

The 2026 Workplace Playbook:

Wellbeing, Digital Skills, Purpose & Inclusion



Insights and Actions HR & L&D
Leaders Need for 2026 and Beyond

goodhabitz

Turning priorities into performance



In 2026 HR and L&D leaders face **both unprecedented opportunities and growing complexity**. Employees expect their organisations to support wellbeing, growth, and inclusion while keeping pace with digital change and social responsibility.

At the same time, leaders must balance short-term business performance with long-term sustainability. Our latest European research with Markteffect reveals the four trends that will define the future of work and learning:

**The wellbeing
of employees**

**The new
digital revolution**

**The power of sustainability
and meaningful leadership**

**The dynamics of
diversity in teams**

All four are critical to organisational success, yet our findings show that many organisations still fall short of the focus HR and L&D leaders want to see. At GoodHabit, we believe **learning is the bridge between intention and impact**. When learning becomes a habit, accessible, engaging, and part of daily work, organisations can turn these ambitions into measurable progress.

“Organisations need their employees to constantly develop, or they won’t have the skills needed to compete. But most employees lack the time, resources and motivation to prioritise learning. Employees are overwhelmed and out of bandwidth, and it’s hurting businesses.”

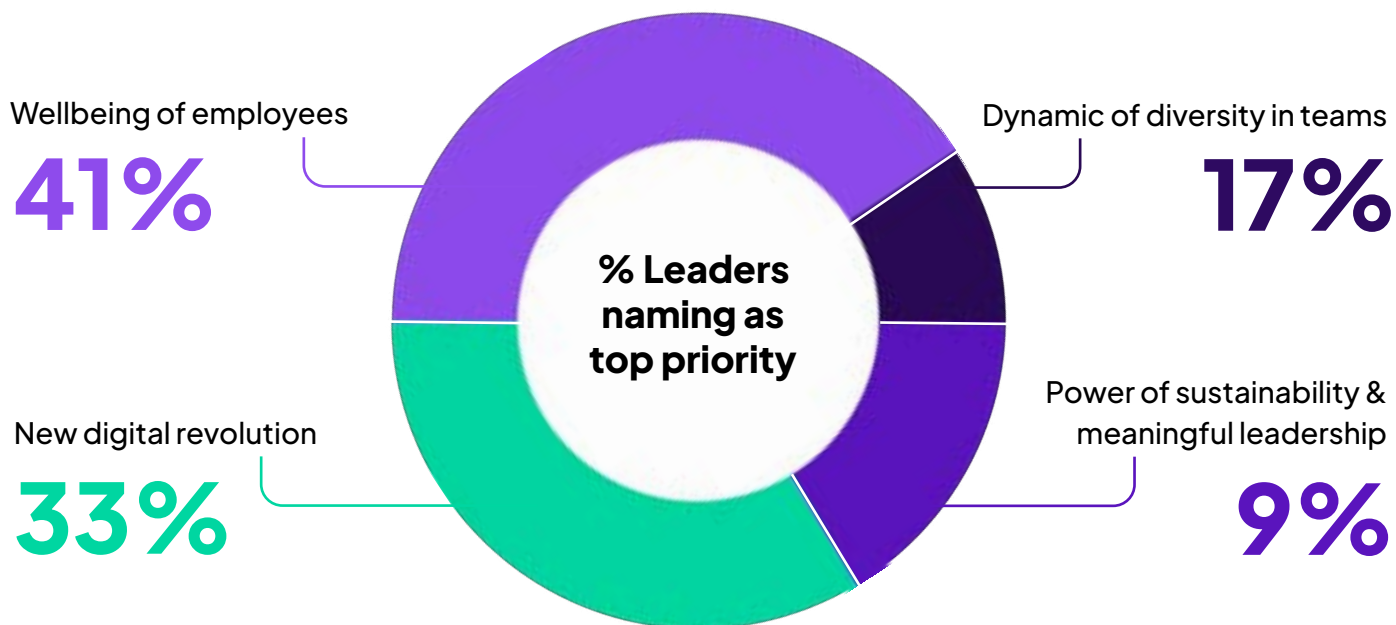
Executive summary: from awareness to action



If you're an HR or L&D leader planning for 2026, you likely already know what matters the most in terms of workplace prosperity. What this research reveals, is the **difference between knowing and embedding**. Across Europe, awareness is high, but execution lags. Leaders understand the importance of wellbeing, digital transformation, sustainability, and diversity, yet struggle to allocate the focus, resources, and continuity needed to make these priorities systemic.

