

LEADERSHIP  
TALKS

# CHIRO

THE ARCHITECT  
OF TRANSFORMATION

Building culture and competence  
as a compass in an evolving world

CHABERTON PARTNERS  
HUMAN EXPLORERS 

in collaboration with  
CHIOMENTI





“

The CHRO's role has evolved to focus  
on human-centric leadership.  
By asking the right questions,  
CHROs are becoming architects of listening  
capable of designing multidimensional systems  
that understand and address people's needs.

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**ELENA PANZERA**  
SENIOR VP HR EMEA&AP - SAS  
PRESIDENT OF AIDP LOMBARDY

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# INTRODUCTION



Dear All,

welcome to our newest effort: "CHRO, the Architect of Transformation". In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and significant shifts in business ecosystems, Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs) play a pivotal role. They strategically prepare organizations to navigate multiple concurrent transitions, including the adoption of artificial intelligence, management of a multi-generational workforce, and adaptation to complex global economic and societal changes.

At Chaberton Partners, we pride ourselves on being "Human Explorers." We partner with our clients to guide these transitions and identify and develop leaders who are crucial to organizational success. This new Leadership Talks insight paper is drawn from in-depth dialogues with CHROs across global organizations, spotlighting the pressing challenges and opportunities HR Leaders face. It underscores their role in devising strategies that address skills shortages, enhance

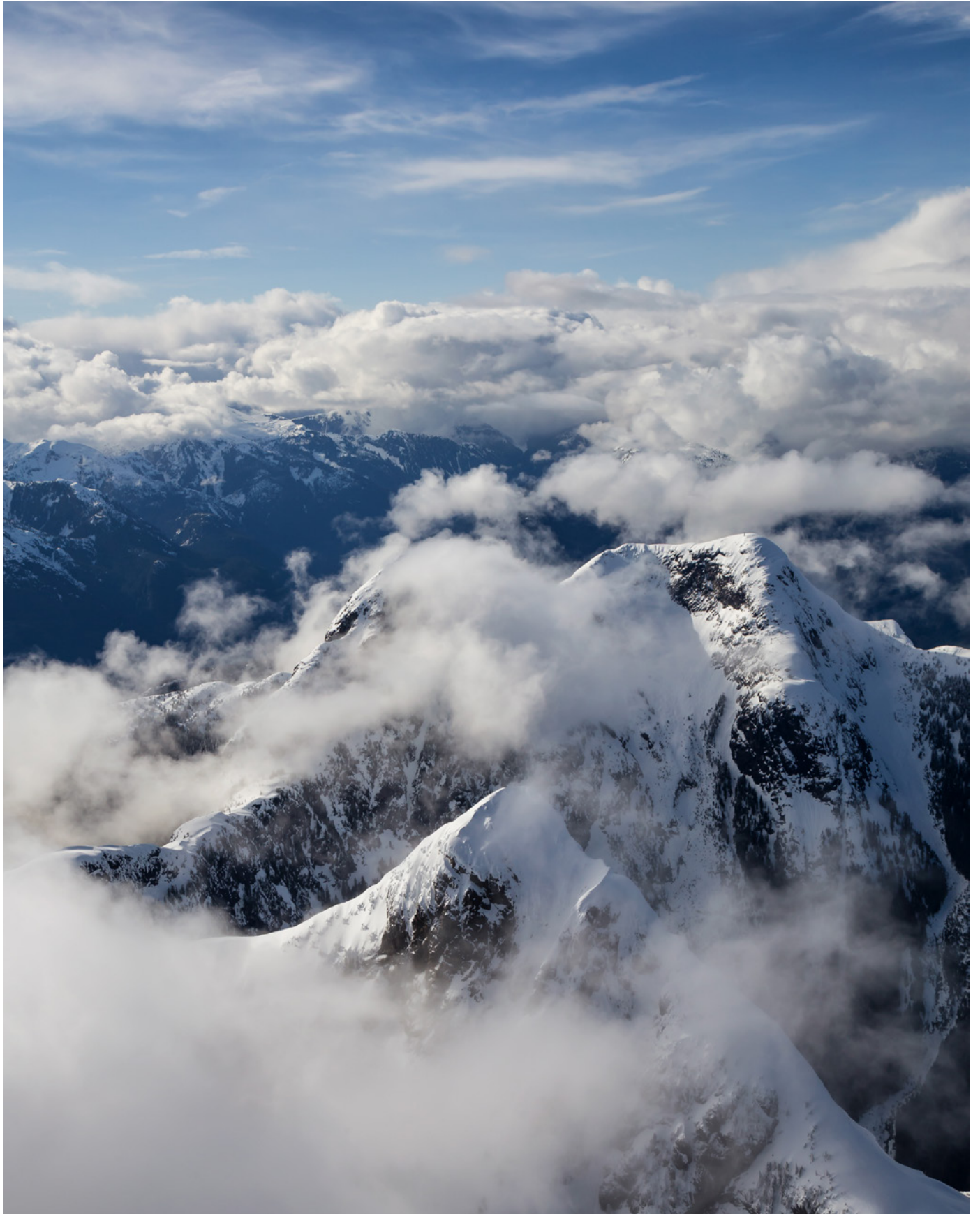
succession planning, and integrate advanced technologies into the workplace.

