AMS

The 2026 talent blueprint

Trends that matter

Executive summary

AI is the strategic force reshaping talent acquisition and workforce design. Our latest analysis, conducted in conjunction with our partners, Wakefield Research, indicates that the role of the CHRO must evolve to confront this opportunity. Leading CHROs say they now play a central role in determining how AI is deployed across the enterprise, not just in HR. They are driving alignment across leadership, equipping the workforces with tools and education, and embedding ethical guardrails into every decision. This is a critical moment for CHROs and represents a significant shift.

This AI-driven landscape demands a skills-driven approach. When companies treat skills data as a shared business system and not simply an HR project, they can grow faster and adapt to challenge more easily. Alongside this shift, the necessity of ethical AI comes into focus as organizations build trust amongst colleagues and candidates alike.

From establishing CHRO-led AI councils and enterprise skills clouds to creating shared design authorities and publishing transparent AI disclosures, the moves outlined in these five trends set the foundation for scale and trust. Organizations that invest in reskilling, internal mobility, and clear change programs will not only mitigate risk but create productivity, growth, and competitive advantage in an AI-driven talent landscape. This is the power and potential unlocked when organizations blend people, process, data and technology meaningfully.

Gordon Stuart
Chief Executive Officer, AMS

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1

The role of the CHRO will expand to include enterprise AI orchestration

Why it matters:

AI is no longer just another tool, it changes how work gets done and is changing work itself. Organizations that use it well can rethink and improve how they operate. The CHRO is in a unique position to connect workforce planning, business needs, and the responsible use of AI to support growth and innovation, and to enrich the experiences of all colleagues within their organization.

What the data says

59%

59% expect the CHRO role to be more focused on AI than people in the next five years as automation expands in sourcing and hiring.

80%

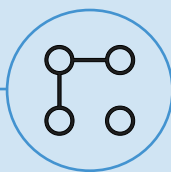80% believe CHROs should lead AI investment decisions, ahead of IT.

71%

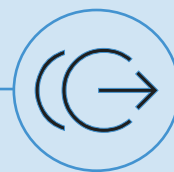71% believe their organization should be investing more in AI for talent acquisition.

Moves to make now

Establish a CHRO-led **AI Talent Council** with Legal, Risk, Data, CIO to set standards and investment priorities.

Tie **AI in TA** to revenue and productivity OKRs, not just cost or speed.

Fund "**AI savvy HR leadership**" hires and reskilling programs.

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A skills-first talent and workforce strategy becomes a source of competitive advantage

Why it matters:

Skills based hiring has been on the agenda of many organizations in a climate where access to quality talent is ever more difficult. AI has a role to play in delivering a skills agenda which supports productivity and growth and identifies the behavioural skills of communication, organization and empathy that drives quality of hire. To have strategic value beyond creating capacity, organizations also need to look to at how AI can unify data flows, mapping, building and mobilizing skills within workforces. CHRO's who treat "skills intelligence" as a core corporate competence, powered by technology to identify the skills within their organization as well as those they need to find externally, can create real competitive advantage.

What the data says

75%

75% cite skills gaps (shortages or early career deficits) as a major barrier to acquiring talent.

76%

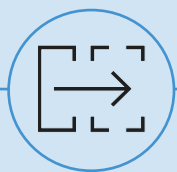76% of respondents' value soft skills more due to rapid developments in AI.

50:50

When it comes to what's more essential in future-proofing the workforce, decision makers are split 50:50 between investing in AI versus investing in people, with CHROs leaning slightly toward AI.
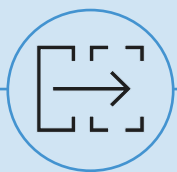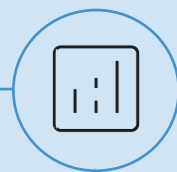
Moves to make now

Build and embed an **enterprise skills cloud** linked to TA, L&D, and workforce planning.

Incentivize internal mobility with **skill based** pathways and verified credentials.

Create a **unified data** view between the external TA systems i.e. enterprise ATS, and the skills marketplace systems to ensure that there is a joined-up view of the talent/skills available.

