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The Workforce Signal
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THIS WEEK

Hiring picks up, layoffs ease, and California details AI review duties

Employers added 165,000 jobs in October, well above the 48,000 monthly average of the prior year, and August and September were revised up by 84,000. Announced layoffs fell to their lowest October total in three years, with AI cited for the fewest cuts of 2026. And new guidance on California's No Robo Bosses Act sets out the human review and notices employers will need from July 1, 2027.

1 Hiring picks up in October

Employers added 165,000 jobs in October 2026, above the average monthly gain of 48,000 over the prior 12 months, and August and September were revised up by a combined 84,000. Unemployment was 4.1%. Professional and business services added 70,000 jobs and health care 42,000. Average hourly earnings rose 0.4% in the month to $38.00, up 3.1% over the year.

What it means for your plan: After a weak September, demand for professional and health care talent looks firmer. If your plan assumed a slack market would make these roles faster or cheaper to fill, recheck time-to-fill and offer rates against your own recent hires.

Source: BLS Employment Situation, Nov 6, 2026 (also reported by Outsource Accelerator, Nov 10, 2026)

2 Layoffs ease, and fewer cite AI

Employers announced 43,994 job cuts in October 2026, down 71% from October 2025 and the lowest October total in three years. AI was cited for 1,265 cuts, its lowest monthly total this year. Through October, AI accounts for 121,401 cuts, about 20% of the total, and market and economic conditions have overtaken it as the leading reason for 2026. Announced hiring plans reached 444,692, the highest October total since at least 2009, largely seasonal.

What it means for your plan: Fewer employers are pointing to AI as the reason for cuts, and most announced hiring is seasonal. Treat AI as a reason to redesign work rather than a default headcount reduction, and do not read holiday hiring as a lasting change in demand.

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Nov 5, 2026 (also reported by Outsource Accelerator, Nov 7, 2026)

3 California spells out AI review duties

Under California's S.B. 947, the No Robo Bosses Act, effective July 1, 2027, an employer that relies primarily on an automated decision system must have a human reviewer validate its output, give a stand-alone plain-language notice, and let employees request a description of their data used by the system. Penalties are $500 per violation, enforced by the Labor Commissioner and public prosecutors. California's civil rights rules on automated decision systems, in effect since October 1, 2025, already require employers to keep that data for at least four years.

What it means for your plan: Human review is a recurring cost, not a one-time setup. If an automate scenario covers California workers, count reviewer time per decision and the cost of keeping records for four years, starting now.

Source: DLA Piper, Nov 4, 2026

4 Turnover and benefit data due in December

BLS publishes October job openings and labor turnover (JOLTS) on Tuesday, December 1, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. ET, the November Employment Situation on Friday, December 4, at 8:30 a.m. ET, and Employer Costs for Employee Compensation for September on Wednesday, December 16, at 10:00 a.m. ET.

What it means for your plan: These releases update attrition, hiring and the cost of benefits per hour worked before most 2027 budgets close. Plan a short refresh of your assumptions in mid-December rather than locking numbers now.

Source: BLS release schedule, December 2026

THIS WEEK'S PLAYBOOK

Recheck your hiring assumptions before the 2027 budget closes

1. Compare your last 90 days of time-to-fill and offer acceptance for professional and health care roles with the figures in your plan, and update any that have slipped.
2. Keep salary growth near 3.1% for next year unless your own pay data says otherwise, and grow benefits separately.
3. For each automate scenario, write down how the work changes and where freed capacity goes before you count any headcount reduction.
4. If a tool makes or drives decisions about California employees, add reviewer time, notices and four-year record-keeping to its cost.
5. Ask employment counsel to confirm which rules apply before you commit. This is planning guidance, not legal advice.

Read online and see past issues: nwtalentsolutions.com/signal/2026-11-12. NWTS DecisionIQ subscribers also see which assumption to update in their model.

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