

HR4ICT12: eHR - Where does the future lie?

June 2012: Conference report written by rapporteur David Hollow, Associate of Jigsaw Consult.

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Executive summary

The 4th annual HR4ICT forum gathered ICT regulators, administrators, operators and training institutions from over 20 countries for three days of presentations, discussion and networking. The conference focused on looking to the future, considering key topics that are shaping the use of technology in HR. It built on the strong tradition that the conference has established in previous years, with high quality presentations from global thought leaders and practitioners from a wide range of backgrounds.

The report adopts a thematic approach, capturing the key trends and themes from across the conference. It includes a range of analysis, interviews and key questions, alongside more detailed tables on specific topics. It is split into nine different themes, each of which overlaps significantly. They should be read as different interconnected facets of an overall picture regarding the technology influenced future of HR. One key thread running through the conference was the increasing significance of social media and so the analysis begins by focusing on this. It then leads into the implications that social media and other technologies are having upon recruitment and perceptions of talent. Following this attention moves to another overarching theme of the cloud, considering in turn the implications of the cloud and other technological changes for individual privacy, organisational security, appropriate HR policy, performance management, and overall integration of HR within business strategy.

A highlight of the conference was the closing debate, where participants gave feedback in response to key questions that arose throughout the course of the conference. They concluded that social media may well be the biggest change since the industrial revolution but that it will continue to change and in five years may not be recognisable from today. It was agreed that building a genuinely talented organisation requires investing in individuals and ensuring effective leadership, promoting a culture that recognises and rewards talent. The 'millennial' generation will significantly change the way HR works but a company should not automatically change its core business because of the changing preferences of its employees. The advance of technology means that a personalised approach to dealing with employees is more important than ever and HR professionals should provide leadership in this area. The cloud presents major opportunities for HR but remains a complicated issue with major security concerns. Technology change management requires high levels of communication with staff and appropriate training and appropriate pace. Finally, participants concluded that social media has a varying role to play in recruitment depending on individual organisational context; however its relevance will undoubtedly increase.

The report closes with four cross-cutting messages from the conference. Firstly, HR and ICT approaches must be viewed as context specific rather than universally applicable. Secondly, the introduction of technology brings a challenge work life balance that HR teams should seek to protect. Thirdly, relationships between HR teams and IT teams should be clearly defined. Finally, there is potential for learning from the OER movement in developing open content for training.

1. Context

The 4th annual HR4ICT forum gathered together ICT regulators, administrators, operators and training institutions from Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, Denmark, Germany, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and the United Kingdom. Some 78 people participated in the forum which was held at the BIS Conference Centre, London, on 16-18 April 2012, and hosted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

2. Overview and structure

The conference was opened by Professor Tim Unwin, CEO of the CTO. He challenged the participants from across the Commonwealth to make the most of the opportunity afforded by the conference, inspiring all those present to ensure they learnt together and committed to changing their practice as a result of what they learnt. Following this, participants enjoyed three days of presentations, discussion and debate, alongside the opportunity to network. The conference focused on looking to the future, considering key topics that are shaping the use of technology in HR. It built on the strong tradition that the conference has established in previous years – with high quality presentations from global thought leaders and practitioners. There were multiple approaches and perspectives within the overall conference topic of **'eHR – Where does the future lie?'** This report captures the key ideas and dialogue expressed throughout the conference.

The emphasis of the conference was on looking forward: anticipating the technological trends and trajectories that are influencing the HR sector, along with the opportunities and challenges they present. In this vein, during the first plenary session, keynote speaker Jacqueline Davies (Author of *The Truth About Talent*) challenged participants to step back from the experiences of their working life, open their minds and consider HR from the perspective of the future workforce. A wide range of different issues were explored from this foundation, forming the body of the report. The nine themes are: social media, recruitment and talent, the cloud, privacy, security, policy, performance, and strategy. Each of these sections closes with a question for the reader to reflect on. As would be expected, significant levels of overlap and integration exist between the themes and they should be read as different facets of an overall picture regarding the technology influenced future of HR. Following these nine themes, the report captures the seven key questions that participants addressed on the final day of the conference and then closes with four additional reflections. The report appendices include four interviews with participants, a list of the key resources from the conference, and a list of organisations represented.

