

THE NEW HR PLAYBOOK

REVOLUTIONIZING TRADITIONAL
APPROACHES TO MODERN
HUMAN RESOURCES



Dominic Keogh Peters

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To my North Star – Daniel Keogh Peters

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INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of today's business world, human resources (HR) stands as the bedrock upon which successful organizations are built. As the heartbeat of an enterprise, HR professionals navigate the intricate web of developing Talent Culture & Capability. But with the advent of groundbreaking technologies, shifting demographics, and a heightened focus on employee well-being, it has become abundantly clear that the traditional HR playbook is in need of a transformative overhaul.

“The New HR Playbook: Revolutionizing Traditional Approaches to Modern Human Resources” is an exploration into the innovative paradigms and strategies that are reshaping the field of HR management. I hope in this guide to lead HR professionals on a journey that transcends the confines of conventional wisdom, inviting HR practitioners and business leaders to reimagine the very essence of their workforce strategies.

Gone are the days of static hierarchies and one-size-fits-all solutions. This book illuminates the way forward by presenting a compendium of fresh perspectives, that challenge preconceived notions and herald a new era of human-centric HR practices. Whether you are a seasoned HR professional seeking to breathe new life into your approach or a business leader eager to unlock the full potential of your workforce, “The New HR Playbook” offers insights that transcend disciplinary boundaries.

From the art of nurturing a diverse and inclusive workplace that thrives on collaboration, to harnessing the power of artificial intelligence for unparalleled talent acquisition and management, each chapter delves into a distinct facet of modern HR. Through captivating narratives and evidence-based analysis, we delve into the art and science of fostering employee engagement, well-being, and retention, while dismantling the archaic silos that hinder progress.

Join me in my views about HR of the future, where adaptability and empathy reign supreme, and where the workforce is empowered to reach unprecedented heights. “The New HR Playbook” is not just a book; it is a manifesto for transformation, an invitation to revolutionize the very core of how we manage, nurture, and elevate our most valuable asset – our people.

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT BUSINESSES WANT FROM HR TODAY: UNLOCKING VALUE, CULTIVATING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE, AND MASTERING TALENT SUPPLY CHAIN

For those parents reading this I am sure that you will relate to the seemingly endless weekend birthday parties you need to attend. And inevitably comes the conversation about what you do. When I mention I work in HR – often the response is sadly – oh you are Mr Hire & Fire. Possibly true 20 years ago but not what we should be doing today.

The role of Human Resources (HR) has evolved significantly over the years. Gone are the days when HR was solely associated with hiring, firing and compliance. In today's dynamic business landscape, organizations expect HR professionals to go beyond historic responsibilities and actively contribute to the strategic growth and success of the company.

This week I discuss three key areas that businesses want from their HR departments today: value creation, leveraging people as a competitive advantage, and mastering the talent supply chain.

Value Creation: Modern organizations seek HR professionals who understand how their business creates value. Whether it's through excellent customer service or continuous innovation, the value is ultimately delivered by the employees. HR must align its practices with the company's value proposition and enable the workforce to contribute effectively. By comprehending the organization's value drivers, HR can develop to enhance employee performance, engagement, and support with productivity.

People as a Competitive Advantage: While products and services can be easily replicated, a company's culture and its people remain unique and difficult to imitate. Businesses operating in customer-facing industries, such as hotels, restaurants, and airlines, recognize that their people can be the key differentiator. HR professionals must focus on attracting, developing, and retaining top talent who can deliver exceptional service and create a positive customer experience. By aligning HR activities with the competitive advantage derived from its people and culture, organizations can gain an edge in the market.

Talent Supply Chain: Talent management is no longer just an advantage; it is a fundamental business necessity. HR professionals must become experts in managing the talent supply chain to ensure a steady flow of skilled individuals into the organization. This involves developing talent feeder systems, measuring success through relevant metrics, and aligning talent acquisition strategies with the organization's future needs.

To align with today's global people megatrends - HR should also prioritize digital skills development, promote diversity and equal opportunity employment, and leverage talent analytics to identify skills gaps and make informed decisions regarding building or acquiring talent.

There are four clear key considerations we should action from this.

Creating talent feeder systems: HR should establish programs and initiatives that nurture talent pipelines, ensuring a consistent flow of skilled individuals to meet the organization's requirements.

Digital skills development: With the increasing digitalization of workplaces, HR must ensure that employees possess the necessary digital skills to thrive in the modern business environment and be future ready.

Diversity : HR should champion diversity and inclusivity by creating a workforce that represents different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences and leverage the innovation this can create.

Talent analytics: HR professionals should leverage data and analytics to gain insights into the existing workforce's skills and identify any gaps that need to be addressed through recruitment, training, or development.

In today's volatile, uncertain complex and ambiguous world, HR professionals must adapt to the changing expectations of organizations. By understanding how their business creates value, leveraging people as a competitive advantage, and mastering the talent supply chain, HR can contribute significantly to the strategic success of the company.

In the future when someone asks you what you do and you tell them you work in HR – wouldn't it be better if people associated our role with enabling business success through talent rather than letting people go.

I think we all know the answer to that.

CHAPTER 2

WILL HR BE REPLACED BY AI

Apparently if companies don't throw out their Human Resource Department first -in a few years we are all going to be replaced by robots or Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Sadly I am reading this a lot on LinkedIn by many 'influencers' - so of course it must be true.

After really giving their comments some thought - whilst some of the arguments put forward make sense, for the moment, I am not really 100% convinced there is a complete end for HR. So, before you move straight to the comments section, fingers on the keyboard, whilst inhaling deeply - let me give you my thoughts.

For a start it really depends on your definition of what a Human Resource Department does. Unfortunately to the detriment of our own profession service delivery standards, outputs, capability and most importantly the actual business alignment and impact of HR departments varies widely across industries and companies.

At a guess the majority of the people who read this article will have had poor experiences of a reactive, admin focused and often inefficient HR department - and I agree over the next few years there will be a vast amount of much needed

change in our profession – and it will be all be driven by digitization.

It is inevitable (and warmly welcomed by HR teams) that all transactional HR processes will be replaced by AI.

All parts of the employee life cycle will benefit from the speed and efficiencies of digitization – and the reality is, that if administration is all you are doing as a HR department then yes, you will probably be replaced by a robot.

From my perspective where I see the future focus of HR and the continued value add, is the strategic influence by HR professionals across the 3 distinct (yet interlinked) areas of **Talent, Culture & Capability**.

Supporting this will be the required skillsets around the ability to read, interpret and act on the data that each vertical will produce – and how that data can be used to support business strategy.

Whilst these verticals will be enabled by digitization, they cannot function without the human element frequently calibrating their outputs and realigning them with the business. Within these areas there are too many subtle nuances that will need frequent readjustment – this for the moment will be beyond anything AI can currently do.

Until AI can really get the EI plug in – you will still need insightful human input into shaping HR Strategy in these verticals.

Talent

Interestingly a recent study in the US showed that AI can do a better job of hiring – an isolated study but one that we need to sit up and take note of.

AI can cover the how we hire but for the moment in a disruptive and ever changing world all these processes and the

why we hire will need frequent calibration and realignment with external environments and internal strategy. This cannot yet be performed by a machine.

Internal Talent can be identified through data mining, and algorithms can be used to predict future successes. Talent ‘potential’ meetings can be made quicker and more rigorous with more real time data and supported by predictive test results – but where will the challenge come from when asking – whilst the candidate ticks all the online boxes are they really future leaders? This requires a skilled HR influencer to facilitate and finalise these conversations.

Culture

I can use a bot on an internal communications platform to give me a company pulse instantly and Chat GPT can create online communications to celebrate success and share employee success stories.

But what we often forget is that culture is really ‘how we do things around here’ and there are certain companywide decisions and the communications that follow those decisions that require a seasoned HR professional to guide and influence the business.

Quite often some of the most critical impacts that HR professionals have are when we are required to push back on senior management decisions that could have a devastating overall impact on the business through the disengagement of our teams.

Anyone remembering the redundancies by text in the UK a few years ago, will hope that this isn’t done by a chat bot next time.

Capability

Online learning, gamification, micro learning – they all work, but as part of a blended approach with a human element added.

The subtle nuances of years of working in complex organizations gives someone the ability to guide, coach and engage people through sharing their knowledge and experience – something online learning in whatever medium cannot yet fully do on its own.

There is also the more strategic aspect of looking into the future and asking what skills and competencies the business will require to remain competitive in the longer term and aligning this with strategic plans, until AI can understand context and can influence senior stakeholders – this will stay firmly within a human remit. AI being good at Chess for the moment doesn't necessarily make it good at business.

Overall decisions around people can never be simply just a matter of crunching data to solve an issue – decisions are also shaped by context, culture, values, experience and often a nod to the future. This will always require an experienced HR professional.

Whilst I disagree that HR will disappear completely – one thing I can be certain of is that change in our profession is inevitable.

Whilst there will most certainly be less of us in the HR department of tomorrow, who remains in these departments will simply be chosen through Darwinian evolution.

Only those in HR choosing to change will be part of the future.

CHAPTER 3

DO YOU VALUE YOUR VALUES ?

As a HR leader have you ever thought about how much you value your values? It may sound like a tongue twister, but it's a question worth pondering. Often, companies focus solely on competencies and skills when it comes to their strategies, but what about their values? Are they truly being integrated into the overall plan?

The response to those questions will give you insight into whether you have an engineering or marketing mindset.

In today's world, values are more important than ever particularly to new generations entering the workforce. They shape the way we think, behave, and make decisions. They are the foundation upon which our organizations and society are built. It is therefore critical to value your values.

