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HR's New Role: How Human Resources Needs To Evolve To Support The Future Of Work

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Careers

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Human Resources evolving GETTY

This past year, we saw HR get pulled into the role of heroes and villains. They were critical in helping organizations move to a fully virtual environment. For companies that had essential workers, they helped field

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As we look toward the future and contemplate the return to the office, we need to look at what the role of HR should really be to help organizations prepare for the future. The concept of [organizational support theory \(OST\)](#), an employee's perception that the organization values their work contributions and cares about the employee's well-being should be at the center of this effort. It's a theory from the late 80s that was used to begin understanding the relationship between the employer and employee. Though times have radically changed, this may be a critical time to dust off its core philosophies and incorporate it into the core of how HR serves its organization moving forward.

Businesses of the future understand that increases in revenue are rooted in whole-person wellbeing. But how can an entire organization frame up its business practices through the lens of employee care?

[Lindsay Lagreid](#) is a senior advisor at the [Limeade Institute](#), a team that tracks the latest well-being and employee engagement research, while also conducting its own research to help achieve our greater goal of measurably improving well-being in the world.

She has insights from her team's work on what successful businesses are

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Understand that HR's role needs to dramatically change to effectively support the future of employee engagement and retention. “HR is the architect of the employee experience and needs to act as the unrelenting advocate of the employee voice to leadership,” cautions Lagreid. Gone are the days of compliance and transaction. As a team, HR has insight and influence to all the different things that impact how an employee feels when they come to work, throughout their time at an organization. If HR can shift from ‘getting what I need from employees’ to ‘how can we show our employees we care about them’ they will be an essential team to the future of successful organizations.

Invest in developing elevated HR skills at all levels and across all specialties within the function. Many HR functions are still prioritizing their role as a compliance and administrative resource. They’ve honed skills that support building efficiencies, employee record keeping and mitigating risk. Lagreid explains that, “The critical skills for HR leadership today are human-centered approaches, focused on active and empathic listening, building processes focused on creating a positive and caring experience for employees and bolstering trust and mutual commitment between employees and the organization.

This means transitioning from being task-oriented to service oriented. It requires skills of an internal consultant. This means partnering with internal leaders and staff to identify the impact needed on the workplace and help shape the policies and structures that empower and support the employee.

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connect with employees so you can integrate those experiences and messages into existing workflows and processes,” recommends Lagreid. This is about building relationships through communication and dialogue. Involving the employee in shaping, driving and leading efforts such as training and programs, can create the experience of community and belonging that goes beyond the content shared.

Provide candid guidance to the C-Suite and senior leadership teams so that they are fully informed on the reality of the employee experience. “An effective HR team will help deliver the employee voice to the C-suite – even if it’s hard to swallow,” advises Lagreid. Developing a rapport and reputation with leaders that equates to them realizing the benefit of having a strategic partner in HR will be critical for the future success of organizations moving forward. Leaders should embrace what the HR team shares with curiosity and active listening. “Your CFO can give you a good idea of what's coming 18 months down the road. Your HR team can tell you if your company will be around in 10 years.”

Connect the dots for employees between their individual purposes and that of the organization. Developing leaders who can hold collaborative career discussions with their direct reports is a ground level step but one that often gets overlooked. Employees are unclear about their individual purpose when it comes to their career so they hang everything on whether their manager appreciates them, if they’re getting promoted or the last time they got a raise. Those items will always matter, but an employee who is clear about their own purpose, tends to engage in a more empowered, self-motivated and resourceful manner.

“HR has an opportunity to catalyze purpose within employees. Help each employee understand why your organization exists to do, why that matters

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H.V. MacArthur

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