

**WINNING  
THE WAR  
FOR  
TALENT**

**A SEAT AT  
THE  
TABLE**

**TECHNOLOGY  
AS A GAME  
CHANGER**

**AGENTS  
OF  
CHANGE  
AND  
GROWTH**

# **#PEOPLE** GAME CHANGERS

**ISSUE 1: HIGH GROWTH AND TRANSFORMERS**

‘Trying to implement an old playbook on new problems just won’t cut it.’

## #PEOPLEGAMECHANGERS

### ISSUE 1: HIGH GROWTH AND TRANSFORMERS

The first Russell Reynolds Associates #PeopleGameChangers have been chosen due to their work **leading companies through a period of high growth or transformation**. Together they represent HR & People functions which deal with scaling at speed, redefining roles, functions and **capability**. They operate in a world where talent is the differentiator. #PeopleGameChangers is the insight from these leaders and organisations as they scale and transform.

The role of the people function in leading businesses is being transformed. No longer viewed simply as a back office function, HR is now front of house and front of mind for visionary businesses.

Where is the people function in a digital, globalized business world heading? What does this mean for the HR leaders – the PeopleGameChangers – of tomorrow?

Commercially astute, agents of change, experts in talent acquisition and data analytics – these are the essential characteristics of future HR leaders, based on our conversations with current PeopleGameChangers across a range of fast-growth sectors.

# WINNING THE WAR FOR TALENT



**'Talented people have more opportunities than ever before... I believe in hiring great people and the org chart will take care of itself.'**

**Aileen O'Toole, Naspers**

**'when you're starting really small, you're going to have a lot of standalone positions. You can't get the talent piece wrong because one bad egg will topple the organisation.'**

**Eimear Donaghy, PeopleDoc**

**'The current workforce are taking a customised and flexible approach to their careers.'**

Attracting and developing the very best people will continue to be the number one issue for many organisations, particularly in the digital arena. Visionary businesses are well aware that they are battling for people as well as customers.

Regardless of geography or sector, talented people have more choice than ever before. Being seen as an employer of choice – a destination brand – with company brand and employer brand holding equal importance, is critical.

Creating talent pools that anticipate and match future business needs has become a major challenge. Successful HR leaders identify capabilities needed now and in the future to help support business growth – finding talent for roles that don't exist today, but will tomorrow.

Large-scale 'talent programmes' are becoming a thing of the past. One size no longer fits all. Employees now expect a customized HR approach taking account of their individual motivations and drivers. Generation Y has a different social contract with the employer – what 18 year olds expect of leadership and work/life balance is very different from what a 45 year old will expect. This demands some radical re-thinking on how to manage talent and get ahead of the needs of the digital generation.

# A SEAT AT THE TABLE

# ‘Soft skills are not much use if you don't have the fundamentals.’

Where HR sits in the reporting line is often a reflection of how an organisation views the people agenda. To demand a seat at the board table, effective HR leaders need the business skills, as well as the ambition to be there.

As the HR function is pushed to the forefront, the need for business and financial acumen among HR leaders is stronger than ever before. HR professionals at all levels are increasingly accountable for business outcomes. This means being as close to the business as possible – knowing its product or services as well as anyone, reading the revenue streams and the P&L, understanding the impact of people strategies on the bottom line. HR needs to mirror the modus operandi of the business – agile, collaborative, flexible, iterative and data driven.

Sometimes viewed as a back office function, HR professionals are now positioned as strategic business partners, drawing on strong analytical skills and business acumen to connect with senior stakeholders. To succeed, HR leaders need more than one string to their bow – the most effective are recognised as those who have rounded exposure to many parts of a business.

**‘for the last 2 years I have been doing the role of MD for Ireland as well as my HRD role – so real P&L experience and that’s helped me develop hugely.’**

**Joanne Walker, Trader Media**

**‘If you’re not commercially inclined then you won’t be able to hold your own in a conversation with the business, and you’ll very quickly get left behind.’**

**Ciara Smyth, King**

**‘being able to use the language of the business when talking about what’s happening from an HR standpoint is hugely impactful.’**

**Melissa McLaughlin, Expedia**

# TECHNOLOGY AS A GAME CHANGER



‘...technology and its ability to grind through data and provide insight is very, very valuable.’

