

## Automation is growing, are you growing with it?

**Automation is becoming a bigger part of modern office life across all industries; yet, co-ordinating automated technical processes is still on the to-do list for many businesses.**

It's a surprise given that technology is transforming business functions across the board, from finance to marketing. Employee-facing services should be no different, and the shift towards digital cannot be ignored much longer. Those that fail to streamline operations and automate repetitive tasks are already losing their competitive edge in performance and talent retention.

A big part of the problem is that automation is often misunderstood, even feared. The idea that computerised processes will soon run riot and spark the downfall of human interaction is a well-worn myth – but also a lazy one.

Top managers know this is far from the truth. They see automation as a chance to liberate staff from laborious manual tasks and devote more time and resource to strategy, creative tasks and staff development.

Before they begin to overhaul existing processes, it's crucial that organisations begin to map out exactly how to manage increasing automation across key areas of human resources. Yes, there may be a few teething problems and perhaps the need to update company policies and protocol ultimately the benefits in doing so vastly outweigh the short-term investment.

### **Less administration... more productivity?**

It's surprising how much time HR professionals spend on managing leave requests, personnel records and onboarding guides, especially in large organisations. A study of

1,000 HR professionals led by tech think tank Silk Road Inc. found that a lack of automation in these areas hinders strategic thinking and organisational growth within 72% of companies.

“Too many companies say they still drown in paper and manual processes,” explains John Shackleton, part of the research team at Silk Road Inc. “Extracting and compiling spreadsheet data for reporting purposes is prone to human error and usually a labour-intensive process.

***"A focus on leveraging automation technology in all aspects of people management can provide HR professionals with new ideas and insights to improve their success."***

“HR’s role is much broader than just managing benefits, compensation and annual leave. Automation can play a key role across a wide range of functions: workforce planning, talent acquisition, learning, onboarding, to name a few. The aim is to create more time for strategic thinking and having a ‘place at the table’ in business decision-making.”

### **Keeping the Human Touch**

There’s no doubt that automation has big potential across various areas of HR – but it’s only useful if we take advantage of the extra time it creates. It should enhance the human touch, not hinder it. As People Director at Virgin Management, Sharron Pomells is well-used to the challenge of leveraging the personal side of HR alongside an increasing level of automation:

***"Automation isn't about replacing human roles; it's about creating opportunities for people to have more time for face-to-face conversations with colleagues."***

"It enables more scope for innovative thinking, building stronger relationships at work and gives us space to think more creatively"

**Comment:** *Interestingly, AI is once again cited as allowing employees and managers MORE TIME.*

*There may be a danger however, that expectations rise and this "down time" is filled with..... yet more work. Could there be a better use? Time to reflect perhaps?*

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Feature

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