



The AI Momentum Model: Redefining Readiness and Driving Action in HR



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Executive Summary: AI in HR, it's time to get moving!

The Headline Finding

Based on a survey of 350+ HR leaders conducted by [Kyle & Co.](#), exploration dominates the current state of AI in HR. Most teams are circling AI but few are committing—and that inertia comes at a cost.

Our research shows a direct correlation between AI momentum and HR impact: **Leaders** in AI for HR are significantly more likely to also be industry leaders across core HR KPIs, while **Laggards** consistently fall behind.

Why Maturity Matters

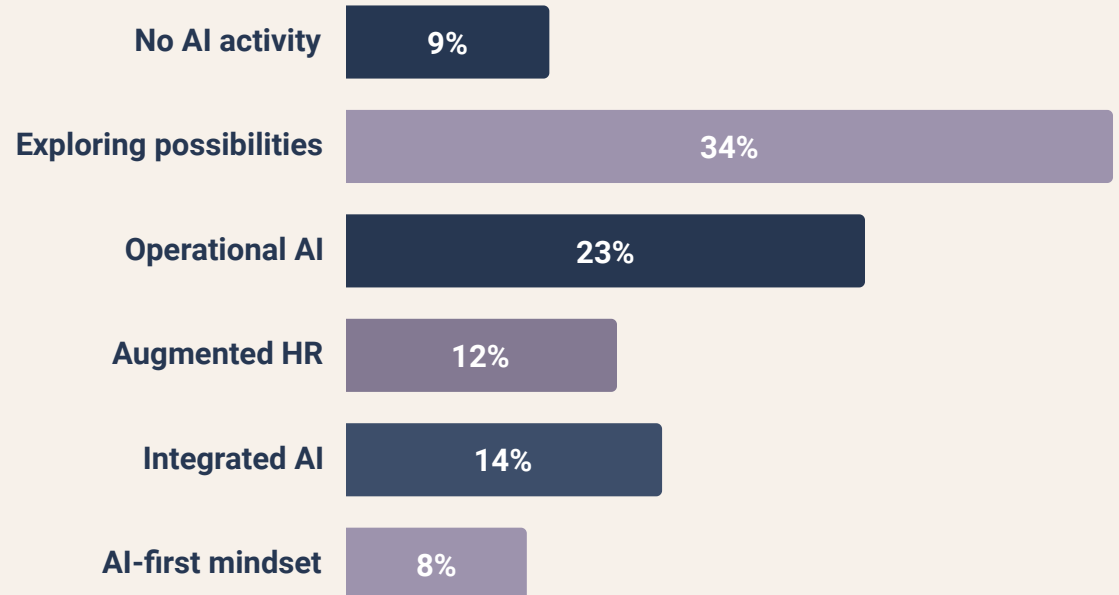
The cost of standing still

For organizations around the world, AI has rapidly evolved beyond an innovation opportunity and is now a cornerstone of modern operations. As of 2024, nearly 80% of organizations are actively using, piloting, or exploring AI in their business operations.[1] Meanwhile, the majority of HR organizations are stuck "Exploring Possibilities."

? How would you describe your organization's current use of AI across HR and Talent?

[1] The 2025 AI Index Report
<https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2025-ai-index-report>

Figure 1. Description of organizations use of AI in HR



Why Maturity Matters

The cost of standing still

In our own study, nearly half of HR teams reported their current state of AI adoption as “Exploring Possibilities,” with many AI strategies stuck at “Exploration Initiated.” In effect, HR isn’t just behind in implementation—it’s behind in intention.

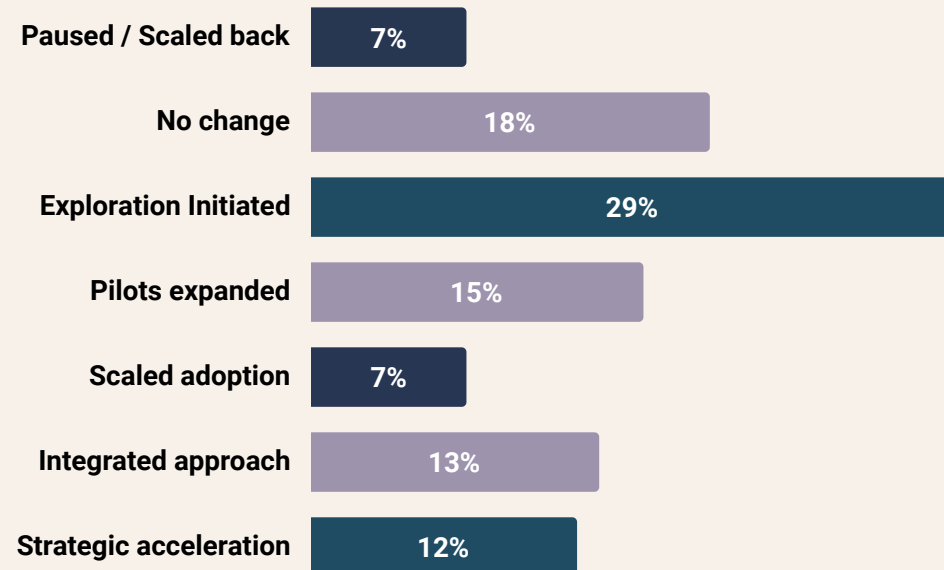
Exploration without action locks HR into a reactive posture, reinforcing old patterns instead of building new capabilities.



?

How has your AI strategy changed in the past year?

Figure 2. Changes in AI strategy over the last 12 months



Why Maturity Matters

The cost of standing still



KEY FINDING

Put simply: inertia isn't safe — it's costly, and it threatens HR's seat at the decision-making table.

That inertia isn't neutral. It signals to the rest of the enterprise that HR lacks readiness, widening the gap as other functions push forward.

The risk is more than reputational: HR risks being sidelined, yielding authority over workforce strategy and ceding influence on how AI reshapes the human side of business at a pivotal moment.

And the stakes are rising. With talent shortages and aging workforces, demands for organizational agility and workforce resilience, and mounting executive pressure to take action, “wait and see” is the worst approach HR can take. This mindset solves nothing, and leads instead to lost credibility, wasted spend, and missed opportunities to shape how AI is applied responsibly in the workplace.

Key Findings of this Research

1 Exploration dominates—and it reinforces inertia

Nearly half of HR organizations place themselves in the “Exploring Possibilities” stage of adoption, with strategies that rarely extend beyond “Exploration Initiated.” This loop creates activity without momentum, leaving HR stuck in old patterns while the enterprise charges ahead.

4 Two AI mindsets are emerging.

Automation-Chasers plateau at efficiency gains, while Operations-Orchestrators advance toward smarter decision-making, innovation, and agility. This divide is already shaping the future of AI in HR.

2 AI leaders outperform laggards.

The organizations that have advanced furthest in AI adoption are also the ones leading in core HR KPIs such as retention, quality of hire, and workforce agility. The link is direct: Momentum in AI translates to measurable business impact.

5 The differences between AI leaders and laggards are striking

These differences consistently show up in six key areas – Strategy, Ownership, Governance, Literacy, Integration, and Investment are each observed as demonstrable strengths for Leaders and drivers of momentum in AI for HR.

3 Ownership isn't enough—coalitions are the unlock

While many HR teams claim ownership of AI, progress accelerates only when IT, compliance, and business partners are at the table. Without cross-functional coalitions, AI strategies remain siloed and stall.

6 Investment signals intent—not outcomes

Nearly half of organizations increased AI spending this year. But where that investment is aimed makes all the difference: Those tying spend to decision-making and agility build lasting momentum, while those focused only on efficiency risk wasted resources and stalled progress.

Introducing the AI Momentum Model

Traditional maturity models—linear scales and even matrixed grids—flatten the complexity of AI adoption. They suggest a steady climb toward the top and right, when in reality organizations move unevenly: advancing in some areas while stalling in others.

Our research finds that progress in AI depends on momentum, not maturity.

When one of these Dimensions lags, momentum stalls. High investment without capability leads to wasted spend. Strong capability without posture hardens into inertia. Posture without resourcing never scales.

Furthermore, momentum builds only when three Dimensions advance together:

Are we equipped with the foundations to apply AI in HR?

Literacy, governance, and integration are the structural enablers that determine whether AI is feasible and responsible, and effective.



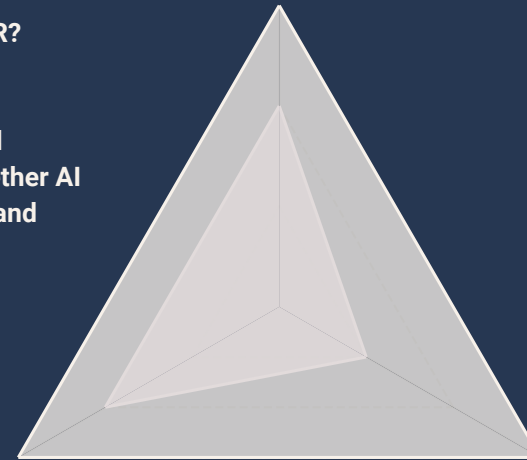
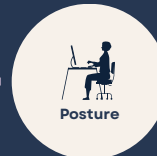
Are we committing meaningful resources to AI in HR?

Budget, people, and scope reveal whether AI is treated as an experiment or resourced as a core transformation initiative.



Are we aligned on where, why, and how to apply AI in HR?

Strategy, ownership, and risk orientation signal whether leaders are leaning in to lead, or leaving AI on the sidelines.



The AI Momentum Model reframes the conversation.

It is:

A Map

to orient where your organization stands

A Way Forward

to build and sustain momentum

A Mirror

to reflect your readiness across capability, posture, and investment

Unlike binary maturity scales, the model shows not just where organizations are, but why they are there—and which levers they must pull to move forward. In this report, we share the first iteration of the model and explore how it can help HR leaders, and the businesses they support, build and sustain real momentum.



The Map, the Mirror, and the Path Forward

The primary finding of this research is clear: Exploration is not progress, and inertia is not safe.

While most HR teams remain in “exploring mode,” the enterprise is moving quickly. The gap we face now threatens HR’s credibility and its role in shaping how AI transforms the workforce.

The leaders who will define the next chapter of AI in HR are those who build momentum across all three dimensions of the model: equipped with capability, committed in posture, and resourced with meaningful investment. These organizations move beyond tactical automation to orchestrate smarter decisions, stronger workforce outcomes, and a more powerful seat at the table.



Key Insight

The time for circling AI is over. The time for building momentum is now.

SECTION

2

HR's Current State of Play: What We Want, What We're Ready For, and Where AI Fits

While AI hype cycles run rampant, it's critical to ground the conversation in the reality facing HR. Leaders are being asked to do more than ever: improve workforce quality, strengthen retention, and build resilience in uncertain times.

Yet the measures of success they're held to still tilt toward efficiency, speed, and compliance.

This tension—strategic ambitions on one side, operational pressures on the other—defines the current state of HR. It also explains why AI adoption, though accelerating, remains uneven.

Most organizations are layering AI experiments onto HR foundations that are themselves still mid-transformation. The result is a field full of ambition but short on alignment—in motion, but not yet in control.

