

# 5 steps to navigating HR's new tech-enabled role

By [Jeff Ryan](#)

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Over the past two and a half years, we've been swarmed by the buzzwords of digital transformation. But there is no denying that the hard lockdowns in 2020 forced people and businesses to adopt more digital ways of working, whether they wanted to or not.



Image: Supplied

From the pandemic, we learned that many roles we once thought could be done only in the office, could easily be done at home, too.

But as the pandemic grinded on and we shifted from fully remote to hybrid working models, some businesses discovered that hybrid work is a double-edged sword. Even after two years of the “new normal”, where team members may be working from the office, remotely or a combination of the two, some organisations are still struggling with how they can get the most productivity out of their teams.

Companies face mass resignations of top talent and lower morale amid a reduced tolerance from employees to return to the “traditional” way of doing things post-pandemic. The pressures that employees feel due to loadshedding and rising transportation costs have deepened employees’ resistance to returning to the old business-as-usual.

Here are some practices that leading human resources (HR) directors are adopting to navigate the landscape:

## 1. The technology experience IS the employee experience

Forward-thinking HR leaders have sharply developed IT skills. They understand that tech isn’t only important to productivity, but also to employee engagement and the employee experience.

Archaic software and ageing hardware have always been a frustration for employees. But in an era of convenient consumer apps and devices, employees are even less accepting of subpar technology.

For those working at home, unreliable or unresponsive systems can lead to a sense of isolation because they can't connect with colleagues to share the 'in-the-moment' frustration with which impacts team togetherness. Plus, even people who don't hold IT roles want to be able to list working on cutting-edge tech and software on their CVs. Many HR directors are thus advocating strongly for reliable and modern tech as a key part of their strategy to attract and retain talent.

## **2. Think about smart data, not big data**

The term 'big data' sounds complex and daunting. While big data analytics has growing importance in HR, many HR directors are focusing on getting actionable data from the systems and platforms they use every day in parallel with big data projects. This has the benefit of enabling them to get workforce insight without complex data extractions or kicking off a long implementation with a data science team.

Simple techniques like a net promoter score (NPS) or pulse survey among the workforce can offer compelling insights into workplace morale. If employees give a low NPS — indicating they wouldn't recommend the company to friends and family — HR can investigate why and take action. Likewise, if the time and attendance data reflects people working long hours, this could flag a risk of burnout.

## **3. Help HR by allowing employees to help themselves**

One of the HR team's biggest challenges is finding enough time to do everything, while offering prompt and responsive service to employees. This is where employee self-service tools are essential.

Employees can retrieve payslips, apply for leave, update personal details, submit expense claims, and more, via the web or a mobile app — enhancing their experience and freeing up HR's time for strategy and relationship building.

## **4. Adopt clear guidelines and policies about who may work at home, when and how often**

Even so long after the Covid crisis started, organisations don't have a blueprint for the normal of the future. Certainly, challenges like extreme weather and high fuel prices may dictate that remote and hybrid work will be a key part of most organisations' strategies for years to come. HR needs to look at which models work best for its people and the business through a new lens.

Each industry will have different guidance, but what matters is that there are clear and fair policies about who works in-office all the time, who works remotely, and who may sometimes work remotely and sometimes in the office. This is a delicate balance between employee expectations, business trends and the company's best interests.

## 5. Join the data dots

PwC's 2022 HR Tech survey shows that cloud transformation and modernisation of systems is one of the top three challenges HR faces today. One practice HR departments are increasingly adopting is to implement cloud-based solutions that offer the benefits of an end-to-end ERP solution without the complexity or high expenses.

Today, businesses can choose a unified integrated solution for payroll, finance and HR that offers them a single view of the business. Or their business can opt for a best-in-class financial system as a base and integrate it with independent software vendor offerings via application programming interfaces.

With such a platform in place, companies can streamline manual processes such as capturing employee data across multiple systems and importing transactional data from the payroll into the accounting system.

### **Don't forget the 'human' in human resources**

Even as data and technology become a more important part of the work experience and the HR director's brief, HR is first and foremost about humans.

Technology exists to help people reach their potential, steer through difficult times with resilience and confidence, and collaborate effectively. HR directors should thus start any conversation about IT by asking how it makes life better for the people who will use it.

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