
Opinion: Five insights into the HR department of the future

[James Brook](#) 3 Feb 2017

[0](#) comments

As technological and societal changes continue to shape the world around us, it's inevitable HR and talent management will evolve too, says James Brook

The pace of change in technology, economics, politics and society is continuing to accelerate at breakneck speed. You don't need me to tell you that in the past year we have seen some seismic and unexpected changes, including the result of the Brexit referendum and the shock election of Donald Trump as US president, both of which will have major implications for HR and talent management. So what will the HR department of the future look like and what other trends will shape it?

More HR tasks will be outsourced

HR outsourcing is likely to continue to increase, with specialist as well as tactical and operational aspects of the HR lifecycle being undertaken by local or offshore HR service providers. New technologies and the rapid rise of niche HR outsourcing service companies will only make these options more cost-effective and attractive.

HR generalists will need to adapt to survive

Organisations are likely to continue to rationalise the number of HR business partners – especially those at lower levels – because of technological advances and self-service options now available to both managers and employees.

To ensure they thrive, generalists will need to ensure they have stronger commercial skills and are more strategic and technologically adept, because they will need to support programmes involving major organisational change and reorganisation, leadership development, digitisation and efficiency and cost-cutting drives.

Decisions will need to be backed by data

We can expect that HR and line managers will have access to software that helps source, test, hire and develop talent. Organisations such as IBM and Facebook are already starting to introduce artificial intelligence into their screening processes to minimise the subjectivity of decision-making, while others are using social media data from platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to profile candidates.

Some employers are also introducing virtual reality screening and development, which enable them to see how candidates respond under pressure to challenging situations – just as pilots undergo training in simulators to learn how to handle challenging flying conditions.

And that's not all. Computers are expected to achieve the speed and capacity of human brains during the next two decades, so we can expect artificial intelligence to play a much greater role in HR decision-making as a result of its superior ability to gather, analyse and disseminate data.

The end of job analysis as we know it

A narrow and rigid approach to job analysis and writing job descriptions is not fit for purpose in a fast-changing, uncertain and complex business environment. Many organisations are noticing that roles are changing so quickly that job descriptions are often out of date within weeks or months of the person starting work.

Employers such as like Facebook and McKinsey are looking for alternatives, and many are already piloting 'job crafting' approaches. This involves focusing on hiring employees with the right strengths, skills and values that align with the organisation's purpose, and then deploying them across multiple projects and assignments where their talents can be used best.

HR will need to retool for the 21st century

Technological, political and social trends – such as the rapid rise of mobile technologies, Brexit and the increase in part-time, flexible and virtual working – mean that HR needs to retool to remain relevant and credible.

Many tools and techniques that HR uses – including many standardised ability tests, traditional competency modelling and inflexible workplace practices – are outdated and no longer fit for purpose. These should be replaced by up-to-date, relevant approaches that take account of the changing workplace and the needs of a fast-paced, socially connected and digitally switched-on 21st-century organisation.

HR leaders and professionals need to act more like start-up tech entrepreneurs, and learn to spot new opportunities, bring innovative products and solutions to their clients, pivot to changing situations and 'fail fast' when the solution doesn't produce measurable returns. By taking these steps they will ensure they remain relevant and at the centre of the ongoing development, adaptation and success of their organisations.

James Brook is joint founder and MD of Strengths Partnership

Tweet

Like

Share

G+1

171

Add Comment

Comment List

Related Content

[Half of current occupations won't exist by 2025, finds report](#)

over 2 years ago

0

[Making global recruitment a reality](#)

over 2 years ago

0

[Recruitment: Wider appeal](#)

over 5 years ago

0