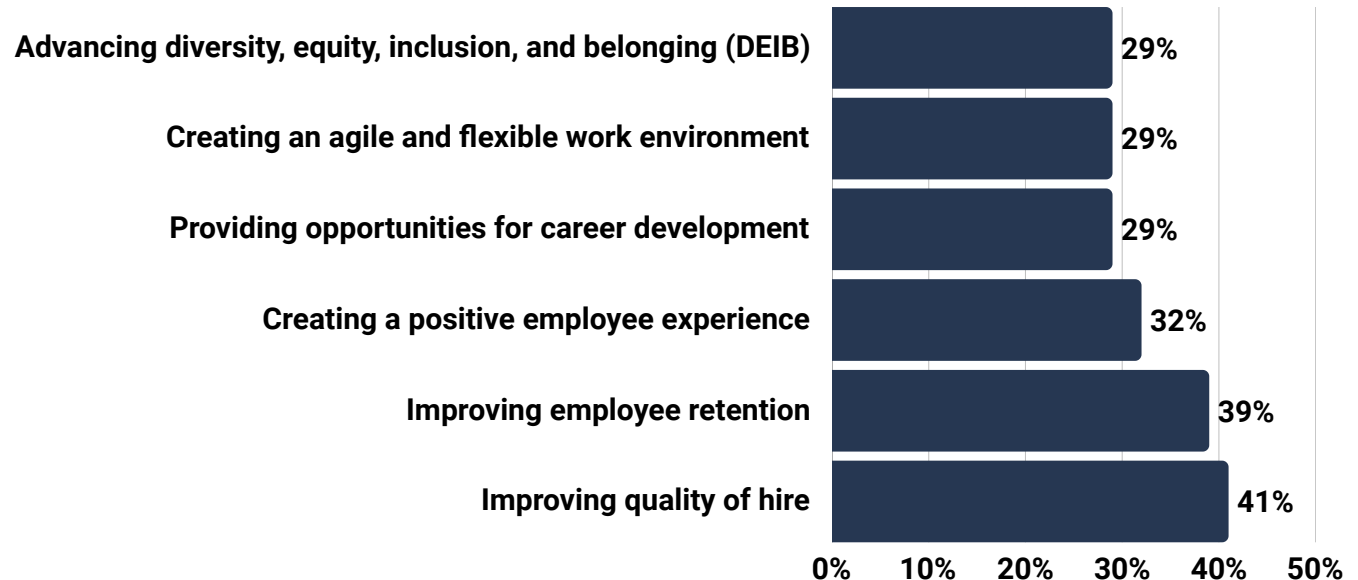
Below we analyze survey responses to several questions to illustrate how and where this is playing out in HR organizations today.

Priorities vs. Accountability: Aiming High, Measured Low

There's no better way to contextualize the current state of AI in HR than to look at what leaders say they are prioritizing—and what they are being held accountable for.



Figure 3. Organizations HR priorities for the next 12 months



- **Talent quality dominates.** Quality of hire (41%) and retention (39%) lead, showing HR's focus on effectiveness, not just headcount.
- **Retention through growth.** Priorities like experience (32%), career development (29%), and DEIB (29%) reflect a belief that engagement drives staying power.
- **Agility is rising,** but secondary. Nearly a third cite workforce agility, though it trails quality and retention.
- **Productivity lags.** Only 25% prioritize performance, suggesting it's seen as a downstream outcome.

What is your HR organization primarily held accountable for today?

Figure 4. HR's Primary Areas of Accountability



"We keep asking HR to innovate while holding them to metrics that reward staying the same. The real unlock isn't chasing the next AI use case — it's fixing the foundations that aren't as 'fun': data, governance, and accountability. Get that right, and transformation suddenly feels less ethereal and elusive."



Brandice Payne, Head of Strategic Marketing & Initiatives at Kyle & Co

What it means

The comparison makes the tension clear: HR leaders aspire to drive quality, retention, and growth, but are judged primarily on efficiency, compliance, and short-term outcomes. This misalignment distorts how AI is applied—channeling investment toward optimizing transactions instead of enabling transformation. Until accountability shifts to match priorities, momentum will remain hard to build.

HR Transformation vs. AI Readiness: Mid-Journey, Unevenly Equipped

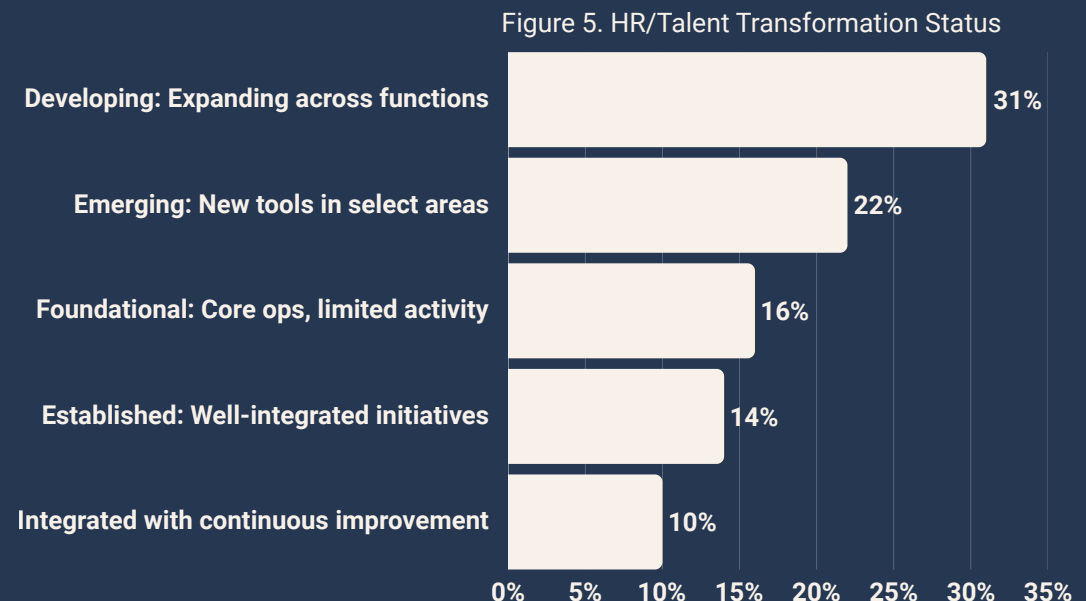
If HR is to lead on AI, its own transformation must be a solid foundation. Our survey results show that most organizations are still somewhere in the middle of that journey.

“Building the HR organization of the future isn’t just about setting a strategic direction; it’s about equipping your team to succeed. For HR Leaders, the age of AI marks a monumental shift in how they lead; gone are the days of waterfall PMOs and linear projects done off the side of an HR Business Partner’s desk. Successful HR Organizations will have empowered teams, trust in their data, and manage to outcomes. The HR organizations of tomorrow will agilely operate as a hybrid of strategy and technology hubs, with a clear focus on their core user, the employee.”

[Sarah Smart, Managing Partner at HorizonHuman](#)



How would you describe your organizations HR/Talent transformation status?



31%

Most HR organizations describe themselves as Emerging or Developing.

10%

Only a small minority report being Fully Integrated and continuously improving.

How well prepared is your organization to support organizational adoption of AI in HR

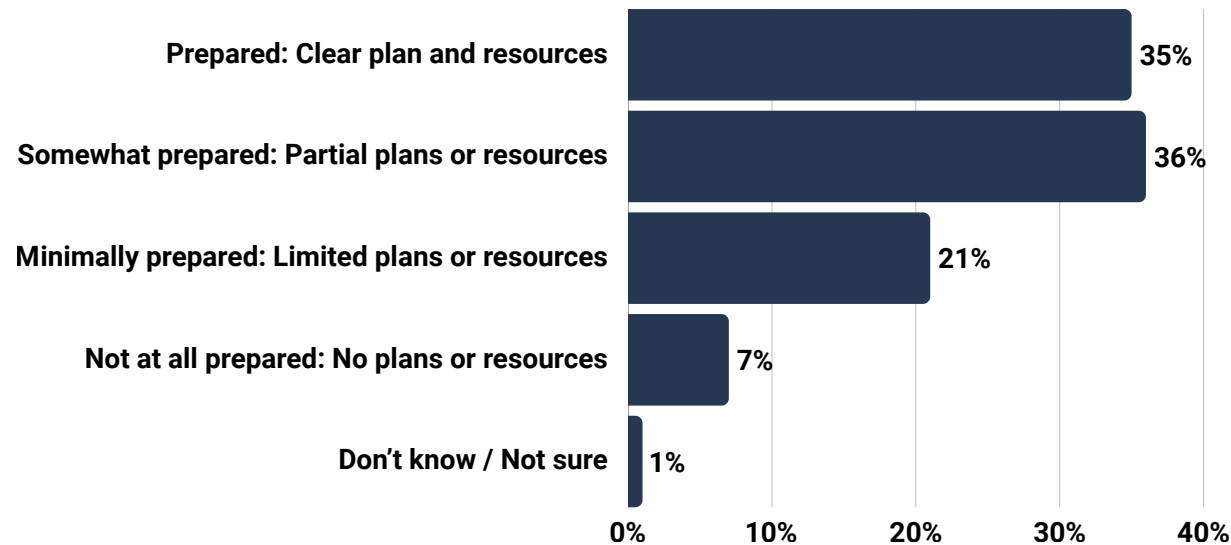


Figure 6. Organizational Readiness to Support AI Adoption in HR

“AI won’t fix shaky HR fundamentals. If your systems, processes, and data are mid-renovation, layering AI on top creates noise, not signal. Tighten the plumbing first—data quality, integration, and change readiness—so pilots produce decisions people trust, not dashboards no one uses.”



Lydia Wu, Adjunct Analyst at Kyle & Co; Founder, Oops, Did I Think That Out Loud?

What it means

The data tells a consistent story: HR is mid-journey in its own transformation and unevenly equipped to take on AI. Many teams are still modernizing systems, aligning processes, and embedding data-driven practices. When AI is layered on top of this unfinished work, results are inconsistent—some organizations feel prepared, while others remain hesitant.

This uneven foundation helps explain why momentum has been slow to build. AI isn’t being adopted into stable, mature environments; it’s being layered onto HR functions that are themselves still in flux. That reality creates both the promise of transformation and the risk of overextension.

36%

Leaders are split nearly evenly between confident and cautious about their readiness to adopt AI.

10%

Very few describe themselves as fully prepared.

Evolution of HR's AI Strategies: Circling Instead of Committing

When it comes to strategy, most HR organizations remain hesitant. Exploration dominates, but few have translated that activity into forward movement.



How has your AI strategy changed in the past year?

Our key takeaway

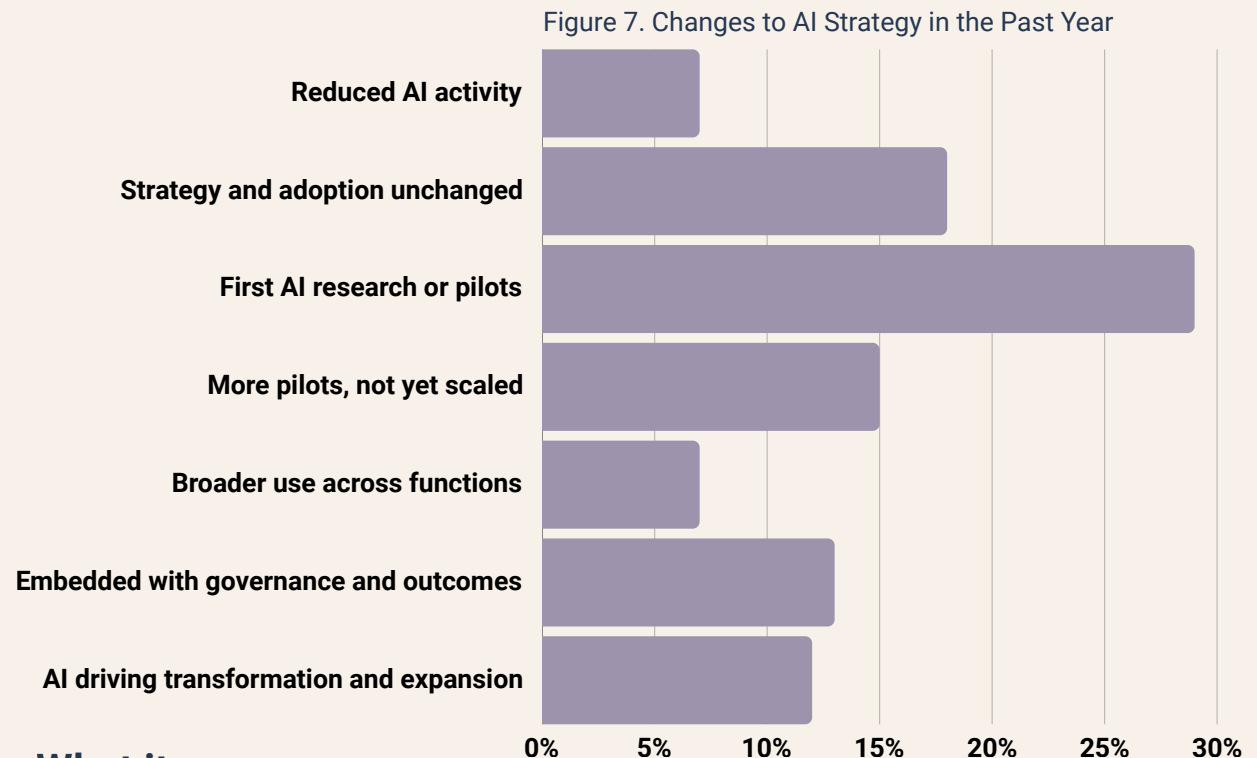
Until strategy shifts from pilots to purposeful acceleration, AI will remain on the sidelines of HR transformation.

