Censia

EBOOK

The Future of Talent: Leading in 2025 with AI-Powered Talent Intelligence

Your playbook to upskill for tomorrow's essential roles, navigate the AI revolution, and empower your employees with future-proof skills.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Censia

The Looming Talent Shortage

Imagine waking up tomorrow and discovering that nearly a quarter of all jobs have completely transformed—or vanished altogether. Sound dramatic? According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), that's exactly the scenario we're facing: by 2027, approximately 23 percent of global roles will experience significant disruption, translating to 83 million jobs disappearing while another 69 million new positions emerge to meet technological advancements and shifting market demands.[1]

But here's the twist—technology alone isn't the protagonist of this story. Deloitte highlights a fascinating reality: the heroes navigating this seismic shift are not machines, but humans. Human adaptability, strategic workforce planning, and a thoughtful embrace of generative AI and automation are the keys to thriving in this rapidly changing landscape.[2]

So, how do organizations navigate this uncertainty without getting lost in the chaos? It starts by proactively tackling emerging talent gaps—before they become insurmountable. This is where powerful solutions like Censia's AI-driven skills intelligence engine comes into play. It provides crucial real-time insights that help businesses understand their current talent capabilities, foresee future needs, and swiftly bridge the inevitable gaps.

In the pages ahead, we'll explore precisely what this future holds for talent, unpacking how you can strategically position your workforce not just to survive, but to lead in an AI-driven era.

Global Talent Shortages and Surpluses by 2030

- Surplus 0
- Deficit 0-6 million
- Significant Deficit 6-12 million
- Acute Deficit 12-18 million

Source: World Economic Forum
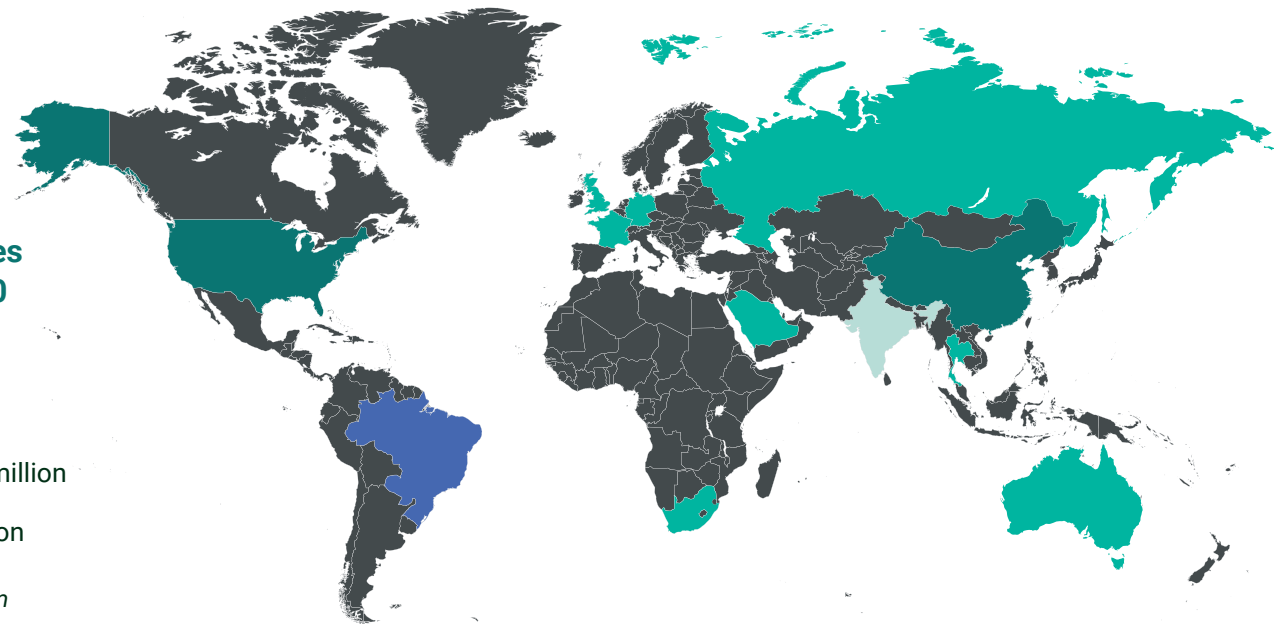
The Future of Work: People +Technology

The future of work is the current reality: artificial intelligence is not only reshaping industries but also transforming the very essence of work. McKinsey & Company estimates that generative AI alone could add a staggering $2.6 to $4.4 trillion annually to global GDP.[3] This isn't just a technological shift—it's an economic revolution.

