

HumanCapital

REALISING BUSINESS STRATEGY THROUGH PEOPLE

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DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

COVER STORY

The Intangibles Of Diversity And Inclusion

Prof. Anuradha M V

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Award-Winning Entrepreneur,
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4x Bestselling Author,
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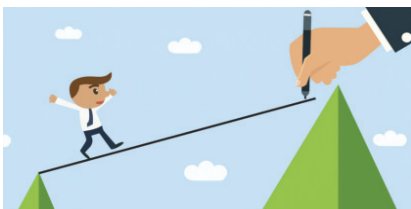
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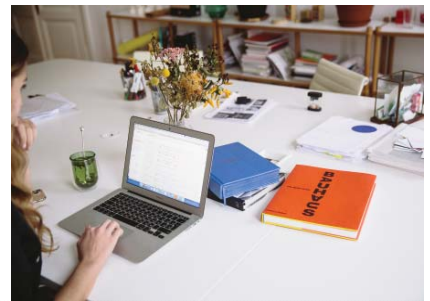
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This issue of **HUMAN CAPITAL** contains 76 pages including cover

From The Publisher's Desk



In the April issue, Human Capital is bringing forth the focus on the quintessential issue of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I). While Indian organisations are well-equipped to harness Diversity in their midst, a vast majority of them are yet to incorporate Inclusion in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, age group, physical disabilities and sexual orientation. As has been reported by the International Labour Organisation, companies' inability to incorporate D & I in their talent management plans has resulted in an untapped GDP of 3-7 percent. Prof. Anuradha M.V. writes that in the absence of culture of inclusion, implementing diversity initiatives comes about as a body without a soul. Monika Navandar writes that organisations need to work towards promoting mindsets, behaviours, processes, and practices that embrace differences and remove barriers.

In the Interview, Jennifer Brown, a diversity and inclusion expert and entrepreneur, shares compelling insights into inclusive leadership, and how organisations can foster a culture of belonging where everyone's talents are nurtured and celebrated. Jennifer also outlines the stages of "Inclusive Leader Continuum." Ashish Kapoor, Director HR-India, Eaton, shares how the company is thoughtfully developing and executing best-in-class approaches to foster inclusivity in the workplace. In Career Management, Prof. Sushil J. Lalwani and Dr. Shweta Lalwani write that during discussions on workplace expectations, employers and employees seem to be on different pages. And it becomes essential to understand corporate expectations from fresh recruits.

Case Study indicates the predicament faced by the organisations when an altercation between high profile clients threatens to vilify the organisational Brand Value. In Expert Talk, Abhiroop Banerjee writes that it is a continual challenge to synergise new talent with the existing employees, synchronise them to the common wavelength of the company's cultural values, ethics, and performance-driven competencies.

Persona features Jacob Morgan, four-time bestselling author, renowned speaker, and futurist who shares unique insights into the future of leadership by drawing on extensive research and discussions with the world's top business leaders.

Carpe Diem!

Neha Jain
Managing Partner

54% of Companies in India Can't Support Work From Home

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

The coronavirus pandemic has triggered an anxious trial run for remote work at a huge scale overnight. A recent study suggests that for many companies in India, this might not be a cakewalk.

According to a report by the IT service management firm, Gartner, nearly 54% of firms in the country do not have enough technology and resources for employees to work from home.

In India, Amazon, Google, Microsoft, Swiggy, Hindustan Unilever, Cognizant, Paytm, Ford India, Reliance Industries Ltd, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Nearbuy, and Wipro, among others, have advised their employees to opt for work from home till the working cadence stabilises.

The study found that it is easier for employees in IT organisations such as Google and Microsoft to work remotely through video conferencing and other software. But most non-IT firms and small and medium enterprises (SMBs) have no other option. A lot of these firms seem helpless due to old desktop-laptops, poor internet connectivity and UPS backup. More than two-thirds of employees lack access to information such as Google Hangouts, Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Group Chat, Cisco WebEx, GoTo Meeting, document sharing, and software that works for the group.

