

The Seismic Shift in Higher Education Human Resources Management

We are living in an era of unprecedented change. There is such information overload and technological advances that makes science fiction look tame. Disruptive technologies such as social, mobile and cloud connectivity are transforming how, where and when people work. Rapidly changing demographics, and the rise of contractors and freelancers, are altering the fabric of the workforce. The consumer experience is reshaping workplace expectations. And all of this is happening in the context of inescapable globalization.

The higher education sector is no stranger to change, and that is just as well as these trends collectively are proving seismic in their impact. What's more, they impact all stages of the talent management lifecycle from recruiting and onboarding the best, through learning and development, to performance management, and engagement and retention.

The pressure on HR to deliver strategic value continues to intensify with both organization and HR leaders rethinking the function's role. HR needs business acumen and strategic focus to unleash the potential of organizational talent and create a compelling value proposition.

HR in its current form is unlikely to continue. We expect to see a transformation wherein the HR models of today fragment and new designs emerge:



Extinction – Transactional HR and talent management are automated or outsourced. Sophisticated and engaging technology replaces HR and shifts talent management to the line manager and employees.



Metamorphosis – HR becomes a talent enabler focused on coaching and strategic decision making. HR centers on identifying and developing future talent with the dual capability to engage people and drive strategic outcomes.

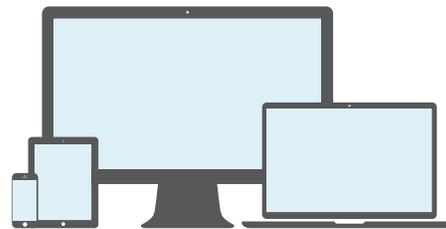


Evolution – A new breed of HR emerges to focus on analytics and workforce management. Strategic business decisions will be based on predictive modeling with a major focus on talent data.

Monumental forces are altering the future of work

- *Disruptive Technology*
- *Workforce Demographic Changes*
- *Globalization*

Disruptive Technology



Digital technology is shaping and reshaping the workforce and higher education environment. It is influencing how, where and when people work. Emerging technologies, including advances in robotic process automation and artificial intelligence are redefining jobs and in some cases, making people obsolete.

New technologies and discoveries have always transformed jobs. However, the impact of technological advances and the digital revolution are uncertain. Jobs are being completely replaced by robotics, machines and advanced software. Emerging technologies will have a massive, economically disruptive impact in the next ten years. Among these, McKinsey list mobile internet, the Internet of Things, cloud technologies, robotics, 3D printing, driverless cars, genomics and automation of knowledge workers^(12,13). Together they have the potential to fundamentally alter the economy, society and the workforce of the future^(12,13).

Once, robots were used in predominantly dirty, dangerous or physically difficult jobs, in agriculture, manufacturing and the military^(13,14). Today, the future of robotics looks vastly different. Advances in cognitive computing give machines the ability to understand human language, allowing them to analyze and interpret large volumes of information and even answer unstructured questions^(12,13). Take the 'virtual teaching assistant' prank Ashok Goel, a computer science professor at Georgia Institute of Technology, pulled on his students early in 2016: he gave them a robot for a teaching assistant. "Jill Watson" did regular teaching assistant work, like remind students of due dates and answer questions, all over email.

Information technology is pervasive; it advances very rapidly, follows exponential trajectories of improvement in cost and performance, and has strong network effects where the value to any user increases as the network increases⁽¹³⁾.

How can HR prepare?

The overwhelming majority of HR professionals remain ill-prepared to meet the demands of the workforce of the future. Despite recognizing its importance, only 20% are ready to embrace the role of technology and automation in replacing knowledge workers⁽¹⁾.

Tailored education and training will be required to re-skill the existing workforce and to align the skills and competencies of future graduates. Digital proficiency, analytical and critical thinking skills need to be embedded as much as reading, writing and arithmetic have been in the past. HR professionals can play an active role in advising professional bodies, policy makers and higher education colleagues on future education requirements.

Safe jobs will be those that require creativity, social intelligence and innovation. Regardless of the technological advances, people will ultimately determine the difference between success and failure.

How much is hype? How do organizations decide which technologies to adopt and which to ignore? The dual challenges for HR professionals will be to 1) remain knowledgeable about the megatrends to determine which technologies to adopt and 2) conduct analytical scenario-based testing to determine the impact of adoption on workforce requirements.

Workforce Demographic Changes

The US anticipates a labor surplus of approximately 20 million in 2020 and even with changes in demographics will still face a surplus of 7.4 million by 2030⁽⁴⁾.