Our research also highlights the **impact of age demographics on the adoption of these trends**. Younger employees may be more adept at digital tools, while older employees might prioritise stability and wellbeing. Understanding these differences is crucial for **tailoring strategies that resonate across generations**.

Key insights at glance



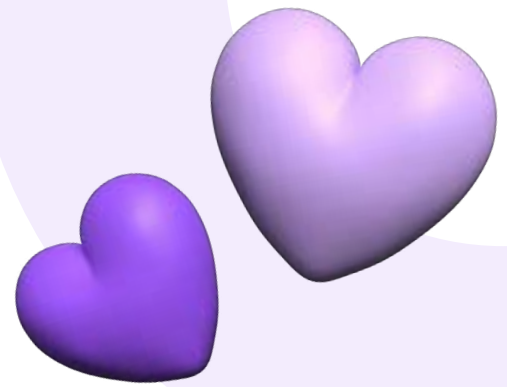
Across all four trends, there's a measurable gap between current and desired focus:



These gaps represent millions of employees working in organisations where critical capabilities like resilience, adaptability, purpose-driven leadership, and inclusive collaboration are **acknowledged, but not yet embedded**.

For HR and L&D leaders, this isn't merely a challenge - it's a strategic roadmap. Bridging these gaps is where learning creates measurable business value.

Putting people first: wellbeing as the heart of performance



Wellbeing has evolved from an HR initiative to a **strategic performance driver**. 41% of leaders name it their top 2026 priority, the highest of all trends. Yet, despite recognition, an 11-point gap remains between current focus (70%) and desired focus (81%).

Why wellbeing matters

Leaders connect wellbeing directly with performance, retention, and culture:

- **Satisfaction and productivity** (36%): Supported employees perform better and stay longer.
- **Mental health** (32%): Addressing stress and burnout builds resilience and reduces absence.
- **Engagement** (21%): When people feel valued, they commit more deeply to their organisation.

Wellbeing is not an add-on; it's the foundation of sustainable performance. You surely have heard of Quiet Quitting: Organisations neglecting employees' wellbeing in the workplace face rising absenteeism and disengagement, leading to higher turnover and elevated costs.



The learning opportunity

Currently, one-third of organisations utilise e-learning to enhance wellbeing. The next step involves deepening this approach by integrating wellbeing into leadership development, team dynamics, and performance discussions. This requires going beyond traditional wellness programs to **cultivate resilience, adaptability, and psychological safety** as essential everyday skills.



To work at scale and improve employee mental health, large-scale initiatives are often necessary. Training managers and HR professionals is crucial, as many lack formal training in **employee wellbeing and people management**. Ensuring that everyone in the chain understands the larger goals and the steps needed to achieve them is vital. **L&D plays a significant role here**, as learning new skills can directly contribute to mental health. Resilience, for example, is a teachable skill

that can greatly enhance wellbeing. **Building a culture of mental wellbeing at work starts with normalising conversations around mental health.** Employees need to feel safe discussing these issues without fear of jeopardising their standing or opportunities for advancement. Transparency about promotions and firings also fosters a sense of security. Employees themselves can become key allies, sharing positive experiences to promote a culture of safety and learning.

Curious to learn more about this topic?



Mental health has become a focal point for both employers and employees, with recent years underscoring the critical need for enhanced mental well-being in the workplace.

Listen to the **GoodHabitiz** podcast [Navigating mental health in today's workplace.](#)

Join Gijs Coppens, CEO and Founder of the mental well-being platform OpenUp, as they discuss the major shifts and ongoing challenges HR and L&D leaders are facing today.

To effectively enhance workplace wellbeing, consider the following Action Plan for 2026:

- Incorporate wellbeing into onboarding and leadership development programs.
- Evaluate progress by using both engagement and wellbeing metrics.
- Approach wellbeing as an ongoing capability to be developed, rather than a one-time campaign.

