Agile Human Resources Management

Release | **8**

Agile..

Human Resources Management

Human resources (HR) management offers some basic tools needed by policymakers to ensure the public sector›s strategic resilience, which means flexibility in obtaining, developing, and customizing resources to meet the ever-changing priorities. Lots of these tools are well-established in the public sector, but an agile mechanism of using them enables it to face the changes. Hiring competencies, recruitment tests, decentralized recruitment, linking employees' performance to the public sector's goals, restructuring, and creating an innovation ecosystem for the employees among others are all examples of tools that the public sector's institutions should use with more agility together with developing agile governance and policies.

"We are looking for leaders who can move mountains, lead the change, and make the future, whose vigor is up to the sky and ambitions as high as the stars."

Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

The paper prepared by the Policies Council of Mohamed bin Rashid School of Government concluded a set of recommendations at the end of 2019, including demanding that the effective HR be reconsidered and re-disseminated to attract, develop, and retain agile employees. It also included the necessity of the employees having strong skills that could be developed through continuous training and systematic performance evaluation. In most cases, new employees did not have enough knowledge of the work responsibilities, not to mention the list of skills they have to develop, not the competencies needed to succeed in work. The paper also recommended helping the employees to develop to their full potentials and move between the various levels or institutions where they will be trained continuously. One of the challenges facing the government will be "how to keep their employees updated with the newest knowledge without disrupting the workflow?»

So, agility, in reality, is a philosophy founded upon making decisions based on experience level, future anticipation, empowering people with education, and testing the solutions developed jointly with clients.

AGILE GOVERNMENT

Nowadays, we need to design processes at the institutional level related to the day-to-day work of the employees. Therefore, instead of designing solutions inside the conference rooms, we need to design them with the clients, test and observe their mechanisms, and rapidly improve them every day.

In a survey conducted by Deloitte **Deloitte.** that involved more than 10000 of the institutions and HR leaders in 140 countries, 94% stated that "agility and collaboration" are crucial for their institutions' success.

Agility is no longer a new concept. On the contrary, it is the best practice in the world that dramatically transforms workplaces all over the world, including the biggest ones like Google **Google** , Apple **Apple**, Facebook **facebook**, Amazon **amazon** , and Microsoft **Microsoft** .

Usually, agility is defined as the ability to move rapidly and easily. In the HR context, however, it is the ability to adapt and develop people and processes in proportion to the rapid and unexpected changes to support individual, strategic, and organizational resilience. It is also how HR management supports the institution to become more responsive and adaptive so that the traditional focus on control and alignment is transformed into a more resilient focus on the responsiveness to the clients.

According to HR Trend Institute **HR TREND**, the term agile HR refers to "designing a new way of working and organizing of the HR function that facilitates responsiveness and adaptiveness of activities and structures, thus facilitating the flexibility in matching workforce fluctuations to demand."

Institutions are agile when the top priority of their employees become customer satisfaction and offering the clients a value. As the HR function is not traditionally designed to offer direct value to the client, it is usually criticized because of its inability to take rapid actions, thus causing disappointment within the HR management. Consequently, institutions have to encourage and empower HR so that it becomes more attentive and responsive to the changing technologies, the requirements needed to remain competitive, and the ability to attract the best talents there is. In agile institutions, HR continues to provide employment, development, performance management, and other HR services but using an agile approach.

