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Wearable technology has the potential to lower healthcare expenditures by integrating wearable devices and leveraging data science techniques to make workplaces safer and increase efficiency and productivity. These technologies are not designed to take work away from humans. Instead, they can supplement and augment what humans do and reduce workplace dangers for their colleagues.

The Next Agenda for Human Capability Improvement and Reporting 4
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A company that understands how it needs to modify its culture to compete in thought leadership is a company that is more likely to sustain thought leadership. Creating a culture of thought leadership is the ultimate advantage in markets where customers choose firms with the best expertise. CHROs now have the opportunity to be at the center of creating that advantage.

What to Do When You Want to Give Your Team Flexibility, but Your Organization Doesn’t. 11
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If your organization resists change, starting small and being patient is essential. You may only be able to implement some of the changes you want after some time. Begin with minor changes, be patient, and demonstrate the benefits of these changes. Once you have shown the value of flexibility, you can slowly introduce more changes.

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Advanced technologies like AI, robotics, eLearning, and recruitment software offer human resources professionals ways to make workplaces safer and increase efficiency and productivity. These technologies are not designed to take work away from humans. Instead, they can supplement and augment what humans do and reduce workplace dangers for their colleagues.

Revolutionizing Workplace Health: Integrating Wearable Devices and Data Science for Cost-Effective Healthcare Solutions 17
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By integrating wearable devices and leveraging data science techniques, organizations can gather valuable health-related information from employees, analyze it, and develop strategies to promote well-being and prevent health issues. The desirable outcome is that the company’s bottom line benefits from increased productivity, job satisfaction, and employee retention.

You Could Be Wearing The Best Thing For Your Health: How The Inclusion of Wearable Devices in Health Plans Could Help Reduce Healthcare Costs 20
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With regular feedback, we are addressing one of the significant challenges in resource retention. We give feedback to employees, which positively impacts both the employee and the workplace. It also helps to retain top talent and avoid bias in the feedback. Managers find this feedback tool saves time and resources while improving the quality of individual feedback sessions.

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In this article, the authors share research and science-based facts behind the phenomenon of why some employees leave organizations voluntarily, why turnover can be contagious for others on the team, and how HR professionals can utilize both active and passive listening tools to enhance their ability to create practical and data-based strategies for talent retention.

Chance, Choice, or Craft: How HR is Reconstructing their Careers in the Modern World of Work 32
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The world of work provides unprecedented access to new opportunities for those willing to craft and pursue them intentionally. It’s time for HR professionals to look after the careers of those in the organizations we guide and introspect our career trajectories and choices. An unknown source said, “Your career reflects your choices. If you do not like your career, it is time to start making better choices.”

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Whatever the crisis, the foremost responsibility is to the people. HR’s role is, in part, to mitigate the uncertainty that is inevitable following a workplace crisis. No one likes to think about unpleasant events, and workplace disasters are unpleasant and dangerous. However, HR professionals are responsible for preparing the workforce should a disastrous event occur.
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Welcome to the second issue of Workforce Solutions Review for 2023, and welcome to summer! In the last few years, our awareness of the impact of health on our overall productivity has been heightened, and this issue contains some thought-provoking perspectives for consideration.

Understanding and capitalizing on the potential of human capabilities is vital to all thriving companies. **Dave Ulrich** and **Norm Smallwood** share insights they gleaned while researching human capability’s impact on business results in “The Next Agenda for Human Capability Improvement and Reporting.” When organizations have a comprehensive framework for human capability with scalable analytics, stakeholders have insights on the human capacity that lead to actionable insights influencing organizational performance and increasing stakeholder confidence.

Companies need to differentiate themselves through industry thought leadership to be competitive in today’s business climate. In “The CHRO’s Crucial Role in Sustaining Thought Leadership,” author **Bob Buday** explains how to develop a culture of thought leadership and separate the “wheat from the chaff” in being a true leader in the field.

Data may reflect that most employees want to work at flexible workplaces, but the mandate for change requires more than employee approvals. “What to Do When You Want to Give Your Team Flexibility, but Your Organization Doesn’t” provides several solid recommendations for promoting flexibility. **Julie Kratz** says you start by measuring outputs versus inputs, setting clear expectations for what good looks like for performance, and leading with trust. These recommendations and the data to support a four-day workweek got our attention.

**Yasmine Mustafa** shares solid suggestions in “How HR Professionals Can Implement Advanced Technologies to Increase Workplace Safety.” Advanced technologies like AI, robotics, eLearning, and recruitment software offer human resources professionals ways to make workplaces safer and increase efficiency and productivity. These can supplement and augment humans’ work while reducing workplace dangers for their colleagues.

“Revolutionizing Workplace Health: Integrating Wearable Devices and Data Science for Cost-Effective Healthcare Solutions” explores the potential of integrating wearable devices and leveraging data science techniques to reduce healthcare costs. **Shashank Agarwal** shares how these devices help workers better manage stress, monitor their fitness levels, and choose healthy lifestyles. The working environment is improved through gamification and social engagement, which promote productive behaviors, goal setting, rewards, and coworkers’ connections.

**Kulbir Singh** discusses the value of wearables in healthcare management in his article “You Could Be Wearing the Best Thing for Your Health: How the Inclusion of Wearable Devices in Health Plans Could Help Reduce Healthcare Costs.” The evidence that wearable technologies enable people to actively participate in their health management, improve health by collecting real-time data, supporting preventive care, and increasing patient involvement is compelling. Don’t miss this one!

Expanding our focus on all aspects of health, we welcome back **Siddharth Sharma** with his article “Implementing and Supporting Mental Health Benefits in the Workplace.” Siddharth describes the rewards of having mental health services in the workplace and discusses critical elements for a successful program and the HR information systems’ role in supporting effective execution.

If you think you know everything about providing feedback in the workplace, read “Everyday Feedback” by **Vijay Balasubramanian**. Vijay highlights how giving accurate feedback without bias is very challenging for humans and highlights tools to improve data collection which provide input and practice delivery of this feedback.

Turnover remains one of the most problematic issues for employers and the most vexing to mitigate effectively. The answers lie in personal psychology but can be unveiled with the insights gleaned through people analytics. **Andrea Derler** and **Peter Burnham** delve into this issue in: “Three Tech-driven Strategies to Understand and Mitigate Turnover Risks.” Turnover can be contagious, and they offer strategies to address it.

**Dieter Veldsman** and **Marne van der Merwe** present an overview of how HR careers are evolving in line with the changing world of work, sharing some of their research based on a digital interactive HR Career Map. “Chance, Choice, or Craft: How HR is Reconstructing their Careers in the Modern World of Work” discusses five emerging HR career patterns and practical user stories aligned to expand how you view the new workplace.

In “Planning for the Unknown...”, **Katherine Jones** tackles a topic many of us would rather forget: unpleasant events and workplace disasters. While we don’t want to think about such events, HR professionals must anticipate, plan, and equip the workforce in case they occur.

We close with the Letter from the Chair, **Dennis Hill** shares his assessment of how HR is crucial to deploying life/work quality improvements across the organization successfully. As change agents, HR-Technology Analysts, Managers, and Directors, become the evangelists of streamlined, automated, and improved workforce engagement processes, and we trust that WSR helps equip you for that role. Read, engage, respond, and challenge us to continue to tackle topics to prepare for the workplace of tomorrow!
The Next Agenda for Human Capability Improvement and Reporting

By Dave Ulrich, University of Michigan, and Norm Smallwood, The RBL Group

Suppose you are a senior business, finance, or HR leader. In that case, you have likely already been asked to share your organization’s commitment to and investment in human capability (talent + leadership + organization + HR) (see Figure 1 for definition).

What will you say, and to whom will you say it so that your response increases confidence in your organization?

Human Capability Matters

The conversation about human capability is becoming increasingly important to an expanding set of stakeholders:

- **Investors** worry more than ever about intangible value, which represents up to 80 percent of your company’s market value (and reduction of risk). Our research shows that 25–30 percent of that 80 percent is tied to human capability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Firm Valuation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>How important is this category for firm valuation?</th>
<th>How well do we assess this category?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Performance</td>
<td>Data that shows up on a balance sheet with economic value, earnings, cash flow, EBITDA, EVA</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>4.47 (.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Investments</td>
<td>Investments in assets strategy, brand, R&amp;D, technology, supply chain, etc.</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>4.33 (.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Capability</td>
<td>Quality of talent, leaders, culture, and HR</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>3.75 (.96)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Investor Criteria for and Assessment of Intangible Value
(Survey of 430 financial and investment experts)

platforms that share company ratings (e.g., Glassdoor, Most Admired, and Top Company lists).

- Boards of directors traditionally examine financial performance and strategic investments in every meeting. Increasingly, human capability issues are not just annual succession planning or compensation reviews but part of every board meeting.
- Senior executives increasingly recognize that talent determines long-term success and talent issues (workforce, retention, engagement). Top surveys of CEO concerns and conferences (World Economic Summit, WOBI, etc.)
- Employees who feel they have more choice want to work for a company where leaders care, have more control over their work setting, and are proud of the reputation and results the organization delivers to all stakeholders.
- HR professionals find meaning in their work as architects who design and deliver a human capability agenda that creates value for all stakeholders.

Because human capability investments and reporting create value for each stakeholder (see Figure 2), human capability reporting needs to improve.

**Current and Future State of Human Capability Investment and Reporting**

To respond to human capability requirements, we envision changes in the content of what is reported and the process for how information is accessed.

**Content.** Content is about what stakeholders pay attention to. However, often human capability discussions are based on analytics that is not integrated:

- People look at isolated HR practices, e.g., time to hire, percent promoted from within, turnover/retention, or diversity indices.
- Activity-focused. Analytics focuses on what is done, e.g., the number of employees, days of training or training budget, or CEO pay ratio.
- Demographics. Reports are done on the distribution of age, education, race, gender, and other demographics.

Considering the impact of human capability on business results, we propose that stakeholders receive more rigorous content that is:

- **Integrated.** Rely on a typology of integrated HR initiatives using a theory of classification. The human capability logic in Figure 1 shows how 38 initiatives clustered into four categories of talent, leadership, organization, and HR.
- **Actionable.** Instead of demographics and activities, offer stakeholders information that helps them make prescriptive investments in initiatives.
- **Impactful.** Impact follows a portfolio logic where initiatives impact stakeholder outcomes differently and prioritizes which of the 38 initiatives will deliver more value to stakeholders. Research without action is like reading how to do a hobby book but never doing it.

**Process.** Process refers to how information is collected. Trusting the data collected is necessary for stakeholders to have confidence in actionable insights. We see four common approaches to managing information:

1. Observation. Leaders know something when they see and feel it. As ethnographers, leaders can learn to pay attention to their experiences. They can “feel” how an organization is or is not working within a short time.
2. Interviews. One-on-one (or team) interviews allow in-depth conversations to pursue and explore issues of interest. Interviews often uncover underlying problems that may be causing symptoms.
3. Surveys. The most common data tool is a survey where questions are crafted and asked of targeted respondents (e.g., engagement, 360, climate). Surveys help with statistics that discover cause and effect and define patterns.
4. Scaling through AI/machine learning. Numerous documents exist within or about an organization (10K, training, social media, texts, emails, and so forth). Using modern AI technology, these existing documents can be scored.

The difference between surveys vs. scaling can be illustrated with nutrition. On a survey, someone may say they are an “8 out of 10” when questioned about healthy eating. But with AI data, one could track what and how often someone buys food (store data), eats at a restaurant (with QR code), and exercises (with health monitors). This AI-enabled data could lead to a behavior-based score (1 to 10) on healthy eating, which is more accurate than a perception of healthy eating.

