Singapore's Growth Mandate:

Why the AI future will be won or lost on people, not technology

A note on this report

This report draws on four research streams conducted between December 2025 and February 2026:

Labour market analysis of the entry level workforce in Singapore; a survey of 518 young Singaporeans entering the workforce; a survey of 70 technology leaders in partnership with the IT Management Association (ITMA); and in-depth interviews with nine C-suite leaders across Singapore's private and public sectors. It also draws on Accenture's global Talent Reinventors research, surveying 1,320 C-suite executives and 4,560 employees across 20 industries and 12 countries.

We use generative AI in the research production process. Our research experts review and validate the generative AI outputs with traditional research methods where possible, applying Accenture's Responsible AI standards.

Full methodology is provided in the About the Research section.

The fork in the road

Every Singaporean CEO making decisions about artificial intelligence (AI) investment in 2026 faces a choice; yet most are not aware they are making it.

The visible choice is straightforward: how much to invest in AI technology, which tools to deploy, how quickly to scale. Boards are asking these questions and technology leaders are answering them, creating real enterprise momentum on AI. Ninety percent of organisations have moved beyond awareness and into implementation, and 77% expect AI investment to grow further in 2026. On the surface, this looks like a country in motion.

But beneath the technology choice sits a more consequential one; and it is a leadership choice, not a technology choice. Will AI be used to optimise the existing enterprise, extracting efficiency from what already exists? Or will it be used to redesign the enterprise: its work, its careers, its operating model and the people it builds over time? The first path is a productivity play; the second is a growth and purpose play. The gap between them in outcomes, in competitive position and in the kind of futures companies create for their people is already measurable.

Accenture's global research is direct on this point. Organisations that placed people at the centre of AI transformation in 2025 grew revenue 1.8 percentage points higher and profit 1.4 percentage points higher than their peers. That gap did not come from deploying more tools. It came from redesigning how humans and machines work together and treating talent strategy as inseparable from technology strategy. Yet today, only one in three organisations has a talent strategy fully aligned with its AI strategy. And 46% of technology leaders say their company has yet to address redesigning job roles or responsibilities at all.

Singapore's stakes are higher than most. Prime Minister Lawrence Wong has named **"no jobless growth"** as a national imperative for the AI era. This is a commitment that human prosperity and technological advancement must advance together. That ambition does not live in policy documents. It lives inside firms, in thousands of daily decisions about how roles are designed, how careers are structured and how leaders choose to deploy the capacity that AI releases. In that sense, Singapore's CEOs are the implementation layer of the national mandate. That is both a responsibility and an invitation to lead.

This report makes three arguments. First, the market is not in crisis but upgrading, however most companies are not keeping pace. Second, rather than a cost category to be managed, entry level talent is a powerful but systematically underused engine for growth. Third, the organisations that will win are those whose CEOs treat the redesign of work as a personal leadership commitment, owning it with the same urgency and accountability they bring to the technology investment itself. DBS, whose AI transformation journey is examined in depth in Section 3, is the proof that this is possible, and the model for what it looks like in practice.

Generative and agentic AI represent a generational break with the assumptions that have shaped organisations for decades. The moment does not call for caution, but the speed and courage to act decisively.

Section

01

The first rung has been raised

The confidence gap is where Singapore's AI story begins

Ask young Singaporeans whether Singapore's national ambition to lead in AI is achievable, and 95% will say yes. The belief in Singapore's capacity to succeed is near universal among the generation entering the workforce. But ask whether that ambition is being pursued in a genuinely people-centric way and only 31% strongly agree.

That gap between 95% believing in the ambition, but fewer than a third believing in the approach is a sobering signal. It tells us that Singapore's youngest workers are not disengaged, fearful or resistant. They are watching to see whether the organisations they are entering will match their own conviction about the future. Many are still waiting.

Some carry specific fears. Forty-five percent of young Singaporeans are worried about keeping up with the pace of AI change, while 33% fear being replaced by AI outright and 38% fear being displaced by someone with sharper AI skills. These are legitimate concerns and they deserve a legitimate response from leaders, not reassurance messaging. The data that follows provides insight into where entry level capability is shifting, and where it is falling behind. But the data alone does not close the gap. Leadership choices do.

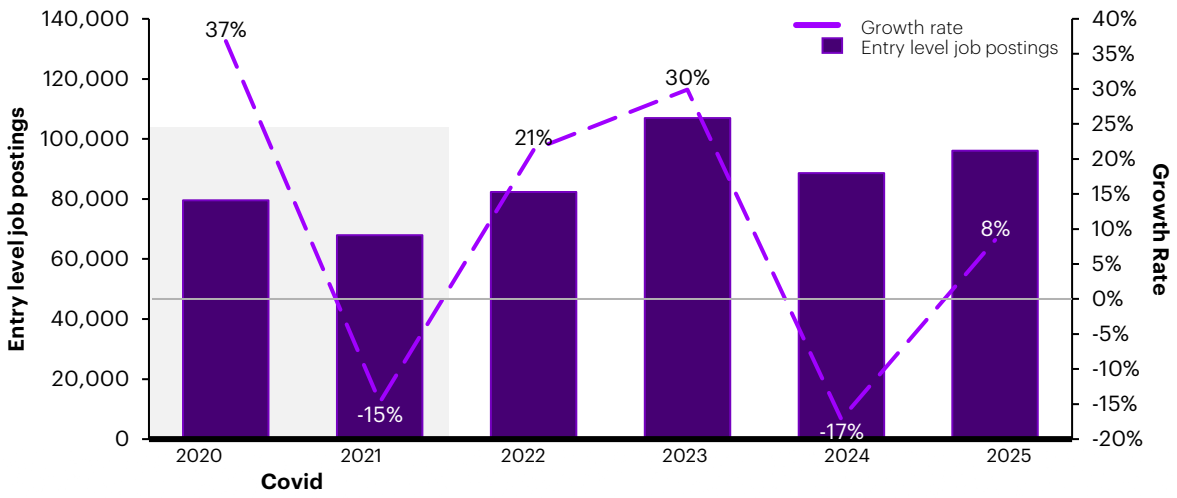
The labour market is upgrading, not collapsing

The fear of an evaporating first rung is understandable. It is also, on the evidence, wrong. Though the reality is more demanding than either "jobs are disappearing" or "nothing has changed."

Singapore's macro conditions remain expansionary.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth outperformed forecasts at 4.8% in 2025.[i] Youth unemployment held steady and underemployment trended downward from its post-COVID high. In fact, entry level job postings rebounded by 8% in 2025 after correcting from the post-COVID boom (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Entry level jobs are rebounding after a post-COVID boom



Source: Accenture analysis of Lightcast, See About the Research

These are not the indicators of a labour market in collapse, but they mask a structural shift that is more important than the headline numbers: what is being demanded has fundamentally changed.

