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Trends in workforce analytics

Capturing the latest results from US Human Capital Effectiveness Benchmarks, 2014

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Transforming HR: Workforce analytics

Market demand for workforce analytics is on the rise as business leaders increasingly recognize that the right talent is critical to bringing business strategies to life. Equally important is the ability to access and analyze the right information to support talent-related business decisions. According to PwC's 15th Annual Global CEO Survey, more than 80% of US CEOs say they need critical talent-related insights to make business decisions, but only a small percentage actually receive relevant information.

The need for better analytics has transformed. While once it was a chronic pain-point and an intellectual curiosity for a small cadre within HR, today it's an acute transformational need. The charge comes from the top, as CEOs have started to demand better information on their talent to support the realization of their business strategy. Those HR departments that deliver analytics will evolve into strategic partners and help achieve a sustainable competitive advantage for their organizations.

For their part, many HR departments are beginning to recognize that delivering the right insights at the right time requires the creation of a new competency—one that incorporates the development of new workforce analytics deliverables, an organization that can produce them, the tools and technology to create them, and an approach to boost usage and adoption.

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Workforce performance and business strategy: Unite

Our US benchmarking service recently published hundreds of metrics that reinforce the business improvement opportunity available to HR departments today—if they can align workforce performance to business strategy, supported by effective data.

The service outlines how businesses are performing relative to their peers and pinpoints improvement opportunities—and, today, areas where robust workforce analytics can contribute game-changing insights.

In the following pages, we share our analysis of critical metrics from our 2014 US Human Capital Effectiveness report, highlight weaknesses in the market, and identify leading practices in workforce analytics that can help promote better performance.

Leading areas of strategic significance:

#1 *Capturing return on workforce investment*

#2 *Curtailing high-potential and high-performer turnover*

#3 *Improving new-hire quality*

#4 *Enhancing the strategic role of HR business partners*

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1. Capturing return on workforce investment: Operational workforce planning

According to our analysis, productivity indicators trended up in 2013 for a second consecutive year across the 12 industry sectors we studied. Revenue per FTE increased from $370,399 to $404,058. Labor costs as a percentage of revenue stabilized, reverting to a pre-recession historic norm. However, despite improvements, our primary metric for Return on Workforce Investment—labor cost as a percent of revenue—still remains at a poor state compared with pre-recession levels. To help companies align workforce performance, we take a look at opportunities in workforce planning.

Much focus in the analytics market has been placed on strategic workforce planning: looking ahead three-to-five years to determine the gap between the future demand for talent and the future supply. While this type of strategic view represents a new positioning for most HR departments, a more tactical, immediate requirement related to operational workforce planning remains unfulfilled for many.

This planning focuses on the here and now, pertaining to next month, next quarter, and the remainder of the year. It can have an immediate impact on labor costs, productivity, and financial results—yielding an opportunity to better align the processes related to labor cost, among them:

- Financial forecasts
- Headcount management
- The talent acquisition pipeline

Figure 1: Labor cost per FTE

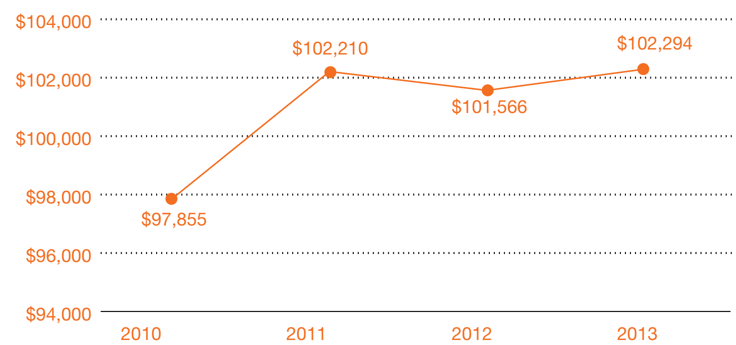


Figure 2: Labor cost revenue percentage

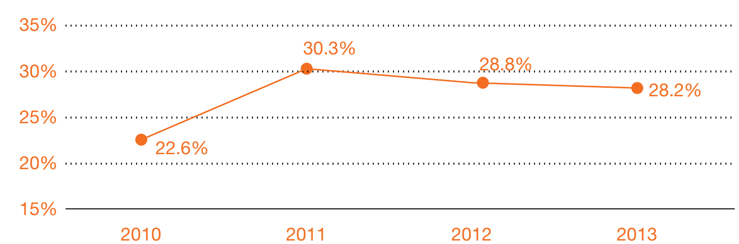
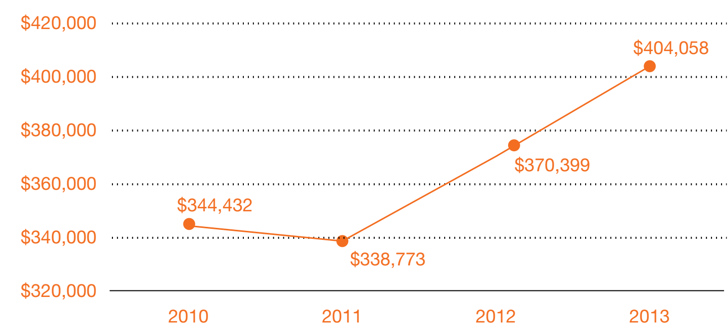


