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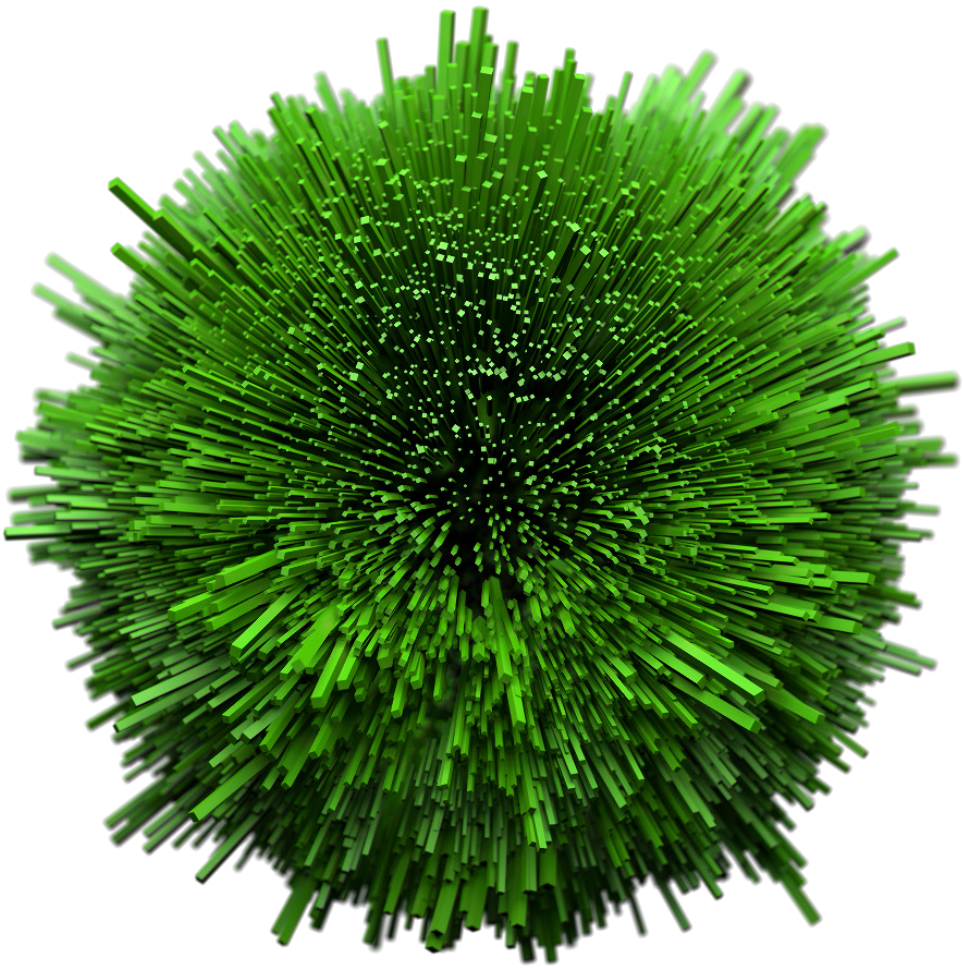


Imagining HR for today's worker

Introducing the People Product Operating Model

MAKING AN IMPACT THAT MATTERS since 1845

Introduction

Even before 2020, the future of work, the workforce, and the workplace demanded that HR services be accessible whenever, wherever, and however a worker required. Enter a global pandemic—which cast an even greater spotlight on the need for agility and accessibility in HR. To match pace with the lightning speed of change and disruption, HR organizations must manage their services like products that are able to evolve constantly. This is not new—in fact, many organizations have attempted to tweak their current operating model to deliver in an agile fashion for many years, with varying levels of success. Those that have tried and failed are learning that revolutionary change requires bold action. Small, or even more substantial changes to an old operating model will not deliver consumer-grade products with curated, personalized experiences. To achieve that, HR organizations must radically shift to an entirely new approach.

A product-driven HR organization embodies agile practices to create fit-for-purpose products and fundamentally shifts the central focus of HR to the worker experience. The organization grows, adapts, and evolves—almost organically—by incorporating feedback from real-time sensing directly back into products seamlessly. Such products empower the people of HR to focus their energy on actual strategy and more closely integrating HR with business decisions and outcomes.

Imagine if a company had a dozen different performance apps, all uniquely configured but still aligned to company policies, with individual business lines or managers choosing which one best fit their needs. At this company, workers receive new features to enhance their experience as frequently as they see updates for their phones, enabling a continual evolution of the product as opposed to a top to bottom redesign every few years. Creating and maintaining such a portfolio requires major shifts but would deliver unparalleled personalized experiences to workers.

What is a people product?

People Products are digital assets or experiences that create specific value for workers and the organization as a whole. They provide continuous opportunities for add-ons and upgrades, making sure that they remain valuable for workers and the organization no matter what change occurs.

