

38 trends to unleash the power of HR and help leaders embrace the future. HR is finally being handed the torch, and thereby given a golden opportunity to take charge of transforming our organisations and work models. To boldly create a 'driving and motivating vision' for the future of People & Organisations.

**COPENHAGEN
INSTITUTE
FOR FUTURES
STUDIES**



UNLOCKING THE FUTURE OF PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONS



Our robot co-worker

Lexica is an Artificial Intelligence program, and it has illustrated every image in this report. Each trend-representing image was generated through our prompts. The images are not censored.

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38 HR trends were developed by Thomas Geuken, Kristian Mehlsen, and through interview with CEOs and HR departments of international companies (kept anonymous).

Art Direction Sara Frostig. Images by Lexica.

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Please note that the HR trends do not necessarily reflect opinions by CIFS.*

*If you have any questions or comments, you are welcome to reach out to futurist, author,
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Introduction

We live in pivotal times of change. Back in 2016, the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies conducted an international research project focusing on the future of work, workforce, and workplace. Its aim was to guide strategic decision-making for a 10-year horizon.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world back in 2019, our previous trends for the ‘future of work’ accelerated to an unprecedented pace. By 2022, notions of remote and hybrid work were no longer the ‘future’ anymore, but a reality for many. This rang particularly true for knowledge workers, who made for a disproportionately high stake of employees to be thrust into these new ways of working.

The pandemic gave leaders, HR departments, and employees more than just a glimpse of what awaits the future of People & Organisations – suddenly, everyone was participating in a global labour experiment. It changed worldviews and led employees to mass re-evaluate their reasoning behind and expectations of the work they do, why, where, and for whom – a transformative journey!

Now, in the pandemic’s aftermath, leaders within the field of Human Resources (HR) are faced with the responsibility of assisting, advising, and guiding their companies into uncertain post-pandemic territories.

HR is finally being handed the torch and given a golden opportunity to step up and take charge of both transforming and futureproofing organisations, work-practices, leadership- and workplace models, and the resulting company culture – to boldly create a ‘visionary winning strategy’ that drives and motivates profound organisational change.

A big question remains: How will HR departments set future trajectories for organisations and companies that help them adapt, align, and embrace the changes happening in the world, both in- and outside company bounds? Organisations need to reconfigure the role of HR by breaking its mould.

This is not merely a technical or structural exercise, but one with great strategic responsibility – not only to people within the organisations, but also for the future of their business propositions.

A STELLAR MOMENT IN HISTORY

Looking back in time at the beginning of the industrial revolution, mankind, within merely a few years, birthed industrial organisation. It acted as a strategic way-paving into a future of mass production.



From this point forward, HR has a similarly heavy-weighted momentum seize. Or, as historian Stefan Zweig might have put it, this has the potential of becoming a stellar moment for humankind ('Sternstunden der Menschheit').

Business executives all over the world are putting HR departments in the driver's seat of business, capitalism, and organisational change, asking them to steer in the right direction and accommodate the needs and demands of the future. Industrial organisations have maxed out their relevance and are desperately in need of inspiration on how to move on. HR needs to get it right by setting new organisational standards.

By way of this new report, the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies seeks to monitor this transformative journey, and guide executive decisionmakers in finding their own voice, in understanding their unique organisational makeup, and in 'surfing' the global tides of these historic shifts. Already set in motion, organisations rely now on HR, too, to navigate and (re-)align two core imperatives:

- 1) Organisations' need of keeping up with the speed of changes in their business environment, and
- 2) employees' altering expectations of, and virtues over where, how, and why they work.

The relationship between People & Organisations is in the midst of a reformation and reinterpretation process – and HR needs to join in on the tailoring of a new systemic equilibrium, rebalancing these two paradigms in a relevant, value creating, vibrant manner.

AN OUTSIDE-IN PERSPECTIVE

Megatrends are reshaping the landscape of HR to such an extent that it will barely be recognisable in the future. CIFS has conducted a research initiative to identify and qualify strategic choices about the future of work and explore related challenges ahead. Our research identified 38 future trends of significant strategic importance for organisations to be aware of. These key trends can be used as actionable insights to assist your company in developing an adaptivity for important megatrends, and embracing the future of people within – 2030 and beyond.

THE WORLD OF HR SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF MEGATRENDS

Megatrends provide frames of reference in an uncertain and complex world. We know, for example, that globalisation is to intensify, population growth is to continue, and that we will need to address an array of subsequential social and environmental concerns – such as an increasingly ageing society, and cities transforming into megacities, propelled by the sprawl of vast urbanisation. More and more people will prioritise a heightened sense of 'liveability' – that is, easier access to better (quality-of-)life services. They will crave greater individuality and personal empowerment, putting heavier emphasis on health and well-being. From a technological and scientific standpoint, many advances in engineering are already on the horizon, unfolding in real time, with artificial intelligence and automation further encroaching on our day-to-day and becoming more seamless and convenient. Big Tech is developing technologies of multi-layered reality, such as VR, AR, and the metaverse – many of which will likely enter both our social and professional spheres, offering greater interconnectedness. All this points toward a more advanced and complex service and network-based economy to which both customer and

employee expectations will adjust accordingly. Wealth will swell, accumulating in certain demographics, and a biotech revolution will hasten the possibilities of interfering with the fundamental DNA of our species. All of this to say, the impact of megatrends, however vaguely related to one's own immediate surroundings it may seem, is not to be underestimated. Welcome to the future!

To quote the author of "Megatrends: Ten New directions for our lives" John Naisbitt:

"Trends, like horses, are easier to ride in the direction they are going"

On behalf of the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies, we hereby share our 38 future trends of HR, hoping that they will guide and assist you to boldly go where you have not gone before. To set new directions or perhaps tweak your HR initiatives for people to live better lives and thrive in our future organisations and work cultures. Simply put: It is good business to be in good company – literally speaking.

SINCERELY YOURS

Thomas Geuken



Future Trends for People & Organisations

HOW TO USE OUR 38 HR TRENDS

Through qualitative research (CEOs and HR executives), the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies diagnosed over 80+ different challenges within HR, predominately pertaining to the field of knowledge workers in an organisational context – but they can certainly apply to other occupations as well.

After triangulating said diagnosed challenges with our global megatrends, we now have the pleasure of introducing 38 strategic HR trends moving your organisation forward towards 2030.

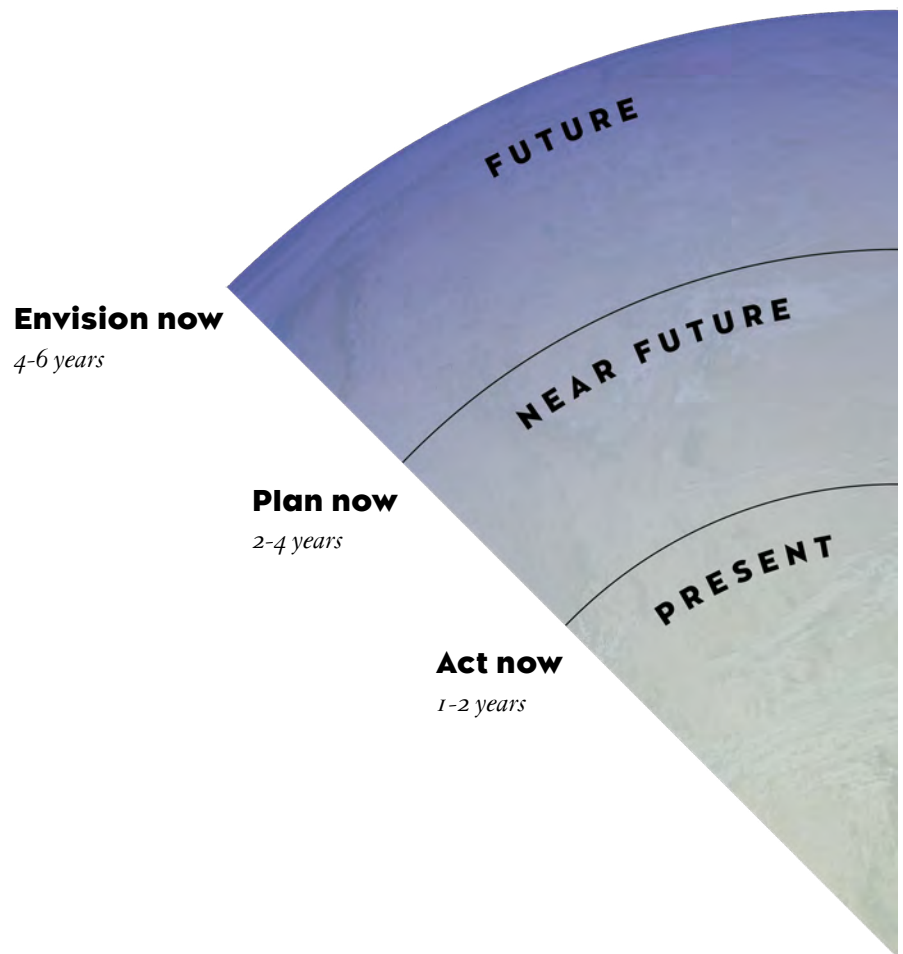
This report is meant to inspire HR executives and decision-makers to get their organisation better aligned – to strategize for and innovate their HR services to better the company and society as a whole.

