

# WEBINAR

# "YOUR FUTURE IN THE HR PROFESSION"

## BY CIPD NORTH SCOTLAND AND ISLANDS BRANCH

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the 21st Century, we have faced the advent and development of New Information and Communication Technologies (NICT), the growth of ecological concerns and for almost two years a Worldwide pandemic. As a business, to survive in this context, we need to reinvent ourselves, adapt and innovate. The Covid-19 issue has generated numerous major changes including the Human Resources (HR) function that seems to be at the heart of the companies' strategy.

### What is the future of the HR function?

To answer the question, we had the pleasure to listen to Sarah Beaumont, a respected figure in HR, who has been in the profession for 20 years.

## CONTEXT & SPEAKER

The conference was held online on the 30th of November 6pm (GMT) on the platform Eventbrite. It was organized by the CIPD North of Scotland and Islands Branch, an association for human resource management professionals.



Originally from Highlands and travel enthusiast, Sarah Beaumont lives and works between Hampshire and Mallorca.

She started her career in 2000 in Learning and Development, graduated MSc in 2012 and worked for GE Oil & Gas, where she set up and led a conversion program with transferable skills. In 2014, she evolved to Senior HR Manager.

Her adventure with Hunter Adams began in 2017 when she assisted them with HR support. On another side, she designed and implemented a new continuous approach in Global Performance Management initiative in Palma, Mallorca. She finally joined Hunter Adams in 2019 as Head of HR and will be promoted in 2021 as HR Director.

Sarah Beaumont is specialized in Talent Development and Leadership Capacity. She works with multiple industries and sectors, in the UK and abroad, on large-scale change projects, and she produces and designs many HR initiatives to innovate in that field. She is the strong leader of 70 consultants and associate consultants. Her role is to build a positive team environment to deliver excellent people strategy to clients.



Hunter Adams is an employee-owned HR consultancy and recruitment business specialized in all HR fields, created in 2011 by Dean Hunter. They cover a wide range of sectors (Oil & Gas, retail, pharmaceutical, textile, finance) and for all type of companies, even SMEs and charities, in the UK and internationally. They define as experts in HR with the main objective to support clients 'needs by increasing employee engagement and focusing on business growth. They give solutions in supporting their people's challenges. Dean Hunter wanted to "provide the marketplace with Commercial HR".

# LET'S TAKE A LOOK BACK ON 2020

On the 3rd January 2020, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) predicted the top 5 Human Resources Trends for 2020.

## WELL-BEING & BEING WELL

Well-being, defined as health or happiness, applies not only to the family, but also to the workplace. Recently, well-being has become increasingly important in the workplace, and more and more employers are aware of its impact. It is essential that employees feel supported and reach their full potential. Creating a good work and life balance is very important for employees' work effectiveness. HR wants employees to Be Well Together which can be defined as " a collective feeling of leading a 'good life' ", shared and created by people and organizations.

Say goodbye to emails and paperwork! Technology is at the service of Human Resources. HR use technology to improve the employee experience, recruitment and storage of all employee information. So keep an eye for the new technology trends occurring in 2022 that could help improve business' HR practices.

## TECHNOLOGY IS THE FUTURE

## EMPLOYEES' VOICE MATTER!

The employee is a key enabler who drives the business forward with its knowledge, experience and commitment. An employee who expresses creative ideas to improve the business is an employee who should be encouraged in his work. "Adopt participative management because it is good for all employees and managers!" (Mark Smith, Director of the Grenoble Ecole de Management Graduate School).

The performance system allows employees, during a meeting with their line manager, to take stock of their knowledge and know-how and to find out where they can improve. This meeting is a constructive exchange that allows employees to understand that certain elements of their work system can be improved. Employees can also take advantage of this opportunity to share their concerns about well-being.

## CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

## BRING YOUR HR DATA TO LIFE!

Data analysis helps to attract and retain the best talent. For example, analyzing employee engagement and satisfaction allows the HR department to improve the working environment in order to respect employee well-being. The things that are talked about in performance reviews can be correlated and used to help focus on employees. For this reason, data analysis is one of the most important trends of this new decade.

Then Covid came along, in March 2020 employees were all told to stay at home as much as possible. For most of them this meant taking their laptops and turning off the office lights. They thought it would only last a few weeks. Sarah Beaumont, remembered sending an email during this period, entitled: "Coronavirus, should we be worried?"

