Report

HR in 2030

Five trends progressive people
leaders need to know to get ahead

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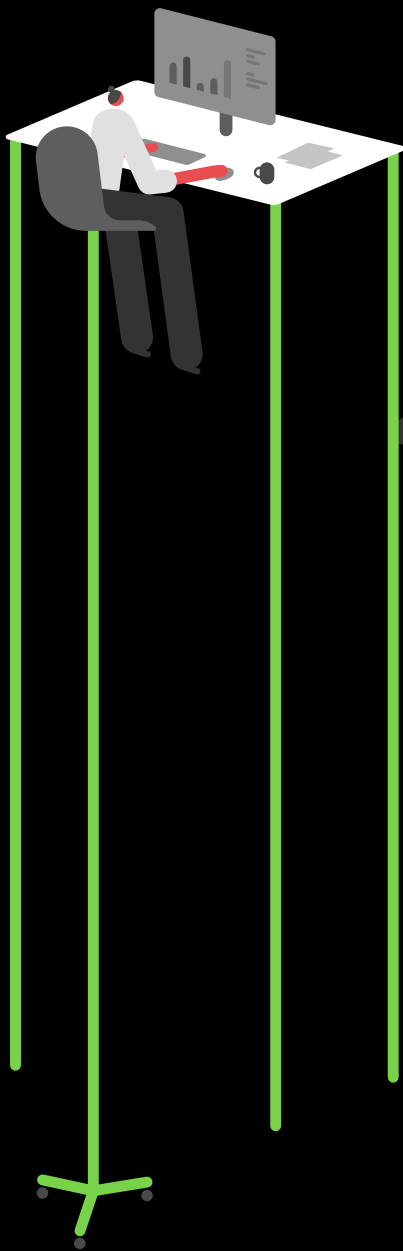
Introduction

Human resources led the charge through the human crisis

HR took up the mantle through the most challenging crisis in a lifetime
The pandemic has truly shone a light on HR in organisations. With no pre-existing playbook for dealing with a global crisis, businesses turned to People leaders to help steer them through the uncertainty—and HR leaders well and truly took up the mantle.

72% of HR leaders told us in our recent research that the crisis has increased the value and wider understanding of their role across organisations, and **59%** of HR leaders said the pandemic has enabled them to become more visible and influential. It's something that employees agree with; **60%** of employees told us in the research that they've noticed changes in HR's role, such as becoming more people-focussed and strategic[1].

The crisis well and truly shifted the world of work in every way. To succeed in this ever-changing landscape, HR and People leaders will need to work with the rest of the C-suite to re-evaluate what productivity means in the new reality, and to redefine what outstanding employee experiences look like.

"We knew the world of work had to change; the pandemic has made the business case and built a strong momentum. HR have a more powerful platform than ever before."

Deborah Wilkes
Managing Director of Enable-HR
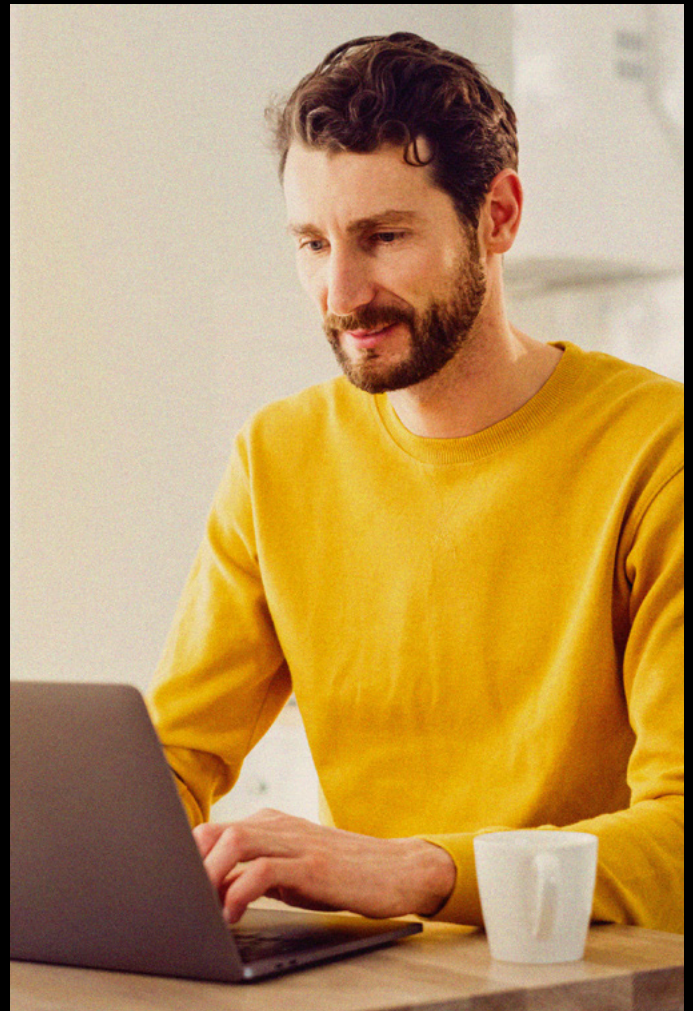
"As we go into the next few years, it's important to reflect on what we learned and make sure we take it forward, while employing newly found skills in remote work, well-being, empathy, and productivity."

Josh Bersin
CEO of The Josh Bersin Company

The role of HR in 2030

What can we expect?

From Personnel, to HR, to People—the function is shifting again towards 'human'. The HR and People leaders of 2030 will be agile, tech and data-orientated, and with a strong human emphasis. Today, as we emerge from the recent crisis, now is the time for HR leaders to start looking to the future and asking: what's next? What will be the big challenges over the next few years? How will they impact People leaders? To find out, we've interviewed a range of HR and People experts—from leading HR professionals and academics, to coaches and authors—to garner opinion on what the world of HR will look like in 2030 and how HR leaders can plan for it right now, today.

"The role of HR is rapidly evolving. [In 2030], HR leaders will be more strategic, visionary, and transformational in enhancing employee engagement and performance management for business continuity."

Mofoluwaso Ilevbare
Head of HR at Procter & Gamble Australia and New Zealand

In this report, we reveal the five trends that our experts predict will have a major impact on the role of HR in 2030 and share tips on how to prepare right now. It's worth noting that many of these trends are very much relevant today, but not always widely adopted; in this report, however, we also look at how they will shift over the coming years—and how HR leaders can get ahead and prepare today.

Our HR and People experts will also share their wisdom on the skills HR leaders will need to start building today to be ready for the challenges they'll face in 2030, as well as the role technology will play in the next decade and what HR leaders will need to do to prepare for the future.

Read on to get ready for HR in 2030 today.

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Meet the experts

Immersed daily in all things HR and People, we've spoken to a range of experts to get their views on the future of HR in 2030.

Josh Bersin
Josh is CEO of **The Josh Bersin Company** and a world-renowned HR industry analyst.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

Rowena Carter
Rowena is Director of People and Culture at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts.

LinkedIn

Gemma Dale
Gemma teaches employment law at Liverpool John Moores University's Business School and is author of '**Flexible working: How to implement flexibility in the workplace to improve employee and business performance**'.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

Linda Holbeche
Linda is Co-Director of The Holbeche Partnership, a research-based development consultancy; Adjunct Professor at Imperial College; and Visiting Professor of HR and OD at City University Business School, London.

LinkedIn

Paul Burrin
Paul is Vice President at **Sage People** and is an author, contributor, panelist, and speaker on the changing nature of work.

