Face of HR

Jasmin Pillay

Director, HR Consulting - Microsoft

Why HR?

For as long as I can remember, and my first vivid memory of this feeling was when I was 6 years old, I have always wanted to help and create positive environments – and not just in the workplace. Human Resources has become my vehicle to do this in different ways. Actually, I had not planned on being in the HR field. At the time I was going in the direction of public relations and media, which is where I envisioned myself being. I still love for that industry and the part it can play in bringing about change. That made a great transition to human resources, which is an important part of supporting employee growth and development as well as the success of a business. So, I chose to go further with human resources because it gives me the opportunity to work with people from different cultures and backgrounds and drive change that matters.

Describe your job in 4 lines

As an HR Consulting leader for a large and complex region, I am accountable for delivering impact in several areas that support the organisation and its employees. This includes consulting on complex and sensitive situations, designing and implementing solutions that enhance employee experiences and development, leading transformative initiatives that drive improvement and innovation in HR. Using data to inform and measure interventions, collaborating with other HR partners, and overseeing program delivery and service quality.

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interview

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What has been your biggest achievement in your career?
I'm so thankful for all the opportunities I had and still have to make a difference for the better. But I don't think of a single role or outcome as my biggest accomplishment. Instead, I see it as a lifelong attitude and a promise to help others grow and succeed in their goals. I'm committed to giving what I can to support dreams and goals, whether it's through professional mentoring or personal support. To be a good person and a catalyst for others is what matters to me.

What changes are you looking forward to seeing in the HR industry?*
The evolution of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) encompassing people of different abilities, as well as other aspects of identity and background is something I'm looking forward to seeing. DEI has been a long-standing goal for many organisations, and we need to go beyond representation and compliance. DEI needs to be embedded in the core values, strategies, and actions of HR, and aligned with the needs and expectations of the employees and the stakeholders. There are many research studies available (there is no shortage of data on this) that show that diverse and inclusive teams are more creative, productive, and profitable, but only if they are also empowered, valued, and respected.
Human Resources has a key role in fostering a culture of belonging, respect, and fairness in the workplace, as well as ensuring that policies and practices are accessible, accommodating, and supportive for all employees, regardless of their physical, mental, or sensory abilities. Also, Human resources can also champion the representation and advancement of marginalised groups, including persons with disabilities, in leadership positions, and advocate for social justice and human rights in the broader society. Another change that I am looking forward to seeing is the adoption of more data-driven and evidence-based practices, powered by artificial intelligence (AI).

By giving insights, predictions, and recommendations from large , complicated data sets, AI can help HR professionals make better decisions, improve processes, and show the value and impact of their work. By adapting to each person's needs, preferences, and goals, AI can also make employee experiences like learning and development, rewards and recognition, wellness and engagement more personalised and unique. With AI, HR can be more strategic, aggressive, and open to new ideas. By leveraging AI, HR can become more strategic, proactive, and innovative.

What improvement do you think the HR industry can make to further evolve?
The HR field is continuously evolving and taking on new challenges and opportunities. In my view, areas where we can further evolve include developing human leaders who can adapt to changing work environments and employee needs; improving organisational design and change management skills to cope with AND thrive in disruption and uncertainty; of course continuing to leverage technology and automation to streamline and optimise HR processes and keeping the focus on creating a culture of continuous improvement and feedback to foster employee engagement and performance.

What has been the HR Tech product/platform that has made your life & work better?

Technology can be a powerful tool to help us achieve our goals and to help us curate our time as we need for work and life, but for it to be effective, we have to use it wisely and intentionally. I am rethinking how I work and how technology can support me in driving impact by aiding with tasks more effectively and efficiently. I also want to have more time and energy for my personal life and hobbies. This is why I have been intentional to learn and use Microsoft Copilot which has helped me in so many different and wonderful ways. For example, I use Copilot to - give me a quick overview and the main people involved in a new project or topic that I need to learn about, summarise the main points and objectives of a session that I have to present, tell me the important information and action items from a meeting or an update that I have missed, create engaging content for an employee or manager engagement session, change a document into a different format that works for me - such as turning an FAQ document into a presentation, and assisting me with analysing data and trends. Copilot has enabled me to save time, improve quality, increase productivity in my work and make more time for the things that matter outside work. All up, you have to be willing to learn new skills and adapt to new ways of working. Technology can be a great ally, but you have to be the one in charge.

If you could make a process seamless in HR, what would that process be, and how would you want the solution to look like?

Human Resources organisational structures can vary based on the size of the organization, industry, and internal or external sourcing of HR responsibilities. The functional organisational structure is the most prevalent type, where HR functions are organised into specialised areas, such as performance and development, compensation and benefits, compliance and employee relations and so on. Each area has its own team of experts who focus on delivering specific HR services and programmes. This structure allows for efficiency, expertise, and standardisation of HR processes and policies across the organisation. The matrix organisational structure is more complex, where HR professionals have dual reporting lines to both functional managers (e.g., learning and development manager) and project managers (e.g., project lead).

This structure enables HR to support cross-functional teams and initiatives, as well as to adapt to changing business needs and priorities. However, this structure can also create role ambiguity, conflicting expectations, and communication challenges for HR professionals. The hierarchical structure is traditional type, where HR roles are clearly defined within a hierarchy, such as CHRO or VP of HR, HR director, HR manager, and HR specialist etc. The senior HR leader usually reports to the CEO, CFO, or COO, and has the authority and responsibility for overseeing the overall HR strategy and operations. This structure provides clarity, consistency, and management of HR activities and outcomes, but it can also limit flexibility, innovation, and collaboration within and across HR functions. In my view, regardless of the type of HR organisational structure, what is essential is that HR functions work together seamlessly to support the desired employee experience and drive business outcomes. This means that HR should not operate in silos, but rather as a cohesive and integrated unit that delivers a consistent and holistic HR service to the employees and the organisation. Employees should not feel the complexity of the HR structure, but rather have a seamless and positive experience that meets their needs and expectations. This requires HR to adopt a customer-centric mindset, to collaborate and communicate effectively, and to leverage technology and data to enhance and streamline the HR processes and systems.

A feat you're super proud of?

Looking back on the opportunities that I have had to touch a person's life in a way that is powerful and meaningful to them...contributing to a person's development, whether it be in the workplace or a life skill, these are the moments that I reflect on, in silence, by myself...for me there is no better moment of pride and a healthy dose of humility 😊

Empowering the People who Empower the Planet

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