



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

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Student Name: Andriy Kovtun

Student Number: 2410666

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Lecturer Name: Dr. Toyin Adisa

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1.Introduction

Henry Pooley & Son Ltd is a long-established mechanical engineering company known for the design and manufacture of weighing machines. Today, the company operates in Birmingham and works in a competitive engineering and manufacturing market. In recent years, the organisation has faced many grievances from employees, especially during a period of business transformation and change. The company is adopting digital technology, updating production systems, and introducing flexible working arrangements. These changes bring new challenges for staff and for the HR department.

This report explains the factors linked to business transformation, digital trends and flexible working. It then evaluates contemporary HR practices that can support these changes. Finally, it critically examines how departmental managers can make sure these practices are used quickly and effectively. The aim of this report is to support better change management, reduce grievances, and improve the employee experience in Henry Pooley & Son Ltd.

2. Explanation of Factors Related to Business

Transformation, Digital Technology and Flexible Working

2.1 Business Transformation Factors

Business transformation means large changes in how an organisation works, including new systems, new processes, and new ways of working. In mechanical engineering companies like Henry Pooley & Son Ltd, transformation is often driven by market pressure, customer expectations and the need for greater efficiency. According to Burnes (2017), transformation is necessary when companies want to remain competitive and respond to industry trends.

One key factor is the move from traditional mechanical production methods to more modern engineering techniques. Many competitors now use advanced machinery, automated processes, and lean manufacturing systems. This puts pressure on Pooley to modernise. Another factor is cost efficiency. Engineering firms face global competition, and digital tools can reduce waste, speed up production and help quality control (Teece, 2019).

Another factor is workforce expectations. Younger employees expect better communication, training opportunities, and modern tools to work with. Without these, staff frustration can

grow. As the business transforms, job roles may also change. Employees may fear job loss or skill mismatch, which can increase grievances (Kotter, 2012).

Finally, regulatory and safety requirements in engineering are changing. New standards require better reporting and improved traceability of materials. Digital systems help meet these requirements, so transformation becomes necessary.

2.2 Digital Technology Trends

Digital technology plays a major role in modern engineering. One key trend is the use of Industry 4.0, which includes automation, data analytics, robotics, and smart machines. According to Xu et al. (2018), Industry 4.0 can improve accuracy, reduce errors, and speed up production. For Pooley, this may include digital weighing systems, automated calibration tools, and advanced testing equipment.

Another trend is digital communication platforms, such as Microsoft Teams or cloud systems, which support collaboration between teams. These tools are important when employees work in different locations or shifts.

The use of HR Information Systems (HRIS) is also increasing. HRIS can support recruitment, training, performance reviews and grievance tracking. This helps HR teams handle high workloads more effectively (Kavanagh & Johnson, 2018).

Digital learning platforms are also part of this trend. Online training helps employees update skills and learn how to use new machines. This reduces resistance to change and supports continuous learning.

However, digital trends can also cause worry. Some employees may feel stressed about learning new tools or fear that automation might replace their jobs. This highlights the need for strong HR support during digital change.

2.3 Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible working has become common in many industries, including engineering. It includes remote work, flexible hours, compressed weeks, hybrid work, and shift-swapping. After COVID-19, many organisations started using flexible working to attract and keep employees (CIPD, 2022).

In an engineering company like Pooley, full remote work is not always possible because many roles are factory-based. However, flexible hours, hybrid working for office staff, and adjusted shift patterns are possible. These arrangements can help employees manage personal responsibilities and reduce stress.

Flexible working also supports employee well-being. Research shows that flexibility can improve job satisfaction, motivation and mental health (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). For Pooley, this may help reduce grievances related to workload, family commitments and burnout.

However, flexible working also presents challenges. Managers need to coordinate teams across different times and locations. Some older employees may prefer traditional schedules and feel uncomfortable with change. HR teams must consider fairness, communication, and policy clarity when designing flexible systems.

3. Evaluation of Contemporary HR Practices to Address These Factors

3.1 HR Practices for Business Transformation

Contemporary HR practices play a key role in supporting transformation. One important practice is changing management training. According to Kotter (2012), employees cope better with change when communication is clear and regular. HR can deliver workshops to explain the purpose of transformation, the benefits, and the impact on employees.

Another HR practice is reskilling and upskilling programmes. As job roles change, employees need new technical and digital skills. This reduces resistance and builds confidence (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). HR can create training roadmaps and partner with colleges or online platforms.

