



# AI at WORK: Shaping the FUTURE

**Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly changing how work is done across South African organisations. Driven by economic pressures, global competition, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, AI is increasingly being used to improve efficiency, strengthen decision-making, and enhance service delivery.**

Across sectors such as financial services, telecommunications, healthcare, retail, and the public service, AI already supports data analysis, fraud detection, customer engagement, and automation of routine processes.

Rather than replacing jobs, AI is reshaping jobs. By automating repetitive tasks, it allows employees to focus on work that requires judgement, problem-solving, collaboration, and ethical reasoning. International research, including by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, shows that AI adoption more often leads to job redesign than job loss.

In South Africa, where unemployment remains a major concern, the priority must be inclusive growth through re-skilling and upskilling. The International Monetary Fund estimates that nearly 40% of global jobs are exposed to AI-related change, highlighting the need for continuous skills development. Whilst digital literacy is essential, human capabilities such as adaptability, communication, and ethical judgment remain critical and difficult to automate.

AI outcomes, however, depend not only on technology but on how it is implemented. Research by *IBM* and *Microsoft* shows that governance, trust, and organisational culture are as important as the tools themselves. Without a human-centred approach, AI risks undermining fairness, wellbeing, and long-term sustainability.

In this context, the PSA has noted with concern reports of suspensions in some government departments following the use of an AI-generated draft policy document. Whilst the PSA recognises the employer's responsibility to uphold accountability and ethics, the Union cautions against placing sole responsibility on employees where clear AI guidelines are lacking.

AI is being introduced rapidly, often without sufficient training, ethical frameworks, or regulatory clarity. Employees are expected to adapt and improve efficiency whilst navigating new systems with limited support, increasing the risk of unintended errors and governance gaps. Disciplinary action must therefore consider organisational readiness and leadership responsibility. Departments have a duty to provide training, capacity-building, and clear guidance. Without this, punitive measures risk unfairly penalising employees for systemic shortcomings and may discourage innovation.

**The PSA calls for urgent, structured AI training across government. The development of a comprehensive AI governance framework that defines ethical use, accountability, and data integrity is required.**

Ultimately, AI represents a major shift in the world of work. Its success will depend on leadership that prioritises people, invests in skills, and builds trust - ensuring that technology and workers evolve together to strengthen public service delivery.

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