

2026 HR Trends and 34 Ways To Stay Ahead



Trend #1: HR Continues Investing in AI

By 2026, one-third of organizations expect their hiring process to be entirely AI-powered. AI is transforming HR by streamlining workflows, improving decision-making, and personalizing employee experiences.

Opportunities for HR Leaders

1. **Implement an AI-driven applicant tracking system (ATS)** to automate candidate sourcing, screening, and matching, saving significant time for recruiters and reducing manual work and bias.
2. **Use automated interview scheduling tools** to streamline coordination between candidates and hiring managers, increasing efficiency and accelerating the hiring process.
3. **Leverage AI-powered onboarding workflows** to assign tasks, send reminders, and track new hire progress for a consistent, personalized onboarding experience.
4. **Set up predictive analytics dashboards** to monitor real-time HR metrics — like time-to-fill and turnover risks — enabling HR to proactively address challenges before they arise.
5. **Automate compliance tracking** for certifications, background checks, and document collection using your ATS, ensuring no crucial step is missed when hiring or onboarding.
6. **Harness AI-driven employee pulse surveys** to gather actionable insights on engagement and satisfaction and get automated recommendations for follow-up action.

With more rapid changes expected for HR next year, staying ahead means being proactive. We're sharing actionable opportunities you can take now to prepare for 2026 and beyond. Take advantage of these 34 opportunities to future-proof your HR strategy and position your company for success.



Trend #2: Employee Upskilling and Reskilling in the AI Era

The U.S. is projected to face a gap of over five million skilled workers by 2032. As AI reshapes the workplace, upskilling and reskilling are critical to closing this gap and preparing your workforce for the future.

Opportunities for HR Leaders

7. **Launch AI-powered skills assessments** to identify employee strengths and pinpoint development areas based on current and future job requirements.
8. **Create personalized learning and development (L&D) plans** in your learning management system (LMS) that automatically recommend targeted training modules aligned to each employee's role or career goals.
9. **Set up internal career pathing** with a talent management system, helping employees visualize potential roles and the skills or certifications needed for advancement.
10. **Deploy continuous feedback and check-ins** with performance management solutions so managers can track skills progress and encourage ongoing development.
11. **Automate course assignments** for required upskilling, ensuring team members receive the right training at the right time, and reminders for completion.
12. **Use AI-enhanced analytics** to track the impact of training initiatives, measure competencies gained, and identify skill gaps across teams. You'll also get automatic recommendations for next steps to close those gaps.

Trend #3: Balancing Growth and Efficiency

43% of HR professionals say upgrading their HR tech to streamline tasks is a top priority Scaling your team and processes without overextending resources is essential for 2026.

Opportunities for HR Leaders

13. **Automate repetitive HR workflows**, like approvals and document management, to reduce manual effort and free up time for strategic projects.
14. **Leverage data-driven headcount planning solutions** to analyze current workforce distribution and forecast future needs, ensuring you scale teams efficiently.
15. **Use customizable dashboards** in your talent management system to monitor performance metrics, identify resource bottlenecks, and reallocate efforts in real time.
16. **Standardize onboarding and offboarding processes** with automated task assignments. That ensures a consistent experience and reduces administrative burden as your organization grows.
17. **Tap into AI-powered reporting** to uncover process inefficiencies and gain recommendations for improvement, allowing your team to act proactively rather than reactively.
18. **Utilize employee engagement and goal-tracking tools** to align daily tasks with business objectives, keeping teams focused and ensuring resources are directed toward the highest-impact initiatives.

Trend #4: Driving Performance With Company Culture

Companies with strong cultures see 72% higher employee engagement. A performance-driven culture that aligns with your values can boost productivity and retention.

Opportunities for HR Leaders

19. **Send engagement surveys** to gather feedback and track sentiment, identifying areas where culture is thriving or needs support.
20. **Launch regular pulse surveys** and analyze the results to measure the impact of culture initiatives on employee engagement.
21. **Recognize employees in real time** — share wins publicly and tie acknowledgments to core company values.
22. **Connect company goals to individual goals** so employees can see the impact of their work and get motivated.
23. **Immerse new hires in company values** from day one with the help of your onboarding and learning software, establishing a strong foundation for performance and engagement.

Trend #5: Cultivating Future-Ready Leaders

Only 20% of HR leaders say their company has leaders ready to fill critical roles. Developing leadership skills like communication, resilience, and adaptability is essential for navigating change.

Opportunities for HR Leaders

24. **Launch personalized leadership development plans** in your LMS, tailoring content and progress tracking to individual needs.
25. **Use performance and engagement analytics** powered by AI to identify employees with high leadership potential early, helping you build your succession pipeline.
26. **Assign targeted mentorship opportunities and coaching programs** to provide practical experience and ongoing support to new and emerging leaders.
27. **Track leadership skill-building initiatives** and certification progress directly in your LMS platform, ensuring transparency and measurable growth organization-wide.
28. **Leverage talent management dashboards** to forecast future leadership needs and prepare your workforce for internal mobility and organizational changes.

Trend #6: Making Employee Well-Being a Business Priority

80% of employees say mental health and well-being training is essential for a positive workplace culture. Prioritizing well-being improves engagement, productivity, and retention.

Opportunities for HR Leaders

29. **Launch well-being and engagement surveys** to identify needs and track progress on wellness initiatives.
30. **Centralize benefits information and simplify access** to resources with a self-service employee portal, making it easy for team members to find and use mental health and wellness tools.
31. **Promote flexible work arrangements**, whether that's with schedules or work locations, to support healthy work-life balance.
32. **Recognize and reward** healthy behaviors and participation in wellness programs, reinforcing your company's commitment to well-being.
33. **Analyze anonymized absence and performance data** to detect burnout risk early and address it with wellness resources and coaching.
34. **Leverage AI-driven onboarding** to deliver personalized well-being resources to new hires, creating a supportive culture from day one.

Drive real results and future-proof your HR strategy with ClearCo.

Schedule your ClearCo demo