29%

Most organizations reported either no change or only exploration initiated.

12%

Only a small minority reported any form of strategic acceleration.



What it means

The numbers confirm that AI strategies in HR remain shallow. Leaders may be experimenting, but most are not committing—reinforcing the cycle of exploration without momentum. This strategic hesitation leaves HR out of step with the broader enterprise, where AI adoption is advancing more quickly.

Investment and Intent: Money Flows, But Toward Efficiency

Spending on AI in HR is increasing, but how that investment is directed tells a more complicated story.



Nearly half of HR leaders reported increased spending on AI this year.



Many are making first-time investments, moving beyond pilots into early implementation.



A significant minority report flat or decreased budgets, underscoring uneven commitment across the market.

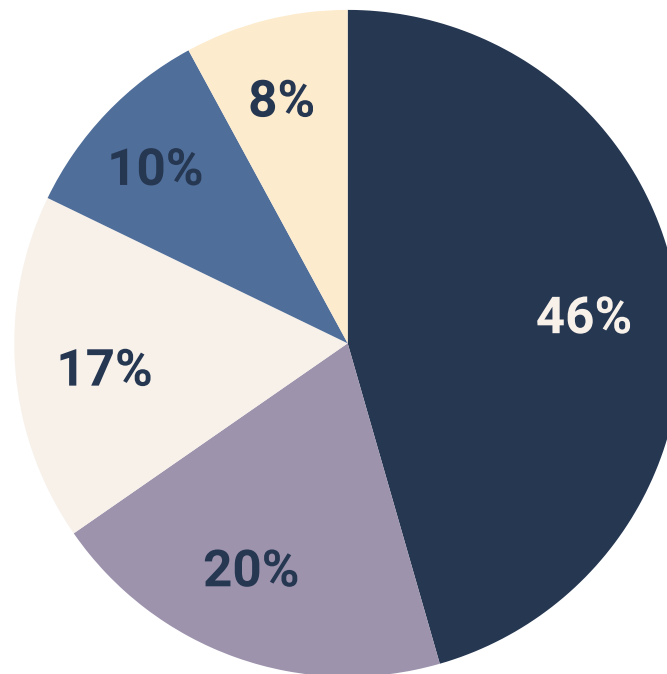


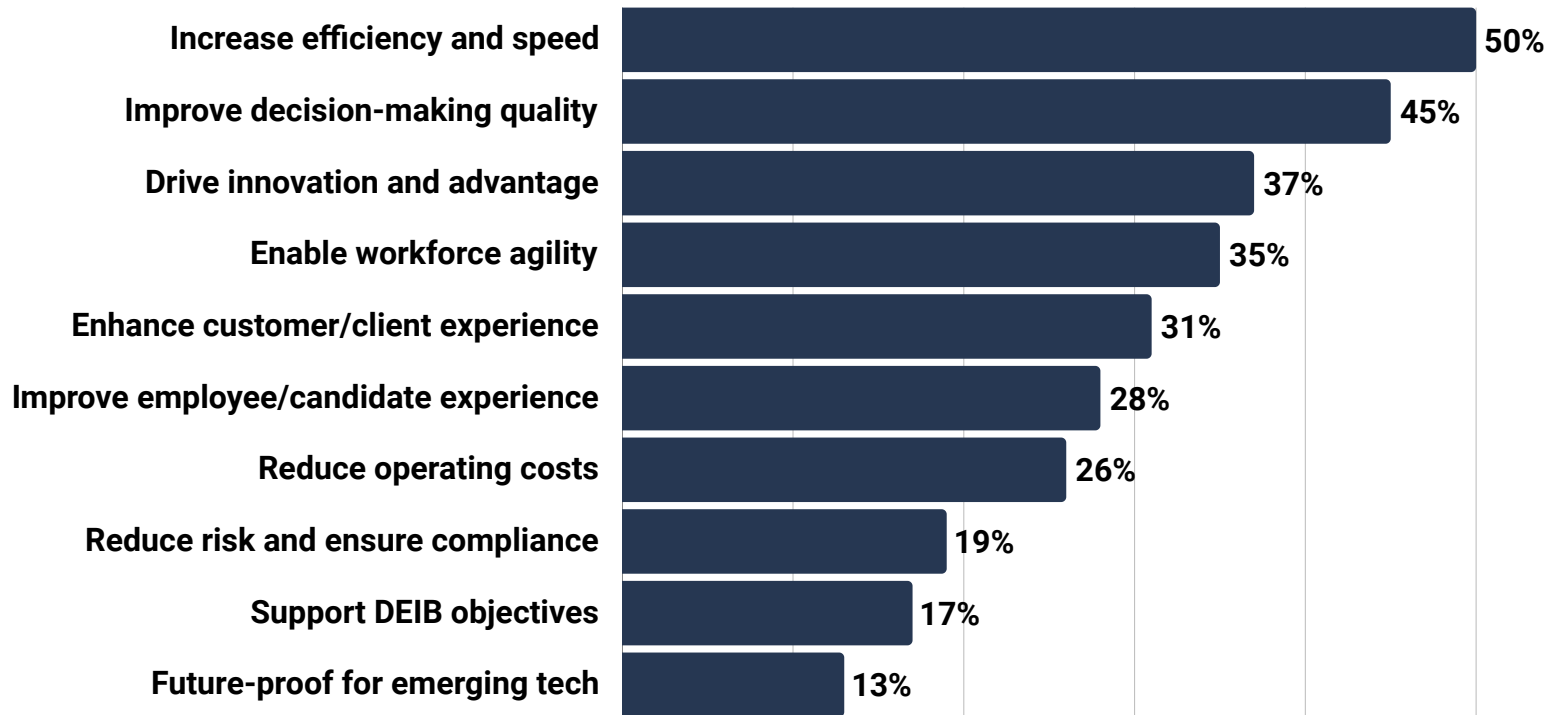
Figure 8. Change in Organizational Investment in AI Capabilities

Has your organization's investment in AI capabilities changed this year compared to last year?

- Increased AI investments this year
- Same level of AI investment as last year
- First-time AI investment this year
- No AI investment this year or last
- Decreased AI investments this year

What are your company's or organization's primary goal for investing in AI capabilities?

Figure 9. Primary Goals for Investing in AI Capabilities



"Success with AI still comes down to moving with intention and defining clear goals. We've seen organizations that experiment with a limited scope win. Small wins build confidence without risking disruption, and stacking those wins turns experiments into lasting value. So many organizations are terrified of taking that leap of faith, small wins matter, its just getting started that is hard for most groups."



Emily Wares, Head of Solutions Consulting at Kyle & Co



Efficiency dominates as the primary goal of AI investment.



Decision-making, agility, and innovation are on the list, but less frequently emphasized.



Few connect investment directly to strategic workforce outcomes such as retention, mobility, or resilience.

What it means

Investment momentum is real, but ambition is uneven.

Many organizations are directing funds toward automating existing processes, which risks plateauing at efficiency gains. A smaller group is tying investment to decision-support, agility, and innovation—positioning themselves for more durable impact.

This is the fork in the road: One path optimizes today's transactions, the other builds tomorrow's capabilities. We explore this trend in more detail in Section 3.

The Current State in Summary: Ambition Without Alignment



Across our survey findings, a consistent pattern emerges where ambition is outpacing execution.

HR leaders aspire to deliver outcomes like quality of hire, retention, and agility—but accountability still tilts toward speed, cost, and compliance.

Transformation is underway, but most teams are mid-journey, layering AI experiments on foundations that remain uneven.

Strategies remain shallow, dominated by exploration rather than acceleration.

Investment is increasing, but much of it continues to flow toward efficiency rather than long-term impact.

The result is momentum without direction. AI is entering HR, but it has yet to translate into durable outcomes for most organizations we surveyed.

This disconnect helps explain why so many organizations remain stuck in exploration. The difference between those circling AI and those building real momentum comes down to deliberate choices about capability, posture, and investment.

Next up

In Section 3, we'll look at what separates leaders from laggards—and how some organizations are converting AI investment into measurable business impact while others stall.

SECTION

3

What's Driving Leadership in AI: Maturity, Readiness, and Momentum

The aggregate data shows HR caught between ambition and execution. But not all organizations are stuck in the same way.

On one end of the spectrum are **Leaders**: the minority of organizations that report being integrated or AI-first, treating AI as a driver of transformation.

On the other end are **Laggards**: the many organizations that report no AI activity or only early exploration, circling the technology without real commitment.

For this study, we compared responses to key questions by maturity segment

LEADERS 22%

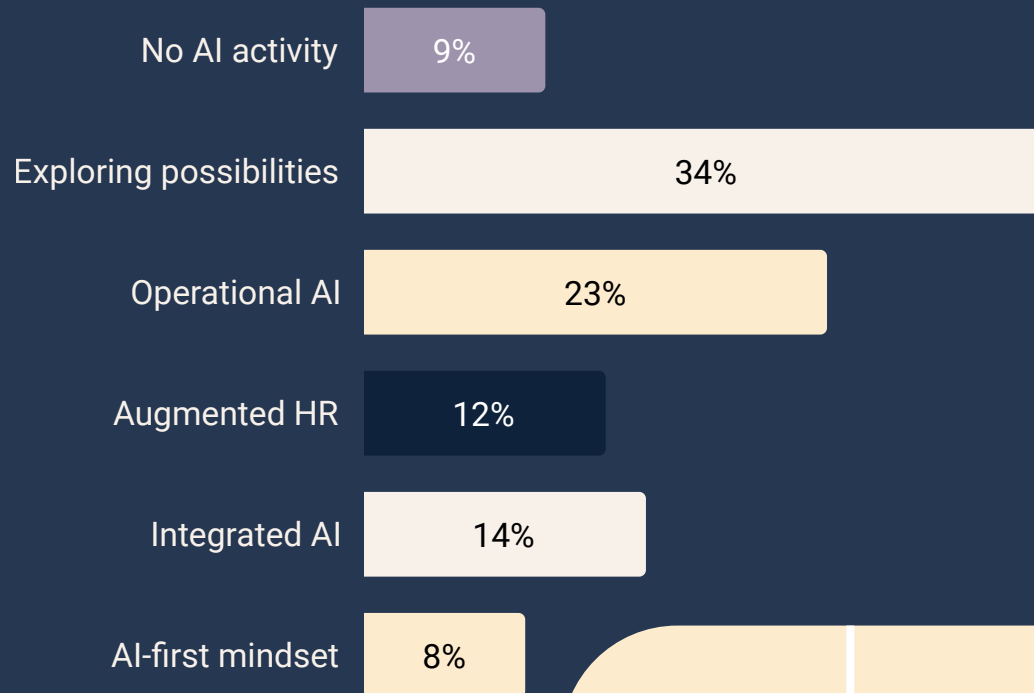
Defined as respondents at the two highest levels of maturity (Integrated AI and AI-firs

LAGGARDS 43%

are those at the two lowest levels (No AI activity and Exploring possibilities)

How would you describe your organization's current use of AI across HR and Talent?

Figure 10. Current Use of AI Across HR and Talent



This lens was helpful for benchmarking maturity and readiness – but as we dug deeper into the data, a different story began to emerge. The differences between Leaders and Laggards aren't just about maturity levels on a linear scale. They show up in how momentum builds – or stalls.

The same dimensions we set out to study (literacy, strategy, ownership, risk orientation, governance, integration, and investment) revealed themselves not only as markers of readiness, but as accelerators or brakes on momentum.

KEY FINDING

This realization shaped the heart of our analysis: AI adoption in HR is not a climb to maturity; it's a matter of building, balancing, and sustaining momentum.

