Could a Robot Do Your HR Job?



Working in partnership with people technology can enable a workforce to do their jobs more safely, efficiently and effectively. Information can be gathered, processed, analyzed and applied quickly helping free people to do tasks that are more interesting and rewarding. However, as technology continues to evolve this partnership is projected to take a different turn. In some cases technology has the ability to take the interesting and stimulating aspects of the job away from people and leave behind the mundane and routine. In other cases the technology partnership will dissolve completely leaving only the machine to do the work.

According to an analysis conducted by the Oxford Martin School, at the University of Oxford in the UK, 47% of US jobs are in danger of being replaced by robots, well, not necessarily robots as but by computers in the next 10-20 years.

HR Jobs at Risk For Computerization

Oxford Martin analyzed 702 jobs categories (based on the US ONET job categories list). Their findings generally were that the jobs those involving physical or social interactions are in the least danger of being replaced by computers. All jobs were analyzed based on several factors (a link to the report explaining the analysis is provided at the end of the article). A score of zero meant no chance and a score of 1 means 100% chance of being replaced. There were no jobs that scored zero or 1. The job scoring closes to zero (least risk of being replaced) was Recreation Therapists (0028). At the bottom of the list and the most likely to be replaced was Telemarketers with a score of .99.

From most likely to least likely to be computerized here is the list of HR and HR related jobs (the ranking on the list is presented first and the score out of 1 is next):

- #666 (.97) Payroll and Timekeeping Clerks
- #630 (.96) Compensation and Benefits Managers
- #532 (0.9) Human Resources Assistants (Except Payroll and Timekeeping)
- #286 (.47) Compensation, Benefits and Job Analysis Specialists
- #242 (.31) Human Resources Training and Labor Relations Specialists
- #182 (.13) Management Analyst
- #64 (.014) Training and Development Specialist
- #47 (.0094) Rehabilitation Counselors
- #30 (.0063) Training and Development Managers
- #28 (.0055) Human Resources Managers

HR jobs that involve a high degree of administrative function including information gathering and processing and financial management are at the greatest risk of loss. With the growing number of software tools to automate all payroll functions, HR management and Hiring it stands to reason that those jobs will be in the greatest danger over the next few years. Additionally, many aspects of orientation and onboarding and performance management are also being managed with software. However people and management focused roles such as training and development, rehabilitation/counseling, and HR management/business partners are much safer bets.

With the loss of many ‘process and function’ focused jobs the HR career path may look very different in the future. Fewer HR professionals will be able to start from the ground floor and move through the ranks. More Lateral moves to different functions within HR or other roles including operations management, marketing, customer relations, finance may be more common paths for HR professionals. Recruiting talent for HR related roles may have to change as fewer HR entry level jobs will exist to train HR professionals. HR managers may well come from different roles in an organization, which may bring new perspectives to HR.

Whether your job is in danger of computerization or if you think 10-20 years is to far away to think about, it is always a good idea take the time to consider your future positioning so you can properly position yourself and your workforce over time.