



The DNA of High-Growth Businesses

Understanding what drives business growth

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Executive Summary

In an increasingly competitive environment, unlocking growth is a critical challenge for business leaders.

This report distills key insights from our research into what sets high-growth businesses apart so others can identify and apply similar strategies within their own organizations.

Key research takeaways

- 1. Growth is getting harder to capture:** Although many businesses grow, the rate of businesses experiencing high-growth events (moving up one employee size classification) decreased from **7.4%** (pre-pandemic) to **4.3%** (post-pandemic), indicating an increasingly tough landscape.¹
- 2. AI skills are a growth multiplier:** High-growth businesses have a **45% higher** level of AI skill development than their counterparts.
- 3. Strategic resource allocation drives results:** Businesses that shift resources to finance and R&D functions may increase their likelihood of growth by up to **20%**.
- 4. Internal mobility powers scalable growth:** High-growth businesses that facilitate internal mobility can increase their chances of growth by **2x in a given year**, particularly in smaller businesses.
- 5. Workplace flexibility boosts growth potential:** Hiring talent with diverse educational backgrounds can **double** growth probability. Workplace flexibility has also been shown to increase the chances of growth for businesses.

How can business leaders position their businesses for growth?

When you look at high-growth businesses, the first question is: what are they doing right? While every business is different, patterns start to emerge when you look closely.

LinkedIn Economic Graph data shows that high-growth businesses² often share common traits: **smart use of emerging technologies, thoughtful organizational design, and talent strategies that promote internal mobility and flexible work when it matters.**

Drawing from over 1 billion professionals and 69 million businesses, the LinkedIn Economic Graph offers a detailed, real-time view of how talent, skills, and business structures evolve. Based on data from 500,000+ businesses across pre- and post-pandemic periods, this report highlights how growth strategies have changed—and what leaders can do to stay ahead.

However, growth doesn't happen automatically just because these elements are present. What matters is how much a business prioritizes them and how deeply they're woven into the way it operates. It's not about ticking boxes, it's about making these strategies a core part of the DNA of your business. By studying what high-growth business do well, others can adopt the practices that don't just support growth, but accelerate it.

Before we dive deeper, let's review the key insights that form the foundation of this report.

¹Pre-pandemic dates refer to 2016–2019, and post-pandemic refer to 2021–2024.

²How do we define a high-growth business? These are businesses that experience a “growth event” which is when a business goes up one employee size category (e.g. 51–200 to 201–500) in a given year.

Report Overview

1: Growth is getting harder to capture

The path to growth may be difficult, but it's far from closed.

Scaling a business has become more challenging in the post-pandemic landscape. According to LinkedIn Economic Graph data, only **4.3% of businesses** experienced a high-growth event between 2021 and 2024—a 40% drop from pre-pandemic levels. This signals just how difficult it is to grow quickly in today's environment.

Despite the challenges, businesses adopting core, strategic practices can better position themselves to scale, even in a tougher market. In the rest of the report, we'll explore how businesses are defying the trend and uncovering new paths to progress.

2: AI skills are a growth multiplier

High-growth leaders aren't just plugging into AI. They're building teams who know how to run with it.

AI adoption is on the rise—and it's not just about using the technology, but building the skills to use it effectively. One striking trend among high-growth businesses is their focus on developing AI capabilities within their workforce. These businesses are investing in AI skill development at a rate **45% higher** than their peers, regardless of industry.⁴ This suggests that building AI fluency across teams may be a key driver of their momentum.

44%

The percentage of businesses that grew their employee base from 2021–2024.

4.3%

The percentage of businesses that moved up at least one size category ("high growth") from 2021–2024.³

80%

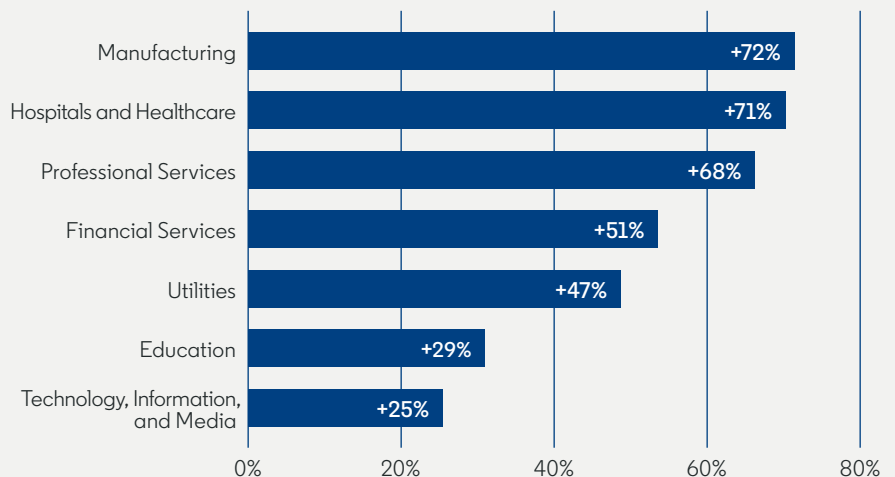
A majority of high-growth businesses ranked in the top quartile across at least 5 of the 20 factors analyzed: internal mobility, skill development, AI literacy, organizational structure, and education.

66%

Higher skill development levels at high-growth businesses compared to their counterparts.

Whether AI is core to their business or just a productivity enhancer, adopting AI tools has the potential to unlock widespread economic gains.⁵

It's not just AI—rates of overall skill development differ between high-growth and non-high-growth businesses (by vertical).



³Standardized business size categories based on the US employee based for various businesses - 0–10, 11–50, 51–200, 201–500, 501–1,000, 1,001–5,000, 5,001–10,000, and 10,000+, and measured at the start and end of the observation periods (2016–2019, 2021–2024). A growth event is when a business moves up by one or more categories e.g. from 11–50 to 51–200 or 11–50 to 201–500. Businesses that experience a growth event are also referred to as high-growth businesses interchangeably.

⁴Skill development levels are measured by skills added per employee which is calculated by taking the total number of skill adds at a business during a period and dividing it by the unique number of employees who added a skill during the same period.

⁵AI and the Global Economy: Unlocking Growth and Reshaping Work, LinkedIn (2025)

3: Strategic resource allocation drives results

Shifting resources to key areas like finance, R&D, and HR functions can be powerful growth drivers.

