THE EXECUTIVE RECAP

WORKDAY RISING 2026

What's new, what matters & what's next

A practical guide for the people building, running, and getting more from Workday.

01

AI moves into the workflow

What new agents mean for everyday HR, Payroll, and Finance work.

02

The platform opens up

How data access, integrations, and identity fit together.

03

A plan for your team

Practical priorities by project stage, plus the 2027 watchlist.

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FROM NICO / THE BIG PICTURE

A lot to be excited about. A clear place to start.

The opportunity is real. The next step is choosing where it will help your team most.

A NOTE FROM NICO

What a week in Las Vegas. It was great connecting with customers, partners, and so many people across the Workday community. I came home proud of our team and excited about where this ecosystem is heading.

Our market research team helped pull together the major takeaways so you can get the highlights without sifting through every conference announcement. We've focused this recap on what these developments could mean for the people doing the work.

After roughly a decade helping clients navigate Workday implementations, launches, and ongoing support, I keep coming back to the same thing: a strong team, clean data, and clear ownership make new capabilities much easier to put to work.

I hope this gives you a useful starting point for your next team conversation. If something here connects to a challenge you're working through, I'm always happy to compare notes.

– Nico

FIVE TAKEAWAYS

01 Agents need an operating owner

Autopilot features bring more activity into the background. Decide who reviews exceptions, approves actions, and measures results. [1]

02 The employee experience is changing

Sana brings tasks and agent activity into Workday Home, with wider access through familiar collaboration and AI tools. [2] [3]

03 HR and Finance can plan together

Decision Intelligence connects workforce and financial questions. Shared definitions still matter. [5]

04 Integration and security belong together

The Trusted Agent Platform expands access to Workday data and workflows. Review permissions before expanding use. [8]

05 Value needs a cost baseline

Flex Credits make usage part of the business case. Track the cost of a completed process alongside time saved. [10]

How to read this issue: product facts link to Workday sources. "Our take" and customer actions are ALKU editorial recommendations. Status reflects announcements reviewed October 21, 2026.

MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS / EXPERIENCE AND AUTOMATION

AI becomes part of the daily workflow

For HRIS, Payroll, Accounting, and IT leaders, the useful question is where the handoff to a person belongs.

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Sana becomes Workday Home

Sana brings tasks, decisions, and agent activity into Workday Home. Employees can initiate work in natural language under existing permissions and approvals. Administrators choose when to enable it. [2]

Status: Home is available now. Sana Concierge, for HR and IT service, is with early adopters; general availability is expected in Q1 2027. [2]

OUR TAKE

Pilot with a small employee group. Update help content, support routing, and manager training before expanding.

Inside familiar tools

Self-service is generally available in Gemini Enterprise, Microsoft Copilot, Teams, and Slack. Broader Sana experiences are planned for late 2026. [3]

Sana in Claude is in early access, with general availability expected in late 2026. The Anthropic partnership links Claude's reasoning with Workday workflows and controls. [4]

NEXT CONSIDERATION

Test role-based access through your chosen tool and define the handoff for requests needing human help.

AUTOPILOT AGENTS

More work happens in the background

Workday announced background automation across hiring, payroll, accounting, and deployment. Customers set the boundaries for automatic actions and human review. [1]

Talent Acquisition

Monitors hiring activity and helps with sourcing and scheduling. Candidate outreach still requires recruiter approval.

Payroll

Planned capabilities check for missing pay data and flag exceptions before payroll runs.

Accounting

Planned capabilities support continuous financial testing and preparation of accounting work for review.

Deployment

Planned capabilities identify relevant release features and prepare adoption steps for review.

Status: Talent Acquisition Autopilot is with early adopters; GA is planned for early 2027. Payroll, Accounting, and Deployment Autopilot early-adopter access is planned for early 2027. [1]

OUR TAKE

For each pilot, name an exception owner and define which actions require approval. Test against known scenarios before increasing autonomy.

MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS / HCM AND FINANCE

Better decisions start with shared context

Three developments worth putting on the agenda with HR, Finance, and Talent Acquisition.

