

WSR

Workforce Solutions Review

1st Quarter 2023

The Official Journal of the International Association for Human Resource Information Management

IHRIM.ORG

- 7 Learnings from 50 Years in the Tech Industry
- 25 The Application of AI in HCM: Benefits and Warning Signs
- 30 The Holy Grail of Data-Driven Workforce Planning

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The author tells us to consider how much we already rely on Artificial Intelligence in all aspects of our life. The fact that a significant part of this article was "written" by AI is a little troubling, given how easy it was to generate what appears to be a scholarly review of the merits of AI in recruiting. Of course, merits and flaws in many cases are so evident that it makes sense that AI could generate these observations, but the challenge presented by AI at the end of this article must NOT be overlooked. To address what is already happening, we are designing laws and procedures. Essentially the same as "Locking the door after the robbery?" Perhaps an extreme analogy, but the merit of developing guidelines for all aspects of AI recruiting is compelling!

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Workforce Solutions Review is a peer-reviewed journal of the International Association for Human Resource Information Management (IHRIM) whose mission is to prepare the next generation of HR technology leaders by advancing the HR technology profession.

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from the editor



Dan Vander Hey has contributed to the HCM consulting world for over three decades. As Co-Managing Editor of WSR, he occasionally opines on things near and dear to his own work experiences. Dan has actively contributed to IHRIM and the HR community as a consultant, champion, coach, and consistent catalyst of innovative ideas to maximize human performance. Vander Hey has galvanized multi-disciplinary teams aligning resources and processes to deliver expected results on time and within budget unfailingly. He has worked in virtually every work environment globally but brings candor and practical focus to achieve remarkable results and develop strong people relationships wherever he goes. He can be reached at Spencer-Thomas Group, where he works as vice president of Advisory Services, Dan.VanderHey@Spencer-Thomas.com.

Well, it is finally here! The 2023 First Quarter Issue of Workforce Solutions is ready for print and distribution, and we appreciate your patience. These are exciting times for IHRIM and Workforce Solutions Review. We have updated the membership rosters of the Review Committee and the Advisory Board for *Workforce Solutions Review*. These people are critical to ensure that WSR stays current and relevant with vital topics related to HR Technology. We are very thankful for the ideas, insights, and regular contributions made by this group of people, and we are eager to ensure that 2023 is captivating and enlightening.

Our first issue of 2023 is an ideal blend of familiar and new! The recognizable authors include Lexy Martin, Bob Greene, Jeff Higgins, and Katherine Jones, who have contributed to WSR for many years. We also welcome two “new” contributors, Siddarth Sharma and Dr. Katherine Chia, who share novel perspectives on the metaverse environment and generational happiness, respectively. Finally, don’t miss any of the outstanding articles in this issue!

The *Letter from the Chair*, Dennis Hill, welcomes and challenges all to “stay ahead of the pack” by staying current with technology advances while being accountable to retain a human and ethical perspective. IHRIM is a collection of visionaries, prophets, technologists, and even nerds who systematically identify problems, creatively discover solutions, and tenaciously implement HR technology plans for their employers and workforce. Dennis leads by personal example in ALL these areas, and he has been a tireless advocate of WSR as a platform to share these innovations and encourage expanded deployment.

The thought of having a technology expert like Lexy Martin share learnings from many years in the Technology Industry was too good of an opportunity to pass up. The only sobering thing about “Lexy’s Learnings from Fifty Years in the Tech Industry” was realizing how long I’ve known and enjoyed her wisdom and levity. So, when Lexy mentioned she would share insights from a 55-year career, I was inclined to ask for a recount, but the reality is that she has been a living legend in the HR Technology arena. She has been involved with WSR as a guest editor, managing editor, and multiple-time contributor. The Six Lessons she shares are insightful, witty, and can’t-miss content.

One of our new contributors is Siddarth Sharma. We welcomed Sid as a Review Committee member for *Workforce Solutions Review* last year. The expertise he has developed leading digital transformation efforts for companies like JP Morgan Chase, Securitas, and Concentrix have been invaluable contributions to his role at WSR. In addition, he shares ideas that will expand what is possible in “*Exploring the Potential of Metaverse Environment for HR Functions: Benefits, Costs, and Challenges*.” So, take some time to explore how the metaverse environment can impact recruiting, onboarding, performance management, compensation & benefits, succession planning, and even time and attendance.

We also welcome Dr. Katherine Chia and her Cangrade team as architects, investigators, and journalists capturing intriguing research on something we all aspire – happiness. Dr. Chia looks at the variations in what makes different generations happy at work and how workplace happiness can help HR practitioners improve engagement at work. The comparisons shared in “*A New Study Finds What Drives Generational Happiness in the*

Workplace” between the various generations will compel you to assess your fit to your generational norm and consider how these observations may be used to impact performance.

“*Seven Things Companies Do Wrong in Recruiting and How to Get Them Right*” is the latest contribution from Jeff Higgins, another member of the WSR Review Committee. The fact that the number of open positions in the US has remained above 10.0 million for more than two years highlights the importance of differential performance in recruiting. With an aging workforce and an increasingly selective audience of prospects, only companies who get it right can compete successfully for talent. Since it is much harder today than a decade ago to find great talent in a reasonable amount of time, the strain on the current workforce is high. Delays in fulfilling key roles further increase the risk of turnover for other good performers and create a negative growing turnover cycle. The excellent news is the solid recommendations proposed by Higgins for each of the seven recruiting mistakes.

Acknowledgment for “*Is it me, or is it ChatGPT?*” should almost be shared equally with CHATGPT and the editor. The capability of AI tools to produce intelligent journalism was a frightening experience. Considering the intelligence and effort I believe go into writing scholarly prose, it was disconcerting to discover the true power of AI-based composition and assess its impact on how candidates present their capabilities. It also has similar benefits and risks to employers who can use the same tools to manage communications and assessments of candidates. If you don’t think that a computer can emulate human composition or provide intelligent responses, rethink that assumption and consider the impact this will have on the overall recruiting and selection process.

Continuing this focus on Artificial Intelligence is the focus of an article written by another member of the Review Committee and legacy WSR Editor, Bob Greene. Bob’s commentary on “*The Application of AI to HCM*” provides a balanced perspective of opportunities and threats presented by AI. The impact of AI is diverse, significant in capabilities, and alarming in potential risks. We see benefits in areas like intuitive search engines that can find exactly the information we need with two words. The fact that many school districts have already banned their students from its use is further evidence of the power of AI. So how can Human Capital Management maximize the value of AI, and what risks must we continue to monitor?

Closing out the First Quarter Issue of *Workforce Solutions Review* in a familiar location is Katherine Jones and her back page article on “*The Holy Grail of Data for Workforce Planning*.” Despite the plethora of tools in the marketplace and significant advances in analytical technologies, too many HR professionals still end up buried in paper, manually rekeying employee information, and being swamped with data rather than strategic activities. Moreover, it is always challenging to plan for the future if ascertaining the present is tricky. Therefore, preparing for the workforce of tomorrow relies first on solid data on today’s workforce: where employees are, what skills they have, what roles they are in, and their likelihood of remaining with the organization.

Finally, we want to promote what lies ahead in 2023. The main topics have been set for the remaining three quarters of 2023. Here’s what’s planned for the rest of 2023 in *Workforce Solutions Review*:

Q2 - Workforce Physical/ Psychological/ Financial Wellness

Q3 - Workforce Planning and Response to Emergencies

Q4 - Creating Workforce Connection - Engagement, Learning, Development & Communications

We will also be adopting a common content creation submission site. The IHRIM content submission page includes space for an abstract or teaser from potential creators. Once an author or presenter agrees to provide a creation (webinar, training session, or article), this page is where the process begins. As a best practice, WSR, TRC, and Education gather all needed information for review and consideration into one pipeline. Exciting times are ahead, and we welcome you to another year of *Workforce Solutions Review*!



From the IHRIM Chair

*Dennis Hill, Ph.D., SHRM-SCP, SHRP, HRIP
IHRIM Chairperson & CEO*

Cybernetics, Colossus, and Visionaries

The future holds tremendous hope for a world where humankind can thrive alongside other species in a holistically healthy environment augmented by technology that best serves all. But what happens when the pace of innovation and rate of technology adoption accelerate faster than the rate of wisdom or ethics to wield it all? For example, when machine learning involves teaching that machine to lie, the consequences will be dramatic, especially challenging public sector representatives and private-sector leaders who share the responsibility of turning a hopeful future into a beneficial present.

Assimilating technology into our lives is nothing new, for civilization often advanced due to remarkable technological strides. Yet, from the invention of the wheel millennia ago to mass industrialization processes today, our periscopic vision of tomorrow is unviewable, imperceivable, and incomprehensible. Like the oceanic horizons observed by Renaissance mariners who imagined a new world of hope and riches to the West, today's leaders mentally conjure what lies beyond the current knowledgebase with similar ignorance, particularly as we operate more deeply, broadly, and codependently at the intersection of humanity and technology. As we function at the junction of workforces and technology, electronic and software innovation moves our industries beyond primary augmentation to sophisticated collaboration. We know that an AI will imminently and ironically draft an HR manual soon, and in the initial steps of creating its first policy, the AI will make a giant leap for some kind. Some will cheer, while others will fear the results, but like all change, we can learn to manage it, or indeed, it will manage us.



IHRIM members and HRIP-certified professionals stand at the Intersection of Human Resources and Information Technology – an exciting junction along the Internet of Things and People. We have extended our generalist HR training from people-centric services to more people-centric services but augmented by productivity-improving automation, speed-of-light communications, and a self-awareness of strategic value to our stakeholders. We are guides, advisors, and gatekeepers committed to lifelong learning with constant demands to pivot, adapt, and evolve.

Since 1980 IHRIM has stood alone as the premier global organization attracting, developing, sustaining, and certifying HR Technology professionals. From Artificial intelligence to Zombie networks, IHRIM offers vendor-neutral insights and guidance through webinars, courses, articles, and events focusing on educating, informing, and

enriching our members. From shop floors to board rooms, IHRIM members are thought leaders and subject matter experts, i.e., agents of change, demonstrating our association's steadfast ability to build tomorrow's leaders in HR Tech successfully.

We know how to effectively challenge, grow, and nurture minds that will shape the future of many organizations and workers. Among us are the visionaries, prophets, technologists, and even nerds who communicate and collaborate with peers worldwide – sometimes daily – to systematically identify problems, creatively discover solutions, and tenaciously implement HR technology plans. Many find reward in their passion and zeal for bridging things and people to improve things for their employers and the workforce they serve.

IHRIM's leaders and subject matter experts continuously monitor feedback from its membership, comprised of practitioners, consultants, developers, researchers, educators, other HR and technology associations, and vendors large and small – to gather and energize a unique and meaningful network of professionals that solve problems every single day for their organizations. And not surprisingly, IHRIM members are sought after for their experience, skills, and access to that same network of peers and problem solvers.



