

# INNOVATIVE THINKING LEADS TO INNOVATIVE TALENT

NEW TECHNOLOGY, AND NEW USES FOR IT, IS CHANGING THE BUSINESS LANDSCAPE MORE QUICKLY THAN EVER, IMPACTING NOT ONLY NEWLY CREATED ROLES WITHIN ORGANISATIONS, BUT ENTIRE WORKFORCES.

TWO TOPICAL SKILLS – CLOUD COMPUTING SKILLS AND CYBERSECURITY – WOULD HAVE DRAWN BLANKS FROM EVEN THE MOST TECH SAVVY OF US FIVE YEARS AGO. EVEN NOW, THESE ISSUES ARE NOT WIDELY DISCUSSED OUTSIDE THE IT INDUSTRY.

SO HOW DO YOU CREATE AND MAINTAIN A PIPELINE OF HIGH QUALITY TALENT WITH THE RELEVANT SKILLS? HERE ARE SOME KEY AREAS THAT NEED TO BE CONSIDERED TO SUSTAIN BUSINESS GROWTH.

## 1 | NEW CHANNELS, NEW PRODUCTS, NEW SKILLS

It's clear we will require new skills in five years' time that today we don't know of, and automation and technology (such as radio-frequency identification (RFID)), is changing the skill base of the workforce.

The new channels available to retailers will also have a major impact on the workforce. While omni-channel retailing, social media and the use of apps are still in the early stages of uptake, new skills are needed to engage with them.

Manufacturing requirements will also change as new products and the skills required to produce them change: think of how smart watches like Apple altered a product that changed little over hundreds of years.

## 2 | WHAT DEPARTMENTS WILL BE AFFECTED?

The impact of digitisation is not confined to the IT department. To provide a true customer-centric experience, traditionally IT roles may now be better aligned with customer analytics, marketing and customer retention teams.

Responsibilities such as search engine optimisation that were outsourced to agencies in the past due to their infancy or required external expertise, may now be more economical brought in-house. Similarly, other responsibilities that are no longer strategic may now be outsourced.

The rise of social media has led to consumers interacting with companies in new ways. The role of Chief Marketing Officer, perhaps more than any other c-suite role, has changed, with knowledge, ideas and strategies all directed through digital channel now, in order to interact with customers more effectively.

The marketing department will also require more technical roles – think big data. Marketers will need to balance the traditional creative and human elements with data driven technology. They will need to integrate campaigns with technology as it transforms their understanding and use of data. As the

Chief Marketing Officer at Westfield has described, the marketer of the future will be a 'creative technologist'.

Human resources roles are changing too. New research roles in talent teams are now responsible for sourcing (online and through more traditional channels) relevant candidates. Likewise, learning and development teams will need to master new approaches to deliver effective online training to a global workforce.

## 3 | HOW RESILIENT IS YOUR COMPANY CULTURE?

Culture is pivotal in sustaining performance – it's about how people work and how they encourage each other while doing it. Truly exceptional organisations are differentiated by constructive cultures in terms of employee engagement, client satisfaction and performance. In times of rapid change, it's more important than ever to foster this constructive culture by engaging your people, assisting them to cope with the uncertainty of a changing internal and external environment and aligning them with the strategy of the business.

Consider the following factors:

- Is your culture one that can change quickly?
- Is your culture aligned to the talent you are aiming to attract?
- How does your culture need to change to attract the right talent?
- Is your employee brand effective and is it aligned to the brand promise?
- How are you perceived with your competitors?

## 4 | FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE?

Despite the on-site gyms, day care for children and even doggy day care of some of the hippest IT companies, when employees are asked which benefits would be most valuable to them, the majority choose benefits that enable work-life integration – work combined with quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

While not a direct result of digitisation, flexible working conditions are required if you want to compete and attract the best people. And this is demanded by all generations and lifestyles – young people who want to work whenever it suits them, employees with families, and those on the retirement path. Technology makes flexible working very much easier – wherever there is WIFI or smart phone access 24 x 7; from home or wherever. Firms like Telstra and Westpac are leading the way by making every role flexible, and the onus is on the employer to state why the role can't be flexible, not the employee on why it can.

## 5 | UPSKILLING AND LEADERSHIP PLANNING

In a workforce that's changing so rapidly, how do you keep your best people at the most relevant skill level? Traditional HR and recruitment roles may require upskilling in order to communicate with candidates via social media, new apps and mobiles.

They're also required to predict what skills will be required in the future. Those in technical roles are likely to advance quickly, so how will you provide them with the management skills required to be a future leader? How will your teams manage effectively to deliver to the ever-changing requirements thrown up by digital disruption?

## 6 | WHERE DO YOU SOURCE YOUR BEST PEOPLE?

With a 40 per cent decline in Australia over the last ten years of graduates completing Technology degrees yet a doubling of job opportunities, finding the right people in the era of digitisation is more difficult than ever before. Employers need to think innovatively about talent pools, engaging with top universities and tech-savvy potential employees early in their education.

Australian retailers have an opportunity to create their niche through developing an innovative culture to attract and retain the best talent. A focus on both culture and people will lead to a robust business and better financial performance.

<sup>1</sup> HRMonthly Feb 2016 Frills for all, Melinda Ham, page 31