

PUBLIC SECTOR PEOPLE
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Evo to the devo revo

Sue Evans, the
PPMA's new
President, charts
the evolution
of workforce
development
to embrace the
devolution revolution



Here's a good question. Is devolution about delivering a better, more efficient public sector, or is it a way of devolving power and with it the responsibility for making further cuts to public spending? And the answer on a postcard is...Yes to both. This could be the shortest article on record were it not for the fact there is a whole lot more to it than that.

So, if we are to deliver both more efficiency and reduce costs, what do we need to be thinking about it terms of the public service workforce? That's the key for me – it's a public service workforce – not just local government, health, fire, police, but a wider, more flexible and adaptable capacity to respond to change, deliver well and reduce spending.

Unpacking what that really means, and what HR should be doing now and as the agenda develops, is fundamental to ensuring that our response is appropriate and timely. The link between employment and economic growth is clear.

Economies and families do better when members are in work. People and communities are healthier and more resilient. This works on two levels. On the one hand it is about having the workforce required to deliver for our communities and on the other supporting people into work within them. Only with this double handed approach can we hope to achieve economic growth.

It starts in schools, develops as young people are supported into employment, arrive work ready, whether through traditional



Sue Evans is incoming President of the PPMA

routes or, increasingly through apprenticeships, and continues as employers develop a skilled and capable workforce. HR and OD are uniquely placed to lead and support this drive. Through effective workforce planning, identifying and developing talent, attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining the right people and a focus on developing the skills required for change and the new world HR professionals can support business growth. Marketing the public sector as a satisfying career opportunity has never been more important and we need to help develop and promote our offer so that we can compete with an increasingly buoyant private sector jobs market. We need great people to run great public services.

The cultural challenges across the public sector cannot be underestimated. New relationships will need to be developed and sustained, changes to working practices and employment terms will be required in order to provide the flexibility to bring different

parts of the workforce together as never before. HR can be catalysts for this transformation and we can challenge the status quo. Above all, we can lead and support the kind of workforce strategy and development that will result in sustained progress towards the workforce of tomorrow. We can help to focus on engagement and commitment so that the workforce is tuned in and turned on to the task in hand. We cannot achieve efficiencies without this change in our workforce – well revolution really, we have moved beyond change – and we cannot achieve this unless we involve, engage and lead them well.

Devolution itself will require new and different leaders, with new and different skills. The skills for collaboration and negotiation are at the forefront for leaders in this world of devolved responsibilities. As accountability is transferred and local leaders take up the challenges of working across boundaries the support they need from HR will help them to be confident and equipped

to deliver. How do we assess for this new breed, how do we recognise and reward great leaders in our sector?

We may need to start without ourselves, of course. HR needs to be in the think of this, leading and supporting and challenging. Are you ready to evo to the devo revo?

**Tell us
your
views**



If you have any views about the contents of this focus or ideas for future articles or would like to contribute please email the Editor Dilys Wynn at Dilys.WYNN@icloud.com



Opportunity knocks

Claire Kober outlines her aims for Haringey, and says the sector as a whole needs to be positive and get out of the mindset of just managing decline

Leading a borough like Haringey is a privilege. As a place, the borough is one of great opportunity, excellent connectivity; high in achievements and ambitions for the future and a diverse, vibrant community.

Of course we face challenges – all local authorities do and especially those in densely populated cities like London. Managing demand in social care, the changes across the public sector and diminishing resources are all significant.

However, I do not believe we should be in the business of managing decline. That is not to sweep aside the issues we face, but to recognise that we also have great opportunities.

Haringey has huge growth potential – two Housing Zones in the pipeline; the opportunity to bring Crossrail 2 to Wood Green

and Seven Sisters; new businesses opening in the borough; and with



Cllr Claire Kober OBE is leader of Haringey LBC

the National College for Digital Skills and London Academy of Excellence arriving in Tottenham, we are creating more opportunities for our young people than ever before.

Like many local authorities, we want to recruit and retain the best staff – and this is challenging in the context of the changes in local government and the wider public sector. That's why it's important that as leader, along with my cabinet and senior leadership team, we set out a clear positive vision, along with a set

of expectations and rewards for our staff.

