

Robert Half survey reveals what early career workers need to succeed--beyond just AI skills

- Report reveals where experienced professionals say early career workers need the most guidance
- 4 in 10 say AI knowledge is a baseline expectation, but a focus on human skills can set candidates apart

TORONTO, April 16, 2026 /CNW/ - As the class of 2026 prepares to enter the workforce, new research from talent solutions and business consulting firm [Robert Half](#) reveals what today's professionals say matters most for early career success. According to a survey of 1,005 experienced workers, 40 per cent say candidates should be prepared to demonstrate knowledge of AI tools when applying to roles. At the same time, 36 per cent caution against using AI to overstate skills or experience.

Where do early career workers need the most guidance?

Respondents point to foundational workplace behaviours as key areas where new professionals require the most guidance, including:

- Time management and punctuality (71%)
- Communication and responsiveness (51%)
- Effective meeting participation (49%)
- Reviewing and refining AI-generated work for accuracy (31%)

"AI skills are quickly becoming table stakes in today's workforce," said Koula Vasilopoulos, senior managing director, Robert Half, Canada. "What truly sets early career professionals apart, however, is their ability to think critically, make sound decisions, and take ownership of outcomes."

What should new professionals prioritize in their job search?

A first professional role can set the foundation for long-term success, and according to survey respondents:

- 80 per cent recommend evaluating opportunities based on long-term potential
- 68 per cent advise being open to in-office work to accelerate learning and relationship-building

"No one expects someone starting out to have all the answers on day one," Vasilopoulos added. "What makes a difference is showing genuine curiosity, understanding professionalism, and being intentional about building skills and relationships over time."

FAQ:

What level of AI proficiency do employers expect from early career professionals?

Employers aren't necessarily expecting deep technical expertise. Instead, workers should demonstrate familiarity with AI tools--particularly the ability to review AI-generated content, recognize its limitations and take responsibility for the final product.

Which workplace skills matter most for early career success?

Foundational workplace behaviours are critical, including time management, punctuality, effective communication, and professional appearance.

How important is a learning mindset for early career success?

A learning mindset is essential for early career professionals. Employers look for curiosity, openness to feedback and a willingness to build professional skills over time, particularly as technology and workplace expectations continue to evolve.

About the research

The research is gathered from a survey developed by Robert Half and conducted by an independent research firm in March 2026. The survey contains responses from 1,005 employed professionals aged 18 and over, across Canada.

About Robert Half

Robert Half (NYSE: RHI) is the world's first and largest specialized talent solutions and business consulting firm, connecting highly skilled job seekers with rewarding opportunities at great companies. We offer contract talent and permanent placement solutions in the fields of finance and accounting, technology, marketing and creative, legal, and administrative and customer support, and we also provide executive search services. Robert Half is the parent company of Protiviti®, a global consulting firm that delivers internal audit, risk, business and technology consulting solutions. Robert Half, including Protiviti, has been named one of the Fortune® Most Admired Companies™. Explore comprehensive talent solutions, research and insights at

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