

Architecting **AI Readiness**

CHRO Perspectives on Building Enterprise-Scale Transformation

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Building Towards An Organisational AI Advantage

AI has moved decisively from experimentation to expectation. What began as a wave of pilots and point solutions has become a structural force reshaping how work is designed, how decisions are made, and how value is created across the enterprise.

Recent findings from the World Economic Forum underscore the scale and speed of this shift. The WEF estimates that nearly 40% of core skills required across roles will change within the next five years, driven largely by AI and automation. At the same time, the Future of Jobs research consistently shows that while technology adoption is accelerating, organisational transformation and leadership readiness are lagging behind.

This imbalance is critical. The WEF highlights that the biggest risks associated with AI adoption are no longer technical, but organisational: skills mismatches, outdated work structures, and insufficient leadership capability to manage change at scale.

Insights from LinkedIn reinforce this view from the workforce perspective. LinkedIn's most recent

talent and skills research shows that AI-related skills are among the fastest-growing capabilities across nearly every function, not just technology roles. In HR and talent functions specifically, AI literacy and AI-adjacent skills have seen double-digit growth year over year, reflecting rapid uptake at the practitioner level.

Yet LinkedIn data also points to a widening gap between AI usage and AI impact. While a growing share of professionals report using AI tools in their daily work, far fewer organisations report measurable improvements in productivity, decision quality, or business outcomes. In other words, AI activity is rising faster than AI value.

This disconnect suggests a deeper issue: AI implementation has outpaced organisational readiness.

This white paper explores

- Why organisational AI readiness is a challenge
- How organisations can build AI readiness and make it a true organisational advantage.
- How they can measure readiness through an AI maturity model

Drawing on candid insights from senior HR, talent, and business leaders across large enterprises and high-growth organisations, this research moves beyond success stories to examine the structural conditions required for AI to scale. It identifies four shifts that consistently differentiate organisations achieving isolated gains from those building durable advantage:

- Leadership alignment as the true constraint on AI scale
- Work reinvention as the primary source of AI value
- System integration as the determinant of AI's ROI
- Applied capability, rather than specialist scarcity, as the foundation of workforce AI readiness

As AI becomes embedded in the fabric of work, the organisations that succeed will not be those that deploy the most tools, but those that change how leadership shows up, how work is structured, and how systems are connected. This paper is intended to help leaders do exactly that.

Challenges in Building AI Organisational Advantage

Four challenges are holding organisations back:

1. AI Scale Is Not a Technology Issue

Most organisations have the tools. What they lack is leadership ownership. When AI is delegated to IT or innovation teams, adoption fragments. When executives role-model usage and anchor AI in operating priorities, scale follows.

2. AI Value Does Not Come from Task Automation

Automating existing processes delivers incremental efficiency. Redesigning work delivers strategic ROI. Organisations that treat AI as a productivity layer remain stuck in marginal gains.

3. AI ROI Is Constrained by Fragmented Tech

Disconnected ATS, learning systems, point tools, and AI layers prevent value from compounding. Without orchestration, AI generates data but not insight.

4. The AI Skills Gap Is Widening

A small core of specialists is necessary. Enterprise value, however, comes from widespread applied usage. Over-hiring experts while under-enabling employees slows transformation.

Taken together, these challenges suggest that AI success in HR is no longer a question of implementation, but of organisational readiness.

While AI adoption has accelerated across enterprises, readiness to scale value has not kept pace. Organisational advantage emerges when enterprises build coherence across four structural dimensions: Leadership alignment for scale, Work redesign for measurable value creation, Technology integration for compounded ROI, Democratised applied capability across the workforce

When these pillars are aligned, AI moves from isolated experimentation to enterprise-wide impact.

Without systemic readiness, AI remains fragmented — generating pockets of efficiency but not structural advantage.

4 Pillars of building AI Organisational Advantage

From implementation to Readiness

	MYTH	REALITY
AI Scale	Tech is an issue	Leadership alignment is key constraint
AI Value	Value is derived through automating Tasks	Work design is needed
AI ROI	More specialised tools will give more	System integration and quality data will maximise ROI
AI Capabilities	Scarcity of specialised, tech skills	Mindset shift and culture of experimentation will drive readiness

Theme 1:

Leadership Alignment Is the

Primary Constraint on AI Scale

Leadership Alignment Is the Primary Constraint on AI Scale

AI initiatives in talent and HR fail to scale not because of immature technology, lack of use cases, or employee resistance, but because senior leaders are insufficiently aligned, engaged, or accountable for AI-driven change.

