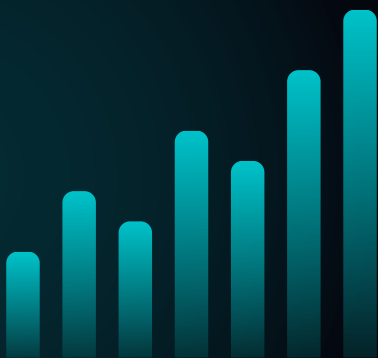


HOPE RESEARCH · 2027 EDITION

7 Workforce Trends That Will Shape 2027

What people leaders need to know about managers, retention and change, and what to do this quarter.



The signal gap

Leaders are being asked for more growth and productivity in 2027, with fewer management layers and less room for error. Yet most organizations still measure how their people are doing once a year, while pressure builds week to week.

That gap between when pressure builds and when leaders see it is where good people leave, managers burn out and change programs stall. The seven trends in this report come from the most recent research by Gallup, Gartner and others. Each one ends with something practical to do this quarter.

Three of the trends include a live poll. Tap an answer to vote and see instantly how your view compares with other people leaders, then come straight back to the report.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Doing more with fewer layers**
Productivity expectations are rising while management layers shrink, making the workforce more "load-bearing."
 - 2 Manager burnout is driving the engagement crisis**
Manager engagement fell from 31% to 22% in three years, and managers shape most of how engaged their teams are.
 - 3 AI adoption runs through managers, not tools**
Employees with supportive managers are far more likely to say AI has transformed their work.
 - 4 Preventable turnover becomes a leadership metric**
42% of people who quit say their manager or organization could have kept them.
 - 5 Change fatigue is the new capacity limit**
Fewer than half of employees achieve the change goals set for them.
 - 6 Listening shifts from annual surveys to weekly signals**
Most employees don't believe their feedback leads to action, and engagement suffers when it doesn't.
 - 7 Closing the frontline "two cultures" gap**
Three in four frontline employees report burnout, and nearly half see a separate culture for them.
-

Doing more with less: productivity expectations rise as management layers shrink

01

67%

of CHROs report increased expectations for employee productivity, while their organizations cut middle-management layers and hire fewer entry-level employees.

Gartner survey of 297 CHROs, July 2026

47%

of managers say they are working harder than they were a year ago.

Gartner HR survey, April 2026

WHAT'S HAPPENING

CEOs want growth and productivity in 2027, and many are redesigning their operating models to get it. Gartner reports that 63% of CEOs and senior executives are radically redesigning the operating model to accelerate financial returns from AI. At the same time, organizations are removing management layers and slowing junior hiring.

The result is what Gartner calls a "load-bearing" workforce: fewer people, carrying more weight, with less slack when something goes wrong.

WHY IT MATTERS

When fewer people carry more of the load, small signs of strain matter more. A struggling team or an overloaded manager is harder to cover for, and the cost of missing it shows up faster in delivery, absence and exits.

DO THIS QUARTER

1. Identify the teams carrying the most critical work after any restructure.
2. Ask how you would know, within weeks, if one of them was nearing its limit.
3. Agree one leading indicator of team capacity your leadership team will review monthly.

LIVE POLL • TAP TO VOTE

Which is highest on your list for 2027?

Keeping good people

Supporting stretched managers

Getting a big change right



Scan to vote

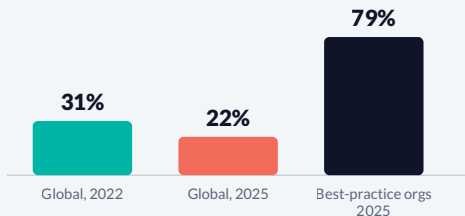
Tap an answer to vote and see live results from other people leaders. Then come straight back to this page.

Sources: Gartner, "CHROs' Top Priorities for 2027," press release, October 6, 2026 (July 2026 survey of 297 CHROs; May 2026 survey of 203 CEOs and senior executives). Gartner HR survey on managers, press release, April 29, 2026.

Share this trend: [Email](#) · [Slack](#) · [Teams](#) · [WhatsApp](#) · [LinkedIn](#)

Manager burnout is driving the engagement crisis

Share of managers who are engaged at work



Source: Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Global employee engagement fell to 20% in 2025, its lowest level since 2020, and Gallup puts the cost at roughly \$10 trillion in lost productivity. The driver is managers. Their engagement has fallen nearly three times as fast as that of the people they lead, and the "engagement premium" managers used to have has disappeared.

WHY IT MATTERS

Gallup estimates managers account for at least 70% of the variance in team engagement. A stretched, disengaged manager pulls their whole team down with them. The good news: in best-practice organizations, 79% of managers are engaged, and manager coaching lifts both managers and their teams.

