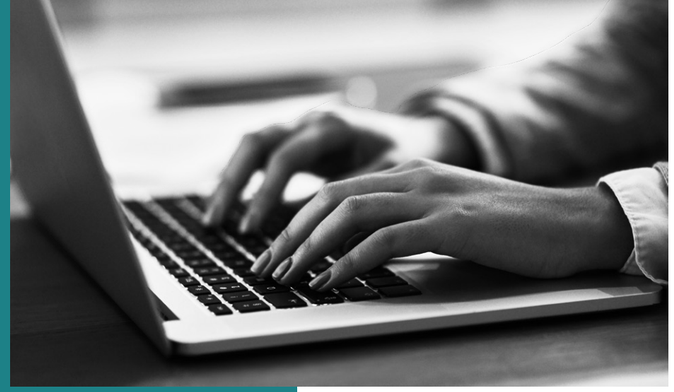
Report

Moving from Support to Strategic in the AI Era

Top Trends for Forward-Thinking People Analytics Leaders in 2026

Visier®







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As we enter 2026, one thing is certain: the pace of change isn't slowing down. If anything, it's accelerating. In a world already buzzing with economic and social uncertainty, the rapid adoption of AI has upended not only how we work, but how business leaders must make decisions about the future of work within their organizations.

Here at Visier, we see how AI is reshaping business firsthand. From product design to how we measure success, there are new tools and skills transforming how we scale our own productivity. But while the possibilities are exciting, they also bring a lot of new existential questions and anxieties for people analytics leaders and employees alike:

- What is our **purpose** when AI can do so much?
- Can we keep pace with executive expectations in mastering AI usage?
- Are we protecting our jobs enough in this new, AI-powered world?





of people cited "meaninglessness" as a core fear in the face of the surge in AI usage in daily life.

A recent study[1] confirmed what many of us feel... a deep-seated fear of becoming irrelevant. In fact, 93% of people cited "meaninglessness" as a core fear in the face of the surge in AI usage in daily life. This is especially true for people analytics teams, who are fighting to stay relevant and impactful against a lightning-fast tech movement. But here's the silver lining: Uncertainty is where people analytics—and leaders like you— matter most.

Instead of organizations having costly, knee-jerk reactions to macroeconomic changes or making assumptions based on misinformation, people analytics leaders can step in to provide steady guidance and trustworthy data to connect the dots between information and action.

The organizations that act now to build AI-ready data foundations and provide measurable business impact will not only survive, they'll thrive.

And for people analytics teams, this is the year to establish a trustworthy partnership with the C-suite to turn insights into action at the speed the business demands. To keep people analytics a business priority, teams must address critical shifts reshaping the function in 2026.



BUT HERE'S THE SILVER LINING:

Uncertainty is where people analytics—and leaders like you—matter most.



Here are the trends we predict will be most important for people analytics leaders in the year ahead:

TREND #1

GenAI Democratizes Insights, Prioritizing Data Quality over Quantity

With generative AI, anyone can ask questions in plain language and get workforce insights in real time. This accessibility will finally make data-driven HR a daily reality for the entire business.

TREND #2

Workforce Speculation Comes at Too High a Cost

As AI reshapes jobs, strategic workforce planning is no longer optional. Flying blind leads to botched layoffs, costly rehiring, and failure to adapt—mistakes people analytics teams must help workforce planning teams prevent.

TREND #3

If Your Tech Stack Can't Evolve, It Won't Survive

HR is shifting its view on technology. It's no longer just about cutting costs; it's about driving business agility and delivering high-quality, actionable data for smarter, human-centered decisions.



TREND #1

GenAI Democratizes Insights, Prioritizing Data Quality over Quantity

Be the AI Champion Your CHRO Needs

Unsurprisingly, AI spending is on the rise. Deloitte recently shared that 78% of leaders expect AI budgets to increase in the coming fiscal year, and 52% consider agentic AI one of the most promising technologies.[2] However, while leaders are optimistic about AI, many are also taking a pragmatic approach when it comes to the ROI that can currently be expected from AI tools.

