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ATLANTA'S HR EXECUTIVE COMMUNITY

FEBRUARY
SPARK SERIES PROGRAM

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Edgar Acosta Chaparro
Corporate & R&T Sr Director
HR
Novelis, Inc.

Mandy Shuck
Cox Enterprises
SVP, Total Rewards

Katy Conway
Shepherd Center
CHRO

Paige Goldner, SHRM-SCPVP
TRC Talent Solutions
EVP, Talent Advisory & Strategy

VOLUNTEER

We are looking for volunteers for our various committees:

- Finance
- Member Engagement
- Member Recruitment
- Programs

If you are interested in volunteering, please send us an email to
info@hrlfatlanta.org

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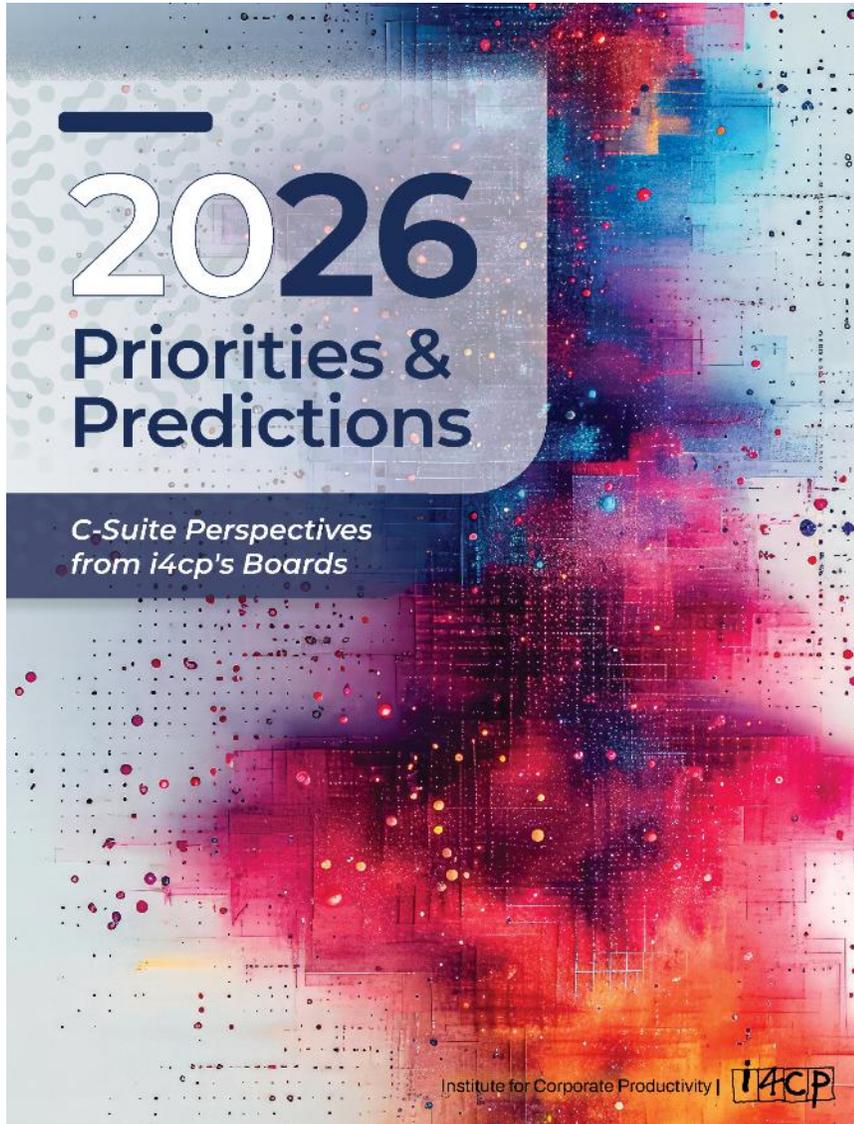**MERCER**

OUR PROGRAM

CHRO Priorities and HR Trends

LORRIE LYKINS
VICE PRESIDENT OF RESEARCH
INSTITUTE FOR CORPORATE PRODUCTIVITY (I4CP)

i4cp's 2026 Priorities & Predictions

Key Findings

High Performance **Defined**

- Revenue growth
- Market share

Over a five-year period.

