

HR PROFESSIONALS

MAGAZINE™

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Josh Bersin
on the Role of
Enterprise AI
In the Employee
Experience

Highlights from
2025 SHRM
Spring Conferences

**SHRM25 in
San Diego**

**Bryan
Gates,**

MHR, SHRM-CP, PHR
Director
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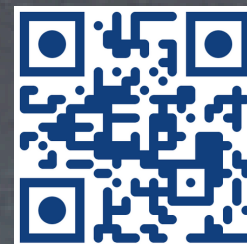
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a note from the editor

We have an exciting June issue for you! It is chock full of highlights from recent SHRM Spring Conferences and previews of more to come! We have highlights from the 2025 Alabama SHRM Conference in Orange Beach on May 12-14, and highlights from the Louisiana SHRM Conference April 10-11 in Baton Rouge.

Here are two SHRM Annual Conferences you do not want to miss! Mark your calendars today and make plans to attend these excellent conferences:

SHRM25 Conference in San Diego June 29 – July 2

SHRM Inclusion 2025 Conference in Louisville October 26-29

Here is an update on the fall SHRM Conference schedule. Time to update your calendars and get ready to earn lots of SHRM and HRCI recertification credits!

HR Florida Conference in Orlando August 24-27

Kentucky SHRM Conference in Lexington August 26-28

Tennessee SHRM Conference in Nashville September 7-10

Mississippi SHRM Conference in Biloxi September 8-10

South Carolina SHRM Conference in Myrtle Beach September 24-26

SHRM Georgia Conference at Stone Mountain October 8-10

Texas SHRM HRSouthwest Conference in Fort Worth October 12-14

AI has to be the major topic in HR today! We are excited to include 2 special articles that you will love – and learn all about AI and how it impacts Human Resource Management. See page 18 for Josh Bersin's excellent article on *"The Role of Enterprise AI in the Employee Experience."* Josh is CEO and co-founder of The Josh Bersin Company. He is a global industry analyst who studies all aspects of HR, business leadership, corporate L&D, recruiting and HR technology.

Be sure to catch Jenny Dearborn's fantastic article, *"AI is Transforming HR – and HR Must Lead the Charge,"* on page 16. Jenny Dearborn is the Chief People Strategy Officer at BTS, the Stockholm-based international company serving the world's largest businesses, including 60 of the Fortune 100, with strategy implementation. She is also the author of three books: **Data Driven** debuted at #1 on Amazon's New Business Releases and was selected as one of the top 10 for "What Corporate America is Reading." Her follow-up, **The Data Driven Leader**, also charted as a national best-selling business book. Jenny's latest book, **The Insight-Driven Leader**, will be released in June 2025.

We also have 4 exciting webinars planned for you in June. They are all pre-approved for SHRM and HRCI credits. So, you can earn 8 total credits in June just attending our webinars from your desktop! Thanks to our sponsors for these excellent presentations:

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June 19	JER HR Group
June 27	Data Facts

Watch your email for my monthly complimentary webinar sponsored by Data Facts that will be on June 25 at 10 AM CT. You will earn 1.00 SHRM PDC and 1.00 HRCI Business credit. If you are not currently receiving our monthly email invitation, you can subscribe on our website at www.hrprofessionalsmagazine.com.

Happy summer to all!



cynthia@hrprosmagazine.com

Follow me on Facebook | Connect with me on LinkedIn

See you in
San Diego for
SHRM25
June 29 – July 2!





Bryan GATES,

MHR, SHRM-CP, PHR

Director of South Carolina SHRM

Bryan is a highly accomplished Human Resources leader with over 26 years of experience in the field. Currently serving as the Vice President of Human Resources at Lutheran Homes of South Carolina, Inc., Bryan brings a wealth of expertise and a passion for driving innovation and high performance in HR practices.

Bryan holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from the University of South Carolina and a Master's Degree in Human Resources and Employment Relations from Penn State University. His strong academic foundation has supported his extensive career and leadership within the HR profession.

Throughout his career, Bryan has been actively involved in both local and state HR organizations. He has been a key member of the Columbia SHRM (CSHRM) Board since 2010 and currently serves as the State Director on the South Carolina SHRM State Council. The position of State Director allows a voice on the SC Chamber of Commerce HR Committee and the SC Department of Employment and Workforce HR Advisory Committee.

His leadership and exceptional contributions to the HR field were recognized in 2022 when he was honored as South Carolina's Human Resources Professional of the Year. This prestigious award highlights his innovative approaches and consistent high performance, benefiting both his organization and the broader professional community.

Beyond his professional achievements, Bryan is actively involved in community service. He serves on the boards of South Carolina HOSA, a student-led organization for future health professionals, and the Midlands Special Needs Foundation. In addition, he is a Chapter Advisor for Pi Kappa Alpha, demonstrating his ongoing commitment to mentorship and service.

Bryan's combination of professional expertise, leadership, and community involvement makes him a distinguished figure in both the HR field and his local community. ■



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Opening Keynote
 University of Memphis Associate Professor of the Management Department and Director of Fogelman Women in Leadership Programs



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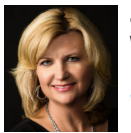
NEVA BURKE HAWES
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"Developing Women Leaders: Creating the Pipeline of Tomorrow's Effective Leaders"



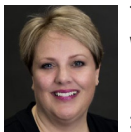
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TAMMY HENRY
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"2025 Changes in Employment Verifications"



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Closing Keynote
 PerformancePoint, LLC
"Never Delegate. Always Grow"



MONTE MILLS
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"De-escalation Skills"



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LEGAL UPDATE

Federal Agencies Aim to Reduce Drug Costs by Aligning with Global Prices



Overview

On May 12, 2025, President Donald Trump issued an [executive order](#) (EO) that aims to bring the prices Americans pay for prescription drugs in line with those paid by similar nations. According to a White House [fact sheet](#), the prices Americans pay for brand-name drugs are more than three times the price other nations pay. In April, President Trump signed another EO aimed at lowering prescription drug prices, which included a variety of directives related to the Medicare program and the pharmaceutical industry. While the directives may not have an immediate impact on drug costs, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) released a [statement](#) on May 20, 2025, with more details on how the agencies expect to satisfy the EO's requirements.

