

Lecture 16: Knowledge as Compensation

Compensation in Organizations

Jacob Kohlhepp

January 29, 2026

Garicano and Rayo (2025)
(Not Yet Published)

Garicano (2025)

(Blog Post on Silicon Continent)

Medieval Apprentices and Generative AI?

- ▶ Smart people are willing to do grunt work. What are examples?
- ▶ It is hard to get firms to provide general training to workers. Why?
- ▶ How does this connect to medieval apprenticeships?
 - ▶ Entry-level workers reap the gains of training through future wages.
 - ▶ Entry-level workers do not have the money to pay for training today.
 - ▶ So they pay for training via grunt work.

Transferring Knowledge

- ▶ Time is continuous and infinite: $t \geq 0$.
- ▶ Both the firm and the worker exponentially discount the future at rate r .¹
- ▶ Expert E commits to wage path $\{w_t\}$ and knowledge transfer path $\{x_t\}$.
 - ▶ Starting knowledge is 0, maximum is 1, knowledge cannot decrease.
- ▶ The Apprentice's output at time t is 0 if $x_t < \theta$, and $(x_t - \theta)$ otherwise.
- ▶ While employed, the Apprentice A gets the discounted flow of wages.
- ▶ Apprentice decides a time to quit $\tau \geq 0$, they work for themselves and receive the discounted flow of their output forever after.
- ▶ The expert gets the discounted flow of output less wages while the worker is employed, and 0 after.

1. Do not worry I will show what this means.

Transferring Knowledge: Adding Generative AI

- ▶ Where was AI?
- ▶ The parameter θ represents the level of generative AI.
- ▶ As θ rises AI can perform more of the basic knowledge tasks.
- ▶ The expert and apprentice cannot sell tasks that AI can do. Why?

The Apprentice Becomes the Expert!

Theorem 1

During a training period that lasts from $0 \leq t \leq \frac{1}{r}$, the apprentice receives 0 wages ($w_t = 0$) and knowledge is transferred:

$$x_t = \theta + (1 - \theta)e^{-1} \exp(rt).$$

From $\frac{1}{r}$, all knowledge has been transferred ($x_t = 1$) and the apprentice is paid all output $w_t = y_t = 1 - \theta$.

- ▶ The apprentice stays for 0 wages initially! Why?
- ▶ The apprentice is given an immediate burst of knowledge. Why?

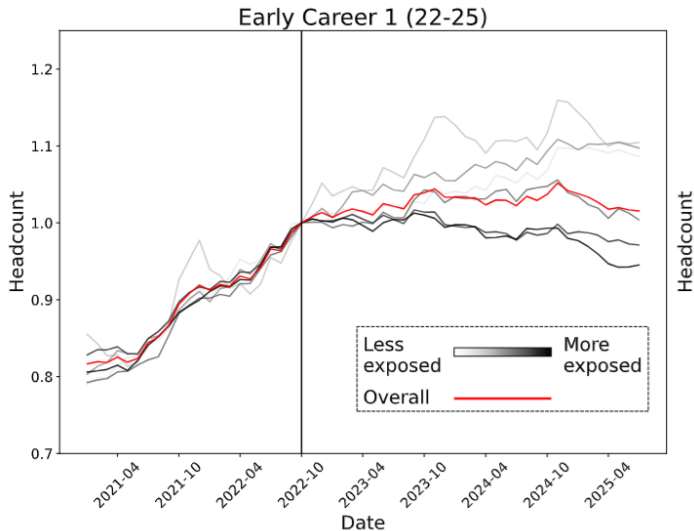
Generative AI and the Old Training Model

- ▶ Profit for the expert from training the apprentice is given by:

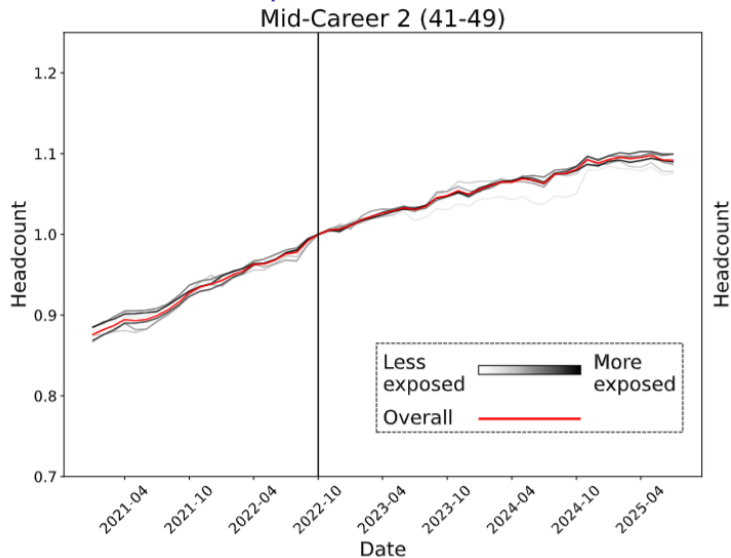
$$\Pi = \frac{1 - \theta}{r \cdot e}$$

- ▶ As θ rises, profit falls, eventually converging to 1 when AI reaches the expert.
- ▶ Entry-level workers benefit through wages from general training/knowledge.
- ▶ The old “deal” was that entry-level workers did menial work for cheap in exchange for training.
- ▶ This grunt work compensates the expert for the training.
- ▶ AI destroys this paradigm.

Employment Growth and AI Exposure: Early Career



Employment Growth and AI Exposure: Mid-Late Career



“Canaries in the Coal Mine?” by Brynjolfsson, Chandar, Chen (2025)