# Duolingo announces strategic shift to become an AI-first company



Online language learning platform Duolingo has announced a strategic shift to become an "AI-first" company, marking a significant transition in its operational approach. The announcement was made public on Monday, 28 April, through a LinkedIn post and an internal email from the company’s chief executive officer, Luis von Ahn.

In the detailed email shared with all employees, von Ahn highlighted that artificial intelligence (AI) is already transforming the way work is conducted across industries. He emphasised the importance of acting swiftly on this technological shift, comparing it to the company's past strategic pivot to mobile platforms in 2012. “When there’s a shift this big, the worst thing you can do is wait,” von Ahn stated.

The CEO indicated that adopting AI would bring Duolingo closer to its core mission of making language learning accessible and effective. AI is expected to accelerate content creation, enhance learning features such as the platform’s video call functionality, and support faster growth. However, von Ahn did not minimise the challenges ahead, noting that much of the company’s workflow will need fundamental redesign rather than mere adjustments. “We’re not going to rebuild everything overnight, and some things—like getting AI to understand our codebase—will take time,” he explained.

Despite the anticipated disruptions, von Ahn assured employees that the focus would remain on empowering the current workforce rather than replacing them with AI. The internal email stated, “This isn’t about replacing Duos with AI. It’s about removing bottlenecks so we can do more with the outstanding Duos we already have. We want you to focus on creative work and real problems, not repetitive tasks.” To support staff during this transition, the company plans to provide enhanced training, mentorship, and AI tools tailored to various functions.

As part of the AI-first strategy, Duolingo will introduce “constructive constraints” aimed at streamlining operations. These include reducing reliance on contractors for tasks that AI can manage and evaluating candidates’ experience with AI during hiring processes. Additionally, performance reviews will take AI usage into account, and teams will only be granted additional headcount if they are unable to automate a substantial portion of their work. Each department is expected to implement initiatives that fundamentally rethink their operational models.

Luis von Ahn acknowledged that change of this magnitude can be daunting but expressed confidence in the opportunities it would bring for the company and its employees. “It will help us better deliver on our mission and for Duos, it means staying ahead of the curve in using this technology to get things done,” he said.

This announcement follows Duolingo’s move in January 2023, when the company reportedly reduced its contractor workforce by roughly 10% as it began integrating generative AI into content development. According to reports at the time, full-time employees were not affected by those cuts, with the company attempting to redeploy those contractors into other roles before resorting to layoffs.

Duolingo’s embrace of AI comes amid a broader trend within the tech industry. Earlier this year, American cloud-based software provider Salesforce announced significant workforce reductions exceeding 1,000 jobs, while simultaneously recruiting personnel for AI product sales. Meta also pursued performance-based staff adjustments in January, integrating AI into its operational restructuring plans.

The marketing and tech sectors continue to adapt to the rapid advancements in AI technology, with companies like Duolingo aiming to enhance efficiency and innovation through this transformative approach. Duolingo has confirmed that it will retain a strong focus on employee well-being throughout this transition.

MARKETING-INTERACTIVE has reached out to Duolingo for further comment on the company’s AI-first strategy.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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