

# HR IN 2022

HOW TO EVOLVE IN  
AN ERA OF ONGOING  
COMPLEXITY

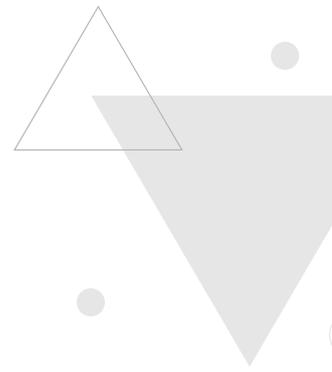


**HRzone**

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# Introduction

As we embark on 2022, we can confidently say the people profession is now well acquainted with relentless turbulence. The events of the past two years have caused the world of work to fundamentally change, leaving the HR function with no choice but to adapt accordingly.

Across the world, HR teams have had to navigate the transition to remote and then hybrid working. They have had to respond with urgency to a dramatic worsening in mental health and an array of other concerning wellbeing issues. They have had many a sleepless night due to labour shortages, the 'Great Resignation' and alarming skills gaps. More broadly, they have experienced greater pressure to make work more flexible and inclusive – with progress on both still required to see a positive impact.

This is not an exhaustive list, and it is not necessary to mention how and why this all came about (we all know). But it is important to acknowledge that we are now firmly in an era where complexity, uncertainty and crisis is the norm. The rapid problem-solving, bold leadership and agility that many in HR embraced back in March 2020 has solidified into a permanent skill-set requirement. And to sustainably exemplify these capabilities as new issues inevitably emerge will require novel thinking and approaches.



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## HR in 2022

Against this backdrop, HRZone's **HR in 2022** report brings together key guidance and strategies from three leading industry experts covering some of the most pertinent issues for the people profession in the bumpy year ahead.

1. Founder and Chief Energy Officer of PTHR, **Perry Timms**, provides a playbook for HR reinvention that befits an age of continual destabilisation and adaptation. He covers areas such as reskilling the profession, increased automation, agility and building robust partnerships.
2. MD of HR Rewired and HR Most Influential Thinker of 2021, **Shereen Daniels**, explores HR's role in enabling transformative company cultures and courageous leadership in order to tackle persisting global injustices.
3. Professor of HRM and Head of the Changing World of Work Group at Cranfield School of Management, **Emma Parry**, urges HR to make 2022 the year a more evidence-based approach to employee wellbeing is adopted. Parry provides insights into the five key drivers of workplace wellbeing and how to consider wellness in the context of the employee experience.

We hope you find these insights useful as you consider your direction of travel through 2022 – hopefully towards a destination in which the world of work is fairer, healthier and more productive.



**Becky Norman**  
Editor, HRZone

**HRzone**

# HR reinvention in 2022



**Perry Timms**  
Founder and Chief Energy Officer,  
PTHR

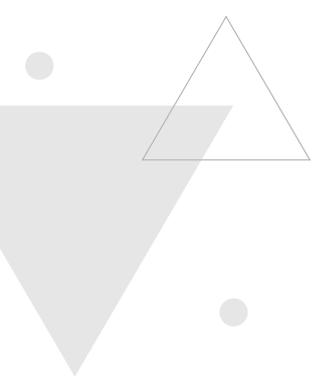
In an era of continual adaptation and turbulence, a fresh take on HR in 2022 will help give organisations a fighting chance of survival. To kick-start this feat, Perry Timms shares his playbook for reinventing HR.

As if a continuing, mutating pandemic wasn't already enough, we are still facing huge challenges in the HR and people profession. These include issues such as the **climate emergency; diversity, inclusion, equity, belonging and social justice**; and new paradigms for what **good work, great leadership, fairer reward and wealth distribution** are.

In addition, varying guises of a *Great Resignation* – or perhaps it is better framed as a *Great Reshuffle* or *Rethink* – has many a business leader and HR professional reaching for their 'War for Talent' articles from a few years back.

