

# FUTURE OF HR

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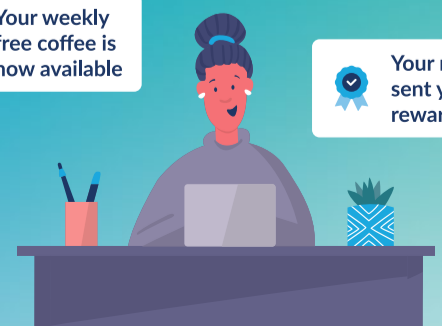


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Andy Randall continues, "Larger numbers looking for work, smaller resourcing teams, a turbulent economy and a major shift to virtual collaboration have changed the employment market beyond all recognition. To be successful in 2021 and beyond requires a new set of tools and a fresh approach to resourcing."



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## FUTURE OF HR

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### BURNOUT

# Who provides human resources for HR?

As employees struggle with job insecurity, health concerns and stress, we should spare a thought for human resources professionals who are facing unprecedented challenges

Jonathan Weinberg

Has 2020 been the toughest year ever for human resources professionals? Many experts think it has, with the coronavirus pandemic presenting threats to both employees' job security and wellbeing, as well as driving major organisational change with very little time to prepare.

In a period when remote working has become normal and negatively impacted the physical and mental health of the teams they look after, the key question is: who is taking care of the carers to prevent HR burnout?

The dangers are very real, as a survey for VMware suggests. Of the 950 HR directors in the Europe, Middle East and Africa region surveyed, 51 per cent worried relationships with their team and other colleagues would suffer as a result of remote working. A third admitted they felt more of a need to be online outside their normal working hours, while 28 per cent reported stress levels had increased as a result of this new pattern.

Research from HR consultancy LHH in UK and Ireland was even starker, showing 93 per cent of HR decision-makers feel more pressure than ever before.

Laura Welsh, head of HR at LLH, says: "HR professionals are being looked to by anxious employees and leadership teams during this difficult time, and are having to take part in decisions that require emotional intelligence, resilience and empathy. If HR professionals don't look after themselves, it can have an adverse impact on their ability to make these decisions. They should apply their own oxygen mask first."

Suggesting regular check-ups and one-to-ones, as well as being strict with boundaries, Welsh says these things are vital to "creating a safe space to express your feelings and discuss any issues that arise".

For many, this may be easier said than done. Charles Alberts, head of health management at global professional services firm Aon, believes human resources needs to look outside itself for the answer to HR burnout.

"There are various reasons for this, not least the stress we place ourselves under in recognising the significance and impact of our work on others and an expanding remit to provide greater support to people in the business."



10/000 Hours/Getty Images

Alberts describes it as "vicarious stress". "When we listen to others and how they are feeling, such as stressed, anxious, depressed, we run the risk of taking those feelings on ourselves and feeling overwhelmed."

"We may not take action to look after ourselves because we perceive what we're going through to be not quite as bad as those whom we have supported."

Supervision is one answer, similar to that received by counsellors and psychotherapists. "We don't currently adopt this practice as standard for HR,

line managers or mental health first aiders but, given the changing nature of these roles and increased emotional demands, we would be missing an opportunity not to adopt supervision principles that are common practice in clinical settings," he says.

Clinical psychologist Dr Nick Taylor, co-founder of Unmind, agrees. He says: "It's crucial we support HR professionals or the productivity and wellbeing of the organisation could suffer. Organisations must embrace technology, investing in mental health

platforms and tools that allow HR teams to learn about their own mental health proactively.

"It's important to ensure they too have an accessible and non-judgmental place to turn if they need support, so they can continue to deliver support for the workforce."

According to Culture Amp's *HR for HR* survey of more than 1,000 HR professionals in June, just 34 per cent of respondents felt able to switch off from work to make time for rest and only 43 per cent felt their levels of stress were manageable.

This could be why Peter Ryding, founder of the HRD PathFinder Club for senior HR professionals, says he has seen an increase in HR directors seeking external networks, coaches or mentors to discuss professional or wellbeing issues.

Other measures include the chief executive or C-suite offering HR professionals unpaid leave or greater levels of flexible working to combat burnout, alongside better access to employee assistance programmes. Additionally, the chance to outsource work and redeploy staff from other parts of the business to assist temporarily or permanently could help reduce strain.

But it is cultivating a positive culture around mental health from the top down that will ultimately open up channels of check-in and communication so HR teams can signal if they are struggling.

Chartered psychologist Lucinda Carney, founder of Actus, a virtual HR software platform, says: "HR professionals have been thrown in at the deep end, entering uncharted territory almost overnight, and often without training. It has been HR who have had to keep teams together, ensuring the cogs are still turning in organisations, while dealing with ever-changing business challenges and employee legislation. This sort of burden has begun to take its toll."

HR consultant Lesley Richards, head of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in Wales, firmly agrees, but suggests such sorely needed change is appearing slowly over the horizon.

"In non-COVID times, the question of who provides HR support for HR people is a long-avoided issue," she says. "But colleagues are now regularly asking after each other's wellbeing. More compassionate and understanding leadership, supported by campaigns such as #bekind or #hrtogether, will be a legacy of the pandemic."

CIPD 2020





# One unexpected casualty of COVID-19

Experts warn fewer fathers will take paternity leave due to the employment and economic shocks caused by the coronavirus pandemic

Bradley Gerrard

New fathers are thought to have been put off taking paternity leave during the coronavirus pandemic, fearful of losing their jobs. With the UK's unemployment rate set to rise above 7 per cent in 2021, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, experts believe fathers and non-birth parents could be less willing to take time off after a birth or adoption for some time to come.

"In terms of take-up of parental leave over the furlough period, I would expect there to be a significant decline in the numbers of people taking it," says Jon Taylor, employment law specialist at EMW. Taylor believes the economic uncertainty created by coronavirus would encourage workers to "keep their heads down and not create hassle for their employer". Although there is no hard data yet to support this assertion, others share the same view.

"For people worried about losing their jobs or who are more at risk of becoming unemployed, I could imagine that such people would try to avoid paternity leave," says Dr Christopher Rauh, lecturer in Economics at the University of Cambridge.

In particular, this would be the case for shared parental leave, which allows parents to split 50 weeks of leave after a birth or adoption, and is available beyond the statutory two weeks qualifying fathers and non-birth parents are entitled to when their child arrives. Beyond time off, paternity leave gives fathers the chance to connect with and feel responsible for their child.

Rauh says research shows the positive effects of paternity leave on the normalisation of gender roles. "When men take paternity leave, they are more likely to take on household duties and more likely to spend time with the children," he says. "The risk [with the pandemic] is that we see a reversal of this, with the move away from traditional roles being put at threat by the crisis."



Koly Sikkema/Unplash

**“The mother has still been the one expected to do all the home-schooling, while the father has worked from his home office**

In addition, women are more likely to have lost their jobs during the pandemic and so have taken on childcare responsibilities, says Rauh. His research indicates women were more likely to either initiate being furloughed or put on furlough, mainly due to their role as mothers.

"I suspect many thought it would be temporary, but it might lead to permanent changes in the gender balance because if you spend time out of work, it reduces your chances of getting work, and your wages, in the future," he says.

Lockdowns have afforded many working fathers more time at home with their children. But this has largely been in place of the commute they no longer do, rather than a formal break from work and doing more around the home.

"Anecdotal evidence suggests the mother has still been the one expected to do all the home-schooling, while the father has worked from his home office," says Helen Astill, managing director of Cherington HR, adding that while she had not

witnessed a drop-off in statutory paternity leave, shared parental leave remained extremely rare.

Even before the pandemic, two thirds of new fathers were failing to take paternity pay in the year to March 31 because of the low level of statutory compensation.

At £151.20 a week, or 90 per cent of their average weekly earnings, whichever is lower, the financial disincentive is usually a crucial impediment to fathers taking paternity leave. And an economic downturn could exacerbate this.

"The problem is that men often feel they need to fit into the societal

role of the breadwinner for their family and, with a global crisis and an economic downturn to contend with, it can be hard to rationalise taking time off work when they could be earning money," says Jamie Mackenzie at employee benefits specialist Sodexo Engage.

"Businesses therefore need to be sensitive to this fact when discussing paternity leave with employees and outlining the options on offer."

For companies keen to modernise their paternity leave policies, experts say it's important managers listen to their staff about what they want.

FTSE 100-listed insurer Aviva offers all new parents a year's leave with the first 26 weeks on full pay, something which has led to an equal 50-50 split in male and female staff taking parental-related leave in the year to the end of October.

Such a generous offer is rare in the UK, but Anthony Fitzpatrick, Aviva's employee relations and global policy lead, says any improvement to parental leave policies is positive.

"Not every organisation can offer members of staff paid leave for 26 weeks, but if they listen and engage with their employees, they can make a small change that's relevant to their company and affordable," he says. "Small changes can make a huge impact on the lives of employees and their families."

An important step is to make paternity and maternity leave packages consistent and ensure shared parental responsibilities are represented in a company's culture.