Many companies have a set of values, but they are often just words on a wall, not lived or incorporated into the fabric of the organization. It's easy to forget about them in the hustle and bustle of daily business – however, values are not just a nice-to-have, they are a necessity for any successful organization.

So, how can HR teams ensure that their values are valued? The answer lies in storytelling. Stories are powerful tools for communicating values. When we tell a story, we are not just

conveying information, we are creating an emotional connection with the listener. A story can bring values to life, making them tangible and real.

To truly drive motivation, people want a story that aligns with their inner superpowers

For example, let's say one of your company's values is teamwork. Instead of just the standard communication of stating this on a screensaver and a coffee mug, you could tell a story about a team that successfully worked together to overcome a challenge. This story when communicated across the business would illustrate the value of teamwork in a way that is relatable and memorable and shapes culture.

The next step is to bring your values to life by linking them to outcomes. How do your values impact your customers, your employees, and your community? This is where your values become your value proposition.

Take the example of a company that values sustainability. Instead of just talking about being environmentally friendly, they could show how their products or services are helping to reduce waste or carbon emissions. This not only demonstrates their values but also creates a tangible benefit for their customers and can also make your employees proud.

HR leaders today need to ensure values are embedded into the culture of the organization. This is where performance management systems can also come into play. Instead of just measuring competencies, companies should be measuring behaviours that align with their values. This creates a culture where employees are recognized and rewarded for living the company's values.

The true HR superpower lies in taking your values and breaking them down into observable behaviours, linking them to rewards, and incorporating them into your communication strategy. By doing so, you create a culture that shapes

itself based on your values, rather than just focusing on skills and competencies. It's a way to align your employees with a larger purpose that drives their inner superpowers. So, the next time you're thinking about your company's strategy and framework, don't forget about the importance of valuing your values.

In conclusion, for the modern employer – values are a critical component of any successful organization. It's a way to align your employees with a larger purpose that engages them through task identity. By valuing your values, you can create a culture where employees are motivated, customers are loyal, and the community is positively impacted. It all starts with storytelling, then linking values to outcomes, and embedding them into the HR architecture of the organization.

So, the next time you're thinking about your company's HR strategy and framework, don't forget about the importance of valuing your values.

CHAPTER 4

THE NEW HR PLAYBOOK – THINKING LIKE A MARKETER

There was a post on LinkedIn last year that went viral – and it simply said – I am going to work at Google for 2 weeks and leave – just so I can add Ex Google into my title. Whilst cleverly poking fun at a key trend on the online networking site – it should make any HR leader sit up and consider how they are harnessing one of the most powerful tools they have available to them – the power of branding.

I am fortunate to be very happy in my job and hopefully you are to – but if Apple called you – you would probably take the call. That's the power of an employer brand today.

Let's ask the simple question – why do organisations succeed or fail? – It ultimately comes down to talent and culture. To secure that talent today you are going to need to establish a brand with a purpose that both attracts and retains talent – and it needs to be as good as or better than your competitors.

This is now why HR needs to grow its skill set and start to think more like a marketer and combining that with creating great HR architecture that supports the employer brand we are creating.

The very start of what should be encompassing your external brand image is the culture you intend to shape and at the heart of that culture your purpose – one that enables your organisation to be both competitive and compassionate and enables innovation and flexibility. We should be working with our leaders to create purposes for our organisations – a mission or vision just won't do the job anymore – we need massive transformational purposes creating stories that shape culture and culture that then shapes winning behaviours.

In the future we need to make sure our people are telling the right stories.

HR teams need to carefully curate and map their employee experience – we create frameworks for our customer journey – why not have the same attention to detail for your employee experience?

Encased under the brand heading should be total reward – and that is not just the financial aspects but aligning your offer with the new expectations of multiple generations in the workplace – we are talking about lifestyle opportunities, work life balance, our approach to CSR and ESG, opportunities to learn and grow, a professional and equitable environment and of course involvement in shaping the product or service provided. Having a voice.

Branding is now more important than ever and it's something that our new talent want to associate with to complement their own personal brand. Highly effective companies have their employer brand as a key strategic asset.

Once this has been established – you need to be working to cultivate your Internet presence – LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Indeed these are all tools that you and your teams should be leveraging to showcase your overall brand and allow talent to self-select.

What should be encompassing your external brand image is the culture you create and at the heart of culture your purpose – one that is both competitive and compassionate and enables innovation and flexibility.

So where can we influence our businesses as marketers?

1. **Recruitment:** HR is responsible for attracting and hiring the best talent for their organization. Marketing skills can provide valuable insights into how to create compelling job postings, how to target the right candidates, and how to craft an employer brand that appeals to top candidates.
2. **Employer branding:** Marketing can also help HR professionals build and promote their employer brand by leveraging traditional marketing techniques. By creating a compelling brand we can support in attracting top talent and engaging our existing talent.
3. **Employee engagement:** Marketing techniques can help HR professionals create effective internal communication campaigns that keep employees engaged, motivated, and informed. Marketing can help HR professionals create engaging content and distribute it across multiple channels to reach employees at all levels of the business.
4. **Training and development:** HR professionals are responsible for creating training and development programs that help employees grow and develop their skills. Marketing can provide valuable insights into how to create effective learning materials, how to promote training opportunities, and how to measure the effectiveness of these programs.

By thinking like a marketer HR professionals can attract, retain, and develop the best talent for their organization. By leveraging marketing techniques, HR can create a compelling employer brand and engage employees at every stage of their journey with the company.

There is a very simple truth we often overlook – It is easy to copy your product but virtually impossible to copy a culture – and how often do we overlook using people and our culture as a source of competitive advantage?

Thinking like a marketer can change that.

CHAPTER 5

THE USE OF DATA IN HR: MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS FOR PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

In today's data-driven world, it's becoming increasingly evident that utilizing data is crucial for making better decisions in various domains. Human resources (HR) is no exception. The practice of using data to enhance decision-making in HR has gained traction, initially pioneered in the United States through the analysis of sports performance. Now, organizations are recognizing the value of data in making informed decisions about their most important asset—their people.

I will always go back to the same point that HR can learn from Marketing as they know the true value of data and how to leverage it. Marketing departments extensively employ data to segment customers and devise more effective strategies. So, why should HR not follow suit? By utilizing data, HR can make better decisions about managing people. HR professionals can start by asking key questions such as: Where does collaboration occur within our organization? Who should we be hiring or promoting? Is our training program effective? What happens if we change incentives? By delving into the data behind these decisions, HR can influence biases and improve overall decision-making.

Analyzing talent is not drastically different from analyzing customer relationships or managing the supply chain. The knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees are often regarded as a company's greatest assets. Therefore, gathering and analyzing data about people in the workforce becomes essential. People data can be found not only within HR systems but also in other departments such as IT and sales. Utilizing this data offers a clear opportunity to contribute to the business in a more meaningful way.

Traditionally, decisions in HR were often based on intuition or hunches. However, many organizations are now setting examples of what effective people analytics looks like. Prominent cases include Teach for America, which tracks the performance of all teachers and compares it to evaluations conducted at the time of hiring. Google has also examined its interview process, finding that interviews have no predictability in performance. Consequently, they limited the number of managers involved in the hiring process to optimize efficiency. Credit Suisse explored talent retention and discovered that individuals who changed jobs were more likely to stay longer, prompting action based on this finding. Data-driven insights help identify the organization's most valuable employees in a factual manner.

Whilst much of this seems straight forward - one of the challenges HR faces is the noisy nature of performance measures. There is a range of outcomes influenced by factors outside the employees' control, making it difficult to discern skill from luck. Similar to how many sports teams use data to distinguish between skill and chance, HR can utilize data to understand where performance improvements can occur. Skill persists, while chance is fleeting.

To leverage the power of data effectively, HR professionals should focus on four key levels of analysis. Descriptive analytics which provide a snapshot of HR metrics such as absence

and annual leave records, attrition rates, and recruitment rates. Taking it a step further, descriptive analytics can be combined with multidimensional data, such as engagement scores and leadership capability, to gain a deeper understanding of what is happening within the organization. Predictive data enables HR to forecast future trends, such as potential skills shortages, by utilizing robust workforce data. Finally, prescriptive analytics combines descriptive and predictive insights to recommend actionable options. For instance, it can suggest online learning courses tailored to individual career goals.

In conclusion, data-driven decision-making in HR has emerged as a powerful tool for making informed choices about people management. By following the examples set by pioneering organizations and leveraging data at various levels of analysis, HR professionals can enhance their decision-making processes and unlock the full potential of their workforce.

The integration of data in HR practices not only leads to more accurate and impactful decisions but also enables organizations to optimize talent management, increase productivity, and drive overall business success.

If you have any doubts about people and data – just watch Moneyball.

CHAPTER 6

MAKING AN EMPLOYEE FEEL AT HOME

I can't think of anything worse than your first day at a new job. Amongst the list of box ticking activities that go on will probably be an information overload and most definitely death by PowerPoint after you have met 27 people in an hour. The coma inducing presentation will inevitably contain at least 12 slides of badly stretched photographs of people - designed in a way to be more like a police identity parade presentation than a welcome.

We have sadly all experienced it.

The thing we often miss is the absolute importance of a great induction as it sets the foundation for new joiners success within the organization by establishing a psychological contract, setting cultural expectations, and starting a positive relationship with the line manager. Research consistently demonstrates that these factors significantly contribute to an employee's long-term success – yet we never seem to take it seriously.

