

The role of AI in the Future of Work

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As the Fourth Industrial Revolution disrupts every facet of our lives, business leaders and HR practitioners face a challenging but exciting time. Technologies such as machine learning and predictive analytics will become core to how the working world attracts, retains, and rewards top talent. As an estimated 15-20 million young people enter the African workforce every year over the next three decades, employers face an arduous task of finding, attracting, and retaining the best and most highly-skilled workers. The continent's escalating use of digital tools only serve to compound the problem: according to the World Economic Forum, the average ICT intensity of jobs in South Africa increased by 26% over the past decade. In Ghana and Kenya, high ICT intensity occupations account for 6.7% and 18.4% of all formal-sector jobs respectively.



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At the same time, the worlds of HR and marketing are merging in significant ways. Today's best candidates have diverse and individualised expectations of their jobs, the companies they work for, and the ways their employers interact with them. The same disruptive shift evident in the consumer market - where marketers have battled for relevance in an increasingly fragmented and demanding customer base - is now being felt within the business world. This is not surprising considering today's top talent is also today's hyper-connected, informed and tech-savvy consumer.

In response, HR leaders must increasingly look toward marketing tactics as a means of developing and maintaining an attractive employer brand, which includes talent sourcing, talent retention, employee engagement, productivity, and more. At this intersection, where marketing, talent, HR, and technology meet, exciting new opportunities have emerged to bring lasting, positive change to the way we approach work.

The hunt for talent treasure

Social sourcing and other digital channels have expanded the pool of potential candidates that employers can choose from. However, this creates a new challenge: in the time it takes a recruiter to research and narrow down the top applications, those talented candidates may have already moved on to another company that was able to provide feedback quicker. Losing out on the talent needed to power a company's digital and innovation agenda puts companies on a one-way road to obsolescence.

The answer? Streamlining the selection process by using data and analytics. Through algorithmic assessments, recruiters can also leverage statistics and historical data to predict whether a candidate will perform well. This allows recruiters to gain intelligent insights from active and passive candidates alike, speeding up the decision-making process and allowing for more accurate candidate-job matching.

Better models of employee engagement

According to Deloitte, the cost of losing an employee can be as much as [twice the value of their annual salary](#). In a recent Gallup study, 90% of companies that helped employees identify and develop their natural strengths achieved 10% to 19% increased sales, 14% to 29% increased profit, 9% to 15% increase in employee engagement, and 22% to 59% fewer safety incidents.

The challenge for business leaders is that the average workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, at a time when employee expectations point strongly toward individualised work benefits and models of engagement. To achieve this, HR leaders will adopt a marketing-oriented mindset, with a strong reliance on technology such as machine learning and AI to automate some of the more time-intensive aspects of their jobs.

Companies using SAP SuccessFactors are already seeing how machine learning, predictive insights, natural language processing and data analysis in an HR context can improve employee engagement. By combining these technologies, HR leaders are unearthing the main drivers for employee motivation and productivity, and rooting out any underlying causes of staff attrition. Companies are also developing accurate individual employee profiles that, when combined with predictive analytics and machine learning, can provide accurate forecasts of which employees are likely flight risks, enabling HR to intervene proactively and stem a potential exodus of scarce skills.

The role of HR will be transformed in the coming years. Smart companies are investing in technology tools that can equip them with the speed, insight, and accuracy they need to find, recruit, and manage tomorrow's workforce.

Are you equipped for this brave new world of work?

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