



EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE FOR GLOBAL ENTERPRISE

HR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE



CHALLENGES | OPPORTUNITIES | TOOLKIT



INTERVIEW
WITH A SPEAKER



MEET THE INTERVIEWEE

Ken has been called a jack-of all trades in the L&D technology world, whether developing tools for Adobe Shockwave 3D, writing books and producing videos, creating skills for Amazon Alexa, or training NASA rocket scientists. He usually has one hand in the code and the other building creative teams that leverage emerging technologies to improve user experience and increase behavioral transformation.

His award winning solutions have helped transform learning programs for Prudential Securities, Ingersoll Rand, Glaxo Smith Kline, Caterpillar, General Motors, and the FAA.

He is currently the SVP, Instructional Design Strategy & Innovation at Wells Fargo.



INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS


Digital HR is a process optimisation in which social, mobile, analytics and cloud technologies are leveraged to make HR more efficient. In other words, it's a tectonic shift in the way Human Resources function.

Digitalisation is necessary for transforming the HR function to suit the current times and needs of employees. In 2019, creating a social, mobile and consumer-style employee experience has become a priority as organisations realise the importance of having an employee-centric workplace culture.

Ahead of the 2019 Employee Experience for Global Enterprise, we spoke with Ken Hubbell, a member of the speaker faculty at the Forum and an L&D expert.

In this interview, he discusses a number of digital tools and integrated platforms which can be used to evolve HR systems including automation, Artificial Intelligence and blockchain technology.

He talks about how they can be used to drive change within an organisation as well as challenges with HR innovation and how they can be overcome. Read the full interview below, to find out how your organisation can become more employee-focused and make employees feel like they are your business's most important customer.



Q: HOW ARE DIGITAL TOOLS RESHAPING THE HR FUNCTION? WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE AREAS WHERE DIGITAL TOOLS WILL HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON HR AND THE WAY BUSINESSES INTERACT WITH THEIR EMPLOYEES?

A: There are several areas where, I think, digital tools are going to be important in the area of HR moving forward. These tools are already proving to be invaluable from the standpoint of web scraping for selecting potential candidates for roles within organisations.

One area that is just being touched on is the area of “knowledge management”. There are a vast amount of resources within large organisations and their HR departments. These company need to make sure that the information and material that's needed by employees and team members is accessible via any of their HR systems and tools.

I would also like to pinpoint that there is a huge opportunity for automation and in particular artificial intelligence with the ability to have automated chat bots to provide 24/7 support for your employees and also to be able to reroute requests for information that goes beyond the capability of the AI system to specific subject matter experts within the organisation.

We're actually rolling out something like that internally at one of the companies I have worked for. It's at pilot stage right now we anticipate it will reduce the load on the contact centres internally. They currently get a lot of calls and requests for a variety of topics and a lot of those topics are fairly basic in nature; they just need a coordinated effort. Some of the topics are very private, especially when when you're talking about human resources and having a non-human person to talk to about it removes some of the stigma associated with some of those reporting tasks that get involved.

Q: CAN YOU NAME ANY PARTICULAR TOOLS THAT YOU HAVE FOUND WORK BEST WHEN LOOKING TO EVOLVE THE HR FUNCTION?

My particular area of expertise is in “learning development,” so I use a number of digital tools and delivery platforms like learning management systems, for example, Cornerstone or Saba and a number of different learning record stores for tracking individual activities.

Those systems have evolved over the last ten years, in the sense that now they are less administrative tools and more “proactive” tools to help people on their learning journey, their life and their career path. Another area that digital tools have changed is in the creation of content for both learning and performance support.

There's a big movement right now, especially with software application training, to get away from formal training and to drive more towards a performance support model where it's integrated into the software systems themselves.

That's a huge gain for employees and for the organisations when it comes to onboarding people and getting them up to speed quickly.

One of the pieces of software we're looking at is called WalkMe and it's an integrated tool for performance support.

We're evaluating to adopt internally in the company as it's one that I've seen used in practice and it appears to be an excellent tool.



