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People & Technology

The world of work in the next five years





ADP Perspective paper

As we approach the halfway point in the decade, the progress of technological innovation continues unabated. Smartphones and Web 2.0 are old news, with Gartner's top trends for 2015 including the Internet of Things, smart machines and 3D printing.

It is easy to be seduced by the hype around new technology that promises to deliver us into the sci-fi future we've all envisaged. But the reality often lags behind, with many mere mortals struggling with the same IT issues that they were ten years ago.

But few would deny that we live in an exciting age – no less those in the HR profession – with the array of gadgets and 'solutions' available promising to change our working lives for the better.

With this in mind, ADP set out to discover how technological innovation is affecting the HR

profession, and more importantly, the people within their organisations, and how they see this progressing in the years to come.



Key questions:

- How can HR ensure technology is working for rather than against the business and its people?
- Can technology really be used to improve employee engagement?
- What role is the changing workforce having in driving innovation in HR technology?
- How can HR be sure it is investing wisely in new technology?

Executive summary

Technology should give people the tools they need to overcome strategic business challenges.

- Technology must be an enabler rather than a blocker of productivity – it should give people the tools they need to overcome strategic business challenges.
- Technological innovation won't deliver employee engagement on its own. It's ultimately about enabling people to do their jobs.
- There is a need to balance the flexibility and productivity offered by technology with employee wellbeing. Privacy and intrusiveness are concerns.
- The changing workforce is both driving and being driven by technological change. This incorporates globalisation, an increasingly flexible workforce and demographic shifts.
- Technology has huge potential for recruitment and employer brand. Employers must build and nurture their own communities rather than relying on traditional social media.
- There is no perfect measure of ROI for technology investment, but HR professionals must be brave when making the business case.
- User Experience (UX) and the 'Last digital mile' are crucial moving forward – the technology needs to be so good that it enhances the employee-employer relationship.

Panel members

ADP's second annual HR Question Time Debate took place in February 2015 with a panel of leading HR thinkers and practitioners:

- Mervyn Dinnen, HR Blogger & Influencer
- Dr. Anthony Hesketh, Senior Lecturer at Lancaster University Management School, Visiting Professor at Copenhagen Business School, Senior Advisor at EY
- Neil Lancaster, HR Director at Gamestec
- Jaime Losantos, Product Marketing Director at ADP
- Bridget Penney, VP Human Resources at ADP
- Tracy Davies, Sales Manager, National Accounts at ADP UK



The Debate

Chaired by Tracy Davies, ADP's HR Question Time was a varied and thought-provoking debate of the key HR technology challenges and opportunities faced by the industry, both today and in the years to come.

With many questions posed beforehand by audience members, the discussion tackled real issues affecting HR professionals in their day-to-day working lives.

Here we outline some of the most pertinent and pressing points discussed by our panel.

What keeps HR professionals awake at night, is talent attraction, retention and maximising productivity.

Technology as an enabler

When asked what keeps HR professionals awake at night, the issues named by the panel are in many ways the same as they have always been, with talent attraction, retention and maximising productivity coming top of the list.

As Neil Lancaster comments: "In that five year span my challenge will be attracting good people, keeping those people and making sure that they work for us to the maximum of their capacity, and that they're engaged."

As a result, in terms of IT, the challenge is ensuring the technology is enabling that to happen, both from the employer and employee perspective.

For Anthony Hesketh, the question comes down to business strategy and the role that people and technology play in delivering that. Chief HR Officers (CHROs) should be asking: "Does the

technology have the capacity to enable me to answer the big questions, both in terms of the boardroom and my day job?"

The role of technology as an enabler is also raised by Mervyn Dinnen, who mentions productivity and the productivity deficit. He asks: "Is all the technology we're buying making us more efficient and productive?"



Engagement 2.0

The need for technology to be an enabler is perfectly demonstrated in the case of employee engagement, which the panel agrees is not something that easily lends itself to 'tools' and 'solutions'.

As Jaime Losantos mentions: "The reason why there is not much tooling on engagement is because it is such a soft concept and touches so many different areas." Mervyn Dinnen echoes this sentiment in saying "engagement isn't an initiative or project – it's the outcome of treating people with respect."



It is broadly agreed that technology has a role in engagement only so far as it helps and doesn't hinder employees in carrying out their roles

It is broadly agreed that technology has a role in engagement only so far as it helps and doesn't hinder employees in carrying out their roles. Neil Lancaster notes that technology can sometimes be a blocker to engagement, saying "...when working with an employee, some of the technology can get in the way. The form becomes the task."

Approaching the topic from a slightly different angle, Anthony Hesketh raises doubts over the high importance placed on engagement today, stressing the importance of getting the job done: "It's the trade-off between getting the job done and having a really nice time while doing it," he says. "This stuff about employee engagement is cool but there are some things you have to do."

He also believes some technology, particularly social tools, can be detrimental through encouraging self-promotion rather than collaboration, arguing that most people are interested in social learning simply to promote themselves. He suggests tools that promote a greater focus on collaboration would benefit both engagement and the bottom line.

