

Are You Talented Enough?

Here's a skillet of seven skills for you to consider cultivating to get and retain a job in the AI era

By Raju Chellam



The HR department unveiled a “Transformative Enterprise AI” designed to bring radical transparency, fairness and truth across the organization. After analyzing employee data, financials and meeting transcripts, the AI concluded the company’s core issue was: “Leadership incentives optimized for slide-decks rather than reality.”

The Board questioned the CEO. The CEO called an emergency meeting. A sub-committee was set up to study the problem. A consultancy was commissioned to validate the results. The consultants confirmed the AI was correct, but the messaging was not. The AI was therefore rebranded, given a logo, added to the org chart, trained to say “we hear you” in six languages, and told never to use the word “problem.” So at the next all-hands meet, the CEO used the AI to proudly present a 24-slide deck titled: “Why Every Issue is a Growth Opportunity.”

If that corny corporate anecdote made you smile, digest this meanwhile: According to a report by the World Economic Forum, AI and related technological

changes will displace 92 million job positions by 2030. But it may create 170 million new roles as well, resulting in a net increase of 78 million jobs. The WEF says about 40% of all jobs worldwide are now exposed to AI, a figure that jumps to 60% in advanced economies.

As for India, it is nearing the peak of its demographic dividend, with the share of the working age population set to decline after 2030. There are currently 367 million youth (age 15-29) who account for 33% of India’s working age population. “Of them, 263 million (72%) are not in education and constitute the potential workforce,” according to the State of Working India 2026 study by Azim Premji University. “The pace of employment creation for this young generation in the coming decade will be critical in determining whether India’s demographic dividend can be translated into an economic one.”

AI exacerbates the problem. The transition from education to employment remains a major challenge, especially for graduates and more so because companies use AI to replace jobs. “Graduate

unemployment among the 15- to 29-year-olds remains high—nearly 40% among the 15- to 25-year-olds, and 20% among the 25- to 29-year-olds,” the study notes. And only a small share secure stable salaried jobs within a year of graduation.”

FLAKY FUTURE

Which jobs will be in demand? “Tech-related roles are the fastest growing jobs in percentage terms, including big data specialists, fintech engineers, AI/ML specialists and software and application developers,” the WEF Future of Jobs 2025 reports. “Green and energy transition roles, including autonomous and electric vehicle specialists, environmental engineers and renewable energy engineers are also in the top fastest-growing roles.”

The Future of Jobs report polled 1,000 organizations representing 14 million workers across 22 industry clusters and 55 economies. Two demographic shifts are evident: aging and declining working age populations in higher income economies—and expanding working age populations in lower-income ones.

“Aging populations drive growth in healthcare jobs such as nursing professionals, while growing working-age populations fuel growth in education-related professions, such as higher education teachers,” the WEF reports.

Will AI make most human skills obsolete? No. But it will change how they are used. More than 70% of current skills can be applied in both automatable and non-automatable work. “With AI handling more common tasks, people will apply their skills in new contexts,” McKinsey says. “Workers will spend less time preparing documents and doing basic research, for example, and more time framing questions and interpreting results. Employers may increasingly prize skills that add value to AI.”

To measure how skills could evolve, McKinsey developed SCI (Skill Change Index), a time-weighted measure of automation’s potential impact on each skill used in today’s workforce. The gist? Highly specialized, automatable skills such as accounting and coding could face the greatest disruption, while interpersonal skills like negotiation and coaching may change the least. Most others, including widely applicable skills such as problem-solving and communication, may evolve as part of a growing partnership with agents and robots.

ARMY OF AGENTS

So far so good. But here’s the twist: AI-powered agents

and robots are set to generate about US\$2.9 trillion in economic value per year by 2030 in the US alone, according to a study by the McKinsey Global Institute.

“Capturing this may depend less on new technological breakthroughs than on how organizations redesign workflows—especially complex, high-value ones that rely on unstructured data—and how quickly human skills adapt,” McKinsey notes. “Integrating AI will not be a simple tech rollout but a reimagining of work itself—redesigning processes, roles, skills, culture, metrics. People, agents, robots could create more value together.”

It’s not just private organizations but also government agencies in the US and outside that want to use AI agents across the enterprise. More than 80% of governments plan to deploy AI agents to automate routine decision-making and enhance efficiency and service delivery by 2028, according to recent survey by Gartner Inc.

“Government CIOs are under growing pressure to embed AI into decision-making capabilities rapidly and responsibly,” says Daniel Nieto, a Gartner director. “The rise of multimodal AI, alongside conversational and agentic systems, has expanded what public organizations can automate, understand and anticipate.”

