

WHITEPAPER FUTURE OF WORK 2024

Reimagine Work.
Redefine HR.

By Propel Consult and Rent a Recruiter

Introduction

Future of Work

Walt Disney famously said: “Times and conditions change so rapidly that we must keep our aim constantly focused on the future.”

In today's rapidly evolving workplace, Walt Disney's wisdom rings truer than ever. Technological advancements and AI are disrupting traditional work models, employee expectations are shifting dramatically, and the very nature of work itself is being redefined.

At the heart of these changes, the Future of Work HR Conference in Bahrain—under the theme “Reimagine Work. Redefine HR.”—brought together leading voices like Ahlam Oun, Director at General Assembly; Gary Brady, Head of HR at RCSI; Farrah Al Qassimi, Associate Principal at Gallup; Ahmed Janahi, Director of Customer Experience & Partnerships at Tamkeen; Yosra Abdulwahid, Head of People Function at APM Terminals; Barry Prost, Chair & Co-Founder at Rent a Recruiter and Propel Consult; and Sangeeta Parmar, COO at Propel Consult. Together, they tackled the pressing challenges and exciting opportunities redefining the future of work.

This whitepaper dives into critical topics such as preparing the workforce for AI, unlocking the potential of generative AI in HR, fostering inclusive and innovative cultures, and weaving technology seamlessly into HR practices.

Packed with actionable insights, it offers you a roadmap to stay ahead of the curve and build a workforce that thrives in the future.

With special thanks to our sponsor, General Assembly, and specifically to Leila Rajab and Ahlam Oun.

Barry Prost

Chair & Co-Founder
Propel Consult & Rent a
Recruiter



Sangeeta Parmar

COO
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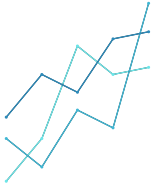
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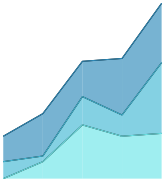
The Evolving HR Landscape



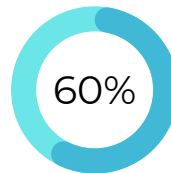
AI allows recruiters to manage **20 roles** at once (compared to 6 without AI).



Gallup data reveals that highly engaged teams show **21%** greater profitability and **17%** higher productivity.



BHD **2,500+** average salaries for Bahrainis in leadership roles, with increased opportunities in **ICT, financial services, and manufacturing.**



By 2027, **60%** of employees will require **upskilling** to remain relevant in the workforce.



Companies with strong **DEI** practices are **35%** more likely to outperform their peers financially.



The **Jobs+** initiative, supported by the Ministry of Labor, Tamkeen, and Propel as a job center, connects employers with Bahraini job seekers, creating job opportunities and driving economic growth.





AI's Role in HR Transformation

Preparing for AI's Workforce Impact

As AI continues to reshape industries, HR leaders must embrace this disruption, balancing the potential for efficiency with employee concerns about job displacement. While AI will take over repetitive, time-consuming tasks like job descriptions, CV formatting, and video screening, it is crucial to remember that AI won't replace human roles entirely. Instead, it will augment HR capabilities, allowing professionals to focus on strategy, employee engagement, and more personalised interactions.

For example, recruiters using AI can save 40-60% of time on tasks, managing significantly more roles in the same workday. However, as organisations look to adopt AI, they must also prioritise upskilling their workforce to adapt to new tools and technologies.

To thrive in an AI-driven future, organisations must prioritize cultivating an agile mindset at all levels, creating environments where innovation is not just encouraged but embedded into the company culture. The gap between leadership's vision for change and employees' ability to innovate presents a critical opportunity for HR leaders to champion more dynamic, flexible, and forward-thinking strategies.

30%

of C-suite leaders describe their organisation as change-agile today.

45%

of employees say their company makes it easy for them to innovate.

AI's Role in HR Transformation

Generative AI: The Future of HR

Gary Brady, Head of HR at RCSI, highlighted the unprecedented opportunities generative AI offers for HR functions. By automating repetitive tasks like resume screening, policy drafting, and data analysis, AI allows HR professionals to dedicate more time to strategic initiatives.



RCSI's HR team implemented ChatGPT for automating job descriptions, onboarding content, and analytics reporting. The results included a **50% reduction in administrative overhead** and **improved recruitment efficiency by 30%**.

