HR BRIEF

March 2026

6 HR Trends for 2026



The workplace is undergoing a transformation, largely driven by technological advancements, regulatory shifts and evolving employee expectations. HR is not a back-office function amid these changes; more than ever, it's a strategic partner shaping organizational resilience and competitiveness.

Here are six HR trends that will define the year ahead:

1. **Artificial intelligence (AI) redefining roles and expectations**—AI is poised to replace many roles and create new opportunities that demand a different skillset. Furthermore, empathetic leadership is on the rise in the digital era, and companies are ensuring that innovation remains human-centered.
2. **The growing gig economy**—By 2027, freelancers, gig workers and crowd workers are expected to become the majority of the workforce.
3. **An HR and IT alliance**—As organizations deploy AI, integrated analytics and digital platforms, HR leaders need IT expertise to ensure secure, scalable and compliant systems.
4. **Layoffs reshaping talent pools**—According to Resume.org, 6 in 10 companies plan to lay off employees in 2026, bracing for slower growth and tighter budgets. At the same time, layoffs expand the talent pool with experienced professionals, creating opportunities and challenges for hiring and retention.
5. **The rise of skills-based hiring**—Skills-based hiring has been gaining traction for years, and this trend is expected to continue. As such, more employers may focus their hiring efforts on the right skills rather than on experience or education.
6. **Compliance changes**—The One Big Beautiful Bill Act is ushering in broad changes to employee benefit plans related to compensation, benefits and payroll operations.

The future of work is both high-tech and deeply human. Savvy organizations can help weather uncertainty by designing workplaces that strike a balance between performance and purpose.

Preventing Burnout by Helping Employees Find Meaning at Work

Burnout has become a defining challenge in today's workplace. Employees across industries report feeling exhausted, disconnected and undervalued. These conditions not only harm individual well-being but also impact organizational performance. While burnout is multifaceted, fostering a sense of purpose at work can be the key to overcoming it.

MetLife reports that half of employees feel disconnected and undervalued at work, a sentiment that often leads to disengagement and emotional fatigue. Several factors contribute to burnout, including job insecurity, limited career development opportunities, increasing work demands, and a lack of recognition and support.

Consider these tips to help employees find meaning:

- **Connect everyday tasks to big picture goals.** Sending monthly or quarterly reports that highlight measurable results tied to team efforts is a practical approach.
- **Encourage autonomy and voice.** Organizations can foster this by allowing flexibility in how tasks are completed and creating forums for feedback. For instance, hosting quarterly meetings where employees pitch ideas for improving processes can empower them to shape the future of their workplace.
- **Recognize and celebrate contributions.** The key is to go beyond generic praise and be specific about what was done and why it mattered. This type of recognition validates the employee's impact.
- **Invest in development.** Providing training and mentorship programs that align with personal interests and career goals can deepen engagement and foster a sense of purpose.
- **Create space for reflection.** Organizations can encourage this by scheduling team discussions about their values and mission.

By prioritizing meaningful work, organizations can transform the employee experience from one of disconnection to engagement. Reach out for additional workplace guidance.

Contact us for more resources.

TOUGHCOMP
BEFORE THE LAST RESORT™
(212)390-8772 info@toughcomp.com

© 2026 Zywave, Inc. All rights reserved.