AIGW | Global AI Governance & Workforce Transformation Policy Observatory

AIGW COMPARATIVE EVIDENCE BRIEF · CHINA

From Frontline Worker to AI Trainer

What JD.com and LONGi reveal about turning domain expertise into new work

Evidence reviewed through 6 November 2026

COMPARATIVE EVIDENCE

Executive snapshot

An experienced customer-service employee notices that an AI answer does not fit a customer's situation. A solar-factory inspector recognizes a defect pattern that a detection system can miss. Both examples point to a question that is often lost in debates about automation: what happens to the practical knowledge people accumulated while doing the original work?

At JD.com, a customer-service AI trainer identified as Yuchen (雨辰) describes drawing on nearly a decade of service experience to diagnose gaps in AI responses, update content, configure agents and maintain or tune the system. At LONGi's Jiaxing factory, separate accounts describe inspectors moving into AI-related quality work. One account follows Zhang Chen (张晨); another follows Zhang Xuanxuan (张玄玄), who describes classifying defects and annotating examples used to improve inspection. They are different workers, reported in different sources. 1 2 3 4

These are individual and company-context examples, not a representative survey. They do not reveal how many affected workers entered AI-training roles, how they were selected, how wages or job quality changed, or whether the transitions lasted. Yet they show why frontline experience deserves attention when organizations redesign work: employees can bring knowledge of customers, products, defects and exceptions into the work of making AI useful and accountable.

The central finding: frontline expertise can be **transition capital**—knowledge that may support work in an AI-enabled system. It becomes a career pathway only when an organization creates accessible roles, learning opportunities and meaningful measures of what happens to workers. This is an AIGW interpretation of selected evidence, not an independently tested causal model.

Key findings

1. **The two settings are different.** JD.com's example concerns customer-service responses and agent configuration; LONGi's examples concern visual quality inspection and defect analysis. “AI trainer” does not describe one uniform task. 1 2 3

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2. **The value carried forward is domain knowledge.** Yuchen describes anticipating customer experience and diagnosing response problems; Zhang Xuanxuan describes using inspection experience to classify and annotate defects. The sources do not establish that their work is interchangeable. 1 3

3. **A reported transition is not a workforce-wide transition rate.** Individual accounts and company-described initiatives do not provide a complete denominator, earnings outcomes or a worker-by-worker accounting. 1 2 3

4. **The new role can change too.** JD JoyAI describes using models to analyze conversations and documents to reduce knowledge-base configuration effort. That is a vendor-described capability, not proof that Yuchen's job disappeared or that any trainer was displaced. 5

5. **Training and qualifications are inputs, not final outcomes.** Shanghai reports AI-trainer assessment participation and certificates; the figures do not establish unique individuals placed in suitable AI jobs or the long-term quality of their employment. 6

Evidence boundary

This brief uses two purposively selected enterprise settings and three separately reported individual accounts. The individual testimony and company-reported operational metrics are not a controlled evaluation. National and local media accounts, corporate product descriptions, an official local-government publication, and AIGW's previous research have different purposes and levels of access. No worker interviews were conducted by AIGW for this brief.

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1. From replacement headlines to the work that remains

When an AI system takes on an activity, the immediate discussion often centers on whether the associated job is eliminated. That question matters, but it does not show the full range of organizational choices. A system must be configured, checked and updated; workers may handle exceptions, serve customers or investigate production problems. Those activities may be assigned to existing employees, new specialists or external suppliers—and some may eventually be automated.

An organization's first task is to identify the actual work unit. An AI system that answers a customer question changes a service workflow. A vision system that flags an image changes an inspection workflow. Neither observation alone establishes the effect on total jobs, pay, career progression or the quality of service. The JD.com and LONGi cases help make this distinction tangible.

They are useful because the reported destination work is closely connected to knowledge from the original role. At JD.com, that knowledge concerns customer intent, product categories and the effects of an answer. At LONGi, it concerns defects, production conditions and how to judge whether a component is acceptable. Those observations justify examining how expertise travels; they do not prove that every frontline employee can or will make the same move. [1] [3]

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2. JD.com: customer-service knowledge becomes AI-operations work

In May 2026, Science and Technology Daily reported the account of JD customer-service AI trainer Yuchen. He described almost ten years of customer-service experience and familiarity with product categories and merchant relationships. According to his account, that experience helps him anticipate how an answer may affect the customer and distinguish a configuration problem from a problem in the AI's logic. His reported work includes content updates, agent configuration, maintenance and tuning. 1

This is more specific than saying that a customer-service worker “learned AI.” The transferable asset is not merely comfort with a tool. It is experience of how questions arise, how products and merchants differ, and when a plausible answer may still fail the customer. The new role puts some of that experience into the operation of an AI-enabled service.

