



Shape the future  
with confidence

# People Leaders Forum

May 7-8, 2025



The better the question. The better the answer.  
The better the world works.

# Welcome

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## Chris Gordon

Partner, National Leader People Advisory Services  
Tax Canada, EY Canada







Shape the future  
with confidence

# Leading HR into the future with confidence

Executive briefing



■ ■ ■ ■  
The better the question. The better the answer.  
The better the world works.



People Leaders Forum

May 7, 2025

# Keynote session: CHRO 2030

## SPECIAL GUESTS

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**Darryl Wright**

Partner/Principal,  
People Advisory Services,  
EY Canada

**Pippa Aird**

Chief Human Resources  
Officer, BMO



# Agenda

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01

**Introduction**

02

**HR executive  
role evolution**

03

**Workforce evolution**

04

**HR function  
evolution**

05

**Prioritizing and  
preparing**



# Established market-leading insights along with new perspective from executives, ground us in data to navigate the next five years

## Humans@Center (H@C) 2024

Conducted in collaboration with **Oxford University**, our leading applied research focuses on what makes business transformations work. Executives tell us it's all about the people and the conditions we create for them to be successful.

## Mobility Reimagined (2024)

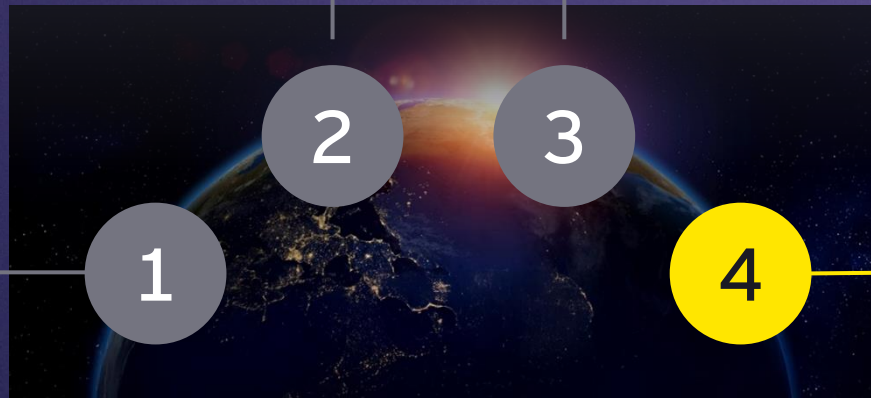
Global research study surveying **1,000+ respondents** from **21 global geographies** that explores how organizations deliver better business and talent outcomes leveraging mobility to cultivate sustainable growth and build resiliency.

## Work Reimagined (2024)

Global research study surveying **17,000+ employees** and **1,595 employers** that explores how a reset in the tech landscape and a dynamic talent market may create a unique opportunity for employers to achieve superior business outcomes.

## CHRO 2030

Net new 2025 research based on discussions with **160+ executives** across **15 sectors** and **26 countries**. Executives tell us that the HR executive role and function must accelerate to meet the rapidly changing needs of the business.





## Headlines: importance, urgency, and opportunity for HR

85%

of employers say that over the next five years, having a strategic HR function will be critical to business success.

**[importance]**

89%

of employers say HR will need to change to meet their evolving talent and strategic business needs.

**[urgency]**

**[opportunity]**

of employers who have a Talent Advantage today - a mix of programs, technology and culture - get them to better talent and business outcomes.

32%



# Headlines: So what...



HR Executive Role  
Evolution

## The HR executive must:

- Operate as a **business leader** first
- Take the lead in getting the **intersection of people and technology** right
- **Lead transformation**, exploiting ready-now technologies to get value lift this year



Workforce Evolution

## Leading companies are:

- Creating a **Talent Advantage** - a mix of programs, technology and culture that differentiate the employee experience and get them to better talent and business outcomes
- Moving to **skills as the currency** for talent
- Building **transformation as a people and business capability**



HR Function Evolution

## The HR function:

- **Is ripe to lead on AI**; now is the time for HR to find ways to translate AI into real value
- Must evolve to **operate as a business** - efficiently, commercially and with agility
- **HRBPs are key** to getting strategy, technology and people experience right



