

Josh Bersin's Top 5 Digital HR Trends

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Employees are overwhelmed by the amount of digital tools available on offer according to HR thought leader Josh Bersin, who explained that many of us are struggling with the pace of change that new technologies such as AI, machine learning and automation are bringing to the workforce.

"I have been an analyst for almost 20 years and I've never seen technology accelerating at the rate it is right now," Bersin says.

Bersin, who gave the keynote address at [HR Innovation & Tech Fest](#), said that this change is having a profound effect on the workplace. "It's essentially changing the nature of jobs and the skills we need, and therefore affecting the way organisations have to manage and invest in their people."

Re-Wiring for the New World of Work

"This digital world of work, which we've really only been in for two and a half to three years, is not wired yet for productivity. We don't know how to organise our workplaces yet to facilitate a productive work experience with all these digital tools that will be on all the time," Bersin says.

Consider these statistics from [Deloitte Human Capital Trends](#):

- The average worker spends 25% of their day reading or answering emails
- More than 80% of companies rate their business as "highly complex" or "complex" for employees
- The average mobile phone user checks their device 150 times a day

While the push for productivity is increasing, we are seeing actual productivity rates plummeting. According to Bersin this is happening because organisations don't know how to re-engineer their work practices around the new technology. "We are working harder and harder for a technology that will always be ahead of us." And the knock-on effect of this productivity lag? Low employee engagement levels.

Bersin says that productivity and engagement are intrinsically linked. He cites a recent [Harvard study](#) that showed that the feeling of being productive in your work day was one of the biggest indicators of engagement. And that in turn is driving some big changes in the HR technology market.

Here are 5 key trends that Josh Bersin outlined during his keynote presentation at [HR Innovation & Tech Fest](#) 2018.

A New Breed of Performance Management

It's very clear that the performance management market has shifted from 'once a year' to continuous performance management. While the research shows that this model certainly works, the problem is we haven't had the technology to support this new model until the last 12-24 months.

"We now have incredible tools for performance management. Tools that are focused on agile goal setting and feedback, and are integrated with Outlook, Slack or other systems of productivity," says Bersin. But with most new PM tools being relatively young companies (3-5 years old) there is no obvious market leader. "People need to look at the tools in the market and look at the one that seems to be most useful and productive for your workforce." Bersin warns that many of these young companies may be acquired in the next few years, but that HR teams shouldn't wait – "Buy and try now and be OK with the possibility of replacing it in a few years' time" he says.

2. The Wellbeing Market Explodes

The corporate wellbeing market is now a \$47 billion market. Organisations globally have embraced the wellbeing movement, offering gym memberships, financial fitness assessments and in-house nutritionists. There are even Wellness apps that help track and monitor your wellbeing programs.

But Bersin says your wellbeing strategy has to be more than simply a fitness or health strategy. "Wellness is about ensuring your employees come to work ready and capable to work." He advises to create a set of wellbeing programs as part of your strategy to build high-performance employees. He believes the next phase of the wellbeing initiative is about productivity, with wellbeing moving from a focus on "reducing burnout" to a new focus on "human performance". Read more about Josh's thoughts on wellbeing [here](#).

3. Engagement, Pulse, Culture Platforms Grow

We've officially moved away from employee engagement 1.0 model of the once a year, top-down, annual engagement survey and performance review. Most companies have embraced Engagement 2.0 and have re-worked their processes to get continuous, real-time feedback.

Bersin says to think about it as an architectural problem. "You don't just want a tool that does one thing, you really need to look at a whole series of pulsing mechanisms to get feedback". As well as pulse surveys, there are anonymous feedback tools, email sensing, performance check-ins, and exit interviews to help get this continuous cycle of feedback.

Employee Engagement Market Evolves

Engagement 1.0	Engagement 2.0	Engagement 3.0
<i>The top-down annual engagement survey</i>	<i>Pulse surveys with intelligent sensing</i>	<i>Intelligent nudges, Focus on everyone</i>
Once per year. Focus on management. Benchmarked annually. Rigid questions asked year after year.	Agile surveys as needed. Pulse on regular basis. Feedback on mobile or apps. AI-based action plans. Immediate feedback.	Many sources of data. Recommendations driven by nudge and suggestion. Open to HRMS, ONA, and other behavioral data.
Focus on benchmarking.	Focus on feedback.	Focus on behavior change.
<i>Survey technology.</i>	<i>Web, mobile, analytics.</i>	<i>AI, nudges, real-time sensing.</i>

[Employee engagement 3.0](#) is the next wave of change, which will focus on behaviour change rather than feedback. Bersin refers to this latest phase as “the intelligent nudge” which will draw on emerging AI and machine learning capabilities being integrated into workplace technology. “In stage 3 we are going to leverage the power of AI to turn feedback and ONA data into prescribed organisational change, using nudges suggestions to make work better,” he says.

