BRIEF

KSI
KNOWLEDGE · STRATEGY · INNOVATION
STRATEGIC INSTITUTE FOR ASIA PACIFIC

HUMAN RESOURCES LEADERSHIP, TALENT AND TOP EMPLOYERS FORUM

MANAGING AND NAVIGATING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN A NEW ERA

10th August 2026, Berjaya Times Square, Hotel Kuala Lumpur



The Human Resources Leadership, Talent and Top Employers Forum brought together HR professionals, business leaders and technology experts to examine the growing impact of artificial intelligence on human resource management and the future workplace. Discussions explored the practical applications of AI across key HR functions, including recruitment, employee engagement and learning and development, while highlighting the importance of maintaining human oversight, ethical considerations and accountability in its implementation. The session also underscored the need for organisations to establish appropriate frameworks, strengthen workforce capabilities and encourage continuous learning as they navigate the evolving relationship between technology and the future of work.

Welcome Speech

Datuk Seri Mohamed Iqbal Rawther, Chairman, Economic Club of Kuala Lumpur and Deputy Chairman, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific

Navigating Disruption and Transformation: Businesses and HR leaders are operating in an increasingly uncertain environment shaped by geopolitical fragmentation, economic instability, rising costs and rapid technological change. These external developments are no longer distant concerns but have direct implications for organizations, employees and workforce planning. Traditional operating models are becoming less effective as the pace of change accelerates, requiring organizations to adapt more quickly, rethink their strategies and prepare their workforce for new challenges. The growth of AI and technology offers significant opportunities to improve productivity and transform HR functions, but it also raises concerns about job displacement, changing skills requirements and the future role of people in the workplace. As a result, continuous reskilling and upskilling are becoming essential, while HR must move beyond its traditional administrative role and become more closely integrated with overall corporate strategy and organizational transformation.

Building Employers of Choice: To become employers of choice, organizations need to focus on creating stronger alignment between employee goals, corporate objectives and wider economic priorities. Retaining talent requires more than simply offering employment; organizations must recognise high performance, provide meaningful career development and create an environment where employees feel valued and motivated. A strong organizational culture should be inclusive, agile and supportive, while maintaining a sense of human connection as workplaces become increasingly driven by data and technology. While information, knowledge and technology can improve decision-making, the speaker emphasised the importance of human judgement and wisdom in ensuring that decisions remain sustainable in the long term. Ultimately, successful organizations will be those that balance productivity and technological advancement with investment in people, culture and responsible leadership.

Special Presentation:

"Reskilling and Upskilling Malaysia: The Urgent Workforce Imperative"

Speaker: Prof. M. Nazri Muhd, Chief AI Architect & Advisor, AI & Design-Thinking Lab

Early Intervention to Protect and Prepare the Workforce: The presentation focused on the urgent need to prepare Malaysia's workforce for technological disruption before job displacement occurs. It introduced a workforce transition initiative built around the principle of identifying workers who may be at risk, understanding their existing skills and helping them move into new and emerging roles. Rather than waiting for jobs to disappear, organizations and policymakers should intervene early through reskilling, upskilling and personalised career transition pathways. The speaker stressed that the issue should not simply be viewed as job loss, but as job redesign, with many existing roles expected to evolve as AI, automation and new technologies reshape the workplace.

Personalised Reskilling Through AI and Human Support: A major emphasis was placed on moving away from generic, one-size-fits-all training programmes. The proposed approach uses AI to analyse an individual worker's skills, experience, interests, strengths and career

aspirations before identifying suitable future roles and the specific skills required to reach them. This would allow workers with the same current job title to follow entirely different career pathways depending on their individual capabilities and the opportunities available. AI would serve as an intelligence and diagnostic tool, while human mentors, HR practitioners and employers would continue to provide guidance, confidence and real-world employment opportunities.

A National Approach to Workforce Transformation: Prof. M. Nazri Muhd argued that workforce transformation cannot be treated as the responsibility of employers or the private sector alone. The scale of technological and economic change requires collaboration between government, industry, employers, training providers, HR professionals, communities and other partners. The proposed initiative aims to create a broader workforce transition system capable of diagnosing workforce risks, matching people with emerging opportunities, providing relevant training and measuring whether individuals successfully move into sustainable employment. The central message was that Malaysia should act collectively and proactively, ensuring that workers are not left behind by technological change but are supported in moving from uncertainty and anxiety towards readiness, resilience and new opportunities.