# HR executive role evolution





## Answers to three pressing questions to lead HR with confidence

**1** How will the HR executive **role evolve** over the next five years?

**2** How must the HR executive **lead in transformation?**

**3** How must the HR executive **leverage technology to deliver future value?**



## Answers to three pressing questions to lead HR with confidence

# 1 How will the HR executive **role evolve** over the next five years?

### Executives expect...

- **Increased complexity** at a faster pace
- An accelerated **shift from HR administrative to HR strategic**
- The HR executive to operate as a **business leader first**
- The HR executive to be a leader of **technology transformation**
- The HR executive to get the **intersection of people and technology right**
- The C-suite will evolve. **CEO, CTO** and **CFO** to be the big three relationships for HR



# How the HR executive role will evolve over the next five years: 3 broad competencies define the high-performing HR executive



## Business Operator

Financial and operational literacy, underpinned by experiences leading multiple parts of the business, ideally having run a P&L. A focus on cost, productivity and performance management. A systems-thinking commercial leader with a business-results orientation.

“

The CHRO must understand P&L, technology, and commercials to be credible in moving the people agenda forward.

## Humanistic Leader

Emotional intelligence; an ability to relate to people deeply. This underpins an ability to serve as a coach to others, to be the connective tissue across leaders, to deliver on the evolving employee wellbeing agenda, and be the leader of a diversified employee experience.

“

As we have tried so hard to tie HR to the "Business", we have lost the focus on the importance of HR supporting the human side of people performance.



## Technology Transformer

An ability to lead digital change, integrate and scale AI, and be on the forefront of adopting emerging technologies.

“

Most important will be technological fluency, the ability to interpret and interact with software, paired with the emotional intelligence to support employee engagement and culture-building.



## Answers to three pressing questions to lead HR with confidence

# 2 How must the HR executive **lead in transformation**?

### Executives expect...

- **Enabling transformation** by (a) being a coach, (b) setting the right culture supported by the right talent programs and (c) building change as a capability
- **Driving transformation** of (a) the definition of work itself, (b) the makeup of the workforce, (c) how the work and workforce is organized and (d) the HR function



# How the HR executive must lead in Transformation: four transformations that the business needs HR executives to drive

## 1 Of the definition of work itself

The nature of work itself is changing. The HR executive must lead in redefining work for their business. What can and should technology automate and do? What is left for the employee? How is the work designed and where is it best performed?

“

The CHRO of the future needs to focus on how work gets done. That encompasses the design of work itself, where work gets done and the best use of technological assistance like AI.

## 2 Of the workforce

The HR executive must redefine what talent means for the business, including how and where it fits and the reward framework needed to support getting and keeping high-demand skill sets.

“

We've been working for past 20 years on centralizing work to low-cost countries. The majority of that work will disappear as we automate.

## 3 Of the business

The HR executive must help lead the way in organizational design. HR must enable collaboration across the business to unlock value and drive business efficiency / optimization, leveraging technology.

“

Leverage technology to streamline operations, reduce repetitive tasks and drive multi-channel communication strategies.

## 4 Of the HR function

While the need for HR functional modernization isn't new, the impetus for accelerating the evolution of the HR service delivery model and optimizing the function to support the business has grown.

“

Need to evolve HR service delivery model in the near future to unlock the value of talent and have HR better positioned to support the execution of the business strategy.

“

Leveraging technology to automate administrative processes such as payroll, recruitment and contract management to reduce manual workload and increase efficiency.



## Answers to three pressing questions to lead HR with confidence

### 3 How must the HR executive **leverage technology to deliver future value?**

#### **Executives cite...**

Are range of technologies that are ready now to increase HR's value to the business by (a) accelerating the move from administrative to strategic, (b) driving efficiency / reducing cost of the HR function and the workforce and (c) modernizing the employee experience.



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# Workforce evolution





# The nature of work, the expectations of the workforce and the needs of businesses lead us to an inflection point with our workforce

The nature  
of work is  
changing

...yet many people don't adapt as quickly as new expectations and technologies are calling them to

By 2030 the **global talent shortage will reach more than 85m people** and in-demand skills will be less available.

The  
workforce  
has new  
expectations

...yet many employers are not in a position to meet these expectations

Only **32% of employers are able to deliver a Talent Advantage** aligned to the personalized expectations of career, rewards and work location.

The  
business  
has new  
needs

...yet many do not have the talent with the skills required to meet these needs

**70% of employers** have an urgent need for talent **with new skills to meet emerging business needs**, drive enhanced performance, and unlock unrecognized value.