CHROs are recognized as strategic architects, whose vision and efforts are essential in constructing adaptive and innovative infrastructures for long-term success. They play a key role in formulating strategies that align with future business objectives and enhance HR's strategic role to drive business value.

I extend my gratitude to all the CHROs who contributed their invaluable insights to this research. Their commitment continues to inspire and drive us toward a future defined by transformative organizational practices. We invite you to explore this insight paper, designed not only to share common emerging key themes, but also to support strategic thinking and transformative action throughout your organization.

**Christian Vasino**

Founder and CEO  
*Chaberton Partners*





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# CHROs ARE Architects OF TRANSFORMATION

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This Leadership Talks Paper is the result of more than 70 conversations with senior CHRO Leaders of small, medium and large companies headquartered in Europe, of which 86% with a global footprint. Our sample includes companies in financial services, insurance, industrial goods, consumer products, professional services, technology, fashion & luxury, energy, and infrastructure sectors. The emerging themes reflect the common challenges that organizations face across diverse markets, industries, and geographies.

During our conversations, we tested several hypotheses that we tackle in our daily collaboration with clients. In most cases, we were able to validate the trends, but we also heard unexpected perspectives and insights. Many of the “usual suspects” in terms of challenges are very much a priority – such as talent attraction and retention, digital transformation and increased DEI and belonging. However, we also identified three key themes that must be addressed now, and the implications for the role that CHROs are called to play.

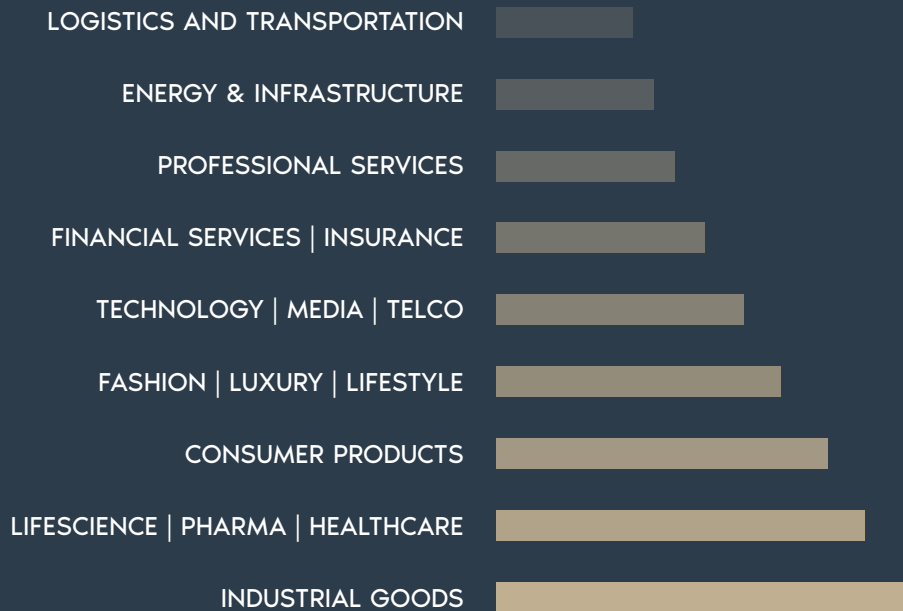
### THE THREE KEY THEMES

1. The rapid **acceleration of digital and AI technologies** is reshaping work and leadership models;
2. The imperative to **guide and engage multi-generational organization** to foster future leaders and developing new leadership skills;
3. The evolving role of **companies as "societies"** where employees both contribute and benefit, learn, and teach, particularly as traditional societal pillars such as welfare and retirement systems face challenges.