In the last three years, Haringey has delivered significant organisational change – and change will be the norm for the foreseeable future. Led by Nick Walkley and the senior leadership team, we have worked in partnership with Penna and others to make changes to the structure and appoint the best possible candidates to the top 25 most senior manager posts. Critical to this has been appointing Jacquie McGeachie who, as our assistant director for HR,

has led a programme that includes implementing a 'Haringey Academy' approach to develop home-grown talent; establishing a new set of corporate values and expectations; as well as a new approach to performance management that makes far more sense than the 15 page form we used to have.

These innovations – as well as continually striving to get the basics right – are so important to achieving success and enabling the culture change I am sure we would all expect from a modern workforce. Additional tools such as more sophisticated data and systems that allow managers to self-support are crucial to ensuring a flexible staff, focused on productivity is in place.

My aim is for Haringey to be an employer of choice – and a HR function that can continue to support and deliver than ambition.

Learning the lessons

Paul Medd looks at what we can learn from this prolonged period of austerity and how renewed skill sets are vital to ensure devolution can be successful

For what seems like an eternity now, local government and its public sector partners have been subject to unprecedented financial challenges. Based upon the latest economic forecasts and number crunching by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, it's a safe bet that austerity will continue to focus our minds for several more years to come. It's hard to believe that by the time the UK's deficit arrives

at a balanced position, it will be over a decade since this journey started. So what have we learnt as a sector and what state are we in now?

It's very clear that local government continues to show a real strength of leadership, which is fuelling the innovation to ensure local services respond to the challenges. Within my own council and local partners, I'm continually staggered by the level of resilience and

innovation I see from across our organisations. Services have been redesigned; employees have been restructured, not once but in some cases on several occasions. Yet despite this and the significant reduction in revenue budgets, most service outcomes to local people remain as strong and effective as ever.

There are still significant unresolved issues such as redesigning an integrated model of social care and

health, the need to further embrace growth as a means of becoming financially self-sufficient, seeking to exploit the potential opportunities of devolution and not to mention adapting to Brexit following the recent referendum. However, if the spirit of resilience and innovation that I have witnessed in the sector is anything to base a firm judgement on, then all may not be as gloomy as it appears.

Local councils and their



Paul Medd is chief executive of Fenland DC

partners must continue to try and protect frontline services and adequate officer capacity to deliver them, as part of ongoing efficiency plans. Unilateral top sliced budgets across the board need resisting, with intelligent and innovative redesign being at the heart of transformation programmes. Modernising staff working arrangements,

harnessing technologies across services, commercialisation, better procurement, are all key areas that need to be fully reassessed.

So what of our workforce? To less enlightened folk, your typical council officer might be seen as an inflexible, traditional jobsworth, who has done the same thing for many years, or perhaps a suspicious, cynical individual who seeks to resist change, at the expense of new and more innovative ways of working!

Most such local government employees have long since departed, as council officer roles have evolved into diverse and multi-skilled jobs. A modern council employee accepts

The time to talk is now

The Government needs to provide strong assistance in dealing with the workforce issues associated with devolution, says Sarah Messenger

Everybody agrees that sustainable change will only be achieved by involving and engaging people. Frontline staff have shown time and again that if they are given the chance to innovate, they will do so enthusiastically. In practice though, many public service reform programmes do not truly involve the workforce and leave aside consideration of basic HR issues until quite late in the process.

The sense of trust integral to the employment relationship is easily broken if there is no early discussion of the bread-and-butter issues around redundancy risks, pension entitlements and transfer rights. As the biggest show in town, devolution provides a fantastic opportunity to co-design services and workforce practices with local people and our workforce at the heart of that process.

So the LGA is calling on Government to work with national players to promote exemplary practice in dealing with the workforce issues associated with devolution. This has to be done because partner organisations will have to find ways to develop a new shared public service workforce based around places rather than organisational silos. Ambitious change demands a flexible workforce as well, with transferable skills able to develop careers that involve moving between permeable organisations.



This provides exciting opportunities but also requires some difficult national conversations about pay and conditions and the time to start those conversations is now. The employment deal across public services, irrespective of the employing organisation, needs to be fair, comparable and portable.

The changing nature of the employment relationship is only part of the story though.