# Navigating this workforce inflection point will require concerted effort in four areas



## Reshape the Talent Advantage

Unlocking talent capabilities in an untethered workforce will be critical to value creation



## Evolve from roles to skills

Competencies and skills are becoming the currency defining workforce frameworks and progression



## Build transformation as a business capability

With transformation a constant, organizations need change-capable people and processes to adapt and keep pace



## Democratize the employee experience

The workforce has evolved from one-size-fits all into personalized experiences and expectations around career, rewards and wellbeing



# To bridge these demands, leading organizations are creating a Talent Advantage through five dimensions

At the surface these are simple, but **organizations with a Talent Advantage differentiate across these dimensions.**

Only **32%** have achieved it today, with just as many, **31%**, with a talent disadvantage.

**Employers with a Talent Advantage report better outcomes:**

## Business outcomes

**6.5x** Productivity has significantly improved in the past two years.

**5.8x** Their company is significantly overperforming in current economic conditions.

## Talent outcomes

**14.9x** Agree that company culture is significantly better in the past 12 months.

**7.5x** Company makes it easier for employees to find new roles in the organization.

**Culture and workplace**  
Evaluate the mix of workplaces, utilization and space design to maximize human connection with the workforce, culture and location investments.

**Learning, skills and career pathways**  
Deliver tailored learning experiences using behavior science and technology to reskill and upskill in alignment with transformation and new market opportunities.





## Skill-centric organizations are outperforming across multiple measures

Skills are the new currency as leading organizations are hiring for skills vs. jobs  
However, the global workforce cannot keep up, resulting in a call to action for upskilling & reskilling



By 2030 the global talent shortage will reach more than 85m people

*Forrester, 2023*



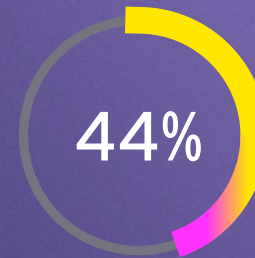
is the year in-demand skills will become widely unavailable

*EY upskilling and reskilling priorities*



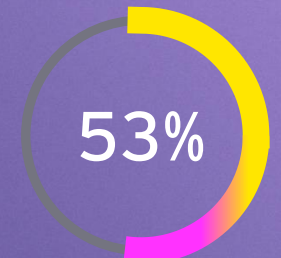
predicted unrealized revenue due to the skills crisis

*Korn Ferry*



workers' skills will be disrupted in the next five years

*WEF, 2024*



of Organizations cite talent attraction as the key obstacle to business transformation

*EY, 2023*

Organizations that are embracing the new 'skills centric' model are outperforming

**2.5x** More likely to agree the Company has successfully navigated external pressures

**-26%** Fewer employees likely to leave in the next 12 months

**5.5x** Agreed their Company is effective at managing changes



# Organizations that get six drivers right for their people in times of change are 2.6x more likely to hit their transformation goals

In collaboration with **Oxford Saïd Business School**, EY conducted applied research into the factors that drive transformation success and failure.

**To inspire:** creating a vision that everyone can believe in  
**Purposeful vision**

**To care:** building a culture that embraces and encourages everyone's opinion  
**Psychological safety**

**To build:** using technology and capabilities to drive visible action quickly  
**Purposeful technology**

**To empower:** setting clear responsibilities and being prepared for change  
**Discipline freedom**

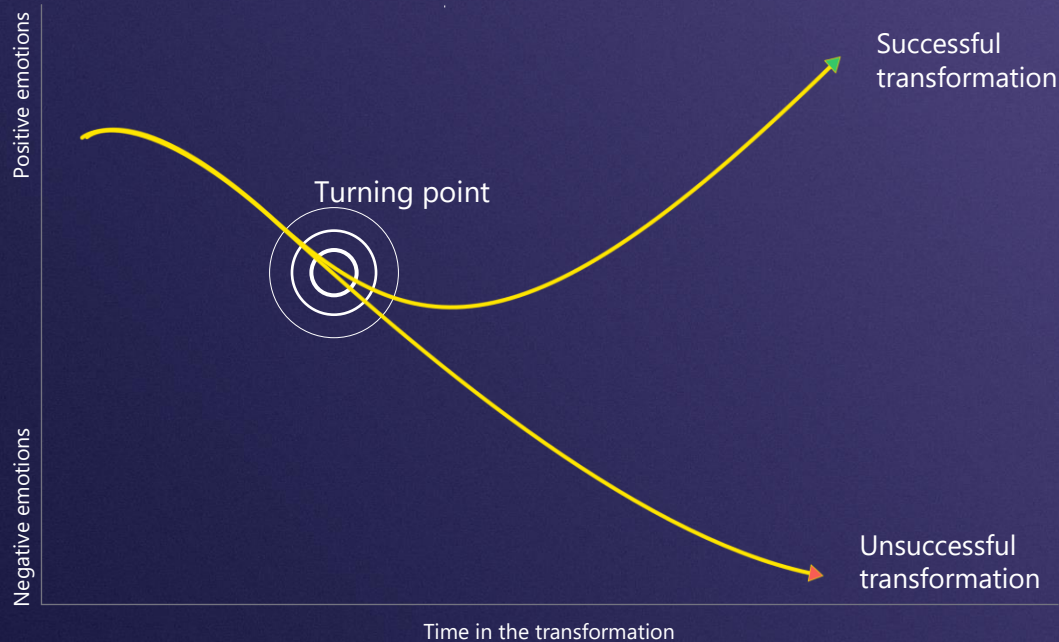
**To lead:** adapting and nurturing the necessary leadership skills  
**Adaptive leaders**

