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DIGIT report:

AI in Marketing Work and the Labor Market

Formal job-market signals, professional AI use, and career narratives from Reddit

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Artificial intelligence is increasingly reshaping not only how marketing work is performed, but also how it is described, evaluated, and experienced across the labor market. This report examines AI from three complementary perspectives: formal job-market demand, everyday professional practice, and career-related narratives. Drawing on European job postings and discussions collected from professional and career-oriented Reddit communities, the analysis explores how AI is integrated into marketing roles, how practitioners use and negotiate AI in their daily work, and how workers and job seekers perceive its impact on employability, recruitment, and professional identity. Together, these perspectives provide a multidimensional view of AI's growing role in marketing work and reveal how technological change is being interpreted, adopted, and contested across different layers of the labor market.

Introduction

This report examines how artificial intelligence is becoming visible in marketing-related work and in broader labor-market discourse through three complementary sources of evidence. The first part analyzes formal job-market signaling, based on job postings returned for the keyword “AI marketing” across selected European labor markets. The second part examines professional Reddit discussions focused on everyday AI use in work. The third part analyzes career-oriented Reddit discussions focused on job search, employability, recruitment, and job insecurity. The analyzed job postings were collected during the last quarter of 2025, covering the period from October to December 2025, while the analyzed Reddit posts were collected during the first quarter of 2026, covering the period from January to March 2026.

These three sources do not measure the same phenomenon. Job postings show how employers formally label AI-related marketing roles. Professional Reddit discussions show how workers – marketers, salespeople, business owners, and practitioners – describe AI as part of everyday work. Career-oriented Reddit discussions show how job seekers and workers perceive and interpret AI as a factor in hiring, skill requirements, and labor-market uncertainty. Taken together, the three layers allow the report to move from formal demand, through workplace practice, to career consequences.

The findings should be regarded as indicative of the ways in which AI is communicated, experienced, and negotiated within specific labor-market and online-discourse contexts. They should not be interpreted as an exhaustive assessment of the entire marketing labor market or as representative of all worker attitudes toward AI. The strength of the combined methodological approach resides in its capacity to compare different layers of visibility: employer signals, practitioner descriptions, and candidate perceptions or adaptations.

Analytical logic of the integrated report

This report employs three distinct empirical approaches. The job-posting component primarily utilizes title-based role structure analysis, given that job titles are the most consistently available and comparable data across various countries. The professional Reddit component is grounded in qualitative coding of workplace narratives, focusing on specific AI applications, perceived benefits, challenges, and emotional framing. The career-oriented Reddit component employs the same qualitative methodology to posts related to recruitment, job search, employability, and career insecurity.

The aim of integration is not to merge the datasets into a single quantitative metric. Given the variations in scale, structure, and meaning across sources, they are instead employed sequentially. Part I delineates how AI-related marketing activities are formally presented in job postings. Part II examines the utilization and contestation of AI in routine work practices. Part III explores AI's influence on the experience of job searching and employability. The concluding synthesis identifies a unifying pattern that emerges across all three levels.

Part I. AI marketing in formal job-market signaling

This section investigates job postings related to the keyword “AI marketing” across selected European labor markets. The data are derived from automated scraping of local job portals over several weeks, then aggregated and deduplicated to identify distinct roles within the observed period. The aim is not to catalog all marketing positions but to analyze the types of roles that become apparent when querying the labor market through the specific lens of “AI marketing”. The analysis focuses on the structure of job titles and the marketing roles associated with the keyword. Where data quality permitted, roles clearly unrelated to marketing were excluded, and duplicate postings were removed using stable identifiers such as job URLs or similar IDs. Due to inconsistencies in job descriptions and salary information across markets, the primary analytical focus remains on job titles, which primarily reflect employer labeling and role positioning rather than the complete functional content of each position.

1. AI marketing appears as an embedded capability, not a separate job category

> Across the job postings, “AI marketing” most often surfaces conventional marketing roles rather than a stable category of AI-specialist marketing jobs.

The primary finding from the analysis of job postings is that AI marketing does not yet constitute a distinctly defined occupational category. Across the examined countries, job titles associated with the keyword "AI marketing” are predominantly classified within well-established marketing domains, such as general marketing, digital marketing, branding and communication, social media, content creation, search engine optimization, customer relationship management, performance marketing, and e-commerce. Explicit mentions of AI in job titles remain relatively infrequent.

This does not imply the absence of AI integration within marketing functions. On the contrary, evidence indicates that AI is frequently embedded within existing marketing roles. Employers appear to seek professionals capable of operating within data-intensive, automated, and AI-enabled environments, yet these competencies seldom result in the creation of new job titles. In terms of labor-market signaling, AI thus manifests less as a novel profession and more as an evolving operational environment for established roles.

Understanding this distinction is crucial. If analysis is limited to job titles explicitly containing "AI," the visible market appears limited. However, considering "AI marketing” as a conceptual filter reveals that AI-related competencies are increasingly being integrated into existing digital and communication functions. From a labor-market perspective, the term "AI marketing” primarily describes the manner in which marketing work is conducted, rather than delineating a separate occupational category.

The institutional illusion of stable job titles often masks a silent reconfiguration of work, where AI is absorbed as an embedded capability within existing roles rather than a new occupational category. This occurs because technologies like AI initially function as cognitive partners that augment routine tasks—such as drafting, ideation, and analysis—before they are formalized into new professions. For employers, this signaling gap creates a risk of under-hiring or under-training, as they may fail to recognize that traditional roles now require advanced AI coordination and governance skills. Employees face a tacit professional expectation to master AI to maintain employability, navigating a labour market where the role title remains unchanged even as the role itself is fundamentally transformed.

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2. Cross-country patterns: breadth, explicitness, and role normalization

> The strongest country-level difference is not whether AI appears in marketing work, but whether AI is explicitly named in titles or remains implicit within broader marketing roles.

The patterns observed at the country level provide a nuanced understanding beyond the aggregate overview. Within the largest and most diversified market sample, the landscape of roles is extensive, encompassing areas such as general marketing, branding, communication, social media, content creation, customer relationship management, performance marketing, and e-commerce, all recognizable as distinct role categories. However, references to AI terminology are only sporadically evident at the job title level. This indicates a relatively consistent pattern wherein AI functions are integrated as an assumed capability across the marketing domain, rather than being explicitly designated within specific job titles.