Q: WHAT ABOUT USING BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY FOR EDUCATION IN HR?

Blockchain technology for education has a huge potential in the evolving HR space, especially with talent recruitment and career pathing. I'm working with a veterinarian practice which has a series of veterinarian hospitals across the country.

One of the challenges with veterinarian medicine is that the credentials required to be a vet or veterinary assistant are usually tied to the specific practice that you work for the college or university attended, this means if you want to move from practice to practice your credentials don't go with you or at least not easily.

But with Blockchain for education, the ownership of those credentials resides with you, the individual, not with the institution. This will enable employees to go to one institution for one type of credential, another institution for another type of credential, maybe from your on-the-job experience and it all rolls together into something that is transportable and it's owned by you, the individual. I'm working with IBM on this project.

"with Blockchain for education, the ownership of those credentials resides with you, the individual, not with the institution"



Q: HOW CAN A SURVEY TOOL LIKE QUALTRICS HELP?

Qualtrics is one of the largest survey tools in existence right now and they just did a partnership with SAP. I've been using it for almost a decade now and it's an incredibly easy tool to use. It has net promoter score built in,

it's customisable and the data it collects is of the highest quality. Also, there are a lot of tools for reporting and they integrate well with other tool packages.

The greatest feature is that pretty much anybody can use it; it's a very intuitive tool to use and heavily reduces the complexity of gathering data – a pain felt by many organisations. These days, with the digitalisation in HR, the tools themselves have made the reporting of the data easier to convert and measure against business outcomes.

This data can then be used to drive change within an organisation and it is especially valuable because you live on the cycles of the people that are going through your organisation.



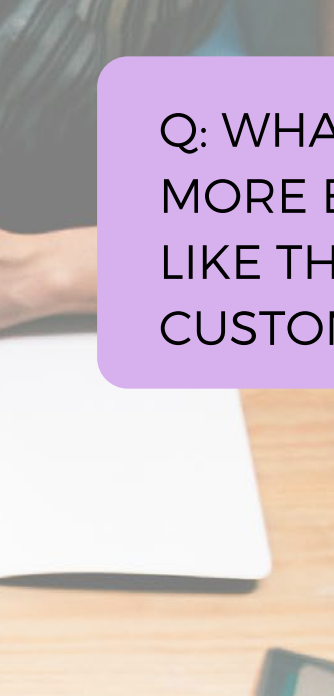
Q: HOW DO YOU THINK SALESFORCE (CRM TOOL) FEEDS INTO THIS WHEN IT COMES TO RESHAPING THE EXPERIENCE OF WORK AND HR?

Salesforce is a pipeline tool, it's great for helping organise and structure your sales organisation, but on top of that it also has the ability to track how someone is actually performing in their role.

You can have Salesforce tied to your learning management system or survey tools like Qualtrics – allowing you to get feedback and provide business analytics at the time of action.


While Salesforce is a pipeline tool and a reporting tool, it also helps you manage the progression of your sales employees. If they are showing deficiencies or capability gaps you can use the data that Salesforce generates to feed into other systems and help service those salespeople by proactively driving training, data gathering or introducing online surveys to pull additional information at the end of a quarter etc. It becomes a one-stop platform where everything funnels through your sales representatives.





Q: WHAT IS THE BEST WAY FOR BUSINESSES TO BECOME MORE EMPLOYEE-FOCUSED AND MAKE EMPLOYEES FEEL LIKE THEY ARE THEIR BUSINESS'S MOST IMPORTANT CUSTOMER?

The key I've found is you have to listen to the employee like a counsellor and you have to treat each employee like a customer. You want the employees to be your best customer and then they will in turn treat your customers like your best customers. Here are some of the best ways to achieve this:



Make sure your employees are satisfied: Employee satisfaction is vital and satisfaction is not the same thing as happiness. Not everyone's happy all the time and there's an illusion, especially with a lot of technology start-up companies and even some larger companies that you have to have playgrounds and ice cream patrols going through the business to keep everybody happy, and that will then in turn drive employee performance. That's not necessarily the case.

