

2026 Top Priorities for CHROs

How Gartner identifies CHRO priorities

Inputs from:

✓ 2026 Gartner HR Priorities Survey

✓ CHRO interviews

✓ 2025 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey

✓ 2025 Gartner HR Leader and Employee Surveys

✓ Market research and data analysis

426
CHROs

23
industries

4
regions

Trends Impacting Chief HR Officers in 2026

AI triggers questions about the future of HR.

AI is seen as a viable alternative to human talent.

Organizations walk a growth-efficiency tightrope.

The employment deal shifts to “give more, expect less.”

Priority 01
Harness AI to revolutionize HR.

Priority 02
Shape work in the human-machine era.

Priority 03
Mobilize leaders for growth in an uncertain world.

Priority 04
Address culture atrophy to power performance.

Actions CHROs should take

Priority 01 Harness AI to revolutionize HR.

Craft a clearly defined HR-focused AI strategy that aligns with enterprise-level business objectives with **Accelerators for CHROs**.

Evolving your HR operating model is the first step toward realizing the full value of AI. This initial stage has the highest predicted impact on AI productivity gains (29%) in comparison to AI knowledge sharing, acceptance or skills. But, evolving the operation model also drives stronger collaboration, customer centricity, efficiency and strategic impact in the long-run.

Key actions

- **Create an HR innovation command center** with a head of HR strategy and head of change management to lead HR through its reinvention.
- **Shift HRBPs to strategic talent leaders** as AI agents take over transactional tasks, like identifying employee upskilling needs.
- **Evolve COEs to become custom HR product designers**, such as personalized onboarding or tailored learning.
- **Transform HR operations to digital HR solutions and delivery**, where AI agents perform most of your current Tier O and Tier 1 activities.

The Gartner AI-infused HR operating model



Source: Gartner

Priority 02 Shape work in the human-machine era.

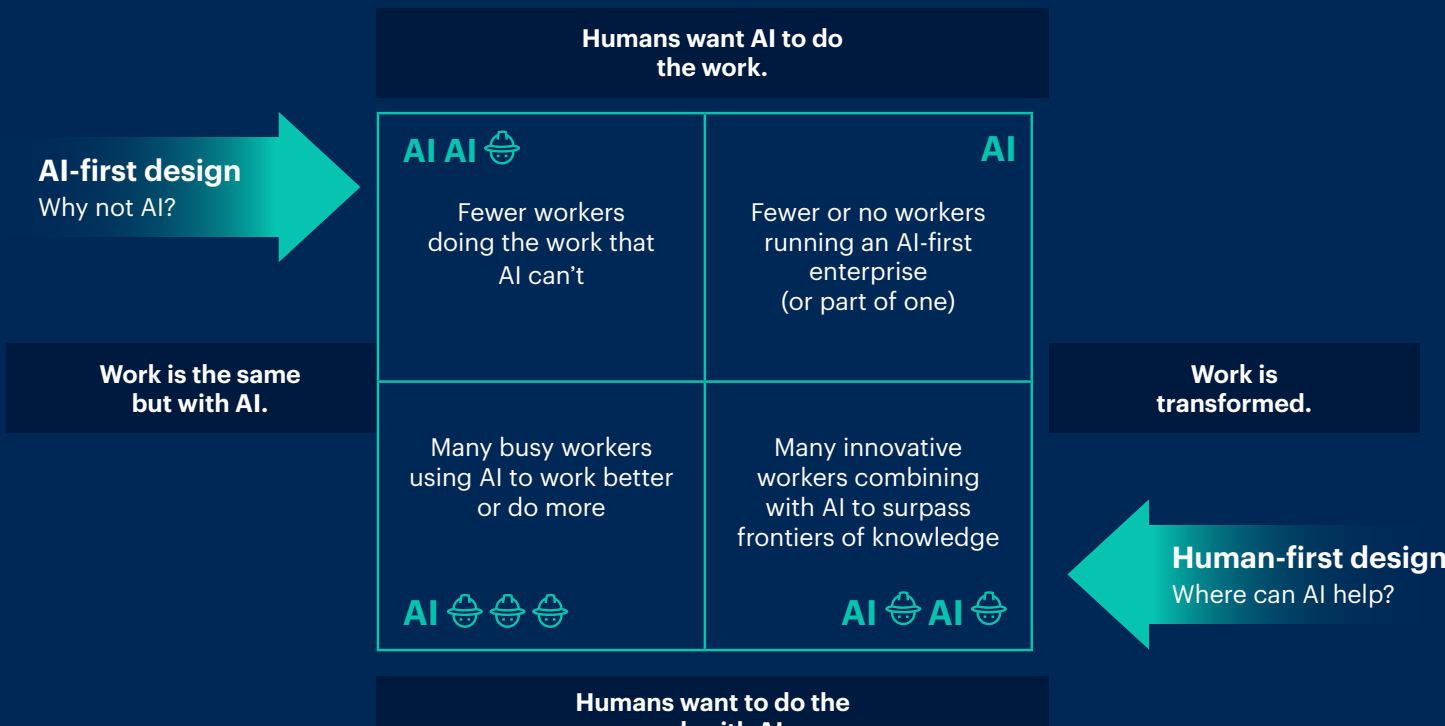
Use the **CHRO Digital Effectiveness Self-Assessment** to evaluate your digital capabilities and identify gaps.

Develop a “now-next” talent strategy that clearly articulates how to maximize talent impact within the next 12 months, while also driving better talent outcomes in the next one to three years. Without this clarity, you risk losing credibility with the C-suite.