## It's all a bit different now

Work is often simplified to the exchange of financial reward for labour/effort/expertise. And yet time and again, studies show that purposeful work is not simply the domain of a privileged professional class. It's a fundamental need, right and pursuit for us all.



This is why the term **reinvention** is more apt than adaptation, or even transformation.

We require a reinvention of work – what it is, how it's done, where it's done, who does it and what they get from it.

And this is the domain of HR. Perhaps a more true domain than administrative and compliance-based people processes and actions.

In reinventing an entire professional field there is a temptation to provide a huge catalogue of rationale, modelling, suggestions and approaches. Yet, we have the time to write the shorter version because – let's face it – TL:DR (Too Long; Didn't Read) represents a shortcoming of our era – one that we must amend. More than ever before we need brevity, clarity and applicability.

## Reinvented HR

Firstly, let's say why it's **reinvented** and not any of the other adjectives like *disrupted*, *hacked* or even *transformed*. The Cambridge Dictionary definition seems more pertinent to a reinvented HR: ***"To produce something new that is based on something that already exists"***.

HR already exists in many guises. It will [therefore] need contextual reinvention so the playbook for reinvention is based on:

1. **Intention:** Declare our plans to reinvent HR. Make your 2022 strategy a place to really set out aspirations.
2. **Collaboration:** Seek input and co-creation from colleagues across the business on what they need reinventing.
3. **Capacity:** We need to create the space, time and resources to do the thinking, planning, designing and deployment of HR reinvention.
4. **Intelligence:** What do we know and what else do we need?
5. **Experimentation:** More prototypes and evidence-revealing ventures that help us reinvent things like recruitment, onboarding, reward, performance reviews, talent and career development, organisation design etc.
6. **Impact:** Better evidence of the value we add and create that is a much more sophisticated set of metrics beyond financial. Human, social, intellectual, material and environmental.

## Reskilling the profession

Alongside this playbook, our focus for 2022 should be on **reskilling the profession**. We absolutely have to create a new skills stack in HR. And we are in need of more **T-shaped HR and people professionals**.

The trunk of the T should hold traditional competencies and strengths in areas such as:



- Employment law
- Diversity and inclusion
- Mediation
- Coaching
- Business partnering
- Talent (acquisition, management, development)
- Organisation development

Alongside this, HR requires a new broader top section of the T in:



- Performance metrics and understanding value creation
- Data science and predictive analytics
- The psychology of learning and behavioural science
- Experience designers and an enhanced sense of meaning at work
- Organisation design and systems thinking
- Code and design engineering
- Agility, Agile and responsive systems of work

None of this will come easily but already there are programmes of learning outside of HR (for product management, agile project teams, marketing, data analytics etc) that we can tap into and acquire knowledge from.

2022 will need to be a year of investment in people professionals. Two years of admirably coping with chaos have revealed much to learn and a need to reinvent what a people professional is capable of.

## Increased automation and digitisation

In addition to reskilling the profession, it is about time we drove the automation and digitisation agenda, rather than reacting to ICT or Operational colleagues' programmes of action.

In addition, we must build our own automated and digitised routines with either people professionals who can design and code, or engineers brought into the people team to build our own platforms, apps and systems within our HR and corporate digital infrastructure.

However we do it, we need to go **beyond** the installation of an HR information system, some self-service options and continued use of basic information exchange applications like Email, MS Teams and Sharepoint. We must learn how to link to our corporate workflow management systems (CRM, ERP etc) so we can seamlessly integrate HR/people applications into the flow of work.

We can *buy, borrow, build or bot* but the key element in this quartet will be to **build** more ourselves. Build on what we have, build more of what we – and our colleagues in the business – need from digitised processes.

Automation and smarter use of digitised ways of working are crucial to creating continued capacity within HR and creating value for those who need us in more complex, high-touch, personable ways.

The agenda of 2022 to reinvent HR has to include enhanced digital capabilities.





