



Robert—
—Walters

AI in HR:

How AI is changing
the TA & HR landscape

Global Talent Solutions



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Welcome

An abundance of change is impacting the workplace, and workforce, in 2025: geopolitical conflicts, intergenerational colleagues with often different perspectives, return-to-office mandates, the EDI backlash, skills shortages and stagflation all requiring nuanced consideration and action. Yet despite this complex web of interconnected business challenges, every topic is impacted by Artificial Intelligence (AI), so AI needs to be at the core of all HR and people leaders' strategies in 2025 and beyond.

AI continues to evolve at a pace never seen before, with capabilities and functionality constantly improving, making long-term strategic planning

complex and challenging. However, this pace of change, and increasing scope for opportunities, is unlikely to slow, so HR and people leaders need to understand the current, and future, opportunities and risks presented by AI, in the context of HR.

Whilst AI certainly brings challenges within HR, notably from an ethics, bias and governance perspective, it also brings benefits that HR and people leaders cannot afford not to unlock. Deployed responsibly, AI can enable better decision making, improved quality of hire, administrative efficiency, enhanced engagement and, potentially, reduced bias

and meritocratic hiring. In an increasingly competitive landscape, HR and people leaders are required to do more, and better, with less. AI can enable this.

In this paper, released in conjunction with the launch of our new AI Readiness: HR Leaders Masterclass Programme, we explore the steps that need to be taken to leverage AI to unlock benefits whilst minimising risk.

As we welcome the Digital Workforce to work alongside our human colleagues, there has never been a more exciting time to be an HR Leader.



Tom Lakin

Global Head of Future of Work
Talent Advisory
Robert Walters

Introduction

“AI is more than just ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude”

AI is not new – the first AI workshop was held in 1956 – but it wasn’t until November 2022, with the launch of ChatGPT, when millions of non-technical consumers began proactively using AI daily. Now, in 2025, it’s hard to think of an app, service or experience which doesn’t claim to be ‘AI-powered’.

Whether intentionally or not, most of us interact with AI daily. Many of the platforms and tools we have used for many years are now powered by AI or, at the very least, ‘AI-infused’:

Gmail

Ever wondered why your primary inbox is thankfully spam-free? AI rather helpfully sorts your emails, using machine learning, to accurately categorise your emails.

Spotify

If Spotify recommends better new music to you than your friends do, that’s down to the way it uses AI. AI not only analyses your listening history it also compares your listening behaviour with similar users as well as analysing the characteristics, such as tempo or BPM, of the music you like.

Duolingo

The popular language-learning app uses ChatGPT to provide real-time role play and immersive ‘live video calls’ that simply weren’t possible without generative AI.

Introduction

It’s not just apps on our phones that leverage AI, increasingly our in-person everyday experiences are AI-powered too:

Train
Stations

AI cameras, trained at ticket barriers, monitor whether more people are queuing to enter or to exit the station and automatically switch the direction of barriers. More controversially, face and object recognition AI is used to predict travelers’ age, gender, and potential emotions – with the data potentially being used in advertising systems.

McDonalds

There is nothing more disappointing than an under-whelming Big Mac, half-full portion of fries or, arguably even worse, when the barbecue sauce is forgotten. AI may make these travesties a thing of the past – McDonalds is exploring using an adapted form of facial recognition allowing AI programs to check images of meals ready for customers and ensure that all items match those made in orders.

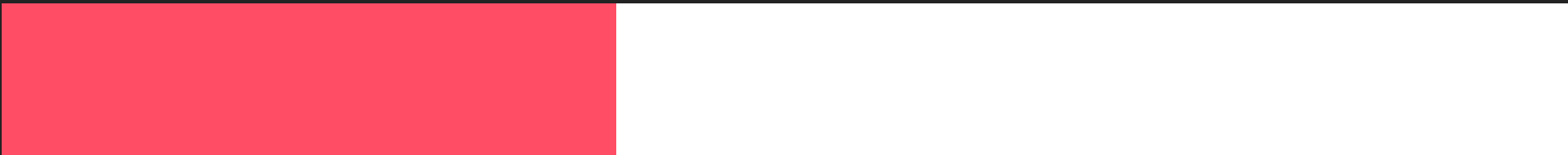
Mortgage
lending

AI plays a growing role in determining the mortgage interest rates we are offered – it does this by leveraging advanced data analysis and machine learning algorithms and can generate personalised mortgage options.



