



Upskilling of Employees for Artificial Intelligence in Multinational Corporations: Evidence and Directions

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ABSTRACT

In 2024, artificial intelligence (AI) moved from the experiment room into everyday work. Tools that write, summarise, translate and analyse are now open to anyone with a laptop or a phone. For multinational corporations (MNCs) this brings a simple question: do our people have the skills to work well with these tools? This paper looks at the need for employee upskilling in the year 2024. It is an exploratory study based on published surveys and reports from Microsoft and LinkedIn, McKinsey, PwC, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Deloitte, Nasscom, the World Economic Forum and the Stanford AI Index, along with public announcements by companies and the Government of India. The evidence points in one direction. About three out of four knowledge workers already use AI, and in India the figure is 92 per cent. Many employees are learning on their own, because training from employers has not kept pace. Jobs that need AI skills pay more, and leaders increasingly say they will not hire people who lack them. India is well placed, with the highest AI skill penetration in the Stanford AI Index 2024, but it still needs about 1.25 million AI professionals by 2027 against a talent pool of 0.6 to 0.65 million in 2022. The paper concludes that MNCs should treat upskilling as a core business investment, mix four routes (training, redeployment, hiring and outsourcing), and teach human skills such as judgement and empathy alongside technical ones.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every few decades a technology changes how ordinary people do their jobs. The spreadsheet did it for accountants and the internet did it for almost everyone. In 2024, generative AI seems to be doing it again, only faster. The McKinsey survey of early 2024 found that 72 per cent of organisations were using AI in at least one business function, and 65 per cent were regularly using generative AI (McKinsey & Company, 2024). A year earlier, those numbers were far lower.

What makes this wave different is who uses it. Earlier technologies were bought by the company and handed to employees. AI tools are often found and tried by employees themselves. The Work Trend Index 2024 reports that 75 per

cent of knowledge workers worldwide use AI at work, and 78 per cent of AI users bring their own tools into the workplace (Microsoft & LinkedIn, 2024). Companies are no longer deciding whether staff will use AI. They are deciding whether staff will use it well, safely and with proper training.

For multinational corporations the task is bigger still. They have employees in many countries, with different languages, education systems and levels of comfort with technology. A training plan that works at a head office may not work in a regional centre. India matters a great deal here. Many MNCs run large technology, finance and service centres in the country, and the Government of India approved the India AI Mission in March 2024 with an outlay of Rs. 10,371.92 crore to build national capacity in AI

(Cabinet, Government of India, 2024).

This paper asks a plain question: what does the 2024 evidence say about why employees need new skills for AI, which skills matter, and how MNCs can build them? We write in simple terms because the topic concerns working people, managers and policy makers, not only specialists.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 AI changes tasks before it changes jobs

The IMF studied how exposed jobs are to AI and found that almost 40 per cent of global employment is exposed. In advanced economies the share is about 60 per cent, in emerging markets about 40 per cent, and in low-income countries about 26 per cent (Cazzaniga et al., 2024). Exposed does not mean lost. The IMF notes that in roughly half of the exposed jobs AI may help workers become more productive, while in the other half it may take over key tasks, which could reduce hiring or pay. In plain words, the same technology can be a helper for one worker and a threat for another, and training is one of the things that decides which.

2.2 Skills pay and the pace of change is high

PwC analysed more than 500 million job advertisements across 15 countries. It found that jobs asking for AI skills carried a wage premium of up to 25 per cent on average across five major labour markets. Sectors most exposed to AI showed 4.8 times higher growth in labour productivity than sectors with little exposure. PwC also found that skills in the most AI-exposed jobs are changing 25 per cent faster than in other jobs (PwC, 2024). A related view comes from the World Economic Forum, which expected 44 per cent of workers' core skills to be disrupted within five years, with six in ten workers needing training but only about half having access to it (World Economic Forum, 2023).

2.3 Leaders want AI skills but plans are thin

The Work Trend Index 2024 shows that 66 per cent of leaders worldwide, and 75 per cent in India, would not hire someone who lacks AI skills. In India, 80 per cent of leaders said they would pick a less experienced candidate with AI skills

over a more experienced one without them. Yet many organisations have no clear AI plan: 60 per cent of leaders worry that their company lacks a plan and vision (Microsoft & LinkedIn, 2024). Deloitte's survey of more than 2,800 senior leaders in 16 countries similarly found that 79 per cent expected generative AI to transform their organisation within three years, while a shortage of technical talent was a major barrier (Deloitte AI Institute, 2024).