LinkedIn

Matt Charney
Matt is Head of Industry and Product Marketing at SmartRecruiters and Partner for RecruitingDaily.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

Ben Eubanks
Ben is Chief Research Officer at Lighthouse Research & Advisory, and an HR analyst, **author**, blogger, and host of the '**We're only human**' podcast.

LinkedIn

Mofoluwaso Ilevbare
Mofoluwaso is Head of HR at Procter & Gamble Australia and New Zealand and is recognised as one of the Global Top 100 HR Leaders and Top 100 Career Women Nigeria.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

Jon Ingham
Jon is Director of **Strategic HR Academy**, and a consultant, speaker and writer. Author of '**The social organization**', he was named HR Magazine's Most Influential Mover and Shaker.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

Susan LaMotte
Susan is CEO and Founder of **exaqueo**, an employer brand consulting agency. With 20+ years' experience, Susan's been a recruiter, HR leader, coach, and consulted for C-level execs.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

April Marcot
April is Head of People and Culture at **Talent**, a tech and digital recruitment specialist.

Linkedin

Mel Norris-Green
Mel is Research Adviser at CIPD, the professional body for experts in people at work, and heavily involved in the '**CIPD's People Profession 2030 report**'.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

Perry Timms
Perry is Founder and Chief Energy Officer at **People & Transformational HR**, and a Guest Professor at four UK business schools.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

Deborah Wilkes
Deborah is Managing Director of **Enable-HR** and author of '**Empowering HR: Building the value and strength of HR**'.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

Dave Millner
Dave is Founder and Consulting Partner of **HR Curator**. He is an Occupational Psychologist with nearly 30 years' HR and consulting experience.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

Angela O'Connor
Angela is CEO and Founder of The HR Lounge, a boutique HR consultancy. She is also the immediate past President of The HR Society, and Visiting Professor at London Metropolitan University.

Twitter | **Linkedin**

Ray Wang
Ray is the Principal Analyst, Founder, and Chairman of **Constellation Research**.

Twitter | **LinkedIn**

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1. Flexible and hybrid working

Revolutionised employee experiences that truly make work, work.

Rising employee expectations will challenge HR like never before to provide authentic, tailored workforce experiences that truly empower people to do their best work—wherever and however they work.

HR need to rise to employees' new shifting expectations
Workers want more. Even today, employees' expectations for their work extend well beyond simply pay and compensation. More than **50%** of employees want a great work-life balance, while **43%** place career advancement at the top of their list, and **41%** place ethics and values as the most important for them[2]. Employees today want to do great work, which they feel is making a difference in the world, in an organisation that truly values them and respects them as more than just human capital.

The focus on this will only increase further in the coming decade. Flexible and hybrid working styles, which flew to the top of the agenda as a result of the global pandemic, are pivotal to this today, and will continue to be so further into the future. Even before the recent crisis, **92%** of millennials said flexible working was a top priority when job hunting[3] and, **70%** of employees felt that flexible working made a job more attractive[4]. Yet, only 2**0%** of advertised jobs were offering flexibility[5]. The demand of jobs that allowed for flexible working were significantly outweighing the supply.

70%
of employees felt that flexible working made a job more attractive[4]

By 2030, workstyles are expected to continue to significantly shift. HR and People teams will be left to "tackle the much more diverse working arrangements that there will be," explains **Linda Holbeche**, Co-Director of research development consultancy The Holbeche Partnership. HR will "have roles in making these new ways of working a safe and healthy environment" for employees, wherever they're based.

"Mental health support will also continue further to be an area that HR professionals will need to manage", says **Rowena Carter**, Director of People and Culture at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. "By 2030, I would anticipate a much more robust approach to providing support to employees on both a professional and personal level."

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"[In 2030] social, mobile, analytics and cloud-based technologies will be leveraged to make the HR function more efficient and enable the employee experience to be at the heart of the workforce strategy."

Dave Millner
Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator

Basic needs won't change, but new generations entering the workforce will shift expectations

However, while employees' expectations on the way they work might change, people's basic workplace needs won't. They will still have a need to continue to grow, learn, do work that has meaning, be recognised for their contribution and have clarity on what's expected of them. Yet employees will want a much more flexible and holistic approach, particularly as the next generation enters the workforce, as **April Marcot**, Head of People and culture at Talent explains: "They will push businesses beyond their comfort zone." As a result, "HR's role is becoming even more important to help deliver on these expectations of the next generation, to help the business listen to their people better, and to be able to move faster and more flexibly than ever before."

The impact of the pandemic will be felt for a long while, explains Research Advisor at CIPD, **Mel Norris-Green**: "The world of work is changing, and the remit of HR needs to shift in line with this. HR will need to juggle things like changing employer-employee expectations, especially as we enter difficult periods in the labour market."

People are tired—they need proper well-being support from their HR teams

Well-being is paramount to this and will be vital for attracting and retaining top talent in 2030. **69%** of employees were experiencing burnout while working from home during the global crisis[6]. "With all this change, people are a little tired," says **Josh Bersin**, CEO of The Josh Bersin Company and HR industry analyst. "We have worked a lot of hours and spent a lot of time on video calls," he adds. "It's important to reflect on what we learned and make sure we take it forward, while employing newly found skills in remote work, well-being, empathy and productivity."

In fact, a holistic approach to employee well-being—supporting workforces with their whole self, rather than just issues they are facing at work—will become table stakes for organisations. Companies that support employees with their needs beyond the workplace see a tangible increase (more than **20%**)[7] in the number of employees reporting better mental health. Supportive employers can also realise a **21%** increase in the number of high performers[8] compared to organisations that don't provide that same degree of support to employees. HR leaders need to consider now what tools and support networks they can put in place to get ahead.

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HR teams will adopt a 'training-forward' approach to align with employee expectations

73% of employees want to learn digital skills—but less than half (**49%**) of workers say their employer gave them the opportunity to improve their digital skills outside of their normal duties[9]. However, this is likely to be just the tip of the iceberg. To bridge the skills gap by 2030, HR will have taken training to a whole new level. **Susan LaMotte** explains: "If it's true that there are less qualified people to fill skilled-labour, tech, and analytics roles, then organisations will begin to truly invest in developing those skills through immersive learning experiences, such as company sponsored schools and classes, apprenticeships, on-the-job-training and comprehensive rotational opportunities."

In addition, HR will focus on succession planning and leadership development to match with employees' expectations. Susan believes, "to ensure the talent they've attracted to their organisation stays, they will clearly need to outline their growth plans and opportunities."

Put the 'human' back in HR to meet employee expectations

Balancing the needs and expectations of employees will be vital in the future; HR will need to show they're true "people advocates" argues **Dave Millner**. "The people advocate will be able to balance the needs of the workforce and ensure that their perspective and challenges are ultimately implemented by the organisation. This will be particularly vital as the employee experience strategy 'comes to life' for employees."

Mel Norris-Green, Research Adviser at CIPD agrees. She explains that HR is rightly becoming more "people-focussed" and will need to use "technology in a human-centred way" which will be vital to this shift. However, we could see a further shift to transition to a more 'human' function by 2030, where we're completely employee-centric.

"Employee-centricity and the employee experience will be a huge focus," predicts **Linda Holbeche**, Co-Director of research development consultancy, The Holbeche Partnership. Employees in a people-centric company culture feel psychologically safe to make suggestions and challenge poor practice. There will be more focus for HR and People teams on "how to communicate as a business with employees" in authentic and human ways and "give them a voice," in a way that ensures they're truly being listened to, adds Linda.