The information technology sector sharpens the picture. Entry level Information Communication and Technology (ICT) job postings saw the largest decline of any occupation group since the post-COVID peak (Figure 2); down 3% between 2024 and 2025, following a 28% contraction the prior year.

But the fastest growing skills within technology roles tell a different story. AI and machine learning, automation engineering and data management are accelerating sharply. While legacy quality assurance and ICT support skills are contracting.

This is structural upgrading. Roles built on repeatable, rules-based tasks are compressing first. Roles that combine domain knowledge, analytical reasoning and the ability to deploy technology in real decisions are expanding to fill and exceed that space. Companies that continue to prioritise traditional criteria over human skills like judgement, teaching ability and collaborative leadership will systematically recruit the wrong people for a market that has already moved.

The strategic implication is clarifying: The first rung has not broken, but it has been raised.

Figure 2: Entry level ICT job postings have seen the largest decline across entry level jobs since the post-COVID boom

Source: Accenture analysis of Lightcast

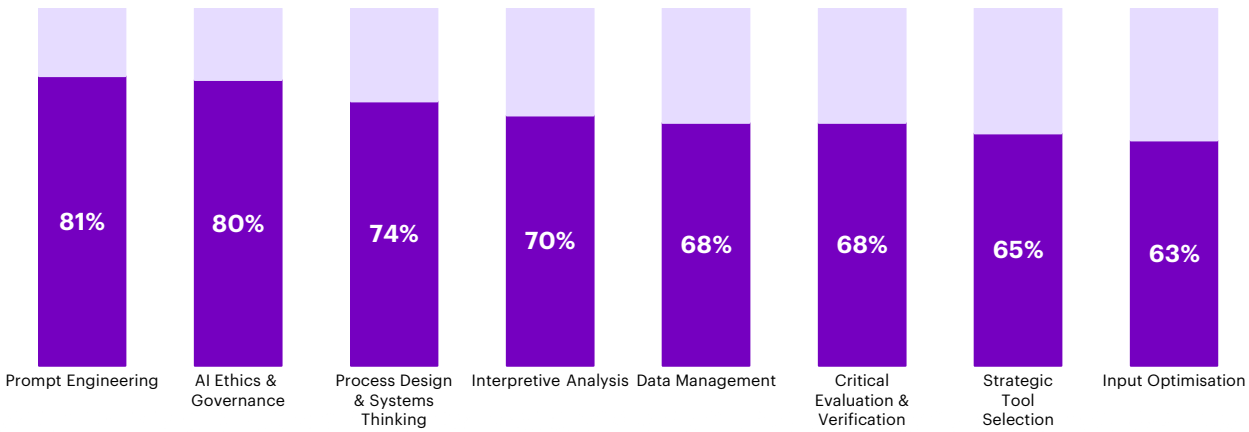
Confidence without capability: The hidden enterprise risk

Singapore's young workers arrive at the workforce door genuinely enthusiastic about AI. Their emotional outlook is overwhelmingly positive. Forty-eight percent describe themselves as confident in AI. Twenty-one percent claim robust or expert proficiency. Usage rates are high: 78% use AI for researching topics, 61% for writing and editing, 50% for basic data analysis.

But confidence and capability are not the same thing and the gap between them is wider than most organisations have registered.

Look beneath the usage statistics and a more honest picture emerges. More than 80% of entry level workers report beginner-level or zero understanding of prompt engineering and AI ethics and governance (Figure 3), with fluency across other key AI fluency components also very low.

Figure 3: Entry level workers who report beginner level or no understanding of deeper AI fluency



Source: Accenture survey of entry level workers in Singapore, January 2026

The system is producing enthusiastic beginners, not AI-fluent professionals. And most organisations have not noticed the difference.

This matters because the enterprise cost is not visible at first. An organisation that reads high AI usage rates as transformation readiness is misreading its own baseline. Surface engagement is widespread but the ability to frame problems for AI, interpret outputs critically and redesign workflows around machine intelligence is not. That absence does not announce itself. It compounds quietly until adoption plateaus, tools outpace the people directing them, and the organisation realises it has invested heavily in AI infrastructure while neglecting to build the human capability to use it well.

This is the hidden enterprise risk in Singapore's AI story. And for leaders willing to act on it, the largest available opportunity.

Entry level workers are the least legacy encumbered, most AI-receptive cohort to ever enter the Singaporean workforce. They are curious, motivated, and as the data will show, eager for the investment that most companies are not yet making. The organisation that sees them as infrastructure for growth, rather than a cost category in the AI era, will compound its capabilities in ways its more cautious peers cannot replicate.

Section 02

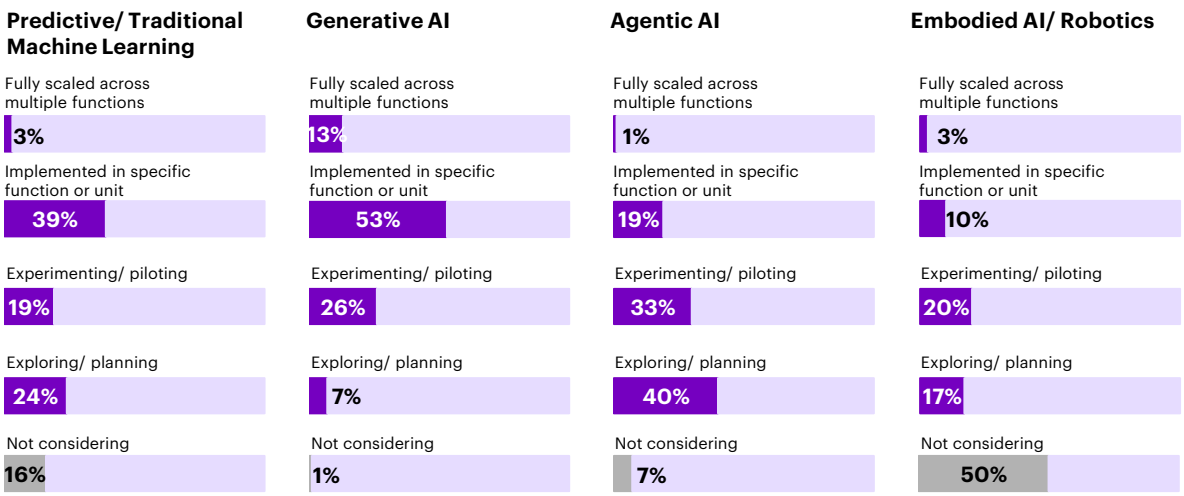
The productivity trap

Singapore is moving on technology. It is not yet moving on transformation.

