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Introduction

Helios Urban Mobility (HUM) is a smart-transport start-up. It has 450 staff across London, Berlin and Singapore. It designs AI-enabled electric mobility systems and smart infrastructure analytics for city governments. After five years of fast growth, Helios now faces serious people problems. New hires take a long time to become fully useful, with an average ramp-up time of eight months. Employee engagement has fallen to only 54% in the latest survey. Many high-potential graduates leave the company early.

This report is written by an external Strategic Human Capital Advisor for the Board. It sets out a clear human capital plan to fix these problems. Task A looks at how to turn new hires into loyal and committed members of the company. Task B looks at how to design jobs that make people want to work hard and be creative. Task C is a short reflection on using AI as a support tool and on my own future skills.

Task A: Socialisation, Identity and Business Activism

Traditional onboarding versus strategic organisational socialisation

Onboarding and socialisation are not the same thing. Traditional onboarding is usually short. It covers the first few days or weeks of a job. It deals with paperwork, IT setup, health and safety and sometimes simple task training. Onboarding is useful, but it is basic. It gets a person ready to start work, but it does not build a real bond with the company. Recent research shows that many new hires are not fully prepared for their roles and take time to reach full performance, which is a real cost to the business (Deloitte, 2025). Helios feels this cost through its eight-month ramp-up time.

Strategic organisational socialisation is deeper and lasts much longer. It is the process where a new person learns the values, culture and behaviour of the company and slowly becomes a true member (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). Van Maanen and Schein explained that companies can socialise people in different ways. They can do it in groups or one person at a time. They can do it in a planned way, or they can leave people to work it out alone. Their research shows that planned, group-based and supportive socialisation builds strong commitment, while leaving people alone often creates stress and doubt.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) also drew a line between two broad styles. One style is planned and shared, where the company gives new hires a clear path,

common training and mentors. This style tells people that they belong and helps them keep their sense of self. The other style is unplanned and left to chance, where people are thrown in alone and must sink or swim. This second style can push people to change too fast, and it often leads to stress and early exit. Helios seems to be using the second style by accident, which may be one because of its high graduate attrition. Moving to the first, planned style is at the heart of my design.

Two more theories help explain this. The first is psychological contract theory. Rousseau (1995) said that every employee holds an unwritten set of expectations about what the company will give them and what they must give back. When the company keeps its promises, trust grows. When it breaks them, people feel let down and often leave. Helios must therefore make honest promises during hiring and then keep them. The second is identity construction. Ashforth and Mael (1989) explained that people want to feel part of a group. When a person sees the company as part of who they are, they stay longer and work harder. So good socialisation is about helping a new person build a new work identity.

A structured socialisation framework for Helios

I propose a three-stage framework for Helios: pre-boarding, the first 90 days, and year one.

Stage one is pre-boarding. This happens between the job offer and the first day. Helios should stay in contact with the new hire during this time. It can send a warm welcome message, a short video about its mission, and the name of the buddy who will help them. These lowers worry and start the bond early. For example, many technology firms send new joiners a laptop and a welcome pack before day one, so they already feel valued.

Stage two is the first 90 days. This is the most important period, so I suggest a simple 30-60-90 plan. In the first 30 days, the aim is to belong, so the new hire meets their team, their manager and a trained buddy, and learns the culture, not only the tasks. Helios should run culture sessions that explain its purpose of building cleaner and smarter cities. In the next 30 days, the aim is to learn: the person takes on real tasks with support and gets weekly check-ins, so problems are found early. In the final 30 days, the aim is to contribute: they own a small piece of work of their own. By day 90, the manager and the new hire review progress together and agree next steps. This planned and supportive approach matches the advice of Van

Maanen and Schein (1979) and should cut the ramp-up time well below eight months.

Stage three is year one. Socialisation should not stop after three months. During the first year, the new hire should get a mentor, join projects across different teams, and receive honest feedback. This builds long-term identity and loyalty. It also helps keep high-potential graduates who might otherwise leave.

I justify this design for three reasons. First, it is gradual, so people are not overloaded on day one. Second, it mixes task learning with culture learning, which builds a strong work identity. Third, it keeps promises clear at every stage, which protects the psychological contract and builds trust.

Mechanisms to build identification, ethics and the business activist mindset

Organisational identification means people feel “this is my company”. To build it, Helios can share its mission often, celebrate team wins, and tell real stories of how its technology helps real cities. When graduates see that their work reduces traffic and pollution, they feel proud and connected (Ashforth and Mael, 1989).

Ethical professionalism means acting honestly and responsibly at work. Helios works with city governments and public data, so ethics matter a great deal. Helios can set a clear code of conduct, train staff on data privacy, and reward good ethical choices, not only strong results. Leaders must act as role models, because staff copy what they see.

The business activist mindset is the newest idea. Ulrich (2022) argues that HR and its people should no longer only do admin work so they should create value for all stakeholders, such as employees, customers, communities and investors. This links to stakeholder capitalism, where Schwab and Vanham (2021) argue that a company must serve society and the planet, not just its shareholders, if it wants to succeed in the long run. For Helios, a business activist is an employee who speaks up on sustainability, questions poor decisions, and pushes the company to do good while doing well. Helios can grow this mindset by giving staff a real voice in decisions, running “green challenge” projects, and letting people spend some time on social-impact work. Patagonia is a real example of a firm where staff activism is part of the everyday culture. This matters for Helios in a very practical way. High-potential graduates today often want a job with purpose, not just a good salary. When they

can see and shape the good their work does, they are far more likely to stay. So, building the business activist mindset is not only the right thing to do so it is also a strong tool against the graduate attrition that Helios is facing.

