THE NEW DIGITAL HR LEADER
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Technological development is the greatest event in the recent history of mankind. Nobody is alien to the great change that has occurred in their environment over the past few years: the way we work, communicate with friends, colleagues and family; how we buy, read and seek information; how we care for our health; how we have fun, play, and more. Every area of our lives has undergone interesting developments and changes through these new technologies and ultimately, the new digital reality.

Adapting to change has never been easy… How are you coping? Do you have the guts to try out each new technology? Are you afraid to change your habits? Are you one of those who carefully studies each new device before adopting it? Everyone approaches technology from different angles and brings it into their lives at different paces. But regardless of how we are predisposed to change, it is already inevitable. So in most cases, it is essential to adapt and rethink our way of doing things, while accepting our limitations and strengths, yet striving to improve daily.

As HR specialists the challenge is even greater: not only will we have to adapt and continuously re-adapt to new challenges arising every day, but we must also help our organizations and
their people to do the same as nimbly as possible. We have to take over the reins of the real revolution rocking the foundation of our organization’s culture, at the same time we must be a stable source of guidance. It becomes quite apparent that those of us in HR have new responsibilities in this new digital paradigm shift towards our organizations as well as in shaping labour and educational markets.

In this scenario, CHROs, VP HR, HR directors, managers and team heads (in different areas such as training, recruitment, or others) leaders worldwide who are on management committees of their organizations will play a strategic role in the digitalization of their company. In this book, we will refer to all these stakeholders collectively as HR leaders for simplicity’s sake and occasionally we may make specific references to certain roles in a particular context.

However, these HR leaders are not the only ones with a vested interest in this digital transformation. We must not leave out HR professionals who are interested in the technology advances and open to learning about the latest market trends so they can apply these to their work to the benefit of others in their organization. Local HR professionals of a multinational also need to be aware of digitalization even though they may not be involved in digitalizing their organization; they will inevitably be affected by corporate changes in the transformation.

Simply because this is something new that has never been done before in a large scale across an entire organization or society, CEOs, C-suite executives, VPs, directors and managers leading digitalization in their companies will want to understand as much as possible of this process, including the HR perspective for digital human capital management. IT managers are key stakeholders of the process in their organization too and should be well informed in order to evaluate impacts and help plan implementation. Professionals in other business areas of the company who are interested in human capital development or
even their own personal development and advancement stand to benefit from this book and understanding the process.

In this book we aim to shed some light on the nature of the technological revolution, its impact in our lives and in the workplace, while providing practical guidance for HR professionals, who are sometimes overwhelmed by information overload and the lack of benchmark references. This task is no easy matter, especially we are talking about new advances we are unfamiliar with, while dealing with a state of constant change. This is precisely the nature of the challenge we face.

Walking through hand in hand with recognized experts in the sector, we will start from our first chapter setting the scene with some background on what Andrew McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson call the *Second Machine Age* that we are experiencing and this includes examining the impact of robotics and how work is transformed by knowledge. In the second chapter, we will go on to explore how the next-generation technologies are shaping the emerging and new digital mindset, creating the imperative for a digitalized workforce. It will become quite clear that the phenomenon of global digitalization is here to stay and that the HR world needs to adapt to it. Thus we will progress to discuss in chapter three, how, as HR professionals, we can rearrange our minds and take the right actions for leading digital change in our organizations. Finally, we pull it all together in the fourth and last chapter, putting forward concrete steps on how to implement the required structural changes to go digital throughout our organization.

Last but not least, we will offer our final thoughts after weighing up everything discussed so far on the nature of work and point out some challenges looming up in the future.

Editors
CHAPTER I

THE REVOLUTION OF THE BRAIN
Nothing is like it was. Our way of living has changed so drastically over the last few years. This new world in which we live seems like something out of a futuristic film. Technologically speaking, it is closer than ever to the imaginary genre of science fiction: self-driving cars, robots controlled by our minds, highly developed artificial intelligence and more. All such advances integrate into the physical world we know, transforming it forever. But it is not just “what we see” that has undergone radical changes. It is also “what we don’t see”, our mental universe, our brain. And perhaps that is just where the fundamental difference lies.

So much so that Nicolas Carr, the author of the book, The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains, feels his life is divided into two acts: the first act in the analogical world, and the other in his present day life in the digital world. Carr can no longer read books, or at least not in the way he used to before, line by line. Today, both he and his friends have the same problem. Instead of reading, they nibble, flitting from one place to another, apparently assimilating information. Almost like a machine. What is happening to us? How does this affect our brain?

According to the communications media guru, Marshal MacLuhan (not in vain the creator of the term, global village),
we are in the midst of a juncture in our intellectual and cultural history, a moment of transition between two very different modes of thinking. Yes, you read it right—of thinking. This is just how MacLuhan put it, “The medium is the message”. The medium dominates content even more; the medium influences us, it changes us and ultimately transforms us. The medium in this case is the digital world.

Digital is not new. So why write a book on this subject? It’s simple: for the first time since the internet emerged, digital has become a way of life, plus it has changed our physical environment and us. Heading towards 2020, technology and the digital world are not just tools, but also the environment we ultimately move in. How can we understand this new world? Can there be any possible definition? How can HR successfully operate in such a world? How can organizations benefit from this in the work environment? More importantly, how can we fully transit to this new digital-everything paradigm?

In 2014, Andrew McAfee, one of the principal researchers of the Digital Business Centre at MIT was in charge of the HR Tech Vegas opening conference, a key event on state-of-the-art HR technology. His talk, titled after one of his books, *The Second Age Machine*, addressed issues that may seem rather surprising; issues that basically revolved around the part robots play in the workforce and the role humans would have in future jobs. Science fiction? Apparently not.

The *First Machine Age* is a late period of the industrial revolutions and usually dated between 1880 and 1945, peaking between the two world wars. It is marked by the great proliferation of mass and assembly production, especially of goods like automobiles and other means of consumer or war transport such as airplanes, tanks or submarines. The communications industry also developed considerably, examples include the wireless radio or record player. This era was also accompanied by a production and demographic explosion never seen before in our history.
However at the beginning of the forties, the term, *Machine Age*, for understanding the changes at the global level was already discontinued. We had entered into a new age that began with the atomic bomb, the first computers and the transistor among others. This period of tremendous high technology growth—and which we are still in the midst of—translates into artificial intelligence, automation or biotechnology.

When labelling this current stage of development, Andrew McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson deliberately chose the term, *The Second Machine Age*, in which we witness a continuation in the great productive and demographic development that characterized the previous period along with a number of important changes. The three fundamental factors that we observe are: exponential development of computers, a colossal volume of digital information available, and combinatorial innovation (a concept that can be further explored in the book, *The Second Machine Age*).

We will put all these points on the back burner, most important for this analysis is to understand something fundamental that we have been saying right from the beginning: these changes are definitely affecting our cerebral constitution or the mental domain, unlike what happened in the first machine era where changes essentially affected the physical domain or the muscle power of organizations. That is why today there is so much talk of neuroscience, or why knowledge professions are so important. We are witnessing a true revolution of the brain.

It can be deduced that in this new global complexity, companies also are mutating across all scales and levels: structurally, to an extent to innovation, in relation to jobs among others. They are becoming true “knowledge organizations”. In this context, HR professionals converted into true “knowledge workers” face a double challenge. First, to adapt their own work to the new environment, and secondly, to guide people in their organizations through such a sharp change.
It is very difficult to know how to steer through a cultural transformation. So, the more that is written on the matter, the more light can we shed on circumstances which are always a step ahead. Perhaps, ultimately the key for organizations experiencing excellent progress in this revolution of the brain will lie in how far off or bang on target their performance is with such changes—the closer, the better. That is why agility will be one of the key differentiators between organizations that are up to speed and others that lag behind.
I have always dreamt of having one of those magic wands that follow me everywhere to do all those tedious and repetitive tasks that bring nothing of value to my life. For want of such magic wands, many of us have imagined that technology would be that infallible ally that would, sooner or later, take charge of all these chores, making our lives so much easier and more comfortable.

However, despite the technological advances that have come a long way to get to where we are today, the raw reality is that cars still cannot pilot in between urban buildings, nor are we able to teleport ourselves to the future (as some of us believed after seeing the film, *Back to the Future*).

Interestingly, the future seems to be headed along different lines from what we had imagined. Robotics and digitalization are opening other ways and doors that perhaps we would never have envisaged before.

Considering the new environment we find ourselves in, I would like to make some deeper reflections upon the presence of robots. This technology still seems like far-fetched science fiction to most of us, something that still remains in the realm of vivid imagination. In fact, the effects of robotics already
have a growing impact in our daily lives right now. Advances in this field are sure to play an even bigger role in our immediate future.

To see where robotics may be going and the implications from the HR perspective, it is worthwhile to tackle a series of questions. What is happening in different work environments? How does this affect development in the way people are managed? What are we up against?

