

CHRO Quarterly

A Magazine for Chief Human Resource Officers
and Their Teams

In This Issue

Overcoming 3 Common Barriers to Agile HR

Page 4

2 Steps for Getting Buy-In for
Your HR Strategy

Page 7

Updating HR Strategy in a
Fast-Moving World

Page 10

How HR Transformations
Miss the Mark

Page 14

Top 10 Emerging Skills
for the C-Suite

Page 17

CHRO Quarterly

Contents CHRO Quarterly: Q2 2019



3 Letter From the Editors



4 Overcoming 3 Common Barriers to Agile HR



7 2 Steps for Getting Buy-In for Your HR Strategy



10 Updating HR Strategy in a Fast-Moving World



14 How HR Transformations Miss the Mark



17 Top 10 Emerging Skills for the C-Suite

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CHRO Quarterly: Q2 2019

From the Editors: Amanda Joseph-Little and Jack Fuller

Like living organisms, businesses must adapt in order to thrive. Unlike living organisms, however, businesses are not born with adaptations; they must cultivate an ability to respond to their environment — and continue to do so as the world changes around them.

Leading a successful organization in 2019 means adapting to a new normal. Competition from new entrants that are unencumbered by legacy business models, evolving technology capabilities and the corresponding changes in customer and employee expectations require businesses to become more flexible, more responsive and more agile than ever. Therefore, leading the HR function means accepting a new normal as well as meeting the demands of changing external market conditions and line-of-business leaders.

If this sounds familiar — albeit more urgent — it's because the pressure to transform HR is not new. For nearly two decades, HR leaders have been on a journey to transform the function into a more strategic partner to the business, with varying degrees of success.

Essential to real transformation and partnership with the business are a truly transformative HR strategy and the ability to ensure it is properly executed. Still, the best laid plans and the most progressive HR strategies will often falter in today's rapidly changing business conditions if those executing them fail to adapt, change and course-correct as needed.

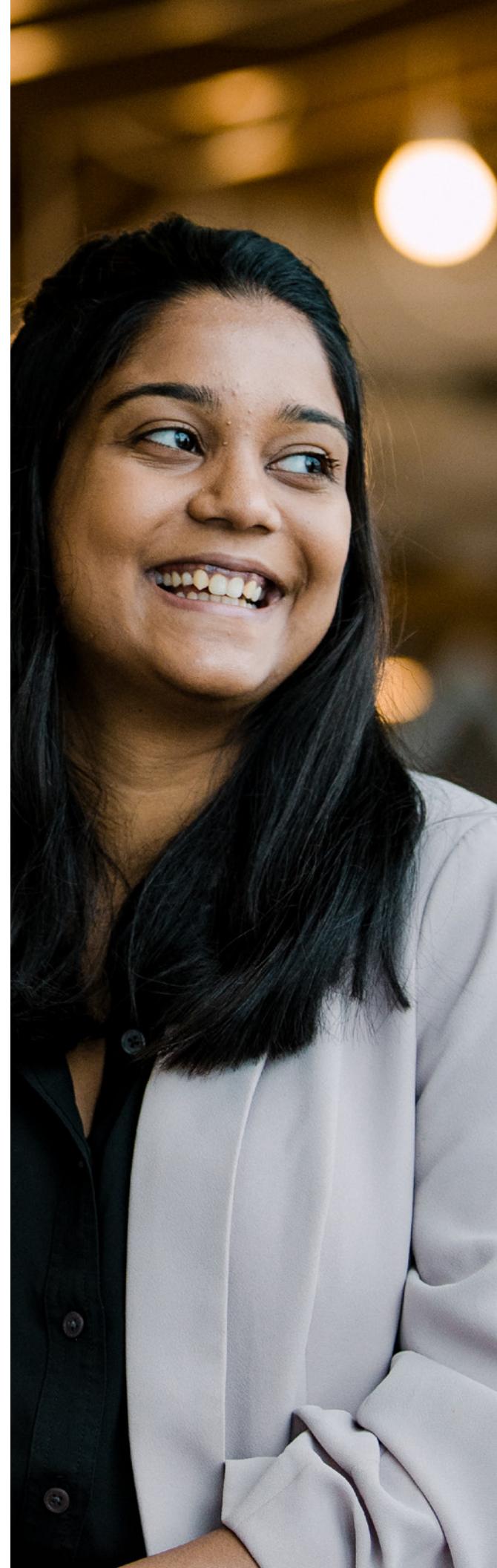
The articles in this issue are designed to help HR leaders cultivate an adaptive approach to executing their HR strategies. Our feature article, "Overcoming 3 Common Barriers to Agile HR," explores the transition to agile ways of working that many HR functions are navigating, unpacks common challenges and suggests ways to overcome them.

We also explore why so many HR transformations fail to gain the traction necessary to succeed (Page 14). We showcase best practices from members of our CHRO Global Leadership Board for making the strategy updates that today's changing business conditions require (Page 10) and discuss how to align the most important stakeholders behind your strategy as it evolves (Page 7). Finally, we explore the demand for emerging hard and soft skills in the C-suite to help you create a leadership bench that will adapt and lead, not follow.

