RESEARCH REPORT

RE-IMAGINING HR
An Asia-Pacific Perspective

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Introduction

This paper is based on Roffey Park’s Re-imagining HR paper by Alex Swarbrick, published in 2015. The paper described the larger economic trends and challenges that the world would be experiencing and what this spells for organisations; the changes they would need to make, and the skills they would need from their leaders and employees.

This version looks at how macroeconomic trends in the world and region, will impact businesses in Asia Pacific (APAC). Particularly, how Singapore organisations will be affected and how HR departments would need to re-think their focus and strategies to cope with these new challenges.
Asian Economic trends to 2050

Asia Pacific Forecast – Growth of ICI (Indonesia, China, India)

Between 2000 and 2014, Asian economies increased their share of global GDP from 26% to 32%. This increase is projected to continue up to 53% of global GDP in 2050. (EIU, 2015. p4).

The EIU report forecast that by 2030 the world’s top three economies will be China, the US and India. China and India’s growth by 2050 will mean each being ‘richer than the next five (Indonesia, Germany, Japan, Brazil, and the UK) put together’ (EIU, 2015. p5).

China in particular is one to watch. It has been launching many economic initiatives (One Belt, One Road; launch of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, AIIB) and forming trade partnerships with other countries, in a strong bid to cement its trade dominance in Asia.

PWC’s The World in 2050 (PWC, 2017, p.25) report reinforces these points – reporting that 9 out of the top 15 fastest growing economies over the next 35 years, are emerging and developing nations from South and Southeast Asia. Their lower levels of economic development means more room for rapid growth, ensuring they catch up with high-income countries over time.

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**Figure 12: Increasing gap between the third and fourth largest economies**

![Graph showing GDP in PPPs (constant 2016 US$) for China, India, United States, and others.]

**Source: PwC analysis**

Global demographics and the economy

The two are powerfully linked. It’s widely believed that global economic growth during the last few decades has been boosted by population growth. However, longer term projections are for a significant reduction in global population growth, from an average of 1.3% during the period 1980-2014 to 0.5% from now to 2050.

The key significance of this is its effect on the global working-age population, labour market and talent shortages. Working age population growth is forecast to drop to 0.3% between now and 2050, compared to average growth of 1.7% between 1980-2014 (EIU 2015. p6).

But the picture isn’t consistent. Projections are that in parts of Africa and the Middle East working populations will continue to grow, the potential labour forces of Angola, Nigeria and Kenya being forecast to almost triple in the period from now to 2050, “rising respectively from 9m to 28m, 56m to 161m and 18m to 48m”. (EIU 2015. P7).

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New Emerging Markets: Larger working populations and rapid economic growth

Due to rapid population growth, emerging markets have larger working populations and are predicted to enjoy great economic success in the next few decades. Vietnam, India and Bangladesh – all developing markets - "have the potential to be the fastest growing economies between 2016 and 2050" (PWC, 2017, p.27).

Besides benefiting from a youthful and fast-growing working age population, their projected growth is also sustained by "capital investment and technological progress" (PWC, 2017, p.27). This gives them a huge advantage over advanced economies like Japan - whose population growth has been on the decline since at least a decade ago, exacerbated by an increasing ageing population.
Summary

- Developing Asian countries such as China and India are seeing rapid economic growth and are set to overtake more developed markets in the next decade or so.
- There is a significant link between population growth and economic success. This is the major reason why emerging markets will be successful in the future - they have a larger population and thus a significantly larger, young, working population to tap on, compared to developed economies.
Singapore forecast

The interpretation below draws primarily on reports by:

- The Singapore Business Federation
- Committee on the Future Economy

Slow economic growth set to continue

Based on data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the world is experiencing a period of very slow economic growth – the slowest since the global financial crisis, and Singapore has not been spared. Singapore has long enjoyed relatively high economic growth, but that has slowed down in recent years. Singapore’s GDP was projected to be “close to 2.0% in 2015, and between 1.0% to 3.0% in 2016 (SBF, 2017). This is compounded by other factors like: close to zero productivity growth, a shrinking workforce, ageing population and rising business costs compared to developed countries in the OECD and in the region.

