



SHL.

Finding purpose:

The human connection individuals and organizations need to flourish

Whitepaper

A time for agile, purpose and insight-driven approaches to talent management.

As we continue to experience the 4th Industrial Revolution in a world of constant disruption, there is a great opportunity for talent and learning professionals, business psychologists, people scientists and business leaders to re-shape approaches to talent management and build productive, healthy and inclusive organizations.

A new era focused on curating digital experiences through human qualities combined with ever-changing context, necessitates constant evolution.

Businesses need to enable rapid and sustainable transformation through their people in order to survive and thrive.

In this paper we explore:

- Why organizations have a compelling need to transform talent management approaches
- How leaders can facilitate stronger connections between individuals and their business
- How HR teams can enable successful individual and organizational reinvention through agile, purpose and insight-driven approaches to talent management
- Where leaders and organizations can start to strengthen their initiatives
- Best practices from businesses that have used agile, purpose and insight-driven people methodologies to drive tangible outcomes



Chapter 1 A compelling need to transform

Over the past decade we have experienced rapid change. 2020 has brought significant disruption and serious concern to society, health, our longevity and how we balance work and life. It's clear that life will never be the same again and there is real hope that once we are through the worst of the pandemic, the experience could become a catalyst for sustainable and positive progress.

As a global society we've faced similar challenges before. The financial crisis of 2008 is perhaps the most comparable - economies plunged into recession and unemployment reaching new highs. However, very quickly glimmers of light began to appear. We saw great advances in technology – mobile connectivity, wearable devices, and the rise of the electric car. By 2019 web-connected video devices exceeded the world's population. Organizations began to focus on ways to transform their businesses through harnessing digital advances to improve productivity and build diverse organizations as multiple generations work together.

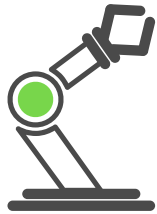
Yet despite great economic progress, critical problems prevail. Individuals often experience fatigue. Well-being, mental health issues and burnout pose serious concerns. Productivity, in many countries, has flatlined, and few organizations have managed to build truly inclusive cultures.

2020's pandemic has magnified these issues. With home and work blurring, education, retail and leisure all having to become virtual, unemployment spiking, the stress and strain on individuals and organizations is considerable. The mythical 'VUCA' (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) world, referenced so frequently, is upon us and more recent events have raised this exponentially.

Now we must find ways to keep aligning individuals and organizational needs in an ever-spinning and changing context. There is real opportunity to fully harness the power that a digital and dynamic workforce provides to build genuinely inclusive, healthy, productive, and therefore sustainable, organizations.

The stage is set. The **Human Revolution** is upon us and we, as HR professionals and business leaders, have critical roles to play in building organizations and driving transformations which truly enable people and businesses to thrive.

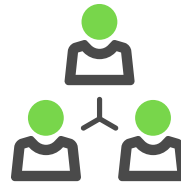
Why now?



Automation, AI and robotics has led to a rise in servicebased jobs



Living longer lives in an always online world means we must find ways to healthily sustain work and life



Organizations need to enable constant evolution through new roles, new teams, new squads, and new skills to remain competitive



Individuals need to remain relevant through life-long learning, growth and re-invention to remain relevant



A Human Revolution: We all need to curate a digital and datadriven world through interpretation, empathy, connection and support

Ever-spinning organizational contexts

A quick glance at how organizations work today, how teams collaborate, how people and careers are managed, and it's clear that a lot has changed. We've been experiencing the 4th Industrial Revolution, with work becoming more digitized, and in some instances, automated. As a result there has been a decline in volume of manufacturing roles and a rise in service-based jobs. Focus has shifted from technical qualifications to how people behave (e.g. capability to interact with customers and colleagues). For individuals this has opened up a wealth of opportunity to transition into new roles, careers, teams and functions because performance in role is less dependent upon specific qualifications or technical skills and more on capability to learn, to interact, and to show empathy.

It's perhaps therefore no surprise that executives are placing greater emphasis on behavioral capabilities (IBM, 2019i) and acknowledging the need to augment the advancing digital capabilities we have with human interpretation and empathy.

Structures are much flatter, and nearly all CEOs are spending time modelling what their future workforce looks like (Mercer, 2020ii). Very often, businesses face new and emerging threats from start-up companies, from mergers and acquisitions, and from an ever-changing backdrop of societal demands: consumer buying behavior, new routes to market, political unrest, concerns around environmental sustainability, and regulatory and ethical requirements.

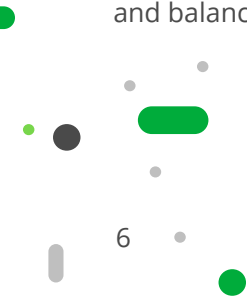
Individuals are increasingly asking organizations to build responsible and multi-faceted strategies to enable them to contribute to a galvanizing mission and purpose (Innosight, 2020iii). To remain in demand and relevant, organizations need to constantly evolve and realign their structure and formation to form agile teams and squads, and to hire and develop people into new critical roles (coding, digital leadership, UX design, etc.).

An organization's view of their workforce has also extended to a powerful and flexible contingent workforce. The gig economy has boomed over the past decade, with many individuals realizing they can build successful independent businesses. Companies who can skillfully flex their adoption and access to critical, on-demand skills can anticipate and respond to market needs and position for growth through launching a new product, establishing a new service proposition or buying channel, often seemingly overnight.

Empowering and sustaining individuals From an individual's perspective, the experience of work has changed considerably too. One in three people say they believe their job will no longer exist in a few years' time (Mercer, 2020ii). The requirement to remain relevant, to constantly re-skill and curate a multi-faceted career has never felt more pressing.

