

Operations Managers

AI copilots and process automation are absorbing reporting, forecasting and routine coordination, freeing managers for decisions and people.

EXPOSURE	WINDOW	ADOPTION TODAY	READING
40 Moderate exposure	4–9 yrs until change lands	High	Augmented more than re-placed. Exposure is the share of today's work AI can plausibly take on within the window.

§ 01WHAT IS HAPPENING

What is happening to operations managers

Impact

General and operations managers now work with office copilots that draft reports and summarise meetings, process-mining tools that find bottlenecks, automation platforms that handle routine approvals and data movement, and forecasting systems that predict demand and staffing. Dashboards answer questions in plain language that used to require an analyst. The day-to-day shifts from chasing information and coordinating handoffs towards deciding what to change, holding teams accountable and dealing with the exceptions and people issues that automation surfaces rather than solves.

Risk

Routine coordination and reporting automate; the role concentrates on judgement, accountability and leading change on the ground.

The score sits in the moderate band: official measures place the role in the high exposure tier and adoption across businesses is high, while the measured applicability of AI to managerial tasks is low and observed usage by managers is modest. Reporting, scheduling, forecasting, routine approvals and much of the coordination between functions are being automated. Responsibility for results, budgets, safety and people, negotiating with suppliers and customers, and deciding how to respond when things go wrong remain human. Over the 4-9 year window, expect flatter structures with fewer coordination roles, more time spent on exception handling and change, and a premium on managers who understand their operations well enough to redesign them around automation.

Sector readiness

High Adoption Through Enterprise Software

AI has reached operations managers mainly through the enterprise systems they already use: office suites, ERP and CRM platforms, workforce management and automation tools have all added AI features. Larger organisations are well advanced; small and mid-sized businesses are adopting through packaged software rather than bespoke projects, which keeps the depth of change uneven.

§ 02 POSITION

Where you stand

- i Position yourself as the manager who redesigns operations around automation rather than the one who coordinates the old process.
- ii Build deep knowledge of your operation so your judgement on exceptions and trade-offs is trusted when the system cannot decide.
- iii Lead change and people development, which are the responsibilities that grow as routine coordination shrinks.

§ 03 ACTIONS

6 POINTS

What this means for you

Concrete changes to how the work gets done, in the order you are likely to meet them.

- 01 **Stop building reports.** Let copilots and dashboards produce them. Your value is in what you do with the information, so redirect the time to decisions and your team.
- 02 **Map your processes honestly.** Process-mining and automation tools expose where work actually flows. Use them to find what to simplify before you automate it.
- 03 **Own the exceptions.** Automated processes fail at the edges. Being the manager who resolves them quickly and learns from them is where judgement earns its keep.
- 04 **Redesign roles, not just tasks.** As coordination automates, team structures need to change. Plan it deliberately rather than letting it happen.
- 05 **Measure what matters.** AI makes it easy to track everything. Choose a few outcomes that reflect customer and financial results and manage to them.
- 06 **Stay visible on the floor.** Operations run on trust and relationships. Time saved from reporting is best spent where the work happens.

What is pushing this change

- 01

Office copilots for reporting and communication. Reports, summaries and plans are drafted automatically, removing a large share of routine management work.
- 02

Process mining and workflow automation. Tools that map processes and automate approvals and handoffs reduce the coordination that defined the role.
- 03

Demand and workforce forecasting. Predictive systems set staffing and inventory levels that managers used to estimate by experience.
- 04

Conversational analytics. Dashboards and ERP systems answer operational questions in natural language, cutting dependence on analysts.
- 05

High sector adoption. Enterprise software vendors have embedded AI widely, raising the adoption rating across industries.
- 06

Low measured applicability to management tasks. Accountability, negotiation and people leadership resist automation, keeping the score moderate.

Impact by sector

The headline figure is an average. Where you work changes the picture.