IHRIM exclusively publishes *Workforce Solutions Review* (WSR), the only peer-reviewed journal serving the global HR Tech community. But as a year of membership will aptly demonstrate, IHRIM webinars, courses, and HRIP certificates form only the tip of

a colossal iceberg of resources. We humbly count the company of major universities and global consultancies among our authorized education and research partners. In addition, our award-winning authors, respected instructors, recognized SMEs, and pioneering thought leaders possess more than 3,000 years of knowledge and expertise with a selfless willingness to share that knowledge and experience on demand. And emphasizing experience with book knowledge as a basis for examination to achieve HRIP certification demonstrates IHRIM's distinct devotion to meeting the needs of employers who require practical catalysts for change in human capital management.

Are we not cybernetically entwined with technology? Live without your phone, tablet, or search engine for a day. Are we not faced with the moral and operational dilemma of emerging autonomous AI predicted by D.F. Jones in the Colossus Trilogy? Check out the film "Colossus: The Forbin Project," then investigate an OpenAI, ChatGPT, or TruthGPT app for your website if one isn't already planned or underway. You may find stakeholder discussions engaging, especially in lieu of well-established or best practices.

Leadership without vision, and vision without leadership will always fall short in the end. As one of the greatest college basketball coaches ever remarked, witnessing the first courtside statistician system at the Final Four in Dallas in 1986, "Computers courtside? That'll be the day." That day shortly followed.

Where will the world be in another generation or two – a globally collaborative, portable workforce in jobs that do not exist today, assisted by emerging technologies yet to be discovered? Joining IHRIM now and running the marathon together will keep us all at the head of the pack.



Lexy's Learnings from Fifty Years in the Tech Industry

By Lexy Martin, Visier

*There's a rumor going around.
It's true!*



One of our customers asked me recently whether I was going to retire. Another said she thought I already had! While I prefer to use the term "redirecting," I will leave Visier in August 2023. I'm 78, and while age should never be a reason to leave the workforce, I want to be the complete mistress of my days. My husband retired a couple of years ago, and I like the freedom of his life. I also want to explore a few personal passions. I want to create a vacuum to see what's next for me – thus, I'm redirecting. I'm so grateful for my seven years at Visier and all my years in the HR arena.

For me, leaving the workforce is bittersweet. The friends I've made in my 55-year career will continue, but the excitement of working with leading-edge customers and partners may fall away. The day-to-day collaborations with colleagues will disappear. I'll miss that. I'll miss the business travel I've done – all but one U.S. state, all continents except Antarctica, 50 countries? I'll miss the foodie meals with colleagues and customers—the fun and memorable insights that spontaneously happen when we get together at conferences.



I will also miss my involvement with IHRIM. That started in 1994 with meetings in San Francisco at the grand Sheraton Palace, conferences in New Orleans and other fine spots (I think I rode a bull in Houston at one IHRIM event), seminars, webinars, and being involved with Workforce Solutions Review (WSR) as guest editor and two years as its managing editor. I learned a lot and have so many remaining friends from that community. Tom Faulkner and I keep in touch with many others – do you remember Karen Beaman? Karen and I collaborated on some joint research on [global organizations](#)¹. As the person who started the Sierra-Cedar HR Systems Survey, now known as [Sapient Insights Survey](#),² I could ask questions about global organization types and then watch the progress of multinational companies to international, then evolving to transnational organization types as they matured. We also watched their adoption of HR technologies grow as well. Vendors might review this older report as the adoption trajectory holds today. I have other collaborators on research today, both within Visier and externally. Ah, the memories.

IHRIM WSR is letting me share some lessons I've learned in my 55-year career as a woman in tech. I'll start with the positives and include one somewhat negative note.

Lesson 1: Technology introductions catalyze changes needed in the workplace.

While I've not always been a researcher – I started as a programmer, systems analyst, and application manager, my first role as a researcher was at SRI International in the late seventies. This experience was when "office automation" was an emerging technology. We didn't do our own typing, analysis, or graphics back then. For analysis, we used VisiCalc and Lotus 1 2 3. Secretaries typed memos and letters for their bosses and professional staff. I did market research back then, resulting in the product we know today as Microsoft Word. I even had a shouting match with Bill Gates, who wasn't buying something I reported. I was so surprised that I yelled back.

Office automation gave typing, calculating, and graphics support to all employees, including executives and managers. It was the early days of integrating separate hardware: word processors, computers, and graphic/engineering systems. Imagine pulling data on amounts owed for a hospital stay from a mainframe computer into word processors to send a bill letter to a patient.

Office automation was a catalyst for many changes. Some jobs went away. The role of secretary went away. Some secretaries took advantage of opportunities and upgraded to new positions in administration. The farms of clerk typists working on early word processors were upgraded or eliminated. We all became better content creators, doing our own writing and presentations. One of the changes back then was, since office automation was eliminating jobs, organizations and the government engaged in upskilling the workforce. Major corporations did extensive re-education of impacted workers, especially the big insurance companies and banks.

Today, people analytics catalyzes change to support decisions with data. With people analytics, organizations can make granular data about the workforce available so that we treat our employees as the whole person they are when making decisions about them. People analytics is a catalyst to "see the [human truth](#)."³ Today, as managers are given tools to make people data-driven decisions, their biases can be eliminated or reduced. People analytics and nudge technologies can remind managers and their executives to recognize outstanding performance. Data can be used to identify burnout, and actions can be taken to minimize burnout. Data can be used in [moments that matter](#)⁴ where the organization shows up as being inclusive or not, such that diversity and inclusion can be improved. So, as with office automation, people analytics catalyzes some needed changes.

What to do with my learning? Every time you introduce a new technology, think about the changes you'd like to see in the workplace and figure out the connection between it and making the change you want to have happen, happen.

Lesson 2: Analysts create the future.

Peter Drucker says, "If you want to create the future, create it." What we write or research creates a future we want to see.

I did this countless times while managing the SierraCedar HR Systems Survey. I read about the growth of HR technology adoption and saw some patterns emerging that I amplified. For example, through analysis

Inclusion Experience Framework

Illuminating the connection between inclusion experience moments, inclusion signals and the outcomes that matter



Collaborative work between Lexy Martin, Visier and Melissa Arronte, Medallia highlighting the moments that matter where the organization shows up as inclusive or not, along with the signals that can be correlated with the outcomes that matter. It's an example of the first lesson learned – technology can be a catalyst for change. The envisioned change is a more inclusive organization.

of the adoption of specific technologies and higher financial performance, I noticed that manager self-service talent management, business intelligence/workforce analytics, and social media – all emerging technologies back in 2000-2010 were being adopted by the more financially successful organizations. I focused research on showing the value of these technologies because what these technologies were enabling made a lot of sense. I also saw a trend towards a single HRMS solution being more cost-effective than multiple best-of-breed solutions and amplified that. I now see a similar trend towards a people analytics solution/platform that can integrate multiple data sources to provide a "single source of truth" and work to amplify that. Most recently, I've seen organizations that focus their people analytics work on improving diversity and inclusion outperform. I both want to see D&I improve and see it from the data, thus amplifying this in my research work. I see other analysts, such as Stacia Garr, RedThread Research, doing this when her firm lays out a vision for a more inclusive future of work or a more purpose-driven work environment. Kate Graham, Unleash, has a personal mission to democratize HR tech and encourage and amplify multiple new and different voices across the space. For example, from constantly listening to HR leader insights, she sees organizations needing a playbook to tackle skill gaps and shortages. She addresses this with a broad range of data and research from analysts, consultants, and vendors to help HR leaders evaluate their next steps to create a skills strategy to set them up for success.

What to do with this learning? First, pay special attention to those analysts that speak from their hearts to your heart. They are the ones worth continuing to listen to. Kate Graham says: "Our industry analysts are respected, and it is exciting to see their platforms being used to amplify purposeful and meaningful causes as they continually help HR navigate some choppy waters and uncertain times."

Lesson 3: Organizations with leading practices outperform.

Again, while managing the Sierra-Cedar HR Systems Survey, when I did my correlations of HR technology adoption and

financial performance, I kept seeing the same organizations show up year after year. I created a mock stock portfolio and watched the same organizations perform well. The economic decline starting in 2008 put a monkey wrench in all these organizations' stock performance, BUT these same organizations remained profitable through that economic downturn.

I've not been so rigorous about this analysis in recent years, but I still see some of these same organizations outperforming. So, what are the leading practices I've tracked?

- Adoption of people analytics. Organizations with people analytics outperform.
- Using people analytics to improve diversity and inclusion. Those focusing their analysis on improving DEIB [outperform](#).⁵
- Getting alignment between HR and finance to understand each function's need for organizing data (HR organizes by supervisory hierarchy; Finance organizes by cost center).
- Integrating more data sources, *including business outcome data*, into a data repository for data analysis. Don't just integrate your HRMS and talent management but include data from workforce management solutions. The critical business outcome data – finances, customer satisfaction, NPS, and operational data are invaluable. After all, many organizations want to see how the workforce contributes to these business outcomes. Without that integration, it's impossible to see.
- Enabling front-line managers, who manage people daily, with data to inform their decision-making on hiring, developing, rewarding, engaging, and motivating their people.
- Expanding the people analytics team to include data scientists, I/O psychologists, behavioral psychologists, storytellers, trainers, and change management specialists.
- A culture of change management.

What to do with this learning? First, consider my leading practices or start your own list, and second, pay attention to how organizations that practice these practices are doing in the stock market. You may even make a few dollars investing in them.

Lesson 4: Change management is a critical success factor for any technology implementation.

I've been writing about this since 1983, when I saw that organizations successfully implementing office automation practiced change management. I have continued to see it as a leading practice when [enabling people analytics](#).⁶ I have paid much attention to what the more advanced adopters of people analytics are doing. (I've got some new research coming out later this year, including the change management practices associated with enabling front-line managers with people analytics.). Here's a [report](#)⁷ devoted to this topic I did a few years ago. [Stacey Harris reported that organizations practicing a culture](#)⁸ of enterprise change management and applying practices to major technology implementation programs are ten times as likely to be viewed by all levels of management as contributing strategic value versus those that never use change management.

We still need to do it better and with agility. I've learned that change never happens as fast as predicted. Plans don't come about. The budget isn't available. ChatGPT may be the exception. But even there, change management is critical to ensure its use is for good in the broadest possible sense.

What to do? Question how your organization is doing with change management and ensure that any technology adoption includes change management. At a minimum, involve stakeholders from every community potentially impacted by your technology to be involved in critical choices about your implementation.

Lesson 5: We can improve by improving diversity, inclusion, and equity.

As a woman in tech since 1967, I've seen terribly slow progress. When I started working as a programmer at the Bank of America in 1967, I was one of five women out of a staff of 100. B of A was unusual in hiring that many women as programmers and systems analysts! I was often the only woman for my first 20 years of working. I was the first woman management systems consultant at SRI International in 1979. I was the youngest, in my thirties, compared to a bunch of older men who had been heads of IT

and CIOs at various organizations. Fast forward to 2023, where female representation in tech workforces is 33%, up slightly more than 2% from 2019, according to Deloitte Global.⁹ This is considered good progress. But is it? Let's also look at pay equity.

