The State of Employee Directories in 2026

The employee directory world is splitting in two. On one side: nice-to-have tools, a digital address book with a prettier interface layered over the same messy data.

On the other: **Intelligent Directory Platforms**, systems built to make employee profile data trusted, auditable, and usable across the entire digital workplace.

> Most employee directory initiatives don't fail because the directory experience is bad. They fail because the underlying employee profile data can't be trusted.

The Real Issue Isn't the Directory. It's Employee Data Health.

Across Microsoft 365 and Entra ID environments, we see the same critical patterns emerge repeatedly when it comes to employee profile data quality:

- Missing fields (contact details, department, location, role, skills)
- Outdated job titles and responsibilities
- Wrong managers and broken reporting lines
- Duplicate or inconsistent employee profiles
- "Optional" attributes that never get completed
- Changes that happen without accountability or audit trails

This isn't just theory. When we analyze real Microsoft 365 and Entra tenant data across organizations, the gaps are consistent and alarming.

What the Data Says: Real-World Microsoft 365 / Entra Profiles

Based on comprehensive analysis of companies by OneDirectory:

31%	33%	27%	42%
Average Profile Completeness	**Directory-Ready Profiles**	**Profile Photo Completion**	**Manager Field Populated**
Nearly 7 out of 10 profile fields are typically missing across employee records	Only one-third of companies have core fields consistently filled (Email, Name, Job Title, Photo at 60%+)	Less than a third of tenants have photos filled in for 80%+ of employees	Over half of employees lack reporting line data, breaking org charts in tools like Microsoft Org Explorer

> 🗋 **Critical Reality Check:** If this is your employee profile data baseline, it doesn't matter how sophisticated your directory tool is. Your people won't trust it, and they won't use it.

What Bad Employee Profile Data Actually Breaks

Bad employee profile data doesn't just affect your directory, it spreads across your entire digital workplace. Most employee tools and experiences are powered by the same underlying employee data (identity, role, department, manager, location, skills). When that profile data is missing or wrong, the damage cascades:

Search Failures

Search returns the wrong people or no results. Employees get frustrated and stop trusting the system entirely.

Wrong Team Context

Employees can't confidently navigate departments, business units, or regional structures when hierarchy is unreliable.

Misrouted Work

Tasks and escalations go to the wrong people because employees follow outdated structure they can see.

Failed Segmentation

Communications and change management messages reach the wrong audiences, reducing effectiveness.

Wrong Experts Surfaced

Knowledge hubs and communities can't identify the right experts when skills and team context aren't reliable.

When directory data is messy, it doesn't just create a few bad employee profiles. It makes *every employee tool* built on that data less useful, eroding trust across your digital workplace.

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The Employee Directory Category is Evolving

The "**employee directory software**" category is dividing into two distinct camps with fundamentally different approaches:

Camp 1: Nice-to-have Directories	Camp 2: Intelligent Directory Platforms
• A presentational layer on top of existing data • Staff list with basic search capabilities • Attractive interface but limited by underlying data quality • Displays information—doesn't improve it	• Treat people data as operational infrastructure • Focus on trust, auditability, completeness, discoverability • Transform employee profiles into a living organizational map • Drive measurable outcomes teams can feel

> The difference isn't the UI. It's the quality of the profile data behind it.

What Fits into the "Nice-to-have Directory" Camp in 2026

Let's be fair: many tools in this camp are useful. They can work well, feel native, and even improve discoverability—**but only when the data is already good**. They typically share one common limitation: they display what's in Microsoft 365 / Entra but don't fix what's missing.

01

SharePoint and Teams "Staff Directory" Web Parts

Classic "directory page" approaches delivered as SharePoint web parts, Teams tabs, or intranet components. The catch: if titles are outdated, photos missing, and manager fields unmaintained, you get a nicer wrapper around unreliable data.

02

Org Chart Visualizers (including Org Explorer)

Tools like Microsoft's Org Explorer can be helpful when manager hierarchy is maintained. Microsoft's documentation is clear: without manager relationship data in Entra ID, users won't see the org chart. Organizations often discover they don't have an org chart problem—they have a manager data completeness problem.

03

People Experiences (like People in Viva)

Experiences designed to help employees discover connections, expertise, and context in the flow of work. But they're only as good as the data feeding them. If skills aren't captured and structure is inconsistent, the experience feels thin or, worse, untrustworthy.

04

DIY Directories (Templates + Search)

The "we'll build it ourselves" approach using SharePoint pages and search. This can work until you hit reality: DIY usually improves the front-end experience, not the underlying profile hygiene.

> **Bottom line:** These tools help employees *consume* directory data. But they don't solve the harder problem: keeping people data complete, accurate, auditable, and trusted.

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What an Intelligent Directory Platform Actually Is

An Intelligent Directory Platform isn't "a nicer staff directory." It's **the system that makes employee profile data usable, trusted, and discoverable** across the digital workplace.

In practical terms, it helps your organization reliably answer questions employees ask every day:

- Who is this person, and what do they actually do?
- Where do they sit in the organization, and who do they report to?
- Who has experience in this area (skills, systems, projects)?
- Where are they based and who's in my region, office, or time zone?
- Who should I speak to to solve this problem?

Point of Contact

Org & Reports

Role & Title

Skills & Experience

Location & Timezone

Why Adding AI Doesn't Equal "Intelligent"

Adding AI to your directory doesn't automatically make it intelligent. AI can make a directory faster, it can't make it *true*.

