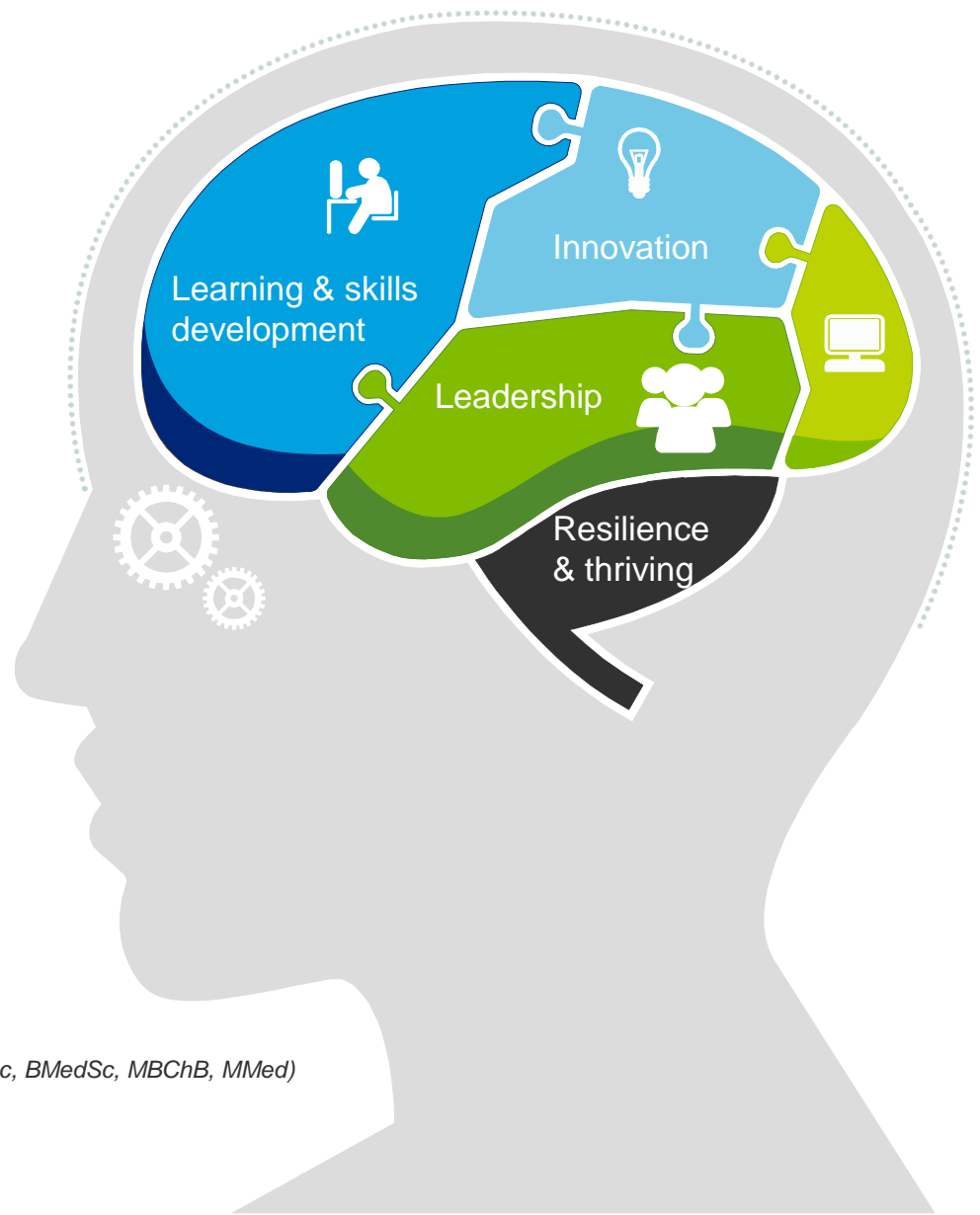


How to Reskill your company's HR Function With Proven Neuroscience



Problem Solving

“The HR and talent function are in the midst of a transformation...”

In the survey of 2,532 business and HR professionals in 94 countries, the 2014 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends Report identifies Reskilling the HR Function as one of the top three most urgent trends. The report suggests that “the HR and talent functions are in the midst of a transformation. HR is not making the grade as companies move away from HR as people administration to a focus on people performance.”

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Neuroscience provides a ground-breaking ‘molecule to behaviour’ perspective of the human factor that will lead to innovative ways to address the reskilling of the HR function, plus several other of the most urgent Human Capital trends identified in the Deloitte report. Exponential growth of knowledge in the neurosciences, coupled with renewed thinking in fields like neuropsychology and anthropology lead to new understanding of how the brain performs. Here are a few important insights that inform an understanding of brain performance in business:

1. Creativity is a whole brain operation

Creativity doesn't belong to the right brain only. It requires the whole brain. The neuroscientific definition of creativity is ‘to solve problems or fashion novel products that promote the survival or well-being of the group.’ In this sense creativity precedes innovation. Both left and right brain work together to be innovative and the emotional system is continuously involved to ensure we promote the group to which we belong. Neuroscientific understanding of the process of creativity and innovation provides new tools to enhance this sought after proficiency in business.