01

Decision Intelligence

HR and Finance can ask questions of live Workday data, compare scenarios, and move approved actions through existing controls. Decision Intelligence is now available to HCM and Financial Management customers; it continues to be available for Adaptive customers. [5]

AVAILABLE NOW

WHO IT AFFECTS

HR leaders, CFOs, FP&A, Accounting, workforce planners, and reporting teams.

WHAT TO CONSIDER NEXT

Use one shared question, such as the cost and timing of a hiring plan. Reconcile headcount, cost-center definitions, and planning assumptions before judging the answer.

02

Work Intelligence

Work Intelligence examines jobs, tasks, and skills to help leaders assess how AI could change work and where development is needed. People remain responsible for decisions about employees. [6]

EARLY ACCESS FOR HCM CUSTOMERS

WHO IT AFFECTS

CHROs, talent teams, Learning, workforce planning, and change leaders.

WHAT TO CONSIDER NEXT

Start with one job family. Check the quality of role and skills data, involve managers, and connect proposed changes to a realistic learning plan.

03

Workday Candidate Profile

Job seekers will be able to reuse saved information across employers using Workday Recruiting. Workday expects roughly 80% of standard fields to be prefilled and applications to take about 40% less time than manual entry. These are vendor expectations. [7]

EXPECTED IN EARLY CALENDAR 2027

WHO IT AFFECTS

Recruiting operations, HRIS, candidate experience owners, and hiring teams.

WHAT TO CONSIDER NEXT

Review career-site questions and mobile application flow. Baseline completion rates now so you can assess the effect after launch.

Our take for Adaptive teams: align workforce and financial planning assumptions with HR before expanding scenario analysis. Keep ownership of models, data mappings, and forecast sign-off explicit.

MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS / PLATFORM AND GOVERNANCE

A more open platform needs clear ownership

Bring integration, reporting, security, and finance teams into the same conversation.

TRUSTED AGENT PLATFORM

Access beyond the screen

"Headless" access lets agents use Workday data and workflows without a person navigating the interface. Agent-Ready Tools, Data Cloud, Developer Agent, Custom Agents, and Agent Harness are generally available. [8]

Agent-Ready Tools use the Model Context Protocol (MCP) to connect agents to systems. Live Data Query provides SQL access to live Workday data through Data Cloud, with Workday security applied. [8]

WHY IT MATTERS

IT and reporting teams gain more ways to build around Workday. Choose a defined workflow, confirm entitlements, and test permitted and denied access before production.

BEFORE AN AGENT GOES LIVE

1 Assign an owner
Who resolves failures?

2 Scope its access
What may it read or change?

3 Check the evidence
Can you trace each action?

4 Set a review cycle
Who retests after changes?

ALKU implementation checklist

IDENTITY GOVERNANCE

The C1.ai agreement

Workday agreed to acquire C1.ai to extend access governance for people and agents across connected systems. Closing is expected in Workday's FY27 fourth quarter, ending January 31, 2027, subject to customary conditions. [9]

OUR TAKE

Bring your identity and security owners into roadmap discussions. Evaluate delivered integration details as they emerge before changing existing access-management plans.

BUDGET AND CONSUMPTION

Budget for usage

Flex Credits support consumption across Workday AI and platform offerings, including agents, Data Cloud, and Sana. The Platform Consumption Console provides usage visibility. This pricing model predates Rising 2026. [10]

OUR TAKE

Confirm your entitlements and rate card. Estimate normal and peak usage, assign a budget owner, and compare cost per completed process with the value delivered.

THE CUSTOMER PLAYBOOK / ALKU RECOMMENDATIONS

Your next move depends on where you are

Use the announcements to improve your plan while keeping the team focused on its current commitments.

01 Implementing Workday

Protect the foundation

Confirm ownership of data conversion, security, integrations, and key business processes. Keep new AI ideas in a prioritized backlog with clear dependencies.

Ask each workstream which data or process issue would make an AI pilot unreliable. Resolve that issue in the core design.

Aim for: Named owners and a realistic scope.

