

Name: Holly Jacqueline Burr

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Lecturer: Toyin Adisa

Contents

Executive summary

1. Introduction
2. Business transformation
3. Digital technology trends
4. Flexible working arrangements
5. HRM practices/organisational development
6. HRM practices/digital HRM
7. HRM practices/WLB
8. Recommendations
9. Conclusion
10. List of references

HR Report: Managing Grievance's through business transformation, digital trends and flexible working

Executive summery

GHD hair London is undergoing significant business transformation through structural change, digital technology adoption and flexible working arrangements. While these developments aim to improve efficiency and competitiveness, they have resulted in increasing employee grievances caused by unclear role expectations, fear surrounding new digital systems, and unequal access to flexibility. This report analyses the challenges created by these three factors and evaluates contemporary HRM practices that can mitigate them. It proposes organisational development approaches that enhance employee voice, digital HRM strategies such as continuous learning and clear governance policies, and structured work-life balance policies to ensure fairness. Recommendations emphasise immediate managerial action, accountability and transparent communication. If implemented effectively, these practices can reduce grievances, rebuild trust, and support successful transformation at GHD Hair.

1. Introduction

GHD hair London is implementing a transformation strategy to remain competitive within a dynamic beauty and hair-care industry. The business is restructuring its operations, adopting new digital technologies, and expanding flexible working options to attract and retain talent. While strategically beneficial, these changes have created anxiety, confusion and perceived unfairness among staff, leading to a notable increase in grievances. Employees report uncertainty over responsibilities, stress linked to digital monitoring, and inequality of access to flexible working. Research shows that rapid organisational change without adequate support negatively impacts morale and increases resistance (Kotter, 1996; Anderson and Wilson, 2009). This report critically examines the key organisational development, digital HRM, and work-life balance practices.

The introduction of technological change and flexible working is particularly complex in established organisations with strong brand identity and long-standing operational procedures like GHD. Employees accustomed to traditional communication patterns and hierarchical decision-making may experience anxiety when new systems are introduced without adequate explanation or training. Consequently, organisational transformation must be seen not just as technological shift, but as a cultural shift that requires coaching, employee support, and clear leadership. For HR, the challenge is to balance operational demands with employee well-being so that innovation strengthens, rather than destabilises, the working environment.

2. Business Transformation

Business transformation refers to significant redesign of organisational structures, job roles and processes to improve competitiveness and value creation (Anderson and Wilson, 2009). At GHD hair, transformation includes restructuring job roles, integrating customer-facing and administrative teams, and emphasising innovative digital product strategies. However, employees have reported confusion as job expectations have shifted without clear communication or involvement in decisions.

Kotter (1996) argues that organisational change fails when leadership does not communicate a shared vision, involve employees or provide short-term wins that build confidence. At GHD, the absence of clear explanations for structural changes has left employees feeling undervalued and insecure. Consequently, transformation is perceived as imposed rather than collaborative.

Additionally, insufficient attention to organisational culture intensifies grievances. employees resist change when they are not consulted, believe they are losing autonomy, or do not understand how their role fits into future company aims (Anderson and Wilson, 2009). Without accessible employee voice mechanisms, concerns are escalated formally instead of resolved informally.

Therefore, grievances at GHD reflect not just operational shifts, but a lack of participatory change. Effective transformation must therefore be accompanied by structured communication, employee involvement, leadership support and transparent guidance on role expectations.

Moreover, business transformation often requires employees to develop new competencies rapidly, leaving some staff feeling unprepared or undervalued. The pace of change can create imbalance between job demands and personal capability when training is not adequately delivered. Additionally, transformation may alter team dynamics, redefining job roles and blurring lines of responsibility. Without clear guidance, employees may feel insecure about their positions or fear being replaced by more technologically proficient colleagues. This highlights the need for HR to introduce learning and development pathways that build confidence and ensure fairness during the transition process.

