



**GP**

Globalization Partners



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# 2026 Global Workforce Trends

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In 2026, HR leaders are being tested on every front.

- **Accelerating automation:** AI continues to drive significant operational change, altering workforce structures and day-to-day processes.
- **Declining engagement:** Employee sentiment is increasingly strained as burnout and job security concerns ramp up.
- **Constrained talent pools:** Local markets struggle to keep up with talent demands, intensifying competition for specialized skills.

# 84%

of executives struggle to find skilled talent in their local market (G-P 2025 World at Work Report)

# 64%

of leaders aren't confident their organizations can handle ongoing disruptions (G-P 2025 World at Work Report)

## A turning point for HR leaders

Leaders need to stop reacting to short-term gaps and start building a global workforce ready for the future.

[The G-P 2025 World at Work report](#) shows that 64% of leaders don't feel confident in their company's ability to manage ongoing disruption. The natural instinct in times of change is to hit the brakes and focus purely on cost-cutting. But technology is an unstoppable force. It's redefining workflows, organizational structures, and the global talent landscape. By 2030, [technological advancements will create 78 million net new jobs globally.](#)

Tech advancements will create  
78 million new jobs globally by 2030.

(We Forum Future of Jobs Report 2025)

Leaders need to prepare for what comes next. We've identified five trends that are shaping the global workforce in 2026. For each prediction we provide actionable strategies you can use to achieve lasting success. Acting on these trends now will help you future-proof your workforce and build high-performing teams ready to grow into the next era of work.



## Trend #1

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# The rise of the AI governance role

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AI adoption is a strategic challenge that starts at the top. While [72% of U.S. hiring managers say their company uses AI](#) – up from 66% in 2024 – 55% admit their company doesn't have the resources or training to help employees use it effectively. For HR leaders, the question is less about tools and more about preparing leadership, processes, and systems to succeed with AI.

## 2026 prediction

HR leaders will take on a central role in AI governance. They'll move beyond administrative functions to lead the development of ethical frameworks and transparent policies. Their role will be key to ensuring AI adoption is human-centered and aligned with business objectives.

## What will trigger this shift

The main driver for this shift is the need to build trust and manage the human side of AI integration. [According to the Australian HR Institute](#), nearly a third of organizations face significant disruption, with more than 19% of their roles at risk. This stat is reflected in studies across the globe. And while McKinsey reported that [71% of employees trust their employer to use AI responsibly](#), maintaining that trust requires deliberate governance. Clear policies and a people-first approach championed by HR will be essential to keep company culture strong and harness AI's full potential.

## Strategic pivot: from cost-cutting to capacity-building

Strategic HR leaders are shifting the AI conversation to focus on building capacity. The emphasis is on using AI to unlock employee potential. [AI will be capable of saving professionals 12 hours per week by 2029](#). This time can be redirected toward innovation, critical projects, and upskilling initiatives.

“The way to ensure your organization is successful with adopting and using AI is to make sure your employees are coming along. And HR is uniquely positioned to do that.”

[Laura Maffucci, VP, Head of HR, G-P](#)



# Putting this trend into action

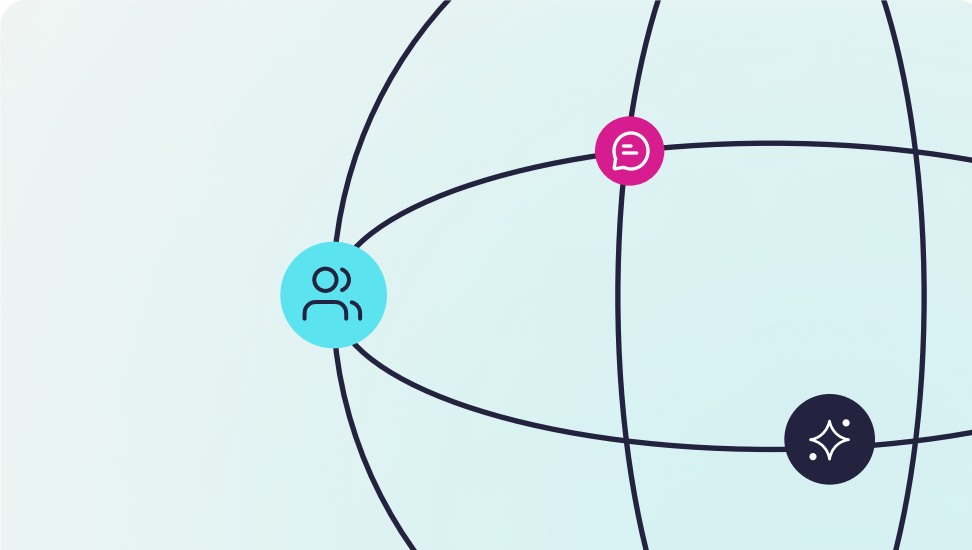
## Within your organization:

- [Create a cross-functional team](#) to identify automation opportunities and address employee concerns.

