



# HR Focus:

What was big in HR last year and is set to be even bigger in 2024.

Annual HR Survey  
JANUARY 2024

Conducted by Cogito HR





# Exec Summary

## Introduction

Cogito HR's annual HR survey is a look back and look forward, the Past, Present and Future. We want to know what HR professionals have been focusing on in the past 12 months and where their priorities will be this year.

## Methodology

We have gathered the views and desires of HR professionals via an online survey to identify what has changed and what the future holds. Data was collected in December 2023 and January 2024.

## Key Findings

- **Remuneration** increases were a key expectation for employees for 2023, especially given the high cost of living in the UK. HR teams conducted pay and benefits reviews including looking at pay frameworks.
- HR teams experienced an increase in the level and variety of support they were required to provide in 2023. Providing **wellbeing support** will be a key priority into 2024 in terms of preventative wellbeing solutions, education and improving work-life balance.
- A big focus for 2024 will also be **AI and technology**. Many organisations will be focusing on the use and impacts of AI within HR and implementing new HR systems. It is hoped these new technologies will increase efficiency and help meet the increasing demand on HR departments.



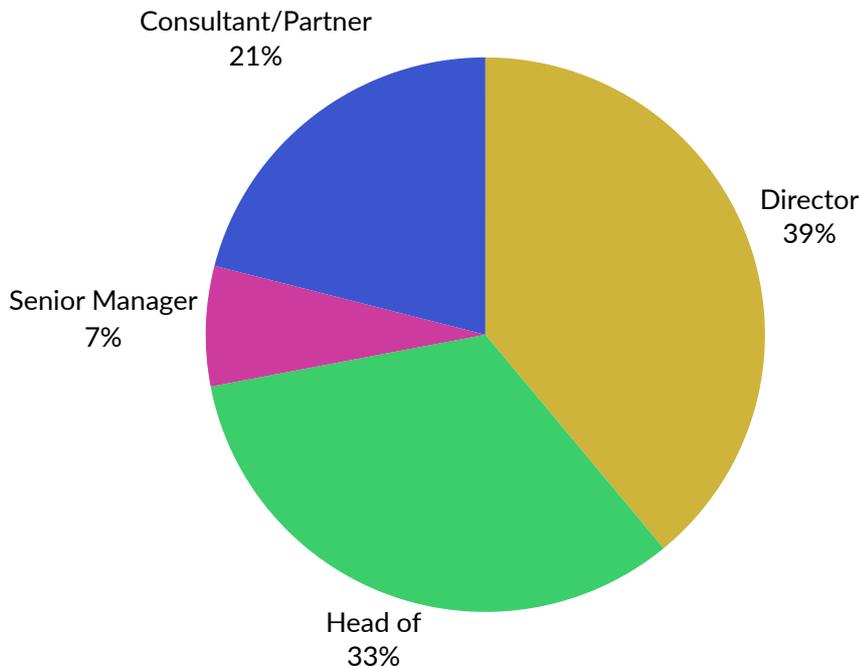
# Overview

## About this Report

Our annual HR survey is a look back and look forward in HR, the Past, Present and Future. We have gathered the views and desires of HR professionals to identify what has changed and what the future holds.

Data was collected in December 2023 and January 2024 from HR Professionals. They work in a range of roles within HR across a range of industries and different-sized businesses. This provides a picture of the HR landscape in the UK. Within this report, there are specific profiles of HR Professionals, along with their survey responses and company information. There are also amalgamated responses across all respondents which allows emergent themes to be examined in more detail.

*Job Level of Respondents*



## 5 HR Priorities for 2024

1

### 1. AI and Technology

The use of new technology is on the agenda for HR in 2024. Many organisations will be focusing on the use and impacts of AI and others are looking to implement new HR systems. It is hoped these new technologies will increase efficiency.

2

### 2. Employee Wellbeing

Employee wellbeing is on the agenda for 2024, especially with many employees still feeling the effects of the high cost of living. Wellbeing strategies will help existing employees, reduce absences and may increase retention. Having a well-defined strategy as well as communicating it could help to attract a more engaged workforce while strengthening your organisation's employee value proposition.