3. digital technology trends

GHD Hair is investing in digital technology including AI-driven customer insights, automated stock management systems and employee performance dashboards. These tools offer competitive advantages and support better decision-making (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). However digital change has negatively impacted employees who feel insufficiently trained and threatened by increased monitoring.

Digital systems have altered workflows, created new expectations and introduced data-driven performance evaluations that some staff perceive as punitive. Moore et al. (2010) emphasise that continual. Individualised training is required to build confidence with digital tools. At GHD, training has been sporadic and generic, leaving employees feeling unprepared.

Furthermore, fears surrounding job security and digital surveillance have surfaced due to unclear governance around performance dashboards. Employees do not know how data will

be used or who can access it, amplifying suspicion. Edwards (2020) notes that unclear monitoring policies damage trust and increase resistance.

The digital transition at GHD would therefore benefit from transparency, continual learning and support-driven monitoring rather than surveillance-driven evaluation.

Beyond operational benefits, digital tools can transform internal culture by enhancing collaboration when employees are trained effectively. Yet when digital systems are introduced without explanation, employees may experience confusion, performance stress, or misinterpret productivity monitoring as punitive surveillance. This creates a sense of being “watched” which can damage psychological safety. HR must therefore promote transparency by communicating clearly what digital systems are used for, what data they collect, and how they support employee development rather than control. A culture of shared ownership over technology can empower employees to engage positively with digital tools.

4. Flexible working arrangements

GHD is offering hybrid working to administrative teams and variable shifts to some customer-facing staff. However, access to flexible working appears inconsistent and dependent on managerial discretion. Employees who cannot work flexibly feel disadvantaged, resulting in perceptions of unfairness.

Brown, Smith and Green (2018) emphasise that flexible working increases grievances when it is applied inconsistently. At GHD, frontline employees perceive inequalities and bias, as hybrid opportunities are more available to office-based staff.

Additionally, flexible working raises practical concerns about scheduling, teamwork and customer continuity. Managers often respond with ad-hoc decisions, reinforcing inconsistency. Pears and Shields (2023) argue that flexible working requires transparent policy, criteria for eligibility and systematic decision-making.

Without standardised guidelines, flexible working can reduce rather than increase motivation and fairness, a structured and equitable approach is therefore essential.

Flexible working can also expose disparities between job roles that can or cannot be performed outside the office. Employees who must remain onsite may develop resentment if they perceive hybrid workers as having greater freedom. This can fracture internal cohesion and heighten perceptions of unfairness. Additionally, remote workers may face feelings of isolation or reduced opportunities for advancement due to less visibility. HR must ensure that flexible working policies maintain equality and inclusion, with performance measured by output, not physical presence, and opportunities for development accessible to every employee.

5. HRM practices and organisational development

To address grievances created by business transformation, HR should lead organisation development interventions focusing on communication, involvement and leadership.

Using Kotter's change model, HR can structure transformation through eight strategic steps including establishing urgency, involving a guiding coalition and reinforcing change (Kotter, 1996). By involving employees in shaping change, GHD reduces uncertainty and increases buy-in.

HR should also introduce formal employee voice mechanisms such as focus groups, consultation committees and anonymous digital feedback platforms. Edwards (2020) notes that voice channels increase trust and prevent grievances from escalating.

Leadership training is equally as essential. Managers must be equipped with communication, emotional intelligence and conflict-resolution skills to support employees through uncertainty (Anderson and Wilson, 2009). Without strong leadership, even strategically sound changes become destabilising.

Effective OD strategies must also address emotional responses to change. Employees may experience fear, frustration, or confusion, requiring empathetic leadership that validates their concerns. Establishing support networks, such as peer monitoring or change champions, can normalise learning and make transformation feel collaborative instead of imposed. These initiatives also develop future leaders by building change management skills within the workforce. Ultimately, OD is not only about improving systems but about cultivating resilience, adaptability, and trust during periods of disruption.