In smaller markets, the landscape is more limited but nonetheless provides valuable insights. Certain countries demonstrate generalist marketing roles with minimal or no explicit reference to artificial intelligence (AI), indicating that AI has not yet established itself as a prominent nomenclature. Conversely, some markets exhibit fewer roles overall but feature more explicit signaling of AI where relevant. This pattern suggests a selective approach: AI may serve as a differentiator in niche or emerging segments, even if it is not widely adopted across multiple role categories.

The primary conclusion is not that one country is inherently more advanced than another. Rather, the distinction lies in the scope and explicitness of AI integration. A market may possess a broad demand for marketing activities without explicitly naming AI, or it may have a narrower focus where AI is explicitly referenced. Throughout the dataset, roles that explicitly integrate marketing functions with advanced AI, data science, or technical expertise remain relatively marginal at the level of job titles. Consequently, AI-related marketing demand is predominantly expressed through adaptations of existing marketing roles rather than through the development of new hybrid occupational categories.

3. Interim conclusion: formal signals may understate practical change

The formal job-market signal points to gradual normalization rather than a disruption in job titles. Artificial Intelligence has not yet fundamentally reshaped the visible structure of marketing-related occupations into a new, stable category. Instead, it appears as an embedded, often implicit capability within established marketing, digital, content, and commercial roles.

This primary observation underscores the importance of interpreting job-posting data alongside practitioner discourse. Formal job titles may underestimate the extent to which AI has already permeated daily work practices. Employers may refrain from labeling a role as "AI marketing," even though practitioners in similar positions are likely utilizing AI tools for drafting, analysis, summarization, automation, and optimization tasks. Consequently, the subsequent analysis transitions from employer signaling to the practical realities of AI integration in routine work activities.

Part II. AI in everyday professional practice

This section investigates how users within selected professional Reddit communities articulate their routine employment of artificial intelligence in work-related contexts. The analysis draws on 97 Reddit posts collected from communities chosen for their relevance to marketing, digital work, sales, SEO, entrepreneurship, and small business. Rather than considering these posts as representative of public opinion, they serve as qualitative evidence illustrating how professionals, business owners, and practitioners describe their direct experiences with AI tools in the workplace.

The material offers a valuable comparative perspective to formal labor-market data. While job postings indicate how employers categorize roles and signal expected competencies, Reddit discussions reveal how workers and practitioners narrate their experiences with AI adoption: their use cases, perceived value, sources of frustration, and the impact of AI on their perceptions of professional expertise, authenticity, trust, and control.

The dataset is exploratory in nature and should not be regarded as a statistically representative sample of Reddit discourse. Nonetheless, it is sufficiently comprehensive to identify recurring themes in professional narratives concerning AI usage, particularly as many posts describe specific work scenarios rather than abstract opinions about AI.

1. Analytical approach

The thematic structure of this section was developed through qualitative coding of the Reddit posts. Each post was reviewed with attention to the concrete work situation described, the AI tools or models referenced, the perceived benefits or challenges, and the emotional tone associated with the experience. Structured dataset fields—including experience type, employed AI models, encountered challenges, skills acquired, and sentiment—served as supporting indicators, but the final themes were derived primarily from recurring patterns within the post content.

The themes delineated herein should be regarded as inductively derived analytical categories rather than pre-defined assumptions. They were retained where evidenced across multiple posts or where they captured a clearly recurring professional tension within the dataset. This methodological approach facilitates not only an assessment of whether users perceive AI positively or negatively but also elucidates how they conceptualize its role within routine work practices.

Sentiment was interpreted as an analytical layer rather than a mere polarity score. Each post was reviewed manually with particular attention to the evaluation target: AI as a productivity tool, AI-generated content, organizational implementation, sales automation, search visibility, or perceived professional risk. The sentiment field in the dataset was used as an initial indicator; however, interpretations were refined through close reading of the original post content. This context-based reading is important because the same post can be positive about efficiency while negative about trust, authenticity, or managerial misuse.

2. Scope and composition of the Reddit sample

The sample consists of 97 Reddit posts collected from communities centered on professional and work-related topics. The content is particularly pertinent for analyzing AI applications within the realms of commerce, marketing, sales, SEO, entrepreneurship, and small businesses. However, it is less appropriate for broader claims about AI usage across various occupations or the platform as a whole.

The posts primarily fall into two main categories of professional discourse: project-related experiences and job-related experiences. Isolated categories with only a single post are not considered independent analytical categories, because doing so would give one-off cases disproportionately weight single instances. Instead, the analysis emphasizes recurring patterns observed across multiple posts or within various professional contexts. The overall emotional tone of the sample is heterogeneous, not simply classified as positive or negative. Numerous users characterize AI as beneficial for specific tasks while simultaneously expressing concerns regarding authenticity, quality, trustworthiness, job boundaries, or managerial overreach. Consequently, the report does not interpret sentiment as a standalone metric. Instead, it employs sentiment analysis to identify areas of positive reception, resistance, and the professional situations that provoke the most significant friction.

3. AI as a practical work tool rather than an abstract technology

> Across the posts, AI is most often described as a practical work aid used for drafting, summarizing, ideating, researching, automating, or structuring tasks, rather than as an abstract or futuristic technology.
>
> *"I uploaded my sales playbook and a ton of calls recording to a GEM. I dubbed it my co-pilot."*

A central pattern within the dataset indicates that users rarely discuss AI solely as a technological trend. Instead, they contextualize it within work-related scenarios. Posts describe the utilization of AI to compose emails, prepare proposals, summarize call transcripts, identify pain points, generate campaign ideas, craft product descriptions, build landing pages, support SEO activities, enhance customer service, and automate repetitive business tasks. This framing is significant: AI is perceived as a tool that alters the execution of routine work rather than as a distinct domain of expertise.

As one user put it, “AI automation is not about automation. It’s about leverage.” This observation captures a recurring pattern. Users rarely evaluate AI in terms of technological sophistication or novelty. Instead, they assess it through its practical contribution to everyday work: whether it helps them save time, increase capacity, reduce repetitive effort, or accomplish tasks that would otherwise require significantly more resources. In this sense, AI is often framed less as a technology in its own right and more as an instrument for extending individual or organizational capabilities.

