The top trends for 2012 according to SHRM's HR subject matter expert panels
About the SHRM Special Expertise Panels

The SHRM Special Expertise Panels serve as a resource to SHRM by identifying topics of importance to the HR profession. Panel members also serve as subject matter experts for SHRM and represent the profession in their area of expertise in media interviews, conference panels and online forums. The panels are composed of a mix of senior HR practitioners, consultants, academics and policy experts with advanced HR skills and experience in one of 12 HR concentrations. Each of the 12 Special Expertise Panels is made up of SHRM professional members who serve a one- to three-year term.

Panel member contributions play an integral role in reporting emerging trends in specific HR topic areas, providing expert advice on matters of professional significance and offering guidance on matters of public policy. Member competencies must include subject matter expertise in the panel topic area, good communication and interpersonal skills and an established professional network with strategic/operational connections. Members are identified, reviewed and recommended by the Panel Selection Committee and approved by the SHRM Board Governance Committee.1

About the Special Expertise Panels’ Trends

As part of the thought leadership pillar within the SHRM strategic plan, Special Expertise Panel members act as thought leaders whose input creates pathways for SHRM’s thought leadership within the profession and among a wider business audience. The lists of key trends the panels produce make use of these experts’ insights to uncover a wide range of HR-related trends. These lists assist SHRM in creating forward-looking information and content for our members in forums such as the online HR Focus Areas, research articles, reports and surveys, and through media and outreach efforts.

The Special Expertise Panels’ trends are used at SHRM primarily as a springboard to more in-depth content ideas. However, they also can be considered a valuable stand-alone resource for any HR professional interested in knowing what issues HR subject matter experts believe will have the biggest impact on the workplace and the profession in the next few years.

SHRM Special Expertise Panels

- Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability
- Employee Health, Safety and Security
- Employee Relations
- Ethics
- Global HR
- Human Capital Measurement/HR Metrics
- Labor Relations
- Organizational Development
- Staffing Management
- Technology and HR Management
- Total Rewards/Compensation and Benefits
- Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

Acknowledgements

SHRM would like to acknowledge the efforts of each of the members of the 12 Special Expertise Panels. A full list of panel members can be found in the back of this report.

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1 The Panel Selection Committee is appointed by the SHRM Board Chair. These volunteers work, with staff support, to identify possible candidates for the panels. The Panel Selection Committee identifies five to 15 members and alternates for each panel. The slates for the panels are reviewed and approved by the Governance Committee of the SHRM Board.
Overview

The SHRM Special Expertise Panels began to compile their lists of key trends more than five years ago. This exercise is an opportunity for SHRM to tap into the cutting-edge insights from the most experienced thought leaders in the HR field. Since then, the panels have been regularly reviewing their most recent trends and adding, subtracting or changing them as new developments occur.

Though the panels vary widely in the subject matter they cover and many of the trends in their lists reflect these differences, they also have some overlap, indicating that some broader trends are influencing many aspects of HR and the workplace simultaneously.

Some of these broader trends include:

- The continuing impact of the economy on budgets, hiring and HR strategies.
- The growing influence of social networking, especially as it relates to recruiting.
- The importance of effective work/life strategies as employees deal with multiple caring responsibilities and, in some cases, multiple paid jobs.
- An emphasis on measurement of results and the development and standardization of key HR metrics to justify HR budgets and expenditures.
- The incorporation of sustainability and social responsibility practices into both strategy and everyday business.
- Safety issues and wellness initiatives to both comply with regulations and save costs.
- Globalization and market interdependence leading to greater volatility.

- The need for skilled employees in spite of high unemployment rates and concerns about the ability of the U.S. education system to produce the needed skilled workers of the future.
- Demographic change and its impact on diversity and labor availability.
- The implications of government legislation, especially health care legislation.

The trends contributed by the Special Expertise Panels and their overall themes will help inform the development of the research and resources SHRM offers to its members in 2012.
Following is the complete list of the updated trends for 2012, in the order of importance (with the first trend being the most important). Panels are listed in alphabetical order.

**Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability**

1. The tangible impact, ability/capability of measurement, scope (economic, environmental, people) and social expectations of sustainable business practices are causing many organizations to incorporate social responsibility policies and activities under the larger umbrella of sustainability.

2. Larger companies’ contracting requirements and governmental reporting standards across the globe are forcing organizations to become more aware of and proactive in developing sustainable and socially responsible programs, practices and policies.