Firstly, establishing the psychological contract is vital during the induction process. The psychological contract refers to the unwritten expectations and obligations between the employer and employee. By clearly communicating the organi-

zation's values, mission, and goals, new employees gain a better understanding of what is expected of them. This understanding fosters a sense of purpose, commitment, and motivation from the very beginning. For example, a study by Rousseau and Greller (1994) found that a clear psychological contract positively influenced employees' job satisfaction and performance, ultimately contributing to their long-term success.

Secondly, setting cultural expectations is essential for a new employee's integration into the organization. Each company has its unique culture, which encompasses its shared beliefs, values, and practices. Induction provides an opportunity to familiarize new employees with "how we do things around here", enabling them to adapt and align their behaviours accordingly. For instance, through interactive activities, team-building exercises, and real-life examples, new employees can grasp the company's cultural nuances, communication styles, and collaboration norms. Research by Denison and Mishra (1995) supports the importance of cultural alignment, suggesting that employees who are aligned with their organization's culture are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment and job satisfaction.

Another surprising yet not so surprising fact is that research consistently highlights the significance of meeting your line manager on the first day of work. A study conducted by Bauer et al. (2007) found that the quality of the initial relationship between an employee and their line manager significantly predicted the employee's future job performance and satisfaction. This highlights the critical role of the line manager in fostering a positive and supportive work environment. When new employees have the opportunity to meet their line manager early on, it establishes a sense of trust, open communication, and support. Line managers who provide guidance, feedback, and mentorship during the induction process contribute to the employee's confidence, motivation, and overall success. Sounds like common sense – sadly common sense is not always common.

To illustrate the importance of these factors, let's consider a hypothetical scenario. Imagine a new employee, Myriam, who joins a marketing firm. During her induction over the first few days in the role, Myriam learns about the company's values, which emphasize creativity and innovation. She is introduced to the team through interactive workshops, where they discuss real-life marketing campaigns and brainstorm ideas. Myriam also has the opportunity to meet her line manager, who explains the team's objectives and provides guidance on how to succeed in her role.

Initiatives like this as part of a comprehensive induction process, means Myriam develops a strong understanding of the organization's expectations, embraces the company's culture, and establishes a positive relationship with her line manager. This sets her up for success in her new role. With psychological safety beginning to be established Myriam feels motivated, supported, and aligned with the company's values. Consequently, she becomes an integral part of the team, contributing innovative ideas and achieving high performance levels.

Often missed and often done badly - Induction plays a critical role in setting up our people for success. By establishing the psychological contract, setting cultural expectations, and ensuring a positive relationship with the line manager, organizations can significantly enhance the employee's long-term success and more importantly accelerate the time to competence.

Lets move away from traditional box ticking information overloads and embrace interactive and engaging approaches during the induction process. By doing so, organizations can create a positive onboarding experience that sets new employees up for success from day one.

And finally, lets leave the 12 slide passport picture gallery where they belong - for the identification parades.

CHAPTER 7

ARE YOU ENGAGED WITH ENGAGEMENT ?

I think it's a fairly obvious statement that - no business can win without its people and employee engagement is crucial for any organization's success. But do HR teams truly understand their potential influence on engaging their teams beyond providing pool tables and jelly beans?

While these things might attract people to the workplace initially, they are not enough to keep them engaged in their work in the long run. So, what are the key initiatives that HR leaders can use to drive engagement in their businesses?

Employee experience plays a vital role in engagement. It encompasses everything from the work environment to the culture of the organization. Employees who have a positive experience in their workplace tend to be more engaged in their work. A positive work environment includes the basics - things like a comfortable workspace, proper equipment and technology, and a supportive team. Its getting the basics right - (think Maslow/Herzberg)

Clear direction is essential for engagement. Employees need to know where the organization is headed, what their role is in achieving those goals, and how their work contributes to

the overall success of the organization. When employees understand how their work aligns with the organization's objectives, they are more likely to feel invested in the organization's success. Think a great induction when people start and goal setting and kick of meetings to align expectations, supported with regular performance check ins.

Autonomy, mastery, and purpose are critical for engagement. Employees need to feel that they have control over their work and the freedom to make decisions. They also need opportunities to develop their skills and expertise, which contributes to their sense of mastery. Finally, employees need to feel that their work has a purpose and contributes to something meaningful. When employees have a sense of purpose, they are more likely to be engaged in their work. Think competent line managers that can delegate, development and career growth and a clearly articulated organisational purpose.

Task identity is essential for engagement. Employees need to feel that they have ownership over their work and that their work is meaningful. When employees have a sense of ownership over their work, they are more likely to take pride in their work and feel engaged. Think regular updates on both comp[any and personal performance.

A two-way voice is crucial for engagement. Employees need to feel that their opinions are valued and that they have a voice in the organization. When employees feel heard, they are more likely to feel invested in the organization's success. Think internal communication platforms, listening groups and regular feedback sessions.

Competent managers are essential for engagement. Managers play a critical role in creating a positive work environment, providing clear direction, and fostering autonomy, mastery, and purpose. When managers are competent, they can create a sense of trust and respect among their team, which

contributes to engagement. Think management development programmes to upskill your leadership team.

Fairness and equity are essential for engagement. Employees need to feel that they are being treated fairly and that there is equity in the workplace. When employees feel that there is fairness and equity, they are more likely to feel invested in the organization's success. Think clear processes and policies supported with great communication.

Finally, reward the right things and celebrate success. Employees need to feel that their hard work is recognized and rewarded. However, it is important to reward the right things. Recognition and rewards should be tied to performance and contribution to the organization's success. Celebrating success also creates a positive work environment and fosters a sense of camaraderie among the team. Think internal reward schemes.

In conclusion, employee engagement goes beyond superficial perks like pool tables and jelly beans. It requires creating a positive work environment, providing clear direction, fostering autonomy, mastery, and purpose, creating a sense of task identity, ensuring a two-way voice, having competent managers, ensuring fairness and equity, rewarding the right things and celebrating success.

When employees are engaged, they are more likely to be productive, committed, and invested in the organization's success. No business can win without its people engaged.

CHAPTER 8

IS YOUR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PERFORMING ?

It's time to call out the elephant in the room - most businesses only have appraisal systems in place to justify company bonus schemes. Let's face it, that's the reality for many organizations out there.

Its time to stop pretending that appraisal systems are actually effective and start focusing on what really matters in organisations - creating a culture that sets you apart from the competition.

As HR professionals, we are not taking the opportunity to fully shape what should in reality be the most crucial business activity system we have - ensuring our people know what they need to do and enabling them to achieve.

So, let's cut to the chase - we need to be working with our organisations to develop a performance management system that drives organizational performance, shapes culture, engages people through task identity, identifies development needs,

enforces the psychological contract, and encourages discretionary effort.

Sound too good to be true? Think again.

We need to start by rebranding appraisal processes with a more fitting name, such as Business Success Architecture or Business Enablement Architecture.

We need to reposition this critical activity in our companies as a positive one that integrates across many different activity systems and organizational architecture.

It's time to ditch the outdated name that brings to mind painful memories of filling out forms after a combative and unproductive annual meeting.

Why do we need to do this? Because enabling both our people and our organisations is not done through an annual conversation that covers 52 weeks of performance, learning, reward, career aspirations, and general catch-ups. It has become a Frankenstein's monster in the HR world that just no one wants to do and is not fit for purpose.

Let's face it, feedback is not always a gift. When it's linked directly to reward, it can lead to confrontation and awkward meetings. And don't forget the biases - fundamental attribution bias, recency bias, overconfidence bias - they just make the conversation even more challenging. Trying to measure and quantify an imperfect system with a defensive employee and an untrained line manager only leads to an ineffective one-way conversation covering events over a year old.

It's time for a change.

Let's create a system that aligns our people with our strategy by engaging them with meaningful agreed objectives, supporting them in their delivery, and encouraging ongoing achievement.

It's time to ditch the scientific management of Taylor and the past and embrace autonomy, mastery, and purpose. We need to create a system that brings these principles to life and engages our people in a way that speaks to them - knowledge workers of today and the new generations entering the workforce.

First port of call in creating Business Success Architecture will always be setting KPIs, OKRs, or Goals - whatever you want to call them. But this is just the beginning. We need to create a system that focuses on strengths-based coaching, regular check-ins, agile learning opportunities and ongoing feedback that leads to continuous improvement. Let's ditch the annual review and embrace a more agile approach that fits our business tempo and encourages a performance-based culture.

It's time to say goodbye to the old, ineffective appraisal system and embrace a new approach that drives organizational performance, shapes culture, engages people, and encourages continuous improvement.

So, are you ready to make the change?

CHAPTER 9

WANT TO DO WELL IN HUMAN RESOURCES – LOOK OUTSIDE THE FUNCTION.

I was recently asked what is the best way is to start in HR – my answer was ”try to not start your career in HR”. A puzzling answer?

Let me explain.

The reality today is an effective HR leader doesn’t just need to have technical knowledge about HR. They must understand how their businesses create value and be able to impact their organisations strategic positioning through supporting on the delivery of the right talent and capability, ideally using HR architecture that shape an intended culture and support the businesses unique competitive advantage.

In Human Resources (HR) we have long been criticized for our focus on compliance and administrative tasks rather than helping our businesses win in the market. Frequently we are often perceived as lacking the necessary skills and experience to effectively manage a team, plan and execute opera-

tional strategies, and understand the financial implications of our decisions.

So how do we fix this?

One of the biggest issues with HR today can be the emphasis on compliance and administrative tasks. While these are important aspects of the role, we often focus more on this than supporting the delivery of company strategy. The solution – spend time within the business to understand what HR architecture you can develop that can make people a competitive advantage in your organisation. Think value add – not compliance.