- Profitability
- Customer satisfaction

Our **Research Focus**

- What do high-performance organizations do differently?
- Do those practices correlate to market performance?
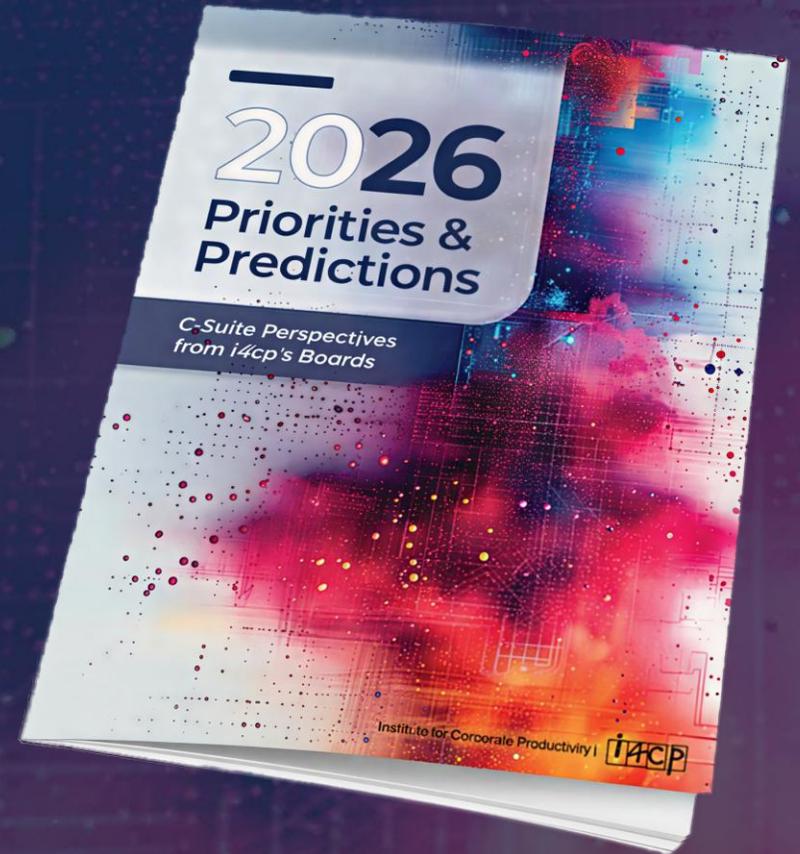
i4cp Members *(partial list)*

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i4cp Boards

i4cp's executive Boards bring together research and forward-thinking leaders to discuss, debate, collaborate, and anticipate trends and next practices in HR in order to make more informed business decisions.

Future of Work Board

Chief Learning & Talent Officer Board

Chief HR Officer Board(s)

