THE talent table

BY **eightfold.ai**

2024-25:
Talent Table
year in review

14 talks on how to **transform HR with AI.**

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Welcome to the Talent Table

Let's be real, HR feels a little all over the place these days. Among the AI hype, skills-based everything, and the push to do more with less, it's hard to separate the buzz from the noise.

That's exactly why we started the Talent Table. We wanted a space where HR practitioners, business leaders, and industry thought leaders could come together, swap ideas, and make sense of the chaos.

Every episode features voices from across industries, including tech giants, consulting firms, analysts, and HR leaders figuring it out. We talk hiring, skills, strategy, AI, culture, internal mobility, and more to decipher what it actually takes to move from theory to action to traction.

Over the past year, we've found that **three big trend**s keep emerging:
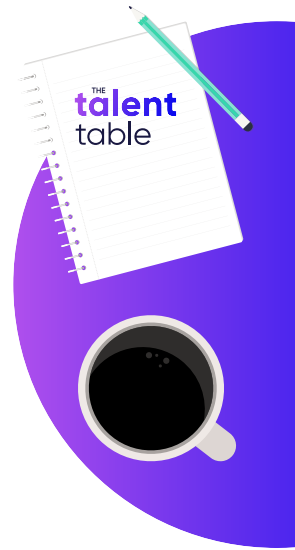
1 Strategy without alignment is guesswork.

HR and business leaders say they are on the same page, but they often aren't even in the same book. The cost of misalignment is real: lost hires, burnt-out teams, stalled progress. The fix? Clear priorities, constant check-ins, and really listening to each other.

2 AI is critical, but people still need the "why."

From skills-based hiring to intelligent upskilling, AI came up in every episode. And yes, it can unlock serious value, but without governance, guardrails, and trust, it's just another confusing technology. HR, in partnership with the business, needs to demystify AI, lead with transparency, and show how it can improve everyone's lives.

3 Keep it simple. Keep it human. Keep it moving.

Complexity kills momentum. Whether it's overengineered tech rollouts, confusing skills catalogs, or strategies that never leave the slide deck, the orgs making progress are the ones cutting through the clutter. A tiny step is better than standing still. Use plain language. Focus on clear benefits. Find a small win, then build. Learn, adapt, change. In a world moving this fast, doing something is better than waiting for perfection.

Hosting Talent Table is one of my favorite things. These conversations fire me up and challenge me to think bigger, get bolder, and stay grounded in what really matters: people.

I love hearing from leaders breaking down silos, rethinking HR's role, and doing the messy, meaningful work to move the needle. Whether it's unlocking internal mobility with AI, giving transformation some teeth, or just getting better at telling our stories, every episode leaves me with something new to think about.

This e-book is a fantastic collection of the best takeaways from the past year. If you're leading talent strategy, rolling out tech, or just trying to hold all the things together, it's a worthwhile read.

So here's your invite: if you have ideas to share, a story to tell, or just want to listen and learn with us, pull up a chair. There's room at the Talent Table.

— Rebecca Warren, Host of Talent Table

Rebecca Warren is a Director with our Talent-centered Transformation Team and the host of the Talent Table, a monthly roundtable where HR's top minds get together to discuss talent.

Getting a head start in the HR skillvolution

What does it take to move from a job-centric to a skills-centric workforce, and why is a skills-based workforce so important in today's market?

We set out to explore this topic with guests from global professional services firm **EY** and automotive technology company **Forvia**. In this episode, they unpack how organizations are redefining workforce strategy across talent acquisition, workforce planning, and internal mobility.

Takeaways

1. **Organizations are rethinking rigid job structures in favor of agile, skills-based models.** Shifting to a skills-based approach allows for greater flexibility in managing talent across roles and business units. It's more dynamic, intuitive, and impactful. Centering strategies around skills helps EY respond faster to business needs and reduce costs while amping up productivity and agility.

2. **AI unlocks real-time talent visibility by connecting data across systems**. Traditional job descriptions rely on lagging data. With AI, organizations can interpret both structured and unstructured inputs in real time to build up-to-date, dynamic talent profiles of employees' skills and capabilities. This gives leaders the power to make faster, more informed decisions about workforce planning and mobility.