Talent strategy plays a crucial role in fueling business growth, and the data backs it up. According to LinkedIn's Economic Graph, businesses that focus on strengthening their engineering and research functions see a **20% higher** likelihood of experiencing growth events.⁶ Similarly, those that invest in finance talent increase their chances of growth by **15%**. While these are correlative results, these numbers point to a pattern: businesses that strategically reallocate talent to key functions are more likely to succeed in their growth ambitions. For example, investing in automation within finance can free up leaders to focus less on manual tasks and more on strategic decisions that drive the business forward.

Finance functions are **30% larger** at high-growth businesses compared to other businesses.⁷

4: Internal mobility powers scalable growth

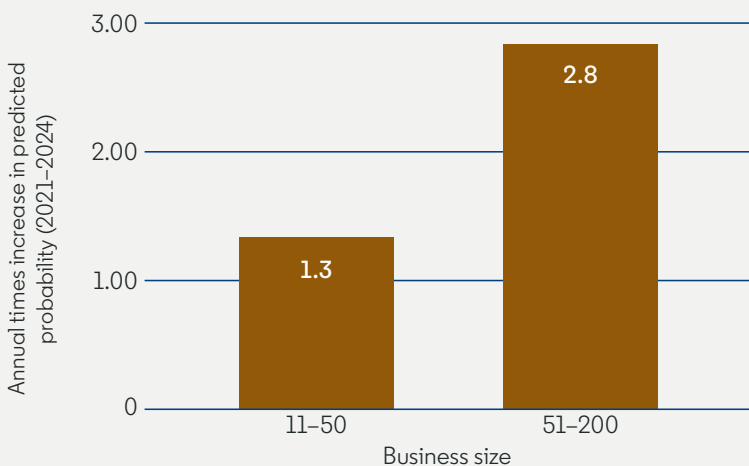
Hiring isn't the only answer. Promoting internal mobility can help drive faster growth.

As businesses grow, creating a culture of continuous growth is essential for retaining top talent, which enables innovation and leverage across business milestones. Smaller businesses (11–200 employees) that double the number of internal mobility opportunities each year can see their chances of experiencing growth double in a single year. Larger businesses only need to increase internal mobility by 50% each year to see a similar boost in growth potential. This underscores the importance of starting your internal mobility strategy early, no matter your current size.

Higher internal mobility increases the probability of experiencing growth in a given year by **2x**.⁸

How increasing employee internal mobility increases the probability of growth

Doubling internal mobility can double the probability of high-growth in a given year compared to businesses with no change in internal mobility.



⁶Electrical, mechanical, and software engineering positions are all categorized under the broader Engineering function.

⁷Comparing high-growth vs other businesses between 2021 and 2024

⁸We use compounded annual growth rate to measure the average annual increase per year over the 2016–2019 and 2021–2024 periods. Internal mobility is defined as a member switching jobs while staying with the same business. We measure both the starting level (number of members) and the compounded annual growth rate of internal mobility occurrences between the 2016–2019 and 2021–2024 periods by comparing the level of internal mobility at the end of the respective period to that at the start of that period (and similarly for other metrics). Businesses experiencing no growth in internal mobility over the observation period (0% CAGR) are said to have 'low' growth whereas those experiencing 50% or 100% growth over the observation period are said to have 'high' growth.

5: A holistic talent strategy can boost growth

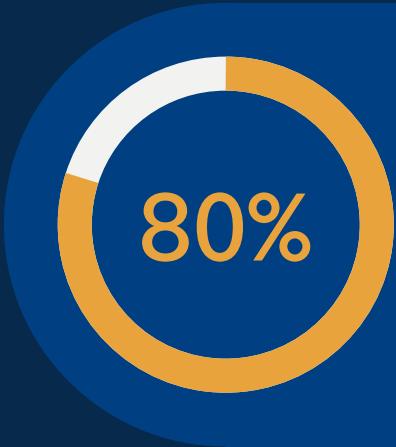
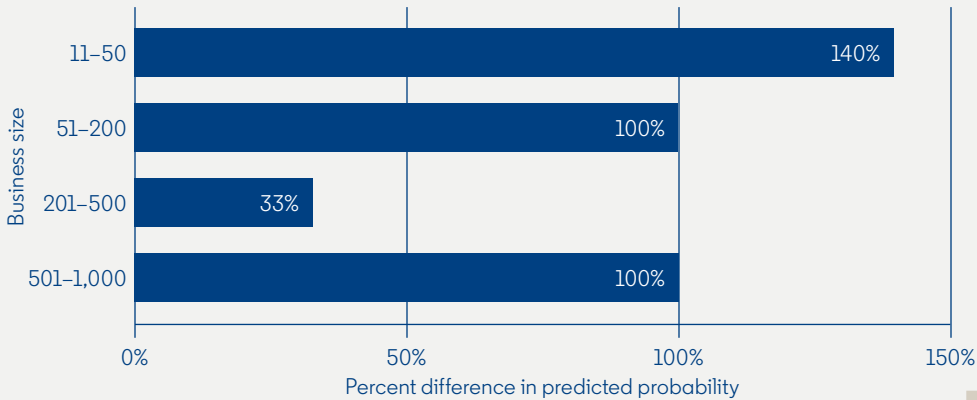
In a competitive talent environment, businesses need to bring in diverse skills.

The technological landscape is changing for many industries and it may not be just the depth of skills that matter for a business, but the breadth. In fact, businesses with a high level of educational diversity consistently experience higher growth rates, regardless of their size or industry. This suggests that fostering a wide range of perspectives and expertise isn't just good for business culture—it's a key driver of business success. In addition, there could be growth benefits for businesses that seek out the best talent through flexible workplace strategies, especially for skills that are in high demand.

Businesses that have employees with a high diversity in education backgrounds had a **100% higher** chance of growth compared to those with medium diversity in education backgrounds.⁹

Higher educational diversity signifies higher growth potential

From 2021 to 2024, businesses with a high degree of diversity in educational backgrounds had a greater predicted probability of experiencing a growth event compared to their counterparts with medium diversity.



The key to growth is in a holistic strategy.

Even in a challenging growth environment, businesses can still achieve their ambitions—if they focus on the right strategies. Growth isn't driven by one factor alone. In fact, 8 out of 10 businesses with the highest growth trajectories excel across multiple areas, including internal mobility, skill development, AI literacy, organizational structure, and education, showing that a holistic approach is crucial.¹⁰

In the following sections, we'll explore how a holistic strategy, built on these insights, empowers businesses to navigate and succeed in challenging conditions.

⁹ We measure diversity in education background by scoring each business out of 9 based on the different standardized levels of education we have available. This is then profiled into low (≤3), medium (4–6), and high (7–9).

¹⁰ 80% of high-growth businesses were in the top quartile of 5 or more of the 20 factors we used to score businesses.