2.4 The Indian Picture

India ranks first in the world in AI skill penetration, with a score of 2.8 against 2.2 for the United States and 1.9 for Germany, and its AI talent concentration has grown by 263 per cent since 2016 (Maslej et al., 2024). Even so, the Deloitte–nasscom report of August 2024 expects demand for more than 1.25 million AI professionals by 2027, while the talent pool in 2022 was only 0.6 to 0.65 million. It also found that 43 per cent of the workforce in Indian sectors already uses AI, and that 60 per cent of workers believe AI skills improve career prospects (Deloitte India & nasscom, 2024).

3. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the present study is

- a. To understand why employees need upskilling for AI in the year 2024.
- b. To identify the technical and human skills that multinational corporations need to build.
- c. To compare the main routes MNCs use to close the AI skills gap and to suggest a practical way forward.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory study. AI at work is still new, and companies are trying many different approaches, so we did not start with a fixed theory to test. Instead, we collected recent, reliable information and looked for patterns. All the data are secondary. They come from reports and surveys published in 2023 and 2024 by international organisations, consulting firms, industry bodies and the Government of India, and

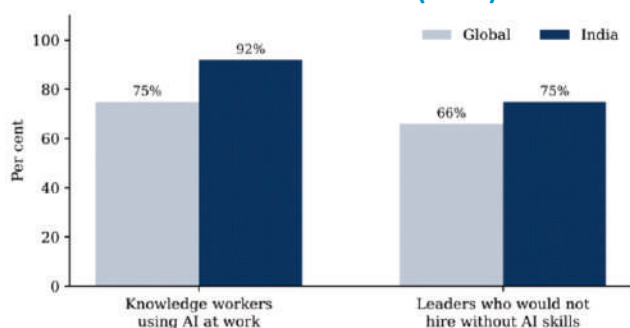
from public announcements by companies. The figures were taken as published and were not recalculated. Because different surveys use different samples and definitions, the numbers should be read as indications of direction, not as exact measurements that can be added together.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Employees are already using AI, ahead of their employers

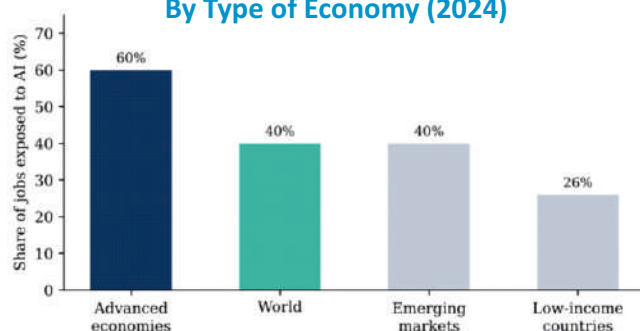
The first thing the data shows is how quickly AI use has spread among workers. Figure 1 compares India with the world. Ninety-two per cent of Indian knowledge workers use AI at work, against 75 per cent globally, and Indian leaders are also more demanding about AI skills when hiring. Seventy-two per cent of Indian AI users bring their own AI tools to work. This is good news, because people are curious and willing. It is also a risk, because untrained use can lead to wrong answers, leaked company data and uneven quality. Training from the employer is how curiosity becomes safe and useful practice.

Figure 1: AI use and AI skills in hiring, India and the world (2024)



Source: Microsoft & LinkedIn, 2024 Work Trend Index (survey of 31,000 people in 31 countries).

Figure 2: Share of Jobs Exposed to AI By Type of Economy (2024)



Source: Cazzaniga et al. (2024), IMF Staff Discussion Note. World figure is stated as almost 40%.

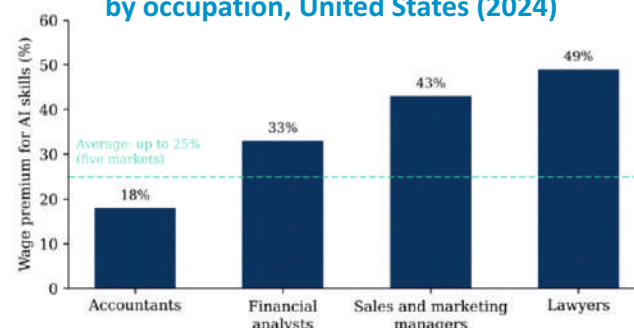
5.2 Exposure to AI differs by country

Figure 2 shows that rich countries are more exposed to AI than poor ones, mainly because more of their jobs are office-based and involve information work. For MNCs this means the skills challenge is not the same everywhere. A company with staff in the United Kingdom, India and Kenya will find that its employees face different levels of change, and so need different training.