**To collaborate:** finding the best ways to connect and co-create  
**Radical interdependence**



# Getting those six drivers right at the right times, at key turning points, matters most. Leaders must prepare for and navigate these turning points

**Turning points:** moments when the program is hit by unexpected challenges and needs leadership to intervene

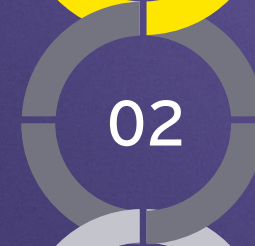


Identified three steps using predictive modeling on 1600+ turning points and 40+ factors



## Sensing

Building an early warning system to rapidly detect the emotional and behavioral signals that an issue has emerged



## Sense-making

Convening the right mix of leaders and workforce to identify the root causes of an issue and co-create a path forward



## Acting

Take actions that address the root causes of an issue to re-establish the six drivers for transformation success.



# HR must enable the workforce experience across three employee experience dimensions – individual, team, and operating environment

Executives said that a **heightened focus and investment in employee experience enabled by technology** will become an even bigger driver of attracting and retaining a highly mobile and untethered workforce.

Employees are not as loyal  
as they used to be.



of employees said they  
are likely to leave in the  
next 12 months

Source: 2024 Work Reimagined

**Organizations that enable employee experience through these three dimensions will have a leg up in achieving the Talent Advantage**



“

*The employee experience will still be front and center even more with all this technology. Employee consumerism - the ability to self-direct their careers, their development and information available at their fingertips will become the new currency.*

“

*Employee experience is becoming the next big area of focus in HR, with a growing emphasis on creating impactful and personalized experiences. It is important for HR professionals to focus on and invest in this as a driver of business growth and talent retention.*

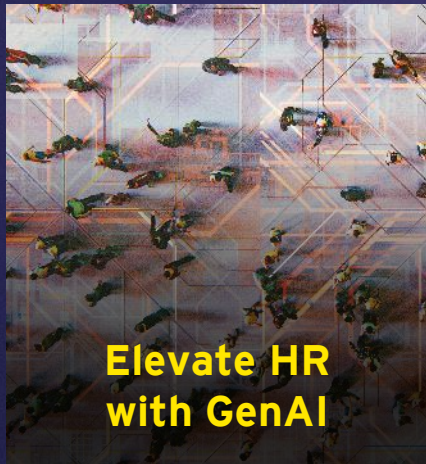


# HR function evolution





# Unprecedented disruption will impact the workforce, meaning HR functions of tomorrow must be ready by focusing on the following areas:



## Elevate HR with GenAI

As AI and technology continue to evolve, HR must find ways to translate it into real value



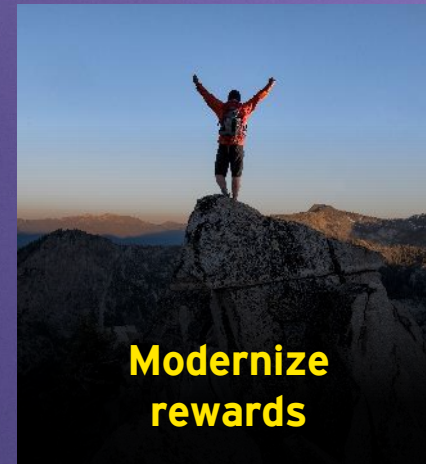
## Operate HR as a business

HR must transform to operate with the strategic agility, customer-centricity, and profit-driven mindset of a successful business



