



TECH TRENDS 2026 REPORT



TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS

Rising together.

The Silicon Forest continues to innovate and adapt as AI reshapes our tech workforce, businesses, and communities. Our 2026 Tech Trends Report offers a glimpse of what's ahead for Oregon's tech hub.

Local firms show a strong appetite for growth, projecting healthy revenue gains, steady headcount for most, and targeted investments aimed at addressing their top challenge: overwork. AI, tech modernization, and platform enablement top the priority list for 2026.

At the same time, perception gaps between executives, managers, and individual contributors have widened — particularly around workload, business alignment, and upskilling plans. Communication about the path forward remains a sticking point. Still, tech professionals and leaders align on key strengths: work-life balance and overall business stability.

Looking ahead, the Silicon Forest's success will hinge on aligning leadership vision with lived experience, empowering innovation, and tackling workforce pressures head-on.

John Boone | Founder & CEO
ProFocus Technology



Voices of the Silicon Forest.

The Silicon Forest, a dynamic tech hub rooted in the Pacific Northwest, continues to **innovate authentically and grow in surprising ways**. This year's survey reflects the voices of practitioners and leaders across the region—from innovative startups to long-established enterprises navigating a changing landscape.

Thank you to all of the technology professionals who participated in **ProFocus Technology's sixth annual survey**. Your input allows us to capture an up-to-date view of the trends shaping 2026 for the local tech community.

This report highlights the priorities driving organizations forward, the realities influencing talent and workload, and the areas where innovation is gaining momentum. With **insights into strategy, challenges, and the state of tech teams today**, you'll be able to see how your organization aligns with others across the region.

1 Outlook & Core Metrics

4 Talent Demands

2 Tech Trends & Innovation

5 Compensation Trends

3 Talent Challenges

6 Culture & Diversity

Please note, some figures in the report do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding or question design (e.g., the ability to provide multiple answers). Some participant quotes were edited for clarity and length.



1 Outlook & Core Metrics: appetite for growth.

The Silicon Forest enters 2026 with an **appetite for growth and an expectation of resilience**. Across Oregon and nationally, economic growth remains uneven; tech employment continues to face pressure, and organizations are planning conservatively. Confidence has not disappeared—**58% of Silicon Forest respondents expect revenue growth in 2026**, suggesting they still see opportunity, even as companies continue to tighten budgets, stabilize teams, and prioritize efficiency.

Silicon Forest economic signals.

The mix of optimism and restraint highlighted by local tech professionals and leaders is consistent with state and national data. In late 2025, Oregon's Office of Economic Analysis reported early indicators that the state economy may be stabilizing after a prolonged post-pandemic slowdown.¹ "With **15% of the semiconductor workforce located in Oregon**, and the majority of it focused on researching and designing next-generation chips, plus a groundswell of new startup activity, opportunity abounds," says TAO President & CEO, Skip Newberry. While net job creation stalled in the first half of the year, the innovators of the Silicon Forest remain resilient.¹ That stability mirrors what Silicon Forest leaders are predicting for 2026. While overall revenue expectations remain positive for most, optimism varies significantly by role and company size:

Revenue confidence is highest among executives: 72% of executives expect growth, compared to 46% of individual contributors (58% overall).

Smaller firms are most bullish: 76% of small and 72% of mid-sized companies anticipate revenue growth in 2026.

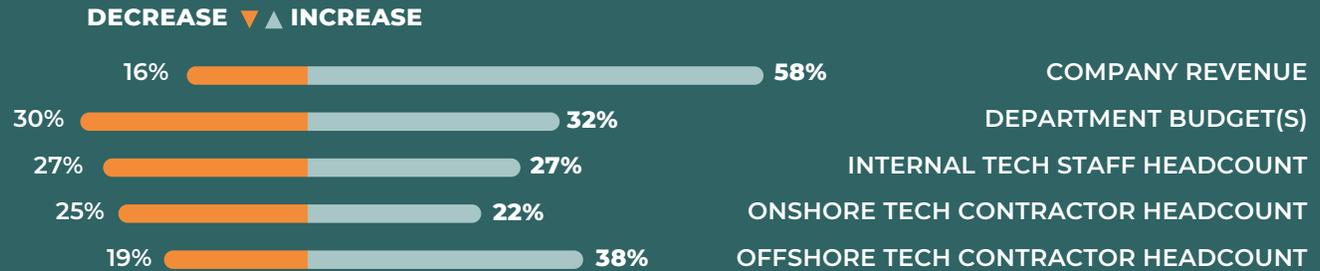
Larger firms show caution: Only 30% of large and 51% of enterprise firms expect growth, many forecasting stability instead.

“Despite national uncertainty and a challenging local business environment, Oregon’s tech sector is generating momentum. Leaders are rallying with shared urgency — from growth in semiconductor startups and AI companies to new education and workforce partnerships — signaling a renewed commitment to strengthening the region’s tech economy.”

SKIP NEWBERRY | PRESIDENT & CEO | TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION OF OREGON

The local forecast.

Expectations for core metrics from all respondents



Potential for growth.

Growth has been slower in Oregon than nationally, reinforcing this measured outlook. Year-over-year GDP growth in Oregon was around 0.8% in 2025, compared to 2.1% nationally, and Oregon’s four-year average GDP growth stood at 1.6% versus 2.7% nationally.¹ **State economists still expect a potential rebound in 2026–2027**, assuming Federal Reserve rate cuts occur in 2026 and additional federal fiscal or tariff-related disruptions are avoided.¹

Headcount and hiring signals.

Key state trends align with what organizations are planning:

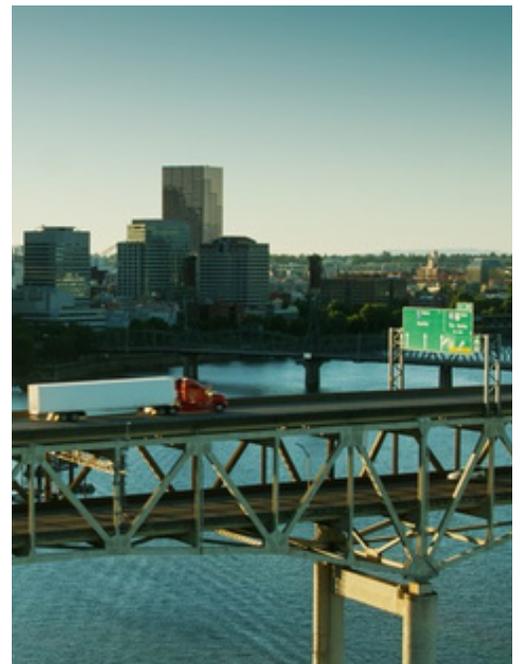
- Oregon’s information sector (**tech**) **declined 2–3% year over year** from September 2024 to September 2025.²
- The information sector lost more than 4,000 jobs between October and November 2025.³
- Oregon’s unemployment rate was approximately 5.2% in late 2025, **edging higher than the national average**.⁴

Silicon Forest hiring trends are consistent with state trends:

- Only 27% expect internal tech headcount growth in 2026
- At the enterprise level, 48% expect headcount decreases
- Department budget increases are modest (32% overall), though executives remain more optimistic (52% expect budget increases, 38% plan to grow headcount)

These patterns suggest organizations are **managing risk and protecting margins rather than adding net-new roles**.

The Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center’s ARIE report rated the **Portland region as among the 20 regions** with the most high-earning entrepreneurs per capita.⁵



National unemployment snapshot.⁶

3.6%

TECH UNEMPLOYMENT

4.3%

OVERALL UNEMPLOYMENT

“To save costs, businesses often turn to offshore teams for new tech solution development, since training offshore teams on legacy systems is time-consuming and costly - and, in some cases where the tech is too old, impossible. This leaves local teams stuck with maintaining the older, customized solutions, which is less rewarding and limits their opportunity to learn new technologies and build the tech capabilities they'll eventually support.

IT DIRECTOR | ENTERPRISE
OUTDOOR APPEARAL
COMPANY IN PNW

Flexibility as a core strategy.

Both economic conditions and survey responses point to flexibility as a defining feature of 2026 workforce strategy. Due to previous years low unemployment, leaders have established locally, Silicon Forest leaders are problem-solving by favoring flexible talent models over permanent expansion:

- **Offshore contractor growth expectations (35%)**
- **Onshore contractor growth expectations (22%)**

This preference reflects continued pressure to balance cost control with delivery capacity—especially as compensation expectations soften and workloads remain elevated.

Delivery tradeoffs.

Many organizations have reduced IT headcount, yet demand for tech delivery hasn't slowed. **Smaller local teams are now supporting larger backlogs**—maintaining legacy systems while validating and integrating new solutions they didn't build. This shift, often tied to offshore or contractor delivery, **creates a hidden support burden and leaves local teams stretched**, with fewer growth opportunities and rising pressure.