Overall, women were 56.2% of the labor force as of 2020, according to [BLS](#).¹⁰ In 2022, women earn an average of 82% of what men earn, according to [Pew Research](#).¹¹ [Our data](#)¹² based on the 17 million plus employee records of our customers, which I believe work for leading practice organizations, show earnings of \$0.84 to the dollar earned by their male counterparts, but that's a decline from progress since we began tracking in 2017! Pay for women in management also fell from \$0.90 to \$0.89. These are concerning reversals. Organizations must prioritize pay parity this year to reach the 2030 equity goal; otherwise, this goal won't be realized until 2036.

What to do? Organizations need to make pay parity a priority in 2023 and moving forward. At a minimum, if you're a leader, it's in your company's best interest to address the legal responsibilities to which you adhere to gender discrimination.

Lesson 6: Toxicity in the workplace is hurting organizations' bottom line.

[Toxicity](#)¹³ and pay equity were front and center in two recently released research reports. As mentioned above, the study on pay equity shows signs of a widening gap between male and female pay. And, then according to [MIT Sloan Management Review](#),¹⁴ women are 41% more likely than men to experience a toxic corporate culture. The pandemic appears to have widened the toxic culture gender gap. Toxic culture is not only an outlier regarding the sentiment gap between women and men but also exacts an enormous toll on organizations and individuals.

If allowed to continue, the toxicity and dissatisfaction will hurt a company's bottom line. Workplace performance drops and the organization's integrity is compromised. Minimizing, gaslighting, or turning your head the other way, in effect, creates a toxic work culture for all employees. The company becomes a revolving door for workers. It becomes more challenging to attract and retain talented employees who can always

find a mentally healthier and more supportive work environment that accommodates gender equality for all workers.

What to do? Leaders who successfully narrow the toxic culture gap begin by focusing on employee experience and identifying and rooting out harmful behaviors across all levels of the organization through a sustained cultural

detox effort. Our workforce deserves this.

I feel like I should have more lessons, but these are the ones that have stuck with me the longest or are top of mind today as I leave traditional employment. Please feel free to keep in touch at lexymartin1@gmail.com. I will decompress for a while, but I will watch our community as it's so exciting.

Endnotes

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About the Author

Lexy Martin consistently uncovers the latest people analytics patterns and trends with a deep passion for showing the value of people analytics and how people analytics enables improvements in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Lexy is Principal, Research and Customer Value at Visier, where she turns data and insights into meaningful guidance to drive organizational and employee success through more informed people decisions. A long-time researcher, she is also well known for starting and managing the Sierra-Cedar HR Systems Survey for its first 16 years. You can reach Lexy at lexymartin1@gmail.com.

Exploring the Potential of Metaverse Environment for HR Functions: Benefits, Costs, and Challenges

By Siddharth Sharma, JP Morgan Chase

The idea of a metaverse setting has existed for some time. Still, its significance has become more pronounced in the present era when individuals are compelled to work from their personal locations because of the pandemic. Although remote work has enabled employees to work from their residences, it has also brought attention to the constraints of conventional office setups.

What is a Metaverse Environment?

The metaverse atmosphere refers to a virtual realm where individuals can use avatars to communicate and engage in various tasks. The development of sophisticated technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence has resulted in the metaverse environment advancing quickly, creating novel opportunities for cooperation and interaction.

Microsoft has announced that it intends to combine its virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) platform Mesh with Teams and has suggested that it may create immersive spaces in the messaging app in the future. In addition, Meta has developed Horizon Workrooms, which allows users to hold meetings using Oculus headsets.

Application in Human Resources Business Functions

Recruiting

Metaverse can enhance the recruiting process by providing candidates with a realistic preview of the job and the work environment. By using virtual and augmented reality, candidates can experience a more immersive and interactive job preview, making assessing their fit for the role more manageable. Additionally, virtual reality can conduct virtual interviews and assessments, create a more inclusive recruitment process, and identify the

most qualified candidates. This will also help make a better first impression and reduce the feeling of isolation that remote workers can sometimes experience.

Onboarding

Metaverse can allow new hires to learn about the company and their role more immersive and engagingly, even when they are not physically present at the office. For example, a virtual onboarding program could provide a 360-degree tour of the office, introduce new hires to key team members and departments through interactive avatars, and allow them to practice critical job tasks in a simulated environment. This can help new hires feel more connected to the company and their role, even when working remotely.

Performance Management

Metaverse can enhance performance management by providing more accurate and objective employee performance assessments. Objective and data-driven performance evaluations can be created using sensors and data analysis. These technologies can provide more detailed and unbiased employee performance reviews, allowing for more fair and objective assessment. Companies can also create simulations that measure employee skills and knowledge in a realistic environment, making it easier to identify areas for improvement and provide targeted training and development opportunities.

Compensation and Benefits

Metaverse can enhance compensation and benefits programs by providing employees with a more engaging and interactive experience. By using virtual and augmented reality, companies can create simulations that allow employees to explore and interact with different benefit options, making it easier to



Figure: Team working together in a Meta Horizon workroom

understand the available benefits and make informed decisions to maximize their benefits packages.

Succession Planning

Organizations must identify high-potential employees and assess their readiness for leadership roles. Simulations in Metaverse can provide employees with realistic scenarios to practice their leadership skills and receive feedback, allowing for more effective leadership development. Augmented reality can also provide real-time guidance and support to employees as they practice leadership skills, allowing for continuous improvement. It can also facilitate knowledge transfer between employees, especially when experienced employees are retiring or leaving the company. In Metaverse, experienced employees can capture their knowledge and experience, which can be shared more engagingly and interactively with other employees.

Time and Absence

Tracking employee time and attendance is an essential HR function. The metaverse can help automate and streamline the time-tracking process. Employees can use their virtual avatars to clock in and out of work, eliminating the need for physical timecards. Virtual reality technology can also help manage real-time scheduling and shift changes.

Metaverse can help simplify the process of reporting absences and requesting time off through virtual portals. Managers can approve or deny requests and make real-time schedule changes, ensuring the organization is always fully staffed.

Cost Analysis for Implementation

Generally, implementing the Metaverse environment for HR business functions mentioned above can involve high upfront costs, including the hardware and software required to create and operate the virtual workspace.

Although it is expected that, over the long term, a metaverse environment can provide cost savings by reducing the need for physical office space, transportation costs, and other expenses associated with maintaining a traditional workplace. It is also expected to increase productivity and improve communication and teamwork. In addition, using technology, such as virtual and augmented reality, can also provide employees with better access to information and resources, allowing them to complete their tasks more efficiently.

Total costs to implement will likely vary depending on the specific needs and goals of

the organization. Therefore, it would be best for organizations to conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine the potential return on investment for implementing a metaverse for HR business functions.

Limitations & Challenges

While a metaverse environment can offer numerous benefits for organizations, there are also several limitations to consider:

1. **Technical challenges:** Implementing a metaverse environment requires advanced technology infrastructure and expertise, which can be costly and time-consuming to set up. Additionally, technical connectivity, bandwidth, and latency challenges may affect the user experience.
2. **Accessibility:** Not all employees may have the necessary hardware or software to access a metaverse environment, which can limit its use and effectiveness. Moreover, employees with disabilities may face additional challenges in accessing and using virtual workspaces.
3. **Security and privacy:** A metaverse environment can pose security and privacy risks, particularly if sensitive data is being shared or stored in the virtual workspace. Organizations must ensure that they have robust security protocols to protect their data and systems.
4. **Limited applicability:** Not all types of work can be done effectively in a virtual environment. Specific industries or job roles may require physical presence or specialized equipment, making it challenging to implement a metaverse environment for these employees.
5. **Cultural resistance:** Some employees or leaders may resist the idea of virtual work, preferring the familiarity and social interaction of a physical office. Changing an organization's culture can be challenging to embrace a new working method.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we went through several use cases showing that a metaverse environment can significantly benefit organizations and employees. While it may not be suitable for all types of employees, it can provide a viable alternative for those who can work in a virtual space. Therefore, companies looking to adapt to the changing work environment must conduct a cost-benefit analysis and consider investing in a metaverse environment to improve their productivity, reduce their carbon footprint, and foster a more inclusive workplace culture.

About the Author



Siddharth Sharma, a seasoned professional in HR Digital Solutions, currently serves as the Vice President at JP Morgan Chase and is a co-founder and former CHRO for TYP. Boasting over a decade of experience in HR enterprise applications, Siddharth successfully led numerous end-to-end implementations to achieve substantial cost reductions and optimize business processes. Experienced in spearheading digital transformations for companies such as JP Morgan Chase, Securitas, and Concentrix, he has managed projects encompassing over half a million employees across 60 countries and budgets of up to \$70 million. In addition to his professional work, Siddharth is an active contributor to the HR community. He serves on the editorial committee for *Workforce Solutions Review* magazine and Technical Review Council at IHRIM. In addition, he is a judging committee member for Stevie, Globee, Codie, and Brandon Hall HR awards. He holds a Master of Science in Information Systems from Georgia State University. He can be reached at sidsharma55@gmail.com.



feature

A New Study Finds What Drives Generational Happiness in the Workplace

By Dr. Katherine Chia, Ph.D.

Without thinking, you've probably generalized about each generation's attitudes towards work - or at least know some typical stereotypes. For example, baby boomers believe you must work hard to get ahead, while Millennials aren't hard workers. And while we at [Cangrade](#) don't believe in holding biases, each generation has fundamental differences.

Each generation has had to mature under different circumstances, which can instill different attitudes. These generational differences are well documented, but this doesn't mean those differences are always addressed. Especially in the workplace. So, what happens when a mix of generations are working together at the same organization?

According to SHRM, work values are the source of most generational differences and the root of workplace conflict. This is why employers must understand what drives each generation's happiness and how to increase it to support job satisfaction and engagement.

Our Study

We conducted a study to uncover how happy each generation is at work and what drives each generation's workplace happiness to help HR practitioners improve employee happiness and engagement at work. In our final report, you can find data on the levels of generational happiness at work, what drives that happiness, and what you can do to foster it.

Armed with this information, you can:

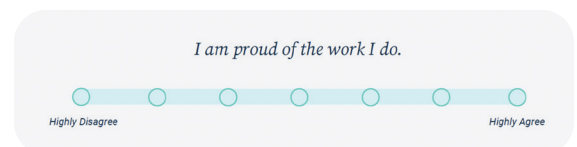
- Increase job satisfaction among your employees and drive employee engagement.
- Drive retention by providing tactics to maximize employee happiness.
- Promote your teams' strengths and fortify their weaknesses by addressing and understanding what each employee needs to succeed.

- Effectively motivate your team members by arming your management team with data on what drives each generation.
- Foster a positive workplace culture that adapts to each employee's needs.