# COVID-19: EXCEPTIONAL HR OPPORTUNITIES

The Crisis of Covid-19, was a real opportunity for the HR department to partner with business leaders and to really make those commercial decisions at a time.

## HR HIGH RESPONSIVENESS

The HR department has been quick to create stakeholder engagement plans which have strengthened the relationship and developed the stakeholder-HR relationship. The HR accompanied middle-managers to create a collective dynamic in distance. The overall morale of the team has decreased due to the confinement.

For isolated employees, especially in small flats, the confinement was burdensome and the lack of social links was more or less difficult to live with.

Fortunately, the creativity of HR in collaboration with the top management helped to strengthen the bonds of trust and solidarity within the company. In the United Kingdom, an HR team organized meetings for managers during the lockdown period so that they could discuss, share their difficulties and help each other on how to manage telecommuting teams.

Some employees decided to return to their home countries to work through Covid, which led to many challenges in terms of social security contributions, corporate taxes and labour legislation. These challenges provided an opportunity to strengthen internal HR policies.

## CREATION OF A COLLECTIVE DYNAMIC IN DISTANCE

## AGILE DECISION-MAKING

Throughout Covid, HR Managers worked on agile decision-making. For example, there was no precedent for furlough. Most of the time, a furlough was dropped on Friday evening at 5pm. During this period, they positioned themselves as adaptive and creative leaders.

The Journalist Martin Leewis had written an article on the employment law updates that Judge Rider had put in place during the lockdown on employment law and furlough updates. Some of the information were incorrect, which resulted for HR in having an opportunity to communicate to employees the actual legislation that had been put in place to reassure them.

Human Resources Business Partners also acted as a life coach by giving practical advice to employees on how best to adapt their daily life to this exceptional situation. The best advice for parents was probably managing telecommuting with their children.

## INCREASE OF HR RESPONSABILITIES

## REINFORCEMENT OF AUTONOMY

Human Resources had both to implement remote working and to ensure the safety of the employees on site. They had to make sure that everyone has the ability and tools to remote work and that leaders can manage their employees without seeing them, by building a trustworthy relationship and communicate differently.

With constantly changing role rules on lockdown. Human resources had a huge amount of information to process, especially from the government. New ethical challenges emerged, such as mandatory vaccination in some sectors. HR had to ensure an inclusive discourse so that both vaccinated and unvaccinated people felt heard.

## NEW ETHICAL QUESTIONS

If you look back, you will see that there have been huge opportunities for day-to-day development that have helped HR to move forward and evolve with the world. Today, many companies offer teleworking, but how 2022 will be like for HR? Only time will tell us!

# OUTLOOK FOR 2022 & BEYOND

## "Resetting Normal. Defining the New Era of Work 2021" - The Adecco Group

"Resetting Normal" is a survey conducted in 2020 by the Adecco Group. It gathers the answer of 14,800 offices-based employees, managers and C-suite executives across 25 countries.

The objective was to give a clear insight of working practices, behaviors and attitudes towards work.

Particularly, the survey focused on how the pandemic has reshaped attitudes of leaders and companies.

From this survey, emerged the 5 biggest shifts that employers and organizations need to continue to evolve and adapt in the new era of work.

1

### The future is flexible

Both companies and employees ask for "hybrid working" in the long-term: the 51% office and 49% remote model seems to be optimal.

2

### End of the 9 to 5 working time and a more effective measure of productivity

About 69% of employees would like their contract to be based on results rather than hours worked.

3

### Leadership needs reinvention

Leaders should develop new standards such as "Emotional Intelligence" to focus on empathy and supportive management.

4

### Universal appetite for mass upskilling

The (compelled) digitalization reinforces the reskilling imperative.

5

### A new trust equation

Employers have gained trust. Now, workers expect them to "reset normal".

Arguably, the Covid-19 pandemic changed the world of work more radically than any other single event in our working lifetime. If there's one thing that seems to have been overwhelmingly embraced during this health crisis, it's telecommuting and, the hybrid work mode. In the pre-pandemic period, the common sense dictated that remote working would lead to a loss of productivity and, by extension, that turning into flexible working does not work. In fact, it does.