ChatGPT is the most prominently referenced tool within the sample; however, other systems and categories are also mentioned, including Claude, Gemini, Perplexity, AI agents, AI receptionists, automation platforms, image-generation tools, and AI-supported research or workflow systems. The diversity of tools mentioned suggests that users are increasingly assembling AI-enabled work environments rather than relying on a single platform. Across the posts, tools are discussed primarily in relation to specific tasks and workflows, reflecting a practical orientation toward solving operational problems rather than experimenting with AI for its own sake.

The most credible positive perspectives frame AI as a support layer rather than a complete replacement for professional judgment. Users appreciate AI when it facilitates the organization of work, mitigates writer's block, summarizes information, or produces initial drafts for review and refinement. This distinction is crucial: effective practical narratives emphasize AI's role in reducing friction within specific workflow components, rather than automating entire roles.

4. Productivity gains and the problem of professional identity

> AI is frequently valued for saving time, but productivity gains are accompanied by uncertainty about what remains distinctively human or professional when parts of the work are delegated to prompts and tools.
>
> *“the sentences i write arent necessarily short, they're just...in my voice?”*

Productivity emerges as a notably positive framing within the dataset; however, it is seldom depicted as entirely uncomplicated. Users describe AI as a facilitator for expediting tasks that are repetitive, text-intensive, or structurally predictable. In sales contexts, this encompasses reviewing transcripts, identifying client pain points, drafting proposals, preparing follow-up communications, and developing prospecting materials. In marketing and digital work, it includes captions, content ideas, rewriting, campaign planning, supporting search engine optimization (SEO), and conducting research. Within small business environments, AI is viewed as a potential solution for managing customer support, handling calls, scheduling appointments, following up, or alleviating administrative burdens.

Despite these productivity enhancements, a secondary question frequently arises: if AI can draft, summarize, structure, and suggest, what remains the unique contribution of the professional? Several discussions illustrate users delineating this boundary—some desire AI to augment efficiency without altering their individual voice, while others express concern that managers or clients may equate AI-generated output with genuine expertise. As one user remarked, *“Using AI for an outline is smart. Relying on it to speak for you is boring.”* The statement captures a recurring concern in the dataset: productivity gains are welcomed, but many users remain reluctant to delegate the expression of judgment, experience, or personal voice to AI systems. In this context, AI transcends the role of a mere productivity instrument, becoming an influence on professional identity.

The most insightful interpretation is not that users merely display enthusiasm or resistance but that they are engaged in defining a sustainable division of labor between human judgment and machine assistance. AI is embraced when it enhances the quality and speed of work; it becomes problematic when it appears to reduce the worker to a prompt operator, editor, or validator of machine-produced content.

5. Authenticity, trust, and the backlash against AI-generated content

> Users repeatedly distinguish between AI as a behind-the-scenes support tool and AI as a visible substitute for human voice, with the latter often perceived as generic, low-trust, or damaging to brand credibility.
>
> *"if customers dont trust it whats the point"*

A major tension in the data concerns authenticity. Within marketing, content creation, sales, and small-business communications, users consistently distinguish between AI utilized privately to support production processes and AI employed visibly as the authoritative voice or representation of a brand. The former is frequently deemed acceptable; the latter often attracts criticism. Users characterize AI-generated text, imagery, videos, and outreach efforts as identifiable, generic, low-effort, or trust-eroding when they are not carefully edited or contextualized. One user summarized this perception bluntly: *"The message comes across as low effort and inauthentic."* The criticism is not directed at automation itself, but at communication that appears detached from human judgment, audience awareness, or genuine effort.

This thematic concern is particularly salient because it indicates that AI output is evaluated not solely based on efficiency but also regarding perceived credibility. For outward-facing communications, audience perception becomes a critical factor. Some observations report customers questioning the authenticity of product photographs, younger consumers identifying AI-created visuals, or users associating AI-generated imagery with notions of superficiality or fraudulent activity. These findings suggest a boundary condition for AI adoption in marketing: although increased speed can be advantageous, it may become a liability if it undermines trust.

The emerging pattern does not suggest an outright opposition to AI in a broad sense. Many users accept AI tools for ideation, editing, resizing, structuring, or supporting the production process. The resistance appears when AI is perceived as a visible stand-in for human taste, voice, or audience understanding. In this context, the discourse within online communities indicates that the market value of human creativity may increasingly depend not only on content production but also on maintaining credibility in an environment where content can be generated at scale.

6. Sales and outreach: automation as both efficiency and noise

> In sales-related discussions, AI is framed as both a productivity accelerator and a source of market saturation, enabling more outreach while making communication feel increasingly automated and interchangeable.
>
> *"instead of scaling trust, we're scaling noise"*

Sales-related posts provide some of the sharpest examples of ambivalence. AI is depicted as useful for building prospect lists, drafting emails, summarizing calls, preparing proposals, augmenting account information, and handling substantial lead volumes. At an individual level,

these technological tools promise increased leverage—more contacts, expedited preparation, enhanced follow-up, and reduced administrative burden.

Conversely, these same sources indicate that extensive automation may generate a collective challenge. When multiple sales personnel employ analogous AI systems that produce similar outreach sequences, recipients encounter increased volume without a commensurate rise in relevance. Several users report saturation, uniformity, and a growing difficulty in differentiation. One user attributed this directly to the widespread use of generative AI, arguing that *"with ChatGPT, everyone sounds exactly the same."* The concern is not merely that more messages are being produced, but that they increasingly share the same structure, tone, and rhetorical patterns, making meaningful differentiation more difficult. Within this context, AI enhances the productivity of individual sellers but potentially diminishes the overall quality of communication within the sales environment.

This represents a significant insight derived from Reddit discussions. The concern extends beyond whether AI facilitates individual task completion; it encompasses the impact of aggregating numerous AI-supported agents on market dynamics. In the domain of sales outreach, data suggests that AI may concurrently boost production capacity while impairing the clarity and distinctiveness of signals. This phenomenon may elucidate why some users advocate for renewed emphasis on face-to-face engagement, personal branding, and relationship-centered sales approaches.