What does this mean for employee experiences in 2030? HR will need to ensure that employees' views are heard and are "part of the change" organisations implement, says **Dave Millner**, Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator. The experiences provided by HR will also be even more 'human' and encompass what's being asked for by employees, such as true flexible working that is outcome driven rather than visibly driven, to well-being support and much more.

"HR leaders need to improve honest, authentic and trustworthy communication. Often buried in legalese and corporate speak, HR leaders need to develop trust in the workplace."

Ray Wang
Founder and Chairman of Constellation Research

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Employee experiences need to emerge by design, not by accident

Employee experiences are already a priority for HR leaders, but by 2030 there will be more emphasis placed on designing, sustaining, and implementing tailored experiences that provide positive outcomes. "It will be about ensuring that the critical touchpoints between the organisation and the workforce operate successfully and add value," explains **Dave Millner**.

Aligned with this will be "the need to ensure that the company culture emerges by design and not by accident," Dave stresses. "As the aim of the employee experience journey is to ensure that all employees are engaged all along the way: from candidacy and onboarding, through to performance, growth, and eventually exit. Disengagement has to be avoided at any stage."

"Employee-centricity and the employee experience will be a huge focus by 2030, with attention on how we can communicate as a business with our employees and how we can give them a voice."

Linda Holbeche
Co-Director of The Holbeche Partnership

A laser-focus on the link between expectations, experiences, and business goals

HR and People leaders will also have to consider how expectations, the experiences delivered, and the link to the wider business strategy are linked. **Ray Wang**, Founder and Chairman of Constellation Research, explains: "HR's mission will shift to reflecting the brand values and ensuring that employee experience matches the mission and purpose of the company."

HR and business leaders of 2030 have a challenge on their hands. If organisations want to attract and retain top talent, they will need to understand employees' evolving expectations, motivations, and aspirations, and link these in a strong way to their mission and purpose to deliver the best experiences for their people.

How to prepare today

Build your knowledge on aligning employee expectations and experiences

Read
Read '**Employee experience by design**' to learn how to build a robust business case for employee experience, and align this activity with organisational strategy to demonstrate impact.

Download
59% of HR leaders felt they became more influential as leaders over the pandemic. Did you? Read our research from 1,500+ HR leaders, c-suite executives and employees across the globe, '**HR in the moment: Changing expectations and perceptions of HR**', to see how recent events have transformed HR today.

Follow
Follow **Jenn Lim**, CEO and Chief Happiness Officer at Delivering Happiness, if you want to find out more about the science behind happiness and how to prioritise purpose, people, and profits to make an impact on the world.

Listen
Listen to the podcast '**Transform your workplace**' featuring industry experts, thought leaders, HR experts and entrepreneurs covering big ideas that can transform organisations.

2. Organisational flexibility

Organisational fluidity and agility led by HR

HR will prepare and lead organisations through whatever crisis hits, with agility and confidence—no matter how unexpected.

HR have learned from the global crisis to be more agile in a changing landscape
If we've learned anything from the pandemic, it's that agility is key. Yet, just one year before the global pandemic, only **29%** of HR leaders said they were organised for speed, adaptability, and agility[10]. Companies that were responsive and flexible and were able to switch their work models at the drop of a hat, without compromising performance or company values, fared best.

HR and People leaders all over the world had to find new, more agile ways to manage their people and adapt to today's world of work. Today and in the coming years, HR and People teams need to continue driving agility to create a truly adaptive, responsive, and resilient workforce, fit to meet any unforeseen challenges in the future. Whenever the next crisis hits, whatever it is, HR will be ready. As a result, organisations will be more prepared, too.

"By 2030, HR leaders will be the lead change agent, using their understanding of transformation to create continually agile organisations."

Angela O'Connor
CEO and Founder of The HR Lounge

The changing landscape "already requires a great deal of agility and flexible mindset in how HR strategies are planned, executed and evaluated," says **Rowena Carter**, Director of People and Culture at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. In 2030, she explains, "there will be a lot less lead-time in rolling out effective strategies." HR leaders "will need to be ready to change direction constantly in response to the changing priorities, as we have seen over the past year or so."

Mel Norris-Green, Research Adviser at CIPD, the professional body for HR and personal development in the UK, agrees: "Some of the key insights from our recent research are about the need to think beyond the immediate context and consider how external disruptors can influence the world of work." The focus between now and 2030, she says, will be how HR "professionals adapt and change, and add the most value" in their organisations.

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**HR need to start thinking outside of the box
—and their teams**

HR and People leaders have already made great strides in more agile ways of working. There's been a "shift to being more experimental, adaptive and creative," says **Perry Timms**, Founder and Chief Energy Officer at People & Transformational HR.

However, by 2030, HR and People teams will have even more responsive approaches, not only to the way we work, but to the way the HR team is designed and operates. "I expect HR to move into more innovative, emergent practices," Perry explains. HR will create a "more fluid, agile organisation design and all the People systems that sit within that." **Jon Ingham**, Director of Strategic HR Academy, agrees: "HR will no longer be a function but a more inclusive network, in which HR spends more time with the rest of the business, and others from the business work with us in HR."

"Senior HR leaders need to be disruptive so that the HR function is future-ready and 'on the front foot' during challenging times. That means a leader who is agile, digitally savvy, and inclusive—so that they can take HR colleagues and executive stakeholders with them."

Dave Millner
Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator

In 2030, "constant change will be part of the daily job," explains **Dave Millner**, Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator. "Companies will adopt a more agile approach to their work, both in terms of work patterns, work content and performance expectations, which will probably be team-based not individual-based." Therefore, HR's role will be "even more about creating and sustaining a culture where these approaches and evolving demands can be maintained," Dave explains.

HR and People leaders have the opportunity now to get ahead. HR teams don't necessarily need to train up their teams on **agile HR** methodology, but taking the **agile principles**, and understanding where these could make a positive impact on processes and mindset, would make great strides towards a more agile way of working in 2030.

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> "If the current predictions of a more flexible future do materialise then tech will play a key role, as successful hybrid working is only really viable with good technology."

Gemma Dale
Author and Lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University

Build your knowledge on HR agility today

Read
Read the short **'Agile manifesto'** to familiarise yourself with the agile principles, and the '**Agile HR manifesto**' to find out more about what this means for ways of working in HR.

Follow
Follow agile HR expert **Perry Timms**, Founder and Chief Energy Officer at People & Transformational HR.

Read
Read '**Agile people: A radical approach for HR and managers (that leads to motivated employees)**' by Pia-Maria Thoren.

Listen
Listen to '**The agility mindset**' podcast from The Agile Future Forum.

Download
How can HR and People teams lead their organisations to be more resilient? Download the eBook, 'Business resilience and agility: How HR leaders can empower change' to find out the eight essential ways to building a stronger, more adaptable workforce.

Enable faster, more intelligent decisions with technology
Technology today already elevates and significantly enhances HR strategies; things like cloud HR, self-service, mobile and automation are already the norm across many organisations. Their adoption will be even more widespread as HR leaders look to automate their working lives for optimum agility. This helps HR leaders to "make intelligent choices faster, that accelerate business and organisational performance," explains **Mofoluwaso Ilevbare**, Head of HR at Procter & Gamble Australia and New Zealand.

However, technology can only help organisations succeed if HR shift their ways of working to be more agile and keep up with the pace of change. "With the relentless digital transformation of work, HR will need to think more like designers and architects, experimenting and testing new ways of doing things, leading their organisations forward," says **Paul Burrin**, Vice President at Sage People.

