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Executive Summary

As today's businesses are forced to operate in a global economy characterized by the "rolling shock" nature of technological advancements, shifting demographics, political tensions, and the growing number of regulations surrounding artificial intelligence, Human Resources Management (HRM) must go beyond being merely a supporting role. As such, HRM needs to create the operational environment in which employees are able to rapidly adapt and continually innovate. This study has identified that there are three ways in which HR contributes to the ability of an organization to be agile: (1) Redesigning work with technology to enable adaptive collaboration and blended talent models; (2) Monitoring and adapting to changes in macro-demographic and geopolitical areas through workforce planning based upon scenarios; (3) Closing existing skill gaps in a timely manner by utilizing a build-buy-borrow-bind portfolio. The studies referenced in this report have included examples from various industries including hospitality, healthcare, and technology, i.e., Netflix and Spotify, (the transition to Team Topologies in large scale software applications), dynamic scheduling in hotels, and telemedicine. In addition, the Reflection section will outline a personal and time-sensitive development strategy for creating an agile, innovation-focused professional career in international organizations.

1. Introduction

With disruption now the default, competitive advantage depends on how quickly firms sense change, reconfigure teams and redeploy skills. Thus, the role of HRM moves from policy administrator to the architect of agility, designing culture, organizational structure, and talent systems that reduce the time period between gaining insight and realizing value. While companies in the technology industry provide an obvious template for how to create an agile, innovation- focused organization (e.g., Netflix's open culture, and the focus on products within teams), the same concepts and principles are beginning to emerge in hospitality (on demand staffing) and healthcare (telemedicine). This report demonstrates how HR can begin to institutionalize agile innovation across multiple industries by leveraging technology, anticipating the impact of macro forces, and facilitating rapid, equitable, skills-based employee mobility.

2.0 Main Body

2.1 Technology as a Catalyst for Workforce Agility

Modern collaboration tools (e.g. Slack, Jira and cloud repositories) serve more than simply as a way to digitally replicate previous ways of working together. Modern collaboration tools help create a new environment that enables fast iteration with small, self-contained teams working toward well-defined objectives. Prior to the popularity of “squads/tribes/chapters,” Spotify's “squad/tribe/chapter” model demonstrated the potential for product-aligned teams (Spotify, 2012). However, many have since criticized the Spotify model as being an inappropriate model for all companies to follow (Lee, 2020). Today, many organizations blend the benefits of autonomy with the clarity of interaction patterns as described by Skelton and Pais in their book “Team Topologies” (stream-aligned, platform, enabling and complicated-subsystem teams) to improve cognitive load and speed up flow (Skelton and Pais, 2019; Fowler, 2023). The HR function has a design role to connect team topologies to value streams and establish explicit collaboration agreements and to ensure that leadership and compensation systems reward fast feedback rather than traditional functional silos (Rigby, Sutherland and Takeuchi, 2016).

HR must also assist in creating a culture that accepts experimentation. In its updated Culture Memo, Netflix emphasizes people over process, talent density and candor as the conditions necessary to achieve speed (Netflix, 2024). Hastings and Meyer (2020) define how several practices, including radical transparency (“context, not control”), “keeper tests,” which provide continuous feedback for high accountability with low bureaucracy, can be implemented by HR in the form of processes: hiring that increases performance and behaviors associated with collaboration; performance management based on frequent, developmental feedback; and policies that provide a few guard rails and allow decision-making at speeds greater than those provided through approval processes.

Hospitality integration. Large hotel chains are using technology like digital workforce systems from UKG to project and generate the flexible roster that allows managers to move hours around quickly and allow employees to trade their time through mobile applications (UKG, 2024; UKHospitality, 2025). The role of HR is to create fair standards for scheduling, protect predictable income when it is needed and develop skills paths so that employees' ability to be flexible will not mean they will lose stability. Hilton's employer-brand work—emphasising development, mobility and inclusion—shows how a strong employee value proposition can support both agility and retention (Hilton, 2024).

Healthcare integration. The introduction of telemedicine and "virtual wards" will necessitate new job designs and staffing models that flex with patient demand across sites. NHS England provides guidance on virtual wards and agency-use rules that demonstrate how policy and operational models are evolving and include provisions for workforce considerations (NHS England, 2025). HR will need to prepare clinicians for hybrid forms of care and ensure that staffing levels and digital ergonomics are sufficient to mitigate the effects of burnout.