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### **Embracing agility and fluidity**

As part of our capacity-creating plan, we need to climb on top of our work backlogs and Agile will help us do this. Saving time, culling unnecessary bureaucracy, shortening and strengthening the outcomes of meetings, bringing more creativity into shaping reinvented processes.

Agile helps us do things more inclusively, with a sustainable pace and not just more speed. It brings clarity and adaptability to create a more versatile way to work on what matters most when it matters most.

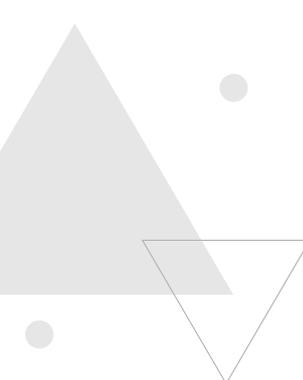
This year needs to see Agile becoming a regular mode for HR on projects, initiatives and, where relevant, core operational functions.

### **Building strong partnerships to evolve the business**

A key test of whether we have our 'reinvented HR' proposition right is to consider how much we see our business colleagues willing to help us design, develop and deliver it. If they are not enthused enough by our intent, there's a lack of relevance we need to address.

It's beyond a capacity issue – but that is important, as HR teams are busier now than at any time in the past 5+ years.

People who are impacted by HR's products and services (our users) should have a say in designing systems that are in their interests, whilst we can ensure compliance with fairness, legalities and progressive business practices.



Evolving businesses see their shared accountability and responsibility to shape for the future and a key consideration of that is how the systems of work, development, performance, inclusion and recognition create the conditions for people to do their best work in changing circumstances.

HR as a relationship broker, convenor and shaper feels more critical now than at any time in the past few decades.

2022's agendas for change, including the reinvention of HR, needs more collective participation and activism. This must be integrated into design, development and delivery to create the best chances of success in our most uncertain of times.

## **Reinventing HR is vital now more than ever**

Covid-19 continues to destabilise and we are getting used to continually adapting.

With that in mind, a stable but, paradoxically, adaptive HR function is needed now more than ever. The people challenges we are facing in business and work now far outweigh the technological and even financial drivers of recent times.

People matter, and it has become clear that means a fresh take on HR will help organisations both develop and deploy key talent to give the company a fighting chance of survival in these most turbulent times.

2022 is the year to produce something new that is based on something that already exists: reinvented HR.



# How to create a radically just workplace in 2022 and beyond



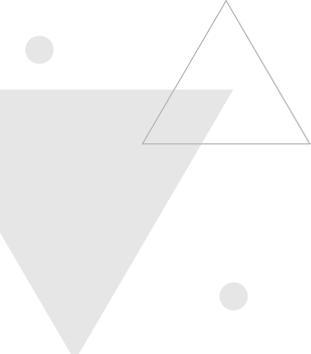
**Shereen Daniels**  
Managing Director  
HR Rewired

In 2022, the injustices of the world are as unrelenting as ever before. To drive positive change, business and people leaders must embrace this timely opportunity to model transformative leadership to build more radically just workplaces.

As we embark on 2022, one could argue it feels like the world is on fire.

There is so much global injustice, with increasing societal pressure to ensure that individuals, corporations, governments and community leaders take a proactive role in being part of the solution.

Yet many leaders can't help but wish they could operate their companies in isolation with what is going on in the outside world. We only have to look at the executive decisions made by certain tech companies to see there is some allure in picking and choosing the issues which can and can't be openly discussed in the workplace.



Many leaders only want to focus on issues that are conditional to feeling safe, impacting the majority of their workforce, and avoiding anything that, by overtly addressing, could cause reputational damage.

One example is Basecamp, where a third of employees quit their jobs after its CEO announced “societal and political discussions” would be banned from the company’s internal chat forums.

### **Do you have a conditional culture?**

In the UK, we see many examples of business leaders getting involved in politics. For example, when the lockdown was extended, there were campaigns, petitions and numerous posts to say ‘Retail Matters.’ The wording was deliberate, therefore the connotations were made very clear. People’s livelihoods were at risk, with businesses potentially ending up bankrupt and hard-working employees losing their jobs.