Across organisations represented in this research, frontline teams are already experimenting with AI-enabled screening, interview automation, matching engines, and content generation. However, in the absence of clear leadership intent and ownership, these efforts remain fragmented, localised, and difficult to translate into sustained enterprise value.

As Santosh D'Souza (LinkedIn) noted during the discussion, enterprise data consistently shows that leadership alignment, rather than frontline capability, is the defining factor in whether AI initiatives move beyond experimentation and scale across the organisation.



What We Are Observing

01 Frontline AI Capability Is Advancing Faster Than Enterprise Permission

A recurring pattern across organisations is that employees, particularly within HR and talent functions, are already comfortable using AI tools in their personal and professional lives. In many cases, employees report being more capable of using AI outside the organisation than within formal enterprise systems.

This creates a structural imbalance:

- Capability exists at the edge.
- Permission, clarity, and governance lag at the centre.
- Innovation occurs, but remains informal and disconnected.

Josh Bersin, Founder and CEO of The Josh Bersin Company, described this moment as unusually asymmetric: AI is evolving faster than leadership confidence. Some employees quickly become proficient, others wait for guidance, and many leaders hesitate—unsure of where to begin or what “good” looks like.

The result is an adoption paradox: AI usage increases, but enterprise impact does not compound.

02 Delegation-Based AI Strategies Stall Momentum

In large enterprises, AI responsibility is frequently delegated several layers down—to HR operations teams, centres of excellence, or innovation units. While this delegation enables experimentation, it consistently limits scale.

Sudeep, CHRO at Tata Consultancy Services, was explicit in his assessment:

“What doesn’t work is leaders thinking they can delegate AI transformation three levels down and expect results.”

Delegation introduces three systemic constraints:

- **AI competes with operational priorities**, rather than shaping them.
- **Change signals are diluted**, reducing urgency and seriousness.
- **Accountability becomes diffuse**, making outcomes difficult to measure or defend.

As a result, AI remains positioned as a productivity enhancer rather than a strategic capability.

What We Are Observing

03 Leadership Immersion Changes the Trajectory of Adoption

Organisations that progressed beyond pilot mode deliberately reversed the delegation model. Rather than starting with tools or processes, they began with leadership immersion.

At TCS, this involved educating leaders on applied use cases, not abstract AI concepts. Senior leaders were paired with digitally native employees, referred to internally as “human copilots”, to solve real, role-specific problems.

According to Sudeep, this approach produced two immediate effects:

- Leaders gained confidence by using AI in their own work.
- Employees saw visible signals that AI was not optional or experimental, but core to how the organisation intended to operate.

This visible learning behaviour reduced fear, legitimised experimentation, and accelerated adoption across levels.

04 Credibility Is Built Through Listening, Not Mandates

Even where leadership intent exists, adoption slows when leaders design AI initiatives without deeply understanding frontline realities.

Erin Scruggs (LinkedIn) highlighted this disconnect:

“We’re often disconnected from the people actually using the technology. When leaders don’t listen deeply to the frontline, adoption slows—even when the tools are good.”

In contrast, organisations that treated AI deployment as a dialogue—listening to how recruiters, HR partners, and managers experienced work—were better able to identify which processes should be automated, redesigned, or eliminated altogether.

This listening-first posture increased credibility and reduced resistance, making change management more effective.

Key Takeaway

AI does not scale through delegation, it scales through leadership ownership. When leaders model AI adoption and anchor it in strategic priorities, impact compounds. When AI is pushed down the hierarchy, it fragments. Enterprise transformation begins at the top.

Theme 2:

AI Value Emerges

Through Work Reinvention

Incremental Productivity Is Not Enough

AI Value Emerges Through Work Reinvention

Incremental Productivity Is Not Enough

Organisations that apply AI primarily to improve efficiency within existing HR and talent processes achieve limited and short-lived returns. The most significant and defensible value emerges only when AI is used to eliminate legacy work, redesign workflows, and redefine roles.