For example, despite 71% of companies utilizing generative AI, according to McKinsey, over 80% of these companies have yet to see a "tangible impact" on their earnings.[3]

This puts CHROs—and their data-facing teams (that's you!)–squarely in the spotlight. CEOs and boards are demanding answers to demonstrate AI's ROI through clear use cases, while also thoughtfully integrating AI collaboratively into the workforce.

For people analytics leaders like you, this creates pressure and opportunity.

You're uniquely positioned to deliver a high-impact AI use case to catch the attention of the C-Suite: using genAI to democratize workforce insights across the organization while simultaneously elevating your own strategic impact.

People analytics leaders can show the true power of workforce intelligence by championing the AI capabilities within their day-to-day practice to support their CHRO's burning platforms.

The impact of generative AI – Visier Vee in action

Visier's Vee is an AI agent to help fast-track insights in a secure, governed environment to reduce the workload of people analytics teams and help free up time for more strategic thinking.

- The efficiency of time and cost savings using Vee resulted in a total of 466 hours saved per month, equating to $35,000 in monthly cost savings and an impressive $420,000 in savings annually.
- Methodology: This finding came through deep analysis of one customer with 28,000 employees, for which Vee helps handle approximately 1,400 questions each month

Each of these queries saves an estimated 20-30 minutes of an HR professional's time, which, based on an hourly rate of $75, translates into substantial financial benefits

In the past, only 23% of executive teams incorporated people data into their strategic decisions. GenAI is changing that, for the better.

Many CHROs are currently being asked by CEOs and boards to produce clear use cases that help demonstrate the ROI of AI, and expect their teams to do the same.





VISIER TOP 50 HR LEADERS TO WATCH IN 2026

Data is only valuable when it changes something. Insight is only meaningful when it improves someone's experience or performance. Too often, we get stuck building dashboards that describe the past but do nothing to shape the future. We have really focused relentlessly on closing that gap and turning intelligence into intervention, and intervention into impact.

Andrew Culleton
Commonwealth Bank of Australia
Executive General Manager, Everyday People Services

People Analytics Should Drive Data Quality over Quantity

Organizations are inundated with data. In fact, data generation grew by 792% between 2019 and 2024 alone.[4] Yet these massive data sets provide no benefit when not used for strategic insight and action planning in organizations.

According to several studies, 85% of large companies fail to effectively use their data,[5] and only 23% of executive teams include people data in strategic decisions.[6] That represents a huge amount of wasted time and effort, and leads to uninformed decisionmaking. Or lack thereof.

Generative AI's growing prominence in workforce analytics has not only generated excitement within HR, but has led to a spike in true engagement with data among business leaders.

According to our recent study with early adopters of Visier's AI agent Vee, it was clear that generative AI takes People Analytics to the next level — the business leader.[7]

Generative AI capabilities help support data-hesitant business leaders by serving as a natural language "translator," and thereby democratizing and simplifying their access to people and business data. This empowers users at all levels, from HR Business Partners to senior executives and even finance teams, to get immediate, accurate answers to their workforce questions. While the self-service capability significantly enhances the productivity of people analytics teams, business leaders see a key benefit in accessing data "in the flow of work," allowing them to fact-check numbers in real-time during meetings and make faster, data-driven decisions.

The catch? When everyone can ask questions, bad data gets amplified. Organizations with fragmented, ungoverned people data will see their credibility erode in real-time. This moment demands platforms built for governed, AI-ready people analytics from the start.

While it can feel risky to open the doors for democratized data, human judgement will always be essential for strategic interpretation and action.

Using genAI to scale insights delivery, reduce manual reporting burden, and enable self-service analytics creates the compelling use case the C-Suite is looking for. And you can leverage this movement to transform your function from a reporting bottleneck into a strategic partner, working hand-in-hand with teams to interpret data and deliver the greatest business impact.

Master this, and you don't just support your CHRO's agenda. You become the main player.

SPOTLIGHT

How Unisys Augments Human Capabilities with Generative AI

Unisys, a global technology company, embarked on a trial with Visier's generative AI assistant, Vee. The people analytics team found it to augment its own capabilities, and uses it to increase efficiency in terms of responding to a high volume of queries. The goal is not to replace analysts, but to amplify the speed of their responses to business stakeholders. According to Dibyendu Sharma Mondal, Head of People Analytics, HR Technology & Ops, Unisys, this reflects a broader company strategy where leveraging AI is "about increasing our efficiency and not reducing headcount."