3. Key themes

3.1 Social media

Social media is transforming personal and professional lives. The implications of this change constituted a major aspect of many presentations. Jacqueline Davies began by providing a compelling case for the use of social media amongst HR professionals, emphasising the fact that both HR and social media are fundamentally about relationships. Similarly, Ruth Miller (Consultant on Resourcing, Strategies and Career Counsellor, RM Associates) argued that the most significant thing that HR professionals could do to adapt and utilise social media is in reaching out to employees

in the way that they are living their lives already. She spoke of the benefits of allowing employees to have conversations online, engaging as employees in the social media contexts where they already live and socialise. Other presenters noted that social media had the potential to replace conventional training courses – arguing that social media could become a powerful learning tool within organisations. Alongside this were significant concerns raised regarding the implications for change management, regulation and loss of productivity – each of which are returned to throughout this report.

Interviewer: What is the most significant social media-based change that will happen over the next five years in HR?

Jacqueline Davies: *'It is the fact that social media is not about technology, it is about relationships. People get news, knowledge, skills, learning through these relationships; it is quick, convenient and customised. Social media has put a bomb under recruitment and training – and it puts stress on education systems. The nightmare for HR professionals is that social media sweeps away your training procedures. People here in the conference are still buying and selling Learning Management Systems – you do not need a Learning Management System if you have YouTube. So, training budgets instead need to be spent on ensuring relationships and relevance. Social media reworks the nature of training within an organization: peer to peer learning and recommendations become central.'*

In his presentation regarding the legal implications of social media and HR policy, Kevin Poulter (Solicitor, Bircham Dyson Bell) gave a piece of important practical advice for organisations that are beginning to utilise social media: do not underestimate the power of the employee who controls the social media of your organisation. He emphasised the need to ensure that the social media specialist within your organisation has shared all the passwords they use for Twitter, Facebook and any other platform on which they represent the company. If they are the only one who can access these then they have considerable power: in the worst case scenario of them needing to be fired then they are unlikely to release the passwords and this could cause significant damage.

Key question: Does your organisation have a long term integrated strategy for social media and HR?

3.2 Recruitment and talent

Much of the discussion around social media led into issues of recruitment and talent. Ruth Miller addressed the topic of whether social media constitutes a viable recruitment tool. She argued that social media should be an integrated part of an organisation's recruitment strategy, making a distinction between HR professionals using social media to 'push' or 'pull' in recruitment. The first involves pushing basic content such as job opportunities out to people who are potential recruits. The second involves pulling in potential recruits through putting out engaging content that draws people in and demonstrates the culture of the company. As she expressed: *'If you are trying to recruit engineers then in the long term your future prospective employees are much more likely to want to read good content from your internal engineers rather than from your recruitment people – this is using social media to pull people!'*

Several presenters emphasised the need to have a long term approach to using social media in recruitment, with HR professionals needing to focus on company culture and how this can be best

presented and reflected on social media. Jacqueline Davies argued that HR orthodoxies should be challenged and that HR teams should utilise social media to find the type of people with the right kind of skills that will enable organisations to flourish in the new world. Her argument centred on the fact that the people with valuable 21st century skills such as information skills, search skills, and sharp problem solving skills, are the very people most likely to be engaging with social media. This was also affirmed by Rasmus Aaen Madsen (Senior Director Product Marketing, Success Factors) who challenged participants to focus recruitment strategies on thinking the way that digital natives think: attracting, retaining and exciting the best new talent requires using the right tools that they are already used to.

The significance of this for HR teams was made apparent with the prediction from Rasmus that over the next decade, attracting talent is going to be a bigger challenge for most organisations than attracting market share. This was developed by Harriet Omoding (HR Director, Uganda Communications Commission) who drew on her experiences across the banking sector and argued that *'attracting talent is a challenge but retaining talent is the bigger challenge – this should be the focus we have as HR professionals'*. However, this led to a discussion amongst participants regarding how best to determine what constitutes talent within an organisation? It was agreed that talent goes beyond technological tools, and can be nurtured and developed through good leadership. In addition, Professor Unwin challenged the suggestion that HR always has to pander to digital natives, arguing that the attributes required in employees may also be more easily found in older generations.