Potential threats to an individual's role and career come from several angles. There are now multiple generations within the workplace. In 2020 Gen Z will account for nearly 20% of the workforce. The 4th Industrial Revolution brings automation of jobs, AI and robotics. Whilst this progress towards a digital world is perhaps not as fast as some had feared, the need for constant evolution and learning has not been lost on individuals. Thankfully, for individuals there is new emphasis on human traits. To interpret, to understand, to show emotion and support. To curate the great advances technology can enable.

Life expectancy has also increased, and as Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scottiv highlight in their book, 'The 100 Year Life', we must now work for a longer time period to finance our lives. Individuals need to find ways to build multi-chaptered careers, to develop, grow, spend time working independently around work and life, and to find the nirvana of work and life balance. Mental health and wellbeing issues have never been more prevalent. In a society without an off-switch, we struggle to find a way to enable sustainability and balance.



Chapter 2 How can we thrive? Connecting individuals and organizations

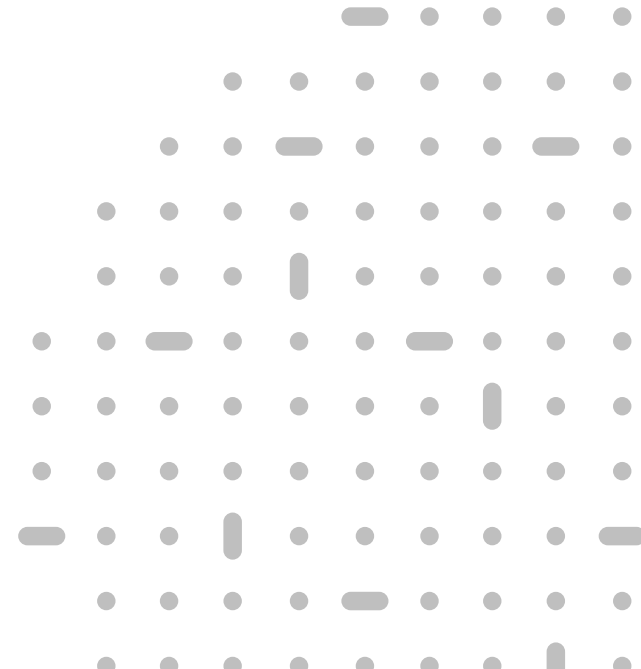
As we live and work for longer, individuals need to navigate a path towards sustainable balance to fund a longer life, stay healthy, and remain well positioned to support families. A job isn't just a job but needs broader meaning and purpose. 37% of people are motivated by strong value and purpose-driven organizations. (Mercer, 2020ii). Individuals no longer just have roles. They have experiences, behaviors, potential, transferrable skills to build, and they own and curate their own careers (LinkedIn, 2020v).

From managers, individuals value a connection, someone who can show empathy, and identify opportunities for re-skilling and growth; indeed the WEF reports^{vi} that 54% of all people will need reskilling by 2022. They're also likely to have multiple mentor and buddy relationships within and outside their organization – learning and growing to remain relevant. Now more than ever, individuals need to be ready for change and personal transformation. Being resilient, open to learning, able to build networks, and quick to adapt ways of working, are all critical for success in the new world of work.

The gig economy, accessibility of technology and seed funding mean new threats to existing organizations emerge every day. Businesses need to constantly evolve to remain relevant in a crowded marketplace. Not just through financial gains but through demonstrating meaningful purpose. 85% of leaders agree an organization's purpose should extend beyond profits (Mercer, 2020ii). Workforces are no longer predictable and static - new contexts, markets, risks, opportunities, increasingly hybrid roles, new departments, new skills and teams, are emerging constantly. Business leaders need to know where the priorities are and what will drive success.

The need for purpose to cut through constant change is something individuals and organizations firmly agree on. Ultimately we need to align people with business priorities and market opportunity to enable competitive edge. To confidently identify new leaders with the capabilities to lead in perpetual disruption, build agile squads to successfully deliver critical business outcomes, and to help people navigate their own careers.

Our HR processes must facilitate objective understanding of the current and future capabilities of our entire workforce, and as Bersin has identified, build a bustling internal talent marketplace (Bersin, 2020vii). Talent management is becoming individually owned and HR-enabled, and we must shift our approach to ensure the optimal dynamics for learning, growth and continuous transformation.

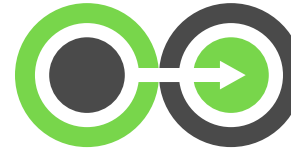


Enabling evolution – a new objective for talent management

Many of these imperatives route back to how we manage our people, the processes established for HR intervention, and the cultures we build as organizations. We believe that businesses need to shift their core approaches to talent management across these main areas:

Business Leaders

- Silo views
- Consistent Strategy
- Exclusive



The Future Architects

- A talent marketplace
- Constant evolution
- Inclusive

Human Resources

- Business-led career management
- Isolated steps
- Static data



The Transformation Curators

- Individually owned and curated
- Connected human experiences
- Agile and predictive insight

Individuals

- Single career paths
- Roles and qualifications
- Separated work and life



The (Re)inventors

- Multi-chaptered careers
- Transferrable skills and potential
- Blended and balanced lives

