

#1 HR AND LEARNING COMMUNITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

14 Spotlight on: James Randall

Describes how recruitment has evolved into a data-driven, verifiable, defensible format in the Middle East



Ramco Systems talks AI-driven Payroll Revolutionizing Employee Experience



Saudi Arabia Launches THE HUMAN CAPABILITY INITIATIVE CONFERENCE



Palo Alto Networks Introduces the Most Secure Workspace for Small Business



Leadership in Uncertain Times: Keeping Teams Calm, Focused and Productive

How organisations can maintain clarity and momentum when external events create workplace distraction

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April Cover Editorial | Driving Forward Together

As we enter Q2, we do so with a clear awareness of the challenges surrounding us.

Across the Middle East, ongoing tensions continue to shape the business landscape. For many of our members, this is not just background noise—it is a daily reality influencing decisions, confidence, and growth. There is uncertainty. There is caution. And there are moments where simply maintaining momentum feels like an achievement in itself.

But if there is one thing that defines this community, it is resilience.

At **ME HR & Learning**, we are not standing still. We are leaning in—with purpose, with intent, and with a clear commitment: **to help drive our members' businesses forward, even in the most complex of times.**

From Community to Commercial Impact

Over the past months, we have built something powerful together—a trusted network, a growing voice, and a platform that champions expertise across HR, Learning, and Talent.

Now, in Q2, the focus sharpens.

This is about commercial impact.

This is about visibility turning into opportunity.

This is about connection turning into revenue.

And at the heart of this is one of our most important initiatives:

The ME Shop – Your Marketplace for Growth

The **ME Shop** is more than a directory. It is a live marketplace of solutions, designed to connect our members directly with organisations actively seeking support.

Across the platform, we are showcasing expertise in key areas that matter most right now:

- **Coaches, Mentors & Advisors** – providing leadership, guidance, and strategic clarity when organisations need it most
- **Training & Development Programs** – helping businesses upskill, reskill, and stay competitive in a rapidly changing world
- **Digital Learning** – scalable, AI-powered learning experiences that meet modern workforce expectations
- **Assessments & Resources** – from psychometrics to practical tools that enable better decision-making and performance
- **HR Tech & AI Solutions** – cutting-edge platforms across LMS, talent management, and emerging technologies like AI, AR, and VR

- **Resourcing & Talent Solutions** – connecting organisations with the talent and capability they need to move forward

This is where your expertise becomes accessible.

This is where your capability becomes visible.

This is where business gets done.

Why This Matters Now

The role of HR and Learning has never been more critical—or more commercial.

AI is transforming how organisations hire, develop, and engage talent, while uncertainty is increasing the demand for agility, speed, and smarter decision-making.

Organisations are not just looking for ideas.

They are looking for **solutions they can implement—now.**

And that is exactly what our members provide.

A Call to Action for Our Members

Q2 is your moment.

- Ensure your offerings are visible within the ME Shop
- Position your services clearly and commercially
- Engage with the community—not just socially, but strategically
- Think about how your expertise solves real business challenges today

Because in times like these, those who show up with clarity, value, and solutions are the ones who move forward.

Moving Forward—Together

We cannot control the external environment.

But we can control how we respond.

We can collaborate more.

We can support each other more intentionally.

And we can create opportunities—together—that would not exist alone.

That is what ME HR & Learning stands for.

A community with purpose.

A platform with impact.

And a marketplace designed to help you grow.

Let's make Q2 count.

Peace Is the Foundation of All Success:

ROHIT BASSI, ME-HR & LEARNING, DUBAI, EXPLAINS WHY EVERYONE DESERVES IT.



In times of certainty and especially VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity), success can never be measured only by output, continuity, or performance. It is measured by whether people are given enough peace to remain clear, humane, and inwardly steady while carrying the emotional weight of what surrounds them.

ME HR & Learning and the Human Reality of This Moment

At ME HR & Learning, the work has always lived at the meeting

point of people, leadership, learning, and organisational life. In ordinary times, that intersection already matters. In times of conflict and uncertainty, it becomes even more significant.

Across the region, people are carrying far more than projects, deadlines, and responsibilities. They are carrying concern for loved ones, the strain of constant developments, the fatigue of emotional vigilance, and the heaviness of not knowing what may come next. This is the human atmosphere that now sits quietly behind

many meetings, decisions, training rooms, classrooms, and workplaces.

That is why this conversation belongs within ME HR & Learning from the very beginning. The platform exists beyond discussions on capability, growth, or solutions in the abstract. It exists in the real terrain where professional life and human life meet. In moments such as these, that reality must be named with honesty and care.

Why Peace Belongs in the Conversation

Peace is often treated as though it were a distant ideal, a private wish, or a gentle concept that sits somewhere outside serious work. In reality, peace is the condition that makes focused work possible.

Without peace, clarity weakens. Judgement becomes more reactive. Communication becomes sharper, more defensive, or more withdrawn. Emotional fatigue settles beneath the surface of performance. People may continue functioning for a period of time, even perform strongly on paper, even appear composed to others, while inwardly paying a heavy price.

For that reason, peace is not separate from success. It is the ground on which lasting success stands.

At ME HR & Learning, this truth reaches into every area of work: leadership, coaching, training, mentoring, organisational development, wellbeing, and learning. The deeper question is not only how to help people produce results. The deeper question is how to help them continue meaningfully without being inwardly eroded by strain, fear, or prolonged uncertainty.

What Conflict Brings Into the Workplace

When conflict settles over a region, its effects do not remain confined to headlines, briefings, borders, or geopolitical analysis. It enters homes, routines, sleep, concentration, conversations, and the emotional texture of daily life. People bring that atmosphere with them into work long before organisations find language to describe what is happening.

A colleague may be present in a meeting while carrying worry for family. A manager may be making decisions while quietly navigating emotional exhaustion. A team may still be delivering while holding a level of inner strain that no performance metric will fully reveal.

This is where many organisations misunderstand the moment. They respond with continuity plans, formal communication, productivity language, and operational discipline. These responses have their place. Even so, they do not touch the deepest human need of the moment. People are often not looking for one more polished message.

They are looking for steadiness. They are looking for relief from agitation. They are looking for some place, however modest, where they are not required to absorb one more layer of pressure. They are looking for peace.

Why Everyone Deserves It

The second half of the title matters as much as the first. Everyone deserves it.

This is not sentimental language. It is a human truth and an organisationally intelligent one. Every person, regardless of role, rank, seniority, or industry, deserves peace in the environments in which they work. Not because life has become easy. Not because conflict has disappeared. Rather because no human being can carry prolonged uncertainty well without some place of calm, dignity, and emotional steadiness.

When peace is absent, exhaustion deepens. Fear begins to shape language. Silence grows heavier. People continue outwardly while becoming depleted inwardly. Eventually that strain reaches culture, collaboration, trust,

judgement, and performance.

A focused workplace recognises this. It understands that performance and humanity are not competing concerns. It understands that a person may still be delivering while privately carrying grief, fear, vigilance, or uncertainty with no clear end in sight. It understands that peace may begin with something simple: a manager who listens well, a culture in which someone can speak honestly without penalty, a little more flexibility, a more humane tone, or visible support that does not make people feel weak for needing it.

The Responsibility of HR and Learning

This is where the role of HR and Learning becomes central.

At ME HR & Learning, this has always been part of the deeper purpose of the field. In stable periods, HR and Learning are often reduced to programmes, policies, frameworks, and schedules. In periods such as these, their true relevance becomes unmistakable. They help shape the emotional and relational conditions in which people continue. They help leaders communicate with greater humanity. They make support visible and accessible.

They help translate care into lived practice.

Their role is not administrative. It is civilising.

This matters because resilience is often misunderstood in professional life. It is too often framed as endurance without acknowledgement, composure without feeling, or strength without pause. Real resilience is more honest than that. It includes truth, care, flexibility, and the capacity to continue with dignity. It includes recognising strain without shame and allowing support to become part of how people carry on.

ME HR & Learning exists precisely in this space, where the human quality of work must be protected and shielded with greater seriousness.

Leadership Is Revealed Here

Periods of uncertainty reveal the true nature of leadership.

In easier times, many organisations speak fluently about values, wellbeing, and people-first culture. Under strain, the deeper test appears. Do people genuinely experience the workplace as humane, or does pressure

quietly override every noble statement?

Peace becomes visible in practical details. It appears in whether someone feels safe enough to say,



I am struggling today.

It appears in whether a manager listens without rushing to close the conversation. It appears in whether support is visible, easy to access, and free from stigma. It appears in whether the workplace adds to the noise of the outside world or offers one of the few environments where people can breathe.

At ME HR & Learning, these are not peripheral questions. They sit at the centre of what leadership, learning, and professional support are meant to serve.

ME HR & Learning as a Bridge to Support

ME HR & Learning is more than a platform for professional exchange. In times such as

these, it becomes a bridge between need and support.

Across the ME HR & Learning ecosystem are coaches, mentors, advisers, facilitators, trainers, wellbeing professionals, and solution providers whose work can help individuals, teams, and organisations find steadier ground. Their value lies not in visibility for its own sake. Their value lies in their capacity to offer grounded help where grounded help is needed.

This is the spirit in which the ME Shop marketplace should be understood. It is not a directory. It is a practical pathway through which organisations and individuals can find relevant support with greater ease, and through which trusted professionals can make that support visible.

Where Support Can Be Found

For organisations, teams, and individuals looking for meaningful support, ME HR & Learning has created clear access points through the following categories:

Digital Learning

me-hrl.com/digital-learning

Assessments

me-hrl.com/assessments

Coaches, Mentors & Advisers

me-hrl.com/mentors-and-advisors

Training & Development Programmes

me-hrl.com/training-and-development-programs

Edtech & AI

me-hrl.com/edtech-and-ai

These links are not listings but are pathways to help. They make it easier for organisations to find credible partners. They make it easier for individuals and teams to locate relevant guidance. They make it easier for expertise to become service at a time when service matters deeply.

For professionals whose work genuinely supports wellbeing, leadership, resilience, emotional steadiness, or organisational effectiveness,

being present within ME HR & Learning carries real purpose. For those not yet listed, service descriptions can be sent for upload to the site so that this support becomes more visible and easier to reach.

A More Human Definition of Success

If peace is the foundation of all success, then success itself needs to be understood more honestly.

Success cannot be defined only by what is achieved while people are inwardly unravelling. A more intelligent and humane definition asks another question: what conditions made that achievement possible, and what was the state of the people carrying it?

Where there is no peace, fear spreads quietly through teams, communication hardens, judgement narrows, and exhaustion begins to sit beneath the surface of

performance. Where peace is protected, even imperfectly, people are more able to think clearly, relate humanely, and continue with dignity.

That is why peace is never separate from performance, trust, leadership, resilience, or meaningful contribution. It underpins all of them. ME HR & Learning has an important role in keeping that truth visible across the region. It reminds organisations that people never need to be pressed harder into professionalism while the world around them feels unsteady. They need to be met with dignity. They need spaces that calm rather than agitate. They need support that is real, visible, and easy to reach.

They need peace.

Closing Reflection

In times of conflict, one of the most responsible questions any organisation can ask is not only,



How do we continue?

It is also,



How are our people being taken care of?

That is where the work of ME HR & Learning becomes deeply relevant. It connects people with support. It gives visibility to those whose work can help. It strengthens the role of HR and Learning at a time when that role is needed profoundly. Above all, it keeps alive a truth that deserves far greater attention in professional life:

Peace is the foundation of all success.

And that is precisely why everyone deserves it.

This is exactly what ME HR & Learning stands for. We are looking for more voices like you, people of depth, credibility, and substance who elevate the conversation rather than dilute it with noise.

Our name may begin in the Middle East, yet our outlook is unmistakably global. ME HR & Learning exists to bring together focused practitioners from across the world who care about insight, quality, real contribution and peace.

If these values resonate with you, consider joining ME HR & Learning and becoming part of a diverse community committed to thoughtful leadership, meaningful dialogue, and steady progress.

Membership details:

<https://me-hrl.com/join-us>

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Spotlight on Simoneta Vargova, Parallel Connections, Dubai

SIMONETA SHARES HER JOURNEY TO THE UAE AND HER PHILOSOPHY ON LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP TRENDS.

1. How did your journey to the Middle East begin?

My journey to the Middle East began with Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, where I was appointed to lead Learning & Development across two countries simultaneously — Damascus, Syria and Amman, Jordan. Operating in culturally and politically complex environments required more than delivering training. It required building leadership capability that could perform under pressure, across cultures, and at scale. That experience shaped my core belief: sustainable performance is not created by strategy alone — it is created by leadership behaviour.

2. What shaped your leadership philosophy, and how has your experience in the Middle East influenced your approach?

Luxury hospitality operates at the intersection of brand, reputation, and execution. There is no room for

inconsistency.