At Gartner, we are optimistic about the future of HR, including HR leaders' ability to meet the demands of today's business environment and their ability to adapt to help lead the organizations of tomorrow. We hope you enjoy the articles in this issue and leave with a new perspective on executing your HR strategy now and in the future.

Overcoming 3 Common Barriers to Agile HR

By Ayomide Oluleye



As HR leaders take a more prominent role in the C-suite, they are looking for new ways to strategically impact the business. And since employees are used to highly customized consumer experiences outside the workplace, HR leaders are striving to meet rising expectations about the tools available at work.

Some HR leaders have considered applying agile to HR to make the function more flexible and responsive to changing employee needs.

Agile is a project management methodology from the world of software development. It has three key values:

- 1. Flexibility** — Agile teams initially scope projects at a high level and add greater detail over time based on customer feedback.
- 2. Collaboration** — Multidisciplinary teams meet in person regularly to ensure the entire team is aware of projects' impediments, progress and handoffs.
- 3. Experimentation** — Teams continuously learn and improve through customer feedback in two- or three-week project phases.

Since agile HR is a new way of working and thinking, HR should be aware of three common barriers to its successful application.

Since agile HR is a new way of working and thinking, HR should be aware of three common barriers to its successful application.

As they assess projects' agile HR suitability, HR leaders should consider three main criteria:

- **Project characteristics** — Look for projects where the requirements must be clarified through iterations, where the potential impact and risk are balanced (i.e., medium-scale projects), and where regulatory requirements are limited and largely independent from other HR projects.
- **Stakeholder characteristics** — Look for projects where all stakeholders are comfortable with ambiguity and experimentation. Stakeholders should be open-minded and make decisions fairly quickly.
- **Resourcing levels** — Look for projects where the cost is reasonable (based on the potential impact), where a project team can be formed with a diverse and balanced set of skill profiles, and where members of the team are willing and able to collaborate.



Barrier 2: Reluctance to Extend Decision-Making Rights to Lower-Level Staff

Agile HR requires a less hierarchical way of working. Teams lower in the function need decision-making rights so they can flexibly respond to changing employee needs. The benefit is faster work execution and better understanding and support of employee needs.



Barrier 1: Identifying Suitable Projects for Agile HR

Not all HR projects are well-suited for agile methodologies; projects that have standardized, predictable steps (such as compliance, updating HR policies) are better served by traditional work models. The benefit of agile is multidisciplinary teams' ability to flexibly respond to changing conditions. An example of a suitable project for agile HR is revamping a performance management system, since that involves uncertainty about the frequency and the levels of visibility and detail employees want in their performance reviews.

But this new way of working can be uncomfortable for HR leaders.

HR leaders don't need to decentralize and delegate all decision-making authority.

As a first step, they should set "guardrails" that clarify for staff throughout the HR function how to make the best decision in real time. The following options can help:

- **Identify the decision types that absolutely require senior approval.** Create categories such as "no approval necessary," "approval may be necessary" and "approval is definitely necessary" as a guide for HR project teams. For example, decisions likely to cause budgets to balloon or likely to affect a large proportion of the workforce could be tagged as the only project decisions requiring approval.
- **Prohibit any decision being made by one person alone.** This approach reduces the risk of an overly influential voice. Agile teams could even invite a peer from outside the project team to offer a perspective. This would reduce the risk of groupthink in decision making.
- **Conduct "retrospectives" to evaluate past decision making.** Retrospectives, or meetings held at the end of a two- or three-week project phase, are a common agile tool that allows teams to reflect on the project's successes and failures and plan for the next iteration.



Barrier 3: Discomfort With Delivering Minimum Viable Products

Agile HR teams deliver minimum viable products (MVPs) early in the project cycle to get employee feedback before committing the resources to finalize a product. An MVP is an unfinished but usable product; it does not have everything the final product will, but it has the aspects that will make or break the product's relevance and usefulness. An MVP provides immediate value to the end user even though it is not the product's final form.

HR staff may be uncomfortable releasing products that feel incomplete, but communicating the benefits can help assuage discomfort. Delivering MVPs provides two benefits:

- Employees can shape a product's development to make the product more relevant to them by giving feedback about how they would use it in their daily activities.
- Organizations can change the product based on employees' feedback earlier in the project cycle, before extensive resources are committed, making those changes less costly.

To take full advantage of these benefits and enable teams to embrace MVPs, HR leaders should set guidelines for delivering products sooner rather than later:

