

Ten Quick Predictions for 2019.

1. HR Technology will be a challenge as many new tools hit the market.

You're going to be flooded with new tools and vendors this year. It's time to partner with IT, set up an architecture group, and look at core systems as an infrastructure foundation, not total solutions. The average HR department will have the option to add many tools this year, so be ready to experiment and carefully select only what you need. The latest research shows that on average, companies have eight HR systems of record, and that number keeps rising.¹⁸

2. Data, analytics, and AI are exciting, but ethics, trust, and governance are key.

After many years writing about the slow evolution of analytics in HR, it has now arrived in a big way. Every HR system you buy has an analytics system included, and you will have a vast amount of data from your Microsoft or other core systems as well. Make sure you have a good analytics team in place and connect it to other functional analytics teams across the company as fast as you can.

You also must keep responsibility, trust, and ethics top of mind. AI systems in the workplace can potentially recommend promotion and pay and even identify employees at risk of quitting. We have to learn how to manage and use this data carefully, which means making sure your data is clean and you have what is often called "explainable AI." If your vendors don't give you tools to understand how recommendations are being made, be careful using their systems. This also means your HR business partners must be well trained on the usage, validation, and dangers of AI systems, so they know how to interpret what the systems recommend.

This is also a time to invest in data governance. Workplace and HR data typically come from many systems. People analytics

team must put together a council of data owners to make sure the data used is well understood and someone is responsible for its quality.

3. While a buzz phrase, employee experience is still very important.

"Employee experience" is a top priority in every company, but there are many different definitions for the phrase. To me, employee experience means understanding what your employees need and treating them with the same care and importance you apply to customers.

A company understands its target markets, customer segments, customer buying needs, and the products and offerings they like. A company also understands its customers' journeys and interactions with its products, and it carefully instruments customer feedback and recommendations. That's what we have to do with employees to really get to know what they need.

This new focus changes our role in many ways. We have to spend more time with finance and IT; we need to collect and understand more real-time data about our workforce; we need more flexible benefits and work arrangements; and we need to integrate all our talent practices and focus them on employee needs, not the needs of HR.

4. Learning is top priority. Get ready to disrupt what you're doing.

The fastest growing segment of the HR market today is tools and systems for learning. Why? Because everyone's job is changing before our eyes and we all want to learn as fast as we can. From an HR and L&D standpoint, this means embracing learning experience platforms, virtual reality, design thinking, and agile learning methodologies. AI tools for learning are arriving, so you can soon buy systems that teach in the flow of work. Don't be afraid to experiment with the new systems in the market; they are ready for prime time. You can read all about learning in the flow of work here.¹⁹

5. Focus on leadership culture and learn to lead in a network.

The leadership development industry is filled with courses, books, and programs – and each has gold nuggets and value. On the other hand, you can't use them all. The big theme in 2019 is learning to lead in a network, which means leading through influence, collaboration, listening, and deciding when to act. High-performing companies thrive through honesty, transparency, experimentation, and learning from mistakes -- and also getting very close to customers. It saddens me to read about the problems at GE, but maybe the message is just that you cannot do things the old way any more. I think the new icons of business leadership are the responsible companies in the world -- companies that thrive based on their purpose and mission and look at profits as a result not a goal.

6. Arm up your recruiting machine.

Of all the areas where technology and science have the most value, I have to say recruiting is number one. LinkedIn, Indeed, and other amazing AI-based sourcing, assessment, and screening tools are now eliminating bias, opening the aperture to more candidates, and helping job seekers better differentiate employers. Your Glassdoor rating and other brand attributes are transparent in the market, so recruiting and leadership are now directly linked. And this year you have to connect your recruiting function to your learning function. Companies spend three to four times as much per candidate on recruitment than they spend on developing internal candidates, yet as many as a third of new hires don't work out. I think the talent acquisition and talent development teams have to spend more time together, so you can truly implement a sound program for facilitated internal mobility. There are some amazing technologies to help with this in the market now.

7. Take the wellbeing market seriously.

I used to think employee perks and wellbeing programs were a bit of a fad. They're not. In today's always-on world of work, you have to provide workers (full-time and alternative) a carefully crafted set of offerings to help them stay healthy, productive, and financially secure. If you don't, you suffer

low levels of engagement, high levels of turnover, and ever-increasing costs of insurance. There are hundreds of new players in this \$40 billion market, and I'll continue to follow this space closely in the year ahead. Just don't buy everything for everyone. You should do some design thinking, surveys, and conjoint analysis to figure out what benefits different employees want. Netflix, for example, just gives every employee a \$15,000 bank account to select what they prefer. I think that's a pretty good idea.

8. Make sure your employee listening strategy is in place.

The world of employee surveys, pulse survey tools, and sentiment analysis is now quite mature. SAP (through Qualtrics), LinkedIn (Glint), and almost every other technology provider now has intelligent, built-in tools for employee surveys and feedback. I would prefer that these tools are embedded into the core HR platforms, but that is still ways off. Make sure effective employee listening is on your 2019 agenda.

9. Talk with your IT department about Microsoft and the company's productivity tools.

This year is going to be a big year for wholesale employee productivity tools. Microsoft Teams and related technologies, Slack, Workplace by Facebook, Google G-Suite, and new tools from Cisco are revolutionizing the day-t- day work experience. You cannot survive without being a part of this transition. In fact, I believe your HR technology group should be partnering with IT in this effort, so everything you do in HR is embedded in the flow of work.

10. Turn your HR function into a multi-disciplinary team.

Let me conclude with a few predictions for HR itself. The functional silos we have built up in HR (recruiting, learning, compensation and benefits, employee communications, and HR tech) are now getting in the way of true end-to-end

¹⁸ Sierra-Cedar 2018-2019 HR Systems Survey

¹⁹ <https://joshbersin.com/2018/11/learning-in-the-flow-of-work-arriving-now/>