Working in the Middle East — a region defined by rapid growth, ambition, and transformation — reinforced a critical truth: when organisations scale quickly, leadership maturity must scale with them. Growth without emotional intelligence creates fragility.

My philosophy is grounded in this reality. Most performance challenges are not structural — they are behavioural. When leaders lack self-awareness, clarity, or emotional regulation, execution weakens regardless of the quality of the strategy.

Leadership is an inside-out discipline. And in high-growth markets, that discipline becomes a competitive advantage.

3. What leadership patterns do you most commonly observe across organisations in the region?

The region demonstrates extraordinary ambition.

Strategic vision is strong. Investment is bold.

What I frequently observe, however, is pressure-driven leadership. Accelerated timelines and high expectations create environments where urgency overrides reflection. Communication becomes transactional. Delegation becomes unclear. Teams comply — but they do not fully commit.

This is not a capability gap. It is a leadership energy gap.

Organisations that shift from pressure-based performance to



↑ SIMONETA VARGOVA, PARALLEL CONNECTIONS, DUBAI

purpose-driven performance see stronger accountability, lower burnout, and more consistent execution.

4. What do senior leaders often underestimate about people's performance?

They underestimate the emotional climate they create.

Boards focus on KPIs, structure, and growth targets — rightly so. But culture is not shaped by strategy documents. It is shaped by daily micro-behaviours: tone, feedback style, consistency, and decision-making under stress.

Most underperformance is not a competence issue. It is a clarity and psychological safety issue.

When leaders create clarity, trust, and direction, performance becomes self-driven. When they create tension and ambiguity, performance becomes fragile.

Leadership presence is not soft. It is commercially decisive.

5. What shifts will define leadership success in the Middle East over the next five years?

The next phase of growth in the region will require depth alongside speed.

Three shifts will define successful leadership:

- From authority to influence
- From control to empowerment
- From reactive pressure to resilient execution

As economies diversify and organisations scale, leaders will need greater emotional agility, stronger strategic thinking, and the ability to align multicultural teams around a clear narrative.

Those who develop these capabilities will not only achieve growth — they will sustain it.

6. Which capabilities separate good leaders from exceptional ones in today's market?

Exceptional leaders demonstrate five differentiators:

1. High self-awareness
2. Emotional regulation under pressure
3. Strategic clarity
4. Direct, courageous communication
5. The ability to develop future leaders, not just manage current performance

Technical competence is assumed at the senior level.

What differentiates leaders now is composure, clarity, and psychological influence.

Exceptional leaders create environments where high standards and human sustainability coexist.

Organisations across the Middle East are entering a maturity phase. The leaders who will define the next decade are those who understand that culture is not an HR initiative — it is a strategic lever.

That is the level at which I partner with executive teams: strengthening leadership capability as a direct driver of performance, resilience, and long-term competitive advantage.

[linkedin.com/in/simon-eta-vargova-executive-coach-dubai](https://www.linkedin.com/in/simon-eta-vargova-executive-coach-dubai)

Spotlight on James Randall, Sales Director, Middle East, HireRight

JAMES RANDALL DESCRIBES HOW RECRUITMENT HAS EVOLVED INTO A DATA -DRIVEN, VERIFIABLE, DEFENSIBLE FORMAT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, MEETING BOTH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, WHILE ALIGNING WITH LOCAL REQUIREMENTS AND LAWS.

1. Can you tell us about your career journey and what originally drew you to the Middle East market?

My career started on the front line of recruitment, working directly with employers and candidates, which gave me an unfiltered view of how hiring decisions are really made. When I moved to the Middle East in 2008, the region was in a period of rapid economic expansion, and talent demand was accelerating just as quickly. I soon transitioned from recruitment into HR technology and subscription-based talent platforms, drawn to the idea of improving hiring at scale rather than one role at a time.

That shift allowed me to understand not only the mechanics of recruitment, but also the commercial realities behind it. I've seen how growth ambitions, compliance pressures, and market maturity shape hiring behaviour across

the region, and that perspective has directly influenced how I approach my role today.

I joined HireRight in 2016 at a time when background screening in the Middle East was still relatively underdeveloped. There was opportunity, but very little structure, limited market awareness, and almost no regional conversation around risk, compliance, or verification standards.

Over the past decade that has changed dramatically. We have built a fully established regional



↑ JAMES RANDALL, SALES DIRECTOR ME HIRERIGHT

operation in the Middle East, grown a strong local team, and embedded ourselves into the hiring ecosystems of some of the region's most regulated and fast-scaling industries.

Personally, my role has evolved from frontline sales to leading regional strategy, building partnerships, shaping market education, and working closely with our global leadership to ensure our approach reflects both international standards and local realities.

What continues to anchor me in the Middle East is the pace and ambition of the market. This is a region that does not stand still. Regulatory frameworks are maturing quickly, governments are raising compliance expectations, and organisations are thinking more seriously about governance, risk, and long-term workforce integrity. That evolution creates both pressure and possibility. It is a complex environment, but it is also one of the most exciting

markets in the world to build something meaningful and scalable.

2. How has your role at HireRight evolved as the region's hiring environment has become more complex?

When I joined HireRight, much of the conversation centred on awareness. Background screening was often reactive, something organisations considered after an issue arose rather than as part of a structured hiring strategy. A large part of my role was commercial, building the client base, introducing consistent processes, and demonstrating tangible value.

As the market has evolved, so too has the nature of the dialogue. Today, organisations approach screening as part of a broader governance and risk framework. That shift has required a different type of leadership from me. It is no longer just about expanding market share; it is about

shaping policy conversations, supporting clients through complex compliance requirements, and ensuring our regional model reflects both operational realities and global standards.

My role has become far more consultative. I spend more time working alongside senior HR, legal, and risk stakeholders, helping them design scalable, defensible screening programmes rather than simply delivering individual checks. Internally, it also means acting as a bridge between regional market needs and our global leadership, ensuring strategy is informed by what is happening on the ground here.

3. What are the biggest shifts you are seeing in how organisations across the Middle East approach hiring and workforce risk?

The most significant change I've seen is a move from hiring quickly to hiring correctly. The region continues to scale at

pace, particularly in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030, and organisations are under pressure to grow their workforces rapidly. However, speed is no longer the only priority. There is a far greater emphasis on verification and defensibility.

Where information may once have been accepted at face value, employers now expect independently verified, source-driven data. That includes confirmed employment history, legally permissible criminal record checks, sanctions screening, and validated professional qualifications. The conversation has become more disciplined and far more structured.

Workforce integrity is also moving into the boardroom. It is no longer seen as purely an HR function. In sectors such as financial services, aviation, healthcare, and energy, hiring controls are increasingly treated as a governance and

reputational safeguard.

At the same time, technology is reshaping expectations. AI and automation are accelerating recruitment processes, but organisations are equally aware that speed must be balanced with transparency and compliance. Screening is no longer perceived as a bottleneck; it is viewed as a layer of protection.

We are also seeing growing interest in continuous screening models rather than solely relying on one-off checks at onboarding. In a region with a highly international and mobile workforce, risk profiles can change over time. Employers want ongoing visibility, not just a snapshot taken on day one.

4. HireRight operates in a highly trust-driven space. How do you personally ensure your team maintains accuracy and accountability at scale?

We operate in one of the most

sensitive stages of the employment lifecycle, handling deeply personal information that carries legal, reputational, and ethical weight. In that environment, governance and data protection are not compliance exercises; they are the foundation of our credibility. We align with global frameworks such as GDPR while ensuring strict adherence to evolving regional regulations, including Saudi Arabia's Personal Data Protection Law. For us, regulatory alignment is not reactive. It is designed into our operating model.

Equally important is how the work is done. Our methodology is source-driven and defensible. We do not rely on surface-level searches or aggregated databases. Wherever legally permissible, we verify information directly with authorised sources. That distinction matters. It ensures accuracy, protects the rights of candidates, and safeguards our clients from relying on incomplete or unverified data.

As the business grows, accountability becomes even more critical. Scale cannot come at the expense of integrity. My role as a regional leader is to embed a culture where our team understands that we are custodians of trust. Accuracy, auditability, and transparency are not aspirational values; they are operational standards. Every check we deliver must be capable of standing up to scrutiny, because in our industry, trust is earned through precision and consistency.

5. How closely do you work with global leadership, and why does that alignment matter for clients in this region?

I work very closely with our global leadership because background screening is increasingly driven by technology, from automation and AI-enabled verification to digital identity solutions. Many of these capabilities are developed at a global level,

but they must be applied in a way that reflects local laws and regulatory expectations.

My role is to ensure that anything deployed in this region is commercially relevant. Clients here expect global standards, particularly multinational organisations hiring across multiple jurisdictions, but they also expect a clear understanding of local regulatory frameworks.

That alignment works both ways. Regional insights, whether related to regulatory change, sector risk, or client expectations, feed directly back into our global product and strategy discussions. It allows us to deliver solutions that are consistent and scalable, without losing local precision.

6. What makes the Middle East hiring landscape unique compared to other markets you have worked in?

The defining characteristic of the Middle East hiring landscape is the international

nature of its workforce. The region attracts talent from across the world, and many candidates have lived, studied, and worked in multiple jurisdictions before arriving here. That global mobility is a strength of the market, but it does introduce additional layers of complexity from a verification perspective.

Each jurisdiction has its own legal framework governing data access, criminal record checks, and employment validation. Navigating those differences requires careful coordination and a clear understanding of what is legally permissible in every country involved. At the same time, employers in the region expect a consistent and reliable standard of screening, regardless of where a candidate's history sits geographically.

Delivering that consistency across a highly international talent pool requires strong global infrastructure, rigorous compliance oversight, and disciplined operational

processes. Balancing quality and thoroughness with efficiency, while remaining fully aligned with local regulations, is one of the region's distinctive operational considerations.

7. Looking ahead, what are your top priorities for the region over the next few years?

Our priorities for the next few years centre on disciplined expansion and long-term market depth. We have evolved from a single-person presence into a structured regional operation, and the next phase is about strengthening that footprint in key markets in the region, where economic transformation and regulatory progression continue to drive sustained demand.

Physical presence matters in this region. Clients value proximity, cultural understanding, and direct accountability. Being on the ground strengthens trust and

allows us to engage more closely with regulators, industry bodies, and enterprise clients. That combination of local commitment and global capability is a meaningful differentiator.

Alongside expansion, we are focused on responsible innovation. We will continue investing in automation and AI-enabled solutions to improve efficiency and user experience, while maintaining the governance standards our clients rely on.

Ultimately, our goal is sustainable growth built on credibility, operational excellence, and long-term partnerships. Growth is important, but it must always be anchored in trust.

8. On a personal level, what continues to motivate you about leading HireRight's growth in the Middle East?

I have always been motivated by technology that has a clear, practical impact. In our space,

innovation is not abstract. Whether it is AI- the governance standards our clients rely on.

Ultimately, our goal is sustainable growth built on credibility, operational excellence, and long-term partnerships. Growth is important, but it must always be anchored in trust.

8. On a personal level, what continues to motivate you about leading HireRight's growth in the Middle East?

I have always been motivated by technology that has a clear, practical impact. In our space, innovation is not abstract. Whether it is AI-enabled verification, stronger academic validation processes, or advancements in digital identity, these tools directly influence how organisations assess trust and integrity.

What keeps me engaged in this region is the pace of its transformation. The Middle East is raising the bar in

governance, regulation, and workforce standards, and it is doing so quickly. Being part of that progression, supporting organisations as they strengthen their hiring frameworks and embed greater accountability, is both professionally rewarding and intellectually stimulating.

On a more personal level, I am driven by the responsibility that comes with this work. Hiring decisions shape businesses, leadership teams, and in many cases public-facing institutions. When we enable organisations to hire with clarity and confidence, we are contributing to something much larger than a transaction. In a region defined by ambition and long-term vision, that sense of impact is what continues to motivate me.

[linkedin.com/in/randalljames](https://www.linkedin.com/in/randalljames)

[hireright.com](https://www.hireright.com)

Ramco's CHRO & MEA Exec Sponsor, Rajiv Nair, talks AI-driven Payroll Revolutionizing Employee Experience

MR. RAJIV NAIR, CHRO & MEA EXEC SPONSOR, RAMCO SYSTEMS, TALKS TO ME-HR & LEARNING ON THE EVOLUTION OF PAYROLL INTO A STRATEGIC DRIVER.

Strategic Vision

How do you see payroll evolving from a transactional back-office function into a strategic driver of employee experience and business performance?

Payroll has evolved from processing salaries to shaping employee trust and business outcomes.

