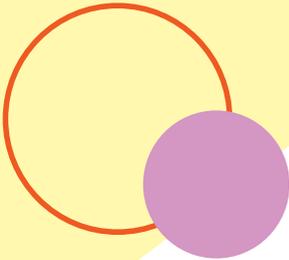


# END OF YEAR REFLECTION SERIES <sup>2025</sup>



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## End of Year Reflection Series 2025

Flyntrok's End Of Year Reflection Series was about helping people make sense of the change unfolding all around us. At times, change happens in such small increments that we miss spotting these trends. The intent of bringing in experts from diverse fields was to provide stimulus and choice for people as they set course for 2026 and beyond.

This document captures the **12 diverse fields** and the **Top 5 Trends** covered in each:

- 5 F's of Personal Finance
- 5 Lenses to Work (Hybrid, AI, Agile, Gen Z)
- Blind spots in Leadership
- Brand Communication Trends
- HR Trends Shaping 2025
- Lifestyle Health
- Mindsets of new Gen Z hires as they enter the workforce
- Optimism trends that transformed workplaces
- Patterns in Organisational Change
- Trends in coaching
- Trends that shaped primary education
- Unheard Voices in the World of Work

**Having seen 2025 drawn to a close,  
it is the perfect moment to pause and reflect.**

At Flyntrok, we believe the most valuable lessons are found in that moment of reflection. That is why we offer our End-of-Year Reflection Series, inviting experts across diverse fields to share the trends, patterns, and shifts that defined their work in 2025. From HR transformation to personal finance, from brand communication to leadership failures, each voice brings a unique lens on the year that changed how we work, live, and lead. These are not predictions for what is coming. These are reflections on what has already happened—the moments that mattered, the patterns that emerged, and the lessons we cannot afford to ignore.

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**Dr. Minako Abe**  
Director, Tokyo Cancer Clinic



## LIFESTYLE MEDICINE TRENDS 2025

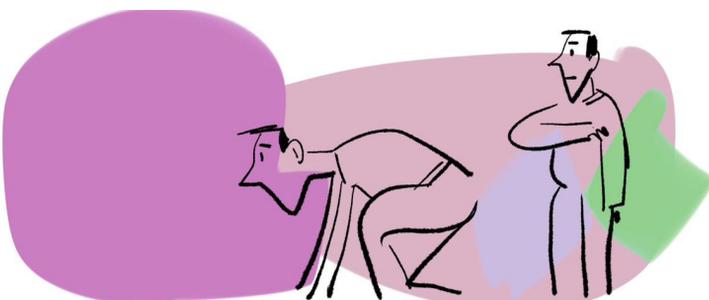
**Dr. Minako Abe** is the Director of the Tokyo Cancer Clinic and a dual board-certified physician in Emergency Medicine and Lifestyle Medicine. After 15 years treating patients in emergency departments across New York and New Jersey—including at Columbia University, Weill Cornell, and Albert Einstein College of Medicine—she realized that nearly 80% of what brought people through the doors was related to preventable lifestyle choices.

In 2014, she moved to Tokyo to focus on what she believes is the most powerful intervention of all: helping people transform their health through how they eat, sleep, move, and manage stress. As a Master Health and Wellness Coach, she works with cancer patients and survivors, guiding them to thrive, not just survive. Her lens on 2025 reveals a fundamental shift: lifestyle medicine is no longer alternative—it is essential.

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### **Over to Dr. Abe...**

As we close out 2025, I have watched five significant shifts reshape how people think about their health. These are not fads. These are evidence-based trends rooted in what the research—and lived experience—has been telling us for years. People are finally listening.



# 1. A Stronger Shift Away from Ultra-Processed Foods

The conversation has moved beyond calories. In 2025, people began to understand that the degree of processing—not just the macronutrient breakdown—drives metabolic dysfunction, chronic inflammation, and long-term disease risk.

Ultra-processed foods are engineered for palatability, shelf stability, and profit. They are not designed for health.

Studies continue to link high consumption of these foods to increased risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and even certain cancers. The Nova classification system, which categorizes foods based on the extent of industrial processing, has become a tool people use when making choices.

In my practice, I have seen patients shift from asking "Is this low-carb?" to asking "How processed is this?" That is progress. Whole foods—vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains, and minimally processed proteins—are reclaiming their place at the center of the plate.

# 2. Less Alcohol, or More Intentional Alcohol Use

The sober-curious movement gained real momentum in 2025. More people are questioning their relationship with alcohol—not because they have a problem, but because they want to feel better.

The science has been clear for years: alcohol disrupts sleep architecture, impairs mood regulation, increases cancer risk (especially breast, liver, and colorectal cancers), and contributes to systemic inflammation. Even moderate drinking is not risk-free.

What changed in 2025 is that this information moved from academic journals into everyday conversations.

People are experimenting with alcohol-free months, choosing mocktails over cocktails, and questioning the automatic weekend drink. The shift is not about total abstinence for everyone—it is about intentionality. When people drink, they are asking themselves why, and whether it is worth the trade-off.

“

**Ultra-processed** foods are engineered for profit, **not for health.**

”

### 3. Food Quality Over Macronutrient Debates

The carbs-versus-fat wars are exhausting. In 2025, people stopped fighting over macronutrient ratios and started focusing on what actually matters: food quality, fibre diversity, and glycemic stability.

Whether someone eats a plant-based diet, a Mediterranean pattern, or includes animal proteins, the common thread among successful dietary approaches is whole foods. Fiber-rich vegetables, legumes, and whole grains support gut health and metabolic regulation. Foods that minimize glycemic spikes—those that do not send blood sugar on a rollercoaster—reduce inflammation and support long-term metabolic health.

The question is no longer "Should I eat carbs?" It is "What kind of carbs am I eating?" The answer lies in choosing foods that nourish, not just fill.

### 4. Exercise Reframed from "Fitness" to "Medicine"

In 2025, exercise stopped being about aesthetics and performance goals and started being prescribed as a clinical intervention.

Strength training is now recognized as essential for aging well—preserving muscle mass, bone density, and metabolic health. Walking is acknowledged as one of the most powerful longevity interventions we have. Movement is being individualized, not generalized. A cancer survivor does not need the same exercise prescription as a competitive athlete, and we are finally treating movement with the nuance it deserves.

The shift is from "I should work out" to "Movement is medicine." And like any medicine, it works best when the dose, timing, and type are tailored to the individual.

“

The **future of movement** lies in personalization, where dose, timing, and type matter as much as consistency.

”

## 5. Connection and Community as Health Interventions

Loneliness and social isolation are now understood as modifiable health risk factors—comparable in impact to smoking or obesity. In 2025, this recognition moved from research papers into practice.

Group-based programs—whether fitness classes, support groups, or community cooking sessions—are being intentionally designed to improve both physical and mental health outcomes. Social connection reduces stress hormones, strengthens immune function, and improves adherence to healthy behaviors.

We are social creatures. Health does not happen in isolation. The most effective interventions in 2025 were the ones that brought people together.

“  
**Walking** may be the most underrated medicine we have.  
”

### Looking Ahead

These five trends share a common thread: they represent a return to what humans have always known. Eat real food. Move your body. Rest well. Connect with others. Lifestyle medicine is not revolutionary—it is foundational.

As we move into 2026, my hope is that these shifts deepen, that more people reclaim agency over their health, and that the healthcare system finally catches up to what the evidence has been telling us all along.

We hope each of these expert series – be it personal finance, optimism, HR, Leadership blind-spots, change and more gave you food for thought. It is now time to weave in your own experiences into these perspectives before you move forward. Please download a reflection guide, "New Beginnings," at [flyntrok.com/point-of-view](https://flyntrok.com/point-of-view) and take time to pause, look back, and set your course for 2026.

# THE TOP 5 TRENDS IN GEN Z HIRES



**Andrea J. Gonzalez**

Strengths-Based Coach &  
Senior Academic



**Andrea J. Gonzalez** is an accredited coach, facilitator, speaker, and awarded senior academic based in Australia. With over 17 years of experience, Andrea has personally coached more than 6,000 students across 34 countries to thrive in their studies and careers. A Gallup Clifton Strengths certified coach, she specializes in strengths-based coaching for emerging adults and advocates for neurodiversity and inclusivity in education and the workplace.

When someone has spent nearly two decades coaching thousands of Gen Z students and emerging professionals across continents, they see patterns others miss. They know what drives this generation—and what shuts them down.

---

## **Over to Andrea...**

Here are 5 patterns and concerns that I constantly noticed in the young students and professionals I coached in 2025. They were young people entering the workforce for the first time. I hope some of these patterns will help leaders better engage with them in 2026...



# 1. Will I get to do what I'm good at?

For years Gallup data has shown us that employees who use their natural talents and abilities every day are nearly 10% more engaged in their work, 15% less likely to leave, and contribute to 29% greater profitability for your company. Yet the biggest groan I hear from young professionals is "I never get to do what I'm good at."