More by accident than design many HR professionals do not have operational experience. They may not have worked in the field they are supporting or never led a team which can often lead to a lack of understanding of the business and its needs. If you have limited experience in these areas its easily fixed. Look to getting yourself involved with projects outside the function, take opportunities to step up and lead small teams and spend time with your operational teams so you can understand how your business operates.

Leadership is a bit like swimming – it can't just be learned from a book.

Without hands on operational experience, as you grow in your HR career it can be challenging to effectively manage your own teams or plan and execute your own operational strategies. An understanding of operations also supports in the development of the ability to collaborate with other departments and stakeholders. Take time to work outside of the function at the coalface – trust me it will change your lens when you create initiatives in the future.

To our own detriment often HR leaders do not have a strong understanding of finance. In the region most CEO's come from a CFO background and we need to be speaking

their language. If you want buy in for your plans make sure you have the necessary skills to analyse financial data or understand the financial implications of your decisions. There are many courses available that will help you understand business finance – upskill yourself in, it will support you in getting quicker buy in.

As automation and AI continues to drive change in our organisations, we need to be upskilling ourselves as a profession, to be both future ready and to remain relevant for that seat at the table. By making these changes, HR can become a true strategic partner to the business.

Want to do well in HR? Look outside the function at some point in your career and learn some techniques from Marketing, Legal, Finance and Operations – you wont regret it

CHAPTER 10

HUMAN RESOURCE TITLES — LETS STAY IN LANE

Human resources (HR) is an essential function in every organization, as it manages the most valuable asset a company has - its people. We also know that no company can deliver its strategy without the right talent, culture and capability. It really is all about people.

I strongly believe that now is the time we completely retire the term HR business partner and start referring to our function as People and Culture professionals, which better reflects the role that HR plays in today's organisations.

Firstly, I have never liked the term HR business partner because it implies that HR is a separate entity that needs to partner with the business to achieve the organization's objectives. This language suggests that HR is not an integral part of the business, which is not the case. No Business can achieve its strategy without its people – so the people function is essential to the success of the organization, and its objectives should be aligned with those of the business. Adding the business partner reminder is just a bit needy.

Even worse the term HR business partner often comes with the addition of the word “strategic” to the title. While it

may sound impressive, in reality, it doesn't make much sense. All departments in a company should be strategic in nature, including HR. If they're not strategic, then what are they doing all day? For instance, finance departments are responsible for managing the organization's financial resources, and marketing departments are responsible for creating demand for the organization's products or services. These functions are strategic by nature, and the same applies to HR.

In contrast, the term people and culture highlights the role of HR in creating an environment that fosters the growth and development of the organization's most significant asset - its people. A strong people and culture department understands that a company's culture and its people are the key drivers of success. Therefore, they focus on creating a positive work environment, encouraging employee engagement and development, and aligning employee goals with the company's strategic objectives.

One of the most important roles of HR is to develop and execute the people strategy. A people strategy is simply the company's strategy delivered through its people. It involves identifying the organization's talent needs, assessing the skills and competencies of the current workforce, and developing a plan to attract, retain, and develop the right talent. A strong people strategy helps to create a competitive advantage by developing a workforce that is aligned with the company's objectives and has the necessary skills and competencies to execute the strategy and if done well provide competitive differentiation.

Finally, the term people and culture better reflects what should be the overall objective of HR, which is to help shape a culture where employees feel valued and engaged. When employees feel engaged and valued, they are more productive and committed to the company's success. This, in turn, leads to better business outcomes, such as increased profitability,

improved customer satisfaction, and a more positive brand image.

My final views - I strongly believe that the new titles of HR should be people and culture and not HR business partners. The latter term implies that HR is a separate entity from the rest of the business, which is not the case. Instead, the people and culture department plays a critical role in creating a positive work environment that fosters the growth and development of the organization's most significant asset - its people.

By developing and executing a strong people strategy, People & Culture teams can create a competitive advantage by aligning the workforce with the company's objectives and developing the necessary skills and competencies to execute the strategy. Let's drop the Business Partner title and embrace the more appropriate title that highlights we are the organisations leaders of people and culture.

CHAPTER 11

I STILL RATE RATINGS

I am sure most of you by now will have read about how all performance management systems are broken and the most progressive companies are moving away from rating employees - it's the new bandwagon for people to jump on - I am not convinced.

As far back as 1991 the then Institute of Personnel Management concluded that performance management was about making sure managers manage properly - that they clearly communicate to their staff what is expected of them and give them the means to meet that expectation.

Whilst I read daily about people scrapping their systems I am yet to see what one of these new systems looks like and empirical evidence to show it works better than the 'old fashioned' systems they had previously. Though I agree that if a line manager is addressing their employee's performance only through a 'formal' appraisal once a year - we do have a huge problem.

An article recently described a large MNC - who had scrapped their ratings - and had replaced them with simply **performing/not performing** -(isn't that a form of ranking on a scale of 2?). When asked about what improvements had been noted, it stated after 2 years «it's still too early to see if it

worked». In the business environment we operate in now – we don't have the luxury of that time to be working out what should be working to drive performance.

Let's say I remove the ratings I use now and replaced them with **performed or not performed**. With a performance based reward philosophy – how do I distribute reward fairly between my ok performer and my superstar – who now both rate as '**performed**'? – If they get the same review I disengage my superstar – If I give the superstar more than the person with the same rating they will both ask why. However if one was rated as a "1" and the other a "3", I can quantify and justify my decision making around reward allocation and potential Talent interventions.

Research has shown that its only around 15 to 20% of your population that really make a difference to the bottom line. With a performed/not performing label – do you really want to lump them with the other 50% of mediocre performers and risk losing them to the competition when they become disengaged by not being recognised?

Ratings work for me because –If your systems are set up correctly – the ratings should be clear and transparent and can be defended if challenged. I work in a complex multi cultural environment and here it can stop accusations of favoritism and tangibly support a decision around Talent or Reward.

I am still reading a lot of 'ideas' about the scrapping of PM systems and ratings – but yet to really see anything that makes me sit up and say 'wow'. Frequently meeting with your employees, giving real-time feedback and reviewing goals and achievements weekly is just good management and I don't need an 'app' to make that happen. More worryingly the app won't fix a poor manager or their poor practices.

Managing performance lies with the line manager it is here where the fix starts. Ratings are not broken – It's the process that feeds into the ratings that needs the work.

What I am advocating is –

- Upskill and educate the line on good Performance Management, provide simple tools and educate them on the right way to use the tools. Equally educate your employees on what their line managers should be doing
- Making sure line managers are setting clear, aligned KPIs, objectives and frequently communicating the required behaviors to their teams.
- Monitoring team results daily and weekly
- Making feedback frequent and timely using whatever medium is appropriate at the time
- Train managers to diagnose performance issues, develop their skills around feedback and give them a performance framework to benchmark against.

Rating people '**performing or not performing**' or **A/B/C** or whatever the new terminology is – this is still rating people.

It's not the rating that isn't working but the whole process behind it that needs attention – whatever happens, for the moment I won't be throwing them out.

CHAPTER 12

HYBRID WORKING PRESENTS A COMPELLING SOLUTION

If I told you I like coming to work in an office then there are many people who will dismiss my view as being that of a different generation. They are 100% right I am from a different generation but I would disagree that doing something you enjoy and getting to spend time with interesting people from a diverse range of cultures, at meetings, presentations and day to day interactions can be replaced by a desk in the corner of a bedroom.

As the argument rages on and more businesses are reversing their stance on completely working remotely – for those advocates that everyone can work from home and it’s not a discussion – here is an example I want you to think about.

Just as your plane is landing the pilot suddenly pulls up and starts to circle the airport. The announcement is “We can’t currently locate our landing slot as the Air Traffic Controller is working from home and his wife is down. We will be updating you when he is back online”. It would never happen – nor would a chef or a surgeon or policeman work from home and that’s why work from home for everyone needs context.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a massive shift in work dynamics, propelling remote work into the spotlight. However, as the world of work moves forward, the balanced approach of hybrid working is gaining traction, offering the best of both worlds by combining the benefits of working from home and the social and cultural advantages of in-office collaboration.

While the jury may still be out on total remote work, several themes highlight the importance of hybrid working as a viable option for businesses and their employees.

The first is proximity relationships: Human interaction and collaboration are vital for effective teamwork and building strong professional relationships. While remote work allows for flexibility, it can hinder the spontaneous exchanges and face-to-face connections that are crucial for innovation and team bonding. By adopting a hybrid model, employees have the opportunity to balance remote work with occasional in-person meetings, fostering stronger proximity relationships and enhancing collaboration.

My favourite definition of culture is – “how we do things around here”. A company’s culture is nurtured through shared experiences, team-building activities, and spontaneous interactions that occur within a shared environment. Remote work, if solely adopted, can dilute the organizational culture and can create a disconnect among team members. By embracing hybrid working, companies can strike a balance that preserves their culture by combining the benefits of both remote and in-person work. It allows employees to feel connected and aligned with the organization’s values while enjoying the flexibility of remote work when appropriate.

One of the downsides of remote work is the fatigue that comes with endless video conferences. Zoom meetings with cameras off was a lowlight of my remote working experience. I personally feel this can contribute to disengagement and

decrease the effectiveness of virtual interactions. In contrast hybrid working can alleviate this issue by ensuring employees have fewer video meetings and more meaningful in-person discussions. Face-to-face interactions not only improve communication but also enhance non-verbal cues, empathy, and overall understanding among team members.

Every business is unique, with its own set of requirements and priorities. While remote work may suit certain industries or job roles, it might not be the best fit for others. Hybrid working offers the flexibility to adapt and tailor the work environment to individual business needs. It enables companies to consider the nature of their work, employee preferences, and customer demands, and find the right balance that maximizes productivity and employee satisfaction.