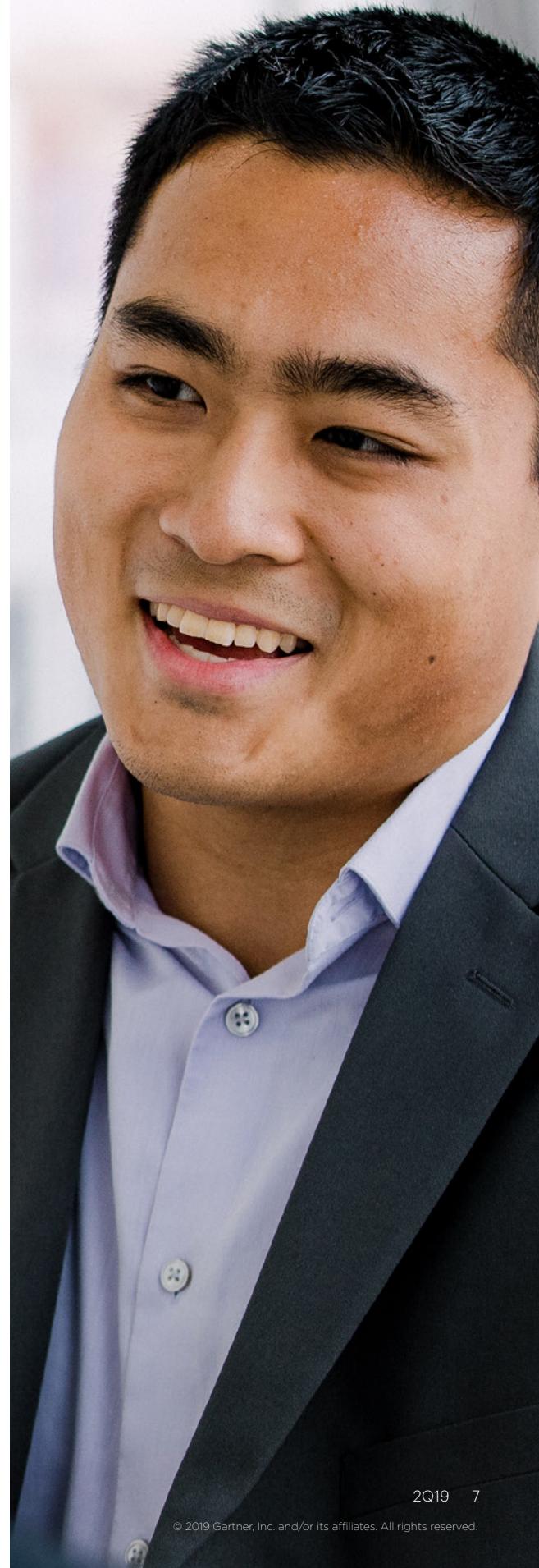
- **Prioritize timely delivery.** Deliver products at the earliest stage possible.
- **Focus on functionality.** Build working end-to-end products by sticking to core features and not worrying about look and feel.
- **Embrace experimentation.** Test core assumptions directly with employees. Each iteration gets the team one step closer to a relevant and useful product.
- **Fail fast.** Failure is part of the process, so do it sooner rather than later, and learn from it. It's better to spot an issue early on and correct it than to wait until later.

Conclusion

Agile is a new way for HR leaders to have a strategic impact on the business. But since agile is a different way of working, some barriers often prevent HR from being flexible, collaborative and open to experimentation in the ways that agile requires. HR leaders can create an enabling environment for desired agile outcomes by avoiding common barriers. If HR leaders choose suitable projects, appropriately extend decision-making rights and guide their teams in delivering MVPs, their organizations will be well on their way to agile HR.

2 Steps for Getting Buy-In for Your HR Strategy

By Jack Fuller



This article is based on material created by our CHRO Global Leadership Board for the webinar “Delivering on the HR Strategic Promise.” The Board’s purpose is to build and lead a collaborative movement among the world’s most distinguished and trusted CHROs. This movement is based on the core belief that peer-to-peer, cross-industry collaboration is key to optimizing individual and organizational success.

The Board is led by Ceree Eberly, former CHRO of The Coca-Cola Company, and co-chaired by Kevin Cox of General Electric, Abbe Luersman of Ahold Delhaize and Daniel Marsili of Colgate-Palmolive.

The accelerating pace of change in today’s business environment requires leading organizations to push the limits of what their HR strategies can accomplish.

CHROs and their leadership teams must create HR strategies that go beyond dictating where the function spends its time and resources — strategies that also shape business strategy to maximize performance and growth potential.

Crafting such a strategy, however, is only half the battle. To guarantee that HR strategies structured to drive business growth actually do so, HR leaders must attain buy-in and support from senior business executives. Two steps are crucial in building this support.

1 Step 1: Understand the Stakeholder Landscape

As HR leaders build and evaluate their strategic approaches, too often they struggle to understand the stakeholder landscape. They identify the obvious stakeholders and their obvious motivations, but what about the nonobvious parties affected by the strategy who can stand in the way? What motivates them?

To create a more nuanced view of the parties involved, consider the following:

- **Who is directly and indirectly involved with the people strategy?** To make a comprehensive list, ask questions such as, who gains and who loses when the strategy is executed? Are other

stakeholders — for example, the community or customers — affected? Will other functional business leaders be affected?

- **What motivates them?** To understand, ask questions such as, what are their business goals? What are their personal goals? How do they currently work with the HR function? Who influences their opinions?

In answering these questions, HR leaders can pinpoint their key stakeholders and identify those who will be in the best position to support the strategy as well as those who will be most likely to stand in the way.

2 Step 2: Align Key Stakeholders to Shape and Execute the HR Strategy

Even with the stakeholders identified and their motivations understood, structural inefficiencies and deeply engrained internal dynamics can prevent HR leaders from gaining the support and buy-in they need to execute an effective people strategy. Leading organizations can overcome these challenges by creating new structures or processes that promote collaboration between HR and business line leaders around the HR strategy, in turn earning their support.