INTUIT Enterprise Suite

Understanding the Drivers of Growth

The economy today is competitive and uncertain, making the path to growth more complex than ever. That's why Intuit is proud to sponsor research that increases our understanding of the behaviors, decisions, and conditions that allow high-growth businesses to thrive, even in challenging environments.

As a global technology platform serving approximately 100 million customers, Intuit is deeply invested in the future of business. We know that to deliver products that truly meet the needs of today's leaders, we must stay close to the trends shaping tomorrow.

This work reflects that commitment. It's designed to help decision-makers make sense of an evolving landscape while equipping them with data-driven insights to move faster, act smarter, and lead with greater confidence.

Intuit is proud to sponsor this research and help businesses stay informed of the forces that are driving growth.

Intuit Enterprise Suite: Helping Businesses Put Their Growth Strategies in Action

Intuit Enterprise Suite brings financial management, payroll, HR, payments, bill pay, and marketing together in one place so growing businesses can run more smoothly and efficiently.¹¹ It's powered by AI to help automate everyday tasks, streamline operations, and remove common roadblocks that often stall momentum and slow innovation. And because it connects data across these functions, it gives you real-time insights—from the big picture to the small details—so you can make more informed decisions and unlock more precise strategies for growth and profitability.

[Explore Intuit Enterprise Suite](#)

¹¹HR benefits are provided by third-party partners. Money movement services by Intuit Payments Inc., licensed by NYDFS.



Chapter 1

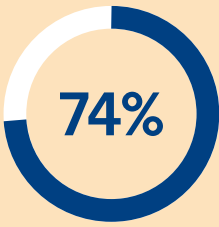
Defining High Growth

“As the economic landscape evolves, businesses are seeking tools to unlock growth and productivity. Strategies that include reskilling workers and adopting new technologies are becoming crucial drivers of business growth.”



Karin Kimbrough
Chief Economist
LinkedIn

What Characterizes Fast-Growing Businesses?



The percentage of high-growth businesses in our sample that went from 11–50 to 51–200 employees

Smaller businesses are more likely to experience a growth event, meaning it's incredibly important to create an organizational culture focused on talent, structure, and continuous learning early on.

While access to capital, favorable economic conditions, and regulatory support all play a role, many high-growth businesses also share specific internal characteristics that help drive their success. **These shared traits form an organizational DNA—common patterns in how high-growth businesses are built and run.**

Using a model-driven approach, the LinkedIn Economic Graph uncovers what's happening inside the organizations that are scaling quickly.

Our analysis looks at how certain organizational features such as talent strategy, internal mobility, team structure, and skill development—impact a business's likelihood of experiencing a **high-growth event**, defined as moving into a larger size category based on employee count. These insights are broken down by business stage, recognizing that what matters most can shift depending on where a business is in its growth journey.

We analyzed over 20 organizational factors across two time periods: pre-pandemic (2016–2019) and post-pandemic (2021–2024), excluding 2020 due to its unique and non-repeatable conditions. While the findings are correlational, they offer a data-driven profile of high-growth businesses—and a practical playbook for leaders who want to build organizations that are not just built to survive, but designed to scale.



Organizational Features and Their Relationship to Growth

Skills & learning

Measures employee share of skill development which is necessary to keep up with emerging and disruptive technologies (e.g. AI) and required to develop diverse knowledge across the business.

Organizational structure

Includes how businesses allocate resources towards functions such as R&D, HR, and finance.

Talent strategy

How businesses hire and organize their talent. Aspects such as remote vs. on-site hiring, external connectivity that may facilitate hiring via referrals and diversity of educational backgrounds.



Business size categories

We create standardized business size categories based on US employees.

Business size definitions (by number of employees)

0–10	201–500	5,001–10,000
11–50	501–1,000	10,000+
51–200	1,001–5,000	

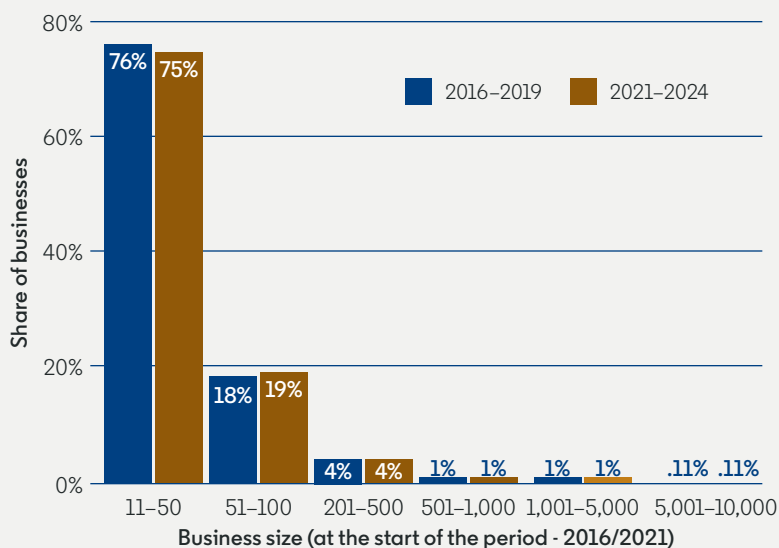
Our models examine businesses with more than 10 employees that have moved up by one or more classifications, e.g. from 11–50 to 51–200 or 11–50 to 201–500.

Note: We only consider full-time employees when calculating the number of employees, although we acknowledge that some businesses rely heavily on part-time or contract workers to meet fluctuating demand.

Although growth events are uncommon, it is important to realize that these size classifications are broad and businesses may still experience growth within a size category.

The percentage of businesses by employee headcount

Using starting business size (2016–2024)



Between 2016 and 2019, **7.4%** of businesses experienced a growth event. That number dropped to just **4.3%** from 2021 to 2024, highlighting how much harder it has become to scale in the post-pandemic environment.

Among high-growth businesses, the most common growth leap occurs when businesses move from 11–50 employees to 51–200. This suggests that smaller businesses often scale more quickly, especially in earlier stages. It aligns with [broader trends](#) showing that as businesses age—and typically grow larger—their pace of job creation slows. In other words, the window for rapid growth tends to narrow over time, making early-stage decisions about talent, structure, and strategy all the more critical.

Chapter 2

AI Adoption: A Growth Accelerant for Business

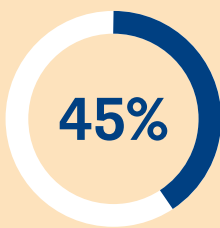
“Businesses that combine the power of integrated data and AI-powered technology to automate key business operations, uncover strategic insights, and complement human expertise will be able to accelerate and sustain their profitability and growth.”



