

TOP 7 HR TRENDS

—IN THE COVID-19-IMPACTED
WORKPLACE



THE TRENDS
THAT COVID-19
IS RESHAPING
OR
ACCELERATING
IN THE HUMAN
RESOURCES
INDUSTRY

What's the workplace going to look like now?

The biggest question on everyone's mind: *what will the new normal be?* What's the workplace going to look like now? The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has generated new insights into how employees and employers will reshape the workplace. For decades, there has been a discussion on "future of work". In 2020, the future is now. With many companies using work-from-home policies to continue operations, there will be a waterfall of changes to come. For example, during the week between March 14th and 24th, video conferencing apps were downloaded 62 million times – a world record for the industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic is reshaping or accelerating trends within the human resources industry. For example, HR teams already face challenges from Generation Y's new attitudes to work, fewer full-time employees, and the pressure to deliver quick solutions in an increasingly fast-paced and unpredictable business environment. With the pandemic, these and other pressures will lead organizations to focus on "first things" first.



While there is no crystal ball to predict what may happen within the next few years, we hope we can provide a better understanding of the trends and where we see the biggest impact on the way we work in a world solving a health pandemic.

2020 HR TRENDS

1. FOCUS ON BUILDING ETHICAL AI

While there may be some confusion about the potential AI can and cannot do, as different perspectives on how to define it, the workplace is focusing on integrating ethical AI. When it comes to fighting for top-notch talent, AI can play a particularly specific role: support organizations to have more accurate and more efficient predictions of a candidate's work-related behaviors and performance potential. AI possesses the capability to support pattern-finding for human talent managers in matters such as employee referrals, CV screening, and face-to-face interviews.

Moving into 2020, a key issue for companies will be to use AI in an ethical and responsible manner and prove it. AI vendors and companies using AI platforms may be subjected to requirements similar to safety checks now conducted on automobiles.

Conducting AI audits and testing for unequal outcomes across gender, race, and age will start to be commonplace. In the United States, California's Bot Transparency bill went into effect July 1, 2019. The bill requires firms to disclose when a bot rather than a human is answering questions online. In another state, new rules around using AI for video interviews started January 1, 2020. This bill makes sure employers tell candidates they are using AI to analyze video interviews before candidates record and submit an interview.

Beyond understanding changing legal status around AI, talent management must be resolving issues related to employee data privacy. In the Oracle and Future Workplace research, AI @ Work, conducted among 8,370 global HR leaders, employees and managers 80% of employees shared their company should ask permission before gathering data on them using AI; 71% of employees mentioned they are, at least sometimes, concerned about data security breaches as companies use AI in the workplace. HR should be using ethical data collection and usage practices, similarly to how it's currently done in traditional hiring.

By holding their own organizations accountable, hiring managers can use third-party AI tools to analyze applications. For example, organizations can use open-source, non-proprietary AI technology for some aspects of the talent management life cycle. For private and proprietary components, hiring managers should arrange a third-party audit of the new tool or hire credible experts in the field that show these tools mitigate bias and have ethical data practices.

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2. SOFT SKILL TRAINING

As technological advancements automate several tasks, there's a growing opportunity for talent to look beyond technical skills and drive value creation through their human capabilities or "soft skills".

The ability to think creatively, solve problems, build consensus, manage difficult conversations, work effectively as teams, and many other capabilities needed to deal with the human side of being an impactful employee. Author and science journalist, Daniel Goleman, writes "Emotional intelligence is the ability to sense, understand, value and effectively apply the power of emotions as a source of human energy, information, trust, creativity and influence."

One of the best frames through which to view the new hard skills is the research and application of the facets of emotional intelligence.

Researchers first coined the term in the 1970s, but it was in the 1990s that emotional intelligence hit the mainstream. Researchers found a direct correlation between emotional intelligence and leadership, organization effectiveness, improved relations and engagement. Emotional intelligence impacts the bottomline of every organization. Given recent social movements, it's important that more and more employees upskill their social management, social awareness, personal management and personal awareness.