3. Organizations of all types and sizes (academic institutions, small and emerging businesses, nonprofits and government agencies—not just large corporations) are participating in philanthropic activities and devoting more resources to creating environmentally profitable and sustainable practices, locations/buildings, products and services.

4. With the increase in global reporting standards and the advancement of green and energy-efficient technologies, sustainability and social responsibility are becoming normal and expected business practices.

5. More academic institutions and training programs are incorporating sustainability/social responsibility as a component of all courses in the business and management curricula, rather than as a topic for a standalone course.

6. Countries are increasingly concerned about their image and reputation in the areas of sustainable and socially responsible business practices because of the implementation of globally acceptable reporting standards, increasingly global media coverage and readily available information through social media.

7. Widespread layoffs and financial instability of companies have caused employees across all generations to redefine the value of their work outside of pure financial returns, creating internal pressure on organizations to create and maintain sustainable and socially responsible strategies and practices.

8. HR professionals will increasingly be responsible for incorporating sustainability/social responsibility considerations into job roles and responsibilities, policies and procedures.

9. Because of budget constraints, organizations’ philanthropic activities are being pushed to the local community and individual employee level, rather than large-scale corporate donation programs, giving employees the opportunity to make a difference in their own communities.

10. Pressure from government agencies and enhanced environmental requirements will lead to increases in regulatory and legislative activity in the sustainability arena.

**Employee Health, Safety and Security**

1. HR may need to focus on evidence-based hiring—e.g., “Ban the Box” (elimination of the questions about past convictions)—to stay in compliance with legal requirements and EEOC guidance. This could influence HR’s ability to carry out criminal background and credit checks.

2. Returning veterans are facing increased barriers to employment due to employers’ perceptions of workplace safety and security issues associated with hiring (e.g., PTSD, workplace aggression and violence, and drug issues).

3. Economic conditions have forced employers to more closely evaluate budget priorities. This could adversely impact employee health, safety and security programs in some workplaces.

4. Safety compliance is evolving toward Injury and Illness Prevention Programs (IIPP).

5. OSHA will continue to be more active, and this will lead to more inspections and higher fines.

6. Increased focus on workplace flexibility and telework will lead to more security and workers’ compensation issues.

7. HR will need to give increased attention to organizational resilience management in preparation for natural disasters, terrorism, workplace violence and pandemic outbreaks, among others.

8. Wellness is being put back on the table as a result of health care reform and attempts to reduce health care costs.

9. There will be an increased focus on prescription drugs and their use in the workplace. In particular, legalization of medical marijuana will affect the workplace by potentially leading to increased accidents and drug testing issues.

10. HR will need to address more privacy and HIPAA compliance issues associated with data breaches.
Employee Relations
1. HR is seeing the importance of being high-touch in a high-tech world and is increasing efforts to maintain and enhance employee engagement.

2. Effective employee relations practices are becoming essential to business continuity in the context of possible natural or other unforeseen disasters.

3. Keeping up with city, state, federal and international compliance is taking up more and more of HR’s time, taking away from the time serving the company as HR business partner.

4. HR continues to develop an acute sensitivity to the impact of the external environment on the workforce and the business as a whole. In that context, effective employee relations practices are becoming increasingly important as companies observe the link between employee engagement/satisfaction and productivity. Recognizing the importance of embedding effective employee relations practices in all HR disciplines will make HR more effective as a business and strategic partner.

5. It is becoming more challenging to manage individuals who believe themselves to be entitled, or don’t believe the company standards or policies apply to them, and to instill in them a sense of accountability.

6. Technology and social media are becoming more of a negative influence on workplace civility, manners, company information, privacy, business writing and etiquette. Their use is increasing opportunities and avenues for harassment.

7. As companies and workplaces change with economic, social, technological and other demographic shifts, HR is becoming more instrumental in facilitating effective change management and integrating culture as a regular duty as opposed to a special project.

8. HR has seen the need to increase efforts in building trust between employees and the company, especially when lack of trust is not based on one specific incident or a situation specific to the employee. Companies have forgotten that employees matter.

9. HR is increasing efforts toward workforce readiness now and in the future. As the economy changes, those currently in the workforce—especially the underemployed—are becoming more of a focus for HR. That is, HR is determining whom their organizations can—or want to—retain once the economy has turned around while keeping an eye on the possible overall talent loss as international workforces expand.

10. Managing multiple generations in the workplace is not the issue some thought it would have been. Baby Boomers are not leaving in masses, and they have shown that they can work with Gen X and Gen Y; generations in the workplace isn’t an area where HR professionals are spending their time.