7. SEO and AI search visibility: uncertainty, experimentation, and measurement gaps

> SEO-related posts show AI not only as a content tool, but as a new visibility environment in which marketers are still trying to understand ranking, citation, discovery, and measurement.
>
> *"The user gets the answer, and I get zero traffic."*

In SEO and digital marketing posts, AI appears not merely as a tool utilized by professionals but as an environment they must optimize for. Users discuss ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, Google's AI-generated responses, and AI-mediated search as emerging layers of discovery. The concern extends beyond content creation, encompassing considerations of whether brands are being cited, surfaced, summarized, or bypassed by AI algorithms.

The discourse within this community reflects a level of uncertainty greater than that observed in narratives centered solely on productivity enhancements. Professionals inquire about metrics for evaluating AI visibility, mechanisms for ensuring presence in AI-generated answers, the ongoing relevance of traditional SEO signals, and methods for explaining these shifts to clients. Some sources suggest that AI-generated responses serve to absorb informational queries that previously generated website traffic. The uncertainty extends beyond visibility itself and into the evaluation of performance. This tension is reflected in the observation that *"The AI tools keep telling me my content is 'optimized' but the data says otherwise."* Rather than questioning AI as a technology, the comment highlights a growing concern that existing optimization frameworks may no longer align with actual user behavior, traffic patterns, or business outcomes in AI-mediated search environments. Others debate whether brands should prioritize optimization for authority indicators, citations, structured data, community-driven content, or interactive tools that AI systems cannot readily summarize.

Fundamentally, AI introduces a transformation in the measurement paradigm. Conventional metrics—such as search rankings, click-through rates, impressions, and traffic—retain their relevance but no longer fully encompass visibility, especially as users obtain direct answers from AI systems. The analysis of discussions within Reddit indicates a lack of consensus among professionals, instead highlighting a field in transition characterized by experimentation with novel concepts and tools, while acknowledging that the underlying performance dynamics of AI-mediated search remain insufficiently understood.

8. Management pressure and organizational misuse of AI

> Several posts suggest that frustration with AI often stems less from the tools themselves than from the way managers, clients, or organizations use AI to shortcut expertise, feedback, or strategic judgment.
>
> *"have you asked AI what it thinks about it?"*

A recurring negative theme pertains to the organizational deployment of artificial intelligence. Several communications describe managers, chief executives, clients, or agencies utilizing AI outputs as substitutes for professional feedback, strategic deliberation, or expert judgment. In these instances, AI is not merely a tool selected by an individual worker; it functions as a managerial or client-side instrument that alters the evaluation of expertise and the justification of work. This shift is captured particularly well in the observation that *"the management layer has become plug these transcripts into a tool."* Rather than supporting professional judgment, AI is described as becoming a substitute for coaching, discussion, and contextual interpretation. In these accounts, managerial oversight risks being reduced to the processing of AI-generated outputs rather than engagement with the underlying work itself.

This distinction is of critical importance. Many users do not dismiss AI per se; rather, they scrutinize its imposition or misapplication. Frustration is evident when a manager inquires whether a campaign has been reviewed by AI, when AI-generated reports displace coaching activities, when AI-produced slides contain weak or fabricated claims, or when clients submit extensive AI-generated question lists that amplify communication efforts. In these scenarios, AI does not facilitate work but introduces an additional layer of justification, rework, and emotional tension.

The underlying insight is that the adoption of AI is uneven across organizations. While workers may employ AI pragmatically and selectively, managers or clients may invoke it symbolically, as an assertion of authority. Such practices can undermine trust in leadership and diminish the perceived value of human expertise. Therefore, the negative sentiments expressed in these communications are not solely attributable to technological anxiety; they often reflect inadequate implementation and concerns regarding the perceived displacement of professional judgment.

9. Emotional framing of AI: useful, destabilizing, and unevenly trusted

> The emotional tone of the posts is mixed: AI is described as useful and efficiency-enhancing, but also as destabilizing, credibility-threatening, and unevenly trusted in professional settings.
>
> *"Trying to find that sweet spot between automation and not sounding like a robot."*

This analysis indicates that a simple sentiment count may underrepresent the complexity of perceptions within the data. An individual may appreciate AI for its efficiency while simultaneously harboring reservations regarding its application in client-facing scenarios. Similarly, a small-business owner might recognize automation as beneficial yet remain concerned about potential customer rejection. A salesperson could utilize AI to summarize calls and still feel frustrated by its managerial feedback. Therefore, sentiment should be interpreted through the lens of specific aspects: what precisely is being evaluated and in which work context.

Positive sentiment is most pronounced when AI facilitates the reduction of friction in well-defined tasks such as call summarization, initial drafting, proposal preparation, website development, research activities, content repurposing, or supporting small-business operations. In these instances, AI is typically regarded as a form of leverage, enabling users to maintain control and expanding capacity without fully supplanting human judgment.

Negative sentiment emerges when AI becomes conspicuous, imposed, or socially disruptive. Users tend to object to AI-generated content that undermines trust, automated outreach that inundates communication channels, AI advice conflicting with performance data, or managerial applications that circumvent professional expertise. Mixed sentiments are observed where users acknowledge efficiency benefits but are concerned about human factors such as quality control, authenticity, customer perception, or employment impacts. This balancing act is reflected in the observation that *"Trying to find that sweet spot between automation and not sounding like a robot."* Rather than expressing outright support or rejection of AI, many posts describe an ongoing effort to determine where automation remains helpful and where it begins to undermine authenticity, trust, or professional credibility.

In conclusion, attitudes toward AI are conditional rather than absolute. Trust is generally placed in AI when it is confined within defined boundaries, appropriately supervised, and employed to complement human efforts. Conversely, distrust arises when AI operates as a visible substitute for judgment, personal relationships, voice, or accountability.

10. Interim conclusion

The Reddit data indicate that AI has already become integrated into routine professional activities across sectors such as marketing, sales, SEO, entrepreneurship, and small enterprises. Users characterize AI as a tool for drafting, summarizing, ideation, automation, analysis, and content generation. However, the most significant insight derived from the dataset is not merely that professionals utilize AI, but that they are actively negotiating the boundaries of acceptable AI deployment.

