

# The duet of MAN AND MACHINE

AI in the workplace is a partnership, not a takeover: Harvard research says



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

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SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

Let’s have a chat about the elephant in every room, on every Zoom call, and in every strategic plan: artificial intelligence. If your feelings about it range between excitement and unease, you’re in very good company. According to the latest global research from Harvard Business Impact, this isn’t just a technological shift; it’s a fundamental reshaping of how we work, learn, and lead.

The central finding from the 2025 Global Leadership Development Study by Harvard Business Impact is both a revelation and a call to action. After surveying over 1,100 L&D professionals and functional leaders across more than 14 countries, a powerful new mandate emerged for learning and development. The business world is no longer asking for incremental improvements; it is demanding learning that is fast, fluid, and fiercely future-focused.

This research reveals that the most forward-thinking organisations have moved

beyond simply implementing AI tools. They are engaged in a far more ambitious project: architecting what the study terms the “collective intelligence of humans and machines.” It’s no longer a ‘humans versus machines’ narrative. Instead, companies want to focus on crafting a powerful partnership where each worker - machine, human, or otherwise - does what it does best.

This changes everything, especially for your career. The old career ladder, that steady climb from one rung to the next, has been dismantled. In its place stands a sprawling jungle gym. The report tells us that every role is up for revision, promising a “nonlinear evolution of roles”. This means your next move might not be up, but across, diagonally, or even into a role that doesn’t yet exist. The pressure is on for all of us to be more fluid, to anticipate the skills we’ll need before the gap even appears.

So, how do you not just navigate but thrive in this new landscape? The research points the way.

First, embrace a mindset of constant,

curious change. The study found that a significant 40% of organisations are putting more emphasis than ever on building a “change-seeking” culture. This goes beyond just being ready for change when it comes from above; it’s about each of us being alert to opportunities, constantly identifying and embracing new ways of working. It’s about being the person who asks, “What if?” instead of the one who says, “We’ve always done it this way.”

Secondly, recognise that your humanity is your greatest professional asset. In a world of algorithms, your human skills are becoming more precious. The research highlights a sharp increase in the value placed on leaders who demonstrate emotional and social intelligence, manage workplace polarisation, and synthesise complex information. These are capabilities where humans, for now and should be until forever, hold a distinct edge. While AI can generate data, it cannot sit with a team member who is struggling, build genuine trust, or navigate the nuanced politics of a workplace. Your ability to connect, empathise, and inspire is your superpower.

Of course, this doesn’t mean you should ignore your technical skills. Quite the opposite, in fact! The velocity of learning has become a critical metric. The study reveals a staggering finding: the half life of a skill has plummeted from 26 years to less than 5. This means we must all become relentless learners, focusing on “speed to skill”. The good news is that AI itself is being harnessed to help, providing personalised coaching and instant access to organisational knowledge, making learning more integrated into the flow of our work than ever before.

The key takeaway is that the future of work is not a solo race. It’s a dance of partnership. AI will handle the scale, the speed, and the data crunching. Our role is to provide the vision, the ethical judgement, the creativity, and the human connection. It’s about using AI to amplify our own potential, not replace it.

Your career is no longer a path you follow, but a garden you cultivate. Tend to your technical skills, but nourish your human capabilities. Be change-seeking, not change-resistant. And remember, the goal isn’t to outpace the machines, but to learn the steps to dance with them. That is how you build a truly future-proof career.



## Top AI executive Robby Walker to leave Apple: report

NEXT STEP DESK

Robby Walker, one of Apple’s most senior artificial intelligence (AI) executives, is preparing to leave the company next month, according to a recent report by Bloomberg News.

Walker, who has worked at Apple since 2013, has been senior director of the company’s Answers, Information, and Knowledge team

since April 2025. He previously oversaw Siri before responsibility for the voice assistant shifted to Apple software chief Craig Federighi earlier this year.

His exit comes at a time when Apple is facing questions over its approach to AI. The company has been criticised for being slow to introduce its Apple Intelligence suite, including a ChatGPT

integration, while a major upgrade to Siri has been delayed until 2026.

The departure of Walker adds to a string of senior AI exits from Apple. In July, Bloomberg reported that Meta had hired Ruoming Pang, formerly Apple’s top executive responsible for AI models, along with researchers Mark Lee and Tom Gunter, to join its Superintelligence Labs team.

## JOBS SPOTLIGHT

### United International University (UIU)

Lecturer, Biotechnology & Genetic Engineering

Deadline: September 22

Eligibility:

- 🔗 Bachelor's and Master's (thesis) degree in Biotechnology & Genetic Engineering/Biochemistry, with a minimum CGPA of 3.5 out of 4.0
- Minimum experience: N/A



## act:onaid

### ActionAid Bangladesh

Development Finance Specialist

Deadline: September 17

Eligibility:

- 🔗 Bachelor's in economics, Business, Finance, or other relevant fields from reputed academic institutions
- Minimum experience: 4-5 years



### UNESCO Bangladesh

Programme Office, Communication and Information

Deadline: September 23

Eligibility:

- 🔗 Bachelor's/Master's degree in Mass Communication, Journalism, Public Relations, or any other related field
- Minimum experience: 5 years