Figure 3: Revenue per FTE



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Operational workforce planning often requires the automated integration of disparate data, breaking down and reforming existing processes, and a champion who recognizes the hidden opportunity that sits within most departments' estimated budgets for labor spend.

Conceptually, operational workforce planning is a simple gap analysis between forecasted/budgeted labor cost, which is generally maintained by Finance, and the projected labor cost that can be calculated based on the data that resides within most HR and talent acquisition systems.

Projecting labor cost for the coming quarter requires a combination of three basic components, which must be collected on a bottom-up, employee-by-employee basis:

Projected headcount: Calculated based on current headcount and adjusted for expected separations, absence management, and the pipeline for filled requisitions.

Projected headcount costs: Looks at the projected headcount and determines its compensation and benefits cost, including adjustments for promotions, bonuses, overtime, and the like.

Contingent/contractor costs: The projected amount of spend on non-employees.

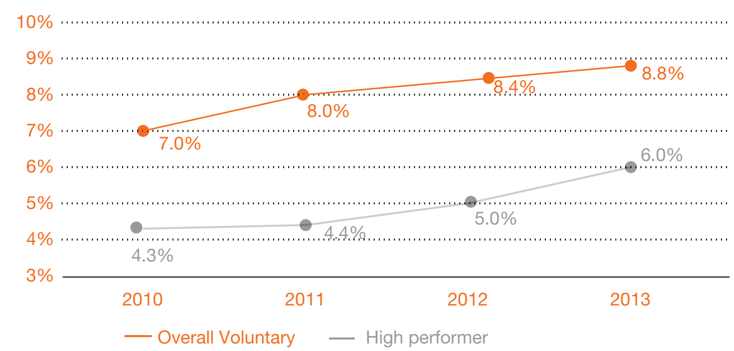
Companies that can better align *forecasted* headcount and labor cost with *projected* headcount and labor cost can more easily achieve financial results without creating downstream consequences such as severance, shortages, and poor-quality hires, among others.

2. Curtailing high-potential and high-performer turnover: An integrated approach to employee surveys

Voluntary turnover has continued to rise consistently across the 12 industry sectors we examined, growing from 8.4% in 2012 to 8.8% in 2013. Significantly, the separation rate among high performers rose by 19.5%, leaping from 5.0% in 2012 to 6.0% in 2013—hitting its highest level in a decade.

The trends in turnover metrics demonstrate the importance of promoting employee engagement as a critical program. Yet about one-half of organizations say that employee engagement improvement is not captured as a corporate goal.

Figure 4: Separation rates



While the concept of tracking employee engagement has been in practice for several years, many organizations have fallen into a routine of conducting annual surveys without much in the way of action planning; linkage analysis; strategic; programmatic survey management, or the practice of using responses as critical inputs to predictive solutions.

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Designing survey questions that predict behavior

Our work in conducting employee engagement surveys and benchmarking across numerous industries shows that 86% of employees indicate that they intend to stay with their organization for the next year.

Interestingly, our attrition-risk predictive solutions show that the response to this question can be a powerful predictor of actual attrition behavior.

To gain further insight, we asked this question of employees within one organization in a different way. Instead of providing respondents with a five-point agree/disagree scale, we gave them a series of attrition timeframes of:

- One-year
- Two-to-three years
- Three-to-five-years, and so on

Predictive models revealed that responses of "one-year" and "two-to-three years" significantly foreshadowed actual attrition in the next 12 months—suggesting that respondents who are actively seeking new opportunities might shy away from responding "within one year," but may feel somewhat safer responding "two-to-three years" even when they intend to depart sooner.

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Successful organizations recognize the increased value they can achieve by creating a company-wide "integrated" approach to workforce surveys, supported by individuals with the right expertise and insight to improve program consistency and effectiveness.

Organizations can derive insight from a wide array of sources, including recruiting (candidates and hiring managers), onboarding, engagement, exit, and customer (internal and external). But when conducted in isolation, these practices can fall short.

