ANALYTICS AND DATA SCIENCE MELISSA CRAWFORD

Why IT and HR need to become 'best friends'

Melissa Crawford, Director at Tech with Heart, shares a vision for HR departments working with technology and provides practical tips on what HR needs to be considering now.

Remember that famous Gallup question "I have a best friend at work"? The future of HR depends on HR and IT building a closer relationship than they ever have before. They need each other.

They have strengths the other is weak in, if only they could get past their insecurities and fears about each other! I have a great love for both of these teams because I have worked in each and I see their magic. I think it's crucial for both sides to learn more from each other, because it could greatly improve the impacts and unintended consequences on humanity.

RAPID GROWTH NOT SLOWING

Let's take ChatGPT, for example. Many IT teams had already started playing with it at the end of 2022. At multiple conferences I spoke at across June and July 2023, I queried adoption by HR: most had still not ventured to create themselves a login and were going only on what they had heard from others.

ChatGPT had a million users in five days after its launch in November 2022 and now has over 100 million users. It logged 1.6 billion visits to the site in June 2023. The moral of the story: your people, future employees and competitors are definitely using it!

While IT is thinking about security and data protection and how to save themselves time by getting ChatGPT to write their first drafts of code, HR should be thinking about several things, including:

• what it means for a likely shift in required capabilities

• how HR will manage their first disciplinary incident stemming from an email sent that it eventuates was written by ChatGPT

• how HR could take an HR Assist Chat bot to a whole other level to free up valuable time.

The few HR people on board with ChatGPT were excited about its ability to write job descriptions and job adverts. But I believe we need to be thinking much deeper than that.

ARE OUR PEOPLE READY?

What are the human impacts of tools like ChatGPT? What is the behaviour it will change in the workplace? How could it radically shift our future workforce requirements? And how do we, as HR, get in front of it rather than watch it unfold and then play catchup? With Microsoft 365 Copilot launching in the upcoming months, this technology could be in the hands of all your Microsoft users to apply to their daily tasks in Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook. Are they ready for it? Are you ready for it?

This is a perfect opportunity to be talking to your new friends in IT and building a relationship to look at new tech from a tech and people perspective. Think about policies this could affect, future risks in the HR space and, strategically, how this could shift ways of working and future workforces.

In several companies I have worked at over the years, I have been the one sent as a 'sacrificial lamb' to sit in the tech project meetings. These meetings were seen as nerdy, boring, techy but important to be seen to be involved. Of course, I actually enjoyed them and delighted in shocking the odd unsuspecting IT professional who took me for a 'tree hugger' and was taken aback to see me throwing in the fix to a piece of code they were stuck on.
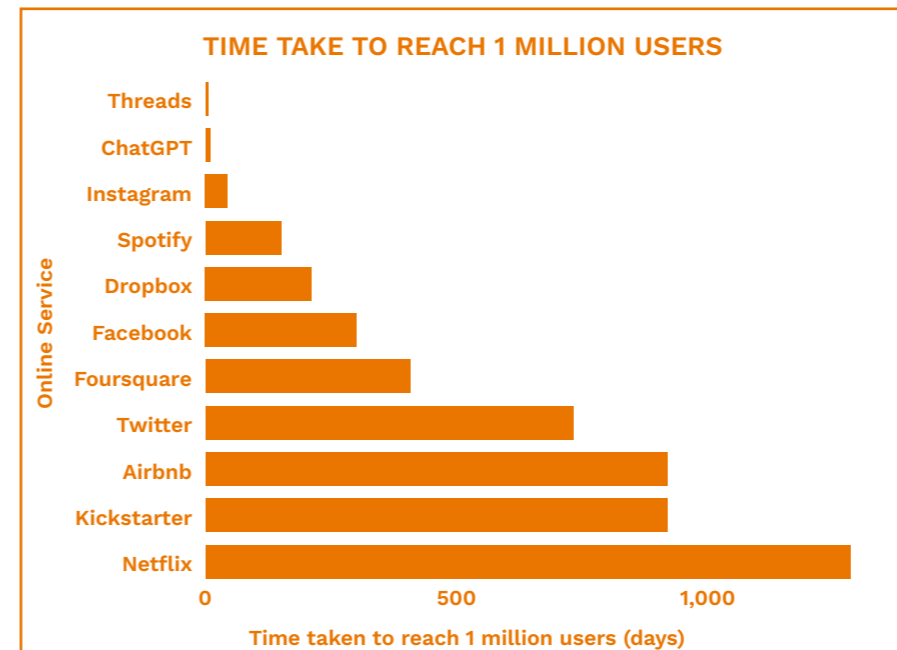
When I look back now, I realise that my colleagues missed the opportunity to upskill themselves on tech developments, ask questions at the initial stages of development and see first-hand how much value the people element could add to those discussions.