However, leveraging AI also raises important challenges:

- **Data Privacy:** Ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.
- **Bias Reduction:** Implementing safeguards to minimise algorithmic discrimination.
- **Human-Centric Design:** Maintaining trust and connection by balancing AI capabilities with human oversight.

The CREATE Framework

Gary introduced the CREATE Framework for effective AI integration:

- **Context:** Provide detailed background and objectives.
- **Refine:** Use clear goals and examples.
- **Explain:** Specify requirements explicitly.
- **Adjust:** Continuously improve output for relevance and tone.
- **Type:** Define desired output formats.
- **Evaluate:** Verify accuracy and appropriateness.

CREATE Framework Example

Ineffective Prompt: "Draft a job description for an HR Business Partner."

Effective Prompt: "Draft a job description for an HR Business Partner who will report to the Head of HR. The role requires expertise in employee relations, talent, and acquisition. Tone: professional and supportive. Format: Word document."

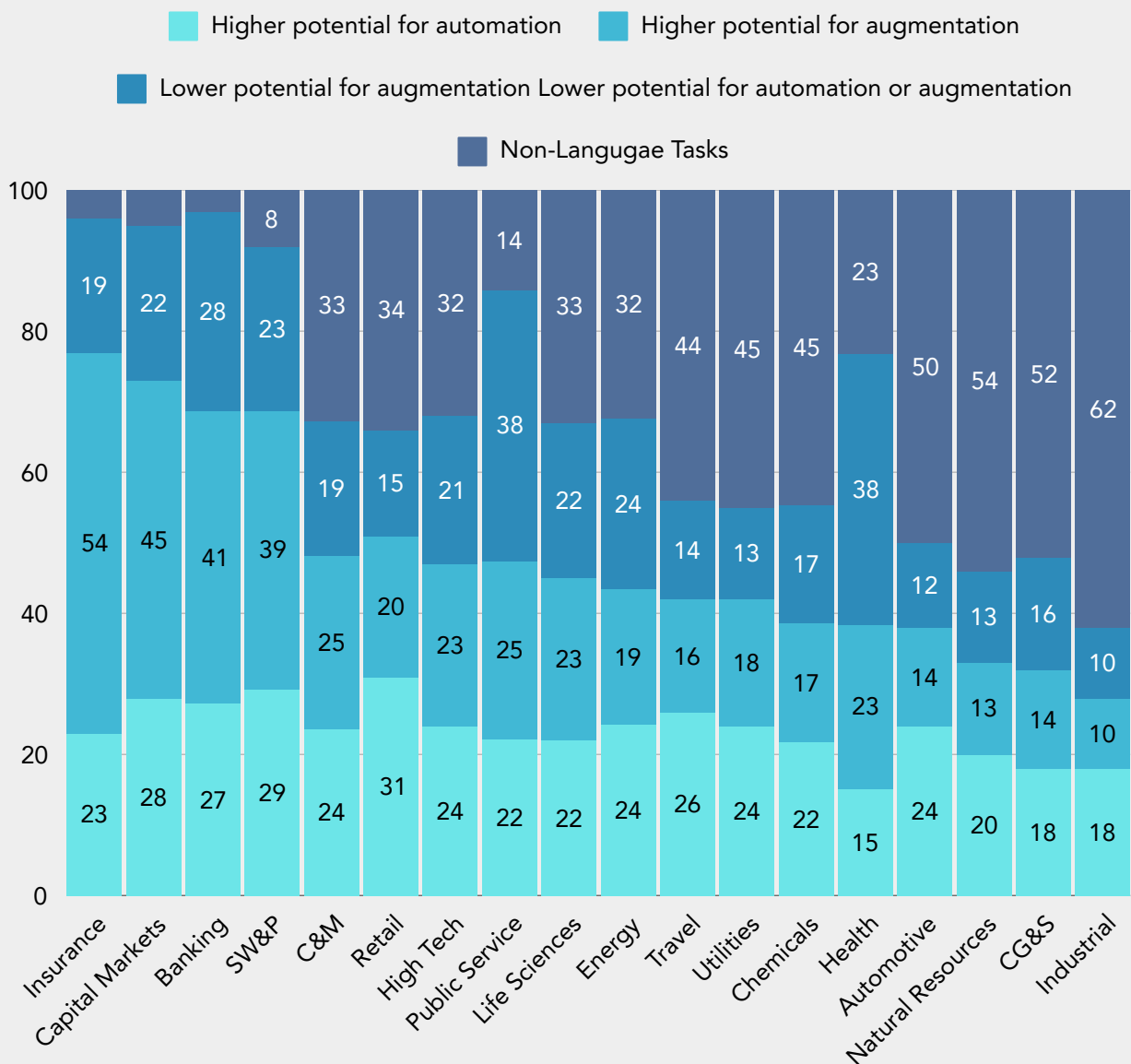
Fun Fact: Being polite and saying "please" to ChatGPT can lead to more precise and effective responses.

