

# FREE THE 'HR' BIRDS: THEY CAN FLY HIGH



By Manish Mehta

**“CAGED IN THEIR TYPE-CAST ROLES, HR PRACTITIONERS MAY FAST BECOME OBSOLETE, NOT ADDING ANY VALUE TO THE ORGANISATION. WITH THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF PEOPLE AND THE IMPENDING FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, THERE IS A NEED TO FREE THE HR PROFESSIONALS, HELPING THEM TO TRANSITION FROM ‘ADMINISTRATIVE’ TO ‘STRATEGIC’ ROLES.”**

**W**ith Gen-Y and Millennials growing in numbers at workplace, the dynamics of organisational culture, work ethics are also changing. This calls for revolutionising the role of HR in shaping future band of leaders, who are equally competent, responsible, and credible. BUT, before that the HR function needs to go beyond its typecast role of managing administrative and logistics of people and related initiatives such as payroll management, claims, leave registry, dissemination of information etc. HR function (in its new avatar) needs to look at advanced analytics to introduce innovative employee retention policies, devise career development strategies, succession planning for all key levels and positions, employer positioning, change and culture management etc. The Co-Founder & Business Director of Propay Partners addresses some of the burning questions on the future of HR roles and function.



***“Over the past 15 years, our mission has been to help organisations migrate their back-room HR employees to a higher purpose, contributing to build the teams, build the business, and build the brand. – Manish Mehta, Co-Founder & Business Director, Propay Partners***

## WHAT ROLE SHOULD HR PLAY IN THIS AGE OF INFORMATION AND DISRUPTION?

For one, Leaders must understand the high-potential role of HR in the context of business which will make HR Function a revenue enabling centre as opposed to a cost-centre. The idea of high-performing, dynamic teams can be real for organisations, who task the HR function to acquire, strategise, build, and retain such teams. In other words, HR needs to assume a value-adding frontline role in the board room engaging with key internal and external stakeholders to achieve desired business goals. HR in the backroom can only serve as a well-oiled administrative machinery, but not as a supersonic, high-tech plane ready to take organisations (and its people) on their flight to success.

## HOW CAN WE FREE HR FROM THEIR CONVENTIONAL / NON-VALUE-ADD ROLES?

At a very basic level, HR practitioners need to align themselves and their roles to key business agenda rather than transactional and operational matters. The HR KPIs must also be closely tied to building leadership potential; employee morale and productivity in addition to freeing up valuable time for other core HR functions like succession planning, employee engagement and skills development.

The second level of change that is required is a critical assessment of the HR function to evaluate the areas that can be automated (which is imminent as organisations are maturing to join the Industry 4.0 regime).

## WHICH ARE THE AREAS OF HR WHICH CAN BE AUTOMATED?

Most of the transactional elements of HR can be automated and the repetitive tasks can be outsourced for greater efficiencies and long-term savings. This would also mean risk mitigation especially in the context of statutory compliance and data accuracy.

Some of the common services that are being centralized by organisations through a 'shared services' center or being outsourced include on-boarding, payroll, leave, claims and rewards management etc. Additionally, there are innovative and scalable cloud HR systems that allow greater empowerment of employees.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP HR TEAMS AND EMPLOYEES SHIFT TO A DIGITAL MINDSET?

It is estimated that by the year 2020, 1.75 billion people or 42% of talent around the world will be a mobile and global workforce; there will be a major shift the way people work. Demands are raising in the age of integrated and agile solutions and organizations are constantly being challenged to optimize people cost without compromising performance and security of sensitive data.

The HR practitioners must look at the digital trends (in their respective sectors / industry) and devise near-term, medium-term and long-term strategies (both operations-related and people-centric), with tangible KPIs, directly tied to organisational performance.

## HOW CAN ORGANISATIONS REVOLUTIONISE HR SYSTEMS AND WAYS OF DELIVERING HR SERVICES?

It's not just about investing in the latest, most expensive technology and platforms. Aon Hewitt's research suggests that those organisations that stand out as having the best-

in-class people practices - spend about 60% of what the average organisation does, but achieve significantly higher people results.

Effectiveness and efficiency is achieved through rigorously planning for talent outcomes and driving agile linkages between programmes, technology, platforms and analytics. In today's competitive corporate arena, an organisation is only as innovative and successful as the talent it attracts and develops.

By adding to this equation the emerging role of digital technology in almost every aspect of our lives, it becomes clear that a new digital era is about to take the lead. Latest cutting-edge technologies now allow Human Resources leaders to revolutionize the employee experience through new digital platforms, apps, and innovative ways of delivering HR services.

This highlights the role of human resource executives, who are increasingly being called upon to serve as strategic partners and transformational leaders to their businesses, rather than procedural guards and document-routing coordinators.

## WILL TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENTS ALLOW HR PROFESSIONALS MORE TIME TO FOCUS ON HIGH-VALUE TASKS?

The old approach of having good standalone systems for performance management, rewards, learning & development, succession planning etc. is no longer meeting requirements. Although these systems may speak to

each other, they don't create a unified experience for the employee, nor can they create decision-making insights for the business.

Today technology progression has made it possible for us to have single 'unified' platforms based on one technology, one-user-experience and one- data-model with a focus on tracking progress of employees, rewarding them appropriately and giving them the tools they need to become successful.

Savvy organisations are investing in cloud HR platforms, which are arguably more cost-effective in the long-term, helping drive efficiency through streamlining of work processes to enhance the end-user experience. However, it is

important to note that the principle of GIGO (garbage in garbage out) still applies to HR systems. To get the best value, organisations need to have the basic processes and talent and HR data in place.

## WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF SUCH TECHNOLOGY AND HR SOLUTIONS AS THE INDUSTRY MOVES TO THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION?

New roles, new talent and constant change! According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), it is estimated that changes caused by the fourth industrial revolution between 2015 and 2020 will mean the loss of 7.1 million jobs worldwide (over 60% of which will be in administration) and the creation of 2 million new job positions in the fields of mathematics, computer science, architecture and engineering. Human resources managers will be empowered on the boards of companies, to work in collaboration with data analysis teams to help them succeed in their plans and accept more flexible working conditions, offering employees the option of working remotely. If your own organization is at a crossroads, we encourage you to start thinking about how to transform your human resources department from an administrative unit to performance-driving force of the organisation. 