# HR Transformation

5 critical success factors HR Directors and Business Leaders need to consider

The world is how we shape it

sopra steria

Introduction

"HR Transformation" is a phrase which many HR Directors and Business Leaders hear often. But what does it actually mean and where should senior business leaders focus if they are serious about changing their HR function for the better?
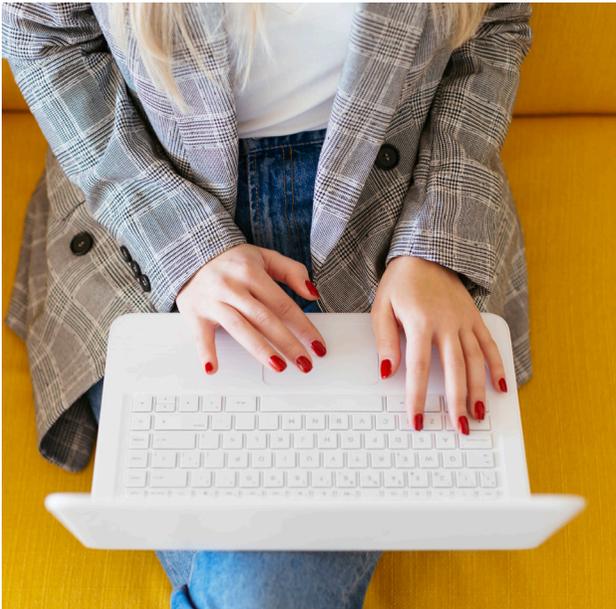
The world of HR throughout the Covid–19 pandemic has been brought sharply into focus. Many of the challenges all organisations are facing from a HR perspective are well documented:

- **Changing ways of working putting excess strain on existing HR systems and processes**

- **Making sure technology is readily available to enable staff to work from specific locations**

- **Staff needing to be recruited, redeployed or made redundant at short notice**

- **Effective workforce planning in terms of who is available, where they are they located and the impact of self-isolation if a member of staff has come back from a foreign holiday**

- **New health and safety guidelines having to be implemented e.g. track and trace – where is data stored and how is it acted upon**

and of course

- **Keeping employees safe - looking after their health and wellbeing as a business priority**
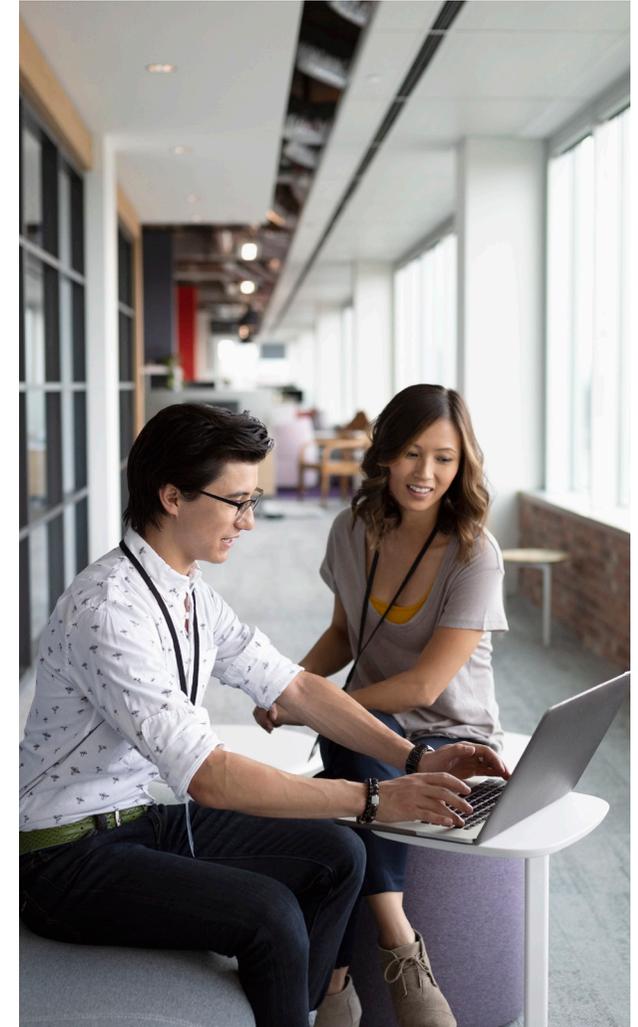
Due to the pace of change we have seen in 2020 many organisations are now starting to review their existing HR systems, processes, people and policies. They are asking themselves questions covering topics such as:

- **What does my organisation look like in the future? Who do I need to recruit and retain to be able to still deliver for my customers and stay ahead of the competition?**

- **How is work being completed? If the majority of my workforce has moved to a working from home model are they just as productive as when they were in an office environment or physical location?**

- **Where do gaps exist in my workforce today? Have we been able to fill gaps which were highlighted by the pandemic effectively without affecting other areas of the business?**

- **Have we communicated correctly with our employees and kept them up to date with changing government guidelines and company policy?**

- **Have our staff been able to access the information they need to be able to undertake their job roles effectively?**

- **Have our existing HR systems and processes been able to cope with changing workstyles and technology solutions which have been introduced?**

- **Can HR staff and managers in the organisation quickly and accurately understand who is available to work on specific projects and any staff health and wellbeing challenges which may need to be overcome due to Covid–19?**

- **Do HR staff and managers understand the current impact of Covid–19 on their workforce and are appropriate plans in place to mitigate risk of contamination or the spread of the disease?**

All of this means HR Transformation is back on the board agenda. It is no longer a 'nice to do' project, but a focused priority if an organisation is going to survive today and thrive in the future. At Sopra Steria we have been working with 100's of organisations across Europe over many years to help them transform their HR functions with employees at the heart of it.

From the HR transformation programmes we have been involved with, we have been able to identify 5 key characteristics which lead to programme success.

1. Being clear on goals and objectives

This is an essential, if not the most critical, piece of foundational work HR and Business leaders need to undertake before embarking on any HR Transformational programme of change. Key questions which need to be answered at this stage include:

- **Why change is needed across different HR areas?**

- **What are the goals you want to achieve in the short, medium and long term with the changes you plan to implement?**

- **What will success look like – financially, culturally and from an employee's perspective?**

- **How are the changes you plan to make linked to key business priorities?**

- **How will you communicate the changes you plan to make and give everyone in the organisation clear visibility of the goals you are trying to achieve?**

It is important at the beginning of any HR transformation project that the context for change is clearly articulated in terms of the competitive landscape, challenges with the current position and expected future state (technology, process and culture!).

To do this it is recommended a programme road-map describing not just the solutions but deliverables, milestones and risks/risk-mitigation is created. It is also important at this stage to identify the resources required to make the programme a success and how business as usual activities will be managed effectively whilst change takes place. All components of good programme management apply to HR transformation and, in most cases should be an essential part of the investment case and financial appraisal.

2. Manage your stakeholders and keep them involved

A HR Transformation programme should benefit the business in tangible ways and these benefits should be articulated through the goal setting process. The next step is to map stakeholders and determine the commitments which need to be secured and agree how much involvement from different stakeholders is required and why they need to buy into the project.

At this stage a **'stakeholder map'** should be created. The stakeholder map should help the HR team to assess key stakeholder perspectives and enable the development of a plan for how to marshal advocates, manage detractors and ensure the 'fences sitters' remain at worst neutral but at best transition to become advocates.

Practical ideas might include a Steering Group to including key stakeholders, regular communications with the wider stakeholder community and active engagement and consultation with different stakeholders groups and employees on design, delivery and change management.

3. Keep it simple and do not be tempted to over complicate

Most HR Transformation projects will deliver some of the expected benefits. In our digitised, automated world high on the agenda will be simplification and streamlining. Taking out non-essential process and activity steps or implementing automation as you look to use emerging technologies such as AI and RPA to will simplify employee or manager access and interaction with core HR processes.

At Sopra Steria we believe keeping things simple and always challenging the status quo asking questions such as – Can this process improvement simplify things? Will the change make things better? Is the change we are making aligned to a business priority? Will this change help employees to become even more productive?

By having this regular thought process in place it will keep the teams involved in the transformation project focused on making the right improvements which are linked back to the goals you set at the start. It should be a constant checkpoint in terms of both what you are delivering and how you are delivering it.

