



## Express Survey Finds AI's Real Workplace Debate Is No Longer Whether to Use It — It's Where to Stop

*New data shows hiring managers and job seekers still want human judgment in workplace decisions with the greatest consequences, from crises and ethics to disputes, feedback and layoffs.*

**OKLAHOMA CITY, June 24, 2026** — As AI use spreads across the workplace, new data suggests the bigger question may no longer be whether companies will use it, but where they still want people involved.

According to an Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey, 90% of U.S. hiring managers say AI will never replace the need for actual employees at their company, and 92% say their company is committed to preserving a human element in the workplace.

Workers are largely in step.

Among employed job seekers whose company uses AI, 82% say generative AI will never replace the need for actual employees where they work. The finding stands out as AI use continues to expand: 79% of hiring managers say their companies use AI, including 43% who say it's used regularly.

### Where Human Involvement Remains a Priority

Even as AI use expands, hiring managers say the clearest preference for maintaining a human element appears in functions tied to employees and customers. The top areas where companies most often rely on people are:

- Human Resources: 59%
- Customer Service: 57%
- Ethics and Compliance: 47%
- Information Technology: 43%



- Sales: 39%

That preference is especially pronounced in customer service among smaller businesses. Three-quarters of companies with two to nine employees (75%) say they prioritize human interaction in customer service, compared with 51% of companies with 500 or more employees.

### **High-Stakes Decisions Still Call for People**

The distinction is sharpest in decisions that directly affect employees and the business itself. Among both hiring managers and job seekers, the strongest support for keeping people involved centers on moments where judgment, trust and direct interaction matter most, such as:

- Managing crisis situations or emergencies — Hiring managers: 82%, Job seekers: 76%
- Making decisions on ethical practices and compliance — Hiring managers: 82%, Job seekers: 73%
- Handling employee disputes or grievances — Hiring managers: 81%, Job seekers: 74%
- Negotiating deals or contracts with other businesses — Hiring managers: 80%, Job seekers: 70%
- Conducting performance reviews and providing feedback — Hiring managers: 79%, Job seekers: 71%
- Determining who gets laid off — Hiring managers: 76%, Job seekers: 71%

Among hiring managers, that emphasis also extends to reviewing applications and selecting candidates for interviews (79%) and serving as the first point of contact for customer issues or questions (77%).

“AI can improve efficiency, boost productivity and take routine tasks off employees’ plates so they can focus on other priorities, but that does not mean it should stand in for people,” said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, president and chairman of Express Employment International. “When the situation is sensitive or the outcome affects someone’s job, career or future, human involvement still matters. The real value of AI comes from working alongside people, not replacing them.”

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### **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](mailto:Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com), Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

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**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.

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