70%

of the variance in team engagement is accounted for by the manager.

Gallup, State of the American Manager

DO THIS QUARTER

1. Look at manager engagement separately from everyone else's. Don't let it hide in the average.
2. Find your two or three strongest teams and ask what their managers do differently.
3. Give managers one clear priority a week, not another dashboard or a longer to-do list.

LIVE POLL • TAP TO VOTE

How confident are you that your managers would spot someone heading for the exit?

1 • Not at all 2 3 4 5 • Very

Tap an answer to vote and see live results from other people leaders. Then come straight back to this page.



Scan to vote

Sources: Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026 (global engagement 20%; manager engagement 31% in 2022 and 22% in 2025; 79% in best-practice organizations; ~\$10 trillion, 9% of global GDP). Gallup, "Managers Account for 70% of Variance in Employee Engagement," State of the American Manager.

Share this trend: [Email](#) • [Slack](#) • [Teams](#) • [WhatsApp](#) • [LinkedIn](#)

AI adoption runs through managers, not tools

03

8.7×

Employees whose managers actively support AI use are 8.7 times more likely to say AI has transformed their work.

Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026

36%

of HR leaders say most of their leaders are prepared to drive their organization's AI objectives.

Gartner HR Symposium, October 2026

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Most organizations have invested in AI tools. Far fewer have seen them change how work gets done. Gallup found that the strongest predictor of AI adoption isn't the technology itself. It's whether an employee's manager actively supports using it.

That puts more weight on a group that is already stretched. Gartner reports that 60% of HR leaders agree leadership needs are evolving faster than development programs can keep up.

WHY IT MATTERS

Rebuilding manager engagement and getting value from AI are the same project, not two separate ones. If managers are overloaded, AI programs stall at the team level, however good the tools are.

DO THIS QUARTER

1. Add a manager-capacity check to every AI rollout plan.
2. Ask which teams have managers with the time and confidence to lead the change.
3. Start AI adoption with your strongest managers, then spread what works.

Leadership readiness for AI

Leaders prepared to drive AI goals



Needs evolving faster than programs



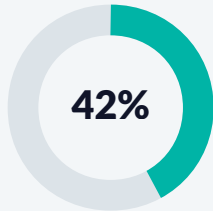
Share of HR leaders who agree

Sources: Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026, as summarized by Brian Heger, Talent Edge Weekly. Gartner, "HR Symposium/Xpo London: Day 1 Highlights," October 6, 2026.

Share this trend: [Email](#) · [Slack](#) · [Teams](#) · [WhatsApp](#) · [LinkedIn](#)

Preventable turnover becomes a leadership metric

What voluntary leavers told Gallup



said their manager or organization could have prevented them leaving

45% had no proactive conversation about their job, performance or future in the three months before they left.

Source: Gallup study of 717 people who voluntarily left an employer in the past 12 months.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Gallup asked people who had recently quit whether anything could have kept them. Two in five said yes. Nearly half said no manager or leader had talked with them about how their job was going in the three months before they resigned.

Pay was the most common fix people named. But nearly a quarter of preventable departures came down to things managers can directly influence: organizational issues (13%) and problems with staffing, workload or scheduling (9%).

WHY IT MATTERS

Most turnover reporting tells you who left and why, after the fact. The signs were often there months earlier. Organizations that can see pressure building at team level, and give managers a prompt to act, stand to keep people they'd otherwise lose.

22%

of preventable turnover traced to organizational issues or staffing, workload and scheduling, which managers can influence.

Gallup

DO THIS QUARTER

1. Add "preventable or not?" to your exit-interview analysis.
2. Ask managers to hold a short "how's it going?" conversation with every team member this quarter.
3. Track workload and scheduling pressure by team, not just organization-wide.

Source: Gallup, "42% of Employee Turnover Is Preventable but Often Ignored." 22% is the sum of the 13% (organizational issues) and 9% (staffing, workload or scheduling) Gallup reports; Gallup describes this as "nearly a quarter."

Share this trend: [Email](#) • [Slack](#) • [Teams](#) • [WhatsApp](#) • [LinkedIn](#)

Change fatigue is the new capacity limit

45%

of employees say they realized the change goals set by their organization.

Gartner, October 2025

up to 42%

drop in employees' intent to stay linked to change fatigue, with performance down by as much as 27%.

Gartner research

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Organizations are running more change at once: restructures, new operating models, AI rollouts and policy changes, often overlapping. Gartner found that fewer than half of employees achieve the change goals set for them.

In a survey of nearly 1,000 business leaders, 36% said their teams tend to hesitate and wait to see whether changes will stick before adopting them. And 39% said change is a significant source of stress for their teams.