Structural inefficiencies and deeply engrained internal dynamics can prevent HR leaders from gaining the support and buy-in they need.



Case in Point: Colgate-Palmolive

Colgate-Palmolive realized a larger structural challenge — the lack of a forum through which to collaborate and align human capital investment strategies and decisions — often led to challenges with buy-in and execution. Business line leaders were often consulted too late in the HR initiative's development cycle, and projects often progressed without senior management agreement.

To align line-of-business leaders to support HR-related initiatives and investment strategies, leaders at Colgate-Palmolive created an enterprise-wide forum within the charter of the executive operating committee to debate, calibrate and shape human capital and investment strategies.

The forum, the Strategic Council for People Investment (SCPI), has a mandate to:

- **Advise the CHRO and the HR leadership team** on project selection, resource and budget allocation, and decisions about where to deploy strategic partnering methodologies against business opportunities.
- **Assign senior business leaders to sponsor enterprise-wide HR initiatives** so they can provide perspective and support throughout the course of the project and in SCPI meetings involving resource allocation decisions. To increase the sponsorship's impact — and business leaders' engagement — the SCPI selects executive partners who have demonstrated specific interest in the topic or initiative.

To ensure the SCPI can be effective in its mandate and to create ongoing engagement, Colgate-Palmolive designates standing blocks of time in executive operating committee meetings as well as select senior staff meetings for providing updates when relevant.

Conclusion

As CHROs and their leadership teams continue the journey to become strategic partners to business line leaders, achieving buy-in is extremely important. And given the increasing speed of business today, organizations cannot afford to have their HR strategies held up by stakeholder misalignment. With stakeholder buy-in and alignment, however, HR leaders can create impactful HR strategies that flex to businesses' ever-changing needs, setting organizations and employees on a path to continued success.

Updating HR Strategy in a Fast-Moving World

By Joseph Macy



This article is based on material created by our [CHRO Global Leadership Board](#) for the webinar “Delivering on the HR Strategic Promise.” The Board’s purpose is to build and lead a collaborative movement among the world’s most distinguished and trusted CHROs. This movement is based on the core belief that peer-to-peer, cross-industry collaboration is key to optimizing individual and organizational success.

The Board is led by Ceree Eberly, former CHRO of The Coca-Cola Company, and co-chaired by Kevin Cox of General Electric, Abbe Luersman of Ahold Delhaize and Daniel Marsili of Colgate-Palmolive.

Today, 71% of CHROs say they spend more time on issues outside the HR function than they used to, and CEOs expect HR leaders to be wide-ranging business executives who can add value to every part of the business.

This expanding role can be attributed to talent’s increased importance as the pace of business change increases. However, the pace of change has also made it harder for HR leaders to keep up — to understand what the business needs and how to adjust their HR strategies accordingly.

Despite the volatility of business strategies today, HR leaders do not regularly update their own strategies. In fact, about 60% of HR leaders report evaluating their strategies annually, and only 22% evaluate their strategies as needed. This current approach puts HR at risk of falling behind in meeting the needs of the business and relevant stakeholders instead of proactively planning for and supporting changes in the business.

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Though it may seem out of scope for some CHROs, it is vital to keep a pulse on the business’s needs and constantly update the corresponding human capital strategies. A simple and effective way to do this is to pre-emptively identify obvious — and nonobvious — moments that should incite you to recalibrate your human capital strategies.

Solution From a CHRO: Strategy Triggers

In a recent webinar about the Board’s newly released “Playbook for Delivering on the HR Strategic Promise,” Jim Williams, the CHRO at Polaris and a member of the Board, discussed how to evolve HR strategic plans in a fast-changing business environment. Based on his experience, Williams emphasized how vital it is to have an alignment strategy that is “continuous, agile and evergreen.”

Since one of the hardest parts of regularly updating HR strategy is determining when to do so, Williams suggests identifying obvious and nonobvious strategy triggers — changes in the broader business that will indicate when HR should re-evaluate its strategy. Pre-emptively discussing what these triggers might be prepares HR leaders to act quickly when they occur instead of falling behind the rest of the business.

Strategy triggers can be grouped into three categories:



Business-driven — Business-driven triggers include events such as strategy redirections, changes to the heads of various business units, and acquisitions or divestitures. These events can have widespread impact throughout the organization, including to talent needs and employee needs, making it critical for HR to reconsider how it supports the business and employees at these times.



Management-driven — Management-driven triggers include events such as decisions to change technological systems and shifts in the company's competitive position in the market. These types of decision often affect employees throughout the organization, so HR support to manage through the change is critical.



Function-driven — Function-driven triggers include missed strategic milestones and financial underperformance. Such circumstances often necessitate a change in human capital strategy, whether it be to increase function efficiency or to change how talent is acquired and developed throughout the organization.

How to Monitor Triggers

CHROs should lead their leadership teams through a discussion to identify strategy triggers at their organizations and document an agreement list for which the team is accountable.

