

2025

Executive Summary

“Human Capital Management for a blended workforce”

On 27 November, more than ninety HR leaders, external talent buyers, and experts in talent management and labour market dynamics came together at the NextEconomy Total Workforce Summit.

Get inspired as if you were there! Below you'll find a concise summary of our expert speakers' contributions and their most remarkable insights on talent management. A more detailed report — including photos and speaker presentations — is available on NextEconomy.

I hope to welcome you to one of our NextEconomy events in 2026. Be sure to mark 26 November in your calendar for the next Total Workforce Summit.

Sincerely,

Marleen Deleu

Director Trends & Insights NextEconomy

Top Takeaways

1. Define your vision first - then execute

Total Talent Management (TTM) is a strategic framework for recruiting, selecting, engaging, developing, and deploying all available talent with the right skills, regardless of employment contract. At its core, TTM requires organisations to develop a Total Talent Ecosystem that encompasses every worker contributing to organizational success.

Without strategic clarity, tactical initiatives remain disconnected and fail to generate sustainable impact. The TTM Maturity Workshop enabled participants to map their organisation's current position across seven dimensions - including visibility, financial integration, talent experience, and technology - and build a practical roadmap for progression.

“If you don't already have a clear, compelling long-term vision about your TTM approach, define one now.”

**Maarten Hansson
and Mark van Assema
TTM Coaching**

2. Adopt a holistic view of your entire workforce

The fundamental strategic question is deceptively simple: Do your contingent workers belong to your flexible talent pool, or are they integral to your core business operations? This is where many organisations falter. They manage permanent and external workers as separate entities, failing to connect them strategically or view them as one integrated ecosystem.

Without this holistic perspective, you cannot optimize allocation, development, or engagement across your total talent base. **Integration starts with visibility:** knowing who is working for you, on what terms, and how they contribute to organizational objectives.

“Our main message today is: it is feasible to manage the entire workforce ecosystem.”

Marleen Deleu
Nextconomy

3. Shift from cost reduction to value creation

Sustainable careers for external talent are co-created, not procured. The question is no longer whether to invest in a blended workforce, but how to unlock its full potential.

This requires a fundamental shift in mindset: from gig thinking to growth thinking, from procurement to genuine partnership, from external labor to external sustainable careers, and from payroll ecosystem to workforce ecosystem.

Organisations that treat freelancers and contractors as strategic partners - providing access to development, knowledge-sharing, and meaningful engagement - realize substantially more value from their blended workforce.

“When external workers and internal workers blend well together, this creates cross-pollination with significant advantages for both parties.”

Prof. Dr. Sofie Jacobs,
Antwerp Management School

4. Prioritise engagement over contract type

If you want to succeed, you need the energy and commitment of your people - derived from within your culture and organization. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is fundamentally transforming how we work, organize, and lead.

Managing a blended workforce effectively is necessary but insufficient. True competitive advantage comes from engaging all talent - regardless of employment status - in ways that generate autonomy, flexibility, and purpose.

“People don’t care about contracts. People care about engagement. You have to organise their engagement. Total Talent Management is only the beginning. We need to move towards Total Talent Engagement.”

Wim Davidse
Labor Market Strategist

5. Start small, but start now & learn from NS

NS (Nederlandse Spoorwegen), winner of the TTM Award 2025, demonstrates how large, complex organisations can implement Total Talent Acquisition incrementally and successfully.

As one of the Netherlands' largest employers -with over 20,000 employees, 1.1 million daily passengers, and 5,000+ annual hires - NS successfully integrated permanent and temporary job opportunities on a single platform.

Results: Increased transparency for all candidates, stronger employer branding, higher website traffic, and simplified talent flow for internal and external audiences.

“NS is a large corporation that changes slowly - a complex and layered organization with many different business units, each with their own challenges and working methods. We’re taking small steps and we started small. An easy initiative can be the first step towards Total Talent Management.”

Claudia Zwitser
Head of Recruitment & Employer Branding, NS

6. Eliminate distinctions between permanent and temporary staff

For NS, Total Talent Management means no distinction between permanent and temporary employees. Both are equally important. The organisation champions transparency, inclusivity, and fair opportunities for everyone through three practices: enable permanent employees to apply for temporary vacancies, create uniform candidate experiences regardless of contract type, and design consistent visual identity and communication across all touchpoints.

This integrated approach positions organisations to compete effectively in an increasingly constrained talent market where artificial boundaries become competitive disadvantages.

“The labor market will become scarcer in the coming years, and there will come a time when we can no longer afford to think in silos.”

Guus van Rens
Manager Inhuurdesk, NS

7. Implement robust legal frameworks around contingent workers.

Bernd Carette (KPMG) presented compelling evidence that strategic workforce planning ranks as HR's top priority, yet shows a 32% capability gap between perceived importance and actual execution capability. Three forces drive urgency: AI disruption affecting 86% of organisations, a projected 170 million new jobs versus 92 million displaced by 2030, and explosive payroll costs.

Julie Van Kerckhoven outlined two critical legal risks companies working with contingent workers: sham self-employment for freelancers and forbidden employee lease for supplier employees. **Compliance requires three fundamental steps:** proper contracts for all categories, documented policies, and separate HR workflows for employees, freelancers, and supplier staff.

Additional consideration: Organisations implementing AI tools must navigate the European AI Act, which imposes significant obligations and notification requirements for AI systems used in HR and workforce management contexts.

“Contract, contract, contract. I don't want anyone here in the room working with contingent workers without a contract, not ever.”

Julie Van Kerckhoven
KPMG

8. Treat contingent labour as integral part of your talent ecosystem

Envalior demonstrates how Total Talent Acquisition (TTA) can be operationalized as a unified, data-driven strategy that integrates all forms of work and workers—both permanent and contingent—with a disciplined framework.

Through cross-functional collaboration, HR, Procurement, IT, and Finance now operate as one ecosystem, sharing data and decisions through a single source of truth across the entire organization.

This approach doesn't just enhance efficiency; it creates a future-ready talent model that drives business agility, operational excellence, data quality, ethical labour practices, and ESG alignment.

Hays MSP provided critical infrastructure through real-time dashboards tracking spend, performance, and compliance across multiple geographies, ensuring visibility and control at scale.

"We built a strategy that makes contingent labour visible, compliant, and valuable. We measure what matters and we act on it."

Mark Ryan
Head of Talent Acquisition at Envalior

9. Use a partnership to build a Total Talent Strategy that scales

WirelessCar's rapid growth trajectory forced a fundamental rethinking of siloed approaches to sourcing and managing talent.

In 2023, the organisation merged its HR and consultant procurement departments while building close collaboration with Finance and Management. This unified structure—treating all talent as one ecosystem—delivered unprecedented flexibility in how the organization engages people.

To achieve this at scale, WirelessCar partnered with Ework Group, a leading total talent solutions provider whose mission is helping clients develop integrated approaches and secure the right talent, regardless of contract form.

"Our goal is simple: to match the right person with the right context to create value. We're preparing for new competences to emerge and helping people grow within our teams."

Anna Gunlycke
Wireless Car

Save the Date



Is your organization on its way to TTM? Share your experiences and inspire your colleagues by competing for the TTM Award 2026. More detailed information on the TTM Award website (scan the QR code to access). We look forward to seeing you at **the TTM Award Ceremony in Breda on April 16th 2026!**

Visit **nextconomy.be** and sign-up for our newsletter to stay informed about our upcoming events and new insights on the future of work, and TTM in particular.

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