

Ebook

The Skills That Will Define the Future of HR



Check your job description. **Does it say anything about adapting to a global pandemic, remote work, or social justice movements? Probably not. But those are issues that all HR teams have had to face** since March 2020.

HR is undergoing a massive transformation. But let's make one thing clear: the pandemic is not entirely to blame. The pandemic merely highlighted and accelerated a trend that had been growing for years — a focus on the people who power organizations. “Previously, [HR was] tasked with compensation, compliance, and benefits,” says [Cara Brennan Allamano](#) SVP of People + Places at Udemy. “But today's HR functions are charged with supporting every aspect of the success and well-being of a company's greatest asset: its employees.”

In practice, the new function of human resources sees [HR managers becoming product managers](#). They're building agile teams that work across the company on every facet of the employee experience.

In this guide, we'll explore how HR is changing and what steps you can take to prepare to face these changes head-on.

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The theme over the next few years won't be about recovering from the pandemic, but transformation.



Josh Bersin

HR analyst, public speaker, and advisor

Executive Summary

According to 55% of HR professionals, the field is radically changing. To succeed today and in the future, HR must adapt and find ways to solve new, complex problems. This involves everything from drafting business continuity plans and emergency procedures to designing hybrid workspaces and empowering employees to work from anywhere.

You'll learn:



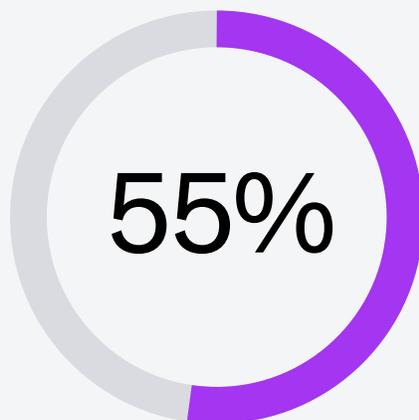
Why committing to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is essential for your organization's success



How building a learning culture will boost resilience and maintain business continuity



Which fundamental HR skills you'll need to keep your organization running smoothly



of HR professionals believe the field is radically changing

1

Are you ready to take
on the new role of HR?

2

Renew your commitment to
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I)

3

Build a learning culture
to boost resilience

4

Don't forget the
fundamentals of HR

1

Are you ready
to take on the
new role of HR?

HR has always played a role in cultivating a company's greatest assets, its talent. But it's time to rethink HR's role in hiring, retainment, and growth. In other words, all things related to the employee experience.

Managing payroll, vacation time, and compliance aren't HR's only focus. HR teams are now stewards of the employee experience, and strategic business partners for every department with the entire company. To safeguard the employee experience, HR will need to be a decision-maker in — if not the driver of — the processes employees use throughout their journey with a company.

Many HR professionals already acknowledge the changing nature of their roles, but only 11% of HR pros say they feel ready to address this trend. Understanding the evolving nature of the employee experience starts with reimagining your workforce's relationship with your company even before they're hired on.



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Rethinking HR's role in talent management

It's the HR team's responsibility to help employees perform and thrive. The following strategies outline the new landscape for recruiting, retaining, and developing employees.

Recruiting and hiring

Competing for scarce top talent

The workforce is shrinking. The fertility rate has dropped. Baby boomers are retiring at record rates. These market changes have a direct impact on your ability to find top talent. “You won't be able to ‘hire your way to growth’ as you have in the past,” writes [Josh Bersin](#). There simply aren't enough workers.

When hiring, prepare to compete for scarce resources. Expect to make a compelling case for why work at your organization is meaningful. You'll need a deep understanding of candidates' motivations and the ability to connect those with your organization's mission.

Increased awareness of systemic inequities also means HR professionals need to rethink hiring practices with a more inclusive lens. This can involve sourcing strategies (looking outside traditional recruitment networks) as well as interviewing strategies (limiting bias with consistent questions and criteria for all candidates).



Retention

Proactively check in before employees check out

Burnout is a real problem in the modern workplace. And this was already the case prior to the pandemic. Two-thirds of full-time workers have experienced burnout on the job.

With the shift to remote work during the pandemic and the stressors that came with working at home, HR professionals could not ignore the importance of mental health. “Historically in the working world, mental health has been shrouded in secrecy,” writes Cara Brennan Allamano. “But last year we started to break through that veneer and finally get honest.”

Proactively consider how to address employee mental health and well-being. This is how you’ll prevent burnout and keep employees engaged. Focusing on workforce well-being isn’t just beneficial to the employee experience, it’s imperative for the health of the business.

Two-thirds of full-time workers have experienced burnout on the job



 **Development**

Invest in employees' growth — or prepare to watch them leave

With talent in short supply, internal mobility matters more than ever. Sixty percent roles are filled by are internal candidates or people who previously applied to the same company.

Some organizations may have frowned upon internal transfers in the past. But 40% of employees cite a lack of career development as their reason for leaving a company. “Such a move might be considered as mutiny to leave one department or another or move up within their own department,” says Cara Brennan Allamano. “This kind of fear-based environment is just one way companies lose fantastic employees.”

