

# Survey: Only five per cent of organizations have the skills and headcount needed for priority projects in 2026

- New Robert Half research shows skills-based hiring is on the rise as gaps become more apparent

TORONTO, Feb 2, 2026 /CNW/ - Businesses are entering 2026 facing widening skills gaps and increasing hiring complexity, according to new research from talent solutions and business consulting firm Robert Half. Of the 1,500 hiring managers surveyed, nearly six in 10 (57%) report having skills gaps in their department, and 58 per cent say the gap is more noticeable than it was one year ago. In addition, only five per cent say they have the necessary skills and headcount to complete high-priority projects.

## Skills gaps are widespread

Only a small percentage of managers across several professional fields report having all the talent they need to complete priority projects:

- Legal – <1%
- Marketing and creative – 2%
- Technology – 5%
- Human resources – 5%
- Administrative and customer support – 8%
- Finance and accounting – 9%

## Top skills gap areas

Finance and accounting	Technology	Marketing and creative	Legal	Administrative and customer support	HR
Financial planning and analysis	AI and machine learning	SEO and paid search	Legal technology (AI tools)	Problem solving and critical thinking	AI literacy
Technology and automation	IT governance and compliance	AI and ML applications	Legal operations and workflows	Quality assurance	Soft skills and leadership
Data analytics	IT operations and infrastructure support	Marketing automation	Legal research and analysis	Customer service and relationship management	Learning and development

"As the gap between available skills and business needs continues to widen, many organizations are responding proactively," said Koula Vasilopoulos, Senior Managing Director, Robert Half, Canada. "Companies are increasingly dependent on specialized expertise to deliver results, yet the hiring landscape has become far more complex, especially with the rapid adoption of AI. Blending full-time hiring with contract support enables companies to address urgent skills shortages, stay adaptable, and maintain momentum on high-priority projects in a labour market that's evolving faster than ever."

## Demand for specialized talent is on the rise

Despite ongoing skills gaps, nearly 8 in 10 (79%) managers are confident in their business outlook for the first half of 2026. In addition to the 55 per cent of hiring managers who plan to add permanent employees, half also expect to bring on more contract talent to address immediate skills gaps and maintain flexibility during the first half of the year.

	First Half 2024	First Half 2025	First Half 2026
Increasing/Adding new positions	54 %	46 %	55 %

## GenAI is making hiring more complex

While hiring plans are strong, the process itself is becoming more difficult. 53 per cent of managers say that finding skilled talent has become more challenging in the last year, with AI contributing to the problem. According to the research, 64 per cent also report challenges identifying the right talent due to the influx of AI-generated applications.

As generative AI tools enable candidates to produce highly polished resumes, applications and work samples, employers are spending more time validating qualifications and job readiness, adding friction to the hiring process and increasing the risk of misalignment.

#### **About the research**

The research is gathered from a survey developed by Robert Half and conducted by an independent research firm in November 2025. The survey contains responses from 1,500 hiring managers in the fields of finance and accounting, technology, marketing and creative, legal, administrative and customer support, and HR across Canada.

#### **About Robert Half**

Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialized talent solutions firm that connects opportunities at great companies with highly skilled job seekers. Offering contract and permanent placement solutions in the fields of finance and accounting, technology, marketing and creative, legal, and administrative and customer support, Robert Half has more than 300 locations worldwide. Robert Half is the parent company of Protiviti®, a global consulting firm that provides internal audit, risk, business and technology consulting solutions. Robert Half, including Protiviti, has been named to the *Fortune*® Most Admired Companies™. Explore our comprehensive solutions, research and insights at [RobertHalf.ca](https://roberthalf.ca).

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