There are three use-cases for the HR trend catalogue: 1) To futureproof your existing HR strategies and initiatives; 2) to ideate new, innovative HR strategies and initiatives, and 3) to create your own internal HR thought-leader program that drives the overarching business transformation within your organisation and industry.

The trend catalogue consists of five different clusters of trends – or domains of HR – in need of setting a new strategic trajectory.

HR CLUSTERS ARE Leadership & Organization Life & Career People & Talent Work & Technology Culture & Workspace

For optimal strategic application of trends, we divided all 38 of them into three time-horizons:



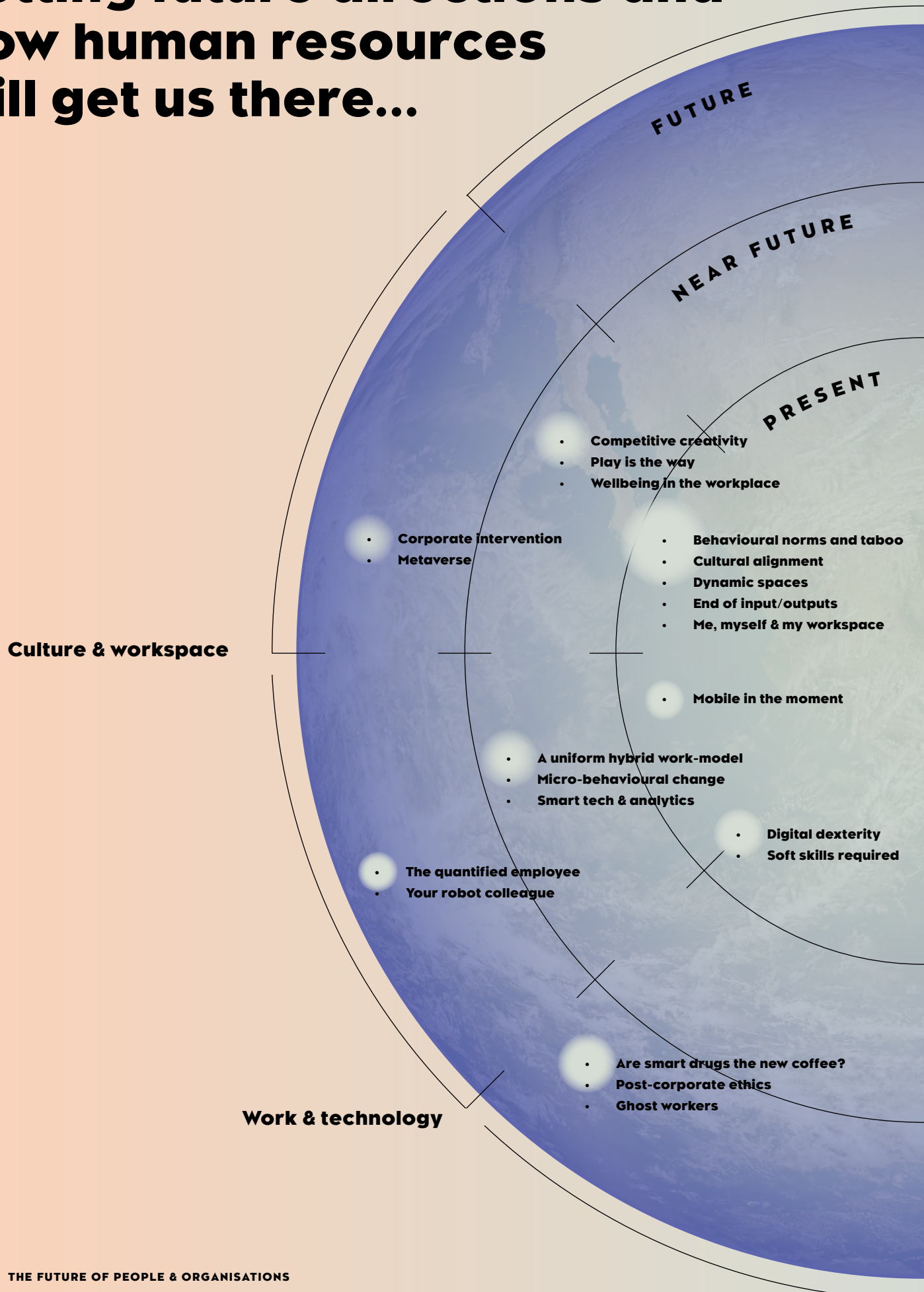
WORKING WITH FUTURES

As futurists, we have the privilege and pleasure of working with different companies of industries on a weekly basis. Veering from one industry into another is much like traveling backwards and forwards in time. Hence, each industry has its own evolution and tempo of change. Some companies are pioneering the future of work, like those within IT, while others are slow and more conservative by virtue of the greater industry at hand.

