

# HR Leaders Quarterly

Second Quarter 2025

DEMYSTIFYING  
Productivity

Gartner®

# Editor's Note

Increasing workforce productivity is a perennial goal for CHROs, and in today's economy, with CEOs focused on driving growth while controlling costs, it is mission-critical. Yet it can be extremely challenging to achieve. A wide range of factors influence an employee's productivity, from individual motivation and team dynamics to organizational structure, processes and technology. Many HR leaders assume that if HR succeeds at fulfilling its core responsibilities, greater productivity will follow. Our latest research finds that this is not always the case, and HR can achieve better outcomes by taking direct responsibility for boosting productivity.

This is just one of several myths about productivity that our research debunks. AI won't automatically lead to greater productivity, nor will forcing hybrid employees back into full-time on-site work; likewise, more

productivity data doesn't always lead to better productivity strategies. To be effective productivity partners for their organizations, CHROs need to think differently about productivity than they have in the past.

This issue of HR Leaders Quarterly presents the findings from our landmark productivity study, along with a complement of other research with direct implications for organizational performance. We explore how learning and development (L&D) can increase its strategic impact by modernizing its operating model and increase skills preparedness by leveraging employees' ability and willingness to build new skills from a minimum foundation. This issue also features an article from our

series on how CHROs can take action to prepare for the future of work, focusing on the impact of technological change on organizational design. Other articles discuss the hallmarks of effective leadership development and the as-yet unfulfilled promise of generative AI in performance management.

These topics all orbit a central theme of what CHROs need to do to keep their workforce productive and high-performing in today's uniquely challenging business environment. We encourage you to put the insights in this journal to use, whether directly or as a starting point for a deeper conversation with Gartner experts about your organization's specific challenges and priorities.

Jonah Shepp

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**Executive Sponsor** Peter Aykens  
**Editor in Chief** Jonah Shepp  
**Managing Editor** Carolina Valencia  
**Associate Editor** Tess Lawrence  
**Contributing Editor** Maia Call

**Authors**

Ruchi Arora  
Swagatam Basu  
Liz Caffarelli  
Chief Etheridge  
Aanya Jain  
Alexander Kirss  
Lisa Mitchell  
Trisha Rai  
Satyanshu Sapra  
Maggie Schroeder-O'Neal  
Jonah Shepp  
April Taylor

**Design**

Walter Baumann  
Robert Birkhead  
Caroline Holloway

**Editor**

Karen Ross

**Project Managers**

Lindsay Kumpf  
Lauren Abel

# Maximize Employee Productivity

## by Debunking Myths and Unlocking Potential

by Chief Etheridge and Swagatam Basu

In today's technologically disruptive and hybrid-first work environment, CHROs need to enhance knowledge workers' productivity potential by actively rejecting common myths about productivity and shifting their focus to new strategies.



In today's dynamic business landscape, productivity is crucial in driving growth. According to the 2024 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive survey, 62% of CEOs have identified growth as their top business priority for 2025, marking a 25% increase from the previous year.<sup>1</sup>

Recent world events and macroeconomic trends may have tempered some organizations' expectations for growth this year. Yet, CHROs face a persistent challenge: traditional strategies for growth, such as market consolidation, labor arbitrage and inexpensive financing, are less effective than before, shifting the focus to employee productivity.

Defining productivity presents challenges. After reviewing academic and business research, we identified two essential components for defining productivity among knowledge workers: efficiency and value creation.

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**Efficiency** involves consistently delivering high-quality work ahead of schedule. **Value creation** focuses on investing resources in mission-critical priorities and making a tangible impact.

Efficiency involves consistently delivering high-quality work ahead of schedule, while value creation emphasizes investing time, capital and technology into mission-critical priorities to make a tangible impact. When employees are highly productive — efficient and effective at creating value for their organizations — their organizations are more likely to achieve year-over-year increases in revenue, profitability, and brand reputation.

But how can HR leaders increase employee productivity? To answer this question, we surveyed over 5,000 employees and managers across major regions and industries to identify key productivity challenges. Additionally, we interviewed more than 50 and surveyed more than 100 HR executives at global organizations to explore how they define, improve, measure and sustain employee productivity, and determine the effectiveness of their organizations and HR functions in these areas.

Our research uncovers four emerging myths about employee productivity that, if unaddressed, can derail an organization's strategy to maximize workforce productivity. These myths highlight gaps in HR's current approach to productivity, and debunking them points to new strategies CHROs can use to unlock their workforce's full productivity potential.

## **Myth 1: Productivity Is Not a Core HR Responsibility**

A common misconception is that productivity is not HR's responsibility. Many HR leaders believe that increasing productivity follows naturally from their core duties. Still, it is not necessarily HR's role to drive the step-change increases in employee productivity CEOs need to fuel their growth ambitions. Yet, direct HR involvement — through targeted programs, policies and explicit goals — can boost productivity by up to 11%.<sup>2</sup> To maximize these gains, HR must act as a productivity partner, aligning initiatives with organizational goals and employee needs.

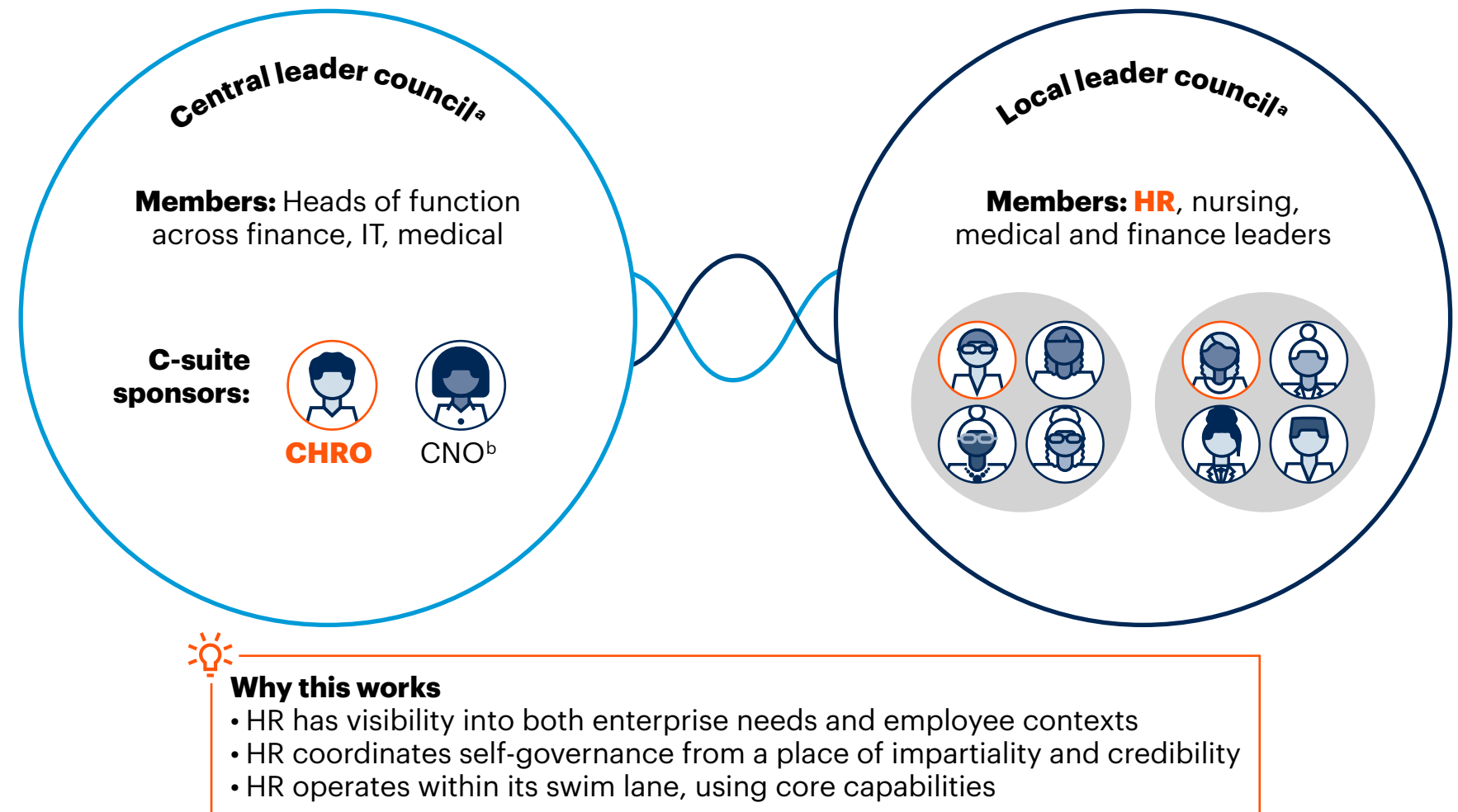
To position HR as a productivity partner, CHROs must engage with business leaders in strategic productivity conversations, become stewards of cross-functional collaboration in productivity initiatives, articulate the talent trade-offs of productivity-oriented changes to senior executives and champion employee needs. By aligning stakeholders' perspectives across the business, HR can drive meaningful improvements and enhance organizational productivity.

## Lee Health’s HR-Facilitated Productivity Leadership

Local leaders typically resist top-down productivity initiatives due to fears of reduced autonomy, concerns that productivity reporting may be punitive, and skepticism about whether solutions truly reflect employees’ context. To address this issue, Lee Health’s CHRO set out to formalize action planning for improved productivity by using self-governance to democratize ownership of productivity and align with shared goals. Central leaders retain oversight

of productivity initiatives through Lee Health’s “system council,” while local leaders take ownership of productivity in their local facilities by running “entity councils.” HR plays a connecting role at both levels, acting as an impartial and credible partner that uses its core capabilities to manage trade-offs and champion employee needs (see Figure 1). Read the full Case Study: HR Partnership Strategy to Boost Productivity (Lee Health).

» Figure 1: HR’s Role in Facilitating Productivity Leadership Through Self-Governance



Source: Adapted from Lee Health

<sup>a</sup> Central and local leader councils refer to Lee Health’s system and entity councils.

<sup>b</sup> CNO = chief nursing officer

## Myth 2: AI Will Fix Productivity

AI's potential to boost productivity excites many business leaders. In fact, 84% of HR leaders report that their organizations are either using or testing generative AI (GenAI) tools in the workplace, anticipating an 11% increase in employee productivity over the next three years. However, only 8% of employees experience significant improvements in speed and quality of work from frequent AI tool usage.<sup>3</sup>

Three main barriers or “leaks” contribute to these minimal productivity gains: employees' limited awareness, inconsistent

adoption and ineffective use of AI tools in the workplace. To address these leaks and ensure employees can realize the full extent of AI's productivity benefits, HR must prioritize employees in their organization's AI plans. This approach requires implementing a range of strategic HR initiatives (i.e., change management, learning and development [L&D] and employee experience enhancements), transparent communication and tailored support for different employee segments to create an AI-ready workforce.



## Red Hat's Human-Centric AI Talent Roadmap

Organizations struggle to navigate the talent implications of AI due to the constantly evolving landscape, concerns about AI replacing employees and the need for support to minimize disruptions to various roles and workflows. Red Hat's HR leadership recognized that AI innovations can fundamentally transform the employee experience. As the organization aimed to boost productivity through AI adoption, HR needed to prioritize talent considerations, risks and trade-

offs within the enterprise strategy. HR embarked on creating a talent roadmap designed to inspire leaders and employees about AI's positive potential. By concentrating on aspirational talent outcomes for the future of work, rather than focusing solely on current technology use cases, Red Hat developed a proactive talent roadmap that anticipates employee needs throughout the AI adoption journey. Read the full Case Study: Human-Centric AI Talent Roadmap (Red Hat).

### Myth 3: On-Site Employees Are More Productive

Leaders and managers believe employees are more productive when they work on-site, but research shows similar productivity levels for hybrid and on-site work models. According to the 2024 Gartner Redefining Productivity Manager Survey, 21% of on-site employees and 21% of hybrid employees are highly productive, based on their managers' ratings.<sup>2</sup> This finding may be surprising, but it is liberating because HR doesn't need to focus on which model is more productive if both are equally effective. So, what should HR concentrate on instead?

After evaluating over 100 potential productivity drivers, we discovered that productivity hinges on how work is accomplished, not where it takes place. In knowledge work, this relies on

the team environment: how well team members adapt to each other's preferences, maintain transparency in work distribution and leverage their differences as advantages rather than obstacles.

Therefore, CHROs must prioritize cultivating a supportive team culture, as it is the most significant driver of productivity, regardless of the work model. By fostering collaboration, trust and engagement, organizations create environments where employees thrive. This approach requires reframing discussions about work models and focusing on factors that genuinely impact productivity, such as team dynamics, effective communication, and both individual and collective accountability.



### Böhler's "Caring and Daring" Team Productivity Feedback

Team members tend to prioritize their own productivity over collective team goals. At Böhler, HR leaders promote open feedback conversations and complementary skills coaching within teams to foster shared accountability for productivity. By encouraging open exchanges of "caring and daring" feedback, Böhler facilitates discussions on how individual behaviors affect others' productivity. This approach ensures that employees feel equally responsible for both their own productivity and that of their teams. Read the full Case Study: 'Caring and Daring' Team Productivity Feedback.

#### **Myth 4: The More Data HR Has, the Better They Can Measure Productivity**

In today's data-driven era, many individuals view having more data as beneficial for measuring productivity. Notably, one in two HR leaders believe they can improve employee productivity without further investing in activity-measuring technologies.<sup>3</sup> By aligning data-driven decisions with broader productivity strategies, HR leaders believe they can contribute to tangible outcomes and enhance organizational productivity.

However, context is key. Without it, data alone isn't enough for making informed decisions. As such, understanding the context of data collection and its application is crucial. Although both quality and quantity of data are important, HR must first prioritize getting the full context of existing data before investing in and acquiring large amounts of new data to make productivity decisions.

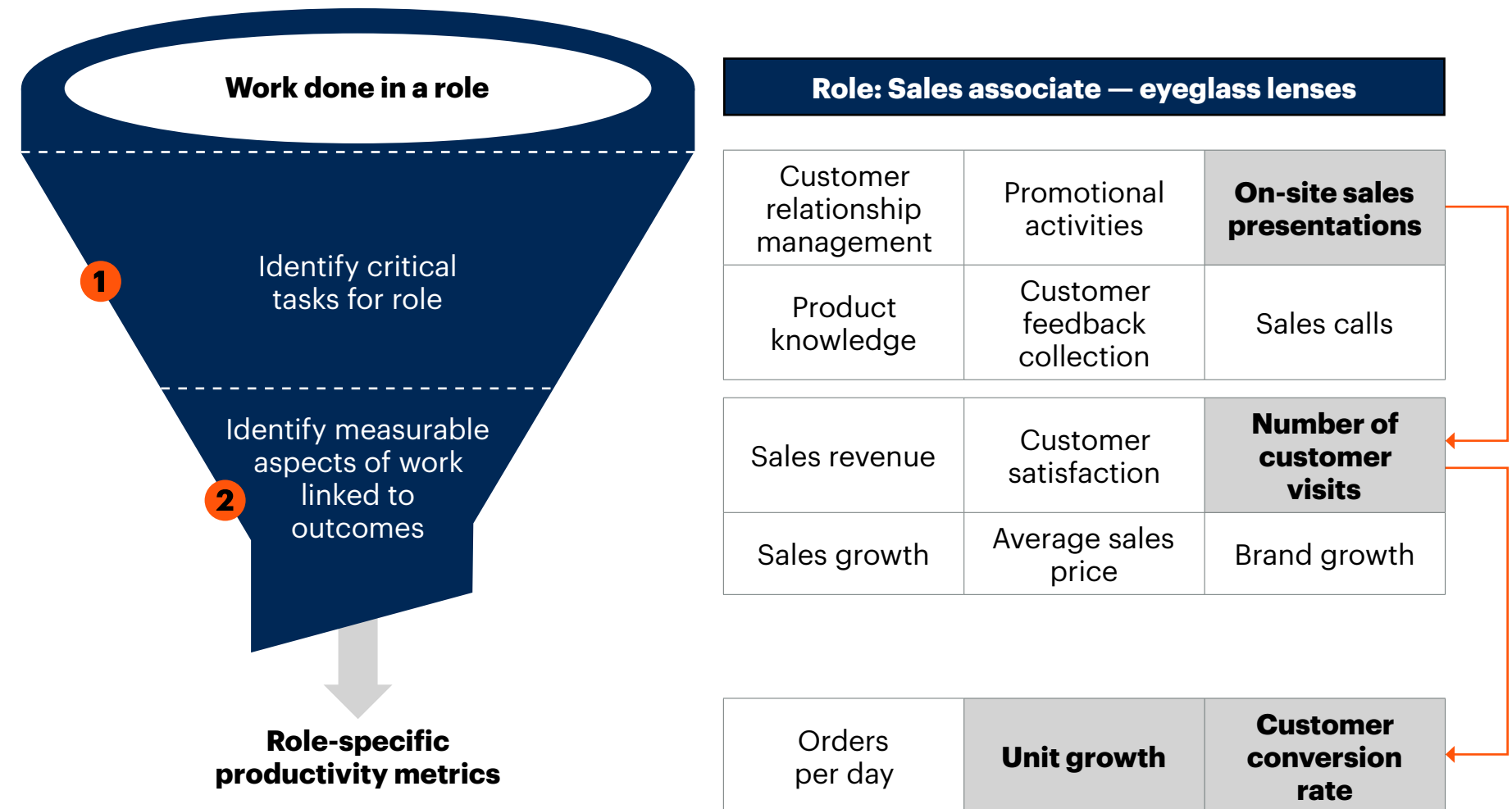
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There are a lot of different productivity (metrics) you can come up with that you want to measure and hold people accountable to. But do you have the right data to do it?