CHRO leaders face several challenges: becoming more data-driven to support organizational transitions, taking a leading role in the ongoing transformation, and redesigning core processes and leadership models for long-term business sustainability.

RESEARCH SAMPLE:  
**70 companies**

BY SECTOR



LISTED  
 COMPANIES

**58%**

# EMPLOYEES



>10.000

53%



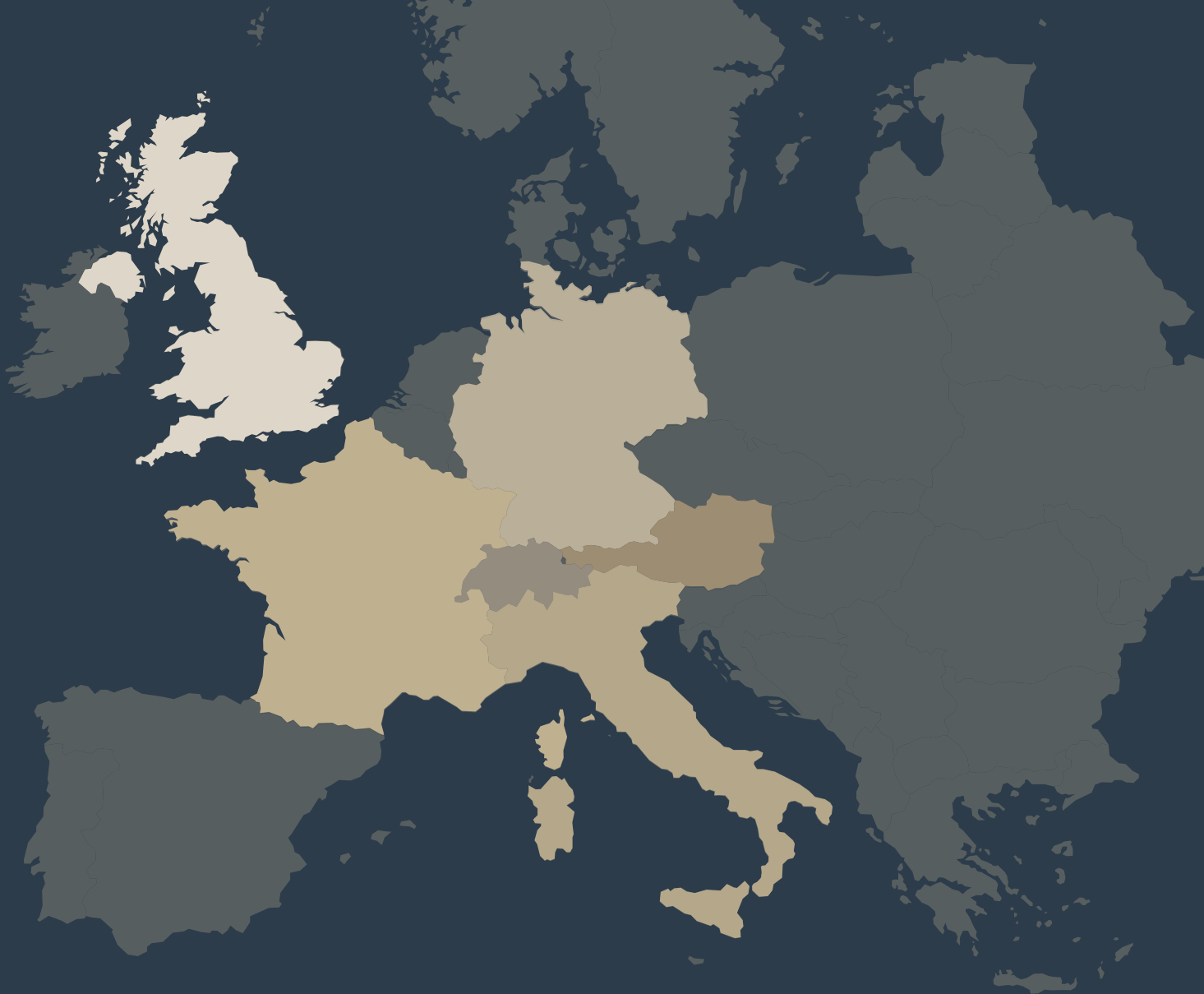
1.000—10.000

36%



500—1.000

11%



ITALY | GERMANY | FRANCE | SWITZERLAND | AUSTRIA | UK

86%

WITH A GLOBAL PRESENCE

CHROs GENDER DISTRIBUTION



48%

# THE Acceleration OF DIGITAL AND AI Technologies AND THEIR IMPACT ON LEADERSHIP MODELS

**A**s digital technologies become increasingly pervasive and the impact of AI and AI-related technologies design a scenario where automation, “IT on steroids,” and “new non-human colleagues” become part of the workplace, the impact on leadership models is not yet clear, but is certain to happen. Organizations must prepare for this inevitable shift, which promises to reshape the fundamental aspects of work and leadership.

