

## Room for improvement in HR's use of technology

Over the years, technology has enabled HR to progress beyond many of the mundane, transactional aspects that made up the "personnel" roles.

Without technology, HR professionals couldn't have become the strategic business partners they are today, with the ability to focus on the everyday while steering organizations into the future.

This technology-based transition continues to advance, particularly as HR information systems move away from cumbersome, legacy mainframes to more nimble software-as-a-service (SaaS), on-demand delivery models.

Given all this, it was somewhat surprising to learn the HR tools favoured by the panel at the recent Strategic Capability Network event were, for the most part, not leveraging new technology or social media. Instead, there were alternative takes on some of the more conventional HR tools that have been around for years.

This is not to suggest these tools are of no value but conceivably there are other tools we haven't come across that challenge HR practitioners to think outside the box.

The principal message derived from the panelists was simple: If organizations want to take advantage of the ever-changing world of HR-based technology options, they must have HR leadership that constantly challenges the way things are being done with an eye to maximizing productivity by successfully leveraging old and new technology.

For HR leaders who want to boost their effectiveness by adopting all of the recommendations made by the panelists, here is a how-to guide:

- Adopt hiring tools that fit the needs of the



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organization, such as the Hiring Smart tool described by Sharon Beasley of Eden Valley Farms in New Minas, N.S. In doing so, the whole recruitment process can be re-engineered to facilitate the hiring of individuals who better fit with the organization.

- Once you get the person in the door, put in place a methodology, such as Aviva's Talking Talent, that monitors and manages talent over time to keep the momentum going.

- Consider incorporating a tool such as the Strength Deployment Inventory at CIBC that allows each employee to become more self-aware and better understand others with whom they work and, ultimately, to develop more satisfying and productive working relationships and teams.

- Eliminate a cumbersome human resources information system (HRIS) and implement a new system — such as Workday, used at Foresters to manage HR transactions, or Cornerstone on Demand, used by the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan to help it get the best out of its workforce.

If HR truly wants to use technologically advanced tools, it should pay close attention to the prediction of this year's Focus 2040 competition winners of how the work experience might be transformed by technology. (For more information on the competition, go to [www.hrreporter.com](http://www.hrreporter.com), click on "Advanced Search" and enter article #13003.)

Their vision of the future direction of work was both provocative and remarkably believable.

"They envision a world where organizations will not be hiring employees, per se, but the best and brightest candidates will interview organizations to see which ones best fit their needs and desires. They would be free agents, moving to the projects that promise the most stimulating challenges and personal fulfillment," wrote Ian Hendry, Karen Gorsline and Ray Johnston in an article on Focus 2040 in the May 7 issue of *Canadian HR Reporter*.

The students presented a picture of what work nirvana would look like for many gen Ys, and challenged all of us to reconsider how we are preparing our organizations to adapt the thinking and tools needed to support this kind of future.

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