



The Connected HR Director: elevating talent management to board level

The opportunity for digital HR, a data-driven approach to managing, organising and leading change - has well and truly arrived. However, according to Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends 2016 report, only 38 percent of companies are even thinking about it, and only nine percent are fully ready. That's despite the fact that nearly three-quarters of companies (72 percent) believe this is an important priority.

As ongoing advances in technology makes strategic, data-driven HR decision-making a possibility, people analytics has become a key priority for executives, propelling the HR function onto a board-level platform. Indeed, in 2016, 51 percent of companies are cited as correlating business impact to HR programs and 44 percent are now using workforce data to predict business performance, up from 29 percent last year.

With people increasingly recognised as a company's most valuable asset, and recognition that the right talent can drive business strategy and growth, connected talent management data makes it possible for the HR Director to collect, monitor and analyse information related to each stage of the employee lifecycle, in context. Such insight provides a platform on which to demonstrate how attracting the right workforce can create a more reactive, agile organisation.

So, with HR and talent management increasingly operating as the engine of a company, is this an opportunity for creating the connected HR Director and elevating their role to the board?

Adding strategic value from insight; why HR needs a place on the board

To ensure they are being used to their full potential, the next step for today's connected HR Director is to develop themselves as an enabler across the whole of the organisation, tracking their talent management requirements and placing the right people at the heart of the business. This demonstrates that unlike the HR managers of the past, today's connected HR Director needs a place on the board.

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The connected HR Director has the opportunity to become a collaborative business partner, adding value by building on past learnings, embracing new technology and innovating for the future based on such data-driven analytics. They cannot hide in the background; instead, with their insight they have the opportunity to propel the business forward by employing those individuals that fit seamlessly into the organisation's changing culture. John Cooper Associates highlights the fact that businesses, as well as people, have personalities and in order for a relationship to work, both need to be in alignment.

A collaborative approach to unlocking employee data insight

Those organisations that are most successful at attracting and retaining talent are increasingly recognised for being flexible, imaginative, opportunistic and early adopters of new approaches. Perhaps most notably, their HR department plays a pivotal role in not only the strategic recruitment of their top talent, but also their growth and development. Cardinal Health, Procter & Gamble, Pitney Bowes, Goldman Sachs, and General Electric, for example, are all connecting their HR departments to the rest of their organisation and elevating them into the realm of business strategy.

However, there are many organisations that haven't embraced these changes and are missing opportunities. Imagine if the HR Director had a real-time dashboard of the business underpinned by a connected modern infrastructure, plugged in to every single department, companywide, that automatically alerted him or her to specific triggers about resourcing, talent management and people performance. Such real-time data integrated across the board would allow them to bring in the right people with the right skills and experience, developing talent plans to drive growth and aligned to organisational strategy. Such insight would also unlock the potential of the Connected HR Director, freeing them up to work closely with the other directors across the board to identify

gaps, improvements and inefficiencies, in turn leading to a more effective and productive workforce.

Playing such an integral role to the success of a business, the impact of the Connected HR Director could also have an impact on how the rest of the board operates, collaborating to ensure that the workforce comprises the right skill base, and increasing confidence that the entire organisation is well placed to embrace future opportunities.

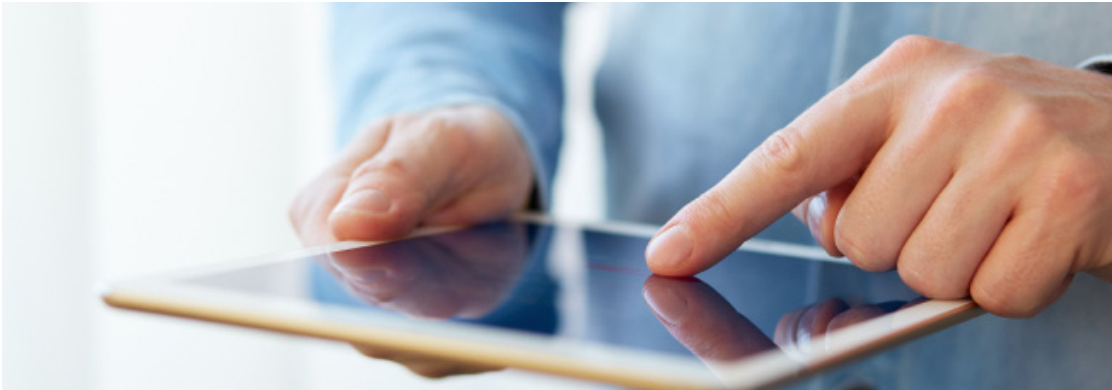
The unattainable Holy Grail of many HR departments has been to unlock the potential of its workforce today and for the future, ensuring that they have the right talent in place to in turn develop new products, services and strategies. However, the technology available to organisations today is making this a reality, and it's the Connected HR Director who is ideally positioned to be at the heart of such changes.

