

How IKEA Used AI to Reskill 8,500 Employees

\$1.4 Billion in New Revenue

Zero layoffs. Full workforce retention.

A blueprint for AI adoption that puts people first.

47%

AI-handled inquiries

8,500

employees reskilled

\$1.4B

new revenue

0

layoffs

THE STORY

From cost-cutting opportunity to \$1.4B growth engine

THE CHALLENGE



IKEA introduced an AI chatbot called **Billie** to handle customer service. It resolved **47% of all inquiries** without human help. Thousands of employees suddenly faced role redundancy.

THE DECISION



Instead of cutting headcount, IKEA chose to **invest in their people**. Leadership recognized that institutional knowledge, empathy, and communication skills couldn't be replicated by a chatbot.

THE EXECUTION

IKEA retrained **8,500 call center employees** into **remote interior design consultants**. They built on existing customer service skills and layered in design, sales, and consultative capabilities. Other employees were upskilled for complex interactions requiring empathy and creative problem-solving.

AI Chatbot
Deployed



47% Calls
Automated



8,500
Reskilled



\$1.4B New
Revenue

THE FOLLOW-THROUGH (2024-2026)

4,000+

employees completed
AI training programs

650

senior leaders trained
to lead AI conversations

54,000+

views on internal
AI literacy resources

3,000

worker training goal
with 500 leaders

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The future of AI is human at the core.

Ulrika Biesert, Chief People & Culture Officer
IKEA (Ingka Group)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **AI handles tasks, not jobs.** Humans moved to work requiring judgment, creativity, and relationships.
- **Reskilling beats recruiting.** Build on existing skills. Faster, cheaper, better for retention.
- **The ROI is revenue, not savings.** \$1.4B in new revenue changes the entire board conversation.
- **AI literacy is ongoing.** 4,000+ trained. This is a cultural shift, not a one-time project.
- **Fear is addressed by doing.** IKEA learns by doing it together with employees, not lecturing.

AI Doesn't Replace People. It Upgrades Them.

47%

of inquiries handled by AI

8,500

employees retained & reskilled

\$1.4B

in new revenue generated

ZERO

layoffs from AI adoption

SOURCES

[1] Personnel Today, June 2023

[2] HR Dive, April 2024

[3] UNLEASH, October 2025

[4] Brian Solis, March 2026

[5] SHRM State of AI in HR 2026

Want to explore AI for your HR team?

Let's talk. | CJ | AI Business Consultant