

# The Future of Attraction, Motivation and Retention: A Literature Review

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WORLDATEWORK

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

This new column in *workspan* will feature cutting-edge ideas, findings, predictions, survey results and suggestions about how attracting, motivating and retaining employees will be done in the future. If you would like to contribute a column, e-mail Editor Jean Christofferson, [jchristofferson@worldatwork.org](mailto:jchristofferson@worldatwork.org).

**E**arlier this year, members of the WorldatWork professional development team embarked on a literature review to find out more about two specific topics:

1. Critical environmental circumstances that will affect the ability of organizations to attract, motivate and retain workers
2. Implications for the practices and professions associated with attracting, motivating and retaining workers.

This article details some of the findings from the literature review.

## The Review Process

The first phase of the project involved gathering resources. Primary criteria for inclusion included the credibility of the author and timeliness (materials written within the past five years were preferred). The team looked primarily to the work of authors specifically concerned with future trends.

A list of themes was then developed so individuals could document their findings in a consistent manner.

Criteria for inclusion of a theme included: consistent recurrence of the theme throughout the materials the team was reading and applicability to the stated purpose of the project (e.g., identifying critical environmental circumstances and implications that will affect attraction, motivation and retention).

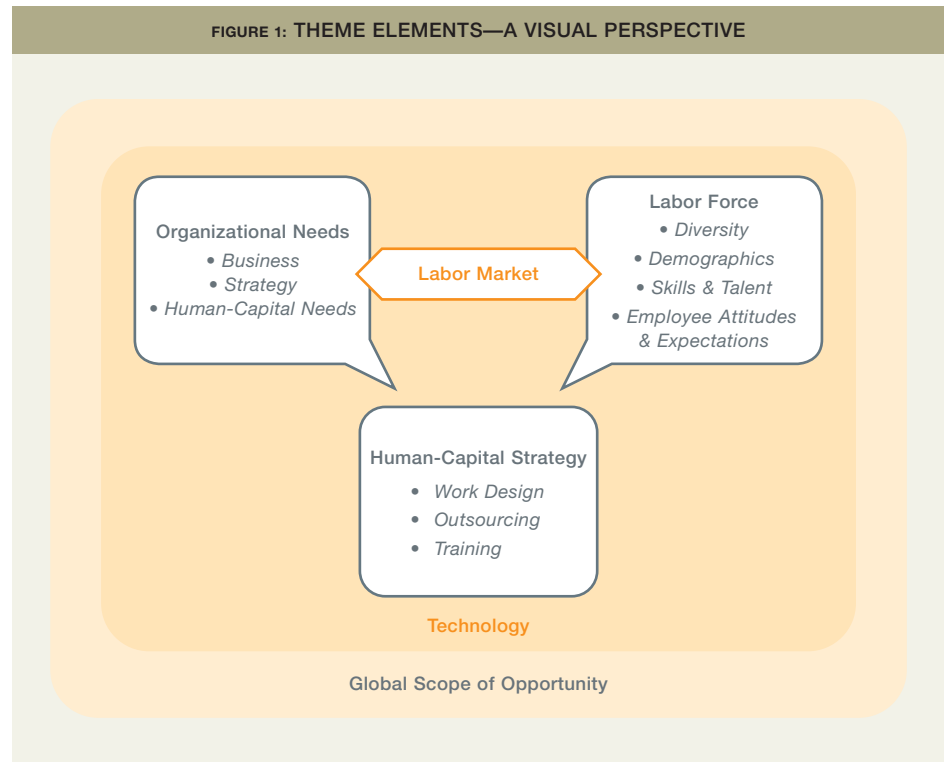
A graphic interpretation of the team's "world view" was developed to help illustrate the relationships between themes. Figure 1 on page 10 represents theme elements that developed during the literature review, and which affect the ability of organizations to attract, motivate and retain workers.

In an environment where the global scope of opportunity and technology are all-pervasive influences, an organization's interaction with a rapidly changing labor force will result in dramatic transformations in human-capital strategy, work design, outsourcing and training.

## The Global Scope of Opportunity

Originally, the team identified a theme called "globalization." It soon became

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apparent that many of the review documents were taking the term “globalization” for granted. It was difficult to ascertain whether all of the authors were talking about the same thing. Some authors took the term to mean the mobility of workers, some used it to mean global operations and some used the term to indicate global economic systems. The review team came across the term “global scope of opportunity,” which suggests a broad perspective that, hopefully, will prevent readers from defaulting to a limited view of globalization.

In every book or article the team reviewed, the global scope of opportunity was a given. The futurist authors pointed to an all-pervasive, inexorable integration of markets and technologies that will enable individuals, corporations and nations to interact more quickly and easily than ever before.