Digital is one of the single most challenging transformational changes that businesses face. Many see this as a game changer for HR. Technology and data have transformed our ability to quantify and understand a business from a people point of view – connecting the dots from the balance sheet to the people.

Having the right tools and data is critical for HR professionals to be credible at senior business level. It allows the HR leader to speak the financial language of business and make decisions based on insightful analytics, rather than intuition. But technology shouldn't drive the philosophy and HR functions need to be wary of relying solely on an algorithm to figure out how many people should be in what box.

Technology is also transforming the way businesses interact with employees and potential recruits. Social media can bring people together and share knowledge as never before. Cloud-based solutions allow talent to seamlessly apply for roles on the move. Employees want a digital, personalised HR experience akin to their experience as a consumer.

Being able to lead with technology and data makes for a successful HR function. But HR tools need to be intuitive in a digital world. Stakeholder involvement in design, implementation and utilisation of technology is key to buy-in.

**‘Technology is the game changer and it’s about how you integrate and leverage that.’**

Gareth Williams, Travelex

**‘Imagine if the person is working on Candy Crush one day and introduced to WorkDay the next – they aren’t going to like it. A game developer will likely reject it like an unwanted organ.’**

Ciara Smith, King.com

**‘dealing with the digital world and the changes that it is generating is the number one change agenda. Absolutely top of the pile.’**

Elisa Nardi, Virgin Media

**AGENTS  
OF  
CHANGE  
AND  
GROWTH**



# ‘...core to maintaining culture is having the right people inside your organisation.’

Each stage of the business lifecycle demands a different approach to talent management and other critical HR functions. But the pace of change and volatility of the talent pool increases exponentially. Talent is increasingly mobile across companies and geographies.

How do HR leaders respond to the unique challenges of high growth in globalized markets, particularly expansion into new and previously unexplored emerging economies? Dilution of company culture during periods of high growth presents a major challenge. How do people connect with the organization and create meaning from their work? The rules of engagement are very different when a business moves from 50 to 1,500 people in a short timeframe. And is there an optimum HR model when it grows from 1,500 to 10,000?

Moving from start-up to more mature business requires foresight but also flexibility in HR thinking. Trying to enforce a one-size-fits-all talent management processes across different regions, with very different needs, is unlikely to bring the desired rewards. Many suggest that corporate centres are dead – that success in emerging markets is impossible with a corporate centre doing all the thinking, including trying to win local battles in the global war for talent.

In many high growth companies the challenge is to continue to focus on quality of resources and avoid a “bums on seats” mentality. Having highly skilled people professionals within the organization to anticipate these growth issues is key to protecting a company’s unique ethos through the growth curve.

**‘the enjoyment of moving from start-up to more mature business is that you can architect the function and put in place what is needed.’**

Ciara Smith, King.com

**‘Forcing talent management processes on the 10 person team in Spain that works for the 1,000 person team in the US just doesn’t work.’**

Colin Daly, Twitter

**‘when people see the leadership around them raising the bar, its motivating to them to raise the bar as well.’**

Joanne Walker, Trader Media

## With thanks to our contributors:



**Colin Daly**

Twitter

Head of Global  
Talent Acquisition



**Ciara Smyth**

King

Chief People Officer



**Melissa  
McLaughlin**

Expedia

Senior Director,  
Human Resources



**Elisa Nardi**

Virgin Media

Chief People &  
Services Officer



**Gareth Williams**

Travelex

Global HR Director



**Joanne Walker**

Auto Trader

People Director



**Aileen O'Toole**

Naspers

Group Human  
Resources Officer



**Eimear Donaghy**

PeopleDoc Inc.

Chief People Officer