SPECIAL REPORTS
DON'T HIDE IT, PUBLICISE THE WORST CLIENT FEEDBACK. PLUS, TOO SMALL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE? SPEND A NIGHT WITH A MOSQUITO

MARTIN KIRKE, GROUP HR DIRECTOR - POST OFFICE LTD

{ D E L I V E R A N C E }

"IT'S NOT SO MUCH THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE AS KEEPING THINGS AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE"

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FUTURE
PROOFING
HR

POTENTIAL
& WHAT TO DO WITH IT

There's been a lot of discussion - and hand-wringing - about the changing role of HR, but is it not patently clear? If talent, skills and capability is central to business success then it makes perfect sense that HR should practice what it preaches, and live by a culture that embraces new disciplines and skills - not just the traditional HR fayre - but in IT, marketing and customer experience.

ARTICLE BY LUKE TALBOT, DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT MARKETING & SCOTT HEYHOE, DIRECTOR - SOLUTION MANAGEMENT - QUESTBACK

Now is the time to take the lead in future-proofing the employee experience which, in turn, will go some way to future-proofing the business and HR's continued relevance. To achieve this there are four key challenges that need to be overcome and that HR directors have to take a lead in: Technology at work, brand and reputation, the impact of employee experience on customer experience and the overall employee lifecycle. First, let's look at expectations of technology at work becoming more influenced by consumer experiences. Consumer technology is significantly impacting on work, the new breed of worker expects their employers to provide the latest technology infrastructure. Whether that's apps to help them collaborate and share insights and learnings, provide data to help them make decisions or technology to automate the mundane parts of their job. If employers don't provide this then

they'll either buy it themselves or move elsewhere. 'The Cloud' is now just a fact of life, not something to be scared of. According to the *Future of Work* report by PwC[1], 59 percent of Millennials said that when considering a job, it was important that the employer provided 'state of the art' technology, and a whopping 78 percent said that being able to access the technology they like would make them more effective. The impact of these digital natives entering the workforce shouldn't be downplayed: ManpowerGroup's 2016 *2020 Vision*[2] report predicts that in the next three years, 35 percent of the average company's workforce will be Millennials, not forgetting Generation Z, who will make up 24 percent.

But let's also consider the digital migrants, those Boomers and Gen Xers who have seen, and possibly even been responsible for this digital Big Bang. Put together, our digital natives

and migrants make up a digitally ready workforce who are part of a new reality where location and proximity are less important and cutting edge communication and collaboration tools are essential. This is great news for business leaders trying to move away from traditional organisational hierarchies towards flatter, more cross-functional team structures where innovation, pace of change and career opportunities are less restricted. As for the future of HR, Deloitte's 2016 *Global Human Capital Trends* report[3] shows Organisational Design of the Future rated by 92 percent of executives as the top trend. For larger organisations, this is only made possible by the rise of the digitally ready workforce. All of this impacts your bottom line; increased effectiveness, productivity and a more attractive work environment for candidates are the prize for HR taking a leading role in the selection and adoption of new

technology in the workplace, something traditionally handled by the CIO within an organisation.

We all know the old adage: people are more likely to share a negative experience than a positive one. Maybe we're just hard-wired for this, and have an evolutionary predisposition to warn our community about bad things, yet keep the good things a little closer to our chests. Whatever the underlying reason, this simple fact affects how we run businesses. For the better part of a decade we've invested in technology to monitor and counter the impact of negative experiences being shared on social platforms, and we've invested more still on the technologies and skills needed to provide a world class customer experience. So far, our focus has mostly been on the front-end, and protecting the top line of our businesses by keeping customers happy. But what happens if our employees and candidates have bad experiences? Is there a risk to our business if they share that with their network, and how might this impact the bottom line? A 2016 CEB report[4] shows that 81 percent of people who have a negative experience during recruitment or onboarding will share it - not just with their friends and family but everyone. Traditionally, this may not have been very wide-reaching, and therefore considered relatively harmless. But the social phenomenon that has revolutionised the world of customer experience management has also reached HR.

A recent study[5] found that in the US, over half of candidates use sites like Glassdoor at some point when looking for a job, and a third wouldn't even apply for a role unless the company had a rating of three or more stars. All this means that issues that existing or former employees face with regards to company culture and values, management, compensation and benefits and even work/life balance are now having a material and substantial impact on the ability to attract and retain the right people. We've always seen brand and reputation as having a direct impact on the top line, but if your ideal candidates aren't even talking to you, then it's time to recognise the impact this has on your bottom line, too. This brings a whole new dimension to the HR role, one that would traditionally be palmed off to the marketing department.

Organisations understand the importance of customer experience to winning and retaining business and have consequently invested heavily in technology that helps them measure, manage and improve customer experience. Yet, often they haven't seen the value of doing the same for the employee experience - despite recognising the direct correlation between engaged staff and a better customer experience. Often, measuring engagement is a scattergun approach, focused on a single, annual survey that sucks up resources and doesn't give a complete picture of what employees are thinking. This provides a clear opportunity for HR directors to step forward, and apply the approaches that are proven to work for CX to the employee experience. Listen to employees when and where they want to

provide their thoughts and ideas - such as through always-on feedback, online communities and more regular surveys. Let them use their own devices to do this, making the process of sharing feedback natural and straightforward and put in place real-time ways of monitoring and measuring engagement levels. This way you have a constantly updated picture of engagement across the business, enabling you to spot trends, take action and see the impact on the bottom line. Demonstrating the link between engaged employees, greater discretionary effort and happier customers is vital to showing that HR directors are responsible for the most important part of their business - the people.

To build trust and transparency HR has to care about their experience throughout their entire journey, from attraction all the way through to exit. For instance, if there's a poor onboarding experience relative to what they were sold during the recruitment phase, this can have a devastating impact on the discretionary effort they'll give, their willingness to remain, and their likelihood to leave a damning review of you and your business. If you're not measuring that constantly and consistently across the business, not only can you not manage it, but you can't even hope to improve it. And because we know there's a correlation between disengaged employees and negative customer experiences, particularly if they're customer-facing, then the HR director isn't just a stakeholder in CRM, they're in a unique position at the front line. Take any candidate, who becomes a new hire, joins the business, and is onboarded to effectiveness. They are going to be managed by a range of colleagues across the business. But only the HR director has the perspective - and the KPIs - across the entire employee journey. Only they can uncover issues such as a poor perceived fit with the organisation during recruitment, driving higher than expected year-one churn. Or make the connection between a suboptimal onboarding experience, and low productivity. HR directors must step up and move beyond the traditional role, embrace disciplines such as; technology and marketing, and take the lead in applying them to employees. Only then will HR be future-proofed. ●

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1. www.pwc.com/gx/en/managing-tomorrows-people/future-of-work/assets/reshaping-the-workplace.pdf
2. www.manpowergroup.com/wps/wcm/connect/660ebf65-144c-489e-975c-9f838294c237/MillennialsPaper1_2020Vision_lo.pdf?MOD=AJPERES
3. www.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/human-capital/articles/introduction-human-capital-trends.html
4. www.cebglobal.com/content/dam/cebglobal/us/EN/talent-management/volume-recruitment/pdfs/precise-fit-paper.pdf
5. www.softwareadvice.com/resources/job-seekers-use-glassdoor-reviews

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Is HR becoming increasingly centralised or localised?

38% Centralised

62% Localised