That is because questions are not asked in a way that can provide analysts a view into the entire employee lifecycle. For example, there are many "checkbox" issues to gauge on a new hire survey (e.g., paperwork, satisfaction with orientation, and the like), but organizations should also aim to assess the unique drivers of engagement within the first 90-to-180 days of hire. This allows for analysis to determine where the "breaking point" is that may cause talent to become disengaged and eventually leave the organization.

Many organizations fail to avail themselves of a survey center of excellence and to integrate this with the workforce analytics function. A centralized survey governance can enable analysts to link the results together to track an employee through the entire lifecycle within the entity, from recruiting experience to exit.

Inability to systematically include survey data in predictive models along with data from core systems is another indicator of integration failure. The analytics function should govern the content, schedule / administration, and survey analysis, as well as the data to incorporate into other workforce data reports.

Including engagement scores into dashboards, strategic reports, predictive models, and the like can raise awareness, accountability, and, ultimately, action planning across the business. Organizations with mature survey programs may also link individual or corporate engagement results to performance metrics, including review ratings, safety incidents, customer satisfaction, and sales, to determine the business impact associated with improving engagement.

With turnover on the rise and growing pressure to retain pivotal employees to achieve strategic results, HR will need to derive greater value from employee survey efforts through such means as:

- Targeting question design focused on assessing progress and driving unique factors of engagement within their organization
- Mapping questions across an array of employee surveys such as engagement, exit, new joiner, candidate, and hiring manager
- Ingraining engagement as a corporate goal
- Using engagement survey results in dashboards and as inputs to advanced analytic solutions

Progressive organizations are achieving this by adopting an integrated survey design, implementation, and action-planning approach.

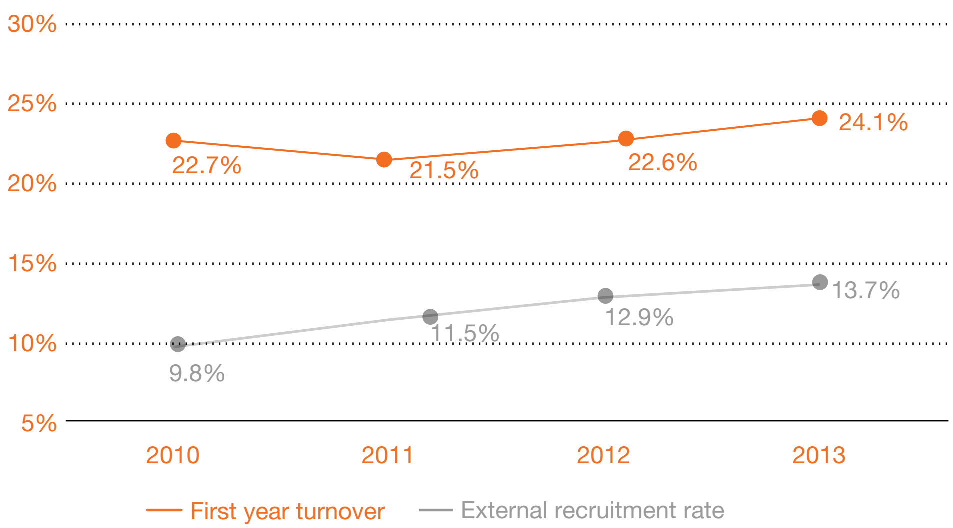
3. Improving new-hire quality: A predictive model for selection

We see two significant hiring trends. First, organizations are hiring more people. Our study shows that the percentage of employee headcount for new external hires has grown in the last three years, increasing by nearly 39.8% from 2010 to 2013. Second, first year of service turnover has increased for the second consecutive year, from 22.6% in 2012 to 24.1% in 2013.

Previous gains in hiring effectiveness have evaporated, suggesting that these gains were made because of the depth of available talent during the recession, not because of improvements to the talent acquisition process. As the economy continues to heal, these pressures will grow more intense.

So, while hiring quantity has increased, hire quality has dropped. Given these trends, it's reasonable to consider that organizations may relapse to pre-recession talent acquisition approaches, which led US organizations to lose nearly one-in-three employees within the first year of service. In turn, organizations face increasingly expensive alternatives to hiring and retention, such as signing bonuses, equity programs, relocation, and salary inflation.

Figure 5: Hiring trends



This begs these questions:

- How do you strengthen your hiring process in the next two-to-three years in a post-recessionary environment?
- Can we identify those markers of talent acquisition success based on who historically succeeded and those who did not?
- Can we then devise a process to systematically prioritize those characteristics while evaluating job candidates?

While much testing has focused on competency assessments in the selection process, less has assessed demographic characteristics in the selection process:

- How far can an employee live from the job site before the commute is a concern?
- How should HR weigh experience versus educational success in selection?

- When does job hopping become an issue?
- What challenges exist in onboarding, rather than selection?