In the ongoing debate between remote work and returning to the traditional office setting, hybrid working presents a compelling solution. It allows businesses to leverage the advantages of both remote and in-person work, thereby enhancing collaboration, maintaining organizational culture, and accommodating specialized professions.

While remote work undoubtedly offers flexibility and increased autonomy, it is important to strike a balance that fosters meaningful human connections and the sharing of ideas.

Ultimately, the key is to find what works best for each individual business and its employees, ensuring productivity, engagement, and a positive work-life balance.

There isn't a best practice only a best fit and just for the record, I am writing this article in Starbucks.

CHAPTER 13

SHOW ME MORE THAN JUST THE MONEY

For those of a certain generation – I have no doubt you can still vividly picture the scene in Jerry McGuire with Tom Cruise being asked to shout “show me the money” down the phone. Unfortunately, when we think of rewards at work, default will always be monetary compensation and we just think its all about the cash.

I would be foolish to say, financial remuneration does not play a significant role in attracting and retaining talented individuals. However, it is crucial to recognize that money is just one piece of a very complicated puzzle that forms what is known as the psychological contract at work.

In today’s dynamic and evolving work environments with multiple generations in the workforce, the concept of total rewards encompasses a broader spectrum of factors that contribute to employee satisfaction and engagement. Among these factors are the often-forgotten recognition of personal achievement, making people feeling valued, the ability to influence, and personal growth. All these are crucial components to creating a holistic and fulfilling work experience in the modern workplace.

While a competitive salary and benefits package can capture initial attention (think show me the money), the ability to achieve and be recognised for those achievements - fosters a sense of purpose and fulfilment within individuals. The desire to make progress, accomplish goals, and overcome challenges superpowers intrinsic motivation, driving employees to excel. Implementing schemes that recognize and celebrate achievements, play a pivotal role in boosting morale, increasing productivity, and nurturing a positive work culture.

The ability to Influence is another essential aspect of supporting the psychological contract - it empowers employees to make meaningful contributions and shape their work environments. Feeling valued and having a voice in decision-making processes fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to your companies' goals. Organizations that embrace transparency, open communication channels, and participatory frameworks create a culture that values employee input. This inclusive approach not only enhances job satisfaction but also allows for the flow of innovation and diverse perspectives, leading to improved problem-solving, innovation and overall organizational performance. The best ideas will always come from your teams.

Employees who have opportunities to expand their knowledge, acquire new skills, and pursue their passions are more likely to feel fulfilled in their roles. Organizations that prioritize the personal growth and well-being of their employees create an environment where people thrive. Opportunities for skill development, mentorship, and coaching programs can support employees to reach their full potential, equipping them with a broader skill set and boosting their self-confidence. As employees grow personally, they bring their enriched selves to the workplace, positively impacting team dynamics, and collaboration. Organizations that invest in learning and development initiatives, provide access to educational resources, and encourage employees to explore new

horizons create a vibrant and engaged workforce. More importantly personal growth initiatives contribute to employee retention, as individuals perceive long-term value in organizations that support their continuous development.

While monetary rewards are undeniably important, they are not the sole drivers of employee satisfaction and engagement. Organizations that acknowledge the significance of recognising achievement, influence, and personal growth as essential components of total rewards create a more enriching and fulfilling work environment. In this holistic approach, employees feel valued, motivated, and connected to their work, leading to enhanced productivity, loyalty, and overall organizational success.

As employers and HR professionals, it is essential to reimagine the concept of total rewards and move beyond a narrow focus on just financial incentives. In an era where talent is increasingly difficult to attract and retain, a comprehensive and impactful total rewards strategy becomes a competitive advantage in the war for talent.

My final thoughts – while money serves as an initial attractor, it is the broader aspects of total rewards that truly engage and retain employees. Recognised achievement, the ability to influence, making people feel valued and personal growth provide a deeper sense of fulfilment and purpose in the workplace.

By embracing a holistic approach to total rewards, organizations can create an environment where individuals thrive both professionally and personally, driving long-term success.

Show me the money? That's nice to start with – but personally there are some things I value greater.

CHAPTER 14

OLD METHODOLOGY TO NEW TERMINOLOGY - BUILDING A TALENT SUPPLY CHAIN.

How many times have you seen a vacancy arise and an external hire is made, and it just doesn't work out? Its more common than we think.

When it comes to filling a higher position within an organization, the decision to promote internally or seek external candidates is often a topic of debate. While external hires can bring fresh perspectives, there is a compelling case for promoting employees from within. By focusing on internal promotions, organizations can nurture a deep understanding of their culture, foster employee loyalty, enhance productivity, and ultimately drive long-term success.

In this article, I discuss the advantages of promoting from within and explore the significance of cultural understanding in making employees effective. I argue that every organisation should have strong internal talent process as the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks.

If we stay with the definition that culture is “how we do things around here” – a crucial aspect of maintaining a strong organizational culture (if its working) is ensuring that employees understand and embody its values and mission. By promoting from within, organizations can capitalize on the social capital that existing employees possess. Internal candidates are already immersed in the organization’s culture, familiar with its values, and aware of its operational nuances. This reduces the time required for onboarding, enhances integration, and minimizes potential disruptions – they are up and running much quicker.

Promoting employees from within sends a powerful message to your people: dedication and hard work are recognized and rewarded. Studies conducted by Wharton Business School, show that internal promotions lead to higher levels of employee satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty. Employees who see a clear career path within the organization are motivated to excel, stay committed, and contribute to the company’s growth. This elevated sense of loyalty and morale can lead to increased productivity and a more positive work environment. It superpowers engagement and discretionary effort. This is when your people become a competitive advantage.

External hires often require a significant investment of time and resources for recruitment, screening, and onboarding. By promoting from within, organizations can bypass these extensive processes and significantly reduce associated costs. Internal candidates already possess a wealth of institutional knowledge, reducing the learning curve and enabling them to quickly adapt to their new roles. Additionally, studies have shown that external hires take longer to reach their full productivity potential compared to internal promotions, further emphasizing the time-saving benefits. A quicker time to competence will have a significant impact on the bottom line in many roles. If many of the skills required for the role can be

taught – have that learning mapped into your talent process so people are future ready.

Employee turnover can be costly and disruptive for organizations. According to research by the Center for American Progress, the average cost of replacing an employee is approximately 20% of their annual salary. Promoting from within can work at some level to mitigate this risk by providing employees with opportunities for growth and advancement, thereby increasing their commitment to the organization. Another added benefit is internal promotions ensure continuity and stability within teams, as existing employees already possess established working relationships and knowledge of the organization's processes.

First adopted by the military in the world wars - succession planning is a critical aspect of organizational strategy. By consistently promoting from within where feasible, organizations can identify and prepare high-potential employees for future leadership roles. This approach allows for a smooth transition of knowledge and responsibilities when senior positions become vacant. A survey conducted by Deloitte found that 86% of companies with a formal succession plan promoted employees from within, highlighting the effectiveness of this approach.

While external hires may bring valuable perspectives and experiences, promoting employees from within an organization offers numerous advantages. Cultivating cultural understanding, fostering loyalty and morale, saving time and resources, enhancing organizational stability, and improving succession planning are just a few of the benefits of a focused Talent process.

The takeout of today? Think of yourself as the Head of Talent Supply Chain. Support your organisations future by having a robust talent process in place. By nurturing and developing existing talent, organizations can tap into their em-

employees' deep understanding of the company's culture and values, leading to increased effectiveness and long-term success. This will ensure your businesses leverage their most valuable asset – their people.

CHAPTER 15

COMPETENCE CAMOUFLAGE

There was a fantastic post last year on LinkedIn in which the writer said they were going to join Google and leave after 2 weeks – just to write Ex Google on their LinkedIn header. Funny but unfortunately it highlights a real modern issue in hiring Talent which I am going to call – competence camouflage.

We all know that out there are some incredible companies. They have spent many years building their brands, refining systems and processes – attracting the best talent – who have then continued to grow and develop those companies into leaders in their field.

Unfortunately, what we don't want to talk about is that those world class processes also create life support systems for the incompetent and the mediocre and when they are hired by a new organisation to raise the bar, based on their previous big brand experience – they struggle to make an impact in organisations where they don't paint by numbers.

Let me be clear – many of these organisations are led by exceptional talent and these people are not the focus of this article. What I do know is that great companies will often have great people processes – and you will see top talent be picked up by these systems and moved up and around within

the organisation. These organisations also have great performance management systems. In contrast this is when you also see people move after 12 – 18 months often between these famous brands. You could pass these short time stints off as ambition, I have a different view – I personally believe this time frame is around when you get questioned on when you have made an impact in your role. And for many it's time to move on.

So the question is why do people then continually get hired into new if not better and more senior roles when they don't stay long or have proven concrete achievements in their current role? – Its now becoming a modern phenomenon. When you list you have worked in the biggest brands in the world people automatically assume your abilities – whether they test for them or not. Its competence camouflage.

Another area this also applies is to our higher education systems. I hear all the time that we should only hire from top business schools. I agree that there is merit in this however, as our current education systems are currently set up we are often hiring academically gifted students who are great at passing examinations – when in reality many of the analytical skills they have learned can now be done by AI.

There is little value add in competing with computers – so we should now be focusing on hiring for the future proof leadership skills of creativity, compassion, collaboration, and critical thinking which sadly most are not taught in business schools. Interestingly someone who went into the working world earlier and missed business school could have taken the time to hone and develop these skills and theoretically should have a competitive advantage over the more academically qualified candidates. A new trend which I am beginning to see is many forward-thinking organisations are now moving away from asking for a first degree because of this and opening up their talent pools.

