

HR Metrics Mid-Year Review and How Canadian Employers Can Adjust Before Problems Become Year-End Results



Don't be like most organizations and review HR metrics too late.

By the time the year-end report is finished, most of the important workforce outcomes have already happened. Employees have resigned. Vacancies have affected operations. Absenteeism patterns have hardened. Training deadlines have been missed. Managers have either supported their teams or damaged them. Complaints have escalated. High performers have quietly decided whether they see a future with the organization.

A year-end HR report may explain what happened. A mid-year review can still change what happens next.

That is why a mid-year HR metrics review should not be treated as a reporting exercise. It should be treated as a course correction. HR should use it to identify where the workforce plan is drifting, where managers need help, where compliance risk is building and where business outcomes may be affected before the year is over.

The timing matters. Mid-year is late enough to reveal meaningful patterns but early enough to respond. A turnover spike in one department can still be investigated. A training completion gap can still be fixed. A recruiting slowdown can still be addressed before peak hiring season is lost. A manager effectiveness issue can still be coached before more employees leave. A rise in absenteeism can still be reviewed before discipline replaces diagnosis.

The best mid-year review asks one question about every metric: **what is this number telling us to change?**

If the number does not lead to a decision, it is not yet useful.

The Problem With HR Dashboards

HR dashboards can create the illusion of insight.

Turnover rate. Time to fill. Engagement score. Absenteeism rate. Training completion. Headcount. Cost per hire. Performance review completion. These numbers may look polished in a dashboard, but they do not automatically tell HR what to do.

A turnover rate of 14% may be fine in one sector and alarming in another. A time-to-fill increase may reflect a weak recruiting process, unrealistic role requirements, compensation problems or a deliberate decision to hire more carefully. A low absenteeism rate may look positive until HR realizes employees are working sick because the culture discourages time off. A high training completion rate may look strong until a workplace incident shows employees clicked through the course without absorbing the content.

Metrics need interpretation. They also need segmentation.

Organization-wide averages often hide the real issue. A company may report stable turnover while one manager loses half a team. Training completion may look acceptable overall while supervisors in one location are far behind. Absenteeism may rise only in one job family. Engagement may be steady while new hires are disengaging within their first six months.

A mid-year review should therefore look for concentration, movement and friction. Where is the problem clustered? Is it getting better or worse? What else is happening in the same area?

That is how HR moves from reporting to diagnosis.

Start With the Labour Market Context

Before HR reviews internal metrics, it should understand the external labour market.

Canada's labour market has been softer than the post-pandemic hiring surge, but that does not make talent issues disappear. Statistics Canada reported that in November 2025 there were 3.2 unemployed people for every job vacancy, up year over year because job vacancies fell faster than the number of unemployed people. That suggests employers may face less vacancy pressure than during tighter labour periods, but it also means hiring conditions vary sharply by occupation, region and skill level.

Statistics Canada's January 2026 Labour Force Survey reported that the unemployment rate fell to 6.5%, while employment edged down by 25,000 and the employment rate decreased to 60.8%. Those national numbers are useful context, but they do not replace employer-specific analysis. A business may still struggle to hire trades, supervisors, sales talent, bilingual employees, safety professionals, payroll specialists, cybersecurity staff or experienced managers even when the broader labour market softens.

This is the first test for HR metrics. Are internal workforce problems being explained by the external market too quickly?

If the labour market is softer but the organization still can't fill roles, HR should examine compensation, job design, hiring manager behaviour, employer brand, screening delays and candidate experience. If voluntary turnover remains high while external opportunities appear less abundant, the issue may be internal. If employees are leaving despite fewer obvious alternatives, HR should pay attention.

Mid-year is the right time to separate market conditions from management problems.

Turnover Should Be Cut Open, Not Averaged

Turnover is one of the most common HR metrics, and one of the most misused.

A single turnover percentage does not tell HR enough. Mid-year turnover should be broken down by voluntary and involuntary departures, regrettable and non-regrettable

losses, first-year turnover, department, manager, job family, location, tenure, employment type and critical role category. Where legally and ethically appropriate, HR may also review patterns connected to demographic or equity data, but that requires care, privacy protection and proper governance.

The most useful mid-year question is not “What is our turnover rate?” It is “Where is turnover concentrated, and what does that concentration suggest?”

