

Role of Human Resources in Digital Transformation

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Abstract

Organizations are exploring a number of new ways to embrace digital transformation for better business. It is a challenge and a real complexity to plan future capabilities of a workforce in the digital economy; as is the ability to integrate the right people into a dynamic organizational context and help existing employees and leaders gain new digital competencies to be able to drive transformation. The areas that HR needs to acquire or strengthen its role in and that are directly related to the success of the digital transformation journey. The purpose of the paper is to define the role of human resource in Digital Transformation.

Introduction:

Digital has been a driving force of change across industries; and the transformation is accelerating – it took five years for Apple to transform the music industry while Uber profoundly reshaped the transportation sector in less than two years. Digital transformation is reshaping the workplace as well (Durou, 2015). Researchers predict that many organizations will lose their market position as a result of digital business incompetence and a failure to respond to how employees want to work. This ‘people’ dimension is perhaps the most challenging aspect facing today’s businesses and HR organizations. Human Resources are undeniably about the staffing, improvement and retention of talent. But HR also plays an important role in enabling digital leaders in the organization and equipping them with the required essential skills and furthering their leadership characteristics. Talent is a differentiator and a business builder. Moreover HR’s concerns will soon be revolving around the changing nature of the organization and employees becoming increasingly digital and influenced by:

- Digital mega trends, including but not limited to, cyber, data, cloud, social and mobile.

- A multi-generational workforce including Millennial or first-generation digital citizens.
- Merging work and life with hyper connected employees.
- Emergence of a new set of digitally skilled employees.
- Business models under stress from digital disruption.
- The employee being perceived as the first consumer of the employer's brand(Jaoude, 2015)

Digital revolution is no longer a niche interest as it jumps out of the tech department and into the board room of leaders across industries, sectors and geographies. Digital talent inspires change in the right structures where new ways of working, leveraging technology to create and innovate and increasing speed and agility differentiates.(Ben Hart, 2016)HR organizations are exploring a number of new ways to embrace digital transformation for better business. It is a challenge and a real complexity to plan future capabilities of a workforce in the digital economy; as is the ability to integrate the right people into a dynamic organizational context and help existing employees and leaders gain new digital competencies to be able to drive transformation. The areas that HR needs to acquire or strengthen its role in and that are directly related to the success of the digital transformation journey, are outlined below: (as suggested by (Jaoude, 2015))

1- Re-structuring the organization to enable the digital transformation: Build a modern-day culture. the leadership team in any organization must align its thought as to what digital means to the organization and how it will fit into the overall business model. Digital talent is looking for purpose, fun, agility, and momentum towards something rewarding. They're not after the gold watch and lifelong position. They are curious and exploratory and don't want to be stuck in a box. They also have super high expectations of experience; don't expect them to stay if infrastructure and governance don't allow them to make a difference and be heard where it matters.

2- Look broader and open up: Provide the means and the motivation to connect, transfer, co-develop and co-create ideas and business gain. Furthermore, some of the best talent doesn't want to come and work for you, sit at a desk or for that matter spend any length of time in one place. Allow project teams to form leveraging online platforms to manage and connect skills underneath leaders who are empowered to resource accordingly.

3- Recognize the difference between digital skills and behaviors: Our bigger gain is collaborative behaviors, sharing, creating space for ideas and creative thinking. Ideas and people motivated and empowered to turn them into action and business gain is behavioral as much as it required skills to do so.

5 – Encourage resourcefulness: The answers are out there, just Google it. Train people to find out what they need to know and where to find it. Encourage resourcefulness as many of the digital skills that can be learnt can be done so flexibly online through personal motivation .

6- Empower cross functional learning: A culture that celebrates when something goes wrong rather than persecutes, is healthy when the wrong is turned into learning. Leverage and create the means to transpose learning across teams and functions. Provide a positive framework for this learning to inform people in getting better, sharing best practice and the means to resolve issues and prevent recurrence.

8- Celebrate the social qualities of digital: Its called social media for a reason; it's about humans connecting, sharing and being social with one another. Rather than preventing these behaviors, celebrate their ability to bring people together for business gain. Allow people to be social using digital, to chat informally, to arrange social meet-ups, to connect and build friendly and personable relationships with each other and the organization's customers.

9- Empowering digital leadership: p: Digital leaders play a critical role in paving the way for the digital transformation and should heavily engage and communicate with key stakeholders (whether internal or external to the organization) in deciding, designing and delivering the digital organization. Digital leaders should set clear costs, risks, mitigations and benefits of the digital transformation and decide on types of change management interventions that are needed to guide the organization through the journey

Old world HR portals, holiday booking, contract provision? Become digital leaders ourselves to inspire the journey by becoming advocates¹ for new and improved digital ways of working. Introduce them from induction through to the way the c-suite communicates. Become a digital first HR department and lead the way.

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