Logistics and distribution	High exposure through forecasting, routing and warehouse automation, with managers focused on exceptions and labour.
Manufacturing	Production planning and quality analytics automate, while shop-floor leadership and safety remain hands-on.
Professional and business services	The most document-heavy setting, where copilots and workflow automation reshape coordination roles quickly.
Retail and hospitality	Scheduling, inventory and customer analytics automate, but site management and customer-facing leadership stay human.

Skills to build

The skills that keep the human part of this work valuable as the routine part is automated.

- 01 **Process redesign.** Learn to simplify and restructure operations around automation rather than layering tools on existing workflows.
- 02 **Data-driven decision making.** Interpret forecasts and dashboards critically so you can challenge them when they conflict with what you see.
- 03 **Change leadership.** Bringing teams through restructuring and new tools is the defining skill of the period.
- 04 **Exception handling and problem solving.** Resolving what automated processes cannot is where management judgement is most visible.
- 05 **Commercial negotiation.** Supplier, customer and contract negotiations remain human and grow in relative importance.
- 06 **Automation tool literacy.** Understand what workflow and automation platforms can and cannot do so you can direct their use.

Tools in use

KINDS OF TOOL WORTH KNOWING

- 01 **Agentic workflow tools.** Systems that carry out multi-step tasks across applications are emerging and will further reduce coordination work.

NAMED TOOLS ALREADY IN USE

Microsoft 365 Copilot	VISIT
Office assistant used for reports, meeting summaries and planning across operations teams.	
UiPath	VISIT
Automation platform used to handle routine approvals, data movement and back-office processes.	
Celonis	VISIT
Process-mining platform that maps how work actually flows and identifies bottlenecks and automation opportunities.	
Workday	VISIT
HR and finance system with AI for workforce planning, scheduling and reporting.	
Salesforce Einstein	VISIT
CRM analytics and forecasting used by managers in customer-facing operations.	

In practice

Ways people in this role are already using AI, and what they get from it.

Automated weekly re-reporting EXAMPLE 1	HOW	An operations manager uses a copilot to compile performance reports from dashboards and meeting notes, reviewing figures and adding commentary before circulating.
	GAIN	A day of reporting each week becomes an hour of review.
Process mining before automation EXAMPLE 2	HOW	A services firm maps its order-to-cash process with process mining, finds the real bottlenecks and automates approvals where delays were longest.
	GAIN	Cycle time falls and staff are redeployed to customer issues.
Forecast-driven staffing EXAMPLE 3	HOW	A distribution centre manager uses demand forecasts to set shift patterns, adjusting manually for local events the model does not know about.
	GAIN	Better coverage with less overtime and fewer last-minute changes.

How this role compares

Three neighbouring roles chosen to show the direction of travel.

Logistics Coordinators MORE EXPOSED	AI IMPACT	Scheduling, tracking and routine coordination are being automated directly, leaving less of the role than for managers.
	WORK MOVES TO	Exception management and supplier relationships.
Supply Chain Managers DIFFERENT SKILLS, GROWING	AI IMPACT	AI forecasting and planning tools are central, and demand for people who can run resilient supply networks keeps growing.
	WORK MOVES TO	Network design, risk and supplier strategy.
Warehouse Supervisors COMPLEMENTARY, LESS EXPOSED	AI IMPACT	Floor-level supervision of physical work keeps exposure lower, with AI mainly in scheduling and tracking.
	WORK MOVES TO	Safety, team leadership and daily throughput.

Closing judgement

If you run operations, the reports and coordination that filled your week are being automated, and the systems will increasingly tell you where the problems are before you find them. What they will not do is decide what to change, persuade a team to change it or take responsibility when it goes wrong. Learn the tools well enough to redesign your processes around them, and put your time into judgement, people and the exceptions that still need a manager.

Evidence and revisions

What the exposure figure rests on, what changed when it was last revised, and the published work cited for this role.

SCORE

40

WINDOW

4-9 years (unchanged)

The 5 October 2026 review held the score.

Exposure Index v2. Inputs: task applicability 22/100 (Microsoft AI applicability score 0.11 for General and operations managers); observed usage 18/100 (Anthropic observed exposure 0.14); official exposure tier 70/100 (BLS: high); labour-market trajectory not yet mapped for this occupation, so its weight was spread across the other inputs; published adoption rating 70/100 (high adoption). Weighted base 39.8. Final score 40. New report: the window of 4-9 years is set from the score band.

