

The CHRO's Role in AI Must Include What Happens to People Next

Redeployment belongs in the AI business case. How CHROs can help people move into new work, including when their next opportunity lies outside the organization.

By Lara Blackert

An AI investment proposal should be able to answer two questions: How will this improve the business, and what will happen to the people whose work it changes?

The second question belongs in the original business case. It should influence the investment, implementation timeline, organizational design, and definition of success. When technology reduces the need for labor, a credible strategy must include a plan for redeployment within the organization and, where necessary, reentry into the broader workforce.

For CHROs, this expands the responsibility of workforce planning. Preparing people to use AI is one part of the mandate. Helping people remain economically productive as their work changes is another.

The CHRO should bring that responsibility into the decisions being made today.

AI's employment effects will depend partly on how organizations choose to deploy it. The International Labour Organization's 2025 analysis identifies job transformation as the most likely overall effect of generative AI, reflecting the continued need for human input across many occupations. That finding leaves substantial responsibility with leadership: exposure to technology does not, by itself, determine an employee's future. [International Labour Organization](#)

Leaders decide how work is reorganized, where capacity is reinvested, which capabilities are retained, and how much time people have to prepare.

The CHRO's role is to ensure those choices are explicit.

A forecast showing thousands of hours saved is an incomplete workforce strategy. Those hours may be distributed across many roles, tied to seasonal demand, or embedded in work that still requires judgement, relationships, and accountability. Converting them directly into headcount reductions can overstate savings and weaken capabilities the business still needs.

Working with the CEO, CFO, and technology leadership, the CHRO should establish what capacity AI actually releases and how the enterprise will use it. Some capacity may support growth, improve service, reduce backlogs, or address work the organization has never had sufficient resources to perform. Other changes may legitimately reduce staffing requirements.

Each outcome requires a deliberate decision about people.

This is where redeployment should become part of the investment logic. Before approving a workforce reduction, leadership should understand which employees could move into work the enterprise expects to need, what preparation that move requires, and whether the implementation schedule allows it.

An internal job board alone cannot accomplish this. Redeployment requires hiring managers willing to consider adjacent experience, funding for development, and clear accountability for moving talent across organizational boundaries. It also requires resolving a familiar conflict: one business unit may receive credit for reducing costs while another refuses to absorb the expense of preparing an internal candidate.

The CHRO and CFO must address those incentives together. Otherwise, the organization can find itself paying to separate capable employees while paying again to recruit skills those employees could reasonably develop.

Yet internal mobility has limits. Some organizations will have fewer positions overall. Others will need capabilities that cannot be acquired within a practical transition period. A responsible workforce strategy must account for employees whose next opportunity will be elsewhere.

Every material AI initiative that anticipates displacement should include a funded workforce transition plan.

That plan should identify the affected populations, expected timing, realistic employment pathways, accountable leaders, and resources available to support the transition. It should distinguish between employees who can move internally, those who need preparation for an external opportunity, and those for whom a viable pathway has yet to be established.

That last category deserves particular attention. Uncertainty about where people can go is a planning problem leadership should confront before implementation.

External transition support becomes more credible when it is connected to actual hiring demand. General training, résumé assistance, and interview coaching can help, but their value depends on whether employers are hiring for the capabilities being developed.

CHROs can build relationships with employers in adjacent sectors, suppliers, customers, educational institutions, and workforce organizations to identify those opportunities earlier. Where demand exists, partnerships could include defined training requirements, direct candidate introductions, structured interviews, or paid transition placements.

For example, an employer reducing administrative work could partner with another organization seeking people with relevant scheduling, customer service, or coordination experience. The receiving employer would help define the additional preparation required. Employees would have a clearer view of the work available and the conditions attached to it.

The strength of the approach lies in connecting development to a plausible destination. Training completion, on its own, says little about whether someone can earn a living afterward.

This also changes how transition programs should be measured. Participation rates and completed courses provide useful operational information. Leadership should also seek to understand whether people secured work, how long the transition took, whether earnings were

substantially preserved, and whether placements lasted. External outcomes would need to be tracked through voluntary participation and appropriate privacy protections.

No employer can guarantee another employer's hiring decision. It can still evaluate whether the support it funded improved people's prospects and adjust when it did not.

The economic implications extend beyond any single workforce reduction.

When many organizations simultaneously eliminate positions, leave vacancies unfilled, and narrow entry routes into professional work, displaced employees may face a market with fewer places to land. Greater effort by individual job seekers cannot resolve an imbalance between available workers and demand for their labor.

If displacement outpaces reemployment, prolonged income loss can place pressure on households and, in aggregate, consumer demand. The scale and timing will vary. The risk belongs in strategic planning because the organizations pursuing productivity gains also depend on customers, communities, and functioning labor markets.

This gives CHROs a reason to work collectively. Regional employer partnerships and industry associations could help connect anticipated workforce reductions with verified hiring needs. Government and educational institutions have complementary roles in supporting access, financing transitions, and aligning preparation with demand.

Individual companies cannot solve the entire adjustment. They can contribute to the capacity needed to manage it.

Within the enterprise, accountability must remain shared. The CHRO should lead the workforce transition strategy, with business leaders responsible for implementation, finance responsible for incorporating its costs, and the CEO responsible for resolving competing priorities. Boards should ask whether material AI investments account for workforce consequences and whether management is delivering against the commitments it made.

The CHRO's contribution to AI is an enterprise judgement: how to improve performance while preserving the capabilities the organization needs and creating credible pathways for people whose work is displaced.

That judgement must be exercised before positions disappear.

Leadership carries a responsibility to pursue better. In an AI transformation, that responsibility includes a serious answer to what happens to people next.