High first-year turnover may point to poor onboarding, unrealistic job previews, weak supervision, compensation mismatch, training gaps or a hiring process that sells the job differently than it is experienced. High turnover under one manager may suggest leadership problems, workload issues, conflict avoidance or poor performance management. High turnover in one role may indicate wage pressure, job design problems or burnout. High turnover among high performers may indicate limited growth, weak recognition or better opportunities elsewhere.

HR should also distinguish between turnover that solves a problem and turnover that creates one. Some departures may be necessary. A low performer leaving after proper performance management is not the same as losing a key account manager, lead developer, safety supervisor or payroll specialist.

The mid-year review should identify which losses the organization can tolerate and which losses it can't.

Then HR should act quickly. A turnover problem discovered in June should not wait until the year-end engagement survey. HR can conduct stay interviews, review compensation positioning, examine onboarding, coach the manager, adjust workload, clarify role expectations or create retention plans for high-risk employees.

The value is not in knowing who left. It is in preventing the next avoidable departure.

First-Year Turnover Deserves Its Own Review

First-year turnover is one of the most revealing mid-year metrics because it reflects the handoff between recruiting, onboarding, management and job reality.

When employees leave in the first six to twelve months, something did not convert properly. It may be the candidate's fit. It may be the hiring process. It may be compensation. It may be onboarding. It may be the manager. It may be workload. It may be the culture employees were promised compared with the culture they joined.

HR should review first-year turnover separately from total turnover. A department with stable long-term employees but poor new-hire retention may look healthy in a broad dashboard while quietly wasting recruiting time and training dollars.

The mid-year review should ask whether new hires are receiving consistent onboarding, whether managers are conducting 30-, 60- and 90-day check-ins, whether job expectations are realistic, whether training is available when needed, and whether new employees know where to go for help.

Exit interview themes matter here, but HR should not rely only on exit interviews. New hires may give polite reasons when leaving because they want references or want to avoid conflict. Stay interviews with employees still in their first year may be more useful. Ask what surprised them, what support they still need, whether the job matches what they expected and what would make them more likely to stay.

If first-year turnover is high at mid-year, HR has time to fix onboarding before the

next hiring cycle.

Absenteeism Should Not Be Treated Only as an Attendance Problem

Absenteeism is often reviewed as a discipline metric. That is too narrow.

Absence can reflect many things: illness, disability, mental-health strain, childcare pressure, eldercare, burnout, workplace conflict, unsafe conditions, poor scheduling, disengagement, low trust, manager problems or unclear attendance expectations. A mid-year review should look at absence as a signal before treating it as misconduct.

Statistics Canada tracks work absence among full-time employees by sector, geography, occupation and other categories, which can help employers compare their patterns against broader labour data. But internal segmentation is more important. HR should review absences by department, manager, job type, day of week, shift, tenure, season, overtime levels and known operational pressure points.

A rise in Monday and Friday absences may suggest attendance management issues. A rise in absences after staffing cuts may suggest workload and burnout. Higher absences in one team may suggest manager behaviour, scheduling problems or conflict. Absences among employees with known medical issues may require accommodation review. Absences during school breaks may indicate family status or childcare pressure. Absences in safety-sensitive roles may require immediate operational planning.

HR should be careful not to jump straight to enforcement. Attendance management is legitimate, but the employer should first understand whether the pattern points to disability, protected leave, accommodation, workload or workplace conflict. Treating every absence as an accountability issue can create legal and cultural risk.

The strongest mid-year absenteeism review connects absence data with other signals. Are overtime hours rising? Are vacancies open? Are engagement comments mentioning workload? Are disability claims increasing? Are complaints increasing? Is one manager's team showing a distinct pattern?

Absence rarely tells the whole story on its own. It tells HR where to look.

Presenteeism Belongs in the Mid-Year Conversation

Absenteeism is visible. Presenteeism is harder to see.

Employees may be physically present or logged in, but not functioning well because of stress, illness, burnout, grief, mental-health concerns, conflict, caregiving pressure or overload. This can affect quality, customer service, safety, productivity and morale.

A mid-year review that only asks "Who is absent?" may miss employees who are struggling but still showing up. That is especially important in workplaces where employees feel guilty taking sick time, where staffing is thin, or where managers reward constant availability.