A good discussion should include the following:

- **Trigger types** — HR leaders should brainstorm the trigger types (like the categories above) their organizations are likely to face. Ask leaders to reflect on past experiences when they felt HR did or didn't react well to a change in the business environment. This list should be as comprehensive as possible.
- **Trigger targets** — Leaders should determine a threshold for each trigger that would indicate the strategy must be adjusted. For example, if market share changes by X% or more, HR should re-evaluate the current strategy.
- **Simulated action plan** — To get a sense for what the process of updating HR strategy based on a trigger would look like, ask the group to run a simulation. Choose a trigger, then discuss an event or decision the business might experience that would fall into that category. Thinking through the example and using a strategy triggers template (see Figure 1), articulate as a team the parts of HR strategy that would need to be evaluated and how the team would do so.

Figure 1. Strategy Triggers Template

Type	Description	Trigger Event	Action Plan
Strategy Redirection	Proposed strategy changes by the head of a business unit	The business accelerates its timeline for expansion in China and India.	Review the expat transition schedule to align with the new timeline; review the list of HIPOs located in China and India.

Source: Gartner (April 2019)



Case in Point: How Polaris Identified Strategy Triggers

To demonstrate what identifying triggers looks like in practice, Williams shared a few triggers he has experienced at Polaris:

- **Management change** — Polaris hired a new CEO from outside the organization.
- **Competitive position** — As it grew from 3,000 employees largely based in Minnesota to 13,000 employees throughout the world, Polaris needed a more diverse workforce with a variety of skill sets.

Williams and his HR leadership team had identified triggers like these that would prompt them to rethink the company's HR strategies, so they were prepared to act when these changes occurred. For instance, Polaris instituted new centers of excellence for functions such as contemporary talent acquisition and instituted a global HR system when the global presence of its business grew.

Having taken a proactive approach to adjusting its human capital strategy as opposed to a reactive one, the HR team helped Polaris grow from \$1.5 billion in sales to \$7 billion.

Conclusion

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to adjusting your human capital strategy, you must make this a proactive process and not simply an annual task. For immediate impact, CHROs should talk with relevant stakeholders to identify business-driven, management-driven and function-driven strategy triggers for their organizations. Once established, CHROs and their leadership teams should proactively monitor business changes to ensure their function can meet the business's needs as efficiently as possible and can improve overall business outcomes.

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How HR Transformations Miss the Mark

By Janelle Copek



As an HR leader, you have likely been involved in a few HR transformations — the process of changing HR to be a more efficient and strategic partner to the business. But while most HR functions have undergone efforts to transform themselves, few of those transformations have been successful. Why are HR transformations so challenging?

We have identified three common missteps HR functions take when implementing an HR transformation. These missteps often prevent organizations from ensuring the most critical elements of HR transformation are in place (see Figure 1). Knowing these missteps can ensure a successful HR transformation in the future.

1 Not (Re)defining the HR Value Proposition

A true transformation of the HR function requires HR leaders to step back and re-evaluate HR at its core. Specifically, HR leaders must revisit and (re)

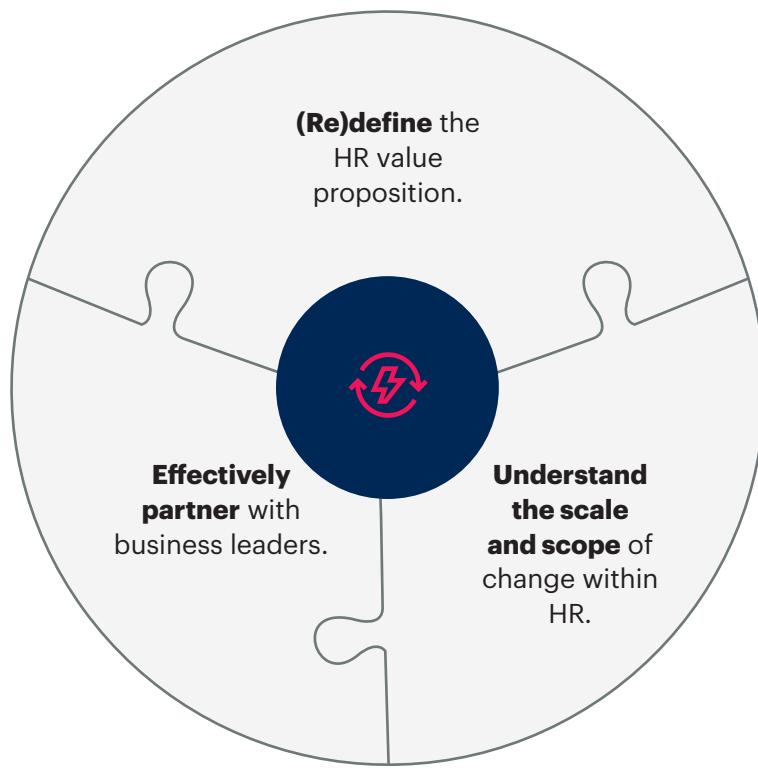
define the value of the HR function and how the function drives business results.

Questions that can help HR leaders (re)define the HR value proposition include:

- What unique value can only this HR function provide?
- What is our HR function's mission?

