



# CHRO Priorities 2024: A MENA Perspective

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# Foreword

As we step into 2024, the echoes of ‘quiet quitting’ and the ‘great resignation’ continue to reverberate across the world of work. These seismic shifts urge us to introspectively re-examine our talent management practices. It’s time to move beyond simply attracting and retaining talent; we must now orchestrate a symphony of employee experiences that foster engagement, growth, and fulfilment.

This collaborative study between SHRM and PeopleStrong Academy serves as a timely compass, guiding us through the complexities of navigating the 2024 work landscape. It delves into the minds of some of the best people leaders in the region, capturing their concerns around hybrid work, skill shortages, and the ever-evolving work-tech landscape.

The report’s findings resonate deeply. The top priorities for 2024 reflect the critical tightrope walk that organizations are required to succeed at. We must nurture a resilient workforce equipped with the skills to thrive in the face of disruption, all while leveraging technology to personalize and enrich employee journeys.

This report transcends mere data; it offers actionable insights. By segmenting responses across industries like IT, BFSI, and Manufacturing, it provides nuanced perspectives that cater to specific needs. It’s data-driven recommendations serve as a blueprint for weaving these findings into our talent management strategies, ensuring we attract, retain, and inspire the future workforce.

This treasure trove of knowledge will be the baton that conducts your talent management symphony in 2024. Together, let us create workplaces where employees not only contribute, but flourish, composing a harmonious melody of business success.

*The future of work is not a solo; it’s a symphony.  
Let’s orchestrate it together!*



**ACHAL KHANNA**  
CEO — SHRM India,  
APAC & MENA  
SHRM East



# Acknowledgement

The world of work is experiencing a profound evolution reshaping the talent equation. Persistent talent shortages, coupled with shifting employee attitudes and motivations, are molding the work landscape in 2024. Are CHROs ready to navigate the most impactful workplace shift since the advent of the internet?

CHRO Priorities 2024: A MENA Perspective delves deep into the pressing concerns of HR Leaders across the MENA region. Written in collaboration between SHRM and PeopleStrong Academy, the research report taps into the insights of over 150 HR leaders, creating a compass that aligns with the evolving need for Saudization and Emiratization.

This data-driven study unveils the top 3 priorities for 2024:

1. Balancing High Growth Expectations, Skills Shortage and Budget Constraints
2. Navigating Skilling Resilience amidst Challenges
3. Harnessing AI & Tech for Next Gen Talent Management

This report transcends mere statistics, offering actionable insights and industry-specific recommendations to empower HR leaders to create workplaces of the future, with a specific focus on the above priorities.

A heartfelt thank you to every HR leader who contributed, shaping this report into a strategic roadmap for HR leaders in the Middle East. In a region where change is not just a choice but a strategic imperative, this report becomes even more crucial.

We hope you will enjoy the report and take forward some key actionable insights for your organization.

Let this symphony of knowledge guide you as you lead your organization into the future of work!



**AMIT JAIN**  
**Chief People Officer**  
**PeopleStrong**





# Introduction

**2024 is the year in which HR isn't just adapting but spearheading the charge towards a more sustainable, inclusive, and business-focused future.**

The shifting relationship between employers and employees has redefined work as we know it. HR teams need to realign workforce priorities to meet the growth demands. The Middle East Region is re-evaluating their talent management practices to provide the right experiences for their employees. 2024 as a year is all about making a shift in our workplaces that are empowered with the right combination of resilient workforce, organizational culture, and technology.

This 2024 collaborative study between SHRM India and PeopleStrong Academy explores how HR Leaders' are navigating the work landscape as they tackle challenges related to hybrid work, skill shortages, and advancements in AI / tech. The report sheds light on the emerging HR priorities for 2024, and data driven implications of these priorities on talent management strategies of the future.

The study findings are based on survey responses from over 150+ HR Leaders from various industries and organizations through online survey questionnaire. For the purpose of the study, all organizational responses have been segregated into IT / Telecommunications, Manufacturing, BFSI, Services and Other industries.

# Key Findings

## Balancing High Growth Expectations amidst skill shortage and budget constraints

### Biggest challenges in executive HR priorities in 2024

44%

Pressure Due to High Growth Expectations

46%

Persistent Skills Short

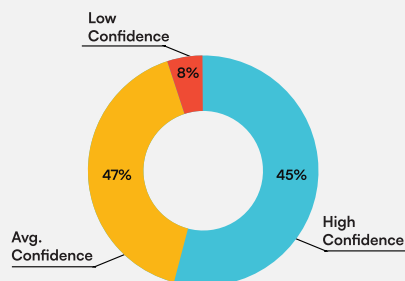
47%

Budget Constraints



## Navigating Skill Resilience Amidst Challenges

### Confidence Levels in Addressing Skill Gaps



### Focus Areas to navigate the Skilling Requirements

74% Use of Digital Learning Solutions

62% Strengthening leadership capability and pipeline

28% Define career paths

## Harnessing AI & Tech for NextGen Talent Management

### Gen AI is the FUTURE! AI Adoption & Impact Awareness

49% Anticipate Positive Impact of AI on HR.