The other fact that we don't like to talk about is how this can affect social mobility. There is sadly a bias that the majority of those that can attend the best academic institutions do so because of family wealth and previous access to a high level of private education. It's not a level playing field for Talent that didn't get the same great start in life.

What am I saying then? – Its simply cast your net further.

To overcome these issues, recruitment teams need to take a fresh approach to selection and focus on developing frameworks and techniques that determine cultural fit and potential abilities for future contribution to the organisation, rather than just looking for brand names on a CV. Screening people based solely on the companies they worked for or the business schools they attend can cause organisations to miss out on a wider pool of talent and potentially encourage groupthink.

In short, HR teams need to take a more holistic approach to hiring that looks beyond the traditional indicators of success. It's time to move beyond competence camouflage and start finding the best talent, regardless of their background or the brand name they use.

CHAPTER 16

UNLEASHING ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE:

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF LEARNING

Last week I joined a conversation with two of my team as they were discussing the launch of a new Talent process across the group. A comment came up about an internet article that had stated training people wasn't important as they would probably leave. Of course, the standard response to that was "what do you do if they stay?" – (its been on a thousand LinkedIn memes). The reality is training or learning as I would much rather describe it – is so much more than simply a cost to teach people a few new things.

In our volatile complex and ambiguous business world, organizations are constantly seeking ways to remain competitive and relevant. Today your learning function is now far beyond being a simple corporate formality – a learning strategy in an organization is an invaluable investment that yields multifaceted benefits. From being an integral component of the total reward framework to fulfilling the psychological contract and enabling people as a competitive advantage, shaping your employer brand – learning emerges as a cornerstone of success.

I have previously written about reward being a lot more than just cash – a well-rounded total reward strategy encompasses more than just monetary compensation. It encompasses various elements that contribute to an employee’s overall satisfaction and motivation. Among these components, development stands tall as a significant factor that not only enriches an employee’s skill set but also enhances their sense of value within the organization. When employees feel that their employer is committed in their personal and professional development, they are more likely to exhibit themselves higher levels of commitment and engagement – you will see them have just that little bit more skin in the game.

Structured development provides a pathway for employees to upskill, broaden their horizons, and stay updated with the latest industry trends. In return, this empowers employees to take on new challenges, leading to increased job satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment – giving them the opportunity to thrive. A holistic learning approach is the foundation of your employee value proposition that then not only attracts top talent but also retains existing employees, fostering a culture of loyalty and dedication that transcends conventional compensation models.

The psychological contract between employees and their organizations is a tacit agreement that extends beyond the written terms of employment. It involves the unwritten, reciprocal expectations that both parties have of one another. In this context, development plays a pivotal role in fulfilling these mutual obligations. When an organization invests in employee development through learning initiatives, it signals a commitment to nurturing talent and fostering a conducive environment for growth.

By delivering on the psychological contract, organizations lay the foundation for a robust employer-employee relationship built on trust and mutual respect. Employees who per-

ceive that their aspirations are being acknowledged and supported are more likely to remain engaged and aligned with the organization's objectives. This, in turn, reduces turnover rates and creates a positive ripple effect across the organization, bolstering morale and productivity.

In a rapidly changing business landscape, organizations are constantly seeking ways to gain a competitive edge. Learning emerges as a potent tool that enables organizations to harness their human capital as a strategic advantage. When employees are equipped with the right knowledge and skills, they can help your organisation win in the market. Furthermore, a well-designed learning framework aligns employees with the organization's strategic goals, ensuring a collective effort towards success.

Development not only enhances employees' technical capabilities but also nurtures essential soft skills such as leadership, communication, and problem-solving. This empowers employees to contribute meaningfully to the organization's strategic initiatives, driving innovation and positioning the company ahead of its competitors.

When a workforce is not only skilled – but also empowered to think critically and act decisively, it transforms into a formidable asset that can steer the organization towards dominating the market it plays in

In the contemporary business landscape, learning transcends its traditional role to become a critical enabler of organizational success. As an integral element of the total reward framework, learning nurtures a sense of fulfilment and engagement among employees, fostering a culture of loyalty and commitment. Simultaneously, it strengthens the psychological contract by demonstrating an organization's commitment to employee growth and development.

Learning ensures organisations succeed strategically by leveraging their human capital as a competitive advantage. Empowered employees equipped with a diverse skill set and a keen understanding of strategic objectives become the driving force behind innovation and sustained growth. In this intricate interplay of factors, learning emerges not only as an investment but as a catalyst for organizational excellence.

In a world where change is constant and agility is paramount, organizations that embrace development as an essential pillar of their operations are poised to thrive. As they equip their workforce with the tools to adapt, innovate, and excel, they pave the way for contribution to a sustained competitive advantage.

I am sure you will agree whether we believe our people will stay or go – learning should always remain top of our agenda.

CHAPTER 17

COULD STRONG HR LEADERSHIP HAVE PREVENTED THE GREAT RECESSION ?

I have a theory that good HR leadership could have prevented the Great Recession – not sure why? Hear me out on this one.

The 2008 global recession was triggered by a complex interplay of factors that paralysed the world banking system. At the heart of it (The Big Short is a great film to reference this) was the unethical behaviour prevalent in the financial sector. Behaviour driven by poorly thought-out bonus schemes that focused on short term gain only for the individual.

Irresponsible selling of financial products to individuals who could not afford to ever pay them back created a ticking time bomb that eventually exploded, wreaking havoc on the global economy. So how could HR have stopped the financial meltdown? Simply having a robust Human Resources (HR) function within an organization to challenge poor cultural norms

or poor reward decisions can manage and mitigate harmful behaviours that at the least can potentially damage organizations and at worst entire economies. Still not convinced? To further support my point, let's move on from 2008 and take a quick look into the infamous Enron and Volkswagen scandals, highlighting how stronger HR influence could have been instrumental in averting or minimizing the damage caused.

In the modern business environment HR must play a fundamental role in helping shape an organization's culture and its attitude towards ethical standards. Strong HR leadership ensures that the right values, principles, and codes of conduct are deeply embedded in the company's DNA. As part of the seat at the table it should act as an ethical custodian establishing architecture for maintaining transparency, accountability, and ethical behaviour across all levels of the organization. It should have the credibility to challenge when things are just not right.

The Enron scandal that unfolded in the early 2000s stands as a classic example of corporate misconduct and the subsequent fallout on employees, shareholders, and the economy. Enron's leadership orchestrated a massive accounting fraud, manipulating financial statements to deceive stakeholders. A toxic corporate culture allowed unethical practices to thrive, and internal warnings from employees went unheard or were suppressed. Perhaps if Enron had a strong HR department with an independent voice, capable of whistleblowing and safeguarding employees' interests, the outcome might have been different. HR professionals who are empowered to flag unethical practices can act as a safeguard against executive misconduct. They can foster a culture of openness where employees feel comfortable reporting potential wrongdoings without fear of retaliation.

Next comes the Volkswagen (VW) scandal which erupted in 2015 when it was revealed that the company had inten-

tionally installed software in its diesel vehicles to manipulate emissions tests. This deceitful practice had severe consequences, tarnishing VW's reputation and leading to substantial financial penalties. Again a robust HR function could have played a crucial role in preventing such deceptive practices. HR is responsible for developing and communicating ethical guidelines and ensuring that these principles are cascaded throughout the organization. It is instrumental in creating learning and communication frameworks ensuring employees understand their ethical responsibilities and the potential consequences of breaching them

So where can we really support the ethical agenda ?

Recruitment and Training: HR professionals are instrumental in hiring the right individuals whose values align with the organization's ethical standards. Comprehensive background checks and rigorous interviews can help identify potential red flags in a candidate's past behaviour.

Performance Management: A well constructed performance framework communicates the expected performance and behaviour expectations. By linking performance evaluations and reward with ethical behaviour, businesses can incentivize employees to uphold the company's values.

Whistleblower Mechanisms: HR departments can establish confidential whistleblower mechanisms that enable employees to report unethical practices without fear of retaliation. By fostering an environment of trust and confidentiality, employees are more likely to speak up when they witness misconduct.

And back to where this started with the 2008 recession. When the world economy collapsed it exposed the consequences of allowing unethical practices to thrive within the financial sector. Organizations must embrace the critical role

HR plays in managing and mitigating such harmful behaviors.

Strong HR leadership that has the credibility to challenge poor decisions, can support organizations to create a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability. The Enron and Volkswagen scandals serve as stark reminders of the need for proactive HR intervention to safeguard against misconduct, protecting not only the organization but also the economy at large.

Having the ability to challenge unethical conduct or poor reward decisions should not be viewed as a formality but as a strategic imperative for long-term company success and sustainability.

CHAPTER 18

A NEW APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

The often-forgotten simple truth for any organisation is that no strategy can be achieved without your people. For that truth to happen your organisations talent also needs to be aligned with your strategy and engaged with its delivery and finally in a culture that enables people. Taking the above statement into account and adding into the mix, new generations and new work expectations and the volatile and uncertain world we now live in – the role of our organisations leaders has never been more crucial.

But lets face it we really don't get this right as organisations. It's no longer enough for leaders to simply learn about what to do its really how they should be doing it. How they guide their teams through challenges and opportunities plays a pivotal role in the overall success and cultural health of an organization. Our leaders are the architects of our cultural destiny and we need to acknowledge and shape that more.

And here is my problem. Traditional leadership training has often centred around the 'what' – setting objectives, making decisions, and achieving goals. However, I am now suggesting a paradigm shift is needed towards teaching 'how' leaders

should lead with a greater emphasis on the potential pitfalls of poor leadership. This change is essential for fostering a positive workplace culture and avoiding the toxic environments that poor leaders create themselves – yet blame others.

