

#1 HR AND LEARNING COMMUNITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

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Recalibrating Work, Skills, and Leadership for the Decade Ahead

ME
HR & LEARNING



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello Reader,

As we close out 2025, it's inspiring to look back at the incredible journey our HR & Learning community has taken this year. From major regional events to new research, thought-leadership, and the continued evolution of how people practices intersect with technology, this has been a year of transformation, resilience, and progress.

Throughout 2025, ME HR & Learning has continued to grow as a trusted platform for professionals navigating an increasingly complex world of work. We've seen remarkable contributions from our members—articles, insights, case studies, and bold perspectives that have helped shape discussions across the Middle East. Your expertise has fueled meaningful conversations and strengthened our ecosystem.

As we move into 2026, we are elevating our ambition for the publication. Expect even more powerful content, deeper industry analysis, and increased visibility for our members. We will be showcasing your products, services, and success stories to support your brand presence, lead generation, and commercial growth. Our goal is clear: to position our members not only as contributors but as industry leaders with influence and impact.

This comes at a critical moment. Many HR and Learning professionals are facing unprecedented uncertainty—balancing performance, restructuring, technological disruption, and even the fear of job security. In this climate, our mission becomes even more important. ME HR & Learning will continue to provide support through meaningful conversations, high-value learning resources, expert articles, white papers, and studies that help our community thrive in a new, integrated world of AI-driven technology and human-centred leadership.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Your engagement, insights, and trust are the cornerstone of our success. Together, we move forward—stronger, smarter, and more connected.

Warm regards,

The ME HR & Learning Team



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Rebel-Red 2026 – Let's Begin

MARK WENTWORTH, GLOBAL COLOUR AMBASSADOR SHARES INSIGHTS ON WHAT'S AHEAD IN THE COMING YEAR.

Well, here we are again at the beginning of a new year. A time when people push the reset button ready for the next twelve-month cycle, talk about new-year resolutions and plan to make it the best year yet. It's also prime time for the vision board workshop season to begin. This year even Pantone's Colour of the Year, Cloud Dancer, talks about wiping the slate clean to begin again.

2026 really is more than just a new year, it is the beginning of a new nine-year cycle, and from the Colour PsychoDynamics Archetypal Psychological perspective, 2026 is a Red Year, and the archetype of Red is the Rebel.

Let me tell you more and how you can translate and use this vibrant energy for both personal and business growth.

Firstly, a bit of background on colour and archetypes. In Ancient Greece, Pythagoras, famous for his theorem, believed and taught that the

world could be understood through numbers and musical harmony. He is also considered to be the father of numerology, which for some belongs to the "woo-woo" section of the fashion magazines, and yet for hundreds of years it was used to support leaders of old and guide them in significant decision-making.

Somewhere within that timeframe of ancient and modern day, colour and numbers became an inseparable part of the mix. In numerological form, 2026, is a 1 year, in colour form, 1 has the same intensity and frequency as the colour Red. Think for a moment of all the connections, imagery, and symbolism connected to both 1 and Red. That's the flavour of 2026.

Colours and numbers are symbolic in nature, meaning they have the potential to create different connections, emotions and images in all of us. They are both archetypal in their own way. Archetypes again have Ancient Greek roots, used by

Plato, and translated to mean "original pattern". Carl Jung brought them into the modern world with his work on the Collective Unconscious.

Carol Pearson, co-creator of the Pearson-Marr Archetype Indicator instrument, is a pioneer who brought archetypes into the workplace, not only in coaching but in marketing too. Her book "**The Hero and The Outlaw**" is usually to be found on most marketing office bookshelves.

I like to think of archetypes much like the deep-sea currents that bring the cold, nutrient-rich water up to nourish the surface ecosystems. They run deep and have the ability to change the course of a whole system, be that personally, in a business, or a team.

A benefit of knowing the archetypal colour of the year is much like looking at the weather forecast. By checking the weather, I can adjust and chart my course through the

the next twelve months accordingly.

Rebel Red

A Rebel is someone who dares to go against the grain, who wants to do something different to bring about change and to transform the old into something new. In some cases, a Rebel has a more negative than positive association, if you have that connection then I suggest thinking of a Rebel as more of a Pioneer. All pioneers have to have a certain amount of risk-taking energy to break into and create the new.

Part of the invitation and opportunity of tapping into this collective Rebel Red energy is to ask yourself as an individual and as a business:



What is the breaking new ground I/we need to be acting upon?

What would be daring and what would be brave actions to take now and this year?

Another way of using the energy of Rebel Red in

business is to reflect on the creation story. I'm always surprised how often very few people know the creation story of the business or company they work for. However big or small, it all started somewhere.

Bringing in the new takes bravery, daring, and the willingness to hold fast in the chaotic storms of creation. If you or your business are feeling a bit lost or sluggish about what next, go back to the beginning. How did it all start? Doing this is much like metaphorically jumpstarting a flat car battery.

When you know the beginning you have provenance. When you have roots you'll understand what is driving the present day. When we have these in place, we can confidently move into unchartered territory, leading the way and being the first to break new ground in whatever we do.

The Invitation to embody Rebel Red: I can do it, I am Me, Let me do something that I have never done before. Be bold, Be daring, Be Brave. Be spontaneous, Bringing the new for the greater good of the community. A Rebel with a cause.

2026 is based on the Gregorian Calendar. The Islamic New Year will be 1448, the year of the Rose Lover. In the Hindu calendar it will be 2083, the year of the Green Gardener. If you do business across all three, start with, **“Once upon a time”** a Rebel, a Lover and a Gardener met at... how do they relate, how do they do good business?

When we bring archetypal colour psychology into business, we have the opportunity of tapping into and using the collective energy of human potential. By so doing, we enter and belong to the realms of the story-seekers, the story-makers, and the story doers, and as Taoist philosopher Deng Ming Dao says,

“Whether we remain the ash or become the phoenix is entirely up to us.”



Interview with Sara Yahia, New York based HR Expert and Author

ME-HR & LEARNING TALKS TO SARA YAHIA ON THE IMPACT ON HER CAREER OF WORKING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

1. Tell us about yourself, your experience, and your time in the Middle East.

Sara Yahia is a rare blend of strategist, cultural critic, and quiet disruptor that modern HR rarely produces. With over a decade of HR experience, she has built a reputation for dismantling outdated norms with empathy, precision, and an introspective sharpness.

Her Middle East chapter was a masterclass in navigating contradiction. After managing large-scale operations in New York, she moved to Qatar, a familiar and foreign world. As she pinpoints,

“Culture is not what’s printed on the wall; it’s what leaders silently allow.”

The experience was not one-sided; she also encountered genuine warmth, professionalism, and hospitality from many colleagues, especially local nationals and those with little power in these dynamics. These contrasts



 **SARA YAHIA, NEW YORK BASED HR EXPERT AND AUTHOR**

sharpened her leadership lens. She didn’t bend to flawed systems; she used them to rise, designing fairer, more accountable practices. As she told [Forbes](#),

“What happens outside the office inevitably shapes workplace behaviour... Bias and exclusion can ripple through teams, but the right culture and accountability turn these challenges into learning opportunities.”

2. How has the work culture in the Middle East impacted your work and career?

The Middle East taught Sara that two realities can coexist: government workplaces with clear structure and strong employee protections, and private-sector environments powered by hierarchy, relationships, and unwritten rules. As she often puts it, it’s **“a global behaviour wrapped in regional nuance.”**

She saw many organizations speak the language of transformation while still relying on exclusive networks and a culture of proximity, where being “known” mattered more than being capable. As she wrote, **“The right environment won’t ask you to dim your light; it’ll hand you the switch and say, ‘SHINE!’”**

Her push has always been to shift from “cultural fit” to “cultural contribution,” where people add value because of

who they are, not because they mirror the dominant group. And her observation captures the challenge with precision:



Systems

protect themselves, not the people inside them.

