

AI Efficiency: What Chinese AI Labs Teach Swiss SMEs

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY & CORE TAKEAWAY

Yes: Chinese AI labs such as MiniMax (428 employees, roughly \$197k total compensation per head) and Z.ai prove that competitive AI does not require thousands of staff or billion-dollar budgets. What matters is sharp prioritisation, lean processes, and targeted AI automation – the same logic that AI outsourcing makes accessible to Swiss SMEs.

CONTEXT & EXECUTIVE RELEVANCE

When you think about AI development, you probably picture thousands of employees and billion-dollar budgets. OpenAI now employs around 4,500 people, plans to grow to roughly 8,000 by the end of 2026, and paid staff an average of \$1.5 million in stock compensation (Fortune, February 2026; Bloomberg, March 2026). Anthropic sits at around 3,830 employees with a median total compensation of \$189,000 (Revelio Labs, March 2026). These are the scales that most of the AI debate is anchored to – and the ones many mid-sized companies quietly use as a yardstick that makes them feel too small to compete.

Chinese labs paint a different picture. MiniMax employs 428 people, paid a total of \$84.3 million in payroll in 2025 – roughly \$197,000 in total compensation per head – while producing frontier models that hold their own internationally (Tencent News, March 2026). Around 75 percent of the workforce sits directly in research and development, with the rest kept deliberately lean (Longbridge, January 2026). Z.ai operates at a similar scale, with a workforce well below the largest frontier labs and total compensation at a comparable level.

CORE ACTION ITEMS

- 01 Identify the three to five processes where AI would create the biggest lever today – not the ten that are easiest to touch.
- 02 Assess which tasks a small, focused core team supported by AI could take on before you consider adding headcount.
- 03 Clarify how governance, data protection and applicable AI-regulation requirements are secured within this lean model – before you scale, not after.
- 04 Define a single pilot with a clear success metric instead of launching several point solutions at once.

SWISS COMPLIANCE & ARCHITECTURE GUIDELINES

- ☑ Full compliance with revised Swiss Data Protection Act (revDSG).
- ☑ Zero vendor lock-in on closed proprietary models.
- ☑ Seamless integration into Abacus, Bexio and M365 ecosystems.

Non-Binding Process Analysis

Let us review in 20 minutes where AI agents create immediate measurable efficiency in your workflows.

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