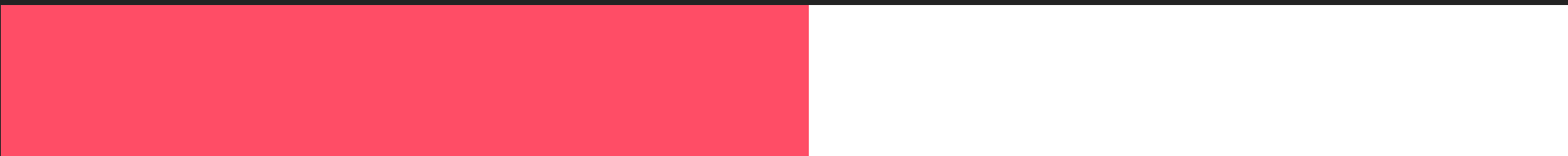
AI in numbers

39% of employees report receiving AI training.



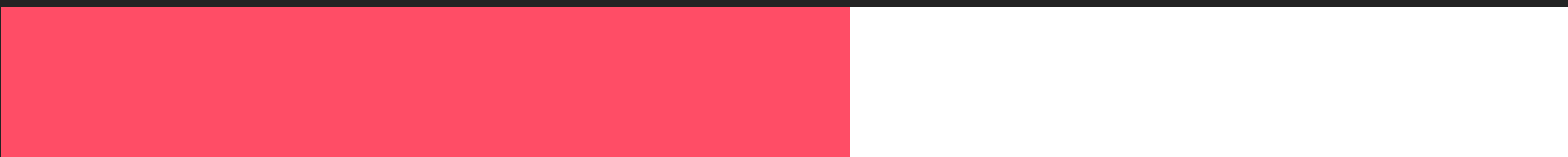
[Source >](#)

52% of executives have never used AI tools in the workplace.



[Source >](#)

54% of professionals said they trusted AI more than HR.



[Source >](#)



58% of experienced professionals already use AI or plan to use AI in the next 12 months to boost their chances of landing their next role.

[Source >](#)



32% of leaders believe employees don't have the technical skills needed to correctly utilise AI, businesses need to proactively upskill teams to build confidence.

[Source >](#)

Business Implications & considerations

The impact of AI is far-reaching with almost no department, sector or role untouched, yet the impact for HR and people leaders is arguably the most significant:

Emergence of the digital workforce

HR and people leaders have, since the early days of the ‘Personnel Department’, been responsible for supporting an entirely human workforce. These human employees may have ever-increasing tech and tools at their disposal, but the job role is conducted by a human. The launch of Agentic AI, such as Open AI’s Operator, which is capable of working independently, fundamentally changed this resulting in the digital workforce being a reality in 2025.

Job displacement

For years the question “will a robot take my job?” has been asked and typically vague hypotheses and answers are given. However, in 2024 and 2025, these hypotheses became a reality as jobs are being displaced that until only recently would have been perceived as too skilled to be automated. From coders to traders, jobs are being displaced resulting in significant support from HR – upskilling, reskilling, coaching and outplacement.

Job creation

AI is creating millions more jobs than it removes. Many of these new roles require new knowledge, skills and capabilities that are in short supply. Solving this talent challenge requires more than simply tweaking current talent acquisition strategies, it requires a strategic review of talent management from early careers programmes, internal talent marketplaces, workforce consultancy models and upskilling and reskilling interventions.

Business Implications & considerations

AI as a growth enabler

Now more than ever, CEOs are realising that growth is dependent on the availability and quality of talent, elevating the role of HR leaders. The demand for talent that is agile, flexible and has the knowledge to use emerging AI technologies is unlikely to slow so HR leaders must invest in Employee Value Proposition, learning and development and employer branding to attract and engage the human talent needed to enable growth.

Future-proof or decline

It's not only roles being displaced – entire organisations and even industries are also being displaced. In less than four years the share price of Chegg, an online student support service, has dropped by 99%.

Chegg's customers are largely students who want help with coursework, which often involves the virtual support of a human tutor. This support can now be accessed at zero cost using generative AI.

Examples such as this highlight the need to hire talent with the curiosity, innovation and creativity to future-proof their employer.

Hyperfocus on risk and governance

The use of AI in some areas is largely unproblematic – most of us appreciate Netflix's use of AI recommendation engine to help us find more shows we enjoy and avoid ones we don't, for example. However, the use of AI in HR, talent acquisition and the workplace is far from as simple.