In other words, AI delivers enterprise impact not by helping organisations do the same work faster, but by forcing organisations to question whether that work should exist at all.



What We Are Observing

01 Early AI Deployments Focus On Speed, Not Structural Change

Across organisations, initial AI adoption in HR and talent functions has been pragmatic and tactical. Common use cases include faster resume screening, automated interview scheduling, content generation, and improved search and matching. These deployments often deliver immediate efficiency gains, measured in minutes or hours saved, but rarely trigger deeper redesign.

Josh Bersin, Founder and CEO of The Josh Bersin Company, cautioned against mistaking these gains for transformation:

“The big ROI of AI is still fleeting, because we’re trying to automate processes that only exist because we didn’t have a better option before.”

This observation was echoed across multiple organisations, where AI improved throughput but left core workflows intact, resulting in incremental benefits rather than step-change impact.

02 Legacy HR Processes Persist by Inertia, Not Necessity

Talent and HR processes, particularly in recruitment, have accumulated layers of approvals, handoffs, and checkpoints over time. These steps were often introduced to manage scale, reduce risk, or compensate for limited data and tooling.

AI exposes the fragility of these assumptions. Josh Bersin described this clearly in the context of talent acquisition:

“In recruiting, there are easily 10 to 15 steps that exist today just to get someone into the organisation. Eventually, many of those steps simply won’t be necessary.”

Rather than questioning these steps, many organisations initially insert AI into each stage, automating individual tasks while preserving the overall structure. This results in faster workflows, but not simpler ones.

What We Are Observing

03 Work Reinvention Requires Letting Go of Familiar Controls

Organisations that moved beyond task automation began by asking different questions:

- Which steps exist only because humans previously had to do them?
- Where is judgment genuinely required—and where is it assumed?
- Which approvals add confidence, and which add delay?

This shift requires leaders to relinquish familiar control points.

Chanakya (Infosys) described this tension candidly, noting that organisations often struggle to decide what to stop doing:

“The real winner will be how quickly we define outcomes and how quickly we decide what not to pursue.”

Without this discipline, AI reinforces existing complexity instead of reducing it.

04 Reinvention Changes Roles, Not Just Tasks

As workflows are redesigned, roles evolve. The discussion consistently surfaced a shift in HR and TA roles away from execution and toward judgment, advisory, and experience design.

Saleel Panse (Sun Pharma) offered a practical reframing that reduced resistance among recruiters:

“We asked teams to think of the Hiring Assistant as a junior recruiter, someone doing the backend grunt work so they can focus on stakeholder management.”

This reframing had two effects:

- It clarified which tasks AI should own.
- It preserved the human role where discretion and relationship mattered most.

Key Takeaway

AI creates real value only when organisations are willing to redesign work—not just accelerate it.

Without work reinvention, AI remains an efficiency tool. With it, AI becomes a lever for structural advantage.

Theme 3:

Integration Determines

ROI of Enterprise AI

Integration Determines ROI of Enterprise AI

Most organisations already possess multiple AI-enabled tools across recruitment, learning, and workforce management. However, fragmentation across systems, not lack of innovation, is the primary barrier to enterprise-scale AI value.

AI delivers meaningful ROI only when organisations move beyond isolated point solutions and build cohesive, orchestrated architectures that allow data, workflows, and decisions to flow end to end.



What We Are Observing

01 AI Tool Proliferation Has Outpaced System Coherence

Across enterprises represented in this research, AI adoption has followed a familiar pattern:

- A legacy ATS remains the system of record.
- Multiple point solutions are layered on top—screening tools, interview platforms, matching engines, chatbots.
- New AI capabilities are introduced opportunistically, often driven by local needs.

While each tool delivers incremental benefit, the overall experience remains fragmented.

Chanakya (Infosys) described this reality bluntly:

“You have the ATS, you have multiple point solutions, and then you need a wrapper that stitches everything together. Without that, we won’t see real productivity gains.”

In practice, recruiters and HR partners are required to navigate multiple interfaces, reconcile outputs manually, and compensate for disconnected workflows—limiting the value AI can deliver.

02 Point Solutions Optimise Steps, Not Systems

Most AI deployments today are designed to optimise individual steps within a broader workflow:

- Resume screening is faster.
- Interviews are automated.
- Matching is more accurate.

