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## Top five HR skills for the future



Erika Lucas  January 31, 2018

HR people are usually so busy focusing on helping everyone else plan their careers, that they pay scant attention to managing their own. But in an increasingly automated and digitised world, HR careers as we know them are likely to change significantly in the future.

At a recent CIPD careers event, Head of Strategy Development Ruth Stuart pointed out that in a fast-moving and unpredictable working environment, it's impossible to predict accurately what HR roles will look like going forward.

Practitioners don't, however, need to worry too much about the much talked about advance of the robots. Artificial Intelligence will undoubtedly make a big difference to the way tasks and processes are managed, but the future of HR will still be 'human'.

Stuart suggested that career success in the future will depend on HR practitioners being principles-led, evidence-based and outcomes driven – and she highlighted the five key skills that will stand HR people in good stead for the future.



## Situational judgement

HR has to deal with many often tricky situations, ranging from claims of sexual harassment or bullying in the workplace to conflict between warring colleagues or sensitive employee health issues. There are often no easy answers. Remaining calm and clear headed and making the right decision for the situation at hand is a key skill.

## Commercial awareness

This is a competence that HR is often accused (usually unfairly) of lacking. The most successful practitioners will have a clear understanding of their organisation's business model and the risks and reputational challenges it faces. They will also have an in-depth knowledge of the way the business creates value and will be able to connect effectively with stakeholders both within and outside the organisation.

## Critical thinking

A World Economic Forum report has dubbed critical thinking as one of the most important skills for the future world of work. HR needs to develop the ability and the courage to question and challenge where necessary decisions that are being made within the business. It's about having the skills to objectively analyse and evaluate proposed strategies and to come up with new insights by making connections between seemingly disparate ideas.

## Digital literacy

This is one area where HR professionals are not alone in acknowledging they need to raise their game. It's not just about embracing the new generation of [Cloud HR software](#) that is now available to automate key processes and reduce admin. HR also needs to learn how to exploit data to support better decision making within the business on everything from recruitment and workforce planning to e-learning and employee engagement.

## Managing ethical dilemmas

You only have to look at the headlines to see how difficult organisations are finding it to manage ethical dilemmas. In the last year alone we have seen everything from environmental, whistleblowing and money laundering scandals – while only last week a whole raft of charities were having to reconsider their position about accepting

donations that were raised at an event where inappropriate behaviour was reportedly rife. HR needs to develop the skills to create cultures where inappropriate behaviour of all kinds is called out and employees are able to speak 'truth to power' without fear of negative consequences.

The good news is that prospects for HR roles are looking healthy. A recent Glassdoor report ranks the role of HR Manager among the top ten most desirable roles in the UK, with a high job satisfaction rating.

But HR practitioners cannot afford to stand still if they want to remain current and marketable to employers. Top career development tips shared during the session included focusing on your transferable skills, getting experience of different disciplines, even if it's just via a short term project, and finding alternative ways to gain knowledge and raise your game, through volunteering for example.

Above all, be open to opportunities – and say yes. To quote management guru Peter Drucker, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

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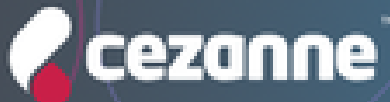
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*- Natalie Brotherton, HR Manager*

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