Business Leaders **The Future Architects**

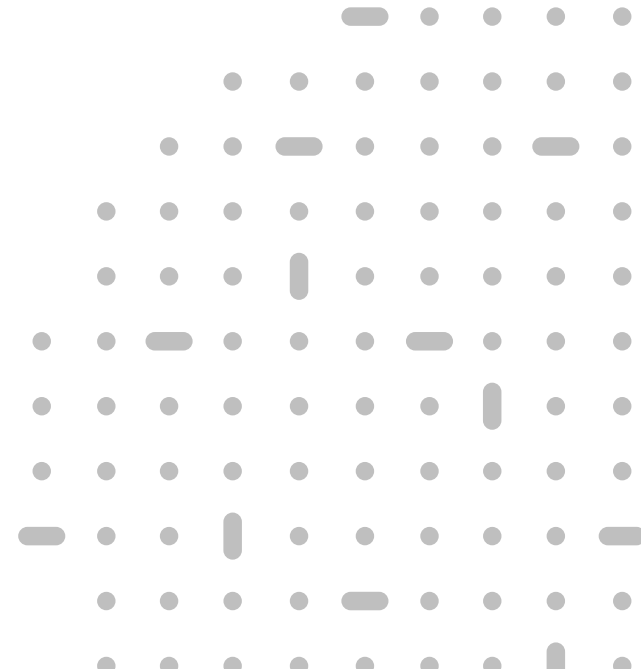
For leaders, talent management approaches need to start with a new view. Traditionally talent is explored in silos, e.g. by function or layer. With organizations becoming increasingly flatter and roles more hybrid, this view is restricting our capability to see the whole picture and to capitalize on broader opportunities. Ideally, organizations will move from a single lens towards building talent marketplaces (Bersin, 2019viii) where individuals are empowered to develop and grow their own careers and learn new skills through the resources available within the organization. A self-directing marketplace where people trade skills and experiences and move to take on new roles, secondments, placements, mentorships, etc. Where managers are rewarded not for hoarding their talent, but nurturing and mobilizing individuals, enabling them to find opportunities to flourish within the broader organization.

Traditionally an organization's approach to talent management is focused on 'top talent'. Even the word 'talent' implies this. In the new world, organizations need to build more inclusive

cultures, and this starts with talent approaches. We spent many years talking about the benefits of high potential programs, typically focused on fast-tracking very capable individual contributors into management and leadership level roles. Talent pipelines and succession planning have traditionally focused on a hierarchical structure, with key transitions linked to managing and leading others (Charan & Drotter, 2011ix).

Now we understand that a range of roles and skills are critical too. We need to think about what talent really means and how it can be nurtured for multiple roles and opportunities across the organization in a continuous manner. Organizations therefore need to be more fluid in their approach to succession planning and development and must be adept at constantly evolving their strategy based on market conditions, disruptions and opportunities. Whilst an organization's core purpose and mission might remain consistent, business leaders need to adapt their strategy and clearly communicate this across the business.

Leaders play such a key role in shaping culture, sharing purpose, and modelling new approaches to empower individuals to explore different opportunities. Ultimately, their behaviors enable or block progress towards a more productive, inclusive and innovative organization.



Human Resources Transformation Curators

For HR, in some respects, the shift in approach involves stepping back from 'owning' career opportunities to empowering individuals and managers to drive this themselves. Technology plays a key enabling role, but culture and ways of working are vital too. Organizations need to shift from performance-focused cultures to growth cultures, and this starts with mindset.

For example, subtle changes in language, i.e. from performance reviews to career conversations, or from enablement to collaborative learning. HR teams need to get comfortable with relinquishing control and, to some extent, enabling individuals to find their own paths, with support and nudging from others across the business.

Linked to this, HR teams are becoming more fluid and hybrid. With generalist roles growing in number for HR professionals themselves, collaborating across HR teams, challenging assumptions and striving to improve experiences are critical components. Passing the baton between HR functions – Reward, L&D, Recruitment – is still prevalent, and in some areas

necessary, but ensuring a consistent and joined-up experience is now the hallmark of success. How does a recruitment experience relate to onboarding? How is information gathered when being considered for promotion, used in 1:1 development?

The early adopters will be those who are comfortable with more fluid approaches, being led by demand rather than tradition or structure. They become facilitators and enablers, working with data and turning it into insight, connecting the dots to see the bigger picture and the business opportunity ahead. HR teams are now very often working with very diverse populations. As we live longer, generational differences get more extreme, especially as work becomes more remote and flexible, and individuals of varying demographics are working side by side. As well as creating experiences, HR must ensure these are fair and inclusive. The human side – showing empathy, adapting, being supportive, finding meaning and purpose – has never been more important.

Data and insight have a key role to play in HR. Not just reporting statistics but using analytics to guide essential strategic questions for leaders to tackle.

Traditional methods are often focused on reporting on past events, e.g. annual leadership development, or quarterly talent reviews. To keep pace in a dynamic, fast-paced world, our views need to become forward-focused, predictive, and real-time. The leaders in the field are embracing psychometric assessments to objectively understand their people and what they can do now and in the future. They're experimenting with organizational network analysis (ONA) to understand the flow of information and how work gets done, and they're looking at ways to incorporate AI into people processes and to help guide decision making. Speeding up HR analytics and modelling scenarios before they play out to improve people decision-making and transformation effectiveness.

Individuals **The (Re)inventors**

For individuals, the shift is perhaps the greatest.

It's all about ownership and meaning – driving and curating their own careers. Finding opportunities to experiment, to try new things and feel supported throughout. For generations already established in the workplace, this might involve more of a mindset shift. From 'my manager decides where my career goes next' and development being restricted to top talent populations or senior managers, to careers being self-directed, owned and curated. For some, identity and profile have been established through years of experience or qualifications and so the transition to 'it's how I behave, it's what I have potential to learn' could feel challenging.

So many different paths and options being available can add to the burden of a mobile and connected world. Developing resilience, positive attitudes to change, and reinvention will be core for individuals to thrive. As well as individuals knowing when they need to take time out, to explore working independently or take a sabbatical. It's no longer a race to one finish line, but a test of durability and sustainability with multiple chapters.

Organizational cultures, therefore, need to reflect these new requirements. To enable networking, sharing of knowledge and experience, facilitate collaboration, experimentation, innovation, provide safe places to be 'myself', try new things and get it wrong, and take time out to re-charge. Building cultures centered around inclusivity, psychological safety and trust will provide a foundation for individuals and organizations to thrive in our new world.

Chapter 3 Navigating a new path - Agile, purpose and insight-driven talent management

We need to evolve static, annual, quarterly programs focused on linear routes for progression and development to view the whole organization, through multiple lenses, in a dynamic and predictive way. See visualization on the next page.

