

# FlemingMartin

## Chief People Officer Roundtable Series

### Q2 2026 Summary

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#### Overview

This summary captures the most pressing priorities, challenges, and innovations discussed by Chief People Officers from leading tech and life sciences firms during our most recent Roundtable series.

It is intended to inform HR strategy and executive decision-making for 2026 and beyond. Resources shared by attendees are consolidated into a [Resources List](#) at the end of this document.

Key discussion topics included:

- [How HR teams are effectively using AI to create value.](#)
- [Skill gaps that companies have identified and what upskilling/reskilling is being prioritized.](#)
- [Change management training for frontline leaders.](#)
- [Achievement of/Progress towards 2026 professional goals.](#)

We added four (4) polling questions across our ten roundtables and included those results.

Additional discussions emerged related to token usage, AI security, and mental health claims (see [Miscellaneous section](#)).



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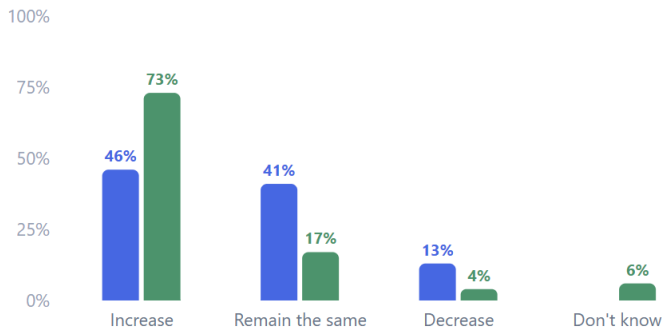
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## Q2 Poll Results

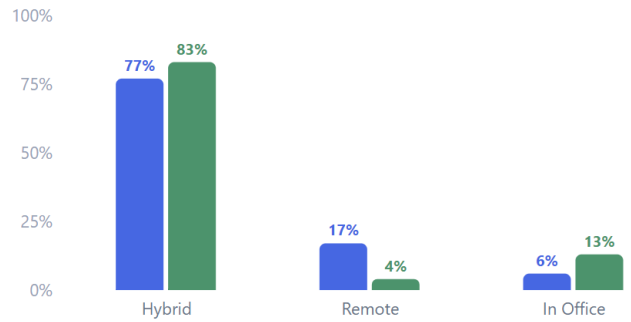
### Tech

### Life Science

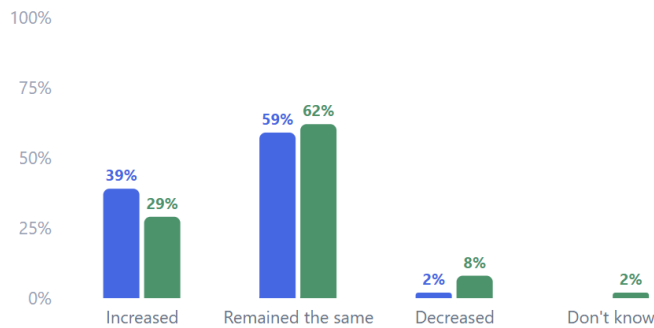
Will your company headcount increase, decrease, or stay the same in 2026?



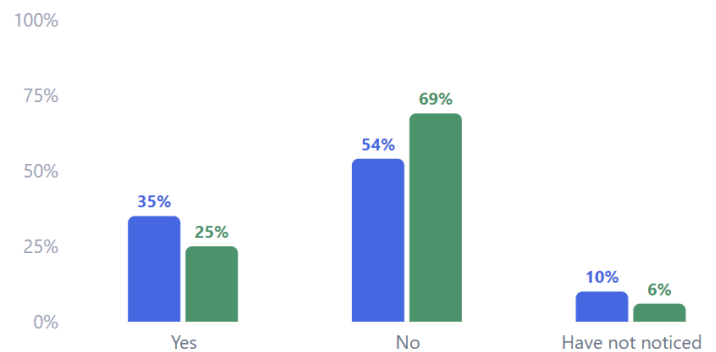
Is your company Remote, Hybrid or In Office?



How has your standing within your executive team changed in the past year?



Are you seeing an increase in mental health services & leave claims?



## Select Highlights

### Topic 1: How is your HR team effectively using AI? Where have you created value and what work processes, tools, build v. buy decisions have you made?