## HOYA Vision Care’s Manager Productivity Metrics Support

Managers struggle to boost employee productivity because of data relevance, judgment and communication challenges. At HOYA Vision Care, HR leaders enable HRPBs to partner with employees, managers and leaders to co-create role-specific productivity metrics linked to business KPIs (see example in Figure 2). HR leaders support managers to interpret and discuss these metrics within employees’ contexts. By establishing these role-specific productivity metrics and empowering managers to engage in open conversations about productivity with their employees, the company saw increased employee retention. Additionally, managers reported feeling more confident in coaching their direct reports on improving productivity. Read the full Case Study: Manager Productivity Metrics Support (HOYA Vision Care).

» Figure 2: Role-Specific Productivity Metric Creation Process



Source: Adapted from HOYA Vision Care

## Embracing New Approaches to Productivity

As CEOs focus on growth, enhancing productivity is crucial. HR leaders have a critical role in driving productivity, and they can effectively do so by:

- Collaborating cross-functionally to provide visibility into productivity initiatives.
- Centering employees in AI strategy.
- Focusing on how, not where, work is done.
- Prioritizing the context of data to inform productivity decisions.

When organizations successfully achieve all four goals, the average employee's productivity potential can increase by up to 35%, or the equivalent of working 2.8 more hours a day.<sup>2</sup> Embracing these new approaches requires strategic alignment, employee empowerment and data-driven decision making, ultimately enabling HR leaders to drive organizational productivity to new heights.

<sup>1</sup> 2024 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey. This survey was conducted to examine CEO and senior business executive views on current business issues, as well as some areas of technology agenda impact. The survey was conducted from July 2023 through December 2023, with questions about the period from 2023 through 2025. One-quarter of the survey sample was collected in July 2023, and three-quarters were collected from October through December 2023. In total, 416 actively employed CEOs and other senior executive business leaders qualified and participated. The research was collected via 356 online surveys and 60 telephone interviews. The sample mix by role was CEOs (n = 282); CFOs (n = 81); COOs or other C-level executives (n = 32); and chairs, presidents or board directors (n = 21). The sample mix by location was North America (n = 175), Europe (n = 94), Asia/Pacific (n = 93), Latin America (n = 41), the Middle East (n = 8), and South Africa (n = 5). The sample mix by size was \$50 million to less than \$250 million (n = 77), \$250 million to less than \$1 billion (n = 101), \$1 billion to less than \$10 billion (n = 166) and \$10 billion or more (n = 71). Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

<sup>2</sup> 2024 Gartner Redefining Productivity Manager Survey. The survey was conducted to understand managers' perspectives on their team's productivity and the strategies they use to maintain high productivity levels among their team members. The research was conducted online from 8 October through 26 November 2024 among 3061 managers of knowledge workers with representation from various geographies, industries and functions. Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

<sup>3</sup> 2024 Gartner Redefining Productivity HR Leader Survey. The survey was conducted to understand HR's role in managing/improving employee productivity at their organization. The research was conducted online from 29 October 2024 through 1 January 2025 among 67 senior HR leaders from various geographies and industries. Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

# Impact of U.S. Immigration Policy on Talent Strategy

by Satyanshu Sapra and Anya Jain

HR leaders from across industries in the U.S. private sector anticipate that the U.S. administration’s evolving immigration policy will impact their talent strategies. To adapt their talent strategy to the changes, HR leaders are auditing the potential challenges it could create for their organizations and evaluating the need for immediate action.



With a net increase of 2.8 million people, net international migration **accounted for 84% of the U.S.’s 3.3 million population increase** between 2023 and 2024.<sup>2</sup>

## Why is it concerning?

HR leaders in the U.S. private sector anticipate difficulty obtaining or renewing visa for employees (67%), lower psychological safety among workers (54%) and less available talent to fill critical talent gaps (43%) as the three most pervasive challenges for their organization due to the U.S. administration’s immigration policy.<sup>1</sup>



**48% of HR leaders in the U.S. private sector** anticipate that the U.S. administration’s immigration policy will impact their **organization’s strategic workforce planning efforts**.<sup>1</sup>

Immigration policies can change quickly. For companies with a sizeable foreign-born workforce, HR leaders should identify critical talent risks stemming from a sharp decline in immigrant talent. They need a plan for mitigating these risks in the short- and long-term.



**Jamie Kohn**  
Senior Director, Research,  
Human Resources

## How are HR leaders responding?

While a few organizations are taking a “wait and see” approach to the U.S. administration’s immigration policy before making significant strategy changes, HR leaders at some organizations are preparing for audits and conducting talent risk assessments.<sup>1</sup>

### Actions HR Leaders are Taking and/or Planning to Take in Response to the U.S. Administration’s Immigration Policy<sup>1</sup>

Percentage of U.S. Private Sector HR Leaders



n = 93-185 U.S. Private Sector HR Leaders

Note: Responses not shown include Other (1%)

<sup>1</sup> Source: Benchmark With Gartner: U.S. Administration Policies After One Quarter (March 2025)

<sup>2</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau

# HR Strategies to Navigate U.S. Tariff Policies

by Satyanshu Sapra and Aanya Jain

HR leaders are considering their options as they evaluate the effects of the U.S. administration's tariff policy changes on their talent strategies. Tariffs can impact the competition, supply and demand for talent because they can raise production costs, potentially forcing cuts to workforce budgets.

To adapt their talent strategies based on the changes to tariff policies, HR leaders are focusing on improving talent retention and adopting cost-saving measures.

HR leaders in the U.S. private sector expect **increased difficulty in their ability to hire for new roles (55%) and for backfill attrition in current roles (49%)** because of the U.S. administration's tariff policies.<sup>1</sup>

## Why is it concerning?

HR leaders in the U.S. private sector anticipate that the U.S. administration's tariff policies will lead to need for layoffs and other cost-saving measures (64%) and challenges in maintaining employee resilience (48%).<sup>1</sup>



**58% of HR leaders in the U.S. private sector** anticipate that the U.S. administration's tariff policies will **increase competition for frontline talent**. 52% of them expect competition for corporate talent to increase.<sup>1</sup>

HR's workforce planning and retention strategies will require robust talent data and the ability to present business leaders with options for globally agile talent structures. The silver lining may be the openness that business leaders will have to explore alternate talent locations which may have been overlooked in the past.



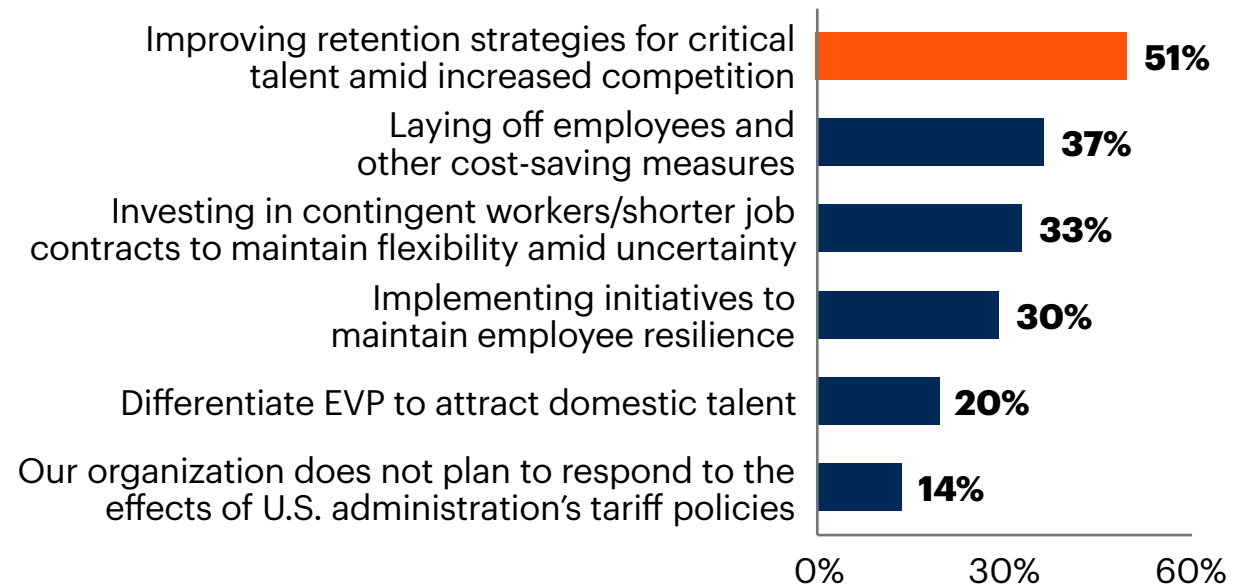
**Trupti Raipure**  
Director, Advisory,  
Human Resources

## How are HR leaders responding?

- Fifty-one percent of U.S. private sector HR leaders say they are improving or planning to improve retention strategies for critical talent amid increased competition. HR leaders favor this approach because it offers the possibility of reducing costs without sacrificing productivity.<sup>1</sup>
- While 40% of U.S. private sector HR leaders believe tariff policies will impact their talent strategy through rising wage pressures, only 5% of organizations have increased or plan to increase wages as a result.<sup>1</sup>

## Top Actions HR Leaders are Taking and/or Planning to Take in Response to the U.S. Administration's Tariff Policies

Percentage of U.S. private sector HR leaders



n = 86-117 U.S. private sector HR leaders

<sup>1</sup> Source: Benchmark with Gartner: Leadership Pipeline Pressures and U.S. Tariffs Impact on Jobs (April 2025)

Note: Increasing wages (5%), Reshoring existing roles from other countries to the U.S. (2%), Creating new roles in the U.S. (1%), Other (8%)

# Close Skills Gaps at Scale

by Building on Skills Promise

by Trisha Rai and Lisa Mitchell


Organizations are struggling to address widening skills gaps through traditional learning programs or by hiring new talent. CHROs can more effectively close these gaps by focusing on promise, not proficiency, and enabling learning in the flow of work.

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CHROs today know they cannot sustainably meet evolving skills needs through hiring alone, but they also struggle to fill the gap with internal skills-building programs. Even when organizations do manage to build skills internally, managers expect employees to be proficient in all the required skills before taking on a new role. However, waiting to move employees into critical roles until they are fully proficient in high-demand skills leaves those roles unfilled and delays valuable employee contributions to the organization.

Instead of waiting for full proficiency, organizations should select internal candidates for these roles based on “skills promise” — the willingness and ability to learn new skills from a minimum foundation — and build their skills by developing them on the job. Skills promise reliably meets an organization’s skills needs by leveraging and redeploying skills it currently possesses without creating any business-continuity risks.

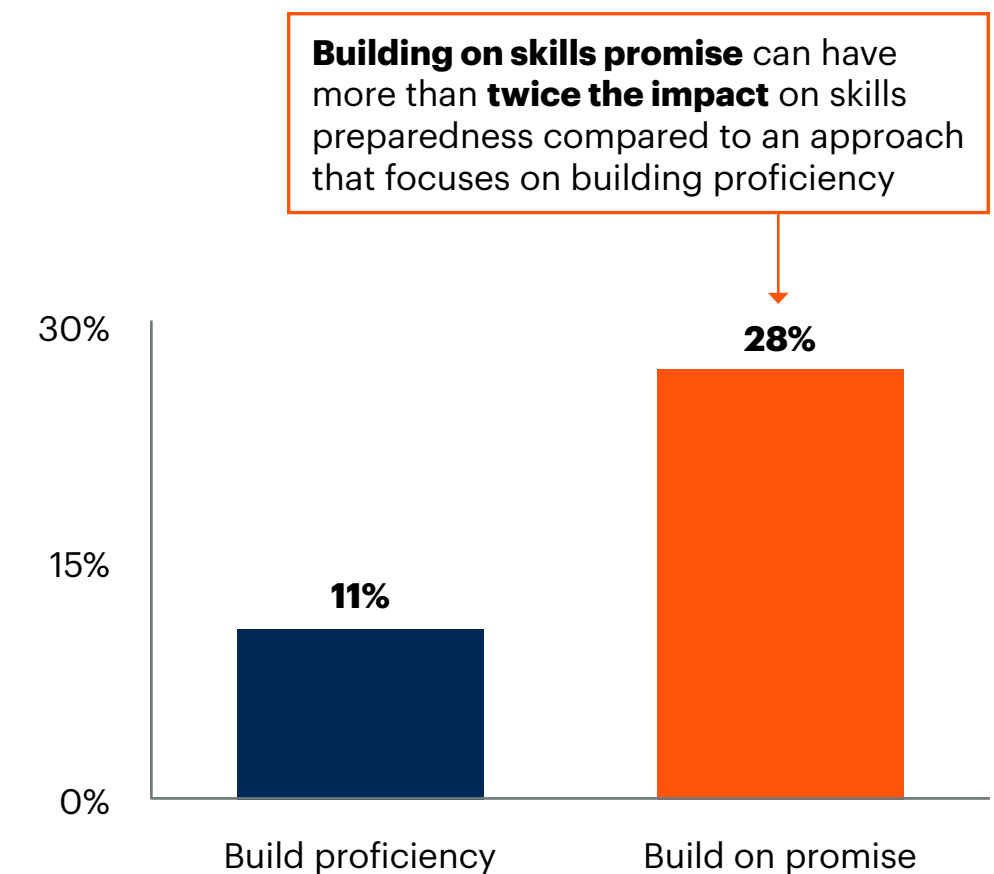
 **Skills promise** is an employee’s willingness and ability to learn new skills from a minimum foundation.

## Building on Skills Promise Bolsters Enterprise Skills Preparedness

Skills preparedness is a workforce readiness measure that indicates employees have the skills needed for current and future roles, can quickly apply and teach learned skills, and feel confident about their employability inside and outside their current organization. Building on skills promise can have more than twice the impact on skills preparedness compared to an approach that focuses on building proficiency (see Figure 1).

Focusing on skills promise increases skills preparedness throughout the organization by enabling employees with a minimum skills foundation to begin performing work that fills skills gaps sooner. It also provides them with an opportunity to further develop and apply their new skills. This approach ensures promising employees continue to quickly build and apply skills in a context that enables and reinforces learning, while at the same time contributing value to the organization in their new roles.

» **Figure 1: Maximum Impact on Skills Preparedness of Building Proficiency vs. Building on Promise**  
Percentage of employees



n = 3,259 employees

Q: When employees are considered for new roles at your organization (e.g., applying for internal roles, assigned to a new team, given new responsibilities), how much importance does your organization place on the following inputs?

Source: 2024 Gartner Closing Skill Gaps at Scale Employee Survey



**Skills preparedness** is a workforce readiness measure that indicates employees have the skills needed for current and future roles, can quickly apply and teach learned skills, and feel confident about their employability inside and outside their current organization.

