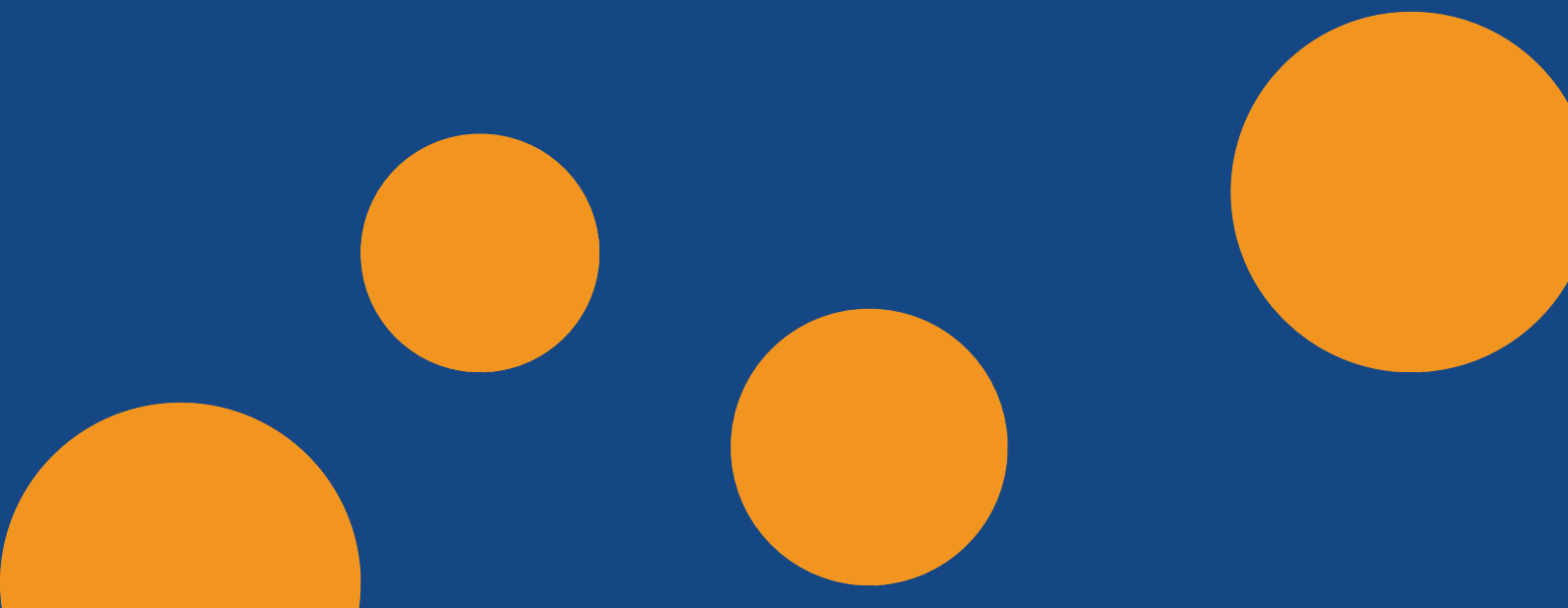


25 Lessons learnt **years** and observations from People Business

For 25 years, we've seen the world of work and people transformed. We've gathered valuable insights into how things have shifted, adapted and changed. Here are some of our observations - perspectives we hope will spark reflection and inspiration.

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We empower people to drive
performance

Helping to create a world where nothing
limits people from contributing fully
to an organisation's success.



“

Committed employers see a 4% higher return on invested capital (ROIC) over three years, 1.2% higher annual ROIC, 0.5% higher sales growth, and 2.8% lower annual turnover compared to those who do not invest in their people.

”

— [The People Factor, 2023](#)

The people ARE the business



It can be short-sighted - and costly - to take your people for granted. When employees are engaged in the process rather than excluded, they contribute more and stay longer. Inclusion isn't just good practice, it drives results.

Neglecting morale and engagement leads to far greater long-term costs: low productivity, high turnover and lost knowledge. Investing in people pays off well beyond the short term.

Organisations need to direct their energy, time and resources into people projects that matter to their people and make a tangible difference.

The role of leadership continually evolves



Leadership has moved beyond command-and-control toward more inclusive and empathetic styles. Today's most effective leaders lead with emotional intelligence, adaptability and a coaching mindset.