Yet, with every revolution comes uncertainty. According to PwC's 2024 *Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey*, about 53 percent of employees report feeling overwhelmed, citing that too much change is happening all at once.[4]

But there's a powerful countercurrent of optimism: many are not just bracing for change—they're embracing it. In the same survey, 77% of respondents said they feel ready to adapt to new ways of working, 72% expressed excitement about opportunities to learn and grow, and 60% shared that recent changes have made them feel optimistic about the future of their workplace.

Organizations today have an unprecedented opportunity—not just to adapt, but to empower their workforce to thrive alongside AI. By strategically leveraging technology, companies can upskill and reskill employees, turning them into active co-creators in this evolving workplace narrative. AI-powered solutions like Censia offer precise, AI-driven insights to map and enhance employee skills, directly addressing workforce anxieties and unlocking human potential.

In this story, technology isn't the villain; it's the catalyst that enables us to shape a future of work where people and AI collaborate seamlessly, redefining productivity and innovation.

The Business Case for Upskilling

In a world increasingly shaped by AI, organizations face a pivotal decision: Should they race to hire external talent already proficient in emerging technologies, or focus inward—empowering their existing workforce through continuous learning and skill development?

Historically, companies have leaned on external hiring to bridge skills gaps. But in today's fast-evolving technological landscape, that approach alone is no longer sufficient. The supply of experienced AI talent is limited, and the competition to attract it is fierce. This reality is prompting many organizations to reevaluate their workforce strategies.

According to McKinsey's "The Critical Role of Strategic Workforce Planning in the Age of AI," businesses must weigh the time and cost trade-offs between internal upskilling and external hiring. While bringing in new talent can inject fresh capabilities, it also comes with significant downsides: it's often more expensive, slower, and riskier—particularly when it comes to in-demand AI roles.[5]

"Hiring is cost intensive, since it takes time to onboard and ramp up an employee," the McKinsey article states. "Finding ways to reskill and upskill existing employees to take on new roles can reduce recruiting costs."

This shift in mindset is reflected in Mercer's *Global Talent Trends 2024–2025*, which highlights a growing preference for building talent from within. Only 39% of companies today fill most roles externally, while 26% are doing so internally—and many are actively transitioning to skills-powered internal mobility strategies.[6]

"The talent crunch is requiring HR to take a 'build from within' approach, rather than relying on the 'buy' strategy most popular over the last five years," the report explains.

But the case for upskilling goes far beyond cost or speed—it's emerging as a powerful driver of business performance. Mercer's research shows that when internal upskilling is combined with AI adoption and thoughtful work redesign, the result is substantial productivity gains.

"Executives understand that workforce upskilling/reskilling and employee well-being continue to be critical to success," the report notes, emphasizing that 88% of organizations excelling at work redesign have increased productivity due to internal upskilling.

The message is clear: Upskilling is no longer just a talent initiative—it's a strategic business imperative. It builds internal capacity, accelerates innovation, boosts retention, and delivers measurable ROI. Companies that prioritize continuous skill development don't just keep pace—they set the pace, outperforming their peers in agility, resilience, and productivity.

In a world defined by AI and constant transformation, the ability to evolve from within is not just an advantage—it's essential.

EIGHT BENEFITS OF WORKFORCE UPSKILLING

1) Accelerated Productivity and Efficiency

Upskilling employees in AI tools and digital skills can yield major performance gains. Research shows that leading companies committed to continuous learning ("Reinventors," representing the top 9% of organizations) are 2× more likely than their peers to anticipate productivity improvements of 20% or more over the next three years. By equipping staff with new competencies, businesses streamline workflows and let people focus on higher-value tasks—boosting overall efficiency.[7]

2) Close the AI Adoption Gap

Many companies are investing in AI, but without upskilled talent they struggle to see returns. In a 2024 survey of 1,400 executives, 54% expected AI to deliver cost savings, yet 66% were ambivalent or dissatisfied with their AI progress—and tellingly, only 6% of companies had begun upskilling their workforce in a meaningful way. This highlights that training employees to work alongside AI is often the missing link to realizing productivity gains and return on investment from new tech deployments.[8]

