



# Future Insights ▶

The top trends for 2014 according to SHRM's HR subject matter expert panels

# About This Report

## 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 who possess advanced HR skills and experience in one of six HR concentrations.

### The six Special Expertise Panels are:

- Ethics/Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability.
- Global.
- HR Disciplines.
- Labor Relations.
- Technology and HR Management.
- Workplace Diversity and Inclusion.

Each of the Special Expertise Panels is made up of as many as 15 SHRM professional members who each serve a one-year term (up to two terms). Panel members report emerging trends in specific HR topic areas. They also provide expert advice and give guidance on public policy.

Panel member competencies must include subject matter expertise in the panel topic area, good communication and interpersonal skills, an established professional network with strategic/operational connections, and the ability to participate.

Members are identified, reviewed and recommended by the Panel Selection Committee<sup>1</sup> and approved by the SHRM Board Governance Committee.

## About the Special Expertise Panels' Trends

The lists of key trends each panel produces in its subject area make use of panel members' 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 can also be considered a valuable resource in and of themselves for any HR professional interested in seeing what issues HR subject matter experts see as having the biggest impact on the workplace and the profession in the years ahead.

Some of the panels produce lists of trends in multiple topic areas, reflecting the broader scope of their subject-matter coverage. For example, the Ethics/Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability panel produces two lists of trends, one covering ethics trends and the other covering CSR/sustainability trends.

## Acknowledgements

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

# What the HR Experts Are Forecasting

## Overview

The SHRM Special Expertise Panels first began to compile their lists of key trends over five years ago, as a way for SHRM to tap into the cutting-edge insights from the most experienced thought leaders in the HR field. Since then, the SHRM Special Expertise Panels regularly review their most recent trends and add, subtract or change 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.** Although many aspects of the economy have improved, challenges remain and have an impact on budgets, hiring and HR strategies.
- **Competition for in-demand skilled workers.** The need for skilled and educated workers is rising around the world. This trend is influencing everything from benefits strategies and employer branding to immigration policies and global relocation of operations.
- **The ongoing influence of developments in information and communications technologies.** Social media has become especially important as it relates to recruiting.
- **Demographic changes.** Across the world workforces are aging.

At the same time, the large Millennial generation is beginning to make its mark on the workplace. More generations working together and increased diversity will affect many aspects of employment and HR practices.

- **The importance of flexible and effective work/life strategies.** As the workforce ages, more employees will be dealing with multiple caring responsibilities and, in some cases, multiple paid jobs, emphasizing the need and growing demand for flexible work.
- **A growing emphasis on measurement.** Metrics and more in-depth data analysis are being required to demonstrate the return on investment of key HR expenditures.
- **A rise in uncertainty and volatility of markets.** Increased globalization, market interdependence and other factors such as political unrest and partisanship in countries around the world are making uncertainty the “new normal.”
- **Implications of government legislation.** As the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) moves into full implementation, HR professionals are focused on making sure their organizations comply. But employment legislation is not limited to the PPACA, and HR professionals must ensure compliance with a wide array of federal and state laws.

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 the years ahead.

# Top Trends by Special Expertise Panel

Following is the complete list of the updated trends for 2014 for each of the panels. The trends are organized in the order of importance, with the first trend being the most important. The panel topic areas are listed in alphabetical order.

## Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability

1. Employers will be adopting CSRS (corporate social responsibility and sustainability) initiatives and support employees' participation in these initiatives in order to compete for and retain top talent.
2. As organizations continue to be held accountable for CSRS initiatives by the community at large, and by other organizations via goods/services contracts, employers will need to examine their CSRS initiatives to remain competitive.
3. Individuals want to align themselves with organizations that support philanthropic activities, so employers will increasingly view CSRS activities as an HR initiative that not only increases employee engagement and relations but also builds goodwill in the community at large.
4. Organizations are increasing their CSRS initiatives, and doing so leads to internal organizational discussions about the role of HR in managing such programs.
5. Due to economic pressures, organizations are focusing their investment in highly visible CSRS initiatives that demonstrate strong return on investment and support the organization's strategic plan.
6. Competition for employees and customers who value CSRS will require HR professionals to increasingly be responsible for incorporating sustainability/social responsibility considerations into job roles and responsibilities, as well as policies and procedures.
7. Individuals continue to seek employment at organizations that view social responsibility and sustainability as core to company culture, as demonstrated by their adoption of workflex, sabbatical, telecommuting, great place to work and volunteer programs.
8. Organizations that produce goods will increasingly report to the global sustainability index in order to compete in the global marketplace.
9. With increased concern about image and reputation regarding CSRS business practices, organizations will consider cause marketing and organizational branding, and will com-

municate their CSRS initiatives to their stakeholders through global reporting standards, traditional media and social media.

