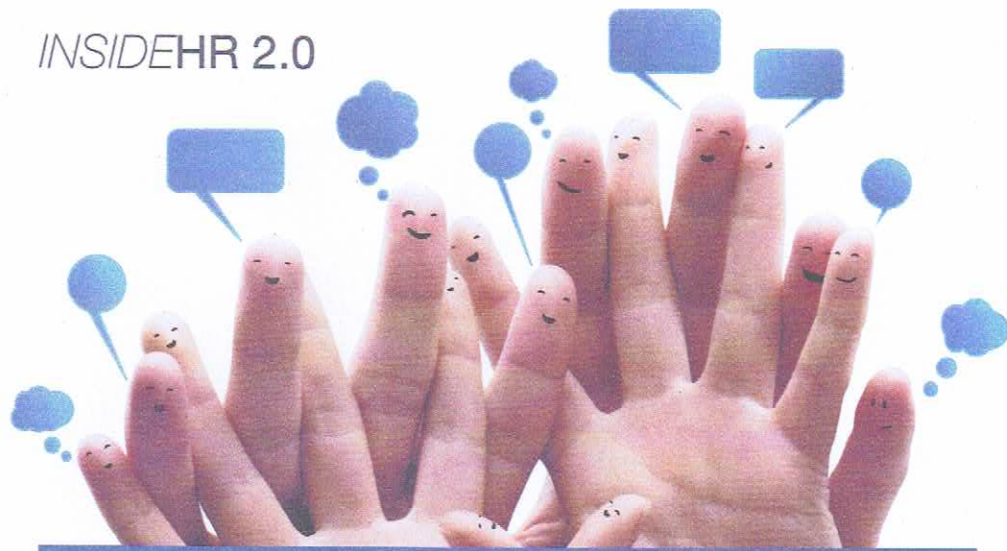


INSIDEHR 2.0



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

LOOKING BACK. LOOKING FORWARD.

Why is HR always on its toes? Perhaps it's because the world of work never stands still.

Wouldn't it be nice if yesterday's problems became today's solutions? Not so, which is why this issue is all about providing some context on how working lives have developed in recent years and what we should anticipate in the years to come.

First up on page three is a lesson on how working conditions and lifestyle have changed over the last 60 years under the reign of our Queen. Interestingly, despite frugal post-war conditions, in 1952 HR managers actually had it easier because we really all were in it together.

For the history buffs, also see how workers under King Henry VIII were more concerned about scythes and falling haystacks than access to TV and technology!

Looking forward, Alison Maitland, co-author of Future Work, says the way we work today is ready for an overhaul (page four).

Her argument is that work needs to become more flexible, partly due to a younger workforce demanding complete autonomy from the office. But here's the problem: many organisations still cling to a rigid model of fixed working time better suited to the Industrial Age than the Digital Age.

Staying with the present, turn to page six to find out why working mothers are less likely to suffer from depression. Somewhat paradoxically, also see how workplace loneliness has become an important discussion point for HR.

There's a lot to think about in this issue.

But if you want to cut to the chase, start with HR 2.0 on this page. Michael Silverman reviews organisational network analysis which he says is the new thing for HR. You never know - it could revolutionise the way we use social media at work.

We hope you enjoy *insideHR* issue eight.



Matt Castle

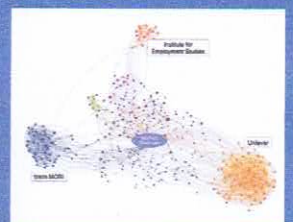
Matt Castle
Editor, *insideHR*

MAKING THE CONNECTION



Author: Michael Silverman

How HR can use "Organisational Network Analysis" to harness and track informal relationships for the benefit of their organisation.



A sociogram of my LinkedIn connections

In recent years, workforce analytics have become commonplace in helping organisations to make better business decisions based on evidence as opposed to gut feeling. However, there is still one huge area of organisational practice where instinct still reigns supreme – supporting social networks of informal relationships.

Most people would agree that the neat organisational charts that are so pervasive in organisations rarely reflect the way that people actually interact to get things done. So although HR practitioners acknowledge the impact that the "invisible" web of informal relationships has on organisational effectiveness, few actually put any effort into assessing and supporting connections amongst their workforce.

It would appear that HR practitioners have been taught in their professional certification, or have learned from experience, that they can't do much about social networks. After all, how can you support something that's invisible?

When HR practitioners *do* attempt to foster collaboration, many wrongly assume that supporting connections between people is simply a matter of enhancing communications between them. The last thing people want in today's world of information overload is more information.

The idea of social networks and social network analysis is nothing new. It was in the 1930s that sociologists first started to draw diagrams (called sociograms) of nodes connected to each other by lines. Yet, it is only due to recent advances in data analysis capabilities and, of course, social media that network analysis is starting to capture the attention of the HR community.

In addition to a lack of awareness, one of the main sticking points that HR needs to start recognising is the distinction

between two specific types of data. The vast majority of data that HR captures is *attribute* data – these relate to the properties or characteristics of employees (e.g. attitudes, behaviours or their demographic characteristics). In contrast, *relational* data are the ties that connect employees to each other – they cannot be reduced to the properties of employees themselves.

In its simplest form this can just be whether people know each other (e.g. think of your friends on Facebook). But any type of relationship can be assessed depending on which questions are asked (e.g. How much do you communicate with this person? How much influence does this person have? How often do you turn to this person for advice on important decisions?) The list is endless.

When network analysis is conducted in an organisational setting, it is often referred to as Organisational Network Analysis (ONA). ONA can be an effective tool to look at a variety of issues such as: dealing with bottlenecks, improving the ability to identify opportunities, supporting important connectors or promoting innovation. In addition to visually inspecting the resulting sociograms, there are also several network statistics that can be calculated to provide insight into the various roles and groupings in a network.

With the relentless advance of social media in organisations, relational data will be increasingly available to organisations that wish to bolster their workforce analytic capabilities through the use of ONA. But before this can happen, there needs to be a concerted effort by the HR community to raise the awareness of network analysis and its application to organisational effectiveness.