

HR Leaders Quarterly

Fourth Quarter 2025

Redesigning Work
in the
AI ERA

Gartner®

Editor's Note

As CHROs look ahead to 2026, they face a daunting amount of change and uncertainty. CEOs are focused on growth and cost optimization, and they see AI as an essential part of the plan for reaching those goals. Yet AI is not yet showing the ROI business leaders and shareholders expect, which creates more pressure for results. HR is being asked to do more with less, employees are unsure about how AI will affect their jobs, and economic and social disruptions are compounding the impacts of this new technology.

AI will require fundamental shifts in how both HR and the broader organization operate. It is changing the work employees do and how they do it, and even creating entirely new ways of working. HR is integral to how organizations derive value from AI, but CHROs are often perceived as less AI-savvy than their C-suite peers. This journal, drawing on our latest research and insights featured at Gartner's 2025 HR Symposium/Xpo, highlights some of the critical issues CHROs need to pay attention to in the emerging AI era, including:

- What CHROs are prioritizing in 2026
- How CHROs can build influence and take the lead in their organization's AI journey
- How HR will evolve in the next five years
- The impact of AI on organizational design, teams and managers
- How to integrate AI into employee workflows
- The arrival of AI agents and what they mean for organizations

In today's challenging environment, these insights can help CHROs respond to the disruptions their organizations currently face and prepare for the even greater changes to come.

Jonah Shepp

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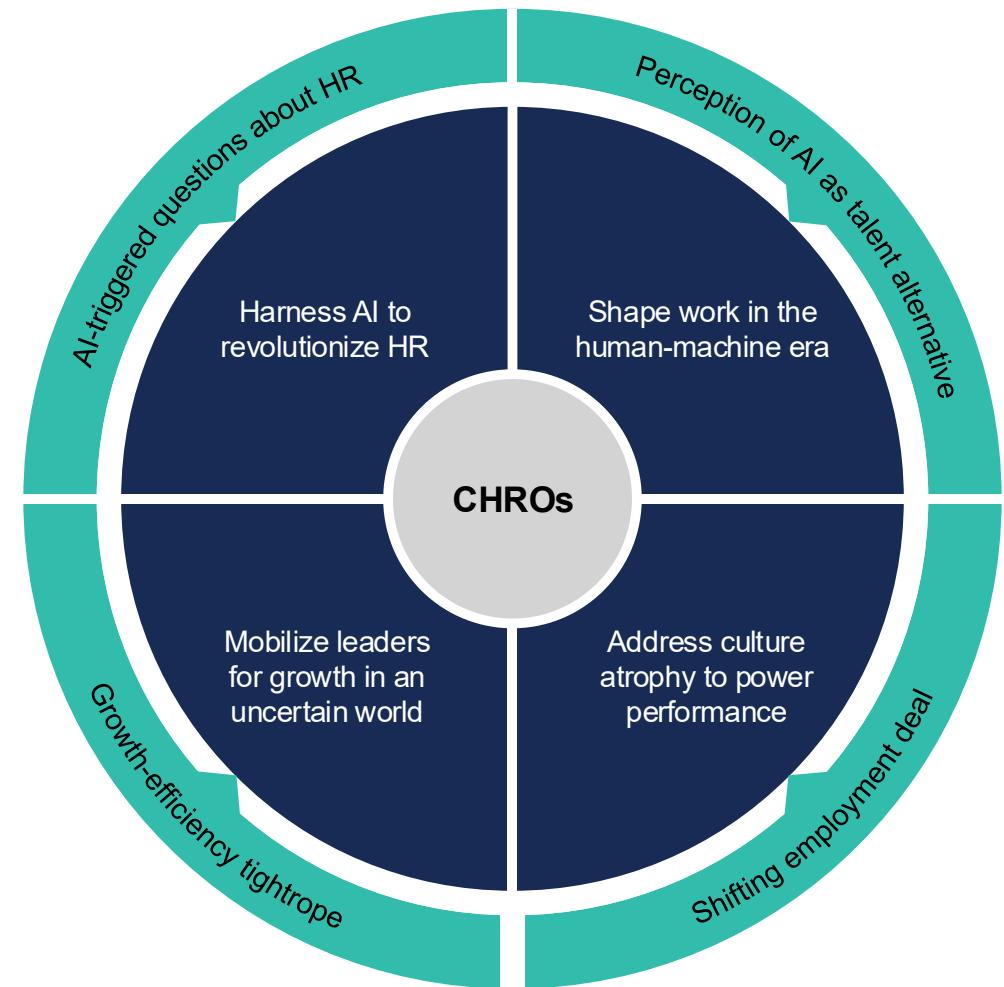


The **Top Priorities for CHROs** in **2026**

by Alex Chertoff, Jessie Knight, Mark Whittle, Peter Aykens and Zach Friedman

For success in 2026, CHROs must address AI's impact — on both the HR function and work itself — equip leaders to drive growth, and strengthen their organization's culture (see Figure 1).

» **Figure 1: Top Trends and Priorities for CHROs in 2026**



Source: Gartner

Gartner's top CHRO priorities for 2026 are:

- **Harness AI to revolutionize HR** — Develop an AI strategy for HR that supports business and technology objectives and guides an AI-infused operating model design.
- **Shape work in the human-machine era** — Build executive alignment on AI's implications for talent and the future of work.
- **Mobilize leaders for growth in an uncertain world** — Equip leaders to routinize change and drive successful change adoption in pursuit of smart growth.
- **Address culture atrophy to power performance** — Embed cultural norms for performance and productivity in employees' day-to-day processes and environment.

Gartner identified these trends and priorities through proprietary data gathered from surveys of global CHROs, CEOs, senior business executives, employees and HR leaders, alongside interviews with CHROs and expert analysts. Use these insights and recommendations to respond to pressing business and talent trends, inform your strategy for 2026, and take action now.

Priority 1: Harness AI to Revolutionize HR

CEOs are betting on AI to drive enterprise growth. CHROs must position the HR function to deliver on this imperative by driving efficiencies, equipping HR talent to leverage new tools and, ultimately, demonstrating ROI. However, AI experimentation in HR is outpacing a clearly defined strategy from CHROs. Furthermore, 59% of CHROs agree that limited digital skills prevent their function from evolving into an AI-first operation.¹

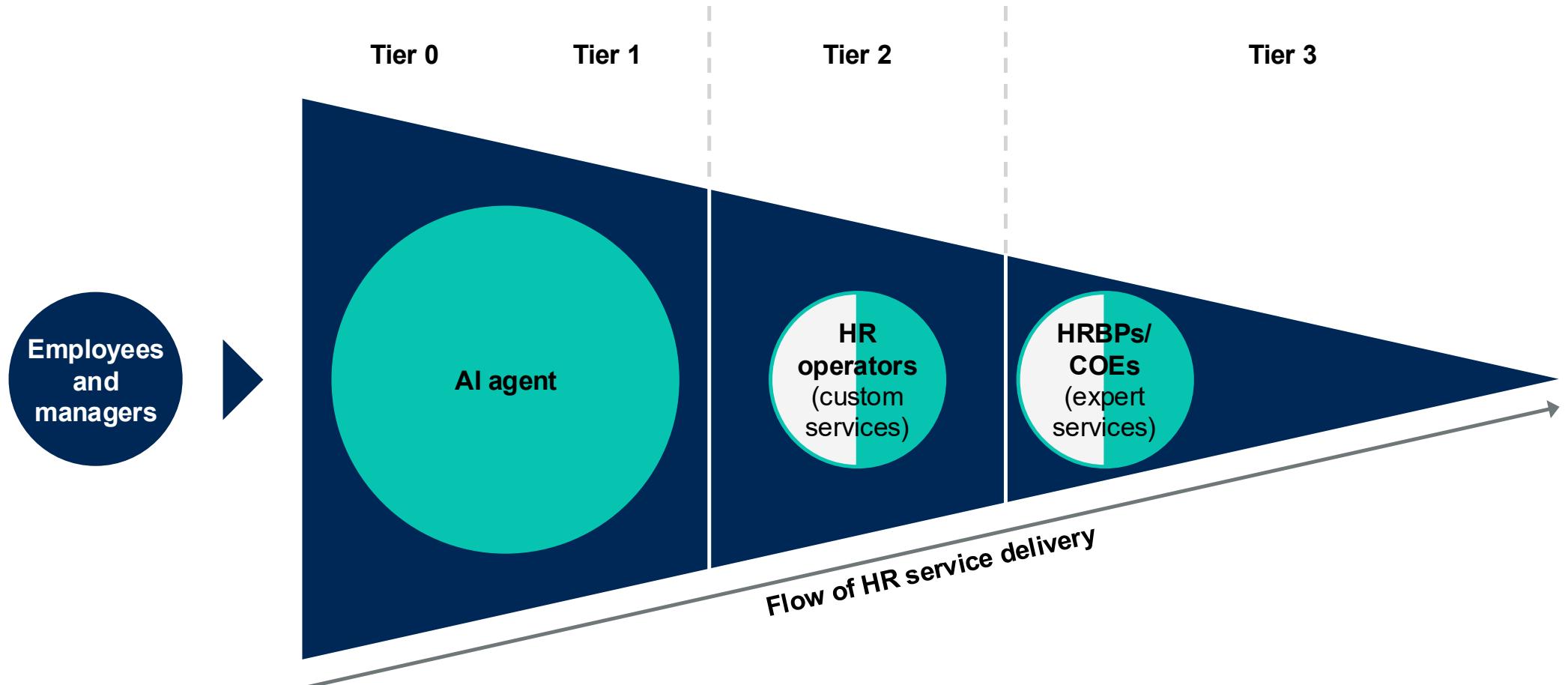
CHROs must outline a clear and compelling AI strategy for HR — or risk undermining HR's strategic relevance. This strategy involves a defined vision statement, a roadmap for embedding AI in the HR function and evolving the HR operating model, the identification of risks, and a plan to prepare HR for new ways of working.

Evolving HR's operating model with AI is key for CHROs to drive demonstrable efficiencies for the enterprise. Gartner's AI-infused HR operating model offers CHROs a path forward to harness AI and revolutionize HR. In the service delivery portion of this model, AI agents are positioned to perform most of HR operations' administrative work, referred to as Tier 0 and Tier 1 activities (see Figure 2). The organization designs HR business partner (HRBP) agents to be most managers' first point of contact. And real-time employee data and AI augmentation enable centers of excellence (COEs) to design hyperpersonalized HR products.

Gartner's AI-infused HR operating model demands new ways of working for HR talent, new roles and new mindsets. While this aspirational model requires a long-term implementation journey with IT, technology vendors and other functions, CHROs should first identify the principles most critical to their vision for an evolved HR operating model and then formalize an AI strategy for HR.

» **Figure 2: Tiered HR Service Delivery Model – Future State**

○ Humans ● AI agents/other AI technologies



Source: Gartner

Priority 2: Shape Work in the Human-Machine Era

Most CHROs are uncertain about how to prepare for AI's effect on the broader organization. Sixty-three percent of CHROs agree they are not prepared to handle the skills implications of an agentic AI workforce, and 54% agree they do not know how to prepare the enterprise-wide workforce for AI transformation.¹

CHROs must prepare for the effect of AI on work, not just the workforce. In the human-machine era, two key (but uncertain) drivers will shape future organizations and jobs:

1. How humans choose to implement or use AI in the flow of work — This driver includes both top-down executive decisions and bottom-up employee decisions. We may want AI to do the work. Or, we may want to work with AI to do the work.

2. How much work is transformed — We have seen how many waves of technological innovation have minimal effect on how professions are defined or on what skills and knowledge people need to do their jobs. The tools change, but the work remains pretty much the same. Will work remain the same, but with AI? Or will it end up being transformed?

CHROs belong at the center of efforts to reshape work for the AI era. CHROs must lead scenario planning exercises to close C-suite blind spots regarding AI's effect on work and the workforce and prepare the enterprise for an uncertain future. Overcoming any hesitations about their digital savviness, CHROs should play an active role on AI steering committees and other cross-functional efforts influencing the future of work at their organization.

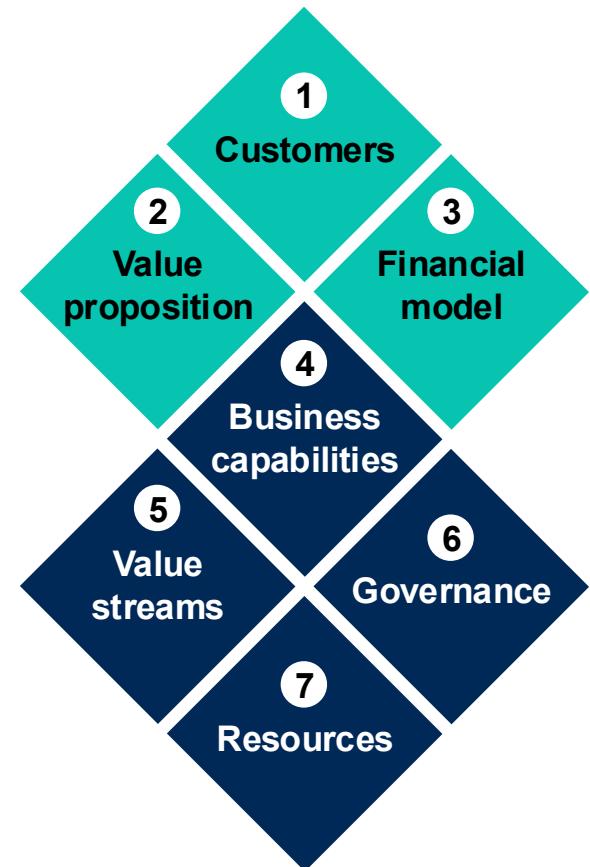


Executive Alignment for AI Transformation

Clifford Chance developed a comprehensive approach to evaluating and tracking AI's effect on its business and operating models, value metrics, and the workforce. The CHRO played a leading role on its AI and innovation board, establishing an AI vision, surfacing critical workforce challenges and co-leading transformation efforts. Clifford Chance's executive team charted the shockwaves AI presented to their enterprise, including its effect on employee experience, and established a cross-functional approach to address these shocks (see Figure 3).

» **Figure 3: CIO-CxO Conversation Prompts to Chart the Shockwaves of AI on the Enterprise**
 Illustrative

■ Business model ■ Enterprise operating model



- 1 How will AI impact our customer base?
- 2 How will AI affect our value proposition and brand?
- 3 How will AI affect our pricing or revenue models?
- 4 What core business capabilities will remain or change because of AI?
- 5 How will AI transform existing workflows and value streams that support business capabilities?
- 6 What guardrails do we need for ethical AI use?
- 7 How does AI impact our workforce strategy?

Source: Adapted from Clifford Chance

Priority 3: Mobilize Leaders for Growth in an Uncertain World

Change in the workplace is constant and increasingly complex, often driven by factors outside the organization's control. CHROs must prepare leaders to drive growth through healthy change adoption, but face an uphill battle: Two in three CHROs agree that employees are exhausted from constant change, while 64% agree that their leaders and managers lack the mindset to lead change effectively.¹

Gartner research finds that in today's environment, leaders who **routinize**, not inspire, change are most likely to drive healthy change adoption. To help leaders routinize change, HR must take three actions:

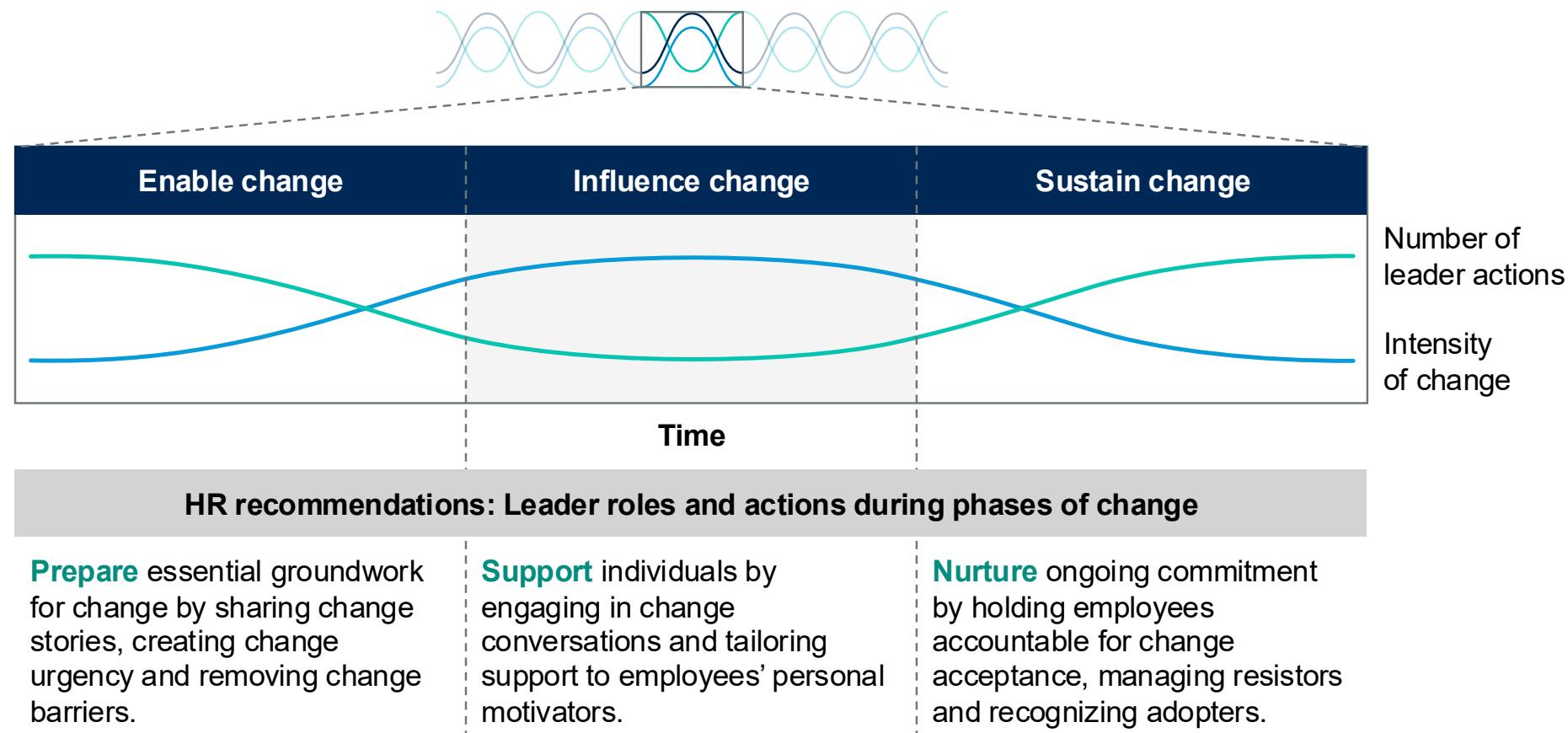
- Clarify leaders' role in change.
- Equip leaders with emotion regulation tools.
- Teach leaders to build change reflexes.