A third of employees quit their jobs after its CEO announced “societal and political discussions” would be banned from the company’s internal chat forums.



In this example I’m sure there was no hesitation to show public support, consequences be damned.

When there are issues affecting human rights or the ability to be treated fairly, there is an awkwardness, a fear of speaking out, of doing anything which might look too radical. Why? Because it doesn’t affect the ‘majority’ and/or because it isn’t universally acceptable to address it.

The challenge we’ve had to date with diversity and inclusion is that, as a profession, it’s never gone deep enough to examine the root causes of how the employee experience can differ so greatly due to characteristics not connected to colleague potential and performance.

We've accepted that showing we are inclusive is about celebrating cultural days or months, marching for Pride, having 'weeks' to raise awareness for certain issues, highlighting the different nationalities we have or ensuring our corporate literature shows people of all ethnicities happy, joyful and working together, even if that doesn't reflect what happens internally.

The real work to unpack why we struggle to embrace difference seems to elude us.

Creating racially just workplaces is going to take work, bravery, boldness and a new type of courageous leadership. But it will also take a different type of culture. One that isn't so fixed but instead flexes according to the changing needs of its employees. This type of culture is always adapting, led by leaders who put their stake in the ground, irrespective of how it may be perceived by others.

## **What does it mean to cultivate a transformative culture?**

We need to learn how to adapt together. To feel safe enough to talk about lived experiences, to feel brave enough to listen, learn and amplify the voices of those who are marginalised because of their difference.

We need to share and leverage power. Moving away from autocratic structures, which give power and influence to the most senior of individuals. Instead we need to think about how we can devolve that power, so that we are not inherently implying value to an organisation that is synonymous with seniority, job title and expertise.

Take inspiration from transformative justice – rather than punishing people for surface level behaviour, we need to find the roots of the harm together and make it impossible to resurface



## Reflective questions to help build a radically just workplace

- ▶ How can we make it easier for colleagues to do the right thing?  
To speak truth to power?
- ▶ How do we make it difficult to be a bystander? Create the right conditions that stop people from retreating into the safety of silence and looking the other way, because your environment values individualism over collectivism
- ▶ Is it possible to have a culture where people have deeply opposing views about how to treat people who are different? Are you brave enough to reestablish your values according to the world you want to live in versus the world we currently inhabit?
- ▶ How can we reduce the othering which occurs in environments where there is a homogenous group of employees coming together? Are you still referring to people who aren't white, cisgender as 'diverse'?
- ▶ Does it matter that we're only conscious of bringing other 'diverse' people together because we're worried about how it looks? Are you still thinking that you can hire your way into anti-racism and social justice? That a few more Black people is enough to signal you are doing the work?
- ▶ Do we understand the root causes of inequities? What do we really know about racism as a system? About whiteness as a social construct? Or are we shying away from that to focus on surface-level inclusion and belonging?
- ▶ How far have we embraced discomfort? Or are we spending most of our time trying to ease it?
- ▶ Are you focused on creating tools to tap into curiosity and self-discovery? Or are we forcing behavioural change through policy and compliance?
- ▶ Does our culture truly value collaboration? Or are we saying that, yet rewarding individualism and competition?
- ▶ Where is the misalignment with what we say versus what we do? And how are we holding each other, even senior directors, to account?

## From transformative cultures to transformative leadership

A transformative culture enables all of these questions to be explored.

A transformative culture recognises your workplace has to be progressive. There is a consciousness in decision-making ensuring that the way you do business has a positive impact on the planet and people.

It recognises political neutrality seeks only to preserve the status quo and that action is more important than sitting in silence because of discomfort.

A transformative leader enables action so we step out of repeating the same cycle of reacting to societal events.

A transformative leader is someone (you, I hope) who acknowledges there might not be a smooth risk-free path ahead, but there is an opportunity to ensure your culture allows for colleagues who are oppressed to be in an environment where they feel seen, heard, safe and treated fairly.