Our Methodology

We surveyed 608 individuals and asked them, "In general, how happy you are at work?" to gauge the attitudes of people from the four generations still widely represented in the workplace. The generations we surveyed include:

- *Baby Boomers*
- *Gen X*
- *Millennials*
- *Gen Z*



Our survey gauged how workplace attitudes varied by generation and what their priorities and main workplace happiness drivers were. We then analyzed this data in two parts:

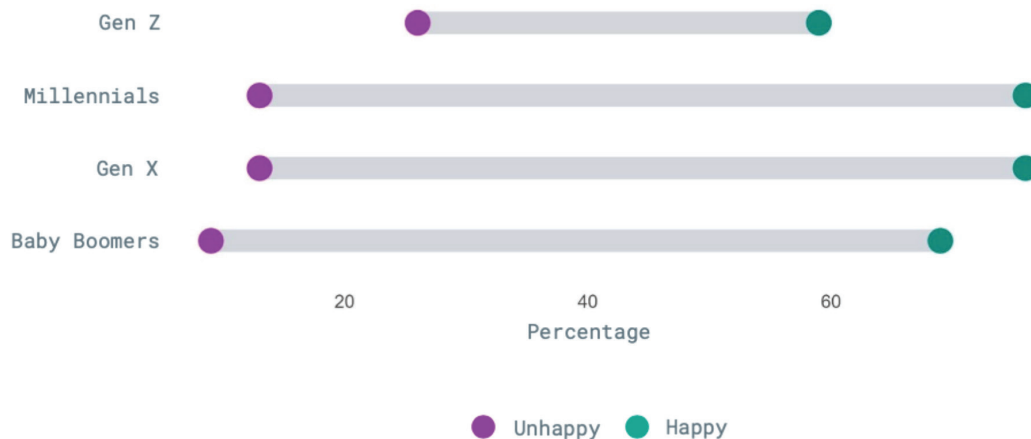
- 1) By asking about general workplace happiness
- 2) By assessing what's important to employees

Our Findings on Happiness at Work by Generation

The full report reveals how happy each generation is at work and what drives that happiness. Here are a few of the high-level data points we discovered.

What percentage of each generation is happy and unhappy at work?

The percentage of employees in each generation who reported being either Unhappy (rated as very unhappy, unhappy, or slightly unhappy) or Happy (rated as very happy, happy, or slightly happy).



Baby Boomers

- 40% of Baby Boomers highly disagree with the statement: "My work is unimportant to my identity."
- Baby Boomers' workplace happiness correlates with the statement, "I get direct answers to my questions at work."

Generation X

- 91% of Gen X agreed with "My manager trusts me," making them the most trusted generation at work.
- 76% reported that they are happy at work.

Millennials

- The statement "I am proud of the work I do" most correlates to Gen X and Millennials' happiness at work.
- 42% of Millennials highly agree, "I am proud of my work."

Generation Z

- Gen Z's workplace happiness is most highly correlated with the statement, "My work environment brings out the best in me."
- 26% of Gen Z is unhappy at work, the highest of any generation.

Managing Gen Z's Workplace Happiness

Since learning that Gen Z is the most unhappy generation at work, how can we make work more satisfying for Gen Z?

Research shows that Gen Z prioritizes

I think about quitting my job

17% of Gen Z highly Agreed with the statement

about 10% more than all other generations.

learning and professional development opportunities in their jobs. So, providing Gen Z employees with the opportunity to grow, upskill and see a future at your organization is critical for retaining them.

Tactics for Increasing Generational Happiness at Work

Knowing and understanding what drives your employee's happiness is the first step to increasing job satisfaction. But our research didn't stop there. We also identified tactics for how to manage each generation at work best. Here are a few of the insights you'll see in our report:

- Baby Boomers most highly value having their voices heard in the workplace.
- Gen X thrives on trust.
- Millennials must feel proud of their work.
- Gen Z needs a workplace that nurtures their development.

For a complete look at the data and insights, we uncovered on generational happiness at work and how to drive it, download or contact us at info@cangrade.com.

References

www.candrade.com

About the Author



Dr. Katherine Chia received her Ph.D. in Cognitive Science from Florida State University. She is a research scientist interested in the intersection between cognitive science and artificial intelligence. During her Ph.D. program, she worked for IBM and investigated how to use speech samples to predict dementia status in older adults. As Kat neared the end of her doctoral program, she realized she wanted to continue scaling her abilities to impact the world positively. Kat met Cangrade, and the rest is, as they say, history. She loves distance running, Dungeons and Dragons, and the occasional woodworking project in her free time.

Seven Recruiting Mistakes Companies Make and How to Get Them Right.

By Jeff Higgins, Human Capital Management Institute

Employers have complained loudly about the inability to find and hire qualified talent for many years. The challenge and noise increased further during the pandemic and the ensuing 'Great Resignation' that started during the pandemic. The total number of open positions in the US has remained above 10.0 million for more than two years, nearly double the pre-pandemic historical norms of 5.0 to 6.0 million open positions across the US. As of February 2023, according to the US Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary (JOLTS) Report, open positions dropped slightly to 9.9 million open positions, but according to some economists studying demographic workforce trends, including an aging workforce, the economy is unlikely to return to the prior average level of open jobs in the foreseeable future.

Evidence of the continuing 'Great Resignation' and resulting talent war trend continues in 2023 since the same JOLTS Report (February 2023) shows quit rates or turnover increasing slightly to 4.0 million workers or 3.7% of the workforce in February 2023. The 3.7% quit rate, when multiplied by 12 months or annualized, equates to a 44.4% turnover rate, which is 75.5% higher than the decade before the pandemic (Feb 2013 vs. Feb 2023).

The point is that higher levels of employee turnover and increasing competition for jobs make for a challenging environment to attract and retain workers is likely to be the new normal for companies.

Therefore, to win the talent war by attracting, hiring, and retaining good talent, companies must be willing to change how they operate,

not just in recruiting but decision-making, accountability, career pathing, and more.

All employees eventually leave a company, whether by retirement (good turnover in many respects), layoffs, or voluntary resignation. What makes a difference is whether the company is improving how it sources, hires, trains, rewards, manages, and retains its best workers.

Companies are, of course, focused on keeping good employee turnover to a minimum. The key is to retain good performers, critical roles, highly engaged employees, and current and emerging stars. The amount of human capital value is lost when a hard-to-fill vital role or high performer leaves, causing work to slow. At the same time, much time is invested in replacing the open position with no guarantee that the replacement will match the level of performance of the prior worker. Since it is much harder today than a decade ago to find great talent in a reasonable amount of time, the company and coworkers struggle while a replacement is found and up to speed. As a result, morale may decrease, and increase the risk of turnover of other good performers may increase, creating a negative growing turnover cycle.

Here are the Seven Mistakes Companies Must Not Make to Win the War for Talent:

1. Hiring managers who are unaccountable for their poor hiring decisions.
2. Valuing jobs and employees only after they leave a company.
3. Recruiting based solely on experience/education/industry.
4. Increasing position job requirements to ensure more qualified hires.

5. Recruiting/Evaluating/Hiring only for the current job.
6. Ignoring the newly hired employee once hired.
7. Throwing money at recruiting problems (unless a job is paid well below market).

1. Hiring managers who are unaccountable for their hiring decisions.

A famous Gallup poll of more than a million employed U.S. workers concluded that the No. 1 reason people quit their jobs is a bad boss or immediate supervisor. In the study, 75% of workers who voluntarily left their jobs did so because of their bosses and not the position itself. “Despite how good a job may be, people will quit if the reporting relationship is unhealthy.”

Marcus Buckingham said it best *“People leave managers, not companies...in the end, turnover is mostly a manager issue.”* The issue is even worse than what Gallup found. Managers in recruiting wield tremendous power in the hiring process and are typically the final decision-makers as to whether to hire a person for an open job. Suppose the manager needs to make a better hiring decision, even if HR and the rest of the organization do everything right. In that case, the new employee often can leave in the first year (or 90 days in some cases), regardless of whether it was a voluntary or involuntary termination. Worse, who do the manager and the organization typically blame for this failed hire, why, HR, and often, explicitly recruiting? The blame may start with unfounded accusations by the hiring manager or a more senior leader trying to support their junior manager saying, “HR didn’t find us any good candidates,” or “We hired the best we could find from a bad batch.” Therefore, managers conclude that HR needs to do a better job attracting talent. Also, HR can be blamed due to HR pay policies that a position be paid commensurate with internal pay equity and candidate experience level, which translates to “HR doesn’t let us pay enough to get and keep good people.”

The solution to Mistake #1, while simple, requires discipline and management support to execute as described below:

- Management can hold hiring managers accountable for any ‘New Hire Terminations’

within a given amount of time (either 90 days or one year via a New Hire Retention Rate metric). In essence, this holds managers accountable for newly hired employees and whether that employee stays with the organization for a specified amount of time.

- Concurrently, HR should track and score all applicants for open jobs based on an agreed-upon set of criteria for each job. Many applicant tracking systems today enable users to score job applicants on how well they meet selected job requirements. The best systems turn the scoring into a percentile from 0% to 100%. The advantage of this is to share such data with hiring managers to help them make more objective final rounds of interviewing and hiring decisions.
- Lastly, another metric is to track and digitize each hire based on who agreed or voted (i.e., hiring manager, HR, recruiter, Higher manager director) to make an offer to a candidate. Over time, managers who are terrible talent scouts are easily identified. In one financial services company case study, when both the recruiter and the hiring manager agreed upon the hire, the retention rate of the new hire was 2x the retention rate when only the hiring manager approved the hire against HR’s advice.

2. Valuing jobs and employees only after they leave the organization.

While this seems obvious, it is one of the great truisms of managers frequently beset with a need to replace departing good employees who are relied on as essential contributors. Unfortunately, these essential contributors are also easily ignored and overloaded with work. The famous saying “the squeaky wheel gets the grease” applies to employees, with some of the best employees are rewarded with more work while others consume more time and resources. This issue manifests as a high-performing employee voluntarily departing and the direct manager suddenly realizing the employee was doing the work in two or even three positions. As a former head of compensation for a publicly traded bank and large privately held real estate firm, I often saw this scenario. Hiring managers would submit a requisition to hire a replacement for a departing employee. Yet, it would have two or sometimes three separate requisitions for a

single vacancy, doubling or tripling the cost.

If the manager were to realize the organization's risk in advance, they could have proactively invested in positive feedback, better salary increases, rewards and recognition, and training for co-workers and appointing future successors to enable automatic backfilling of some or all skills. In effect, if managers genuinely value each employee as if they may leave or be promoted at any time, they will treat the employee better, recognize and reward better, and most importantly, have defined career paths and successors, pushing continual cross-training and career development.

3. Recruiting based solely on experience/education/industry.

Managers, overly reliant on experience, education, and industry-relevant knowledge/expertise, often need to pay more attention to the three most robust predictors of future job success and retention.

The solution is to focus on what potential employees want, a career, a community, and a cause (see *Harvard Business Review Feb 2018, The 3 Things Employees Really Want: Career, Community, Cause* (hbr.org)¹).