Laurent Sellier

SVP of Product Management for Mid-Market,
Intuit

How is AI Changing the Calculus of Growth?



High-growth businesses have 45% more AI skill development compared to other businesses.¹²

Regardless of industry, AI literacy is associated with fast-growing businesses, which suggests that businesses that are not leveraging new technologies for productivity can fall behind.

The skill landscape is evolving fast. By 2030, the skills needed for an average role are **expected to shift by nearly 70%** compared to 2015, with Generative AI (GenAI) accelerating that transformation. For business leaders, this change presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Organizations that invest in upskilling their teams aren't just keeping pace—they're fueling employee growth and positioning themselves for long-term success.

Many businesses are already leveraging GenAI and AI-powered tools to drive innovation and efficiency. In a **recent survey** of over 2,000 businesses across the US, India, the UK, France, and Germany, leaders identified innovation and creativity (**70%**), automation of repetitive tasks (**60%**), and process simplification as some of the most impactful applications of GenAI.

Time savings from generative AI usage

76%

of businesses reported experiencing **substantial time savings** across some or most job functions

The most popular ways in which businesses leveraged these time savings include:

- Customer engagement
- Business development
- Research and development
- Upskilling and re-skilling

Source: Access Partnership's survey of 2,620 businesses in the US, India, Germany, the UK, and France



¹² Based on comparison of the pace of AI skill development at businesses between 2021 and 2024

There are also meaningful differences in the level of AI skill development between businesses that experience growth events and those that don't.¹³ From 2016 to 2019, high-growth businesses developed AI skills at a rate **105% higher** than their peers. By the 2021 to 2024 period, that gap had narrowed to **45.5%**, indicating that more businesses are recognizing the value of AI adoption and starting to close the gap.

2x

From 2021–2024 data, businesses with employees holding 1–10 GenAI skills were **twice as likely** to experience growth as those with none—and the likelihood was even higher (2.5x) for larger businesses.¹⁴

In 9 of 17 industries we observed, the level of AI skill development at the start of the observation period amongst high-growth businesses was also higher in 2021–2024 compared to 2016–2019, showing the increasing importance of AI skills, and the growing popularity of AI tools.

It's not just technical skills that are gaining traction. According to LinkedIn's annual [Skills on the Rise List](#), capabilities like Adaptability and Process Optimization are becoming increasingly valuable across all industries. This shift underscores an important point: the combination of technical and non-technical skills sets high-performing teams apart.

For leaders focused on scaling, building a workforce that can both master new tools and adapt quickly to change is becoming a competitive advantage.

Skills on the rise

Underscoring the growing importance of both AI and human skills in today's workplace, LinkedIn Economic Graph data shows that the fastest-growing skills, by both supply and demand, include:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. AI literacy | 3. Adaptability | 5. Innovative thinking |
| 2. Conflict mitigation | 4. Process optimization | 6. Public speaking |



¹³ We also refer to and profile AI skill or AI Engineering skill development in the same way as GAI skills. These are skills related to technical expertise and practical competencies required to design, develop, deploy, and maintain artificial intelligence systems e.g. Convolutional Neural Networks, Generative Adversarial Networks, MLOps, Responsible AI, Model Training etc. For more information see our AI skills classification [here](#).

¹⁴ Represented by the 'none' category of GAI skill development (GAI skills per employee at a business) i.e. no employees have GAI skills. Other levels are 1–10 and 10+ GAI skills per employee at a business. AI literacy or GAI skills refer to the knowledge, abilities, and competencies required to understand, evaluate and effectively interact with AI technologies e.g. Prompt Engineering, Generative AI Tools, Multimodal Prompting etc. Note that we measure skill adds since 2023 to account for the novelty of GAI skills.

Leveraging AI to better utilize human resources

When asked about how they plan to use AI and agents in the workforce, respondents are considering a range of strategies.



Chapter 3

Organizational Strategy & Business Growth

“Businesses must contend with dynamic environments where business models, competition, and your customers are constantly changing. However, the ingredients to scaling remain largely constant: skills, talent, learning, and innovative technologies.”



Sharat Raghavan

Director of Research, Data Science & Economic Graph
LinkedIn

How Does Organizational Design Contribute to Growth?



Finance functions at high-growth businesses are 30% larger compared to other businesses in the 2021–2024 period.

Organizational design plays a key role in scaling. For example, integrating more automation into finance processes frees leaders to focus on activities that drive growth.

High-growth businesses across industries invest more in R&D, HR, and finance than businesses that don't experience a growth event. Additionally, data shows that these differences are growing in importance.

Difference in employee allocation

Our data highlights how high-growth businesses are increasingly allocating employees to key areas, with these percentages rising over time. Data from 2021–2024 shows an upward trend in talent share allocated to particular functions compared to the 2016–2019 time period:¹⁵

- **Research: 46.5%** (up from 26%)
- **Engineering: 43%** (up from 34%)
- **Human Resources: 32.8%** (up from 29.9%)
- **Finance: 30%** (up from 13%)



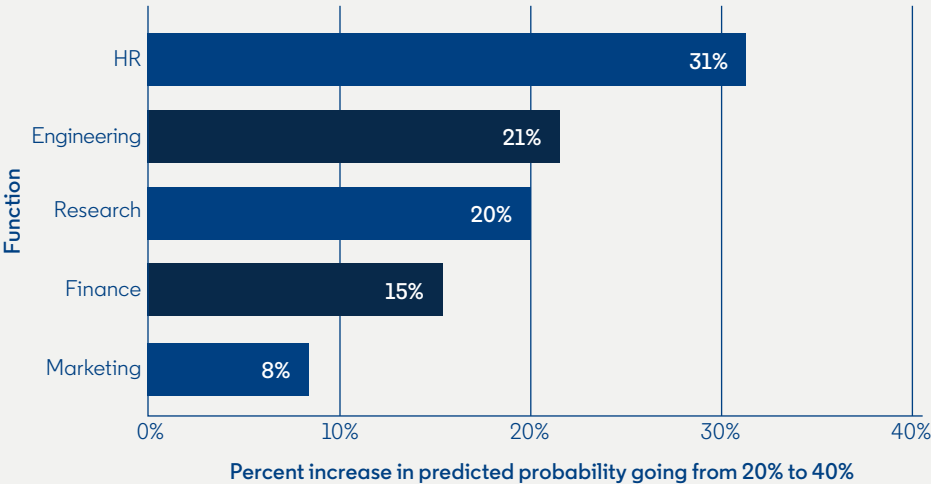
¹⁵ Includes the broad variety of engineering roles ranging from mechanical and electrical engineering to software engineering, and is industry agnostic. This is based on LinkedIn's standardized function classification.