The company also highlights that AI's value proposition has to extend beyond HR, and answer integrated business questions about revenue, client delivery, and financials. In their eyes, for a generative AI solution to be truly indispensable, it must evolve into a single source that answers critical business questions for all leaders, from the CHRO to the CEO.





HOW TO GET AHEAD IN 2026

Identify your top 10 most-repeated questions and activate Vee as the first responder.

Using an AI agent like Vee from Visier will help free up time on your team for higher-impact priorities, instead of continually firefighting. Track how many ad-hoc requests Vee handles vs. what gets escalated to your team to immediately demonstrate the ROI, while building up stakeholder confidence in AI-generated insights.



TREND #2

Workforce Speculation Comes at Too High a Cost

People Analytics Must Fuel Strategic Workforce Planning

As AI fundamentally reshapes how work is done in organizations, teams throughout the business are being challenged to help shape the way the workforce needs to adapt to the new requirements of an AI-driven era.

We're already seeing several indicators of how workforce requirements are changing: we found that overall hiring has been declining, yet specific domains like Technology, Finance, and Healthcare are experiencing substantial growth.[8] Especially roles combining skills such as finance and technology, such as that of a Financial Systems Analysts have grown by 338%, while other roles are becoming obsolete due to automation, creating a complex reshuffling of the job market.

For many leadership teams, the pressure to understand how their organizations must adapt to the new capabilities brought on by AI inspired a renewed focus on strategic workforce planning. At its core, workforce planning is a strategic process of aligning an organization's workforce with its business goals, to ensure the right people with the right skills are in the right roles at the right time.

And it depends on people analytics teams providing the information required for this moment: Accurate, timely insights that reinforce smart planning.

Unfortunately, there are also examples of failures in data-driven and strategic workforce planning, such as photo giant Kodak's inability to adapt to disruptive technologies and its neglect of workforce digital reskilling, which led to its eventual decline and relevancy in a world where digital photography skyrocketed.[9] Companies unable to adapt effectively to disruptive change are sometimes forced to costly and ineffective measures later. Ironically, without data driven strategic workforce planning, even cost saving measures such as layoffs can backfire: more often than not, 5% of laid off staff is rehired, most at a higher cost.[10]



Roles that combine skills, such as Financial Systems Analysts, have seen a 338% growth. Others are becoming obsolete.





VISIER TOP 50 HR LEADERS TO WATCH IN 2026

To democratize data and support a culture where people decisions are grounded in insights, our key allies are the CHRO and CTO, who drive talent strategy and digital innovation. Together, we transform how insights are delivered—evolving our analytics capabilities and exploring cutting-edge technologies to make our people data more accessible and actionable for our business leaders.

Andrea Kasper Pazinko
Prudential Financial, VP, People Insights & Analytics

How can people analytics teams support strategic workforce planning to help their organizations avoid these costly mistakes?

The solution starts with providing workforce planning teams the insights they need to act strategically, not randomly. Workforce planning should be a strategic imperative, a tangible business cost that has a non-negotiable impact on a business's potential to grow.

Instead of focusing on the 92 million jobs potentially displaced by 2030, businesses should prioritize planning for the 170 million new jobs and their associated skill requirements because according to the World Economic Forum, "skill gaps are categorically considered the biggest barrier to business transformation."[11]

People analytics can help identify where skill gaps exist today, which roles are evolving and what capabilities they need amidst a rapidly-changing, AI-driven environment. When PA and workforce planning teams work together, PA can deliver trusted data on workforce trends, skills inventories, and capacity modeling—driving recommendations that prepare the organization for what's coming next.

The quality of insights directly impacts your organization's next move and its path to future success.