Key Directives

The most recent EO outlines a number of actions intended to lower prescription drug prices in the United States. Among other things, the EO directs:

- The U.S. Trade Representative and Secretary of Commerce to take action to ensure foreign countries "... are not engaged in practices that purposefully and unfairly undercut market prices and drive price hikes" in the U.S.;
- The Trump administration to communicate price targets to pharmaceutical manufacturers; and
- The Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a mechanism through which American patients can buy their drugs directly from manufacturers who sell to Americans at a "Most-Favored-Nation" price.

Notably, if drug manufacturers fail to offer most-favored-nation pricing, the EO directs the Secretary of HHS to:

1. Propose rules that impose most-favored-nation pricing; and
2. Take "other aggressive measures to significantly reduce the cost of prescription drugs to the American consumer and end anticompetitive practices." This includes, but is not limited to, enforcement action by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission.

Potential Legal Hurdles

While the EO directs the Secretary of HHS to communicate most-favored-nation price targets to pharmaceutical manufacturers within 30 days, it is expected to face legal challenges. Industry professionals reference a similar proposal from Trump's first term, which aimed to link Medicare payments for certain medications to the lowest prices paid by other countries. This proposal was blocked by federal courts for not adhering to the notice and comment process required by the Administrative Procedure Act. Thus, the immediate impact on drug costs remains to be seen.

What this means for you & your employees

There is nothing for you, as the employer, to do currently. This process will work its way through the Legislative process, and we will be here to keep you updated. **However, you CAN partner with a Broker that can help educate your employees on the existing cost saving measures as they relate to high-cost drugs. If you want to ask a question or simply get a comparative quote on an upcoming renewal, reach out today and we will be happy to help in any way we can.**

Provided by The Benefits Group

This Legal Update is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as legal advice. Readers should contact legal counsel for legal advice.



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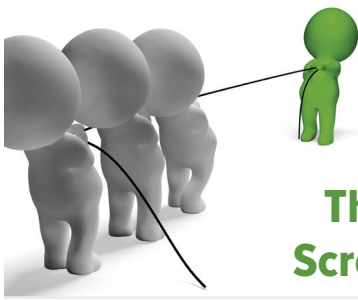
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Save Time and Money with These Background Screening Shortcuts

In HR, there's a constant tug-of-war between doing things right, doing things fast, and doing them affordably. The same goes for background screening. If making informed hiring decisions, saving time, and saving money were a playground ride, it would be some sort of weird, three-sided see-saw.

Skipping or rushing through the process to save a few bucks or a couple of hours can result in disastrous (and expensive) hiring mistakes. But the good news? There are ways to streamline background checks without forgoing thoroughness or falling out of compliance.

Smart Shortcuts to Streamline Background Screening

You don't have to sacrifice quality to get faster or more affordable results. Here are a few ways that help you move efficiently while staying compliant.

Screen Smarter with a Progressive Approach

Progressive screening is a strategic approach that layers the background check process, starting with quick, low-cost searches that identify unqualified or high-risk candidates early on. Rather than running every check on candidate upfront (which is costly and unnecessary) you start with the basics. If the applicant clears those, you move forward with more comprehensive screening.

Step #1: Begin with instant searches and identification products

Your screening process should begin with identity verification. After all, if the person isn't who they say they are, the rest of the background check isn't worth much. Using products like Social Security Number (SSN) validation and verified ID (vID) can flag red flags like false names, multiple aliases, and mismatched date-of-birth information, right from the start.

These identity tools are fast and inexpensive. They often deliver results in seconds and can quickly eliminate candidates who aren't being truthful about their identity.

In addition, you can set up your progressive search based on your must-have requirements for the role. For example, if you're hiring a driver, you need someone with a valid driver's license and a good driving record. In this case, running a Motor Vehicle Records (MVR) search early in the process would be a smart move.

Step #2: Add Additional Background Checks Only If Candidates Advance

If a candidate clears the initial checks, then you can invest in more background screening components. These may include:

- County-level criminal record searches.
- Employment and education verifications.
- Drug testing.
- Professional license verifications.
- Social media screening.

This progressive method helps you make the most of your budget and use your resources on candidates who make it past the first round.

Standardize Screening Packages by Role

A one-size-fits-all screening approach is a surefire way to overspend. Not every position carries the same level of risk or requires the same credentials, so your screening strategy shouldn't treat them all equally.

Tailor your background check packages based on job function and risk level. For example:

- A warehouse worker may not require a credit check or college degree verification.
- A financial controller, on the other hand, may warrant a full financial history and credential verification.

To decide which components fit which roles, consider what risks come with the job. Will the employee handle sensitive data, financial assets, or interact with vulnerable populations? Categorize roles and build screening packages for each one.

Aligning screening depth with job responsibilities ensures you're thorough where it counts.

Use an Integrated Screening Partner

Working with a background screening partner that integrates with your applicant tracking system (ATS) offers big budget benefits.

When your background check provider platform and ATS "talk" to each other, you create a seamless hiring workflow. This automation minimizes delays, reduces administrative load, and helps HR teams move faster without sacrificing quality.

An integration can also eliminate duplicate data entry, reduce human error, and cut turnaround time significantly. With one click, you can send screening requests, track progress, and keep everything organized in one place. The time you save can translate into real budget savings.

Set Clear Internal Policies

Having a consistent screening policy prevents delays and confusion. For example, without a set policy, a recruiter might order employment and education verifications, even though they weren't needed. Standardized policies eliminate waste and streamline decision-making.

Decide in advance which checks are required for which roles, who needs to approve results, and what your red flag criteria are. When everyone on the HR team follows the same playbook, you can make decisions faster and you don't end up paying for screening components you didn't need.

Automate the Candidate Experience

Delays don't always come from your side...sometimes candidates drag their feet. Waiting on a signed disclosure or completed form can stall the entire background check process. That's why it's essential to use platforms that support electronic disclosures, authorizations, and data collection. When candidates can complete their paperwork online with just a few clicks, the process moves forward more quickly.

A mobile-friendly platform is especially important. Many applicants complete tasks on their phones and, if your background screening process isn't optimized for mobile, you risk frustrating them and delaying turnaround times.

Automated reminders are another time-saving feature. These prompt applicants to finish their tasks (signing a form, uploading documents, or confirming personal information) without your team having to follow up manually.