The most favorable perspectives depict AI as an ancillary layer of productivity operating under human oversight. Conversely, the most critical narratives emerge when AI is viewed as a threat to human judgment, authenticity, and communication fidelity—particularly when imposed by managerial or client demands without adequate understanding. In this context, the informal discourse on Reddit portrays AI less as a settled workplace technology and more as a contested practice.

For the broader report, this section offers qualitative supplementary insights to formal labor-market analyses. While job postings reflect employers' demand for AI-related skills, Reddit discussions illuminate practitioners' firsthand experiences with AI—highlighting its utility, frustrations, potential to enhance productivity, threats to credibility, and capacity to destabilize professional norms.

Part III. AI, job search, and employability narratives

The third part of the report employs a dataset comprising 47 Reddit posts sourced from communities focused on career development and human resources. This dataset is comparatively smaller than the corpus designed for professional applications and primarily centers on topics such as job searching, employability, recruitment, layoffs, career guidance, and workplace uncertainty. Consequently, it should be regarded as an exploratory collection of career-related narratives rather than a representative sample of worker attitudes towards artificial intelligence.

The analysis does not seek to determine whether artificial intelligence objectively caused specific layoffs, rejections, or hiring decisions. Rather, it examines how individuals involved in human resources interpret notions of career stability, recruitment procedures, and skill requirements through the lens of artificial intelligence. This distinction is essential: the primary focus is on how artificial intelligence shapes subjective experiences within organizational and meta-organizational HR practices, influencing broader labor market dynamics, or vice versa.

1. Analytical approach and scope

The posts were analyzed qualitatively, focusing on the described situations, the role assigned to AI, and the emotional or practical issues central to each post. Structured fields in the dataset served as supporting metadata, but interpretation relied mainly on close reading of the content. Themes were included only if they appeared consistently across multiple posts or reflected recurring tensions in how users discuss AI and work.

The overall tone of this corpus is more anxious compared to the professional-use dataset. This is partly expected given the context: individuals tend to write career-related posts when feeling uncertain, rejected, frustrated, or worried about their future. Therefore, the report does not interpret negative tone as a general indicator of public opinion. Instead, it considers it evidence that AI has become a prominent frame through which users explain hiring opacity, career risks, and the pressure to adapt.

2. AI as employability pressure

> In career-related posts, AI is often framed as a new threshold of competitiveness: workers are not only asking whether AI will replace them, but whether people who use AI will replace people who do not.
>
> *“It’s not “ai vs humans” It’s “humans with ai vs humans without it”.”*

The predominant theme emerging from this dataset is the perception of artificial intelligence (AI) as a determinant of employability. Respondents depict AI not merely as a utilitarian tool but as a delineating boundary between adaptable workers and those at risk of obsolescence. This perspective shifts the discourse away from a simplistic replacement paradigm. The perceived threat does not solely entail AI directly displacing human roles; rather, there is an increasing concern that the labor market may preferentially reward candidates and employees proficient in AI integration.

This finding aligns with the analysis of job advertisements. In formal job titles, AI is often implicitly referenced. Conversely, in career narratives, the expectation to understand and utilize AI is explicitly articulated and sources of anxiety are evident. Users express concerns that traditional skills may become less valuable without AI literacy, that experience alone may be insufficient unless complemented by AI competencies, and that acquiring AI skills has transitioned from a competitive edge to a strategic necessity for career safeguarding. This concern is reflected particularly clearly in the observation that *"It feels like we're being told our wisdom doesn't matter if we can't write a prompt."* The statement captures a recurring fear that accumulated experience, institutional knowledge, and professional judgment may be re-evaluated through the narrower lens of AI proficiency. Rather than viewing AI as a supplementary skill, some users perceive it as a new benchmark against which existing expertise is increasingly measured.

Crucially, the dataset does not suggest that AI skills are universally mandated; rather, it indicates a growing interpretative framework where employability is increasingly associated with AI adaptation. Thus, AI functions as a marker of current relevance, competitiveness, and readiness for evolving work environments.

3. Job insecurity and displacement narratives

> Users often interpret job loss, weak hiring prospects, or career uncertainty through AI, even where the data cannot verify AI as the direct cause.
>
> *"AI keeps getting better and better. And my friends won't shut up about how "ai is gonna take your job"."*

A recurring theme pertains to job insecurity. Users express concerns about potential replacement, challenges in securing employment, uncertainty regarding career trajectories, and anxiety over the sustainability of entry-level, creative, analytical, or technical positions. Several posts associate AI with domains such as writing, web development, design, animation, advertising, search, or junior-level tasks. These accounts should be interpreted cautiously, as the dataset does not establish causality—specifically, whether AI has directly caused layoffs, diminished demand, or altered hiring practices.

The data indicate that AI functions as a prevalent explanatory framework for perceived instability. Users employ AI as a heuristic to rationalize feelings of decreased job security, doubts about the reliability of career pathways, or perceived increased difficulty in market entry. This broader shift in perception is reflected in the observation that "It feels like every career conversation eventually turns into an AI conversation." The statement suggests that AI increasingly functions as a reference point through which users interpret uncertainty, competition, and future career prospects, regardless of whether AI can be identified as the direct cause of a particular labor-market outcome. Even in cases where causal links are ambiguous, the perception itself significantly influences viewpoints. AI thus plays a role in shaping individuals' perceptions of their professional futures.

This phenomenon distinguishes the career-focused dataset from the broader professional-use dataset. In routine work contexts, AI is typically assessed on task performance metrics—such as assistance in drafting, summarizing, outreach, or automation. Conversely, in the context of career development, the implications are more profound, implicating livelihood, personal identity, and fears of obsolescence.

4. Recruitment opacity, suspicion, and gatekeeping

> AI enters recruitment discourse as both an invisible filter and a source of suspicion, making hiring feel more automated, less transparent, and less human.
>
> *"Eligible 88.889%, 9:21a.m."*

The predominant theme within the career dataset pertains to the opacity of recruitment processes. Respondents characterize these procedures as increasingly automated and challenging to interpret. References are made to automated screening mechanisms, applicant tracking systems, algorithmic scoring, video interviews, AI-assisted preparation tools, AI-generated applications, and the ambiguity regarding whether applications are ever reviewed by a human.