The EU AI Act identified several contexts in which the use of AI was considered 'high risk'. Unsurprisingly, this list includes biometrics and immigration but the list also includes 'employment', giving the rationale that AI "may appreciably impact future career prospects, livelihoods of these persons and workers' rights". This means any AI use relating to recruitment advertising, selection and talent development could all be considered 'high risk'. HR leaders must have a deeper understanding of AI, it's capabilities, limitations and the related governance and compliance.



Quality & Efficiency:

Understanding HR use-cases for AI

The most frequently used narrative around the use of AI in business is cost minimisation. This of course shouldn't be underestimated but if it is the sole aim of AI then typically it provides only a very short-term unique selling point – as seen in automated trading, automation that solely removes cost rather than adding value simply decreases the value of the service offered.

AI can be used to augment or automate most HR activities:

Recruitment & hiring

- Application screening, job description enhancements, virtual candidate concierges
- Onboarding
- Document verification, tailored engagement and training content, process updates

HR services

- 24/7 chatbot support
- Sickness and leave management
- Policies and benefits

Performance and learning

- Skills gap identification, career pathing, personalised learning

Quality & Efficiency: Understanding HR use-cases for AI

The HR value chain

The HR value chain is a framework that illustrates the interconnectivity between HR activities and their impact on business outcomes. In short, it applies a value and purpose to HR activities and shows how HR helps achieve business objectives such as growth, productivity and innovation.

Many organisations identify an AI vendor or solution and then try and find a use case for it. A more impactful approach is to focus on the priority of strategic objectives and only then explore AI solutions. What does your organisation really need to achieve. Is the priority near-future revenue growth? Or is it immediate cost saving? Or perhaps innovation and ideation to stay relevant? AI can support all these objectives but understanding the priority and desired outcomes is essential. Here are examples of how AI can support strategic objectives and be linked to HR activities:

1. Strategic objective: Near-future revenue growth

In most organisations, revenue is a primary success indicator, and sales teams are largely human rather than digital. We need sales teams to listen, tell stories, showcase our products and solutions.

AI-powered HR activity: Success Fingerprint

Research indicates that a small percentage of top salespeople often drive a significant portion of total sales – often following the 80/20 rule (20% of salespeople generate 80% of sales).

Using a blend of gamification and AI, HR leaders can identify the ‘success fingerprint’ of their top performers. What are the unique characteristics that your top performers have – are they commercial, curious and kind, for example?

Advances in assessment and natural language processing mean AI can support quality of hire projects, with meaningful impact.

“The new breed of AI-infused assessment technologies can help HR and business leaders identify the hidden characteristics that form the ‘success fingerprint’ of their organisation. Assumptions are frequently made – often that competitiveness and resilience are the primary characteristics for success – yet findings highlight that there is often little or no correlation between top performers and these characteristics, instead curiosity, empathy and innovation proving to be stronger predictors”.

Louise Fowkes

Senior Manager, Future of Work
Talent Advisory, Robert Walters

Success Fingerprint

[Learn more >](#)



“Employers are increasingly using AI for employee self-learning yet we’re also seeing a surge in-demand for complementary, human-led interventions such as executive coaching to unlock innovation, transition coaching and leadership development. This blend of AI and expert human coaching and development is proving to be high impact.”

Adam Gordon

Global Head of Talent Development,
Talent Advisory, Robert Walters

Quality & Efficiency: Understanding HR use-cases for AI

2. Strategic objective: Immediate cost-saving

Using AI to cut costs remains the primary use of AI in HR with 93% of HR managers claiming to use AI tools to reduce costs. This focus on cost-saving has resulted in some compelling use cases:

Walmart uses AI to forecast when staff are needed and also uses AI to then optimise staff shift rotas, which has led to a 15% reduction in labour costs.

Manipal Health Enterprises used AI to automate it’s HR services, focusing on employee queries on holiday calendars, taxes, pay slips and leave time. This AI virtual assistant saved more than 60,000 hours for employees and HR team.

IBM has deployed AI-powered chatbots to onboard new employees. These chatbots provide answers to common questions, assist with paperwork, and deliver personalised training modules. As a result, IBM has seen a 60% reduction in onboarding time, allowing new joiners to be productive faster.

