

# 7 shifts changing the face of HR

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HR (People) professionals will be expected to continue making a radical shift towards bigger and broader thinkers. The ability to be innovative and to use technology in new and different ways is essential - this will enable them to enhance and lead the human-centricity way.



Image source: Getty Images

To achieve this, tech-savviness is required and to quickly respond to the ever-changing demands from the agile workforce.

Leaders need to be mindful of the latest trends – not just People (HR) teams.

## 1. Permanent flexibility increases productivity

Flexibility involves rethinking how work is done and by whom. We have seen the continuous trend to focus on the outcome rather than hours spent at work. Leaders should define and be very clear on the outcomes and allow their teams to craft their own methods towards these outcomes.

Companies that have experimented with the four-day work week have seen productivity increased. Not only were teams able to maintain the productivity of the five-day work week, but they also had reduced stress levels. They also reported a significant increase in a more balanced approach to life. This is huge!

South Africa remains high on the working hour chart in comparison to other countries; a large percentage of the South African workforce works a 50-hour week. With this insight, it creates the opportunity for People teams to co-create alternatives with the business - a “one size fits all” approach will not work. People teams should use design thinking principles to collaborate and to understand what will add value to the various teams.

## **2. Gamification makes HR interesting**

Knowledge workers thrive on autonomy, mastery and relatedness. Gamification combines intrinsic with extrinsic motivation, which makes gamification as relevant as ever. The clever combination of game design, psychology, motivation theory and neurophysiology has shown benefits in surprisingly effective ways. For example: gamification included in team learning encourages bonding across multiple locations.

Gamification should be well thought through. If you think you can quickly pull together a game by including a few badges, call it gamification and assume it will increase engagement, you are wrong.

Start with the end in mind and be clear of why you are doing it; tie gamification directly to your business strategy, skills and abilities you want to develop. Define what success would look like and how you're going to measure and track impact. For example: if gamification is used for recruitment, it should inspire candidates to engage with the business career sites or its social media profile.

## **3. Get creative with the war for talent**

Career paths aren't linear anymore. Creating opportunities for internal movements remains a high priority as companies move away from strict career paths to a career mosaic approach – which allows for more lateral movement; balancing the need of the individual with the business.

People and talent acquisition teams are looking for innovative sourcing strategies; as with many other functions, they should be innovative in the way to find talent. This starts with looking critically at the candidate experience and using technology to add value.

A good example is involving colleagues in the recruitment process. Companies can connect applicants with colleagues via an interactive job portal. The colleagues then become brand ambassadors using the technology to enhance the candidate experience.

Reskilling goes together with lifelong learning. Imagine if everyone in the company learns just one new thing every day, what impact will that have on the company after a year? Companies have a responsibility to assist with the reskilling of teams and can support their colleagues by creating learning solutions linked to their needs: available anytime and easily accessible.

However, it remains the responsibility of the individual to ensure life-long employability. They must understand the difference between marketability and employability where marketability refers to the “attractiveness” to potential employers and employability ensures added benefit/value to current and future employers.

According to the World Economic Forum, the skills demand identified for 2018 and 2022 is a real eye-opener. 2020 should be used to intentionally build these skills.

## **4. Shrinking People (HR) teams – outsourcing HR to specialists**

The economic pressures demand smaller teams. The role of People professionals continue to evolve from control and implementation to supporting business agility and coaching leaders. Sadly, some teams remain focused on the compliance/administrative aspect of HR instead of outsourcing some of the more specialist areas or invest in technology. This can be the nail in the coffin for those teams – the need is increasing to add VALUE to the business.

In line with the previous point, People professionals should consider enhancing their T-shaped competence. This means having knowledge and expertise in one area; whilst being great in this area, they have the capability to collaborate and use the knowledge gained through collaboration in other business disciplines.

## **5. There's power in inclusivity**

Leadership development starts with personal development and self-awareness. We choose how we show up in every interaction. Inclusive leadership aims to create, change and innovate whilst balancing the needs of the individual.

Inclusive leadership means having the courage to take conscious steps to break down barriers. It embodies an approach that welcomes diversity, invites and appreciates everyone's contribution and encourages commitment, responsibility and everyone's obligation to contribute to decision making and shaping reality.

Psychological safety is the foundation, especially if companies want to instill a culture of increased innovation. Leaders need to create an environment where employees can be real, feel comfortable to use each opportunity to experiment, learn and solve problems. Innovation goes hand-in-hand with being disciplined, having tolerance for failure (not incompetence) and collaborate with others.

When colleagues don't feel heard, seen or respected, they will not have the willingness to experiment and learn.

Diversity of thought is critical. There is never only one way of working towards a solution. The more diverse your team, the more leaders can draw on the experience, background and thinking coming from their team. Bear in mind this doesn't mean that having a diverse team is enough - diversity in leadership is the first building block for influencing and innovation.

## **6. Personal accountability**

Accountability is not new. But, the way we look at accountability is.

Learning organisations, companies that learn the fastest, will have the competitive advantage. In the digital world, where information is readily available and the focus on teamwork is essential, it is critical to hold one another accountable, specifically in workspaces where we encourage innovation.

Leaders can no longer micro-manage their teams. Leaders should clearly define the outcome and leave the rest for the team to decide how and what. Everyone needs to up their game; new hires will be required to contribute quicker and formulate relevant questions and insight.

## **7. Kindness is not just for pre-school**

Imagine a workplace where kindness is not questioned or frowned upon. Team members who have genuine respect for each other and their diverse way of thinking, will be kind to another and be open to vulnerability.

There is an increased focus on wellbeing in the workplace, bringing your best self to work, being kind to ourselves, and with the people working with us.

Kindness creates an encouraging ripple that influences the whole workplace culture. When kindness is instilled in

your company values, it may just create a safe space that will result in higher levels of happiness... and productivity and a sense of belonging. Everyone has a part to play.

Employees that will thrive in the economy of 2020 will exhibit a do-it-yourself attitude.

## Closing words

The best People leaders have a seat at the boardroom table – they contribute to conversations and decisions around new revenue streams, options to expand or shrink operations and lead the way with an agile mindset. They emphasise the importance of increasing autonomy, the use of intrinsic motivation and stress the benefits of a flatter organisation with quicker, distributed decision-making powers.

Whilst many People leaders are still grappling to embrace these points/actions, the first step will be to consider ways to enhance the leadership development programmes to be more inclusive and for businesses to display more inclusive traits.

## ABOUT ANJA VAN BEEK

Anja van Beek is an independent leadership consultant, talent strategist and coach.

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