Yet what shaped her most was the contrast. The same dynamics that fuel bias can also ignite progress when leaders choose accountability over comfort. She worked alongside professionals, especially national talents, whose integrity and warmth reflected the region at its best. Her takeaway is simple and firm:



Align culture with values... not with egos.

A philosophy she carries into every global role that follows.

3. How easy is it for you to get direct access to decision-makers?

It's rarely about the title; it's about trust. As an insider-outsider, Sara often watched decisions unfold off stage, shaped by informal networks before meetings even began. Yet results changed the room. As she reminds peers,



I wish credibility and performance would be the only passport that works in every culture.

The reality?

“Visibility often outweighs performance.”

Without top management embracing ideas, no top-to-bottom approach, critical for embedding values, dismantling toxic behaviours, and shaping performance and retention, can succeed. When her strategies were recognized and backed, doors didn't just open; they stayed open.

4. What are your biggest challenges in the next 5 years?

The challenge is no longer technical capability but whether companies can unlearn outdated mindsets fast enough. Gender equity, leadership diversity, and cultural intelligence aren't **“initiatives”** anymore; they're survival tools. In her contributing work, she reminds us that organizations don't fail from lack of talent; they fail from lack of listening. This is the battle ahead.

5. What skills and competencies must be developed to meet the region's talent needs?

She emphasizes emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, and inclusive leadership. Leaders need a global perspective while staying grounded in local realities. Real impact comes from meaningful mentorship, inclusive pipelines, and training that lifts underrepresented voices. As she says,



You can't coach tomorrow's leaders with yesterday's rules.



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Recalibrating Work, Skills, and Leadership for the Decade Ahead

RON THOMAS, CEO STRATEGY FOCUS GROUP, SHARES REFLECTIONS ON 2025 AND HIS THOUGHTS ON 2026

Recalibrating Work, Skills, and Leadership for the Decade Ahead As 2025 comes to a close, one thing is clear: we are no longer debating whether work has changed — we are living inside its consequences.

Over the past year, organizations across regions and industries have quietly crossed a threshold. The old assumptions that once anchored workforce strategy — linear careers, stable skill sets, predictable leadership pipelines — have fractured under the combined weight of automation, AI, demographic shifts, and economic volatility. What we witnessed in 2025 was not disruption for disruption's sake, but a recalibration — one that exposed structural weaknesses while opening the door to a more intentional future of work.

2025: The Year of Reckoning, Not Reinvention Much of 2025 was spent confronting uncomfortable truths.

- Degrees continued to lose
- Job titles proved to be poor

proxies for actual value creation

- Performance systems struggled to keep pace with hybrid, AI-augmented work
- Leadership pipelines showed visible cracks, particularly at mid-career levels

Organizations that fared best were not those with the most advanced technology, but those willing to rethink how work is designed, how skills are developed, and how leadership potential is identified.

Across global client conversations, a recurring pattern emerged: HR teams were being asked to move faster, but without a clear architectural blueprint. Strategy was evolving in real time, yet workforce models often lagged behind — built for stability in a world now defined by motion.

2025, in many ways, was the year organizations stopped optimizing yesterday and began questioning tomorrow.

The Silent Shift: From Roles to

Capabilities One of the most significant — and underappreciated — shifts of 2025 was the movement away from role-based thinking toward capability-based workforce design.

Rather than asking, "Who fills this role?" leading organizations began asking:

- What capabilities does the business need to win?
- Which of these can be automated, augmented, or redeployed?
- Where do humans add irreplaceable value?

This shift fundamentally altered conversations around talent



RON THOMAS, CEO OF STRATEGY FOCUS GROUP

acquisition, learning, and succession planning. Skills became more fluid, careers more non-linear, and internal mobility less about promotions and more about adjacent capability movement.

The implications for leadership were profound. Traditional leadership development models — heavily focused on hierarchy and tenure — struggled to keep up with the speed at which value was being created across networks, projects, and ecosystems.

Looking Ahead to 2026: From Experimentation to Intentional Design If 2025 was the year of reckoning, 2026 will be the year of intentional design.

Three trends are poised to define the next phase:

1. **Workforce Architecture Becomes a Boardroom Priority** Organizations will increasingly treat workforce design with the same rigor as financial and operating models. Strategic Workforce Planning will evolve from headcount forecasting into scenario-based architecture — blending AI, human capability, and business strategy into one integrated view.

Boards will ask harder questions:

- Do we have the capabilities to execute our strategy — not today, but three years from now?
- Where are our capability dependencies and talent risks?
- How resilient is our leadership pipeline under multiple future scenarios?

1. Leadership Redefined for an AI-Augmented World

Leadership in 2026 will not be about control, presence, or positional authority. It will be about sense-making, ethical judgment, and the ability to orchestrate human and machine intelligence.

Leaders will be expected to:

- Make decisions alongside AI, not in competition with it
- Build trust in environments where work is increasingly invisible
- Develop others continuously, not episodically
- This demands a recalibration of leadership development — away from programs and toward practice, exposure, and real-time learning loops.

1. Careers as Portfolios, Not Ladders

Employees are already behaving this way; organizations are simply catching up.

By 2026, career paths will look less like ladders and more like portfolios of experiences, skills, and contributions. Internal talent marketplaces, project-based assignments, and cross-functional rotations will move from “innovations” to expectations — particularly for critical talent.

Organizations that fail to support this fluidity will struggle with engagement, retention, and relevance.

The Opportunity Ahead The future of work is not something that will arrive fully formed. It is being built — decision by decision — inside organizations today.

The real question for leaders as we enter 2026 is not whether they are future-ready, but whether they are architecting their workforce with intention or simply reacting to change as it arrives.

Those who succeed will be the ones who stop chasing trends and start designing systems — systems where strategy, skills, leadership, and learning move in concert.

Because in the end, the future of work is not about technology. It's about how deliberately we choose to design the human enterprise around it.

Beyond Authority: The Next Evolution of Leadership in the Gulf and Middle East

JOHN KAIROUZ & MARIE-LOUISE ADLERCREUTZ PRESENT THEIR VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE REGION

Leadership in the Gulf and Middle East carries a unique level of complexity. In the UAE alone, expatriates make up close to 90% of the population, representing more than 150 nationalities. Every organization becomes a meeting point of different expectations, communication styles, cultural habits, and interpretations of hierarchy. Leaders here are expected to move fast, perform at global standards, and maintain harmony across a deeply diverse workforce.

In our leadership and executive coaching work across the region, one theme consistently appears: leaders who care deeply about their people and results, but feel frustrated by the gap between what they expect from their teams and what they actually see. They want ownership, initiative, and strategic thinking — yet they find themselves receiving escalations, delays, hesitation, or reactive behavior.

This frustration is rarely about

capability. Most employees have the potential to perform at high levels. The real challenge often sits inside the inner world of the leader. When pressure increases — deadlines, risks, stakeholder demands, cultural expectations — leaders unintentionally shift into a mental state designed for protection rather than performance.

Neuroscience offers a simple explanation. When stress rises, the **limbic system**, the brain's emotional center, becomes more active. This is the part of the brain responsible for scanning for threats and protecting us. At the same time, the **prefrontal cortex** — the area responsible for logic, decision-making, empathy, and creative thinking — becomes harder to access. When this happens, leaders become more reactive, more controlling, and more focused on avoiding mistakes than enabling growth.

Teams feel this shift immediately. They become cautious instead of creative.

They wait instead of act. They focus on protecting themselves rather than solving problems. The psychological space to think shrinks, and performance drops not because of lack of talent, but because of reduced psychological safety.

