



2024 YEAR END TALENT TRENDS & IMPLICATIONS

Specializing in recruiting and developing leaders for organizations that feed the world, [Kincannon & Reed](#) places leaders who drive innovation and growth across the agriculture and food value chain. The [K&R EDGE Leadership Solutions](#) team specifically consults with organizations to develop high-performing leaders and foster sustainable business growth.

TODAY'S EVOLVING TALENT MARKET

Addressing global food security through sustainable practices has highlighted critical leadership challenges. While technology, capital, and policy support are essential, effective leadership remains the linchpin for solving future food and agriculture challenges. Our client work has revealed key themes and implications for 2025:

MOVING TARGETS	IMPLICATIONS
The food & ag sectors are experiencing significant technological advancements and digital transformation, improving efficiency and increasing transparency within the value chain.	New roles being created and an increased demand for leadership with advanced technical skills provides an opportunity for organizations to attract new individuals and consider recruitment from outside the sector.
AI represents both a significant opportunity and a challenge for the talent landscape.	Organizations must strategically adapt to leverage AI's potential while addressing its risks, ensuring their leaders are prepared for an AI-driven future.
Cybercriminals are leveraging advanced technologies to create more complex and damaging attacks, while the proliferation of smart devices and remote work has significantly expanded opportunity for attacks.	Organizations face a rising demand for highly skilled Chief Information and Security Officers and Security Architects to manage complex systems, the implementation of security strategies and expanding budgetary requirements.
Willingness to relocate was cut in half during the pandemic and has not rebounded.	Organizations will need to consider remote and hybrid work options to appeal to highly desirable candidates.
Economic uncertainty & geopolitical tensions continue to cause disruptions and volatility in the market.	Businesses must consider human capital strategies in their risk management and contingency plans.
Organizations are facing difficulties in finding qualified candidates due to skill shortages and rapidly changing skill requirements.	Organizations may need to broaden their recruitment strategies and consider non-traditional candidates in addition to investing in development programs.
Despite its critical importance, succession planning hasn't been prioritized making the process increasingly difficult, especially as businesses face an impending succession boom.	Organizations must recognize the urgency of developing comprehensive succession strategies to ensure future success and retain high performers.
Employee expectations for intangibles such as flexible working conditions and purpose-driven work are evolving.	Retaining high performers requires top quality management, growth opportunities and an inclusive, innovative culture.

THE NEW LEADERSHIP PARADIGM

Kincannon & Reed recently partnered with the [Association of Executive Search Consultants \(AESC\)](#), the standard-setting association for the executive search and leadership consulting industry, to shed light on the latest trends in talent management.

The survey* uncovered insights that will help inform 2025 human capital strategies. From the growing importance of emotional intelligence to culture as a competitive advantage, these trends are reshaping effective leadership today.

Notably, in the war for top talent, purpose and paycheck stand on equal footing. For **32% of respondents, both purpose-driven mission and competitive compensation** ranked in the top key drivers impacting leadership attraction and retention. Successful organizations will continue to rely on a trusted recruitment process that prioritizes transparency and alignment between company values and candidate expectations.

While we eagerly await the AESC's full report, our findings at right provide a sneak peek into the future of talent management.

Amid the evolving landscape of talent trends, one thing is clear: **2025's strategies need to be different.** Organizations must reimagine their approach to talent management, cultural cultivation, and strategic execution. The future belongs to those who can artfully blend emotional intelligence with operational excellence, purpose with performance, and agility with innovation.

The question is not whether to adapt but how quickly and effectively we can evolve.



Our survey respondents identified three top strengths essential for leaders in the current business landscape. Today's complexities call for a nuanced blend of **emotional intelligence (24%)** and **results-driven leadership (20%)**, which is consistent with the AESC's global data. The **ability to thrive in ambiguity (16%)** has emerged as a key characteristic of effective leadership, reflecting the volatile nature of global markets.

In the talent marketplace, culture has emerged as the invisible hand that can make or break an organization's ability to attract and retain top-tier talent.

48%

38%

According to our respondents, **trust and mutual respect (48%)** form the bedrock of high-performing cultures, followed closely by **effective communication and collaboration (both at 38%)**.

Our respondents identified the top three biggest areas of opportunity when looking ahead: **operational efficiency, product innovation and the ability to adapt to market shifts.** Organizations must strike a delicate balance between optimization and innovation to stay ahead of the curve.

48%

Operational efficiency

43%

Product innovation

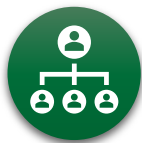
27%

Ability to adapt to market shifts

*Survey Conducted by AESC with 1,737 executive respondents in June-September 2024; K&R's data-set included 175 responses

K&R EXPERIENCE

The food and ag industry continues to face a leadership deficit despite more talent being in the market. Tomorrow's industry leaders, and our 2024 placements, were sourced from around the globe for many executive functions.



Functions Recruited

Nearly one third of our search engagements in 2024 were for Chief Executive Officer/ President/ GM roles, with Operations and Commercial roles rounding out our top three functions.



Startup Recruitment

Investments in food and agriculture bring demand for innovative leaders. Over 20% of our search engagements this year were with private equity or venture capital backed companies.



Compensation Insights

Executive compensation in these sectors is multifaceted, and we're seeing performance incentives becoming increasingly significant as companies navigate economic pressures.