"The value of digital channels, products and operations is immediately obvious to companies everywhere right now. This is a wake-up call for organisations that have placed too much focus on daily operational needs at the expense of investing in digital business and long-term resilience", said Sandy Shen, Senior Director Analyst, Gartner. *"Videoconferencing, messaging, collaboration tools and document sharing are just a few examples of technologies that facilitate remote work. Additional bandwidth and network capacity may also be needed, given the increasing number of users and volume of communications",* Shen added.

As per the report, employees from non-IT companies and small and medium enterprises (SMBs) are the worst-affected in India as most of them have little or no clue about how messaging and collaboration tools work. 

Employees Disagree With Bosses on Gender Equality in India

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Despite on-going efforts to improve inclusively at the workplace, a huge perception gap persists in India between the way leaders and employees view progress toward equality in their organisations, new research from Accenture has revealed.

As per the report titled *"Getting to Equal 2020: The Hidden Value of Culture Makers"*, nearly all leaders in India (94%) believe their employees feel included. Yet, just one third (36%) of employees agree, and while two out of three leaders (66%) feel they create empowering environments at the workplace where people have a sense of belonging, less than half (48%) of employees agree.

"A significant gap exists between the way leaders and employees view progress toward equality in their organisations", according to the cross-industry research from Accenture. *"Closing the gap will yield substantial benefits for companies and their employees",* the findings showed.

The study, based on a global survey of more than 30,000 professionals in 28 countries, including India, claimed that organisations are at an inflection point. *"For every organisation today, building a culture of equality needs as much focus as any other business goal",* said Rekha M Menon, Chairman and Senior Managing Director, Accenture (India).

The contemporary workforce believes that it is critical to helping them thrive in the workplace (reported by 88% of women and 77% of men in India). Also, the majority of leaders (91% in India) say an inclusive workplace culture is vital to the success of their business.

Additionally, most leaders in India rank diversity and workplace culture low on their list of top organisational priorities. A majority of leaders ranked brand recognition and quality (84%), and financial performance (78%) at the top of their list of priorities, while only 37% ranked diversity on top.

"Aligning leaders' perceptions with those of their employees would yield significant upsides. Everyone—both women and men—would advance faster, and global profits would increase by \$3.7 trillion, including \$1.35 trillion in the Asia Pacific region", said the study. If the employee perception gap was reduced by 50%, the proportion of women who feel like a key member of their team with real influence over decisions would increase from 1-in-5 to more than 1-in-3 in India. 

Covid-19: A Black Swan

Response to Covid-19 involves resources, both human and financial, and therefore pose an even bigger challenge for small companies who are strapped for both.

BY GAUTAM BRAHMA



The Coronavirus (Covid-19) is a serious threat to global health. The Economist recently estimated that the moment it enters a country, it may infect anywhere between 25% to 70% of the population. For India, this translates into truly terrifying numbers that range from 30 to 90 crores. It is expected that 80% of these cases will be mild, like routine viral fevers that can be treated at home, and 15% may require hospital treatment. The remaining 5% may require intensive care. This last number itself is potentially greater than 1.5 crores. In other words, the country's medical infrastructure will be severely tested.

Governments all across the world are doing their bit. They are

screening incoming visitors and ensuring testing of people reporting symptoms suggestive of Covid-19 infection. They are spreading awareness, suggesting dos and don'ts, training medical personnel, establishing treatment and contact-tracing protocols, building quarantine facilities, and ensuring medical supplies. The Indian government is doing all this and more. For instance, the political leadership is staying away from large social gatherings and setting an example for others to follow.

Everyone is looking towards China - the first country to be affected - and drawing lessons from there. Many of these may have long term implications - good and bad. The positive learnings are those that are related to speed and decisiveness.