Imagine a leader who is respected and experienced, yet under pressure begins to tighten control. He steps in, rescues decisions, and takes on more than he should. His intention is efficiency, but the outcome is dependency. His exhaustion increases, his team's confidence decreases, and the cycle continues.

The next evolution of leadership in this region is not about abandoning hierarchy. It's about

transforming authority from protection to presence.

Presence means the leader stays grounded even when pressure rises.

It means their emotional system is regulated enough for the prefrontal cortex to stay online — allowing clarity, empathy, and strategic thinking to guide decisions instead of fear.

Here are a few questions that invite reflection:

- When I'm under pressure, do I lead from clarity or from tension?

- Do my people hesitate because they lack skill, or because they don't want to disappoint me?
- What does my presence signal: openness or urgency?

Empowerment is not something leaders give verbally. It's something people feel internally. And they feel it when authority is paired with

emotional presence. When leaders operate from this space, teams move with ownership rather than permission.

This is the shift that will define the next generation of leadership in the Gulf and Middle East: authority with presence, empowerment with clarity, and performance built on psychological safety.



Human Creativity, Uncertainty, and the Choice Ahead

SARA HABOUBI SHARES HER THOUGHTS ON 2026 WITH ME-HR & LEARNING

As 2025 draws to a close, it is difficult to reflect on the year in isolation. The reality is that we are still living with the aftershocks of a world that has been in near-constant disruption since 2020. Global uncertainty, social fragmentation, economic volatility, and rapid technological acceleration have become the norm rather than the exception. For many individuals and organisations, certainty has been conspicuously absent. Long-term planning has felt fragile, while the pace of change has tested both resilience and adaptability.

One of the most defining undercurrents of this period has been fear. Fear of instability. Fear of irrelevance. And more recently, fear of artificial intelligence. Since generative AI entered mainstream awareness, public discourse has frequently focused on replacement rather than augmentation. Headlines have predicted widespread job losses, human redundancy,

and a future where machines outperform people across creative, cognitive, and relational domains. For many, this has triggered anxiety and resistance rather than curiosity.

Yet 2025 has also revealed another truth. Periods of uncertainty, while uncomfortable, are often fertile ground for growth. When familiar structures fall away, individuals and organisations are forced to reassess what truly matters. Across coaching, learning, leadership, and entrepreneurship, there has been a noticeable shift towards deeper questions. Who am I without certainty. What value do I bring beyond efficiency. What cannot be automated.

In this sense, the very technologies that have caused fear have also acted as catalysts. AI has stripped away complacency. It has challenged superficial competence and exposed the limitations of purely transactional work. At the same time, it has opened space for creativity, innovation,

and new forms of human connection. Many professionals have used 2025 to reinvent themselves, to build offerings that integrate technology while doubling down on insight, empathy, and lived experience.

This theme was echoed clearly at both the DOERS Summit in Dubai and the Bridge Summit in Abu Dhabi. What stood out was not a rejection of AI, but a reframing of its role. Speaker after speaker emphasised that human creativity cannot be replaced. Not because technology is inadequate, but because being human is fundamentally complex, contextual, and unpredictable. Creativity does not arise from data alone. It emerges from contradiction, emotion, curiosity, and meaning.

There is also a growing movement towards valuing the human-made. Handcrafted products, bespoke services, and experience-led offerings are increasingly recognised for their depth and authenticity. In a world of infinite replication,



originality carries a premium. What is created by a person, shaped by experience, and delivered through relationship now holds differentiated value. This is not nostalgia. It is a strategic response to saturation.

For organisations and individuals alike, the concept of a competitive moat is evolving. In 2026, defensibility will not come solely from scale or speed. It will come from experience, expertise, and human creativity. Experience provides context and judgement. Expertise brings discernment and trust. Human creativity fuels innovation that resonates emotionally as well as intellectually. Together, these elements form a moat

that technology alone cannot breach.

AI, of course, remains a remarkable tool. It enhances productivity, accelerates ideation, and lowers barriers to entry. Used well, it can free humans from repetitive tasks and enable deeper focus on strategy, design, and connection. Used poorly, it risks reducing people to operators within an automated production line, optimised for output rather than meaning.

This brings us to 2026. The year ahead represents a choice. We can continue down a path where speed, automation, and efficiency dominate, at the cost of depth and humanity. Or we can

consciously return to ourselves. To our capacity for reflection, creativity, and connection. To work that is not only scalable, but significant.

For leaders, educators, coaches, and creators, 2026 is an invitation to be deliberate. To integrate AI without outsourcing identity. To build systems that support human potential rather than replace it. And to remember that progress is not defined solely by what we can produce, but by who we become in the process.

The risk is not that AI will take over. The real risk is that we forget what it means to be human.

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!



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.

The Highlights and Predictions for 2026 for Capytech, Dubai

DAMIAN HEHIR OF CAPYTECH, SHARES THEIR SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES OF THE YEAR AND WHAT LIES AHEAD

2025 Highlights This year marked a significant milestone for Capytech as we successfully delivered on a major government initiative supporting entrepreneurship in the region - details of which will soon be made public. This project reinforced our commitment to creating impactful learning experiences that drive real outcomes.

We also expanded our ecosystem substantially. Our partnership with Articulate, the world's leading authoring tool, now enables us to offer even more powerful content creation capabilities. We've brought additional premium learning libraries to the Middle East, alongside a growing portfolio of accredited training content - ensuring our clients have access to globally recognised qualifications alongside engaging digital experiences.

Most significantly, we've continued advancing our AI capabilities across the learning journey. From intelligent content recommendations to

adaptive learning pathways, AI integration has become central to how we design and deliver solutions.

2026 Predictions AI will no longer be optional in corporate learning—it will be the baseline expectation. Organisations that haven't integrated AI-powered personalisation, intelligent tutoring, or automated content development will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage. I expect to see three key trends:

- AI tutors becoming mainstream - Moving beyond novelty to genuinely useful coaching and performance support embedded in daily

workflows

- Consolidation of learning ecosystems - Companies will demand integrated suites rather than fragmented point solutions
- Skills-based learning gaining momentum - With AI handling content delivery, the focus will shift to demonstrable competency development and real-time skills validation

The providers who succeed will be those integrating AI to maximise value at every touchpoint, not as a feature, but as a fundamental approach.



The Highlights and Predictions for 2026 for 'business en motion.'

DEBBIE NICOL, SHARES HER SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES OF THE YEAR AND WHAT LIES AHEAD

My Highlights of 2025

What key milestones, achievements, new projects, or lessons defined your year?

business en motion has celebrated a remarkable year, one defined by expansion, innovation and meaningful progress.

A standout milestone was the enhancement of our leadership portfolio through the introduction of *PresencePro*, a cutting-edge leadership solution now live at presencepro.ai.

As we look ahead, *business en motion* will be inviting organizations that view leadership as a strategic differentiator to test-run this contemporary toolkit beginning January 2026.

Complementing the tool is our

new learning experience, Future-Proof Your Leadership: A Shift in Presence.

This program is designed either to elevate existing leadership offerings to new heights or provide a powerful starting point for organizations beginning their leadership journey.

- Its Body of Knowledge is deeply aligned with today's workplace realities.
- Its learning process is crafted for the modern learner; it is flexible, relevant and immediately applicable.
- And its AI Companions are already proving to be a formidable value-add for our current test clients.

If you'd like to explore what this could mean for your department or broader organizational team, simply click through to learn more.

My Predictions for 2026

What trends do you expect to see in HR, Learning, Leadership, Talent, AI, or your specific area of expertise?