There is a phrase used quietly but often in Singapore's boardrooms about AI: "We're doing this." And on the technology dimension, Singapore's enterprises are. Ninety percent have moved beyond awareness and exploration into implementation.

Around one in two have deployed generative AI in specific business units. Seventy-three percent are experimenting with or exploring agentic AI, the next frontier of autonomous decision making (Figure 4). For a broader discussion on the role of the CIO in Singapore's technology transformation see our research here.

Figure 4: Singapore companies are implementing generative AI and agentic AI



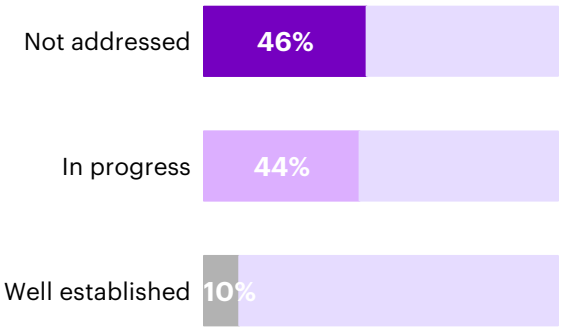
Source: Accenture survey of ITMA professional network, January 2026

But moving on technology and moving on transformation are not the same thing and conflating them is an expensive strategic mistake.

Productivity optimises the existing model. It deploys AI to do what the organisation already does, faster and at lower cost. Transformation redesigns the model itself: the work, the careers, the operating architecture and the definition of value. The distinction between the paths is additive versus generative.

Singapore's enterprise AI investment is flowing toward the first path. The gap shows up not in headlines but in execution data: 46% of Singapore's technology leaders say their company has yet to begin redesigning job roles or responsibilities. Just 10% say job redesign is well established (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Close to half of companies have not yet addressed job redesign



46%

Have not yet begun redesigning job roles or responsibilities

Source: Accenture survey of ITMA professional network, January 2026

In practice, this creates a specific and costly situation: AI tools exist, but the organisation has not updated its operating model, decision rights, incentives, risk controls, performance measures and career pathways to support new ways of working. The technology is deployed but the work is unchanged and people are unsupported. As a result, the value that AI was supposed to create does not materialise.

Singapore's CEOs are the implementation layer of a national mandate

The stakes extend far beyond the success or failure of any single company's technology program. When Singapore's enterprises use AI not only to reduce costs but to redesign work, build new capabilities and create new sources of value, they create long term growth for themselves, their employees and the country. When they do not, the cost falls on all three.

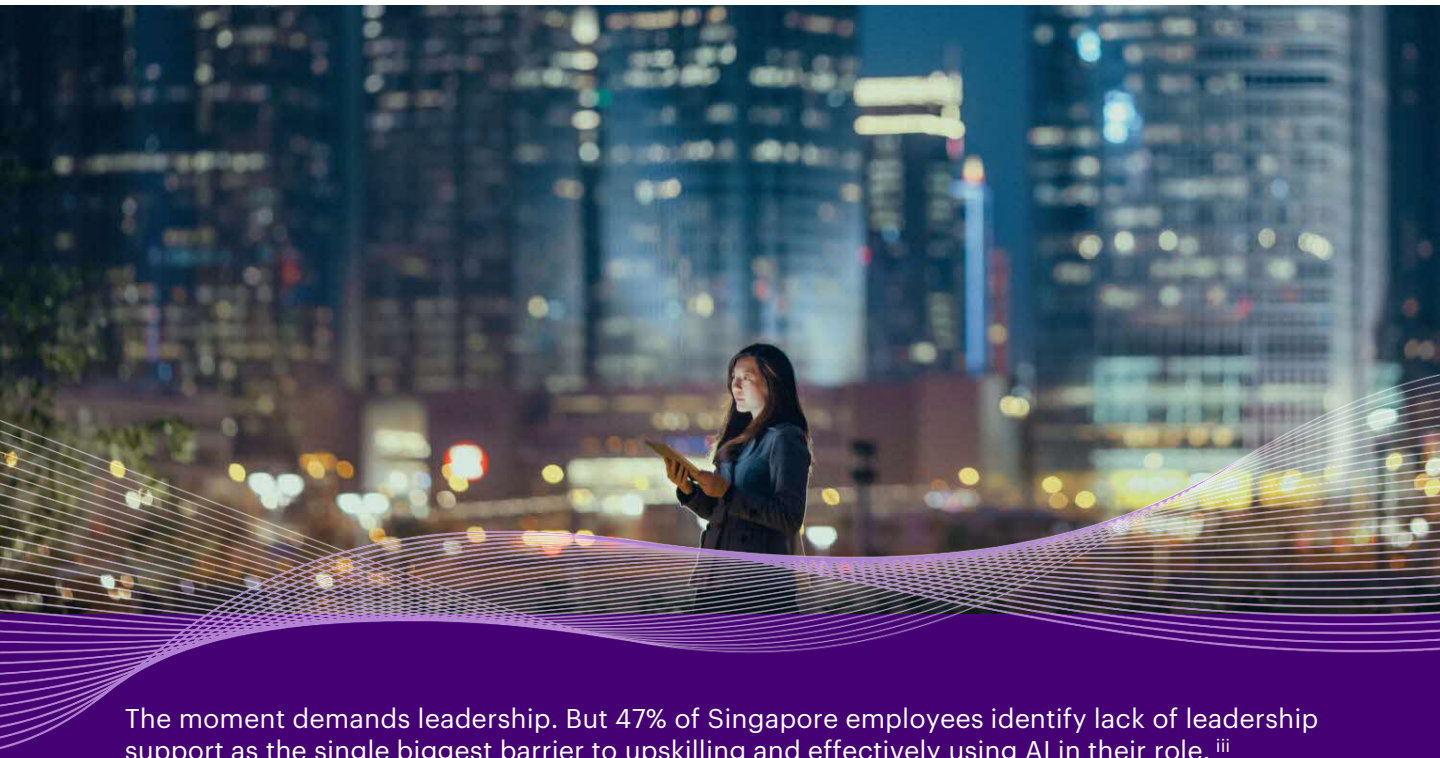
At the national level, this is precisely how Prime Minister Lawrence Wong's goal of "no jobless growth" becomes real or fails to.[ii] For Singapore, a small economy structurally constrained by an ageing population and intensifying global competition for talent, getting AI right is a matter of survival.