When organizations have a comprehensive framework for human capability with scalable analytics, stakeholders have insights on the human capacity that lead to actionable insights.

**Example of Emerging Human Capability Reporting**

We have scored the human capital reporting required by the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) for 7,000 US firms using 2021 and 2022 data. We scored each of the four human capability pathways. For a review of this methodology, see [https://bit.ly/43VxxzH](https://bit.ly/43VxxzH).

Table 2 shows the remarkable finding that the “human capital” information reported in 2021 and 2022 has identical scores. This data reflects that the reported messages about human capability have not changed between these two years. We find that the processes and roles used to craft these messages are not evolving. Even though stakeholders want better human capital information, they are not receiving it. This consistency represents an enormous opportunity for differentiation if a firm can offer a more rigorous and reliable report on human capability than others in their industry.

With this large database and AI methodology, we found that the total human capability score explained 26 percent of cash flow and 25 percent of investor confidence, which is remarkably consistent with the findings in Table 1 from our earlier survey of investors.

**Diagnose Your Human Capability Efforts**

To improve building and to report better human capability, we have used the diagnostic in Table 3 to help focus attention on steps to enhance human capability efforts. The line in the scoring box is the typical pattern in answers we receive, with higher importance rated higher than effectiveness, effectiveness higher than clarity, and so on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnostic questions for human capability:</th>
<th>Score Low 1 to High</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How important is human capability to your business?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How effective is your organization’s human capability compared to others in your industry?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How much clarity do you have about your highest priority investments in human capability?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How well do you communicate your human capability efforts to internal and external stakeholders?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To what extent is HR involved in communicating human capability to investors and other external stakeholders?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Actions for Improving Human Capability Investments and Reporting**

To respond to requests by all stakeholders for more information on human capability, we propose actions for each of the five diagnostic questions (see Table 4).
Conclusion

We expect human capability reporting to become more like financial reporting in the future because of human capability’s impact on all stakeholders. So, rather than be hesitant or offer piecemeal information about work in human capability, we encourage business, finance, and HR leaders to improve their human capability efforts to increase stakeholder confidence.

References


Table 4. Human Capability Improvement and Reporting Actions

About the Authors

Dave Ulrich is the Rensis Likert Professor at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, and a partner at the RBL Group, a consulting firm focused on helping organizations and leaders deliver value. He has published over 200 articles, book chapters, and more than 30 books. He edited Human Resource Management 1990-1999, served on the editorial board of four journals and on the Board of Directors for Herman Miller (16 years), has spoken to large audiences in 90 countries, performed workshops for over half of the Fortune 200; coached successful business leaders, and is a Distinguished Fellow in the National Academy of Human Resources. He is known for continually learning, turning complex ideas into simple solutions, and creating real value for those he works with in three fields. He and his colleagues have shaped the HR profession, and he has been called the “father of modern HR” and “HR thought leader of the decade” by focusing on HR outcomes, governance, competencies, and practices (HR Champions; HR Value Added; HR Transformation; HR Competencies; HR Outside In). He spearheaded a “gift” book on the future of HR (The Rise of HR distributed to over 1,500,000 HR professionals), in which 70 thought leaders freely shared their insights. To find out more about Dave, visit Dave Ulrich (rbl.net).

Norm Smallwood is a recognized authority in developing businesses and their leaders to deliver results and increase value. In 1999, Norm co-founded The RBL Group with Dave Ulrich. Much of his current work relates to measurably improving the customer and employee experience to increase business outcomes. This is accomplished by partnering with clients to integrate organization design, technical and cultural capabilities, customer brand experience, leadership, HR practices, and employee experience. Success is defined as increased confidence in the future by investors, customers, and employees, which translates to more excellent market value in publicly traded firms. Norm has co-authored eight books: Real-Time Strategy, Results-Based Leadership, How Leaders Build Value, Change Champions Field Guide, Leadership Brand, Leadership Code, Leadership Sustainability, and Agile Talent. He has published more than a hundred articles in leading journals and newspapers. In 2010, the Harvard Business Review recognized Norm in an ad for the magazine as doing “innovative and ground-breaking work on effective leadership.” In January 2019, Norm joined the board of HRCI, and later that year, he received a lifetime achievement award from Utah Business Magazine. Norm has also been a faculty member in executive education at the University of Michigan in the Ross School of Management. To find out more about Norm, visit Norm Smallwood (rbl.net).
The CHRO’s Crucial Role in Sustaining Thought Leadership

By Robert S. Buday, Thought Leadership Partners

B2B companies of seemingly every stripe want to be seen as “thought leaders” these days. They’re putting senior talent in place to achieve it at such companies as talent sourcing provider RGP, staffing giant Manpower, mutual fund king Fidelity Investments, data provider Thomson Reuters, and music streamer Spotify. Their goals may sound arrogant, even ominous (with suggestions of Orwellian mind control). But they’re not. They merely want their audiences (especially customers) to view them as premier experts in their product or service categories. In increasingly complex markets, companies that turn chaos into coherency stand out.

The majority of the 163 firms we surveyed last year told us that being seen as a thought leader was highly or extremely important to selling their offerings. These companies included consulting, IT services, enterprise software, venture capital, private equity, investment banking, and cloud computing firms. They have good reasons for showing off their unique expertise: three-quarters of their customers said thought leadership plays a vital role in deciding whether to use them.

However, just like the old warning we told our kids when they were young (and our parents told us) – “Your eyes are bigger than your stomach” – an organizational desire to be regarded as thought leaders can exceed the will to achieve it. Hearing stories of how a consulting firm built a billion-dollar service on the back of a bestselling book or how a major research study led to a multibillion-dollar new service offering will whet their appetites. But after a few months or a year into seeing how hard it is to develop a novel concept, collect the evidence to prove it works, and launch marketing campaigns that generate interest, many of these firms will give up or scale back.

Over the years, I have worked with many companies to help them get recognition and serious revenue as thought leaders in their domains. But far more often, I’ve seen the desire wane before their thought leadership programs had a monetary impact. They gave up too quickly.

The No. 1 reason is that they don’t fully realize what it takes to play the long game of thought leadership. And don’t kid yourself; thought leadership is a long game. Specifically, most companies that desire to be seen as thought leaders don’t understand precisely what organizational values, beliefs, and behaviors will encourage their people to bring groundbreaking expertise to the market. They act as if merely exhorting their people – *Get out there and be thought leaders!* – would get it done. If it were only that easy!

If it were, every business book would be published by a prestigious publisher and sell hundreds of thousands of copies. Every wannabee TED TALK speaker would be invited to the big stage in Vancouver, BC. *Harvard Business Review*’s article acceptance rate would be 99% rather than 1%, and the New York Times would run every op-ed submission. (They reject the vast majority).

Recognizing the premier expert in a business domain means being regarded as the go-to firm with a premium price tag attached. But being seen as the thought leader is also difficult. And it is made only more so in companies that don’t nurture their experts and their experts’ helpers: editors, ghostwriters, speaker coaches, PR professionals, graphic artists, and others with the skills to put the experts in the limelight.
Without a nurturing environment, imploring your company’s experts to be seen as thought leaders is like planting palm trees in New England soil. They won’t survive the first winter.

To continue the arboreal analogy, companies that want to compete on thought leadership need a “soil” whose nutrients nurture great ideas from studying best practices, expertise delivered by multiple people, and marketing that educates rather than boasts. This is the soil – the culture – in which thought leadership can flourish continually.

This is where HR comes in. Since they are in charge of people issues, HR executives can play an outsized role in shaping a culture of thought leadership. When a CEO tells the chief marketing officer, “Our firm needs to be seen as thought leaders,” what the CEO and CMO are also unwittingly signing up for is culture tweaking or possibly more.

What kind of culture adjustments am I talking about? Specific values, beliefs, and behaviors are crucial to sustaining thought leadership programs over time. (See Exhibit 1.)

I won’t go through all the cells but will highlight those especially important. These are the organizational values, beliefs, and behaviors on which thought leadership thrives:

- Possessing superior expertise is the ultimate competitive advantage, and it comes from comparing the practices of companies that are best at solving the topic at hand with those that are the worst at it. Companies possessing these values and beliefs fund case study research, which is the wellspring of big ideas.
- They must share superior expertise widely rather than cloaking it in secrecy, available only to those who pay for it. The firms with highly supportive cultures for thought leadership are also prolific publishers of articles and books, experienced conference speakers and organizers, and often-cited social media influencers. They trumpet their expertise widely, knowing it will open doors in high places.
- They scale their expertise rapidly and at high quality rather than quarantine it in the heads of a few thought leaders. Whether in law, consulting, architecture, IT services, training, investment banking, or other firms, they know clients will pay extra for thought leaders who work on their issues. If they can’t get the authors of a bestselling book on their project, they know the project team from that firm is just as capable.

No one is better equipped than the CHRO to help their organization establish the values, beliefs, and behaviors essential to creating a culture of thought leadership. The place for the CHRO to begin is sitting down with the CEO, CMO, head of sales, head of product/service development, research, and other internal experts and discussing what thought leadership means and why it’s essential. That conversation should then quickly move to what the CMO must do, what an internal content development function must do (the place that conducts the best-practice research), and what others must do in their roles to position the firm as the leading expert in its markets for the foreseeable future:

- How will thought-leading content be developed?
- How will it be marketed?

Exhibit 1.
• How will salespeople be equipped to sell like experts?

And how about the people who deliver the expertise to clients? What programs must be in place to train and develop them so they can deliver an organization’s unique expertise just as competently as its most proficient experts?

Once these thought leadership collaborators understand the programs and processes of thought leadership – and where they need to be involved – the CHRO should lead the conversation about culture. How will the firm’s values, beliefs, and behaviors be adjusted? What values, beliefs, and behaviors will nurture thought leadership right now? Which ones will erode it – how can the firm change them?

A company that understands how it needs to modify its culture to compete in thought leadership is a company that is more likely to sustain thought leadership. If your organization believes superior expertise is the way to compete in the years ahead, it must begin creating a culture of thought leadership right at the start. Please don’t wait until after you’ve created the programs, hired all the people, and set them in motion.

Over time, the culture I’ve described in this article will keep your firm ahead of competitors that also profess the desire to be thought leaders but which lose their drive after the first cold snap of a lackluster book, off-target study, or lightly applauded company-hosted conference. Creating a culture of thought leadership is the ultimate advantage in markets where customers choose firms with the best expertise. CHROs now have the opportunity to be at the center of creating that advantage.

About the Author
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Data shows that most employees want to work at flexible workplaces. With the global labor shortage ensuing, the competition for diverse talent has never been so intense, and flexibility is a competitive advantage for leaders. Even if your organization does not promote flexibility, leaders can model three things – measure outputs vs. inputs, have clear expectations for work hours, and trust their employees to manage their time versus watching how long they are working.

The modern workplace has mostly stayed the same since its originality in the 1950s post-World War II era. Back then, men were primarily the providers, and women were seen as full-time caregivers, nurses, or educators. The assumption that workers had support for childcare and household duties was baked into the construction of the modern workplace. Fast forward 70 years, and that model doesn’t work (if it ever did).

Research shows that flexibility strategies like the four-day workweek boost productivity, improve retention, and increase access to diverse talent. In addition, given the current global labor shortage, this flexibility is more attractive to caregivers, younger employees, those from different socioeconomic classes, and those with disabilities.

