

commonwealth Human Resources & ICT '20

11 - 12 FEBRUARY 2020, GABORONE, BOTSWANA

The Changing Shape of the Workforce

EVENT REPORT



Data analytics
Digital HR
Social and online media
Future technologies
Sustainable leadership
Information security and data privacy

Organised by



COMMONWEALTH
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
ORGANISATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Commonwealth Human Resource and ICT Forum was organised by the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) in conjunction with Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC), Botswana Fibre Networks (BoFiNet) and Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA). The conference was held on the 11-12 February 2020 at Avani Hotel in Gaborone, Botswana.

Commonwealth countries present included Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa and Mauritius among others. Delegates represented regulators, government departments, wholesale sellers, service providers, parastatals and other stakeholders in the information and communications technology, as well as humanitarian and country representatives from High Commissions and National councils.

The focus of the conference was to consider the approaches to human resources in the ICT sector and the technological solutions available for members of CTO.

WELCOME REMARKS

MANAGING DIRECTOR – BOTSWANA TELECOMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION

The Managing Director of Botswana Telecommunications Corporation, Mr Anthony Masunga opened the conference by welcoming all to the country. He mentioned that the theme to the conference coincides with his being in the telecommunications space for over twenty years, and puts more emphasis on focusing on technology than on people. He also mentioned that it is imperative to bring people central to the discussion and that this brings people closer to the strategy.

Mr Masunga mentioned that tensions between people and products yields negative results. Also over-investing on infrastructure and under investing in people who use and service the infrastructure is a recipe for disaster. He indicated that in most African governments, technology infrastructure is normally too big for local economies hence rendering it not user friendly. He challenged HR leadership to find ways to realise the need for people to drive strategies and skill them to levels where they can compete globally.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Mr Masunga voiced out his desire to see more women in ICT leadership positions and that his focus was to see more women in his executive team as the drivers of ICT. He encouraged women in the room to leverage on this conference to milk as much as possible to stay relevant and compete equally to their male counterparts in the ICT landscape. He remarked that the country's human resource strategy touched on the human capital development in the knowledge based economy that the Government of Botswana, led by President Mokgweetsi Masisi envisions in the national strategy. He also advanced an interest in having the upcoming conference to be held locally to afford Botswana more opportunity to benefit from the same.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER – BOTSWANA FIBRE NETWORKS

The Acting Chief Executive Officer of BoFiNet, Mr Mpho Koolese noted that HR and ICT is continuously changing the environment and that the degree to leverage on ICT in human resource depends on humans to affectionately apply technologies. In Botswana, he mentioned that connectivity both in rural and urban areas is spread to ensure citizens are given services. As the world enters the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR), it is about the relationships between machines and people, and that we were privileged to meet at this kind of gathering full of diverse fields for interaction and exchange of ideas.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER – BOTSWANA COMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The Acting CEO of BOCRA also alluded to the fact that the world was at our disposal. She encouraged more women to take the ICT space and that she hoped the conference will bring out the best in all industry players.

HIGH COMMISSIONER – BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION

The Deputy High Commissioner reiterated the above sentiments and added that it is all about connectivity, innovating and configuration that is at the tip of the conversations around ICT. The Tokyo 2020 was cited as the perfect example for the gathering and that the next successful economies were those that will compete in development. In future jobs, she said, human skills will play an important role. The UK is hosting COP 26 in Glasgow, hence requires everyone to be involved in the reduction of carbon emissions. She also made a pledge to the participants to reduce household waste and thanked all for supporting such a successful event.

WELCOME REMARKS AND OFFICIAL OPENING

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CTO – GISA PURCELL

The CTO Head recapped on all the deliberations. She mentioned that gender issues and relationships between people and machines were the most outstanding issues touched on the conference. Ms Gisa Purcell also talked about the CTO plan to host a conference on women. She emphasised the need to hold the conference in all commonwealth countries to afford locals the opportunity to deliberate on diverse issues concerning HR and ICT.

