

## The Judgment Gap

### A point of view on what AI is actually removing from the workforce, and why it will not show up in the numbers

The debate about AI and employment is measuring the wrong thing. The question is not how many jobs artificial intelligence takes. It is what it quietly removes from the ones it leaves.

The judgment gap is the growing distance between what AI can produce and what a person can evaluate, interrogate, and stand behind. Output is getting better and cheaper. The human capacity to stress-test it, to notice when a confident answer is covering for a shallow one, is not keeping pace. The gap is not in the tools. It is in the people being asked to operate alongside them.

Routine tasks were never just routine. They were the slow accumulation of noticing. Which numbers do not add up. Which client talks around the problem rather than stating it. Which arguments fold the moment they meet evidence. The junior analyst who spent two years reconciling spreadsheets was not wasting time. They were building a feel for when something is off. Delete the task and the training ground disappears with it.

Research tracking employment across AI-exposed occupations found that hiring of workers aged 22 to 25 fell roughly 16 to 20% relative to less-exposed roles. Software engineering and customer service showed the sharpest drops. The intuitive reading is that AI is taking the jobs. The more honest reading is that AI is taking the tasks through which those jobs used to teach people how to decide.

Some fields are more insulated, and the reason is structural rather than cultural. In crisis response, regulatory analysis, political risk, clients are not buying a deliverable. They are buying access to someone who can reason through a problem under pressure and be held accountable for the conclusion. AI can sharpen that work. It cannot replace the person.

The problem this creates companies is that it will not show up where they expect it to. A 24-year-old formed entirely on AI-assisted work can produce output indistinguishable from someone who built judgment the slower way. The difference does not surface in a portfolio, a writing sample, or an interview answer. It surfaces under pressure, when the tool produces something plausible that is wrong, and the person in the chair either catches it or does not.

That is the hire you cannot fully evaluate in advance. It is also the development problem most organisations are not yet treating seriously. The runway through which judgment used to be built is shorter than it was five years ago, and most talent strategies have not adjusted for that.

The question for any company in the twenty first century is not whether to adopt the tools. That decision is largely made. The question is whether they are still building people who can tell when the tools are wrong. That capacity does not develop by accident.