As the workplace becomes more global and distributed, managers are no longer just task-focused, they play a critical role in developing talent and fostering collaboration across remote and cross-cultural teams.



The people function has developed and morphed

The evolution of the people function reflects broader shifts in work and society. Once called Personnel, then HR, and now often People and Culture, the name itself signals a deeper, more human-centred focus. But this change is more than branding. The remit has expanded dramatically, encompassing wellbeing, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), neurodiversity, culture, change management and more.

Over the years, the function has shown remarkable agility through global crises, from the dot-com crash to COVID-19 and the ongoing cost of living challenges. In each case, people leaders have helped organisations navigate uncertainty, adapt quickly and emerge stronger.





With a more strategic seat at the table, HR is now playing a vital role in aligning people strategies with business goals. Promoting a stronger link between performance and employee engagement has elevated the profession, moving it beyond its traditional silo and into a central role in driving growth, resilience and innovation.

In times of change, there's always opportunity. By embracing disruption, focusing on human potential, and responding with empathy and agility, the people function continues to prove its value, both in moments of crisis and in shaping the future of work.

“

**Human resources isn't a thing we
do; it's the thing that runs our
business.**

”

— Steve Wynn

The world has moved on at a pace and this reflects in the world of business

“
Diverse companies are 70% more likely to capture new markets.
— [eduMe](#)”

As the world has shifted, so too has the way organisations operate and measure success. Climate change and sustainability have moved to the forefront, prompting businesses to re-evaluate their practices through the lens of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) responsibility. Over the past 25 years, ESG has evolved from a niche concern to a central strategic focus.





Forward-thinking organisations are expanding their metrics beyond financial performance to include human-centric outcomes like employee engagement, innovation and social impact. DEI is no longer optional. It is now expected by employees, stakeholders and society at large. Transparent and accountable DEI practices have become essential, not just for fairness, but because inclusive workplaces lead to stronger teams, better decisions and greater innovation.

Leaders are expected to actively champion DEI, embracing generational diversity, addressing bias and microaggressions, and building cultures of psychological safety. Embedding equity into business practices aligns with broader ESG goals. It isn't just about values, it strengthens long-term sustainability and trust.

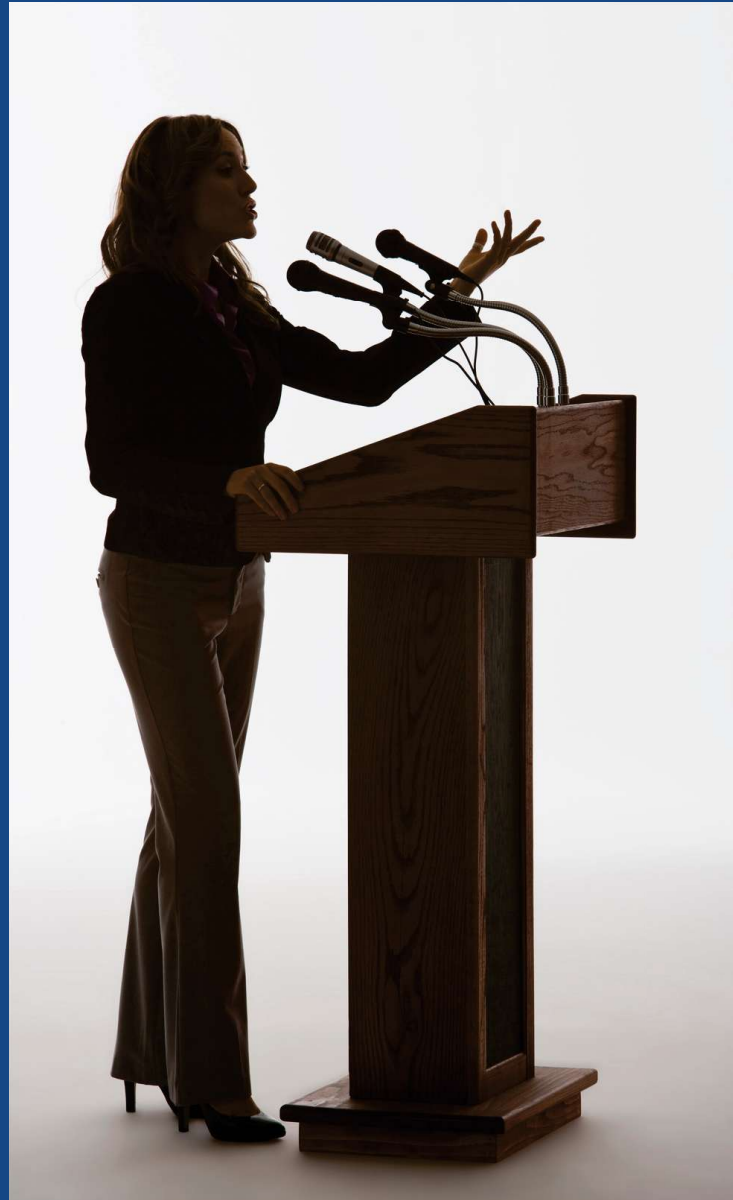
To step back now is to risk losing credibility and betraying core values. Businesses that commit to progress in people practices, not just profits, will be the ones that endure and thrive.