WHY IT MATTERS

Most change programs measure progress with milestones and an annual survey. That tells you whether the plan was delivered, not whether people can absorb what comes next. The question for 2027 is how much more change your teams can take, and where that capacity is thinning.

How business leaders describe their teams

Change is a significant source of stress



Teams wait to see if changes stick



Gartner, April 2025, ~1,000 business leaders

DO THIS QUARTER

1. List every change landing on each team in the next six months, side by side.
2. Sequence the next wave away from the teams already carrying the most.
3. Read team signals before and after each milestone, not just at year-end.

Sources: Gartner, "Less Than Half of Employees Achieved the Change Goals Set by Their Organization," press release, October 9, 2025 (April 2025 survey of nearly 1,000 mid- to senior-level business leaders). Intent-to-stay and performance figures from earlier Gartner research on change fatigue (HR Leaders Survey, 2023).

Share this trend: [Email](#) • [Slack](#) • [Teams](#) • [WhatsApp](#) • [LinkedIn](#)

Employee listening shifts from annual surveys to weekly signals

06

Engagement depends on whether people believe feedback leads to action

Believe action will follow a survey

86% engaged

Don't believe action will follow

47% engaged

Average engagement rate by group • Inpulse analysis of 40,000 responses

8%

of employees strongly agree their organization acts on survey results.

Gallup, 2023

WHAT'S HAPPENING

More than half of employees (54%) don't believe their organization will act on engagement survey results. Those who don't believe action will follow are far less engaged. Gallup found that just 8% of employees strongly agree their organization acts on survey results.

WHY IT MATTERS

An annual survey reports back after the moment has passed, and often after the people who were struggling have gone. The organizations pulling ahead listen in shorter, more frequent bursts, act at team level, and show people what changed as a result. Participation follows visible action.

DO THIS QUARTER

1. For your last survey, list what changed as a result, and tell people.
2. Pick one team-level signal to check monthly, not annually.
3. Close every loop with a simple "you said, we did."

LIVE POLL • TAP TO VOTE

How often do you get a real read on how your teams are doing?

Annually

Quarterly

Monthly

Weekly

Tap an answer to vote and see live results from other people leaders. Then come straight back to this page.



Scan to vote

Sources: Inpulse analysis of 40,000 engagement responses, reported in The HR Director. Gallup (2023), cited in HR Grapevine, August 2026. Inpulse is an engagement vendor; figures are its own analysis.

Share this trend: [Email](#) • [Slack](#) • [Teams](#) • [WhatsApp](#) • [LinkedIn](#)

Frontline employee engagement: closing the "two cultures" gap

76%

of frontline employees reported burnout in 2025.

UKG, 8,200 frontline employees, 10 countries

47%

say their organization has two separate cultures: one for frontline employees and one for everyone else.

UKG, 2026 frontline study

58%

of hospitality frontline employees say their schedules make a healthy lifestyle impossible.

UKG

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Frontline and deskless workers make up the large majority of the global workforce, yet most workplace tools, surveys and programs are designed for people at desks. Frontline employees rarely have a company laptop or email, so they are the hardest to hear from and the easiest to miss.

Pay and scheduling flexibility top the reasons frontline employees give for leaving. Their managers are often promoted from the floor, with little time and little data to work with.

WHY IT MATTERS

In retail, hospitality, healthcare and logistics, the frontline is where revenue and service are delivered. If leaders can't see how frontline teams are doing until people quit, they're always reacting. Reaching people on the phone they already carry, and giving their managers simple prompts, closes the gap.

DO THIS QUARTER

1. Check what share of your frontline actually responded to your last survey.
2. Offer a way to give feedback that doesn't need a laptop or login, such as text.
3. Give frontline managers a two-minute pre-shift prompt, not a report.

Source: UKG, "Global Study Reveals Flexibility and Financial Wellness Are Top 2026 Priorities for Frontline Workers," January 2026, based on a 2025 study of 8,200 frontline employees in 10 countries commissioned by UKG and Workplace Intelligence. UKG is a workforce software vendor.

Share this trend: [Email](#) · [Slack](#) · [Teams](#) · [WhatsApp](#) · [LinkedIn](#)

TAKE ACTION

Your 2027 checklist

One action per trend. Most take less than a week to start.

- ☐ **TREND 1 · PRODUCTIVITY**
Name your load-bearing teams and agree one leading indicator of their capacity to review monthly.

- ☐ **TREND 2 · MANAGERS**
Separate manager engagement from the average and learn what your strongest managers do differently.

- ☐ **TREND 3 · AI AND MANAGERS**
Add a manager-capacity check to every AI rollout, and start with the managers who have room to lead it.

- ☐ **TREND 4 · RETENTION**
Ask "was this preventable?" in every exit analysis, and make sure every person has had a "how's it going?" conversation this quarter.