HOW THE FIGURE IS BUILT (EXPOSURE INDEX V2)

Task applicability — Microsoft Research, AI applicability score	22 × 39%	8.6
Observed usage — Anthropic Economic Index, observed exposure	18 × 22%	4.1
Official exposure tier — US BLS AI-exposure category	70 × 22%	15.6
Labour-market trajectory — US BLS projected employment change 2025–35	not measured	—
Published adoption rating — This report’s adoption level	70 × 17%	11.7
Weighted base		39.8
Exposure score		40

MEASURES BEHIND THE SCORE

US Bureau of Labor Statistics · *Employment Projections 2025–35 and AI Exposure Categories* (27 August 2026)

AI-exposure tier: High. Projected employment change not yet mapped for this occupation. Matched to General and operations managers.

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Microsoft Research · *Working with AI: Measuring the Applicability of Generative AI to Occupations* (10 July 2025)

AI applicability score 0.11 for SOC 11-1021; scaled to 22/100 as the task-applicability input.

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Anthropic · *Anthropic Economic Index report: Cadences* (26 June 2026)

Observed exposure 0.14 for SOC 11-1021; scaled to 18/100 as the observed-usage input.

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UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology · *Assessment of AI capabilities and the impact on the UK labour market* (28 January 2026)

UK context: around 70% of UK workers are in occupations with tasks AI could perform or enhance, above the US average; a one-standard-deviation rise in exposure was associated with a 3.9% fall in UK job postings.

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<https://www.careerguard.ai/sources>

§ 12 APPENDIX

Method and sources

Each report was written from a large body of published research. The exposure score itself is computed, not written: it is the CareerGuard Exposure Index, a weighted average of occupation-level measures from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (AI-exposure classification and 2025–35 projections), Microsoft Research (AI applicability scores) and Anthropic (observed exposure), together with the adoption rating published on the report. The organisations and publications below are the standing literature behind the narrative sections. Every source, with dates, licences and archived copies where we are permitted to hold them, is catalogued in the research library.

Exposure Index v2 (October 2026). Each input is scaled to 0–100 and weighted: task applicability 35% (Microsoft AI applicability score ÷ 0.5), observed usage 20% (Anthropic observed exposure ÷ 0.75), official exposure tier 20% (BLS very high = 100, high = 70, moderate = 40, low = 10), labour-market trajectory 10% ($50 - 2.5 \times \text{projected \% employment change}$), published adoption rating 15% (very high = 85, high = 70, medium-high = 55, medium = 40, low-medium = 25, low = 10). Inputs not measured for an occupation are dropped and the remaining weights renormalised. An editorial adjustment of at most ± 12 points is allowed only for automation channels the measures cannot see (robotics, self-service, machine vision, medical imaging, RPA/OCR, generative video) and is always logged with its reason. Scores are whole numbers, not rounded to five. The change window shifts one notch (a year at each end) per ten points of movement.

World Economic Forum

The Future of Jobs Report series — Employer survey of expected job growth and decline, skill shifts and technology adoption (2020, 2023 and 2025 editions); Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Entry-Level Work (2026).

AI governance and transformation reports — Frameworks on ethical AI, talent strategy and industry transformation.

McKinsey Global Institute

AI, Automation and the Future of Work series — Research quantifying automation potential by task, sector and demographic, from "Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained" to "Agents, robots, and us" (2025).

Industry-specific reports — Financial services, healthcare, manufacturing and others.

PwC

Global AI Jobs Barometer — Annual analysis of job postings and productivity by AI exposure (2024–2026 editions).

Upskilling Hopes and Fears survey — Employee perceptions and readiness.

Microsoft Research and Anthropic

Working with AI (2025); Anthropic Economic Index (2025–2026) — Occupation-level usage data from Copilot and Claude conversations, the two observed-usage measures behind the 2026 revision.

