

## "Innovative HR Strategies for Responsible Entrepreneurship: Building Sustainable Talent Ecosystems"



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### Abstract

The growing entrepreneurial ecosystem of freelancing and the gig economy, and the growing use of remote and hybrid work models are all contributing to the rapid evolution of the entrepreneurial environment. The growth of the gig economy and freelancing, the emergence of startups, and the growing popularity of remote and hybrid work models are all contributing to the rapid evolution of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Concurrently the rising prominence on principles of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and ethical leadership has amplified the demand for responsible entrepreneurship.

The primary objective of this paper is to evaluate the contribution of HR innovative strategies in enabling responsible entrepreneurship and in building resilient talent ecosystems. The study adopts a conceptual and exploratory approach based on a review of existing literature, industry reports, and global best practices. The study covers transparent performance management systems, ongoing learning and development programs, inclusive hiring methods, ethical HR policies, and employee empowerment techniques. The study concludes that strategically integrated HR practices can promote responsible entrepreneurial growth, improve worker resilience, and close skill gaps.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial eco-system, Sustainable Talent Ecosystems, Gig Economy Workforce, Skill-Based Human Capital, ESG-Oriented Leadership.

### Introduction

The today's dynamic business environment stands at a critically inflationary indicators where the key pillars of responsible entrepreneurship and strategic talent management converge to address extra ordinary global challenges. As organizations traverse the time period which is often defined by rapid technological advancement, talent dearth, and growing employee expectations. Mercer, the Conventional HR framework are undergoing fundamental transformation. This research examines the relationship between innovative HR strategies and responsible entrepreneurship, proposing a framework for building sustainable talent ecosystems that simultaneously drive organizational performance and contribute to broader societal and environmental objectives.

In the past 20 years, responsible entrepreneurship has advanced significantly—from not just simply meeting corporate social responsibility (CSR) requirements to emerging as a vital strategy that embeds the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit at the heart of business activities. Studies indicate that sustainable entrepreneurial practices and CSR allow businesses to positively impact society and the environment while enhancing goodwill, increasing competitiveness, attracting and retaining customers, and fostering long-term value creation for stakeholders. This shift in paradigm requires a related advancement in how organizations perceive, attract, cultivate, and retain

talent—changing HR from a supportive role into a key driver of enduring business transformation. Recent studies indicate that organizations are encountering substantial difficulties in their talent management initiatives. About 70% of organizations still struggle with filling full-time roles, and around 75% of employers indicate issues in locating qualified candidates. These hiring difficulties are worsened by the rapid rate of skills becoming outdated, as one in four companies notes that roles filled in the past year have necessitated new skills. The merging of these trends highlights the pressing necessity for HR strategies that advance beyond conventional headcount planning to foster adaptive, sustainability-focused talent ecosystems. Incorporating sustainability principles into talent management serves as a moral obligation and a competitive edge. Organizations that integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors into their HR policies show improved capability to draw in employees who value environmental issues and align with societal standards while promoting innovation and adaptability. Responsible entrepreneurship fuels social innovation, mainly because of its intrinsic dedication to ethical, sustainable, and inclusive practices. Wiley Online Library, establishing a positive feedback loop where purpose-oriented talent strategies improve both organizational performance and social effect. The emergence of artificial intelligence and automation requires organizations to restructure

work based on human-centered principles, promoting environments of active human-machine collaboration and ongoing skill enhancement and retraining. Moreover, companies are substituting obsolete, inflexible performance evaluations with adaptable goal-setting, peer feedback mechanisms, and continuous coaching frameworks that focus on ongoing growth

