The State of HR Information Management

Strengthen a core responsibility with which HR still struggles

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary

Information management is one of the core accountabilities of HR, one that has become even more important as a result of the trend toward remote work arrangements. It's a particularly challenging topic because of the sensitivity of HR information. It's also challenging because of the sheer amount of information and the fact that it can be stored in many different places. Moreover, the automation of information management can help determine overall HR performance.

In this study, we examine how HR departments are handling the challenges of information management. In particular, we examine the difference between information management leaders and laggards.[1] By examining the differences between the two groups, we can gain insight into what practices may be most useful.

Key Findings from the Study

Major Finding **1**

There is a distinct need for improved information management.

- About half of respondents (48%) rate their information management at 3 or less on a 5-point scale, from 1 for poorly managed to 5 for excellently managed.

- Manual processes still dominate information management; in more than half of responding organizations, there are no information management processes that are mostly or completely automated.

- Lack of budget is the most common barrier to good information management, cited by 51% of organizations.

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[1] Information management leaders answered the question "How well managed is information throughout its lifecycle in your HR department?" as 4 or 5 (on a scale from 1: "Poorly managed" to 5: "Excellently managed") whereas information management laggards answered 1, 2 or 3 to the same question.

Major Finding 2

There are key advantages to good information management.

- More than three-quarters (77%) of respondents say freeing up time for HR is one of the advantages of information management technology.

- Nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents say information technology helps protect employees' sensitive information.

Major Finding 3

Security needs to be addressed in many organizations.

- Nearly a third of organizations (31%) say sensitive employee information could be made quite a bit more or much more secure.

- Only about two-thirds of organizations have retention rules for the most sensitive types of employee information such as performance appraisals, employee identifiers (e.g., name, address) and formal complaints. Even fewer have retention rules for other types of employee information such as immigration status, benefits usage, and assessment scores.

Major Finding 4

There is considerable variation in how often organizations conduct HR audits.

- More than one in five organizations (22%) do not audit HR at all.

- Just over a third of organizations (34%) do HR audits every year.

- More than one in three organizations (36%) do HR audits more than once a year.

Major Finding 5

Artificial intelligence (AI) is beginning to make an impact.

- Just over a quarter of organizations (27%) are making moderate or high use of AI in their HR departments today.

- More than half of respondents (58%) expect to make moderate or high use of AI over the next 18 months.

- Most organizations (65%) expect AI to have a positive impact on analytics and metrics in the next two years.

Major Finding 6

Remote work disrupts information management for some organizations but not others.

- During the pandemic, the increased number of remote work arrangements complicated accessing information and subsequent collaboration for 46% of respondents.

- When compared to smaller organizations, larger organizations had an easier time with remote work. Among organizations with 1,000 or more employees, only 36% agree or strongly agree remote work complicated accessing information, compared to 52% of organizations with fewer than 1,000 employees.

Major Finding 7

When compared to HR information management laggards, information management leaders are:

- almost four times as likely to say information management, in general, is mostly or completely automated

- almost three times as likely to have mostly or completely automated information maintenance

- almost three times as likely to have mostly or completely automated information preservation and deletion

- more than twice as likely to have quarterly HR audits

- more likely to dispose of sensitive employee information in a timely manner

- half as likely to say lack of ownership is a barrier to good information management

- half as likely to face a lack of support from their organization's leadership
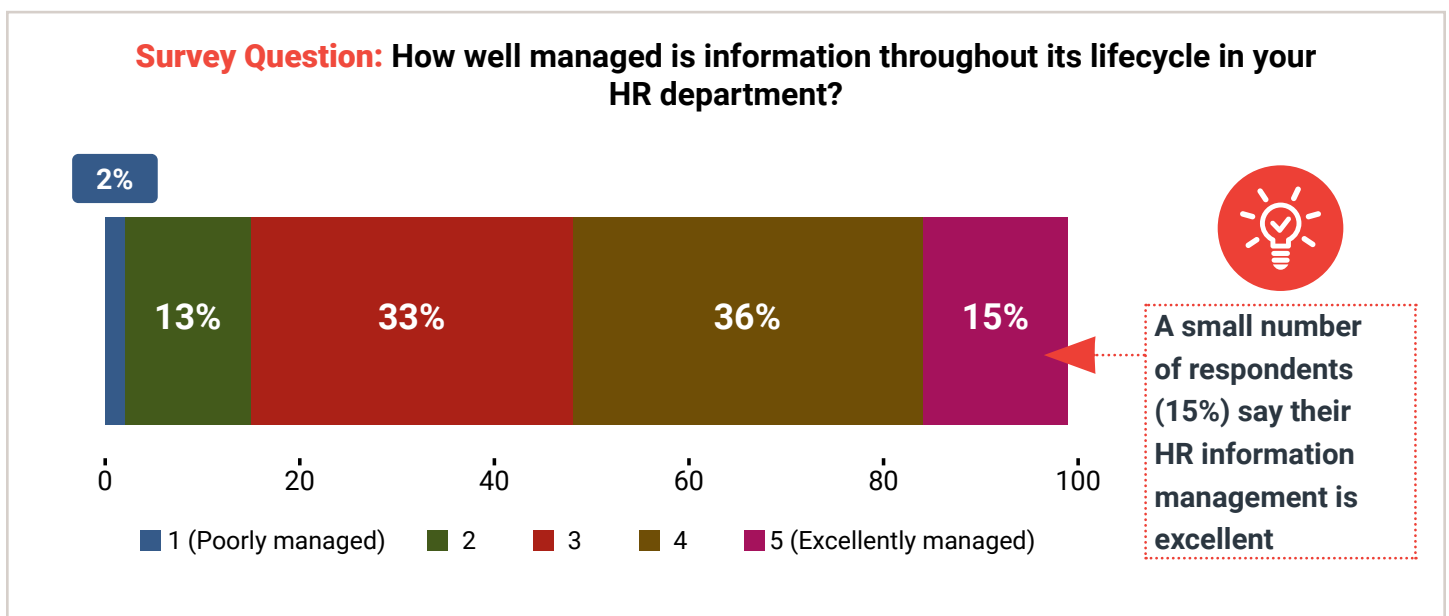
HR Information Management Trends

For the purposes of this survey and report, we defined information management in the following way:

Information management refers to how HR-related information is managed throughout its lifecycle. It includes the way employee and other work-related information is captured, stored, classified, managed, distributed, preserved, and deleted. This data can provide valuable input that supports critical day-to-day workflows and enables data-driven decision-making in HR. It includes the process of responding to information requests, managing archiving policies, and deleting older data as dictated by information management policies.

Finding: There is a distinct need for improved HR information management

There are few organizations (15%) where HR information is excellently managed. In fact, 48% score three or less on a five-point scale, indicating a need for considerable improvement in information management in many organizations.

Survey Question: How well managed is information throughout its lifecycle in your HR department?

2%

| 13% | 33% | 36% | 15% |

A small number of respondents (15%) say their HR information management is excellent

0   20   40   60   80   100

■ 1 (Poorly managed) ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 (Excellently managed)

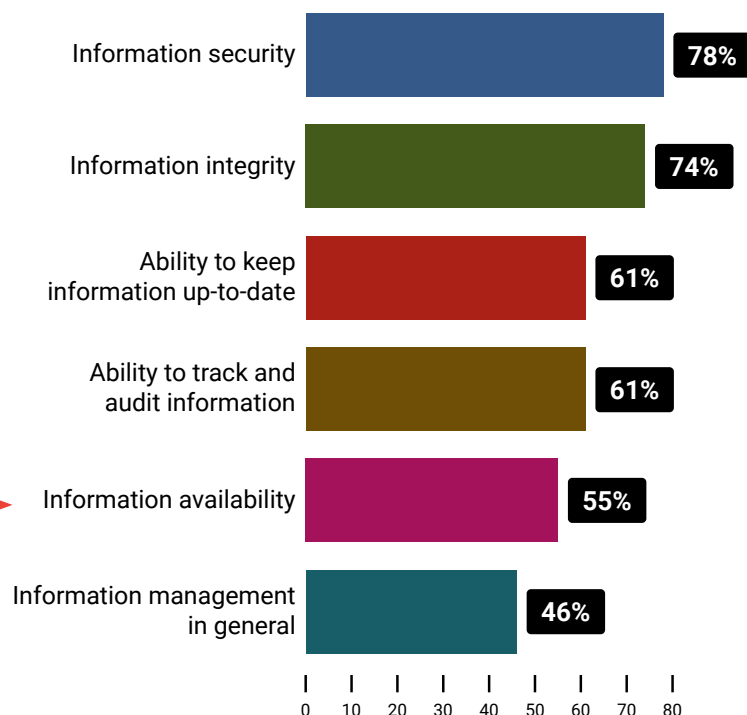Note: Numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Finding: Information security and integrity are the most important elements of HR information management

There are many very important outcomes that organizations want from HR information management. Of these, the two most widely cited are information security (78%) and information integrity (74%). If an issue is very important but not well managed—as our previous finding determined—then the organization needs to align its priorities and devote sufficient resources to fix the problem.

When we add together very important *and* important responses, the overall importance of these issues is even clearer. There is virtual consensus that all these issues are important or very important. Fully 95% say information security is important or very important, and even information availability is rated as important or very important by 86% of respondents.