### **Technology**

As with the global scope of opportunity, there was consensus about technology. All of the futurists predicted a world of astonishingly advanced, omnipresent technology. The technological revolution has reached around the world, with important consequences for organizations, governments and the labor force. And while many people marvel at the speed of advances made over the past few decades, the futurists all agree that the end of the exponential leaps in technology is nowhere in sight. Not only will the world be connected, it will be intensely networked.

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In this environment, the organization, which represents demand, meets the labor force, which is supply, and the space of their negotiation is the labor market. Where organizational need meets availability of talent (or lack of), things get interesting. The resulting evolution of human-capital strategy, work design, outsourcing and training will change the face of attraction, motivation and retention forever.

## Predictions

The team compiled eight predictions about critical environmental circumstances that will affect the ability of organizations to attract, motivate and retain workers in the future. Each of the main themes represented in Figure 1 has an associated prediction.

Identifying the eight predictions was not difficult. Initially, the team was concerned that the reading materials would yield a chaotic perspective. But as it turned out, there was remarkable consensus among the futurist authors. It was also noted that what the team was reading about as “the future” might actually be the present for some organizations, particularly more progressive ones. Following are the eight predictions:

1. The successful organization of the future will excel at acquiring, organizing and strategically deploying global resources.
2. There will be increased global connectivity, integration and interdependence in the economic, social, technological, cultural and political spheres.
3. Technology will advance at an even more rapid pace than in previous decades.

Job  
enrichment,  
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and career  
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4. There will be continuous, dramatic changes in the labor force.
5. Human capital will become an even greater source of value.
6. The way work is organized and performed will evolve and change continuously.
7. Outsourcing will increase.
8. Self-paced, self-directed individualized virtual learning will dominate business training.

## Implications

The second part of the literature review involved identifying the implications for the practices and professions associated with attracting, motivating and retaining workers. Following are some examples of these implications.

### Organizational Needs

Recruitment and retention will be part of a business' competitive edge in a

hypercompetitive market. In the near future, an organization's ability to attract, motivate and retain will emerge as the primary indicator of fiscal performance and survival. To that end, given the diverse workforce, organizations will be offering more variety in rewards as they try to access the best and the brightest in a seller's market.

### Global Scope of Opportunity

Sourcing talent, like everything else in the future, will be a global affair. The global scope of opportunity will involve companies in many complex systems: economic, social, technological and political. Still, an organization's most important strategic concern will be people. People issues will be at the top of the agenda for companies interested in growing, being innovative, being productive and being competitive.

### Technology

All-pervasive technology will be a double-edge sword: while it will be easier to work when and where one wants to, it may be harder to get away from the job. The futurists see technology deeply integrated into the workplace and in people's lives—at work and at home.

### Labor Force

With an increasingly diverse workforce, no single reward element will be a value driver. Job enrichment, flexibility and career development will be valued above job security and stability. There will be increased importance of the value proposition for individual workers.

### Human-Capital Strategy

There will be a more aggressive emphasis on reward differentiation for engaging

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and retaining critical talent. Assessment will be more important and more valuable as organizations assess rewards that attract, motivate and retain the workforce. Increasing commitment, retention and productivity are the goals, and these can only be accomplished through improvements that are mutually beneficial for both the organization and the worker.

#### **Work Design**

With workers working outside the traditional environment, HR professionals will face new challenges in work design. Dramatic technological advances will mean that being “at work” will include telecommuting hubs, collaborating with global colleagues and using virtual worlds. Being at work won’t necessarily mean being at the office. That said, technology that makes “going to work” easier may also make leaving work much more difficult.

#### **Outsourcing**


For purposes of the literature search, outsourcing is defined as the movement of internal business processes to an external entity. Given the likelihood that outsourcing will increase, future challenges include: motivating a non-employee workforce and motivating people who are doing prescribed tasks or who do not have career paths or logical career progression. Job design will be examined as organizations look for ways to pull jobs apart to find pieces to outsource. Thought must be given to the motivation of workers assigned “pieces” of the work.

#### **Training**

Authors writing about future trends all agreed that there will be continuous connectivity and a wealth of information. Mass collaboration will allow networks of people to share information and create knowledge together. Digital communities will flourish, and experts will assert themselves through these communities. Training will be available in small, readily accessible, easy-to-use modules for use at any time. Technology and learning will be integrated with daily business tasks and woven throughout workers’ lives.

#### **A Glimpse of the Future**

The goal in sharing this look at the WorldatWork literature review is to foster continued exploration of the future of attraction, motivation and retention. WorldatWork will be using the predictions from “The Future of Attraction, Motivation and Retention Literature Review” to engage in collaborative discussions and innovative thinking with experts and practitioners in the field.

A discussion forum has been established on the WorldatWork Web site. Members and nonmembers are invited to help identify and discuss important trends that affect attraction, motivation and retention. To join the ongoing discussions, go to [www.futureoftotalrewards.org](http://www.futureoftotalrewards.org). And look for more articles and requests for submissions about the future of attraction, motivation and retention in upcoming issues of *workspan*. 

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