Automation, AI and technology

Explore the CIPD's point of view on automation, AI and technology, including actions for Government and recommendations for employers

With more jobs being augmented or created following the introduction of new tech than eliminated, employers need to put HR at the centre of technology implementation decisions.

Automation, artificial intelligence (AI) and other workplace technologies are bringing major changes to work and employment. But CIPD research shows that HR has very little influence over strategic decision-making processes relating to automation and AI, and is not involved in the operational delivery of technology change. This creates several risks:

- Overemphasis on technology as a way to improve productivity, rather than improving people management practice and HR capability

- Harm to individuals, whose jobs and tasks may change or become redundant

- A lack of employee involvement and voice when implementing technology, leading to job insecurity

- Impact on job quality and employee well-being; for example, excessive surveillance and monitoring, a downgrading of people's skills, or an increase in work intensity/stress.

A CIPD-commissioned review suggests that, in some sectors of the economy, emerging work-related technologies will complement and extend human capabilities more than they will make current roles redundant. This view is supported by our survey of employers on the use of automation and AI, which found that more jobs have been augmented or created than eliminated as a result of the introduction of new technology.

It's crucial for employers to put HR at the centre of technology implementation decisions and to involve employees directly. This will ensure that employees have a meaningful voice on matters affecting them, including the ways in which their job roles could be augmented or changed by technology. Where changes to roles are significant, employees must be supported throughout the transition - through effective people management as well as reskilling or upskilling.

The CIPD's principle of 'people matter' (underpinning its professional standards) states that employees' needs merit the same consideration as other business outcomes (such as productivity and cost management). Automation, AI and other technologies must be adopted with this principle in mind to ensure that individuals are protected and their working lives enhanced for the better.

- Continue to develop the Industrial Strategy with emphasis on encouraging employers to develop people capabilities that complement technology investment and boost productivity. Highlight both the opportunities to be had and the risks to be managed.

- Help small firms develop people management capabilities that support the introduction of new technology and optimise its impact.

- Improve labour market enforcement to ensure that people's employment rights are not compromised during the introduction of new technology.

- Increase investment in career advice and guidance, adult skills and lifelong learning.

- Consider how job design, organisational policies and processes, values and behaviours can be applied when designing, developing and delivering new technologies in the work place.

- Involve employees in decisions on the design and implementation of new technologies that could augment or change their roles. Encourage individuals to voice their concerns (particularly during one-to-one meetings).

- Provide training and support to employees in the lead-up to - and following - technological change.

- Consider the needs of diverse groups within the organisation when making decisions about how technology is used in the workplace. HR should show ethical leadership to ensure that these needs are respected.

Reports

- Workplace technology: the employee experience
- People and machines: from hype to reality
- Impact of artificial intelligence, robotics and automation technologies on work

Guidance and factsheets

- AI and automation in the workplace

Podcasts

- Are robots stealing our jobs?
- HR tech revolution: friend or foe?

Articles

- No robots please, we're British