3) Enriched and Meaningful Work

A robust upskilling program helps employees move from repetitive work to more creative, strategic roles alongside AI. Nearly two-thirds of business leaders strongly believe that adopting AI (paired with workforce training) will make work more fulfilling and meaningful for employees, as mundane tasks are automated. In essence, upskilling enables people to work smarter, not harder, improving job satisfaction and engagement.[7]

4) Revenue Growth and Innovation

Companies that invest in upskilling are better positioned to innovate and grow in the AI era. According to Accenture, organizations that actively develop their people's skills and integrate AI see tangible top-line benefits—unlocking up to a 5% revenue boost by tapping employees' full potential. In fact, most executives view generative AI not just as a cost-cutting tool but as a path to innovation and market growth, with 17% predicting it could increase their market share by over 10% through new products and services. Upskilling ensures the workforce can drive and sustain that innovation.[7]

EIGHT BENEFITS OF WORKFORCE UPSKILLING

5) Talent Retention and Loyalty

Upskilling isn't just a nice-to-have—employees now demand it, and it pays off in loyalty. Almost half of workers say that having opportunities to learn new skills is a key factor in deciding whether to stay with their employer or leave for a new job.[4]

6) Employee Readiness to Embrace AI

The good news for employers is that workers are eager to upskill for the future. An overwhelming 94% of employees say they are ready to learn new skills to work with AI technologies – signaling massive workforce enthusiasm – yet only 5% of organizations are actively reskilling at scale to meet this demand. Companies that act on this opportunity will tap into a highly motivated talent pool, empowering employees who want to adapt. By closing this gap, businesses can foster a culture of continuous learning and ensure their people are equipped to leverage AI's full potential.[7]

7) Workforce Agility and Resilience

A culture of upskilling makes companies more agile in the face of disruption. The U.S. workforce in particular has shown a high capacity for adapting to new roles—Americans changed occupations nearly 3× as often as workers in Europe in recent years. This inherent flexibility, when coupled with continuous upskilling, means organizations can redeploy talent quickly as AI reshapes job roles. Upskilled employees are better able to shift into emerging positions or departments, helping companies respond to market changes faster than competitors.[10]

8) Future-Proofing Amid AI Disruption

Upskilling the workforce is a critical risk-mitigation strategy as automation and AI reshape jobs. McKinsey projects that by 2030, roughly 1 in 10 workers in America may need to completely switch occupations due to technological shifts—a significantly higher rate of change than before the pandemic. Proactive upskilling and reskilling programs help companies navigate this transition smoothly, redeploying and retraining employees for new roles created by AI instead of resorting to layoffs. In effect, continuous learning creates a future-proof workforce that can adapt to whatever new demands emerge, ensuring business continuity and reducing disruption in the face of rapid tech advancement.[9]

Understanding the Skills of the Future

The landscape of employment is undergoing significant transformation, driven by technological innovation and structural changes in the labor market. According to the 2025 WEF *Future of Jobs Report 2025*, the period between 2025 and 2030 will see profound shifts.[10] The report projects the creation of approximately 170 million new jobs alongside the displacement of around 92 million existing positions. This shift results in a net gain of 78 million jobs globally. To better understand this evolving landscape, the following table highlights specific roles anticipated to see the greatest growth and decline, offering a clear snapshot of where skills investment and development will be most critical.

TOP 15
Largest Declining Jobs (2025-2030)

1. Accounting, Bookkeeping and Payroll Clerks
2. Administrative Assistants and Executive Secretaries
3. Data Entry Clerks
4. Cashiers and Ticket Clerks
5. Bank Tellers and Related Clerks
6. Postal Service Clerks
7. Statistical, Finance and Insurance Clerks
8. Salespersons, Wholesale and Manufacturing
9. Door-To-Door Sales Workers, News and Street Vendors and Related Workers
10. Material-Moving Machine Operators
11. Assembly and Factory Workers
12. Textile, Garment and Leather Workers
13. Legal Secretaries
14. Travel Agents and Clerks
15. Graphic Designers
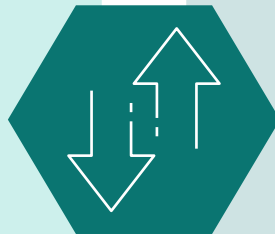
TOP 15
Largest Growing Jobs (2025-2030)