Stanford Digital Economy Lab and Stanford HAI

Canaries in the Coal Mine? (2025–2026); AI Index Report (annual) — Payroll evidence on early-career employment in exposed occupations; annual measurement of AI capability, investment and adoption.

Deloitte

Human Capital Trends series — Workforce, talent and HR technology trends.

Tech Trends series — Emerging technologies and their business implications.

Accenture

Technology Vision series — Forward-looking analysis of emerging technology, with emphasis on AI.

Fjord Trends — Design, innovation and human experience in a digital world.

Boston Consulting Group

AI/ML insights and industry solutions — "The AI Revolution in the Workplace" and related research.

EY

AI and workforce reports — Adoption, talent strategy and ethics.

IBM Institute for Business Value

AI and automation studies — Business models, workforce evolution and leadership.

OECD

AI Policy Observatory — International data and policy on AI, labour markets and skills.

Employment Outlook — Labour-market trends including technological impact (2023–2026 editions).

International Labour Organization

Generative AI and Jobs: A Refined Global Index of Occupational Exposure (2025) — Task-level exposure gradients for every ISCO occupation; successor to the 2023 global index.

International Monetary Fund

Staff Discussion Notes on AI and work (2024, 2026) — Complementarity framing: where AI augments and where it substitutes.

UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

Assessment of AI capabilities and the impact on the UK labour market (2026) — UK occupational exposure and job-posting evidence.

Brookings Institution

AI and automation research — Economic and social implications, displacement and skills.

Yale Budget Lab and Goldman Sachs Research

Tracking the Impact of AI on the Labor Market; AI and the US labour market (2026) — Aggregate labour-market monitoring; macro displacement estimates.

Oxford University (Oxford Martin School)

The Future of Employment — Frey & Osborne and subsequent research on susceptibility to automation.

MIT Technology Review

AI & Work — Reporting on AI research and its implications for industries and jobs.

Gartner

Hype Cycle for Artificial Intelligence — Maturity and adoption of AI technologies.

Future of Work reports — Workplace models and talent strategy.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Employment Projections 2025–35; AI Exposure Categories; Occupational Outlook Handbook — Ten-year employment projections and, from the 2025 cycle, an AI-exposure tier for every detailed occupation.

Indeed Hiring Lab

AI at Work Report (2025) and posting-market updates — Skill-level transformation estimates and job-posting trends by occupation.

II CORE AI AND MACHINE-LEARNING RESEARCH

OpenAI

Research papers, blog and API documentation — Large language models, generative AI, safety and societal impact.

Google DeepMind

Research papers and blog — Reinforcement learning, AI for science, AGI and ethics.

Meta AI

Research papers and blog — Large language models, computer vision, AI for social good.

Hugging Face

Transformers library and model hub — Open-source state-of-the-art NLP models.

TensorFlow and PyTorch

Documentation and community forums — Core frameworks illustrating practical capability.

arXiv

cs.AI, cs.LG, cs.CV, cs.CL — Pre-print research.

NeurIPS and ICML

Conference proceedings — Top-tier academic research.

ACM and IEEE

Journals and proceedings — ACM Computing Surveys; IEEE Transactions on AI.

Kaggle

Datasets and competition solutions — Applied machine learning on real-world problems.

The Alan Turing Institute

Research and reports — Responsible and applied AI.

III ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE AI DEPLOYMENT

NIST

AI Risk Management Framework — Voluntary framework for managing AI risk.

European Commission

AI Act — Risk-tiered legal framework for AI.

Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI — Principles for responsible development.

Partnership on AI

Research and best practice — Responsible AI development.

AI Now Institute

Annual reports — Social implications: power, inequality, rights.

ACM FAccT

Proceedings — Fairness, accountability and transparency.

Data & Society

Publications — Social implications of data-centric technology.

WIPO

Conversation on IP and AI — Intellectual-property implications of AI.

IEEE Global Initiative on Ethics of AI/IS

Ethically Aligned Design — Recommendations for ethical AI design.

Center for AI and Digital Policy

Policy briefs — Accountable AI policy.