The 2007–2008 Workplace Trends List

The Top Trends According to SHRM’s Special Expertise Panels
About the Workplace Trends List

This is a summary of the Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM) Special Expertise Panels 2007 Trends Reports. These reports are designed as a way to tap into the knowledge and expertise of SHRM’s Special Expertise Panels. Because the panels are comprised of subject matter experts, the lists of trends they submit in their reports are a compilation of cutting-edge insights into a wide variety of HR-related topics and trends as well as their future implications.

For the 2007 update, members of each panel were asked to reexamine their trends from 2006 to see if any trends warranted changing and to update their lists with any new trends that they believed would have a significant impact on the workplace and the HR profession in the coming years. The lists of trends submitted by each expert panel assist SHRM in creating forward-looking information and content for SHRM members in forums such as the online HR Focus Areas, white papers, research reports and surveys, and through media and outreach efforts. While the lists of trends are used primarily as a springboard for creating more in-depth content, the lists are in and of themselves a valuable resource for HR professionals who are interested in seeing what issues HR subject matter experts believe will have the biggest impact on the workplace today and in the years ahead.

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. The panels are comprised of SHRM members possessing advanced HR skills and experience in one of 13 HR concentrations. Each of the 13 Special Expertise Panels is comprised of five to 15 SHRM professional members who serve a one- to three-year term.

Panel member contributions play an integral role in reporting emerging trends in specific HR topic areas, providing expert advice on matters of professional significance and providing guidance on matters of public policy. 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 Committee1 and approved by the SHRM Board Governance Committee.

Acknowledgements

SHRM would like to acknowledge the efforts of each of the members of the 13 Special Expertise Panels. A full list of panel members can be found in the back of this report.

Special Expertise Panels:
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Employee Health, Safety and Security
- Employee Relations
- Ethics
- Global
- HR Consulting/Outsourcing
- Human Capital Measurement/HR Metrics
- Labor Relations
- Organizational Development
- Staffing Management
- Technology and HR Management
- Total Rewards/Compensation and Benefits
- Workplace Diversity

1 Members of the Panel Selection Committee are appointed by the SHRM 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 of the panels. The slates for the panels are reviewed and approved by the Governance Committee of the SHRM Board.
Overview

In 2005, the newly formed SHRM Special Expertise Panels were asked to compile a list of the key trends in their subject matter areas. By generating and debating these important trends among subject matter experts, SHRM hoped to tap into the cutting-edge insights of the most experienced thought leaders in the HR field. Each year thereafter, the SHRM Special Expertise Panels have revisited the trends they generated in 2005 and added or modified them as a result of new developments or more information gathered over the course of the year.

While for many panels the changes in 2007 were fairly minor, other panels made significant changes to their list of key trends. This may reflect the rate of change within the various subject matter areas. One significant change between the 2006 and 2007 trends is the addition of a new Special Expertise Panel, Corporate Social Responsibility, which brought with it new perspectives on issues and developments in this subject area.

Overall, several key themes emerged:

- The importance of globalization and integrating markets.
- Demographic change and its impact on diversity and labor availability.
- The implications of increased health care costs.
- Immigration and global labor mobility.
- Skills shortages and a greater emphasis on talent management.
- The growing importance of demonstrating ethics and corporate social responsibility.
- The influence of new technologies, especially social networking and HR technologies.
- A greater reliance on metrics.

Many of the themes and issues the panels raised reflect similar concerns of HR professionals overall—such as the threat of rising health care costs, skills shortages and globalization—as indicated in the findings of the most recent SHRM Workplace Forecast survey.

As SHRM moves forward, 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.
Following is the complete list of the updated trends for 2007 in the order of importance (with the first trend being the most important). Panels are listed in alphabetical order.

**Corporate Social Responsibility**
1. Business leaders’ recognition of the need to be involved in corporate social responsibility (CSR) within their organizations.
2. Greater integration of CSR into business strategy.
3. Increasing need to articulate business case for CSR.
4. Shift to sustainability as core competency for business success.
5. Transparency: As people continue to scrutinize the role of business in society, companies are becoming more transparent in their operations.
6. Growing emphasis on corporate brand and values.
7. Greater visibility of global supply chains.
8. Expanding awareness of gaps between “haves” and “have nots” within countries and between countries.
10. Maturing of widely accepted tools for measurement, reporting and transparency.