The differences between **Leaders** and **Laggards** are striking – and, as noted in the **Executive Summary**, they consistently show up across seven drivers: Literacy, Strategy, Ownership, Risk Orientation, Governance, Integration, and Investment.

Driver 1: The Literacy Unlock

AI literacy is not the same as expertise—but it is the foundation for progress.

Few HR leaders will ever need to code algorithms, but every HR leader needs to understand enough about AI to evaluate use cases, ask critical questions, and adopt with confidence.

Without that baseline, literacy gaps turn into barriers: People resist what they don't understand, and fear takes the driver's seat. Instead of curiosity and experimentation, HR functions default to caution, doubt, or outright opposition.

By contrast, when literacy is in place:

- Leaders approach AI with confidence rather than fear.
- Teams are willing to test and learn, creating evidence instead of stalling in speculation.
- Adoption accelerates, because employees can see how AI adds value to their work.

How would you rate AI and tech literacy across your HR organization?

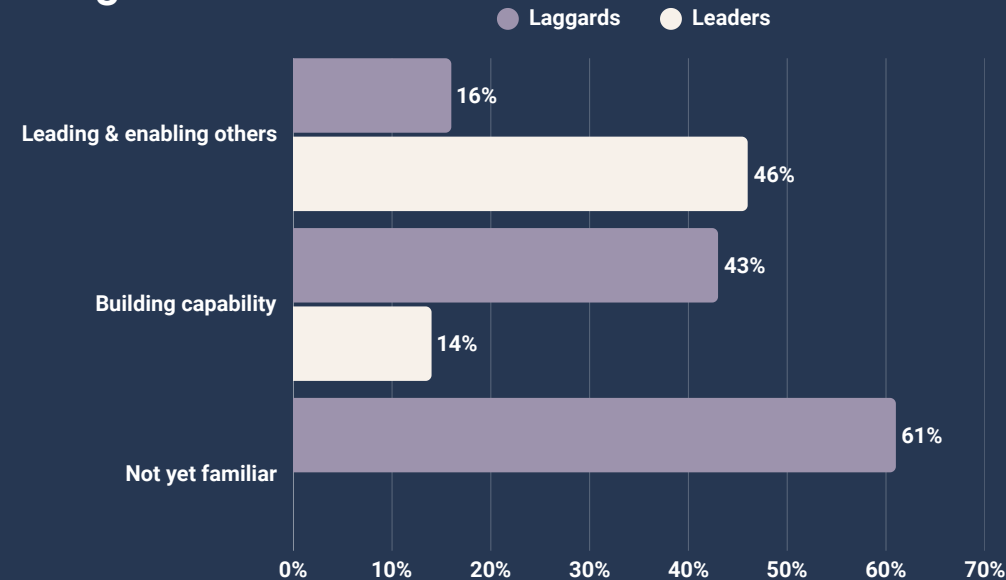


Figure 11. AI and Technology Literacy Across the HR Organization

What Leadership looks like

Leaders are far more likely to describe themselves as Confident Practitioners or as Enabling Others. Their literacy enables purposeful experimentation and the scaling of pilots into practice.

- Literacy gives leaders the ability to see opportunity instead of risk, making experimentation a tool for learning rather than a threat.
- They can translate AI concepts into business conversations, enabling adoption across teams and gaining buy-in for value-add iterations.

Why Laggards are stuck

Laggards cluster heavily in "Not yet familiar" or "Becoming aware." Without confidence in what AI is or how to use it, they stall in exploration and struggle to move beyond pilots.

- Lacking literacy, laggards confuse awareness with progress—mistaking talk of pilots for actual adoption.
- Fear, not insight, guides decision-making, which slows change and keeps AI framed as a risky experiment rather than a strategic tool.

What to do about it

Build baseline literacy

across HR leaders and managers, not just HRIT or analytics teams.

Demystify AI with hands-on practice.

Pair training with scoped pilots that make AI tangible and build confidence.

Make literacy collective

by ensuring HR, IT, compliance, and business leaders share a common understanding of terms, risks, and opportunities.

Driver 2: Strategy Posture: The Amplifier

Once literacy takes hold, strategy posture determines whether momentum accelerates or stalls.

Posture is about intent: Is AI framed as a driver of transformation, or as a side experiment to be deferred until “later”?

Strategy signals seriousness. When HR leaders treat AI as central to their transformation agenda, they amplify the impact of literacy and investment. When they avoid it, progress plateaus—even if budgets or pilots are in play.

How has your AI strategy changed in the past year?

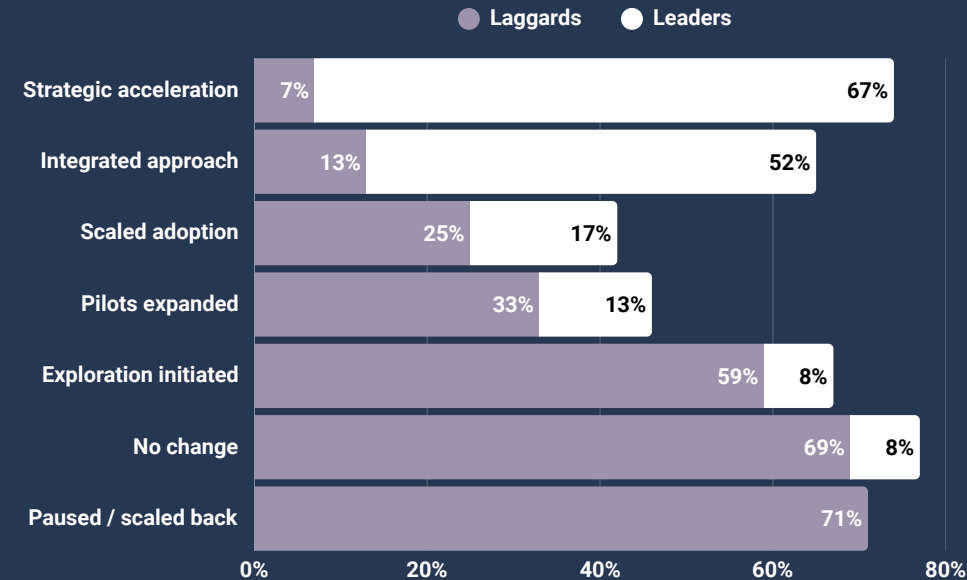


Figure 12. Changes in AI Strategy Over the Past Year

What Leadership looks like

Leaders are far more likely to report strategic acceleration or to have embedded AI into integrated HR strategies. They use AI as a lever to drive change, not just efficiency.

Leaders make AI visible in their strategy documents and transformation roadmaps, not just tucked away in pilots.

They treat AI as a force multiplier for HR transformation—linking it to goals like workforce agility, retention, and decision-making.

Why Laggards are stuck

Laggards concentrate in “no change” or “exploring” categories. Their posture keeps AI sidelined, disconnected from business or transformation goals.

Without a strong strategic posture, AI is seen as optional—something to explore but not to embed.

This hesitancy signals to the enterprise that HR is a follower, not a driver, and leaves investment at risk of being deprioritized.

What to do about it

Elevate AI in HR’s strategic agenda. Integrate AI into strategic and specific goals, rather than relegating as a side project.

Anchor AI to business outcomes. Frame initiatives around capabilities that matter—and that you’re held accountable for (e.g. agility, retention, and workforce quality).

Create visible commitments. Communicate clear milestones and accountability for how AI advances HR’s role.

Driver 3. Risk Orientation: The Catalyst

Risk orientation determines whether HR experiments boldly or hesitates at the edges. Leaders treat risk as a catalyst—testing, learning, and adjusting. Laggards treat risk as a barrier—waiting, watching, and losing ground.

AI in HR carries genuine risks. Bias, compliance, reputational harm are real, material concerns with major implications for HR and its stakeholders.

But those risks aren't reduced by inaction. On the contrary, they're most effectively managed by experimentation, governance, and iteration. Organizations that embrace a “test and learn” posture build confidence and accelerate maturity, while those that avoid risk stall out.

Who Owns AI Strategy for HR and its Functions in Your Organization?

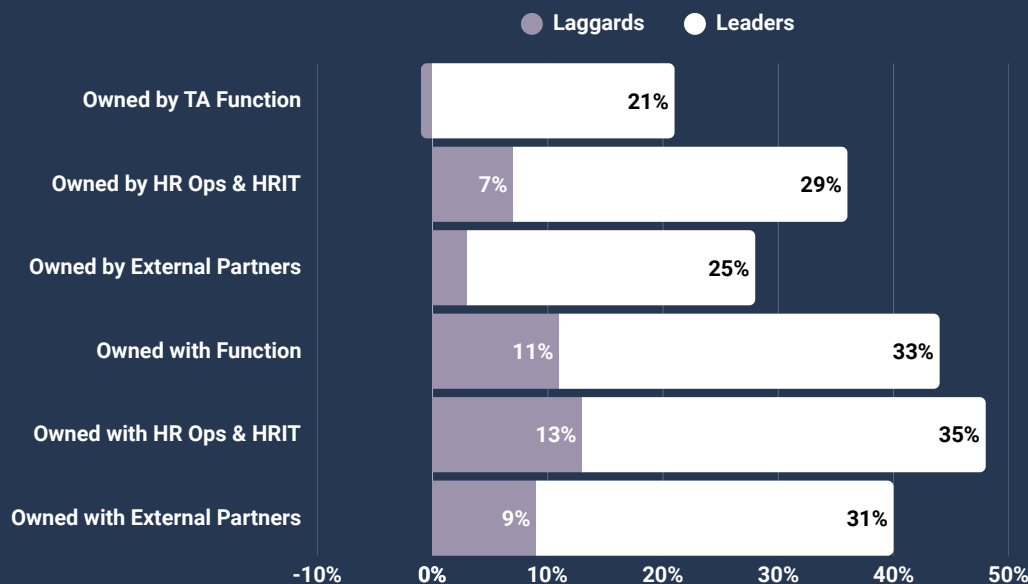


Figure 13. Ownership of AI Strategy for HR and Its Functions

What Leadership looks like

Leaders are much more likely to describe themselves as experimenting aggressively with AI.

- Leaders adopt controlled experimentation, using pilots to surface risks and address them before scaling.
- They create feedback loops where early insights reduce uncertainty and build organizational confidence.

Why Laggards are stuck

Laggards are concentrated in “waiting and watching.” Progress for them stalls under risk aversion.

- Passive “wait and see” strategies equate caution with safety—but in reality, this approach leaves HR falling further behind.
- Without experimenting, laggards never build the institutional muscle memory to manage AI responsibly.

What to do about it

Reframe risk as a learning opportunity.

Controlled pilots reveal risks early and allow for correction.

Establish lightweight governance. Even draft guardrails reduce fear and enable experimentation.

Celebrate learnings, not just wins. Normalize iteration to show that missteps fuel progress.

Driver 4. Ownership & Coalitions: The Multiplier

Ownership signals responsibility, but on its own it's not enough.

Momentum multiplies when ownership extends beyond HR to include IT, compliance, and business partners. Coalitions create alignment and shared accountability; silos stall progress.

This matters because AI touches sensitive data, regulatory risk, and business processes far beyond HR. Without coalitions, HR-led efforts lack the credibility and infrastructure to scale. With them, AI becomes an enterprise initiative anchored in shared goals.



"AI is a team sport. Savvy HR leaders unite technology, data, and governance experts, inspire peers across the business, and drive bold, ethical transformation to lead their organizations into an innovative future.

Without that coalition, efforts stall in silos, progress slows, and HR risks being seen as a follower rather than a leader. With it, adoption accelerates and AI becomes a shared, trusted enterprise capability."

Sarah Smart, Managing Partner at HorizonHuman

What best describes your organization's approach to risk with AI?