3. **Driving AI adoption requires a massive and sustainable culture shift.** To address urgent TA needs, Forvia skipped the pilot phase and rolled out predictive AI matching globally. While speed was a huge factor, the automotive company also made sure to laser focus on adoption. For change management strategy, leaders set key recruiting KPIs, spotlighted local champions, and communicated the results of those productivity gains across executive and employee audiences.

For EY's talent management adoption goals, the mission was to give employees control and ownership of their skill profiles. EY's leaders identified three essential levers for adoption:

1. Improving the accuracy of skills data.

2. Embedding career development into daily workflows, like Teams and SharePoint.

3. Rethinking traditional change management approaches to make them more iterative and people-focused.

As a result, adoption jumped from 15% to 80%.

Watch the full episode

"Think big, be pragmatic, and engage your people. It's an amazing journey. Even if people are a bit afraid, this is a journey for them to gain visibility and to help design their own jobs."

— Gaël Barjot, HR Lab Director, Forvia

Build, buy, or borrow? Creating the right talent strategy

Full-time hires are expensive. Contractors don't always have the context. And AI is powerful, but it's not human. In this episode, guests from telecommunications company **Ericsson** and industry publication **HR Grapevine** join us to explore the tough yet strategic calls HR leaders must make when deciding whether to build, buy, or borrow talent, and how a skills-first approach, powered by AI, helps simplify the equation.

Takeaways

1. **Business outcomes must be HR's North Star.** Talent acquisition leaders work under the imperative to prioritize roles that quickly drive value. In addition, many TA pros use KPIs that validate their performance, like time to fill or hiring volume. However, this doesn't necessarily validate whether recruiters hired the right person or if that new hire's performance contributed to better business outcomes. Business performance should always be an important KPI — for new hires and recruiters.
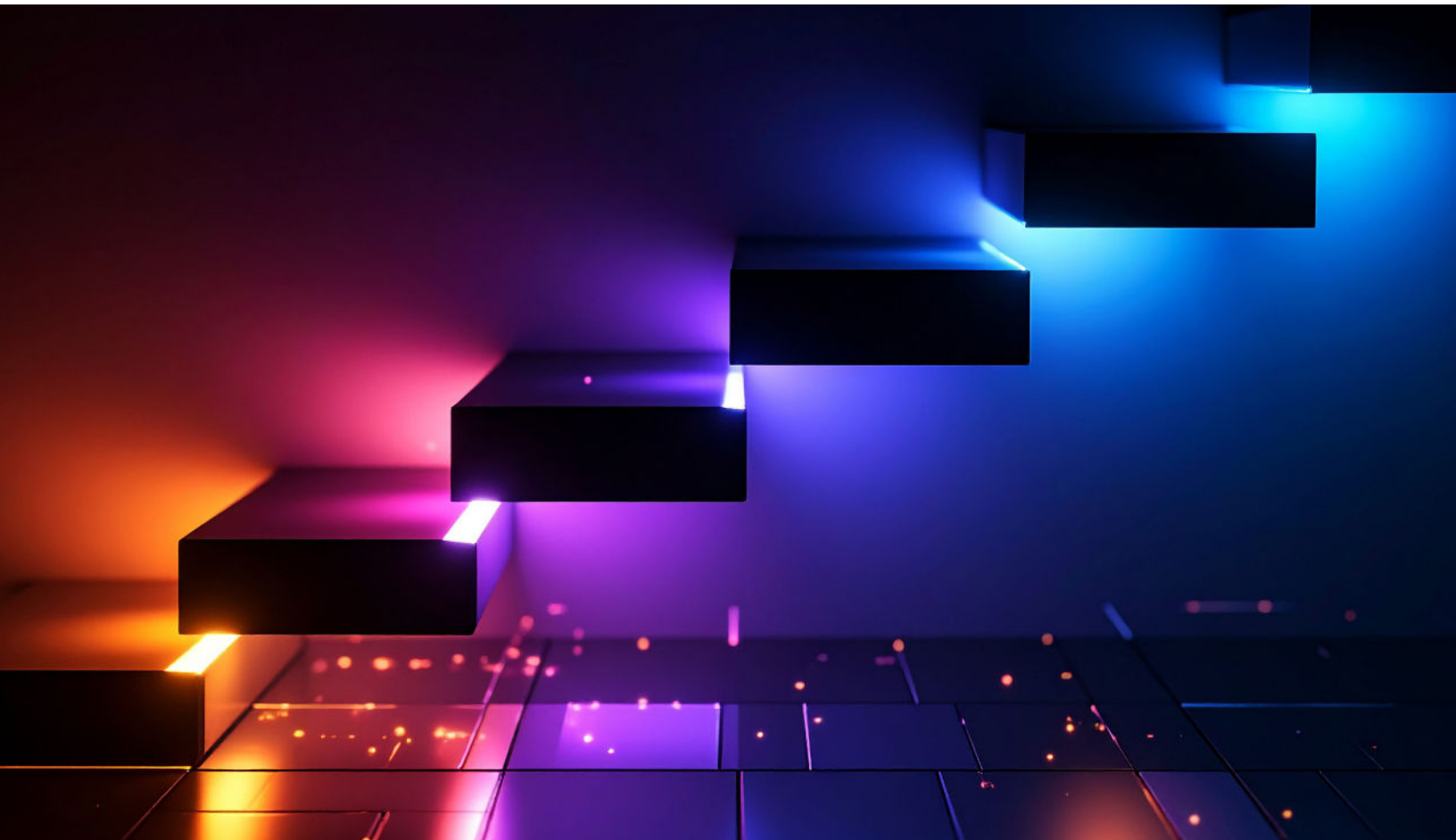
2. **A skills-based mindset helps retain top talent.** HR teams need to "catch people before they fall" by identifying skill adjacencies and career growth potential early. The goal should be to proactively move people into roles they might not have considered before they disengage or quit. Building internal mobility systems and upskilling plans is essential for long-term employee satisfaction.