As much as government policy can set favorable conditions, it is inside the firm that thousands of daily decisions are made about how roles are designed, how careers are structured and how leaders choose to deploy the capacity that AI releases.

Company CEOs are thus the implementation layer of the national mandate. This is not a burden but an invitation to lead.

The new leadership contract has three elements. A commitment to use AI for growth, not just cost reduction. Ownership of work redesign as a CEO-level responsibility, not a byproduct of technology deployment. And finally, reinvestment by ensuring that productivity gains released by AI flow back into people and capability. Together, they are what converts an AI program into a transformation, and what makes the national growth mandate real at the enterprise level.

The question is not whether Singapore's enterprises are ready to adopt AI. They are. The question is whether their CEOs are ready to own the redesign and treat that ownership as the growth strategy it is.



The moment demands leadership. But 47% of Singapore employees identify lack of leadership support as the single biggest barrier to upskilling and effectively using AI in their role. [iii] Technology leaders corroborate this; "getting leadership buy-in to change management for AI is the biggest hurdle."

Section

03

What it actually looks like: The DBS story

DBS Bank* is proof that AI adoption can scale without leaving people behind. Its progress has been recognised, with Prime Minister Lawrence Wong singling DBS out as one of two companies leading in AI in his Budget 2026 speech.[iv]

Here is its story:

*__Footnote:__ We have chosen to tell the DBS Bank story in detail as evidence of an integrated approach to AI and workforce transformation. Accenture did not deliver this transformation with DBS Bank.

“If we don’t change, we die.”

In 2014, then DBS CEO Piyush Gupta returned from a trip to China paying close attention to what was unfolding. He had seen, up close, how Jack Ma and Alibaba were doing digital business at a speed and scale that by comparison made Singapore’s largest bank look slow. The message he brought back was not diplomatic. It was galvanising: “If we don’t change, we die.”

DBS’s CHRO Lee Yan Hong, who has been central to the bank’s transformation journey since its earliest chapter, reflects on why the bluntness mattered: “We don’t only want to survive, we want to win.” The goal that followed, to become the world’s best digital bank, seemed audacious at the time. It became a rallying call that reorganised how an entire institution understood its own ambition.

That moment in 2014 is where DBS’s AI story actually begins, more than a decade before it generated about S$1 billion in AI-driven economic value from its data analytics and AI/machine learning initiatives in 2025.[v]

Understanding this timeline is essential, because DBS’s outcomes are not the product of a single tool or a lucky early bet on generative AI. They are the product of a decade of leaders choosing, consistently and with increasing sophistication, to treat technology adoption and human development as inseparable. Every chapter of the transformation, across digital, robotic process automation (RPA), AI and now generative and agentic AI, built on the one before it. When ChatGPT arrived in 2023 and DBS gained access to an enterprise version, the bank did not start from scratch. It started from a position of hard-earned strength.

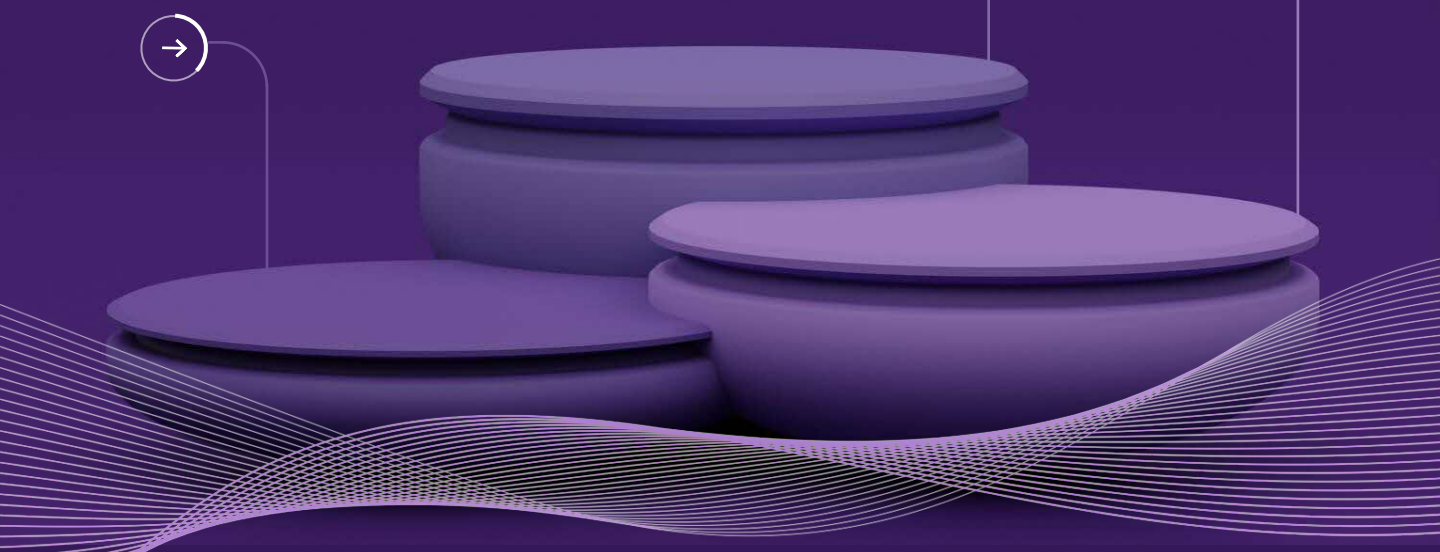
Three Moats: The decade of investment that made transformation possible

Lee describes the foundations of DBS's AI readiness in terms of three "moats"; capabilities built deliberately over years that made each subsequent wave of change easier to absorb.

The first is the **digital moat.** From the earliest transformation wave, DBS automated practically everything it could across every department, including HR. The experience of change, of learning new tools and adapting to new workflows, became normalised across the organisation. By the time generative AI arrived, the bank's people had a decade of practice at updating how they worked. As a result, the transition didn't shock and instead was treated as another chapter.

The second is the **data moat.** AI at enterprise scale is only as good as the data that underpins it. DBS invested heavily and early in cleaning and organising its data, building the data lake that DBS's current AI capabilities rest on. As Lee puts it: "You cannot do what you want to do today if you don't clean up your data."

The third, and most differentiating, is the **culture moat.** DBS built an organisation where experimentation is expected, failure is treated as a teacher and continuous improvement is the operating assumption. "It's a culture of DBS to continue with experimentation," says CEO Tan Su Shan. "We encourage our staff to embrace it. We train them, they train themselves, and we experiment."[vi] This culture required leadership to model it, scorecards to reinforce it and years of consistent practice to embed it. And it is what made every subsequent transformation initiative capable of scaling.