Generative AI will transform work across all industries in Saudi Arabia.

Generative AI is set to reshape work in Saudi Arabia, with varying impacts across industries. Sectors like Capital Markets (45%), Banking (41%), and Retail (31%) show high automation potential, while Industrial (62%), CG&S (54%), and Natural Resources (50%) rely more on non-language tasks, limiting AI's effect. Meanwhile, Public Service (38%) and Health (38%) have strong augmentation potential, indicating AI will assist rather than replace workers. As Saudi Arabia advances its digital transformation, understanding AI's role in automation and augmentation will be key to workforce planning.

Automation: AI assists humans to enhance their work

Augmentation: AI fully replaces human tasks



Source: National Statistical Institute and O*Net database information.

The statistics have been derived from an analysis done on a basket of nations, and this does not necessarily represent specific percentages for Saudi Arabia. Estimates sourced from a computer-based analysis of work tasks' exposure to the impact of generative AI.

A fundamental idea underlying this new wave of technology is that computer programmes no longer need to function as human-controlled tools, confined to specialised tasks: They can now combine multiple tasks without human input.



AI Advancements in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia

Bahrain's Bold Leap into the Future with Emerging Technologies

AI has become a cornerstone of Bahrain's technological revolution. The government has made significant strides in embedding AI across various sectors, from healthcare and education to cybersecurity and public services. One of the most impactful examples is the BeAware Bahrain app, which uses AI, IoT, and machine learning to help the Kingdom effectively manage crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This app provides citizens with real-time information, helping them stay informed and safe. Bahrain's approach to AI is not just about technology adoption but about ensuring that it aligns with the Kingdom's values, promoting both innovation and responsible use.

Blockchain technology is another area where Bahrain is making significant strides. With initiatives like the electronic Know-Your-Customer (eKYC) platform, Bahrain is revolutionizing the way financial institutions verify and process customer data. By using blockchain, the Kingdom ensures secure and efficient transactions while maintaining transparency. The Blockchain Vehicle Registration project further demonstrates Bahrain's commitment to utilizing cutting-edge technology to streamline processes, reduce costs, and improve the quality of services provided to citizens.

Bahrain's commitment to data-driven decision-making is reflected in the development of its National Data Lake, the first country-level data repository in the region. This centralised platform, which integrates data from 73 government entities, allows for powerful analytics that will enhance public service delivery and policy-making. Big data and AI work hand in hand, enabling the government to make more informed decisions and deliver better services to the public, whether in urban planning, healthcare, or economic development.

Education and workforce readiness are also key priorities as Bahrain embraces its digital future. Through partnerships with institutions like Bahrain Polytechnic and Tamkeen, the Kingdom is ensuring that its workforce is equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in a technology-driven economy. These initiatives foster innovation by nurturing talent and supporting businesses in adopting new technologies. As Bahrain continues to push forward with blockchain, AI, and other emerging technologies, the Kingdom is building a foundation for a dynamic, sustainable, and future-proof society.

AI Advancements in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Pioneering Towards a Digital Future

Saudi Arabia is rapidly advancing towards a digital future, driven by its Vision 2030 initiative. Led by HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country is diversifying its economy with a focus on AI, robotics, and the Internet of Things (IoT). These technologies are being integrated into key sectors like manufacturing, services, and smart city development, positioning Saudi Arabia as a regional tech leader.

A major highlight is the creation of NEOM, a smart city powered by innovative digital technologies, including the world's first cognitive metaverse. The Saudi government is fostering tech growth by supporting startups and international businesses through specialised economic zones and investment initiatives.

AI plays a central role in this transformation, with the Saudi Data and AI Authority (SDAIA) spearheading national efforts to integrate AI across sectors like healthcare, finance, and public services. The country is also investing heavily in digital infrastructure to support this growing demand for AI-driven solutions.

These initiatives are expected to significantly boost Saudi Arabia's digital economy, creating jobs and enhancing its global position in the tech landscape.