Pank Koria (CEO, Project People) explored whether in-house or outsourced solutions provided a better outcome when seeking talent. He referred to the devastating effect on the business as a result of not having the right talent in place and the importance that CEOs in global organisations are placing on resolving this to deliver business success. He also outlined the effects of new technology in the talent acquisition space. Social Media and Social Media-optimised resourcing platforms and applications mean that organisations can now communicate instantly with, and attract, large numbers of candidates. However this presents some novel significant challenges: it is necessary to have the ability to sift out the talent from a larger number of inappropriate candidates but, consequentially, not handling the candidate experience well at this point can seriously tarnish your consumer brand. Taking Google as his case study for an in-house model, he demonstrated that if you have an unlimited budget and expend enough effort you can create a world-class talent acquisition service.

The key question that HR professionals need to ask is how to build an HR proposition that is appealing for all generations, not just the 'millennials'. Jacqueline Davies emphasised the increasing role that customisation will have in HR in promoting personalised work: *'this idea is going to hit HR like a meteor in the next five years'*. She argued that the big shift would be towards customisable reward packages, working arrangements, benefits and even job descriptions all tailored around an individual. She then argued that this, in turn, would make the difference around whether employees would choose to stay within their organisation in the future: *'the organisations that succeed in retaining the best people are those that make sure they feel like an individual at work'*.

Key question: How do your employees and the outside world perceive your organisation? Is it perceived to be an attractive place to work?

3.3 The Cloud

Another overarching theme that infiltrated discussion across the three days of the conference was that of the cloud and the implications it has for HR teams. The debate focused around opportunities and risks – with speakers and participants holding strong and diverse perspectives.

Will Venters (Lecturer, Information Systems, London School of Economics) made a compelling case for the benefit of the cloud by considering the way in which it enables rapid scaling of storage space. He used the example of technology start-ups in the late 1990's that grew very quickly but were hampered by the scalability of their servers. By the time they had solved the problem and acquired sufficient server space, markets would move on and their start-ups would collapse. In contrast, because of the cloud, rapid scalability is no longer an inhibiting factor for start-ups. He suggested that it is more cost-effective for organisations to use cloud based servers rather than establish their own data centres because of Moore's law – in this instance referring to the prediction that the cost of storage halves every two years.

Similarly, David McLeman (Managing Director, Ancoris Ltd) talked about the challenge of transitioning organisations to a stage where genuine collaboration on the cloud is possible. He discussed the benefits of the cloud, enabling people to work from anywhere and moving beyond being location- and device-centric in order to get things done: *'We are entering a new generation of computing with cloud computing - using the tool to access data whenever and wherever we want to'*. He argued that the transition to the cloud is *'very cheap to run and very quick to implement'*.

Interviewer: What is it that makes you most optimistic about the opportunity of the cloud for the HR community in the next five years?

David McLeman: *'It is the fact that the cloud creates opportunity for changing the way of working – it gives the opportunity to get workers working more effectively together, across geographical boundaries, working more effectively with external contractors outside the organisation. It creates a safe environment for people to meet and interact when working together. Ultimately, the cloud enables the introduction of truly collaborative working practices.'*

Lutz Bartsch (Chief Technologist EMEA, Success Factors) noted the benefits of the cloud: *'it is available on demand, it scales as you need it without the need to invest in new servers, it is delivered over the internet, it is cost-effective through using a shared platform.'* But he also emphasised the challenges and key questions to address:

- The cloud is shared and is located somewhere – what are the implications of this?
- Consider scalability: how will this work when my business grows?
- Can we split the server if my business splits?
- Information – where do we handle the information about our employees?
- Is the solution that we choose adaptable to our needs?'
- Who manages the data and who controls the data and who owns the data?
- How long can data be held and who has access to it?
- What is the procedure for extracting our data?
- How do HR and IT teams collaborate effectively in addressing these questions?

It was agreed that, from an HR perspective, it is vital to have people within the organisation who can deal effectively with the governance implications of the cloud, with the agility to think through the different consequences of all the options.