Some institutions have the ability to evolve gently towards agility, whereas in others, nothing short of a revolution within them will achieve agility.
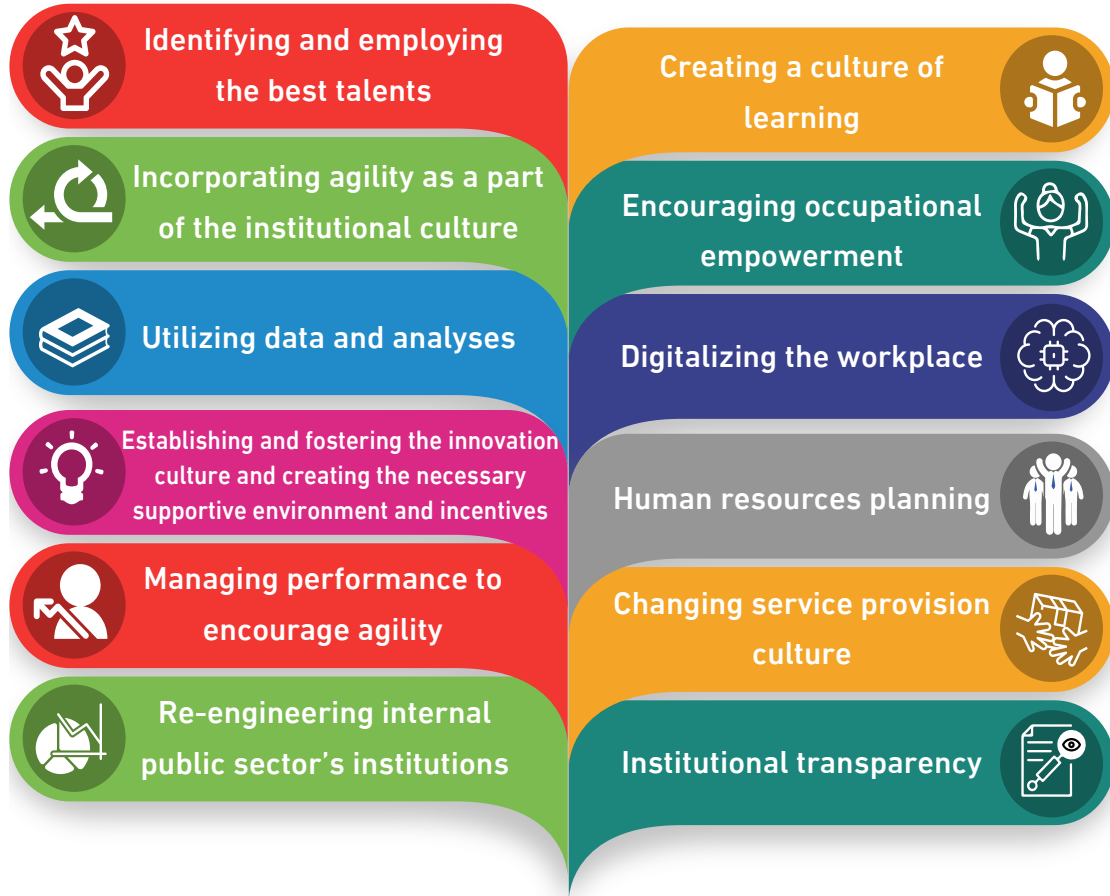
According to a LinkedIn **Linked in** article by Wayne Tarken, a senior adviser for the Agile HR Consortium, there are three components of agile HR:

1 The ability to "quickly and easily identify issues that need to be addressed."

2 The ability to decrease "the time it takes to develop then implement a response."

3 "Incorporating analytics and design thinking to predict, design then target programs with the highest probability of being successful."

Incorporating agility into the HR function is prerogative of the leadership. It should be a leadership privilege that empowers and motivates HR to be an important assistance tool for the agile mechanism of work. Hence, leadership has to incorporate all the changes that happen inside the institution into the HR management functions, including the adoption of new technologies, processes› modification, work objectives reorganization, or adaption accordingly to facilitate productivity and competency and continuously develop, empower, motivate, and monitor employees.

Practices that can make HR management's function more agile

Identifying and employing the best talents	Creating a culture of learning
Incorporating agility as a part of the institutional culture	Encouraging occupational empowerment
Utilizing data and analyses	Digitalizing the workplace
Establishing and fostering the innovation culture and creating the necessary supportive environment and incentives	Human resources planning
Managing performance to encourage agility	Changing service provision culture
Re-engineering internal public sector's institutions	Institutional transparency

01 Identifying and employing the best talents

Employment remains one of the HR priorities. Discovering and developing talents within the current HE, however, is crucial to move forward. Enhancing the current employees' skills also requires improving the HR readiness and responsiveness to engage the employees and encourage them to promote and enhance their skills, besides taking into consideration diversity and attracting competencies from outside the institution.

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In a global CEO survey conducted by KPMG Consulting in 2014, struggling to determine the employees of appropriate skills ranked second among the main challenges that meet business leaders seeking to achieve profitable growth. That is because, even with investment in new technologies, if companies could not find or develop the essential talents they need, it is unlikely they will be able to compete successfully.

Agile leaders who can adapt to the rapidly changing business landscape will be able to employ the best and the most productive employees, as well as utilize their talents to achieve lasting success.

