



The list below summarizes IT trends mentioned by the National IT Innovation Center's BILT (Business and Industry Leadership Team) at the March 2026 job skills prioritization meeting on data management and the April 2026 cross-disciplinary trends meeting. The purpose of this summary is to keep faculty – and their students – informed on the ever-evolving IT landscape.

1

AI is driving immense workplace change. AI will soon be everywhere, across all disciplines and in every department. Jobs are going to shift, with many current workers becoming “managers of AI agents” that automate repetitive tasks, including coding. New AI-focused roles will be created, especially in areas like legal and compliance and governance. Students need to be prepared to be flexible. Understanding how to use AI tools is fast becoming an essential skill. That said, businesses for now don't really know yet how to use AI. They're still figuring it out.
Learn more: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai>

2

Foundational computer and IT skills are still critical. The BILT worries that as focus shifts to new AI tools, students aren't being taught “how stuff works” on a fundamental level. That includes knowing the OSI model. Many employers can share horror stories about technicians and engineers who lack basic understanding of how IT systems work, which then affects their ability to successfully do their job. Hardware and software are faster, more precise, and better connected, but they have not fundamentally changed over the past 50 years.
Learn more: <https://globalgig.com/blog/when-the-talent-pool-dries-up-how-to-navigate-the-shallow-waters-of-the-network-skills-shortage/>

3

IT technicians must understand their employer's business. Too many new hires don't understand basic business processes and workflows. IT may be only 2% of the company budget, but it powers the other 98% in areas like sales, operations, finance, and customer service. Pay attention to the business goals during the interview and hiring process. New employees should be able to explain how the tools and systems they use serve company goals.
Learn more: <https://penncomp.com/strategies-align-it-business-goals-success/>

4

New hires lack professional soft skills. This remains an ongoing concern of the BILT. Students need to develop critical thinking and embrace an analytical mindset. Is there another, better, more creative way to solve a problem? Students also need to strengthen communication skills, whether delivering a public presentation, providing customer service, or knowing how to adjust an explanation depending on whether they're talking to an experienced technician or a layperson C-suite executive.
Learn more: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/we-asked-executives-what-skills-young-workers-are-missing-heres-what-they-said/2025/12>

5

AI skills and tools should be threaded into every IT course. How can community colleges effectively teach so many AI skills and tools? The BILT acknowledged this is a challenge, especially considering the speed with which AI tools are evolving. One employer suggested that each course should include 1) one AI use case relevant to the discipline, 2) one hands-on interaction with AI such as prompting, 3) one discussion of risks, limitations, and ethical considerations, and 4) one example of a workflow or automation using AI. The idea is to ensure students learn not just how AI works, but how to use it effectively and responsibly. Keep AI embedded across curriculum rather than siloed.
Learn more: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/navigating-the-turbulent-future-of-ai-and-work>

For a deeper dive into these topics, visit NITIC's BILT page: www.nitic.org/industry/national-bilt/bilt-overview.