The concept of sustainable talent ecosystems extends beyond individual organizational boundaries to bring together interconnected frameworks of educational institutions, employers across sectors, and grassroots stakeholders. This ecosystem approach recognizes that while sustainability has increasingly become a business imperative, successfully embedding these principles requires looking beyond environmental initiatives to how organizations attract, develop, and retain their employees. This research aims to equip HR professionals and entrepreneurial leaders with evidence-based frameworks for building talent ecosystems that generate sustainable competitive advantage while contributing to the achievement of broader societal goals, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The following sections of this paper delve into the theoretical bases that support sustainable talent ecosystems, offer empirical data from various organizational settings, and suggest practical strategies for HR leaders aiming to incorporate responsible entrepreneurship principles into their talent management practices. Through this exploration, we aim to enhance both academic understanding and the practical implementation of innovative HR strategies that act as catalysts for responsible entrepreneurship and sustainable organizational change.

Looking toward the future, emerging research forecasts a transformative landscape where **talent ecosystems become central to entrepreneurial success**. Predictions indicate that the global workforce will require continuous upskilling and reskilling to remain relevant amid technological disruptions, while HR innovation will increasingly embrace human-centric approaches that balance digital augmentation with ethical and psychological well-being. Roles that blend creativity, emotional intelligence, and ethical reasoning are expected to proliferate, suggesting a shift in HR strategy from credential-based hiring to competency-based workforce design.

Thus, this paper argues that **innovative HR strategies should be purposefully designed to foster sustainable talent ecosystems** that not only equip entrepreneurial ventures with the human capital they need to thrive but also align business growth with societal and environmental progress. Such strategies represent a nexus where responsibility, innovation, and sustainability

coalesce — paving the way for resilient entrepreneurship in the 21st century.

## Literature Review

### 1. The Global Context: The Rise of the Responsible Entrepreneur

In the post-2020 economic landscape, the definition of entrepreneurial success has undergone a theoretical shift. No longer is "industry destruction" measured solely by market share or valuation; instead, the emergence of Responsible Entrepreneurship demands a triple-bottom-line balancing approach—profit, people, and the planet. As we move into 2026, entrepreneurs are increasingly viewed as "social architects" who must navigate a "resilience" of global disruptions, from climate volatility to the ethical integration of Agentic AI.

### 2. The Problem Statement: The unsustainability of modern talent models.

Despite the rise of purpose-driven brands, many entrepreneurial ventures struggle with "workforce vulnerability." Historical data from the early 2020s revealed a paradox: while 66% of large organizations expressed excitement about AI-driven productivity (ADP Market Pulse, 2025), nearly 65% of mid-sized firms faced significant obstacles in providing the skills development necessary to sustain that growth.

Key Insight: Traditional HR models, often characterized by "extract-and-replace" mentalities, are incompatible with the long-term goals of a sustainable venture. A "Sustainable Talent Ecosystem" is not merely about retention; it is about an organization's ability to continuously attract, nurture, and evolve its human capital in alignment with ethical values.

### 3. Bridging the Gap: Innovative HR Strategies

This research argues that for entrepreneurship to be truly "responsible," HR must move beyond administrative functions into Strategic Ecosystem Management. Current trends for 2026 indicate three critical pillars for this transformation:

- **Role versatility:** Shifting from degree-led hiring to capability or skill-based models. Data suggests that by 2026, skills-based hiring will be a standard workforce strategy for over 75% of leading firms, allowing for greater internal mobility and resilience.
- **AI-Human Convergence:** Instead of perceiving AI just as an automation tool, conscientious entrepreneurs are employing Agentic AI to manage everyday activities, therefore "re-humanizing" the workplace and enabling people to concentrate on high-impact, value-oriented work.
- **Purpose as a Retention Lever:** Longitudinal studies (e.g., Cisco, 2025) demonstrate that employees engaged in community impact or

"purpose programs" show a 12% lower attrition rate.