Ms Purcell urged all to reflect on what the conference has achieved since its inception in 2005, the changes, challenges and solutions to identified problems. She also mentioned that the conference was designed to discuss and learn to understand how to utilise ICTs in HR. The huge digital divide in the commonwealth was also a cause for concern as every African country is at a different stage of connectivity. She urged governments to intervene and solve challenges of connectivity in their grounds. Also the programme for development and training of the CTO is a stepping stone to assisting organisations to upskill their personnel to learn more in the areas of ICT. ICT is vital for increasing efficiencies in the HR field for organisations to achieve their goals. She summarised by urging all participants to end talking and put discussions to fruition.

DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

The outcomes of session 1 as discussed by different speakers were that:

- Businesses needs transformation and therefore people in the technology sector needs to share ideas with the HR people for this transformation to happen.
- Factors driving transformation include growth/profitability, globalisation and emerging markets where innovation and talent management are key.

- There is need to think HR as an enabler for competitive advantage by sourcing the right skills and also equip and empower HR to ensure all is transformed digitally for speedy processing of service.
- To change the traditional, cultural and political outlook on women in work places by rather equipping them to perform and change with the times. She also requested participants to further deliberate on whether the proportionality of females mean the success of companies.
- Presence of women brings positive change to companies, evidence supports that 1 woman in the board of directors brings a possibility of 12% growth, revenue growth by 40% and 46% increase on return on investment.
- Social entrepreneurs, majority being women are doing more. Research shows that technology companies led by women makes 35% return on investment and that there is need for diversity in companies. The impression is not just about recruiting women but those with potential and required competencies.
- Digital technology to be used to enhance HR to make it more efficient and that HR should consider having mixed teams of coders and data analysts as well as finance, mathematicians and operations to remain agile, accountable and recognisable.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & EFFECTIVE HR STRATEGIES

This session was focused on effective HR Strategies and how they impact digital transformation. Topics discussed include Digital HR strategies, Strategic Principles and Current HR Digital Strategic Trends.

- There should be clear cut steps to follow in digitisation of HR systems to create clear and effective strategies. Objectives should be clear, documents digitised and analytics built.
- Digitisation produces intelligent reports, therefore all should try to go the clean desk route. Develop better policies and manage change.
- All were encouraged to work on mitigating the risks associated with digitising HR. Change mind sets, use technology but being available to your employees. Technology cannot solve all problems, face to face interactions are still inevitable.
- HR Practitioners should focus on change management as machines cannot measure performance. Computers have taught people to be interactive and innovative instead of the belief that they were taking over people's jobs.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES – THE FUTURE OF WORK

- Artificial Intelligence, robotics and people are fighting for space in the workplace. In this era of automations, robotics and cognitive technology are used to schedule meetings, taking minutes since humans do not have the capacity similar to machines.

- Artificial Intelligence enhances the skills required to perform jobs, therefore there is need for collaboration between man and robots. Companies using AI have competitive edge.
- Issues for HR to consider are that artificial intelligence will create more jobs with different skill sets hence there will be shortage of skills. Also innovation and operation efficiency will need HR to engage people to get more skills.
- The tradition for performance reviews has been to sit in the room and dialogue face to face but there is need to embrace systems to get away from that, it is better to catch up than resist at all.

TRANSFORMING RECRUITMENT - DIGITAL MEDIA TOOLS & ONLINE SERVICES

- Social and digital media has changed the world, there is a wealth of data online. Social and digital media screening identifies high quality candidates quicker and more accurately, they also identify hidden skills, talents as well as establishing value/culture matches.
- Disability consideration in decision making pertaining to the implementation and use of social media. Disability is not included in decision making as everyone is judged fairly and on account of competence and not disability.
- There are laws governing the use of social media therefore, hate speech and derogatory comments are dealt with accordingly.
- Most of the recruitment processes are done online and not being able to access digital media puts one at a precarious position. This might cause discrimination and bias which most recruiters were advised to be conscious of in order to eliminate that.

DAY ONE – SUMMARY

Technology is not here to take away what humans ought to be doing but to enhance the skills and learning so that humans are well developed and knowledgeable.

Shortage of skills will be realised in the near future and HR should be better placed to engage more people to acquire skills.