- Career includes a defined career path and growth potential, meaning the ability for the employee to grow with the organization over time, assuming good job performance. This also includes cultural and motivational fit meaning a job is intrinsically motivating and that employee gets satisfaction.
- Community includes feeling respected, cared about, being part of a team, recognized by others, and today increasingly has job flexibility and autonomy in skilled roles.
- Cause reflects a sense of purpose, that the employee is making a meaningful impact, aligned with an organizational mission, and doing good in addition to doing well. This element is often reflected in employee engagement surveys which ask employees to rate the questions "I am proud to come work for XXX Co." and "I am proud to go to work each day."

4. Increasing the job requirements for a position to ensure a more qualified hire is closely related to #3 above. Hiring managers who feel pressured to fill a role and restart work quickly may interpret that

if no time is used to train a new hire, they can get an immediate boost by increasing the job requirements. Examples of growing job requirements include advancing years of experience, increasing the required education level, adding certificates/certifications, and requiring more industry expertise. Managers following this path to success unknowingly will likely doom the new super job to dramatically fewer job candidates, longer time to fill the job, significantly increased cost, and a plateaued employee with little or no career growth. Such a position becomes a job with less chance of meeting what employees want (see #3 solution above) and may spend more time as an open position unless hiring managers actively practice answers to #1, #2, and #3 Above.

5. Recruiting/Evaluating/Hiring only for the current job. As described, this is short-term thinking at its worst and, combined with #4, may make a position harder to fill and one without a defined career path since the employee is expected to have plenty of experience. Additionally, such positions in less technical roles are subject to competitor talent cherry-picking via higher pay leaving no successor due.

6. Ignoring the newly hired employee once hired. Once hired, even one experienced and qualified employee still requires considerable time to fully develop in a new organization due to unique aspects of work, decision-making, support systems, tools, and technologies. The largest of the learning curve challenges often is navigating the human capital aspects of employment, whom to go to for specific questions, how to work with others in the team, how decisions are made, and what it takes to fit into organization culture. Hired and ignored employees can fail regardless of expertise, experience, and competence if rejected by the company culture, co-workers, departments, and leaders. In such situations, it is far easier for the employee, sensing that they have no support from their boss, to leave and go on to the next company.

7. Throwing money at recruiting problems can be like putting out a fire with paper. The problem, like fire, gets bigger. In the field of compensation, trying to adjust compensation significantly for one individual or position can have the

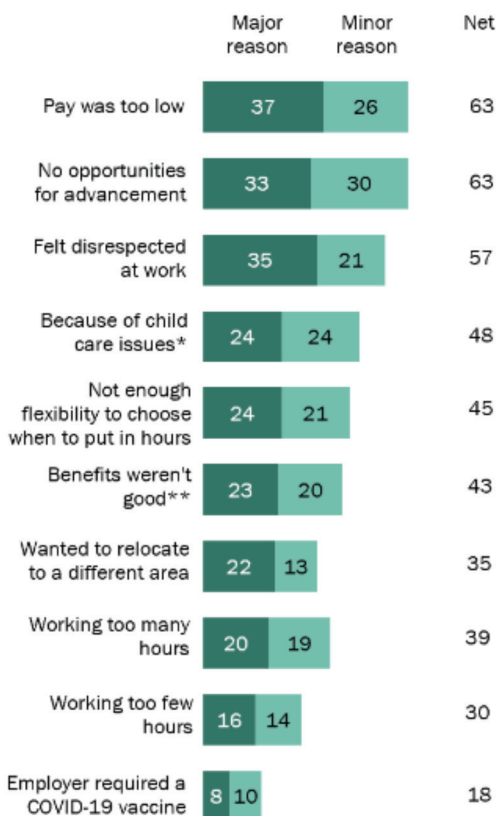
inadvertent effect of creating many unhappy employees and positions all around it since, in most cases, employees end up discovering what other employees make in salary or total compensation. In addition, once a pay disparity is created as an exception for a position, it can create internal havoc across more extensive sections of the workforce.

The solution to #7 is to hire the best available talent that is a good fit with the internal wage structure and the external market, rather than a weak manager simply trying to get an exception to salary and wage policies to make their department more stable and secure. Unfortunately, this is another form of sub-optimization that many large companies experience as hiring managers seek to optimize their situation without regard to the impact on larger organizations.

Note: research for this article includes a February 2022 Pew Research Center study examining why employees left their jobs in 2021. See chart.

Top reasons why U.S. workers left a job in 2021: Low pay, no advancement opportunities

Among those who quit a job at any point in 2021, % saying each was a ____ why they did so



*Among those with children younger than 18 living in the household.

**Question provided health insurance and paid time off as examples.

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 7-13, 2022.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Endnotes

¹ <https://bit.ly/3V4RUap>

About the Author



Jeff Higgins is founder and CEO of the Human Capital Management Institute(HCMI), predictive analytics, workforce planning software, and consulting company. HCMI features SOLVE predictive analytics, the only ISO30414-compliant human capital reporting software on the market today. Using ISO30414, SOLVE meets U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission(SEC) disclosure requirements.

An adjunct professor of HR & People Analytics at the University of Southern California(USC), Higgins is a founding member of the Workforce Intelligence Consortium, a member of the ISO Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on human capital, U.S. lead for #ISO30414 Human Capital Reporting Standard, board member Center for Talent Reporting (CTR) and editorial committee member IHRIM Workforce Solutions Review (WSR) magazine.

Jeff and HCMI help companies turn workforce data into intelligence with over 600 standardized metrics and predictive and prescriptive solutions for companies of all sizes. With his unique experience as a senior HR executive and former CFO, Jeff helps organizations gain insights and solve talent issues to unlock billions of dollars in workforce ROI.

Higgins was EVP of client services at Inform, a workforce planning and analytics company, EVP of Workforce Planning at Countrywide Financial Corp., and senior HR leader driving workforce analytics and planning at The Irvine Company and OneWest Bank. Previously Mr. Higgins spent 15 years in finance and accounting roles of increasing responsibility for Johnson & Johnson, Baxter International, Colgate Palmolive, and Klune Industries, ultimately as a Controller, VP of Finance, and CFO. In September 2019, Higgins and HCMI were featured on a CFO magazine cover story on Human Capital Reporting “human-capitals-big-reveal”. He can be reached at jeff.higgins@hcmiinst.com.

Is it me, or is it **ChatGPT**?

By Dan Vander Hey, Spencer-Thomas Group

In February of 2022, the U.S. achieved an all-time high of 5 million more job openings than unemployed *people*.¹ The data suggest a better time to find a job has never existed. Still, those conditions have also contributed to a significant volume of resignations and job instability. In the first few months of 2023, the news has focused on substantial layoffs, particularly in the technology sector, so what's the real *story*?² Good job market? Shrinking opportunities? Some have called it *weird*,³ others *challenging*,⁴ with a consensus that it merits watching what is happening. What is intriguing about the chaotic employment market is that both employers and job seekers are taking advantage of emerging capabilities of *Artificial Intelligence* (AI).⁵

The ability to sort through hundreds, if not thousands, of resumes in hours offers an attractive alternative to spending days and weeks reviewing and comparing candidates. This searching and sorting is a similar requirement for adept employment seekers. AI provides job seekers a tool to guide search efforts, craft cover letters, tailor resumes, and respond to qualifying questions.

With potential benefits for both employers and prospects, what liabilities must also be considered?

The following content below promotes an understanding of AI's value **AND** detriments in recruiting (Company focused) and selection (Employee focused). This article is unique because AI has been used to generate the positions stated!

Admittedly a little guidance was necessary on what to include in this discussion, but AI generated a significant volume of the content for this article. What is potentially disturbing about

this commentary is the viability of this writing as novel thought. Great efforts have been made in this article to clearly define what content was generated by AI (**ChatGPT** in this case⁶). The concept of having AI itself debate the relative merits of AI in recruiting and selecting potential employees was intriguing at first and, during the process, a little unnerving based on the quality of the response. It was impossible not to consider the ongoing repercussions to original thought or human intelligence, but I will leave that to another date and time. Great effort has been expended to identify content that **ChatGPT** has generated, so the differentiation between author sources should be easily distinguished. (**ChatGPT generated all text written in red based on questions posed by the author.**)⁶

The ratio of available jobs to employees can vary depending on the specific job market and industry. In some cases, there may be more job openings than qualified candidates to fill them, while in other cases, there may be more job seekers than available positions. For example, during economic growth and low unemployment periods, there may be more job openings than job seekers, leading to a tight labor market where employers struggle to find qualified candidates. Conversely, during periods of economic recession or high unemployment, there may be more job seekers than job openings, leading to a surplus of available workers and increased competition for limited job opportunities.

These traditional markers for the job market have been challenging to follow since economic growth is prolonged. However, there still appear to be many more jobs than applicants, so using AI as a tool for corporations and individuals will

remain a viable tool, with more than 70 percent of companies increasing *spending on AI*.⁷

Arguably it is easier for people to quit their present employment when attractive options appear plentiful, which may impact what looks like relatively high unemployment numbers. However, those leaving their current work have only decreased modestly despite a significant number of layoffs in the technology industry, demonstrating that available jobs still far exceed the response from the workforce despite most people continuing to look at employment alternatives. With the plethora of potential applicants, the luxury that most companies afford is having volume and interest working in their favor. At issue in this process is the potential to trust artificial intelligence to short-list aspirants with various factors that may result in inferior interviewees.

Today's work environment complicates the selection process for most companies. The overall volume of people searching for their next job is higher than ever, but the challenge for any company is to sort through the masses and find candidates who ideally fit the requirements. The same technology that supports companies in identifying best-fit prospects equips job seekers with the tools to tweak resumes or even create resumes and cover letters!

The following is the first AI-generated response:

AI can bring several benefits to companies in the recruiting process. Some of the key benefits include:

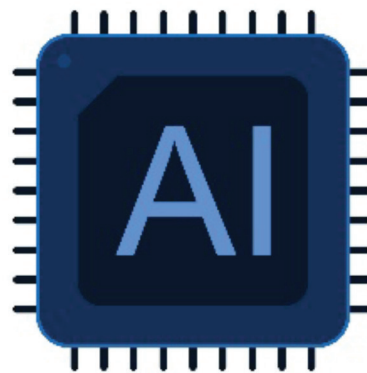
1. **Efficiency:** AI can help automate repetitive and time-consuming tasks in the recruitment process, such as resume screening, candidate sourcing, and scheduling interviews. This can help recruiters save time and focus on more high-value tasks, such as conducting interviews and building relationships with candidates. **Improved candidate matching:** AI-powered tools can help analyze candidate profiles and job requirements to identify the best match, reducing the chances of hiring the wrong candidate.
2. **Reduced bias:** AI-powered recruitment tools can help eliminate unconscious biases in the recruitment process by removing personal identifiers such as name, age, and gender from candidate profiles, thereby providing an equal opportunity for all candidates.

3. **Improved candidate experience:** AI can help improve the candidate experience by providing real-time feedback, scheduling interviews, and answering candidate queries through chatbots, which can help increase candidate engagement and reduce drop-out rates.
4. **Cost savings:** By automating repetitive tasks and streamlining the recruitment process, AI can help reduce the overall cost of recruitment, including advertising, sourcing, and hiring.