3

### 3. Recruitment and Talent Pipelining

Succession planning, recruiting apprentices, recruiting talent and growing leaders were initiatives noted as being on the agenda for 2024. As well as recruitment, the retention of current employees, and reducing the need for replacement recruitment is a priority. Organisations will seek to improve both their recruitment and retention techniques in 2024.

4

### 4. Employee Engagement

Driving employee engagement and re-engaging employees to drive motivation and productivity is key for HR professionals in 2024. It was also mentioned that improving the receptiveness of employee survey feedback is an important focus.

5

### 5. Pay Strategies

Pay remains a priority in 2024. Implementing new pay strategies and frameworks that work for employees and the organisation and are attractive to prospective candidates is on the agenda. Linking pay to performance is also a prominent move organisations are making.



# Spotlight Respondents



**Jay Williamson**  
Head of HR at IVC Evidensia

**Q. What has been your biggest highlight in your role in 2023?**

A. Overseeing a significant restructure in the business and through my team managing this in a sensitive way.

**Q. What has been the most significant change you have noticed in relation to the demands business has placed on the HR team this year?**

A. Pace of change and ever more expectation to react quickly and decisively has been relentless.

**Q. What were the notable shifts in employee expectations or needs that you observed in 2023?**

A. People remain uncertain about ways of working (office presence, hybrid working etc.) and rightly expect us as their employer to be ever clearer in our guidance. People also remain challenged by economic pressures.

## Looking ahead to 2024...

**Q. What do you see as the next big thing(s) for HR to focus on?**

A. Continuing to define future ways of how we all work, whilst continuing to find ways to help people balance economic difficulties - this isn't just about throwing money at people.

**Q. How prepared do you feel you and your business are for this?**

A. Well prepared.

**Q. What are the challenges you experience in your role which you'd like to be resolved in 2024?**

A. More economic and political stability.

**Q. What are the focus areas or initiatives you feel that should be a greater priority for HR professionals in 2024?**

A. I think that's too broad a question to answer as so much depends on the type of business / industry you're in - for us it's about finding creative ways to engage, motivate and retain people.

## IVC Evidensia

**Sector:** Veterinary Services

**Location:** Keynsham

**Headcount:** 10,000+



## Andrew Thomas

Head of HR at Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

### Q. What has been your biggest highlight in your role in 2023?

A. Helping the business to resize itself and set itself up for the future when faced with a tough economic climate.

### Q. What has been the most significant change you have noticed in relation to the demands business has placed on the HR team this year?

A. Having a handle on producing good quality and timely people data and MI to drive decision making. As well as providing welfare support for our employees living with mental health challenges.

### Q. What were the notable shifts in employee expectations or needs that you observed in 2023?

A. Despite the economic climate trying to manage a conflicting desire for promotions and salary reviews.

## Looking ahead to 2024...

### Q. What do you see as the next big thing(s) for HR to focus on?

A. Re-engaging employees to drive motivation and productivity whilst maintaining a culture of flexible working.

### Q. How prepared do you feel you and your business are for this?

A. It will require a change in mindset for both the business and HR.

### Q. What are the challenges you experience in your role which you'd like to be resolved in 2024?

A. Pilot a new approach to managing performance and creating a common grade framework across the practice.

### Q. What are the focus areas or initiatives you feel that should be a greater priority for HR professionals in 2024?

A. How to capture and develop relevant people KPIs to monitor trends and progress being made with various strategic people initiatives.

**Allford Hall  
Monaghan Morris**

**Sector:** Architecture  
and Planning

**Location:** London

**Headcount:** 500+



## Victoria Roden

Director of People at Citizen Housing

### Q. What has been your biggest highlight in your role in 2023?

A. Restructuring the People team and welcoming new people to the team to strengthen our approach.

### Q. What has been the most significant change you have noticed in relation to the demands business has placed on the HR team this year?

A. There are always demands on the HR team but this year has all been about a new pay framework and the demand to pay market rate.

### Q. What were the notable shifts in employee expectations or needs that you observed in 2023?

A. Salary expectations and a shift in attitude towards hybrid working, with it becoming more of an expectation as we see employees placing more importance on work-life balance, it also has greater significance when recruiting.