According to Four-Day Week, organizations with successful implementation take into account the differing preferences of their employees with the flexibility to co-create their work schedule. LinkedIn’s Workforce Confidence survey, which surveyed 19,000 workers in 2022, found that for 54% of people, the four-day workweek is among their top three priorities regarding workplace benefits. Support is especially strong for the younger workers, with 62% of millennials and Gen Z supporting the shift. The four-day week was also more prevalent among women (57%) than men (51%).

Employees are voluntarily quitting over work flexibility concerns, according to a recent GoodFirms study. The study found that 70% of H.R. manager respondents pointed to flexibility as a reason for resignations, the most cited cause in the survey.

Since modern workers are challenging the “modern” workplace rigidity and voting with their feet, leaders must listen and shift to changing employee needs. Workers increasingly expect organizations to be more flexible and lead with trust versus micromanagement.

If you, like many leaders, want more flexibility in the workplace, but your organization’s policies don’t support flexibility yet, consider leading by example:

1. Measure outputs vs. inputs.
2. Have clear expectations for performance.
3. Build a culture of trust.

#1: Measure Outputs vs. Inputs
You’re making a mistake if you’re measuring employee performance by when they arrive and when they leave, how long they’re in their cubicle, or how busy their calendar is. Those activities rarely lead to high performance and are highly correlated with a low-trust environment.

Modern workers want to be treated with respect and expect to be trusted to get their work done when they should. For example,
there are better times for peak performance for caregivers than early morning meetings and late evening social outings. Today, 56% of U.S. workers have care responsibilities outside traditional work. Managing work and caretaking is taking a toll on workers, leading to lost productivity, burnout, and absenteeism. Caregiving is the number two reason behind retirement that employees leave the workforce.

Additionally, for the 20-25% percent of the population that has a disability, the challenges of in-person environments often are taxing and limit performance. Virtual work and accommodations for doctor’s appointments and support can boost performance by trusting workers to do their job mentally and physically at optimal performance. Leaders permit people to do their best work by providing flexibility for necessary care.

If you need help figuring out where to create more flexibility in a seemingly inflexible work environment, start by adjusting how you measure performance. Set up or revisit:

**Goals and Objectives:** Setting goals and objectives for employees is an effective way to measure their work output. Goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound (SMART), and aligned with the organization’s objectives. Regular reviews can then be conducted to evaluate how well employees meet these goals.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Measurable values demonstrating how effectively an employee achieves critical business objectives. Examples of KPIs include sales figures, customer satisfaction ratings, or the number of projects completed within a specific timeframe.

**Project Status Reports:** Use status reports to measure work done towards outcomes and regularly review progress together. If there are issues or obstacles, be proactive in managing them together.

**Peer Reviews:** Peer reviews or 360 reviews measure work outputs versus inputs. This involves having employees assess each other’s work quality and productivity, which can provide valuable insights into an employee’s performance and identify areas for improvement.

**Employee Self-Evaluation:** Employee self-evaluation can help measure both inputs and outputs. Employees can evaluate their work inputs, such as their time on specific tasks, and outcomes, such as their accomplishments or completed projects.

### #2: Have Clear Expectations for Performance

As a leader, you need to lead by example. If you ask your team members to work more flexibly, you must demonstrate that you are willing to do the same. Be flexible with your schedule and show that you trust your team members to work independently.

Before making any changes, you must understand your organization’s policies and procedures. Take the time to read through the employee handbook and any other relevant documents. Then, talk to HR and your supervisor to clearly understand what is allowed and what is not. This will help you determine the flexibility you can offer your team members.

Communication is critical when introducing changes to your team. Be clear and transparent about the changes you are making and why you are making them. Ensure your team members understand the expectations and guidelines for working flexibly. Encourage open communication and feedback from your team members to ensure that the changes you are making are effective.

Start each week’s work with priority setting and end each week with a feedback loop discussing how expectations were met, exceeded, or not met. When leaders are clear with expectations, it is easier for workers to meet them. As leaders, we often have expectations in our heads but need to be more precise with our team. Refrain from assuming they know what good looks like – ask them their priorities, give feedback, and modify the plan so that all parties agree on critical tasks and expected completion.

“To be clear is to be kind” – Brene Brown.

### #3: Build a Culture of Trust

Flexibility only works when trust is present. Ideally, employees manage their time versus watching how long they spend to complete their work. If outputs are appropriately measured and expectations are clear, this creates an environment for trust to thrive.

Trust is difficult to earn and easy to lose.
Leaders that lead with trust are vulnerable to their weaknesses and mistakes. They model trustworthiness on the team and give frequent feedback versus waiting for performance review time.

There are many benefits associated with increased flexibility and trust.

1. Increased productivity: Flexibility can help employees to balance their personal and professional responsibilities better, reducing stress and allowing them to focus more effectively on their work.

2. Improved employee retention: Offering flexibility can make employees feel more valued and appreciated, which can help to reduce turnover and improve employee retention rates.

3. Enhanced job satisfaction: Flexibility can improve employee satisfaction by giving them more control over their work schedule and allowing them to work in a way that best suits their needs and preferences.

4. Expanded talent pool: Flexibility can also make attracting and retaining top talent easier by allowing them to work in a way that suits their lifestyle and preferences.

5. Reduced absenteeism: By offering flexibility, organizations can reduce absenteeism by making it easier for employees to manage personal responsibilities without taking time off.

6. Increased diversity and inclusion: Offering flexibility can help to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace by making it easier for employees with different needs and preferences to work and succeed within the organization.

Considering these benefits, trust is often created through subtle yet intentional, consistent experiences. Therefore, having your team’s back and checking in with them proactively is critical to ensure they understand expectations versus assuming they aren’t working.

If your organization resists change, starting small and being patient is essential. You may only be able to implement some of the changes you want after some time. Begin with minor changes, such as allowing employees to work from home one day a week or adjusting work schedules to better accommodate personal needs. Be patient and demonstrate the benefits of these changes. Once you have shown the value of flexibility, you can slowly introduce more changes. Start by measuring outputs versus inputs, setting clear expectations for what good looks like for performance, and leading with trust.

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A few years ago, advanced technologies were the subject of science fiction movies or futurist novels. Artificial intelligence and robotics were something mad scientists worked on in their laboratories. Since then, these technologies have become a part of most people’s daily lives. Most of us use advanced technologies daily, from purchase suggestions on online shopping platforms to smart home assistants.

But what about the workplace? Here, too, the use of advanced technologies is increasing. As a result, advanced technologies are exciting for human resources professionals to help improve workplace safety. In this article, we are taking a closer look at the potential of advanced technologies in the HR field.

**Attracting Top Talent and Selecting the Best Candidates**

Recruitment takes up a large proportion of the human resources workflow. Sifting through cover letters and resumes to identify the best interview candidates, going through the interview process, and choosing the best candidates for a job is time-consuming. In addition, there are other pitfalls when the entire process is left to human HR professionals. For example, even with the most thorough training, humans may introduce bias into the selection process by inadvertently considering the age or gender of applicants. Improving the selection process is where advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), can help make the process safer and equitable and support creating a more diverse team.

Processing and analyzing vast quantities of data is one of the strengths of AI-based tools and platforms. As a result, these platforms assess the information they receive faster and with fewer errors than humans could. For example, HR software can evaluate applications for a vacancy, check candidates’ background information, and deliver a pre-selection to your company’s HR team. In addition, programming technology to consider qualifications and experience rather than personal details minimizes bias at this stage of the recruitment process. It also helps keep applicant data safe. Plus, your HR team saves time by eliminating unqualified and unsuitable candidates right at the start.

**Streamline Onboarding and Train Employees Effectively**

Every new employee requires onboarding and training, whether your business wants to fill a senior executive or entry-level customer service position. In an ideal world, line managers and colleagues could fill that role, but their days are busy already. As a result, onboarding and employee training are in danger of becoming an afterthought. Compromised onboarding and training processes can easily cause workplace safety problems. For example, in a production environment, new hires may need to be aware of potential dangers from equipment or chemicals. Likewise, in a customer service role, new team members need to learn how to protect customer data and prevent breaches.
eLearning applications offer excellent onboarding and training solutions. Think about providing easy access to company policies and standard operating procedures and presenting them in an interactive way that encourages employees to ask and answer questions. Online learning platforms can also deliver training on critical workplace safety measures or specialized equipment. Delivering this type of training does not necessarily replace an induction provided by the new hire’s line manager. However, it can ensure nothing is missed, limiting the likelihood of incidents and potential worker’s compensation cases later. Online-based training solutions make onboarding more efficient and bring new team members up to speed faster and more efficiently. In addition, they provide your HR team with proof of training delivered.

**Alerts for Emergencies**

What are your day-to-day on-site safety measures like? For example, has your business installed a CCTV system, and employees must use passes to access your site? These are all excellent technologies to help keep your assets safe. They do limit unauthorized access. But what about protecting workers from environmental hazards? In many jobs, employee safety is impacted by exposure to noise, dust, and other hazardous substances. It can be challenging to realize when safe limits are exceeded and workers are in unnecessary danger.

Environment, health, and safety (EHS) management technology can fill that gap. For example, cost-effective, easy-to-install sensors can measure dust and noise levels in a facility and warn workers when safe levels are being exceeded. Equipping potentially dangerous machinery with panic buttons is another option for keeping lone workers safe. Your business could also consider automatic programming shutdowns when a piece of equipment overheats or when the machine detects an anomaly in its typical workflow. More recent safety technologies include wearable panic buttons that send alerts discreetly via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi. These solutions allow employees to call for help quickly and effectively.

**Robotics and AI**

Earlier in our article, we touched on the growing use of AI technologies. Robotics offers another solution to increase workplace safety. Anyone working in a production environment understands that robots are far from the scary creatures that movies would make you believe. They have become indispensable in industries such as automotive manufacturing. The World Economic Forum referred to human-robot collaboration as “*the future of manufacturing*” during the coronavirus pandemic. There is no reason to abandon this collaborative path now.

In hazardous environments, AI-powered robots are excellent tools to help complete tasks that could be dangerous for human workers. By delegating those jobs to machines, companies, and their HR teams can minimize the potential for workplace-related injuries or illnesses and their associated costs.

Robotics are also ideal for completing repetitive tasks. While many of those tasks are relatively easy for humans, they can become mundane over time, increasing the potential for errors and even accidents. Using robotics for repetitive, time-consuming work allows human team members to focus on the tasks that require their creative input and increases overall productivity and safety.

**Conclusion**

Advanced technologies like AI, robotics, eLearning, and recruitment software offer human resources professionals ways to make workplaces safer and increase efficiency and productivity. These technologies are not designed to take work away from humans. Instead, they can supplement and augment what humans do while reducing workplace dangers for their colleagues. As technology develops, we will likely see new opportunities emerge for further integrating novel technological solutions.

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**About the Author**

Yasmine Mustafa is the CEO & Co-Founder of ROAR, a technology company dedicated to cultivating safer workplaces. The company’s patented workplace panic button solution provides employees with one press of a button to protect their people, here and now. She can be reached at yasmine@roarforgood.com.

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**References**


WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Wearable technologies enable the continuous monitoring of human physical activities and behaviors and physiological and biochemical parameters during daily life.

Some wearable technology applications are designed to prevent diseases and maintain health, such as weight control and physical activity monitoring. Wearable devices are also used for patient management and disease management.

What are the implications of wearable technologies for human resource management solutions? In the following two articles, the authors explore how wearable technologies can promote well-being, prevent health issues, and reduce healthcare costs at work.
I. Introduction

The work environment has changed significantly due to the development of new technologies like computers and cell phones. As a result of this transformation, job descriptions have evolved drastically, with many professions requiring a significant period of sitting and inactivity. Thus, managing burnout and health problems at work has taken precedence.

