

Margo Droulers, Head of HR Client Services and Deputy HR Director, Macquarie University, discusses how to transition from transaction "policy police" to leading strategic and trusted business advisors

Key Messages

- Have been living in a VUCA world for a number of years driven by reduced income, changed competition, as well as the pandemic. HR have had to be responsive within this context and are managers of rapid change (change managers) – for example putting content online and teaching content online. Leadership is critical and strong messages of gratitude in times of and responding to a crisis.
- HR has become a profession rather than a personnel function
- Key capabilities HR needs now to be effective include generalist HR to have good consulting skills (to be good advisors, work in partnership and understand the real problem – you're not there to just 'take the order') and for specialized HR they need to understand what their specialty is but to be able to effectively translate this into the day-to-day solutions. They need a pragmatism as well as a depth of expertise.
- Understand the problem and then apply specialist expertise to the problem when it is needed. This is often a combination of people.
- Design thinking capability is about understanding what the problem is from a multitude of a number of users/multitude of experiences. Then bring people together to design and develop the solutions together. This requires good diagnostic skills. HR is a service delivery function and we need to remember that. We had to move away from being the enforcer of the rules.
- Has transformed an HR function starting with the implementation of a business partner model and moving from the enforcer of rules. They had to change their capabilities and really understand what it meant to be a business partner. They first asked their clients what they needed and they realized that they first had to improve their processes and the advice they were providing – starting with recruitment. Their tendency was to say 'no' rather than 'yes'
- Moved into workforce planning and started looking at the workforce profile and ask the question – is this the right workforce profile? They needed to truly understand their client by spending time with them and building relationships with clients.
- They developed a simple people strategy around getting the basics right, trusted advisors – to change their model to be solutions focused and build better knowledge with the business partner group (involving training in every aspect of the employee life-cycle, strategic skills, service delivery and consulting skills) and strategic services – the transformational value add.
- All HR managers have been accredited in ProSci
- They invited their clients to come into HR and talk to them – to share their experiences.
- Exploring the organisational culture was important and they trained everyone in a "service culture" and they embedded this across the whole function which included a reward and recognition scheme developed by the "change champions" – the ACE Awards (for individuals and teams) to thank them for the work they have done. Supported by a 'service charter' – values and characteristics for the HR team
- Spent time developing relationships across HR and understanding individual's capabilities and areas of strengths. Supported by Executive Coaching and frequent masterclasses (eg unconscious bias).

- Have developed a ‘development framework’ for their HR team – don’t just listen to the latest in HR – learn about what’s happening in the world that will be of interest and we should know about.
- You have to meet people ‘where they are at’

References

- [ProSci](#)