3. Strategic objective: Innovation & ideation

In 2025, innovation is crucial for sustainable growth, requiring companies to embrace new technologies, nurture creativity, and adapt to evolving market dynamics to stay competitive and grow.

AI-powered HR activity: Learning & development

AI is being used to augment employers learning value proposition. Learning and upskilling has been high on employer’s agenda for some time, but 2025 has seen rise to a top priority for candidates and employees, who want to future proof their careers, and employers, who are relying ever-increasingly on their employees’ innovation to grow.

AI-powered HR platforms such as HiBob are raising the game with employee on-demand learning, providing best-in-class user experience with third-party content providers like Udemy. Learning content is increasingly focusing on innovation, creativity, design thinking and foresight.

Ethics, bias & governance:

Understanding the constraints of AI in HR

HR leaders should no longer just ask “can we use AI?” but rather “should we use AI?”.

The answer to the first question is now, almost always, ‘Yes’ – it is technically possible to use AI at every stage in the HR value chain. From resume-filtering to facial recognition in interviews to avatar career coaches, AI is a potential option.

However, the ethical, bias and governance considerations should not be under-estimated:

Ethics

Some applications of AI may be legal in some regions but, for many, would be considered ethically dubious. The question of ethics is already of primary importance for HR leaders, but this will only heighten as AI begins providing functionality that has the potential to infringe on employee rights and even cognitive liberty, as emerging AI can monitor our brains processes.

Neurotechnology is evolving at an alarming pace – AI will soon be able to identify whether we are feeling cheery, a tad depressed, hating your job or even if you are questioning your sexuality. Most employees don’t want these personal thoughts shared with anyone, let alone our boss. HR leaders must be knowledgeable and informed in this controversial and fast-moving area of AI, with HR leaders increasingly joining AI Ethics Committees to help support the responsible use of AI in the workplace.



AI Readiness Masterclass

[Learn more >](#)

“The key to using AI responsibly in recruitment is recognising where it adds value – and where human judgment remains essential. AI can support efficiency and uncover patterns at scale, but ethical recruitment means using that technology to enhance, not replace, human insight. For instance, while AI may surface candidates based on predefined criteria, a skilled recruiter can spot potential that sits outside those parameters – whether it’s transferable experience, a standout attitude, or something less easily captured by keywords alone.”

Faye Walshe

Global Director, Innovation & AI
Robert Walters

Ethics, bias & governance: Understanding the constraints of AI in HR

Bias

The jury is still out as to whether AI is a ‘friend or foe’ when it comes to bias. Humans are inherently biased, and this translates into our behaviours and decisions and this data then teaches AI ‘what good looks like’ – as shown by the biased algorithm in one of [the earlier pilots of AI in hiring](#) by Amazon. The Amazon example dates back to 2018 but bias in AI in recruitment remains a current challenge.

Some bias is intentional - [one company allegedly](#) programmed its AI-powered software to reject women job candidates over age 55 and men over 60 – yet is more often it is a hidden and an unintended consequence of AI. A 2024 [experiment by Bloomberg](#) using ChatGPT to rank candidates resumes found bias against job candidates based on their name alone.

Bias is difficult, but not impossible to minimise. [Auditing your processes and technology for bias](#) can be a win/win, resulting in improved quality outcomes, minimised bias and often compliance with legislation or best practice.

Governance

How AI will be legislated and governed is still being established but one thing is certain – there will not be a single global law or mandated compliance framework. Already, we are seeing differing approaches by region – Europe has a comprehensive AI Act, North America has no comprehensive federal regulations though many AI bills are being considered, whilst China became one of the first countries in the world to regulate generative AI technology in 2023.

HR and people leaders need to be aware of legislation and government guidelines in each region but should also shape the strategic approach their organisations use of responsible and impactful AI.

Meet the AI vendors reimagining HR

AI is transforming the HR and talent Acquisition technology ecosystem – almost all HR tech vendors rushed to add ‘AI-powered’ functionality to their existing products whilst a new breed of AI-first technology is emerging. It’s a complex space to navigate – features and impact are often oversold, algorithms are opaque and proven case studies are few and far between.

However, some vendors are offering impactful, meaningful change, powered by AI.