More than half (55%) say information availability is very important to their HR department

Survey Question: Please rate the following attributes in terms of importance to your HR department:

Percent responding very important

Attribute	Percent
Information security	78%
Information integrity	74%
Ability to keep information up-to-date	61%
Ability to track and audit information	61%
Information availability	55%
Information management in general	46%

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80

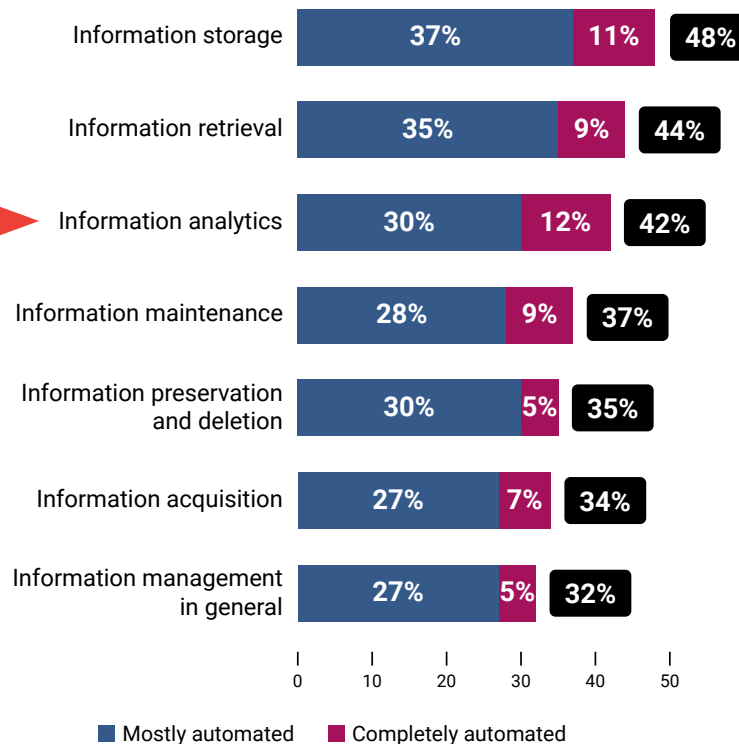# Finding: Manual processes still dominate HR information management

There are many advantages to automating aspects of HR information management. Done well, automation is more reliable and faster than processes requiring a lot of human intervention. Despite these advantages, none of the information management processes are mostly or completely automated in more than half of HR departments. The one process that comes closest is information storage, of which 48% of HR professionals say is mostly or completely automated.

The use of manual processes may explain why so many respondents give a low rating to the quality of their information management. We view automation as an area of opportunity for some organizations. Given the evolving tools that make automation easier, we expect to see the degree of automation increase in the coming years.

Forty-two percent of HR departments have mostly or completely automated information analytics

Survey Statement: Please rate the degree to which information management/administration processes are automated in your HR department:

Process	Mostly automated	Completely automated	Total
Information storage	37%	11%	48%
Information retrieval	35%	9%	44%
Information analytics	30%	12%	42%
Information maintenance	28%	9%	37%
Information preservation and deletion	30%	5%	35%
Information acquisition	27%	7%	34%
Information management in general	27%	5%	32%

■ Mostly automated   ■ Completely automated

Note: The options in this question included completely manual, mostly manual, about half-manual half-automated, mostly automated and completely automated.
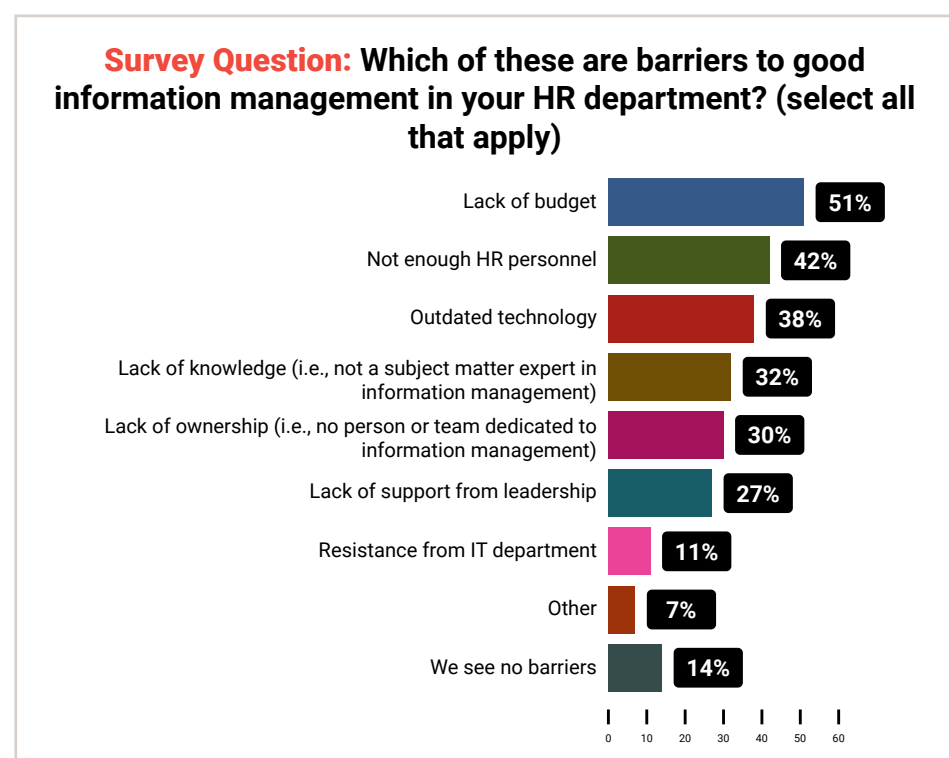
Finding: Lack of budget is the most commonly cited barrier to good HR information management

The large majority (86%) of responding HR professionals experience barriers to good HR information management. What are the primary hindrances? About half (51%) of respondents say that the lack of budget is a barrier to good information management. The next most frequently cited barrier is the lack of enough HR personnel (42%).

By contrast, only 32% cite lack of knowledge as a barrier. This suggests that many HR professionals know what to do but lack the budget or personnel to actually do it. Of course, a lack of automation may be the reason that there are not enough personnel to do information management well.

On a positive note, only a few respondents (11%) say resistance from the Information Technology (IT) department is a barrier. It appears in most organizations IT is aligned with HR in working for better information management. When possible, HR should partner with IT in getting the budget and personnel needed for good information management.

Survey Question: Which of these are barriers to good information management in your HR department? (select all that apply)

Barrier	Percentage
Lack of budget	51%
Not enough HR personnel	42%
Outdated technology	38%
Lack of knowledge (i.e., not a subject matter expert in information management)	32%
Lack of ownership (i.e., no person or team dedicated to information management)	30%
Lack of support from leadership	27%
Resistance from IT department	11%
Other	7%
We see no barriers	14%

The Role of Technology

Finding: More than three-quarters (77%) of respondents say freeing up time for HR is one of the advantages of HR information management technology

Virtually all (98%) of HR professionals see advantages in leveraging information management technology. Saving time, cited by 77% of the respondents, is a major advantage of information management technology. This is closely followed by protecting employees' sensitive information, cited by 74%. The fact that protecting sensitive information ranks so highly probably reflects both regulation (such as the General Data Protection Regulation) and frequent press reports on data piracy and information breaches.

Identifying trends in your employee data to influence decisions is cited as an advantage by only 57% of respondents. It appears that for most HR functions the main benefits from information technology at this point are just in handling data more reliably and efficiently rather than in pulling insights from that data. Given the demands of leaders for more analytics, however, HR may want to demonstrate that it can draw business value from data rather than just store it.

Survey Question: Which of these are advantages of using information management technology in your HR department? (select all that apply)

Category	Percentage
Make HR more efficient/free up time	77%
Protect employees' sensitive information	74%
Comply with regulations	68%
Increase access and visibility into employee information	67%
Simplify audit responses	64%
Identify trends in your employee data to influence decisions	57%
Reduce overall costs of providing HR servicess	50%
Support remote workforces more effectively	49%
Do not see any possible benefits	2%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