This is where HR has a perfect opportunity – to role model transformational leadership that in turn drives meaningful change.

## Useful resources



[What every leader ought to know before they begin their anti-racism journey](#) (HR Rewired TV)



[Moving beyond allyship: Five ways that companies can support the most marginalized employees](#) (Forbes 2021)



[How to promote racial equity in the workplace](#) (Harvard Business Review 2020)



# Is 2022 a new dawn for employee wellbeing?



**Emma Parry**

Professor of Human Resource Management and Head of the Changing World of Work Group, Cranfield School of Management

While employee wellbeing is now widely recognised as a boardroom issue, many organisations are still focusing on sticking plasters rather than addressing the root causes. As we embark on 2022, Professor Emma Parry explores what really drives employee wellbeing and how to deliver a more evidence-informed approach.

Over the past year, there has been growing evidence that employee wellbeing is finally evolving from being an HR issue to one which is discussed in the boardroom. In a 2021 CIPD survey, three-quarters of respondents reported that senior leaders had wellbeing on their agenda – up from 61% in 2020 (CIPD 2021). The reasons behind this are clear – the last two years have been tough for employees. With 79% of employees reporting burnout, and 20% reporting mental health problems for the first time, many employers have been forced to wake up to their responsibilities for employee wellbeing (Employee Benefits 2021).



## Working in a fast-moving, complex world

Let me encourage you for a moment to reflect on the additional demands that your employees might be facing in today's changing and increasingly complex operating context.

Take the move to remote and hybrid working. There is often an assumption that hybrid working is good for wellbeing as it potentially removes the need for a daily commute, allows people to work without distraction and can have positive effects on work-life balance.

However, the outcomes of working at home are not the same for all – it can lead to social isolation and the blurring of the boundaries between home and work. We have seen the rise of online presenteeism where employees feel that they are unable to switch off. It's also important to remember that not everyone can work remotely, so for those in front line roles, the comparison with office workers who have the choice to work at home may also negatively affect their wellbeing.

Let's also consider technological advancement. While technology often makes our lives easier, the long-term uncertainty in occupations that are seeing increasing automation and the need to upskill or reskill as the result of digitisation can also have a chronic impact on wellbeing.

These trends, coupled with the current pandemic and ongoing pressures around productivity are all potentially damaging. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that employers are beginning to move wellbeing up their list of priorities. Alongside this is the recognition that employee wellbeing plays a key role in employee retention, as employers battle with fears of the 'Great Resignation'.



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The need to upskill or reskill as the result of digitisation can also have a chronic impact on wellbeing.



## Wellbeing and the employee experience

What is clear to me is that approaches to wellbeing also need to change. Too often, organisations create standalone wellbeing initiatives, divorced from their wider approaches to employee experience. What we need is an integrated strategy that considers employee experience, engagement and wellbeing together.

Importantly, employers need to consider in detail how the employee experience can promote – or harm – employee wellbeing. To a large extent, wellbeing initiatives within organisations have focused on interventions that help individuals to develop aspects such as resilience and mindfulness. These approaches can be useful in highlighting the importance of wellbeing and in helping employees to manage stress but do not address the root causes of wellbeing issues at work.

Many of the common causes of poor wellbeing are work-based – almost half (49%) of respondents to a 2021 survey conducted by Ceridian cited high workload and just under a third (32%) pressure to meet deadlines, as catalysts for their burnout (Employee Benefits 2021). In addition, aspects such as low levels of support, poor leadership, a lack of positive work relationships and a negative workplace culture can also have a detrimental effect on wellbeing.

Organisations need to move away from reactive approaches such as mindfulness and yoga sessions, that aim to fix the person, to addressing the workplace drivers of poor wellbeing. It is important as HR professionals that we take the time to reflect on the employee experience in depth, to identify those aspects that might be detrimental to wellbeing and to proactively develop a culture that instead promotes positive employee experience and wellbeing together.





