



Future of Work 2030

Executive Strategies for Talent, AI
& Change Leadership

WAVESTONE

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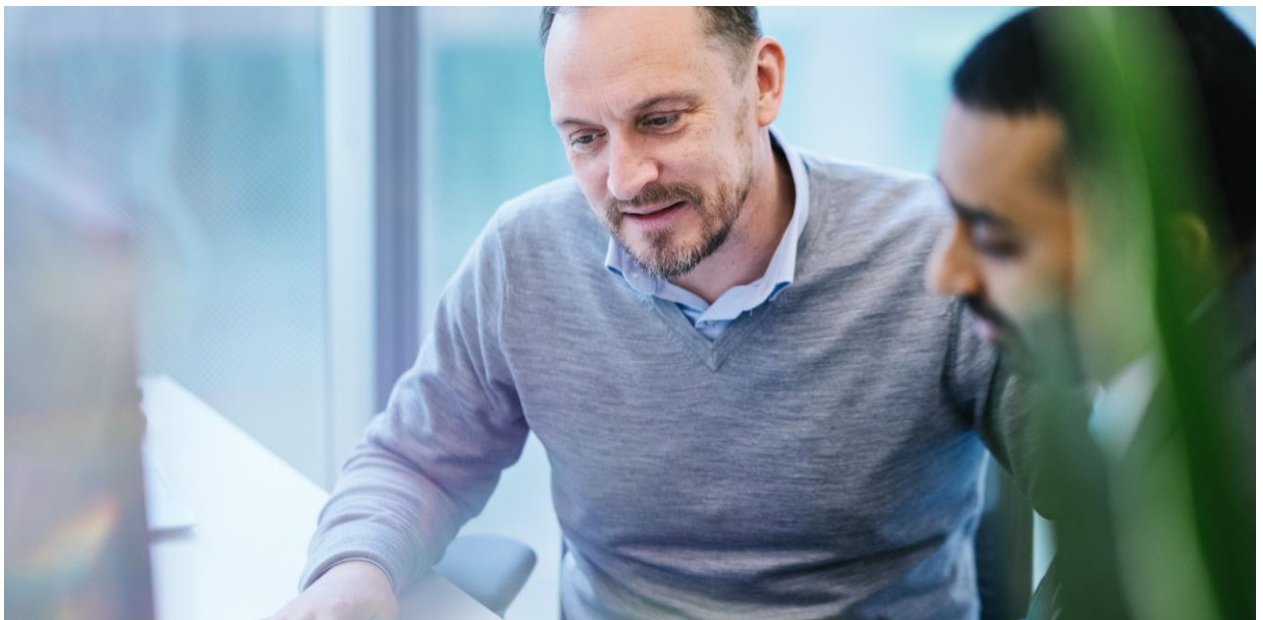
Introduction

Workplace trends: How to prepare for 2030 & beyond

As Generative AI technology takes a front seat in strategic conversations, the leaders of today and tomorrow are focused on designing agile organizations and building skilled workforces capable of championing digital transformation, driving innovation, and thriving amid constant global disruption. To position your business to succeed in the next few years, it will be important for leaders to address 4 areas:

1. Change leadership in the era of AI & digital transformation
2. Redesigning organizational structure for speed & alignment
3. Future-proofing talent: planning, development & leadership
4. Building an agile, insight-driven culture

Whether your organization is upgrading digital platforms, experimenting with AI tools, or embedding robotics into your manufacturing processes, new ways-of-working and new expectations of leaders continue to unfold as organizations leap forward with accelerated changes.



01. Change leadership in the era of AI and digital transformation

Whether it's a footnote in a business unit's strategy or the north star of a multi-year initiative, the **generative AI** and **digital revolution** demands skilled, strategic change leadership.



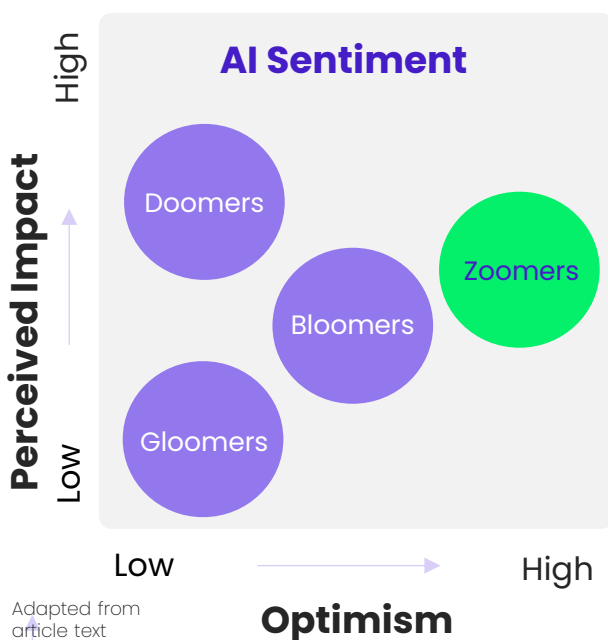
Leading through a seismic shift in how we work.

