



2025 EBOOK

# HR Field Guide to the Future

We asked 200+ HR and business leaders about the most pressing challenges on the talent horizon. Their responses revealed their level of organizational readiness for the forces sure to drive HR and business action over the next half-decade.



We're putting these forces in historical context, while also providing **actionable advice for HR teams** trying to assess their risk, prepare their teams, and better understand the ramifications of inaction.

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Using our initial research for guidance, we broke the survey into five distinct sections:

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# 01

## Dealing with talent shortages

The notion of a widespread talent shortage might seem counterintuitive, given the prevailing concerns about AI coming for human jobs. How can there be talent shortages in industries where technology is threatening our very livelihoods (or so we've been told)?



# Companies are training their people, but not necessarily in new skills.

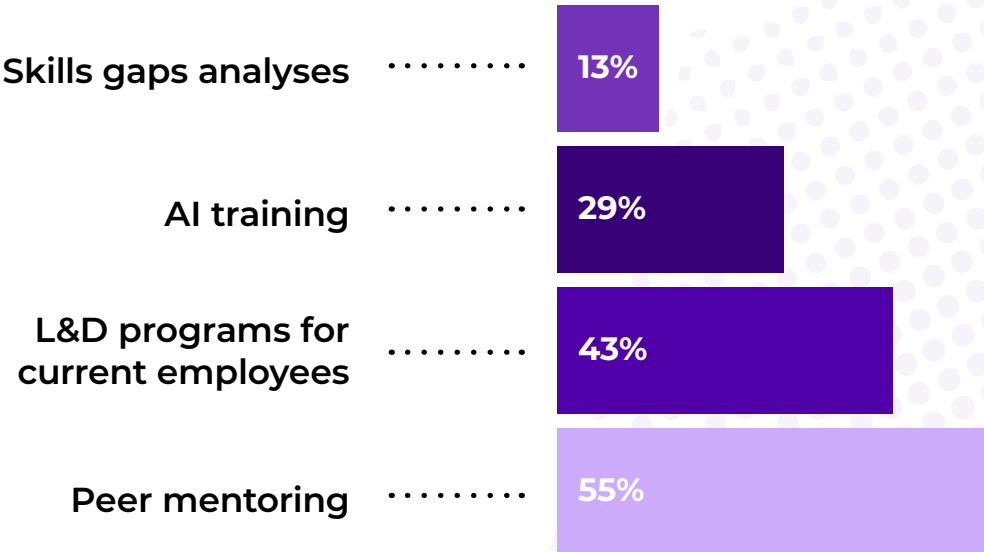
The reality is talent shortages are nagging many industries, from tech to construction and manufacturing, and not because the workforce is simply shrinking. Labor participation rates have stayed relatively flat over the past half-decade, yet some prognostications estimate that by 2030, [the global talent shortage](#) could equate to around \$85 trillion in lost revenue.

As an HR leader, it's imperative that you understand the factors driving a shortage in your field, its potential long-term effects, and your level of short-term vulnerability. Preparation can take many forms.

A majority (55%) of respondents are on top of peer mentoring. But they're coming up short in addressing skills gaps and AI understanding among their people.

A common misconception around AI is that its emergence will supplant humans entirely. In many cases, there will be a greater need for people with strong social and emotional skills, sharpened through training that focuses on the behavioral traits that best *complement* generative AI.

Which of the following are part of your internal talent strategy?



# 90+ percent say candidate experience is an essential part of the employer brand.

Survey respondents resoundingly agreed: **A healthy brand is a harbinger of future profitability.** Quantifying the health of a brand is more art than science, but perception matters a lot.

That includes the perceived attitude toward candidates - those with a future at your company and those who don't advance past screening.

Some developments are well beyond HR's control. The candidate experience, however, is something proactive organizations can turn into their competitive advantage.