Maryam Bayi (Head of Human Capital, Nigerian Communications Commission), emphasised the problems of cloud computing and the risk of having lots of personal data available online. She suggested that the cloud would make it easier for people to be stalked and get harassed online, alongside the increased potential for hacking into personal data. Finally, Gus Hosein (Executive Director, Privacy International) provided a startling anecdote for HR professionals regarding one of the world's leading security companies. Virtually all information security makes use of their products but in 2011 they were hacked and it is still not known who was responsible. The initial access route was through an email to the HR department! He suggested that the challenge with cloud computing is that you are dependent on companies such as RSA to ensure you are safe. He argued that the more confident society becomes in cloud computing, the more that will become the target. This theme is explored in more detail below.

Key question: Has your organisation assessed the risks and benefits of utilising the cloud? Is it feasible in your present context?

3.4 Privacy

All the speakers agreed that privacy and security are key issues for HR, but they had different approaches to dealing with it: those who are sceptical and are withdrawing – to those who are optimistic and simply emphasise due diligence.

Gus Hosein argued that we are all being tracked far more than we realise and that privacy is becoming an increasingly global issue. He raised the question: What rights do organisations have to monitor their employees? In light of this, he called the HR professionals present to remember that 'the right to privacy' is enshrined in international law and should not be broken. He argued that at the foundation of modern privacy protection is the notion that no one can buy my personal information: it can be handed to someone but then it does not become theirs and therefore they should not be allowed to sell it.

The advance of technology raises significant ethical questions for HR professionals: what are the implications of secret blacklists of people who should not be given jobs. Is it the right of an individual to always know what lists you are on? Should this be part of the duty of care placed upon the organisation? This led to some intense debate amongst participants at the close of the first day of the conference. Is using HR to check on employees intrusive snooping or legitimate monitoring as part of the job? Participants agreed that 'balance and boundaries' are key issues – monitoring will not disappear but the challenge is how to adapt to the new challenges that the new technologies present.

Interviewer: What is the most significant issue or threat that the HR community will face in relation to the implications of the cloud over the next five years?

Gus Hosein: *The most significant issue is enforcement – you can have all the policies in the world but if the information you have on your staff is no longer under your control – it is all being held elsewhere – then it becomes impossible to manage and enforce any of the policies that your*

organisation has. The most important things we can do to mitigate this are building in privacy and security impact assessment and in depth due diligence right at the outset of any interaction or relationship.'

Key question: Is your organisation agreed on the appropriate level of employee monitoring?

3.5 Security

Throughout the conference, discussion kept returning to the issues of how ICT is affecting different aspects of organisational security, and how HR should respond and adapt to this. Speakers emphasised the level of sophistication in Spyware 2.0 – urging participants to recognise that no one is immune from targeted attacks, however small the organisation. In light of this, Ram Herkanaidu (Education Manager, Global Educational Programs Development, Kaspersky Lab) led participants through the basics of what should go into a technology security policy (below).

HR and Security principles from Ram Herkanaidu of Kaspersky Lab

Basic security rules for employees - awareness of security risks:

- Education
- Proper mindset
- Carefulness, responsibility

Basic security rules for employees - attention and prevention:

- Regular updates of operating system
- Regular updates of all software used
- Complex security solution
- Including anti-spam, firewall

Basic security rules for employers and system administrators:

- Educating employees on current security threats
- Forcing employees to use secure passwords
- Forcing regular password changes
- Using secure protocols for communication
- Restricting employees' permissions as much as it is possible
- Securing network infrastructure
- Performing regular updates of all server software
- Performing regular updates of software installed on all workstations
- Using complex security solution (including firewall and anti-spam)
- Conducting regular penetration tests of the whole infrastructure

He emphasised that when thinking about how to make an organisation secure, the most important thing is to educate people within the organisation on how to be secure. He argued against training for specifics because the challenge is always different. In order to be secure with HR *'you cannot just have the system, you need to have buy-in from the humans – your staff'*.

Interviewer: How should HR professionals prepare for the security threats that will emerge over the next five years?

