

TOP OF MIND

How HR Jobs Will Change in the Age of AI

**Chris Havrilla, Vice President, Vice President, HR Technology & Solution Provider
Strategy & Research Leader**

Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Charu Ratnu, Senior Research Analyst

Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Overview

During the last few years, many workers have been alarmed by studies predicting that artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics mean the end of jobs. It's a natural worry, but, in reality, jobs are not going away. Jobs are *changing*, and fast—as is work in general. HR professionals and their organizations need to be ready to rapidly acquire new skills while retaining a flexible mindset for reskilling, as today's best practices become tomorrow's obsolete strategies.

The good news is that there's great opportunity for HR to thrive in the age of AI. This article explains how AI and other emerging technologies are influencing HR jobs, what HR skills are necessary to respond to this change, and how fostering a forward-thinking culture that prioritizes continuous learning and embraces change and innovation can help individuals and organizations move ahead.

In This Article

- ✓ How artificial intelligence (AI) is influencing HR jobs
- ✓ What skills HR professionals need for the AI-enabled future
- ✓ What HR leaders should prioritize to excel in the age of AI
- ✓ How organizations will need to shift their workforce to adapt to AI





How HR Is Currently Using AI

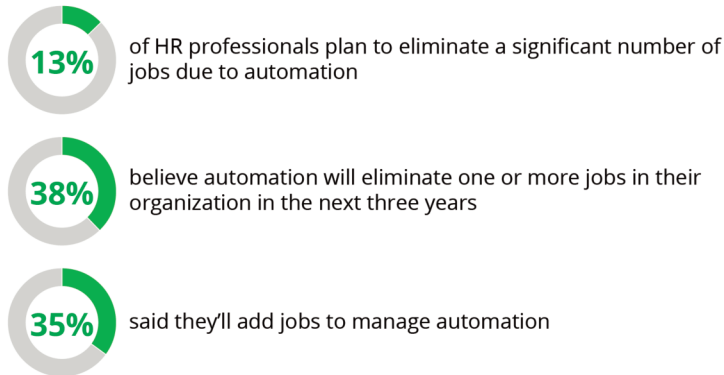
To understand how HR jobs will evolve as AI's role grows, let's review how the function is generally using AI. Chatbots and virtual assistants have become more commonplace, changing workers' roles as more rote tasks are performed by machines. Deloitte's 2019 Global Human Capital Trends research shows that 41 percent of HR organizations report using automation extensively or across multiple functions, a figure that doubled from the previous year. In addition, over the next three years:¹

- 64 percent of respondents indicate they expect the use of robotics to increase or increase significantly
- 80 percent indicate they expect the use of cognitive technologies to increase or increase significantly
- 81 percent expect the use of AI to increase or increase significantly

The impact of this technology revolution is and will continue to be significant for HR. Despite fears of job loss from these emerging technologies, we see that automation via AI has the potential to create and, in many cases, change jobs—not eliminate them. Demand is rising for HR workers with advanced data collection and analysis skills, advanced people skills, and technical skills for managing emerging tools. Figure 1 points out the impact and silver lining of automation on HR jobs.²

Figure 1: The Impact of Automation on HR Jobs

According to Deloitte's 2019 Global Human Capital Trends research . . .



Source: Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2019.

While high-performing organizations are moving toward implementing AI and adapting it to their workforce, many organizations are still in denial about its growing relevance to HR. The latter group is aware of the changes but is hesitant to act because of concerns about disruptions caused by the proliferation of robots and intelligent technology, the risks of automation, or simply a fear of the unknown. Additionally, high attrition and worries about AI lead some organizations to decide that reskilling their workers isn't worth the investment.

To overcome this resistance, HR functions and individuals must embrace change and reimagine and revise their workplace roles to thrive in the AI-enabled future. They also need to help their organization and its greater workforce do the same.

How HR Jobs Will Evolve

With 41 percent of organizations reporting that they currently use automation extensively, many standard jobs have morphed—or will need to morph—into hybrid roles. The complex skills needed at work are changing further, ushering in the dawn of the “superjob,” which requires a broad suite of technical, analytical, and people management skills.³

Historically, HR has been a myriad of siloed, specialized services, projects, initiatives, and programs. As the function evolves, it will need to:

- Be more strategically driven and aligned to business objectives, productivity, and worker experience.
- Find more and better ways to connect workers to HR answers, options, solutions, and / or actual assisted transactions through humancentric digital processes and advanced technologies and data.
- Welcome—even embrace—disruption.
- Become more business and tech savvy, data literate, and knowledgeable of complex business problem-solving and execution

KEY POINT: High-performing organizations are implementing AI and adapting it to their workforce, but many organizations are still in denial about its growing relevance to HR.