Every organization operates within a context – the business conditions, market demands, political drivers, regulatory requirements, buying behaviors, technological advances, health and environmental concerns – and today this is changing very rapidly. Organizations must constantly update understanding of the context and anticipate changes, risks and opportunities, to pivot their organizational strategy towards growth. Core purpose is very likely to stay consistent, but strategy needs to evolve. There have been many great examples of organizational transformation over the years from the likes of Google (from advertising to driverless cars), Netflix (from mail order film subscriptions to online streaming and content production) and Amazon (from online retail to cloud-based computing). What they all have in common is a galvanizing purpose – this remains

constant, uniting everyone around one mission, with strategy flexing to optimize market impact and enable growth. And transformation enabled through aligning people and behaviors with strategic goals.

The next lens focuses on the organizational structure, which often needs to be more fluid. Critical roles, teams and functions are no longer set in stone. Agile, as a work method, has helped many organizations to build teams and squads, and this approach is filtering into everyday organization design. An organization chart, previously a staple of any good induction program, is now often out of date a few days after publishing. They're living and breathing organisms and therefore organization formation needs careful attention to ensure it enables people and businesses to flourish.

How these circles interact is critical. Understanding and identifying the moments of alignment are key for organizations to drive successful transformation. The circles we've discussed so far are constantly rotating as context, organizational strategy and structure evolve.

The powerful insight that organizations, and HR teams, need to help drive moments of alignment is people insight. That is the objective understanding of skills, behavior, experiences and

potential of their workforce. Organizations who can connect this insight with context, use it to design and stress-test organizational formations and team composition, to identify hidden gems who might have previously been overlooked, to move into new and critical positions, will stand out from the rest.

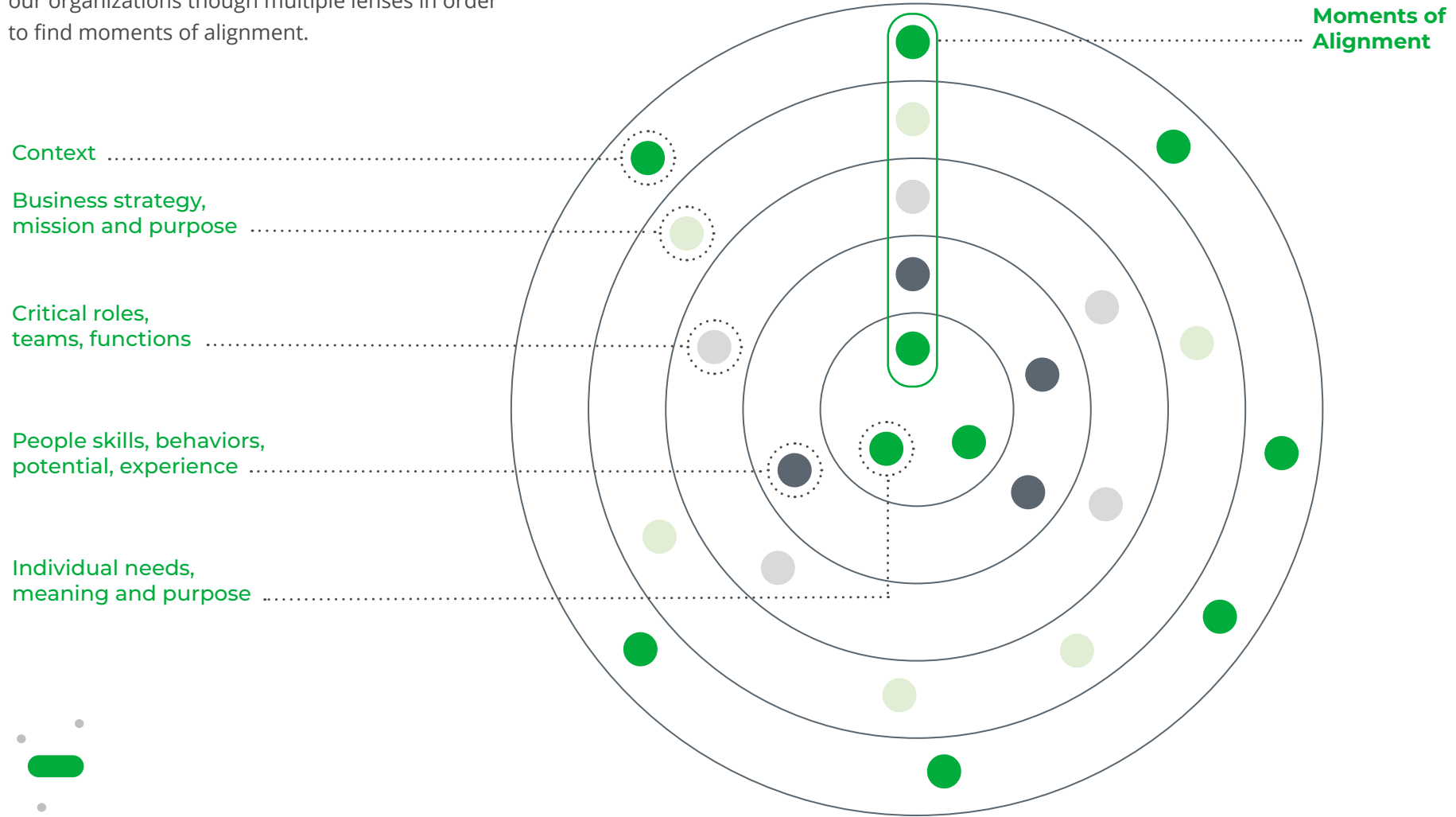
Finding moments of alignment

Of course, to drive true alignment through all five lenses there must be a meaningful connection and purpose felt at the individual level. This is where putting people first, building human-driven organizations, will pay off. All the information gleaned above could be redundant if the individual's needs aren't truly understood. Engagement, motivation and aspiration will ultimately impact an individual's capacity and desire for behavioral change, appetite to move into new roles or squads. It is also fluid and will change as individual lives and priorities evolve. Therefore being able to regularly tap into individual needs at specific points in time will provide organizations with the means to enable true alignment across all these lenses.

