The "Soft" Skills Surge

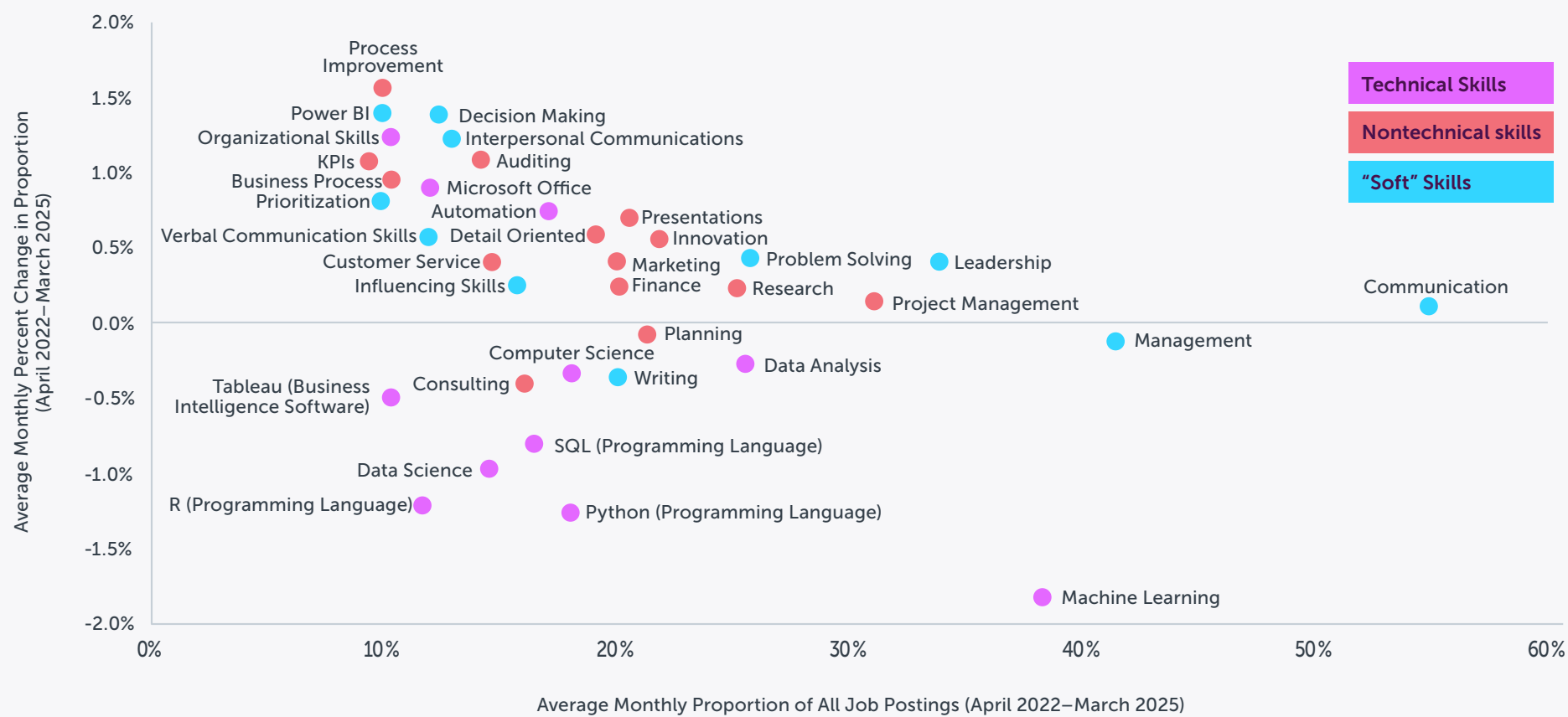## As AI Automates the Technical, "Soft" Skills Become the Competitive Edge

Widespread AI adoption is likely to increase the relative value of so-called soft skills. As artificial intelligence automates routine technical tasks, some previously in-demand skills, such as Python or data analysis are appearing less frequently in job descriptions. That is leading to a larger reshuffling of skill demand. As the only truly non-automatable skills, those such as communication, problem-solving, and leadership are rising in importance. This shift is just beginning. **As AI becomes more capable and complex, this divergence will grow over time.**

Business Roles Highlight Shifting Demand for Skills

Job postings related to business and financial roles in the United States offer a clear example of shifting skill demand. The chart to below shows the prevalence and change of the top 50 skills for general business roles in the U.S. job market that request AI or related skills. The analysis includes more than 188,000 job postings between April 2022 and March 2025. The horizontal axis represents the average monthly prevalence of each skill in job postings. The vertical axis shows the average monthly percent change in how often each skill appears. The farther to the right a skill is, the more common it is in postings. The farther up, the more it's growing in prevalence over time. This chart shows that as technical skills decline in demand, soft skills are increasingly sought after, highlighting the growing need for human-centric capabilities in AI-integrated roles.

Prevalence of and Change in Skills Mentioned in Job Postings

Lightcast, April 2022—March 2025, United States

Legend:
- Technical Skills
- Nontechnical skills
- "Soft" Skills

Y-axis: Average Monthly Percent Change in Proportion (April 2022–March 2025), from -2.0% to 2.0%

X-axis: Average Monthly Proportion of All Job Postings (April 2022–March 2025), from 0% to 60%

Data points: Process Improvement, Power BI, Organizational Skills, Decision Making, Interpersonal Communications, KPIs, Auditing, Business Process, Microsoft Office, Prioritization, Automation, Verbal Communication Skills, Detail Oriented, Presentations, Innovation, Customer Service, Marketing, Problem Solving, Leadership, Influencing Skills, Finance, Research, Project Management, Communication, Planning, Management, Tableau (Business Intelligence Software), Consulting, Computer Science, Writing, Data Analysis, Data Science, SQL (Programming Language), R (Programming Language), Python (Programming Language), Machine Learning

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Demand for Technical Skills More Likely To Be Declining—a Likely Symptom of **Automation**

Skills like computer science, data science, and coding languages are mentioned in business and financial operations job postings less often today than they were in 2022. While many declining skills are those AI can now help complete—such as repetitive or executional tasks like inputting data or creating code—the fastest-growing ones demand more situational thinking, interpersonal insight, and cross-functional collaboration.

Soft Skills Strike Back? **Human-Centered** Skills Likely to Become More Important in Hiring Decisions

As skills that are harder to automate, leadership and interpersonal communication are becoming increasingly important to employers. As one CHRO of a Fortune 500 company said in Seramount's listening tour of 100 CHROs, "We keep calling them soft skills like they're nice to have. They're critical. We need to pay more attention to leadership behaviors and capabilities, not just technical performance."

AI Training Necessary, But Not the Sole Solution

Upskilling specific teams to use tools like ChatGPT is valuable for short-term skill development. However, organizations can't rely on technical upskilling as their only strategy. The fastest-growing skills in today's business operations job postings are about people, not tools. To stay ahead, organizations need to rebalance training, hiring, and leadership development to focus on the uniquely human capabilities that AI can't replicate.

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