The core issue extends beyond automation alone; it centers on the lack of transparency associated with such technological interventions. Candidates frequently remain unaware of whether their evaluation was conducted by a recruiter, an algorithm, a scoring system, or a combination thereof. Consequently, rejected applicants may interpret such outcomes as the result of mechanical filtering. Furthermore, when interviews are mediated through surveillance technologies, ordinary behavior may be misconstrued as suspicious.

This erosion of trust is captured in the observation that *"You take notes → you're cheating."* The comment reflects a broader concern that, in AI-mediated recruitment environments, ordinary candidate behavior may be interpreted through the lens of potential technological assistance. As a result, actions that were previously considered unremarkable can become signals of suspected misconduct.

In an environment saturated with AI, even standard candidate conduct can be perceived as potential cheating or external assistance. This dynamic fosters a recruitment climate in which both candidates and employers harbor suspicions of mutual AI use, undermining perceptions of authenticity. Ultimately, AI functions not merely as a recruitment tool but as an integral component of a mistrustful infrastructural framework.

The rapid adoption of AI in recruitment risks a trust collapse where the efficiency of automated screening creates a mutual opacity that leaves decision-making increasingly invisible to candidates. This environment fosters a climate of suspicion, where ordinary behaviors may be misinterpreted by algorithms and the absence of clear standards erodes the perceived fairness of the hiring process. To mitigate these risks, organizations must treat AI as a cognitive partner rather than a substitute for professional judgment, ensuring a human-in-the-loop approach that provides the contextual understanding algorithms lack. Ultimately, preserving trust requires balancing technical scale with ethical oversight, recognizing that long-term institutional credibility depends on maintaining transparency in an environment increasingly saturated with automated signals.

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5. AI as a tactical job-search tool

> The dataset also contains pragmatic narratives in which AI helps candidates organize and improve the job-search process, but it is rarely framed as solving the underlying uncertainty of the labor market.
>
> *"used to tweak my resume for each role because i learned the hard way that one generic resume mean zero callbacks"*

Not all narratives related to careers are negative. Some users characterize AI as a practical tool for job searching: customizing resumes, drafting cover letters, preparing for interviews, enhancing online profiles, monitoring applications, or identifying missing keywords. These descriptions depict AI as a strategic support system for navigating a complex and often opaque job market.

However, even positive applications are predominantly instrumental rather than celebratory. This pragmatic attitude is reflected in the observation that *"Claude helped me prepare, but it still came down to whether someone wanted to hire me."* Rather than eliminating uncertainty, AI is described as improving preparation, organization, and presentation while leaving the fundamental outcome of the hiring process outside the candidate's control. AI facilitates the rapid production of improved materials, enables more systematic organization of the process, and allows for better preparation. Nonetheless, it does not eliminate inherent uncertainties, competition, or the risk of automated rejection. In this context, AI functions to help individuals adapt to the job-search environment while simultaneously contributing to the increasing complexity of the system.

This scenario results in a paradox. If only a limited number of candidates utilize AI effectively, it may confer a competitive advantage. Conversely, if a majority employ similar tools, the advantage may diminish, potentially leading to increased skepticism among employers towards polished, AI-assisted applications. The same tool that enhances candidate competitiveness may also intensify the competition between candidate optimization strategies and employer screening mechanisms.

6. Unclear norms: competence or cheating?

> A recurring tension is that AI use can be interpreted either as digital competence or as dishonesty, depending on context, visibility, and expectations that are often not clearly stated.
>
> *"are CVs and cover letters also expected to be written or helped by AI or is it here negative if AI use is detected?"*

The dataset pertaining to employment indicates that prevailing norms regarding the utilization of artificial intelligence in the job search remain unsettled. Users ask whether it is acceptable to use AI for resumes, cover letters, interview preparation, or live interview assistance is permissible. Concerns are raised about the detection of AI-generated content, employer perceptions, application screening processes, and the potential penalization of AI-assisted materials. These recurring questions stem from a lack of clear regulatory guidelines.

This ambiguity carries significant analytical implications. The same actions can be interpreted variably—as a form of preparation, efficiency enhancement, dishonesty, or adaptation necessary

for survival. Job seekers may regard AI-assisted editing of resumes as a form of self-improvement, whereas employers might perceive highly refined applications as less genuine or as a consequence of overwhelming volumes of automated submissions of inferior quality. The demarcation between acceptable aid and unethical substitution remains fluid. This uncertainty is captured in the observation that *"Everyone is using AI, but nobody seems to agree on where the line is."* Rather than debating whether AI should be used at all, many discussions focus on where legitimate assistance ends and inappropriate substitution begins. The challenge is therefore not only technological but normative, reflecting the absence of widely accepted standards for AI use in recruitment and job search activities.

Consequently, the labor market environment is characterized by mutual use of AI technologies by both parties, accompanied by mutual concerns regarding each other's AI usage. Employers might depend on automated screening algorithms, while candidates optimize their applications through AI tools. Likewise, candidates utilize AI to prepare interview responses amid employers implementing monitoring or integrity verification mechanisms. Thus, AI not only enhances recruitment efficiency but also alters the moral and institutional frameworks governing participation within the employment process.

7. Interim conclusion

The data from Reddit concerning employment trends indicate that artificial intelligence is increasingly integrated into perceptions of employability, equitable hiring practices, and job security. It is discussed both as a necessary competency for workers seeking to remain competitive and as a factor contributing to reduced transparency in recruitment processes and heightened fragility of trust.

The most significant finding is not that AI has objectively replaced specific occupations within the dataset. Rather, it is that users are progressively interpreting labor-market uncertainties through the lens of AI. As one contributor noted, *"It feels like every career conversation eventually turns into an AI conversation."* This observation captures the broader role AI plays in the material—not necessarily as a verified cause of labor-market outcomes, but as a dominant lens through which those outcomes are interpreted. Topics such as rejection rates, automated assessment methods, resume optimization, video interview technologies, skills anxiety, and job insecurity are all analyzed in relation to AI. This suggests that AI has become embedded within the symbolic and operational frameworks of the job-search infrastructure.

