

# CORNELL HR REVIEW

## 2016 CAHRS Partner Day Summary

*Mara Kanbergs*

Looking back upon the Fall 2016 semester, the Cornell HR Review would like to take the opportunity to reflect on some of the seminars and activities that our executive team attended. One highlight was the [Center for Advanced Human Resources \(CAHRS\)](#) Partner Day, with “HR Innovations” as the theme. The CAHRS partnership connects leading companies, ranging from American Express to Shell, to Cornell University, the ILR School, and intellectual leaders to advance global human resources management.

During Partner Day, corporate partners gathered in Ithaca to host seminars and discuss the top issues affecting human resources practitioners today. While topics ranged from mobile learning to design thinking, a common theme that emerged was HR’s new obsession with customer service. Technology has dramatically altered the way people live their lives and how they work. It is time for HR to adapt practices to reflect the modern environment. How HR embraces and uses technology will be the true differentiator in providing better customer service.

The term “customer” can be applied to many of HR’s stakeholders. Discussions were focused on HR’s internal customers, employees, and management. Building a customer focus may be easier for some organizations than others. First and foremost, customer obsession must begin with a cultural shift within HR itself. HR should have a vision of what it wants to accomplish, and everyone within the HR department should be able to articulate this vision. Leverage data and design thinking principles to create impactful initiatives. And always seek feedback from outside of your HR department.

Once a general culture of customer service has sparked, this momentum can be used to enhance several HR services, including:

- **Talent Management:** Technology has drastically altered the way that employees can give and receive feedback. With the rate at which employees are now able to communicate, feedback systems that operate on a year-long timetable don’t make sense. Additionally, feedback that only uses one source, i.e. an employee’s manager, fails to utilize technology’s ability to simultaneously gather feedback from multiple sources cheaply and efficiently.
- Furthermore, technology can be used in other areas of talent management such as **employee development**. Technology can be used to better assess employee strengths/weaknesses and identify learning opportunities. Data analytics can be

used to better pair mentors with mentees. Here, the benefits of technology are its speed and ability to be customized.

- **Employee Engagement:** Customization is a key aspect of enhancing customer service. Consider leveraging analytics to segment your employees by employee life-cycle and other categories (be careful to follow the law!). New technology platforms allow organizations to cater to these different employee categories without having to use multiple platforms. Go deep with customization; it can be a differentiator!
- **Learning:** Technology has drastically altered the way individuals learn. Recently mobile learning has taken off. Thanks to mobile learning, training, and information have become more bite-sized and digestible. In many cases, mobile learning has been used to supplement and reinforce training given in-person.

Learning is now also more collaborative. An employee can now pose a question across the firm and instantly begin a dialogue with multiple employees with whom he/she had no formal interaction with.

Change can be often daunting, but organizations stagnate without innovation. HR is on the precipice of a technologic shift. For companies across all industries, the message is clear and simple. It is time to embrace change or be left behind. ✂

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