



## How the Customer Experience Revolution is changing the role of HR Professionals

*Published in NZI HR Magazine*

*Issue: December 2012 – January 2013*

*Page: 22-23*

*Jennie Vickers, a freelance writer and business lawyer has just returned from Oracle OpenWorld in San Francisco. Jennie spent her time at OOW sitting in on the Customer Experience (CX) and talent management sessions, to see for herself if finally CX and talent support are ready to come together to help her clients grow their businesses.*

*This article looks at the latest research and buzz around CX, the re-emerging priority being given to employee experience, and the implications of these revolutions for HR professionals seeking to add value to their organisations.*

CX is not a new phenomenon but it is back on the table. CX has been around as a trend and imperative for more than 10 years. If the buzz at OpenWorld is anything to go by, it's finally here to stay. HRINZ's own 2004 Conference included a visionary presentation called "HR's Challenge. Creating a Winning Customer Experience". Fast forward to 2012 and we are at Oracle OW in San Francisco with 2 1/2 days devoted to CX as if it were the new kid on the block.

It seems that while the challenge and opportunities were identified by marketers years back, only a comparatively few global businesses seized the initiative, gave it a go and were really successful in implementation. Listening to 6 days of conference presentations, it was the discussion around data challenges that seemed to give the clue as to why so many aspired to CX but so few delivered. Data, a proliferation of databases and insufficient clarity has hampered many of the best efforts. In this context, transforming HR from an administrative chore, to an authentic source of competitive advantage, maybe was also too big an ask. Platitudes of "our people are our most important asset" abound, but too few are backed by the systems needed to support turning the platitude into a truth.

In researching this article I asked a couple of HR Professionals what their dream job looked like. I can confirm that they did not say administration, processing data or acting as a postbox or grim reaper! What they did describe was being part of the core executive team, having a pivotal role in evolving happy cultures, a say in strategic development (particularly where talent was involved) and being part of a team nurturing and developing employees to achieve greatness.



If this is a dream job description for many, it does pose the question of how many HR Professionals have a dream job and if not, why not and whether the changes under way, will finally help HR Professionals live the dream.

Research into the desirability of good CX is delivering a consistent message. Research in 2011 and 2012 by Forrester Research Inc. affirms that we really have arrived into the age of the customer. Their findings include the confirmation that the removal of competitive barriers as a result of the web and the commoditisation of so many products and services, has led us to the position that CX is now the number one differentiator of businesses. The correlation between CX and loyalty is now so strong that it is impossible to ignore. With costs of 8x more to win a new customer than to keep an old one, the logic of CX is compelling.

This brings us nicely to the twin challenge of employee experience. Brian Curran of Oracle put it simply saying *“Happy employees drive happy customers and the first happy experience should be for your employees”*.

The evolution of HR Professionals to their desired dream job, helping create happy environments is going to be reliant on innovations enabling the shift of HR admin into the hands of line managers. Critically, it must be done in such a way that the managers accept the role willingly, as a result of a concurrent delivery of better systems and better data.

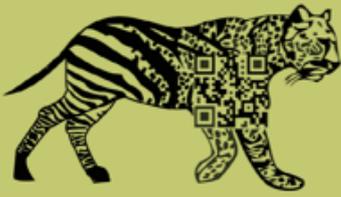
Taleo with many customers in NZ and Australia and approximately 5000 worldwide, was acquired by Oracle in February 2012 to beef up the Oracle talent management offerings and bring the cloud to Oracle’s HR.

At the OpenWorld conference they made 2 announcements, which will help the HR dream job evolve for some into a reality. First, was the arrival of Oracle Fusion TAP. Fusion TAP brings Taleo onto mobile devices, optimised for ease of use and in the cloud. The second was ongoing enhancement and commitment to the Taleo Business Edition (which is specifically for sub 3,000 employee businesses).

Demonstrations of Taleo on a tablet, showed me how much easier the evolution and change process will be when managers have good data, which is easy to access and available anywhere. Taking over admin, control and knowledge simultaneously is a much easier sell.

I canvassed a few CEOs to get their views on how the CX Revolution and a push for better employee experience could change their working relationship with their HR Professionals. The reaction was enthusiastic and positive. For example, Carl Rogers CEO of Asplundh New Zealand said:

*“It has been a source of frustration for many years that my HR team has been preoccupied with administration and process and has not had time and focus to*



*do a role that really adds value. While I recognise that access to quality data has often hampered them, it has not made my job easier.”*

*My vision is that HR Professionals in 2013 will take the charge on improving employee experience and therefore customer experience. They can do this by moving the admin and talent management safely into the hands of line managers where it should always have been. That way they will be freed up to take their rightful roles alongside CEOs and management teams, providing quality data and wisdom to help us see beyond the horizon. Managing talent needs to be treated more as an art than a science and with the science finally sorted they can focus on the art.”*

I predict that 2013 will be an exciting and thrilling year to be an HR Professional. As systems like Taleo come within the reach of more companies, the opportunities for those HR professionals who choose so, to come from behind the desk are growing. As the explosion of mobile devices and data on the go become a reality, we should see more managers taking the opportunities to DIY and free up HR for value-adding not pen-pushing work.

HR Professionals now have 3 imperatives to make the move to dream job a reality:

- Nurture an obsessive level of care around the security of personal and sensitive employee information. Particularly where data is going to be accessed on mobile devices. YouTube videos of 3 year olds hacking iPad passwords by learning finger sequencing are very entertaining, but do provide a reminder that line managers need really good and practical protections in place, to prevent nightmare inadvertent breaches. The thought of a pay rise or redundancy notice sent by a three year old makes me shiver;
- Fiercely defend the training budget, to ensure managers who are taking on their own talent management, spend enough time learning, not only the system functionality but also the talent management philosophies which will make all the difference to success or failure; and
- The need to work even closer with the IT professionals to ensure that the psychology of change, which underpins these massive shifts to manager control, are as well understood by IT as possible, so they design effective not destructive change processes into their architecture.

I finish with the wryest thing Mark Hurd (President of Oracle) said, speaking from his perspective as a CEO, about the opportunities Taleo presents to HR Professionals. He said it presented the opportunity to make them: *“More human and more resourceful.”* That sounds like the makings of a dream job.