Measure soft skill signals in assessments and interviews by coaching hiring managers to read them well.

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Leadership alignment on AI will create disciplined and meaningful scale

Why it matters:

The ownership of AI strategy remains divided in many organizations and yet expectations for the technology to deliver meaningful impact remain high. This fragmentation of different leaders pushing tools without shared outcomes and understanding of data output will stall efficiency, duplicate effort and create risk. The CHRO is ideally placed to align on where and how AI creates value across the enterprise, which skills are needed to apply it, measure success and determine the ethical guardrails that need to be preserved.

What the data says

89% ◯

89% aren't using AI across all TA use cases; 63% say their TA team isn't using enough AI to find and recruit qualified talent.

71%

71% want more AI investment in TA; 53% want somewhat more investment.
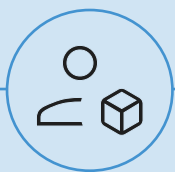
#1

Where AI is used for TA, efficiency, not cost-savings, is the #1 driver (67%).
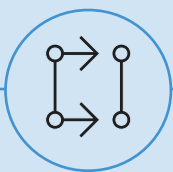
47%

50% CHRO
58% other Csuite
34% HR/Talent

47% say the Csuite and HR/TA are misaligned on AI's role in finding, recruiting and hiring strong talent.

Moves to make now

Develop an **enterprise AI** use case roadmap for TA, sequenced by value and risk.

Apply AI to blend common and emerging talent KPIs such as skills velocity, quality-of-hire, recruiter productivity, diversity outcomes.

Create a shared design authority (**CHRO + CIO**) to approve models, data sources, and integrations.

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Job security concerns will give way to new roles for growth minded organizations

Why it matters:

Automation has already reshaped TA and HR structures but to sustain performance and culture, organizations now need roles that blend people expertise and AI fluency – combining AI and HI (human intelligence). Critically, this approach requires a change program that addresses morale and capability, it's not just tech rollout. The opportunity is to create strategic advantage by focusing on the human element, addressing fears (such as job displacement), building skills, fostering trust, and aligning people with new processes to ensure AI is effectively used and delivers real business value, not just deployment.

What the data says

70%

70% are concerned about job security as AI becomes integral to TA.

The top operational changes expected with regards to hiring processes over the next two years:

53%

Hire AI savvy HR leaders
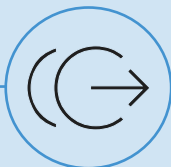
45%

Automate the hiring process

41%

Hire more talent managers

Moves to make now

Create **hybrid roles** (e.g., AI Talent Operations Lead, TA Data & Ethics Partner) with clear career paths.

Fund cross functional HR/Talent reskilling, including promptcraft, model literacy, and candidate experience design.

Run a **change & communications plan** that acknowledges anxiety and shows net positive impact on work.

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Ethical AI becomes a brand and compliance advantage

Why it matters:

Guidelines for the use of AI are now a given, but real trust comes from how well those guidelines and policies are operationalized. Today, particularly in early careers/campus programs, we are seeing 3x increase in applications for roles due to the tools that candidates can use, as naturally candidates want to increase their chances of being hired. This phenomenon is, however, causing a huge increase in effort to manage the higher volumes, and the impact is decreasing trust, further eroding the social contract between employers and candidates.

There needs to be clear transparency for candidates, hiring managers and team leads that sit with auditable governance models and clear human oversight where it matters. In 2026 this will become a core part of employer brand narrative and reputation.

What the data says

88%

AI GUIDELINES

88% report formal ethical AI guidelines approved and shared with TA teams.
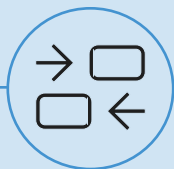
87%

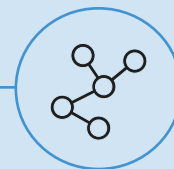87% agree it's ethical for candidates to use AI to improve resumes.

Moves to make now

Publish your **AI disclosures** to candidates (what's automated, fairness controls, human review points).

Audit models quarterly for bias/validity and transparently report outcomes.

Codify "**qualified human-in-the-loop**" decision gates in hiring.

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People powered partnership