3. People analytics

HR insights that drive business impact

People analytics in HR teams will have fully evolved beyond just data reporting and collection—and instead be intrinsic to driving business impact across all organisations.

There will be a shift to predictive analytics to support c-suite decision-making
The days of needing to rely on spreadsheets and gut feel are fully behind us. Organisations have more HR insights than ever before and HR teams are more and more moving from lagging metrics that give insight on historical information, to leading metrics that predict trends and inform business-decision making in real-time. However, there's still some way to go. **94%** of business leaders told us in our recent research that they have access to some form of People data from HR, but **60%** of the c-suite say they're also not using HR data to drive any kind of decision-making[11].

By 2030, HR and People-predictive analytics will be business leaders' go-to for decision-making. **Angela O'Connor**, CEO and Founder of The HR Lounge, explains: "HR will be at the heart of the company, using analytics and business forecasting to focus strategic workforce decisions."

HR analytics need to drive bottom line business results
By 2030, HR and People leaders will be proactive and focussed on continuous improvement that drives "tangible bottom line improvements, growth or significant cost inefficiencies," believes **Dave Millner**, Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator. He explains that the focus for HR to become truly strategic will depend upon delivering value to the internal and external customer. People analytics plays an essential part of future-proofing businesses, he says: "Data and analytical-based insights are a critical element of demonstrating the evidence that builds credibility with HR's internal clients."

"Data and analytics are at the heart of the digital world of work," he adds. "That means that the future HR practitioner needs to be more numerate and be able to explore data and information to elicit insights that might not normally have been identified." Being more numerate though, is based upon a specific foundation—"having a commercial mindset and thinking like a business leader to ensure that everything has an impact upon the bottom line."

"Data will be the daily language of HR by 2030, with it defining and creating the way in which HR communicate with strategic stakeholders."

Dave Millner
Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator

"As HR tech becomes more global and cloud based, protecting employee data from breaches will also be seen as a core responsibility within the HR function in the future. In this way, HR will be seen as an amalgamation between finance, operations, and IT—which is a pretty good place to sit."

Matt Charney
Head of Industry and Product Marketing at SmartRecruiters and Partner for RecruitingDaily

"By 2030, with the increase in technology being used, there will be even more data and analytics available to help leaders better understand the people within their organisations, and to help them make informed decisions."

Susan LaMotte
CEO and Founder of employer branding firm, exaqueo

Matt Charney, Head of Industry and Product Marketing at SmartRecruiters and Partner for RecruitingDaily, agrees and goes one step further, reiterating the importance of not just People analytics, but HR leaders becoming more savvy with business data too. "HR leaders need to brush up on basic business skills, particularly around forecasting, planning and analytics," Matt explains. "If you can't reconcile a profit and loss, or understand basic business math, general accounting, financial planning and analysis, or similar quantitative disciplines, it would be a good time to start."

This is imperative, Matt explains, for HR and People leaders who want to excel in 2030: "In tomorrow's world of work, HR will not only be responsible for aligning their work with the employees they serve, but also, bigger business and bottom line results. The days of touchy feely, 'human relations' centred HR are fleeting. [By 2030], if you're not helping drive profits, you're going to end up at a loss."

HR's alignment to bottom line results and business outcomes will move ever increasingly into focus over the coming years. Today, only **43%** of business leaders feel HR is playing a leading role across organisational priorities[12], so there is still some way to go.

Conversations will be led by actionable insights, not gut feel—but HR need to upskill
A lack of technology, as well as a skills gap in People insights, are major stumbling blocks to successful People analytics strategies in HR teams today. Nearly two-thirds (**62%**) of HR leaders say they're currently not able to spot trends and make business-related predictions, and **35%** say a lack of confidence or skills is holding them back from providing better insights[13]. There is a lot of work to do to upskill the HR function—and People leaders know this. Less than a third (**28%**) rate their analytics skills as expert, but over three-quarters (**76%**) believe it will be an important skill for the future[14].

"[In 2030], there will be greater demand for HR to step up and lead with data to bring solutions to the business through research and information rather than a gut feeling or how we feel about something on a personal level," says **Ben Eubanks**, Chief Research Officer at Lighthouse Research & Advisory. "We will need to bring actual data insight on to the table."

The importance of understanding what data matters most

There's no question that People analytics is changing HR for the better. It's helping HR and People teams to increase its impact on an organisation and be more focussed on business outcomes but "the difficulty lies in understanding which data actually matters most, what the data actually means, and how to use the data to make informed decisions," says **Susan LaMotte**, CEO and Founder of employer branding firm, exaqueo.

She explains: "HR leaders need to upskill on how they collect data and why. But HR often fall prey to canned surveys and benchmarks because we're so concerned about competition without looking inward to what data and insight we really need from our people."

Again, this goes back to HR understanding wider organisational objectives. "Learning how the organisation works" for example, and "what drives success" is imperative, explains **Deborah Wilkes**, Managing Director of Enable-HR. HR and People teams need to know "which numbers matter; the customer's world; the dynamics in your sector and what the CEO and CFO worry about. Numbers are the language of organisations and HR must speak this language."

HR analytics is the secret sauce for stronger strategic partnerships with other business leaders

With the right skills and technology, People leaders can extract actionable insights that result in real change, but HR can't do this alone. HR teams will need to work together with other business leaders and departments to have real influence. By 2030, it will be commonplace for HR to pool different resources and skills to analyse data and implement solutions that work.

> "HR will be regarded as a 'Power Station'. HR will become a consistent partner whose views, opinions, insights and challenges are consistently sought after because they are perceived to be an 'added value' collaborator and challenger to the business."

Dave Millner
Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator

Where to begin

Build your knowledge on predictive analytics and business forecasting

Read
Read '**The power of people: Learn how successful organisations use workforce analytics to improve business performance**'; '**Predictive HR analytics: Mastering the HR metric**'; and '**The practical guide to HR analytics: Using data to inform, transform, and empower HR decisions**'; for step-by-step guides to using HR data in areas such as employee engagement and performance.

Follow
Follow **David Green**, a People analytics leader, consultant, and conference speaker.

Listen
Listen to '**People analytics & future of work**' podcast.

Read
Read our recent research report '**HR in the moment: Impact through insights**' to find out what 500 HR and business leaders said about how People analytics are being used in organisations today.

Download
Download the eBook '**Four steps to better People analytics**' to analyse your People data, assess the gaps and make sure you're getting your data into good condition to understand the make-up of your workforce today.

4. Automation will free up time

The great admin liberation

Automation will free up HR leaders' time to focus on the things that really matter—and take more of a leadership role across organisations.

30% more time — think of the possibilities
How would you feel about freeing up a third of your teams' time? With automation, HR and People teams can do just that, allowing them to concentrate on what really matters: their people and building great experiences for them[15]. Admin is something HR leaders have been struggling with for years now, as it continues to hold HR back from the things that really matter. Despite **65%** of HR leaders[16] saying their teams have had a vital role to play in the pandemic, **57%** of the c-suite[17] still see HR as largely an administrative function. This isn't surprising given that the majority of HR leaders feel their workload has increased, with **40%** feeling they are too focussed on paperwork and admin[18].

"Over the next few years an opportunity exists for HR to play a stronger leadership role across the organisation," says **Paul Burrin**, Vice President of Sage People. "Automation and digital transformation can free HR teams from manual administration to make higher value contributions to the business."

HR has certainly made great strides with automation over the years, but there's certainly some way to go. In fact, HR managers are still losing an average of 14 hours a week by manually completing tasks that could be automated.[19] Consider what you could do with that time instead.

