Bold hiring intentions for tech teams allude to pent-up demand amid a time of business complexity

- Software engineering and development, cybersecurity and data privacy, and AI, machine learning and automation initiatives are the strategic priorities within technology that employers plan to hire for in 2025
- **Highest intention to hire <u>permanent</u> employees:** AI, machine learning and automation initiatives, cybersecurity and data privacy, and software engineering and development
- **Highest intention to hire <u>contract</u> employees**: Cloud projects and initiatives, software engineering and development, and data engineering and BI insights
- The biggest challenges for attracting and retaining tech talent include meeting high salary expectations (40%), and lack of relevant industry experience among candidates (34%)

Sydney, 11 August 2025 – Areas of relative focus for specialised talent skilled in software engineering and development, cybersecurity and data privacy and AI, machine learning and automation initiatives is driving a strategic hiring evolution by businesses in their technology departments for the remainder of 2025.

However, the hiring landscape is marked by historically low unemployment[1] rates coexisting with a sustained decline in job advertisements[2]. Companies who have intentions to hire are up against navigating a more cost-conscious and economically challenging environment.

New independent research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) finds employers are opting for a mix of contract and permanent staff, as they strive to meet immediate skills needs as well as transform their workforces for future capability. The dual talent strategy will also help organisations remain agile as they complete project-based work as well as navigate long-term growth in an increasingly complex environment.

"The prevailing story of today's job market is one of economic caution, leading to what we call the 'Big Slow' in hiring. While the need for skilled talent continues to shape strategic priorities, companies are now taking a more tentative approach, with hiring decisions often taking longer and requiring full budget sign-off or board approval. In relation to AI, there is still a lack of clarity around what AI hiring involves, making it more challenging to justify in a cost-conscious climate," says **Tom Ward, Director at Robert Half**.

Software development and cybersecurity top the priority list
While cybersecurity and data privacy strategies are high on the priority list, unsurprisingly given recent public incidents, AI also remains a strategic focus. However, software engineering and development is this year's top priority to maintain business operations.

When asked if they planned to hire permanent or contract staff this year to successfully implement strategic priorities in 2025, employers revealed the top five areas they are most likely to hire in:

1. Software engineering and development
2. Cybersecurity and data privacy
3. AI, machine learning and automation initiatives

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[1] [Labour Force, Australia, June 2025](#)
[2] [SEEK, Employment Report – June, 2025](#)

4. Technology modernisation
5. Cloud projects and initiatives

"Technology skills are integral to virtually every strategic priority for Australian businesses in 2025. Organisations are seeking to build resilient, innovative and data-driven foundations that will form the bedrock for competitive advantage and future company growth," **Ward** says.

Permanent and contract workers required for different areas
The demand for permanent talent is strongest in areas like AI, cybersecurity, and software engineering, whereas contract staff are more sought after for cloud, data, and CRM/ERP projects.

Employers hiring for <u>permanent</u> staff:	Employers hiring for <u>contract</u> staff:
1. AI, machine learning, and automation initiatives	1. Cloud projects and initiatives
2. Cybersecurity and data privacy	2. Software engineering and development
3. Software engineering and development	3. Data engineering and BI insights
4. AI governance	4. CRM/ERP implementations

Source: Independent survey commissioned by Robert Half among 200 hiring managers in technology.

"Companies' permanent recruitment strategy centres on laying the foundational skillsets needed to support long-term growth and resilience. The strong interest in AI governance, along with the other priorities indicates a long-term commitment to innovation, protection, and ethical deployment."

"For initiatives requiring specialised skills, rapid deployment or project-based expertise, contract professionals offer invaluable agility, allowing organisations to quickly scale up and down to access cutting-edge skills without immediate long-term commitments. They can also accelerate critical tech transformations, such as CRM/ERP implementations, without disrupting their permanent core teams," says **Ward**.

Planning to hire but not without its challenges
While the <u>intention</u> to hire is there, the majority (95%) of technology leaders say they are facing challenges in attracting and retaining talent to successfully implement their strategic priorities.

The top five challenges cited by technology hiring managers include:
- High salary expectations (40%)
- Scarcity of qualified candidates (34%)
- Competition from other companies (30%)
- Candidates not having the right mix of technical and soft skills (29%)
- Difficulty assessing true capabilities during interviews (27%)

"The surge in technology hiring intentions reveals a pent-up demand within businesses that are navigating increasing complexity. Turning these intentions into reality comes with challenges; companies must contend with the barrier of finding highly specific skills and securing the necessary financial commitment, even in a market with many jobseekers," concludes **Ward**.

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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, 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 Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Melbourne South East, Perth, and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com/au.

For more information
Courtney Fletcher
PR Manager
Courtney.Fletcher@roberthalf.com.au
+61 421 209 304