24% Expect Future Applications.

### Tech Ready Teams

40% State HR readiness depends on the specific tech.

36% Express confidence in their HR teams leading change.

### A Proactive Investment Horizon:

63% Plan to significantly increase investment in HR Tech for 2024.

# Shifting Sands: Key HR Priorities

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## Balancing High Growth Expectations, Skills Shortage and Budget Constraints

As organizations step into 2024, HR Leaders face a complex landscape, **navigating between ambitious growth targets, persistent skill shortages, and budget constraints**. This has featured as the Top 1 priority for HR leaders across the Middle East region.

The pressure resulting from high growth expectations is a notable challenge, with 44% expressing concerns. Aligning HR strategies with ambitious growth targets and managing associated workforce demands pose significant challenges.

While the market landscape has put in high growth expectations from organizations, this is not being corroborated with adequate and relevant skills or budget / resources available. Over 47% of the HR

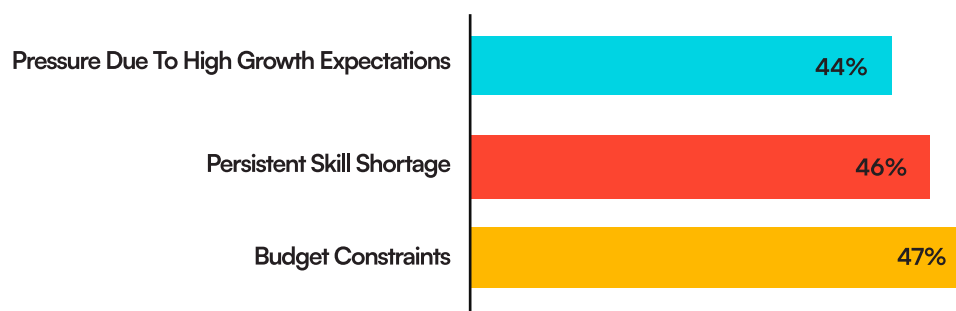


leaders, expressed concerns over effectively managing resources to address the HR priorities, amidst financial limitations of being equitable while balancing expat versus local talent. 46% further highlighted concerns about acquiring and retaining talent.

*Navigating the competitive talent market becomes essential for strategic workforce capabilities in the future!*

2024, will see a lot of HR Leaders and organizations taking a renewed focus on balancing high growth expectations with skills shortage and budget constraints.

### Biggest Challenges in Executing your HR Priorities for 2024



## Navigating Skilling Resilience amidst Challenges



Skilling has emerged as both a challenge and an opportunity for HR Leaders in 2024, reflecting the evolving needs of a dynamic workforce. The study survey responses delineate the contours of the skilling landscape, from prioritization to challenges and innovative solutions.

### PRIORITY AND CHALLENGES:

Skilling claims a prominent spot on the agenda for 35% of HR Leaders, underscoring its critical role in organizational development. Success is marked by internal promotions, robust leadership development, and fostering a culture that nurtures growth and innovation.

However, challenges abound, with budget constraints (47%) and persistent skill shortages (46%) standing as significant hurdles. Niche skills are paving their way into the market place. Skilling ones' talent itself is an expensive proposition, with training interventions getting expensive. This confluence highlights the delicate balance HR leaders must navigate to align skilling initiatives with financial constraints and talent market demands.

*62% are prioritizing the need to fortify Leadership Pipeline !*

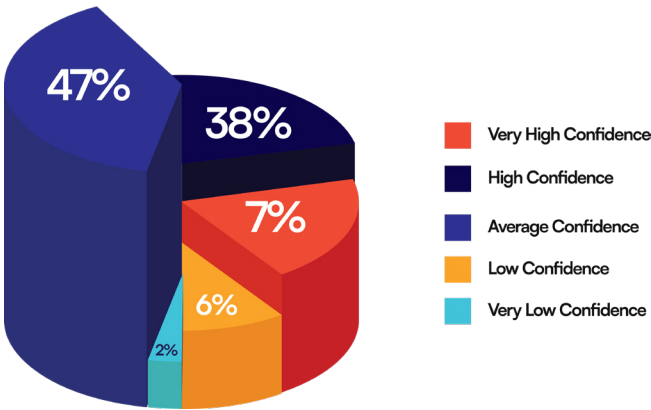




CONFIDENCE LEVELS IN ADDRESSING SKILL GAPS:

While, strengthening leadership pipeline has come out as one of the top focus areas, confidence levels in addressing skill gaps vary, with 47% expressing average confidence and 38% exhibiting high confidence. This spectrum suggests a nuanced approach, where organizations assess their readiness to meet the demands of evolving skill requirements. This indicates an opportunity for HR teams to focus on strategies and interventions that will help address the skill gaps.