Baby Boomers are retiring, taking their knowledge and experience with them and creating skill shortages in academia and elsewhere. The mass exodus of a generation will accelerate workplace change from the old hierarchical models to new modes of work as Millennials fill the employment vacuum.

Meanwhile, Millennials are entering the workforce en masse with expectations that are heralding a new era of work. Today, Millennials account for 34% of the workforce in the USA, surpassing the other generations for the first time⁽⁷⁾. By 2020, Millennials will represent 50% of the global workforce⁽⁸⁾. They have a natural affinity with the digital world which shapes their expectations at work. For the first time in history this has created a situation where new workplace entrants have a better understanding of key business tools than their senior and more experienced colleagues⁽⁹⁾. Millennials have elevated expectations of life in the workforce: flexibility, regular feedback and encouragement, purpose, challenge and collaborative decision making. The relationship between the organization and the individual is fundamentally shifting to reflect demographic changes and the growing power of the individual. There is a high emphasis on personal needs over those of the organization.

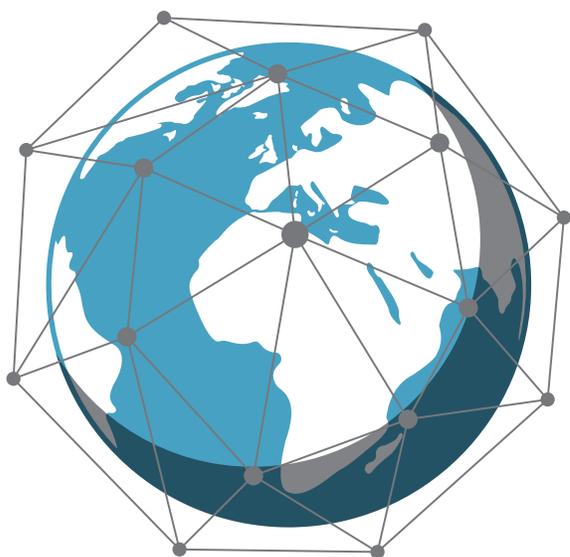


How can HR prepare?

More than ever, organizations need to build workforce plans to predict and manage upcoming shortages. Analytics can be used to forecast skill gaps and mitigate skill shortages. Transition-to-retirement programs are being instigated as organizations attempt to maintain skills and knowledge by offering flexible or part-time work arrangements. HR has a key role to play in overcoming the challenges faced by an expanding part-time workforce, creating avenues for the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next, and ensuring the uptake of new technologies that enable flexible and remote work arrangements.

Millennials have different expectations of work: 41% prefer electronic communication and 59% expect access to state of the art technology⁽⁸⁾. Faculty is frequently sourced from communities where potential faculty go to learn, discuss & explore. This is especially true of younger faculty which means recruiters need to work across a broad spread of social media to attract and engage them. Professional development, work-life balance and career progression consistently rate above financial rewards, together with autonomy about where and when they work. Flexibility reigns supreme, with 68% of current graduates saying the ability to work remotely influences their likelihood of accepting a position and 74% expecting flexible schedules in the workplace⁽⁹⁾. How can we keep Millennials engaged? Organizations that get this right will hold a competitive advantage. Understanding what drives Millennials and altering organizational practices to accommodate them will be key.

Globalization Becomes Pervasive



Globalization increasingly affects universities and colleges globally too, from how they are funded to who and how they hire.

US colleges and universities attract some 19% of international student enrollment, hitting a record high of 975,000 students in SY14-15. In this light, the importance of global university rankings has never been greater, not only in attracting students, but also in attracting great faculty talent.

As Michael Vogt, Human Resources Director at the University of Melbourne points out, the strengthening of global university rankings has some surprising HR implications on both recruitment and retention: “Global university rankings are forcing institutions to put in place mechanisms that promote and reward high performance. Like every other sector, we compete for great talent – to attract and retain the world’s best academic talent, we need to demonstrate our employment value proposition, part of which is being recognized as a leading global institution”.

How can HR prepare?

In an increasingly global world, there are hiring and retention strategies to prepare for tomorrow’s changing workforce. Many organizations are already using HR analytics for workforce planning. To avoid coming skills shortages, HR can expand its use of analytics such as gender and other diversity metrics to further understand the make-up of recruits and provide matching incentives.

Additionally, HR will need to prepare for the complexities of hiring, managing and integrating a global workforce. The use of communications technology and the expansion of transnational universities and colleges are not likely to let up. Attracting global talent requires staying abreast of new strategies for finding and attracting talent. Technologies such as social media are essential for recruiting, but the challenge is to align these new strategies with organizational goals.