HOW TO GET AHEAD IN 2026

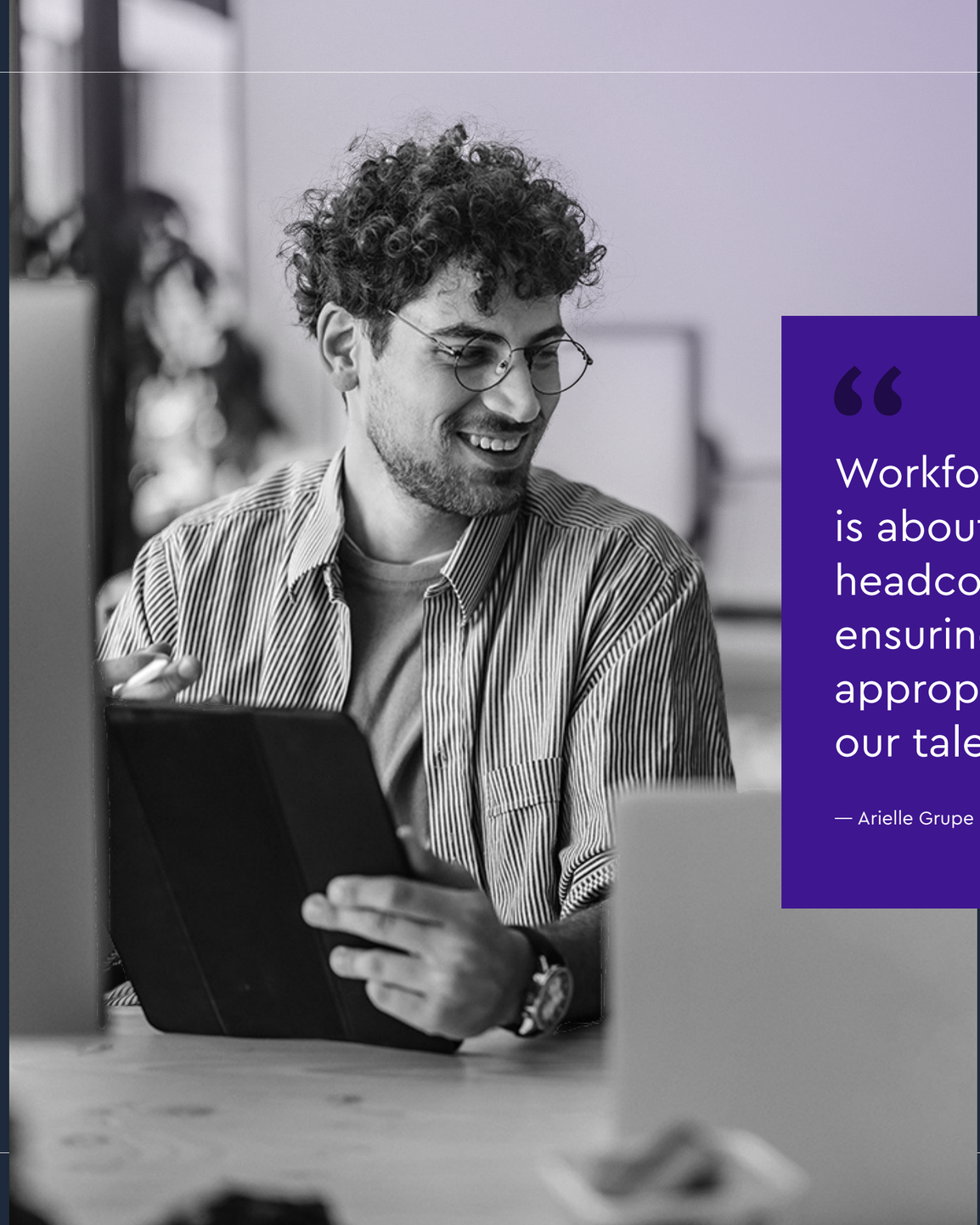
Anticipate the ask.

Don't wait for the workforce planning team to ask for help—deliver the insights they didn't know they needed. Proactively surface emerging skills gaps, retention risks in critical roles, or capacity constraints before they become crises. When planning teams see your team as proactive versus reactive, you move from being a data provider to a strategic partner.

SPOTLIGHT

How Ascension Drives Business Results Through Integrated, Data-Driven Workforce Planning

Ascension, a large healthcare system, faced unsustainable contract labor and bonus costs for nurses during the pandemic. They implemented data-driven strategic workforce planning, integrating workforce and business metrics to accurately assess staffing needs at a departmental level. This enabled informed decisions on recruitment and retention, leading to process improvements like same-day offers that helped retain nearly 1,000 more nurses year-over-year. Data analysis also revealed that sign-on bonuses were ineffective, allowing them to overhaul the policy and achieve significant savings. This case study illustrates how integrated, data-driven workforce planning optimizes staffing, enhances talent acquisition, and ensures long-term organizational sustainability.