GoodHabitiz offers a comprehensive [suite of e-learning modules](#) that empower organizations to seamlessly integrate wellbeing into daily workflows, providing resources on **mental health, resilience, and adaptability**. Thanks to courses on stress management, mindfulness, and work-life balance, GoodHabitiz provides the tools and resources you need to bring your wellbeing action plan to life. Track employee progress and knowledge gains within our platform to gain a holistic view of your organisation's wellbeing.

The new digital revolution: When technology becomes human



A significant portion of HR and L&D leaders, 33%, identify digital transformation as a key strategic priority. While 65% are already concentrating on this area, the goal is to reach 71%. The key to closing this gap lies in addressing and leveraging the human aspect of technology integration.

Why digital transformation matters

- 56% highlight **innovation and technology adoption**.
- 12% focus on **changing work processes**.
- 11% emphasise **efficiency and automation**.



The learning opportunity

In an AI-driven workplace, **human skills are essential to complement AI's capabilities**. While AI efficiently handles data-driven tasks, it's the human skills that interpret this data, make strategic decisions, and adapt to new challenges. Notably, 43% of employees reported **fewer interactions with coworkers** due to AI, highlighting the need for strong human skills.



Iris Cremers, GoodHabitZ's Chief Human Resources Officer, emphasizes, "*Whilst content is being commoditised, human skills are what set people and companies apart.*"

Our research identifies the top five human skills that complement AI:

- problem-solving
- critical thinking
- creativity
- collaboration
- adaptability

Digital readiness extends beyond technical skills; it involves emotional intelligence as well.

To be future-ready, teams need to:

- build digital confidence
- cultivate ethical awareness around AI and data
- foster curiosity and adaptability.

Want to provide effective AI training for your employees but don't know how?

Check out our blog on [How to Build an AI-Literate Workforce](#).

For more insights, tune into the [“Moving Forward” podcast episode](#) featuring Rina Joosten-Rabou, CEO of Pera, where she discusses AI's role in retention and development, and the competencies that will keep employees future-proof.



To prepare your team for digital transformation, consider the following Action Plan for 2026:

- Foster trust by cultivating a digital mindset alongside technical skills.
- Ensure digital learning is practical, experiential, and conducted in a psychologically safe environment.

AI is transforming the workplace, yet many employees still feel uncertain about how to use it effectively. [This is why we created Goodlearn](#), our mobile-first, gamified AI literacy platform: to equip every employee the **foundational knowledge, practical skills, and confidence** to work with AI responsibly. Goodlearn is designed to make learning engaging: bite-sized lessons, hands-on practice, and gamified challenges turn experimentation into safe, habit-forming learning, ensuring your teams are **ready for the upcoming EU AI Act** and other compliance standards.

Purpose and sustainability: the new currency of leadership



Currently, 57% of organisations prioritise sustainability and meaningful leadership, with a goal of reaching 68%. This 11-point gap presents a **significant opportunity for HR** to transform purpose into a measurable leadership capability, driving both organisational growth and social responsibility.

