

HR Reimagined:

The world of work is changing



In many ways it seems that we are all living the technology dream. The advent of the web and the ever faster evolution of services and devices have transformed the way people live their lives.

People are connected and embracing technology in incredible ways; they are communicating with friends over Skype, they are playing games online, they are streaming movies and music, and sharing photos. And they are doing all this increasingly on the move. We live in a period where technology is all around us, where it has become a natural, normal part of our every-day lives.

Technology megatrends are reshaping the IT landscape at work. An IDC survey of HR executives found that analytics, cloud, mobile and social are changing the world of business. But has all this promise translated into a transformed workplace with a happier, more fulfilled workforce? Sadly not. Several recent studies have shown that only a third of workers are really engaged in what they do. That means that fully two-thirds do not really care about something that takes up the majority of their waking lives five days a week.

Somehow we have lost sight of the fact that we are professional, independent creative beings, employed by our organisations to help them achieve great outcomes. This presents an enormous opportunity for HR to re-engage employees whilst also transforming the way we think about HR and corporate culture.

HR's strategic role in business performance

HR can play a key strategic role in overall business performance by helping to drive

this re-engagement of the workforce, as well as a bottom line impact. Retaining and developing new skills and leadership among employees is critical to business success.

The workplace is now under huge pressure to change due to the expectations encouraged by new technologies. Many companies are challenged to retain and motivate the most talented young workers who are accustomed to a more blended work/life balance facilitated by digital technology.

The current generation of Millennials (aka GenY) grew up marinated in the digital world. Their expectations are shaped by their life experience as consumers, students and citizens who use social media, collaboration, search and other technologies as an organic part of their life and work.

When this generation comes to work, they expect workplace technology to provide the same kind of capabilities and experience as the tools they use in their outside life.

Many companies are challenged to retain and motivate the most talented young workers if they can't meet these expectations.

As Tom Bailey, CHRO, QinetiQ, North America, told IHRIM's Workforce Solutions Review: "The value of HR technology is in its ability to support us

in reaching our business goals. Human resources information systems are converging around social media, which is revolutionising how we attract people to the company and how we identify specific skillsets.

"Social media adoption is being driven by the new generation that is just now entering the workforce, and this goes beyond recruiting. It's all about knowledge and people trying to get answers to problems they are trying to solve. Gaining general knowledge and developing different points of view is enhanced through broader social networks."

HR has a crucial role to play in encouraging forward thinking in technology adoption, to help engage workers, which in turn promotes productivity and better staff retention.

The power of collaboration

Microsoft believes it is time to harness the power of collaboration; to rethink the way we work towards a better, more agile, more creative working environment. Microsoft business tools help HR professionals inspire collaboration, by connecting and unlocking social, organizational and operational intelligence that inspires innovation and interaction for better and faster results."

Setting employees free with new collaboration technologies increases employee engagement. A case in point is a major UK retailer, whose flagship



department store is one of the largest in London. Managers decided they needed to upgrade the company's intranet with a self-service HR portal to overcome the challenge of engaging with a diverse workforce and business units. Employees were given the ability to update their own HR profiles leading to more accurate and relevant information and to transform their internal communications to keep staff informed.

Such increased communication and collaboration is key to future success for businesses today and can be driven by HR.

HR Analytics

For companies with increasingly global workforces, such information management is critical. Talent management is more important than ever as the competition for the most skilled workers across the world increases. This requires a more analytical approach where HR professionals can unlock HR potential for business impact and tie talent strategies to corporate strategies.

Analytics is a key opportunity for HR professionals to help executives make better business decisions. Using the right analytics and reporting tools, HR can translate workforce data into insight business leaders can act on.

For example, if high staff turn over was a problem within a company, the right tools enable HR managers to evaluate the factors associated with this churn and generate actionable insight in a report that shows how salary, educational level, skills or length of service contribute to the staff changes.

The importance of trust

The added bonus is that embracing innovation can improve a company's culture so that the best employees are attracted to work there and, importantly, want to remain.

As Tom O'Byrne, Chief Executive, Great Place to Work Institute UK, puts it: "Our research shows that engagement starts with trust. High-trust organisations are better able to attract and retain quality staff. That can also mean greater productivity and an improved bottom line."

Microsoft itself is making great strides in this area. The company has recently been awarded third place in the UK's Best Large Workplaces ranking, climbing three places since last year. This makes Microsoft the highest ranking technology company in the UK, as voted by employees.

Going beyond the tactical

Theresa McHenry, Human Resources Director at Microsoft UK, believes that HR can have real impact in the boardroom "beyond the tactical".

"Culture can equal profits. It takes a willingness to stand by the investment in culture, whether making hiring decisions or handling times of transition. Those leaders willing to take this stand enjoy the returns through better talent, stronger client relationships, resilient employees, and sustained revenue," she said

Trust, in particular, is key for one area of innovation where Microsoft is leading the charge – flexible working. Working from home, the office or third spaces is happening in companies everywhere. Flexible working must be a strategic objective for companies looking to profitably reimagine how they do business,

whether they want to maintain an office space or not.

Microsoft offers a range of solutions to help HR professionals transform the modern workplace, solutions which enable business effectiveness, build a modern corporate culture and embrace innovation.

For example, the ERP Human Capital Management solution enables HR professionals to optimise their human capital investments and its HR Self-Service Portal delivers to employees the skills they need to compete and improve communications.

The solution helped UK wholesale distribution specialist JJ Food Service power innovation and change, enabling ERP support and development with just three staff. Microsoft Dynamics AX delivered intuitive tools – plus role-based, personalized dashboards and key performance indicators targeted to specific jobs. The organisation gained invaluable insight and control over its operations, which helped it drive major commercial success.

Since deploying the solution in 2004, the company has expanded the deployment to cover all aspects of its business, including procurement, sales cycle, warehouse and inventory management and financial ledger.

Reimagining business and the business of HR is about waking up to a new environment based on collaborative working, on flexible working, on technologies that, used correctly, liberate rather than constrain. The future of work must be based on being open, on focusing on results, not process, on empowerment, not hierarchy.