I expect to see HR, OD and Talent functions stepping more intentionally into the AI space, yet doing so with a degree of trepidation. The real challenge won't be adopting the technology;

it will be learning how to balance its power with the human-centeredness our professions are built upon.

Organizations will increasingly seek ways to integrate AI without diluting empathy, judgement and presence, the very qualities that define effective leadership and people practices.

WellWise Looks at Trends in Wellbeing for 2026

BOBBI HARTSHORNE OF WELLWISE SHARES HER 2025 HIGHLIGHTS AND PREDICTIONS FOR 2026

This year marked significant progress in advancing human sustainability and evidence-led workplace wellbeing. WellWise shared its expertise with more than 1,500 attendees across 12 events and workshops, supporting organisations across sectors to strengthen culture, resilience, and leadership capability.

A GCC defence client achieved the Most Supportive Technology Company award following a WellWise diagnostic and advisory programme, and we celebrated the publication of our 100th WiseTalk article, now reaching almost 2,000 subscribers. We also launched the WellWise Verified Mark, with the first accreditation awarded to our Abu Dhabi-based client and expanded our team to meet rising global demand.

The common thread across all these achievements is impact. We used robust data to guide meaningful changes that will improve employee experience and business performance for

years to come.

Bobbi Hartshorne, Founder and CEO, Predictions for 2026

If 2025 was the year leaders recognised the gap between intent and impact, 2026 will be the year they realign their systems for human sustainability. Four shifts stand out.

1. Wellbeing will evolve into human sustainability and move further into core governance, with psychosocial risk integrated into enterprise risk registers and senior leadership reporting.



BOBBI HARTSHORNE, FOUNDER AND CEO OF WELLWISE

2. Investment in leadership and management capability will become a priority, with practical upskilling in workload design and supportive management as this is where the greatest risks and obstacles have been identified.
3. Culture, fairness, and job design will take centre stage as organisations focus on the structural conditions that enable performance and strengthen rather than deplete human capacity.
4. Evidence will become non-negotiable as leaders demand credible diagnostics, reporting, and measurable outcomes in a space that has been historically undermeasured.

As organisations transition to human sustainability as strategic infrastructure, the WellWise diagnostic will continue helping leaders map, measure, and manage psychosocial, performance, and capacity risk with clarity and confidence.

Enthral Expands to the U.S. to Redefine Workforce Skilling with Agentic AI

US EXPANSION IS DRIVEN BY THE GROWING ADOPTION OF AI TOOLS FOR CORPORATE LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Enthral.ai, a leading provider of AI-powered workforce skilling platform, today announced its strategic expansion into the United States, further strengthening its footprint globally. With a solid customer base in India, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, the US expansion is driven by the growing adoption of AI tools for corporate Learning & Development (L&D) and is being bolstered by the onboarding of Steve Goldberg, a top HR Tech influencer, as a strategic advisor for the region. An ex-VP & Research Director for HR Technology at Bersin and HCM Practice Leader at ISG, among other leadership roles, Goldberg brings 4+ decades of expertise in guiding companies on organizational agility and workforce development.

The expansion comes at a time when skill demands in the United States are shifting significantly. Research from McKinsey suggests that the requirement for advanced technological capabilities could

rise by almost 50% by 2030, while demand for basic digital skills may grow by nearly 70%. The global HR technology market is projected to almost double from around USD 36 billion in 2024 to nearly USD 69.9 billion by 2033 with North America as the largest contributor. The share of CHROs who are actively planning or already deploying GenAI in HR has jumped from by early 2025.

As organizations prepare for these changes, L&D models are moving away from traditional training toward Agentic AI-powered personalized upskilling and talent transformation.

'Made in India, for the world', Enthral's unified LMS and LXP platform, powered by agentic AI, is ideally suited for America's Enterprises looking to sharpen their sales teams' communication to drive higher revenue as is equally effective for Small and Medium Businesses (SMBs) seeking a comprehensive solution to

upskill their internal and external teams. Its immersive AI avatar-based, two-way role-play capability enables customer-facing teams, and communication-intensive roles to engage in scenario-based simulations for real-time practice. The platform's comprehensive feature set, encompassing learning/training, talent, and performance capabilities, deliver a seamless, outcomes-driven solution for organizations aiming to build adaptive, future-ready teams.

Asma Shaikh, Co-founder & MD, Enthral.ai, said

"Our expansion into the U.S. is a natural progression of our mission to enable organizations to build confident, future-ready workforces through practice-led, AI-powered learning platforms. The U.S. market is at a pivotal moment where skill transformation must go beyond content delivery to measurable performance outcomes. With Steve's



expertise, we are confident of navigating the U.S. market, refining our platform for enterprise adoption, and aligning our offerings with local business expectations while leveraging India's growing AI and talent capabilities as a backbone for innovation."

and positively impact performance and business outcomes. Our platform uses AI Agents to help teams build real skills fast, and to keep improving at scale,

said Sammir Inamdar, Co-founder & CEO of Enthral.aiHe further added,

As we enter the U.S. market, the focus is to build on what has worked rather than scale for its own sake.

to build on what has worked rather than scale for its own sake. Enthral has grown at around 30% year-on-year as a cash-positive, self-funded company, and we aim to maintain this growth rate over the next few years.

Enthral'sxpansion reflects a dual strategy:

bringing India's technological innovation to the world while responding to global demand for scalable, intelligent skilling solutions.

Enterprises
don't care about just training anymore;
they want to 'upskill' their people

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.

At **SkillUp MENA**, we've seen what derails projects and how to avoid it:



Scope Creep

Goals expand beyond control.



The Ghost Client

Stakeholders disengage mid-project.



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 call with a SkillUp expert.



Reimagining Purposeful Growth for Generations to Come

CAROLINE HOBEIKA, CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER AT AW ROSTAMANI GROUP SHARES THE GROUP'S RENEWED FOCUS ON PURPOSE AND PEOPLE.

In a world that never stands still, transformation has become more than a corporate buzzword. It's no longer just about new strategies or digital tools — at its heart, it's about people. True progress happens when organisations invest in nurturing their culture, growing their capabilities, and preparing for the generations that will follow.

For us at AW Rostamani Group (AWR Group), our recent rebrand represents far more than a new look; it's a symbol of an inward shift — a renewed focus on purpose, people, and the future we're building together.

The Changing Face of Talent

The pace of change around us demands more than technical skill. It calls for curiosity, adaptability, and a deep connection to purpose. The old idea of talent as a resource to be managed is giving way to a new understanding: people are the ultimate differentiator.

That means talent

development can't sit on the sidelines. It must be embedded within business strategy and measured with the same rigour as financial performance. Career pathways are no longer linear but dynamic and fluid — evolving in line with both market dynamics and individual aspirations. Organisations that

development can't sit on the sidelines. It must be embedded within business strategy and measured with the same rigour as financial performance. Career pathways are no longer linear but dynamic and fluid — evolving in line with both market dynamics and



 **CAROLINE HOBEIKA, CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER AT AW ROSTAMANI GROUP**

The Engine of Transformation

However, even the most sophisticated strategies falter without a strong cultural foundation. As the popular saying goes, "culture eats strategy for breakfast." Cutting-edge technology and innovative business models only succeed when the culture evolves alongside them.

The most successful organisations will be those that foster environments where ambition and

well-being are mutually reinforcing, where experimentation is encouraged (even in failure), and where cross-generational collaboration thrives.

This requires leadership that visibly invests in mentorship, celebrates innovation regardless of hierarchy, and makes development resources genuinely accessible.

At AWR Group, we've learned that storytelling and lived experiences are what embed change. When people see their own values reflected in the organisation's journey, transformation becomes real — and lasting.