Ram Herkanaidu: *'The most important thing is not to rely on IT to create technology solutions to the security threats – you need to create human solutions. This is about raising awareness amongst your staff. It is an ongoing process rather than a once only event. You have to raise security awareness amongst the staff, not just introduce technology. The key is how to change the mentality that staff*

have regarding security. This is about good teaching practice – you tell them, then you show them, then you get them to do it themselves. If they see for themselves how weak their passwords are they will realise that they need better security. All of this helps set a culture of security within the organization.'

Linked to this, Henrietta Abraham (Technology Lawyer, Reach-Legal) explored in more depth the legal implication of data protection on company practice. She noted that, in the UK, if employee monitoring is going to take place then there has to be a specific justifiable purpose behind it. This also took discussion back to the data protection and data privacy implications of the cloud. Specifically, participants were reminded that it is important for HR teams to understand data protection regulations for each country in which their organisation has employees, because all rules are different and locally defined.

Key question: How are you building the security culture amongst the staff of your organisation?

3.6 Policy

In his presentation, Jon France (Global IT Director, GSM Association) made the case that effective HR is dependent upon good security systems combined with appropriate policies: one without the other will not work. In considering the future trajectory of technology and connectivity, Jon France noted that HR policies and practices will have to adapt in order to survive and thrive. In particular, he argued that HR departments would have to be reconciled to the fact that 'user owned devices' will be brought into the workplace – however hard it is resisted. Similarly, Richard Dick (CEO and Principal Consultant, Development Consulting Centre) gave an inspirational and challenging call for organisations to bring their HR policies up to date so that they fully serve the purpose that they are intended for. This was taken one stage further by Maryam Bayi, who argued that HR policy documentation must be more strategically aligned with wider organisational development priorities so that there are '*structures in place that will drive the mission*'.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on effective policy development in this new environment?

Ram Herkanaidu: *'30 years ago it was simple: you did not use personal devices at work. But now everything has changed and people are coming into work with all different devices. From an HR point of view you cannot put your head in the sand and refuse to deal with it. The same old policies will not work – you cannot ban these devices from your organisations so we need to find a way to manage it well. You need to start with a policy first – and then talk about the technology solutions afterwards.'*

Kevin Poulter engaged with the HR policy implications of social media. He raised potential scenarios such as: what do you do if one of your employees does something on social media that you consider to be inappropriate and against company policy? It might have happened outside of work at the weekend but it could still affect clients or other employees – but do you as an HR department have any control over it? He urged HR professionals to consider this kind of thing in the process of introducing company policies on social media and other new technologies. Kevin Poulter also highlighted the fact that UK law is still ambiguous regarding how to deal with social media as employers:

- What constitutes fair or unfair dismissal around social media?

- So how does a HR team make these things relate to a standard misconduct policy?
- What are the implications for online bullying? What are your company harassment policies?
- What about confidentiality - what happens when employees post confidential information online?

Whilst this is uncharted territory for the UK courts, it was noted that the key criteria that are being used in determining the appropriate actions are:

- Status (within the organisation)
- Type of business (is an online social media presence a big part of it)
- Potential effect on business
- Potential readership

Interviewer: How would you advise HR professionals to deal with the ambiguity that technology is causing?

Kevin Poulter: *'The way to handle the ambiguity is to have your own guidelines in place but make sure you communicate to your employees what is expected of them. Acting reasonably and consistently is key. It is not sensible to over regulate – you can't hamper people's private lives and their freedom of expression. So only regulate in so far as what is happening will damage relationships in the business – only go as far as you have to go and no further.'*

Key question: Do you have adequate policies in place that reflect the current and changing demands of the organisation?

3.7 Performance

Technology is changing the culture of organisations and making different working patterns possible and potentially beneficial. This raises questions of how HR ensures that employees are still performing well. Richard Dick suggested that HR departments need to think beyond standardised bonuses and instead hold people accountable and reward them according to their performance: *'sometimes we are paying our employees an appearance fee, we manage by presence rather than by performance!'* Several presenters suggested that as long as overall productivity is high, it is less important when and where the work is being accomplished.

Interviewer: How can organisations respond and adapt to all the new tools and options available?

