

Editorial

Javier Bajer

Let's step up, but differently!

Please allow me the challenge.

It is clear that most “transformation”, “digital” and “employee experience” initiatives have not delivered the level of attraction, engagement, productivity and sense of purpose which are needed in the world of work. If in doubt, just look at the global levels of customer satisfaction, trust, innovation and business sustainability.

Aside from a few success stories, most organisations struggle to get people to love their work and to be passionate about the value that they bring to customers, patients or citizens.

Having more data is not making us any smarter, in the same way as having alluring perks is not motivating us.

The problem is that we might be trying to fix the wrong problem.

We are creating red herrings and then spending our energy chasing them around. Our businesses are becoming places where we spend more time thinking about ourselves (what we are going to get) than about our customers (what we are going to give). Too many conversations around attraction, retention, succession, diversity, learning, careers, talent management, pay and rewards, promotions, awards, performance management, etc., are pointing inwardly, following the industrial model of control and predictability.

Unless we revert this focus, we will continue to develop the wrong capabilities in HR and in our people. We can play catchup, as we create even cosier and more flexible ways of working, but unless we underpin these with an authentic sense of purpose, we would be wasting our efforts. We need to stop getting busy implementing initiatives that have not worked before, no matter how “cool” and “intellectually promising” they might sound to us.

We now know that human motivation does not follow Pavlov's theory. Even Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was somewhat misleading, as “self-realisation” has more to do with what we do for others, than what we get for ourselves – of course, after having our basic needs met, that is. Humans have shown to be unstoppable when using their talents on things they care for (hint: whatever your company sells, this is still possible), breaking through barriers and creating efficiencies organically.

As you look for inspiration in this issue of Strategic HR Review, consider what capabilities your HR teams will need to make a real difference in the creation of value. Personally, I put it down to three:

1. deeply understanding people;
2. deeply understanding the market; and
3. having an appetite to add value to those people in that market.

Everything else will come as a consequence.

Sincerely,

Dr Javier Bajer

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