

ARISE HR • HR ROUNDTABLE

The AI Imperative

Why CEOs Needs HR to Lead the Future of Work

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A Quick Word on Why I'm Standing Here



Sat in the HR seat first

Served as a CHRO and Chief Innovation Officer before founding ARISE HR — I've made these calls from inside the building, not just advised on them.



Wrote the book on it

"The AI Imperative: Why CEOs Need HR to Lead the Future of Work" — the thesis we'll build on today.



Work the floor, not just the podium

ARISE HR partners with small businesses, nonprofits, and community institutions doing this work in real time.

LET'S START WITH A SHOW OF HANDS

Where is your organization, right now?

- 1 We haven't really started
- 2 A few of us are experimenting
- 3 It's in daily use on my team
- 4 We have formal AI policy & governance

Raise your hand when I call your number — no wrong answers.

PART ONE

HR Has Led This Before (We Just Didn't Call It That)

Three moments when technology rewired the workplace — and the people function had to decide whether to lead the transition or absorb the fallout.

01



1913

The Moving Assembly Line

Henry Ford's assembly line cut the time to build a Model T from about 12 hours to roughly 90 minutes. Skilled craftsmen who once built a whole car watched their trade get broken into repeatable steps — and many feared the machine was coming for their livelihood.

Instead, Ford nearly doubled wages to \$5 a day in 1914, in part to hold onto workers through the disruption. The job changed. The workforce didn't disappear — it had to be retrained, re-organized, and re-motivated, on purpose.

THE PATTERN: New technology doesn't just change output — it changes what a job is. Someone has to redesign the role and manage the people through it, or the gains never show up on the balance sheet.

02



1980s

The Personal Computer Hits the Office

When PCs landed on desks, entire departments of typists and calculators braced for layoffs. Instead, new categories of work appeared almost overnight — data entry, systems administration, desktop support — while other roles were redefined around a keyboard and a screen.

Companies that simply dropped a computer on every desk without retraining or redesigning workflows saw years of stalled productivity. The tool arrived fast; the organizational change took far longer.

THE PATTERN: Buying the technology is the easy part. The competitive advantage comes from how deliberately you redesign roles, retrain people, and reset expectations around it.

03



1990s

The Internet Arrives at Work

Email, intranets, and the early web collapsed how fast information could move inside a company — and blew up decades of assumptions about who needed to know what, and when. HR departments that had run on paper personnel files and posted memos suddenly had to govern a channel nobody had rules for yet.

Organizations that got ahead of it wrote the first real "acceptable use" and information-security policies. The ones that didn't spent years cleaning up the mess — including some very public, very expensive ones.

THE PATTERN: Every technology wave needs guardrails before it needs enthusiasm. The organizations that write the rules early move faster later — the ones that don't spend that time in cleanup instead.

Every Wave Looks the Same in Hindsight

1

1. Fear arrives before the tool does

People assume the worst about what a new technology means for their job — usually before anyone has decided anything.

2

2. The tasks change before the headcount does

Roles get restructured around the technology long before — if ever — the org chart actually shrinks.

3

3. Someone has to manage the human side, on purpose

Retraining, redesigning roles, resetting expectations, and writing the guardrails doesn't happen by accident.

That "someone" has always been HR's job to claim. This time is no different — except the pace is faster and the stakes are higher.

PART TWO

Where HR Actually Stands in 2026

Not predictions. What's already happening in HR departments this year.

2026, in Four Data Points

81%

Recruiting leads AI adoption of any HR function today

62%

Of organizations expect to grow headcount this year — AI is not primarily a layoff story

4 in 10

Companies say they plan to replace some roles with AI, concentrated in repetitive, data-heavy work

1 in 2

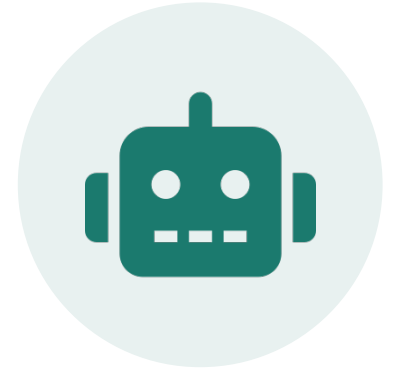
Talent leaders plan to add an autonomous AI agent to their team this year, per Korn Ferry

TURN & TALK • 90 SECONDS

Tell the person next to you:

"What's one task on your team that AI has already touched — whether you rolled it out on purpose, or someone just started using it on their own?"