GET INVOLVED AND UNDERSTAND THE IMPLICATIONS

Just as you in HR may not think about whether that new system you are fighting for has a current 'Pentest,' IT will not be thinking about how that technology may change the entire shape of your capability framework and therefore your recruitment selection process and talent framework. Look for ways to get involved and help identify 'people' risks as well as standard security, financial and project timing risks.

For years I lamented as I watched customer service teams get the tech investment and modern systems. But over the past few years (ironically especially since COVID-19), HR has had a big refocus on technology with HR technology spend the highest priority two years in a row, according to Gartner.
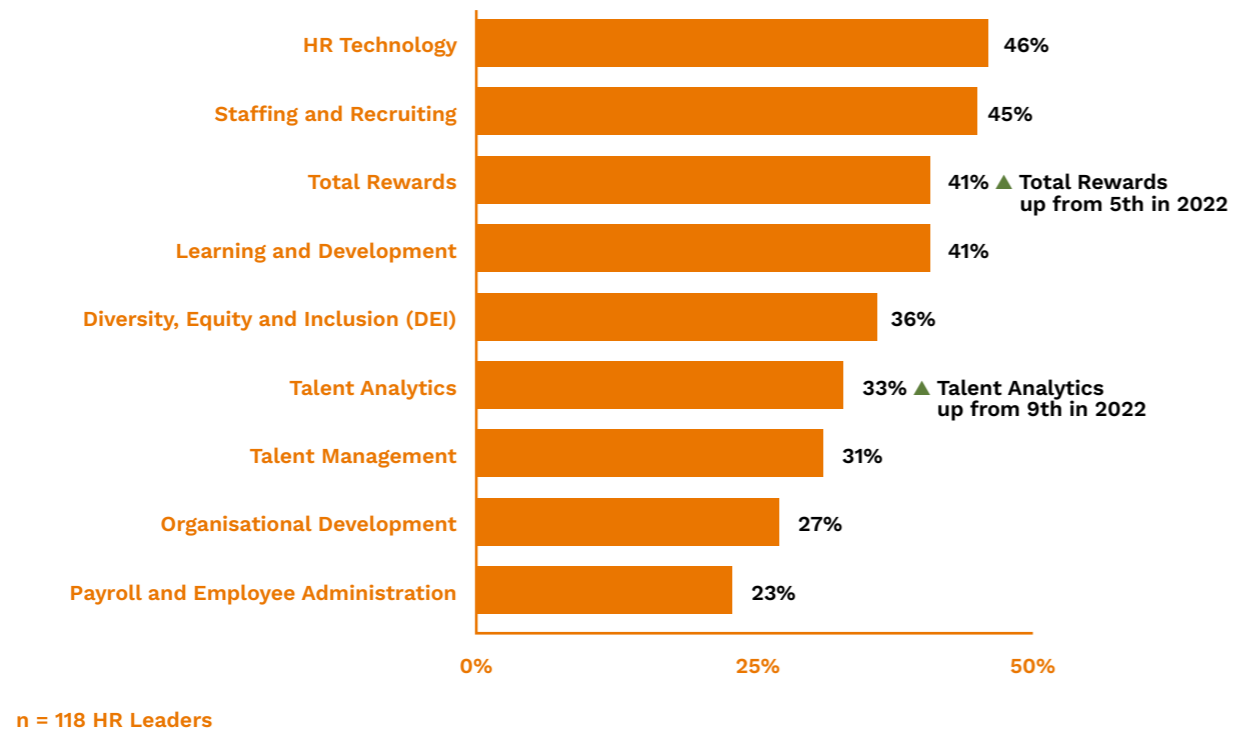
This is great news, but it is important that HR fully understands the implications of this. Artificial intelligence (AI) is creeping into most modern HR platforms now. When I talk to clients about what algorithms their application tracking system (ATS) is using to create the filters and pipelines for their talent, they often have no idea what they are, nor do they test and revise them regularly to check machine learning is going in the direction they are assuming. This is having all sorts of side effects.

