

## Soft skills and hard measures the future for Singapore's HR professionals



HRM Asia - 12 Oct 2017



John Belchamber from the OrgDev Institute shares how HR should effectively operate in an increasingly complex and disruptive marketplace.

Robots are not the only thing changing the workplace  
The impact on Singapore employers and HR teams  
The changing focus of HR

The rapid change in the lives of business leaders, particularly for those responsible for organisations' human resources, rages unabated. At a pace, we have seen emerging technologies, computerisation and automation that have reshaped the Singapore workforce.

Now, with abundant computing power and vast amounts of data, there has been a surge in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine-learning techniques that are further transforming the workforce at dramatic speed, with many jobs starting to disappear and different skills required.

Oxford University researchers have estimated 47% of US jobs could be automated within two decades. They predict the first to go to the robots will include middle management, commodity salespeople, report writers, book-keepers and some doctors.

Pew Research Centre in the US says automation, robotics, algorithms and artificial intelligence have shown they can do equal or sometimes better work than humans in areas of dermatology, law, sports journalism, psychological testers and border patrol agents.

Australian telco Telstra's soon-to-retire Chief Scientist, Hugh Bradlow, warned that while the impact of technology to date has been significant it is likely to be dwarfed by emerging technologies in the near future.

He says this will require employees to undertake tasks that are less routine and not readily automated, which will involve more soft-skills such as complex problem-solving, teamwork and interpersonal negotiation skills.

Last year's World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs report predicts disruptive change from job creation and loss, heightened labour productivity and widening skills gaps.

### TOP FIVE STORIES

1. Which industries are home to Singapore's unhappiest workers?
2. HR's primary role in managing change resistance
3. Asia's top HR leaders share the secrets of their success
4. Breadtalk Group's steady rise to the top
5. Singapore companies reveal the impact of SkillsFuture on staff

### PHOTO GALLERY

Scenes from Smart Workforce Summit 2017



[View More](#)

### LATEST POLL

What's the chief productivity killer in your office?

- Emails
- Unnecessary meetings
- Idle chat

### Robots are not the only thing changing the workplace

If the emergence of AI was not disruptive enough, the changing human behaviour and expectations around work-life is also necessitating change to how leaders approach human resources.

People today, irrespective of age, expect more flexible work environments and variable employment arrangements.

A global report by Mercer this year comprising of 5,400 employees and 1,700 HR professionals from 37 countries and 20 industries, reported a rise in people expecting their employer to "make work work" for them as individuals.

Similarly, a 2016 Pew Research Centre survey found 87% of workers believed it was essential for them to be trained and given new skills to keep up with workplace changes.

It's clear these two forces, AI and changing views of how we work, are changing the workforce and driving organisational transformation. People will be employed exclusively in higher order roles, no longer burdened by mundane, repetitive tasks, and more and more be on short-term contracts.

According to Emergent Research's Intuit 2020 Report, 25% to 30% of US workers are currently contractors or "contingent" workers and this is only expected to continue to grow.

### The impact on Singapore employers and HR teams

The impact on Singapore's HR professionals will be enormous as they play a critical role in ensuring organisations are productive and successful in tomorrow's increasingly, complex, competitive and disruptive marketplace.

While jobs may be coming and going at a scary rate, and long-term career development may go the way of the mullet and punk rock, the employee's ongoing personal growth, psychological development and self-management will be top of the pops.

There will be an increasing focus on managing soft skills in developing your people and, at the same time, there will be expectations that this is underpinned by proven tools that provide hard measurement.

With continually shifting workforces, there will be many new pressures on HR professionals. You'll be expected to have diverse high-quality resources at your fingertips ready for deployment, the ability to deliver insights that have demonstrated impact, produce faster returns from training, demonstrate value and do so at a lower cost.

The need for the HR function to be reinvented is supported by the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs report which said business leaders need to manage skills disruption as an urgent concern.

To do this, HR capabilities need be more strategic, employ new kinds of analytical tools to spot talent trends and skills gaps and provide insights to help organisations align their business, innovation and talent management strategies.

### The changing focus of HR

At the OrgDev Institute, or ODi, we've been tracking workplace changes and their impact. While companies across the world invest around \$130 billion a year on training and development, they often fail to deliver the learning experience necessary for tomorrow.

It is the view of ODi that the advent of new technology and changing behaviours of the workforce has created an opportunity and a responsibility for HR and organisational development professionals.

It is critical the HR profession steps up to this.

To do so, we need to:

- Show leadership in the nurturing and training of soft skills in your workforce
- Have a clear vision in the management of the workplace of the future
- Provide the workforce with the full breadth of personal development opportunities
- Demonstrate value by providing clear measurement of results



John Belchamber is the Chief Development Officer for the OrgDev Institute (ODi), a member-based institute established to help human resource professionals with the new breed of employees and emerging technology challenges.

- Loud colleagues
- Surfing the internet
- Social media
- Others

**VOTE**

### HRM EMAGAZINE



**HRM September 2017**  
Nick Walton, Head of Southeast Asia for Amazon Web Services, shares how a zealous focus on customer obsession is driving the cloud computing leader's lightning-growth in the industry

[View More](#)



The Working  
Blues

### Add new comment

Your name

CAPTCHA

This question is to ascertain that you are a legitimate user and prevent automated spam submissions.



What code is in the image? \*

Enter the characters shown in the image.

Save

Proudly owned by: **diversified**  
COMMUNICATIONS SINGAPORE

Copyright © HRM Asia. All Rights Reserved.

[Privacy](#) [Conditions of Website Use](#) [About Us](#) [Contact Us](#) [Log-In](#)