10. As organizations expand their global reach, they are increasingly utilizing the UN Global Compact and other international conventions as resources to evaluate their CSRS initiatives.

## Employee Health, Safety and Security

1. Obesity is on the rise in the U.S. and worldwide. If current trends continue, more than 50% of the U.S. adult population will be obese by 2030. The growing number of employees and candidates who are obese or who have obesity risk factors is creating safety and accommodation challenges for employers.
2. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) will continue to fast-track many new regulations. This will put a significant burden on employers to rapidly implement new standards to stay in compliance.
3. Following the implementation of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), litigation will continue to increase while employers adapt their policies to prevent violations during pre-employment physicals, post-offer fitness-for-duty testing, and safety and workers' compensation policies.
4. The increasing use of prescription opioids is creating a new category of employees—employees who are working legally high. The workers' compensation system is attempting to regulate and change the use of opioids when treating routine orthopedic injuries.
5. The increasing incidence of natural and manmade disasters is prompting employers to develop or improve their organizational resilience management (e.g., disaster preparedness, emergency response plan, continuity of operations plans).
6. With legalization of recreational marijuana use in two states and medical marijuana use in 18, more states will likely follow. Employers' policies will evolve accordingly to ensure safety in the workplace.
7. As states adopt ban-the-box legislation, employers will adapt their due diligence processes.
8. The increase in workflex policies and telecommuting will create new hurdles for employers to ensure the safety and security of their employees as well as privacy of data.

# Top Trends by Special Expertise Panel

9. The rising use of technology and smartphones will continue to provide both safety (e.g., distracted driving) and security (intellectual property, privacy protection) challenges for employers.
10. The use of data analytics and predictive modeling is on the rise, which leads to privacy concerns, but also allows for injury/accident prevention and better preparation for adverse events.

## Employee Relations

1. Globalization will amplify the importance of cross-cultural leadership, communication and organizational policies and procedures. Also, virtual workplaces, individuals and teams will further affect these leadership, communication and organizational challenges.
2. Organizations will continue to operate with a lean workforce, potentially affecting their ability to remain competitive while maintaining workforce engagement.
3. Legislation (federal, state and local) will continue to be enacted without clear and detailed guidelines, ultimately requiring HR to grapple with interpreting and implementing complicated employment laws.
4. Smart and innovative retention efforts will increase in importance due to the increased difficulty of attracting and retaining talent.
5. Work/life balance efforts will require increased attention, as managers recognize there are fewer firm boundaries between employees' work and personal lives.
6. Organized labor laws and employment laws in general will increasingly influence the business community.
7. Qualitative assessments in performance management are becoming more widespread and, in some cases, supplanting quantitative measures of performance and contribution.
8. Talent reviews are becoming more widespread, serving as a prime vehicle for assessing talent. They will increase the capabilities of line managers to evaluate, develop and engage talent.
9. Technology-based training will become more prominent in the workplace, enabling workplaces to become more flexible and versatile.

## Ethics

1. Organizations continue to struggle with balancing the competing interests of the bottom-line and legal obligations and employee demands when making ethical decisions in all aspects of the employment life cycle.
2. As organizations accept, recognize and measure the impact and return on investment of workplace culture, they will increasingly make business decisions through an ethics- and culture-based frame of reference.
3. Organizations are increasingly wrestling with the ethical decisions around appropriate boundaries/nonintrusion into employees' lives—for example, work-life fit, off-duty behavior, privacy and wellness programs.
4. Increasing diversity in the workplace (e.g., multicultural workforces and various generations in the workplace) has led to a growing tension between employees' and employers' views of the employment relationship (at-will v. a social contract view).
5. Organizations operating in multinational, multicultural environments will need to adapt to managing a workforce made up of unique ethical perspectives while remaining compliant with applicable local laws, regulations and customs.
6. Employers that seek to implement "creative" hiring strategies must increasingly ensure these strategies remain within the law, are respectful of a candidate's personal privacy, and don't require candidates to perform prehire work without compensation. Ongoing economic insecurity is leading to increased ethical dilemmas for employers and employees alike, requiring organizations to develop greater awareness of and solutions to address these situations.
7. Organizations continue to evaluate ethical issues related to the access and appropriate use of information from social networks for employees both on and off the job, as well as ethical issues surrounding the organizations' own use of social media.
8. Organizations are increasingly aware of how to properly respond to legal and ethical complaints and claims of retaliation due to stepped-up government enforcement, e.g., implementing policies and processes, proper recordkeeping and effective internal investigations.
9. In areas where no clear legal standard exists (e.g., workplace bullying or other inappropriate workplace behaviors), organizations will increasingly rely upon and expect supervisors to possess ethical competencies to properly address these issues.