Impact & Belonging Leader Board

Talent Acquisition Board

Total Rewards Leader Board

People Analytics Board

NEXT PRACTICE
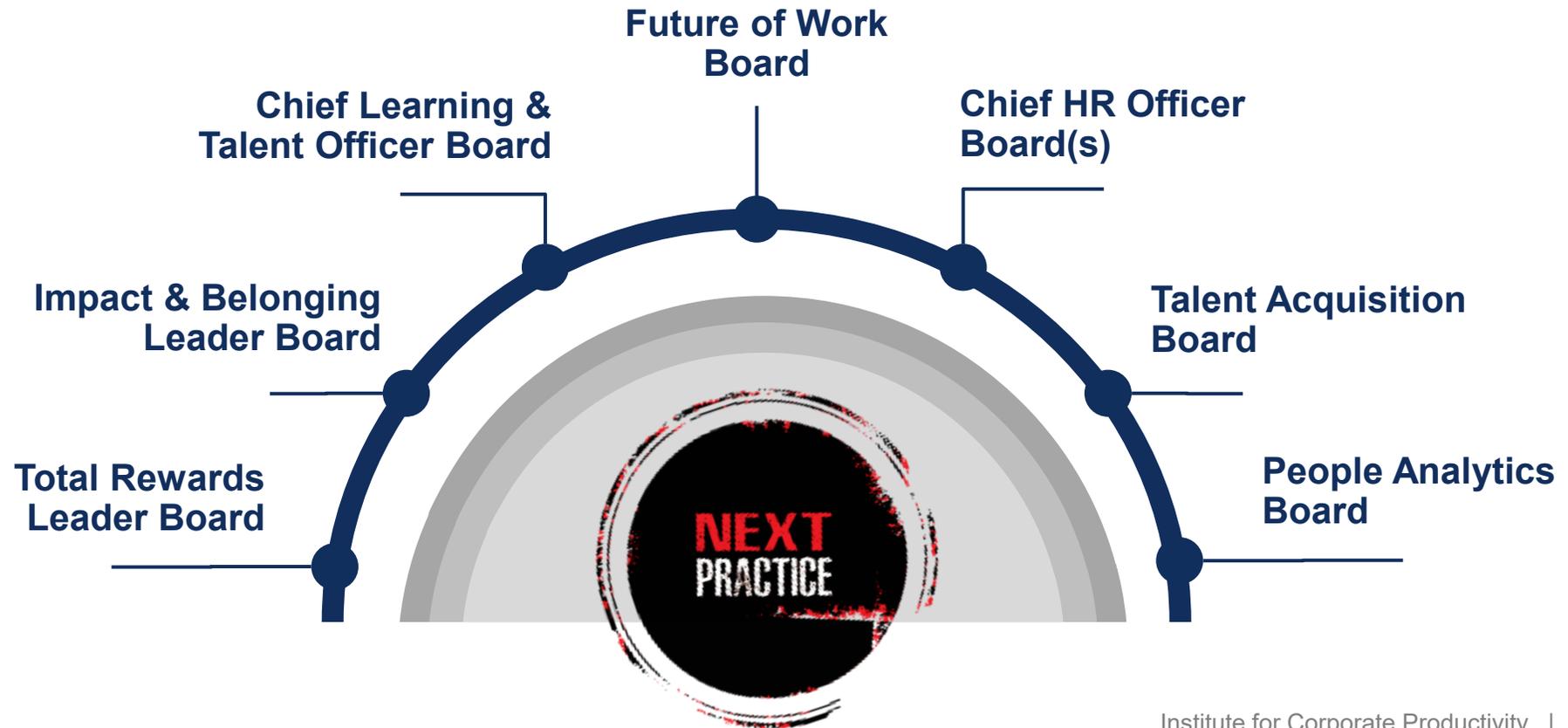
We asked:

- **What are the top priorities for your function in 2026?**

- **What do you predict will be the biggest challenge(s) for your function in 2026?**

- **What are the biggest pressures facing HR?**

Poll – Which of the following *external* issues pose the greatest threat to your organization's ability to execute its 2026 strategy? (Select your top three)