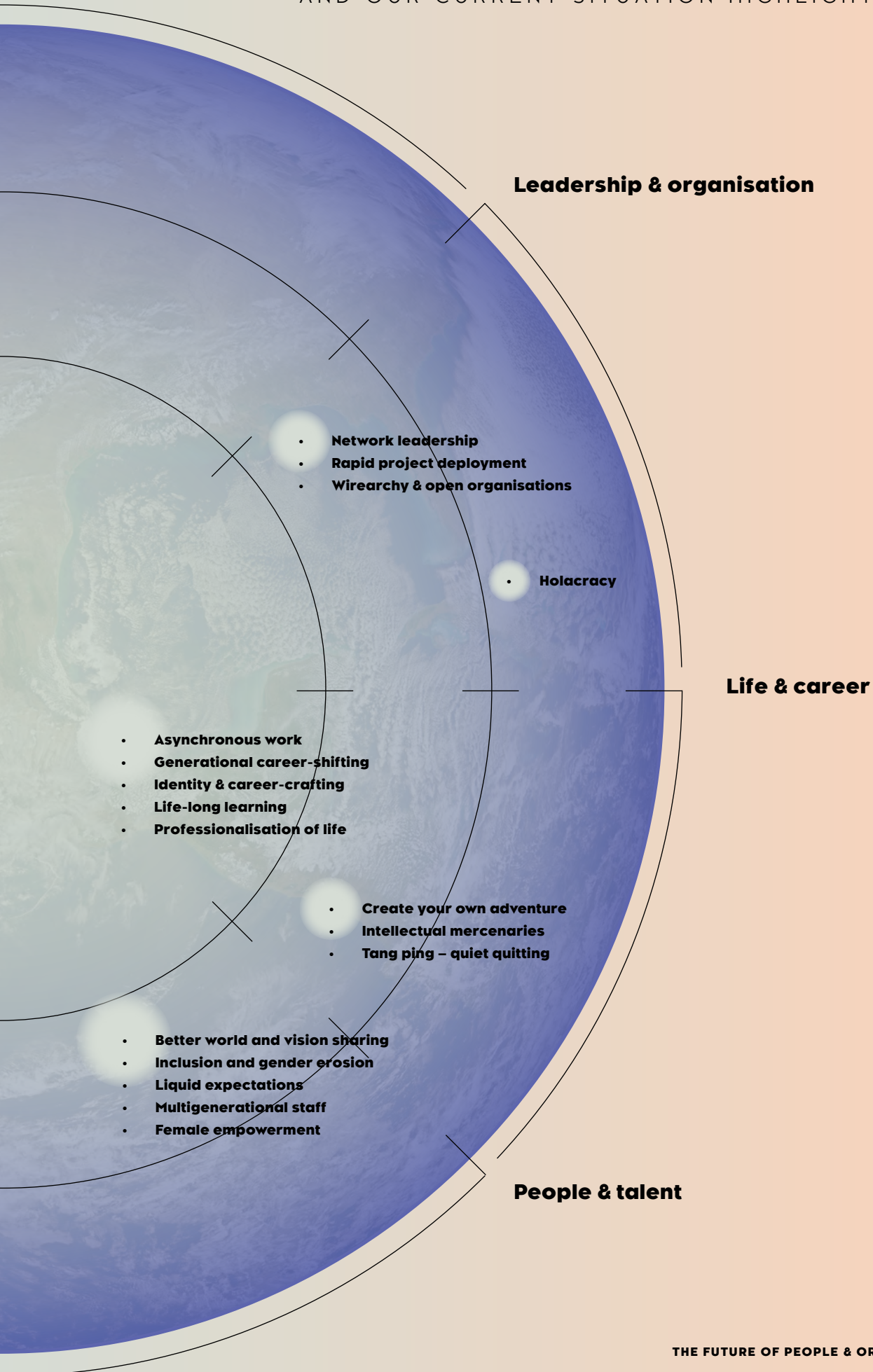
Due to this circumstance, we recommend to examine our 38 HR trends carefully. Depending on your own position within your industry, dissect and (re-)arrange key trends into your own categories to better fit your individual business environment's needs.

We truly believe that the importance of Human Resources is gaining significant traction. There is a void to be inhabited by innovative HR measures, one that will, however, be conquered by the likes of facility and supply chain management algorithms if they are too slow, thus leading to the worrying thought that if HR does not start to think about its future, it might not have one.

Setting future directions and how human resources will get us there...



THE FUTURE OF HR SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF MEGATRENDS
AND OUR CURRENT SITUATION HIGHLIGHT 38 TRENDS



LEADERSHIP & ORGANISATION

“With greater democratisation comes more decentralised decision-making.”

Rapid project deployment

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Network Economy



“Work campaigns” or project-oriented work are becoming the norm, with workers operating as “free agents”, assembled on a project-by-project basis. Said campaigns will be much better suited for talents unwilling to be trapped in a “Sisyphus-like” work situations, flexible work arrangements are adopted as the accelerating pace of change pushes many companies to move from fixed to variable costs, including employees. High-level professionals are also choosing to work on a project basis for a variety of different companies in order to enhance their employability.

An aging population will also contribute to the shift towards project-oriented work, as more than three-quarters of adults approaching retirement say they plan to continue working in some capacity. The advent of ad-hoc companies is also expected to fuel the popularity and spread of such formats – as in, companies that are created to complete a task or solve a problem, only to be dissolved shortly thereafter. This rings especially relevant as we enter an era of “post-corporate ethics”.

Network leadership

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Network Economy |

Individualisation & Empowerment



In the future, the landscape of networked leadership will venture away from the notion of integrated factories or conventional companies, and towards highly coordinated networks and ecosystems with a multitude of approaches to mobilising, orchestrating, and engaging talent, skills, leaders, and ideas. The nature of HR challenges facing managers are in constant state of flux.

Networked leadership is shifting its focus from developing skills and competencies to development stages, where the responsibility for employee growth and development will be transferred from HR, managers, and trainers to individuals themselves as they are guided through stages of progression.

Leadership will spread through networks, rather than reside in a single person or role, raising the question: What conditions do we need for leadership to flourish within a network?

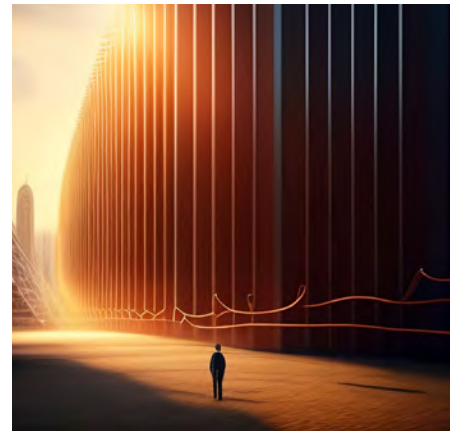
Wirearchy & open organisations

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Network Economy |

Globalisation



In an accelerating and increasingly complex business reality, hierarchical organisations have a tendency for being too slow with their fixed internal resources and roles, often relying on individual endeavours to put out fires and demonstrate adaption readiness. Consequentially, this prompts organisational structures to modify from hierarchies to wirearchies – dynamic flows of power and authority, based on information, trust, credibility, and a focus on results, enabled by interconnected technology and people. Take the company Wolt, for instance, who provide on-demand jobs globally for hundreds of thousands of “self employed couriers” – companies will need to challenge the entire notion around the modern organisation. Open organisations are children of the digital age and the advent of social media.

Open and innovative organisational models, and the utilisation of peer-to-peer networks and open-source information, transparency and participation are emerging, by way of which communities are built, resources and talents are harnessed, silos both inside and outside the organization are broken.

The next generation of companies will find inspiration in DOAs – Decentralised Autonomous Organisations. DAOs are member-owned organisations without any centralized leadership. Instead, they use software algorithms, rules and manifestos to facilitate and sustain relationships, offer hyper agile work-models, and provide therewith a sense of direction and purpose.

Distributed leadership

Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Network Economy |

Greater Interconnectedness



With greater democratisation comes more decentralised decision-making. Here, “holacracy” and self-management are receiving increased attention. It is less about training employees, and more about raising leaders. Individuals will be required to take far greater responsibility for their personal work, but also to contribute to collective, collaborative efforts. This departs from a conventional approach that emphasises a vertical, influence-related process (top-down) in which subordinates are controlled and managed by a single individual leader. For decades, this was the prevalent paradigm in leadership, yet emerging alternate approaches suggest that leadership is an activity that can be shared or distributed among members of an organisation, among colleagues.

This provokes new bodies of thought on informal leadership in organisations where people are empowered to make proactive decisions concerning their tasks and implement them. For these sentiments to materialise necessitates not only reconfiguration of how we view leadership, but also of what influences how work processes are designed in order to allocate the leadership role.

LIFE & CAREER

“In an accelerating and complex environment we will be required to be more fluid and flexible.”

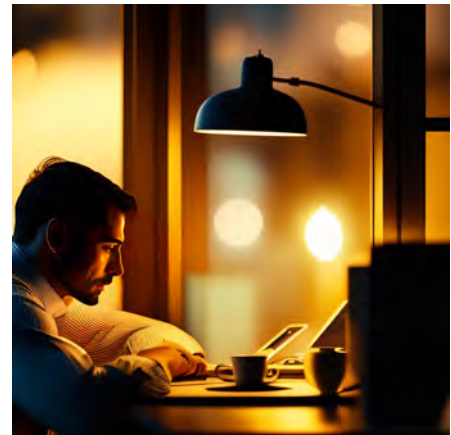
Asynchronous work

Megatrends driving HR trend

Network Society |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Globalisation



Moving from the rigid 9-to-5 work schedule towards a 24/7 work culture seems to be the trend for individuals as well as the businesses they are employed by. In a global and intricate business environment, the demand for higher flexibility surges. Recognition is widespread over how an employee's productivity is dependent on and can profit from individually fashioned regimens. Versatility in lifestyles will further contribute to this, as will a greater scientific comprehension of chronotypes – the behavioural manifestations of underlying circadian rhythms (sleep-awake cycles).