Richard Dick: *'All these tools that we are exploring with eHR are really about performance. The challenge for each organization is to figure out what is the right formula of technology, engagement, employee growth and face to face contact that will give the organization the ingredients that will enable growth. In this age, everything is available to everyone but not everyone needs it all. We all need different tools – that is what HR needs to figure out – how to navigate the right path of performance and people: what mix of appropriate tools will give us the right blend.'*

Key question: Can your organization adapt to changing working patterns? Do you value presence over productivity?

3.8 Business strategy

Technological change gives HR an opportunity to align itself with core business. Zain Khan (CMC, President and Managing Consultant, Alliances Consulting Group Inc.) argued that changing technologies, and in particular social media, is putting HR management into a different realm. He encouraged participants to think ahead of the curve regarding how HR will be shaped in the future, positioning it at the core of business strategy: *'Omitting HR from the overall strategy will be detrimental to effectively achieving company goals – HR practitioners need to be an integral part of the process.'*

Similarly Rasmus Aaen Madsen suggested that this is an opportune time for HR to begin speaking the language of business, and learn to make a business case around the HR proposition. Again, Brian Goulden (Director, Strategy and Capacity Building, Pygma Consulting) talked about the need for HR to undergo a fundamental shift: first and foremost HR is there for the business: *'In 60% of large organisations – HR is not represented in the boardroom by an HR professional. We have to ensure that in our organisations we are represented at the right level. If we align ourselves closely with the core business interest we can do this'*. Brian Goulden suggested that the best way to achieve this is through the proposition below:

Professional Skills + Aligned HR + Credibility = Influence (access to boardroom)

Interviewer: What is going to be the most significant change over the next five years?

Brian Goulden: *'The most significant change that is going to happen over the next five years will be that we don't know what the change will be! People working in HR will not be able to keep up with the pace of technological change, whatever it may be. HR does not have much influence in the how things are actually done. But what we want to do is move from transactional HR to HR that is focused on development and attracting and retaining talent. The costs of transactional HR can be reduced with ICT but the key issue is transitioning HR into a place where ICT is used to increase talent management and development – and so HR can become real business influencers.'*

Key question: Is your HR strategy aligned and integrated with the core business interests of your organisation?

4. Concluding conversations

In the final session of the conference, participants discussed seven key questions in break-out groups. Their responses to these questions encapsulate the overall trends and perspectives of the three day conference, picking up major themes that the speakers had explored.

Is social media a fad or the biggest change since the industrial revolution? Participants agreed that social media constitutes a huge change, perhaps the biggest since the industrial revolution. However, it was noted that social media will continue to change and adapt, and in five years may not be recognisable from today. There was unanimous agreement that HR needs to find new ways of working that utilises and incorporates social media into working patterns, because of the ubiquity of social media amongst the next generation of the workforce.

How can we build a talented organization rather than simply an organization of talented individuals? Conversation focused around the need to view individuals as the key ingredient in

ensuring the success of the organisation. Participants emphasised the need for effective retention policies alongside effective leadership and also discussed the need for the right culture around recognising talent across the organisation.

Do we really need to reorient our work programmes around the ‘millennial’ generation? A company should not automatically change its core business because of the changing preferences of its employees. But the working habits of this generation do represent a significant issue and harnessing their working potential effectively will require changing company culture to accommodate this – adapting to bring out the best in them. It was agreed that this adaptation process can be undertaken without sacrificing the core values of the organisation. This is a constant HR process, something that happens step by step rather than occurring all at once.

How do we develop a personalised approach to engaging with and dealing with employees? The discussion concentrated on the need for HR departments to adopt holistic approaches to dealing with employees, recognising the need for Know Your Employees (KYE) approaches and the need to consider employee coaching and mentoring. Participants noted the importance of engaging with the whole of life, accounting for employee’s families and commitments outside of work. It was agreed that the process of listening to employee concerns and understanding what motivates them is a power means by which to develop corporate structures, incentives and career progression paths that meet their aspirations.

What will have happened to HR and the cloud in 5 years’ time? Are the security implications too risky? Participants emphasised the complexity of this issue and the multiple issues involved. Overall, the concerns around security were considered to be significant – with the primary concern over clarification regarding ownership of data. However, there was general consensus that in five years cloud computing would be considered a mature, stable technology and most HR systems would be largely operating based in the cloud. Specifically, it was argued that smaller companies would be able to make the transition to the cloud more quickly than larger companies, as larger companies often have more complicated ingrained structures and may be more likely to resist change.