In today's world, shaped by fast-paced technological change, rising societal expectations, and closely connected global economies, Human Resource (HR) strategies have evolved far beyond routine administrative tasks. They now play a central strategic role in fostering sustainable and responsible entrepreneurship. Responsible entrepreneurship emphasizes not only financial success but also ethical leadership, social contribution, and environmental responsibility. To support this approach, HR systems must be adaptable, forward-looking, and closely connected to the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem. Global studies such as the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) highlight that entrepreneurship does not occur in isolation; instead, it is strongly influenced by surrounding conditions such as the availability of skilled talent, supportive institutions, cultural attitudes, and a nation's capacity for innovation. Bombiak, E., & Marciniuk-Kluska, A. (2019).

Historically, HR practices focused on routine tasks such as recruitment, payroll, and compliance; however, the emergence of digital technologies and sustainability imperatives has redefined HR as a **catalyst for innovation, talent ecosystem development, and organizational resilience**. The integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics, and automation is reshaping how talent is sourced, developed, and retained. These technologies not only enhance operational efficiencies but also provide strategic insights that enable talent agility and predictive workforce planning — key ingredients for sustainable competitive advantage in entrepreneurial settings. Bura, C., Naayini, P., & Kamatala, S. (2025).

Moreover, scholars have begun conceptualizing entrepreneurial ecosystems themselves as human resource systems — where inter-organizational networks, educational institutions, investors, government bodies, and entrepreneurs collaboratively influence talent flows, skill development, and organizational learning. This meta-organizational perspective underscores a shift beyond isolated HR practices toward **collective ecosystem orchestration** that supports entrepreneurial firms in acquiring and nurturing the right human capital under resource-constrained conditions. Spigel (2017)

At the same time, responsible entrepreneurship increasingly requires human resource strategies to be integrated with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles in order to advance sustainability objectives across organizational levels. Existing studies indicate that incorporating ESG considerations into HR practices—such as equitable recruitment, continuous skill development,

performance evaluation, and employee well-being initiative strengthens employee engagement, enhances organizational credibility, and supports sustainable long-term value creation. Ehnert et al. (2016) – *Sustainable HRM and ESG alignment*

Concurrently, responsible entrepreneurship demands that HR strategies align with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles to reinforce sustainability goals at every organizational layer. Research suggests that embedding ESG considerations into HR practices — from inclusive hiring and continuous reskilling to performance management and employee well-being — enhances workforce engagement, organizational legitimacy, and long-term value creation. Ehnert, I., Parsa, S., Roper, I., Wagner, M., & Muller-Camen, M. (2016).

According to, Tiba, S., van Rijnsoever, F. J., & Hekkert, M. P. (2019). Research on responsible entrepreneurship focuses too much on how start-ups benefit society, while under examining how responsibility improves firm-level financial outcomes, communication practices, employee well-being, customer responses, civil society engagement, and the balancing of environmental with social and economic performance. This is because different fields address responsibility across the refined triple bottom line of profit, people, and planet. A **glaring research gap** is the near-complete lack of work on HR-driven, innovative people practices, such as responsible talent attraction, development, engagement, and retention that both improve employee resilience and well-being and strategically enable responsible start-ups to build sustainable talent ecosystems as a competitive capability. This study links micro-level HR architecture with the larger profit-people-planet agenda identified but not operationalized in this review.