**Employee Health, Safety and Security**
1. The rise in the cost of health insurance and its influence on issues such as smokers’ penalties, “standard premiums,” health risk appraisals and wellness programs, especially for diabetes and obesity.
2. “Temporary” accommodations for workers’ compensation (WC), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), setting a precedent for permanent work arrangements.
3. An increase in protective health information such as Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), WC, FMLA, ADA, etc.
4. Managing paper flow and the use of identifiers has given rise to greater threat of identity theft.
5. Increased worker surveillance in relation to leave and WC fraud.
6. Communicable diseases, especially Tuberculosis, Hepatitis and HIV/AIDS, and pandemic preparedness.
7. Scope of control is moving further down in organizations, resulting in lack of health, safety and security compliance and consistency.
8. Pre-employment/post-offer health screening.
9. Increased use of background checks.
10. Increasing conversion between employee relations, workers’ compensation and OSHA issues.
11. New discovery rules: how e-mail is monitored, saved and destroyed.
12. Greater need for culturally and linguistically appropriate health, safety and security training.
13. Increased safety issues among workers whose first language is not English.
14. Drug testing becoming increasingly complicated, especially in relation to what to do with results.
15. Stress as a workplace environmental issue: ADA, FMLA, WC. How do the dots connect?
16. An increasing number of employers refusing to hire smokers.
17. Multiple generations in the workplace and implications for drug testing, turnover rates, differences in values and a demand for alternative work environment, resulting in no control over safety of environment and visitation in the home by clients, others.
18. “New diagnosis”—asking for accommodation for previously unrecognized conditions.

**Employee Relations**
1. Retention of talent is becoming a strategic objective due to the high demand for skilled workers, e-recruiting tools and the mobility of the workforce. Organizations are in high competition for a shrinking supply of workers.
2. HR will play an increasingly important role in promoting the link between employees’ performance and its impact on the organization’s business objectives, profitability and productivity through the use of strategic HR measurement tools and demonstrating how HR processes support ROI expectations.
3. Employers providing developmental opportunities for managers to move to a more effective leadership style: setting expectations, attracting managerial talent, developing skill sets.
4. Evolution of employee-employer relationships to partnerships where effective management, leadership skills, communications and personal accountability will be required for organizational success.

5. Employers must address the growing challenge of a multi-generational workforce as it applies to employee relations, recruitment and retention.

6. The continued acceleration of domestic and global change resulting from mergers and acquisitions and outsourcing, and its effect on workplace operational objectives, strategic goals, and human resource strategy and management.

7. Decline in traditional communication methods and increase in cyber communication, requiring employers to revise policies about the use of communication devices and the etiquette necessary to communicate effectively and appropriately.

8. Increased burden on employers to respond proactively to lack of workforce readiness.

9. Diversity is being redefined as a result of the increasing percentage of minorities/immigrants in the workforce, placing pressure on employers to develop and maintain more inclusive workplaces.

10. Increasing impact of ethics and governance issues on the HR agenda.

Ethics

1. Differences in perception and understanding of ethics across generations.

2. The increasing role of HR professionals in company ethics compliance programs; increase in ethical issues facing HR professionals.

3. Ethical issues arising from immigrants in the workplace.


5. Ethical responsibility and accountability of boards of directors and committees to an expanding group of stakeholders.

6. Ethical considerations arising from electronic/satellite technology.

7. The need for heightened ethics training for employees working in information technology.


10. Ethical issues arising from employee use of blogs and other communication technologies.

11. Ethical issues arising from Islamophobia (discrimination against Muslim employees) in the workplace.

12. Ethical issues arising from pandemics and infectious diseases.

Global

1. Managing talent globally and having the “right” talent to achieve business strategy, particularly in high-growth countries.


3. Global teams that can manage distances effectively and balance a U.S.-centric view versus a global view.

4. Global leadership and the recognition of a need to cultivate specific global leadership competencies.

5. Demographics: Generational differences in work styles/preferences as well as workplace shifts as baby boomers retire.

6. HR communication and expertise across borders to leverage globally dispersed pockets of knowledge.

7. Demand for HR skill sets (strategic/international versus transactional).

8. Immigration reform and the staffing shortage (construction, engineering, output from universities).

9. Domestic is global and global is domestic.

10. Movement of people in Western multinational corporations (MNCs) to other economies and growth of emerging-market-based MNCs.

HR Consulting/Outsourcing

1. The role of HR professionals has changed due to the increasing prevalence of outsourcing, consulting and globalization. The shift has allowed HR to focus on the more strategic, high-level activities of the organization.