Not all leaders can or should be mobilized for growth in this way. For leaders who are underperforming or unwilling to adapt their leadership approach to today's change-heavy context, CHROs should consider bold actions — such as retraining, reassigning, or even removing leaders — to strengthen their leadership bench.

Develop Leaders to Guide Employees Through Change

Fulton Bank equipped its leaders for success in today's change-heavy environment. CHROs and their teams often struggle to develop leaders who can guide employees through times of intense change. HR leaders at Fulton Bank guide the actions leaders should take and the roles they should play (during times of both low- and high-intensity change) to enable, influence and sustain change in employees (see Figure 4). The "phases of change" framework enables leaders to see change as part of their daily responsibilities, which allows them to better guide employees through it. This approach helps mobilize leaders for growth during periods of uncertainty, cost-optimization and transformation.

» **Figure 4: Fulton Bank's "Phases of Change" Framework**
Illustrative



Source: Adapted from Fulton Bank

Priority 4: Address Culture Atrophy to Power Performance

Culture is increasingly viewed as a barrier to, not an enabler of, performance. CEOs cite culture as one of their top challenges for leading and growing the organization, while less than half of CHROs say their culture drives employee performance in today's environment.^{1,2} In response, organizations have dialed back employee flexibility, implementing RTO mandates and tightening investments in people and culture development. In this environment, employees do not feel well-positioned: Only 43% of employees believe that their culture helps them succeed.³

To drive employee performance amid changing expectations, CHROs must embed relevant values and norms in employees' day-to-day processes and environment. Employees must understand the values that drive the organization's culture, know the behaviors that align with those values and see those values reflected in their daily processes. Organizations with embedded cultures can experience up to a 34% increase in employee performance.⁴



Case in Point SugarCRM



“Just Fix It” — Employee-Powered Productivity

SugarCRM's CHRO sought to embed a focus on productivity at all levels of the organization. To do so, SugarCRM took the following approach:

- Identify the behaviors of employees who successfully drive key organizational outcomes to show how to achieve productivity in a way that will resonate with employees.
- Socialize and adapt the behaviors that drive productivity with employees to give them ownership over how the organization communicates productivity and to create a shared understanding of productivity.
- Empower employees to autonomously identify productivity barriers and propose potential solutions.

This approach embedded a productivity-oriented culture, clarifying core values and aligned behaviors for employees and ensuring they were reflected in daily processes.

Gartner Virtual Events

¹ **2026 Gartner HR Priorities Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand senior HR leader perspectives on their priorities and challenges for the coming 12-18 months. The survey was conducted online from 6 June 2025 through 18 July 2025 and contains responses from 900 HR leaders with representation from various regions and industries.

² **1H25 Update to the 2025 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey.** This survey was fielded between 20 March and 7 April 2025. In total, 105 actively employed CEOs and other senior executive business leaders qualified and participated. All respondents were screened for active employment in organizations greater than \$50M in annual revenue. The sample mix by role was CEOs (n = 80); CFOs (n = 10); COOs or other C-level executives (n = 8); and chairs, presidents, board directors (n = 7). The sample mix by location was North America (n = 43), Europe (n = 33), Asia/Pacific (n = 22), Latin America (n = 4) and the Middle East (n = 3). The sample mix by size was \$50 million to less than \$250 million (n = 7), \$250 million to less than \$1 billion (n = 31), \$1 billion to less than \$10 billion (n = 43) and \$10 billion or more (n = 24).

³ **2025 Gartner Organizational Culture Employee Survey.** This survey was conducted to explore employees' perceptions of their organizational culture and collaboration practices at work. The research was conducted online from 18 March through 26 April 2025 among 3,199 employees with representation from various geographies, industries, and functions.

⁴ **2023 Gartner State of Employee Experience Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand employee preferences on topics like EVP, employee perceptions & expectations, hybrid work policies & return to office status, talent outcomes and culture. The research was conducted online from 5 October through 18 November 2023 and contains responses from 3,512 employees with representation from various regions, industries, and functions. Disclaimer: The results of surveys do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

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

[The Culture Strategy Reset: How to Help Your Culture Evolve and Stay Relevant](#)

[CHROs, Reinvent Change Leadership for Organizational Success](#)

[CHROs, Transform How Work Gets Done In The AI Era](#)

[Improve CHRO Digital Effectiveness to Drive AI Transformation](#)

[The Top CHRO Priorities for 2026](#)



HR's Role in Getting Value From AI

by Caitlyn McDonough, Katie Sutherland, Harsh Kundulli, Rebecca Lane and Ned Feuer

To ensure their organization's AI investments pay off, CHROs must lead the way in transforming how work gets done. This includes augmenting existing work, reengineering roles and processes, and inventing new, AI-based ways of working.

CEOs are striving for growth at the lowest possible cost. They're working with CFOs to set aggressive goals that require increasing revenue and productivity without adding any headcount.^{1,2} Organizations are looking to AI to achieve these ambitious goals. Yet, only one in five AI initiatives achieves measurable ROI, and just one in 50 delivers disruptive value.³

To achieve value from AI, organizations must redesign how work gets done. Gartner data shows that business units that redesign how work gets done, rather than just deploy AI and encourage employees to use it, are twice as likely to exceed revenue goals.⁴ Organizations are changing work in three key ways:

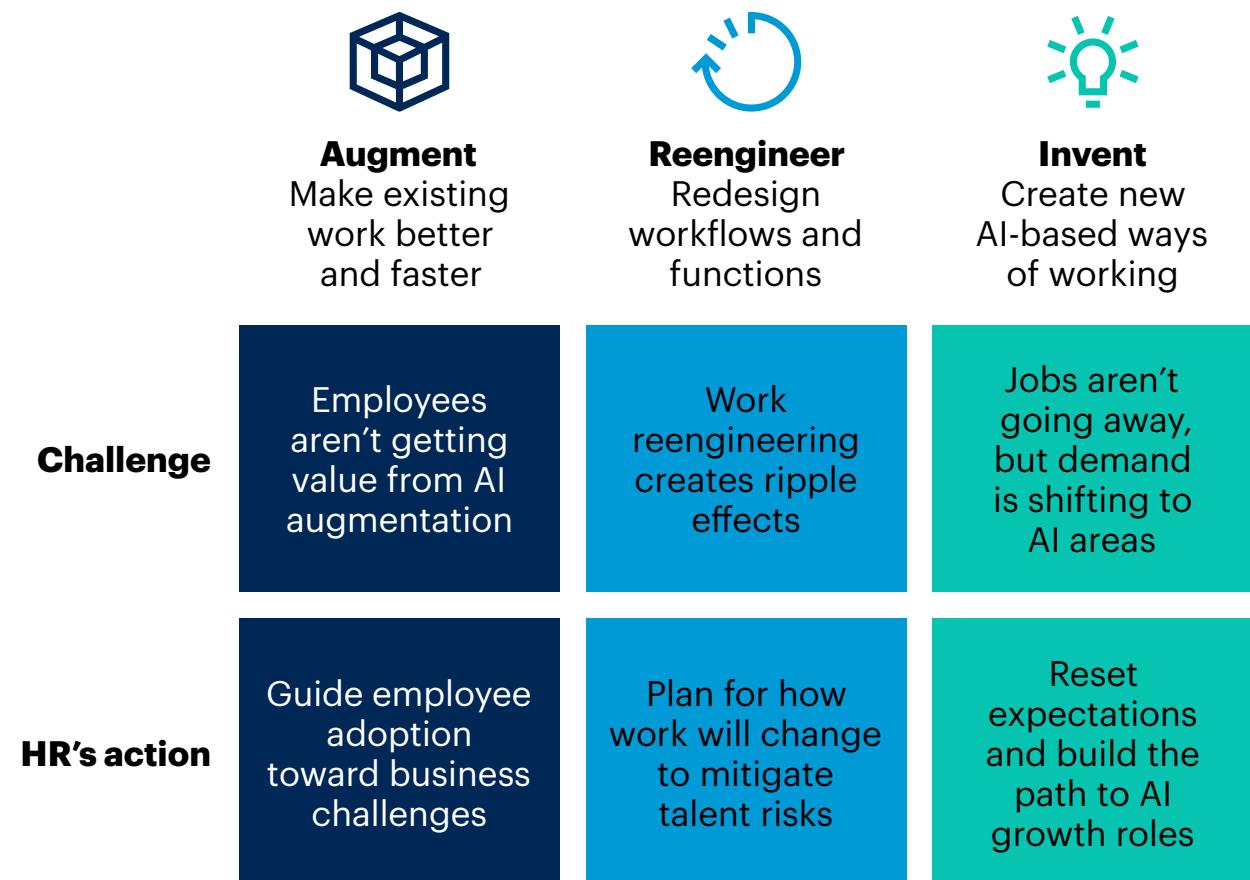
- **Augmenting** — Organizations are augmenting existing work to make it faster and more accurate. For example, healthcare organization Kaiser Permanente uses ambient AI listening to transcribe patient-clinician conversations during office visits and create more accurate notes.⁵

- **Reengineering** — Organizations are reengineering entire workflows and functions to make work more efficient with AI. For example, a financial services organization might use AI to detect and investigate fraud. As a result, it now has a smaller, more senior fraud detection team to review the AI output.

- **Inventing** — Organizations are inventing entirely new, AI-based ways of working that dramatically improve scale and disrupt markets. For example, over the next few years, salespeople will have AI agents working alongside them to prioritize leads, conduct research and analysis, and nurture prospects independently.⁶

Every organization's unique strategy determines its portfolio of work changes based on how much cost and risk the organization can afford to take on and how much return it needs to generate. Understand your organization's work redesign portfolio because each type of work change has distinct barriers to success that HR leaders are uniquely positioned to solve (see Figure 1).

» **Figure 1: How Work Is Changing Across Organizations**



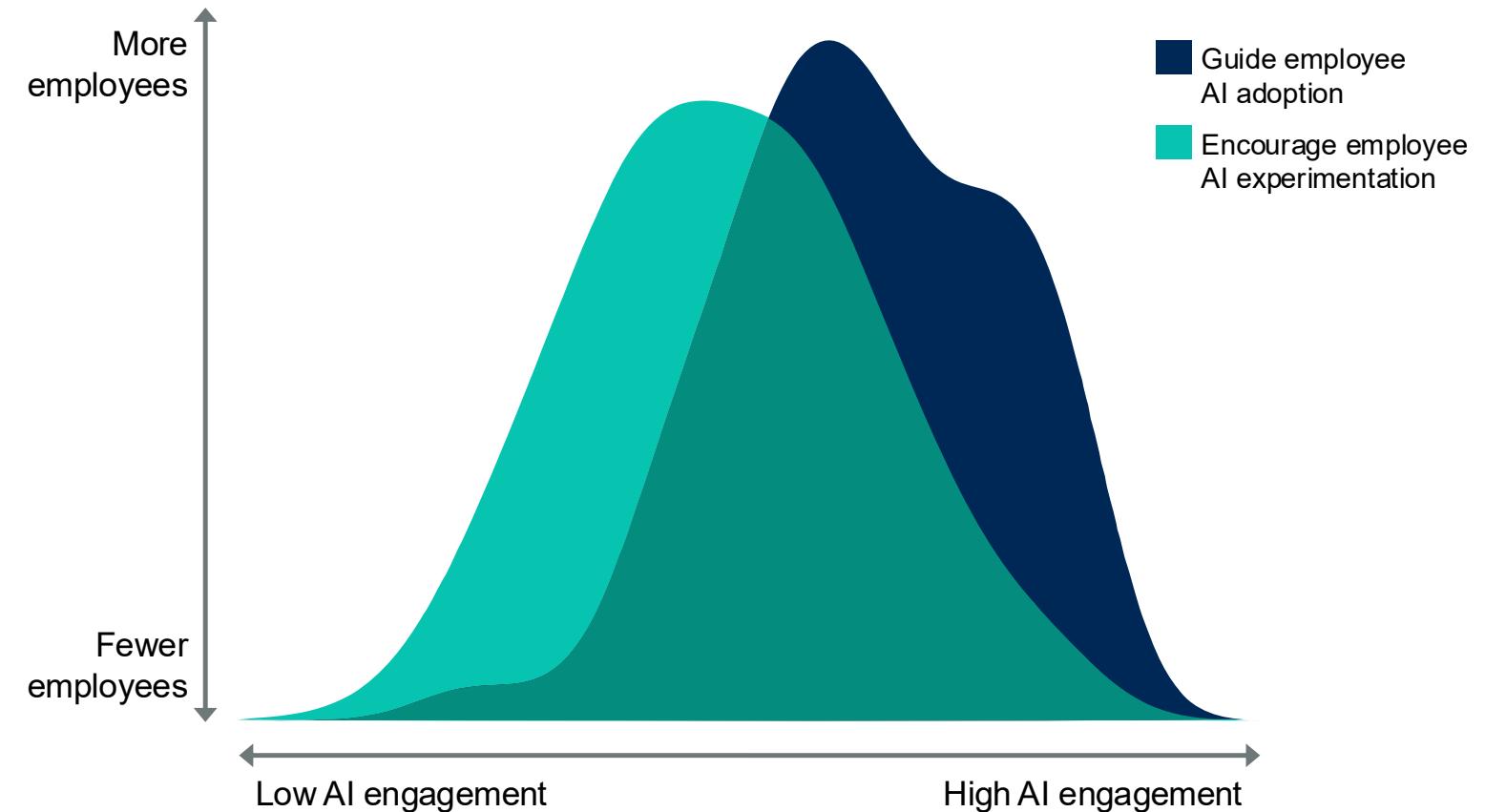
Augment: Guide AI Adoption Toward Business Challenges

Ninety percent of organizations have rolled out AI and are encouraging employees to experiment with it.⁷ Many mainstream media articles assert that employees are resisting AI, but Gartner data shows this is not the case.

We analyzed how employees engage with AI — defined as their mindset toward AI, how often they use it and how much value they get from it. At the typical organization, only 3% of employees are AI detractors who actively avoid AI. Similarly, only 3% are AI superstars who consistently get value from it. Most employees are stuck in the middle.⁸ They experiment with it, but haven't figured out how to get real value despite their efforts.

The key to shifting employees from AI users to AI value creators is to guide them to the highest potential opportunities. CHROs must partner with IT to help employees identify how to adopt AI in their workflows to solve business challenges. This strategy includes HR and IT working together to create role-specific AI guidelines or co-leading AI workflow workshops. With guidance, the AI engagement curve shifts rightward, turning 15% of employees into AI superstars (see Figure 2).⁷

» **Figure 2: Distribution of Employee AI Engagement**



n = 3,029

Source: 2025 Gartner HR Symposium Employee Survey

Note: AI engagement is a measure of an employee's mindset toward AI, how often they use it at work, and how much value they gain from it.

Reengineer: Plan for the Work, Not Just the Workforce

Work reengineering is happening opportunistically in pockets in many organizations as AI matures, without an enterprise-wide strategy or direct HR involvement. Such uncoordinated redesigns often create lasting ripple effects, such as the elimination of entry-level roles, which deplete the long-term talent pipeline. HR must help leaders better plan for the ways work will change and anticipate talent implications as AI takes on more work.

CHROs should work with executives to establish principles that guide redesign efforts. For example, will the organization offshore work that can eventually be automated? CHROs should also evolve workforce planning to provide greater insight into how work will change

throughout the organization. For example, workforce planning should reveal the top two to three redesigns needed for every function to provide insight into the future organizational design. Once the top changes are identified, HR should concentrate on supporting the work reengineering projects with the greatest business impact and talent implications.

Invent: Build a Path for Employees to Move Into AI Growth Areas

Agentic AI promises to transform who does work and how it gets done. Gartner predicts that by 2028, at least 15% of day-to-day work decisions will be made autonomously through agentic AI.⁹ However, HR must balance leader expectations with the reality that AI is not yet ready to replace

most jobs. In the first half of 2025, less than 1% of all job cuts were the direct result of AI productivity gains. To avoid premature layoffs, CHROs must work with their C-suite peers to reset leader expectations on AI's maturity and establish ways to sense when AI is ready to take on a larger share of work.

Jobs are not going away in the short term, but job demand is already shifting toward AI growth areas. There isn't enough talent in the marketplace with the skills to fill these jobs. HR's immediate role in inventing new ways of working is to help more employees transition into growth areas. Employees need a clear pathway to transition into these roles. Otherwise, the organization won't have the talent it needs to invent new ways of working.

Measure: The Impact of Work Transformation

To measure their success, CHROs should track four key metrics as they seek to transform the way work gets done at their organizations:

- **Perceived value from AI** — Percentage of employees reporting AI improves work quality and speed.
- **Talent complications from organizational redesign**
 - Number of unforeseen talent issues or ripple effects that occur following a work redesign project (e.g., empty talent pipeline, skills atrophy).
- **Talent pipeline health** — Strength of the talent pipeline in functions redesigned as a result of AI.
- **Internal mobility** — Number of internal moves from declining roles into AI-growth-related areas.

By tracking these key dimensions of work transformation, CHROs can validate their organization's AI progress and address unforeseen challenges before they evolve into major problems.

¹ **3Q25 Update Gartner CEO & 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. This survey was fielded between 20 March and 30 June 2025. Half of the survey sample was collected from 20 March through 7 April 2025, and half was collected in June 2025. In total, 217 actively employed CEOs and other senior executive business leaders qualified and participated. All respondents were screened for active employment in organizations greater than \$50M in annual revenue. The sample mix by role was CEOs (n = 172); CFOs (n = 20); COOs or other C-level executives (n = 14); and chairs, presidents, board directors (n = 11). The sample mix by location was North America (n = 86), Europe (n = 65), Asia/Pacific (n = 54), Latin America (n = 6) and the Middle East (n = 6). The sample mix by size was \$50 million to less than \$250 million (n = 18), \$250 million to less than \$1 billion (n = 49), \$1 billion to less than \$10 billion (n = 83) and \$10 billion or more (n = 67).

² **2025 Gartner CFO Planning Assumptions Survey.** This survey sought to provide CFOs and FP&A leaders guidance on critical assumptions for building annual operating budgets going into 2026. It covered the assumptions organizations are making for revenue growth, cost of goods sold, overhead function budget changes, profitability, compensation, and investment prioritization. The survey was conducted from August through September 2025 among 142 CFOs and senior finance leaders across multiple industries and geographies. Survey respondents were required to be full-time finance employees to be included in this research.

³ Gartner analysis based on two surveys:

• **2025 Gartner AI Survey — CIO and Technology Leader View.** This survey was conducted to understand CIOs' and technology leaders' views on the enterprise's status in their AI journey, investment and technology priorities for 2025. It also captured their sentiments toward their enterprises' response to and effectiveness in dealing with disruptions. The survey was conducted online in May 2025 among CIOs (n = 224) and other technology leaders (n = 282). The total sample was 506 respondents, with representation from North America (n = 211), Europe (n = 141), Oceania (n = 54), Asia (n = 41), the Middle East (n = 30) and Latin America (n = 29) across all industry sectors.