Employee involvement is also essential. When workers are included in decisions, they feel more valued and less anxious. HR can use surveys, feedback sessions, and suggestion systems to encourage participation. This helps reduce grievances linked to uncertainty.

Performance management is another important practice. During transformation, performance expectations change. HR must update job descriptions, create fair goals, and

ensure managers support employees. Clear expectations reduce confusion and improve productivity.

3.2 HR Practices for Digital Technology Trends

To address digital trends, HR must provide digital skills training for all staff. This can include basic IT skills, cybersecurity awareness, and training for new engineering technologies. Learning platforms like LinkedIn Learning or internal e-learning systems are effective modern HR tools (Kavanagh & Johnson, 2018).

Another modern practice is implementing an HR Information System (HRIS). This helps HR teams record grievances, monitor training, manage performance, and store employee data. HRIS reduces paperwork and improves communication between departments.

Recruitment also needs to change. HR should recruit people with strong digital skills or experience with automation. At the same time, HR must offer fair opportunities for existing staff to learn, to avoid feelings of replacement or age discrimination.

Digital transformation also requires a focus on well-being. Technology can increase workload or stress. HR should introduce well-being programmes, counselling services and stress management workshops to support employees during digital change (CIPD, 2022).

3.3 HR Practices for Flexible Working

To support flexible working, HR must design clear flexible working policies that explain eligibility, expectations, communication rules, and safety requirements. Clear policies reduce conflict and unfair treatment.

HR should also train managers on how to supervise flexible teams. This includes time management, remote communication, and performance monitoring. Research shows that good leadership is essential for successful flexible work (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

HR can also use digital tools to support flexible work, such as scheduling apps, shared calendars, and online communication platforms. These tools help the organisation coordinate shifts and meetings more easily.

Another HR practice is regular check-ins and well-being reviews. Flexible work can sometimes create isolation or communication problems. HR should encourage managers to hold 1-to-1 sessions to support engagement and resolve problems early.

Finally, HR should promote equality. Flexible working should be available to all employees where possible, not only to office staff. This reduces grievances about unfair treatment.

4. Critical Evaluation of How Managers Can Ensure Practices Are Implemented Urgently

Departmental managers have a central role in making sure HR practices are implemented quickly and effectively. For urgent transformation, managers need strong leadership, communication and monitoring skills.

First, managers must act as change champions. Kotter (2012) argues that successful change happens when leaders show commitment and communicate a clear vision. Managers should explain to staff why transformation is important and how it will support the long-term survival of the company. This reduces resistance and fear.

Managers must fairly and consistently also apply HR policies. For example, flexible working policies must be used equally across teams. If the application is unfair, grievances will increase. Managers should attend HR training and understand the rules well.

Another important role is supporting employees through training. Managers should check who needs training, encourage participation and follow up on progress. If managers ignore skill gaps, digital change will fail. They must also give staff time during the workday to complete training.

Communication is a critical factor. Managers need to hold weekly or bi-weekly meetings during periods of change. This creates a safe space for employees to ask questions. According to Burnes (2017), regular communication reduces uncertainty and increases trust.

Managers also need to monitor employee well-being, especially during digital upgrades or flexible working changes. They can use surveys, informal talks and team meetings to identify early signs of stress. If problems appear, managers should work with HR to find solutions quickly.

Managers must also ensure that performance expectations remain realistic during transformation. If new technology causes delays, managers should adjust goals temporarily. This prevents burnout and helps employees adapt gradually.

Finally, managers must work closely with HR. They should report issues early, share data about team performance, and request support when needed. HR cannot solve problems alone; strong cooperation between managers and HR is essential for urgent implementation.

Overall, managers need to be proactive, supportive and fair. Their behaviour will strongly influence whether employees accept or reject the new practices.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, Henry Pooley & Son Ltd is facing major changes in business transformation, digital technology and flexible working. These changes bring challenges such as employee anxiety, skill gaps and communication problems. However, with strong HR practices and effective management, these issues can be managed successfully.

Recommendations:

- Provide continuous training in digital skills and change management.
- Introduce a modern HRIS to manage grievances, training and communication.
- Create clear flexible working policies and apply them fairly.
- Improve communication through regular meetings and updates.
- Support managers with leadership training focused on change management.
- Encourage employee involvement in decision-making.

These steps will help reduce grievances, improve engagement and support the company's future success.

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