Linda Holbeche, Co-Director of The Holbeche Partnership, explains: "Very few HR teams have really embraced the strategic potential of technology [such as automation]." She believes the reason behind this is due to its speedy transformation. "It's evolving so fast and it's hard to get to the front of the queue when it comes to investing in technology." It means HR leaders need to make a strong business case today for the right HR technology for them, so they can reap the benefits tomorrow.
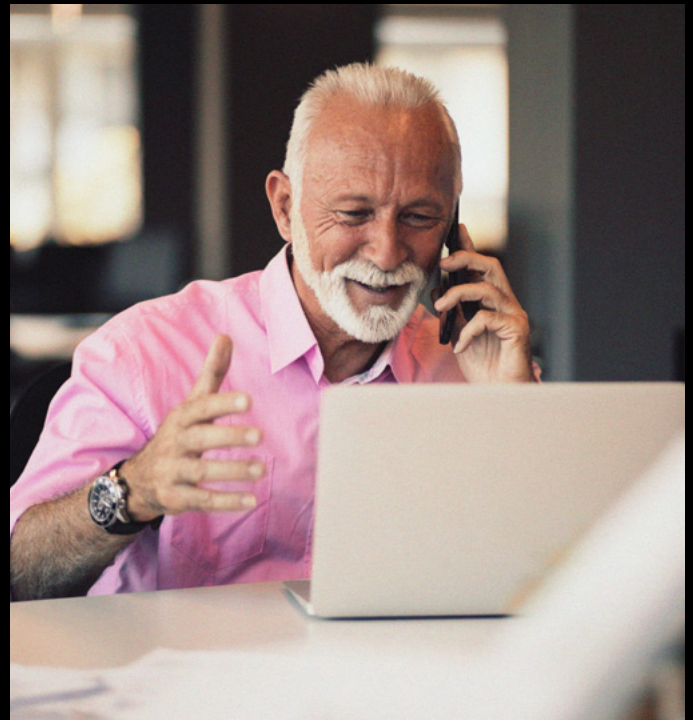
"Automation will simplify HR processes. A more innovative and ideation-based approach will emerge in HR, rather than the protocol-based approach of the past."

Dave Millner
Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator

Push for tech investment to take advantage of HR automation

HR leaders must be willing to push for tech investment. **67%** of HR leaders want to invest more in HR tech in the future, but **36%** see lack of investment from the company as a barrier[20]. "Presently, many HR and People leaders find it hard to get to the front of the queue when it comes to investing in HR technology," explains **Linda Holbeche**. "Many have still got separate HR systems, and the challenge is that many of these systems are not kept up to date and can hinder rather than help."

It means that HR leaders must be willing to make a strong and carefully thought through business case. To be future-ready, HR and Business leaders need to invest in getting the operational side of HR automated, which will "free up HR to make a more strategic contribution to the business," Linda advises. Pushing for HR investment isn't easy, however, HR leaders will need to provide persuasive, tangible reasons to the board with a robust business case that can demonstrate a clear return on investment.

HR will bring more value to the table, with help from technology

All of our HR experts agree that by 2030, technology—most of which is already available today—will be a crucial enabler for HR to be truly strategic and bring greater capacity and value to a more focussed HR function. "It will enable increased automation and the ability to streamline significant parts of HR that have distracted resources away from dealing with strategic and vital people-based issues and challenges," says **Dave Millner**, Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator.

"Taking care of menial administration that takes up valuable resources will free up time for deeper purpose driven work that supports individual people and the overall organisational culture," says **Rowena Carter**, Director of People and Culture at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. **Dave Millner**, Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator agrees, and explains that "Automation will enable a more business intelligent function, that has the ability to be forward looking, more responsive and have greater credibility."

"We need to automate low-level admin, including guidance to manage and resolve disputes and working issues. The casework and litigious nature of workplace disputes will be supercharged by automated and bias-free machine processing, advice, and risk profiling."
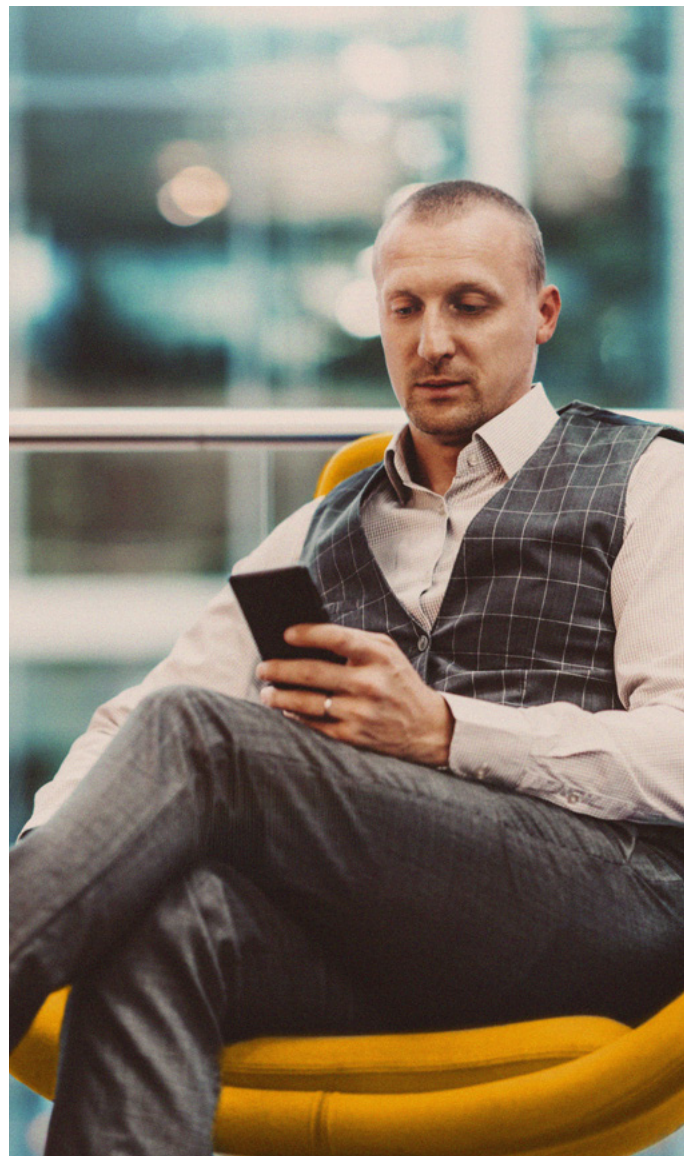
Perry Timms
Founder and Chief Energy Officer at People & Transformational HR

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Artificial Intelligence will free up HR to be more strategic

Of course, there will always be a need for the human touch within the HR function of the future, but our experts also predict that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to improve recruitment, will create a more diverse workforce, as well as speeding up the screening of candidates.

"HR will be about managing skills and competencies of both humans and machines. Many capabilities will be tracked by artificial intelligence [...] The role of HR will become more strategic as we see a greater degree of automation for compliance, legal, and regulation."

Ray Wang
Founder and Chairman of Constellation Research

Ben Eubanks, Chief Research Officer at Lighthouse Research & Advisory, and author of Artificial Intelligence for HR, paints the scenario of a pushed-for-time HR leader who needs to urgently screen 50 CVs and work on a strategy for how to create a better workplace for employees. Although both of these tasks will take an hour, "one will really add a tonne of value to the business. The other task takes the same amount of time and the majority of it is just saying no to candidates who you can't hire." If we are able to create "a shortlist of 10 candidates for us to speak to in an unbiased way, we are able to get that time back to focus on the strategic tasks that often get pushed to the side," Ben concludes.