Firms must also actively share information on paternity and shared leave, especially as research by meeting provider PowWowNow in March showed just a quarter (25.9 per cent) of firms provided details without being asked.

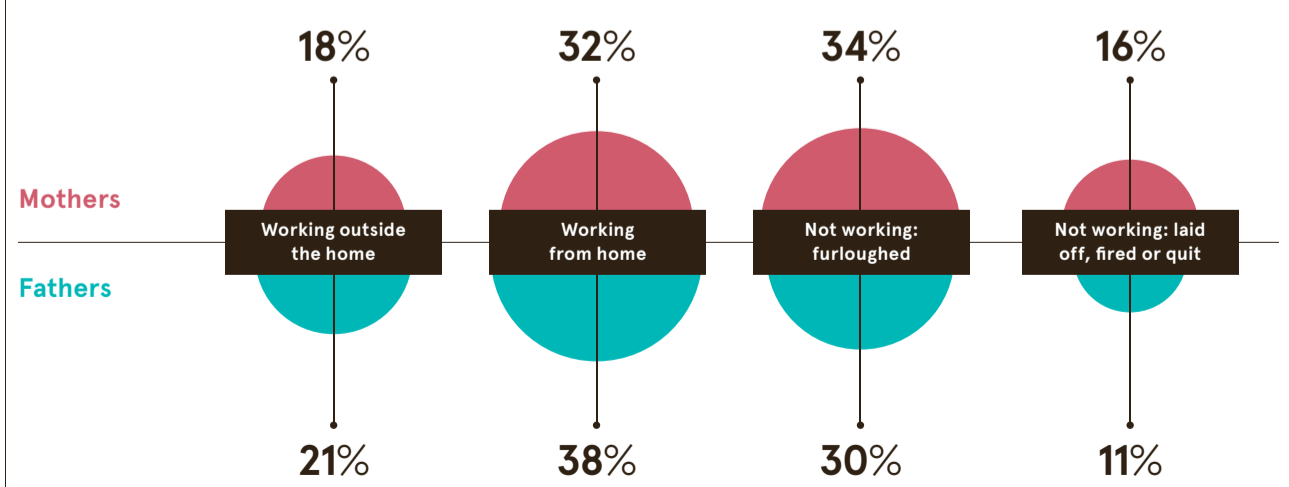
This lack of transparency could help explain why just 3.8 per cent of eligible couples applied to use shared parental leave in the 2018-19 tax year, according to HM Revenue & Customs.

And coronavirus isn't helping. Jobs website DirectlyApply found the number of job posts on its site that mentioned paternity leave fell by 90 per cent between January and October this year.

Commentators agree the onus is on the individual to take parental leave. But they also believe workplaces must support fathers and non-birth parents to take leave to help in the drive for gender equality, something that will benefit everyone in the long run. ●

## MOTHERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE STOPPED WORKING DURING COVID

The number of mothers who have been furloughed or laid off is significantly higher than the number of fathers



Institute for Fiscal Studies 2020

## 'COVID is not an inventor. It is a time machine that has pulled the HR profession forward'

More people have moved to online shopping and learning in the last five months than in the past ten years.

2020 was the year HR changed forever. In HR technology terms, it turbocharged the shift to online. The profession has endured a global crisis, one unheard of in our lifetime and for which the future economic, social and human impact is still unfolding. The events of 2020 have reinforced in me that the future of the workforce is changing more dramatically than anyone can predict, and it's led to fundamental changes in our labour force and economy.

That's why the statistics behind our in-depth research this year *Why HR Projects Fail* are both scary and heartening. HR has been stoical in this crisis, the unsung hero and superhero on the leadership team, leading remote working, contingency planning and repeated business transformations.

HR leaders recognise all models were broken: business, leadership, strategy, culture, engagement, compensation, learning. The radar organisations flew into this crisis with hasn't worked and won't be the one they need flying out. This is why the research we're working on behind the scenes is fundamental as CHROs and the C-suite rethink how they do business and retool their organisations for the real-time COVID economy.

At UNLEASH, we've always asked our industry to call out the truth for full clarity and integrity; to clearly define what's working, what isn't and explore HR's direction of travel.

Our *Why HR Projects Fail* report formulated 8 Golden Rules for successful HR projects that enable leaders to get the best out of the systems they commission over the next 12 months.

We gathered perspectives from over 1,000 global HR leaders, representing an estimated \$4 billion of managed HR tech budget.

Based on our analysis, we've identified that project excellence correlates with attention to eight critical factors. I'm happy to share 1 and 5.

**1. Focus on outcomes**  
Ask the question, what do we need to achieve? Leadership teams must understand their objectives before signing expensive contracts. Organisations that have clear goals and stick to their vision

are more likely to achieve transformational outcomes.

Imagine the contract has been signed with the vendor or service provider. Think of the questions you now need to ask yourself, your team, and your organisation.

Don't sign a multi-million-dollar HR technology contract and start asking questions on business strategy, resources, finance, IT, user adoption, language, culture, data management, integration, training and return on investment afterwards.

**5. Build on solid data**  
Data that's not clean or ready is the most frequently encountered challenge for HR tech projects.

Predictive became redundant in this crisis. It wasn't designed for this level of chaos or a virus turning the global economy on its head with on-and-off lockdowns. That said, HR analytics can serve a much bigger purpose over the next six to twelve months.

Think of the skills your organisation will need to match your business strategy in 2021. This crisis has put strategy firmly in the hands of the CHRO. In a world of never normal, business and front-line leaders must be armed with HR reporting that enables us to understand who's coming back to the office, who's staying at home, and the hybrid worker who loves both, and when.

HR hack for 2021: if you don't have data scientists in your HR department, steal them from IT.

HR and workforce tech is coming of age under the spotlight. Getting it right means HR can become the business value driver it's always aspired to be. ●



Marc Coleman  
Founder and chief executive  
unleashgroup.io



## Shift performance management to drive business growth

Performance management: do it right and it can fast-track company growth; do it wrong and it can erode the foundation of your employee experience

There's no doubting the fact 2020 has brought huge changes to the way we work and do business. Our slowly evolving methods and procedures have been forced into hyperdrive. Light was cast on outdated processes that continue to hold business growth back.

But while it's long been no secret that constant and clear feedback is what enables everyone to move in the right direction, it's only recently more companies have realised the annual process of evaluating the work of employees, and paying or punishing them accordingly, is increasingly out of step with their overall goals.

Performance management is broken and it has been for a long time. This year has only underscored just how critical it is companies fix it. Employees have long come to fear traditional performance reviews and their unnecessary bottlenecks, which slow down the flow of much-needed feedback and guidance, and adds to existing frustrations. Without continued, clear insight on how to best meet the needs of the business, employees are unable to be effective in their roles.

Many organisations are now moving to more frequent growth and development-focused conversations between managers and employees. Changing attitudes towards performance management aren't just driven by business needs though. Jack Altman, co-founder and chief executive of Lattice, a people management software platform that enables people leaders to develop engaged, high-performing teams, believes something bigger is at play.

"Continuous people management highlights a shift from accountability

to growth," he says. "Employees want more than a paycheck. They want to understand how they impact the bigger picture and how they can successfully accomplish their career goals. Continuous feedback gives employees ongoing insight to understand and adapt to business needs and expectations, so they can become top performers."

If nothing more, 2020 has demonstrated the need for businesses to be agile to the changing climate around us. As our world shifted, the human resources function has needed to stretch beyond just compliance into a strategic arm, charged with enabling the continual success of their people. The need to simplify and drive efficiencies has become increasingly clear. To meet these evolving needs though, HR technology is rapidly pivoting to focus on supporting this new mission and meeting new business and employee needs.

"HR technology should mirror transformation of the HR function," says Altman. "As HR's mission and scope evolve to meet business needs, leaders should look for tools that not only enable performance management, but

also provide insights into the engagement and growth of their teams."

With employees actively asking to be more involved in their career growth, companies are looking for new ways to ensure managers give this support and new tools to help make these discussions more collaborative and structured. Software that's able to provide transparency and alignment enables both employees and their managers to hold more structured and impactful conversations.

Top-tier performance management software solutions are easily used by both people teams and employees alike. They provide a singular front-end experience for employees, while offering deep analytics to people teams and management. They also enable managers to share guidance and growth paths while giving people leaders better understanding of how top performers are experiencing the company. They take into account the near-term and longer-term needs of their employees as they grow within the company.

We're all living in especially disruptive times, when company success depends on rapid pivoting. The ability of organisations to engage and bring their staff with them will be what helps them get through these tough times and beyond.

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**“Continuous people management highlights a shift from accountability to growth**

To learn more about continuous people management or Lattice please visit [www.lattice.com](http://www.lattice.com)







ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

# New tools to tackle bias

The technology grabbed headlines for perpetuating discrimination in recruitment, but new artificial intelligence solutions can help root out the biases holding talent management back

Francesca Baker

What's in a name? When it comes to hiring candidates, a lot. Names can reveal our gender, ethnicity and even age, and these revelations can leave the door open for bias.