These moments of alignment will help organizations to shift gear, to develop new behavioral muscles, to launch new products or service propositions, in order to transform and grow their businesses.

The talent ecosystem organizations, leaders, HR and individuals need to navigate has multiple and shifting components. We must dynamically view our organizations though multiple lenses in order to find moments of alignment.

Finding alignment through multiple lenses



The power of purpose

To summarize, the experiences individuals and organizations strive for in today's world are anchored around shared purpose:

Individuals are: Personal and meaningful – striving for meaningful experiences, to find purpose, and build identity.

Unbiased and inclusive – being recognized for their strengths and empowered to develop others.

Reinvented and resilient – equipped to constantly learn, grow, adapt and recharge when needed.

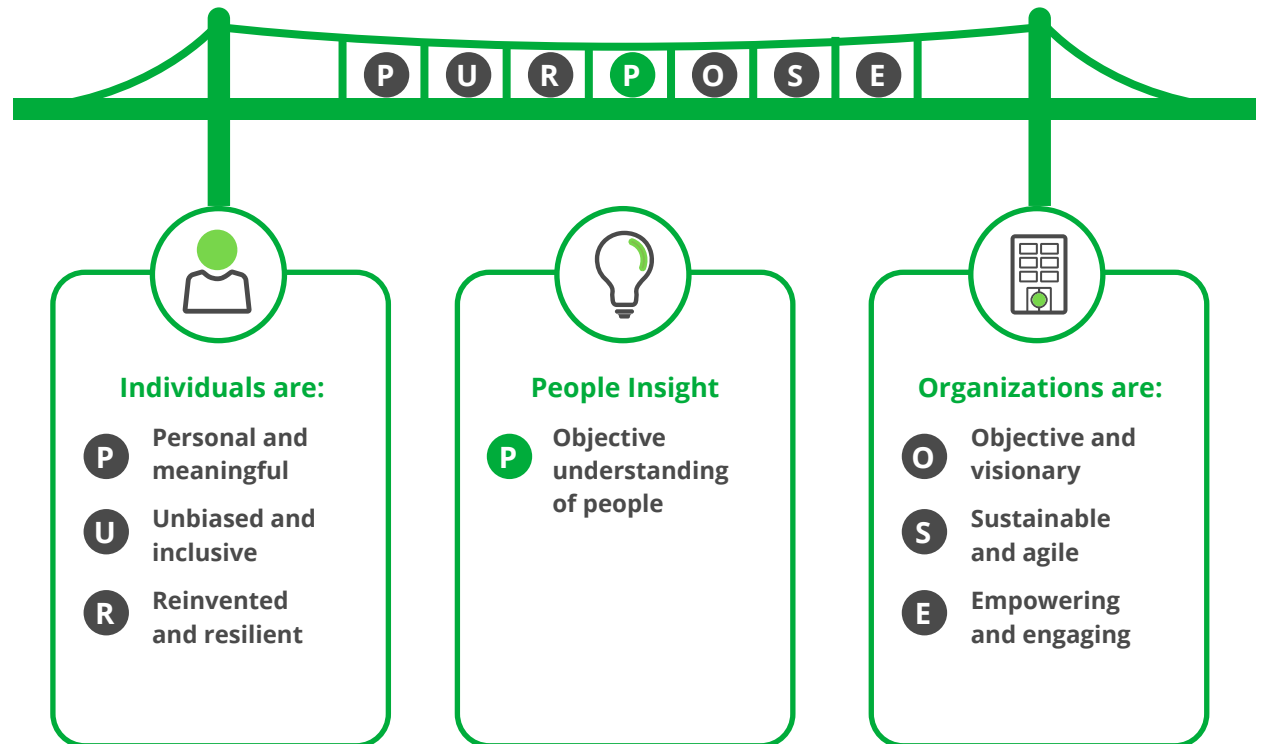
People Insight

Objective understanding of people, their capabilities, potential, motivations and aspirations, enabling a strong, predictive and versatile bridge between individuals and organizations - today and tomorrow.

Organizations are: Objective and visionary – focused on future possibilities for individuals and the business.

Sustainable and agile – nurture purpose-driven, growth cultures to enable transformation.

Empowering and engaging – create safe and trusting environments for people to flourish.



A new ecosystem for talent management
Business leaders, HR and individuals need to evolve their roles and focus on an intertwined and ever-evolving ecosystem for talent management. Drawing upon objective people insight to help navigate transformations and connecting individuals and organizations through shared vision and purpose, with agility to optimize experience and impact



Chapter 4 Five steps towards agile, purpose and insight-driven talent management

Step 1

Shifting perspectives

A holistic view of the organization is an essential feature of talent management today. In addition to systems and processes which enable understanding of people across the business, being able to toggle between views is key. For example, zooming in at an individual level, using insight to understand an individual's ways of working, their strengths and areas to improve, and their motivational drivers and aspirations for their career. Rolling this up at a team level also enables close inspection and rigorous testing of optimal team formations, to understand any gaps or opportunities to accelerate and, at a business level, enabling leaders to objectively understand the levels of organizational capability – themes in strengths and development needs, capacity to grow and accelerate, to benchmark capability vs competitors.