- methodologies (e.g., Agile, design thinking).
- Focus on facilitating and leading HR, the business, and the workforce through the transformation initiatives that address disruption and change.
- Deliver services to the workforce in new ways.

HR should be *the* place for testing and utilizing the newest technology and should be focused on usercentric design, reimagination of work, and leadership that shifts the digital mindset. In addition, HR should design and implement solutions focused on coaching, consulting, and connecting the business to workforce advisory services.

To enable this, the HR workforce will need to acquire new abilities and / or further develop key existing ones. Emerging HR roles such as business strategist, solution architect, service operations specialist, workforce experience specialist, and domain specialist signal the growing role technology and analytical skills will have in this space. These roles will bolster the consultative capacity of HR, allow it to focus on designing operational excellence, craft workforce experiences that deliver moments that matter, and better drive talent acquisition strategy.

As AI's growth shifts desired job skills, forward-thinking organizations will adopt a culture of rapid reskilling and continuous learning to make the best use of emerging technology. Early movers can stand out due to the current gap between grasping the issue and taking action: 64 percent of the 2019 Global Human Capital Trends respondents cited AI and robotics as an important issue in human capital, but only 26 percent say they're ready to address the impact of these technologies.⁴

KEY POINT: As AI's growth forces the workforce to acquire broader skills sets, forward-thinking organizations will adopt a culture of continuous learning.

Skills HR Pros Will Need to Navigate the Evolution

If the HR landscape is changing with the rise in technology, what skills do HR professionals most need to succeed going forward? The World Economic Forum provided its take, comparing its view of the most vital skills from 2015 to those required for 2020 (see Figure 2).⁵

Figure 2: The Evolution of Top Workplace Skills

Top 10 Skills	
In 2020	In 2015
1. Complex Problem-Solving	1. Complex Problem-Solving
2. Critical Thinking	2. Coordinating with Others
3. Creativity	3. People Management
4. People Management	4. Critical Thinking
5. Coordinating with Others	5. Negotiation
6. Emotional Intelligence	6. Quality Control
7. Judgment and Decision-Making	7. Service Orientation
8. Service Orientation	8. Judgment and Decision-Making
9. Negotiation	9. Active Listening
10. Cognitive Flexibility	10. Creativity

Source: World Economic Forum, 2016.

The shift in desired skills for HR roles can be addressed and prioritized by dividing critical skills into two buckets and then developing relevant subskills:

- **Technical, data, and analytical skills**
 - **Tech savviness.** A basic aptitude and openness to learning new tech tools and how they can be utilized to enable work.
 - **Data fluency / literacy.** The ability to synthesize data, create hypotheses, and forecast scenarios, as well as interpret and tell the necessary stories from insights gained.
 - **Design thinking.** When utilized properly, this creative, human-focused problem-solving methodology can help reduce idea, “product” (what you are trying to build / accomplish), and execution risk within the innovation / transformation process.
 - **People analytics.** The ability to interpret HR data to make recommendations and / or better decisions about talent and the workforce.
- **People skills**
 - **Leadership.** Setting company direction and inspiring a workforce to fulfill its mission.
 - **Creativity.** Making ideological leaps and generating fresh ideas.
 - **Business acumen.** A learned shrewdness that leads to smart business decisions.
 - **Collaboration.** Bringing together stakeholders and partners to improve outcomes.
 - **Conflict resolution.** Mediating between parties to create win-win solutions.
 - **Complex problem-solving.** Resolving issues that have multiple sides, scenarios, and repercussions.
 - **Change management.** Foreseeing issues and guiding workers to new operating modes.
 - **Innovation mindset.** A willingness to let go of old paradigms to embrace new concepts.
 - **Stakeholder visioning / management.** A deep understanding of the personalities involved in an organization.
 - **Ethical vigor.** Intentional focus on moral judgment, actions, and behaviors given machine involvement in guidance, recommendations, and decisions / decision support (e.g., ensuring a lack of bias in hiring decisions).

The two buckets above indicate that HR workers will need to know how to audit, manage, and continually guide and “train” AI tools, or “assistants,”⁶ and know how to interpret, utilize, and act upon their data, guidance, and recommendations. Successful workers will also need to develop advanced people skills, offering visionary leadership, deep insights, and people management expertise that no machine can replicate.

