

BREAKING POINT

In today's dynamic labour market, which is riddled with uncertainty and transformative shifts brought about by AI and the new dynamics in the world of work, HR has become no stranger to change, it has become the nature of our function. But with a constant need to adapt, accelerated innovation and increased pressure, it is our function that is being expected to bear increasing pressure, as we have been nominated to lead in the workplace transformation that is happening now.

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OF DISENGAGEMENT"



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The current climate has prompted HR and TA leaders to have a strategic focus on retaining, upskilling and “recruiting” existing employees, while also continuing to build and nurture external talent pools to be hire-ready and address the ebbs and flows in hiring needs. The changing role of HR leadership - in reality a significant transformation - reflects the broader and more complex needs of modern organisations. Today, HR leaders are viewed as strategic partners, responsible for navigating the changing needs of the business and carefully balancing talent investment with overarching organisational objectives and, in terms of recruitment, are expected to do more than open and fill jobs. Notably, there is an opportunity for recruiters to advise the business on what is happening across all functions and this includes assessing existing employee talent and identifying in-demand skills needed for the future of work. The unique position of recruiters and the data at their disposal, enable them to educate their fellow business leaders on the broader hiring landscape as talent expectations and needs evolve, helping to lead the organisation in its technological transitions. This strategic role shift is particularly important amid corporate budget constraints and high staff attrition rates, where the need to keep top talent engaged and motivated has never been more critical.

With nearly half (46 percent) of professionals considering quitting their jobs in the year ahead, companies are increasingly turning to HR leaders to develop and implement comprehensive retention strategies - which include creating clear pathways for career advancement within the organisation - that will enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty. After all, poor retention is costly and it's a burden that many companies can't afford in this current economic environment. Financially, the constant cycle of recruiting, hiring and training employees demands substantial resources and the cost of vacancy is one of the top three metrics. So, the consequences of poor retention extend beyond direct expenses, with constant employee turnover creating a sense of

uncertainty and instability, leading to feelings of disengagement, low morale and a decline in overall business performance. Turning then to the rise and proliferation of AI, which has added another layer of responsibility, with HR decision makers now at the forefront of upskilling initiatives, ensuring that the organisation's most promising talent has the necessary resources to grow in their roles and that their workforces possess the necessary skills to operate effectively in a rapidly evolving work environment. Of course, like their peers across the business, HR leaders too are focused on AI investments - and increasingly stepping up to lead technological change - whilst

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cultivating collaboration and identifying new ways to drive impact. Indeed, nearly 70 percent claim that they have already implemented new AI capabilities into recruiting processes or plan to do so in the next 12 months. They also say that some of the top uses for AI across their teams, are to draft candidate communications, generate interview questions and create job descriptions. But as we all integrate AI into recruitment processes, we must also focus on ethics and fairness and use AI responsibly, to help mitigate bias in decision-making and enhance the human aspect of HR.

With so many “top” priorities on the list, it is little wonder that HR leaders and their teams feel under pressure. So, let us conclude with a look at the top priorities for the next 12 months: Improve diversity

hiring and retention, enhance internal mobility, improve talent acquisition and enhance employer brand. When narrowing in on TA priorities specifically, some of the top focus areas are analytics and reporting, talent sourcing, diversity of talent pools and hires and hiring manager productivity. That's a lot, not to mention, more than half (55 percent) are spending more time in their role on talent acquisition today than they did two years ago. Not only are we navigating changing hiring needs for our business criteria, but we are also dealing with market shifts and increased candidate expectations. Concurrently, retention isn't far behind, with over a fifth of HR leaders citing the retention of high-performing employees as a top business concern. Notably, many HR seniors recognise internal mobility as pivotal in tackling the challenge of retaining top performers, given the strong emphasis that employees place on upskilling and career advancement opportunities. Indeed, a whopping 83 percent of HR leaders ranked internal mobility as a top priority for 2024, with 37 percent reportedly placing a bigger emphasis on these initiatives than they did in 2023.

Strategic investment in internal mobility fosters employee loyalty and engagement, leading to higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover rates. In addition, organisations that prioritise upskilling not only satisfy their current workforce, but also better attract prospective talent, enabling them to build a more resilient and adaptable workforce capable of meeting evolving workplace demands. In fact, Gallup research found organisations that invest in employee development are twice as likely to retain their employees and further report an 11 percent greater profitability. So where is the investment in internal mobility going to be focused upon over the next 12 months? The answers will not be a surprise to most readers of this publication, it is in new tech, increasing internal hiring rates, upskilling and reskilling employees and creating the framework and career paths to build a formalised programme.

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