The Chinese government set up large dedicated hospitals in record time and acted quickly to isolate vast multitudes, entire cities and provinces. They also developed and deployed testing facilities on a vast scale and rapidly sequenced and shared the virus genome so that researchers around the world could start developing vaccines and antidotes.

The negative consequences are those that of personal liberty. An app developed by Ant Financials, and mandatorily deployed over large parts of China, uses self-declared data coupled with information in terms of location and movement pulled out from a social media platform (WeChat) to generate a colour code. This has to be flashed on demand by showing one's phone and determines access to public places. If red, one can be asked to stay at home for 14 days. In some locations, motorists have to scan roadside QR code signs to determine if their personal colour code allows access. *Baidu* and *SenseTime* are helping the government identify people who are not wearing masks in public places. Technology companies sharing individual data with government agencies serve a benign purpose at this moment, but once these gates open they are likely to remain open. Countries that have been squeamish about following China's example in technology-based surveillance may be compelled to do so to combat Covid-19, and thereafter, may become comfortable in this practice.

Business organisations are doing their bit to protect employee well-being and ensure business continuity. This has consisted of education, better sanitation, provision of supplies, cancellation of travel and group events, and in some cases, shutting of offices for fixed periods. Here again, many are looking to see what China has done. While Chinese companies have done all of the above, they have gone beyond in some areas. In some companies, employees are required to keep alternate seats

empty and not talk when they eat at the company cafeteria. Apparently, talking while eating facilitates viral transfer. They are also required to use masks and submit to temperature measurements several times a day.

What is more interesting is their rapid response by way of pivoting their service delivery model. Two examples are illustrative. One, while schools were shut in Wuhan, not one day of schooling was lost as lessons were delivered through the internet on mobile phones. Some parents have welcomed the easy access to teachers for query resolution which has melted down the traditional hierarchical relations in Chinese schoolrooms. Two, Sun Art Retail, which is one of the largest supermarket store chains in the country, has seen no decline in revenue even though 80% of their stores are shut. This is because they turned to online sales and home delivery in a big way. The 18-month spell of Spanish flu in the US (1918) is a rough guide to the duration companies will have to seriously examine their business model to retain revenues and margins since Covid-19 may be around for a while. To continue with the US analogy, the virulence declined with the onset of summer, leading to relief and complacency, but come winter, the virus spread ferociously claiming over 6 lakh lives in 18 months.

Some of the changes that will come about as a result of Covid-19 may stay forever.

- Companies will have to not only review and strengthen their work from home policies, but will have to provide the appropriate infrastructure, and establish protocols to prevent inappropriate use of that infrastructure.
- Reorganisation of the workforce to reduce geographical concentration and thus minimise the impact of shutting any one facility will also have to be considered.
- Careful shadowing of key personnel, which was always a good thing to do to minimise

attrition impact, will now have to be done to minimise the impact of those people falling sick. Processes may have to be reviewed to minimise group meetings and get people used to interacting over phone or video-conferences to achieve the same purpose.

“Since the virus does not distinguish between staff on rolls and those on contract, companies will have to invest in both education and infrastructure for the vendor staff who currently fend for themselves.”

At a macro level, supplier diversification will have to be introduced to minimise the impact of any one supplier being quarantined. This has huge implications for global supply chains where enduser companies do not even have full visibility of the locations and number of the secondary suppliers who supply their primary suppliers. The pharma companies are seeing this need right away because they depend on China for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs). To see the challenge involved consider this: the last US-based penicillin fermenter was shut down in 2004. Since the virus does not distinguish between staff on rolls and those on contract, companies will have to invest in both education and infrastructure for the vendor staff who currently fend for themselves. Since this is often a varying number, the difficulties are obvious. In short, many things were good to do, but were either put on the back-burner or were done as a matter of form and not in spirit, will actually get done leaving organisations transformed for the better.