Research shows the most in-demand talent among employers is listening skills -- 74% employers indicated this was a skill they valued. Attention to detail (70%) and effective communication (69%). Soft skill training can be done by AI. 92% of talent professionals say that soft skills matter just as much, or even more, than hard skills. Fusion skills are the intelligent combination of hard skills and soft skills. Employees with fusion skills possess knowledge of technology and automated processes. Soft skill training supports employees by training them with real-life situations by imagining how humans will interact with them. Facial expression detection AI, for example, uses behavioral research and tailored questions to train employees in key scenarios

3. ONLINE JOB SPEED DATING

Instead of using an online application system, filling in a pre-employment assessment, or using AI for recruiting, job speed dating is usually an in-person event. Usually organized by a third party, the event invites candidates and companies to take part in filling out in-demand roles. For example, the event could be focused on developers trying to land their next career move and companies specifically recruiting for developer roles.

Depending on space and or other parameters, the number of invitees is limited. With the COVID-19 pandemic, these events are going online via video conferencing tools like Zoom and Google Hangouts.

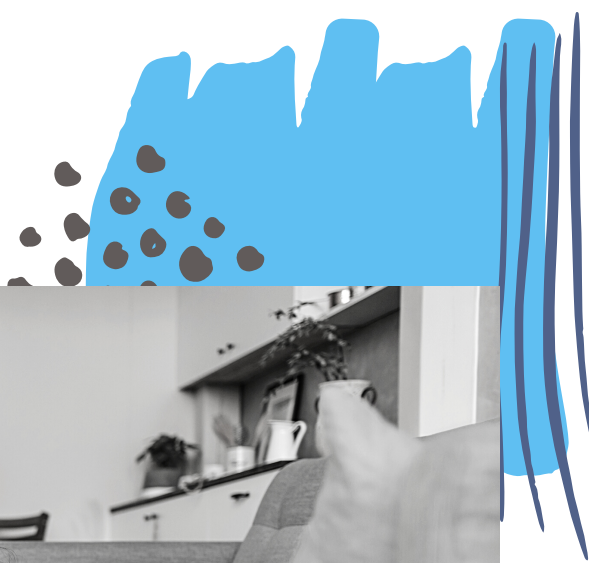
Employers and applicants participate in separate calls or "rooms". Each conversation or interview averages only 5 minutes. It's extremely quick, so both parties have to know what they're looking for. Then, after a buzzer in the room rings, candidates move to the next table/employer.

Job speed dating is an interesting concept for organizations and candidates alike. It may be the fastest way for applicants and hiring managers to meet and make a great impression. Employers like Google and Twitter have been known to attend job speed dating events like these. It may be likely they and other organizations come to these events as applicants are often picked by event coordinators---it's usually not simply a "sign up and show up" process. It's still a tailored process.

A few things to look out for: Candidates that spend too much time complaining about their current situation or who are unclear in what they want. Applicants are often looking to change companies due to a poor fit. It may be their manager, culture, or even job. Look for candidates that may briefly mention as to why they're interested in leaving their current role. However take caution with candidates who spend too much time emphasizing why they hate their job. It could be a sign of someone who isn't focused on the future right now.

4. FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENT

It's clear that employees are expecting a much greater voice in deciding how they work best. According to one PwC survey, increased flexibility at work (25%) and the ability to design your own job (23%) are seen to be the two major trends. Employees want to dialogue about their career and working arrangement. Creating organized feedback is an important component in building out a more flexible work environment. This is especially important when it comes to building out the new generation workforce.



Generation Y, or Millennials, make up more than 50% of the workforce. Creating an engaging and creative working environment, based on mutual interest and passion and less formal authority is incredibly important. Other trends playing into the flexible work environment scheme is the increase of part-time workers and outsourcing to service providers, like consultants or contractors. A flexible work environment means greater resources for the hiring organization as skilled workers from all over the world will be available to hire.

5. NEW HIERARCHIES

How we approach the “new normal” includes seeing more people take action in how they’re managed. Employees want more power-balanced organizations and resources. Democratization in organizational hierarchies see less employment-based and more project-based relationships. Talent will engage around an organization's purpose rather than simply showing up for a paycheck. Particularly organizations with clear missions will want to include feedback loops that replace traditional, hierarchical feedback. Employees are looking for social and external collaborations, as well as looking for a great product and/or service to look for. These kinds of interactions build more meaningful and more power-balanced relationships within the workspace. Horizontal and shared leadership are key in the democratization of organizational feedback.

HR is often seen as a passive, service-oriented support function. But given the demands in today's changing workplace and business environment, HR lies at the crossroads of change and needs to facilitate it in tandem with senior management. Since organizations are undergoing significant restructuring when remaking power-balanced relationships, it includes how jobs are reorganized. Employees can be given personal development stipends to train themselves, giving power back to their own creativity and flexibility. This understanding of change has been clearly embraced by the PwC survey participants, who see change as a chance to enhance the role of HR. One survey found 79% of employees view HR as a center of excellence by 2025.