How do we get buy-in from staff when introducing new technology solutions and pushing a change in security culture? Conversation focused on the importance of continuous communication with staff, alongside appropriate training opportunities that are presented in an appealing, accessible form. It was recognised that helping staff adapt to the shifting security culture constitutes a major change management exercise and should not be underestimated.

Does social media constitute a viable recruitment tool in our contexts? Participants agreed that this question was very dependent on the different HR contexts in which people are operating. In some contexts it is premature, whilst in others it is already an effective tool. Even in those contexts where it would not yet work, the lessons can be stored for the future as in a few years it is likely to constitute a viable tool much more broadly. It was also noted that effective use of social media also leads to challenges in recruiting: how to select from a larger pool of applicants, how to actively engage the target audience, and how to augment social media approaches with other job matching software.

5. Key learning and recommendations

The report closes with four reflections that cut across the themes of the conference and add to the concluding conversations above.

ICT and HR approaches are context specific. Participants at the conference are working in HR in a wide range of different settings, demands and limitations. It should not be assumed that what solves an HR challenge in one context will do the same in a different situation – adaptability and flexibility are key. Some of the solutions and approaches suggested during the conference are dependent upon reliable broadband connections and their context-specific suitability should be assessed in light of this. However, even solutions that are currently out of reach are useful to learn about in order to plan for the future of HR.

Technology can challenge work life balance and HR teams should protect this. The final discussion of the conference moved away from technology and focused on the effect that the changes are having on personal lives. It was noted that although technology has moved employees away from conventional working patterns, it is part of the HR role to recognise and protect the importance of personal life, families and communities. It was noted that having access to lots of information and always being connected does not always mean that employees are becoming more productive. Within this, Mridula Rakha encouraged participants to focus on people as the centre of HR – not allowing technology to mean that the human touch is lost from eHR.

Relationships should be clearly defined between the HR team and the IT team within the organisation. Throughout the conference, participants noted the uncomfortable relationship that sometimes exists between HR and IT. It should not be assumed that HR practitioners will understand technological issues in depth. Whilst technology can help HR, the staff will require helping along the way. Whilst HR should contribute to technological change within the organisation, this is ultimately the responsibility of the IT managers. Similarly, with the different available tools to enhance HR, there is need for collaboration between HR and IT – as what the IT team identify as constituting appropriate technology may be very different from the HR team.

HR could learn from the OER movement in developing open content for training. There are many high quality open access training materials available. One potential option is that the CTO could work to develop open access training materials that would enhance organisations and enable HR teams to operate more effectively (see table below).

The potential for CT to consider developing open learning and training content

Reasons for CTO to consider developing open training content:

- Drawing on good practices of PDT membership
- Enabling high quality low-cost training materials to be widely available for HR capacity development
- Freely accessible through the CTO portal

Questions and challenges that would be faced:

- Would it undermine the business models of CTO suppliers? (although they could benefit from shared pool of resources)
- How would the costs of creation be covered? (would require external funding)
- How would usage be guaranteed?
- What would the testing and certification process be?

- Would this involve an online platform?

Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant responses on the conference

Kelepha Samba, Director of Human Resources and Administration, Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, Gambia:

First of all, this conference is a great opportunity to network. It gives opportunity for you to meet people from the same field of work – exchange ideas, challenges and success stories. The reality is that some countries are more advanced than others and have faced challenges in HR that others have not faced yet – so we can learn from them, and vice versa. In this theme or HR4ICT we all know that technology is moving very fast and we recognize that we have to change the way we work as a result: the approaches to recruitment, the implications how we engage with social media, the challenges of data protection and security. We have to be very aware of all that we are doing – so that HR becomes more strategic, effective and efficient. One thing that jumps out from this conference is the lesson we have learnt on new recruitment methods. Our standard tool of advertising through the newspapers has now expired – we can use Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, all these new social media. This is something organisations will no doubt embrace as part of their strategies on attracting and retaining the best talent. HR4ICT is a brilliant forum.