## Looking ahead to 2024...

### Q. What do you see as the next big thing(s) for HR to focus on?

A. Benefits of automation and impact on the business in terms of service delivery and resources.

### Q. How prepared do you feel you and your business are for this?

A. Some areas more than others but AI is still a new concept to grasp.

### Q. What are the challenges you experience in your role which you'd like to be resolved in 2024?

A. Salary expectations which we hope to resolve with a new pay framework in early 2024.

### Q. What are the focus areas or initiatives you feel that should be a greater priority for HR professionals in 2024?

A. Work-life balance and health and wellbeing - there is a lot of talk in the profession about burnout.

**Citizen**

**Sector:** Housing (Non-profit organisation)

**Location:** Solihull

**Headcount:** 1,000+



**Rael Ryan**  
HR Director at Zimmer Biomet

**Q. What has been your biggest highlight in your role in 2023?**

A. Benefits review, increased Engagement score by 15% and decreased attrition rates.

**Q. What has been the most significant change you have noticed in relation to the demands business has placed on the HR team this year?**

A. Increased requirement to offer coaching support. Retention is important but less likely to counter. Transformation has been a focus both on how we deliver HR and how the business structures itself.

**Q. What were the notable shifts in employee expectations or needs that you observed in 2023?**

A. Salary review & growth / benefits review / Work from home as norm (even if market is changing).

## Looking ahead to 2024...

**Q. What do you see as the next big thing(s) for HR to focus on?**

A. Driving engagement, focusing on HR offering very specific value-added services rather than some of the transactional activities.

**Q. How prepared do you feel you and your business are for this?**

A. Unsure, moving towards Success Factors - Are we ready?

**Q. What are the challenges you experience in your role which you'd like to be resolved in 2024?**

A. Driving HR Business Partnering across an organisation that is used to HR being a transactional service.

**Q. What are the focus areas or initiatives you feel that should be a greater priority for HR professionals in 2024?**

A. Talent / Success planning (and doing it properly) / Pushing the organisations to think differently.

**Zimmer Biomet**

**Sector:** Medical  
Equipment  
Manufacturing

**Location:** Swindon

**Headcount:** 10,000+



## Abi Cox

Senior Manager, HR & Corporate Services at ASMPT

### Q. What has been your biggest highlight in your role in 2023?

A. Having a complete HR team who've smashed it out of the park and worked their socks off in the process. Our dedicated HR on site recruitment partner has made that happen for me, and I'm so grateful to her. Oh... and not forgetting the small matter of our site refurbishment so our People have a fabulous workspace where they can collaborate, communicate and consult each other.

### Q. What has been the most significant change you have noticed in relation to the demands business has placed on the HR team this year?

A. Without doubt, this year has been the busiest yet. We've seen the delivery of a number of our projects conceived during the pandemic, and we've been asked by the business to deliver a different kind of candidate this year so this has resulted in us further developing our recruitment processes to attract differently.

## Looking ahead to 2024...

### Q. What do you see as the next big thing(s) for HR to focus on?

A. Leader & People Manager development HR Technology, specifically, how we embrace AI and use it to our advantage internal career mobility.

### Q. How prepared do you feel you and your business are for this?

A. We're getting to grips with the benefits of AI Development and career mobility is well underway.

### Q. What are the challenges you experience in your role which you'd like to be resolved in 2024?

A. The change management implications of implementing a new Global HR Information System to create one company including one reward framework and one performance management system over 30 countries.

### Q. What are the focus areas or initiatives you feel that should be a greater priority for HR professionals in 2024?

A. How we can develop the workforce to close the cliff edge caused by underfunding and misaligned business and academia over multiple decades.

**ASMPT**

**Sector:** Electronics  
Manufacturing

**Location:** Weymouth /  
Munich

**Headcount:** 12,000+



**Paul Turner**  
HR Director at LiveWest

**Q. What has been your biggest highlight in your role in 2023?**

A. Recruiting a record number of apprentices in to our business to help support the long term workforce planning and to develop the next generation of talent.