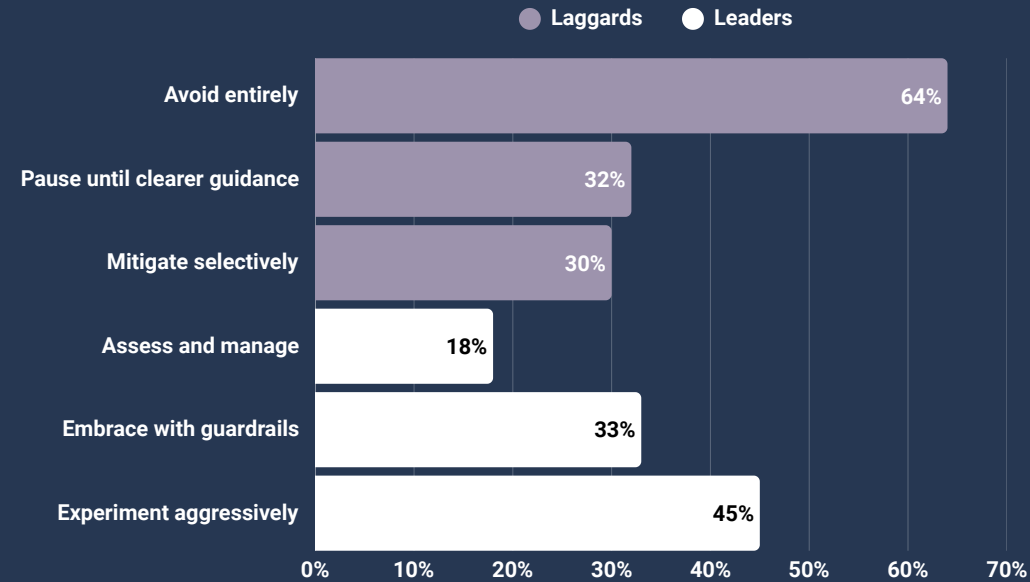


Figure 14. Organizational Approach to AI Risk

What Leadership looks like

Leaders report broader ownership of AI strategies across HR, IT, compliance, and business leaders—and greater involvement of external partners.

Leaders build coalitions early, engaging IT for technical rigor, compliance for governance, and business leaders for adoption.

These coalitions act as multipliers, spreading literacy and ensuring AI isn't viewed as "HR's project" but as a strategic enabler for the enterprise.

Why Laggards are stuck

Laggards keep ownership narrowly within HR, with limited cross-functional engagement or shared accountability.

Narrow ownership isolates HR, leaving AI efforts underpowered and under-resourced.

Without shared accountability, AI initiatives struggle to gain traction and are often deprioritized when budgets tighten.

What to do about it

Expand ownership into coalitions. Ensure IT, compliance, and business leaders are co-owners of AI in HR.

Leverage external partners. Bring in vendors, advisors, or academics to fill capability gaps and accelerate learning.

Anchor coalitions in shared goals and outcomes. Frame AI initiatives around enterprise goals (agility, workforce resilience, decision-making) to secure sponsorship.

Driver 5. Governance: The Accelerator

Governance is often assumed to slow progress, but in practice it accelerates adoption. Clear guardrails give leaders the confidence to move faster, not slower.

Without guardrails, fear dominates; with them, AI adoption accelerates.

AI in HR surfaces questions of ethics, bias, data privacy, and compliance. Lacking governance, these concerns stall adoption and undermine trust. But with strong, function-relevant governance, leaders gain a framework to test responsibly, scale confidently, and prove credibility to the enterprise.



"When pitching AI solutions as a product leader, I've consistently seen that organizations with clear AI governance move faster, not slower. With established guidelines and approval processes, purchasing decisions are streamlined. Without them, procurement and policy teams get bogged down in reactive reviews — essentially building their governance plane while trying to fly it." **Jake Paul, Co-Founder & Chief Product Officer at Crosschq**

Does your organization have a formal governance framework for AI in HR?

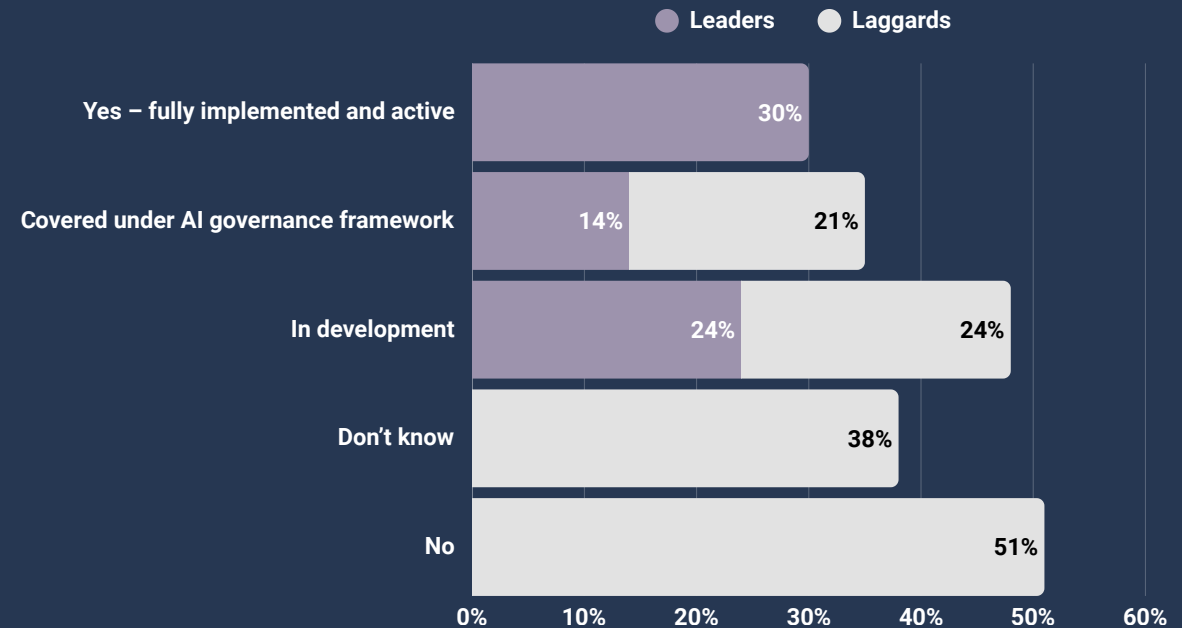


Figure 15. Presence of a Formal AI Governance Framework in HR

What Leadership looks like

Leaders are far more likely to report having formal governance frameworks (ethics guidelines, approval processes, bias testing).

- Governance is positioned as a confidence enabler: principles, approval processes, and bias testing reduce uncertainty and legitimize adoption.
- Leaders embed governance early, ensuring responsible use becomes part of the AI journey, not an afterthought.

Why Laggards are stuck

Laggards report few or no governance structures in place, often citing risk as a reason for inaction.

Among all respondents, a notable share admitted they don't know whether governance exists—a sign of weak visibility or immaturity.

- Without governance, concerns about risk turn into excuses for inaction.
- The absence of clear principles makes adoption a credibility risk—both internally and externally.

What to do about it

Stand up minimal guardrails early. Even a draft framework creates clarity and reduces fear.

Make governance visible. Publish principles, share approval processes, and communicate bias testing openly.

Evolve as you scale. Start lightweight, then expand governance as use cases and complexity grow.

Driver 6. Integration: The Connector

Integration connects systems, processes, and data, allowing AI to scale beyond isolated pilots.

Without integration, AI remains fragmented—promising in pockets but unable to deliver enterprise impact.

The hard lesson many early adopters have learned is that when HR systems are disconnected, or data is inconsistent, or processes vary, even the best tools remain stuck at pilot stage. Integration provides the connective tissue that allows AI insights to flow across functions, fueling scale and sustainability.

How well integrated are your HR systems and data to support the effective use of AI?

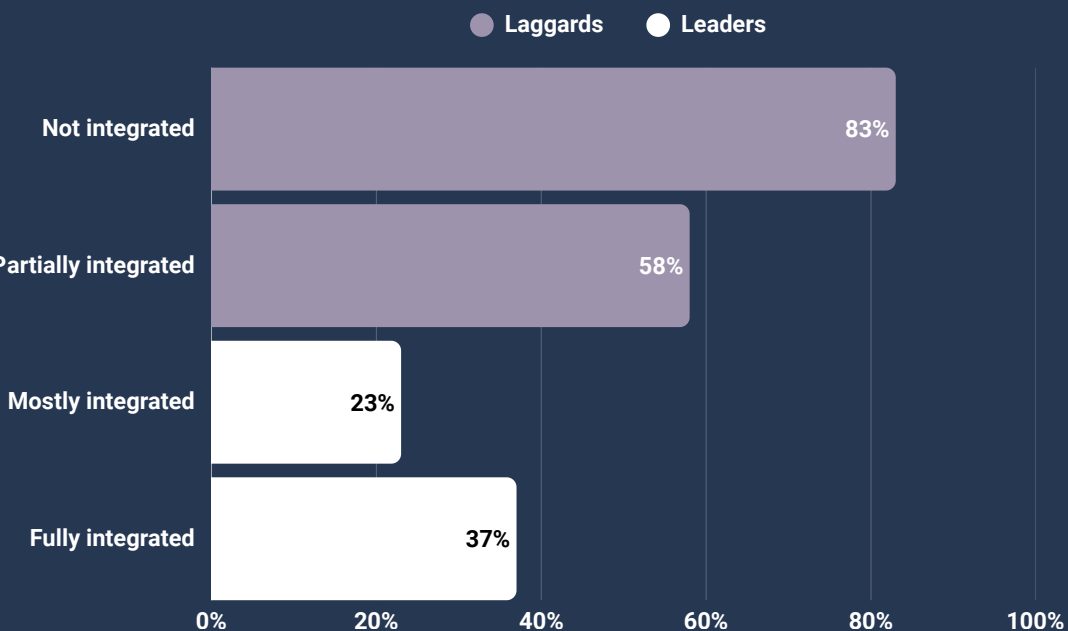


Figure 16. Integration of HR Systems and Data to Support AI

What Leadership looks like

Leaders are far more likely to report well-integrated HR systems and data. Integration allows AI to scale across processes and functions.

Leaders treat integration as foundational infrastructure, not a back-office IT project.

They align HR, IT, and business systems so that AI outputs can flow seamlessly into decision-making.

Why Laggards are stuck

Laggards rely on fragmented, siloed systems, limiting AI to small pilots or isolated use cases.

This divide highlights integration as a core enabler of momentum—not just a technical choice, but a strategic one.

Siloed systems make AI insights hard to share, validate, or scale.

Fragmentation leads to duplicated effort, wasted spend, and pilots that never graduate to production.

What to do about it

Prioritize integration early. Connect HR data sources before chasing advanced AI tools.

Align integration with business priorities. Focus on linking systems that directly support agility, retention, and workforce planning.

Make integration cross-functional: HR leaders should work with IT to ensure AI is supported by enterprise architecture, not bolted on.

Driver 7. Investment: The Signal

Investment doesn't guarantee maturity, but momentum rarely happens without it. Budgets, people, and scope are the visible signals of seriousness.

When investments are flat or misdirected, even strong literacy or strategy can stall.

AI in HR is not a side project. Without dedicated resources, pilots remain unfunded, initiatives stay narrow, and adoption loses steam. Investment—when tied to strategic outcomes—reflects conviction and continuity.

Has your organization's investment in AI capabilities changed this year compared to last year?

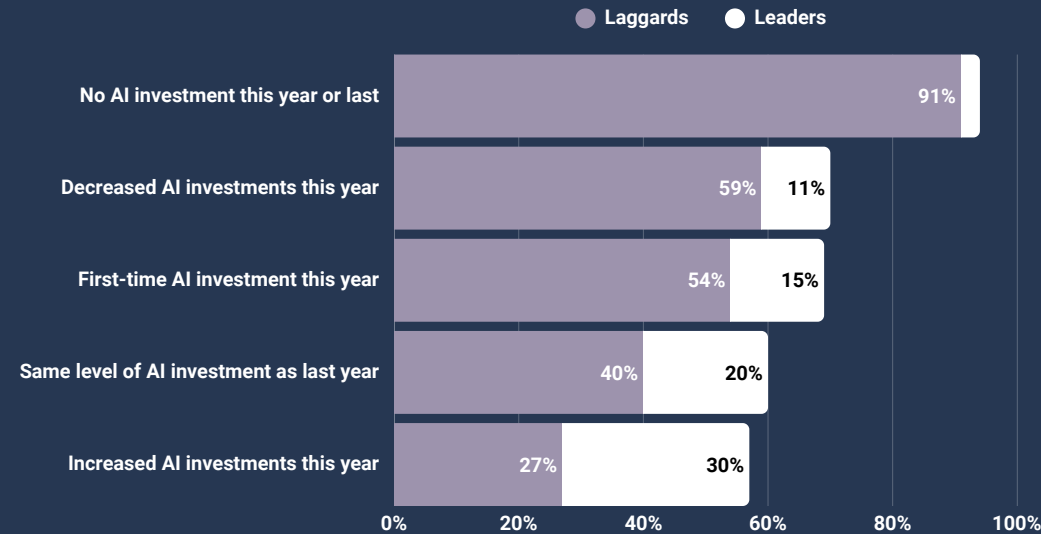


Figure 17. Change in Organizational Investment in AI Capabilities Year Over Year

What Leadership looks like

Leaders are far more likely to report increased investment in AI and to link spending to business outcomes such as decision-making, agility, and innovation.