Confidence level of organizations to effectively address the skill gaps

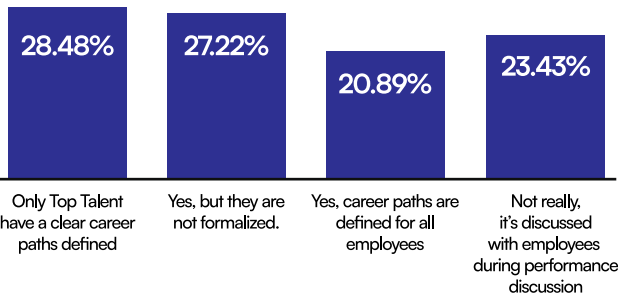


Skilling is not just a task for HR Leaders; it is a strategic imperative requiring a delicate balance of financial prudence, adaptability, and innovative learning solutions to bridge the skills gap.

FOCUS AREAS TO NAVIGATE THROUGH THE SKILLING REQUIREMENTS:

**Defined Career Paths:** Around 28.5% HR Leaders indicated a strategic focus on providing structured advancement plans for top talent suggesting a commitment to retaining and maximizing the potential of key contributors.

Career Pathing for Employees at Companies in the GCC



**Digital Learning Surge:** A striking 74.05% reported a substantial increase in the use of digital solutions for learning and skilling in the last 12 months. This surge signals a fundamental shift towards technology-driven blended learning solutions, possibly catalyzed by the hybrid work environment and the need for flexible, accessible learning experiences.



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## Harnessing AI & Tech for Next Gen Talent Management



This section delves into the specifics of HR technology, exploring scalability, AI anticipation, organizational readiness, and investment plans.

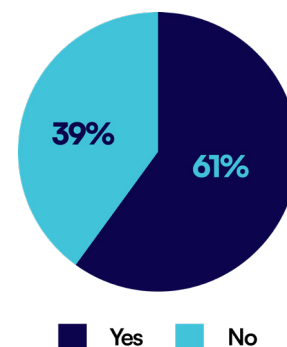
*The need to harness AI & tech for next gen Talent management is not an option, but a **STRATEGIC NECESSITY!***

Acknowledging the pivotal role of technology in shaping employee experiences, HR Leaders are leveraging tech solutions to improve experiences across the talent management life cycle (38%). Success involves user-friendly HR technologies, personalized experiences, and digital platforms facilitating seamless communication and collaboration.

### TECH SCALABILITY:

Majority of HR Leaders (61%) expressed confidence in the scalability of their current HR technology solutions, indicating a collective belief in the adaptability of existing infrastructures. This highlights the importance of investing in flexible, future-ready technologies that can seamlessly evolve with organizational needs.

### Is your current HR technology solution scalable for your future business needs?



**BFSI (72.73%), Manufacturing (72.22%) and IT / Telecommunications (67.86%) showcased significant confidence levels in scalable HR technology**, reflecting a commitment to robust and adaptable solutions for compliance, security and efficiency. Services (55.81%) indicated moderate confidence in scalability, reflecting a balanced perspective on HR technology adaptability within the sector.

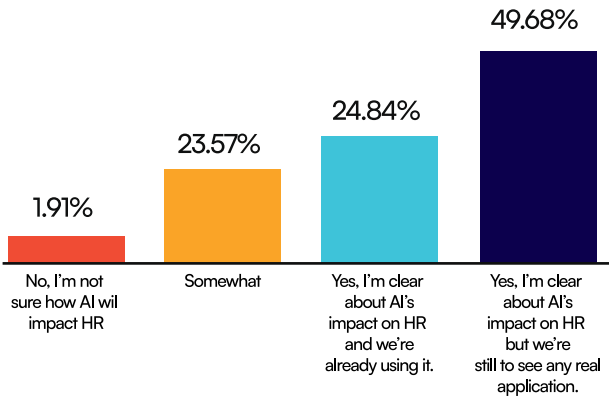
GEN AI IS THE FUTURE:

Generative AI, a harbinger of transformative change, has taken center stage in the strategic vision of HR Leaders in 2024. A detailed examination of responses from the study provided insights into the depth of adoption and the sector-specific nuances guiding its integration into HR practices.