3. **Technology needs to drive behavior, not just capture data.** Most HR tech is still too focused on reporting and compliance. Platforms must direct recruiter and manager behavior toward better outcomes in a way that feels like these technologies are built for modern, everyday work life. For example, Netflix-style learning recommendations and educational content directly surfaced to employees with AI-enabled guidance. This helps people grow and thrive.

Watch the full episode

"Think about what you're measuring, and why you're measuring it."

— Benjamin Broomfield, Head of Content, HR Grapevine

Why collaboration — not control — is the key for HR tech

HR tech doesn't succeed simply because you turn it on. While change management can be tricky, sticky, or prickly, listening to employees and clearly showing them how a solution will help them in their everyday lives can drastically alter engagement and adoption.

In this episode of Talent Table, global professional services firm **Accenture** and life sciences company **Bayer** joined us to talk about why collaboration with employees and leaders is the secret to making HR tech investments pay off. From early co-creation and storytelling, to passion-based project staffing and better onboarding, they explore how HR leaders can build adoption into the DNA of their tech strategy.

Takeaways

1. **Engagement starts way before go-live.** Bayer shared how its talent leaders co-create HR tech solutions with diverse teams across functions, geographies, and backgrounds. Strategic partnerships from day one help ensure tech is relevant to more people and easier to adopt at launch. Accenture added that a more agile, iterative rollout — with the help of AI — beats an outdated big-bang approach where HR teams spend months to years implementing a solution and crossing their fingers that everything goes perfectly at launch.

2. **HR shouldn't dictate what the business or employees need from tech.** Instead, HR teams should look for "pull signals" — real business needs and common employee feedback and areas of friction — then solve for those. Less is more, and leaders should focus on what matters most to the business.

3. **The "why" is everything.** Successful tech adoption is, surprisingly, all about storytelling. HR must move from telling to showing, using peer voices and compelling use cases to explain how new tools will help people in their roles. Word of mouth from early champions is often much more effective at building excitement than long-winded onboarding campaigns.

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"It often feels like we're hammers looking for nails when it comes to tech solutions. Instead, we need to ask: what does help look like for the business or employees?"

— Jacob Bradburn, Senior Manager, Talent & Organization, Accenture

How AI can help — not harm — your talent practices

We've all been asking a variation of the same question for years: Will AI replace me?

But maybe a better question is: What new things can I accomplish with this powerful new technology?