# Top Trends by Special Expertise Panel

## Global HR

1. Leadership is being redefined. The hierarchical control and command structures of the past may look archaic and ineffective in managing a global workforce, particularly the Gen Y workers. Countries with a large proportion of younger workers may see a leadership deficit. HR will have to play the change agent in identifying and developing effective next generation of leaders.
2. There is an increase in the number of countries making significant changes to or completely overhauling immigration laws that affect businesses and the transfer of knowledge. Countries are enacting more limitations to employment authorizations (such as higher fees, longer approval processes, etc.), which create hurdles for business and immigration of foreign workers.
3. Globalization is no longer a driver and a challenge just for large multinational corporations (MNCs); it now affects companies of all sizes. As the rise of “born global” small- and medium-sized companies continues, the need will become more acute for competent global HR practitioners with the commensurate global mindset, crosscultural savvy, remote team and talent management, and intercultural communications skills to manage the challenge of having both brick-and-mortar and virtual operations across multiple countries. The MNCs are no longer the only group involved with managing a workforce and transactions across borders; small nonprofits and private organizations are also dealing with this challenge, but they may need a different set of best practices and technologies to optimize their compliance.
4. Educational institutions may fail to keep up pace with industry. Educational institutions, particularly in the developing countries, may not be able to deliver what the industry wants in terms of either quality or quantity. This may put an additional burden on corporations to invest in training and developmental activities. The training would not just include technical competencies but also other important soft skills such as crosscultural sensitivity, written communication skills, public speaking and leadership development.
5. More emphasis will continue to be placed on achieving more from less. The recession and continued global economic uncertainty has led organizations to rationalize their manpower by cautious hiring and moving jobs to low-cost destinations. The improvement in the economy many not result in a proportionate increase in hiring of new workers.
6. Diversity is going global. More and more is being done to lead and transform the diversity approach and to globalize the concept. Doing so is critical to address the talent pipeline issues in the mature markets and to fully benefit from the potential of global markets. All markets have complex workforces, and diversity goes much deeper than just age and gender. Effectively managing diverse talent globally continues to be a challenge for most companies.
7. Heightened regulatory compliance requirements (tax, immigration and employment) remain atop global HR professionals’ list of priorities and program risks.
8. Recruitment systems and tools will be taken to the next level. While recruitment finally happens online (Taleo, LinkedIn, etc.), it is already the technology of yesterday. We need to find more flexible ways to go about online and mobile recruitment with tools that match today’s technology and communication style and pace. Attention will need to be given to the older workers and how to connect with them in the best way because in many markets people will work longer due to the aging workforce and later retirement ages.
9. Companies are more focused on measuring the return on investment of international assignee costs. HR professionals must align compensation and benefits administration to the company’s strategic objectives by establishing or improving performance management systems with a global context. Companies are moving away from “traditional” (3-5 year) expatriate assignments toward using more long-term business travel arrangements, thereby creating risks with international workers’ compensation coverage and increased tax liabilities for the employees.
10. The second wave of shared services issues is now addressed in a more differentiated way than during the first wave, when it was led by a couple of the big companies. Shared services are not just a cost consideration anymore; they are more driven by the idea to improve HR processes and services. Organizations are now considering nontraditional locations for service centers and select them creatively. Companies that were not on board in the first wave are now getting involved.

