

## **HRM 4.0 for Human-Centered Organizations**

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Digitization is referred to as disruptive innovation that opens up new business and social opportunities, while at the same time it challenges traditional job design. These challenges require that both people and organization change. Workers should develop new competencies and capabilities, from technological expertise and data analysis capabilities to essential social and emotional skills as well as creative skills (Colbert et al., 2016). This requires organizations to redesign their structures and processes (Kane et al., 2016).

In many ways, we may think these developments as positive ones.

Industry 4.0 is changing the relationship between workers and machines. What workers used to do is increasingly being done by machines: more and more humdrum and 'dull' activities will be performed by machines, while human tasks will be characterized by growing autonomy and empowerment at decreasing costs (Holland & Bardoel, 2016).

The 4.0 revolution is also changing (the) time and space of work: smart working, agile working, new virtual production are only few examples of a new way of design work enabling a better work and life balance for a wider group of workers, as well as, a more efficient way of designing work, assigning clear goals and giving real-time feedback that sustain continuous development and motivation (Sonnentag et al., 2008).

On the other hand, both research and practice suggest some potential downsides.

Detractors of the 4.0 revolution prophesy that smart machines will replace human work, and that this will happen not only for routine activities, causing an unprecedented job loss and more precarious work arrangements. There are in fact evidence that the possibilities of automation will include cognitive tasks too, thus leading to the worrying question of whether the number of new jobs will be as large as the ones replaced by robots and what will be the jobs where humans will excel. This will in any case force organizations to redefine and continuously change the architecture of their management practices. Machines are influencing the quality of social interaction toward

isolation and segregation (Turkle, 2011), causing difficulties to separate work and non-work domain, stress, and burnout (Butts et al., 2015) and negatively impacting on individual creativity and critical thinking (Jackson et al., 2001).

This challenging scenario represents a tremendous chance for the HRM domain. It provides stimuli to develop a positive social change and to develop and adopt new digital systems and innovative organization solutions. HRM professionals can help business leaders and employees shift to the 4.0 mind-set, digital ways of managing, organizing, and leading change. To face this opportunity, HRM 4.0 needs to collaborate with IT, spread an agile mind-set to perform projects, adopt design thinking, and use integrated analytics. It represents a new world for HRM, potentially opening up new career opportunities and transforming the impact that HRM has on people, business and society at large (Strohmeier & Parry, 2014; Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016).

In order to seize these opportunities, the HRM department needs to focus on non-routine, evidence-based, science-inspired, creative, and value-added tasks.

Rigorous conceptual and empirical research that are relevant to organizational settings is called for. Contributions submitted may include, but are not restricted to, the following **topics**:

#### *Humans and work design in the 4.0 era*

- Organization 4.0, flexible workplace, agile and smart working
- Work, creativity, and technology
- Design thinking and co-design
- Virtual and augmented reality, collaboration, cooperation and team
- Ethics and industry 4.0
- Emotions, wellbeing and health in industry 4.0
- Research methodologies and methods for understanding work and organization 4.0

#### *Humans and HRM in the 4.0 era*

- Conceptualization of electronic and digital HRM and their relationships with Strategic HRM
- Changes in HRM requirements and competences for HRM 4.0
- Applications of the Internet of Things and Cloud-based approaches to HRM
- Big Data and people analytics
- HRM 4.0 and international business
- Sustainability and HRM 4.0
- Social media, social learning and HRM
- HRM 4.0, work engagement and individual performance

For this special issue, contributions are encouraged from organization studies communities, and in particular, from the participants of the **7<sup>th</sup> International e-HRM Conference 2018** that will be held at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy, November 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (<http://www.ehrm-conference2018.com/>).

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Papers will go through the standard review process of the journal <http://www.francoangeli.it/riviste/sommario.asp?IDRivista=73> and should be 8,000 words (maximum) in length, including abstract, tables, figures and reference section.

**Deadline** for full paper submission (in English): **31 January 2019**.