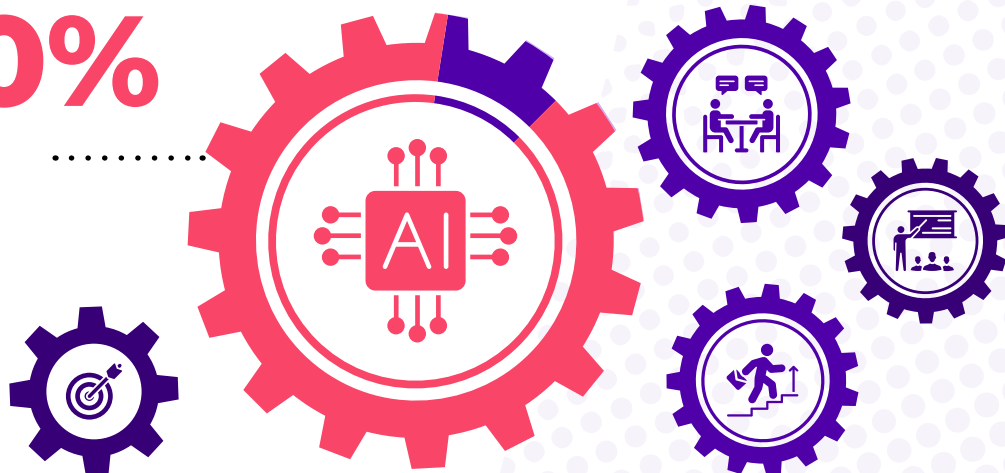
Gain that advantage through a thoughtful hiring process, alignment around cultural and behavioral fit, and a cohesive experience that starts when someone arrives on your site, continuing all the way through their job application and onboarding.

In fact, the way you disqualify people - *how quickly do you let them know (if you let them know at all)?* - may say more about your brand than any perks you grant your new hires or existing employees.

**Is the candidate experience an essential component of the employer brand?**

**90%**

agree





# Companies are (over)reliant on new tech to fill talent gaps.

The notion that emerging technology can replace traditional labor is not without merit, but it's generally reductive.

Talent shortages are layered. Each industry will experience them differently, and HR teams must therefore move to plug talent gaps tactically. That means not simply assuming the void will be filled by new tools.

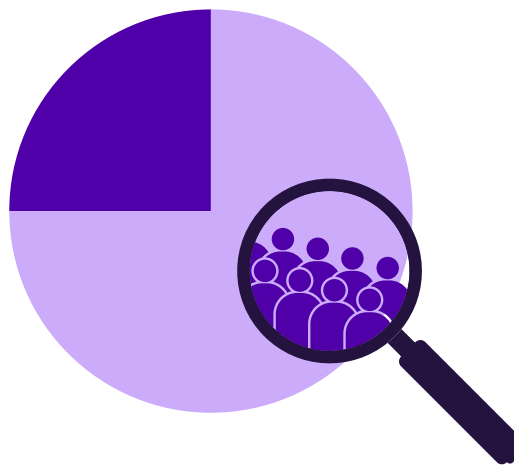
Your best weapon against any talent shortage (temporary or prolonged)? Retention.

Your existing talent, especially the top performers, represents your easiest avenue to unlocking the benefits of any new tech.

Focus on training people in the skills needed to work *alongside* such enhancements, **while leaning into their behavioral strengths.**

**75%** .....

say emerging technologies will offset talent shortages



## HR PREP STEPS

Revise your recruitment and training metrics to prioritize the skills that matter most moving forward. Put yourself in the shoes of a candidate, and reassess every step of the user experience, from search to onboarding.

# 02

## Handling human + tech integration

We know with relative certainty that companies will accelerate their adoption of AI and automation technologies in the coming decade, applying them to increasingly complex tasks.



# Leaders are split on evolving HR policy for the **sake of AI.**

Doctors may use AI to assist with diagnoses, while retail workers shift to managing automated systems as part of their daily routines.

This rapid pace of advancement complicates the role of HR considerably.

More than half our respondents (51%) recognize the need for revising policy as generative AI advances assist - but also expose - their people and processes.