We'll take two or three out loud before we move on.



Agentic AI Moves In

- Agentic AI — systems that can execute multi-step tasks and make decisions with minimal human input — is moving from pilot to production across HR technology.
- Early use cases cluster in onboarding, payroll processing, workforce analytics, and routine administrative work.
- The organizations getting value aren't the ones with the flashiest tool — they're the ones with clean, accessible, well-governed data underneath it.

THE HR ANGLE: If your data governance isn't HR's job yet, it needs to be — agentic AI amplifies whatever data discipline (or chaos) already exists.



Skills-Based Hiring, With a Catch

- Skills-based hiring is now the dominant recruiting approach for many organizations, opening the door to candidates without traditional credentials.
- It comes with a new risk HR leaders are naming out loud: "skillfishing" — candidates overstating or fabricating capabilities to get past AI-assisted screening.
- The advantage in 2026 goes to teams that move verification earlier in the process, not the teams that simply hire faster.

THE HR ANGLE: Speed without verification just moves the mis-hire further down the funnel — and it still lands on your desk.



From Program Owner to Strategic Partner

- HR is increasingly expected to co-strategize AI transformation — not just administer the tools IT and the C-suite hand down.
- That means a seat in the rooms where AI deployment decisions get made, alongside the CFO, CTO, and business unit leaders.
- The job is to translate what a technology decision means for roles, skills, culture, and trust — in language leadership can act on.

THE HR ANGLE: If HR isn't in that room by invitation, the move is to build the case for why it should be — with data, not just a seat request.



AI Literacy Becomes a Core Competency

- SHRM research puts prompt writing, data ethics, and model interpretation on the same list as any other foundational HR skill this year.
- Digital fluency training is showing up in formal learning-and-development plans — not as a nice-to-have, but as infrastructure.
- HR's own credibility to lead this conversation depends on practicing what it's asking the rest of the organization to do.

THE HR ANGLE: You can't coach AI adoption you haven't tried yourself. Fluency is now a leadership requirement, not a personal hobby.

Standing Still Isn't Neutral

Every historical wave we looked at had a version of this fork in the road:

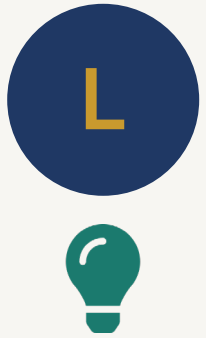
If HR leads

- + Roles get redesigned on purpose
- + Guardrails exist before problems do
- + People trust the process because someone owned it
- + HR earns the strategic seat

If HR waits

- IT or individual managers decide alone
- Policy gets written after the incident
- Adoption happens unevenly, off the books
- HR is handed the cleanup, not the credit

Four Moves to Lead From Here



Learn it yourself

Get hands-on with the AI tools already in your building before you're asked to govern them.



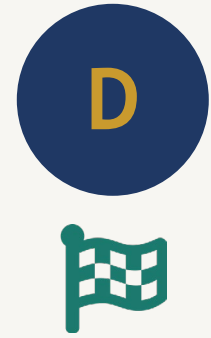
Evaluate the data

Audit what data feeds your HR systems — agentic AI is only as good as what it's reading.



Align with the C-suite

Build the relationships with IT and finance now, before a rollout forces the conversation.



Drive the people plan

Own retraining, role redesign, and communication — the parts of every past wave that decided who won.

QUICK GUT CHECK

On a scale of 1 to 4, how ready is your HR function to lead this?

1 We're still figuring out what AI even touches in our org

2 We have pockets of activity but no plan

3 We have a plan and we're executing pieces of it

4 We're actively shaping how AI gets used here

One Thing, Before You Leave This Room

Write down one specific action you'll take in the next two weeks:

Which tool, process, or policy will you personally test-drive?

Who from IT or Finance will you schedule 30 minutes with?

What data source needs a governance conversation first?

NOW, LET'S TALK

Roundtable Discussion

Your submitted topics, on the table.

Topics you told us mattered to you at registration:

How to track FMLA?

PTO and unpaid time off - what do CUs do for their policies?

Dress Codes - how do you undo casual - daily jeans Is anyone getting rid of / cutting back on remote work hours

Thank You

Let's keep the conversation going.

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Reviews
Appreciated!