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Out: Résumés: In: Weeklong in-office trials.

In the age of AI, any job candidate can talk the talk. Now employers want you to come in and walk the walk.



By [Amanda Hoover](#)

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When Ellis Neder interviewed for a job as head of design at Foxglove three years ago, a platform for robotics developers, he was asked to come in for a few days to work. He was hesitant to invest the time, but took some days off and flew to Foxglove's San Francisco offices to work over a long weekend.

Neder tells me he loved it. The work trial, which involved fixing a user experience issue within Foxglove's app, let him see up close the pace at which the team moved, how the startup's leadership team functioned, and the bigger problems he would tackle upon joining.

Now he oversees work trials for other prospective employees at Foxglove, as the company uses them for every role. People ask him, "Can I use AI during my work trial?" Neder answers, "We expect you to use AI, and we will give you whatever AI tools you want." It's not just about evaluating a candidate's competency. "We want them to see what it's like to really work with us."

Last month, I wrote that the age of AI, the résumé has lost its cachet. Online job portals are launching them into the void. Instead of relying on your past experience, recruiters are more actively sourcing candidates on LinkedIn, relying on referrals, and putting job seekers through work trials, job simulations, or picking people based on personality traits.

Welcome to the show your work era of job hunting. It's not enough to ace an interview and list your GPA and previous employers — job seekers need to demonstrate those skills and aptitudes live. AI lets everyone talk; your next boss wants to be sure you can walk. Just as college professors have pivoted back to in-person Blue Book exams and middle school math teachers require equations written out step-by-step, hiring managers are looking for workers who can back up what they say they know. The job interview has always been a sort of audition; now companies are increasingly looking for people who can get on the proverbial stage and perform — not just to prove that they're real in a world of generative AI fakes and frauds, but also to show that they can use AI.



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AI is "changing not just how we get the job, but what we do in the job and what's expected of us in the job as well," says Patrick McCue, senior vice president at talent management firm Right Management. Companies want workers who combine hard and soft skills, like vibe coding marketing managers. People who can add AI skills to their portfolio and show how they would use them are increasingly valuable. "The future job market is going to definitely benefit the bold — people who are willing to put themselves out there with just a little bit of knowledge and understanding, knowing that they will be able to fulfill whatever it is they're asked to do."

During the 2000s, employers added degree requirements to jobs that had previously been open to those without college degrees, like managers, administrative assistants, sales representatives, and IT workers. But between 2017 and 2019, when companies struggled to fill managerial and IT roles in particular, companies dropped degree requirements by 46% for middle-skill positions, and by nearly a third for high-skill ones, according to research published by Harvard Business Review in 2022. Companies like Google and IBM hopped on the trend. Some positions in healthcare followed suit in 2020, as the pressure to hire workers during the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Skills-based hiring, which emphasizes assessments over credentials, started to rise.

Now, as the job market tightened and companies have shed the employees they overhired during the 2010s tech boom, employers are even hungrier for skills. The hype around generative AI and Silicon Valley's promises of a new era of productivity have amplified the drive to hire the most effective people. The number of job postings requiring AI skills has quadrupled, from about 50,000 in March 2024 to nearly 200,000 last month, according to an analysis from the Brookings Institution. A 2025 survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that the proportion of employers who say they're using skills-based hiring increased from 65% to 70% from 2024 to 2025. More than 60% of 3,500 business leaders surveyed in late 2025 by payment intelligence firm Payscale said they had updated the expectations of existing roles to include AI usage — at both tech and non-tech jobs.

And just as candidates need to show more of their work to get hired, they need to show more skills to stay employed. Revenue per employee metrics are back — Meta's revenue per employee has jumped as the company implemented layoffs and adopted AI over the past three years, now averaging more than \$2.5 million per worker. Big Tech companies are tracking how workers use AI and adding AI competency to performance reviews, trying to crystalize the murky relationship between the technology and productivity gains. The shift towards skills "opens the door for a lot of people that may not have opportunities," says Rick Smith, a professor at Johns Hopkins Carey Business School who also directs the Human Capital Development Lab. "It then creates a challenge for employers with, OK, how do you measure these skills and competencies?"

Startups are racing to build the new interview standard. There's Rounds, a work simulator that gives candidates tests ranging from 30 to 90 minutes for roles like software engineering, design, social media marketing, in content, and for product and technical leaders. The company uses an AI agent named Sophia, who takes job candidates through an interview process that includes technical simulations and questions. AI use is not just allowed, but part of the evaluation. "Every enterprise wants to build AI native teams, and consequently, they have to change their hiring process to test for how well people work with AI," says Fardeen Khimani, CEO of Rounds.

Live tests and work trials are appealing because they take away the questions of whether someone cheated by overrelying on AI. Foxglove tells me they have extended offers to eight of the 13 people who completed them in the last 90 days.

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interviews upended by AI early on. Michelle Volberg, founder and CEO of recruiting software company Twill, tells me that she has seen processes where candidates for finance jobs are asked to decipher spreadsheets during interviews. "Every single function you can think of, there is some sort of live component to it," she says.



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- Jake Ward, cofounder of Contact

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But even work trials and simulations might fail to capture the highly sought after trait bosses are seeking: adaptability. "Work is changing so quickly, because of AI, that job descriptions will be varying," McCue says. Some employers are looking not just at skills-mapping, but capability-mapping, he says, or seeking soft skills that correlate to success on the job. Davide Grieco, head of growth at software company Clay, tells me that his new team doesn't come from Big Tech companies or with years of marketing experience. Instead, he selected for personality traits he thought would equip workers for success: obsession, creativity, and the ability to multitask, putting those traits above more traditional qualifications. He hired a top NCAA artistic swimmer; someone who had juggled gigs across a nonprofit and a floral business; and an applicant who joined a livestream Grieco hosted and started participating. Work experience didn't matter, adaptability did. "The problem is everything changes so fast," Grieco says. "Knowing how to do something today doesn't mean that you know how to do something in six months."

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Volberg has seen the uptick in demand for former athletes, too. "The majority of people that we work with would much rather hire somebody with no experience or like one to two years of experience that played on a sports team or did something competitively in a field that they have some level of interest in." She says AI and vibe coding are fueling the trend that values personality traits over white-collar experience. The question is no longer: "How am I going to make this person more efficient?" she says. Instead, they think: "I'm going to hire this person to make the team more efficient."

At small companies, the work trial is critical to assess dollars spent on a small batch of hires. Peter Grafe, cofounder of AI marketing platform BlueAlpha, says he has used work trials to find about half of his 12-person team. The company will bring candidates in for several days, and pay them \$2,000 or cover their travel expenses to San Francisco. "Everyone can code something within 48 hours," Grafe says. "But what we want to understand is how do you think, how critically do you assess things, and then are you using AI tools to make yourself 10X faster?"

Results are outweighing credentials and prestige. Jake Ward, cofounder of internet search agency Contact, posted a link to an application portal on LinkedIn. "I don't care about your CV or what degree you have. Just what you've created, written, launched, or the results you've driven," his post read. Days later, Ward told me the firm had received more than 1,000 applicants for six open roles — a large pool for the small company. The portal asks just for name, email, role they're interested in, years of experience, and then an open-ended response about two or three projects the applicant is proud of. "All we really care about is results — results for our clients, results for our users, results for our product, and a CV doesn't tell you that, their past experience does," Ward says. "I would love to see the thing that broke and how you thought about that thing and how you got it back to where it needs to be."

For larger companies, sorting droves of applicants by degrees is much easier than skills-based hiring, Moe Hutt, director of strategic consulting services at recruitment advertising agency HireClix, tells me. When inundated with applications, they're still putting candidates to a test, but that's often because they're trying to evaluate whether a person and their qualifications are real in an age of AI, rather than put their aptitude above their past experience. "The knee-jerk reaction is to put something in front of them: a test," Hutt says. "Companies are able to do this right now because it is an employer market." If the market shifts, employers may change their demands on candidates. But it's likely that the change in showing, not just telling, that you're the best fit for a job sticks.

Amanda Hoover is a senior correspondent at Business Insider covering the tech industry. She writes about the biggest tech companies and trends.

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