Predictive analytics can help answer such questions and improve recruiting process effectiveness by defining the probability of success within the entity's environment and identifying what characteristics yield better quality hires for the organization. It also enables the organization to build a robust data-driven analytic framework that will lend insight into what drives effectiveness.

We see leading organizations using predictive analytics in their candidate selection process, using advanced analytics to isolate characteristics of success, then using those markers to create strong hiring profiles, and, finally, tailoring assessment surveys that evaluate every potential job candidate for those characteristics. These are typically a combination of attitudinal, demographic, and experiential factors. It's important to note that even if these assessment instruments have common factors across employee roles, success factors are tied to specific roles.

Although this is still in the early stages of development, the practice of using predictive analytics is trending up in three areas:

Pivotal roles, which have a disproportionate impact on the organization's core objectives

Entry-level roles, especially in professional services and knowledge-based organizations, which typically hire large numbers of talented college graduates annually

High-volume, high-turnover roles, especially in the technology and retail sectors

By gaining a better understanding of the characteristics of successful employees, HR departments can recognize which candidates possess the traits and talent that truly align with the organization's culture and needs.

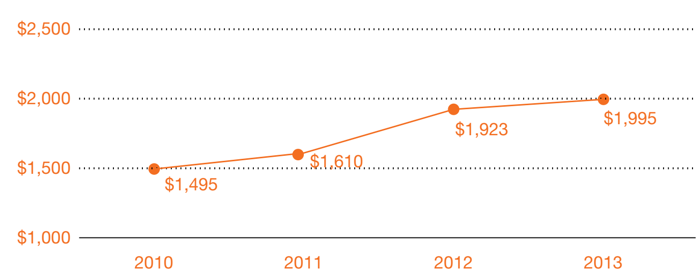
4. Enhancing the strategic role of HR business partners: Use of standardized strategic reports

As the economy continues to revive and the emphasis on talent returns, organizations continue to evolve the HR function amid a growing recognition that HR needs to be more strategic:

- Centralize transactional activities in shared services or similar models.
- Make heavier investments in such critical areas as HR leadership/strategy, workforce intelligence/analytics, and HR technology.

As this shift continues, overall HR spend continues to grow from $1,923 per employee in 2012 to $1,995 per employee in 2013. Companies are demonstrating that an improved return on workforce investment requires an increased investment in HR.

Figure 6: HR costs per employee



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As part of this transformation, the business partner needs to be transitioned from transactional activities to talent strategy, succession planning, workforce analytics, and the like. In particular, we see a fundamental need to build the business partner skill set based on interpreting and presenting data in a meaningful way. Many business partners have traditionally been caught in a cycle that either ignores people-related data completely or delivers it in a way that requires business partners to overinvest their time in cleaning, correcting, or formatting data, rather than analyzing the numbers, conducting root cause analysis, or telling the story behind the data.

As HR business partners become more quantitatively savvy and business leaders demand more frequent and robust HR data, strategic workforce insight is becoming more of an imperative. While many corporate leaders receive a high-level dashboard on a monthly or quarterly basis, business partners, analysts, and HR leaders should be reviewing data on a daily or weekly basis, with all of the detailed information included.

Organizations are best served by forming a set of strategic report templates, which can be centered on a variety of workforce themes, including headcount, recruiting, diversity, performance, and the like. Reports can have a balanced view of raw data, such as employee counts and costs, and calculated metrics regarding such factors as turnover rates, as well as internal and external benchmarks, targets, historical trends, and future projections for quick views of improvements and declines, and warning areas that require immediate action.

However, many organizations face a major technology constraint when attempting to construct and automate their strategic reports. Dozens of data points may need to be tracked on an ongoing basis, rendering manual tracking nearly impossible. Ideally, an HR technology tool can take data across a variety of sources (HRIS, ATS, LMS, and the like) to populate these strategic reports across the entire employee population. Technology solutions will also allow for automated report distribution, either by pushing reports out to stakeholders or having them available for ad hoc pulls.

As business partners move into a more strategic role and start using more data-based evidence to support workforce decisions, it will become increasingly important for them to understand, use, and distribute strategic insight. While business partners and analysts may need to build skills to properly advance the creation and use of reports, organizations maturing in analytics are investing in these activities now to realize the future payoff.

