THE LADDER
IS BROKEN.

What the data says about the U.S. job market
for graduates & PhDs in 2026.

35% fewer entry-level jobs.

49,000+ AI-driven layoffs in 4 months.

PhDs rejected. Experts sidelined.

And what comes next.

A REPORT BY EMBOA LLC

The Entry-Level Floor
Has Disappeared.

↓35%

Entry-level postings since 2023

↓36%

U.S. tech job postings vs. pre-pandemic

35%

Of 'entry-level' roles require 3+ years exp.

45%

Of employers post ghost jobs — never filled

Sources: Revelio Labs · Forbes · Fast Company · Handshake (2025–2026)

The door isn't hard to open. It's been removed.

A Degree. A Debt.
No Job.

9.7%

Unemployment — recent grads. Same as high school dropouts.

43%

Of 22–27yr grads underemployed — jobs requiring no degree

30%

Of 2025 grads secured jobs related to their degree (down from 41%)

16%

Applied to 20+ jobs to get a single offer

Sources: CNBC · Federal Reserve Bank of NY · Times of India (2025–2026)

Upskilling is not the answer. The structure is broken.

AI Is Now the #1 Named
Reason for U.S. Job Cuts.

49,135

planned layoffs tied to AI — Jan to Apr 2026 alone

26%

of all April
layoffs cited AI

16%

of all 2026
layoffs AI-driven

33%

YoY rise in
U.S. tech cuts

Source: CFO Dive · Fortune · Challenger, Gray & Christmas (2026)

**"Regardless of whether jobs are replaced by AI,
the money for those roles is." — Challenger, Gray & Christmas**

They're Investing Billions in AI.
And Cutting Tens of Thousands of Jobs.

Amazon
30,000 corporate jobs cut since Oct 2025

Microsoft
15,000 layoffs + voluntary buyouts, Apr 2026

Meta
~8,000 layoffs + 6,000 open roles closed

Oracle
~30,000 roles shed — AI restructuring

Block
40% of staff cut — explicitly called an 'AI Remake'

LinkedIn
875 roles (5%) cut — engineering, product, marketing

Source: Times of India Tech · CFO Dive (2026)

Overqualified.
And Underqualified.
At the Same Time.

"I have a PhD and I cannot find the bottom rung."

- 10–20% of applicants on high-volume roles have PhDs — yet can't break in
- Rejected as overqualified for entry roles, underqualified for industry roles
- Companies say: 'We don't need deep science — we need operational experience'
- Algorithms filter out overqualified candidates before humans see them
- 66% of executives plan workforce reductions or hiring freezes in 2026

Sources: LinkedIn · CNBC · Forbes · NACE (2025–2026)

One Person. The Work of 75.
AI Is Doing the Rest.

75 → 1

Data science team replaced by one AI-augmented specialist

- Stanford: 22–25yr-olds in AI-exposed roles saw 13% employment decline since 2022
- Tech exec stopped hiring below L5 engineer — AI handles all lower-level tasks
- IMF: 'A tsunami hitting the labor market' — entry-level first to be eliminated
- 40% of executives: AI already performing research, admin & briefing tasks
- Entry-level roles were where judgment was trained. That pathway is now closed.

Sources: Stanford · NYT · Forbes · Fast Company (2025–2026)

What's Buried in the Data.

Documented. Rarely Discussed.

AI Washing

Companies blame AI for layoffs they would do anyway. Sam Altman confirmed it.

Gartner (350 firms)

AI-driven layoffs do NOT deliver higher returns. Best performers used AI to amplify people — not replace them.

The Algorithm Problem

Hiring AI filters résumés for keywords. 'LLM,' 'prompt engineering,' 'ML ops.' Without them, you're invisible — even if you're better.

Overqualified = Rejected

Algorithms predict overqualified candidates will leave or ask for more. They're filtered before a human sees them.

The Money Is Gone

'Regardless of whether individual jobs are replaced by AI, the money for those roles is.' — Challenger, Gray & Christmas

Sources: Fortune · Gartner · Digital Savage Experience · CFO Dive

The Ladder Is Broken.
Build Your Own Floor.

The institution will not save you.
Upskilling will not save you.
Another application to another ghost job will not save you.

What does:

- **Your Ecosystem**
  Member Firms across territories, industries, time zones — linked.

- **Your Pipeline**
  Inside Emboa, your client pipeline is the network's pipeline.

- **Your Terms**
  Your hours. Your rate. Your clients. AI augments your output.

- **Your Insurance**
  When one firm struggles, the network reaches in. Not charity — infrastructure.

20 hours a week. From home, your pool, or wherever you have WiFi.

Your Expertise.
Your Ecosystem.
Your Terms.

Emboa is a globally linked Member Firm ecosystem

for independent professionals armed with AI.

Not a platform. Not an employer.

A sovereign architecture for your professional life.

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