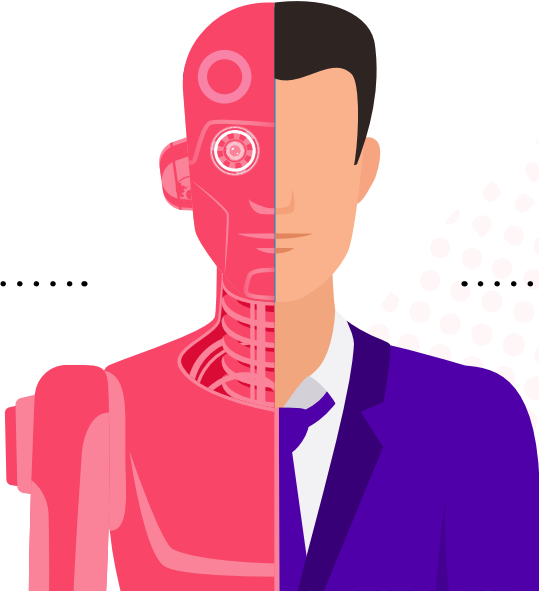
Healthy businesses will remain vigilant and proactive about what tools their people are using, and how they're using them.

They'll apply guardrails that are consistent with existing policies, while self-educating, just as they would with new payroll tech or applicant tracking systems, before rushing to update user policy.

### Is traditional HR guidance enough for implementing generative AI?

**51%**

say HR policies need to evolve ..... for AI



**49%**

..... say current HR practices are enough



# But most everyone agrees security measures should be **sharpened**.

Few people (12%) deny that with new tech come new vulnerabilities. **Adoption will almost always outpace available guidance.**

HR teams need to first fully understand the scope of what their people are using. You can't pinpoint your exposures without knowing what you're up against.

Then lean on the experts in their fields for support. Equip security and IT teams with ample resources and training to help protect the company against known threats and potential vulnerabilities.

**Do generative AI advances require re-evaluating your company's vulnerabilities?**

**88%**

agree evolving tech demands stronger security



# When it comes to using new tools, leaders should lead by example.

There's nuance to this issue, but generally, people are in agreement about who should serve as the models for tech use - new or otherwise. In that sense, the rules around ChatGPT and Slack are no different from those applying to workplace decorum.

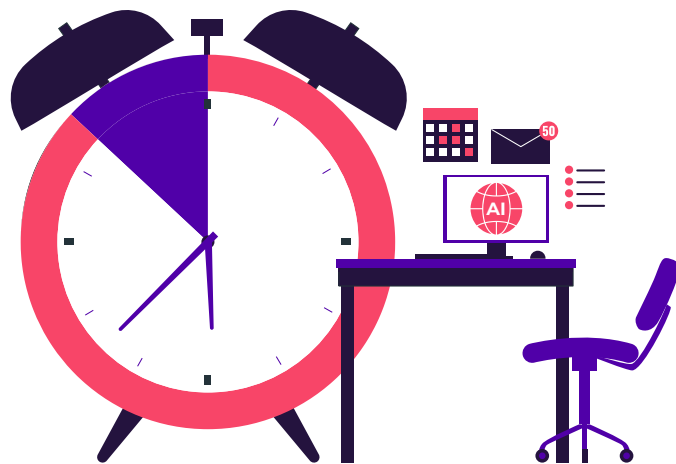
But after-hours may mean something completely different from one company to another - or even from one geographically dispersed team to the next. So it's up to leadership and HR to determine and communicate those guidelines, then model them.

Should leadership serve as the model for after-hours technology use?

**87%**

agree leadership sets the standard for after-hours tech use.

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## HR PREP STEPS

Define what constitutes required tech, and provide guidelines for adoption, integration, and collaboration. Conduct assessments, implement surveys, and engage in regular conversations with employees to gauge how integration is going.

# 03

## Guarding against generational drift

We're entering an unprecedented era in workplace culture. Onboarding fresh talent will have limited payoff if it comes at the cost of alienating more tenured employees who don't feel like they're part of the plan.



# Aligning on values is increasingly important to **business health.**

The most forward-thinking businesses are figuring out ways to unify the 4+ generations that will share spaces over the next decade.

These companies will rally their people around a common mission and vision. **And they'll do it with HR as the bridge.**

Many HR and business leaders still seem to think companies can succeed without a commitment to shared values. But by 2030, with more millennials in leadership roles, the demand for a more engaging, and satisfying work experience only figures to increase.

People need to feel like they're marching toward *something*. Codify and commit to a series of shared values, and you'll leave less room for ambiguity and argument.

Folks can feel confident in the collective vision. The most productive, profitable businesses will thrive not because everyone is always ethically aligned, but because their purpose - whatever it may be - is plain and clear.