Accurate, transparent, and timely pay is one of the most powerful drivers of employee confidence and engagement. At the same time, payroll data provides critical insights into workforce cost, productivity, compliance risk, and global operations.

With automation, AI, and integrated HR-finance systems, payroll is moving from transaction processing to delivering intelligence, strengthening governance, and enabling better business decisions. In the future, payroll will not just execute pay — it



↑ RAJIV NAIR, CHRO & MEA EXEC SPONSOR, RAMCO SYSTEMS

will actively support workforce strategy and organizational performance.

Hyper-Personalization in Action

What does hyper-personalization in payroll truly look like at scale, and how can organizations balance customization with operational efficiency?

Hyper-personalization in payroll at scale means using data & technology to offer employees options that suit their individual needs without making the system complex.

Benefits can be aligned to different life stages, such as childcare support or wellness programs. Automated enrolment significantly reduces administrative effort. AI can also recommend timely bonuses based on engagement or performance data, with rewards processed in real time rather than waiting for monthly payroll cycles.

The balance comes from keeping the core payroll system standardized and automated, ideally on a single global platform. Clear policies, digital workflows, and smart use of data make personalization possible without losing efficiency, cost control, or compliance.

In this way, organizations can deliver a more personalized employee experience while maintaining consistency, governance, and operational efficiency across regions.

Predictive Analytics as a Leadership Tool

How can predictive payroll insights help executives anticipate workforce trends, mitigate attrition risks, and strengthen financial wellness initiatives?

Predictive payroll insights give executives early visibility into workforce patterns such as rising overtime, pay gaps, absenteeism, turnover trends etc. By spotting these signals early, leaders can anticipate attrition risks, forecast workforce costs more accurately, address compensation concerns proactively, and design targeted financial wellness initiatives. In simple terms, payroll data becomes a forward-looking tool that helps executives make smarter people and financial decisions before issues grow.

Building Trust in AI-Driven Payroll

As organizations embed AI and automation into payroll systems, what governance frameworks are essential to ensure data privacy, transparency, and ethical decision-making?

As organizations embed AI and automation into payroll systems, strong governance is

essential to protect sensitive employee data and maintain trust. From a payroll and cybersecurity perspective, this means having strict access controls, data encryption, regular system audits, and continuous monitoring to prevent breaches or fraud. Clear approval workflows and human oversight of AI outputs help avoid errors and biased decisions. It is also important to follow global data privacy regulations, conduct vendor risk checks, and define clear accountability for decisions. In simple terms, good governance ensures payroll automation improves efficiency while keeping data secure, decisions fair, and processes transparent.

The Competitive Advantage

For organizations investing in next-generation payroll technologies today, what measurable impact should they expect on talent retention, engagement, and overall HR effectiveness over the next 3–5 years?

Organizations investing in next-generation payroll technology can expect clear and measurable benefits over the next 3–5 years. Accurate and on-time payroll builds

employee trust, improves satisfaction, and helps retain key talent. Faster processing and easy self-service reduce payroll queries and frustration. Fewer errors mean fewer disputes and less time spent fixing mistakes.

From a business perspective, the impact is equally strong. Automation reduces operating costs, improves compliance, and lowers financial and regulatory risk. It also provides real time workforce cost data, helping leaders plan hiring, manage budgets, and make better compensation decisions. In simple terms, modern payroll improves employee experience, strengthens HR efficiency, and gives the business better control and clarity over its people costs.

Ramco Systems LinkedIn Page:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/ramco-systems/>

Payce product page:

<https://www.ramco.com/products/payce-payroll-software>

AI IN EDUCATION

From 'about AI' to 'with AI': lessons that build judgment, creativity and real-world workflows.



Chat With History

AI FOR TEACHERS

The workload on teachers is ever-increasing, with thousands leaving the profession each year. They won't be replaced by robots- they'll be succeeded by forward-thinking teachers who use new tools to streamline the grind and refocus on what matters most: pupils. Let AI be your co-pilot: cut the time spent on admin, and spark fresh, creative ideas when you're running on empty. LessonLab makes this simple. Need a plan for a lesson you've never taught—or something clear for a cover supervisor? Use our planning tools. Need evidence-informed strategies for tricky behaviour? Our Behaviour Management tool helps identify the root cause and suggests practical actions. Facing report season? Progress Reports turns teacher notes into accurate, personalised write-ups in minutes. And next in this fast-moving space: turning data into impact- securely using student progress to tailor every learner's journey, with teachers in control. We've got that coming soon!



George Wescott
Primary Teacher
Founder of LessonLab

AI FOR STUDENTS

We prepare students for the “big-wide-world”. You know, the one where we regularly use pythagorus or simplifying quadratic equations... right? What we should be doing is preparing students to succeed with the tools they'll actually have. But we can't just hand out ChatGPT and call it a day. That's where Study Rooms by LessonLab comes in: a safeguarded, teacher-led chatbot that coaches thinking without doing the work. You set the brief (“Talk through the strategy for fractions”), and the system keeps pupils on task- if someone asks for the final answer or drifts off-topic, it blocks the request and alerts you. Students build real tool-fluency- prompting, checking, citing, reflecting- while you keep full oversight. To remove language barriers, Language Boards turn key vocabulary into on-device sound boards: auto-created, tappable buttons with icons and correct pronunciation, so every learner can hear it, say it, and use it confidently in class.

Leadership in Uncertain Times: Keeping Teams Calm, Focused and Productive

BEN EDWARDS HIGHLIGHTS HOW ORGANISATIONS CAN MAINTAIN CLARITY AND MOMENTUM WHEN EXTERNAL EVENTS CREATE WORKPLACE DISTRACTION

Across the UAE, many organisations are currently working to maintain a sense of normality while the wider regional situation continues to evolve. For employees, the working day increasingly runs alongside a constant stream of news alerts, messages from family members and conversations about what might happen next.

At the same time, businesses still have clients to serve, projects to deliver and commercial targets to meet. For leaders, the challenge is not simply maintaining productivity - it's helping teams remain clear-headed and focused when uncertainty becomes the background noise of everyday work – supporting teams who may be anxious about family, following constant updates on their phones, or making decisions about travel and temporary relocation. In some companies, employees have chosen to work remotely or leave the country temporarily, while others continue working from offices

or hybrid environments.

In volatile periods like this, performance rarely drops because people stop caring about their jobs. More often, it drops because **decision quality deteriorates under pressure.**

The rise of 'panic productivity'

When uncertainty increases, teams often respond by trying to work faster. Emails multiply, meetings increase, and people attempt to push tasks forward quickly. But this can create what many organisations recognise as **'panic**



↑ BEN EDWARDS, HEAD OF TRAINING, IGNITE TRAINING, DUBAI

productivity' -

a pattern where activity increases but clarity disappears. Attention fragments as people follow constant updates and speculation.

Communication becomes shorter and more reactive. In multicultural workplaces like the majority of those in the region, small misunderstandings can escalate quickly when people are distracted or under stress. The result is not disengagement. It is cognitive overload. When the brain is processing too many inputs, decision-making becomes less consistent and priorities blur.

Why calm leadership matters more than certainty

During uncertain times, employees rarely expect leaders to have all the answers. What they look for instead is steadiness. Clear communication,

realistic priorities and visible composure help teams regain a sense of direction. Even simple actions - acknowledging the situation, reinforcing what matters most and encouraging people to focus on controllable tasks - can significantly stabilise a working environment. This is particularly important in diverse teams, where individuals may be processing external events differently depending on their personal circumstances and backgrounds.

Resilience is built in teams, not individuals

Another important lesson from recent years is that resilience is rarely just an individual quality. It is shaped by the team environment. When expectations are clear and communication is open, teams are far better able to absorb external pressure. When priorities are unclear or conversations become guarded, stress spreads quickly. For HR and learning leaders, this highlights the importance of creating psychologically safe environments where people feel comfortable raising concerns, asking questions and supporting each other. In practice, these dynamics often have a direct impact on

performance as well as wellbeing.

Resetting performance after the initial reaction

Interestingly, productivity challenges often appear **after** the initial shock of an external event. Once the first wave of reaction passes, teams can experience a quieter drop in momentum as attention remains divided and confidence dips. This is where leadership becomes particularly important. Resetting priorities, simplifying decisions and helping teams regain a sense of control can restore momentum surprisingly quickly. Many organisations are now introducing simple frameworks that help teams recognise when they have slipped into reactive thinking and reset their focus.

From reaction to clear execution

One such approach helps teams distinguish between reactive thinking, where attention narrows and decisions become rushed, and clear execution, where individuals regain perspective and focus on the most effective next step. The aim is not to ignore uncertainty. It is to ensure it does not dominate

every conversation or decision. Because while organisations cannot control external events, they can control how they respond to them. And in uncertain times, the organisations that maintain calm leadership, clear communication and strong team dynamics are often the ones that remain both productive and resilient.

About the author

Ben Edwards

Head of Training, [Ignite Training](#)

With over 15 years of experience in learning and development in the UK and Middle East, across corporate and government sectors, Ben is Head of Training, and leads the design and delivery of Ignite's LEAP Graduate Trainee Program for Emirates Global Aluminium, a flagship initiative supporting UAE national leadership development aligned with Emiratisation goals.

He designs structured, high-impact learning journeys that deliver lasting behavioural change. He is a qualified facilitator of the Royal College of Psychiatrists-accredited i-act mental health programme, and certified Jigsaw Discovery Tool Master Facilitator.

The \$8.8 Trillion Leak: The New Business Case for EQ is a Wake-Up Call

MORRISON JAYNE OF 6SECONDS PUTS UP A STRONG CASE FORWARD FOR EQ IN THE WORKPLACE.

When you're staring at a spreadsheet in a glass-walled office at 2:00 PM, friend, it is imperative that you don't ask why your chest feels like a tightening vice. You are less suspicious if you keep typing. They may even promote you, stretching your "grit" to its elastic limit.

The modern workplace is an abject, noisy town - executives driven by performance anxiety, middle managers ridden by burnout, and employees walking on the thin ice of "quiet quitting." It's annoying. Or, in the parlance of the boardrooms, it's a "productivity gap." But this is the global economy, and there's no law against being inefficient.

We are here in an era of Emotional Recession. Since 2020, well-being has plummeted, optimism has soured, and our collective Emotional Intelligence has declined by 3.5%. It's a big deal! They told you to keep climbing, that the air would be clearer at the top of the ladder.

You bought the dream and did the time. But now that you've reached the summit, the view is just a thick fog of burnout. Is the climb laughing at you? Hard to say.

None of this is important, really. You probably just want to know why \$8.8 trillion is disappearing from the global economy every year. The short answer is disengagement. The long answer is that we've been trying to lead humans like they're hardware, ignoring the messy, "obscene-looking" reality of the human feeling.

There is a metric for every failure and a failure for every metric. When you think about it, it's crazy how we spend billions on AI for the future, while the people in the chairs right now are burning out at 2:00 PM. You cannot eradicate the stress; you can only hope to contain it. Some leaders get punished. Some get away with it- maintaining the appearance of "professionalism" while the culture they lead is breaking in half.

The array of excuses is laid out: "Market volatility," "Shift to hybrid," "Gen Z." Dealer's choice. But neuroscience is a discipline. It tells us that emotion and cognition aren't separate rooms in the house. They have the same wiring. If you ignore the "fluff" of how your people feel, you are effectively cutting the power to your own decision-making.

On the company Slack, they are playing the same old tune: "Efficiency at all costs." But execution hits harder when the trust is hard. I consider asking the C-suite to play a different track - something about empathy or psychological safety, because that's where the profit is. But I decide against it. No self-respecting "leader" listens to empathy, or so they think.

The first data point almost takes your head off: Managers account for 70% of the variance in team engagement. 70%! That's not a statistic; that's an assault on the senses. It means the manager isn't just a



supervisor; they are the emotional thermostat of the entire room. If they are cold, the team freezes. If they are stressed, the team catches the contagion like a dirty raindrop on a windshield.

[The Business Case for EQ](#)

has been around for a while, providing hard data on emotional intelligence. To paraphrase the greats: don't fear the leader who has made 10,000 analytical choices once, but the leader who has mastered one emotional trigger 10,000 times. This report exposes the tattoos of the trade: 30% turnover costs, \$250 million lost in poor decisions, and 4 in 10 employees feeling 'a lot of stress' yesterday. It's a tired cliché to say people are our greatest asset while we're still treating them like a placeholder in a slide deck.

It feels good to talk about "Sustainability" and "Noble Goals"; it feels like being immortal and unbeatable. But then the reality breaks your heart. Cultures die every day. You wish you could have just one more honest conversation with a disgruntled talent before they quit, but HR has already moved them to the "Exit" column.

In therapy, they tell you no one can own your story better than you. In Six Seconds, we tell you that when you measure what matters - Trust, Engagement, EQ - it loses its power to haunt your bottom line.