Recruitment bias both perpetuates inequalities and impacts commercial success. Human resources teams need to be hiring a diverse workforce because it's good for society and good for business, but too often old ways of thinking trip up diversity efforts before they get started.

Advancements in technology might help. Artificial intelligence (AI) in HR has had some high-profile mishaps but, used correctly, it can hugely increase equality of opportunity.

A report from talent management software company Headstart found 38 per cent of hiring managers in the United States actively admit to discriminating against potential employees, based on their protected characteristics. But discrimination can occur even with strict diversity

and inclusion strategies in place, often because we are unaware of our own biases.

It starts before candidates reach the interview room, with bias in job listings. A milestone piece of research in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* showed adverts in more male-dominated fields, such as engineering, frequently used wording which is typically interpreted as masculine, including terms such as "competitive" or "dominant". That was in 2011. Eight years later, job

**“We cannot assume technology will correct human bias. We need to build ethics into the entire process”**

35%

of HR professionals believe their organisation has the statistical capability to check whether their talent acquisition processes are free of bias

65%

agree that AI technology has the potential to improve diversity and inclusion

IBM 2019

Johnson increased the proportion of under-represented candidates by 22 per cent, simply by changing the language they used.

Applying for a job is merely the first step, however, with the interview itself offering further opportunities for bias to creep in.

AI interview platform Metaview applies natural language processing to job interviews to help organisations reduce bias and inconsistency. It automatically records and transcribes interviews, providing hiring managers with data and insights which can help inform their decision-making.

The platform also offers interviewers guidance, with feedback on metrics such as the structure of the interview or their rigour and consistency in asking questions. "Metaview enabled us to scale our hiring quickly without compromising on quality, as well as reducing interview bias," says Liz Savory, chief of staff at software company Wave Financial.

Talent matching platform pymetrics is also using AI to improve fairness and inclusion in hiring. The tool conducts behaviour assessments designed with specific job roles in mind, rather than simply right or wrong answers. The assessments have been rigorously tested for bias across gender and ethnicity, and come with adjustable options for those with disabilities. Using the tool, one leading investment firm saw female representation of candidates increase 44 per cent and application to offer for females up 62 per cent.

Despite these and other positive advances, worries over using

site Adzuna found 60 per cent of all industries in the UK still had a significant male bias in their job ads.

But help is at hand. Ethical AI systems, trained with appropriate algorithms, can help parse job adverts, weeding out language that causes problems and making them more inclusive.

British consumer giant Co-op is working with augmented writing platform Textio on one such initiative. Using AI, the tool can reveal hidden gender bias in writing and suggest amendments. It can also be aligned with company values, identifying language which is most likely to appeal to inclusion-minded people.

As part of a larger company effort to improve hiring diversity, pharmaceutical company Johnson and

AI in HR remain. "AI is designed by humans so it is vulnerable to the biases of the people who develop the system," says Hayfa Mohdzaini, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's senior research adviser in data, tech and AI. Without due process and care, there is still nothing to stop AI simply replicating the biases of its programmer.

Another issue is the lack of outcome data at mass scale. There are enterprising tech startups developing potential solutions, but will they solve the major issues? Amazon stopped using their AI hiring systems when it was found they perpetuated bias against female applicants. When a global monolith using technology to underpin a multi-billion-dollar empire can't get it right, it should give HR professionals at smaller companies pause for thought.

Aon's AI hiring assessment solutions have been used by companies such as Deloitte, Burger King, Siemens and O2. Yet Aon's director of global products Richard Justenhoven is cautious. "Letting AI models self-drive with their own judgement calls is not right. Don't treat them as omnipotent tools," he says.

When it comes to using AI in HR, not all responsibility can be left with technology. HR leaders must play a role.

Learning algorithms do exactly that – learn – from data fed into them. High-quality input should be tested and adjusted regularly. And HR needs to monitor outcomes, checking AI-aided recruitment processes are not negatively impacting minority groups.

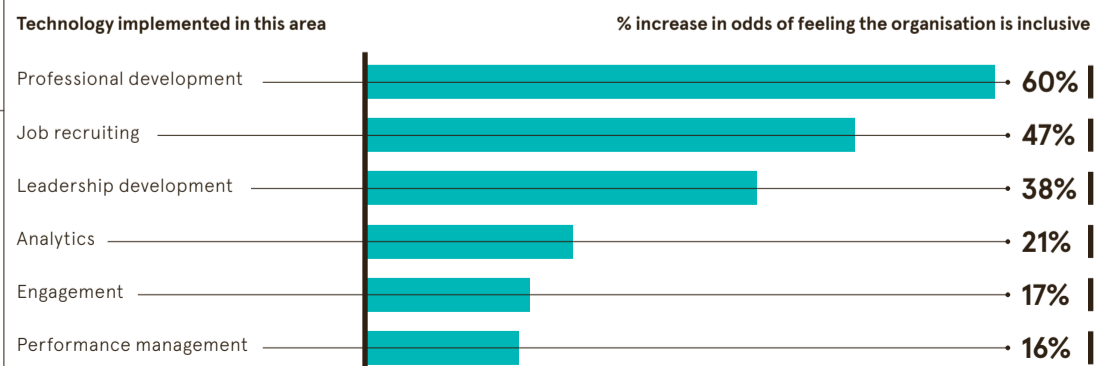
IBM Research has launched a series of toolkits and resources to help organisations check for and correct bias in AI systems. They also help AI designers and developers ask the right questions about the social and ethical aspects of the technology they create.

Michael Hind, IBM distinguished research staff member, says despite advancements there is an essential need to address and govern how an AI model or service is constructed and deployed.

Elizabeth Adams, of the US Digital Civil Society Lab in partnership with the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity, at Stanford University, concludes: "We cannot assume technology will correct human bias. We need to build ethics into the entire process, including an ethical auditing process." ●

## HOW TECH CAN BOOST D&I EFFORTS

Using AI, machine learning, natural language processing and sentiment analysis to create a diverse culture can improve the odds an employee agrees their organisation is inclusive.



O.C. Tanner Institute 2020



# Putting people at the heart of digital transformation

Most digital transformations fail because companies neglect the crucial people element. Getting that right requires a unique, embedded and agile approach to talent acquisition

Digital transformation has shot up the corporate boardroom agenda, with organisations racing to keep up with rapidly evolving customer expectations in the digital age. This is particularly visible in the retail sector where, before the coronavirus pandemic, 87 per cent of customer experience journeys were already starting online, according to Salesforce research.

But the need to transform transcends all sectors, as agile "born-tech" startups disrupt traditional industry incumbents weighed down by bloat and legacy.

If the pace of change wasn't fast enough already, coronavirus has dialled it up further. By forcing even the most vehemently analogue consumers, and indeed businesses, to interact and carry out tasks online, it has left organisations with no choice but to meet their customers where they are on digital channels. The pandemic has subsequently accelerated digital transformations by six years, according to research from Twilio.

However, simply taking the step to embark on a digital transformation by no means guarantees success. The cold hard truth is 73 per cent of digital transformations fail, an Everest Group

study shows. And one of the most common reasons for this is companies prioritising technology over the importance of people.

"Digital transformations fail when people are not brought along with it and they don't understand the 'why,'" says Daniel Goldstein, group chief executive of Elements, which provides strategic consultancy and in-house talent acquisition to some of the biggest born-tech and "going-tech" businesses in the world.

"If people don't understand the 'why' of transformation, they're not going to get on board with the 'how' and actually delivering it. You can buy the best technology, but unless your people are absolutely brought into it, and are really driving it, it's just not going to do what you want it to.

"Transformations also fail when they're forced onto people. A fixed approach to solving problems doesn't work. If the people at the end of processes, who are actually doing the work, don't feel it's working from them, they're not going to adapt the way they work.

"What might work for your people in digital might not work for your people in finance or sales. Approaching it as a one size fits all is a mistake. There are

Born-tech organisations have brought this to the market and their reward is the flexibility and adaptability that allows them to thrive.

To keep up, going-tech companies need to first understand how many people in their current workforce can be redeployed or retrained to work in a new digital environment and how much talent needs to be acquired. This requires effective workforce planning and support in the thought process.

Once they've done that, organisations then need to decide how to supplement existing talent with new talent, bringing in the necessary skills to support transformation. This might mean recruiting hundreds of new people because there is no relevant talent in house or cherry-picking talent in certain areas.

"You need to learn as a company where you are, in terms of the tech you have and what you're looking to do, and make sure you hire people who have undertaken those types of projects before," says Mike Scullion, managing partner at Elements. "If you're a going-tech company going through a digital transformation, you probably don't want to bring people in who have only worked at born-tech companies because they haven't seen the transformation from a traditional business to a more digitally focused one."

Agile is more than a methodology, it's a mindset that focuses on failing fast and learning fast. Allowing failure to be part of a company's psyche requires a major cultural shift in the way businesses have worked previously.