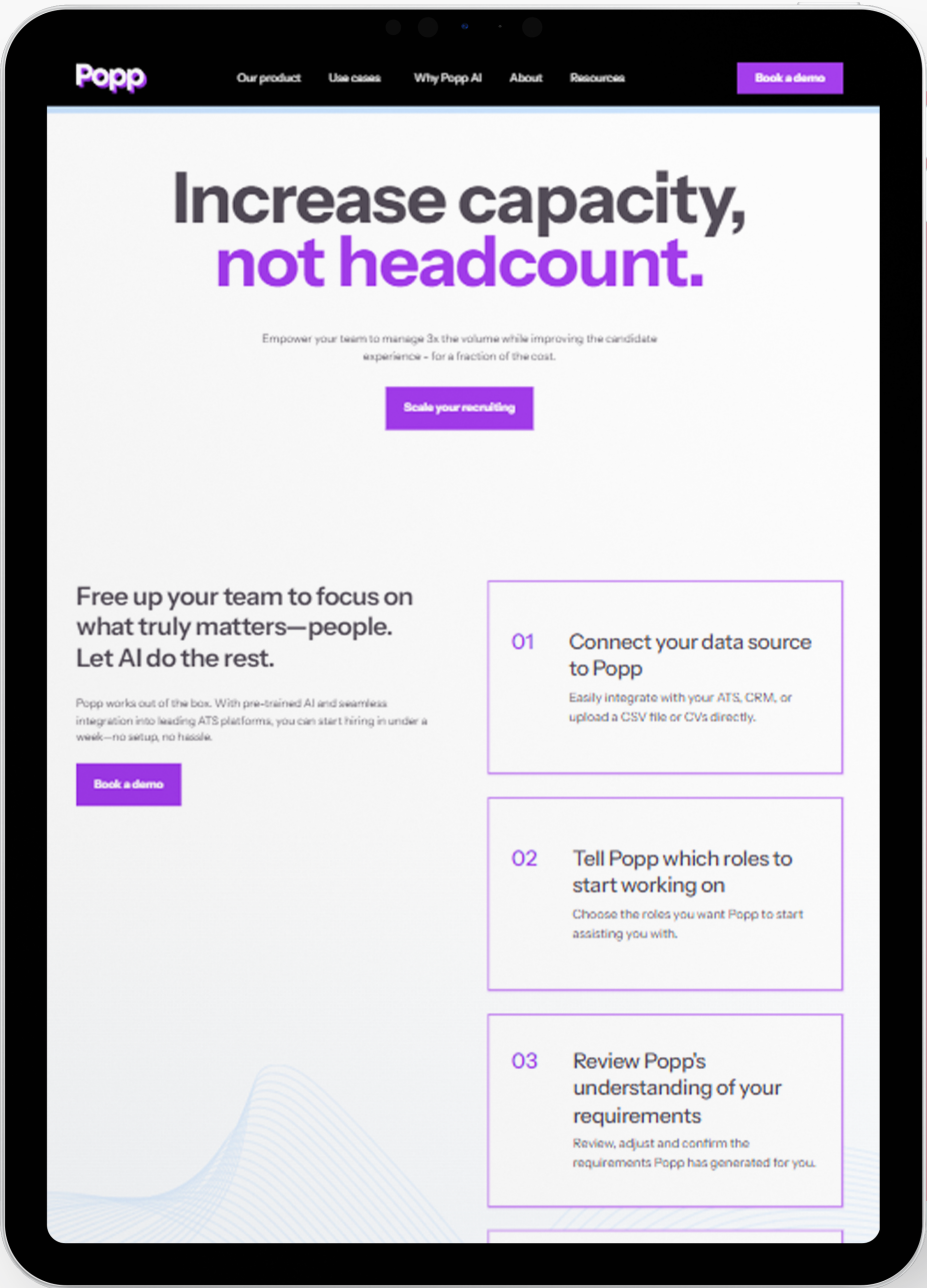
Meet the AI vendors reimaginging HR

Popp

Popp leverages generative AI to streamline the hiring process, with a particular focus on resume screening and candidate shortlisting. Popp’s approach is AI-powered open-ended conversations, with responses being scored against criteria set by a recruiter.

Whilst legacy careers platforms and candidate messaging often feel somewhat archaic, Popp’s fresh interface and multi-channel communication platform – including WhatsApp, SMS, email or webchat – provides a candidate-first experience.

Popp’s commitment to AI integrity is upheld by Warden AI’s assurance platform, which performs ongoing bias audits.



