

McKinsey recruiters test graduates on use of AI agents as consulting evolves

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The elite consulting firm has started using its AI tool Lilli as part of its notoriously taxing tests for business school graduates, according to people familiar with the matter.

Candidates who were part of the pilot were asked to use the chatbot during one of their interviews to replicate how the firm expects its consultants to work as the technology transforms office jobs.

The candidates used Lilli to help analyse a case study and refine their conclusion, one person said. The interview tested how applicants prompted Lilli and whether they had the “curiosity and judgment” to “take stuff that Lilli spits [out] and work with it, challenge it, put it into context of the client’s specific requirements”, they added.

The move underlines how AI-driven disruption is reaching even one of the world’s most competitive recruitment processes at a firm that has long been a training ground for chief executives including Alphabet’s Sundar Pichai, Citigroup’s Jane Fraser and Lloyds Banking Group’s Charlie Nunn.

McKinsey will adopt the test for all junior recruits in the coming months if the pilot proves successful, the people said, adding that it was just one evaluation rather than a pass-or-fail exercise.

Mayank Gupta, chief executive of CaseBasix, which trains McKinsey hopefuls for the rigorous interview process, said other leading consulting firms such as Boston Consulting Group and Bain were likely to incorporate AI into the interview process.

Many consulting firms are buying or building AI expertise as they spend less time on strategy advice and more on helping business adopt the technology.

Last week Accenture agreed to buy Faculty for \$1bn to improve AI abilities and appointed the start-up’s chief to its own global management committee.

Big firms could be forced to shift from their traditional pyramid, which uses a small number of senior consultants to oversee armies of junior analysts.

McKinsey has increased its use of “AI agents”. Chief executive Bob Sternfels told a podcast this month that the firm had a “workforce” of 20,000 agents on top of its 40,000 staff. That figure would grow over the next 18 months to “get to one agent per human”, he added.

McKinsey declined to comment.