In addition to these groups, looking for talent models and frameworks which can be dynamic could be game-changing. We must be able to dynamically view fit to context, changing scenarios, and new roles. Competency and value frameworks offer a great deal of insight when fit is measured through objective assessment tools, however their challenge is that they are static and the information is therefore only applicable to the specific role and point in time to which they relate. At SHL we have introduced an approach of measuring fit to context,

e.g. understanding an individual's likely fit to an organization focused on growth through innovation, or reducing costs, creating a more collaborative culture. This enables the data collated to later be used in a more dynamic way as context evolves. For example, the SHL Leadership in Context framework has 27 different contexts, and through two assessment tools it enables businesses to not just make one decision

at a single point in time but return to this insight as context (market conditions, organizational strategy, team structure and roles) evolves to understand fit in the future. In addition, through this approach we have found 3x more power in predicting future job performance (SHL, 2019x).



Conclusions

Build a holistic and dynamic view of your workforce

Individuals

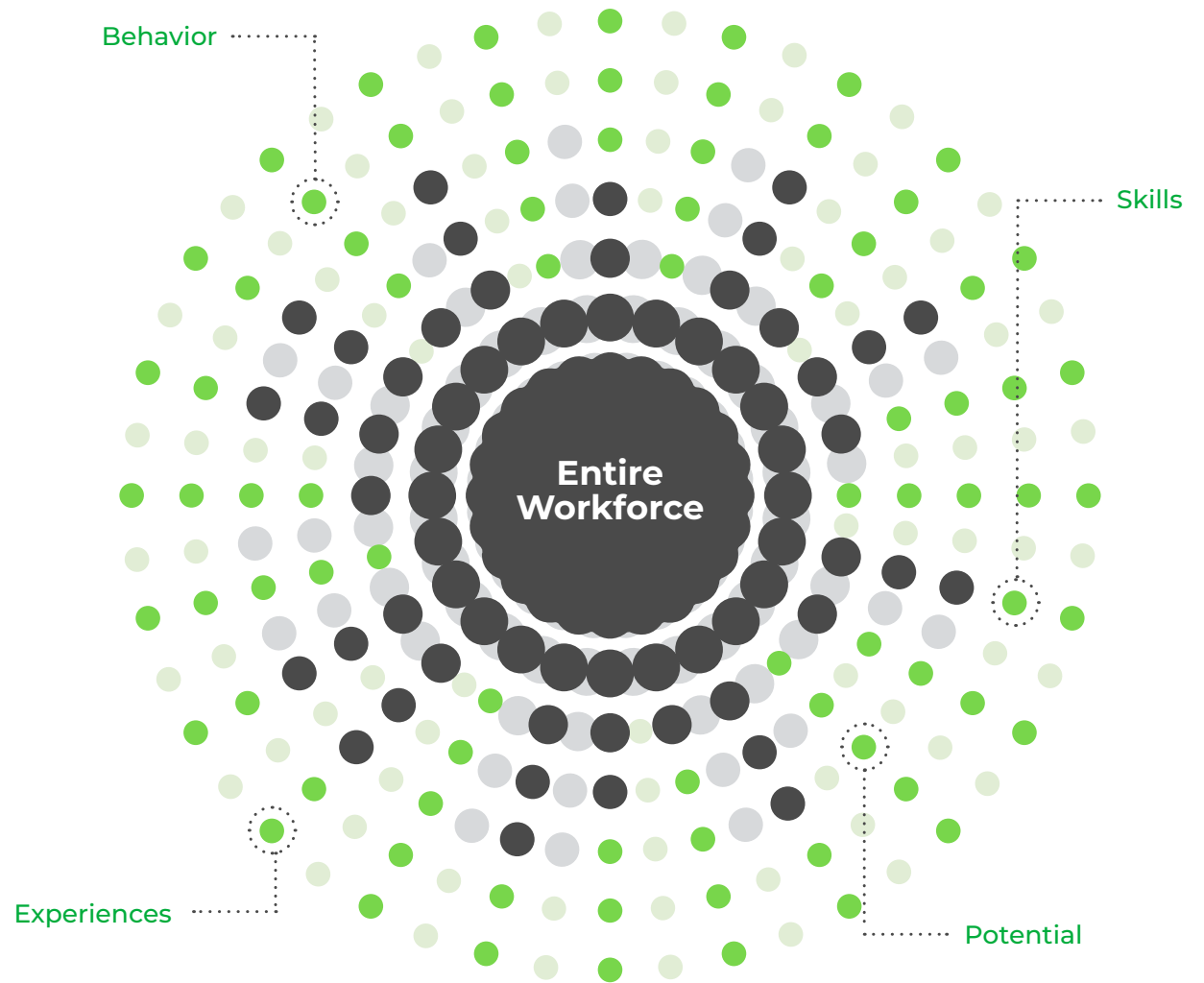
Help me find meaning and connection in my work to enable contribution, wellbeing, balance and sustainability across a multi- chaptered career.

Teams

Enable agile team construction, formation and effective ways of working in line with evolving business priorities and market context to optimize impact and success.

Organization

We must keep transforming our business to remain relevant. Help us understand and optimize the power of our people (our greatest assets) in the right place at the right time to enable growth.



Step 2

A value proposition for all

It's likely that there are already many aspects of talent management working well within your organization. However, with rapid contextual changes, some components will need revitalization or repurposing. Talent management should enable visibility of people across multiple levels and functions, and therefore inform decisions, actions and outcomes across these four areas. As such, talent management approaches become valuable and insightful for a variety of critical stakeholders:

- Accelerate behavioral transformation: To remain competitive and relevant, organizations need to continuously target behavioral transformation in specific departments, teams and levels. For example, to become more digital, more nimble, to align behaviors with new regulations, to identify areas of risk and opportunity, i.e. in diversity, in talent pipelines, in organizational capability. This is critical to many stakeholders but in particular to Functional Leaders, e.g. Sales, HR, Finance, Technology etc.