Generative AI is reshaping the workplace so profoundly that 'change leadership' may no longer be enough to describe the leadership required.

Doomers, gloomers, zoomers and bloomers...

Reid Hoffman (tech entrepreneur, author and venture capitalist) coined the terms doomers, gloomers, zoomers and bloomers. *"Doomers think AI is an existential threat that should be stopped. Gloomers believe it's an inevitable march toward job loss and human displacement. Zoomers are excited and want to hit the gas pedal, full speed ahead. And bloomers are cautiously optimistic, driving forward while tapping the brakes."* Hoffman is a bloomer, by the way. (Basiouny, 2025)

Where do you stand? How about your leaders?



49%

"Nearly half of tech leaders (49%) say AI is now fully integrated into business strategy... However, just 30% say it is fully integrated into operations". (Marr, 2025).

40%

"Nearly 40% of jobs globally will be impacted by AI...as high as 60% in advanced economies". (Ospina, 2024)

63%

63% of employers identify skill gaps as the biggest barrier to business transformation. (Battista et al., 2025)

The road to change

At the company level, according to BCG, *"only 10% of companies have mastered how to scale GenAI to create value."* (Luther et al., 2024)

It is no question that this is an exciting time and a time of great disruption. Successfully moving your teams from opportunity to reality on GenAI, Digital Transformation, or other strategic shifts takes expert change leadership throughout the lifecycle of the project.

Spotlight

Walk with your teams through change

Everyone navigates change at their own pace. As leaders, your role is to support individuals and empower teams throughout the transition.

As a partner in helping companies through change, we see the benefits of a holistic approach to change leadership.

While change leadership is owned by the business, you may want help on the larger initiatives or when your internal team is full-out. Your change partner should be doing 2 things in parallel:

- Bringing **change expertise** to ensure a strong plan & successful transition.
- **Teaching your team** to govern the process, hold people accountable, and lead change effectively by building the capability to handle future shifts with confidence.

Our Prosci-certified Change Practitioners help clients define their current and ideal state as part of mapping a realistic, successful change strategy including:

- 1 Organizational change evaluation
- 2 Persona-based change impact assessment
- 3 Integrated, overarching change roadmap

Change isn't just a process; it's an emotional journey. We address **all 7 emotions** people experience, helping leaders meet both the operational and human needs of transformation.

The 7 emotions elicited by change



Adapted from the Kübler-Ross Change Curve®

Practice in action

Driving change & adoption for a successful large scale digital transformation



➔ Challenge

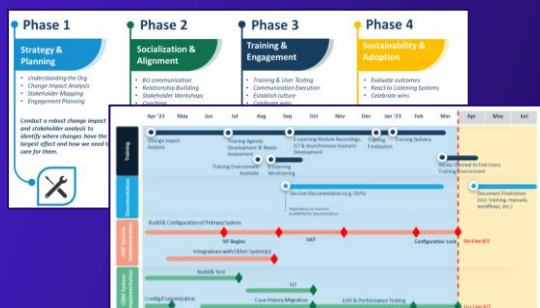
A large integrated healthcare organization was undergoing an extensive digital transformation within their Medicaid business unit. The client required support in managing the technical implementation as well as assessing the impact and preparing the organization to manage upcoming changes. We developed and implemented a change leadership plan ensuring leadership buy-in, featuring robust communications, comprehensive role-based training, and active stakeholder engagement.

➔ Solution

The plan was carefully tailored for the client by incorporating feedback from lessons learned from prior technology implementations and creating personas for impacted stakeholders. It encompassed overarching activities managing organizational awareness and detailed operational readiness activities synced with technical delivery. We received buy-in from the program sponsors and actively engaged leaders through the transformation, driving top-down and cascading communications frequently. We identified change agents across impacted teams driving smoother adoption and established a forum for end-users to submit their questions or concerns.