Starting here supports a more thorough review of the HR function, a clear set of goals and the creation of a holistic action plan — leading to a true transformation. However, HR leaders commonly overlook this step, beginning HR

Figure 1. Critical Elements for Success in HR Transformation



Source: Gartner (April 2019)

transformation by targeting a specific goal or action, such as restructuring the function, upskilling HR business partners and investing in a new HRIS system.

Worse, HR leaders may target several well-intentioned but uncoordinated goals and actions. While this approach may make implementing changes within the HR function feel more manageable, isolated or uncoordinated action plans are not transformational. They are unlikely to substantially impact HR's goals or the achievement of the HR value proposition and can lead to conflict. True HR transformation requires change initiatives to be based on and integrated into the business strategy.

True HR transformation requires change initiatives to be based on and integrated into the business strategy.

2 Underestimating the Scale and Scope of the Change for the HR Function

For HR transformations to succeed, the function must have a comprehensive, long-term change management plan. HR leaders often take for granted that HR staff support and understand the change, and they underestimate the time and attention they should spend securing staff buy-in and helping staff navigate changes associated with the transformation.

For example, HR staff members whose work is impacted by transformational change need their career paths, processes and goals clearly defined and updated before, during and after the change process. It is important for those actually implementing the change into their work to understand why the change is needed, exactly what the process will look like and what the end goal of the transformation is. Change management plans for HR transformations should have the same scope and breadth as other firmwide changes.

3 Not Resetting Expectations With Leaders

HR transformations often affect the way HR interacts with the line, the services HR delivers and the way HR delivers those services. Resetting leaders' expectations about HR's changing role is a critical component of an effective HR transformation, yet HR leaders tend to underinvest in it.

Resetting expectations effectively should begin before the transformation is finalized and requires a long-term, organizationwide implementation plan. Communication to leaders and managers is a good start but not enough, alone, to reset expectations. Implementation plans should detail all relevant changes related to the new role HR will play (specific tasks HR will now perform) while recognizing the role HR is pivoting away from (what HR will no longer do). They should also detail specific plans to reinforce those changes with HR and the line over an extended period.

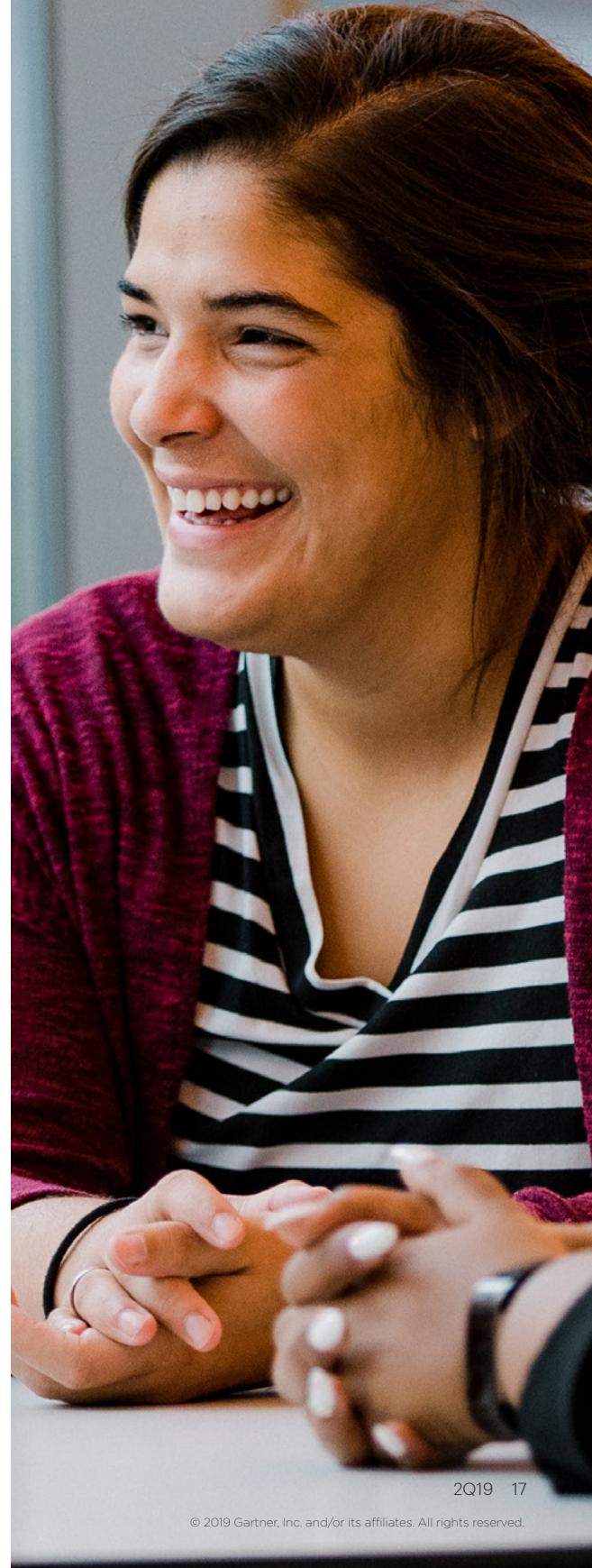
Resetting expectations with the line also requires support for frontline HR staff, who may be reluctant to say "no" to leaders and managers or to change the way they operate.