• **2024 Gartner AI Survey — CIO and Technology Leader View.** This survey was conducted to capture CIOs' and technology leaders' sentiment toward AI and to better understand what organizations are doing as a result of recent changes and announcements about AI. The survey was conducted online in June and July 2024 among CIOs (n = 314) and other technology leaders (n = 394). The total sample was 708 respondents, with representation from North America (n = 329), EMEA (n = 253), Asia/Pacific (n = 89) and Oceania (n = 37) and across all industry sectors.

⁴ **2025 Gartner Growth-Ready Workforce Manager Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand the manager's perspective on team adoption and use of AI tools, as well as the effectiveness of leveraging technology on employee contributions. The research was conducted online from 24 June to 28 July 2025 by 1,973 managers from different geographies and regions.

⁵ Lessons Learned From the Kaiser Permanente Rollout of Ambient AI Scribes, Kaiser Permanente.

⁶ 19 Artificial Intelligence Use Cases for B2B Sales

⁷ **2025 Gartner HR Symposium HR Leader Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand approaches and challenges related to AI implementation in the workforce, redesigning roles and teams, and the future of work. The research was conducted online from July 21 through August 26 2025 among 114 HR leaders with representation from various geographies, industries, and functions.

⁸ **2025 Gartner HR Symposium Employee Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand employees' experience using artificial intelligence at work, how it's affecting their jobs, and their perceptions of culture, leadership and change at their respective organizations. The survey also explores employees' current jobs, the technology they use in their work, and changes they are experiencing at work. The research was conducted online throughout July 2025 among 3,029 employees from different geographies, industries, and functions. The survey was designed and developed by Gartner's HR practice research team.

⁹ Top Strategic Technology Trends for 2025: Agentic AI

Disclaimer: Results of surveys do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

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Embrace change: Build adaptability and resilience.



Foster AI leadership: Develop talent for lasting success.



Boost productivity: Empower managers and teams.



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3 Ways for CHROs to Build Strategic Influence in the AI Era

by David Bobo, Emi Chiba, Chantal Steen, Ben Cook, Lee-Anne Vallée and Mary Mesaglio

As organizations redesign work to drive growth, control costs and get the most value from their AI investments, CHROs must take an active role in the creation and evolution of the business strategy. To play that role effectively, they need to build credibility as strategic partners in areas within their traditional domain and outside of their comfort zones. CHROs must also prepare to lead the organization's response to brand-new challenges that emerge as AI becomes more deeply embedded in employee workflows.

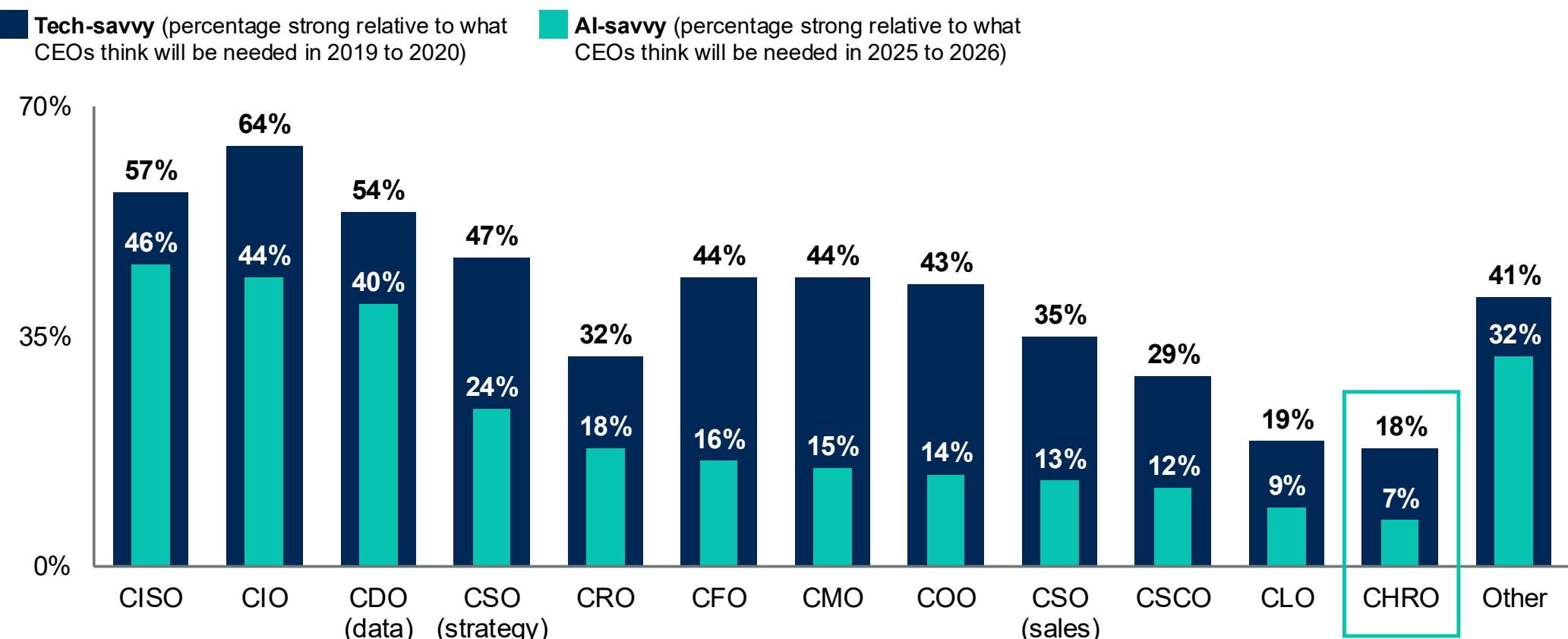
This article explores three opportunities for CHROs to build credibility and assert strategic leadership as their organizations plan, execute and scale their AI investments:

- **Become digitally effective CHROs** who lead, pursue and deliver technology within HR and support delivery elsewhere within the organization.
- **Build AI literacy throughout the organization**, segmenting training to fit the needs of executives, managers and employees.
- **Manage the health of human-AI relationships** and the behavioral byproducts of AI.

Become a Digitally Effective CHRO

AI adoption is a key factor in the transformations organizations are undergoing today. To lead organizational change in the age of AI, CHROs must become digitally effective — and CEOs and other C-suite leaders must perceive them as such. Currently, however, CEOs perceive CHROs as the least tech- and AI-savvy members of the C-suite (see Figure 1), and only 15% of CHROs are actively shaping AI and digital transformation strategies.¹

» **Figure 1: CEO Perceptions of C-Suite Leaders' Tech and AI Savviness**



n varies, wave 2 survey responses only, excluding "we don't have this role"

Q. How "AI savvy" is each of your executive team members — relative to what you think will be needed in 2025 to 2026?

Source: 2025 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey

To build their digital effectiveness, CHROs should focus on:

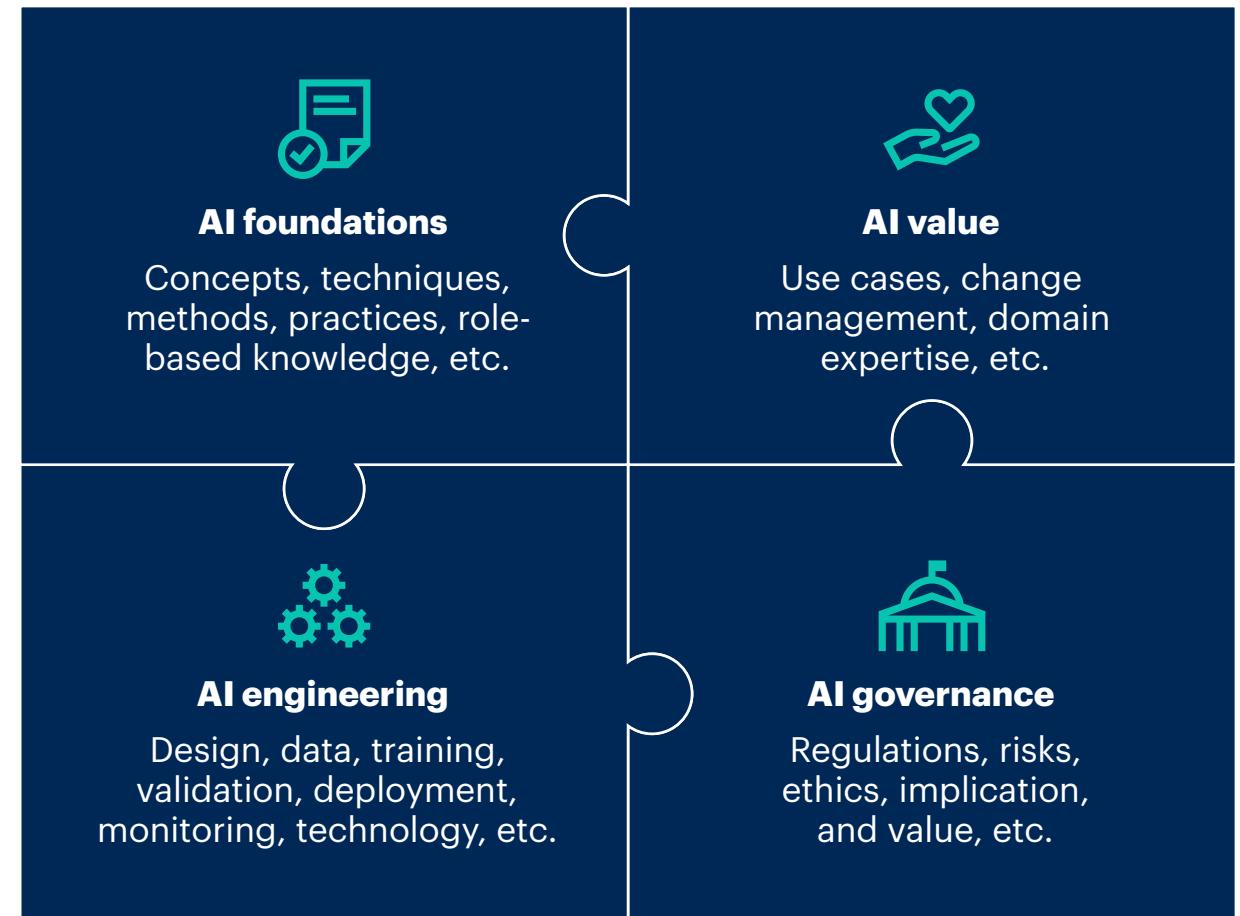
- **Awareness** — Explore, understand and learn about digital technologies and their impact. CHROs can cultivate awareness by adopting a growth mindset, leveraging connections and integrating hands-on experience into their routine.
- **Change outlook** — Assess and manage the change and risk associated with technology decisions. CHROs can shape their change outlook by adopting change-oriented mindsets and behaviors, leveraging effective value statements to secure a budget for innovation and co-creating change with employees.
- **Influence** — Use influence to grow the organization's and the HR function's digital ambition and improve digital strategy and execution. CHROs can amplify their influence by building out their digital brand, demonstrating digital presence and partnering with their C-suite peers (particularly the CIO) on highly visible digital initiatives.

CHROs can start on this journey by focusing on what they can control directly: creating a vision and strategy for AI in HR and planning an AI-infused HR operating model. Those who have built a robust and effective AI strategy for the HR function will have greater credibility to support and influence AI delivery throughout the organization.

Build AI Literacy Throughout the Organization

AI literacy is the ability to effectively and responsibly use AI in business and societal contexts. This ability includes role-based knowledge about AI's implications and risks, as well as its resulting values and outcomes. It includes understanding the fundamental principles of AI, technology and applications, analytical and algorithmic methods, data and knowledge sources, and ethical considerations (see Figure 2).

» **Figure 2: Gartner Definition of AI Literacy**



Source: Gartner

Currently, 55% of HR leaders say their organization offers training on AI skills, but these initiatives often fall short of expectations in improving the ROI on AI investments.² One-size-fits-all AI training is ineffective because use cases vary widely for the workforce. Organizations need a targeted approach that aligns training to specific roles.

Segment AI Training by Level

A more effective approach includes targeting AI training to the differentiated needs of executive leaders, managers and employees.

To support **executives** in becoming AI-ready, CHROs should consider leading efforts to:

- Make AI a shared executive responsibility, for example, by creating a cross-functional AI council to align on AI strategy and share best practices.
- Educate executives on the fundamentals of AI implementation, emphasizing the costs and value potential of various AI use cases at the organization.

- Understand AI's effect on the operating model and anchor AI decisions on how it will affect your customers, pricing, business capabilities and workflows.

For **managers**, the challenge rests in preparing them to address and communicate AI change. To support managers in leading the AI transformation:

- Identify their pain points, including what they are being asked to do with AI, their goals, their frustrations and what support they need to succeed.
- Coach managers on articulating AI value stories that focus on a specific, real-world improvement AI has delivered, link the impact to business objectives and back up the narrative with evidence.
- Equip managers to navigate emotional resistance to AI change. Resources can include active listening exercises to practice listening and responding to employee anxieties with empathy, conversation guides for difficult conversations and peer support from other managers.

Employees need guidance in seeing the relevance of AI in their jobs. Less than 50% of employees know where AI can be used to improve their work.³ To help employees identify AI use cases:

- Focus on work friction. Where can AI help eliminate bottlenecks, check-the-box tasks, and other sources of tension and inefficiency in employees' daily workflows?
- Facilitate rapid problem solving by prioritizing iteration and broad experimentation over perfection, and by implementing fail-safes to help employees jump hurdles.
- Help employees redeploy the time AI frees up for them in ways that support their productivity, career growth, well-being or community engagement.

A segmented approach to AI literacy will help prepare the organization to adopt and scale AI effectively and in alignment with critical business goals. As AI becomes more deeply integrated into the business, the next challenge for CHROs will be ensuring employees' AI use is both productive and healthy.

Establish Healthy Human-AI Relationships

The CHRO's role in the organization's AI journey is essential because AI represents more than just a technical change. AI requires fundamentally redesigning how work gets done and creates a new kind of relationship between employees and the technology they use. This shift is another reason why CHROs must develop a deep understanding of how their organization plans to use AI: to anticipate the human-AI relationships that will inevitably emerge and their effects on the workforce.

As increasingly advanced forms of AI take on larger roles in the organization, the two-way conversations between these technologies and their users are

forging more intimate connections that can feel strikingly human. CHROs must pay attention to whether the resulting human-machine relationships are healthy, unhealthy or ambivalent. They also need to manage AI's behavioral byproducts — the ways humans change behavior as a result of the machine. However, many leaders aren't even tracking the behavioral outcomes, and those who are often don't know what to do with them.

Most organizations have not yet established who is responsible for managing these relationships and behavioral byproducts; in the absence of explicit ownership, that responsibility often falls to the CIO.

However, CHROs should be centrally involved in this work. Working with their CIOs, CHROs must ensure that the organization designs advanced AI solutions with the human-machine relationship in mind and considers how this technology is changing employee behavior. Paying attention to these often hidden factors can lead to faster, more productive AI adoption, improved ROI from AI investments and a better employee experience.

Conclusion: Use Influence to Lead Productive Change

CHROs are experts at managing change, and organizations today are scrambling to keep pace with constant, complex and layered changes in technology, society and the business environment. To have strategic influence at a time of transformation, CHROs need a keen understanding of the business context, the organization's strategic priorities and the new technological tools it uses to reach its goals. They must teach the business what works, by demonstrating effective strategies within the HR function and by influencing leaders' thinking throughout

the organization. In addition, CHROs must guide AI adoption to encourage healthy human-AI relationships and avoid costly unintended consequences.

Organizations are transforming rapidly, with or without the CHRO's influence. CHROs who successfully establish and leverage their credibility as digitally effective, AI-savvy change leaders today will drive better outcomes for their organizations and their employees in the fast-approaching future.

¹ **2024 Gartner Q3 CHRO Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand CHROs' major priorities and challenges around employee experience, such as flexibility and resenteeism/quiet quitting, as well as capturing behaviors around HR tech. The research was conducted online from 12 August through 30 August 2024 and contains responses from 54 HR leaders representing various regions and industries.

² **2025 Gartner HR Symposium HR Leader Survey.** This was conducted to understand approaches and challenges related to AI implementation in the workforce, redesigning roles and teams, and the future of work. The research was conducted online from 21 July through 26 August 2025, among 114 HR leaders representing various geographies, industries, and functions.

³ **2025 Gartner Growth-Ready Workforce Employee Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand employee adoption and use of AI tools, as well as the effectiveness of leveraging technology on employee contributions. The research was conducted online from 3 June to 7 July 2025 among 2,986 employees from different geographies and regions. The survey was designed and developed by Gartner's HR practice research team. 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.

What HR Will Look Like in 2030

by Piers Hudson

By 2030, AI will transform organizations in ways that impact the fundamental role HR plays and the value it provides. In the coming years, CHROs will need to update their operating model to address new demands on HR and ensure the function's evolving role takes advantage of its core strengths.



CHROs may believe now is the perfect time to realize the benefits of past HR transformation efforts; new technologies finally promise to free HR staff from transactional activities and bring them new levels of workforce insight. Meanwhile, AI in the wider workforce creates many new needs for HR's support. However, many HR functions are themselves ill-equipped to play these new roles, or their internal stakeholders do not yet see the need for HR to play such roles around these technologies.

AI projects often fail to realize their promised benefits because organizations do not make the workflow or behavior changes needed to truly drive new types of work. HR staff and wider employees — lacking exposure to these new technologies and often fearing for their jobs — can approach these changes from the standpoint of trying to defend their current roles and ways of working. This means operational leaders either do not involve HR colleagues because they fear HR will slow them down, or they simply do not see the need to involve them (e.g., in aspects such as change management) until it is too late for HR to have a positive impact.

While the HR function would not likely disappear from most organizations, if HR is unable to clarify its future, provide more value-add, clarify its role in a more AI-infused workplace and build an operating model with the right capabilities for that evolving role, its relevance risks being diminished. HR risks becoming a smaller function, monitoring more AI-equipped HR processes for basic compliance as opposed to possibly being the key amplifier and shaper of AI's benefits.

The Imperative for HR to Be Future-Ready

New Demands Shift HR's Potential Roles

CHROs want to understand the future of HR, but 71% of CEOs do not think their organization's operating model is fit for an AI world.¹ We have a long way to go in understanding the future effects of AI on the workforce and in the HR function. In the short term, HR is likely to have more work, as it manages the impacts of AI-driven changes, such as restructuring or retraining staff.

HR itself will also be under pressure to realize efficiencies of new AI-enabled tools. But if HR focuses too much on just navigating the efficiencies and negative effects of AI on its own function, it will be ill-equipped to support the newly arising opportunities that will come as new technologies are embedded in the organization.

HR must look at where technology capabilities can simply automate the tasks it does today, but it must also look for where the technology could equip managers, or another function, to do tasks better than HR can in the future. CHROs should begin thinking of "citizen HR" — non-HR managers and employees leading traditional HR activities such as change management or role design throughout the organization — as an opportunity rather than a risk or threat. In determining which tasks to automate or relocate, CHROs should consider where AI-driven changes to the organization will place new demands on HR's services and whether their current HR staff can meet those demands.

