

2026

Leading the Future of Work Trend-to-Action Playbook



H3 HR Advisors
www.H3HR.com



Meet Our Team



TRISH STEED CO-FOUNDER, CEO

Trish Steed is the CEO and Principal Analyst for [H3 HR Advisors](#), co-host of the [At Work in America](#) podcast and the HR Happy Hour podcast on the HR Happy Hour Network alongside [Steve Boese](#). She is also the creator of the H3 LIVE! vlog.

A former HR executive and HCM product leader with over 20 years of experience in Big 4 public accounting, PR, healthcare, manufacturing, and IT, Trish brings that knowledge to her clients as an analyst and advisor.



STEVE BOESE CO-FOUNDER, PRESIDENT

Steve is one of the Co-Founders of H3 HR Advisors, a leading HR technology advisory and services consultancy.

Since 2013, Steve has been the Program Chair and host of the [HR Technology Conference](#), the world's largest gathering of the global HR Technology community, and authors a monthly HR Technology Column for [Human Resource Executive magazine](#). He is a frequent speaker and author on topics in Human Resources, HR technology, and the world of work.



KAREN STEED DIRECTOR, CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Karen Steed is the Client Experience Director & Learning Analyst of H3 HR Advisors.

Karen works with client teams to promote their organizational needs seamlessly and effectively, through strategy and planning. She is also responsible for the HR Happy Hour Network media production and promotion. Previously, Karen served 15 years as an elementary educator and early childhood administrator. Her focus is on learning solutions that are engaging and practical.



Introduction

The world of work is always evolving and changing. HR leaders are now responsible for balancing technological disruption, shifting workforce expectations, and the need for trust and empathy at the core of leadership.

In our Trends Shaping HR and Business Leadership presentation, we explored how forces like Gen AI, skills-based talent strategies, and strategic compliance are redefining how we lead today.

This playbook is designed to turn those insights into clear, 90-day actions that help you:

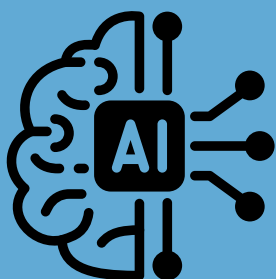
- Move from trend awareness to real execution
- Engage your teams in forward-focused conversations
- Build momentum toward lasting transformation

Think of it as a bridge between insight and action to help you lead with clarity, agility, and purpose in the months ahead.

How to Use This Guide

1. Pick one trend to focus on first.
2. Share the 90-day actions with your team and invite their ideas.
3. Set milestones and measure results.
4. Build Momentum and layer in additional trends over time.

💡 **Tip:** Use this playbook in team meetings or quarterly planning sessions to spark discussion and drive alignment.



Generative AI in 2026

What it Means

Generative AI has moved beyond pilots into everyday productivity, with domain-specific models delivering unique value. In HR, its use is expanding into training, content creation, and workflow automation. Integration and innovation are driving competitive advantage.

Why it Matters

- Unlocks efficiency and personalization across HR functions.
- Creates new opportunities for innovation and competitive differentiation.
- Requires policies for ethical, secure, and equitable use.

90 Day Actions



Quick Win

Identify one HR workflow where Generative AI could cut completion time in half, and run a pilot.



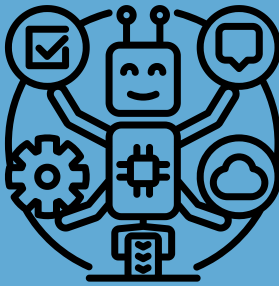
Team Engagement

Host a collaborative workshop to co-create AI use guidelines, ensuring buy-in, ethical guardrails, and a focus on secure data practices.



Long-view Start

Launch an AI literacy and co-creation upskilling program so your workforce is prepared to partner effectively with AI tools and understand their impact.



Agentic AI & the Future of Workflows

What it Means

Agentic AI refers to autonomous systems that act on behalf of users; managing tasks, making decisions within defined parameters, and freeing people from repetitive work. This transforms work from “doing” to “directing.”

Why it Matters

- Allows employees to focus on high-value, human-centered work.
- Enhances the employee experience through intelligent task delegation.
- Introduces new leadership skills and oversight responsibilities.

90 Day Actions



Quick Win

Identify a single workflow where an AI agent could take over routine steps.



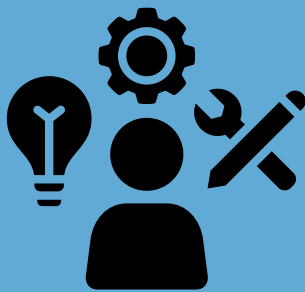
Team Engagement

Host a “Workflow Reimagined” session with managers to map tasks that could shift to AI agents and discuss how oversight would work.



Long-view Start

Develop an “AI Agent Onboarding” process that includes ethical guidelines, performance monitoring, and escalation protocols.



Skills-Based Talent Strategies

What it Means

Organizations are shifting from degree-based hiring to focusing on the capabilities people bring to the table. This opens access to diverse, nontraditional talent pools, supports internal mobility, and empowers employees to grow in dynamic ways.