Digital Products

Digital Tools that address HR and business outcomes through seamless digital engagement. Digital products reflect a high level of personalization and leverage advanced technologies or automation, such as an ePerformance Management app.

Experiential Products

Curated experiences that address workforce needs through deliberate, programmatic engagement. Experiences are built to the specific audience and integrate seamlessly with HR services and digital products, when appropriate, such as a unique Onboarding experience for New Hires. It is important to note that not every HR service or solution needs to be—or even should be—a product. Products, especially experiential products, could advance specific strategic priorities or enhance an existing differentiator. For example, a company with a focus on cultivating talent might have a unique onboarding product that provides "once in a career" experiences to jumpstart cultural integration.

People Product Spotlight

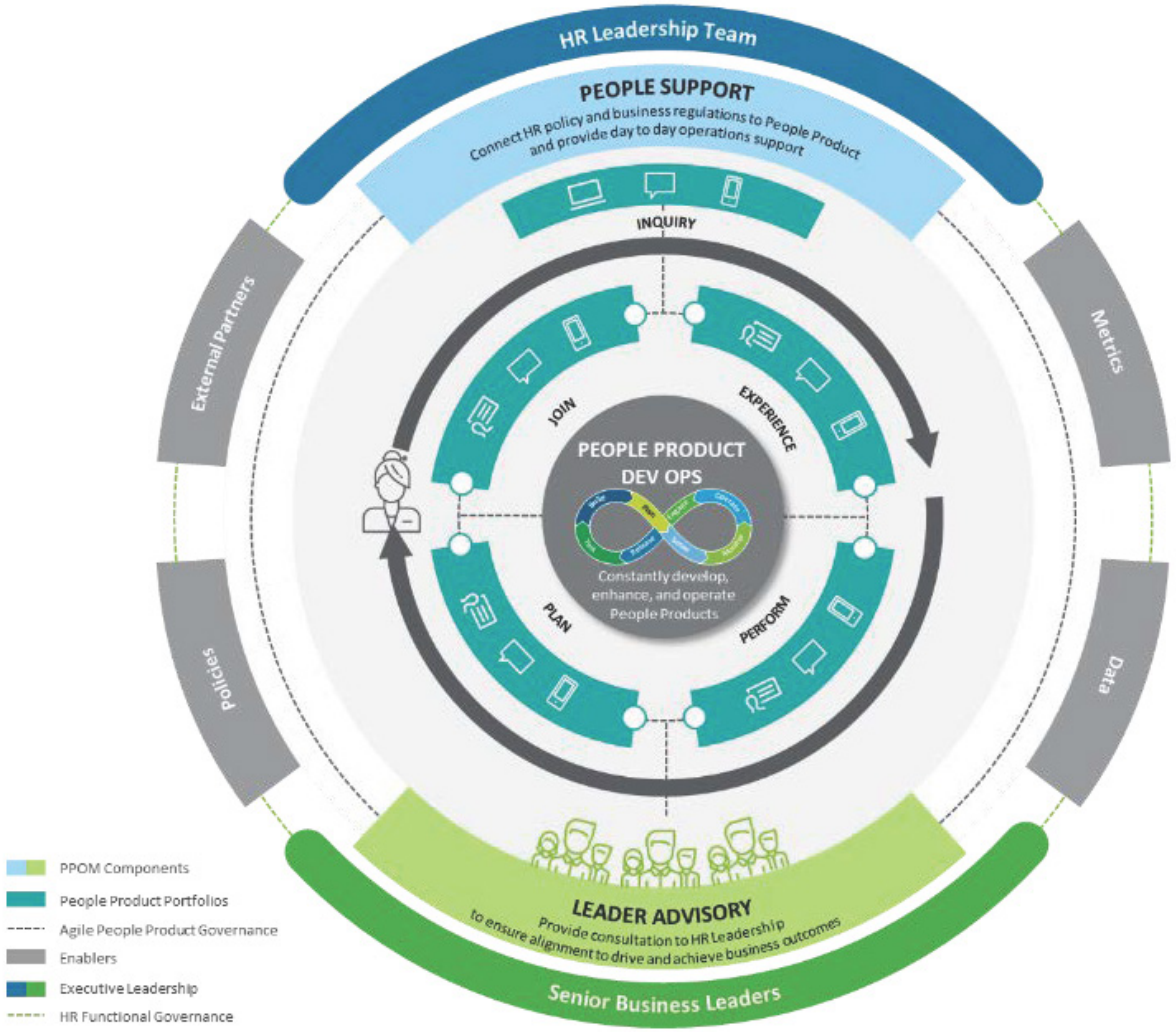
Deloitte's Magnet app—an app that considers both the worker and their workplace—ultimately allowing people to be better at work.

Imagine that you're a new hire, entering the company building for the first time. You don't know where to go or who any of your future colleagues are. Now, imagine if an app knew what team you belong to, pointed you to sit on the right floor, and was even able to tell you who from your team is in the building, helping you build key connections right from Day 1.

