



What 2026 R2 Changed While You Weren't Looking



THE WORKDAY UPDATES THAT DESERVE YOUR ATTENTION



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→ Executive Summary

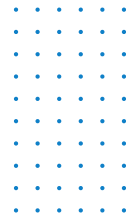


Workday 2026 R2 went live in production on September 19, 2026. It delivers 459 updates, including 382 new features, 64 retirements, and a significant expansion of AI agents across HR, payroll, finance, and reporting.

Some of these changes are already active in your tenant. Others sit dormant until they're configured. A few are on track to become mandatory in 2027 R1. Knowing which is which is the difference between a smooth release and a disruptive one.

This guide highlights the themes and high-impact changes in 2026 R2, and why a structured release review matters more than ever.





Introduction

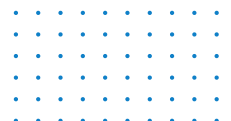


Twice a year, Workday customers receive a new release. And twice a year, HR, payroll, finance, and IT teams face the same question: what in here actually matters to us?

The release notes are thorough, but they're written to be complete, not prioritized. Without a clear way to filter, teams tend to either skim and miss something important, or try to review everything and run out of time before the next release arrives.

2026 R2 raises the stakes. Workday is retiring legacy experiences, enforcing new defaults, and building AI directly into everyday workflows.

Organizations that treat each release as a planning moment get more value from Workday and fewer surprises in production.





What Is a Workday Release Cycle?



Workday delivers two feature releases each year, R1 and R2. Each one lands first in your Preview tenant, giving teams time to review and test, then moves into Production. For 2026 R2, Preview opened August 15 and Production followed on September 19.

Every update falls into one of three categories: changes that happen automatically, features that require setup, and retirements. Each one calls for a different response.





➔ **Key Themes in 2026 R2**

Agentic AI Moves Into Everyday Work

AI agents are the clearest thread running through this release. Workday expands its Self-Service Agent and introduces new agents for reporting, case management, and revenue contracts. Agents can also now be built directly into business processes. Many of these capabilities come with licensing and contractual prerequisites worth understanding before you plan a rollout.

A More Modern Experience

Workday continues to replace legacy interfaces with the New Workday Experience, including updates to Change Job, the home page, and navigation.

Payroll, Compliance, and Financial Automation

Payroll and Financial Management together account for well over 150 updates, from new compliance requirements to automation that reduces manual effort.

Open Data and AI Connectivity

New capabilities like Workday Data Cloud and the Adaptive Planning MCP Server point toward a more connected platform, where Workday data moves more easily into the tools and AI environments organizations already use.



→ **Spotlight: The Changes You Can't Ignore**

Most of 2026 R2 is optional. A few items are not. Several changes were applied to tenants automatically at release, including a conversion that affects core job change workflows. Others currently allow an opt-out that will disappear in 2027 R1.

Add 64 retirements, many involving report fields that custom reports and integrations may still rely on, and the risk of something quietly breaking is real. The organizations that come through releases cleanly are the ones that identify these items early and test them on purpose.

Business Value

A structured approach to each release pays off over time:

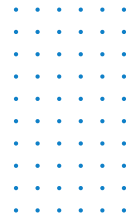
- Fewer production surprises for employees and administrators.
- Faster time to value from features you're already paying for.
- Protected integrations and reporting as legacy items retire.
- Smarter AI adoption, with prerequisites and costs understood up front.

Implementation Framework

Every release review should answer a few core questions:

- What changed in our tenant automatically, and have we tested it?
- Which retirements affect our reports, calculated fields, or integrations?
- Which new features are worth adopting, and when?
- What's coming in 2027 R1 that we should prepare for now?

Answering them well takes a clear view of your tenant's configuration and a repeatable process. That's where an experienced partner makes the difference.



→ **How Syssero Helps**

Syssero helps Workday customers turn every release into a plan. Our Release Highlights guide translates Workday's official release notes into plain language, organized by module and setup effort, so each team can see exactly what affects them.

Our Workday consultants go further, helping you test automatic changes, audit retirements against your configuration, evaluate new features and AI agents, and build an adoption roadmap that fits your priorities. Talk to Syssero about your 2026 R2 release review.

Conclusion

Workday 2026 R2 is a release about direction. Legacy experiences are giving way to a modern interface, AI is moving into everyday work, and data is becoming more connected. Not every update deserves your attention, but the right ones deserve it early.

The release notes tell you what changed. A roadmap tells you what to do about it.



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