- **Leaders back up their strategy** with sustained budgets, dedicated people, and enterprise-level scope.
- **They treat AI investment** as a commitment to transformation, not a one-off experiment.

Why Laggards are stuck

Laggards are more likely to report flat or no investment—and when they do spend, it is often tied narrowly to efficiency gains.

Comparing across cohorts shows that leaders use investment to signal intent, while laggards use it as a tactical budget line.

- Flat or shrinking budgets make it impossible to scale pilots or build momentum.
- Even when funding exists, focusing narrowly on automation yields diminishing returns.

What to do about it

- **Sustain investment:** plan for multi-year funding to ensure continuity, not one-off projects.
- **Resource beyond tools:** dedicate people and scope, not just budget lines.
- **Link investment directly to business outcomes:** make the case for retention, agility, and workforce quality, not just cost savings.

Sidebar: The “Yeah, But...” Perspective

Many HR leaders tell us, “I’m on board with moving beyond exploration, but the only budget and buy-in I have today is to fund efficiency.”

This is a valid concern—efficiency is often where AI gets its first foothold. But it doesn’t have to be the end of the story. The risk is staying stuck there, plateauing at cost-savings while missing the bigger prize of agility, resilience, and performance.

“Don’t count the Laggards out. They appear to be investing in the right areas. We’re assuming the Leaders have already invested and nailed what the Laggards are focusing on. If they haven’t, they won’t be Leaders for long. Foundational strength has never been more critical.”



**Amy Schwenck, Founder & Principal Consultant
Essential Growth & Talent**



That's a wrap on drivers!

From Momentum to Impact: Why Maturity Matters

Based on our research, **Leaders** advance not because they are bigger or better resourced, but because they are deliberate. They raise literacy, accelerate strategy, build coalitions, stand up governance, integrate systems, and invest with conviction.

Laggards, by contrast, remain locked in exploration—underpowered, siloed, and hesitant to commit. And the cost of inaction is steep.

Our survey shows a direct correlation between AI adoption and business performance: Leaders in AI for HR are far more likely to also lead in core HR KPIs such as retention, quality of hire, and workforce agility, while laggards consistently cluster at the bottom. That correlation matters. It shows that AI adoption isn't just about tools or efficiency — it's about business outcomes.

And it pushes us beyond the language of maturity and readiness. What really separates leaders from laggards is momentum—the ability to align capability, posture, and investment at the same time.

For organizations that hesitate, the opportunity cost is massive: every year of inertia is another year of lost performance, wasted spend, and diminished influence. For those that move deliberately, the payoff is equally significant: the right investments reduce costs and improve outcomes, positioning HR as a true business partner.

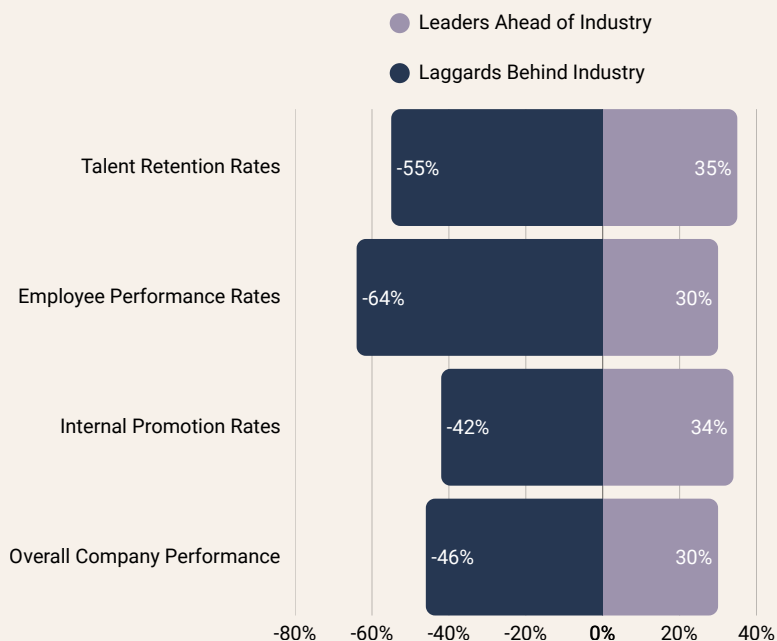


Figure 18.

Next up

In Section 4, we'll introduce the AI Momentum Model—a framework built not to score maturity, but to diagnose stalls, direct action, and build lasting progress.

SECTION



Introducing the AI Momentum Model

In Section 3, we saw the limits of maturity and readiness as frames for understanding AI adoption. They help benchmark where organizations are, but they don't explain why some pull ahead or why others stall. The data makes it clear: momentum is the most meaningful differentiator between AI Leaders and Laggards in HR.

Momentum captures whether organizations are equipped, committed, and resourced at the same time. It explains why some move from pilots to impact while others stay stuck circling. And it shows the levers leaders can pull to regain balance when progress falters.

That's why we developed the **AI Momentum Model**—a framework designed not to score maturity, but to diagnose stalls, direct action, and build lasting progress.



We Need a More Dynamic Model to Understand AI in HR

Maturity ladders look tidy on paper

Which is, early, developing, and advanced, but they miss the messy reality of AI adoption. In HR, progress is rarely linear. Teams surge ahead in some areas, stall in others, and never truly arrive at a neat “endpoint.”

That’s the problem with maturity: it implies completion. But AI in HR will never be “done.” New tools, regulations, and expectations constantly shift the ground under our feet. A static maturity model oversimplifies what is dynamic, uneven, and ongoing.

Momentum tells the real story. Momentum reflects whether organizations are equipped, committed, and resourced at the same time. When one of these elements lags, the entire effort slows down or stalls—like an engine with a missing part.

When one of these dimensions lags, organizations stall. Big budgets without capability create wasted spend. Strong systems without leadership posture collapse into turf wars. Posture without resourcing is a paper tiger — ambitious on paper, but hollow in practice.

The AI Momentum Model reframes the conversation.

It is:

- **A Map**

to orient where your organization stands

- **A Mirror**

to reflect your readiness across capability, posture, and investment

- **A Way Forward**

to build lasting progress

The Three Dimensions of the AI Momentum Model

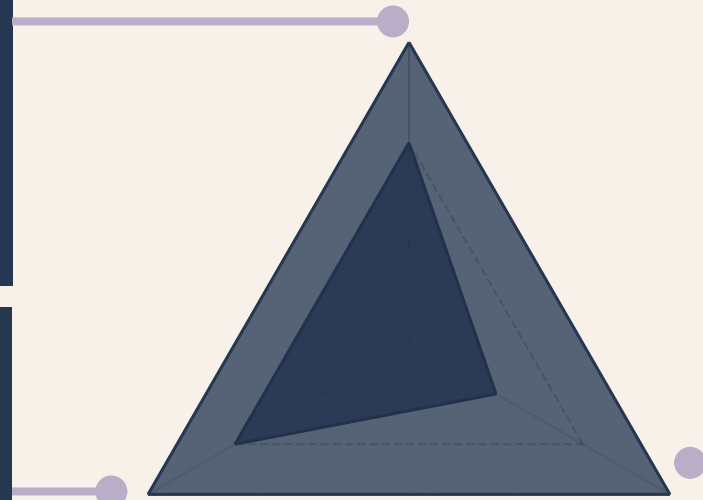
Our research shows that momentum builds only when three dimensions advance together, each powered by critical drivers of change:

Capability

Includes the structural enablers—literacy, governance, integration. Without them, even the strongest strategies get stuck in pilot purgatory.

Investment

Is the visible signal of commitment—budget, people, scope. Without it, progress starves before it can scale.



Posture

Is the combined strategic stance—ownership, risk orientation, and strategy together. Without bold leadership, momentum hardens into inertia.

Unlike static maturity scales, the model doesn't just show where you are. It shows why you're there—and which levers you must pull to regain momentum.

Capability: Are we equipped with the foundations to apply AI in HR?

Organizations can only scale AI when the right foundations are in place. Without literacy, governance, and integration, even the strongest strategies stall. Capability represents these structural enablers—the “plumbing and proficiency” that determine whether AI is feasible and sustainable.

Drivers: AI Literacy, Governance, Integration *Spectrum of Capability*

LOW	MID	HIGH
Little literacy, siloed systems, no guardrails.	Partial integration, early governance, growing awareness.	Confident practitioners, strong integration, formal governance.



Posture: Are we committed and aligned to lead AI in HR?

Posture reflects whether leaders are leaning in to make AI a strategic priority. It captures the cultural and leadership stance: Is AI seen as an experiment, or as a driver of transformation?

Momentum depends not just on strategy, but on ownership and risk orientation that show intent.



Drivers: Strategy Acceleration, Ownership & Coalitions, Risk Orientation.

PASSIVE	TRANSITIONAL	ACTIVE
Little literacy, siloed systems, no guardrails.	Evolving strategy, partial ownership, cautious pilots.	Strategic acceleration, cross-functional coalitions, aggressive experimentation.

Investment: Are we committing meaningful resources to AI in HR?

Investment is the visible signal of seriousness. It goes beyond budget to include the people who carry the work forward and the scope of deployment across the organization. Without dedicated teams and enterprise reach, even large budgets can fail to create impact.

Drivers: Investment, People, Scope Level of Investment

LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
Unfunded, small pilots, limited scope.	Targeted function-level initiatives, regional or departmental focus.	Significant budget, enterprise/global scope, dedicated AI/innovation teams.

Starting with a Simple-Ish Model

The version of the AI Momentum Model you see here is intentionally straightforward. Think of it as the first gear: a way to get moving without overcomplicating the dashboard. Each of the three dimensions—capability, posture, and investment—is powered by specific drivers like literacy, governance, integration, and ownership.

A full diagnostic could measure every driver individually, then roll them up into a multidimensional profile. That's where future iterations of this model will go. But here's the point: leaders don't need a perfect diagnostic to start. They need a clear signal of where momentum is strong, where it's stalling, and what levers to pull next.

This "simple-ish" model does exactly that. It provides a high-level entry point that helps leaders orient themselves, reflect on reality, and begin moving forward — because momentum only builds once you're in motion.

How the AI Momentum Model Works

The AI Momentum Model is more than a framework. It's designed to be a reality check. To plot an organization on the radar chart, leaders answer a set of questions aligned to each dimension: Capability, Posture, and Investment.

By answering a set of questions aligned to capability, posture, and investment, leaders can plot their organization's momentum profile. The profile shows whether momentum is balanced — or skewed in ways that stall progress.

A balanced profile appears as a full, even shape on the radar chart: equipped, committed, and resourced at the same time. Uneven profiles are where the stalls happen. Based on our research, we see this playing out in several (real life) scenarios.

SCENARIO 1

An organization with high capability and strong investment but passive posture often finds itself stuck in inertia.

In this case, HR may have well-integrated systems and a dedicated AI budget at the enterprise level, but a lack of clear direction on HR's strategic priorities leaves functional teams fighting over which use cases to fund first.

Momentum Profile: High Capability + High Investment, Low Posture

Outcome: Momentum stalls in turf wars, and adoption loses credibility before it even begins.

SCENARIO 2

HR leadership is ambitious and ready to fund big projects, but weak foundations risks wasted spend and credibility loss.

The CHRO's office secures funding for an AI matching and scoring solution, only to discover that data quality is inconsistent and governance is nonexistent.