Millennials, especially, will continue to crack down on the industrial, linear approach towards work and career, drifting between focus periods in which they work hard, followed by extended breaks of recreating, up-skilling, or other pursuits, introducing herewith an alternative “work beat” to today's organisations.

Given risks of stress and pressure associated with a 24/7 culture, however, there will need to be a spotlight on attention-management rather than time-management, to provide hyper-individualised work-setups by reassembling organisations to benefit both employees' optimal deliveries, and their overall quality of life.

Generational career-shifting

Megatrends driving HR trend

Population Growth |

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

An Aging World



Millennials and Generation Z not seldom reject the prospect of a career within one single field and are a lot more prone to frequent career-shifts along the duration of their working lives. What is today a growing trend will in the future become a dominant reality: a majority of employees will not expect to stay at an organisation for the long run, unless truly convinced and incentivised otherwise. This coincides with the normalisation of the gig economy, within which multiple, temporary jobs are preferred over tending to a single, steadier career.

This rise in career-shifts is partly because Millennials and Gen Z identify with a more 'liquid' style of life: they defy to be defined by nationality, class, gender, personal interests, etc., and are instead far keener on temporariness and shapeshifting through contexts. Although this may cause problems for maintaining retention rates, it also means that younger generations are more malleable. Thus, not only is it necessary to quicken onboarding processes, but also to instill a company with a holistic vision. With younger generations eager to fast-track internal career-ladders, more instant, developmental career prospects will soon become a significant retainment mechanism.

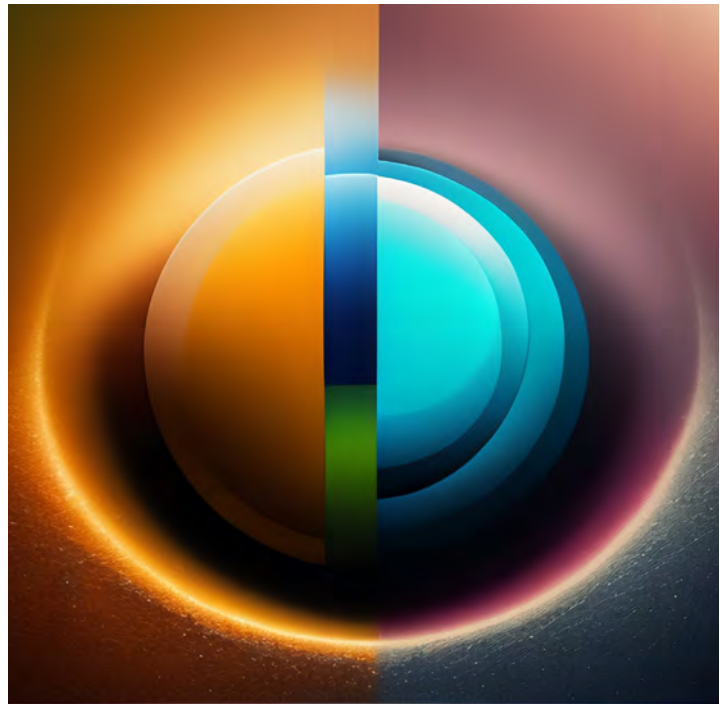
Identity & career-crafting

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Globalisation



Work in the future, especially for people in developed economies, will be a defining aspect of life and thus, their identity. As boundaries blur between private life and professional life, more and more individuals seek meaningful associations between what they want to represent them, their competencies, and their interests and values – above and beyond occupational responsibilities.

Organisations need to be prepared to accommodate this. More people will be joining companies and finding work that is a manifestation of their personal value sets, rather than just money or satisfaction. Professional titles and defined areas of expertise will grow in importance because professional recognition is more enduring, especially in an era characterised by a fluctuating job market. Hyper-specialisation will also enable individuals to transition from job-security to career-security, allowing them to sustain their identity through several occupations in an increasingly transient labour market – a practice of “career crafting”.

Professionalisation of life

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Globalisation



The boundaries between professional life and private life will increasingly blur. In the Global North, the boundaries between professional life and private life are blurring to such extent that they are virtually indistinguishable, with individual valuations of and interests for both coming into unprecedented alignment: We wear to the office what we wear for leisure, use the same laptop for spreadsheets that we use for streaming true crime, gossip in meetings with colleagues about other colleagues just like we would with friends about other friends over dinner.

We complete personal tasks at work and work tasks at home. Even after office hours, people think about work or talk about it with their friends and family in their so-called private life. After Covid-19, many office employees have designated at-home working stations, whereas the offices they do commute to feel less and less sterile to reflect a more comfortable, fluid style of work/life.

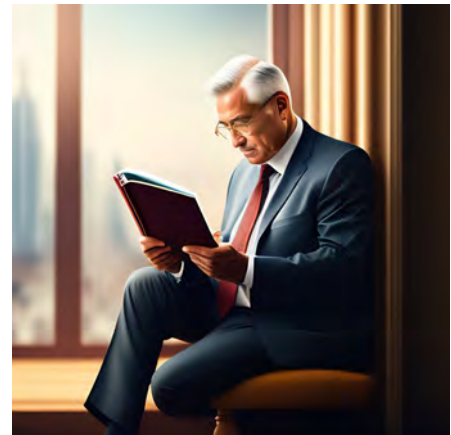
As our professions are meshed into and become an integral part of our identities, the separation of different areas of life complicates. The speed of this movement and the amorphousness ensued require agility and flexibility, to then allow for the fulfilment of career responsibilities, functions, activities that simultaneously coincide with personal interests.

Life-long learning

Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |

An Ageing World



Today, competencies quickly obsolesce – novel skills must be acquired to stay ahead. It is important for employees to keep learning throughout, either at work or by taking time off work to improve and add onto their portfolio. Learning itself, however, is changing, diverging from just-in-case learning – where it is all about vast, wide-ranged knowledge that might come in handy someday – to just-in-time learning, where it is more so about the tools needed for concrete, upcoming tasks. Broader knowledge will lose in importance as search engines and intelligent expert systems can churn out information you need at higher speed and sophistication. Specified learning tools will take centre-stage: methodology, analysis, design, criticism, programming, the scientific methods, et cetera. This also ropes in non-conventional techniques of teaching and learning.

A related aspect is that of general self-fulfilment and self-development, that can be either related or unrelated to purely professional endeavours. The mercurial 21st century life is inciting a quest for a deeper sense of personal meaning in all aspects of peoples' lives, including those of job and consumption. Our future life will not be divided into four, sharply defined life-phases à la childhood (play), young (education), parents (work), elderly (pension). Instead, employees will be cycling through work-, upskilling-, and rest/play-stages many times throughout their career- and lifespan.

Create your own adventure

Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Economic Growth |

Growing Population



In the same vein as the above, catering to a workforce-of-one requires organisations to rethink compensation and employee benefits in the future. We are likely to see much more salary differentiation, as well as witness organisations putting together benefits packages that suit specific employee needs: “Choose your own adventure” is the name of the game, factoring into compensation things like lifestyle and demographic attributes, location, regional context, creative stimuli, roles and responsibilities, and merit. It is detrimental to just consider all employees as one, rather than understanding them as a diverse group of individuals with different needs and interests.

Benefits and compensation should reflect this and be a more dynamic, diversified mix of access to opportunities, money, insurance, or other perks. Additionally, as project-based work and shared labour pools become more popular, there will be more and higher task-oriented and performance-based compensation.

Intellectual mercenaries

Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Greater Interconnectedness |

Network Economy



The open talent economy describes a phenomenon in which the dominant employment model constitutes a collaborative, transparent, technology-enabled, rapid-cycle way of doing business through networks and ecosystems of “intellectual mercenaries”. Business in the future will be a battleground amid accelerated complexity, and “intellectual mercenaries” will thus be instrumental in the war for talent.