The HR manager of the past

Traditionally, aside from the hiring and recruiting aspect of their job, a considerable amount of the HR manager's time was spent involved in training and performing administrative tasks such as completing paperwork and checking references for new employees, payroll procedures, or training them for their new positions. As a result, the HR manager remained largely independent of other departments, working in isolation, rather than in partnership with, the rest of the company.

However, the digital era and the role of technology has shifted this dynamic. With technology now automating HR's traditional responsibilities – record keeping, performance management, tracking of job vacancies, hires and leavers, safety concerns and employee grievances – driving up process management and making it faster, cheaper, and better than ever before. Modern software solutions have become more advanced, integrated and cost-effective, providing data-driven analytics to drive talent management, enhancing the

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value of HR processes heralding the rise of the connected HR Director.

The role of the connected HR Director – and department – is very different.....

The digital era: transforming talent management into an organisation's engine room

Few would deny that digital transformation has reshaped the way organisations work, placing people at the heart of a business. Technology no longer simply supports business operations but drives them, providing the data-driven analytics and insights required for managing performance and future growth. Yet these rapid developments not only affect business models, but also shape an organisation's talent management strategy.

Mobility and cloud computing allow employees to work virtually, giving companies access to the right skillsets regardless of physical location. Data analytics help workers operate more efficiently and speed up decision-making, thus enhancing performance and productivity. Video conferencing, white boarding and messaging tools drive collaboration both with colleagues as well as suppliers and even customers. These changes and developments have an important effect upon the way in which people work, what their expectations are and how they see themselves advancing in their careers, and as deciding factors in which organisations they wish to work for. All of which means that in today's organisations,

technology and HR can no longer be separate if HR is to be successful.

A study carried out by Kurt Salmon, in cooperation with Cercle Humania and Apec, shows the extent to which HR departments are involved with business transformation. It suggests that while HR's traditional strengths of choreographing recruitment and selection, administering payroll, compensation and benefits, arranging training solutions, and carrying out conflict resolution are still important to today's workers, HR departments are becoming increasingly involved in the implementation of digital transformation, ultimately functioning as innovative engines at the heart of the company. The data also shows that HR departments play an important role in the digital transformation of their companies: 55% percent of respondents indicated that they are involved with digital projects from the very beginning.

With access to tools that allow them to measure things that were once difficult to predict, HR is becoming a strategic business function, enabling a broader collaboration between departments to understand where the business is going and what people skills are needed to get there, driving business results through the strategic use of technology.

HR Directors that embrace digital services and understand the power of a connected IT infrastructure will be better positioned to drive innovation and productivity, elevating their position to a digital pioneer. Connected HR Directors can employ their traditional

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skills alongside a data-driven approach to HR to assist other members of the C-Suite and the CEO in understanding how talent management can help drive business performance and steer both recruitment, and training plans of existing staff, to be ready for future requirements.

Connected talent management

Instead of the traditional HR format of decision-making based on assumptions, first impressions and relationship building, talent analytics – the harnessing of ‘big data’ on employees to gain insights that can more tightly link HR and business strategy – is changing the way that Connected HR Directors view, analyse and harness their talent data.

Talent acquisition

A company’s onboarding process is an employee’s first experience at a new company, making it a crucial touchpoint to form the foundations for a long and successful partnership. Technology can be used to introduce fair yet rigorous assessment processes, to identify the right candidates in the first place with the right skills, competencies and attitudes. The use of automation tools not only drastically reduces time spent on manual tasks during onboarding, it also ensures a consistent experience to each new employee and allows HR to quickly scale with a growing company.

Management

There is little point investing solely in recruitment and on-boarding if the same attention isn’t devoted to performance management and as a result your star employees are becoming disenchanted and leaving the company. And with just over a quarter of HR professionals admitting their business does nothing to keep hold of its talent, and four out of five having failed to implement a specific talent management strategy, (read more here) it’s clear many organisations need to do far more to identify their high-potential employees and communicate the company’s investment in them and their future career.

Equally, a company’s culture plays an important role here, and with the HR department owning

internal communications, a connected HR Director will work hand-in-glove with marketing, to ensure an organisation’s brand values are alive within the organisation and staff can relate to them.

Retention

If employees are not stimulated and challenged, or if they feel their talents are being poorly used, their time at the company is likely to be short-lived, representing a great waste of the recruitment budget. It may also mean the company is failing to develop a succession plan – increasing its risk if senior talent retires or moves on. HR departments therefore need to develop a clear, single view of who its key talent is and making sure those individuals are identified, managed and rewarded. According to research from Willis Towers Watson, over one quarter of employees are at a high risk for turnover, and over 70% of high-retention-risk employees say that they have had to leave an organisation to advance their careers. Many of those people possess mission-critical skills and are top performers, or have potential to become top performers. Therefore, succession planning is vital.

Sophisticated software solutions can now encompass recruitment, performance and succession management, compensation and learning as well as candidate relationship management and workforce management and optimisation tools. With the right technology in place, the connected HR Director is perfectly placed to manage this knowledge effectively and enable the CEO to make informed top-line decisions.