# Top Trends by Special Expertise Panel

## 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. Globalization will cause many U.S.-based unions to look at the European Union model as a means to gain more presence in the private sector.
2. Increased complexity in the regulatory environment will put more pressure on companies to monitor their internal employee relations and guard against increased organizing activities by labor unions. Organizations will need to be more concerned with acts that may be construed as protected/concerted activities by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Organizations may have to contend with nontraditional forms of organizing.
3. Union organizing will become more unconventional in the attempt to increase unions' presence in the private sector through micro-union organizing and through the establishment of worker centers throughout the country.
4. Monitoring communication within organizations will become more complex through the growing influence of social media tools. The speed at which technology evolves will pose a challenge for organizations to monitor and distinguish between work and play. Proliferation of state laws could pose additional challenges to HR professionals as they continue to monitor electronic communications in the workforce.
5. State and local governments will become more aggressive in implementing their own labor and employment policies, which, in some cases, could run counter to federal law and thus circumvent the NLRB. This could result in an increase in equal employment opportunity claims filed at the local level. Additionally, there will continue to be significant momentum behind paid sick leave and wage-and-hour legislative efforts at the local level.
6. As the Baby Boom generation begins to retire, the skills gap will continue to grow within organizations. More emphasis will be placed on workplace flexibility, more creative benefits and incentives, and organizations will increasingly focus on succession planning to bridge the skills gap and to impart institutional knowledge.
7. General expertise among HR professionals is diminishing in the area of labor relations. HR professionals will need

greater knowledge of the process, procedures and strategy behind union organizing in the workplace. It will be imperative to acquire the competencies in order to deal with a union organizing campaigns within organizations.

## Organizational Development

1. Developing senior leaders from the ranks of technical experts is challenging but vital in many organizations. There is increasing focus on the development and engagement of high professional talent—high-potential employees who possess deep expertise, drive innovation and uniquely contribute to their organization's value proposition.
2. As HR departments place more focus on strategic initiatives and expand self-service models to deal with tactical requirements, line managers must become more proactive in managing and coaching talent and demonstrate many of the skills of the HR practitioner. HR has a responsibility to educate line management and help them acquire those skills.
3. Organizational structures are becoming increasingly complex and subject to change in the global, dynamic, competitive landscape. There is a growing need for organizational development (OD) professionals skilled in organizational design and change management required to effectively implement enhanced organizational structures. Understanding and responding to the talent requirements of various organizational designs is an important skill for OD practitioners.
4. Workforces will continue to diversify with five generations of employees working in a globalized environment. To be effective, leaders will need superior communication and situational leadership skills, motivation, energy and learning agility. The ability to recognize and respect cultural differences and to reconcile the issues cultural diversity creates will become even more valuable.
5. The output of the workforce planning process is being increasingly integrated with career planning and employee engagement to provide information and support for employees to help them identify and choose from available career paths and job opportunities.
6. The emergence of decision support tools and predictive analytics that can be used for selection and forecasting will make the ability to use "big data" more valuable. This increases the knowledge requirements for OD practitioners

# Top Trends by Special Expertise Panel

due to the need to interact with the technology specialists to produce accurate and useful models to use in planning and managing the workforce.

7. Advancements in mobile technologies are increasingly being used for bite-sized on-demand and focused training and performance support applications. These advancements have accelerated the trend for just-in-time learning via “pulled” rather than “pushed” instruction.

## Staffing Management

1. Companies must continue to consider factors for each country or region (e.g., demographics, local hiring challenges, talent pool availability, competitors, attraction drivers, salary expectations) to tailor effective local recruiting strategies.
2. Candidates will demand more personal and individualized experiences to get their attention while not letting up on expectations of being able to reach and research employers through a variety of means on social media and the Internet.
3. Leadership talent scarcity will continue as the workforce ages and fewer workers populate the pipeline behind vacating Baby Boomers.
4. Talent in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) will continue to command a premium in the talent marketplace.
5. Immigration reform will continue to be a driver of companies’ talent management strategies.
6. Pressure will increase for the U.S. government to dramatically increase or abolish H-1B visa ceilings, recognizing the shortage of STEM graduates in the U.S. and the resulting loss of talent when these students graduate and return to their home countries.
7. Mass sourcing of candidates through “big job boards” (e.g., Monster) and broad networks (e.g., LinkedIn) gives way to more targeted sourcing of subpopulations, enabled by use of analytics and big data.
8. Contingent labor utilization will continue to increase as companies seek ways to be more flexible and scalable with their workforces. It will also bring heightened statutory and legal scrutiny of temporary labor employment practices.

## Technology and HR Management

1. Companies will need to assure employees that HR data is secure in the cloud.
2. Companies will be exploring gamification as a way to accomplish such tasks as engaging and training employees, and attracting and screening talent.

