Whitepaper

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TECHWOLF RESEARCH · 2026

You're preparing for the wrong AI event

What task data from 1,496 large enterprises says AI will change, and what it won't.

David Mendelsohn

> Somewhere in your company, there's a committee planning for an AI headcount event. It has a workforce model, a hiring-freeze scenario, and a slide that estimates how many roles AI will replace. That committee is wasting its time.

David Mendelsohn, PhD

Principal, Strategy and Operations, TechWolf

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Boards ask how many jobs AI will cut. The work points somewhere else.

We broke the jobs at 1,496 of the world's largest enterprises down into their tasks, using 2 billion public job postings, and scored every task.

1.4%
of task hours AI could absorb end to end

39%
of task hours AI can accelerate

1 in 20
roles where AI could take over at least half the work

~3x
faster: AI frees up capacity faster than people naturally leave

01 The headcount event is small.
In 2 out of 5 roles, AI can't fully take over any of the work.

02 The role redesign event is large, and nobody owns it.
The 39% AI can accelerate sits inside roles that stay. Most companies don't budget for it, measure it or have a committee for it.

03 Job titles hide the change.
The same title can be 90%, 55% or 0% exposed to AI, depending on the company.

04 Five practices separate the companies getting value.
Attach redesign to something already moving, score every task, rebuild around human work, turn the role into a training plan, and track the freed hours.

01 · THE WRONG NUMBER

The committee is working on the smallest part of the problem

Somewhere in your company, there's a committee planning for an AI headcount event. It has a workforce model, a hiring-freeze scenario, and a slide that estimates how many roles AI will replace.

To find out what the work itself says, we reconstructed the task profiles of roles at 1,496 of the world's largest enterprises from 2 billion public job postings. Then we scored every task on one question: can AI absorb this work, can it accelerate it, or does it stay human?

AI can absorb 1.4% of enterprise task hours. It can accelerate 39%.

Share of work hours in each band, across 1,496 of the world's largest enterprises



Unweighted average across the 1,496 companies; rounded shares may not sum to 100. Shares measure potential in the work itself, independent of today's AI adoption. Source: TechWolf Workforce Intelligence Index.

The 1.4% AI can absorb

Has a committee, a workforce model and a board slide.

The 39% AI can accelerate

Nobody owns it, budgets for it or measures it.

When that much of the work changes, roles have to change with it. The standard tool for that moves far too slowly: most enterprises refresh their job architecture (the official catalog of roles and job descriptions) every five to ten years, in a consulting project that takes more than a year and can cost millions. AI is changing the work faster than that cycle can see it.

02 · HOW WE MEASURED IT

Every task, scored on the Human Agency Scale

Each task was scored on the Human Agency Scale, a five-level framework developed at Stanford,[1] then grouped into three bands.

Absorb	H1	AI-led: AI can do the task with minimal human input
Accelerate	H2	AI-assisted: AI does most of the work; a person guides it
	H3	Equal partnership: person and AI contribute equally
Stays human	H4	Human-led: a person performs the task; AI supports
	H5	Fully human: no meaningful AI role