Ndubueze Okeke – Human Resources Manager, Nigerian Communications Commission:

The conference has given us the opportunity to discuss the contemporary HR issues that are relevant for us. I have been able to explore issues and gather information on topics I didn't know about before. An example of this is cloud computing: it is entirely new to me, I'm not sure my organization has been aware of it, there is certainly no evidence that we are working to embrace it. As I have got to know more about cloud computing during the conference I have realized that this is good and something that we can make use of in our organization. We have an IT department of 15-20 people but what they do is something that could be done at a lower cost and more efficiently if we move to the cloud. The new knowledge about the cloud also gives us opportunity to be the pace setters: other government agencies are not thinking about it in our country. It is a different context but we will look at the feedback and see how we can review it to fit our own needs. Alongside this, the conference has given me insight into things I didn't previously take seriously such as the laws about privacy policies. I have now started thinking and working out how I can use these laws to improve our HR. It is most likely that the people do not know that there are laws there that are meant to protect them. In turn, this will make us more careful as an employer and will help us to improve on our own processes that we are using back home.

Halima Letamo – Head of Capability Development, Botswana Telecommunications Corporation:

I come to this conference because it is a context in which we can exchange ideas and engage in dialogue – it is a rare opportunity to discuss and learn alongside our peers. The reason that I keep coming back is because of the continuity of the conference – it attracts similar people each year and

so there is continuity. All of us here are engaging with similar issues and challenges. The lesson I have learnt is that we have still got a long way to go in fulfilling our mandates – in every session you realize that there is still a lot more to learn!

Mridula Rakha, Manager of Training, Quality and HR – Information and Communication Technologies Authority, Mauritius:

I come to this conference because I get the opportunity to meet and interact with people. It is a unique platform we have for discussing real life issues, rather than just the theory. We go home with so much more – so we come back every year and each year we can see how much we have evolved and progressed. So it is good that this conference happens regularly. This year we have focused on our challenges, the eHR focus has come at the right time.

Appendix 2: Resources

Throughout the conference speakers referenced a wide range of different resources, videos, books, websites that may be of interest for participants. This list is not exhaustive, and inclusion in this list of resources does not equate to an endorsement from the CTO.

Useful websites - recruiting, networking, resource management, outsourcing:

www.bravenewtalent.com

www.foursquare.com

www.txteagle.com

www.iresource.com

www.glassdoor.com

www.rackspace.com

www.topcoder.com

Useful websites - content, resources and training:

oerwiki.iiep.unesco.org (UNESCO educational wiki)

opentraining.unesco-ci.org (UNESCO Open Training Platform)

wikieducator.org/OER_AFRICA (The OER Africa project)

gc21.giz.de (GIZ Global Campus 21)

www.ecb-check.org (Open ECB-Check Initiative)

www.cipd.co.uk (The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development)

www.opencontent.org

Books and articles referenced through the conference:

Accenture, 2011. Cloud and the Future of Business: From Costs to Innovation www.accenture.com/us-en/Pages/insight-cloud-future-business-costs-innovation-summary.aspx

Davies, J. and Kourdi, J. 2010. The Truth About Talent: A Guide to Building a Dynamic Workforce, Realizing Potential and Helping Leaders Succeed.

Lakhani, K., Garvin, D. and Lonstein, E. 2010. TopCoder (A): Developing Software through Crowdsourcing hbr.org/product/topcoder-a-developing-software-through-crowdsourci/an/610032-PDF-ENG

McKinsey, 2008. Making talent a strategic priority, McKinsey Quarterly www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Making_talent_a_strategic_priority_2092

Michaels, E., Handfield-Jones, H. and Axelrod, B. 2001. The War for Talent.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012. Annual CEO Survey: Delivering Results – Growth and Value in a Volatile World www.pwc.com/gx/en/ceo-survey/download.jhtml

Ulrich, D. 1996. Human Resource Champions: The Next Agenda for Adding Value and Delivering Results.

Example use of social media:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtFsmVI2RwM

smarterplanet.tumblr.com (IBM and their use of Tumblr)

www.pepsico.co.uk (An integrated social media strategy – one of the first companies in the world to use a smartphone app for recruitment)

Appendix 3: Organisations represented

[To be completed by CTO]