

Empowering the modern workforce: HR trends for 2020 and beyond



2020 is a year like no other and has irrecoverably changed the way in which we work, study, shop and empower the workforce to be productive from anywhere, anytime. Tshepo Yvonne Mosadi, Human Resources Director at HEINEKEN South Africa, provides some HR trends to help managers build a foundation for success in 2021 and beyond.

Home is where the heart is... and also the office

In 2021 working from home or hot desking will remain a key change in our working life. This, as the disruption of 2020 has brought about change that a younger workforce has been longing for. The pandemic just accelerated these changes since working from home (WFH) has been on the table long before COVID-19 entered our collective vocabularies, it was just few companies were brave enough to really to give the concept a chance.

Now that we know it can work, working from home is here to stay and this is going to be a very strong employee value proposition for any company that wants to be recognised as an employer of choice. As most companies are adopting a hybrid model to return back to work, leaders need to know how to balance their approach, leading virtual and on-premise teams in a way that eliminates the perception and views of inequality and favouritism.

Diversity and inclusion need to go from policy on paper to real-world practice

Along with news of the Coronavirus pandemic, 2020's headlines were also characterised by stories around diversity and inclusion as movements such as Black Lives Matter highlighted inequality and lack

of diversity within corporate management structures. Beyond being the 'right thing to do', diversity and inclusion is actually a business imperative that aides in creating more divergent business strategies. The World Bank also estimates the loss in human capital wealth as a result of gender inequality to be around \$160.2 trillion, while McKinsey found that businesses within the top-quartile for gender diversity in terms of their executive structures were 21% more likely to outperform their competitors when it comes to profitability and were 27% more likely to deliver superior value creation.

As inclusion becomes very critical, leaders will have to be on the forefront of change to help organisations and their teams to navigate through these changes. The role of HR professionals as change catalyst should be to provide the necessary tools, resources and support to leaders to enable them to become effective leaders.

A bigger focus on mental health and wellness

With the disruption to business in 2020, has come a host of new stresses at work as many companies close doors, businesses resize by laying off staff, salaries get reduced to avoid layoffs, children take virtual classes from home and remote working as well as virtual meetings reduce time to connect with employees. All of this means that employee wellbeing will continue to grow in importance as a core area for HR professionals in 2021 and moving forward. With regards to WFH specifically, HR departments might have already developed mental health initiatives when lockdown first started, but these will definitely need to develop as longer-term solutions for support down the line as WFH becomes more commonplace in future.

The new world of work is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA). HR's role has never been as crucial as it is now in supporting the business during this time where people are at the centre of the crises and business success. There is a strong need for leaders to be able to connect, support and be empathetic when it comes to the needs of their teams they need to show relentless support, despite the pressure to deliver results and keep the business afloat in these challenging times.

Rethinking various aspects of the employee experience

Traditionally, many aspects of the employee experience rely on one-to-one or personal conversations or interactions including disciplinary procedures, the hiring process, and the onboarding of new staff. The pandemic and lockdown have presented an opportunity to employ technology to reimagine these experiences for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR).

Agile talent management is needed throughout employee lifecycle (from sourcing to exit). The way we retained talents in the past will not keep them in these changing times. HR need to help organisations to redesign their talent management and skills retention strategies. The landscape for the workforce has changed. HR has to partner with the business to redefine the strategic workforce plan, which needs to be aligned to the new capabilities unlocked by the 4IR including big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and the internet of things.

At HEINEKEN, we've always been a people-centric organisation. People and culture are at the centre of success of our businesses historically and with the challenges associated with COVID-19 and the disruption it brings, requires sustainable leadership behaviours and practices. The focus for us and other businesses will be on further developing business leaders to keep to date with the new leadership skillsets required to lead during this new normal.