The development of effective, lasting partnerships demands a transformation of cultures and values as well as new skills. People working in, or thinking about joining local government, are increasingly asking what devolution means for them. As functions and funding are devolved to combined authorities new skills will be required, for example around commercial investment

and an enhanced ability to influence across organisational boundaries.

Devolution also mean changes to the work of the LGA. We have been:

- Seeking to ensure that the lessons learned from the frontrunners on devolution are shared with the whole sector through our DevoNext Hub and our national events;
- Providing specific support to



Sarah Messenger is Head of Workforce, LGA

councils to make the most of the opportunities offered by devolution.

We have also been talking with various councils and groups to ensure the advice and support we offer on workforce issues is tailored to the demands of devolution, including our advice and expertise on good industrial relations which is so vital in establishing trust from the outset.

We've been studying recent research and consultation which identifies the many interrelated HR issues that really need to be at the front of people's minds as devolution develops. The HR and OD teams within partnerships need a common language and a strategic approach to; workforce planning, leadership development, performance management and incentives, commercialism, change management skills and talent management programmes in particular.

We have been working with others including the PPMA and SOLACE to bring to life, via an e-book, the excellent *21st Century Public Servant* research undertaken by the University of Birmingham, a concept that will help define and drive new roles, cultures, behaviours and skills.

To learn more about what the LGA can offer you as devolution evolves, visit www.local.gov.uk/devolution and www.local.gov.uk/workforce.

the need to transform and deliver services in conjunction with a range of external partners.

Today's council officer embraces change and contributes towards innovative transformation solutions for delivering quality services on a tighter budget. Working with partners is seen as the norm, not the exception, so relationship building skills are a must. There is no place for preciousness and protectionism in the pursuit of sustainable service delivery solutions. Do the public really care who is delivering for them? We all know the answer to that.

Further opportunities will abound for those who are brave enough to seize the

reality for the future of local public service delivery. A change in career direction is awaiting those lasting few who can't, or don't want to, evolve with the times.

As the role of local councils and their officers continues to change, so will the need to develop a renewed skill set. Those competency frameworks that have existed for the past decade will require a dusting down and thorough review to ensure they align the organisations' people and its culture, with the future direction of travel and key priorities. A continued commitment to the most cost-effective staff learning and development is essential. A smash and grab raid on training budgets,

in the face of continued financial challenges, should be seen as a retrograde step, and as such resisted.

The sector has lobbied Government for greater autonomy and recognition, in meeting the future needs of our communities and local people. Devolution deals provide this opportunity. I've always tried to maintain a positive outlook despite the most difficult of challenges. To those who become drawn into a glass half empty way of thinking, it's worth bearing in mind the esteemed Albert Einstein 'In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity'. A pretty good mantra by which to approach the future for local government, growth challenges and the public service reform agenda.





What Brexit means for HR directors

Michael Burton looks at how – or whether – Brexit will impact on the public finances and advises HR chiefs to reassure their staff that they must ‘keep calm and carry on’

The June PPMA conference seems to belong to another era. As we networked over the awards dinner at Aston University few of us believed that the next day, 23 June, would prove to be a pivotal day in the UK’s history and that our world would never be the same again.

It is fair to assume that most senior public sector directors are pro-Remain and a recent *The MJ/Penna* poll indeed confirmed that an overwhelming majority of local authority chief executives wanted to stay in the EU. Certainly virtually all PPMA delegates at Aston were pro-Remain along with private sector suppliers. It is not hard to see why; with virtually all economists warning of a downturn in the economy should we leave the EU it was clear there would be a detrimental knock-on effect on the public finances.

So how will the Brexit vote affect local government and its staff?

Firstly, nothing changes legally in that we continue to be a member of the EU until Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty signalling we wish to leave is invoked. In fact most of us by now must be experts on Article 50 which the day before the referendum meant nothing to us.

However the uncertainty has already caused sterling and shares to slide while banks are warning of moving staff to Europe. Much more worrying is that overseas investors which might have been ready to invest in the UK will now hold back. This cannot fail to have some impact on GDP. George Osborne – who almost certainly will not be Chancellor by October – has abandoned his threat to hold an Emergency Budget leaving any decision on the public finances to his successor, depending on what the Office for Budget Responsibility concludes for the Autumn Statement. However he

has still emphasised that taxes will rise and there will be more spending cuts. He might even have added ‘I told you so.’