## Four Steps to Build on Promise

Learning and development (L&D) leaders are HR's resident experts in continuous upskilling and on-the-job learning. However, investing in and building on skills promise is not a task for L&D alone. Instead, it should be a joint venture between talent performance management (TPM) and L&D that spans multiple, intersecting workflows such as identifying critical skills gaps, supporting career development and enabling talent mobility. Given the cross-functional nature of this work, CHROs are best positioned to guide L&D and TPM leaders' joint efforts.

To shift their organization's approach to internal mobility and skills development from proficiency to promise, CHROs must focus on four tactical priorities:

- 1 Establishing foundational skills** — Define the foundational skills and behaviors required across different roles to identify employees with skills promise.
- 2 Building manager confidence in promise** — Address manager concerns about emphasizing promise over proficiency by educating them on the long-term benefits of this shift.
- 3 Ensuring contribution while learning on the job** — Enable new-to-role employees to deliver value with a minimum foundation of skills, while simultaneously building on that foundation.
- 4 Scaling expertise with learning networks** — Facilitate knowledge exchange and transfer to expand the resources available to employees for upskilling, reducing the burden on managers.

## 1 Establish Foundational Skills Requirements for Roles

Most organizations have an extensive list of requirements for each role and believe the only way to close skills gaps is by ensuring incumbent employees are fully proficient with an exact skills match before moving into a new role. However, this approach dramatically limits the available talent pool and delays hiring for the role.

Organizations that successfully use skills promise to close skills gaps recognize two things:

- 1. Core skills and behaviors serve as indicators of success across roles.** As such, many of the criteria included in role descriptions overlap. These common core skills and behaviors that signal success in a particular job family (e.g., curiosity, ability to navigate change, collaborative work habits or customer orientation) are a better indicator of success than an exact match of specialized skills.
- 2. Different roles with varying skills requirements necessitate a nuanced treatment.** Adding role-defining requirements outside of a common core, such as legal minimums or skills that support essential role tasks, may be necessary. However, assuming all roles must hire for the same level of role-defining skills requirements hinders the organization's opportunity to build on promise and reliably meet skills needs on an ongoing basis.

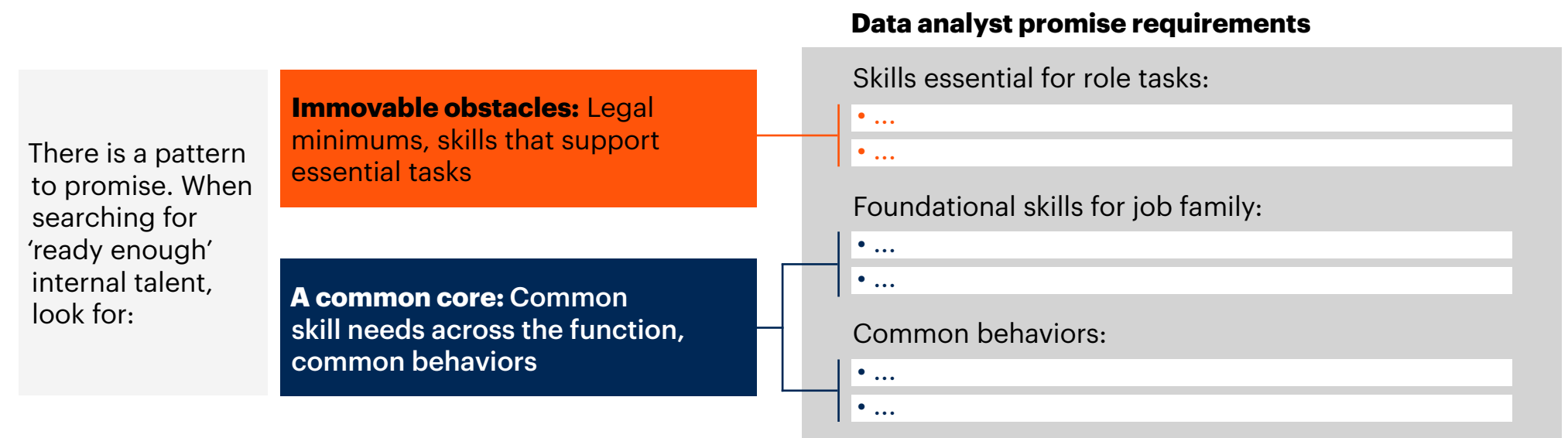
# To identify employees with promise at scale, organizations must define the foundational skills and behaviors that are critical for each role.

CHROs can have their L&D and TM leaders partner on differentiating between the skills essential for a role, foundational skills for each job family and common behaviors that indicate promise of quick learning and high performance. Instead of taking a one-size-fits-all approach, some organizations are establishing foundational skills and behaviors that define promise across different departments. Such an approach enables these organizations to source talent from a wider pool of employees who can be readily upskilled for high-demand roles (see Figure 2).

## 2 Build Manager Confidence in Promise

Even when HR leaders collaborate to define promise, managers often express concerns about hiring talent that's not fully proficient in all the needed skills. One in two managers say they make hiring decisions based on how proficient a candidate is when they apply for a job and not on their potential to learn the job.<sup>1</sup> This is because

» Figure 2: Identify Promise Through Foundational Role Requirements



Source: Gartner

managers fear the responsibility for upskilling a new employee will fall on them alone, with little or no support from HR. To assuage manager concerns about hiring based on promise, most organizations use recruiters to persuade managers to accept the “best available” talent for roles on a case-by-case basis. However, this approach is inconsistent and not scalable, because it relies on the recruiter’s influence without acknowledging the enterprise benefits of hiring for promise.

Gartner research confirms that managers who hire for promise see results: Their employees are 1.9 times more likely to perform effectively in their roles than those whose managers exclusively hire for proficiency.<sup>1</sup> Leading organizations work to help their managers understand the value of promise with evidence-based value stories that address manager concerns about time to performance. A value story presents a mix of quantitative and qualitative data to communicate

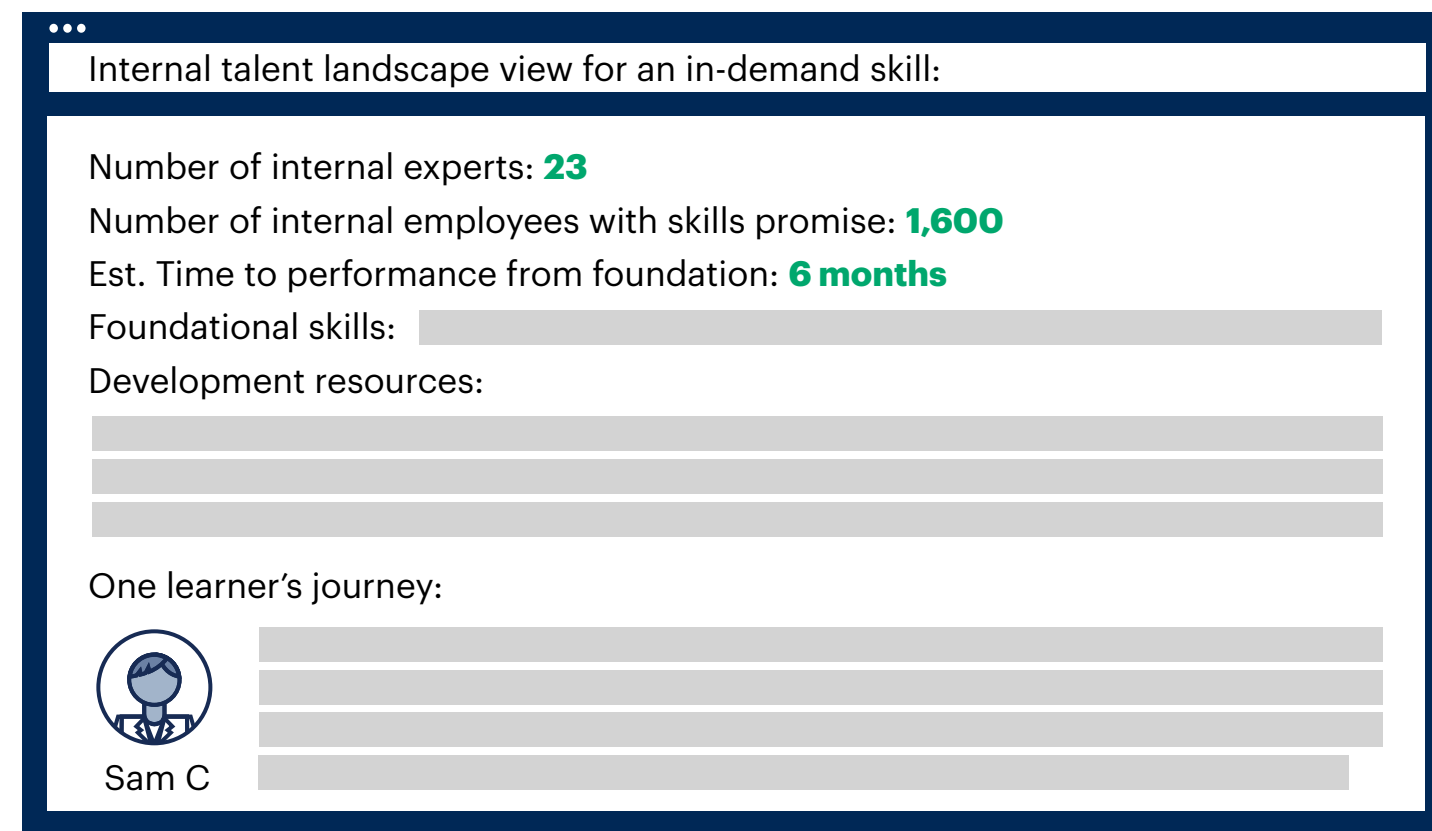
to managers at large about how the organization defines promise for a role and how each candidate fits the criteria. Value stories also clearly demonstrate the path to convert promise into performance by curating a list of existing L&D offerings that managers can leverage to upskill promising talent (see Figure 3).

An effective manager value story should include:

- A clear articulation of how existing foundational or adjacent skills within the organization can translate into future performance in open roles with skills shortages
- Onboarding and development needs for each candidate to upskill in the role
- What early contribution deliverables and behavior indicators will look like
- Off-the-shelf L&D offerings to support candidate development
- Qualitative success stories about each candidate

» **Figure 3: Value Story Explaining Skills Promise for an in-Demand Skill**

**Sample value story:**



Value stories present a **mix of quantitative and qualitative data** to communicate to managers at scale about:

- **What promise looks like** for a shortage skill
- How to convert **promise into performance**

Source: Gartner

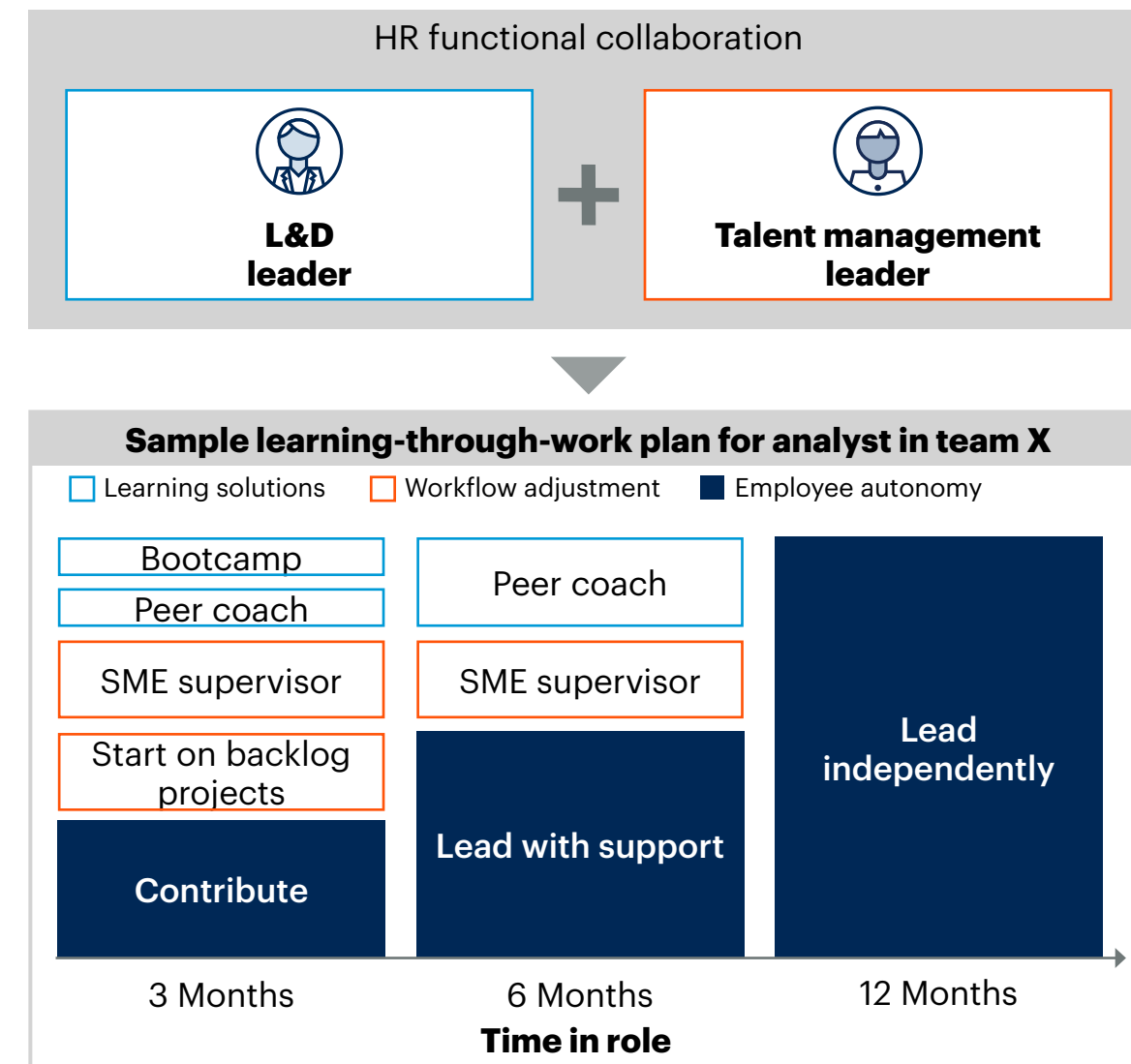
The goal of the value story is to boost manager confidence in hiring talent with potential by offering clear indicators of promise and sharing success stories that illustrate future performance.

### 3 Ensure Contribution While Learning on the Job

Typical individual learning solutions aim to build an individual's proficiency over time, which effectively supports long-term skills preparedness and career development goals. However, individual learning solutions are often too slow to address large or complex skills gaps, as building new skills takes time. To get ahead of this problem, progressive organizations are aligning learning solutions with workflow adjustments to realize value from employees with promise while accelerating their time to performance.

To ensure learning solutions remain aligned with workflow adjustments, L&D and TPM leaders need to collaborate with managers to develop a well-structured onboarding plan. The plan should clearly outline how skills gaps will be addressed and how employees will build on their skills promise through a team-based development approach. Effective plans combine scaled learning solutions that are already in place, like coaching and formal training, with adjustments to team workflow to maximize learning through work (see Figure 4). These mutually agreed upon guardrails on level of ownership and contribution enable teams to get work done while new team members are getting up to speed. Since many teams share similar structures and resources, HR leaders are able to scale these plans throughout the organization, creating reliable, embedded pathways to performance that link learning to work.

» Figure 4: Learning and Workflow Adjustments to Ensure Contribution



Source: Gartner

## Transforming L&D With Tech-Enabled Collective Learning

Genpact's L&D team took on the role of knowledge manager to sense skills needs and identify individuals with subject matter expertise throughout the organization. The team identified what it called "Master Gurus" who were subject matter experts in a high-demand or newly emerging skill. These Master Gurus work directly with L&D to upskill additional gurus throughout the organization to disseminate skills knowledge. This setup allowed Genpact to sustainably harvest knowledge from experts without overwhelming them.