Having good, measurable goals, providing reinforcement and training so that the employee feels empowered to do what they need to do, providing HR systems where they can go to if they need support and guidance and help both in their personal and their professional lives makes a world of difference to an employee, more so than little gifts from the organisation. Money's important; don't get me wrong, because if you don't pay your people they're not going to stick around.

But satisfaction is even more important, and the great thing is that for some employees who are more extrinsic in their approach to life, there are technologies that can help you address them. Whether it's through gamification, where you're providing badging and visible reinforcement for performance within the organisation, or from a more intrinsic standpoint (some employees don't like to have all the spotlight put on them) where if you provide the systems that allow them to still feel meaningful, engaged and respected then that makes all the difference in the world.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE KEY OBSTACLES TO HR INNOVATION AND DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE ON HOW TO OVERCOME THESE?

There are challenges with HR innovation because a lot of things come into play from a human change standpoint. Key obstacles would be these:

1.

Be willing to improve:

It is about showing willingness to know that the subject can be improved. If it's a rote practice or it's never going to change, if it's a government mandate or whatever the case might be that subject probably is not going to be able to be modified. You can spend a lot of time innovating around a subject that can't be changed and that just builds frustration, so you want to target areas of your organisation that can be improved and then know that once you've identified them you get everyone on board to accept the fact that it can be improved and then tackle it together. It's a team effort regardless.

2.

Learn to fail:

You have to be able to fail; that's one of the key components of innovation. It's like any scientific experiment; you have to be able to fail as well as succeed. The important differentiation between innovation and production is that you don't want to fail in production. It is failure while attempting to do something new that's okay, because in the innovation cycle you pick that up early and you get rid of the failures as fast as you create them and you move on to the next approach. The key is once in production you don't repeat the same failure over and over again. A lot of people think, oh, everybody fails. Yes, but you just don't fail doing the same thing

3.

Implement innovation process:

As you start each innovation effort, you need to establish on the front side of the whole innovation process a statement of intent, "if we succeed or when we succeed at innovating around this, we're actually going to implement it." There's nothing more frustrating to employees and to organisations than to come up with a great innovation and not be able to actually implement it because the organisation never had the resources prepared to make it happen. It burns through cycles, it frustrates employees and it impacts the organisation in ways you just expect because everyone goes, well, we tried it the last time and you guys didn't pay attention to us so we're not going to do it the next time. So then it halts innovation in your organisation.

4.

Evaluate your ideas:

One of the ways you can achieve this is to make sure that the scope for implementing the innovation is included on the front side so that you don't innovate on something and come up with something that's too expensive or unrealistic to implement within your organisation. There are tools and there are mechanisms by which you can evaluate your innovation ideas on the front side to determine whether or not it's even worth going through the innovation process at all so that you know that you're going to be able to implement it at the end of the day.



5.

Make innovation a team sport:

Then at the end of the day - this is something that I talked about a lot in other presentations I have delivered - innovation is a team sport. It requires a lot of different input from a lot of different parts of your organisation; sales, marketing, IT, your communications department, the specific line of business or functional part of your business that's doing the innovation.

Innovation is not just one person in a garage with a great idea - that's invention. Innovation requires getting the broader organisation involved in some form or fashion; if it's an internal innovation then it's all those mechanisms helping to promote the change management inside your organisation. If it's external innovation then these are the folks that turn around, market and sell your innovative solution to the rest of the world.

It's a team effort and one of the things that I've found in organisations over the last several decades is that innovation is not just about the areas of business that are involved in the innovation process but the wider employees themselves.



A person's arm with a silver watch is visible in the top left corner. Below it, a desk with a clear water bottle with a green cap and a smartphone is visible. The background is a light green color.

6.

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7.

Encourage diversity:

You need a diverse level of input; male, female, cultural changes, cultural differences, language aspects of things, keeping in mind disabilities and other factors that may come into play, racial and other types of diversity that come into play. It is diversity of thought that drives innovation.