Elements' embedded partnership model is designed to build and accelerate the success of digital transformation agendas through people, connecting big strategic vision to the talent capable of bringing it to life. For each partner Elements works with, it builds a bespoke team of embedded consultants and, by advising from the inside, its people can go deeper and inspire more meaningful change. They truly understand each company's mission, values and culture, and then convey all of that to the wider talent marketplace.

Having pioneered and built this unique model around its first embedded partners, themselves among the biggest global brands, Elements has

since rolled it out across both born-tech and going-tech organisations around the world.

Its experience with leading born-tech businesses, in particular, is hugely appealing to large corporations embarking on digital transformations. Being involved from an early stage in the growth of these digital natives, and building the systems and processes that allowed them to attract, hire and deliver talent in hugely competitive areas, provides a blueprint. However, adapting to the bespoke needs of a going-tech company is the key to success.

"If people didn't understand digital was the future before, they certainly will now," says Goldstein. "Companies that hadn't already started digitalising have suffered the most during the pandemic and will continue to. We partner with organisations to understand their mission and enable them to successfully execute them. We're there to supplement and support them internally, working with talent acquisition and human resources teams to provide the firepower and knowledge to drive power-centric digital transformation.

"Our passion for outstanding candidate experience and our unrivalled stakeholder management, treating our clients as partners and being treated as equals by them, is what drives our success. The opportunity to digitally transform is now and people should be embracing this moment to adapt their environments and cultures for the future."

For more information please visit [weareelements.io](http://weareelements.io)

**elements**

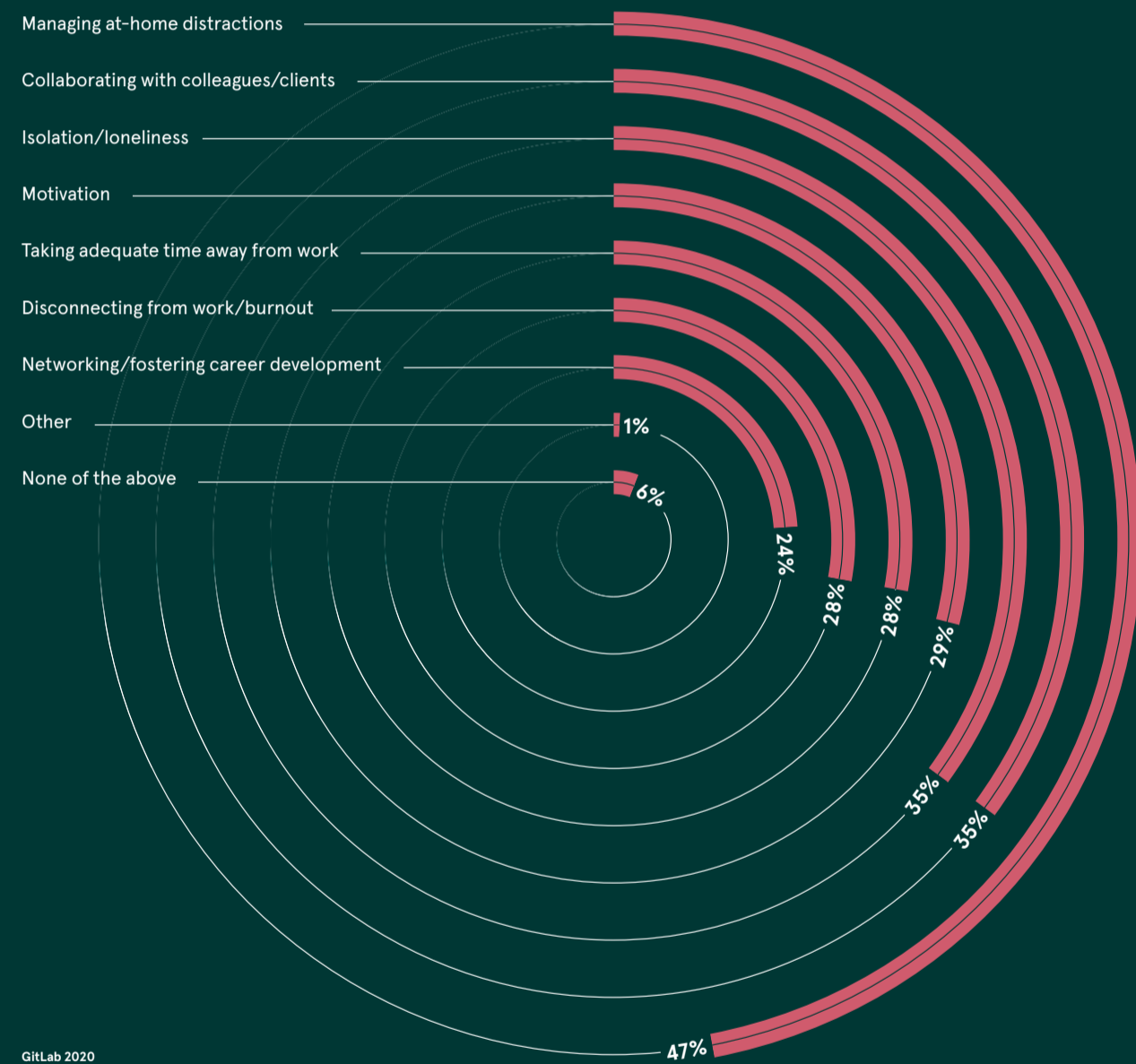


# PEOPLE PROBLEMS

Not only has COVID-19 resulted in unprecedented changes in the way office employees work, it has thrown unexpected challenges at human resources professionals the world over

## TOP CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

Survey of employees who work remotely or have the option to and are in roles with digital output



GitLab 2020

85%

of HR professionals say they can be effective working remotely, compared with just 66 per cent of all other workers

LinkedIn 2020

72%

of office workers would like a combination of office-based work and remote working moving forward

Slack 2020

34%

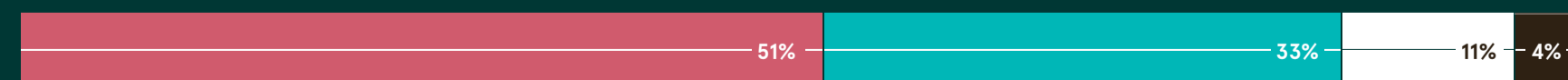
say a lack of social interactions is likely to impact their mental health if they are to continue working remotely

PwC 2020

## KNOWING WHAT YOU'RE DOING

Remote workers were asked if they know exactly what is expected of them as they work remote, such as working hours, availability and productivity

■ Yes - everything is crystal clear to me     ■ Almost - I feel expectations have not been formalised  
■ Not really - I'm only accountable for my own productivity     ■ Not at all - I do not feel we have set standards for remote work availability and productivity



\*Numbers do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding

Wrike 2020

## INTERNAL TENSIONS

IBM 2020

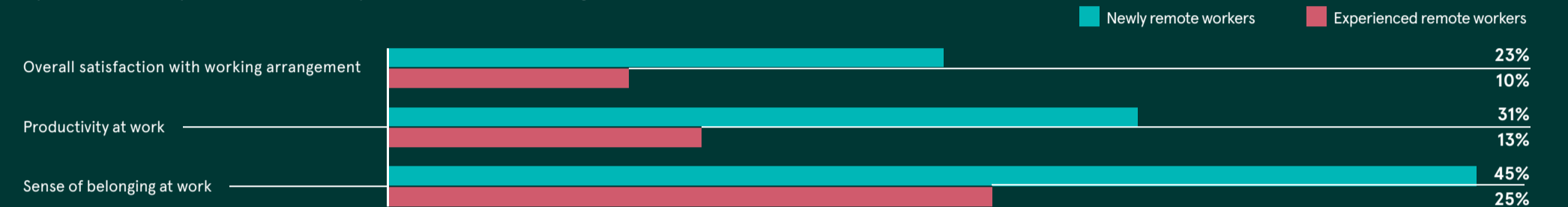
How employees and executives view organisational support during the pandemic



## REMOTE NEWBIES ARE STRUGGLING

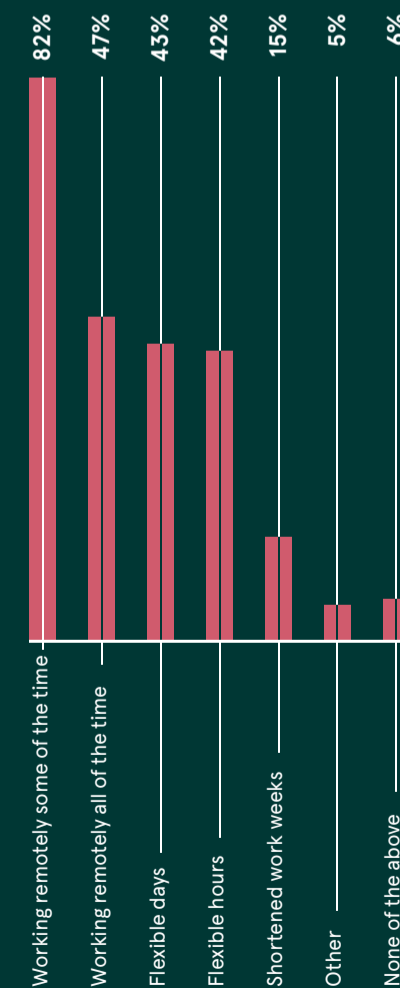
Slack 2020

Experienced and newly remote workers who say WFH is worse for the following reasons



