



# The Role of the Executive Sponsor: Your HR Tech Project's Guiding Light.

Pinpoint's insights from 20 years of delivering HR Tech projects.



# Introduction.

*Hayley Parker, Head of Strategy, Pinpoint HRM*

As an HR leader, you may be preparing for a new people technology project. Perhaps you're still in the early planning stages, building a business case, or close to selecting your preferred vendor and solution.

If you've been well advised up to this stage, you'll know that assembling a capable project team around you is critical, if not the #1 key to project success.

In a previous article, '[Meet your Dream Team: 8 roles that define Cloud HR project success](#)', we underscored the importance of carefully selecting your crew for this project and most importantly understanding the role of the Executive Sponsor.

While the specific role may vary across different organisations and depend on the project's complexity, having the right person in this key role will underpin the success of your HR tech project.



# Understanding the Role of the Executive Sponsor.



Ideally, your sponsor should be a member of the Executive or Senior Leadership Team. This demonstrates the project's importance to the business.

As the conduit to other executives, the project sponsor ensures the alignment with business priorities and steers it through the necessary governance processes.

An Executive Sponsor is not just a figurehead; they are the linchpin in the

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*The project sponsor is the most critical person to get onboard, early if not first!*

successful deployment of Cloud HR projects. Their role transcends mere endorsement; they are the strategists, the advocates, and the bridge between the project team and the highest levels of organisational leadership.



# 01 Setting the Strategic Vision.

## *Charting the Course*

The Executive Sponsor is the strategic visionary behind the project. They ensure that your HR Tech initiative aligns with the broader business objectives, corporate priorities and culture.

They have clarity on the 'why' of the project and 'what' the strategic objectives and outcomes are.

They know and can articulate the top 5 critical business drivers and how they align to people transformation outcomes.

Their foresight in understanding how technology can enhance HR functions is crucial for the project's relevance and longevity. They are instrumental in helping the execs and board embrace the project as a critical business transformation program and not another new technology rollout.





# 02 Advocating and Supporting.

## *Mind the Gap*



One of the most critical roles of an Executive Sponsor is advocacy. They champion the project across the organisation, garnering necessary support, resources, and buy-in from various stakeholders.

HR Tech projects often require collaboration across HR, IT, and other departments.

The Executive Sponsor plays a key role in breaking down silos and fostering a collaborative environment.

By ensuring that all relevant departments work together towards a common goal, the Executive Sponsor helps to streamline the implementation process and enhance the project's effectiveness.



## 03 Managing Risks and Decision Making.

### *The Artful Dodger*

Executive Sponsors are instrumental in foreseeing, navigating and addressing risks. They have the authority to make critical decisions that can steer the project away from potential pitfalls. Their experience and organisational clout allow them to face challenges head on, escalate where necessary and allocate resources effectively.

Their involvement is not about micromanaging but ensuring they are sufficiently informed to intervene and guide the project towards success. This includes ensuring compliance with company policies and any relevant regulations.

As Amanda Tober, Chief People Officer at Levande recalls of her role as Executive Sponsor:

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*I was in the project from the get-go, chairing fortnightly steerco's and attending daily standups at critical phases during the implementation. Not that I was down in the weeds, but I made sure I knew enough to get involved where I needed to and escalate when required. You've got to know when to make that call to your implementation partner or vendor. We all want success right? I valued the enormous amount of work my team were putting in and I had to be there for them.*

**Amanda Tober**  
Chief People Officer, Levande





# 04 Driving User Adoption and Cultural Change.

## *Be the change*

Their influence is vital in overcoming resistance to change, which is a common hurdle in HR technology adoption. By actively promoting the project and its benefits, the Executive Sponsor ensures a smoother transition and greater acceptance among all levels of the organisation. Their influence is not just about pushing a new system but fostering a culture that embraces change as a pathway to innovation and growth.