Magnet also helps with all the little things—like where the bathrooms and printers are—and can suggest meeting rooms by syncing with your calendar. It is a digital product that enables success by considering how to help the worker do their work in their workplace.

The People Product Operating Model

Transforming to a product-driven HR organization, in which workers experience HR whenever, wherever, and however they want, requires new ways of working and an entirely different HR Operating framework. In this new People Products Framework, we see HR organized into three groups—People Products Development and Operations, Leader Advisory, and People Support.



People Product Development and Operations

People Product Development and Operations teams are the mainstay of the new framework. They are inspired by engineering DevOps teams that are built to have feedback and sensing capabilities that constantly drive product creation and iterative enhancements. As with many other DevOps functions, we think Development and Operations teams can sit separately, with significantly different roles and capabilities.

While the People Product Development and Operations group is a 'Shared' People Service in that it delivers at scale, the work itself varies drastically from the typical activities performed by Shared Services or HR Operations. In fact, HR Ops as a standalone function no longer exists. Inquiry and Transactional Services are automated and available via People Products, and daily administrative and operations delivery is embedded within People Support. The human capabilities that exist within People Product Development and Operations relate to sensing worker needs, developing products, programming, and operating the product day to day. Many organizations will use a mix of in-house and vendor-provided capabilities to deliver these DevOps functions.

People Products teams are organized by experiential portfolios—Join, Perform, Experience, Plan. Organizing an HR organization by portfolios structurally supports the creation and enhancement of end-to-end experiences for workers and allows experiences to drive HR services. It also recognizes the interplay between various products within a portfolio and creates a natural governance structure to enable a holistic, portfolio-wide strategy for product creation and enhancement.

Leader Advisory

Leader Advisory connects people to solutions. They work as account managers, responsible for brokering relationships between senior business stakeholders, People Support and People Product Dev Ops teams. Leader Advisory does not serve as a traditional "doer," as is seen with many HRBPs, rather they work as account managers to find opportunities to expand product services and product experiences to different business units where they weren't previously available and hand off the delivery of the work to People Support. There is a movement away from building inflexible, custom solutions for individual business units, and rather a new means of connecting People Support and business units to the right products that are already made to deliver personalized services.

People Support

People Support will be organized by portfolio (or by product if scale requires) to ensure that teams have the level of portfolio/product familiarity that is needed in this People Product Framework.

Within People Support, there is an Operations Support team organized by portfolio that addresses high-touch, highly sensitive inquiries and transactions or escalated queries that are strictly time-bound, using intake channels provided today (ideally embedded within products and routed via an integrated delivery model). Questions will increasingly be answered via a product by default. The most mature organizations do not require live Tier 1 support driven by humans, as it is now offered through automation/enabling technology or in-product support. Operations Support will also provide escalated support for business processes that are not productized. Overall, Operations Support will require higher capability than that of Shared Services and a strong knowledge of the end-to-end experience within a product or portfolio to be able to resolve escalations or troubleshoot. They will also coordinate regularly with the Operations team of the People Product DevOps team to report any product-related malfunctions, bugs, or fixes (and vice versa if the DevOps teams expects a surge in inquiries).

People Support can be deployed to specific products when there is a spike in resource need (usually when creating a new product or launching a major update). Outside of deployment to products, People Support could be deployed to specific lines of business to help them adopt People Products to meet business needs (e.g. from helping advise business leaders about which version of products to use, to building up self-service capability for reporting) but with specific deployment ranges (to avoid slipping into an HRBP role). This deployment model grows self-service capability within lines of business and ensures that People Product solutions will be in tune with their needs and outcomes.

How can you get started?

A full-scale shift to a product-driven future requires a radically different HR delivery framework—a revolution rather than an evolution. But there are ways HR organizations can begin to pilot People Products in a way that works for them. You have the option to scale to a specific functional area, across an entire portfolio, or keep it only to pockets of the HR organization for which People Products make sense.

Starting Small—being Agile in the transformation

You can begin to "productize" within a specific function, or even one aspect of the function before gradually expanding. Launching a single product and continuously releasing iterative enhancements allows an organization to build required capabilities to model at scale and adapt to the change in ways of working. It may be easier to begin the journey with a function or aspect that is somewhat autonomous from the greater HR organization or is already "productized" to some degree. We often see Talent Acquisition or Recruitment being a good candidate. Regardless of how People Products are implemented, we believe there are critical wins at every stage that will equip an HR organization to become more agile.

Conclusion

Every organization will need to become product-driven in the future—the ever-changing work, workforce, and workplace demands it. The question is not if—but when and how—organizations make this change. We recognize that each organization is unique, and no model will ever be perfect off-the-shelf, but we believe that the People Product Framework can work for any organization if done in the right way, at the right time. With People Products, HR will be equipped to enable any organization's greatest asset—its people.

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