




A New Era of HR Innovation

Experts Reveal Keys to Evolving from Administrators into Changemakers

A group of diverse professionals in a modern office setting, overlaid with a blue semi-transparent rectangle containing text. The background shows a woman in a grey dress sitting on the left, and several other people standing and sitting in the background. The text is white and bold, with a vertical orange line to its left.

Innovation is often seen as the responsibility of IT, operations and product development. But innovation doesn't just come from technology. It comes from people. That's why the HR department has become the key to driving innovation throughout the enterprise.

In a world where the company with the best people wins, the company with the best HR department has the advantage. Today, it's imperative that HR professionals move beyond being administrators and compliance cops to become one of the enterprise's most strategic functions.

In this guide, we asked leading HR professionals to share their thoughts about the role HR plays in the success of companies and how a modern HR function will be a requirement to compete not just today, but in the future.

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Stela Lupushor
Chief-Reframer
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> HR Becomes a Source of Talent Innovation

Innovation is all about thinking differently. To create an innovative workforce, HR must think differently about the way talent is sourced, trained and retained.

What role does HR play in driving innovation?

HR might be the best investment in innovation a company can make. 🐦

Look at the state of the talent market. The perception is that talent is scarce, picky and expensive. On top of that, there are changes in generational mix, raising expectations, skills gap, location mismatch, eroding loyalty, shallow succession pipeline and looming retirements. A company's ability to innovate depends on HR's ability to successfully overcome these issues.

How can HR drive innovation by thinking differently about talent?

It's simple: There just aren't enough qualified candidates who match the job requirements, especially if those jobs require "unicorns." Meanwhile, despite the tightest labor market in generations, sizable segments of our population are untapped, underutilized, underpaid or unemployed. For example, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis shows that half of the long-term unemployment in the U.S. is comprised of women between 55 and 65, while the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that women 55+ represent the fastest-growing age/gender segment in the labor force. This is a perfect example of a segment with big potential for companies to attract.

Hiring managers must think about how to distill the work to its essence and reconfigure what needs to get done by whom and how, transitioning from “jobs” to “work.” This can bring much-needed flexibility in choices of talent, such as part time, contingents, stay-at-home moms with only two or three hours available, disabled individuals and more. All these alternative talent pools have different needs, abilities and expectations from the workplace.

What can HR do to turn this untapped pool of workers into valuable employees?

HR must rethink how work is designed and orchestrated, then create pathways for engaging with

talent in a way that personalizes their experience while matching the talent’s needs and wants with the organization’s business goals.

With fewer digitally-savvy candidates on the market, companies must invest in upskilling their existing workforce. However, the focus should not be on the ROI of learning programs, but rather on the long-term employability of its workers. This means investing in skills that will be in demand over the next three to five years, which will make the workforce competitive and give them access to meaningful and fairly compensated jobs. **Upskilling is not only good for the business. It’s also a responsible way to uplift communities and have a positive impact on your brand, which, in turn, will attract more high-quality talent.** Win-win for everyone! 🐦



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Tom Haak

Director
HR Trend Institute



> Data Comes to the HR Department

It doesn't matter what business you're in; these days, every enterprise is in the data business. And so is every department. HR is now using data and analytics to uncover new insights into the hiring and managing of employees.

What do innovative HR departments do differently from typical HR departments?

Innovation requires a progressive culture that includes autonomy, rewards and psychological safety. HR teams can add value by optimizing not just recruitment and training, but focusing on rewards, development, and even organizational and office design that can spur casual interactions between employees that often spark new ideas. Innovative HR teams also innovate HR. They study the current trends, are aware of new technologies, and will push to discover how these trends and technologies can help HR support the company's most urgent business issues.

What are the top trends you see in the way leading HR departments utilize data and analytics?

Leading HR departments have learned a lot from marketing. They've made the shift to continuous measurement of a relatively small set of important variables. "Continuous listening" lets HR track and follow important trends in the organization, day by day or even hour by hour. By using data and analytics to find out the needs and capabilities of candidates and employees, they can help their organization quickly adapt rather than be reactive.

How can the way HR uses analytics impact the business performance of other departments?

Increasing productivity has not gotten enough attention. When there are capacity issues, management and HR generally focus on recruitment. When not enough people can be found, the “War for Talent” is blamed. But in many organizations, the potential of people is underutilized.