However, the underlying workflow often remains unchanged.

Josh Bersin characterised this as a critical limitation:

“This isn’t a ‘buy the technology and turn it on’ moment. AI is far more creative and interconnected than that, but most organisations are still treating it like a product rollout.”

As a result, organisations see efficiency improvements at specific stages, but fail to unlock compounding benefits across the hiring or talent lifecycle.

What We Are Observing

03 Integration Is as Much an Operating Model Issue as a Technical One

Integration challenges are often framed as technical debt or vendor limitations. However, the discussion revealed that ownership and decision rights are equally significant constraints.

Common issues include:

- HR owning tools, but IT owning architecture.
- Vendors optimising for their product, not the ecosystem.
- No single owner accountable for end-to-end experience or outcomes.

Santosh D'Souza (LinkedIn) noted that without alignment across HR, IT, and business leaders, even strong tools struggle to scale:

“There is experimentation at the frontline, but it doesn’t scale because change management and leadership alignment are missing, especially around how systems work together.”

Without a clear orchestration mandate, integration remains incremental and reactive.

04 Scale Forces Integration Decisions That Pilots Can Avoid

Pilot environments can tolerate fragmentation. Scale cannot. Organisations operating at large volumes—high hiring numbers, frequent internal mobility, or global operations—are forced to confront integration gaps.

Sudeep (TCS) illustrated this clearly through internal mobility:

“Every few months, close to 50,000 people move between projects. At that scale, you cannot rely on manual coordination or disconnected systems.”

At scale, organisations must integrate:

- Skills data
- Demand signals
- Availability timelines
- Assessment outcomes

Without this integration, AI outputs remain advisory rather than actionable.

Key Takeaway

AI value does not scale through more innovation—it scales through better integration.

Until AI systems operate as a cohesive whole, organisations will continue to see isolated gains rather than enterprise-level transformation.

Theme 4:

AI Skills Gap Is Rooted
In Applied Capability,
Not Specialist Scarcity

AI Skills Gap Is Rooted In Applied Capability Not Specialist Scarcity

Most organisations significantly overestimate the extent of the AI skills gap. While a small number of advanced specialists are required to build and maintain AI platforms, the majority of enterprise AI value is created by non-technical employees applying AI within their domain contexts.

The primary constraint on AI capability is not talent availability, but mindset, enablement, and organisational permission to experiment.



What We Are Observing

01 Organisations Conflate AI Engineering With AI Value Creation

AI skills discussions are often dominated by concern over hiring scarce AI engineers, data scientists, and model architects. This framing creates a perception that AI adoption is limited by external talent availability.

However, practitioner evidence consistently shows that:

- Only a small core group is needed to build or tune AI models.
- Most AI value comes from application, not creation.
- Domain expertise matters more than technical depth for day-to-day impact.

As Josh Bersin, Founder and CEO of The Josh Bersin Company, observed during the discussion, this moment is analogous to the early days of spreadsheets:

Most people don't build Excel — they use it. AI is heading in the same direction.

Organisations that continue to treat AI as a specialist-only capability unnecessarily constrain scale.

02 Applied AI Capability Is Emerging From Unexpected Talent Pools

Several organisations shared examples where effective AI capability came from individuals without formal technical backgrounds.

Josh Bersin shared a telling example from his own organisation:

One of the people doing the most effective AI testing and prompt optimisation used to be a school teacher. She had no computer science background, but she was meticulous, detail-oriented, and deeply curious.

This pattern appeared repeatedly:

- Recruiters configuring AI screening workflows
- HR partners building prompt libraries
- Business leaders experimenting with AI agents for decision support

The common thread was not technical training, but comfort with experimentation and problem-solving.

What We Are Observing

03 Mindset and Permission Matter More Than Training Programs

Where organisations struggled to build AI capability, the barrier was rarely lack of training content. Instead, it was uncertainty around what was allowed, safe, or expected.

Chanakya (Infosys) described this tension in large enterprises, where controls and governance can unintentionally suppress experimentation:

The capability exists. The question is how you unlock it inside large organisations like ours.

In contrast, organisations that explicitly encouraged experimentation—within guardrails—saw faster skill development, even without formal AI curricula.