What's one more cold, analytical choice in a sea of them? It's a classic move, backed by every "Titan of Industry"

analytical choice in a sea of them? It's a classic move, backed by every "Titan of Industry" from the last century. We are comfortable here, in the realm of the old guard. But there's a ghost in the room, the fear that this "safe" way of leading is exactly what's making us obsolete.

Life is for the living, and business? Business is for the humans. At the end of the day, nothing matters except that we are alive and aligned. If you believe the data, you know the path forward. If you don't, well, the symptoms are everywhere: the recession isn't just in the banks. It's in the heart.

Don't wait for the collapse. Build the case for a better way.

[Download the Business Case for EQ Report here.](#)
[linkedin.com/in/morrisonjayne6seconds.org](https://www.linkedin.com/in/morrisonjayne6seconds.org)

The Hidden Pitfalls of L&D Projects – And How to Fix Them

Many organizations invest heavily in learning and development, yet too many initiatives fall short. The issue isn't commitment, it's recurring mistakes that quietly undermine success.

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The Ghost Client

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The Customization Paradox

Over-tailoring delays delivery.



The Forgotten Campaign

Poor promotion reduces adoption.

We don't just deliver training, we partner with you to ensure learning is impactful, scalable, and engaging.

**Scan the QR to book a
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The HR Umbrella Paradox

UZAIR HASSAN, CEO, 3H SOLUTIONS, SEES THE HR STRUCTURE FUNDAMENTALLY FLAWED AND LIKENS IT TO A SPLINTERED ARROW.

So what are we? HR? what does that even mean. We are fractioned into subdivisions like Compensation and Benefits, Employee Acquisition, HRIS, Compliance and Risk, OD, Total Rewards etc. etc.

Silos abound as do territorial angst. And what about oversight? Alignment? One team?

The overarching umbrella may be HR but the specializations stretch team spirit to breaking point. We may have a common direction but the divided visions for each segment pointedly amplify their differences.

Toxic mix of defensive behavior coupled with competitive spirit dovetailed with mistrust. A heady yet destructive concoction. Driven in part by self-preservation, the complex is made even more complex to ensure that the job desperately requires the people running it. Career security in complexity.

Human Resources promised us one thing: a unified voice for people and culture. Instead, we see fiefdoms.

Walk into any midsize company and you'll find them—Talent Acquisition guarding their pipeline like state secrets, Compensation & Benefits speaking a language only actuaries understand, Learning & Development building empires of mandatory training nobody remembers. Each subdivision flies the HR flag while quietly sharpening knives for budget meetings.

The angst is real. An HR Business Partner gets caught between Employee Relations' risk-averse playbook and Talent Development's growth-at-all-costs mantra. Who wins? Usually whoever has the

CHRO's ear that week.

This isn't collaboration—it's detente. Recruiting wants to hire fast; Compliance wants to hire safe. Total Rewards designs retention packages; Workforce Planning questions whether we need those roles at all.

Everyone nods in the HR leadership meeting, then returns to their isolated corner to protect their headcount, their budget, their relevance.

The competitive nature is baked in. When HR subdivisions are measured on



different metrics—time-to-fill versus compliance incidents versus engagement scores—they're not partners. They're contestants. Self-preservation kicks in. Silos harden. The left hand stops telling the right hand anything useful.

And the employees caught in the middle? They just want their paycheck processed, their manager held accountable, and someone to answer the phone. They don't care about your matrixed org chart. They really don't.

One umbrella, yes. But when everyone moves in a different direction, all you get is wet.

The painful truth: HR subdivisions were created to highlight and consolidate expertise. Instead, they've mastered territoriality.

Until we admit the structure itself breeds the dysfunction, we'll keep wondering why HR can't get its act together.

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The Hidden Contagion of Panic... and How to Stabilize the Field

DR. CAROL TALBOT, PHD WHO IS LEADING THE EVOLUTION IN MULTI-DIMENSIONAL INTELLIGENCE & FOUNDER OF THE POSSIBILITY HUB SHARES HER THOUGHTS ON STAYING IN COHERENCE IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY.

Over the past 10 days, I have noticed a shift in the atmosphere here in the UAE. Conversations feel more charged. News alerts and commentary seem to arrive in waves. There is speculation, dramatic headlines, and a growing sense of uncertainty circulating through social and professional spaces. Yet internally, I feel remarkably calm.

This is not because I am ignoring what is happening, nor because I am uninformed. It is because I understand something that is rarely discussed during moments like these. The human nervous systems are deeply interconnected, and emotional states can spread rapidly through populations.

Panic is not only psychological. It is biological.

The human brain is designed to detect threat quickly, and through mechanisms such as mirror neurons and limbic

resonance, we unconsciously absorb the emotional signals of those around us. When fear is repeated, amplified, and broadcast through multiple channels from news media, social platforms, and constant conversation, the body begins to interpret that signal as immediate danger. The amygdala activates, cortisol rises, and the nervous system shifts into survival mode. In this state, rational thinking narrows, perception contracts, and decision-making becomes reactive rather than intelligent. This is the natural biology of the human system.

However, it is precisely in these moments that another capacity becomes essential... coherence.

In the work I do around Multi-Dimensional Intelligence, coherence refers to a state in which the nervous system, the brain, and the body are stabilized and aligned. When coherence is present, the mind regains access to clarity, discernment, and broader perception. We move out of survival reactivity and into conscious response. Without coherence, people react. With coherence, people see.

There is another layer to this that is often overlooked. Emotional states function more like signals within a shared field. The emotional tone of one person can influence those around them in subtle but measurable ways. When fear spreads



across groups, communities, or organizations, the entire environment becomes more unstable. And the opposite is also true.

A calm, coherent nervous system has the ability to stabilize those around it. People unconsciously entrain to the most regulated presence in the room. This is why, during uncertain times, if you can remain grounded, calm and regulated, you create an environment in which others can think more clearly and respond more intelligently.

At the same time, moments like this call for greater discernment about the information environments we place ourselves in. Modern news cycles operate within an attention economy where dramatic narratives attract engagement. The more emotionally charged a headline is, the more likely it is to be shared and amplified. Continuous exposure to these narratives keeps the nervous system in a constant state of threat scanning.

When people repeatedly check updates, scroll through speculation, or consume emotionally heightened commentary, their bodies never receive the signal that it is safe to return to balance. The nervous system remains locked in anticipation of danger and perception becomes

distorted. We project imagined futures, anticipate worst-case scenarios, and react to possibilities rather than responding to what is actually present.

Panic lives in projection. Coherence lives in the present moment.

One of the simplest ways to restore coherence is through conscious regulation of the breath and attention. A brief pause can reset the nervous system remarkably quickly. Slowing the inhale through the nose and allowing the exhale to be slightly longer than the inhale begins to calm the body. Bringing attention to the heart area and asking a simple question, "What is actually happening right now?" can return awareness to the present moment rather than the imagined future.

In times of uncertainty, it is natural for the mind to search for answers and predictions. Yet perhaps the most powerful contribution each of us can make right now is not adding more commentary to the noise, but stabilizing our own internal state. Every calm nervous system influences the environment around it. Every

regulated response creates more space for intelligent action.

In the work I do around Multi-Dimensional Intelligence, this capacity to stabilize our inner state is a foundational human skill for navigating an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

What state of being are you choosing to transmit into the collective field?

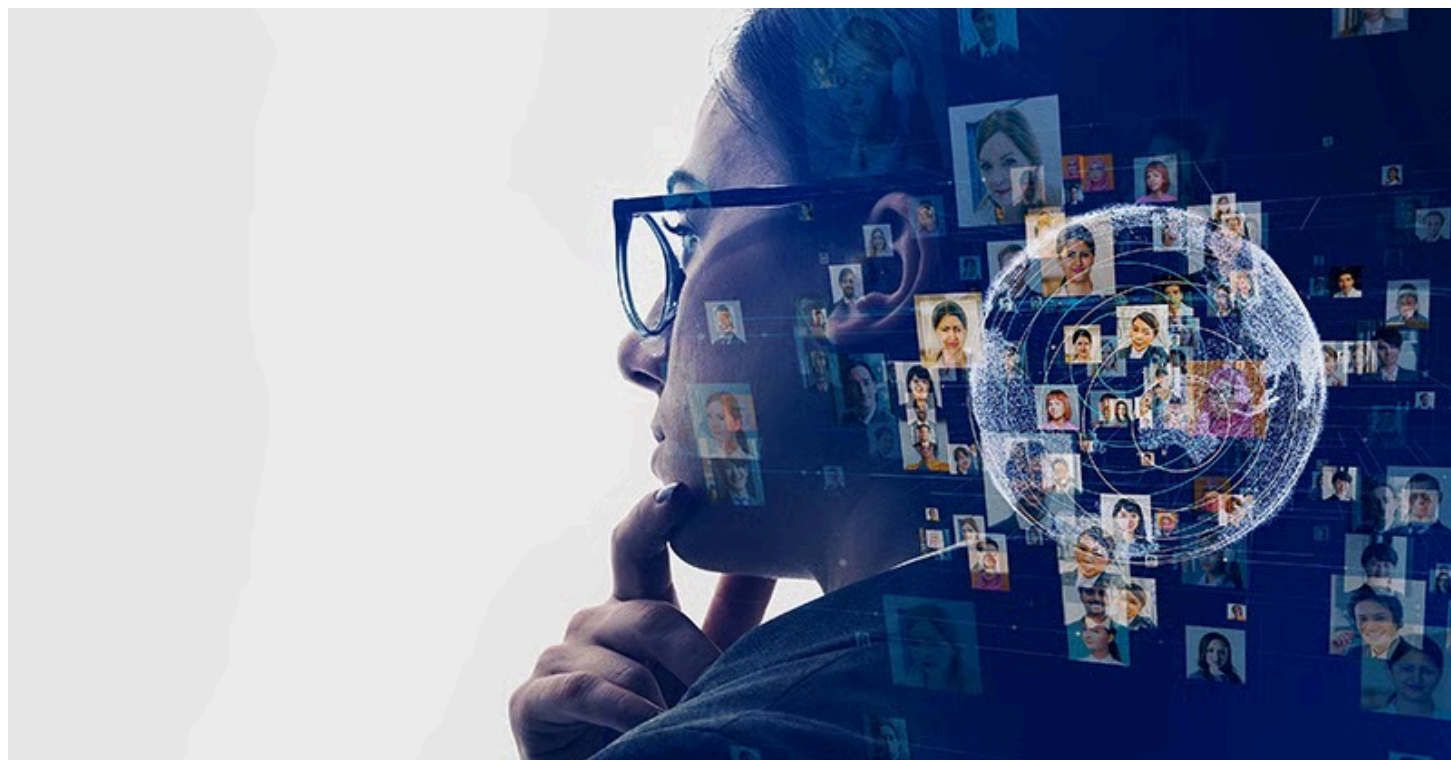
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has been designed to support you and your team at this time.

www.multi-dimensionalintelligence.com

If HR Was Invented Today, Would We Design It The Same Way?

BOBBI HARTSHORNE. BEWELLWISE, DUBAI ASKS IF HR SHOULD BE REIMAGINED.



A genuine thought experiment: What if HR didn't report to leadership at all?

What if it reported to employees instead?

Not as a popularity contest. Not as a grievance machine.

But as a structural shift in accountability.

I've written a short piece exploring why this question matters now, what it reveals about trust and legitimacy at work, and what any serious HR redesign effort would need to work.

I'm curious to hear your take. Would this strengthen the system, or break it?

What Comes After HR as We Know It? Imagining the Alternative

HR was designed for a different world.

A world of hierarchy, predictability, long careers in single organisations, and a largely unquestioned belief that institutions knew best. In that context, HR's role made sense. It balanced risk, compliance,

and people management on behalf of the organisation.

That world has gone. Yet, HR, in many organisations, has not caught up.

This is not a personal critique of HR professionals. It is a structural assessment driven by the mounting evidence that something is misfiring and should no longer be ignored.

- Trust in institutions is declining across societies, and workplaces are no exception.
- Engagement scores

- remain stubbornly flat despite decades of initiatives.
- Burnout, stress-related absence, and attrition continue to rise even as 'wellbeing strategies' proliferate.
- Employees routinely report that they do not feel heard, protected, or treated fairly, particularly when pressure increases.
- Employees increasingly use external platforms to raise concerns, rather than through internal channels.

HR often sits uncomfortably at the centre of this tension.

In theory, it exists to support people. In practice, it frequently reports into power structures that prioritise short-term performance, legal protection, or cost control. The result is a credibility gap.

HR becomes the translator of decisions rather than the shaper of conditions. The messenger rather than the advocate. Over time, people stop engaging in something that feels illegitimate.

