



Post-COVID, HR Professionals Are Looking to Play a Larger Role in Business Operations

Fifth Annual MindEdge/HRCI Survey Finds HR Has Adapted to The Post-Pandemic “New Normal”

BOSTON, MA, and ALEXANDRIA, VA (December 4, 2024) –Turning the page on the COVID-19 era, HR professionals express a strong interest in expanding HR’s role in their organization’s business operations, according to the fifth annual collaborative survey from [MindEdge Learning](#) and the [HR Certification Institute \(HRCI®\)](#).

The online survey, [HR’s Role in the Changing Workplace](#), probed the attitudes of 1,044 HRCI-certified human resources professionals. Almost nine-of-ten (88%) survey respondents say that HR should play a more active role in business operations—while only 8% believe that “HR should stick to its traditional role of managing employee-related issues.”

The desire to expand HR’s role reflects a belief that higher-ups do not see HR as full partners in organizational activities. More than two-of-five (44%) respondents report feeling that leaders “see HR as a department that performs an important but narrow function.”

In addition, many HR professionals are concerned that leaders are not providing their departments with sufficient resources. Respondents are evenly divided over whether their HR departments had enough budget to do a good job in the past year: 45% say that HR received enough funding, but another 45% say that it did not.

Similarly, 45% of respondents say that their HR departments were understaffed in the past year, compared to 47% who say that staffing levels were adequate.

HR professionals who work in the Technology sector are most likely to say that HR was underfunded and understaffed and that leaders do not see it as an integral part of the organization.

By contrast, respondents who work in Financial Services are most likely to say that HR was adequately funded and staffed and that it is seen as a full contributor to the organization’s activities.

Looking to the future, HR professionals express confidence in the U.S. economy and in their own organization's financial well-being. Overall, 55% of survey respondents say they are confident in the strength of the U.S. economy, as it affects their organization. Only 38% say they lack confidence in the national economy; another 6% declined to answer the question because they live outside the U.S. *[Note: These results were recorded before November 5, and therefore were not influenced by the results of the U.S. presidential election.]*

Respondents are even more confident in their own organization's financial strength. Three-of-five (60%) respondents say they are confident that their organization's revenues will be enough to meet its goals in the coming year.

Respondents who work in the Financial Services sector are very confident (75%) in their organization's revenue outlook. Confidence is somewhat lower among those who work in Education (49%).

Top Challenges for HR

When asked to name their top one or two job-related concerns (from a list of seven), survey respondents single out *retaining employees* (42%) and *attracting talent* (40%). *Retaining employees* is a particularly acute issue in the Healthcare (57%) and Retail (53%) sectors, while *attracting talent* is the number one concern in the Manufacturing (48%), Education (45%), and Financial Services (42%) sectors.

At 36%, *employee burnout* ranks third on the list of HR concerns, followed by:

- *The skills gap* (28%)
- *Employee health and wellness* (12%)
- *Managing remote work* (11%)
- *Lack of diversity* (8%)

Consistent with past survey findings, *employee burnout* continues to be a significant concern for HR professionals. While this issue ranks third among the concerns of all survey respondents, it is the number one issue for those who work in the Technology sector (45%).

In response to a separate question, 74% of HR professionals say they have seen an increase in employee burnout at their organization—up from 68% last year. One-of-four (23%) respondents say they have seen a *major increase* in burnout.

As we saw in last year's survey, burnout remains an especially acute issue in the Healthcare (84%) and Education (84%) sectors.

Moving Past the Pandemic

Several notable data points indicate that American businesses have arrived at a "new operational normal" in the post-COVID economy—and that HR professionals have, for the most part, adapted well to these new workplace realities.

More than half (52%) of respondents say that most employees at their organizations are now working in-person. This figure is consistent with the results of the 2023 MindEdge/HRCI survey (55%). In-person work is most common in the Manufacturing (79%), Retail (71%), and Healthcare (69%) sectors.

