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HR skills for now and the future

by John Crowley

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Deloitte University Press says that [HR's role is expanding beyond its traditional focus](#). And I agree. But what is HR's 'traditional' focus? And what HR skills will businesses need to develop in order to build a thriving workforce, both now and in the future?

Today, I'm looking at:

- Which traditional HR skills are becoming less relevant
- Why the role of HR is changing
- The new skills HR needs to thrive, both now and in the future

If you think I'm missing the point with any of this, don't be afraid to leave an opinion in the comments section at the end!

What is HR's traditional focus?

Deloitte University Press identifies some of the traditional HR skills that are starting to shift, as talent management and HR transactions. My own experience talking to HR professionals has taught me that many of the more transactional, admin-heavy HR skills are indeed being replaced by technology. But are we at a point where these skills are completely moot yet? I don't think so.

Job site Monster still includes "good administrative skills" in its description of [what employers want from HR](#). However, it does place much greater focus on social and strategic skills, such as:

- Commercial awareness
- Diplomacy
- Relationship building

This serves as a fantastic example of how HR has already been through a major shift over the decades. You see, back in the 1920's, HR was more concerned with the technical elements of hiring and firing. Today, [HR is more](#)

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What factors will influence the future

HR skills will change in many ways in the future. For example, you might not consider yourself much of a property expert – but Marie Puybaraud, global head of research at JLL Corporate Solutions, predicts that [HR and real estate will soon merge](#), as HR looks to use workplace design as a tool for company culture and employee engagement.

In order to predict the HR skills most likely to be relevant in the future, we need to look at what is changing in the world around us. And the most obvious answer is technology.

Robots are automating so many aspects of our work and our lives, and this extends to HR. For example, during a recent conversation I had with Kazim Ladimeji for an upcoming podcast, I learned how [Matilda the Hiring Robot](#) is being employed to execute a 25-minute interview, during which time she can read emotions and play relaxing music.

I don't believe that technology will ultimately 'steal our jobs'. But I do believe that [technology will change the jobs we do](#), and I don't think HR will escape lightly. Here are three skills HR professionals are going to need to work on, both now and for the future.

1. HR needs to get better at data collection and analysis

According to Ken Fee, head of Organisational Development and HR for [Sense Scotland](#), HR really needs to start getting good at collecting relevant employee data, and doing something with it.

"The number of badly designed surveys I see drives me mad" [he says](#). "Poorly-written questions, double negatives, inconsistent scales."

[Mastering the art of HR data collection and analysis](#) can help you:

- Deliver better employee training
- Hire more suitable applicants
- Retain more employees
- Gain better management insights

Fee explains that people metrics have always been critical, but it's only recently that HR has begun to understand their role and take ownership within the organisation.

2. HR must become more tech-savvy and learn to wrangle new software

As more technology becomes available to take care of the transactional elements of HR, don't be surprised if you start bumping into HR software more and more often. And if you've not already embraced it, then you need to become more tech-savvy yourself – or risk getting left behind.

Luckily, learning new tech isn't quite the daunting task it used to be – modern HR systems are designed to be user friendly, and for a non-technical audience.

In most established organisations, HR software – such as a human resources information system – is part and parcel of the company's toolkit. It is very much 'the norm'. Some smaller or newer companies, however, are still getting by with traditional HR administration techniques, such as spreadsheets and paper files.

3. HR should find new ways to build strong teams across long distances



dynamic when managed on a digital landscape.

You're no longer managing teams that work together in the same room or building. Increasingly, HR is recruiting and managing teams that are collaborating online, and working from all sorts of weird and wonderful remote locations. There are even many useful tools, such as a [retrospective template for remote teams](#), to collaborate effectively.

How to Engage Remote Workers



Include Them

An invite to an office party even if they can't attend



Keep in Contact

A quick call to say 'How are you?'



Send Rewards

A thank you card for their hard work this week



People

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www.peoplehr.com

Helping remote workers collaborate using technology

I recently interviewed business psychologist Simon Kilpatrick about technology mediated work. [You can read the full article here](#), but there are some key challenges you should learn to manage:

- **People pay less attention during interactions.** It's easy to phase out during a Skype meeting, especially if you have video switched off.

- **There is less concern about how work will be evaluated.** Something about not being ‘in the room’ with the person evaluating another person’s work can sometimes make it feel less important.

Digital collaboration can be a blessing and a curse, of course. Obviously, you have the benefit of being able to work together with anybody, anywhere – and any collaboration is better than no collaboration, right? But beyond this, Simon is quick to point out that sometimes, a lack of social cues can actually improve the quality of our communications. Especially when it comes to two people working together who may normally suffer big personality clashes.

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JarethSmith

— Where I work has one of these, but it's just for show mainly. They like to pretend they care for their workforce, yet when my colleague went to try and

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Evelyn Trow

— Amazing article. Nice content to share.

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Daisy Samara

— You've raised a very interesting topic for discussion.

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Leon Simon

— You have a great experience. It's good that you are sharing it with others. I appreciate that.

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