

## AI Paradox in HR: From Learning in 2025 to real impact in 2026

**New Delhi, December 30, 2025:** From autonomously screening hundreds of applications to forecasting performance and attrition risk, a significant number of organizations today claim AI integration is essential in talent acquisition and retention, more than ever.

For instance, according to a Gartner study **98% of organizations are now accelerating AI integration in HR** and 44% of HR leaders plan to deploy semi-autonomous AI agents within 12 months. Interestingly industry research revealed, about 72% of Indian organizations are already using AI-powered features in their HR software, which is higher than the global average of 55%.

However, despite the availability of Agentic AI, **nearly 85% HR leaders say their companies have not fully adopted agentic AI**, highlighting a clear readiness and capability gap.

Recent HR and AI surveys show that while almost all organizations in the country are experimenting with AI, only a small fraction say they are truly ready to scale or are at maturity in AI usage. To illustrate, over 50% of the HR leaders confirm their organizations as being only in early or pilot stages of AI use in HR, even though they acknowledge AI's strategic importance. Additionally, a 2025 report stated that while 86% of HR leaders feel "change ready," only 29% are AI-ready. Thus, many organizations feel unprepared to scale it effectively, highlighting—a gap between AI availability and execution is vast.

In fact a nationwide survey conducted by an HR solutions provider found that almost 59.1% of HR leaders believe that lack of trust in AI-driven decision-making is the single biggest barrier to its adoption. Another, Gartner survey revealed, Indian CHROs face rising pressure from CEOs to cut costs and rapidly deploy AI tools, but nearly a half admit their organizations are still in nascent AI adoption phases, lacking mature capability or governance.

This indicates an AI Paradox in HR—whether the HR leaders are actually AI ready.

While leaders are preparing to embrace AI, the HR technology landscape is not fully keeping pace. Most tools available today are built as standalone modules – recruitment systems, learning platforms, performance tools, engagement apps – each capturing data in isolation. This fragmentation blocks the true potential of AI. Real intelligence requires connected, end-to-end data across the employee lifecycle. Until the market shifts towards integrated Talent Operating Systems with a unified data model, the AI promise in HR will remain only partially realized.

However, in 2025, most of the focus was on learning about AI, talking about it, and making predictions about how it might change HR. But 2026 will be different – it will be the year when companies start using AI in real, practical ways and begin to see real results. Businesses and HR leaders will move from small test projects to rolling out AI tools across their HR functions, making sure that AI helps improve hiring, keeping employees, and overall employee experience in a measurable way. Most HR tools today operate in silos – recruitment platforms don't talk to learning systems, performance platforms don't integrate with engagement tools, and analytics engines don't stitch context across the lifecycle.

Reports from companies like EY and ADP show that many Indian businesses are already using various forms of generative AI in their day-to-day HR tasks. This marks a clear shift from just trying things out to actually using AI actively. One important development is the use of agentic AI – smart AI systems that can do complex HR jobs on their own but with human supervision. These AI agents will take over tasks like onboarding new hires, checking payroll information, planning workforce needs, and providing useful insights from HR data to help make better decisions.

Considering the industry predictions, in 2026, many big Indian companies will start using agentic AI more widely. This means AI systems will not just help with hiring, but also with managing employee performance, training, and keeping employees engaged. Smaller and medium-sized companies will soon follow this trend. Companies in India are also expected to spend much more money on AI for HR compared to today. This shows that businesses are serious about using AI to improve how they find, develop, and manage their employees.

With this, learning new skills will be very important in 2026. The year will mark the rise of skill graphs— dynamic AI models that map skills adjacency, growth potential, and future role fit for every employee.

Many organizations will offer training, so workers and HR teams understand AI better. They will compete not on efficiency but **predictive capability**. They will also hire experts who know how to work with AI, as companies that can predict will win the talent war.

Finally, HR leaders will focus on being open and honest about how they use AI at work. They will keep employees informed and involve them in decisions about AI tools. This will help build trust and make AI a helpful partner for everyone.

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The views expressed here are personal.***