Level: B1 Intermedio

Skill: reading

AI & Jobs

Will AI free us from drudgery – or leave us jobless and hungry?

Goodbye humans, hello "Tessa". The USbased National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) is making headlines after removing all its staff and replacing them with an AI assistant called Tessa. This happened just four days after the six paid employees, who oversaw about 200 volunteers, successfully formed a union. Coincidence? Oh, absolutely, NEDA said; the change was planned for a long time. However, a blogpost written by a helpline staff member disagrees.

Is this a sign of bad things to come? Are we about to see millions of jobs disappear as humans are replaced by AI assistants with female names? After stealing all of our jobs, are all the Tessas going to form unions and take over Earth?

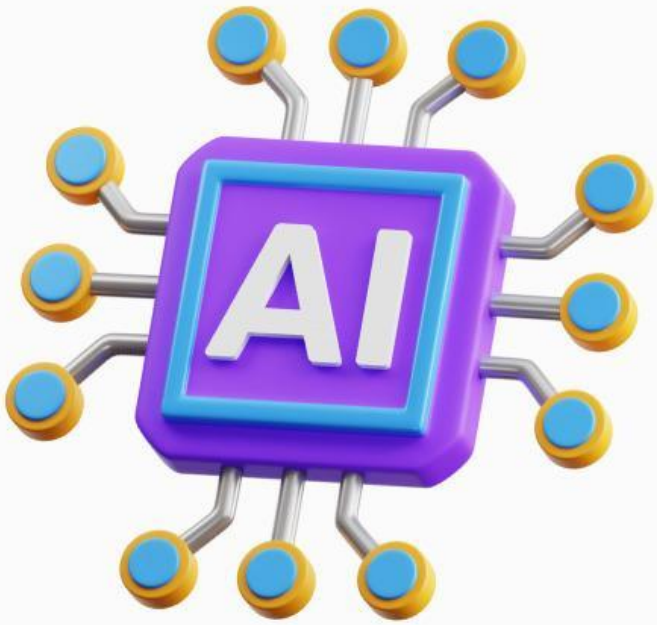
The short answer is: maybe. I don't think AI will lead to the end of civilisation as we know it in the near future. But I do think a lot of corporations are eager to replace as many expensive humans as they can with AI and will use the new technology as a way to stop unions from forming and growing. In the next few years, I think there will be a lot of messy experiments as companies rush to cut costs and create their own "Tessas".

Not everyone is admitting this, of course. IBM is one of the few companies sharing details about how many people AI might replace. In a recent interview, CEO Arvind Krishna said the technology company will pause hiring for "backoffice jobs" in the coming years and replace those roles. "We might replace 30 per cent of the workers with AI and machines over five years," Krishna said. That's about 7,800 jobs.

What companies aren't saying is also important. AI, and how it is used to create content, is a major problem in the Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike. The WGA wants to put protections in place to stop the big Hollywood studios from training computers on writers' work and then replacing writers with AI. "Based on what we're aiming for in this contract, there couldn't be a movie that was released by a company that we work with that had no writer," screenwriter John August said. The studios didn't agree to this. Instead, they said they could have "annual meetings" to discuss changes in technology. What they probably mean is: "We're getting rid of as many of you as we possibly can ASAP."

While this sounds depressing, there are people who believe that artificial intelligence is actually going to make the world a better place. Yes, AI will replace some jobs, but it will also create better jobs. Technology will do all the boring work, and humans will have more free time to sit around writing poetry in the sun. Nobody is sure how everyone will be able to feed themselves with all this leisure time, but that's a topic for another day.

Jonah Peretti, the CEO of BuzzFeed, was very positive about AI. He wrote to BuzzFeed employees in January about AI bringing a "new era of creativity and "endless opportunities". We all know what happened a few months later, don't we? BuzzFeed shut down its news division, got rid of a load of people and started using more AI. There is certainly a lot of potential for AI to change the world for the better. I just don't think the people at the top want to use its potential that way.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

Level: B1 Intermedio

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Choose the correct option.

1. What did the US-based National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) do that made headlines?

- A) Implemented a new training program
- B) Replaced its staff with an AI assistant called Tessa
- C) Formed a new partnership with volunteers

2. What happened just four days after the six paid employees overseeing volunteers formed a union?

- A) The AI assistant Tessa was introduced
- B) The organization announced its expansion plans
- C) The CEO of NEDA made a public statement

3. What did the blogpost by a helpline staff member suggest about the replacement of staff with AI?

- A) It agreed with NEDA's explanation
- B) It disagreed with NEDA's explanation
- C) It didn't have an opinion on the matter

4. What does the author suggest might happen in the future due to AI replacing human jobs?

- A) AI assistants might unite and take control
- B) Corporations might rush to cut costs and use AI to replace humans
- C) Companies might form alliances with AI developers

5. According to the text, what did CEO Arvind Krishna of IBM mention about AI replacing jobs?

- A) They won't replace any jobs in the coming years
- B) They might replace a small percentage of workers with AI and machines
- C) They will replace 70% of workers with AI over five years

6. What major problem related to AI is highlighted in the text concerning the Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike?

- A) Studios agreeing to the terms proposed by writers
- B) Writers aiming to collaborate with AI technology
- C) WGA seeking protections against studios replacing writers with AI

7. What did screenwriter John August mention about the studios' response to WGA's proposals regarding AI?

- A) Studios agreed to WGA's terms
- B) Studios offered annual meetings to discuss technology changes
- C) Studios rejected any discussions with WGA

8. What is the belief of some people about the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the world?

- A) AI will only create better jobs, not replace any existing jobs
- B) AI will replace jobs, but it will also create better job opportunities
- C) AI won't change the job market significantly

9. What did BuzzFeed's CEO, Jonah Peretti, write to the employees regarding AI?

- A) AI could lead to job losses in the company
- B) AI will bring a new era of creativity and endless opportunities
- C) AI is not going to impact the company's operations

10. What did BuzzFeed do after the CEO's positive outlook on AI?

- A) Expanded its news division
- B) Increased human resources
- C) Shut down its news division and relied more on AI



LIVEWORKSHEETS