- A Strategic Imperative:** Generative AI emerges as a strategic imperative, with 37% of HR Leaders indicating its introduction as a top priority for 2024. This signals a proactive approach towards leveraging AI-driven solutions in HR processes, emphasizing the potential for innovation and efficiency gains.

Impact of evolving technology trends, such as generative AI, on HR and talent

- AI Adoption and Impact Awareness:** Almost half (49.68%) of HR Leaders expressed the anticipation of positive impact of AI on HR. It is seen that a significant portion (25%) is already implementing AI technologies, showcasing a proactive stance, while 24.84% expect future applications. This dual perspective emphasizes the nuanced journey that the organizations are undertaking, with some at the forefront of AI integration and others gearing up for the anticipated wave.



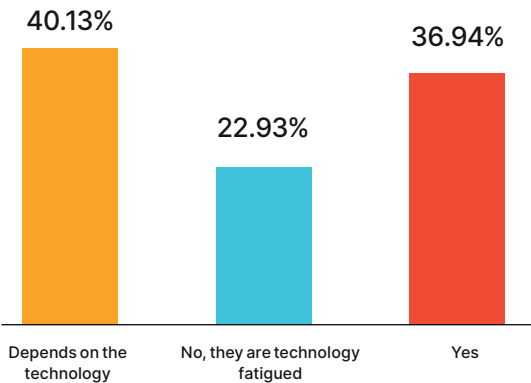
Generative AI is not just a theoretical concept but a strategic reality for HR Leaders, with each industry adopting it with a tailored approach that mirrors their operational dynamics.

TECH-READY TEAMS:

The readiness of HR teams to lead change in technology is multifaceted, with 40.13% indicating dependency on specific technologies and 36.94% expressing confidence in their team's adaptability.

*The effectiveness of technology adoption is contingent on both the NATURE of the technology and the TEAM'S READINESS to navigate change!*

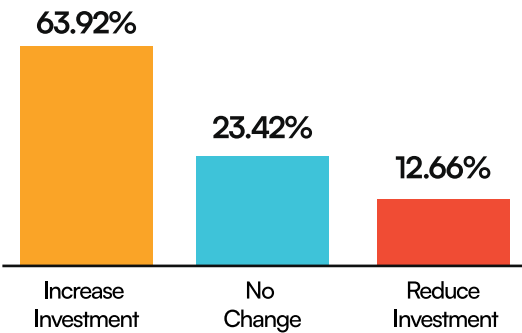
Readiness of the HR to Lead Technological Change and Drive Adoption



**Investments in HR Tech in 2024**

**A PROACTIVE INVESTMENT HORIZON:**

A decisive majority (63.92%) plan to significantly increase investment in HR technology for 2024. This proactive stance indicates a recognition of technology’s transformative potential and a commitment to staying ahead in the competitive landscape.



Technology is not just a tool but a cornerstone of HR strategy in 2024, requiring a dynamic approach to scalability, anticipation of AI impacts, building tech-ready teams, and strategic investments to foster innovation and competitiveness.

The HR Leader landscape in 2024 is marked by strategic acumen, as leaders navigate the complexities of Generative AI integration, skilling imperatives, and the transformative potential of technology. Industry-specific adaptations, nuanced approaches to challenges, and proactive stances towards innovation collectively define the trajectory of HR practices in this dynamic era. The report underscores the role of HR Leaders as architects of change, shaping the future of HR practices with foresight and adaptability.



# Future Implications: Road Ahead

## HR Is Realigning Workforce Priorities

With increasing pressure on CHROs to contribute in the growth and strategic agendas of the CEO, HR leaders are faced with a productivity paradox. Worker productivity has stagnated across the world. Yet 2024 is the year where organizations are aiming to scale and grow. HR leaders are needed to align closely with business and reprioritize HR strategies.

There are 3 levers for this shift:

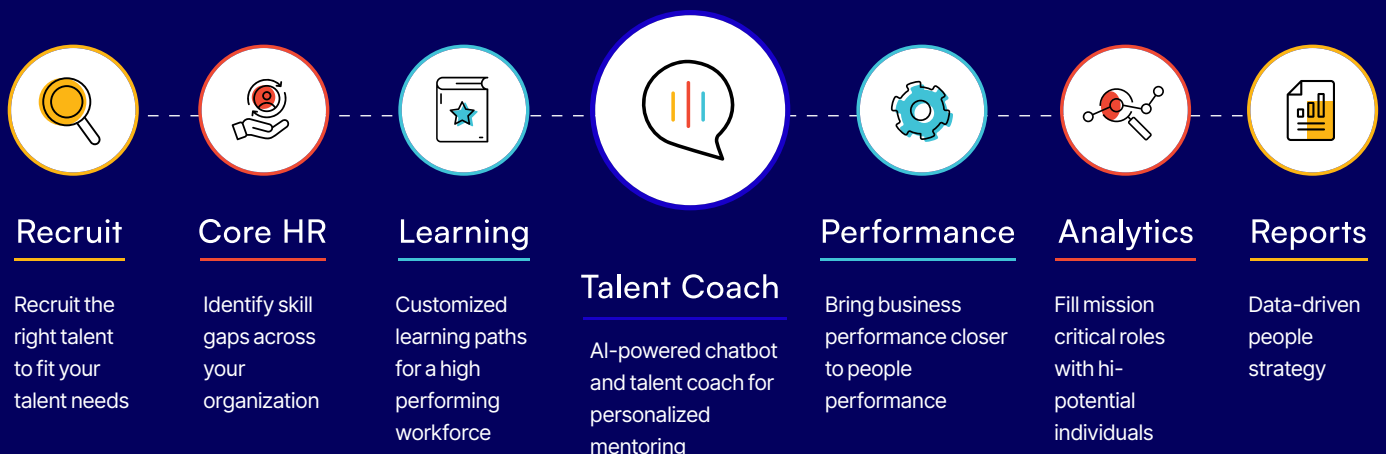


### BUILDING A TALENT OPERATING SYSTEM TO MANAGE TALENT

Technology today is the linchpin driving transformation in the talent management landscape. There is a palpable evolution away from the old, traditional outlook of focusing solely on siloed functions like recruitment, engagement, and retention. Organizations are now adopting a dynamic approach that aligns processes and technology closely with strategic business goals, giving

rise to talent management processes that are more comprehensive and impactful.

Talent leaders who adopt this new mindset and leave the bifurcated approach behind can transform talent management and create business impact.





## SKILLS AT THE CENTRE OF EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

Companies at the forefront of transformation across the GCC are taking steps to focus on skills and capabilities. They are moving from a person-based approach to a skills-based approach – changing how HR efforts support hiring, managing, training development and skills retention.

This shift towards skills is unsurprising, as it widens the talent pool for dynamic environments. However, it also highlights challenges in designing a skills-based talent strategy.

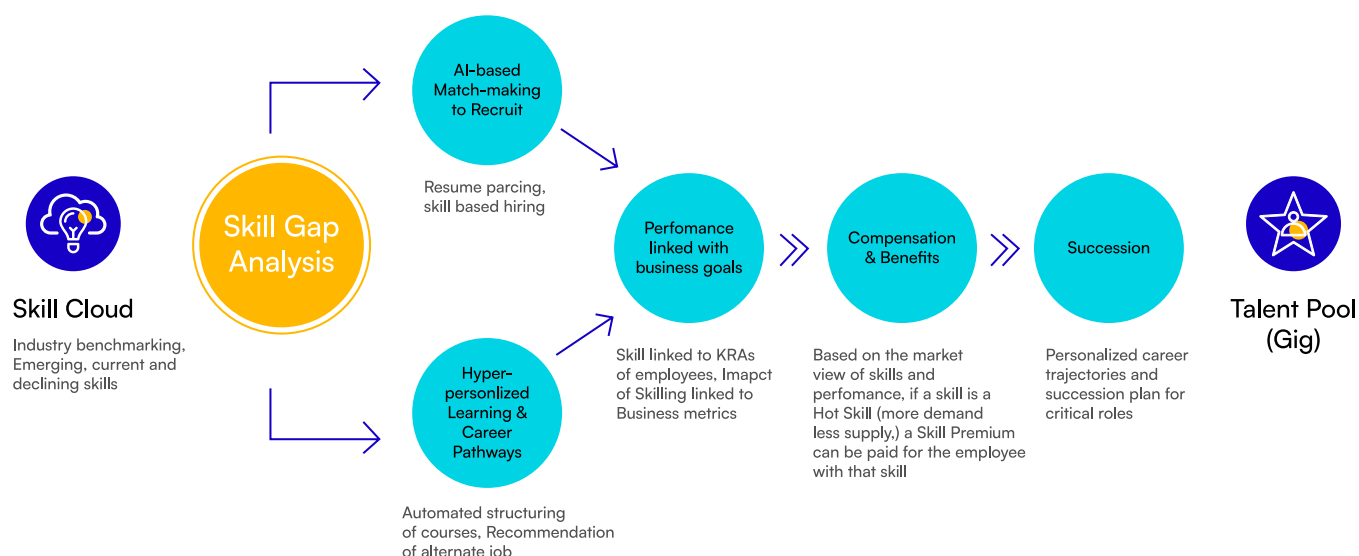
Skills serve as the foundational element for any robust talent strategy. However, the challenge lies in the absence of readily available skill taxonomy or skill inventories that comprehensively map each job role to the requisite skills for success. Consider an organization with a diverse workforce encompassing 500 distinct roles. Establishing a skill repository for such a scenario

demands significant commitment and time investment. Even if such a resource existed, the inherent variations in organizational contexts across different companies would render it ineffective without necessary customizations.