4. Exciting New Generation of Learning Platforms

Learning and career management software is the fastest growing segment in HR technology today, which may explain why Bersin says the average L&D department has a stunning 22 technologies on offer!

“It’s very clear to me we are in a complete renaissance in the learning industry” Bersin says.

In addition to the three main L&D trends Bersin outlines [in this article](#), there has also been a reinvention of career models. [Deloitte research](#) shows that one of the most pressing questions HR leaders are asking is “How do we build a more developmental, individualised career path?”

Deloitte Human Capital Trends 2017 found:

- 58% of companies are redesigning or planning to redesign their career model
- 83% of companies expect to have an “open” or “highly flexible” career model within the next 3-5 years.
- 31% of companies expect careers to be 3-5 years long and 60% expect them to be 10 years or less

The learning tech market has redefined itself and now offers a broad range of tools from learning experience and micro-learning platforms, to highly sophisticated virtual reality and digital adoption tools.

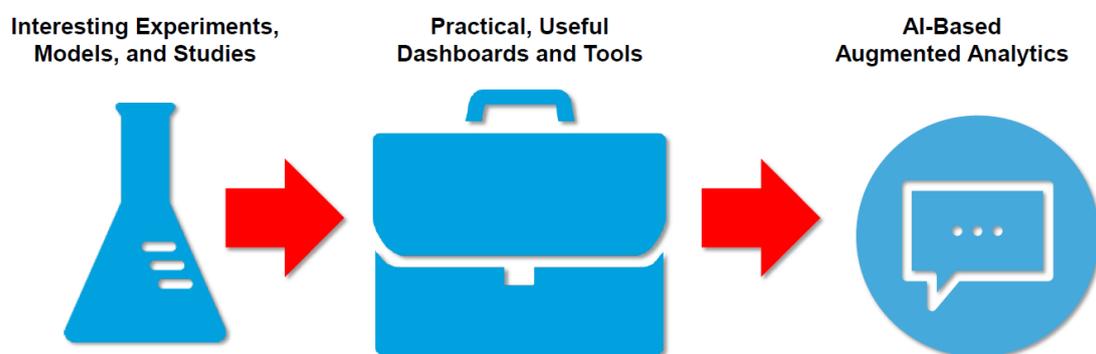
Rather than become overwhelmed by the number of technologies on offer, Bersin recommends to build an architecture with the learning tools that make most sense to you. “Your focus today should be on the learning experience, not just the technology and design

of one particular program. So much of this is self-directed and in the flow of work that employees will find the learning they need if you give them the right experience and culture,” he says.

5. People Analytics and AI

The area of [people analytics](#) is experiencing a fundamental shift in its function. Bersin predicts a big shift away from science projects and analytics to production use of data. The days of crunching data to study reasons for retention or diversity problems are a thing of the past according to Bersin. The analytics function has now matured to become a discipline of business problem solving using people related data.

2019: People Analytics Is Shifting



“CEOs and leadership now expect you to deliver actionable data” he says. In order to stay ahead of the game in people analytics, HR needs to be more ‘business consultant’ and less ‘data analyst’.

There are new areas of people analytics emerging such as relationship analytics or Organisational and Network Analysis (ONA). While the ONA space has been around for a long time, the shift has been in the application of the technology Bersin explains. ONA technologies have become much more sophisticated, looking at the patterns of communications between different employees to analyse what is causing high/low levels of productivity. Bersin sites one company that used ONA technology to predict with a 78% accuracy who would leave the company nine months before they left because their pattern of communication changed.

Embracing HR Change

Bersin concludes his keynote on a positive note, encouraging the [HR Innovation & Tech Fest](#) community to embrace the change that is upon us. “We’re working in a highly empowered, multi-functional workforce and we need to give employees the autonomy to do what’s necessary to have the closest relationship as possible with the customer”, Bersin says. “We need tools to help HR support the organisation in that area”.