Overall, AI can bring significant benefits to companies in the recruitment process, from increased efficiency and cost savings to improved candidate matching and a better candidate experience.

I am unsure about your reaction to that last paragraph. Still, I was impressed by the content depth in this response and the validity of the stated benefits supported by other published content on this topic. I have cited specific articles that mention the same benefits cited by ChatGPT.^{5,8,9}

Let's move forward with this analysis of AI and its potential value for job seekers. Initially, the value in this area was something that I overlooked, but after additional research, the AI value for people looking for their next job is just as impressive.^{10, 11}



Artificial Intelligence (AI) can offer a variety of benefits for candidates looking for a job, including:

1. **Improved matching:** AI can analyze candidates' skills, experience, and qualifications and match them with job openings that best fit their profile. This means that candidates can quickly and easily find relevant job opportunities

without spending hours searching through job postings.

2. Streamlined application process: AI-powered recruitment tools can automate many aspects of the application process, including resume screening and initial candidate assessments. This means that candidates can apply for jobs more efficiently and receive faster feedback on their applications.
3. Personalized job recommendations: AI can use a candidate's job history, skills, and interests to provide personalized job recommendations, which can help candidates find jobs that they may not have considered otherwise.
4. Objective evaluations: AI can objectively evaluate a candidate's skills and qualifications, reducing the risk of bias in the recruitment process. This means that candidates are assessed on their merits rather than on factors such as race, gender, or age.
5. Increased efficiency: AI can automate many time-consuming tasks in the recruitment process, such as scheduling interviews and sending follow-up emails. This can save both candidates' and recruiters' time and effort.

Overall, AI can help candidates find jobs more efficiently, streamline the application process, and reduce the risk of bias in the recruitment process.¹⁰

The case for AI is strong, and adoption has increased dramatically in 2-3 years. However, most recent statistics suggest that at least 28%¹¹ of companies use AI in some aspect of their recruiting process, and even that number probably needs to be updated based on the reticence of some companies to admit AI utilization of any form.¹² Artificial intelligence (AI) in recruiting and candidate selection has become increasingly popular in recent years. While AI can provide significant benefits in terms of efficiency and objectivity, there are also potential risks and challenges that organizations should consider. Here are some of the most significant risks associated with using AI in recruiting and candidate selection:

1. Bias: One of the most significant risks of

using AI in recruiting is the potential for bias. AI systems are only as unbiased as the data they are trained on, and if the data used to train the AI contains bias, then the AI will also be biased. This can lead to discriminatory hiring practices and a need for more diversity in the workplace.

2. Lack of transparency: Another risk of using AI in recruiting is the need for more transparency. AI algorithms can be complex, and it can be challenging to understand how they make decisions. This lack of transparency can make it difficult for candidates to understand why they were rejected and can erode trust in the hiring process.
3. Legal compliance: Using AI in recruiting can create legal compliance issues. Organizations must ensure their AI systems comply with relevant laws and regulations, such as those related to equal employment opportunity and data privacy.
4. Technical issues: AI systems can also be susceptible to technical issues like software glitches and algorithmic errors. These issues can lead to incorrect or unfair hiring decisions, significantly affecting candidates and organizations.
5. Lack of human interaction: Using AI in recruiting can lead to a lack of human interaction in the hiring process. While AI can be efficient, it must maintain the value of human judgment and intuition. As a result, candidates may also feel that the hiring process is impersonal and dehumanizing.

In summary, while AI can provide many benefits in recruiting and candidate selection, organizations must also be aware of the potential risks and challenges. Therefore, they must take steps to ensure that their AI systems are unbiased, transparent, legally compliant, technically sound, and incorporate the value of human judgment.

This is an interesting summary when you consider that AI is generating a response on the disadvantages of AI itself. This provides some insight into the capabilities of AI to be objective, even when it comes to assessing the viability of its existence.

Fortunately, the merit and risks of AI are relatively discernable at this point in the

evolution of this enabling technology. Speed, mass processing, and objectivity are easy benefits. Yet, simultaneously, the risks of reliance on technology for what many see as a deeply personal process are also evident, so how does it all stack up?

The use of AI in candidate recruiting has both advantages and disadvantages. The extent to which the benefits outweigh the disadvantages depends on the specific application of AI in the recruiting process and the organization's goals. Here are some potential advantages and disadvantages to consider:

Advantages:

1. **Increased Efficiency:** AI can automate repetitive tasks such as sorting resumes, scheduling interviews, and sending follow-up emails. This saves time and resources for recruiters, allowing them to focus on more complex tasks.
2. **Objective Decision Making:** AI algorithms can make unbiased decisions based on specific criteria, reducing the risk of human biases and discrimination.
3. **Enhanced Candidate Experience:** AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can provide quick and personalized responses to candidates, enhancing their experience throughout the recruiting process.
4. **Data-Driven Insights:** AI can analyze large amounts of data to identify patterns and trends, providing valuable insights into the recruiting process's effectiveness and potential improvement areas.

Disadvantages:

1. **Lack of Human Touch:** AI algorithms may need more personal touch and emotional intelligence than human recruiters possess, leading to a less personalized and engaging candidate experience.
2. **Limited Contextual Understanding:** AI may need help understanding the nuances of human behavior and context, leading to inaccurate assessments and decisions.
3. **Potential for Bias:** AI algorithms may reflect the biases and assumptions of their creators and training data, leading to unintended discrimination against certain candidates.

4. **Risk of Technical Failure:** AI systems may be vulnerable to technical glitches, leading to errors and inaccuracies in the recruiting process.

In summary, the advantages and disadvantages of using AI in candidate recruiting should be carefully considered before implementing such technology. While AI can improve efficiency, objectivity, and data-driven decision-making, it may also need more human touch and contextual understanding and may introduce unintended biases or technical errors. Ultimately, organizations should evaluate their specific needs and goals to determine whether the benefits of using AI in recruiting outweigh the potential drawbacks.¹³

Consider again how much we already rely on Artificial Intelligence in all aspects of our life. The fact that a significant part of this article was "written" by AI is a little troubling to me, given how easy it was to generate what appears to be a scholarly review of the merits of AI in recruiting. Merits and flaws in many cases are so evident that it makes sense that AI could generate these observations, but the challenge presented by AI at the end of this article must NOT be overlooked. It is stated that organizations "should" evaluate their specific needs and goals to determine whether the benefits outweigh the potential "drawbacks." Better said, organizations MUST assess their needs and goals and look closely at the potential disadvantages. Many algorithms behind AI are precisely that, behind, and lack personal review and consensus on factors that promote or eliminate candidates. The reality of technology bias and fundamental operational gaps that still exist in this technology and the legislation to ensure that adequate review protocols are in place is lagging far behind AI deployment itself. In short, we are designing laws and procedures to address what is already happening. Essentially the same as "Locking the door after the robbery?" Probably an extreme analogy, but the merit of developing guidelines for all aspects of AI recruiting is compelling!

*Author's Note – Significant research was conducted to validate the assertions stated by ChatGPT. Additional References have been cited to support statements made independently by ChatGPT.

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About the Author



Dan Vander Hey has contributed to the HCM consulting world for over three decades. As Co-Managing Editor of WSR, he occasionally opines on things near and dear to his own work experiences. Dan has actively contributed to IHRIM and the HR community as a consultant, champion, coach, and consistent catalyst of innovative ideas to maximize human performance. Vander Hey has galvanized multi-disciplinary teams aligning resources and processes to deliver expected results on time and on budget unfailingly. He has worked in virtually every work environment globally but brings candor and practical focus to achieve remarkable results and develop strong people relationships wherever he goes. He can be reached at Spencer-Thomas Group, where he works as vice president of Advisory Services, Dan.VanderHey@Spencer-Thomas.com.



The Application of AI to HCM: Benefits ... and Warning Signs?

by Bob Greene, Sr. HCM Value Consultant, UKG

Imagine that you are a Vice President of HR at a large services organization, you just completed a quarterly virtual all-hands meeting with your extended department, and you followed up with a lengthy e-mail, a portion of which went like this:

Thanks, all, for attending today's quarterly meeting.

As we discussed, we have several new initiatives post-pandemic to get us all back "into the groove" after our extended period of work-from-home. ...

*For our next meeting, we'll all be reading **We're All in This Together: Creating a Team Culture of High Performance, Trust, and Belonging** by Mike Robbins (a copy is being shipped to you now), and we will discuss it in depth at our next quarterly meeting, which will be June 3, 2023. ...*

Additionally, we'll be forming task groups to work on the HCM deliverables for this year – your name appears below in your group with the specific aspect of our agenda to which you've been assigned...

Within an hour, you receive a response from Jesse, one of your team members, that includes the following:

Thanks for the follow-up message. I thought the meeting was great, and I look forward to "hitting the ground running" on these new initiatives. I've already put a hold-the-date on June 3 to be sure I'm available for the next meeting, and I can't wait to work with

Jim, Jennifer, Julia, and Justin on our task group's aspects of the year-long HCM deliverables. I've also already read Robbins' book, but I look forward to re-reading it. I particularly liked his advice on fostering an environment of psychological safety, advocating for inclusion and belonging, addressing conflict, and maintaining a healthy balance between high expectations and personal empathy.

You finish reading this note – the only one you received from those to whom you sent the original e-mail – and are duly impressed. Although Jesse is a relatively new addition to the team, he certainly appears to be a go-getter!

Here's what you don't know:

- ...he never attended the meeting,
- ...he never read the Robbins book (as he claimed), and
- **...he didn't even write the reply e-mail you just received – an AI "bot" did.**

AI Comes Into Its Own, Quite Suddenly

On January 23, 2023, Microsoft announced the latest phase of a long-term partnership with OpenAI, dedicated to advancing Artificial Intelligence technologies to achieve, among other things, "supercomputing at scale, new AI-powered experiences, and [being the] exclusive cloud partner" of OpenAI via Microsoft's Azure platform.

Significantly, the Microsoft announcement went on to explain, “We formed our partnership with OpenAI around a shared ambition to responsibly advance cutting-edge AI research and democratize AI as a new technology platform.” The words “responsibly” and “democratize” do a lot of work in this assertion. The casual reader might wonder what responsibility and democratization have to do with AI, and to paraphrase the Bard, “Methinks the spokesperson might protest too much...” In other words, regarding the more general use of AI, “what could possibly go wrong?”

Within a few short days of this announcement, the following articles appeared across the internet, all popping up in featured headlines:

- From the healthcare metaverse: *“AI Bot ChatGPT Passes US Medical Licensing Exams Without Cramming – Unlike Students”*¹
- From the education metaverse: *“ChatGPT Passes MBA Exam Given by a Wharton Professor”*² and *“ChatGPT Banned in Some Schools...”*³
- From the compliance metaverse: *“AI Rockets Ahead in Vacuum of US Regulation”*⁴

Additionally, and perhaps not coincidentally, on January 26, 2023, the Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology issued version 1.0 of its Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (*AI RMF 1.0*).⁵

At about this same time, the Brookings Institution, a leading nonprofit public policy organization, published an excellent commentary entitled “NIST’s *AI Risk Management Framework Plants a Flag in the AI Debate*,”⁶ authored by Cameron F. Kerry, a Brookings Fellow and former Commerce Department leader.