Ethics
1. Continued economic challenges are leading to unethical behaviors at all levels in the workplace, reinforcing the need for organizations to develop greater skills and practices to deal with these behaviors.

2. Successful, forward-thinking organizations are finding ways to ensure that ethical values are embedded in the organization’s culture and are supported and promoted by all levels of management.

3. Senior leader misconduct and a lack of transparency in the decision-making process have led to a loss of trust in leadership and, ultimately, employee disenfranchisement.

4. Companies are increasingly developing ethics training programs and enforcing ethics policies that hold all employees accountable for their behavior.

5. As organizations continue to recognize and value ethics as an employee competency, they are seeking ways to effectively identify and measure this competency in applicants and employees.

6. There is a growing need to incorporate the ethical values of an increasingly diverse and global workforce while striving to remain compliant with applicable laws and regulations.

7. Recent legislation, government regulations and government-funded cash payouts to whistleblowers are causing organizations to improve ethics-related reporting and internal investigation procedures, in an effort to encourage employees to report perceived misconduct within the organization.

8. Standards of ethical workplace conduct are increasingly influenced by the behavior of public figures and shifting cultural norms.
9. Organizations continue to struggle with ethical issues related to accessing and using information from social networks.

10. Increases in government funding of administrative agencies and stepped-up enforcement are leading to enhanced scrutiny of organizations’ ethics policies and practices.

Global HR
1. Barriers of language, time and learning are dissolving, leading to a new working environment.

2. Around the world, the lines between personal and work-life fit are blurred as a result of globalization and the effects of lower-cost and more effective technology (Skype, social networks), which enable 24/7 business operations. There are no longer any “8-to-5” jobs at the managerial level, and work in virtual teams is becoming more commonplace, prevalent and expected.

3. Globalization is a constant, and a globalized delivery model is a business necessity. HR must accept it, embrace it and be globally competent to build it.

4. Companies are reducing the number of employees, combining jobs and requiring employees to work more, resulting in discontent and engagement challenges.

5. There is no more social contract between employees and employers, resulting in higher attrition levels (although older workers are staying invested and engaged in the workforce longer).

6. The influence of Western companies has changed hierarchical management to participatory management, which is quickly becoming the standard.

7. Traditionally healthy economies are no longer healthy. U.S. debt could push the global economy into deep recession, and personal and social taxation may rise around the world because of fiscal deficits, with consequent loss of trust in the global economic system. Scarcity and price pressure on fuel, food and water could imperil productivity and increase social unrest.

8. There is a general shift occurring from Western to Eastern universities, and Western universities are establishing presences in China and elsewhere in Asia, leading to changes in talent sourcing and talent management.

9. Whereas governments used to demand it, now major large customers are mandating the employment of local workers.

10. There is an increase in the number of non-Western global companies, as well as an increase in non-Western C-level executives in Western companies.

Human Capital Measurement/HR Metrics
1. There will be increasing demand by organizations to measure and assess the value of their human capital and the HR activities, initiatives and practices that support it.

2. Increased demand for HR metrics may bring about a widely accepted set of analytic measures and methods—global standards to describe, predict and evaluate the quality and impact of HR practices and the productivity of the workforce.

3. The development of deeper levels of analysis to monitor metric outcomes, identify trends, leverage positive outcomes and intervene in or mitigate negative outcomes will lead to better overall human capital management.

4. Evolving HR technology will increase the use of sophisticated organizational capacity-planning techniques to support a broader review of human capital sourcing—beyond just employees.

5. The application of risk analysis and risk management to human capital, including the use of tools like failure mode analysis, which can determine the severity and probability of risks, will provide a better understanding of human capital risk/reward.

6. Broader use of human capital planning and sourcing will require different metrics and different definitions of ongoing metrics.

7. Increased use of empirical data and evidence-based management tools in people decision-making will challenge HR practitioners and some line managers to significantly strengthen their business acumen and quantitative analytical skills.

8. The increased need to use business intelligence, visualization and workforce planning technologies to support data integration, reporting, analysis and presentation will challenge HR and HRIS professionals to evolve the HR technology platform and show the ROI of implementing these technologies.

9. The emergence of different metrics as a result of economic conditions shows that the metrics landscape is variable, not fixed—and that ongoing internal and external collaboration is
needed to have the right metrics and analytic processes for an organization’s current and planned business context.

10. Globalization is driving more impetus toward the use of metrics with greater cultural sensitivity. While standardized measures may appear optimal in order to compare similar metrics from organizations in different countries, a measure that is valued in one culture may be irrelevant or inappropriate in another.