**WHO ARE THESE ROBOTS?**

Let us start with two basic definitions of the word, robot:

**Definition 1:**
“A reprogrammable, multifunctional manipulator designed to move material, parts, tools, or specialized devices through various programmed motions for the performance of a variety of tasks.” *(Robot Institute of America, 1979).*

**Definition 2:**
“A robot is an automatic device that performs functions normally ascribed to humans or a machine in the form of a human.” Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

The first defines the figure of the robot as an element that will help us to do our work; and the second one goes further, effectively observing that tasks can be performed exclusively by a machine without human intervention capable of manipulating objects and performing operations previously reserved only to people.

This is where the debate usually begins on whether robotics will wipe out jobs. There is no denying that this can happen for certain functions, but history has shown that the creation of new technological advances also creates new jobs to the same degree. Other lines of thought could be directed towards the
“surprising workforce crisis” that Rainer Strack (Senior Partner and Managing Director at the Boston Consulting Group) foresees, declaring that “in 2030 we will be plunged into a global employment crisis, with labour shortages worldwide and huge skills gaps.”

For now in this chapter we will not explore the prediction on the immediate future of the workforce, instead simply observe what is happening right now with digital changes and robotics—what role robots play in certain settings.

Let’s take a look at some real examples of applied robotics in the work environment today:

1. A robot transports trays of food through the passages of a Spanish hospital—this makes it easier for the hospital staff to deliver the right tray to the right patient quickly.

2. Nao is a programmable and autonomous humanoid robot, an intelligent and friendly companion, a sort of robotic pet. Highly successful in education, students of all ages have greatly benefited from learning from Nao. Similarly in research, developers recognize the potential of Nao as an expressive medium for creating applications. Pepper, another such robot, is already greeting and interacting with customers in stores in Japan. Both humanoid robots are developed by Aldebaran Robotics, a French robotics company headquartered in Paris.

3. The Kiva robots residing in the Amazon warehouses bring shelves to the operators to speed up the logistics processes.

4. A hotel in a new theme park in Japan to be partially attended by androids that work as reception assistants: as reception attendants, robot waiters, cleaning staff and a cloakroom attendant.
With such applications of robotics around, either live or in the making, can you imagine going back to the past and speaking to a telephone operator who moves pegs to connect you with another phone number? How about using a paper-based map to get somewhere? Or reserving an entire bookshelf for a pile of CDs or cassettes? No, those days are over, aren’t they?

ROBOTS ARE HERE TO STAY

Robotics development in some companies is so big that in the present-future such robots already possess levels of intelligence (AI) that no longer render them just a part of the production chain, but also a part of the work team.

That’s why they are already defining robot workforce management models, profiling situations such as those mentioned by the HR technology expert, Naomi Bloom: what robots are on which team and what are their functions, productivity and learning developments and more. The expert adds that for this task, HR must work together with other departments—communication, purchasing, accounting and others—to develop new models of work.

FRIEND OR FOE?

More and more, we will be working closely with robots able to develop many of the tasks previously reserved for people. This is why, as we said earlier, many are concerned by what jobs will remain for humans to perform. But wouldn’t it be better to ask ourselves, how can we make a difference in our daily lives? That is to say, what value can we bring into a world ruled more by automation?

Martin Weitzman said, “The long-term growth of an advanced economy is dominated by the behaviour of technical progress.” In turn, Andrew McAfee, in his eminent book, The Second Machine Age, points out that, “We’ve never seen a truly
creative machine, or an entrepreneurial one, or an innovative one… We’ve also never seen software that could create good software.” From this, it follows that there are inherent abilities to humans that cannot be done by robots.

Nevertheless, we must go further still; we shouldn’t be asking ourselves who can do more, or who owns the work—the humans or the machines, but instead we should ask how man can leverage the skills robots possess to achieve better results across the entire spectrum of humanity’s development. Recent studies are already showing that ultimately, “unity is strength” as the work coming from merging both intelligences is much stronger than that which is exclusively human.

So by uniting the creative and innovative abilities of people with such digital technology capabilities at our fingertips, we can discover this new edge that makes us unique in the world.

Let’s all together create that magic wand of the future.
THE NATURE OF WORK HAS CHANGED

A large percentage of the active population in developed countries is currently what Peter Drucker calls, knowledge workers. The internet, the latest advances in robotics and technology development generally makes us think that this trend is not only here to stay, but also to continue upwards over the next few years.

The emergence of this new kind of work activity, profoundly different from the traditional one and almost nonexistent until just a few decades ago, brought on a revolution of the first order on the nature of work, as it completely changes the meaning of the word, work. Work is no longer what it was and this change affects not only the way of working and its content, but also its relationship with value generation.

Despite all these changes, the people who undertake their activity in this new kind of work mostly are not aware that they are knowledge workers. This raises the next question: can a person optimally contribute to value generation at work without really knowing what this work is about?
KNOWLEDGE WORK IS NOT SO OBVIOUS

Traditionally work was something obvious. A shepherd for instance did not have to ask himself the question, “What do I have to do today?” Neither did a farmer or a blacksmith have to consider it. The options were well delimited and which one to do was marked by the needs or the circumstances of the moment. The same happens today with manual labour which is still carried out in production lines. Another feature of such manual jobs was that it was obvious as to when the task was finished, as the result could be observed. The shepherd knew when sheering had finished, the same for the farmer when he had brought in the wheat harvest.

Drucker says that, unlike what happens in manual labour, in knowledge work the task is not quite so obvious, nor when it is completed. Let’s take for example, the typical email we open again and again without ever deciding to work on it. Usually this is because we know that there is something to be done, but we are not quite sure what exactly, nor when it will be done. This lack of definition characterizes this new way of working. For instance, when is a sales proposal finished? A presentation? Or even an email to a client?

From the above, it can be deduced that in knowledge work, to be able to undertake the work, it must be defined beforehand, i.e. identify what exactly must be done and what must occur before it can be claimed to be completed. Once the work and when it is deemed complete have been defined clearly, performing the tasks or tasks that follow is little different from any other manual labour.

For example, if I have to prepare a sales presentation for a client, I will have to decide what to include in the presentation, what data, what graphics, in which order and more. What product data will cause a greater impact? What should I tell the client about the competition? How do I audiovisually support the
message I want to transmit? Once all this is decided, typing text and inserting photos is a manual task of little value, anyone can do it. In fact not so far off in the future, this job will probably be done by machines. The value of the presentation resides in the knowledge we applied when deciding on what to do and how to do it, not in the actual manual task of doing it.

In contrast with everything so far, the educational system still does not teach us how to perform in this new kind of work. Nobody explains to us that our work now consists of defining the work. To do this work effectively and efficiently, time and effort must be invested beforehand into thinking and deciding what to do and what to leave alone, what we have to think about and also decide in which order, with which tools and under what circumstances.

PRODUCTIVITY IN KNOWLEDGE WORK

As a result of the above, individuals and organizations are suffering from growing levels of stress, without this leading to significant improvements in productivity. Ignorance among some individuals in managerial positions continues to confuse productivity with more hours of work, more presence in the office and greater wage moderation. The recipe of more work and less salary undeniably succeeds in boosting productivity when we are talking of manual labour, but fails drastically when applied to knowledge work.

The solution to problems rarely comes from doing more of the same. Instead, new things must be tried out. The senseless frenzy organizations are subject to in an absurd rat race to ‘do for the sake of doing’, should give way to ‘do less to do better’. Obsession should be substituted for results, since in knowledge work, as Peter Drucker points out, productivity is rarely the outcome of quantity. In contrast the value of work in knowledge work comes from thinking and deciding better, not from doing more. Said differently, if you are a knowledge worker, you are basically paid to think.
CHAPTER II

IT’S A GLOBAL AND DIGITAL WORLD
Technology is changing the way we work and how fast we work, says
David Ulrich of the University of Michigan\(^1\) ...

Technology is facilitating the acceleration of product and delivery
cycles in global markets with global supply chains\(^2\) ...

Technology is providing the interconnectedness needed to de-layer
hierarchical organizations and replace them with flatter ones with
different ways of communicating and interacting...

Technology is providing organizations with an ever greater ‘reach’
with which to target stakeholders with real time information...

Technology is shifting traditional power dynamics, as equal access
to information and crowd sourcing provide individuals with more
influence and voice...

Technology is bringing a transparency previously unknown, and
organizations must relinquish some control of their brand (and
employment brand) to consumers and employees with social
media tools.

AN ODE TO THE TECH FACTOR
Betsy Kolkea

CHAPTER II: IT’S A GLOBAL AND DIGITAL WORLD  |  20
Technology is providing an ever increasing volume of data with a powerful potential for value added analytics to feed into improved decision making...

Technology is replacing some jobs, changing others, and creating many brand new ones.

Technology is influencing generational development. As generations of digital natives join the workforce, they bring radically different expectations, motivations, and methods of communication and learning with them. I recently heard a Millennial’s definition of work as the place where I have to use out of date technology and systems! ...

Technology is enabling skilled talented individuals to easily access opportunities in the global labour market, and increasingly to work virtually, at the time and place of their choosing. The contingent workforce continues to increase as traditional full-time permanent roles disappear...

Technology is changing the way we live: how we learn, how we look for work, how we communicate and collaborate, how we relate with others, and how we give and receive feedback...