What if HR's problem is not capability, but accountability?

So, here is a deliberately

provocative thought experiment.

What if HR did not report to leadership at all?

What if, instead, it reported to employees?

Not as a democracy-by-survey. Not as a popularity contest. But in accountability terms.

Imagine HR being measured primarily by the people it exists to serve. Measures could include:

- whether employees believe it improves fairness, voice, workload design, and psychological safety
- whether it surfaces and mitigates risk early and completely, rather than reacting after harm occurs
- whether it strengthens the conditions for sustained performance, not just compliance
- This is not as radical as it sounds.

This is not as radical as it sounds.

Organisations have experimented for decades with alternative models of power, feedback, and accountability.

Companies like NextJump have built cultures around extreme transparency and peer accountability. Others, from Buurtzorg to Haier, have decentralised decision-making and pushed authority closer to the work itself. None of these models are perfect. That is not the point. The point is that rethinking people systems is not new. It is simply not mainstream.

Of course, this idea carries risks.

Short-termism. Role confusion. The temptation to turn HR into a grievance tribunal or a campaigning function. These are real concerns.

But every system has risks, including the one we are currently running. And it is worth asking whether a model that many employees no longer trust remains the safest option.

Why does this question matter now?

Power of all kinds is under scrutiny. Authority is no longer assumed to be legitimate simply because it exists.

Once people see rules being bent, ignored, or selectively

applied in other arenas, they start testing them everywhere. At that point, compliance becomes conditional, silence becomes strategic, trust becomes fragile. The hard truth, we are already there.

If that is not the intention, and I assume it isn't, then we must ask: should HR remain what it has been, or should it become something else entirely?

Questions like this, when handled with openness, curiosity, and intent, become an invitation to imagine.

If HR were invented today, in this moment, with what we now know about human sustainability, trust, and performance under pressure, and the world we operate in, would we really design it the same way?

What do you think?

Join the conversation and share your expertise in the comments.

A Practical Note (For Anyone Actually Trying to Fix This)

Most HR redesign conversations fail for one simple reason: they are built on

assumptions, and on data that is often misleading or misinterpreted. That is why so many organisations feel stuck. They build a strategy around what the engagement survey appeared to reveal, and yet nothing materially improves.

Before restructuring accountability, redefining HR's role, or changing how people systems operate, organisations need a clear view of where strain is sitting, what is driving it, and what is (often unintentionally) being normalised inside the culture. That cannot be achieved through sentiment capture alone.

That is where WellWise helps. The WellWise People Risk Diagnostic identifies psychosocial risk, hotspots across teams and functions, and the cultural and structural pressure points that quietly drive burnout, conflict, attrition, and performance decline. It is aligned with global best practice (including ISO 45003), and designed to surface the real drivers of employee experience and organisational friction.

This is not another

engagement survey. It is an early-detection approach that gives leaders evidence they can act on, fast.

WellWise can also support leadership assessment through trusted partners, helping organisations understand leadership strengths, traits, and behavioural patterns, and where these may need to be optimised, de-risked, or better supported across the organisation. This can be used with existing leaders and teams, or as part of recruitment and selection.

If your organisation is rethinking HR and you would value an independent view of where strain is building, reach out for short overview of the diagnostic and how it works.

Bobbi's profile

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Integrating Neurodiversity and Wellbeing in the Workplace Will Help Solve Widespread Burnout in the UAE, says VIWELL

THE 10TH ANNUAL WELLBEING AT WORK MIDDLE EAST SUMMIT IN DUBAI FOCUSED ON EMBEDDING WELLBEING INTO BUSINESS STRATEGY, OFFERING TOOLS TO MEASURE IMPACT ON SATISFACTION AND PRODUCTIVITY

VIWELL, an end-to-end ecosystem that enables balanced workplaces through holistic wellbeing, encourages organizations in the UAE to incorporate wellbeing and neurodiversity in the workplace to effectively address burnout in the UAE's workforce.

Mohammed Husary, Founder and CEO of VIWELL, explained that a deliberately inclusive workplace environment built through wellbeing initiatives creates opportunities for neurodivergent professionals to thrive and contribute to the organizations' growth objectives.



Integrating holistic wellbeing into the workplace and transforming it into a conducive environment for everyone across the

neurodiversity spectrum can help mitigate stress and burnout in the UAE's workforce,

said Husary.



At VIWELL, we believe that when wellbeing is embedded into company values and aligned with business goals, it transforms workplaces into thriving, human-centric environments. This is a call to action for leaders to champion mental health, resilience, and inclusion, and VIWELL acts as an enabler in creating cultures where every individual feels valued and inspired,

he added.

VIWELL was the Headline Partner of the 10th annual Wellbeing at Work Middle East Summit, held in Dubai on 29 January. The summit gathered senior leaders from diverse industries across the region to impart insights,

tools, and frameworks to elevate organisations' wellbeing offerings. Participants benefited from an immersive exploration of the components of modern wellbeing in the workplace— leadership, connection, belonging, purpose, environment and personalisation.

In his keynote speech at the summit, Husary underscored the importance of creating neuroinclusive workplaces and urged organizations

to embrace the opportunities that come with integrating neurodivergent professionals. He outlined key drivers that enable the advancement of neurodiverse talent in today's market and identified the unique contributions they bring to both their organizations and the wider industry.

Husary also joined a C-suite panel discussion titled



Wellbeing as the Power Behind Organisational Performance.

Following this, VIWELL led a leadership workshop designed to provide participants with practical strategies for embedding wellbeing deeply into their business operations.

The Middle East Wellbeing at Work Summit marked its 10th year by visiting major cities in four countries in the region. The Dubai summit is the finale of the series, which commenced in Cairo on 20 January, followed by Riyadh on 22 January and Muscat on 27 January.

Amid unprecedented change, the Wellbeing at Work Summit

has become an essential event for business leaders. It transforms the traditional conference model by going beyond dialogue to offer an immersive experience that brings workplace wellbeing to life.



 **MOHAMMED HUSARY, FOUNDER AND CEO OF VIWELL**

[Registration is now open.](#)

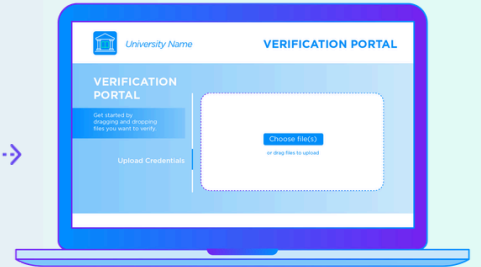
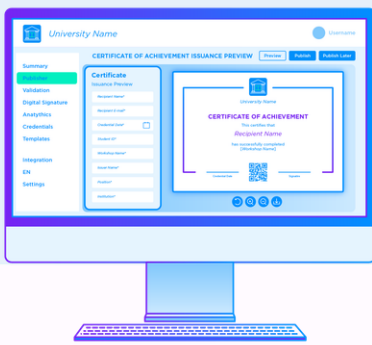
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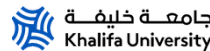
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Afraa Al Shamsi

Chief Information Officer at United Arab Emirates University

Predictions for 2026: Building a Trusted Future of Work in the Middle East

TRUST WILL BE THE DEFINING STRATEGIC ASSET FORECASTS **JAMES RANDALL,**
MIDDLE EAST SALES DIRECTOR, HIRERIGHT

As 2026 begins, the Middle East is entering a transformative era for the world of work. National growth agendas, accelerated digitisation, and increasingly mobile talent pools are reshaping how organisations hire, verify, and retain employees. In this evolving environment, trust will be the defining strategic asset. Looking at the year ahead, here is a brief look at trends we can expect to see as organisations hire:

Trust Moves to the Boardroom

Workforce integrity will become a core governance issue. With maturing data protection frameworks in the UAE and labour reforms under Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia, screening will shift from a transactional HR process to a board-level priority. In visibility-sensitive sectors such as aviation, financial services, energy, and healthcare, the cost of a single poor hire could be significant, from operational disruption to regulatory censure.

The financial services sector illustrates this shift clearly. As banks and fintech providers across the region adopt AI-enabled credit scoring, automated Know Your Customer processes, and embedded finance models, the demand for risk, compliance, cybersecurity, and digital

banking talent is rising rapidly. As Gulf regulators strengthen anti-money laundering, Know Your Customer, and fintech frameworks, screening expectations will intensify, including more detailed criminal checks, credit reviews, sanctions screening, and verification of professional certifications. As innovation accelerates, trust will be the foundation that protects institutions and customers alike.

AI Will Be Indispensable — and Must Be Explainable

AI continues to reshape recruitment, but its responsible use will be critical. The World Economic Forum's [Future of Jobs Report 2025](#) predicts it will create 78 million net new jobs globally by 2030,



↑ **JAMES RANDALL, SALES**
DIRECTOR ME HIRERIGHT

driven heavily by technological change. Technology-related skills, including AI, cybersecurity, and data literacy, will dominate growth, while human skills such as analytical thinking and collaboration remain essential.

AI will streamline verification and risk assessment, but employers will need human oversight, transparent algorithms, and dedicated AI governance roles to ensure fairness and compliance.

Continuous Screening Will Replace One-Off Checks

The region's international workforce brings diversity but also evolving risk. [McKinsey](#) estimates that **up to 45% of work activities in Middle Eastern economies** could be automated by 2030, shortening skills cycles and increasing job mobility. Employers may

therefore shift towards continuous or event-based screening, especially for high-trust positions or regulated functions, enabling organisations to detect discrepancies in real time.

Data Protection Will Drive Screening Choices

As data protection laws in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and other markets mature, compliance will become a decisive factor when selecting screening partners. Employers will need regionally compliant models for digital identity, data storage, consent, and verification, while also aligning with broader standards such as the GDPR for multinational operations.

As regulatory scrutiny increases, screening requirements will expand to include deeper criminal checks, enhanced credit assessments,

sanctions screening, and verification of professional qualifications. With financial systems becoming more digital and cross-border, the ability to meet strict compliance standards will be crucial for protecting both regulatory alignment and customer trust.

Conclusion

The Middle East's future of work will be shaped by speed, innovation, mobility, and above all, trust. Employers that combine advanced hiring technologies with strong governance, ethical oversight, and transparent human-centred processes will be the most resilient.

[linkedin.com/in/randalljames](https://www.linkedin.com/in/randalljames)

Website

[hireright.com](https://www.hireright.com) (Company)

Department of Government Enablement Hosts 9th Abu Dhabi Leadership Forum

HELD UNDER THE THEME UNLOCKING PERFORMANCE THROUGH HUMAN CAPITAL THE FORUM AIMS TO ADVANCE TALENT-DRIVEN PUBLIC SECTOR TRANSFORMATION

The ninth edition of the Abu Dhabi Leadership Forum, hosted by the Department of Government Enablement (DGE), brought together more than 180 government officials to deepen cross-departmental collaboration and accelerate a collective, talent-driven transformation of Abu Dhabi's public sector.

Held under the theme Unlocking Performance Through Human Capital, the Forum marked the government's first major leadership gathering since the enactment of the Human Resources Law No. (08) of 2025, which came into effect on 1 January 2026. The event served as a key platform to champion the law's core priorities: strengthening a merit-based culture, enabling flexible career pathways, and positioning the Abu Dhabi Government as an employer of choice for high-performing talent. These priorities are supported by DGE's integrated digital HR platforms and

workforce analytics systems, which enable real-time talent management and performance monitoring across government entities.

His Excellency **Ibrahim Nassir**, **Undersecretary** of DGE,

said:



Public service is both a responsibility to our community and an opportunity to make a tangible difference. With the new HR Law now in effect, we have a strong framework to attract, develop, and retain top talent by offering impactful learning opportunities, accelerated growth pathways, and genuine work-life balance.



Through the Abu Dhabi Leadership Forum, we are

reinforcing a culture where leaders actively invest in their people, create space for learning and translate development into measurable impact. This is how we elevate performance across government and build the capabilities needed for the future.

Opening the Forum, DGE leadership emphasised that the new legislation represents more than a regulatory update; it is a strategic enabler for the government of the future – one that is AI-native, anticipatory and powered by a digitally confident workforce, supported by unified digital platforms, advanced data capabilities and smart government services developed and coordinated by DGE as part of the Abu Dhabi Government Digital Strategy. Leaders committed to the Talent Nurturing Pledge, signalling a shift from cultivating a learning mindset

to demonstrating learning impact through daily leadership actions.

His Excellency Dr Yasir Al Naqbi, Director General of GovAcademy,

said:



Talent nurturing is not a one-off initiative; it is a leadership mindset about leading and working that must be omnipresent across government every day. While the new HR Law provides the workforce systems and governance frameworks that enable meritocracy and flexibility, it is the leaders who bring them to life.



