



Human resources should be at the centre of an organisation's business model

Five HR strategies to add value to your business

Putting your people at the heart of your organisation's business model can deliver great outcomes



Pedro Angulo

Successful businesses share a relentless and balanced focus on financial results (revenue, cost and profit margin), customer satisfaction, operational excellence (quality, compliance and risk), corporate and social responsibility and people performance.

Their senior executives work collaboratively and take mutual accountability for spotting opportunities and making a positive impact in all these business-critical result areas.

Human resources leaders can add value by collaborating with business leaders across the enterprise in order to create high-performance organisations that are purpose-led, put their people first, are customer-obsessed, invest in developing critical business capabilities, and have in place transparent and best-in-class talent management practices.

Place purpose at the heart of your business model

People working in purpose-led organisations tend to be more clear on

the strategic direction of their business and how their own work contributes to the overall performance of the business, are more trusting of their managers and leaders, experience higher levels of responsibility and meaningfulness for the work they do, and feel a greater sense of belonging leading to greater levels of staff satisfaction, productivity and retention.

Purpose also impacts on customer, employee and investor choices as well as decision-making. People want to work and do business with ethical organisations that want to make a positive impact in the communities in which they operate and the world at large.

Becoming a more purpose-led organisation starts by articulating an authentic purpose statement that is more than just about making money and places social and environmental considerations at the centre of making strategic business decisions, then building awareness and finally embedding it into everything the organisation and its people do.

Cultivate a people and customer-obsessed culture

Take care of your people and they will take care of your customers. Creating a people-centric, customer-obsessed culture is arguably the only source of long-term sustainable competitive advantage.

Competitors can easily copy our

products, technology, structures and processes but the one thing that can't be easily copied or replicated is culture.

Do not leave the development of your culture to chance. HR executives need to work with business leaders to clearly define, articulate and bring to life the ideal culture that they would like to create.

Remember that everything you say or do (or indeed don't do) creates culture.

Embed proper practices for talent management

Talent management is a business-critical activity and therefore business leaders need to be fully committed to developing and executing talent management plans. It involves attracting, developing, and retaining those individuals with high potential who are of value to the organisation.

There are four critical activities that we should have clear strategies for:

1. Identify your organisation's critical roles. Roles critical to successfully executing business strategy and have a large impact on bottom line results and/or the customer experience;

2. Identify successors for all critical roles. Do you have a person ready now to step up into your chief executive's role if he/she was to leave your organisation? Or your head of data analytics? Or commercial director? Or chief financial officer? Lack of proper successors for critical roles is one of the greatest operational risk to any business.

3. Identify your high potentials (HiPos). Your high performers are

not the same as your high potentials. High potentials are normally high performers but not all high performers are HiPos.

HiPos are emotionally intelligent, have a growth mindset, are highly effective at dealing with complexity and ambiguity, enjoy and seek opportunities to lead people, and are highly ambitious but in a collaborative way.

4. Fast-track the development of your successors and high potentials by providing them with the right mix of knowledge and experiences that enable them to develop competency gaps, as well as, their agility, enterprise and critical thinking, creativity and collaboration skills.

Close current and future capability gaps

Irish chief executives see the shortage of core skills as one of the biggest threats to business growth. According to PwC's Annual Global CEO Survey (2019), 33 per cent of Irish chief executives say they are missing growth targets due to the lack of availability of key skills.

Skill shortages are also driving people costs up more than expected eating into an organisation's profit margin.

Furthermore, these gaps are likely to hinder the design and delivery of high quality products and services.

Irish organisations need to safeguard their organisation's future by identifying critical capabilities, assessing capability gaps, providing the right training and career development interventions needed and cultivating cultures that encourage ongoing curiosity, learning and agility.

Improve the customer experience

Empower your frontline staff and develop their emotional intelligence (EI). Doing this will pay off in improved interactions and more profitable relationships with customers.

L'Oréal is often cited as a good example of an organisation that has seen an improvement in profitability as a direct result of the introduction of a number of EI programmes for frontline staff.

Great initiatives, however, are only as good as their execution. We have all come across purpose statements that look great on walls but carry little meaning or impact. We have participated in talent sessions where people are put in boxes or categories, but nothing has happened as a result.

We have had the need to replace a senior executive, and although there was someone internally identified as their successor, we go externally to fill the vacancy.

The five strategic initiatives above might sound simple to implement, but to do so successfully and reap the benefits will require the right level of resources, as well as commitment and time from the whole senior executive team in your organisation.

Great businesses grow great leaders, who in turn create the right climate for people to be at their best and deliver great outcomes for customers, the organisation and society at large.

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The secret ingredients to get the best from your team

There is no magic recipe for high-performing work groups, but a few key measures will help



Paula Milligan

Forming, building, leading and sustaining high-performing teams is one of the biggest leadership challenges we will face. It is, in many ways, the prize we all seek, the fulcrum on which we deliver everything.

An elixir for high-performance teams is not available, but with a couple of special ingredients woven into your leadership mix, your team can start coming together.