Both the Treasury and the Institute for Fiscal Studies warned that Brexit would lead to a drop in GDP requiring a further round of spending cuts and tax rises to offset the fall in tax revenues. The national debt is still high at 80% even if the deficit is down to 3%. Before the result IFS director Paul Johnson warned that ‘given that leaving the EU is likely to reduce growth the public finances would suffer. That would mean higher borrowing in the short term and higher taxes or lower spending in the long-term.’

HR directors will need to reassure their staff that we are not at the end of the Brexit process but only the beginning. Indeed I would argue that the obstacles to leaving the EU are so immense it will never happen. Parliament

itself is pro-Remain and is unlikely to accept any agreement with the EU that jeopardises the single market.

So far EU leaders have said there will be no single market without freedom of movement. The Brexiteers sold their gullible supporters a pack of lies, that somehow Brexit would mean we could leave the EU but have all the benefits of a single market. I can see another referendum coming...



Michael Burton is editorial director of *The MJ* and *The MJ.co.uk*



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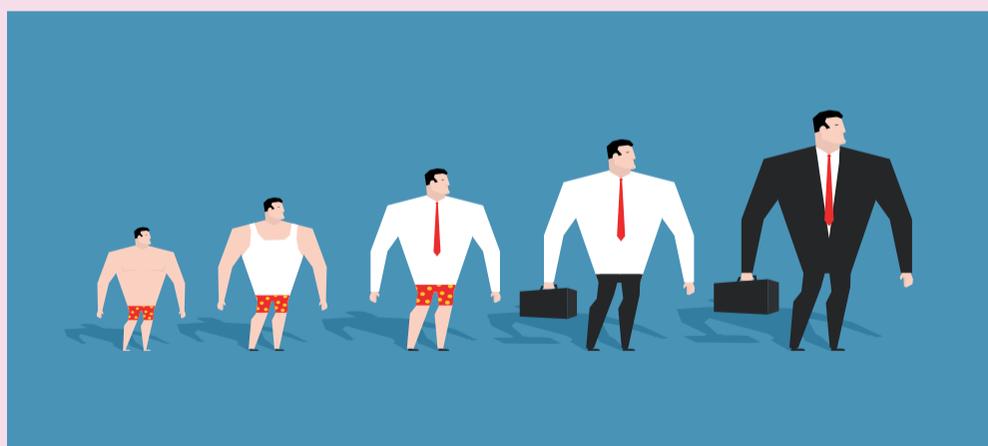
Make local focal to devolution

Mark Hawthorne urges central government to tap into the 'energy and enthusiasm' of local government if devolution proposals are to succeed

Devolution is one of those words that we in local government have a habit of latching onto as the game changing concept that is going to revolutionise the world as we know it. Like the latest fashion fad, it's the must have of the season – only like all fashion fads, there's an eerie sense we've been here before.

And that's my problem with the current devolution narrative, the sense of revolutionary fervour, the desire to tear everything up and build anew, sort of misses the point that we've arrived here not because of some innovative new thinking from central Government but the fact that local government itself has evolved so much over the last five years.

It wasn't that long ago that Total Place was the buzz word of the moment, or when everyone was talking about becoming 'commissioning' councils. The fact is that local government is not the stale, never changing, beast that so many in Whitehall think it is. It's instead a constantly evolving ecosystem, ever-changing to meet the new demands it's facing, against a



backdrop of ever tighter public finances.

And it's through that backdrop I project myself forward over the next 12 months. Local government needs to go back to its core argument, that we are best placed to deliver real change, based on services built around individuals and communities – not governmental silos and institutions.

From our vantage point we can see where the system fails to mesh together, and through numerous pilots like Total Place

and Troubled Families we have proven how better outcomes can be achieved. We have



Mark Hawthorne is leader of Gloucestershire CC

evolved to be more than just civic leaders, and have emerged as leaders of whole place.

Indeed if you look at the devolution documents being put forward by councils up and down the country, what you see are common themes around education and skills, health and social care, economy and growth. These are not coincidences; they are a result of councils who know what change is required to improve outcomes for their residents – and know what *local* solutions are needed to deliver

that lasting change.