- Macroeconomic uncertainty

- Changes made by the U.S. Government

- Available talent pool

- Regulations and / or compliance specific to industry

- Changing workforce demographic and expectations

- U.S. political instability

- Evolving consumer demographics and expectations
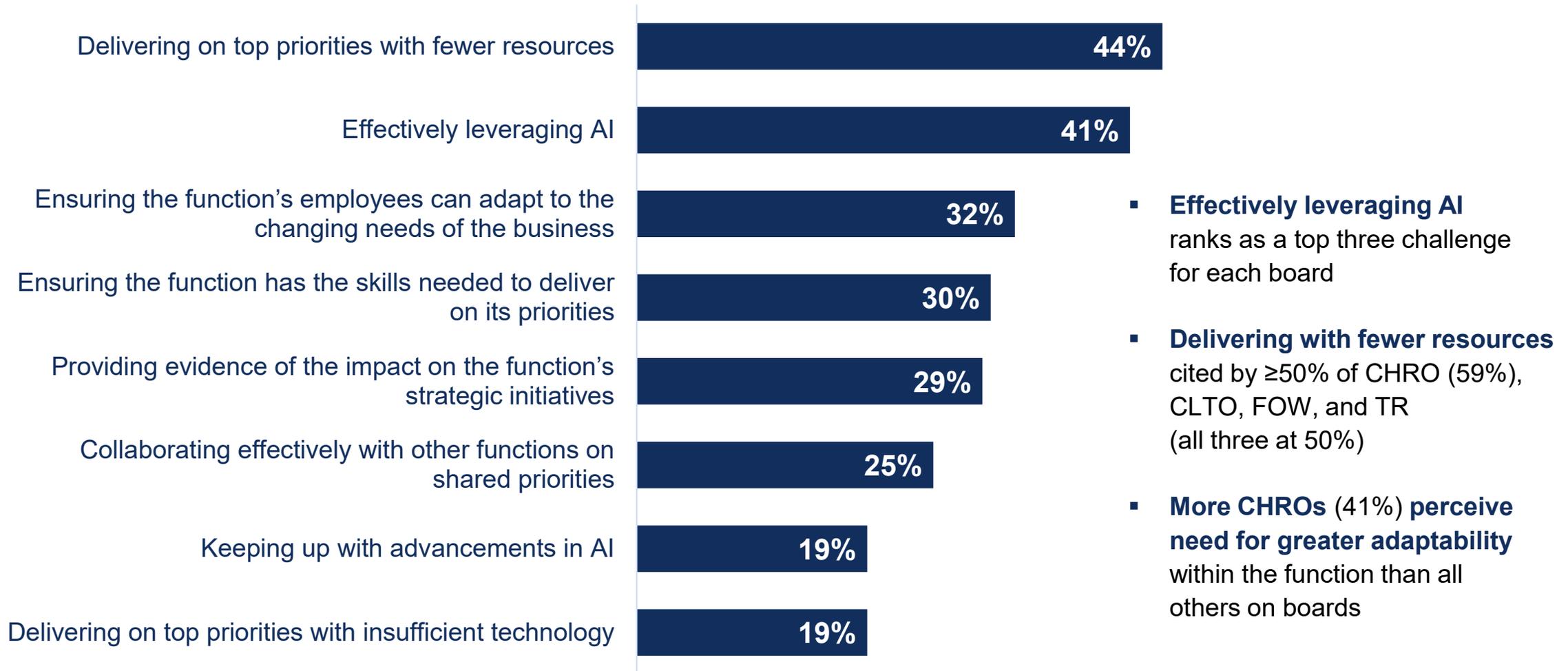
- Global political instability