What’s the barrier to creating AI value in government? Fragmentation. Gartner polled 138 government officials worldwide in Q3 2025 and found 41% cited siloed strategies and 31% cited legacy systems as key challenges to adopting and implementing digital solutions. As AI transitions from experimentation to being deeply embedded in decision-making, governance approaches must also evolve beyond managing AI models, data and algorithms.

A strategic solution? “Decision intelligence (DI) could shift this focus towards the governance of decisions themselves,” Gartner says. “For example, on how they are designed, executed, monitored and audited. This shift in governance is especially critical in government, where public legitimacy relies on transparency and fairness.”

Govern decisions, not just isolated AI components. “Governing decisions can help governments better balance automation with human judgment, particularly in high-stakes or rights-impacting contexts,” Nieto says. “Regulated industries and governments cannot rely on opaque black box systems for consequential decisions. DI elevates explainability from a technical requirement to a governance imperative.”

SKILLET OF SKILLS

A skillet is a versatile, flat-bottomed cooking pan with low, slightly sloped or flared sides, commonly used for searing, frying, and sautéing. Do you need a variety of skills to succeed in the current AI era? Maybe not. That's because 75% of AI's economic gains are being captured by just 20% of companies which focus on growth, not just productivity gains using AI. That summation comes from a very recent study by PwC.

“Many companies are busy rolling out AI pilots, but only a minority are converting that activity into measurable financial returns,” says Joe Atkinson, PwC's global chief AI officer. “The leaders stand out because they point AI at growth, not just cost reduction. They back it up with the foundations that make AI scalable and reliable.”

Organizations with the strongest AI performance treat the tech as a reinvention engine, using it to reshape business models and expand beyond traditional industry boundaries. PwC's research shows that these top-performing companies are not simply deploying more AI tools. Instead, they are using AI as a catalyst for growth and business reinvention, particularly by pursuing new revenue opportunities created as industries converge, while building strong foundations around data, governance and trust.

The bottom line: Are you talented enough? Here is my skillet of seven skills—in alphabetical order—for you to consider cultivating to get and retain a job in the AI era:


- **Adaptability:** The ability to continuously learn, unlearn and relearn as roles, tools and workflows change. This includes fluency in using AI tools, responding well to ambiguity and reskilling faster to keep pace with technological disruption.
- **Business:** Understanding how work creates value—not just how tasks are done. This means grasping business models, costs, customers and outcomes so you can apply AI to improve efficiency, revenue, and/or decision-making rather than using AI for routine and simplistic tasks.
- **Collaboration:** Strong teamwork across humans and AI systems is already happening. This includes communication, feedback, trust-building and knowing when to rely on people versus machines. High performers will orchestrate AI as a team member and not work in isolation.
- **Domain:** Deep expertise in a specific field, such as healthcare, finance, engineering, education, supply chain, manufacturing, retail. AI raises the value of

domain knowledge exponentially because experts can ask better prompts, validate outputs and apply insights responsibly.

- **Engagement:** The capacity to stay motivated, curious and purpose-driven in a fast-changing environment. This includes emotional intelligence, resilience and the ability to connect meaningfully and effectively with colleagues, customers and stakeholders—areas where humans will always outperform AI.
- **Focus:** The skill of attention management in an AI-saturated world. This means distinguishing signal from noise, thinking critically, setting priorities and doing deep work while AI manages routine tasks.
- **Government:** Awareness of laws, ethics, compliance and public policy related to AI. This includes data privacy, AI governance, risk management and responsible use—critical for trust and leadership roles.

Since we started with an innovative corporate tale, let's end with another: The company launched an EIAI (Enterprise Innovation AI Initiative) to accelerate creativity, challenge assumptions and embed disruption at scale. After reviewing idea portals, hackathon outputs, pilot projects and abandoned roadmaps, the AI concluded that the company's biggest barrier to innovation was this: “Too many innovation initiatives.”

The CEO welcomed the insights and asked for a rollout plan. A Steering Group was formed. An Innovation Framework was created. The EIAI was updated to score ideas not by impact but by alignment. The AI was trained to reject concepts labeled too early, or too risky, or not aligned with this year's innovation theme.

At the annual Innovation Day, the CEO announced record participation, showcased a dozen pilots and declared innovation “part of our corporate DNA.” The AI-enabled EIAI agreed and confirmed the system was working as intended and ideas were being explored, pilots were being funded, but nothing ever reached production or scale. 

Raju Chellam is a former Editor of Dataquest and is currently based in Singapore, where he is the Editor-in-Chief of the AI Ethics & Governance Body of Knowledge, and Chair of Cloud & Data Standards.
maildqindia@cybermedia.co.in