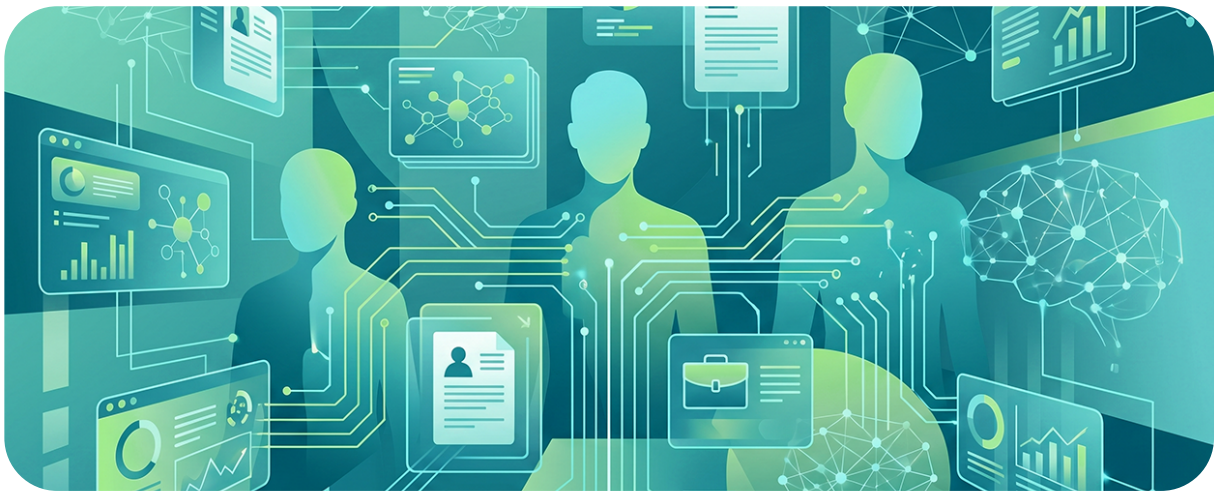
Within the scope of this report, this segment extends the analysis beyond employer signaling and workplace practices. It demonstrates that AI also influences individuals' perceptions regarding their future positioning within the labor market. AI is not merely a tool for task execution; it is increasingly recognized as a condition through which individuals assess their ability to access, retain, or advance in employment.

Synthesis. From formal signaling to lived labor-market pressure

Across the three parts of the report, a coherent picture emerges. AI is not appearing primarily as a separate occupational category. It is appearing as a layer of work, a layer of communication, and a layer of labor-market evaluation.

The job-posting analysis shows that AI is often under-signaled formally. Employers rarely define marketing roles as explicitly AI-specific at the level of job titles. Instead, AI appears to be absorbed into existing role families. This suggests a process of normalization: AI becomes part of the expected environment of marketing work without necessarily changing what jobs are called.

The professional Reddit analysis shows what this normalization looks like in practice. Workers use AI to draft, summarize, automate, research, ideate, analyze, and communicate. But they also worry about authenticity, trust, generic content, automation overload, and managerial misuse. AI is useful when it remains under human control and supports judgment. It becomes problematic when it visibly replaces voice, floods communication channels, or is imposed as a shortcut around expertise.



The *Reddit's /r* career and HR analysis extends the picture further. AI is not only changing work tasks. It is changing how people think about employability, hiring, fairness, and job security. Candidates and workers describe AI as something they must learn to remain competitive, but also as something that makes recruitment more opaque and trust more fragile. AI becomes both a job-search tool and a source of suspicion.

The strongest integrated conclusion is that AI is becoming a tacit professional expectation before it becomes a stable job category. Formal job titles may not show a dramatic occupational shift, but informal discourse shows that AI is already reshaping how people work, how they evaluate their own skills, and how they experience the labor market. This gap between formal signaling and lived practice is one of the central findings of the report.

A second conclusion is that productivity and trust now move in tension. Across the Reddit datasets, users acknowledge that AI can save time, increase output, and support small teams. But the same mechanisms that increase productivity can also produce low-trust communication, generic content, suspicious hiring processes, and a sense that human expertise is being bypassed. The key question is therefore not only whether AI makes work faster, but whether it preserves credibility, judgment, and fairness.

A third conclusion is that AI is changing the meaning of professional competence. In job postings, AI may be implicit. In workplace narratives, it becomes a practical skill. In career narratives, it becomes a condition of employability. The worker of the near future is not necessarily an "AI specialist," but is increasingly expected to know when and how to use AI, how to evaluate its outputs, and how to maintain human value in work systems that increasingly incorporate automation.

Overall, the combined evidence suggests that AI's impact on marketing and related labor-market contexts is best understood not as a sudden replacement of roles, but as a gradual reconfiguration of expectations. AI is entering established jobs, reshaping workflows, and changing how candidates and workers understand their position in the market. It is less visible in titles than in tasks, less settled in institutions than in everyday experimentation, and more contested in practice than formal labor-market signals alone would suggest.

The central finding

Across three distinct layers of evidence — formal job-market signals, practitioner narratives, and career discourse — a single structural tension emerges with consistency: AI is already reshaping the content of marketing work, but the institutions surrounding that work have not caught up.

Job titles look stable. Competency frameworks are still being written. Governance expectations are largely absent. Yet practitioners are already negotiating AI use in daily workflows, candidates are reframing their employability around AI literacy, and organizations are quietly eliminating the entry-level roles through which professional judgment has traditionally been built.

This is not a story of disruption. It is a story of silent reconfiguration — one that carries significant risk precisely because it is happening below the threshold of formal institutional response.

Three paradoxes that define the current moment

Paradox 1 — The Institutional Illusion: stability on the surface, transformation underneath

The formal labor market presents a picture of continuity. Across European markets analyzed in Part I of this report, AI marketing does not appear as a new occupational category. Titles such as Digital Marketing Manager, Marketing Manager, and Director/VP Marketing dominate the landscape. AI is embedded within these roles rather than named in them. The market looks, on the surface, like it always has.

This surface stability is misleading. The U.S. job-posting analysis (DIGIT Report 4, N = 319 postings) shows that 95.3% of AI-context marketing postings already require cross-functional AI coordination, and 79.0% embed platform and cloud-based AI environments as baseline expectations. The DIGIT AI-Driven Marketing Competency Framework (NAWA Report 3) identifies 13 distinct AI competencies — spanning data collection, customer insight, content generation, sales intelligence, and governance — that are now expected at intermediate-to-advanced proficiency levels. The role title has not changed. The role has.

