

The Great Misconception About the AI Job Killer

Work After AI 2026, the founding edition of Gerhard Kürner's annual report, breaks the job killer headline down into three processes that have different causes and run at different speeds: the AI argument, which serves the capital markets, the measurable career gap at the entry level, and the long rebuild of organizations. 113 pages, 141 checked sources, nine predictions for 2027.

5 %

of American companies that use AI report any effect at all on their headcount. Software is replaced a good three times as often as people.

U.S. Census Bureau, Business Trends and Outlook Survey, 2026

19 %

below the level of their peers: employment among 22 to 25 year olds in exposed occupations. The entire gap comes from hiring.

Stanford Digital Economy Lab, Canaries in the Coal Mine, August 2026

80 vs. 37

80 percent report productivity gains of their own, 37 percent see any value in the operating result, only 6 percent a measurable contribution of at least 5 percent.

McKinsey, The State of AI in 2026

THE TEN KEY FINDINGS

- 1 The job killer is a capital markets story.
- 2 Expectation outruns measurement.
- 3 The career gap arises in hiring, not in layoffs.
- 4 The entry level is shifting from execution to oversight.
- 5 Women carry the higher risk and have the lesser access.
- 6 What the individual gains does not arrive in the organization.
- 7 Delegating is a leadership decision, and whoever stops checking loses the skill.
- 8 The organization of the future orders its work by topic instead of by function, and in doing so it becomes smaller.
- 9 Marketing is the first function in which the rebuild becomes visible, from the inside as well as from the outside.
- 10 In Europe, demographic pressure reverses the opening question, and the future of work is decided by the company's ability to work with the technology.

NINE PREDICTIONS FOR 2027, GRADED PUBLICLY THE FOLLOWING YEAR

Among them: The AI argument does not arrive in the German speaking countries in 2027. No company in Germany, Austria or Switzerland with more than 10,000 employees justifies job cuts of more than 1,000 positions primarily with artificial intelligence. The gap between pilot and production does not close, the group with a measurable contribution to operating profit of at least 5 percent stays below 10 percent. At least three well known companies reverse an AI justified hiring freeze at the entry level. The gender gap in generative AI, larger at work than in private life, does not close in 2026. Every prediction names the measure against which it will be tested; the dated forecasts of vendors, market researchers and researchers are graded along with them.

About the report. Every fall, same structure, same core questions. Every figure checked at its primary source, sources with an interest of their own marked as such. Self funded, tied to no vendor, no model and no consultancy. License CC BY 4.0, free at workafterai.org. The 2026 edition is updated through the end of the year, every version carries a version number and date.

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