Nearly half of respondents (49%) see HR information management technology as playing a role in supporting remote workforces more successfully
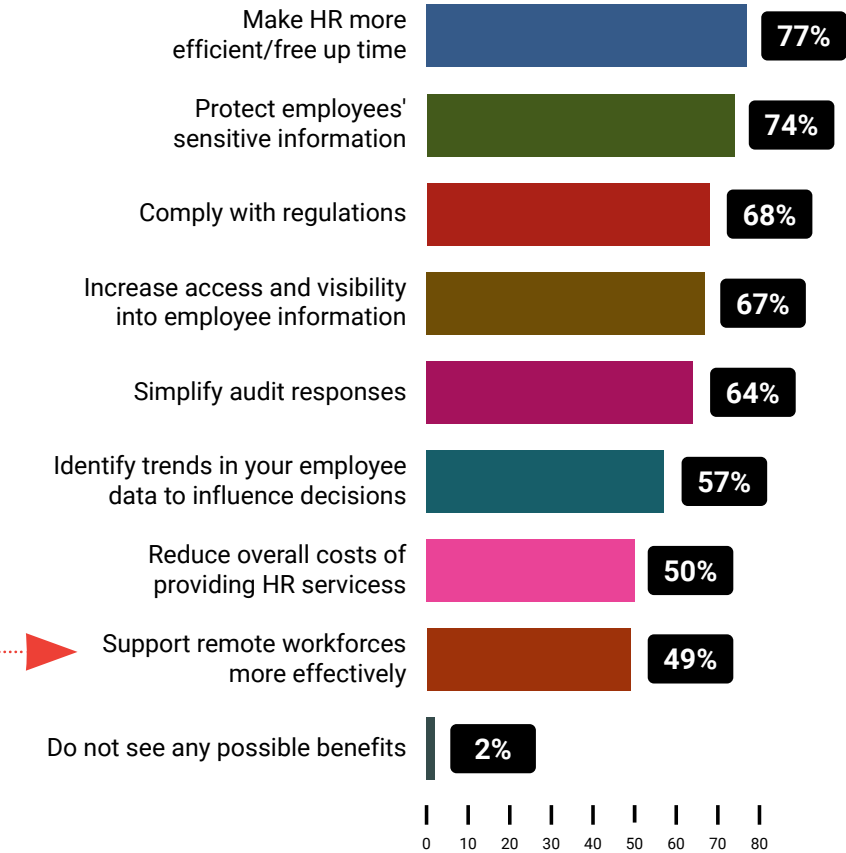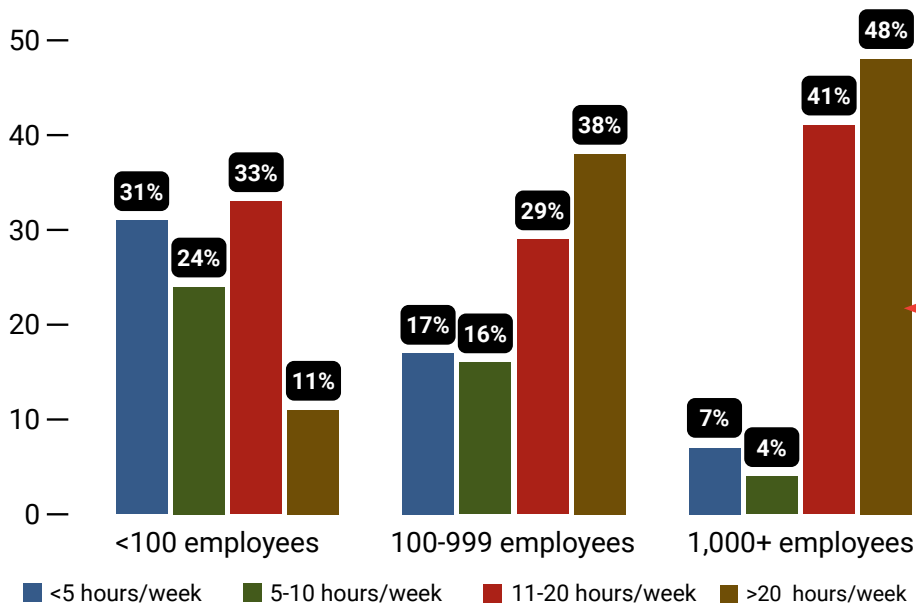
Finding: Most HR departments spend at least 5 hours per week on manual administrative tasks, and the number grows by size of organization

The amount of time spent on manual administrative tasks increases with the size of the organization, but even most small organizations spend at least 5 hours per week on such administration. While these are only rough estimates, they do convey the sense that a significant amount of time is taken by low-valued added administrative work. This suggests there is an opportunity for many organizations to increase automation.

Survey Question: On average, about how many hours per week does your HR department as a whole spend on manual administrative tasks? (please provide your best estimate)

<100 employees				100-999 employees				1,000+ employees			
31%	24%	33%	11%	17%	16%	29%	38%	7%	4%	41%	48%

■ <5 hours/week   ■ 5-10 hours/week   ■ 11-20 hours/week   ■ >20 hours/week

Nearly half of large organizations spend more than 20 hours per week on manual administrative tasks

Defining Organization Sizes

- Small organizations are those with fewer than 100 employees.
- Mid-sized organizations are those with between 100 and 999 employees.
- Large organizations are those with 1,000 or more employees.
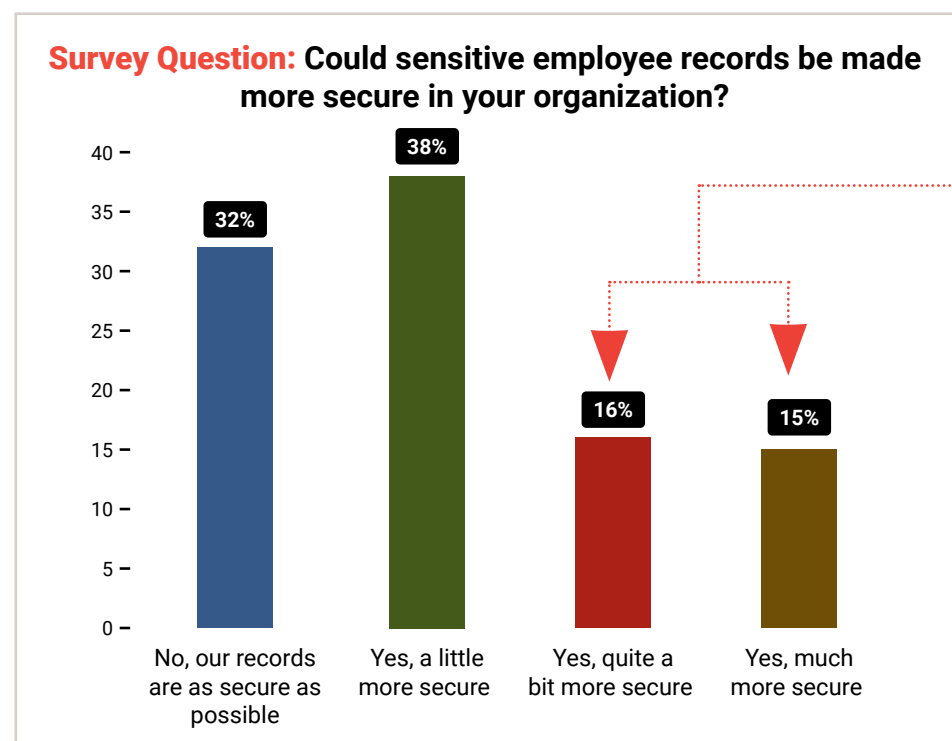
HR Information Security and Retention

Finding: More than two-thirds (69%) say their employee records could be made more secure

Most (69%) respondents say that employee records could be made more secure. In an era where cyber-hacking is commonplace, organizations are right to be concerned about the security of sensitive employee information. Almost a third of respondents (31%) indicate there are weaknesses in their security such that the information could be—and no doubt should be—made quite a bit more or much more secure. On a more positive note, a similar proportion (32%) believe their records are as secure as possible.

Organizations with insecure employee information should, at the very least, have a road map for shoring up their defenses. It may not be possible to go from insecure to secure in a few months, but over a span of a few years, every organization should be able to reassure employees that their sensitive data is safe.

About one-third of respondents (31%) say their employee records could be made quite a bit or much more secure

Survey Question: Could sensitive employee records be made more secure in your organization?

| Response	Percentage
No, our records are as secure as possible	32%
Yes, a little more secure	38%
Yes, quite a bit more secure	16%
Yes, much more secure	15%

Finding: Only 55% agree or strongly agree that HR disposes of sensitive data in a timely manner

Disposing of sensitive employee data is a problem for many organizations. Only 55% agree or strongly agree that they do so once it is no longer required by law, leaving almost half who are neutral or disagree. Nearly one in four organizations disagree or strongly disagree that they dispose of sensitive employee information in a timely manner.

Twenty-four percent disagree or strongly disagree that their HR department disposes of sensitive employee information in a timely manner

Survey Statement: In a timely manner, your HR department consistently disposes of sensitive employee information once it is no longer required by law.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
6%	18%	20%	37%	18%
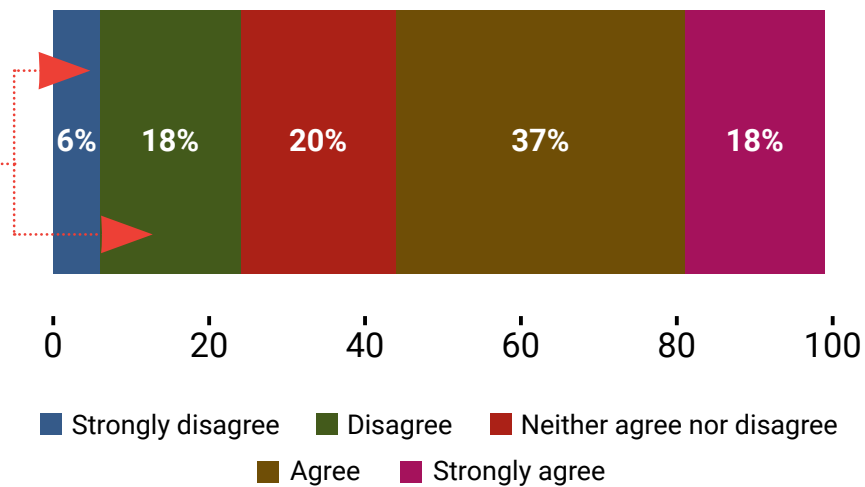
Finding: Only 66% of organizations have retention rules for employee identifiers

HR is the custodian of many different types of sensitive employee data such as performance appraisals, employee identifiers, formal complaints, and background screening data. Ideally, HR should have clear policies about how long this information should be retained and when it should be destroyed. For those four types of data, only about two-thirds of organizations have retention rules.