1. AI and Machine Learning Specialists
2. Data Analysts and Scientists
3. Sustainability Specialists
4. Business Intelligence Analysts
5. Project Managers
6. Renewable Energy Engineers
7. Business Development Professionals
8. Digital Transformation Specialists
9. Industrial and Production Engineers
10. Supply Chain and Logistics Specialists
11. University and Higher Education Teachers
12. E-commerce Specialists
13. Management Consultants
14. General and Operations Managers
15. Database and Network Administrators

Top Barriers to Business Transformation

As organizations adapt to rapid market changes, one significant challenge consistently stands out: skills gaps. In the WEF Future of *Jobs Report 2025*, a substantial 63% of employers identify skills gaps as their primary obstacle to successful business transformation from 2025 to 2030.[10] This widespread challenge affects businesses across nearly all industries and geographic regions, making it a top priority to address.

Closing these skills gaps isn't just about adapting; it's key to maintaining your competitive edge and achieving sustainable growth. Employers agree that bridging these gaps is essential to fully harnessing new technologies and capitalizing on evolving opportunities in the labor market.

To illustrate just how critical skills gaps are, the following table shows the major barriers businesses face during transformation, clearly highlighting the prominence and impact of skill shortages.

Top Barriers to Organizational Transformation (2025-2030)

Barrier to Transformation	Share of Employers Surveyed Expecting Barrier (Global)
Skills gaps in the labor market	**63%**
Organizational culture and resistance to change	46%
Outdated or inflexible regulatory framework	39%
Inability to attract talent to the industry	37%
Lack of adequate data and technical infrastructure	32%
Inability to attract talent to my firm	27%
Shortage of investment capital	26%
Insufficient understanding of opportunities	25%

Source: WEF *Future of Jobs Report 2025*

Top Skills of 2025

Preparing for the future requires organizations to understand and integrate emerging critical skills into their workforce development strategies.
WEF identified several skills as most important for the future of work, categorizing them as core skills needed now and skills expected to increase in importance by 2030.[10]

Top Skills Expected to Increase in Importance (by 2030):

These skills are projected to grow most rapidly in importance over the next five years.

- AI and big data
- Networks and cybersecurity
- Technological literacy
- Creative thinking
- Resilience, flexibility and agility

Top Core Skills (as of 2025):

Employers surveyed consider these skills essential for their workforce today:

- Analytical thinking
- Resilience, flexibility and agility
- Leadership and social influence
- Creative thinking
- Motivation and self-awareness

Empowering Employees for the AI Revolution

Successfully navigating the AI-driven future requires organizations to actively support their workforce in developing essential AI skills. According to McKinsey's article "Superagency in the Workplace: Empowering people to unlock AI's full potential," employees clearly recognize AI's transformative potential and express a strong desire for structured training from their employers to maximize this opportunity.[11] However, a noticeable gap exists—more than one in five employees feel they receive minimal or no support for developing their generative AI capabilities, and nearly half indicate receiving only moderate support.

While attracting top AI talent remains important, upskilling current employees is equally crucial. Organizations must anticipate new roles and skill demands, emphasizing practical, on-the-job training tailored specifically to individual roles. For example, technical teams might benefit from intensive bootcamps on creating AI libraries, whereas functional teams could gain practical skills from targeted courses in prompt engineering. Additionally, fostering an environment where employees can openly discuss concerns and ideas related to AI applications can significantly aid in transitioning to an AI-enabled workforce. Embracing these strategies will help businesses build a workforce ready to actively shape and thrive in the future of work.

4 Ways to Tackle the Skills Gap

The WEF's *Future of Jobs 2025* report offers a clear roadmap for how leading employers plan to address the global skills gap. These strategies signal a decisive shift toward a more resilient, skills-powered workforce—where adaptability, inclusivity, and lifelong learning take center stage.

1 Upskilling the Workforce

Upskilling stands out as the most widely adopted workforce strategy, with 85% of employers planning to prioritize it between now and 2030. It's a top-three priority across every region and income level, underscoring its universal importance. Notably, 63% of employers also identify upskilling and reskilling as one of the most effective ways to improve talent availability. These initiatives not only help businesses keep pace with change—they future-proof the workforce.