To make the tactic even more scalable, Genpact leveraged AI to create a digital twin of the Master Gurus to ensure their impact and skills knowledge could reach every part of the business. For more, see [Case Study: Transforming L&D With Tech-Enabled Collective Learning \(Genpact\)](#).

## 4 Scale Expertise With Learning Networks

Relying solely on managers is not enough to meet promising talent's learning needs. In fact, managers may be overwhelmed by their upskilling responsibilities: Eighty percent of managers say they spend a significant amount of time upskilling new team members.<sup>1</sup> To ensure sufficient support for promising talent without overburdening managers, L&D needs to scale expertise by structuring and augmenting learning networks. Skills-based learning networks create an environment where employees learn from a variety of sources, including their peers, subject matter

experts and L&D. They practice together and coach one another in a way that feels organic and sustainable. As a result, overburdened managers don't need to figure it out themselves, and employees have an entire community of experts to turn to.

Learning networks nearly double the impact on skills preparedness when compared to 1:1 support. To establish skills-based networks, L&D leaders need to identify employees with critical knowledge about emerging skills and facilitate the sharing of their expertise across typical team boundaries.

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Integrated learning and team-based workflow adjustments have nearly triple the impact on skills preparedness, compared to individual development support.<sup>2</sup>

# Gartner Virtual Events

Gartner regularly hosts virtual events across a variety of Human Resources topics. These webinars present an opportunity for you to gain insights from our research experts on making better decisions for your function and organization.

**Strategies for CHROs to Effectively  
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**3 Steps CHROs Can Take to Initiate a Strategic Workforce Plan**

**How CHROs Can Help Employees Navigate Constant Change**

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**Making Work Better - The Reset-Ready Organization**

**The Top Priorities for HR Leaders in 2025**

Genpact realized its organization had the skills knowledge it needed, but it existed in silos. To share knowledge more effectively, Genpact's L&D team introduced a new structure that enabled cross-functional sharing of expertise to drive skills development.

## Conclusion

Organizations cannot sustainably meet evolving skills needs exclusively through traditional learning programs or by hiring new talent. To close skills gaps sustainably and at scale, CHROs should partner with L&D and talent management leaders to establish foundational skills that:

- Enable identification of employees with promise.
- Build confidence for managers who can leverage promise talent.
- Enable simultaneous contribution and learning through team-based support.
- Establish learning networks to scale expertise.

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<sup>1</sup> 2024 Gartner Closing Skill Gaps at Scale Employee Survey. This survey was conducted to understand organizations' approach to mobilizing internal talent and upskilling employees in a new role to minimize organizational skill gaps. The survey was conducted online from 26 Sep 2024 through 21 Oct 2024 and contains responses from 3,259 employees with representation from various regions, industries and functions.

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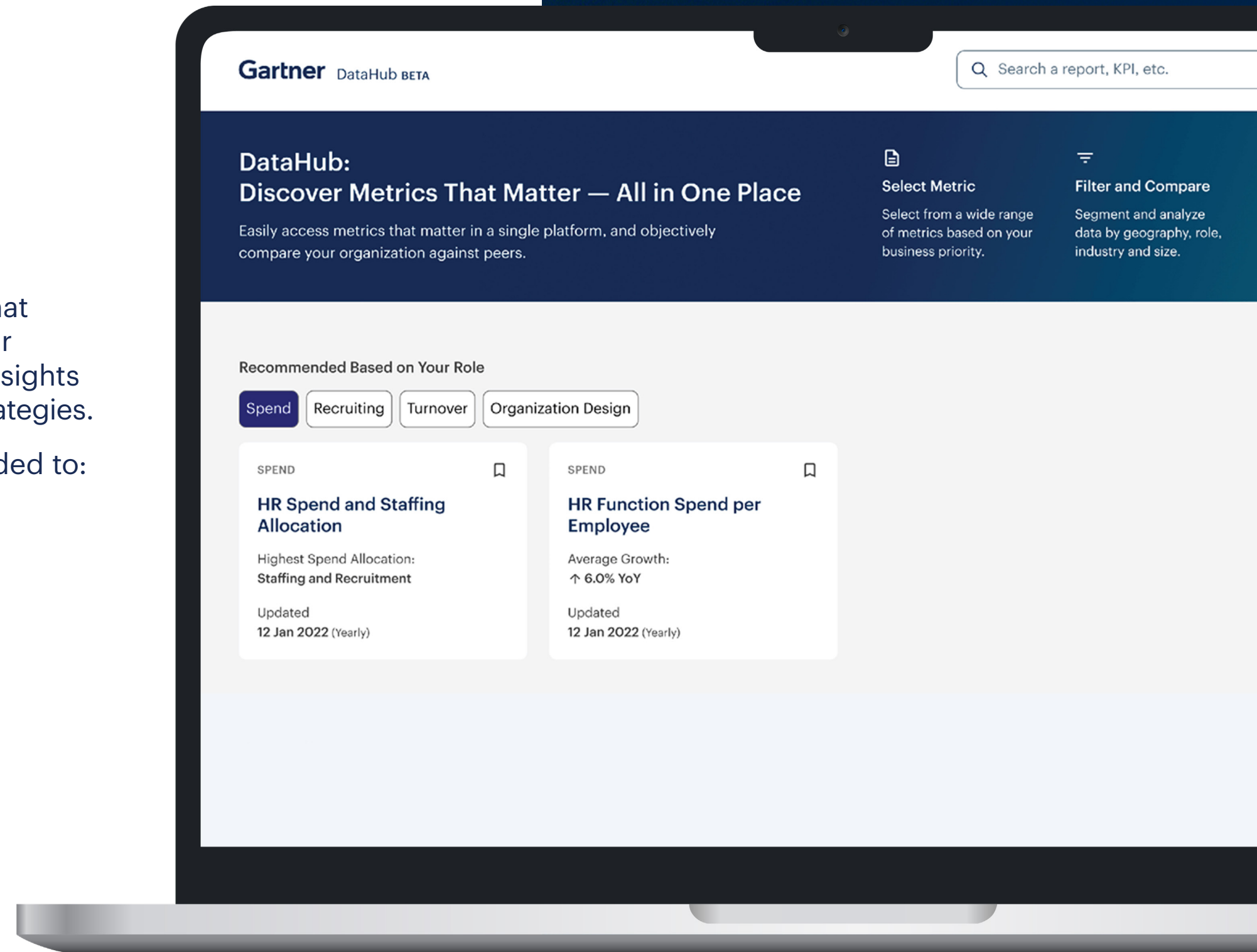


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# 3 Steps to Modernize Your L&D Operating Model

by Liz Caffarelli

L&D leaders who want to modernize their operating model must think beyond structural adjustments. Instead, they should consider how their function supports core business goals, identify pain points and bottlenecks in their workflows, and target potential changes that can add value immediately.

We recently spoke with a new learning and development (L&D) leader who expressed frustration with the challenges of working in a decentralized environment. Her limited oversight and control over her organization's regionalized units led to challenges with consistency, visibility and scaling innovations, costing the organization a lot of money. As we discussed her challenges further, it became clear there were issues throughout the entire L&D operating model.

The L&D function delivers value and runs itself by way of seven overlapping components: workflows, skills mastery, motivation, resource allocation, team structures, tools and places where the work gets done. It's not just about organizational structure and reporting lines; it's about addressing challenges in how the work flows into and out of the function.

Before figuring out how to solve the new L&D leader's challenges, we talked about creating a business-aligned L&D strategy, which clarifies the problems worth solving. This same advice — to start with a strategy — applies to many other L&D leaders who find themselves in similar situations.

CHROs are counting on L&D to support the delivery of new HR solutions that accelerate workforce productivity and meet cost targets. This means L&D leaders can expect more questions about modernizing their operations, including how to effectively decentralize learning for scaled delivery. When work is moving too slowly, many leaders' first instinct is to adjust reporting lines so they can tell people what to focus on to be more strategically aligned. However, restructuring can add to change fatigue, especially when combined with other disruptive changes in the organization or the business environment.

Changing reporting lines is not enough to solve the problems many L&D leaders are facing with their operating models. At best, focusing

on structural changes alone neglects other underlying operating model issues, such as ineffective tools or a lack of motivation. At its worst, adjusting team structures can create new challenges where none previously existed. In other words, changing the structure doesn't get to the root of the problem and can also create more problems that didn't exist before.

Instead, to get to the root of their operating model challenges, L&D leaders should take these three steps:

- 1 Align business and L&D strategy.
- 2 Map key workflows and identify pain points.
- 3 Prioritize opportunities for improvement.

## 1 Align Business and L&D Strategy

First, start by aligning the L&D strategy to specific growth objectives at your organization. As they think about overarching objectives, progressive L&D leaders are able to align business goals with daily L&D activities that support those objectives. They shift focus from measuring specific programs toward a more comprehensive story, such as skills preparedness. Creating this kind of strategy will require inputs and synthesis between employee needs and growth objectives, ultimately guiding your decisions about all the work to be done.

Articulating the connections between L&D work and organizational objectives can be a good starting point for creating or updating your L&D strategy. Value stories — success stories that illustrate how L&D contributes to specific business objectives — reveal what is already working and highlight opportunities for improvement. For example, if your organization is working to achieve double-digit growth, the L&D team may want to be able to show how quickly it's able to identify and close emerging skills gaps. This might mean reevaluating how it's identifying skills to make the process more iterative and flexible for design and delivery.

Once you've identified your success story, you can start to build your strategy, define the current state of L&D and the desired state, and identify what needs to happen to close those gaps. In the example above, the value story is rapidly closing emerging skills gaps to mitigate risk and increase talent readiness. The current state might look like an uncoordinated approach to skills identification, siloed information, low talent readiness and high turnover. The desired state might look like a standardized approach to skills collection, increased communication and talent readiness, and reduced turnover caused by a lack of development opportunities. Rather than focusing on individual L&D programs, whose value is often difficult to explain, this approach to strategy building begins by connecting everything L&D does back to its fundamental purpose of developing employees and advancing the organization's goals.

## 2 Map Key Workflows and Identify Pain Points

After clarifying exactly which strategic objectives L&D is supporting and how, start assessing your function's operational strengths and weaknesses. Map what the function is already doing and analyze what is and isn't working. Look for pain points — that is, aspects of your current working processes and procedures that are holding your function back from achieving its goals.

The more specific you can get in articulating these problems, the better:

- Are too many decision makers creating a bottleneck?
- Is the team falling into old ways of working because it's receiving positive reinforcement for those behaviors from important stakeholders?
- Is the current process for identifying and closing skills gaps too slow and ultimately impacting retention goals?
- Are efforts duplicative, resulting in waste within the function?

Mapping how work flows into and out of the function will help you identify these barriers.

## 3 Target Quick Wins for Immediate Functional Improvement

Of all the things you could fix, what should you fix first? To set these priorities, think back to the strategy you outlined in step one. What is the performance story you need L&D to tell at the end of the year? What do you most want to be known for? Which problems are worth addressing to support those goals? This is specific to you at your organization. It's less important what others are doing with their operating models and more important that you're clear on what would create the biggest impact in your organization with your specific context.

Some organizations prioritize changing the components that most closely align with the strategy, while others find the quick wins. But the highest-priority changes don't necessarily need to be big ones: Often the quickest wins are small tweaks that clear bottlenecks and enable work to flow more efficiently.

For example, one team identified feedback loops that kept the team stuck in traditional ways of working. By changing the intake process to an automated version that was then evaluated in standard team meetings, it was able to minimize positive reinforcement for outdated ways of working. Another organization found its decentralized team was experiencing inconsistencies in learning delivery, creating a negative employee experience. Rather than centralizing, the L&D team developed a tiered engagement framework that defined clear roles for partners throughout the organization in learning design and delivery. The nimblest L&D teams aren't the biggest or most resourced but rather, the ones that are most effective at identifying pain points in their work and making incremental changes.

## **Small Changes Matter**

Modernizing the L&D operating model to keep pace with change may not always require a complete overhaul but rather, a series of adjustments you make to why, where and how you can make work better. Now more than ever, L&D feels pressured to transform the function to prepare for an uncertain future, but changing the wrong components of the operating model introduces new risks. To avoid change management quagmires

while modernizing the operating model, L&D leaders must use a targeted approach to operating model changes. By creating a business-aligned strategy, diagnosing broken workflows and making purposeful changes to the operating model, L&D is better positioned to inform and influence key talent decisions, ultimately elevating the function to a strategic imperative.

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# Spotlight Individual and Team Level Impact of Work to Boost Productivity

by Arijit Das

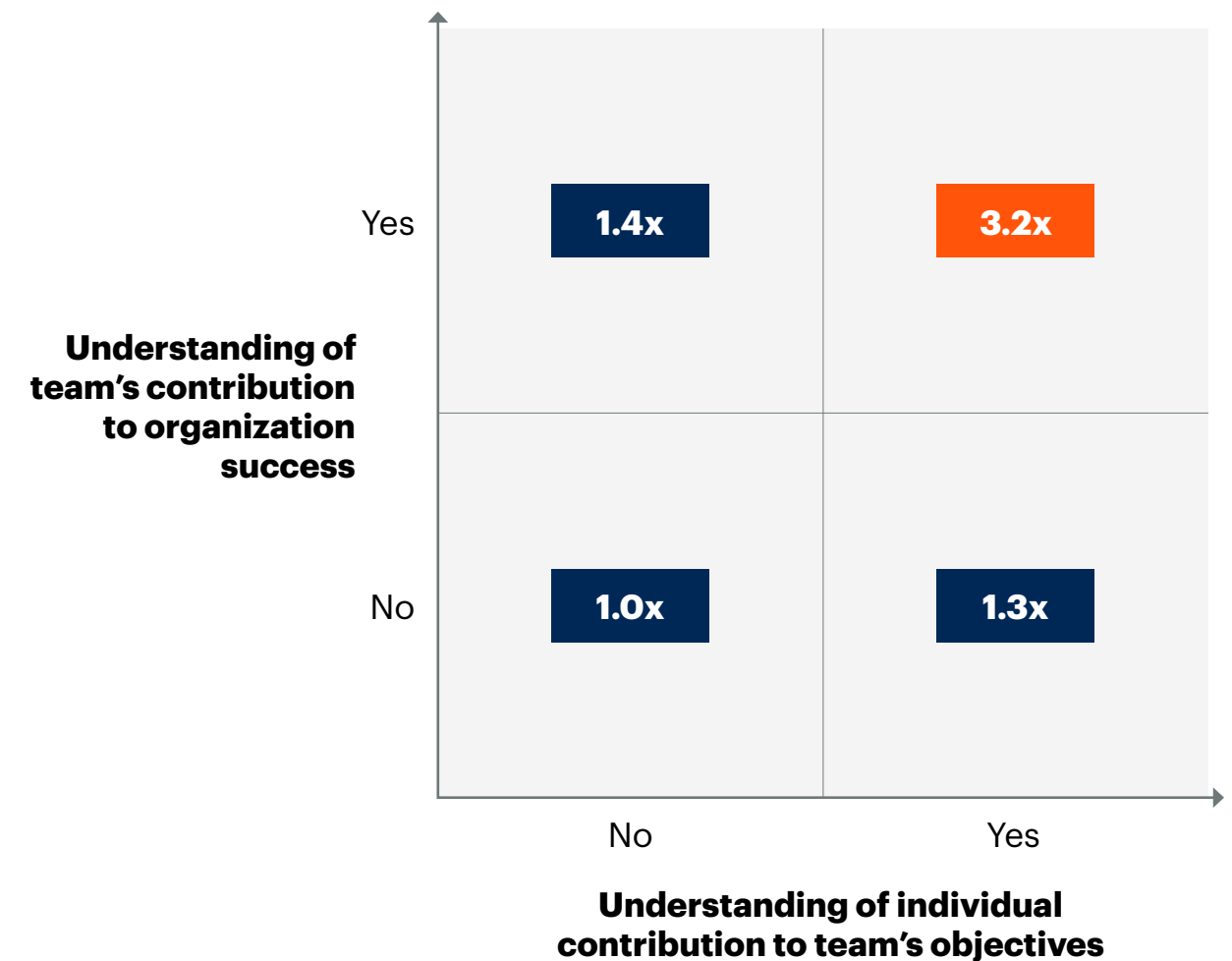
Employee productivity is crucial for organizational success, but only 63% of employees feel they are able to meaningfully contribute to organizational productivity goals. Gartner research finds employees are most likely to contribute to productivity goals when they understand their own contribution to their team's objectives as well as how their team contributes to the organization's success. Understanding how one's team's achievements contribute towards organizational success increases the likelihood of an employee contributing to productivity goals by 1.4 times, and understanding one's own contribution to the team's objectives increases the likelihood by 1.3 times. Employees who understand both dimensions

are over 3 times as likely to contribute to organizational productivity goals (See Figure 1). These findings demonstrate the importance of giving employees a holistic view of the impact of their work at multiple levels. Understanding how personal contributions support team objectives helps employees optimize their day-to-day efforts and fosters a collaborative team culture. Clarity on team objectives' alignment with organizational success enhances employees' understanding of their work's broader impact, increasing support for strategic decisions.