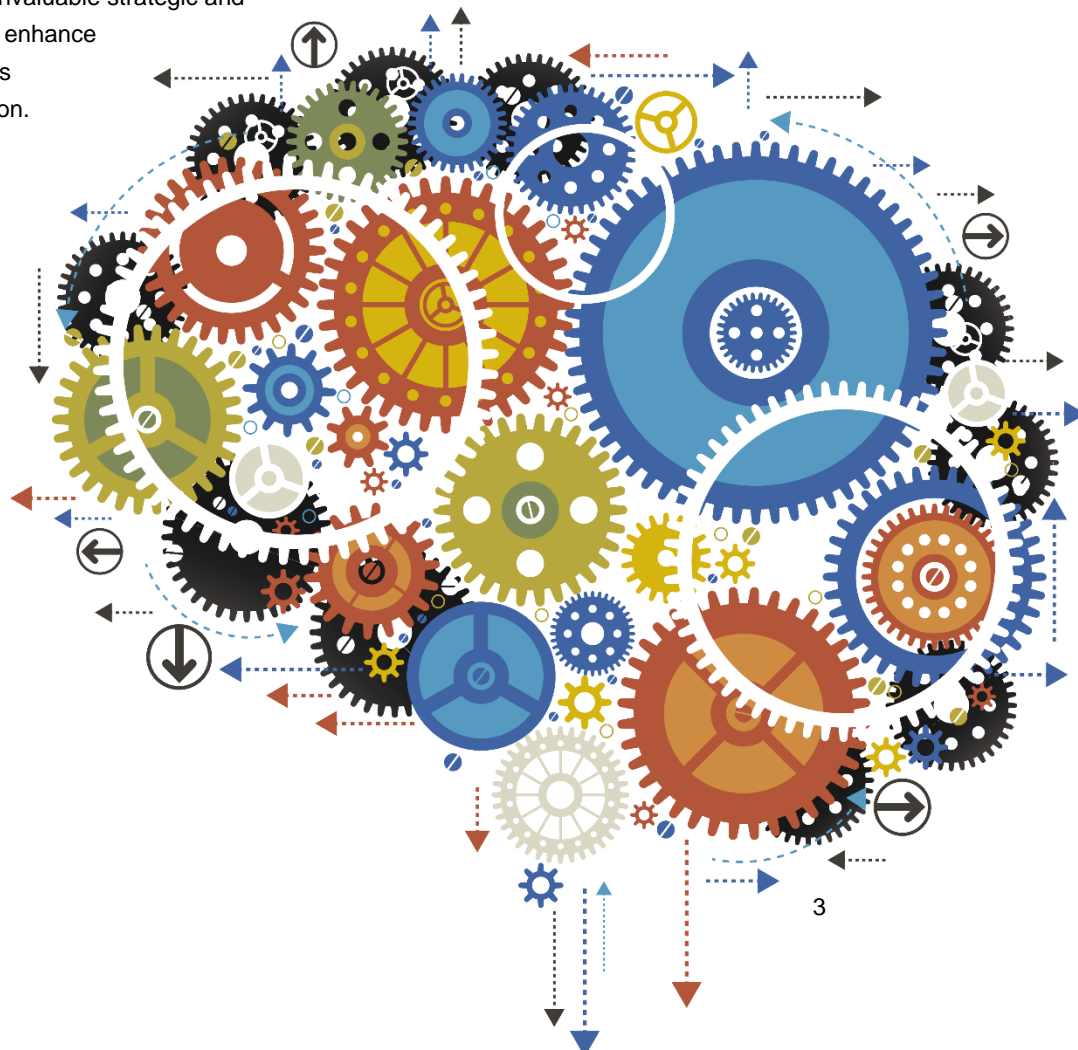
“Fairness and collective wellness are imperatives for the successful business...”

2. All decisions involve the emotional system

The idea that the emotional system drives irrational decision-making has been replaced by a new paradigm. The emotional brain is heavily involved and continuously instructive in the way we make decisions in everyday business. Fairness and collective wellness are imperatives for the successful business and essential for an ideal state of thriving. The brain might well view business as something in which ‘we allocate resources together and distribute these fairly among the group to keep us alive, ensure we survive and enable us to thrive in life.’ Today’s business leaders need to prioritise the softer emotional factors in the organisation and align strategies accordingly.

3. The brain is an unconscious problem solver

The brain is a vastly unconscious processor. Decisions are made in the unconscious. Problems are solved in the unconscious and new ideas arise while we are not consciously paying attention. This happens mostly during sleep. The brain is not a serial processor, but works in a multimodal fashion, continuously streaming information, and using learned knowledge as the building blocks of innovation. Understanding how the brain learns and innovates, especially in the unconscious, provides invaluable strategic and practical tools for HR to enhance organisational capacities of learning and innovation.



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4. The brain is an unconscious attention selector

The sole purpose of the brain is to keep us alive, ensure we survive and enable us to thrive in life. This is equally true for business, since we naturally aggregate into groups (organisations) to achieve this goal. Our brains are naturally organised to avoid threats and maximise perceived rewards. The brain unconsciously and continuously pays attention to the most basic cue that threatens its survival. In this sense we respond to threats many times more readily than to rewards, simply because a single threat can threaten our survival. Chronic stress can be viewed as the result of a brain under continuous perceived threat. Understanding what these threats are provides leadership with invaluable insight to reduce the organisational burden of chronic stress and its detrimental effects on thriving and productivity.

5. The brain can change

Until fairly recently, neuroscientists believed it was not possible to grow new brain cells. The concept of 'neuroplasticity' has revolutionised our current thinking of brain function, brain performance, and behaviour in general. Neuroplasticity refers to capability of the brain to alter its structure as and when needed. We now know we can grow new brain cells in certain areas, and we can grow new and stronger brain connections. This forms the neurobiological basis of the concept of a 'growth mind-set' and should form the foundation for enhancement of organisational performance. HR and organisational leadership can leverage this insight by gaining a working understanding of how growth factors can be enhanced through simple measures such as certain types of exercise, silencing the mind, and support of certain biological rhythms.

For a more detailed discussion relating to talent development through optimising brain performance within your organisation, contact Magda Ross (Manager – Integrated Talent Solutions) at maross@deloitte.co.za or on +2782 339 1745.

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