2B
public job postings

1,496
of the world's largest enterprises

20,127
roles

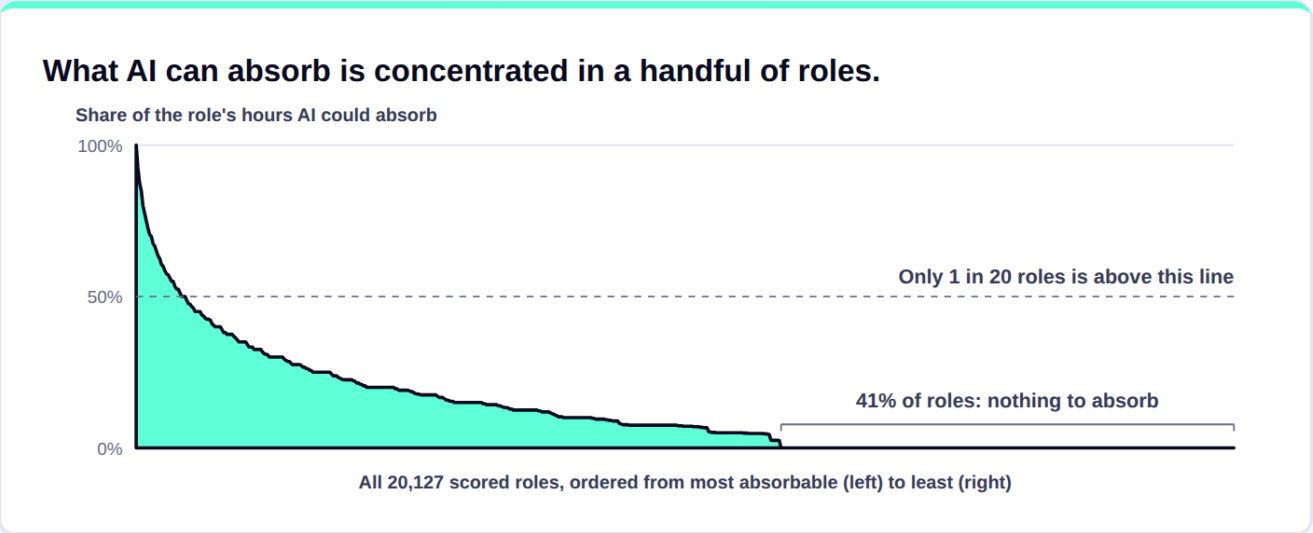
26
industries

The shares measure potential in the work itself.
They are independent of how much AI a company uses today.

03.01 · WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

Very little work can be automated outright

Only 1.4% of task hours are work AI could take over end to end. At the role level, AI could take over at least half the work in just 1 in 20 roles. In 2 out of 5 roles, it can't fully take over any of the work.



Source: TechWolf Workforce Intelligence Index.

03.02 · WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

A large share of work can be accelerated

AI can accelerate 39% of work on tasks such as first drafts, research, data pulls, summaries and tracking. People stay in the driver's seat while AI does a real share of the work.

This work is already being reshaped

inside job titles that look unchanged from the outside.