Currently, fewer than half of all employees say they understand both their individual and team impact. To increase this understanding, HR leaders should ensure both aspects are embedded in the organization's goal setting framework, performance management, recognition programs, and other communications directed towards employees. This dual focus maximizes the potential for productivity gains.

» **Figure 1: Maximizing Productivity Contribution Through Dual-Level Understanding of Impact**

Increase in Likelihood of Employee Contributing to Productivity Goals



n = 3,405 employees

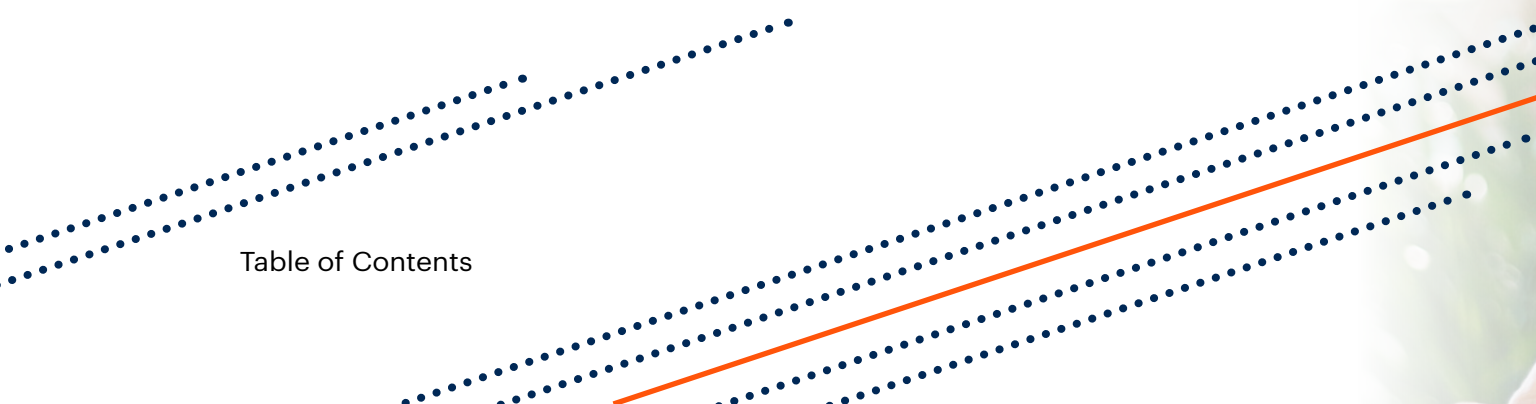
Source: 2024 Gartner Redefining Productivity Employee Survey




# 7 Hallmarks of Effective Leadership Development

by April Taylor and Ruchi Arora

HR leaders face the challenge of developing effective leaders in today's evolving business environment. Learn how using seven targeted approaches to leadership development can boost the kind of leadership required for today and in the future.



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## Human and Enterprise Leadership

Leader and manager development is HR leaders' top priority in 2025.<sup>1</sup> Only 28% of identified successors for critical or priority leadership roles are ready to assume their new responsibilities today, highlighting a significant gap in current leadership development efforts.<sup>2</sup>

HR leaders know what organizations need from their leaders. Gartner research shows that organizations need both enterprise leadership and human leadership:

Enterprise leadership is the leader's effectiveness in achieving individual objectives while strategically contributing to and enhancing the performance of other units or teams. It involves guiding their team to adopt a collaborative approach, ensuring that the entire organization works cohesively toward common goals.

Human leadership is the leader's effectiveness in leading with empathy, authenticity, and a focus on the well-being and development of individuals within a team or organization. It involves understanding and valuing the diverse perspectives and needs

of team members, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, and encouraging open communication and trust.

But HR leaders are less clear on how to get human and enterprise leadership. Only 36% of HR leaders believe their initiatives effectively prepare leaders in their organization for future challenges, and a mere 23% have confidence in their organization's ability to cultivate emerging leaders capable of meeting future demands.<sup>3</sup>

Through surveys of HR leaders and other leaders who have participated in leadership development programs, we have identified seven hallmarks of effective leadership development, which can enable leaders to succeed today and in the future (see Figure 1).

» Figure 1: Seven Hallmarks of Effective Leadership



Source: Gartner



Leaders are defined here as individuals within an organization who hold positions of responsibility, overseeing and guiding a team of direct reports, from frontline managers to C-suite executives.

## **Hallmark No. 1:** **Reserve In-Person Development Only for Connection**

Fifty-seven percent of leaders dedicated either a majority of their time or almost all of their time to attending seminars and lectures during their last in-person development event.<sup>4</sup> However, focusing the majority of in-person leadership development time on seminars and lectures actually reduces the likelihood of cultivating enterprise and human leadership skills. Contrary to the common assumption that in-person development is always superior, these forms of training are more effective when delivered virtually.

The real utility of in-person development is in making connections. Using in-person time for team-building activities increases the likelihood of being an enterprise leader by 1.6 times, while using in-person time for networking events boosts the likelihood of being a human leader by 1.4 times and an enterprise leader by 1.6 times.<sup>4</sup> To maximize the effectiveness of leadership development, CHROs should deliver training primarily in a virtual format and reserve in-person time for building connections.

## **Hallmark No. 2:** **Intersperse Connection and Training Over Time**

Among the most valuable things leaders can take away from development programs are peer connections they can leverage later on to reinforce and effectively apply what they have learned during the program. Unfortunately, social interaction in these programs is often short-term, spontaneous or incidental. Without opportunities to build deeper, ongoing connections, the impact of leadership development can be limited because participants lack peer support to draw on after the program has concluded. Leaders who continue to leverage these connections after the end of the program to apply what they have learned are 1.7 times more likely to demonstrate enterprise leadership.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of counting on participants to make connections organically, HR leaders should facilitate multiple social connection opportunities for leaders, interspersing them between training sessions throughout the course of the leadership development program.

### **Hallmark No. 3:** **Create Diverse Learning Cohorts Followed by Reflection With True Peers**

Peer connection-based learning is a critical component of effective leadership development, with participants who learn in peer cohorts being 18% more likely to demonstrate enterprise leadership.<sup>4</sup> To maximize the benefits of peer connection-based learning, it is important to create diverse learning cohorts. Data shows that diversity in cohort composition increases effectiveness by 23% with level diversity, 10% with geographical diversity, and 5% with business unit diversity.<sup>4</sup>

However, while diversity is crucial during the learning phase, conduct post-training reflection with true peers of the same level. Enterprise leaders engaged 1.3 times more in reflective practices with their true peers, as compared to others, where they could explore the application of their lessons in a safe and supportive environment.<sup>4</sup>

### **Hallmark No. 4:** **Include Hard Accountability for Application**

Aligning development programs with performance goals is essential for effective leadership development. When these programs focus on the same skills and behaviors that leaders' performance is evaluated on, they are up to four times more likely to become enterprise leaders and 1.7 times more likely to become human leaders.<sup>4</sup> Also, making it a performance expectation for leaders to attend specific leadership development experiences makes it 2.4 times more likely that they will demonstrate enterprise leadership and 1.8 times more likely that they will demonstrate human leadership.<sup>4</sup>

To reap these benefits, HR leaders should implement hard accountability measures for attending leadership development activities and applying the lessons learned. Soft accountability measures such as peer and direct report check-ins are not as effective in producing enterprise and human leaders. These methods often lack the structure and rigor necessary for motivating leaders to fully integrate new skills into their daily work. Hard accountability gets results: Leaders who receive evaluation of leadership skills and behaviors in formal performance reviews are 3.4 times more likely to show enterprise leadership and 1.8 times more likely to exhibit human leadership.<sup>4</sup>

## **Hallmark No. 5:** **Build Experiential Learning Into Existing Roles**

Although experiences outside leaders' current roles might be helpful for preparing for the next role, they are not the most effective approach for helping leaders demonstrate enterprise and human leadership in their current roles. In fact, removing leaders from their roles to conduct secondments or rotations yields no impact on leaders' human leadership or enterprise leadership.<sup>4</sup>

A more effective strategy for increasing enterprise and human leadership is to integrate experiential learning into leaders' existing roles. Leaders who participate in on-the-job learning are 1.3 times more likely to demonstrate human leadership and 1.6 times more likely to demonstrate enterprise leadership. Leaders who participate in experiential learning via site visits display 1.6 times as much leader skill preparedness and are 1.9 times more likely to demonstrate enterprise leadership.<sup>4</sup>

## **Hallmark No. 6:** **Prioritize Development Support for High-Risk, High-Stakes Moments**

Many leadership development programs aim to prepare leaders for a broad array of potential scenarios, but this generalized approach can dilute the effectiveness of development efforts. As a result, leaders may find themselves unprepared for the most critical situations where their leadership abilities are truly tested.

In our survey, leaders identified five key moments where they most desire targeted development support:

1. Guiding their teams through major organizational changes
2. Managing high-risk situations
3. Adapting to significant shifts in role expectations
4. Making strategic decisions that impact the direction of multiple teams
5. Implementing new technologies within the business<sup>4</sup>

By aligning leadership development support with these high-risk, high-impact situations, HR can ensure leaders are equipped with the specific skills necessary to navigate complex and challenging moments where they feel least confident. This can be achieved by integrating these scenarios into a leadership development curriculum and providing targeted, just-in-time resources so leaders can access support when they encounter these self-identified pivotal moments.

## Hallmark No. 7: Facilitate Visible Self-Investment for Leaders

Leadership development often suffers from a top-down approach where senior leaders direct others to engage in programs while remaining on the sidelines. This can inadvertently signal that growth is important only for lower levels of the organization.

The data also reveals areas where traditional leadership development signaling efforts fall short. Activities such as senior leaders promoting leadership development through emails or town halls have no impact on enterprise or human leadership. Merely advocating for development is insufficient; active participation is crucial.

Effective organizations adopt a different strategy, with senior leaders visibly engaging in leadership development and sharing their own progress with their teams. When senior leaders actively participate in their own formal development programs, organizations can see an improvement of up to 28% in creating enterprise leaders and 30% in creating human leaders.<sup>4</sup>

The most effective role-modeling is leaders participating in development, reinforcing the message that growth is a priority for all, regardless of rank. This approach not only amplifies the impact of development programs but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement and learning, ensuring that leadership development is seen as a shared responsibility and a critical component of organizational success.

## Where to Begin

These hallmarks of effective leadership development emphasize the impact of connections, practice and accountability on leaders' success at effectively applying their learned skills. Organizations that apply these insights to their leadership development programs can enable their leaders to evolve into the human and enterprise leaders essential for success in today's complex business environment.

HR leaders can begin by prioritizing the hallmarks that address the most significant gaps between their current leadership development practices and the identified hallmarks, rather than following a specific sequence. By systematically targeting these areas, they can tailor their approach to maximize impact and drive meaningful improvements in leadership effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> 2025 Gartner HR Priorities Survey. This survey was conducted to understand senior HR leader perspectives on their priorities and challenges for the coming 12 to 18 months. The survey was conducted online from 13 June 2024 through 15 July 2024, and contains responses from 1,403 HR leaders with representation from various regions and industries. Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

<sup>2</sup> 2023 Gartner Talent Management Leadership Survey. This survey was conducted to understand talent management leaders' perspectives on the key challenges of talent management today and their organization's approaches to talent management strategy, HIPO retention, leadership bench strength and succession. The survey was conducted online from 27 April 2023 to 1 June 2023, and contains responses from 82 heads of talent management with representation from various regions and industries.

<sup>3</sup> 2024 Gartner Leadership Bench Strength and Leader Learning HR Leader Survey. This survey was conducted to get insights on the initiatives that various organizations are taking to develop their leaders and succession planning strategies. The research was conducted online from 27 February 2024 through 8 April 2024, and contains responses from 162 HR leaders with representation from various regions and industries.

<sup>4</sup> 2024 Gartner Leadership Development Leader Survey. This survey was conducted to understand the development methods, experiences and other factors that play a role in creating successful leadership development programs. The survey was conducted online from 17 April 2024 to 15 May 2024, and contains responses from 985 senior leaders and midlevel managers with representation from various regions, industries and functions.

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# How to Augment Employee Performance Management With GenAI

by Laura Gardiner

Talent management leaders can enhance performance management by leveraging GenAI for drafting goals, feedback, and evaluations, thus saving manager time and reducing bias. Assessing process maturity and available capabilities will guide them toward the best GenAI solution for their organization.



## The Promise of GenAI in Performance Management

Under pressure to drive growth and control costs, CHROs are focused this year on delivering new HR solutions that accelerate workforce productivity. One such potential solution is to make the performance management process more efficient and accurate. Talent management leaders must assess how they can utilize performance management technology to help CHROs achieve this goal, especially with the new generative AI (GenAI) capabilities that are emerging in this space. Many technology vendors have begun to embed GenAI features in performance management systems, citing the potential benefits of manager time savings and a more data-driven and unbiased view of employee performance. Yet even as these features become more widely available, adoption remains limited and perception of the value varies.

Notably, 52% of HRBPs say their organizations have no interest in implementing AI in performance management.<sup>1</sup> Conversations with Gartner clients indicate that HR leaders evaluating GenAI for performance management may initially be hesitant to implement it because the technology is new and raises unanswered compliance questions.

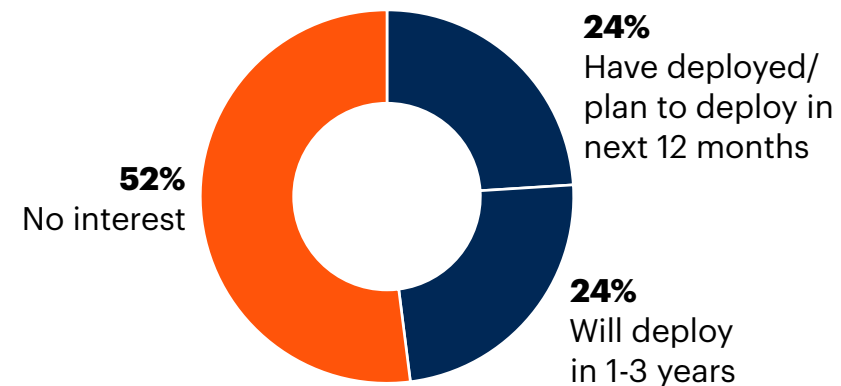
Even as these initial concerns are addressed, many HR leaders perceive that typical use cases may not be worth the risk or effort needed to realize benefits. This does not mean GenAI lacks potential in this area: Only 14% of HRBPs see no value in performance reviews written by AI (see Figure 1). However, the 55% of HRBPs who are unsure or undecided about the value of AI-powered performance

reviews indicates how the options currently available for using GenAI in performance management are not meeting organizations' needs.<sup>1</sup>

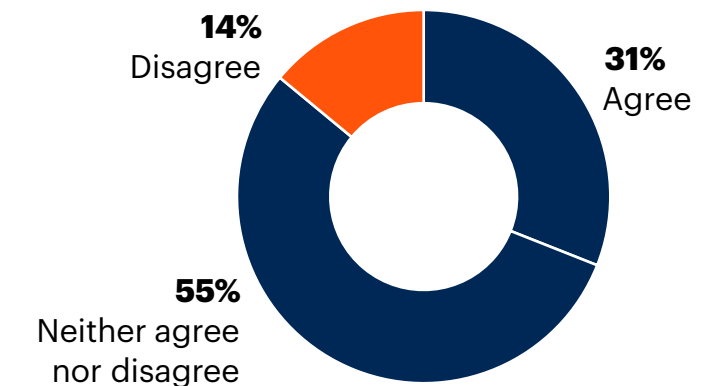
One main reason for this disconnect between the technology's potential and HR leaders' adoption of it is a lack of flexibility and customization options. Currently,

» **Figure 1: AI in Performance: Value to Action Gap**  
Percentage of HR Leaders

**Is your organization currently using AI in the performance management process? (n = 45 HRBPs)**



**To what extent to you agree that you would find value in a performance review written by AI? (n = 85 HRBPs)<sup>a</sup>**



Source: HR 2024 Gartner Talent Management HRBP Survey (Q2), July 2024  
<sup>a</sup> Data excludes unsure

the GenAI capabilities for performance management are embedded in performance management systems, and often not available as add-on tools. This limits talent management teams' current choices, but not the future potential. Talent management leaders who see value in GenAI for performance management must weigh two approaches:

- **Approach 1** — Evaluate add-on GenAI tools that could be applied to support performance management outcomes.
- **Approach 2** — Focus on process maturity to improve the potential of embedded GenAI features.

