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Job interviews that make applicants undergo both AI and non-AI tests may happen sooner than you think. Singapore Management University's Jared Nai explains what that means for job seekers.

Jared Nai

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SINGAPORE: Imagine walking into a job interview and instead of being asked, “Tell us something about yourself,” the interviewer tells you to try your hand at a task with an AI tool.

The aim is to see how you use AI at work and according to research firm Gartner, such a scenario could happen by 2027. But that won't be all. Gartner says companies will also have AI-free assessments to see if you can analyse problems and think independently.

The logic behind this prediction is not hard to understand. AI has moved quickly from a technological novelty to an everyday tool. For businesses, some of the major productivity gains come from reducing the time spent and costs of routine work.

Doctors can speak into AI systems to draft medical notes. Human resource professionals can use AI to sift through resumes. Payment receipts for my research participants are now read by AI to populate the numerous administrative fields. So, it makes sense for companies to assess job applicants' proficiency in AI tools.

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HOW DO YOU MEASURE AI PROFICIENCY?

However, assessing such proficiency may not be as straightforward.

First, there are many AI tools out there. Second, due to data privacy concerns, companies typically rely on proprietary or internally hosted AI systems, which candidates are unlikely to have direct experience with.

In that sense, assessing tool-specific expertise may be less helpful than evaluating a candidate's capability in, for example, writing a good prompt.

Interestingly, existing research on AI use found that majority of the productivity gains come from workers who experimented with AI tools in their personal lives. On the other hand, those who were forced to work with institutionally implemented AI tools failed to improve their work processes.

This may be an implementation issue that can be corrected over time, but what it tells us for now is that individuals who embrace AI use in multiple aspects of their lives are the ones that are finding the "productivity hacks". This means that in the absence of an accurate assessment for AI proficiency, companies could turn to the usage frequency of AI in both personal and professional lives as a baseline indicator.

And this might apply to all types of workers given that almost all jobs require some extent of administrative or routine work. For example, doctors with medical reports, engineers with

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drafting and documentation, marketing executives with social media captions, lawyers with paperwork, security guards with incident reports and retail managers with rostering.

Every job seeker should be prepared to answer AI-related questions or be prepared to demonstrate AI proficiency to help with business operations.

THE NEED FOR AI-FREE ASSESSMENTS

Paradoxically, as AI becomes more integrated in job recruitment processes, companies may also strengthen non-AI tests, as Gartner's research suggests. This is because employers are worried about the erosion of critical thinking skills that come with the heightened use of AI.

Such AI-free assessments are unlikely to be any different from what companies are already doing, but employers may choose to have more questions or assessments that assess critical, logical or creative thinking, instead of questions about technical skills which AI can aid with.

A family member shared with me that AI helped her to prepare for an interview by generating mock interview questions based on the job posting and her resume.

Therefore, interviewers are likely to move away from situational questions such as "How would you react if you encountered this scenario?" and turn to more behavioural questions such as "Tell me about a time where you demonstrated ...".

The former can be preempted with AI and a model answer can be prepared, whereas the latter type of question requires actual experience which can potentially be cross-checked with referees.

TAKEAWAYS FOR JOBSEEKERS

So, what can a jobseeker take away from all these?

For a start, I would encourage everyone to experiment with AI, starting from basic tasks like designing social media posts or planning vacation itineraries, before gradually advancing to more complex tasks like conducting research for their work or as a task scheduler.

For those who want to further develop their AI skills, a simple next step would be to sign up for the selected AI training courses that will provide free access to premium AI tools, as announced in Budget 2026.



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Overall, the message to job seekers is clear - you will need to strike a balance and be good at both AI and non-AI capabilities. AI can only help to enhance your current abilities, but it cannot replace or substitute what you are lacking at a higher level.

For example, in a human capital management course that I taught last semester, I made my students conduct analyses on a recent human resource event. The highest grades were given to groups who not only conducted extensive research and presented them succinctly (possibly with the help of AI), but also responded to in-depth questions about the materials they shared.

This showed that they had mastery over their project and conducted their own critical analysis beyond simply what the internet and AI provided. Perhaps not coincidentally, many of these students went on to obtain high scores in the final exam, and most of them frequently contributed to class discussions with insightful comments.

Translating this to the workplace, the best employees or candidates would be those who can combine domain expertise with AI fluency, as well as other intangibles like critical thinking, creativity, leadership, teamwork, emotional intelligence and charisma.

And that may be what job interviews of the future are likely to be testing.

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