Stable headcount & hiring.

78%

ANTICIPATE INTERNAL HEADCOUNT TO STAY
THE SAME OR INCREASE

Long-term outlook.

Oregon employment projections and hiring trends.⁷

140,600+

NEW JOBS BETWEEN
2024 AND 2034



BY 2034, FOR EVERY NEW JOB CREATED BY EXPANDING BUSINESSES, OREGON EMPLOYERS WILL NEED TO FILL ANOTHER NINE JOB OPENINGS DUE TO WORKERS RETIRING, LEAVING THE LABOR FORCE, OR CHANGING OCCUPATIONS.

Resetting expectations for 2026.

Expectations for 2026 aren't dramatically different from last year. Instead, unanticipated pressures in 2025—such as tariffs and other global events—shifted timelines, making 2026 feel like the year many leaders originally planned for. See how the predictions have changed:

Revenue growth expectations have cooled, but remain positive. In 2025, 67% of respondents expected revenue to increase; for 2026, that drops to 58%. This suggests companies still believe in market opportunity, but with greater caution as macro uncertainty, interest rates, and customer buying cycles continue to influence planning.

Budgets are tightening. The share expecting department budget increases fell from 39% to 32%, while those anticipating budget decreases rose from 22% to 30%. This widening gap points to a Silicon Forest trend we're seeing consistently: leaders are prioritizing efficiency, cost controls, and ROI over expansion.

Internal hiring plans have shifted from growth to stability. Going into 2025, 37% expected internal tech headcount growth; in 2026, that drops to 27%, with nearly half now expecting headcount to stay flat. Employers are choosing to stabilize teams rather than add net-new roles.

Talent strategy favors flexibility over permanence. Expectations for onshore contractor growth remain flat year over year (23% to 22% in 2026), while offshore contractor growth remains the most prevalent (33% to 35%). This reflects continued pressure to manage costs while maintaining delivery capacity.

Bottom line.

The Silicon Forest is recalibrating. 2026 plans reflect measured confidence, disciplined spending, and a continued reliance on flexible talent models to navigate uncertainty while protecting growth.

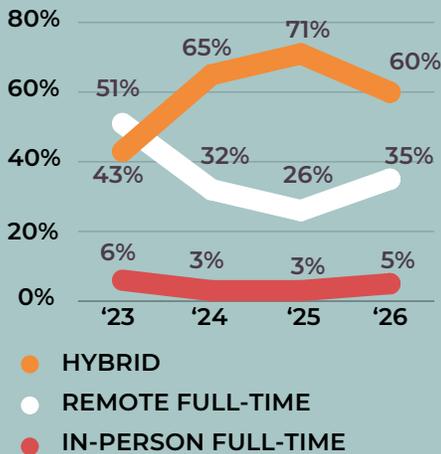
“Heading into 2025, there was real optimism the market would improve, but that shifted quickly in Q1. Many of the leaders we're talking to now **believe 2026 will be the year we all thought 2025 would be** - even with uncertainty still in the mix.

JAMES LUND | PRESIDENT & PARTNER | PROFOCUS TECHNOLOGY



Hybrid is here to stay.

Working arrangements



Where we work.

Despite headlines of RTO mandates, **hybrid work remains dominant (60%)** in the Oregon and Washington tech ecosystems.

Meanwhile, fully remote roles make up 35% of arrangements, and fully in-office setups are holding steady at 5%.

Small & midsize companies are **twice as likely to offer fully remote roles**, while enterprise and large firms favor hybrid.

Success across the river.

Vancouver, Washington, has a thriving tech community tied closely to the Portland metro area. Regional investment and innovation momentum are shaping the broader Portland–Vancouver tech corridor in big ways:

Regional engine:

Vancouver offers a compelling mix of Washington’s tax structure, proximity to Portland’s startup infrastructure, and growing business investment. Many founders and tech leaders operate regionally, leveraging resources from both states while building teams that span the river.

Development strategy:

In early 2025, the City of Vancouver adopted its first comprehensive economic development strategy focused on building generational wealth, strengthening trade-oriented industries, and enhancing opportunities for business expansion — a policy milestone aimed at bolstering startup and tech growth locally.⁸

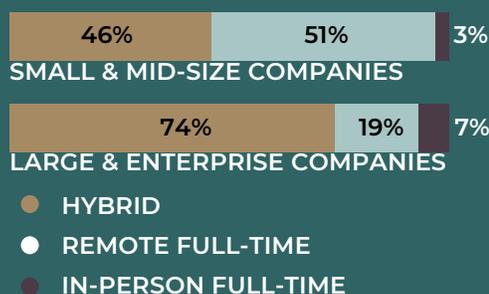


*The Vancouver tech scene has its own flavor and, in a word, I'd say it's a bit **stealthier**. One moment you think you've met all the players and then you find out there's a talented, sophisticated company you never heard of that's just down the street.*

ERIC PREISZ | FOUNDER | ENGRAMIC.IO

Small firms say remote.

Company size arrangements



2 Tech Trends & Innovation: alignment to execution.

In 2026, innovation in the Silicon Forest is **less about experimentation and more about execution**. While support for innovation remains strong—with **71% agreeing employees are empowered to innovate**—confidence in business and tech alignment is beginning to slip, where execution happens most. Roughly **3 out of 4 executives say business and tech are aligned**, compared to about half of managers and individual contributors, a nearly **10% drop** for managers and ICs compared to 2025. As organizations scale, respondents say priorities are shifting toward bringing new services to market, operational efficiency, and AI and automation, signaling a move from exploration to delivery. As anticipated, the **#1 tech project investment is AI and automation**.

2026 strategic priorities.

In 2026, priorities are focused on execution and scale. Across leadership levels, strategic focus narrows in on three execution-oriented priorities:

1. Bringing new services or products to market
2. Leveraging AI & automation
3. Improving the customer experience

Together, these priorities reflect a **balancing act between growth and operational discipline**. Innovation efforts are increasingly tied to tangible outcomes—launching offerings, improving efficiency, and delivering measurable value to customers.

Priorities for tech leaders.

Top 3 initiatives for 2026

- 1 Bringing new services or products to market
- 2 Leveraging AI & automation
- 3 Improving the customer experience



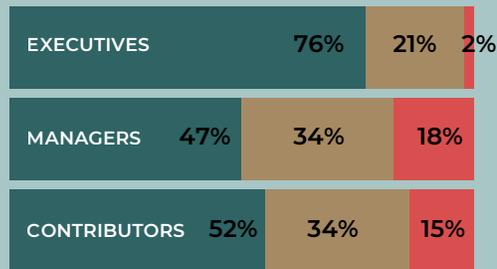
Year-over-year story.

2025: Customer experience and efficiency were tied as the top priorities, while bringing new services to market ranked lower (#4). AI and automation ranked #3.

2026: Bringing new services to market moves into the top tier (#1), while AI and automation gain importance as enablers of delivery at scale. Customer experience and efficiency remain important, but are no longer the primary focus.

Alignment: business leaders & tech teams.

Are the two aligned on priorities?



- AGREE
- NEUTRAL
- DISAGREE

Companies scale, priorities shift.

As organizations grow, innovation priorities evolve from speed to scale.

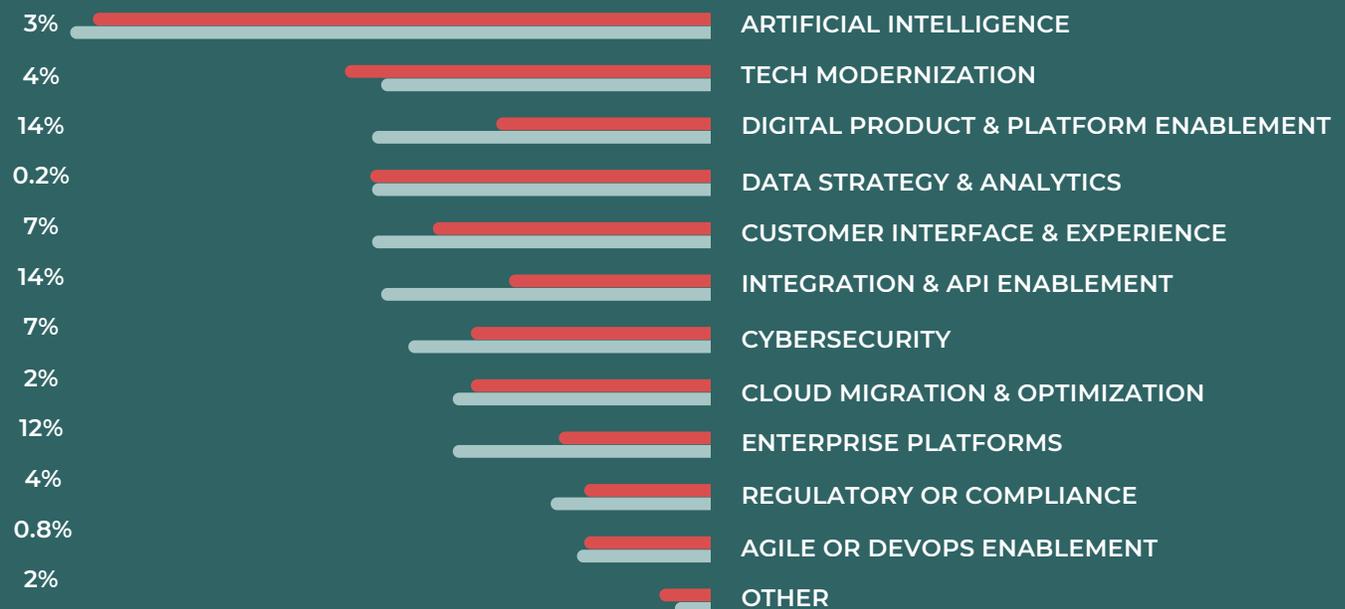
Small & midsize companies' top priority is bringing new services or products to market.

