9 Digital HR Terms Every HR Professional Must Know

Digital HR has garnered a lot of interest from HR professionals and business leaders for the way it is changing how we manage people. This change enables a better HR service delivery but also impacts how we do HR on a day-to-day level.

To many of us, digital HR seems fascinating but do we really know what it is? Its lexicon is riddled with unfamiliar sounding terms that we need to understand in order to really comprehend the phenomenon.

Here are the top 9 terms that HR professionals would typically use when talking about digital HR and its applications.

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1. Digital HR

Let's start off with the term in the title: digital HR.

Digital HR is a process optimization in which new technologies are leveraged to make HR more efficient.

All HR processes can be digitized and to some degree automated. Think for example of recruitment apps that enable candidates to auto-assess themselves (through games and the upload of video introductions).

These video introductions can be scanned by an algorithm on factors like friendliness, openness, and customer orientation. This data is then combined with the assessment and as a result, the app can make an accurate preselection.

2. SMAC

SMAC is the enabler of Digital HR. SMAC is short for social, mobile, analytics, and cloud.

Every employee and potential hire has a smartphone. Using analytics, employers can quickly analyze vast quantities of data and make predictions about the workforce. Information is increasingly stored in the cloud and employee profiles can be shared amongst one another for learning purposes and to improve performance.
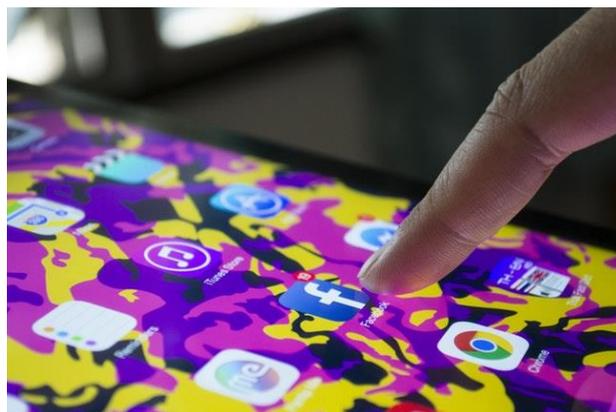
3. Digital transformation

Another term that's often used is digital HR transformation. Digital transformation is the change process that describes the move from traditional HR towards a more digital approach.

Onboarding apps are a good example. While new hires traditionally were designated to a mentor, today, apps can be of assistance during the onboarding process; they guide the new recruits through their first few weeks and introduce them in a playful way to their new colleagues, thus reducing onboarding time.

However, providing access to an app and a successful integration of said app in daily practice are two different things. The process of selecting the right software (or application), implementing it, making sure it's sticking, and measuring its success is referred to as digital transformation.

Successful transformations make the difference between 'shiny object syndrome' and real business impact.

4. Digital workforce

The digital workforce is another term that is often mentioned in relationship to digital HR.

Technology changes the way we work and this holds true for employers too; they are becoming increasingly digital.

Staff is increasingly flexible and on demand, sometimes working from the other side of the world. Data and analytics enables us to operate more effectively, and Technology enables automation of many of the traditional administrative tasks that HR was doing

These changes require a high degree of flexibility, the ability to work remotely, and the ability to automatically gain real-time insight into data.

5. Agile HR

Agile HR is another term. To understand what it means, we first need to know what agile is. In 2001, a number of authors created the Agile Manifesto. According to the authors:

Individuals and processes go over processes and tools. This is a statement that every HR professional will agree with!

Working software goes over comprehensive documentation. This means that a quick and dirty fix is better than a well-documented but unsolved problem.

Customer collaboration goes over contract negotiation. The customer comes first and creating customer delight is a top priority for everyone in the business. For HR this is primarily the internal customer: the employee.

Responding to change goes over following a plan. A plan becomes less valuable in an increasing rapidly changing world.

The agile principles were primarily oriented towards developing software. However, as you can see they apply almost one-on-one to HR.

Compared to traditional HR, agile HR is a customer-oriented, collaborative way of working in which the aim is (continuous) learning and improvement. This way of working results in superior service delivery through HR technology.

6. People analytics

People analytics, or HR analytics, is the application of statistics on people data to help solve business problems.

People analytics is especially relevant for larger organizations, starting at around 500 people. There are different kinds of analyses. Descriptive analytics, for example, looks at what happened. These kinds of basic statistics provide insight into the workforce, often through HR dashboards.

More advanced statistics, like predictive analytics, help to predict what will happen in the future. Using people analytics you can predict who will leave the organization, which candidates will perform best if hired, and which employees will be the most suitable future leaders.

7. Digital HR strategy

We're almost at the end of the list. At this point, we need to talk about digital HR strategy.

Digital HR strategy is about leveraging SMAC technology to redefine HR processes in terms of design, delivery, access, and operations.

A digital strategy is new for most HR departments – but nonetheless essential. A digital strategy helps to integrate the different digitalization transformations. A solid strategy makes the difference between 70 different HR apps (yes, I've come across this in an organization) and one integrated HR platform that guides the employee to whatever he needs.

In the former scenario, more than half of the HR service tickets were questions about where employees could find essential functionalities to do their job. The latter fixes this in a customer-centric way.

8 & 9. Real-time & On-demand

We finish our list with real-time. Real-time, or on-demand, is a trend that has been going on for a few years now.

On-demand feedback apps like Impraise are based on the idea that feedback is most effective when it's provided directly after the interaction.

Real-time learning is knowledge acquisition based on immediate needs. Employees don't have to wait until the next training session, no, they can get what they need on-demand (a term that would have been worthy of inclusion in this list individually as well). Real-time, or on-demand learning, provides the relevant knowledge precisely when it's required thus greatly increasing its effectiveness.

Real-time analytics also fits into this category. Applications in HR are pulse surveys that enable a company to collect feedback on culture and employee satisfaction day-to-day. This kind of feedback helps to smother conflicts and prevent the escalation of small problems.

To cut this long story about 9 digital HR terms short: HR is changing rapidly – and often for the better.

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