Another major hurdle is integrating skills data from various sources. To get the best analytics and artificial intelligence driven experiences—such as personalized career recommendations—across these applications, data needs to be connected.

The process of integrating skills data is far from simple. It frequently involves intricate complexities, necessitating expensive tailored integrations that don't consistently yield results. That's where comprehensive Talent Operating systems bring all this data together to provide a unified experience.

### Skills Center of Excellence - Flow in Employee Lifecycle



### INTERNAL TALENT MOBILITY



Accountability for capability building



Best in class AI and other technologies



Role specific upskilling (technical + digital + leadership)



Inbuilt connectors with other HRIS, ERP, Learning, R&R systems

## HYPER-PERSONALIZED EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES & CAREER PATHS

From a traditional approach to talent management where succession or skilling efforts were focussed only on the top 20% of talent, the world is now fast moving towards personalisation at scale. This is reflected in how HR leaders hire, engage and retain talent today. Artificial Intelligence is rapidly emerging as a prominent force in the field of talent management. Recent studies indicate that integration of AI can add up to \$150 billion to the economies of countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

AI algorithms efficiently process vast data volumes, offering insights impossible to achieve manually. From recruitment to succession planning, AI impacts the talent lifecycle, enhancing decisions based on actionable insights. Some of the use cases include:



### THE SKILLS LACUNA

Organizations traditionally lacked a detailed analysis of the capabilities they need to develop when building talent strategies. Artificial intelligence has changed this by simplifying data collection and analysis for skill gap analysis. What used to take 3-6 months can now be done more quickly and accurately.



### SKILLS-CAPABILITY HANDSHAKE

AI technologies take the skill gap analysis one step further by matching each organizational role with the necessary skills for success. AI learns and suggests the skills an organization should possess, fostering overall capability development and addressing vital questions such as, “Do we have the right people for our organization?”



### IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

The skill based match-making capability (Job Description - CV) empowers recruiters to identify candidates with the desired skills, enhancing decision-making with a structured and objective approach.



### SKILL-BASED ROLE ASSIGNMENT

The roles of managers and leaders are evolving from traditional employee management to dynamic orchestration of work and skills within projects, tasks, or problem-solving contexts. In this shift, influence and empowerment take precedence over traditional hierarchical structures.



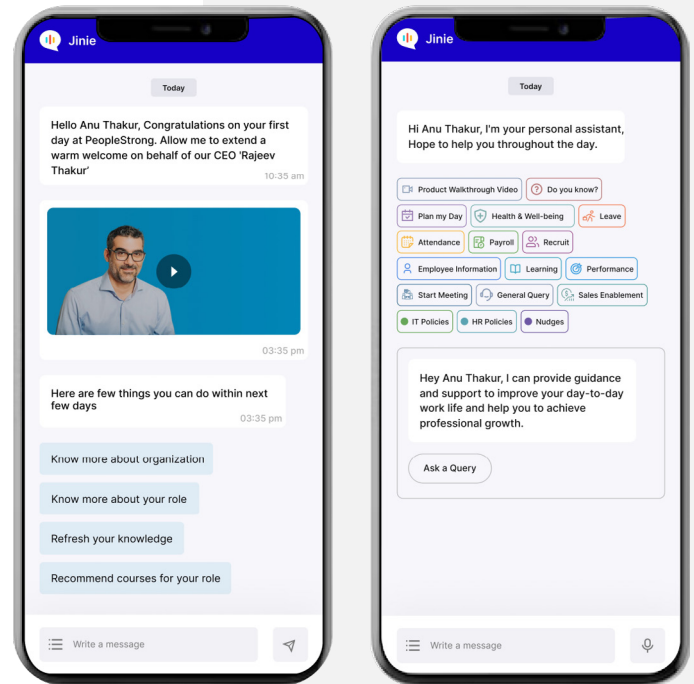
## HYPER-PERSONALIZED LEARNING & CAREER PATHS:

Detecting disparities between an employee's current abilities and the required ones can precisely identify their unique learning and development needs. This, in turn, streamlines their journey for upskilling while also assisting them in exploring various career paths available throughout their professional journey.



## LINKING PERFORMANCE TO BUSINESS OBJECTIVES:

AI powered goal libraries recommend goals/OKRs/KPIs basis role, past performance, manager objectives, and company priorities.



peoplestrong

Search by module name

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**Draft with AI**

Choose from suggested Goal or mention your specific areas of focus for this period

Suggestion based on your job role.

