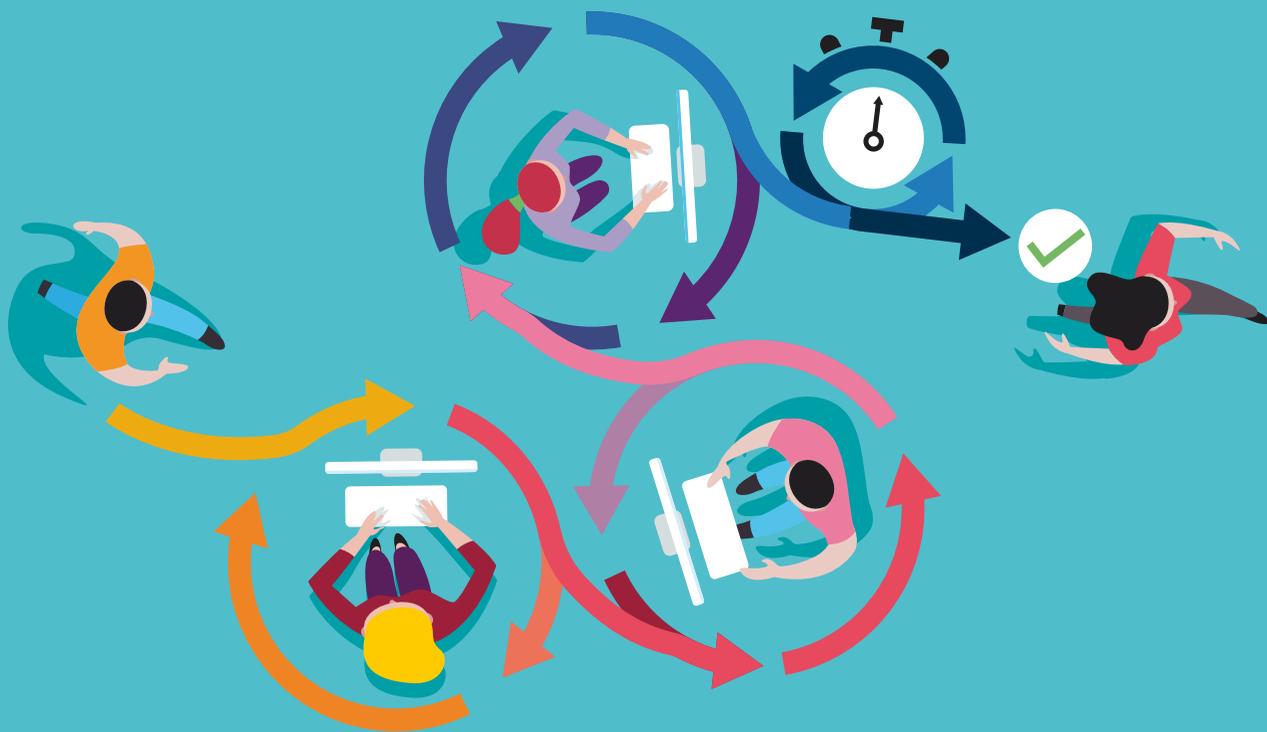


Building agile organisational capability at Cigna

Robin Lewis and **Bieke van Dessel**, share insights into the role of human resources in building Cigna's organisational capability



Contemporary organisations are fluid and complex structures. Cigna, a global healthcare provider, aims to ensure the organisation is structured and enabled to handle lively and rapid change and be able to proactively support the needs of members, clients and partners worldwide. It needed both agility and scale.

Operating models are not just about structure and even the best strategy will not succeed without talented teams and inspired leadership. We recognise that to be truly effective, any organisation design project (OD) needs to embrace people and culture as well as the structure of the organisation itself; the human resources (HR) team plays a lead role in enabling this. In Cigna's EMEA region, we identified three key enablers to organisational effectiveness:

- Creating an agile market-facing operating model
- Developing leadership talent and bench strength
- Building our “winning culture”

Cigna delivers integrated healthcare solutions across multiple geographies and channels. We work with global corporates, governmental organisations as well as individual consumers. As part of our drive to better meet the needs of our customers, we have built an operating model that aims to keep close to the customer, that is agile and open to change, and that embodies the global connectivity essential to our business. Like all things, however, we keep this model under constant review. It is an iterative and evolving process.

Rapid advances in technology and automation only increase the virtual nature of the global labour market. At the same time, leadership and management skills need to evolve rapidly at all levels in an organisation to be able to drive change and deliver results.

Leaders, often operating across multiple dimensions of our matrix organisation, strive to balance the global nature of their roles with the ability to respond to local markets and partners. Many teams now operate across markets, in multiple locations and are essentially “virtual”.

In developing leaders, we recognise that technical capability is only a start; collaboration is an essential manager skill set and coaching is the essence of our approach to performance management.

As in many contemporary organisations, traditional reporting lines are becoming blurred. There are multiple functional partnerships and “dotted lines” on the organisation chart. Results are often achieved through influence rather than direct line management control.

HR leaders play an essential role ensuring the operating model is nimble, innovative and close to the market while at the same time delivering on its key strategic intent. The operating model should always be an enabler to strategy rather than an end goal in its own right. And, critically, it needs to be supported by a talent strategy aligned to the changing needs of the market.

Creating a “market-facing” operating model

In Cigna's EMEA region, our aim has been to create a business model and an integrated structure that is market facing. Primary accountability for delivery is with the market leads or segment CEOs. Regional and global connectivity is achieved through a thin layer of global functional capability to ensure fully integrated service delivery. The goal is to ensure regional accountability together with globally consistent service delivery (customer services, claims management, care provision).

