



AMN Healthcare Survey Reveals Sharp Divide Between Leaders' Organizational Confidence and Industry Outlook for 2026

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Survey of 700+ executives shows AI leadership roles surging as succession planning and clinician engagement lag

DALLAS, Feb. 26, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- While nearly three-quarters of healthcare executives believe their own organizations will be as strong or stronger in 2026, more than half expect the healthcare industry overall to face a worse year ahead, according to a new survey of healthcare executives. The findings highlight a widening confidence gap alongside a rapid rise in demand for AI-savvy leaders and persistent weaknesses in succession planning and clinician engagement.

Conducted by B.E. Smith, a leading provider of healthcare executive search services and a division of AMN Healthcare, the [2026 Healthcare Leadership Trends](#) survey captures perspectives from healthcare leaders on the forces shaping recruitment, retention, engagement, leadership development, and the financial and operational context influencing decision-making in the year ahead.

"Healthcare leaders are navigating a complex mix of financial pressure, workforce realities, and rising expectations for innovation," said Tessa Misiaszek, president of leadership solutions at AMN Healthcare. "This year's findings reinforce that the winners in 2026 will be organizations that invest in strong, adaptable leadership, especially leaders who can implement and translate AI and technology advancements into meaningful improvements to access, quality, and operational performance."

The 2026 findings reflect a nuanced view of the path forward: leaders are relatively steady in their outlook for their own organizations, yet significantly more concerned about the broader industry environment. At the same time, the report highlights accelerating momentum for artificial intelligence (AI) leadership and capability-building alongside ongoing headwinds in leadership recruiting, clinician engagement, and succession readiness.

Key Findings

- **A widening confidence gap is emerging.** Almost three-quarters of respondents expect their organization's health to be better or the same as 2025, while **52%** forecast a worse year for the industry overall.
- **AI leadership is surging in importance.** AI roles moved to the top of leadership priorities for 2026, with leaders citing the need for developing a clear AI strategy (**63%**), engaging clinicians and staff to grow adoption (**48%**), and investing in data infrastructure (**41%**).
- **Retention risk shows signs of cooling, but mobility remains.** Among leaders considering leaving, **35%** would like to do so within one year. At the same time, the report notes signals of reduced urgency to move compared to prior years.
- **Career advancement remains a friction point.** Only **21%** of respondents consider themselves to be on promotion track, while **26%** feel they must leave their employer to advance often citing limited internal opportunities.
- **Leadership recruiting is still difficult and organizations are expanding tactics.** Four in ten respondents regard attracting quality leadership candidates as extremely or very challenging.
- **Clinician engagement continues to lag.** Leadership teams are perceived as highly engaged compared to physicians and nursing staff, continuing a multi-year pattern and highlighting ongoing workforce experience challenges.
- **Succession planning remains underdeveloped.** Fewer than half of responding organizations maintain formal succession planning for any leadership level, including the top echelon.

B.E. Smith's [Healthcare Leadership Trends](#) survey is conducted annually to assess the plans, perspectives and challenges facing healthcare leaders in the coming year. The 2026 survey is based on 703 responses from healthcare executives nationwide representing a range of leadership levels, organizational types, and hospital sizes. To learn more, [download the report](#) or join the upcoming Becker's Hospital Review webinar, "[The Future of Healthcare Leadership: Risks, Realities, and Readiness for 2026](#)," based on the survey findings.

About B.E. Smith and AMN Healthcare

B.E. Smith is a leading provider of interim healthcare executive, healthcare executive, and academic search services and is a division of AMN Healthcare. AMN Healthcare is the leader and innovator in total talent solutions for healthcare organizations across the United States. Through a steadfast partnership approach, we solve the most pressing workforce challenges to enable better clinical outcomes and access to care. We provide a comprehensive network of quality healthcare professionals and deliver a fully integrated and customizable suite of workforce technologies.

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