02 Creating a culture of learning

Learning culture is an important part of the agile institution. Engaging employees is not only desirable but also a primary added value to HR departments. Embedding the institution›s values in a diverse and multigenerational workforce is a great way to consolidate agility.

We need to rethink the education and development policies of our institutions and link continuous learning to career development. A continuous learner has some of the adventurous entrepreneur's characteristics. He is intellectually curious, dissatisfied with the ordinary work, always goes beyond his current role to learn something new, sees connections between topics that might seem otherwise irrelevant, and endeavors to acquire diverse experiences and different relationships.

03 Incorporating agility as a part of the institutional culture

Through the creation of a highly adaptable and agile culture, regardless of the occupational level. Employees also need to be informed of all new developments, have the ability to express their opinions, and be allowed to act according to that knowledge.

Mark Price, one of Accenture Management Consulting's CEOs, says: Agile management is not just a strategic framework, it is a culture that includes every department and employee within the institution. In agile management, there is no place for bureaucracy or hierarchy, but for a team capable of making decisions and solving problems instead. Roles and responsibilities must be outlined though to establish healthy boundaries because the agile team is the one that decides which opportunity to seize and what to do about that opportunity. Accordingly, every team member must be empowered with the necessary tools and training.

Agile culture requires open communication with everybody. There should not be walls standing between the departments of the agile institution. Information should flow freely and smoothly among employees without gaps in the departments' knowledge. Likewise, all employees must be aware of market changes and clearly understand clients' needs and expectations.

04 Encouraging occupational empowerment

Agile processes can enable HR to positively respond to the employees' expectations and aspirations and help them to expand their skill sets. For example, HR can benefit from the growing effect of artificial intelligence (AI) to help identify skills within the workforce and establish agile processes for the development of occupational improvement programs.

Resilient occupational performance could be also enhanced by giving the necessary informed powers to make decisions and engage the employees to benefit from the estimated effort of the entire knowledge staff.

One of the fundamental factors of the ability of the institution to endure and meet challenges is its strong relationship with its cadres and whether or not the operating HR feels "involved" with the institution. Whereas employees are often referred to as the greatest asset of the institution, only a minority of the institutions have a clear leadership model that is good at engagement, eliminating the barriers to innovation, and discovering the hidden strengths of their employees.

05 Utilizing data and analyses

Analyses might be the best way for HR›s function to be agile because it allows for insightful decision making. Data and analyses minimize the need for dangerous speculations that often lead to dire consequences. Mobile devices' technologies and social media can gather so much information about job seekers and people with talents and their achievements. That way, HR management can access large amounts of data about potential employees, thus increasing the chances that the institutions would detect the best suitable candidates. Also, employees would find something suitable for their skills at the employer.

06 Digitalizing the workplace

Modern human resources are digital, so HR experts need to focus on improving their processes to digitalize the workplace's practices. Professor Yousef Al Assaf (New Digital Era, 2019) says: Digitalization is the process of converting something from an analog format to digital format, meaning converting information into digits. However, digitalization means nothing without technology.

With the emergence of organizational culture and engaging and retaining employees as the main work priority, there is increasing pressure on HR to promote a more positive digital culture to be agile. HR also needs to take advantage of the new technologies and platforms that will help them to build a more productive and adaptive workplace that will eventually develop the institution as a whole.

07 Establishing and fostering the innovation culture and creating the necessary supportive environment and incentives

This is particularly crucial for the employees to be able to innovate products and services continuously to meet the demands of the clients, and to benefit from the employees' ideas in implementing the cost-cutting initiatives, also with innovation. That way, HR management can help the employee to prove himself and provide an atmosphere dominated by a love for learning and new ideas generation. This can be achieved by implementing the following principle: "respect employees' questions, value their ideas, train them to be courageous while expressing their opinions, and give them some space and opportunity to experiment."

08 Human resources planning

Planning helps governments to work in the increasingly complicated and uncertain environments and think about the mixture of necessary people and skills needed to respond to the changing social needs. By identifying the existing competencies and the gaps in skills, governments can determine the skills they need and put employment plans based on determining the appropriate number of people with suitable skills for the appropriate time and place.

09 Managing performance to encourage agility

Encouraging agility in the workforce requires developing the appropriate motivators via individual performance management systems and rewards. The first step in this process is to set clear organizational goals at the institutional level, then link the individual employee performance objectives to these goals. In a survey on business CEOs in 2006, about 40% of the participants mentioned that linking the institution's strategy to the individual performance's objectives was the biggest contributor to agility in their organizations (Mckinsey & Co, 2006).