02 Preparing for go-live

Keep cutover predictable

Keep optional experience and automation changes within formal scope control. Test payroll, close, integrations, and critical reports against approved scenarios.

Make access reviews, support routing, knowledge transfer, and escalation paths part of go-live readiness.

Aim for: A supported production environment.

03 Recently live

Let operational evidence lead

Use ticket volume, payroll corrections, reconciliation issues, and reporting gaps to identify the most useful improvements. Stabilize recurring problems first.

Choose one bounded pilot with an accountable owner, a baseline measure, and a clear way to stop or reverse it.

Aim for: Less repeat work for the support team.

04 Mature and optimizing

Build a repeatable adoption plan

Review the reporting backlog, integration maintenance, release adoption, and manual controls. Rank opportunities by business value and effort.

Create a small group spanning functional, security, data, and change expertise. Review results and consumption before expanding.

Aim for: Measured improvements you can sustain.

If you are still evaluating Workday: ask for demonstrations using your own priority processes, confirm what is available and licensed today, and include implementation effort and ongoing support in the comparison.

WHAT WE ARE WATCHING / INTO 2027

Keep the roadmap visible. Keep the dates qualified.

These are Workday's announced availability plans, not commitments for your tenant.

ANNOUNCED AVAILABILITY

WINDOW	WHAT TO WATCH
Now	Workday Home and Decision Intelligence are available. Core Trusted Agent Platform components are GA. [2] [5] [8]
Early access now	Talent Acquisition Autopilot, Work Intelligence, and Sana in Claude have limited early access. [1] [6] [4]
Late 2026	Broader Sana availability across external platforms and GA for Sana in Claude are expected. [3] [4]
Early 2027	Candidate Profile and Talent Acquisition Autopilot GA are expected. Payroll, Accounting, and Deployment Autopilot early-adopter access is planned. [7] [1]
Q1 / early 2027	Sana Concierge GA is expected in Q1. Agent Context Service and Grounded Reasoning are planned for early 2027. [2] [8]
By Jan. 31, 2027	C1.ai transaction expected to close in Workday's fiscal Q4, subject to closing conditions. [9]

OUR TAKE / THE SIGNALS THAT MATTER

Evidence from production

Look for repeatable customer results: fewer exceptions, shorter cycle times, and better service. A demo alone cannot establish that value.

Support after launch

Watch how ownership, monitoring, and escalation evolve as agents become part of normal operations. Budget time for that work.

Practical economics

Track usage against completed outcomes. Reassess the business case as adoption grows and new capabilities become available.

For your next team meeting

Choose one process to improve. Name its business and technical owners. Agree on the evidence you need before expanding the pilot.

GA means generally available. Availability, licensing, and future dates can vary; confirm eligibility and scope with Workday.

STAY CONNECTED

Let's keep the conversation going.

You do not need a fully defined project to compare notes.

If something in this recap connects to what your team is working through, reach out. I'm always happy to hear where things stand, talk through the challenge, and help you think about what expertise would make a difference.

ALKU helps customers find experienced Workday talent for implementations, optimization, post-production support, and specialized project needs. That can mean a functional expert, a strong reporting or security resource, or someone who can help a busy project team get to the finish line.

The goal is simple: get you the right expertise when you need it, and give your team some time back.

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Sources and further reading

Linked references below support the product reporting in this issue. Workday announcements [1–9] were issued October 13, 2026; [10] provides additional pricing context. Reviewed October 21, 2026.

01 Autopilot Agents

02 Sana as Workday Home

03 Sana across employee tools

04 Workday and Anthropic

05 Decision Intelligence

06 Work Intelligence

07 Workday Candidate Profile

08 Trusted Agent Platform

09 Agreement to acquire C1.ai

10 Flex Credits and usage-based pricing

Research foundation: Workday Rising & Analyst Day 2026, October 20, 2026, supplied for this recap. Public Workday materials were used to verify product claims and availability. This newsletter contains original ALKU summaries and customer recommendations; analyst charts and financial forecasts are not reproduced.

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