By integrating wearable devices and leveraging data science techniques, organizations can gather valuable health-related information from employees, analyze it, and develop strategies to promote well-being and prevent health issues.

This article explores the potential of integrating wearable devices and leveraging data science techniques to reduce healthcare costs at work.

A. Importance of Addressing Burnout and Health Issues in the Workplace

Burnout and health issues are significant challenges in the modern workplace. Burnout among employees may have severe consequences for people, their families, and organizations. To safeguard the well-being of their staff, managers must identify and handle burnout symptoms. According to research, burnout and cardiovascular disease have a strong correlation, underscoring the importance of intervention (Maslach et al., 2021). Workplace programs that promote well-being and avoid burnout increase productivity and work satisfaction (Sianoja et al., 2020). Employers can build a more productive and engaging workplace by addressing these challenges.

B. Overview of Integration of Wearable Technology and data science in Improving Employee Health

Wearable technology, sometimes known as wearables, is a relatively new sector revolutionizing how people live, work, and maintain their health. Smartwatches, fitness trackers, smart gadgets, wearable electronic headsets, wristbands, head-mounted displays, and medical wearables are wearable devices worn on the body. They are designed to collect data on the wearer’s physical activity, health, and vital signs and transmit it to smartphones, tablets, or computers.

Integrating Wearable technology and data science can revolutionize employee health by offering real-time monitoring, insightful data, and customized solutions. By collecting and analyzing real-time health data using machine learning techniques, organizations can tailor interventions, encourage healthy behaviors, and foster a culture of well-being, leading to improved employee health outcomes and overall wellness.

II. How Technology through Wearable Devices Can Help Fight Burnout and Health Issues

Employee productivity, morale, and general well-being can all be negatively impacted by burnout and stress-related health problems. By empowering employees to take proactive steps toward their well-being and enabling them to monitor their stress levels, work-life balance, and physical activity, wearable devices can help combat these issues.
A. Monitoring Stress Levels and Promoting Work-Life Balance

1. Tracking Heart Rate Variability and Detecting Stress Patterns

Wearables with cutting-edge sensors can track heart rate variability (HRV), which measures the variations in the time between heartbeats. Wearable technology can measure stress levels and give workers insight into how they respond to stress by analyzing HRV patterns.

2. Providing Reminders for Breaks and Relaxation Exercises

Utilizing real-time data from wearable devices, machine learning algorithms (such as natural language processing techniques) can provide customized notifications during the workday to encourage individuals to take breaks and practice relaxing techniques. These employee-tailored reminders can encourage them to get up from their workstations, move about, practice mindfulness, and recharge, which lowers the likelihood of burnout.

B. Monitoring Steps, Calories Burned, and Sedentary Behavior

Wearable devices integrated with artificial intelligence (AI) can monitor inactive behavior, daily steps, and calories burnt. In addition, AI can also further recommend food choices and types of exercises for employees to meet their daily fitness goals.

Employees can become aware of their activity levels and work to fulfill prescribed levels by receiving real-time feedback (Gupta et al., 2021).

III. How Wearable Devices Aid in Health Education to Empower a Positive Lifestyle in Workers

Wearable technology is essential in educating employees about their health and enabling them to live healthy lives. Integrating these devices with data science can give data-driven feedback and individualized health insights. Additionally, wearable technology has social engagement and gamification elements that encourage workers to establish objectives, get incentives, and compete with coworkers, creating a positive work atmosphere.

A. Personalized Health Insights and Data-Driven Feedback

1. Analyzing Sleep Patterns and Suggesting Improvements

Wearable devices with data science-based sleep-tracking capabilities can give users precise insights about their sleep habits, including duration, quality, and sleep stages (Gupta et al., 2021). By examining this data, employees may spot areas for development and take well-informed actions to enhance their sleep hygiene, improving their general health and well-being.

2. Tracking Nutrition and Providing Dietary Recommendations

Some wearable technology lets users record their dietary intake and monitor nutritional data. Wearables can offer individualized suggestions for a balanced diet, portion control, and better food options by tracking eating patterns and analyzing nutritional data using time series forecasting methods. This insightful input makes employees better equipped to change their eating habits.

B. Gamification and Social Engagement for Healthy Habits

Devices focused on encouraging workers to adopt healthy behaviors; wearable devices frequently include gamification aspects like goal setting, prizes, and challenges (Gupta et al., 2021). Employees are encouraged to participate in physical exercise, uphold good habits, and compete with their coworkers by earning badges, points, or virtual incentives for reaching goals, creating a pleasant and encouraging work atmosphere. This social component promotes a sense of community, cooperation, and mutual aid, enhancing overall well-being and motivation.

IV. The Inclusion of Wearable Devices in Health Plans to Reduce Healthcare Costs

Incorporating wearable devices into employee health plans can lead to significant cost savings for employers and employees.

A. Early Detection and Prevention of Health Issues

1. Detecting Irregular Heart Rhythms and Potential Cardiovascular Problems
Wearables with integrated electrocardiogram (ECG) and artificial intelligence capabilities can identify abnormal heart rhythms, such as atrial fibrillation, which may indicate underlying cardiovascular diseases (Chatterjee et al., 2022). Early identification permits prompt action, halting the development of potentially significant health problems and lowering the expense of healthcare connected with cutting-edge therapies.

2. Monitoring Blood Pressure and Providing Proactive Interventions

Certain wearables come with blood pressure monitoring capabilities that let users keep track of their readings regularly (DePina et al., 2021). Employees can effectively manage hypertension by identifying aberrant patterns in blood pressure and seeking medical assistance or making lifestyle modifications. This preventative strategy can improve health outcomes and reduce the need for expensive medical interventions.

B. Enhanced Data for Better Healthcare Decision-Making

1. More Accurate Diagnoses and Treatment by Healthcare Providers

Applying machine learning algorithms to data obtained from wearable devices (such as activity levels, sleep patterns, and vital signs) along with patients’ previous electronic health records can enable Healthcare professionals to make more precise diagnoses and individualized treatment programs (Chatterjee et al., 2022). This data improves the accuracy and efficacy of healthcare interventions, potentially lowering costs related to misdiagnoses or ineffective treatments.

2. Enabling Remote Patient Monitoring and Reducing Hospital Visits

Wearable devices with remote monitoring capabilities enable healthcare practitioners to monitor and track patients’ health problems remotely (DePina et al., 2021). This practice saves money for individuals and healthcare systems by reducing the need for frequent hospital visits, enhancing access to care, and optimizing resource allocation.

V. Conclusion

The above article argued how using data science-enabled wearable devices in the workplace represents a forward-thinking approach that benefits employees and organizations. These devices help workers better manage stress, monitor their fitness levels, and choose healthy lifestyles. In addition, the working environment is improved through gamification and social engagement, which promote productive behaviors, goal setting, rewards, and connections among coworkers. Such an approach also enables enhanced healthcare decision-making, cost savings, and improved employee well-being. The desirable outcome is that the company’s bottom line benefits from increased productivity, job satisfaction, and employee retention.

Endnotes


About the Author

Shashank Agarwal is an analytics expert who has channeled his expertise within the pharmaceutical space over the years. He has worked with several Fortune 500 healthcare companies such as CVS Health, AbbVie, and IQVIA. His experience cuts across various areas in market access, brand analytics, predictive modeling, launch strategy, and multi-channel marketing. He has led multiple end-to-end implementations to achieve substantial cost savings and optimize business processes. Additionally, he holds a Master of Science in Engineering Management from Johns Hopkins University. He can be reached at shashanka757@gmail.com.
This article explores the potential of wearable devices in reducing healthcare costs and improving patient outcomes. It examines the advantages of including wearable technology as covered benefits in health plans, with support from relevant research results, case studies, and statistical data. Wearable technology significantly reduces healthcare costs through real-time data collection, promotion of preventive care, and improved patient involvement. Rising healthcare costs pose a significant challenge for consumers and the healthcare industry calling for innovative approaches to address cost containment while improving patient outcomes. Wearable devices have emerged as a promising solution to achieve these dual objectives. The potential cost-savings offered by wearable technology ultimately will foster the development of a more resilient and effective healthcare system and improved health practices by all individuals.

Wearable devices are electronic devices worn on the body as personal accessories or clothing. These devices collect and transmit data about various aspects of an individual’s health and physical activity. This active data transmission typically incorporates sensors, processors, and wireless connectivity to capture and transmit data to other devices or platforms for analysis and interpretation without any significant user actions. This article summarizes cost savings and fitness benefits impacting individuals, healthcare organizations, and society.

**Benefits of Wearable Devices in Healthcare**

**Remote Monitoring and Real-Time Data Collection**

Wearable technology allows continuous remote monitoring of vital signs, physical activity, sleep habits, and other health-related

### Various Smart Wearable Devices and their applications

**Measurement**

- Step Count
- Impact Force
- Speed Sedentary Time
- Exercise
- Stair Count
- Distance Traveled
- Calories burned estimates
- Heart Rate
- BP
- Cardiac output
- Stroke volume
- Pulse-based rhythm detection,
- Sleep and its stage
- Single-lead and multi-lead ECG,
- Continuous ECG monitoring
- Interval measurement,
- Arrhythmia detection

**Clinical Application**

- Risk Prediction in healthy individuals and those with established CVD
- Hypertension screening and management
- Cardiac inter-rehabilitation
- Arrhythmia screening and diagnosis
- Acute coronary syndrome diagnosis
- Diagnosis of electrolyte abnormalities such as hyperkalemia
- Long QT-C diagnosis
- Heart failure management
- Medication titration such as B-blockers
- Risk assessment in healthy individuals and those with established CVD
- Physical activity behavioral interventions in primary and secondary prevention
- Heart-failure management
data. Users can utilize devices that passively gather various health metrics and identify potential interventions. Examples include fitness trackers, smartwatches, and health sensors. Healthcare professionals can now spot potential health risks early, take quick action, and save expensive hospital stays thanks to real-time data collection.

Promoting Preventive Care

Wearable technology encourages people to lead healthier lifestyles and take charge of their health, which promotes preventive care. Wearable technology encourages increased physical activity, better sleep patterns, and better self-management of chronic illnesses by tracking daily activity levels, sleep quality, and heart rate, ultimately lowering the need for costly medical interventions. Research published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research suggests that wearable health monitoring and preventative care technology might result in yearly per-person savings of $500 to $1,000.

Cost Reduction through Wearable Device Implementation

Reduction in Hospital Readmissions

A study published in Nature (2021) provided this insight, “Smart wearable devices in cardiovascular care demonstrated that the use of wearable devices for remote patient monitoring resulted in a 43% lower likelihood of hospital readmission among patients with type I MI (coronary artery disease).” The continuous fitness monitoring and timely health interventions facilitated by wearable devices helped prevent complications and minimize the need for hospitalization, leading to substantial cost savings of $6,000 per patient.

Improved Medication Adherence

Research by Patel et al. (2019) demonstrated that wearable devices providing medication reminders and adherence tracking capabilities improved medication utilization rates among patients with chronic conditions. Wearable technology can prevent illness exacerbations and lower healthcare consumption, which lowers the cost of hospital stays and ER visits. Reminders and activity trackers ensure that medication usage consistency promotes overall health impacts.

Enhanced Chronic Disease Management

Wearables provide real-time patient-centered health data, which can help inform self-management decision-making. According to a study, using wearable technology to manage chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension led to better health outcomes and lower medical expenses. Constant monitoring of vital signs, activity levels, and other pertinent health data enabled early diagnosis of irregularities and prompt interventions, improving illness management and reducing dependency on expensive medical interventions.