No one has a crystal ball to forecast how AI will evolve after the impressive emergence and acceleration of the past 18 months. However, our conversations with CHROs have identified the concern that many core tenets of today’s work environment will be impacted. On one hand, there is the expected increase in productivity and the ability to dedicate time to more value-added activities. On the other hand, there are changes in how learning will occur in organizations, how apprenticeship and critical problem-solving skills will be needed and developed, and how mentorship will take on a new meaning and role.

In a nutshell, leadership models will need to evolve. This is an acceleration and a nuancing of a process that was already happening. Leaders will need to maintain and nurture their contextual domain and technical knowledge, but will also be asked to embrace human-centric values like empathy, creativity, flexibility, and ethical decision-making.

Effective AI use requires experience and contextual understanding, often lacking in younger generations. This may reinforce workplace hierarchies by empowering senior Leaders. To address this, they must create opportunities for younger employees to develop critical-thinking skills.

**In essence, well-rounded Leaders will be more needed than ever, as they will be responsible for bridging the gap between technology and human-centric values in the workplace.**



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AI confronts us with a Copernican revolution similar to what happened in the 1980s with the introduction of the computer. New business leaders will not need to be measured by their technical knowledge, but rather by their ability to look beyond, imagine the future, tackle challenges with a holistic vision that can connect the dots, synthesize information, and keep sustainability at the core of their agenda.

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**ADRIANO MUREDDU**  
CHRO - GRUPPO FERROVIE DELLO STATO ITALIANE



“

In a large system company, four generations – Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z – coexist, presenting a unique and complex challenge for CHROs. Managing this multigenerational workforce requires a nuanced approach that balances diverse cultural and professional models, while respecting and leveraging the unique strengths of each generation.

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**PAOLO CHIRIOTTI**  
CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES, ORGANIZATION, REAL ESTATE  
& TRANSFORMATION OFFICER - GRUPPO TIM

# HARMONIZING AND LEVERAGING Generational Diversity

In contemporary workplaces, there is a unique blend of traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z, each with distinct values, communication styles, and work preferences. Effectively managing this diversity requires fostering an inclusive environment that respects and leverages the strengths of each generation while bridging generational divides.

**Leaders must foster open dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaboration across generations.**

The impact varies in severity depending on the industry and the local culture. For example, in professional services, the development of critical problem-solving skills is expected to happen in the context of a project team setup. In other industries, this might vary according to business or functional lines. Interestingly, we have heard about similar approaches

that cut across industries and geographies. A large European bank is creating “communities” of technical expertise, such as credit experts and software developers, to allow more junior employees to onboard more effectively and develop a sense of belonging. Similarly, a global luxury brand is investing heavily in “communities” of craftsmanship for the sustainability of the know-how of highly valued skills to produce the highest quality leather goods.

In any case, the impact of AI and AI technologies presents an opportunity. Several CHROs have mentioned that senior leaders will be expected to leverage technology not only to increase productivity, but also to “create time” to mentor and support more junior colleagues. This is easier said than done and will require, depending on the context, a major “rewiring” of core tenets of a company’s culture. The goal is to ensure that all generations can work together harmoniously and that the strengths of each group are utilized to drive the organization forward.

# Bridge Builders

## CONTEXT

## VALUES & TRAITS

### BOOMERS

1946 - 1964

Post-war  
Economic boom  
Cold war  
Space competition  
Civil rights

Idealist  
Revolutionary  
Collectivist  
Loyal

### GEN X

1965 -1980

More freedom  
Cold war  
Terrorism  
Computer age

Materialist  
Competitive  
Individualist  
Independent

### GEN Y MILLENNIALS

1981 -1996

Globalization  
Economic stability  
Internet  
Mobile phones

Globalization supporter  
Curious & generous  
Purpose-driven  
Balanced lifestyle

### GEN Z

1997-2012

Economic crisis  
Climate change  
Smartphone  
Social media

Socially conscious  
Committed  
Innovative  
Work-life balance  
Respectful



To build bridges across generations, Leaders and Managers need to **BE** different and **DO** things differently.