These three moats explain something important about DBS's AI advantage that is often misread: DBS did not win the AI era because of a technology choice made in 2023. It won it because of a human choice made in 2014.

The magic in people: A different kind of growth story

Most organisations frame their AI story around efficiency: hours saved, costs reduced, headcount managed. DBS made a different choice. Lee is explicit: "We don't see AI as a tech story. It is a human story, a tapestry of ingenuity, adaptability, agility and the will to learn, unlearn and relearn."

What that framing produces is a fundamentally different relationship between employees and the technology they are being asked to use.

Lee describes a moment that captures this. One of her team members came to her desk barely able to contain his excitement. He had been working with a fifty page document and doing the kind of analysis that would have previously required hours of reading, cross-referencing and manual summary. With generative AI, the summary had been generated in minutes. **"They were so excited because in the past, I would be the one pulling the insights out and asking 'how come you didn't see this?' Now they see everything," Lee says.**

"And when a human being is that excited, it's quite infectious. You can use that energy to transform."

This is what growth looks like on the ground: AI becomes more than a tool for efficiency. Instead, it expands human possibility the moment a person discovers that AI does not diminish what they bring to their work but amplifies it.

By 2025, DBS had developed over 430 use cases and 2,000 models, and unlocked approximately S$1 billion in AI-driven economic value from its data analytics and AI/ML initiatives. This scale was not reached through a series of pilots but reflects an operational capability embedded into the enterprise. Approximately 70% of DBS's staff have used DBS GPT, the bank's proprietary generative AI tool integrated with internal policies.

DBS positions this as a meaningful 'gift' to employees , where time and capacity can be reinvested in higher-order work, thinking more clearly or personal well-being.

Transformation is everyone's job: The accountability architecture

The gap between a company that says "AI is a priority" and one where AI is how work gets done comes down to one thing: accountability architecture.

At DBS, AI objectives are not siloed in the technology function or the digital transformation team. They are embedded in the balanced scorecard of the senior management team and every employe across front office, middle office and back office. Everyone participates and everyone is accountable. The board rewards progress on these objectives alongside revenue, signalling to the entire organisation that the transformation agenda is a long term strategic investment.

This is the operational expression of "tone from the top." The galvanising call in 2014 mattered because it was backed by a structural commitment: the redesign of how performance was measured and rewarded.

DBS also built for inclusion from day one of the AI era. Rather than reserving access to AI tools for senior employees or specialist teams, the bank deployed DBS GPT to all staff simultaneously. The early communication strategy was deliberate: start with what's in it for the employee, for example workload relief or career growth opportunity, and only then explain the business and customer benefits. **"You have to make people want [AI]," Lee explains. "[When] you cannot live without it, then you know you've got it right."**

The Triple E framework of Education (structured learning), Exposure (job shadowing, learning festivals, showcases and peer-to-peer demonstrations) and Experience (hands-on use in real work contexts), operationalises AI fluency across the entire organisation. It is a continuous learning ecosystem embedded in how DBS works, not a standalone training program.

“We don’t save jobs. We save people.”

The trust contract at the heart of DBS’s transformation is captured in one sentence from Lee: **“We don’t save jobs. We save people.”**

Stated plainly, it means this: roles will change. Some will disappear. But the institution commits to investing in reskilling and redeployment as its first response, not retrenchment. Workforce planning operates on a three-year horizon, using natural attrition and retirements as the primary adjustment lever, supplemented by the three Bs: Buy (external hiring for new skills), Build (reskilling existing employees) and Borrow (internal assignments and task forces).

DBS’ commitment to their staff is a strategic, as well as ethical, decision. When employees believe their organisation will invest in them rather than leave them behind, they engage with transformation rather than resist it. The fear narrative turns into a growth narrative and adoption accelerates. Importantly, the organisation builds the one asset that cannot be purchased off a shelf: genuine human capability, shaped to the specific needs of the business.

Lee gives an example of what this looks like in practice. DBS’s call centres experienced a meaningful uplift in productivity in the first year of AI deployment. This created a question: what happens to the people who used to do that work? The answer was not retrenchment but reskilling, and some of those call centre employees are now relationship managers. **“When I see my colleagues move like that, I’m so happy for them,” Lee says. “Because it opens up an entire career they otherwise would never have imagined.”**

This is what human-led AI transformation produces: not just a more efficient business, but people who discover what they are capable of when the organisation invests in them.

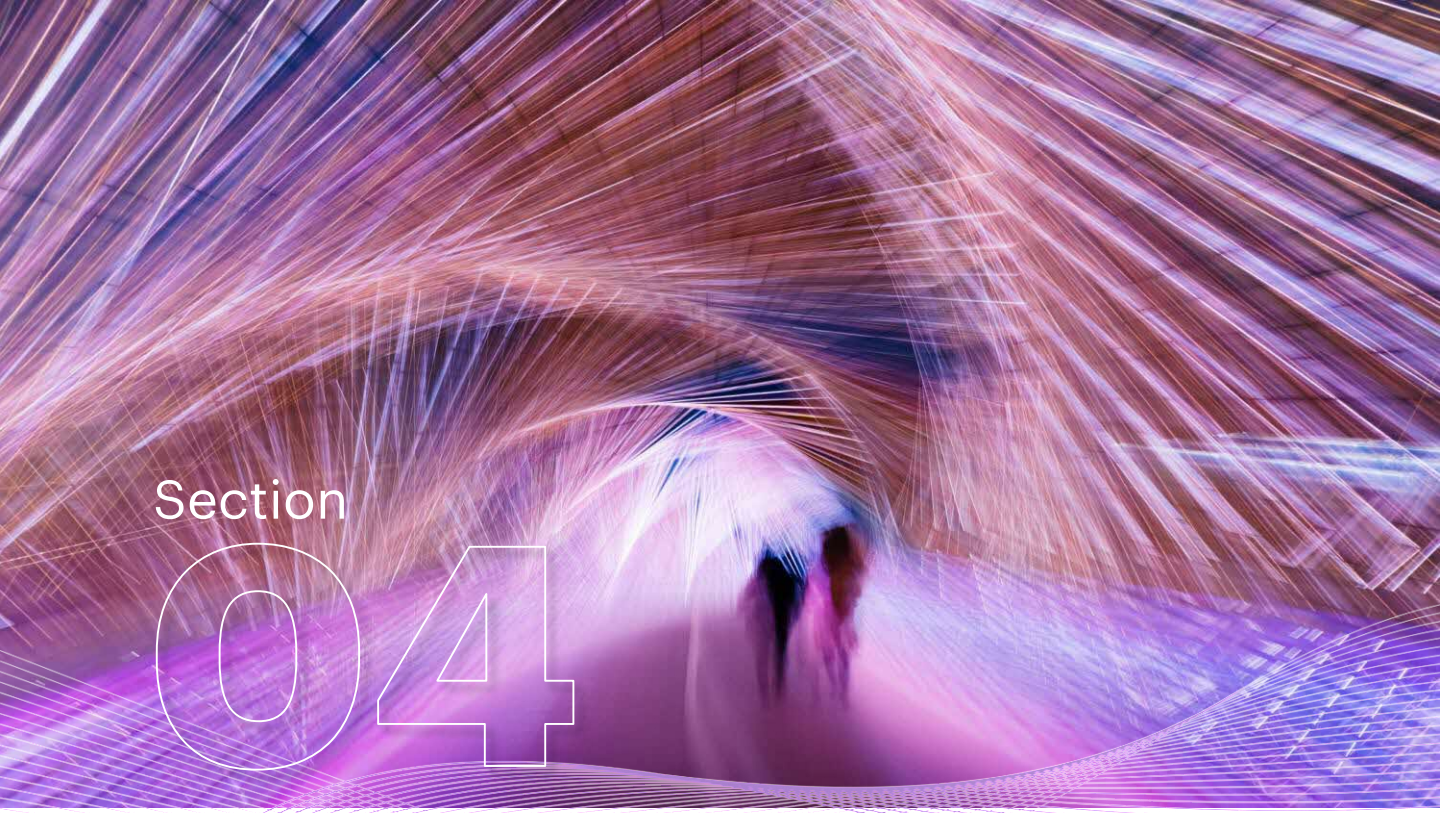
Raising the first rung: How DBS is redesigning entry level work