2. Increasing weight of non-cost drivers as decision criteria for determining the use of consultants and outsourcing.

3. Just-in-time work functions, demographic shifts, growing diversity, etc., are increasing organizations’ needs for outsourcing and consulting services.

4. HR professionals are demanding increased customization of products and services from consultants and outsourcing partners.
5. Increasing need for specialized niche HR consulting. One-size-fits-all approach no longer acceptable. HR professionals hiring boutique HR consultants.
6. Greater reliance on metrics to justify HR activities.
7. Increased consolidation and competition are reshaping the outsourcing and consulting industry.
8. HR professionals are reevaluating and scrutinizing outsourcing and consulting activities due to past failures. There is increased scrutiny over service-level agreements and key performance indicators to mitigate security and risk to the organization and its employees.
9. HR consulting is expanding due to increased need for international/global services.
10. Increasingly, small organizations are outsourcing their entire HR function.
11. Small organizations are turning to Professional Employer Organizations (PEOs) to provide all benefits for their employees.

Human Capital Measurement/HR Metrics
1. The increasing demand by organizations to measure and assess the value of their human capital and the HR activities, initiatives and practices that support it. Such increased demand may bring about a widely accepted set of analytic measures and methods to describe, predict and evaluate the quality and impact of HR practices.
2. Elevating the HR profession to a decision science and simultaneously educating HR professionals and non-HR professionals on measuring human capital practices and results.
3. Increased use of workforce planning, staffing and optimization to drive business results.
4. More impetus on the use of metrics with greater cultural sensitivity. A measure that is valued in one culture may be irrelevant or inappropriate in another.
5. Deeper levels of health care/medical cost analysis to identify trends, monitor costs and mitigate negative outcomes, leading to better overall health care management.
7. Increased use of HR technology.

Labor Relations
1. Union consolidation and sectoral claims to organize members on a greater scale.
2. Growing power of labor to lobby stakeholders.
3. The impact of increased health care and benefit costs on labor relations.
4. Organization of labor relationships in non-traditional sectors.
6. Maximizing flexibility to compete globally and the growing influence of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in global circles.
7. The impact of Kentucky River—the case of the National Labor Relations Board v. Kentucky River Community Care, Inc. that led to the recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that essentially defines nurses and physicians as supervisory personnel who can’t engage in collective bargaining—will more clearly delineate those individuals who are defined as “supervisors” and therefore not covered under the National Labor Relations Act for the purpose of collective bargaining activity, as supervisors are not permitted to join a union.
8. Modernized strategic and mobilization tactics.
9. Use of unfair labor practice charges as an organization tactic.
10. Impact of immigration policy on union organizing efforts.

Organizational Development
1. Increased awareness of organization development through evaluation of human performance metrics and the corresponding impact on business outcomes.
2. The value of supporting targeted groups with specialized development to increase organizational capacity.
3. Organizational performance is tied to talent management and an evaluation of their knowledge, skills and abilities.
4. More organizations are identifying the macro skill sets of organizational development experts to create whole system changes rather than fragmented interventions.
5. Recognition of the importance of organizational culture.
6. The evolution of management and worker interaction as a result of global, virtual and variable teams.
7. Organizations are sustaining themselves through ethical behavior and citizenship initiatives in the areas of financial responsibility, stewards of the environment and support of societal needs.

8. Changing demographics (e.g., the aging workforce) are redefining organizational systems.

9. Increased internal and external employment branding.

10. More and more entry-level workers lack interpersonal skills, workplace etiquette and emotional intelligence.

### Staffing Management

1. The impact of the looming skills and talent shortage on staffing management.

2. The impact of shifting demographics on staffing management.

3. The impact of globalization on staffing management.

4. An increase in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), including recruiting.

5. A continuing increase in the use of technology in the practice of recruiting.

6. A continuing reliance on flexible work arrangements.

7. Increasing use of assessments in the selection and promotion process.

8. Increasing use of metrics in the staffing management function and aligning these metrics and goals with overall business goals.

9. Increased organizational focus on employment branding and its alignment with product branding.

10. Workforce planning and forecasting becoming an increasingly important staffing management activity.

### Technology and HR Management

1. The rapid growth and pervasiveness of electronic social networking through public sites such as MySpace and LinkedIn and internal corporate sites like Starbucks.

2. The growing need for understanding legal issues around the use of technology in HR, especially as it relates to international privacy laws, testing, data storage and Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP).