It is now easier to see how the digital revolution is taking a grip on the marketplace and how it is shaping our lives and businesses. So let’s analyze some scenarios where the implementation of next-generation technologies has contributed to wellbeing and engagement among people.

TECHNOLOGIES CREATE A SERVICES CENTRE DISTRIBUTED BY HR

The new generation of systems that automate and integrate various HR functions free up analysts from the tyranny of having to dedicate a fair part of their time to resolving administrative and transactional needs. Even though such needs are relevant in different areas of people management, they bring little business value.

From the point of view of the users who need HR services, their satisfaction is increased when information on their holidays, salary package or development plan, to name a few, is accessible at all times from anywhere through various devices. In particular, without requiring any direct mediation with one or more HR analysts for handling straightforward issues and actions.

With the facilities for distributed people management services, HR is well positioned to take on an advisory role to business
areas. They can provide valuable advice on developing leaders, training people, acquiring talent, analyzing salary market trends, and developing new roles and job descriptions.

Upon off-loading a heavy transactional and administration legacy within Personnel Administration departments, HR can devote time and resources to boosting employee well-being and engagement in a company sensitized to the value of people. Only this way will this HR function, traditionally subordinated to the mandates and influence of other management directives such as Finance, Operations and Marketing, be able to raise its profile as a key business partner and agent of business transformation.

TECHNOLOGIES FOR BOOSTING EMPLOYER BRAND

For boosting the company’s receptiveness to using social technologies, the company develops new channels to strengthen the prestige of their brand as a superb employer and a great place to work. The company’s well-earned prestige, when reinforced by positive opinions from happy employees on the job and committed to their organization, multiplies the effectiveness of the message the company transmits to its community of business partners, internal and external customers, and potential candidates.

Using Facebook and LinkedIn, the organization fosters two-way communication and spreads the values, mission and vision of a company that recognizes value and respect people deserve. This way the company promotes their strategic projects, highlighting corporate social responsibility activities. Likewise, it publishes their portfolio of products and services, and also advertises their job offers.

Analyzing the impression a company stirs on Twitter or Glassdoor, it is possible to get a relatively realistic perception of what others say and talk about the company. Upon positively correlating companies that stand out as great places to work, as listed on the Best Workplaces index, with their satisfaction ratings on
Glassdoor and their outstanding financial performance—such analyzes are important for fine-tuning practices, policies and tactics that facilitate the company’s transition to an organization with heart and soul, where the best talent want to work and develop professionally.

SOCIAL AND COLLABORATIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR CREATING A CULTURE OF INNOVATION

Less motivated by a competitive salary, a talented professional will instead feel more inspired and committed to their company by the challenge to give of their best. This occurs more effectively, when such talented professionals are grouped into high-performing teams assigned to projects, noted for their potential to generate new products and services.

Opening up the company to free and full access to collective intelligence begins with overcoming the challenge of orthodox management practices and styles. Through mechanisms of blind obedience and control, these inhibit the expression of individual creativity, generate deep dissatisfaction among particularly talented employees, introduce toxic factors into the working environment, and undermine the company’s productivity. Managing knowledge trapped in functional silos attributed to rigid organizational structures is not the way to stimulate productivity and the potential for innovation in teams that should be multidisciplinary and inspired by a business vision of significance both to the company as well as leaders and team members.

This calls for shaping a new organizational architecture, where agility, dynamism and flexibility facilitate the expression of individual creativity and fuels within people the desire to experience new ideas and concepts. These crystallize in the development of new projects bringing potential business value. The creation of a culture of innovation starts with firm commitment from executives and business leaders in favour of
transforming processes, systems and structures, as part of the transformation initiatives. With an obvious impact on corporate culture, these initiatives are important to improving the competitive profile of the company that sets stakes to become a leader in the knowledge era.

The organization that learns from the environment leads transformations which energize markets and surprise clients. Likewise, it expands access to experiences, practices and knowledge outside the physical boundaries of the company, through intensive and extensive use of social technologies and next-generation collaboration.

Organizations that complement a functional structure, made up of well-integrated operational and business processes, with communities of practices, innovation ecosystems and discussion groups arising from social technologies spreading out into all areas of the company. Such organizations will succeed in forming collaborative working environments where it makes sense to work, learn and develop professionally.

TECHNOLOGIES FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING THE BEST TALENT

In highly competitive markets it is essential that the organization demonstrates superior capacities to attract, connect, and retain the best talent available in the labour market. Also increasingly more competitive, the labour market transcends the economic environment with perceptible sustained recovery.

Just as important as making certain that people to be hired provide evidence of skills and competencies specific to the role, it is a must to ensure values, interests and personality traits of prospective candidates are as compatible as possible with the unique and defining elements of the corporate culture.

A traditional recruitment and selection process will place emphasis on capturing active candidates, who usually comply with the
profile requirements of a predefined position. In organizations with a toxic working environment and a high attrition rate, the recruitment and selection process recurs again and again by focusing on fast and just-in-time hiring of the candidate needed for a vacancy, rather than on hiring the best available candidate for the position.

Using social media, recruitment analysts with good communication skills and proven abilities in using various technologies, will arrange deep conversations with both active and passive candidates, regardless of whether a new position is open or not.

Analysts and leaders who contact such candidates through different social channels will have a golden opportunity to build a rough impression of their abilities, interests and skills. They will fail if they have to forcibly gamble to make a hire decision based on past experiences of questionable value, which may be distorted by cognitive bias of the leader who interviews candidates once in a while, and whose cunning and insight may distort the process for recruiting new talent.

An outstanding employer brand usually draws the attention of outstanding talent, those who have committed time and resources to build an exceptional personal brand. When both come together, an employment relationship of highest mutual benefit is likely to emerge. The most attractive professional the market has to offer ultimately embraces the golden opportunity to put their talents and skills to use in the company. Besides enjoying the best opportunities for growth and development within the company, such professionals add more value to the business.

TECHNOLOGIES FOR MANAGING EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION, ENGAGEMENT AND HAPPINESS

With social technologies deployed throughout the entire organization, and through explicit support from inspiring and influential leaders, every initiative to promote the company’s
reputation as a good employer and an excellent work place will have an important impact on the minds and hearts of sensitive employees eager to work for a company where important and meaningful professional roles are abound.

The management style favoured makes public the leadership’s honest and generous recognition of those people who stand out for work well done. The values, mission and vision are emphasized and oriented towards the individual’s development in order to strengthen the notion of corporate citizenship.

The company’s operational and business results are reported transparently and frequent exposure of the corporate leaders to social media is encouraged. This way a strong sense of belonging to the company is nurtured among employees willing to demonstrate their commitment to devoting efforts required for achieving excellent operational and business outcomes.

Access to cloud systems and corporate applications on any device, anytime and from anywhere helps to develop guidelines for flexible working hours to the benefit of various groups of employees. People with elderly parents who require medical care or mothers with young children of school age need to reconcile their particular needs for time, to resolve their specific personal issues, with their work goals to achieve.

For an average individual to fully reconcile their personal, social and family responsibilities with those linked to their role as an employee in a company aware of the trust and respect that responsible people deserve, it is right to create cordial, inclusive and flexible work environments, where intelligent deployment of next-generation technology applications plays a top role.
Globalization is the process of interaction and integration among different nations, companies and people. It arises from the interchange of ideas, world views and products and it is mainly driven by international trade and investments.

International businesses have grown tremendously over the years due to this type of globalization. This is all due to the reforms in organizations brought about by improved technology and digitalization.

WORK IS CHANGING

As new technology allows information to be processed, protected, created and exchanged in various ways, work processes, interactions and tasks will continue to undergo major transformations. Businesses that capitalize on new technology discover new ways of working and are able to increase their productivity at lower costs than conventional operating models.

Traditional work is becoming more virtual-focused as technology continues to grow; physical responsibilities are automated and people become intellectual sources. Employees using digital tools and smart machines create large amounts
of comprehensive data that are automatically gathered and then used to create better decisions. As organizations begin to realize the value of virtualization, big data, cloud and mobile, they start to adopt work processes that use digital technologies to boost their business value.

Many organizations, however, are still not really taking full advantage of digital technologies. A company may have started to use social media to communicate online, but likely has not really explored how it can drive innovation, business growth and differentiation.

**HR AS PROACTIVE CARETAKERS OF WORKFORCE DIGITALIZATION**

Companies have expanded globally searching for talent in different parts of the world. This new talent has to been connected digitally to ensure real time interaction and exchange of ideas, allowing for a new type of virtual workspace environment to pop up, designed by and for employees. It is all evolving and there is the urgent need for companies and HR to design this new workplace in order for them to attract and retain the best talent.

HR professionals who are responsible for the productivity and growth of the organization or the ability of everyone in the company to connect and implement strategies can no longer exclude this digitalization trend. No longer can they assume that all the technical side of this trend here to stay, is purely in the domain of the IT departments and infrastructures; they too share some of the responsibility. Today, HR professionals as the caretakers of the workforce’s talent potential, productivity and growth also become co-custodians, together with ITC departments, of how digitalization is best used for HR processes and optimizing the workforce. Likewise other areas of the organization need to use digitalization to facilitate their own work, e.g. customer services and support departments.
need to harness digitalization to provide even better services and support.