Response to Covid-19 involves resources, both human and

financial, and therefore pose an even bigger challenge for small companies who are strapped for both. Many small establishments are under equipped with even washrooms, soap and driers, leave alone sanitisers and masks. They also have very lean staffing and cannot afford to carry extra staff for contingencies. It will be an uphill task for them, but the good thing is that if they last through the spell they would have become better places to work.

Our knowledge of Covid-19 is evolving almost by the day. For instance, when this piece is being written, it has become clear that there are at least two strains, one more infectious than the other, and that women suffer fewer fatalities than men. In many respects, the key information is so vague that it can be seen as almost useless for planning. For instance, the fatality rates estimated by different researchers vary by an order of magnitude. One thing is certain though. This is a true Black Swan event that will forever change the way we work. 

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About the Author

Gautam Brahma is a management consultant who advises start-ups and SMEs on strategy & operations including sales, HR and IT. He carries an experience of over four decades in the public, private and non-profit sectors in telecommunications and IT industries. He has been an invited speaker on multiple industry forums and a monthly columnist on HR issues for nearly two decades. Gautam is based out of Gurgaon and can be reached at gautam.brahma@bizmentor.in.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The Intangibles Of Diversity And Inclusion

Diversity refers to the structural elements in an organisation while Inclusion implies a cultural mindset. Without the culture of inclusion, implementation of diversity initiatives would come about as soulless.

BY **PROF. ANURADHA M. V.**

While working as an intern in an Information Technology company in 2008, I found it truly inspiring that the autistic child of an employee was running a small library at the very entrance of the company. Also, I had a colleague who was visually challenged. The HR Professional, who was my mentor in this company, was in the middle of a management crisis since it was to be decided if the creche situated on the ground floor, should be outsourced to an external agency, whose premises was two kilometres away or managed in-house by the organisation itself. I would often accompany her to meetings with the HR representatives and employees who were using the creche services. The HR Head insisted that the creche be managed inhouse as it would allow mothers to visit their children more often, and thus make them feel less guilty while working. Many parents supported him. There was also a section of employees who were rationally evaluating the cost for the company due to such a decision, and those who were debating how best they could adjust their daily schedules in case the creche shifts outside.

My mind picked up all these diverse events and wove them into

one coherent narrative of what the organisation stood for. It was an organisation owned by everyone and managed by a few. It was a place where people also earned self-respect along with their bread and butter.

Today, as an academic who wishes to make meaningful contributions to the growing conversation about diversity and inclusion, my mind keeps wandering back to my internship experience. I wonder what could have made that organisation become what it was. I also wonder if it paid off in the long run!

Diversity: A Social Phenomenon

Organisations have always been inherently diverse. There have always been people with different personalities, socio-economic and educational backgrounds, varied age groups etc. in any organisation. There were commonalities too. And these were more dominant and visible than the differences. For instance, some professions were dominated by a single gender - for example, men on factory floors and women in teaching. The national boundaries were mostly intact. In fact, the working population in an organisation many times belonged to a single region within the country.



Contemporary organisations, however, have evolved into open systems. The boundaries between organisations and nations have blurred. Gender roles are being redefined as well. Therefore, diversity in today's organisations is qualitatively different from the diversity experienced by organisations a couple of decades ago. There are more people from different ethnic, cultural, religious, social backgrounds within the same workspace. There are more women in the workforce. Generational differences have widened because values have changed with the speed of technology. There are commonalities between people too. But the differences are more dominant than the commonalities.