Personalized Treatment and Care

Tyler’s (2020) research brought attention to the potential of wearable technology to deliver individualized care and treatment. Healthcare professionals can learn more about patients’ health statuses, spot patterns, and modify treatment regimens by combining wearable device data with electronic health records and using advanced analytics. This individualized strategy can avoid pointless treatments, maximize healthcare resources, and lower healthcare expenses while identifying patterns and methodologies with broad benefits.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Studies have shown that wearable devices that promote preventive care through activity tracking and health monitoring can lead to significant cost savings. A research study by Rovniak et al. (2016) demonstrated that individuals who consistently used wearable devices to track their physical activity and receive personalized feedback had lower healthcare costs than those who did not use such devices. The preventive measures enabled by wearable devices help individuals maintain healthier lifestyles, reducing the incidence of chronic diseases and associated healthcare expenses.

Conclusion

Wearable technology has the potential to lower healthcare expenditures while also enhancing patient outcomes significantly. Wearable technologies enable people to actively participate in their health management, improving health by collecting real-time data, supporting preventive care, and increasing patient involvement.
Implementing and Supporting Mental Health Benefits in the Workplace

By Siddharth Sharma, JP Morgan Chase

Introduction
The role of mental health in our everyday life is of great importance, especially in the workplace. Organizations increasingly acknowledge the significance of mental health issues among their employees and are taking active steps toward introducing mental health benefits as part of their corporate policy. This move towards mental health initiatives in the workplace creates a healthier work environment and contributes to enhanced productivity and job satisfaction. This article will delve into the rewards of having mental health provisions in the workplace, discuss critical elements of a successful program, and suggest effective strategies and the role of HR information systems for execution.

Comprehending the Significance of Mental Health at Work

• Mental Health: Its Effect on Employee Morale and Output
Mental health issues can gravely affect employees' morale and performance at work. Workers grappling with such challenges are prone to burnout, frequent absences, and diminished job satisfaction. Furthermore, these mental health difficulties can also precipitate physical health issues, reducing productivity and escalating attrition rates.

• Rewards for Instituting Mental Health Support Programs
Instituting mental health support initiatives in the workplace presents a multitude of advantages. It significantly boosts the mental health and overall wellness of employees. Such programs also increase productivity and job contentment while curbing absenteeism and employee turnover. Additionally, they are pivotal in enhancing a company's reputation and brand image as a caring employer. Significantly, these programs can also reduce healthcare costs and fewer disability claims, making them a beneficial investment for businesses.

Essential Ingredients of a Prosperous Workplace Mental Health Scheme

• Construction of a Mental Health Policy
A successful mental health program hinges on a robust and detailed mental health policy. This policy should clearly articulate the organization’s commitment to mental health support. It should also outline the program’s specific goals and objectives and designate the roles and responsibilities involved in the program’s implementation. Moreover, this policy must address and resolve confidentiality and privacy issues, ensuring all participants’ trust and comfort.

• Advocacy of Mental Health Awareness
The effectiveness of a mental health program relies heavily on cultivating an environment of mental health literacy within the organization. This enhanced
literacy can be accomplished by conducting training and workshops for all staff, distributing educational materials related to mental health, arranging events that raise mental health awareness, and encouraging open conversations about mental health. A well-informed workforce is a significant first step toward a successful mental health program.

• **Provision of Access to Mental Health Resources**

Providing a range of mental health resources is essential for employee well-being. Potential resources should encompass Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that provide:
- confidential counseling and support,
- accessible and available mental health experts for advice and referrals, and
- online resources like self-help tools and educational materials.

In addition, accommodations, such as flexible work hours to cater to mental health needs, are significant in fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment.

• **Fostering of Self-Care and Resilience**

Promoting self-care and resilience plays a vital role in preserving employee mental health. This self-health focus entails fostering a culture that values breaks and work-life balance, providing resources and workshops for stress management, and enabling access to wellness initiatives. Such programs, including mindfulness training, yoga, and meditation, empower employees to manage their well-being proactively and bolster resilience.

• **Creation of a Supportive Work Atmosphere**

A conducive work environment is instrumental in fostering employee mental health. Organizations should nurture a culture of empathy and understanding to establish such an environment. They should implement policies that promote work-life balance, facilitate open communication, and support camaraderie among team members. Additionally, equipping managers with training to identify and address mental health concerns can further contribute to creating a mentally healthy workplace.

**Tactics for Successful Execution**

• **Gaining Leadership's Approval**

The execution of a mental health program necessitates the endorsement of top leadership. Leadership endorsement is secured by presenting a persuasive business argument for the inclusion of mental health support programs, demonstrating the potential return on investment these initiatives can yield, and emphasizing the significance of mental health in influencing the general well-being of the employees. This strategic approach ensures that leaders understand the value and benefits of mental health initiatives.

• **Setting Up a Mental Health Committee**

Establishing a mental health committee can significantly assist in managing the program. This team, composed of employees from various hierarchical levels and departments who are enthusiastic about mental health, can be charged with responsibilities like monitoring the implementation and assessment of the mental health program, coordinating mental health training and awareness activities, and acting as an intermediary between employees and management on issues related to mental health.

• **Routine Evaluation and Enhancement**

Regular evaluations are pivotal to ensure the success of a mental health program and to make requisite enhancements. These evaluations can take various forms, including employee surveys to assess mental health requirements and program effectiveness, a frequent review of program results such as service utilization, staff satisfaction, and effects on productivity and turnover rates. Furthermore, soliciting feedback from employees and stakeholders can help identify specific areas that require improvement.
Role of HR Information Systems in Workplace Mental Health

Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) can integrate technology solutions to enhance user experience and support employee mental health. Here are several ways this can be accomplished:

- **Digitalization of EAPs:** Digital platforms for Employee Assistance Programs should be incorporated into the HRIS. HRIS-embedded EAP options allow employees to access mental health resources and counseling services easily.
- **Teletherapy Services:** HRIS can provide links to approved teletherapy and virtual counseling services, making it easier for employees to seek professional help.
- **Mental Health Apps:** HRIS can recommend and provide access to various mental health apps that offer stress management, mindfulness, and more resources.
- **AI-Based Support:** AI chatbots can be incorporated into the HRIS, providing employees with immediate, anonymous mental health support at any hour.
- **Wellness Programs:** HRIS can include features that promote overall well-being, such as access to online fitness programs, mindfulness training, and other wellness resources.

**Conclusion**

Endorsing and prioritizing mental health within the workplace mutually benefits employers and their employees. It aids in enhancing the individual well-being of the workforce, ensuring that employees feel supported, understood, and able to perform at their best. Simultaneously, it contributes to a healthier, more inclusive, and compassionate organization. The overall organizational health is significantly boosted, characterized by improved productivity, lower absenteeism, and higher job satisfaction, cultivating an environment conducive to growth and innovation. Businesses can establish a nurturing and supportive workplace culture by implementing the right strategies and taking a proactive approach toward mental health. The strategic integration of technology through HR Information Systems (HRIS) further augments the program’s effectiveness, making mental health support readily accessible to employees. This culture should not only prioritize mental health but also foster a sense of respect for these issues, thus ensuring that employees feel valued and cared for. By doing so, organizations create a happier workforce and a more efficient and sustainable business model.

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.
Introduction
Every organization has an organizational structure where the manager leads a group of employees. The manager/leader is supposed to give feedback to each team member and decide on the bonus/annual increase or decrease. Few companies have “360-degree” feedback mechanisms, but almost all have one-way feedback from managers to team members. Feedback is expected to impact the bonus (based on the role and company, some have quarterly, and some are annual) and a yearly pay increase. First, feedback is critical for employees as it impacts the money they take home, but most importantly, it also affects their professional life and personal brand. Therefore, getting the correct feedback is crucial for an employee. However, most importantly, performance-based input at the earliest possible will help employees to correct their mistakes and fine-tune their performance and self-image in the professional environment.

Challenges with Current Feedback Mechanisms
Giving accurate feedback without bias is very challenging for a human being. Knowing the importance of feedback, companies organize all possible training for their managers on how to give feedback, what to talk about in the discussion, what not to talk about, and how to avoid bias. The other big issue in feedback is how long it takes to get the feedback. While some companies recommend that managers provide active and instant feedback, it can be very challenging for managers to communicate with team members as they are busy managing their daily professional/personal life. Therefore, there needs to be a process to assist them in giving feedback on an active occurring basis (as it is impossible). This ambitious challenge is the topic this article addresses; given the popularity of language models and AI, is it possible to automate the feedback mechanism so people can get feedback right and improve their brand value while saving time?

Large Language Models
Large language models (LLMs) are foundation models that utilize deep learning (Advanced Machine learning). Large language models are pre-trained on a vast amount of data to support learning the complexity and linkages of language. Using techniques such as:
• Fine-tuning
• In-context learning
• Zero-/one-/few-shot learning
These models can be adapted for downstream (specific) tasks (see Figure 1).
In simple terms, Large Language models are complex machine learning models trained using vast amounts of data to answer any possible question. ChatGPT is an extensive language model version, as is Bard from Google. Though developing a good model for the use case is essential, relevant data plays a critical role in its performance.

**What Kind of Data We Have**

With modern data collection tools, we have a lot of sophisticated tools to collect data. Some data examples are: When employees enter the office, when they leave the office, how many times they leave the building and how fast they walk in the corridor, how many hours employees spend inside the office, how many meetings they attend, and their level of participation in discussions. These are some basic ones, but many can be added to the list based on the company infrastructure.

Since most roles are virtual post-covid, we can also tailor the data collection method for virtual employees. For example, basic things such as; active screen time, number of characters typed by employees, keyboard typing speed, distraction (opening different screens and not spending time on a particular task), tone of responses in emails, and emotions they use in the conversation, can all be quantified and gathered.

A significant additional issue in data collection/storage is how we correlate the data and attribute it to a particular person. Does this type of data collection jeopardize user privacy in an era where no one wants to lose their privacy?

**User Privacy**

Recently, there has been much research on data privacy and security. Using best-in-class storage methods, we can assure employees that the chance of data getting leaked is nil. But beyond that, we can also anonymize the data. That way, user identification is protected. Furthermore, we can aggregate the data for common feedback, i.e., team feedback, so nothing is attached to the user. Additionally, we need to publish strict rules that the data has to be used only for input and employee improvement in the workplace.

**Daily Feedback**

Given that we have many data and large language models (LLM, such as ChatGPT) that can be deployed with minimal cost, we can use the LLMs to give timely daily feedback. So, we collect the data daily and feed it into the model. Then, the next day, when an employee starts their work, we can initiate feedback from LLM on the screen. This feedback can be as simple as the top 3 things that went well and a list of things to improve. This feedback helps employees understand their impact on the company and helps them visualize their future potential. We can also share the feedback with managers (Figure 2) so they know the content and context of employee feedback and set the stage for success.

**Loop the Feedback and Improvement to the Annual Review**

During annual reviews, managers can actively review how the employee corrected the mistakes and build on positive feedback. The advantage of this method is that employees know what they will hear in the annual review. Also, the chances of managers introducing bias in the review process are almost nil. Managers can also celebrate the quick wins and improvements in the team, which can ultimately boost morale.

**Conclusion**

With regular feedback, we are addressing one of the significant challenges in resource retention. We give feedback to employees, which will positively impact both the employee and the workplace. It also helps to retain top talent and avoid bias in the feedback. For managers, this feedback tool saves managers a lot of time and resources while improving the quality of individual feedback sessions. Finally, these tools enhance feedback frequency without compromising privacy so all parties benefit.
Are you an HR professional who finds themselves under pressure to attract and retain top talent amid ongoing labor shortages? If so, you are not alone.