There is nothing preventing an organization from pursuing a dual strategy that both focuses on optimizing the value of embedded GenAI capabilities and looks beyond performance management systems to other technology that could be applied to support performance outcomes. However, talent management leaders must be conscious of the level of effort and change management required to adjust

performance processes, upskill managers and maintain or improve the employee experience. Pursuing both approaches simultaneously would not be optimal for most organizations.




### Overcome Employee Skepticism by Addressing Pain Points

Only 44% of employees say they are comfortable with AI solutions independently conducting performance feedback.<sup>2</sup> The majority of employees who are skeptical of this technology are unlikely to change their minds unless they see it delivering value for them. To demonstrate value and build trust, talent management leaders should focus on GenAI capabilities that address specific pain points in their organization's performance management processes.

Most performance management vendors offer GenAI features that help managers draft goals, feedback and performance evaluations by summarizing data within the system to generate text-based outputs (see Figure 2). GenAI can also help evaluate feedback and evaluations

» **Figure 2: Performance Management Technology Supported Activities and GenAI Capabilities**

☐ Frequently supported by PM systems ☐ Infrequently supported by PM systems

 Drivers	 Activities	 AI capabilities in PM systems
Align expectations	Goal Setting	Goal and milestone drafting
	Outcomes   Behaviors	Not applicable
Share progress	Ongoing performance conversations	• Drafting and bias review • Suggested ratings
	Feedback   Recognition	
Evaluate performance	Performance review	Not applicable
	Calibration	
Plan for growth	Development plans   PIPs	

Source: Gartner

for bias and suggest performance ratings. These features may help solve problems such as:

- Unclear or unreasonable goals
- Vague or inaccurate feedback
- Perceptions of unfairness in performance evaluations

If managers and employees struggle with these pain points, and if your existing performance management system includes capabilities that address them, the simplest solution may be to address your organization’s needs using embedded GenAI features. However, as outlined below in Approach 2, organizations require a level of performance process maturity to realize the full potential, including robust performance data and manager competence at using AI-generated information.

Talent management leaders may find they need to look beyond text generation to

address pain points for their managers and employees. For example, if your organization struggles with feedback quality, looking at GenAI applications that coach managers to improve feedback skills could prove more beneficial — and more acceptable to stakeholders — than text-summarization capabilities.

### Approach 1: Evaluate Add-On Capabilities to Enhance Performance Management

Add-on GenAI capabilities that could address common pain points include: overlay text evaluation for bias detection, summarization of feedback and performance data points from multiple HR systems, manager coaching support and skills-based development planning (see Table 1). Most of these are not currently embedded within performance management systems, but they can be found elsewhere.

» Table 1: Add-on GenAI Capabilities for Performance Management

PM pain point	GenAI capabilities	Where to find them	Benefits	Integration
Unclear or biased performance feedback	Add overlay text evaluation.	AI writing-assistant software; employee performance management systems	Improve unclear writing, tone and word choice and avoid bias.	Likely to appear fully integrated; included in some PM systems
Inaccurate or incomplete measurement of employee performance	Summarize data and generate insights from multiple systems.	People analytics technology	Combine disparate performance-related data points that are collected outside the formal PM process.	Collected and reviewed outside the PM tool or workflow
Poor feedback quality or delivery	Coach managers.	Digital coaching applications; private GenAI chat assistants	Build skills in having difficult conversations.	Likely accessed as a separate tool outside the PM system
Unclear goals and development pathways	Create skills-based development plans.	Internal talent marketplaces; other skills intelligence technologies	Create targeted development plans based on gaps in current performance and/or future aspirations.	Typically a component of larger skills-based talent management tools

Source: Gartner (June 2025)

To determine whether these capabilities are worth the investment, talent management leaders will need to do a cost-benefit analysis to ensure the expected ROI is aligned with the performance management outcomes they are looking to achieve.

## Approach 2: Assess Process Maturity to Maximize Benefits of Embedded GenAI Features

Whatever use cases and technology capabilities talent management leaders identify as beneficial, they must also honestly assess their process maturity and readiness to realize the potential benefits of this technology. This step is especially critical to realize benefits of the commonly available use cases of GenAI in performance management, such as drafting goals, feedback and evaluations. With GenAI, managers can complete continuous performance

management activities with less time and effort by simplifying the process. Additionally, moving toward a more data-driven and consistent process that does not rely as heavily on individual managers can potentially reduce the impact of human bias. However, simply making GenAI available doesn't automatically yield these benefits.

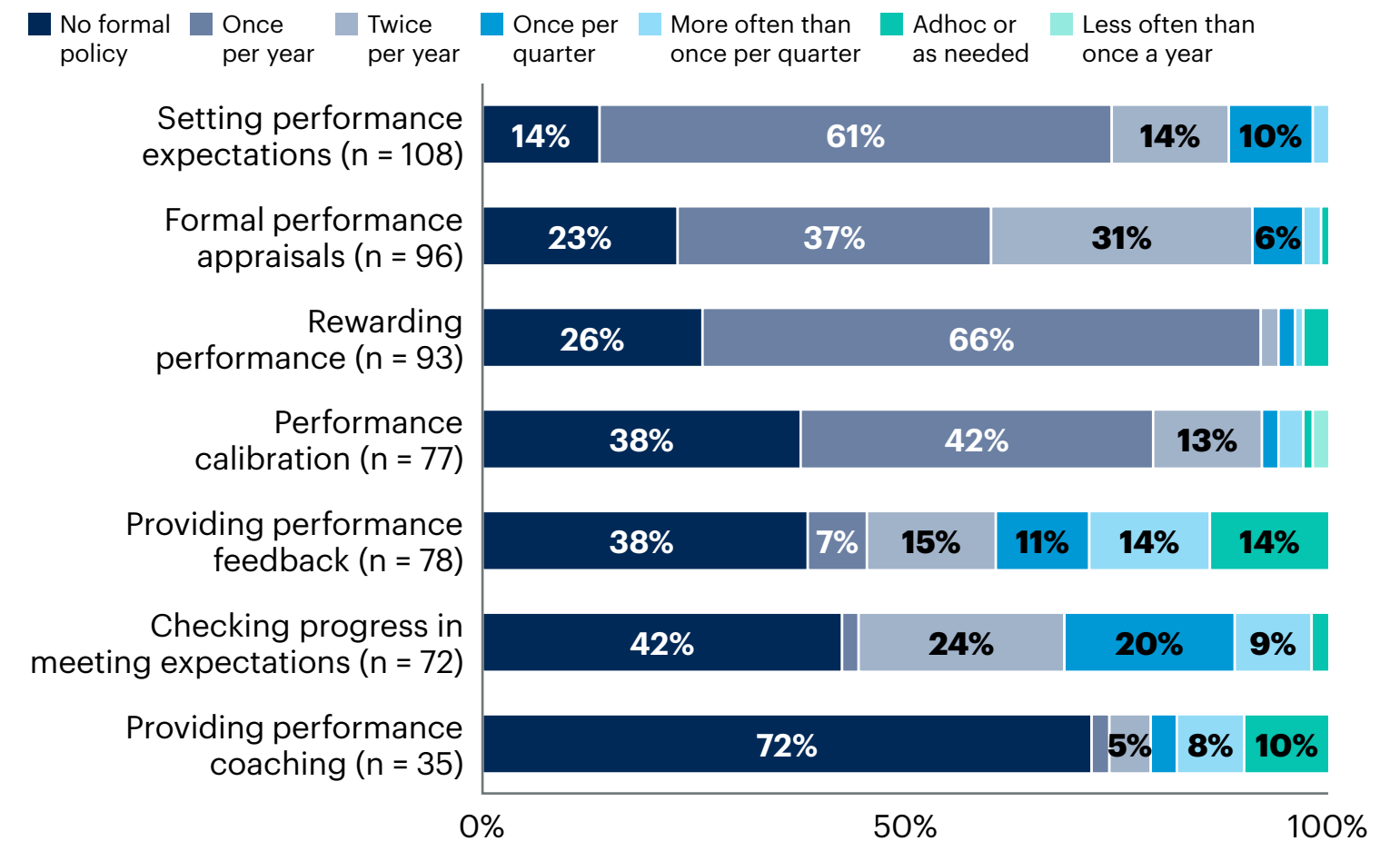
To realize the potential benefits, organizations need a strong foundation in performance management with:

- Processes that capture a variety of data sources that represent employees' performance
- Managers who can build trust in the performance management process

However, most organizations perform each of these activities infrequently (see Figure 3). For example, if progress checking and performance feedback

» **Figure 3: Prescribed Frequency of PM Activities**

Percentage of organizations with PM activity policies



Source: 2023 Gartner Career and Performance Management HRBP Survey  
 Note: Data points equal to and less than 3% are not shown.

occur twice per year or less, embedded GenAI tools will not have enough data to generate text that is accurate enough. It will also not be unique enough to provide utility for the employee and will still require significant manager inputs, thereby negating the intended benefits.

Talent management leaders must ensure their talent processes capture information about employee performance to supply GenAI models with enough data to produce reliable, accurate and unique outputs that are valuable to managers and employees. This performance data should include:

- Goal progress and completion information
- Manager and peer feedback
- Documentation of behaviors or competencies

Talent management teams must also proactively monitor compliance with these processes to ensure information

is provided throughout the year and amounts to enough total touchpoints that summarization and insight generation is a value-add.

Additionally, even with sufficient data inputs managers need the skills to use AI-generated performance information to improve, but not replace, their role in managing performance. Talent management leaders, in collaboration with other subject matter experts, must provide managers the opportunity to learn how to best use AI-generated information in evaluating performance while still ensuring accuracy, context and specificity are provided to employees.

Thrivent's approach of creating guiding principles and using "real work training" to prepare managers for performance evaluation, particularly in uncertain situations, can serve as an effective model for improving performance management process maturity.



## Thrivent's Real-Life Performance Evaluation Training

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Thrivent created guiding principles and used "real work training" to prepare managers for performance evaluation, especially in the most ambiguous situations. Many managers conceptually understand their organizations' performance criteria yet struggle to practically apply it to their direct reports' evaluations. The same struggle applies when learning to effectively leverage AI-generated text in performance reviews.

Thrivent acknowledged this "knowing-doing" gap. To increase managers' ability to evaluate performance, Thrivent developed guiding principles that outline the most important tenets of its performance management philosophy.

To develop the guiding principles, Thrivent's talent team interviewed managers to identify evaluation scenarios that were ambiguous and required judgment to address correctly. The talent team then used these real-life, difficult-to-determine scenarios as inputs for the guiding principles.



Next, Thrivent hosted hands-on training sessions in which managers applied the guiding principles to the same real-life scenarios. The managers debated how they would rate the employee in each scenario, reflected on what they learned through the discussion and rehearsed delivering a performance review based on one of the scenarios. The sessions allowed managers to grow their judgment and better understand how to apply performance criteria — especially behavioral criteria — in their performance assessments.

Ultimately, talent management leaders exploring GenAI in performance management need to determine their primary approach and build a strategy from there. They can look to maximize the potential benefit from capabilities that exist in their current performance management system by focusing on nontechnical process maturity. Or they can target technology solutions that support the activities of performance management but may not be integrated with their performance management system. The ambitious talent management function may opt to pursue both approaches simultaneously, but should carefully consider the organization's appetite and capacity for change.

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<sup>1</sup> 2024 Gartner Talent Management HRBP Survey (2Q). This survey was conducted to understand roles and responsibilities of HBRPs in key talent management areas like organization design and workforce planning, employee experience, promotions, employee feedback and coaching, goal setting, performance management technology and career management. The research was conducted online from 28 May through 27 June 2024 and contains responses from 101 HRBPs with representation from various regions and industries.

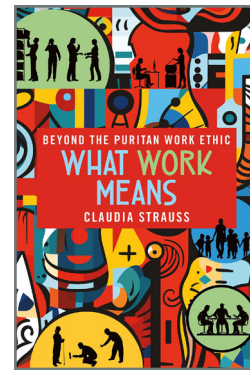
<sup>2</sup> 2023 Gartner HR Technology Employee Experience Survey. This survey was conducted to understand employees' ratings of 75 technologies and innovations across seven HR subfunctions based on the level of adoption in their organizations, the impact on current performance and the future importance for employee performance. The research was conducted online from 10 October through 7 November 2023 among 3,477 respondents from various geographies, industries and functions.



# Reading List

by Alexander Kirss

HR leaders' time is precious, and the supply of literature marketed to executives is vast. With that in mind, this new feature offers a list of books, both new and old, that we believe can help HR leaders confront some of the major challenges they face today.



## What Work Means

**Claudia Strauss**

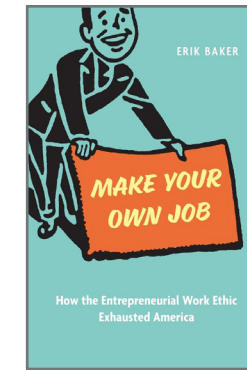
*ILR Press, 2024*

Claudia Strauss never uses the term “employee value proposition” or “EVP” in her ethnographic account of the meaning of work, but it haunts her analysis.

Strauss develops powerful, detailed descriptions of a variety of feelings and beliefs that American workers have about paid employment. These include both the meaning they ascribe to work as an abstract concept, or “work ethics,” as well as how workers relate to individual jobs (e.g., treating work as a “calling” versus “just a job”).

Going beyond classification, Strauss shows these motivations are deeply personal, varying both between different workers and over time based on workers’ experiences and broader societal norms.

The challenge for HR leaders is to develop an EVP that accounts for these distinct motivations in a genuine, but also practical, manner. Failing to consider employees’ motivations may harm engagement and performance. Tailoring a personalized EVP to all employees, however, may be impossible. Strauss’ work is a novel, essential spur for HR leaders to carefully reflect on whether and how work at their organization aligns to employee needs.



## Make Your Own Job

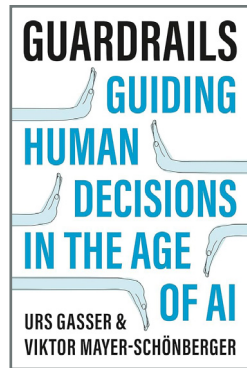
**Erik Baker**

*Harvard University Press, 2025*

In his new book, historian Erik Baker charges that there is a “rot festering at the core of the culture of work.” He calls it the “entrepreneurial work ethic”: the idea that advantages should “accrue to people who create work for themselves – as opposed to merely executing... the work assigned to them by others.” It’s a pervasive belief, encompassing not just start-up founders or traditional entrepreneurs, but also gig workers and employees encouraged to use their creativity and zeal to define a unique role within a large corporation.

Make Your Own Job is an angry book, but Baker’s outsider perspective is important to consider, whether HR leaders are convinced by his accusation or not.

Specifically, Baker’s historical lens sets his analysis apart from other arguments about the meaning of work (e.g., Claudia Strauss’ *What Work Means*). His sweeping account of 20th century ideas on leadership and management forces HR leaders to reconsider the novelty and effectiveness of “new” practices, many of which are rebranded versions of older ideas. This doesn’t invalidate them, but HR leaders should confirm their continued relevance rather than assume it. Historical circumstances may change, but for better or worse, the entrepreneurial work ethic stays strikingly the same.