There is a widely held assumption in Singapore's enterprise community that AI will reduce demand for entry level talent. DBS's experience challenges it directly.

Lee describes a deliberate shift in where and how DBS hires at the graduate level. The bank has reduced its intake for entry level roles built on repetitive processing and doing the type of work most directly automated by AI tools, such as call centres and routine operational functions. But simultaneously, it has expanded hiring into higher-end early career programs.

Management associates in Singapore, a program that places graduates directly into substantive, cross-functional roles with real accountability, numbered around 60 per year three years ago. That rose to 80, then 120, with a target of over 100 each year going forward. DBS has also opened what were previously experienced-hire-only areas such as global financial markets and wealth management to fresh graduates. Clearly, AI did not reduce DBS's demand for entry level talent. Instead, it redirected demand to higher-order skills.

The pattern is clear. AI does not replace the first rung. It redesigns it into something more meaningful, more developmental and more valuable for both the employee and the organisation. But that redesign requires a choice. It does not happen automatically.



Section

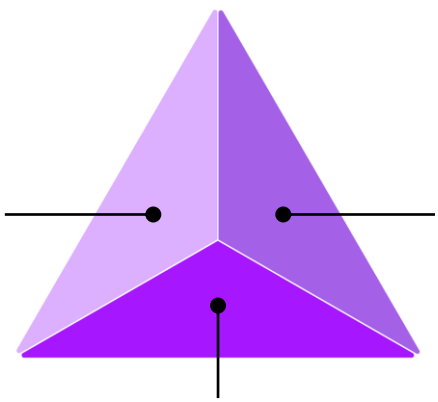
04

Three imperatives for Singapore's CEOs

DBS's outcomes are the proof that human-led AI transformation produces real, measurable results: financial growth, a motivated workforce and an entry level talent pipeline that compounds rather than atrophies. But DBS's journey is also a specific one that is a decade long, resource-intensive and driven by exceptional leadership.

For Singapore's CEOs reading this in 2026, the question is not whether the DBS model is admirable. But what do I need to do now, in my organisation, with the urgency the moment demands?

Three imperatives follow:

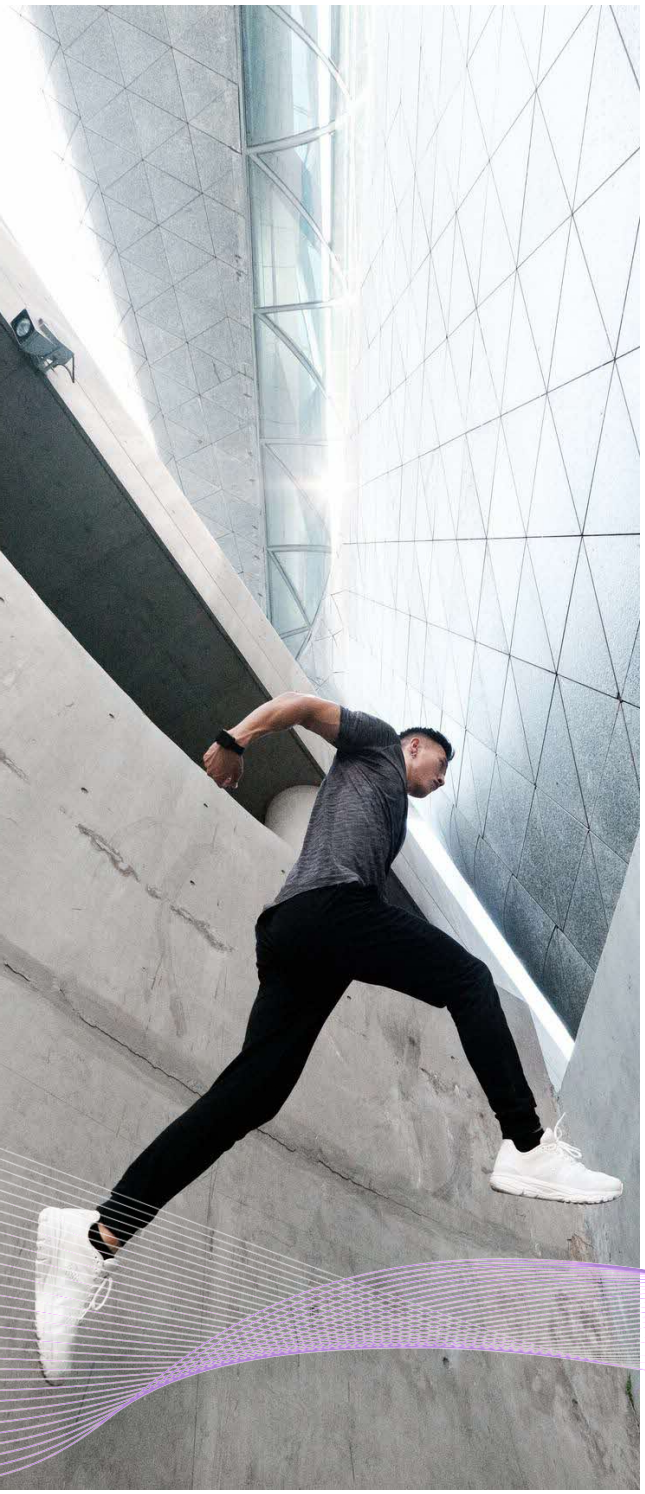


Make a generational break, not an incremental upgrade

See entry level talent as your growth engine, starting from day one

Build the organisation that makes AI work for real

1. Make a generational break, not an incremental upgrade



Most Singapore companies are treating AI as the most important technology upgrade in a generation when it is really the most important redesign of work itself. The difference between those two approaches will determine where your organisation stands in 2030.