Diversity: A Strategic Tool

Initially, diversity in organisations was a natural extension of the changing social fabric. These demographic changes piqued the interest of organisational researchers. Through academic research, it was found that diversity of membership in any group led to higher organisational performance and novelty. People from different backgrounds brought forth with them varied perspectives. This variation improved performance. Diversity

**SAKSHI SOOD**

HR-Business Partner, Merck

“Diversity and inclusion are the buzzwords these days, but they are not just abstract concepts—they are core values and strategic business imperatives that deliver business results. They help break down barriers so that powerful potential of employees can be unleashed. But fostering the D&I agenda can't be restricted to focusing on just hiring a diverse team, it needs to be embedded in the work culture such that diverse teams actually grow and prosper. It is about instilling a mindset change and a commitment to fostering an inclusive environment that embraces different perspectives and values the contributions of each individual.”

also created a positive social image of the organisation. A positive social image added to the brand value of the company. Positive research findings such as these led organisations to adopt diversity as a strategic tool. And Recruitment policies were so devised that they ensured a fair amount of weightage to hiring people from different backgrounds.

Despite a number of these initiatives, implementation of diversity was not always successful. For instance, a study in 2015 found that in the US, while men's income increased by 6% after they had a child, women's earnings went down by 4% when they had a child. In 2019, women in Indian corporates were still earning 19% lower wages than men. In an informal conversation, an HR professional in India once suggested that they were struggling with the implementation of a

“reconnect” programme for women employees who had taken a sabbatical on maternal grounds. These women got labeled as ‘Diversity Candidates’ i.e. those who get special (perceived as unfair) privileges. These women felt that their competence was overlooked owing to such cataloguing. Controlling these inhibitory group dynamics emerged as a mammoth task for the organisation.

Social scientists have determined that diversity leads to benefits for the group only when there are mechanisms to harness diversity. A good leader could be an example of such an integrating mechanism. Good leaders can tap into the differences in perspectives of the diverse members of the group and utilise it to increase the performance of the entire group. Strong organisational cultures could also be effective in harnessing the diversity. In the absence of these factors' diversity efforts become ineffective as in the examples cited above.

“Diversity in today's organisations is qualitatively different from the diversity experienced by organisations a couple of decades ago. There are more people from different ethnic, cultural, religious, social backgrounds within the same workspace.”

Inclusion: the Soul of Diversity Implementation

Diversity refers to the structural elements in an organisation and Inclusion refers to a cultural mindset. Without a culture of inclusion, the implementation of diversity initiatives would emerge

as soulless. In order to understand this, the first question that needs to be addressed is “whose onus is diversity?” Is it a Human Resource tool or is it the top management's vision and strategic intent for the organisation? For organisations where diversity efforts are owned by the Human Resource Department alone, the efforts do not lead to the benefits suggested by research. In organisations where diversity is owned by the top management and trickles down to every department, diversity initiatives flourish.

**SANDEEP GHAI,**

Senior Director- Human Capital, Optum Global Solutions

“Inclusion is intentional and diversity is incidental. An inclusive workplace environment has merits of equivalence in roles, learning, growth opportunities and pay-parity—organisational levers that attract a diverse workforce. While this fulfils organisations' I&D agenda, the paramount objective of enabling an inclusive ecosystem is to nurture a bias free, positive, motivated and high performing culture, where all voices are heard, all suggestions are acknowledged, and all decisions are based on diverse perspectives. The increasingly competitive job market calls for focusing talent management efforts on reskilling and skill upgradation, and leveraging the diverse talent pool that is capable, yet remains untapped due to dated talent acquisition/talent development models. Organisations today simply cannot afford to overlook the potential of and the need to be inclusive and diverse.”

**SHUILU DAR**

Talent Acquisition Leader, DuPont South Asia

“The conversation around diversity and inclusion (D&I) has come a long way in recent years and has grown to include equity. Building a diverse workforce at every level of an organisation is the right thing to do both from a business perspective as well as from a people perspective. This is because embracing a diverse, equal and inclusive culture positively impacts the overall growth and future success of organisations. We continue to see inspiring examples of how most companies are scaling up their recruiting efforts and implementing strategies to attract, retain and advance talent from all backgrounds while fostering an inclusive work environment. Unsurprisingly, companies that build diverse, equal and inclusive teams are able to bring a variety of views and backgrounds to the table which in turn helps them to meet the evolving customer needs in a fast-changing environment.”