TIME TAKE TO REACH 1 MILLION USERS

Horizontal bar chart titled "TIME TAKE TO REACH 1 MILLION USERS". Y-axis labelled "Online Service" with categories from top: Threads, ChatGPT, Instagram, Spotify, Dropbox, Facebook, Foursquare, Twitter, Airbnb, Kickstarter, Netflix. X-axis labelled "Time taken to reach 1 million users (days)" with gridlines at 0, 500, 1,000.

Source https://explodingtopics.com/blog/chatgpt-users

learning curiosity I am looking for HR to have.

Remember when COVID-19 struck and we had to re-evaluate how we helped leaders to upskill to lead remote teams? What is our vaccination policy? How do we onboard remotely? How do we keep our people engaged? How do we transfer all the learning into something they can do remotely?

One of my idols, Peter Diamandis, said, 'in the next decade we will see the same amount of change as in the last century.' If that does not prompt you to start getting more interested in what is coming, I don't know what will. I really want 'people people' to play a major role in upskilling, supporting and preparing people for this future.

Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality and metaverses are the biggest technological developments to keep your eye on for a start. The next generation coming into the workforce will have extensive knowledge on how these apply to their personal worlds and therefore expectations on what tools should be available to them in their workplace.

We know from demographic studies that fewer people are entering the workforce, we know that technology holds the key to creating an augmented workforce that uses the best of technology and the best of people. Wouldn't it make sense for us to build a closer friendship between the two departments that will shape the future of work? I think so.

Melissa Crawford is the Director of Tech with Heart and a highly regarded expert in the future of work. With a unique blend of skills that span both people and technology, Melissa has won several accolades and held senior HR strategy roles across some of New Zealand's largest organisations crossing diverse industries. With two technology degrees, Melissa brings a unique perspective and is well equipped to understand the impact of technology on the future of work. With her wealth of expertise and commitment to shaping a better future, Melissa is also a CMHRNZ, CMInstD and an independent director on the board for HRNZ. techwithheart.co.nz

One of these side effects includes candidates putting a copy of the job description into their CV in white-coloured text so it is detected by AI as a 'perfect candidate' and hence put through to the 'top candidates' list. This primary school-level magician 'invisible ink' trickery is not detected by the recruiter's eye. This may seem sneaky, but it raises an interesting point. I know of multiple examples of superb candidates not getting through an ATS's AI and when I have shown the recruiting manager the output of how their ATS rated and discarded that candidate, they are horrified. A fun exercise is to put yourself through for a vacancy for your own role: do you make the cut?

A VISION FOR HR WORKING WITH TECHNOLOGY

I often get asked 'Which company are you seeing as the most tech savvy in their internal HR in New Zealand?' Sadly, I am still looking. Sure,

many have just updated some of their systems and put something interesting in. But my vision would include an HR team that:

- has a full HR technology strategy that sets them up for success now and in the future

- has their fingers on the pulse of what is ahead and the changes they are going to need to make

- has a plan on how to take their people on this journey, understanding changing expectations, behaviours, needs, digital capability

- means the HR department is maximising the data and insights as a bigger picture view rather than transactional reports from each system that never appreciate the correlation between the data

- creates a strong relationship with HR and IT teams that upskills each other on people psychology and technology trends

- includes a people aspect that would help support that tech focus, with a strong HR culture that role models the best people practices, their people are thriving so much that the rest of the business is clambering for some of what they have.

These are my wishes for the future.

Often, HR teams are not keeping abreast of the latest technology in their field. When they join with IT to review systems, sadly IT is also not on top of what is leading in the HR world. IT is often more focused on how the technology sits in the company's tech stack and elements of their security and data integrity features. It is the blind leading the blind. Both are well intentioned but missing the opportunity to really move the people function forward.

Unless you already knew what it meant, how many of you went and Googled what I said a few paragraphs ago about a Pentest? That is the sort of