Session One: What Top Employers Get Right – Alignment, Retention, Rewards

Speakers: Mr Effie Rizal bin Mustafa Kama, Advisory & Capacity Building Solutions, AI & Design-Thinking Lab (AIDT), KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific; **Ts. Dr. Gajendra Balasingam,** Managing Director, GKK Consultants; **Mr Segar Moses Jeyatsingh,** Chief Executive Officer, Leaderonomics International

Moderator: Dr Christina SS Ooi, Board Member, Regional Board of Malaysia, Chartered Management Institute (CMI) UK

Culture Fit and Bringing Out the Best in Talent: The discussion emphasised that identifying top talent goes beyond assessing technical skills, qualifications or past performance. Organizations must also consider whether an individual will fit within the culture and environment of the company, as even a high performer can become disengaged or underperform if placed in the wrong setting. Leaders were encouraged to understand what motivates each employee, what brings out their best and whether the workplace provides the conditions for them to thrive. Creating psychological safety and giving quieter employees equal opportunities to contribute were also highlighted as important elements of an inclusive and high-performing culture.

Managing People Through Trust and Communication: Strong leadership requires managers to move beyond simply assigning tasks and measuring results. The session stressed the importance of trust, open communication and regular engagement, particularly in hybrid and remote working environments. Remote teams cannot simply be managed in the same way as office-based teams; leaders need to establish clear expectations, maintain consistent communication and create opportunities for employees to remain connected and aligned. The experience of managing teams during and after COVID-19 demonstrated that organizations can sustain performance outside traditional workplaces, provided there is sufficient trust, accountability and clarity around shared goals.

Retaining Talent Through Adaptability, Character and Development: The panel explored the qualities that organizations should look for when identifying and retaining top talent. Beyond technical capability and performance, adaptability, willingness to learn, integrity and character were identified as essential qualities in a rapidly changing workplace. Employees must be prepared to continuously acquire new skills and adapt to new technologies, particularly as AI and automation reshape existing jobs. At the same time, employers have a responsibility to support employees in developing and repurposing their skills so that they remain relevant not only within their current organization but throughout their future careers.

Understanding Employees Before They Decide to Leave: A key message was that employee retention should not begin only when someone submits a resignation letter. Leaders need to regularly engage with their teams, understand changes in employee behaviour and identify signs of disengagement before they become resignation decisions. Regular one-to-one conversations, feedback and "pulse checks" can help managers better understand what employees are experiencing and what may need to change. The panel stressed that leaders should seek to understand employees rather than make assumptions about their motivations, while recognizing that poor management, lack of recognition and a failure to feel valued can all contribute to talent leaving an organization.

Building the Employer of the Future: The discussion concluded that the employer of the future must place people and talent at the centre of business strategy. Organizations should regularly evaluate whether their training programmes, management practices and talent initiatives are producing meaningful results, rather than continuing outdated approaches without measuring their impact. Talent discussions should involve senior leadership and boards, rather than being treated as a secondary HR issue. Organizations also need to strengthen their use of technology, AI and flexible working arrangements while maintaining strong values, communication and human connection. Above all, integrity was described as non-negotiable, with organizations encouraged to recruit and develop people who demonstrate strong character, energy, adaptability and a genuine willingness to learn.

Introductory Remarks:

Tan Sri Michael Yeoh, President, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific

The remarks highlighted the importance of leadership grounded in ethics, integrity and responsibility in navigating an increasingly complex and changing environment. The speaker introduced the session by recognising the experience and contributions of the keynote speaker, noting that his insights would provide valuable perspectives on the role of leaders as models of ethical conduct and integrity. The address also reflected on the importance of responsible leadership across organizations and institutions, particularly in shaping trust, guiding decision-making and setting the standards and values that influence those around them.

Keynote Speaker:

YABhg. Tun Dato' Seri Zaki Tun Azmi, Former Chief Justice of Malaysia & Chief Justice of Dubai International Financial Courts / Chancellor, Multimedia University and MAHSA University

Courage to Lead and Make Difficult Decisions: Tun Dato' Seri Zaki emphasised that leadership is not simply about discussing theories or understanding what should be done, but about having the courage to act when faced with difficult circumstances. Drawing on examples from political leaders and his own professional experience, he stressed that leaders must be prepared to make decisions even when those decisions may be unpopular or carry risks. In his view, a wrong decision can often be corrected, but indecision can leave an organisation or institution paralysed.