Moreover, a lot of very traditional clients even asked companies like Hunter Adams, for some help to find a way to arrange their remote working policy and to find a solution that works for them, not just for employees but also for the business.

**"We want to work smarter and not harder"**

Similarly, a "New Week" demand has appeared during the pandemic. Indeed, employees and employers talk about a shorter and flexible time schedule, on the model of the 4-day working week, in addition to the hybrid working model. The question is, can it work for the business? Nobody knows. However, the fact is that "We [employees] want to work smarter and not harder [or longer]".

Working smarter, not harder means having a well defined strategy to prioritize the most important activities in order to make each day productive. This strategy will help in feeling satisfied rather than overwhelmed, frustrated and overloaded. About that, the Adecco survey shows that people prefer to be evaluated on results rather than hours worked.

The fact that burnout might be the next worker pandemic supports this demand. Indeed, working longer and harder, through the pandemic, has led to fatigue and burnout. Above all, the assessment is that managers were not able to quickly identify people who were struggling because of remote or excessive work and pressure. On that matter, HR professionals have to work with the leaders, especially on their soft-skills, to not just manage employees but also build a team culture. Indeed, in a disengaged team, there are many factors affecting the leader ability to build that culture and to manage effectively.

And last but not least, this crisis has created a “Great Re-Evaluation phenomenon”. It means that, companies will not observe a tsunami of turnover because of mass resignation but, in reality, people are re-evaluating how they want to work. For instance, when a company is dictating whether the employee have to work full time at the office or in full-remote, in other words dictating one extreme, it observes attrition or large number of resignations. Thus, HR professionals have the opportunity to work with leaders and sales representatives to really understand what the business needs to make a strategy and how they can support the employees to be able to meet that.

### *The key work of the future is “flexibility”.*

Finally, as we emerge from Covid, employees are seeking more flexible and remote working options which suppose more conversation about what want the employer and the employee. Even more, they expect a more inclusive hybrid working model, providing flexibility over when and where they work. However, it could be an opportunity to select the best talent by hiring beyond the location of the office. In addition, employees are looking for meaningful work and companies that act ethically and with integrity. Consequently, companies' policies need to reflect more than ever the change, not only to attract and retain top talent but also to support employees and meet the business strategy simultaneously.

## THE FUTURE OF HR SKILLS

### *Transitioning from operation to strategic business partner*

HR professionals are working in a partnership with businesses. They have to understand the strategy and the business objectives. They will be able to come up with solutions and achieve the business goals while ensuring ethics and integrity.

### *Supporting leaders*

There are two main objectives: ensuring that the right structures, technology, and resources are in place and developing the skills required to manage hybrid working teams. HR will have to work in partnership with leaders in order to help, coach, and upskill them. The purpose of these actions is to help leaders to develop skills to manage hybrid working teams.

### *Attract and retain talent*

HR professionals will have to implement defined career paths and development opportunities. As a lot of employees are looking for long-term career development, HR has the opportunity to help them.

### *Designing and supporting employee performance frameworks*

The objective is to understand people's expectations and ensure that they are meeting their needs, both for onsite and remote workers.

### *Efficient use of technology*

In order to run effective meetings regardless of the location of employees, HR will have to use technology such as Zoom and Google Meet. The majority of people prefer having challenging conversations on face to face rather than zoom calls. Nowadays, technology skills are indispensable to communicate with team members.

### *Open communication*

Communication is the key to the business's success. By communicating openly, HR specialists can understand employees' concerns. Honest feedback allows them to implement strategies to support employees

### *Ensuring fair and equitable treatment*

Nowadays, employees wish to work with integrity and ethics.

# 3 TAKEAWAYS FOR HR PROFESSIONALS

*The arrival of the Covid-19 was a real proof that changes can come at any time and in any form, therefore it is very important to be well prepared to face them. In a future perspective, it is important for HR professionals to keep the following 3 tips in mind.*

## 1 FOCUS ON NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS

When thinking about the responsibilities of an HR, the first things that might come to mind are technical tasks such as recruiting, on-boarding, compensation and benefit management, budgeting, etc. Knowing how to perform these tasks is obviously a big contribution to the success of a company. However, the focus is shifting more towards non-technical skills, which, if well assimilated, can make a real difference.