Momentum Profile: High Posture + High Investment, Low Capability

Outcome: Recruiters resist using the tool, compliance raises red flags, and credibility erodes across the business.

SCENARIO 3

Talent acquisition has skilled practitioners and a clear use case for interview scheduling, but can't expand pilots enterprise-wide because technology budgets are controlled at the business unit-level.

HR has the right capability and posture in place, but no funding becomes a starved operator, unable to scale despite readiness.

Momentum Profile: High Capability + High Posture, Low Investment

Outcome: Over time, enthusiasm fades, pilots stagnate, and competitors outpace the organization in adopting scalable solutions.

How the AI Momentum Model Works

From Model to Movement

The AI Momentum Model gives us a new lens on adoption: Not maturity as a finish line, but momentum as a force to be built, balanced, and sustained. It shows where organizations stall, and why.

But diagnosis is only the start. Leaders need more than a mirror, they need a way to act.

That's where we go next—we turn profiles into patterns, and patterns into archetypes. Section 5 brings the model to life, showing how uneven momentum plays out in the real world and what leaders can do about it.



SECTION

5

Momentum in Action: From Profiles to Archetypes

The AI Momentum Model is powerful in theory, but its real value comes in practice. By translating diagnostic inputs into organizational profiles, leaders can see not only where they stand but also why momentum is building—or stalling.

These profiles expose the imbalances that slow progress and highlight the levers that can move HR forward. Our goal is to gauge momentum as a starting point.

By diagnosing Capability, Posture, and Investment, HR teams can assess the signals we have found as most indicative of momentum in AI:

CAPABILITY

How integrated are HR systems and data? Do teams demonstrate baseline AI literacy? Is there a governance framework in place?

POSTURE

Has strategy accelerated in the past year? Who owns AI in HR — one function, or a cross-functional coalition? Does the organization adopt a passive, cautious, or active risk posture?

INVESTMENT

Has funding increased? Are there dedicated teams or roles for AI in HR? Are initiatives isolated pilots, departmental, or enterprise-wide?

When responses to these questions are aggregated, they create a momentum profile on the radar chart. A balanced profile shows strong, sustained momentum. Uneven profiles quickly reveal where progress is stalling.

But profiles are only the beginning. Momentum isn't abstract—it shows up in how budgets are allocated, how risks are managed, and how coalitions are built (or avoided).

Profiles make these imbalances visible. Archetypes make them relatable. They translate abstract data into recognizable patterns of behavior that HR leaders can see themselves in.

Together, profiles and archetypes move HR leaders from analysis to action—from seeing the problem to knowing the next move.

How the AI Momentum Model Works

Once organizations diagnose their capability, posture, and investment, the real value comes from understanding what that profile means and how to act on it.

To that end, the diagnostic approach that powers the AI Momentum Model is designed to make it clear where momentum is strong and where it is weak.

More importantly, it highlights the imbalances that create stalls: Investment without Capability, Posture without Resources, or Capability without Leadership. Each of these patterns points to specific risks, but also to practical levers leaders can pull to regain balance.

To make the model tangible, we translated these profiles into Archetypes. Archetypes take abstract data and turn it into recognizable personas—"types" of organizations that HR leaders can see themselves in. They show not just where you stand, but the traps to avoid and the moves that will help you build lasting momentum.

Appendix A has an expansive list of the Archetypes we identified. But to anchor the model's utility and relevance, we have developed some sample profiles for review. Each would be derived based on the answers to diagnostic questions related to the various drivers that support momentum (e.g., Governance, Literacy, Integrations, etc.)



SAMPLE PROFILE ONE: High Capability, Low Posture, Moderate Investment

ARCHETYPE: THE RELUCTANT OPERATOR

SNAPSHOT

Strong systems, governance, and literacy in place; some resources allocated. But leadership is hesitant and strategy has not accelerated.

RISKS

Frustrated teams, wasted potential, missed opportunity to connect AI to business goals.

Equipped and resourced, but lacking the will to lead. Momentum is stalled by cautious leadership and static strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build a cross-functional coalition to expand ownership.
- Reframe AI as a strategic priority with clear outcome targets.
- Use existing investment to launch a one-year acceleration roadmap.

SAMPLE PROFILE TWO: High Posture, High Investment, Low Capability



ARCHETYPE: THE OVER-INVESTED GAMBLER

Ambitious leadership and big budgets, but weak foundations. Investments are at risk of becoming shelfware.

SNAPSHOT

Leaders eager and willing to experiment; budgets are flowing. But literacy and governance are weak, and systems are fragmented.

RISKS

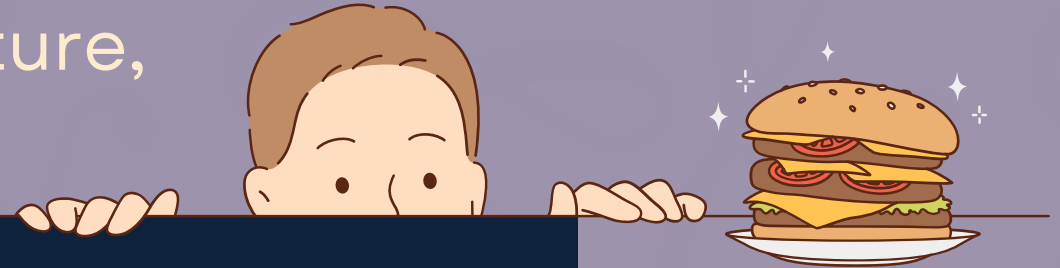
Wasted spend, reputational risk, compliance gaps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritize literacy programs for HR leaders and managers.
- Establish baseline governance (ethics principles, approval workflows, bias testing).
- Sequence technology rollouts after foundations are in place.

SAMPLE PROFILE THREE:

High Capability, High Posture, Low Investment



ARCHETYPE: THE STARVED OPERATOR

Ready to accelerate, but momentum is undercut by lack of resourcing. Without investment, intent goes unrealized.

SNAPSHOT

The right conditions are in place, and leaders are ready to move—but initiatives remain unfunded or narrow in scope.

RISKS

Stalled progress, inability to scale, competitive disadvantage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

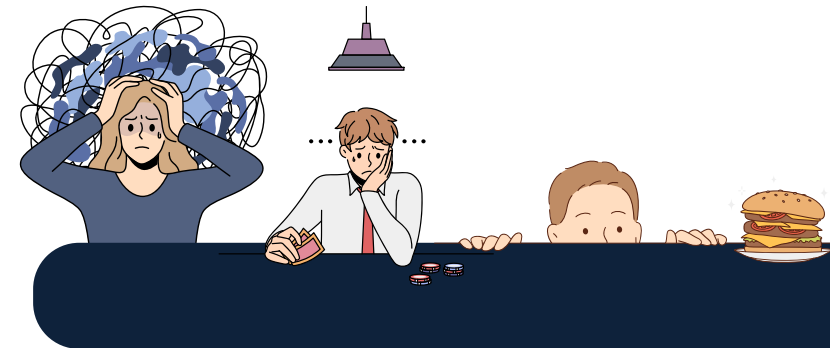
- Secure leadership commitment to sustained funding.
- Expand scope from pilots to enterprise-level programs.
- Tie investment requests directly to business outcomes (e.g., retention, agility).

The AI Momentum Model: Profiles That Point the Way

The sample profiles highlight how uneven momentum creates predictable stalls—inertia, wasted spend, and starved progress. They also show that none of these stalls are inevitable; each comes with levers leaders can pull to regain balance.

But profiles are only the beginning. To make this analysis practical, we translated them into Archetypes—personas that capture the lived reality of HR organizations wrestling with AI.

Archetypes bring our research to life. They're easier to recognize, harder to dismiss, and designed to help leaders not only see themselves but also know what to do next. That's where we turn in Section 6: From profiles to full Archetypes, and from maps to movement.



SECTION

6

Implications for Leaders From Map to Movement

The AI Momentum Model shows us that when it comes to meaningful adoption of AI in HR, knowing where you stand is only half the battle. The real test is whether you're ready to move—and whether you're moving in the right direction.

Momentum is built (or lost) in the choices HR leaders make every day: which use cases to fund, which risks to take, which coalitions to build. A model is only useful if it drives action.

That's where profiles and archetypes come in. Profiles show where momentum is stalling. Archetypes take it further—turning those profiles into recognizable patterns of behavior.

If profiles are a diagnostic, archetypes are the human story. They make the research tangible, showing HR leaders the traps they may be falling into and the moves that will help them regain momentum.

But archetypes aren't just mirrors. They're tools for action.

This section translates the research into practical implications for HR leaders, business executives, and the organizations they support—and lays out the archetypes in three categories that simplify the landscape: stalled, overextended, and momentum-building.

We'll start with the implications of our benchmark analysis. Momentum needs focus—and before we jump into the archetypes, we'll ground ourselves in what the data tells us about where HR is today and what it means for the businesses we serve.

Implications for HR Leaders

If you're in HR, here's what the AI Momentum Model is telling you:

- **Literacy is the unlock.** Without baseline fluency, fear fills the gap. When people don't understand AI, they resist it — and adoption dies on the vine.
- **Strategy is the amplifier.** A scatter of cautious pilots won't cut it. When leaders put AI on the transformation agenda, everything else — investment, coalitions, adoption — accelerates.
- **Governance is the accelerator.** Guardrails don't slow you down; they give you permission to move faster. The absence of governance is what creates drag.



Taken together, these implications underline a simple truth, which is that momentum is collective—and it's continuous. HR can't build it on strategy alone, and the enterprise can't achieve it without HR at the table. Based on our research, AI Momentum lives in how capability, posture, and investment line up (or don't) across both sides of the equation.

That's where the archetypes come in.

Think of them as the “personality types” of AI adoption in HR. They translate the dry mechanics of capability, posture, and investment into recognizable patterns: the organizations stuck idling in neutral, the ones revving too hard in the wrong gear, and the rare few finding a rhythm that carries them forward.

These archetypes are designed to be mirrors: They'll help you spot your organization in the research, recognize the traps you may be falling into, and—most importantly—see the moves that will help you regain or sustain momentum.

Know thyself. It's my favorite proverb, and an essential point of guidance for the current state of continuous disruption.

Though we're experiencing a pace of innovation we've never experienced before—we're finding that the things making a difference aren't, actually, new.

Knowing where you stand—and knowing that you're not the only one in this position—is as important as knowing where you're trying to go.



Kyle Lagunas Founder &
Principle at Kyle & Co

Recommendations by Archetype

The nine archetypes fall into three categories:

Stalled, Overextended, and Momentum-Building.

These categories cut through the noise and simplify the landscape. They tell you whether you're stuck, stretched too thin, or starting to hit stride—and each comes with its own priorities for leaders who want to move faster, with more confidence.



CATEGORY ONE

The Parked Explorer

The Reluctant Operator

The Compliance Checker



STALLED ARCHETYPES

These are the organizations stuck idling in neutral. Leaders hesitate, budgets are thin, and risk avoidance becomes the default strategy. Progress rarely makes it past “exploring possibilities,” and teams lose energy waiting for direction.

WHY IT MATTERS

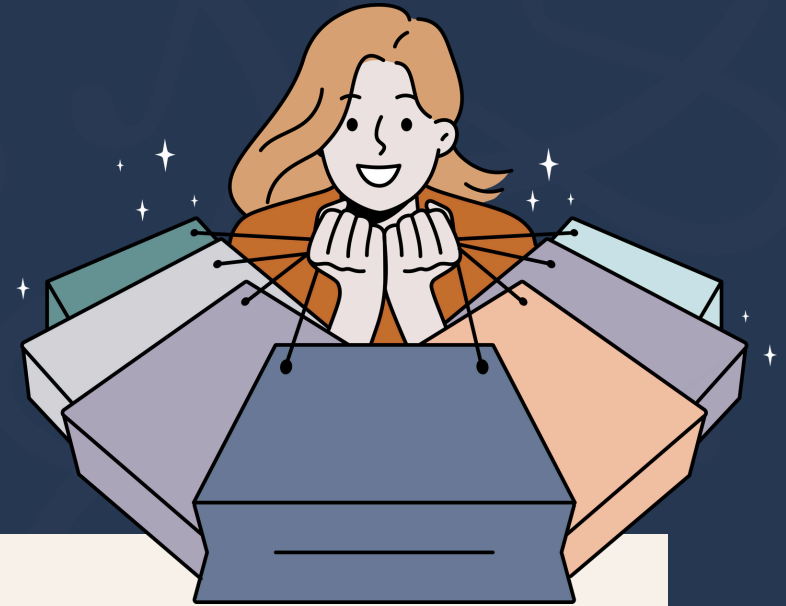
Stalled archetypes don’t just move slowly—they risk becoming irrelevant. While other functions surge ahead with AI, HR is left circling the runway.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU FIND YOURSELF HERE

- **Start with literacy:** build baseline AI fluency across HR so fear doesn’t block change.
- **Put guardrails in place early:** even a lightweight governance framework creates confidence to move.
- **Fund a handful of visible pilots:** small wins prove value, build credibility, and spark executive support.