In fact, other functions have already fast moved on with digital media, digital ideas, digital workspaces, and more—in short, digital anything, whatever leads to business innovation and creativity. HR however seems to move forward slowly, wanting to keep the power and still remain productive. Those that do change, go at it full heartedly without sufficient in-depth technical expertise or experience. This brings on other problems of unorganized implementations, design and usage of anything to do with technology. However, companies and HR departments that hold back to wait and see if this trend will move on, now find themselves unable to catch up as the gap widens. Other companies and HR departments that have embraced this trend have already implemented digital processes to move forward and beyond. The destructive gap between the digital haves and have nots will become even greater over the next 18 months.

GLOBAL VIRTUAL REALITY

Technologies that unite into intelligent digital processes are capable of supporting a global workforce that is craving for more efficiency and engagement. Working in a connected manner, irrespective of time zones and physical locations, is far more likely to help a global workforce to succeed in their business goals.

Intelligent digital processes are made to provide insightful data and let organizations control that information to make it beneficial to the overall workforce. Digital technologies that operate on smart digital models and devices are used to arrive at smarter decisions. They respond immediately to shifting conditions, deal more efficiently with complexities and communicate better with every colleague. This delivers a
much more promising formula for true employee engagement. There are different digital technologies that play an important role in creating intelligent digital processes. These include:

- **Wearable and mobile interfaces** allow organizations to work together with all of their tools to make applications and data available where and when required.

- **Real-time collaboration technologies** promote better presence using tools like video and audio conferencing at different bandwidths.

- **Digital process management tools** like CRM and task-management tools automate processes. This eliminates manual emails, making the organization more systematic and efficient.

- **Digital behaviour-shaping and gamification tools** engage and help employees track the progress of their objectives, build an achievement portfolio and develop new skills.

- **Social collaboration technologies**, such as enterprise social networking and tools for content sharing and collaborative authoring allow colleagues to communicate better.

- **Intelligent assistants and analytics** turn information into insights about the external ecosystem and internal processes. Digital assistants are beginning to have a physical form, rather like robots that are involved in information flow and physical workflow.

- **Crowdsourcing platforms** offer alternative ways to source labour.

- **Virtual workspaces, virtual job fairs and virtual conferences** (online events) permit global employees and delegates to interact and ‘walk around’, engaging live at the water cooler.
In a nutshell, intelligent global digital processes support smarter execution of current work processes. They do this by enabling a range of various work design options that drive changes for the better within the company’s culture.

Creating these intelligent processes operating on digital models with enough support from some of the above mentioned tools can help improve the physical, cognitive and collaborative abilities of the workforce. This enables new work designs that can provide the HR function with considerable quality and cost benefits. It is possible for HR to improve the organization’s digital workforce, whilst mastering the techniques stated earlier and understanding how to efficiently incorporate them into daily processes and applications.

There are still challenges that HR will need to deal with such as pulling the existing technologies together to enhance their HR processes, while bridging the gaps in their HR technologies and processes. As Albert Einstein wisely put it, “I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots.”

Existing products currently used are not designed to openly support the process of re-design options. Organizations are responsible for managing their own transformational change and such legacy products may cause HR and other functions to either limit their efforts to gradual digitalization of their current processes, or completely avoid investing in this area.

What HR professionals need to understand, however, is that the workforce is changing. The increasing popularity of mobile, cloud and social technology has created new responsibilities. These require vastly different skills and competencies that are changing at a fast pace. Today’s generation of employees has grown up in this digital world, making them highly familiar with the ways this is shaping their lives.
Collaboration and social tools are already creating new ways to get work done. Candidates and employees expect these tools to be available to them, so that they can work internationally and across organizational divisions. Eliminating workplace boundaries and giving mobile access to data allows employees to take necessary actions, communicate outside their office, and make better decisions.

Digital tools also allow HR to identify the true leaders in their digital workforce through online reputation management and social networks. HR can work together with these leaders to get more things done and improve their processes and operations.

**WORKFORCE MOBILITY**

The new workforce comprises of a set of diverse people who interact within a networking community using new media constantly; it is thus crucial to provide a business environment conducive to their lifestyle. Organizations have had to change their policies to make them more flexible and collaborative.

However as these young employees are more conversant with the new technologies, they are better able to work efficiently with the advancement in technology. Their mindset is different. They tend to be more outspoken and demand freedom in their working environment. They seek to work freely, at their own pace, in their own way and without a lot of supervision in order to yield better results.

For most of the different functions in the business, including HR, to stay connected with this new generation of digital natives within the company, there is need for more interaction with them through these new technologies and the online world. For example, a standard procedure in most companies today is to ensure cohesiveness among employees who should work together as an engaged team communicating in real time despite the different geographic locations. This is one area
where HR can improve this digitalized interaction to better engage a dispersed workforce.

HR professionals therefore need to think about the strategic approach to the design of the organization and of the working culture, environment in order to keep up with the digital trends. Their ultimate goal is to create a successful workplace to ensure the satisfaction of all diverse groups involved, as IBM highlighted, “a social business is an organization whose culture and systems encourage networks of people to create business value”.

However, some businesses fail due to poor planning and inability to integrate new HR technology. Others fail due to lack of security of their digital content or due to insufficient information technology infrastructure to cater for a sophisticated digital back office.

In a real globalized digital company, employees are able to choose the most effective way to access any business application; organizations are able to provide employees with smart phones and tablets while others allow employees to bring theirs to work. This ability to choose their own personal gadgets at work enables a different kind of boost in morale and motivation among employees. The provision of these smart phones and tablets and other digital gadgets enables remote connectivity, faster internet access such as browsing and downloading, so the staff are able to interact and engage much better with their customers. Likewise, they will be able to understand customer needs more clearly and provide the right services that cater to current market needs for increased productivity.

**NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WORKPLACE MAKE PROCESSES EFFICIENT**

For companies to remain competitive they have to create workflows that are collaborative and connective. They must be
communicating, interacting and exchanging ideas even more easily and faster than ever with their employees wherever they are located. Harnessing information technology to ensure cutting edge digital sophistication will attract the next-generation workforce.

Remember what Bill Gates stated, “Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important.” The organization should have role models or so-called technologists in place for promoting collaboration through innovation and by using modern technology tools. This system of learning and sharing information through a central access point, leads to direct savings in management effort and infrastructure cost.

The key to attracting and retaining this global, diverse and digital workforce is by creating an environment that is conducive for them—it should be flexible, interactive and connected. It should enable the company to stay competitive as employees share ideas and information with their teams globally, keeping them up with the current trends in social and business transformations. Once again, Albert Einstein hit the nail on the head, “The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” This sums up how the technology we designed shapes the way we not only think but also work together.

However, the best way of making a widespread shift throughout an organization is for it to start out from the HR side. Designing a global digital workplace is a challenge, but through proper planning and using new strategies, the HR function becomes technologist. HR professionals themselves become more comfortable with data, as mobile technologies and social media have penetrated almost all aspects of businesses and their own lives. The bottom line is that HR should consider all this to maximize the full value and benefit to the organization.
CHAPTER III

HR LEADERS TO CHANGE THEIR MINDSET
TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DIGITAL HR LEADER

- Strategic thinking
- Future focused
- Business focused
- Data & analytics savvy
- Champion & negotiator
- Curious quick to learn & agile
- Open & authentic leadership
- Enabling, not controlling
- Willing to take risks
- Human sensitivity
Amidst this technology revolution, the objectives of HR leaders have remained fairly constant: to attract, grow, develop, reward, and retain the talent needed to achieve business goals.

So how well are CHROs doing? Recent Deloitte research found that “While CEOs and top business leaders rate talent as a key priority, only 5 percent of survey respondents rate their organization’s HR performance as excellent.” 3 They also discovered that in fact, “Only 30 percent of business leaders believe that HR has a reputation for sound business decisions; only 28 percent feel that HR is highly efficient; only 22 percent feel that HR is adapting to the changing needs of the workforce; and only 20 percent feel that HR can adequately plan for the company’s future talent needs.” 4

HR leaders are being called on to bring new skills and capabilities to meet the challenges of a digital, global, and dynamic business environment.

1. STRATEGIC THINKING

In the digital age of knowledge workers, the calibre of an organization’s talent will increasingly become a key differentiator. Technology will automate whatever can be
automated, but will leave untouched the sphere of human creativity and innovation.

So if talent will largely determine success or failure of an organization, those responsible for leading talent acquisition, growth, and retention will increasingly be in pivotal roles. That organizations are struggling to procure the quality of talent they require is evident in recent research:

- Almost three in four organizations report difficulties attracting critical-skill employees, and more than half report difficulties retaining them (Towerswatson, 2013).

- More than 60% of all companies cite leadership gaps as their top business challenge (Bersin, 2014); 83% of companies are seriously worried about their leadership pipelines and only 8% have strong programs to build leadership skills in their millennial populations. Retention and engagement remain the number two issue around the world (Bersin 2015: Predictions).