They may be new to their role at work, but they have been using their natural talents for success at school, in sport, in part-time jobs, and in community and cultural pursuits for over a decade.

Build a matrix of skills and talents for your team so everyone sees the value of your youngest workers from day one. Then give them challenges and problems you need solved so they can use them.

Your Gen Z employees are not blank slates. They are bringing a decade of proven capability. The question is whether you will see it—and use it.

# 2. What happens when I fail?

It is their biggest fear and it is holding them back because they have watched their parents live through an era of shame and blame for failures at work.

Instead, acknowledging and rewarding our new professionals for their courage and persistence through inexperience and mistakes creates a culture of potentiality. It builds loyalty. It inspires other young workers.

Most of all, encouraging experimentation and accepting their failures accelerates company innovation using the ultimate intelligence—the infinite imaginations of our youngest generation at work.

The fear of failure is not about lack of confidence. It is about having watched what happened to the generation before them. Create a different story, and watch what they can do.

# 3. What makes my job meaningful?

This is so important to your Gen Z workers we need to accept this now for their good health and wellbeing at work.

The most successful tip I have, to help your young professionals embrace any role at work is: coach them.

Coaching helps them connect values, take right action, align with leadership, and embrace the alliance between the success of your company's strategic vision and enjoying their time at work.

Meaning is not a luxury for Gen Z. It is a requirement. And it is not about grand purpose statements. It is about connecting the dots between what they value and what they do every day. Coaching creates that bridge.

## 4. What's my source of truth?

Our youngest professionals hate a lie—there, I have said it. They know when they are being lied to and it is the biggest, and quickest, turn-off to them doing their best work.

It is truly counterproductive going into 2026 to think your Gen Z workers must believe you because you are in authority. At every level of leadership and management, say what you mean and do what you say, for they can handle it—and they will respect you for entrusting them with the truth.

This generation grew up with information at their fingertips. They fact-check. They cross-reference. They know when something does not add up. Authority without honesty is not authority. It is just noise.

“  
**Authority** without honesty isn't leadership.  
It's just noise.  
”

## 5. Will I have friends at work?

Our youngest professionals are onto something here and we need to pay attention.

In 2025 Gallup shared that worldwide employee engagement has fallen to just 21%. This means most of your employees are giving their time, but not the energy and passion you are counting on from their discretionary effort.

There is one exciting exception and our youngest professionals thrive on it. Gallup's data shows that employees who have a best friend at work are more likely to be supported socially and emotionally, informed, accountable, connected, and committed to key business outcomes—even in a hybrid or remote worker model.

Creating opportunities and encouraging your youngest employees (indeed all employees) to grow and keep lasting friendships is the ying to the yang of embracing AI in the workplace.

“  
Employees with a best friend at work are more  
**connected, committed, and accountable.**  
”



## What This Means for Leaders

These five questions are not requests for special treatment. They are signals of what every generation needs—but Gen Z is the first to say it out loud.

They want to use their talents. They want space to fail safely. They want meaning in their work. They want truth from their leaders. They want connection with their colleagues.

None of this is unreasonable. All of it is measurable. And organizations that figure this out will not just retain Gen Z talent—they will unlock innovation, engagement, and performance that other companies are leaving on the table.

The organizations struggling with "Gen Z problems" are not dealing with a generational issue. They are dealing with a leadership gap. Because what Gen Z is asking for is what good leadership has always provided: clarity, honesty, development, purpose, and connection.

2025 showed us the questions Gen Z is asking. 2026 will show us which leaders were listening.

We invite you to look back at 2025 through your own experiences and consider the varied perspectives of the experts in this series. A personal reflection guide (New Beginnings) is available for you at [flyntrok.com/point-of-view](https://flyntrok.com/point-of-view).

“

The companies struggling with “Gen Z problems” aren’t facing a generational crisis — they’re facing a **leadership test**.

”

# 5 LEADERSHIP FAILURES THAT DEFINED 2025



## Abhijit Pendse

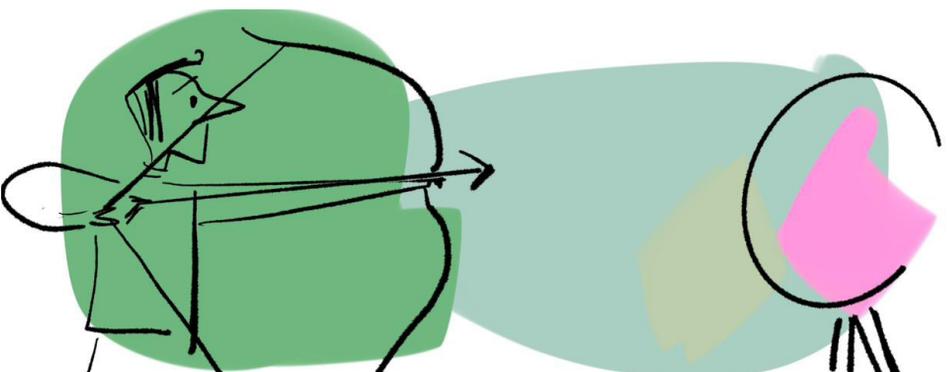
HR & Leadership Development Expert,  
SKF, Gothenburg, Sweden



**Abhijit** Pendse is a HR and Leadership Development expert at SKF in Gothenburg, Sweden, with over 27 years of experience running global leadership initiatives. He specializes in innovative approaches to leadership development and brings strong, evidence-based points of view on what makes leaders succeed—and what makes them fail. When someone has spent 25+ years watching leaders across continents, studying activist investor interventions, and designing programs to transform leadership teams, their observations about leadership failures carry weight.

**Over to Abhijit...**

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# 1. Will I get to do what I'm good at?

Why is it that intelligent, successful leaders continue to ignore the lessons from their own and others' experiences despite knowing the adverse consequences of their decisions on people and organizations?

As I prepared for a conversation with the management team of a startup company on lessons for startups from grown-up companies—Byju's, Bombay Shaving Company, and others. The pattern was unmistakable: leaders repeating mistakes that had been documented, analysed, and warned against.

Yet leaders act as if their situation is uniquely different, as if the rules do not apply to them.

The cost of this historical amnesia? Predictable failures that could have been avoided. Organizations that repeat the same mistakes. People who suffer the consequences of decisions that ignore obvious warning signs.

# 2. What happens when I fail?

Activist investors rattle boards and executive management by bringing in data on company underperformance and exposing inefficiencies in the organization. Yet boards often sit as if conspiring to let the gradual build-up of incompetency go unchecked.

Again, how do these competent, capable, and successful individuals miss the mark so widely?

White papers published by Trian Partners (Disney, P&G), studying changes in Unilever, and understanding Cevian Capital's approach and many others show the basic trigger in companies where activist investors enter is consistent. For instance:

1. The company has tremendous potential for shareholder maximization, yet it has been consistently underperforming over years
2. The incumbent board and executive management refuse to act on data that marks mediocre performance, incompetency, and inefficiencies

Boards are supposed to be the guardians of organisational health. Instead, they become enablers of gradual decline. They see the data. They hear the warnings. They choose inaction until an external force—an activist investor—makes it impossible to ignore.

“  
**Activist investors** don't create dysfunction.  
They expose it.  
”

### 3. The Shareholder Value Trap

Leaders lose personal credibility when they are seen only as champions of shareholder value creation.

Leaders want employees to have faith in a "glorious future" and, for that, to endure discomfort and pain in the present—redundancies, closures, restructuring. The employees and Works Councils, on the other hand, are preoccupied with the present and are not excited by this "glorious future" storyline.

The disconnect is profound. Leaders stand in front of their teams talking about long-term value creation while simultaneously announcing decisions that destroy lives today. They speak the language of shareholder returns while employees are calculating whether they can pay rent next month.

Credibility is not built on future promises alone. It is built on balancing the present and future. When leaders are perceived as caring only about shareholder value, they lose the trust of the people who must execute the transformation. Without trust, transformation fails.

But the reverse is equally worrying as you will see in the next key trend/mistake that shaped 2025 for many leaders.

### 4. The Say-Do Gap on Long-Term Value

While there are some leaders who over-index and think only long term. There is an increasing, worrying trend for leaders in organisations to give more weight to the short term than to the long term.

Long-term value creation sits in all internal and external storylines, but not in day to day practice. Most leaders have conveniently misunderstood Keynes' warning.

"The long run is a misleading guide to current affairs. In the long run we are all dead," wrote John Maynard Keynes in his 1923 work, *A Tract on Monetary Reform*.

Keynes was making an economic argument about policy flexibility, not giving leaders permission to ignore the future. Yet leaders quote this line to justify short-term thinking while simultaneously claiming they are building for the long term.

