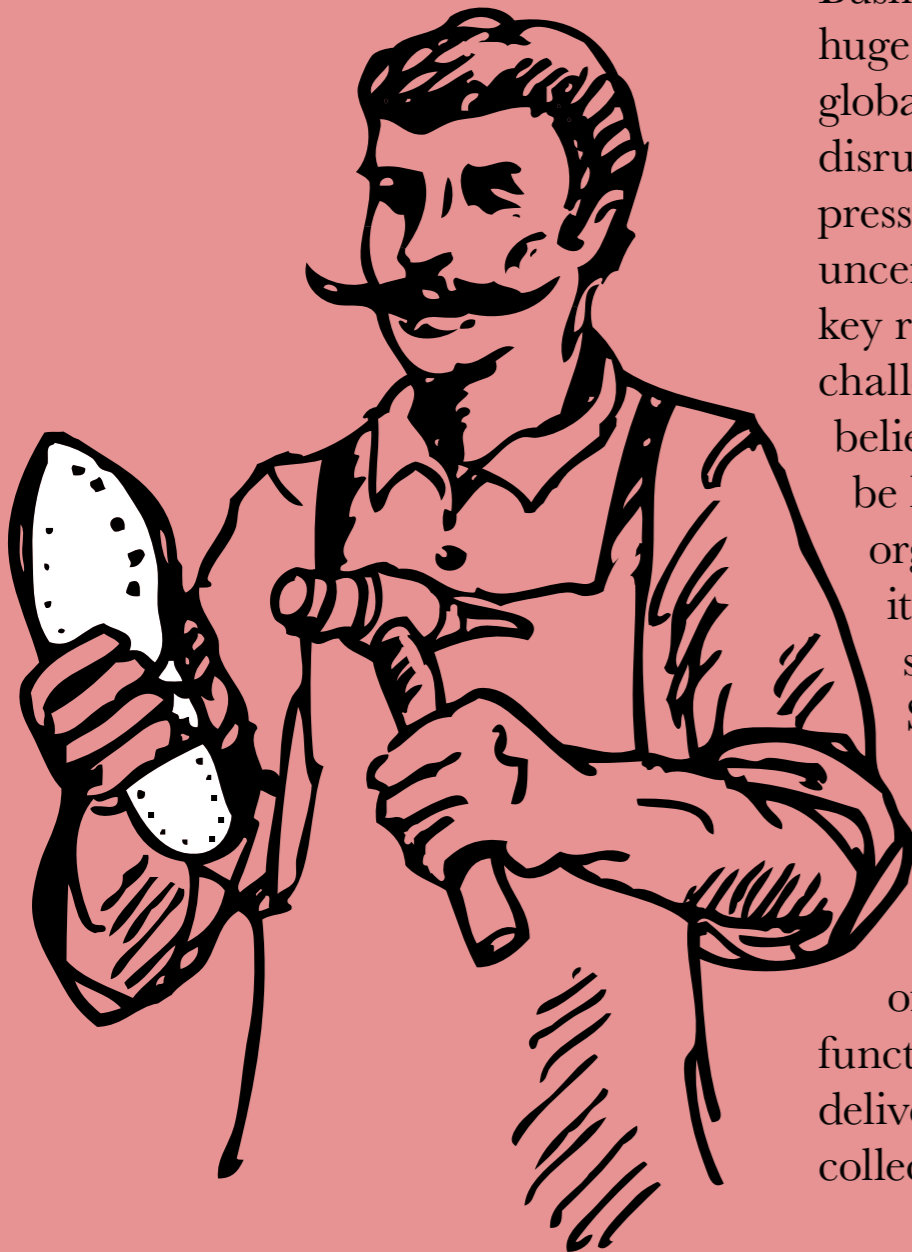


are we cobbler's children?

Businesses in 2016 face huge challenges from globalisation, technology disruption, demographic pressures and political uncertainty. HR has a key role in meeting these challenges and I strongly believe that HR would be letting down the organisation, of which it is part, if it doesn't step up to the plate. Stepping up to the challenge depends on many things but above all it depends on the capability of people in the function at every level to deliver individually and collectively.



The challenge is finding the time and resources to develop the function while being under increasing pressure to deliver, often within a smaller budget. This is perhaps the biggest challenge of all because if you don't find the time and resources the danger is you won't meet the challenge. At best the function will underperform. At worst the business will find someone else to meet their needs.

Recently I carried out some interviews to look at how organisations are building this capability within their HR functions. One, not unique, Head of Talent told me that her biggest frustration was that *"The hardest function to get buy-in from is HR. They don't like doing it to themselves...they don't always practice what they preach"*. They talked the right words about development but could never find the time or budget to systematically and rigorously manage talent across the function or more worryingly even invest time in their own personal development. As someone rather quaintly put it *"In terms of our development...we're like a hairdresser with a rubbish haircut"*. So, are we rubbish hairdressers or cobbler's children?

Whilst I did observe some functions underinvesting, I am fundamentally optimistic as I observed an increasing number of organisations that are grasping this challenge. In each case I observed a small, but key, set of things these organisations are doing that sets them apart.

They have a long-term commitment to developing the capability of the HR function and the people within it.

They have a talent/capability process applied within HR that is:

- developmental in its ethos
- a partnership between the organisation and the individual
- a balance between buy and build
- owned by the HR Leadership Team
- applied consistently over time
- rigorously followed through.

They have a clear model of what will be required to be successful in the HR function, in their organisation, in the future, that is:

- applied rigorously using proven predictive tools in all assessments (internal and external, senior and junior)
- the basis of a menu of development opportunities including:
 - development programmes, both generic and HR (something CRF Learning will be working to create over the coming months)
 - career moves including into line roles
 - project-based learning
 - mentoring and involvement of senior HR leaders
- communicated clearly so people understand what they need to learn and do to succeed.

In my research I found that the critical success factor that differentiates the successful HR functions, in terms of developing their capability and individual career offer, is their long-term ethos and focus on sustaining their investment until it really bears fruit. This ethos is one of investing in the development of the function rather than simply leaving it up to market forces or individual initiative.

Where there is a commitment to developing the capability of the function that is sustained across the economic cycle and linked strongly to a future vision of what the organisation requires from HR, I see much stronger evidence that they are building sustained and effective HR capabilities.

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