



AI Is Driving Workplace Gains but Deepening Job Anxiety for US Workers

Hiring managers and job seekers say AI is boosting efficiency and helping close skills gaps, but fears are rising around workforce cuts, fewer entry-level roles and what may be lost when technology takes on more of the work.

OKLAHOMA CITY, June 10, 2026 — AI is helping businesses work faster and close skills gaps, but according to a new Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey, those gains are also deepening worker unease about hiring and the future of work.

AI Is Already Reshaping the Workplace

AI is already making an impact, as 79% of hiring managers say their companies use AI in the workplace, while 62% of employed job seekers report the same about their own companies.

For hiring managers, that growing use is closely tied to business value:

- 71% say AI could help address the shortage of skilled talent, and 80% say integrating AI tools could be essential to bridging the widening skills gap seen in new hires.
- 81% say generative AI is expected to improve efficiency, 79% say it will free up employee time and 75% say it will enhance customer service.

Those benefits are showing up in day-to-day work. Forty-four percent of hiring managers most often say AI has led to greater employee productivity, followed by higher company efficiency and more creativity, both at 38%.

Among companies that use AI, 85% of hiring managers say the personal connection between employees and clients remains unaffected.

But Unease Is Growing Alongside It



Yet those benefits are arriving alongside a growing sense of unease.

Ninety percent of job seekers say they have concerns about the growing use of AI in the workplace, while 62% of hiring managers say AI-driven automation threatens to diminish their company's brand personality.

Among job seekers, the biggest worries center on how AI could weaken both effort and opportunity over time:

- 42% worry there will be an overdependence on technology, while 37% say employees will put in less effort in favor of AI completing the work.
- 36% fear there will be fewer entry-level jobs for workers to gain experience, and another 36% worry employees will lose the ability to problem-solve.

That tension is not limited to workers alone. Seventy percent of hiring managers believe employees are concerned that generative AI will make them useless, underscoring how quickly the conversation can shift from productivity gains to anxiety about long-term value at work.

When Efficiency Starts to Threaten Headcount

The tension becomes more concrete when the conversation shifts from productivity to jobs. Sixty-four percent of hiring managers say AI could allow their company to reduce its headcount by needing fewer workers, while 73% of job seekers say they are scared companies will not need to hire as much because of it.

That concern is showing up in workforce plans, with 17% of hiring managers who plan to decrease or hold headcount steady for part of this year citing AI solutions as the reason, up from 9% in spring 2025. Among job seekers whose company uses AI, 71% say they are scared their own workforce could be reduced as well.

Entry-Level Work Faces Some of the Earliest Pressure

For many workers, the pressure feels especially intense at the start of the career ladder. Job seekers say AI is already changing the kind of early experience that has traditionally helped people get a foot in the door, build skills and move forward.

Entry-level work is a major pressure point:

- 58% of job seekers say they know of companies using AI to automate tasks handled by entry-level employees.
- 53% agree it is more efficient to use AI for entry-level tasks than to hire and train a candidate.

There Is Optimism, but Not Equal Confidence

Even with the disruption, most hiring managers and job seekers believe new jobs will emerge as

AI reshapes the workforce. Eighty-six percent of hiring managers say new jobs will emerge to compensate for roles eliminated by AI, and 83% of job seekers agree.

But job seekers are far less confident those new roles will be enough:

- 19% of job seekers believe more new jobs will emerge than the number of jobs eliminated.
- 38% expect some new jobs will emerge, but not enough to replace those lost.
- 26% expect only a few limited jobs to emerge, and 17% expect no new jobs to emerge to replace those eliminated.

The More Hopeful Path Depends on How AI Is Used

Even amid ongoing change, the data points to a more constructive path forward. Many hiring managers still see AI as a tool for helping people work better, not simply as a way to cut labor. That more hopeful outlook depends on whether businesses invest in training and prepare workers to use AI alongside the skills technology cannot replace.

Many say that starts with better preparation:

- 44% of hiring managers say companies should provide on-the-job training specific to managing and working alongside AI.
- 40% say businesses should offer dedicated training for skills that are not replaceable with AI.
- 38% point to apprenticeship and internship programs that include AI training.

“The future of work will be shaped by how businesses empower people to work alongside AI,” said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, president and chairman of Express Employment International. “In an incredibly diverse economy as ours, the real opportunity is to pair innovation with training, adaptability and human potential so the workforce becomes stronger, more prepared and more confident about what comes next.”

Discover more research and real-world workforce trends from the America Employed series at [ExpressPros.com/Newsroom](https://www.expresspros.com/newsroom).

Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 3 to 19, 2025, among 1,002 U.S. hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 7 to 20, 2025, among 1,003 adults ages

18 and older.

For full survey methodologies, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

About Robert (Bob) Funk Jr.

Robert (Bob) Funk Jr. is the Chief Executive Officer, President and Chairman of Express Employment International, a global staffing franchisor founded and headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He leads a portfolio of workforce solution brands, including the flagship Express Employment Professionals franchise, along with several affiliated brands serving specialized markets. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

About Express Employment Professionals

At Express Employment Professionals, we're in the business of people. From job seekers to client companies, Express helps people thrive and businesses grow. Our international network of franchises offers localized staffing solutions to the communities they serve across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, employing more than 11 million people globally since its inception. For more information, visit ExpressPros.com.