The inconsistency is glaring. Leaders talk long term in strategy documents and investor presentations. They act short term in quarterly decisions and resource allocations. This say-do gap erodes trust faster than almost anything else.

Employees see it. Boards see it. Markets eventually see it. But leaders convince themselves the contradiction does not exist.

## 5. Echo Chambers That Block Ground Truth

All four patterns point to a deeper problem: leaders operating in environments where dissent is silenced, challenge is unwelcome, and ground truth never reaches the top.

This is why they ignore history—no one reminds them of past failures.

This is why boards enable incompetency—dissenting board members at times are marginalised.

This is why they lose employee credibility—they hear a filtered version of frontline reality.

This is why they are inconsistent—no one holds up a mirror for the gap between words and actions.

Echo chambers are not built intentionally. They emerge gradually. Leaders surround themselves with people who agree. Those who disagree learn to stay quiet or leave. Information gets filtered on its way up. Bad news gets softened. Warnings get dismissed.

The result? Leaders making decisions based on a distorted version of reality. Organisations heading toward predictable failures that everyone except leadership saw coming.

The most dangerous sentence in any organization is not "We failed." It is "No one told me."

Because usually, someone did. They were just not heard.

These five patterns are not new. They have been present in failing organisations for decades. What made 2025 different is that the gap between what leaders say and what they do became impossible to hide.

Leadership is not about having all the answers. It is about creating the conditions where the right questions can be asked and all answers have a voice.

We invite you to look back at 2025 through your own experiences of listening and understanding. This will be important as you chart the work that matters in 2026. A personal reflection guide (New Beginnings) is available for you at [flyntrok.com/point-of-view](https://flyntrok.com/point-of-view).

# THE 5 F'S OF PERSONAL FINANCE: NAVIGATING THE 2025 LANDSCAPE



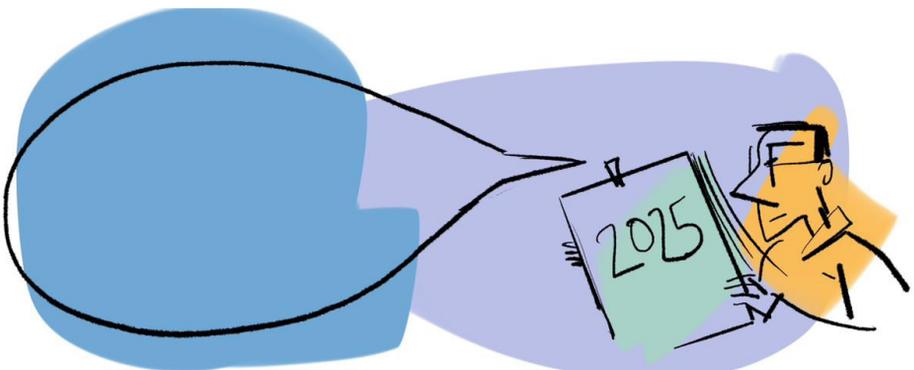
## **Kaushik Ramachandran**

Financial Wellness Strategist & Founder,  
Dyota Solutions

**Kaushik Ramachandran** is the Founder and Principal Officer of Dyota Solutions, a SEBI-registered investment adviser. With degrees from BITS Pilani and IIM Lucknow, and over 30 years of experience in financial services across Tokyo, Seoul, and London, Kaushik founded Dyota Solutions in 2012 to enhance financial wellness for professionals. His firm has empowered over 80,000 professionals through its "5 Secrets of a Financially Happy Life" program and serves Indian families worldwide. When someone has spent three decades watching markets—and watching people make the same mistakes in every market cycle—you pay attention to what they see.

## ***Over To Kaushik***

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# 1. FIRE (Financial Independence, Retire Early)

The post-Covid surge led many to believe that a 20% XIRR was a birth right rather than an exception. When plugged into spreadsheets, these inflated numbers birthed the FIRE movement. However, a retirement plan built on temporary market euphoria is a house of cards. True financial independence isn't about escaping work; it's about having the "Conviction" to sustain a lifestyle for 30+ years based on realistic long-term returns.

“  
A spreadsheet can **promise** early retirement.  
**Reality** demands long-term discipline.  
”

# 2. FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out)

Social media is a highlight reel of 40% daily gains, conveniently hiding the deep red of losses. This FOMO drove investors into overcrowded trades. When equity markets paused in late 2024, the herd rushed into Gold and Silver ETFs. As we end 2025, many are trapped in a "Silver Dilemma." Chasing the next "hot" asset class is the fastest way to erode capital.

“  
**Social media** celebrates 40% gains,  
but it rarely posts the quiet,  
painful losses that  
follow overcrowded trades.  
”

# 3. Finfluencers

The intersection of FIRE and FOMO created a vacuum filled by Finfluencers. While some mean well, many exploited "Financial Literacy" to push unregulated advice. The regulator's crackdown in 2025 was a necessary intervention to protect gullible investors from emotionally driven exploitation.

## 4. Fintechs

We've seen a mushrooming of apps designed to convert Finfluencer hype into instant action. Using "dark patterns," these Fintechs nudge users toward high-risk behaviors: Intraday trading, F&O, and high-yield low-rated bonds. They are attempting to transform India from a nation of "Good Savers" into "Risk-Unaware Gamblers."

“

**Finfluencer hype** plus instant trading is a risky combination.

”

## 5. FinMin's New Tax Regime

The Finance Ministry has made its stance clear: the era of "tax hacks" is ending. With robust data collection and a streamlined New Tax Regime, the focus is shifting away from complex deductions. The goal is transparency, leaving investors with fewer loopholes and a greater need for genuine, tax-efficient wealth management.

### The Bottom Line:

The noise of 2025 will only get louder in 2026. The only way to see Financial results that are truly "**Compounding**" is to practice high "**Conviction**" long term strategy "**Consistently**"

When everyone is chasing the next hot trade, the real advantage goes to those who can tune out the noise and stick to fundamentals. That is not just investment advice. It is survival strategy for 2026.

# 5 TRENDS THAT SHAPED PRIMARY EDUCATION IN 2025



## Dr. Jasmine Sangma

Founder & Managing Director,  
Nokrek Heights, Tura

**Dr. Jasmine Sangma** is a Founder and Managing Director of Nokrek Heights, Tura. She has a PhD in Education and over four decades of experience in education and teachers training. Her perspective comes not from theory alone, but from daily immersion in classrooms, playgrounds, and the evolving world of young learners.

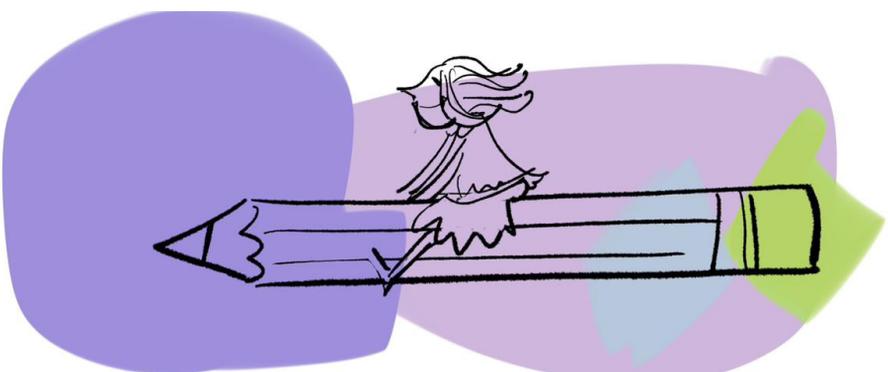
If you want to understand where primary education is headed, listen to someone who has spent forty years watching children learn—and watching what gets in their way.

---

### **Over to Jasmine...**

As I look back at 2025, I feel energised that primary education is slowly but surely moving in the right direction. We need more schools, parents, and teachers to adopt these world views so it becomes a way of life. Here are five trends in 2025 in the space of primary learning that seek to share with you.

---



# 1. Learning without pressure

There is no point in cramming information into children anymore.

Information is available everywhere, anytime. What we need to do is build thinking skills—and let them learn without the weight of anxiety pressing them down.

This shift is happening globally, but it is particularly significant in systems like India's, where for decades, education meant one thing: cracking exams. Engineers and professionals were trained to pass tests, not to solve real problems. When faced with real-life situations, many lack problem solving and critical thinking.

**Schools are beginning to ask a different question:** What if success was not about how much you remember under pressure, but how well you think when the pressure lifts?

The goal is simple. Children should enjoy what they are learning. They should learn seamlessly without even realising they are learning.

“

Information is everywhere.  
Critical thinking is not.

”

# 2. Outside the classroom experiences

Classroom learning is becoming less relevant.

Not because classrooms do not matter, but because sitting inside and listening to a teacher is no longer enough. Children need experiences outside the classroom—experiences connected to their everyday lives.

This is not about field trips as extras. It is about recognizing that the world outside is where learning becomes real.