- 56% of executives see critical gaps in their ability to fill senior managerial roles in coming years (Boston Consulting Group, proprietary research).

- 63% of CEOs say they are concerned about the future availability of key skills at all levels (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014).

Furthermore, research indicates that those organizations who approach the acquisition and development of talent in a strategic way, achieve better business results.

Bersin found that “while most organizations are engaged in many types of talent management efforts, many companies lack a clear talent strategy with advanced processes in place. Our research finds that organizations which perform well
on business outcomes have a talent strategy. By contrast, of those organizations rated least effective at business outcomes, between 70 percent and 80 percent lack a talent strategy or are implementing a new strategy.”

“In addition, those organizations with a talent strategy are 4.2 times more likely to be in the top quartile of business outcomes. Our research indicates that this relationship holds true, regardless of organization size, industry, or geography.”

HR leaders will therefore need to bring a strong strategic mindset to the people challenges of their organizations. Whilst borne out by research, it is perhaps also intuitive that in an increasingly open, transparent, fluid global labour market, only deeply rooted strategic initiatives will prove to be difficult for competitors to replicate quickly.

2. CURIOUS, QUICK-TO-LEARN, AND AGILE

Perhaps due to its process and compliance focus, historically, the HR function has not commonly been associated with curiosity and agility. As the pace of technologic change and innovation grows exponentially, the solutions that work today will be ineffective tomorrow.

HR leaders will need to bring curiosity to their roles, identifying trends that could present challenges or opportunities, and actively enquiring and investigating. In an increasingly fast moving environment, those who are curious and quick to learn will gain advantage.

Agility will be another key differentiator, as HR leaders will increasingly recognize that just as product and delivery cycles accelerate, so HR solution lifecycles must accelerate.
3. WILLING TO TAKE RISKS

Again HR has often been characterized as risk-averse. How many times has HR lost their voice in strategic decisions or market innovations because of their focus on compliance, governance issues, and the potential problems they can foresee?

This cautious approach will not serve HR leaders well in an environment where safe, known solutions are unlikely to be found, and if they are, they will be yesterday’s solutions, and as such will fail to yield competitive advantage.

4. ENABLING, NOT CONTROLLING

With the advent of the Cloud, the predominant HR voice was one of concern about data security, about process control, and about governance issues. The arrival of social media tools was greeted by HR with a flurry of policies and controls to manage employee behaviour in these new environments.

But technology can be a great enabler, those HR leaders who focus less on the control issues (although guidelines will be needed), and more on the opportunities the technology provides will better serve their organizations.

Whoever can harness the immense potential of MOOCs for flexible and customized learning, and whoever can build strong authentic online collaboration tools and feedback mechanism within their organizations will yield considerable benefits. These will more than outweigh any costs of employees using personal social media tools during work hours.

5. FUTURE FOCUSED

When the pace of change is slow, it is often sufficient to be reactive and responsive. But in our fast paced digital world,
those HR leaders who are unremittingly future focused will be best placed to meet the talent challenges they face.

In talent acquisition, this may involve strategies that actively foster relationships with key talent long before vacancies are open. Talent pools can be managed, relationships can be built with potential candidates, pre-screening assessment can be carried out, and some investment can be made in strong candidates to make them enthusiastic about the organization. Strategic alliances can be built with communities and social media groups who align closely with your critical profiles.

Similarly a focus on succession planning will reduce lost opportunities and vulnerability when critical posts are left vacant. Only 32% of organizations have a steady supply of leaders at the top levels, and only 18% hold their leaders accountable to identify and develop successors on a regular basis (Bersin 2015: Predictions).

The underlying question of how an organization defines and measures talent is even more fundamental in this future focus. Whilst we have seen experience give way to skills, and skills be replaced by competencies as the most popular talent metric, a recent HBR article, says that “In a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment competency-based appraisals are increasingly insufficient… the question is not whether your employees have the right skills, it’s whether they have the potential to learn new ones.” (Claudio Fernández Aráoz, 2015).

HR leaders will increasingly be called upon to play a key role in identifying future opportunities, in assessing likely future strategies of key competitors, and of equipping their own organizations to complete well in tomorrow’s marketplace. To nurture this sort of future focus, HR leaders will have to cultivate and maintain good networks to obtain input
from diverse sources, as well as rely on their own intuition and judgment to spot which future trends are the most important.

6. BUSINESS DRIVEN

It has long since been the case that those HR leaders who are most immersed in the business, and who understand and actively participate in strategic business leadership, are most effective in delivering talent and people strategies to meet business goals.

It is perhaps a reflection on how many HR leaders’ failure to do this that over 40% of new CHROs are now being appointed from the business, and not from HR at all. (Deloitte, 2015).

The importance of this business focus will only grow as technology increases the pace of change experienced by customers, by organizations, and by those providing talent to the organization.

An unrelenting focus on the business, competitors, markets, and the external environment will serve HR leaders well in many regards. Firstly they will be more likely to anticipate and predict trends which will affect the organization's talent, and therefore they will be well placed to strategically plan ahead. Secondly this focus will ensure that the people and talent strategies they lead will be closely linked to the context of the organization and in tune with the direction in which it is moving. Thirdly, those with this business focus will establish the credibility and network of senior leadership contacts which will be necessary for implementing the engagement strategies that are so crucial to success in the global knowledge-based economy.

7. DATA AND ANALYTICS SAVVY

In the digital age, organizations have a lot of people data. HR leaders who realize the enormous potential of this data to enrich
people decisions and contribute to talent strategies will outstrip those who view this just as the output of operational processing. A recent study reports that, “In an era of rapid change, the role of CHRO becomes radically different and more demanding than ever….CHROs must be comfortable with adopting and embracing technology and analytics, which are integral to HR’s future success.” (Deloitte, 2015)

Bersin identifies four levels of maturity in talent analytics: Reactive – Operational Reporting, Proactive – Advanced Reporting, Strategic Analysis, and finally Predictive Analysis. They also found that only 15% of organizations believe that their HR teams have strong credibility in talent metrics and analytics today (Bersin, 2013).

Whilst HR leaders are unlikely to have or require a depth of technical knowledge, they will need to grasp conceptually the power that this data has, the asset it is, and the investment that is worthwhile to ensure that data is captured, structured, and analyzed in a way to best inform decision and strategy.

Just as market insights and customer insights are analyzed to inform marketing strategy, people and HR data analytics are increasingly a powerful contributor to successful HR strategies. HR leaders who bring strategic analytical thinking will be asking the right questions. Similarly they will be drawing on the data available to answer these questions, and thus better positioned for formulating sound solutions to tomorrow’s challenges. They will be building alliances with those who have the analytical and technical skills needed to make sense of big data, and to harness it to produce predictive analytics which identify the HR initiatives yielding business benefits, or not at all.

8. OPEN AND AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

Transparency is a key feature of our Digital Age. Consumers and employees alike have access to transparent, accessible
reviews and feedback about any organizations or product through Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Amazon, and a multitude of other sites.

Transparency and authenticity is also in big demand from leaders. Perhaps our awareness of the volume of data and the power of analytics available today causes us to look for confirmation that those leading us are being authentic.

In her article, *The Authenticity Paradox*, Herminia Ibarra claims that “Authenticity has become the gold standard for leadership”, a claim that is certainly supported by the volume of leadership literature dedicated to authenticity. She attributes this to two trends; firstly an all-time low in trust in our leaders in 2012 (Edelman Trust Barometer), and secondly a similar low level of employee engagement, with a 2013 Gallup poll showing only 13% engaged at work.

Whether this low trust and engagement is linked to digitalization and a movement away from more direct human contact at work will certainly be the subject of on-going research. For HR leaders, it provides an enormous challenge to harness the benefits of the digital age, whilst leading in an authentic and open way to encourage trust and engagement from colleagues.

**9. HUMAN SENSITIVITY**

It is widely acknowledged that the pace and scale of the technology transformation we are experiencing is unprecedented. The pace at which life is lived continues to increase.

What impact this increased pace is having on us as human beings is the subject of much research. Deloitte’s global human capital trends research identified that more than two-thirds of all organizations believed that their employees were
overwhelmed with too much information, too many projects, too many meetings and phone calls, and an always-on 24x7 work environment. (Deloitte, 2015)

How often do you check your mobile phone and emails? When your phone beeps to indicate a new message, how long does it take you to check? It is quite clear to most of us that we are living in an age of constant bombardment, leading to information and digital overload coming from all sorts of sources and devices. What effect does this barrage have on your stress levels, what is your ability to find diversions when you are tempted to procrastinate, your propensity for distraction, and your ability to focus and to identify real priorities?

As pioneers in this digital age, HR leaders will need to bring humanity and human sensitivity to play as they help their organizations balance the digital and the physical worlds. We see an increasing focus on wellness at work, mindfulness, and practical strategies to help employees to manage the sheer volume of data and information, filtering out the low priority.

Bersin’s advice is clear: “As more technology floods the workplace (smart watches, wearable devices, and even smarter phones), HR should take a hard look at the entire work environment—and advise business leaders about steps they can take to make work more humane, rational, and simple.”