Noting the recent rapid development of AI capabilities, Kerry explains that the AI RMF provides “two lenses” through which to view these developments: (a.) a conceptual roadmap for identifying risks in the context of AI, and (b.) a set of organizational processes and activities that can be used to manage those risks. While this commentary does not focus specifically on labor supervision practices and the problem organizations may face where employees use AI in unapproved

ways, the framework it establishes can be helpful in this situation and much more! In particular, the commentary points out, multi-national organizations will need to monitor the development of standards, rules, and restrictions by various regions, with the European Union, typically, likely leading the pack and building on the *restrictions on AI use under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)*⁷ that are already in effect.

The Promises of AI, Fulfilled

Before focusing on the burgeoning concerns about AI utilization, it is essential to highlight the many areas where the benefits of AI are improving HCM processes and delivering on long-standing promises for HR.

Recruiting: AI-enhanced candidate screening has been an essential feature of the recruiting system for well over a decade. As job boards, recruiting sites, and social media tools have made it increasingly easy for candidates to apply for jobs – now with “one click,” and regardless of their qualifications, recruiters have found it increasingly necessary to perform mass screening of those job applicants. Supporting good “CRM” (candidate relationship management) practices, AI can now be deployed to ask various qualifying questions, employ deductive logic to move the candidate through those questions, and, of course, terminate the application where the candidate does not meet minimum requirements.

HR Service Center: A foundational principle of the service center software underpins automated HR Service Delivery -- that employee inquiries and service requests must be stratified by complexity and routed accordingly. The more of these inquiries that can be “pushed down to” and thoroughly addressed by employee self-service, the lower the per-inquiry cost to the employer.

Sometimes referred to as “Tier 0 Support” (so named for the amount of time needed by a human support representative to resolve – zero), this level of solution originated simply as online documentation for employees to read through on their own, hoping that they will find their answer. Unfortunately, with a wide variance in employees’ abilities to check out these answers independently, Tier 0 support

features in HR service center applications initially floundered.

Adding AI to HR service center applications has been a true game changer.

Essentially leveraging the same technology and logic that is ubiquitous in online shopping sites, AI within the HR service center application uses semantic search and content-based filtering to resolve an employee's issue. Incorporating the latest AI innovations, chatbots can turn this interaction from a stilted keyword exchange to a more human-like "conversation."

Simply put, the smarter the AI engine can make the HR service center software, the more employee support transactions can be successfully resolved at "Tier 0," resulting in lower organizational costs – and a happier workforce (due to reduced resolution times and the increased satisfaction of having resolved a question instantly).

Workforce Analytics: Workforce analytics were largely retrospective analyses when first introduced to the HCM marketplace in the early 2000s. The most significant measure of their innovation was in the presentation layer – charts and graphs replacing simple listings and tabular reports. With the recent incorporation of artificial intelligence into these analytics, HR professionals can finally transition from a "rearview mirror" pure reporting focus to root cause analysis and basic predictive analytics.

The Threats of AI, Misused

Threats related to the misuse of artificial intelligence technology by employees must be interpreted in the context of the current employment situation, which in 2023, is going through substantial change. Coming out of the pandemic, very high rates of remote work are decreasing toward, but usually not yet reaching pre-pandemic norms. Indeed, the combination of virtually full employment (50-year low 3.4% unemployment rate and more than two open positions for every unemployed individual) and a new zeal for work-from-home convenience as experienced by workers at the height of the pandemic, has changed the work location dynamic fundamentally for large swaths of the US labor market. Employees want it – sometimes prioritizing it over pay raises. However, their employers don't necessarily agree.

The World Economic Forum has been *tracking the comparison of workers' desires vs. employer plans*⁸ for work-from-home on a days-per-week basis, and the two-year period from mid-2020 through mid-2022 shows a narrowing but still measurable gap. (See Figure 1.)

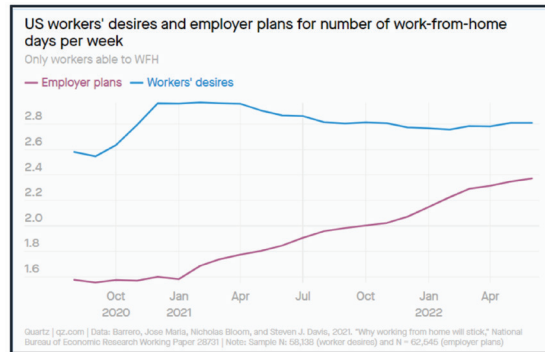


Figure 1.

As the gap between employee and employer desires for work-from-home days narrows and agreement is reached, for those employees in work-from-home eligible jobs, the likely average number of such days permitted will be about 2.5 per week, around 50% of total time working. This would be a significant increase from the average work-from-home days seen in the years before the pandemic when only *6% of employees worked remotely on a primary basis*.⁹

With such a dramatic increase in the percentage of time remote (or hybrid) employees can work from home comes the inevitable potential for abuse. While it may be true that most employees in jobs eligible for remote or hybrid work-from-home status would be salaried and/or exempt and personally trusted to put in the work during regular working hours, there will always be the exceptions which will be less engaged and require more active monitoring.

Since well before the pandemic, tools existed to help ensure that employees were where they said they were when clocking in or signing in for work. These include IP address monitoring, where the location of the employee's computer can be approximated from the internet protocol address of the connection. Similarly, geo-fencing can incorporate GPS technology and restrict the places an employee can clock into time management systems and/or the employer's production servers. Of course,

tech-savvy employees can defeat some of these technologies using IP spoofing or other evasion techniques, but most employees will not have the technical skills to do so.

OpenAI Premieres ChatGPT, and the Threat Increases

The US-based research lab OpenAI, started in 2015 by a group of entrepreneurs, including Elon Musk (who has since exited the organization), had arguably been one of the most influential developers of artificial intelligence technology for business applications. It was in January of this year that OpenAI, as the saying goes, “blew up the internet” with its announcement of a new protocol available for commercial use called GPT-3 (and its application, ChatGPT).

What is GPT-3? According to [sciencefocus.com](https://www.sciencefocus.com),¹⁰ “GPT-3 (Generative Pretrained Transformer 3) is a state-of-the-art language processing AI model developed by OpenAI. It can generate human-like text and has a wide range of applications, including language translation, language modeling, and generating text for applications such as chatbots. In addition, it is one of the largest and most powerful language processing AI models to date, with 175 billion parameters.” And if that description sounds like bragging, consider this: sciencefocus.com obtained that description from GPT-3 itself when they asked a chatbot to describe its capabilities!

OpenAI is rippling through every aspect of society right now, with (as noted previously) test runs showing it can pass and even excel at medical and legal professional exams. Microsoft has embedded the technology in its Bing search engine. Many school districts have banned their students from its use. (Even this article’s author, while writing this piece, had a sometimes-helpful, sometimes-not “co-author” in the form of Microsoft Word’s “Text Predictions: On” setting with the program constantly suggesting completions to his thoughts!)

Employees could use the same AI technology to produce work products ranging from e-mails to full reports. But could the future for unsuspecting employers include the occasional employee who sets their AI technology engine(s) on and then heads to the beach for the day?

What's An Organization To Do?

The solutions that employers will ultimately deploy to address the challenge of employees using AI in unapproved ways fall under the broad categorical heading of “employee monitoring software.” While it is fair to say that this category is in its infancy, it is also growing fast.

How fast? According to [TechBrew](https://www.techbrew.com)¹¹ (see Figure 2), in 2020, venture capitalists invested \$180.5 million in the space. Still, in 2022, as of November of that year, the year-to-date investment had already reached \$403 million. Clearly, the VCs see the same confluence of a fast-growing remote/hybrid workforce, the need to oversee that workforce, and the potential for AI to contribute to lower productivity for individual employees.

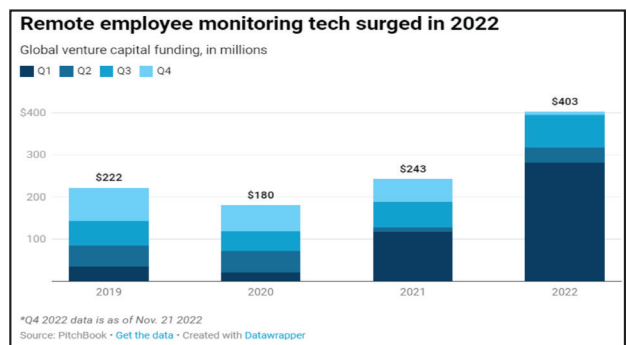


Figure 2.

There are specific steps that cautious employers can take with technology readily available today to try to head off these new AI challenges:

- A mandate for the use of only corporate-owned technology may or may not be practical (e.g., where the company does not provide mobile devices to employees who must use their personal devices to stay connected while traveling on business), but this is the basis for protecting against AI misuse,
- Mandated use of VPN connections may also aid in this regard, but many employers find that performance issues can plague VPN-mandated connections for large meetings over platforms like Teams or Zoom, and,
- An essential step on corporate-owned laptops and desktop PCs would be to use software installation restrictions – the

programs that regularly inventory all software on a machine, reporting any unrecognized or unapproved software to Corporate IT, and/or restricting the kinds of software that can be installed.

Conclusion

AI as a technology is entering a new phase of deployment which can present significant challenges to HR departments. Given trends like low unemployment and plentiful job

openings, a strong desire by many employees to work from home, and challenges to employee engagement so great that they sometimes culminate in “quiet quitting,” AI chatbot technology will tempt some employees to coast, appearing to be “more present” than they are. In the face of this emerging technology trend, employers will need to make decisions about the extent to which they will monitor their workforce and the tools they will use to keep them engaged.

Editor's Note:

The speed at which AI development advances in this country and worldwide is astounding. Indeed, just within the 6-8 weeks since this article was written, there have been several continuing developments in this story:

- Chat-GPT 4 has been announced as now in “initial availability,” replacing the previous version, which emerged only months before. The Open AI announcement for Chat-GPT 4 proudly asserts that the scores achieved by version 4 bots in taking the Uniform Bar Exam progressed to the 90th percentile of all test takers (vs. the 10th percentile for earlier versions) and in taking the Biology Olympiad tests, the new bots tested out at the 99th percentile (vs. the 31st percentile for earlier versions.)
- This increased speed of development leads many AI scientists to warn that we are approaching the point of “singularity” faster than ever. Singularity can be considered the future point when artificial intelligence will have surpassed human intelligence. (Now might be a good time to re-watch the Stanley Kubrick film “2001: A Space Odyssey,” paying particular attention to the role of “HAL.” But, of course, it was a futuristic satire – or so we thought then...)
- Given all that has happened over the past few months, Congressional legislators are suddenly paying more attention than ever to the impact AI may have on our society. Less than a month ago, Congressman Ted Lieu (D-CA) introduced a non-binding measure requiring Congress to examine this impact in the House of Representatives. This resolution was written entirely by ... wait for it ... artificial intelligence.