## HOW FLEXIBLE WORKING MIGHT CHANGE AFTER COVID-19

Percentage of business leaders who are intending to deploy the following strategies



Gartner 2020

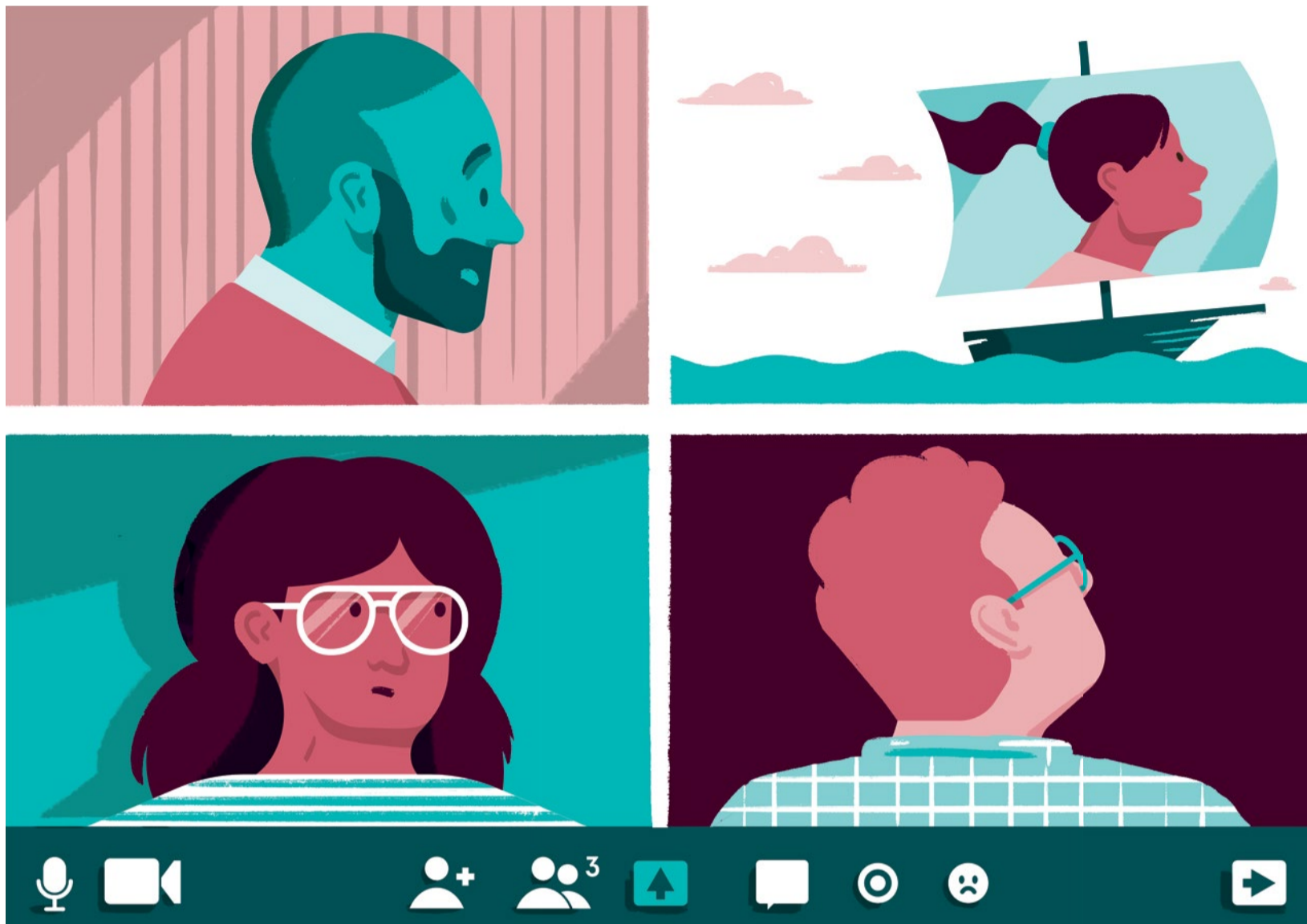
## MAINTAINING PRODUCTIVITY

Whether onsite or remote workers are as or more productive than before the pandemic



Boston Consulting Group 2020





EMPLOYEE ATTRITION

# Why you might be about to lose vital talent

The coronavirus pandemic has given employees time to assess what they want from their job, so businesses must be vigilant about wellbeing and progression to avoid churn

Chris Stokel-Walker

**E**mployee attrition can be a difficult challenge for businesses at the best of times, but the coronavirus pandemic and the chaos it has wrought on workplaces compounds issues of staff retention.

Employee engagement has become a major issue as workplaces become remote: UK public service productivity fell by a third in the second quarter of 2020, according to the Office for National Statistics. And world-changing events like

pandemics crystallise thoughts about the future. Some employees may be re-evaluating what they want as a work-life balance and coming to the conclusion they need to leave the company.

"I've never seen human resources more prominent in the workplace," says Sir Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology and health at Manchester Business School, and president of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. In a competitive business world, where a number of employees are likely to look at changing careers, making sure you attract and retain talent is key.

Data compiled by the Health and Safety Executive pre-pandemic found 57 per cent of all long-term absences from the workplace were down to stress, anxiety and depression. That's likely to be compounded as employees find themselves away from the collegiate atmosphere of the workplace, left to fend for themselves against tough deadlines. "How do you pick people up remotely who aren't coping?" asks Sir Cary.

It requires building robust relationships with colleagues outside work-oriented goals to reduce the rate of employee attrition. This starts at the very beginning of the process.

"Everyone needs to look at their induction processes and think about whether they need to widen them to make people feel part of the organisation," says Professor Heather McGregor, head of Edinburgh Business School.

She recently did an entire interview process for a new position at the same time as another new colleague and it was months until they found a way of working together efficiently, when they were finally able to thrash it out together in a physical room.

"It's difficult to build relationships over Zoom," says McGregor. "When you arrive in a company, the

induction needs addressing, and the second thing is how do people build relationships? What are you going to do to help people who have never worked in the company, who have only ever been online?"

Many things have been put on pause or stalled as the pandemic bites, but one thing that can't be the potential for workplace progression. One of the biggest contributors to employee attrition is workers feeling they've reached the limit of where they can go in a company. Professional growth and a sense of purpose drive employees the most to work well. Knowing there's still the potential for promotion is key.

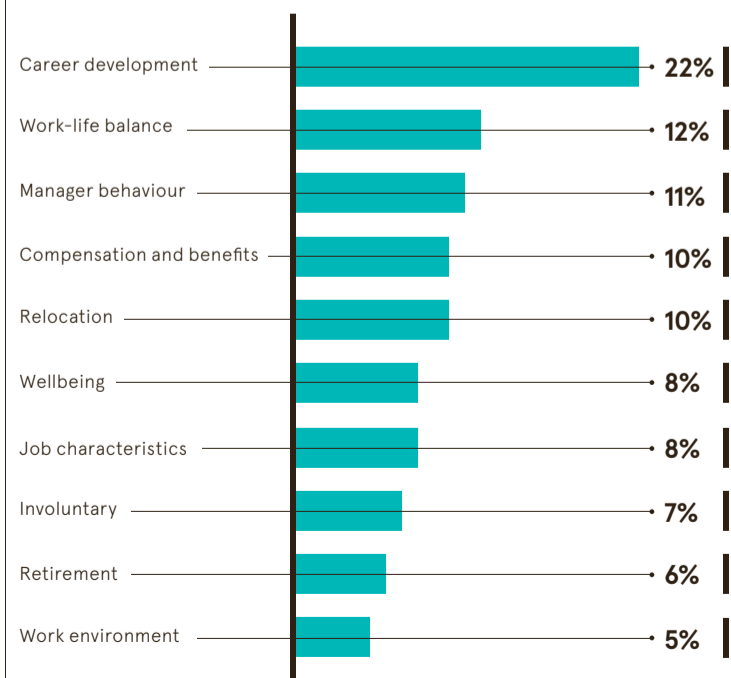
"We don't have the right kind of line manager in the UK and many other countries," says Sir Cary. "We recruit and promote people to managerial roles on the basis of their technical skills, not their people skills. Now, more than ever before, we must ensure there's parity, when people go for managerial roles, between people skills and technical skills."

Managers must be able to reassure workers there are opportunities for progression to keep down the number of employees who leave, and they can do this with support from HR. Providing a roadmap for where someone comes from and where they can go means they're less likely to head for the door. Job security and assurance are key in times of crisis and providing both avoids losing vital talent at a time when onboarding new employees is more complicated than ever.

It's also more difficult to pick up signals that something is wrong when the workforce is scattered to the winds. An unhappy employee usually makes themselves known when you're interacting with them in an office eight hours a day. When they're communicating only via email or occasional video calls, it can be difficult to identify issues.