Understanding Problems from the Ground Up: A key lesson from the speaker's experience was the importance of personally understanding the realities of an organisation before attempting to reform it. When taking on leadership roles, he described going directly to the ground level, observing operations, speaking to staff and understanding the challenges they faced rather than relying solely on reports or senior management. This hands-on approach allowed him to identify the real causes of problems and make decisions based on practical realities rather than assumptions.

Empowering People and Giving Them Responsibility: Tun Dato' Seri Zaki highlighted the importance of trusting people, giving them clear responsibilities and allowing them the freedom to find solutions. He shared experiences of taking over organisations that were facing significant challenges and explained that, rather than trying to control every detail, he focused on empowering capable individuals and teams to take ownership of their work. However, he also stressed that empowerment must be accompanied by accountability, with leaders providing direction, monitoring progress and ensuring that those given responsibility are prepared to deliver results.

Driving Change Through Decisive and Practical Leadership: Much of the discussion focused on the Tun Dato' Seri Zaki approach to reform and organisational change, particularly in situations involving inefficiency, delays and resistance to change. He stressed that leaders must be willing to challenge outdated practices, simplify processes and introduce practical solutions that address the real problem. His experiences demonstrated that meaningful reform often requires persistence, clear instructions and the willingness to confront resistance, while ensuring that changes are implemented with a clear purpose and measurable outcome.

Encouraging Initiative, Communication and a Culture of Action: In concluding, Tun Dato' Seri Zaki encouraged the audience to create environments where people are confident enough to speak openly, share ideas and challenge decisions when necessary. He stressed that leaders should not surround themselves with people who simply agree with them, as constructive disagreement can prevent mistakes and lead to better decisions. Ultimately, his message was that effective leadership requires courage, initiative and the ability to act decisively, while remaining open to feedback and willing to acknowledge when a decision has been wrong.

Session Two: Moving Beyond Stereotypes Towards Organizational Transformation

Speakers: Mr Anthony Raja Devadoss, Country Managing Director, Korn Ferry Malaysia; **Mr David Heng,** Managing Partner, Global Leadership Dynamics Asia; **Ms Mag Tan,** Director of Staffing, Adecco
Moderator: Dato' Seri Dr. Vaseehar Hassan Abdul Razack, Executive Vice Chairman, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific / Regional Representative, Malaysia and Southeast Asia, Dallah Albaraka Group, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Employee Engagement and the Changing Workplace: The panel highlighted that attracting and retaining employees has become increasingly complex as workplace expectations continue to evolve. Leading employers are moving beyond traditional approaches focused primarily on salaries and benefits, placing greater emphasis on employee engagement, flexible work arrangements, career development, wellbeing and a strong sense of belonging. Organisations that take care of their employees, give them opportunities to grow and create meaningful connections are more likely to build loyalty, commitment and long-term performance.

Transformation Is Fundamentally a People Challenge: While AI, automation and new technologies are driving significant organisational change, the speakers stressed that transformation is ultimately about people rather than technology alone. Organisations can purchase advanced systems and redesign processes, but transformation will not succeed unless employees are willing and able to change how they think, work and collaborate. This requires organisations to build adaptability, develop new capabilities and help employees understand what is changing, why it is changing and what it means for their future within the organisation.

Leadership, Empowerment and Faster Decision-Making: Effective transformation requires leaders to move away from excessive bureaucracy, centralised decision-making and lengthy approval processes. The panel emphasised the importance of building leadership systems that empower people to exercise judgement, take ownership and make decisions within their areas of responsibility. Leaders must create clarity and alignment while giving employees the confidence to act, as organisations that delay decisions through multiple layers of governance risk becoming too slow to respond to changing business environments.

Building a Culture of Learning, Trust and Adaptability: The future belongs to organisations with people who are curious, willing to learn and able to continuously adapt. The discussion emphasised that technical skills will continue to evolve rapidly, making continuous learning, critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration increasingly important. At the same time, trust and honest communication are essential during periods of change, particularly as employees seek reassurance about job security, career opportunities and their role in an AI-driven workplace. Leaders must therefore demonstrate commitment, communicate transparently and create a culture where people feel safe to experiment, contribute ideas and develop new skills.