3. The growth of collaborative application development, which allows non-programmers to develop applications and content through established templates and share them with colleagues. A simple example of this is the wiki.

4. The continuing “Borg” model of HR technology vendor growth, with industry consolidation and more “suite”-style product offerings.

5. Continuing growth of application service provider/outourcing versus in-house software implementations, perhaps as a backlash against the difficult enterprise resource planning (ERP) implementations of the past.

6. The growing importance of globalization/global integration in HR technology implementations.

7. The emerging importance of managing virtual relationships for HR functions such as talent management and career development.

8. The growing need to work closely with the IT department/CIO in order to implement and manage newly automated HR functions.

9. The growing importance of HR technology vendor management, especially as it relates to hosted applications and liability issues.

10. The emergence of real-time Web applications (live Web), including remote interviewing, employee pulse surveys and the ability to trigger employee scheduling changes based on real-time store traffic.

### Total Rewards/Compensation and Benefits

1. Executive compensation, transparency and compliance: HR professionals will need to develop their own competencies and awareness of the organizational and economic factors that influence executive compensation in order to ensure proper oversight and compliance with regulations.

2. Impact of an aging workforce on compensation and benefits will be significant, with organizations emphasizing phased retirement, chronological diversity and other programs.

3. Risk and cost shifting has become a significant factor in total rewards/compensation and benefits. These shifts are generally occurring between the government and employers, as well as between employers and their employees.

4. Talent management: total rewards practices and initiatives play a key role in the acquisition and retention of key talent for now and in the immediate future.
5. Total rewards, as a retention strategy that ensures competitiveness and explains a company’s value proposition, today requires a broader definition that includes not only compensation and benefits but other initiatives such as career development and work/life balance.

6. Performance management and alignment, and their tie-in with company culture and total rewards strategies, are a strategic necessity in today’s ultracompetitive and highly accountable business environment.

7. Global mobilization of workers/weakening of the dollar will require that organizations flex their total rewards strategies to adapt to different cultures and ensure competitiveness in international markets.

8. Effectively communicating the value of total rewards to employees is critical in order for organizations to maximize total rewards programs as a competitive advantage now and in the immediate future.

9. Mandates versus flexibility (e.g., paid leave mandates), as well as a growing momentum at the federal and state level for mandated leave benefits for employees, create challenges for organizations attempting to develop their own paid leave and other flexible leave options.

10. Health care and the uninsured: the traditional American approach of covering the cost of health insurance through an employer-sponsored plan is shrinking as the cost of health care rises.

Workplace Diversity

1. Linking diversity to the overall business strategy to ensure that it has the visibility and commitment that it needs to build ownership across all business lines.

2. Demographic shifts and their effects on the “war for talent:” As the United States experiences increased changes to the makeup of its workforce, including an aging population, generational mixes in the workplace and more minorities entering the workforce, attracting and recruiting qualified talent will be not only a top priority for organizations but also a business necessity.

3. Measurement: Putting diversity measures into a larger context and linking them to new measures of intangible assets.

4. Building leadership capability: One of the key differentiators among organizations that thrive and those that survive in the next decade will be their ability to attract, grow and fully leverage their leaders.

5. Globalization is becoming synonymous with organizational survival. HR, diversity professionals and organizational leaders must expand their perspective from a local view to a worldly view.

6. Transactional versus strategic: As the business environment increases in competition and complexity, being more strategic will become a must for HR.

7. Skills/competencies of practitioner: As business needs become more complex and ever-changing, the skills that drove success 10 and 20 years ago for HR and diversity professionals will not sustain the organizations of the future.

8. Immigration’s multiple implications for business and HR, including new policies, compliance, talent management, communication, language and religious issues, among others. Cultural competence and the ability to provide culturally relevant services will be required for many of the organizations that want to maintain their customers, employees and credentials.

9. The pace of technological innovation will continue to accelerate.

10. Rising health care costs and the role of HR in implementing new cost-cutting strategies to manage health care expenses, influencing policy and implementing programs that meet the needs of a more diverse workforce, especially the aging population and people with disabilities—two of the largest consumers of health care. It will also be important to consider additional options for health care benefits, taking into account, for example, the multiple generations, ages, disabilities, ethnicities, religions and the associated values and expectations of each group.

11. Religion/spirituality: HR and diversity professionals will be expected to address and devise strategies that will be able to accommodate employees’ religious and spiritual needs and expectations while ensuring that the challenges associated with this issue do not negatively affect the organization’s ability to do business and achieve operational excellence.
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