It's not just the recipe, it's how you cook

People who take the initiative, have a vision, can strategise, plan and accomplish goals to achieve their vision are considered good leaders. Those who combine this skill with the ability to work well with others and lead their team to success are great leaders.

No matter what leaders set out to do – whether it is creating a strategy or mobilising teams to action – their success depends on how they do it. Even if they get everything else just right, if leaders fail in the primal task of driving emotions in the right direction, nothing they do will work as well as it could or should.

Emotions are strongly correlated with high performance and productivity. Teams whose members feel emotionally supported and appreciated will probably be happier, more productive and more successful.



Good relationships are key to high-performance

When your culture is not right

Unresolved problems become a constant thread of tension that is never relieved. We become so accustomed to them that working around them becomes a way of life. We learn what not to say and what not to do to flare up a conflict. We become highly skilled at the dance of avoidance.

On the surface this may look okay, non-conflictual, people are doing what they are being asked, but look closer and you will see what is truly lacking. People will stop bringing their genius, passion, loyalty, creativity and innovation. They will just put in their day via the path of least resistance. High performance can never be reached here. This is highly dysfunctional and damaging to your company culture and needs to be addressed.

Organisational culture can account for one third of financial performance, so not addressing this has a massive impact on the bottom line.

If your company culture is dysfunctional, this can challenge high-performing teams. Spending time and resource-aligning your leadership, your people and your culture can be one of the biggest competitive advantages you will give to your team and your organisation.

Humans are a social species

One of the key differentiators within a high-performing team is the powerful relationships in place between the people within them.

Good relationships allow for complex interactions, whereas if the relationship is weak, it is brittle and often rife with misunderstandings and miscommunication.

We live in a complex world and relationships need to be strong. Digitally connected networks and communities, robotics, AI, culture, changing gender roles, global integration, X Y Z generation: all these things are increasing the social complexity of the world we live in. Leadership communication is difficult, and the relationships need to be up to it.

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An Insta-guide to the Gram

Instagram is one of the most popular web platforms in the world, so here's how to make it work for you



Eva Perez

Feeling overwhelmed about keeping up with new social media platforms and new features? Instagram is one of the most popular platforms today, but should your business consider using it? You probably feel you should, as your competitors are on it and everyone is raving about it. But first, let's go back to marketing basics.

To lead or be led?

When you look at how fast and dynamic marketing has become in the last few years, it is challenging to keep up with the pace, but smart marketers think strategy first.

Your marketing strategy supports your organisation's mission, vision and goals. It is an interactive process and must be integrated within your strategic marketing plan. When considering whether or not your business should be on Instagram, the real question is would Instagram fit with my current marketing strategy and how can I best integrate this channel with the rest?

Instagram is a communication channel but, like all social media, it has a characteristic that no other medium has

provided before: it is online, participatory and sharable.

Is your profile worth a profile?

So, your starting point is looking at your current marketing strategy and your target audience. Considering that this is the place where your customers spend their time and considering that you have the resources required to participate in Instagram, then these are my top three tips to get you starting.

Who is your buyer persona?

Your starting point is to know your target audience, and in the digital age, targeting can be really specific so your market must be specific. You need to develop a buyer persona, a representative of the type of buyer that you have identified as having a specific interest in your product or brand.

A buyer persona is a fictitious character that embodies

a segment of your target audience. Identify your target audiences first.

Use key data such as age, household income and prior purchases, and then use free software such as xtensio.com to design your ideal customer using its buyer personas templates. This looks professional and it is very easy to share amongst your team.

What do you want to achieve?

Think about key areas such as growing sales, communicating with your audience and saving money. Objectives need to be clear and specific to give you indication and commercial targets.

I highly recommend aligning your objectives with KPIs (key performance indicators) to check that you are on track.

Specific metrics, critical drivers or critical success factors will ensure that you are managing your marketing tactics as expected. Remember, if you cannot measure, you cannot manage.

For example, an objective for your Instagram strategy needs to include the following aspects: task (what is to be accomplished), measurable quantity (how much) and time frame (by when).

This may translate into "to increase Instagram followers from 60 to 200 in the next four weeks".

What content are you going to use?

Focus on specific content that relates to your brand and gives justice to your online image – think like a customer and write content for the customer. Instagram is all about the image as it is a highly visual platform.

You can create your own content using free software. For example, I use canva.com. The free version gives you hundreds of templates and images. You can also encourage your audience to create content.

This kind of content is referred to as UGC, or user-generated content. Don't forget to

use hashtags (but in moderation). Create your own and tap into existing hashtags that are relevant to your content.

Lastly, you can collaborate with influencers, but this can be a challenge and only appropriate if they match your brand characteristics. You can nurture them, or you can pay them.

Remember, video is also a huge aspect of Instagram. It is a great opportunity for products that require demonstration, but also for brands that want to bring their personality to life.

It's not too late to join and become successful on Instagram. With the right marketing strategy, businesses can promote products and services, boost their brand, and increase sales on Instagram.

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