Governance for responsible AI. Workforce Governance for Responsible AI. As AI becomes a part of hiring, scheduling and workforce analytics, HR has to provide for the proper and responsible use of these tools. The European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act treats many of the AI-based employment systems as "high-risk" and thus requires employers to have risk management plans, data governance processes, transparent communications about how they are using AI and to have people involved in reviewing the output of the AI-based systems (Clifford Chance, 2024). Colorado's AI Act (SB 24-205) also regulates the use of "consequential" AI in employment and indicates a path for compliance that employers need to begin planning for now (Mercer, 2024). Practically, this means impact assessments, vendor controls, bias testing and clear worker communication whenever AI touches employment decisions, aligned with broader AI risk frameworks (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023).

The same digital levers that speed iteration can also amplify exposure to macro shocks. Agile HR therefore pairs tech-enabled teaming with scenario-based workforce planning.

2.2 Navigating Macro-Environmental Shifts with an Agile HR Mindset

2.2.1 Demographics.

The UN's 2024 World Population Prospects highlights population ageing in many economies and divergent fertility and migration paths—trends that reshape participation and skills supply (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2024).

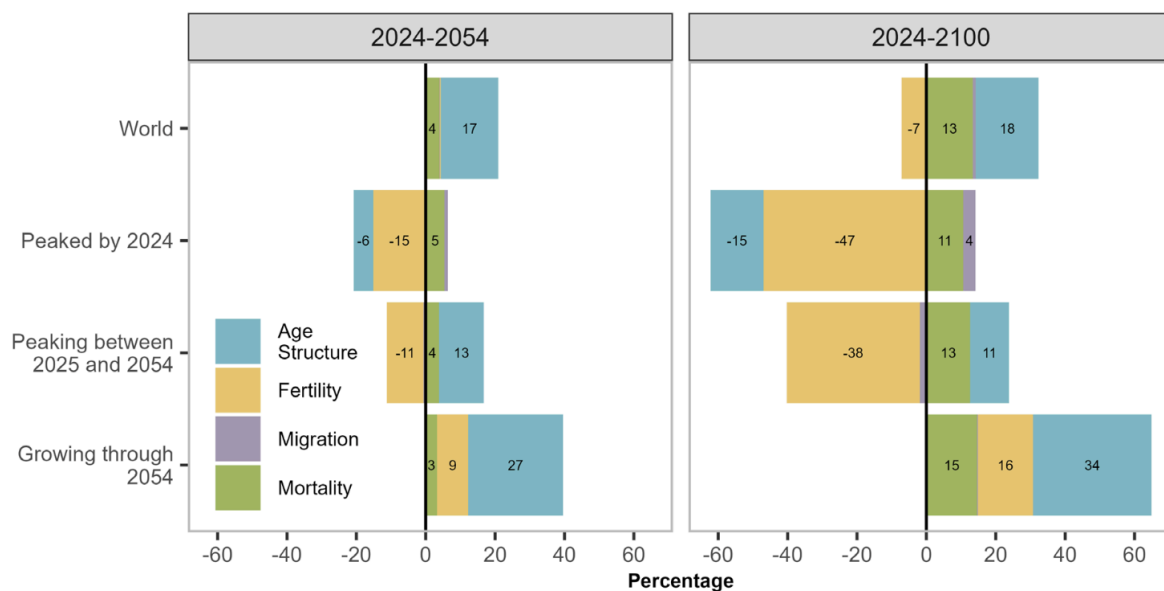


Image 1: Relative contributions of the components of population change to future population size (Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2024)

Agile Human Resources will need to consider phased retirements, cross training and the acceleration of knowledge transfer in order to ensure that experience does not leave the organisation. Healthcare workforces are being placed under strain due to an ageing workforce and increased patient numbers requiring proactive workforce strategies – ‘bank’ staffing models, return-to-practice schemes and flexible part-time employment opportunities – require HR departments to develop adaptable pipeline options whilst maintaining safe working environments and quality standards (NHS England, 2025).