- *I've got a founder who's intimately involved here and is basically like, go fast, break glass.*
- *We launched paid Copilot for sixty people, not the whole company. We're already seeing a gap between people who have it and don't. Everyone wants the paid access ASAP. In addition to Copilot, people are using Perplexity and Claude. **Lesson: AI is changing the game so quickly that it's okay to switch and adjust your plans.***
- *We created an ERG for people to share how they are using AI – it's been popular.*
- *Our IT team helped us create an HR bot on our intranet, which will go live in June. It will answer employee handbook questions and hopefully free up my team.*



- *We just wrapped up our semiannual hackathon, and my team worked together to create an automated, personalized onboarding system.*
- *We're trying to capture dollars returned to the business so we can measure the impact of AI usage. We are just now getting to the point where we're pushing to say, okay, what does this mean at a job level, and how are these jobs being re-architected?*
- *[3000+ person company] We're telling every leader to imagine how their function would be in four or five months if they could automate or build agents. Our end-goal stated by our Chief AI Officer is that every person has a few agents that are built for them, that are running all the time. So that's the vision for everyone, but I think about who will train everyone on effective use of AI?*
- *We offered a voluntary retirement program and basically created the whole program in less than a day based on criteria we knew we needed with Copilot. It worked very well, and then the conversation with the [outside counsel] was much shorter.*
- *We've used [Onyx](#) to build [an agent] that handles benefits questions and is handling at least 90% of the questions now, which is just a huge savings.*
- *We do quarterly connects here, and we uploaded our performance reviews and our manual effort to identify our HiPos. We asked AI to identify who our HiPos and single point of failure flight risks are. The AI was about 95% accurate, based on the performance reviews from the last year. Now, there are the 5% that missed, but it is helpful in identifying some of our gaps.*
- *Single points of failure - that is one of our hot topic areas as well.*
- *Governance is a big topic for us right now. If the AI tools being built plug into other systems and are integrated, you need somebody to own it. If that designer leaves the company, then who's updating and who's maintaining it? There's other stuff where I'm like, "Yeah, if these are your personal productivity hacks, I'm totally fine with you just building your own thing and maintaining it yourself."*
- *We may be a bit unique in that we have standardized the entire company on Claude Cowork and in fact we just moved our entire intranet wiki off Confluence into a GitHub repo that we are managing now as a fully closed loop system through a cloud interface.*
- *We [believe] workforce equals people plus agents. From a cost perspective, from a planning perspective, from a how work gets done perspective, we're using that framework now. Whether they show up in an org chart or not, the reality is that agentic input/output should correlate to your workforce. I think all of us are going to be grappling with how to measure these things very soon.*

## **Topic 2: What skill gaps has your company identified and what upskilling/reskilling is your leadership team prioritizing?**

- *We're in the process of looking for AI architects to hire that will go in across all teams to help us figure out what we need to do [with AI].*
- *In our engineering positions, we're looking at bringing on more senior engineers.*
- *I would say much of the pressure on me right now is how do I go faster in recruiting? Anything customer facing, either on the retention or the sales side is a priority.*
- *Delivery excellence and program management for us.*



- *If I lost someone on my team today, I would replace, but I would replace with different skill sets than what I have today.*
- *Our emphasis is to reskill and not to uplevel. We see a lot of value in helping people understand our workflows.*
- *We've hired a few internally focused FDEs (forward-deployed engineers) to help build some AI use cases and solutions. We hired one solely focused on go-to-market. We are letting Engineering fend for themselves and we also hired one for our G&A functions to support across legal, finance, and HR, because we need the most tech lift. We hired these people in Warsaw and not San Francisco.*
- *We need product managers who are data scientists. They're rare and they're expensive, but we have hired from the outside from companies like Amazon.*
- *We need to build systems thinking.*
- *A major skill gap at the director-level and above is coaching and performance management.*
- *Avoiding conflict is part of the human condition. It takes courage to have crucial conversations. Leaders need to practice it and set the example. There is no substitute for that.*

### **Topic 3: Are you offering your frontline leaders any training to develop their change-management skills?**

- *We are running a change management series of three workshops. We're calling them brown bag workshops, but essentially it is to help managers with change management.*
- *We launched a leadership summit to teach leadership skills, focusing on creating clarity, building capabilities, and driving results. Our summit included all leaders, whether of one person or everyone. HR developed it, but leaders delivered the training. It was fun to see a director leading and teaching a bunch of VPs and other executives.*
- *The thing that's changing for us very quickly across the organization is delivery timelines.*
- *We have been going through some substantial changes and identified cross-functional communication as an area of concern, so we're working on improving training for that.*

