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## 5 Key Skills in Managing Human Resources for Challenging Times

Happy New Year to all and looking forward to a wonderful 2017. The world in 2017 will become even more volatile with unstable economies in Europe, intense business competition, rapid technological advancements as well as an aging workforce. The Singapore economy is predicted to slow down, and as businesses consolidate and face increasing pressures, HR will need to continue to innovate, design and develop new strategies to help their companies and leaders manage in challenging times. Here are my thoughts about the **5 key HR areas** that we can focus for 2017.



**Organisation Development and Change Management** - Dynamic business environments will lead to constant change. HR professionals will need to understand how to revisit old structures that are hierarchical and help the organisation transit to more agile, lean and nimble multi-disciplinary teams. In order to transit to a new way of working, we will need to work with senior leaders to drive organisational change through culture alignment. In cultural alignment, we start with a culture analysis to assess the gap between the current and desired culture. Thereafter, HR leads the way by working with Senior Management to develop action steps that are needed to drive the new culture, mission and goals. Please read my paper at <http://jaclynlee.sg/article/ieee.pdf> to find out more about how to drive cultural alignment.



**Tech Savvy** - There is going to be continued importance for HR to innovate in the area of technology as companies continue to drive productivity and use analytics to improve employee performance. We will need to lead technology discussions rather than depending on IT. This means that you will need to be able to describe the organisation's talent strategy and see how technology can support the strategic implementation of key HR initiatives, programs and people analytics. This may require you to conduct product research and understand how each of the systems are able to meet your needs in strategic HR projects, specialist functions and business intelligence. Once you are clear with what you need, the role of IT is to help you with the technical aspects of implementation, security issues and integration.



**Business Partnership** - This is a widely used term, but so misunderstood. Partnership means having the ability to understand the unique challenges and needs of different business units and internal departments supporting and driving the organisation's goals. As businesses face challenging times, the ability to develop strategic HR Plans together with BU heads and deploying them with successful outcomes, is the key to the heart of good partnership. HR Business partners in essence, will need to operate like professional consultants that are hired to solve tactical and strategic people issues. Every person in the HR Division, in essence, is a business partner, serving internal clients.



**Design Thinking** to develop innovation and to create disruption will be needed as businesses face increasing competition. HR needs to learn tools in design thinking to look at ways to improve processes, and to introduce these tools to the workforce so that innovation, creativity and collaboration can occur in the workplace. In Action Design, we always start with identifying an organisational problem, provide intervention of the problem through design and re-design of the solution. This solution can be a computer software, new process flow or a product that a company wants to launch in the market. This is tested in small bite sizes with user groups and through the use of iterative prototyping continuously refined. Tim Brown in his HBR article reiterates that, "IDEO's designers engage with users sooner, or going to them with a very low resolution prototype to get early feedback. They kept repeating the process in short cycles, steadily improving the product until the user was delighted with it. When the product is finally launched, it is almost a guaranteed success." As HR learns to develop and incorporate such tools in their workplace, they will enable their organisations to have the competitive advantage



**Marketing and Social Media Capabilities** - With the advent of the digital economy, the ability to use new tools to recruit and retain talents will give an organisation its competitive advantage. In my article with Joe Escobedo, at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/joescobedo/2016/10/04/3-proven-digital-marketing-strategies-for-hr-in-asia/#49c0bfb16ba7>, we talked about how HR practitioners through clever digital marketing, can attract, engage and retain top talent. For resourcing of talents, you can use online platforms such as Facebook Ads and Google AdWords to attract talent. The reach can be in the thousands and will bring traffic to your corporate job portal and website. Adriano Corso at IBM smarter workforce, uses a digital marketing approach through automation tools such as email marketing. As for retention of talent, you can leverage on analytics to improve retention. Finally, **DIGITAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT** will be the next big arena confronting us today. As the mobile phone becomes a ubiquitous device, learning on the go will be a key tool that will equip our workforce with the skills for coping in challenging times. We will need to use innovative tools, apps and different learning platforms to engage with learners and help equip them with essential skills "on the go"

I hope this gives you fresh insight to begin a new year in 2017!