An incremental response to AI optimises existing roles. It adds tools, runs pilots, trains individuals and tracks efficiency metrics. Done well, it produces real productivity gains. But it does not change the logic of how work is organised, how careers are structured or how value is created. And because the operating model is unchanged, the productivity gains are captured once and then plateau.

A generational break does something categorically different. It recognises that intelligence is now embedded in work itself; that AI is not a tool that sits alongside human effort but a capability that reshapes what human effort is for.

"In this age, you cannot be a fast follower. Twenty years ago, you could copy-and-paste. Now, by the time you copy, somebody else has moved."

CTO of a large real estate company, Singapore

This means jobs and careers must be deliberately reassembled, not gradually upgraded. Roles that were built on information retrieval, data processing and rules-based decision making must be redesigned around judgement, synthesis, stakeholder engagement and the creative application of AI-generated insight.

This is a CEO-level responsibility. It cannot be delegated to the HR team or the technology function, because it requires the alignment of three things that typically sit in separate organisational silos: talent strategy, technology strategy and business strategy. Today, only a third of Singapore organisations has achieved that alignment.[vii] Just 10% maintain AI-informed, real-time skills data and only 25% use AI-driven platforms to match internal and external skills, demonstrating how wide the execution gap remains.

Closing that gap requires a clear growth intent at the top. Seventy-five percent of Singapore's C-suite leaders already view AI as more beneficial to revenue growth than cost reduction.[viii] The test is whether execution now matches that belief.

What DBS demonstrated is that a generational break requires a rallying call, not a strategy document. CEOs who have not yet issued that call, in their own voice and in terms specific to their industry and their people, have not yet crossed the threshold from upgrade to transformation.

For Singapore's CEOs: where to start

- **Immediately:** Apply a "tasks, not jobs" lens across your organisation. Map where human judgement is essential and where AI can assist, augment and automate. Use that map to inform deliberate work redesign, not as a cost exercise, but as a growth one.
- **Over the next cycle:** Move from skills inventories to skills infrastructure. Real time visibility into what your people can do and what they can be developed to do is the foundation of an organisation that can move quickly as work continues to evolve.
- **CEO commitment:** Name work redesign as a strategic priority and hold the organisation accountable for progress. Without that signal from the top, incrementalism will fill the vacuum. The organisations that make this break deliberately, in the next twelve to twenty-four months, will be substantially harder to catch by 2030.

2. See entry level talent as your growth engine, starting from day one

Every organisation that designs entry level roles around supervision and repetition in 2026 is building its own obsolescence.

This sounds harsh. But consider what the data reveals about the cohort entering Singapore's workforce right now (Figure 6). Seventy-nine percent say that skill development is more important to them than their title. Eighty-five percent expect to continuously renew their skills throughout their career. Eighty-one percent are willing to be reskilled if their role becomes automated.

Figure 6: Young workers understand that AI means a career of constantly evolving their skill set

79%
agree skill development is more important than their title

85%
expect continuous skill renewal throughout their career

81%
are willing to be reskilled if their role becomes automated

Source: Accenture survey of entry level workers in Singapore, January 2026

Two-thirds already interact with AI tools weekly, and they arrive with a conviction about the future that many of their more senior colleagues have not yet matched:

"The development of artificial intelligence will not lead to the disappearance of humanity, but rather will enable more human potential to be realised."

Recent graduate from university and working in full time employment, 22

"Developing AI-related skills creates empowerment as a fresh graduate, curiosity about how industries are changing and optimism for future employment."

Recent graduate from a polytechnic and seeking full time employment, 24

This is readiness. And it is being undervalued by organisations that are still designing the first rung around tasks that AI is already performing.

The opportunity is this: AI has broken the traditional logic of the entry level role. When the work that junior employees used to do, such as information retrieval, data collation, document drafting and scheduling, is handled by AI, two paths open.

The conservative path is to hire fewer junior people, capturing the efficiency. The growth path is to redesign what those junior people do, reallocating their capacity toward higher-order work sooner, so that they build judgement faster, add more value earlier and become the AI-native capability pipeline the organisation needs for the next decade.

The organisations that take the growth path will build a workforce that compounds. Those that take the conservative path will save money in the near term and find themselves with a talent deficit they cannot buy their way out of.

Singapore's labour market makes this imperative acute. A structurally ageing population[ix], intense competition for experienced talent and limited scope to fill capability gaps through immigration mean that the domestic early career cohort is not a discretionary pipeline. It is the primary one. Entry level talent is where AI-first habits form, where organisational learning accelerates and where future leaders begin to be shaped. Organisations that stop investing at the first rung stop compounding, full stop.

"We need to [keep hiring fresh graduates] because there is still a fundamental domain knowledge that needs to be taught. And then AI can supplement."

CHRO of a large telecommunications company, Singapore

For Singapore's CEOs: where to start

- **Immediately:** Redesign internship and early career programs around applied AI experience. The organisations that shape graduates as they enter the workforce will build the most AI-native talent pipelines. An internship programme that has not been updated as recently could be training people for work that no longer exists.
- **Over the next cycle:** Give managers explicit direction on what entry level talent should stop doing, start doing and do more of. Reallocating time freed by AI into higher order work requires deliberate guidance from management. Build this into how managers are coached and how their teams are designed.
- **CHRO commitment:** Redefine what entry level means in your organisation as a formal, board level commitment to reimagining the first rung. Entry level talent is not a cost to be optimised. It is where the next generation of your enterprise capability begins. Treat it accordingly.

3. Build the organisation that makes AI work for real

Deploying AI tools is not the hard part. Singapore's enterprises have largely mastered that. What separates the organisations that capture sustainable value from those that plateau, is building the conditions for people and AI to work well together, at scale and over time.