Today’s workforce is a diverse cast of full-time employees, contract- and freelance talent, with several having no prior connection to the brand or business at stake. People hover from one role into another, across organisational boundaries, more freely than ever. Global markets and products are informed by innovation and demand talent pools and systems that can be rapidly assessed and leveraged. Business leaders and customers alike expect agility, scale, and the necessary expertise on demand.

The currency with which to acquire highly specialised talent combines the prestige of the inquiring company with the experiential value of the task at hand – do the amounted credentials here benefit the hired professional’s own employability? Ergo, the latter pursues projects to stay relevant and become more attractive for potential future gigs. Remote work schemes not only simplify such relationships, but also give companies a unique chance to harvest talent from everywhere.

Tang ping – quiet quitting

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Globalisation



Going above and beyond simply meeting the bare minimum requirements of a job has long been the working norm. This supercharged work ethic has become the standard way for employees to impress their employers. However, the counter-trend tang ping (“lying flat” or “quiet quitting”) is a rejection of societal pressure to overwork, and the rat race now often perceived as concluding in diminishing returns.

Somewhat related is the “the great resignation” wave, which empowered employees to demand more from their work experiences and an elevated work-life balance. But it’s also likely a by-product of the aftermath of living – and working – through the coronavirus pandemic, and the subsequent burnout that affected millions.

As far as talent identification goes, the challenge becomes to not always prioritise “motivated”, “driven”, “energetic”, et cetera, as core traits of potential candidates, but instead lean into those with the ability to get the job done, and actually recognise and reward them for it, to allow for a more inclusive, competent, and sustainable workspace, culture and praxis.

PEOPLE & TALENT

“Due to greater individual empowerment throughout society, including the workforce, individuals are increasingly awarded greater responsibility, self-direction, and self-leadership for their own work pursuits.”

Digital dexterity

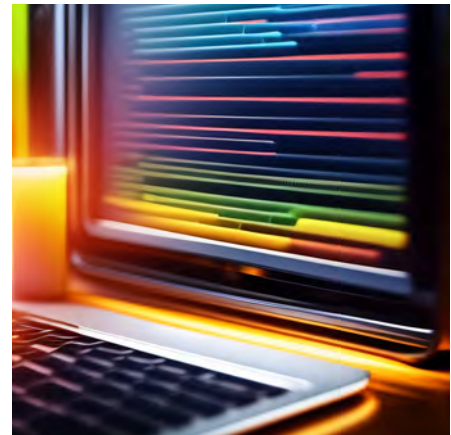
Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |

AI & Automation |

Economic Growth |

Engineering Advances



According to a study by Gartner in 2018, up to 83% of organisation leaders reported they struggle with making “meaningful progress on digital transformation”. In a future where digital transformation will not be an opt-in, nor solely used by ‘progressive’ companies, corporate leaders will have to tackle and take on the responsibility of changing IT systems, as well as deeply held, subconscious apprehensions that employees may hold regarding new technologies.

For digital/technological transformations to be effective, ensuring that employees have ‘digital dexterity’ – that they can navigate the incoming technology – ought to precede any actual implementation. Aforementioned study showed that employees who are literate in new technologies are 3.3 times more likely to launch and complete digital initiatives quickly, and thereby deliver greater value.

Although Generation Z – and Alpha, soon – are so-called ‘digital natives’, there is no ‘statistically significant correlation’ yet between younger generations and digital dexterity at the workplace. This should be viewed positively by organisations, given that employees will not have to be grouped according to age for training. However, across all ages, Gartner reported that less than 1 in 10 had profound digital dexterity.

Soft skills required

Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Network Economy |

Greater Interconnectedness



Due to greater, personalised empowerment throughout society, including the workforce, individuals are increasingly awarded greater responsibility, self-direction, and self-leadership for their own job pursuits. As such, they will be asked to rely on their own skills for most aspects of their work, including not only technical skills, but soft skills, too, such as work ethic, attitude, communication and interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and several other social attributes. Soft skills are the new hard skills and will become a cornerstone of the future workforce.

The importance of these soft skills is often undervalued, and there is far less training provided for them, with the assumption upheld that everyone knows and understands the importance of these less-tangible skills. But claiming more of the largely untapped potential here, and really investing in honing in on personal accountability, interpersonal negotiation skills, adaptability and flexibility, creative thinking, and inclusion can all increase performance.

Liquid expectations

Megatrends driving HR trend

Population Growth |

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Globalisation



In a world of “liquid expectations”, each new great experience will be held as a new standard for all subsequent (and adjacent) experiences to come. Thus, expectations from other fields will eventually impact HR: Candidates and Business Unites expect seamless and frictionless service experiences – “why should it be more complicated to be onboarded and get my contract than setting up a Netflix-account?”. Services that both make life easier and more convenient, and make stakeholders better at what they do (a better me), will mark where the bar is set.

In this context, HR should provide a frictionless stream of organisational opportunities for betterments and self-improvement, as well as making it even easier to contribute and support the overarching corporate vision – preferably in line with initiatives in support of a better world at large. In essence, HR services need to be designed around values of flexibility, adaptability, lightness, detachment, and speed which will increase user and stakeholder appreciation, as well as, ultimately, competitive advantage.

Better world and vision sharing

Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Network Economy |

Greater Interconnectedness



There is a growing movement towards concept selling, where you are no longer selling a product or service, but rather selling a vision or fulfilling a purpose. Businesses are increasingly becoming ideologically driven and no longer primarily focused on intellectual property and competitive advantage. As such, visions, and ideologies play an important role in shaping the direction of an organisation, where customers buy into the product, technology, company, or services because of what they stand for – people are joining a shared vision and a business-journey for the betterment of the planet and people; profit from purpose.

This is equally important for work culture, as in current and potential employees, seeing as they, too, want to be able to identify somehow with the organisation's beliefs and trajectories. That said, the location of the job and whether or not it resonates with certain values may come to be more significant of a factor for potential hires – or a lack thereof. At the same time, however, all this is to be treaded carefully, to avoid ideological bias and maintain operational efficiency.

Multigenerational staff

Megatrends driving HR trend

Population Growth |

An Aging World



Organisations in the future will be challenged in effectively managing, engaging, and motivating a multigenerational workforce – Generation X, Y, and Z. More workers will also work past the age 65 – something to be considered. Different generations bring different values, degrees of familiarity with technology, and expectations to the workplace. As a result, organisations will be forced to find a way to facilitate internal co-existence and balance between the needs of more diverse and individualistically oriented workforces, and the inherited industrial logic that demands standardised solutions to reduce costs. The challenge resides in constructing a synergy between several disparate generations and their various virtues.

This, in turn, requires shaping the work and designing its processes in accord with the tendencies and predispositions of different demographics, all whilst keeping within the parameters of the strategic mission and vision of the organisation in question.

Inclusion and gender erosion

Megatrends driving HR trend
Individulisation & Empowerment



We live in a world with competing value-systems across generations and the political spectrum. The value pendulum of the public discourse has moved from listening to logic, facts and science towards emotions, sensations and populism. Trust in the institutions of society are eroding and it is a struggle to find a common ground.

A key dimension is identity politics. Here, a new ecology of mind and a new voice of the next generation is on the rise. An ecology where generalisations and objectifications of gender, race, sexuality and ethnicity are not accepted. The rhetoric emerging here aims to embed us on a point of history's timeline at which we have learned from and undo the wrongs of the past – exemplified by cancel culture. Universities are implementing “safe-zones” – spaces where students are safe from judgmental stereotypes and preconceptions over sexuality, biological gender, cultural ethnicity, or neurologic conformity. Will safe zones become expected in our workspaces too?

The LGBTQ+ community is calling out corporations to extend on their pride-sympathy and actually nurture an inclusive workplace, whereas the broader diversity and inclusion agenda is beginning to underscore neuro-diversity in their aspirations; articulating mental disorders within an appreciative framework, such as the “bright not broken” sentiment, to encourage the recruitment of people with Asperger syndrome, for example, due to their special skillset and exceptional abilities in finding errors hidden in coding.

