

Can AI advance toward value if workforce tensions linger?



ISAAC SARPONG: Isaac is the Partner in charge of Tax Services. He has over 26 years' experience in the provision of multi-faceted advice to both local and international clients in taxation, accountancy, audit & assurance, and corporate law, among others. Isaac is a Chartered Accountant, a Chartered Tax Practitioner and a Lawyer.



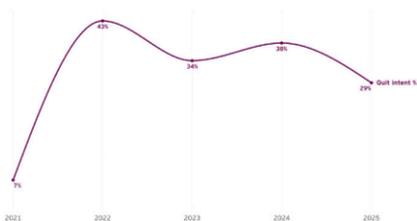
Reaping value from AI investments requires mastering the tensions between talent and tech or risking an AI productivity drop of 40%.

Talent Advantage employers achieve dramatically higher talent health scores. While only 20% of employees at Talent Disadvantage organizations are likely to promote their company as a great place to work, 89% are likely to do so at Talent Advantage organizations. This creates network effects - employee promoters become talent magnets who attract more high-performers.

Talent flow remains foundational and even employees in sectors and at companies they promote will switch jobs. In 2025, the overall intent to quit has dropped to a four-year low of 29%, down from the "Great Resignation" peak of 43%. However, this masks an important dynamic: job jumping remains high for those with the most AI learning, with 45% quit intent among this group who continuously weigh internal and external career and pay opportunities. The paradox, which broadly surfaces with highly trained, high-value talent - building capability while increasing flight risk - becomes one of the critical tensions that organizations must navigate. Employers can address this risk by ensuring these critical employees have continued access to tech, career opportunities, and are well rewarded.

Employees are hunkering down as the job market cools

% Employees intending to leave their job in the next 12 months



Source: EY 2025 Work Reimagined Survey

This chart shows the percentage of employees intending to leave their job in the next 12 months.

2. AI adoption excellence

AI adoption excellence requires frequent, sophisticated use of AI with role-specific tools and strategic goals. Organizations maximizing employee AI adoption value create opportunity to unlock eight to 14 hours per week of time savings as employees leverage higher complexity use cases.

Their advanced users don't just use AI more, they use it differently, treating it as a colleague, coach and thought partner rather than a simple automation tool. Top performers who adopt this collaborative mindset achieve gains more than twice as great as their peers.

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Joe Depa
EY Global Chief Innovation Officer

However, organizations need to provide the right AI tools to get their employees to use the AI. Even with tailored tools, given pressures to perform, employees are often taking matters into their own hands. Between 23% and 58% of employees bring their own AI to work, with variation by sector. This "shadow AI" represents untapped innovation potential but also governance and security challenges that organizations must address systematically. "I think you have to be really clear around the sort of compliance issues the organization faces as a result of using some of these AI tools," acknowledges Joe Depa, EY Global Chief Innovation Officer. "As we realized our own custom AI tool, EYQ, would eventually not be able to keep up with the rapid pace of technology advancement, we pivoted to providing an alternative enterprise version with GPT-5 as well. This flexibility allows us to put employee needs first, while maintaining security and compliance."

3. Learning and capability development

Learning and capability development stands as the strongest predictor of AI success. Employees that receive the 81-plus hour threshold see transformational results. However, higher levels of training create the learning paradox: employees with more than 80 hours are 55% more likely to quit compared to the average. Advanced training makes skills more marketable and external markets may often reward AI expertise faster than internal promotion cycles can respond.

Talent Advantage organizations address this by pairing intensive learning with retention and rewards strategies and career development. They create internal talent marketplaces, design progressive skill certifications tied to tenure and build learning cohorts that develop peer networks because social capital increases retention. The proportion of

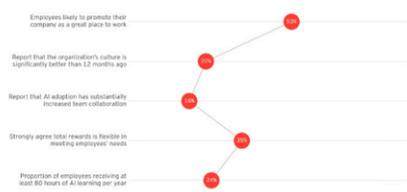
employees receiving at least 80 hours of AI learning per year jumps from 15% at Talent Disadvantage organizations to 42% at Talent Advantage organizations.

Employers with a Talent Advantage experience a wide range of benefits

Talent Disadvantage



Talent Middle



Talent Advantage



This chart shows the range of benefits employers with a Talent Advantage experience.

4. Culture and workplace transformation

This kind of transformation provides the enabling environment for AI integration. Leadership vision and cultural alignment are essential for successful AI adoption. Culture scores have improved significantly, with 60% of employees now agreeing culture is significantly better than 12 months ago, up from 48% in 2021. Employers have made progress in closing gaps in ways of working, enabling team connections, and helping employees feel more trust and support.

Talent Advantage employers dramatically outperform on culture metrics, with 63% reporting culture is significantly better than 12 months ago versus only 3% of employees at Talent Disadvantage organizations. Culture accounts for 44% of the Talent Health score, driven by caring leaders, supportive employers, empowering managers, and team connection. AI adoption itself can strengthen these cultural elements when organizations frame it as a collaborative learning experience rather than an individual technical skill.

5. Strategic total rewards

Strategic total rewards must be person-

alized and flexible, aligning with evolving employee needs and AI-driven roles. Unlike in the past, where employees focused primarily on career opportunities inside their organizations, employees with AI skills can easily look outside for their next role. These skilled workers become more focused on a work experience with great technology, flexibility and opportunities for growth that lead the market.

Talent Advantage organizations understand that rewards drive approximately 32% of talent health and they excel at making total rewards flexible. Fully half of Talent Advantage employers strongly agree their rewards meet employees' needs, compared to just 7% of Talent Disadvantage organizations.

Case study: How EY used a Client Zero approach to prove Talent Advantage formula

As organizations worldwide navigate AI transformation, EY adopted a Client Zero approach. We tested AI solutions internally across 400,000 employees before guiding clients through similar journeys.

The key challenge was moving beyond scattered proof-of-concept initiatives while balancing bold investment with fiscal prudence, integrating AI learning into demanding workloads and aligning stakeholders with varying risk appetites.

(CONTINUED IN NEXT EDITION) ■

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Find out more:

Address: 60 Rangoon Lane, Cantonments City, Accra.
P. O. Box KA16009, Airport, Accra, Ghana.
Telephone: +233 302 772001/772091
Email: info@gh.ey.com,
Website: ey.com