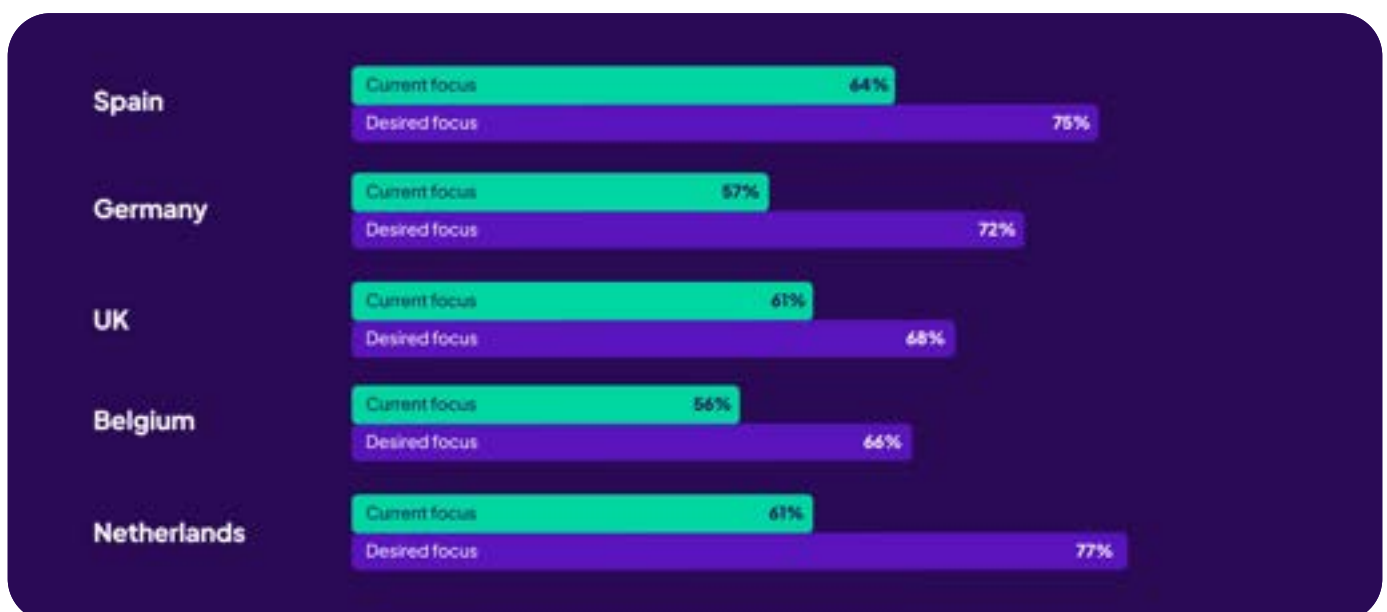
Why it matters

Leaders connect wellbeing directly with performance, retention, and culture:

- **46%** of organisations link purpose to leadership and culture, highlighting its role in shaping organisational values and behaviours.

- **29%** associate it with social responsibility, underscoring the importance of aligning business practices with societal needs.
- **5%** connect it to employee engagement, indicating its potential to inspire and motivate the workforce.

Purpose-driven leadership strengthens companies by aligning growth with responsibility, making effective leadership training a fundamental building block for organizational success, not just a formality. Take a look at [what it takes to build an effective leadership training programme](#).



The learning opportunity



Purpose-driven leadership is more than an initiative; it's a mindset shift that requires embedding sustainability into leadership training. **To achieve this, organisations should:**

- Equip managers to balance stakeholder expectations effectively, ensuring that diverse interests are considered in decision-making.
- Encourage long-term thinking, fostering decisions that benefit both the organisation and society over time.
- Connect purpose to everyday decision-making, making it a fundamental part of the organisational culture.

Developing inclusive leadership traits is crucial in today's workplace.

Here are some practical steps leaders can take:

- **Implement an Inclusive Onboarding Process:** Tailor onboarding to meet the specific needs of diverse groups, assess inclusivity in materials and processes, and involve current employees in program design. This strategic approach is key to shaping loyal and productive employees, especially as 83% of Gen Z evaluates a company's DE&I commitment.
- **Practice Inclusive Communication:** Use language that celebrates diversity, show respect, and involve the people you talk about. This fosters stronger, more meaningful communication.
- **Create Feedback Loops:** Encourage regular feedback to identify blind spots and biases and adjust strategies proactively. Promote 'Failure Sharing' in meetings to discuss mistakes and learnings openly.
- **Practice Allyship:** Actively support marginalised groups by taking action, focusing on behaviour, and listening actively. This commitment helps develop a leadership style that truly sticks.

For more insights, explore our article [on Inclusive Leadership](#) to uncover valuable information about this important topic.

What exactly is purpose-driven, sustainable, and inclusive leadership, and why is it so crucial in today's workplace?