There is also a greater need to produce enough local companies that can compete globally. Local enterprises or homegrown Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) make up about 99% of all businesses, 70% of Singapore’s workforce and 50% of our GDP (SBF, 2017).

Ageing Population

A huge shift in the demographic is the decline of a younger, working population and an increase in the ageing population globally.

Singapore is facing this problem right now. In a report by Natixis, Singapore’s working population will fall by 2% every year after 2020. This will have adverse effects on GDP, production and economic growth. The Department of Statistics in Singapore released some numbers last year, which showed that the “proportion of residents aged 65 years and over has increased from 8.4% in 2006 to 12.4% in 2016.” They also go on to say that “there are now fewer working-age adults to support each resident aged 65 years and over as indicated by the falling resident old-age support ratio from 7.8 in 2006 to 5.4 in 2016” (Department of Statistics, Singapore, 2016). This size of this group of citizens is at 440,000 today, and is expected to increase to 900,000 by 2030.

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Last year, the total population here grew by 1.3 per cent — its slowest pace since 2005, while total fertility rate continued to fall despite the Government’s incentives and encouragement” (MCI Singapore press release, 2015)\(^6\). All these mean a smaller percentage of youths in our population.

Summary

- Singapore’s slow economic growth is set to continue. Factors like lowered productivity, rising business costs and the lack of competitiveness of local SMEs have all contributed to the slow growth.
- Singapore ageing population is on the rise. Coupled with a low fertility rate — and a lower proportion of youths — and a smaller working population, this has adverse effects on economic growth.
Rapid urbanisation and growing income gap

The world is getting wealthier and the number of middle-class consumers are projected to increase. On one hand, this creates a lot of opportunities for businesses, especially in sectors where wealthy consumers are more likely to spend their money in (SBF, 2017, p. 26). However, the gap between rich and poor is widening due to urbanisation. More people are living in cities, with the world’s urban population forecasted to jump by 72% by 2050.

In order to be more globally competitive, businesses in Singapore would need to seek out regional and international opportunities. There is limited room for local expansion, given Singapore’s small size and high costs.

“Rapid urbanisation brings major implications for businesses as they refocus their offerings, marketing and distribution towards an increasingly urban customer base with distinct needs and consumption habits.” - SBF (p.25)

Singaporean businesses should also work to increase their connections with other countries, cities and regions. There are many ‘municipal governments’ that are searching for urban solutions for its rapidly expanding, urbanized populations. The SBF suggests that Singapore-registered businesses could offer solutions to these governments, such as “urban planning and water management,” (SBF, p. 25).

Big Data, Automation and building strong digital capabilities

Data has been changing our lives and the way we make decisions. It will continue shaping our economy in huge ways. At this point, we are still trying to make sense of the amount of data available. Workers with the necessary skills to interpret data are in high demand, more than ever before.

As such, the Committee on the Future Economy recommends “building up expertise in cybersecurity and data analytics”

Flexible locations and space design

As contract workers and freelancers increase, the concept of workspaces has also been evolving. ‘Co-working’ or shared workspaces are increasingly used by “millenial workforce and hordes of start-ups as well as companies looking to contain costs.” Such places include meeting rooms, pantries, cleaning services with people from shared workspaces are increasingly used by “millennial workforce and hordes of start-ups as well as companies looking to contain costs”.

There is also a need to encourage SMEs to adopt digital technologies.

With greater technology, we are also starting to see opportunities with automation and artificial intelligence. A Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study predicts that 25% of all jobs will be “replaced by smart software or robots” by 2025. This is especially so in Asia where the workforce tends to be made up of a larger percentage of low skilled workers.

This begs the question - how will automation change jobs and manpower now and in future decades?

Rise of the Gig Economy

Singapore’s ageing population, coupled with a slow decline in the working population and a reduction in the number of foreign talents, has to look at other ways of sustaining the labour economy.

In recent years, there has been a rise in the number of freelancers - who make up 11 per cent of the resident workforce – part-timers and contract workers. Combined with companies like Uber and Grab who mainly employ such individuals, they make up the gig economy.