Let me explain: Rather than stick with the traditional organizational setup of hiring people for specific jobs, analytics should be used to get a better view of the relation between individual and team behavior and characteristics. These insights can then be used

to increase productivity by utilizing each employee’s full potential.

How can HR go digital without losing the human touch?

Becoming more digital and more employee-centric go hand in hand. For example, employees want quick and easy access to relevant HR information, while applicants want real-time information about the status of their application. Ease-of-use, speed and transparency are vital. A user-friendly employee portal, 24/7 chatbots and other technologies can better serve people while freeing HR to become more human.



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Robin Schooling

HR + People Strategy
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> Building the HR Technology Stack

A data-driven HR department is only as good as the technology that powers it. By building the right technology stack, HR can more effectively meet the needs of their business and employees.

What are the key elements of an HR technology stack?

Obviously, there needs to be a primary system of record that houses basic employee data like records, payroll and benefits. The components for the remainder of the HR tech stack will depend upon the unique needs of the business. For talent acquisition, the company may wish to incorporate technology, such as augmented writing tools, candidate matching technology or even chatbots to manage top-of-funnel volume. Strengthening the employee experience may include using technology, such as feedback platforms or learning management system (LMS) technology, which allows employees to co-create their learning plans.

How can HR use technology to build and improve its company culture?

For organizations that pride themselves on openness and transparency, the use of technology can promote these attributes by providing all employees with access to real-time business data on everything from productivity to revenue to customer feedback. In addition, with an eye toward encouraging feedback and promoting a transparent culture, organizations can use technologies, such as collaboration tools or

asynchronous platforms, which allow employees to drive conversations, ask questions and get answers from one other. Similarly, an organization that is nurturing a culture of collaboration and community can use these sorts of channels to connect employees to one other, as well as to resources and information.

What role does HR play in a company's overall technology strategy?

- 🐦 **HR leaders must be part of the conversation around the implementation of any work technology that impacts employee end-users.**

As an example, let's imagine that a logistics company is implementing a new system that will require upskilling and training for all warehouse employees, in addition to a concerted effort around change management for all those impacted. In order to gauge the effectiveness of the rollout and any corresponding success metrics, there must be integration and interplay between not just this new warehouse technology, but also between the HR management system, the course design in the LMS and tracking of key performance indicators amongst the employees.



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Tracie Sponenberg

Chief People Officer
The Granite Group



> From Paper Pusher to Strategic Storyteller

HR used to be primarily concerned with administration and taking care of complaints. However, HR's true business value is its ability to provide the employee insights necessary to drive the company's strategy forward.

What can HR do to help influence their company's strategy?

An innovative HR department is forward-thinking instead of backward-thinking. That means instead of concentrating on putting out fires, they're focused on preventing them in the first place. To do so, everyone in HR from the CHRO on down has to take the time to truly understand how the business works, understand the industry and understand how their company makes money. That means attending industry events, sitting in on meetings with other departments and becoming as much of an expert on the business as possible. Only then will they have the insight necessary to make the right recommendations.

What holds HR back from being more strategic?

Most people who get into HR come from a people background, not a technology background. That means HR is generally behind the curve when it comes to automating routine tasks that can free up time to be strategic. As a result, I think many HR departments still view themselves as an administrative function, and lack the confidence to take a seat at the table.

