

# Introduction

## What's the impetus for having a digital strategy?

Today, many organizations are going through a digital HR journey, focusing predominantly on HR services and process optimization using social, mobile, analytics and cloud technologies, which all help to make HR more efficient.

For most organizations, the main aims of digital HR and its associated transformation are related to strategies that can:

- digitize the HR function by transforming it from being paper-based, reactive and time-consuming to digital-first, mobile and optimal;
- transform operational HR processes to become automated and data driven;
- focus on the initiatives to optimize the HR function, embracing new digital solutions and generating value for the business.

As the digital economy is shaping aspects of society, including the way the workforce interacts, the economic landscape, the future of work and business transformation becoming empowered through fast-changing technologies, there is a need to think beyond digital HR.

The transformation of business functions and HR in this digital age must start with a revolution in which the patterns of change are understood as challenges, not least in terms of the workforce, thereby leading the organization to reach its desired future state by correctly defining its rightful purpose. During this journey of transformation, the organization needs to build strategies that concurrently:

- unleash its HR and digital transformation journey in relation to the new industrial revolution and the growing digital economy;
- rethink the correct digital mindset in terms of operating models and working frameworks to bring about business value for people-centric transformation;

- leverage the right way to use data and strategy together with cultural transformation.

Most organizations are content with this journey, but many are not ready or are neglecting their future survival as they are not considering the growth of intelligent technologies, the new world of work and the demand for human-centric experiences. There are always new strategies that need to be developed, even in organizations that are already transforming, such as:

- preparing for the impact of augmentation, automation and reskilling, and contemplating the future of work and the evolution of the new talent economy;
- focusing and balancing the entire experience and value proposition for employees with future workplaces, wellbeing, jobs, technology and the human touch.

The future is created by what we do today, and the organization needs to develop the capacity from within itself to continually identify the factors affecting its holistic growth in the long term, build knowledge, develop new skill sets and learn to counter adverse factors so as to achieve sustainability along its continuous journey of transformation. Hence for this journey phase, there is a need for strategies and learning to:

- reinvent organizations to become responsive to emerging and sustainable changes;
- empower innovation through the right levels of diversity and inclusion, new edge leadership and an inspiring culture within workforces;
- develop a fairer society by supporting ecosystems through more community-driven learning and enforcing social capital.

Many organizations have started the above strategies and approaches as separate initiatives, some through their HR organizations and some through other business functions. But unless they can assimilate all of them into their entire journey of transformation, fit them into the different phases of that journey and start them collaborating with one other, there will not be progress towards sustainability. Organizations need to go beyond current digital HR approaches and set strategies for a sustainable journey of transformation in the digital age, hence the origin of this book, *Digital HR Strategy*.

## What this book is about

The world is changing at a rapid pace in terms of sharing information, productivity and collaboration between people. The workforce of the future will be very different from that of today, and there are many complex elements disrupting both organizational structure and ways of working. The transformation of organizations in such an ever-changing environment renders it difficult to contemplate the needs of a future workforce.

A sustainable transformation can be accomplished by framing a clear, sensible approach that also includes the workforce. In most cases, this begins with the identification of a specific business problem or new opportunity and then depends on the organization's capacity to understand and react to digital threats and opportunities. Organizations must enable their leaders and workforces to embrace change that comes with innovation, as that is the only way to succeed.

This book will provide different frameworks and opportunities for leaders, practitioners and business people to collaborate and rethink the current ways of working, and operating and managing the workforce. In the digital age connecting the dots to the right strategies to achieve the building blocks for the future, such as through new models, the overall future of work, innovation and many more, is vital in respect of the changes required to the workforce. Different changes need to be phased in throughout the revolutionary process to ensure the survival and sustainability of the organization, since no one size fits all.

## Who this book is for

This book is aimed at business leaders and in this fast-changing digital age provides strategic approaches to the sustainable transformation of future organizations and workforces through their collaboration with HR. The intention of the book is to provide c-suite, business and HR leaders, along with HR practitioners and business people, with new strategies and approaches on how to prepare and transform their workforces in this digital age, going beyond digital HR concepts and strategies and considering a sustainable journey of transformation by showing how they can all collaborate together.

The book is also a very good tool for employees who want to prepare themselves for the future, a future where they can be motivated all the time

in their daily work, enjoy experiences they don't want to change or forget, explore human capabilities beyond their usual repetitive tasks and have a constant flow of continuous learning and reskilling so that they can work alongside machines. This book is also a great asset to those people who might be looking for a career change or upgrade and may not be sure about the new skills that might be useful for their future.

This book is also a great guide for students in colleges and universities who want to familiarize themselves with the changes that are happening today in the digital age. They will gain an insight into how functions such as human resources need to ensure the workforce is ready for the digital economy, the new future of work and many other new areas, most of which are not actively being pursued in organizations today.

## How to use this book

This book can be used as a comprehensive approach to learning about strategic ways for the sustainable transformation of organizations and workforces through collaboration with human resources. The book has been divided into three parts, where each part indicates a phase in the journey of transformation and the chapters within each part are based on one block along the journey. The chapters are laid out such that the reader may dip into the text at any point to enhance their learning process.

In each chapter there is an interesting section that is not normally present in other business books. This section is called 'Time to act' and is more like an action plan for readers based on asking some basic questions. The questions used in those sections are the most common ones, but readers need to ask more relevant questions to start their own journey, as there is no one-size-fits-all model and approaches may vary from company to company:

- Why the need for change
- What makes sense
- Where to start
- Who can help
- How to change

Readers might also only be interested in certain areas of the book, in which case there might be more value in reading only the relevant chapters. There is always a reference in each chapter to others wherever there is a touchpoint. Each chapter sets out its key learning objectives at the start and then

summarizes these at the end of the chapter. Reading the summaries might be useful for readers who need to learn and note the major points from each chapter.

## Terminology used in the book

Throughout the book, there are several terms that have been used that may have different understandings or meanings to different users. To help reduce any confusion on the part of the reader, the definitions of these terms are provided below:

**Business:** work relating to the production, buying and selling of goods or services.

**CHRO:** Chief Human Resources Officer, who is a corporate officer who oversees all aspects of human resource management and industrial relations policies, practices and operations for an organization (*Market Business News*, definition).

**Function:** an organized group of individuals that support an organization or business in achieving its objectives.

**HR:** Human resources, which is also the organizational function that deals with the workforce or people.

**HRBP:** HR Business Partner, which is a position responsible for aligning business objectives with employees and management in designated business units (*SHRM*, job description and definition).

**HRM:** human resource management, which is the practice of recruiting, hiring, deploying and managing an organization's employees. HRM is often referred to simply as Human Resources.

**Industry and Sector:** a group of companies that are related based on their primary business activities. These are typically grouped into larger categories called sectors.

**Leader:** a person who holds a dominant or superior position within their field and can exercise a high degree of control or influence over others.

**Organization:** any organized group of people, employees or business leaders working towards a common goal. In this book, an organization tends to be the equivalent of a business, company or non-profit entity.

**Team:** can sometimes also refer to a function, but in the context of this book usually refers to a smaller set of employees within a function.

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