Hospitality has had many of its roles classified as difficult to fill and historically relied on migrant workers. The UKHospitality's workforce campaign outlines the continued difficulties experienced by employers in terms of vacant positions and recruiting employees which may be related to tightened migration regulations since Brexit (UKHospitality, 2025). Agile HR must plan for multiple policy scenarios and build redeployment and cross-training options—including local outreach and training academies—to cushion sudden changes.

Technology – Diversity & Inclusion as Innovation Levers. Teams which allow for rapid surfacing of diverse perspectives — such as stream-based teams supported by enabling teams — represent performance advantages and not simply "nice to haves" (Fowler, 2023; Skelton and Pais, 2019). HR can support this with inclusive hiring slate lists, sponsorship programs and psychological-safety practices that increase idea flow. According to Edmondson (1999) the level of team psychological safety is a strong predictor of learning behavior, a key component of the dynamics of agile innovation.

2.2.2 Geopolitics.

Semiconductor tensions and industrial policy are changing where work takes place. The CHIPS for America program is stimulating investment in new U.S. semiconductor facilities and although firms such as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) have experienced challenges with finding skilled-labor and integrating culturally when building fabs in Arizona (CHIPS for America, 2023; Reuters, 2024). At the same time, device manufacturers such as Apple are increasing their manufacturing presence in India, which will shift demand from engineers and operational personnel to new locations (Reuters, 2024). Human Resource departments will need to anticipate the movement of work between geographic regions by developing multi-hub talent pools and creating "follow-the-sun" teaming arrangements which limit dependence upon individual locations.

2.2.3 Agile planning discipline.

Instead of using static five-year plans for Human Resource, it would be better to use quarterly "people sprints" in order to regularly update demand and supply estimates and position talent movements. Data inputs could include United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2024) demographic projections, migration and labor market indicator data (OECD, 2024; UKHospitality, 2025), and internal data concerning employee turnover and required skills. This frequency will connect the team agility discussed in 2.1 to macro uncertainty: the same mechanisms used to expedite software delivery can also expedite workforce adaptation.

Scenario planning almost always reveals the bottleneck—skills. Closing it requires a portfolio approach tuned to sector velocity.

2.3 An Agile Approach to Closing the Skills Gap

A classroom-only approach to upskilling is far too slow to meet today's skills half-life. Therefore, HR needs to establish a Build–Buy–Borrow–Bind portfolio of learning that rapidly converts learning into work, and uses evidence to continuously rebalance over time (Rigby, Sutherland and Takeuchi, 2016).

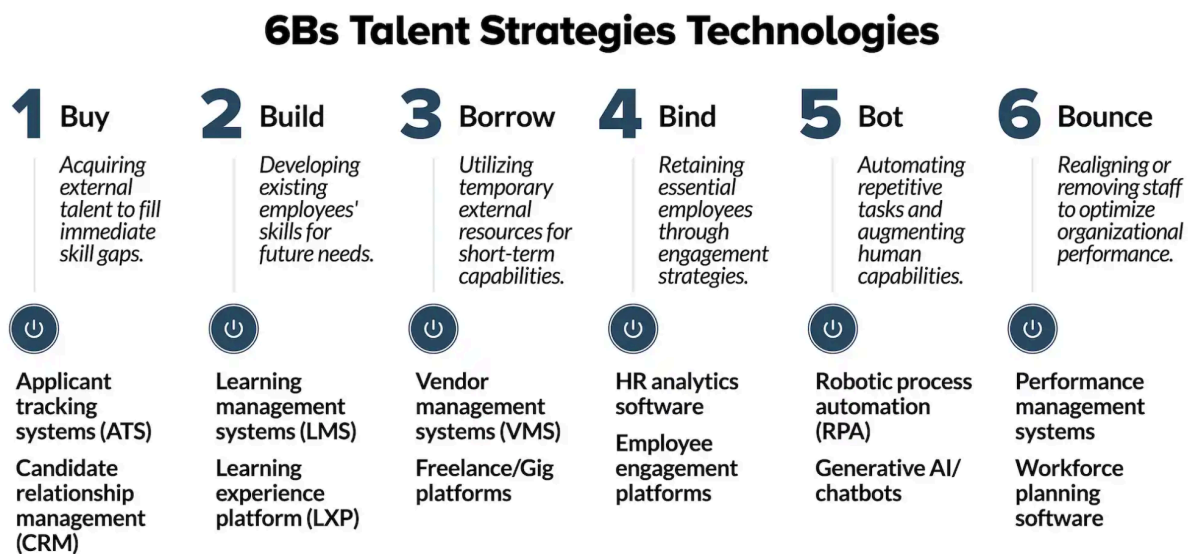


Image 2: 6B Framework (Source: wowledge.com)