Sales target achievement Team performance and development

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Specify areas of focus for this period

Sales target achievement

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+ Add more

Generate

OBJECTIVE OWNER			
	Rajat Setia Function Leader - Revenue...	0% OUTCOME PROGRESS	0% EFFORT PROGRESS
Key Result	Objective Description	Activity Log	Continuous Feedback
Key Result	Due Date	Achieved / Target	
0% Implement process Improvements to decrease the average time... Effort   Progress	30 Sep 2023	0/100	
0% Enhance data analysis techniques to improve the accuracy of revenue... Effort   Progress	30 Sep 2023	0/100	



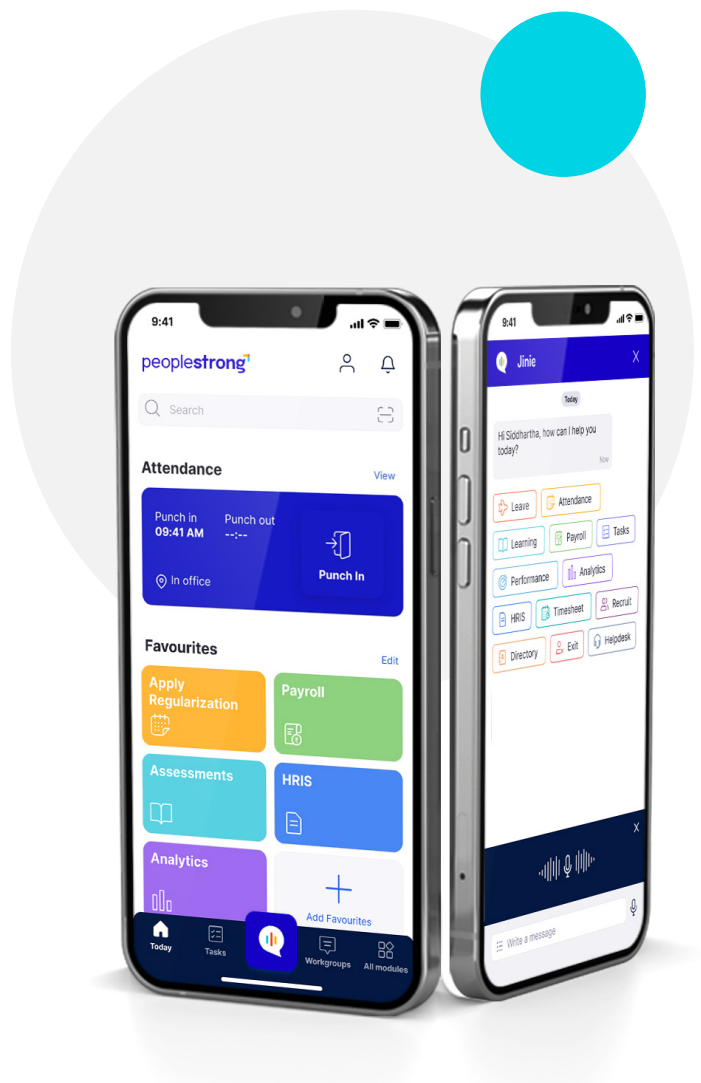
## SUCCESSION PLANNING:

Organizations traditionally lacked a detailed analysis of the capabilities they need to develop when building talent strategies. Artificial intelligence has changed this by simplifying data collection and analysis for skill gap analysis. What used to take 3-6 months can now be done more quickly and accurately.



## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS:

Considering the market demand for skills, offering a Skills Premium for employees possessing “Hot Skills” (in high demand and low supply) provides an objective method to base compensation on an individual’s specific skill set. This approach ensures that compensation aligns directly with an individual’s bundle of skills.



PeopleStrong’s AI-powered, Integrated Talent Management platform helps organizations recruit, mentor, retain, and engage a future-ready workforce. The AI-Powered platform creates a trifecta of data, capability, and performance to bring insights into an employee’s journey from recruitment to their growth, and beyond. The AI-powered skills framework has been trained on over 1 million data points and has mapped more than 50,000 roles with skills. It features 15-years of enriched skill data collected from across 20 industries offering functional benefits like predictive data analytics and proactive insights. With this patent-ready technology, PeopleStrong uses data from multiple systems to build a centralised black box of skills and applies a layer of Artificial Intelligence to deliver a Talent Strategy that enables companies to manage their talent better, for today and tomorrow.