**Q. What has been the most significant change you have noticed in relation to the demands business has placed on the HR team this year?**

A. At times unrealistic demands to find scarce skills & talent in a challenging and dynamic recruitment market. The team have had to work exceptionally hard to deliver but also to manage stakeholder expectations.

**Q. What were the notable shifts in employee expectations or needs that you observed in 2023?**

A. Increased wage demands and supporting benefits, including more flexible working when there is already (in my opinion) a very flexible approach from the business.

## Looking ahead to 2024...

**Q. What do you see as the next big thing(s) for HR to focus on?**

A. Data analytics, including the use of AI.

**Q. How prepared do you feel you and your business are for this?**

A. At best average, in reality we are probably not as prepared as we should be.

**Q. What are the challenges you experience in your role which you'd like to be resolved in 2024?**

A. Candidate attraction and retention and a more balanced approach to employee relations, especially with Trade Unions.

**Q. What are the focus areas or initiatives you feel that should be a greater priority for HR professionals in 2024?**

A. 1) AI 2) Recruiting far more apprentices 3) Managing employee expectations better in areas such as hybrid working, pay & benefits.

**LiveWest**

**Sector:** Real Estate

**Location:** Exeter

**Headcount:** 1,800



**Harriet James**  
HR Advisor at Cogito

**Q. What has been your biggest highlight in your role in 2023?**

A. Achieving the Good Employment Charter Accreditation.

**Q. What has been the most significant change you have noticed in relation to the demands business has placed on the HR team this year?**

A. From the business, more focus on development of employees and growing our suite of retention tools and a lot less recruitment compared with the previous year.

**Q. What were the notable shifts in employee expectations or needs that you observed in 2023?**

A. Notable shifts around pay expectations, due to cost of living and an increase in the need for wellbeing / mental health support.

## Looking ahead to 2024...

**Q. What do you see as the next big thing(s) for HR to focus on?**

A. Focusing more on being proactive (looking into the future and making plans/adapting people strategies accordingly) instead of being reactive.

**Q. How prepared do you feel you and your business are for this?**

A. We are prepared for this, I think it's important to know that we don't have all the answers and that the HR landscape is forever changing. However, with plans in place, this can ensure that the business is prepared for various scenarios and therefore removes a lot of reactive actions.

**Q. What are the challenges you experience in your role which you'd like to be resolved in 2024?**

A. It's got to be the effects of the cost of living and the crisis in the UK with our mental health services. These both have a direct effect on how employees feel and ultimately how they show up at work. Even with support from the business, we are unable to remove all of these external pressures and stresses.

**Q. What are the focus areas or initiatives you feel that should be a greater priority for HR professionals in 2024?**

A. Technology enhancements in HR - how this can optimise the effectiveness of the HR function (Metaverse/AI). Focusing on creating healthier organisations and putting preventative wellbeing solutions and education in place.

**Cogito**

**Sector:** HR Services

**Location:** Bristol

**Headcount:** 20 - 30



**Kelly Anderson**  
Director at Nspire People

**Q. What has been your biggest highlight in your role in 2023?**

A. Working as part of the team. It's been true business partnering and mutual respect has made it enjoyable.

**Q. What has been the most significant change you have noticed in relation to the demands business has placed on the HR team this year?**

A. Increase in requests to review benefits as well as pay.

## Looking ahead to 2024...

**Q. What do you see as the next big thing(s) for HR to focus on?**

A. Balancing culture through the hybrid lens, talent shortages, rising impact of AI on business and employees, operating efficiencies.

**Q. How prepared do you feel you and your business are for this?**

A. AI not at all.

**Q. What are the challenges you experience in your role which you'd like to be resolved in 2024?**

A. Peaks and troughs of work! Using support to outsource areas where I can.

**Q. What are the focus areas or initiatives you feel that should be a greater priority for HR professionals in 2024?**

A. Career mapping - through experiences not traditional career ladders. Continuing to define and publicise the employee deal.

**Nspire People**

**Sector:** HR Services

**Location:** Gloucester

**Headcount:** 2-10



## Overall Survey Findings

All survey responses were analysed to establish prominent themes across the responses. The key themes and areas for focus are presented below.