The smoother the process is for the candidate, the less time your team spends chasing down paperwork. Plus, the candidate takes away a positive experience from your organization.

Smart Background Screening Saves More Than Money

Taking shortcuts doesn't mean cutting corners. With some strategic planning, HR teams can speed up the background check process, stay compliant, and still make high-quality hires. With tight schedules and tighter budgets, efficient screening can make all the difference.

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A Mission *that drives us*

FEDlogic was founded in 2015 to assist organizations in guiding their employees through the complexities of federal and state benefits. Co-Founders Frank and Elizabeth Cardenas draw from their personal experiences, having faced significant challenges in understanding and accessing these vital programs for their own families. Frank's tenure at the Social Security Administration, coupled with the struggles his family encountered in securing resources for his disabled sister, inspired their dedication to creating a resource for all families.

The core mission of FEDlogic is to provide families with unbiased and unlimited access to expert knowledge at no cost. We aim to be a supportive resource during critical moments of need and crisis. While our services offer substantial value in reducing healthcare expenditures, this has never been our primary focus. Our ultimate goal is to empower individuals with the information and support they need to navigate their options.



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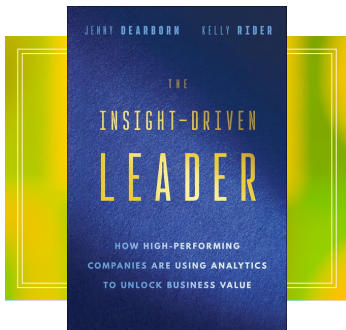
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AI Is Transforming HR— And HR Must Lead the Charge

By JENNY DEARBORN

Artificial intelligence is reshaping every corner of the modern enterprise—and Human Resources is no exception. But unlike previous waves of workplace change, this one doesn't just affect how we work. It demands we rethink *who* does the work, *how* it's structured, and *why* it matters.

In this environment, HR has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to lead—by redesigning work for the AI era, aligning talent strategies with business outcomes, and freeing human capacity to focus on the work only humans can do. But if HR doesn't seize this moment, someone else will. Because in today's world, if HR can't drive business value, business leaders will simply find someone who can.



Align HR With Business Strategy—Or Be Left Behind

To remain relevant and indispensable, HR must start with the business. That means anchoring every talent decision to the company's core metrics: revenue growth, margin expansion, customer satisfaction, product innovation, and speed to market. These aren't "finance problems" or "product priorities"—they're business outcomes that HR should help drive.

Instead of rolling out programs based on trends or tradition, HR must work backward from these business goals. What kind of talent do we need to hit our growth targets? How should we structure work to improve customer experience? Which skills are essential to accelerate innovation? From talent acquisition to learning and development, every HR policy must be evaluated through this business-first lens.

This shift isn't optional. It's existential. If HR fails to demonstrate how it contributes to commercial success, the function will be eclipsed by line-of-business leaders who *can* connect talent to outcomes. The future of HR belongs to those who can think like businesspeople first, and HR experts second.

Everyone in HR Must Understand the Business

This business alignment isn't just the CHRO's job. It must cascade to every level of the function. From early-career HR analysts to senior VPs, everyone must understand how the company makes money, how it serves customers, and how value is created.

That understanding should shape every decision—from hiring and onboarding to performance management and workforce planning. If your HR

team can't articulate the corporate strategy and identify how their work supports it, then you're not building a function that can survive in an AI-driven business world.

Redesigning Work: Human, Augmented, and Automated

One of HR's most urgent responsibilities is to lead the redesign of jobs. AI gives us the ability to break roles down into individual tasks and rethink who—or what—should be doing each one. In doing so, HR can create a more agile, efficient, and human-centered organization.

Each role should be analyzed and reorganized into three categories:

1. **Human-only tasks:** These require empathy, ethical reasoning, creative thinking, complex collaboration, and strategic judgment—skills AI can't replicate.
2. **AI-augmented tasks:** Here, humans use AI tools to increase speed, precision, or insight—like a recruiter using an AI platform to analyze fit and flag potential bias.
3. **AI-agent tasks:** Fully automated workflows that can be monitored or supervised by humans but don't require their day-to-day involvement—like payroll processing or scheduling.

By adopting a task-based design mindset, HR can evolve jobs to better match both business needs and employee strengths. This isn't just about automation—it's about *amplification*.

AI Enables HR to Focus on What Matters Most

Ironically, as AI becomes more powerful, the human side of work becomes more important. In HR itself, AI will increasingly take over the tedious, repetitive, and soul-crushing tasks: scheduling interviews, screening resumes, administering compliance training, and processing transactions.

What's left is the work that only humans can do—and that's where the future of HR lies. With AI delegating the transactional, HR professionals will be freed up to focus on:

- Designing high-impact talent strategies
- Facilitating culture change
- Solving organizational challenges
- Coaching leaders
- Building inclusive, engaging employee experiences

These aren't "nice to haves"—they're critical levers for business performance. And they require exactly the kind of skills that can't be automated: critical thinking, creativity, systems-level problem-solving, and emotional intelligence.

Talent Strategy Must Follow Business Strategy

At its core, the HR function exists to ensure that the company has the right people, in the right roles, with the right skills, at the right time. But too often, talent strategies are built in isolation from business realities.

HR must align its efforts to key business shifts—new markets, product pivots, customer trends, and compet-

itive threats. That means rethinking how we attract, develop, and retain talent. It means linking learning agendas to emerging skill needs, evolving leadership models for hybrid teams, and creating talent pipelines for AI-literate roles that didn't exist five years ago.

Whether your company is investing in digital transformation, launching new products, or expanding into new regions, HR must be able to answer: What talent do we need? What capabilities are we missing? And how do we fill the gap?

HR at the Helm of Organizational Reinvention

As AI reshapes the structure of work, HR must lead the reinvention of the organization itself. That includes:

- **Workforce planning:** What roles are emerging, evolving, or disappearing?
- **Change management:** How do we help people navigate the disruption?
- **Governance:** How do we ensure AI is used ethically, transparently, and fairly?
- **Culture building:** How do we preserve trust and connection as machines take on more tasks?

HR is uniquely positioned to be the bridge between strategy, technology, and people. But to do that, it must operate at the intersection of data, business acumen, and human insight.