**COMMUNICATION  
STYLE**

**LEADERSHIP  
STYLE**

**WORK  
ENVIRONMENT**

Face-to-face  
Valuing personal interactions

Hard work recognition  
Respect  
Hierarchical management  
Recognize loyalty  
Clear tasks and career paths

Stable  
Structured  
Professional development

Efficient  
Direct  
Decision-making

Autonomous  
Flexible  
Hands-off management

Professional growth  
Success recognition  
Work-life balance

Value continuous feedback  
Digital  
Instant messaging

Collaborative  
Team-oriented  
Purpose-driven work  
Career development

Seek purpose and meaning  
Collaborative and inclusive  
Flexible

Highly digital  
Instant messaging  
Video calls

Entrepreneurial  
Pragmatic  
Supportive  
Rapid and adaptive career  
development  
Continuous learning

Diverse & inclusive workplaces  
Flexible & Tech-savy  
Innovative  
Enterprenurial



“

People today aspire not just to work for a company, but to be active players in its success, sharing in its risks and rewards. Direct participation systems like employee share ownership embody this desire, empowering individuals to have a stake in the business they contribute to.

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**FRANCESCO TUTINO**

GROUP CHIEF HR & ORGANIZATION OFFICER - PRYSMIAN

# THE Evolving Role OF COMPANIES AS “SOCIETIES”

The context around all of us has become increasingly unpredictable over the past few decades, and this trend seems to be accelerating. In addition, the response to the recent pandemic has brought significant changes in the role companies play more flexible working arrangements, a continued increase in broad welfare and support networks. In some cases, this can mitigate the percentage of attrition, whether due to an increased sense of belonging or hesitation to change jobs in an uncertain market.

Companies will become, if not already, more and more points of reference for their employees. This shift moves away from some of the transactional approaches seen in the past decade and back toward the concept of companies as “societies.” This is not just about employee benefits in a context where public health and welfare systems are under pressure. It is also about setting clearer expectations in terms of values and

expected behaviours. For example, despite the challenges in talent attraction and retention, more companies are reviewing their remote working policies to ensure they align with their long-term vision and values.

As companies take on more of a societal role, they are defining a context where employees of each generation are expected to give and take, to learn and contribute.

This shift requires a rethinking of how companies engage with their employees and how they support them in both their professional and personal lives. Companies that successfully navigate this transition will not only retain their top talent but also foster a more engaged and committed workforce, ultimately driving long-term success.

# Evolutionary Leadership:

THE EXPECTED TRAITS

**Brave** Empathic RESULT DRIVEN  
Energizing CURIOUS  
Trusted  
Participative GENEROUS  
Passion lead  
Navigate complexity  
Flexible ENGAGING  
People inclusive KIND  
centric DRIVE CHANGE  
Learn from mistakes  
Caring  
Authentic  
WALK THE TALK  
Resilient  
AGILE  
Vision  
Collaborative  
Servant  
Innovative



“

The role of HR must become increasingly strategic, capable of proposing innovative solutions while capturing, and anticipating company's sentiment. Profound understanding of the specific business dynamics is key in a well-connected HR, capable to become a true 360° credible advocate for diverse solutions.

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**PATRIZIA VALSESIA**

CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER - ARISTON GROUP

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More than ever, the CHRO of the future should transition from a tactical and operational focus to a strategically oriented approach.

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**FRANÇOIS ROGER**

CHIEF PEOPLE, WORKPLACE,  
ORGANIZATION OFFICER - RENAULT GROUP

# Flexibility

IN THE

# workplace

The best practices to attract and retain employees through mechanism allowing an improvement of work-life balance

**A**ttracting and retaining talent is one of the main objectives for companies after the “great resignation” trend which followed the Covid-pandemic. The implementation of policies aimed at achieving these objectives requires knowledge of the possibilities offered by employment law.

We analyze below, from an employment law standpoint, some of the ways in which companies are aiming to attract and retain talent:

### 1. HYBRID WORK

Designing a remote work policy that contemplates office and remote work, in compliance with the law, helps companies combining the benefits and learning of office work with the adaptability of remote work, as well as ensuring legal compliance by regulating employees disconnection rights, protecting Company’s confidentiality and IP and compliance with H&S rules.