The gig economy allows people the flexibility to schedule tasks and jobs at their own time. It allows anyone with the right skills to participate with little barriers to entry. This is a huge advantage for sections of the population, such as older workers. People have more work options – they can choose to work from home or on shorter, flexible stints with breaks in between. Besides Uber and Grab, there has also been a proliferation of freelancing websites online such as Freelancer, Upwork and Fiverr. These sites specialise in remote or virtual jobs, where anyone, anywhere can apply for, from the comforts of home. All is needed is a computer and an internet connection.

Employees are not the only group of people enjoying the flexibility of such options - employers do too. They are able to choose from a wide pool of people who possess the deep skillsets they are looking for.

All these changes the very nature and definition of jobs and the challenge for both employees and employers would be to change their mind-sets and their approach to work, as well as enjoying the flexibility that the future of work brings.

Flexible locations and space design

As contract workers and freelancers increase, the concept of workspaces has also been evolving. ‘Co-working’ or shared workspaces are increasingly used by “millenial workforce and hordes of start-ups as well as companies looking to contain costs.” Such places include meeting rooms, pantries, cleaning services with people from shared workspaces are increasingly used by “millennial workforce and hordes of start-ups as well as companies looking to contain costs.”
different companies working in different rooms. These locations are getting increasingly popular as networking spots and to meet “likeminded workers from different firms” (SBR, 2017). It allows for more collaboration and flexibility whilst not feeling the isolation that working from home sometimes brings. An article in Harvard Business Review\(^\text{12}\) describes how people thrive in co-working spaces as it promotes a sense of community. They are more likely to see their work as meaningful and experience greater job control.

Continued learning and developing a skillset

According to the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) “The Future of Jobs” report, there are several skills that will be critical for workers to possess in the near future. It predicts that technical skills valued at the start of the digital revolution, such as programming and equipment operation, will gradually become irrelevant. Softer skills such as those associated with “sociability, creativity and critical thinking will be placed high on the list of hiring managers” (WEF Future of Jobs Report, 2017). Instead of just focusing on academic results and grades, educational institutes should also shift their focus on “ imparting the adaptive skills needed for the future economy” (Today Online, 2017). With how quickly things in the business world change, we need to constantly upgrade our skillsets and make learning a lifelong pursuit.

“We come from a place where we go get a diploma and think it is the key to employment for 25 years. This world has changed, so we need to get in the minds of our kids that school is just one step” – (Olivier Legrand, MD and VP, APAC & Japan, LinkedIn; 2017)

People need to take up skills that can be used in different industries and companies. Skills like adaptability, resilience, communication and social skills are critical. Ng Cher Pong of the Workforce Development Agency calls this “horizontal skills” (MOF, 2017). Employees possessing these skills are able to switch careers easily.

Other soft skills such as sharing, collaborating and negotiating will continue to be important (WEF, 2017). Knowing how to empathise, build meaningful relationships across all levels and roles as well as forming deep connections with others becomes crucial. As we move towards a more global business model and interact with diverse groups of people, there is a greater need for social and emotional intelligence as well as collaborative skills.

Summary

- Rapid urbanisation and growing income gap provides opportunities for businesses - in both emerging and developed markets, as well as in different sectors of society.
- Singapore businesses should also take advantage of this and expand into other markets in the region.
- Data is changing the way we run business and there is now a strong demand for employees with skills in data analysis and digital technology. We are also starting to see more opportunities in the areas of automation and artificial intelligence.
- There is a rise in the gig economy, an increase in the number of freelancers, contractors and part-timers that make up the labour market. Companies whose business models are largely based on employing this group of the working population are also gaining more prominence. This shift in the nature of work has allowed more flexibility.
- In future, the focus will be on softer skills such as communication, resilience, collaboration and creativity.