The Bottom Line

AI won't replace HR. But HR that *doesn't* embrace AI—and doesn't align with business strategy—*will* be replaced. The future belongs to HR teams who can:

- Redesign work for a blended human-AI world
- Translate business goals into talent priorities
- Deploy AI to elevate human potential, not just automate it
- Develop future-ready leaders and skillsets
- Foster cultures where both humans and machines thrive

This is not a time for HR to be reactive or peripheral. It's a time to lead. Because in a world where change is constant, agility is currency, and human potential is the ultimate differentiator, HR holds the keys to building a workforce—and an organization—fit for the future.



Jenny Dearborn is the Chief People Strategy Officer at BTS, the Stockholm-based international company serving the world's largest businesses, including 60 of the Fortune 100, with strategy implementation. She is also the author of three books: **Data Driven** debuted at #1 on Amazon's New Business Releases and was selected as one of the top 10 for "What Corporate America is Reading." Her follow-up, **The Data Driven Leader**, also charted as a national best-selling business book. Jenny's latest book, **The Insight-Driven Leader**, will be released in June 2025. For more information or to learn about her upcoming book, visit jennydearborn.com/insight-driven-leader

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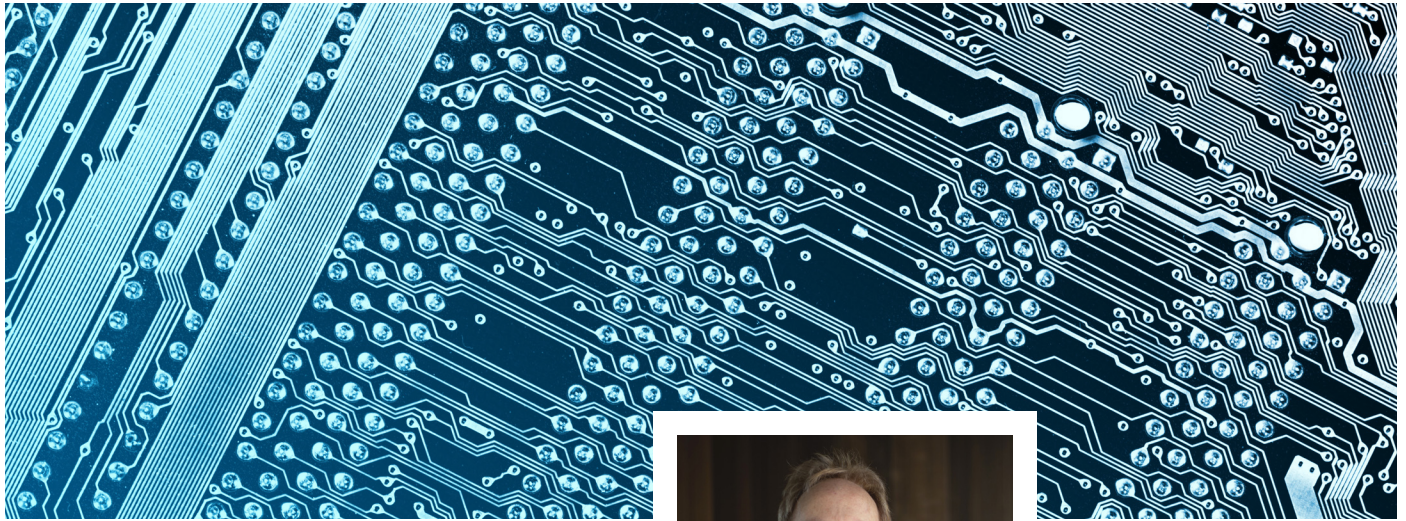


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The Role of Enterprise AI in the Employee Experience

By JOSH BERSIN



The author, CEO and co-founder of [The Josh Bersin Company](#), is a global industry analyst who studies all aspects of HR, business leadership, corporate L&D, recruiting, and HR technology.

New research from [The Josh Bersin Company](#) examines the experience of EXP users, revealing a clear insight: the technology remains highly relevant and is increasingly seen as the best way to embed AI into organizations. Josh explores in more detail.

Since the pandemic triggered an [urgent push for digital transformation](#), workplaces have faced an overwhelming influx of digital tools. As remote and hybrid work became the norm, HR had to confront the pressing risk of widespread employee burnout. To navigate this challenge, HR teams collaborated with IT and vendor partners to simplify communication, alleviate stress, and maintain productivity despite the mounting pressures.

The core challenge was the relentless flood of emails, messages, and notifications—intensified by the rise of smartphones. This era sparked a wave of digital detox apps and mental health initiatives, yet many fell short. As companies sought to simplify digital interactions, the concept of an Employee Experience Platform (EXP) took shape. Industry leaders like ServiceNow spearheaded the development of these platforms, designed to unify business communication, tasks, and resources into a single, user-friendly hub.

Microsoft, Meta, and others quickly followed, fueling the rise of a dedicated Employee Experience (EX) market. These platforms became essential for managing the complex needs of diverse workforces—spanning multiple locations, languages, and job roles—all requiring tailored experiences. Major HR and enterprise software providers, including Oracle, Workday, SAP SuccessFactors, and Microsoft, integrated EX capabilities into their ecosystems. Microsoft's Viva, in particular, gained strong momentum, leveraging AI to boost productivity and collaboration.

Viva's success highlighted the corporate demand for streamlined solutions that empower knowledge workers in complex, multi-location environments while providing a centralized, AI-driven employee experience. Microsoft was gaining traction—and enterprises were increasingly receptive to the idea—of Viva serving as a seamless gateway to workplace resources, simplifying navigation across multiple systems.

An AI-powered interface and virtual assistant? Your EXP can take you there.

This evolution was already in motion when a new disruptor emerged: Generative AI. Its rise has fundamentally reshaped the Employee Experience landscape. While EX platforms offered structured tools, AI has introduced a more fluid and intuitive approach—eliminating the need to navigate multiple interfaces. Now, employees can simply interact with AI-driven assistants, receiving instant, context-aware responses that streamline their work.

The industry hasn't caught up yet, but it's incredibly close—and this shift will be a game-changer for HR. Instead of searching through company portals for policies, employees can now ask an AI assistant to instantly retrieve relevant information. This transformation is reshaping EX platforms in three key ways:

1. **AI as the New Experience Layer**—AI assistants are streamlining access to information, automating repetitive tasks, and replacing rigid portals with conversational AI. Routine queries like password resets or PTO balance checks are handled instantly, reducing the burden on both employees and IT teams.