Large & enterprise companies' top priority is Operational efficiency and cost management.

AI and automation become higher priorities as company size increases.

Investments.

Percent difference in expectations for tech project investments.



LEADERS ● INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS



Culture of innovation.

Support for innovation remains a clear strength in the Silicon Forest. With **71% agreeing that employees are empowered to innovate**, and only 6% disagreeing. Local tech professionals also largely agree that their **companies use innovation to disrupt their industries**, with fewer than one-quarter disagreeing.

This broader sense of empowerment suggests organizations have continued investing in a culture of innovation, which becomes increasingly important as **teams are asked to move faster and deliver more tangible outcomes**.

Small but mighty.

Company size strongly influences how innovation is applied.

- Small and mid-sized companies **rank highest in agreeing that their organizations use innovation to disrupt their industry**.
- Respondents at these companies also report **stronger alignment between business leaders and tech teams**.

For smaller organizations, innovation is **viewed less as a support function and more as a core differentiator**.

With fewer layers between strategy and execution, smaller organizations may find it easier to stay aligned and move quickly.

Key trend watch.

Innovation at smaller organizations is more closely tied to growth, speed, and bringing new services to market.

Half of C-suite respondents ranked bringing new services or products to market as their top priority for 2026, and a large share of those respondents came from small and mid-sized companies, influencing how these priorities ranked overall.

This suggests **small and mid-sized organizations** are positioning innovation, specifically new services or products, as a key driver of growth in 2026.

Small but mighty.

Employees are empowered to innovate

LEADERS	73%	21%	6%
CONTRIBUTORS	63%	27%	10%
SMALL & MID-SIZE	76%	20%	4%
LARGE & ENTERPRISE	65%	25%	10%

- AGREE
- NEUTRAL
- DISAGREE

Tools making an impact.

Burnout and tool fatigue are part of the current reality. Most users have adopted AI tools, but teams still rely on strong human judgment to make them effective. As one respondent put it, **“coding tools and agentic platforms have shown some reduction in software delivery time, but only when skilled software engineers are retained as drivers.”**

All about AI.

Nationally, **65% of organizations report regularly using generative AI** in at least one business function, most commonly for process automation and product development, according to McKinsey & Company’s 2024–2025 Global Survey on AI.⁹ The Silicon Forest is no different, ranking it the #2 priority and #1 investment for 2026.

AI focuses and barriers.

For local organizations prioritizing AI, the top two focuses were process automation and product features, while the biggest barriers cited were **data quality and talent**. Several VPs and directors also voiced concerns over change management and proficiency on their current teams. These local insights align with national trends: according to Gartner’s AI Adoption and Scaling Survey, **more than half of U.S. organizations cite data quality and a lack of skilled talent as their top barriers to scaling AI**, even as adoption accelerates.¹⁰

69%
INVESTING
IN AI IN 2026

65%
REGULARLY
USE AI AT
WORK

“Honestly it’s hard to keep up - even as a tech leader, by the time I discover something, it doesn’t feel ‘new’ anymore.

ANONYMOUS | PNW EXECUTIVE

Tool recommendations.

The most common technology and tools recommended or used by respondents

Databricks Anthropic Custom LLMs
Claude Cursor Snyk Snowflake
Copilot Agentic AI Qualtrics
Linear GitHub AI ChatGPT New Relic RAG
Slack PyTorch OpenAI Microsoft Fabric
Amazon Q

Leveraging AI.

Across company sizes, respondents describe using AI less as a standalone strategy and more as a force multiplier to support speed, efficiency, and product delivery. Here are the top ways AI is being leveraged in the Silicon Forest in their own words:

Using AI, in your own words.

Productivity & Efficiency

“To automate daily workflow tasks. Conduct deep research.”

“Lower recruiting costs, speed up project bids.”

“Automating repetitive tasks. Doing research with large datasets. Identifying trends that may not be obvious.”

Structure & Governance

“Standardized on Copilot; identified use cases and pilots.”

“Limited Proof of Concepts and a couple in production. The biggest factor is ROI.”

“Inconsistently and without a strategic goal or objective.”

Software Delivery Speed

“AI accelerates our software development.”

“Using AI (GitHub Copilot) to improve automation delivery velocity.”

“Very light coding, SQL queries, insight into bugs and unfamiliar code.”

Human Still Required

“AI CLI coding tools and agentic platforms have shown some reduction in software delivery time, but only when skilled software engineers are retained as drivers.”

“All usage is required to have critical thinking applied to it; as LLM's will create incomplete, and imaginative results.”

“Our team of software engineers has highly specific domain expertise, but does occasionally use generative AI for code assistance.”

Products & Go-to-Market

“Agentic AI will be a key element of our SaaS product when we go to market in 2026.”

“We’re building a product that includes Agentic AI.”

“Employees use AI to increase productivity, and we are looking for ways to embed AI in our products.”

Uneven Adoption

“Yes, but in early stages.”

“We have not meaningfully engaged with AI.”

“We use it when the problem implicates it. That is not very often.”

“ The days of relying on rigidly siloed roles are ending as AI quickly blurs the hard boundaries across development teams. We need to trade gatekeeping and control for empowerment and humility. It's time to figure out how to help everyone on the assembly line work faster.

At Trimble, teams that are helping each other out and leaning into the blurred roles are excelling. Teams sticking to old paradigms will struggle and likely face impending obsolescence.

JEFF DOOLITTLE | PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT | TRIMBLE

3 Talent Challenges: capacity constraints.

Across the Silicon Forest and the broader Pacific Northwest, tech leaders are navigating a market that feels **less constrained by access to skills—and more defined by day-to-day pressure on their teams**. In 2026, overwork rises to the top of the talent challenge list, with many ranking it as their number one issue, and nearly half of leaders saying their tech teams are overworked. Wage pressure closely follows, with **47% reporting upward pressure on tech compensation**, reinforcing how competition shows up internally as much as externally. Together, these signals point to a common theme: talent challenges today are less about finding people and more about **sustaining the teams** already in place.

The most pressing challenges.

Overwork stands out most clearly. More than **half of respondents ranked team overwork in their top three challenges**, and 25% ranked it as their number-one issue, making it the most frequently cited top concern in the dataset. Competitive offers and wage pressure followed closely, ranked #1 by 17% of respondents. Finding talent and retaining talent remain persistent challenges, each receiving 15% of #1 rankings, reinforcing that hiring and retention pressures continue but are now closely intertwined with workload and compensation dynamics.

Hiring gaps continue to play a role in that strain. In 2026, nearly **30% of respondents report frequently having unfilled tech roles**, down from nearly four in ten leaders in 2025. The pressure has eased compared to last year, but many organizations are still operating with leaner teams—helping explain why overwork remains the most visible challenge.

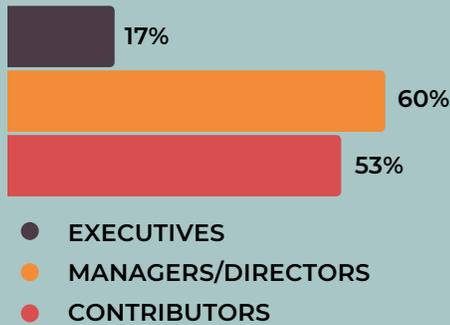
Tech talent constraints.