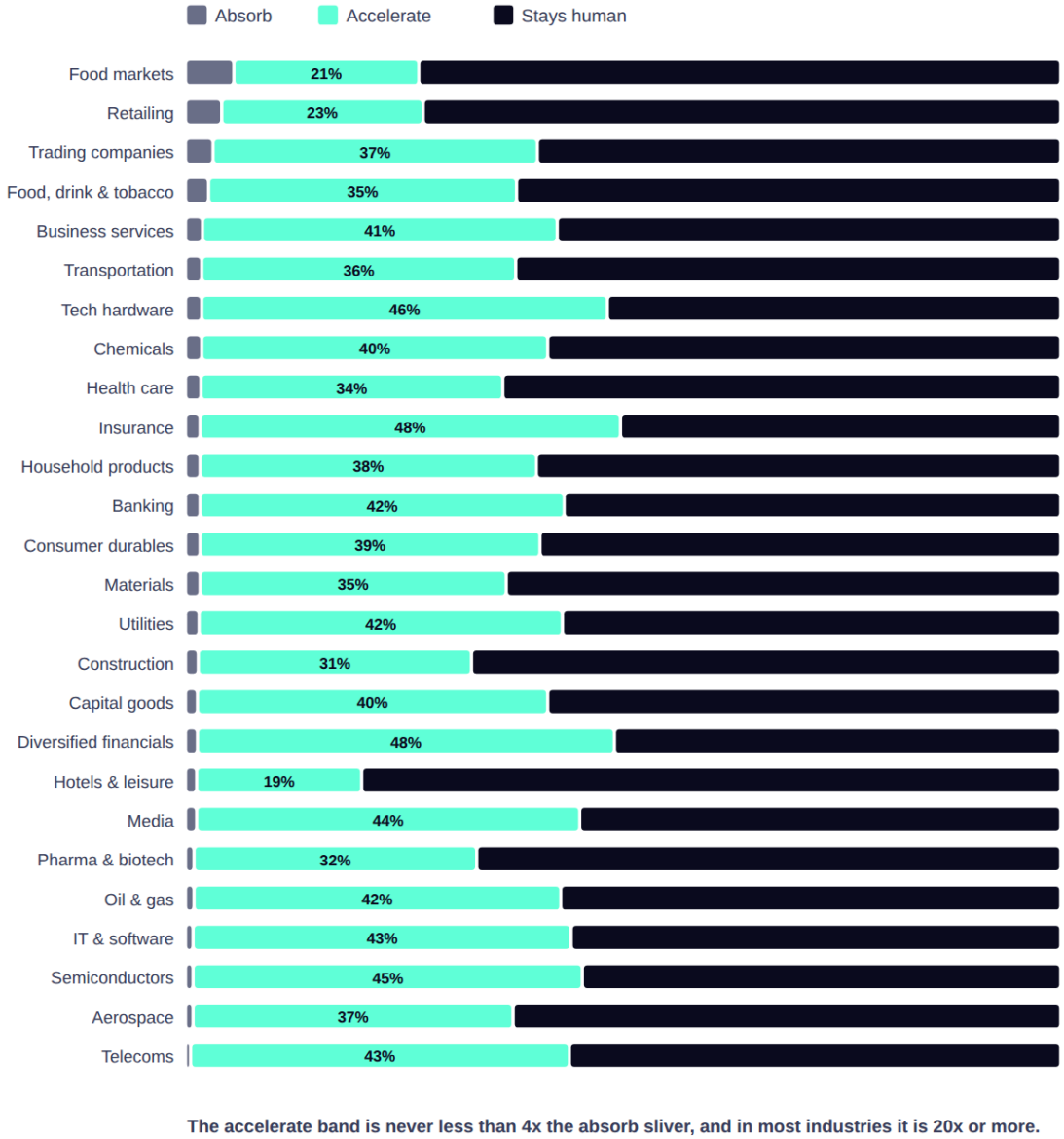
03.03 · BY INDUSTRY

Even in the most automatable industries, acceleration is the bigger opportunity

Only about 4-5% of task hours can be absorbed by AI in food markets and retail, while AI can accelerate over 20%. Across all other industries, absorbable work never reaches 3% of hours, while acceleration potential runs from 19% to 48%.

Even the industries with the most absorbable work have far more to accelerate.

Share of work hours in each band, for all 26 industries in the dataset, sorted by the share AI can absorb



The accelerate band is never less than 4x the absorb sliver, and in most industries it is 20x or more.

Unweighted average across each industry's companies. Source: TechWolf Workforce Intelligence Index.

04 · WHAT STAYS HUMAN

AI takes the structured middle of a job. What stays human is consistent.

Across all 1,496 companies, the same pattern shows up in the task data. The repeatable middle of a job is where AI can absorb or accelerate the work. The edges stay with people.

AI ABSORBS OR ACCELERATES

The structured, repeatable middle

- Routine analysis
- Quoting
- Documentation
- Reporting

STAYS HUMAN

The judgment and the relationships

- Client relationships
- Negotiation
- Mentoring
- Owning decisions

39%

of task hours AI can accelerate, inside roles that stay

1.4%

of task hours AI could absorb end to end

04 · SAME TITLE, DIFFERENT JOBS

You can only redesign a role from its actual work

Job titles and descriptions won't tell you what that work is. Most were written years ago for grading and hiring, and the work has long since moved on.

We scored the same title, underwriter, at three global insurers, task by task, asking how much of the posted job AI could absorb or accelerate.

90%

Insurer A

Mostly risk analysis, quote generation, policy binding and documentation.

55%

Insurer B

Pricing analysis, claims forecasting and client reporting could go to AI. Risk judgment and renewals stay.

0%

Insurer C

Portfolio strategy, client relationships and mentoring, top to bottom.

Under the same title, those are three different jobs.

> "About 70 to 80 percent of the jobs and skills between Sales Engineering and Product Engineering are actually similar, which none of our leaders knew.
>
> CHRO, North American technology company, after a task-level analysis of its own workforce

Three thousand engineers shared identical titles and did very different work.

05

Five practices for the role redesign payoff.

Run redesign one role family at a time: all the variants of one job, like underwriters or store managers.

05 · FIVE PRACTICES

What the companies getting value from role redesign do

A few dozen role families cover most of a large enterprise, and the family is where redesign decisions get made.