External threats to executing strategy in 2026

Threat	Percentage
Macroeconomic uncertainty	48%
Changes made by the U.S. Government	44%
Available talent pool	36%
Regulations and / or compliance specific to industry	35%
Changing workforce demographics and expectations	34%
U.S. political instability	32%
Evolving consumer demographics and expectations	26%
Global political instability	23%
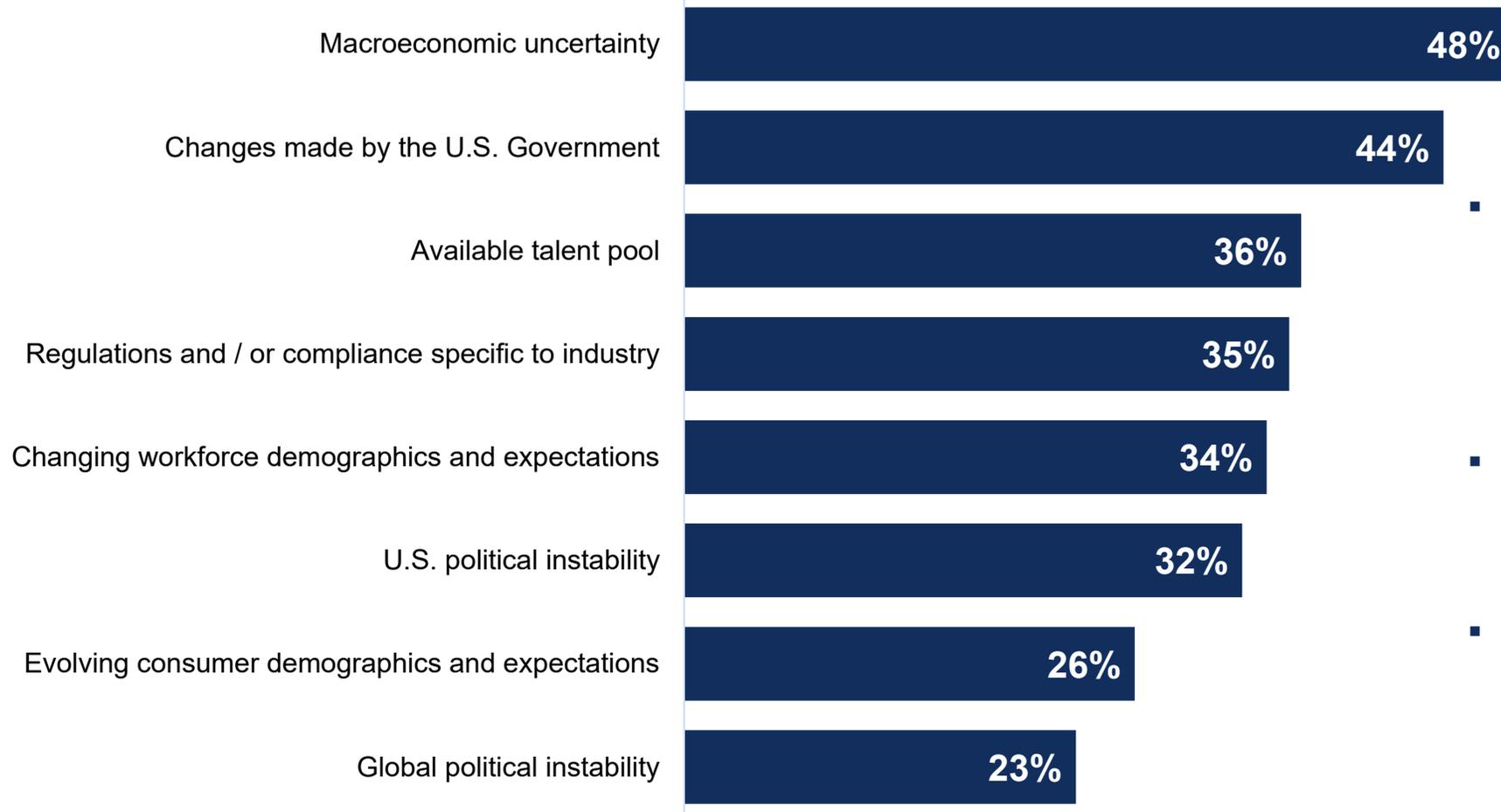
- **Macroeconomic uncertainty** presents the greatest challenge to TR (75%), CHRO (63%), CLTO (58%), TA (57%) and FOW (50%) boards

- 50% of PA leaders cite **data security/privacy** and/or **industry-specific compliance/regulations**

- Majority of IB leaders cite **divisiveness with DE&I** and/or **U.S. political instability**

Source: *i4cp's 2026 Priorities & Predictions Survey*, 2025. Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp).

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Biggest Challenges to Functional Execution

Challenge	%
Delivering on top priorities with fewer resources	44%
Effectively leveraging AI	41%
Ensuring the function's employees can adapt to the changing needs of the business	32%
Ensuring the function has the skills needed to deliver on its priorities	30%
Providing evidence of the impact on the function's strategic initiatives	29%
Collaborating effectively with other functions on shared priorities	25%
Keeping up with advancements in AI	19%
Delivering on top priorities with insufficient technology	19%

- **Effectively leveraging AI** ranks as a top three challenge for each board

- **Delivering with fewer resources** cited by ≥50% of CHRO (59%), CLTO, FOW, and TR (all three at 50%)

- **More CHROs** (41%) **perceive need for greater adaptability** within the function than all others on boards

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Budget change in 2026

Aggregate:

Remain same = **48.6%**	Increase = **21.7%**
Decrease = **25.7%**	Too soon = **4.1%**

Budget Changes in Fiscal Year 2026 - by Function/CoE

Legend: Increase | Remain the same | Decrease | Too soon to tell

Function/CoE	Increase	Remain the same	Decrease	Too soon to tell
Chief Human Resource Officers	21%	43%	32%	4%
Chief Learning & Talent Officers	11%	43%	43%	3%
Future of Work Leaders	50%	30%	10%	10%
Impact & Belonging Leaders	9%	65%	20%	6%
People Analytics Leaders	63%	37%		
Talent Acquistion Leaders	31%	48%	17%	4%
Total Rewards Leaders	25%	63%	12%	

More **PA, FoW, TA,** and **TR** functions expect budget increases than decreases.