## Within HR workflows:

- Approach capacity gains from AI as a resource to invest within your own HR organization. More forward-thinking HR leaders will formalize freed time for learning, upskilling, and strategic HR projects.
- Adopt agentic AI systems to manage complex HR functions, including compliance and data analysis. This technology elevates AI from a basic productivity tool to a strategic force multiplier as HR teams navigate complex employee management at a global scale.

In 2026, HR leaders will be more empowered than ever to turn AI's potential into measurable business advantages. Organizations that lead in the future will be those that prioritize creating capacity.



## How HR and IT can align on AI

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Go behind the scenes with HR and IT leaders at G-P as they share real-world tips and strategies for successfully adopting AI across departments.

[Watch now](#)



## Trend #2

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# Continuous learning is the new secret to retention

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Your organizational strategy for AI will set the stage, but your employees' experience will determine the outcome. The pace of change is fueling uncertainty: [62% of workers worry their skills won't keep up](#). And [63% of employers cite skills gap as their top transformation barrier](#). This disconnect is a recipe for anxiety and disengagement. It requires a full reset in how organizations approach skills development.

## 2026 prediction

A study from Workday revealed that that [70% of leaders believe AI is key to HR success](#). While continuous learning has always been critical, the constant evolution of AI will pressure upskilling outside of L&D moments. HR leaders will integrate skills-building directly into daily workflows, ensuring development is continuous, measurable, and aligned with business objectives.



# 46%

of employers think their teams have the skills to succeed. But employee confidence dropped from 59% in 2024 to 49% in 2025 ([Trinet](#))

## What will trigger this shift

According to [ADP research](#), employees who feel supported in their training are six times more likely to recommend their company and 3.3 times more likely to report high productivity. Investing in skills breaks down the 63% transformation barrier, enabling successful AI adoption and scaling.

## Strategic pivot: from hiring skills to building capabilities

HR strategies are evolving to prioritize internal talent development over relying on external talent acquisition. Instead of treating learning and development (L&D) as a supplemental benefit, leaders are using it as a strategic asset that drives retention and ensures their workforce can scale alongside new technologies.