Saudi Arabia's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) market is the largest and fastest-growing in the MENA region, valued at over £32 billion.



Upskilling and Reskilling

Bridging Gaps for Tech Talents

Bridging the Skills Gap

Ahlam Oun, Director at General Assembly, emphasised the urgent need for upskilling programmes to address the widening tech talent gap. Bahrain has positioned itself as a leader in workforce development, particularly in emerging fields like software engineering, UX design, and cybersecurity.

As technologies and business models continue to evolve, many companies face skills shortages. Digitalisation is reinventing businesses, and CEOs are turning to HR leaders to develop and recruit new talents for achieving company goals.



General Assembly trained over 1,000 Bahrainis, with 80% achieving positive career outcomes and 36% transitioning into tech roles. These programmes included boot camps, accelerator courses, and career coaching.

Identifying skill gaps

Upskilling Bahrain: Insights That Matter

1. Bahrainis Are Your Winning Bet

Investing in Bahraini talent ensures sustainable growth and fosters a competitive workforce.

2. Career Transitioners Are an Investment

Those transitioning into new fields bring fresh perspectives and a strong drive to succeed.

3. Bootcamps Work!

Intensive, hands-on training programmes deliver measurable results in a short time frame.

4. Upskilling Motivates

Continuous learning opportunities boost employee morale and commitment.

To future-proof the workforce in an era of rapid technological change, Ahlam Oun highlighted the importance of structured upskilling programmes that align with evolving industry demands. Bahrain's proactive approach to workforce development, particularly through initiatives like those spearheaded by General Assembly, positions it as a regional leader in preparing talent for the digital economy.

The AI Upskilling Framework reinforces this strategy by providing a clear pathway for individuals and organisations to cultivate AI expertise. Rather than focusing solely on technical specialists, this framework ensures that every professional—from entry-level employees to senior leaders—has the opportunity to grow their skills and contribute meaningfully to AI-driven transformation.

Do you face a skills gap within your company?



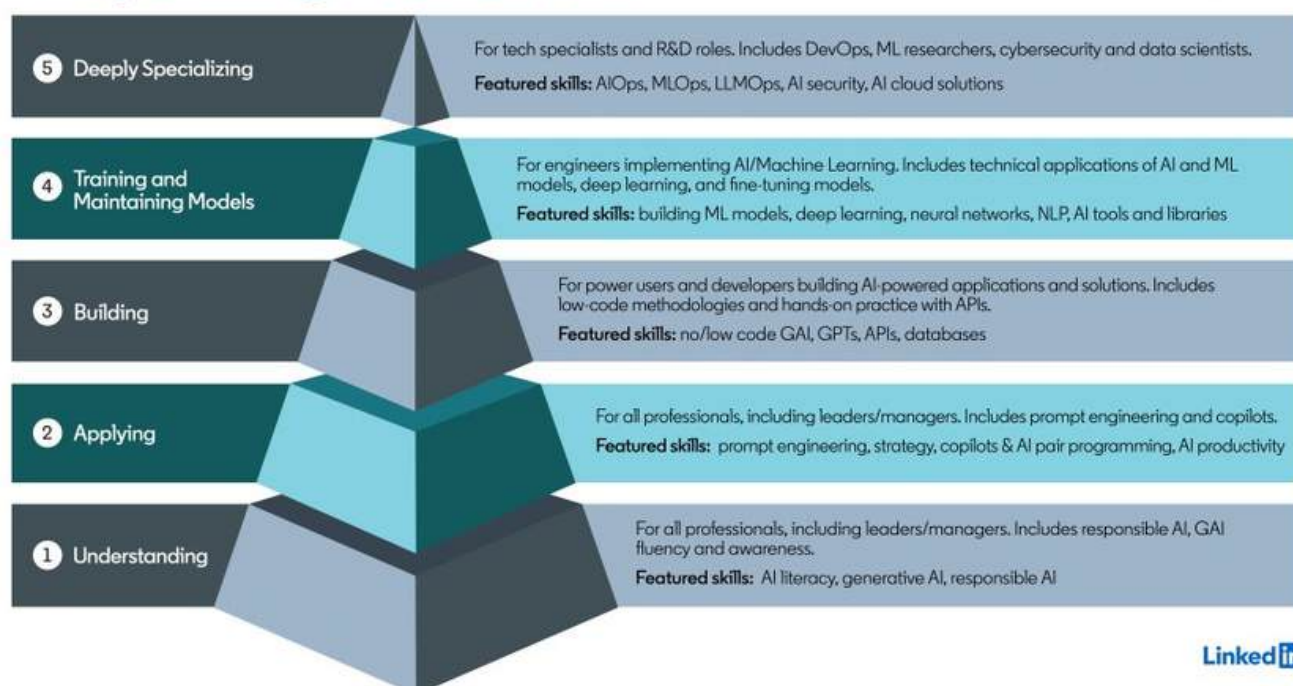
Training vs. hiring: How do you address the skills gap?