In this episode, we're joined by telecommunications giant **Vodafone** and consulting firm **Deloitte** to demystify AI and explore how HR can embrace AI to accomplish more, as long as it's done with transparency, collaboration, and trust. People must be at the heart of every decision.

Takeaways

1. **Start with strategy.** Before adopting AI, define the business outcome you're targeting. Vodafone began its journey by collecting nearly 300 AI-related user stories, then narrowed down what was going to best help and complement people's work. They emphasized the importance of building around clear objectives and not technology trends.

2. **AI works best when it augments human decision-making.** AI can help recruiters surface talent from massive candidate pools and personalize development at scale, but it should never be the final decision-maker. Keeping "humans in the loop" is essential for compliance, ethical usage, and building trust with employees.

3. **Trust in AI starts with transparency and strong governance.** From existing and developing regulations around AI to internal guidelines, clear guardrails are critical to safe and effective AI deployment. It's important to show employees where, why, and how AI is used. Be upfront about its benefits — and its risks.

Watch the full episode

"Overall, communicate and explain to people any risks or strategies for how their role might be different, so they can get ready for the jobs of the future."

— Adrian Boruz, Senior Global HR Product Portfolio Manager, Vodafone

Elevating talent with AI: From first steps to the finish line

Internal mobility is quickly climbing the priority list for employees and employers, but giving people tangible opportunities to grow takes more than good intentions. AI can help bridge the gap and make effective internal mobility a reality by surfacing potential talent, assisting in succession planning, and building a talent intelligence roadmap.

In this episode, beverage giant **Coca-Cola Europacific Partners (CCEP)** joins HR industry analyst firm **The Josh Bersin Company** to discuss how leading organizations are using AI to reshape approaches to talent management. A skills-based mindset, paired with the right technology, can create a culture where people see real paths forward and feel empowered to take them.

Takeaways

1. **Start with the business problem, then craft clear goals.** CCEP focused on real pain points, like employees struggling to find internal growth paths, before choosing a platform. Staying focused on their ultimate goal of increasing internal mobility helped talent leaders achieve quick wins.

2. **Keep messaging light and clear.** Organizations need to explain AI initiatives in relatable terms instead of overloading the rollout with jargon. This understandable messaging helps garner early buy-in.

3. **Make next steps simple to gain traction.** Instead of mapping tens of thousands of skills and maintaining the past sophistication of HR skills catalogs, CCEP prioritized 100 core capabilities, then asked employees to focus on their top five. Not only did this simpler approach lead to widespread adoption, but because employees could only list five skills, it made their talent profiles more meaningful.

Watch the full episode

"If we don't know your skills, we can't give you the opportunity. But if you give us that, we can give you something back."

— Nico Orie, VP People & Culture, Coca-Cola Europacific Partners

Integrating diversity from the start: How AI is shaping this essential business practice

Diversity shouldn't be performative. It shouldn't be a trend. It shouldn't be a box to check or a PR talking point. It should be woven into the DNA of how an organization hires, develops, promotes, supports, and empowers talent.

When that happens, organizations create a safe and fair workplace for everyone, and AI can be an important ally in this process. When deployed ethically and responsibly, it can help reduce bias and ensure diversity principles are integrated throughout the talent life cycle.

In this episode, forest sustainability organization the **Sierra Institute** and career-coaching firm **TRAP Recruiter** discuss how HR leaders can shift from compliance-driven programs to culturally integrated diversity strategies — and how AI fits into the mix, helping to create a workplace where people can belong and thrive.

Takeaways

1. **Diversity programs are often disconnected from reality.** Many organizations tout inclusion, but fail to tie diversity to real outcomes or employee experience. Candidates see through the disconnect between surface-level messaging and the lived reality inside organizations.

2. **AI can help embed fairness into daily processes.** When thoughtfully applied, AI can reduce bias in hiring, flag pay disparities, and surface overlooked internal talent for new opportunities.

3. **Start where you are and focus on what matters.** Smaller organizations don't need sweeping ERG programs to show commitment. Instead, they should look inward and can start right where they are by analyzing pay equity and embedding inclusion across processes.

Watch the full episode

"The difficulty is figuring out which questions to ask and then how to mine those insights. AI offers a huge quantum step forward in that process. ... It doesn't give you the perfect answer. It doesn't give you the complete answer. But it helps you guide your thinking about where to go next."