Poonam Ajgaonkar, HR leader at a healthcare AI startup, highlighted the importance of psychological safety:

When you allow experimentation, you have to let people know it's okay to fail, but fail fast. That mindset has to be embedded.

Without this permission, AI learning remains theoretical rather than applied.

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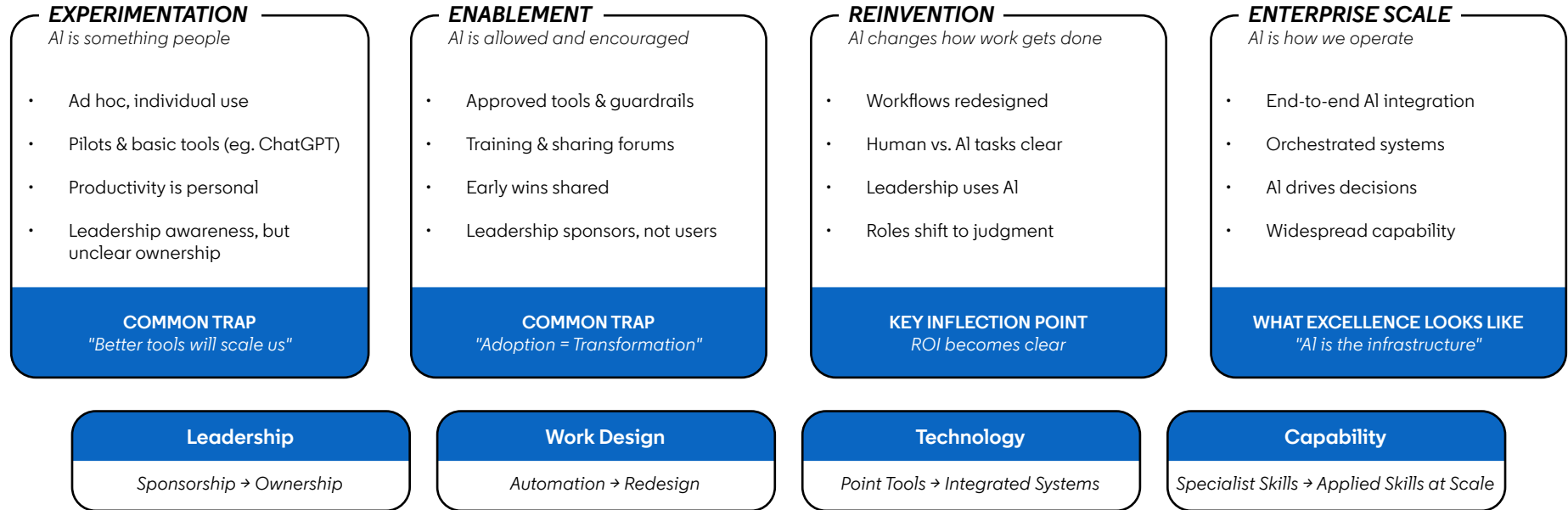
Until AI systems operate as a cohesive whole, organisations will continue to see isolated gains rather than enterprise-level transformation.

AI Maturity Model For Talent & HR

From Experimentation to Enterprise Advantage

Low Maturity

High Maturity



WHERE MOST ORGANISATIONS ARE TODAY

- Majority stuck between Experimentation & Enablement
- Few reach Reinvention
- Enterprise Scale is rare

REALITY CHECK:
If AI tools went away tomorrow, would work still look different?

AI Maturity Diagnostic Checklist for Talent & HR

How to use this checklist | For each statement, score your organisation on a scale of 0–3
0 = Not true at all | 1 = Partially true / isolated cases | 2 = Largely true but inconsistent | 3 = Consistently true across the enterprise

Dimension 1: Leadership Alignment & Ownership

- Senior leaders actively use AI in their own work, not just sponsor it
- Leaders can clearly articulate why AI matters for talent and HR (beyond efficiency)
- AI transformation is not delegated entirely to HR Ops, IT, or innovation teams
- Leaders model learning and experimentation publicly
- Accountability for AI outcomes is explicit at the leadership level

Scoring guide

- **0–5** → Leadership is a bottleneck
- **6–10** → Leadership is supportive but not catalytic
- **11–15** → Leadership is actively enabling scale