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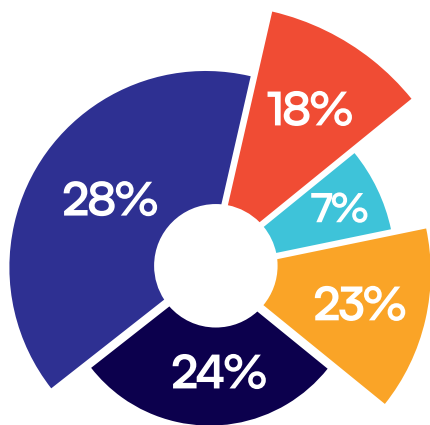


# HR Priorities 2024

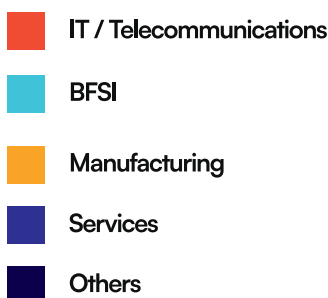
## Respondent Profile

Orchestrating Tomorrow's Workforce Symphony, study findings are based on survey responses from over 158 HR Leaders from various industries and organizations through online survey questionnaire comprising primarily of multiple-choice and rank order questions. The respondents represent a diverse set of organizations across IT/ITES, Manufacturing, BFSI, Services and Others. The figures indicated in this report reflect the percentage of respondents opting for the particular response choice, unless categorically stated otherwise.

The collected data was then analyzed to gain insights into HR Leader priorities for 2024. The analysis encompassed factors such as respondents' demographics, anticipated challenges in executing HR priorities, level of technology adoption and measures of success.

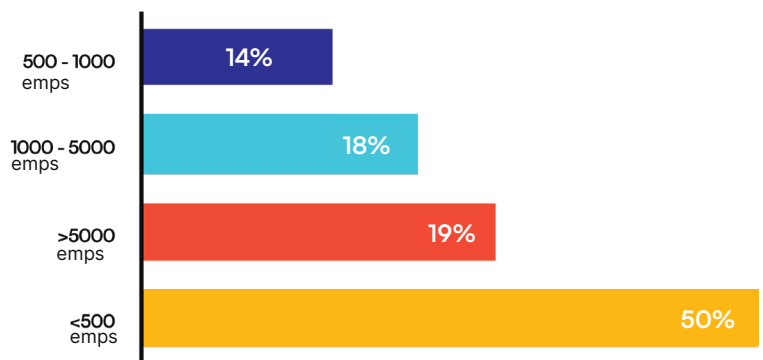


### Industries



### Organizations basis employee strength

#### Respondent Profile





SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management, creates better workplaces where employers and employees thrive together. As the voice of all things work, workers and the workplace, SHRM is the foremost expert, convener and thought leader on issues impacting today's evolving workplaces. With 320,000+ HR and business executive members in 165 countries, SHRM impacts the lives of more than 115 million workers and families globally. SHRM provides a platform for thought leadership, sharing of best practices and professional networking within the Indian and global HR communities in order to take the profession higher through continuous and collaborative learning.

For more information about SHRM,

[www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org)



PeopleStrong Academy is a pioneering skilling platform that is delivering world-class training and certification on HR domain expertise. Accredited by American Council of Training & Development, PeopleStrong Academy is creating HR Technology Champions for Asia & the Middle East. For more information about PeopleStrong, visit [www.peoplestrongacademy.com](http://www.peoplestrongacademy.com)

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100+ Online  
Courses



15+ years of  
Industry  
Expertise



13000+ People  
Trained



2400+  
Certifications



**MODE OF  
LEARNING**  
Online & Classroom  
Based Learning



**PROGRAM  
DURATION**  
3 Months



**MASTERCLASS  
SESSIONS**  
by HR Technology  
Experts



1M+hours of  
Training  
Delivery

## EMPOWERING 500+ GLOBAL BRANDS TO MANAGE THEIR TALENT BETTER



PeopleStrong is the Middle East's leading and the most comprehensive Human Capital Management SaaS platform. The HR technology company focuses on delivering a unique employee experience, data-driven decision-making, and agility for businesses.

Simplifying worklife at over 500+ large enterprises across the emerging economies of Asia & GCC, PeopleStrong empowers the lives of 2 million+ employees with a mobile-first, AI and ML-powered talent operating system. Their tech capabilities span across the employee lifecycle from hire to exit, including Human Capital Management, Payroll, Talent Acquisition & Management, and Collaboration.

PeopleStrong is rated among the Top 5 in the Asia Pacific at Gartner's Peer Insights and voted as Customers' Choice of HR Tech in the Gartner 'Voice of Customer' Report for 1000+ employee enterprises for 2 consecutive years (2022 & 2023).



4.5/5 ★★★★★  
286 Ratings



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