Source: *i4cp's 2026 Priorities & Predictions Survey*, 2025. Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp).

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Future Investments

Which of the following do you anticipate will receive the greatest investment of resources in 2026?

Category	Percentage
Generative AI (GenAI) functional augmentation	65%
Agentic AI	42%
Leadership Development	38%
Strategic Workforce Planning	38%
HR Technology	33%

Think Future-Ready Organization:

- Culture readiness
- AI readiness
- Skills readiness

Source: *i4cp's 2026 Priorities & Predictions Survey*, 2025. Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp).

The *Future-Ready* Framework™

AI readiness

A workforce equipped and supported to experiment with and operationalize artificial intelligence safely and effectively.

Skills readiness

A workforce with the skills needed to execute on strategy over the next one- to three years.

Culture readiness

A culture (and its leaders) that embraces and models change.

2026 TOP PRIORITIES

Chief Human Resource Officers

1. **AI-related workforce initiatives**

2. **Leadership development**

3. **Strategic Workforce Planning for the next one- to two years, including redesigning work due to AI**

4. **C-Suite succession**

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Chief Human Resource Officers

- **2026 will be an intern year for agentic AI.**

- **More focus on agility will lessen need for resiliency.**

- **The theme of uncertainty will continue.**

- **We will see a rise of the intelligent, adaptive HR ecosystem.**

Chief Learning &Talent Officers

PRIORITIES

1. **Upskilling the organization's workforce**

2. **Leadership development**

3. **Increasing manager effectiveness**

4. **Implementing AI technology or services**

PREDICTIONS

1. **AI-powered learning will become the norm.**

2. **Talent pipelines—especially for early career—will be more challenging.**

3. **AI will drive An *always on* talent ecosystem.**

4. **In-person training has a renaissance.**

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Future of Work Leaders

PRIORITIES

1. Redesigning work (the responsibilities, jobs, and tasks that are performed) due to AI

2. Reimagining enterprise organization design to align with evolving business needs

3. Helping the organization become skills-centric

4. Improving the mobility of talent to optimize work impact and career engagement

PREDICTIONS

1. Strategic workforce planning becomes a boardroom imperative.

2. AI literacy becomes a core enterprise skill.

3. Productivity metrics will be redefined around capacity creation.

4. The human operating system gets an upgrade.

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Impact & Belonging Leaders

PRIORITIES

1. Promoting and embedding inclusive leadership practices and habits

2. Strengthening DE&I strategies to ensure alignment with organizational goals

3. Leveraging AI to enhance DE&I program effectiveness

4. Eliminating bias in processes, decisions, systems

PREDICTIONS

1. Integration, not isolation.

2. Legal and brand pressure is real.

3. Turning to the data.

4. Widening the lens.

People Analytics Leaders

PRIORITIES

1. Connecting people analytics data to the business' strategic goals

2. Workforce planning and scenario modeling

3. Implementing AI technology or services

4. Demonstrating the impact or ROI of talent programs and interventions

PREDICTIONS

1. AI becomes the co-pilot of workforce intelligence.

2. From people analytics to organizational intelligence.

3. Ethical analytics becomes a boardroom issue.

4. Scenario intelligence drives strategic workforce agility.

Talent Acquisition Leaders

PRIORITIES

1. Implementing AI technology or services

2. Improving internal talent mobility

3. Restructuring/reorganizing the TA function to align with evolving business needs

4. Leveraging data analytics to guide recruitment strategies and decisions

PREDICTIONS

1. The TA function will become AI-first and more data-driven.

2. TA will evolve toward a skills-first, talent-mobility-enabled model.

3. Talent acquisition will shift toward candidate-discovery marketing, creator/peer-led attraction, and employer-brand authenticity.