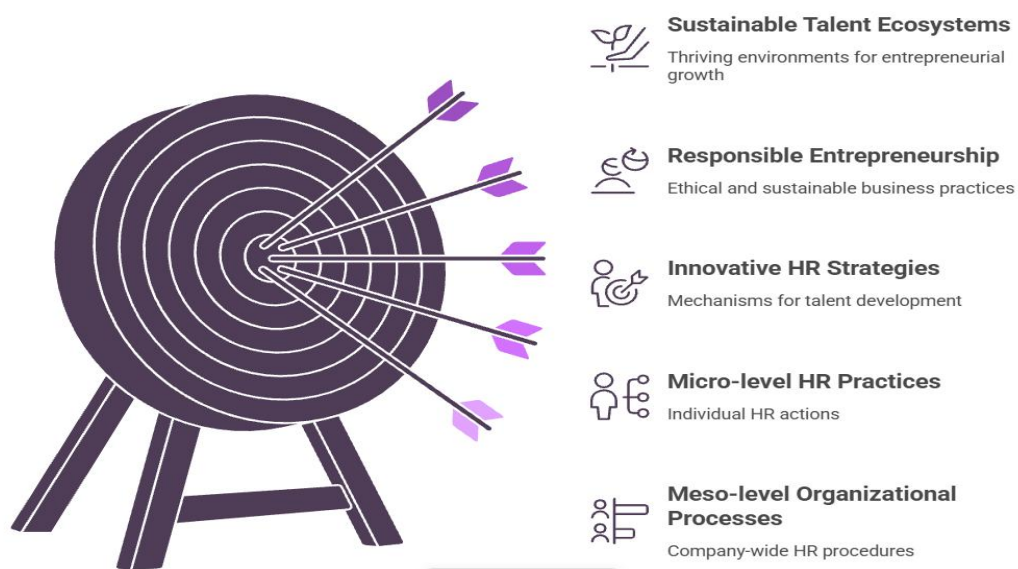
These studies were categorized into five primary topics that demonstrate the distinctions between profit-driven and ethical entrepreneurs. These five topics clarify why conscientious businesspeople: Strike a balance between business and social good; they aim to make money while simultaneously improving society. Integrate accountability into their business plans; it is an essential component of the company's operations and not an optional feature. Contribute to societal change: Entrepreneurs have the power to influence social and environmental change. Promote responsible innovation: Companies require cultures and procedures that foster moral and long-term creativity. Make good use of market incentives; they leverage market forces to encourage ethical and sustainable company practices. Vallaster, C., Kraus, S., Kailer, N., & Baldwin, B. (2019). This paper's primary strength lies in its clear organization and explanation of these important concepts, as well as its recommendations for future study areas, particularly about the need for innovation to evolve toward greater

responsibility. The study does have several drawbacks, though. It is primarily theoretical in nature, discussing concepts rather than actual procedures. Additionally, it pays little attention to people-related issues, such as how employee skills, training, motivation, engagement, and human resource practices may support ethical businesspeople in striking a long-term balance between profit and social responsibility.

To explain responsible entrepreneurship in developing nations, Azmat and Samaratunge (2009) primarily concentrate on small and unofficial enterprises, which are crucial for employment and economic growth. But according to the report, these business owners frequently struggle to act morally due to issues including poverty, fierce rivalry, a lack of government assistance, lax regulations, and peer pressure to thrive. The authors provide a framework to demonstrate how local economic factors, business environments, and cultural norms affect how entrepreneurs see and carry out their responsibilities. The article mostly examines concepts at a broad level, even though it clarifies why ethical entrepreneurship is difficult in poor nations.

### Conceptual Framework Overview

#### HR's Role in Sustainable Entrepreneurship



Source: Created with Napkin.ai

#### Theoretical Foundations of the Framework

The framework is anchored in four established theories to ensure conceptual rigor:

1. **Resource-Based View (RBV)** – Skills and human capital are strategic resources that generate sustained competitive advantage when developed, deployed, and retained through HR systems.

#### Objectives

1. To examine the evolving dynamics of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including the gig economy, freelancing, startups, and remote/hybrid work models, and their implications for talent management.
2. To explore the role of HR in building resilient, sustainable talent ecosystems that address skill gaps, enhance workforce adaptability, and promote long-term entrepreneurial growth.
3. To identify global best practices and propose a framework for integrating HR strategies to foster responsible entrepreneurship and skill-based human capital development.

#### Scope

1. This study focuses on the intersection of innovative HR practices and responsible entrepreneurship within contemporary entrepreneurial ecosystems. It encompasses:
2. Key trends like the gig economy, freelancing, startups, and remote/hybrid work models.
3. HR strategies including transparent performance management, learning and development, inclusive hiring, ethical policies, and employee empowerment.