And yet a cursory glance at the devolution deals announced at the last Budget would show a cut and paste affair which suggests that participants ordered their devo deals on the treasury equivalent of a McDonald's Menu screen – and not through a process of genuine discussion on what's best for their place.

What's missing from these is the energy and enthusiasm that emerged across local government when the devolution debate started. That sense of councils taking the next evolutionary steps on their journey to deliver better outcomes for their residents. The desire to work together with other public sector partners, both local and national, to take on the big challenges facing the public sector today.

And so as I look forward to the next 12 months, my hope is that local government rediscovers its evolutionary voice and that instead of pursuing the mantra of 'what can national government do for us', instead return to its core strength of 'what can we do together to improve our communities'.



Integration nation

Mike Emmerich looks at the important role of distributed leadership in tackling the challenge of health and social care

I would be very surprised if there is a bigger or more frequently discussed challenge in public service than the integration of health and social care. And yet until quite recently, the balance was very heavily skewed towards talking with precious little actual integration to speak of save a few small local pilots. This is going to have to change. There are reasons for optimism that it can.

The advent of devolution may be one of the catalysts for unlocking reform. For the first time in the careers of most, council chief executives are now working across their boundaries, often using models of decentralised leadership and cooperation to forge newly devolved service and funding models in ways that would have seemed impossible just a few years ago. This is not just an activity for officers but for members too. The practice of distributed political leadership, one of the lesser known features

of the Greater Manchester model is finding favour in other areas too as a way of developing common solutions to shared problems, creating new and powerful alliances, overcoming traditional enmities in the process.

It is a small leap from this into using the same models of working across health and local government leadership teams. The idea is a simple one: that the leadership roles are divided by portfolios or themes; leaders take responsibility for developing and implementing proposals in different areas once agreed by all parties; and, as a result, each council and NHS organisation has some skin in the game of all the others. By definition it forces each of the parties to own the problems and constraints of the whole. It isn't easy. It requires confident politicians and Trust Boards, public service leaders with vision and commitment along with a good deal of time and effort.

It isn't just that there is an

opportunity. There is a financial need too. For the first time ever, integrating health and social care looks to be both necessary and the line of least resistance. There has never before been a need great enough to make the pain involved worthwhile. The usual approaches: spot purchasing care and sweating the NHS asset are not open in the way they once were. Care budgets are tighter than anyone has ever known them with the NHS in record deficit.



Mike Emmerich is founding director, metrodynamics.co.uk

All across the country NHS and local government leaders are looking at how to maximise the effectiveness of spending. Unsurprising then that integrating health and social care features heavily in Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs), is on the shopping list of areas looking at devolution, and for most council finance directors is the Christmas present they dream of as they contemplate the next round of council cuts. But without fresh thinking we'll end up going round the same loop again.

So distributed leadership looks like an approach that could work and the need is there to make it worth the effort of trying. But integration is not going to be easy. Viewed too simplistically integration requires that councils or trusts give up their legal duties to one another whilst retaining legal duties and risk. This is clearly difficult territory for any accounting officer. But distributed leadership

is a means both by which such issues can be aired and for organisational boundaries to be renegotiated in more subtle and sophisticated ways. It is a way for councils and NHS organisations to identify quick wins as well as planning longer term change.

Centrally driven programmes of change haven't delivered what's required. What's needed is practical action on the ground. And I think the conditions precedent are coming into place. Local government devolution, the advent of STPs and the rather more devolutionary *NHS Five Year Forward Review* alongside a profound and ongoing budget crisis all make change possible and necessary.

But from what I've seen in the places across the country where we've worked in this way, distributed leadership holds real promise for catalysing the change we so very much need to see in practice.





Let's keep the wheels turning

Karen Camilleri provides a transport recruiter's perspective on the impact of devolution

Increasingly in our engagement with clients we are receiving a wealth of enquiries that are centred around exploring how public sector bodies are going to work through their new devolved responsibilities.

A key challenge we know they face is one of capability and readiness. Having not focused on the delivery of transport services for some time means a distinct lack of skills and gaps in this area. Another area of focus and one that needs to be done right is stakeholder engagement. This is crucial to secure vital funding and revenue streams from Government and other streams and schemes for example in conjunction with local commercial operators, but also with the passengers and users of the service.