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### **Five drivers for employee wellbeing**

Many of the things that drive a healthy organisation and promote wellbeing align with those that also encourage a positive employee experience and high employee engagement. Five main aspects are essential to wellbeing within organisations. Employees must:

#### **1. Have the resources they need to do their job**

There is nothing more stressful than feeling that you don't have the practical, physical or mental resources to do your job. As mentioned above, excessive workload and constant pressure from deadlines are the key drivers of stress and burnout, therefore it is essential that we monitor and address these issues as appropriate.

#### **2. Feel safe and supported**

Organisational culture is as crucial for wellbeing as it is for employee experience generally. Thus, a focus on creating a culture built on trust, inclusion, psychological safety and belonging is key to maintaining wellbeing and to encouraging employees to share and discuss the challenges that they are facing and to improve their relationship with work.



### **3. Have the opportunity to make a difference**

Wellbeing is strengthened when individuals feel they are contributing, either to the organisation or more broadly to society and the people around them. Especially since the pandemic, we have seen a growing desire for meaningful work – the perception that we are doing something worthwhile in life is key to positive mental health.

Therefore, we also need to pay attention to the content and design of jobs so that they are meaningful to employees and consider how the organisation makes a difference to the world around it.

### **4. Have skills and experience that are recognised and valued**

Wellbeing can be damaged if people feel that their skills are no longer valued (such as if their role is automated), or that they are not learning and progressing in their careers. Development should therefore not only help people to manage their own resilience but also ensure that their skills remain relevant. Employees also need to be allowed the opportunity to use their competencies and be recognised and rewarded for these contributions.

### **5. Build positive work relationships**

Ultimately, relationships are the basis for positive wellbeing. Employees need constructive relationships with their line managers and opportunities to communicate, collaborate and socialise with their peers. This is particularly important, and might take more effort, in hybrid working environments where people are at risk of social isolation.

## **An evidence-informed approach to managing wellbeing**

It would be remiss of me not to emphasise the importance of data in driving an organisation's approaches to managing wellbeing. Three actions are important here.



### **1. Interrogate organisational data**

This can be about exploring the reasons behind absence rates, examining the results of employees, or conducting health risk assessments to understand the workforce's wellbeing. A strategy for this should be based firmly on an in-depth understanding of the wellbeing within the workforce. Technology plays a key role in this – by storing and supporting people analytics processes and collecting data through wearables or mobile applications.

### **2. Examine evidence for the effectiveness of wellbeing interventions**

Wellbeing has become big business and the world is full of claims about what a particular intervention can do. However, the evidence suggests that many wellbeing interventions simply don't work (HRZone 2021). We need to seek evidence of effectiveness, as well as consider what best fits with our employees' needs.