— Michael Keane, Managing Partner, Sierra Institute

Bring your talent back from the dead

Hidden in every ATS is a graveyard of forgotten candidates. But it's one worth revisiting to resurface talent and give them new life.

Many silver medalists and past candidates are qualified, motivated, and already familiar with your brand. In this episode, HR industry newsletter **Recruiting Brainfood** joins consulting firm **PwC** to unpack how AI can help you reanimate recruiting strategies by engaging past applicants in smarter, more human ways.

Takeaways

1. **Your 'candidate graveyard' is full of untapped potential.** Silver medalists, company alumni, and past applicants may still be a great fit for future roles. AI-powered platforms can help you resurface and re-engage these candidates and build a robust talent pipeline brimming with potential.

2. **The hiring funnel needs some friction.** With mass AI-generated applications on the rise, hiring teams are overwhelmed and are struggling to identify quality candidates. Adding small barriers to entry, like short assessments that give candidates meaningful feedback, can help filter high-intent applicants while protecting the candidate experience — and saving you time.

3. **Respect and relevance matter more than ever.** Poor experiences, like ghosting or generic mass rejection emails, can alienate top talent. Organizations should treat past candidates as future brand advocates. One way to do this is by crafting personalized outreach and offering valuable career insights that build long-term trust.

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"These candidates are the obvious people to speak to first. ... The problem is that once we've processed them as candidates, we forget about them. We throw them into the graveyard."

— Hung Lee, Editor, Recruiting Brainfood

Unlocking what today's executives need from HR

Organizations benefit when HR and the C-suite are aligned, but what do executives need from their HR teams? In an effort to reframe the discussion, European energy company **E.ON** joined HR industry analyst firm **The Josh Bersin Company** to share how leaders can build credibility, drive business outcomes, and stay aligned with a C-suite navigating constant change and demanding results.

Takeaways

1. **HR must shift from guardians to pioneers.** HR professionals have historically taken a perfectionist stance, trying to make sure everything is correct and compliant before proceeding, but agility and innovation are more important than getting everything right. COVID was the perfect example. HR was allowed to move fast without everything being absolutely perfect, and the results were transformative. Leaders need HR to experiment, move fast, and embrace ambiguity.

2. **Skills are the new currency of strategic workforce planning.** The shift from jobs to skills is well underway. Organizations can unlock far more talent and deploy it with greater flexibility by focusing on what people can do and not just their job titles. In addition, focusing on and revealing ability and potential — especially learning new skills like working with AI — can help promote internal mobility.

3. **HR teams need investment and upskilling, too.** While HR is often responsible for upskilling others, the department is frequently overlooked when it comes to development. Many organizations spend dramatically less on developing HR staff compared to other functions. That has to change if HR is expected to lead business transformation.

Watch the full episode

"For every five skills you think you know about a person, there are 12 more you can infer and another 15 that are adjacent."

— Bill Pelster, Co-founder, The Josh Bersin Company

It's time to get aligned: Bringing HR and business strategy together

HR and business leaders want the same thing — a thriving, productive workforce. However, according to our latest talent survey, only 44% of HR professionals believe their talent strategies are aligned with business goals.

Our study co-author **3Sixty Insights** joins us to dig into our survey findings and explore what HR teams can do to close the gap between talent strategy and business goals. We unravel the consequences of misalignment; explain why trust and transparency are foundational to a thriving partnership; and explain how data-driven talent intelligence can help HR teams earn a strategic seat at the table.

Takeaways

1. **Misalignment is costly.** When HR lacks visibility into business goals or leaders don't understand HR's strategic value, it leads to breakdowns in communication. The consequences can impact virtually everything: hiring, engagement, retention, morale, brand reputation, and more.

2. **Communication must be constant and candid.** Many business leaders assume HR will deliver results without providing the right context or direction. Meanwhile, HR often struggles to make their impact visible. Closing the loop requires regular, open dialogue between HR and executives.

3. **Better workforce decisions start with better data.** To truly understand talent problems — and possible solutions — organizations need to unify data sources and ensure that leaders are tracking the right metrics. Strong data practices support faster hiring, stronger decision-making, and more strategic workforce planning.