When a child measures the height of a tree instead of solving height problems in a textbook, something shifts. When they observe weather patterns instead of memorizing climate zones, the knowledge sticks differently.

Primary education in 2025 moved toward this understanding: spend more time outside. Let children touch, observe, question, and connect what they learn to the world they live in.

The classroom is still important. But it is no longer the only place where learning happens—or even the most important one.

### 3. Building student autonomy and agency

As children move from primary to middle and secondary years, one skill becomes essential: the ability to make informed decisions for themselves.

They need to know where they are going. They need goals, and the motivation to pursue them.

Building autonomy means guiding children to become good agents of their own education. It means teaching them not just what to learn, but how to steer their own learning.

Autonomy does not happen overnight. But 2025 showed that schools are beginning to make space for it. As parents and educators weaving in autonomy in learning is a key aspect for us to consider.

“

**When students know**  
where they are going and why, motivation  
becomes internal — and learning  
becomes self-driven.

”

### 4. Technology comfort from early years

Children are growing up in a world where AI is already shaping their lives. Preparing them early means they won't be catching up later—they'll be fluent from the start.

This isn't just about teaching children to use AI tools. It's about building computational thinking and critical thinking skills from the foundation. It's about helping them understand how technology works, not just that it works.

I know you probably think that children are exposed to way too much technology and screens as it is. While that is true, the ability to use technology well is lacking. The strength to not give up our agency and critical thinking to technology is something we must help build early on.

The comfort with technology matters. Not just for future careers, but for how children think, solve problems, and engage with information.

## 5. Soft skills over technical/ subject knowledge

The most important shift in 2025 was not about curriculum. It was about what schools started to value.

Adaptability. Resilience. Interpersonal skills. Problem-solving. Creativity.

These soft skills are becoming as important if not more than technical/subject knowledge. —Because soft skills are harder to build instantly /later. They need time, practice, and space to develop.

This shift challenges a long-standing assumption in education: that success comes from mastering content. But content changes. Jobs change. Industries change.

What does not change is the need to adapt, to collaborate, to think creatively under uncertainty.

Schools are beginning to recognize this. They are creating space for children to fail, try again, and learn from the process. They are prioritising collaboration over competition. They are asking children to solve problems that don't have one right answer.

The children who succeed in their professional and personal lives won't be the ones who memorized the most. They will be the ones who learned how to learn, how to adapt, and how to connect with others.

### A wish for 2026

Jasmine's hope for the year ahead is simple, and profound:

"All children should be as comfortable in school as they are at home. They should be able to learn without anxiety, without pressure. They should enjoy what they are learning."

It is a vision of education where children do not carry the weight of performance. Where they are free to be curious, to make mistakes, and to grow.

2025 showed us the direction.  
2026 is when we take the next steps.

# FIVE LENSES ON 2025: THE YEAR WORK TRANSFORMED



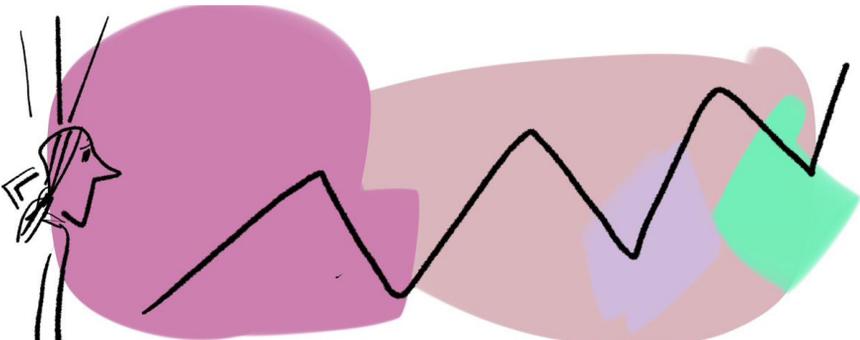
**Deepa Premkumar**

Partner - Flyntrok



Deepa Premkumar designs and leads organisational change efforts. With expertise in Transformation, Analytics, and organisational development across different industries. She brings a combination of expertise in change management and a genuine curiosity about how people experience transformation. She has been invited to speak on evolving work trends at forums and channels including CNN, CNBC, and NDTV. Her lens of 2025 explores how things have changed from 5 different dimensions.

**Over to Deepa...**



# 1. The Workforce in 2025

## A new generation is taking over.

**Gen Z and Millennials are now the dominant force** in our workplaces. Together, they will comprise nearly three-quarters of the global workforce by 2030. But here is what we must understand: they carry distinct burdens that previous generations did not face at the same scale.

**The mental health data is stark.** Gen Z shows a 44.5% rate of major depression diagnosis, compared to 35.8% for Millennials, 19.2% for Gen X. COVID interrupted their formative years—education, milestones, critical development periods. The paradox? They're earning more than their parents did at the same age, yet 65% don't feel financially secure.

The challenges are not really in their bank accounts—it is in their anxiety, depression, and sense of perpetual instability. This matters because their expectations, resilience, and relationship with work all carry this weight. We will need to lead differently.

## Skill-based hiring has become predominant.

Companies do not hire for a degree earned years ago anymore. They hire for the skills you have today. Tech companies are dropping degree requirements entirely. Considering the impact of AI and shortening shelf life for skills, this shift makes sense.

## Fractional leadership roles have gained traction.

Companies are hiring fractional CXOs and Leadership roles. At Flyntrok itself the number of requests for fractional CHRO support has increased considerably in 2025. Leadership does not require full-time presence to create full-time value.

# 2. The Workplace in 2025

## Flexibility Wins, Negotiation Continues.

After the back and forth between return to office and remote work, 2025 saw hybrid work settle as the dominant model. Flexibility won. The data backs it up: 52% of workers are hybrid.

But here is the tension: hybrid remains a constant negotiation. Which days am I in? Who else will be there? Camera on or off? These are not resolved questions—they are daily negotiations.

Plus, both these micro trends are real!

- **Hybrid creep:** The number of days in office are inching up. 39% now work three days in office & 34% work four days, both numbers are up from previous years.
- **And then there's coffee-badging:** 43% of hybrid employees admit to briefly showing up just to check the attendance box before working elsewhere.

The model is hybrid. The experience is still unsettled. Leaders who treat hybrid as a solved problem are missing the daily friction their teams navigate—and losing trust in the process.

## 3. Work Itself in 2025

### From execution to orchestration.

We used to go to office and deliver tasks. Now, with AI embedded everywhere, work is about orchestrating—managing between different AI tools, humans, async and sync channels.

Here is an example that is probably true for many of us: We no longer work with one AI model. We are carrying three or four LLMs—Claude for one task, ChatGPT for another, a specialized model for something else. We are comparing outputs, reviewing output, testing approaches, and choosing what ships. That is orchestration.

### The AI Identity Crisis: What Do We Do With Our Time?

But orchestration creates a deeper challenge—one that is hard to name but impossible to ignore.

**Orchestration feels like cheating.** Like we are taking shortcuts. Like we are not doing what we are supposed to do. We have been trained to value execution—doing the work ourselves. Delegation to AI triggers something in us: Is this really work? Am I still adding value?

**Add to this:** we have not figured out what our next arc of growth is. We freed up time by delegating to AI, but we do not know what to do with that time. So, we end up doing more of the same. Creating a loop of overwork and fatigue rather than using the freed capacity for higher-value work.

This identity crisis—the discomfort with orchestration, the uncertainty about our next evolution—is the hidden cost of AI adoption that nobody is talking about.

### The Manager Paradox

**The curious paradox we are noticing:** as AI and technology become more integrated into individual contributors' roles, managers' roles have become even more emotion- and development-focused.

As AI handles more technical work, managers must hold the flag of emotions and development even more strongly. They are the human interface technology cannot provide yet. The more automated work becomes, the more 'human' leadership must be.

“

As AI handles more execution,  
leadership must become **more human.**

”

## 4. The How We Work

For 2025, am picking two distinct 'How' that have had an impact on work – AI and Agile

### **Agile: Context Over Ceremonies**

Agile has been around 25+ years and people keep writing its obituary, every now and then. Yet the State of Agile report 2025 says over 90% of organisations use some Agile practices.

But how they are using it has shifted.

- Companies are no longer interested in following ceremonies, but rather are adapting practices to suit the outcomes they seek to create. They are not focussed on "Did we answer the three questions in standup?" but "What will give us better results?"
- Agile roles now demand technical expertise alongside facilitation skills. Scrum Masters and Agile coaches could be pure facilitation roles earlier. Not anymore. These agile roles now need both technical depth plus facilitation capability.

At Flyntrok, we have always believed facilitation is a key leadership skill. Not a standalone specialisation. This shift validates that belief: leaders need technical prowess and facilitation capacity to lead teams into the future.

## 5. AI: From Novelty to Trusted Collaborator

The biggest shift? How AI evolved—and how we had to evolve with it.