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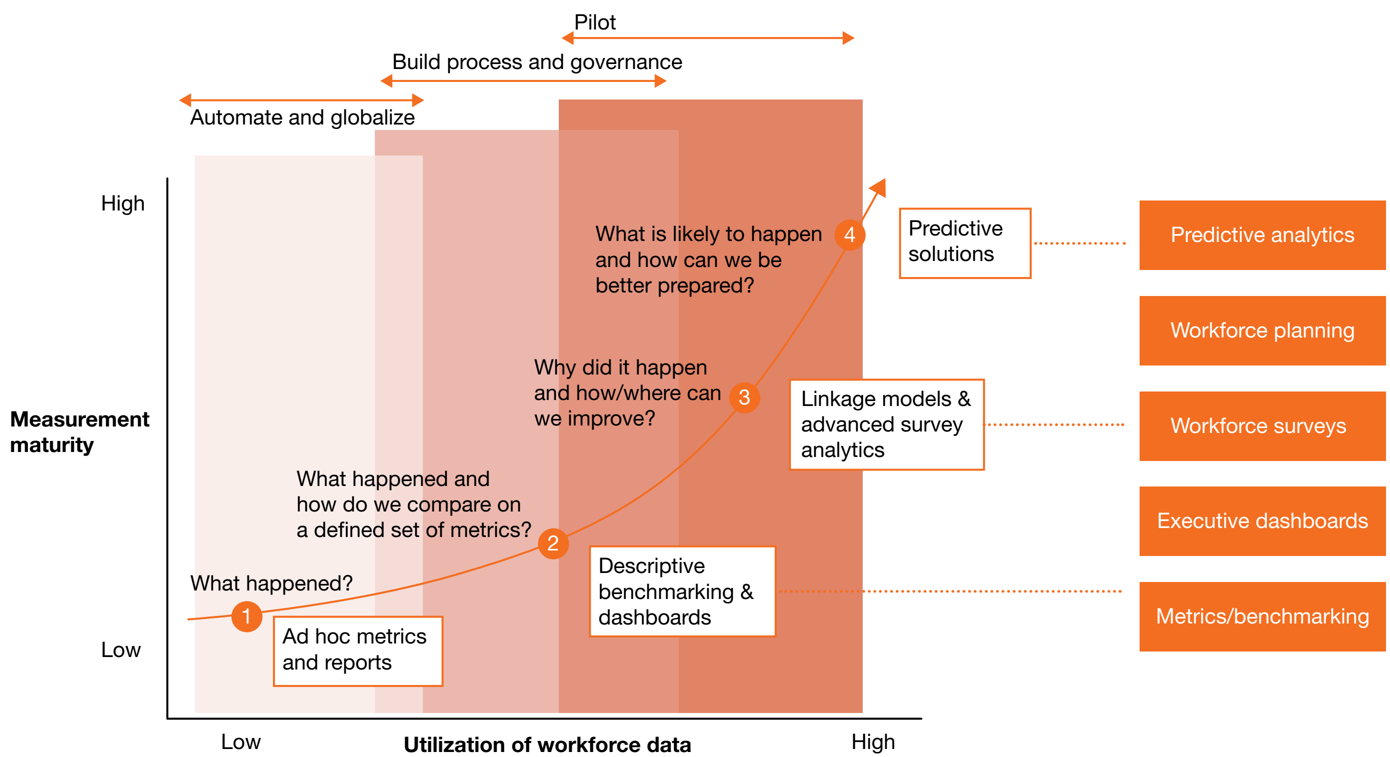
Harnessing data: Marching up the maturity curve

The power of workforce data drawn from metrics, surveys, and predictive analytics can help HR drill deep into the nature of the entity's talent pool and yield answers to support and sustain a talent strategy aligned with the organization's agenda. These analytics can help deliver on the promise of the right workforce, the right hires, limited turnover, a robust talent pipeline, an engaged team, and the achievement of financial and operational goals.

This is a multi-step undertaking that requires progression along the maturity curve (shown in the following graphic), as well as the creation of a roadmap for implementation, with this question in mind:

What do you need to do with respect to people, technology, and processes to move from the entity's current position to its desired state?



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Level 1

Organizations are adept at answering the "what happened" questions. With transactional systems in place, it's easy to answer questions such as, "How many employees quit voluntarily last year, last month, or last June? How many new employees did the Sales function hire in November?"

Level 2

Organizations are not only able to identify what happened, but they also are able to extract key data elements to compute standardized metrics that allow for systematic tracking and comparisons with peers. For example:

- Did we develop internal mobility for high performers or low performers?
- How often did we fill key roles with succession candidates, rather than having to go outside for talent?
- Which did we grow faster, revenue or labor costs?

While this remains a backward-looking effort focused on finding out what happened, it enables organizations to level-set their performance.

Level 3

Organizations begin to answer the "why" and "how" questions:

- Why did my high performers quit?
- How many new hires do I need to meet our projected revenue growth in a given area?

Level 4

Organizations are able to build, deploy, and maintain predictive and workforce planning solutions on the fly or have predictive indicators already embedded into their reporting dashboards.

As they ascend the maturity curve—a multi-year journey—we suggest that organizations:

- Build a long-term roadmap based on business needs.
- Start small, perhaps by running a series of pilots.
- Establish a foundation for growth.
- Firm up business cases for an array of enterprise solutions.
- As momentum grows, scale rapidly.