## Putting this trend into action

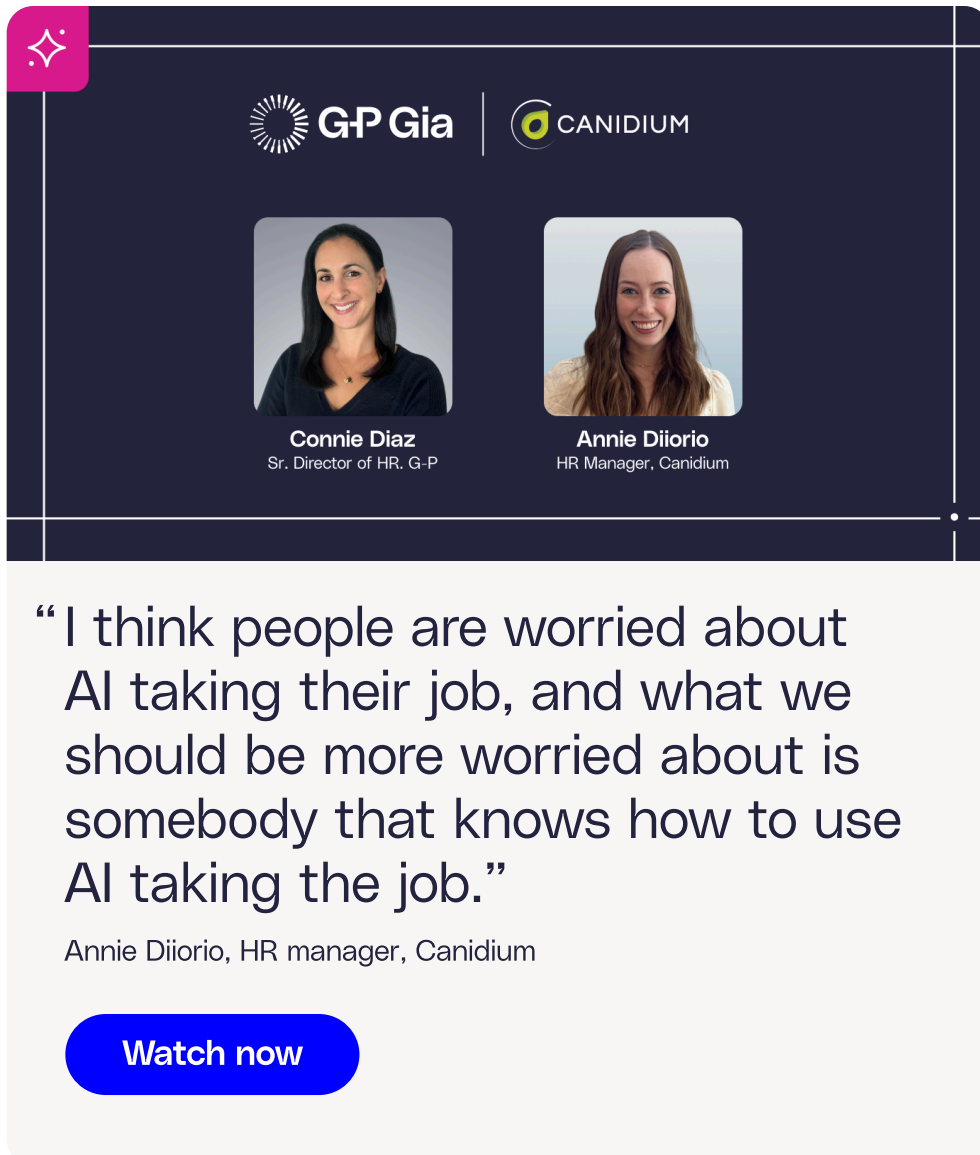
### Within your organization:



- Realign L&D as a core business function. Integrate skills-building into retention and performance strategies.
- Focus training programs on critical thinking, creative problem-solving, ethical decision-making, and adaptability.
- Use real business scenarios to teach employees the how and why of applying insights, reinforcing human oversight.


### Within HR workflows:


- Invest in HR systems (HRIS) or talent platforms that can track and categorize skills dynamically. This means the system can adapt as new skills (like AI proficiency) become important.
- Ensure the platform automatically suggests the right training courses based on their reported skills and the identified gaps.

By transforming L&D into a value-driving engine, HR leaders can close critical skills gaps, retain their best talent, and position their organization to thrive in 2026 and beyond.



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**Connie Diaz**  
Sr. Director of HR, G-P

  
**Annie Diorio**  
HR Manager, Canidium

“I think people are worried about AI taking their job, and what we should be more worried about is somebody that knows how to use AI taking the job.”

Annie Diorio, HR manager, Canidium

[Watch now](#)

# Regional perspectives on AI and L&D

The following country-level breakdown highlights the regional differences in workforce views on job security, AI readiness, and job displacement.

| % of employees:  | U.S. | U.K. | Australia | France | Germany | Singapore |
|--|------|------|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|
| Concerned about losing their job due to macroeconomic factors impacting the global economy | 70%  | 61%  | 62%       | 56%    | 56%     | 85%       |
| Worried their skills aren't future-proofed for an AI-powered workplace                     | 64%  | 59%  | 60%       | 55%    | 54%     | 83%       |
| Think AI and automation are already replacing entry-level jobs at their organization       | 64%  | 55%  | 61%       | 40%    | 41%     | 66%       |
| Searching for a new job or likely to start looking in the next six months                  | 55%  | 53%  | 61%       | 36%    | 39%     | 62%       |

## What these regional differences reveal:

- 1. Job security concerns:** Countries like Singapore and the U.S. face heightened anxiety about job security due to macroeconomic factors and rapid AI adoption, which is reshaping industries. In contrast, France and Germany, with stronger social safety nets, report lower concern levels.
- 2. AI readiness and skills:** Singapore's aggressive AI integration, supported by initiatives like the Platform Workers Act, drives high concern about future-proofing skills. Meanwhile, slower AI adoption in Germany and France results in less urgency for upskilling.
- 3. Job search activity:** High job search activity in Singapore and Australia reflects dynamic labor markets and proactive regulations, such as Australia's wage theft laws and Singapore's platform worker protections.