### What has been the biggest highlight in your role in 2023?

Whilst there were a range of factors that HR professionals shared as their biggest highlight in their role in 2023, this highlights the range of areas HR impacts within organisations and the number of challenges HR has faced in 2023.

Common highlights included:

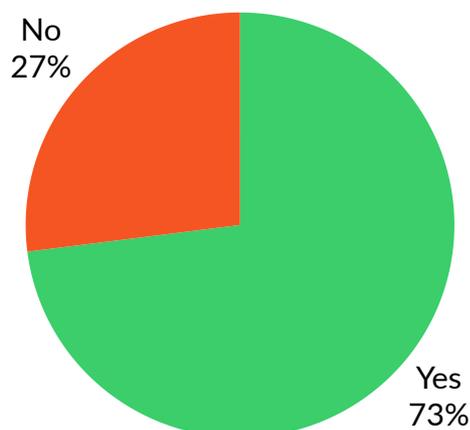
- **restructures**
- **pay/benefits reviews**
- **creating pay strategies**

Other prominent themes were around succession planning and developing teams. Some people also mentioned that their highlight was working well as part of the HR team.

### What has been the most significant change you have noticed in relation to the demands business has placed on the HR team this year?

The most prominent theme that emerged around this question was the **level of support** that the HR team has had to provide. This includes welfare and mental health support, development and coaching, support with employee absences, and employee relations support. Other themes included reviewing pay and benefits, increasing retention and the tools used to retain employees. It was also mentioned that HR teams have had a large volume of work/projects in 2023.

### Were there any notable shifts in employee expectations or needs that you observed in 2023? And if so, what were they?



Of those who saw notable shifts in employee expectations in 2023, 64% said these shifts were around **remuneration**, particularly salary expectations. 45% mentioned expectations around the ability to **work from home and flexible working arrangements**.

This suggests that pay and benefits and flexibility around where and when to work are key factors for employees. HR professionals will need to consider pay reviews and guidance on working practices to address these expectations.



## Overall Survey Findings

### What do you see as the next big thing(s) for HR to focus on?

36% of HR Professionals said that **AI** was one of the next big things for HR to focus on. This was in terms of understanding the impacts of AI and how it can be used to benefit the organisation, particularly within HR and data analytics. Half of those felt completely unprepared for AI and half felt that they were partly prepared but not fully. This suggests that a focus area within HR in 2024 is understanding and using AI.

Another theme that emerged was around **employee engagement** in terms of driving engagement and re-engaging employees to drive motivation and productivity. It was also mentioned that improving the receptiveness of employee survey feedback is an important focus. HR professionals feel partly prepared for a focus on employee engagement but acknowledge that it may require a shift in mindset.

HR Professionals are also putting a big focus on **talent pipelines** in terms of finding talent, meeting talent shortages and succession planning. The HR community feels well-prepared to create talent pipelines. Another theme that emerged was **improving HR Systems** to become more efficient within the HR department.

### What are the challenges you experience in your role which you'd like to be resolved in 2024?

The most prominent responses to this question were around resolving **pay expectations**, specifically with new pay frameworks and grading systems. Another challenge is balancing **HR capacity and resources** with the volume of work that is expected to be completed by the HR function.

Change management of implementing new HR systems and the economic and political instability in the UK were also mentioned as challenges.

### What are the focus areas or initiatives you feel that should be a greater priority for HR professionals in 2024?

The greatest priority as viewed by HR professionals is **recruitment and retention**. It was noted that succession planning, recruiting apprentices, recruiting talent and growing leaders were initiatives that are a priority for 2024.

Improving **employee engagement and recognition** also emerged as a priority, which will likely help with retention.

Another key theme was improving employee **wellbeing**. Areas such as preventative wellbeing solutions, education and improving work-life balance were put forward as methods for meeting this priority.



**Feel free to approach us if you have any questions.**

If you would like to discuss any of the content of this report or require HR support contact us via [connect@cogitohr.com](mailto:connect@cogitohr.com)

Our team of HR & Talent experts are ready to help, visit [www.cogitohr.com](http://www.cogitohr.com) to discover more about our short-term, project-based and strategic HR services.

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