

HRD

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ANN PERRINS
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
ATLASSIAN WILLIAMS F1 TEAM





ARTICLE BY RENA CHRISTOU, GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER - EMPOWERING PEOPLE GROUP

SYSTEMATIC

HR IS A PRESSURE POT WHERE WORKLOAD KEEPS BUILDING. BUT THE TRIALS OF THIS MOST UNDER-INVESTED OF FUNCTIONS COULD PROVIDE INSIGHTS INTO SYSTEMIC CHANGE AT SCALE. HR RARELY OPERATES IN CALM CONDITIONS, PARTICULARLY IN LARGE, HIGH-PRESSURE ORGANISATIONS WHERE SCALE AND COMPLEXITY ARE AN EVERYDAY REALITY. CONSEQUENTLY, TRADITIONAL 'SERVICE DELIVERY' HR MODELS ARE STRUGGLING AMIDST A MULTITUDE OF CHANGES.

As HR's workload keeps building, a systemic approach - which shifts from firefighting individual cases to managing the health of the entire employment ecosystem - is increasingly vital way to navigate change within organisations. Employee relations are often heavily underinvested in or treated as a back-office function. But ER is where change initiatives can deliver the most significant impact, because of its unique position as a function where organisational design, leadership behaviour and risk most visibly converge. When ER processes are handled reactively as an escalation path or compliance safeguard, organisations fail to grasp the potential for workforce insight, essential for proactive, cross-functional strategy alignment. Introducing data as a strategic tool rather than a reporting mechanism means organisations see patterns previously hidden. For example, instead of seeing a grievance as a one-off problem, a systemic approach treats it as a data point, revealing potential issues elsewhere in the organisation. This includes identifying gaps in manager capability, understanding how leadership behaviour influences case escalations or seeing how delays in one part of the system creates risk elsewhere. When a systemic approach is applied, visibility reaches the next level, enabling trends and the root cause of issues to be analysed and proactively addressed. Absence rate in isolation is just

the number of people off sick, but when you have visibility of team-level rates against benchmarks - combined with manager capability data - it provides clear actionable insights. The reality for many businesses is that data is disconnected or inaccessible, because of underinvestment in the right technology to support the ER

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function and the reliance on outdated systems to record sensitive ER data. This simply can't continue in the new litigious landscape we're facing in the era of the Employment Rights Act.

Investment in transformative technology reshapes how information is captured, how work is allocated, how decisions are made and how accountability is experienced. In many organisations, responsibility for ER activity can be ambiguous, lacking clarity in where accountability sits with

managers and when they should escalate an issue to HR. This leads to HR being relied upon for transactional ER matters that don't require their specialist skillset, diluting accountability and slowing effective resolutions. A transformed ER operating model, where managers are empowered to self-serve people, matters in a risk-controlled way and creates outcomes that are genuinely business changing. The systemic approach recognises that everything is interconnected, telling you how the whole system is operating. If you change one thing, it affects everything else in that system. A systemic approach to ER and empowering managers to be better people leaders builds an integrated model and a paradigm shift across the organisation. Manager behaviour is changed at scale, as each is empowered to act earlier on issues such as absence and follow a consistent approach. This reduces pressure on HR, not just from increased capacity, but also fewer late-stage escalations. In complex, high-pressure environments, it is one of the clearest lenses through which leaders can understand how the organisation is truly operating and proactively respond.

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