Task B: Job Design

Job design means how tasks, duties and roles are built into a job. Good job design makes work feel meaningful and keeps people motivated. Helios needs this to fix its low engagement of 54% and to support more innovation. Low engagement is a wide and costly problem: Gallup found that engagement among European workers is the lowest of any world region, and that disengagement costs the global economy hundreds of billions of dollars each year (Gallup, 2024). I propose a job design strategy that uses three ideas together: the Job Characteristics Model, job crafting theory and a skills-based architecture with an internal talent marketplace.

The Job Characteristics Model

Hackman and Oldham (1976) created the Job Characteristics Model. It says that five job features make work motivating. These are skill variety (using many skills), task identity (doing a whole piece of work), task significance (work that matters to others), autonomy (freedom to decide how to work), and feedback (clear information on performance). When these five features are high, people feel their work has meaning, feel responsible for it and know their results. This leads to higher motivation and better quality.

Helios can build all five features into its jobs. For skill variety, engineers can work on both data analysis and city design. For task identity, a person can follow one city project from start to finish. For task significance, Helios can show how each role helps create clean transport. For autonomy, teams can choose how to solve problems in their own way. For feedback, managers can give regular and honest reviews. Together, these changes should lift engagement above the current 54%.

Job crafting theory

The Job Characteristics Model is top-down, because managers design the job. Job crafting is bottom-up. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) said that employees can shape their own jobs to fit their strengths and interests. There are three types of crafting. Task crafting is changing what tasks you do. Relationship crafting is changing who you work with. Cognitive crafting is changing how you think about your work and why it matters.

Helios should allow and encourage crafting. For example, a data scientist who loves teaching could add mentoring to their role. A graduate who cares about the environment could join a green project team. When people craft their own jobs, they feel more ownership and stay longer. This directly helps the graduate attrition problem, because young workers want variety and growth, not a fixed and boring role.

Skills-based architecture and an internal talent marketplace

The third part is a skills-based architecture. Deloitte research shows that fixed job titles can hold companies back, and that focusing on skills makes firms more flexible and innovative (Griffiths, Cantrell and Jones, 2022). In a skills-based model, Helios would map the skills of every person, not just their job title. Work is then given out based on skills, not on rigid roles.

To make this real, Helios should build an internal talent marketplace. This is a digital platform where staff can see open projects and short assignments inside the company and join them (Bersin, 2020). For example, an engineer in Berlin could join a London data project for a few months. Real companies such as Schneider Electric and Unilever already use talent marketplaces to move people to where they add the most value, which raises retention. For Helios, this would let graduates try new work without leaving the company, which fixes the attrition problem, and it would spread skills across London, Berlin and Singapore.

How this design builds intrinsic motivation and innovation

Intrinsic motivation means doing work because it is enjoyable and meaningful, not only for pay. Ryan and Deci (2020) said that people need three things to feel intrinsically motivated: autonomy, competence and relatedness. My design gives all three. The Job Characteristics Model gives autonomy and a sense of competence through clear feedback. Job crafting gives more autonomy and lets people use their strengths, which builds competence. The talent marketplace builds relatedness by connecting people across teams and countries.

This design also supports innovation. When people have variety, freedom and the chance to work on new projects, they share more ideas and try new things. A well-known real example is Google, which for years let staff spend some work time on their own projects, and this led to new products. Helios could copy this idea in a small way through its talent marketplace. The skills-based model also lets Helios

quickly build the right team for a new problem, such as a new city contract. This makes Helios faster and more creative than rigid competitors. In short, better job design can turn a tired 54% workforce into an engaged and inventive one.

Task C: Reflective Report

Using AI as a decision-support tool without losing human judgement

As an advisor I would use Artificial Intelligence to support Human Resources decisions not to replace them. Artificial Intelligence is very good at handling amounts of data. It can spot patterns in engagement surveys predict who might leave and match people to projects on the talent marketplace. This saves time. Gives useful insight.

Artificial Intelligence also has risks. It can be biased if the data is biased and it cannot fully understand feelings or context.

So, I would follow a "human-in-the-loop" rule. The Artificial Intelligence gives the suggestion. A person makes the final choice. For example, if the Artificial Intelligence flags that a graduate might quit, I would not act on the number. I would talk to the graduate and their manager first.

Deloitte argues that the real value of Artificial Intelligence comes when machine speed is joined with the edge of judgement, creativity and care not when Artificial Intelligence is used on its own. I would also test the Artificial Intelligence for fairness and be open with staff, about how it's used so they trust it. This keeps ethics which matters a lot for Helios because Helios works with public data.

My personal capability development plan

To be a strong Human Capital Advisor in the future, I must keep learning. I have built a simple plan around four skills.

First is data literacy. I need to read and understand HR data with confidence. I will take an online course in people analytics and practise using dashboards. Being able to read data well will make my advice much stronger.

Second is AI augmentation in HR. I need to know how AI tools work and where they should, and should not, be used. I will follow trusted sources such as Deloitte and Josh Bersin, and try HR AI tools myself, so I can guide clients wisely and safely.

Third is strategic influencing skills. Good ideas fail if I cannot persuade a Board. I will improve my presenting and storytelling, ask for regular feedback, and learn to link HR ideas to clear business results, as Ulrich (2022) advises.

Fourth is global mobility awareness. Helios works in three countries, so I must understand different cultures and laws. I will read about global HR and learn how the rules differ in the UK, Germany and Singapore.

I will review this plan every three months. By building these four skills, I can give better advice and stay employable in a fast-changing world of work.

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