➔ Results

- Increased organizational awareness, excitement, and acceptance for the transformation across the organization.
- Tailored role-based trainings prepared end-users in advance leading to smooth adoption.
- Provided change leadership – blueprint and templates, enabling the client to drive effective change for future initiatives.



Wavestone utilizes the Prosci ADKAR® Model as a foundation for change leadership solutions

02. Redesigning organizational structure for speed & alignment

The **best innovations, tech, and strategies** only work if teams are supported with the **right processes, structure and operating model.**



Organizational design grounded in business strategy.

Organizational design is broader than layers and levels. Your strategy should consider four key areas and align across your entire value creation spectrum:

1 What your organization knows:

These are your organization's capabilities, how you do work, how you learn, and how you improve as an organization.

3 How your organization is structured:

The reporting lines, team compositions, organizational hierarchies that aid in ensuring work gets done and team members are supported.

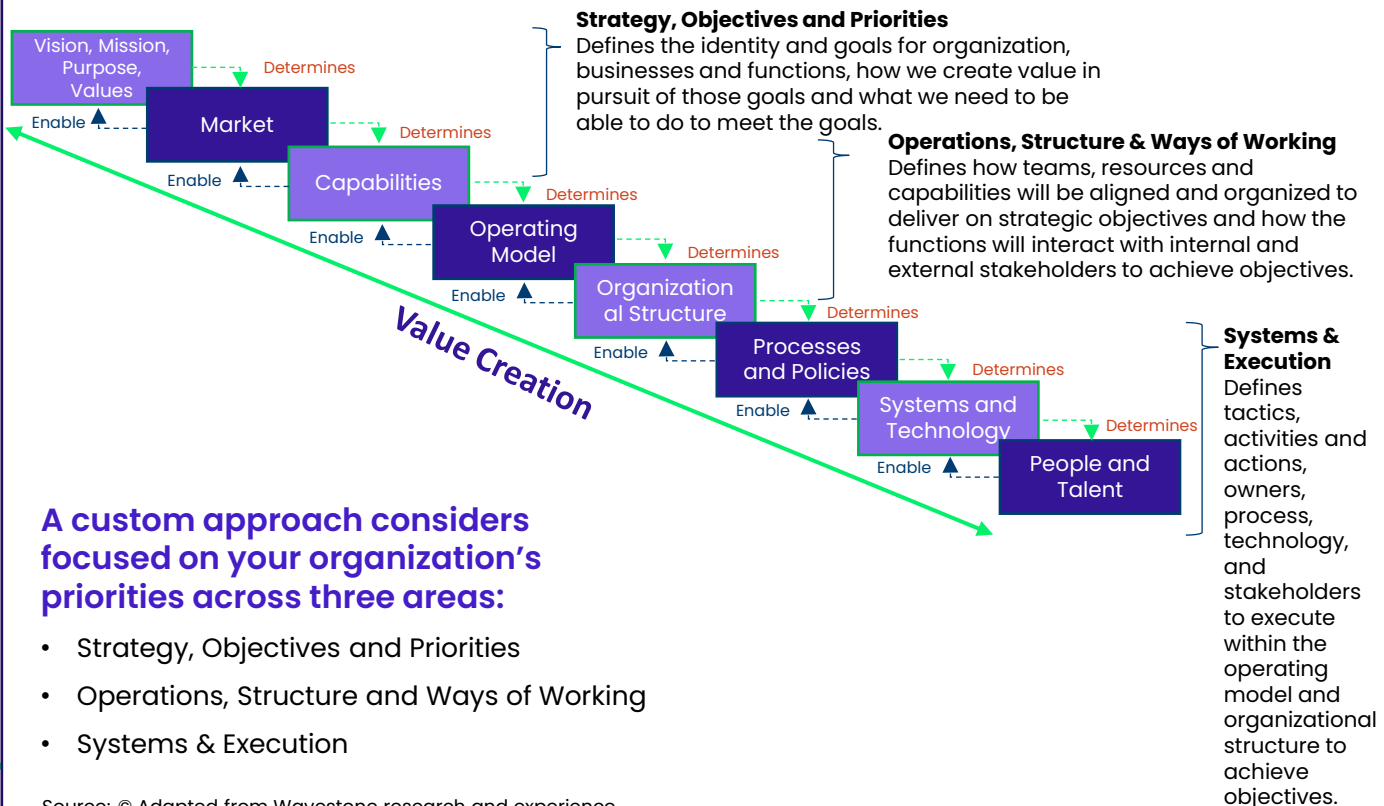
2 What your organization does:

These are the daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually activities your organization conducts to deliver value to your customers.