Most companies need to address activities on two fronts (sequentially or in parallel):

1. Develop a strategy and roadmap for workforce analytics that assess current state, develops a vision for the future state, defines the recommended approach, achieves alignment among stakeholders, and sells the business case.
2. Develop a series of pilots for various workforce analytics programs to better define stakeholder requirements, establish value, and determine the approach to adoption, whether the programs are strategic reports, executive dashboards, workforce plans, or predictive models.

As part of the roadmap, companies need to assess the current capability of data, technology, and people to deliver analytics and to align investment with a workforce analytics strategic approach.

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Analytics: Harnessing the power: In talent and transformation

Nearly three quarters (70%) of US CEOs worry that the availability of key skills will undermine their strategies and plans for growth[1]—up dramatically from 54% the previous year.

Many organizations can't bridge the chasm between talent supply and demand to deliver on strategy, relying instead on short-term, tactical, and reactionary maneuvers carried out by siloed functions. Absent strategic workforce planning, many companies scramble for a cohesive talent approach.

They need to clearly define their strategy and implement a formal process to understand how strategic changes will affect talent and skills. We recommend the following workforce planning approach for long-term success, placing the right people with the right skills in the right jobs, when and where they're needed:

1. Find the traits and skills that feed success based on your strategy. Build management skills and cultivate strong leadership; set the tone at the top to cultivate the right corporate culture.
2. Proactively determine what skills, knowledge, and experience you need enterprise-wide. Develop a pipeline of business-ready talent (for example, collaborating to co-create programs with universities that support the business strategy and forming curricula to prepare younger talent for the workplace).
3. Assess where you're strong—and can be stronger. Addressing the skills gap is about more than hiring new talent; take a fresh look at talent from within. Most (86%) of US CEOs think that technological transformations will most change their business models and that much of the current workforce will drive this transformation. The significance of training—and retraining—programs remains pivotal to successful business model transition.
4. Create your plan to hire, train, or "rent" the right people, even if circumstances change. Plans flourish when HR strategically partners with the business to use workforce data and analytics to deliver "real-time" decision support.
5. Implement and communicate about the plan effectively. Leaders need to get people connected to the strategy and to feel good about the organization. It's important to understand where the company is headed, what it takes to be successful, and what the expected behaviors are enterprise-wide.
6. See what works and adapt. Constantly compare needed and existing skills and determine how to fill gaps. Know how well the workforce plan is working and make necessary adjustments.

These actions cultivate buy-in among managers and staff and position the company for employee engagement, organizational pride, and long-term success.

[1]PwC's 17th Annual CEO Survey, 2014.

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Analytics: Harnessing the power: In healthcare programs

Most employers now recognize the need to more effectively manage, reduce, and mitigate cost increases. Rising healthcare costs have leading employers using—or attempting to use—advanced data analytics to better understand and manage their healthcare programs. It's more important than ever to be able to draw meaningful information from data, which can help employers understand root causes, identify opportunities, evaluate performance, and guide corrective actions as a basis for a future healthcare strategy.

Yet, the overwhelming size of available data means that healthcare data analysis can be a daunting challenge. For example, HR and Finance departments often receive monthly and quarterly reports from insurance carriers, PBMs, disease management vendors, and even data warehouse vendors, yielding numerous pages of claims statistics—a volume of data and reports that often renders efforts to achieve actionable results futile.

The following advanced-level analytic practices can help you overcome the challenges inherent in executing a data-driven healthcare strategy:

- Understand and isolate the factors driving healthcare costs and their effects.
- Connect the dots to understand the interplay between strategies and outcomes.
- Integrate forecasting and monitoring into healthcare benefits strategic planning.

Focusing on these three practices can enable you to better synthesize data, program results, and outcomes to derive actionable information.

With continued technological and systems advances, more and more specialized healthcare data is at employers' fingertips. While it's easy to get lost amid a sea of numbers and statistics, smart analytics will help sift through the data to arrive at meaningful connections, skip spurious data "dead-ends," and provide actionable results that can form the foundation for future benefits strategy. Advanced data analytics can help to determine the correlation and potential cause-and-effect relationship between healthcare programs and improved quality, morale—and even profits.

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Analytics: Harnessing the power: In compensation

The organization's rewards practice can benefit significantly from using advanced survey workforce analytics to gain insight into such metrics as voluntary turnover and identifying and finding high performers.

Rewards, including compensation benefits and wellness programs, historically a talent retention tool, are now a strategic tool designed to engage the critical talent necessary to produce business results. The information that can support efforts to engage pivotal talent is multidimensional and typically emanates from a variety of sources within the organization.