Post-corporate ethics

Megatrends driving HR trend

Environmental Challenge & Sustainability |

Economic Growth



Increasingly, social sustainability and related concepts are becoming a business imperative, in which success is judged also on the contributions made to improving socio-environmental conditions globally. This includes social investment, social innovation, and a general set of core business ethics and operational values. It calls into question the fundamental role of organisations. To what extent will private entities be required to support social well-being by providing or facilitating public services or engaging in activism?

Organisations will be required to find the appropriate balance between being profit-oriented and society-driven. As a result, organisations will need to position themselves accordingly, mindful of several implications related to the future of work, such as workplace location, supply chain management, talent attraction and retention, investment areas, and overall business proposition. In this age of information, and amid unrelenting demands for transparency, organisations need to be prepared for potential backlash, at all times.

Female empowerment

Megatrends driving HR trend

Economy Growth |

Individulisation & Empowerment



Going forward, organisations will have to become more “gender-bilingual” to attract women and their skills. Although women already constitute the majority of the workforce in Europe and North America, they remain an underutilised talent pool globally.

Over the next decade, demographers expect that up to one billion women will enter the global workforce. In many OECD countries, more women than men earn university degrees. Around the world, women’s purchasing power is increasing at a faster rate than men’s.

This increase is due to women’s higher educational attainment, however, and not due to a closing wage gap between equally qualified men and women.

Women appear in studies to be better prepared for the requirements at future workplaces, and research shows that women typically outperform men in soft-skills such as team building, the display of emotional intelligence, the setting of clear expectations, and the exhibit of other traits often associated with effective knowledge work.

Are smart drugs the new coffee?

Megatrends driving HR trend

Focus On Health |

Individualisation & Empowerment



Increasingly, smart drugs – a.k.a. nootropics – are consumed at the workplace and at school, to enhance an individual's ability to perform. Some drugs, like Modafinil, reduce the need for sleep and the effects of sleep deprivation, while others, like Ritalin, increase learning and concentration. Others enhance mathematic abilities or reduce nervousness. Electronic stimulation of the brain may also be used to enhance language and mathematical ability, attention span, problem solving, memory, and coordination.

Employees may choose to use cognitive enhancement to perform better overall, or to meet deadlines, with or without explicit approval. Cognitive enhancement is, in many cases, not illegal, and may provide a competitive edge, but managers should look out for overuse, addiction, or psychological side effects. At stake, too, is the unfurling of a toxic work culture that peer-pressures, expects or even necessitates cognitive enhancement. Thus, companies will need to contemplate the instatement of policies on nootropics, to perhaps mandate and regulate them on a prescription basis or elsehow.

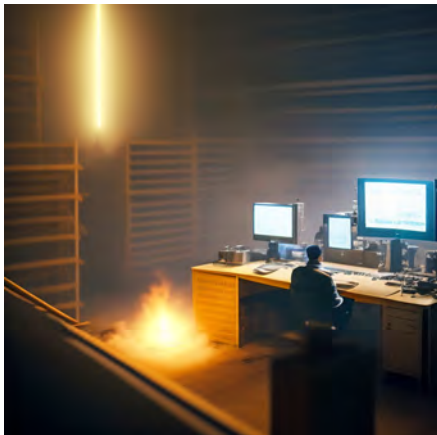
Ghost workers

Megatrends driving HR trend

Technologic Development |

Focus on Health |

Environmental Challenge & Sustainability



In 2030, companies will need to understand the notion of “contract cheating”, a phenomenon deriving from higher education, where students employ other professionals to do their university work for them. Contract cheating is happening all over the world, on all levels. This could plausibly increase in an age with a remote and hyper-competitive workforce. Here, you will recruit and hire a person to work remotely – perhaps in the metaverse with a digital twin or avatar. Using an avatar, they will employ other invisible freelancers or ghost workers as subcontractors to fulfil their contract obligations to the organisation. Subcontractors will offer 100% plagiarism-free work, and, with it, level-up the contractor’s professional reputation, helping the latter get promoted inside an organisation as fast as possible.

In many industries today, we have fully legitimate ghost workers: Ghost writers for books by celebrities and musicians, or for their accounts on social media. Same goes for people in the most powerful political offices. Ghost workers are here to stay.

WORK & TECHNOLOGY

“We should expect competencies and tech-capabilities necessary for success in the workplace to change, towards strengthening collaborations between humans and robots.”

Mobile in the moment

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Globalisation



Departing the thick of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have come to realise there are few if any domains where knowledge workers cannot go about their job; as in, the exponential development of information and communication technologies (ICT) is driving new hybrid work practices, greater mobility, and remote occupation. In the future, we will be “mobile in the moment” – the office is wherever we set up our connected device. As a result, the number of digital nomads – individuals who leverage telecommunication technologies to perform their work duties elsewhere than a cubicle, and generally conduct a more locally ephemeral lifestyle – is growing.

Firstly, this tampers with occupancy rates in office spaces: they fall, and thus pose a facility and investment challenge. Secondly, there is a leadership challenge in building, managing, and motivating efficient asynchronous teams remotely. The workplace is no longer just a place to perform a work task, but rather, needs to be viewed as a strategic asset that drives the core elements of the company’s brand, culture, business strategy, and value proposition.

A uniform hybrid work-model

Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |

AI & Automation |

Economic Growth



The post-pandemic era will be defined by the seamless integration of hybrid work models into the core business practices of organisations. A significant majority of workers want to retain the hybrid – or even fully remote – working practices experienced during the pandemic, rather than return to a business-as-usual mentality. Hybrid working practices within different organisations vary today, as the last stages of the pandemic properly begin to wane, but industries will probably tend to homogenise towards a uniform hybrid working structure.

The Global Future of Work Report from 2022 shows that 40% percent of the workforce can be “productive anywhere”. This stake had interesting commonalities: These workers had more autonomy, positive mental health, a desire to participate in learning, advanced digital fluency that enabled them to evaluate and adopt technology to get the job done, strong social bonds at work, and work-life enhancement, which means that they felt their work added to their ability to enjoy other areas of their lives.

Micro-behavioural change

Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Focus On Health |

Environmental Challenge & Sustainability



A better understanding of human behavioural science will continue to inspire employers to push people towards expected behaviours through nudging, digital design, and gamification. This includes embedding gaming elements and metaphors into non-gaming situations, in order to motivate individuals and incentivise behaviours. Gamification is about harnessing the experiential power of games as a tool to animate employees to achieve their own goals while supporting an organisation's strategic objectives. As a result, work will likely be more engaging, fun, rewarding and collaborative, likely with improvements to productivity. "Micro-behavioural change" also includes designing agile workspaces that unconsciously nudge employees in their decision-making.

These practices can be used to address areas such as employee health, engagement, and motivation, as well as lowering absentee rates and increasing productivity, or driving sustainability at the workplace – all of which are areas with huge potential for cost savings.

Smart tech & analytics

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

AI & Automation



Data are gathered about people whenever they work, shop, travel, or just generally browse the internet. With perhaps hundreds of billions of sensor-equipped devices being connected to the internet over the next 10 years, the amount of data gathered will grow exponentially. No place will remain untouched, especially work, the workforce, and the workplace. Automated analysis of this “big data” can help companies know their customers better, predict market movements, improve employee performance, and boost efficiency in work processes. An issue here is that when you look for patterns in very large and complex data sets, false patterns may appear that have little or nothing to do with reality, including the identification of false positives. User-generated “dirty data” will also render inaccurate HR results.

This calls for caution and care when trusting big data analyses, and to focus on profound interpretation and intelligent execution. The internet of everything, and data-driven work embedded in a smart ecosystem, are likely part of the future ahead.