Regional and segment CEOs are fully accountable for delivery in their markets. This ensures swiftness and clarity of accountability; they can act fast and respond quickly to clients and customers. The connectivity built into the structure ensures scale and global capability (for example hospital networks and clinical excellence). This regional and global matrix requires close collaboration, excellent communications and clarity over “decision rights”. This is a true partnership.

Developing leadership bench strength

As well as building the right accountability structure, it is equally important to construct a business-led talent strategy. Our approach has been to focus on a few key talent enablers and to do this well.

Regular talent reviews and vigorous talent management strategies enable us to deploy our best people to the key business projects and, where possible, to then use these project opportunities to further develop global leadership capability.

Our talent review process aims to identify and nurture emergent potential as well as identifying game changing capabilities that will help build the business of the future. Talent assignments often create stretch opportunities that generate career growth as well as being great development opportunities.

For example, we have successfully used global project roles to fasttrack the development of future market leads. Managing multiple stakeholders in a global project context is a huge opportunity to develop stakeholder engagement and the influence, collaboration and global connectivity required to succeed.

Data sciences and digital technology are just two examples of capabilities disrupting the market. Ensuring we have the skills and the experience to compete is critical. Data scientists, for example, have become highly sought after across many sectors including our own. Innovation and “ideation” are skills essential to management teams.

At our organisation we have been able to build communities of practice and centres of expertise to enable internal talent to build and grow their skills in these areas. In addition, the strength of our employer brand enables us to attract market-leading talent.

Next to attracting and retaining talent, we also invest in developing it. A combination of feedback, challenge and support can help managers quickly adapt to new roles.

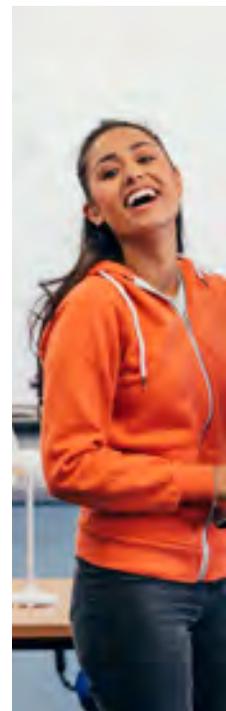
After individual training we frequently use team-based coaching to support our management teams. This approach enables teams to focus on “behaviours” -- how they interact and work together. Team coaching can provide opportunities to explore tensions and challenges in a safe environment and helps surface and resolve issues before they become problems. The investment is in time away from the day job, often in a facilitated offsite environment.

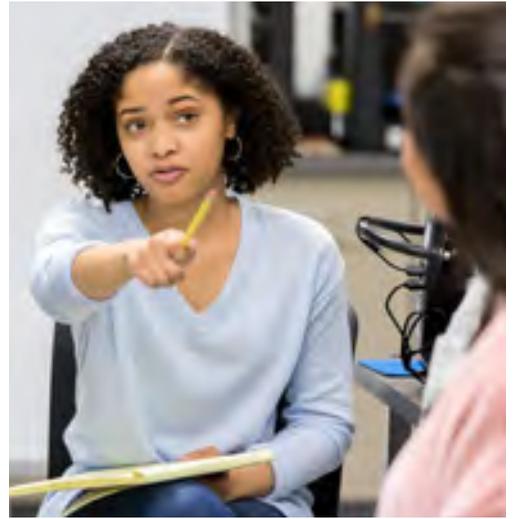


Building a “winning culture”

Building a “winning culture” was the third key strategic goal. Rather than taking a top-down approach as many organisations tend to do, we took time to ask our employees how we could build our culture and what we should be doing differently. Using teams from global high-potential leadership development programmes, we ran action learning projects across multiple global locations involving focus groups and stakeholder interviews to get to the essence of what we could do better.

The key recommendations highlighted gaps in communication and management accountability. We had thought we were doing great with communications but the feedback told us that we had relied too much on top-down formulaic approaches. We had talked about accountability but had not done enough to equip our managers with the essential skills to be effective.





Our markets have taken this feedback to heart and have used it to build communications strategies as well as some involving and relevant management skills programmes. This is still a journey but as an example, our IO (International Organisations) business has led the way with some engaging communications approaches.

Teams of employees creatively “ideate” and build strategies to communicate and collaborate across multiple locations. They have developed an internal website to create one big IO and Africa “family” feeling by sharing vision, strategy, priorities and values. An approach to “story telling” enables them to share and celebrate some of the work they are doing with clients and customers as well as internal initiatives and projects.

They launched an eco-system explaining to employees how their function contributes into the bigger company activity. They have developed and rolled out skills programmes to equip people managers to be better able to motivate, collaborate and build great teams, ready to accelerate in a rapidly changing environment.



The key recommendations highlighted gaps in communication and management accountability

Of course we recognise organisations do not stand still for a moment. Structures, business models and ways of working continuously evolve. That’s why a culture of agility is so important. There needs to be a continuous cycle of evaluation and adaptation.

As we continue to build high added value organisational capability, from an HR perspective the opportunity is always there to partner with business leads to innovate and to attract and retain the best talent as well as to ensure the organisation itself is designed for optimum performance.

In summary, HR leaders have a key role in building the operating model and in particular ensuring our talent strategy is closely aligned with the business strategy; that leadership and management skills are continually forward thinking; and that the key principles that underpin organisation design continually evolve to deliver value to customers, partners and clients. In essence, to deliver the business strategy.



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