> “Workforce planning is about more than headcount—it's about ensuring we're staffed appropriately and using our talent efficiently.
>
> — Arielle Grupe



TREND #3

If Your Tech Stack Can't Evolve, It Won't Survive.

From Efficiency To Impact: The New Role of HR Tech Is All In the ROI

VISIER TOP 50 HR LEADERS TO WATCH IN 2026

> What energizes me most is shifting people analytics into a predictive, real-time engine that drives smarter decisions at every level. The urgency is real: the speed of business is accelerating, and we can't rely on hindsight to guide the future. Managers bring this vision to life; transforming insight into impact by pairing human judgment with intentional leadership that inspires action.

Julio Estela
Lemonade, Director of People

For years, the mantra in HR tech was "efficiency." The main goal was to streamline processes, cut administrative costs, and consolidate all those different point solutions into one neat, all-in-one system. A 2023 survey showed that 80% of organizations were focused on this exact thing.[12]

But after all that work to simplify, a critical question has emerged: Sure, we're saving money, but is any of this actually helping the business grow?

A global study by The Josh Bersin Company found that companies with top-tier people analytics weren't just cutting costs; they were boosting financial performance, driving innovation, and getting ahead of talent trends.[13]

How? By connecting their people data directly to business outcomes. But people analytics leaders need to lead this charge, working hand in hand with their counterparts in IT, Finance, and the C-suite to make sure that the right technology is put in place to serve the business.

That's why more companies are turning to flexible people analytics platforms like Visier to add the essential people data layer to an integrated tech stack. Instead of getting stuck in one rigid system, a platform like ours pulls data from all your different HR tools (HRIS, payroll, performance, you name it) into one clean, analysis-ready place. It does the heavy lifting of cleaning and integrating the data, then uses AI to deliver key insights to the people who need them.