## Does aligning company values predict organizational health?

**61%**

.....  
agree value alignment is key to organizational health



# A clear mission is not just a nice motivator - it's a **competitive must-have.**

Ninety-one percent of respondents agree: Communicating a clear mission and vision is a competitive differentiator. It's also an attainable win for any evolving organization.

It means aligning everyone from the hiring teams to salespeople to articulate the same goals and plan. Mixed messaging may not seem like a matter of employee engagement, but in the era of the global workforce, more professionals operate like free agents. And if you're not careful, threats to that messaging can emerge from within.

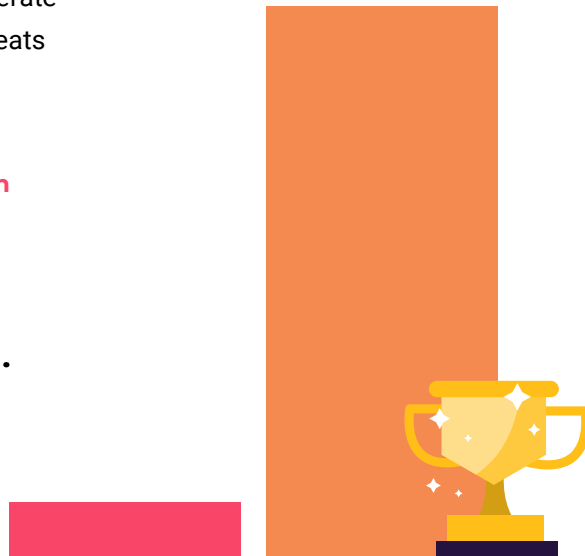
## **Assume your top talent talks to other top talent.**

The best people know what a high-functioning, forward-thinking company looks like, whether they're happily working for it or actively seeking to join one. Your company's reputation may precede itself.

**Is clear mission and vision communication a competitive advantage?**

**91%** .....

say clear mission and vision give a competitive edge.



## **HR PREP STEPS**

Connect roles (new or existing) to the skills and behaviors that will lead to success in them, and make it clear how they apply to the company's mission and goals.

# 04

## Contending with corporate backlash

The employer-employee dynamic is constantly shifting,  
but perhaps never more than in the past half-decade.





# HR and business leaders see flexible working as key to **employee satisfaction.**

Many employers have wielded return-to-office mandates as a show of force, with mixed results. Employees have exercised their own agency by leveraging competing offers, quitting (quietly or not so quietly), and expressing their dissatisfaction with traditional notions of work. Structured hybrid models have steadily increased.

“Flexible” can mean different things at different places, for different people, but a resounding majority (91%) sees the correlation with employee satisfaction and organizational health.

Understanding how your people are behaviorally driven can offer insight into their potential preferences, but there will be no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to the modern workplace setup.

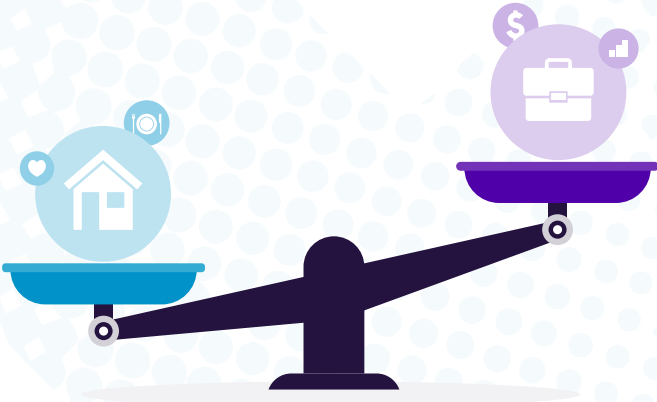
**Agility and empathy will be hallmarks of healthy businesses in the coming decade.** While certain industries and roles will afford more flexibility than others, business leaders who hold the line purely for the sake of policy or tradition will fall by the wayside.

The consequences of inaction on this issue might be particularly dire.

Ultimately, it’s a matter of competitive standing - if every other employer in your field is offering hybrid or ad-hoc working arrangements, you simply won’t be able to retain talent if you don’t.

**91%**  
agree flexibility fuels satisfaction and health.

.....