Labor Relations
1. Labor law is increasingly influenced by globalization, trade agreements and global labor standards. In addition, there is pressure to include labor-friendly provisions in standardized trade agreements and discourage offshoring through proposed tax changes.
2. The National Labor Relations Board and the Department of Labor are becoming more active through the rulemaking process and attempting to reverse prior Board decisions.
3. Union organizing is intensifying among certain sectors, including health care, nursing home, hospitality and child care services.
4. The increased use of social media tools—including Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn—for union organizing is changing the way that traditional campaigns are run.
5. State legislatures and governors are continuing to pay more attention to labor relations areas not preempted by the National Labor Relations Act.
6. Unions are attempting to consolidate and collaborate to increase political leverage and market density. This is particularly true for the global labor market.
7. Unions of federal government workers are poised for additional losses in the scope of bargaining matters. In addition, state and local unions are increasingly fighting legislative initiatives that could curtail their current structure, status and bargaining power.
8. Labor relations expertise is diminishing within the HR profession as a result of the retirement of more Baby Boomers and many Millennials/Gen Xers purposefully avoiding the area. Nevertheless, HR professionals’ interest in labor relations and awareness of the importance of general—rather than just specialized—HR have increased as a result of proposed labor legislation.

Organizational Development
1. Organizations need to develop and execute strategies that build, drive and sustain employee engagement to attract and retain critical human capital, to motivate high levels of performance and to promote workplace cultures that inspire and reward innovation.
2. Organizations must transform their view of human resource management from a pure people management function to a decision science. Relevant evidence and decision-making tools such as environmental scanning, scenario-based planning, hypothesis formulation, and testing and organizational development tools must be used in order to improve workforce management decisions. The function must shift from reporting to turning information into insight to drive better business decisions.
3. Organizations must develop integrated workforce planning models to ensure the workforce is capable of meeting current and future business needs. Particular focus should be placed on critical skills such as driving and managing change, fostering innovation and creativity, executing organizational strategy, and coaching and developing others.
4. Organizations will develop flexible career management strategies, processes and tools that will provide developmental opportunities for employees to grow and expand their capabilities, despite decreased opportunities for traditional vertical promotions.
5. Organizations with global workforces must recognize and embrace their employees’ cultural differences, beliefs and values, develop strategies for reconciling the issues these differences raise, and foster cultures that embrace diversity and inclusion.
6. Differentiated succession planning strategies must be created to address the development and deployment needs of key talent cohorts, such as emerging (early-career, fast-track) talent, high-professional (functional/technical) talent and high-potential (general management) talent, in order to overcome shortages of critical skills and knowledge.
7. Robust and reliable organizational development metrics (e.g., competency measurement, development ROI and intervention effectiveness) should be widely adopted to demonstrate that OD and HR interventions positively affect organizational performance metrics such as revenue growth,
profit margins, retention/turnover, employee productivity, and customer loyalty and satisfaction.

8. Performance management systems must be institutionalized and valued as a best practice in development. They must focus on creating a continuous cycle of planning, measurement, development, and appraisal, enabling managers to effectively define, measure, and reward contributions to organizational performance.

9. Leadership skills will grow even shorter in supply, and organizations will need to drive leadership development through deployment of talent into key developmental jobs and widespread application of experiential learning. Traditional coaching and training methods and developmental assignments will also be crucial to create opportunities for employee growth.

10. Organizations must ensure employees have access to and are motivated to use technology effectively and appropriately, including information management systems, decision modeling, social media, and collaboration/mobility tools.

### Staffing Management

1. Companies have seen a return to productivity, increased capital expenditures and profit; however, there have not been increases in personnel, and that is building pressure on retention and recruiting to still "do more with less."

2. Recruiting activity has increased in the last year, creating a "war for talent" by companies trying to fill current openings.

3. New entrants into the workforce are looking for different intrinsic work returns that lead to higher engagement, social impact, and non-monetary returns (e.g., better work/life fit).

4. The increased use of social media for applicant pools has created a recruiting strategy shift away from job boards.

5. Full-time employees are being replaced by contingent workers, including campus hires (interns), as companies look to limit the fixed overhead associated with labor costs.

6. Companies are focused more on candidate care and user experience for applicants, as a lack of care is causing damage to their brand through social media and networking channels.

7. The use of assessment tools has increased as companies look to hire the best talent from a larger pool of applicants.

8. There is a shift from operations/quantitative evaluations of HR metrics to a more qualitative metric approach focused on quality of fit and retention for new hires.

9. Increased HR and federal regulatory activity is starting to diminish the availability of certain specialized global talent pools.