4 How your organization interacts:

The operating model and expectations for how teams and leaders within your organization work together and support each other.

Organizational Alignment Model



Source: © Adapted from Wavestone research and experience.

Spotlight

Rapidly advance transformation with Org Accelerator™

A structured and proven approach to organizational design that supports your operating model enables a leap-forward in transformation.



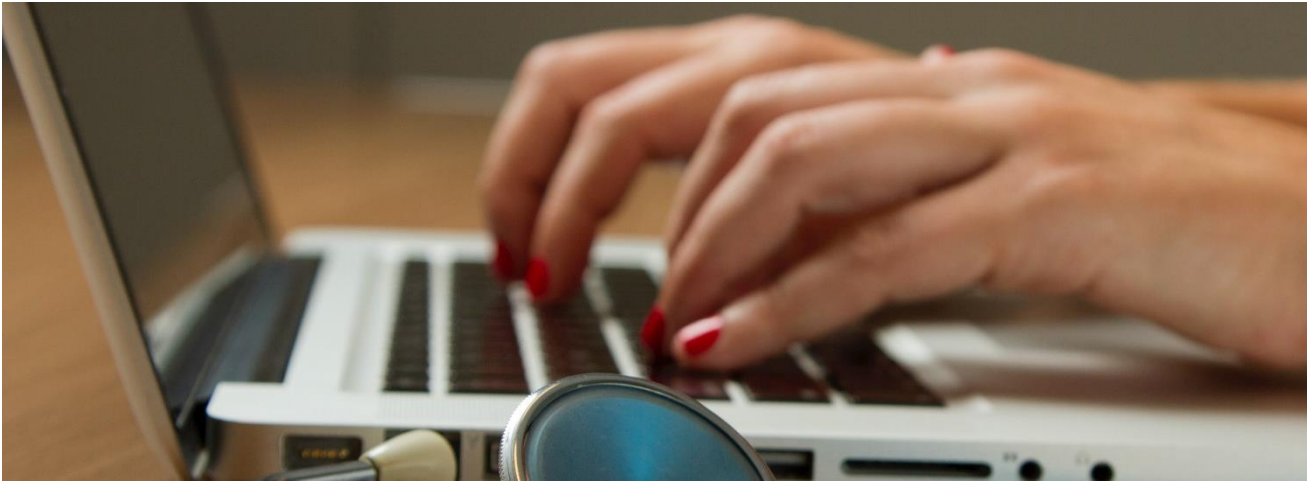
We can partner with you to ensure seamless organizational transformation.

The [Org Accelerator™](#) is a 12-week program designed to rapidly advance transformation and performance including:

- Assessment of current state organization vs. strategic priorities
- Support of operating model and functional alignment
- Sequenced approach to restructuring and reorganization
- Improving efficiency through streamlined processes, technology advancement and upskilling
- Rightsizing roles and skills to realize the strategy
- Realigning roles and decision rights

Practice in action

Organizational transformation for 3:1 return on investment



→ Challenge

Six months post integration, the business unit leadership team of a large healthcare organization was still struggling to unite people.

The client recognized that they had not yet fully realized synergies just as they were considering several new acquisitions. Employees were uncertain about when, and if, things would change in the new organization.

Decision-making was delayed and often required senior leader input. Leaders themselves were diving deep on content, struggling to connect across silos, and feeling overwhelmed.

→ Solution

Wavestone developed a 12-week org acceleration plan. We worked alongside leadership to:

- Assess current state roles and activities
- Develop a capability and activity taxonomy, and the operating model and guiding principles for the future state organization, as well as a roadmap for implementation with value realization
- Redesign the organization, including decision-making factors and structure.

→ Results

In 12 weeks, Wavestone delivered a roadmap to realize a 3:1 return that involved changes in the operating model, structure, processes, and roles. The roadmap provided:

- An operating model that clarified “how they work” and gave the team distinct value with customers.
- A succinct operating rhythm and decision rights to better align and focus work.
- A path to better integrate and realize synergies in the current team.
- A playbook to more quickly and effectively integrate future acquisitions.

03. Future-proofing talent: planning, development & leadership

New leaders will emerge to help organizations move forward. They will **understand workplace sentiment** and **embrace leading** in exciting and thoughtful ways.