- Future workforce modelling: Organizational re-design is no longer an annual activity but a continuous process of change to enable businesses to evolve and optimize their workforce for growth. Using objective people data to model and stress-test new organizational formations, construct agile teams, match leaders to specific contexts, and to identify hidden gems. This activity is particularly important for HR teams but also CEOs, Leadership Teams and CHROs.
- Target development and growth: Focusing on the key individuals, teams and functions to develop and grow remains a critical part of talent management. Organizations must be able to quickly identify, motivate and develop critical talent and accelerate individual careers. E.g. objectively identify and accelerate future stars for specialist and leader roles, ensuring succession plans succeed when they are needed and strengthen capability within critical roles and teams. E.g. assess readiness, coaching and team development. This is very relevant to HR teams and managers.

- Empower career mobility: Building a talent marketplace which enables individuals to own and curate their careers and organizations to re-deploy, motivate and retain talent. Of course, this needs to be owned by people, and empowered through HR leaders and managers.

Looking for ways to build connected experiences across these four main components will help both individual and organization – to ensure a meaningful and personalized growth journey through typical talent acquisition activities into onboarding, role development and career navigation. And for organizations, to simplify and streamline processes and ensure people insight data is collated and used to model the future as well as report on the past. 'Consumer grade' experiences need to translate into employee experiences, just as they do for customers and clients.

Step 3

Dynamic data

The engine of talent management today is people insight. The objective and predictive data that organizations can gather on their people and teams. Investing in building this now will definitely pay off in years to come, especially as change and disruption look set to be the norm.

For over a century science has repeatedly proven the link between cognitive ability, personality style, motivational drivers and behavioral capability, and job performance. Over the years, focus on improving psychometric assessment power, building improved participant experiences, and enhancing workflow technology have enabled us to further improve this prediction. Fundamentally, the more we understand – objectively - about an individual, the more we can align individuals with roles, teams and organizations, achieve optimal fit, and enable growth and development.

Core to this too, is that people are powerful. As humans, we have demonstrated for centuries the

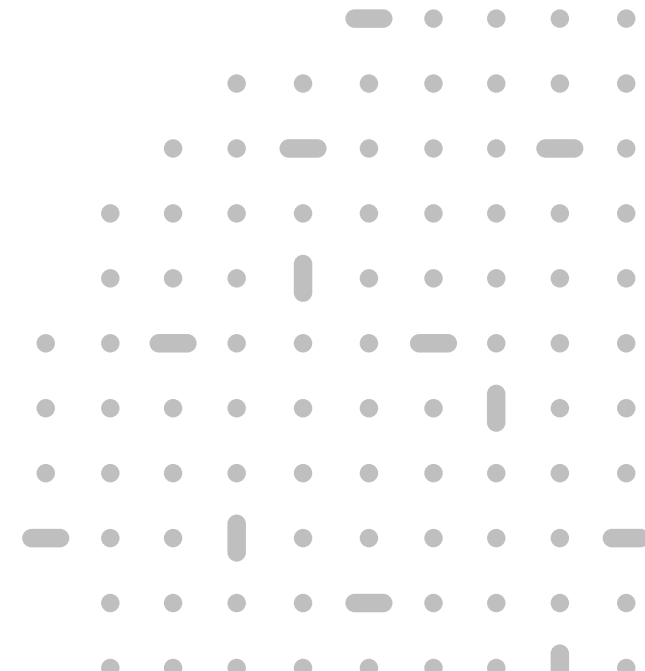
capability to evolve, adapt, demonstrate resilience and to support one another to thrive. Therefore capturing the power of an organization's people in a fair, transparent and meaningful way, and via methods allowing for insight to be applied in a dynamic and fluid manner (as context, strategy and structure evolves), is the cornerstone of impactful talent management.

In the not-so-distant future we envisage a world where organizations have their own 'People Insight Hubs'.

A platform containing so much valuable insight on people and organizational metrics, which leaders and HR teams use every day to guide critical organizational and people decisions. Much like a CRM system is the lifeblood for commercial functions.

And the same rules apply – rubbish in, rubbish out. The people insight hub must be fueled by good quality inputs, interpreted by people who understand what the data means and how it should be used (and shouldn't) and is managed, monitored and maintained.

Businesses make financial decisions informed by objective financial data. We should be applying the same logic to our people. After all it's people who are truly capable of transforming organizations and driving outcomes.



Step 4

Model and predict

Another key element is shifting the focus from reporting the past to predicting and modelling the future. Naturally some reporting of key metrics and progress is still required but there is a great opportunity to pivot towards using people data at the point of conception, to model what might be. This pivot creates opportunity for HR to really guide leadership decisions and organizational transformations through using people insights to model new structures before they're implemented.

Where are the strengths? Where are the development areas or the risks? Could this be mitigated or improved through some changes to the line-up?

When building agile squads, modelling out the team and stress-testing to see if the team are likely to be able to deliver the critical outcomes. And pinpointing where they might need support. Is there a mentor or sponsor within the business who could complement the team and help ensure they consider all angles?

As well as using internal people insights, organizations who can incorporate external insights will certainly have the edge. Benchmarking potential and capability against the broader industry or specific competitors. Using information to understand talent and skill availability within the market can also help inform a build-or-buy strategy from a new hire perspective.

Step 5

Make it human

With great advances in science and technology, our unique capability is that we are human. And this is so vital when you consider that the number one factor contributing to happiness at work is it being meaningful (Bersin, 2020 xi), closely followed by the opportunity to learn and grow and the company culture. All elements largely shaped and influenced by people. Building a culture based on trust is inherent in all of this. To feel empowered, there must be trust.

To feel that it's ok to experiment and try new things in order to learn and grow, there must be trust. To build a grown-up, self-feeding talent marketplace where individuals curate their own careers, managers feel they can nurture talent for the greater good of the organization, and people are happy to share their feedback on the organization, talk about their personal preferences for ways of working, what motivates them, where the development needs are - there must be trust.

