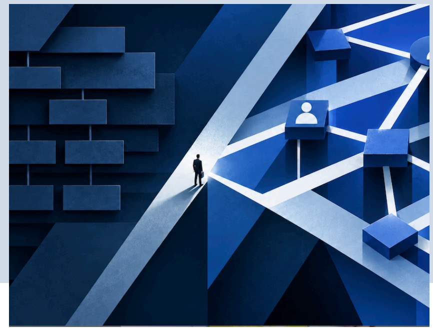
LEADING HR | M1 Insight

Tired vs. Wired: The HR Agenda Is Moving



3 Min Read | September 10, 2026

Based on recent M1 conversations with CHROs and talent leaders, the HR agenda is shifting quickly.

Some of the “tired” ideas are beginning to resemble the office fax machine: once indispensable, now a reminder that functional and future-ready are not the same. Here is our synthesis of what is losing momentum and what forward-looking leaders are testing instead.

TIRED	WIRED
Asking which HR agent	→ **Determining how AI will generate revenue**
Counting licenses, pilots and use cases	→ **Reengineering workflows and restructuring teams**
Leading with how many jobs AI may eliminate	→ **Removing low-value work and creating higher-value human contribution**
Treating AI training as the strategy	→ **Deeper capability-building in high-value roles**
Assuming past performance predicts future potential	→ **Assessing systems thinking, tech-human judgment, curiosity and adaptability**
Completing the annual succession grid	→ **Having authentic debate on successor viability**

TIRED	WIRED
Defaulting to an external search	→ **Comparing external talent and internal bench, then investing accordingly**
Keeping strong talent inside business units	→ **Forcing trades across businesses and functions**
Giving the board a comprehensive HR update	→ **Naming the material gap, the action underway and where guidance is needed**
Debating remote work only as policy	→ **In-person experiences that build relationships and judgment**

This is not a consensus or a list of universal best practices. It is an editorial synthesis of where recent conversations appear to be moving. Some of the “wired” practices are established, while others are plans, pilots or experiments inside individual companies.

In July, one food manufacturer described a demonstrated relationship between site-level engagement and safety, quality and performance. The lesson was not that every company should track the same outcomes. It was that engagement earns credibility when leaders can show what it predicts in their particular business. The wired move is to stop treating the metric itself as the outcome.

Dallas participants applied the same thinking to leadership and succession. One company asked executives to vote on whom they would want in critical leadership roles several years into the future. A later iteration introduced confidence ratings and required leaders to specify what evidence would increase their confidence in a successor. Elsewhere in the discussion, participants described cross-business talent “drafts” designed to surface internal candidates and counter talent hoarding.

These are individual company practices, not universal answers. But they reflect a common question: Are we assessing talent for the organization we have, or the one we are becoming?

The AI conversation is moving in a similar direction. July participants described significant investments in licenses, pilots and employee access. Yet one leader argued that the real challenge was no longer doing the same work faster. It was workflow reengineering.

The group did not agree on how quickly AI would produce credible headcount reductions. Some leaders expected meaningful displacement; others worried that AI was being used to cover weak business plans. But the conversation was clearly expanding beyond adoption. One organization put its CEO, CHRO and CIO together to explain where lower-value work might disappear, where employees could grow into more valuable work and how the transition would affect the workforce.

The emerging HR agenda is less about finding a definitive model and more about asking better questions: What business outcome are we trying to change? What evidence would show that our talent strategy is working? Which capabilities will matter in the next version of the company? Where should technology remove work, and where should it create room for more valuable human contribution?

Tired HR reports the activity. Wired HR keeps asking what changed because of it.