That requires three things, and they must be built simultaneously. Doing one or two is what produces the frustrating situation many organisations are already in: investment in technology, surface adoption and underperformance against transformation goals.

First: Embed transformation capability across the enterprise; not as a program, but as how work is organised.

AI cannot be scaled through isolated use cases. Winning with AI is less about deploying tools and more about building an enterprise that can keep changing, grounded in a secure digital core, organised around workflow redesign, and led with a risk-managed, experimentation-forward mindset. When AI outputs are integrated into real decisions, AI becomes part of how the organisation functions, not an overlay on top of it.

DBS's story shows what this looks like when it works: a secure digital and data foundation that makes enterprise-grade AI safe to use, paired with an accountability architecture that makes it everyone's job to redesign how work gets done. The balanced scorecard did not sit on top of the transformation but pulled the organisation through it, turning AI objectives into day-to-day expectations across functions, levels and geographies.

> **"We have invested in change management, continuing to build up the relationship between IT and the business, all while reshaping the organisation. I believe these are the preconditions you need if you want to have AI. Without them, you will not get transformation."**
>
> CIO of a large hardware and software solutions company, Singapore

Second: Move AI fluency from surface usage to applied capability and build it in the flow of work.

Most employees are already using AI tools, but few have the depth of fluency that enables genuine human-AI collaboration. Framing a complex problem for AI, evaluating its output critically and redesigning a workflow around machine intelligence; these are not skills that develop through watching a tutorial. They develop through practice, in real contexts, supported by managers who model and reinforce good use.

In Singapore, only one in four organisations embed learning into daily workflows. Among the companies Accenture identifies as Talent Reinventors, meaning the 18% achieving the highest outcomes from AI and talent combined, 92% embed learning in daily work, making them 8.5 times more likely to treat upskilling as a habit rather than an event.[x]

Third, and most critically: Build trust actively and deliberately, treating it as a hard operational requirement, not a soft, cultural aspiration.

Even with the best tools and the strongest learning infrastructure, value can only be created where people are willing to use judgement, challenge AI outputs and surface failures when they arise. That requires trust in the technology, in the process and, most importantly, in the organisation's intentions.

The data on trust in Singapore is a serious warning: only 23% of Singapore employees truly trust their employer to act in their best interest when introducing AI.[xi] This deep seated suspicion will not be allayed by yet another town hall; it requires consistent, credible action.

Trust, once built, is the force multiplier of everything else. It is what turns cautious adopters into genuine collaborators. It is what makes the difficult conversations about roles changing, skills needing renewal and the discomfort of learning new ways of working survivable rather than destabilising. Ultimately, trust is the foundation of the long term employee-employer compact that AI transformation at speed hinges upon.

For Singapore's CEOs: where to start

- **Immediately:** Diagnose where trust is breaking down. Survey employees on AI clarity, intent and job security confidence alongside your adoption metrics. High usage with low trust is a leading indicator of plateau, not progress. Act on what you find.
- **Over the next cycle:** Embed AI fluency into work itself. Build it into how work is designed, how managers are coached and how performance is measured. Move the learning out of the training program and into the workflow.
- **Board commitment:** Track the human dimension of transformation such as workforce confidence, career progression and trust with the same rigour you apply to technology metrics. Organisations that maintain board visibility on the human dimension build the feedback loops that sustain adoption at scale. Without that governance, transformation gets managed as a technology program and delivers technology program results.

Singapore's moment

AI is not improving how work is done. It is redrawing the logic of the enterprise itself.

The real divide in Singapore's corporate landscape is no longer between organisations that have adopted AI and those that have not. It is between those using AI to optimise yesterday's model and those reorganising around entirely new ways of creating value. The greatest risk is not job loss in the immediate term. It is strategic drift, the slow erosion of competitive relevance as organisations preserve familiar roles and structures that the market is already beginning to leave behind.

Prime Minister Wong's "no jobless growth" mandate is a choice that Singapore's enterprise leaders are being asked to make in the decisions they make about their people, their organisations and the kinds of careers they create. The national ambition is real and the policy environment is supportive. Young Singaporeans entering the workforce are eager. What remains is for CEOs to close the gap between the ambition they hold and the transformation they are actually running.

This will require speed. The window in which the early movers build compounding advantage over slower peers will be measured in cycles. Organisations that make the generational break in the next twelve to twenty-four months will be building organisational muscles that their more cautious competitors will struggle to replicate.

It will also require courage. AI transformation asks CEOs to own things that are genuinely uncomfortable: the redesign of roles that people have held for decades; the acknowledgment that some skills are contracting and that the organisation must invest in building new ones; the admission to employees that the future is uncertain but that the organisation is committed to navigating it with them, not around them.

The future is being built now, inside Singapore's firms, in the decisions its leaders make about people and technology together. Those that choose the growth path, with the speed and the courage it demands, have the opportunity to shape not only their own organisation's future, but Singapore's.

About the research

This study is based on a multi-method research approach examining how organisations in Singapore are approaching AI transformation.

Labour market analysis

Accenture analysed entry level job posting data for Singapore using Lightcast. Lightcast is a data aggregator, compiling more than 18 billion labour market data points, including job postings, career profiles, and compensation data, across 165 countries. The analysis tracked volume trends, role and skill composition shifts and the emergence of AI-related skill demand at the entry level.

Survey of entry level workers

Accenture surveyed 518 young Singaporeans in January 2026, including students in their final year of study at Universities, Polytechnics and ITE institutions; fresh graduates seeking employment; and entry level professionals who graduated in the past two years. The survey covered AI confidence and usage patterns, career expectations, workforce readiness and attitudes toward AI adoption. A subset of 141 respondents was resurveyed in February 2026 following the Government Budget announcement to capture updated perceptions of Singapore's national AI ambition.

Survey of technology leaders

In partnership with the IT Management Association (ITMA), Accenture surveyed 70 technology leaders in Singapore in January 2026, including CIOs, CTOs and senior technology executives across a range of industries. The survey examined organisational AI adoption maturity, workforce barriers and investment intentions for 2026.

C-suite interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with nine C-suite leaders across Singapore's private and public sectors between December 2025 and February 2026, spanning financial services, technology, telecommunications, professional services and the public service. Interviews explored AI strategy, workforce transformation approaches, entry level hiring practices and leadership perspectives on Singapore's growth imperative.

Accenture Talent Reinventors research

Global findings draw on Accenture's Talent Reinventors research, which surveyed 1,320 C-suite executives and 4,560 employees across 20 industries and 12 countries between August and September 2025.

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