- ☐ **TREND 5 · CHANGE**
Map every change landing on each team over the next six months, and sequence the next wave away from those carrying the most.

- ☐ **TREND 6 · LISTENING**
Show people what changed after your last survey, then check one team-level signal monthly.

- ☐ **TREND 7 · FRONTLINE**
Give frontline teams a way to be heard without a laptop, and give their managers a two-minute prompt they can use before a shift.

Share this with your team. This checklist works best as a conversation starter for your next leadership or people-team meeting. Pick the two trends that feel most urgent and agree who owns each action. Want to see where your organization stands?

[Request a free, personalized preview.](#)

How Hope helps leaders close the signal gap

Hope is a workforce performance intelligence platform. It gives leaders a continuous read on the people drivers of revenue, retention and risk, and gives managers clear actions to improve them.

1 · MEASURE

The Hope Index™ sets a private baseline across five workforce conditions: Purpose, Health, Environment, Relationships and Security.

2 · LISTEN

Short recurring check-ins, including by text or WhatsApp for frontline teams, track what's moving.

3 · ACT

Elpis, Hope's AI, gives leaders their priorities and each manager one clear action, with the words to use.

4 · IMPROVE

Hope measures whether conditions actually improve, and what to do next.

Private by design

Individual answers are never shown to managers or leaders. Leaders see team-level patterns only.

Keep your HR stack

Hope works alongside your existing HR, people analytics and engagement tools as an intelligence layer.

Built for managers

Guidance, not monitoring: one priority a week, not another dashboard.

HOW IT MAPS TO THE SEVEN TRENDS

Hope gives leaders an earlier view of team capacity (Trends 1 and 5), puts managers at the center with weekly guidance (Trends 2 and 3), surfaces pressure before it becomes preventable turnover (Trend 4), replaces once-a-year listening with a weekly signal and a visible feedback loop (Trend 6), and reaches frontline teams on the phone they already carry (Trend 7).

FOR READERS OF THIS REPORT

Get a free, personalized preview of what Hope would show for your organization

We'll build a private walkthrough for your organization, using public information only, and take you through it in 20 minutes:

- The three workforce priorities most likely to matter to you in 2027
- What your leaders, managers and teams would each see
- What a 90-day Hope Activate program would measure

Request your preview



Scan to request

Where the numbers come from

Trend 1 • Productivity

- Gartner, "Gartner Says CHROs' Top Priorities for 2027 Focus on Meeting CEOs' Expectations While Minimizing Organizational Risk," October 6, 2026. July 2026 survey of 297 CHROs; May 2026 survey of 203 CEOs and senior executives.
- Gartner HR survey on managers working harder than a year ago, press release, April 29, 2026.

Trend 2 • Managers

- Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026. Engagement and manager engagement data for 2022 to 2025.
- Gallup, "Managers Account for 70% of Variance in Employee Engagement," State of the American Manager.

Trend 3 • AI and managers

- Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026, as summarized by Brian Heger, Talent Edge Weekly.
- Gartner, "HR Symposium/Xpo London: Day 1 Highlights," October 6, 2026.

Trend 4 • Retention

- Gallup, "42% of Employee Turnover Is Preventable but Often Ignored." Nationally representative study of 717 voluntary leavers.

Trend 5 • Change

- Gartner, "Gartner HR Research Finds Less Than Half of Employees Achieved the Change Goals Set by Their Organization," October 9, 2025.
- Gartner research on change fatigue and intent to stay (HR Leaders Survey, July 2023).

Trend 6 • Listening

- Inpulse analysis of 40,000 engagement responses, reported in The HR Director. Vendor research.
- Gallup (2023), cited in HR Grapevine, "My last engagement survey had a 38% participation rate," August 11, 2026.

Trend 7 • Frontline

- UKG, "Global Study Reveals Flexibility and Financial Wellness Are Top 2026 Priorities for Frontline Workers," January 2026. 2025 study of 8,200 frontline employees in 10 countries, commissioned by UKG and Workplace Intelligence. Vendor research.

Methodology. This report draws on published research from independent research firms and, where noted, vendor studies. Figures are reported as published, with their source and date. Live poll results on the web version reflect the people leaders who have chosen to answer and are not a representative sample. Hope Platform Ltd does not endorse the products of any vendor cited.

hope.

From workforce signals to business outcomes.

Answer the live polls, see how other people leaders responded, and get the latest version of this report.

findhope.io/research/workforce-trends

Share this report with your team

Email

Slack

Teams

WhatsApp

LinkedIn

See what Hope would show for your organization: [request a free, personalized preview](#).

findhope.io

© Hope Platform Ltd 2026. Free to share with attribution.