Malaysia's Opportunity to Transform for the Future: The panel reflected on Malaysia's strengths, including its diverse workforce, established human capital and continued

attractiveness to international investors, while also acknowledging the need to improve organisational agility and decision-making. Reducing unnecessary hierarchy, empowering employees and making greater use of AI to improve productivity could strengthen the country's competitiveness. AI should not simply be viewed as a replacement for people, but as a tool to automate routine work, enhance human judgement and enable employees to focus on higher-value contributions, with future performance increasingly measured by outcomes, value creation and business impact rather than activity alone.

Session Three: Scaling New Heights with Future Ready HR – AI and Technology in HR

Speakers: Mr Nabil Oudghiri, Co-Founder & CTO, brioHR Sdn Bhd; Mr Christoffer Erichsen, Founder & Executive Chairman, Human Inc; Mr Billy Lee, Chief Executive Officer, Green City Developers Ltd
Moderator: PMgr. Ts. Poo Ching Loong, General Manager, YesBoss Corporation

AI as an Enabler, Not a Replacement: The discussion opened with the central question of whether AI will replace traditional software and, ultimately, human workers. The speakers argued that while AI is highly effective at analysing information, interpreting large volumes of data and automating repetitive cognitive tasks, it still lacks human intent, organisational understanding and judgement. Traditional software will continue to play an important role in enforcing rules, maintaining records and running structured processes, while AI can sit between systems and people to undertake more complex knowledge-based work. Humans, however, remain responsible for setting direction, providing context and verifying AI-generated outputs.

Building a Faster and More Efficient HR Function: AI was presented as a practical tool for helping HR professionals save time, effort and resources. Applications include screening large volumes of job applications, matching candidates to vacancies, operating AI-powered chatbots to answer employee questions, supporting onboarding and personalising learning and development. One speaker introduced the concept of a "FAST" approach, emphasising the importance of having the right framework, adaptive systems, systems thinking and transformation. By allowing AI to handle repetitive and administrative work, HR professionals can devote more attention to areas where human judgement and interaction are most valuable.

Human Accountability and Ethical Decision-Making: A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the need for humans to remain "in the loop." AI can structure information, generate drafts, identify patterns and provide recommendations, but users must guide the technology carefully and review its outputs step by step. This is particularly important in sensitive HR decisions involving recruitment, performance management, promotion, dismissal and other decisions that directly affect people. The speakers stressed that ethics must serve as a baseline for AI adoption, with human oversight, accountability and clear safeguards ensuring that efficiency does not come at the expense of fairness, empathy and responsible decision-making.

Preparing People and Organisations for Changing Jobs: The panellists acknowledged concerns surrounding job displacement and predictions that many roles will change significantly as AI

adoption accelerates. However, they argued that the greater opportunity lies in identifying which tasks can be automated and using the time saved to create more value. Employees and organisations were encouraged to experiment with AI, develop new skills and continuously learn rather than simply fear technological change. HR has an important role in supporting this transition by helping workers understand how their jobs are evolving, identifying skills gaps and building a culture in which people are encouraged to test new tools and learn from experience.

HR's Expanded Role in Organisational Transformation: The session concluded that AI may ultimately elevate rather than diminish the role of HR. As organisations rethink how work is designed, how knowledge is retained and how teams collaborate with AI systems and agents, HR will be increasingly important in guiding culture, capability-building, job redesign and workforce transformation. Successful adoption will require more than purchasing AI licences or introducing new software; organisations must build human readiness, establish clear frameworks and ensure employees understand how to use the technology effectively. The future of work, the speakers concluded, is not AI versus humans, but humans, AI and systems working together to create more productive, ethical and human-centred organisations.

Kingsley Advisory and Strategic Initiatives Sdn Bhd
Published in August 2026

Copyright Notice
2026 Kingsley Advisory and Strategic Initiatives Sdn Bhd
All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means; electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission from Kingsley Advisory and Strategic Initiatives Sdn Bhd

Prepared by:
Research Department
KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific

Contact Information:
A-08-01, Plaza Mont Kiara, 2, Jalan Kiara, Mont Kiara, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
T +603 6419 9698
F +603 6419 9683
E info@kasi.asia
W www.kasi.asia