4. Never forget, culture eats strategy for lunch

Technology and process solutions should be transformative. To succeed we must remember Transformation is about changing culture, whether that be empowering managers, building a stronger Employee Experience or a myriad of other things which make up an organisations culture; 'the way we do things around here'!

If HR leaders only focus on changing technology and process they will quickly find they actually haven't changed anything at all. Quite often they will be left with an expensive technology solution which no one knows how to use or why they are using it.

A HR change programme needs to be both mindful of the **'as-is'** culture of the organisation throughout the management of the programme, but also ensure it never loses sight of the **'to be'** operating environment. After all, the benefits case aligned to the transformation project probably assumes quantitative and qualitative benefits.

5. Measure, Review and Feedback

**Galileo was reputed to have said-**

> ## Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so.

He was right.

Measurement and review are fundamental elements of any change programme on a continuing basis not just saved for the post implementation review meeting. They are the fundamentals of an iterative process which will improve programme delivery and enable the fine tuning and optimisation around final business and project outcomes.

This need includes measurement of the obvious programme cost, time and quality but also the rich feedback from what stakeholders and users are thinking and saying. Reflecting this into programme and solution changes is not an admission of failure but recognition of organisational realities and, in the long term more likely to contribute to programme success.

However, a word of caution. Always, always ensure solution changes are consistent with your stated programme goals and maintaining your general commitment to simplification; remember, activity drives cost and, where technology is involved, built in complexity generally hinders effectiveness and efficiency.
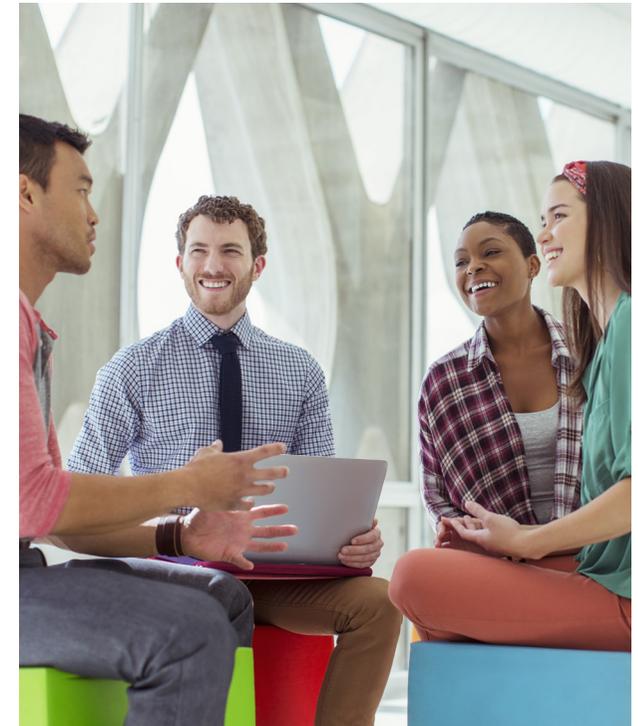
Final thoughts

As we have discussed in this short article there are 5 critical success factors which underpin every successful HR transformation programme.
HR teams are under more pressure than ever before to put in place an operational model which is agile, fluid, improves cross company collaboration and enables employees to be productive, engaged and motivated wherever they are undertaking work for the organisation they are employed by.

As the world of work continues to change one thing is for certain. Those organisations who take the time to examine their existing HR policies, processes, people and technology and align them to what the business wants to achieve in the future will be in a much better place than their competition.

The starting point is the development of a HR transformation plan based on clear goals and objectives. Now is the time to make sure your organisation is set up to thrive in a post Covid-19 world.

More Information

Sopra Steria is a global provider of strategic HR technology solutions. Our HR technology services have been specifically designed to help organisations overcome their people, technology and business challenges. By working with Sopra Steria, HR departments can unlock a range of business and technology benefits across talent management, payroll, time and attendance and the potential of their organisations data through our HR analytics platform.

To find out more about the HR services we provide please email fiona.petrie@soprasteria.com.

We look forward to working with you.

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