



Canadian Companies and Employees Still Prefer the Human Touch Over AI for Many Workplace Tasks

Survey finds hiring managers and job seekers still want human judgment in workplace decisions with the greatest consequences.

TORONTO, June 24, 2026 — As AI use spreads across the workplace, new survey data suggests the bigger question may no longer be whether companies will use it, but where they still want people involved.

According to an Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey, while nearly two-thirds (63%) of hiring managers say their companies already use AI, 82% say AI will never replace the need for actual employees at their company, and 89% say their company is committed to preserving a human element in the workplace.

Workers are largely in step. Among employed job seekers whose company uses AI, 81% say generative AI will never replace the need for actual employees where they work.

The finding stands out as AI use continues to expand: 63% of hiring managers say their companies use AI, while 75% of job seekers fear the growing use of AI will result in their company reducing the size of the workforce.

Where Human Involvement Remains a Priority

Even as AI use expands, hiring managers say the clearest preference for maintaining a human element appears in functions tied to employees and customers. The top areas where companies most often rely on people are:

- Customer service: 68%
- Human resources: 58%
- Ethics and compliance: 47%
- Sales: 45%
- Marketing and communications: 38%



- Legal: 38%

This preference is especially pronounced for small businesses. More than three-quarters of companies with two to nine employees (78%) say they prioritize human interaction in customer service, compared with 60% of companies with 100 or more employees.

High-Stakes Decisions Still Call for People

The distinction is sharpest in decisions that directly affect employees and the business itself. Among both hiring managers and job seekers, the strongest support for keeping people involved centers on moments where judgment, trust and direct interaction matter most, such as:

- Managing crisis situations or emergencies — Hiring managers: 76%, Job seekers: 74%
- Handling employee disputes or grievances — Hiring managers: 75%, Job seekers: 70%
- Negotiating deals or contracts with other businesses — Hiring managers: 73%, Job seekers: 66%
- Making decisions on ethical practices and compliance — Hiring managers: 72%, Job seekers: 68%
- Conducting performance reviews and providing feedback — Hiring managers: 71%, Job seekers: 69%
- Determining who gets laid off — Hiring managers: 70%, Job seekers: 67%

Among hiring managers, this emphasis also extends to serving as the first point of contact for customer issues or questions (66%) and reviewing applications and selecting candidates for interviews (65%).

“AI can improve efficiency, boost productivity and take routine tasks off employees’ plates so they can focus on other priorities, but that does not mean it should stand in for people,” said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, president and chairman of Express Employment International. “When the situation is sensitive or the outcome affects someone’s job, career or future, human involvement still matters. The real value of AI comes from working alongside people, not replacing them.”

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Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 3 to 19, 2025, among 504 Canadian hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 7 to 21, 2025, among 502 adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodology, please contact Ana Curic at Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

About Robert (Bob) Funk Jr.

Robert (Bob) Funk Jr. is the Chief Executive Officer, President and Chairman of Express Employment International, a global staffing franchisor founded and headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He leads a portfolio of workforce solution brands, including the flagship Express Employment Professionals franchise, along with several affiliated brands serving specialized markets. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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