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CROP OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH NEW
IDEAS AND IT’S A VERY POWERFUL
DRIVER OF INNOVATION”

MICHELLE HOPKINS-JONES
GLOBAL PEOPLE & CULTURE DIRECTOR
YUGO



BOX OFFICE

The role of HR as supporting actor is essential, but the profession also needs to be “box office”, bristling with charisma and élan. HR leaders must confront this head-on and prioritise transformation initiatives that galvanise the commercial and strategic value of the function. But many HR teams find themselves anchored to outdated systems and entrenched processes, which limit the opportunity to be expressive and transformational.

"SIMPLY REACTING OR ADAPTING IS NOT ENOUGH. TO ACHIEVE SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATION, IT'S ESSENTIAL TO IDENTIFY THE GOALS OF THE INITIATIVE BEFORE ENGAGING IN ANY ACTION"



ARTICLE BY SIMON FOWLER, CEO - EMPOWERING PEOPLE GROUP AND ADVISERPLUS



The age-old HR conundrum is tactical overload. HR departments have long been mired in the day-to-day minutiae of tactical people management, leaving them with limited bandwidth and budget to address strategic priorities. Now, with advancements in automation technology, process digitalisation and analytics, the opportunity to break tactical chains and free HR from the burdens of transactional tasks is a reality, allowing leaders to become visionaries of strategic excellence. To thrive in this ever-changing environment, HR must, first and foremost, be proactive in driving change, with HR leaders in the driver's seat, using knowledge and experience of what is best for the success of an organisation. To be explicit, simply reacting or adapting is not enough. To achieve successful transformation, it's essential to identify the goals of the initiative before engaging in any action, including talking to technology vendors for solutions.

Without clearly defining the end goal and identifying existing gaps in areas such as process efficiency, analytics and insight, employee experience and the people skills to reach it, organisations may make costly investments in unsuitable solutions. The strategic goal is imperative to having the right investment and implementing technology that helps to simplify tasks and enhance ways of working.

Enabled with the right technology and resources and with the automation of routine, repeatable tasks, HR professionals gain precious time to focus on strategy, such as workforce planning, talent development and culture building. Technology also offers data-driven insights that can inform decision-making. HR can leverage analytics to benchmark the organisation's health, identify areas for improvement and drive continuous growth. For example, a major retail company utilised employee relations data insights to understand the root cause of issues impacting employee experiences. By drawing out insights within granular ER data, the HR team was able to pinpoint an issue affecting employee performance. It was identified that managers within a particular department lacked experience and training to support neurodiverse

talent within the business. This valuable insight led to the creation of a tailored training program, showcasing the power of data-driven HR strategies. Embedding the right technology, automation and new ways of working will enable HR to have more time and budget to focus on strategic, business-driven priorities, while also supporting line managers so they can self-serve more routine people matters.

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BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE
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One of the fundamental changes required to enable line managers to self-serve is investment in fit-for-purpose technology and training that supports managers to handle more of the routine people management tasks that are commonly escalated to HR. This not only reduces the burden on HR, but also allows line managers to take greater ownership of their teams' well-being, creating closer emotional commitment between managers and employees. This isn't about burdening hard working line managers with more work, it's about empowering them to become more effective people managers. This, in turn, leads to happier, more engaged employees and a positive impact on productivity, ultimately enhancing the line manager's own contribution to the success of the business. This also isn't a process of 'passing off' issues to managers. Managers and employees should always have the support of HR so the function continues to play a pivotal role in ensuring people matters are effectively handled. However, it does mean that HR teams can focus on more complex cases and strategies that support the culture and business decision-making. While technology, automation and analytics are invaluable tools, they should not replace the human element in HR.

Building a closer emotional commitment with employees is increasingly necessary with the way we now work across remote and hybrid environments. Employees, no matter where they are based or how they work, will always seek empathy, understanding and personal connection and HR and line managers play a pivotal role in ensuring they thrive. Indeed, balancing actionable insights with a human touch is essential. HR and line managers can use technology to become more effective - not less personal.

By automating repetitive tasks and enabling managers to take on greater ownership of people matters, HR and managers can focus on building relationships and harnessing insights to understand the unique needs of employees. This approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement and ensures that HR, in particular, remains a vital source of support and guidance for the workforce. Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of effective HR transformation is the alignment it can create between HR and line managers. When line managers can address people matters more effectively, not only are they likely to experience increased employee engagement and retention within their teams, they are also likely to gain a more harmonious relationship with HR, understanding the wider needs of their teams, their organisations and the importance of the role. Simultaneously, HR gains a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by line managers, enabling them to tailor strategies that address issues proactively. As the working world continues to evolve at such pace, HR leaders must be sufficiently agile to adapt and embrace change at equal pace. A strategic, business-driven HR function is the cornerstone of long-term organisational success. Investing in the latest - and the right - technology and evolving the support HR provides to line managers, is essential to elevating HR's role and developing the culture and support structures that build workforce agility and organisational health.

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