



How HR leaders are guiding health organizations to reimagine the future.

With leaders shepherding their organizations' approach to adapt and thrive in uncertain times, many are seizing the moment to drive an entirely new vision for the future.

As health organizations bridge from responding to the global COVID-19 crisis, to adapting the workplace, HR leaders face a work environment irreversibly changed. While the shape of the recovery is uncertain, one thing is clear – businesses must reinvent for a different normal. Employee behaviors have changed, along with business imperatives, requiring a new blueprint to thrive and move forward.

Strategies shaped during the crisis will need to evolve, moving toward more human-centric, technology-enabled models that reimagine ways of working. Adapting will take considered actions that enable a more resilient, nimble culture, support and empower employees/associates/caregivers, and embrace digital acceleration to meet fast-changing shifts in customer, patient and business needs. In addition, health organizations are facing pressure to cut costs, requiring new efficiencies to sustain performance.

As a result, HR leaders have never been in a more essential position. To outmaneuver uncertainty and set a foundation for long-term success will require a holistic view and a granular approach. Here are four areas of focus to rise to the challenge -- and build for the future.

Empower employees and culture change

Health organizations need to balance business priorities with human needs to help employees navigate a shifting work landscape. Leaders who focus on building trust, flexibility and resilience into an adaptable workforce culture, enabled by strong digital communication methods, tools and work processes, will help their organizations forge resilience for change.

Harnessing data and analytics is also essential to improve employee experiences and create environments that cultivate a more engaged and productive workforce. By listening and responding to their needs and concerns, organizations can deliver the right tools and personalized support to help individuals learn, grow and adapt to new circumstances.

It is also important to apply an iterative design approach that engages employees in building change and sustaining an agile culture. Empowering teams to explore new ideas to better serve customers, enhance skills, and improve processes, helps employees feel valued and perform their jobs more effectively, while building adaptation muscle.

A 2019 Bain study found companies with a high capacity to handle change are more profitable, grow revenue up to 3X faster, and deliver greater shareholder returns (nearly 2X) – and have almost twice as many engaged, inspired employees.¹

Advance digital platforms

With the pandemic, leadership teams embraced digital to enable new ways to interact and support remote working and collaboration, and realized productivity gains, greater efficiency and cost savings. Moving forward, the heart of the new agile operating model requires an ecosystem of integrated digital platforms that tightly connect people and technology.

Shaping the future of work, digital platforms connect data, real-time insights and AI to reinvent core processes and enable entirely new capabilities. Together, they are improving employee experiences and collaboration models that let teams move quickly to meet customer and business demands in a changing marketplace.

The health crisis reinforced the need for fast, agile operations, and now HR organizations have a unique opportunity to accelerate technology-enabled work, to improve performance and cost optimization. Innovation leaders are exploring how to work smarter, automate where possible, and find ways to speed knowledge sharing, simplify workflows, and leverage mobile for convenience and efficiency.

Nearly 80% of employees say they don't have the digital tech they need to do their jobs.² (Gartner)

As employees approach work as consumers, many organizations have also turned to digital platforms to deliver the end-to-end, omnichannel HR services, and always-on, personalized support workers expect. AI-led employee care can include conversational virtual assistants that are responsive in real-time to in-the-moment needs. While integrating feedback mechanisms allows organizations to continually monitor and rapidly address employee needs and concerns.

Reimagine the Workplace

COVID-19 has accelerated the shift to digital and moving beyond the idea that work should be performed in a specific, physical location. The future workplace will blend the physical and digital seamlessly, requiring new strategies that help employees adapt, redesign work models, and transform experiences.

In reimagining the nature of work, organizations should adopt an innovation mindset to create more virtual capabilities. Empowering remote workforces and remote access to everything will equip employees to stay productive, supported by intelligent, digital-enabled work processes that are as effective in a virtual, distributed manner, as in a co-located environment.

