The Broken Ladder:

Why Remote Work—Not AI—is Stalling Early-Career Growth

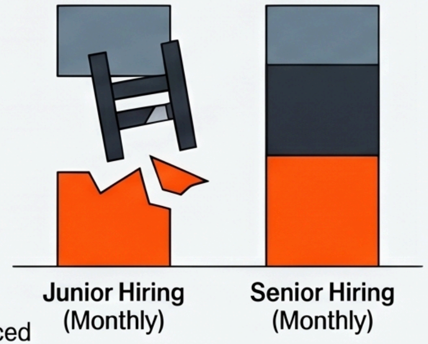
While many attribute the decline in entry-level hiring to AI automation, research reveals that work-from-home (WFH) arrangements are the true driver. Remote work disrupts the "incidental learning" and mentorship required for junior development, leading firms to favor experienced hires over new talent.

The Decline of the Junior Hire

8–11% Drop in Early-Career Hiring

The junior share of new hires has fallen significantly below 2019 baselines as of 2025.

A Shift Toward Seniority



Remote Work Predicts the Decline

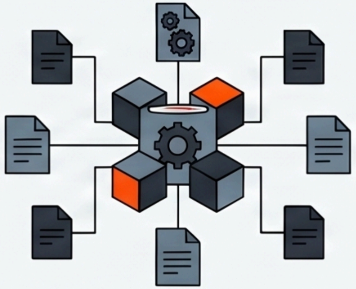
WFH exposure, not AI, is the robust predictor of reduced junior hiring intensity across developed economies.

	Entry-Level Change	Senior-Level Change
Monthly Hiring Volume (2023-2025 vs. 2017-2019)	↓ 14% to 29% Decrease	↑ 5% to 21% Increase
Online Job Postings	↓ Substantial Decline	↑ Growth/Stability

Rebuilding the Career Ladder

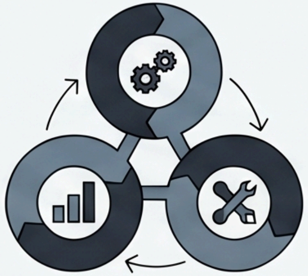
Formalize Distributed Mentorship

Replace proximity-based learning with scheduled video co-working and recorded work walkthroughs.



Asynchronous Operating Models

Use comprehensive internal documentation and decision logs to capture tacit knowledge for distributed juniors.



Rotational Development Programs

Implement 12–18 month cross-functional rotations to build broad organizational capability in hybrid environments.