I think it is time for us to think beyond the ‘What’ – to the importance of the ‘How’

Leadership is not just about achieving results at the cost of sacrificing psychological safety and culture; it’s about inspiring, motivating, and nurturing a team to perform at their best. As the saying goes, “It’s not what you do, but how you do it.” The manner in which leaders interact with their teams can greatly impact employee morale, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. In today’s interconnected and diverse workplaces, leaders need to possess a keen understanding of interpersonal dynamics, communication styles, generational differences, and emotional, social and cultural intelligence. By shifting the focus from simply outlining tasks to curated and purposeful leadership styles, organizations can create an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute their best and finally thrive.

We should also not forget the dark side of leadership. The traditional leadership narrative often neglects to address the potential negative outcomes of poor behaviors. A toxic workplace culture can result from leaders who lack empathy, are unable to manage conflicts, or exhibit favoritism. These environments can lead to high employee turnover, decreased performance, and mental health issues among staff. By incorporating lessons on the consequences of poor leadership, aspiring leaders can develop a heightened sense of responsibility for the well-being of their teams and the broader organization. Acknowledging the negative outcomes of inadequate leadership is a crucial step towards fostering a culture of accountability and positive change.

Next on the list is ownership – its about walking the talk and helping our managers learn to be cultural curators. Our management teams play a pivotal role in shaping the culture of an organization. Every decision they make, every interaction they have, contributes to the overall atmosphere of the workplace. Therefore, it's imperative for leadership training to emphasize the connection between leadership actions and the broader cultural landscape. Managers should be educated on how their behaviours and decisions can either promote inclusivity, open communication, and collaboration or inadvertently create an environment of fear, distrust, and exclusion. By instilling a sense of ownership over the organizational culture, managers can contribute to the creation of a workspace where employees feel supported, valued, and empowered.

A holistic approach to leadership training involves a combination of practices that align with the organization's values and goals, or intended interventions for intended outputs. I suggest rather than relying solely on isolated workshops or seminars, a bundled approach that includes ongoing coaching, mentorship, and peer feedback can provide a more comprehensive learning experience. This multifaceted approach helps aspiring leaders develop a deeper understanding of the 'how' of leadership and provides them with the tools to navigate complex scenarios effectively. By focusing on sustained interventions, organizations can ensure that leadership skills are continuously honed and adapted to meet the evolving needs of the workforce and industry.

The evolution of leadership training is essential for the continued success and well-being of organizations. While the 'what' of leadership remains important, the 'how' is equally vital in fostering a positive workplace culture and avoiding the potentially toxic outcomes of poor approaches. By being honest with ourselves about the potential negative outcomes of inadequate leadership and empowering managers to be cultural curators, organizations can cultivate an environment

where employees thrive, contribute meaningfully, and feel valued.

Through renewed interventions that focus on intended outputs, leadership training can shape effective leaders who not only achieve results but do so in a manner that inspires and uplifts their teams.

As the business landscape continues to evolve, investing in a new approach to leadership training is an investment in the sustainable growth and success of the organization and supports a competitive advantage through our people.

CHAPTER 19

MIND THE GAP -

FOSTERING CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN DUBAI'S MULTICULTURAL WORKPLACE

I love working in Dubai. The opportunity to embrace its cultural diversity, and having the privilege to work with and learn from incredible talent from all corners of the globe converging in this vibrant city is truly incredible.

My time in Dubai has also introduced me to many unique cultural norms such as the incredible generosity of Arabic hospitality and my personal favourite in my Indian colleagues culture – the jugaad. For those that don't know it is the incredible flexible approach to problem solving using limited resources in an innovative way. It is often a sight to behold – a true work super power.

Whilst this diversity enriches the social fabric and offers a unique living experience, it can also present some unique challenges in the workplace. This is where Human Resources (HR) should play a pivotal role in helping to develop cultural understanding among employees. Through intended HR architecture promoting inclusivity, tolerance, and empathy, HR can create a harmonious work environment where cultural differences are celebrated and leveraged for greater collaboration and productivity.

Regional HR Leaders can design and implement cultural awareness initiatives to help employees appreciate and respect different customs, traditions, and beliefs. These initiatives can include workshops, seminars, and training sessions that explore various cultures represented in the workplace. These activities offer employees the opportunity to learn about each other's backgrounds, fostering a sense of understanding and breaking down stereotypes.

Through different interventions HR can work closely with employees to sensitize them to cultural differences and potential misunderstandings that may arise in a multicultural setting. By raising awareness of these challenges, employees are better prepared to navigate cross-cultural interactions with sensitivity and respect.

A diverse and inclusive workplace is one where employees feel valued and appreciated for their unique contributions. HR can actively promote diversity and inclusion by ensuring equitable hiring practices, providing equal growth opportunities, and encouraging diverse voices in decision-making processes. By embracing diversity as a strategic asset, HR can set the tone for a culture of acceptance and appreciation for different perspectives.

Effective communication is the bedrock of a successful workplace. HR can organize cross-cultural communication training that equips employees with the skills to communicate across cultural boundaries. Such training can focus on understanding non-verbal cues, active listening, and adapting communication styles to accommodate cultural nuances.

HR can support the formation of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) based on cultural backgrounds. These voluntary groups provide a platform for employees to connect with others who share similar cultural experiences. ERGs not only foster a sense of community but also offer valuable insights

to HR on specific challenges faced by employees of diverse backgrounds.

Unfortunately conflict is inevitable in any workplace, but HR can play a critical role in addressing conflicts that may arise due to cultural differences. HR professionals can be trained in cultural sensitivity to ensure that they approach conflict resolution with empathy and understanding, taking into account the cultural contexts of those involved.

We can encourage the organisation of cultural events and celebrations in the workplace, allowing employees to share their cultural heritage with their colleagues. This not only enhances cultural understanding but also creates a sense of camaraderie and unity among employees.

We also should not just talk the talk – we should walk the walk. Leading by Example HR leaders should actively demonstrate cultural understanding and inclusivity in their interactions with employees. When HR professionals and the senior leadership team model the behavior they expect from others, it sends a powerful message throughout the organization.

Dubai's multicultural workplace offers a rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives, making it a truly remarkable place to work and learn.

However, navigating the complexities of such diversity requires a concerted effort to develop cultural understanding and foster an inclusive environment. HR must play a pivotal role in leading this effort, with a range of initiatives that promote awareness, sensitivity, and acceptance. By emphasizing cultural understanding, HR can create a workplace that embraces diversity as a strength, leading to enhanced collaboration, employee satisfaction, and ultimately, organizational success.

In the incredible melting pot of cultures that is Dubai, the role of HR in nurturing cultural understanding cannot be overstated, and if we are not leveraging our diversity as a superpower – there definitely needs to be a cultural jugaad.

CHAPTER 20

HR AS THE CATALYST FOR ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

In 2022 was the late Queen Elizabeth II's jubilee and an article in the Times looked back at the top 30 companies that dominated the business landscape in 1952 at the time of her coronation.

The British business landscape was then led by industrial giants such as Swan Hunter, Lancashire Cotton, Murex, and Vickers. These companies employed men in physically demanding roles, symbolizing an era of traditional industrialization. However, with the passage of time, the business landscape has transformed significantly. Of the 30 companies in the index when Elizabeth II came to the throne, only one remains unchanged — Tate and Lyle - though even that has sold its sugar refinery business.

If we move to more recent times - the rise and fall of major phone manufacturers like Nokia and BlackBerry demonstrate the importance of adaptability and evolution in the corporate world. I am hoping now that you are beginning to ask what this has to do with Human Resource leadership ? The simple answer is the one thing we often forget - business don't change - people change.

Continuing with the history lesson – you will at some point have heard of the phrase Darwinian – it also applies very much to the business world. Charles Darwin’s Theory of Evolution asserts that individuals with adaptive traits are more likely to survive and pass on those traits to future generations. The same principle applies to the business world, where organizations need to adapt to the changing market dynamics to thrive.

The ability to navigate through uncertainty and embrace transformation is critical for the survival and success of any business. This is where good HR leadership comes into play, serving as the catalyst for change within organizations. If you want to see true examples of change – think Netflix from DVD’s to content creation and Fuji from film to leaders in the digital camera field.

Businesses themselves cannot change without the people within them driving change by thinking and acting differently. Organizations are made up of individuals, each with their unique perspectives, skills, and abilities. HR professionals understand this fundamental truth and play a pivotal role in aligning the goals and aspirations of employees with the strategic direction of the company

True HR professionals are adept at recognizing the need for change within organizations. They analyze market trends, assess competition, and identify areas for improvement or innovation. By keeping a finger on the pulse of the industry, HR can anticipate future challenges and drive proactive change initiatives.

Change is often met with resistance, especially when employees are accustomed to traditional ways of doing things. HR leaders and teams can play a vital role in creating a culture of adaptability within the organization. By fostering open communication, promoting continuous learning, and encouraging a growth mindset, HR professionals enable em-

ployees to embrace change and contribute to the organization's new direction.

Implementing change successfully requires careful planning and execution. HR professionals who specialize in change management can employ various strategies to ensure smooth transitions. They can develop comprehensive change management plans, communicate effectively with employees, provide necessary training and support, and monitor the progress of change initiatives.

As businesses evolve, new skills and competencies become essential for success. HR professionals identify skill gaps within the organization and develop strategies to bridge them. This may involve training programs, new talent acquisition, or upskilling initiatives. By aligning the workforce with the changing needs of the business, HR ensures a smooth transition during periods of change.