Talent planning & development

Optimizing your talent pipeline

What expertise do you want to develop in-house and where does it make sense to bring in external talent?

Look 3–5 years out in your organizational strategy.

Critical business needs:

What are the current and future competitive advantage areas, and how does your talent strategy support this?

Competitive advantage areas will likely need in-house expertise. Best practices include early talent development programs, HIPO programs, structured mentorship programs, up-skilling, re-skilling and even technical training.

Talent pipeline health

Given your 3–5 year strategy, what is a realistic view of talent readiness?

- Does your current strategy prepare the talent you'll need?
- Is there time to develop talent in-house?
- Where and when should expertise be brought in from outside?

Creating an employer-employee win-win

How to align your business needs with your employee's career development goals

The cost of losing an employee is high—especially when they take with them **critical technical or industry expertise**, or when a seasoned leader departs, leaving behind a gap in **trusted relationships and team cohesion**.

The best development programs and talent strategies only work if they align with the career goals of your employees.

The employee view on career growth

Lifetime employment is no-longer the goal. When employees are coached on developing a career, success is usually not painted as a 40-year career with one company. That could be considered the exception not the norm.

Your talent strategy should include answers to these questions:

- How long does it take you to develop an employee in a critical business area?
- What is the incentive for them to stay after this development?
- Does your talent strategy support a model where an employee is only with you for a few years? How can you leverage this to an advantage?
- Do your incentives and recognition flex with your talent strategy?

Talent planning is complex and nuanced and requires significant time and expertise. The right talent strategy itself can become a **competitive advantage** for your business.

Wavestone can help you develop your talent strategy with expertly crafted Talent and Succession Planning Programs.

Spotlight

Transformational leadership

Transformational leaders build inclusive, agile teams that anticipate trends, drive innovation, and thrive in continuous change.

In her HBR article, “The New Rules of Executive Presence”, Sylvia Ann Hewlett writes about her research on the changing definition of Executive Presence (EP); “Confidence and decisiveness have not gone out of style; those are still the most-sought-after traits contributing to gravitas, which accounts for the lion’s share of EP. However, inclusiveness, in all its manifestations—respecting others, listening to learn, telegraphing authenticity—has shot onto the list of the most-valued components of all three dimensions of EP.” (Hewlett, 2025)

Inspire & rally

Effective transformational leadership hinges on inspiring and aligning teams around a shared vision. Yet even the most promising initiatives can stall when faced with resistance. Anticipating and addressing concerns early helps build trust and ensure smoother transitions.

Wavestone helps leaders sharpen the skills they need to drive sustainable change through:

- Leadership, individual, and team assessments
- Practical, multi-faceted leadership development programs
- Executive and Executive Leadership Team (ELT) coaching
- Support in enabling a culture of accountability

Retain & engage

A genuine effort to gather honest feedback builds transparency, fostering trust, goodwill, and stronger collaboration across the organization.

We combine deep organizational behavior expertise with AI-powered tools to help companies build environments where people and performance thrive.

To support this, we offer a range of targeted solutions, including:

- Organizational assessments
- Employee engagement strategies
- Employee experience insights (including sentiment and satisfaction analysis)
- Change readiness evaluations
- Skillset assessment and development planning
- Talent lifecycle optimization
- Enablement and adoption of HR systems (e.g., HRIS, LMS)
- Wellbeing program design and implementation



Practice in action

Establishing leadership best practices for a growing company.



→ Context and objectives

A construction and technology company was growing through the addition of new companies and industries, creating a larger and more complex environment. To successfully adapt to this state of growth, the client engaged Wavestone as their partner to assess and support organization redesign, succession planning and leadership development efforts. Because of the client's strong culture, they wanted to work with a proven partner who had helped similarly structured companies in the past and had a track record of customization.

→ Approach

Our team began by guiding the leadership team through our org redesign process. Once complete, we worked through succession planning exercises to assess current depth of talent and create a talent roadmap for future growth roles. The final component was leadership training to strengthen and align leaders in the critical leadership skills to support growth, including the use of DiSC and individualized assessments and feedback, and a customized learning journal and toolkit.

→ Results

Our strategic workforce planning recommendations led to decisions directly increasing productivity and efficiency throughout the organization. Additional workstreams were developed to continue building on the company's growth.



04. Building an agile, insight-driven culture

With rapid shifts in business and technology, organizations must stay **future-focused** while remaining agile enough to **seize emerging opportunities**.