All these reflect both the market segmentation for the innovation that you're doing, even if it's internal, but it also allows you to promote a product, service or process that addresses the needs of everyone both in your organisation and outside the organisation that may be affected by the innovation itself.

A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows a person's hands working at a desk. The person is wearing a watch on their left wrist. On the desk, there is a laptop, a tablet, and a water bottle with a green cap. The person's hands are positioned as if they are typing or interacting with the devices.

Q: WHAT ARE THE KEY BENEFITS OF CREATING A SOCIAL, MOBILE AND CONSUMER-STYLE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE?

In my opinion, the biggest benefit of creating a social, mobile and consumer-style employee experience is connectivity; it's the ability to be able to have your employees connected any time. That is not to say that they need to be available any time, but it is to say that if they need it they can. This also goes for internal systems; I should be able to access anything that has to do with my employment, whether it's HR policies, sales practices or anything that has to do with my personal training, tracking of my progress from my career standpoint. They should be able to access this anywhere and anytime from a mobile standpoint and it's great.

The other part of it is the desire to share with others and serve as a connection point. As an employee, this should be customisable. I should be able to socially share the parts of me in a way that allows me to connect better and network better with the rest of the organisation so people know who to come to and for what.

In my case or anyone else's case this means I can identify who's an expert, who has the competency or the capabilities in specific areas of the business that I can learn from or that I can partner with to be able to develop solutions for the organisation or that I might just find a common interest and be able to build a network group within the organisation itself. While we do have lives outside of work, a good third or more of our day is usually spent with the people that we work with.

When it comes to our customers, it's important that the employees can have visibility to what the customers are feeling as well. There are some organisations where the customer filter goes through one single pipe, and while that's good to filter some of the information that's coming through, it is also important that employees realise the impact they're making both in their communities, to the marketplace, and to themselves. Also, how that correlates to what they're doing as individuals. So, providing a social platform for your customers to be able to communicate back in to your employees at least at a high level is really important.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR SOMEONE JUST STARTING OUT ON THEIR DIGITAL HR JOURNEY?

My piece of advice is as follows:

1.

Every company's digital solution is different:

Firstly, we need to understand that every company's digital solution is different. Just because it worked for your friend's company and they've got a great system in place doesn't guarantee that it will work for your company. There are so many factors involved in the digital HR journey - to say digital advocacy and adoption within every organisation is the same is an illusion and the same boilerplate solution for every organisation is unlikely to work.

There are a lot of companies that will sell you solutions and they will say, well, it worked for this other large organisation or this small organisation. But when we start to peel away the onion we realise that we don't support that particular device, particular mode of communication or that particular system. Then their solution falls apart or the scale of it alone becomes unmanageable.

Last year, I was at a presentation and the speaker was presenting this wonderful platform for producing employee incentives around reconciling their travel expenses and I asked him, "How many people are currently using your system at the largest organisation you're working for?" He said, "We have one organisation and it's got roughly 4,500 people on the system and it's working great." I responded, "Take that number, multiply it and add several zeroes on the end of it. Now how effective is your system?" His face blanked for a second and then he replied, "I don't know!" I said, "That's the issue!" The point being there's a huge difference in the solutions used by a company that has 4,500 people and a company that has 270,000 people.

I'll point out another example here. At the last three companies I've worked with, which have all been huge companies, they limit the people they issue cell phones to. They do some bring-your-own-devices but they limit the ones that they're going to actually give cell phones to as a part of the practice. Somebody asked, why, that limits the amount of communications you can do with your employees.

That's true, it does limit the communication, but when you have a 50-person company doing a technology innovation, then a technology push is easy. If a company has 50 people and it buys each one a cell phone at \$1,000 each that's a \$50,000 investment that can be metered out over time. On the other hand, if I do that with a 270,000-person company I've just spent \$270 million on phones, \$270 million on phones. That's a tough one to justify!

That's a huge difference, so when we talk about things like virtual reality - everyone's excited about virtual reality or augmented reality; oh, we can get these headsets and you can get a pair of glasses for \$200. \$200 times - I'm going to round the number down - 250,000 people is \$50 million; \$50 million to give them all headsets. The scale is a huge factor when it comes to starting - so you have to be realistic from an HR digital standpoint.






