

Data, Design and Digital: The Future of HR in South Africa

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Human Resources (HR) in South Africa is an industry grappling for innovative solutions to the radical new challenges of current times. "The rules of work have changed; now we are waiting for the mindset to change," says Ralf Fletcher, CEO, [Topco Media](#) and organiser of the recent Future of HR Conference. "Given the world's current circumstances, there is now opportunity to re-write and re-imagine the future of work."



Ralf Fletcher, CEO, Topco Media

[Southern Africa's 7th annual Future of HR Summit](#), in partnership with Simplify, is an annual gathering in which business leaders and HR thought leaders can share their challenges and successes, to advance strategic HR within their organisations and across the economy.

"Centred on a mindset of growth, trust and action, executives, entrepreneurs and recruiters were able to network and connect for tangible solutions at one of Africa's largest HR gatherings," says Fletcher.

Delegates numbering 2,500 from over 30 countries participated and worked through ten deep dive sessions, from 50 local and global speakers. This year's sponsors include Simplify, Quit Genius, Sage, Remote, Umgeni Water, and Old Mutual.

People-centric and practical – the HR agenda of the future

A robust programme saw speakers unpack key HR trends on financial wellness, leadership, youth, and skills development, shaking up

company culture as well as diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

The opening speaker, general manager of Careers 24 and Simplify.hr at Media 24, Marc Privett, emphasised that companies that adapt fastest, emerge from the pandemic in the strongest form. Speaking to all five HR trends, Privett flagged the significance of innovation as a vital enabler. "Companies should understand that not only has the nature of work changed but so have the skills required to do this work," Privett highlighted. "In this respect, it is essential that the connection between the two is made in order to fight unemployment."

The conference offered insight into the new competencies required by companies to unlock opportunities and fast track into the future. Founder and CEO of Aukomo Inc, Younes Hairej named these as, "adaptability, agility and resilience".

Lessons learned from start-ups for companies of the future, included a return to the concept of "purpose". A call was made for companies to return to this concept of the greater purpose demonstrated by start-up founders i.e., solving specific problems with conviction and passion with money being a secondary driver.

Valuable take-aways for companies of the future

Insights also included the approach to implementing policies of human capital to be done in a holistic way, rather than in a tick box fashion. "It's important to implement in a way that isn't just about ticking boxes," emphasised Reshmili Lutchman, group executive for Corporate Services, Water Research Commission.

Furthermore, there should be the right mix of priorities for employees and employers to unlock efficiencies. According to

Lisa Andrews, HR director at Unilever: "We need to ensure that we have the right mix of priorities in our talent strategy which builds capability and unlocks capacity."

In addition, acceptance that every firm must become a software firm in some way or the other should be made. "Every company is becoming a software company, no matter what industry you are in," says Gerhard Hartman, vice president, Sage Africa, and the Middle East.

The future of HR awards

The 6th annual Future of HR Awards honoured southern Africa's most outstanding, inspiring, and effective leaders in human capital management, HR innovation and HR tech; highlighting their achievements for local and international peers to emulate and move the industry forward.

"Featuring new awards categories and entry criteria updated in collaboration with our advisory panel of HR industry experts, the awards have been attracting inquiries months in advance from South Africa, neighbouring countries and even Asia," says Fletcher. □ □

"A company operates by its workforce," emphasises Fletcher. "As a result, it's critical for HR experts to not only find the best employees but also to try to establish a work atmosphere that encourages them to stay with your company. To elevate your company's reputation and make it perfect for young job seekers, improve employee experience, provide continuous learning and skills development programs, and provide continuous learning and skills development programmes."

Winners: The Future of HR Awards

Employer of Choice: Large Organisations
Itumelang Monale, Exchange

Employer of Choice: Small to Medium Organisations
Theo Baloyi, Bathu Shoes

Best Health and Wellness Strategy
Karen van den Bergh, HRtorQue Outsourcing

Best Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
Faith Ramusetheli, SAGE

Best HR Team of the Year Award
Portia Lepesa, VKB Group

Best HR Industry Innovation using Technology
Hayley Byleveldt, IOT.nxt

CEO of the Year
Theo Baloyi, Bathu Shoes

HR Leader of the Year Award
Angie Ontong, dti

HR Rising Star of the Year
Dr Ederick Stander, Psychai Africa

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