CATEGORY TWO

The Scrappy Experimenter
The Automation Chaser
The Over-Invested Gambler
The Starved Operator



OVEREXTENDED ARCHETYPES

WHY IT MATTERS

Overextended archetypes risk burning credibility. Ambition without balance can make HR look reckless rather than forward-thinking.

These organizations are revving the engine hard but grinding the gears. They show strength in one or two areas — bold leadership, big budgets, or enthusiastic pilots — but weakness elsewhere drags them off course. The result: fragile momentum that flames out, tools that become shelfware, or teams that run out of gas.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU FIND YOURSELF HERE

- **Rebalance before you scale:** pause expansion and shore up weak spots.
- **Invest in foundations:** strengthen literacy, integration, and governance before chasing more tools.
- **Tie experiments to outcomes:** connect AI use cases to retention, agility, or performance so progress is measurable.

CATEGORY THREE

The Visionary Builder The AI Orchestrator



MOMENTUM BUILDING ARCHETYPES

WHY IT MATTERS

Momentum-builders set the bar for everyone else. They prove that AI in HR isn't about dabbling with efficiency, but about shaping agility, retention, and performance across the enterprise.

These are the rare few that have found their rhythm. They balance capability, posture, and investment, embedding AI into HR in ways that scale and stick. They're not perfect — the risk here is complacency — but they're moving with purpose and pulling ahead.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU FIND YOURSELF HERE

- **Focus on sustaining momentum:** keep evolving governance as scope increases.
- **Prove ROI:** show direct links between AI initiatives and business outcomes to reinforce credibility.
- **Expand fluency:** continue building literacy across HR and the enterprise so momentum spreads, not stalls.

SECTION

7

Conclusion— Clarity, Coalition, Commitment

AI in HR isn't about chasing shiny objects, though there's plenty of cool and exciting innovation to go around. Instead, it's about meaningful innovation; it's about delivering solutions that matter. And solutions don't come from climbing a static maturity ladder. They come from momentum: the energy you have to build, balance, and sustain if you want progress to stick.

The research is unambiguous: exploration is not progress, and inertia is not safe. HR leaders who hesitate risk ceding credibility, influence, and resources to other functions. Momentum will happen somewhere in the enterprise—the only question is whether HR will own it.

But the opportunity is just as clear. Leaders who act with clarity (anchoring AI in real outcomes), build coalitions (across HR, IT, compliance, and the business), and commit resources consistently will not only unlock AI in HR — they'll shape how AI is adopted across the enterprise.

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR HR

No other function sits at the intersection of people, technology, and trust the way HR does. That makes HR uniquely positioned to guide the responsible adoption of AI across the enterprise—and that's really exciting.

HR owns the employee lifecycle, understands the risks of bias and inequity, and has the credibility to design governance that balances innovation with ethics.

This moment is a crossroads. With executive pressure mounting, HR's choices today will determine whether the function is seen as a driver of transformation or a follower of technology.

Driving means taking ownership of how AI is applied to workforce planning, talent acquisition, performance, and employee experience. Following means reacting to tools handed down by IT or operations — and losing the chance to shape how AI touches people at work.

The opportunity is not just to “adopt” AI, but to set the terms of its adoption—to demonstrate the impact AI can have in unlocking new levels of talent retention, workforce agility, and employee performance and productivity... and to do it all while staying rooted in fairness, transparency, and trust.



**Few functions
are trusted
with both
outcomes and
ethics. HR is
one of them.**

What Leaders Must Do Now

The research shows exactly where to start—and where momentum is lost when leaders hesitate.



Build literacy across the HR function.

Without baseline fluency, fear takes over. HR teams need the language, concepts, and confidence to engage with AI, ask the right questions, and spot both risks and opportunities. Literacy is the unlock that shifts mindsets from resistance to readiness.



Elevate strategy posture and form coalitions..

AI cannot succeed as “HR’s project.” Momentum multiplies when HR partners with IT, compliance, and business leaders to co-own strategy. Leaders must put AI on the transformation agenda, not relegate it to side pilots, and rally coalitions around outcomes the business values



Stand up governance early—as a confidence accelerator.

As a confidence accelerator. Governance isn’t about slowing things down with bureaucracy. It’s about creating clarity and legitimacy. Draft principles, approval flows, and bias testing reduce fear and give teams permission to experiment. Done right, governance is a green light, not a red tape.



Invest with intent.

Budgets, people, and scope send signals. Investment tied narrowly to efficiency hits a ceiling. Investment tied to retention, agility, and performance creates durable impact. Leaders must ensure that AI is resourced as a transformation initiative, not treated as an experiment.

Meeting the Moment: A Call to Action for HR

The time for circling AI is over. HR leaders don't need perfect conditions — they need conviction. Momentum is built choice by choice: every use case funded, every coalition formed, every guardrail put in place. Those choices determine whether HR leads the transformation or gets left behind by it.

Momentum isn't about reaching an endpoint; it's about sustaining forward motion. The question isn't whether AI belongs in HR. The real question is: will HR shape the future of work with AI — or watch others decide it for them?



Appendix A: Archetypes of AI Momentum

Category	Archetype	Capability	Posture	Investment	Snapshot
Stalled	The Parked Explorer	Low	Low	Low	Stuck in exploration; no real progress.
	The Reluctant Operator	High	Low	High	Strong systems, but hesitant leadership and static strategy.
	The Compliance Checker	Moderate/High	Low	Low/Moderate	Governance-heavy; risk management dominates strategy.
Overextended	The Scrappy Experimenter	Low/Moderate	High	Moderate	Enthusiastic pilots, but weak literacy/governance.
	The Automation Chaser	High	Low	Moderate	Strong systems, but focused narrowly on efficiency.
	The Over-Invested Gambler	Low/Moderate	High	High	Ambitious leaders and big budgets, but weak foundations.
	The Starved Operator	High	High	Low	Ready to move, but momentum blocked by lack of funding/scope.
Momentum-Building	The Visionary Builder	Moderate	High	High	Bold strategy and investment, building capability steadily.
	The Integrated Operator	High	High	High	Equipped, committed, and resourced; AI embedded.

Appendix A: Archetypes of AI Momentum

1. The Parked Explorer

- Snapshot: Low across capability, posture, and investment. Endlessly “exploring” but never committing.
- Risks: Inaction hardens into inertia; credibility declines as other functions move forward.
- Next Moves: Launch literacy-building efforts, define minimal guardrails, and fund at least two scoped pilots.

2. The Scrappy Experimenter

- Snapshot: High posture and enthusiasm for pilots, but weak capability and governance.
- Risks: Fragmented efforts, pilot fatigue, compliance gaps.
- Next Moves: Introduce baseline governance (ethics, approvals, bias checks), consolidate experiments, and focus investment.

3. The Automation Chaser

- Snapshot: Strong systems and governance, but AI is focused narrowly on efficiency and cost savings.
- Risks: Plateau at tactical automation; miss the leap to decision-support and strategic outcomes.
- Next Moves: Reframe AI strategy toward prediction, insight, and workforce agility. Expand use cases beyond efficiency.

4. The AI Orchestrator

- Snapshot: High across all three dimensions. AI embedded across HR processes with strong governance and cross-functional ownership.
- Risks: Risk of complacency; AI programs embedded but not evolving toward strategic impact.
- Next Moves: Connect AI initiatives directly to business outcomes (retention, performance, agility). Demonstrate ROI.

5. The Over-Invested Gambler

- Snapshot: Big budgets and ambitious leadership, but low literacy, weak governance, or fragmented systems.
- Risks: Wasted spend, shelfware, reputational risk.
- Next Moves: Pause new purchases, invest in literacy and governance, then re-sequence technology rollouts.

Appendix A: Archetypes of AI Momentum

6. The Reluctant Operator

- Snapshot: Strong systems, good governance, and funding, but passive leadership and static strategy.
- Risks: Talent frustration, wasted potential, loss of momentum despite strong infrastructure.
- Next Moves: Build a cross-functional coalition, create an acceleration plan, and tie strategy to measurable business goals.

8. The Compliance Checker

- Snapshot: Strong governance structures, but low posture and weak investment. AI framed primarily as a risk to be managed.
- Risks: Innovation strangled by over-indexing on compliance; credibility as a business partner weakened.
- Next Moves: Balance governance with ambition; expand strategy posture; secure resourcing to scale.

7. The Starved Operator

- Snapshot: High capability and posture, but underfunded and narrow in scope. Ready to move, but no resources to scale.
- Risks: Missed opportunities, competitive disadvantage, stalled progress.
- Next Moves: Secure sustained investment, expand from pilots to enterprise-level programs, tie funding to outcomes.

9. The Visionary Builder

- Snapshot: High posture and investment, building capability steadily. Positioned to become an Integrated Operator.
- Risks: Overconfidence could lead to gaps in governance or literacy; momentum could stall without continuous investment.
- Next Moves: Continue building literacy and integration capabilities; maintain momentum through sustained coalitions and governance.

Appendix B. Diagnostic Questions to Gauge AI Momentum Across Three Dimensions

- To plot an organization on the radar chart, inputs are needed that map directly to each dimension.
- These questions provide measurable signals for capability, posture, and investment.
- They translate the model into something actionable and repeatable.

1 Diagnosing Capability

How well integrated are your HR systems and data?

- Minimal integration; systems siloed
- Partial integration; some functions connected
- High integration; systems and data unified across HR

How would you rate AI literacy across HR functions?

- Low literacy; limited awareness of AI concepts
- Moderate literacy; some capability, pockets of expertise
- High literacy; confident practitioners enabling others

Do you have an AI governance framework specific to HR?

- No governance structures in place
- Some elements; draft principles or ad hoc approvals
- Formal governance; principles, approvals, bias testing established

2 Diagnosing Posture

How has your AI strategy changed in the past year?

- No change or stalled
- Pilots expanding but limited
- Clear acceleration; AI a strategic driver

Who owns AI strategy for HR?

- Owned narrowly within HR
- Shared with one or two functions
- Broad coalition (HR, IT, compliance, business leaders)

What is your organization's risk posture?

- Passive; waiting and watching
- Cautious; limited pilots
- Active; experimenting aggressively

3 Diagnosing Investment

Has your investment in AI capabilities changed this year?

- Decreased or flat, no meaningful allocation
- First-time or moderate investment; function-level scope
- Significant increase; sustained, enterprise/global scope

Do you have dedicated people or teams for AI in HR?

- None; no dedicated resources
- Some; partial time allocation or regional role
- Yes; dedicated AI/innovation or HRIT roles at enterprise level

What is the scope of your AI initiatives?

- Isolated pilots
- Departmental or regional initiatives
- Enterprise-wide or global deployment

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Kyle & Co is a practitioner-led research and advisory firm helping HR leaders and solution providers cut through the noise in a complex market. With firsthand experience as operators, analysts, and advisors, the team knows what it takes to drive adoption, shift strategy, and create momentum. Kyle & Co blends original research, strategic advisory, and bold storytelling to clarify what's happening in HR tech and transformation—and what's next. Through initiatives like the Human-Centric AI Council, flagship research projects, and community-driven platforms, the firm connects big ideas to real-world execution. With flexible engagement models ranging from credit-based advisory to co-developed research, Kyle & Co equips partners to move forward with clarity, credibility, and confidence. For more information, visit www.kyleandco.com.

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