Identifying Areas for HR to Have Differentiated Impact

As CHROs assess the organization's evolving needs, they will identify some activities HR is uniquely placed to support, even if these activities require some significant HR upskilling. Areas such as organizational and role redesign and long-term skills planning and assessment all highlight HR's ability to assess the multilevel and cross-functional effects of different workforce decisions.

HR's 2030 operating model needs to reflect these areas of differentiated impact, and maximize:

- **HR's human-behavioral expertise** — Operational managers may have an intuitive understanding, from their past experience, of the types of people who work in their field (their motivations, behaviors, critical-thinking skills), but as new demands arise and new generations enter the workforce, HR must add to this understanding with data on the wider labor market, knowledge of how different skills are developed and its view of shifting employee preferences.

- **HR's multilevel view** — HR is often the only function that can see how an issue affects different types of workers or to see "second order" impacts. For example, a process does not just affect immediate productivity, it also affects other aspects, such as well-being, a worker's sense of identity or workers' relationships with other teams.

- **HR's embedding of management frameworks** — HR often has to bring a framework or a set of parameters to a workforce issue and embed them to shape decisions that are made by others — usually managers and leaders.

CHROs should also keep these strengths in mind as they decide how deeply HR should get involved in different aspects of workforce change. As new issues arise, CHROs should look to identify whether HR can bring in additional human behavioral expertise. Consider whether the issues have a clear multiworker or multilayered impact and whether principles or frameworks must be established so leaders, managers and employees own decisions on an ongoing basis. Where

only one or two of these aspects are present, HR should either look to provide lighter-touch support, or negotiate with operational leaders or other functions, as to whether these are truly HR's issues to prioritize.

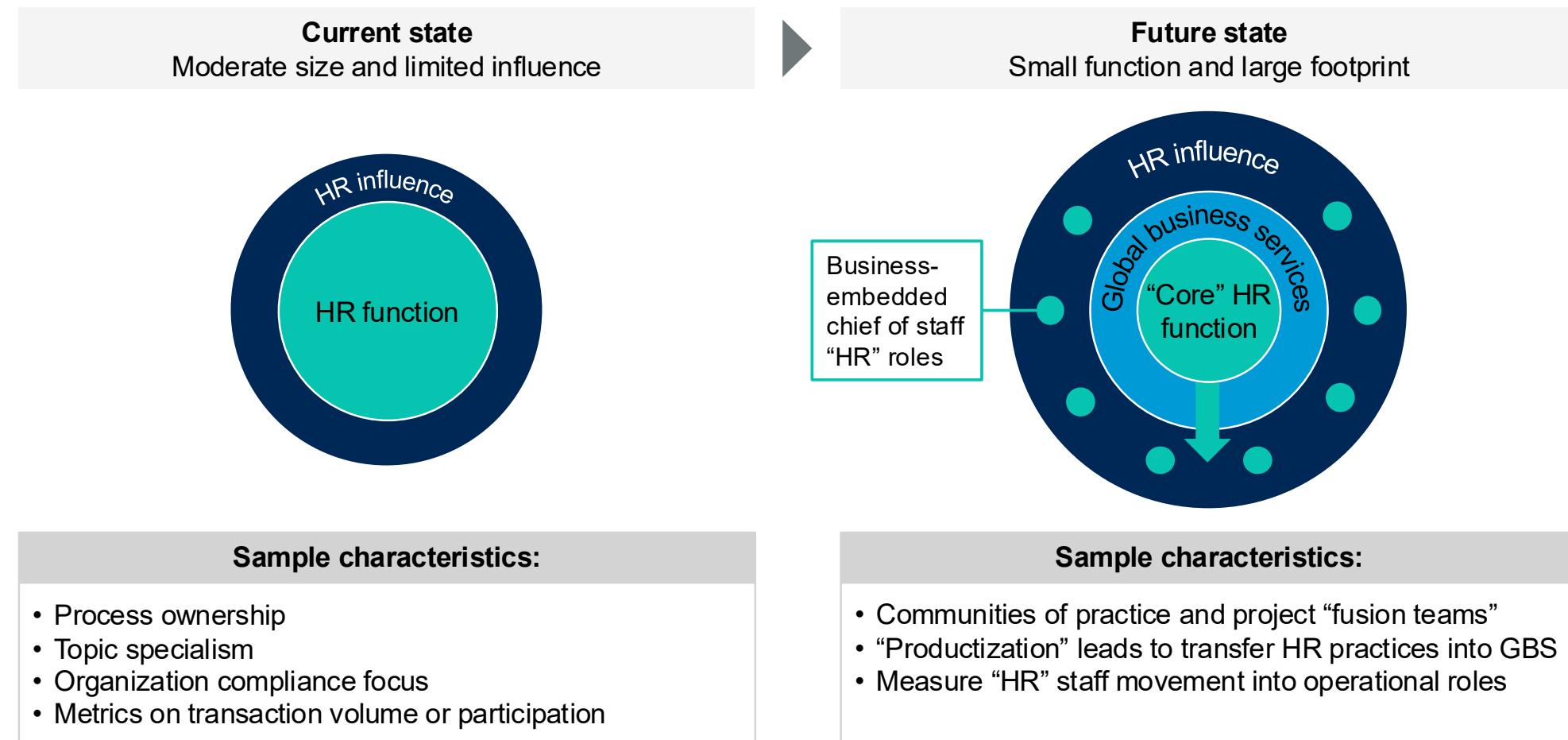
HR will continue to own some core processes, but as AI continues to codify the knowledge in these areas and either automate processes or distribute the knowledge directly to managers, HR must focus on deepening its expertise in new areas. HR may continue to own the parameters that are built into the AI systems that manage some of these core processes, but if HR continues to execute large parts of these processes, this approach will eat into its capacity to support newly arising areas. In this way, HR's operating model must also reflect a move toward deeper, more dynamic and distributed types of expertise.

Organizing to Deliver on HR's Core Strengths

Deeper, Dynamic and Distributed Expertise

Preparing for HR's future role in the organization will require a new mindset, oriented more toward HR as a *discipline* to be embedded in the organization rather than as a pure function owning specific processes or static types of knowledge. HR must be ready to take on new things, as well as be ready to pass things on to others or sunset them when no longer needed. This strategy may involve HR people moving off into either operational or other functional areas. This shift would leave HR as a smaller function, but one with new levels of influence, as illustrated in Figure 1.

» **Figure 1: HR's Shifting Functional and Influence Footprint**



Source: Gartner

Overall, we assume that HR will need deeper and more specialized expertise in people-management-related tasks or the needs of specific types of workers as the technology codifies more of the knowledge of traditional HR-supported tasks and makes this knowledge more accessible to managers. New technology allows for more management of people-related issues (e.g., workforce planning, L&D and recruiting) by business-embedded “chiefs of staff.” Just as IT has done with “business technologists,” HR will need to embrace the idea of “citizen HR,” in the operational parts of the enterprise, rather than trying to shut it down and control all traditional HR activities centrally.

This shift will partly come about through managers having more time to manage such tasks as AI takes some of their coordinating and technical roles, but

managers will also, philosophically, recognize the need to address people issues to drive the benefits of new technologies. Central HR will be able to manage a greater diversity of more personalized employment experiences using technology and can monitor more closely when these technologies may be creating friction between groups of workers.

Furthermore, HR shared services will pool more of its specialties toward genuine “global business services.” This will happen, in part, because of demand from end users for more integrated, seamless services. Managers and employees will not want breaks in the steps or systems between, say, a finance-led process and an HR-led process when onboarding a new employee.

Shaping a 2030 HR Operating Model Plan

As noted, changes to the HR operating model may lead to a smaller function, but one with greater influence, based on HR professionals seeing themselves as owners of the people management and enablement discipline, rather than always strictly “HR” professionals. To begin this journey toward a more influential function, we recommend CHROs:

- Assess the progress and potential of HR technologies in different HR subfunctions to either automate or democratize HR tasks, but do so alongside identifying where functions outside HR and internal customers have developed new capabilities. Identify where this technology frees up potential for current HR staff to play new roles and the level
- Identify the right areas of HR to pilot product management roles and responsibilities, focusing on areas with a clear business imperative, where this is a requirement for end-user behavior change (or adoption) and where current solutions are fragmented.

of change this would require, or where there must be discussions with other functions and leaders as to whether new, merged teams might be appropriate or a manager’s role descriptions should change.

- Dedicate a share of HR’s budget and time to innovative applications of AI technology — with a focus on the new types of work these could allow — but treat these projects primarily as learning opportunities for the HR staff involved. Look for opportunities to deliver these projects with partners outside HR, especially when other functions may be running ahead of HR in thinking about the people-related implications of AI tools.

- Identify areas of the business where there are already signs of “citizen HR” — particularly in relation to technology projects and implementations. Where are business units already doing work in areas such as change management, role redesign, workflow redesign and AI enablement? Gather these groups into communities of expertise or practice, based on opportunities for these leaders and managers to share good practices with one another. HR should also look for ways to recognize these individuals as a growing professional cadre within the business.
- Explore new measures to assess the effect of HR on the wider organization’s people management abilities, as well as an awareness of the people implications of new technology projects. Track the

growth of HR’s ideas getting leverage in the business through measures such as the level of movement of HR people into the business (e.g., recognizes HR experience’s criticality to wider success), the desirability among operational role holders of a move into HR and the share of technology projects recognizing the people-enablement aspects by appointing dedicated change management or enablement resources. Furthermore, assess the range of role or organizational redesigns that take place as a result of technology projects and the level of staff engagement in these changes as indicators of the need for “human” design for technology to have positive impacts.

¹ **2025 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 June 2024 through November 2024, with questions about the period from 2024 through 2026. One-quarter of the survey sample was collected from June through July 2024, and three-quarters was collected from October through November 2024. In total, 456 actively employed CEOs and other senior executive business leaders qualified and participated. The research was collected via 421 online surveys and 35 telephone interviews. The sample mix by role was CEOs (n = 303); CFOs (n = 95); COOs or other C-level executives (n = 39); and chairs, presidents or board directors (n = 19). The sample mix by location was North America (n = 194), Europe (n = 118), Asia/Pacific (n = 91), Latin America (n = 35), the Middle East (n = 15) and South Africa (n = 2). The sample mix by size was \$50 million to less than \$250 million (n = 32), \$250 million to less than \$1 billion (n = 122), \$1 billion to less than \$10 billion (n = 200) and \$10 billion or more (n = 102). 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.

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Prioritize Change Management for Successful HR Digital Transformation

CHROs need to prioritize change management during digital transformation planning to maximize ROI from HR technology investments



How AI Agents Will Reshape the Landscape of **HR Technology**

by Stephanie Clement

Agentic AI is receiving a lot of buzz among HR technology leaders and vendors, and with good reason: By 2030, Gartner predicts that 60% of HR work tasks will be completed through AI agents. However, this technology is still emerging, as are its precise use cases, impact and value in HR. The challenge for CHROs today is to understand what AI agents can do for HR and prepare to make the most of the opportunity they present.

What AI Agents Are

AI agents are autonomous or semiautonomous software entities that use AI techniques to perceive conditions, make decisions, take actions and achieve goals in their digital or physical environments.

AI agents are not digital workers. They are pieces of software that use a range of AI techniques, including GenAI and machine learning, to perform tasks. Agentic AI is differentiated from other types of AI by its autonomy: AI agents operate independently, with humans either partly or entirely out of the loop. They can perceive conditions, make decisions and act without being continuously managed by a human user.

Not all AI agents have the same level of agency. Their ability to perceive, decide and act varies depending on what they are designed to do:

- **Perception** — Can the tool figure out what you want? Can it make sense of the information and what's happening around it? At the lowest level, an agent might just notice something, like a missing form. But an advanced agent doesn't just notice. It understands why this perception matters and what could happen next, and it acts on what it notices (e.g., flagging and completing the missing form before moving to the next stage).
- **Decision** — Can the tool compare different options, solve problems and get better over time? A low-agency agent follows instructions. A strategic one weighs options, considers goals and makes smart trade-offs to arrive at the most logical decision.
- **Action** — Can it use other resources and change what it does depending on the situation? A low-agency tool simply automates tasks, but a more advanced agent can take initiative and change how it works, depending on what's happening.

Applying Agentic AI in HR

AI agents have a variety of potential use cases for HR, some of which are already available in existing HR technology, while others are on the cutting edge. Looking at three examples of low-agency, medium-agency and high-agency tools, we can see how agents can support, evolve and even transform how HR delivers value.

Low Agency: Employee Performance Review

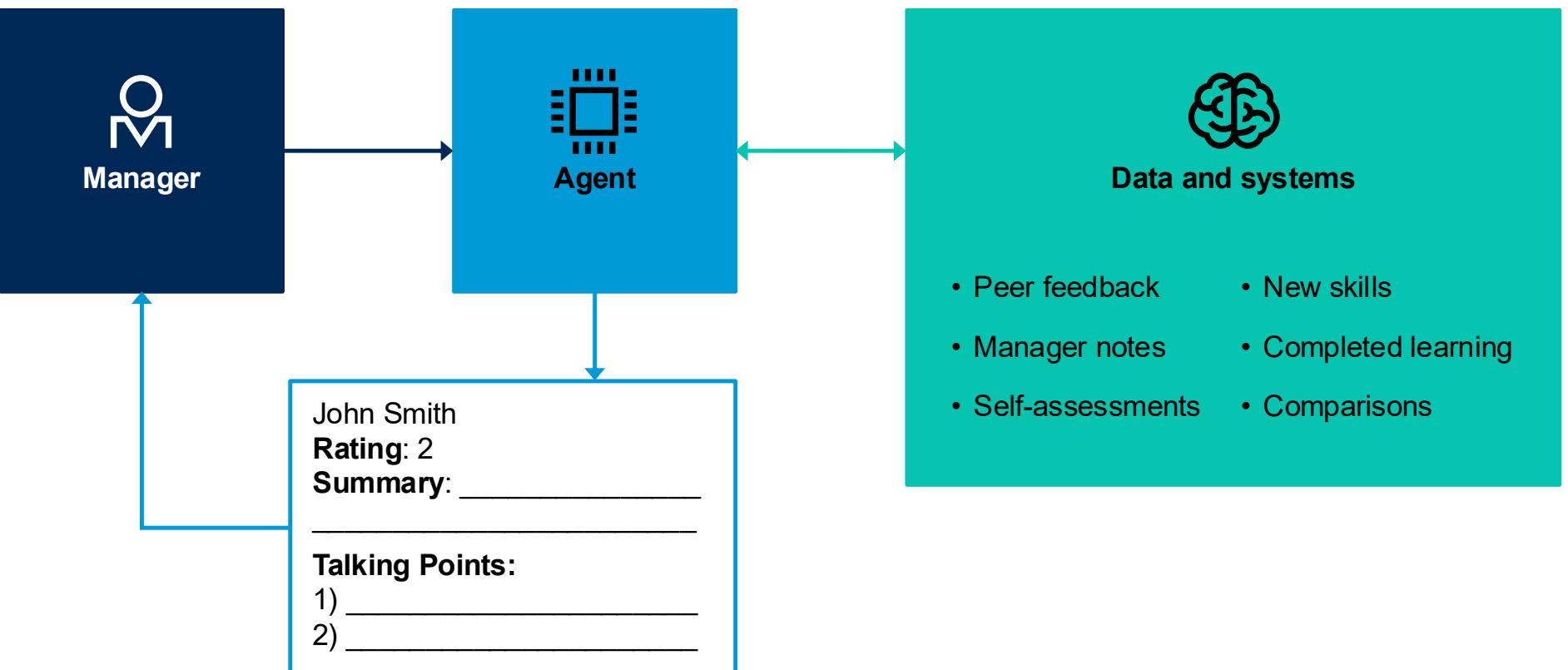
Performance management is a promising area for automation, as it takes up a great deal of managers' time and produces results that are uneven in quality and potentially biased. An AI agent can take a lot of the work out of writing performance reviews, quickly pulling data from multiple sources that would take managers hours to find

and compile manually. A manager prompts the agent to draft a performance review; the agent then gathers all of the relevant information, drafts a review, suggests a rating, and recommends talking points for the employee's performance conversation (see Figure 1).

This low-agency tool, which may already be available in your HR technology suite, is a relatively simple entry point into agentic AI. However, CHROs must still be careful when implementing it and be mindful of:

- **Data availability and quality** — An AI agent can only work well if it has the right data to work with and can access the system in which the data is stored.
- **Data privacy, security and compliance** — Sensitive employee information must be protected, not just for compliance, but to maintain trust.
- **Employee and manager adoption** — Agents must be developed in a way that encourages or even requires adoption to complete the task.

» **Figure 1: Employee Performance AI Agent in Action**



Source: Gartner

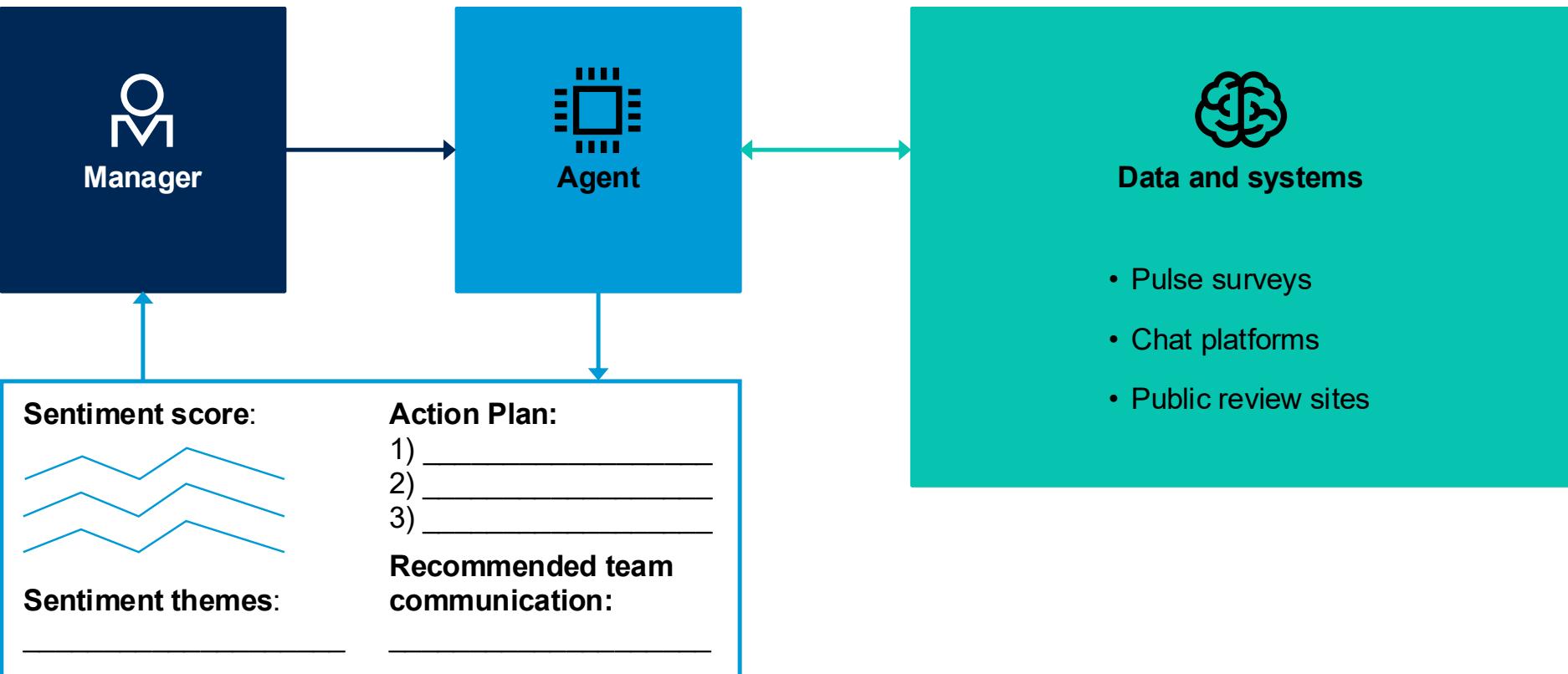
Medium Agency: Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis capabilities are already available in some voice of the employee solutions and can identify emerging issues in the workforce much faster than traditional surveys and feedback tools by drawing on a wider set of data and identifying trends and themes. For example, a manager prompts the agent with a question, such as, “How is my team feeling this month?” The agent then synthesizes the relevant information (e.g., pulse surveys, chat platforms and other employee communications) and produces a current picture of employee sentiment, complete with actionable insights, action plans and communication strategies for responding to any concerns (see Figure 2).