“Popp, first and foremost is easy to use. It was allowing our consultants to go end to end on their campaigns without any technical knowledge. Previously when we have used any conversational toolings, there had to be branching logic that’s put in place, a campaign that is run and you have to have days if not weeks’ worth of notice. Popp allowed us to put this in the recruiters’ hands and run the campaign end to end.”

James Atchison-Wootton
Senior Innovation Manager, Robert Walters

Meet the AI vendors reimaginging HR

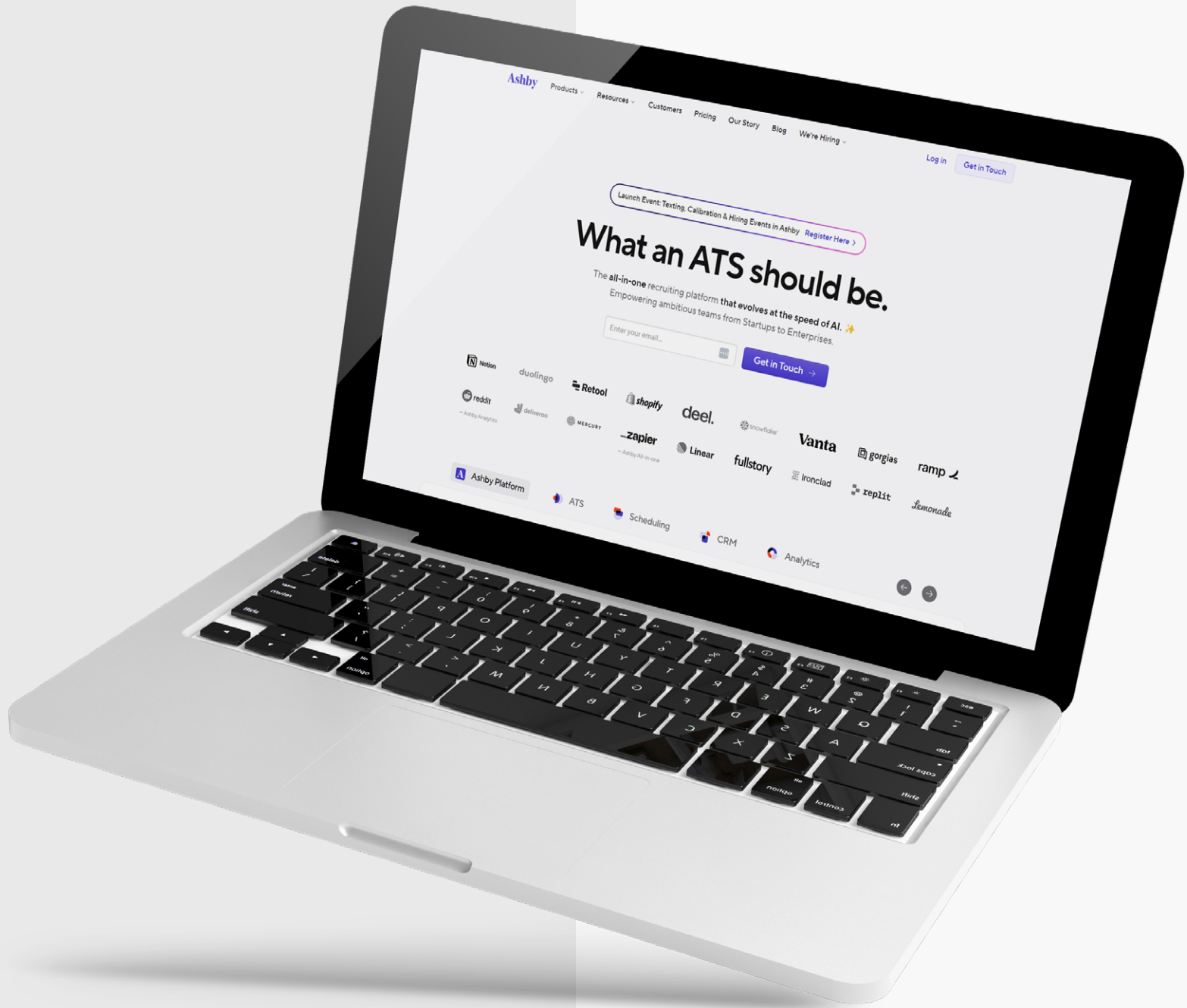
Ashby

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS’s) have historically been a rather unloved ‘necessary evil’ of the recruitment tech stack. Perceived as clunky legacy tech that often adds friction to both candidate and recruiter processes, ATS’s have been slow to evolve but Ashby has added a heavy dose of AI that enables recruiters to interact with the platform in a totally different way. AI-generated filters allow natural language search (“find me candidates with Java skills who we interviewed but didn’t hire”) rather than the Boolean searches or tags of the past.

