

CAHRS  
Virtual  
Working Group  
Series:  
  
Rethinking  
the HR  
Operating  
Model

## Session 4: Aligning HR Capabilities with Changes to the HR Operating Model

May 13, 2021

Companies faced many challenges in 2020 including COVID-19, natural disasters, and the effects of deep societal divides. This has had a huge impact on organizations' business results, business models and employees in some extreme and different ways. Human Resources has been at the center of much of this and has made adjustments to operate in this new environment. In this fourth working group in the series of how this has impacted the HR Operating Model, CAHRS Academic Director and William J. Conaty Professor Brad Bell and CAHRS Executive Director Beth Flynn-Ferry led a discussion regarding the new and amplified capabilities that **the changing HR operating model requires along with strategies CAHRS companies are deploying to develop these capabilities.**

### DISCUSSION TAKEAWAYS

There were several new or amplified capabilities the group discussed as particularly important in light of the ongoing evolution of the HR operating model:

- Change Management
  - Across companies there was agreement that there is a heightened need for change management capabilities that can support ongoing transformation efforts.
  - HR business partners need to be able to support people leaders in their change efforts and to provide business coaching and advisory, all while continuously working to adjust the perceived role of HR (transactional → strategic).
  - COEs need to take on more accountability for not only developing new programs and services but also driving their implementation in the business.
- Organizational Agility
  - Disruption has become the norm rather than the exception, as exemplified by the past year. Thus, change management efforts alone are not enough; HR needs to help build organizational agility capacity.
  - Agility is also important for supporting the broader array of work models being adopted by companies, such as fast-to-action project teams that allow more fluid movement of the workforce to align capabilities of the organization while offering side benefits of cross-functional experience and exposure to those employees.
- Data and Analytics
  - Data and analytics capabilities are as important as ever for supporting evidence-based decision making, particularly with regard to talent.

24  
participants  
from  
20  
CAHRS  
Companies:

Accenture  
American Express  
Boeing  
Boston Scientific  
Cigna  
Colgate-Palmolive  
CUBIC  
Estée Lauder General  
Electric Hormel Foods  
HP  
Johnson & Johnson  
Manulife  
McDonald's Medtronic  
Samsung  
Terex  
Trane Technologies  
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functional solutions to emerging challenges.

- Other Capabilities
  - The group highlighted a number of other capabilities that are growing in importance, including the ability to support people-technology interaction, a global mindset, organization design expertise, and project management skills.

Companies are adopting a variety of approaches to develop and embed these emerging HR capabilities, including upskilling HR talent through formal and informal learning and development, educating people leaders in critical HR capabilities (e.g., organizational design), and importing talent from other functions and specialties (e.g., project management, market research). Across these efforts there are a few key challenges and considerations:

- Online Fatigue
  - Much of the HR learning plan currently consists of self-directed learning through LinkedIn learning and other online platforms. With the amount of time people are spending online currently, there is a concern that this format may not be very effective.
- Sustainability
  - With all of the transformation and change taking place, which HR is front-and-center on, it can be hard to engage people in development efforts and even harder to sustain them over time.
  - Companies are carving out dedicated learning time (e.g., development week), building in Human Resources Leadership Team (HRLT) presentations that emphasize the importance of the learning, and experimenting with more interactive and innovative learning formats (e.g., shark tank competitions) all in an effort to spark and sustain learning engagement.
- Social Learning
  - Given concerns that people may not absorb as much from self-directed, online learning, companies are increasingly leveraging more social learning elements, including peer-to-peer learning and mentoring.
- Blended Learning
  - Although most offerings right now are virtual out of necessity, when things return to “normal” it will be important to adopt a hybrid approach that leverages diverse formats (e.g., online, instructor-led, experiential) that are best suited to the capabilities being developed.

This Summary Report was prepared by Brad Bell and Beth Flynn-Ferry for participants of the "Aligning HR Capabilities with Changes to the HR Operating Model" Virtual Working Group.

**The Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS) is an international center serving corporate human resources leaders and their companies by providing critical tools for building and leading high performing HR organizations. CAHRS’ mission is to bring together Partners and the ILR School’s world-renowned HR Studies faculty to investigate, translate and apply the latest HR research into practice excellence.**

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