Conclusion

Leaders face many challenges that make it hard to (re)define the value of HR while effectively addressing both internal and external effects of HR changes. Failing to do so, however, can result in wasted resources when no transformation takes place. By prioritizing the requirements of every HR transformation and avoiding common missteps, HR functions can be better prepared to truly transform.

Top 10 Emerging Skills for the C-Suite

By Zachary Friedman
and Preetesh Sharma



Skill needs are changing. In today's increasingly digitalized landscape, organizations are integrating emerging technologies more than ever to drive innovation and growth. Such rapid digitalization leads to changes in the skills organizations need in the workforce, including C-suite roles.

Coupled with this challenge is the fact that the labor market has become increasingly tight. Unemployment rates have steadily declined over the past five years in every region of the world. This makes finding the right talent for C-suite roles more difficult. HR executives must therefore be aware of the top emerging skills for C-suite roles so they can attract and develop the high-performing C-suite team their organizations need.

Our TalentNeuron platform analyzed over 400 job postings for C-suite executives from 2015 to 2018 and from locations around the world, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, the U.K. and the U.S.¹. This analysis has revealed the top 10 hard skills

and the top 10 soft skills — those with the highest emerging demand since 2015.

Top 10 Hard Skills

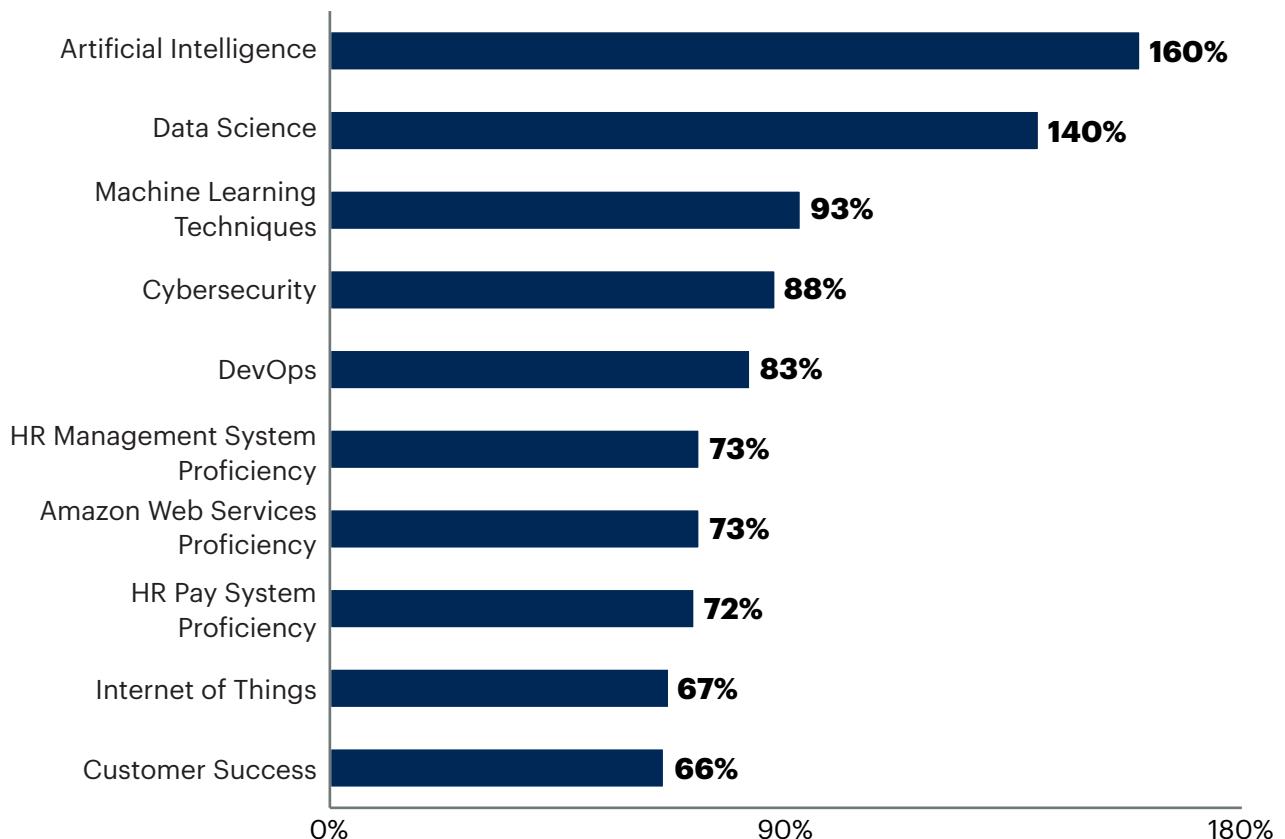
Artificial intelligence, data science, machine learning techniques and cybersecurity are the hard skills with the highest growth in job demand for C-suite executives (see Figure 1).

Among the top 10 hard skills for C-suite executives, the prevailing emphasis is on technology:

- Demand for advanced tech skills, such as artificial intelligence, data science and machine learning, illustrates the increased need to own and support digital business strategies and automate processes throughout the organization to drive efficiency.
- Skills related to using platforms, such as HR management systems and HR pay systems, exemplify the need for all C-suite leaders

Figure 1. Hard Skills That Witnessed the Highest Demand

Compound Annual Growth Rate (C-Suite Executives, 2015-2018)



Source: Gartner (April 2019)

to access and use data to make informed decisions about their talent.