Remember 2022–2023 when Generative AI emerged? Unreliable. Hallucinated constantly. More novelty than utility.

2024 brought improvement. You could give AI tasks. It needed oversight, but it got better at drafting and research. A tireless apprentice needing constant supervision.

2025 saw AI become a trusted collaborator. Reliable enough for substantial work. We moved from line-by-line review to spot-checking. It handles complex reasoning now. The numbers tell the story: 77% use AI to save time and reduce manual effort. 41% use it to accelerate planning and development.

And autonomous agents are emerging—not fully mature, but evolving toward delegating entire workflows, not just discrete tasks.

That means that we have had to change our mindsets – treating AI as a thinking partner. We have to get better at defining outcomes and release control over the step-by-step processes. This means getting comfortable with ambiguity.

## The Thread Running Through It All

One pattern emerges across these five lenses:

2025 was the year work stopped being about following established processes and started being about navigating constant evolution.

Gen Z is not following traditional career paths. Hybrid is not settled. Work shifted from execution to orchestration. Agile moved from framework adherence to contextual outcomes. AI moved from tool to collaborator.

Work in 2025 became more human in its demands (empathy, emotion, adaptation) even as it became more technological in its tools.

“

As AI grew more capable and processes became more fluid, one truth emerged: the more advanced our tools become, **the more human our leadership must be.**

”

## What This Means for Leaders

The leaders who will thrive are not those who have mastered AI or perfected hybrid. They are the ones who can hold both: technological fluency and deep human capability.

Organisations that invest only in tools without developing their people's capacity to orchestrate, adapt, and lead through ambiguity will find themselves with impressive infrastructure and disengaged teams. The tools will not compensate for the absence of leadership.

*The question for 2026 is not "What's the next tool?" It is "How do we develop leaders who can navigate constant evolution while keeping their teams whole?"*

That is the work that matters.

# TOP 5 TRENDS IN COACHING



**Anne Boland**

Director, Inside Edge Consulting  
Psychologist & Leadership



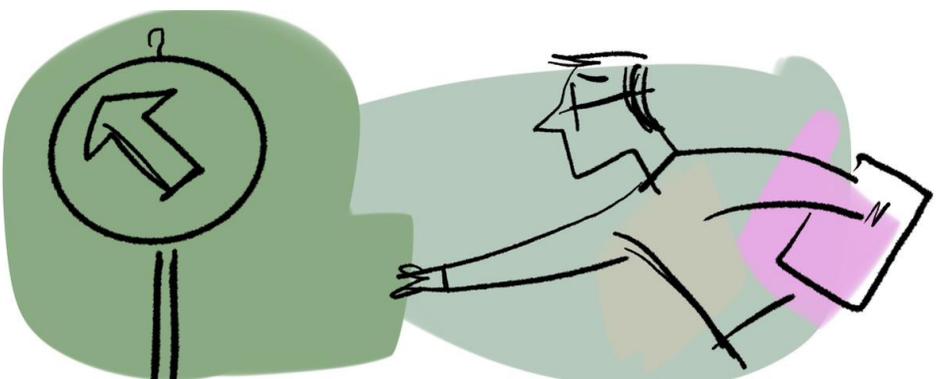
**Anne Boland** is the Director of Inside Edge Consulting, a psychologist with over 30 years of experience in leadership development and coaching. Anne has worked with leaders and teams across professional services, retail, government, and not-for-profit sectors. What sets Anne apart is her ability to create space for leaders to shift how they work, lead, and relate—not just for their own benefit, but for those around them. Hence we thought it was best to turn to Anne and request her to identify the top 5 coaching trends of 2025.

---

## **Over to Anne...**

It continues to feel like a privilege to work with individuals and teams as they explore their inner world—wrestling with their thinking, emotions, and patterns of behaviour. Coaching creates space for people to shift how they work, lead, and relate, for the benefit of themselves and others.

In 2025, I have been reminded again of how powerful coaching can be in supporting deeper self-awareness and insight into others. These insights often translate into meaningful changes that help people thrive, not only at work but also in their personal lives. Here are my top 5 picks for the year.



# 1. Development programs and coaching

When coaching is integrated into development programs, participant's learning deepens. Insight turns into practice, and practice leads to shifts in mindset and behaviour over time.

Diagnostic tools are most valuable when they are accompanied by skilful coaching debriefs. It is in the conversation—rather than the data alone—that meaning is made.

I have also noticed the value of involving an individual's manager at key, strategic moments in a coaching program. When done well, this supports alignment, shared understanding, and growth for both the individual and the manager.

The most effective development programs in 2025 did not just deliver content. They created the conditions for sustained change by embedding coaching throughout the journey.

# 2. Coaching support during conflict

This year, a trend in coaching was working with senior leaders whose relationship had become highly strained, with behaviours that were undermining one another. Coaching was offered as an intervention at the point of greatest stress.

While most leaders were already highly self-aware and had received feedback about what to stop and start doing, it was coaching in the moment of conflict that enabled real change. The immediacy and emotional reality of the situation made the learning stick.

This taught me something important: sometimes the best time to coach is not when things are calm. It is when the stakes are highest and the need for change is most urgent.

“

The **best time to coach** isn't when everything is working — it's when relationships are breaking.

”

### 3. Peer coaching needs structure

Organisations that have not established peer coaching practices are missing a significant, untapped resource. The potential lies not just in bringing peers together, but in supporting them to develop clear processes and strong facilitation skills.

Like mentoring, peer coaching works best when the purpose is clear, the structure is supportive yet flexible, and the group builds psychological safety. When these elements are present, the growth within peer coaching groups can be substantial and sustained.

I see the role of experienced coaches as guides for establishing peer coaching practices in organisations. We can help set the conditions, train facilitators, and ensure the structure supports meaningful learning rather than just conversation.

Peer coaching does not replace professional coaching. But it creates an ongoing practice of reflection, support, and accountability that extends the impact of formal coaching interventions.

“  
Psychological safety turns peer groups  
into engines of **sustained development**.  
”

### 4. Real-time team coaching

Real-time team coaching remains another underused offering. When I facilitate and coach team workshops or meetings, I can observe teams as they work together in real situations. The coaching observations shared with the team—and with individuals—often lead to deeper insight and meaningful behavioural change.

I see growing potential for coaches to offer team coaching not only as an intervention when something is “wrong,” but as a regular team health and practice check-in. Used this way, team coaching becomes a proactive support for how teams think, relate, and perform together.

The shift in 2025 has been from reactive to proactive. Teams that engage in regular coaching conversations—about how they are working, not just what they are working on—are building resilience before they need it.

## 5. Building coaching capability in leaders

One of the most significant shifts I have observed in 2025 is the growing recognition that coaching is not just something leaders receive—it is a capability they need to develop.

Organisations are beginning to invest in building coaching skills in their managers and leaders. Not to turn them into professional coaches, but to equip them with the ability to have coaching conversations that unlock potential, support problem-solving, and build autonomy in their teams.

This matters especially in times of uncertainty. When leaders can coach—when they can ask powerful questions, listen deeply, and help their people think through challenges—they are not just optimising for immediate performance. They are preparing their teams for tomorrow.

Coaching as a leadership skill is not about having all the answers. It is about creating the conditions for others to find their own answers—and building the capacity of the entire organization to navigate complexity together.

“

When leaders **develop coaching capability**, they're not just driving performance today — they're building resilience for tomorrow.

”

Clearly the future of coaching is not just about more coaching. It is about coaching being present at the moments that matter most—and building the capability for coaching conversations throughout organisations.

That is how we create workplaces where people do not just perform. They grow.

**Kavi Arasu**

Principal, Flyntrok  
Organisational Change  
Specialist & Executive  
Coach



# TOP 5 TRENDS IN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

**Kavi Arasu** is an organisational change specialist, executive coach and writer. He brings deep expertise in helping leaders and teams navigate transformation. Kavi Arasu as Principal At Flyntrok drives change working across multiple geographies and industries. His lens on 2025 reveals something crucial: the organisations that made progress weren't the ones with the boldest change initiatives—they were the ones that learned to define what actually needed fixing.

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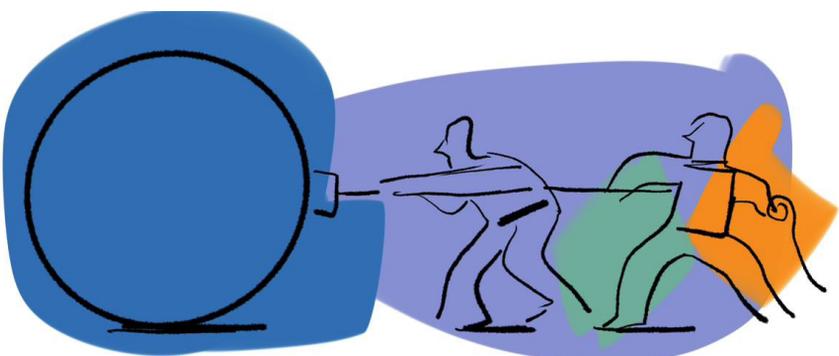
**Over to Kavi...**

## The Quiet Work of Leading Change in 2025

Change has always been part of organisational life. What feels different in 2025 is how crowded it has become. Too many signals arrive at once. Too many tools promise improvement. Too many initiatives compete for the same attention.