Even as the job markets are cooling off somewhat, many businesses urgently need to continuously acquire and retain the right people to help the organization facilitate its post-pandemic growth efforts. While talent retention is as much a science as an art, HR and business leaders must delve deeply into the intricate dynamics of employee turnover. Why do people choose to leave? Answering this question entails understanding the psychological factors that influence individuals’ decisions to either stay or go, coupled with the daily adoption of data-informed decision-making practices. Insights derived from people analytics are invaluable and equip them with the tools to make educated interpretations and take effective action, empowering them to excel in their roles.

In this article, we aim to share research and science-based facts behind the phenomenon of why some employees leave organizations voluntarily, why turnover can be contagious for others on the team, and how HR professionals can utilize both active and passive listening tools to enhance their ability to create practical and data-based strategies for talent retention.

**Behind the Curtains: Voluntary Employee Turnover**

Even one of the most fundamental metrics provided by people analytics, the resignation rate of an organization, can be a valuable starting point for the exploration of if an organization may experience an undesirable talent drain. Tracked over time and monitored regularly, a company’s resignation rate provides a sense of if employees decide to call it quits. Suppose this number is above the expected natural turnover rate standard for doing business. In that case, HR professionals can double-click further into the Who and Where the talent drain occurs. They can further compare their organization’s rate to external benchmarks of organizations in similar industries or organizational sizes and put their rate into context.

Double-clicking down on the demographic and business-related information of employees who left the organization can then be supplemented with trends about the resignation rate before homing in further on data gathered from active and passive listening methods that can be employed. While ‘active listening’ refers to ways in which employees are asked directly about their experience at the organization, for example, through engagement and pulse surveys or exit surveys and interviews, ‘passive listening’ methods gather information about employee’s everyday work experience by just observing their collaboration patterns, or well-being indicators for example. Over time, a fuller picture may emerge about whether, where, and why employee turnover may be or become an issue for the organization.

**Turnover can be Contagious.**

Another related, underestimated factor in understanding voluntary employee turnover is how social relationships between employees influence their propensity to stay or leave the organization. An experimental study
using the Visier Community Data of more than 17 million employee records revealed a phenomenon: Sometimes, people leave because others on their team have left the organization.²

This effect which is termed “turnover contagion,” was observed both in the case of employee resignations, as well as terminations: most team members quit at higher rates in the following 45-70 days after the first person left, but the risk persists for 135 days (see chart).

People working together in smaller teams were more prone to follow their peers out the door than those in larger teams: the risk for turnover contagion for employees working in teams sized between two to ten members lies between 12%-25%, compared to larger teams where there is an increased risk of further resignations of between 7%-8%. And this makes sense: smaller teams typically facilitate closer working relationships between employees than larger teams. The remaining peers may have to pick up more work until a replacement is found, as work processes in smaller teams may be more intertwined.

The Psychology Behind Turnover Contagion

Turnover contagion reveals a deeply psychological phenomenon that points to the human social connection between employees but also what happens to peers when one of their colleagues leaves. A glance at psychology tells us some of the reasons why people leave and why this effect is more substantial when a teammate quits their job:

People copy each other's behavior. Social Learning Theory³ shows us how humans mimic others' behavior, especially when they can see that their peers got some form of reward for their actions. If a peer moves jobs, gets paid more, receives more development, and is happier, they look to do the same.

People struggle with change. Neuropsychological research tells us that part of our brain, the amygdala, interprets change as a threat and releases the hormones for fear, fight, or flight. Sometimes, people leave because the new situation created by their peer’s resignation creates a heightened sense of uncertainty that feels uncomfortable and frustrating. Group Think can also come into play when an individual starts questioning their own assessment of job security risk due to someone else deciding to leave before they must.

People feel betrayed. Psychological contract theory tells us that if employees feel the collegial sense of “we are in this together” has been shattered by their peer’s departure, they can question whether they should stay on the job. A violation (or breach) of the psychological contract by the employer – caused by terminations, or layoffs, for example - can have sudden and powerful consequences for the remaining employees, negatively affect job satisfaction, commitment, and performance, and increase turnover intentions.

People develop a fear of missing out. Social comparison theory explains how people process information about how others behave or communicate and what it means for them. “Fear Of Missing Out,” commonly referred to as FOMO, can be triggered by a peer resignation and make employees question their place in the organization. By comparing their peer’s next new job opportunity, which they resign for, to their own, they wonder if they too could benefit from another company’s advancement opportunities or the prospect of a higher salary.

Active and Passive Listening to Tackle Voluntary Turnover

At first sight, voluntary turnover can seem like an unsurmountable obstacle: Employees seem to resign for a whole host of reasons, many seemingly random and deeply personal, while others may be clearly understood but hard to change. And
while the turnover contagion effect seems to complicate things further, it teaches us a valuable lesson: every resignation event should trigger a series of immediate actions that could help HR and business leaders mitigate the risk of further resignations on the team.

But with the help of a growing body of research and technological advancement, HR leaders can actively produce information about the remaining team members and learn how likely it is for others to leave with the help of so-called “risk of exit profiles” learn how likely it is for others to leave. By learning about some of the most common reasons or commonalities of people who resigned from their jobs at the organization in the past, they can create strategies for soft-touch approaches to keep peers left behind from also leaving after a colleague’s resignation.

For example, people analytics and HR leaders at Pitney Bowes dug into the turnover issue. They found that amid a national truck driver shortage, this population was at the highest risk of leaving. By utilizing the insights gathered from people analytics, the company could reduce turnover among truck drivers by a few percentage points and achieve higher retention while saving millions of dollars!

To do that, HR teams need reliable data. The good news is that there are various known strategies using an organization’s people analytics capabilities to begin understanding typical reasons for turnover (this is not an exhaustive list).

1. **Look at Your People Data.**

Based on historical data about similarities between employee populations who left, the driving forces behind resignation rates can provide a granular understanding of reasons for quitting. The so-called “Drivers Chart” (screenshot) presents past employee resignations’ most important contributing factors.

Negatively correlated factors (left in green) and positively correlated factors (right in blue) show which groups or employee attributes are responsible for the resignation rate in an organization. The example shown in the drivers’ charts indicates that resignation rates are driven by low tenure, a lack of pay change, and males working as contractors. Such information zooms in on specific organizational populations and helps HR and business leaders define a more targeted retention strategy around this employee population if desired.

2. **Actively listen to employees.**

Employee surveys can help gauge employee sentiment and engagement and get a continuous sense of people’s satisfaction with the company, its culture, or its role. Lower engagement scores, and changing patterns in these scores, especially if they vary from one business unit to the next, can indicate resignation risks or perhaps even help identify “quiet quitters” - employees who are considered unmotivated workers who are disengaged and only work the bare minimum.

Organizations have been asking employees what they think and feel for decades, and there is value in asking openly for people’s opinions. However, survey results should always supplement, not replace, fact-based data based on historical data or risk of exit models.
infrequently, they present a lagging indicator that could be less valuable.

3. Utilize passive listening tools.

In addition to active listening methods, new technologies offer a less biased and time-intensive way for companies to stay abreast of the day-to-day experience of their workers. Passive listening, or gathering passive feedback, involves measuring work patterns within data collected through digital collaboration and communication tools.

For example, with passive listening tools, workers can monitor their collaboration patterns, including peer feedback gathered from micro-surveys with their closest collaborators, and assess their own well-being and burnout risks based on digital day length (when does the employee perform their first and last outgoing digital activity each day) communication quality with others and their everyday workday routine.

Through passive listening, HR leaders clearly understand how work is performed in real-time and how collaboration is happening across the organization. Employees can access rich and personalized insights to help them maximize their contributions, improve collaboration, and assess their well-being and burnout risks. By analyzing computer usage, communication quality with others, and everyday work routines, employees can better understand their strengths and weaknesses, improving job satisfaction, higher-performing teams, and enhanced productivity. Overall, passive listening is an effective and efficient way for organizations to gain valuable insights into their workforce while minimizing bias and disruption to employees’ day-to-day work.

Analyzed in combination with people data as described above, passive feedback collected during everyday work activities can provide continuous insights for everyone and help detect patterns in employee behavior related to resignation rates. As with any data point about a person, organizations need to implement passive listening tools with the utmost respect toward their employees’ rights for privacy and establish clear rules around the Why of using passive listening tools. The purpose of gathering data and insights about workers’ experience should be to improve workflows, well-being scores, collaboration efforts, or exit risk mitigation strategies, thereby strengthening, not weakening, trust in the company’s talent strategy. Technology is just a tool to provide valuable insights. Still, it is up to the leaders in organizations to decide how the insights gathered can be helpful to the workforce and the business.

HR can proactively use data for employee retention.

The insights gathered from Visier’s research into the phenomenon of turnover contagion further highlight the importance of active and passive listening to always have an eye on the pulse of the employee experience. Employees who quit their jobs almost always leave behind a vacuum that their peers could be quick to fill with their own resignation intentions.

On the bright side, people analytics technologies have come a long way to help address this issue and enable HR and business leaders to gather a comprehensive array of data points that can tell a meaningful and helpful story about why people leave the company or return.
Using such technologies gives HR leaders an excellent opportunity to act, not just react. As the discipline of people analytics becomes the engine behind successful HR practices and programs, HR can own talent retention strategies based on data and facts. A few recommendations for HR leaders to do so are:

1. **Consider data your guide, not the holy grail.** Every data point requires more information.

2. **Time is your friend.** You will learn to understand turnover prediction accuracy by continuously looking forwards and back.

3. **Be proactive.** Use resignations as triggers to respond with a “soft touch” approach, such as career progression initiatives.

4. **Own the process.** Ask your people analytics team for regular risk of exit analyses. Consider implementing differentiated contact and retention strategies for key employees with high resignation risk.

Note from the authors: Many thanks to Morgan Turnipseed for his invaluable contributions to the practitioner recommendations in this article.

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Endnotes
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About the Authors
Andrea Derler, a previous human capital analyst and organizational researcher, brings a research, science, and consulting background to her role. As Visier’s Principal, Research and Customer Value, Andrea collaborates with various external and internal stakeholders to help produce data-based and practical insights based on people analytics. Andrea’s research encompasses a variety of topics, including people analytics, leadership strategy and development, talent and performance management, DEI, organizational change and transformation, and organizational growth mindset. Her work is widely publicized in the U.S. and Europe, and her contributions have appeared in *Harvard Business Review, Forbes, Chief Learning Officer, FastCompany, Wall Street Journal CMO, Deloitte Review, FORMAT, the Leadership & Organizational Development Journal*, and more. She can be reached at andrea.derler@visier.com.

Peter Burnham, BSc, MSc, C.Psychol, AfBPS is a Chartered Psychologist and an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society (BPS). He is a Division of Occupational Psychology member and a BPS Level A and B qualified trainer. He has been involved in the design of surveys and psychometrics for over 22 years. Peter was previously the Lead Occupational Psychologist at Sainsbury’s and has worked as a consultant with more than 20 percent of the FTSE 100 and many more non-listed and international clients. At one stage, approximately 10 percent of the working population of the UK was going through a psychometric survey each year that either Peter or his team had designed. He can be reached at peterburnham@peopleytics.com.
Chance, Choice, or Craft: How HR is Reconstructing their Careers in the Modern World of Work

By Dr. Dieter Veldsman and Marna Van der Merwe, Academy to Innovate HR

Introduction

HR jobs are projected to grow by 10% by 2030.¹ Since the Covid-19 pandemic, HR job postings have increased 87%.² In addition, with the rise of new roles and responsibilities in HR, such as digital, analytics, and well-being, we see more non-traditional HR career paths and opportunities arise.

