

Digital HR race

At the global level, organisations are taking data insights and the analytics approach in making business decisions that are aligned with the universal trendsetter, such as Industry 4.0, Big Data and the Gig Economy. The digital world is bringing cross-border businesses closer and companies who cannot adapt to digitisation may need to find the nearest exit.

As the world becomes smaller and with businesses jumping onto the digital bandwagon, there is no exception for the human resource (HR) department. In line with most multinational corporations that use Human Resource Shared Service (HRSS) as an automated employee digital services, does it make stronger sense to further digitise the functions of HR? Can we anticipate this emerging digital trend to continue extensively in the coming years?

Technology has enormously influenced every aspect of the HR industry, be it operations or talent management. Digitising HR takes things to the next level in terms of efficiency, with quick and reliable decision making for employees and the business as a whole. This is merely underpinned by a proper streamlined HR system, technology and processes.

With the emergence of the Gig Economy, and a significant number of companies going paperless and digital, would this be a trend towards the non-existence of HR function in business? The rise of robots creates an impact on the way HR operates. For instance, the presence of Chatbot and the use of robots to conduct interviews are a few robust indicators. With such predictions, which are likely to evolve in the near future, how do HR practitioners prepare themselves to face the above-mentioned challenges?

As there is a vigorous move heading towards the HRSS model globally, so does the integration and adoption of HR strategy and talent management efforts. Taking into account the complexity of HR functions in the current world, digitising it helps cross-border and globally connected businesses to be more lucrative at the international arena. A full-fledged digitised framework and model will deliver value to both employees and employers in managing their HR efforts. Here are some advantages of HR going digital:

(Bulleted, thanks)

Cost efficiency — This reduces the exorbitant cost of space, printing and documentation tasks. It also automatically tracks employees when they become qualified for HR benefits enrolments and career progression internally.



MY Say
BY PRAKASH SANTHANAM

Increasing productivity — The automated system allows HR employees to focus more on the work efficiency and strategic planning as well as HR business partner, hence, see a reduction in operational tasks.

High accessibility — A well-established data management will propel HR practitioners forward in managing and retrieving centralised data and access to accurate data within seconds as well as make available the data for 24 hours a day at various locations.

Enhanced data protection and security — Easy to track, provides fast access to users and manage confidential information efficiently as well as enable predictive analysis with strong security and firewall protection.

Another advantage of the digitalisation includes having a centralised data at the country, region or global level, setting HR industry benchmark, comprehensively manage the overall HR strategy aligned with organisational plans and needs.

This effort will benefit companies by elevating HR digitalisation to reciprocally support each other while being time and cost-savvy, and most importantly, increase the response time and decision making to stakeholders. Organisations that use such an approach tend to experience a less negative impact on their business and more accurate decision making skills that are data and pattern-driven.

At the tactical HR level, with HRSS taking on more operational functions than before, where does the strategic HR function reside? One of the solutions to materialise this is to ferociously empower line managers with essential knowledge and skills in HR functions, especially on the performance management system, recruitment, employee engagement and internal HR processes. This creates a stronger set of competencies for managers in an organisation to further equip themselves with new skill sets. Such practices will further elevate the HR department to greater heights and ensure that the focus is more on people and technology.

In order to champion this effort in the future, several key HR metrics need to be embedded in line managers and business leaders' KPIs. For example, to further support the business from a human capital point of view, areas that require experienced professionals, there is an option of outsourcing to a third-party service providers. With this, HR has a higher tendency to merge with strategic business planning, transformation efforts and workplace optimisation teams with a single focal point for business leaders.

HR functions comprise several units, namely recruitment, employee engagement, employee relations, organisational planning and design, HRSS and learning and development (L&D) or talent management (Strategic HR) depending on the structure and the needs of the business. With such transformation, there is a higher possibility to grow HR outsourcing services while HR practitioners may take up consultancies and project-based efforts with an organisation in line with the Gig Economy.