- The rising demand for cybersecurity skills demonstrates the need for all C-suite executives to support the risk management that accompanies a greater use of technology and data.

Top 10 Soft Skills

Design thinking, strategic management and adaptability are the soft skills with the highest growth in job demand for C-suite executives (see Figure 2).

The soft skills required for C-suite roles increasingly trend toward customer centricity. Such high demand for design thinking, complaint management, customer satisfaction and customer relations skills indicates that leaders are making the customer's experience a focal point for all C-suite executives. The inclusion of sales skills and sales leadership among top C-suite skills also indicates increasing demand

for the entire C-suite to not only understand customers but also acquire and sell to customers.

The soft skills required for C-suite roles increasingly trend toward customer centricity.

Additionally, the increase in demand for skills such as strategic management and adaptability reflects the need for C-suite executives who can thrive in volatile and rapidly changing business environments.

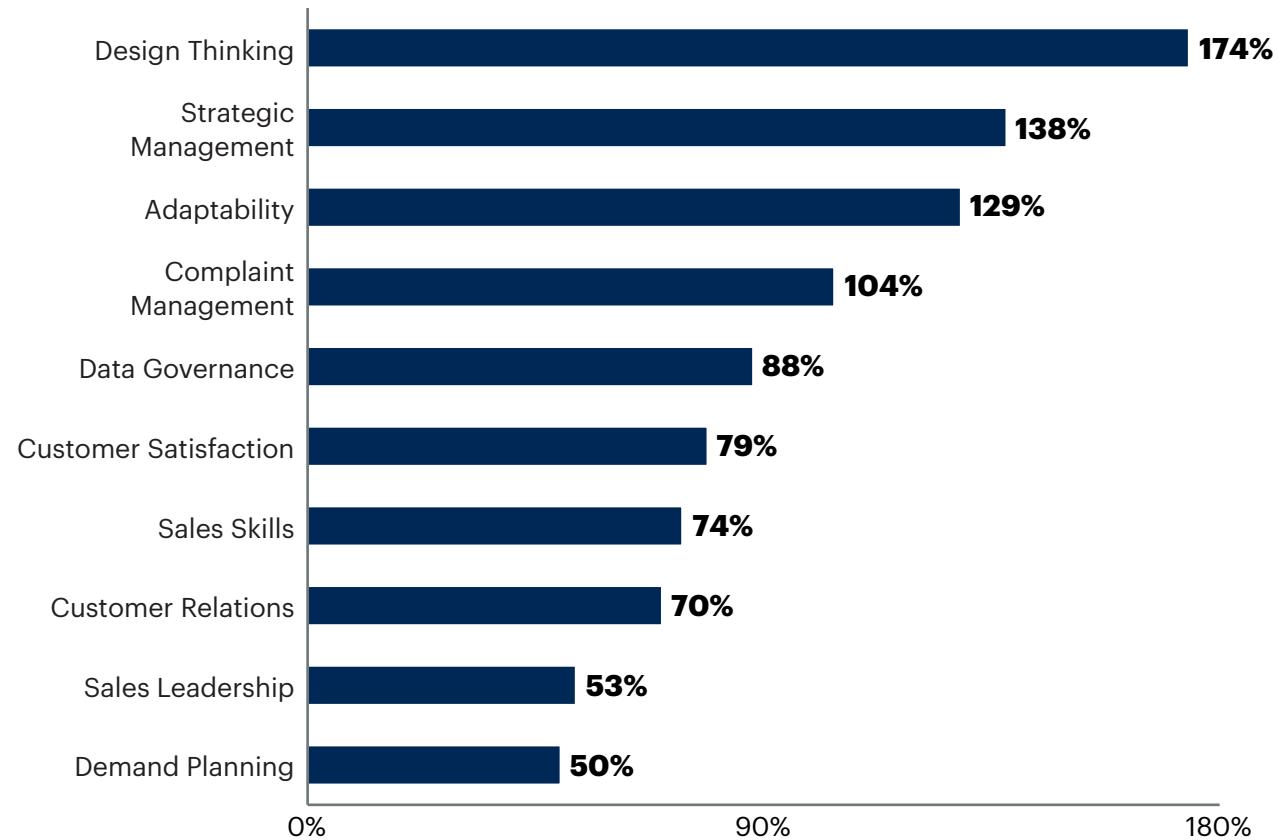
Conclusion

Armed with this knowledge of the most in-demand skills, heads of HR and their C-suite peers can effectively plan for the leadership team that will lead them into the future.

¹ All C-level job titles are included in the analysis (e.g., chief HR officer, chief executive officer, chief technology officer, chief financial officer, chief information officer, chief operating officer, chief compliance officer, chief knowledge officer, chief security officer, chief data officer, chief marketing officer).

Figure 2. Soft Skills That Witnessed the Highest Demand

Compound Annual Growth Rate (C-Suite Executives, 2015-2018)



Source: Gartner (April 2019)

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