In terms of tracking and measuring engagement, Bridget notes that some of the engagement tools that have become popular in recent years are not transforming it. “I think managers get bored with HR pushing the process of engagement and surveys once a year. They want more real-time.”

Jaime Losantos agrees that this is a key feature of new technologies available or underway, including the ability of employees to rate their job and colleagues in real-time and generate detailed data around engagement drivers.

55 million people worldwide are currently working outside their home country, and the figure is only expected to increase.¹

Managing a constantly shifting workforce

One of the constant themes raised throughout the debate was how the shifting nature of the workforce – whether through globalisation, demographic changes or new ways of working – has influenced and been impacted by technology.

For example, some 55 million people worldwide are currently working outside their home country, and the figure is only expected to increase.¹ From a technology point of view, how can businesses cope?

One exciting development is the ability of technology to aid talent and succession planning at a global level, with Bridget Penney saying she now has the ability to “pull data showing where there are gaps on the bench, at what level and in what part of the world.” She also mentions the role of this kind of technology in seeing development needs across the business and ensuring high-potential employees are in the roles that will drive growth in the future.

Jaime Losantos agrees, arguing we are now in the second wave of globalisation, and technology needs to be aligned with that. “When we think of talent now, we think of an open talent economy,” he says. “You think of people sitting in India, or freelancers you may never see. You need to keep everything under one hood. A global workforce demands a global solution.”

There are also considerations around increased diversity in the workforce, with companies working to accommodate different demographics and personalities as well as possible. In this respect, Mervyn has noticed a shift in how diversity is viewed across Europe, saying “they talk about diversity and inclusion differently. It’s not just about age, gender, ethnicity, it’s about introverts and extroverts working together, creatives and analytic people working together, people with different technological capabilities coming together.”



Finding the tech-life balance

The danger of technology working too well is that we end up never switching off, which can make it intrusive. A key question therefore looked at the challenge of finding the balance between maximising the flexibility offered by technology and ensuring employees have work-life balance.

Mervyn Dinnen argues the ‘anywhere, anytime’ culture is the inevitable result of a workplace where “in some respects we have taken away jobs and outsourced it back to the individual,” suggesting it is perhaps the role of the employee to know where to draw the line.

The increasingly intrusive nature of technology is also a concern for Neil Lancaster, who specifically mentions wearable devices, which measure activity and other metrics. He asks: “What if your employer asks you to wear one of these because you’re covered by their life insurance and they don’t want you to have a heart attack? There is a moral and ethical obligation to say how this data is used.”

This is also a cross-generational issue, with panellists agreeing that the new generations coming into the workforce feel differently about the intrusiveness of technology. Bridget believes we can learn from the ‘Millennials’ regarding their relationship with and use of recent innovations, noting that many companies already have initiatives that allow a cross-generational exchange of ideas and experiences on the challenges involved.

The panel is also broadly in agreement that traditional definitions and perceptions of different generations don’t always hold, and similarities and distinctions between individuals can be far greater. “There is a perception that the older you get the less interested in technology people are. I don’t find that,” says Neil.

Many companies already have initiatives that allow a cross-generational exchange of ideas and experiences on the challenges involved.



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Boosting employer brand

One area where the panel agree technology has a huge role to play is in extending employers' networks for recruitment, with the power to boost – or indeed harm – their employer brand.

Bridget Penney makes the point that now that everybody's CV is publicly available online through social platforms, it has made the role of employer brand even more important. She says: "People are now interested beyond the job description, they want to know who you are, what your company is about, what you stand for, and what your vision and values are."



This is echoed by Mervyn Dinnen, who discusses how review sites have revolutionised job hunting: "After looking for jobs, the activities that jobseekers use social media for are to research companies and find out what other people say about working for companies."

As a result, both agree that building and nurturing their communities online is crucial for any employer. "At ADP, we've started to move away from going online and mining for people, to really building and creating our own talent communities," says Bridget Penney.

A constant challenge for HR is making the case to the business for implementing new and innovative technology solutions and then showing the return on investment.

Making the business case

A constant challenge for HR is making the case to the business for implementing new and innovative technology solutions and then showing the return on investment further down the line. How did our panel view this issue?

Jaime Losantos believes that HR needs to be brave and try new systems that could potentially improve the business: "The technology is out there to serve them. Give it a try and if it works, you've got the business case done."

For Neil Lancaster, this is a pertinent topic as he is currently going through a significant HR technology transformation initiative. In choosing which system to implement, he and his team looked at a number of areas: "It has to be able to fit the business need, be robust, have a pedigree and heritage in its experience and expertise. Then you need to ask whether it will provide the information that will enable you to make better business decisions. Is it easy to use and has it got the potential to grow with the business?"

He stresses, however, that it can be hard to measure the return on investment (ROI) of a new HR technology system: “If we are able to analyse talent to a better extent, then we will hopefully improve across our talent development, retention and recruitment. It’s those areas where we try our best to determine ROI.”