These trends underscore the importance of region-specific strategies to address workforce sentiment and readiness.

In high-anxiety regions like Singapore and the U.S., HR should prioritize AI upskilling and continuous learning to ease concerns about skills and job displacement. In lower-anxiety regions like France and Germany, proactive upskilling integrated into daily workflows will prepare employees for the eventual impact of AI adoption.

AI tools for global HR and compliance can simplify complex, multi-region legal requirements, allowing HR teams to focus on strategic initiatives like tailored upskilling and talent development.



### Trend #3

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# The best perk is peace of mind

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Ongoing economic uncertainty and employee burnout continue to reshape the employee value proposition (EVP). U.S. workforce burnout has surged to its highest level in six years with **72% of employees experiencing moderate to very high stress**. And **55% of the global workforce is experiencing financial strain**, up from 52% in 2024. As competition for top talent intensifies, companies must address both external financial pressures and internal strain from heavy workloads to succeed.

96%

of employees report work-related stress  
(Aflac WorkForces Report)

55%

of global workers experience  
financial strain (PwC)

## 2026 prediction

Companies will take more ownership of employee well-being, leveraging new technology to personalize and localize total rewards. By addressing regional financial insecurity, burnout, and turnover, they'll set new EVP standards. A 2025 study shows companies with robust well-being programs see [41% lower turnover, linking employee health to retention](#).

## What will trigger this shift

A dual crisis of financial instability and widespread burnout is forcing employers to prioritize well-being.

- [Better pay and improved benefit](#) packages are top deciding factors for 54% of employees considering changing jobs – a jump from 41% pre-pandemic.
- 61% of employees are experiencing [burnout from staffing shortages](#).

The message is clear: Employers who focus on well-being will attract and retain top talent.



# 35%

of U.S. employees would switch jobs for better benefits (HR Dive)

## Global snapshot

- In the [U.K., median basic pay increases](#) have remained at 3% across all sectors for six consecutive quarters, despite inflationary pressures.
- HRD Asia People at Work 2025 revealed that [27% of workers feel unfairly paid](#), with concerns higher among women. Stress has become a leading cause of unscheduled absences, rising from 42% to 57% over two years. On top of this, there's a growing trend of workers having multiple jobs, reshaping workforce dynamics.
- In the U.S., [35% of U.S. employees would switch jobs for better benefits](#).

# Strategic pivot: from surface-level perks to proactive stability

HR leaders should design total rewards strategies that are globally consistent yet locally customized. This approach will directly address the root causes of employee stress and turnover.

But designing a global total rewards plan is more complex than a domestic one. HR teams are using AI technology to navigate diverse regulations, cultural expectations, and cost-of-living variations to create customized benefits offerings. Ensuring fairness, compliance, and alignment with the organization's overarching strategy will be the ultimate challenge for leaders in 2026.

## Putting this trend into action

### Within your organization:

- Adopt a data-driven approach to benefits. Treat them as strategic levers for talent acquisition and retention.
- Design a global total rewards system that balances global consistency with local customization.
- Address financial insecurity and burnout through targeted, high-value benefits and flexibility.

### Within HR workflows:

- Use AI to navigate diverse regulations, cultural expectations, and cost-of-living variations across countries.
- Implement pay transparency and analytics to ensure fairness and alignment with organizational goals.
- Use technology to streamline benefits administration and the employee experience.

By transforming total rewards into a value-driving engine, HR leaders can close critical skills gaps, retain their best talent, and position their organization to thrive in 2026 and beyond.

## Learn more about global total rewards



See how global robotics leader Boston Dynamics uses tech tools to research, design, and implement compliant benefits and policies for their global workforce.

[Watch now](#)



Tune in as Stephanie Varner, Sr. Director Global Total Rewards at G-P, explains how companies navigate rapidly evolving global compensation.