Implications for HR and Leaders

HR identified challenges

These changes in the workplace will certainly bring about more challenges for HR. According to our Working in Asia 2017 survey, the main people challenges HR is facing now in Singapore are:

- Employee engagement and morale (67%)
- Recruiting the right staff (67%)
- Career development (64%)
- Developing strategic thinking in leaders (63%)
- Developing emotionally intelligent leaders (62%)

They predicted slightly different changes in 5 years’ time:

- Developing strategic thinking in leaders (48%)
- Increasing diversity in senior leadership (45%)
- Retention of key employees (44%)
- Skill shortages (41%)
- Succession planning (40%)

The data reveals that diversity, strategic thinking and a sustainable talent management pipeline will become increasingly important in the near future.

Data from Deloitte’s 2017 Global Human Capital Trends also revealed similar trends, where the ‘organization of the future’ (62%), ‘careers and learning’ (49%) and ‘talent acquisition’ (46%) are seen as extremely important.

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*Table from: https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/human-capital/articles/gx-human-capital-trends-dashboard.html#3

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Recruitment, Talent and Skill Shortages

For organisations to grow and to flourish, it is critical they recruit and retain good talent. However, it is worrying that around 96 per cent of Singaporean businesses are struggling to find the skilled individuals they need. If this continues, it might pose a serious threat to Singapore’s economy. Echoing the WEF report, PWC’s recent 20th CEO survey reported many skill gaps are in soft skills like collaboration, creativity, innovation, problem solving and leadership, as the table below illustrates.

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HR and organisations need to invest more in the learning and development of their employees, as it is a key employee retention factor. The lack of career growth and development opportunities is the top reason Singaporean respondents gave for wanting to leave their current organisation. 52 per cent of them indicated wanting to do so in the Working in Asia 2017 survey.

Organisations should look at more creative ways of development, instead of just limiting it to formal training. Other methods include mentorship, coaching or even ‘stretch’ projects in their current roles.

Employees themselves need to take the initiative to upgrade their skills and to learn continuously. Being equipped with the right skillsets means being more in control of their career choices and also widens their career options.

**Being prepared for big data and artificial intelligence**

With the increased automation, introduction of robots and artificial intelligence, many fear that their jobs might become obsolete. However, new technologies could actually help create new jobs, increase productivity and elevate developing economies⁸⁰.

Whilst data-driven decisions are changing the landscape of work for the better, it might be a better idea to view these technological leverages as augmented intelligence (MOF, 2017). Instead of constantly pitting man against machines and seeing who wins, how about a collaboration between the two? The combined effort of both man and machine would produce results far beyond the outputs of either.

While machines are great at identifying patterns and crunching data, there are still aspects of certain jobs that require a human touch and would be difficult for a robot to emulate. Roles like physiotherapists, counsellors, doctors, and psychologists still require human connection at the heart of what they do. Artificial intelligence may be our future but there are still some aspects of work that just can never be automated.

**Productivity challenges**

Singapore is currently facing a productivity slowdown. Whilst wages continue to increase, labour productivity has been very low, even lower than that of China, Indonesia and India⁹. Combined with the increasing ageing population, alongside global uncertainties and protectionist policies in place in Europe and the USA, Singapore has to look within to increase its competitiveness. A closer look at how we work shows room for improvement.

Our working culture and attitudes have to change, and HR can be the driver of these changes. A recent survey revealed Singaporean workers to be the least productive amongst the countries polled. Those countries are USA, France, Australia and Germany amongst others. Singapore employees spend only “60 per cent of their time on main work duties, compared with a poll average of 72 per cent”¹⁰. They also spent 380 hours a year tolling away on administrative and repetitive tasks. These indicate a need for innovative initiatives and cultural change. Repetitive tasks could be automated so that employees are freed up to perform more strategic tasks.

On top of that, Singaporeans clocked the longest working hours in the world in 2016¹¹. At 2371.2 hours, we were ahead of Japan (1735) and South Korea (2193). A study by The Economist¹² found that longer hours do not positively correlate with increasing productivity. Anything more than 50 hours had zero impact on productivity, with no difference in productivity rates between someone who worked 56 hours and another who worked 70 hours. There is a need for HR, leaders and organisations at large to take a closer look at this and explore other ways of working which involves reducing workload and having a better work-life balance.