Dimension 2: Work & Workflow Reinvention

- AI is used to eliminate steps, not just speed them up
- Legacy approvals and handoffs have been consciously removed
- HR and TA roles have been redefined to reflect AI-augmented work
- Clear boundaries exist between what AI owns and what humans own
- Success is measured through outcomes (fit, quality, cycle time), not activity

Scoring guide

- **0–5** → AI is an efficiency layer only
- **6–10** → Some workflows redesigned, but inconsistently
- **11–15** → Work has been structurally reinvented

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Dimension 3: System Integration & Architecture

- AI tools are integrated with core ATS and HR systems
- Data flows end-to-end across the talent lifecycle
- Users do not need to manually reconcile outputs across tools
- There is a clear owner for end-to-end talent workflows
- Build vs buy decisions prioritise integration over features

Scoring guide

- **0–5** → Fragmented tool landscape
- **6–10** → Partial integration, limited compounding value
- **11–15** → Orchestrated, system-level AI architecture

Dimension 4: Capability, Skills & Mindset

- AI capability is built internally, not just hired externally
- Non-technical employees are actively applying AI in real work
- Experimentation is encouraged within clear guardrails
- AI is positioned as role support, not role replacement
- Communities of practice exist to share AI learnings

Scoring guide

- **0–5** → AI seen as specialist or risky
- **6–10** → Capability exists but is uneven
- **11–15** → Applied AI capability is widespread

AI Maturity Diagnostic Checklist for Talent & HR

TOTAL SCORE	MATURITY STAGE	WHAT THIS MEANS
0-20	Experimentation	Activity without scale; leadership and systems are the constraint
21-35	Enablement	Tools and training exist, but AI is layered onto old work
36-50	Reinvention	Work is being redesigned; ROI becomes defensible
51-60	Enterprise Scale	AI is a foundational organisational capability

Think Tank- Participating Leaders

This research synthesises insights from senior CHROs, Global Talent Acquisition leaders, and industry experts representing large enterprises and global organisations. The following leaders participated in the AI Talent Think Tank discussion.

Enterprise & Talent Leaders



Sanjay Chandel
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Amit Ahuja
Global Head & Talent Leader
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VP & Head – Talent
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Sudeep Kunnumal
CHRO
TCS



Girish Nandimath
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TCS



Poonam Yadav
Group Head – Talent Acquisition
Aditya Birla Group



Adil Nargolwala
SVP & Global Head – Talent Acquisition
WNS



Rakesh Kumar
TA Delivery Head – India
Ericsson

Think Tank- Participating Leaders

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Industry & Knowledge Partners



Teena Wooldridge

Senior Director – APAC
& China Marketing
LinkedIn



Erin Scruggs

Vice President & Head of
Global Talent Acquisition
LinkedIn



Santosh D'Souza

Senior Director & Head of
Talent Solutions – India & SAARC
LinkedIn



Josh Bersin

Founder & CEO
The Josh Bersin Company



Cheshta Dora

Head of Research
& Content Strategy
People Matters

About LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network, with more than 1 billion members across 200+ countries and territories. The platform connects professionals to opportunity and enables organisations to hire, develop, and retain talent at scale.

Through LinkedIn Talent Solutions, Learning, and AI-enabled workforce intelligence tools, LinkedIn supports enterprises in building skills-based organisations, strengthening talent pipelines, and improving hiring outcomes. Its data and research provide real-time visibility into global workforce trends, skills evolution, and the changing dynamics of work.

LinkedIn partners with organisations worldwide to translate talent intelligence into measurable business impact.



About

People Matters

People Matters is a leading HR and talent management media and research platform serving Asia Pacific and the Middle East. It connects senior HR leaders, business executives, and technology providers through research, conferences, digital content, and advisory engagements.

Through flagship platforms such as TechHR, research think tanks, and industry roundtables, People Matters convenes C-suite and talent leaders to address the most pressing workforce challenges — from AI transformation and skills strategy to leadership development and employee experience.

The logo for People Matters is displayed on a white circular background. The word "people" is written in a lowercase, orange, sans-serif font. The word "matters" is written in a lowercase, black, sans-serif font, with the final letter "s" in orange. The two words are stacked vertically, with "people" on top and "matters" below it.

people
matters