## Guardrails: Guiding Human Decisions in the Age of AI

**Urs Gasser and Viktor Mayer-Schönberger**

*Princeton University Press, 2024*

Modern organizations thrive on information flows, and leaders increasingly turn to technological “guardrails” to ensure they are safe and productive. Think access restrictions, employee monitoring and the automated detection of unwanted activities.

Although technology is often pitched as a cure-all for fallible human decision-making, Urs Gasser and Viktor Mayer-Schönberger provide a persuasive counterpoint. When used judiciously, technological guardrails can be effective. But social guardrails – the various ways a society prods, nudges, or pushes individuals towards a particular option – often outperform them.

Still, social guardrails are no panacea either. They are particularly helpful in novel or rapidly changing circumstances. To be effective, though, they must empower individuals to make decisions, be socially anchored and enable learning. This is a tough ask in many hierarchical organizations.

Gasser and Mayer-Schönberger’s philosophical approach to guardrails is thought-provoking, particularly as HR leaders think about how to improve decision making when workforces increasingly integrate humans and machines. Since there is no single, “right” approach to guardrails, they provide an argument, conceptual language and tools to help HR leaders craft strong guardrails – social or technological – across a range of organizational situations and contexts.



## The Checklist Manifesto

**Atul Gawande**

*Metropolitan Books, 2009*

Atul Gawande’s Checklist Manifesto, lauded on its release a decade and a half ago, is just one of many half-remembered bestsellers from the late 2000s. Unlike many of its peers, however, its core insight is worth recovering in today’s chaotic operating environment.

Specifically, Gawande argues that simple operational cross-checks – the titular checklists – can improve team performance in complex situations. Checklists can bolster communication and focus team members on avoiding the most critical errors in each process.

Gawande’s most convincing checklist examples come from the medical profession, but his recommendations have broader applicability. CHROs, for instance, should rely on checklists to guide emergency executive succession and employee communications during natural disasters and other crises. HRBPs can use checklists to ensure tough conversations around letting employees go or managing employee friction are appropriately conducted. Equipping managers with templates for communicating rewards packages and performance reviews can standardize these across disparate teams. Gawande rightly notes that not everything needs a checklist, but in some cases, they can be an essential tool for HR leaders and their teams.

# Trends in Action

## Organizations Redesign to Prepare for Technological Innovation

by Maggie Schroeder-O'Neal

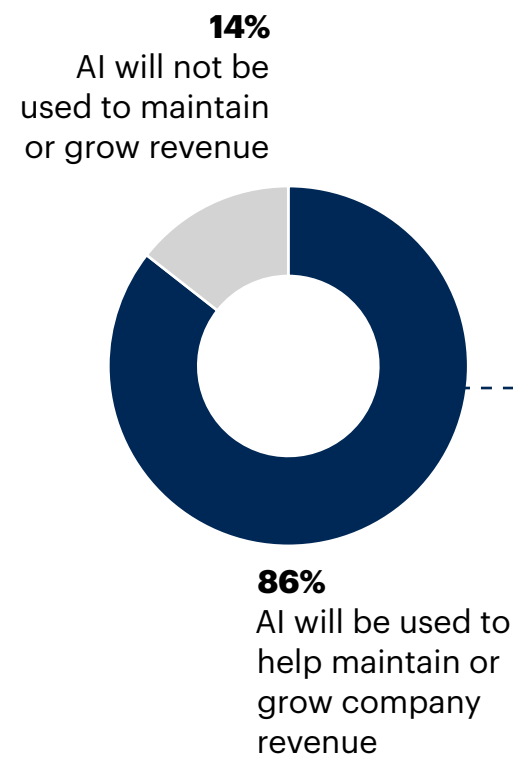
With ambitious growth plans for 2025, but lackluster ROI from current technology investments, CHROs feel pressure to make organizational design changes. To best prepare for technological innovation, CHROs can use this research to promote agility and center org design around future business goals.



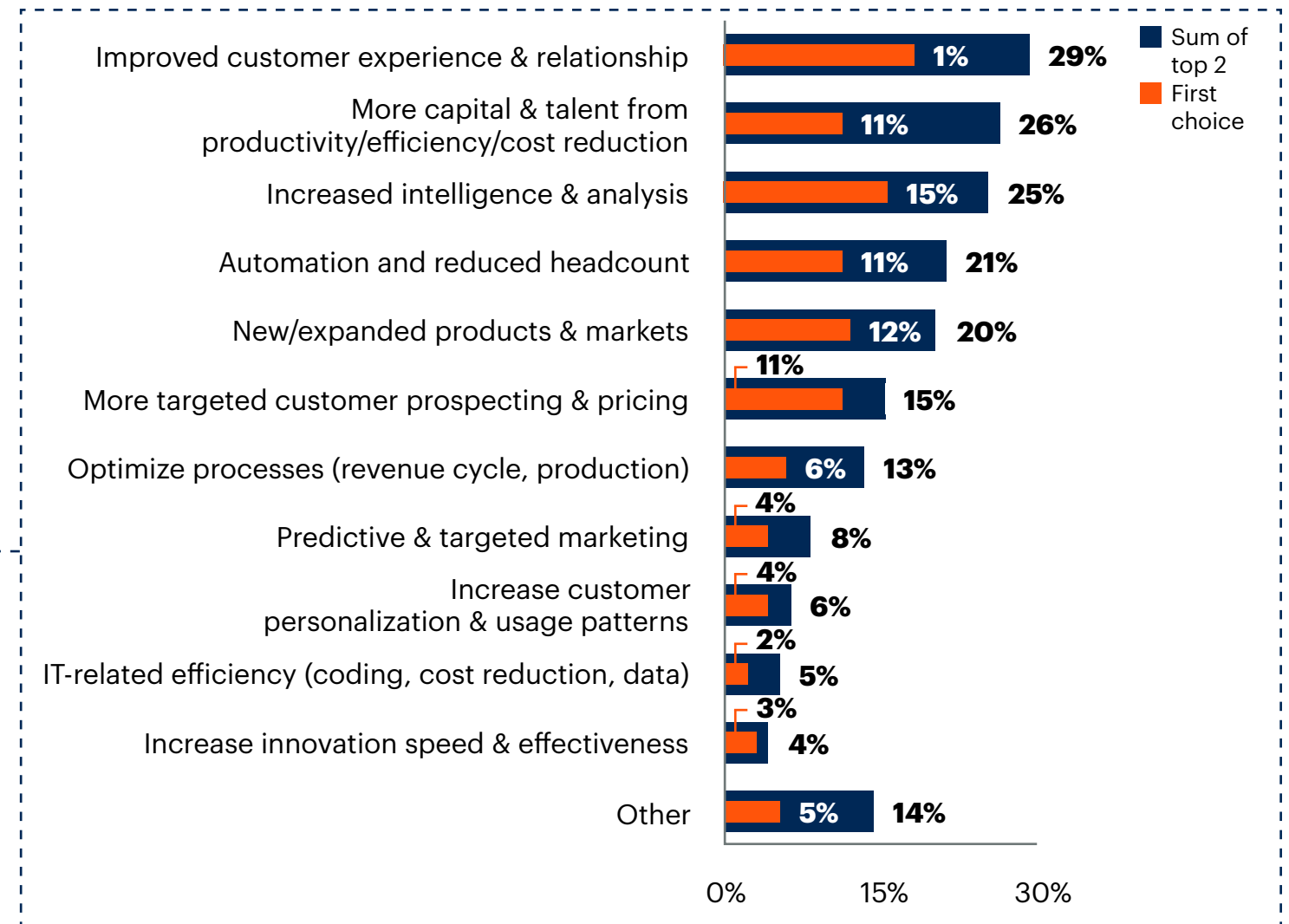
In Gartner's Trends in Action series, we examine our 9 Future of Work Trends for 2025 in detail, exploring the actions CHROs can take to prepare for, get ahead of or take advantage of these trends.

CEOs' top strategic business priority for 2025 is to foster growth, primarily by embracing emerging technologies. Recognizing technology like generative AI (GenAI) as a pivotal force in driving growth, CEOs are focused on using it to scale productivity and optimize resources. As such, digital capability and IT are the top two areas where investment has increased, with 86% of surveyed CEOs reporting they will use AI to help maintain or grow company revenue in 2024 and 2025 (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

» **Figure 1: Use of AI to Help Maintain or Grow Company Revenue in 2024 and 2025**  
Sum of top two ranks



n = 305, Wave 2 only  
Q. Exactly how do you think AI will be used to help maintain or grow company revenue in 2024 and 2025?



n = 261, Wave 2 only, AI will be used to maintain or grow company revenue

Source: 2024 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey

However, investments in new technology will continue to be insufficient due to challenges in adoption and integration caused by limitations in current organizational designs (ODs). Fifty-eight percent of CHROs believe their current OD is not flexible enough, and 40% believe their current OD makes it hard for their employees to get work done. Furthermore, only 44% of CHROs are confident they can deliver on their OD goals in the next 12 to 18 months.<sup>2</sup> Traditional ODs hinder a company's ability to fully benefit from advancements like GenAI. To effectively adopt AI, organizations need a design that is agile and collaborative, promotes data-driven talent, empowers teams, and has strong leadership.

The typical response to OD limitations is to change business models to become more agile. However, merely changing models without addressing existing barriers can lead to those same challenges persisting in the new model. Today, CHROs understand that without significant changes, the obstacles from current organizational structures will prevent

them from preparing the workforce to fully benefit from both current and future technological innovations.

In 2025 and beyond, most CHROs will look to redesign their organizations to improve current and future adoption of new technologies. But the most progressive CHROs will avoid jumping straight to a full redesign and instead will simplify and prepare their OD for technological innovation in two distinct phases:

- **Near term:** Minimize the barriers in the existing OD that prevent successful technology integration.
- **Long term:** Consider new structures, where appropriate, to enhance OD agility.

## **Near-Term Actions: Minimize Barriers in the Existing OD That Prevent Successful Technology Integration**

**1. Design workflows for collaboration between humans and technology.** Work friction is on the rise, with 67% of employees in a high-friction environment, up from 64% in 2022.<sup>3</sup> Increased work friction is impacting employees' ability to do their jobs. Often, friction in the workforce is perceived as a barrier to getting things done. CHROs should use areas of friction as a catalyst for process transformation, allowing greater collaboration between employees and technological innovations (such as GenAI). Successful CHROs end up with a seamless integration between employees and technology to create an effective, collaborative and adaptable human-AI workflow.

This human-AI workflow includes three unique components:

- Process analysis to identify the risks and complexities of assigning tasks to humans versus technology
- Collaboration guardrails for human+AI partnership
- Feedback assessments to understand what worked well and what needs improvement

## **2. Embrace intentional workflow friction for productivity.**

Typically, when integrating new ways of working, such as introducing GenAI tools into workflows, the goal is to make things easier by eliminating friction. In reality, when integrating a new technology like GenAI into how work gets done, there are moments in a workflow where it is helpful to have intentional points of friction embedded. As employees continue to learn how to work with new technology, CHROs should partner with IT to ensure the collaboration process is two-sided, between humans and machines. Implementing intentional pause

points in the workflow, designed to encourage users to carefully scrutinize AI-generated work, helps reduce errors and unwanted friction later on. For example, MIT and Accenture partnered to introduce “targeted friction,” described as cognitive and procedural speed bumps in their workflows where AI was introduced. Researchers found that intentional points of friction actually enabled the successful integration of GenAI use.<sup>4</sup>

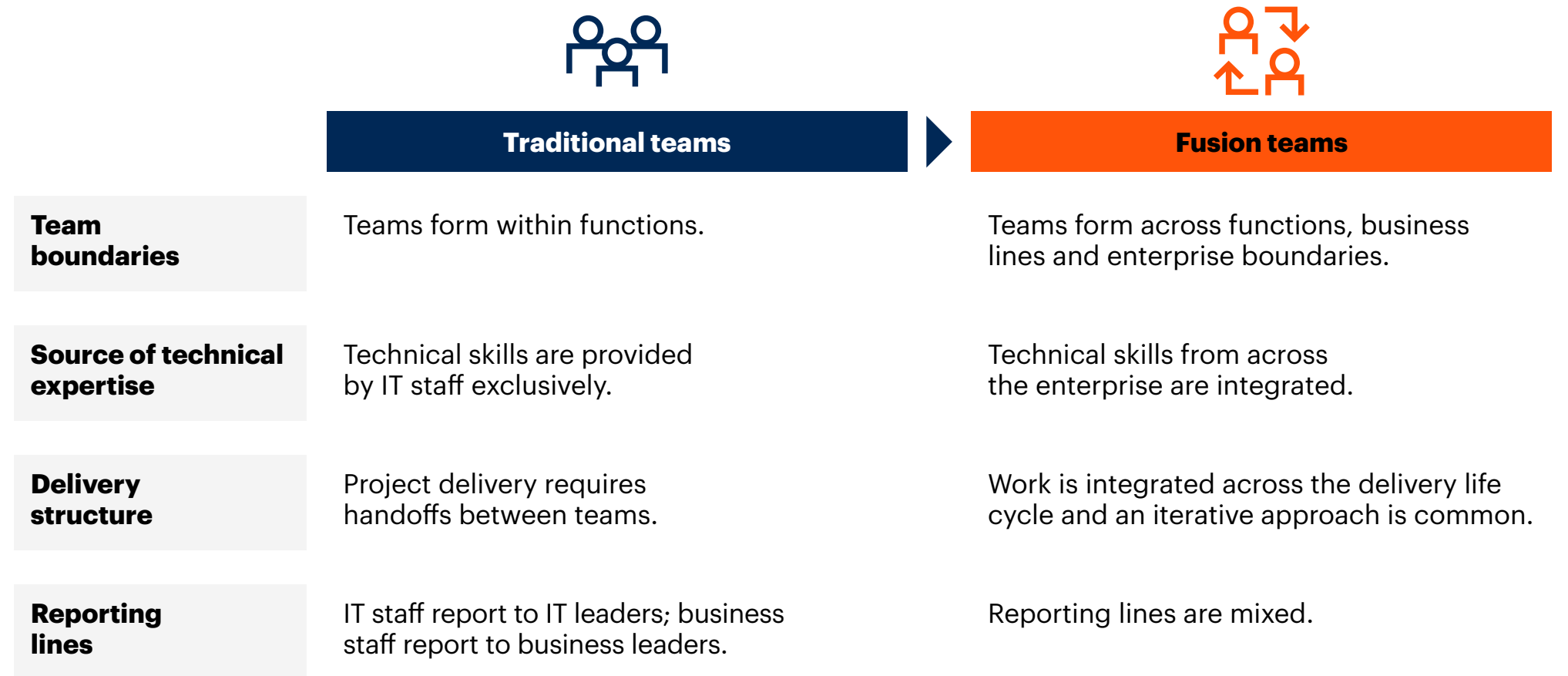
## **Long-Term Actions: Consider New Structures Where Appropriate to Enhance OD Agility**

**1. Approach flattened hierarchies without eliminating people.** When organizations implement technology that reduces demand for talent to the point of eliminating positions, CHROs and their function can declutter multilayered hierarchies and identify opportunities for reskilling and redeployment across the organization. Focusing on reskilling and redeployment will enhance

their talent attraction strategy by assuring employees that even if technology replaces their job, the organization is committed to their career and will create highly collaborative and productive human-technology teams. CHROs should make short-term investments in their talent process now to facilitate reskilling and redeployment options in the future. Without an intentional approach to career pathing and transparency around development opportunities, organizations may hollow out their midtenure workforce, due to attrition, which is a serious long-term threat to a talent strategy that relies on having experienced employees. For more information, see: *The Future of Frontline Work: Collaborative Human-Machine Teams*.