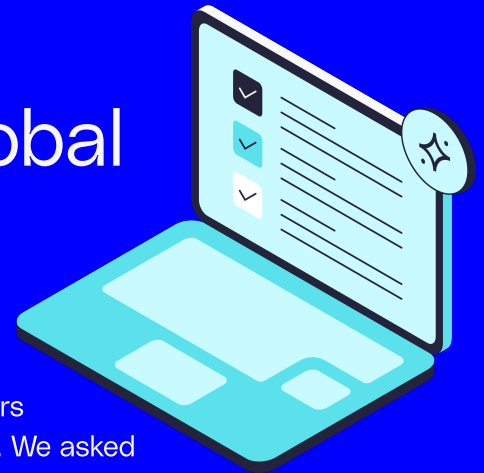
[Watch now](#)

## AI in practice

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# Save time in 2026 by using AI to guide your global total rewards strategy

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To give you a real-world example of how technology can shape your strategy, we asked G-P Gia™ for insights. Gia is agentic AI that offers HR compliance guidance across 50 countries and all 50 U.S. states. We asked Gia for an overview of benefits expectations in a few countries around the globe:



**Australia:** Superannuation is a significant part of total rewards, with employers required to contribute to the fund of the employee's choice. The contribution rate is 12% of an employee's ordinary time earnings (OTE).



**France:** Due to extensive state benefits, supplemental benefits are less common. However, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is offered to provide additional support.



**Germany:** Common allowances include home office, telephone/internet, and transportation stipends. A **13-month salary** is sometimes negotiated, although not a standard offering.



**Singapore:** Companies often offer supplemental perks like medical coverage, dental, vision, and maternity benefits. An EAP is also provided to support employees with personal or work-related issues.



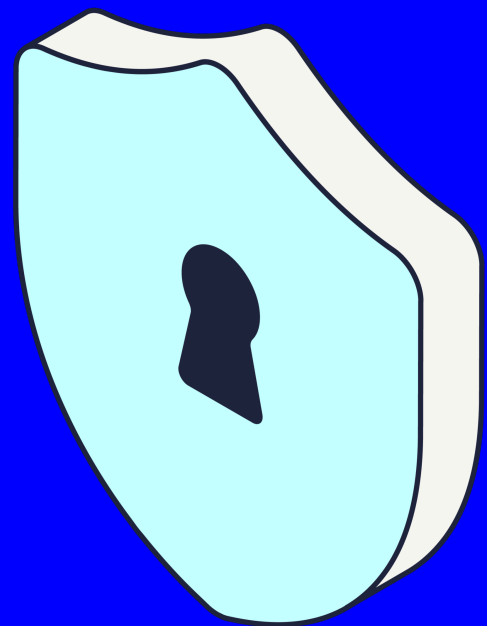
**United Kingdom:** Supplemental benefits such as life insurance, income protection, medical, dental, and an EAP are highly valued. These benefits complement state benefits and are important for attracting and retaining talent.



**United States:** Bonuses and commissions are common components of total rewards, subject to state and federal payroll withholdings. The U.S. has a progressive tax scheme, which affects the tax rate based on income.



Want to learn about the required benefits in a specific country? [Ask Gia](#). By designing a global total rewards system that considers local regulations and cultural expectations, businesses will build a foundation of trust and establish themselves as employers of choice.



## Trend #4

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# From periodic to proactive HR compliance

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As global hiring accelerates and AI-powered HR tools redefine industry standards, compliance is poised to become a cornerstone of strategic HR management. In 2026, the growing complexity of international labor laws and rapid technological advancements will push organizations to transition from periodic or manual compliance efforts to continuous, proactive strategies. Those who embrace these innovations will not only mitigate risks but also unlock new efficiencies, setting the stage for a more agile and resilient workforce.

# 2026 prediction

HR compliance is set to undergo a major transformation as organizations adopt proactive, tech-enabled frameworks to mitigate risk.

A [recent 2025 study](#) revealed that over half (53%) of organizations are currently using or trialing AI for HR compliance functions – a significant 25% increase from the previous year. Agentic AI will be the core tool to support HR leaders with changing complex labor laws, tax requirements, and benefits compliance.

## What will trigger this shift

# 35%

of HR leaders believe they're spending too much time on administrative work  
(HRD Asia)

# 61%

of HR leaders are keeping up with changing regulations and compliance requirements  
(HRD Asia)

This shift will be triggered by the mounting pressure of escalating enforcement and global mobility complexity.

- **Escalating enforcement:** Regulatory action is a significant threat, with more and more organizations facing legal or financial penalties.
- **Global mobility complexity:** With [62% of employees open to international relocation](#), the difficulty of managing diverse labor laws and payroll regulations is amplified.
- **Technology fragmentation:** Separate, manual payroll and HR systems increase errors and create dangerous compliance blind spots. [77% of payroll professionals see this as their top challenge](#).