The employee voice is louder and expectations are higher



Employees today are more vocal, empowered and values driven than ever before, and organisations are being held to higher standards as a result. Attracting and retaining top talent now hinges on more than pay and benefits; a strong employer brand and a meaningful Employee Value Proposition (EVP) are essential. This means offering clear career progression, personal development opportunities, and a culture built on continuous feedback and genuine empathy.

Wellbeing - physical, mental and financial - has become a central part of the employee experience, alongside psychological safety, diversity, dignity at work and flexible working. Employees are not afraid to speak up, and platforms like Glassdoor, alongside internal engagement surveys, have made their voices more influential than ever. Agile organisations are listening closely and responding, not just with policy but with cultural shifts that reflect what their people truly value.



“ Flexibility is a top priority - with 77% of employees preferring to work for companies that offer the option to work from anywhere, and 59% valuing flexibility over salary or traditional benefits.

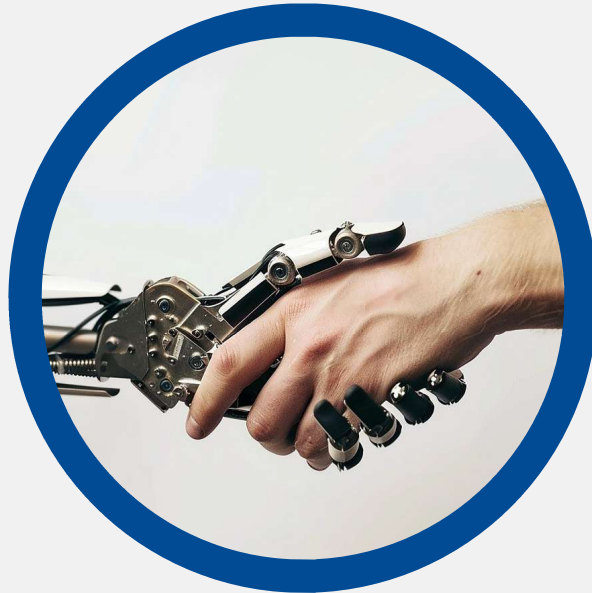
— People Insight, 2025

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With up to five generations now sharing the workplace, expectations vary but common threads include purpose, flexibility and inclusion. Younger employees, in particular, want ethical, socially responsible employers who support mental health and encourage work-life balance. To meet these needs, businesses must align their values with those of their people, promote intergenerational collaboration and create opportunities for knowledge-sharing across all career stages.

Ultimately, organisations that genuinely listen, adapt and invest in their people will be the ones that thrive in a workforce defined by higher expectations and greater employee power.

Technology has propelled us forward - keep the focus on people



The rapid rise of technology has reshaped the HR and people development landscape: from applicant tracking systems to onboarding and performance management, and digital learning platforms to people analytics.

Dashboards and data driven decision-making have become essential, offering clarity and insight at speed.

AI is transforming how we hire, engage and understand our workforce. But as technology advances, the human element must remain central. Technology should enhance, not replace, the role that people play in creating thriving workplaces.