### 2. REMUNERATION VS. SALARY

Salary is no longer the only focus that talent looks at when evaluating a position

and a company. Variable compensation plans based on objectives allow to generate a culture of joint objectives and greater involvement and motivation. Possible examples are: **new welfare schemes**, not only in the form of goods and services, but also providing the possibility to “buy” time, converting welfare value in paid leaves; the introduction of “**4 days week**” reshaping the Monday to Friday approach; **new pay mixes** combining different forms of remuneration, such as Cash LTIP (rewarding the ability to deliver results in the medium/long term) and equity LTIP making talent a “stakeholder” in the Company.

### 3. EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Upskilling and re-skilling processes allow talent mobility within the organization and having clear professional development program allows talent to know the milestones of their professional progression. The implementation of these measures requires a thorough knowledge of the legal regime of professional classification, while retaining company’s flexibility to adapt and update programs to ever evolving business needs.



WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW  
AND DO TO COMPLY WITH THE  
**EU's Gender  
Equality**  
STRATEGY 2020-2025

The European Union has made progress in gender equality, thanks to the legislation on equal opportunity and an increased awareness of all the involved stakeholders on the benefits of valuing diversity and inclusion. Still, women remain under-represented in decision-making positions and earn on average 13% less than men across the EU.

To address these disparities, the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, includes:

- 1** the Directive on Pay Transparency to be transposed by Member States by 2026, which aims to actualize the principle of “equal pay for equal work”, a concept established in the Treaty of 1957, by leveraging the transparency principle. Employers will be required to disclose pay rates to job applicants before interviews and to provide workers with information on average pay levels by gender for comparable work. Equality is not achieved by transparency alone but requires tangible actions: the Directive provides that if there is a reported gender pay disparity of 5% or more among any group of employees that cannot be objectively explained, employers must conduct an audit (involving employees’ representatives) to ascertain if the pay differences are not based on gender-related reasons;
- 2** the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, which must be transposed by Member States by 2024. The Directive extends sustainability reporting obligations to thousands of companies, including listed SMEs, and requires them to disclose information on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) impacts, including gender equality and pay parity. Reports must follow the “double materiality principle”, which means that companies must report on the impact of their activities on society and the environment as well as on how sustainability issues affect their development and performance.

Beyond reporting, if employers want to turn the enhancement of diversity into an asset that can increase productivity and employees’ satisfaction, they shall assess their current status on pay transparency and gender equality (and, looking further, their procedures to ensure equal career paths regardless of gender and facilitate a fair balance between work and caregiving needs) taking appropriate corrective actions.

Early adoption of the principles and practices of the EU measures may also provide companies with a competitive edge and enhance their attractiveness to talents and investors.



“

Change management is no longer confined to specific moments of transition. It has become a fundamental, ongoing mindset and attitude for a CHRO.

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**FRANCESCA MORICHINI**  
CHIEF HR OFFICER - AMPLIFON

# CHROs PIONEERING THE Future OF TRANSFORMATION

**I**n light of the three key emerging themes, CHROs clearly see both the challenges and opportunities and are determined to jump on the new train. The first wave of digital transformation brought a series of decisions that were mostly taken in the rooms of Technology, Information, and sometimes Business Officers. This time, CHROs cannot stay out of the room. In fact, they are preparing themselves and their teams to be at the forefront of the transformation.

This will require, first and foremost, a clear understanding of the trends at play and the technologies shaping the context. More importantly, CHROs and their teams will need to become more hybrid, data-driven, creating capabilities and platforms to support this transition. Furthermore, the ability to influence and partner with other core functions like the CFO, CIO,

and the rising CAIO (Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer) will be crucial for success.

All the emerging themes seen above will require adapting processes, career paths, core problem-solving skills, and decision-making approaches.

CHROs are called to act as architects, envisioning and building the bridges, roads, and connectors that might not yet exist. They will lead their organizations to create the infrastructure necessary for long-term sustainability and success. This proactive approach will ensure that organizations are not only prepared for the future, but are also positioned to thrive in an increasingly complex and dynamic business environment.



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Capitalism hasn't changed its approach,  
it's people who have changed  
their approach to work in the meantime.