2.

Providing alternatives to manage disabilities:

Another thing about a digital HR adventure or journey is disabilities. Each individual within the organisation is going to have their own special, unique circumstances. There's the 80/20 rule which is 80% of these people are going to have no issues at all or no issues that would affect their ability to do digital, but 20% of them may. They may have limited eyesight; they may have limited verbal or movement capabilities and so on.

Those things affect your digital platform because that means you have to have multiple ways for them to get the same information. You have to have the way that 80% of the people in the organisation get the information and then you have to have the multiple alternatives for the other 20%.

From a scale standpoint, that becomes a big deal. If you have a small organisation with a small number of things that you have to support from an HR standpoint, that's practical. But if you have a lot of things from an HR standpoint that you have to manage, then, that becomes an investment and you have to make sure everybody goes in with their eyes open.



3.

Overcoming shiny objects syndrome:

Another important point to remember is: shiny objects are not solutions. What I mean by that is that everybody's got a new thing, a new toy that's going to help their HR department, a new technology that's going to make your HR systems better or faster or more scalable or whatever the things are and they look really great. If you're at a show, if you're watching TV, whatever and you're seeing these solutions out there you're like, that would make my company work so much better.

They're just shiny objects though until you actually get a chance to play with them, use them and test them out and when a senior-level executive, a C-level executive sees a shiny object, that's a scary thing in the HR world because usually it means, there's an underlying problem they're trying to solve that you haven't solved yet, and so they're looking for a magic solution that's going to solve everything at once and they found one, they saw it and now they've latched onto it. Now, you have to evaluate it to figure out whether it is actually going to work or not.

4.

Learn from people actually using those digital systems:

Digital; I love this one because my kids pointed it out to me; listen to your team members and your kids for ideas on what really needs to change. In that light - my kids know I'm in HR so the first thing they always say when they get a job or they're working for somebody is, dad, why don't they have this on their phone so that they could do this easier?

I take a little note on the side of a piece of paper and I keep track of all these ideas and one of these days I'm going to be rich because I'm going to put all their ideas into motion because they're not afraid to point out some of the stupid things we do as organisations.

Obviously we have reasons why we've done them that way but when you see it through their eyes you're like, why do we do it that way? So when you're looking for ways to improve your HR organisation through a digital or non-digital approach listen to the folks that are actually using your systems.

5.

Give employees the tools they need to succeed:

The other thing is that you have to give your employees the tools that they need to succeed. If your tools are out-of-date, if they don't mesh with the current needs of your organisation, if it's a legacy system and you just haven't gotten around to changing it, evaluate it, figure out whether it's costing you more to keep it than it is to get rid of it and replace it with something better.

Also accept the fact that when you do put something into place it's not going to ever be the final solution. It is a solution for a period of time. You may have to upgrade it; you may have to replace it somewhere down the road so buy it with that in mind.

Accept the fact that when you put a HR system that is tracking huge volumes of personal information, especially if you have a global company and you're dealing with GDPR or all these other things that are coming into play, understand you're dealing with people's lives essentially and that's what the HR side of the whole thing is - the human factor!

6.

Embrace change because it's inevitable:

Last but not least, breathe and take the first step because change is hard. You have to understand that whatever you're putting into place will most likely have to change; the rate of change is happening faster and faster. You have to be able to be flexible to work with this change and that means while proprietary is often seen as safe and great to keep in house; non-proprietary may be better because you're not having to do the maintenance work and the upgrading process yourself.

For most organisations, change is one of the biggest things that impact them, and HR change is sometimes seen as, 'oh, that's an unnecessary expense', or 'why do we want to go through all that unnecessary effort with our people', and all those kinds of things.

If you're going to grow and you're going to evolve as an organisation, you have to accept the fact that you have to take those steps and you have to embrace the future and make the change.

TOPIC:

Talent Acquisition, Onboarding & Development
Talent Disruption: Reskilling the Workforce for
the Next Decade and Beyond

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