Embracing Generation Next

This commitment to a vibrant culture and evolving talent landscape is rooted in our guiding principle, **"Embrace Generation Next"**.

It encapsulates the forward-looking mindset that sits at the heart of our transformation. It's both a promise and a challenge — to ensure our growth today creates value for tomorrow. Purpose and performance are

not competing priorities; they are partners in progress.

Talented professionals — especially the younger generations — are seeking meaning in their work, drawn to companies whose mission resonates with their own values. They want to contribute to something larger than themselves — to sustainability, innovation, inclusion. When organisations align their business models with these aspirations, they not only attract top talent but also unlock deeper engagement and creativity.

People at the Heart of Progress

Ultimately, every transformation begins and ends with people. Companies that see their people as their biggest strength, that create spaces for ideas to flourish and leaders to grow, will shape the future.

Today's talent is ambitious, educated, and eager to make an impact. They deserve companies that genuinely believe in them, invest in their growth, and offer clear paths to

That's the essence of purposeful growth — and our rebrand is both a reflection of that belief and a reaffirmation of our readiness for what comes next.

Caroline Hobeika is the Chief Human Resources Officer at AWR Group, where she leads the Human Resources function and aligns people practices with the organisation's vision.

She develops and implements HR policies across the Group, from talent acquisition, compensation and benefits, and employee relations to learning and development, change management, and talent and performance. Aligning HR strategies with AWR Group's core values, Caroline strategically drives sustainable growth and empowers employees to achieve their full potential.

Why Every Employee Wellbeing Strategy Should Start with Recruitment

MEQA SMITH GROWTH STRATEGIST DISCUSSES HOW RECRUITING DIFFERENTLY CHANGES THINGS FOR THE BETTER

We spend a lot of time talking about wellbeing at work: mindfulness programmes, flexible work policies, and engagement surveys. These things matter, but they're often just well-intentioned attempts to fix issues that were baked in long before a person's first day.

The truth is, employee wellbeing doesn't start with yoga classes or mental health days. It starts with how you hire, or more precisely, with the paradigm behind the way you hire.

The Hidden Foundation of Wellbeing

Every personal relationship begins with an intention. That intention shapes how you show up, communicate, and what you expect. Work is no different.

But here your intention falls into one of two main categories: extraction or expansion.

If you see work as a

development can't sit on the sidelines. It must be embedded within business strategy and measured with the same rigour as financial performance. Career pathways are no longer linear but dynamic and fluid — evolving in line with both market dynamics and individual aspirations. Organisations that are transactional you'll be operating with an extractive mindset, and you'll behave in a transactional way.

If you see work as a way for humans to build mutual working relationships based on collaboration and connection, your intention is expansion. Your intention shapes the initial employment relationship you

build, which can have a long-term impact on productivity, retention, and wellbeing.

Why Wellbeing Starts with Hiring

If you start the relationship the right way, so much suffering can be avoided.

Here's how recruitment usually goes: jobs are created with lists of tasks and set wage, and are bolstered by vague references to the "great company culture". What isn't discussed is the day-to-day realities of the role. Which is odd, considering one of the most important parts of hiring is making sure employees are



comfortable with 'the way things are done around here', and have traits that match the role requirements, team and wider culture.

New employees hired under false pretences find themselves feeling let down, frustrated, and sometimes even unable to do the jobs they were hired to do.

Is it really any wonder so many people burn out and disengage?

You Can't Fix a Broken Arm with a Plaster

Most companies are trying to solve these problems downstream with "perks" such as rooftop yoga and team building days. But the real problem is upstream.

When a hiring approach doesn't reflect the reality of the culture and work, it attracts the wrong people.

This leads to unhealthy employment relationships where people feel stressed, anxious, and disengaged, which ultimately erodes productivity. A relationship doomed from the start.

From Employment to Enrolment

An upstream paradigm shift changes everything.

Enrolment thinking is expansive. It's about partnership and recognises that wellbeing is a by-product of the way people feel about working for you. It's about alignment on goals, principles, contribution, and reward.

In this paradigm, the most powerful thing you can do is hire in a way that sets up healthy working relationships. Because when employees thrive, so do businesses.

Employment thinking, on the other hand, is about extraction - getting people to do things they don't want to do by incentivising them with perks.

The result is a vicious cycle of fatigue, frustration, and turnover. In this paradigm employees are cogs in a machine of inherently unfulfilling and mis-aligned work. Some employees will painstakingly strive for recognition and to feel a sense of "belonging" in a mis-match environment, and those that don't achieve it burn out. The

rest simply quit or take another job.

The Ripple Effects of "Hiring Wellbeing"

When you recruit differently, everything downstream changes for the better.

Engagement: People feel seen, valued, and connected from the start.

Productivity: Employees self-manage, innovate, and collaborate naturally.

Retention: When people choose a company because it helps them grow, they want to stay.

Culture: A culture of enrolment fosters trust, autonomy, and psychological safety, the real drivers of wellbeing.

Profit: When you hire the right people the right way, you unlock creativity, innovation, and higher retention - and profits follow.

Recruitment done right isn't a cost. It's one of the most powerful investments you can make in employee wellbeing and performance.

The limbo that paralyses us

START. NOW. NO EXCUSE IS GOOD ENOUGH, SAYS UZAIR HASSAN, CEO OF 3H SOLUTIONS, DUBAI.

The price for not doing it is so much higher than the price one may pay for trying something out. Take the first step. Be brave. Never look back and regret what could have been.

The trepidations, insecurities and limiting beliefs all combine to make the first step seem impossible. Its that first step that changes everything. Things begin to look simpler, more achievable, after that first step.

Why not? Is the question one must ask themselves. What have I got to lose? Its not just about money, but time itself and the effort involved. Then there is the specter of failure. The ever-looming shame or loss of face. What would people think? How would I extract myself from a potential downside?

Yet, the upside has something to offer that is tangible. Not hurt feelings, or peoples viewpoints or the sentiment of shame etc. Quantifiable and hard evidence of your success. Your ability to navigate through it all.

The freedom, fame or money (Whatever one is looking for) that comes with a successful venture. The obvious self-satisfaction. The sense of achievement, of having fought one's demons, and won.

In over 40 years of experience I have seen, first hand, the first step as being the absolute hardest. I have had many forays into the business world with over 10 businesses setup and taught at multiple schools and universities and talked about entrepreneurship on multiple platforms. Time & again, the one thing that has stood out has been that first step.

How? What's the first step to begin with? Where does one even start? Where does the money come from? Can I do this on my own? Is the market ready for this? Self-doubt. Self-belief.



The feeling of discomfort of being where one is, the status quo, must be stronger than the sting of change.

Let me say this.
It never ends.
The questioning.

If its not questions pertaining to the first step, it's about one's own ability, moving forward, scaling, direction etc. Questioning is good. Just be aware of the analysis paralysis trap. Remember, the first step needs to be taken.

Same goes for jobs. We all know when to get one. We need it, Need the money, Need the stability. But most of us seem to miss the signs when it is time to leave a job. Make the move. Resign. You are not going anywhere unless you go somewhere.

Limitless possibilities exist. Limited only by that first step.

Like Nike says, **Just do it.**

← **UZAIR HASSAN, CEO, 3H SOLUTIONS, DUBAI, UAE.**

Women In Leadership: The Rise of Emirati Women in Business: Leading Under Commercial and Cultural Pressure

WOMEN ACCOUNT FOR 66% OF THE UAE GOVERNMENT WORKFORCE

The rise of Emirati women in business is not just a social milestone - it is one of the UAE's most underappreciated competitive advantages. Too often, discussions about women in leadership remain trapped in the language of inclusion and representation. The reality is more compelling: Emirati women are excelling under uniquely intense cultural and commercial pressures, and in doing so, they are pioneering a style of leadership that businesses across the Middle East - and beyond - would do well to emulate.