3. Companies are moving beyond policies to control social media, and are adopting and integrating it within the organizations for the purposes of expanding communication and employee engagement.
4. An increase in virtualization and globalization is amplifying the need for innovative use of better collaboration tools for agility, productivity and efficiency.
5. Organizations can remove barriers to creativity by using cross-functional innovation teams to improve productivity and quality.
6. The real value in adopting cloud, business process outsourcing (BPO) or software as a service (SAAS) solutions is using technology to support business goals so HR can focus on strategy and potentially eliminate the associated infrastructure costs and hassle.
7. Mobile tools are evolving in their ability to put the right data in the right hands at the right time on the right device for the right task.
8. HR professionals need to be able to harness and analyze big data to drive business performance results.
9. The number of systems, databases and tools tracking similar or related data is driving the need for thought-out and purposeful integration, consolidation and “suite solutions.”
10. Human resource management will be further elevated as a profession through the definition of global HR terms, metrics, data models and standards.

## Total Rewards/Compensation and Benefits

1. Full implementation of the health care reform between 2014 and 2018 (with the possibility of legislative changes and amendments) will have employers concerned about how to be properly prepared for cost, funding, administration and not knowing for sure what will be implemented.
2. The focus on wellness and disease management will expand as a way to help prevent/control the cost of major illnesses. Incentives or disincentives will continue and become more elaborate as the goal to keep employees healthy and knowledgeable about their health will become more important.
3. Organizations will consider a broader mix of total rewards, such as career development and growth, work autonomy, innovation and other intangible rewards, to supplement the traditional cash compensation and benefits in order to recruit and retain the best employees to drive business performance.



# Top Trends by Special Expertise Panel

4. There is an increasing trend toward linking direct pay to organizational and individual performance through implementation of variable pay programs.
5. As employees focus on family and work/life balance, organizations are considering and implementing family leave programs with paid time off provisions and flexible work schedules, as such programs can be strong retention and recruiting tools.
6. Organizations will continue to examine their programs for providing retiree benefits and the basis for determining benefit levels. The trend toward replacing defined benefit pension plans with defined contribution plans will continue, and retiree health plans will be cancelled or altered to have retirees pay more.
7. Organizations continue to increase the use of teams and collaborative work, resulting in performance being defined, measured and rewarded at the group/unit/team and organizational levels in addition to the individual level.
8. As organizations continue to source talent globally, the number of traditional and expensive expatriate assignments is being reduced in favor of short-term assignments, training/development assignments, “global commuters” and virtual workers. The challenge will be determining how to compensate these new global workers.
9. Accountable care organizations (ACO) may become more prevalent as organizations work to align health care reimbursements and care delivery with quality measures, resulting in cost reductions.
10. large number of companies don't have a social media policy, and they are still grappling with how to balance social media with expanding their employer brand, appeal to Generation Y, and maintain transparency and company confidentiality.
6. The expansion of affinity groups to employer networks or business resource groups has grown beyond race and gender to include religion, disability, hobbies, causes, etc.
7. There is an increased conversation and focus on LGBT issues and benefits.
8. A fifth generation on the horizon will add to the conflicts and challenges currently presented with four generations in the workplace (communication, work styles/preferences, development/growth, etc.).
9. White males are feeling excluded from the diversity and inclusion conversation and believe that these efforts leave them experiencing reverse discrimination and being marginalized.
10. With more Traditionalists and Baby Boomers staying in the workforce longer than anticipated, companies are faced with issues associated with an aging workforce: phased retirement, knowledge management (capture and transfer), disabilities, increased medical costs, and engagement.
11. Workplace flexibility is a growing business strategy for companies that want to attract and retain a more diverse, virtual and global workforce.
12. Lack of education/vocational training leaves gaps in careers such as electricians, plumbers, carpenters and other professions that computers cannot replace.
13. With the increase in religious identities, as well as those who are now identifying as “none” (meaning they don't identify with any organized religious group and include atheists, agnostics, etc.), organizations must find ways to address the tensions, conflicts and accommodations necessary to be more inclusive and accepting of differences.

## Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

1. Expansion of Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) continues to add complexity to accommodation issues.
2. Globalization increases the need for cultural competence.
3. Technology advances and innovation leave skills gaps and continue to keep CEOs up at night.
4. Women's participation in the global workforce is increasing and tends to be the main focus of D&I efforts worldwide. However, women still lag behind men in equal pay for same jobs, in representation in senior/executive/board levels, and in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.
5. Social media is still a growing concern in recruiting efforts relative to the biases associated with candidates' profiles. A

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