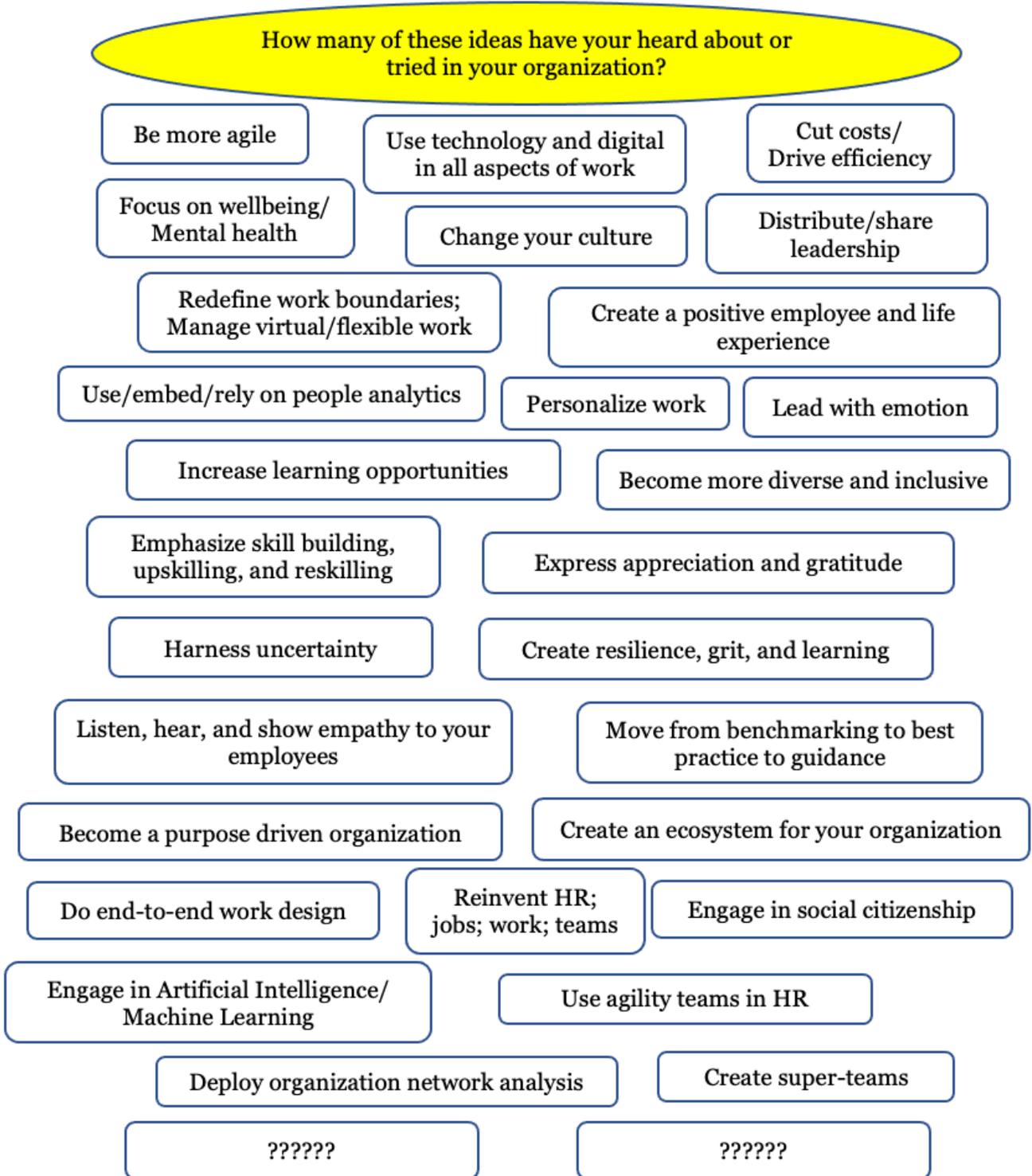# How to Filter HR and Leadership Advice: Where Should I Turn?

Author: Dave Ulrich . October 2021

If you are like me, you are getting oodles of posts, invitations, surveys, research reports, articles, and insights (including this post) about how to respond to changing business conditions. Figure 1 shows topics I have seen in only the last 6 weeks.

Figure 1:
Recent Suggestions for How to Respond to Post-2020 Crises

How many of these ideas have your heard about or tried in your organization?