Unfortunately, we also see that most HR professionals have had limited exposure to new ways that HR careers are evolving. This article provides a brief overview of how HR careers are evolving in line with the changing world of work. We also share our research based on a digital interactive HR Career Map that we developed to expose HR professionals to new emerging career patterns. Finally, we discuss five emerging HR career patterns and share practical user stories aligned to each pattern.

The Changing Nature of Careers

The past decade has significantly shifted what people want from work.³ Movements such as the “anti-work movement,”⁴ the “lying flat movement,”⁵ and a call for “decent work”⁶ all point toward the changing expectations that individuals have of employers and work. This attitude change has translated into the world of careers, with a significant shift evident in how career stages are perceived.⁷

Traditionally, we saw individuals entering the workforce with a mindset that “any job is a good job.” Once we had built some initial skills, the need to further our careers, build wealth, and broaden our responsibilities became the primary driver of our career choices. During the latter part of our careers, contributing towards a legacy became a key priority. This legacy aspiration often translated into how individuals reflected on the meaning that work brought to their lives. Meaningful impact desire was evident with individuals in their late-stage careers engaging in mentoring and coaching others or pursuing new opportunities more aligned to a personal journey of meaning.

This traditional timing is no longer the case.

Today we find individuals already asking questions regarding meaning during the early stage of their careers. Early-stage careers today are characterized by individuals trying to turn what gives them meaning into an activity they can use to earn a living. Beyond these early stages, individuals then focus on transferring the learned skills into other domains to increase their earning potential and access different opportunities that fit their work-life philosophy. We are also finding that towards the latter stages of these careers, individuals still focus on wanting to give back to others in the form of legacy, yet this is done by reflecting on the meaning that

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¹ L. F. ² L. F. ³ L. F. ⁴ L. F. ⁵ L. F. ⁶ L. F. ⁷ L. F.
work has brought to them in the context of their work and life and moves beyond only transferring professional skills.

Given these changes in career motivations and drivers, we set out to better understand the current reality of HR careers. Our initial insights pointed to two key challenges:

1. Some HR professionals only ended up in HR by chance rather than as a conscious choice. The implication was that their knowledge of possible opportunities in the field was limited to the environments they found themselves in. If I did not work in an organization that had moved beyond only employing generalists and recruiters, my belief in what an HR career would entail was limited to those prospects;

2. HR professionals needed more data and visibility of career patterns that could be explored across various contexts and environments.

Based on these two challenges, we developed the HR Career Map as an exploratory tool for HR professionals to see how careers could develop in HR. The map was created by using HR work architecture data from various organizations and publicly available databases, reviewing data available in terms of preceding and proceeding progression opportunities, and evaluating career stories against the map to test feasibility.

To date, N=6552 HR professionals have explored 10,632 paths, and the map has undergone three iterations based on user feedback on new emerging opportunities within the market.

Based on these insights, we have identified five emerging HR career patterns which we discuss below.

The Emerging HR Career Patterns

A career pattern can be described as the collection of experiences an individual engages in over an extended period of their working life. These experiences relate to roles, opportunities, occupations, projects, and/or work assignments.

We have identified five distinct career patterns that are emerging within HR. We first discuss the traditional linear career pattern, which still exists, even though it is becoming less prevalent, before moving towards new emerging patterns.

Pattern 1: Traditional linear paths

This pattern shows a steady progression of roles aligned to a specific domain, and movements are made vertically. These movements are aligned with seniority, an increase in status, and responsibility. Career movements can be in one organization or across multiple organizations throughout the career journey.

Mary started her career as an HR Consultant before moving to an HR Business Partner role. Next, she became a Senior Business Partner, increasing her portfolio of responsibilities before joining the Global HR team and being responsible for a region as the strategic HR partner.

Mary continued to progress in seniority, and at the end of her career, she was the HR Director responsible for a regional business.

Pattern 2: Within HR, cross-discipline

In this pattern, individuals move between disciplines within the HR job family. These moves were based on developing skills, exposure to new areas, and available opportunities within those areas to gain more exposure. Therefore, this career pattern is closely linked to applying transferable skills within different environments to unlock new opportunities.
Pattern 3: In and out of HR
This pattern describes movements in and out of HR at different stages of the career. These moves were driven mainly by opportunities to apply transferable skills and knowledge across different settings and to reach different outcomes.

Jamal joined the HR team as an OD Administrator. An opportunity became available to work with the broader generalist HR team, and he moved to the HR coordinator role. He has always enjoyed data, and after doing a few short courses in data management, he joined the HR Technology team as an HRIS Analyst.

Jamal was asked to lead a project team to implement a new HR Technology solution and eventually moved into an HR Operations and Systems role.

Abhi started his career as a call center agent directly after school. Given his product knowledge, he applied for a role as a Training Facilitator in HR tasked with training new joiners on the product suite. He continued to develop within Learning and Development but moved back into Operations as a Regional Manager of the outbound call center.

Later in his career, he returned to HR, and by applying his business knowledge, he became part of the HR Operations Leadership team.

Pattern 4: The Squiggly Career
The squiggly career, a term coined by Tupper and Ellis (2020), refers to seemingly non-linear movements driven by interests, opportunities, and individual ambitions. Again, there is no clear vertical or horizontal pattern, yet a set theme runs through all the career choices for the individual.

Abhi started his career as a call center agent directly after school. Given his product knowledge, he applied for a role as a Training Facilitator in HR tasked with training new joiners on the product suite. He continued to develop within Learning and Development but moved back into Operations as a Regional Manager of the outbound call center.

Later in his career, he returned to HR, and by applying his business knowledge, he became part of the HR Operations Leadership team.

Pattern 5: The Skills-Driven Pattern
The last pattern is constructing a career around a specific skill to obtain more in-depth knowledge, exposure, and responsibility within a particular skill set. Individuals in this career love the “science” or “technical” aspects of what they do and often move into similar roles in other industries or environments.

Laura studied labor law and started her career as a Labor Relations Expert. She has grown by taking on more complex and high-profile cases. She has moved industries a few times to gain exposure to different aspects of labor law, and over time she has also furthered her studies and qualifications in this domain.

Where do we go from here?
Given our research, HR professionals tend to manage their careers in one of three ways:

1. **Chance** = having careers happen to them and opportunities not being actively sought out and coming across them as and when
2. **Choice** = choosing to actively seek opportunities that become available and aligned with ambitions and goals
3. **Craft** = actively taking ownership of creating opportunities, even though unconventional, to achieve broader life and work goals.

HR professionals in the future need a more active craft orientation toward careers. Careers will still unfold within and between different organizational settings, increasing individuals’ need to craft their career patterns intentionally.

The concept of sustainable and self-driven careers has become the norm, with individuals and organizations taking shared responsibility for career journeys to create shared value for both. To do so, we propose three actions for HR professionals to enable them to navigate this changing career landscape:
● **Action 1:** Align your skills with your ambition and balance broad expertise with transferable specialist skills. To succeed in the future, we believe that HR Professionals must have core skills complemented by deep specialist skills in designated areas depending on role and context. We refer to this as becoming T-shaped HR Professionals.

● **Action 2:** Reflect on your career’s work/life fit. What is important to you in your situation and stage of life? This self-introspection is a crucial step to understanding how your career can be crafted differently to accommodate other life priorities.

● **Action 3:** Let go of preconceived ideas of success. In the past, many HR professionals let others define their picture of career success, usually tied to status, wealth, or power. In today’s world of work, success should be determined at a deeper level.

Does your career meet the expectations that you have set for yourself? Does your career contribute to bringing you joy? Does your picture of career success align with your life goals?

The world of work provides unprecedented access to new opportunities for those willing to craft and pursue them intentionally. The time has come for HR professionals to look after the careers of those in the organizations we guide and introspect our career trajectories and choices. An unknown source once said, “Your career reflects your choices. If you do not like your career, it is time to start making better choices.”

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**Endnotes**


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**About the Authors**

Dr. Dieter Veldsman is an organizational psychologist with a passion for HR. He has over 15+ years of experience across the HR value chain and lifecycle, having worked for and consulted with various multinational corporations in Europe, Asia, and Africa. He has held the positions of CHRO, Organizational Effectiveness Executive, and Organizational Design and Development Principal. He regularly speaks at international conferences and industry panels on Strategic HR, the Future of Work, and Organisational Development. In addition, he co-hosts a monthly podcast called “HR Hot Topics,” which discusses actual events impacting the world of HR and interviews leading HR Practitioners as part of his HR Dialogues Videocast series. He can be reached at dieter.veldsman@aihr.com.

Marna van der Merwe is an Organizational Psychologist and Subject Matter Expert at The Academy to Innovate HR. She has over 12 years of experience within the Human Resources domain, focusing on Organizational Effectiveness and Strategic Talent Management. Her research areas of interest are talent management, specifically the evolution of talent management within the fourth industrial revolution, experience design, and the changing nature of careers within this context. Marna holds a master’s degree in Organizational Psychology and is completing her Ph.D. at the University of Johannesburg. She can be reached at marna.dermerwe@aihr.com.
Disaster recovery is one area where prevention is the best medicine. Unfortunately, as many incidents that can adversely affect the workplace cannot be prevented, risk analysis and preparedness prove the next best course of action. HR professionals aim to ensure the safety of their workforce and any contractor or vendors on their property, minimize damage to the site, the environment, or machinery, and reduce downtime or disruption in service.¹ There are steps to take in a preparedness and response plan; if your firm is large, you likely have an emergency response team in place; if you still need to, appoint a response leader yourself. However, the response is the last step: here, we look at the phases in addressing disasters, focusing on those events that pose an operational risk to your organization. After assessing both the probability and degree of risk, the steps include prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and your response were the event to occur.

While there is an entire profession of risk assessment, HR can at least consider the possibility of an adverse incident and ascertain the risk to the organization if that incident occurs. Evaluating risk and the cost of risk is its OWN science, yet we can use premises from that science and apply them in preparedness planning.

Business Risks

Many significant business risks are preventable; your organization likely has procedures to prevent these from happening. Such risks include:

- Security and fraud risks include data breaches, cyberattacks, identity theft, embezzlement, money laundering, criminal record, and intellectual property theft.
- Compliance risk includes laws and regulations governing occupational health and safety, equipment certification requirements, taxes, hazardous waste disposal, climate initiatives, and data privacy.
- Financial or economic risk; areas that affect cash flow and profitability, such as market movements, foreign currency exchange rates, over-reliance on venture capital, or commodity price fluctuations; these are commonly addressed through getting insurance, diversifying income streams, and limiting the amount or tenure of loans.
- Reputational risk is often preventable. These include bad customer service and support, shoddy products, protracted labor action or strikes, negative Yelp! or Glassdoor reviews, or other damaging publicity about your employees or leadership.
- Operational risk.² Unlike the preceding risk factors, an operational risk that interferes with your business processes may be difficult to prevent but critical to plan for – these risks are the focus of this article.