### **Topic 4: We are nearly halfway through the year, how are you doing on your 2026 professional goals?**

- *I'm 90% done with my big board-mandated goals. The biggest goals were creating career pathing and implementing mid-year and annual reviews.*
- *We added about 200 people at the beginning of this year, and we're getting positive feedback on our orientation and onboarding, so we're meeting our staffing goals. I've been delayed on refreshing our performance appraisal process and rewards structure, but I'm making progress there. My boss complemented our plan and I said, "We'll only know if it's good when the results come in."*
- *This is the first year we don't have HR-specific corporate goals, so I'm more self-directed. Personally, I'm trying to work on not getting in the weeds too much.*
- *The pace of change is so aggressive right now that we said, "Look, if we can get to two or three top level goals for the organization that's a success."*



- *You know what's funny is personally, I've kind of thrown [departmental] goals to the wayside and just made a lot of the people's success criteria a function of the business success.*

## Miscellaneous

### Mental Health Claims

- *We are seeing an uptick of activity as well. I wonder if it's partly due to the economy and overall feeling of "desperate times."*
- *Most of the claims stem from documented performance coaching. Workers seem to be using claims as a tactic to maintain employment or get money.*
- *I sit on the BOD of the MMA Trust, which includes 200 life science companies. For the third year in a row, we are seeing significant increases in claims data, and the biggest sector is mental health. I recommend speaking to your broker about mental health claims trends.*
- *People don't use our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) enough. Those who do seem to really benefit from it.*

### Token Usage

- *We're managing it very closely. If my CFO was on this call, you'd see the hives breaking out. We had our board meeting this week, and we talked about that, and we are capping usage to a certain degree.*
- *Rather than looking at it as a software cost, we're looking at it as "compared to head count" cost. That mindset shift was helpful. With people that have the super high usage, we are saying, "Okay, now let's look at the code. What was the ROI on that token spend?"*
- *Our CFO wanted to measure the percentage of each department's token usage and it's like, "no, no, no, no." How can AI help us reduce customer churn? How can AI help us get more enterprise customers, and what is the ROI on that effort?*
- *We want to promote utilization, so we set a high cap. We have a \$500 per month cap on tokens right now per user, and our super users are in the high \$300s right now. We've got a couple of rare exceptions who pushed up against that cap, and when they want to apply for a cap extension, they must show the ROI.*

### AI Security

- *I find our IT department and security people are extremely conservative. Agentic development requires approval from the IT department in my company.*
- *We're going to make somebody's life hard. We have all these AI architects and everybody's asking who should approve this, who really has the accountability for this? It appears great, and then as you go deeper, the data access part is at a massive scale. Somebody asked me, "Who has access to my agents now? Who can see the data once it goes into the ether?" The ultimate goal is that the agent will talk to some agent in FP&A, and to some agent in legal, and to some agent somewhere else. At this point, I don't know how much control we're going to really have when 1000s of agents are always on. I think there will be some cautionary tales around this.*



## Other Highlights

- *I was talking to my CIO about [ripping out Workday], I asked her if she thought I was crazy if we didn't want to keep Workday, and we also talked to somebody from Gartner that does a ton of work with HRIS systems in the Magic Quadrant. The Gartner person said, "Right now there probably is nothing better, but give it six to nine months and the landscape's going to look really different."*
- *How do we think about people that oversee agents? If these agents were people, then they would be a manager, right? They don't need people skills to oversee agents, so they could be an IC engineer. But if their output is 5-10x of a coder, how should I think of them?*
- *I was at a dinner with a CFO of a professional services company and another CHRO talking about AI, and the CFO said, "Man, I feel so behind compared to you two." The other CHRO and I were looking at each other as if to say, "We feel like we are behind!" The other CHRO said their husband works at Anthropic Claude, and they feel behind. I think we're all suffering from a collective form of FOMO. I have not heard anybody say that they feel they are on top of it, but it also pushes us to change--it's a forcing mechanism.*
- *We introduced an AI interview into our hiring process for our engineering team, and we observed a cohort, particularly folks from Amazon. It turns out how they were engaging with the AI interview was leading to a suboptimal outcome. They were treating the AI like an untrusted junior employee, and they were being narrow with their prompts. As a result, it was negatively impacting the outcomes. So, in terms of teaching management skills and teaching how to be effective, I think there's something that's not to be underestimated. While this interaction is with AI and not a human, they are still managing a workflow and outcomes. If they don't have the right skills to do that with AI prompts, they might not be effective.*
- *[Software Company] We are realizing that our top customers are going to outpace our development to get what they need. They are going to innovate faster than we can in areas that matter most to them. It's a very interesting challenge. What if they just build it themselves?*