In this environment, organisations develop an itch to do something. Any movement feels better than stillness. Over time, defining the issue quietly becomes the hardest part of the work.

Across Heavy Engineering, FMCG, Shipping, Law, Insurance, Financial Services, Education, Global Capability Centres, Building Materials, Natural Resource Management, publishing, the same patterns keep surfacing.



# 1. Patience has been spent

People still want work to improve. They are open to experiments, especially small ones. The condition is simple. The experiment must solve a problem they are already wrestling with.

In a heavy engineering setup working through digital transformation, supervisors were happy to trial changes that reduce rework or shorten maintenance cycles. Interest fades quickly when pilots add reports, meetings, or dashboards without easing daily pressure.

In professional firms modernising processes, people engage when new practices reduce turnaround time or friction. They disengage when change arrives as an additional layer, even when it promises benefits in the long run.

Energy now flows toward ideas that reduce effort in the present. Anything that promises future elegance without present relief struggles to hold attention.

# 2. Change has crossed an authority threshold

There was a time when announcing change created momentum. Today it often creates questions. Usually sensible ones.

Leadership capability programmes reveal this clearly. Senior leaders are committed. Specialists are focused on outcomes. Middle managers sit in between, absorbing pressure from both sides, often with impressive politeness.

Research consistently shows that middle managers now spend most of their time coordinating, translating, and buffering work rather than driving it forward. They carry the invisible load of making sense of competing demands, usually without a formal invitation.

Change slows when this load remains unseen. It moves when organisations invest in facilitation that helps prioritise, sequence, and decide what can reasonably wait. Sometimes the most useful intervention is simply agreeing what not to do this quarter.

“

Change accelerates not when we add more initiatives, but when we **reduce competing demands.**

”

### 3. Everyday experience has recalibrated expectations

This plays out quietly every day.

People now live inside powerful, responsive technology. They plan travel, manage money, learn new skills, and solve small problems instantly. Over time, this changes more than habits. It changes expectations.

When similar tools and ideas arrive at work, those expectations travel with them. People assume progress will feel smoother, quicker, and more intuitive. Often, it doesn't.

Disappointment sets in not because the intent is wrong, but because personal experience has raised the bar. People grow less tolerant of awkward rollouts and half-finished transitions at work.

Change efforts that meet these heightened expectations earn trust quickly. Those that fall short linger longer in memory, usually outlasting their original announcement.

“

**Personal experience**  
with powerful technology has quietly reset what people consider acceptable at work.

”

### 4. More information has made judgment visible

Leadership teams today sit on oceans of data. Dashboards multiply. Benchmarks circulate. Analysis arrives confidently from many directions.

Decisions still feel heavy.

Leadership research shows that despite expanded access to information; decisions have not necessarily become faster or clearer. Discussions stretch longer. Interpretations multiply. Meetings extend and somehow solve less.

The challenge is no longer finding insight. It is agreeing on what deserves attention now. Defining the issue becomes harder when every answer arrives fully formed.

## 5. Many voices speak at once

Generational diversity has always existed. What has changed is how confidently every group now speaks, and how easy it has become to do so.

Younger professionals arrive shaped by global exposure that is broad, fast, and fragmented. Ideas flow in from many places at once. Different industries. Different cultures. Different voices. Many of these voices sit outside the organisation. Everyone follows someone. Everyone is followed by someone. Opinions form quickly and often in public.

Layered onto this is something new. Almost everyone now has an AI-enabled view and an AI-assisted voice. Ideas are easier to frame, arguments easier to sharpen, and language easier to produce. What takes more effort is pausing to ask why something needs to be done, and what might follow once it is done.

Senior leaders bring deep institutional memory. They have seen cycles repeat and unintended consequences play out. Middle managers stand in between, balancing speed with stability, while tracking conversations that begin online, continue inside the organisation, and sometimes loop back out again.

Everyone sounds reasonable. Alignment still takes work.

Messages now compete across internal and external spaces. Attention moves easily between them. The line between private thinking and public expression has thinned. The space to test ideas quietly, make small mistakes, and revise views has narrowed.

In this environment, change slows when voices multiply without reflection. It moves when someone helps people slow down just enough to see the implications of what they are saying, listen long enough for different views to settle, and then guide the conversation back to what actually needs attention.

### What this adds up to

Change in 2025 is less about bold declarations and more about careful navigation. Less about launching initiatives and more about clarifying which problem deserves attention first.

People remain open to change. They simply want it to matter.

The organisations making progress are running thoughtful experiments that ease real pain. They are helping leaders interpret a noisy environment. They are resisting the urge to move simply to appear busy.

Change has become harder because everything is happening at once—and someone has to decide what

actually needs fixing, and help people arrive at that decision together.

# TOP 5 TRENDS IN OPTIMISM



## Victor Perton

Founder & Chief Optimism Officer,  
The Centre for Optimism, Author



**Victor Perton** is the Founder and Chief Optimism Officer of The Centre for Optimism and Author of *Optimism: The How and Why*. Known globally as "That Optimism Man," he has spent over 30 years studying what makes people optimistic, asking thousands the simple question: "What makes you optimistic?" His lens on 2025 reveals a profound shift—from organisations asking "how do we succeed?" to "how do we remain hopeful while everything changes?"

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## Over to Victor...

### 2025 is almost saying goodbye.

As the year draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on a question that has guided my life's work: What makes us optimistic? This year, I witnessed something extraordinary—optimism stopped being dismissed as naive positivity and started being recognized as a practical

leadership discipline. From sustainability circles to boardrooms, from global forums to daily workplace conversations, optimism emerged not as denial, but as rigorous realism.



# 1. Optimism as Strategy

In sustainability circles and boardrooms alike, optimism is now seen as a driver of better outcomes. Will Sarni said it best: "Victor makes the case that it is a practical leadership discipline that enables better decisions, bolder investments, and more resilient communities. Optimism as rigorous realism, not denial."

That is the optimism we practice.

In 2025, I saw more leaders around the world adopt this mindset, replacing critique with appreciative questions like, "What is working well?" and "How do we build on it?" It is a shift from problem-finding to life-giving leadership.

Optimism became strategic—not because it ignores challenges, but because it focuses energy on what is possible rather than what is broken.

# 2. Resilience Anchored in Optimism

The RiSE Initiative's Christmas message encouraged Australians to revisit Infectious Optimism. Their message echoed a now widespread understanding: optimism underpins resilience. It gives people the belief and energy to keep going, even when the way is difficult.

Throughout 2025, I observed organisations recognizing that resilience without optimism is merely survival. True resilience—the kind that enables people and organisations to thrive through adversity—requires an optimistic foundation. It's the difference between enduring hardship and transforming because of it.

# 3. A Global Call to Restore Optimism

The World Economic Forum's [Global Risks Report 2025] (<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2025/>) named declining optimism as a threat to global wellbeing.

This was not just analysis—it was a wake-up call.

In response, the Commonwealth Heads of Government pledged to "restore hope and optimism in our common future." These are not just words. They represent a turning point in how governments and leaders think about the emotional and psychological foundations of progress.

When global bodies recognize that optimism matters as much as economic policy or security strategy, we know something fundamental has shifted.

## 4. The Rise of Loving-Kindness Meditation

A gentle yet powerful practice gained traction this year. Loving-kindness meditation—silently wishing happiness, safety, and peace for others and oneself—found its way into boardrooms, leadership retreats, and daily routines.

[Recent research] (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10902-025-00948-7>) published in the Journal of Happiness Studies confirmed what practitioners have known: loving-kindness meditation effectively improves workplace wellbeing, reduces burnout, and enhances interpersonal relationships.

This is optimism in quiet action. It softens hearts, calms minds, and builds communities rooted in compassion. What strikes me most is how this ancient practice is being embraced not as a retreat from the challenges of modern work, but as a tool to meet them with greater emotional resilience and human connection.

## 5. Better Questions, Better Conversations

Across workplaces and communities, a beautiful habit continued to grow. Instead of asking, "How are you?" more people asked, "What has been the best thing in your day?"

One small shift, and the energy in the room changed. Smiles appeared. Conversations deepened.

I have asked this question thousands of times over the years, and every time, I witness the same transformation. People pause. They reflect. They connect with something positive, often something they had not even noticed until they were asked.

