

Entry-Level Work Remains Essential: 94% of HR Leaders Expect AI to Create New Entry-Level Roles, Cognizant and Pearson Study Reveals

Cognizant and Pearson joint study finds 6 in 10 HR leaders admit L&D programs are failing to keep pace as AI rapidly reshapes entry-level roles

TEANECK, N.J. and LONDON, June 18, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- [Cognizant](#) (NASDAQ: CTSH) and [Pearson](#) (FTSE: PSON.L) today revealed new findings from their joint study, *The AI Workforce Pulse*, signaling that entry-level roles are being reimaged by AI, and work is evolving faster than organizations can redesign how they hire, develop and support talent.

The findings point to four interconnected shifts shaping the AI workforce ahead:

Roles are Being Reinvented

Entry-level roles are expected to evolve toward supervising and collaborating with AI systems rather than executing routine tasks.

- **Nearly all (96%) HR leaders expect entry-level roles to evolve into positions where employees supervise or manage AI systems** within the next five years.
- **Nearly all HR professionals (94%) expect AI will generate new entry-level roles** in the next five years that didn't exist before.
- **More than 90% of respondents say middle managers are instrumental** to redefining job roles as AI changes the day-to-day work of team members.

Demand for AI Skills is Outpacing Readiness

While demand for AI training is accelerating, most organizations lack the learning infrastructure to keep pace.

- **Ninety-one percent report employee requests for AI training have increased in the past year** Yet 46% of organizations are not proactively arranging AI training.
- **Sixty percent say their company's learning and development programs cannot keep pace** with how fast AI is transforming jobs.

AI is Redefining Candidate Pools

As AI takes on routine work, employers are shifting hiring toward non-traditional skillsets.

- **Nearly seven-in-10 (69%) state broad, interdisciplinary backgrounds are more important** for early career talent than deep, specialized skillsets or focused degrees.
- **Two-in-three HR professionals (67%) report they value liberal arts degrees more** than they used to in light of AI advancements.
- **Nearly all (97%) report soft skills matter** more than ever, reflecting a need for adaptability, problem-solving, and human judgment.

The Race for AI-Ready Talent Is Accelerating

Across industries, the rapid pace of AI adoption is creating a disconnect between the skills organizations have and the skills they need, making talent strategy one of the defining challenges of the moment.

- **Sixty-four percent of respondents believe they can't find the right talent** because AI is rapidly changing what skills they need to hire for.
- **Almost all surveyed organizations are planning to redefine job roles** to reflect AI's impact on day-to-day work.
- **Only about half (54%) proactively arrange AI upskilling training** in anticipation of roles evolving.

"AI is reshaping the talent landscape and exposing the limits of traditional talent and learning models," said Kathy Diaz, Chief People Officer, Cognizant. "With the fundamental shift in entry-level tasks and skill requirements changing rapidly, organizations must rethink how they hire and develop talent at pace."

The new findings build on Cognizant's earlier New Work, New World 2026 study, which found that AI is already impacting 93% of jobs, underscoring the urgency for employers to prepare for changing role expectations. Cognizant sees early-career talent as increasingly important in an AI-enabled workforce. After hiring 20,000 fresh graduates in 2025, the company expects to exceed that number in 2026, reflecting its continued investment in early-career talent and skill development as work evolves.

"As work evolves, the most successful organizations will focus less on replacing tasks and more on building the capabilities that help humans and AI work together. That starts with early-career talent," said Ali Bebo, Chief Human Resources Officer, Pearson. "The future belongs to organizations that combine AI innovation with a deep understanding of how people learn, develop, and apply new skills in the real world."

Through their [partnership](#), Cognizant and Pearson are working together to help recent graduates, apprentices, and mid-career professionals build skills in AI, cloud, and digital technologies. Pearson supports Cognizant's existing workforce development programs, including [Synapse](#) and its [Immersive Learning Center in Chennai](#), to help create stronger development paths for the workforce.

Methodology: Wakefield Research surveyed 750 HR professionals at the director level and above, at companies with at least 1,000 employees, across the United States, United Kingdom and India, between March 23 and April 3, 2026.

To view the complete study and learn more, please visit <https://www.cognizant.com/us/en/insights/insights-blog/adapting-roles-for-an-ai-workforce>.

About Cognizant

Cognizant (NASDAQ: CTSH) is an AI builder and technology services provider, building the bridge between AI investment and enterprise value by building full-stack AI solutions for our clients. Our deep industry, process and engineering expertise enables us to build an organization's unique context into technology systems that amplify human potential, realize tangible returns and keep global enterprises ahead in a fast-changing world. See how at www.cognizant.ai or @cognizant.

About Pearson

At Pearson, our purpose is simple: to help people realize the life they imagine through learning. We believe that every learning opportunity is a chance for a personal breakthrough. That's why our c. 18,000 Pearson employees are committed to creating vibrant and enriching learning experiences designed for real-life impact. We are the world's lifelong learning company, serving customers in nearly 200 countries with digital content, assessments, qualifications, and data. For us, learning isn't just what we do. It's who we are. Visit us at plc.pearson.com.

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 impact of AI on the job market, including entry-level positions. These statements are neither promises nor guarantees but include findings of the reports discussed above and remain subject to a variety of risks and uncertainties, many of which are beyond Cognizant's 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 Cognizant and its clients 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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