Going the last digital HR mile

When it comes to using technology to enable employees and the business, the HR world could perhaps learn from the world of commerce, with the concept of the ‘Last Digital Mile’ raised as a point for discussion.

Getting the user experience right is currently a key driver in product development, naming ‘mobile first’ products as the latest innovation.

Anthony Hesketh describes this as: “actually giving the customer what they want at the right time, right place and right price. It’s trying to replicate this in the HR space and across other business platforms.”



As many HR processes are outsourced to technology providers, employees are now interacting with, and completing more of, the related administration themselves. In order to complete the ‘Last Digital Mile’, this should be made as easy and simple as possible, Anthony argues.

Talking from his personal experience as an end-user, he says HR needs to reach a point, “where we have such good systems in place that it enables my life. It isn’t just a cost-reduction mechanism, it’s not just a way of trying to improve productivity. It’s so much more than that.”

Jaime Losantos agrees that getting the user experience right is currently a key driver in product development, naming ‘mobile first’ products as the latest innovation for ensuring employees and businesses can use the technology how and where they want to.

“In HR you own the last digital mile,” he says. “You have the power to generate engagement through the use or non-use of that tool, to generate adoption, interest and most importantly to convey the corporate culture.”

Doing this well could revolutionise not only the relationship between the employer and its employees but also how employees represent the culture outside the company.



ADP perspective on People & Technology

David Foskett,
Managing Director at ADP UK & Ireland



The workplace will be subject to great change in the next five years. Technology allows organisations and cross-cultural teams to be more connected than ever before, our ability to analyse big data continues to thrive, and flexible working will further erode the traditional 9-5 working hours. The possibilities seem endless, and the workplace may look drastically different in 20 years.

Staying on top of technological breakthroughs is of paramount importance for business success, and the benefits cannot be underestimated. By adopting the right technology and being pre-emptive of the changes, organisations can enhance all facets of the employee lifecycle. If done correctly, they can acquire, train, retain, motivate and analyse their talent more efficiently.

At ADP, we are extremely excited about what the next five years will bring. We believe that technology is the key to better Human Capital Management, enabling organisation to be more productive, engaged and prepared for the future. The most successful organisations will be those that put people at the heart of their technology strategy.

References

¹ OECD (2013) World Migration in Figures. Available at:
<http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/World-Migration-in-Figures.pdf>

Biographies

Mervyn Dinnen, HR Blogger & Influencer



Mervyn Dinnen is a content creator and social engagement strategist for the Recruitment and HR sectors. He is an award winning blogger who writes regularly for Monster, Broadbean Technology and other

sites, and reports from HR Technology conferences in Europe and the US. He is also a regular speaker and chairman at a number of HR and Recruitment events.

Dr. Anthony Hesketh, Senior Lecturer at Lancaster University Management School, Visiting Professor at Copenhagen Business School, Senior Advisor at EY



Anthony Hesketh (BSc Econ, PhD) is Senior Lecturer in the Management School at Lancaster University and Visiting Professor at Copenhagen Business School. He also acts as a senior advisor on human capital to

EY, and was recently named by HR Magazine as one of the profession's Top 10 Thinkers. Anthony has done extensive work on organisational performance, human capital management and executive pay. He is currently leading a major research project exploring the contribution to strategy and performance made by the boards of the UK's top performing organisations.

Neil Lancaster, HR Director at Gamestec



Neil is HR Director at Gamestec, part of Novomatic UK, with over 2,000 employees in the UK. Neil is a highly experienced HR Director, with 25 years in the industry and expertise in delivering cutting-edge

organisational change and driving strategic business growth. In recent years, he has particularly focused on the benefits of strategic HR, talent management, HR transformation and change management. Neil is currently the project lead for the introduction of the new group-wide HR and Payroll system, in collaboration with ADP.

Bridget Penney, VP Human Resources at ADP



Bridget is Vice President, Human Resources for GES International Sales, responsible for the ADP Sales organisation in all countries outside North America. She joined ADP in 2004 as an Organisation

Development Consultant and has also held the role of Vice President, Global Sales Leadership Development, responsible for developing and executing the leadership development strategy for the global salesforce. With 20 years of global HR experience, she has held various positions across a broad spectrum of business units and HR functions, with involvement in large scale service and sales initiatives.

Jaime Losantos, Product Marketing Director at ADP



Jaime Losantos is ADP's Product Marketing Director for the EMEA region. He is an established HR technology expert and entrepreneur, having previously worked at SAP, Oracle and Workday. With extensive

knowledge of the HR space, he thought leader in technology trends and understands the value they can deliver to public and commercial organisations in all areas of Human Capital Management.

Tracy Davies, Sales Manager, National Accounts at ADP UK



Tracy Davies is a seasoned sales professional with over 20 years experience in the HR Technology services sector. In her current role as VP National Accounts in the UK, she is focused on providing clients

with innovative solutions to meet the evolving Human Capital Management needs of business, encompassing HR, Talent Management and Payroll.

Watch the HR Question Time event
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