

NURTURING THE
future
OF WORK

HOW ORGANIZATIONS EMPOWER TALENT



ELAINE ARDEN

Chief Human Resources Officer

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TAKING A HUMAN APPROACH TO THE FUTURE OF WORK



With assets of \$3 trillion and operations in 64 countries and territories at 31 December 2021, HSBC is one of the largest banking and financial services organizations in the world. The company has a customer base of approximately 40 million and employs around 220,000 full-time equivalent staff.

Elaine Arden joined HSBC in 2017 as its Chief Human Resources Officer. Prior to that, she was Group HR Director at RBS (now NatWest) and Direct Line. With over 25 years of experience, Elaine has been responsible for various aspects of HR across several business verticals, including IT, Credit Cards, and Asset Finance. She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Banking in Scotland (CIBOS) and a member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

The Capgemini Research Institute spoke to Elaine about managing talent across geographies, closing skills gaps, and building an inclusive and collaborative culture to improve business outcomes.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF PEOPLE STRATEGY

What are the key elements driving the people agenda at HSBC?

— I think it's useful to divide the people agenda into two areas of focus.

The first comprises reskilling, restructuring, and growing the business. Reskilling is essential for the future skills we need to deliver on our strategic plan. On restructuring – HSBC is constantly transforming. As a recent example, we radically downsized our operations in Europe and the US to support the shift in capital to Asia in 2020. To support growth, we have big hiring plans to build robust capabilities in Asia.

The second area focuses on cultural change: fostering diversity and inclusion with our global reach and footprint, future-proofing the workplace culture and strengthening leadership to set the strategic direction of the organization.



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Chief Human Resources
Officer, HSBC

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LEARNING AND TALENT ALLOCATION AT HSBC

How does HSBC encourage dynamic talent allocation and skills development?

— We support our employees in developing the digital, data, and sustainability skills that will be most important in the longer term.

We're providing our employees with a learning platform that gives us a framework for skill-building at scale. Employees are able to train, upskill, and attain qualifications in a way that is tailored to benefit their professional trajectories.

We have set a core curriculum that helps them develop structured learning journeys focused on in-demand skills. For instance, the Sustainability Academy offers programs that are accredited by external bodies and instill everything from very specific change to a high-level understanding of current sustainability imperatives.

Executive Conversations

We also have an internal talent marketplace that 140,000 employees use. It's a game-changer: connecting talent and skills, at scale, across the business. It empowers people and democratizes access to work by disrupting traditional internal hierarchies and breaking down silos.

We are committed to redeploying employees affected by our restructuring programs; almost a quarter of employees affected in this way found new roles within HSBC in 2021, up from 14% in 2020.

How does HSBC use its internal talent marketplace to overcome cultural and geographical barriers and support collaboration?

— We selected around 10,000 employees from the technology team based in India to introduce the digital talent marketplace platform, as, by the nature of their training, they were already thinking of skills and projects in this way. Following a successful pilot, we were able to go live with the talent marketplace for another 90,000 employees across four markets. We will make it available to all our employees worldwide by Q1 2023. Anecdotally, I have heard a lot of good things, and we are also looking at quantitative data to see how the system is working. We will examine outcomes across markets and verticals as we scale. But, overall, we are keen to keep it loosely structured, giving people freedom to explore new tasks and roles.

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THE PRODUCTIVITY PUZZLE

How can organizations improve productivity in the hybrid era?

— Organizations rely on their people to connect with customers; consequently, they need to make sure that their people are happy with their choice of employer and work environment. We're moving away from traditional targets, like days spent in the office; productivity should be measured in terms of customer outcomes, team cohesion, and social capital.

We trusted people through the lockdown, and they delivered. So, why suddenly take that trust away? It's easy to focus on the extremes, pointing to the few employees who did not respond positively to the office re-opening. But it's never a good idea to design your whole approach for the outliers. The best way to improve both organizational health and individual well being is to offer a range of flexible working options and support teams in finding the right balance between office and remote working.

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We want to maximize the autonomy and empowerment that lockdown and remote working brought, and then get the benefits of “together” work and great workplaces – I can’t stress enough that human connections count.

We have learned that one size doesn’t fit all; hybrid means employees in most roles can choose the best way to get work done for their teams, their customers and themselves.

81% OF EMPLOYEES SPEAK FAVORABLY ABOUT HSBC’S APPROACH TO FLEXIBLE WORKING TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY AND MANY VALUE IT AS A KEY REASON TO RECOMMEND HSBC AS A GREAT PLACE TO WORK.¹

Executive Conversations

It's important to allow teams to take time to try things, discover what works best. We have 220,000 people in over 60 countries; that's a lot of different markets and business cultures to consider! Instead of trying to enforce a common framework, we decided to allow managers to implement hybrid working at team level, focusing on flexibility, both for the employee and the customer.

Our engagement survey revealed that our employees worked flexibly even before the pandemic and our hybrid approach takes this a step further; 81% of employees speak favorably about HSBC's approach to flexible and hybrid working and many value it as a key reason to recommend HSBC as a great place to work. And 86% of people managers say their teams have the balance between remote and office working right.¹



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¹ HSBC's Future of Work survey, June 2022.

INSTILLING A CULTURE OF TRUST

How can organizations nurture a sense of community among their remote workforce?

— Organizations need to elevate workplace experience by equipping managers to implement the initiatives they know will support their teams, and by creating even more flexible and digitally enabled workspaces. We have redesigned workplaces to build social capital, with a strong focus on new joiners. In our employee engagement survey, we use a “hybrid effectiveness index” to track the benefits of hybrid working. By monitoring the outcomes, we intend to drive trust between employees and their managers and colleagues, productivity and customer focus, and a sense of social belonging and well being at work.

We need to be culturally and geographically sensitive and adapt our approach depending on where in the world our teams are based. For instance, although Hong Kong and the UK aren’t hugely different in terms of working cultures, Hong Kong is a much smaller city with shorter commute times and a higher proportion of intergenerational households. The UK workforce is geographically more dispersed, and employees are less likely to live with their families. So, the work-life balance and requirements for one set of employees could be quite different from that of another, even where there are superficial similarities.

We run an executive leadership program to align our leaders’ personal objectives with corporate goals and foster human connections, offering executive education and training, using both internal and external experts. The program has helped leaders build trust and to bring together a global community of leaders who, day to day, are geographically distant.



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Chief Human Resources Officer,
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