Using Learning to Excel in the Age of AI

Given the trend of AI tool exploration and adoption, how can HR professionals and their organizations thrive in this fast-changing environment? Here’s a look at top priorities for these stakeholders:

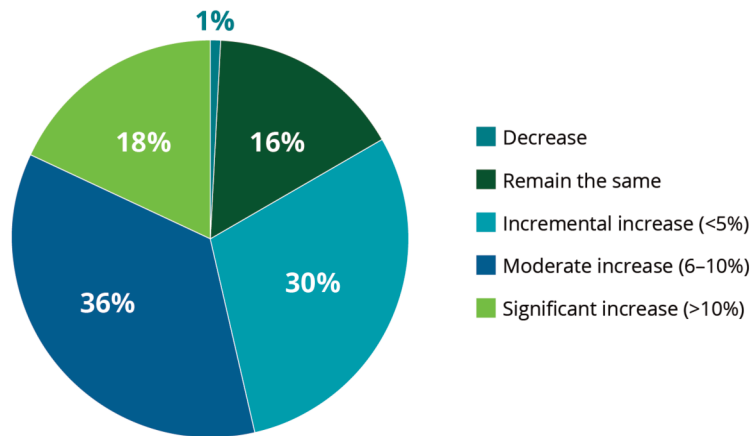
KEY POINT: AI adoption will necessitate a workforce with a solid combination of technical skills and human-centric interpersonal skills.

- **Individuals.** Build value by learning in the flow of work to fast-track new skills. Be proactive in asking their organizations for necessary learning resources.
- **Organizations.** Invest in reskilling. Because traditional / formal classroom training can be too slow and interruptive to keep pace with change, skill acquisition must be integrated into the flow of work and made constantly available.⁷

Learning will be important for keeping up as AI rapidly takes over more transactional HR tasks. As Figure 3 illustrates, 84 percent of Global Human Capital Trends respondents report their organizations are already increasing funds for retraining, with 18 percent of those investing significantly.⁸

Figure 3: Investments to Support Reskilling the Workforce*

What additional investment are you anticipating to accommodate workforce reskilling?



* Only respondents who said that automation would require reskilling at their organizations answered this question. Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2019.

Staying relevant also necessitates an emphasis on creativity. Marty Neumeier, an author on innovation and creativity, states that all human work can be placed into four basic categories.⁹ These are:

- **Creative.** Unique, imaginative, nonroutine, and autonomous.
- **Skilled.** Standardized, talent-driven, professional, and directed.
- **Rote.** Interchangeable, routinized, outsourceable, and managed.
- **Robotic.** Algorithmic, computerized, efficient, and purchased.

Rote and robotic work is already being performed in some organizations by AI-enabled technologies. As technology progresses, we will also see more skilled and standardized work become automated. Creative work will stay unique to humans; hence, such talents need development.

Identifying with Whom to Build and Grow

Not all HR workers will embrace the move to more creative and technical work. Organizations should take the pulse of the workforce and identify

individuals who are fearful or resistant to technology or long for previous work models dependent on simple rote work. Those who are not on board with change and acquiring new skills may need to consider new roles or career options.

HR must begin to identify the workers who have the aptitude or capabilities best suited to train for the skills needed in the function's rapidly changing, AI-enabled future. Organizations should invest in identifying and obtaining key skills for growth and implement in-the-flow education to enable the workforce to evolve rapidly.

Reflection

Despite some hesitance to fully accept it, AI usage in HR will continue to grow and subsequently change the key skills that HR professionals and their organizations need to succeed. High-performing HR organizations will get past the denial and complacency that limit their low-performing peers—and the concerns that attrition makes retraining not worth the investment—and embrace the AI-enabled future.

To assure rapid progress, high-performing organizations will invest aggressively in reskilling and implement learning in the flow of work to create a workforce that is aligned with technology. They will develop the workforce to have both technical and humancentric (“soft”) skills.

In the age of AI, HR remains a vital component of organizational success. Building a strong learning culture will help close the talent gap, make work more meaningful, and create a deeper connection between the organization and its workers.

KEY POINT: HR functions must identify the workers best suited to train for skills needed in HR's AI-enabled future, while resistant workers may need to be encouraged to consider new roles or career options.

Key Takeaways

- High-performing organizations are implementing emerging technologies such as AI, but many organizations are still in denial about their growing relevance to the HR function.
- By embracing change and reenvisioning their current roles, HR organizations and their workers can thrive in the AI-enabled future.
- Adoption of AI will require a workforce with a solid combination of technical skills and interpersonal skills.
- For optimal impact, prioritize reskilling through continuous training in the flow of work.
- HR staff uninterested in adapting to AI may need to seek out other roles or career options.
- Successful integration of AI with reskilled workers will allow HR to stay relevant and deliver more value.