## TOP 10 REASONS FOR LEAVING A JOB

A survey of over 250,000 US employees, across all sectors, found that more than 5 in 4 employees who have quit could have been retained by employers



The Work Institute 2019

## What are you going to do to help people who have never worked in the company, who have only ever been online?

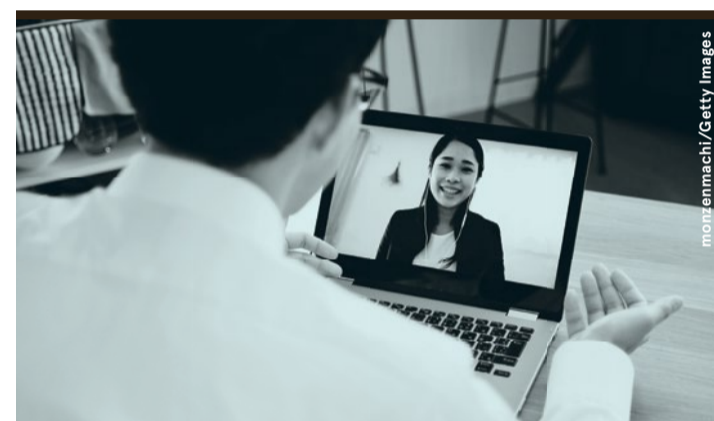
Checking in on people, and providing wellbeing support through initiatives that identify where problems are coming to a head, and acting quickly to try and solve them, is the solution to the revolving door of workers leaving the company for pastures new.

"We should be doing regular wellbeing audits to see how people perceive their work environment because of the rapidly changing

nature of work," says Sir Cary, who points to the example of the last significant change in our economy, the 2007-8 financial crash. Then, an HR director in the financial services sector came to him and spoke about "regrettable turnover". "We've lost 35 per cent of our staff," the HR director said. "How do we retain them?"

The answer is support and providing a sense of purpose. "Millennials, unlike previous generations, will leave if they don't like the culture they're in," says Sir Cary.

But it's not just millennials; confronted with the enormity of a world that has totally change. People are recalculating what they want from their workplace and employee attrition is rising. While the market for workers is likely to be significant, due to imminent economic turbulence, it's far easier and cheaper to invest time in wellbeing initiatives than lose a talented worker and have to replace them with someone new. ●



## How to nail a remote interview

No matter how hard you try, employee attrition can be unavoidable, making online recruitment inevitable.

The coronavirus pandemic has thrown up an entirely new challenge: successfully identifying and onboarding employees remotely. So in the world of the Zoom interview, what should you look for?

"The critical thing about video interviews is that, as with in-person interviews, 85 per cent of communication is non-verbal," says Professor Heather McGregor at Edinburgh Business School. "You have fewer non-verbal clues in a video interview."

So paying close attention to those non-verbal clues when they appear is important: how is the candidate dressed? How comfortable are they communicating through a webcam, given it's likely to be the norm for some time to come?

And what's their background like? "The first thing you have to think about is whether they're going to have a green screen background or not, or whether they blur it out," says McGregor. "I think that matters because you communicate

so much through what you don't say and people make assumptions."

Making assumptions is one of the biggest risks for businesses looking to hire people in the age of Zoom. Assumptions affect decisions and it can be easy to misconstrue a misplaced pot plant or a slightly messy background as an indication someone is unreliable when it could simply be that they've had to home-school their children due to a COVID-19 outbreak at nursery.

That personal touch is difficult to replicate online, too. "Your personal expression is not as easy to read when you're in a little square, especially if you're in a panel interview," says McGregor. "Your bit of the screen is small; unless all the people on the panel have been told to put you on speaker view, you're small. When you're speaking, you don't have the same level of expressiveness digitally as you do in person. I think it's harder to convey things."

So bear all this in mind and be prepared to make decisions without all the information you would normally have with an in-person interview.

# How 2020 turned a spotlight on employee happiness

How employees feel and how their employers think they feel are often two different things

**W**hile the social challenges of 2020 compounded by the coronavirus pandemic have highlighted the joint responsibility both parties have for employee welfare, research carried out by employee experience platform Perkbox reveals the true extent of the mismatch between leaders and their staff.

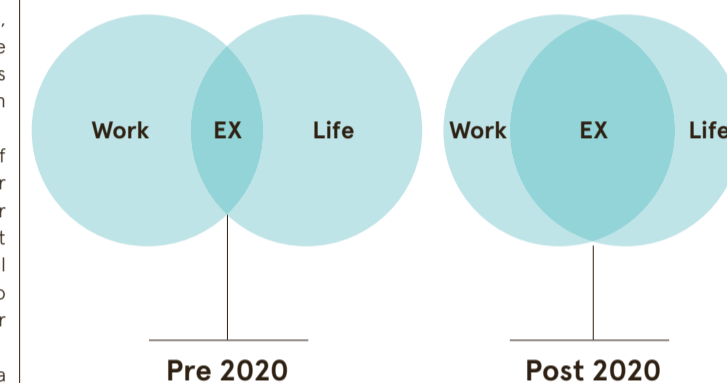
More than a third (36 per cent) of employees felt less connected to their colleagues and 32 per cent felt lonelier than ever before, yet only 20 per cent of bosses saw maintaining emotional wellbeing as a significant challenge to be addressed, compared with 45 per cent of employees.

As organisations emerge into a new working world, where the lines between work and life have blurred, they must find new ways of connecting with employees, and which ultimately improve their wellbeing and the success of the business.

Perkbox's Head of People Mona Akiki explains: "To succeed, a business needs employees who perform at their best and for this to happen employees need to be mentally and physically healthy. The new working world has meant some organisations are no longer in the office and as a result managers are no longer able to notice warning signals. Ironically, this also holds true for essential workers who may be physically present, but whose sole purpose is to maintain the wellbeing of others."

Many are predicting the events of 2020 will bring about a permanent new norm for businesses. Employers should, therefore, be focused on providing a positive employee experience, which in itself has evolved during the crisis. Previously

## THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE (EX) EVOLUTION



## Employers that factor wellbeing and employee experience into how they do business will have a more driven, productive, healthy and happy workforce

focused on perks within the physical office space, employee experience is now being reset to create a more meaningful and lasting emotional connection between employer and employee.

Perkbox's research found 60 per cent of business leaders recognise the emotional wellbeing of their employees

has suffered more since COVID-19 and, while 36 per cent now plan to invest more in wellbeing initiatives, 24 per cent clearly see the problem, but have no plans to invest in improving it.

"Employers need to be more creative and build various types of support systems," says Akiki. "Apps like Zoom help staff feel less lonely and more connected, but that isn't enough. If employees are to perform at their best, they need to know where to turn when things get tough, as well as how to celebrate wins. It's as simple as creating communities within the organisation and making it easy for employees to reach out."

Stronger connections are also needed to encourage better, more regular interactions between employees and managers to surface any concerns before they become obstacles. The COVID crisis has made people re-examine priorities and that includes feeling valued at work. People are still willing to work hard, but they want to do it for an organisation that cares about them as an individual and values their contribution to business goals.

"Wellbeing is no longer just a perk, but an expectation, in life and at work. Without it, people will ultimately burn out and leave," says Akiki. "Employers that factor wellbeing and employee experience into how they do business will have a more driven, productive, healthy and happy workforce."

## Perkbox's top tips

**Organisations**  
Employee experience should become one of the main business priorities for all organisations, as it is integral to achieving business goals. There should be strategies that also focus on making people feel healthy, happy and engaged, in life and at work.

**Managers**  
Now more than ever, managers need to build better relationships and a stronger sense of connection with their employees based on regular, recurring discussions to reinforce a

positive employee experience and, crucially, be ready to spot signals when things aren't going well.

**Employees**  
Creating relationships and reaching out to others is good for colleagues and beneficial for the individual. Loneliness isn't necessarily physical. You can be busy in your job and still feel isolated and lonely, so nurture those relationships. Notice the individuals who fill you with hope and positivity, and surround yourself with them.

Learn how Perkbox helps companies improve their employees' experience at [perkbox.com](https://perkbox.com)





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C-SUITE

## Shifting role of the CHRO

With unprecedented people challenges comes unparalleled power for the human resource professionals helping organisations navigate the HR demands of coronavirus

Cath Everett

The coronavirus pandemic has given the chief human resources officer (CHRO) a voice and influence like never before. With the crisis initially playing out as a workplace or people challenge, and now a humanitarian emergency, HR leaders have been offered an opportunity to prove their worth to the executive team by helping steer their organisation through widespread uncertainty. And significant numbers have seized the chance.

Jo Taylor, managing director of HR consultancy Let's Talk Talent, explains: "There has to be a ship's captain and it has tended to be HR making sense of the chaos, hand in hand with the chief executive. CEOs have been relying on their guidance while trying to keep the lights on, so HR has embraced the adage 'it's our time to shine' and done so."