5.3 Skills are rewarded in the job market

Employees have a clear personal reason to learn. Figure 3 shows the pay premium for AI skills in the United States by occupation. The premium is not limited to technology jobs. It is high for lawyers, managers and financial analysts, which shows that AI skill is becoming useful across the whole organisation, not only in IT. For employers, the other side of the same fact is that people with these skills will be offered more elsewhere. Training is therefore also a way of keeping good people.

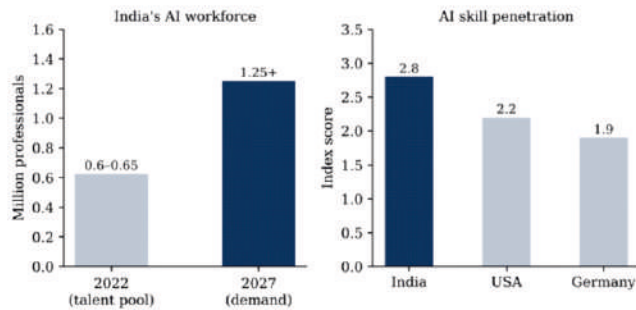
Figure 3: Wage premium for AI skills by occupation, United States (2024)



Source: PwC (2024), Global AI Jobs Barometer. Dashed line shows the average premium of up to 25% across five markets.

5.4 India: strong skills, but demand is growing faster

India has a good starting position. Figure 4 (right) shows that it leads the world in AI skill penetration. But the left panel shows that the demand for AI professionals is expected to roughly double between 2022 and 2027. Because the AI market is expected to grow by 25 to 35 per cent a year, the supply of trained people will need to grow just as fast. This is why many MNCs in India are training their own staff rather than waiting to hire.

Figure 4: India's AI Workforce and AI Skill Penetration (2022-2027)

Source: Deloitte India & nasscom (2024); Maslej et al. (2024). The 2022 pool is shown at the midpoint of the reported 0.6–0.65 million range.

5.5 Which skills should MNCs build?

Many people think AI upskilling means learning to code. The evidence suggests it is broader. Companies need a few technical specialists, but they need everyone to understand what AI can and cannot do. They also need people who are good at the things machines find hard: judging whether an answer makes sense, understanding a customer's feelings, working with colleagues and solving unusual problems. The World Economic Forum lists analytical thinking and creative thinking as the top skills for

Table 1: Summary of Key 2024 Evidence

Indicator	Figure	Source
Organisations using AI in at least one function	72%	McKinsey & Company (2024)
Organisations regularly using generative AI	65%	McKinsey & Company (2024)
Knowledge workers using AI at work (global / India)	75% / 92%	Microsoft & LinkedIn (2024)
Leaders who would not hire without AI skills (global / India)	66% / 75%	Microsoft & LinkedIn (2024)
Global employment exposed to AI	Almost 40%	Cazzaniga et al. (2024)
Wage premium for AI skills (average, five markets)	Up to 25%	PwC (2024)
Productivity growth, AI-exposed vs less exposed sectors	4.8 times	PwC (2024)
Workers' core skills to be disrupted within five years	44%	World Economic Forum (2023)
India's AI skill penetration score (US / Germany)	2.8 (2.2 / 1.9)	Maslej et al. (2024)
India's AI workforce demand by 2027	1.25 million+	Deloitte India & nasscom (2024)

Note: Figures are as published by the sources. Surveys differ in sample and method.

Table 2: Skills Employees Need in the AI Era

Skill Group	What it includes	Who Needs it
AI literacy	Knowing what AI tools do, where they fail, how to write clear instructions (prompts), and how to check and correct their output	All employees
Data and technical skills	Working with data using tools such as Python, R, SQL, Power BI and Tableau; building and testing AI-based solutions	Analysts, engineers, IT and data teams
Human skills	Critical thinking, creativity, communication, empathy, teamwork, ethical judgement, and willingness to keep learning	All employees, especially managers and customer-facing staff
Responsible AI	Understanding bias, privacy, data protection, and company rules on AI use	All employees; more depth for managers and specialists

Note: Commitments are targets announced by the organisations and have not been independently verified by the authors.