But almost as many respondents say that most of their employees either work remotely (14%) or on a hybrid schedule (33%). And in some corners of the economy, remote work is the norm: 78% of respondents in the Technology sector say that most of their employees work remotely or on a hybrid schedule, as do 71% of those who work in Financial Services

Remote work is most definitely here to stay. Among those whose organizations are either fully remote or on a hybrid schedule, an overwhelming 86% of respondents say these new work arrangements are permanent; only 8% expect that most of their employees will eventually return to in-person work.

Significantly, most HR professionals report no major problems managing remote workers. Only 11% of respondents identify *managing remote work* as a top-tier concern. Even among those who work in primarily hybrid or remote organizations, only 18% rank managing remote work among their top two concerns.

At the same time, one of the major workplace issues of the pandemic era—high employee turnover triggered by the Great Resignation—has noticeably eased. Only 34% of respondents say their organizations are experiencing higher employee turnover than before the COVID-19 pandemic. This figure is lower than we saw last year (40%), and *much lower* than we saw in 2022 (67%).

“Four years after the onset of the pandemic, American businesses have settled on a new mix of work arrangements—mostly in-person in some sectors of the economy, mostly remote or hybrid in others,” said **Hugo Lallo, chief of technology and staff for MindEdge Learning**. “HR professionals have risen to the challenge and adapted to this New Normal with relative ease.”

HR professionals have also risen to the challenge of remote work—at least, for the most part. Two-of-five (40%) respondents say their organizations conduct HR functions remotely “all” or “most” of the time, and another 34% say they practice remote HR some of the time.

And this year, for the first time, a plurality of survey respondents say that remote recruiting and interviewing are easier and more productive than doing so in person. HR professionals continue to give a thumbs-down to remote onboarding, however: by a two-to-one margin, respondents say remote onboarding is harder than in-person.

Continued Strong Interest in Online Learning and Certificates

Consistent with 2023 survey results, respondents display a strong interest in continuous learning. Four-of-five (79%) say their organizations offer continuous learning to employees, and 75% report taking courses on specific HR topics outside their general certification.

Four-of-five (82%) respondents say they would be interested in taking online courses to earn a certificate in a specific HR topic outside their general certification—including 42% who say they would be very interested in taking such online courses.

The most popular option? Four-of-five (83%) respondents say they would be interested in earning a certificate in HR Leadership. There is also strong interest in certificates in Workplace Wellness (68%) and Talent Acquisition (60%).

"Our findings highlight a dynamic shift toward continuous learning rather than HR certification alone," said **David Meginley, aPHR, GPHR, Chief Revenue & Learning Officer at HRCI**. "Professionals are taking a more expansive approach to education and skill enhancement, which is key to ensuring that HR has a place in strategic organizational development. HRCI is excited to grow along with our community and will continue to be a career partner through a variety of learning and engagement avenues."

About the Methodology

MindEdge/HRCI's 2024 *HR's Role in the Changing Workplace* survey was conducted online from October 18 through 29, 2024. The survey probed the attitudes of 1,044 HR professionals in the United States who are 18 years or older and hold one or more certifications from HRCI.

About HRCI

HRCI, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, is the premier credentialing and learning organization for the human resources profession. For over 50 years, HRCI has set the global standard for HR expertise and excellence through its commitment to the development and advancement of businesspeople in the people business. HRCI develops and offers world-class learning, as well as the administration of eight global certifications, and is dedicated to helping professionals achieve new competencies that drive business results. Learn more at <https://www.hrci.org/>.

About MindEdge Learning

[MindEdge](#)'s mission is to improve the way the world learns. Since its founding in 1998 by Harvard and MIT educators, the company has served some 4 million learners. With a focus on digital-first learning resources—from academic courseware to professional development courses—MindEdge's approach to best practices in online education focuses on learners' needs across the spectrum of higher education, professional development, skills training, and continuing education.

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