

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST: A MATTER OF URGENCY

In a time of unprecedented uncertainty and after a uniquely trying year that has seen dramatic changes in business strategies and working practices, people are in the spotlight now more than ever. With companies being forced to adapt quickly to new technological challenges, **the rise of AI and continuous digitalization**, companies and their employees are facing immense pressure.

In this complex environment the urge to evolve the Human Resources function has never been greater. As companies are finding solutions to the challenges of our time, the drive towards **employee-focused policies and practices** is gathering pace, and at Global Sage we are continuing to track this ongoing evolution of the HR function.

At a recent luncheon event, we invited more than 20 Regional HR Leaders from across industries and sought their views on the foremost people issues, and the strategies being adopted to address them. The 3 emerging themes that we discussed with them: **People Science**, **Agile HR** and **Employee Experience (EX)**.



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PEOPLE SCIENCE: FROM DATA TO INSIGHT TO ACTION

The digital revolution and the use of **data analytics** to make meaningful decisions are fueling the paradigm shift and will urgently shift HR from a support function to a **people-centric endeavour**. This will help organizations adapt to the new digital environment by using data to understand employees and their behaviour in the company, leading to more actionable insights that

help leaders **make better business decisions**. But it is much more than mere HR analytics. In practice, it means not only mining data and reporting it—but **analysing it and gaining actionable insights to test hypotheses and identify solutions**.

Global Sage sought to understand **how widespread People Sciences are used in the four key areas**. Our lunch guests deemed each of the

four topics of equal importance, and all of them are using data analytics in some way; however, not one company is applying People Science through all areas. In fact, each area polled the same amount, signaling that each topic is being implemented.

Areas of Application	% Companies Adopting People Science
Leveraging People Analytics for Business Impact	33%
Achieving an Optimum Staffing Level	33%
Optimizing rewards packages for employees	33%
Improving employee experiences	33%



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AGILE HR – FASTER AND NIMBLER

“Agile HR” is a new approach to HR practice that focuses on being **agile in thought, nimble in action and swift in delivery**. The Agile methodology started as an approach to software development and project management. It focuses on iterative and collaborative practices to deliver solutions faster through incremental steps. This approach allows teams to **test ideas and concepts as they go, and respond to changes quickly**.

While traditional HR practices focus on rules and standards within a strict hierarchical structure, Agile HR shifts the paradigm to a simpler and faster approach that prioritizes **collaboration, feedback, and innovation**.

All rated **“Develop Managers’ coaching skills”** as their top priority because of the influence managers have on their teams, and managers with agile coaching skills are better in guiding teams to work together, set tasks and goals, track their own progress and assess leadership.” Moving towards **“a continuous feedback model”** also scored 100% among our guests but some suggested “continuous” is not practicable, so their additional question would be “how often should feedback take place?”

A majority of participants (75%) also ranked “Increasing frontline staff decision rights” as a priority.

In doing so, frontline staff are encouraged to make decisions, take ownership of their work, and learn from their mistakes. However, only 5% of the participants rated “Moving away from traditional organizational hierarchy” and “Adopting an agile approach to compensation” as priority areas.

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Most HR leaders find **“Adopting an agile approach to compensation” very difficult to implement** due to the complexity involved in the implementation. Many suggested that **“Moving away from traditional organizational hierarchy” is a major undertaking and also might not bring the results that were intended**.

Priorities to adopt Agile HR	% of Respondents
Develop managers’ coaching skills	100%
Moving towards a continuous feedback model	100%
Increase frontline staff decision rights	75%
Adopt an agile approach to compensation	5%
Moving away from traditional organizational hierarchy	5%

FROM EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT TO EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE (EX)

Employee Experience (EX) is an emerging mindset that puts people at the heart of the HR function. EX is the convergence of an employee's expectations, the environment, and the events that shape the journey within the organisation. It could involve events and moments that would be emotionally important for the employee on top of the normal journey from attraction and recruitment through onboarding and retention to exit. With mental wellbeing issues raised by the pandemic, EX is even more crucial. **A positive employee experience, even and particularly in times of crisis, could bring positive impact on many areas, from increasing employee engagement and retention to improving profitability.**

All the HR Leaders agree Employee Experience is of utmost importance and the key is collecting feedback at critical stages of employment such as Recruitment, Onboarding and Exit.

When asked about the adoption of tools and technologies to enhance Employee Experience, it was revealed that all companies are using a variety of tools such as, Microsoft Team, Trello, Slack, Slido or Mentimeter. Most companies use a **mix and match approach to digital tools** rather than only using one particular tool or developing their own tool. Most find the use of a Virtual Assistant as questionable for enhancing Employee Experience.



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PEOPLE CHALLENGES IN 2022

Our HR Leaders suggested that in 2022 there will be more **focus on Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing, Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, and the increased use of **predictive data analytics** on employee behaviours and engagement.

However, a big challenge will be the **budget constraints** they face in attempting to garner the resources required to effectively support these initiatives. The group suggested that **instead of talking about HR Costs**, HR must change their narrative and utilize People Science and data analytics to build business cases that **emphasize Investment in People**.

"SUPERPEOPLE"

We deliberated over what an HR Leader might look like in the future, a discussion that threw up some interesting feedback. There were suggestions that **"future HR will look like anything but HR!"**

It was mooted that future leaders will be "advocates" for a whole range of issues including **mental health, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**, and **hybrid work**. With such a broad remit that will be critical to business success, some even suggested that the **HR leaders of the future will be nothing short of "SuperPeople"**.

Like a warrior helping the business to champion on many new fronts, the "HR SuperPeople will conquer and stand tall after the battle."



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