When leaders model growth, recognise progress and empower teams to learn and grow through real work, we build confidence and a stronger sense of higher purpose in public service. We are spearheading a shift towards a workforce that is adaptable, resilient, and ready to deliver on the

promise of a future-ready Abu Dhabi.

The Forum, which was attended by 71 Directors General and 113 Executive Directors, featured a keynote fireside discussion with global experts and Abu Dhabi Government leaders. It shared practical approaches grounded in behavioural science, performance research and data-driven management. Conversations highlighted that meritocracy is shaped less by policy and more by everyday leadership behaviour, from how decisions are made to how progress is recognised.

Forum participants also took part in interactive sessions focused on decision-making, adaptability, and cross-sector collaboration. Leaders explored practical techniques for integrating coaching, real-time

feedback and capability-building into routine management conversations, supported by digital tools that track progress and reinforce accountability. Sessions also highlighted how personalised development platforms such as Tomouh, an AI-supported app that provides tailored learning journeys for all government employees, can align individual growth with organisational priorities.

The Abu Dhabi Leadership Forum forms part of DGE's wider efforts to strengthen leadership effectiveness across government and embed consistent practices that support sustained performance. The Forum builds on growing momentum across government, with thousands of employees engaged in AI learning, digital upskilling, and capability-building initiatives.



EdUHK President Joins World Governments Summit in Dubai

ADVANCING GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

Professor John Lee Chi-Kin, President of The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) - a globally leading university in teacher education and complementary disciplines - was invited by H.E. Omar Sultan Al Olama, UAE Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence (AI), and H.E. Zaki Anwar Nusseibeh, Cultural Adviser to the UAE President and Chancellor of the United Arab Emirates University, to attend the World Governments Summit (WGS) held in Dubai from 3 to 5 February 2026. During the Summit, Professor Lee engaged with government leaders, university presidents, and senior representatives from the UAE around the world in a series of high-level dialogues, reinforcing EdUHK's global standing and contributing to strategic education collaboration that supports the UAE's ambitions in talent development, innovation and future-ready governance, while fostering strategic collaboration in education between Hong Kong and the Middle East.

The World Governments Summit is widely regarded as one of the most influential intergovernmental platforms worldwide. This year's Summit, themed



Shaping Governments, Future

was the largest to date, drawing over 6,000 participants from more than 150 countries and regions. Delegates included 35 heads of state, over 500 ministerial officials, Nobel and Turing Prize laureates, and more than 700 leaders of multinational corporations such as Alibaba, Airbus and IBM. Representatives from more than 100 international organisations and academic institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), also took part in discussions on global governance, economic prosperity, social well-being, and emerging technologies.

Professor Lee contributed to three major sessions: the Global Universities Roundtable, the Future of Education Forum, and the High-Level Economic Dialogue, underscoring EdUHK's growing role in international education governance and innovation aligned with the UAE's long-term development agenda.

At the Global Universities Roundtable, senior representatives from the United Arab Emirates University, Stanford University, McGill University and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology discussed the strategic role of universities in times of rapid change. Discussions focused on four themes: universities as anchors of social stability and opportunity, talent as a national strategic asset, innovation-led economic development, and resilience in the age of artificial intelligence. Professor Lee highlighted EdUHK's distinctive strengths in teacher

education and educational innovation, emphasising their relevance to building social resilience, inclusive competitiveness and sustainable growth - priorities that closely mirror the UAE's education and economic objectives. He also shared EdUHK's experience in research translation and industry collaboration, highlighting Hong Kong's unique position as a global higher education hub that bridges international education governance with practical, local impact.

At the Future of Education Forum, themed "Who Shapes the Future Classroom?", Professor Lee joined H.E. Gilda Alcívar, Ecuador's Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, and Professor Mykel Kochenderfer, Associate Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics at

Stanford University. The session explored the role of artificial intelligence in education, personalised learning, creativity development and ethical responsibility. Professor Lee presented EdUHK's pioneering research on AI applications in education and teacher professional development, which are areas of growing importance to the UAE as it advances AI-enabled education systems. His contributions were highly commended by participants, highlighting EdUHK's commitment to empowering diverse education systems worldwide through knowledge, technology and policy-relevant research.

Beyond education, Professor Lee also took part in the High-Level Economic Retreat, alongside the UAE Minister of Economy and Tourism H.E. Abdulla Bin Touq, Egypt's

Minister of Planning and Economic Development and International Co-operation H.E. Rania El Mashat, and the OECD Secretary General H.E. Mathias Cormann, among others. He emphasised that education must serve as a key driver of economic diversification and social transformation, and that universities play a critical role in nurturing innovators capable of addressing complex global challenges and empowering others. Professor Lee also outlined EdUHK's vision to serve as a hub for interdisciplinary innovation, a designer of lifelong learning ecosystems, and a bridge connecting China with the world through internationalisation and strategic alliances while reinforcing opportunities for the UAE and other nations to deepen global education partnerships and knowledge exchange.

For more information about EdUHK, visit

<https://www.eduhk.hk/en/>

LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/school/the-education-university-of-hong-kong/>



Middle East Shared Service Week: 2nd Edition Returns April 28-30, 2026 in Riyadh

THE 2ND MIDDLE EAST SHARED SERVICE WEEK (MESSW) BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF ITS INAUGURAL EDITION.

The 2nd Middle East Shared Service Week (MESSW), hosted at ssmiddleeast.com, will take place on **April 28th, 29th & 30th, 2026** in **Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**—building on the success of its inaugural edition that drew 300+ delegates, 30+ speakers, and 300+ leading organizations ¹.

This premier platform unites C-suite leaders, shared services executives, and digital transformation experts to showcase real-world success stories from public and private sectors, highlighting next-generation delivery models, intelligent automation, and digital talent strategies aligned with **Saudi Vision 2030** and regional agendas.

Core Themes and Strategic Focus Areas

MESSW addresses critical pillars of shared services evolution:

- **Robotization & The Intelligent Digital Core:** Robotic process automation, predictive intelligence, AI, cloud, and data-driven architectures.
- **Human Capital Transformation:** Reskilling, digital mindsets, and future-ready cultures.
- **AI, Automation & Robotization:** Intelligent bots, generative AI, and predictive analytics.
- **HR Digitization and Workforce Excellence:** Digital tools for workforce planning and engagement.
- **Leadership, Enterprise Change & ESG Integration:** Sustainability-aligned leadership.
- **Finance, Procurement & Operational Optimization:** Data-driven modernization ¹.
- **Data Governance, Cloud Architecture & Cyber**

Resilience: Secure, interoperable systems.

Event Highlights and Engagement Opportunities

- **Executive Roundtables:** Closed-door strategic sessions.
- **Workshops:** Hands-on learning in AI, digital roadmaps, and transformation.
- **Conferences:** GCC/global experts on automation, ESG, and next-gen models.
- **Recognition Awards:** Honoring SSC/GBS excellence and leadership.
- **Exhibition:** Cutting-edge tech demos ¹.
- **Target Audience:** CEOs, CIOs, CFOs, COOs, Chief Shared Service Officers, EVPs/SVPs in Global Business Services, Digital Transformation Experts ¹.

- **Delegate Benefits:** Full access to sessions, networking, lunches, breaks, and post-event presentations.

success stories.

Awards and Nomination Process

Recognition Awards celebrate excellence—nominate via ssmiddleeast.com/award-nomination.

Multiple entries per organization welcome.

Regional Context and Contact Information

MESSW positions Riyadh as a hub for SSO innovation amid oil & gas, infrastructure, and energy growth. Contact us at **+971 569865725** or visit ssmiddleeast.com for

registration, sponsorships, and inquiries.

This event equips leaders to drive AI adoption, talent optimization, and ESG integration for measurable outcomes in the GCC's dynamic SSO ecosystem.

Register as a sponsor: <https://ssmiddleeast.com/#register>

Register as a delegate: <https://ssmiddleeast.com/#fee>

Nominate for an award: <https://ssmiddleeast.com/#awards>

Speak at the event: <https://ssmiddleeast.com/#register>

Featured Speakers and Leadership Insights

While the full 2026 speaker lineup is forthcoming, the inaugural edition featured 30+ speakers from top shared services leaders across the Kingdom and region, delivering insights on operational transformation and Vision 2030 alignment. Expect similar caliber for 2026, including C-suite executives from public/private sectors sharing AI, automation, and GBS



Saudi Arabia Launches THE HUMAN CAPABILITY INITIATIVE CONFERENCE

THE HUMAN CAPABILITY INITIATIVE CONFERENCE WILL RETURN TO RIYADH FROM 03–04 MAY, CONVENING MORE THAN 15,000 GLOBAL LEADERS TO DRIVE FUTURE HUMAN CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE THEME “THE HUMAN CODE.”

Saudi Arabia’s Human Capability Development Program (HCDP) today announced the third edition of the Human Capability Initiative (HCI) Conference, to be held on 03–04 May 2026 in Riyadh, bringing together global leaders to drive the future of human capability development under the theme “The Human Code.”

Held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the HCDP Committee, HCI 2026 will feature the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as the Country of Honor, underscoring

the strategic partnership between Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom in education, workforce development, and economic cooperation.

HCI 2026 is expected to attract more than 15,000 leaders and feature over 250 local and international speakers, including policymakers, industry leaders, academics, experts from the public and private sectors, non-profit organizations, and global think tanks. The program will focus on learning and working environments that maximize human capability in the age of artificial intelligence.

Youssef bin Abdullah Al-Bunyan, Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Education and Chairman of the Executive Committee of

HCDP, said the conference reflects the Kingdom’s commitment to investing in people as a foundation for sustainable economic growth and long-term competitiveness.



Human potential remains the most critical driver of progress in a rapidly changing global landscape, and investing in humans is the most critical pillar in building a competitive economy and a knowledge based society. This third HCI Conference reflects Saudi Arabia’s commitment to enriching a global dialogue to contribute to the development of human



capabilities, in line with Saudi Vision 2030 objectives, Al-Bunyan said.

Saudi Arabia's Minister of Commerce and Chairman of the Economic and Social Committee of the Saudi-British Strategic Partnership Council, Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Kassabi, welcomed the United Kingdom as the Country of Honor, stating:



The United Kingdom's status as the Country of Honor

represents a continuation of the strategic cooperation between both countries, including the launch of the 'Skills of the Future' initiative at the 2025 HCI Conference, focused on advancing economic cooperation, educational exchange, and workforce development.

Since its launch, HCI has become a leading global platform for dialogue on human capability development. Over the past two editions, the conference attracted more than 23,000 participants, featured over 550 speakers, and

announced more than 156 partnerships and initiatives. Host the HCDP is one of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 Realization Programs, enhancing citizens' human potential to the Kingdom's competitiveness.

Registration is now open, for more information visit www.humancapabilityinitiative.org

Rubrik Data Protection for Google Workspace Helps Enterprise Customers Achieve End-to-End Cyber Resilience

ONE OF THE FIRST UNIFIED CYBER RESILIENCE PLATFORMS FOR GOOGLE WORKSPACE; PROVIDES CUSTOMERS WITH COMPREHENSIVE PROTECTION ACROSS DATA, IDENTITY, AND AI.

As adoption for Google Workspace continues to grow, Rubrik (NYSE: RBRK), the Security and AI Operations Company, today announced the launch of Rubrik Data Protection for Google Workspace. More than 11 million enterprises using Google Drive and Gmail can now use Rubrik features to help them achieve end-to-end cyber resilience.

Google Workspace is a suite of AI productivity tools that empowers teams to collaborate from anywhere. It holds mission-critical data for millions in organizations worldwide who cannot lose access to these tools or their data. Rubrik Data Protection can now help Google Workspace customers reduce the risk of significant data and business losses, or suspended operations.

Anneka Gupta, Chief Product Officer at Rubrik, says: **“Organizations can’t protect data in isolation. Modern**

resilience requires us to see the entire estate at once. Rubrik is built on three pillars of resilience – data, identity, and AI – because an attack or error in one is a direct threat to the entire ecosystem. With our deep collaboration with Google Cloud, our core mission is to empower today’s organizations with a unified platform that offers trust and complete cyber resilience.”

Now, Google Workspace customers can benefit from these Rubrik features:

- **Logical Air-Gap Protection:** Immutable, air-gapped backups for Gmail and Google Drive
- **High-Fidelity, Rapid Recovery:** Instead of manual, destructive restores that strip away permissions
- **Automated, Policy-Driven SLAs:** Organizations gain additional layers of protection to meet strict RPO and RTO requirements

- **Seamless Continuity:** Rubrik’s “point-and-click” experience slashes recovery times from days of manual reconstruction to just minutes

Millions of Google Workspace users globally can now embrace the future of secure, scalable AI with end-to-end cyber resilience. Learn how to achieve active operational recovery for your Google Workspace ecosystem [here](#). Visit the Rubrik booth (#7509) at Google Cloud Next 2026, April 22 – 24 in Las Vegas.

