

Unlocking the Future of Work: Key Insights from NRI’s session in the ATD APAC 2025 Conference

As the future of work continues to unfold at an unprecedented pace, HR professionals across the Asia-Pacific region are grappling with an urgent need to adapt to a rapidly changing world of work.

It was an honor to speak and share NRI’s key insights on APAC workforce landscape at the recent Association for Talent Development (ATD) APAC conference in Taiwan. With over 2,000 CHROs, HR professionals, business leaders and managers in attendance, the 3-day event explored some of the most pressing issues affecting organizations today.

In my session, I shared insights from a proprietary employee survey conducted by NRI across five countries—Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The study, which surveyed over 1,000 employees, aimed to uncover what makes employees stay and strive in an organization.



Source: NRI’s ASEAN Study

While much research has been done on talent attraction and motivation, the following key insights usher a whole new lens in understanding today’s workforce:

1. Pay Gets Them In. Growth Keeps Them In. Fairness Wins Their Loyalty.

When it comes to keeping employees engaged and committed to an organization, it’s clear that compensation is only the beginning. Our survey results confirm that **compensation** is indeed a



Event Highlights: Diane Cordova (in the blue coat), NRI’s Principal Consultant, at the ATD APAC 2025

critical factor in attracting talent—after all, a competitive salary package is one of the first things an employee evaluates. However, it’s not the only factor that ensures long-term retention.

Growth opportunities — especially at the dawn of digitalization, talents clamor for the chance to develop professionally, acquire new digital and high-value skills, to advance their careers in an increasingly agile work. Employees who feel they are being supported in their career growth are far more likely to stay and contribute meaningfully to the organization. This finding underscores the importance of continuous learning and development programs, especially in a world where the skills gap is widening and evolving at such a rapid pace.

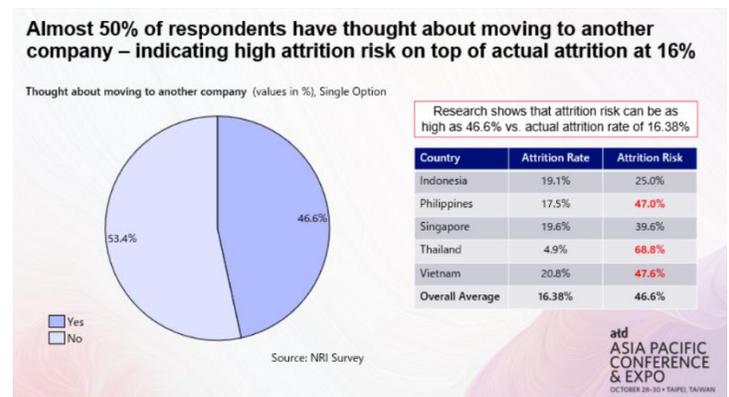
Yet, the most surprising insight from the survey was the crucial role of **fairness** in securing loyalty. Employees are not only looking for recognition that aligns with their job roles, but they want to feel valued for their contributions, with fair and transparent evaluation processes. Employees who feel that their hard work is consistently recognized and rewarded are more likely to stay and thrive in an organization. A fair and equitable work environment fosters a sense of trust, which in turn leads to long-term loyalty.

2. Attrition vs. Attrition Risk: A Critical Differentiation

While most companies monitor attrition rates—which indicate the percentage of employees leaving the organization over its total workforce—it is equally important to focus on **attrition risk**, a more subtle but equally impactful metric. Attrition risk refers to employees who are not actively leaving but have considered or are open to the idea of moving to another organization.

This concept is crucial because companies often focus on high-level attrition metrics but fail to consider the wider implications of having a significant portion of their workforce at risk.

Our study revealed that a large percentage of employees across all five countries reported being at risk of leaving in the near future—ranging from 30% to as high as 50% in some markets.



Source: NRI's ASEAN Study

The business case for understanding and addressing attrition risk is compelling: when a significant portion of your workforce is disengaged or considering an exit, you're not just losing individuals—you're losing valuable productivity, institutional knowledge, and momentum. This necessitates proactive HR interventions. Organizations that can identify and address attrition risk early have the opportunity to mitigate the damage before it becomes a crisis.

This is why HR must not only track employee turnover but also measure the psychological and emotional commitment of employees (through engagement surveys, stay interviews, etc.), taking steps to re-engage them before they make the decision to leave.

3. Innovation: A Unifying Cultural Preference Across Borders

While our survey revealed some regional differences in employee preferences, one striking commonality stood out: across all five countries, **Innovation** consistently topped the list as the **preferred organizational culture** of today's workforce. Employees—regardless of their geographical location—want to be part of an organization that fosters change, encourages creative problem-solving, and challenges the status quo.

This finding has significant implications for HR and leadership teams. Talents today are not content with simply following orders or maintaining the status quo. They are eager to make an impact and drive change. For HR professionals, this means equipping employees with the right digital tools and creating an **agile, adaptive work environment** that allows them to experiment, innovate, and bring new ideas to life.

To foster a culture of innovation, companies must ensure that they are not only offering fair, transparent performance evaluations but also providing employees with the resources, autonomy, and recognition they need to succeed. **Empowerment** is key. HR must ensure that employees at all levels feel they have the capability—and the responsibility—to challenge conventional thinking and lead change within the organization.

From Insights to Impact

As HR leaders, it's time to move beyond traditional approaches to talent management.

The future of work is already here, and the need for HR to be agile, strategic, and forward-thinking has never been greater. If we are to truly support our workforce in the rapidly evolving global landscape, we must prioritize strategies that not only attract but also retain and engage talent.

For CHROs and CEOs, this means investing in tools, processes, and mindset training that are adaptive, innovative, and responsive to the changing needs of employees. It also means being proactive in addressing attrition risk and ensuring that our organizations are places where growth, fairness, and innovation are not just buzzwords but guiding principles.

The question is no longer, “Are we ready for the future?”—it’s, “How will we lead it?”

As HR leaders, we have a unique opportunity to build organizations that are not only prepared for the changes ahead but are also thriving in them. This means empowering our teams, fostering innovation, and creating environments where talent can be cultivated to grow and succeed.

Now is the time to take a proactive approach—invest in the right strategies, tools, and culture to attract, retain, and engage the talent that will drive your organization’s success.

Diane is the Head of HROD Sector, leading the Total Rewards Practice, at Nomura Research Institute – Manila branch. NRI is a leading global private think tank, systems integrator, and management consulting from Japan with branches in the world’s major cities. Prior to NRI, she was the HROD Director, Head of Organization Development and HR Business Partnering, in Unilab, Inc

With over a decade of significant experience in leading teams of HR experts handling organization development initiatives, performance and rewards management, policy development, business partnering solutions, she continues to help organizations in their transformation journeys. She is also a recipient of the prestigious Australia Awards Scholarship, where she earned her Masters’ degree in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations from The University of Sydney.

About the Contributor



Diane Cordova
Principal Consultant
diane.cordova@nrisg.com



Interested to talk about the article or any of NRI’s services?

✉ nrimanila-inquiry@nrisg.com

📍 26/F Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza,
6819 Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Philippines