2 Hiring for New Skills

Seven in ten employers are focused on bringing in new talent equipped with emerging skills. This approach reflects a growing emphasis on capabilities over credentials, ensuring companies stay agile in the face of technological and market shifts.

3 Transitioning Talent into New Roles

Half of employers are actively planning to transition employees from roles in decline into those with growth potential. These efforts require strategic, targeted reskilling to help workers successfully shift into jobs that blend technical know-how with human-centric strengths like collaboration, communication, and creativity.

4 Embracing a Skills-First Mindset

Nearly half (47%) of employers are embracing skills-first hiring—placing greater value on demonstrated capabilities rather than traditional degrees. This is a significant leap from previous years and signals a broader movement toward more inclusive and dynamic talent strategies. The electronics sector, for example, is leading the way by removing degree requirements to unlock access to wider, more diverse talent pools.

Leading Talent in 2025:
The AI Intelligence Advantage

As artificial intelligence continues to redefine the workplace, organizations face a choice: react to change—or architect the future. In an era where roles evolve faster than ever and skills can become obsolete in months, companies must move beyond static planning and embrace dynamic, intelligence-driven workforce strategies.

The most forward-thinking organizations aren't merely tracking change—they're anticipating it. They're building agile talent ecosystems powered by real-time skills visibility, enabling them to redeploy talent as priorities shift, unlock hidden capabilities, and shape new roles before they're even named. This is the foundation of a truly adaptive enterprise—one that thrives amid disruption because it knows where its strengths lie and how to evolve them.

At the heart of this transformation is a strategic shift: from job-based planning to skills-based orchestration. This means designing learning experiences not just to fill gaps, but to fuel growth. It means identifying the skills that will drive tomorrow's innovation—and cultivating them today. And it means reimagining workforce planning as a continuous, data-driven capability that unites talent acquisition, development, and mobility into one cohesive strategy.

Censia stands at the forefront of this evolution. Our AI-powered talent intelligence solution delivers the clarity and foresight organizations need to lead in the age of AI. By unlocking a unified view of workforce capabilities and surfacing actionable insights, Censia empowers HR and business leaders to make faster, smarter, and more strategic decisions.

The future of talent is intelligent, agile, and profoundly human. With the right tools, it's yours to shape.

ENDNOTES

1. World Economic Forum, *Future of Jobs Report 2023* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, April 2023),
   https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023

2. Deloitte, "Generative AI and the Future of Work," *Deloitte Insights*, February 2024,
   https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/consulting/articles/generative-ai-and-the-future-of-work.html

3. McKinsey & Company, *The Economic Potential of Generative AI: The Next Productivity Frontier* (McKinsey Global Institute, January 2024),
   https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-economic-potential-of-generative-ai-the-next-productivity-frontier#/

4. PwC, *Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2024* (PwC, June 2024),
   https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/workforce/hopes-and-fears.html

5. McKinsey & Company, "The Critical Role of Strategic Workforce Planning in the Age of AI," February 2025,
   https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-critical-role-of-strategic-workforce-planning-in-the-age-of-ai

6. Mercer, *Global Talent Trends Report 2024* (New York: Mercer, January 2024),
   https://www.mercer.com/insights/people-strategy/future-of-work/global-talent-trends/

7. Accenture, *Work, Workforce, Workers: Reinvented in the Age of Generative AI* (Accenture, January 2024),
   https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/accenture-com/document-2/Accenture-Work-Can-Become-Era-Generative-AI.pdf

8. Boston Consulting Group, *From Potential to Profit with GenAI* (BCG, January 2024),
   https://www.bcg.com/publications/2024/from-potential-to-profit-with-genai

9. McKinsey & Company, "The Upskilling Imperative: Required at Scale for the Future of Work," May 2025,
   https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/the-upskilling-imperative-required-at-scale-for-the-future-of-work

10. World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2025* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, January 2025),
    https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/

11. McKinsey & Company, "Superagency in the Workplace: Empowering People to Unlock AI's Full Potential," January 2025,
    https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/superagency-in-the-workplace-empowering-people-to-unlock-ais-full-potential-at-work#/