10. The potential for more organizations to discourage unemployed workers from applying is creating the risk of a fragmented workforce as the "war for talent" is segmenting workers.

### Technology and HR Management

1. User experience and ease of use are becoming significantly more important to employees when it comes to HR technology solutions.

2. One-size-fits-all solutions are decreasing in popularity and effectiveness, given the increasing diversity and complexity of issues affecting HR departments.

3. Employees are increasingly expecting a more integrated digital experience when it comes to their interactions with HR (e.g., single sign-on, one-stop shopping).

4. Employees are increasingly expecting their HR departments to provide mobile access to core HR functions.

5. Social media tools are increasingly becoming an integral component of virtually all HR functions, including employee relations, benefits management, and training and development.

6. HR less frequently views its role in social media as a policing function and more as a means of helping its organizations leverage social media for maximum employee engagement.

7. HR departments are gaining more autonomy and flexibility in making technology decisions that affect their work.

8. HR departments are increasing their reliance on video conferencing as well as helping their organizations adopt this technology in appropriate ways.

9. Software as a service as well as cloud-based software solutions are increasingly becoming the preferred direction for HR technology.

10. HRIS solutions are increasingly offering integration with social media tools such as LinkedIn.
Total Rewards/Compensation and Benefits
1. Given the uncertainty of health care reform, it will be necessary to understand the demands of federal and state mandates and their impact on employees.
2. Performance-based compensation approaches are increasing in popularity and will be key to managing costs and company success while retaining the right employees.
3. In an increasingly complex regulatory environment, organizations are expecting HR professionals to possess a broader level of expertise and capability, especially in compensation and benefits.
4. Wellness and disease management programs continue to grow in popularity and importance as employers recognize the long-term cost benefits. Employees are increasingly expected to share responsibility for their health maintenance, and employers are providing the means for them to do so.
5. Given the growing numbers of workers who are facing retirement but lack the necessary financial literacy and planning skills, it will be the employer’s charge to provide the education necessary to address retirement readiness.
6. Organizations are increasingly implementing total rewards strategies that focus less on cash compensation and more on aspects of career satisfaction such as flexibility, career growth and development, and recognition.
7. Increased attention to deficit reduction has imposed uncertainty on compensation and benefits planning.
8. Retirement packages are trending away from defined benefit and toward defined contribution plans. Plan sponsors with defined benefit plans need to achieve fully funded status, and this requires plan sponsors to evaluate investment strategies to manage the balance sheet and profit and loss risk.
9. Continued government and shareholder scrutiny on executive compensation has increased the need to provide a greater level of compensation disclosure.
10. Proliferating regulations and mandates are affecting employer benefits and compensation programs, driving employers to rethink strategies for delivering programs to take advantage of available safe harbors.

Workplace Diversity and Inclusion
1. The “jobless recovery” is forcing many to increase their workload beyond reasonable expectations, resulting in burnout, decreased engagement and an inability to implement effective workplace flexibility. This may affect some employee demographics more than others.
2. Postponed retirements are affecting talent management of all generational cohorts, generational demographics and psychographics.
3. Now that the disability community is both the largest and fastest growing minority in the world, organizations will be reacting to various legislation (ADAAA in the U.S., quotas in other parts of the world) and issues related to the inclusion of employees with disabilities.
4. Advances in technology are allowing unique instances of discrimination and other misbehavior to “go viral” nearly overnight, requiring organizations to anticipate and manage their brand more quickly than ever before.
5. The lack of a set career path and effective succession planning for diversity and inclusion professionals continues to malign the importance of the diversity and inclusion function within organizations.
6. Troop withdrawals in the Middle East will necessitate the inclusion of greater numbers of combat veterans into the civilian workforce, requiring organizations to obtain greater knowledge of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), TBI (traumatic brain injury), other combat-related disabilities and military culture.
7. Continuing political and religious polarization around the world is fracturing the social fabric of historically moderate and conciliatory societies, creating confrontational and disharmonious workplace environments. (In the United States, this is particularly relevant because of the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11 and the 2012 presidential election.)
8. The increase of EEOC claims is forcing organizations to spend more time and resources on complaints, investigations and prevention of retaliation, rather than proactive or strategic diversity and inclusion initiatives.
9. Old models of racial demographics are becoming obsolete as a result of increasing numbers within the biracial and multiracial segments.
10. More states will be enacting laws supporting same-sex marriages or civil unions, adding greater complexity to workplace culture as it relates to LGBT inclusion and total rewards structures.
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