The quantified employee

Megatrends driving HR trend

Individualisation & Empowerment |
Technology Development



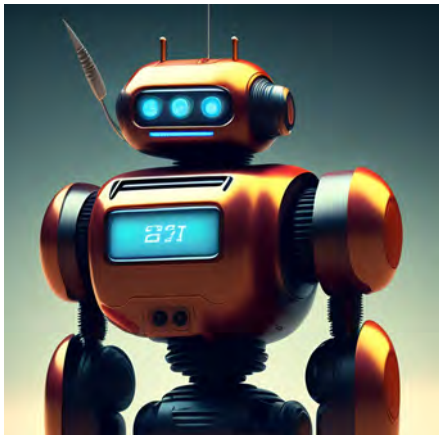
The “quantified employee” refers to a new age of monitoring in the workplace – smart and data-driven human resource management used to identify (in-)efficiencies and improve the security and design of work processes accordingly, as well as employee well-being. This includes the measuring and supervision of employees and their activities using sensors, tracking devices, and biometrics.

Further, researchers have identified a type of “biomarker for financial risk-attitude”. Some suggest the possibility of neuromanagement – as in, brain scanning as a part of the interview process, much like psychometric testing to assess an individual’s creative potential, commitment, and so on.

While the science is still largely immature, many hypotheses also posit that your genes influence several personality traits, so there may be additional room upward for what genome sequencing can grasp and be put to use for. Enabled by new science and technology, organisations will take a more introspective look at their resources, undoubtedly including their employees. With millions of Apple watches and wristbands with sensors sold globally, HR of the future will need to get access to private health data (small data) to tailor optimal work conditions for every single employee.

Your robot colleague

Megatrends driving HR trend
Greater Interconnectedness |
AI & Automation |
Globalisation



**Lexica is our robot co-worker
and it has illustrated
every image in this report.**

Robotics are omni-present. Artificial Intelligence is everywhere: as chatbots that make music and write fiction, as apps that translate what we say into different languages with a click on our smartphone, as TVs, as Apple watches, in our production lines, as lab assistants making scientific discoveries.

Roughly 25% of current jobs – in production, service industry, and knowledge work – will be automated within the next 10 years.

We should expect competencies and tech-capabilities necessary for success in the workplace to change, towards strengthening collaborations between humans and robots. Existing side-by-side, enhancing each other's work – the co-botic revolution. Will AI tools such as ChatGPT be able to improve (knowledge) labour at the same ratio as our new factories did back in the early 1900s?

By 2030, employers rely on algorithms to manage white-collar employees and assess their effectiveness. Performance reviews are automatically generated by algorithmic managers who evaluate employees across areas that were previously difficult to quantify. Attitude and emotional profiles determine if one is fit for a job and pinpoint an employee's development and promotion opportunities, both accessible to the organization, and to other companies using the same platform.

CULTURE & WORKSPACE

“To address changing needs, the workplace will be required to consist of dynamic spaces that accommodate several work styles and can meet the needs of several different assignments, or projects.”

Behavioural norms and taboo

Megatrends driving HR trend

Globalisation |

Economic Growth



We live in a multipolar world. The assumption that Western attitudes and behaviours will persist as the dominant workplace narrative is a damaging notion. Organisations should be conscious of Eastern management practices, workplace and workforce structures, and attitudes towards work. This will be especially important as non-Western companies gain traction and garner greater influence over the global marketplace.

In a knowledge-intensive society, organisations will need to be aligned with the cultural tenets of growing, hyper-specialised talent pools coming from Asia and elsewhere to capitalise on high-quality people resources. Such future changes in behavioural norms will likely challenge and/or support several embedded taboos related to work such as stress, depression, behavioural expectations of employees, and the industrial-ownership mindset of shaping employee-employer relations.

Cultural alignment

Megatrends driving HR trend

Globalisation |

Network Economy



In the future, global, over-arching literacy will be of crucial importance – a mutual understanding of nuance in order to act and work civilised and cooperative across cultural borders. In light of growing global reach and interconnectedness, organisations will be required to enable operational variability across markets. This includes building the capacity to address context-specific challenges with local innovation and local leaders. As a result, global organisations need to rethink and differentiate in prices, products, service models, as well as office design and location.

The key is to adapt global values to local culture to ensure operational efficiency and productivity are optimised, and outcomes and opportunities are fully realised. The challenge lies in considering cultural subtext across different markets while at the same time maintaining outward and inward brand consistency. Thus, large, growing companies will demand a particular formalisation of their work. This will entail a degree of process standardisation, where tasks and projects are structured and integrated in a seamless way.

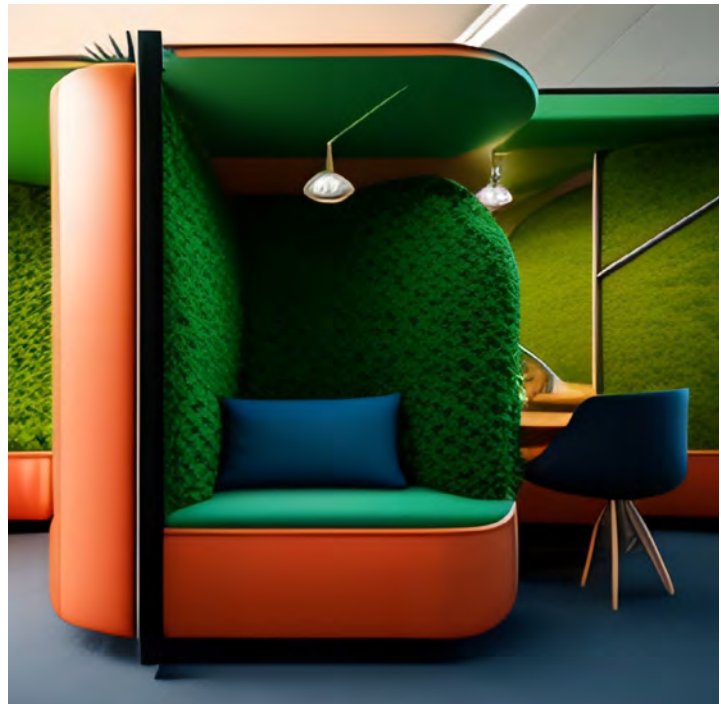
Dynamic spaces

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

Globalisation



As organisations and work are becoming more fluid and demand a higher degree of agility, it is necessary for the physical workplace to be scalable and adaptable. To address changing needs, the workplace will be required to consist of dynamic spaces that accommodate several work styles (e.g., influenced by personality, gender, generation, culture, et cetera), and can meet the needs of several different assignments, or projects. Dynamic and adaptive activity-based workplaces should have physical space available, integrated tools and technology, and be emotionally aligned with any number of objectives, whether it be learning, increasing focus, enhancing collaboration, or facilitating social interaction.

In the near-term post-pandemic workspace, organisations need to invest and prioritise the areas for socialising and collaboration where multipurpose, multifunctional furniture and other physical objects will allow for a more dynamic workspace. The spectrum of dynamism, here, starts with open office spaces, mobile furniture and removable walls, as well as an overall modular architecture and fluid design.

Me, myself & my workspace

Megatrends driving HR trend
Individualisation & Empowerment



Workspaces are declining in size transforming into open and flexible office landscapes. Driven by the need to reduce costs and make the workplace more adaptive, standardised workspaces have become a norm. However, corporations that allow groups of workers to shape their office environment report greater productivity. The BYOD (bring your own device) phenomenon already allows users to resort to the input devices they are most comfortable with, but “bring your own workspace” (BYOW) would allow users to bring (or select) their own desk, chairs, and other amenities. Further, virtual workspace personalisation via IT platforms and devices, including employees’ self-procured technology, could be one way to grant a sense of personal control over the workspace.

Own non-stationary devices, in particular, will allow workers to develop local immersive work experiences, regardless of where they find themselves. With this, however, come new security challenges pertaining to data management, maintenance, et cetera – for the former, cloud-based security protocols will likely become the standard go-to approach.