Allamano recommends creating a culture where it's common for employees to raise their hand for new opportunities. Help managers develop career coaching skills so that they can have regular career development conversations with their employees. Introducing the idea of internal growth opportunities early into an employee's tenure with a company allows them to feel comfortable revisiting the topic in the future.

In the next chapter, we'll dive deeper into HR's role in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the organization.

2

Renew your
commitment to
Diversity, Equity,
and Inclusion (DE&I)

Forward-thinking HR professionals recognize the importance of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DE&I). Research shows that businesses benefit from having employees that reflect the diversity of the world around them. For example, Fortune 500 companies with at least three female directors saw a **53% greater return** on equity increase than their peers.

While requiring company-wide DE&I training is essential for building a foundation of inclusivity in your organization, that's not where your DE&I efforts stop. Instead, adopt the following approaches to make DE&I a committed pillar of your organization and the employee experience.

Treat DE&I as a journey, not a destination

DE&I is an ongoing effort — just like building a culture of learning. Committing to DE&I means the HR team and other company leaders must be willing to take an honest look at where their organization is falling short. Don't ask employees to recommend how the company can be more equitable. Change needs to start at the top.

Companies can build an inclusive and equitable culture by considering the employee experience. Reflect on the following questions with your team:

How inclusive are our interviewing and hiring practices?

What kind of mentorship and development opportunities do we offer to people from underrepresented backgrounds?

Are managers coached to give consistent feedback and performance reviews to their direct reports?

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If companies want to be great places to work and attract exceptional talent, they need to systematically address their own biases, open up a transparent dialogue, and commit to rigorous anti-racism institutionalization.



Wayne Lorenzo Titus

Co-Chair of DE&I Council at Greenhouse

Uncover unconscious bias and promote allyship

Creating an inclusive environment involves changing people's attitudes and behaviors. Unconscious bias and allyship are two areas where HR departments can make a significant impact.

Organizations can limit the effects of bias with a combination of education and action. Start with training programs that help employees learn more about common types of bias. This can be especially helpful in making employees aware of how biases affect their hiring decisions and treatment of colleagues.

But training alone won't suffice. You'll also need to pair training with concrete actions like instilling a system of checks and balances. For example, when hiring managers say they want to hire someone with an Ivy League degree, challenge them to instead define the skills and qualities that will help a candidate be successful. This opens the hiring pool to a broader range of candidates — not just those with degrees from particular universities.

Many employees — including HR specialists — are unsure of how to be an ally to under-represented groups, both on an individual and company-wide level. Udemy instructor [Dr. Victoria Mattingly](#) defines an ally as anyone who uses their power and status to support and advocate for someone who doesn't share a key part of their identity.

Allyship requires both inner work and external actions. The first step is to look at your own attitudes and behavior in the workplace. Then allies need to take action to change their behavior and possibly address past behavior. HR teams can facilitate positive external action by training employees on how to recognize microaggressions (or more obvious aggressions) and how to speak up.

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An unconscious bias is when incorrect and often biased judgments about people occur due to stereotyping.



Gail Tolstoi-Miller
Udemy instructor

Empower employees with ERGs

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are a great employee-driven way to elevate the voices of different groups within a company. ERGs are similar to clubs you may have participated in during school. They're led by employee volunteers who share a characteristic with one another such as gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or hobby.

For ERGs to thrive, HR and L&D teams should work closely with them to develop goals and budgets, identify executive sponsors, and plan company-wide events that allow employees to learn more about these groups. ERGs can also influence your wider learning strategy by recommending topics and issues of particular interest to their members.

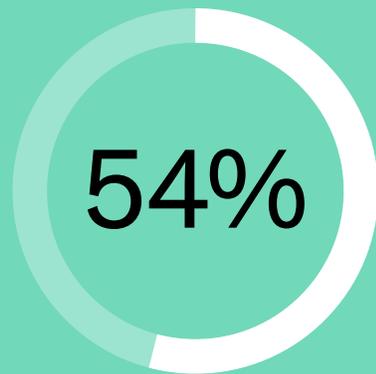
DE&I is an integral part of an employee experience and building a learning culture for your company. **In the next chapter, we'll explore more ways to build a robust culture of learning that prepares your workforce for whatever challenges might lie ahead.**



3

Build a learning culture
to boost resilience

Companies that empower their employees to learn and adapt quickly will be best positioned to face future challenges head-on with little if any loss of business continuity. When you encourage employees to always be learning, they're primed to be resilient problem-solvers. Below you'll find tips for how to accomplish this.



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Facilitate learning in the flow of work

Gone are the days when employees could spend weeks away from their teams and projects at offsite training. Learning must now take place as employees need it. HR leaders can demonstrate how employees can learn “in the flow of work” through the following four principles.

- 1 Move away from programmatic and episodic learning.** Rather than relying on a set schedule and specific training modules, put employees in charge of their own learning by allowing them to schedule it into their workday.
- 2 Create the time and space for learning at work.** Fifty-four percent of employees said having more time to learn at work would motivate them to learn. Establish a company-wide block of time where everyone is expected to focus on learning, whether it's through an online course or a group discussion.
- 3 Managers reinforce the practice of learning at work.** Managers need to feel comfortable setting aside time for their own learning — and encouraging their employees to do the same.
- 4 Leaders make it clear that learning is a top priority.** Leaders have the ability to build a learning culture through everyday actions big and small, such as asking team members to share recent learnings in meetings.