This is not about toxic positivity or ignoring difficulties. It is about deliberately directing attention toward what gives us energy, hope, and connection. The question itself becomes a leadership practice—one that builds optimistic cultures one conversation at a time.

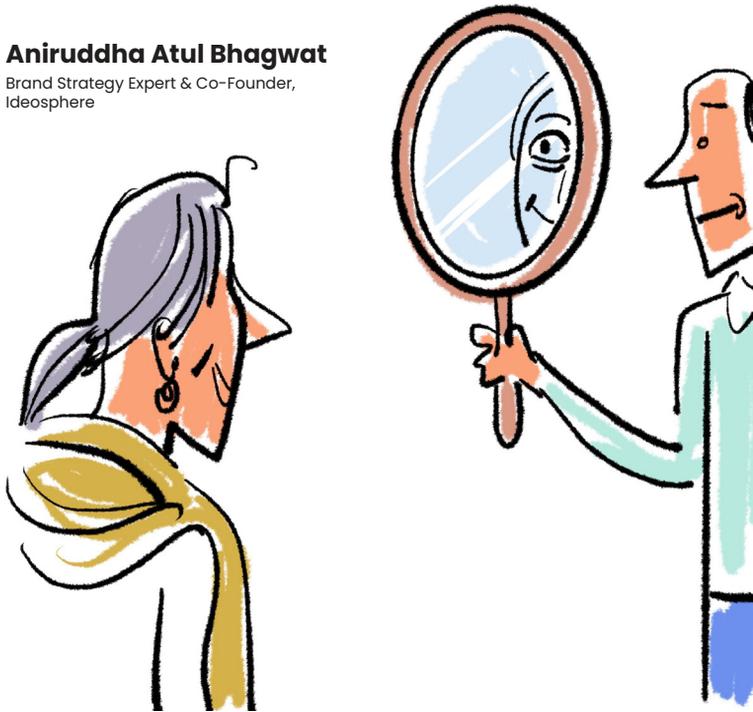
These five trends tell a larger story: 2025 was the year optimism stopped being seen as optional. Organisations that thrived were not those that ignored difficulties—they were those that faced challenges with an optimistic mindset. They asked better questions.

# TOP 6 TRENDS IN BRAND COMMUNICATION



**Aniruddha Atul Bhagwat**

Brand Strategy Expert & Co-Founder,  
Ideosphere



**Aniruddha Atul Bhagwat** is Co-Founder & CEO of Ideosphere, a brand strategy and communications consultancy that has worked with over 250 clients including METRO AG, Tech Mahindra, L&T Technology Services, and Microsoft Accelerator. Aniruddha and his team focus on building robust brand cultures for high-impact storytelling. His lens on 2025 reveals something critical: the year when brands stopped asking "how do we get noticed" and started asking "how do we remain coherent while everything around us changes." Here are his top 5 .. no, top 6 trends in brand communication from the year 2025.

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**Over to Aniruddha...**

## **2025: The Year Brands Learned to Say Less, and Mean More**

It was not a loud year for brand communication. It was a careful one. A year where saying less, but saying it right, mattered more than ever. Media cycles became shorter. Scrutiny increased. Trust became fragile. And in the middle of all this, a few clear patterns stayed with me.

# 1. From Only Possibility to Consequence, Too

One thing became very clear in 2025. Brands are far more aware of consequence.

For a long time, storytelling leaned on optimism and future promise. In today's media environment, that approach started to feel risky. Leaders began asking tougher questions. What happens if this message is misunderstood. What is actually at stake. What breaks if we overstate or stay silent.

You could see this across industries. Manufacturing and infrastructure brands became more careful about claims. Technology companies softened the language of disruption. Even consumer brands showed more restraint, knowing how quickly things can spiral online.

The ambition did not disappear. The awareness increased.

# 2. Messaging as a Decision System, Not just a Branding Exercise

There was a clear fatigue with activity without clarity.

Across organisations, the ask was not for more content. It was for sharper thinking. What do we stand for right now. What problem are we really solving. What should stay consistent even as things around us change.

This pushed messaging into a different role. It became a way to make decisions. What we say. What we repeat. What we avoid. What we let go.

The brands that felt strongest were not everywhere. They were simply very clear.

# 3. If You Can Dream It, You Can Make It

AI stopped being a conversation and became part of the team.

The biggest shift was not efficiency. It was possibility. With AI video and creative tools, the distance between an idea and a visual reduced sharply. If you could imagine a story, you could build a version of it. Quickly. Often without traditional production.

This changed how brands experimented. Early ideas could be tested. Internal narratives could be brought to life. Concepts could be seen, not just discussed.

AI did not replace thinking. It removed friction. And in doing that, it expanded what brands felt confident trying.

## 4. From Humanising Brands to the Human Behind Them

Thought leadership also matured in 2025.

The year rewarded fewer posts and deeper thinking. Clear points of view. Real experience. Speaking when there was something to add, not just something to say.

Another important shift was whose voices were heard. Communication moved beyond just founders. Second line leaders, domain experts, and long term operators began showing up more.

Trust came from seeing the people behind decisions, not just the logo on the post.

## 5. The Customer Became the Hero

Another shift that stood out was how brands began thinking about the customer's role in the story.

Increasingly, brands realised that attention and loyalty are harder to earn if the customer does not feel central. What many now call Main Character Energy became a useful lens. Brands had to find a positioning that feeds a sense of agency, confidence, and personal momentum.

Automotive brands showed this clearly. Bajaj's Ab Dikha campaign, for instance, was not just about the machine. It was about the rider moving ahead, proving something, being seen. The product worked as a reinforcement of the customer's own narrative.

More brands are waking up to this reality. If a product is not provoking, enhancing, or reinforcing the illusion or delusion of being the central character in one's own story, stickiness becomes hard to achieve. This is not about ego. It is about relevance.

“  
The **most powerful brands**  
in 2025 weren't telling their own story —  
they were amplifying the customer's.  
”

## 6. Immerse Inside Before Sharing Outside

Internal communication took on a much bigger role in 2025.

It was no longer treated as supportive or secondary. It became strategic. A way to explain change, align teams, and make direction clear before the outside world heard about it.

This matters because employees are often the most believable carriers of a brand story. When they understand the logic behind decisions, communication outside becomes simpler and more consistent.

### **If one line captures the year, it is this:**

Brands are no longer asking how do we get noticed.

They are asking how do we remain coherent while everything around us changes.

That shift explains almost every pattern above. The move towards consequence aware communication. The renewed focus on messaging clarity. The way AI expanded possibilities without becoming the story. The shift from performative thought leadership to credible human voices. The rise of Main Character Energy as a lens for relevance. And the growing importance of getting the internal narrative right before speaking outside.

At its core, 2025 reminded us of something simple. Visibility is easy to buy. Coherence is hard to build. And in a fragmented, high scrutiny environment, coherence is what lasts.

“

Employees are the most  
**believable storytellers;**  
when they understand the “why,”  
the outside narrative  
strengthens naturally.

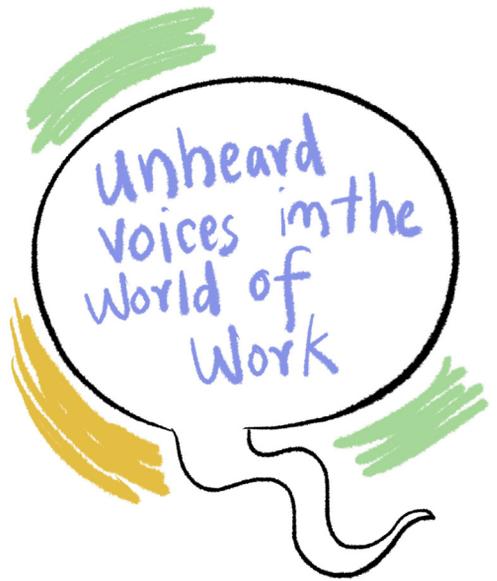
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# 5 UNHEARD VOICES FROM THE WORLD OF WORK IN 2025



**Vivek Patwardhan**

Former Head HR, Asian Paints,  
Author, People at Work



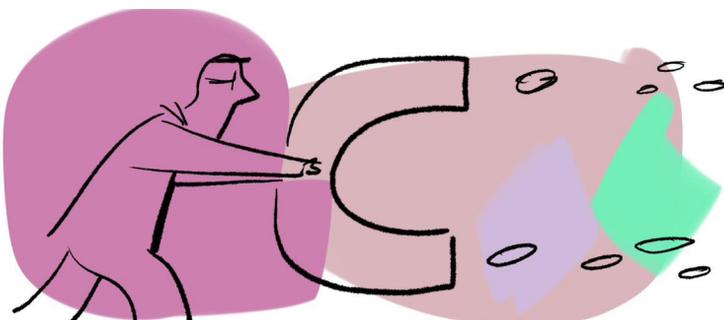
**Vivek Patwardhan**, author of *People at Work: The Untold Story of Labour Management Relations*, is an industry doyen in the space of HR and social change. Vivek has spent over 33 years at Asian Paints, retiring as Head HR, and today he dedicates his work to amplifying the voices that corporate India rarely hears—the workers whose struggles remain invisible in boardrooms and policy discussions. His lens offers something we desperately need: a reckoning with the human cost of our economic systems.