## Resources List

Mentioned during the roundtables.

<p><b>FlemingMartin Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Takeaways from Q1 Chief People Officer Roundtable</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How CFO's Are Navigating the Start-Stop Economy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">What Separates Elite CEOs</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Takeaways from VC/PE Talent Partner Roundtable</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">What Top Operating Partners Are Doing Differently in 2026</a></li> </ul> <p><b>AI Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">BrightHire</a> (by Zoom) AI Recruiting</li> <li>• <a href="#">Fireflies.ai</a> (AI Notetaking)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Glean AI</a> (AI Assistant)</li> <li>• <a href="#">GitHub Copilot</a> (Developer platform)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Granola</a> (AI Notetaking)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Lovable</a> (AI App Creator)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Metaview</a> (AI Notetaking)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Noon</a> (AI Recruiting Sourcer)</li> <li>• <a href="#">NotebookLM</a> (Google's AI Research &amp; Writing Assistant)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Onyx</a> (Enterprise Knowledge Tool)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Perplexity</a> (AI Model cited for research)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Synthesia</a> (Text to Video AI Tool)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Wisq</a> (AI Platform for HR)</li> </ul> <p><b>Articles/Books/Events/Podcasts/Websites</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Claude Cowork Prompt – Monthly Growth &amp; Development Report</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Claude Cowork Prompt – Preparing for an AI Automation Workshop</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">AI Training Resource</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Are AI tokens the new signing bonus or just a cost of doing business?</a> (TechCrunch)</li> <li>• <a href="#">CEOs are handing out AI tokens like paychecks—and figuring out how to justify the spend</a> (Fortune paywall)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Claude for HR Cheat Sheet</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">From Prompts to Systems: Building AI-Powered People Operations</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Workday's Last Workday?</a> a16z Blog</li> <li>• Zapier - <a href="#">Four Levels of AI Fluency</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>Coaches &amp; Speakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">EZRA Coaching</a> (Coaching)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Torch</a> (AI Coaching)</li> </ul> <p><b>Compensation &amp; Benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Alpine Rewards</a> (Comp Consultant)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Culpepper</a> (Comp Consultant)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Modern Health</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">OpenComp</a> (Compensation Data)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Pave</a> (Compensation Data)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Radford</a> (Compensation Data)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Sequoia</a> (Benefits Provider)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Sparrow</a> (Leave Management)</li> </ul> <p><b>HRIS/ATS/HR Ops</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Ashby</a> (ATS)</li> <li>• <a href="#">BambooHR</a> (HRIS)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Gem</a> (AI Recruiting Platform)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Greenhouse</a> (ATS)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Juicebox</a> (Recruiting Platform)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Lever</a> (ATS)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Paycom</a> (HRIS)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Paylocity</a> (HRIS)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Snowflake</a> (AI Data Platform)</li> <li>• <a href="#">TalentWall</a> (AI Layered on ATS)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Workday</a> (HRIS)</li> </ul> <p><b>Talent Development/Org Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ChartHop</a> (Performance Mgmt)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Crucial Conversations</a> (Training)</li> <li>• <a href="#">CultureAmp</a> (Employee Survey)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Lattice</a> (Performance Mgmt)</li> <li>• <a href="#">The Leadership Edge</a> (OD Solutions)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Learnit</a> (Learning Programs)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Leapsome</a> (Performance Mgmt)</li> <li>• <a href="#">LifeLabs Learning</a> (Leadership development)</li> <li>• <a href="#">LinkedIn Learning</a> and their <a href="#">AI tools</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="#">SuccessFactors</a> (Performance Mgmt)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Udemy</a> (Training platform)</li> </ul>
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