### Square Textiles PLC.

Technical Manager, Fabric R&D

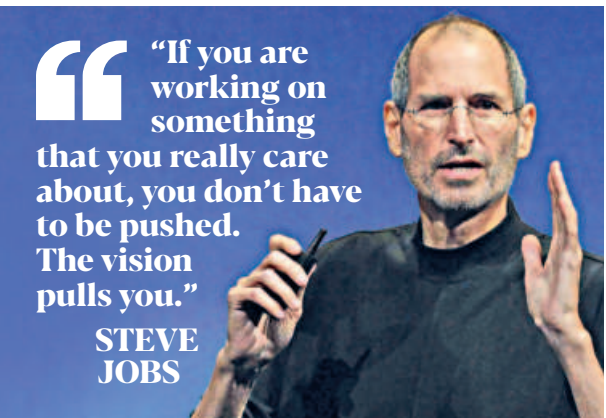
Deadline: September 25

Eligibility:

- 🔗 Graduation from any reputed national or international university/institution, with prior experience in a reputed fabric manufacturing company
- Minimum experience: 5-8 years



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## Elon Musk’s xAI lays off 500 employees: report

NEXT STEP DESK

Elon Musk’s artificial intelligence company, xAI, has laid off at least 500 employees from its data annotation team, according to a recent report by Business Insider. The workers, who help train the company’s Grok chatbot, were notified of the decision by email on Friday.

The data annotation team is xAI’s largest workforce and is responsible for teaching Grok to interpret and categorise raw data. As per the report, affected employees were told they would be paid until the end of their contract or November 30, but their access to company systems was revoked immediately.

In response to the report, xAI posted on X that it is still actively hiring across multiple domains and plans to expand its specialist AI tutor team by “10X”. The layoffs follow the recent departure of xAI’s chief financial officer, Mike Liberatore, who left the company in July after only a few months in the role.

## AI - the new colleague on your desk

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

The sudden rise of artificial intelligence in workplaces has sparked both enthusiasm and unease. From language models to workflow automation, AI tools are increasingly integrated into everyday work, promising efficiency and insight. Yet adoption remains uneven, in part because misconceptions abound. Some fear AI will replace human judgment, while others use it superficially, missing its potential to truly enhance productivity. The question is no longer whether to use AI, but how to make it work for you without letting it overstep, and the answer lies in understanding both the capabilities and limitations of these tools and integrating them thoughtfully into workflows.

In order to understand this better, I caught up with professionals across different industries, and realised that there is a common theme: AI is at its best when treated as a thought partner, not a substitute for human judgment. It is less about letting machines run the meeting and more about clearing enough mental space so the meeting is worth having in the first place. “As a consultant, I find AI particularly valuable for brainstorming ideas, initial problem-solving, proofreading, and enhancing the quality of my written outputs,” says Sadid Murshed, Associate at Boston Consulting Group. “We use a variety of AI tools, ranging from publicly available platforms like ChatGPT to proprietary software such as Deckster, which specifically aids in creating and refining presentation slides. However, I firmly believe AI should serve

primarily as a supportive thought partner and not for generating client deliverables from scratch.”

For all the grand predictions, the most common uses of AI in the workplace are surprisingly practical. People use it to summarise meetings, structure emails, draft presentation outlines, or help teams think visually when time is short and AI excels in areas where structure, language, and patterns intersect. “It helps

Microsoft Copilot or ChatGPT.” Platforms like HiredScore or Taira allow HR teams to sift through hundreds of profiles against job descriptions in minutes, a process that once consumed entire afternoons. Nonetheless, career roadmaps, succession planning, and stakeholder conversations still demand human nuance.

One thread connecting all these conversations is the shift from replacement to augmentation. The



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

save time on something that is not very strategic to begin with,” explains Ashraf Shabab, Talent Partner at Unilever Bangladesh Limited. “I use it to redraft meeting minutes or build on the base of presentation decks; basically, tasks that we can now handle much faster using

strongest users do not hand over their work to AI; they hand it their rough drafts, half-formed ideas, or background clutter and reclaim their thinking time. Ishmam Chowdhury, COO at Shikho, says, “We do regular management meetings where we discuss action points for each department.

With AI, the time spent behind making slides is replaced by time spent thinking. There is no shame if you use AI to prepare something because what matters is that you still have to think about the analysis and the right prompt.” Tools like ChatGPT can draft reports, generate email templates, or offer brainstorming prompts. Automation platforms like Zapier or Microsoft Power Automate streamline repetitive workflows, moving data between apps or scheduling tasks automatically. The strength of AI lies not in replacing expertise, but in augmenting it, thereby giving professionals more time to focus on strategy, creativity, and judgment.

ChatGPT will not make your decisions for you, nor should it. But it can help you make better decisions faster, and perhaps with less friction. The skeptics, often with good reason, warn of overreliance. And yet, the people already integrating AI with care are not naive about these concerns. They are, if anything, more conscious of them. And that, ultimately, might be the real skill of this new era: not prompt engineering in isolation, but editorial control over your own workflow.

Knowing which corners can be cut and which must remain hand-carved. Knowing that even as these tools get better, faster, and eerily more persuasive, your judgment takes the point. As this tide of AI-driven assistance spreads, what seems more likely is a recalibration. The work that is rote becomes lighter. The work that is creative becomes faster. And the work that is strategic? It stands out even more.