Organizations today must continuously react to market forces, change course and reinvent themselves at breakneck speed.

In this disruption-fueled environment, business leaders are increasingly recognizing that operating a high-velocity business requires a high-velocity workforce—agile, relevant, empowered.

Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs) are taking advantage of this opportunity to shake up the status quo.

Winning CHROs are already sparking a change reaction by focusing on:

- **WORKFORCE-RELATED INSIGHTS** to guide strategic transformations
- **TAILORED EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES** that attract, develop and retain top talent
- **RENEWED TALENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES** to drive new levels of productivity

By investing in these areas, CHROs are positioning HR at the center of an organization’s change agenda, while playing a critical role in reshaping the future workforce to fuel business growth. Their unique perspective is invaluable at this inflection point.
The success of any business strategy or transformation initiative depends on the abilities and commitment of the people carrying it out.

Research conducted by Accenture Strategy shows 80 percent of HR and other business leaders are convinced HR should shift its mandate to become a driver of workforce performance.1 Through data-driven insights, HR leaders now have the opportunity to directly tie workforce-related decisions to tangible business outcomes.

With advances in analytics and unprecedented access to real-time workforce data, HR leaders can proactively anticipate the needs of the business. Coupling those insights with a solid understanding of market dynamics and business needs allows them to determine the best talent strategies going forward.

It also enables them to derive and present valuable insights to shape strategic discussions with the business on a variety of topics. These range from the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies that augment people’s capabilities to workforce management, succession planning and leadership development.

Sharing insights with the C-Suite and across the enterprise helps executives not only make better workforce-related decisions, but also understand the implications of those decisions on the business.
At the Accenture incubation hub in Dublin, the Dock, clients are reshaping their future workforce by using a variety of technologies—from AI and analytics, to the Internet of Things—keeping people at the core. By combining industry benchmarks and market trends with unique company data, leadership teams engage in scenario planning to address the workforce implications over time from strategic business decisions, such as reconfiguring global manufacturing capabilities or expanding into new markets.

Data is empowering HR to bring new ideas to the business and boost leadership teams’ evidence-based decision making. Combining the science of data analytics with the art of talent management and overall employee experience elevates the value HR can deliver across the enterprise.

Through a newly developed analytics program, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ HR division can access a wealth of HR data to make better workforce-related plans and decisions and improve transactional efficiencies.

Additionally, evidence-based insights are helping leaders of various state agencies attract, develop and retain talent, while generating higher levels of employee productivity and satisfaction. Above all, the analytics solution provides insights that help state workers deliver better and more enduring outcomes to the people they serve.
Employees expect the same level of personalization and flexibility in the workplace that they experience with companies from whom they purchase products and services.

In personalizing employee experiences, HR organizations are accountable not only to an organization’s permanent employees, but to the extended workforce including contractors and freelance workers. These workers may differ in many respects, including the roles they play, the skills they bring to the table and their physical locations. What unites them is their desire for tailored, relevant experiences.

Appreciating an individual’s skills and delivering relevant and engaging experiences is in the business’s long-term interest. One study found that organizations that deliver highly satisfying workforce experiences outperform their peers in terms of cumulative long-run stock returns by anywhere from 89 to 184 percent.³

As more and more HR transactions are based on apps and automated tools, HR will add value on two fronts: The ability to design workforce experiences; and to engage or satisfy workers and boost productivity and organizational health. HR can take several steps to have a greater impact on the employee experience (see Figure 1).⁴

When it comes to orchestrating employee experiences for an extended workforce, the “CHRO” title feels limiting. That’s why some HR leaders are opting for more inclusive titles such as chief employee experience officer (CEEPO), chief leadership officer (CLO), or chief people officer (CPO).
FIGURE 1
WHAT CAN HR DO TO HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE?

