Cracking the Tech Code:
Five Strategies to Attract and Retain Top Talent in Tech.

Thought Leadership

In recent years, Big Tech has found itself under the microscope, with the public scrutinizing its market influence, data privacy practices, and competitive fairness. Yet, despite skepticism and economic fluctuations, the technology sector remains highly attractive due to competitive pay, digitization, and ongoing AI innovation.

Recently, Korn Ferry spoke with HR leaders across the industry to uncover what draws talent to the field and how companies can attract and retain the best in tech. While tech's appeal remains strong, our conversations revealed that employers need to be more proactive and intentional in meeting employees' evolving needs.

TECH'S TIMELESS APPEAL

Despite its cyclical nature—marked by periods of rapid growth and occasional contraction—the tech industry continues to offer unparalleled opportunities for innovation. Engineers and product managers, in particular, are drawn to the sector's fast-paced advancements, especially in AI. Companies centered on AI are viewed as forward-thinking and innovative, making them highly competitive in today's talent market. But AI isn't the only factor driving interest in tech.

Competitive compensation remains a powerful draw. From executives to recent graduates, many

> **"It hasn't faded one bit.** There's skepticism in the public domain, but I don't think the skepticism that exists in the media resonates or has in any way influenced talent flows."

are attracted by strong salaries, equity packages, accelerated career growth, and comprehensive benefits—advantages that often outpace those offered by legacy companies.

HR leaders we spoke with agree that tech's resilience and historical growth contribute to its ongoing appeal. At the same time, recent political and legal developments, such as the US Supreme Court's ruling on affirmative action, have impacted diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, raising concerns about the industry's direction. What's more, controversial behaviors by high-profile tech leaders may damage company reputations and discourage potential hires. Economic pressures, including layoffs and increased focus on efficiency, may also cause job seekers to hesitate.

Still, these challenges, plus growing public skepticism toward Big Tech, have had limited impact on talent flows so far. But that doesn't mean companies can afford to be complacent. To sustain tech's appeal, they need to stay laser-focused on how they attract, engage, and retain the best talent.

KORN FERRY

5 SMART STRATEGIES TO WIN AND KEEP TECH TALENT

Today's most sought-after talent is motivated by more than just pay. They're looking for purpose, flexibility, transparency, and growth. We discovered through our research and discussions with HR leaders that strategies like flexible work design, radical transparency, and investment in development aren't just boxes to check off; they're proven drivers of attraction, retention, and engagement. To stay ahead of the talent curve, organizations need to move intentionally and proactively.

From our conversations, we identified five clear strategies for not just finding, but keeping the best in tech:

Build a Culture that Inspires Trust and Purpose

- *Be radically transparent.* Communicate openly about company structures, reorganizations, layoffs, and business decisions to create a culture of respect and shared understanding. Many HR leaders we spoke with touted the importance of a strong, authentic culture with clear values—a view supported by Korn Ferry's 2025 Talent Acquisition Trends report, which found that 45% of HR professionals believe integrating cultural values is key to drawing in talent.
- *Reinforce purpose.* Connect employees to the company's mission and offer opportunities to work on innovative, high-impact projects. Tech talent will stay engaged when they can connect and pursue their purpose in addition to collaborating on cutting-edge technologies and projects. For talent working in AI, this is particularly important.

> **"Layoffs are a big concern that continues to come up. Employees are feeling uneasy.** Every team is looking at reorganization and what they need to do to be more efficient and that plays a part in the overall narrative when you think about engagement and employee satisfaction."

Offer Compensation and Flexibility That Competes

- *Be clear about total rewards.* Offer comprehensive compensation packages—including salary, bonuses, equity, and benefits—to build trust and meet expectations in a competitive talent market. Korn Ferry's latest Workforce Survey reveals that 70% of respondents feel their current salary is falling behind the cost of living, and 35% believe they're underpaid relative to their skills. This means that going forward, compensation could be the deciding factor for talent.
- *Prioritize flexible work design.* Offer remote and hybrid options, no-meeting days, and intentional in-person collaboration to support diverse needs and adapt to the evolving tech sector. Regardless of the specific policy, continuously innovating workplace practices and prioritizing the collective good are essential when keeping and competing for talent.

> **"Good companies will pay whatever it takes to get great talent, but people aren't making decisions around perks anymore.** People want to work on important things with the least amount of friction possible."

KORN FERRY

Deliver Growth That Drives Retention

- *Invest in future skills.* Provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities, particularly in AI and new technologies, to help employees adapt to new advancements, strengthen succession planning, and build resilient talent pipelines. Our 2024 Workforce Survey found that 67% of employees would stay with a company if given upskilling and advancement opportunities—even if they disliked their current role.
- *Create clear career paths.* Provide visible, attainable growth opportunities and support leadership development to build strong internal pipelines and boost long-term retention. By investing in manager and leadership capabilities through targeted programs and offering in-person onboarding experiences, companies can drive engagement from day one.

Recognize, Reward, and Reconnect

- *Celebrate progress*. Keep employees connected to the company's vision and show them how their work contributes to it, allowing them to stay aligned and feel motivated. One idea from our discussions was to implement a recognition and appreciation platform with regular updates, ensuring employees are aware of their achievements and the rewards they can earn.
- *Strengthen connections.* Promote a sense of belonging through in-person onboarding, hybrid engagement activities, and initiatives that support employee well-being. Encouraging genuine workplace friendships and creating a supportive environment helps with daily job satisfaction and boosts retention.

Empower HR with Strategic Leadership

- *Position HR as a strategic driver.* Many HR leaders emphasized the need to elevate the role of HR to a strategic level, focusing on supporting and developing leadership to manage new waves of technology and innovation. Our latest Workforce Survey found that 43% of employees believe their leaders aren't aligned, underlining the need and opportunity to align strategically.
- *Act on real insights.* Use employee feedback and workforce data to shape people-first policies that balance individual preferences with the company's needs. The best way to know what your employees want is to ask—and to keep asking.

TO DRAW IN, STAND OUT

By taking a strategic, proactive approach to recruiting top talent, HR leaders in tech can do more than fill roles—they can build a lasting culture. This culture attracts high-performing and high-potential talent, supports their growth, and inspires them to stay. The tech industry may be resilient, but it's not immune to disruption. Even the strongest companies must work hard to stay ahead. When employees feel seen, supported, and connected to something bigger, their engagement increases, innovation accelerates, and long-term success becomes not just possible, but inevitable.

"It's important that any company, especially distributed ones, maintain a consistent pulse on employee sentiment and morale and **adapt accordingly."**

AUTHORS

Angela Castellani, PhD
Senior Client Partner
Human Resources Practice
Korn Ferry

Karena Man
Senior Client Partner
Technology & Digital Officers Practice
Korn Ferry

Brooke Phinney
Senior Associate
Technology & Digital Officers Practice
Korn Ferry

Shaan Sabharwal
Senior Associate
Human Resources Practice
Korn Ferry

ABOUT KORN FERRY

Korn Ferry is a global organizational consulting firm, bringing together strategy and talent to drive superior performance for our clients. We work with clients to design their organizational structures, roles, and responsibilities. We help them hire the right people and advise them on how to reward, develop and motivate their workforce. And we help professionals navigate and advance their careers.