End of input/output's

Megatrends driving HR trend

Economic Growth |

Greater Interconnectedness



The focus of work in the future will gravitate towards outcomes, where success is defined in terms of outcomes achieved, and less in terms of input (hours) or output (an amount produced or number of sales). Outcomes are defined as meaningful changes, usually betterments, that are not always directly traceable to specific in- or outputs, but rather generally compatible with an overarching organisational vision.

Get the best out of people (talent), not the most out of resources (effectiveness). For example, an outcome could be measurable – growing the business in a region by ten percent, regardless of employees or hours or number of sales it took, for instance – or immeasurable, such as improving employees' happiness. The challenge is to put in place the appropriate mechanisms for performance monitoring, needs assessment, and to develop measurement systems to ensure somehow tangible progress is being made. Organisations will be responsible for setting the direction and allowing employees to pursue outcomes by any measure of inputs or outputs they deem necessary. Work will no longer be about compliance.

Well-being in the workplace

Megatrends driving HR trend

Focus on Health |

Individualisation & Empowerment



According to the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2019, mental health problems now affect an estimated 700 million people. Amongst other things, psychological distress is related to a feeling of lack of control in the face of uncertainty. Additionally, a new WHO survey shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted or halted critical mental health services in 93% of countries worldwide, meanwhile the demand for them has soared. Mental health is a bomb to the governmental health system. Organisations will, to a larger extent, become tomorrow's health-care providers for employees and will be held responsible for their well-being. Well-being is going to be atop of the HR-future's agenda.

One noteworthy blind spot of future-preparing organisations in regards to the decline in well-being, is techno-stress: a generation-spanning phenomenon describing the inability to cope or have a positive relationship with modern technologies.

HR strategies need to get team leaders and managers engaged in creating a high-performance mental health culture, by articulating a workplace well-being strategy and building resilience to stress and uncertainty.

Competitive creativity

Megatrends driving HR trend
Individualisation & Empowerment



With automation of routine work becoming more commonplace, a growing fraction of human jobs will be creative in a broad sense: scientific endeavours, research, design, innovation, storytelling, product development, et cetera. Individualisation and diversity in the workforce is of benefit to creative work, as is the ability to work together across disciplines and professional boundaries. Simultaneously, we are seeing the rise of the creative consumer, for whom it is important to take part in designing, developing, or co-creating somehow the products, services or experiences they buy into. Providing opportunities for this sort of co-creation is becoming a seriously important metric of competition. In creative work, the boundaries between work and leisure often erode.

The creative mind cannot be turned off and on like a factory engine, and people in creative work cannot help thinking about their work when they have time off. Conversely, it also benefits them to take “creative breaks” at work. Such creative breaks can take the form of physical or mental games that take the mind off the task at hand and renews their energy. Science and scientific breakthroughs are indeed based on creative work themselves, and thus have many similarities to artistic practice.

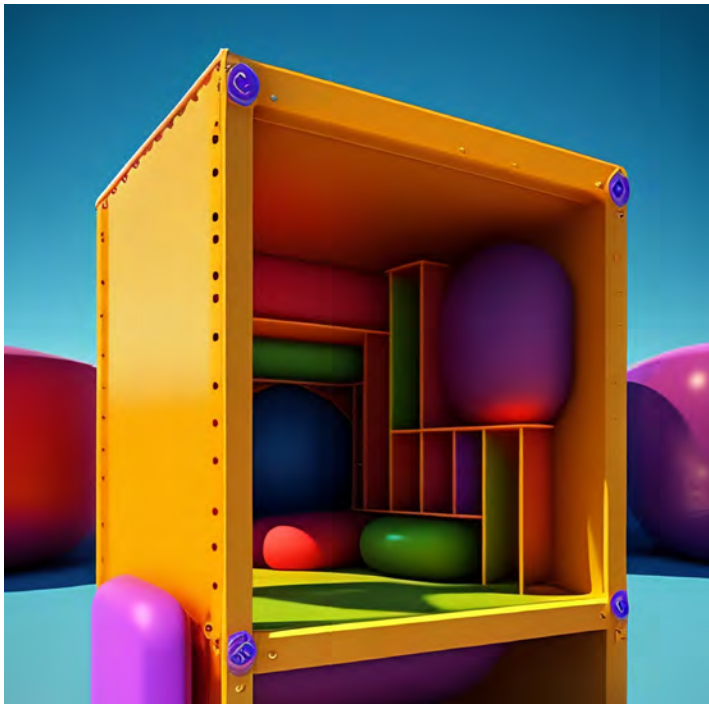
Play is the way

Megatrends driving HR trend

Economic Growth |

Network Economy |

Individualisation & Empowerment



In a similar manner, play and games can also be central parts of innovation, and it can often be difficult to distinguish innovation sessions from silly games. Breaks from work that are used for other things than eating or smoking are, in general, healthy for the mind and body – and the mind works best in a healthy body. In the Industrial Age, such playfulness was suppressed; you had to be mature and serious to succeed. Only realism was socially and academically accepted in literature and movies – anything else was seen as frivolous escapism.

Today, when more and more jobs in the production and service industries are automated and the creative industries are growing, imagination and playfulness, in return, become increasingly important parameters for success. Globally, HR is forced to drive better engagement, stronger ties and to create a culture that is fun and better fit for humans. As exemplified by Elon Musk: like an “overgrown teenager”, he has started several projects involving space travel, electric sports cars, super-fast trains, flamethrowers, and interfacing the brain with chips.

Corporate intervention

Megatrends driving HR trend

Focus on Health |

AI & Automation



As the lines between private and professional lives further blur, employer's will be expected to take greater responsibility for employee health and well-being, calling for a corporate intervention. This is to be seen not only as an attraction and retention mechanism, but as an investment in productivity and social welfare. A healthy and happy workforce is a productive workforce, and a healthy society breeds a climate primed for business growth. Such interventions include things like helping employees quit smoking, lose weight through activity and diet, or improve fertility.

For instance, the Big Five tech, Apple and META among them, are balancing reproductive reality and the demands of professional life by paying for their female employees' egg freezing and redeeming paid expenses for abortion procedures. The so-called "perks arms race" might also include things like sponsoring genome sequencing, which instils employees with information to make better decisions. Yet, the challenge lies in finding the appropriate balance between supporting and caring for employees versus being perceived as invasive.

Metaverse

Megatrends driving HR trend

Greater Interconnectedness |

Individualisation & Empowerment |

AI & Automation



Recently, CitiCorp opined that “the metaverse economy could be worth \$13 trillion by 2030”. This happened at the same time a plot of virtual real estate sold for a record USD 2.43 million in Decentralland – so, a virtual piece of land in the metaverse.

Facebook changed its name to META in 2021, to kickstart the next social tech wave. The metaverse is going to pioneer how and where we work together. Their invitation is for people and organisations to live and work in and out of virtual worlds. It is a new platform for organisations and workers around the world to engage in a truly hybrid work model. Get the best of both worlds: Be at the office in slippers – at home.

Try to imagine your own work – now done without stationary computers. The metaverse is going to be fully integrated into wearables and devices where our personalised avatars will be our vehicles for work, play, and virtual experience. What does it actually mean to deliver HR services in the metaverse?

Seen before as an unpractical gimmick and relic of media frenzy, virtual reality headsets are being taken seriously by many organisations, as exemplified by Accenture purchasing over 60,000 of them for their own VR training program. LARVOL and its staff of 150+ only ever even meet in the meta-verse.

STRATEGIZE THE FUTURE OF HR

Throughout this whitepaper, we provided a set of potent HR trends in the domains of culture, workspace, leadership, organisation, life, career, people, talents, technology, and work. But when it comes to shaping your organisation's future of HR, there is an urgent need for more extensive exploration.

Want to know more ?

We have helped and guided the biggest companies in the world towards better strategic futures. We offer short presentations, scenario building, seminars, strategic workshops, and visionary thought-leader programs. But enough about us. We would love to hear about you. .

Feel free to reach out

Contact expert futurist, critically acclaimed author, psychologist and Associated Director of CIFS, Thomas Geuken, via tg@cifs.dk

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