We predict that the role of the Connected HR Director will only grow stronger as digital transformation continues. This will strengthen the connections between the board roles, as they are together positioned to support issues in each department, providing vital insight to other executives and assisting with resource plans, recruitment, supply chain viability and other business needs beyond that of the HR department.

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Alex Arundale,
Group HR Director at Advanced



How do you define the role of the HR Director?

Talent management today is about aligning the company's people – its workforce – to the vision of its leadership and the culture of the company. Our vision is to have a dynamic, motivated and engaged workforce that reaches its potential and has the right skills and experience to support our business goals. For me, the HR Director therefore has ultimate responsibility for all people based activity within an organisation from both an operational and strategic perspective.

It's not just about costs and productivity – it's also about innovation, unlocking human potential, and creating organisations that people really want to work for.

The HR Director is involved across the business, from resource planning and recruitment; training; managing a variety of employee relationship issues and being the first point of contact for all employee related issues, through to mapping people to the strategic future of the business.

How is this role changing in the digital era?

Technology and the digital era is automating many aspects within the HR function that were previously manual and time-consuming. This is freeing up the function from the more operational tasks and enabling HR Directors to focus on true value added activities. The modern HR Director is increasingly becoming the catalyst for managing change, especially in the recruitment and development of talent. However, to do this, they need access to people information connected across the organisation.

Do you think there are any particular areas of HR operations that aren't connected yet?

We talk of the Connected HR Director and the role of the HR Director is definitely moving in that direction; connecting talent with the organisation, talent with data, and the organisation with the rest of the community. But while the core systems are there, that's a journey we're currently on as part of our own organisational transformation process.

I don't think there is one particular area of the business that HR isn't connected too. Instead, I see the biggest danger from a lack of a connected business is information silos. Some HR divisions use legacy systems that contain several years of highly personal employee data, but it's not easy to access the data – so people use their own spreadsheets for their individual purposes. Others however have multiple systems for different areas of HR, such as one system for training purposes, another for compensation and benefit packages, and yet another for employee performance reviews – do these come together with one view of the employee, and how their skills and competencies map onto the business needs? Most organisations still need to connect the dots and have one version of the truth.

What's your vision on the future?

I'm excited about the idea of the Connected HR Director, that adds value to every business unit and every board member – who can demonstrate with a data-driven approach, how HR is supporting and driving the business goals, with the right workforce and the right skills. Imagine a 'connected' HR Director with access to a holistic dashboard that brings together all aspects of HR - from attraction, retention, through to cost of payroll and talent management development - to help predict any skills gap and anticipate future requirements. That HR Director will become the right-hand person to the board and ultimately the CEO.

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What do you think of the term 'digital pioneer' and is it relevant to HR?

To have a successful digital workplace, organisations must have the right strategy, culture, environment and infrastructure to exploit the benefits fully. Digital has to be the natural way of working so that everyone is more productive and the organisation more efficient. It's therefore vital that HR policies encourage digital working in order to create a culture where engaged people are working to achieve their own, team and overall business goals. Employees need to see digital working as beneficial to them and it's the role of the HR Director to ensure this happens.

I personally see my role as a pioneer in exploring the digital world from a HR transformation perspective and better understanding how you get people to develop an 'explore and discover' mindset and get both curious and comfortable about the massive opportunity offered by digital.

Is the HR Director the driving force in the business?

HR Directors need to ensure they are adding value to every business unit and every board member. Only those who can provide evidence – from a data-driven connected view of the business – of how HR is supporting and driving the business goals, with the right workforce and the right skills, can really achieve this. As a digital pioneer, the connected HR Director will undoubtedly be enhancing the importance of their role. With an overview of all aspect of recruiting, managing and developing talent – and understanding precisely why this talent is needed - the HR Director will be working as part of the board in real-time to help drive the business, today and into the future.

If the HR Director is operating as the digital pioneer, do you think it can increase their value and importance on the board?

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Conclusion - making the Connected HR Director a reality...

The reality is that although digital HR is possible now, digital transformation for organisations is still in its infancy and for the majority of businesses, the journey is just beginning. For many HR departments, a fully-connected view of their talent is yet to be realised, and a lot of time is being spent to establish the basic foundations on which they can benefit from modern and connected IT infrastructures.

As we've argued, strategic talent management requires looking at the bigger picture. As guardian of a company's talent, a connected HR Director will use technology to provide a data-driven view of their workforce, and understand and identify gaps in skills, experience and knowledge, in line with where their organisation is headed.

In the future, the connected HR Director will be vital in delivering efficiencies and driving business growth. Rather than simply having access to information about their own department, a connected HR Director will work in conjunction with the rest of the C-Suite to measure the wider-impact that effective talent management is having on business success and use this information to make informed, strategic decisions to ensure their organisation is well placed to succeed, grow and prosper.

As custodians of an organisation's culture with direct responsibility for the growth and motivation of its people, it is now critical for HR Directors to adopt a collaborative, connected and digitised approach if they are to fully realise the strategic role they can now carve within the boardroom.

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