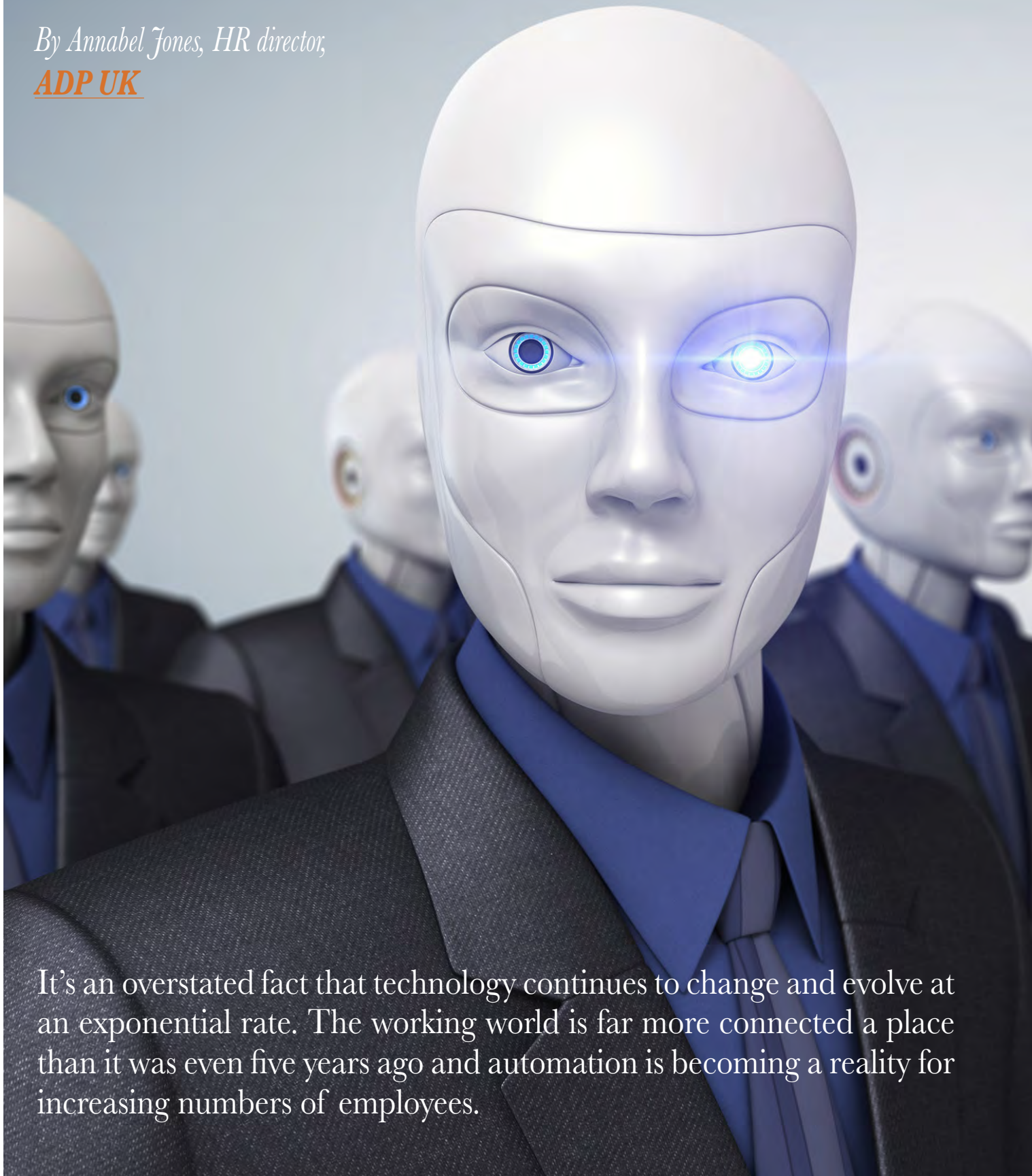


A workplace technology r

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It's an overstated fact that technology continues to change and evolve at an exponential rate. The working world is far more connected a place than it was even five years ago and automation is becoming a reality for increasing numbers of employees.

revolution,



As an HR director, fast-moving technology is something to which I need to pay attention as it has an obvious impact on HR and payroll functions. In fact, a number of processes and systems are already starting to be automated in this area, replacing various manual tasks that were previously undertaken by staff.