The source nevertheless leaves important questions open. It does not provide Yuchen's full training history, the size of the cohort offered a similar route, comparative pay or the duration of his new assignment. A published example illustrates a possible pathway; it should not be treated as a probability that other workers will obtain the same result. 1

Other JD service work can also remain human and specialized. A shift of routine inquiries to automation does not itself establish that all other interactions are handled in one uniform way or that a particular number of jobs has been created or eliminated. The company and its service ecosystem contain different products, organizational units and commercial users. The workforce effects of a specific internal workflow should not be inferred from the availability of a product sold to outside users. 1 5 7

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3. LONGi: inspection experience becomes input to a quality system

LONGi's Jiaxing solar-manufacturing case shows a different route from frontline work to AI-related activity. Xinhua reported in 2026 that Zhang Chen joined the company in 2022 as a quality inspector and transitioned into AI training in 2023. It reported that AI systems flag defects and that workers double-check flagged items. The article attributes an inspection labour-cost estimate to the worker; that estimate is not a layoff count and should not be generalized to the entire factory or company. 2

A separate December 2024 Zhejiang Daily report follows Zhang Xuanxuan, also at LONGi's Jiaxing base. He described receiving a new assignment in August 2022 involving defect samples, classification and annotation to support an AI quality-inspection system. The account attributes to the factory the introduction of an advanced analysis system in March 2023 and gives examples of continuing human review. These dates and activities belong to **Zhang Xuanxuan's reported account**; they must not be transferred automatically to Zhang Chen. 3

The distinction is important because the reports describe different people. They can both inform the analysis of inspection expertise, but they cannot be combined into one biography, a single training programme or a workforce-transition rate.

Zhang Xuanxuan's example helps explain the nature of the expertise. An inspector does not simply look at an image: the person learns how defects appear, which differences matter for quality, where the system may make mistakes, and how observations relate to production. Turning that experience into categorized examples or verification work requires additional skills and an organizational process for using the knowledge. The report describes these activities; it does not independently measure the quality or long-term career value of the resulting role. 3

The 2024 report also includes factory-reported staffing and operating figures. They may describe a specific inspection configuration or wider transformation at a point in time. A reduction in people allocated to an inspection function is not automatically a count of workers dismissed, and a factory-wide operational improvement cannot be attributed solely to a particular AI trainer. This brief does not compare such figures numerically with JD's customer-service data. 3 8

CASE COMPARISON

4. Two settings, a shared decision

FIGURE 1

Qualitative comparison

Selected cases: expertise and evidence boundaries

Dimension	JD.com: customer service	LONGi: solar manufacturing	Boundary
Original domain	Customer questions, products and merchant context. [1]	Visual inspection, defects and manufacturing context. [2] [3]	Different work settings and source accounts.
Reported AI-related work	Yuchen describes diagnosing response gaps, updating content and configuring or tuning agents. [1]	Zhang Chen and Zhang Xuanxuan are separately reported to have moved into AI-related training or quality work; the latter describes annotation and defect classification. [2] [3]	Do not combine the two LONGi accounts into one person's role or timeline.

Source: Science and Technology Daily; Xinhua; Zhejiang Daily [1] [2] [3]

Note: Purposively selected cases; accounts concern different workers and are not representative or directly comparable.

CASE COMPARISON

FIGURE 2

Qualitative comparison

Selected cases: expertise and evidence boundaries

Dimension	JD.com: customer service	LONGi: solar manufacturing	Boundary
Expertise carried forward	Anticipating customer needs and understanding products and service experience. [1]	Recognizing and interpreting defect patterns and inspection context. [3]	Transferable expertise is an analytical inference from individual accounts.
Human role	The reported trainer helps identify and address AI response problems. [1]	Reports describe training activities and human checks of flagged defects. [2] [3]	Formal approval, override and accountability rights are not established for every workflow.
Workforce outcome	An individual pathway and broader company-context claims are reported. [1]	Individual pathways and factory-context claims are reported. [2] [3]	Neither source provides a comparable worker-level transition rate.

Source: Science and Technology Daily; Xinhua; Zhejiang Daily [1] [2] [3]

Note: Purposively selected cases; accounts concern different workers and are not representative or directly comparable.

The shared decision for employers is not "make everyone an AI trainer." It is to ask which expertise is needed in the redesigned workflow, whether the destination work is available, and who has a fair opportunity to develop into it.

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5. Transition capital: what travels from the old role?

AIGW uses **transition capital** as an analytical term for knowledge and capabilities a worker may carry into new work. It is not a score or a guarantee of employability.

In these cases, transition capital can include:

- **Domain recognition:** understanding a product, a customer situation or a defect.

- **Exception judgment:** knowing when an answer or classification looks plausible but needs further scrutiny.

- **Context:** understanding business rules, production conditions or user expectations.

- **Communication:** explaining an error or requirement to colleagues with different expertise.

- **Operational memory:** recognizing recurring problems that may not be fully documented in a formal procedure.