HR should look for indirect indicators of presenteeism. Quality errors, missed deadlines, customer complaints, safety near misses, low engagement, increased conflict, reduced participation, slow response times and manager feedback may all point to employees working below capacity.

This is where HR metrics need human interpretation. A team with low absenteeism but rising errors, complaints and turnover risk may not be healthy. It may be depleted.

The mid-year review should ask whether employees are truly able to perform sustainably, not merely whether they are present.

Hiring Metrics Should Measure Friction, Not Just Speed

Time to fill is useful, but it can mislead.

A fast hire is not necessarily a good hire. A slow hire is not always a recruiting failure. Some roles require careful selection. Some delays are caused by compensation constraints, unclear job requirements, slow hiring managers, weak candidate pipelines, unrealistic qualifications or internal approval bottlenecks.

At mid-year, HR should review hiring metrics as a flow system. How long does it take to approve a role? How long before the posting goes live? How many qualified applicants are received? How long does screening take? How quickly do managers respond? How many interviews are required? Where do candidates drop out? How often are offers declined? How often do new hires leave early?

The external labour market matters here. When job vacancies fall and unemployment rises, some employers assume hiring should become easy. That may be true for some roles, but not for specialized skills. Statistics Canada's vacancy-to-unemployment ratio shows broader labour market cooling, but it does not mean every employer can attract the people it needs at its current pay, location and work model.

The mid-year review should also compare time to fill with quality of hire. If a department fills roles quickly but loses new hires within months, the process is not working. If another department takes longer but retains strong employees, the longer timeline may be justified.

A better metric set includes time to approve, time to post, time to shortlist, manager response time, offer acceptance rate, candidate withdrawal rate, source quality, new-hire retention and hiring manager satisfaction.

The decision question is simple: where is hiring slowing down, and is the delay protecting quality or damaging the business?

Training Completion Is Not the Same as Capability

Training metrics often look better than reality.

A dashboard may show that 92% of employees completed harassment training, 88% completed cybersecurity training, 80% completed safety refreshers and 75% completed manager modules. Those numbers matter, especially for compliance. But completion does not prove understanding, behaviour change or workplace application.

A mid-year training review should separate three questions.

1. Did employees complete the training?
2. Did employees understand the training?
3. Is the training changing workplace behaviour or reducing risk?

Many organizations stop at the first question because it is easiest to measure. The higher-value review goes further. If harassment complaints continue after training, HR should ask whether the training is too generic, whether managers are failing to intervene, whether reporting channels are trusted or whether the workplace has deeper culture issues. If safety incidents continue after training, HR should ask whether employees were trained on real hazards, whether supervisors reinforce safe practices and whether production pressure is undermining compliance. If cybersecurity incidents

continue, HR should examine whether training is practical enough for the threats employees face.

Training data should also be segmented. Are managers behind on training? Are new hires missing required onboarding modules? Are field employees struggling to access the LMS? Are certain locations consistently overdue? Are employees completing training after the risk period has already passed?

Mid-year is the right time to correct training gaps because many compliance deadlines can still be met. It is also the right time to examine whether training content is actually aligned with current risk.

A training metric that does not connect to behaviour is an administrative measure. A training metric connected to incidents, complaints, errors and manager accountability becomes a risk-control measure.

Manager Effectiveness Should Be Measured Directly

Many employers measure employees constantly but avoid measuring managers.

That is a mistake.

Managers influence retention, absenteeism, engagement, accommodation, performance, conflict, productivity, safety and training completion. If HR does not measure manager effectiveness, it may misdiagnose workforce problems as employee problems.

Gallup's 2026 State of the Global Workplace data reports that only 21% of Canadian employees are engaged at work. It also reports that globally, employee engagement declined for a second consecutive year in 2025, with manager engagement falling significantly from 31% in 2022 to 22% in 2025. This matters because managers carry the daily burden of translating strategy into work. When managers are depleted, unclear or unsupported, the effect spreads through the team.

At mid-year, HR should review manager-level indicators. Turnover by manager. First-year turnover by manager. Absenteeism by team. Engagement by team. Training completion by manager's employees. Performance review completion. Number of employee relations escalations. Accommodation delays. Complaint patterns. Exit interview mentions. Internal transfers out of a team. Overtime levels. Safety incidents. Grievances.

The goal is not to create a punitive manager scoreboard. The goal is to identify where managers need support and where manager behaviour is creating risk.