This can't wait until 2030. HR leaders need to liberate themselves from admin today. It means more time working on more strategic initiatives, providing great experiences to employees and providing better outcomes and results for the business, that will come to fruition, both today and in the future.

Where to begin

Build your knowledge on HR automation today

Follow
Follow **Josh Bersin** for regular insights on AI and automation and to better understand the HR technology market.

Read
Read '**HR without people?: Industrial evolution in the age of automation, Ai, and machine learning (future of work)**' to hear how modern HR practices need to respond to far reaching technological and industrial change in 10-, 30- and 50-years' time.

Read
Read Ben Eubanks' book '**Artificial intelligence for HR**'.

Listen
Listen to '**The HR automation journey**' episode on the HR Exchange podcast.

Download
Ready to raise your game with automation? Download our '**Transformation through automation: 5 ways to raise your HR game**' eBook and discover the five ways HR automation is a game changer.

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5. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and sustainability

DEI will encompass so much more

Companies still have a long way to go—and employees already expect, and deserve, more than just hollow words.

DEI will include so much more by 2030

Diversity cannot be tackled with one action. It can't be as hollow as a PR or a tick box exercise. It's not as simple as requiring training classes or building an internal committee. To support diversity and inclusion in the long run, it must be integrated into all HR and organisational processes until it becomes the norm.

Currently, we still have a long way to go in most organisations. There's no room for discrimination or bias in any company of the future. Successful companies don't just know this already—they're making tangible changes for the better, today. It goes without saying that this should be the case for all organisations right now.

"As the next generation enters the workforce, they will push businesses beyond their comfort zone. They will expect businesses to take a more serious attitude toward equality, diversity and inclusion, and to be more flexible and adaptable to change."

April Marcot
Head of People and Culture at Talent

Also, today, we're already seeing some future-focussed organisations start to broaden out the definition to include diversity of personality, emotional intelligence, lived experience, risk appetite, neurodiversity, imagination, and adaptability. By 2030, this should be the norm across all organisations who recognise diversity and inclusion as key to success. All these different attributes together make for a stronger, more resilient organisation because diversity, in every form, is good for business[21].

Employees will hold organisations to account on their DEI practices

Companies' DEI strategies are today being put to the test—and rightly so. As many as **70%** of job seekers say they want to work for a company that demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion[22]. Those that haven't put a robust and efficient DEI policy in place or don't act upon it, will struggle to survive in 2030.

Diversity and inclusion should already be front and centre for many companies; however, "as the next generation enters the workforce, they will push businesses beyond their comfort zone," in 2030, says **April Marcot**, Head of People and Culture at Talent: "They will expect businesses to take a more serious attitude toward equality, diversity and inclusion, and to be more flexible and adaptable to change." In 2030, there will be no room for excuses or empty words.

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Organisations will need to show they're contributing to global sustainability efforts

Sustainability, like DEI, has leapt up the agenda as the effects of global warming are coming more into focus. Organisations have a crucial part to play in lightening the footprint and making strides towards more ethical practices. Both **April Marcot**, and **Linda Holbeche**, Co-Director of the Holbeche Partnership, flag the increased importance employees will place on the environment by 2030 too. April highlights it as something else that workforces will expect a much more serious attitude towards. Linda explains: "HR will also have to support in pushing through an environmentally-friendly agenda to align with focus on these areas within society as a whole."

"Areas such as purpose, values, responsible business and sustainability are really writing the agenda for many senior HR leaders," explains **Mel Norris-Green**, Research Adviser at CIPD, the professional body for HR and personal development in the UK. "We're seeing that come into the remit of HR, where it might not have been before." **Gemma Dale**, author and Lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University, also points out the inevitability of HR "continuing to be influenced by external factors [like sustainability] as we always are." The recent pandemic is a prime example of this.

> "HR's role is becoming even more important when working with businesses to help them to deliver on the expectations of the next generation. [HR will need to] help the business listen to their people better, and to be able to move faster and more flexibly than ever before."

April Marcot
Head of People and Culture at Talent

Interestingly though, only a quarter of HR leaders (**24%**) say that they're currently playing a leading role in sustainability in their company[23]. This is in contrast to the fact that **39%** of fellow c-suite leaders said that they believe HR is leading in this area[24]. This indicates that, as sustainability moves up organisations' agenda, there may be disconnects across business leaders on the role HR leaders play here. This is something that will need addressing way before 2030.
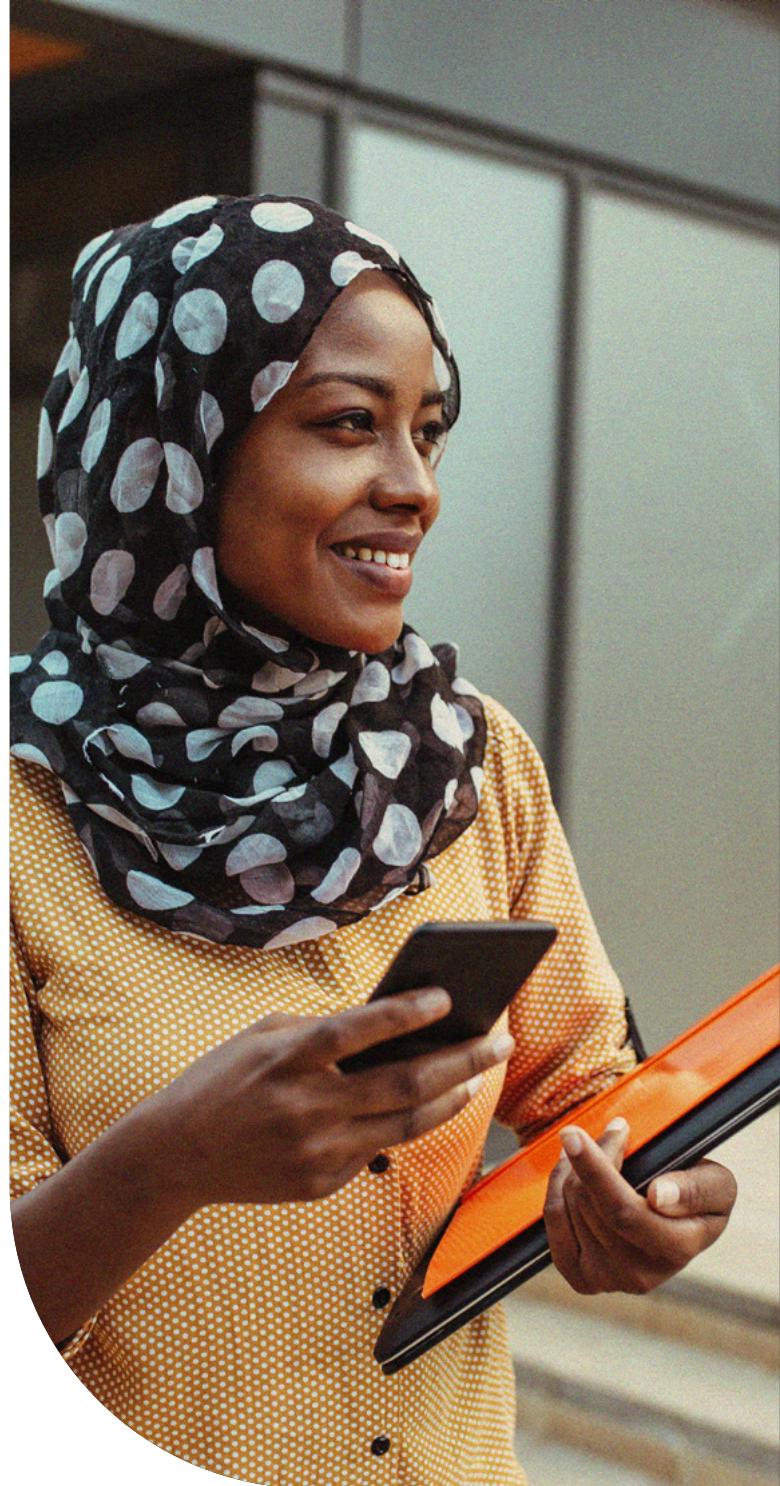
More tech tools will be used to elevate DEI strategy —but there will be flaws