Pitfalls to watch out for with sentiment analysis include:

- **Data availability and quality** — If only a portion of employees respond to surveys or engage the channels being analyzed, the results may not reflect the true sentiment of the team or organization. AI can also misinterpret jokes and sarcasm.
- **Organizational context and cultural alignment** — The agent might suggest plans and communications that don’t align with your organization’s context and culture. You must ensure these outputs convey the correct tone, values and local practices for your organization.

» Figure 2: Sentiment Analysis AI Agent in Action



Source: Gartner

- **Data privacy, security and compliance** — Employee feedback must be anonymized and secure across all channels so employees feel comfortable providing honest feedback and communicating openly.

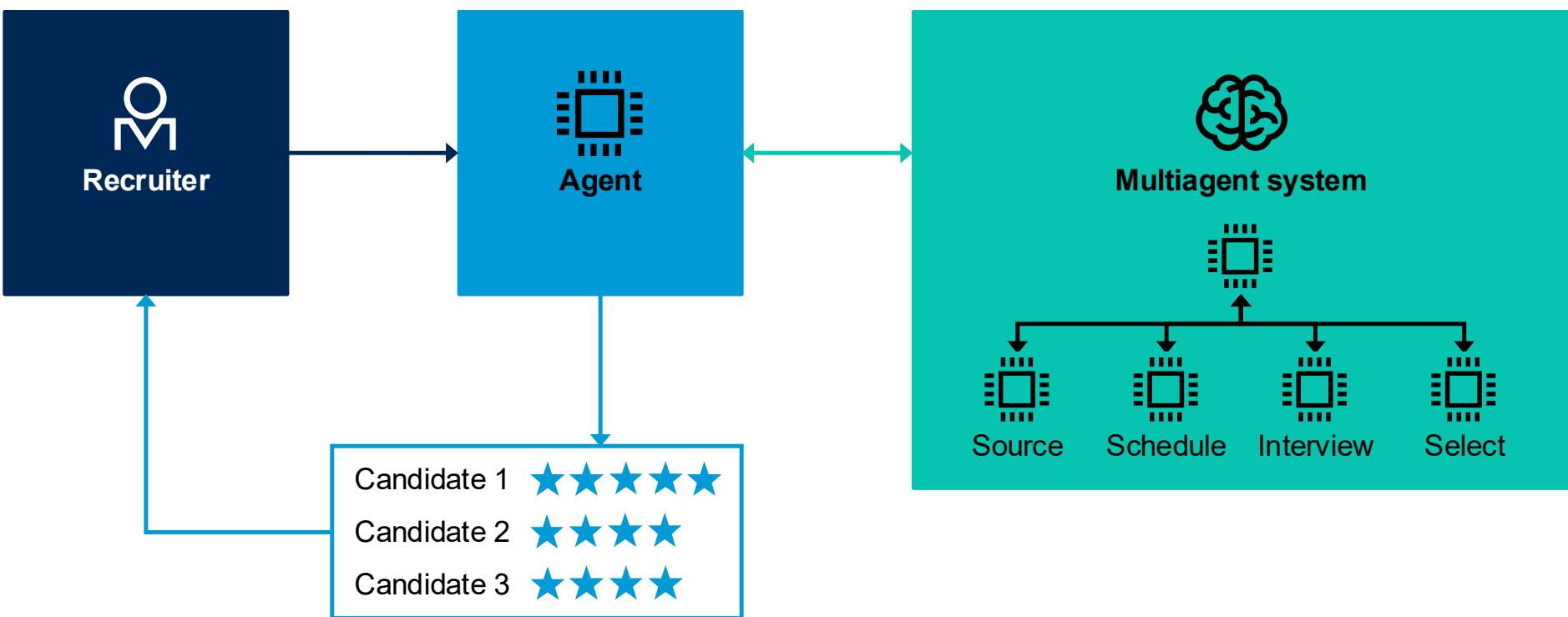
High Agency: Recruiting

In recruiting, AI agents could reduce repetitive tasks, analyze massive datasets, proactively source passive candidates and keep active candidates engaged. Recruiting is one area where we expect to see multiagent systems develop, in which agents talk to agents, handing off tasks to each other, to handle much greater complexity. These multiagent systems are not yet on the market, but they are coming soon.

The way a multiagent recruiting system works is that a recruiter prompts a conversational agent, for example, to find the top candidates for a certain role. An orchestration agent then coordinates activities among task-specific agents responsible for sourcing, scheduling, interviewing and selection.

These activities take place asynchronously, and once the system has identified the top candidates, it will return those results to the recruiter (see Figure 3).

» **Figure 3: Recruiting AI Agent in Action (Multiagent System)**



Source: Gartner

CHROs looking to use AI recruiting agents should bear in mind that this is a highly advanced, emerging example of agentic AI technology.

Things to consider during implementation include:

- **Tech capabilities and maturity** — Capabilities vary widely among vendors, and not all features are equally mature and proven in real-world settings. Consider piloting one task-based agent before scaling up to a multiagent system.
- **Transparency and fairness** — Schedule regular audits to check for unintended bias and ensure the system is identifying diverse, high-quality candidates.
- **Candidate experience** — Watch out for overly generic or impersonal candidate communications from the agent, which can negatively affect your employer brand, and ensure it's easy for candidates to still access human support.

Getting HR Ready for Agentic AI

CHROs looking ahead to the advent of agentic AI can approach it in one of two ways:

1. **Automate the status quo** — Retain familiar processes, but insert task-based agents to help with some of that menial, administrative work. Wait and see how the technology evolves before making more fundamental changes.
2. **Reimagine HR** — Recognize that AI agents are poised to reshape how organizations do business, and proactively design a new HR operating model with new roles and workflows.

Proactively rethinking the operating model will set up CHROs for success as AI directly affects how work is done in HR. HR support roles will experience the greatest impact, especially those focused on routine, transactional work. Work in these roles will

shift to more strategic, less administrative tasks, and these employees will need to learn how to work effectively in tandem with AI agents. This shift will create new work, such as:

- AI governance and oversight
- Decision facilitation
- Continuous AI optimization

In planning for the impact of agentic AI, CHROs should not simply think about what process can be automated and how much headcount they can eliminate or money they can save by replacing human workers with AI agents. To unlock AI agents' full potential, CHROs should evaluate how they reshape HR workflows and encourage the growth of new roles and services to the organization.

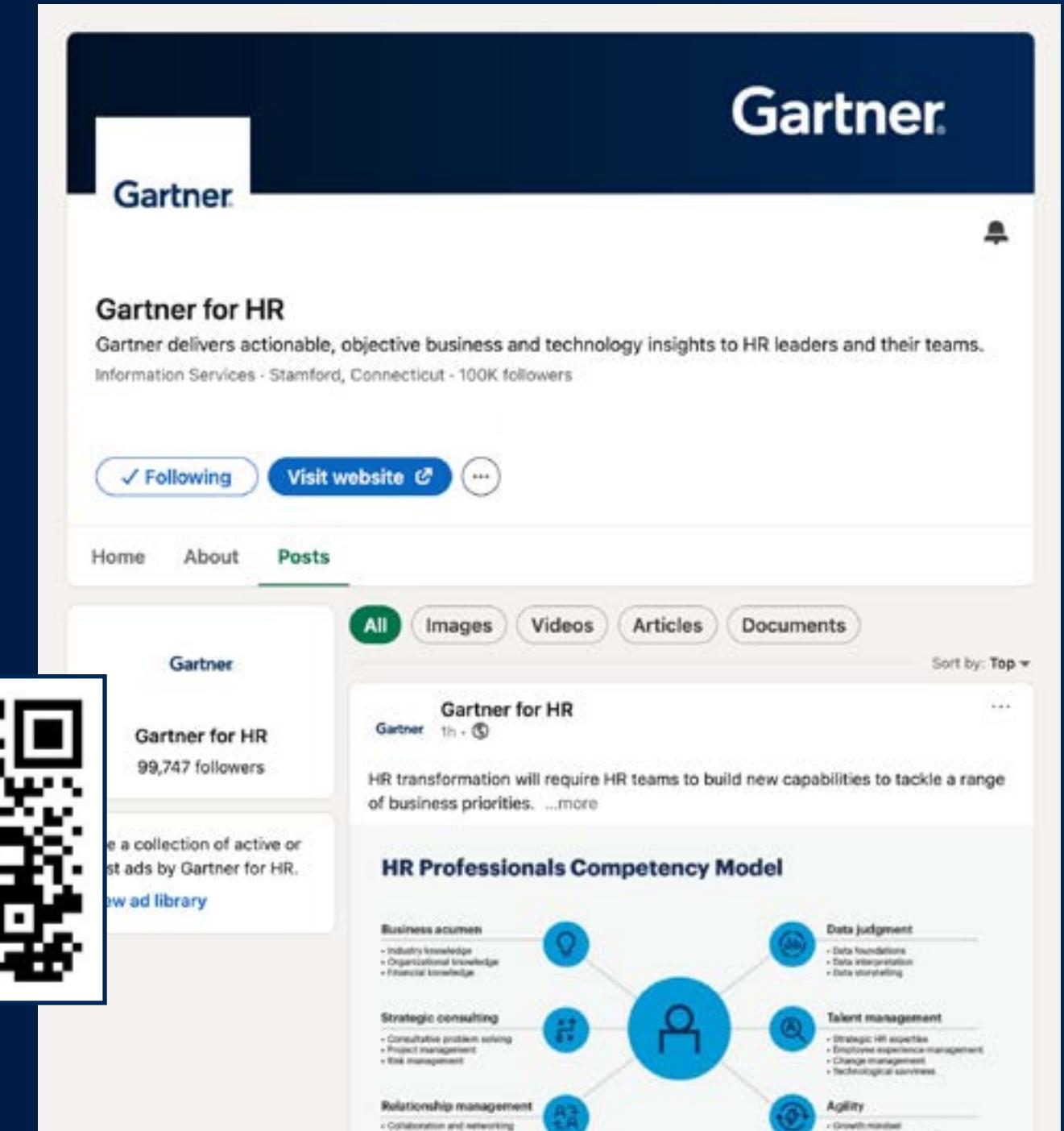
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The screenshot shows the LinkedIn profile of 'Gartner for HR'. The profile has a blue header with the Gartner logo and the text 'Gartner for HR'. Below the header, it says 'Gartner delivers actionable, objective business and technology insights to HR leaders and their teams. Information Services - Stamford, Connecticut - 100K followers'. There are buttons for 'Following' (with a checkmark), 'Visit website', and a three-dot menu. Below these are tabs for 'Home', 'About', and 'Posts'. The 'Posts' tab is selected, showing a post from 'Gartner' 1h ago. The post reads: 'HR transformation will require HR teams to build new capabilities to tackle a range of business priorities. ...more'. Below the post is a diagram titled 'HR Professionals Competency Model' showing a network of interconnected circles representing various competencies: Business acumen, Strategic consulting, Relationship management, Data judgment, Talent management, and Agility. Each competency has a list of sub-components.

Strategic Workforce Planning in an Era of Constant Disruption

by Aaron McEwan and LJ Justice

A wide range of social, political, economic, technological and other disruptions threaten today's workforce plans. CHROs can't assume their organizations' needs, priorities and challenges will be consistent from one year (or even one quarter) to the next.

Plans made in January could be out of date by July. It is tempting to wait for conditions to stabilize before taking action on strategic workforce planning (SWP). But what if conditions never stabilize?

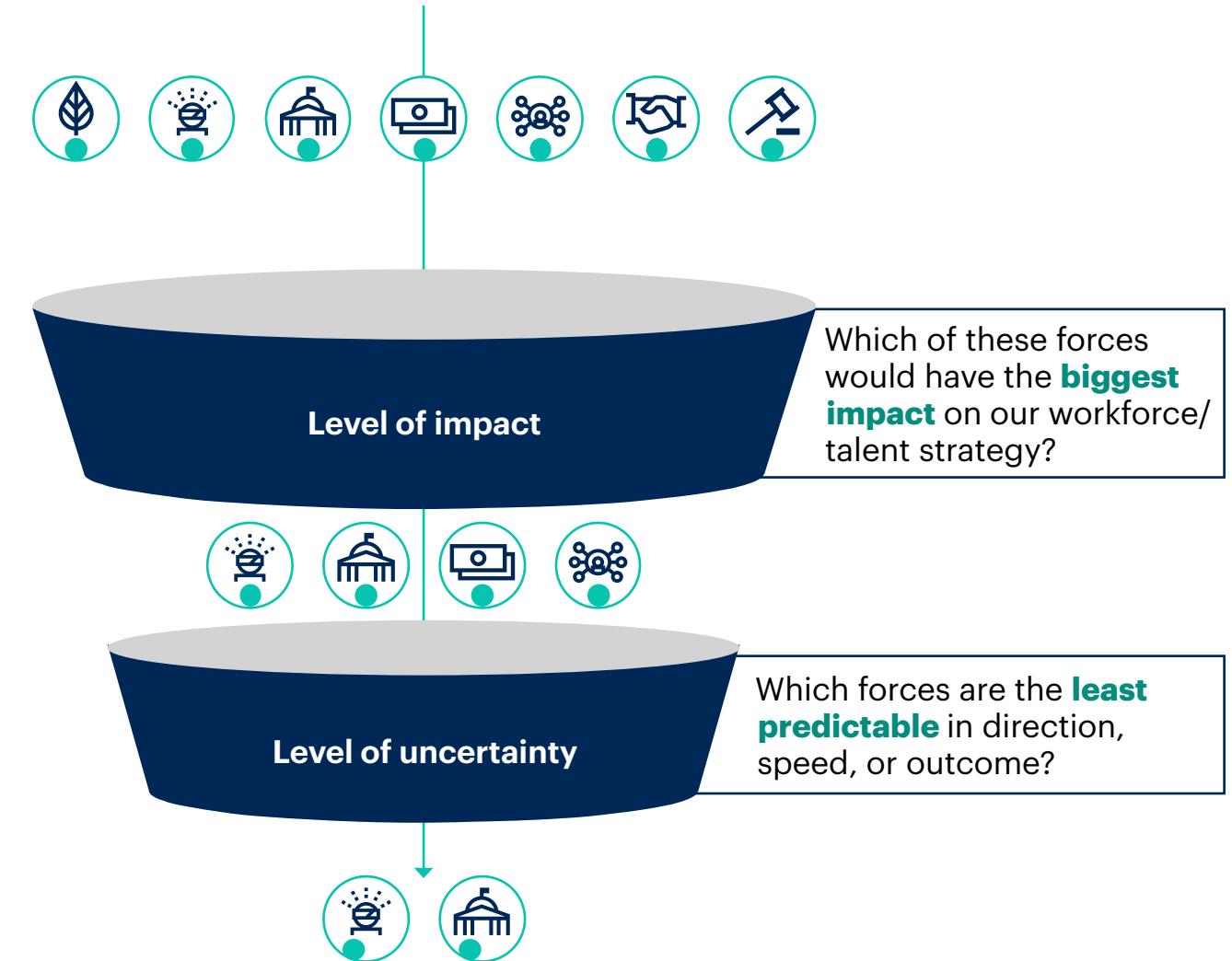
In this environment, CHROs need to create workforce plans that are not just resilient, but antifragile: that is, evolving to be even stronger in the face of shocks and risks. Antifragility is more than just resilience; surviving disruption is not enough when the disruption is constant, continuous and multidimensional.

Organizations need to be able to get stronger, add more value and be more profitable in turbulent times.

The key to building an antifragile workforce plan is scenario planning, which allows organizations to prepare to withstand disruption and to capitalize on the opportunities it presents. Rather than try to plan for every conceivable scenario, CHROs should narrow their focus onto the issues of greatest strategic importance to the organization that are the most unpredictable and most vulnerable to disruption. They can then plan around these scenarios in six steps:

- 1 Define the focal talent issue.** Ask targeted questions, such as: Is the issue tied to enterprise priorities? Does it materially affect critical roles, skills or talent pipelines? Is the future of the issue highly unpredictable? Would stress-testing the priority give you options for planning?
- 2 Identify the most disruptive forces** that shape the issue and **filter down to two critical uncertainties** (see Figure 1). Start with a manageable list of potential threats, such as Gartner's TPESTRE framework (technological, political, economic, social/cultural, trust/ethics, regulatory/legal and environmental). Ask: Which of these forces would have the biggest effect on your workforce? Which forces are the most unpredictable, and what are you least prepared for?
- 3 Craft scenarios around the focal issue.** Use the top two most relevant driving forces to define the scenario planning exercise for the focal talent issue.
- 4 Explore the workforce implications of each scenario** and identify signals that indicate a scenario is becoming real.

» **Figure 1: Questions to Narrow Forces for Scenario Planning**



Source: Gartner

5 Assess scenarios to action

workforce plans. Map anchors — actions that would help in every scenario — and options to take in response to each scenario. Use these options to adapt your plans to any scenario that may arise.

6 Hold your plans lightly.

Increase the frequency of workforce plan review based on emerging signals and stakeholder feedback. More frequent reviews ensure plans remain aligned to business needs as they evolve throughout the year.