Table 3: Routes available to MNCs for building AI capability

Route	What it Means	Works Best When	Main Risk
Upskilling	Train current employees in new tools and ways of working	Staff know the business well and the new skill can be learnt in months	Takes time; needs real work practice, not only courses
Redeployment	Move employees from shrinking tasks into new, AI-supported roles	Routine work is being automated and staff can move to higher-value work	Staff may fear the move; needs support and clear career paths
Specialised hiring	Recruit experts in machine learning, data science or AI ethics	A deep skill is needed quickly and does not exist inside	High pay; competition for talent; may unsettle existing staff
Outsourcing	Use outside firms for niche or short-term AI work	The need is occasional or very specialised	Less learning stays inside the company; data-sharing concerns

Note: Table prepared by the authors.

Table 4: Examples of large AI training commitments

Indicator	Statistics	Source
Tata Consultancy Services	Trained 3.5 lakh employees, over half of its workforce, in foundational generative AI skills (2024)	The Pioneer (2024)
Amazon	'AI Ready' initiative: free AI skills training for 2 million people by 2025 (announced November 2023)	Amazon (2023)
IBM	Commitment to train 2 million learners in AI by 2026 (announced 2023)	IBM (2023)
Government of India	India AI Mission with an outlay of Rs 10,371.92 crore, approved on 7 March 2024	Cabinet, Government of India (2024)

Note: Commitments are targets announced by the organisations and have not been independently verified by the authors.

the coming years, with AI and big data also among the fastest-growing (World Economic Forum, 2023). Table 2 groups the skills in three levels.

5.6 Four routes to close the skills gap

When a company finds that it lacks AI skills, it has four basic options. Most MNCs use a mix. Table 3 sets them side by side.

5.7 What leading companies are doing

Large firms have started to act on a big scale. Table 4 lists some public examples. They share a common idea: training is offered to many people, not just to a technical few.

6. FINDINGS

- AI is already in the workplace. Three in four knowledge workers use it, and in India nine in ten do. Employers are catching up with their staff, not leading them.
- AI changes tasks more than it removes jobs. Roughly half of exposed jobs may gain from AI and half may lose some work. Training helps decide which side a worker lands on.
- Skills are being rewarded. Pay premiums of up to 25 per cent on average, and the stated hiring preference of leaders, give employees a strong reason to learn and employers a strong reason to teach.
- Human skills still matter. Critical thinking, creativity, communication and empathy remain top skills, alongside AI literacy and data skills.
- India is strong but under pressure. It leads in AI skill penetration, yet demand for AI professionals is expected to double by 2027, so large-scale training is needed.
- No single route is enough. MNCs get the best results by mixing upskilling, redeployment,

hiring and outsourcing.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Start with AI literacy for everyone. A short, practical course on what AI can do, where it goes wrong and what the company's rules are, for every employee.
- Learn by doing. Link training to real tasks in each team, so people try tools on their own work with guidance.
- Teach human skills alongside technical ones. Include critical thinking, communication and empathy in the same programme.
- Bring 'bring your own AI' into the open. Offer approved tools and clear rules on data, so that employees who already use AI do so safely.
- Use a flexible mix of routes. Combine upskilling, redeployment, specialised hiring and outsourcing according to the need.
- Adapt to each country. Plan training locally, because exposure to AI, language and education levels differ.
- Support the pipeline. Work with universities, industry bodies and government programmes such as the IndiaAI Mission to widen the supply of trained people.
- Measure results. Track more than course completions, look at quality of work, time saved and employee confidence. Sixty per cent of leaders say they lack a plan, so even a simple one is a good start

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study uses only secondary data, and many of the surveys come from consulting firms and technology companies, which may have an interest in AI adoption. The figures come from

different samples and years, and some company figures are announced targets. The study does not include interviews or surveys of employees. Future work could collect first-hand data from employees and managers in MNCs, compare countries more closely, and test which mix of training, redeployment, hiring and outsourcing gives the best results over time.

9. CONCLUSION

The year 2024 can be remembered as the year AI became an ordinary part of work. Employees are using it, leaders are asking for it,

and governments are investing in it. The main gap is now not in the technology but in preparation. For multinational corporations, the sensible response is to invest in people at the same pace as they invest in tools: teach everyone the basics, give specialists deeper training, protect and develop human skills, and use all four routes of upskilling, redeployment, hiring and outsourcing as the situation requires. For India, which already leads in AI skills, the next step is to turn that lead into scale. Companies that treat their employees as partners in AI, not as people to be replaced by it, are likely to do best. ■

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