2.3.1 Build (technology).

Major companies have their own in-house academies and apprenticeship programs to develop adjacent talent into roles in the areas of software development and/or data analysis, for example, provides internal pathways into software engineering for non-traditional candidates, combining structured training with placement on product teams (Amazon, 2025). The HR function will design the process for selecting candidates based upon their potential, place coaches within the program to ensure successful transition and will also ensure that all new hires will be placed on actual teams right away — thereby shortening the time it takes to produce results while

expanding the pool of qualified candidates beyond the top tier of applicants (Gartner, 2024).

2.3.2 Buy (hospitality).

When demand spikes are immediate, an employer's brand will become the key competitive advantage. As illustrated by the Hilton Corporation's global "best workplace" lists and its "Stories From Hilton" case studies, maintaining a constant employee value proposition (including development, mobility, and inclusion) creates the ability to provide superior customer service and support recruitment efforts (Hilton, 2024). HR's rapid response playbook includes using data driven compensation and benefit positioning by market, providing visible career paths for employees to advance from entry level to supervisory/managerial levels, along with partnering with other organizations to provide a pipeline of pre-qualified candidates during peak periods (UKHospitality, 2025).

2.3.4 Borrow (healthcare).

Health organizations use staffing banks and, if needed, temporary agency workers to adjust capacity. NHS England guidance encourages reducing agency reliance by professionalising internal banks, with evidence of cost savings and better continuity of care where banks are well run (NHS England, 2025). A key role of HR is to attract flexible pool members by creating fair and equitable credentialing processes, establishing a fair pay band, and providing predictable scheduling for flexible pool members, and to integrate the flexible pool members with the permanent team so that the opportunity to work flexibly does not negatively impact either job satisfaction or patient safety.

2.3.3 Bind (all sectors).

Retaining employees is the compounding factor that drives agility: the quicker employees can progress through internal career paths, the greater the long-term payoff from each unit of learning. Internal talent marketplaces, supported by skills graphs, help match people to gigs, projects and roles—turning learning into movement and reducing external hiring dependency. Gartner identifies internal talent marketplaces as a growing

and evolving category that enables large-scale mobility and experiential learning (Gartner, 2024). HR should pilot internal talent marketplaces with established governance structures and evaluate the marketplace's effectiveness by measuring the speed to find matches, the diversity of opportunities and the success of assigned projects.

2.3.4 Synthesis.

The relative velocity of each sector determines the mix of Build, Buy, Borrow and Bind: Technology emphasizes Build and Bind; Hospitality relies heavily on Buy and Bind; Healthcare must borrow and build to safely respond to unpredictable fluctuations in hospital acuity (NHS England, 2025; UKHospitality, 2025). HR's meta-task is to instrument the portfolio and run regular reviews that reallocate investment as signals change (Rigby, Sutherland and Takeuchi, 2016; Gartner, 2024).

2.4 Reflective Report: Cultivating a Personal Mindset of Agility and Innovation

2.4.1 Context

I am in the process of developing my international business MBA with focus on the start-up and scale-up environment. I now see Human Resource (HR) as a function providing products to customers (teams), which have to find and provide fast value. I intend to develop a people system, which will help to minimize the time (cycle) from an idea to results; while also ensuring fairness and well-being to all parties involved.

2.4.2 Evidence of strengths.

Adaptive collaboration. During a project with my team, we changed direction when new customer interviews forced us to question our hypothesis. We broke down work into week-long sprints, and utilized an array of asynchronous tools (e.g., shared documents, comments, brief daily updates). We concluded each sprint with a

retrospective review to eliminate two "vanity" metrics. The result was successful delivery on time, and clear, measurable KPI's (Rigby, Sutherland and Takeuchi, 2016).