Building a culture of curiosity, courage and relentless improvement.

Keeping an eye on the horizon:

What methods does your company employ to ensure that you stay up-to-date on your industry and customer landscape? Are you able to pivot quickly to stay relevant?

Below, we give a preview of how to teach agility and improve decision making in your organization. Then, on the right, the Culture Maturity Curve shows the progression of embedding these initiatives throughout the ongoing rhythm of the organization.

Teaching: agility & fast failure

A culture of curiosity builds agility

When curiosity is encouraged, and skills around experimentation are taught, the risk of myopic strategy and group-think are reduced.

Fail fast, reward courage

Creating the systems, habits and psychological safety required to enable a fail-fast culture takes intentional effort.

It is one thing to say, "take risks", or "make mistakes", but it is a far more effective approach to ensure that every part of a teammate's employee experience enables this, especially at critical inflection points like strategy development, idea sourcing, and success/failure response.

Faster decision making

Rigor and structure around your decision-making model improves decision quality and speed and reinforces a culture of "small-bets" and "fail-fast". If you don't have a model in-place to help your organization make decisions, Wavestone can help you build one and then partner with you to incorporate it into your operating model.

The culture maturity curve

Getting to an integrated operating rhythm

As your company matures into new methods of building agility and better decision-making, consider how mature your culture is at sustaining itself. Ultimately, you want to move toward a self-sustaining and thriving culture that integrates curiosity, courage and fast decision making into day-to-day routines, regardless of the leader or department.



Source: © Wavestone research and experience

Practice in action

Activating leadership: A framework for effective change



→ Context and objectives

A global manufacturing company introduced a new multi-year strategy focused on significant investments and ambitious growth. **However, the rapid changes led to widespread uncertainty across the organization.** Employees struggled to understand how to align their individual roles with this strategic shift, leading to difficulties in acting on the new strategy.

As a result, leadership struggled to motivate the workforce to embrace and execute the new direction. **Concerns about job security, evolving roles, and shifting organizational goals made the situation even more difficult.**

→ Approach

Unlike traditional change leadership that focuses only on implementation, our approach emphasized helping leaders activate their strategy by addressing immediate needs and improving business performance. We simplified a complex business plan into a clear and easy-to-understand format, overcoming challenges at every step.

Leaders found our support during the new leader assimilation process especially valuable, creating a positive ripple across the organization. A team bonding session with over 120 participants marked their strongest communication in years. By keeping things simple and effective, we proved that even complex strategies can be successfully activated.

→ Results

- Developed a glossary of strategic terms from a complex business plan, ensuring clarity at all organizational levels.
- Created comprehensive organizational structure communications and toolkits, receiving feedback as "the most comprehensive and clear communication that I have seen come out of [the organization]."
- Introduced two new communication channels to increase touchpoints with leaders.
- Leaders recognized the value of the process that helps new leaders integrate into their team's culture and relationships.

This is just the beginning. Let's continue the conversation!

The way we work is shifting quickly. This ebook offers a snapshot of the forces shaping that change, from the rise of GenAI to evolving digital transformation efforts, organizational design, and executive leadership.

Today's leaders face unprecedented expectations, but also extraordinary opportunities to reshape how their organizations operate, compete, and thrive.

Wavestone offers expertise in the following capability areas:

- Change Leadership
- Organizational Structure & Design
- Transformational Leadership
- Employee Experience

If you or your organization are interested in looking deeper at these topics, or if you have a challenge you would like to discuss with us, please reach out to Judy Johnson.

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Together we can build effective workplace strategies to unlock organization's tremendous potential.

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Methodology

At Wavestone, we build expert insights through the collective teams' breadth and depth of experience globally, and across industries.

Additional Research and Insights

To give a holistic and unbiased approach to research, insights were leveraged from a wide variety of sources including cited industry research, government and non-profit research group data, thought-leaders and journalistic sources.

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About Wavestone

Wavestone is a consulting powerhouse, dedicated to supporting strategic transformations of businesses and organizations in a world that is undergoing unprecedented change, with the ambition to create positive and long-lasting impacts for all its stakeholders.

Drawing on more than 5,500 employees in 17 countries across Europe, North America and Asia, the firm offers a 360° portfolio of high-value consulting services, combining seamlessly first-class sector expertise with a wide range of cross-industry capabilities.

Wavestone is listed on Euronext Paris and recognized as a Great Place to Work®.

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