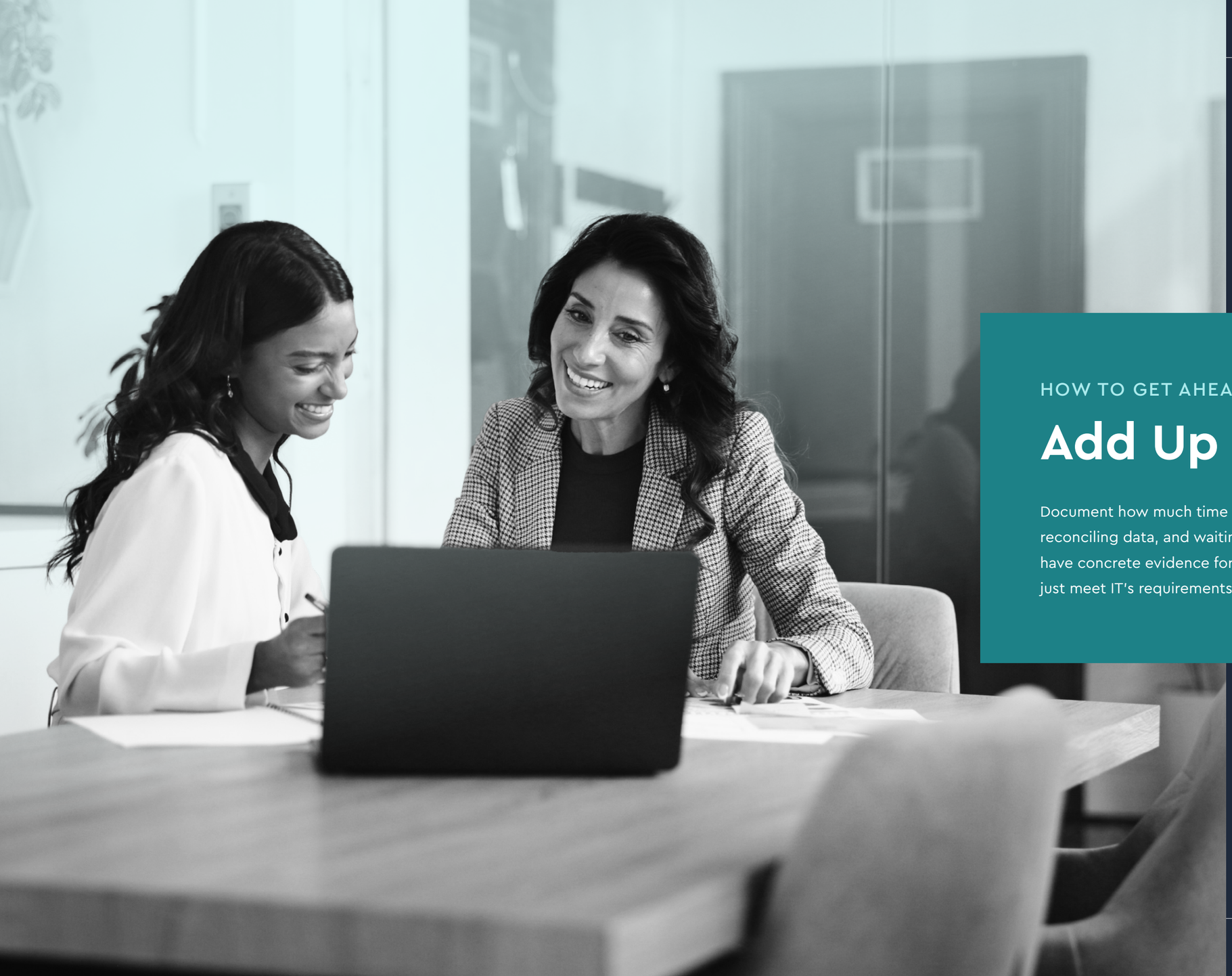


Companies with top-tier people analytics not only cut costs but also boost financial performance, drive innovation, and stay ahead of talent trends.

So how do people analytics leaders navigate this shift? How do you build a tech foundation that provides strategic value while maintaining the flexibility your business needs?

It comes down to a few key ideas:

1. **Connect the dots.**
   As more business leaders rely on analytics, you have to bring your people data and business data together. A cohesive view is no longer a nice-to-have; it's essential.
2. **Think human + machine.**
   AI is fantastic at automating tasks and spotting trends, but human expertise is what turns an insight into a smart business decision. The real value of AI is its ability to be a powerful co-pilot, supporting your people with data right in their daily workflow.
3. **Demand flexibility.**
   Your business isn't static, so why should your tech be? A platform with an adaptable data model is crucial. It allows you to customize and expand your analytics to answer the unique questions your business is asking today—and whatever comes next.



HOW TO GET AHEAD IN 2026

Add Up the Busywork.

Document how much time your team spends maintaining dashboards, reconciling data, and waiting on IT. When consolidation discussions begin, you'll have concrete evidence for why you need tools that preserve PA's agility—not just meet IT's requirements.

SPOTLIGHT

How Bekaert Rethinks HR Tech for Business Outcomes with Unified Data

Jorn Waterschoot, Global Head of HR Technology at Bekaert, highlighted that the company's approach to its HR tech stack has shifted from a focus on efficiency and cost savings to an emphasis on outcomes and business impact. According to Waterschoot, the key is to ensure all HR tools and solutions are "consolidated and connected" in a single data source. By integrating data from various HR systems—such as payroll, applicant tracking, and performance management—with non-HR data, Bekaert can gain a holistic and accurate view of the workforce in real time. This unified approach allows them to analyze trends, uncover insights that were previously hidden in data silos, and make data-driven decisions that drive strategic business value and a tangible return on investment. Waterschoot stresses that a robust data infrastructure is a fundamental prerequisite for leveraging advanced technologies like AI to make insights more accessible for the entire organization.







2026 is Your Moment

The shifts are happening, whether you're ready or not. All around you, GenAI is changing how insights are managed and delivered. Five years of workforce disruption—from the Great Resignation to AI transformation—have made workforce planning a critical lever to business survival. And on top of that, HR tech stacks are under more scrutiny than ever to ensure they can evolve as fast as strategy demands.

Here's what this means for you:

You're not just supporting the CHRO's agenda anymore. You have the opportunity to become central to it. Navigating 2026 means stepping up to the plate to build the foundation for people analytics excellence, while also anticipating potential challenges ahead.