Leaders' top challenges related to tech talent

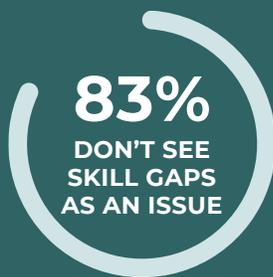
- 1 Team being overworked
- 2 Competitive offers or wage pressure
- 3 Finding talent
- 4 Retaining talent
- 5 Team morale

Out of touch.

Agree their company's top challenge is tech teams being overworked



Tech skills story.



Who is overworked?

While overwork ranks as the top overall talent challenge, perception varies sharply by role.

- Only 17% of C-suite respondents agree their teams are overworked
- In contrast, 60% of managers and directors agree
- 53% of individual contributors also report overwork

People closer to the work, managers and individual contributors, are **reinforcing overwork as one of the most broadly acknowledged pain points** in 2026.

However, the gap between the C-suite (17%) and managers (60%) suggests a disconnect between executive perception and the lived experience of mid-level management. This potentially shows misalignment of expectations for the tech team's workload.

Wage pressure consensus.

Wage pressure stands out as the only challenge where the majority of respondents—**regardless of role in their organizations**—consistently ranked as one of their top three challenges.

- Nearly half of leaders (47%) report experiencing upward wage pressure for tech talent
- Competitive offers and wage pressure are ranked #1 by 17% of respondents overall

By position:

- Managers feel wage pressure most acutely, with 53% agreeing
- Individual contributors follow at 44%
- C-suite leaders report 41% agreement

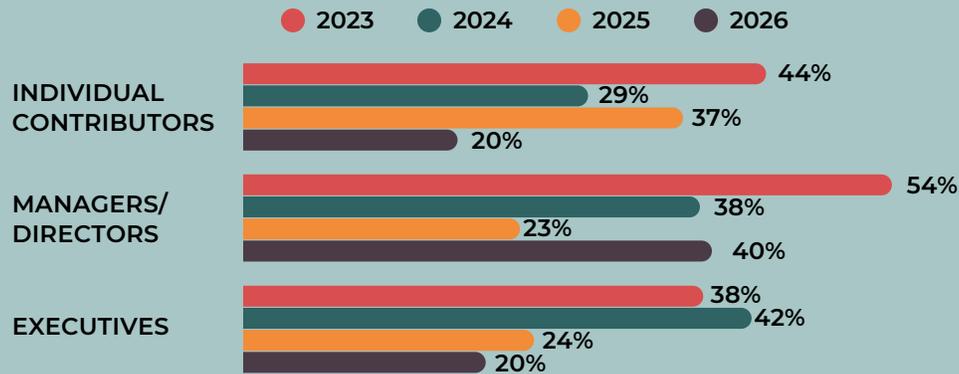
Weighted averages reflect the same pattern, showing **wage pressure intensifies as responsibility for hiring and retention increases.**

Skills shortages.

Despite continued discussion of skills gaps in the market, tech skills shortages are not viewed as a leading barrier in 2026. 83% don't feel strongly about skills gaps, indicating other constraints—such as workload, compensation pressure, and prioritization—are viewed as more immediate blockers. This marks a notable shift from 2025.

Skills shortage?

A tech skills shortage keeps my team from meeting its key goals.



Primed for growth.

While tech skills shortages are less frequently cited as an immediate barrier in 2026 compared to other challenges, investment in future skills remains a priority at the leadership level. This year, **65% of C-suite respondents say their company plans to upskill tech talent**, a slight increase from 2025, when 62% of leaders reported similar plans.

In 2026, while 65% still see plans to upskill talent, only 41% believe training is sufficient, signaling a **growing gap between intent and execution**.

The sustained—and growing—focus on upskilling suggests that organizations continue to prepare for future capability needs, even as skills gaps are no longer viewed as the primary constraint for reaching their goals.

Future skills.

2x

EXECUTIVES ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO REPORT PLANS FOR UPSKILLING

“One of the most rewarding things in IT leadership is watching someone on your team grow into a new role. I'll always prefer developing internal talent over external hiring — these people already know your environment, your culture, and your business.

But let's be honest about the hard part: finding the time to mentor and train while keeping the lights on. Production doesn't pause because someone's learning a new skill. Tickets don't stop. Outages don't wait.

The real staffing challenge in tech isn't just finding talent — it's creating space for the talent you already have to develop, without burning out the team covering the gaps. It's worth the effort. Every time.

CONRAD PALMER | SENIOR IT MANAGER | FOREST CITY TRADING GROUP



Talent tension by company size.

Small businesses (1–100 employees)

- Struggle most with finding talent, driven by limited visibility and recruiting resources.
- 49% disagree that skills shortages prevent goal achievement.

Midsized companies (101–500 employees)

- Most affected by overworked teams, reflecting the transition from scrappy growth to more complex operations.
- 56% disagree that skills shortages are a primary blocker.

Large companies (501–5,000 employees)

- Face stronger retention challenges, often tied to internal mobility and unclear career paths.
- Show higher agreement that skills shortages impact goals (17–24%).

Enterprise organizations (>5,000 employees)

- Experience the highest pressure from wage constraints, retention challenges, and morale concerns.
- 61% agree they face upward wage pressure—the highest agreement rate in the entire dataset.
- 56% agree teams are overworked, with the highest weighted average (4.41).
- Nearly one-quarter rank wage pressure as their #1 challenge.

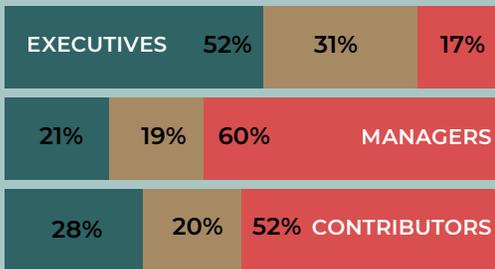
Talent tension by role.

% of challenges ranked in the top 3 by role



Overwork.

Are tech teams are overworked



- NEUTRAL
- DISAGREE
- AGREE



Talent challenges by position.

Managers are nearly twice as likely as executives to flag burnout, retention, and morale as urgent issues

Individual contributors are more than three times as likely as the C-suite to rank turnover as a top challenge

Executives are twice as likely as other roles to prioritize upskilling and future skills

Trends to watch.

Overwork and wage pressure are no longer secondary effects of hiring difficulty—they are now **the core experience shaping how teams operate day to day**. When teams remain stretched for long periods, pressure doesn't just affect morale; it begins to **influence turnover** and the ability to sustain performance over time.

At the same time, the **gap between executive perception and frontline experience** suggests much of this strain builds quietly. Skills may be available, and hiring may feel “manageable,” but the data shows that many organizations are still operating with little margin for error. In 2026, the defining talent challenge is not simply finding people—it's how long teams can continue to **absorb pressure before it starts to show up in outcomes**.



*Over the last 10 years, it seems as if the industry has shifted more towards "assembly-line development" that has become **process-heavy and silos developers**. In addition, many (existing) patterns and practices often don't optimize a high-performance SaaS platform. Our focus is to find developers that are **passionate, relentless, and curious**, then expose them to all facets of development, challenge them to think differently, and learn the inner working of all the systems we use.*

MATT AMAN | CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER | HAWKSOFT

4 Talent Demands: flexibility expected.

When it comes to attracting and retaining tech talent in 2026, the priorities are clear — and they've shifted. In 2025, remote work ranked #1. This year, **the top spot belongs to Salary & Compensation** (73% very important), followed closely by Meaningful Work (70%) and then Remote Work (65%). Rounding out the top five are Benefits (60%) and Flexible Hours (56%).

The reordering matters. Flexibility remains essential, but compensation has reclaimed its position as the strongest signal in the market. At the same time, **meaningful work continues to track almost neck-and-neck with pay**, reinforcing that tech professionals are evaluating both financial stability and impact when making decisions.

Talent market dynamics.

These expectations influence mobility. The percentage of individual contributors actively seeking a job change **jumped from 11% last year to 35%** this year, and overall, 57% of professionals are at least open to leaving. This shift isn't just about better pay or benefits. Market dynamics — including ongoing tech layoffs and national policy changes creating economic uncertainty — are influencing behavior. As one local recruiter put it, **“Many professionals have taken roles below their pay or skill level, and most people aren't willing to wait and see if they're in the next round of layoffs.”** In this environment, competitive compensation and steady work aren't just advantages — they're critical to retention.

What talent wants.