2. **Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) Theory** – HR practices enhance employee abilities (skills), motivation (incentives and engagement), and opportunities (participation and mobility).
3. **Stakeholder Theory** – Responsible entrepreneurship requires balancing the interests of multiple stakeholders, including

employees, gig workers, communities, industry, and government.

4. **Human Capital Ecosystem Theory** – Talent is developed across interconnected institutions rather than within isolated firms.

**Data Analysis & Interpretation**

**1. To examine the evolving dynamics of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including the gig economy, freelancing, startups, and remote/hybrid work models, and their implications for talent management.**

➤ The report surveyed 3,650 HR and business leaders to uncover how organizations are adapting to global hiring, automation, and the future of work (**Global workforce trends 2025: Key insights from remote**)

➤ According to - **Economic Survey 2026**: India’s fast-growing gig economy needs an overhaul  
The document stated that workers in the gig sector have increased to 12 million in fiscal year (FY) 2025, from 7.7 million in FY 2021. The growth of 55 per cent is driven by smartphone penetration among over 800 million users and 15 billion UPI transactions per month.

➤ “Now representing over 2 per cent of the total workforce in India, growth of gig workers outpaces overall employment, with non-agricultural gigs projected to constitute 6.7 per cent of the workforce by 2029-30, contributing ₹2.35 lakh crore to GDP,” it noted.

➤ **According to a NITI Aayog report**, the share of high-skilled gig workers is expected to be 27.5 per cent by 2030. For low-skilled workers, it is projected to be 33.8 per cent by 2030.

**2. To explore the role of HR in building resilient, sustainable talent ecosystems that address skill gaps, enhance workforce adaptability, and promote long-term entrepreneurial growth.**

According to the report presented by - Union Minister Shri Jayant Chaudhary unveils report on “Skills for the Future: Transforming India’s Workforce Landscape” Posted On: 27 JUN 2025 6:24PM by PIB Delh

**2.1 Occupational Skill Distribution (PLFS 2023-24)**

Skill Level	Share of Workforce	Interpretation
Low-competency occupations	88%	Indicates overdependence on low-skill labour
Medium-competency roles	~2-4%	Thin pipeline for future leadership
High-competency roles	10-12%	Severe shortage of advanced skills

**Data Interpretation (HR Lens):**

- The dominance of low-competency roles reveals structural under-skilling, posing risks to innovation and entrepreneurial competitiveness.
- HR strategies must shift from headcount-based hiring to capability-based workforce development.
- Responsible entrepreneurship demands upskilling and reskilling frameworks to ensure inclusive growth.

**Identified sectors:**

- IT & ITeS
- Textile & Apparel
- Electronics
- Healthcare & Life Sciences
- Beauty & Wellness

**Data Interpretation:**

- Skilling efforts are concentrated, leaving emerging and green sectors underserved.
- Overconcentration risks talent saturation and underutilization.
- HR in entrepreneurial firms must anticipate future skill needs, not just current market trends.

**HR as Ecosystem Builder**

**2.2 Sectoral Concentration of Vocational Training (66%)**

Report Insight	HR Strategy	Entrepreneurial Outcome
Skill mismatch	Continuous reskilling	Innovation readiness
Low high-skill share	Talent acceleration programs	Competitive advantage
Sectoral imbalance	Cross-sector skill mobility	Sustainable growth
Regional disparities	Local talent partnerships	Inclusive entrepreneurship

3. To identify global best practices and propose a framework for integrating HR strategies to foster responsible entrepreneurship and skill-based human capital development.

**India’s Quantitative Skill Landscape (Government & Surveys)**

◆ **Workforce Skill Composition**

- Around 88% of India’s workforce is employed in low-competency jobs (2023-24), underscoring the scale of skill gaps in the labour market. (Economic Times)

◆ **Vocational & Technical Training**

- Only 4.1% of people aged 15–59 in India have received formal vocational training, while a majority (65.3%) have no vocational or technical training whatsoever.