If your **employee profile data** is messy (missing fields, outdated titles, wrong managers, incomplete skills), AI doesn't fix the problem. It works with what it's given. That usually means:

Confident Wrong Answers

The worst kind, AI delivers incorrect information with certainty

Missed Experts

The right people aren't found because skills and roles aren't captured

Broken Recommendations

Suggestions fail because reporting lines and teams aren't accurate

Low Trust

Employees notice inconsistencies quickly and stop relying on the system

> The real question isn't "Can we add AI?" It's: Do we have people data that's complete, accurate, and trusted enough for AI to be useful?

Without that foundation, AI doesn't create directory intelligence. It just scales the mess.

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The OneDirectory Point of View for 2026

At **OneDirectory**, we're doubling down on one clear goal: **Turn your employee profile data into a trusted, searchable digital map of your company.**

That's why OneDirectory is becoming an **Intelligent Directory Platform**. Not "an employee directory tool," "a SharePoint staff directory web part," or "a nice-to-have company directory" but **the system that makes your employee profile data usable, trusted, and discoverable** across your digital workplace.

And when you get that right, the outcomes aren't vague:

→ Higher-quality people data that drives better decision-making

→ A digital workplace that actually works as intended

→ Faster expert discovery and knowledge sharing

→ Smoother onboarding and employee orientation
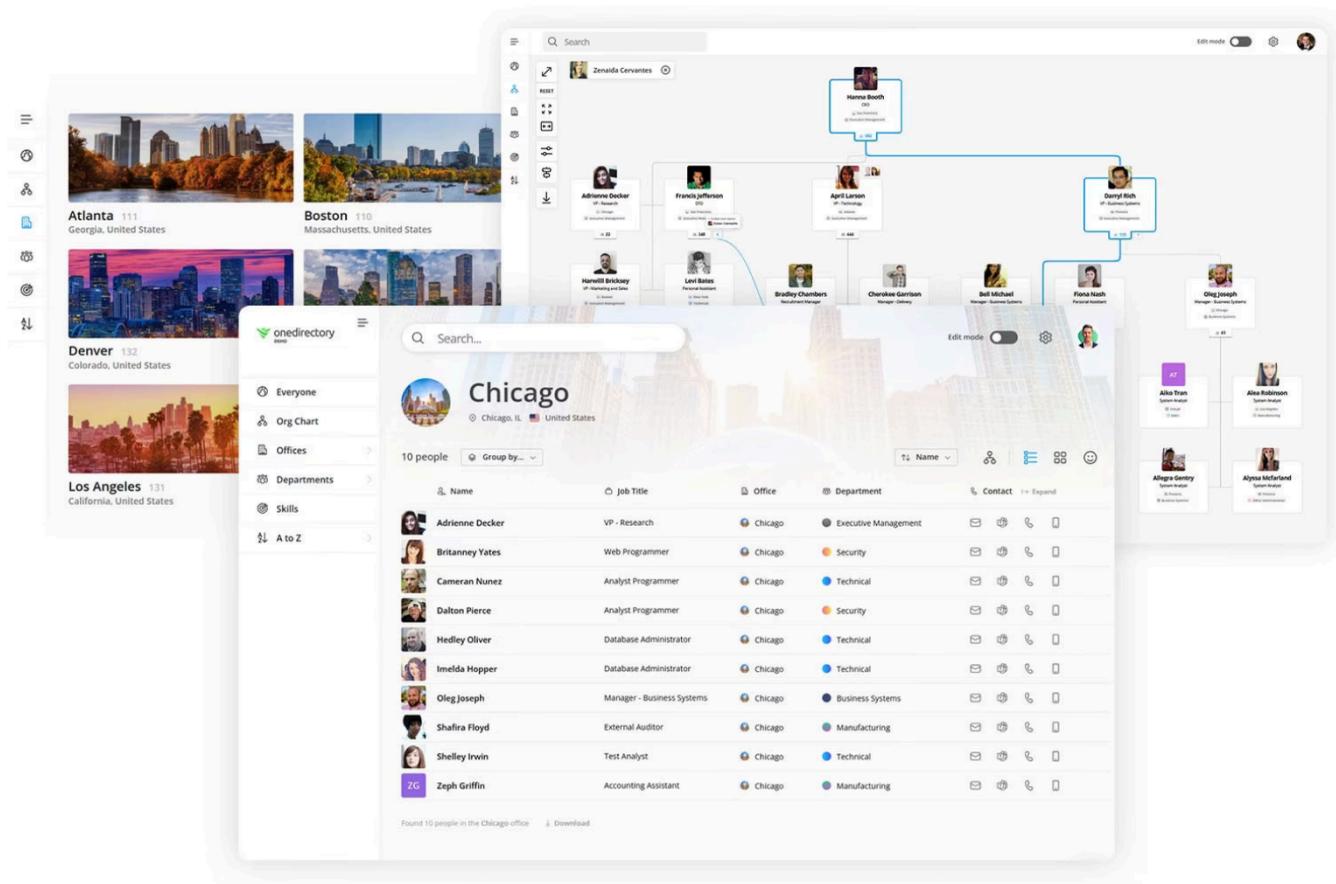
Quick Self-Check: Do You Trust Your Employee Directory Today?

If you want a simple diagnostic, ask these three questions:

1	2	3
Org Chart Trust	**Expert Discovery**	**Change Accountability**
Would employees trust the org chart if it showed up in a meeting right now?	Can people find experts by skills without relying on "who they know"?	If a manager or title changes today, can you audit who changed what, and why?

🗒 **The Bottom Line:** If any of those answers are "not really," you don't need another directory interface. You need to raise the standard of your employee profile data. Because in 2026, directory intelligence starts with employee profile data that you can trust and actually use.

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Unlock True Directory Intelligence.

Stop scaling the mess. Start leveraging complete, accurate, and trusted employee data to drive better decisions and a more connected workplace. Experience OneDirectory firsthand.

Start Your 14-Day Free Trial   Book a Personalized Demo