The numbers tell a powerful story. Women now account for 66% of the UAE government workforce and hold an extraordinary 75% of leadership roles in government entities - one of the highest rates of female public-sector leadership anywhere in the world. In the private sector, Emirati women occupy 15% of board seats in listed companies, double the figure just five years ago. These

figures put the UAE ahead of countries such as Japan (10%) and close to Singapore (16%), underlining how quickly progress has accelerated.

But the statistics only scratch the surface. What makes Emirati women leaders remarkable is not simply their growing presence, but the way they operate under a dual spotlight: cultural expectations at home and commercial scrutiny in the boardroom. Every success is amplified as a win for Emirati progress. Every setback risks being interpreted as a collective step backwards. This is leadership at high altitude - where cultural integrity must be preserved while global competitiveness is demanded.

Pressure as a catalyst, Not a constraint

Conventional leadership models tend to treat cultural context as a constraint to be managed. Emirati women leaders flip that logic on its head. By using cultural intelligence as a

strategic tool, they are able to manage diverse stakeholders, balance tradition with transformation, and deliver results without sacrificing authenticity.

This is not theory - it is a daily reality in a country where business meetings can involve stakeholders from 20 nationalities, and where local heritage must coexist with global practice. Far from holding them back, Emirati women's deep cultural grounding gives them a natural advantage in building trust, creating consensus, and navigating complexity.

Five leadership lessons from Emirati women

From this lived experience emerge five strategies that regional and global businesses should pay attention to:

1. Perspective management: They balance the urgent demands of quarterly

performance with the long-term reputational weight of cultural expectations. That dual-lens thinking produces decisions that are both commercially sound and socially sustainable.

2. Emotional regulation: Leading under scrutiny requires composure. Emirati women leaders cultivate resilience, acting as emotional anchors for their teams in environments where stress levels can derail performance.

3. Communication across boundaries: Multilingual and culturally fluent, they switch easily between directness and diplomacy, ensuring clarity while respecting norms across diverse audiences.

4. Innovation through evolution: Instead of chasing disruption for its own sake, Emirati women build change on continuity - an approach that secures faster adoption and reduces resistance.

5. Mentorship and legacy building: Their leadership is generational. With 56% of

UAE university graduates and 61% of STEM graduates now women, Emirati leaders are creating ecosystems of mentorship to ensure that the next generation of talent rises with them.

These are not just "soft skills". They are hard-edged competitive capabilities, directly linked to organisational resilience, customer loyalty, and long-term growth.

The commercial dividend

Organisations led or influenced by Emirati women are demonstrating higher cohesion, lower resistance to change, and stronger loyalty. This resilience is not abstract - it translates into bottom-line performance. In markets where volatility is the norm, leaders who can blend cultural authenticity with commercial execution are the ones who build companies that last.

Consider the example of the LEAP Graduate Trainee Program, run by Emirates Global Aluminium in partnership with Ignite Training. Designed to prepare the next generation of Emirati leaders, female participants in particular are

thriving, precisely because the program acknowledges - and equips them to manage - the dual pressures of cultural and commercial leadership. This is more than training; it is a model of how inclusive, context-sensitive leadership development can align with national economic goals.

A regional and global model

What is happening in the UAE has global relevance. In international negotiations, Emirati women leaders act as cultural translators - bridging local tradition with international norms. Their emphasis on relationship-building over transactional deals aligns perfectly with the UAE's long-term economic diplomacy.

As UAE businesses expand abroad, Emirati women are becoming not only leaders at home but ambassadors of a distinctive leadership model abroad: One that merges values with vision. Their rise challenges the outdated binary of 'modernisation versus tradition' by showing that tradition, when intelligently applied, can be a source of strategic strength.

The takeaway for business leaders

The lesson for business leaders across the Middle East and beyond is clear: What once looked like a constraint is now a competitive advantage.

Emirati women are showing how to lead under pressure by turning cultural expectation into strategic value.

For companies, this means two things. First, inclusive leadership development is not a 'nice to have' - it is a direct driver of resilience and performance.

Second, the strategies forged by Emirati women leaders under dual pressure are not just relevant to

gender diversity. They are relevant to anyone seeking to lead in an increasingly complex, multicultural business environment.

As the UAE continues its rapid diversification and global expansion, the women are reshaping its leadership

landscape are providing something even more valuable than representation. They are offering a playbook for sustainable leadership in the 21st century. And it is time the business world started paying attention.



The International Coaching Federation Announces Inaugural Converge Summit 2026

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND EVENT WILL BRING GLOBAL COACHING COMMUNITY TOGETHER IN PARIS, EUROPE

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: ICFCONVERGESUMMIT.COM

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) has announced its inaugural Converge Summit 2026, taking place in Paris, France from 17 – 19 May 2026. The first event of its kind in Europe, Converge Summit is an immersive gathering designed to bring together coaches, leaders and coaching advocates from around the world for two days of learning and growth.

Celebrating the diversity of ICF's global network by blending regional insight with international best practice, Converge Summit 2026 is a more intimate event than traditional conferences, welcoming around 900 attendees, with a focus on sparking connection, collaboration and conversation.

Converge Summit 2026 will feature keynote speakers, workshops and interactive discussions designed to help coaches at every stage of their

perspectives and strengthen their impact across personal, professional and organisational contexts.

Magdalena Nowicka Mook, CEO of the International Coaching Federation, said,

The event follows ICF's recent 30th anniversary celebrations and signals the next chapter in the organisation's evolution - demonstrating its ongoing commitment to innovation, inclusivity and professional excellence on a global scale.

 **Coaching thrives on connection, and Converge Summit 2026 is where those connections come to life. This new Summit reflects our commitment to bringing people together to inspire change, strengthen our community and continue shaping the future of the coaching profession.**

The debut ICF Converge Summit highlights ICF's global role as the gold standard in coaching, showcasing its commitment to ethical practice, evidence-based impact and professional development across more than 150 countries. It will focus on four key content themes:

- **Supporting the Coaching Community –** Exploring collaboration, inclusion and maintaining human connection in the age of AI and digital transformation

- **The Business of Coaching** – Practical insights into sustainable growth, marketing, client relationships and business innovation
- **Coaching Unique Populations** – Addressing the needs of diverse groups, from youth and underrepresented communities to leaders navigating complex change
- **Coaching in Organisations** – Demonstrating the measurable impact of coaching in driving culture, wellbeing and performance across sectors

10% discount.

Registration is now open.
For more information visit:
[**icfconvergesummit.com**](http://icfconvergesummit.com)



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Afraa Al Shamsi

Chief Information Officer at United Arab Emirates University

New Year's Promo: Special Access 3rd Annual 100 CHRO Summit UAE 2026

The 3rd Annual 100 CHRO Summit UAE 2026 is the region's most influential gathering for HR leaders, Chief Human Resources Officers, and Talent & People executives shaping the future of work across the Middle East. Held annually in Dubai, the summit brings together **100+ CHROs and senior HR decision-makers** for a day of high-level dialogue, strategic insights, and solution-driven discussions.

This year's edition focuses on **elevating human capital strategies in a rapidly changing world**, addressing emerging challenges in talent management, leadership development, workforce transformation, and the growing impact of AI on HR functions.

Introducing the TOP 25 HR Leadership &

Transformation Award

A highlight of the 2026 summit is the Top 25 HR Leadership & Transformation Award, celebrating outstanding HR changemakers across the region.

This prestigious recognition honours leaders who have:

- Redefined organizational culture
- Championed strategic transformation
- Elevated employee experience
- Driven measurable business impact
- Led with innovation, resilience, and people-centric vision

This award reflects our commitment to spotlight the trailblazers shaping the future of HR and inspiring the next generation of leaders.