If you take nothing else away from this report, here's what we suggest to focus on:

- Building AI-ready data foundations that make democratization safe (and credible)
- Fueling workforce planning with insights that prevent costly speculation
- Choosing technology that preserves strategic agility while keeping your IT team happy

Take these steps so you can help your organization build a future that's not just reactive, but ready for anything.

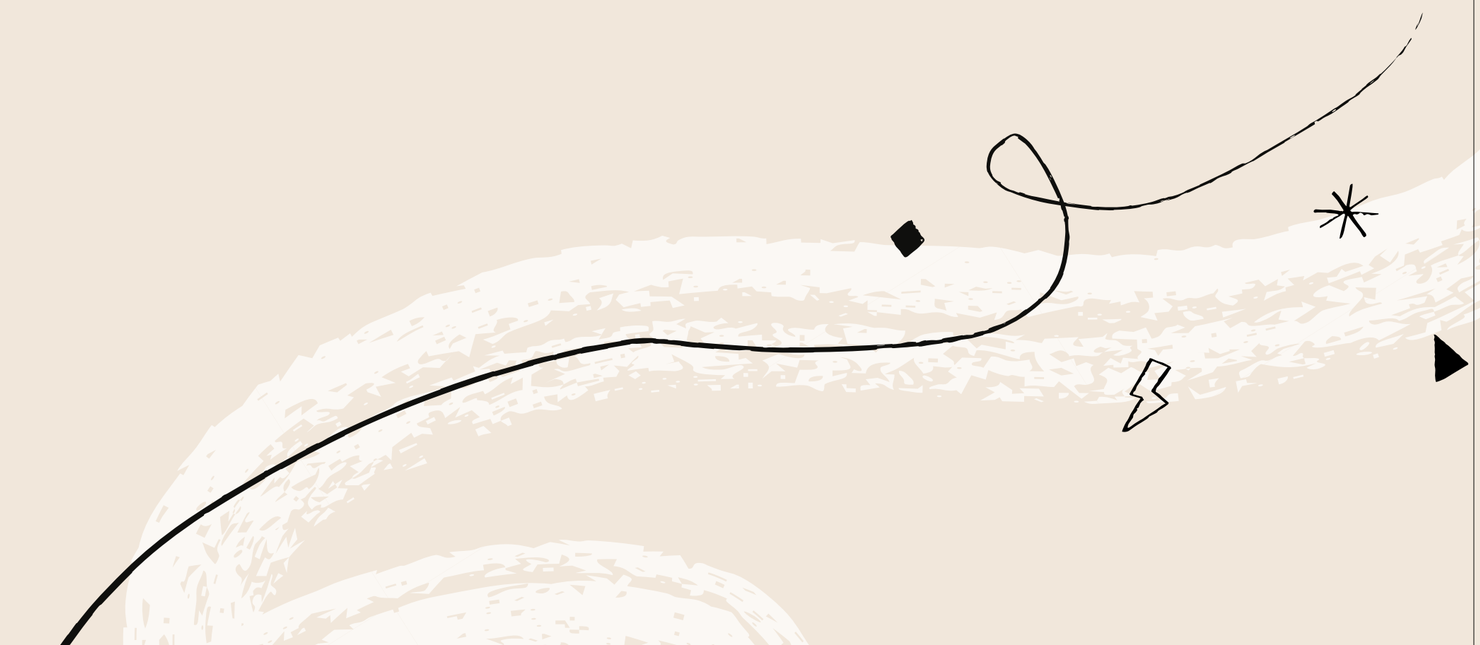
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About Visier

Visier Workforce AI is the context foundation for talent management. The Visier Workforce Intelligence Platform turns scattered, sensitive people data into one governed understanding of the entire workforce, so organizations can understand, plan, and activate all of their talent priorities in one place. More than 85,000 of the world's most complex organizations, including Ford Motor Company, eBay, Experian, and Domino's Pizza, rely on Visier's over 16 years of workforce domain expertise, ranked #1 in vendor satisfaction and user experience for three consecutive years by the Sapient Insights HR Systems Survey.

Learn more at Visier visier.com.





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