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## **Over to Vivek...**

This is the last month of the year. While presenting the moments which have left an indelible mark on my mind, I am reliving them—all from my work during 2025.

The problems of the most neglected workers—those who have lost their jobs, those whose dignity is stripped daily, those who work in the shadows—are not on the radar screen of society. They exist in thousands. I have been focusing on studying and writing about them. And their life.



# 1. Job Loss Has Destroyed Homes

Racold employees were not lucky. Their lives have been torn apart by the sudden loss of jobs. Here is an excerpt from my conversations with them:

*"The dialogue in the family stops or suffers badly."*

One father told me: "My son enrolled for an engineering course. One day over dinner I asked him if his studies were going well. He could not eat his food. He started crying. It was a heart-rending sight to watch my son at dinner, crying inconsolably with his food plate in front of him."

*"What happened?"*

"Dad, where is the time to study,' he asked. He had to change three buses to reach his institute and the same way to return. It often took five hours of travel. He thought that staying in a hostel at Pune would be impossible given our financial situation. He was not wrong, and he had not asked me."

He had accurately guessed his father's financial status.

This is what unemployment does. It does not just take away income—it takes away futures, conversations, dignity.

# 2. Crematorium Workers Worry About Future of Their Children

I met the workers at Nigdi (Pune) Crematorium. I asked them if they would have difficulty getting their children married. The opinion was divided.

Some felt that it would not be seen well by the bride's or bridegroom's family. Others felt it would be the job of the bride or bridegroom that would matter.

But everyone agreed on one thing: "Our children will not be entering this profession for sure."

Even those who handle death with dignity every day know that society reserves no dignity for them.

**Dignity in work** does not always translate into dignity in society's eyes.

### 3. The Choice Between Work and Dignity

I had a meeting with Soppecom (an NGO working with sugarcane workers) officials and a small group of women sugarcane cutters. The situation is shocking, and that word does not convey the extreme situations women encounter.

Several posters were displayed during our meeting. One stopped me cold.

Here is the English translation of what the poster says:

"While returning to our camp, we women workers noticed corn cobs in a farm. We women workers took away a few corn cobs to eat. My son, a little boy then, was with me and I moved out of the farm a bit late. The farmer spotted me, abused me and said, 'You fix the corn cobs back to the plants or else sleep with me.' I feared that if I resist, the farmer will complain at the camp and it will mean severe reprimand. I lay down on the ground there and told him, 'Take what you wish to take!'" — A woman sugarcane cutting worker

This is not an isolated incident. This is the reality for women workers who have no choice but to submit—because resistance means losing the only income that keeps their families alive.

“

For some women, the choice is not between right and wrong — it is between survival and dignity.

”

### 4. Beedi Workers Don't Even Get The Minimum

Thinking of women workers, one of the most exploited groups among them are beedi workers. They roll a thousand beedies a day. They roll them while making morning tea, while cooking meals, and even stay awake past midnight to complete the quota.

I watched a woman making beedi bundles—they are piece-rated—with her three-year-old son sitting next to her.

The Government has declared a minimum wage for them. Nobody pays it—with, I believe, the connivance of the Government.

## 5. Hope Finds Its Way

My series 'Their Life After Retirement' began with the interview of Dipak and Sonali Ghole. Dipak, who is ITI trained, studied English language for two years and migrated to Australia. A very unusual decision for a person of his background.

Renuka Budharam another beedi worker for 30 years, stepped away from that world to become a well-known author, TV anchor and poetess. Read my interview with her, [here](#).

Sometimes, against all odds, workers find a way out. But for every Dipak who makes it to Australia, there are thousands who don't.

It is easy to exploit people. Particularly in a country where unemployment means starvation. Let us hope that 2026 brings equity and justice to them.

These voices are not just stories from 2025. They are the stories we have been ignoring for decades—the human cost of our economic growth, the price paid by those who have no seat at the table.

This post is part of the End-Of-Year-Reflection-Series bringing you diverse perspectives from different walks of life. As you reflect on your own journey of 2025, please feel free to download the personal reflection guide 'New Beginnings' at [Flyntrok Point Of View](#) and we also leave you with Mr Vivek Patwardhan's signature as a guiding thought ..

“

What you leave behind is not  
what is engraved in  
stone monuments, but what is woven  
into the lives of others.

— Vivek S Patwardhan

”

# TOP 5 TRENDS IN HR



## Richard Lobo

Chief People Officer, Tech Mahindra,  
Author, Human At Work

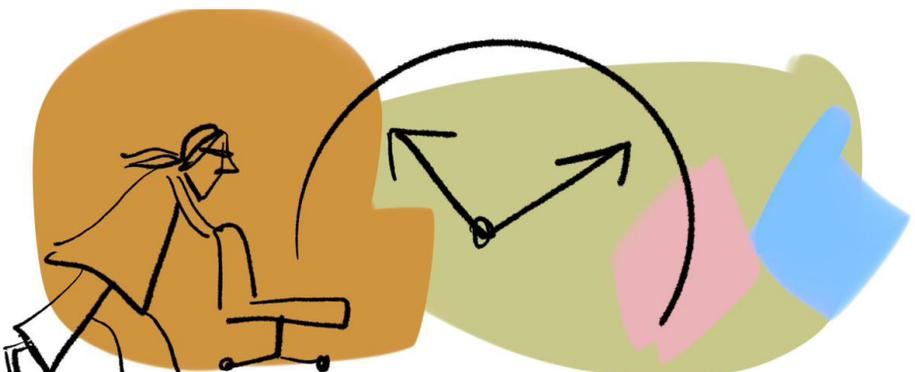


In this post **Richard Lobo**, Chief People Officer, Tech Mahindra, picks the 5 trends that are already underfoot in 2025, that are set to transform HR. As the author of the book, *Human At Work* and over three decades of leading human resources for some of the largest tech ecosystems, Richard has a unique vantage point on the intersection of technology and the human spirit. He offers a crucial lens of how the world of work itself is being reimaged—and what it means for leaders steering their organizations into 2026.

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### ***Over To Richard...***

The workplace in 2025 looked different than it did just a year ago. Here are the five trends in HR that have shaped this journey.



# 1. People Analytics Becomes Agile

Firstly, data-driven decision-making through people analytics is gaining significant traction. HR teams are becoming adept at harnessing data to spot trends, create prototypes, and draw meaningful conclusions. This not only adds strategic depth to the HR function but also yields improved business outcomes.

“

Data is giving HR a sharper, more strategic voice at the table.

”

# 2. AI Enters The HR Mainstream

Secondly, Artificial intelligence is making waves across HR applications, from recruitment to enhancing employee experiences. Many mature companies are now leveraging agentic AI to handle operational tasks and provide a seamless interface for employees, making the entire process more efficient and engaging.

“

From recruitment to experience, AI is **reshaping** the HR value chain.

”

# 3. Relevance And Skills Eclipse Credentials

Moreover, the traditional focus on qualifications and experience is shifting. Skill and relevance to client needs are now taking precedence in career decisions. As companies prioritize what employees can deliver, continuous learning, upskilling, and reskilling have become top priorities.

## 4. Workplace Flexibility Gets Redefined

The evolution of work models is the fourth one I would pick. While there was a push towards returning to office work, workplace flexibility tied to productivity measurement is emerging as the preferred model. Innovative tools and methods are enabling companies to enhance collaboration while granting employees a degree of autonomy.

## 5. Employee Experience & Well Being Are Inter-Twined

Finally, there is a growing emphasis on employee experience and well-being. Companies are combining technology with traditional methods to create a balanced approach that maximizes the benefits of both.

“  
The **most resilient organisations**  
in 2025 are those that  
integrate performance, experience, and  
well-being into one strategy.  
”

Richard's insights remind us that while the 'how' of work is changing, the 'who' remains the most important part. These shifts are not isolated—they are interconnected threads in the larger tapestry of organizational change. As you reflect on your own 2025, weave in both your persona reflections and diverse perspectives.

Download the "New Beginnings" reflection guide at [flyntrok.com/point-of-view](https://flyntrok.com/point-of-view) to guide your reflection journey, capture your insights and set your direction for the year ahead.

# About Flyntrok

Flyntrok is a human centric change firm. We help businesses and individuals develop the capacity for change that's sustainable and centered around people, so your team is ready to adapt and thrive, whatever the future brings. We believe change works best when it's shaped by the people who experience it every day. Every organisation is unique, so we walk the path with you, keeping your people and goals at the heart of everything we do.



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