

Press release
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Cost optimisation no longer a short-term measure as companies face ongoing financial challenges

- 82% of Australian companies report cost optimisation is now a greater strategic priority for their organisation than it was five years ago
- Rising operational costs (49%), inflation (40%), and market competitiveness (37%) are the top factors driving cost optimisation
- Technology/IT infrastructure (40%), professional services (32%), and supply chain/procurement (29%) are the business areas primarily being targeted for cost optimisation
- When investing in the right talent to improve efficiency or reduce long-term costs, finance teams look for technology and systems skills (44%) and tech teams seek AI proficiency, automation integration, and digital transformation skills (41%)

Sydney, 11 December 2025 – Companies no longer view cost optimisation as a short-term measure to overcome financial challenges, placing a greater priority on sustainable long-term strategies across their operations to combat ongoing economic pressures.

New independent research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) finds about four in five (82%) companies have made cost optimisation a greater strategic priority now than they did five years ago, pre-COVID. Meanwhile, 18% of companies report it has the same level of priority.

The areas driving the need for cost optimisation

The research reveals economic factors are largely behind companies' greater focus on cost optimisation. However, ongoing business challenges such as remaining competitive and addressing revenue shifts also rate significantly. The top factors are:

- Rising operational costs 49%
- Inflation 40%
- Market competitiveness 37%
- Wage pressure 35%
- Economic uncertainty or market volatility 34%
- Interest rates 31%
- Declining or unpredictable revenue 23%
- Investor or board pressure 23%

*"Cost optimisation is no longer a reactive, short-term measure, it has fundamentally evolved into a core strategic mandate," says **Nicole Gorton, Director at Robert Half**. "With inflation and rising operational costs being the dominant drivers, this is less about simple cost-cutting and more about structural recalibration. Organisations that embed efficiency into their operating model and workforce structure, rather than just wait for economic uncertainty to pass, will be the most resilient moving forward."*

The target areas for cost optimisation

Companies most commonly cite technology as having a key role in achieving cost optimisation. However, changes to business processes and policies may also create efficiencies. The most prevalent business areas that are the primary targets for cost optimisation are:

- Technology/IT infrastructure 40%
- Professional services 32%

- Supply chain/procurement 29%
- Capital expenditure 29%
- Compensation and benefits 28%
- Marketing/sales 26%
- Travel and entertainment 23%
- Real estate/facilities 18%

“Technology is both a significant cost centre and one of the greatest enablers of long-term efficiency. The savviest organisations aren't slashing IT budgets but are strategically leveraging automation and AI platforms to drive digital transformation, ensuring the right skills exist across departments. They are cutting friction, not capability,” Gorton says.

How the right talent can optimise costs

Finance and tech teams reveal investing in the right talent in a number of areas can significantly improve efficiency or reduce long-term costs.

Finance and accounting teams are most keen to invest in workers who can implement and use technology for improvements:

- Technology and systems 44%
- Automation and process improvement 39%
- Project and operations management 34%
- Data and analytics 34%

Tech teams are most likely to invest in workers skilled in transformation and integration as well as analytics:

- Digital transformation 41%
- Automation and AI integration 41%
- Data management and analytics 37%
- Software development and engineering 34%

“The ability to generate lasting cost savings often hinges directly on specialised talent. True workforce optimisation is not always achieved through headcount cuts, it's achieved by leveraging experts in areas like digital transformation, automation, and a solid workforce strategy,” Gorton concludes.

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Notes to editors

About the research

The study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted online in July, 2025, by an independent research company of 500 hiring managers in finance and accounting, IT and technology, and human resources. Respondents are drawn from a sample of SMEs as well as large private, publicly-listed and public sector organisations across Australia. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management, and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the global, specialised talent solutions provider that helps employers find their next great hire and jobseekers uncover their next opportunity. Robert Half offers both contract and permanent placement services, and is the parent company of Protiviti, a global consulting firm. Robert



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