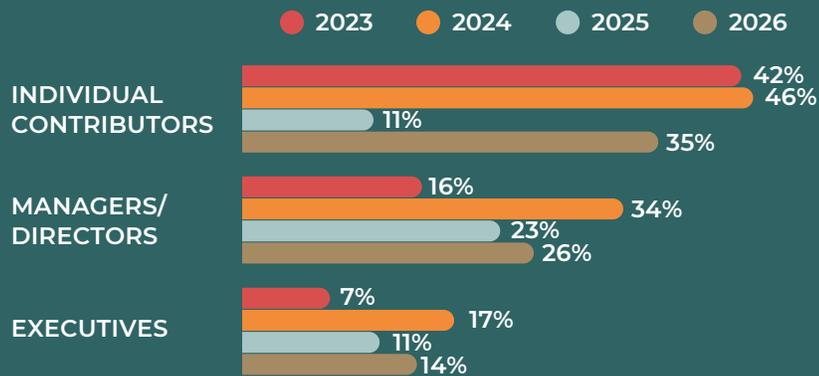
Top 5 talent attraction and retention factors

- 1 Salary/compensation
- 2 Meaningful work
- 3 Remote work
- 4 Flexible hours
- 5 Benefits



Stay or go?

Actively seeking a job change



Quiet quitting.

The hiring market hasn't felt predictable — and talent behavior reflects that. In 2026, while 43% say they're not planning to change jobs, nearly six in ten are at least open to leaving. That's a **majority of the workforce quietly evaluating options**, even if they're not all actively applying.

The most dramatic shift is at the Individual Contributor level. More than one-third are actively seeking a new role — up from just 11% last year. In other words, **ICs are now more than three times as likely to be actively job hunting** compared to a year ago. Managers and Directors fall in the middle, with roughly one in four (26%) actively looking, while Executives remain the least mobile at about one in seven (14%). Company size tells a similar story. At larger organizations (500+ employees), four in ten professionals are actively searching, putting pressure on retention at scale.

Cautious but restless.

These local trends are unfolding alongside mixed national signals. According to recent [CompTIA analysis](#), **the tech unemployment rate rose to 3.6%** — still below the overall unemployment average — even as certain tech occupations saw job losses.¹¹ According to a [2026 survey by Staffing Industry Analysts](#), nearly three-quarters of U.S. tech professionals are considering a job change this year, yet **41% feel confident they would land a better role if they switch**.¹² The picture that emerges is a workforce that is cautious but restless — open to opportunity, even while uncertain about outcomes.

National trends.¹²

74%

PLAN TO
CHANGE
JOBS IN
2026

52%

APPLIED TO
JOBS BELOW
SKILL LEVEL

66%

IMPACTED
BY LAYOFFS
IN TECH

Unique benefit offerings.

When we asked respondents about unique benefits at their organizations, clear patterns emerged by company size.

Small companies emphasize autonomy and trust — remote-first models, flexible schedules, profit sharing, and human-centered cultures over formal programs.

Midsized companies add more structure to flexibility, offering hybrid models, unlimited PTO, stipends, and intentional culture initiatives.

Large companies provide robust benefits like sabbaticals, equity, and professional development — but feedback reflects **uneven execution and trust concerns**.

Enterprise organizations lean heavily on total compensation, tuition reimbursement, and large-scale perks, though responses suggest ongoing frustration around retention and people experience.

Notably, **small and midsized firms are twice as likely to offer fully remote options** compared to larger organizations.

Job hopping for higher pay.

A final pattern reinforces the mobility story. Professionals who changed jobs 6–9 times over their careers show the highest earning potential, with average salaries around \$142,000.¹³

Those with **10+ job changes see average compensation decline** — suggesting excessive job hopping may eventually limit earning growth.¹³ The signal is clear: strategic movement drives salary progression.

It is clear that **compensation anchors decisions, meaningful work differentiates employers, and flexibility remains expected**. The organizations that balance all three will hold the strongest position in a still-mobile market.

“Flexibility may attract talent, but culture is what keeps it. The data showing strong work-life balance and flexibility is encouraging, but the lower morale in larger organizations is a reminder that **scale can sometimes dilute connection**. The real differentiator today isn't perks, it's whether leaders build trust, communicate clearly, and create an environment where people can grow without burning out.

SABY WARAICH | CIO, CISO |
CLACKAMAS COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



“ In 2026, we’re seeing renewed confidence in the talent market, with competitive pay returning as the top priority. Yet meaningful work remains a powerful differentiator and flexibility is still an expectation — not a perk. Even amid high-profile layoffs, leaders who want to secure top tech talent must offer market-aligned compensation and be **bold in articulating the impact and opportunity their organization provides.**”

JENNIFER WALDRIP | VP CLIENT & TALENT SERVICES,
PARTNER | PROFOCUS TECHNOLOGY

5 Compensation Trends: a story of tension.

Compensation in 2026 is not a story of dramatic increases or sharp declines. It's a story of tension. On one hand, most organizations expect pay to remain steady. On the other hand, leaders continue to feel upward wage pressure—and tech professionals expect significant raises to make a move. Salary remains one of the most powerful drivers of attraction and retention, yet many employees aren't convinced their pay is truly competitive. Beneath the surface of “cautious stability,” three forces are shaping the market:

- Flat compensation planning amid ongoing **wage pressure**
- Growing **expectations for 20–25% increases** to change roles
- A **perception gap** around what “competitive” really means

The result is a compensation environment that appears **stable on paper but remains highly sensitive to market dynamics on a local, national, and global scale.**

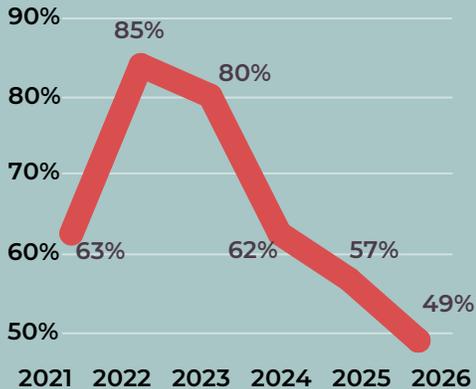
Plans for pay.

Most organizations are heading into 2026 with steady compensation plans. In our survey, 68% expect tech-team pay to remain the same, while 26% anticipate increases. Very few expect reductions. At face value, this suggests cautious stability. But beneath that surface, **nearly half of all respondents (47%) report experiencing upward wage pressure for tech talent.** Competitive offers and wage pressure ranked as the #2 challenge overall—reinforcing that even in a controlled budget environment, the market continues to push compensation higher for in-demand skills. The tension is clear: planning may be flat, but competition is not.



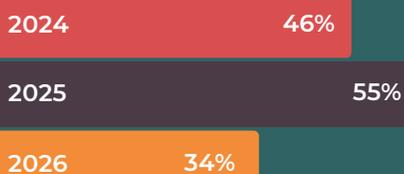
Wage pressure.

Leaders reporting the pressure to raise wages year-over-year



Market-driven pay.

Respondents who agree their company offers competitive compensation



Post-pandemic ease.

Leaders reporting upward wage pressure have declined for four consecutive years. After peaking at 85% in 2022 (up from 63% in 2021), wage pressure fell to 80% in 2023, 62% in 2024, 57% in 2025, and now 49% in 2026. While pressure has clearly **eased from its post-pandemic highs, nearly half of executive and senior leaders still report feeling upward wage pressure**—indicating that competitive compensation remains a meaningful factor, just no longer at peak intensity.

High expectations.

Salary remains one of the strongest levers in attraction and retention. **Nearly three-quarters (73%) rate compensation as very important** when considering opportunities.

However, the threshold to move is high. More than **half of professionals expect at least a 20% increase to change roles**. Another 17% would consider a 10% increase. Only 19% would move for the same salary, and just 13% would accept a pay cut. **Career moves are being weighed carefully**, and financial upside must meaningfully outweigh perceived risk.

Pay perception.

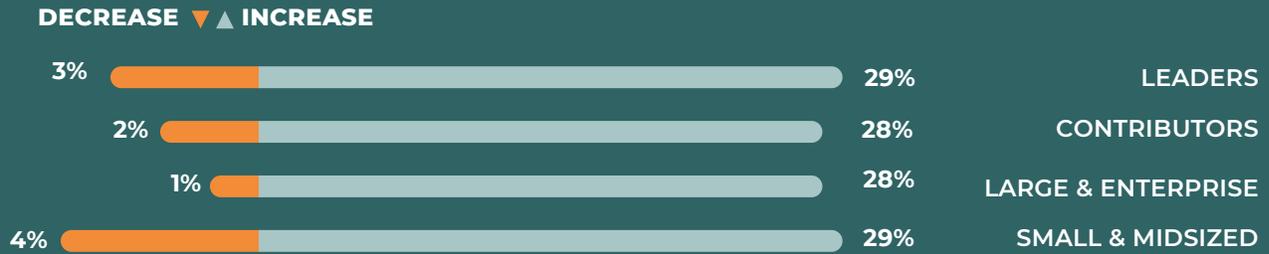
Compensation competitiveness is mixed—but leans cautious. Just 34% agree their company offers competitive pay, while more than 65% are neutral or disagree.