For other types of sensitive data, the situation is worse; 60% or fewer have retention rules about compensation, healthcare/medical data, immigration status, and benefits usage.

It's natural for HR to focus on acquiring information. However, an important element in information management is knowing how long to hold on to that acquired information. Therefore, an absence of retention-related rules in many organizations is troubling.
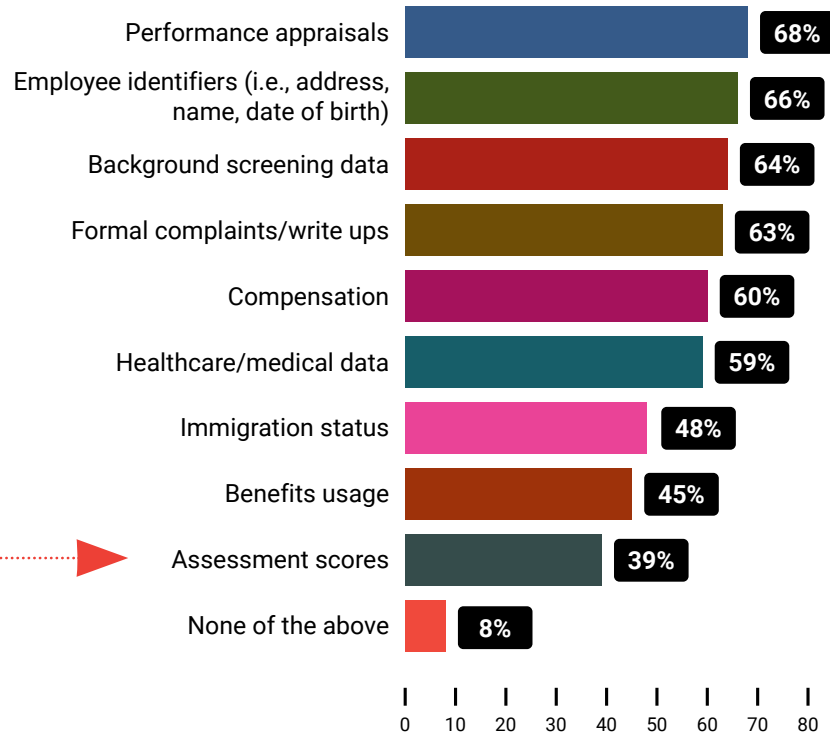
While one might expect large organizations to have better retention rules, there is in fact little difference based on the size of the company.

Well under half of respondents (39%) say their organizations have retention rules for assessment scores, something many would consider "sensitive" data

Survey Question: Employers often have rules for the retention of certain types of information. To which of the following types of information does your organization apply retention rules? (select all that apply)

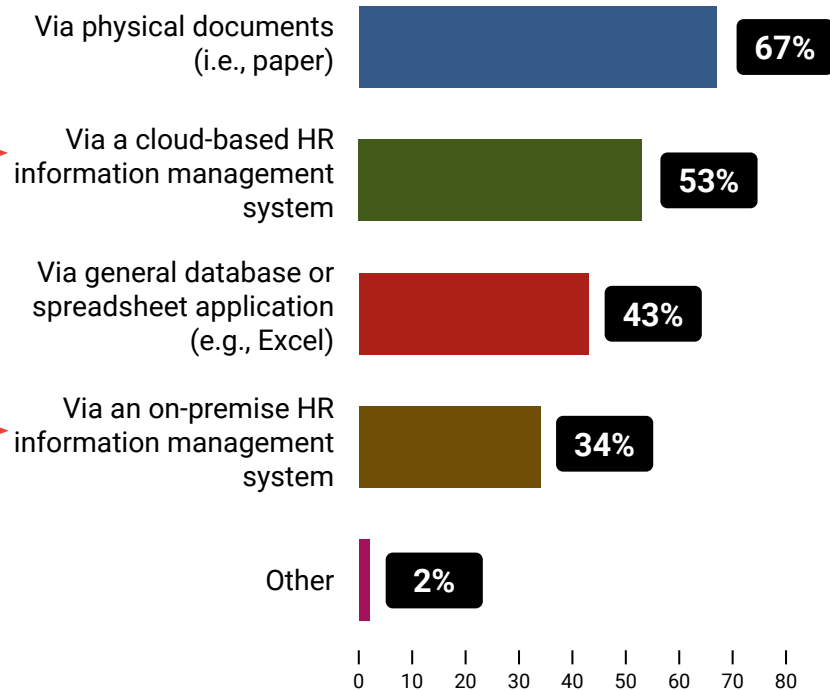| Category	Percentage
Performance appraisals	68%
Employee identifiers (i.e., address, name, date of birth)	66%
Background screening data	64%
Formal complaints/write ups	63%
Compensation	60%
Healthcare/medical data	59%
Immigration status	48%
Benefits usage	45%
Assessment scores	39%
None of the above	8%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

Finding: Paper remains an important means of storing employee records and is used by 67% of respondents

Organizations use multiple means of storing employee records and the most popular method remains paper (67%). Cloud-based storage is also popular, used by just over half of respondents (53%). It's notable that cloud-based systems are now substantially more popular than on-premise systems, used by 34% of respondents.

For storage purposes, organizations are more likely to use a cloud-based HR information management system than an on-premise one (53% vs. 34%)

Survey Question: How does your organization store employee records? (select all that apply)

Storage Method	Percentage
Via physical documents (i.e., paper)	67%
Via a cloud-based HR information management system	53%
Via general database or spreadsheet application (e.g., Excel)	43%
Via an on-premise HR information management system	34%
Other	2%

The Importance of Audits

Finding: More than one in five organizations (22%) do not audit their HR departments

Audits play an important role in information management because, if they are not conducted, then problems with data will be unquantified or even invisible. However, audits are time-consuming and may be seen as unpleasant in that they often turn up problems that HR then needs to fix. Perhaps for that reason, one in five respondents takes the risk of not doing audits at all.
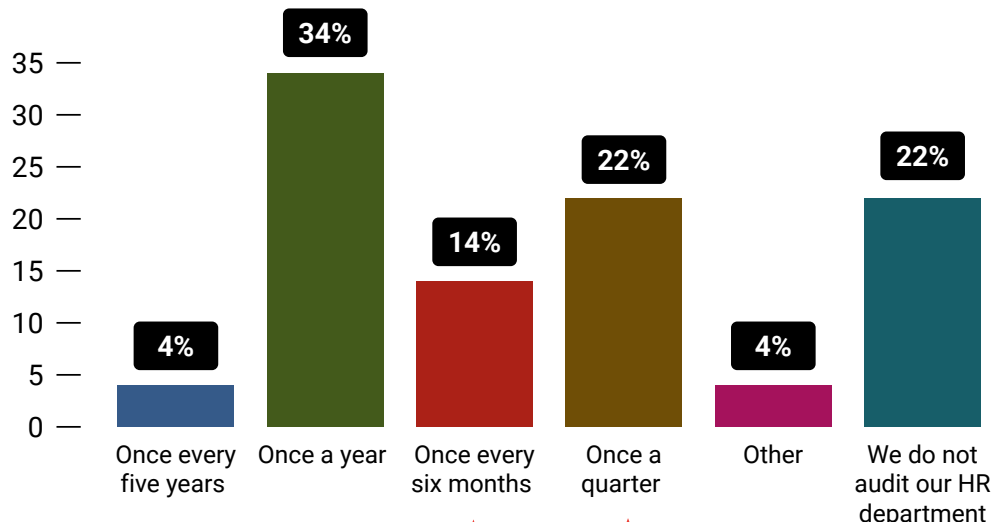
Many of the organizations that do not do audits are small organizations; 38% of organizations with fewer than 100 employees do not do audits, whereas only 14% of organizations with 1,000 or more employees fail to conduct audits.

The most common audit frequency is once a year (34%), though about the same percentage do it more frequently: that is, once every six months or once a quarter (36%). Many of the "Other" responses indicate that audits are done as needed.

Survey Question: In your organization, how frequently is your HR department audited?