Data from our Working in Asia 2017 survey shows that 50 per cent of respondents think that senior leaders in their organisation do not role-model work-life balance. Other studies done earlier this year showed a gap between employee and employer expectations when it came to good work-life balance. In Randstad's Employer Brand Research 2017 survey, good work-life balance was the top factor that employees seek from their employers. In contrast, work-life balance was the 8th-ranked factor in terms of what employers were offering employees.1

Companies should also look at the people element of productivity – an area that is constantly neglected (Roffey Park, 2017).2 This involves engaging employees, attracting and retaining the right talent – something that leaders seem to struggle with.

Data from the Working in the Asia survey show that 43 per cent of rated their line managers ‘weak’ at connecting with them personally and emotionally. People were also disengaged due to a lack of clear expectations and feedback concerning their roles. 71 per cent of HR managers in the same survey rated leaders ‘ineffective’ at providing meaningful performance feedback. HR and organisations need to explore ways of developing emotionally intelligent leaders who are able to connect with and bring out the best in their employees.

Increased focus on employee well-being and Building Resilience

With a constantly evolving business landscape, the unpredictable global economic situation and long working hours, it comes as no surprise that many employees are burnt out and stressed.

Mental health experts estimate that as many as 90 percent of their patients are grappling with “menthal health issues caused by stress from work” (Straits Times, 2017).3 In a new study by Aon, a global professional services firm, 72 per cent of employers in Singapore said they considered stress and mental health an issue which affects productivity. However, only 51 per cent have emotional and psychological wellness programmes in place for their workers.4

All these figures show us that there is a pressing need for HR leaders and managers to encourage resilience-building – individually and organisation-wide. One way of doing this would be for both leaders and employees to develop a wide network of friends and colleagues. This network not only serves as a source of information and resources, but also as a source of emotional and mental support in challenging times (Roffey Park, 2017).5

Intercultural Virtual teams and Diversity

Businesses have operations in different parts of the world, meaning that people from different cultures and backgrounds have to work closely together. Organisations need to work harder at developing international leaders and employees who are capable of handling the challenges of working across different cultures and geographies. Current data shows us that there is still a long way to go.

Working in Asia 2017 data shows the following:

- 56 per cent of managers disagreed that there is sufficient diversity in their senior leadership teams
- 48 per cent of managers agreed that their managers are equipped with the skills to manage in different cultures
- 49 per cent of managers agreed the managers in their organisation are skilled at working with diverse types of people
- 46 per cent agree that their organisation is prepared to meet the challenges associated with changing workforce demographics
- 46 per cent agree that their organisation’s culture supports virtual working
- 36 per cent agree that the managers in their organisation are equipped with the skills to manage virtual teams and workers

The data shows that managers still are not fully prepared to lead diverse teams. This requires honing soft skills – communication, cultural sensitivity and emotional intelligence.

In light of the tight labour market, employers would need to tap on the strengths of older workers. They represent a large percentage of our population and have invaluable experience.

“These workers clearly bring vast experience and serve as good role models to help mentor and guide young workers. But employers need to recognise there are practices and constraints that make it harder for older workers to give their best.”

But, this would mean that in the next few years at least, with the Millennials joining the workforce in droves, organisations would have at least 3 or 4 generations of people working together. Each generation has a distinct working style that is bound to cause friction. HR would need to be creative in engaging employees from different generations.

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Organisational agility

Recognising the growing necessity for organisations to increase their ‘agility’, the CIPD (2014) report on Organisational Agility recommends that organisations build ‘environments geared for collaboration, innovation and ongoing – rather than intermittent adaptation.’ (P2). As the world continues to grapple with turbulence, uncertainty and ambiguity, organisations need to be able to cope with disruption and leverage on the opportunities that uncertainty may bring. According to PWC’s CEO Survey, the building blocks of an organisation’s agility and resilience is made up of three facets:

- Strategic responsiveness. The ability to forecast future opportunities and risks, and rapidly come up with responses to those challenges
- The breadth to accommodate failure. Encouraging a learning-oriented culture, one which learns from its mistakes and failures; and one in which people are allowed to fail.
- An agile, well-rounded and diverse workforce. One that has the flexibility to adapt swiftly to changing situations and make decisions with imperfect, asymmetrical information.

