



United States Senate
AI Insight Forum: Workforce
November 1, 2023
Statement from Accenture

Senators Schumer, Young, Heinrich, and Rounds, and all Senators present, Accenture is grateful for the opportunity to provide the following statement for the Insight Forum focused on the impacts and implications of AI on the workforce.

Accenture is a global professional services company that helps the world's leading businesses, governments and other organizations build their digital core, transform their operations, accelerate their growth and enhance citizen services, creating tangible value at speed and scale. We are a talent- and innovation-led company with approximately 733,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. We combine our strength in technology and leadership in cloud, data and artificial intelligence (AI) with unmatched industry experience, functional expertise and global delivery capability.

Accenture has deep experience both in AI as a technology and its application across every industry. We are the largest independent technology services firm globally and the top partner of most of the leading technology and AI companies. Our unique position in the market allows us to identify cross-cutting trends and concerns in the use of AI and generative AI, including how they will affect the future of work and business.

The AI Public Awakening

AI is not new. It was not born in 2022 when ChatGPT was released. What is undeniable, however, is that generative AI has ushered in a new era for the technology; one that portends major changes in human behavior, the nature of work, and business processes, all at an accelerated pace. Because adoption and evolution of the technology will take place almost simultaneously, generative AI will be disruptive continually. But it will also unleash human creativity and empower people to solve problems that were unsolvable before.

At Accenture, we have been using AI technologies for years. We developed a responsible AI framework before the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) released their AI Risk Management Framework (RMF). Even so, understanding the disruption that is occurring across every industry, we recently announced a \$3 billion investment in our Data and AI practice over the next three years, including in our people and training.¹

Accenture may be ahead of the curve in its investment, but we are far from alone in seeing the impact of the technology. In a recent survey Accenture conducted of C-suite executives, 99 percent plan to grow investments in generative AI, with 44 percent planning to make "big bets" on generative AI over the next two years. Seventy-five percent of those surveyed said they believe they risk going out of business in five years

¹ *Accenture to Invest \$3 Billion in AI to Accelerate Clients' Reinvention* (June 13, 2023), <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/accenture-to-invest-3-billion-in-ai-to-accelerate-clients-reinvention.htm>.

if they do not scale AI. Critically for this audience, 96 percent of executives support some level of government regulation around AI.²

This confluence of dynamics creates an urgency for government action so that, as the technology develops, the public's trust in it and its ability to produce fair outcomes that benefit the individual and society develop along with it. Conversely, a lack of public trust in AI technologies and government inaction will slow growth in AI and put at risk America's global technological leadership.

AI will transform the workplace

AI presents a significant value creation opportunity. The U.S economy could add \$8 trillion in economic activity and increase productivity by as much as 40 percent.³ Nevertheless, as with other breakthroughs in AI, large language models (LLMs) raise big questions about their impact on jobs and how companies can apply them productively and responsibly.

There is a common fear that generative AI is the dawn of a robot workforce rendering human unnecessary. On the contrary, we view this as a "both/and" proposition; not an "either/or" one. Jobs will not be done either by robots or by humans, but by humans, enhanced by generative AI.

To give just one example, Accenture analysed the technology's impact on customer service jobs, a vital activity in almost every industry. We broke down the bulk of work for customer service representatives into 13 distinct tasks and found that 4 tasks would continue to be performed primarily by humans with low potential for automation; 4 tasks could be fully automated; and 5 tasks could be augmented to help humans work more effectively.⁴

Most importantly, five new, high-value tasks emerged from our research. Human, automated, augmented, and emergent tasks are the ingredients of a new mix of tasks around which companies can reorient jobs to take maximum advantage of generative AI.⁵

This research is borne out in our engagements with clients. Rather than automate away the role of a customer service representative, we are finding that clients are more

² *Accenture Pulse of Change*, https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/company/pulse-of-change?c=acn_glb_othercorpcommsvanityurl_13975026&n=otc_0923.

³ *Why Artificial Intelligence is the Future of Growth*, <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/artificial-intelligence-poised-to-double-annual-economic-growth-rate-in-12-developed-economies-and-boost-labor-productivity-by-up-to-40-percent-by-2035-according-to-new-research-by-accenture.htm#:~:text=AI%20was%20found%20to%20yield%20the%20highest%20economic,USD%20%248.3%20trillion%20in%20gross%20value%20added%20%28GVA%29>.

⁴ *Jobs of Tomorrow: Large Language Models and Jobs* (Sept. 2023), https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Jobs_of_Tomorrow_Generative_AI_2023.pdf.

⁵ Id.

interested in using generative AI to improve efficiencies and create a better employee and consumer experience.

After customer service representatives complete a call, for example, they are often tasked with writing a summary of the call. However, these summaries are hard to standardize because each individual representative might use different words to convey the same meaning in his/her narrative description of the issue raised by the customer. Using LLMs and transcribed calls saves the customer service representative time, allowing the employee to move to the next call more quickly and reduce wait times. Companies also get more standardized summaries that can be analyzed more easily to identify common issues that customers raise and fix them more quickly.

The ability of generative AI to put massive amounts of information at the fingertips of customer service representatives also greatly increases their capacity to resolve the customer's problem more thoroughly and quickly than either a chatbot alone or a representative can following a rote script. But because conversational AI can sometimes produce incorrect, irrelevant, or nonsensical responses, a human must remain in the loop to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of machine-generated content.