Source: the State of L&D - Survey by TalentLMS & SHRM

AI Upskilling Framework

Build business-critical AI skills at every level of your organization



LinkedIn

Upskilling and Reskilling

Future-Ready Talent with Tamkeen Offerings

Tamkeen, established in 2006, has played a crucial role in driving the development of Bahrain's national economy. By empowering Bahrainis, driving private sector growth, and creating sustainable employment opportunities, Tamkeen's initiatives are essential to Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 and ensuring long-term economic and social prosperity.



Key Objectives for the Future of Work

Ahmed Janahi introduced Tamkeen's objectives and initiatives that are designed to support Bahrain's transition to a more competitive and future-ready economy:

Jobs+

The Jobs+ programme connects employers with qualified Bahraini talent, offers hiring support, and provides wage subsidies through Tamkeen.

1. **Upskill & Reskill:** Equip Bahrainis with in-demand skills.
2. **Diversity & Inclusion:** Enhance workforce participation for all.
3. **Tech Adoption:** Prepare for AI and digital advancements.
4. **Private Sector Growth:** Connect businesses with skilled talent.
5. **Future-Proof Jobs:** Create adaptable employment opportunities.

Tamkeen partnered with Pluralsight to provide over **1,000** Bahraini private sector employees with access to its vast library of over **7,000** tech courses, aiming to enhance their skills and career growth.



Upskilling and Reskilling

The Rise of New-Collar Jobs

Younger workers are prioritising job stability, fair pay, and upskilling opportunities over new technology disrupted jobs. Gen Z, for example, increasingly favours stable sectors like government and healthcare for jobs with security, purpose, and are less likely to experience layoffs.

Blue collar is back

Blue-collar job opportunities are on the rise in the Middle East, particularly within manufacturing and construction. In the UAE, blue-collar job postings increased by 69% in 2024, driven by major construction projects. Saudi Arabia is investing heavily in manufacturing, with over \$100 billion in investments in the sector. Additionally, blue-collar migration from India to the GCC has surged by 50% in 2023, reflecting the growing demand for skilled labor.

Source: Arabian Business, Fast Company ME, The Indian Eye

New collar explained

In the Middle East, the rise of "new-collar" jobs in sectors like fintech, e-commerce, and AI is creating opportunities for skilled workers who may not have advanced degrees but possess practical experience or vocational training. This shift highlights the growing emphasis on competencies over formal education credentials.

Source: Expertise Recruitment, QS Magazine



AI Job Roles

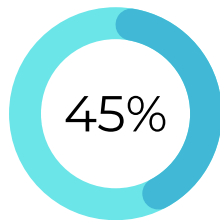
As AI continues to advance, specialised roles are key to ensuring its successful development and integration. These professionals collaborate to optimise performance, maintain security, and support business transformation, driving innovation and delivering value across industries.



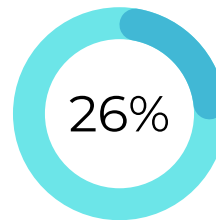
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Inclusion as a Driver of Organisational Success

Inclusion is a critical pillar in creating diverse and thriving organisations. It encompasses the extent to which employees from all backgrounds feel valued, respected, accepted, and are encouraged to contribute meaningfully to the organisation's goals. Farrah Al Qassimi, Associate Principal at Gallup, presented Gallup's research highlighting that inclusion is not merely a concept but a necessity for fostering a supportive work environment.



Companies with **high diversity scores** reported an average of 45% innovation revenue.



Companies with **low diversity scores** Reported an average of 26% innovation revenue.

Innovation revenue is the money a company earns from selling its new or significantly improved products, services, or processes.

Source: Boston Consulting Group (BCG)

Gallup's three core elements for building an inclusive organisational culture

According to Gallup, a staggering 90% of employees who report not being treated with respect also indicate having experienced some form of discrimination or harassment at work. This reinforces the importance of respect as a foundation for inclusive workplaces.