Clients are, at present, largely operating in the tech space – including Duolingo and Shopify – but it’s comprehensive suite of tools including analytics and CRM make this a vendor to watch.

Pera

In many cases, AI simply automates a typical human process, but sometimes a new vendor provides a solution which aims to shake up historical approaches. Pera is a good example of this – it is a candidate assessment platform that uses AI to analyse competencies such as ‘making an impact’, ‘building relationships’, ‘influencing’ and ‘business agility’. However, unlike legacy assessment vendors, Pera does this by asking candidates to simply provide short written or verbal responses to three simple questions. It’s an interesting approach in an era of AI-generated prose but the candidate experience and user-friendly reports are helping Pera win clients including Rituals and L’Oreal.





Next steps

AI Readiness: HR Leaders Masterclass Programme

Our AI Masterclass programme equips people leaders with the knowledge and critical analysis to become an effective and informed leader, confident in the benefits, use-cases and considerations of leveraging AI throughout the business and people value chain.

- Easy-to-understand & jargon-free.
- Actionable insights for immediate impact.

Curated exclusively for people leaders, designed by our award-winning Future of Work Advisory practice. Why is understanding AI in the specific context of people critical? AI is transforming the way both employers hire and the way candidates research and apply for jobs. AI can unlock significant benefits: from lower

cost of hire to increased quality of hire, yet few people leaders are leveraging these benefits.

People leaders must also be informed of the risks of AI; from AI-infused applications to deepfake candidates and the ethical and bias implications

With Robert Walters’ AI Readiness Masterclass, you will gain critical insights into how to responsibly deploy AI.

AI Readiness Masterclass
[Learn more >](#)

Next steps

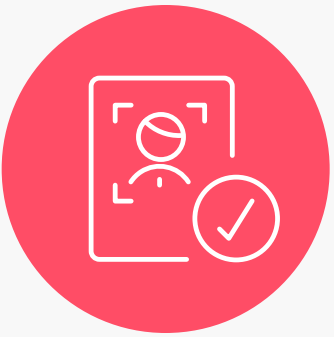
The Masterclass & learnings

5 x 1-hour modules covering talent acquisition-specific AI content & learning:



AI Knowledge baseline & upskilling

What really are LLMs, neural networks and why does it matter? What jobs are being displaced? What work can be automated (and what can't)?



AI Advocate: use cases

Explore how AI is reimagining hiring and workforces, for the better



AI Sceptic: Considerations

Understand the risk of bias, privacy, security, freedom and job erosion



AI Activation: Strategy & pilots

Learn how to move beyond foundational generative AI and activate impactful AI



1 x 6-month AI Update

AI never stays still. Keep up to date with a bespoke ongoing learning session with our expert team



Find out more about the Masterclass [here](#) >.

We deliver end-to-end talent solutions

Robert Walters is the world’s most trusted talent solutions business. Across the globe, we deliver recruitment, recruitment outsourcing and talent advisory services for businesses of all shapes and sizes, opening doors for people with diverse skills, ambitions, and backgrounds.

We help organisations find the skills and solutions to reach their goals and assist talented professionals to power their unique potential.



Specialist professional recruitment

Leverage our specialised industry expertise, extensive local insights, and global reach to champion your story and connect you with the best professionals for your organisation.

- Permanent recruitment
- Temporary recruitment
- Interim management
- Executive search



Outsourcing

Experience agile recruitment solutions tailored to your unique requirements, seamlessly scalable to match your evolving needs and objectives.

- Recruitment process outsourcing
- Contingent workforce solutions
- Statement of work



Talent advisory

Elevate your hiring strategy with our data-driven market intelligence and ESG solutions, empowering your business to cultivate talent, foster growth, and future-proof your success.

- Market intelligence
- Future of work
- Talent development

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New Zealand | Philippines | Portugal | Singapore | South Korea | Spain | Switzerland | Taiwan | Thailand | United Arab Emirates | United Kingdom |
United States | Vietnam.