- According to recent data, the share of individuals receiving any vocational or technical training rose to 34.7% in 2023-24, up from 27.4% in 2022-23.

◆ **Formal Apprenticeship Engagement**

- As of FY 2025, there were 36,63,696 apprentices active across India, with over 1.21 crore apprentices enrolled historically.

◆ **Secondary Education & Skill Integration**

- Only 47% of schools in India offer skill-based courses at the senior secondary level, and only 29% of students opt for them.

- In one example, over 4.2 lakh government school students chose vocational courses in Delhi during 2024-25.

Indicator	Value	Source
Over-qualification (OECD average)	~23%	www.oecd.org
Under-qualification (OECD)	~9%	www.oecd.org
Workers with job-matching skills (OECD)	~64–67%	www.oecd.org
Employers reporting skill shortages	77%	https://webapps.ilo.org/business-case/cases/skill-development
India’s workforce in low-competency jobs	~88%	https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/
Formal vocational training in India	4.1%	https://sprf.in/unpacking-the-current-scenario-of-indias-skilling-landscape
Vocational/technical training participation	34.7%	https://www.drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/03-01-2026/print/manual?
Schools offering skill-based courses	47%	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/only-47-of-schools-offer-skill-based-courses-government-study/articleshow/122352569.cms
India employability rate (2026)	56.35%	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/only-47-of-schools-offer-skill-based-courses-government-study/articleshow/122352569.cms
Apprentices engaged (FY25)	~36.6 lakh	https://www.ibef.org/government-schemes/skill-india?
Farmers trained (3 years)	~1.22 crore	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/only-47-of-schools-offer-skill-based-courses-government-study/articleshow/122352569.cms
Global youth lacking skills	~450 million	https://unevoc.unesco.org/

**Findings**

1. Transformation of entrepreneurial ecosystems has intensified strategic HR demands.
2. Persistent skill polarization constrains responsible entrepreneurial growth.

3. Limited vocational training penetration reflects structural inefficiencies in human capital development.
4. Apprenticeship systems demonstrate scale but lack strategic integration.
5. Global skill mismatch trends reinforce the relevance of ecosystem-based HR strategies.

6. HR functions emerge as pivotal enablers of responsible entrepreneurship.

### Suggestions

1. Transition from qualification-centric to skills-based HR architecture.
2. Embed continuous learning as a core HR function.
3. Strengthen public-private skill development partnerships.
4. Align HR governance with ESG and responsible entrepreneurship principles.
5. Leverage HR analytics for anticipatory workforce planning.
6. Promote ecosystem-based talent collaboration models.

### Conclusion

This study clearly demonstrates that innovative HR practices play a crucial role in promoting responsible entrepreneurship and building sustainable talent ecosystems. The findings highlight ongoing challenges such as unequal skill development, inadequate access to vocational training, and a mismatch between educational curricula and labour market needs. These issues are further intensified by the fast growth of non-traditional forms of employment and rapid technological changes.

The results confirm that the multifaceted problems of modern entrepreneurial ecosystems cannot be adequately addressed by classic administrative HR methods. HR must instead become a strategic architect of talent ecosystems by combining data-driven planning, ESG-aligned governance, skills-based workforce design, and continuous learning mechanisms. Such a change improves worker resilience and innovation capability while allowing firms to strike a balance between flexibility and accountability.

The study adds to the expanding corpus of research supporting ecosystem-oriented approaches to human capital management by situating HR at the nexus of sustainability, skill development, and entrepreneurship. By connecting micro-level HR practices with macro-level results pertaining to inclusive growth, ethical entrepreneurship, and long-term economic sustainability, the suggested paradigm promotes theoretical knowledge as well as practical implementation.

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