Watch the full episode

"If you don't have that trust that you're part of something bigger and that you have an understanding of where you all are going, it's really hard to get excited to come to work every day."

— Dylan Teggert, Principal Analyst, 3Sixty Insights

HR transformation: What 2024's trends mean for 2025 strategies

Today's relentless pace of change is as much a cliché as it is an urgent call to action. Organizations and HR teams can choose to either passively react or proactively transform.

Here, we're joined by HR consulting firm **TalentLign** and **The Recruiting Future Podcast** to explore how HR teams can move beyond "managed helplessness" and become active architects of their futures. They explore how AI is reshaping work, how to create strategies to meet shifting organizational priorities, and why HR leaders must challenge outdated assumptions to stay relevant.

Takeaways

1. **Businesses shaping the future will come out ahead.** No one knows what will happen tomorrow, but the way organizations handle that uncertainty matters. While HR has typically been reactive, there's a huge opportunity to step up and drive strategy and agility.

2. **Governance and trust are key to making AI work.** The speed of AI advancement has far outpaced federal legislation and continues to evolve daily. In a highly unregulated industry, business leaders must take the initiative in considering ethical considerations regarding technology and data. When organizations use employee data, they must be super clear about how it's collected, used, and why it matters. Employees need to see how sharing their data benefits them and not just the business.

3. **Understand and guide how AI can improve work.** AI is kind of like having a smart best friend, one that helps you make better decisions and sparks new ideas. HR leaders need to understand how AI can change workflows, and the delineation between what people will do and what machines will do. AI can also help boost employee engagement while helping HR understand what keeps employees satisfied.

Watch the full episode

"A lot of times, HR has been the recipient of strategy in tech, not the driver of it. … HR departments can really bring things together to where a business can pivot, can be agile, and can become the ones making those market shifts, those ripples, and that thunder."

— Dr. Patti Fletcher, *Chief Strategy and Practice Officer, TalentLign*

Everything HR ops pros need to know about adopting new technologies

The pace of innovation and change in HR tech is accelerating, and HR operations is at the center of it all, guiding direction and impact. But when every vendor is suddenly an AI provider and every new tool promises transformation, how do you separate signal from noise?

In this episode, intelligent computing company **Qualcomm** joins HR consulting firm **IA** for a deep dive into how HR and IT leaders can evaluate, adopt, and scale the right AI solutions. They cover everything from aligning tech with business goals to avoiding common implementation missteps, building strong governance frameworks, and identifying vendors that can grow with you.

Takeaways

1. **Good tech strategy is good business strategy.** Before introducing new AI capabilities, organizations need to define ultimate objectives. Whether it's reducing time to hire or improving employee experience, new tech should align directly with those objectives. Internal readiness, data maturity, and stakeholder alignment are all critical to evaluate and improve before committing to a new technology.

2. **Governance and trust are essential.** Most organizations still lack a formal AI governance structure, creating unnecessary risk. Setting up a center of excellence (COE) or governance body with IT, HR, legal, and finance can help you responsibly evaluate tools and navigate compliance.

3. **Evaluate vendors with an eagle eye.** Not every "AI vendor" is equal. Ask vendors for customer references, confirm the company's financial stability, and dig into support models, hidden costs, and flexibility. Vendors should offer localized, auditable solutions and be willing to partner long-term on supporting implementation and rollout, not just implementation.

Watch the full episode

"One wrong move can basically take us three to five years back."

— Bharat Daga, Director of IT, Qualcomm

Ready for the spotlight: The future is skills-first and HR takes center stage

As organizations shift toward skills-based practices, HR is front and center in driving this revolution. In this episode, information technology company **HP** and biotech leader **Amgen** explore how a skills-first mindset is transforming L&D practices, career pathways, and everyday work. These leaders share what success looks like when skills guide decision-making, and how agentic AI can support leaders and learners.

Takeaways

1. **Skills need relevance and structure.** It's not enough to have a long list of skills. Organizations must tie skills to roles, business needs, and outcomes. Persona-based frameworks can help teams avoid complexity and focus on what matters most.

2. **Learning must be continuous and connected to the business.** The most effective L&D programs make learning part of daily workflows and conversations. Success comes when leaders see it as a force multiplier for performance, not just an HR activity.