10 Changing service provision culture

This can be achieved by creating HR that minimize their dependence on rules and regulations and increase their reliance on creativity and collaboration, as well as having innovative and risk-taking workforce. Employees are given some space for constructive failure because the ability of the public sector to rapidly and flexibly respond to disruptions requires the employee's creativity and innovation in particular. It is possible that the employees capable of thinking independently and utilizing their skills to solve problems might be more resourceful and more able to improvise in response to any disruption. The opportunity should be given to the employees to suggest solutions for workplace challenges.

11 Re-engineering internal public sector's institutions

This can be accomplished by relying on e-government, which might largely address the inertia of the organizational and cultural structures. At the same time, management engineering can be difficult and mysterious because of the many binding considerations of government work. The issue usually requires a strong political will and a clear focus on goals. The government sector needs to collaborate with external stakeholders, re-engineer external connections and processes across the organizational borders, establish partnerships between public and private sectors, increase flexibility, cut the costs, besides modifying organizational structures to be resilient and adaptable to roles and responsibilities, thus giving their work teams the power to make decisions.

12 Institutional transparency

Institutional transparency constitutes one of the government agility's factors. Therefore, using information technology to disseminate data increases agility, which, in turn, would not only increase openness through transparency and engaging and empowering stakeholders, but also promote resilience in policymaking and service provision, and motivate innovation. Building common information technology and communication platforms for the use of all government sectors, rather than continuing with individual systems, can help to achieve the desired resilience, rapid information delivery, and speedy decision making.

> Institutional agility is no longer a choice but a necessity for whoever wants to continue down the road of excellence, pioneering, and sustainable success.

In their book "The Future Workplace Experience," Jeanne Meister and Kevin Mulcahy mentioned seven criteria for the future agile leader. This capability is determined according to two important dimensions.

The first is the ability to achieve results, which requires:

- **Being transparent:** the leaders communicate regularly with the employees and admit to mistakes.

- **A sense of responsibility:** the leader acknowledges his losses and victories and learns from them.

- **Taking initiative:** the leader looks for new opportunities and motivates others to think, imagine, and work daringly.

- **Focusing on the future:** A leader must predict the growing complexity of the work environment, then anticipate the future, be ready for the change, and get out of the comfort zone.

The second dimension is the ability to engage the work team, which requires:

- ✅ **Social Intelligence:** a leader cultivates teamwork practices that enhance the capabilities of the institution's teams.

- ✅ **Inclusiveness:** which means forming diverse teams representing and including several diverse personalities because a leader makes diversity and inclusiveness a key-value inside the institution.

- ✅ **Developing others:** a leader provides the possibility of individual learning, as well as learning from peers on demand.

All these criteria facilitate making more effective managerial decisions, increase awareness, and ability to understand the teams› strengths and generate sustainable results.

Managing those two dimensions of results-oriented leadership and increased interaction is the way to achieve the most substantial change inside the institutions and distinguish the fittest leaders for survival.

Agility is not limited to predicting and containing change, but also invest change to achieve the intended results. It is not about just recovering from disasters as it might appear at first glance, but about developing the institution and improving its performance, whether crises happen or not. The agile institution is always ready to deal with any emergency so that the leader finds himself ready to face whatever exceptional circumstance that might arise. So, how to anticipate this change in the future? And how to prepare for something that did not happen yet and be ready for it?

"I love to learn about and read as many book summaries as I can. Learning and leadership are prelusion and result, and a prelusion cannot be separated from a result."

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Reading = Knowledge

Knowledge = Power

Power = Respect

Respect = Success

Success = Happiness

Aisha Sultan Al Shamsi

Saleh Saliem hammouri

كلية محمــــد بن راشــــد
للإدارة الحكــــومــــية
**MOHAMMED BIN RASHID
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT**

كلية محمد بن راشد للإدارة الحكومية - التعليم التنفيذي
دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة - دبي - شارع المستقبل، برج
المؤتمرات، الطابق 13

📞 +971-4-3293290

@ execed@mbrsg.ae.ae

🌐 www.mbrsg.ae

🐦 /mbrsg   ▶ /mbrsg

f /mbrsgae   📷 mbrsgae

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