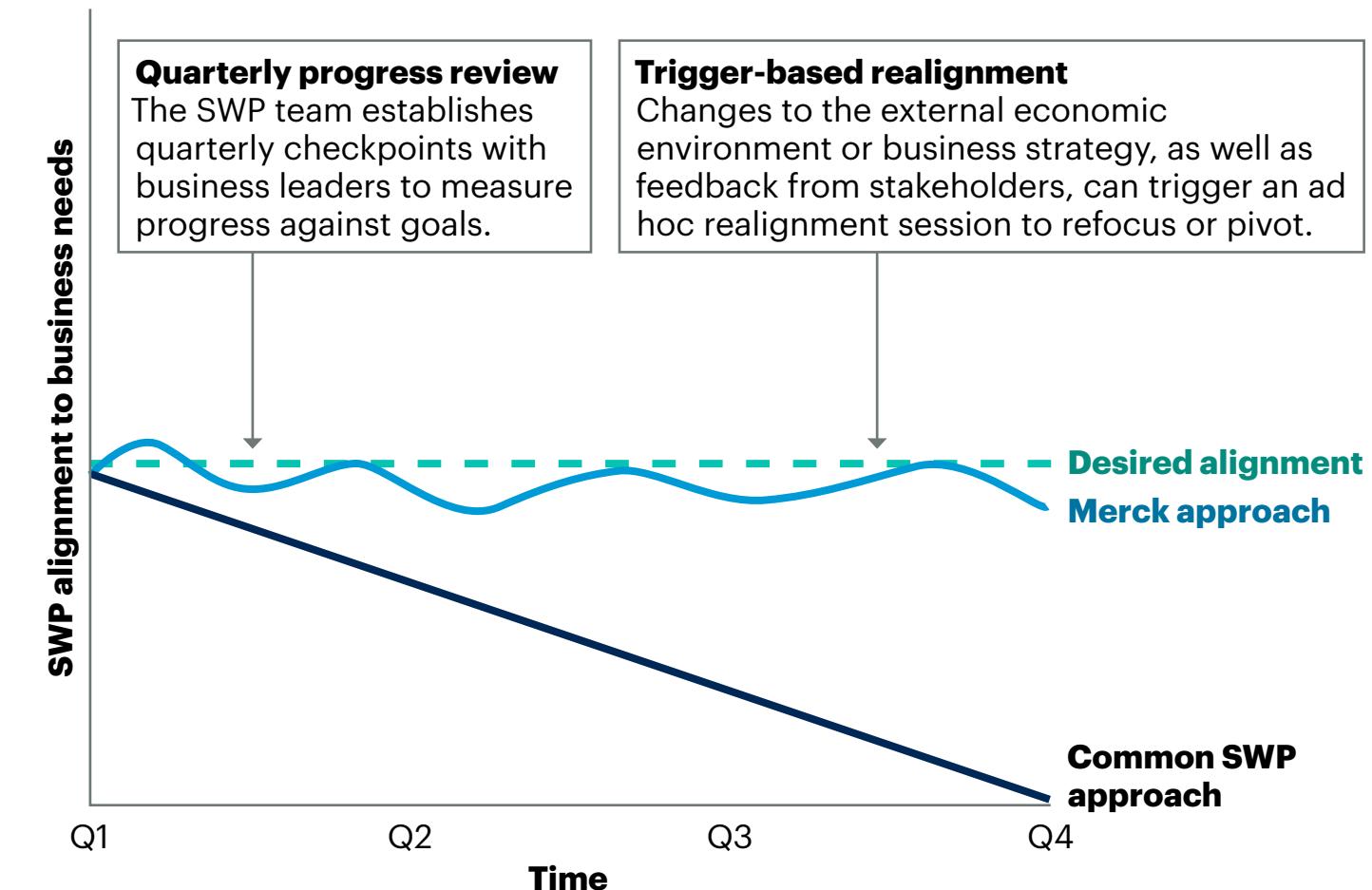
Rather than engaging in scenario planning as a one-and-done process, CHROs should think of these steps as a cycle that can be completed rapidly and regularly. Frequent, quick scenario planning exercises provide a level of flexibility that traditional, annual SWP processes typically lack.

At Merck, for example, the SWP team reviews the strategic workforce plan on a quarterly basis to adhere to agreed objectives and measure progress against goals. Merck also has frequent audits at shorter intervals, allowing for better adjustments to changes and stronger alignment with the business context (see Figure 2).

This process enables CHROs to generate a flexible set of options to address the most disruptive scenarios the organization is most likely to face, while also providing clarity on their anchors: the strategic investments they should make no matter what. Proactively developing strategic options means the organization is ready to respond to scenarios as they arise, or even before. This approach can also help strengthen the business case for strategic HR investments and increase the perception of HR as a key strategic partner in the organization.

Figure 2: Regular Strategic Workforce Planning Reviews

Illustrative



MERCK

Effective Leadership Communication Must Go Beyond the Perfect Message

by Maia Call

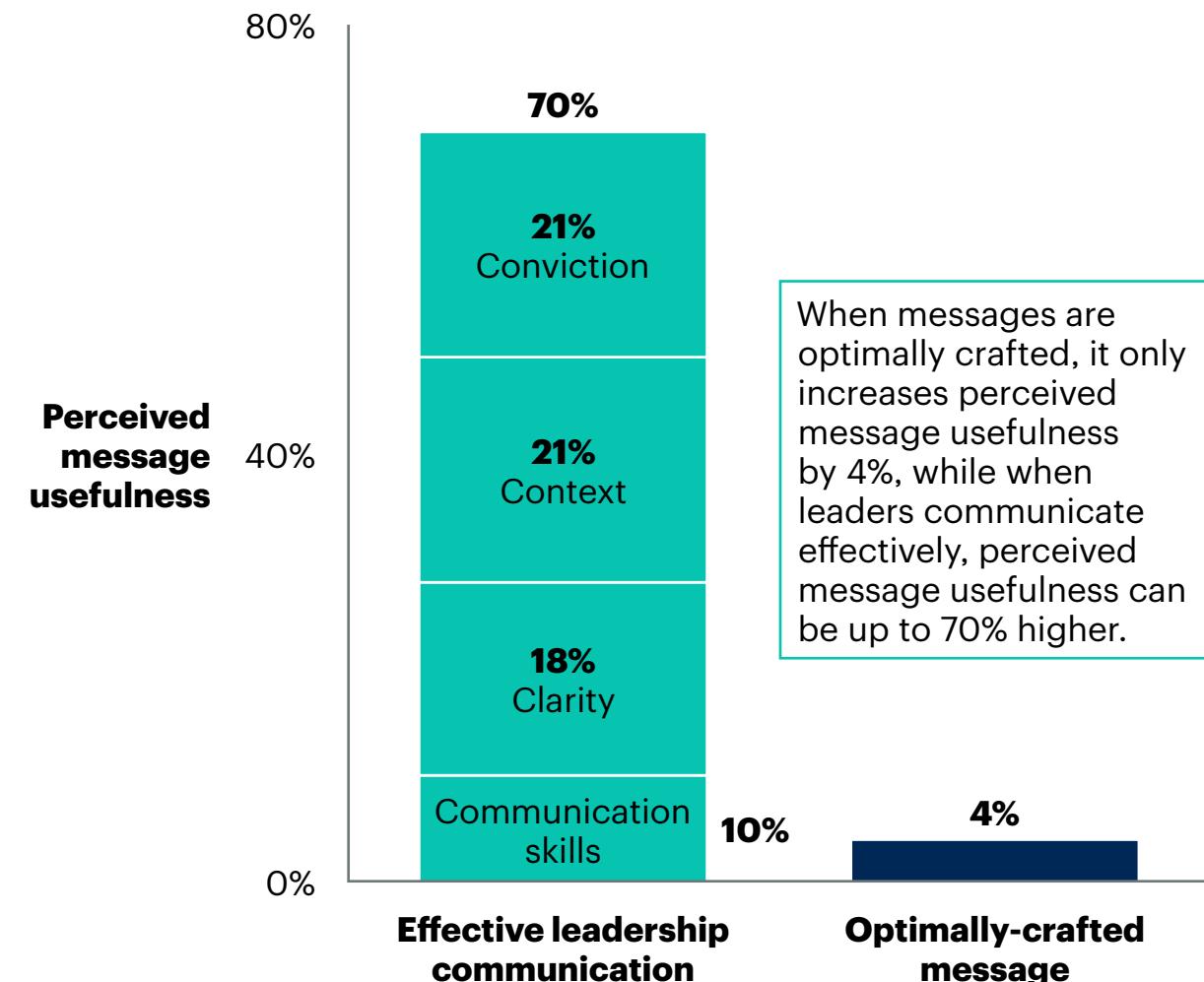
The unprecedented pace and volume of change in today's work environment has left employees feeling overwhelmed, rudderless and in need of guidance from leaders. Yet our data reveals a significant disconnect between what leaders communicate and what employees hear: While 70% of employees recall receiving executive communications, only 20% report finding these messages useful.¹

The most useful communications are not those that are simply well-crafted, but those that deliver clarity, context, and conviction (see Figure 1). To deliver more effective communications, leaders must provide clear explanations of the rationale behind changes, contextualize those changes for different teams through collaboration with managers, and demonstrate conviction by authentically

addressing challenges and seeking employee feedback. When employees perceive leadership messages as useful, enterprise contribution, discretionary effort, and engagement rise by 21%, 21%, and 29% respectively.²

CHROs should prioritize building executive communication strategies that maximize message utility for employees. This includes coaching leaders to focus on clarity (explaining the "why," "who," "what," and "how" of change), enabling collaboration with managers to contextualize change at the team level, and establishing mechanisms for ongoing feedback and transparent progress reporting. HR should also support leaders in developing the skills and confidence needed for vulnerable, authentic conversations—especially when addressing tough questions.

» **Figure 1: Maximum Impact of Effective Leadership Communication on Perceived Message Usefulness²**



Source: 2025 Gartner Reluctant Managers Survey

¹ n = 3,002 employees

² n = 2,141 employees who received a message from senior leadership in the last six months



How AI Changes the Way We Work

by Cian O'Morain and Rebecca Lane

AI is rapidly and dramatically changing the way work gets done. This historic change requires CHROs to fundamentally rethink how they design roles, decision-making structures and teams.

Thanks to the internet, the way work gets done at many organizations is dramatically different today than 30 years ago. However, the principles of organizational design developed in the industrial era still govern the way businesses structure themselves and make decisions.

Organizations today are often heavily matrixed, with work flowing horizontally as well as vertically. This shift has made work more complex by introducing multiple layers of management and approval to networked teams and projects. The digital era did not end up completely reinventing organizational design; in most cases, it has simply added layers of complexity onto existing structures.

Rethinking Organizational Design

As organizations adopt generative and agentic AI, grafting these technologies onto the current organizational structure won't be so easy. AI is being adopted too rapidly, and the multiplier effect of the internet and AI together will require a more fundamental rethinking. GenAI stands to transform both work and organizational design, and the organizations that can redesign the fastest are best positioned to succeed. AI will require fundamental shifts in:

- **Role design** — Rather than choosing between specialist and generalist talent, AI will enable organizations to develop “versatilists”: talent with deep expertise in one or two areas plus a general knowledge of the business context and processes surrounding their areas of specialization. This mix of deep and broad knowledge, combined with the capabilities of AI, allows versatilists to deliver better innovation and value by conducting AI agents’ workflows. Table 1 shows some examples of how roles are already shifting from specialists to versatilists.

» Table 1: Versatilist Role Design Examples

Business area	Specialist	Versatilist
IT infrastructure and operations	Python automation specialist: Deep expertise in writing scripts	I&O software engineer: Conducts agentic AI to deliver impact across a broader set of tasks, with the ability to pivot focus effectively as needs change
Retail frontline operations	Grocery department shelf-stocker: Trained to stock goods quickly and effectively in one department	All-department shelf-stocker: Interacts with generative AI to know the right assortment and location of stock for all areas
Fast-moving consumer goods product development	R&D scientist: Develops formulas and hands-off packaging to industrial design team	R&D product developer: Uses generative AI models to model the impact of packaging into new formula development

Source: Gartner

- **Decision making** — Formal decision-making structures will need to be redesigned around the combination of human and artificial intelligence. Currently, decision rights are structured around functional areas and subdivided to enable people with deep expertise in their specific function to make good decisions at the pace of business. In a human-AI organization, however, a more optimal design will structure decision rights more broadly. Because AI can analyze a wide variety of data and use it to inform decision making at the speed of business, a person equipped with AI can be accountable for a wider range of decisions throughout an entire customer segment or product category.

- **Coordination** — These shifts in role design and decision-making processes will lead to larger, self-contained, cross-functional teams that operate more independently, eliminating much of the work that currently goes into coordinating work across silos. At the same time, it will become more difficult to foster employees' sense of belonging in the broader organization, as well as to capitalize on enterprise contributions from high-potential and high-performing talent.

As CHROs look ahead to these big-picture design changes, they must also confront the ways work has already changed and continues to change in the face of growing complexity. AI is just one of many disruptions that affect how employees work together within their teams — and increasingly, across multiple teams and functions.

Enabling High-Impact Teams

Today, employees are on an average of five teams at any given time, and collaboration among multiple teams is essential to getting work done.¹ AI is creating new avenues for collaboration, but it also adds uncertainty for employees about how their work will evolve, both individually and on teams.

This complex, collaborative work environment is great for the organization when it works well. Teams that collaborate often and well have 21% higher agility.¹ Multiteaming employees are 19% more productive, and cross-functional teams have higher innovation.²

For teams to have the greatest impact amid this complexity, they must have:

- Clear expectations, responsibilities and norms of collaboration
- Team cultures that support wellness, enable candor and mitigate the risk of burnout
- Guidance on using AI in ways that generate the most value

To enable these high-impact teams, CHROs must:

- **Establish clarity before consensus —**

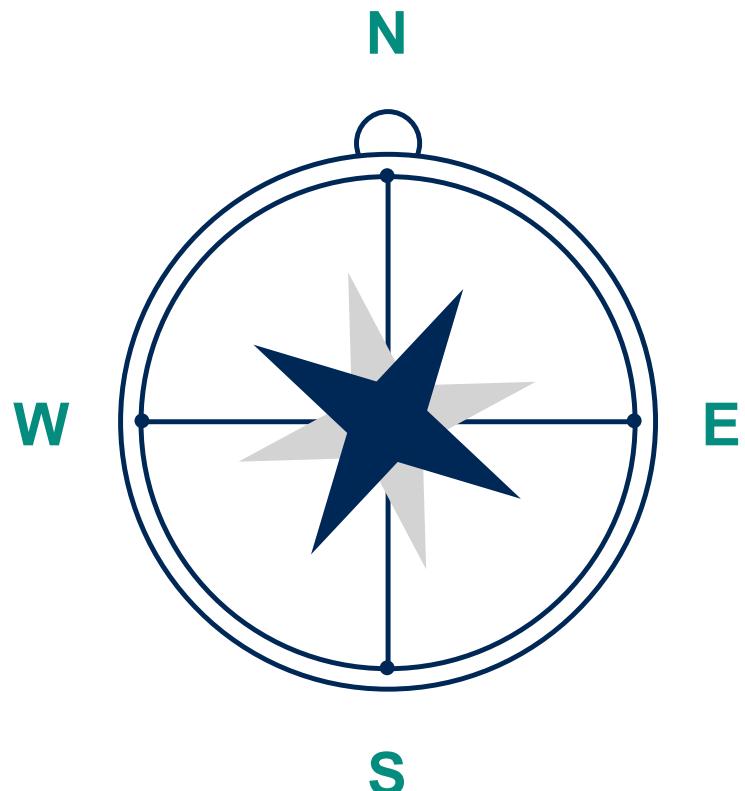
Collaboration should begin with establishing a minimal, leader-led team charter that clarifies the desired outcomes, necessary trade-offs, roles and responsibilities, and structure and timing of team touchpoints.

- **Reduce the emotional cost of multiteaming —**

Focus on wellness networks, not just wellness resources, to give employees and teams a sense of ownership of their well-being. Foster an environment of courageous exchange that offers psychological safety and accountability, so team members feel safe being themselves, as well as to hold each other accountable for shared outcomes.

- **Provide teams with an AI compass —** To encourage teams to pursue higher-value AI use cases, offer specific guidance on when not to use AI at all, where to look for easy wins, where to push boundaries and how to measure success (see Figure 1).

» **Figure 1: AI Compass for Guiding Teams' AI Decisions**



No-gos: Things we won't do with AI

Our product monitoring won't occur without a human in the loop.

Easy wins: Opportunities to seize now

We seek ways to use AI to make our products more creative.

Success measures: How we know it's working

We prioritize employee and customer satisfaction.

Ways forward: Future opportunities to aim for

We aspire to use AI to source and supply new markets.

Work With Complexity, Not Against It

These solutions all acknowledge the significant disruptions employees are seeing, or will soon see, in their roles, tasks and ways of working. Rather than try to make work less complex or shield employees from uncertainty, CHROs must create an environment that enables employees to work effectively within the complexity and disruption. CHROs must provide clarity on goals and processes, balancing psychological safety and accountability, and offering an AI compass to help navigate uncertainty will help them reap the benefits of a highly collaborative workforce.

¹ **2024 Organization Design and Change Management Employee Survey.**

This survey was designed to understand foundational change management concepts such as change fatigue, change readiness culture, and transformation deficits. The survey was conducted online from 18 October through 14 November 2024 and contains responses from 3,479 employees with representation from various industries, functions, and regions. 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.

² **2024 Gartner ReimagineHR Employee Survey.** This survey was conducted

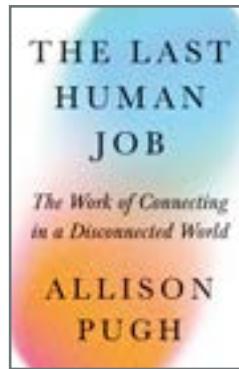
to understand employees' work expectations and the environment at their organizations. The survey was conducted online from 21 June 2024 through 28 July 2024 and contains responses from 3,528 employees with representation from various regions, industries, and functions. Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.



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.



The Last Human Job

Allison J. Pugh

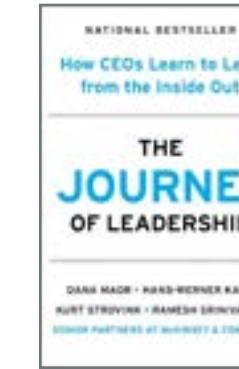
Princeton University Press, 2024

Organizations today are super-sizing their investments in AI and related technologies while pulling back on hiring and cutting workforce spending. Sociologist Allison

Pugh's analysis of "connective labor" — the "forging of an emotional understanding with another person to create valuable outcomes" — offers a compelling counterargument to the belief that running towards AI represents the primary (or best) way for organizations to operate in the future.

Real human connections don't just drive intrinsic value for those individuals. It also generates extrinsic value for the organizations and society they are a part of. When individuals don't just "see" the other person, but reflect back that understanding to build meaningful bonds, those connections can motivate individuals to work harder towards collective goals or, more transactionally, spur purchases.

Amidst a broader move towards greater automation and the depersonalization of organizational life, Pugh urges leaders to recognize that amplifying connective labor is not just a way to engage employees. As a critical element of organizational strategy, it can drive real, irreplaceable value for customers and stakeholders alike.