Endnotes

1. [*2019 Global Human Capital Trends: Leading the social enterprise—Reinvent with a human focus*](#), Deloitte Consulting LLP and Deloitte Insights, 2019.
2. [*2019 Global Human Capital Trends: Leading the social enterprise—Reinvent with a human focus*](#), Deloitte Consulting LLP and Deloitte Insights, 2019.
3. [*2019 Global Human Capital Trends: Leading the social enterprise—Reinvent with a human focus*](#), Deloitte Consulting LLP and Deloitte Insights, 2019.
4. [*2019 Global Human Capital Trends: Leading the social enterprise—Reinvent with a human focus*](#), Deloitte Consulting LLP and Deloitte Insights, 2019.
5. “The 10 skills you need to thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” [Work Economic Forum](#) / Alex Grah, 2016, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>.
6. [*Demystifying Artificial Intelligence in HR: A Primer*](#), Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP / Chris Havrilla and Charu Ratnu, 2019.
7. [*Embedding Feedback in the Flow of Work*](#), Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP / Kathi Enderes, Nehal Nangia, and Julie Hiipakka, 2019.
8. [*2019 Global Human Capital Trends: Leading the social enterprise—Reinvent with a human focus*](#), Deloitte Consulting LLP and Deloitte Insights, 2019.
9. “The Skills You Need to Succeed in 2020,” [Forbes](#) / Avil Beckford, August 6, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ellevate/2018/08/06/the-skills-you-need-to-succeed-in-2020/#78d33dee288a>.

The Bersin™ Membership Program

Our research-driven insights are provided exclusively to organizational members of Bersin. Member organizations have access to the Bersin suite of offerings, including our proprietary tools and services. In today's business-driven HR landscape, we offer research, analytics, and industry insights to help design and execute innovative talent, leadership, and change programs, including:

- **Content and Insights**—Market-leading, proprietary research including research reports, high-impact industry studies, videos, webcast replays, process models and frameworks, and case studies.
- **Bersin Blueprints**—Designed to provide actionable approaches to help Human Capital leaders address their most pressing talent challenges, Blueprints offer convenient access to research, performance support materials, tools, and member advisory services to tackle key challenges.
- **Interactive Factbooks**—Covering a wide spectrum of Human Capital metrics, this platform allows members to filter by industry and company size and create custom benchmarks, analyze trends, and identify drivers of variance.
- **Maturity Diagnostics**—Research-based maturity assessments, integrated with business feedback, deliver actionable custom analysis, relevant research resources, and guidance from member advisors. These assessments help members develop a plan to progress in maturity.
- **Performance Support**—Practical materials in the form of illustrations, handouts, worksheets, templates, assessments, and recipes. Members can use these materials to help promote thinking, facilitate discussion, enable self-assessment, outline steps, direct processes, and aid decision-making.
- **Member Advisors**—Through virtual and in-person activities, our specialized member advisors help members understand our research, uncover deeper insights, prioritize human capital issues, and map solutions to some of their most pressing challenges.
- **Networking**—Member-only online Communities, working groups, and roundtables let you connect with peers and industry leaders to discuss and learn about the latest industry trends, emerging issues, and leading practices.
- **IMPACT Conference**—Our executive conference brings research-driven insights to Human Capital leaders and their teams, offering them the opportunity to exchange ideas with other senior-level practitioners, industry thought leaders, and Bersin team members.

For more information about our membership program, please visit us at www.bersin.com/membership.

About Us

Bersin is the indispensable digital destination for the HR Professional to build capability, community and credibility, stay informed, and lead on workforce issues. Our membership delivers research-based people strategies designed to help leaders drive exceptional business performance. A piece of Bersin research is downloaded on average approximately every minute during the business day. More than 5,000 organizations worldwide use our research and consulting to guide their HR, talent and learning strategies.

As used in this document, "Deloitte" means Deloitte Consulting LLP, a subsidiary of Deloitte LLP. Please see www.deloitte.com/us/about for a detailed description of our legal structure. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting.

This publication contains general information only and Deloitte is not, by means of this publication, rendering accounting, business, financial, investment, legal, tax, or other professional advice or services. This publication is not a substitute for such professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for any decision or action that may affect your business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your business, you should consult a qualified professional advisor. Deloitte shall not be responsible for any loss sustained by any person who relies on this publication.

Copyright © 2019 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved.

Member of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited.