ai@work

How artificial intelligence contributes to competitiveness and workforce planning

AI & Workforce planning
Business Case #1
Company: The Adecco Group

Company profile

The Adecco Group is a global leader in workforce solutions that provides recruitment, staffing, and career development services for job seekers and employers worldwide. They connect companies with talent by finding temporary and permanent positions, offering training and upskilling, and helping businesses build their workforces. The company operates under the mission of making the future work for everyone, through brands like Adecco, Akkodis, and LHH.

THE ADECCO GROUP

Year of foundation: 1996
Headquarters: Zurich, Switzerland
Size: ~34,000 employees
Sector: Temporary staffing and recruitment services

Interviewees

Megan Wickens

Global Head of SparkAI
at The Adecco Group

Megan Wickens (MW) is the Global Head of SparkAI at The Adecco Group in Canada, where she leads global initiatives focused on AI skilling, solution adoption, and change management for colleagues worldwide. With more than a decade of experience within The Adecco Group across sales, operations, and business innovation, Megan brings a strong track record of building new capabilities and driving transformation — with a focus on the intersection of people and technology.

Menno Bart

Head of Policy Advocacy
at The Adecco Group

Menno Bart is Public Affairs Manager at the Adecco Group in the Netherlands. As such, he is responsible for managing the Group's relationship with global and European policy makers, and for representing the Group in institutional settings. In addition, Menno is closely involved with employment and social policy topics, working via BusinessEurope, the International Organisation of Employers, and Business at OECD.

What has been your overall approach or strategy towards AI?

Our technology ambitions and our AI strategy need to connect to the rest of our organisation group strategy as well. It is important to us that AI is connected to tech, data and talent, which is all part of our organisational strategy. They are not separate things. We may refer to them as different facets of our strategy, but when we look at them, we look at them holistically and the impacts of AI and innovation as it relates to our entire organisation and the makeup thereof. So, when we are talking about AI, we look at it in three different categories:

1. Everyday - Transforming our operations and learning & development. What can we bring every day to our colleagues? Create efficiencies, gain productivity, build capacity - independently of your role.
2. Optimising - Enhancing core services. How do we look at transforming our business operations?
3. Disruptive - Creating differentiated experiences, innovative services and new business models. Be disruptive and transformative in the way that we bring solutions and service offerings to the market.

How did you introduce AI into the workplace?

Like many organisations, there is the constant battle of build or buy. We were not immune to that. Certainly, I would say that there are probably three ways that we look at bringing AI into the organisation - build, buy, and enrich.

1. building with our own teams - proprietary & self-developed
2. off-the-shelf AI solutions to adapt and deploy into the business, and/or
3. AI enrichments or enablements within existing technology.

When looking at our Everyday AI - it was important for us to look at a global approach. Something for everyone. What can we do, what can we deploy in the organisation that we know all colleagues can interact with? Ease of access and colleague experience was paramount, as well as high potential to create efficiency and productivity.

AI can be daunting for some individuals. You hear a lot about the deployment of AI and the complexities around that. Most certainly, we do not want to diminish how critical it is to ensure that when you are looking at bringing AI into your organisation, you are looking at it from a data privacy and security perspective. However, you must also look at it from a people readiness point of view. This starts with, do they have the right skills and access to the right training? Do they understand how to use it responsibly? Have you explained its purpose well?

What are your main AI use cases?

Given our core business, a natural starting point for was us to look at our recruitment activities. Experience was also at the top of our list both for candidates and our recruitment teams. It was really important for us to look at what administrative components of the work that our recruiters do every single day can we unburden them with using AI. As a result, we launched a tool called **Recruiter GenAI suite**, globally - it has seven use cases that are applicable to the recruitment process (see below) and we have been increasing adoption across the group since it has been live. This is not yet agentic - it is more about generative AI capabilities. Our goal was to help our teams build capacity to do the work that they love, which is building meaningful relationships and putting their time back into high value tasks.

Recruiter GenAI suite

Create Job Description - Empowering our recruiters to quickly generate engaging and diverse Job Descriptions (JD) - Recruiters can include job details, client specific requests and define the communication style. Then simply review automated job descriptions in an editable template, adjusting as needed. The model uses Adecco know-how together with the power of Gen AI.

Refine Job Description - Effortlessly transform existing job descriptions into new and engaging content - Recruiters can use their existing job descriptions and refine them further with the help of Gen AI. With a simple copy and paste into the tool, they benefit from improved language, uniformity in tone, style and corrections, delivering a unique job description based for each role.

Write Interview Questions - Create relevant interview questions to help get the best responses from our candidates - Recruiters can generate a comprehensive list of interview questions tailored to a job title or job description, automatically incorporating questions that target relevant hard and soft skills, helping start meaningful conversations with candidates and bring out their best qualities.

Summarise Candidate Profile - Help to summarise Candidate profiles, recapping interviews, recruiter notes, and highlight key skills comparing to the job description - Recruiters can save time creating lengthy emails summarising their candidate interviews and notes by generating individual profile snapshots including a suitability suggestion to help clients make informed decisions faster.

Manage CVs / Resumes - Effortlessly redact personal info and standardise candidate CVs, perfect for client sharing - Simply upload a CV, and it will be automatically stripped of personal details and formatted into a TAG template, ensuring a consistent, professional, and unbiased presentation for clients.

Candidate Evaluator - Save time and improve hiring accuracy by quickly identifying candidates who best align with the job description - Simply upload one or more CVs, and our tool will analyse how well each candidate aligns with the role requirements — helping you focus on the most relevant talent right from the start. Recruiters will see a general fit summary, which includes candidate/ job alignment, gaps or areas that require further attention, and suggested interview questions.

Summarise Transcripts - Turn long interviews or conversations into clear, actionable summaries, saving time and ensuring no detail is missed - Automatically summarise interview transcripts or candidate conversations, highlight key takeaways, and suggest follow-up questions to support faster, more informed hiring decisions.

How does your staff learn AI skills?

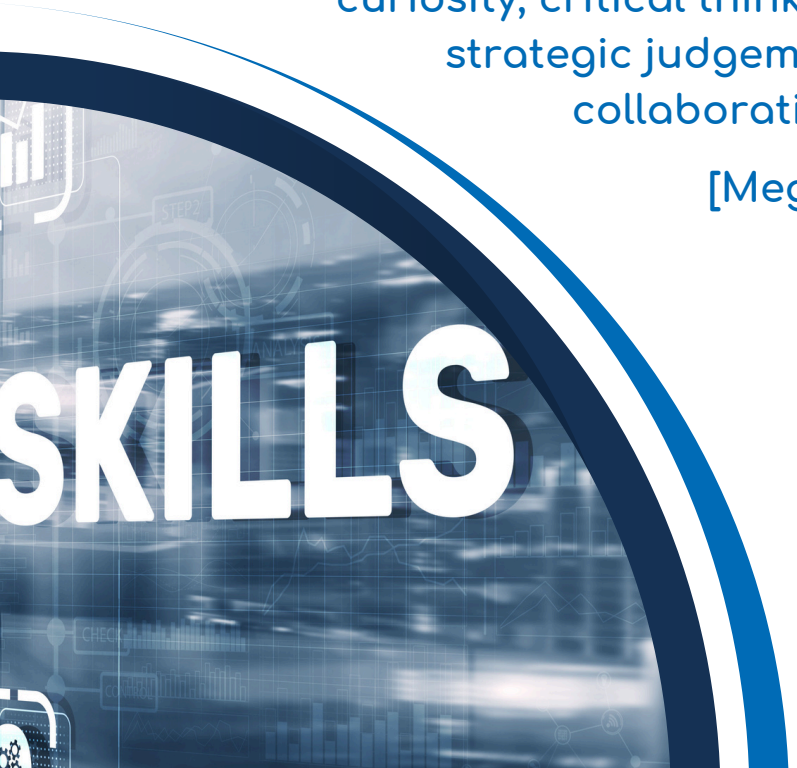
It was non-negotiable for us to ensure that we had adequate and accessible training. We started with what felt obvious, global Responsible AI Training. That is where we began our journey with reskilling or upskilling our workforce in a more structured way. We wanted to ensure that we connected our colleagues with our five core Responsible AI principles which is ethical, human centric, transparent, safe and lawful. We wanted to make sure they understood what those principles were, how we were applying them in the organisation, how we were applying them to innovation, and that they can embody that and make that applicable as they used AI.

As an organisation, we knew that our employees would be starting at different levels of experience, at different levels of expertise related to AI, and we wanted to catch them where they were at in their journey. Therefore, we launched a global AI skilling initiative, which is our first skills-based learning programme at this scale. It focuses on allowing people to access learning that interests them based on where they are at in their AI learning journey, irrespective of their role in the company. As a result, the entry points vary greatly. If you have a higher degree of technical expertise, you may start with our more advanced learning pathway. If you are at the very beginning of your journey, you are unsure, you do not understand the potential of AI fully, you may not know where to start – we've got you there, too. People feel safe to explore and they do not feel like it is an all or nothing type of deployment. We want them to see the clear benefits of AI and that is our responsibility - to show them what it is, what is in it for them.

Has AI affected the valuation of skills in your company?

"What has bubbled up right to the top of the list is the soft skills - curiosity, critical thinking, strategic judgement, collaboration."

[Megan]



If we go back to our core workforce, the recruiters, who are in a branch, trying to recruit temporary workers, assign them to a job in a factory - inherently, most of those people are very social. For many recruiters, this is the reason they went into this work in the first place, because they enjoy the interaction with the candidates and clients, and they enjoy the livelihood and the quickfire connections. In that sense, AI is allowing them to get back to their areas of strength, because now they can go back to being that social person rather than being an administrator who is an Excel wizard. AI is taking care of that boring part for them so that they can focus on their social skills instead and that type of shift is what we see with many different job categories.

Concluding remarks

[Menno] AI is just a tool in the end, and it only does what we design it to do. In the end, I am a strong believer that every wave of automation, we think that it is total gloom. I always tell this anecdote about the knitters' guild who wrote a letter to Queen Victoria to ask her to please ban knitting machines because this would be the end of all employment if, all of a sudden, machines would start taking over knitting.

And here we are 150 years later and luckily everything turned out well. And, of course, AI is different. AI is different than the Internet. The Internet was different than the combustion engine or the steam engine or electrification [...].

> "In the end, I think it is just another tool that will help us humans do work better."

[Megan] We should remain critical of and cautious about how we approach AI, but when you peel back the layers, what we are doing is not necessarily complicated, but it is complex. My hope and our goal is that we continue on the mindset that we build for the people using the technology and we do not build for ourselves.

> "What we are doing is meant to bring back those incredible human skills."

And yes, along the way, things are going to change and that is the whole point of the work that we are doing. If we do it right, things will change, jobs will change, but it is our responsibility to make sure that we are focusing on elevating human beings as we continue to innovate with technology.

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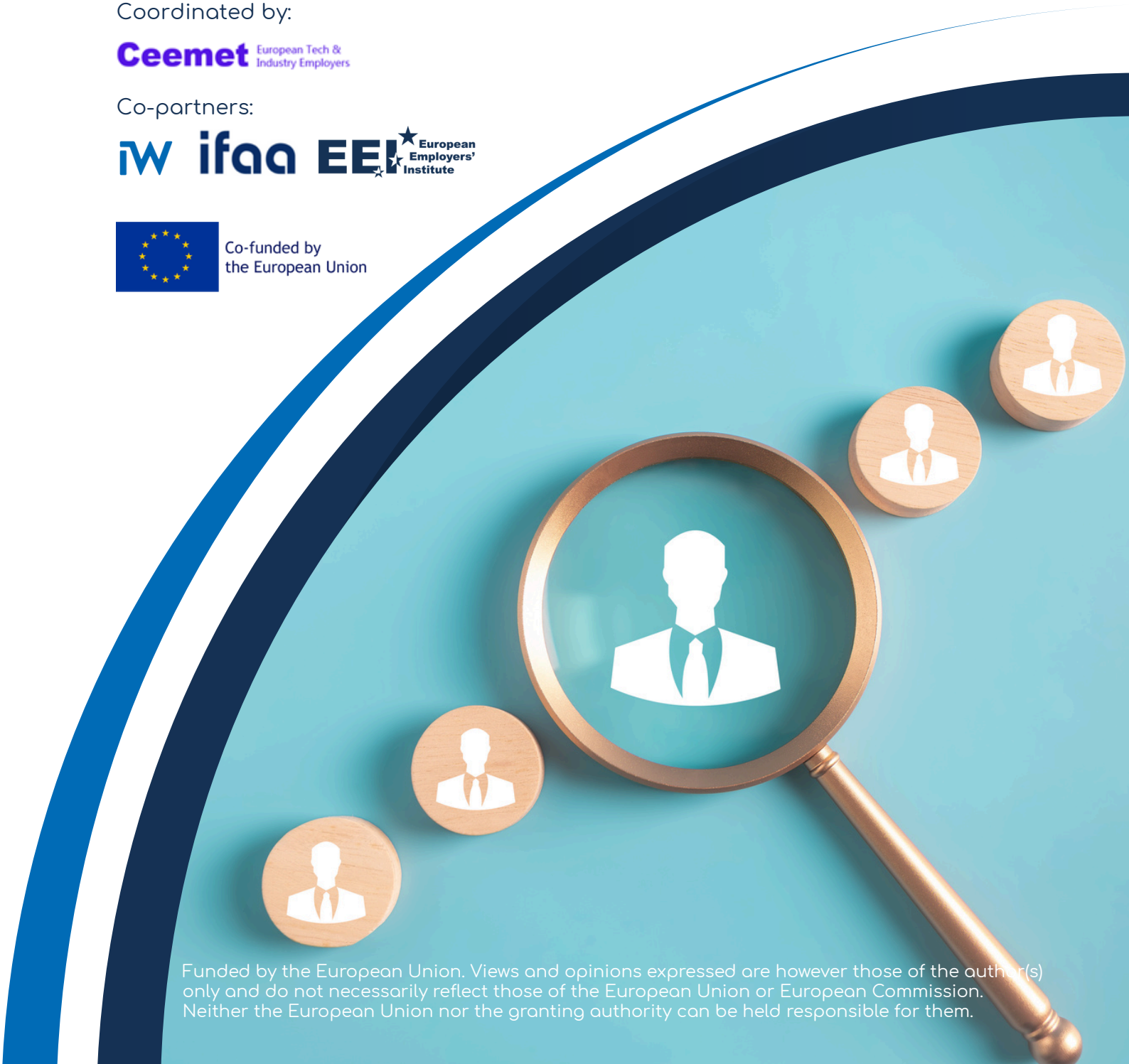

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