This points to a perception gap. Compensation packages may benchmark competitively against market data, yet employees may not feel that competitiveness in practice. In a market where salary expectations are elevated and external offers remain visible, **perception carries real weight**.

For leaders, this reinforces that compensation strategy is not only about numbers—it's also about transparency, communication, and clarity around total rewards.

Workload alignment.

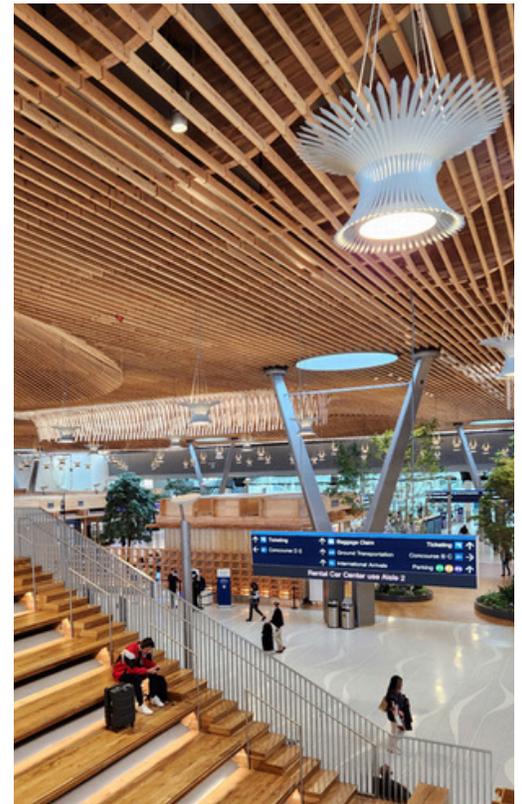
Expectations for hours worked in 2026



Tech career context.

Broader industry data reinforces the complexity of today's compensation environment. According to the Salary Guide from Dice, average tech salaries reached \$112,521 in 2024.¹³ While that reflects steady nominal growth over two decades, inflation-adjusted purchasing power tells a more restrained story. **When accounting for inflation, today's average tech salary is roughly equivalent to what professionals earned in 2005.**¹⁴

In other words, compensation has largely kept pace with inflation—but has not meaningfully outpaced it. Compared to broader U.S. household income trends, **tech professionals have maintained stronger relative positioning**, but real gains have plateaued.¹⁴ This context helps explain why expectations remain elevated. Even if salaries have increased year over year, many professionals do not feel materially ahead.



Workforce insights.

PNW predictions and perspectives from all respondents

28%
EXPECT AN INCREASE IN HOURS WORKED

47%
EXPECT UPWARD WAGE PRESSURE

34%
AGREE THEIR FIRM HAS COMPETITIVE PAY

National salaries.

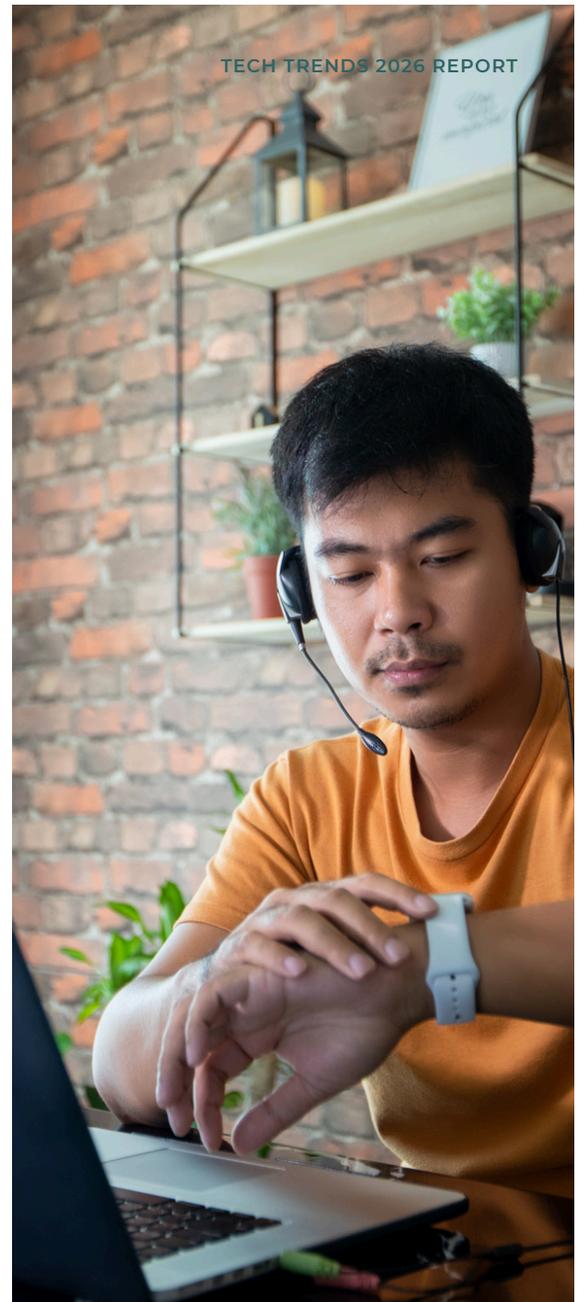
Below is national salary data from trusted sources. By averaging the data and analyzing percentiles, we provide a clearer picture of how compensation varies by experience level:

- **25th percentile:** Experienced professionals who are advancing their skills and experience, and building autonomy in their roles.
- **50th percentile:** Experienced professionals who can perform core responsibilities independently, confidently navigate processes, and have a solid understanding of their field.
- **75th percentile:** High performers who go beyond job expectations, bring advanced expertise, and are well-positioned for career advancement.

Portland salaries are higher.

12%

ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE ¹⁵



National Salary Guide.

PERCENTILE	25TH	50TH	75TH
LEADERSHIP & EXECUTIVE ROLES			
Chief Information Officer	\$221,500	\$251,750	\$308,000
Chief Information Security Officer	\$206,125	\$266,731	\$277,625
Chief Technology Officer	\$212,892	\$253,600	\$277,875
Vice President	\$182,775	\$194,500	\$223,109
Director	\$163,315	\$165,000	\$187,743
Manager	\$140,000	\$150,000	\$163,497

PERCENTILE	MID LEVEL			SENIOR LEVEL		
	25TH	50TH	75TH	25TH	50TH	75TH
SOFTWARE ENGINEERING						
AI/ML Engineer/Architect	\$149,136	\$170,750	\$192,044	\$171,538	\$189,280	\$208,655
App Engineer/Architect	\$100,130	\$110,384	\$120,639	\$132,500	\$137,500	\$142,500
Mobile Engineer/Architect	\$104,150	\$116,902	\$132,677	\$153,998	\$169,485	\$200,377
QA Engineer	\$87,351	\$102,500	\$114,230	\$116,143	\$128,625	\$151,988
Software Engineer/Architect	\$109,250	\$142,000	\$144,050	\$153,875	\$198,684	\$235,075
PROJECT, PRODUCT, & TEAM MANAGEMENT						
Product Manager	\$113,278	\$115,875	\$121,955	\$131,775	\$161,700	\$184,680
Project Manager	\$104,540	\$114,456	\$130,444	\$116,279	\$133,529	\$146,327
Scrum Master	\$111,796	\$119,342	\$125,394	\$133,516	\$139,886	\$144,093
DATA & ANALYTICS						
Business Analyst	\$95,313	\$106,400	\$111,263	\$112,288	\$124,075	\$142,313
Data Analyst	\$95,848	\$106,750	\$117,495	\$118,687	\$128,833	\$141,167
Data Engineer/Architect	\$141,625	\$156,250	\$168,500	\$156,644	\$175,769	\$203,875
Data Scientist	\$125,826	\$145,902	\$169,605	\$163,437	\$188,490	\$219,620
CLOUD, SYSTEMS, & INFRASTRUCTURE						
Cloud Administrator	\$99,375	\$105,625	\$121,688	\$121,938	\$132,700	\$149,815
Cloud Engineer/Architect	\$149,380	\$153,210	\$157,040	\$151,304	\$171,750	\$174,130
Network Administrator	\$86,675	\$92,000	\$98,688	\$109,735	\$114,020	\$119,982
Network Engineer/Architect	\$123,500	\$137,000	\$152,750	\$167,557	\$196,312	\$242,000
Site Reliability Engineer/Architect	\$130,630	\$140,000	\$151,061	\$162,900	\$170,100	\$177,300
Systems Administrator	\$81,503	\$91,632	\$103,526	\$110,173	\$116,115	\$119,269
Systems Engineer/Architect	\$101,406	\$121,500	\$123,750	\$121,507	\$127,877	\$134,248
SECURITY & DEVOPS						
DevOps Engineer	\$132,775	\$144,370	\$148,740	\$157,113	\$167,325	\$179,988
Security Analyst	\$108,087	\$118,005	\$137,913	\$133,820	\$145,439	\$155,250
Security Engineer/Architect	\$131,750	\$145,000	\$167,875	\$148,989	\$157,250	\$220,000
TECHNICAL SUPPORT						
Help Desk	\$52,175	\$58,975	\$64,875	\$70,850	\$76,375	\$87,315
Technical Support Analyst	\$55,500	\$66,750	\$68,100	\$78,250	\$81,661	\$92,760

Salary Sources: Robert Half Salary Guide, Mondo Salary Guide, Motion Recruitment Salary Guide, CompTIA.^{15, 16, 17, 18}

6 Company Culture: impactful adjustments.

Company culture in the Silicon Forest is being shaped by the same forces influencing tech teams nationwide: sustained workload pressure, evolving expectations around flexibility, and a sharper focus on transparency and stability in an uncertain market.