To prepare promote purpose and sustainability, consider the following Action Plan for 2026:

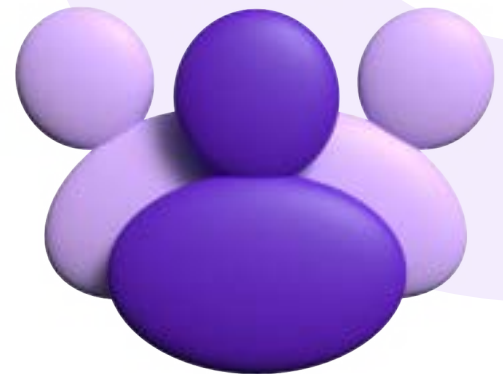
- **Make purpose a principle:** Treat purpose as a guiding principle rather than a one-time project, ensuring it permeates all aspects of the organization.
- **Integrate into leadership frameworks:** Embed purpose into leadership frameworks, KPIs, and culture metrics to ensure it is consistently measured and prioritized.

By taking these steps, organisations can harness the power of purpose and sustainability to drive meaningful change and achieve lasting success.



Leadership isn't just a title; it's a skill anyone can develop. Empower your employees at every level to lead effectively by providing them with the tools and resources they need to inspire, make informed decisions, and achieve impactful results. GoodHabitZ offers a comprehensive suite of leadership development content designed to create lasting change. Explore our core topics and [equip your team with essential skills](#) through popular courses, lesson and assessments like "The Art of Feedback," "Decision Styles," "Difficult Conversations," and "Leadership - Find Your Style."

Diversity: From initiative to core capability



Despite external pressures, 62% of organisations are now prioritizing diversity, an increase from 55% earlier in 2025. This modest 4% gap indicates **steady progress and a maturing approach to diversity**. Here's why diversity is crucial:

- **36%** of organizations link it to leadership and culture.
- **17%** associate it with employee engagement.
- **10%** connect it to performance outcomes.

This data underscores the growing recognition of diversity as a fundamental component of organisational success.



The learning opportunity



Transitioning from traditional DE&I programs to **fostering inclusive leadership capabilities** will help create a more cohesive and innovative workplace.

By focusing on developing empathy, cultural intelligence, and a sense of belonging, organisations can enhance collaboration, improve employee satisfaction, and drive

better business outcomes. These skills are essential for navigating diverse work environments and ensuring that **all employees feel valued and understood**. E-learning facilitates this transition by promoting inclusion on a large scale, making these critical skills accessible to every employee, every day.

How can you cultivate a culture of diversity and inclusion?

Tune in to the podcast [Learning the Language of Inclusion](#) featuring communication expert Hannan Challouki for valuable insights

To embrace diversity in the workplace, consider the following Action Plan for 2026

- Integrate Inclusion: Embed inclusive practices into all leadership and communication training to ensure that leaders are equipped to foster diverse and welcoming environments.
- Develop Measurable DE&I Capabilities: Establish clear metrics to assess and track diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, ensuring that progress can be quantified and evaluated.
- Shift from Awareness to Accountability: Transition from simply raising awareness about DE&I issues to holding individuals and teams accountable for creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace culture.

Download our guides for a more inclusive workplace:

[Practical guide to inclusive onboarding](#)

[Inclusive style guide: the gender equality edition](#)



Work today is a team sport. Equip your team with essential skills for clear communication, psychological safety, and effective collaboration. Diverse and inclusive teams not only create a more enjoyable work environment but also **drive innovation through varied perspectives and ideas.** GoodHabitZ platform engages employees of all ages, fostering empathy, cultural intelligence, and a sense of belonging. With personalized learning paths tailored to different styles and preferences, we ensure inclusivity and engagement across generations, helping organizations seamlessly integrate **sustainability** into their leadership culture.

Country insights: a diverse European picture

	Key Strength	Focus Gap	Insight
Spain	Leads in wellbeing, digital and sustainability	Minimal	Fat growth, momentum driven by renewed HR investment
Netherlands	Mature digital and wellbeing culture	Low urgency	Lower focus reflects integration, not neglect
Germany	Structured approach to diversity and leadership	Moderate	Methodical, steady implementation of DE&I and purpose-driven learning
UK	Ahead on diversity and digital learning	Wellbeing gap	Early DE&I adoption, opportunity to deepen wellbeing focus
Belgium	Catching up on wellbeing and digital focus	High	Lagging in adoption, but high appetite for structured growth