**2. Embrace the democratization of technology by piloting fusion teams.** Fusion teams lie at the heart of a democratized digital delivery model — multidisciplinary teams in which technology and business experts work together and share accountability for business and technology outcomes (see Figure 2). With their expertise in strategic workforce planning and collaboration with the C-suite, CHROs should partner with CIOs to transition from IT-led to business-led digital leadership. This partnership democratizes technology use throughout the organization by empowering business functions to establish fusion teams as needed. CHROs play an important role in empowering fusion teams by helping orchestrate communities of practice to foster consistent knowledge and skills development and secure, architecturally sound ways of working in distributed fusion teams. Additionally, CHROs and their function are critical to ensuring that within fusion teams, learning and work are fused by shifting from episodic to embedded, agile learning.

» Figure 2: Traditional Versus Fusion Teams



Source: Gartner

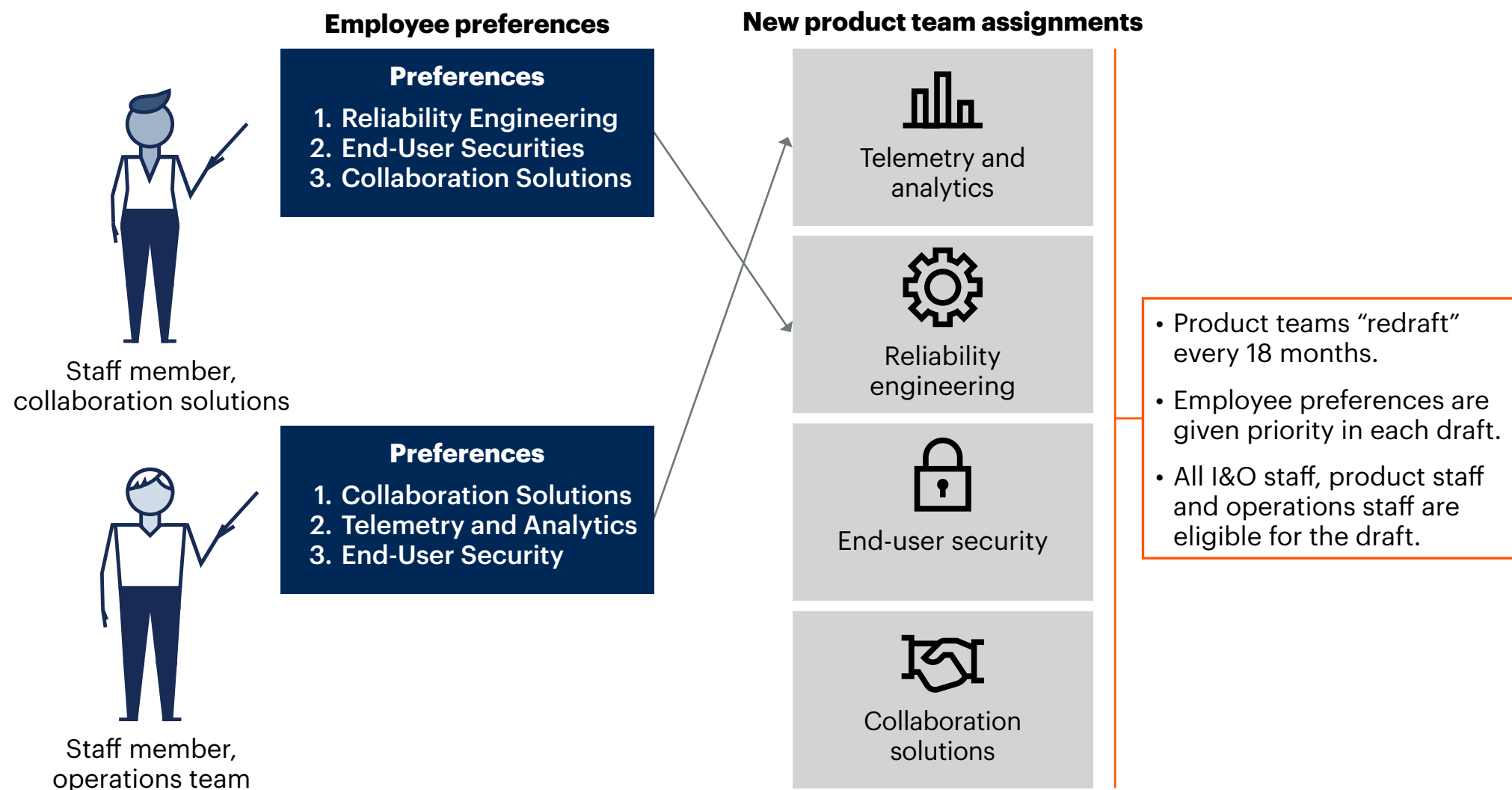
### 3. Boost agility with self-nominated team rotations.

To encourage both participation in fusion teams and individuals' chance to learn digital skills, CHROs should create opportunities for staff to try out assignments with rotational, on-the-job learning experiences.

At Tetra Pak, to push team members beyond tasks that only required their existing knowledge, the organization developed a draft system allowing employees to self-nominate and rotate among teams for an 18-month period. This system gave employees the opportunity to learn new digital skills that they would have otherwise not learned in their existing role. Tetra Pak found success by:

- Encouraging staff to select their top three preferences for rotations based on the new areas or skills they wished to learn. This approach allowed staff to learn new technical skills through real working experiences (see Figure 3).
- Keeping product owners and one to two team members stable, which boosted productivity and maintained consistency as new teams were assembled.

» Figure 3: Using “Draft System” to Empower Staff Members to Shift Teams  
Illustrative



- Product teams “redraft” every 18 months.
- Employee preferences are given priority in each draft.
- All I&O staff, product staff and operations staff are eligible for the draft.

Source: Adapted From Tetra Pak

HR leaders can use these recommendations to review and adapt their OD to improve how they adopt and integrate new technology, such as GenAI. Strategic investments in minimizing existing OD barriers to adoption and integration, and considering new structures where appropriate, are critical to ensure an organization realizes the full potential of its technology investments. These strategies will directly, and positively, impact an organization's growth trajectory and competitive advantage.

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<sup>1</sup> 2024 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey. This survey was conducted to examine CEO and senior business executive views on current business issues, as well as some areas of technology agenda impact. The survey was conducted from July 2023 through December 2023, with questions about the period from 2023 through 2025. One-quarter of the survey sample was collected in July 2023, and three-quarters were collected from October through December 2023. In total, 416 actively employed CEOs and other senior executive business leaders qualified and participated. The research was collected via 356 online surveys and 60 telephone interviews. The sample mix by role was CEOs (n = 282); CFOs (n = 81); COOs or other C-level executives (n = 32); and chairs, presidents or board directors (n = 21). The sample mix by location was North America (n = 175), Europe (n = 94), Asia/Pacific (n = 93), Latin America (n = 41), the Middle East (n = 8), and South Africa (n = 5). The sample mix by size was \$50 million to less than \$250 million (n = 77), \$250 million to less than \$1 billion (n = 101), \$1 billion to less than \$10 billion (n = 166), and \$10 billion or more (n = 71). Disclaimer: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

<sup>2</sup> 2025 Gartner HR Priorities Survey. This survey was conducted to understand senior HR leader perspectives on their priorities and challenges for the coming 12 to 18 months. The survey was conducted online from 13 June 2024 through 15 July 2024, and contains responses from 1,403 HR leaders with representation from various regions and industries.

<sup>3</sup> 2024 Gartner Organization Structure and Leadership Trust Survey. This survey was conducted to understand employee experiences with organizational change and trust in organizational leadership. The research was conducted online from 15 June through 11 July 2024, and contains responses from 3,529 employees with representation from various regions, industries and functions.

<sup>4</sup> To Help Improve the Accuracy of Generative AI, Add Speed Bumps. MIT Sloan School of Management.

# Planning for Leadership Pipeline Pressures

by Jonah Shepp

In April's Benchmark with Gartner webcast, HR leaders said skills gaps were the most common issue currently affecting their organizations, followed by leadership pipeline pressures (see Figure 1). Participants also indicated a growing interest in being better prepared for the future, with 44% saying that the market outlook for 2026 was a current issue for their organization: up from 28% in February. New political priorities also remain a key concern.

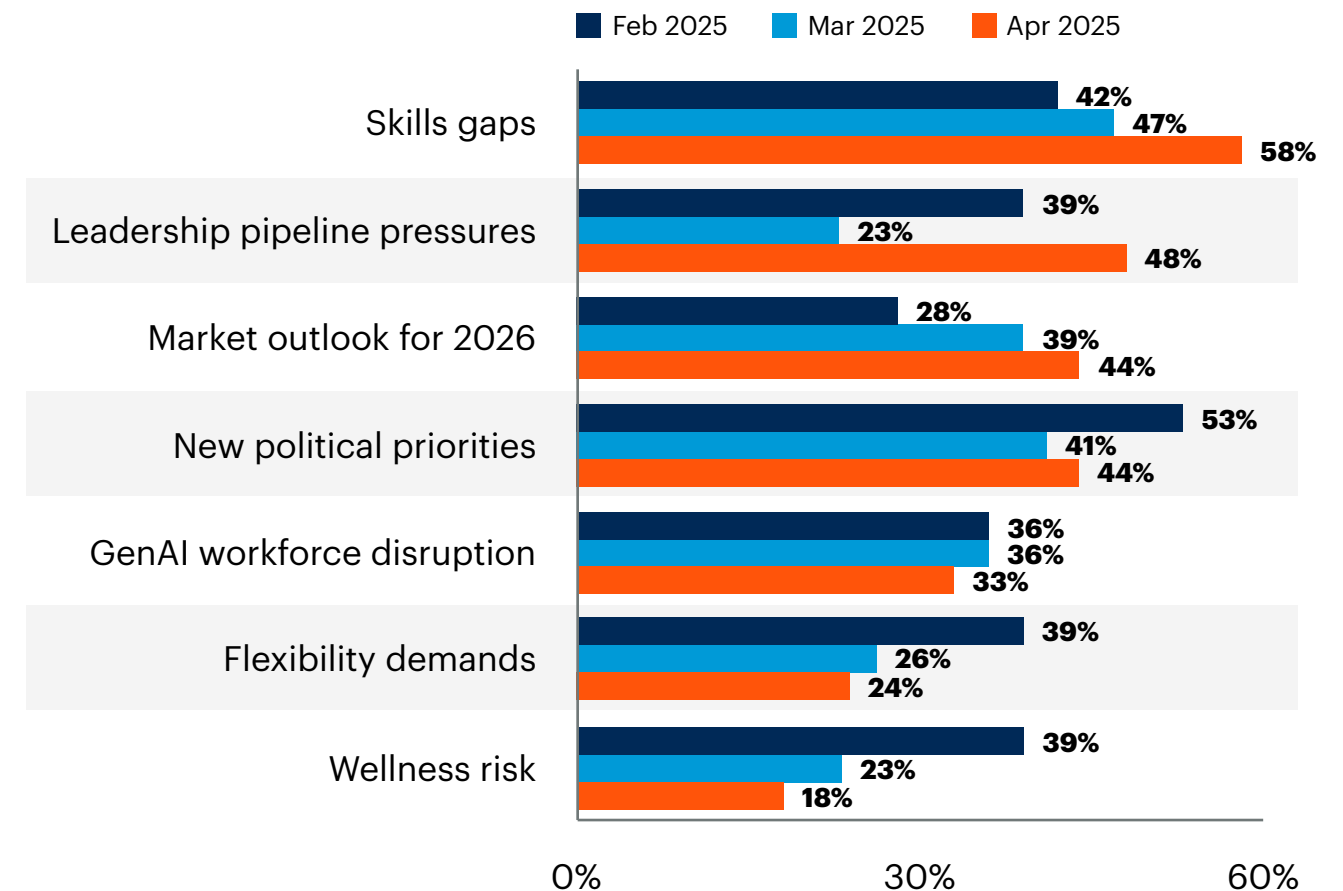
Our labor market outlook showed signs of growth between March and April, with a sharp increase in the percentage of HR leaders saying their organization's job postings were increasing and even sharper decline in those saying they were decreasing (see Figure 2). However,

the data also showed quit rates decreasing to their lowest level in twelve months, suggesting employees lack confidence in the job market.

April's webcast also surveyed HR leaders about leadership pipelines. Only 37% said they are very or extremely confident in their organization's ability to build a robust leadership pipeline that supports meeting strategic objectives. Figures 3 and 4 show the most common barriers participants identified to building a robust leadership pipeline, along with the most popular strategies for addressing this challenge.

» Figure 1: Current Issues of Concern to HR Leaders

Percentage of HR leaders



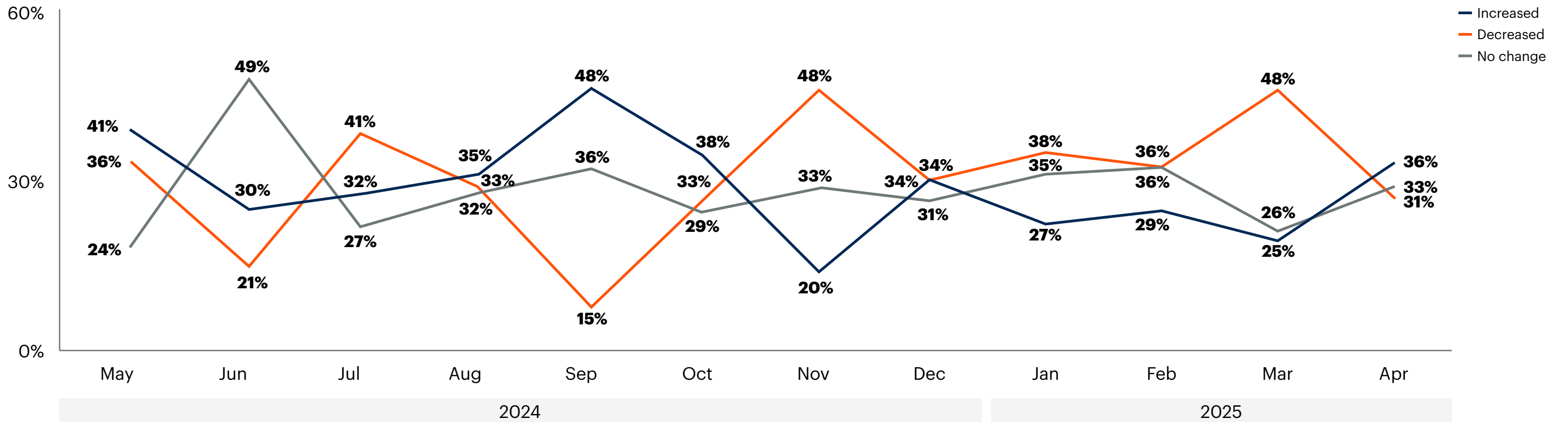
n = 66 (Apr 2025), 94 (Mar 2025), 36 (Feb 2025)

Q. Which of the following topics are current issues for your organization this month? (Select all that apply)

Source: Benchmark with Gartner: Leadership Pipeline Pressures and US Tariffs Impact on Jobs (Apr 2025), U.S. Administration Policies After One Quarter (Mar 2025), Political Priorities Change Impact and Wellness Risk (Feb 2025)

Note: Pay equity expectations, inclusion pressures, and "none of these topics" series not shown

» Figure 2: Trends in Job Postings  
Percentage of HR leaders



n = 81 (Apr 2025), 102 (Mar 2025), 56 (Feb 2025), 88 (Jan 2025), 58 (Dec 2024), 46 (Nov 2024), 45 (Oct 2024), 33 (Sep 2024), 63 (Aug 2024), 63 (Jul 2024), 53 (Jun 2024), 59 (May 2024)  
 Q: How have your organization's job postings changed this month compared to the average of the last three months? (Select one)  
 Source: Benchmark with Gartner



» Figure 3: Barriers To Building Robust Leadership Pipeline

Percentage of HR leaders



n = 80 (Apr 2025)

Q: What are the primary challenges your organization faces in the areas where building a robust leadership pipeline is most difficult? (Select all that apply)

Source: Benchmark with Gartner: Leadership Pipeline Pressures and US Tariffs Impact on Jobs (Apr 2025)

» Figure 4: Strategies to Combat Pipeline Pressures

Percentage of HR leaders



n = 83 (Apr 2025)

Q: Which of the following strategies is your organization currently implementing to address leadership pipeline pressures? (Select all that apply)

Source: Benchmark with Gartner: Leadership Pipeline Pressures and US Tariffs Impact on Jobs (Apr 2025)

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