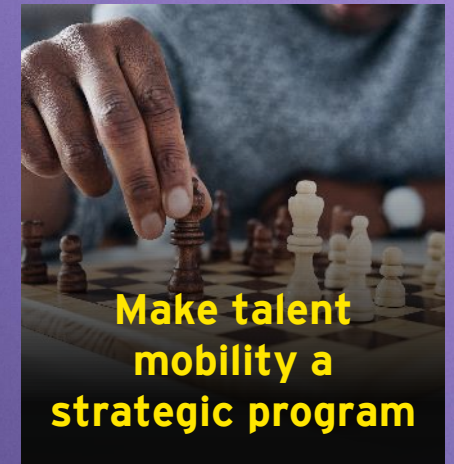
## Transform HR business partner role

Business partners will not only have to be strategic but also the “glue” that connects digital and functional strategies



## Modernize rewards

Organizations will need agility to meet evolving employee pay, total reward and wellbeing preferences



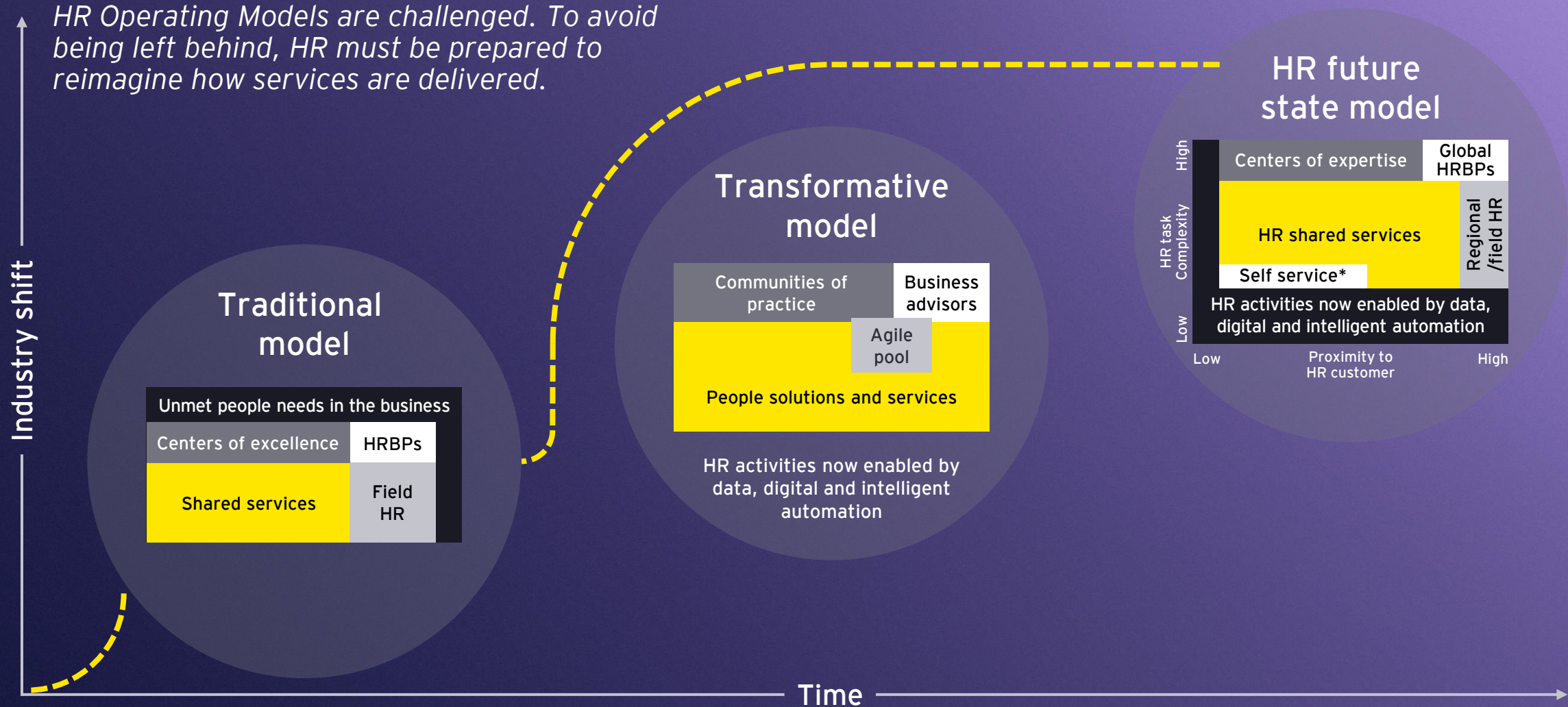
## Make talent mobility a strategic program