The organizational risk is clear: companies that read stable titles as evidence of stable requirements will systematically under-hire, under-train, and under-prepare their marketing workforce. The gap between what a job is called and what it actually demands is widening — and most job descriptions are not closing it.

Paradox 2 — The Productivity Trap: individual efficiency, collective credibility loss

The practitioner narratives in Part II of this report (97 Reddit posts from professional marketing, digital marketing and sales communities) are consistent on one point: AI saves time. Drafting, summarizing, ideating, automating, and structuring tasks are faster with AI. At the individual level, this is unambiguously positive.

At the collective level, the picture is more complicated. When every marketer uses the same tools to produce the same types of content, the result is not a productivity gain for the market — it is a signal-to-noise collapse. Practitioners describe it directly: *"instead of scaling trust, we're scaling noise"; "with ChatGPT, everyone sounds exactly the same."* AI-generated outreach is increasingly recognized, flagged as low-effort, and associated with inauthenticity. In SEO, AI-mediated search is absorbing informational queries that previously generated traffic, without clear replacement metrics.

This dynamic is confirmed by the survey of 178 marketing managers (NAWA Report 2): while managers report high perceived usefulness of AI and low anxiety about job displacement, they simultaneously identify risk assessment and data governance as the most urgent competency gaps — areas where the consequences of AI misuse are most visible. The optimism about AI at the task level coexists with unresolved concern about AI at the system level.

The organizational risk: productivity gains captured today may be eroding brand credibility, audience trust, and communication distinctiveness at a rate that is not yet visible in short-term performance metrics. Organizations that optimize for AI-enabled output volume without investing in judgment, voice, and governance are trading long-term credibility for short-term efficiency.

Paradox 3 — The Trust Collapse: automation on both sides, transparency on neither

The career and HR narratives in Part III of this report reveal a third paradox, operating at the level of the labor market itself. Employers are using AI to screen, score, and filter candidates. Candidates are using AI to write, optimize, and tailor applications. Both sides are automating their participation in the hiring process — and both sides are suspicious of the other's AI use.

The result is a recruitment environment characterized by mutual opacity. Candidates cannot determine whether their application was reviewed by a human or an algorithm. Employers cannot determine whether a polished application reflects genuine capability or AI-assisted optimization. Standard candidate behavior — taking notes, preparing structured answers — is reinterpreted as potential cheating in AI-saturated interview contexts. The norms that govern what is acceptable, competent, or authentic in hiring have not been established, and neither party is in a position to establish them unilaterally.

This trust deficit has direct implications for talent quality. If high-quality candidates disengage from opaque, automated processes, and if employers cannot distinguish genuine capability from AI-optimized presentation, the efficiency gains of automated screening may be offset by systematic errors in selection.

What this means for organizations: three priorities

1. **Close the signaling gap — now.** Job descriptions must be rewritten to reflect actual AI-related expectations, not just conventional role titles. The co-occurrence data from DIGIT Report 4 is unambiguous: employers need integrated capability bundles — AI-based communication paired with cross-functional coordination (co-occurrence rate: 37.3%, n = 119 postings), and sales intelligence linked to value articulation (25.1%, n = 80 postings). Descriptions that name only one of these dimensions will attract candidates who can deliver only part of what the role requires. More precise role definitions are not an administrative improvement — they are a talent acquisition strategy.

2. **Invest in judgment, not just tools.** The market is currently rewarding intermediate-to-advanced AI application skills — 77.1% of postings in DIGIT Report 4 signal this depth level. But the DIGIT Competency Framework (NAWA Report 3) and the practitioner narratives in Part II of this report both point to the same conclusion: the differentiating capability is not tool proficiency — it is the judgment to know when to use AI, how to evaluate its outputs, and when to override it. Training programs that focus on tool familiarity without developing critical evaluation, ethical awareness, and cross-functional coordination will produce marketers who are fast but not credible. The 39.5% of postings (DIGIT Report 4) that already signal attitude-related expectations — accountability, transparency, collaborative mindset — are an early indicator of where the market is heading.

3. **Establish norms before the governance gap becomes a liability.** Governance-related competencies are nearly invisible in current job descriptions (DIGIT Report 4): responsibility for AI-generated content appears in only 8.2% of postings, digital safety in 0.6%, and AI agent collaboration in 0.0%. This does not mean governance is unimportant — it means it is unassigned. Marketing teams are making AI-driven decisions in customer-facing, commercially significant contexts without clear accountability frameworks. As regulatory pressure increases and as AI-generated content becomes more visible and more contested, organizations without explicit governance norms will face avoidable reputational and compliance risks. The time to define those norms is before an incident, not after.

The strategic horizon: what comes next

The current moment is a window. AI adoption in marketing has moved past the awareness phase but has not yet reached institutional maturity. The organizations that use this window to build integrated competency models, redesign talent pipelines, and establish clear governance frameworks will be structurally better positioned — not only to use AI more effectively, but to attract and retain the professionals capable of managing it responsibly.

The organizations that do not will find themselves managing a different set of problems: a mid-level talent shortage as the entry-level pipeline continues to thin (DIGIT Report 4 records only 1.3% of AI-context postings at entry level, consistent with a reported 31% decline in marketing assistant roles since 2022); a credibility deficit as AI-generated content erodes audience trust (documented across Part II of this report); and a governance exposure as regulatory frameworks catch up with practice.

Project Overview

DIGIT (People and algorithms in organizations: competencies for working in the digital environment) is the NAWA Strategic Partnership project focused on understanding and developing the competencies needed to work with AI and manage AI-enabled work in marketing environments.

The primary objective is to identify and develop the competencies to work with AI in marketing contexts, manage AI-enabled work processes, and adapt to Marketing 5.0 environments.

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The report is based on original empirical data collected specifically for the study. The primary sources include job postings returned for the keyword “AI marketing” across selected European labor markets and Reddit discussions related to professional work, employability, recruitment, and career development. These sources were analyzed to examine how AI is represented in labor-market demand, integrated into everyday work practices, and interpreted in the context of career opportunities and risks.

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