Expanding this research out, Accenture recently issued a report with the World Economic Forum that provides a structured analysis of the potential direct, near-term impacts of LLMs on over 19,000 individual tasks across 867 occupations.⁶ The report assesses the potential exposure of each task to LLM adoption, classifying them as tasks that have high potential for automation, high potential for augmentation, low potential for either or are unaffected (non-language tasks). It also explores the new rules that are emerging due to the adoption of LLMs.

About 62 percent of total work time across occupations involves language-based tasks, meaning the widespread adoption of LLMs such as those behind ChatGPT could significantly impact a broad spectrum of job roles.⁷ To be clear, this does not mean that 62 percent of tasks or 62 percent of jobs will disappear. Rather, it demonstrates that the nature of work will be changing dramatically, and companies need to prepare their workforces for that eventuality.

The jobs with the highest time spent on tasks that could potentially be automated through LLMs include office clerks (81 percent of work time could be automated), Management Analysts (70%), and Telemarketers (68%). Jobs with the highest potential for task augmentation emphasize mathematical and scientific analysis as well as critical thinking and complex problem solving, such as Insurance Underwriters (100 percent of work time potentially augmented), Bioengineers and Biomedical Engineers (84%), and Mathematicians (80%).⁸

One critical but often overlooked point in the discussion of AI's impact on the workforce, though, is that, in addition to reshaping existing jobs, the adoption of LLMs is likely to create many *new* roles and job functions, including within the categories of AI

⁶ Id.

⁷ Id.

⁸ Id.

Developers, Interface and Interaction Designers, AI Content Creators, Data Curators, and AI Ethics and Governance Specialists.⁹ One need only look at the role the internet played in job creation to understand this. Jobs for web developers, search engine optimization consultants, and social media managers did not exist twenty years ago. To put this in even greater historical context, 60 percent of today's job titles did not exist in 1940.¹⁰

Companies are beginning to recognize this reality. Based on our research and surveys, 60 percent of organizations now expect to hire more workers and re-skill their current workers for AI roles.¹¹

Reskilling and upskilling for the jobs of the future

Given the transformative potential of AI, government and industry will need to consider the impacts of AI on their workforce in three critical ways: how it will impact existing jobs; how to develop a pipeline of talent to create the AI-powered innovation that will drive American competitiveness; and what kind of workforce/skilling gaps AI will create that must be addressed. Organizations will need their employees to be capable of developing, deploying, monitoring and working with and alongside AI and AI-enabled technologies in the future.

Our reskilling, upskilling, retraining and apprenticeship programs are critical to our success and adaptability. We invest \$1 billion a year in these areas. And as part of our \$3 billion investment in our Data and AI practice, Accenture plans to double our data and AI workforce from 40,000 to 80,000 over the next three years through a combination of acquisitions, new hires and reskilling/upskilling of our existing workforce.

We create multi-stage training programs to meet our people needs. The first stage is to ensure that all our employees have a baseline understanding of technology by requiring everyone to participate in our technology quotient (TQ) program, designed as a simple and effective way to learn about technology, how it's applied, why it matters, and how it works with other technologies.

We also have skill and role-based learning as organizations look to pivot AI skills for a generative AI era. In some instances, this includes partnerships with top academic institutions. For example, Accenture partnered with Stanford University to create a Foundation Model Scholar Program last July. We are now sending our practitioners to multi-day trainings to learn from the best of the best.

When we do hire, we focus primarily on skills, not degrees. We have completely rethought our entire recruiting process down to the questions we ask in interviews. By focusing on strengths-based questions, we get a sense of each applicant's approach and experiences, rather than relying on their pedigree. We also reduced the number of entry-level positions that require a four-year college degree. As of fiscal year 2023, nearly half

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ *New Frontiers: The Origins and Content of New Work, 1940–2018*, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w30389>.

¹¹ *Accenture Pulse of Change*, https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/company/pulse-of-change?c=acn_glb_othercorpcommsvanityurl_13975026&n=otc_0923.

of Accenture's entry-level positions in the US are open to individuals who do not have a four-year college degree.

We also heavily invest in structured, "earn and learn" apprenticeship programs, onboarding more than 2,000 apprentices and filling 20 percent of our entry level roles in North America through our North America apprenticeship program. We do not just keep these ideas in house, either. We have launched 9 local Apprentice Networks convening over 175 employers and other key partners and published a national professional apprenticeship playbook to help companies jumpstart their own programs.

We are also creating digital skilling programs for our clients. In one example, we worked with a global critical infrastructure company to implement an enterprise-wide digital skilling program, enabling them to identify skills gaps across the business in more than 100 job families. In total, their employees have spent about 18,000 hours and completed 112,000 courses.

Conclusion

All too often the AI and workforce debate turns into a binary one – will the machines take all our jobs? The answer, we think, is a resounding no, but it can help us do our jobs better if deployed effectively and responsibly. We know that organizations, including government, will need to radically rethink how work gets done. We believe the focus must be on evolving our operations and training our people as much as on the technology itself.

AI will create the next generation of global tech leaders. The US benefited greatly from the last round of tech innovation, and the largest companies in the world are now US tech companies. We find ourselves in the next big pivotal moment, but American competitiveness is by no means a guarantee. It will require: 1) the right policies to foster innovation while mitigating the biggest downside risks; 2) significant investment in R&D; 3) a workforce that has the *right* skills not only to build technology but to work alongside it; and 4) a national data policy because the AI revolution is going to be built on data, and if we don't get that right, we'll be going in circles and spending decades in legal battles while other nations create the policy and regulatory certainty needed to allow business to invest.