Nationally, burnout remains elevated across the tech industry. A 2025 Indeed workplace survey found nearly **60% of tech professionals** report high levels of burnout, compared to roughly **45% across the broader U.S. workforce.**¹⁹

The local story.

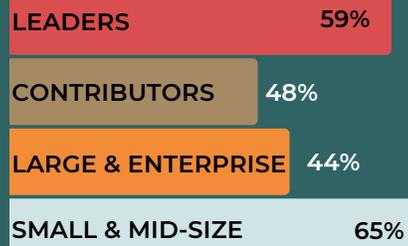
Silicon Forest data reveals a nuanced local story. Nearly half express concern about their tech teams being overworked. Executives consistently rate morale, culture, and growth opportunity more positively than contributors. Small and midsize companies report stronger perceptions of transparency, and large and enterprise organizations report stronger signs of stability.

In 2026, culture is less about perks and more about balancing new technology, burnout, and the need for “a human in the loop.” Silicon Forest organizations are navigating growth carefully, balancing innovation and AI-driven efficiency with the human realities of burnout, transparency, and trust.



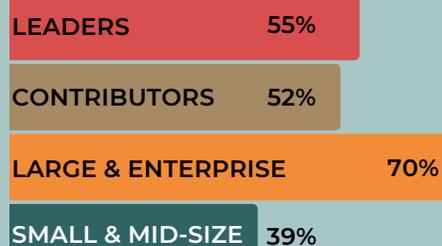
Company transparency.

Ranked company transparency above average or excellent



Business stability.

Ranked company stability / solvency above average or excellent



Transparency in tech.

Transparency perceptions vary meaningfully by both role and company size. Fifty-nine percent of leaders rate company transparency as above average or excellent, compared to 48% of contributors. The gap widens by company size: 65% of small and midsize organizations receive strong transparency ratings, compared to 44% of large and enterprise companies. Smaller organizations appear to benefit from proximity — **fewer layers between decision-makers and teams**. In larger environments, communication complexity may dilute clarity.

Business confidence.

Confidence in financial stability also varies by company size. **Seventy percent** of respondents at large and enterprise companies rank their organization's stability or solvency as above average or excellent. That compares to 39% at small and midsize organizations. Leaders (55%) and contributors (52%) report similar levels of confidence, indicating relative alignment on financial outlook across roles.

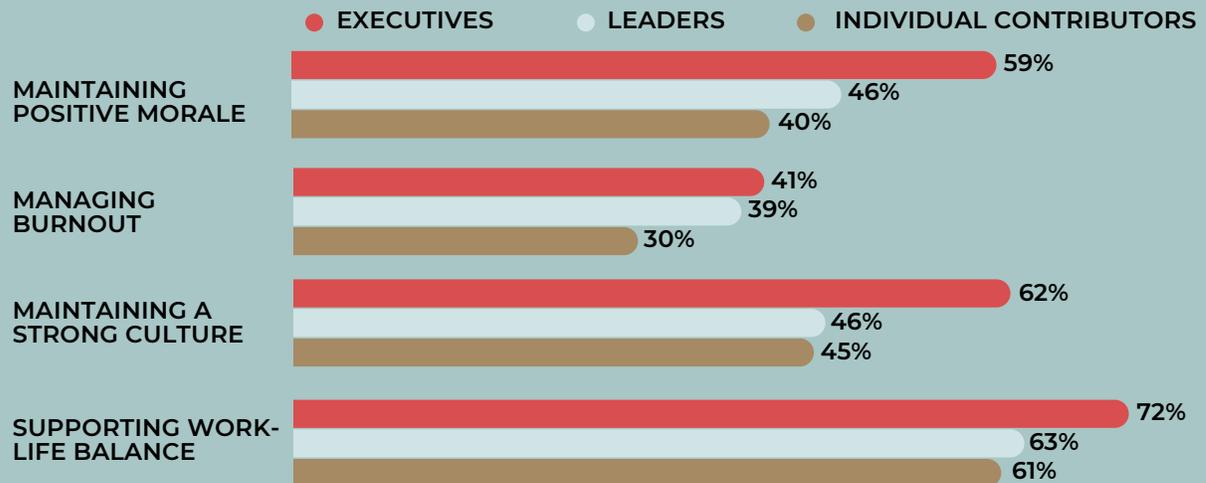
9 trends shaping work in 2026.

According to the [Harvard Business Review](#), there are nine trends shaping work in 2026 and beyond.²⁰ These national trends are a key part of determining and influencing company culture here in the Northwest.

- 1 AI layoffs outpace AI productivity gains.
- 2 Culture dissonance holds organizations back from performance goals.
- 3 AI takes a toll on employees' mental fitness.
- 4 AI workslop becomes a top productivity drain.
- 5 Forward-thinking employers restore humanity to the hiring process.
- 6 Insider corporate espionage risks increase.
- 7 Tech-to-trades career paths blossom.
- 8 Process pros—not tech prodigies—unlock AI value.
- 9 Employees demand compensation for training their digital doppelgangers.

Positive perceptions.

Where company culture issues are above average or excellent



Misalignment on culture.

Perception gaps are most visible in how culture is experienced across levels. When asked about maintaining positive morale, 59% of executives rate their organization above average or excellent. That drops to 46% among leaders and 40% among individual contributors.

Life outside of work.

Work-life balance shows a similar spread. **Seventy-two percent of executives believe their company supports work-life balance at a high level**, compared to 63% of leaders and 61% of contributors. Maintaining a strong culture follows the same pattern, with executives consistently reporting more favorable experiences than those at other levels in the organization.

Reading between the lines.

The contrast suggests culture intent may be strong at the top, but lived experience varies by role. National tech industry research reflects similar dynamics, where leadership often reports higher engagement and optimism than frontline teams. For Silicon Forest organizations, the opportunity lies not in redefining values — but in aligning experience with intent.

“*In times of crisis, I reject the instinct to micromanage, and double down on empowerment and empathy. **When pressure is high, a team doesn't need more oversight; they need the psychological safety to innovate and the support to remain resilient.***”

VIDHYA CHANDRASEKARAN |
SENIOR ENGINEERING
MANAGER | INTERTEK
ALCHEMY



Manager growth gap.

Perceptions of growth opportunity further illustrate role-based differences. **Seventy-two percent of executives rate their organization as above average or excellent as a place to grow and succeed.** Among managers and directors, that figure drops to 46%, while contributors report 53%. Small and midsize companies slightly outpace large and enterprise firms in perceived growth opportunity.

Notably, managers and directors rate their organizations the lowest as a place to grow and succeed. Positioned between executive vision and contributor execution, **this layer may experience the greatest pressure and ambiguity.** While only 3% of executives rate their firm as below average or poor, managers and directors are nearly **ten times more likely to express dissatisfaction.**

Area of improvement: training.