Strategies that allow for more flexible work arrangements also require revised policies and specific guidance to help employees learn to work in new ways, stay engaged, and manage well-being to family obligations. Ensuring regular, clear communication is even more important in maintaining employee trust, enabling them to operate at their best in a changing environment.

To successfully sustain flexible, agile operating models, leaders must make the structural and cultural changes needed to rapidly form dynamic, collaborative teams, increase their capacity to put technology to work, and empower smart experimentation -- rewarding fast failure as well as successful innovation.

74% of executives say they are currently helping their employees learn to work in new ways. But only 38% of employees said the same.³

Cultivate Talent

As organizations navigate the fast-changing landscape, they'll need a comprehensive approach that transforms talent management throughout the employment lifecycle, from talent acquisition through employee development. Digital business models are both changing how we work, and creating demand for new skills. The result is a critical need to identify the skills required to build the organization of the future, with strategies that are talent-centric and AI-powered.

Traditional training approaches haven't kept pace with people demands for highly personalized experiences, as well as the up-skilling needed to collaborate with intelligent technologies – all necessary to thrive in the new normal. Now is the time to redesign learning to transform skills more quickly, and future-proof the workforce through a robust, digital learning platform:

- **Leveraging AI, automation and personalization** to create engaging, user-centered skills and career development experiences – offered through intuitive, convenient services.
- **Establishing a culture of continuous, agile learning** to ensure employees gain the skills necessary to drive innovation, business impact and readily adapt to changing needs.
- **Using data and predictive capabilities** to match learning to individual interests and preferences, aligning employee profiles and aspirations to relevant opportunities.
- **Improving effectiveness and ROI** on training, bringing innovation and learning together to help workers upgrade skillsets, stay agile and business-relevant, while reducing costs.

A survey among 2,400 life science professionals found the top reason employees want to leave a job is, “I’m ready for new challenges”, indicating need for more engaging, personalized learning experiences that grow skills and create career opportunities.

Building the workforce of the future also requires a new vision for talent sourcing, rethinking how organizations attract, hire and onboard, while achieving greater efficiencies. As with training and skills development, opportunities to innovate depend on data, analytics, and intelligent digital solutions that optimize human-AI collaboration and experiences -- for both candidates and recruiting teams.

In this consumer-driven era, candidates' expectations are shaped by their everyday digital interactions that offer efficient, convenient, tailored experiences. Prospective employers must offer the same to attract top talent. Automating and optimizing the steps, time and expense of securing qualified candidates can improve success factors across the acquisition process. Outsourcing talent services can yield even greater savings and higher quality candidates, helping leaders focus resources and improve performance.

From our experience working with clients, having the right balance of people, data and technology, companies can increase quality of hire up to 40%, while reducing costs by 15-20%.

CHROs are rising to the challenge

Health organizations are experiencing a radically changed work environment with new rules, behaviors and demands. But for innovation leaders, disruption is also a catalyst for improvement and growth. CHROs are in the spotlight, and those that seize the moment to set a vision for the future, with a path to reinvent today, will see their businesses thrive -- whatever comes next.

Visit us at [IBM.com](https://www.ibm.com) to learn how we can help you build talent and workforce success.

Connect with us



Leo Brajkovich, PhD
Client Partner
Life Sciences
IBM Talent & Transformation
leo.brajkovich@us.ibm.com



David Larson
Sr. Client Executive
Healthcare Providers
IBM Talent & Transformation
david.erwin.larson@ibm.com



Brad Yeager
Sr. Client Executive
Healthcare Payers
IBM Talent & Transformation
brad.yeager@us.ibm.com

Sources

¹Bain Change Power Index Survey 2019 (<https://www.bain.com/insights/the-power-to-change/>)

²Gartner (<https://www.gartner.com/en/human-resources/insights/hr-technology-strategy>)

³IBM Institute for Business Value, "COVID-19 Action Guide: Beyond the Great Lockdown"
(<https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/covid-19-action-guide>)

⁴BioSpace's 2017 Life Sciences Ideal Employer Report
(<https://www.biospace.com/article/retaining-employees-in-the-life=sciences-industry/>)