Organizations that can adapt to a new borderless and flexible workforce will see better ROI and enhanced business resilience



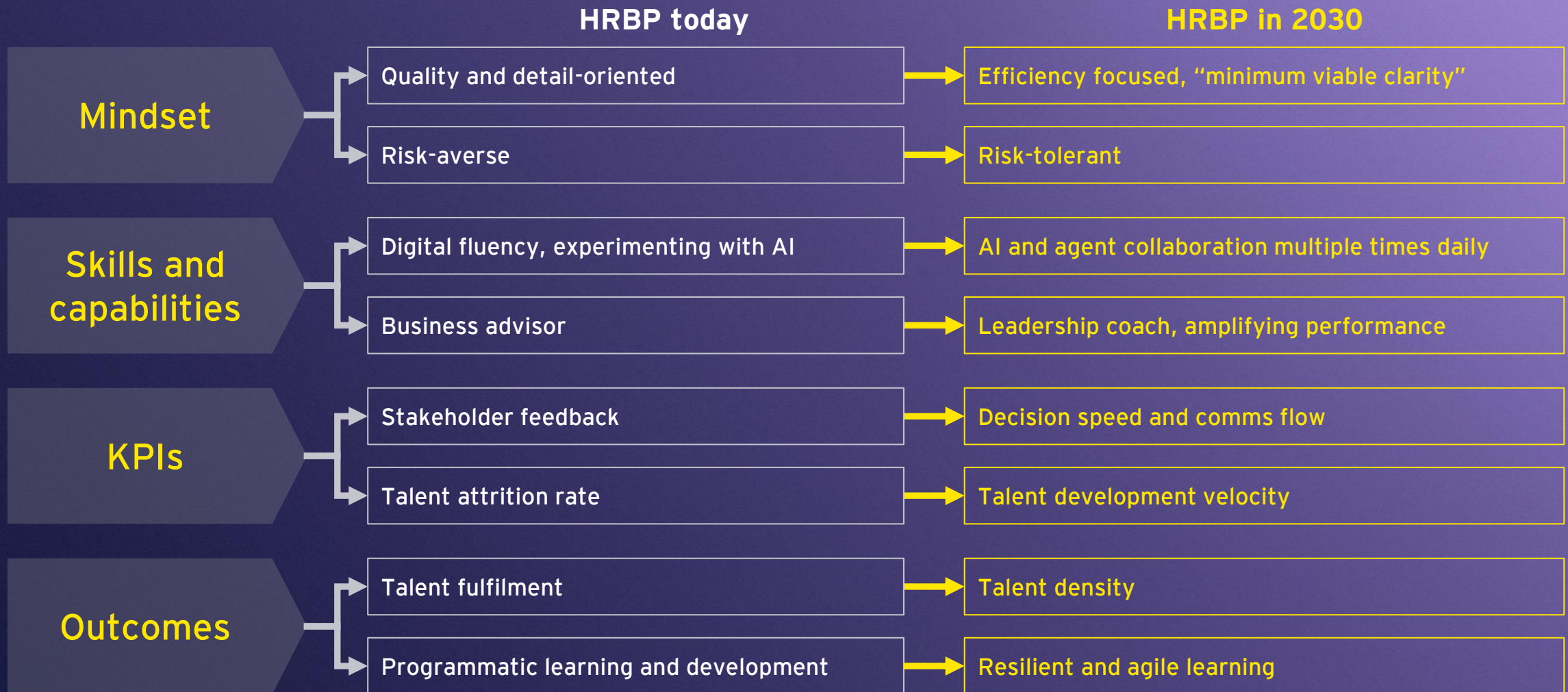
# Transforming HR requires a bold leap forward on the innovation S-curve

*HR Operating Models are challenged. To avoid being left behind, HR must be prepared to reimagine how services are delivered.*





# HR business partner role will require fundamental changes to meet future needs





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# Closing





# HR business partner role will require fundamental changes to meet future needs



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# Seated dinner and networking

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.





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EY is building a better working world by creating new value for clients, people, society and the planet, while building trust in capital markets.

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EY teams work across a full spectrum of services in assurance, consulting, tax, strategy and transactions. Fueled by sector insights, a globally connected, multi-disciplinary network and diverse ecosystem partners, EY teams can provide services in more than 150 countries and territories.

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