## Strategic pivot: from reactive policies to tech-enabled governance

HR compliance isn't just about avoiding fines anymore – it's a strategic shield to protect your company. The future of compliance will move beyond piecemeal global policy management. Instead, it will rely on technology-driven frameworks that enable proactive risk mitigation and agility.

This specialized approach is essential. Platforms that [integrate with best-in-class providers](#) offer the depth and flexibility needed to address complex compliance challenges; something all-in-one solutions often fall short of delivering.

## Putting this trend into action

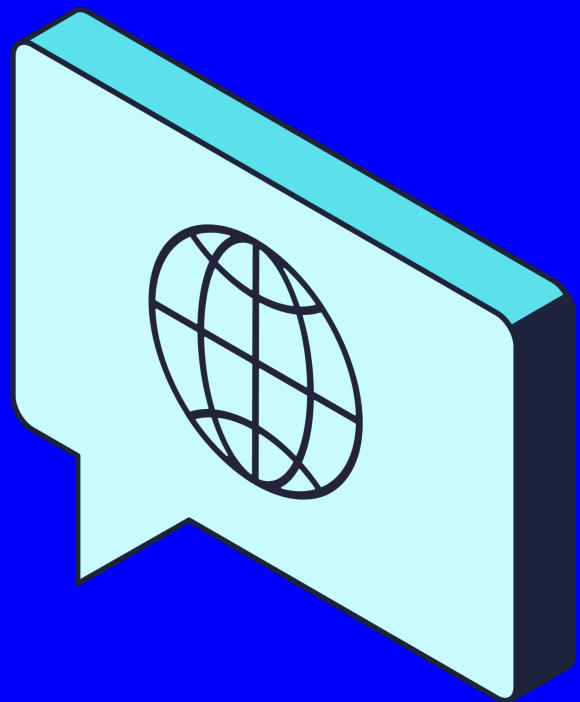
### Within your organization:

- [Partner with an EOR](#) who can help you streamline, support, and navigate the complex HR compliance for employees where you don't have entities.
- Monitor pay equity, adhere to transparency laws, and forecast labor costs in real time.

### Within HR workflows:

- Use [agentic AI to standardize tax](#), benefits, and labor law administration globally.
- Implement [human-centered AI governance](#) frameworks to ensure fairness and transparency.

The next wave of compliance isn't just about risk avoidance. As regulatory complexity grows, organizations that use technology and partnerships to build proactive governance systems will gain the agility to expand into new markets with confidence. This approach positions compliance as both a safeguard and a foundation for sustainable business growth.



## Trend #5

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# The rise of the global talent advantage

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Competition for specialized talent is intensifying, and hiring budgets remain tight. The limitations of local hiring are a bottleneck for innovation and operations, forcing companies to look beyond borders for specialized talent.

## 2026 prediction

[Companies will strategically tap into global opportunities](#) to do-more-with-less. HR leaders will need global expertise to connect the dots and offer insight on when, where, and how new markets can solve additional business challenges and find niche expertise that doesn't exist (or is too expensive) locally.

## What will trigger this shift

This shift will be fueled by the need for greater cost efficiency, increased resilience, and faster market entry. Over half of U.S. Executives (53%) believe that rising costs and inflation pressures will pose the greatest threat to workforce stability in 2026, and nearly half (48%) cite talent shortages in critical roles as a top threat. [This is consistent globally](#). Companies that successfully diversify where and how they hire and become borderless will gain a strategic edge.

## Strategic pivot: from local limits to global opportunity

The imperative is clear—move from a locally constrained workforce and operational approach to a global strategy. Instead of centralizing teams in singular locations and risking business continuity, successful HR leaders are building dispersed workforces. This strategic shift means using technology and building policies that allow both global standardization and localization.

## Putting this trend into action

### **Within your organization:**

- Diversify critical roles across multiple regions to reduce dependency on any single market, improve customer experiences, make business expansion easier, and accessing skilled talent within budget.
- Build an adaptive, borderless approach to talent acquisition to enhance resilience and cost efficiency.
- Use talent heatmaps and cost-of-labor tools to pinpoint optimal regions for specific roles.

### **Within HR workflows:**

- Use AI to standardize core policies while adapting them to meet regional requirements.
- Lean on an AI-driven EOR solution for easy hiring, onboarding, and managing employees where you don't have an entity.
- [Standardize global onboarding](#) processes and documentation through technology, allowing for regional policy customization.

