AI Can Unlock $4.5 Trillion in U.S. Labor Productivity Today, Reveals Cognizant's Latest "New Work, New World 2026" Report

Cognizant's study shows AI is accelerating faster than projected, with 93% of jobs potentially affected today

Findings also point to the limits of AI's impact, with skilling and human judgment playing a critical role in how organizations capture AI's full value

TEANECK, N.J., Jan. 15, 2026 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Cognizant today announced the release of [New Work, New World 2026](#)," providing fresh analysis on how artificial intelligence (AI) will impact work and jobs. Building on the [original report's](#) release in 2024, the new research reveals AI is changing the workforce faster than previously reported: it's now capable of handling $4.5 trillion in U.S. work tasks and impacting potentially 93% of jobs today. However, the report also underscores that AI is not a blanket solution for advancing labor productivity: human involvement and adaptable operations continue to be vital to capturing the full value potential of AI.

Cognizant's analysis for New Work, New World 2026 is based on a reassessment of 18,000 tasks and 1,000 jobs in the O*NET labor database, with a focus on how jobs and tasks could be assisted or automated by AI. Specifically, the new study points to an accelerated pace of change in "exposure scores"—the degree to which a job can be assisted or automated by AI—and highlights how those evolving changes can influence labor and enterprise success.

"We're seeing significant capital flow into AI, and the rapid adoption of these technologies is reshaping the workplace," says Ravi Kumar S, CEO of Cognizant. "Our research shows that enterprises could unleash $4.5 trillion in labor productivity today. However, turning that investment into meaningful results takes more than raw technology power. Businesses must also integrate contextual intelligence, build flexible systems that can absorb new AI capabilities, and prioritize human learning and development alongside technological advancements. Companies that focus on these essentials will unlock the true value of AI."

Kumar continues: "Human skilling becomes the bridge through which today's AI spending translates into tomorrow's tangible results. AI's promise is realized when we empower our workforce with digital fluency, adaptability and continuous learning, while ensuring AI solutions are deeply contextualized to unique business challenges. As a result, new job roles will emerge to harness this opportunity."

Cognizant's "New Work, New World 2026" report reaffirms that human knowledge and judgment remain essential to harnessing AI's full potential. It emphasizes that much of AI's value potential remains untapped without the power of human intelligence and involvement. There is still much work left to be done by human hands across job tasks that AI may never assist with, let alone automate. The potential of AI resides in skilling workers and freeing them up for higher order thinking—creative agility, fresh thinking and novel ideas that can transform business operations.

Other key highlights from the report's findings include:

- **AI is changing the workforce far more quickly than projected:** The report finds the average exposure score across jobs is 39% today, which is 30% higher than what the original forecast was for 2032. This means more tasks can be assisted or automated by AI, sooner than originally predicted. These exposure scores are also now increasing by 9% annually, compared with 2% in the original research. Some notable changes in exposure scores across jobs include legal (from 9% to 63%), education (from 11% to 49%), healthcare practitioners (from 10% to 39%) and C-suite roles, including CEO (from 25% to 60%).
- **Knowledge work is not disappearing, nor is manual work completely insulated:** The impact of AI is evolving across sectors. Roles in computer and mathematics, once seen as highly exposed to AI, no longer top the report's exposure scores – indicating rapid advancements in AI may have reached their limits in some knowledge work areas. Meanwhile, the research reveals AI could significantly impact manual labor jobs at a faster rate than previously understood. For example, the exposure score for transportation rose from 6% to 25%, and in construction it rose from 4% to 12%.
- **All told, AI can perform $4.5T in labor productivity today across a wide variety of roles:** Through increased automation, AI has the potential to deliver significant value to businesses and the economy today. According to the new report, fewer tasks are left untouched by automation. The percentage of tasks that are non-automatable by AI has plummeted, from 57% on average across tasks in 2023 to 32% today.
- **Simultaneously, realizing full AI value from labor is not a one-size-fits-all strategy:** The report revealed AI is unable to automate upwards of 40% of management, business/ financial operations and administrative tasks, signaling a critical reality: AI alone can't fully replace humans, and human expertise and collaboration remain indispensable. To tap into the $4.5T in labor productivity, businesses must create flexible operating models that can adapt to new and evolving AI capabilities. They must also treat workforce learning as a rapid response mechanism so employees can continuously keep pace with change and effectively leverage AI to deliver meaningful growth.

To read the full report, visit the [website here](#).

About Cognizant:

Cognizant (Nasdaq: CTSH) engineers modern businesses. We help our clients modernize technology, reimagine processes and transform experiences so they can stay ahead in our fast-changing world. Together, we're improving everyday life. See how at www.cognizant.com or @cognizant.

Cognizant remains committed to empowering the next generation of talent through itsSynapse program, which aims to reach two million individuals globally by 2030, creating new pathways to opportunity and preparing the workforce for the jobs of the future. To learn more about Cognizant's Synapse skilling initiative, visit the website here.

Forward-Looking Statements

This press release includes statements that may constitute forward-looking statements made pursuant to the safe harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, the accuracy of which are necessarily subject to risks, uncertainties and assumptions as to future events that may not prove to be accurate. These statements include, but are not limited to, express or implied forward-looking statements relating to the adoption of AI and the labor value of such adoption, the effects and speed of impact of AI on the workforce and the economy and the effectiveness of businesses' efforts to capture the full potential of AI through skilling and human involvement. These statements are neither promises nor guarantees but are the findings of the studies discussed above and remain subject to a variety of risks and uncertainties, many of which are beyond our control, which could cause actual results to differ materially from those contemplated in these forward-looking statements. Existing and prospective investors are cautioned not to place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements, which speak only as of the date hereof. Factors that could cause outcomes to differ materially from those expressed or implied include general economic conditions, the impact of technological development and competition, the competitive and rapidly changing nature of the markets we compete in, the competitive marketplace for talent and its impact on employee recruitment and retention, and the other factors discussed in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Cognizant undertakes no obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise, except as may be required under applicable securities law.

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