What to Expect

The 2026 Summit will feature:

- Expert-led keynote presentations by leading HR visionaries
- Panel discussions exploring talent, culture, AI, hybrid work, and leadership
- Future-focused insights on workforce transformation and digital HR
- Exclusive networking opportunities with senior HR executives
- Actionable frameworks and best practices for building future-ready organizations

Designed exclusively for senior HR leaders, the summit provides a rare strategic



2nd April 2026
Dubai, UAE

platform for deep learning, collaboration, and cross-industry exchange.

Who Should Attend

- Chief Human Resources Officers
- Chief People Officers
- VPs & Directors of HR, Talent, L&D, and Total Rewards

- Heads of Workforce Transformation, Culture & Engagement
- Senior HR decision-makers across industries

Take advantage of this exclusive limited-time offer before rates adjust in 2026. Team packages and early-bird promotions are also available.

Registration Link:

<https://buy.stripe.com/x29AT3dl9nnasZ1KW67S2c>

<https://www.3novex.com/chro-uae-2026>

AI is not Replacing Good Recruiters, It's replacing Bad ones

TIAGO COSTA, CEO OF PARISIMA RECRUITMENT, DUBAI SHARES THE UPSIDE OF AI

With the rise of AI in recruitment, there's growing concern that technology is coming for our jobs, but let's be honest: the only recruiters who should be fearful are those who relied on keyword-matching and gut instincts. For the rest, especially those focused on the human side of hiring, AI is not a threat – it's a powerful tool and one that the team and I are embracing.

AI at our recruitment consultancy is used to do the tedious legwork – now, instead of trawling through hundreds of CVs, identifying basic core skills and filtering candidates based on qualifications – we can spend our time where it really counts for long term success all round – understanding the human behind the CV.

One of our core beliefs at Parisima is that 'cultural fit' is one of the most critical factors in long-term placement success – so now, after AI has done its job, we are stepping in with a deep-dive process which

involves an hour-long interview, psychometric testing, and Personal Profile Analysis (PPA). The result is a deep and nuanced understanding of each candidate – it matters to us what their motivations are, preferred communication style, stress triggers, leadership potential and of course - team compatibility potentially is.

The Cost of Getting Culture Fit Wrong

We know in a fast-paced market like the Middle East; the stakes are high. According to a study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the cost of a wrong hire can reach as high as **\$240,000** per candidate when you factor in recruitment, onboarding, lost productivity, and replacement expenses. Astoundingly, the global turnover due to poor hiring and retention decisions is estimated to cost US companies over **\$1 trillion annually** and we've seen it firsthand from new clients where we've been brought in to assist after some

expensive and extensive missteps.

It's no secret and something I've spoken about frequently – cultural misalignment is a key driver for new candidates – but understanding this in practice from both an employer and employee perspective is tricky to navigate. In a LinkedIn survey, 89% of hiring mishaps were attributed not to a lack of technical skills, but to a mismatch in attitude, values, and emotional intelligence. It's not that the person couldn't do the job – it's that they couldn't do it there.

Happy Employees, Healthier Businesses

Getting culture fit right benefits everyone. Employees who feel aligned with their workplace culture report **higher levels of engagement**, take **fewer sick days**, and are **24% more likely to stay** at their company for more than three years, according to Gallup.

There's also an undeniable link between mental health and job satisfaction and in 2023, a Deloitte study found that 28% of Gen Z and Millennials left roles due to mental health challenges caused or exacerbated by workplace culture. In contrast, when employees feel supported and valued, their productivity can increase by up to 21%, according to the same Gallup research.

AI + Human Insight = Smarter Recruitment

At Parisima, AI and human recruiters don't compete, they complement one another – working in synergies which we celebrate. The AI handles the volume, the screening, the technical qualifications and our team brings empathy, curiosity, and nuance - qualities that machines, for all their speed and scale, currently still lack.

Importantly, Parisima's team also recognises a simple but often overlooked truth: culture is not universal – one man's trash is another man's treasure and whilst one workplace might feel dynamic and fast-paced to some – it might feel overwhelming and chaotic to another. Neither is wrong —

they're just different which is why the goal is not to find the "perfect candidate," but the right match between candidate and company – and now with AI by our side – we have more of our most precious commodity – time. Time to spend with our clients, time to spend with our candidates and even more time as a team to discuss and cross share opportunities.

Raising the Bar for Recruiters

So when I am asked - is AI replacing recruiters, I say yes - but only the bad ones!

The future of recruitment belongs to those who are willing to go deeper - look beyond the CV and beyond the hard skills to truly understand what makes a candidate tick. Tools like AI will continue to evolve, but they won't replace the ability to assess team dynamics, emotional compatibility and long-term cultural alignment.

It's really time to stop fearing AI and start embracing what it makes possible: a world where every hire is not just qualified but genuinely a great fit.



↑ **TIAGO COSTA, CEO OF PARISIMA RECRUITMENT**

MoHRE Launches New Update for the Wage Protection System

AED 35 BILLION TRANSFERRED MONTHLY BY ESTABLISHMENTS THROUGH THE SYSTEM TO PAY PRIVATE-SECTOR WORKERS' WAGES.

- The update was launched in collaboration with the Central Bank of the UAE, Al Etihad Payments, and leading financial institutions.
- The updated system enables employers to manage salary payments using a set of advanced digital platforms.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) has launched an upgraded version of the Wage Protection System WPS, in collaboration with the Central Bank of the UAE and Al Etihad Payments - the national payments service provider owned by the Central Bank - along with a number of MoHRE-accredited financial institutions through their digital platforms.

The update was launched under the Ministry's partnership with e& Group, Botim, Al Ansari Exchange, Lulu Exchange, GCC Exchange, and Al Maryah Community

Bank. It forms part of the MoHRE's ongoing efforts to protect rights and enhance ease of doing business by leveraging smart technology, strengthening transparency and competitiveness in the labour market, driving digital transformation, and advancing the UAE's Zero Government Bureaucracy Programme.

The Wage Protection System covers more than 99% of private-sector workers, whose wages are transferred by the establishments employing them through the system, with total monthly transfers exceeding AED 35 billion.

In a press statement, the Ministry explained that the updated version of the WPS enables employers to manage salary payments easily and quickly with real-time, direct data integration between MoHRE's systems and financial institutions via the Central Bank. The process is implemented through these institutions' digital platforms, allowing customers to benefit from smart digital

solutions, innovative applications, and proactive, best-in-class services.

MoHRE noted that the new version helps accelerate registration and verification procedures and strengthens communication between companies and relevant entities, raising performance efficiency, enhancing data integration, and establishing a secure and reliable digital environment.

The update marks a notable leap in wage management with its direct electronic integration, the Ministry explained, revealing that the enhanced system enables employers to complete all procedures digitally by reading data from MoHRE systems, accurately tracking salary transfer movements, and ensuring workers receive their wages on time, in line with the highest standards of transparency and protection, which, in turn, supports a sustainable work environment and reinforces confidence in

the national economy.

The upgraded version also contributes to labour market stability by relying on supervisory bodies to strengthen governance within the WPS, while ensuring employers comply with the provisions of the Federal Decree-Law regarding the Regulation of Employment Relationships and relevant regulatory decisions. It further improves labour market efficiency and agility using integrated digital financial systems.

Moreover, the system provides an accurate database to support planning and strategic decision-making, and protects the rights of all parties through a smart, automated oversight framework. It also enhances integration between government, banking, and financial institutions to ensure transaction governance, reduce labour disputes arising from delayed or unpaid wages, and boost transparency and competitiveness, in line with the targets of the "We the UAE 2031" vision.