Global hiring creates a win-win scenarios for HR leaders and their companies – with more opportunities for innovation, flexibility, and access to top talent. With tools like employer of record (EOR) platforms, companies can make HR compliance easier while expanding their global reach, positioning themselves for success in a rapidly evolving world.



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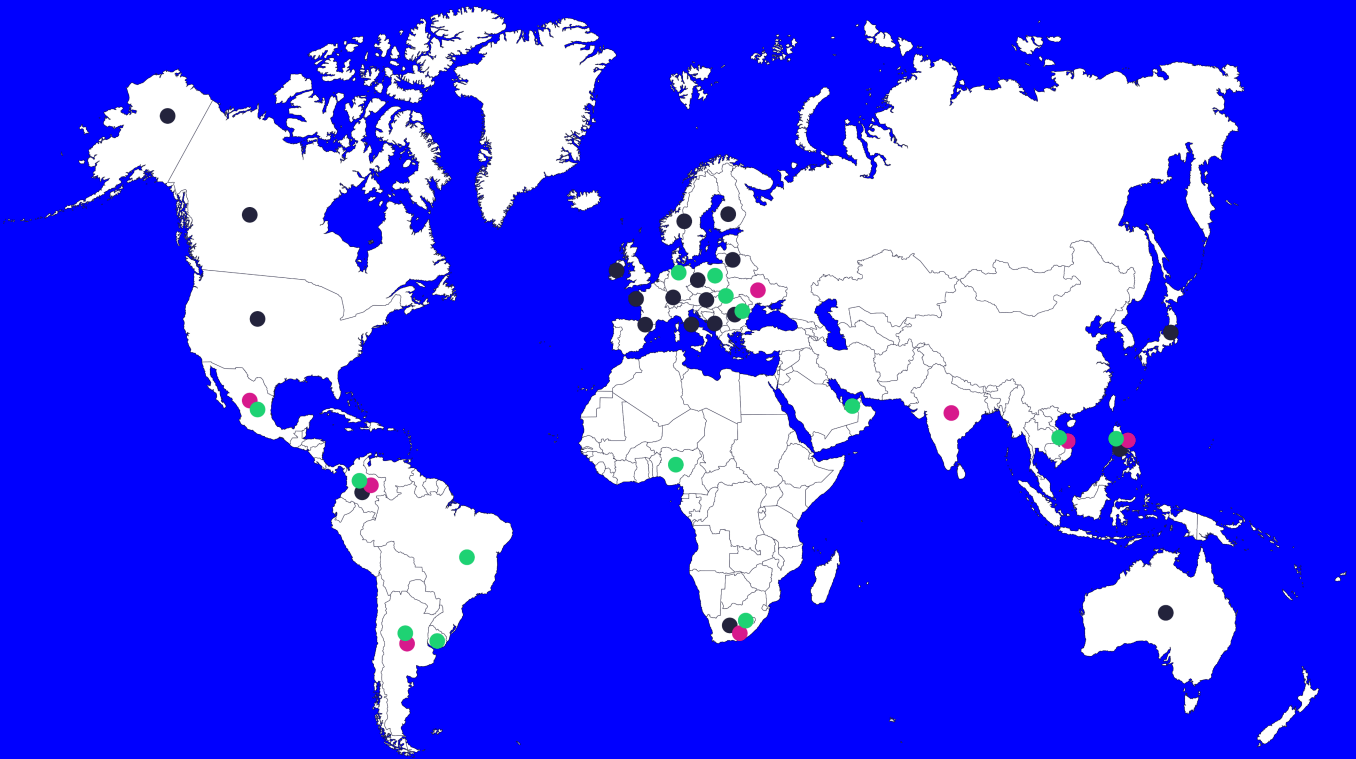
# Trending global talent hot spots

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Drawing from our 13+ years of global employment experience, we've identified trends in global talent distribution. Talent isn't randomly scattered – it's concentrated in regions where skills are abundant, accessible, and cost-effective. For HR leaders, this data is a game-changer. It can help you expand your 2026 talent strategy beyond traditional markets and consider countries you may not have thought of before:

- **Find hidden value:** Emerging talent hubs offer large, skilled, multilingual talent pools that can significantly lower your total cost of employment for roles like engineering or customer support.
- **Fill crucial skills gaps:** Find AI and big data experts in cost-effective regions to meet your organization's growth goals.
- **Build international resilience:** Safeguard your workforce in 2026 against local talent shortages and geopolitical volatility.

