

Key messages and references for Natasha Fox and Ben Neal's Podcast Leading digital workforce transformation

Key messages:

- Have observed the change in HR from “transactional excellence” to “how you treat the workforce as a strategic asset”. Driving organisational outcomes from the better management of HR through concentrating on the skills required to undertake the function rather than the services themselves and the true value you can provide to organisations.
- Defence operates on a ‘worst case’ scenario and ensuring the workforce is prepared for this. They see themselves as a long-term training organisation and spend a great deal of time looking to the future and what skills they will need to ensure the workforce is prepared.
- Fourth industrial revolution and the impact of technology on the workforce is significant – and not being overwhelmed by the possibility of this. We need to see, understand and predict events much faster than we did in the past. We need to learn, relearn and learn more rapidly to keep up with the change.
- Have moved successfully to online recruitment of over 7,000 candidates per annum. Feedback, matching, and testing for suitability, alignment with a career coach and recruitment is now much faster and they have also moved to virtualized promotion panels. They are reducing risk of transmission (from Covid-19), leveraging technology and have embraced virtual conferences, seminars and capability development. Need to be digitally literate and need to accept a level of risk for individuals to learn and embrace this new environment.
- Workforce planning has shifted from capacity and affordability (ie how many heads can I afford) to one about transformation and the digital and tech enablement. There is still operational workforce planning but now more about the skills and capability transformation required which are not easy to do but with scenarios you can start to more effectively foresee what will be required.
- You are not finished when you deliver the workforce plan, it is just the start of it. Implementation of the roadmap to implement the skills and capabilities required to transition.
- Tips for workforce planning include:
 - understanding that whatever enterprise decisions are made, they will have implications for the workforce. It is important to understand the practical workforce implications and then actively manage them.
 - the further you look out the less likely you are to ‘nail it’. Importance of scenario planning cannot be under-estimated to help in bridging and modelling out the workforce implications and then strategies for the predictions of each of the scenarios. You can also create “book ends” or left/right arc for each scenarios which are on the edge of reality and then settle on something in the middle.

- grounding the plan in the practical and pragmatic. It absolutely has to be implementable. You need to have a really practical roadmap with near term actions for the next six months, 12 months and longer-term actions that need to be adaptable based on the scenarios you have modelled.
- Understanding that the workforce of the future will have the skills already learnt to be a digital savvy/native and this needs to be harnessed – very quickly utilise technology to learn.
- We have to be a bit of a generalist and a specialist in our future environment. In particular to take data to understand the situation and then to be able to tell the story to make decisions. We need a lot more cognitive flexibility in this space to project future generations and how they will work. Privacy within younger generations has not been tested.
- HR practitioners need to be better at digital service delivery to better enable the employee experience (aligned to our digital customer experience).
- Changes made to respond to Covid-19 that will remain in the workplace will include the ongoing use of digital environments to engage with the broader workforce (and in Defence's case families). Learning and being effective in 'digital empathy' to track health and well-being and to inform about support/assistance available – depending on how employees feeling.
- Planning for stabilization after Covid-19 is important. If downward pressure is required, how to make this effective. Practical challenges in the culture of the organisation in particular to make sure workforces are safe and to rethink the office – where communities come together to collaborate – rather than where people simply come to work. Also rethink notions of productivity within this new environment.
- Give yourself permission to accept that you don't know it all – learn, relearn and keep learning.
- Don't always operate in your comfort zone – need to plan further out where you are uncomfortable and uncertain to think about the depth and breadth of the solutions available to us. To do that we need to understand the capabilities we need in the future and determine the gap – which we need to plan and bridge accordingly. HR is the stewards of workforce capability.
- **References/remaining abreast of trends:**
- Read widely, one article per week equates to 50 articles per year
- Getting involved in your peak body, AHRI as an example
- How to contribute to the discourse and debate – put your questions and thoughts on social media platforms to move understanding
- Brene Brown - <https://brenebrown.com/>
- Radical incrementalism – summed up in this article <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1356389015578895?journalCode=evia>
- World Economic Forum - <https://www.weforum.org/>