

CORNELL HR REVIEW

PEOPLE AND TECHNOLOGY:

REFLECTIONS FROM THE 2016 HUMAN CAPITAL ASSOCIATION SYMPOSIUM

Cornell HR Review Editorial Board Members

From time to time, the Cornell HR Review staff contributes summaries of HR-related events that take place on the Cornell University campus in Ithaca, NY. The intent is to disseminate the content of these events to the wider HR community of practitioners and researchers.

In September 2016, the Human Capital Association (HCA) hosted its 14th Annual Symposium. HCA is a student-run organization within the Samuel Curtis Johnson School of Management and the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. The HCA strives to drive the future of the HR profession through educational and professional development opportunities across the Cornell community. Its annual symposium provides a forum for students, faculty and corporate executives to come together and explore the various human capital issues prevalent in global business.

This year, the topic of the HCA Symposium was “People and Technology”. The highlight of the symposium was a keynote address given by Tracy Keogh, Chief Human Resources Officer of HP, Inc. Tracy’s address summarized a “Future of Work” analysis recently conducted by HP, Inc., and identified key Future of Work trends that will impact the workforce, including technology, globalization, generational changes and organizational changes. The Symposium also included a panel discussion on technology trends in the world of work, with representatives from The Hershey Company, Dell, American Express, and Citibank. Finally, the Symposium concluded with breakout sessions with representatives from The Hershey Company, Johnson & Johnson, Citibank, Ingersoll Rand and Cummins, where those companies introduced students to a current “People and Technology” challenge faced by their respective companies, and invited students to provide their analyses and possible solutions.

Multiple *Cornell HR Review* staff members attended each of these events. Key insights and reflections by our staff are summarized below:

HR’s Role in Leveraging Mobile Technology. “Something I found significant from both the keynote speaker, Tracy Keogh, as well as the panel members, was that HR needs to ensure that it is keeping up with new technology innovations to serve its internal employee customers. Employees are now able to order food, pay for coffee, and check into the gym all on their smartphones, and HR should prioritize making tasks like checking benefits and requesting vacation time just as integrated and seamless. Enhancing the employee experience through technology that we all already access on a daily basis is certainly a logical and practical step for HR departments across industries.”

-- Danielle Collier, Cornell MILR ‘18

The Future Workplace is Already Here. “If one thing was clear from the HCA Symposium, it was that we don't have to envision a future workplace, it is already here. Companies are already moving to adapt to evolving tech trends, worker preferences, and strategic business decisions. One example is workplace location. In the panel discussion, The Hershey Company described its "Smartflex" program, where employees choose when, where, and how they work. This shift was shortly echoed by fellow panelists representing Citi, American Express, and Dell. This change creates value, opening new talent markets that were previously unavailable. As students, we are beginning our careers in HR at an exciting time. As markets change, technology advances, and organizations evolve, we have the opportunity to not only innovate in the ever-changing world of work but also enjoy the stimulation of continual learning.”

-- Steven Oakley, Cornell MILR '18

The Importance of Technology for Change Management. “Tracy mentioned the need for integration of new technology within the organization and the importance of change management for this to occur. This theme was also reflected in some of the panel discussions with American Express, Citibank, Hershey, and Dell--companies need to embrace change and collaborate because the pace of these developing technologies is not going to slow. Tracy also highlighted a few implications for HR--as technology continues to grow, so do the people within an organization. The various generations within in the workforce go through various life changes at different times--companies need to be aware of these changes so that they can foster an environment that allows its people to balance work and well-being.”

-- Rachael Berkoff, Cornell MILR '18

Technology Will Drive Greater Transparency. “Technology has exponentially increased the volume, geographic reach, and speed of news. Businesses today have nowhere to hide their failures and mistakes. As a result, businesses need to must be more transparent and accountable than ever, or risk losing the public's and its customer's trust.”

--Joey Chiang, Cornell MILR '18

HR Continues to Leverage Design Thinking Methodologies to Drive Innovation. “I participated in the breakout session with Hershey. During the session, we were split up in groups and asked to brainstorm ideas for a more effective recruiting process. There was only one rule to this activity, which was to say “that’s a great idea, and also...” The point of this activity was to highlight how our ideas often build off what others have already brought up. We were given post it notes, and instructed to write our ideas on them, read it out loud, and stick them onto the board. It was very fast paced, and within 30 minutes, we had a creative solution to creating a more effective and interesting recruiting system. Through this activity, we were able to see how valuable everyone’s ideas were, and how being respectful and enthusiastic about others’ ideas makes the creative brainstorming process much more well-rounded. It was definitely an interesting and rewarding experience.”

-- Amelia Tsui, Cornell MILR '18