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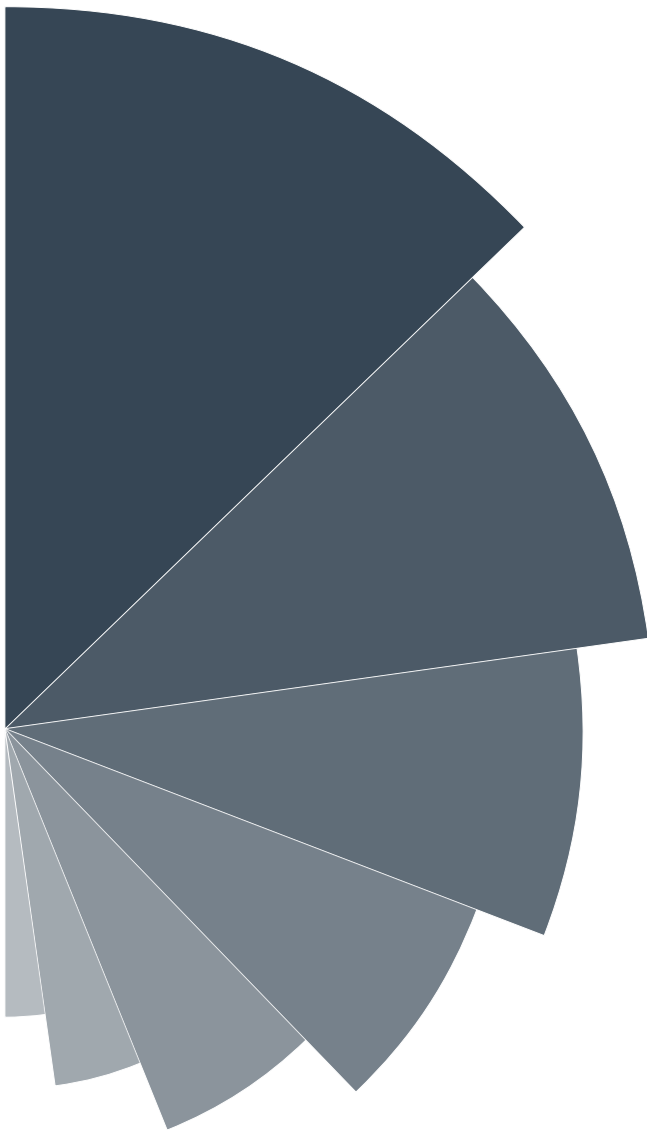
**ANNE-JULIETTE HERMANT**  
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER - NANObIOTIX

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a snowy mountain landscape. The scene is dominated by large, jagged rock formations partially covered in snow. In the foreground, a person wearing a dark jacket and a hat stands on a snow-covered slope, looking towards the mountains. The overall tone is muted and somber, with a focus on the textures of the snow and rock.

# Additional findings

# Top Priorities

FOR CHROs



- 1. Talent attraction & retention**
- 2. Artificial Intelligence**
- 3. Multi-generational diversity**
- 4. New leadership skills and succession planning**
- 5. Employee belonging and well-being**
- 6. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**
- 7. ESG**

## CRITICAL SKILLS SHORTAGE

# 91%

---

of CHROs rank **talent shortage** and the identification of new skills and competences as critical factors for their business.

## GENERATIVE AI: OPPORTUNITIES AND UNCERTAINTIES

# 73%

---

of CHROs agree on the benefits of **generative AI**, but are still struggling to remain uncertain about the real impact on HR and the technologies to adopt.

## HOLISTIC APPROACH TO DIVERSITY

# 65%

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of CHROs expressed the need to transition from an isolated DEI approach to an integrated, **multi-generational diversity** strategy throughout the entire organization.

