

# 5 skills every future HR leader must possess

Organizations depend on their human resources department to attend to the company's most valuable asset — its people. In the constantly evolving modern workplace, such responsibility goes well beyond issuing paychecks on time or filing paperwork for new hires. For a business to remain competitive, HR needs forward-thinking executives capable of keeping up with demands made of and by its workforce.

Will up-and-coming leaders possess the skills, mindsets, and behaviors necessary to manage human capital effectively in an era where a whopping 85% of jobs that will exist in 2030 have not even been invented yet? No, according to participants in a recent [study](#) by the Society for Human Resource Management's Executive Network, HR People + Strategy (HRPS), and Willis Towers Watson. Only 35% of current executives surveyed believe that future Chief People Officers are getting the development they will need.

Where might tomorrow's leaders be lacking? Here's a look at five things current executives pinpoint as extremely important for those who aspire to one day take their place:

## Agility

The COVID-19 pandemic certainly brought into focus the need for organizations to adapt quickly to whatever comes their way. Embracing flexibility and change, though, isn't limited to this singular event. Advanced technology, the ever-expanding global marketplace, innovation, and other factors will make the ability to respond to conditions important for HR leaders and the workforces they manage.

Inevitable disruption of the status quo means tomorrow's HR departments must prepare to change their actions to suit the times. For instance, they may need to alter recruitment methods, find effective ways to retrain current workers, or redefine job descriptions to account for automation. While attending to these new objectives, HR still must continue to flawlessly perform traditional administrative and operational tasks central to their department.

In addition to honing their own ambidextrous mindset, HR leaders will need to encourage the same outlook throughout the company. Employees oftentimes do not respond well to change, and HR leaders play a top role in getting workers to shift priorities and embrace new policies.

## Digital business acumen

HR execs do not need to be tech experts themselves. They do, however, need to understand how technical skills fit into the organization and how changing technology impacts the workforce.

Take the case of automation. Over the past three years, the amount of work completed via automation went from 8% to 17%. Over the next three years, this figure should hit 30%. This increase will affect the day-to-day responsibilities of many current employees, and leaders will be tasked with how to make the best use of people.

Advanced technology also may mean hiring for specific skillsets. HR will need to figure out effective ways to attract and retain in-demand tech talent.

And, of course, operations within the HR department itself will continue to change with the times. Decision-makers must assess the value of automating certain administrative tasks to free up HR staff for other business activities.

## **Appreciation of data science**

Tomorrow's executives will continue to gain access to a huge amount of potentially valuable information. Those who know how to interpret the numbers can use key findings to make better decisions. Within an HR department, predictive analytics assists with issues such as pinpointing future talent shortages, figuring out which workers are most likely to quit, and identifying how well different benefits contribute to employee retention.

## **Dedication to work reinvention**

Outstanding HR execs should be lifelong learners hungry to gain skills and knowledge that keeps them relevant. They also need to generate this type of commitment to progress throughout the company. By 2022, more than half of all employees will require significant reskilling and upskilling — about a third of these up to six months of additional training. HR will play a large part in such training's delivery and acceptance by staff.

Shifting to remote operations during the pandemic opened the doors for permanent reconsideration of when and where work gets performed. HR execs will be a strong voice in company conversations about reinventing the workplace and forming policies that take both organizational and employee well-being into account.

## **Commitment to developing company culture**

Tomorrow's HR leaders face the prospect of dealing with on-site, hybrid, and remote employees as well as freelancers and other gig workers. Execs will confront the challenge of keeping all involved vested in a common mission and purpose.

Add to the equation increased demand for diversity, equality, transparency, and company accountability. The organization's brand — and the talent it can attract or retain — hinges heavily upon the successful navigation of these issues.

The cost of turnover in the U.S. stemming from workplace culture exceeded \$223 billion over the past five years. To promote retention and to attract quality applicants during projected labor shortages in many fields, a company needs to distinguish itself as a great place to work. For while many things change at an organization over time, one thing remains steadfast — the importance of its people.