The Link Between Business Team Size and Growth Potential

Our models show that the structure of an organization—specifically the size of key functions—can greatly impact growth, especially during the early stages when a business has 11 to 50 employees. At this stage, directing resources toward strategic functions like HR, engineering, R&D, and finance can **boost the likelihood of achieving high growth by 15–30%.**

How boosting key function boosts the likelihood of business growth

Between 2021–2024, doubling the size of key business functions from 20% to 40% significantly increased the likelihood of experiencing a growth event for businesses with 11–50 employees.



As businesses grow, investing in **engineering and R&D** functions significantly increases the likelihood of experiencing growth events, suggesting that these areas are key to building a high-growth business. These teams are central to developing and adopting digital tools and play a pivotal role in driving innovation. This aligns with research showing that businesses with higher digital integration report greater productivity and revenue growth.

80% of growing businesses self-identify as early or timely adopters of new digital technologies.¹⁶

The most digitally integrated small businesses were

1.9x

more likely to report higher productivity

1.5x

more likely to report revenue growth

1.4x

more likely to report confidence in future revenue growth¹⁶

According to data from LinkedIn and GitHub—a platform for hosting and collaborating on code—businesses that deploy GitHub Copilot are more likely to expand developer hiring.¹⁷

“The need for automation including AI is clear. In our research, more than 8 out of 10 business leaders agree that manual data wrangling undermines productivity, employee morale, and even their profitability. With the time saved by automation, they can put all their focus on growth strategies and customer satisfaction.”

Simon Worsfold, Head of Data Communications, Intuit

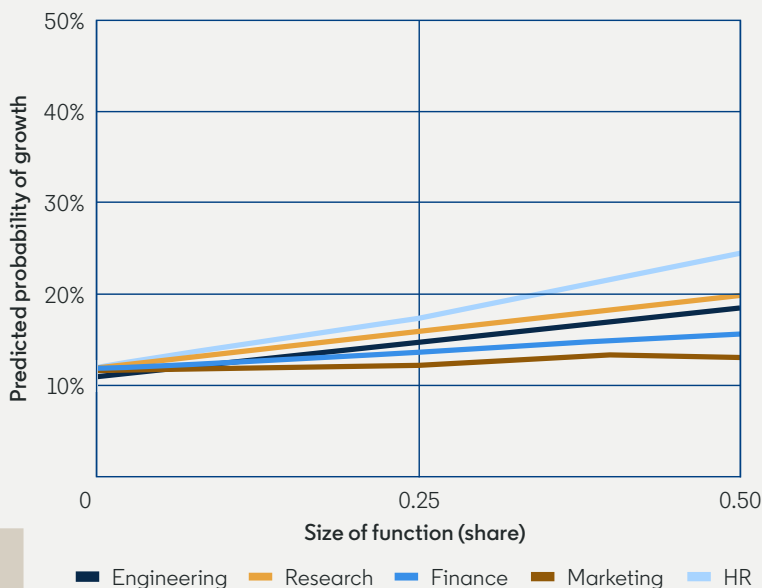
¹⁶Based on Intuit Quickbooks data from businesses of up to 100 employees, [Scaling Up: Unlocking and Managing Business Growth](#), & [Small Business Index Annual Report 2025](#)

¹⁷LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2024

For businesses with 11–200 employees, the size and speed of growth in key functions play a critical role in driving growth. Our research shows that the right organizational structure—prioritizing growth in specific functions—greatly increases the likelihood of achieving high growth. Below, you can see how different function sizes influence the probability of growth for businesses in the 11–50 employee range, providing insights into what matters most in these early stages.

How function size affects growth potential

As businesses with 11–50 employees grew various key functions, the probability of experiencing a growth event increased.



Scaling The Finance Function in Early Stages is a Key Lever

For businesses with 11 to 50 employees, doubling the size of finance teams increased the predicted probability of experiencing a growth event by more than **15%** between 2021 and 2024. This emphasizes that scaling the finance function is a key lever in driving success in the early stages of growth.

For larger businesses, it matters how fast the finance function grows.

Among businesses with 51 to 200 employees, the speed at which the proportion of finance talent grows can also make a big difference. Between 2021 and 2024, businesses with faster-growing finance teams (growing to 50%) saw a **25% higher likelihood of experiencing a growth event** compared to those with slower growth in this area. This gap was also notable in the 2016–2019 period, with a 19% increase in the predicted probability of growth. In a time of elevated financial pressure and macroeconomic uncertainty, investing in the right finance talent is more critical than ever.

What's Driving the Value of Finance Functions in Fueling Growth?

Many high-growth businesses are investing in advanced technologies like AI to automate repetitive tasks, streamline finance operations, and access key insights. Equipped with the right technology, finance teams can free up time and allow leaders to focus on strategies that directly contribute to securing capital and driving growth.

Skills & Learning

High-growth businesses embrace continuous learning to drive growth.

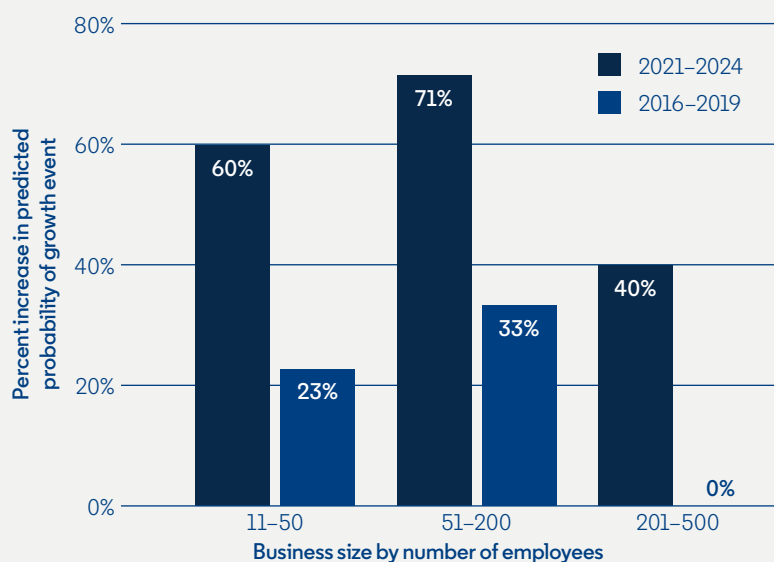
Growth requires change, and true change happens through continuous learning. High-growth businesses stand out not just for their AI skills, but for a broader focus on skill development. Across industries, businesses that experience growth events typically see over **60% more skills developed per employee compared to those that don't grow.**

For businesses of all sizes and across both time periods analyzed (2016–2019, 2021–2024), accelerating skill development and fostering a diverse range of educational backgrounds are strongly linked to growth. The data shows that increasing the pace at which employees learn and develop new skills leads to a higher likelihood of experiencing a growth event, no matter the size of the business. This trend holds true across business with 11–500 employees. “With the rapidly evolving technological landscape businesses face today, adopting a culture of continuous learning and skill development is a competitive advantage,” says Akash Kaura, Staff Research Scientist, Economic Graph at LinkedIn.