Companies of all sizes are using EOR partnerships to explore new markets without the time and cost of entity setup. The chart below highlights current talent trends. However, always ensure you validate this information against your unique needs and the latest market conditions.



## Talent hot spots by role

Certain regions offer stronger talent pools for specific roles. Here are a few examples:

|                                     | Traditional hubs  | Cost-effective scale  | Emerging talent hubs  |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Engineering and development</b>  | EU, U.S., Canada, Australia                                 | India, Philippines, Vietnam, Ukraine  | Poland, Romania, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia                                    |
| <b>Customer success and support</b> | Philippines, Ireland, Portugal                              | Mexico  | Colombia, South Africa  |
| <b>Marketing and creative</b>       |   |   |   |
| Digital marketing                   | U.K., U.S., Canada, Australia                               | Philippines, India, South Africa, Nigeria   | Germany, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, Spain, Portugal |
| Content Creation                    | Ireland   | Philippines, South Africa   | Brazil, Uruguay, Germany  |
| Design                              | U.K., U.S., Canada, Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain | Poland, Romania, Ukraine, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Vietnam, Philippines | Poland, Romania, Ukraine, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Vietnam, Philippines     |
| <b>Sales</b>                        | Ireland, Portugal, Colombia, Philippines, South Africa      | South Africa, Argentina, India, Philippines, Colombia                               | Mexico, Brazil, Poland, Romania, UAE and Czech Republic                                 |

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# Where in the world are companies hiring global talent?

These are the top countries we're seeing our customers hire based off their headquarters.

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## **Australia-based companies:**

U.S., U.K., Canada, New Zealand, Vietnam, and Singapore



## **France-based companies:**

U.K., Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Germany



## **Germany-based companies:**

Spain, Italy, Netherlands, U.K., and Poland



## **Singapore-based companies:**

Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Taiwan



## **U.K.-based companies:**

Spain, Italy, U.S., UAE, and Sweden



## **U.S.-based companies:**

Canada, U.K., India, Philippines, Mexico, Brazil, and Germany

The competitive edge in 2026 hinges on your ability to think globally and act strategically. Exploring new regions offers untapped potential for creative, engineering, and support roles.

Every company is different, and your 2026 strategy will be unique, but a benchmark is always valuable. To get specific hiring advice, [connect with a G-P expert](#).



# 2026 and beyond: Unlock your global workforce potential

Leaders must now focus on integrating advanced technology, fostering continuous learning, and building resilient, globally distributed teams.

To thrive in this era of rapid change, you need proactive strategies. AI governance must go beyond cost-cutting to unlock innovation and growth. Learning and development should be a core business function, closing skills gaps and elevating your workforce. The employee value proposition needs to shift toward localization and providing regional-specific benefits that focus on total well-being.

Most critically, businesses need to adopt a borderless hiring strategy. By tapping into global talent pools, organizations can navigate uncertainty, mitigate risks, and seize opportunities in an increasingly interconnected world.

## Your next steps

Building a competitive edge starts with turning insights into action:

- 1 Audit your workforce strategy:** Use AI to evaluate your talent acquisition, retention, and development strategies. Track turnover rates, time-to-hire, satisfaction scores, and performance data to map out areas for improvement.
- 2 Use an employer of record (EOR) for global hiring:** Partner with an EOR to simplify international hiring and offer competitive benefits packages that appeal to talent and satisfy regulations.
- 3 Invest in AI upskilling programs:** Create customized learning paths. Upskilling transforms fear into opportunity and engagement.

# Now that you have the trends and predictions, use the Global Hiring Toolkit to activate your strategy



[The Global Hiring Toolkit](#) offers practical frameworks and expertise from HR leaders who have successfully navigated the intricacies of global hiring. No more uncertainty. Just actionable, step-by-step guidance to make global hiring easy.

## What's inside:

- Strategies to build your business case to leadership
- Guidance on choosing the right hiring model for your business
- The 15 most common legal, operational, and cultural mistakes
- Top talent markets with data-driven location scorecards
- A step-by-step implementation roadmap



Ready to take the next step? Explore the toolkit or [connect with a G-P expert for a tailored demo](#). We'll show you how our global employment products and EOR solutions can accelerate your global hiring success.

[Book a demo](#)