

The growth of HR into a business priority

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The past year has defined the new order of work which is driving a shift in many roles including human resources. While in 2018, many organisations had no plans to increase headcount in the human resources function, and some were even considering decreasing headcount, three years later, human resources is set to increase by up to 15% as the role grows in importance. This is according to the newly-released ManpowerGroup research [*Skills Revolution Reboot: The 3R's-- Renew, Reskill, Redeploy*](#) which sheds some light on what businesses can expect HR to look like in the future.



Image source: Getty Images

The shift in human resources is leading companies to invest in automation technologies to aid human resources in evolve to meet its new requirements which according to the report includes a focus on employee health, well-being and resilience, workforce planning and reimagining the workplace, plus engagement and ethics, reskilling and upskilling as well as broader employees-as-consumers initiatives.

Shifting priorities and putting the human back into HR

The health, economic and social crisis has turned the spotlight onto the HR department as companies have had to prioritise their people and, as such, this has positioned HR firmly within the business strategy. As companies consider the future of work, HR is responsible for determining what will be best for the employees and put their wellbeing at the centre of this decision to move the company forward.

The acceleration of HR also means that new skills are emerging and new technologies are required to help HR deliver on these needs. As companies collect more data about employees and job seekers, there is a greater responsibility to keep personal data secure. This is placing added pressure onto HR departments as HR is now responsible for data collection, protection and analysis. To help achieve this, HR departments are turning to technology to help them manage this process and gain valuable insight into the skills that are best suited for the organisation and more.

Prioritising health and well-being

For 2021 and beyond, HR leaders see employee health and well-being as the most important priority for companies, especially given the fallout from the global pandemic of the past year. As such HR is shifting its focus and turning into well-being experts, balance advocates and education advisors while focusing on keeping its remote employees productive, motivated, engaged and connected.

As discussions about hybrid working models ensue across the globe, HR needs to rethink the way people work most effectively, how they want to be recognised and rewarded and what tools and support they need to help them juggle work-life priorities and challenges in the workplace of the future.

Embracing new work models

While employee wellness is the top priority for HR, this is followed by new work models which include part-time, contract and flexible workforce. Now that companies have dabbled with work from home and engaged a remote workforce, new opportunities exist for employers to tap into skills that previously may have been outside of their periphery.

Digital connections, increased social networking and virtual communications now mean that workers can be based anywhere and provide the necessary skills and services to organisations across the globe. These agile operating models are redefining the workplace and the worker and giving companies access to a wider range of skilled workers that can be employed on a part-time or flexible basis to meet specific requirements.

Preparing the workforce of the future

The world of work has changed at an unprecedented pace and companies are preparing for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), which is being driven by the rapid rate at which technology is being adopted. As such HR managers are concerned with preparing employees for the workforce of the future, a key priority being the upskilling, learning and development of employees. For HR managers, there is an urgent need to upskill employees to meet the growing demand for both technical and human skills. According to the ManpowerGroup report, [*Humans Wanted, Robots Need You*](#), by 2025, humans and machines are expected to split work-related tasks 50-50, while 97 million new jobs will emerge in AI, the Green economy and the Care economy.

HR managers are faced with the challenge of developing a workforce of continuous learners and helping to develop the much needed soft skills such as communications, time management, adaptability, analytical thinking, initiative-taking and empathy, which will be highly valued and sought after by employers more than ever before, and are considered to be the backbone of success.

With the introduction and implementation of new technologies and the changing ways of work, HR managers need to take their seat at the boardroom table and make decisions that will help to prepare their organisations for the workplace of the future.

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