10. CHAMPION AND NEGOTIATOR

Finally, HR leaders will need to bring the negotiation and political skills necessary to secure the resources needed to provide world class HR in the digital age. If an organization’s talent force is increasingly going to provide the competitive advantage, the calibre of the HR team, the investment in learning and leadership, as well as the investment in HR technology and analytics, will all be critical.
The idea of organizations establishing a “G3” group, composed of the CEO, CFO and CHRO is being adopted in many organizations. Elevating the CHRO to be part of this strategic inner-circle will provide an opportunity for real HR leaders to be instrumental in steering organizations, but will also quickly reveal where CHROs are not up to the job.


In a world of uncertainty in constant flux and where technology is a key indicator of progress, the HR professional plays a role that is more important than ever: to lead on paths never taken before, take decisions in new contexts, manage change, risk, and at the end of the day, help their organization to flourish in a new emerging digital complexity.

Just as we have been saying throughout this book, this revolution in which we find ourselves implies huge changes in many spheres. We are moving from analogue to digital. This revolution is transforming our understanding of the world and the way we interact with it, as well as how organizations operate and as a result, human capital management.

Regarding people management, there are umpteen innovations that shape a new digital environment for the sector’s professionals: big data, cloud, collaborative environments, new ways of working and more. Without attempting to become an expert in all these fields, the HR professional must indeed be very familiar with them and know how to move in the new emerging scenarios.

Even so, all this is not enough. It’s not enough for HR professionals and managers to be up to date; they must become
leaders, pioneers and innovators. In short, just like how this chapter’s headline reads, they must be strategic leaders in a global technological world, with a vision of the future and a human touch.

In this technological transformation from analogue philosophies, structures and environments, the role of HR professionals is essential from three angles:

1. No machine or algorithm can make truly strategic decisions, based on risk, ethics, and complexities, among others.

2. There is a misalignment between the analogical world and what technology offers: an existing lack of legislation in place for numerous situations.

3. Regional and local complexity requires clear, intelligible and inclusive leadership.

The HR professional must know how to adapt technology to the needs of their organization. As much as technology can deal with countless issues, such as revealing an employee’s ethnicity, it must know under which circumstances this can be done and when not. Technology, in short, never will keep track of “ethical” or legal directives.

Fulfilling local needs is also essential for this leadership. Along these lines, one of the issues that most frequently surfaces is that of compliance with the regulations of each country. And this is especially critical with regards to privacy and data security, for instance. Each country has its own legislation which varies geographically and over time. Thus, citing a specific case, for some organizations identifying where they will be hosting the data on their employees and the location of servers is so crucial. If these are in a country with laws that bring about substantial discrepancies in privacy management, it can end up triggering a problem for the company in question.
As we can see, technology advances do not stop the world from following its analogue path or from each locality having its own specific needs. That is why another of the key tasks of this strategic leader will be decision-making and risk management. In unregulated situations (often technology is ahead of the institutions), it will be necessary to make decisions by weighing out the benefits and risks. To manage properly, many factors and nuances must be taken into account. For the time being, it seems rather difficult for a machine to know how to do such tasks or to possess the criteria for making such distinctions, just as we discussed in the first chapter of this book.

Can one sole man do all this? Not necessarily. On this exciting journey, HR leaders must surround themselves with the best: experts in data analysis, legislation, innovation, collaboration and more. A good team will thus be the key to good strategic management.
CHAPTER IV

HR LEADERS CHANGING THE ORGANIZATION
Digital transformation, much has been written about it. It’s a favourite amongst consultants, analysts and researchers alike. It’s certainly a multifaceted process that promises to be challenging, beneficial and stimulating.

The objective of digital transformation in an organization must be to improve productivity and performance in order to achieve business goals. But what does digital transformation mean for organizations today, and more specifically what does it mean for HR leaders?

In their book, *Leading Digital*, the authors, George Westerman, Didier Bonnet and Andrew McAfee propose two major areas of investment in order to success in digital transformation. Firstly they point to investment in digital capabilities, and secondly investment in those leaders who are agents of change. Within this context HR leaders have a dual role to play. As leaders within the HR function they have opportunity to walk the talk and demonstrate what digital transformation looks like within their own team. In the wider organizational context, the acquisition and retention of digital talent, the development of digital skills across the employee population, and the fostering of digital understand at senior leadership levels will all be priorities.
A roadmap is presented here to guide HR leaders through digital transformation within their own organization. This roadmap identifies ten critical milestones along the path to successful transformation. Many HR leaders will be familiar with some of these, as they are generic to all successful change management programmes. Here they are placed specifically in the context of change and transformation in the digital age.

1. AUDIT THE DIGITAL CULTURE AND TALENT

An audit of the “as-is” state of the organization is an important starting position. This will both help to identify the key areas for focus, and also provide a good benchmark against which to measure progress.

An audit of digital culture and talent should include technology, cultural readiness, organizational structure, skills, and leadership. Which digital technologies have already been adopted to support collaboration and communication both internally and externally? What lessons have been learned during their adoption? How ready is the organization for digital transformation? What are the key change agents and where is resistance most expected? What priority does the current organizational structure and job design give to digital? What information is available on the digital skills and capabilities within both the employee base and the wider contingent workforce? Have effective metrics been developed to understand and measure digital skills and capabilities? How savvy and ready are the leadership of the organization to lead in this digital age?

All of these are critical questions to consider in assessment the current state, and will immediately begin to shed light on some of the opportunities and challenges that the digital transformation programme is likely to encounter.
2. DEVELOP A DIGITAL VISION

As with any change initiative, a clear and compelling vision of the future desired state is critical. HR leaders have an important role to play in facilitating this vision, setting down the change strategy with the senior leadership team, involving others within and outside the organization as relevant stakeholders.

The vision should clearly lay out a tangible picture of what success looks like—what is deemed to be achievable and possible, plus what implications this would have. Existing norms and the status quo are likely to be challenged, external perspectives sought, blue-sky thinking encouraged—all to ensure that the vision is truly transformative and not simply minor tweaks to the current business model.

While HR will have a role in facilitation, technical and digital leaders will bring specific knowledge and experience. Additionally those in customer-facing leadership roles will contribute the key customer perspective. Many organizations will choose to invite external perspectives and speakers to come in and challenge them with the latest on trends, research initiatives, and innovations in the marketplace.

Whatever the process, the outcome should be a compelling and tangible digital vision for the future which is easy to communicate throughout the organization.

3. DESIGN A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

Having already audited the current digital landscape and established a digital vision for the future, the next step is to extract the implications of how to get from here to there. What needs to happen for the organization of today to transform into one which will deliver the vision of tomorrow? The key areas of focus which are likely to be included in any
organization’s roadmap for change are:

• Technology: what investment is needed, in what types of digital technologies?

• Skills: what skill acquisition and development is needed, for whom, at what level?

• Organization: which changes are needed in how jobs and teams are organized and managed?

• Stakeholders: who are the key stakeholders, what is their likely reaction to the vision?

• Costs: what financial investment is required, what is the estimated return on investment?

• HR framework: what changes are needed, if any, in how people are hired, trained, managed, rewarded or assessed in the light of the new digital vision?

• Leadership: who is most capable of leading this transformation, what roles should different individuals adopt?

• Metrics: how should success be measured?

Each organization will develop a very different roadmap suited to its own context.

4. INITIATE THE ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION

Many of the principles in the implementation of the roadmap are common to all change programmes. The vision should be effectively and continually communicated. Top leadership should own and sponsor the programme. A wide group of employees should be involved in the details of the
implementation and invited to contribute to its content. Resistance to change should be allowed, listened to, and used to generate valuable and compelling discussions which illustrate the benefits of the change.

One of the key challenges likely to be faced is that digital transformation often involves considerable cultural change. Things will be done in different ways; roles will be defined differently; organizations are likely to be more fluid and less hierarchical; new skills will be valued; new ways of communicating and collaborating will be introduced. All of these, while potentially exciting for some, will be stressful for others, and care will need to be taken in their implementation. Generational differences are likely to emerge, as younger generations will be more familiar with the digital technologies and mindset than older colleagues. It will be important to reinforce the need for partnership—the digital skills of the young can benefit from drawing from the knowledge and experience of older colleagues.

Digital tools, such as collaborative social networks and gamification applications, can be harnessed in this implementation to facilitate global collaboration, discussion and feedback. However, support and training must be provided to those who are not at ease with these new tools to ensure that they are not excluded from this kind of global conversation.

5. BUILD DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

Any radical transformation in an organization will call for radical changes in how the organization is led and reactions may be rather mixed. Some current leaders may choose not to make this change or are unable to accept the new mindset and ways of working. Many other leaders will positively welcome the digital vision and have agility and be willing to contribute to its successful implementation.
Attention should be given to identifying which leadership capabilities and skills are necessary in the digitally transformed organization. Whilst some may be directly related to technology, many more capabilities are likely to be related to how people and teams and processes are managed, for example, an enabling rather than a controlling leadership style. There is considerable value in possessing an ability to deal with ambiguity and to feel comfortable when your own team members have areas of expertise that you do not share. Additionally, the ability to collaborate rather than dictate, by expressing views openly and confidently, better engages the parties involved in online dialogues. All of these and many more abilities and skills are likely to be critical in the leadership style that will be most effective in a digitally transformed organization.