HR and leaders would have to ensure employees and managers are equipped with the skills to deal with uncertainty and complexity. A psychologically safe environment needs to be created at work for people to innovate, make mistakes and learn from them.

Leadership Skills Needed

Leaders would need to be equipped with the right skills to manage their teams and lead capably. There are two additional areas where leaders have to step up on: engaging their employees and being strategic. Good leadership is the key factor employees look for when joining an organisation (57%) and is also a source of motivation (64%). An absence of it is also a huge reason why employees leave (40%).

Leaders need to be better at balancing both operational and strategic pressures, as well as seeing the big picture and identifying value-adding opportunities. In order to thrive in uncertainty, leaders would need to ensure they get less bogged down by day to day operations and find the space to try new ways of doing things and add value to the business that ensures future-readiness.
Summary

- Organisations need to invest more in workforce development. A lack of career growth is one of the biggest reasons people leave.
- Instead of fearing technology and artificial intelligence, we should look into ways of combining both technology and manpower to create better outputs.
- Singapore has a huge productivity challenge, with long working hours and a tendency for employees to focus on tasks that are not part of their main roles.
- In the face of workplace stress, organisations should focus more on employees’ wellbeing and developing their resilience.
- Organisations are going global, with cross-culturally diverse teams working together more than ever. However, leaders are not sufficiently prepared to lead such teams.
- Organisations and leaders also need to learn to be more agile, to effectively cope with disruption and leverage on the opportunities that uncertainties might bring.
In light of all the above, a re-imagining of HR’s ultimate purpose and practice might be timely. Perhaps even re-imagining the label ‘HR’ itself.

As well as questioning the usefulness of the term ‘Human Resources’ it might even be worth questioning the usefulness of the term ‘organisation’, which has connotations of hierarchy and permanence which, as shown, are less typical of 21st century enterprises.

With those questions in mind, I experiment with an alternative description of HR’s purpose below, one more consistent with Roffey Park’s view of organisations and HR.

“To facilitate the fulfilment of an enterprise’s purpose through, and with the people working for it, both individually, and collectively as a dynamic human system.”

Each aspect of this definition is elaborated in turn below.

‘Facilitate’

HR’s central purpose can be understood as making specific outcomes easy, for both the enterprise and the individuals working with it. The root of the word ‘facilitate’ means ‘to make easy’, but in Roffey Park’s work and in OD the term also has a fuller, multifaceted, highly active meaning.

I propose the term ‘facilitate’ in preference to ‘lead’ or ‘guide’ or ‘support’ or even ‘enable’ primarily because when understood in terms of the Heron 6 facilitative dimensions below, the term encompasses all of those, and provides scope for a wider range of facilitative interventions by HR.

Applying Heron’s facilitation approach, each of the above can also be undertaken in what he refers to as

- Hierarchical mode,
- Cooperative mode, or
- Autonomous mode.

So understanding HR’s function as ‘facilitative’ in Heron’s terms implies HR professionals and functions consciously and actively choosing facilitative interventions appropriate to the context, people, and organisational outcome pursued, taking account of the perceived usefulness of doing so while invoking hierarchy, cooperation or autonomy. What this would entail in common HR practice can be further elaborated elsewhere.

‘Fulfilment of an enterprise’s purpose’.

I propose the word ‘fulfilment’ in preference to ‘achievement’. ‘Fulfilment’ can seem more grounded and process focused, ‘achievement’ more instrumental and transactional. This also emphasizes HR’s responsibility for helping the enterprise keep its own purpose in mind, its ‘ends’, the reason it exists, be that profit or some other purpose.

‘Enterprise’ rather than ‘organisation’

Choosing the word ‘enterprise’ in preference to ‘organisation’ relates to the earlier point about unhelpful associations between the word ‘organisation’, structure and hierarchy. The evidence suggests that over the coming 10 – 15 years, many commercial and not for profit enterprises will no longer have the kind of formal structures we associated with the word ‘organisation’. Irrespective of sector or structure, they might be more appropriately described as ‘enterprises’.