4. The TA function will revolve around strategic business partnerships and organizational agility.

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Integrating AI into Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

EVP Dimension	Good (Basic AI Integration)	Better (Developing AI Culture)	Best (AI-First EVP Strategy)
Talent Attraction	Job descriptions may mention AI tools in passing, but not consistently	AI work is highlighted as part of the employer brand	Employer brand is synonymous with cutting-edge AI work
Employee Development	AI training is optional or minimal	Structured AI learning pathways and internal certifications	Personalized, AI learning journeys are embedded in roles
Work Design	Some AI tools are available for productivity enhancement	Teams actively redesign workflows to leverage AI	AI is a core part of job architecture and role evolution
Career Pathways	AI-related roles are unclear or siloed	Emerging AI tracks in multiple departments	Cross-functional AI career lattice, supported by internal mobility
Compensation & Rewards	Standardized pay with occasional AI premiums	Targeted incentives for AI upskilling or contributions	Dynamic, AI-skill-tiered compensation models
Organizational Culture	AI adoption is driven top-down	Experimentation is encouraged, with AI innovation hubs, etc.	Culture of AI co-creation and transparency enterprise-wide
Inclusion & Trust	Employees are uncertain about AI's role in decisions	AI governance policies are communicated	Full AI transparency; employees co-design AI use policies
Technology & Tools	Basic AI tools (e.g., chatbots) in use in limited functions	Departmental AI tools are integrated into workflows	Seamless, enterprise-wide AI suite implemented with user autonomy
Employee Voice & Feedback	Occasional surveys, not AI-specific	Regular feedback loops on AI impact are in use	Routine sentiment analysis conducted to understand AI's impact on EVP

Total Rewards Leaders

PRIORITIES

1. Evaluating healthcare coverage offerings to reflect rising costs

2. Implementing AI technology or services

3. Restructuring/reorganizing the total rewards function to align with evolving business needs

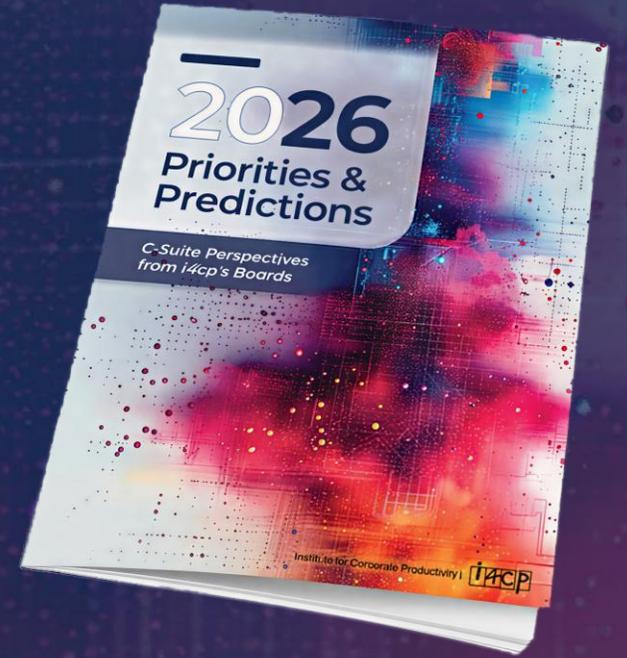4. Aligning rewards to organizational objectives

PREDICTIONS

1. Rapid acceleration of personalized, data-driven rewards experiences.

2. The embedding of AI and automation increasingly shifts the total rewards function from reactive to proactive.

3. Stronger linkage of rewards to organizational objectives and value creation, with greater scrutiny on ROI.

4. Shifting workplace demographics and longer careers will reshape benefits and rewards models.

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i4cp | 2026 Priorities & Predictions
Chief Human Resource Officers

What CHROs Need to Lead Next

C-Suite perspectives from i4cp's global boards

Scan to download
the full report

Thank you

Lorrie Lykins

Vice President, Research

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THANK YOU

- Please complete your survey