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**In theory, a human collaborating
with an AI system should make
better decisions than either
working alone.**

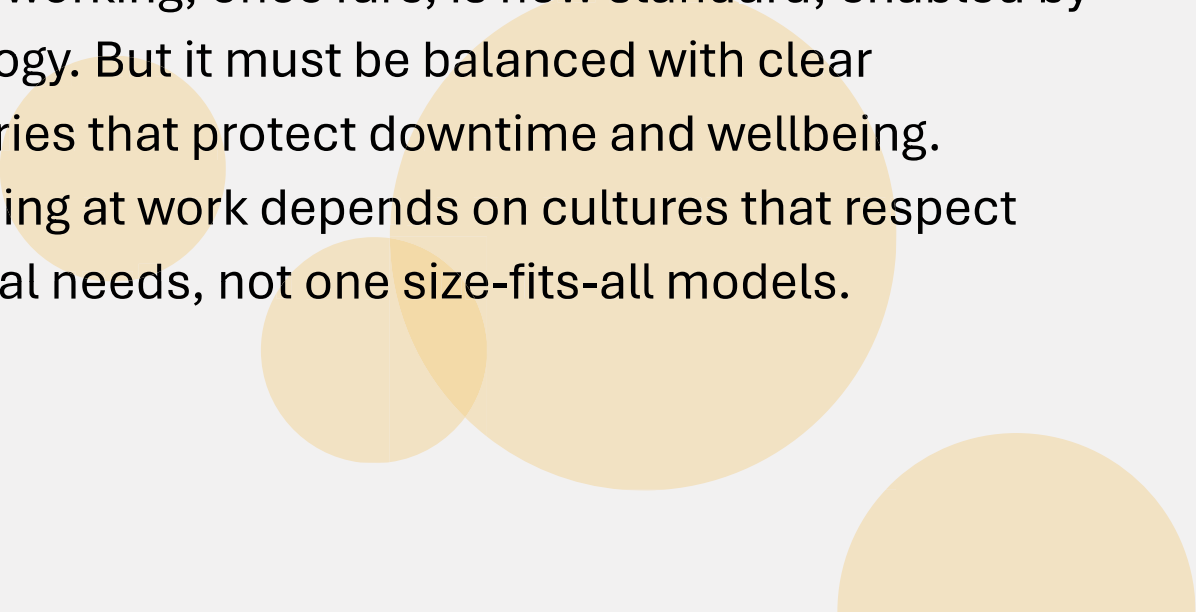
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— Stanford University, 2023



Communication has evolved rapidly too: from letters to emails and meetings to virtual collaboration. While face-to-face interaction has clear benefits, virtual connections can be just as meaningful when approached with intent. We must challenge outdated assumptions about how relationships are built.

Flexible working, once rare, is now standard, enabled by technology. But it must be balanced with clear boundaries that protect downtime and wellbeing. Flourishing at work depends on cultures that respect individual needs, not one size-fits-all models.



Social media has also reshaped professional life. LinkedIn revolutionised recruitment, but as platforms become more ingrained, we must ask what's next, and how we can ensure these tools strengthen connection rather than dilute it.

Technology is a powerful enabler, but people, not platforms, create real value. When used thoughtfully, technology can amplify human impact and help workplaces thrive.



Investment in people pays dividends

Investing in continuous learning and development keeps your workforce aligned with the pace of business change, while boosting engagement and improving retention.



Employees today expect more than just a job; they want growth, flexibility and work that feels meaningful. The old model of a linear career path is fading. Instead, forward thinking organisations are embracing a talent lifecycle mindset, recognising that people value diverse experiences and opportunities for reinvention throughout their careers.

Coaching, once seen as an exclusive perk for senior leaders, is becoming more democratised, with various coaching options making it accessible across all levels. This shift supports individual growth and helps organisations build resilient, future-ready teams.



Training has evolved from traditional, face-to-face courses into more dynamic, blended approaches. Shorter, more frequent learning sessions, combined with virtual, in-person and digital methods, can be powerful, but only if they allow space for application and maintain a high standard of quality. eLearning, when thoughtfully designed, offers more than convenience. It enables deeper learning over time, ensuring that development is embedded and impactful, not just a box-ticking exercise.



“

93% of organisations are concerned with employee retention, and 94% say they would stay longer if their company invested in their careers.

—— [LinkedIn Learning, 2024](#)

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In short, people-first development strategies are no longer optional, they're essential for sustainable business success.



As the world evolves, so does our purpose: adapting, learning and leaning into change.

About People Business

People Business is a specialist provider of integrated HR services offering expertise in people development, talent assessment and HR. Our consultants have held senior roles, stood in our clients' shoes and understand the modern HR landscape. With 25 years in business, we offer our clients from all types and size of organisation professional experience, integrity and unsurpassed breadth of knowledge.



**Find out how we can help your organisation
and get in touch at
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