Doubling the pace of skill development can lead to a **50–100% increase in the predicted probability of experiencing a growth event**, with the impact varying based on business size.¹⁸

How increasing skill development increases growth potential

Doubling skill development from 10 to 20 skills has a bigger impact on growth likelihood in 2021–2024 than it did in 2016–2019. Across businesses of all sizes, there is a correlation between growth and a culture of continuous learning and skill development.



¹⁸ CAGR (2021–2024) for the number of skills added per employee

Chapter 4

Internal Mobility & Workforce Strategies



A deliberate talent strategy is a key differentiator for businesses of any size. Sometimes your best talent is within, and businesses can benefit from fostering internal mobility to retain this talent.”



Karin Kimbrough
Chief Economist
LinkedIn

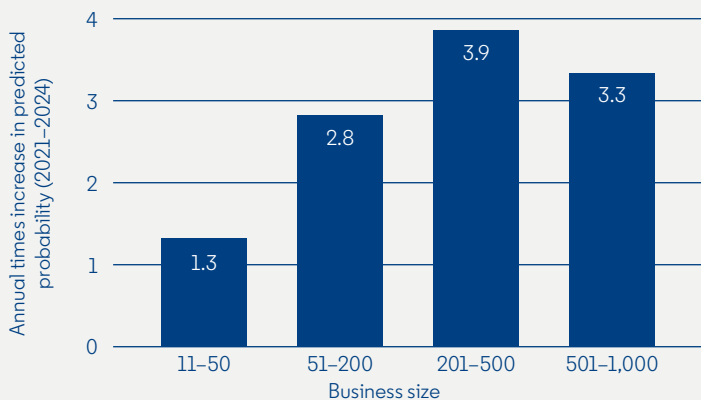
How Does Increasing Internal Mobility Improve the Likelihood of Growth?

Internal mobility is a key factor in driving growth at all stages of a business. Our data shows that the more internal mobility opportunities a business offers, both from the start and as the business grows, the higher the chances of experiencing a growth event. This trend holds true for businesses of all sizes, whether we look at the 2016–2019 period or the 2021–2024 period.

The bottom line? Offering employees diverse career paths within your business can be a crucial play for long-term growth. “Creating opportunities for internal mobility is a great way to break down internal silos and facilitate knowledge transfers around your organization,” says Kaura.

Increasing internal mobility increases the probability of growth for businesses of all sizes.

Businesses who increased internal mobility by 100% saw their chances of growth in a given year more than double.



For businesses with 11–200 employees, doubling internal mobility opportunities each year can **double the probability of growth** in a given year. Businesses with 201–1,000 employees only need to increase internal mobility opportunities by **50%** each year to achieve a similar increase in their annual chances of growth. This highlights how critical internal mobility becomes as businesses scale, and how investing in it can be a key lever for growth regardless of your business size.



The Importance of a Flexible Workforce With Diverse Skills and Knowledge

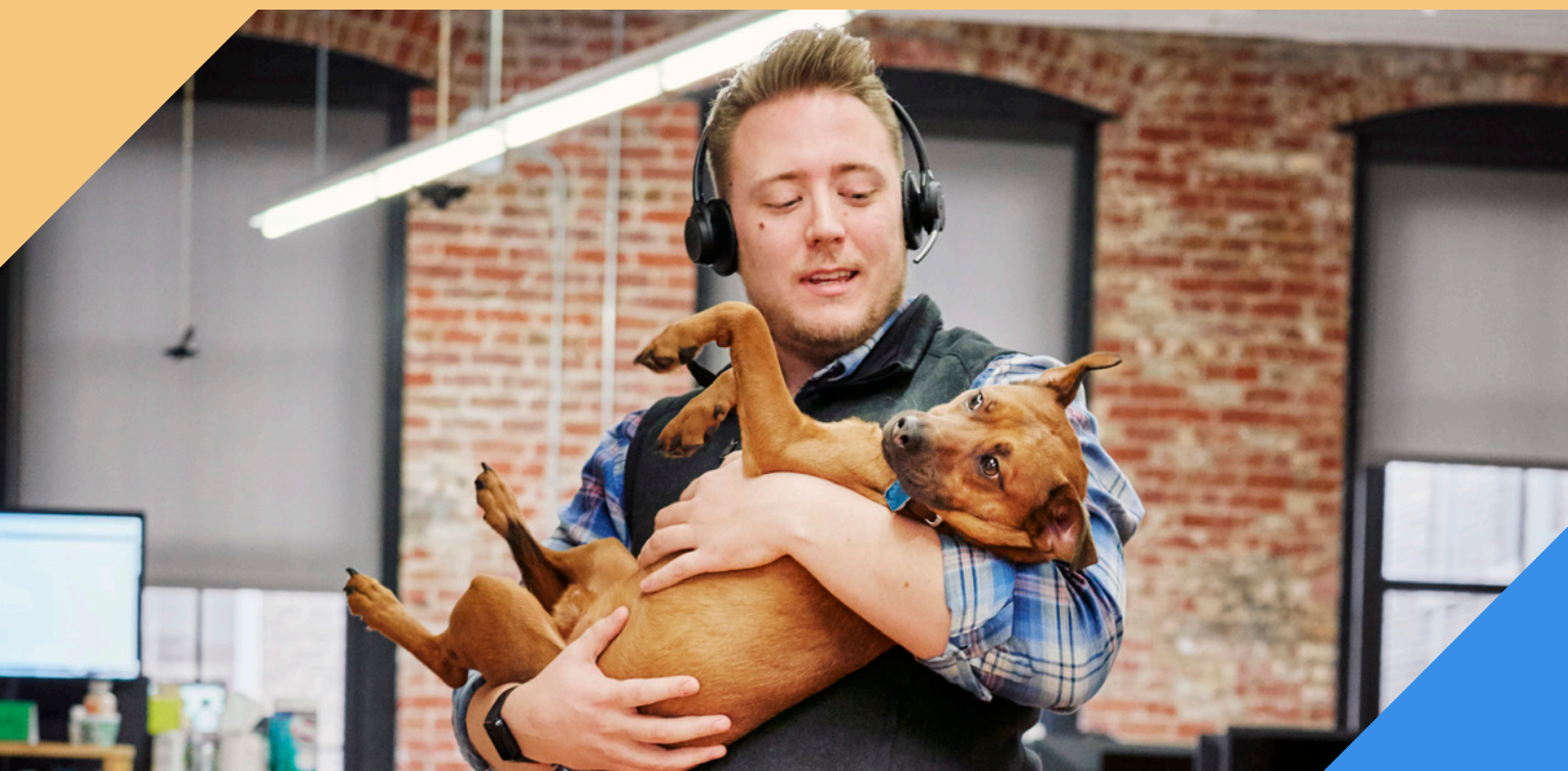
We looked at how recruiting talent with diverse educational backgrounds affects growth. Our results show that businesses with high educational diversity have a **100% higher chance** of experiencing growth compared to those with medium diversity in educational backgrounds. This effect varies by business size but all businesses benefit from more degree diversity.