Being able to manage different stakeholders, influencing them, managing change, being an effective communicator and having commercial skills are some of the non-technical skills that will become the new normal for HR.

## 2 CRITICALLY ANALYZE "THEORY VS PRACTICE"

Diversity & Inclusion, Well-being, Employee Engagement are terms we hear more and more often in business environments. A company that presents itself with these characteristics will certainly improve its reputation. This is why there is a constant race to choose the most attractive values for a company.

However, the problem, is not in being able to identify itself with those, but rather in being able to put them into practice. In an increasingly competitive and demanding world, it is the task of HR to ensure that: managers tie to the values of the company, the mental health of everyone is protected, initiatives are put into practice and everyone sticks with them. Last but not least it is important to take a step back when needed and have a critical eye on what is feasible and what is not.

## 3 EMPLOYEES' VOICE IS IMPORTANT

Employees have a voice and they are not afraid to use it anymore. Tick box policies are no longer tolerated. Leaders need to role model the business values and HR need to support them to do that effectively. Therefore, they should make sure that a structure is in place, support in setting business and strategic goals and be able to manage stakeholders.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## How HR could develop more in terms of commercial awareness?

HR are sometimes quite distant from the senior business leaders. However, getting closer to them is a great opportunity to ask questions and start to understand topics such as finance interests or business strategy. What HR have to do is to identify leaders in the business and converse with them.

Our objective, as HR, is to help the business work on and link with HR topics like recruitment. HR professionals don't have to get away from HR topics to be able to get that commercial part. They just have to be interested enough, curious, to go and find out what they are doing.

## How do HR can choose between HR priorities and business strategy?

It's not about turning off the operational side of HR but doing small incremental steps. One solution can be to ask yourself those questions: "What are my business priorities? What am I looking to achieve?" and to find the answers.

HR professionals need to take into account the collective tasks but also the individual's one. They have to take the two opposite strategies and bring them together. That is what will make the difference between somebody who just does what need to be done (and does things day-to-day) and somebody who takes a step back, can look at that bigger picture and is able to explain it and to act.

## What about HR people's well-being?

The COVID-19 crisis was such an unusual crisis for companies, whether small or large, that the HR people's well being seems to have been ignored, while they were done and tired. Indeed, HR are great at supporting leaders and employees. But when it comes to them, they are not great at self-supporting

During the crisis, they continued to work and didn't recognize, from an HR point of view, that they needed to be supported. This is why companies, like Hunter Adams, have given to some clients the external resources necessary to give their internal HR teams time to regroup and look after themselves. In other words, Hunter Adams and others have become well-being ambassadors for their clients. Thus, employees knew they could bring some suggestions on people's well-being, on working practices, and that the company was making sure that real break were taken between assignments.

Finally, there is no magic wand, the most important, equally inside and outside the HR team is "communication".

## Are the trends and skills for the future more UK centric or global?

The trends and skills approached during the conference are observed globally. But, sometimes, for specific subjects it can depend on the country and on their policies. For instance, remote working or flexible working has been adopted globally during the pandemic. However, there is no guarantee that after the crisis all companies will continue this way of working, it mostly depends on the culture of the country and of the company.

## Is there anything HR professionals should emphasize more than before?

From now on, what seems to have a major importance, or at least what can make the difference, are the non-technical skills such as stakeholder management, influencing, building credibility and above all, change management and agile decision-making. But obviously, these are skills that can often only be built when we are in the middle of it.

# CONTACT & LINKS

## CONTACT INFORMATION



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**Hunter Adams**



<https://hunteradams.co.uk/>



**Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)**

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/learn/branches/north-scot-islands#gref>

## NEXT SESSIONS

**eventbrite**

<https://www.eventbrite.fr/>

"Being a HR professional in 2022; what do we want it to look like?"

by CIPD Shropshire Branch

Wed, 12 January 2022  
8:00 PM – 9:00 PM CET

Here the link to register on Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/being-a-hr-professional-in-2022-what-do-we-want-it-to-look-like-registration-209811500847?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

The Future of HR – Keeping you Future Fit

by CIPD Shropshire Branch

Wed, February 16, 2022  
8:00 PM – 9:00 PM CET

Here the link to register on Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-future-of-hr-keeping-you-future-fit-registration-224092626077?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>