## CULTURE AND FLEXIBILITY: A BALANCED APPROACH

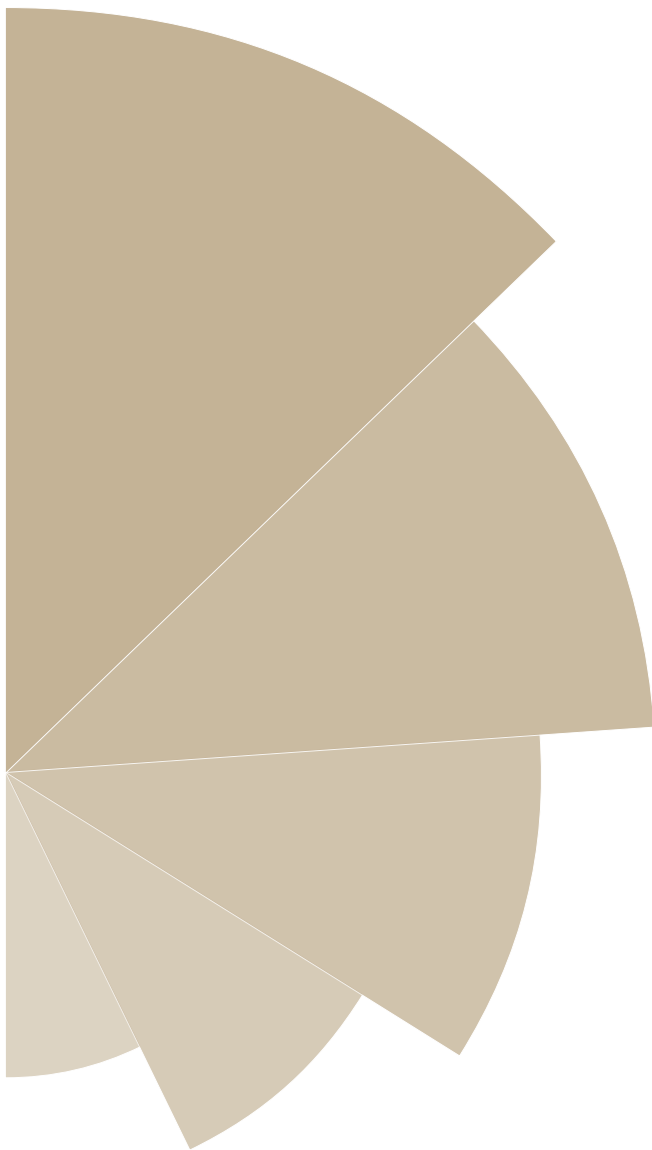
# 58%

---

of CHROs are still striving to achieve the right balance between company culture and employees' demands for flexibility and **innovative well-being ecosystems**.

# Top Emerging Risks

FOR CHROs



- 1. Slow pace in upskilling and reskilling the workforce**
- 2. Ask more from managers causing overload, demotivation and crashes**
- 3. Build succession planning in line with future skill demands**
- 4. Inability to adapt to the new cultural and technological revolution**
- 5. Avoiding to become a people-centric organization**



UPSKILLING  
AND RESKILLING

93%

---

of CHROs struggle in sourcing talent from the market therefore, the urgency of accelerating the **workforce reskilling and upskilling**.

MANAGERS  
OVERLOAD

75%

---

of CHROs identify that **increasing demands placed on managers** to achieve high performance levels, streamline operations, and effectively manage their teams can lead to overload, frustration, and potential burnout.

CULTURE AND FLEXIBILITY:  
A BALANCED APPROACH

71%

---

of CHROs express the difficulty of implementing a robust succession planning strategy capable of **meeting future business demands** in terms of skills.

CULTURAL AND  
TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

62%

---

of CHROs rank the **risk of competence** growth fading to match the advancements in AI and new emerging technologies.

88%  
of CHROs

confirmed

LEADERS  
AND MANAGERS

must develop new capabilities and skills  
to navigate fast changing environments  
and manage across generations.

“

It is no longer HR just doing HR,  
Senior Management of a company will need a  
CHRO in the form of a co-pilot, who is also a  
business leader and an entrepreneur.

---

MICHAEL PURI  
CHRO - NOVOCURE

**DO**

What we do



**SITUATIONAL  
SELF-AWARENESS**



Emotional  
Intelligence

Collaboration  
& Team Building

Curiosity &  
Applied Creativity

Adaptability  
& Resilience

**BE**

Who we are



73%  
of CHROs

Acknowledge the  
LOW REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN  
IN THEIR LEADERSHIP TEAMS  
and have established a goal  
to increase it within two years.  
However, in most cases, the target  
for improvement remains undefined.

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Achieving gender parity in senior leadership remains elusive. Although companies are making strides in increasing women's representation at the top, gender disparity in early promotions persists. Typically company, men hold 60 percent of manager-level positions, while women occupy only 40 percent.

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Consequently, the pool of women eligible for promotion to director is smaller, leading to a continued decline in the number of women at each subsequent level of leadership.

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We would like to thank all CHROs  
and HR Senior Leaders for their  
valuable insight during our conversations.

Project Lead: Erika Perez - Chaberton Partners

CHABERTON PARTNERS

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CHIOMENTI

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Executive Search, and Management Search firms.  
Our Human Explorers operate from Lugano (HQ), Geneva, London,  
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