100%

By recruiting from a wide variety of educational backgrounds, businesses boosted their probability of growth by 100%.

Growth-focused businesses prioritize hiring speed over work location. By adopting flexible talent strategies, businesses can gain a competitive edge and drive faster growth.

A talent strategy featuring flexibility in work location is becoming more crucial, particularly in industries where hiring is competitive. Our research shows that increasing the share of remote hiring between 2021 and 2024 boosted the chances of experiencing growth events, even for larger businesses.



From Insights to Action

What can business leaders do to realize their plans for growth?

The data paints a clear picture: capturing growth is becoming increasingly difficult. Yet despite the challenges, the landscape is shifting in ways that reveal new opportunities to break from the trend. It's not just one strategy, but a combination of targeted actions—and the speed at which businesses pursue them—that sets high-growth businesses apart. These opportunities can help leaders accelerate progress and build more resilient, growth-ready organizations.

Make AI an essential competency

High-growth businesses across industries have **45% higher** AI skill development than their counterparts. This isn't just about adopting AI tools—it's about integrating AI across functions to enhance decision-making, streamline operations, and drive innovation. Leaders should prioritize training teams in AI capabilities and adopt agile, scalable solutions like Intuit Enterprise Suite to unify finance, HR, marketing, payroll, and other key business operations with intelligent AI automation and analytics.¹⁹

Treat core functions as growth engines

Strategic allocation of resources to finance and R&D functions can raise the **probability of growth by up to 20%**. These departments should be viewed not as cost centers but as partners in growth. Investing in their expansion and equipping them with modern forecasting and analytics tools can help guide more informed, faster strategic decisions.

Build a culture of talent mobility

The most scalable growth often comes from within. Businesses that prioritize internal mobility are **2x times more likely** to experience growth, particularly in small and mid-sized businesses. Leaders should develop structured mobility programs and invest in ongoing skill development to unlock the full potential of their workforce.

Adopt flexible work as a strategic advantage

Flexibility isn't just about employee satisfaction, it's a growth driver. Hiring talent with diverse educational backgrounds can lead to a 100% increase in growth probability. Workplace flexibility has also been shown to increase the chances of growth for businesses. Flexible work policies give businesses access to broader, more diverse talent pools and enable faster hiring, which is critical in competitive markets.



¹⁹ HR benefits are provided by third party providers. Money movement services are provided by Intuit Payments Inc., licensed as a Money Transmitter by the New York State Department of Financial Services. For more information about Intuit Payments' money transmission licenses, please visit <https://www.intuit.com/legal/licenses/payment-licenses/>. Account subject to eligibility criteria, credit, and application approval. Not available in U.S. territories or outside the U.S.

Methodology

We grouped U.S. businesses into standardized size categories based on employee count: 0–10, 11–50, 51–200, 201–500, 501–1,000, 1,001–5,000, 5,001–10,000, and 10,000+. For this report, we focused on businesses with more than 10 employees that moved up by one or more size buckets during the study period—for example, from 11–50 to 51–200, or from 11–50 to 201–500. We excluded businesses on the 2024 Fortune 500 and S&P 500 lists.

Using LinkedIn's Economic Graph (EG), we created two panel datasets tracking headcount growth in the U.S. across two time periods: 2016–2019 and 2021–2024.

Growth Events and High-Growth Businesses

Based on the business size buckets above, if a business moves up in business size buckets between the start and end of the study periods, we consider that a business high-growth event.. Businesses that experience such an event are referred to as High-Growth Businesses in this report.

We use these events and a number of covariates associated with a business's organizational structure, hiring and workforce planning practices, skill development etc. to understand what correlates to growth events. We divide our analysis into two equal time periods (2016–2019 and 2021–2024). We exclude 2020 because pandemic effects may influence the models in ways that are not generalizable—2020 would contribute inadvertent volatility to various metrics and influence growth related terms by providing levels that may be too high or too low depending on the design, e.g. 2016–2020 may underestimate growth whereas 2020–2024 may overestimate growth.

Skills (AI Engineering & AI Literacy Skills)

LinkedIn members self-report their skills on their LinkedIn profiles. Currently, more than 41,000 distinct, standardized skills are identified by LinkedIn. These have been coded and classified by taxonomists at LinkedIn into 249 skill groupings, which are the skill groups represented in the dataset.

Skill groupings are derived by expert taxonomists through a similarity-index methodology that measures skill composition at the industry level. LinkedIn's industry taxonomy and their corresponding NAICS codes can be found [here](#).