‘People who ‘work for’ rather than people ‘employed by’ an enterprise’

As described above, people will increasingly participate in, and contribute to, the work of an enterprise through a range of relationships other than a traditional employment contract. E.g. self-employment, multiple employers, etc. That being the case, it could be argued that the HR / People Function’s responsibility also extends to these wider work relationships.

‘Individual’ and ‘collective’

To date, HR has been largely preoccupied with the individual, from recruitment, to performance management, to learning and development, succession, and talent planning. Re-emphasising its dual focus recognizes that while there are individual contributions made by people to the enterprise’s purpose, and individual relationships between the enterprise and its people, there is also a collective dimension to the enterprise as a dynamic human system. So this dual emphasis calls HR to be
skillfully attentive at any one time to the personal, the interpersonal and the whole system in the interventions it chooses.

‘Through’ and ‘with’
This acknowledges that while an enterprise is only able to fulfill its purpose ‘through’ the people working for it, any humane, compassionate and ethical enterprise also has moral, if not contractual responsibilities ‘towards’ its people. How it fulfills that responsibility can, in turn, contribute to or undermine the enterprise’s attempt to be an appealing place to work. This is central to HR’s talent strategy, again with particular relevance to Generation Y.

Outcomes pursued
In relation to process, this paper propose that HR’s purpose is ultimately ‘to make it easy’ for people to join, to make it easy for people to stay, make it easy for the enterprise to achieve its purpose; and this faces HR with some facilitative choices.

In choosing its facilitative style in relation to specific outcomes linked to its purpose, HR’s tasks could be then summarized as:

- Policy Drafters
- Culture Shapers, and
- Capability Builders

Policy Drafters
Neuroscience has confirmed what makes it easy for people to want to participate in an enterprise. It is to do with autonomy, mastery / competence, purpose, and relatedness. HR then has a remit to draft policies such that those things are embedded in the enterprise’s way of working with people.

This in turn might shine the spotlight on the enterprise’s performance management policy. It might also call into question the premise of grievance and discipline procedures, which might precipitate a shift away from HR being the implementers of compliance and control systems, towards HR being the facilitators of organizational justice, ‘making it easy’ for people to do their jobs well without risk to or from the enterprise.

Culture Shapers
Over recent years this has been seen as primarily within the OD domain. However, regarding culture, if autonomy helps people want to stay and contribute their best, instead of HR simply being implementers of control systems, HR can act to facilitate the emergence of a culture which promotes autonomy.

Capability Builders
Broadly, this means HR helping to build the enterprise’s capability to fulfill its purpose through its people. As an example, this might involve facilitating ways for people to build their own competence and mastery, or equally acting to help build capability and competence in leaders, that they become the ones in turn shaping the culture to help the people who work with them.

I recognise, and make no apology for the fact that the above blurs some traditional boundaries between HR and OD. Our experience with clients suggests the time is right for that to happen more and more.

Summary
Roffey Park takes a particular view of organisations as complex, dynamic human systems. We take a particular view of human participation in those systems from which arises our approach to OD, HR, leadership and Personal Effectiveness.

This paper has sought to outline Roffey Park’s credible and distinct perspective on HR.
About Roffey Park

Roffey Park is an internationally renowned leadership institute based in the UK and Singapore.

We develop people who develop organisations.

With 70 years’ experience of leadership, organisational development, human resources and coaching, we provide executive education and research to many of the world’s leading companies and organisations.

We offer tailored development programmes, qualifications accredited by the University of Sussex, management consultancy, coaching and training courses. Our research services provide a unique combination of research, consultancy and development expertise for organisations who are investigating ways of improving their effectiveness and intelligence.

Research at Roffey Park

Roffey Park funds its own research programme with the aim of meeting one of its charitable objectives: namely to conduct and publish research in support of the health and welfare of people at work. Our research improves the world of work and organisational performance by sharing knowledge of good practice in people management, leadership and organisational development.