More than one-third of organizations (36%) do HR audits more than once a year

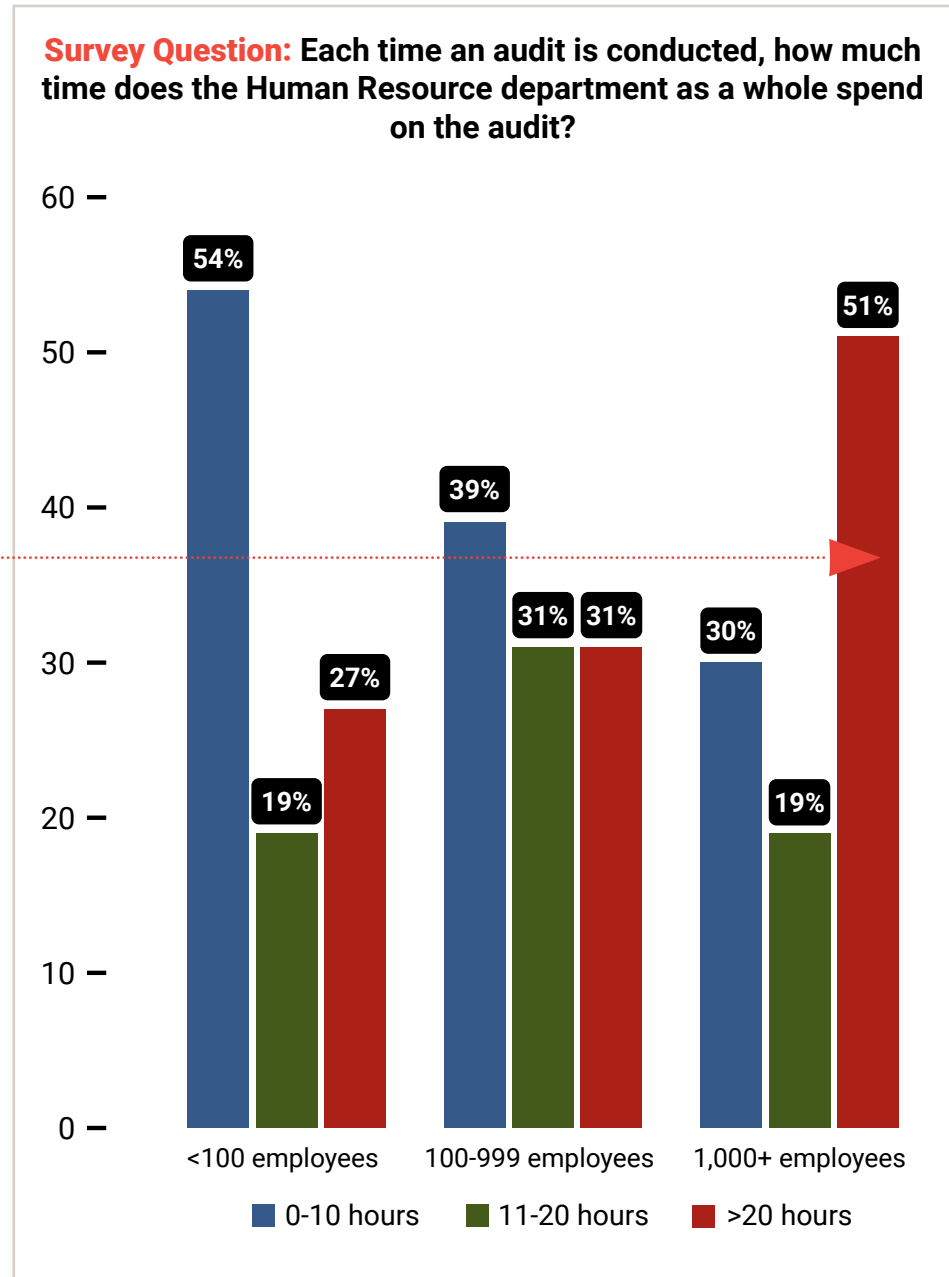| Response	Percentage
Once every five years	4%
Once a year	34%
Once every six months	14%
Once a quarter	22%
Other	4%
We do not audit our HR department	22%

Finding: Most organizations spend 11 or more hours each time they conduct an audit

The amount of time spent on audits varies considerably among organizations, even among organizations that are of similar size. This may be a result of some companies having more rigorous audit procedures. It could also be a result of better automation, enabling faster audits.

About half of large organizations spend more than 20 hours on each HR audit they conduct

Survey Question: Each time an audit is conducted, how much time does the Human Resource department as a whole spend on the audit?

	<100 employees	100-999 employees	1,000+ employees
0-10 hours	54%	39%	30%
11-20 hours	19%	31%	19%
>20 hours	27%	31%	51%

- 0-10 hours
- 11-20 hours
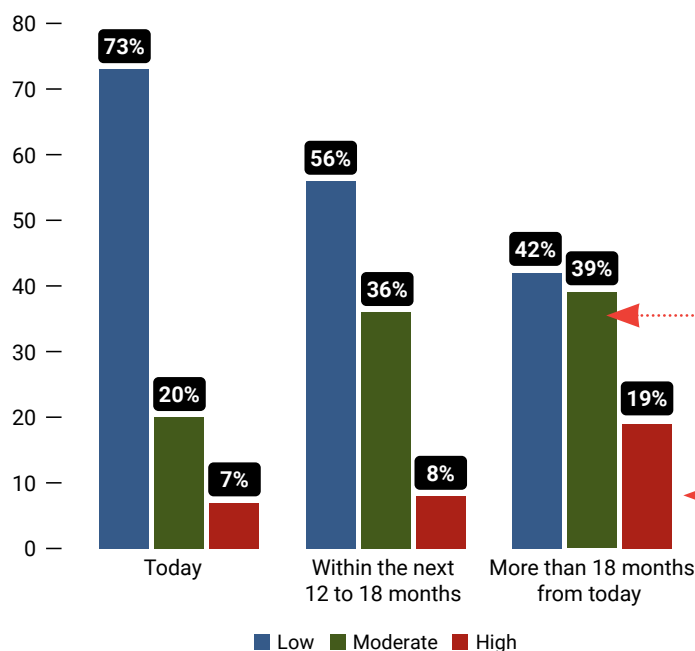- >20 hours

The Role of Artificial Intelligence

Finding: Just 27% of organizations are making moderate or high use of artificial intelligence (AI) in their HR departments today

We are beginning to see HR use more AI tools. Just over a quarter of organizations (27%) are making moderate or high use of AI in their HR departments today. This number is expected to grow rapidly. More than half of respondents (58%) say they will make moderate or high use of AI more than 18 months from today.

While there are a lot of unknowns around the use of AI in HR, there is no question that many organizations are looking at the opportunities associated with HR. In fact, most expect it won't be long before many of the opportunities come to fruition. HR leaders need to build the capability to assess the value of AI tools and implement them effectively.

More than half of respondents (58%) expect to make moderate or high use of AI 18 months from today

Survey Question: To what extent is your organization using artificial intelligence (AI) in the HR department today, and to what extent will AI be used in the future?

Finding: Most organizations (65%) expect AI to have a positive impact on analytics and metrics in the next two years
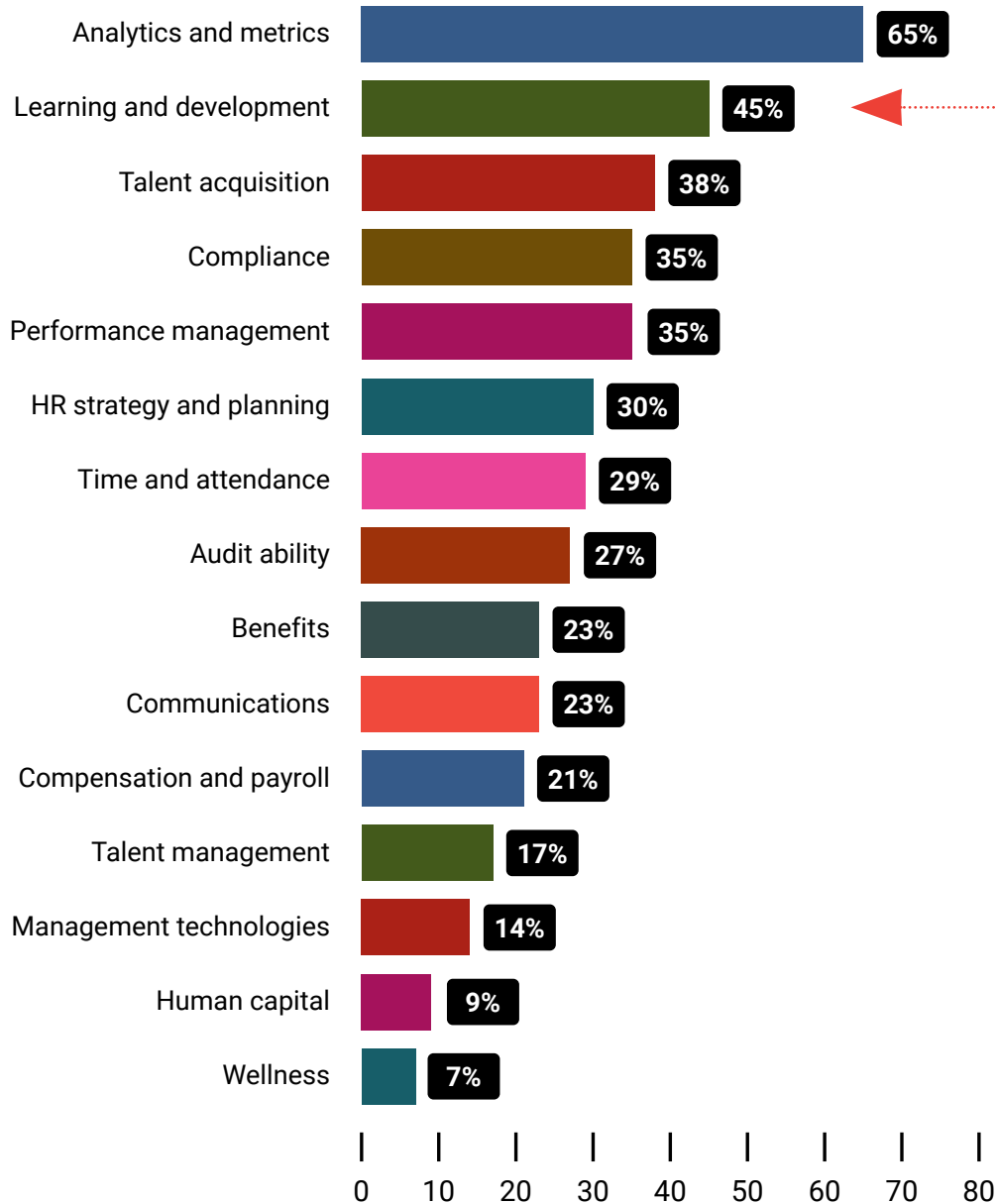
Where will AI have the greatest impact on HR? We asked HR professionals to select up to five areas where AI has the greatest potential to improve the HR function in the next two years. The top five choices are:

- analytics and metrics
- learning and development (L&D)
- talent acquisition
- compliance
- performance management

Of these, only analytics and metrics were selected by more than half of the respondents, suggesting that there is still no consensus on where AI will have the most positive impact. That said, the three most commonly chosen functions have typically been chosen in recent years, according to longitudinal research conducted by the HR Research Institute.

Survey Question: From the list below, select the five areas where you think AI has the greatest potential to improve the HR function in the next two years? (select up to five)

Category	Percentage
Analytics and metrics	65%
Learning and development	45%
Talent acquisition	38%
Compliance	35%
Performance management	35%
HR strategy and planning	30%
Time and attendance	29%
Audit ability	27%
Benefits	23%
Communications	23%
Compensation and payroll	21%
Talent management	17%
Management technologies	14%
Human capital	9%
Wellness	7%

Scale: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

Almost half of organizations (45%) expect AI to have a positive impact on learning and development in the next two years
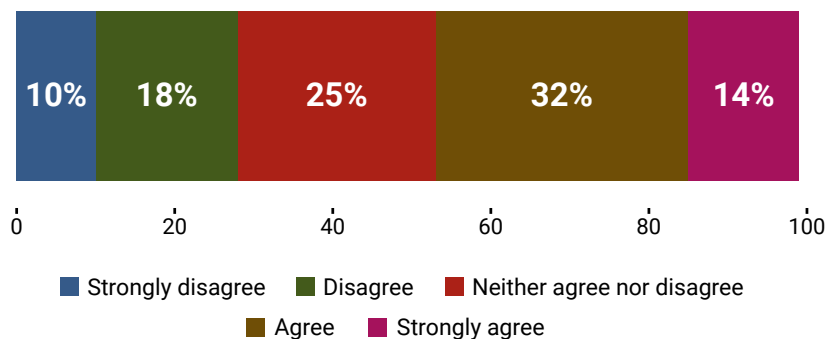
The Impact of Remote Work

Finding: Remote work has complicated accessing information and subsequent collaboration for 46% of respondents

For organizations previously inexperienced with remote work arrangements, the pandemic hindered many aspects of the operation. This includes HR information management. Accessing information and subsequent collaboration was complicated in almost half of responding organizations (46%). By way of contrast, only 28% of organizations— presumably ones that had some experience with remote work— disagree or strongly disagree that there were complications.

Larger organizations have had an easier time with remote work arrangements. Among organizations with 1,000 or more employees, only 36% agree or strongly agree remote work has complicated accessing information, compared to 52% of mid-sized organizations and small organizations.

There is no fundamental reason why information cannot be well-managed in a remote situation. However, it can take organizations some time to adapt to this way of working. Now that remote work has become more commonplace, most managers responsible for HR information should assume that they will need to support systems and processes that work in a remote environment.

Survey Question: **The rise of remote work due to the Covid-19 pandemic has complicated accessing information and subsequent collaborations.**

10%	18%	25%	32%	14%

0   20   40   60   80   100

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree
■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Factors That Distinguish Good HR Information Management

To better understand what leads to great information management in HR, we divided the survey respondents into two cohorts:

- **HR information management leaders:** Those who answered the question "How well managed is information throughout its lifecycle in your HR department?" as 4 or 5 on a scale from 1 (representing poorly managed) to 5 (representing excellently managed).

- **HR information management laggards:** Those who answered 1, 2, or 3 to the same question.

Of course, correlation is not the same as causation. While we cannot state that any particular practice will definitely lead to a successful HR information management, we do see intriguing relationships that might result in greater success.

Finding: HR information management leaders are far ahead of laggards on all aspects of automation

When it comes to automation, the difference between HR information management leaders and laggards is stark. Compared with information management laggards, information management leaders are:
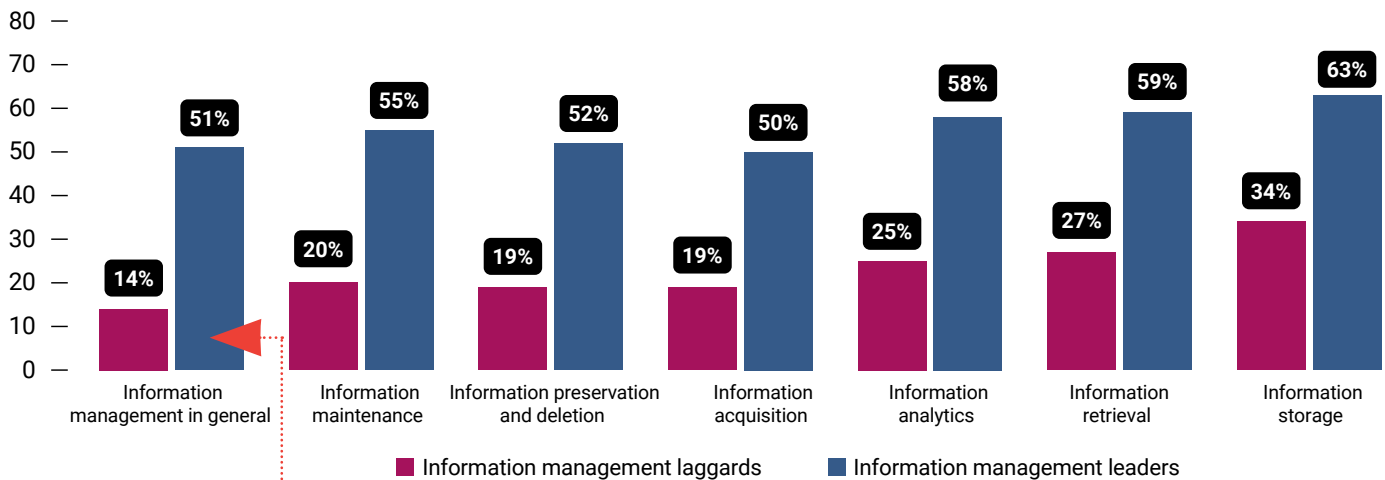
- almost four times as likely to say information management, in general, is mostly or completely automated

- almost three times as likely to have mostly or completely automated information *maintenance*

- almost three times as likely to have mostly or completely automated information *preservation and deletion*

- more than twice as likely to have mostly or completely automated information *acquisition*

- more than twice as likely to have mostly or completely automated information *analytics*

- more than twice as likely to have mostly or completely automated information **_retrieval_**
- almost twice as likely to have mostly or completely automated information **_storage_**

This data indicates there is little doubt that automation can be a key factor in effective HR information management. Therefore, creating this capability may be a useful strategy for HR information management laggards.

Survey Statement: Please rate the degree to which information management/administration processes are automated in your HR department:

Percent answering mostly or completely automated

	Information management laggards	Information management leaders
Information management in general	14%	51%
Information maintenance	20%	55%
Information preservation and deletion	19%	52%
Information acquisition	19%	50%
Information analytics	25%	58%
Information retrieval	27%	59%
Information storage	34%	63%

Note: Possible responses to this question included completely manual, mostly manual, about half-manual half-automated, mostly automated and completely automated

HR information management leaders are almost four times as likely as laggards to say information management, in general, is mostly or completely automated