3. **Technology helps, humans lead.** AI can accelerate skills discovery and validation, but people must bring the context, judgment, and purpose to talent decisions and their everyday work.

Watch the full episode

"Skills are the motor oil in the engine of any company."

— Jivko Kirov, Sales & Partner Training, HP University, HP

From silos to strategies: Empowering talent teams with skills and self-reflection

Transformation, whether in the organization or within HR, doesn't happen in a vacuum. Every team and worker is interconnected. HR, talent management, talent acquisition, and L&D — each of these HR functions impact one other's success.

In this episode, HR industry analyst firm **The Josh Bersin Company** and chemical manufacturer **Huntsman Corp.** unpack what it takes to align strategy across functions and within HR. Additionally, they share how to embrace AI without getting overwhelmed while building a culture that supports growth.

Takeaways

1. **Break down silos to unleash organizational agility.** Teams may share the same goals, but without cross-functional communication, they risk duplicating work, missing redeployment opportunities, or even undermining each other's efforts. HR leaders can create alignment by addressing cultural barriers and designing systems that reward enterprisewide thinking rather than talent hoarding.

2. **Apply a skills-first lens to your career.** Skills-first thinking doesn't stop with hiring or talent management. Every HR team member's growth and development also comes into play. With job requirements constantly evolving, HR professionals can no longer rely solely on past titles or linear career paths. Approaching every project is a chance to deepen your expertise and build new skills.

3. **Give AI a seat at the table.** Today is the slowest AI will ever be — it's only going to get better and faster. That's why it's important to give AI a seat at the table.

Watch the full episode

"Imagine a world-class orchestra where every musician is incredibly talented, but no one is playing in sync. The result isn't music — it's noise. That's exactly what happens when departments operate in silos."

— Nehal Nangia, Senior Director of Research,
   The Josh Bersin Company

Talking to HR tech like a pro: Connecting innovation and employees to business strategy

HR leaders are eager to build skills-first cultures and roll out the latest AI-powered tools, but getting employee buy-in takes more than technical implementation. It takes strategic and relatable messaging.

However, too many organizations fall back on vague catchphrases like "digital transformation" or "skills-based organization." These bumper-sticker terms sound impressive, but often confuse employees and leave them disengaged.

In this episode, our expert panel from global workforce consulting firm **QuantumWorks Advisory**, financial leaders **Bloomberg** and **LSEG**, and insurance firm **Aviva** break down how to cut through the jargon and explain new technology in relevant, honest ways. From launching new tech to shifting employee mindsets, you'll get practical ideas and strategies for communicating with employees and inspiring adoption.

Takeaways

1. **Start with simplicity.** Before introducing any new technology, HR needs to explain the "why" in plain language. If the average employee can't immediately grasp the benefit to their everyday life, adoption will take a hit.

2. **Design with employees in mind.** Don't buy tools and then expect employees to automatically adapt and adopt. Involve users early, run pilots, and evaluate solutions through the lens of the employee experience.

3. **Measure what matters.** Usage stats alone aren't really enough to define success. To truly gauge the effectiveness of a solution, define clear success metrics, like internal mobility or repeated engagement, that show whether new tools are supporting the outcomes that really matter to the business.

Watch the full episode

"People don't understand what you're saying, and therefore, you don't win hearts and minds. You're losing your most valuable asset, which is the sentiment of the people within your organization."

— Jig Ramji, Former Chief Talent Officer and Global Head of HR at Bloomberg, LSEG, and Aviva

Take a seat at the Talent Table

Want to stay updated on the latest strategies in HR to overcome your toughest challenges? Join us every month for a new roundtable discussion with top HR leaders.

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About Eightfold AI

Eightfold AI doesn't just organize data — we understand people. As pioneers of the world's most innovative AI-native Talent Intelligence Platform, we combine enterprise data, market insights, and user interactions to create a complete picture of talent across the entire employment life cycle, providing an endto-end experience that includes hiring, development, and retention. A third of our customers are from Fortune 500 companies and have relied on us to move faster and more strategically than the competition. Our platform is guiding our customers through the greatest work acceleration in history by unlocking the power of people and showing them how partnering with AI can unleash unlimited potential. Learn more at www.eightfold.ai.

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