Chris Underwood, managing director of executive search and leadership development consultancy Adastrum Consulting, agrees, pointing out that the current CHRO role as crisis manager may be a new one, but on the whole the profession has risen to the challenge.

"As a collective, HR leaders have done really well, so they now have a voice and their stock is high at senior level and among colleagues," he says. "While in the past, they were often seen as either the 'fun police' or 'a bit fluffy', their influence on how the organisation should operate has been front and centre this time."

In other words, the CHRO role has, almost overnight, become less tactical and more strategic, not least as the crisis has "given people the ability to rip up the HR rulebook and rewrite it", says Taylor.

This scenario has resulted in those HR leaders who have embraced the opportunity becoming "more like the conductor of an orchestra by taking a more holistic view and collaborating with other functions to make things happen".

Another central consideration for HR leaders, meanwhile, has been in finding an appropriate balance between undertaking operational and strategic activities. In practice, this has meant ensuring the right team is in place to deal with day-to-day issues, while HR leaders provide

**“In the past, they were often seen as either the ‘fun police’ or ‘a bit fluffy’**

not only oversight, but also insight and influence at the executive committee level.

The single biggest differential between those whose star is now shining, or not, is attitude, says Taylor. "Those with a growth



John Lumby/Gettyimages

mindset have flourished, while those with a fixed mindset have struggled," she says.

The importance of having a growth mindset can most clearly be seen in the newly adopted CHRO role of change manager. While HR leaders were traditionally seen as risk averse with a focus on "keeping people out of trouble and the organisation out of court", throughout the pandemic they have had to act with "previously unimaginable flexibility, agility and speed", says Underwood.

As a result, not only have HR leaders facilitated and driven workplace change, ranging from support and communication around remote working to digital skills development, they have also changed the rules of engagement to ensure they are now more based around people.

One example is the shift from a traditional one-size-fits-all approach to policies and procedures towards a more nuanced, personalised way of dealing with things to cope with the inherent complexity of the current situation.

Put another way, the humanitarian nature of the crisis has led to the 'human' being put back into HR" as a result of the growing realisation that "workers are human beings rather than just employees", says Brian Kropp, head of research for analyst firm Gartner's HR practice. This means the CHRO role has increasingly become that of a guardian of wellbeing.

"There's an increasing sense that employees are now stakeholders

in running their companies rather than just shareholders, which is leading to more humane ways of working," he points out. "ESG [environmental, social and governance] was building before COVID hit, but the pandemic has created an environment in which organisations are being tested to see if they're true to their values and those that are will thrive post-pandemic."

**“Those with a growth mindset have flourished, while those with a fixed mindset have struggled**

Tongwen Zhao, who joined Quorn Foods as director of people and planet in July, agrees. The company has brought HR and sustainability together under a single remit to ensure environmental values are both embedded into its culture and reflected in its employer brand. Zhao expects this approach to become more widespread as climate concerns among internal and external talent pools continue to mount.

"The ability to integrate your people responsibilities with other areas of the business is an essential weapon in the arsenal of the modern HR leader," she says.

Another essential skill, in a world in which technology is increasingly disrupting and changing everything, is being tech savvy. On the one hand, this means HR leaders have to understand which tasks and processes the organisation would benefit most from automating, not least to free line managers' time up to focus on supporting their team's needs.

On the other, it is about knowing how to use data insights and analysis effectively to plan, exert suitable influence over senior executive decision-making and make appropriate business cases for action in key people areas, ranging from recruitment to talent management.

In fact, Kropp says, although it may seem counter-intuitive, the effective use of data actually helps HR leaders to "support employees in a more humane way" by enabling them to combine empathy with business acumen.

Linda Mountford, HR director at canned fish brand John West, says it is essential to "recognise the power of data and technology in transforming the entire employee experience".

Taylor agrees. "Technology is the cornerstone. You don't have to be a whiz at IT – you have a team for that – but knowing what's possible with technology and data is important now and will be even more vital in future," she says.

To illustrate the point, Taylor cites an article published in the *Harvard Business Review* in August entitled *21 HR Jobs of the Future*. The study contends that of 60 new roles that are likely to be created in the field over the next ten years, 21 will have high levels of organisational impact. Of this 21, more than half (12) will include a mid-to-high tech component, while the rest, which consist mainly of employee wellbeing and experience roles, will have a low-to-mid tech element.

But as part of this shift to a more automated world, Kropp also expects the CHRO role to morph correspondingly, adopting a much stronger vendor management element. While roles, such as HR business partner, will remain and newly created positions will come about, he anticipates other jobs in areas like recruitment and learning and development will increasingly be outsourced.

"There'll be fewer solutions developed in-house and more partnering will take place," he forecasts. "We're already seeing a shift due to the current economic environment as people look to get rid of fixed costs, so the future is coming at us now."

Nonetheless, Taylor does not expect to see the demise of the HR function or a drop in the status of its leader, any time soon, even if the operations side of the equation does contract due to automation.

"The human-centricity of HR won't disappear, so while the operations side may shrink, the people side, which deals with things like diversity and inclusion and employee experience, will grow. And successful HR leaders will become increasingly adaptive, imaginative and think virtual first," she concludes. ●

### TOP CHALLENGES FACING THE CHRO

HR leaders from Fortune 1000 and private companies cite the top challenges facing them as they go into 2021



PwC 2020

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ROLES

# HR will look very different in 2025

Roles such as the “chief heart officer” or “head of anti-racism” may seem gimmicky, but they represent a real statement of purpose and intent for the future of human resources



Jonathan Weinberg

The start of the decade has been one of the busiest on record for human resources departments, but by the middle of the 2020s their make-up could look very different, with a whole wave of future HR roles coming on stream.

Cognizant’s 21 HR Jobs of the Future report, published in May, acknowledges the scale of change ahead, observing: “This is HR’s moment of truth to lead the organisation in navigating the future of work and prepare workers for the next decade.”

It suggests the need by 2025 for roles such as a chatbot and human facilitator, gig economy manager, chief climate response leader and human bias officer.

Robert Hoyle Brown, vice president of Cognizant’s US Center for the Future of Work, says: “There are five core themes across HR’s jobs of the future: individual and organisational resilience, organisational trust and safety, creativity and innovation, data literacy, and human-machine partnerships.” Highlighting a couple more examples, he explains that human

network analysts would study the “natural network” of how people come together and stay connected using artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics, while softer HR skills would be exemplified in roles like chief purpose planners, who identify social causes, align stakeholders and encourage information, ideas, content and influence to flow.

Nick Matthews, vice president and general manager, Europe, Middle East and Africa, at Culture Amp, an employee experience platform, believes such change to future HR roles is reminiscent of companies appointing chief risk officers after the 2007-8 financial crash.

“We’re seeing the rise of new roles that would have been unheard of before: director of remote experience, chief wellbeing officer, and welfare and resilience managers,” he says.

“Today’s novel job roles such as director of remote experience reflect changing company operating structures, signifying departmental functions have been redefined in recent years by better connectivity, easy-to-use software-as-a-service solutions and new app-based business tools.”

Others believe a scientific and data-driven approach to talent and recruitment will also change the HR department by 2025, giving

recruitment within the financial services sector, has noticed more firms recruiting for diversity-specific roles within their HR function and say it has escalated exponentially this year.

Voice platform Thoughtexchange now has a head of anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion, a title that chief people officer Dessalen Wood says was created because “we mean business”.

She explains: “Put the problem in the title. Make it something you can’t look away from, no matter how hard the work to address it will be. Having a head of anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion does the one thing missing from traditional diversity and inclusion titles, it acknowledges systemic problems exist. It says to our employees, our customers and the public, this is real and we are no longer going to look the other way.”

As the rise of AI and machine-learning takes over parts of the business, Derek Irvine, senior vice president of strategy at human capital management technology firm Workhuman, predicts a chief heart officer will bring more humanity to the workplace, treating employees as people, rather than numbers.

“This new role requires not only people management and development skills, but also an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and a high level of emotional intelligence,” he says. “Candidates may come from outside traditional recruiting spheres, from a broader range of fields and experience.”

But if such talent is to be sought elsewhere for now, is enough being done within HR to prepare new entrants for these future roles?

Ruth Cornish, co-founder and director of HRI, a membership organisation for independent HR and people professionals, believes current training regimes and qualifications will have to change.

“The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development qualification will need a complete overhaul. And there will be space for a new, more practical qualification, encompassing the role of technology, allowing HR practitioners to hit the ground running once they qualify. This will be a game-changer in the industry,” she says.

Cognizant’s Hoyle Brown also sees the change coming to future HR roles from the spread of outside influence and lifelong learning. “From history to communications, to computer science, to economics to philosophy, the future of work is a prism that cuts through seemingly every discipline found in the modern university, to HR’s potential benefit,” he concludes.

“In fact, one of our jobs of the future is literally called the unilife co-ordinator. Ultimately, the job of HR, today and in the future, will be to get that balance just right to catalyse the future of work for the companies they serve.”