AIGW infers these categories from the reported work; they are not standardized measurements taken from both employers. 1 3 Not every element is equally transferable, and an experienced worker may still need training, time and support to move to a different role.

Nor should domain expertise be romanticized as a substitute for safe system design. People need clear responsibilities, appropriate access to tools, sufficient time to review outputs and a route to escalate concerns. The cited cases do not establish exactly who has final override rights across each workflow.

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6. A new role is not necessarily the final destination

A second transition can occur after the first. JD JoyAI's product page says its model can analyze consultation conversations and documents, using knowledge enhancement and FAQ discovery to reduce the effort required for trainer knowledge-base configuration. 5

That statement matters because it shows a possible direction for the tools used around service operations. It does **not** establish that the function was deployed in Yuchen's workflow, that it achieved its advertised effects, or that a specific worker was displaced. It is evidence of a vendor-described capability, not a measured employment outcome.

For a worker, this creates a career-design question: if part of today's configuration work becomes easier or automated, which capabilities will remain useful? Possible areas to investigate include evaluating outputs, understanding exceptions, governing knowledge, communicating with business teams and checking system performance. These are examples for planning, not predictions that demand for every such task will grow.

The same question applies in manufacturing. A role built around producing labels may evolve as tools improve, but the public LONGi sources used here do not establish the future composition or security of the reported workers' jobs. Monitoring that uncertainty is more useful than promising a permanently safe role.

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7. China's occupational infrastructure: an enabling layer, not an outcome

China has developed occupational and training arrangements around AI-related work. A Shanghai human-resources authority page, reproducing Xinhua reporting, says AI trainer was included in the city's priority support context for skills training and assessment. It reports 16,300 assessment participations and 10,900 certificates in 2025. 6

Those measures must be read precisely: **participations may include repeat participation, and certificates are not the same as unique workers placed into AI-training jobs**. They do not establish earnings, sustained employment or a transition rate for JD.com or LONGi employees. The source is useful for understanding a local skills-infrastructure signal, not for calculating the effect of the two company cases.

An occupational label can make a role more visible to training providers, employers and workers. Its practical value depends on what the standard assesses, whether learning is accessible, whether employers offer suitable roles, and whether the credential connects to work and progression. This brief does not claim that a certificate was required for either reported individual transition.

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8. What employers should design

The two cases suggest a practical sequence of questions for an employer considering a transition pathway. The following is an AIGW proposal for discussion, not a tested assessment or a description of either company's full process.

1. Map the changed work

Identify the task, the workflow and the people affected. Record what the AI tool actually does, where human work continues and where the evidence is incomplete. Do not infer workforce reduction from technical adoption alone.

2. Identify expertise worth carrying forward

Ask experienced employees to describe difficult cases, recurring exceptions, customer consequences or production defects. Make that knowledge visible before treating a role only as a set of routine tasks.

3. Specify the destination work

Describe the new role in operational terms: tasks, required knowledge, tools, review responsibility, manager, pay range where appropriate, and progression. “AI trainer” can cover different functions; the title by itself is not a pathway.

4. Build a supported learning route

Combine technical instruction with practice on real or safely simulated cases, feedback from domain and technical colleagues, and time to learn. Ensure access is not limited to workers who already have an advantage in digital training.

5. Measure the transition

Record separately the number of workers informed, eligible, offered a place, starting training, completing it, assessed for capability, assigned to new work and still in that work after an appropriate period. Where lawful and appropriate, assess pay, hours, retention, job quality and worker experience. Counts at one stage must not be reported as proof of the next.

6. Revisit the destination role

Ask periodically whether the work is still needed, whether part of it has been automated, and what new learning or mobility opportunities are available. The goal is an ongoing career pathway rather than a one-off move into a title that may change.

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9. Implications for policymakers and training institutions

The cases connect occupational policy with enterprise implementation. Public agencies and training providers can help define skills, make training more accessible and support local matching. Employers remain central to creating actual roles, providing workplace practice and reporting credible outcomes.

A useful evaluation would ask whether workers who take a course can enter relevant work, whether the job uses the skills taught, and whether the work provides suitable conditions and progression. It should also identify who is missing: workers not selected for training, employees whose original tasks were reduced but who did not move, and people outside formal employer programmes.

The evidence in this brief does not establish a national success rate. Its contribution is to make the implementation question concrete: how do a worker's experience, a learning route, a real assignment and a durable employment outcome connect?

Conclusion

The JD.com and LONGi accounts show that AI transformation can create new uses for knowledge accumulated on the frontline. A service worker's understanding of customers can inform AI service operations; an inspector's understanding of defects can inform an AI-enabled quality system. Those are specific reported pathways, not a promise that every worker can be redeployed or that all outcomes are positive.

The strongest institutional response is to treat the destination role as carefully as the technology being deployed: define the work, recognize existing expertise, provide access to learning, clarify human authority and measure what happens to people over time. As AI systems evolve, the pathways need to evolve too.

SOURCES

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