The Journey of Leadership

Dana Maor, Hans-Werner Kaas, Kurt Strovink, and Ramesh Srinivasan

Portfolio, 2024

Practical guides for organizational leadership rise or fall based on how well they respond to a particular historical moment. The Journey of Leadership meets today's circumstances by acknowledging that successful leadership requires improving both one's individual mindset and performance as well as leveraging the strengths of those around them.

Where yet another over-engineered framework or set of abstract principles would fall flat, Dana Maor and her co-authors (all senior partners at McKinsey & Company) instead prompt current and prospective leaders with a series of thought-provoking questions. These focus on leaders' personal hang ups — the desire to prove oneself, the fear that one isn't good enough, or the urge to avoid failure — as well as how to scale a leader's influence through their network by allowing others the vulnerability to openly share their talents.

As the CEO job becomes increasingly difficult to manage (a reality that reveals itself in shorter CEO tenures), CEOs must recognize that they can't drive organizational performance by themselves. They have to consider how they scale their influence by constructing and motivating a strong team around them. CEOs also must actively parse the fears and insecurities that might hold them back; doing more in and of itself won't help CEOs accomplish their goals; the current moment requires introspection, not suppression, of common emotional and mental blocks that can impinge on CEO performance.



Integrate AI Into Employee Work to Drive Growth

by Benjamin Loring

Empowering employees to use AI at work is not enough to realize the full benefits of AI adoption. CHROs must also integrate AI into employees' work, guiding them to use it in ways that most benefit them and the organization.

HR Empowers Employees to Adopt AI

Organizations are spending significant funds annually on AI tools, but so far few have realized the expected benefits. All too often, CHROs see organizational culture and employee mindsets as the major barrier to employees using AI to drive growth.

Believing the greatest challenge is employee willingness and ability to work with AI, most CHROs and their teams seek to empower employees with the skills and mindsets to use the new technology. Most managers say their organizations provide employees with AI learning, reassure them that they won't be replaced by AI, and encourage them to keep up with new tool rollouts and experiment with new ways of working.¹ The goal of these measures is to ensure employees demonstrate the skills and behaviors needed to achieve ambitious organizational growth objectives.

And most CHROs have succeeded: employees do feel empowered to use AI at work. Large majorities of employees report that they take AI training when it is offered, are excited to use AI at work and have taken on new tasks outside of their job description within the last 12 months.² This last finding is important: As organizations introduce new technologies, they need employees to be willing to work in new and unforeseen ways. We see higher levels of employee engagement and individual performance when employees report their organizations have taken an empowerment approach to AI adoption than when they don't.²

HR's New Challenge: Integrating AI Into Work to Drive Growth

CHROs have succeeded in empowering employees, but they are still not seeing employee AI adoption affect the organization's bottom line. When employees feel empowered to use AI, it boosts their willingness to use the technology but has no significant effect on the likelihood of their business unit exceeding its revenue goals.¹ Even if employees embrace AI, their work was designed for other technologies, limiting the gains employees can realize with AI. In fact, as AI use increases, so too does work friction.²

Translating AI investments into growth requires more than empowerment. The solution is to integrate AI into employees' work. This approach drives organizational growth. When organizations integrate AI into work, the likelihood of business units exceeding their revenue goals increases twofold.

Integrating AI into employees' work is an ambitious goal, but it requires HR to do things that are already within its remit, such as reskilling employees whose tasks are being automated, optimizing employee time use, and redesigning roles and teams.

CHROs should do three things to integrate AI into work:

1. Design AI learning around work frictions.
2. Guide employee use of time freed up by AI.
3. Adapt roles and work processes to an AI-enabled work environment.

Design AI Learning Around Work Frictions

CHROs have developed their AI adoption strategies around a common misconception. HR leaders cite fear of replacement as the leading reason employees do not use AI even when encouraged to.³ Consequently, HR often crafts messages reassuring employees that AI will not replace them and encouraging them to get comfortable and proficient with the technology through exploration or “playing with” the AI tools.

In fact, few employees fear being replaced by AI. Instead, the largest barrier to employees' use of AI is its relevance to their work. When asked why they don't use AI, even though they can, employees in AI-applicable roles (roles that rely on mental effort involving computers or touchscreens) most frequently say either their co-workers don't use it, that it's not relevant to their role or simply that AI cannot improve their work. At the same time, only 12% of employees say they don't use AI because they fear replacement.⁴ AI learning, therefore, must be relevant to employees' work for them to use the technology.

The most effective way to make AI learning relevant is to give employees hands-on practice in solving real problems. Helping employees learn by applying AI to the work frictions they experience is one proven method. Such learning efforts increase employee AI usage by up to 40%, whereas simply providing encouragement and training opportunities increases its use by only up to 20%.⁵

CHROs and their L&D teams should identify opportunities to center AI learning in work frictions. One organization, the law firm McDermott, Will and Schulte, helped employees identify opportunities to apply AI in solving on-the-job frustrations by asking reflection questions, such as, “What tasks feel repetitive and inefficient?” The organization then created employee groups of mixed AI experience levels to brainstorm solutions and apply them with IT professionals' support.

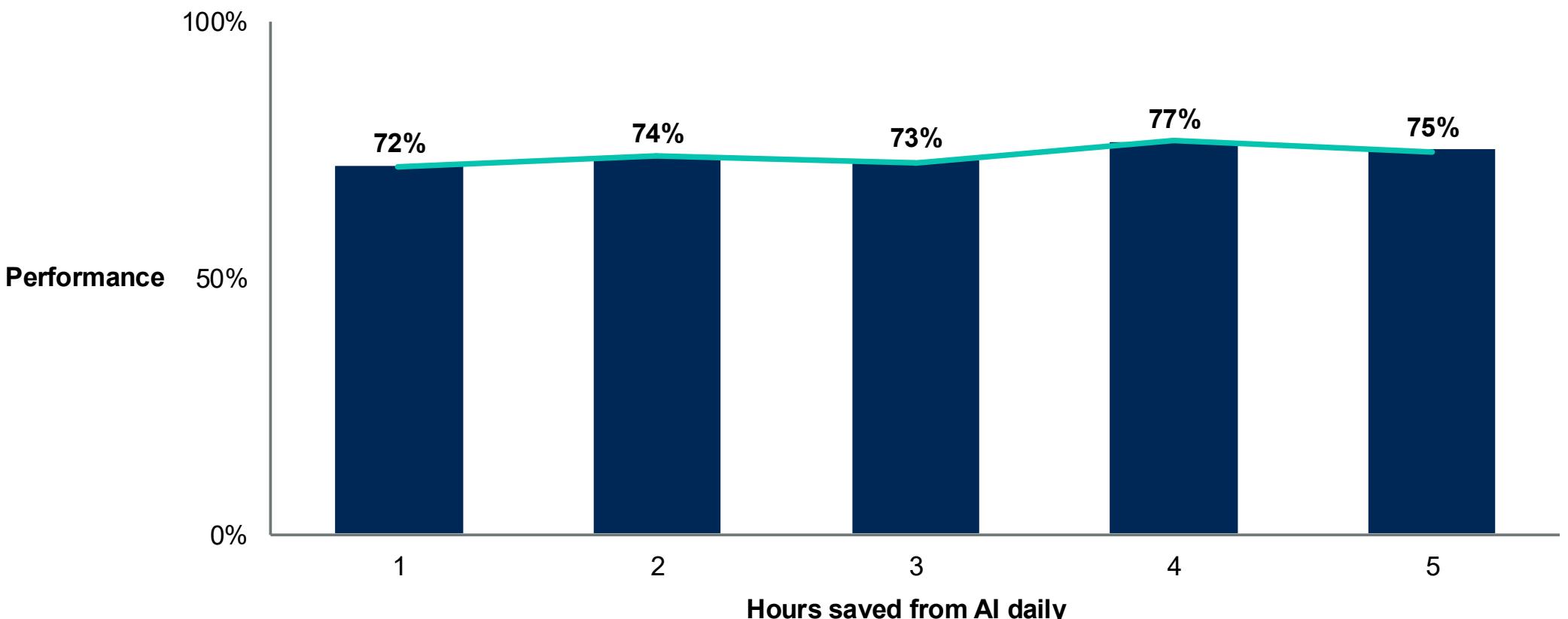
Guide Employee Use of Time Freed Up by AI

Most organizations fail to effectively communicate expectations for AI use in employees' work. Only 26% of employees say their organization expects higher performance when they use AI.² As a result, employees free up time with AI — those in AI-applicable roles claim to free up 1.5 hours per day — but no matter how much time employees free up, simply having the time does not result in higher performance (see Figure 1).^{5,6}

Getting higher performance from employees requires guidance. Only 7% of HR leaders say their organizations provide guidelines on how to use the time they've freed up.³ But those who do have guidelines do see a performance boost. Thirty-eight percent of employees whose organizations provide guidelines about the use of time saved by AI demonstrate high performance, whereas only 18% demonstrate high performance in organizations that don't provide such guidelines.²

» Figure 1: Freed-Up Time Alone Does Not Translate to Growth

Average performance by time saved



n = 1,664 employees who use AI for at least one core work responsibility.

Source: 2025 Gartner Growth Ready Workforce Employee Survey

Note: Performance is measured from the extent of employee enterprise contribution.

CHROs should set targets and clear guidelines governing the use of time freed up by AI. The CHRO at one organization, SACE, set a modest target of 20 hours freed up by AI per month for its employees. SACE also developed guidelines to help employees redeploy the freed up time through growth-driving activities agreed upon by both the employees and their managers. Not only did SACE report 100% AI adoption, but it also marked a 26% increase in productivity.

Adapt Roles and Workflows to AI-Enabled Work

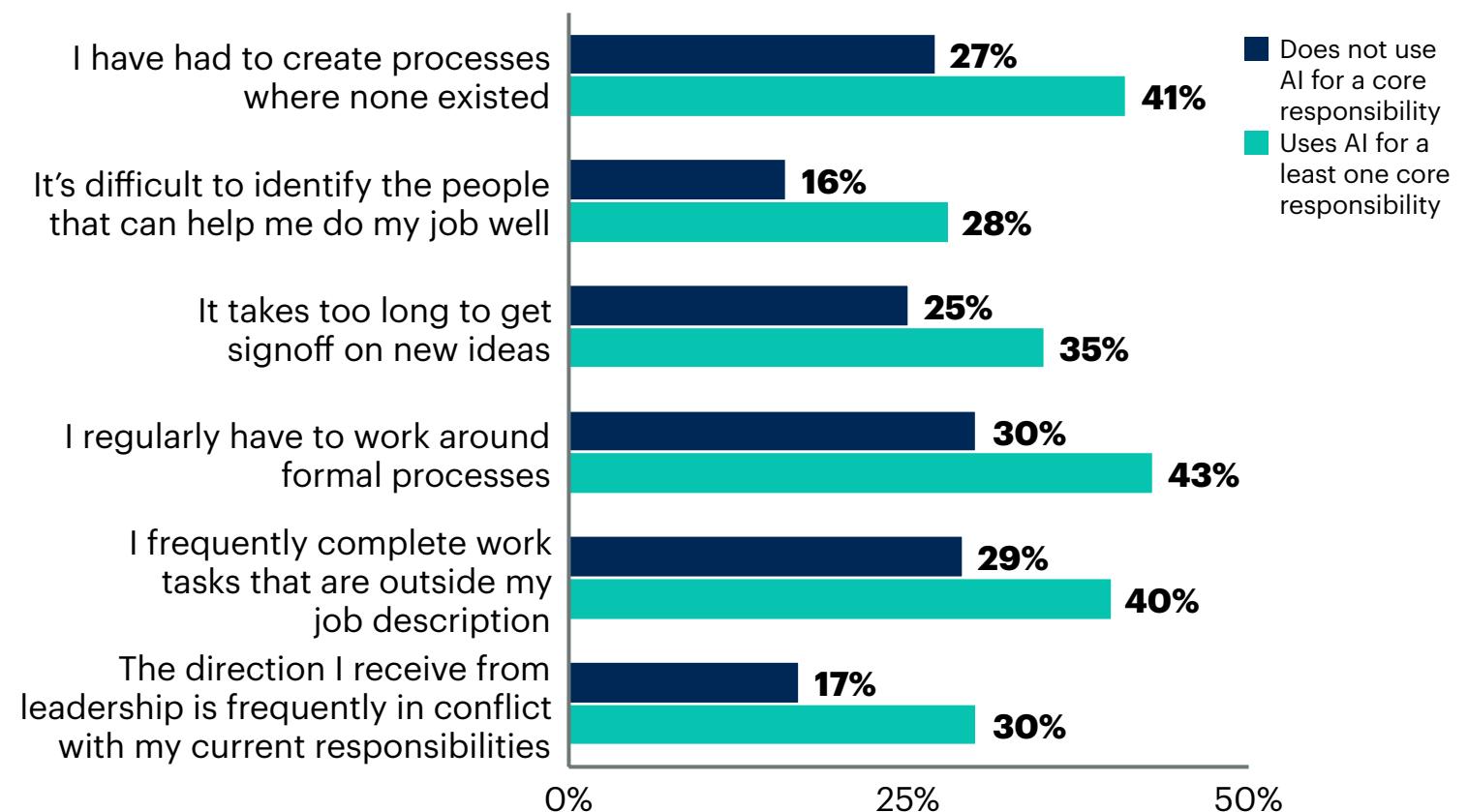
AI adoption causes side effects that undermine organizational growth goals. Employees who use AI every day (roughly 27% of employees in AI-applicable roles) experience higher work friction than those who don't (see Figure 2).

Meanwhile, many organizations are not ready to make critical updates to employee role requirements to accommodate AI, with only 18% of HR leaders saying their organization is well-equipped to redesign roles if necessary.³

Most organizations expect employees to adapt to the new circumstances and innovate their way to growth-driving performance. Sixty-five percent of managers say they expect their employees to experiment with new ways of working.¹ HR leaders frequently say that employees need a "growth mindset" and "change readiness" to overcome the challenges that arise with adopting a new technology.

Figure 2: Employees Who Use AI for Work Report More Work Friction

Percentage of employees agreeing with common statements about work friction



n = 2,986

Source: 2025 Gartner Growth Ready Workforce Employee Survey

But the most successful HR teams recognize their role in adapting work in an AI-enabled organization. HR teams must lead improvements to organizational structures and processes, such as:

- Identifying automation opportunities in employee workflows
- Proposing automation solutions
- Updating role design
- Building process improvement capabilities among employees
- Facilitating collaborative employee networks to identify and solve work design issues

For example, HR at U.S. Ventures worked to overcome GenAI integration challenges by leading collaboration between employees and IT to address day-to-day frictions. Organizations that adapt employee work see up to 42% higher team performance than those that don't, whereas emphasizing employees' individual adaptation yields only up to 22% higher team performance.⁷

Getting Started

By shifting their focus from employee empowerment to AI-work integration, CHROs can help realize the promise of the new technology in driving growth. To get started, CHROs and their teams should:

- 1 Assess how the organization is currently addressing the issue. Is HR still in an “employee empowerment” phase, or is it already integrating AI into employee work?
- 2 Identify specific HR actions to prioritize in integrating AI into employee work, such as learning initiatives, manager toolkits and facilitation guides.
- 3 Revisit current AI learning programs to find opportunities to refocus them on common challenges in employee work.
- 4 Work closely with the CIO to scale learning solutions and establish clear expectations for AI use.
- 5 Share organizational, AI-related goals and metrics with the workforce, and guide managers and their teams in channeling freed-up time toward higher-value work.
- 6 Leverage HR's expertise to redesign work in collaboration with employees and IT.

¹ **2025 Gartner Growth-Ready Workforce Manager Survey.** This survey was designed to understand foundational change management concepts. This survey was conducted to understand the manager's perspective on employee adoption and use of AI tools, as well as the effectiveness of leveraging technology on team contributions. The research was conducted online from 24 June to 28 July 2025 among 1,973 managers from different geographies and regions. 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.

² **2025 Gartner Growth-Ready Workforce Employee Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand employee adoption and use of AI tools, as well as the effectiveness of leveraging technology on employee contributions. The research was conducted online from 3 June to 7 July 2025 amongst 2,986 employees from different geographies and regions. The survey was designed and developed by Gartner's HR practice research team. 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.

³ **2025 Gartner AI Strategy and Leadership Effectiveness Survey.** This survey (n = 114 HR leaders) was conducted to understand HR leader perspectives on the impact of AI on their workforce and their current leadership strategy. The survey was conducted online from 28 May 2025 through 14 July 2025 and contains responses from 114 HR leaders with representation from various regions and industries.

⁴ **2025 Gartner Growth-Ready Workforce Employee Survey, n = 692 employees** who can, but do not use AI at work for a core responsibility

⁵ **2025 Gartner Growth-Ready Workforce Employee Survey, n = 1,490** employees who Gartner estimates are in positions where they could use AI

⁶ **2025 Gartner Growth-Ready Workforce Employee Survey, n = 1,664** employees who use AI for at least one core work responsibility

⁷ **2025 Gartner Growth-Ready Workforce Manager Survey, n = 948 managers** whose team members save on average one hour per day by using AI



How to Develop AI-Ready Managers

by Shannon Wiest, Carolina Engels and Grace Myers

As AI changes the way employees work, it will also have major implications for how they are managed. Only 38% of HR leaders expect AI to have a positive effect on manager effectiveness, while 59% are unsure what impact it will have, and only 8% believe their managers have the skills to use AI today.¹

As AI changes the way employees work, it will also have major implications for how they are managed. Only 38% of HR leaders expect AI to have a positive effect on manager effectiveness, while 59% are unsure what impact it will have, and only 8% believe their managers have the skills to use AI today.¹

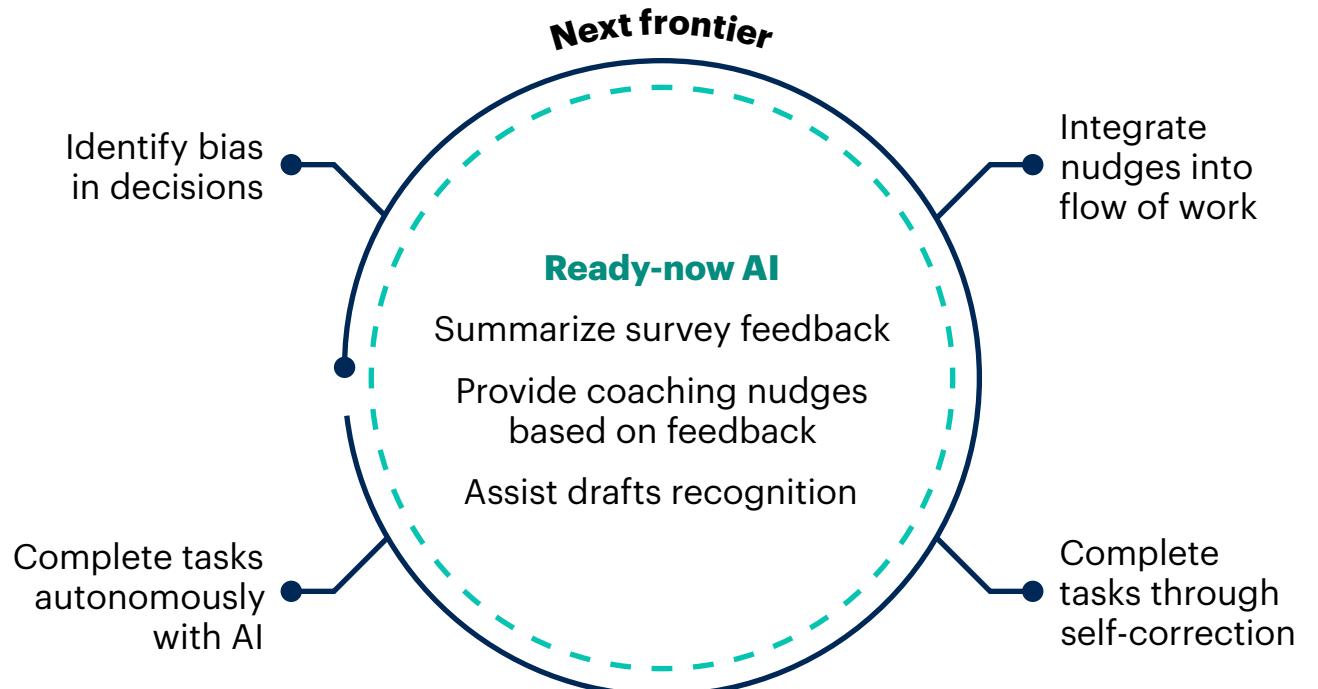
However, research shows there are many ways to augment the manager role with AI that, with thoughtful implementation, can reduce the administrative burdens managers face and free up more of their time and energy for the human and strategic parts of their jobs (see Figure 1).