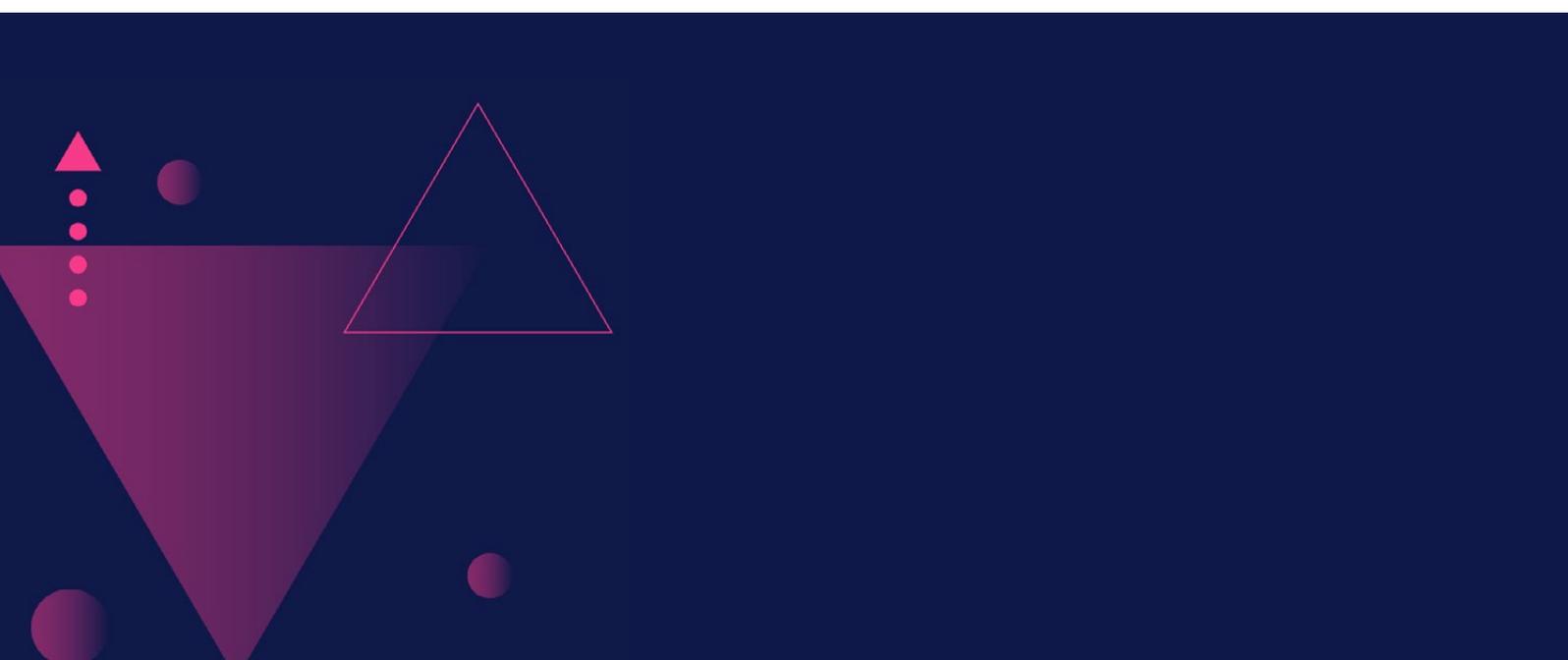
### **3. Listen to employees**

It is impossible to overestimate the value of regular and open conversations between line managers and their team members. This allows us to understand experience and wellbeing at an individual level and to move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches.

## **Employee wellbeing in 2022**

To summarise, the things that drive or damage wellbeing have not changed, but the context in which we are managing wellbeing has, bringing with it different challenges and different emphases.

The key for employers in 2022 is to consider employee wellbeing alongside employee experience and engagement, and to develop holistic and evidence-based strategies for managing these within the current, complex environment.





# Key takeaways

To embrace the changes our industry experts urge the HR profession to implement in 2022 is a vast undertaking alongside business as usual. So where is the best place to start?