But technology is also having a big impact on the roles of the rest of the workforce too. Many employees have concerns as a result, but others are expressing new aims and ambitions - and as an HR representative, it is my responsibility to respond appropriately to them all.

Interestingly though, an ADP Research Institute study entitled the “***Evolution of Work***”, recently revealed a rather alarming trend: around 45% of the 2,400 employees and employers surveyed across 13 countries believed that technology enhancements and growing levels of automation would eventually replace the work of humans, particularly in the case of repetitive, admin-type tasks.

Given the extensive media coverage of events such as the landmark defeat in March of Go champion Lee Sedol by Google’s artificial intelligence system ***AlphaGo***, such findings should really come as no surprise.

Widespread fears

But the huge technological leaps and bounds being experienced are understandably making many workers fearful of what the future holds for them employment-wise. At the very least, there is a ***widespread belief*** that more reliance on technology will see them change roles more regularly, with nearly two out of five Europeans expecting to need to learn new skills as a result. ►

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As a result, employers have a duty to ensure that workers don't feel left behind or indeed that they are replaceable. Instead they should be helped to understand that technology can be used as a means to support and help them boost their overall efficiency and quality of work.

But HR and payroll professionals are just as likely to be as affected by technology as employees elsewhere in the business. For example, we could see a jump in the number of shared service centres whose role it is to take care of basic administrative tasks that are increasingly based on standardised, streamlined processes in order to make them more cost-effective.

This means that technology should be seen as an opportunity rather than something to be feared

as it frees up time for practitioners to adopt a more strategic approach. In a payroll context, for example, mobile devices, data analytics and cloud computing are all technologies that provide teams with the means of evaluating data more effectively.

Technological benefits

Such activity enables them to understand their organisation better and to influence the way the business communicates with the rest of the workforce. Payroll teams are then able to use these insights to contribute to the company long-term strategy and, ultimately, its success.

But today's technology platforms can also help employers to make the talent acquisition process smoother. Comprehensive talent management



systems and specialist recruitment tools make it easier to mine data from CVs, applications, and qualifications. This data can then be used to improve the way the organisation handles recruitment and enable it to make more informed hiring decisions.

But technology is also expected to have an impact once workers are on board. Three out of five European employers are confident that it will be used to measure and improve employee wellbeing in future. Around 38% of UK employers likewise believe it will help them to boost the performance of individuals and teams.

Interestingly, enabling staff to work flexibly was found to be the single most important factor influencing engagement. *Many European employers are aware of this trend* however, and so have already armed about two thirds of their employees with smartphones, laptops or tablets to enable them to work where they please. Such tools, combined with a more flexible working day structure, mean that staff can tailor their working week around their own unique preferences and lifestyles.



Human touch

In fact, a *study by high tech market research firm IDC* indicates that the number of European workers who have access to mobile technologies at work has risen drastically over the last five years, from 186 million to more than 244 million.

Not only do these kinds of technologies enable employers to better cater to the many and varied needs and desires of their staff, it also facilitates far more efficient working. Automating simple, repetitive tasks means that workers can focus on more skilled activities.

Nonetheless, it is vital that employers do not forget the human touch and find ways to connect with their employees – particularly those who are anxious about adopting new technologies and the changes they will inevitably bring to the world of work.

Ultimately, if used correctly, technology can help the workforce become more networked and efficient. But it is down to HR and payroll professionals to provide staff with all of the support they need to get there. ■



Annabel Jones is HR director at ADP UK, a global provider of human capital management systems. A seasoned professional, she heads a team looking after around 800 employees and is responsible for strategy development in key areas such as pay and performance, talent management and corporate social responsibility. Annabel is also a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.