Keep in mind that many managers are already using GenAI in their work, with or without the organization's support or approval. Only 14% of organizations report providing support to managers on how to integrate AI into their daily tasks, but managers can do much more if they have visible support.¹

AI-Augmented Management

For example, managers spend hours collecting and analyzing data for performance reviews. AI can collate and synthesize this information much faster, giving managers more time to review the data. This strategy gives managers more time to draft the review, and AI tools can even help them rehearse the review to refine the narrative and delivery. AI can also augment managers' human-centric tasks, such as by nudging them to recognize employees for outstanding work, flagging microlearning moments or helping to identify employee stretch goals.

» **Figure 1: Opportunities for Augmenting the Manager Role**



Source: Gartner

When deciding what managerial tasks to augment with AI, work with managers directly to uncover which tasks are best fit for automation and collaborate with IT to determine what is possible. Keep the following principles in mind:

- **Start with a quick win** — Automate one high-friction task to build trust and momentum.
- **Redirect time to value** — Free-up space for human-centric work, like coaching, recognition or team support.
- **Guard against productivity leak** — HR plays a key role in shaping performance expectations to ensure that time saved adds value back into the organization.

And of course, CHROs must not forget the ethical and legal dimensions of managers' AI use. Managers need clear guidelines about when it is and is not acceptable to rely on AI, as well as about the importance of ensuring AI is not making decisions about their direct reports without human input or review.

Managing Agentic AI

AI agents are still a novel technology, and Gartner predicts it will be another two to five years before agentic AI becomes mature for basic business applications. That time is fast approaching, however, and 61% of organizations plan to invest in agentic AI.² This technology will have an even greater effect on managers' daily workflows. CHROs must get ahead of the curve on this next frontier of AI-augmented management, because the idea of replacing human employees with AI agents will be tempting to business leaders. However, CHROs must advocate for keeping the human in the loop, because AI agents will only be as good as the people who train and manage them.

That means helping managers build the skills they will need to manage agentic AI before it comes time to apply this technology. Some managers will continue to only manage people, and entirely new roles will be created for people who manage AI agents exclusively, but many managers — perhaps most — will find themselves doing both.

Managers working with AI agents will need to spend more time monitoring the inputs and outputs to ensure alignment with the model. Reviewing, prompting and editing the work of agentic AIs will become part of their daily workflow. This shift requires a different skill set than managing people,

though some critical managerial skills apply to both (see Table 1).

To prepare managers for the adoption of agentic AI, CHROs will need to:

- **Redesign workflows** — Partner with IT to identify where agentic AI changes how work gets done and where managers need new support.
- **Clarify manager roles** — Define who leads people, who directs agents, who manages both and how to support both without overloading either.
- **Develop leadership strengths** — Help technical managers take on agent oversight, while people managers focus on coaching and connection.

» **Table 1: Skills Required for Managing People vs. Coordinating AI Agents**

Managing people	Overlapping skills	Coordinating AI agents
Having emotional intelligence	Setting clear expectations and goals	Managing data
Resolving conflicts	Monitoring performance and feedback loops	Having digital literacy
Influencing and persuasion	Integrating workflows and aligning processes	Monitoring AI outputs for bias and accuracy
Managing stakeholders	Managing risk and ethical oversight	Keeping track of accountability and shifting legal issues
Managing career potential	Troubleshooting and escalation	Focusing on AI competency, not AI mastery
Navigating difficult conversations	Ensuring communication and clarity in instructions and documentation	Innovating and experimenting
Being creative		

Source: Gartner

Conclusion: How Will AI Reshape Your Managers' Roles?

To enable managers to work with AI today and begin preparing them for the AI use cases of the future, CHROs should:

- **Set guardrails** — Partner with legal and risk teams to define how managers should use AI, ensuring transparency, privacy and ethical boundaries are built into everyday tools.
- **Co-design evolving roles** — Involve managers in shaping how AI changes how they work — what to augment, automate or avoid. Role shifts should feel empowering, not imposed. Update/manage performance metrics accordingly.

- **Pursue human-centric design** —

Give managers a voice in how AI informs decisions and equip them to explain AI-driven insights to their teams with clarity and confidence, ensuring a positive employee experience.

- **Guide AI literacy** — Support managers with

hands-on, role-specific AI training, led by learning and development and IT, scaled through peer learning, to help them lead with and through AI. Create peer learning groups.

¹ **2025 Gartner HR Symposium HR Leaders Survey.**

This was conducted to understand approaches and challenges related to AI implementation in the workforce, redesigning roles and teams, and the future of work. The research was conducted online from 21 July through 26 August 2025, among 114 HR leaders representing various geographies, industries, and functions.

² Gartner polling from two agentic AI content webinars: (a) [Executive Essentials: Business Value Drivers for Agentic AI](#) and (b) [AI Agents: The Next Big Thing in AI](#).

How HR Is Implementing and Adapting to AI

by Jonah Shepp

In September's Benchmark with Gartner webcast, HR leaders identified a similar set of major concerns as they had over the previous months. Leadership pipeline pressures were the top issue of concern, with 52% of HR leaders saying it was a current issue for their organization, followed by the market outlook for 2026, skills gaps, and GenAI workforce disruption. New political priorities were the fifth most-cited issue at 30%, still a significant percentage but down sharply from earlier in the year (see Figure 1).

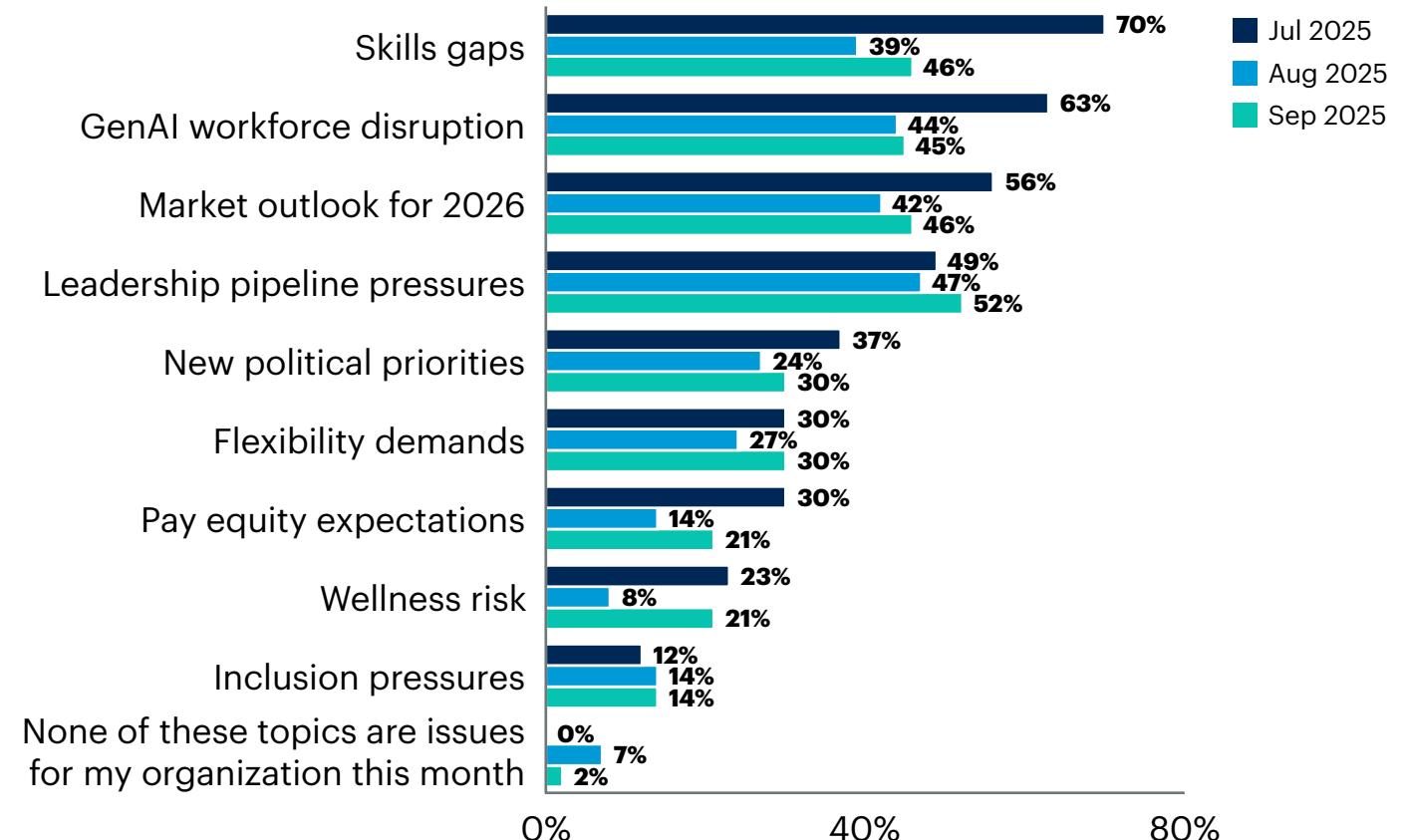
Our labor market outlook showed distinct signs of cooling, with only 16% of HR leaders saying their organization's job postings had increased in September compared to the average of the previous three months, while 53% said they had decreased (see Figure 2). These represent

the lowest percentage of increases and the highest percentage of decreases recorded in over a year.

Over 90% of HR leaders are taking some kind of steps toward implementing AI in HR. The most common actions include piloting AI projects within HR, partnering with other functions to support HR AI initiatives and providing AI training for HR staff (see Figure 3). However, HR leaders also see challenges ahead in adapting HR initiatives as their organization integrates AI alongside human employees. Employee experience, succession management and organizational design are the top areas where HR leaders anticipate difficulty (see Figure 4).

» **Figure 1: Current Issues of Concern to HR Leaders**

Percentage of HR Leaders



n = 43 (Jul 2025), 59 (Aug 2025), 56 (Sep 2025)

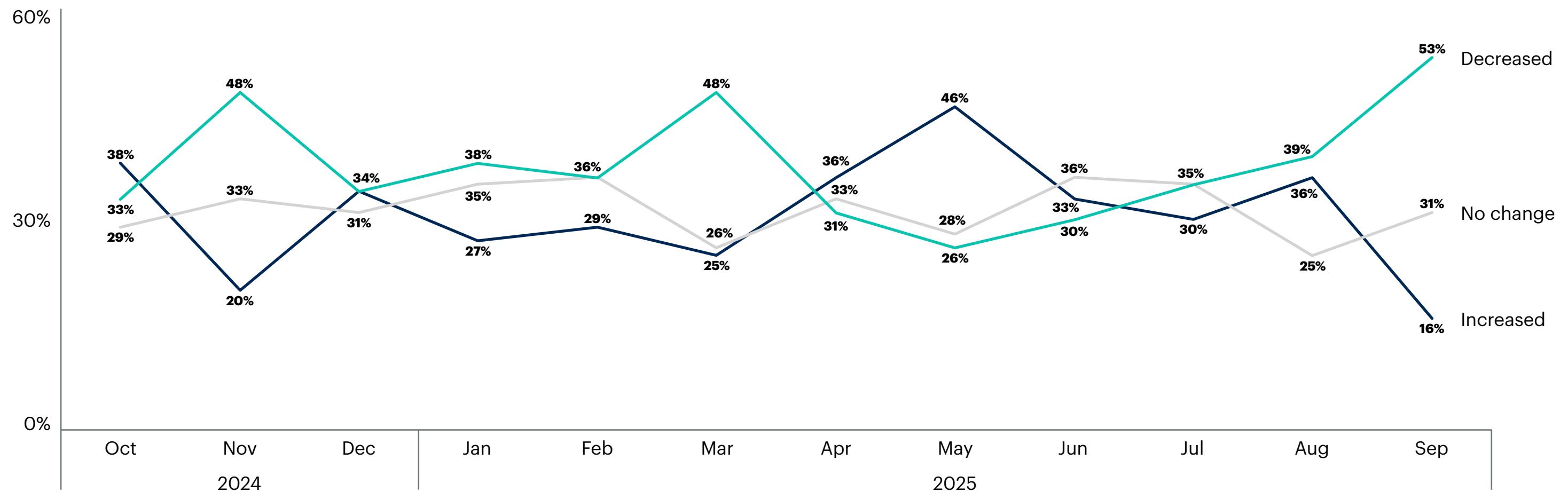
Q. Which of the following topics are current issues for your organization this month? (Select all that apply)

Source: Balance Cost and Productivity With AI & Tackle Flexibility Demands (Jul 2025), 'Big Beautiful Bill' Talent Impact, AI Culture Effect & Pay Equity Demands (Aug 2025), Benchmark with Gartner: CHRO Top Market Insights From 2025 and Implications for HR Strategy (Sep 2025)



» Figure 2: Trends In Job Postings

Percentage of HR Leaders

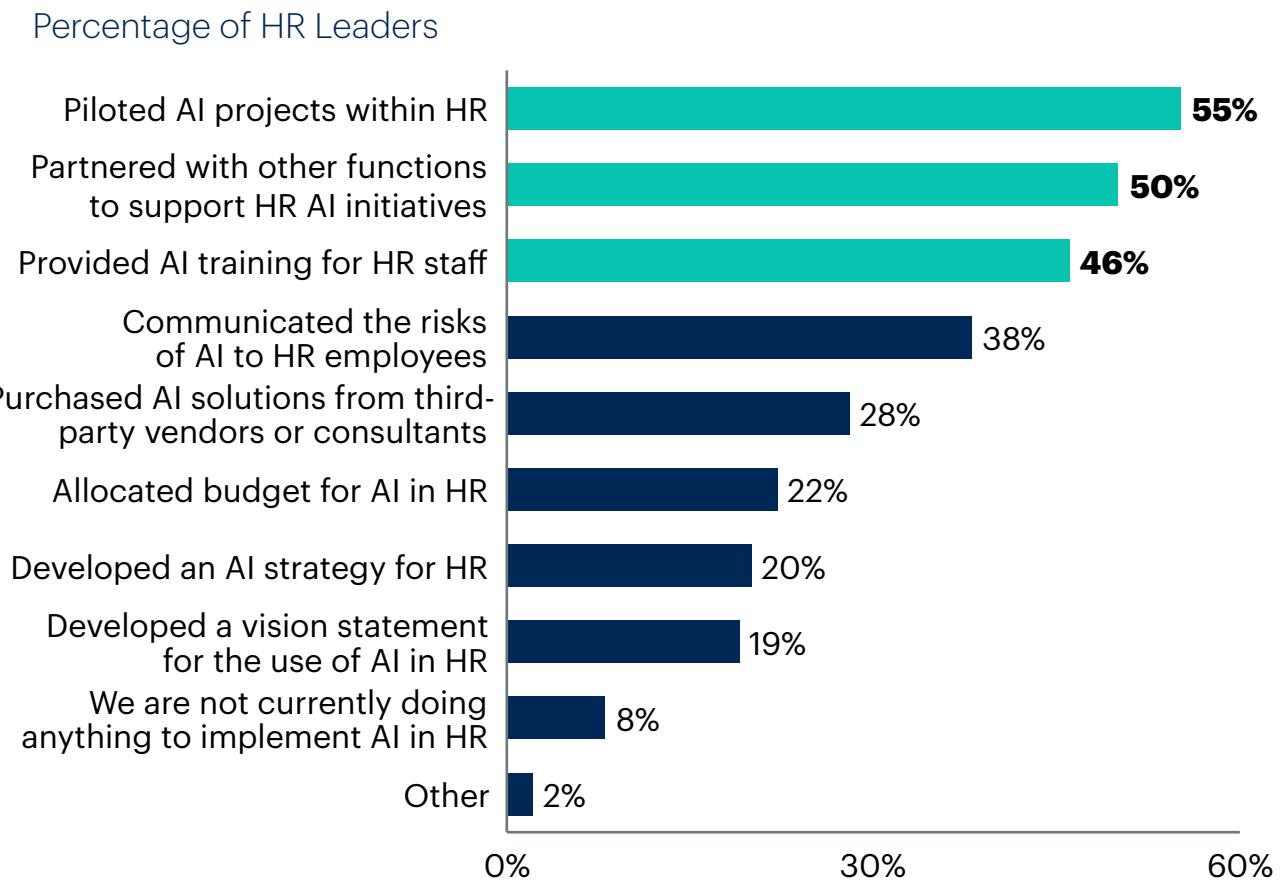


n = 45 (Oct 2024), 46 (Nov 2024), 58 (Dec 2024), 88 (Jan 2025), 56 (Feb 2025), 102 (Mar 2025), 81 (Apr 2025), 50 (May 2025), 33 (June 2025), 40 (July 2025), 83 (Aug 2025), 70 (Sep 2025)

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: Common Actions to Implement AI in HR**



n = 107 (Sep 2025)

Q. What actions have HR leaders at your organization taken in the last six months to implement AI in HR? (Select all that apply)

Source: Benchmark with Gartner: CHRO Top Market Insights From 2025 and Implications for HR Strategy (Sep 2025)

» **Figure 4: Most Challenging HR Initiatives to Adapt to AI**



n = 103 (Sep 2025)

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: CHRO Top Market Insights From 2025 and Implications for HR Strategy (Sep 2025)

Note: Other was a response option but was not selected by any respondents

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