Some organisations are already using technology to create equal representation in their workplaces. "We're seeing great progress by HR in adopting AI and machine learning in recruitment," says **Linda Holbeche**, Co-Director of The Holbeche Partnership. AI tools remove identifiers such as race, religion, age, and address so that candidates are selected on merit alone, but Linda warns that some of these AI processes can have in-built bias, which "HR leaders will have to address and overcome." Being aware of these and acting now is paramount, in order to effectively tap into these tools in the future.

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Diversity, equity and inclusion: useful resources

Read
Read '**Building an inclusive organization**' by Stephen Frost.

Read
Read '**How to be an inclusive leader**' by Jennifer Brown, diversity and inclusion expert.

Follow
Follow **Asif Sadiq MBE**, Head of Equity and Inclusion at Warner Media International.

Listen
Listen to '**ReWorked: The diversity and inclusion**' podcast from diversity and unconscious bias specialist, EW Group.

Download
Where are you on your People analytics journey? Download '**People analytics: Four steps of HR analytics**' to find out and get further suggestions on the key metrics to track.

People analytics available today will inform DEI strategies in 2030

People analytics also offers HR leaders the tools with which to identify how big the problem currently is within their organisations today and put in place standardised processes, measures, and targets to make real change for the future. This means analysing your data, not just by how many women or people of colour you have, for example, but what jobs they do, how much they are paid, what opportunities for progression they have. Then having difficult conversations internally, being transparent, sharing your findings and creating alignment of incentives and opportunities to create meaningful change.

Nearly a quarter (**23%**) of companies surveyed recently have calculated their ethnicity pay gap for 2020 compared to just **5%** in 2018, and a further **40%** have committed to disclosing the gap in the next one to three years[25]. With modern People analytics, we now have the tools today, and by 2030, there really will be absolutely no excuse.

40%

of companies have committed to disclosing their ethnicity pay gap in one to three years.[25]

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What are the top skills needed to get ahead today?

"People professionals need to prioritise their own development. HR professionals take a role in building talent, so they really need to prioritise their own as well." We really couldn't say it better than **Mel Norris-Green**, Research Advisor at CIPD. With so many exciting and complex challenges by 2030, now is the time to skill up and get ahead. Here's our experts' advice.

1. Innovation

"Every company must innovate its HR and leadership practices because the way we manage people is changing faster than ever. Most of us are dealing with factors such as broad employee demographics, multi-cultural teams, constant automation and digital change, and increasingly global markets. You, as an HR professional, have to figure out what to do about all these things—and also be a good economist, anthropologist, and politician as well."

Josh Bersin
CEO of The Josh Bersin Company

2. Agility

"Agility. A simple one word, throw-away statement, but it really does [reflect the] need for iterative, pacy, and inclusive ways to garner the energy of people—and the creativity needed for new challenges and responsive practices."

Perry Timms
Founder and Chief Energy Officer at People & Transformational HR

3. Influence

"The skill that HR leaders need to build on is their ability to sell ideas, approaches and perspectives through influence and an understanding of customer needs. This incorporates the attributes of emotional intelligence, exceptional communication skills and wider business understanding."

Angela O'Connor
CEO and Founder of The HR Lounge

4. Collaboration

"The ability to work collaboratively with other functions, such as IT, on projects outside of the traditional HR remit are becoming important."

Mel Norris-Green
Research Adviser at CIPD

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5. Compassion

"Compassion. Really thinking about how to serve people, to think about how to care for people and looking for ways to actually build better connections."

Ben Eubanks
Chief Research Officer at Lighthouse Research & Advisory

6. Empathy

"The most important human quality in the future of work will be empathy, and based upon this, the key skill will be influencing."

Jon Ingham
Director of Strategic HR Academy

7. Critical thinking

"Critical thinking in problem-solving. No two situations will be the same. HR leaders have to be courageous and rise up to the demands of the future, finding creative ways to coach leaders and empower employees."

Mofoluwaso Ilevbare
Head of HR at Procter & Gamble Australia and New Zealand

8. Resilience

"Adaptability and resilience. If the pandemic has taught us any long-term lessons it is that whatever we plan for, we must be prepared to adapt quickly in a changing environment. We cannot predict what will happen in the next few years with any certainty, but we can prepare ourselves to change to fit to whatever circumstances arise."

Gemma Dale
Author and Lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University

9. Analytics

"HR leaders need to upskill on how they collect data and why. We often fall prey to canned surveys and benchmarks because we're so concerned about competition without looking inward to what data and insight we really need from our people."

Susan LaMotte
CEO and Founder of employer brand consulting firm, exaqueo

10. Confidence in decision making

"Confidence [in your insights]. So, having a viewpoint and the ability to back it up with the evidence so that you can argue a case well if you need to."

Linda Holbeche
Co-Director of The Holbeche Partnership

11. Emotional intelligence

"[Work on your own] emotional intelligence and the ability to develop this skill in all leaders in the organisation."

Rowena Carter
Director of People and Culture at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts

12. Digital savviness

"Skills such as the technical ability to use software tools and the ability to collaborate and build relationships are critical. We can see how these skill types are going to change for HR leaders and how we play a role in the business."

Ben Eubanks
Chief Research Officer at Lighthouse Research & Advisory

What role does **HR technology** play?

Technology opens so many doors for HR leaders and their teams. It means reducing laborious admin, having the right data to understand your people better, becoming more agile to support the well-being of your employees and so much more. Find out what our experts say about the role of technology in 2030.

1. A competitive edge

"Focussing on technology that elevates the candidate and associate experiences will be key to getting ahead. Technology that creates engagement, connection, and transparency in applications, will give HR leaders a competitive advantage in the remote post-COVID environment."

Susan LaMotte
CEO and Founder of exaqueo

2. Essential for survival

"HR technology is an essential part of business today. HR technology is moving from 'good to have' to 'essential for survival.' While there are many changes taking place, the biggest shift of all is the move from HR technology to work technology. It's impossible to manage people without tools. We desperately need systems for record keeping, pay, recruitment, learning, and many other things. The issue that HR leaders must tackle is managing all this technology in the most effective, streamlined, and efficient way. The overall strategy is to make more and more HR technology disappear. That is, make it useful to employees, managers, and leaders."

Josh Bersin
CEO of The Josh Bersin Company

3. The importance of a clear ROI

"It's important that we think about technology in a purposeful and critical way and consider the impact. So, if we introduce technology, it [needs to] really enhance HR professionals' job quality, giving their role more meaning and purpose, and allowing them to work in more strategic areas. HR needs to really make sure that they have the digital skills and support digital transformation needs, to be sure that the organisation reaps the benefits of any investment and technology."