“What might once have been deemed outlandish job titles now represent a response to unprecedented crisis

be miles ahead of the competition and well positioned for success.” Janine Chamberlin, senior director at LinkedIn, agrees. “Data-driven HR teams will also guide companies on their future hiring needs based on new skill requirements or skills gaps within their organisations and hold businesses to account on diverse hiring,” she says.

Diversity and inclusion could be an area where future HR roles will change fast. Barrington Hibbert Associates, specialists in executive

OPINION

## ‘Employers plan to realign their reward strategy in 2021 to match changing company purpose and values’

If 2020 was the year employers radically shifted their thinking about the feasibility of working from home and the importance of employee mental health to the sustainability of a business, then 2021 will be the year when the focus moves to how remote working and the rise of environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics will change pay packets.

These pay shifts are unlikely to be as fast-tracked as the 2020 upheavals were, but the underlying pressures to change are coming from diverse directions and align to predict long-term workforce changes.

Employers are questioning why they should continue to pay a premium to staff who used to come into expensive office hubs such as London, but who now work remotely from elsewhere.

The idea that how much an employee is paid is partly based on their location is often forgotten by employees, but it is certainly front of mind for employers scrutinising ways to reduce expenditure on workplace leases and office-based perks or the cost of redundancies and recruitment during this tumultuous time.

The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 crisis on pay and benefits, released on December 1 by the Reward & Employee Benefits Association (REBA), shows that as many as one in seven (15 per cent) medium-to-large employers have regionally weighted salaries under review by their human resources reward team.

Employers in several sectors, particularly among technology and professional services firms where many staff worked remotely for most of 2020, are considering whether employees should have their salaries adjusted according to the going rate of the region in which they will be working for the foreseeable future.

HR and reward directors say reviewing pay policies for remote workers is very much on their agenda, although few have the appetite to be the first-in-sector mover to make the change. The risk of losing their top talent to a competitor employer needs to be carefully weighed, while ensuring staff feel engaged and cared for after such a tough year is vital.

But on the flip side, HR are aware that not putting in place a clear, upfront policy for a post-pandemic pay structure will lead to employees making decisions about where to work remotely without being aware of potential future pay adjustments

or tax hits should they choose to work from abroad.

However, what that policy could look like, and its implications for employer costs and workforce planning, needs a crystal ball. Expectations are that there will be a greater emphasis on outputs and performance than ever before.

This is not the only reason that well over a quarter (28 per cent) of the employers responding to our REBA research plan to review their pay strategies in 2021 and nearly two-thirds (58 per cent) have either agreed, or will review changes to, bonus performance metrics for the coming 12 months.

In most cases, the changes are linked to changing financial metrics, but quietly creeping up are broader objectives that employers want their workforces to focus on. The acronym ESG has filtered across from the world of investment into executive remuneration targets and is starting to be mentioned in connection with broader employee pay and bonus targets.

I don’t want to give the impression of a sea-change with regards to pay and ESG, as the going is very slow. However, green, environmental and social initiatives right across the employee reward package are noticeably on the up, from choosing electric company cars to caring for the welfare of staff. To me, these are symptoms of investor pressure on corporates to review their long-term sustainability using ESG targets. These will filter down into all employee bonuses, incentives and performance objectives in the coming years.

It comes as no surprise the REBA research identified that a quarter (25 per cent) of employers plan to realign their reward strategy in 2021 to match changing company purpose and values.



Debi O'Donovan  
Director, Reward & Employee Benefits Association

# Digital credentials will help facilitate frictionless screening

Self-sovereign identity and digital credentials are set to transform screening processes, enabling a more qualitative, employee-focused approach and holistic view of candidates

The gig economy has transformed the labour market over the last decade, driven by the rise of companies such as Uber and Deliveroo. A study last year by the University of Hertfordshire found that one in ten working-age adults in the UK now work in the gig economy, which is twice as many as there were in 2016. However, its growing influence is exposing the challenges that exist in the area of candidate screening and onboarding. Traditional referencing procedures continue to be labour intensive, often delayed while waiting for companies to respond. Every organisation has their own policy on referencing and employers often provide the same reference on multiple occasions, as people move from job to job. This can delay the screening process and impact onboarding timeframes. And with all the focus now on culture, amplified by increases in remote working, human resources teams want both a quicker turnaround and a better understanding of candidates.

Referencing has always been a challenge and there’s often a sense of Groundhog Day and duplication of effort,” says Georgina Wilson, director of strategy and planning at Vero Screening, the largest UK independent employment screening company. “Particularly when moving quickly between roles, the need to repeat referencing procedures can frustrate both the candidates, who have to go through the same process and delays, and HR because it’s a costly and admin-heavy task.

“And the days of references which gather detailed feedback are largely gone. These days, it tends more towards a basic, tick-box quantitative assessment of a person’s time with companies, based on dates of employment and position held.”

New data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation, which give data subjects more control over their personal data, partly solve these issues by allowing people to request access to their previous screening reports and then share them with new employers. But how can employers be confident in the validity of such reports, coming directly from the prospective employee as they do?

Powered by blockchain, digital credentials will address the issue of authenticity and credibility, while simultaneously speeding up employment verification dramatically and driving down costs. This will leave time and money for HR to focus on gaining a more holistic view of candidates. In this model, employers can shift their focus to complementary services, such as social media screening which offer a better sense of an individual and have more direct relevance to culture. These emerging technologies will enable a more qualitative, employee-focused approach to screening, with faster turnarounds better suited to today’s more fluid workforce, which moves around at pace. “We read about blockchain everywhere at the moment. It’s being leveraged in all sorts of sectors and while it’s not at the forefront of the HR sector at the moment, we’ve seen a lot of movement over the last year, particularly since the coronavirus pandemic hit, and it’s starting to happen,” says Steve Woodrough, chief technology officer at Vero Screening. “It certainly needs to. Automation technologies are speeding up recruiting processes, but the average candidate screening process can still take up to



ten days, which is just not acceptable in the gig economy where people need to be onboard much quicker. Blockchain will help accelerate that.” There are still hurdles to overcome before digital credentials and self-sovereign identity are integrated into screening processes. It’s a very large, complex model with many stakeholders – data subject, owner, issuer, recipient – spread across millions of different companies and individuals around the world. The Velocity Network Foundation, which Vero has joined, is looking to establish the model around which data will start to be shared, with companies and their HR systems feeding into an “internet of careers” ecosystem. “Screening will still be critical to the safe onboarding of new employees. But with digital CVs we’ll be able to use verified information to speed up and enhance the process. We can then shift our focus to dynamic rather than static checks,” says Woodrough. “Candidates will carry with them a certified professional history, including qualifications and roles with other employers. That’s the static credentials. Then we can layer on top the dynamic checks that change over time to provide a quick, comprehensive and fully up-to-date report, transforming the screening process.”

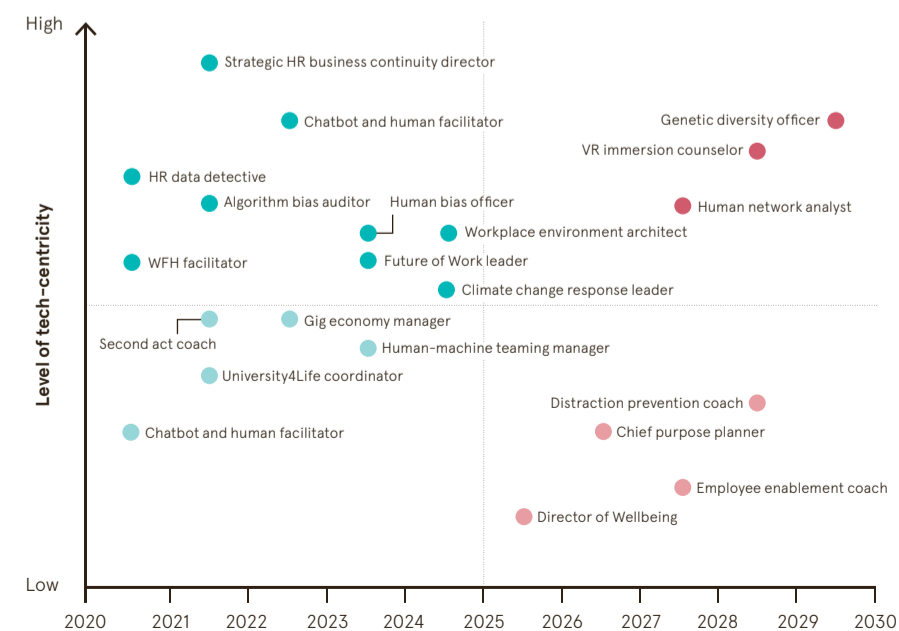
For more information and to find out more about Vero’s range of screening services, please visit [www.veroscreening.com](http://www.veroscreening.com)



### 21 HR JOBS OF THE FUTURE

The roles which nearly 100 senior HR leaders see the function evolving into over the next 10 years

- Mid to high-tech within 5 years
- Mid to high-tech within 10 years
- Low to mid-tech within 5 years
- Low to mid-tech within 10 years



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