Responses of HR and other business leaders surveyed:

- Ensure its leadership understands how to apply digital technologies: 53%
- Create an operating model that adapts to employee needs in real time: 47%
- Hire more senior leaders from non-HR backgrounds: 46%
- Educate, coach and facilitate employees on talent practices: 44%
- Provide personalized employee services anytime, anywhere: 39%
- Reskill by borrowing from other functions: 38%
- Focus on a consumer-based employee experience: 33%
Leading HR organizations are responding to the needs of today’s diverse workforces in various ways. Four out of every five businesses have rolled out or are piloting technologies to improve the employee experience.\(^6\)

Other companies are redesigning their employee experience to support a culture with the employee at the center. Airbnb is an example. Its HR chief, who goes by the title of Chief Employee Experience Officer, is responsible for traditional HR functions, as well as the “workplace as experience” vision. Every aspect of the Airbnb employee experience—from physical workspaces and collaborative technologies to global corporate citizenship programs and transparency—is designed with the employee in mind.\(^7\) This way, the employee value proposition is an extension of the customers’ “belong anywhere” value proposition.\(^8\)

Importantly, the actions of companies like Airbnb are not just designed to give employees what they want. They also give the business what it needs: A committed, highly productive workforce that can adapt to constant change.
To boost worker productivity and drive business agility, leading HR organizations renew their businesses’ workforce capabilities and foster a culture of continuous skills development.

To help drive such a culture shift, HR leaders are starting with their own internal HR organization, building relevant capabilities and instantly acting as a role model for the business.

Technology is a key enabler of this change because it allows workers to reskill and improve in flexible ways at their point of need. Two in three HR leaders (64 percent) are already planning to leverage advanced technologies to help people become more productive in their jobs. At the same time, 71 percent agree there is still work to do. HR needs more skills and capabilities to help the business effectively apply these digital technologies.⁹

Digital skills and understanding are only part of the competencies HR professionals need to be effective in a digital world. Innovation and creativity, problem solving and collaboration can all play a role (see Figure 2).

Once HR has built the relevant capabilities and driven a culture of continuous development within, it can position itself as a catalyst for the whole business, enabled through the use of data and technology.
FIGURE 2

**TOP SKILLS** HR PROFESSIONALS NEED TO SUPPORT WORKFORCE PERFORMANCE WITH **DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

Responses of HR leaders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital skills and understanding</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and creativity</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to quickly develop new skills</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business savvy</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical problem-solving skills</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary and strategic thinking</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration and networking skills</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing skills (i.e. understanding the customer)</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SEIZE THE MOMENT

Forward-thinking CHROs are putting HR at the center of change to develop and orchestrate different talent pools in a way that drives organization-wide collaboration and agility, as they:

**OBSESS ABOUT DATA**
Successful CHROs position the HR organization as an agent of change by developing analytics skills and honing its ability to integrate workforce-related insights with business objectives to create recommendations for improving productivity and other business outcomes. This means proactively partnering with business leaders to frame and answer the business’s most pressing questions. What problems do we have? What capabilities do we need? How can we close the gap?

**CHAMPION THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE**
Leading CHROs create highly personalized employee experiences for all parts of the workforce, including contractors and freelancers, to keep workers engaged, skilled and committed to doing their best. Co-creating those experiences with workers is a particularly effective way to lure new employees and retain existing ones.

**LEAD BY EXAMPLE**
Forward-thinking CHROs reinvigorate the HR organization with a new kind of management discipline. One that works actively to earn employee respect and trust. One that leverages creative energy in a world of rapid change. One that takes direct responsibility to help CEOs and top management grow the next generation of business leaders. Renewal allows the HR organization to secure the strategic capabilities needed and develop a continuous learning culture. And it enables HR to provide an example of what an engaged and highly productive workforce can deliver.
CHROs have the opportunity to position HR in the center of the organization, sparking a change reaction that helps the business and its people adapt and thrive in the face of digital transformation.

Those who lean in will fundamentally change what they do, elevate the role of HR across the organization, and take their place as a valuable partner to the business.
NOTES
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH
The Accenture Strategy HR/Employee Experience study surveyed 950 C-level executives and their direct reports equally split between HR and non-HR leaders from Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States about the role of the employee experience in their organization’s strategy and the role of HR in improving worker and business performance. Survey conducted in January–February, 2017.

ABOUT ACCENTURE
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