Mel Norris-Green
Research Adviser at CIPD

4. Consolidation of systems

"We're going to be seeing a consolidation of systems from highly fragmented and specialised into much broader business platforms, and it's going to be incumbent on HR leaders to know not just their people tech stack, but the systems the company is using in other functions. I'd start with talking to people in other departments and getting a handle on what they use and how HR could potentially leverage these extant tools to broaden their overall business impact."

Matt Charney
Head of Industry and Product Marketing at SmartRecruiters

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7. Garner more credibility

"Automation will enable a more business-intelligent HR function that has the ability to be forward looking, more responsive, and have greater visibility and credibility. It means HR will have the infrastructure in place that will drive evidence and data-based practices that can influence the business in its thinking."

Dave Millner
Founder and Consulting Partner of HR Curator

8. World of possibilities

"Technology can enhance HR solutions; analyse employee insights and stakeholder needs via analytics; simplify HR processes; enhance productivity; and help leaders and make intelligent choices faster that accelerate business and organisation performance. "

Mofoluwaso Ilevbare
Head of HR at Procter & Gamble
Australia and New Zealand

5. Fight for investment

"I'm shocked by the stats on how few HR functions feel they've made adequate investments in tech. If it were sales, marketing, or production—the organisation would be pushing tech at them. I'm guessing HR people have been too busy to make the case. This is part of a wider challenge for HR—to move from the reactive to the proactive, or from the transactional to the transformational. Every HR person wants to add more value. Tech will be a large part of the solution and worth the hassle to get there. Fight for it."

Deborah Wilkes
Managing Director of Enable-HR

9. An opportunity to lead

"Continued digital transformation, at pace, is inevitable. HR not only needs to use this technology, but also be able to lead for it within their own organisations."

Gemma Dale
Author and Lecturer at Liverpool
John Moores University

10. Clearer measurement of HR impact

"By 2030, we will expect work to change but also how we measure the value and impact HR and the People Profession brings. Beyond financials, this will include human energy and well-being plus social, intellectual and environmental value. We have to be prepared to create a more sophisticated report card on what a successful, sustainable and flourishing organisation is for the people that work there."

Perry Timms
Founder and Chief Energy Officer at
People & Transformational HR

6. A powerful partner to people

"Technology is the tool and the platform to enable communication, process or delivery. It supports people doing what people have always done, innovate, communicate, create, lead, and teach. Used wisely, it is a powerful partner to the important things. It can simplify, speed things up, facilitate, and replace repetition. In saying that though, people need to be the core of HR strategy."

April Marcot
Head of People and Culture at Talent

A toolkit for progressive HR and People leaders to be future-ready

Sage has a range of resources to support HR and People leaders to prepare now for the future of HR.

Understand the new HR agenda
Find out how the pandemic has impacted the role, expectations and views of HR and People teams globally in brand new research.

Reveal the research

Raise your game with HR automation
Automation is a game changer for HR and People teams. Say goodbye to admin, and hello to automated processes and ways of working in these five ways.

Hello automation

Drive business success with actionable insights
Discover the four stages of HR analytics, find out where you are in your journey, and learn how to build business impact with actionable insights.

Discover the four stages

Equip yourself for the future
What skills will People leaders of tomorrow need—and are you ready to get ahead? Find out the top four skills needed.

Uncover the top skills

Build business resilience
Business resilience isn't just important in the wake of recent disruptions. We highlight eight essential ways HR and leaders can drive business resilience and agility.

See how to drive agility

Invest in new HR technologies
Find out how to choose the right HR software, with our ultimate guide to what HR leaders, CEOs, Finance and IT leaders look for.

Get the ultimate guide
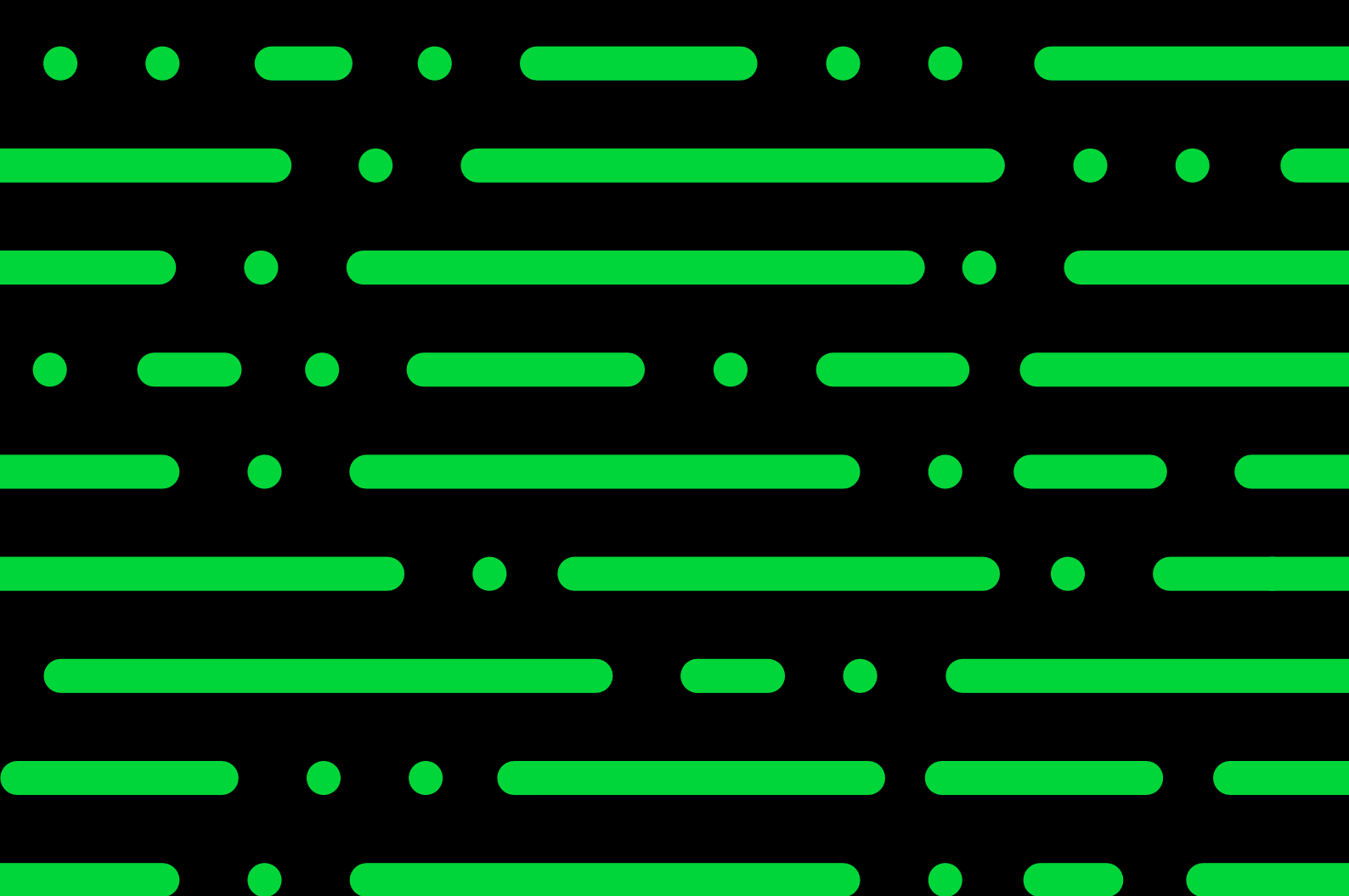
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Thank you to all our experts who gave up their own time to contribute to this report

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