In an ever-changing business landscape and our volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world, organizations must adapt and evolve to remain competitive. The key to businesses successfully changing is utilizing the people within them as they hold the key to successful transformation. HR professionals play a crucial role in leading change by recognizing the need for adaptation, fostering a culture of flexibility, and managing the transition effectively. By leveraging their expertise in change management, talent development, and organizational alignment, HR professionals ensure that businesses can navigate the challenges of the modern world and continue to thrive.

In this Darwinian era of business, strong HR leadership can be the guiding force that enables companies to embrace change and shape their own destinies.

Businesses don't change - people change.

CHAPTER 21

AN EYE TO THE PAST CAN HELP GUIDE THE FUTURE

Last year I escaped the Dubai heat to spend 2 weeks with my family in the region of the UK I grew up in – Lancashire. I have for some reason over the past few years started to have a greater interest in history and I was fascinated to read about the Lancashire Cotton Panic of 1861 – 1865. An economic depression caused by overproduction of cotton and the interruption of the supply of baled cotton from the US due to the American Civil War causing a major ripple effect worldwide particularly impacting China at the time.

What I found fascinating about the story from the 1800's was the interlinked economic spiders web – events happening around the world that had repercussions in far reaching economies. What I found more interesting is when we talk about the drivers of change in the modern world, globalisation always tops the list as a recent phenomenon and how world events now are like tsunamis – they affect everyone, rather than like hurricanes that only impact a smaller area. History would tell us something much different it seems some of the effects of globalisation have been with us much longer than we think.

I also recently had a conversation with a friend about NFT's and their drop in price. I explained to him the similar phenomenon that occurred in the 17th century – Tulip Mania.

400 years ago – the Dutch Republic experienced a significant increase in the prices of tulip bulbs, driven by speculative trading. However, the bubble eventually burst, resulting in a sharp collapse in prices. If you don't believe that – Google it – it's an interesting read. Tulip mania serves as a cautionary tale about speculative bubbles and asset pricing.

So what's the point of the small history lesson in a HR column? In my personal experience one of our biggest faults as a profession is always looking inwards into a business and reacting to day to day events, not analysing the external environment sufficiently, and not taking into account how history can often guide us on our future.

Understanding history is crucial for Human Resources professionals because the lessons from the past will offer valuable insights and guidance that can be applied to contemporary organizational challenges. History provides us with a wealth of information on how societies and economies have evolved, the successes and failures of various strategies, and the consequences of different decisions. By delving into historical events like the tulip bubble and the Lancashire Cotton Famine, HR professionals can gain a deeper understanding of human behaviour, economic cycles, and the impact of external factors on business operations. It can help us plan better.

Going back to my new holiday learnings – in the case of the Lancashire Cotton Famine, there are great learnings about the lessons that the impact of global economic forces can have on industries and employment. The overproduction of cotton and the American Civil War disrupted baled cotton imports, leading to a depression in the textile industry of North West England. Globalisation is not a modern phenomenon.

So, what can HR professionals do with this historical knowledge?

The one thing that stands out is simple – it can help us with better decision-making: By understanding historical economic events, HR professionals can make more informed decisions when it comes to workforce planning, talent management, and compensation strategies. They can identify potential risks and opportunities, ensuring the organization is well-prepared to navigate through uncertain times.

It can help us with enhancing our strategic planning: HR can contribute to strategic planning by incorporating historical perspectives into the business strategy. Recognizing patterns from the past can help HR teams identify potential future challenges and develop proactive measures to address them.

It will help us focus externally – through continuous monitoring of the external environment: for us to truly add value – HR professionals must not be insular; they should consistently monitor the external environment, including economic, social, and technological trends. By being aware of the global landscape, HR can anticipate changes and respond proactively, thereby contributing to the company's resilience and success.

It can support organizational learning: Encouraging a culture of learning from history can be valuable in HR development programs. It enables HR professionals to cultivate critical thinking and apply historical insights to various HR functions, such as recruitment, training, and performance management.

My learning on my holiday? History provides Human Resources professionals with a treasure trove of knowledge that can be applied to modern-day challenges.

By looking outside our normal scope of influence, HR can make better decisions when influencing strategic plan-

ning. Embracing historical insights equips HR with the evidence-based practice necessary to navigate the complexities of the dynamic business world and support the organization's long-term success.

The Lancashire Cotton Famine and Tulip Mania are not just parts of our history, they are examples that emphasize the need for HR to stay vigilant about global economic trends and their potential implications for the organization's workforce.

CHAPTER 22

A LETTER TO MY SON - EMBRACING CHALLENGES AND UNLEASHING YOUR POTENTIAL

I was asked a question by a friend who wanted to know if, when my son goes into the world of work what advice would I give him based on my experience of working in Human Resources in the Corporate World – the question was “What advice would I give him to set him up for success?”

It was a great question and made me really think about how I would approach this one day. The below is my answer, with a few caveats.

If many points sound familiar – well it’s because they aren’t really new – they are simply tried and tested and work. Secondly these include my personal observations based around being fortunate to have worked with some highly impactful leaders in the last 30 years and some things that worked for me.

To begin with there is the real truth in that there isn’t a hack to success in the corporate world – but there are some things you can do to increase your chances of doing well. As always, it’s not about the cards you are dealt but how you play your hand.

There is though one defining trait that I have seen amongst all the most successful leaders – and that is self-mastery.

Often referred to as “know thyself,” it is a lifelong journey of personal growth and development. It involves gaining a deep understanding of your strengths, weaknesses, values, and passions, and using that knowledge to navigate through work challenges with resilience and determination. I would break down self mastery into these key focus areas.

Controlling Your Inner Voice: One of the most powerful tools for self-mastery is learning to control your inner voice. Our thoughts and self-talk greatly influence our emotions and actions. By cultivating a positive and empowering inner dialogue, you can overcome self-doubt, fears, and negative thinking patterns. Replace self-limiting beliefs with affirmations that support your growth and success – examples can be keeping a journal of your successes at work can support this.

Embrace the Suck: Discipline is the key to achieving professional success. Embracing the “suck” means being willing to endure discomfort and push through challenges to reach your goals. Understand that setbacks and failures are a part of the journey. Instead of avoiding difficult tasks, embrace them as opportunities for growth and learning. Develop a mindset that thrives on adversity and see every obstacle as a stepping-stone towards your ultimate success.

Exercise and Self Care: Taking care of your physical well-being is essential for self-mastery. Regular exercise not only improves your physical health but also enhances mental clarity and focus. Engaging in physical activities helps you practice self-discipline that can teach you perseverance, self-control, and resilience. These skills transfer well into the workplace.

Determination and Bouncing Back: Work life is filled with ups and downs. In the face of failure or adversity, it's crucial to cultivate determination and the ability to pick yourself up.

Rather than dwelling on past mistakes, learn from them and use that knowledge to propel yourself forward. Remember the saying, “Fall 7, rise 8.” Every setback is an opportunity to rise stronger and wiser.

Time Management: Mastering time management is crucial for maximizing productivity and achieving your goals. Superpower your skills in prioritising your tasks, eliminate distractions, and creating a schedule you can stick to. Be mindful of how you spend your time and also who you spend your time with and ensure that it aligns with your long-term vision.

Self-Awareness and Reflection: Developing self-awareness allows you to understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. Take time for self-reflection and introspection regularly. Understand your strengths, weaknesses, and triggers, and use that knowledge to make informed decisions and improve yourself continuously at work.

Have a career plan: A well-defined career plan acts as a roadmap to success. Set clear, measurable career and personal goals and break them down into actionable steps. Create a plan that incorporates continuous learning and aligns with your long-term vision. Regularly review and adjust your plan as necessary, and don't forget to celebrate your achievements along the way.

Seek Discomfort: Growth and self-mastery occur outside of your comfort zone. Seek out new challenges, take calculated risks, and embrace uncertainty. Stepping into unfamiliar territory expands your skills, knowledge, and confidence, enabling you to reach new heights.

Be a lifelong learner: We live in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world. To adapt to this environment knowledge and skills become outdated at a very fast pace. Ensure you are focusing on acquiring new skills and under-

standing new technological advancements, it will always keep you one step ahead of the curve.

Building Relationships and Seeking Mentorship: Surround yourself with like-minded individuals who inspire and support your journey. Build strong relationships and seek mentorship from those who have achieved what you aspire to. Learning from their experiences and guidance can provide valuable insights and accelerate your growth.

And my final and most important piece of advice for my son would be simply this. Where you could be rough, instead be gentle. Where you could judge, instead accept. Where you could assume instead be curious. These qualities will help foster positive relationships, empathy and an open mindset which are invaluable in any professional setting.

The rest is up to him

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dominic is a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD and a graduate of the Wharton Business School CHRO programme. He has lectured and coached on CIPD programmes for the Dubai PWC academy, is a CIPD mentor for HR Directors in the UK and is a member of the MENA CIPD advisory board.

Dominic's HR leadership experience has been gained leading teams in multibillion dollar, high growth multinational companies alongside some of the world's leading brands. His industry experience has spanned the UK, EMENA and APAC covering Platform Distribution, Telecoms, E-commerce, Supply Chain, Logistics, Retail, Hospitality, Media and Automotive.

His work on organisational transformation has been showcased by the CIPD in their digital learning series and presented at the CIPD London Festival of Work. Dominic is a newspaper columnist, an international keynote conference speaker

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Dominic is a guest lecturer on HR strategy at leading universities in the UAE and KSA and has judged on the MENA CIPD awards. A National Training Award winner in the UK, his Axiom Telecom team were awarded the CIPD award for the best HR team in the MENA in 2020 and he has been listed in the top 50 most Influential HR leaders in the MENA by the Economic Times.