Analytical learning. I created a lightweight "skills graph" for the various capstone roles within my cohort, to test our internal mobility logic, then tested this concept through a mini "marketplace" using micro-project postings and peer-to-peer "matching" based on their demonstrated skills. The pilot resulted in higher levels of engagement, and provided visibility to many of the hidden skills/abilities of my cohort members, supporting the benefits of an internal talent marketplace (Gartner, 2024).

Cultural fluency. Due to our working across time zones, I began rotating the facilitator duties among my colleagues for weekly demo presentations. A simple design decision allowed me to improve the contribution balance among my teammates, and ultimately helped surface a potential path forward that we may have otherwise overlooked. Upon reflecting upon Edmondson's (1999) research regarding psychological safety, I recognized the influence that facilitation norms and leader behavior have on creating an environment where open innovation can occur.

2.4.3 Growth areas.

Coaching at speed: I can default to "ship fast", under-investing in coaching conversations that unblock others and help them learn from experiments.

Systems storytelling: my analyses can be dense; I need sharper narratives and visuals to secure buy-in from non-technical stakeholders.

2.4.4 Development plan (time-bound).

Timeline	Key Actions
By end-Q2	Complete an agile or product-ownership certification and apply backlog, sprint, and retrospective practices to one student venture.
By end-Q3	Run a four-week experiment with a personal “learning sprint” cadence—weekly objective, demo, and retrospective—using a visible dashboard.
By end-Q4	Design and evaluate a mini internal talent marketplace for a student society; measure match speed and participation.
Ongoing	Practise “coaching micro-habits”—weekly 20-minute one-to-ones with two peers focused on clarifying blockers and next experiments.

Ethics and governance. I will treat AI tools as accelerators, not oracles: disclosing their use, maintaining human oversight and aligning with emerging employment-AI rules to ensure transparency and fairness if I pilot AI-assisted matching (Clifford Chance, 2024; Mercer, 2024; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023).

3. Conclusion

The HR function needs to re-write the ways of working in the organization as agile innovation which would make it common for small teams, quick turnaround times for feedback, clear interface's between functions and responsible technological practices to exist. Hospitality and Healthcare are examples of how the mechanics of team topology, product cadence, and cultural candor from technology companies can be applied across industries with similar results. When HR provides the structure and career paths, flexible scheduling and staffing pools can provide the same level of performance as well as ethics in their application. In addition to applying these models of flexibility in staffing, HR also needs to provide the resources and protections necessary for hybrid clinical roles to scale in virtual care. A data driven build-buy-borrow-bind portfolio and internal marketplace will replace the current skills bottleneck when employees convert learning into movement. Governance is the underlying theme for HR to create an environment of both speed and trust, including compliance and inclusion, along with creating a psychologically safe work environment. With the correct implementation, HR can serve as the engine room of adaptability in organizations by providing the ability to detect change sooner, mobilize talent quicker, and translating ideas into action quicker than before.

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Appendix

Reflective Self-Assessment of Capabilities for an International Context

Capability Area	Evidenced Strength	Identified Area for Growth
Technology	Analytical Learning: Proactively built a lightweight skills graph and piloted a mini talent marketplace for the cohort.	Ethics & Governance: Ensuring responsible AI use; treating tools as "accelerators, not oracles.
Communication	Cultural Fluency: Rotated facilitation in a cross-time-zone team to improve contribution balance and psychological safety.	Systems Storytelling: Needing to develop sharper narratives and visuals for non-technical stakeholders.
Teamwork	Adaptive Collaboration: Successfully used agile practices (sprints, retrospectives) to manage scope changes in a cross-border project.	Implicit: Balancing team task-completion with individual development.
Leadership	Facilitation: Design choices (e.g., rotating facilitators) led to better team outcomes and idea generation.	Coaching at Speed: Defaulting to "ship fast" over investing in coaching conversations to unblock others.
Self-Directed Learning	Proactive Application: Applied course concepts (agile, marketplaces) to active learning projects (capstone, student ventures).	Formalising Cadence: Moving from ad-hoc learning to a structured, time-bound personal "learning sprint" cadence.