2. **The Rise of the AI-Powered Employee**—In our recent research study with CHROs and CEOs, we explored how AI is redefining white-collar roles. Employees now engage with AI daily to boost productivity, freeing them to focus on strategic work. Josh Bersin Company is calling this trend the rise of the “superworker”.

3. **Redefining Employee Support**—AI enables truly personalized employee experiences, shifting HR from administrative tasks to strategic workforce planning. And this isn't just theory—we've been speaking with Viva clients who are actively transitioning from traditional EX platforms to AI-enhanced EX. What's crucial to recognize is that they're not just using Viva, but also Microsoft's generative AI assistant, Copilot, to transform the way work gets done.

Essentially, our new research report examined how leading organizations are leveraging these tools to drive AI transformation while enhancing the employee journey. One example is ASOS, a major UK online fashion and cosmetics retailer valued at \$3.4 billion. They've been using Microsoft EXPs to support employee learning, communication, and the integration of AI into daily workflows.

ASOS's plan is to use EXP as a gateway for AI adoption, streamlining operations, automating workflows, and optimizing decision-making. The results are impressive: ASOS has actively embraced AI to enhance IT operations, boost productivity, and drive sustainable practices. With Microsoft Copilot, it has automated admin tasks, streamlined processes, and improved decision-making. Meanwhile, Viva continues to support AI-driven learning, communication, and collaboration.

As part of the study, we also spoke with global law firm Clifford Chance using Viva for AI-powered knowledge management in a way rarely seen outside heavy industry. By employing AI tools to capture expert legal insights, lawyers can instantly access knowledge when human experts aren't available—dramatically improving efficiency and service. EXP plays a key role here too, with Viva helping train employees on AI adoption and accelerating digital transformation.

The EXP research also featured insightful discussions with Microsoft HR on how it leverages its own technology to bridge today's EXP with broader AI adoption in the flow of work. Our conversations with EXP users make it clear that AI is transforming EX platforms, and not replacing them just yet.

As recent breakthroughs from DeepSeek and Alibaba suggest, AI could potentially replace many EX functionalities within a decade, making today's platforms obsolete.



As recent breakthroughs from DeepSeek and Alibaba suggest, AI could potentially replace many EX functionalities within a decade, making today's platforms obsolete. But for now—and for the foreseeable future—structured EX tools remain essential. If you've invested in EXP, regardless of the vendor, these platforms still play a critical role in enabling enhanced document search, workflow automation, and knowledge access—key steps toward unlocking the Superworker advantage.

Your new Employee Experience priorities

So, what's the mission for CHROs and EX leaders in this evolving landscape? It comes down to a key decision:

- Which EX functions AI will take over (e.g., answering questions, automating tasks).
- Which areas still need structured platforms (e.g., complex case management).

For example, AI tools like Microsoft Copilot are enhancing knowledge sharing, automating admin tasks, and optimizing workflows—summarizing meetings, generating action items, and improving sales enablement and HR processes. Is your organization actively embracing this shift, or just letting employees figure it out themselves? Is that really the best on-ramp to Superwork?

I suspect not. But let's be clear—the shift isn't just technological; it's strategic. One key takeaway from this research is that AI-driven change is unlike any transformation before it. Unlike traditional change initiatives, like ERP rollouts, AI transformation is fluid, ever-evolving, and demands an agile approach.

To unlock AI's full potential and reach “superworking” productivity, organizations must rethink HR, workforce planning, and adaptive information flow. In working with CHROs, we uncovered a fascinating synergy emerging between Systemic HR (how AI reshapes HR's role), Superworking (how AI empowers employees), and Change Agility (how organizations thrive amid continuous transformation).

Employee Experience is at a crossroads. AI is transforming workplace interactions, moving from structured platforms to AI-driven, conversational experiences. While today's EX platforms remain essential, businesses must prepare for the AI-enriched Employee Experience that Gen Z and Gen Alpha will soon expect as standard.

You read it here first: if your EXP is in place, leverage its power and adoption to accelerate your climb up the AI tree to superworker success.



New Simplified Rules for Medicare Part D Creditable Coverage— What HR Professionals Need to Know in 2025

By R. EDWARD JOHNSON

A new era of simplicity for creditable coverage notices

In the first and second quarters of 2025, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) finalized changes to how employer-sponsored group health plans determine if their prescription drug coverage is “creditable” for Medicare Part D purposes. For HR professionals, this marks a shift to simplified processes, more precise actuarial determinations, and clearer compliance pathways.

What’s changed?

Under previous rules, plan sponsors were required to determine whether their prescription drug coverage was creditable—meaning the plan was expected to pay, on average, at least as much as standard Medicare Part D coverage. This involved actuarial analysis, especially for plans that didn’t closely resemble Medicare Part D in benefit design.

There are currently two sanctioned methods to find out if coverage is creditable for Medicare Part D: a simplified determination method and an actuarial method. Many employer plan sponsors use the former to assess creditable coverage status for their prescription drug coverage.

Now, the recent CMS update to the simplified determination method will allow many employer-sponsored plans to employ the simplified determination method, as long as they meet specific plan design criteria.¹

Key features of the simplified determination method

The updated method outlines several plan design features deemed creditable by default. If your prescription drug plan meets these criteria, you can use the simplified determination from CMS and skip the actuarial certification process.

Here’s a quick overview of those plan design features:²

- Offers reasonable coverage for brand-name and generic prescription drugs and biological products
- Provides reasonable access to retail pharmacies
- Designed to pay on average at least 72% of participants’ prescription drug expenses
 - o This is up from 60% due to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which significantly enhanced the Part D benefit
 - o Note that the simplified determination methodology no longer reflects actuarial equivalence with defined standard Medicare Part D coverage due to enhancements to the Part D benefit under the IRA

CMS has also published model notices and checklists to help employers self-assess whether they meet the simplified criteria.^{3,4} These include guidance on high-deductible health plans and plan design recommendations exceeding the 72% threshold.

