Asure's 2026 HR Benchmark Report Finds Compliance Confidence Collapsing at America's Small Businesses

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Asure's annual study asks what growing companies do differently from shrinking ones. This year, the finding that jumped out was something else: business owners are far less certain they are complying with employment law than they were a year ago — and the erosion reached every kind of company.

AUSTIN, Texas, Sept. 09, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Asure Software, Inc. (Nasdaq: ASUR), a provider of payroll and HR solutions for employers and enterprise payroll tax and treasury infrastructure, released its 2026 HR Benchmark Report at its annual Asure50 Awards event, finding that small-business owners have lost confidence they are complying with employment law. Among companies having a down year, certainty on some compliance questions fell more than twenty points in a single year.

Each year the survey asks small-business leaders whether they follow forty HR best practices, then compares companies that grew with those that shrank. Seven questions ask something different — not whether leaders do a thing, but whether they're confident they're doing it right. This year, those seven told the loudest story in the report.

> "Small business owners aren't getting sloppier — the ground is moving under them," said Pat Goepel, Chairman and CEO of Asure. "When even the companies that are growing are less sure they're compliant than they were last year, the problem isn't that owners stopped caring. The problem is that there's more to keep track of every year, and fewer people to keep track of it."

What the report found

- **Confidence eroded across the board, and cratered where businesses are struggling.** Certainty about wage-and-hour law, the Affordable Care Act, COBRA and final-paycheck rules fell for every company, dropping steepest among companies having a down year — in some cases by more than twenty points, versus near-universal confidence a year ago.

- **Even growing companies slipped.** Companies adding revenue and headcount — the ones getting most of the rest of this report right — were less certain on every one of the seven compliance questions than growing companies were a year earlier.

- **Three forces are converging on the same back office.** The rulebook keeps getting longer, and owners increasingly cite complexity — not cost — as their biggest regulatory difficulty. The people who'd absorb that work are harder to find; in most small companies, the owner keeps up with the rules alone. And the rules increasingly differ by state and locality, so a company with employees in three states follows three sets of them.

- **The companies that feel certain are the companies doing the work.** Confidence tracked concrete practice almost exactly: the businesses sure they were compliant had trained managers on employment law, written down a complaint process, and kept their paperwork in order. Certainty, the report concludes, is a byproduct — not a temperament.

On the report's central question — what separates companies that grew from those that shrank — the answer widened. Growing companies now out-execute declining companies by roughly twenty points at every stage of the employee lifecycle, from recruiting through offboarding. The single largest difference costs nothing at all: coaching employees on a career path, which two-thirds of growing companies do and fewer than four in ten declining companies do. Compliance keeps you in business; development is what separates growing from stalling.

> "This is exactly why we built AsureWorks," said Goepel. "A lot of owners don't want another system to learn — they want the work off their desk. AsureWorks puts our people on it. The payroll gets run, the filings get made, the handbook stays current, and the owner goes back to running the business. What you're really buying is the certainty this report says is getting harder to come by on your own."

The 2026 HR Benchmark Report is available at no cost at https://offers.asuresoftware.com/hubfs/Asure_HR_Benchmark_Report_2026.pdf.

About the Asure50
The annual Asure50 Awards recognize outstanding organizations demonstrating excellence in growth, workplace culture and community impact. The 2026 Asure50 class includes 50 organizations representing 13 industries, 20 U.S. states and one Canadian province.

About Asure
Asure (Nasdaq: ASUR) provides payroll and HR solutions for employers and enterprise payroll tax and treasury infrastructure for large organizations. For employers, Asure's platform covers payroll, HR, recruiting, time and attendance, benefits, and compliance — delivered through AsureCentral, its connected platform, or through AsureWorks, its managed services offering for employers who prefer to outsource the work entirely. For large enterprises, Asure's payroll tax and treasury infrastructure handles multi-jurisdiction tax filing, funding, and money movement, integrating with platforms including Workday, Oracle, and SAP. For more information, visit www.asuresoftware.com.

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