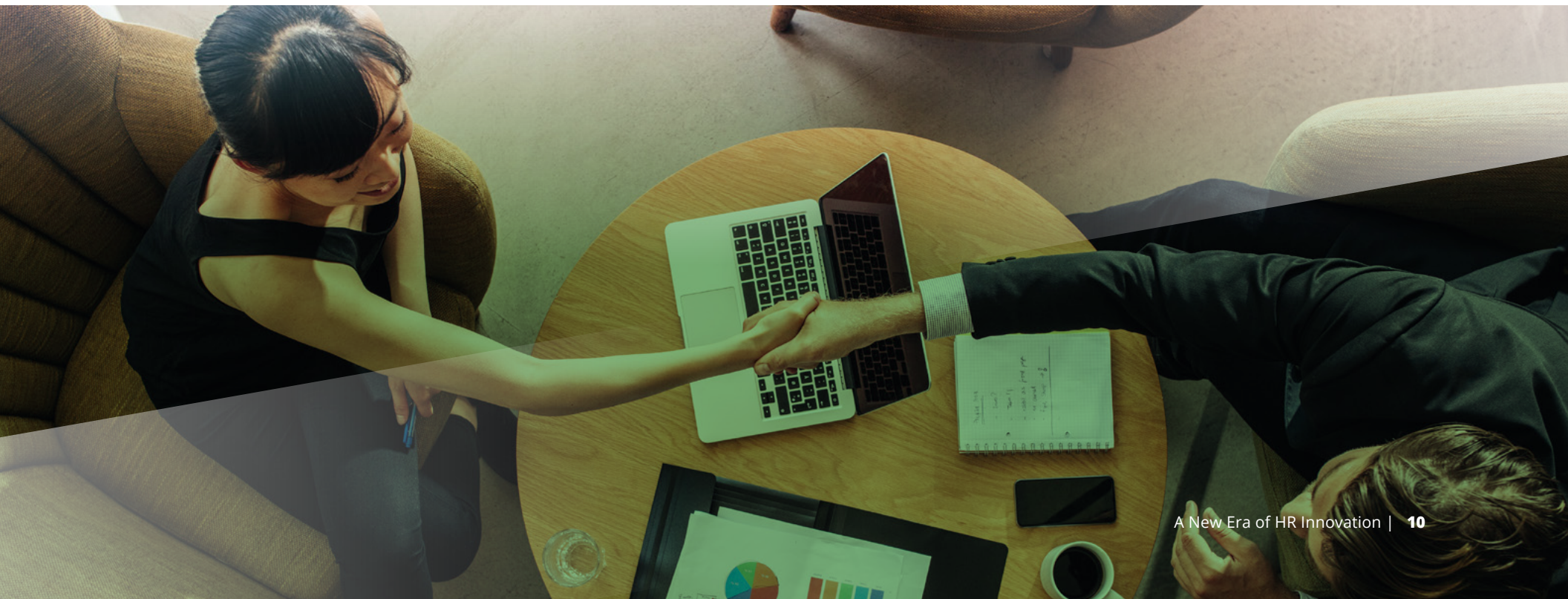
🐦 **Our companies will only view HR as a strategic asset if we start viewing ourselves that way.**

That means being bold, courageous and sometimes making waves—not something HR is traditionally used to!

How can HR use technology to gain that confidence?

Data tells a story. Once I embraced data and analytics, I was able to evolve beyond being driven

by policy to understanding the business in a way that allowed me to help forecast issues and provide solutions. Even within the people sector, we can learn a lot from numbers. We can learn who may be likely to leave, where we have gaps in compensation, how we interact with different types of employees and where we may need to hire next. The more you use data to tell those stories, the more you can help your business for the better. The goal for any HR department should be to report as much information as finance, marketing or sales.



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Doug Hoffer

Chief Human
Resources Officer
Access



> Automation Comes to HR

Automation is no longer just found on the manufacturing line. HR is using automation to overcome time-consuming, low-value tasks to free up time for the strategic thinking that can help truly move the needle in their organization.

Why should HR invest in automation?

Many HR managers today struggle with the amount of time consumed by administrative and compliance activities. This time can't be spent on higher-value activities, like partnering with the business, driving efficiency, developing talent and engaging with the workforce.

In a [recent survey](#) of HR professionals commissioned by Access, two-thirds of respondents said their goals are well aligned with corporate goals. But alignment and execution are two different things. As a profession, HR needs to minimize the amount of manual work we do so we can focus on helping our companies reach their goals.

How much time can automation help people reclaim?

According to our research, nearly half of all HR professionals believe that 20% to 40% of their administrative work could be freed up for other initiatives—a productivity boost any organization would sign up for. HR service delivery, compliance, analysis and reporting are all seen as opportunities for saving time through automation.

How have you incorporated automation into your own HR function?

Ten years ago, we were a relatively small company. As we expanded to new markets, we in HR had to figure out how to meet that growth by sourcing the best talent and providing the best experience for our employees. At the same time, the HR headcount wasn't exactly growing at the same clip as the company. We had to make do with less while keeping our HR staff from getting burned out from extra work.

By automating tasks like application processing, onboarding, audits and employee investigations, we were able to eliminate 90% of our paper while reducing tasks down to minutes that used to take days. Now, we've reduced the number of people working on administrative duties and freed them to work on new projects, such as implementing our new human capital management system.





Download our research report: *What's Hindering HR Success in 2019?* to learn more about how you can maximize efficiency to help your organization achieve its strategic goals.