The notices from CMS clarify that for calendar year 2026 only, non-Retiree Drug Subsidy (RDS) group health plan providers can choose to use either the current simplified determination method or the revised simplified determination method to decide whether or not their prescription drug coverage is creditable.¹

For 2027, the notice states that CMS intends no longer to allow the use of the current simplified determination method. If finalized, non-RDS group health plan providers will need to use either the actuarial method or the revised simplified determination method for the 2027 calendar year.¹

As a reminder, employer plan sponsors will generally determine the creditable coverage status of their group health plans as outlined below:

- Fully insured plans: Employers who sponsor fully insured group health plans can typically rely on their insurance carriers to determine the creditable status of their prescription drug coverage.
- Self-funded plans: For employers with self-funded health plans (including level-funded plans), your employee health and benefits consulting team can help determine the creditable status of your prescription drug coverage if the plan’s third-party administrator or pharmacy benefit manager does not provide that determination.

Why this matters for HR

HR professionals and those overseeing benefits for employers with Medicare-eligible employees or retirees, are responsible for distributing creditable coverage notices each year. That usually occurs by October 15, before the annual Medicare open enrollment period begins.

Failing to accurately determine and disclose creditable status can result in significant employee confusion and even financial penalties for Medicare-eligible individuals who delay Part D enrollment based on incorrect assumptions about their employer coverage.

The simplified rules reduce the burden on HR teams by:

- Eliminating the need for actuarial reports in many cases
- Improving compliance efficiency
- Helping employers stay audit-ready with clearer documentation standards

Action items for HR teams in 2025

1. Review your current prescription drug plan designs.

Check whether your plans meet one of the five simplified criteria. If so, document your findings internally.

2. Update your annual creditable coverage notices.

CMS has issued revised model notices aligned with the new rules—be sure to use them.³

3. Coordinate with legal and compliance teams.

Make sure the new simplified rules are reflected in your compliance calendar and employee communications protocols.

4. Educate employees.

Use this opportunity to refresh your Medicare communications strategy—especially for employees approaching age 65 or already Medicare-eligible.

Looking ahead

While CMS has indicated that actuarial determinations will still be required for “non-standard” plan designs (e.g., high-deductible or limited coverage), most employer-sponsored group health plans should now fall within the simplified framework.

If you’re not already preparing to implement the new simplified creditable coverage rules, now’s the time. With the 2025 open enrollment season approaching, leveraging these changes can streamline compliance and enhance employee support.

Sources:

¹ <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/final-cy-2026-part-d-redesign-program-instruction.pdf>

² <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/final-cy-2026-part-d-redesign-program-instructions#:~:text=Under%20the%20revised%20simplified%20determination,60%25%20under%20the%20existing%20methodology>

³ <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/employers-plan-sponsors/creditable-coverage/model-notice-letters>

⁴ <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/employers-plan-sponsors/creditable-coverage>

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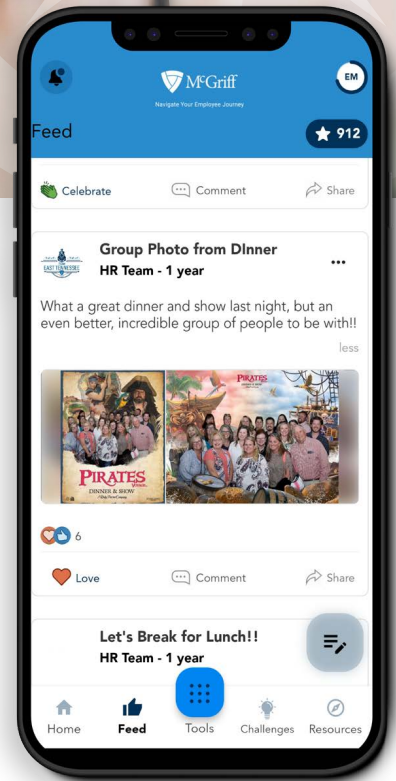


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Managing a Polarized Workforce

BY AMY SCHABACKER DUFRANE

Bringing your whole self to work results in higher levels of employee engagement and productivity; however, it's not without challenges. These days, political polarization is challenging HR professionals—"stress-testing" the wellbeing programs put in place to ensure employees can feel and do their best.

HRCI recently dug into this topic in our latest white paper, "Managing Political Polarization in the Workplace." When HRCI queried thousands of HR professionals around the world in October 2024 by asking "How prepared do you feel your organization is to handle politically charged discussions?" The majority (55 percent) said they are, minimally, or not at all prepared to handle politically charged discussions at work.

According to a 2024 study by Pew Research Center, a large majority of Americans see little to no common ground between the two major political parties. At the same time, only 20 percent of those surveyed in the Edelman Trust Barometer said they would be willing to serve as a co-worker with some who strongly disagreed with them, implying that 80 percent would not.

While simply asking employees to refrain from political discussions at work might seem like a practical request, we know that's unrealistic. We've asked employees to bring their authentic selves to work, to be comfortable and creative, and to be fully present. Directly linked to fostering trust, this approach – over time – can result in better collaboration and improved business outcomes. It builds culture, values multiple viewpoints, and encourages innovation.

The upside has a downside, one that has become glaringly apparent in these times of strong opinions and divisiveness. HRCI's data showed that 27 percent of HR professionals have witnessed or heard a political argument at work. More than half of our respondents (59 percent) said that political polarization also impacts relationships with customers.

A conflict-riddled workplace is stressful, and stress is a contributing factor to voluntary (and involuntary) terminations. Workplace stress can crush productivity and even result in disruptive behaviors. It can influence your employer brand and sway qualified talent away from your organization. In some states, stress leave may be available under workers' compensation, FMLA, or, for example, the California Family Rights Act.

There is no one-size-fits-all here. Rules forbidding political discussions in the workplace may be a borderline infringement on first amendment rights. Such rules are also difficult to enforce, seen as heavy handed, and leave the organization open to lawsuits and social media disasters. Consider taking a more positive approach:

Create a positive environment where employees know they are free to express themselves without fear of retribution. For example, explain that expression of all viewpoints is permitted, but anything discriminatory or hurtful will not be tolerated.

Guide the conversation with examples demonstrating how to disagree in a civil and respectful way. Bear in mind that not all polarized moments involve conversation and that setting parameters around overtly political paraphernalia in the workplace should be considered.

Give employees wellness outlets that enable them to discuss and diffuse stressful situations. Encouraging healthy habits like proper nutrition, physical activity, and breathing exercises can help employees maintain wellbeing while dealing with friction in their day-to-day workplace.