Remove the fear from feedback

A learning culture goes hand-in-hand with a feedback culture. But for many people, the word “feedback” conjures negative connotations.

By learning how to give and receive feedback with a growth mindset, employees become more aware of development opportunities. Leaders must help teams reframe the idea that they’ll hurt a colleague’s feelings when sharing feedback. Managers can lead by example in giving well-thought-out, constructive feedback to their teams and asking for feedback in return.

The most impactful types of feedback help recipients to see themselves differently and offer actionable direction about how they should be learning and growing.

Course recommendation:

Smart Tips: Communication with Deborah Grayson Riegel

Short, immediately actionable lessons on how to give feedback that people can hear and act on



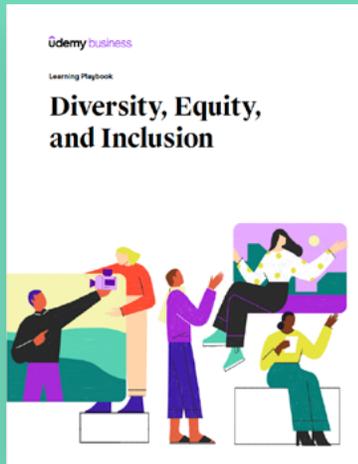
Smart Tips: Communication
Deborah Grayson Riegel
4.5 ★★★★★ (6,745)
3 total hours • 61 lectures • All Levels

Supercharge learning with Skills Academies

A Skills Academy is a place — whether virtual or physical — where employees learn, collaborate, and share. This type of learning environment combines classroom and independent learning to help employees develop both technical and soft skills.

Skills Academies can promote social learning through activities such as lunch and learns, internal webinars, and online social forums. Make these programs an opportunity for colleagues to learn from one another and internal experts.

Next, we'll consider the fundamental skills and knowledge that every HR professional needs.



Learning Playbooks: A practical approach to scaling your Skills Academies

You've decided on the topics and courses you'd like to cover in your Skills Academies. What's next? If you're a UdeMy Business customer, check out Learning Playbooks in your Resources tab. Available in topics like Manager Training and DE&I, these hands-on guides provide ideas for how to market your Academy internally, facilitate group activities, and measure the success of the program.

4

Don't forget the
fundamentals of HR

Although the role of HR is experiencing a titanic shift, you're still responsible for following local and national labor laws, keeping your employees safe, and ensuring everyone gets paid on time.

Learning never stops for the HR professional. And in the recent past we've seen huge growth in this area. There was a 406% increase in consumption of HR content on [Udemy from 2019 to 2020](#).

There are plenty of resources to help build your foundational knowledge of human resources best practices. You can join an organization like the [Society for Human Resources Management \(SHRM\)](#) or the [HR Certification Institute \(HRCI\)](#). Both organizations offer certification programs ([over a third](#) of HR professionals have a certification to their name!) and continuing education opportunities like webinars and conferences.

↑406% increase in consumption of HR content on Udemy from 2019 to 2020

Besides keeping on top of what you need to know to help your company run smoothly, you'll also want to continue to build and enhance your own skills. Here are a few areas where it makes sense to invest your time and effort:

Skill for HR pros to develop**How it'll help you grow****Mentoring**

Your ability to mentor and coach others will keep employees engaged and much more likely to stick around.

Change agility

Developing change agility helps you build confidence in your ability to face disruptions and adapt quickly.

Feedback

Welcoming feedback fuels your own growth and delivering effective feedback is the key to being a good leader.

Difficult conversations

You can't shy away from conversations around people's performance, mental and physical health, or harassment, but you can learn frameworks to remove the awkwardness.

Data literacy

As an HR professional, you can harness data to understand your recruiting metrics (where candidates come from, pass-through rates for each stage), employee engagement, and attrition rates.

Business strategy

To take a more strategic role in the organization, you need to know what matters most to executives and how to tie your work into those goals and objectives.

Networking with other HR professionals can help you stay up to date on the latest trends and skills as well. Not ready to meet up IRL yet? No problem! You can choose from countless online communities like [Culture Amp's Slack channel for People Geeks](#) or [Lattice's Resources for Humans](#).

Prepare your HR team to lead the solutions for tomorrow's challenges

You've seen how the role of HR is transforming. It's no longer simply about systems and compliance. The HR professionals of the future oversee every aspect of the employee experience. Your work has the power to influence who your company hires, how employees grow and develop, and how long they stay. Your quick thinking and adaptability will help the organization weather any external forces that come its way.

Overall one thing is clear: HR teams need to prioritize their own learning. HR professionals must develop their own resilience to face the complex challenges of the past year and transform the future of their industry. You'll likely need support to help your HR team navigate this sea change. [Talk with our learning experts](#) about how to build an action plan for your HR team's development.

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