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- ¹⁰ Sciencefocus.com, <https://bit.ly/443plOG>
- ¹¹ TechBrew, <https://bit.ly/441VPci>

About the Author



Bob Greene currently serves as Senior HCM Value Consultant for UKG where he provides value consulting services to UKG's clients and prospects in the human capital management space. Prior to this, he was HR Industry Analyst at Ascentis. His 43 years in the human capital management industry have been spent in practitioner, consultant, and vendor/partner roles. As practitioner, he managed payroll for a 5,000-person bank in New Jersey. As consultant, he spent eight years advising customers in HRMS, payroll and benefits system design, as well as acquisition strategies for Towers Perrin (now Willis Towers Watson). He also built a strategic HCM advisory practice for Xcelicor (now Deloitte Consulting.) As vendor/partner, he has had

prominent roles in sales support, marketing and product management at Cyborg Systems, SAP, Oracle, Vurv Technology, SumTotal Systems, Enwisen, and Lawson Software. Greene has a total of ten years on the Editorial Board of IHRIM's *Workforce Solutions Review* journal, as contributing editor, and for 2020-2021, was Co-Managing Editor. His experience also includes two years as Adjunct Lecturer in HRIS at Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois. Greene holds a BA in English from Rutgers College, and studied Law at IIT-Kent College of Law, concentrating in ERISA and employment law. He can be reached at robert.greene@ukg.com.

The Holy Grail of Data-Driven Workforce Planning

By Katherine Jones, Ph.D.

A decade ago, I wrote a column for *Workforce Solutions Review* urging HR professionals to look beyond short-term workforce planning. At that time, when businesses were clawing out of a recessionary period, I implored readers to move from the tactical to the strategic:

What is strategic workforce planning? It is a holistic framework within which to assess and analyze the impact of internal and external trends on the future workforce by carefully considering alternate futures—different scenarios that may or may not come to pass. And it is essential for corporate agility; strategic workforce planning allows organizations to position themselves more quickly and intelligently for changing conditions.

We didn't do such a great job with implementing this imperative planning. Why? Few considered a pandemic that would crush supply chains, kill millions, cripple hospitality industries, and exponentially increase the number of work-from-home workers. Few—maybe even fewer—are currently considering other “what-if” scenarios: a resurgence of mutating viruses, political instability, street violence that keeps all workers at home for their safety, escalating food or rent costs, or the threat of engaging in war. We don't like to plan for things we don't want to think about.

We don't like to plan for things we don't want to think about.

A decade ago, I wrote, “Strategic workforce planning is not staffing. Staffing refers to getting the right person in the right job at the right time—but rarely addresses the long-term questions that engage a strategic workforce planner. So staffing is essential—but it is not to be confused with

strategic workforce planning.

Let's Get Real

The HR professionals I have spent time with recently are, in general, maxed-out, often requesting “another pair of hands” to assist with the workload, and are unlikely to get those hands budgeted. Despite the plethora of tools in the marketplace, too many end up buried in paper, relying on spreadsheets, re-entering information, and being swamped with tactical rather than strategic activities. Few have time to consider the future when submerged in the day-to-day.

This must change.

Planning to Plan

It will be challenging to consider planning for the future if there is difficulty in ascertaining the present. Therefore, preparing for the workforce of tomorrow relies first on solid data on today's workforce: where employees are, what skills they have, what roles they are in, and their likelihood of remaining with the organization.

While HR professionals have many more tools that generate analytics at their fingertips, there are some caveats:

- You likely have data from your HRIS system, perhaps a separate payroll system, and probably many more applications. If your corporate system has been best-of-breed, you may have multiple separate systems to extract data from.
- Integration is necessary: systems on which you rely for any employee data must be integrated so you can easily access ALL data you need. Easily.
- Your data must be trustworthy: if you get different numbers from payroll than you have in the HRIS system or can't figure out PTO between your PSA system for service people and your HR system, you have a problem. Only you know if you feel the analytics

presented to portray the state of your organization accurately.

- If you have a stand-alone analytics system, the data integration may be done for you—is it complete? Timely? Easy to access and understand?
- And importantly, can you access the data you need, no matter where it is? Do you have to jump through hoops to get data from sources outside of HR? And can you get information easily via single sign-on through the systems you have?
- Does the data you have access to matter? Organizations need to see trends in—for example, attrition, pay equity, promotion recommendations, and much more—even to consider future planning. Reports that only provide counts rarely give you data from which to make strategic decisions.

Your organization is not Noah's Ark: The fact that you may have a best-of-breed strategy for software does not mean you need every breed available.

Why HR Needs Good Analytical Data

Ensuring the likelihood of a sufficient, competent, appropriately skilled workforce for the future is certainly not trivial: It takes thought, data, and time to hypothesize the “what-ifs.” HR professionals will need access to reliable external data and data native to their organizations. Knowledge of worldwide locations for advanced skill sets, trends in undergraduate and graduate school majors, worldwide demographic changes and changes in retirement policies, work locations by cost-of-living, safety, ease of access to public transportation and health care add to already recognized need for data on competitive salaries and housing and living costs in the regions where you employ people today. And more.

So let's look at the “and more.” Data you can access with today's tools will help your planning and comes from many different sources besides those noted above. Planning for the future requires a solid grip on questions such as these:

- How is your brand viewed today, and do you need to modify your public branding to attract the workforce you anticipate needing in the future? For example, if you are getting dissed on Glassdoor and Yelp, your ability to attract hires is already diminished.

- The perception of your company and its reputation is critical in the short and long term. Is that perception academic and a bit stuffy? A fun place to work? An excellent place to learn and get work experience? An organization that treasures the environment and supports charities. A firm with long hours and few perks, or that leads to burnout. You have access to survey tools to help you ascertain such views from alums, current employees, and those who applied that you did not hire or declined your offers.
- Your future sourcing strategies will likely be different than they are today. Data on, for example, which job boards are most attractive to which demographic, what candidates never submit resumes to job boards, which colleges have the best candidate placement offices for your recruiters to work with, and the like will change and adapt over time. Having the data now about what sources are most productively used is a start but start tracking new sources as they appear.
- Employee experience will—and, in fact, likely must—change. Vendors have been hitting this hard in the past few years, as companies buying software noted difficulties in attracting and retaining hires. Intuitive, modern interfaces are one thing, but policies must keep up. The glitziest user interface won't make up for arduous arcane procedures that adversely impact employee productivity and satisfaction at work.
- Experience is more than touching the software: increased flexibility, support for remote work options, active programs for countering burnout to retain professionals in their field, such as extended R&R with pay if they will return to their positions, better support for parents, and those with elder care responsibility, job rotations and sharing, and creative programs to retain potential retirees at least part-time. What programs and policies have been successful in other companies? Other countries? These are all knowable things.

Analytic and survey tools can help you answer many basic questions to get you started – and in all these areas, tools using artificial intelligence and natural language processing can make finding and synthesizing data more efficient: face it, much of what you need to know could be time-consuming without AI aid.

Let's use the data you gleaned for the “what ifs.”

There are some ready examples that you and your firm already have contingency plans for:

- What if our data is breached and employee PII or customer data is released?
- What if stock price volatility affects our overall position in the market?
- What if recessionary and post-pandemic pricing continues to impact the cost of living?
- What if we have a massive power outage, face fire, or flood at our premises?
- What if something unforetold happens to a member of our leadership team?
- What if we are hit with a significant lawsuit, fraud, or embezzling issue?
- What if our number one supply chain provider goes under or disappears?

These are topics you and others in the organization have very likely thought about and have a disaster recovery or business continuity plan, even if informal, to address. Executive succession plans are likely in place as contingents for something catastrophic. (Note that many companies do not allow their executives to make business trips on the same aircraft – that is a contingency plan.)

The 200,000+ layoffs experiences across the U.S., especially in high-tech industries, are in response to one “what if:” What if the current recession and interest rates hikes continue into a waterfaling decline in consumer and business spending? This was a data-driven decision based on recent economic and labor-related statistics. In this context, however, it is a tactical, short-term decision rather than a 10+ years projection of labor force needs. Companies, particularly tech companies, rely on their cache to re-hire as they need in the future.

What Long-Term Planning Means for HR

Give at least some thought to the “what if’s” you don’t want to think about:

- What if a catastrophic disaster (like Turkey’s recent earthquake) hit your headquarters?
- What if a new war caused the conscription of your younger workforce members?
- What if the retirement age in 2035 is 80?
- What if the U.S. broke up as the Soviet Union once did?
- (One planner I consulted to wanted to consider “What if aliens invaded us,” but seriously, I don’t think we need to worry too much about that...on the other hand...)

In addition to solely workforce planning, HR professionals have several medium-term planning considerations to think about:

- What organizational structures would best support our company’s growth plans?
- How might social media and technology-related regulations in Europe affect future legislation in North America?
- What climate-protecting and sustainability changes should we plan on?

For all these considerations, you need data—from analytics within your company and externally. You need to know your current corporate strategy—not just the year ahead. As the strategic workforce planner – you are (yes, you are!) – try to look up from the morass on your desk to see further in the distance, contemplating scenarios that may occur and using data to plot the options the corporation will have should possibilities come to pass.



About the Author

Unique as a thought leader for her ability to make theory actionable and technology comprehensible to non-technologists, Dr. Jones is a sought-after writer and speaker in the US and internationally. Moving easily from the academic world to the worldwide technology stage, she has repeatedly created value propositions bridging technology and theory with the practical world of today's business. Whether working with systems integrators in the Federal arena, consultants in oil and gas, or small business owners, her clarity and wisdom – as well as her wit—has been appreciated and commended.

Now an independent high-tech marketing analyst, she was previously responsible for the creation and provision of thought leadership content for a web-based membership program as a partner at Mercer and spent several years at Bersin & Associates both before and after its acquisition by Deloitte, where she was the VP heading the HCM technology research practice in Bersin by Deloitte. She became an industry analyst at Aberdeen Group in Boston, first covering the ERP space, then human capital management in Palo Alto. Later, as marketing director for NetSuite, her efforts coincided with one of the more successful IPOs of that year. Before becoming an analyst, Katherine was in the Boston-area high-tech companies' product marketing and strategic alliance management, specializing in data communications and network management. She spent several years in marketing education at a minicomputer company, creating new programs in high-tech sales and system engineer training and selling to the Federal Government, leading a DDN certification project in the company's Federal System Division. She had left a career in higher education administration and teaching, which included the assistant deanship in the School of Education at the University of Connecticut and responsibility for the Master of Arts in Teaching program in the English Department at Cornell University, where she was instrumental in the Improvement of Undergraduate Education project in the Provost's office. An industry veteran, and independent high-tech analyst, she is widely published on topics of talent management and personnel-related technologies, cybersecurity, ERP and HCM systems implementations, change management, and the mid-market, totaling over 500 works in print. Her master's and doctorate degrees are from Cornell University. She can be reached at katherine_ics@msn.com or [@katherine_jones](https://www.linkedin.com/in/katherinejones).

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