Finding: HR information management laggards are twice as likely as information management leaders to cite lack of budget as a barrier to good information management
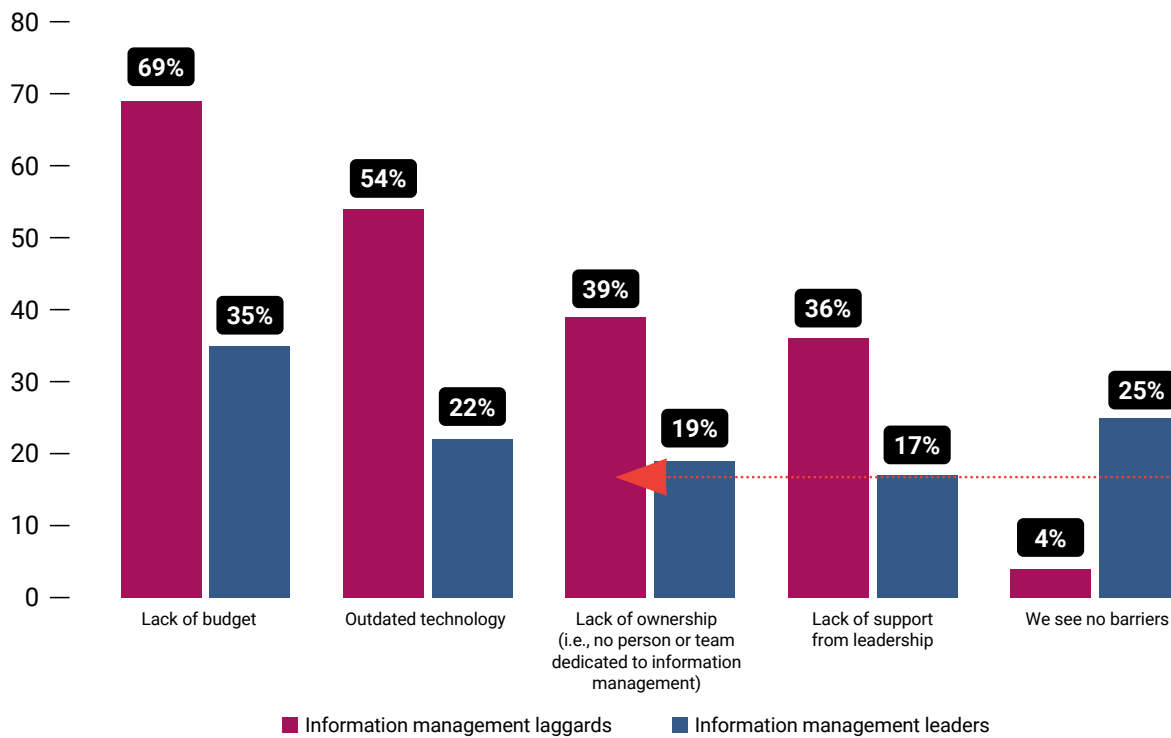
Four barriers to good information management afflict information management laggards much more often than information management leaders. These laggards are:

- twice as likely to lack support from leadership

- twice as likely to face a lack of budget

- more than twice as likely to suffer from outdated technology

- more than twice as likely to be held back by a lack of ownership

The first three are closely related. Lack of support from leadership leads to lack of budget which leads to outdated technology. The last factor, lack of ownership, is more interesting. It is possible that without someone owning HR information management, leadership will be unaware of its importance and no one will be championing investment in this area.

The takeaway is that HR information management might need a champion. If the head of HR doesn't want to take this on, then they need to find someone with the enthusiasm, expertise, and influencing skills to be that champion.

Survey Question: Which of these are barriers to good information management in your HR department? (select all that apply)

Bar chart showing barriers to good information management:

Barrier	Information management laggards	Information management leaders
Lack of budget	69%	35%
Outdated technology	54%	22%
Lack of ownership (i.e., no person or team dedicated to information management)	39%	19%
Lack of support from leadership	36%	17%
We see no barriers	4%	25%

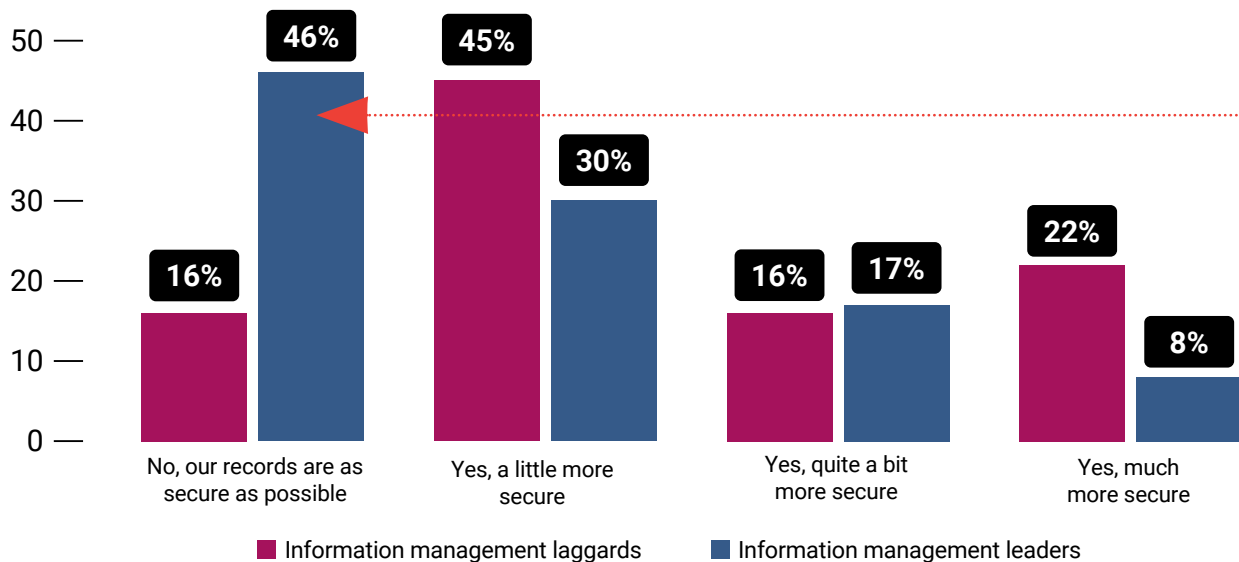■ Information management laggards ■ Information management leaders

HR information management laggards are twice as likely as information management leaders to say lack of ownership is a barrier to good information management

Finding: Twenty-two percent of HR information management laggards say sensitive employee records could be made much more secure

One issue that should grab the attention of leadership is the lack of security of employee records. Almost one-quarter of HR information management laggards say this is a problem and that their records could be made much more secure (i.e., not just "a little more secure"). Where this is true, HR professionals should consider documenting the problem in a way that makes the risk of poor information security clear to management. At the same time, they should provide a practical set of steps to improve security.

Survey Question: Could sensitive employee records be made more secure in your organization?

Response	Information management laggards	Information management leaders
No, our records are as secure as possible	16%	46%
Yes, a little more secure	45%	30%
Yes, quite a bit more secure	16%	17%
Yes, much more secure	22%	8%

HR information management leaders are almost three times as likely as laggards to say their records are as secure as possible

Finding: More frequent audits may lead to improved HR information management

HR information management leaders are more than twice as likely as laggards to have HR audits once a quarter (30% vs. 14%). While most information management leaders do not do audits quarterly, the difference between leaders and laggards on this measure draws attention to the fact that audits can play a role in promoting improved information management. In the absence of an audit, complaints about information management are mostly hearsay. With audits, problems are quantified and documented. The advantage of quarterly rather than annual audits is that it creates an expectation that some issues will be improved by the next quarter, not just the next year. We think this can generate ongoing momentum for improvement.

HR information management leaders are more than twice as likely as laggards to have quarterly HR audits

Survey Question: **In your organization, how frequently is your HR department audited?**

30%

14%

Once a quarter

■ Information management laggards
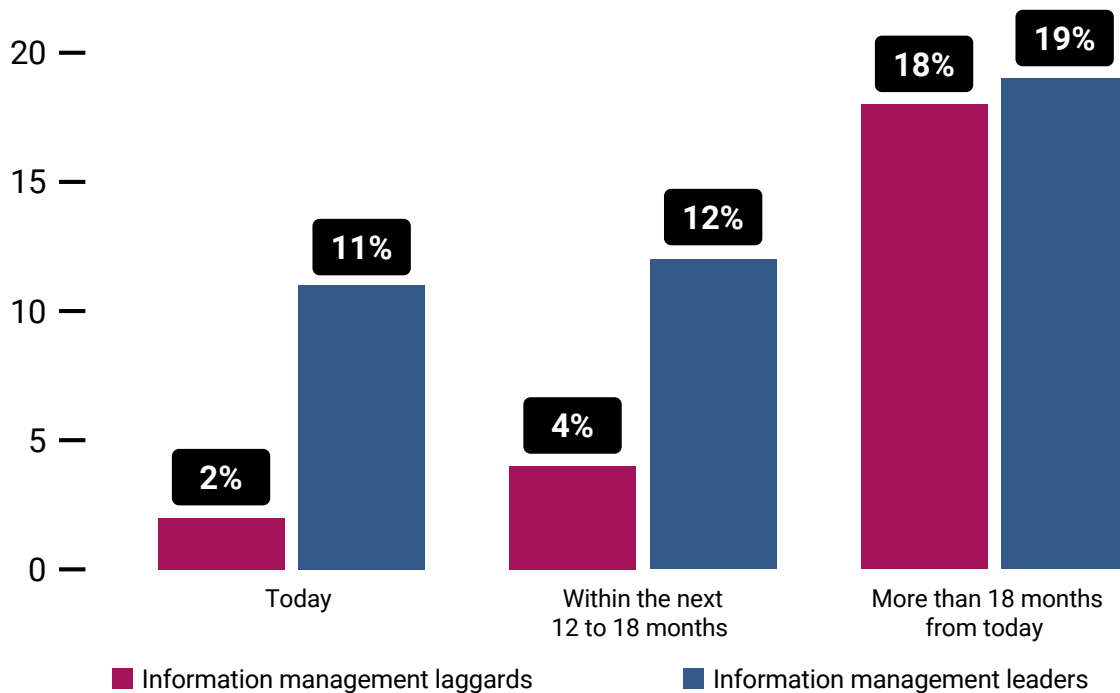■ Information management leaders
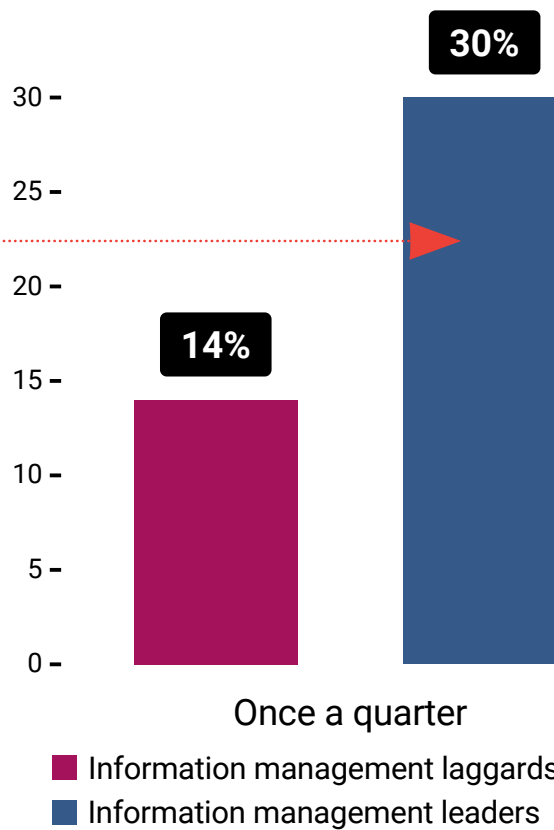
Finding: HR information management leaders are far more likely than laggards to be early adopters of AI