From new hires to exit, the collection and analysis of information on the employee can help companies understand what motivates them and how those factors align with the company's values; workforce demographics can also provide data regarding employees' generational mindset about how they expect to be rewarded.

The following practices can help you overcome the challenges inherent in executing a data driven Total Rewards strategy:

- Use the business intelligence generated by workforce analytics to inform the company's total rewards strategy.
- Determine which of the employee behaviors they are trying to promote align with the company's values.
- Design rewards programs that guide, promote, and compensate the behaviors that will strengthen the company's culture and deliver the best individual results.
- Leverage advanced conjoint analysis or total reward optimization to better align programs with employee preferences.

Our findings show that companies increasingly rely on workforce analytics to achieve business results. Organizations that use that information wisely to engage the critical talent will be better positioned to win the talent war.

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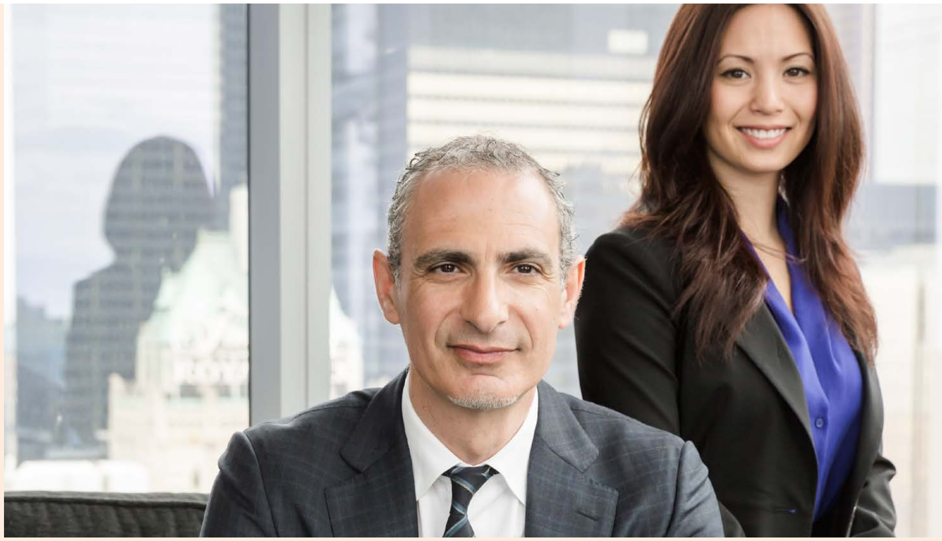

Analytics: Harnessing the power: In retirement

The trend in retirement benefit design in the United States continues to be a migration toward 401(k) and account balance-type arrangements and away from traditional defined benefit pension plans. In most cases, this has been motivated by a desire to transfer to employees a greater portion of the cost and/or financial risk (e.g., investment risk, interest rate risk) associated with retirement benefits.

This trend is partially responsible for the recent decrease in labor cost per FTE. However, it also contributes to the increase in the separation rate among employees—including high performers—as retirement benefits have become increasingly uniform and portable from one employer to the next. As a result, it's often difficult for organizations to quantify their true return on investment from the delivery of, and changes to, retirement benefits.

From an HR perspective, transformations in the retirement benefit landscape mirror those of the broader HR function. Consistent with the increasing demand from executives for talent-related analytics, we see increasing demand for actionable analysis of retirement benefits. This includes real-time analysis of retirement benefit liabilities and cost (i.e., financial risk), as well as information on employee utilization and appreciation, adequacy of retirement benefits for transitioning employees to retirement, and market competitiveness for attracting and retaining talented employees.

This information allows organizations to proactively manage financial risk and capitalize on market conditions to cost-effectively deliver retirement benefits, better align these benefits with business objectives, and achieve an appropriate balance between employee reward and corporate profitability.

Insights to-go

Workforce analytics can serve as the glue between HR delivery and business strategy. Those HR departments that build an internal competency for analytics create the ongoing cohesion between the workforce and business strategy. Gone are the days when data insight was just an interesting distraction, or mere night job.

Those companies that tap into analytics can unlock their investment in HR data—and find the hidden value in their workforce. These intangibles can be made tangible on the P&L and on the balance sheet.

Metrics and benchmarking are step one, as has traditionally been the case. In our view, organizations should strive to develop a strategy for marching up the maturity curve to realize return on workforce investment, achieve a market leadership position in workforce analytics, and realize a sustainable competitive advantage.

It's time to step up and win.