Organizations are also faced with the need to develop the means to assess skills across divergent talent sources and then create programs to fill skills gaps after employees are hired. In addition, they need to understand how to manage and integrate multicultural employees.

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The composition of the workforce is changing. Traditional career models are transforming; some jobs will become obsolete and others will change beyond recognition. In a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous (VUCA) world, only a few HR leaders are fully ready and able to deal with a technology-led workplace transformation. Adding to the complexity is the changing makeup of the workforce – baby boomers are exiting, Millennials have come of age and are demanding flexibility, meaning and high-touch engagement. The on-demand economy is on the rise and traditional work models are fragmenting with an influx of freelancers, contractors, fractional and virtual workers. Globalization is impacting all aspects of our environment as students and staff becoming increasingly international, and global mobility becomes a prerequisite.

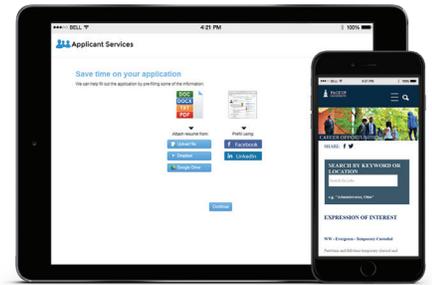
As technology continues to transform the global economy, HR leaders must look ahead and plan. At PageUp we’re taking a multi-pronged approach to the key challenges (see overleaf).



1 Consumer technologies set the Benchmark

By focusing on the employee experience, HR has an opportunity to increase workforce engagement. In all aspects of the employee lifecycle – from recruitment, training and development, performance management and succession planning – HR professionals need to understand the technology expectations of their current and future employees and adjust practices accordingly.

Social and mobile technologies have become standard practice. Meetings are conducted via Skype and WhatsApp; collaborative technologies such as Yammer, or Slack enable instant sharing of information and feedback to questions and ideas inside and outside the office. Many of these activities occur on personal devices. We address these issues with our solutions, enabling mobile and social optimization. This enables HR to seize the initiative and proactively shape what the future of work looks like in their organization.



2 HRM embedded into standard practices

HR departments have contracted in size and financial constraints have led to an increase in the introduction of cost-efficient employee and manager self-service technologies. Greater efficiency, higher employee satisfaction and engagement will continue to drive the uptake of the employee and manager self-service tools, especially as advances in technology and cloud based applications continue to accelerate. Transactional activities will cease to form part of the HR remit.

Managers will own the talent management of their teams in the same way they own operational productivity outcomes and deliverables. Employees will drive their own development, learning and career pathways. HR will drive the creation of an organization-wide mindset in which the employee is treated like a customer and a valued asset. As part of the “customer experience” HR practices will shift from being standardized to personalized, where managers and employees have the flexibility to choose from within a predefined framework.

3 Unified talent management and big data

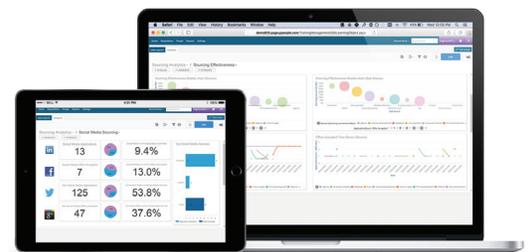
In order to identify which processes can be improved to create a more engaging user experience and understand how to drive wider acceptance, HR professionals will need to analyze how employees are currently using HR service delivery technologies⁽²⁷⁾.

Data profiling tools that enable advanced customer relationship management in marketing are already being applied internally and will raise the stakes in employee management. Sensors monitoring employee location, performance and even health are being introduced. Those responsible for talent management will need financial, analytical, and marketing skills to measure the impact of talent on their organizations. At the same time they also need coaching skills and the ability to connect to people to retain the best talent.

In the not-too-distant future, data and metrics will drive business productivity. The right person with the right skills will be identifiable and placed in the right place at the right time. On-the-job performance measurement and assessment will be fed back into the system so productivity data is assessable in real-time. Organizations will have access to more data than ever before but the information is useless unless it is analyzed intelligently and the results used to improve talent strategies. HR professionals will need the analytical skills and business acumen to develop and execute a workforce strategy that drives and delivers strategic business outcomes.

Disruption continues to be a feature of the higher education landscape. With the megatrends of globalization and technology already rocking the paradigms underpinning the higher education sector, what shape will the future take?

Bibliography can be found in PageUp's whitepaper "In a hyper connected world is HR disconnected?"



Interested to learn how PageUp can help you take talent management to the next level at your institution?

[Let's have a chat](#)