

## HR Skills of the Future

Author: Jonathan Ferrar . October 2021

The Human Resources profession needs to change. It must become more digital and analytical to deliver greater business value. The digital age has brought with it sweeping changes to the way that employees and workers interact with each other, the way that work itself gets done and the amount of workplace data that when analyzed properly can create tremendous amounts of value for organizations.

As a consequence, there is an increasing need for HR professionals to become digitally and numerically literate – to acquire the skills necessary to process, produce and leverage digital information. When HR professionals, as core Business Partners, are analytically and digitally more literate, they will possess skills that will put their organization in the best possible position to deliver greater value to all stakeholders.

### But what do HR professionals themselves want to learn?

This question is the one that we, at my future, studied via our crowd-sourced survey in late 2018. We wanted to do something different. We did not want to go to a select group of companies. We did not want to pre-select a number of people beforehand or gather data via selective focus groups. We wanted to generate data from people across the world and ask them what skills they thought were most important to learn for 2019 and how they wanted to learn.

Within four weeks we had engaged people from over 60 countries. The findings are available in our HR Skills of the Future report which you can access by clicking the button here.

### Our Key Findings - Skills of the Future

Of our survey respondents, 72% of them stated they had roles in Human Resources internally in their organizations. A further 23% worked in areas that support HR - either as a consultant or working for HR vendors. When asked a “free text” question we found these insights:

- Expertise in **People Analytics** is the most in-demand skill. People want to become more analytical and data-driven.
- **Managing stakeholders** and **influencing others** are key skills for HR professionals. There is a

clear indication that being effective in these two skills is very important to be a successful HR professional in 2019.

- Learning about new **HR technologies** and using techniques like **design thinking** to drive adoption are also skill areas that are key for Human Resources professionals.

## Our Key Findings - The Future of Learning

We asked respondents about the methods they use for learning and the amount of time they spend using them every month. We asked them about blogs, free online training, and formal online company training, amongst other things. Our hypothesis was that people don't learn from the training provided to them by their company as much as they do from other sources. In summary, we found the following:

- Three-quarters (**75%**) of our survey respondents said they spend at least four hours (or half a day) a month learning from free content such as blogs, articles, or directly from social media. The number rose to 97% of respondents spending at least one hour a month.
- Only **32%** learn for more than four hours a month from free online training sources (such as that found on YouTube). The number rose to 76% for those spending at least one hour a month learning using these types of platforms.
- When asked about formal online training provided by their company, only **13%** of respondents said they learn this way for four hours or more a month. And in total only about half (52%) of people learn this way for at least one hour or more a month.

In summary, people want to learn their professional skills using platforms and sources outside their company. This tells us that company-developed training is not having the effect needed in the modern world. Also, it seems clear that many organizations are not doing enough to provide HR professionals with access to the type of content that they need to develop the skills necessary for the future.

## Our Crowd-sourced Survey

We sent our survey out via a LinkedIn post from [David Green](#), an often-cited influencer in HR. Since David has expertise in People Analytics and curates a large amount of material on this topic, it might be considered that the survey is biased towards People Analytics. We found that David's post attracted a large amount of "likes" and comments — many more so than his articles and posts normally attract. In fact, this was the second most "liked" article, post, or blog that David published in the entire year of 2018.

Additionally, many HR practitioners and business influencers, such as [Dave Ulrich](#), made comments and shared the original article. Overall we found that the article reached a large readership with respondents to the survey coming from over 60 countries and with about one-third equally coming from small, mid-sized, and large organizations.

*The post "HR Skills of the Future" was first published by Hilton Barbour here <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/hr-skills-future-jonathan-ferrar/>*

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## About the Author

This blog was written by Jonathan Ferrar, one of the authors of the HR Skills of the Future Report. Other authors are [Ian Bailie](#) and [David Green](#).

[Jonathan Ferrar](#) is the CEO and co-founder of [Insight222](#). He is a globally respected speaker, author and business adviser in HR strategy, workforce analytics, and the future of work. Jonathan has worked in corporate business for 25+ years for companies like Andersen Consulting (now Accenture), Lloyds Bank, and IBM where he served as executive manager for 10+ years. He is a keynote speaker, co-author of *The Power of People*, a Board Member of the [CIPD](#), and an Advisor to the Board of [TrustSphere](#).

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