There is need for reforms in HR, change management is key, retooling and retraining should be at the forefront of decision making.

Inclusion of women in leadership roles and diversification of workforces for sustainability should form part of the fearless discussions.

This marked the end of day one at 5pm.

DAY 2

SUMMARY

CTO is committed to upskilling people through the PDT programme. Member organisations are the pillar of this forum as their annual subscriptions keeps the programme up and running. Key events of the CTO to look forward to include the Roundtable which is designed for senior officials responsible for regulation, law making and development of ICTs.

LEVERAGING TALENT & ENHANCING SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

As technology is advancing, HR is challenged to think differently in terms of recruitment and selection. As compared to back in the 60s and 70s, it is now a requirement to have digitally savvy employees, and HR is expected to deliver those expectations.

HR TODAY

Structural hierarchies are now being replaced by digital technologies. HR is expected to produce, monitor and deliver in real time and digitisation has enabled this to be able to happen. The future of HR is dependent on upskilling employees to effectively use digital applications that enhance delivery.

The below points were noted:

- Redefine HR mission
- Transform and adapt digitally
- Update tools for learning
- Building digital HR teams dedicated to explore new solutions and organise HR into networks with strong business partners.
- Innovation to be key strategic HR issue, enhance skills by providing technology training to HR personnel.

Businesses should develop tools that allow employees to work and interact online. To remain relevant and competitive, HR people need to self-learn as the internet has a lot of information available.

Political, executive and management pressures also deter HR professionals to recruit suitable people who are technologically savvy. Traditional organisations are characterised by bureaucracy hence resilience is the only way forward.

TRANSFORMING HR

Leaders have a bird's eye view of business landscape and key ingredients for success which include quality of life and high motivation which enables individuals to exploit their potential.

There has to be concerted efforts to build inclusivity at the HR strategy. Craft solutions regarding knowledge and be more empathetic.

HR transformation is a system where employees self-serve.

DATA ANALYTICS

- Vendor solutions not up to speed with contemporary data trends
- Disintegration of IT and HR departments and unjustified ROI on technology investments.
- Obsolete IT infrastructure not supporting modern agile requirements.
- Lack of data governance structures hampers implementation of data silos.
- Data Analytics is an important skill in HR and in the process of interpreting data, lean towards the human aspect.
- HR profession should now have generalist skills as well as specialised skills

CYBERSECURITY AND DATA PROTECTION

- African governments urged to implement data regulation laws to protect their citizens from data breaches.
- Most African governments at different levels of connectivity hence all urged to keep up to date.
- Educate more people on cybersecurity and the importance of protection and care of information.

CLOSING REMARKS

The CTO Secretary General, Ms Gisa Purcell urged all participants to take all the discussions as something to ponder about back at their countries. She emphasised that enough talking has been done and it is now time for action. Governments of Commonwealth countries were encouraged to take a leading role in assisting organisations to implement regulations regarding the digital transformation.

She urged all participants to show interest and benefit from CTO offerings which is another way of developing their employees with the latest technological developments in the global stage. She said that CTO is prepared to assist all those who want to be a part taker in the digital transformation and therefore all should embrace this offer and come to the party.

Ms Purcell thanked the Botswana Government and all stakeholders for pulling up such a magnificent event in the shortest time possible and encouraged other governments to emulate Botswana and show interest in hosting these events as they benefit not only the delegates but even citizens of those countries who are in the same fields of discussions.

CONCLUSION

The conference was an eye opener to all of us in the HR field as we have realised that the world is transforming and so should we. Employee development should be the backbone of each organisation if they want to benefit from the digital transformation. Employees should also be encouraged to self-learn and plan their developmental paths in line with digital transformation to keep up with the changing trends.

HR transformation is dependent on people who are eager to speak the language of machines. Human knowledge is vital for machines to work and produce desired results. Data analytics, big data, internet of things are some of the important topics of knowledge and skills required in the HR field. To remain relevant and competitive, HR should build strategies that address skills and competencies in a technological world. Change is inevitable and individuals, companies and governments should be encouraged to keep up with the times.

THE END.