For example, a manager with high turnover and low engagement may need coaching, workload review or closer oversight. A manager whose team has low training completion may not be making time for learning. A manager with repeated conflict complaints may need intervention. A manager with strong retention and good engagement in a difficult department may be worth learning from.

Mid-year gives HR time to act. Waiting until year-end allows poor management patterns to become employee exits.

Engagement Metrics Need Follow-Through

Engagement data is often over-collected and underused.

Employees complete surveys, answer pulse questions, attend focus groups and provide feedback in town halls. Then months pass. HR may analyze the data, but employees do

not see enough action. The next survey arrives, and participation drops or comments become more cynical.

The metric HR should review at mid-year is not only engagement score. It should also review response rate, comment themes, manager follow-up, action plan completion and whether employees know what changed because of their feedback.

Gallup's Canada data reporting 21% employee engagement should concern HR because low engagement affects retention, productivity and trust. But internal trend matters more than the national comparison. If engagement improved in one department and declined in another, HR should examine what changed. If trust in leadership declined after a policy change, HR should examine communication. If employees rate managers low on recognition, HR should examine manager habits, not launch a generic recognition campaign.

A strong mid-year engagement review asks what employees said, what leaders did, what remains unresolved and what will be communicated back.

If no visible action followed the last survey, the mid-year correction should start there. Employees do not need every request granted, but they do need proof that feedback was taken seriously.

The worst use of engagement data is to admire the score. The best use is to change management behaviour.

Compliance Metrics Are Early Warning Indicators

HR compliance metrics should be part of the mid-year review, not handled only when a file escalates.

These metrics may include harassment complaints, workplace violence concerns, accommodation requests, investigation timelines, unresolved grievances, health and safety incidents, training overdue rates, payroll corrections, employment standards complaints, policy acknowledgements, performance documentation gaps and leave management issues.

The value is not in counting files. It is in identifying patterns.

A rise in harassment complaints may reflect worsening conduct, better reporting trust, manager training gaps or unresolved team conflict. Delayed investigations may point to resource constraints or unclear procedure. A rise in accommodation requests may reflect aging workforce needs, mental-health strain, return-to-office conflicts, family status issues or inconsistent manager responses. Payroll corrections may indicate system configuration problems, statutory holiday errors, overtime misclassification or manager coding issues.

Canadian HR professionals should treat compliance data as operational intelligence. A complaint is not only a legal file. It may be a signal about culture, supervision, training or workload. A payroll correction is not only an accounting fix. It may reveal a policy or system gap. An overdue training report is not only a reminder list. It may show that managers are not prioritizing compliance.

Mid-year is the time to correct these issues before they become year-end incidents, claims or audits.

Accommodation Metrics Need Careful Interpretation

Accommodation data is sensitive, but it is too important to ignore.

HR should not use accommodation metrics to identify or stigmatize employees with disabilities or protected needs. But it can review process-level data in a privacy-protective way. How many accommodation requests are open? How long do they take to assess? Are temporary accommodations being reviewed? Are managers delaying implementation? Are return-to-work plans progressing? Are certain departments generating more requests? Are requests linked to workload, remote work, scheduling, family status, mental health or physical demands?

The mid-year question is whether the accommodation process is working.

A backlog may indicate HR capacity issues. Delays may increase legal risk and employee frustration. Repeated requests in one department may point to job design problems. Accommodation failures may show that managers need training on restrictions, functional limitations and privacy.

HR should also review whether accommodation decisions are being documented properly. Good documentation protects the employee and employer. Poor documentation creates confusion and risk.

This is a place where metrics should lead to process improvement, not employee scrutiny.

Workforce Capacity Is the Missing Link

HR metrics become more valuable when connected to business capacity.

If overtime is increasing, vacancies remain open, absenteeism is rising and engagement is falling, the issue may not be individual resilience. It may be workforce design.

HR should therefore review people metrics alongside operational metrics. Production delays, customer complaints, missed project deadlines, safety incidents, quality errors, sales pipeline issues, overtime costs, service response times and manager workload can all help explain what HR is seeing.

For example, a customer service team with rising absenteeism, high turnover and increasing complaint volume may not need another wellness webinar. It may need staffing changes, better scheduling, improved tools, clearer priorities or manager support.

A warehouse with safety incidents, overtime and new-hire turnover may not only have a training issue. It may have a pace-of-work problem.