By giving back to change and being agile to meet new requirements such as coaching, HR analytics and digitization will quickly evolve to lead change in changing how organizations are structured.

The role of HR may change itself with the role of HR professionals working to be more integrative to the overall business strategy. With a proactive mindset in learning other dimensions of organizational structure, HR will influence the other aspects of business.

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6. PEOPLE ANALYTICS FOR DECISION MAKING

Advanced “people analytics” can make an incredible impact in improving how organizations identify, attract, develop, and retain talent. Yet organizations and hiring managers still make talent-related decisions based on instinct and intuition. These are important and powerful feelings. However people analytics adds a data dimension to support managers and talent leaders solve problems and build solutions. This includes increasing employee engagement, reducing bias during the hiring process, and improving performance. Powerful people analytics is a powerful method in exploring how organizations gain stability and sustainability.

Market strategies use rapid prototyping with intensive user feedback. Similarly organizations can leverage global and real-time communications and technology to create immediate feedback on projects, timelines, and other dimensions of people management. Big data analysis possesses wide-reaching potential that can be used in any aspect of an organization. In HR, utilizing a data-driven approach to people analytics allows employers to discover valuable insights on employee performance and satisfaction and what influences their productivity and motivation. With HR tech solutions,

HR departments are equipped with a wealth of information that is available at their fingertips, including recruitment data, employee statistics, and performance KPIs. In the years to come, companies will apply this valuable insight into making smarter decisions for their organizations, from less biased hiring decisions to better support for their current employees.

According to Deloitte's 2017 Global Human Capital Trends report and survey, people analytics as a business discipline is starting to gain traction in the corporate world. With the changing employee demographics, the rise of team-based organizational models, the globalization of the workforce, and the increasing influence of technology, companies are turning to people analytics to better understand employee data and its impact on business performance.

7. VIRTUAL REALITY FOR CORPORATE TRAINING AND HANGOUTS

In today's competitive labour market, persuading talent to join your organization is a challenge. In 2020, organizations will continue to take stock of their employer brand by considering what it is that sets them apart as employers and how they market themselves as a unique workplace. What could be more unique than tailored, soft-skill training using virtual reality? Nearly every position requires employees practicing soft-skills like persuasion and active listening.

These business skills require practice and yet are in high-demand. VR provides organizations an opportunity to train employees remotely. Skills such as public speaking, sales, negotiation, and networking are rarely taught at school or university. Online courses are helpful, but do focus on more corporate skills. It's important to remember these essential skills that keep organizations running smoothly. It's these skills that welcome new candidates and onboard new employees; it's these skills that sell products to potential customers or be able to sort through an office dispute.

VR enables companies to fill these skills gaps and instill transferable skills within their employees. One company, VirtualSpeech, specializes in soft skills training, integrating traditional online classes with VR. The VR element allows employees to practice what they've learnt in the courses in realistic simulations such as networking events, dealing with the public relations and media, and moderating at conferences. HR can share with candidates how their company works on creating innovative practices for self-development.

With the arrival of 5G, companies may be crafting virtual hangout spaces for their employees. It may be a space that has a much greater need than cut-and-dry meetings. Some employees enjoy a bit of banter in the company kitchen, or to shoot a game of pool. It could be the same in the VR or AR space. Virtual meetings could also focus on the nuts-and-bolts of work projects. But they could also provide team-wide entertainment, like a game. During the week between March 14th and 24th, video conferencing apps were downloaded 62 million times – a world record for the industry. If people didn't use Zoom or Microsoft Teams, they are well-acquainted by now. The familiarity with meeting up online will trickle over in other ways, such as using dynamic tech like AR and VR.

Organizations need to make the right investments in how they manage their people during this critical time. It not only includes investing in cutting-edge AI technologies, but also (and especially) in talent development— the talent that upholds and sustains an organization's advantages in the marketplace. Creating a stronger talent pool and pipeline minimizes potential risks in employee turnover and not reaching business goals. Particularly when combining artificial intelligence and human intuition, the goal is likely to be reached---or at least a better result to be derived. Whether it's a commitment to corporate social responsibility, offering a flexible work environment, companies that show clear value propositions to employees will succeed in sustaining current talent.

