

TOP-OF-MIND FOR HR



A POINT OF VIEW FROM CLEARROCK

ClearRock is a boutique talent consulting firm. We work with HR professionals, leaders, and teams across industries, including life sciences, higher ed, technology, finance, and healthcare. ClearRock's leadership team, talent consultants, coaches, and career consultants convened to discuss what is top of mind for employees and leaders this year. This is what was shared.

EQ in leadership has never been more important. Leaders need to inspire trust, respect, and accountability while authentically modeling their own values and company values in their words and actions. They need to be able to connect to with the “whole person,” align their team on the organizational mission and goals, and drive performance. Leaders must understand the role they play in creating psychological safety and fostering inclusion and belonging across a highly diverse workforce.

More people are seeking entrepreneurship and career pivots. Our career consultants report that more individuals are making significant career shifts, including entrepreneurial ventures. People's relationship with work, and what they are willing to do has changed. They are thinking about work-life integration and not work-life balance, designing careers to fit their lives and align with their values.

This is a tricky market for hiring talent. All of the talk about layoffs leaves hiring managers with the impression that there is a surplus of candidates. Not true. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are 1.9 jobs for every unemployed worker. Tech companies that grew like crazy during the pandemic are rightsizing and laying off talent, and they are being picked up in healthcare, manufacturing, higher ed, etc. Layoff activity is high in life sciences as well, but Moderna wants to hire 2000 people this year. When organizations can find talent, competition is fierce and organizations must be ready to address work-life integration. The current skill gap is expected to widen with the advancement of AI/automation and shrinking birth rates.

The remote work model presents unique challenges for inclusivity and engagement. HR leaders report that it is difficult to engage and retain people that were hired and continue to work remotely. The belief is that forging a meaningful connection to the people and the mission/vision of the company is more challenging to foster, and decisions to stay or go are made based on the job itself and the money/benefits.



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It's complex navigating multiple perspectives around DEIB. While many leaders are interested in continuing the momentum of DEIB efforts, some are struggling with the right approach and how to allocate resources. Leaders are challenged with how to manage diverse and divergent views on the approach and challenged in defining the role that they will play. Many organizations are recruiting nationally, where viewpoints differ across regions. As a result, the pressure of managing polarizing views has grown. Everything is so charged. And with social media creating opportunities for anonymous character assassination, there seems to be little room for mistakes.

ChatGPT (and others like it) is the next big disrupter. ChatGPT is an AI chatbot that uses deep learning techniques to generate human-like responses to text inputs in a conversational manner. Great for planning an itinerary to Iceland or understanding current trends in HR. Higher ed is worried about research/writing that is AI-generated. Our consultants are already seeing it in cover letter creation and resume building. Feedback is that the resulting documents are not specific enough, too robotic, and too wordy/long – but a good starting point. Moreover, the AI will get smarter and better every day. This is going to impact many industries and how work gets done.

Companies are looking for ways to create a culture that both promotes well-being and inspires performance.

The trauma of the pandemic and environmental and socio-political events have taken their toll on us physically, mentally, and emotionally. PTSD, anxiety, depression, and burnout are at all-time highs. Leaders report feeling challenged with well-being themselves and untrained to support others. Some worry about opening Pandora's box when leaving space for people to talk about how they are feeling, taking the emphasis off of work. New or middle/front-line managers share that they need guardrails to understand what their role is in employees' mental health and the balance between private life and work.