A sales team with high turnover and low engagement may not only need motivation. It may have unrealistic targets, weak onboarding or compensation misalignment.

Mid-year is the right point to connect these dots because the organization still has time to rebalance workload, adjust hiring priorities, train managers, pause low-value work or reallocate resources.

The strongest HR metrics review does not stay inside HR. It connects workforce conditions to business performance.

The Mid-Year Metrics Review Process

A useful mid-year review should follow a disciplined process.

First, compare mid-year results to the same period last year, not only to annual

targets. Seasonality matters. Absenteeism, vacation, hiring and turnover may follow predictable patterns.

Second, segment the data. Review by department, manager, role, tenure, location, employment type and critical skill group where appropriate. Averages can hide risk.

Third, identify outliers. Do not explain them away. A single team, role or manager with unusual results may reveal the most important finding.

Fourth, connect HR data with business data. Turnover, absenteeism and training metrics are more powerful when compared with overtime, customer experience, safety, quality and productivity.

Fifth, test possible causes before recommending action. Do not assume engagement is low because employees need more recognition if the real issue is workload. Do not assume absenteeism is misconduct if the real issue is disability, burnout or childcare pressure.

Sixth, assign ownership. HR should not own every fix. Managers, executives, payroll, safety, finance and operations may need to act.

Seventh, create a 90-day correction plan. Mid-year action should be specific, time-bound and manageable.

Eighth, report back before year-end. Employees and leaders should see that the review led to action.

This process moves HR from “Here are the numbers” to “Here is what we are changing.”

The 90-Day Correction Plan

The most valuable output of a mid-year review is a 90-day correction plan.

The plan should identify the top three to five issues that require action before year-end. It should assign owners, define measures, set deadlines and specify what will be communicated to employees or managers.

For example, if first-year turnover is high, the 90-day plan might include revising job previews, adding 30-day manager check-ins, assigning onboarding buddies and reviewing compensation for the role.

If training completion is low, the plan might include manager dashboards, protected training time, overdue escalation and replacement of low-quality modules.

If absenteeism is rising in one department, the plan might include workload review, manager coaching, accommodation audit and scheduling changes.

If engagement comments show trust problems, the plan might include leadership listening sessions, communication follow-up and visible action on one issue employees raised.

If payroll corrections are increasing, the plan might include manager time-coding training, system configuration review and monthly payroll audit sampling.

The correction plan should be short enough to execute. HR does not need a 40-page strategy document. It needs a focused set of interventions that can change the second half of the year.

What Makes This Review Different From Year-End Reporting

Year-end reporting often looks backward. Mid-year review should look forward.

The question is not “What happened?” It is “What is starting to happen, and what are we going to do about it?”

That shift changes the tone of the conversation with leadership. HR should not simply present metrics. It should bring recommendations. It should explain risk, likely consequences and practical options.

For example, instead of saying, “Turnover in operations is 18%,” HR should say, “Turnover in operations is concentrated among employees with less than one year of service, mostly under two supervisors. Exit themes point to unclear expectations and workload. We recommend a 90-day onboarding correction plan, manager coaching and a review of shift coverage.”

Instead of saying, “Training completion is 73%,” HR should say, “Mandatory training completion is below target, and overdue rates are highest among field employees. Access appears to be the barrier. We recommend mobile access support, paid training time and manager-level accountability.”

Instead of saying, “Absenteeism has increased,” HR should say, “Absenteeism is concentrated in two teams with high overtime and open vacancies. We recommend workload review before moving to attendance enforcement.”

This is how HR becomes a business advisor rather than a dashboard owner.

The HR Takeaway

The purpose of a mid-year HR metrics review is not to admire the dashboard.

It is to decide what must change before the year is over.

Canadian employers need HR data that shows where workforce risk is building, where manager support is needed, where compliance gaps are emerging and where people issues are affecting business performance. The most valuable metrics are not the ones that look best in a chart. They are the ones that force better decisions.

At mid-year, HR still has time. Time to reduce avoidable turnover. Time to fix onboarding. Time to close training gaps. Time to support managers. Time to address absenteeism before it becomes discipline. Time to respond to engagement feedback before employees stop believing the survey matters. Time to correct compliance risks before they become claims, complaints or audits.

A year-end report explains the past. A mid-year review should improve the future.