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Skills Remain in Focus as Hiring Momentum Moderates Across APME in Q3 2026, ManpowerGroup Survey Finds

- The Net Employment Outlook (NEO) for Q3 2026 in Asia Pacific and the Middle East (APME) stands at +28%.
- Employers in India (+48%), China (+33%), and Vietnam (+28%) report the strongest hiring outlooks in the region.
- The Tech & IT Services (+39%) specialty sector leads hiring intentions in Q3 2026, followed by the Information sector (+36%) and Finance & Insurance sector (+35%).
- Technical skills employers in APME are willing to pay a premium for in the coming quarter include AI literacy (69%), AI model and application development (68%), and sales and marketing skills (66%).
- The top soft skills employers in the region are willing to pay a premium for in the coming quarter include communication, collaboration, and teamwork (74%), followed by critical thinking and problem-solving (71%), with adaptability and willingness to learn, as well as professionalism and work ethic tied for third at 70%.

SINGAPORE (9 JUNE 2026) – Even as hiring sentiment across Asia Pacific and the Middle East (APME) moderated in Q3 2026, employers continue to indicate a willingness to pay a premium for skills including AI literacy as well as communication, collaboration, and teamwork, according to the latest ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey.

The survey of 13,168 employers across 11 APME countries and territories found that 43% of employers plan to increase headcount in the coming quarter, 15% anticipate a decrease in staffing levels, while 41% expect no change. This results in a seasonally adjusted Net Employment Outlook (NEO) of +28%, down 10 points from Q2 2026, while remaining unchanged year over year.

Hiring sentiment across APME markets eased in Q3, with most reporting quarter-on-quarter declines. China (+4) and Türkiye (+1) were the only markets to record quarter-on-quarter improvements. Despite a 20-point decrease from the previous quarter, India (+48%) continues to report the strongest hiring outlook in the region, and globally, followed by China (+33%) and Vietnam (+28%). At the other end of the spectrum, hiring sentiment is weakest in markets including Hong Kong (-9%), Japan (+1%), and Singapore (+13%).

“The broad moderation in hiring sentiment across the region reflects a far more complex operating environment in Q3, shaped by geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and rising cost pressures,” said François Lançon, Regional President, Asia Pacific & Middle East,

ManpowerGroup. “These forces are affecting markets unevenly, dampening confidence in more trade- and energy-exposed economies, while growth markets with strong domestic demand and technology momentum show relative resilience. Even so, employers are taking a more cautious approach to hiring as the downstream effects of higher energy and operating costs continue to unfold.”

Skills Employers Are Investing In

Beyond hiring intentions, the survey examined which technical and interpersonal skills employers are willing to pay a premium for in the coming quarter, highlighting where organizations are concentrating their talent investment.

AI-related capabilities lead technical skills demand. More than two-thirds (69%) of employers in APME report being willing to pay a premium for AI literacy skills, while 68% cite AI model and application development skills. This is followed by sales and marketing skills (66%), and traditional IT and data skills (64%).

Across markets in the region, AI literacy is the top technical capability employers in Singapore (66%) and Vietnam (83%) are willing to pay a premium for, while AI model and application development ranks as the leading skill in India (84%), China (73%), Hong Kong (67%), and Israel (69%).

When it comes to soft skills, employers are most willing to pay a premium for communication, collaboration, and teamwork (74%), and critical thinking and problem-solving (71%), closely followed by adaptability and willingness to learn (70%), professionalism and work ethic (70%), and time management and prioritization (68%).

“Employers across the region are investing their hiring budgets with intent, prioritizing skills that drive impact today and strengthen competitiveness tomorrow. AI capability, from everyday literacy to advanced model and application development, is crucial, but its true value is realized when combined with strong human skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, and adaptability. This reinforces the importance of a human-first, digital-always approach—centering workforce strategy on people, while leveraging technology to meet immediate business needs now and prepare organizations for what comes next,” Lançon said.

To view the complete results for the Q3 2026 ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey, including regional and country data, visit: <https://www.manpower.com.sg/en/meos-apme>. The next survey will be released in September 2026 and will report hiring expectations for Q4 2026.

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ABOUT THE SURVEY

The ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey, now in its 64th year, is the most comprehensive, forward-looking employment survey of its kind, used globally as a key labor market indicator. The Net Employment Outlook (NEO) is derived by taking the percentage of employers anticipating an increase in hiring activity and subtracting from this the percentage of employers expecting a decrease in hiring activity.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The data for the third quarter was collected between April 1-30, 2026. The findings reflect employer sentiment at the time of data collection and may not capture the potential impact of subsequent events. Size of organization and sector are standardized across all countries and territories to allow international comparisons.

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY SECTORS

ManpowerGroup has introduced an updated industry sector classification to ensure our insights more closely reflect today's global economy. Beginning with this release, data will be reported across nine sectors: Construction & Real Estate; Finance & Insurance; Hospitality; Information; Manufacturing; Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; Public Sector, Health & Social Services; and Trade & Logistics. Historical data has been reclassified to maintain

consistency over time, and national and regional results remain unchanged. This update enhances comparability with other research and ensures greater relevance for clients, media, and market stakeholders

Tech & IT Services is a specialty sector that combines subsectors across Manufacturing, Information, and Professional Services to provide a holistic view of all aspects relating to IT and telecoms. Automotive is a specialty sector that combines subsectors across Manufacturing and Trade & Logistics to provide a holistic view of all aspects relating to the automotive value chain.

ABOUT MANPOWERGROUP

[ManpowerGroup](#)® (NYSE: MAN), the leading global workforce solutions company, helps organizations transform in a fast-changing world of work by sourcing, assessing, developing, and managing the talent that enables them to win. We develop innovative solutions for hundreds of thousands of organizations every year, providing them with skilled talent while finding meaningful, sustainable employment for millions of people across a wide range of industries and skills. Our expert family of brands – [Manpower](#), [Experis](#), and [Talent Solutions](#) – creates substantially more value for candidates and clients across more than 70 countries and territories and has done so for more than 75 years. We are recognized consistently as a best place to work for Women, Inclusion, Equality, and Disability, and in 2026 ManpowerGroup was named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies for the 17th time; all confirming our position as the brand of choice for in-demand talent.

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FORWARD LOOKING STATEMENTS

This report contains forward-looking statements, including statements regarding labor demand in certain regions, countries and industries, and economic uncertainty. Actual events or results may differ materially from those contained in the forward-looking statements, due to risks, uncertainties and assumptions. These factors include those found in the Company's reports filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), including the information under the heading "Risk Factors" in its Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2025, whose information is incorporated herein by reference. ManpowerGroup disclaims any obligation to update any forward-looking or other statements in this release, except as required by law.