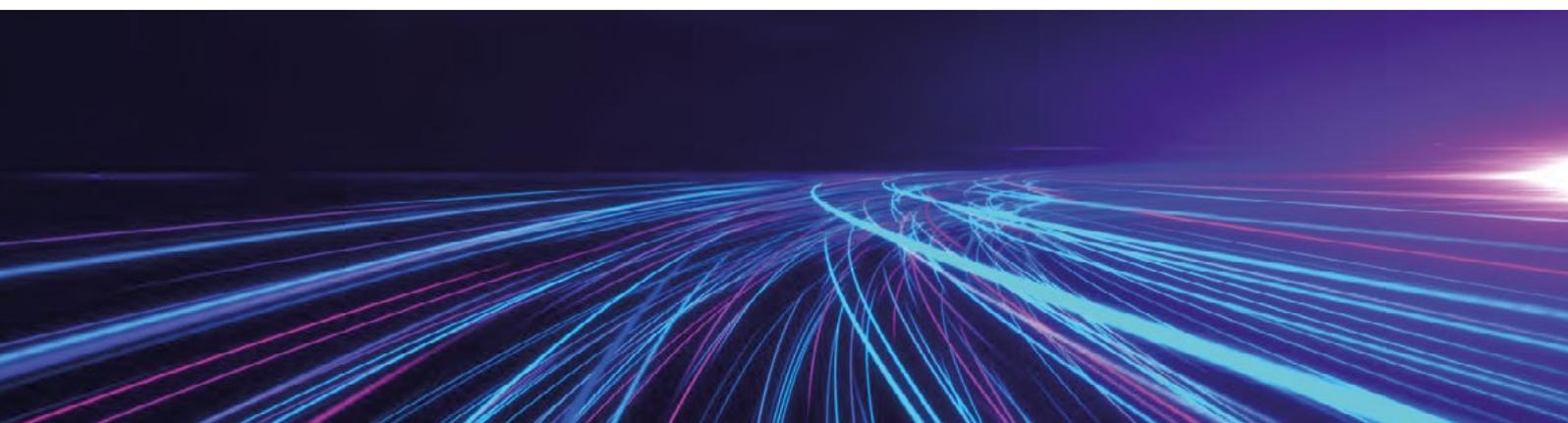
## **1. Declutter**

With an ever-increasing number of responsibilities falling into the lap of HR, many in the profession are time-poor, workload-heavy plate jugglers. But you won't be able to make meaningful changes if you do not have the mental space and capacity to step back from the daily grind to reflect, research, upskill and experiment. So at the top of your list should be an audit of your duties and responsibilities. Consider what is an unnecessary bureaucracy, what can be delegated and what remains a priority.

## **2. Start at an individual level**

You cannot change the culture of an organisation without the leaders of your organisation consistently embodying the desired behaviours and characteristics. And you cannot get your leaders aligned with this change if you are not confident that your own leadership behaviours adhere to the standards you wish to set across the board.

Start by reflecting on your own leadership style and be honest with yourself. Are you really embracing all the qualities you wish your leaders and the wider workforce to embrace? If the answer is no, then your starting point is your own leadership development. If the answer is yes, you can then assess the strength of your relationships with fellow leaders and find allies among them to support your mission.





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Are you really embracing all the qualities you wish your leaders and the wider workforce to embrace?

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### 3. Gather evidence

Whether you're looking to refresh your wellbeing approach, improve the employee experience or evolve the HR function itself, it is critical to dig into a diverse scope of data to inform your strategy. In the current climate, creating positive impact should go beyond just financial success, with human impact a central consideration.

With this in mind it's important to listen to the views of your colleagues with, intention and sincerity. What worked for one organisation or one HR team is unlikely to translate effectively over to another business. Nor will acquiring a new piece of tech, in isolation, solve your problems. Context is critical.

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# About the authors



## Perry Timms

Perry is the founder and Chief Energy Officer of People and Transformational HR, a global consultancy in progressive people and organisation design. He has written two books: Transformational HR (1st & 2nd Editions) and The Energized Workplace, shortlisted for UK Business Book of the Year 2021. Perry is a 4x member of HR's Most Influential

Thinkers List and his peers voted him at No 2 in 2021. He is a 2x TEDx speaker and a guest professor at four UK-based business schools.

[www.pthr.co.uk](http://www.pthr.co.uk)



## Shereen Daniels

In approaching two decades of human resources leadership within notable international corporates, Shereen established the anti-racism advisory firm HR rewired to champion racial equity in the workplace.

Devised from her extensive experience, Shereen's bespoke diagnostic approach combined with her personable candour supports internationally recognised corporates and household brands as

they work towards dismantling systemic racism across their organisational structures. Her story has been featured in Forbes, she was recognised as one of LinkedIn's Top Voices for 2020 and is the winner of HR Most Influential Thinker 2021.

[hr-rewired.com](http://hr-rewired.com)



## Emma Parry

Emma Parry is a Professor of Human Resource Management and Head of the Changing World of Work Group at Cranfield School of Management.

Emma's expertise and interests focus on the impact of the changing context

on managing people, particularly the influence of technological advancement and demographic trends.

[www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/expertise/changing-world-of-work](http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/expertise/changing-world-of-work)

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