Do public sector bodies have enough senior leaders with the strategic skills to inspire and lead their workforce to come up with new ways of working that will engage with their local communities at one level and yet bring in a serious

and sustainable revenue streams at another level? Is partnership working across geographical boundaries being encouraged and best practise shared or is this bring done in competition and in silo?

There are many ways this can be addressed: coaching and mentoring can be of great value to upwardly promote and bolster existing teams. There has to be a balance between constantly reaching for outside hires and investing in existing staff.

A common trend that we are seeing is the use of very senior players from the industry who have operated in the commercial transport

sector being utilised on a call off contract to support and road test the strategy around devolution and forge relationships with the deliverers of the service.

This resource is being used sparingly and with a view to developing capacity internally within these public service organisations, to boost confidence and to ensure the thinking around strategy is robust. These contracted hires are short term and often part time. At the same time right at the other end of the spectrum we have to ensure we have a pipeline of new entrants into the transport market via the apprenticeship route.

This is a real opportunity for local government and the wider public sector to provide these opportunities in transport to a wider audience from more diverse backgrounds, not just traditional ones, and create a more balanced workforce gleaned from all sorts of backgrounds. To achieve all this they need strong leadership and direction and to start making that happen they need to invest now.



Karen Camilleri is sector lead, transport and infrastructure, executive interim, Penna



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Making individuals feel valued is a major part of keeping our workforce engaged, says Martin Rayson

As I was reflecting on the highly successful and thought provoking seminar held by the PPMA, one of the themes that struck me was the extent to which we recognise our workforce as a collection of very different individuals, each with their own needs and wants, driven by their particular circumstances and motivations.

Whether it is in terms of

contract arrangements, the way we reward or the ways that we engage and communicate, we need to show greater flexibility, to tap into the individuality of our people. And expectations that we will show flexibility if we want to attract, keep, and motivate our talent are growing. Someone at the seminar told me of an employee who wanted their working life to consist of stints of working of around three

years and then a year away from work, travelling. When you think about it, this is not



Martin Rayson is director of HR and OD, The Nursing and Midwifery Council

an unreasonable response when faced with the possibility of having to work much longer than previous generations.

To be able to offer greater flexibility though, we need a level of insight into our staff that we do not currently have. Lucy Adams said many insightful things, but none more so than that those businesses who apply the same techniques for understanding their customers to understanding

their staff enabling them to inspire loyalty. This means a complete departure from some of our traditional methods of getting a view of our workforces as individuals and almost certainly will mean abandoning the 'one annual survey'. We need to find ways to better understand our people as individuals and then be able to differentiate our employment offer to reflect what they want from work.

There are, of course,

practicalities in meeting everyone's needs, but perhaps it is about making everyone feel valued as an individual. There are also idiosyncracies and I was amused by Lucy's story of the person who said she could not possibly relocate to the North because she was a vegetarian. Her individual package might need to include a briefing on the fact that they grow vegetables north of Watford and there are even one or two vegetarian restaurants!

Hard facts and HR

Yvonne Skingle and Tom Baker say customer and staff information needs to be more closely aligned in an era where data is more important than ever

Open data, data sharing, use of data for smarter outcome based commissioning are part of the rhetoric and debate that surround the future of local public service.

Knowing what communities want from the public sector and understanding more about our service outcomes and workforce have to be top priority as we move towards the adoption of new models of public service delivery.



Yvonne Skingle is Director at Penna Executive Search and PPMA National Policy Lead



Tom Baker is Business Development Director – Smart and Healthier Cities at BT Global Services



It is the view of many that public sector HR hasn't had the greatest of track records of being the 'top of the league' for using data for decision making. HR needs to build understanding about the increasing role that data, its use and application will have in shaping our workforce and

their skills.

There is an acceptance that there is a need for a stronger focus on evidence based commissioning but what could this mean in terms of the public sector workforce? Our need to be certain in the decisions we make has never been more acute, either

in terms of organisational models or the delivery of integrated care.

Recently we debated the linkage between data, information and the workforce, talking about data and its use, how we share it within the public sector and beyond and what this could

mean for the shape of things to come.

When there is a focus on cost, evidence is key and understanding outcomes is imperative. In a sector like ours where people are our primary cost is now the time for HR to embrace the data revolution?



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