6. HRM practices and digital HRM

To minimise digital anxiety, GHD should adopt structured digital HRM strategies. Firstly, a learning management system (LMS) should deliver continuous digital training tailored to job roles. Moore et al. (2010) highlight that one-off training fails; effective upskilling requires ongoing development.

Secondly, peer monitoring should support digital learning. Experienced users can help colleagues navigate systems, creating confidence and reducing exclusion (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

Thirdly, HR must publish transparent data governance policies explaining how performance monitoring works, how data is used and how evaluations are made. Edwards (2020) argues that transparency reduces fear and builds trust.

Digital HRM should therefore empower rather than monitor, and support rather than punish.

Digital HRM must also recognise diverse learning needs. Some employees learn best through videos, others through written guides or one-to-one coaching. Offering multiple training methods demonstrates organisational respect for different learning styles and helps build equity in digital competence. Furthermore, HR must clearly separate performance management systems from personal communication tools to prevent the perception that employees are being monitored unfairly. By positioning technology as a resourceful empowerment, not surveillance, GHD can develop a culture of digital confidence and innovation

7. HRM practices and work-life balance

To reduce conflict related to flexible working, HR should implement a structured, fair and transparent policy. Eligibility should be based on job design and measurable outcomes rather than managerial preference (Brown, Smith and Green, 2018).

GHD should also pilot a Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE), where employees are assessed on output rather than hours worked, particularly for non-customer roles (CIPD, 2023). This enhances autonomy and increases motivation.

Furthermore, HR should provide wellbeing support such as support such as stress-management guidance, mental health resources and regular check-ins to support employees coping with change.

All flexible-working decisions should be documented to ensure accountability and reduce bias.

WLB strategies must go beyond policies written on paper and become embedded behaviours in the organisation. Managers must be trained to recognise signs of stress, disengagement, or burnout, especially among remote workers. Explicit guidelines on working hours and email contact outside of office times can help restore personal boundaries. When employees witness leaders practising healthy WLB behaviours themselves, they feel permission to balance work demands without guilt. Over time, a strong WLB culture can reduce conflict, improve retention, and enhance organisational reputation.

8. Recommendations

- Implement Kotter's structured change management model with employee consultation.
- Establish digital and in-person employee voice forums.
- Provide continuous digital training through an LMS.
- Introduce wellbeing programmes and regular check-ins.
- Monitor implementation using KPIs and audit outcomes.

These recommendations should be implemented through a staged timeline to prevent overwhelming employees and to ensure ongoing evaluation. Establishing success indicators such as reduced grievances, increased training completion, and improved employee feedback will allow HR to measure progress objectively. With structured leadership accountability, HR strategies will maintain momentum and ensure that cultural improvements become ingrained rather than temporary solutions.

9. Conclusion

GHD Hair London's transformation has potential to strengthen competitiveness. However, unclear communication, inconsistent digital support and unequal flexible working have increased employee grievances. Applying organisational development strategies, digital HRM and structured work life balance policies can address these challenges. The success of these solutions relies on transparent communication, fair managerial decisions and accountability. Through these HRM practices, GHD can reduce conflict, rebuild trust and support sustainable change.

For GHD, the path forward requires human-centred leadership that values learning, dialogue, and well-being. When employees understand the purpose of change and feel supported in their development, resistance diminishes and innovation thrives. By investing in the work force as partners in transformation, GHD can cultivate resilience and position itself as a future-focused employer of choice in a digitalised business landscape.

As GHD expands its digital platforms and global reach, its employees will remain central to competitive advantage. The organisations future success will rely on its ability to cultivate digitally confident, adaptable teams who feel connected to the company's mission and valued for their contribution. By embedding continuous training, transparent leadership, and equity in flexible working opportunities, GHD can stabilise its workforce and promote a culture where grievances are minimised because employees feel respected, informed, and equipped to succeed. Ultimately, transformation becomes sustainable only when people experience progress not as threat, but as an opportunity that they are supposed to grow into. With intentional leadership and strategic HRM, GHD can evolve confidently into a digitally empowered organisation built on trust, capability, and long-term engagement.

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