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The new Chief HR Officer

By Desirée Klein-Wagner

Some of you may have accessed Heidrick & Struggles' new thought leadership piece based on interviews with over 50 digitally-led HR leaders globally with the aim to uncover the core capabilities and mindset of next-generation CHROs. Here the link to their summary which is worth reading for any ambitious HR professional:

https://www.heidrick.com/Knowledge-Center/Publication/Creating_next_generation_CHROs

Certain of Heidrick & Struggles' findings are not surprising, as many of us have been able to observe these changes for almost a decade. Before I comment, here their five key findings - their report then describes for each finding the difference between the past and today (or tomorrow):

1. (CHRO) Serving as a trusted partner to the CEO
2. (CHRO) Prioritizing agility
3. (CHRO) Treating employees as digital consumers
4. (CHRO) Employing data science
5. (CHRO) Promoting diversity and inclusion

While the **first item** still does not apply to all companies, or not at all times, as, e.g., sometimes the CHRO role is part of an Executive Committee and at other times, in the same company, it may be moved off the table again, for reasons which one may or may not agree with. There are surely still some differences, perhaps also biases, by sector in how the value of the CHRO role is seen compared to other 'chief' roles, occasionally the shift may also happen as part of a major company change or transformation journey, and both directions, although one could argue that particularly in times of significant business and organizational change HR should sit at the table... and from the beginning of any Executive Committee meeting.

The **second item** relates to the need for HR to deliver faster. As businesses need to be able to adjust to changing circumstances every more quickly, organizations must be able to reconfigure ever faster. Here, it refers to moving from polished, fully baked HR programs to innovating agile, minimum viable products. This is something that one can observe particularly well in start-ups and high growth organizations that cannot afford a fully fledged HR team yet and where the CHRO may often need to also be the Chief Designer, however, Designer on the fly. While this may serve the business well on one hand, it bears

significant risks as well as costs on the other. Just think of all the things that can go wrong with semi baked incentive schemes and their consequences further down the road, blank pension promises, with no consideration of their potential cost or financing, etc. My recommendation here: There is nothing wrong with experienced HR professionals wanting to please their CEOs by quickly putting an HR program together, but I do advice to obtain at least an expert 'opinion' and some constructive comments before communicating. There are numerous industry experienced experts out there to take a quick look at a program self-developed on the fly, at a reasonable cost and without you needing to go through a time-consuming and heavy RfP process first. *(Feel free to email info@hrvaluecurve.com if you have any such need at info@hrvaluecurve.com)*

I will skip **items 3 and 4** here for sake of the length of this post and move to **item 5**. In my view, this goes further than the aspects H&S picked up through their research. It requires new CHROs to also be masters of digital technology, including various social media. Look at the increasing presence of CHROs on LinkedIn mass communicating any remarkable achievements of their organizations and positioning their companies as great employers. As an HR consultancy, we also see an increasing number of employers undertaking the effort to be certified as an organization of "Fair Compensation", "Great Place to Work" or other aspects which may position your company ahead of other firms in the war for top talent. Of course we also support organizations who seek to achieve such a certification. Again, it is something that, once achieved, companies do not just celebrate in their internal communications but which any CHRO, Head of Reward or Head of Talent will also very happily write about or present on externally.

With these thoughts I will close my post and I look forward to reading any comments you may have on this interesting piece of research from H&S, or debating any of the above aspects further with those of you interested. Thank you!

The author, Desirée Klein-Wagner, is Managing Director of HR ValueCurve in Munich/Germany. Prior to founding HR ValueCurve, where she advises Remuneration Committees, Chief HR Officers and Global Reward Heads, Desirée was Global Compensation & Benefits Head in three market leading multinational companies in the Germany, Switzerland and the UK. She has over 25 years of Corporate HR experience, served seven years on WorldatWork's Board of Directors and one year on the Board of Directors of the Global Equity Organisation (GEO). An accomplished speaker at international HR conferences, she can be reached at desiree@hrvaluecurve.com.