The next burning question is, if such a situation arise, how can HR practitioners cope and capitalise on it? There is a growing demand for futuristic HR technology-driven elements, such as HR analytics, artificial intelligence (RPA, RTDBS, Telepresence Robot, Chatbot and Electronic Filing). Therefore, learning these skills may become a basic requirement for HR practitioners in the years to come.

More examples of digitalisation include virtual onboarding for new hires, augmented writing technology, programmable job advertisement and many more. Investing equal time and money in these efforts can be debatable but I personally feel it is worth exploring and implementing such digital interventions and expect more to come in the ever-changing digital world. It can be a tiring experience, and yet, fulfilling as it keeps HR practitioners on their toes within the digital sphere.

With such transformation taking place, there is a stronger requirement for HR experts/practitioners, third-party vendors and consultancy firms to champion digital HR initiatives in organisations. HR outsourcing services are experiencing a momentous growth with the emergence of technology and more tasks to be taken within the artificial intelligence domain.

Many of us may ask, do we have a choice as an HR practitioner not to embark or to delay on the digitalisation. I feel the answer is an absolute no, as we cannot deny technology but the best is to embrace change by integrating technology and explore how the digital innovation can lead us to additional enhancement in people and business. As there is no choice and time to proceed with the suspension of this, get ready for the digital race in HR. If we cannot win the race at the forefront, then, at least let us be a participant. ■

Prakash Santhanam is a certified talent management and HR professional and former president of the International Association of Coaching (IAC) Malaysia Chapter

Urgent need for a new paradigm

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measure of the GDP that does not count resource depletion and pollution).

In short, if you cannot solve the paradigm or mindset that shapes politics, we cannot even begin to tackle the Rodrik trilemma.

Historically, we human beings have always sought leadership to pull us out of difficult social quandries. English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) argued that man needs a social contract between the many and an absolute monarch — the Leviathan — who deals with the politics of man and God. The front piece of Hobbes' book is a triptych, in which the King holds both a sword (to rule over man) and a crosier (to rule over religion) — a three-cornered trilemma.

The trilemma is real because there is a risk that an absolute monarch can end up as an autocrat without restraint. Poli-

tics is all about power and its checks and balances.

Climate ecologists know that global warming has many roots but the most fundamental dilemma is that carbon emissions and resource wastage come from individual and collective human consumption, but rules and regulations are national in nature. Then, at the global level, we collectively consume limited resources from One Earth but multiple national governments cannot agree how to limit consumption to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and resource depletion, including declining biodiversity.

We consume too much natural resources and pollute our water and air because the underlying paradigm of neo-classical economics, as interpreted by the neo-liberal order, suggests that everyone is free to consume without limit. This is facilitated by debt — you can consume more than you

earn by borrowing: today's consumption at tomorrow's expense. The only trouble is that there is only One Earth and nearly eight billion people, growing to perhaps 11 billion by the end of the century, on it.

Climate scientists hope that there will be a global agreement, ideally a global Leviathan or central government to help restore balance. But because of geopolitical rivalry, we cannot achieve global government (even the EU cannot create a unitary European government with a consistent fiscal policy). Consequently, we must somehow try to achieve global cooperation on efforts to deal with the mutual threat of climate change, even as different nations compete with each other.

But we are going through a phase of grave uncertainty because the unipolar power (the US) is beginning to abandon its vision of multi-lateralism for a more

self-interested protectionism and bilateral negotiations. The Trump Administration is known as a climate denier. In the TV documentary, *The Years of Living Dangerously*, National Geographic shows how farmers in sub-Saharan Africa can no longer live off the land due to climate warming from carbon emissions from the rest of the world. By the end of the century, it is estimated that 60 million Africans will migrate northwards to Europe.

It short, everything has become more complicated, complex and unpredictable. Europe and, indeed, every individual and nation must wake up to the threat of boiling climates and weather disasters. A new paradigm is urgently needed for a new age of technology, inequality and global warming. ■

Tan Sri Andrew Sheng writes on global issues from an Asian perspective