HR leaders will play a critical role in identifying such leadership skills and the traits needed, as well as in providing evaluation tools and development programmes. This way HR enables the company’s leaders to work towards developing this digital skill set and qualities. However, tomorrow’s leaders will need to perform a balancing act in the way they use all their skills. Digitally enabled organizations are more likely to thrive with a ‘light-touch’ leadership that enables, encourages, fosters innovation and accepts change as constant. At the same time, these leaders must still shape and guide and direct. They will have the added task to find their own ways to achieve this balance within their teams.

6. ADOPT SUITABLE HR TECHNOLOGY

It is evident that with the increasing pace of automation and change in the digital era, organizational success will depend more and more on human talent, and how efficiently it is harnessed to deliver innovation and creativity.

Only those organizations that have the most suitable HR
technology will be able to manage their talent effectively, with tools to identify where talent is today and where it will be needed in future. HR teams will be able to focus on partnering with their business colleagues to best manage that talent, through relying on excellent HR technology to handle transactional processes and reporting that fell into the domain of onerous manual administrative activities in the past. Self service portals for employees and managers will form part of digital transformation, providing everyone with the tools and information they need in the time and place where needed.

HR leaders should therefore take time to consider the capabilities of their own HR technologies. How broad is the functionality? How valuable are the self-service portals? How strong are the HR analytics capabilities? How comprehensive are the mobile applications? How integrated are social technology tools?

With a myriad of HR technology tools in the marketplace today, it is advisable to look for an integrated cloud based system which provides for all HR processes. This kind of cloud solution will allow the technology to grow with your organization, delivering continual benefits.

7. TRANSFORM THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

It is evident that digital transformation calls for more than new technologies and processes. To successfully embed in an organization, substantive changes are likely to be necessary in the very fabric of the organization, impacting the corporate culture–how work is organized, how people relate to one another, and how value is defined.

The organizational transformation work is one of the most critical that HR leaders will be charged within a digital transformation. It will not simply be a case of tweaking job
descriptions and hiring a few new people. Jobs and teams are likely to be much more fluid, agile and engaged in cross-functional collaboration. As we have already seen, leadership is likely to be more light-touch and enabling. The challenge for HR leaders will be to harness digital technology in developing new ways to recruit, manage, organize, assess, reward and retain the talent needed to drive the digitally enabled organization.

8. INTRODUCE GLOBAL DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

With the new jobs and teams defined, the digital technologies needed to make the structure work internally can be introduced. Having identified which mobile, social, analytical technologies are needed, the IT function will now be heavily involved in the implementation of these. Ensuring integration and the ease of passing data and ideas back and forth will be critical.

As with any technology implementation, the technology is only one part, and the most challenging part is often ensuring that those who need to use it have the skills, confidence and knowledge to effectively participate. Again in our digital age, new learning technologies are being introduced continually. MOOCs can make a large volume of learning curriculums and structures widely accessible to those willing to learn; something that has never happened before. User communities and access to online experts can make learning much more interactive and real. Once again HR will have a critical role to play to ensure that the learning and development experiences offered in their organization result in efficient talent development.

9. DEVELOP DIGITAL TALENT SKILLS

CEOs share the concerns of HR leaders globally that talent is increasingly hard to find and retain in today’s global
connected economy. Those skills needed to succeed in the digital age are perhaps the most in demand.

Again the technologies available to support HR leaders in developing successful selection and retention practices are continuing to grow. Global social and professional networks provide for targeted talent searches; the big-data capabilities of HR systems allow for the analysis of high volumes of candidate data almost instantaneously; and online tools such as Glassdoor provide opportunities for employers to provide transparent employee-led insights into their working culture and style.

Having procured the talent needed, an embedded learning culture will be a prerequisite to make sure that skills and knowledge are continually updated. Online learning tools and communities empower employees to manage their own development, providing access to content, expertise and online communities of support. The digital age will see more people acquiring more digital technical expertise, but even more importantly, skills such as concise communication, analysis, facilitation, using data to innovate, and managing change will lead to success.

HR leaders will have a wide range of choice of tools available which will allow them to design the talent selection and development programmes. This way they will be able to attract the talent they need for their organization, as well as ensure that the existing talent is fully prepared to meet the demands of a truly digital work environment.

10. MEASURE SUCCESS AND LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Having already started with an audit of the current organization and its digital capabilities, it will be possible to consistently compare and measure the progress that has been made at regular intervals.
To what extent has the digital vision outlined been achieved? How fully have the business outcomes outlined been achieved? What is the return on investment over the period? Addressing such questions through this type of rigorous discipline will indicate the extent to which the digital transformation has succeeded. Similarly it will also point to those areas which need continued effort, focus and improvement.

Formal and detailed assessments of areas that support digital transformation are also necessary. This includes various other KPI analyses to discover what is still needed: competencies and skills by department to see if training efforts were successful, adjustments to positions to find out whether new ones must be opened and others dropped or changed. Similarly the state of digitalization of the organization’s technology must be evaluated, without the right kind of technology in place, digital transformation will be harder to achieve. Last but not least, the identifiable digital footprint of the transformed organization must also be mirrored in the digital employer branding. Lessons learned along the way can be helpfully captured to improve future activities and to avoid pitfalls.

As the pace of change is guaranteed to continue to increase, it is essential to realize that a digital transformation is a step in the right direction, and one that will need to be regularly repeated as the digital technological environment in which we live and work continues to evolve. Likewise the organization will have to continually readjust the strategy and plan new milestones accordingly.
Let’s do an exercise. Let’s think of the term, talent, as we understand it in HR and mentally form the first words we associate with it. In our mind’s eye, generic terms like competence, skill and knowledge will file past. Going in deeper, let’s think of the talent our organization needs, also in general terms without going into specific details. Probably the terms that have surfaced so far will now be accompanied by adjectives like international, multicultural, digital… Let’s stop here. We are going to pause at this point to reflect on the next idea, digital talent, and we are going ask ourselves the following questions around this idea: What is the state of the digital competencies of the members of our organization? Is it apt? What are we doing to attract and retain the best digital talent? Do we really know how to manage this?

Immersed in the booming digital economy and well into the 21st century, this ostensibly patent need is part of the great core competencies for the workforce in any organization, regardless of the sector it belongs to. Yet it still continues to pose challenges for managing both talent search and retention.
DIGITAL LITERACY

In the 2015 predictions, the famous Bersin report by Deloitte (Predictions for 2015: Redesigning the Organization for a Rapidly Changing World) reminds us how important it is to promote and work on competencies, particularly the technical and digital skills, as these directly affect the overall company performance and business success. Similarly it reminds us that the shortage of such skills in the workforce is a critical problem that has been pointed out repeatedly in studies published in recent years.

The study called, The Digital Talent Gap: Developing Skills for Today’s Digital Organizations by Capgemini Consulting in collaboration with the MIT Center for Digital Business in 2013 analyzed companies around the world. The study backs the Bersin findings and underscores the need to solve a predicament it exposes through the next fact: it is estimated that about 4.4 million jobs will be created in the big data field in 2015, but only one third of them will be covered. This is just a sample figure; the conclusion of the study reveals another even more compelling data: 77% of companies believe that the lack of digital skills is the main hurdle for their digital transformation. This shortage pervades throughout the organization and it is not confined to technological departments or companies that fall within the ICT sector. Where is the source and how can we fix it?

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves what the level of technological literacy in the current workforce is. To shed light on this, here is some more data drawn this time from the studies conducted last year by the European Commission’s initiative, the Digital Agenda for Europe: 47% of the European population does not have sufficient digital skills and 23% has none of them. The labour force data is more positive, but no less striking: 39% of European workers do not have the necessary digital skills and 14% do not have any.
The light such data shed so far show quite evidently that the problem is much deeper than it may seem at first sight, and solving it involves far reaching measures to address the problems from the social basis.

What do we do then to guide our company on the digital journey that the reality we live in imposes upon us? While governments and social agents work in their fields, in HR let’s do our bit as far as our considerable possibilities allow us to go.

The Capgemini Consulting study has identified a number of errors in practices for developing digital competencies undertaken by companies, among which notably is the lack of investment. Most of these failures are directly linked to the HR department which is not normally actively involved in the development of these skills and instead concentrates all efforts on promoting traditional skills. Furthermore, selection processes are still performed largely in the traditional way and training plans are not aligned with the digital needs of the organization.

After uttering *mea culpa* to acknowledge these mistakes, let’s find solutions. Obviously it does not just depend on HR, but the initiative and leadership for change can come from the department. How? By creating a roadmap in collaboration with all areas of the organization—from Marketing to R&D—for the first step towards the digital transformation of the organization: to create a powerful team with the best digital talent.
On the digital transformation journey of our organizations, those of us dedicated to HR are aware of the importance of developing a digital culture that is based on innovation and customer oriented. To achieve this, we are aware that the best digital professionals are needed as their capabilities are essential for doing the tasks in the new jobs we will create and also for helping us to evangelize this new vision throughout the organization. That is why we are particularly concerned about the state of talent within our companies. How can we lead all employees to digital transformation? Specifically, how do we make our talent go digital?

