

EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE

Hosted by **alight**



HRD
HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
ASIA

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Alight's first executive roundtable in Singapore

HRD invited 16 top HR leaders in Singapore to discuss how HR's role is transforming in the digital world. This and many more relevant topics were addressed at the roundtable event.

TRANSFORMATION is not a new concept in the business world. However, the current pace of change is faster than ever, pushing every part of the organisation to innovate and adapt to keep up. But what does digital disruption mean for HR? And how is it changing HR's role in an organisation?

At a recent roundtable event in Singapore, HRD Asia, in collaboration with Alight Solutions, addressed those questions and discussed pertinent topics surrounding digital transformation to figure out how HR can rethink the operating model and optimise technology to their advantage.



How does HR's transformation affect employee experience?

Vikrant Khanna, *Leader, HR Transformation Advisory (Asia Pacific), Alight Solutions*: Design thinking has always been part of HR's processes. In the past when processes were designed, they were designed more along compliance and control, which will require a lot of reports and approvals. Now we are seeing a shift – with today's technology you can vary processes for the first time and not think about compliance and control as much, because everything that you do on a platform will get reported anyway.

Now what matters more is the person

who is made part of the process – it could be an employee, a manager or a leader. The moment you put them at the centre of the design process, that's when design thinking comes into play.

HR Director from a leading bank:

My role is in HR transformation. Within my team I've got a dedicated employee experience team and they bring a different perspective to HR. Those in the team are typically UX designers who have tech backgrounds and were formerly from tech companies or start-ups.

When we go through the design process of each of our different transformation programmes, we have an assurance process in place and we make sure that throughout each stage of that process, whether it's from initiation right through to roll out, we continue doing various studies and ask our employees what they think about our products and services, and how a new system we're launching might be able to help them address their HR needs, and what's the easiest way that we can help them to get things done.

And when we've got prototypes to show employees, we would go back out to test the design with them. It very much resonated with me in our roundtable discussion that at the centre of our design process is the employee experience..



about our products and services, and how a new system we're launching might be able to help them address their HR needs, and what's the easiest way that we can help them to get things done.

Evangeline Chua, *Chief People Officer, Government Technology Agency of Singapore (GOVTECH)*: Right now there are two different [ways of working] in an organisation, one is the legacy way and the other is the emerging technologies group, which is the younger group of people. The style of working varies drastically for both groups.

To me if you do not manage them from a HR strategy perspective, things may not [fall into place]. What we're looking at doing is to actively try to ensure that both groups are treated fairly and we manage the creative tension between the two. This is necessary right now because in our

business we have the brick and mortar side and the digital space. How we manage these people across the room is by going back to employee experience.



How can HR get leader buy-in for HR tech?

Vikrant: A few things are still a challenge for HR tech adoption. One of it is leader buy-in – that's a key challenge that's always popping up. The next is the need for integration...but more than that it's about successful tech deployment, and it's not about what system you have, it's how you get ready for deployment.

CHRO from a leading international organisation: When talking about executive sponsorship, I think our company owners have thought, 'HR manages' – we do things on excel spreadsheets and get the data we need. It takes about three weeks to get global headcount numbers for instance. But I think because we've been resilient, they've thought we don't need to digitalise HR.

But we've been moving from a regional structure to a business-line structure and that's pushing our HR and data analytics. We'd say, 'I'd love to get the data for you but we don't have any systems', so we've actually used a different strategy by telling our owners that not having data is not conducive for the business.

Having said that, for the last few years we've tried to get global standardisation for our businesses, whether it's for talent management processes or performance management, so that's really put us in a much better place to get something. It's been about a seven-year journey just to get the understanding from them that an HRIS system is not just a nice-to-have, but it's a need to support the business.



HR Director from a leading bank:

Those in our employee experience team are typically UX designers. A lot of them have worked at tech companies and start-ups. Some of their thinking is 'a bit out there', so it really does is challenge our way of thinking for our HR processes.

What we say is we don't want to compare ourselves with other banks – that's not good enough. What we do is bring alternative insights from Google, Facebook and tech start-ups. We're not going to be able to take all their ideas on-board because we're in the financial services industry and are heavily regulated but we can take snippets and integrate that into what we do at our bank – that really helps us future-proof the organisation.

CHRO from a leading international organisation: Because we've got a digitalisation strategy [in place], we need to hire engineers – and we've never had to hire engineers before. How do we attract them to our organisation when they want to go to the Googles, Facebooks and Grabs?

We really had to sit down and think about our employee value proposition. We ensure that HR focuses on that to attract the talent that we need. And it's about the sense of purpose in the job. Now we're attracting more millennials than before.

Evangeline Chua, Chief People Officer, GOVTECH: The employee value proposition that we bring to the candidate is very powerful. We may not be able to compete with the Googles and the Facebooks but most of the candidates joined us with the same passion and purpose – the passion to serve the citizens and the nation. Very few tech companies could offer the similar value proposition.



Why should HR tap onto the power of analytics?

Vikrant: The way we see people analytics is it's about people coming together to solve a problem, rather than doing a "big bang approach" and saying 'yes, we do analytics'. It's about collaborating and solving small problems and moving forward.

Na Boon Chong, Managing Director & Partner, Aon Hewitt: The successful use of analytics that I've seen started with HR using whatever data they had. [For instance] useful analysis of data to get the senior management's attention.

Some HR do a lot of engagement surveys and that's always very useful as a starting point. Consider how do you look at engagement data with other data – for example clients' data, customer data etc. That seems to be gaining traction

in Singapore as opposed to a "big bang" approach of going straight to people analytics and finding out the problems with the team.

Sharon Seet, Global HR Manager, Yanmar International: Last year the organisation's business leaders didn't know [why the team was struggling to progress], so what the HR team did was conduct a test in one of our 51 subsidiaries in Singapore. We also asked the leaders what they wanted out of the team as we wanted to understand the key success factors that leads to a high performing team.

We speculated that there was something wrong with the team – but they were just based on a lot of assumptions. Instead of using assumptions, to capture the business thought and its challenges, we did one-to-one, face-to-face surveys with managers and collected the data.





We analysed the results objectively and [found it to be a culture problem], so we came up with solutions like: 1) conduct “in-house” cross cultural awareness and communication workshop, 2) create a “shared knowledge database or bank” in each division, 3) use of psychometric assessment tools (e.g. Harrison Assessment) for recruitment, career planning, promotion and 4) create a “team charter”.

This year we are carrying out phase two of the test. We’re going to conduct cross-cultural training on self-awareness and team awareness with the

use of psychometric tool like Harrison Assessment.

We came up with the program on our own, so the Japanese leaders saw it as a cost-saving method, which was more attractive to business leaders instead of getting them to understand the program’s usefulness in solving culture. It’s also about telling them how the programs will solve business problems. It’s a lot of work but the difference made is a lot.