For each of these, consider both the probability of the occurrence and the likely severity of the damage where it occurs. Organizations vary in their tolerance for risk; you may find your company has a greater risk tolerance than HR professionals. The strategies for approaching known risks are, in fact, relatively simple:

- Accept the risk potential and budget for its impact (e.g., we know a planned building site is on a flood plain, and we budget or insure for that potential occurrence).
- Avoid the risk (or activity) totally (e.g., the potential for war is higher in country X, so we will not locate personnel there); thus, the chance of business discontinuity is eliminated.
When you evaluate risk across your organization as an HR professional, locational issues can weigh heavily. Some areas of the world are more prone to earthquakes than others; some regions are more likely to suffer from tornados, floods, wildfires, volcanic eruptions, or hurricanes. Some are more prone to human-led issues impeding business, such as wars, terrorist attacks, transportation disruptions, etc. As part of your risk management strategy, you will be considering and weighing the probability of an event occurring against the cost to the company and employees if it does happen. As employee safety is foremost, considering the likelihood of a devastating event is essential, then balancing the cost of mitigation vs. the business impact of so doing. After considering the possible, the task is too narrow to the more probable, knowing you cannot be accurate 100% of the time. If you have multiple geographies in your company, you will need to consider the likelihood of potentially disastrous events on a regional basis.

Assessing Probability
When you evaluate risk across your organization as an HR professional, locational issues can weigh heavily. Some areas of the world are more prone to earthquakes than others; some regions are more likely to suffer from tornados, floods, wildfires, volcanic eruptions, or hurricanes. Some are more prone to human-led issues impeding business, such as wars, terrorist attacks, transportation disruptions, etc. As part of your risk management strategy, you will be considering and weighing the probability of an event occurring against the cost to the company and employees if it does happen. As employee safety is foremost, considering the likelihood of a devastating event is essential, then balancing the cost of mitigation vs. the business impact of so doing. After considering the possible, the task is too narrow to the more probable, knowing you cannot be accurate 100% of the time. If you have multiple geographies in your company, you will need to consider the likelihood of potentially disastrous events on a regional basis.

Geolocational risks
The probability of a particular type of natural disaster may be location specific. In this, existing data is helpful. Consider:

- **Tornados**: it makes more sense to have an on-premise tornado shelter, a tornado alert siren, and trial drills for employees if your site is in the “tornado alley”: the states of Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, or South Dakota.³

- **Earthquakes**: Alaska has the most earthquakes, but California, in second place, has the most damage from them. The following most earthquake-prone states are Hawaii, Nevada, and Washington state. Given earthquake probability—not just possibility—means attention to seismic-ready buildings, bolted-down furnishings, employee shelter, and evacuation plans.⁴

- **Hurricanes**: Florida is by far the most hurricane-prone state in the US: 40% of US hurricanes strike Florida. Texas, Louisiana (tied with North Carolina), and South Carolina. Hurricanes are considered seasonal (so you have an identifiable time factor): from June 1 to November 20.⁵

- **Wildfires**: California has had the most significant number, with Texas second, followed by Colorado, Arizona, Idaho, Washington, Oklahoma, Oregon, Montana, and Utah. While corporate structures, supply chains, and transportation may be affected, and because residential property damage can be devastating in these fires, consideration of the impact on employees if fires sweep through their communities also merits planner attention.⁶

- **Floods**: According to authorities, every state has flood hazard zones — and like fire, flooding can devastate corporate structures. The highest risk is in Louisiana, followed by Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas, and New Jersey.⁷ However, for cities, Miami, Florida, has the highest flood risk score in the United States.⁸

Disastrous Events can be Anywhere.
Several classes of events require preventative and recovery planning, regardless of company size or location. Fire or water damage, for example, can bring a company to its knees in a hurry.

- **Workplace fires**: Workplaces are considered “non-residential structures,” according to the National Fire Prevention Association. In 2021, 125,500 non-residential structure fires caused an estimated 130 civilian fire deaths, 1,100 civilian injuries, and $3.6 billion in direct property damage. From 2020 to 2021, non-residential structure fires rose 4 percent, deaths rose 30 percent, injuries did not significantly change, and direct property damage rose 6 percent.⁹ Fires can be caused internally by electrical failures, gas explosions, sabotage or arson, and other causes.

- **Water damage**: Water damage can be more than just external floods, though a report from the nonprofit First Street Foundation and commercial engineering firm Arup finds that businesses in the U.S. could lose more than 3.1 million days of operation next year due to increasing flood
risks from human-caused global warming. The report predicts this total may grow to 4 million days by 2051, warning of ripple effects throughout local economies. However, broken water mains or a malfunctioning sprinkler system can prove equally devastating.

**Workplace shootings:** Workplaces are the most common mass shooting sites, with perpetrators most likely fired from that site, according to the Violence Project, which tracks mass shootings, defined as four or more victims killed. The second most common location for mass shootings was retail locations, representing 16.9% of all recorded mass shootings. The third most common location was restaurants and bars, which represented 13.4% of all recorded mass shootings, according to the Violence Project.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there were 392 workplace homicides in 2020, plus 37,060 nonfatal injuries in the workplace resulting from an intentional injury by another person. That figure rose to 481 workplace homicides in 2021. The five occupational groups with the most workplace homicides in 2020 were sales and related, transportation and material moving, management, construction and extraction, and production. Homicides in sales and related occupations accounted for 23 percent of all workplace homicides in 2020.

The initial planning, the response itself, and the recovery planning vary on the event, and all rely on identified safety measures, employee education, and simulated drills. At the very least, all employees need to know how to safely exit the site, where to reconvene in a safe location, what communication mechanisms are used in an emergency, and the most likely corporate responses to the event.

**Ascertaining Impact**

All risks are not equal, and as with anything, there is a cost to the degree of prevention or recovery steps undertaken. For example, you could likely build a building that would withstand a severe tornado or hurricane, but the cost could be far more prohibitive than the effort is worth. Better to invest in insurance and build anew in most cases. Given that you can neither prevent nor prepare for all operational-impeding events, to a certain extent, HR professionals must think a bit like gamblers—hedging one’s bets, as it were. To begin, limit the parameters:

- Is it likely to affect one or all sites in our organization? For example, would a hurricane causing the closure of the Florida plant adversely affect operations in Texas or Washington? Unlike natural disasters, however, war or epidemics could force the closure of all sites in a single country.
- Is it likely to affect all classes of workers or only subsets? Bird flu, for example, may affect those raising poultry more directly than leadership housed elsewhere.
- Is it likely to impair the workforce or permanently disable or kill them? (Consider a toxic gas spill in a chemical plant in which all unprotected workers could be exposed or a roof collapse during work hours due to the weight of snow from a blizzard).
- Is it likely to be of a long- or short-term duration? For example, internal network failure will raise havoc but likely be addressable within days; a total grid failure could prove lethal for many businesses relying on e-commerce or real-time networked communication.
- Is it likely to result in site closures or new working models (as in the past pandemic with the move to home offices or closures of meat-packing plants)?
- Is the overall financial risk to our organization large or small? In other words, what does it take for our firm to survive what may be a protracted slowdown due to the event?
- What are the cost implications by unit, given the risk perceived?

**Preparedness and Response**

The goal is to mitigate risk potential by optimizing preparedness and planning for the impact of a designated risk. Even if the operational effect of the event cannot be mitigated, workforce preparedness is your number one responsibility. Most firms have an emergency response team, or at least someone charged with thinking about disaster effect and recovery. This team or individual prepares emergency plans and procedures, provides preparedness training, and directs crisis management activities. Note that the first measure in most emergencies is to contact fire, medical, or police professionals.

For example, considering any workforce emergency, train employees to exit the building properly and promptly. An evacuation plan and corresponding training should provide employees...
with information to:

- Know two exits and escape routes from their work area;
- Assist others with the proper escape route, if possible;
- Exit to the designated meeting area regardless of whether others comply and follow.

If an active shooter creates a crisis and employees cannot safely evacuate, they must be trained to hide. Partners at Fisher-Phillips’ Workforce Safety Practice Group recommend that employees are trained to effectively lock and barricade themselves in a safe area and use door locks and desks or furniture to block the shooter from entering the door to the room. Hiding places should be out of sight of windows, and employees should also silence noisemaking devices that may alert the shooter to their presence (cell phones, tablets, computer speakers, etc.). Ideally, the area will be protected if shots are fired in the employee’s direction. Employees should only contact 911 to alert the authorities when it is safe. However, they should be careful not to alert the shooter of their location.16

In all events, a plan and practice are imperative. Routes for evacuation must be practiced, not just posted. Repetitive drills can make the response second nature, and while not wholly alleviating panic, can better ensure employee safety.

Post-disaster Response

Here we are talking about the response AFTER the event rather than the response while the event occurs. A coordinated, prompt, and thoughtful corporate response to emergencies is imperative. Handwringing is not the answer here; this is HR’s “keep calm and carry on” moment. You can put your business continuity plan in place because you have anticipated the possibility of an occurrence that causes business operations to halt. You have employee locations and contact information, including emergency contacts. You have detailed communication procedures to follow, including executive communication with the press and media.

Conclusion

Whatever the crisis, the foremost responsibility is to the people. HR’s role is, in part, to mitigate the uncertainty that is inevitable following a workplace crisis. Employee support, trauma mitigation, consolation, and family assistance may be required and should be immediate. The continuity plan should be explained as early as possible. Fear of returning to the workplace is not uncommon and should be accommodated and expected. If, for example, the site is destroyed through fire, proves unworkable through water damage, or is uninhabitable from mold, smoke, or fumes, alternative work environments must be addressed quickly. The pandemic provides guidance, as many now are well-versed in working from home. No one likes to think about unpleasant events, and workplace disasters are unpleasant and dangerous. However, HR professionals are responsible for preparing the workforce should a disastrous event occur.

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, 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 DOD 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 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.

Endnotes

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From the IHRIM Chair

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

Servant Leadership – Leaning Forward without Getting Ahead of Our Skis

Dear Colleagues & Friends,

Technical prophets of the 80s and 90s predicted an imminent paperless and virtualized society, enabled by a ubiquitous and wireless network, converging telephony, data, and video systems, promising a new information age intended to benefit all humanity everywhere. And yet, thirty to forty years later, it took a global pandemic to manifest these solutions among a change-reluctant, if not resistant, population.

As the oldest and only global association of professionals that serve at the intersection of human resources, i.e., relations, and technology, IHRIM and its members have lived and worked as advocates of continuous improvement in the workforce supply chain – from recruitment to retirement. Membership in IHRIM and professional certification distinguish one among many peers and assure employers of objectivity, integrity, and value-adding partnership with all organization departments when addressing HR and sensitive information management.

HR departments were already under pressure to embrace new software solutions promising process improvement long before the COVID crisis. Still, as one long-time IHRIM member remarked, the pandemic challenged companies, especially HR, to no longer operate at an evolutionary but revolutionary pace when it came to core HR functions. All the while, however, our focus on the workforce could not waiver. HR Technology professionals are expected to forge process and quality improvements for workforces at the leading edge.

For decades, WSR and other active assets of IHRIM have shed light on technology’s impact, and this issue focuses on maintaining good employee health and wellness, a sensitive and essential part of HR practice that has benefited from many technological innovations in recent years.

From in-home COVID monitoring to apps that offer coping mechanisms when confronting fear, uncertainty, and doubt, HR is crucial to successfully deploying life/work quality improvements across the entire organization. As change agents, HR-Technology Analysts, Managers, and Directors serve as the evangelists of streamlined, automated, and improved workforce engagement processes - from the shop floor to the board room.

IHRIM members possess the know-how to manage change, especially when change is constant and pivoting, routine. Moreover, when the change is indistinguishable from the agent, subject, and object, a workforce in continuous ebb and flow, up and down of circumstances, demonstrates agility, adaptability, and resilience, not resistance, amidst change. As we lean forward over our skis, avoiding not to get ahead of them, our employers and coworkers witness the HR Technology professional navigating how to manage change with grace, balance, and, most of all, competency – a few important traits of servant leadership.

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