Remember that employees will look to their managers to identify what's tolerated and acceptable. Make sure supervisors have the appropriate coaching and training to be leaders during these (sometimes challenging) conversations. When managers work in tandem with HR, risks can be reduced and discord averted.

If you're looking for better ways to integrate wellness at your organization, take a look at HRCI's new Pro Series Certificate in Workplace Wellness, available now in the HRCI Learning Center!



Amy Schabacker Dufrene, Ed.D., SPHR, CAE, is CEO of HRCI® — where she is responsible for driving and disrupting the conversations about building high-performing, strategic HR teams. An engaging thought leader at the intersection of talent strategy and continuous learning, Dr. Dufrene is an award-winning leader and celebrated keynote speaker on the human side of successful business strategy in the 21st century.

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Why Gen Z Needs More Than Just a Paycheck:

The Case for Real-Time Pay Solutions

By JON LOWE

As employers compete on how to attract and retain the next generation of talent, a growing body of evidence suggests that supporting employees' financial wellness is critical—particularly for Gen Z. This generation, now comprising a significant share of the workforce, is entering adulthood during a time of economic volatility, rising living costs, and shifting employment expectations.

For Gen Z workers financial stress is a daily reality and objectively more acute than previous generations in the workforce. Research from [BrightPlan's 2024 Wellness Barometer](#) shows that over 86% of Gen Z workers worry about their financial situation. Student debt, inflation, and limited savings have created real barriers to creating financial stability. The Education Data Initiative notes that [approximately 43.5%](#) of Gen Z adults carry student loan debt, and a significant portion of that group reports struggling to manage repayment alongside basic living expenses.

As a stop-gap, nearly half of [Gen Z workers \(48%\)](#) have taken on side hustles, according to Bankrate, representing a shift in the essence of what traditional employment looks like. While this can signal ambition and adaptability, it also reflects a need to make ends meet—often leading to burnout, fragmented schedules, and job dissatisfaction. In fact, burnout among Gen Z is disproportionately high, with a UKG report noting that 83% report experiencing burnout and a third say they've left jobs due to its impact on their mental health which runs congruent to increases in benefits costs associated with mental health resources.

But part of the problem isn't just financial—it's systemic.

For decades, American workers have been paid on a bi-weekly basis, a cadence originally driven by the limitations of early payroll processing systems. The two-week cycle was designed for efficiency, not for optimal employee outcomes. It was a solution to a technological constraint, not a strategic choice. That constraint no longer exists.

Advances in financial technology have made real-time payroll capabilities possible—and practical. Today, companies can safely and securely offer employees access to their earned wages as soon as they're available. This model, often called on-demand pay or earned wage access, leverages modern payroll integrations and API-based systems that make tracking, calculating, and disbursing pay instantaneous and compliant.

For employees—especially younger workers managing tight budgets and unpredictable expenses—this shift can be transformative. On-Demand Pay doesn't replace budgeting or financial literacy; rather, it complements them by giving workers the flexibility to handle emergencies, avoid high-interest credit, and reduce financial stress.

In an on-demand era, planning, expenses, and life operates on a real-time basis; which is incongruent with a 14 days paycheck cycle. With real-time visibility to earnings and access to earnings on an on-demand basis employees are more likely to stay engaged and show up consistently. In fact, research from Arizent commissioned by DailyPay shows that [55% of employees](#) with access to on-demand pay pick up at least one extra shift per month; and churn at a [rate of 44%](#) less than firms that have not adopted on-demand pay provisions.

For employers, On-Demand Pay and the technology supporting it has now become universally accessible as a low- or no-cost benefit that supports a broader financial wellness strategy. When paired with tools for budgeting, saving, and learning, it helps younger employees feel more in control of their financial lives—without administrative complexity or additional payroll burden.

In an era where talent is mobile and competition is high, investing in practical, high-impact benefits matters. And for Gen Z—who have grown up in an on-demand world where food, rides, and entertainment are available with a tap—access to pay shouldn't feel like a delay. It should feel immediate, fair, and aligned with how the world works today.

Retention doesn't always start with a raise. Sometimes, it starts with relief—powered by technology, driven by empathy, and aligned with the needs of a changing workforce.



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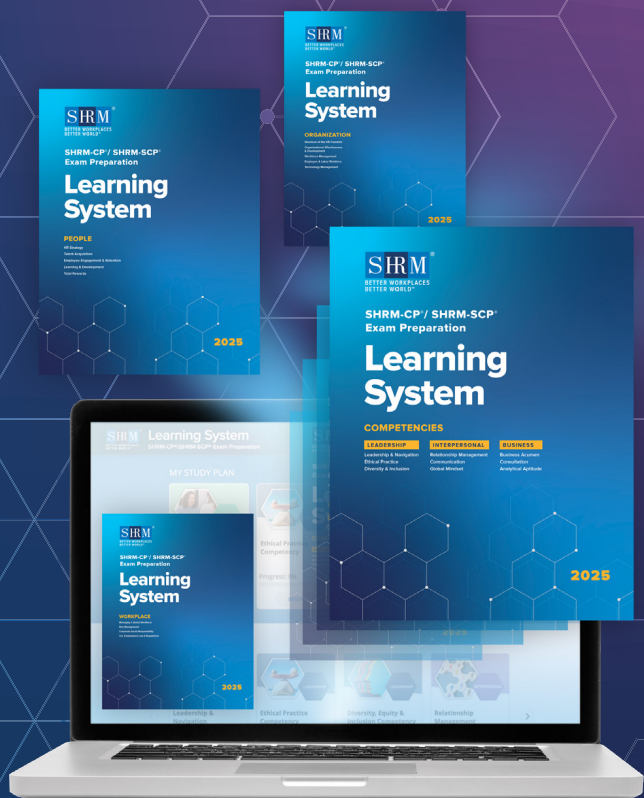


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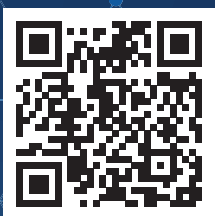
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Still Struggling to Effectively Track Employee Licenses, CPEs, and Credentials?