Resistance to change is a natural human instinct, especially in the workplace where new technologies can unsettle established routines. The Executive Sponsor's role is to understand these concerns, address them head-on, and turn scepticism into buy-in.

They do this by:

- **Communicating the Vision:** Clearly articulating not only the 'what' and the 'how' but, most importantly, the 'why' behind the change. When people understand the reasons for change and the benefits it brings, they are more likely to support it.

- **Leading by Example:** The Executive Sponsor must be the first to embrace the new technology, demonstrating its value through their actions. This leadership by example is a powerful motivator for others to follow suit
- **Providing Support and Resources:** Ensuring that everyone has the training and support they need to make the transition as smooth as possible. This might include training sessions, user guides, drop-in virtual Q&A's and a dedicated HR helpdesk to triage questions and issues.





# 05 Being the Evangelist for the project benefits and recognising the ‘wins’.

*Broadcast the benefits AND amplify achievements*

The Executive Sponsor is the project’s chief evangelist, promoting its benefits across the organisation. This also includes managing the ‘optics’ of the project with the executive and board. Too often, the great work on a project can be overlooked or overshadowed by a couple of issues that impact only a small portion of the business.

No one is going to get these complex Cloud HR transformations exactly right every time. There are always twists and turns along the way. Don’t let perfection get in the way of progress and don’t let a negative here or there outweigh all the positive outcomes!

The Sponsor does this by:

- **Highlighting Success Stories:** Sharing the wins and success stories to build momentum and prove the positive impact of the new technology
- **Recognising and Rewarding Adoption:** Acknowledging departments or individuals who lead the way in adopting the new system can motivate others to explore and utilise the new technology
- **Facilitating Open Dialogue:** Creating forums for feedback and discussion allows users to voice their concerns and suggestions, making them feel valued and part of the change process. This includes being flexible and willing to adjust strategies based on feedback and adoption rates
- **Keeping it Real:** Setting realistic expectations about the transition process post go-live, including any potential challenges and how they will be addressed
- **Eyes Wide Open:** Keeping an eye on how well the new system is being adopted and identifying any areas where extra support might be needed. This might include more training for certain teams or revising communication strategies to better address user concerns.





# Best Practices for Engaging Executive Sponsors.

## Selecting the Right Person

Choosing the right Executive Sponsor is critical. This individual should have a blend of influence, strategic insight, and a genuine interest in the success of the project. They should also have a thorough understanding of the organisation's culture and values. And preferably they will have 'done this before'.

## Establishing Clear Communication Channels

Effective communication is key. HR leaders should establish regular check-ins and updates with the Executive Sponsor. This ensures that they are always in the loop and can provide timely guidance and support.

## Empowering Decision-Making

While it's important to keep the Executive Sponsor informed, it's equally crucial to empower them to make decisions. This autonomy will enable them to act swiftly and effectively in guiding the project.

## Encouraging Sponsor Involvement in Key Milestones

The Executive Sponsor should be involved in major project milestones, from kick-off meetings to implementation phases. Their presence can boost morale and underscore the project's importance to the organisation.



*How involved they are would vary depending on obviously the size of the organisation, the scope and urgency of the project as well. In our situation, I was quite involved. Executive sponsorship was really important.*



**Amanda Tober**  
Chief People Officer, Levande





## Wrapping it Up.

The role of the Executive Sponsor in HR Tech projects is indispensable. They are not just supporters; they are the catalysts for successful implementation and adoption.

For HR leaders, understanding and leveraging the role of the Executive Sponsor can be the difference between an 'ok' technical project and one that thrives and drives the organisation forward in HR maturity, credibility and agility.

Need help with your HR tech project or looking to get more from your current solution?

**Contact our HR tech consultants** today.



# Start your HR tech journey with Pinpoint today.




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Our passionate team of 80+ HR tech experts work with clients across the full lifecycle of HR transformation and cover all the market leading HR, Payroll, and Workforce Management software systems.

With experience delivering more than 650 people technology projects, we know there's more to success than just the tech!

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