1. **Employees** must feel respected.
2. **Managers** should actively recognize and value employees for their individual strengths.
3. **Leaders** must take decisive actions aligned with doing what is right.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Embracing Human Sustainability

The move toward human sustainability represents a parallel shift in organisations' concept of people. Human sustainability applies to all people in contact with the organisation: not just current workers, but also future workers, extended workers, customers, investors, communities where the organisation operates, and society broadly.

What is Human Sustainability?

Shifting focus to **how organisations benefit people**, rather than how people benefit organisations. This includes improving human outcomes to enhance organisational outcomes, creating a beneficial cycle for all stakeholders.

However, the worker-organisation relationship is becoming increasingly fraught amid broad disruptions in business and society. Only **43%** of workers say **their organisations have left them better off than when they started**. In the research, workers identified increasing work stress and the threat of technology taking over jobs as the top challenges to organisations embracing human sustainability.

Tactics for organisations to thrive in 2025

The way organisations respond to disruptions in talent and technology will determine who will succeed and who will struggle in 2025.

Businesses must focus on creating an adaptable, agile workplace and proactively develop strategies to anticipate future challenges and opportunities.

Effectively executing these tactics will be essential as businesses seek to harness disruption as a catalyst for innovation and growth. In adopting forward-thinking approaches, organisations can thrive by turning disruption into a driving force for reinvention.

1

Invest in Upskilling Your Employees

- Explore Tamkeen's funding programmes to subsidize employee training costs, including AI certifications and upskilling initiatives.
- Partner with General Assembly to provide employees with access to their high-quality training programmes, such as AI-focused bootcamps, upskilling accelerators, and career development courses.

2

Encourage Human and AI Collaboration

- Use AI tools to automate tasks like CV formatting and interview note-taking, saving 60% of time for more strategic work.
- Regularly assess both human and AI skills to avoid over-relying on AI for tasks requiring empathy or ethical decision-making, ensuring human judgment remains central.

"Collaboration between humans and AI could unlock up to \$15.7 trillion in economic value by 2030."

World Economic Forum

3

Come Up with New Job Roles

- Identify areas within your company to automate repetitive tasks and create new roles that encourage creativity and innovation, allowing employees to focus on strategic, value-driven activities.
- Build interdisciplinary teams that blend technical expertise with diverse perspectives to foster creative problem-solving and develop new AI-integrated opportunities for growth.

5

Move away from generic HR programmes

HR must shift from generic programmes to tailored solutions. By collaborating with managers, HR can understand specific business needs and create targeted initiatives while ensuring that programmes are relevant, impactful, and aligned with overall business goals. By moving away from a generic approach, HR can demonstrate its value as a strategic partner, contributing significantly to the organisation's success.

4

Cultivate an Inclusive Workforce (DEI)

- Foster a sense of belonging for all employees, regardless of their background, race, gender, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.
- Actively recruit and hire from diverse talent pools. Implement mentorship programmes to support the growth of underrepresented groups.

6

Encourage healthy work life boundaries

To create antifragile workplaces, organisations must recognise the link between well-being and productivity. Stress and burnout at work result in depression and anxiety, costing \$1 trillion in losses. Provide your employees with the space to recharge and maintain their productivity and antifragility over the long term.

**4 in 10 people
report feeling
burned out at work.**



Gallup Survey

Conclusion

The future of work is being defined by rapid technological advancements, evolving workforce expectations, and the critical need for inclusive, adaptive strategies. At the Future of Work HR Conference, attendees were asked, **“What is the biggest challenge you’re facing in HR?”** Responses highlighted key pain points such as employee retention, productivity, hiring, and talent development. These challenges underscore the complexity HR professionals face as they strive to align organisational goals with the needs of a dynamic, future-focused workforce.

Retention and hiring remain top challenges as organisations compete for talent in a dynamic market. Productivity and talent development also stand out, highlighting the need for upskilling and reskilling to meet evolving demands like AI integration. These interconnected challenges require comprehensive solutions.

Propel Consult specialises in recruitment and HR solutions to help organisations address these complexities. From sourcing top talent to enhancing workforce capabilities, we are dedicated to empowering businesses to thrive in the future of work. Together, we can build a skilled, innovative workforce ready to drive success.



The responses above reflect the insights shared by attendees of the Future of Work HR Conference 2024 when asked about the biggest challenges they face in HR.



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