



RUDISH HEALTH

# The Future of Work 2026



### An Introduction.

// I can't predict the future...  
we need to be ready for anything. //



The Future of Work 2026, informed by survey responses collected in November and December of 2025, observed a broadly stable healthcare talent ecosystem. Some of the uncertainty reported last year seems to have subsided. Respondents, 89% of whom were healthcare board members, C-suite executives, or managers, highlighted a renewed commitment to evergreen imperatives, such as revenue growth, while responding to newly budded challenges, including unpredictable regulatory changes.

As highlighted in our analysis, AI is undoubtedly here, and many respondents think it has the potential to change pretty much everything about the way we work. How exactly AI will drive that change, however, remains widely unclear.

// Retaining and re-engaging talent amid rapid healthcare regulatory changes. //

### Budding and Evergreen Talent Challenges and Responses.

Key themes emerged when respondents were asked to describe the greatest strategic challenges their healthcare organization faced. New this year: board members, C-suite executives, and managers were keen to highlight regulatory pressures, "Medicaid funding changes," and the corresponding "uncertainty of federal programs" as key challenges. An evergreen challenge was also echoed by a consensus of respondents: talent. Particularly pertinent this year were issues related to workforce shortages, recruitment, and sustainability. Productivity and succession planning were also emphasized as critical strategic hurdles facing healthcare organizations.

Given the nature of their roles, board members, C-suite leaders, and executive managers were clear-eyed about the centrality of "revenue growth" and "margin maintenance and improvement." Non-executive respondents were concerned with similar themes, particularly "rapid healthcare regulatory changes" alongside a broader "lack of certainty" across the industry.





Healthcare leaders also looked to both new and established avenues to address these challenges. Unsurprisingly, artificial intelligence received many mentions as the strategic tool presumed to be the best equipped to unblock some of the above hurdles. Respondents, however, seemed unsure of exactly how to "advance," "leverage," and/or "deploy" AI's potential.

Talent leadership, particularly "recruitment, training, and mentoring," was highlighted as a crucial element to meet these challenges. As a respondent bluntly put it, to meet healthcare's greatest challenges, their organization must "hire excellent people for the right roles."

These responses, from executives and non-executives alike, point to a commitment to basic organizational stewardship. A renewed foundational focus on cultivating and nourishing talent, while prioritizing revenue and seeking technological enablement, is a time-worn, sensible response to industry ambiguity.

### Adaptability: The Key to Workforce Success.

“ To succeed today, adaptability ... is crucial. ”

When considering which workforce attributes will be most crucial for organizational success, healthcare board members, C-suite executives, and managers roundly observed one hallmark distinction: adaptability.

Financial literacy and "technical acceptance" had their fair share of mentions, as did softer characteristics, such as "patience," "vulnerability," "empathy," and "integrity." Communication, analysis, and strategy, together with "collaboration" and "listening" were also described as vital.

Still, "adaptability" and an "ability to pivot" were by far the most quoted characteristics. This shouldn't be too surprising a finding, given industry and regulatory fluidity. Still, the specificity of the response is striking in its near universality.





### A Lack of Leadership.

// Leadership curiosity that goes beyond the domain of expertise. //

Across the healthcare industry, executives and non-executives alike underscored the lack of leadership their organizations faced. What's missing, our respondents emphasize, is "strategic thinking, mission awareness, and the ability to implement and manage best practices." Other respondents stressed a distinct lack of "stable leadership," while still others yearned for stewardship with greater vision.

Defining what leadership means to different organizational types, let alone each individual organization, clearly lies outside the scope of this report. However, an ability to balance "strategic decision-making" with "creative risk-taking" might come close, according to our respondents.

### How Organizations Recruit. And How to Improve.

Healthcare board members, C-suite executives, and managers broadly agreed with team members that their organizations do a fair job at talent recruitment. While executives report a mean of 3.02 out of 5, team members report a very similar 3.29. This finding is consistent with past *Future of Work* surveys, where team members have been slightly more likely to highly rate the organizations to which they were recruited. Still, there remains plenty of room for improvement.

Organizations have incorporated various tactics as part of their talent acquisition strategies, according to respondents. Over 60% of executives reported leveraging technology as a key strategy for improving talent acquisition, while 52% noted nationwide recruitment. Offering flexible working models was also emphasized by a large percentage of respondents at 45% (more on this below).

Offshoring, perhaps challenging in a highly regulated and deeply personal industry such as healthcare, was identified by only 17% of respondents as a workforce strategy they had incorporated. Outsourcing all talent acquisition and recruiting from graduate and undergraduate programs, however, were some of the avenues down which executives sought to attract top talent.



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“  
Recruit for  
quality and cast  
a wide net.  
”

When asked how they might improve organizational talent acquisition, healthcare board members, C-suite executives, and managers sought to cast a wider net while recruiting for quality over "looks." Some were focused on remuneration. "Paying equity for [the] market" was suggested, as was paying "more for top talent and continually growing them so that they stay." This emphasis on internal growth and promotion was, unsurprisingly, echoed by team members who advocated looking "internally... and upskilling existing talent." While recognizing the power of the dollar, respondents also suggested organizations "provide more incentive-based compensation to align work with mission."

Furthermore, respondents suggested integrating a "standard candidate interview program for managers and leaders to improve consistency" while another urged a focus on "responding to individual needs." Several respondents also highlighted the power of "working with recruiters."

Compensation adjustment was seen as the most effective tool for retention amongst board members, C-suite executives, and managers working in healthcare: over 60% of respondents marked it as a vital strategy. Improving employee benefits was also highly rated, with over a third of respondents reporting its efficacy. And exactly 50% of respondents indicated that they'd incorporated flexible working models as a tool to improve employee retention.