Key actions

- **Invest in differentiated capabilities** that competitors cannot easily replicate and structure costs to disproportionately support these areas.
- **Optimize current potential** by focusing on motivation and deployment to drive immediate impact. Use build, buy, automate or augment strategies to prepare for future needs.
- **Plan for a blended workforce.** Move beyond viewing AI as a bolt-on and begin designing a human-AI workforce where both co-deliver work.
- **Manage dual KPIs.** Establish two distinct sets of metrics: one for “now” and one for “next.” This will help balance short-term performance with long-term strategic outcomes.

CHROs must create a “now-next” talent strategy for 4 human-AI scenarios



Source: Gartner

Priority 03 Mobilize leaders for growth in an uncertain world.

Learn how a fellow CHRO **developed an effective change management process** for their organization.

Your leaders must routinize — not just inspire — change. When change becomes natural and instinctive for employees as part of the normal course of work, it results in a **3x higher probability of healthy change adoption**.

Key actions

- **Reset and demonstrate expectations** in leader performance criteria, competency models and development programs.
- **Create tools for leaders and employees** to understand the emotions they feel, what's driving them and what they can do about them.
- **Identify core change skills** that matter most. Find moments within daily work to practice those skills and keep employees committed to building reflexes.

Leaders today must routinize, not inspire, change

	Think	Feel	Do
Leader action	Acknowledge the journey	Regulate discomfort	Train intuition
HR action	Set expectations Clarify that the leader's role is to focus on progress on the change journey.	Manage emotional responses Equip leaders with tools to help employees regulate uncomfortable emotions.	Drive action Teach leaders how to build change reflexes for intuitive action.

Source: Gartner

Priority 04 Address culture atrophy to power performance.

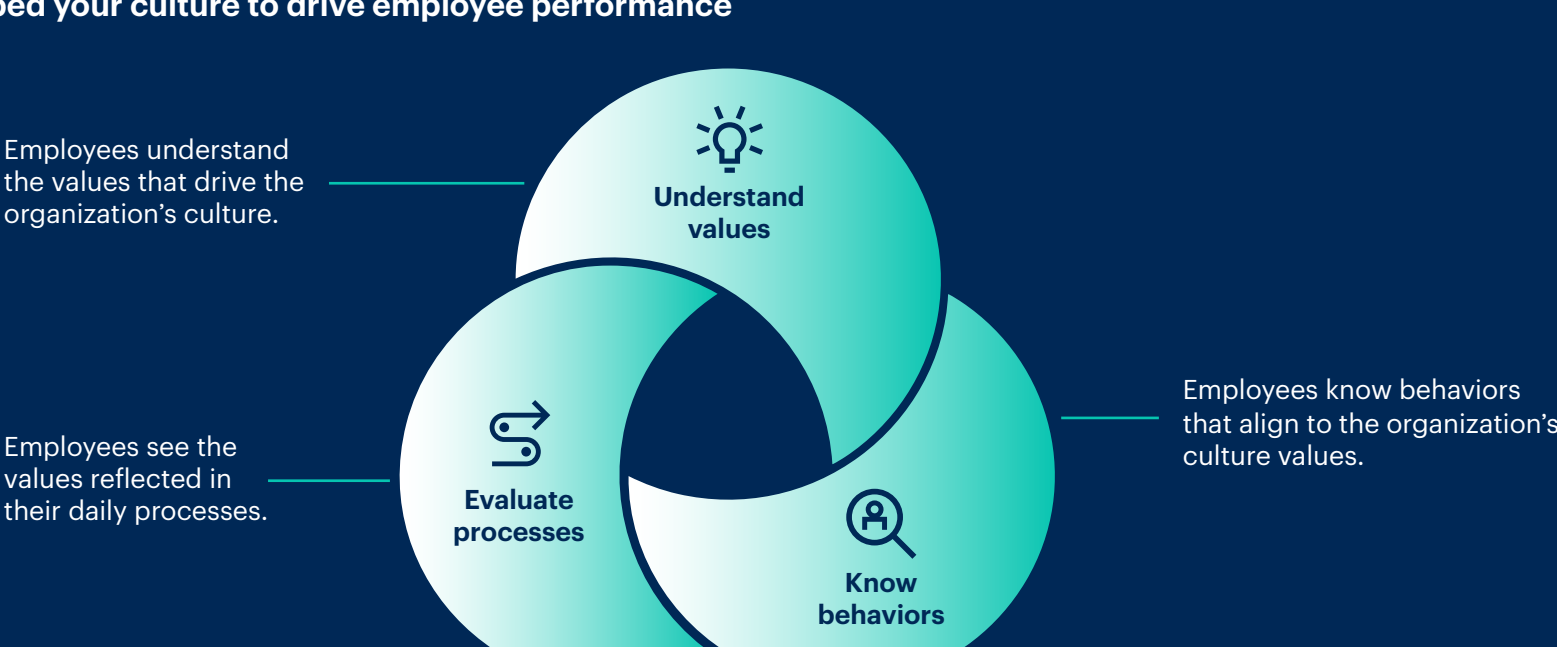
Use **Gartner HR Score** to benchmark how your HR team delivers on culture initiatives and explore areas for improvements.

To achieve and sustain desired culture, CHROs must embed it into employees’ day-to-day work. Organizations that do so see up to a **34% increase in employee performance**.

Key actions

- **Drive understanding of values** by differentiating values proficiency levels that resonate with associates at all levels.
- **Translate values** into actionable, contextualized behaviors to facilitate employee actions that reflect and sustain the desired culture.
- **Integrate culture values into talent and business processes** to create an environment that consistently reinforces the desired culture.

Embed your culture to drive employee performance



Source: Gartner

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