Therefore, for everyone involved – individuals, managers, leaders, HR - the core foundation is building a human, purpose-driven culture. Where people feel comfortable to show empathy, to support others to grow, and can communicate a broader purpose which unites everyone, no matter their role or level, to a galvanizing mission. And HR has a unique, people insights-powered role to play in this.

“The current pandemic is surely the worst calamity most business leaders have seen, but it is hardly unique. The past two decades have witnessed a startling series of crises and black-swan events, including terrorist attacks, murderous local conflicts, fatal-disease outbreaks, and unprecedented weather events, such as hurricanes and wildfires. And all that is on top of “ordinary” business disasters: data breaches, trade wars, digital disruptions, and so on. The future, in our view, won’t be all that different: It is likely to present companies with a series of unexpected challenges and opportunities, and business as usual will no longer be enough. An agile business system can help companies create the innovations they will need to survive in these uncertain times.”

(Harvard Business Review, 2020xii)

Chapter 5

Learning from others

We have been on the path towards agile, purpose and insight-driven talent management over the past few years, and in many organizations significant steps have been made. This is simply the next chapter in our evolution. Now we have real opportunity to move our impact to the next level and to forge the way for individuals and organizations to thrive in a new digital, ever-changing, yet deeply human, world.

Impacting organizational transformation with data

The Nationwide Building Society Story

As the world's largest Building Society, Nationwide respects and values its 136 years of heritage. With over 16 million members benefiting from its enduring ethos of helping people buy their own homes and making the most of their savings. Its socially focused provenance today continues in its vision to "building society, nationwide".



Building Society

The Challenge

Like many organizations, Nationwide faced challenges from existing and new competitors. To remain relevant Nationwide needed to quickly simplify its services and ways of working, create efficiencies and empower its people to make a step change in its organizational culture. At the leadership level, this meant a series of shifts: from a more operational to visionary focus, a loosening of central control to empowering its people, and moving from a sense of comfort to embracing a more disrupted and experimental world. By doing this, its members would continue to be the heartbeat of a more agile, inclusive and future-focused organization.

The Solution

Nationwide and SHL enjoy a longstanding partnership. Previous research and cultural work had provided a strong sense of the critical capabilities required, articulated and measured through a common framework and clear leadership principles. All senior executives, typically heads and directors of functions reporting to the C-suite, were appointed and promoted further to a standardized assessment approach, driven by the Occupational Personality Questionnaire, Motivation Questionnaire and a cognitive element, all aligned with Nationwide's frameworks. These generated custom reports for one-to-one executive interviews, for both selection and development, co-designed with Nationwide, implemented by SHL and delivered by an in-house team of specialists.

All data was transposed into bespoke dashboards and linked to SHL's leadership in context research. This would mean that Nationwide's HR and business leaders could start to use this insight to inform critical decisions about its people's careers and contributions to the organization. Alongside this, SHL conducts frequent analysis to share with Nationwide, supporting its strategic HR team in such projects.

The Results

This analysis revealed the performance and potential of Nationwide's leaders and provided comparisons with a range of other businesses, in finance, retail and the technology sectors. For example, there was real strength in leaders' capability to think strategically, to learn and grow, to bring people together in solving challenges and reach meaningful decisions. And opportunities to stretch, by extending their emotional repertoire and turning their focus inwards to consider the self-transformation required. These areas would be invaluable in leading cultural change.

Nationwide could also get a sense of what motivated leaders, how aligned this was with future direction and evolving context. Giving both HR leaders and the executive committee clear visibility of the capability in the organization and its alignment with driving cultural change proved a critical lever. This informed where Nationwide could seek capability externally and where the internal leadership development focus would add most value.

In some ways this is the continuation of a journey, ensuring that assessments provide a positive and developmental experience, creating engaging selection and development conversations and critically, doing so in a commercially sustainable way. In others, it's the start of enabling

HR and business leaders making more fully informed people decisions with objective data and predictive insight.

Finally, Nationwide reflects its commitment to ethical practice in its partnership. Here at SHL we look forward to continuing to play a part in Nationwide's further transformation.

“A true demonstration of the power of co-creation. Working in partnership with SHL, we now have a suite of practical tools, providing valuable, useful insight into our leadership population”

Julie Foster, Leadership Development Manager, Nationwide

Key Takeaways



1. Focus Forward

Constantly shifting context in a digitally advancing and complex world feels faster than ever. This presents challenges and great opportunity for individuals, HR and leaders to accelerate personal evolution and business transformation. Refocusing our approach to talent will enable us to be ready to pivot and reinvent.



2. Be Human

Embracing and valuing our human attributes will set the ground for curating our ever-evolving and digital world: facilitating opportunities for individuals to build meaningful connections. Shared purpose will drive true alignment between individuals and organizations; creating a safe environment will enable people to thrive.



3. Dynamic Data

The need to collate and access objective people insight to inform transformation is compelling, to spot opportunities in the market and quickly align people and teams to deliver. To enable organizations to live and breathe as their own ecosystem, empowering and trusting individuals and managers to learn, grow and experiment. Those able to take the lead with this will gain competitive advantage.



4. Build Belonging

Individuals want to feel empowered to build their own careers and to feel supported working within a trusting, fair and inclusive culture. Living and working for longer demands constant growth and reinvention, and finding connection and purpose is often the guide rope through a landscape of change and complexity.



5. Embrace Reinvention

Talent management is for everyone. We have great opportunity to re-design our approaches to enable people and businesses to thrive in our new dynamic world. Business leaders need to lift their focus to the future, to model new possibilities and enable their talent ecosystems to flourish. HR teams can become facilitators and enablers of transformation earning credibility and trust through the use of predictive people insight. Individuals can navigate their own pathways of reinvention to find meaning and purpose.

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SHL brings powerful and transparent AI technology, data science, and objectivity to help companies attract, develop, and grow the workforce they need to succeed in the digital era.

We empower talent strategies to unlock the full potential of your greatest asset—people.

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