BY MATT CROSS

Historically, managers have tracked employee licenses, CPE, and certifications through various methods that have evolved with technology over time. Manual tracking using spreadsheets was (and sometimes still is) standard protocol. Digital methods emerged in the 1990s, followed by HRIS integration in the early 2000s. Today, cloud-based HR platforms, LMS, and credential software provide different levels of compliance tracking for licenses, credentials, courses, and CPE units.

Why Tracking Employee Licenses and Credentials is Essential

In today's highly regulated and fast-paced workplace, effectively tracking employee licenses, certifications, and CPEs is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. As credential management has evolved from manual spreadsheets to advanced cloud-based systems, organizations must keep pace to ensure compliance, reduce risk, and drive strategic workforce planning.

Maintaining accurate records of employee licenses, certifications, and CPE units is an effective way for HR to support organizational compliance, performance, and growth. Proactive credential management enables you to:

1. Ensure Regulatory Compliance

By verifying that all employees hold current licenses and fulfill requirements, your organization will remain aligned with industry regulations, state and federal laws, and accreditation standards, helping you avoid fines and maintain a good standing.

2. Minimize Legal Risks

Tracking credentials ensures that only qualified and certified employees are practicing, reducing liability risks and fostering a culture of safety and accountability.

3. Secure Business and Contract Opportunities

Many clients and contracts—especially in regulated or government sectors—require proof of staff credentials. Demonstrating compliance can enhance client confidence and assist in winning new business.

4. Strengthen HR Oversight

With a centralized system in place, HR can effortlessly monitor renewal dates and training deadlines, minimizing the risk of lapses and ensuring the workforce remains fully compliant and prepared.

5. Enhance Workforce Planning

Credential tracking offers essential insights into your team's qualifications, facilitating more strategic training, development, and staffing decisions based on real-time data.

6. Protect and Elevate Your Reputation

Showing that your team is fully credentialed builds public trust, strengthens your brand image, and supports positive regulatory and industry reviews.

7. Support Internal Policy Compliance

Automated tracking enables HR to consistently maintain organizational standards, ensuring adherence to policies and fostering fairness and transparency across roles.

Who is Responsible for Managing Employee Licenses & Credentials?

Managing employee licenses, credentials, and CPEs typically involves various departments, with responsibilities divided between HR and legal/compliance teams.

HR manages employee qualifications and ensures that staff meet job requirements, establishing itself as the logical owner of professional credential tracking. Associated managers and department heads regularly monitor team members' certifications pertinent to their functional areas and roles, requesting renewals or training support as necessary.

HR is usually responsible for:

- Tracking professional licenses and certifications required for job roles (for example, nursing licenses, CPA certifications, manufacturing & construction skills)
- Managing CPE compliance and renewal reminders
- Handling onboarding/offboarding processes tied to credentials
- Ensuring employees meet role-specific training requirements
- Maintaining records for audits and compliance

Legal/compliance departments ensure credential-related practices align with laws and regulations and help mitigate legal risks.

Legal/compliance is usually responsible for:

- Setting policies and standards around credentialing and compliance
- Ensuring the company complies with regulatory and contractual obligations related to employee credentials
- Overseeing risk management related to credential lapses or violations
- Handling investigations or disputes involving credentials

How to Select the Right Credential Management Platform for HR

Choosing the right credential management platform for HR involves balancing ease of use, compliance features, automation, and integration with existing HR and talent development systems. **Here are some tips to help HR teams select the best credential, license, and CPE tracking solution.**

Step 1: Define Your Needs

- **Scope:** Are you tracking licenses, certifications, CPE units, or all three?
- **Users:** How many employees do you have? Are there contractors involved?
- **Compliance Requirements:** Are there industry-specific regulations or reporting/auditing needs?
- **Integration:** Do you require integration with your HRIS, LMS, or TMS?
- **Automation:** Do you need automatic expiration reminders or renewal workflows?
- **Access:** Who needs access — HR, managers, and/or employees?

- **Reporting:** What types of reports or dashboards do you require?
- **Budget:** What is your price range?

Step 2: Features to Look For

- Centralized license and credential tracking to reduce errors
- Automated alerts and reminders to avoid expired licenses and missed deadlines
- Document storage that lets you upload certificates, licenses, and proof of CPEs - all stored *and tracked* in one place
- Reporting capabilities to audit compliance and alert HR to pending issues
- Workflow automation helps track renewal tasks, scheduling, and approvals
- Role-based access controls that protect sensitive information
- Integration capabilities that sync data with HRIS, LMS, or training management systems
- Mobile capabilities, for remote management, on-the-go employees, and emergencies

Step 3: Ask Vendors These Questions

- How does your platform specifically handle licenses, credentials, and CPE tracking?
- Can it automatically send renewal alerts to employees and HR?
- Does it integrate with existing HRIS, TMS or LMS systems?
- What reporting and audit features are included?
- What data security and privacy measures are built into the platform?
- What kind of support and training is provided?
- Can the system scale as the workforce grows?

Step 4: Trial & Pilot

- Request demos and free trials with your top 2–3 choices
- Test real workflows, like uploading licenses, sending reminders, and generating reports
- Get feedback from HR users

In today's dynamic business environment, keeping a close eye on employee licenses, certifications, and CPEs is essential. Gone are the days of relying on manual spreadsheets; now, we have advanced cloud-based systems that make this task much easier. It's important for organizations to stay on top of these changes to ensure compliance, minimize risk, and support effective workforce planning.

HR plays a central role in maintaining these records. By selecting the right credential management platform—tailored to organizational needs—organizations can streamline operations, improve oversight, and enhance internal efficiency.

Matt Cross, Account Manager

[Trainery One](#)

Matt Cross is an eLearning and HCM Specialist with Trainery One™, a talent management technology provider. He has over 15 years of experience in facilitating training and implementing solutions that help employees grow. His experience helps clients 'bridge the gap' when selecting and implementing HCM technology solutions.

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TRAKCredentials

TRAKCredentials™ offers a best-in-class credential management system to define, track, manage, store, and maintain the renewals of certifications, licenses, CPE units, and regulatory compliance requirements for your employees.

- Track compliance, licenses, and certification requirements by role, individual, group, and due dates
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TRAKCredentials is offered as a standalone module of TraineryLEARN and as part of the TraineryLEARN suite, providing you with full control over online and offline learning and credential management. We are built-tough for regulated industries while remaining scalable and flexible to meet the needs of any organization, regardless of sector or employee count.

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