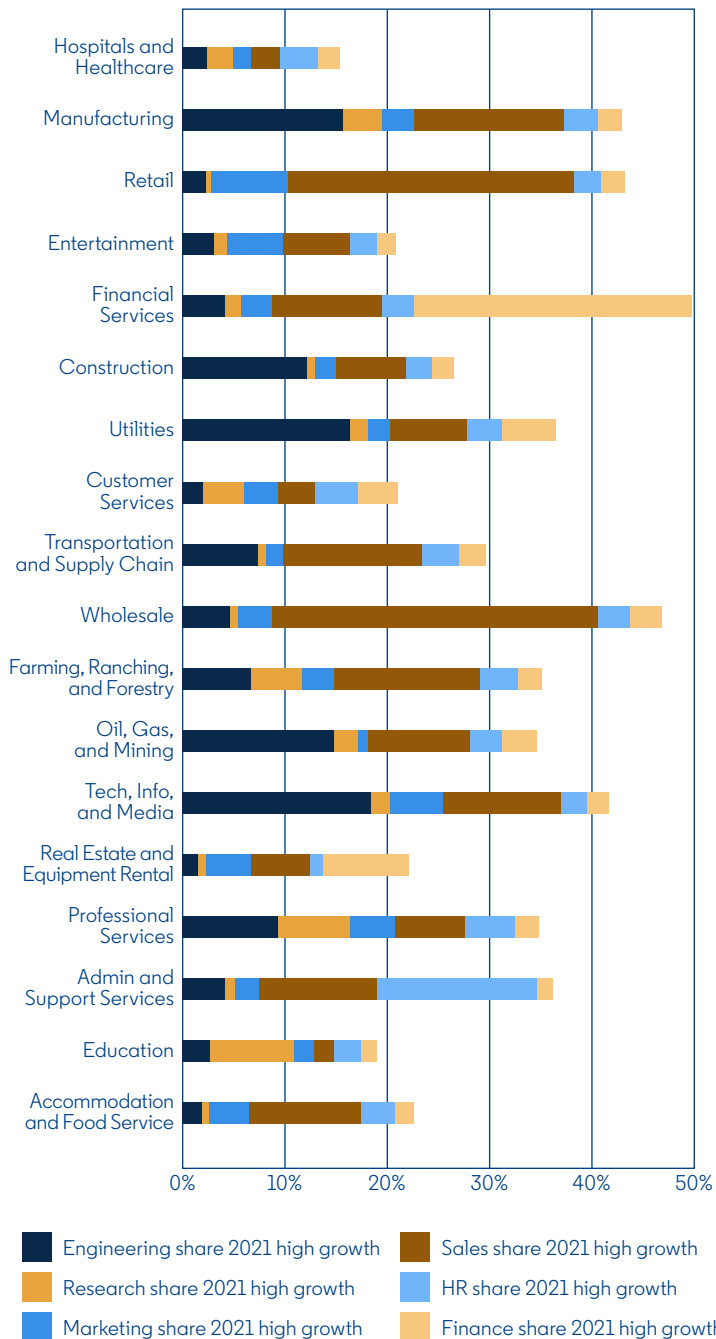
AI engineering skills involve programming, machine learning, statistics, or software engineering-related skills required to develop AI tools and technology. This includes skills like Predictive Modeling, Deep Neural Networks (DNN), Hyperparameter Optimization, Autoencoders, Synthetic Data Generation, Image Synthesis etc.

AI literacy or GAI skills pertain to using AI tools and include skills like prompt engineering, generative art, GPT-3, Google Bard etc. More details on this can be found in our [AI Partnerships Technical Note](#).

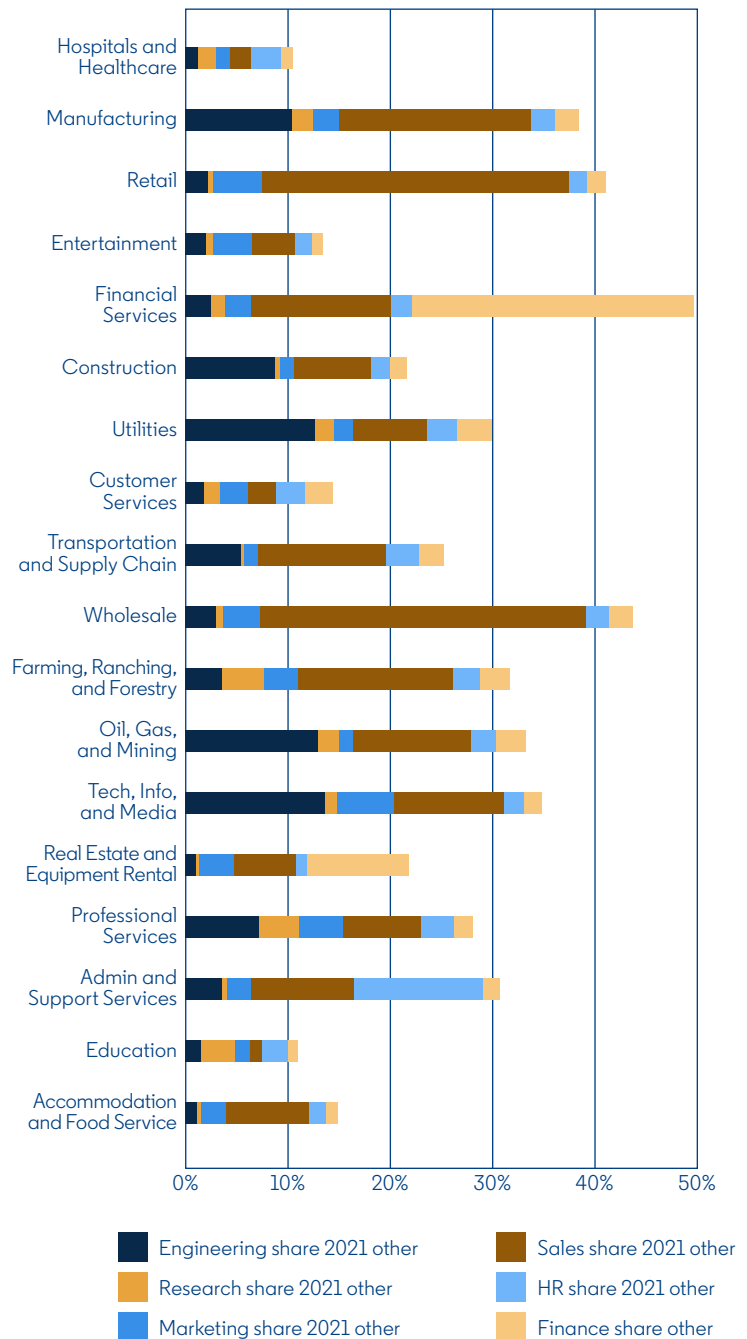
Average Size of Functions at High-Growth vs. Other Businesses by Industry

LinkedIn maintains a standardized classification of functions stemming from job titles and other position details on a member's profile. Based on these, we are able to determine the share of employees in key functions at each individual business and take the average for each industry. Below we present this for high-growth vs. non-high-growth businesses for the 2021–2024 time period. We can see that a large proportion of employees for both high growth and other businesses, work in the sales function (highlighted in green below), indicating the importance of those teams in identifying and closing customers:

Share of various functions at high-growth businesses (2021–2024)



Share of various functions at non-high-growth businesses (2021–2024)





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