

# How cognitive solutions are impacting L&D at IBM

by HR Tech Trends

03 Apr 2018

by Hannah Go



The trend of endless data streams, coupled with continuous technological disruptions and the changing demands of the labour market, are all factors compelling HR professionals to embrace cognitive solutions. Simply put, cognitive solutions – or systems, or computing – are tech solutions that have adopted human-like approach/intelligence. They can understand, reason and learn in order to help users analyze data faster and more effectively.

According to a report issued earlier this year by IBM, titled *Extending expertise: How cognitive computing will transform HR and the employee experience*, more CEOs and HR executives now recognize the invaluable impact of cognitive computing on HR processes, and HR professionals are beginning to tap into these solutions for three key areas: talent acquisition, talent development, and HR operations.

The report highlighted key challenges that are best addressed by cognitive computing, with the first and foremost being ‘slow transformation of skills’. Moreover, of the HR executives surveyed in the study, the majority (72%) of those from outperforming organizations were quick to pinpoint L&D and workforce planning as key areas that are benefitting immensely from cognitive solutions.

The report findings match up with the digital strategy of IBM’s HR teams globally. *HR Tech News* chatted with Singapore’s country HR director, Yi Ling Chionh, about their initiatives.

“Our learning platform, ‘YOURLearning’, has built in cognitive capabilities that provide employees with personalised experience,” said Chionh. In a promotional video, the platform is described as being ‘like Netflix for your professional development, personalised with cognitive

capability that understands just what you like'. The platform offers a plethora of hot learning topics, along with career roadmaps, and customisable channels for employees to tailor to their development needs, anytime, anywhere.

Chionh said one program on offer caters specifically to the HR team, acknowledging that the team also needs dedicated training in order to be properly equipped to help the rest of the employee base.

"IBM HR recently launched the HR Digital Skills Accelerators, an exciting new development experience for all in the HR community," Chionh said. "HR Digital Skills Accelerators is designed using a Design Thinking approach, putting HR employees at the centre, looking at the experiences we want to have and how we want to learn."

As outlined in IBM's white paper, the content of the Digital Skills Accelerators is divided into Foundation Bundles and Discipline Bundles, with the former focused on core capabilities needed to support business strategy and the latter delving into specific disciplines/sub-areas under HR. In addition, modules on cloud and cognitive technologies are offered for 'non-technical' employees to gain a deeper understanding of how cloud and cognitive solutions are applied in various areas of the business.

These modules are presented in various forms such as videos, blogs, wikis, publications covering internal and external perspectives, and gamification. The platform contains multiple checkpoints in the form of 'built-in checkmarks', 'game-like assessments', as well as 'leaderboard and badges' that incentivize and help nudge the employee along the learning process. Upon completion of the Accelerators program, the employee earns a digital badge that can be used as a credential to certify their digital literacy.

The key to its success, Chionh said, was having good data analytics as the foundation. The team has done extensive work around inferring employees' skills and propensity to learn, as powered by cognitive solutions. An automation cognitive campaign was held through sending out of personalized newsletters to solicit employees' comments and testimonials about the platform. IBM utilized its AI Watson to process the data and generate learning patterns and insights, which eventually led to inferred skill levels for each employee and suggestions for managers on how they can assist in further upskilling and learning. Additionally, the team also uses social sentiment tools to harvest data from their internal social media and pulse survey and effectively assess employee engagement.

"With this, leaders have quick access to employees' voices, which can support them in decision making," Chionh said.

Other companies can take the lead from IBM. The HR digital transformation and the accompanying platform can be seen as two-pronged in effect: it helps employees quicken their uptake of both HR and digital skills by effectively 'normalizing' digital learning, thus increasing the appeal of the digital and ensuring long-term sustainability.

<https://www.hrtechnologynews.com/news/workforce-management/how-cognitive-solutions-are-impacting-landd-at-ibm/95189>

*Submitted By: Ruth Edge – Cardinia Shire Council*