- Be more agile
- Use technology and digital in all aspects of work
- Cut costs/ Drive efficiency
- Focus on wellbeing/ Mental health
- Change your culture
- Distribute/share leadership
- Redefine work boundaries; Manage virtual/flexible work
- Create a positive employee and life experience
- Use/embed/rely on people analytics
- Personalize work
- Lead with emotion
- Increase learning opportunities
- Become more diverse and inclusive
- Emphasize skill building, upskilling, and reskilling
- Express appreciation and gratitude
- Harness uncertainty
- Create resilience, grit, and learning
- Listen, hear, and show empathy to your employees
- Move from benchmarking to best practice to guidance
- Become a purpose driven organization
- Create an ecosystem for your organization
- Do end-to-end work design
- Reinvent HR; jobs; work; teams
- Engage in social citizenship
- Engage in Artificial Intelligence/ Machine Learning
- Use agility teams in HR
- Deploy organization network analysis
- Create super-teams
- ??????
- ??????

Whew! For many, there is idea fatigue with an overload of all these good ideas. While it is helpful to curate them (see David Green's or People Space monthly posts), the deluge of insights can be overwhelming. As a result, on the one hand, it is tempting to ignore all the advice and just get on with whatever works, which is a bit like not dieting because there are so many diets. On the other hand, it is probably even more dysfunctional to chase fads and seek silver bullets which lead to vicious cycles of hope and despair (yo-yo dieting).

Good business and HR leaders want to become better, so how can you separate signals that matter from the noise that abounds? Let me offer six tips to filter good ideas to rely on those ideas that might be most useful to you.

1. Ensure relevance

Many of the suggestions are about activities (e.g., use this digital platform, express appreciation) rather than results of the activities. To filter which ideas work best for you, do NOT start with activities you do, but about results you care about. This means moving from benchmarking and best practices descriptions of what could be done to prescription and guidance about what should be done. It is helpful for you (with your advisor) to be clear about the results your organization cares about which might include: employee (well being, productivity), business strategy (digital reinvention), customer (net promotor score, revenue per customer), investor (profitability, market value), and community (reputation). With results in mind, suggestions can be pursued *so that* the desired outcomes happen. Ask yourself or your advisor: *How will this suggestion help me reach the results I care about?*

2. Build on existing knowledge

Most, if not all, "new" activities build on and evolve previous work. For example, employee experience is an extension of decades of work on individual satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and engagement. While the challenges of 2020 were intense, many existed before: Many employees have worked remotely, organizations have had to become more agile, and leaders have been encouraged the become meaning-makers for decades. Acknowledging and building on previous work avoids repackaging old ideas without moving them forward. Too often, many current suggestions recycle previous work without building on it. Spiraling forward to the future respects the past but emphasizes creating a better future. Be aware of the advice that promises unique and unheard of insights or does not build on others. Ask yourself or your advisor: *Who else has worked on these issues and how does your work advance those ideas?*

3. Adapt to my circumstances

Almost all innovative suggestions have worked somewhere for someone. That does not mean they will work for you in your specific circumstance. Best practice for others is not necessarily your desired practice. To prioritize insights that have impact on you, you might explore the extent to which they will impact results you care about (see above) and are implementable within your organization. Recommendations should be adapted to your setting, not adopted. Effective advisors start with questions to find out about your unique circumstances before giving answers. Ask: *How curious is my advisor about my unique circumstance and willing to adapt their ideas to help me?*

4. Keep it simple

The world is increasingly complex, but reacting with complexity does not facilitate progress as much as determining simple priorities. Successful changes generally will be small and simple nudges rather than dramatic metamorphosis. It is better to make and keep simple promises than to make bold assertions. Simple is not simplistic and requires rigor in finding patterns, taking first steps, and learning from results. Responding to complexity with simplicity is more demanding than matching complexity with complexity. Ask yourself and your advisor: *What are the simple first steps to make progress?*

5. Partner to discover solutions

Partnering means that the advisor wants you to be an independent, not dependent thinker. Over time, the suggestions you adapt become yours with your mental maps (language, frameworks, logic) fingerprints (actions, investments). You should discover unique approaches to employee experience, organization reinvention, or digital investments. Good advisors work to empower you to create your own solutions. You lease to own their knowledge rather than rent in. Ask yourself: *How well does my advisor encourage me to have a point of view that works for me?*

6. Take care of yourself

Your personal well-being allows you to have the emotional energy to seek and screen new ideas. Seeking ideas, or seeing around corners, comes from being curious, connecting with others to source innovative ideas, and studying widely for new insights. Screening ideas means forcing yourself to navigate paradox, take time to prioritize, and stop doing things that don't add value. Ask: *How am I keeping up my emotional energy?*

Good ideas proliferate and are increasingly accessible. Impactful ideas require filtering that leads to success. How do you know where to turn for ideas with impact?

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https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/how-to-filter-hr-and-leadership-advice-where-should-i-turn