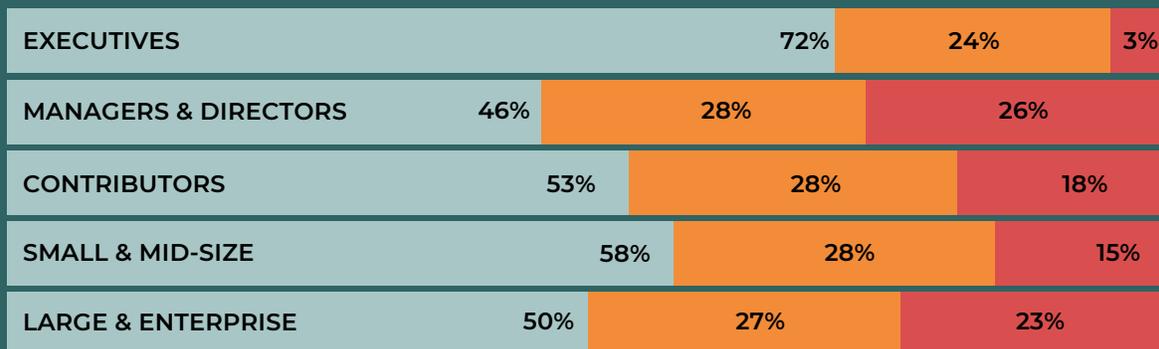
National tech surveys consistently show career growth and learning opportunities rank among the top reasons employees stay or leave. Silicon Forest data suggests paths exists — but could be strengthened.

Overall, **only 41% agree their firm has sufficient training and development** opportunities. This highlights a key weakness for firms looking to retain and attract talent.

A place to grow & succeed.

Rate their company as a place to grow & succeed as a tech pro

● ABOVE AVERAGE OR EXCELLENT ● AVERAGE ● BELOW AVERAGE OR POOR



Building loyalty & engagement.

% of all respondents



Building culture through feedback.

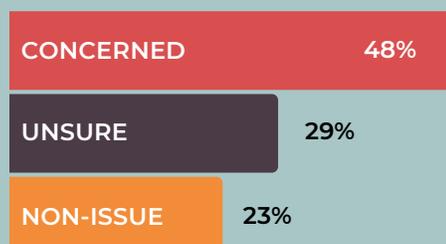
When asked what drives loyalty and engagement, respondents rated their companies most positively on supporting work-life balance, with 90% ranking their organization as average, above average, or excellent. Strong culture followed at 85%, along with positive morale (78%) and burnout management (77%). These priorities mirror national workforce trends, where flexibility, psychological safety, and sustainable workload have become core engagement drivers.

In 2026, **Silicon Forest organizations appear to recognize that burnout is not a short-term inconvenience — it is strategic feedback.** As AI reshapes workflows and hiring remains intentional, culture is increasingly defined by how companies balance performance with sustainability.

The data points to a central truth: growth without alignment erodes trust. But when stability, transparency, and sustainable workload converge, culture becomes a competitive advantage.

Workload concerns.

Are tech teams overworked



47%

PLANS TO UPSKILL
TECH WORKFORCE IN 2026

“**Burnout is not a badge of honor, it is feedback.** If our team is stretched too thin for too long, that is a leadership problem to solve. We are planning to grow, but not at the expense of who we are. **In a landscape reshaped by AI, adding headcount is not the default solution.** We will grow with purpose, bringing in people whose strengths expand our capabilities and whose values strengthen our culture. **When people feel supported and connected to the mission, they do not just avoid burnout, they thrive.**”

WENDY (DEMERS)
MANYWHITEHORSES | CIO |
ACCIO3D



Bigger than tech.

When asked about **favorite local charities and non-profits**, the Pacific Northwest was quick to show up and show love for the organizations they support. This strong community engagement reminds us of the wide-reaching impact of the tech sector.

- ABC House
- Aim High PDX
- Andando.org
- Basic Rights Oregon
- Blacks in Technology (BiT)
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- Community Warehouse
- Food For Lane County
- Forest Park Conservancy
- Free Geek
- HCAO (Healthcare for All Oregonians)
- iUrban Teen
- Meals on Wheels
- Meals On Us PDX
- Miah Families
- Oregon Food Bank
- Oregon Entrepreneurs Network (OEN)
- Portland Opportunity Industrialization Center (POIC)
- Portland Rescue Mission
- Portland Tennis & Education
- Raphael House of Portland
- The Salvation Army
- We All Have a Name
- WHO (Winter Hospitality Overflow)
- Women in Big Data Northwest

We appreciate our community partners.



Technology Association of Oregon drives regional growth, empowering entrepreneurs and fostering connections to position the Northwest as a global innovation hub.



Society for Information Management (SIM) is the world's fore-most nonprofit membership association for Technology Executives and Industry Leaders.



Northwest Veterans in Technology is a community created by military veterans that seeks to empower all people within technology careers.



AI Portland is an inclusive community designed for individuals of all backgrounds who share a common interest in artificial intelligence & its impact.



Rose City Techies is an inclusive community of techies dedicated to building, creating, and exploring the future of tech together.



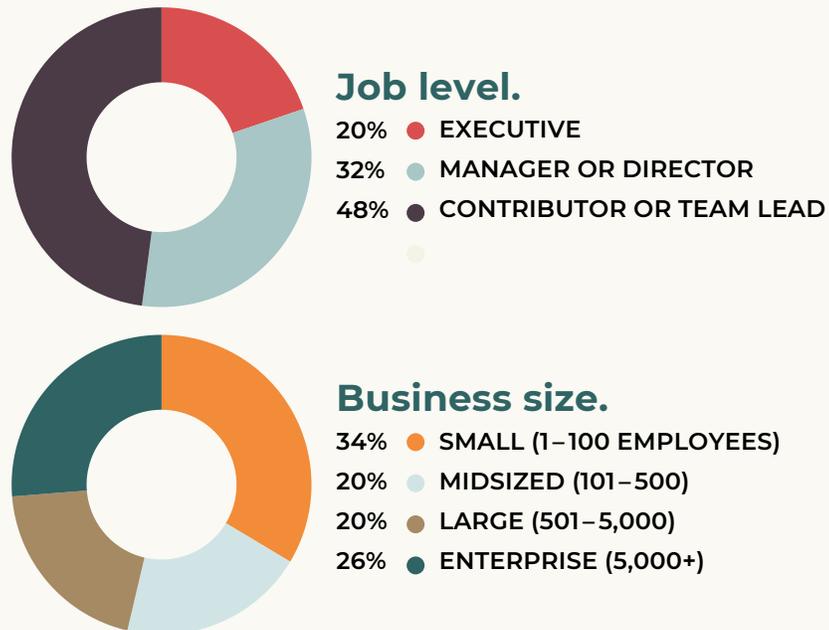
Blacks in Technology | Portland supports and celebrates the participation of Black diaspora and POC folk in the Portland professional community.



ProFocus Technology's **Tech Connect Series**, is a community for tech professionals to connect, learn, and network with peers.

Survey Demographics.

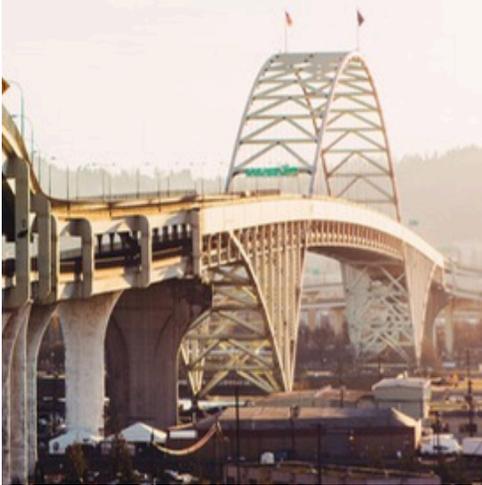
The **2026 Silicon Forest Tech Trends Report** is based on 259 total responses, 178 fully completed responses to an online survey of Pacific Northwest technology leaders and professionals, conducted between September 15 and November 9, 2026.



Endnotes.

- [Oregon Office of Economic Analysis](#)
- [Oregon Employment Department - QualityInfo](#)
- [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)
- [Oregon Employment Department - Oregon.gov](#)
- [Nasdaq - Advancing Regional Innovation Economies](#)
- [CompTIA Tech Jobs Report](#)
- [Oregon Employment Department - QualityInfo - Projections](#)
- [City of Vancouver Washington - Economic Development](#)
- [The State of AI Report by McKinsey](#)
- [AI Maturity Matters: Top Barriers in AI Implementation by Gartner](#)
- [CompTIA Analysis Press Release - January 2026](#)
- [Staffing Industry Analysts - January 2026](#)
- [Dice Salary Report 2025](#)
- [Dice - 20 Years in Review](#)
- [Robert Half Salary Guide](#)
- [Mondo Salary Guide](#)
- [Motion Recruitment Salary Guide](#)
- [CompTIA Salary Industry Outlook 2026](#)
- [Indeed Workplace & Hiring Lab Report](#)
- [Harvard Business Review](#)





Let's connect.

Have questions about the report or want insights on other regional tech trends? Contact us! We serve clients and job seekers nationwide.

Info@ProFocusTechnology.com
ProFocusTechnology.com

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TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS



ProFocusTechnology.com | Info@ProFocusTechnology.com
SW Eastridge Street, Suite 100, Portland, OR 97225