HR information management leaders tend to be more enthusiastic about AI. Nearly a quarter (23%) of HR information management leaders have already adopted AI to a high extent or plan to do so in the next 18 months. In contrast, just 6% of laggards say the same. As AI becomes more powerful, information management leaders could extend their lead over the laggards in terms of HR information management quality.

Survey Question: To what extent is your organization using artificial intelligence (AI) in the HR department today, and to what extent will AI be used in the future?

Percent responding high extent

	Today	Within the next 12 to 18 months	More than 18 months from today
Information management laggards	2%	4%	18%
Information management leaders	11%	12%	19%

■ Information management laggards   ■ Information management leaders

Twenty-three percent of HR information management leaders have already adopted AI to a high extent or plan to in the next 18 months

Finding: HR information management leaders are more likely than laggards to have handled the rise of remote work easily

When faced with the unforeseen disruptions caused by remote work during the pandemic, HR information management leaders have fared better than laggards. Unlike laggards, fewer than half of HR information management leaders agree or strongly agree that the pandemic complicated accessing information and subsequent collaboration. This is a reminder that good processes can pay off when facing unexpected challenges.

HR information management laggards are more likely than HR information management leaders to agree or strongly agree that remote work complicated accessing information

Survey Statement: **The rise of remote work due to the Covid-19 pandemic has complicated accessing information and subsequent collaborations.**

Percent responding agree or strongly agree

	Laggards	Leaders
	53%	39%

Information management laggards — 53%
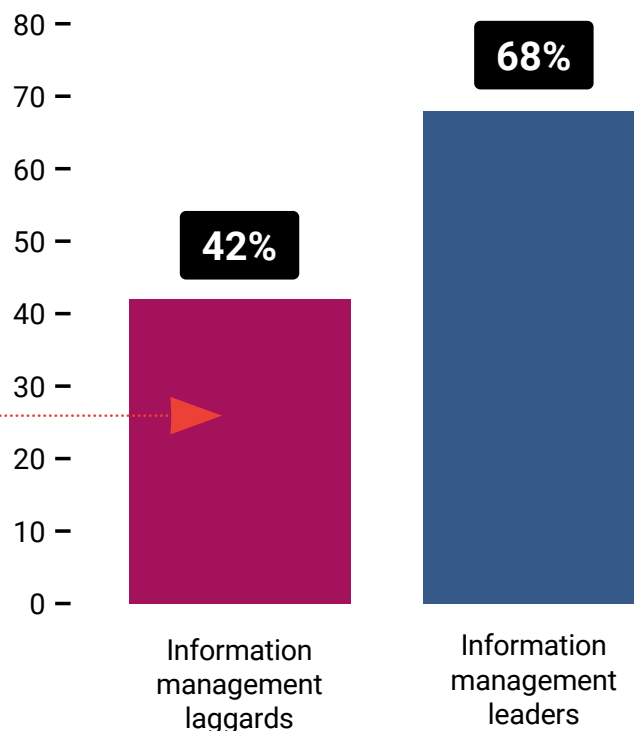Information management leaders — 39%
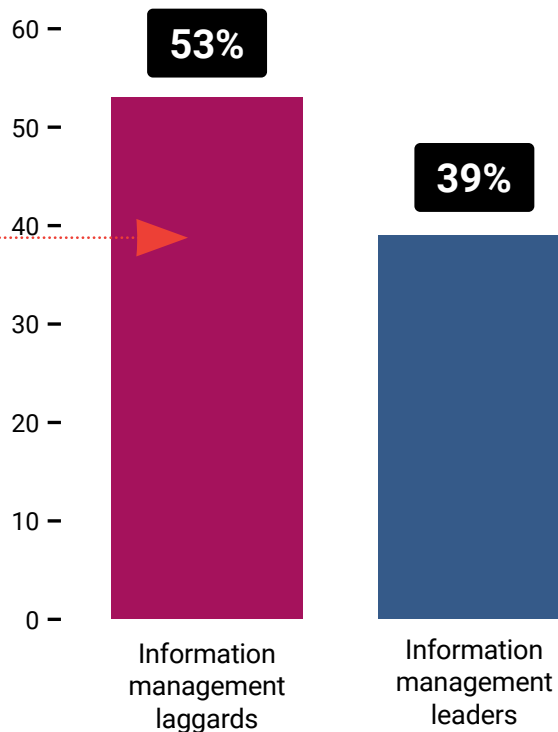
Finding: HR information management leaders are more likely to dispose of sensitive employee information once it is no longer needed

How employee information is disposed of (once it is no longer required by law) is a good indicator of how disciplined HR information management is. HR information management leaders are considerably more likely than laggards to say they consistently dispose of sensitive employee information once it is no longer required by law: 68% versus 42%.

Survey Statement: In a timely manner, your HR department consistently disposes of sensitive employee information once it is no longer required by law.

Percent responding agree or strongly agree

Only 42% of laggards agree that they dispose of sensitive employee information in a timely manner

	42%	68%
	Information management laggards	Information management leaders

Key Takeaways

Key Takeaway 1

Clarify ownership of HR information management. HR information management is unlikely to improve unless it has a clear owner. Given the widely recognized importance of information management, it should be apparent to leadership that if there is not a clear owner then that needs to be addressed.

Key Takeaway 2

Start with audits. Audits are the best tool to assess the state of HR information management and bring that to the attention of leadership. In the absence of the hard data provided by an audit, complaints about insecurity or overly manual processes or data integrity will just be seen as anecdotal complaints. Audits set the stage for change.

Key Takeaway 3

Leverage audits for leadership support and budget. If an audit finds significant problems in HR information management, then HR is in a position to ask for the budget or personnel needed to fix the problem.

Key Takeaway 4

Pay special attention to the security of sensitive data. If HR finds leadership is suggesting HR fix information management problems with no additional resources, then it can be helpful to point out concerns about the security of sensitive data. This is a "must-have" not a "nice to have" feature and will dispel any wishful thinking that HR can solve information management problems in its spare time.

Key Takeaway 5

Don't overlook the need for a data retention and disposal policy. It's easy to overlook the need for data retention policies, but they are not usually that difficult to craft or implement—especially if you have automated processes. If you don't know what retention policies are appropriate then consult an expert.

Key Takeaway **6**

Have a roadmap for technology and automation. Automation plays a big role in efficient and effective information management. While HR may not have the resources to do all the automation it would like all at once, it should at least have a roadmap for the next three to five years on how it will bring in the needed technology.

Key Takeaway **7**

Build the capability to assess AI tools. AI tools are increasingly becoming important in HR information management. Unfortunately, few HR departments have experience in assessing the value and risks of a given AI tool. HR needs to build the capability to assess AI tools, partly by hiring or partnering with people with experience in this area and partly by piloting some tools to get hands-on experience.

About Iron Mountain

Iron Mountain Incorporated (NYSE: IRM), founded in 1951, is the global leader for storage and information management services. Trusted by more than 225,000 organizations around the world, and with a real estate network of more than 90million square feet across more than 1,450 facilities in approximately 50 countries, Iron Mountain stores and protects billions of valued assets, including critical business information, highly sensitive data, and cultural and historical artifacts. Providing solutions that include information management, digital transformation, secure storage, secure destruction, as well as data centers, cloud services and art storage and logistics, Iron Mountain helps customers lower cost and risk, comply with regulations, recover from disaster, and enable a digital way of working. Visit http://www.ironmountain.com for more information.

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