### Stability? Or the calm before the storm?



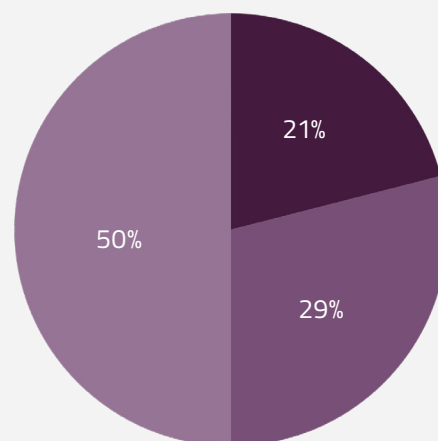
Reinventing how I operate to meet the evolving technology and operating models of the future.



Over 70% of respondents worked either entirely from home or in a hybrid capacity, with hybrid arrangements the most popular by far at 50%. Just 28% of healthcare respondents worked entirely from the office. This represents a shift from last year when over 60% of respondents worked in a hybrid fashion and about 12% worked entirely from the office. While the trends are clear, as noted above, flexibility still matters deeply for employee satisfaction. Indeed, the ability to "offer greater employment opportunities outside the normal office environment" was often listed as a core driver of successful recruitment.

What is your current working environment?

- Entirely Remote
- Entirely in Office
- Hybrid



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Another notable shift from last year was how respondents ranked what was most important to them personally when considering a new role. Last year, compensation topped the list for the first time, but this year it fell back down to second place, behind organizational mission. This ranking is a return to the results of two years ago. The disparity might be more reflective of the economic uncertainty when last year's survey was conducted (November-December 2024), whereas a year later, the economic situation appears at least temporarily stable, if still fluctuating.

When personally considering a new role, please rank the following in order of importance.

- 1 Organizational Mission
- 2 Compensation
- 3 Work/Life Balance
- 4 Real World Impact
- 5 Benefits/PTO
- 6 Job Security



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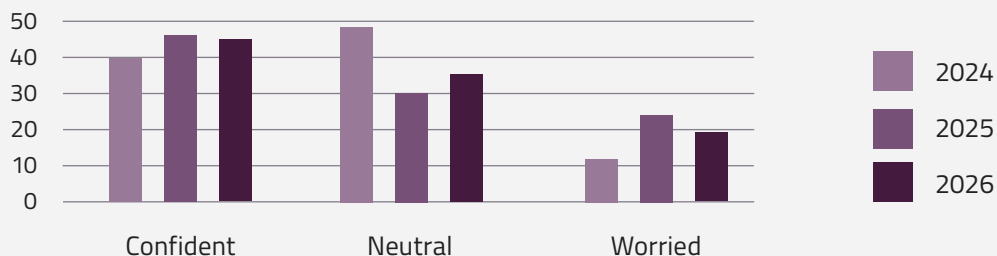
### AI Gets Personal.

AI is only part of the solution. It is not the answer to all questions.

Respondents' feelings on the future of work were largely stable. 45% remain confident (statistically flat from last year). A modest shift, however, was reported in healthcare respondents who felt neutral or worried. Whereas last year 30% of respondents were neutral and 24% worried, this year, those numbers were 36% and 19%, respectively. Much like the shift back to the importance of organizational mission and away from pure compensation, this might be reflective of the time in which last year's survey was conducted. The fluctuations in both data points will be fascinating to consider in years to come.

Regardless of whether they were confident, neutral, or worried about the future of work, healthcare respondents pointed to technological changes and the advancement of AI as a key driver of their reply. For those who saw the future of work positively, "technology dramatically reshapes the speed and how work is conducted from present-day paradigms," as one respondent noted. Others shared a seemingly positive outlook, with one addressing a "willingness to reinvent how I operate to meet the evolving technology and operating models of the future."

When you personalize the future of work, how do you feel?



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Still others were more cautious. "Bold projections," respondents noted, were being sold "to the masses without the benefit of needs assessments for success." Some respondents noted "confusion about practical implementation of AI solutions," while others warned of an impending "AI bubble." Some respondents highlighted a perceived ageism in the workplace and, in particular, in talent acquisition, stressing that when recruiters too heavily utilize AI, they "don't know how to find and properly evaluate candidates."

If this talk of how AI is impacting the healthcare industry sounds a bit vague, that's because it is. When asked what talent acquisition challenges respondents might imagine being solved by AI, the overwhelming majority replied something along the lines of "not sure," "not sure yet," "not sure at this time," "none," or, simply, "no." Some respondents offered unclear predictions: that AI might help ease "repetitive work" or create a "buffer for employees to have time to be upskilled in areas of need." While AI is clearly a "hot topic" across every facet of society, one, indeed, that many think could revolutionize a way of life, its full potential has yet to be felt. And its use has yet to be effectively implemented across the workforce.



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“ My daughter has spent all my money on Labubus. ”

### A Bit of Fun.

To the 88% of respondents who had exactly zero Labubus: there's time yet to mend the error of your ways. In responding to this cheeky query, some respondents understood the assignment: "They are on order for the holiday!" one replied. And another professed, "My grandkids took them all!" Some respondents, however, seemed downright hostile to our little joke, replying "nope" or "not gonna happen."

With over 100, only one brilliant respondent possessed the appropriate minimum number of Labubus. The reason for their brilliance? "I learned from Russ." To them, Rudish Health raises its glass.

### Final Thoughts.

AI is around every corner, and its impact is yet to be fully seen or felt. To meet the AI moment and to face other challenges, new and evergreen alike, healthcare board members, c-suite executives, managers, and team members must remain nimble and adaptable. Leadership, lacking today, is more vital than ever. And while the relative stability of the time in which this survey was conducted might tempt complacency, inertia is not a strategy. The future of work is closer than ever.



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