The updated WPS reflects the

UAE's commitment to strengthening transparency and providing an attractive, fair work environment that ensures balance between workers and employers. It represents comprehensive digital transformation aligned with international best practice in labour administration and financial governance by expanding the pool of participating financial institutions, increasing processing efficiency for transfers, and integrating with financial institutions' digital platforms to enable establishments to manage their financial operations easily and effectively.



UAE labour market legislation requires private-sector establishments to pay workers' wages monthly, in the amount and at the time agreed in the employment contract, through the Wage Protection System, which is an innovative electronic system that facilitates wage transfers via approved banks, financial institutions, and exchange houses.

Achieving a New Milestone in Eliminating Bureaucracy and Advancing Digital Transformation

MOHRE COMPLETES 13 MILLION TRANSACTIONS USING AUTOMATION AND AI WITHOUT HUMAN INTERVENTION

- The smart work permit quotas system for establishments reduces processing time from 10 days to just one second.
- Nearly 900,000 permit quotas granted proactively to private sector establishments using AI

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) has announced the completion of approximately 13 million transactions through automation and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, without human intervention, from the beginning of the year until December 10, 2025.

The smart transactions covered a wide range of the Ministry's services, marking a significant milestone that reaffirms its steady progress in integrating AI technologies across all operations. This aligns with Phase Two of the Zero Government Bureaucracy (ZGB) programme, supporting digital service transformation, enhancing the UAE labour market's competitiveness, and

contributing to 'We the UAE 2031' vision.

The Ministry employs a sustainable approach to developing services by optimally utilising AI solutions, leveraging its digital infrastructure and readiness, and enhancing the skills of the workforce to manage smart automation efficiently. This is supported by electronic integration with government partners, facilitating ease of business and meeting customer expectations for fast, seamless, roundtheclock services.

In a related context, the Ministry uncovered the outcomes of its AI-powered system for work permit quotas for establishments, which supports business growth by streamlining transactions and proactively allocating quotas based on individual establishment needs and operational status, effectively meeting their workforce demands.

The upgraded system reflects the Ministry's ongoing

commitment to deploying advanced digital and AI solutions across all operations to achieve operational excellence, facilitating data driven decisionmaking, and addressing potential challenges such as time constraints, human error, and ineffective data utilisation.

Since the beginning of the year until October, the system has granted around 900,000 quotas to establishments and processed over 11 million transactions through automation and AI.

The upgraded system has reduced human effort by 56%, automating procedures for approximately 175,000 requests out of 310,000 between February and October. It has also shortened the time required for reviewing and approving additional quota requests that do not require human intervention by up to 99%, reducing the completion time from 10 days to just one second. This enhancement contributes to

the accuracy of outcomes delivered by automation projects. The system deploys predictive models to anticipate requirements and automatically approve some requests. If the AI determines that the quotas are insufficient, the issue is referred to the relevant committee.

The system automatically grants initial quotas to establishments, using AI to verify their eligibility and approve quota requests according to their needs.

For additional quotas, the

system deploys predictive models to anticipate requirements and automatically approve some requests. If the AI determines that the quotas are insufficient, the issue is referred to the relevant committee.

The system also features selflearning capabilities, which allow it to

continuously improve its decision-making process. By analysing new data and reviewing operational patterns of establishments, it refines its expectations and determines needs more accurately.

Over time, this enhances the quality and precision of the system's outputs.



From Managers to People-First Leaders: The Clarity Game Revolution

ME-HR & LEARNING REVIEWS THIS TRANSFORMATIONAL STRUCTURED METHODOLOGY TO UN-LOCK POTENTIAL

In organizations worldwide, there's a critical gap between management and leadership. Managers excel at operational excellence—hitting targets, optimizing processes, ensuring compliance. But true leadership is about something deeper: getting the best out of people, making them feel empowered, and creating an environment where teams thrive.

This is where Samir Geepee, creator of The Clarity Game™, is making a transformative impact. Through structured peer coaching, he's helping organizations elevate their managers into people-first leaders who balance operational excellence with human connection.

What is Peer Coaching?

Peer coaching is a leadership development approach where professionals at similar organizational levels support each other's growth through structured dialogue and reflection. Unlike traditional coaching with external experts,

peer coaching harnesses the collective wisdom of colleagues who understand the real-world challenges of their shared environment.

The power lies not in giving advice, but in asking the right questions. When facilitated effectively, peer coaching creates breakthrough insights that help leaders recognize solutions they already possess but haven't fully articulated.

The Clarity Game™: A Framework for Leadership

Transformation

Samir Geepee developed The Clarity Game™ as a structured methodology to unlock this potential. The framework operates on several transformative principles:

- **Curiosity over advice:** Peers explore challenges through powerful questions rather than solutions
- **Safe space for authenticity:** A certified facilitator creates conditions for honest, vulnerable dialogue
- **Collective intelligence:** Multiple perspectives

reveal blind spots and new Possibilities

- **Action orientation:** Insights immediately convert into concrete commitments

The game addresses the reality that most managers are technically excellent but struggle with the human dimensions of leadership: confident communication, empowering conversations, handling difficult dialogues, and inspiring teams to grow independently.

Real Impact: A Glimpse Into Transformation

In a recent session with a manufacturing company, a quality manager grappling with assertive communication



participated in The Clarity Game™ with three peers from learning and safety leadership. Over two hours, something remarkable happened.

Through carefully structured peer inquiry, the participant moved from uncertainty to clarity. Seven concrete commitments emerged—from mentoring new team members to presenting strategic initiatives to senior leadership. Within the session, vague aspirations transformed into specific 30-day and 120-day goals with clear action steps. But the impact extended beyond one individual. The peer coaches also gained insights into their own leadership approaches. One committed to asking questions more freely. Another resolved to focus on future-oriented thinking. Cross-functional relationships strengthened, and a culture of mutual support began to take root. This is the ripple effect of people-first leadership development.

Why Organizations Need This Now

Traditional leadership training often fails because it's disconnected from workplace reality. Managers attend programs, hear

inspiring concepts, then return to environments where operational pressures immediately override their best intentions.

Samir Geepee's approach succeeds because it:

- Meets managers where they are:** Addresses real challenges in their actual context
- Builds internal capability:** Creates sustainable peer support rather than external dependency
- Shifts mindsets, not just skills:** Helps managers see themselves as developers of people, not just deliverers of results
- Creates cultural change:** Embeds people-first values through how leaders relate to each other

The Clarity Game™ includes pre-session alignment with line managers, expert facilitation, real-time documentation, structured goal-setting, personalized reports, and accountability, follow-ups. Each element is designed to ensure insights translate into lasting behavioural change.

From Operational Excellence to Human Excellence

Operational excellence will always matter. Processes must run smoothly, targets must be met, quality must be

maintained. But organizations that want to thrive in an era of rapid change, talent scarcity, and employee expectation shifts need something more.

They need managers who can have conversations that empower rather than diminish. Leaders who help team members feel capable of solving their own problems. Cultures where people bring their full energy and creativity to work because they feel genuinely supported by their leaders.

This is what Samir Geepee enables through The Clarity Game™—a practical, structured way for managers to become the people-first leaders their organizations desperately need.

The Question Worth Exploring

What would be possible in your organization if every manager knew how to unlock the potential in their people through empowering communication? What if leadership development didn't require expensive external programs but instead activated the collective wisdom already present in your teams?

The Clarity Game™ offers a pathway to finding out.

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	Capytech	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.

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:

MONSTER

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HAYS

GulfTalent

**وظائف دبي
dubai careers**

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No. 1 Job Site for Professionals

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EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT

Laimoon

TalentArabia*
Perfect Talent. Every Time

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.



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.