For more information, visit www.rubrik.com



↑ ANNEKA GUPTA, CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER AT RUBRIK

Palo Alto Networks Introduces the Most Secure Workspace for Small Business

ENABLING TEAMS TO WORK SEAMLESSLY AND STAY PROTECTED WITH BUILT-IN SECURITY AND AI CONTROLS.

Palo Alto Networks (NASDAQ: PANW), the global cybersecurity leader, today announced the launch of Prisma Browser for Business, the most secure workspace for small business. This new offering enables small business owners to easily configure and manage the apps and AI tools their business relies on, while allowing employees to work securely from any device, anywhere. Prisma Browser for Business also protects against phishing, ransomware and fraud threats and provides built-in AI controls to prevent business information from ending up in the wrong hands.

Today, small businesses depend on an average of 36 applications running in the browser, which is where most

work gets done. However, with 95% of companies experiencing a security incident originating in the browser, the need for a secure workspace has never been greater. At the same time, employees are rapidly adopting AI, making it harder than ever for small businesses to tame the workspace chaos, keep their business protected and prevent unintended AI actions.

Anupam Upadhyaya, SVP of Product, Palo Alto Networks



For most small businesses, the browser is now the office. It's where you interact with customers, manage your books, and use new AI tools to help grow your business. But standard browsers

weren't built to stop modern cyberattacks or prevent AI data leaks. We're providing small businesses with the same protection used by the world's largest enterprises, but in an easy-to-use, simple to manage workspace with flexible and accessible pricing for any small business.



↑ ANUPAM UPADHYAYA, SVP OF PRODUCT, PALO ALTO NETWORKS

Prisma Browser for Business is a secure workspace designed for small business to:

- **Streamline the workspace:**

Easily configure and manage the apps and AI tools teams rely on to work securely from any device, anywhere.

- **Protect the business:**

Block AI-powered phishing, ransomware, and fraud threats before they harm the business.

- **Control AI actions:**

Enable teams to leverage AI for productivity, while preventing business information from ending up in the wrong hands.

Anurag Agrawal, Analyst, TechAisle



Palo Alto Networks is addressing a critical gap in the market by providing small businesses with a secure workspace that enables employees to get more done from any device, and any location while protecting against cyberattacks and unintended AI actions.

As the global leader in cybersecurity, Palo Alto Networks processes billions of threats daily for the world's largest companies. Now that same enterprise-grade protection is made available in a secure workspace designed for small businesses.

Prisma Browser for Business is available today in the United States.

Start the 30-days free

and in just four clicks, enable teams to work seamlessly while keeping the business protected and AI under control.

Follow Palo Alto Networks on [X](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

EdUHK Deepens Strategic Partnership with UAEU to Support UAE's Education and Talent Agenda

EXPANDED COLLABORATION IN RESEARCH, STUDENT EXCHANGE AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES FORM CORNERSTONE OF DELEGATION VISIT ALONGSIDE WORLD GOVERNMENTS SUMMIT AND DIPLOMATIC MISSION

A delegation led by Professor John Lee Chi-Kin, President of the Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) - a global leader in teacher education and complementary disciplines - recently visited the United Arab Emirates, reaffirming the University's long-term commitment to advancing academic collaboration with UAE institutions. Alongside attending the World Governments Summit in Dubai, the delegation engaged in a series of high-level academic exchanges with United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) and other stakeholder meetings aimed at strengthening education, research and talent development partnerships that support the UAE's national priorities.

A key focus of the visit was EdUHK's long-standing strategic partnership with UAEU. Professor Lee and the delegation met with UAEU's senior leadership, led by H.E. Zaki Anwar Nusseibeh,

Chancellor of UAEU, and Professor Ahmed Ali Al Raeesi, Vice-Chancellor. Both sides reviewed the strong outcomes of their collaborations to date, including the launch of dual-degree programmes, the establishment of a joint research fund supporting collaborative projects, and ongoing student and faculty exchanges as well as jointly organised academic conferences. These initiatives directly contribute to capacity building, research excellence and the development of globally competitive graduates in the UAE.

Building on this foundation, the two universities outlined future directions for expanded cooperation, including increasing student exchange opportunities, advancing joint projects aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and exploring new collaborations in key disciplines such as education and business. The discussions reinforced a shared

vision for deeper, more systematic collaboration that delivers long-term academic and societal impact for the UAE.

Academic staff from EdUHK and UAEU also held in-depth discussions to translate this high-level strategic consensus into sustainable academic outcomes, exploring opportunities for co-authored academic publications, co-organised international conferences, and culturally immersive exchange programmes designed to foster global perspectives while remaining locally relevant.

During the visit, Professor Lee also participated as a distinguished guest at the



Phoenix Go Global: Global Development Forum

held alongside the World Governments Summit. Themed



From Governance to Joint Growth – The Evolving Role of China-Middle East Cooperation

the forum brought together government officials and business leaders from the UAE and wider Middle East including Mr Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman and CEO of the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre; Ms Sheikha Al-Mahrouqi, Director of International Communication at Oman's Ministry of Information; and Mr Daniel Sellers, Foreign Direct Investment expert at UAE Ministry of Investment.

Discussions were held on cooperation, innovation and future economic growth and engagements at the forum provided EdUHK with valuable insights into the UAE's vision of becoming a global leader in future technologies, talent development and innovation-led growth, further informing future education and research collaboration in the country.

The delegation also met with Minister Zhao Liang, Charge d'affaires a.i. of the Chinese Embassy in the UAE, and H.E. Ou Boqian, Consul General of the Chinese Consulate General in Dubai, where discussions highlighted the important role of higher education institutions in serving national development strategies, cultural exchange and talent cultivation under the China-UAE Comprehensive

Strategic Partnership. These engagements underscored strong institutional support for deeper education cooperation between China and the UAE.

EdUHK's delegation members included Ms Gai Huixia, Associate Vice President (Mainland Engagement and Development), Professor Sin Kuen Fung Kenneth from the Department of Special Education and Counselling, Professor Alfredo Bautista, Associate Head of the Department of Early Childhood Education, Dr Yang Lan from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and Dr Wang Yifei Faye, Project Manager of Internationalisation.

Through sustained engagements with UAEU, government stakeholders, international partners and diplomatic missions, EdUHK continues to strengthen its academic presence in the UAE, laying the groundwork for expanded collaboration that supports the country's ambitions in education excellence, innovation and human capital development.

For more information about EdUHK, visit

<https://www.eduhk.hk/en/>



GLMC and the World Bank Group Release “A Decade of Progress” Report on Saudi Arabia’s Labor Market Transformation

THE REPORT SERVES AS AN ANALYTICAL REFERENCE DOCUMENTING THE KINGDOM’S LABOR MARKET TRANSFORMATION OVER THE PAST DECADE.

The Global Labor Market Conference (GLMC), in collaboration with the World Bank Group and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, announced the release of a report titled “A Decade of Progress,” offering a comprehensive analytical overview of the labor market transformation witnessed in Saudi Arabia since the launch of Saudi Vision 2030 and the Labor Market Strategy.

The report is grounded in a time-based comparison between 2015, as the baseline year prior to Vision 2030, and 2025, enabling an assessment of the tangible impact of reforms and policies led by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. It also highlights how these efforts have contributed to modernising labor market institutions, strengthening participation across different groups, and enabling the private sector to serve as a key engine for job creation.

The report details three major transformations that have reshaped Saudi Arabia’s labor market:

First: Labor market activation and strengthened inclusiveness

The report documents a notable expansion in the productive labor force, driven by an increase in labor force participation to 67.1% by 2025, alongside a rise in the net number of employed Saudi citizens over the decade. This reflects a measurable demographic dividend, captured through combined gains in participation and employment. Overall, unemployment recorded a significant decline, reaching 2.8% by mid-2025, as increasing numbers of economically inactive individuals moved directly into employment. This is reflected in higher employment-to-population ratios and a reduction in labor supply constraints associated with

inactivity.

This activation and inclusiveness are further reflected in improved outcomes across key groups. Female employment increased from 11% in 2015 to 32% in 2025, while employment among mothers rose from 8% to 45% over the same period. Youth employment (ages 18–24) increased from 10% to 33%, while the share of youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) declined from 40% to 25%. Over the decade, the share of youth engaged in either education or employment also increased significantly.

Second: Private sector dynamism and an expanded role in employment

The report highlights a structural shift in the role of the private sector, with the share of Saudi citizens employed in the private sector

reaching 52.8% by Q2 2025, alongside a notable transition, particularly among women, into private sector employment.

This shift reflects the growth of a more competitive private sector, as most net job creation for Saudi citizens is attributed to private sector employment. The share of employment in micro-enterprises increased from 6% to 26% of total employment, underscoring the sector's vitality.

This improvement has been supported by a sustained decline in labor market mismatch over the decade, and an increase in education-to-job matching from 41% in 2015 to 62% in 2025, reducing skills-related barriers to employment. Labor market frictions also declined, reflected in a notable rise in job-to-job transitions and increased labor mobility towards private sector firms.

Third: Deep shifts in social values and attitudes towards work

The report notes significant shifts in social norms and job search preferences. The share of individuals unwilling to work declined from 49% to 12%, while the preference gap

between the public and private sectors narrowed considerably. The share of jobseekers who were exclusively seeking public sector jobs fell from 60% to 10% for men, and from 48% to 22% for women.

A large share of job seekers now target private sector opportunities, reflecting stronger alignment between work preferences and actual job search behaviour.

Social norms related to women's employment also shifted substantially. Acceptance of women working in mixed-gender workplaces has increased, directly contributing to higher female employment in private sector companies, expanding opportunities available to women, and strengthening their integration into the labor market.

The report concludes that the progress achieved over the past decade provides a strong foundation for the next phase of labor market development. Saudi Arabia has already begun leveraging data and advanced analytics to strengthen policy quality and programme effectiveness, while continuing to invest in skills development

and enhance workforce readiness for the requirements of the new economy. The report highlights the importance of sustaining public-private collaboration and strengthening labor market flexibility to support inclusive growth and economic diversification, and to ensure the Saudi labor market remains responsive to the rapid changes shaping the future of work.

Cristobal Ridao-Cano, the Practice Manager for Social Protection and Labor in the Middle East and North Africa, Pakistan, and Afghanistan at the World Bank, said,



The private sector is now one of the driving forces behind new job growth in Saudi Arabia, in line with its economic diversification vision. Employment ratios increased as inactive individuals moved into jobs, driving a notable drop in Saudi unemployment and expanding the productive workforce. The Knowledge attained from Saudi Arabia's transformation model can

be transferred to other countries.

The report, titled



A Decade of Progress: Inside Saudi Arabia's Labor Market Transformation: Indicators and Shifts between 2015 and 2025,

forms part of GLMC's efforts to advance evidence-based dialogue and develop practical solutions that support policymakers in navigating labor market transformations.

As the third edition of the conference convenes in Riyadh, with participation from

more than 200 ministers, policymakers, business leaders, experts, and representatives of international organisations, the report serves as a practical reference to support specialised discussions, knowledge exchange, and collaborative action to strengthen labor market efficiency and

inclusiveness at both the regional and global levels.

For the full report, access:

[HERE](#)

Program & Contact:

The full GLMC 2026 program is available on the website:

<https://www.glmc.com/glmc-2026>



MoHRE Launches 'Emirati Work Bundle in Private Sector' to Provide Integrated Proactive Employment Services

THE INITIATIVE SUPPORTS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND LEADERSHIP IN SERVICES, IN LINE WITH THE UAE'S ZERO GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY PROGRAMME.

Emirati Work Bundle in Private Sector

Integrated and proactive digital services that support Emiratisation, digital transformation, and Zero Bureaucracy

Introducing a new seamless employment journey for UAE citizens and employers:
From the moment a citizen registers on the Nafis platform through to their enrolment in the UAE's pension, retirement, and social security systems

- Strengthening the social protection system for citizens employed in the private sector and safeguarding their contractual rights
- Standardising information and documents, integrating data across relevant government entities, and enabling direct access to the citizen's status

تصفير البيروقراطية
ZERO BUREAUCRACY

The initiative supports Emiratisation efforts, accelerates digital transformation, and strives to ensure leadership in government service delivery, in line with the objectives of the UAE's Zero Government Bureaucracy Programme.

Adhering to the highest standards of integration among government entities, the Emirati Work Bundle in the Private Sector leverages the data sharing between MoHRE and the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs, and Port Security (ICP); General Pension and Social Security Authority (GPSSA); Emirati Talent Competitiveness Council; Abu Dhabi Pension Fund; Department of Health - Abu Dhabi; Emirates Health Services; Dubai Health; and Digital Dubai Authority.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE), in collaboration with its partners across local and federal government entities, has launched the 'Emirati Work

Bundle in Private Sector', designed to provide integrated, proactive digital services for Emirati citizens working in the private sector and for employers.