01 Attach the redesign to something already moving.

Redesigns tied to a live initiative (an upskilling program, a cost program, a new operating model) get adopted. Redesigns pitched on data alone stall. A global telecoms-equipment company started with AI upskilling for its HR business partners, then realized the program only worked if the role changed with it. Upskilling tells people what to learn. Redesign tells them what the job becomes.

02 Score every task and model options with risks attached.

At a specialty insurer, the workforce-planning lead used an AI system to score every role and draft options: boost output with the same team, deliver the same with fewer people, or reshape toward where the market is going. Mapping one function used to be a 12-week consulting engagement. The system scored the whole enterprise in days.

03 Rebuild the role around the work only people can do.

Removing the absorbed tasks is the easy half. The real decision is what the job becomes. The telecoms team wrote a from-to for the role, aimed the recovered time at consultative work with the business, and validated it with the managers who own the role.

04 Turn the redesigned role into a training plan.

When a role's tasks change, its skill profile changes too, and that profile is the most concrete target an upskilling program can get. The telecoms company kept it manageable with one rule: one skill out of the profile for every skill that came in.

05 Track the freed hours, and plan where people go next.

Plan on redeployment, because attrition won't keep up: in the companies we've modeled, AI frees up capacity about three times faster than people naturally leave. The specialty insurer translated task scores into three words leaders could act on (automate, augment, humanize), set targets below what the scores said was possible, and built a multi-year redeployment plan. Where a real gap remained: buy, build, borrow or bot.

Hours still going to work AI could absorb

Should fall ↓

Hours redeployed to human-led work

Should rise ↑

05 · UPSKILLING AND REDESIGN

Upskilling tells people what to learn. Redesign tells them what the job becomes.

Run them together, one role family at a time.

UPSKILLING

What to learn

- Builds new skills
- Runs as a training program
- Stalls when the job itself stays the same

REDESIGN

What the job becomes

- Changes the tasks in the role
- Rebuilds the role around human work
- Gives upskilling a concrete target

HOW A GLOBAL TELECOMS-EQUIPMENT COMPANY DID BOTH

01

Started with AI upskilling for its HR business partners.

02

Realized the program only worked if the role changed with it, and wrote a from-to for the role.

03

Turned the redesigned role into the skill profile the training plan builds.

1 out, 1 in The rule that kept it manageable: one skill out of the profile for every skill that came in, the incoming one usually about working well with AI.

06 · START WITH ONE QUESTION

Ask it about your three largest role families

Task by task, what can AI absorb, what can it accelerate, and what stays human?

ABSORB

What could AI take over end to end?

Tasks AI can do with minimal human input. Expect them to be few.

1.4%
of task hours, on average across 1,496 enterprises

ACCELERATE

Where can AI do a real share of the work?

Drafts, research, data pulls, summaries, tracking. This is where roles change most.

39%
of task hours, on average

STAYS HUMAN

What should the role be rebuilt around?

Client relationships, negotiation, mentoring and owning decisions.

60%
of task hours, on average

The organizations that can answer it, and then redesign their roles around what they find, will be the first to turn AI from a slide into business results.

NEXT STEP

See the task-level picture of your workforce

TechWolf scores the tasks inside your roles from data you already have.

Explore role redesign →

techwolf.ai/use-case/role-redesign

COMPANION WHITEPAPER

AI is saving time everywhere and money nowhere

Why the returns come from redesigning the process, and how to do it in five steps.

Read the whitepaper →

techwolf.ai/resources/whitepapers-playbooks/ai-roi-whitepaper

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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David is the author of TechWolf's research on AI and the redesign of work, based in New York. He spent nearly ten years at McKinsey & Company, most recently as a Research Science Expert leading the science behind its solutions on organizational health, employee experience and talent management. He then led workforce strategy and consulting at TalentNeuron. David holds a PhD in social-organizational psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Princeton.

SOURCES

1. Shao, Y., Zope, H., Jiang, Y., Pei, J., Nguyen, D., Brynjolfsson, E., & Yang, D. (2025). Future of work with AI agents: Auditing automation and augmentation potential across the U.S. workforce (arXiv:2506.06576).
2. TechWolf Workforce Intelligence Index. Task-level analysis of 2 billion public job postings across 1,496 large enterprises.

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