Digital talent is found both within and outside the organization, so our task is to strengthen the talent already in our organization and to recruit the talent we want, but do not have as yet with us. However, on this two-pronged path the point of departure is the same: define what profile is required to achieve the goals we set, what functions are to be developed, which skills and attitudes are necessary for this.

Based on the business goals to achieve within the digital environment, the first challenge we face will be to identify which new jobs we must create and which existing jobs we should redefine to include digital skills. Thus we may find
ourselves adding in our job profile catalogue, positions that range from the most generic like the Digital Manager, through to communication experts such as the Digital Marketing Manager or the Branded Content Specialist, to more analytical or development jobs such as the Big Data Analyst or the Open Data Specialist, for instance. Yet we may find that existing job posts within the company should include some new skills such as digital literacy, networking, network leadership, customer orientation, network communication and information analysis. To accommodate both new jobs and new competencies added to existing positions, we will also have to transform plans for careers, succession, evaluation, development, compensation and others. As this new digital environment is still very changeable, these HR processes need to be agile and adaptive. For example, in performance appraisals, we will have to create continuous multi-source feedback systems that enable objectives to be adjusted as often as needed and enable employees to actively participate through self-evaluation and even possibly set their own goals. In this process the manager becomes a coach. Moreover, liquid careers will eventually prevail over linear ones; so in parallel there will be joint-responsibility in development, continual learning, flexibility and localization among others.

However, to start developing these new or redefined positions, we must conduct beforehand a thorough audit of our digital talent to see which defined capabilities need to be developed and what kind of professionals we need to recruit or train up for our organization. Having already discussed the handicap of a widespread shortage of digital skills in the labour market, if we add to this, ambiguity in the definition of new emerging functions and the complexity involved in new knowledge-related work activities, then auditing task seems complicated at the very least, but not impossible. As mentioned earlier, we will be filling these posts with both internal and external talent. With internal talent, it is vital to boost a collaborative work environment that enables us to find the people who are
most open to digital change and those who could potentially cover the new digital posts if we train them up. Concerning training efforts, it is important to have a vision of constant life-long learning, with personal learning spaces, experiential training (action learning), e-learning, in a never-ending process of reviewing and updating skills and competencies. Special emphasis must be placed on collaborative learning, including learning communities and MOOCs.

Additionally, our selection strategy will be broad, multi-channel and strongly supported in social networks. A strong employer branding strategy must be developed and the concept of candidate changed and expanded to include employee care.

When developing our change management departments, as mentioned in the previous chapter, some of these digital professionals will become our digital leaders, who will help and guide different segments of the organization along the journey towards the transformation into a digital culture. These profiles will be particularly open to change and innovation as well as our allies throughout the process.

Besides structural changes, other changes in competencies and positions, together with the departmental transformation carried out by digital leaders, we must deploy all HR machinery available to promote cultural change. In this context, we can give free rein to our imagination and undertake many different types of tactics. Fostering a collaborative culture through social networks is a key point in this strategy, developing maximum transparency and collaboration. Such networks also enable employees to participate in collaborative innovation processes. Another of our allies is gamification, using game mechanics to adopt new digital tools and skills.

The retention of know how must also be factored in this entire process. As mentioned in the first chapter, the new
professionals of today are knowledge workers, so one of greatest values of our employees is their ability to learn and share what was learnt over the net. We have to develop comprehensive strategies for knowledge management.

Once this cultural change process has been initiated and continues to progress, regular assessments will be important alongside the performance appraisals of our leaders and employees. This will allow us to evaluate the work done and make the necessary adjustments. Forget annual audits and conduct more frequent controls, depending on what kind of agile organization we want to become.

Moreover, do not forget that this entire process we will not do on our own. In the digital transformation of the organization, the top executive HR leaders—the CHRO, VP HR or HR Director—will play a key role, but so will the CIO, as someone who has the capacity to bring technology closer to the members of the organization. He will also help us identify the digital skills gaps within our organization and define the specific profiles required with which we may not be familiar. Let us not overlook the Marketing department either, together we will develop various strategies, including employer branding, to acquire professionals specialized in new digital environments and who are still scarce. Hence we should work towards making the goal of the best talent is to join the company. We will also gain valuable support from marketing experts for evangelizing the principles of this new digital culture that we want to inculcate. Be reminded that in the world of transparency and communication, our own HR department must embrace marketing tactics.

We will not find our allies just on home ground. Union is strength and in this context collaboration is fundamental. Strategic partners with common sense and aware of our needs are going to be a great help to us. Without losing sight of the goals, we can achieve an advantageous win-win that supports
us primarily in areas in which we neither possess expertise nor master yet. Throughout the digital transformation process, transparency with our customers and strategic partners is fundamental.

Lastly, let us recap the ten milestones mentioned here:

1. Conduct an audit of digital talent
2. Define the new digital jobs
3. Define the new digital skills
4. Develop advanced recruitment strategies through social media and big data
5. Find the hidden talent of our organization
6. Develop the digital skills of all employees through advanced training plans
7. Appoint digital leaders
8. Renovate career, succession, performance planning and the entire employee life cycle according to the new digital requirements
9. Execute corporate strategies for digital cultural transformation: social networks, gamification, compensation, teambuilding and others
10. Plan and execute regular assessments of the strategy

After this brief analysis and drawing conclusions from these data and examples, are you ready to boldly lead talent digitalization in your organization?
VISION FOR THE FUTURE: WHAT IS WORK?

Will there be work in the future? That sounds like a crazy question to even voice. Actually perhaps it is more valid that you think. Let’s see why.

So far, over these pages we have discussed the nature and the implications of the new digital environments, the vital need for a mentality shift to better adapt to this new digital reality, the new robotic forces and the new knowledge workers that are shaping novel hybrid workforces and dynamics. Paradoxically, as we write this book, all this is already becoming obsolete. Every day our environment mutates and develops at break-neck speed, and even more so in this inevitable age of widespread digital transformation affecting organizations, their workforces, the labour market and the way we all work with one another. That’s why we speak of the importance of agility: our ability to adapt and readapt marks the difference between more advanced organizations and those left lagging behind.

Even if we were to tackle the future with this agility, we may still fall short in our thinking. If we were to really look far ahead, perhaps we should even speculate: will there a labour
market in the future as we understand it now? Once everything that can be mechanized has become machinery or something more, it will be impossible to continue to understand work as an 8-hour day, let alone anything like today’s working day which allows flexibility and teleworking. Besides, will there even be a working day? Research from Oxford University in 2013 predicted that in two decades, half the jobs in USA will disappear.

It looks like it is time to rethink the concept of work itself. Without detracting from the clichés, of varying paces of progress around the planet or that talk of such evolution is still totally surreal, we are seeing in more developed regions that work is increasingly less “a means of living which dignifies the human being”, typical of the post-industrialization era. When cities are extremely smart and robots take over all kinds of tasks—even as we speak, this is happening, for example, in Japan a company is already commercializing taxis without drivers—what will work mean?

It is rather futuristic and audacious to look deep into the crystal ball and predict what this work might be like years or decades down the line in the future. In a recent article in the Atlantic, tackling the prospects of a world without work, the journalist Derek Thomson resorts to science fiction. This is done increasingly when things no longer seem so outlandishly farfetched, and more of a feasible reality. In this light, Thompson paraphrases the speculative fiction novelist and essayist, William Gibson (also the “noir prophet” of the cyberpunk subgenre), that there may be fragments of the post-work future distributed throughout the present. Using such clues, Thompson envisages several different possibilities emerging as formal employment opportunities dwindle. These include creative communities, contingent workers, and also inactive people displaced from the formal workforce who enjoy their leisure time. None of these possibilities sound that futuristic today. Even so, perhaps the most probable scenario
for us is the trend for contingency work: independent people or “collaborators” who work together with certain organizations during given periods.

For the time being, so long as our society is sustained by the prevailing notions on professional development and work, and if as people do not feel realized unless they have tasks that contribute to the development of the world, then it is hard to imagine a planet where work completely disappears. At least our world, but you never know as much depends on what changes finally take root.

Thus HR professionals need to be extremely open to change and have a fresh outlook at all times, as any future is possible. With this fresh outlook, and as we have been saying throughout this book, the key skill for the future will be agility. HR managers of the future, or present, are like true marathoners: they must know how to always keep active, alert, and up to date with the latest changes.

The 21st century, and thereafter, poses many challenges for HR professionals in talent management. Contemplating the widest horizon of the future, we can talk of three challenges that will be critical over the next few years: the gap between knowledge workers and those without proper training, robotics workforce management, and finally, managing new kinds of work, which we referred to earlier as “collaboration” or “contingent work”.

Most important of all in this new landscape, the future HR professional not only has to learn to manage all changes, but must also become one of the architects of the future world. This will be vital for redefining what we still understand as work today.
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