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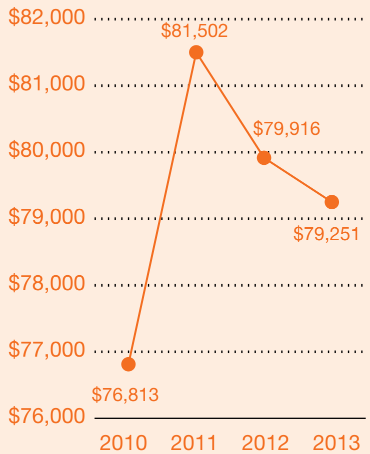
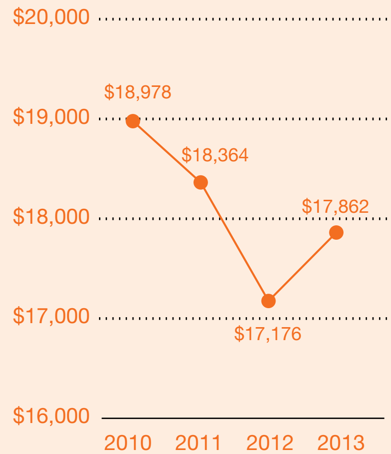
Appendix: Additional data charts

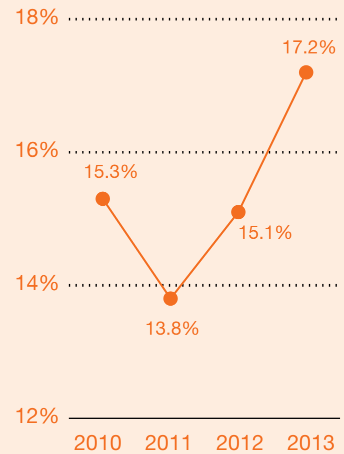
Compensation cost per FTE



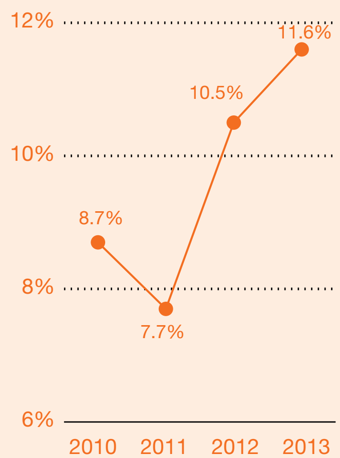
Average benefits per employee



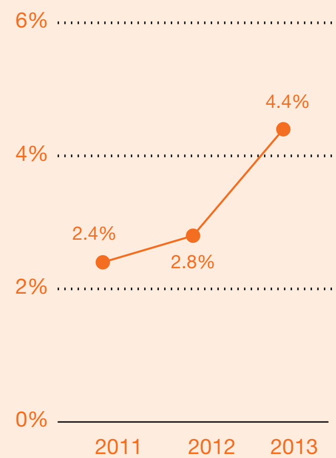
Ethnically diverse management headcount percent



Ethnically diverse executive headcount percent



High-potential voluntary separation



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About PwC's Human Resource Services (HRS)

As a leading provider of HR consulting services, PwC's Human Resource Services' global network of 6,000 HR practitioners in over 150 countries brings together a broad range of professionals working in the human resource arena—retirement, health & welfare, total compensation, HR strategy and operations, regulatory compliance, workforce planning, talent management, and global mobility—affording our clients a tremendous breadth and depth of expertise, both locally and globally, to effectively address the issues they face.

PwC is differentiated from its competitors by its ability to combine top-tier HR consulting expertise with the tax, accounting, and financial analytics expertise that have become critical aspects of HR programs.

PwC's Human Resource Services practice can assist you in improving your performance across all aspects of the HR and human capital spectrum through technical excellence, thought leadership, and innovation around five core critical HR issues: reward effectiveness and efficiency; risk management, regulatory, and compliance; HR and workforce effectiveness; transaction effectiveness; and global mobility.

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About PwC Saratoga

As part of our Human Resource Services practice, PwC Saratoga delivers workforce surveys, metrics, and analytics to help leaders make better workforce decisions to drive business performance.

Don't just collect data. Generate insight.

There's a quiet revolution taking place in human resources and talent development departments around the world. Faced with a growing need for meaningful insights into the workforce, companies are beginning to recognize the enormous, untapped potential in what they already know, and what they could know, about their own workforce. Workforce Analytics is changing the way companies think about everything from attracting and developing talent to employee engagement and predicting turnover.

We get it. In fact, we created it.

PwC Saratoga is the global leader in Workforce Analytics because we go beyond simple data reporting and surveying. We are your full-service human capital analytics partner, with a real understanding of the specific workforce issues faced by your company and your industry. We offer a broad range of services, from benchmarking to advanced analytics to comprehensive workforce surveying. PwC can even work with you to build a workforce analytics capability that allows you to do more with your data including Big-Data for HR. We help you to take the guesswork out of your most important workforce decisions, for better operational and financial results.

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