**Do flexible work options boost satisfaction and health?**

# Evolving your hiring and team-building practices is **essential**.

In a similar vein, the companies whose hiring practices stay stagnant won't fare well with the next generations of available talent. In the same way your employer brand can reflect how you value customers and candidates, your hiring practices are a peek behind the curtain of day-to-day company operations.

Expand the criteria you use to evaluate candidates to include cognitive or behavioral data and you'll unlock newfound insights into why people work certain ways. You can apply the same concept to team building, to great effect. **Just one addition alters the behavioral profile of the group.**

“**Top performers are seeking autonomy and want to make an impact. They don't want to feel like just a number or a cog in a machine.**”

**MATT POEPSEL, PhD**

Vice President & Godfather of Talent Optimization at The Predictive Index



## **HR PREP STEPS**

Make behavioral awareness and workplace flexibility a part of your company's mission. HR and business leaders who recognize and leverage people's behavioral preferences will broaden their organizational appeal.

# 05

## Practicing stakeholder capitalism

The concept of stakeholder capitalism holds that the employee can cash in their accrued capital for better compensation and better working conditions.



# Ensuring employee **safety** is organizational job one.

Stakeholder capitalism can benefit job creators, too. They can practice it by catering to a broader swath of the employee population, appealing to more job seekers who share their values and commitment to a stated mission. Research suggests that doing so leads to better treatment of employees.

Safety is a recurring theme among modern jobseekers, one that resurfaces regularly in employee engagement data, and one business and HR leaders agree is a near-unanimous priority (97%) over the next few years.

Employers can advance their own capital by taking simple steps to make people feel included, seen, and secure.

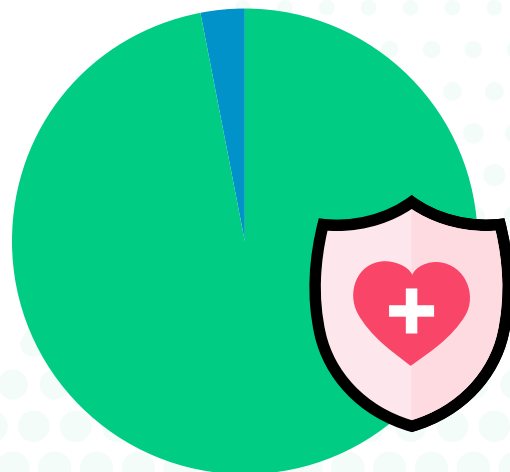
That means using technology to enhance security for on-site and remote employees alike, but it also means fostering a culture of support and open communication, through outlets like employee resource groups.

Psychological safety isn't easy to attain, but it's a widely agreed-upon necessity for a harmonious workplace - and therefore a worthy goal for proactive organizations.

Does workplace safety predict organizational health?

**97%**

.....  
say workplace safety predicts organizational health.



# Over the next decade, more companies will embrace **social responsibility**.

What's the role of business when it comes to social issues? There are no easy answers to that question, but the path of least resistance has generally been the status quo. Take no sides, risk no business losses.

But what does that approach say to your employees?

Research suggests that finding purpose in one's work, and working for a company whose organizational purpose includes social responsibility, are increasingly intertwined.

**86%** .....

say social responsibility gives companies a competitive edge in attracting talent.

It's an opportunity companies can capitalize on without compromising their customer base or profit margin.

Embracing social responsibility can be subtle. And the organizations that strike this balance will serve notice - both through their customer activity and talent acquisition.



## HR PREP STEPS

Take advantage of that seat at the decision-making table. As an HR pro, you have the pulse of the people at your organization, and the ear of other business leaders. Use powerful people data to inform sound business decisions.

# Assessing your threat level as a business

Run back through the five forces we've covered. How prepared is your business for each threat? What are the ramifications of being unprepared?

Every organization's situation is unique, but we can feel confident about a few things:

- Companies that don't deal with talent shortages will **see performance suffer**.
- Integrating new tech without adequate people training will **sew disengagement**.
- Failing to unite different generations at work will lead to **alienation and attrition**.
- Refusing to evolve for the sake of corporate tradition will **stunt growth**.
- And ignoring stakeholder capitalism will **limit your impact**.

Address these challenges head-on, however, and you'll not only reinvigorate your current people - you'll start attracting new ones.