Closing the gap: Turning priorities into performance

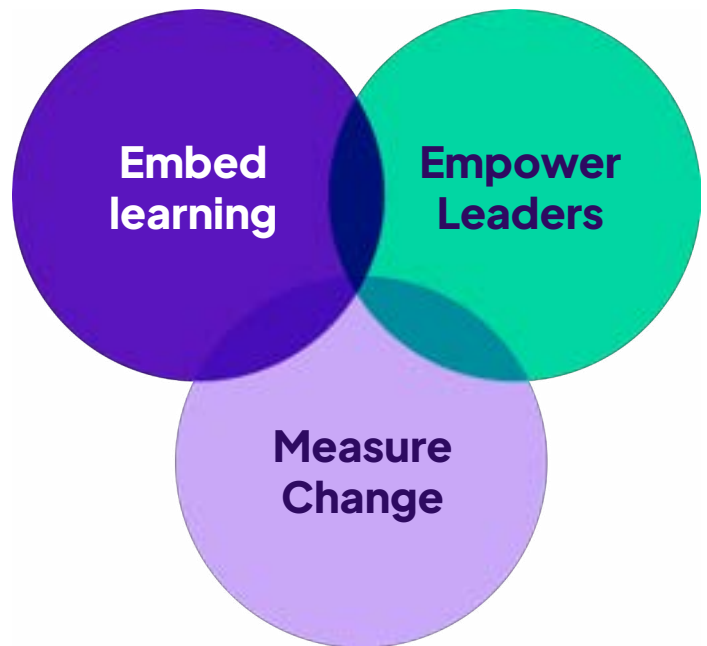
Across all four trends, one truth stands out: awareness alone doesn't create change: **learning does.**

Embed learning in daily work

- **Why:** Continuous learning is essential for adapting to the rapidly changing workplace. By integrating microlearning into daily workflows, employees can develop skills incrementally without disrupting their productivity.
- **Actionable Insight:** Implement bite-sized learning modules that employees can access on-demand, allowing them to learn at their own pace and apply new skills immediately to their tasks.

Empower leaders to model learning

- **Why:** Leaders who actively engage in learning set a powerful example, fostering a culture of curiosity and growth within their teams. This not only boosts morale but also encourages a shared commitment to development.
- **Actionable Insight:** Encourage leaders to share their learning journeys through team meetings or internal platforms, highlighting the value of continuous learning and its impact on personal and professional growth.



Measure behaviour change, not just completion

- **Why:** The true value of learning lies in its ability to drive meaningful change. By focusing on behaviour change, organizations can better assess the impact of learning initiatives on key business outcomes.
- **Actionable Insight:** Develop metrics that link learning engagement to improvements in retention, performance, and employee wellbeing. Use these insights to refine learning strategies and demonstrate ROI to stakeholders.



The Zumtobel success story

As a forward-thinking technology company with approximately 5,500 employees across diverse departments and roles, **Zumtobel recognized that AI was already impacting daily operations**. With the EU's AI Act on the horizon, training wasn't just important; it was a critical necessity. However, the challenge lay in deploying this training effectively across the entire organization. The complexity of the topic and the breadth of the audience demanded a learning experience that was inclusive, practical, and safe. Zumtobel also needed a communication strategy that would generate genuine interest and participation, ensuring more than just a cursory click-through.

The GoodHabitZ Solution: A Tailor-Made Learning Path

Zumtobel partnered with GoodHabitZ to create a custom AI learning path seamlessly integrated into their existing Learning Management System (LMS). This approach, combined with a clear communication plan and engaging GoodHabitZ content, transformed a compliance requirement into a highly engaging learning experience. By focusing on practical application and inclusivity, Zumtobel successfully turned mandatory training into a valuable opportunity for employee growth and development.

[Read more on how Zumtobel delivered mandatory AI training employees wanted to complete.](#)



About GoodHabitz

GoodHabitz makes learning as engaging as your favourite series, and just as easy to access. Our mission is to help organizations make learning a habit that bridges awareness and action across wellbeing, digital skills, sustainability, and inclusion.

About the research

Conducted by **Markteffect** on behalf of **GoodHabitz** in 2025.
Sample: 1,040 HR and L&D professionals managing ≥ 3 employees in organizations of 250+ staff.
Markets: UK, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Belgium.
Margin of error: $\pm 3.1\%$.



**Ready to turn priorities
into performance?**

[Request a demo](#)