His Excellency Khalil Khoori, Undersecretary of Labour Market and Emiratisation Operations at MoHRE, said:



The Emirati Work Bundle in the Private Sector supports the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation in its commitment to ensure continued leadership in digital transformation, in collaboration with its partners. The new launch enhances the customer journey by streamlining procedures and reducing employment requirements for UAE citizens and employers. It covers the full process from the moment an Emirati citizen registers on the Nafis platform and begins their job search, until their appointment in a private-sector job, along with their registration in the UAE's pension and social security systems.

For his part, His Excellency Major General Saeed Salem Balhas Al Shamsi, Acting Director General of Identity and Foreigners Affairs at ICP, said:



The new work bundle for citizens strengthens the UAE's model for secure

digital solutions, ensuring service efficiency and advancing Zero Government Bureaucracy by integrating data among all partners, which contributes to providing an excellent and swift service for both the Emirati citizen and the employer.

Meanwhile, His Excellency Feras Al Ramahi, GPSSA Director General, affirmed that the Authority's pioneering partnership with MoHRE plays a key role in achieving national Emiratisation objectives, in accordance with the highest standards of efficiency and competitiveness.



The Emirati Work Bundle in the Private Sector saves time and effort for both the job-seeking Emirati citizen and the employer, enabling us at the General Pension and Social Security Authority to track updates in the customer's status, which expedites service delivery and digital procedures in cooperation with partners.

On a similar note, His Excellency Khalaf Abdullah Rahma Al Hammadi,

Director General of the Abu Dhabi Pension Fund, said:



Launching the new Emirati Work Bundle highlights the advanced model of integrated government operations implemented at both the local and federal levels. It embodies the UAE's vision in aligning efforts and enhancing data integration among relevant entities, which allows for providing an outstanding experience for customers. This integration underscores the importance of early and accurate registration in pension systems, which strengthens the social protection system and guarantees pension rights for Emirati citizens.

The Emirati Work Bundle in the Private Sector aims to standardise required information and documents among regulatory bodies, ensure the registration of all UAE citizens working in the private sector in the country's pension and social security systems, and enhance integration of digital systems to provide fast and effective services.

UAE Labour Market: A pioneering model in social security and protecting workers' entitlements

THE PROGRESS SEEN IN THE UAE LABOUR MARKET REFLECTS A STEADFAST COMMITMENT TO ENHANCING A SAFE, STABLE, AND SUSTAINABLE WORK ENVIRONMENT.



maintaining a fair balance with those of their employers, which, in turn, supports efforts to achieve national strategic directions and the 'We the UAE 2031' vision.



The success achieved in 2025 confirms the effectiveness of the comprehensive strategy that the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation has implemented in the labour market, which prioritises establishing sustainable partnerships with federal and local government entities, as well as the private sector,

Alshehhi explained.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) announced that the social security system for workers in the labour market has made ground-breaking achievements, reporting remarkable results in terms of protecting workers' financial entitlements and enhancing their awareness over the past year (2025).

Her Excellency Dalal Alshehhi, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Labour Protection at MoHRE, affirmed that the positive results recorded in 2025 reflect the Ministry's commitment to establishing a safe, stable, and sustainable work environment that provides a high quality of life for workers, ensures their wellbeing, and protects their rights while



These results support efforts to implement legislation, ensure compliance, and optimise the execution of initiatives and programmes aimed at reinforcing the UAE's role as a pioneering model in protecting workers' rights.

The Ministry revealed that approximately one million workers had participated in 100 celebratory events organised over the past year in collaboration with partners in the federal and local government sectors and the private sector across 30 locations nationwide. These events engaged workers during national occasions and holidays, in an effort to enhance their social inclusion and promote their wellbeing. The celebrations reported a 95% satisfaction rate among workers, and included gifts and valuable prizes worth around AED10 million.

Meanwhile, workers registered in the Wage Protection System accounted for 99% of the total

workforce in the private sector. The Workers Protection Programme reported the same figure (99%), with more than 38,000 workers benefiting from it. The average amount paid to each worker was around AED9,000, with a total payout value exceeding AED300 million by the end of 2025.

Moreover, workers registered in the Unemployment Insurance Scheme accounted for 90% of the total eligible workforce by the end of last year. The programme has paid more than AED350 million in total as compensations for workers who lost their jobs since the system came into effect at the beginning of 2024 and until the end of 2025.

With regards to awareness programmes, which the Ministry provides in 17 different languages, 100% of eligible workers completed mandatory guidance sessions by the end of 2025, while the number of beneficiaries from specialised awareness programmes exceeded 3 million workers during the past year.

Last year's results also demonstrated the success of the partnership approach that the Ministry implements in its

collaborations with the private sector, which allowed for enhancing social responsibility efforts and increasing compliance among establishments with protection standards and initiatives. Additionally, the results highlighted the efficiency of MoHRE's digital and field inspection system, where 99% of private sector companies complied with the requirements of the Occupational Heat Stress Prevention Policy, while more than 10,000 rest stations were set up around the country for delivery riders.

Lastly, and driven by its firm conviction in the importance of providing labour accommodations that comply with occupational health and safety standards, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization reported that the number of companies registered in its Labour Accommodation System surpassed 2,700 by the end of 2025, allowing nearly 1.9 million workers to benefit from quality accommodations offering the highest standards of comfort, health, and safety.

The ME HR & Learning Awards 2025 – The Results Are In

ANNOUNCING THE WINNERS OF THE ME HR & LEARNING AWARDS 2025, IN NO CERTAIN ORDER.

We're proud to announce the winners of the ME HR & Learning Awards 2025, recognising people and organisations making a meaningful impact across HR, Learning, Leadership, and Workplace Innovation.

All award inclusions were based on a combination of industry recommendations, editor's picks,

and self-nominations, ensuring a broad and inclusive representation of excellence from across our community.

The Awards themselves were judged through a rigorous evaluation process designed to ensure fairness, credibility, and relevance. Each nomination was assessed using a combination of industry peer recommendations, independent

editorial review, and evidence submitted through self-nominations.

Collectively, these inputs evaluated impact, innovation, professional excellence, and contribution to the wider community, resulting in a balanced and objective selection of award recipients.

2025 Award Winners

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Business en Motion | Best AI Blended Leadership programme |
| 2 | Enthral AI | Best Use of Generative AI for Employee Development |
| 3 | Hono | Best Use of Agentic AI in HR Tech |
| 4 | The CEO Podcast series | Best Podcast for Learning in Leadership |
| 5 | LEA Growing People | Best Use of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Learning and Leadership Development |
| 6 | Studium Alliance | Best uses of Mobile Learning Technology |
| 7 | Prime Performance Labs | Best Innovation in Leadership Development |
| 8 | TAAB Biostudy Services | Best Approaches to Experiential Learning |
| 9 | Dr. Carol Talbot | Future of Intelligence & Conscious Leadership |
| 10 | Dubai Dry Docks | L&D team of the year |

2025 Award Winners

11	Mohammed Bamatraf	Best at building networks for Education synergies
12	BPME	Best innovation for a specialised community platform for Business Psychologists
13	Gazing Middle East	Best Mindset Development Programme
14	Smiletastic Lifestyle Coaching	Best Mindset Reset Tool
15	Educhain	Best Digital Micro-Credentialing Platform
16	Nader Sabry	Best Growth Strategy
17	Wellwise	Best Human Sustainability Diagnostics
18	Jombay	Best BPS-Certified Personality Assessment
19	Capytch	Best Custom Content Development
20	Leenium	Best Innovation for Learning in VR
21	Julie Lewis	Best trailblazer in nature based regenerative Leadership
22	Skillup MENA	Best Future Skills Visionary
23	The Clarity Game	Best Gamified Leadership Development Strategy
24	Sara Haboubi	Best Innovation Neuro Inclusive Learning Solution
25	LessonLab AI	Best use of Ai in Education
26	Peoplecraft Performance FZE	Best Integrated Leadership & Organisational performance strategy
27	Thrive	Best Innovation for Learning Management
28	Anastasia Grigoras	Best Mindset Training Program for Sales People
29	Innoverto	Best Training for Executive Assistants
30	NYsKOOL	Best Innovative Models for Alternative Education

2025 Award Winners

31	Mumkin	Best PR for Health & Wellbeing
32	Jaroma	Best Strategic HR Audit
33	Game Changer International	Excellence in Gamification-Based Team Development & Performance
34	HNI	Best Learning & Gamification Solutions
35	Muslim Women Coaching Academy	Emerging Global Leader in Muslim Women's Coaching & Empowerment
36	Happcoach	Best Initiative for Digital Book Transformations
37	Navlan Consultation	Best Design Thinking and Innovation Strategy
38	QBF Consulting	Best Loyalty Marketing Education & Community Network
39	Ignite Training	Best Blended Learning Program Strategies
40	Intuition	Best HIPO Strategies

Congratulations to all our 2025 award winners.

Your work continues to shape the future of HR and Learning across the region, and beyond. We are proud to recognise and showcase your impact to the ME HR & Learning community.

Annual HR & Learning community survey 2025

PROVIDING A BIG PICTURE LOOK AT WHAT THE REGION THINKS ON CRITICAL ISSUES IN OUR FIELD

[Take the survey here:](#)

At ME HR & Learning, we believe that progress in our profession begins with collaboration, shared insight, and real data from the people driving change — **you**, our community of HR and Learning professionals.

We're thrilled to announce the launch of our **Annual HR & Learning Community Survey 2025** — a comprehensive 20-question survey that takes just **10 minutes** to complete.

This year's survey focuses on the evolving challenges and opportunities in areas such as:

- Employee engagement and retention
- Learning and skills development
- Technology in HR and Learning
- Future workplace trends
- Leadership and culture

Your input will help us capture a clear snapshot of where the HR & Learning landscape stands today — and where it's headed next.

What's in it for you?

- Receive a free copy of the 2026 HR & Learning Insights Report when it's released
- Get a chance to win a 1-hour consultancy session with one of our expert members, offering tailored advice for your HR or L&D strategy



It only takes a few minutes, but your contribution will make a lasting impact on the region's HR & Learning community.

[Take the survey here:](#)

Together, let's continue building a stronger, more connected HR & Learning ecosystem across the Middle East.

WoW HR & Learning Awards 2026

RECOGNITION FOR EXCEPTIONAL INITIATIVES DEDICATED TO IMPROVING HR & LEARNING

As part of a new Initiative in 2025 ME HR & Learning set out to recognise individuals and or their organizations who are making exceptional contributions in the **World of Work (WOW)** in HR & Learning throughout our region.

If you recognise individuals', external organisations, or your own please contact us with a short paragraph and photo describing one, some, or all of the questions below:

- 1) What new initiatives are you introducing in 2026?
- 2) How are you able to build a better culture of L&D in your organisations?
- 3) What are your key measurements of success in 2026 for HR & Learning?

We will then:

- a) Publish this on our site
- b) Add to our next virtual magazine issue
- c) Enter you into the 2025 Annual Awards at the end of the year.

We would love to hear how you are contributing to HR & Learning in 2026.

Email us at info@me-hrl.com



Where to find Jobs in the UAE?

MONSTER.COM IS ONE OF THE FOREMOST WEBSITES FOR JOBS AVAILABLE IN THE UAE.

For the latest in the UAE job market, search:











For the latest in the job market in the **UAE search Monster.com.**

Search for salary and career advice. Monster.com allows you to download your CVs direct, advises you on covering letters, and cv writing.

They offer help on interviewing skills, career development and what to do if you wish to move on.



BUSINESS PSYCHOLOGIST MIDDLE EAST
CONNECTING EXPERTS TO ELEVATE WORKPLACES

The Middle East Hub for Business Psychology & Growth

Community & Consultation



Connect with experts to share knowledge and tackle workplace challenges.

Knowledge & Strategy



Access research and tools to align people, performance, and growth.

Solutions & Impact



Unlock evidence-based resources to boost leadership and results.

Who We Are?

BPME is the Middle East's first dedicated platform for business psychology and organizational development. Built to connect experts, HR leaders, and professionals, we provide a trusted space to share knowledge, tools, and services that elevate workplaces across the region.

What We Do?

We empower professionals and organizations by offering a hub of resources, expert insights, and networking opportunities. From evidence-based practices to cutting-edge solutions, BPME helps you overcome workplace challenges, enhance leadership, and unlock new levels of growth.



BUSINESS PSYCHOLOGIST MIDDLE EAST
CONNECTING EXPERTS TO ELEVATE WORKPLACES

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