Why it Matters

- Expands access to talent beyond traditional pipelines.
- Improves agility by aligning workforce skills to business priorities.
- Encourages internal mobility and retention through clearer development pathways.

90 Day Actions



Quick Win

Audit current job descriptions to identify where degree requirements could be replaced with specific skills.



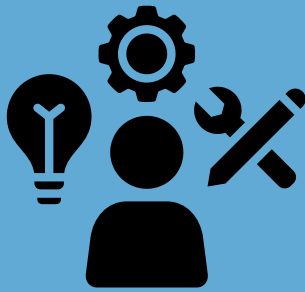
Team Engagement

Facilitate a “Skills Discovery” session with one department to identify key skills in use, underutilized capabilities, and areas for growth. Document results in a and choose one hidden skill to apply in a small project within 30 days.



Long-view Start

Begin developing a dynamic skills framework that supports talent marketplaces and evolving business needs.



Trust & Empathetic Leadership

What it Means

As trust in institutions declines and technology reshapes the workplace, the need for leaders who communicate clearly, act ethically, and show empathy has increased. Trust and empathy are skills that directly influence engagement, retention, and performance.

Why it Matters

- Builds employee confidence during times of change.
- Strengthens team cohesion and psychological safety.
- Differentiates organizations in attracting and retaining talent.

90 Day Actions



Quick Win

Schedule regular leader-led updates to address business priorities, changes, and progress with transparency.



Team Engagement

Lead a short “Empathy in Action” discussion with your team, asking them to share examples of when they felt most supported at work and how those moments could be replicated.



Long-view Start

Incorporate empathy and trust-building exercises into leadership development programs, including training on active listening, decision-making, and difficult conversations.



Strategic Compliance

What it Means

Rising complexity in AI, data privacy, and employment law requires HR to lead proactive, transparent compliance strategies. Compliance is no longer just about risk mitigation; it's a driver of trust, stability, and brand integrity.

Why it Matters

- Reduces organizational risk in a rapidly changing legal environment.
- Builds trust with employees, customers, and stakeholders.
- Enables innovation by creating a foundation of transparency and fairness.

90 Day Actions



Quick Win

Conduct a mini-audit of one high-risk compliance area, such as AI use, data privacy, or wage and hour policies.



Team Engagement

Hold a “Compliance in Action” meeting to review how regulations impact daily work and gather ideas for improving processes.



Long-view Start

Partner with legal and technology leaders to develop an audit-ready compliance framework that supports automation, consistency, and ongoing training.

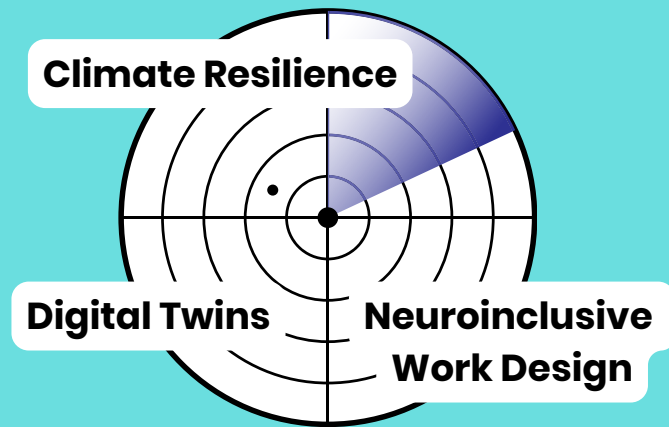
Emerging Trends to Watch

While today's trends demand immediate attention, future-readiness also depends on tracking the signals of what's next.

Areas like digital twins and AI-powered assistants, climate resilience as a core business priority, and neuroinclusive work design are gaining traction and will shape the workplace in the years ahead.

Why it Matters

- Gives organizations a head start on adapting to new opportunities and risks.
- Positions HR as a strategic partner in business transformation.
- Encourages a culture of experimentation and adaptability.



Action Starter Ideas

Digital Twins & AI Assistants

Identify one workflow where a digital assistant could handle data updates or scheduling, and test it with a small team.

Climate Resilience

Review your facilities' emergency preparedness plan and identify one quick sustainability improvement.

Neuroinclusive Work Design

Pilot one change to meeting formats or workspace setup that reduces sensory overload and supports different thinking styles.

Partner with us in 2026









H3 HR Advisors is a full-service Human Capital Management consulting, research, and advisory firm. Additional packages or retainer options available.



Launched in 2009, The HR Happy Hour Media Network features the longest continuously running internet radio show and podcast on all things HR and HCM.

Succeed by building relationships that drive your ambitious business results forward with experience and insights you can trust

-  HR and learning leaders bringing our combined 70+ years of experience to your project
-  Providing an objective look at your solution and marketing needs
-  Helping you reach your product and customer goals
-  Utilizing our company research to support your business imperatives
-  Thought leadership to understand the evolving workplace
-  Projects tailored specifically to your needs

Contact Us

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