Organisations are reflective of the society in which they are embedded. Therefore, social role expectations, stereotypes, and prejudices come along with diversity. These biases are usually unconscious. To provide wings to any diversity initiative, training should be aimed at dealing with these biases.

Media is a very strong social influencer, and is stronger than the laws of the land. The messages sent across by movies, the storyline of advertisements, and social media influencers can be effectively used to tap into the unconscious biases and modify them.

Conflicts in a diverse group are also highly probable. Building cultures of inclusivity should mandatorily focus on conflict management. Pre-empting structural features that could lead to conflict and correcting them proactively; training people on conflict management techniques etc. could help in dealing with conflicts. It is important to understand that while diversity can be introduced at all levels in the organisation through the use of employee referral programmes, mentoring and flexiwork opportunities etc., the propensity for conflict can be reduced only when employees feel that the organisational environment

**ANUSHREE SINGH**

Head of HR, AkzoNobel India

“Diversity and inclusion are no longer just a HR strategy. Now, it's more of a way of life for organisations focused on having a competitive edge. The emphasis these days is regarding successfully leveraging diversity to produce better products and services as well as to exceed customer expectations through innovation and progressive culture. An organisation that is determined to make a real impact needs to work at each of its layer. It is important that diversity and inclusion is not treated as a tick in the box item and start grooming talent to build strong managers and leaders who appreciate and act upon diverse viewpoint. And thereby, create an ecosystem that nurtures, accepts and appreciates diversity of talent and thoughts. The only non-negotiable in driving diversity is that quality and equality should never be compromised.”

communicates a sense of fairness to all its stakeholders irrespective of their age, gender, race, ethnicity etc.

“Organisations are reflective of the society in which they are embedded. Therefore, social role expectations, stereotypes, and prejudices come along with diversity. These biases are usually unconscious.”

When diversity is implemented along with an inclusive mindset, D&I provides a competitive advantage to the organisation. But how do you know if it is working for you? Researchers have quantified diversity statistics, profitability, innovativeness, absenteeism, turnover etc. But measuring the intangible aspects of an inclusive culture is relatively difficult. Qualitative interviews with employees could be an alternative.

I could also suggest an ‘intern test’ i.e. if an intern exposed to the organisation for a short span of time can sense the inclusivity (like I did during my internship), then in all probability, the organisation is on the right track! **HC**

About the Author

Dr. Anuradha M. V. is presently working as Associate Professor in the OB & HR area at IIM- Visakhapatnam. She has obtained her FPM from XLRI, Jamshedpur and completed her bachelor's and master's degree in psychology from University of Delhi. Her research has been published in various national, international journals. She has also written for reputed outlets that includes the Human Capital. Her research interests lie in the domain of identity, self and various aspects of meaning of work and well being.

The How-Tos of D&I

Organisations should work towards promoting mindsets, behaviours, processes, and practices that embrace differences and remove barriers.

BY MONIKA NAVANDAR



Today, there is a fair amount of awareness among corporates when it comes to diversity and inclusion (D&I). At least, the C-suite at the enterprise level acknowledges the importance of having either a D&I strategy in place or keenness to kick-off D&I initiatives. Personally, having worked in various roles at the enterprise, global, regional and country levels, my observation is that the MNCs that have been amongst the top 50 D&I organisations for numerous years at the world headquarters level are still lagging in basic D&I practices in their EMEA and Asia Pacific markets. Some of their country leadership teams struggle to understand that diversity and inclusion are two distinct terms.

For them, D&I is equivalent to any gender diversity and unconscious bias awareness program. Also, despite many successful efforts, there is still a lack of minority talent in board rooms and the C-suite.

D&I is a business imperative. Recruitment, unconscious bias awareness, and mentoring programs alone, or merely celebrating Women's Day/ International Day of PwD/ Pride month won't move the needle when it comes to having a diverse talent pipeline.

A diverse workforce with highly inclusive culture leads to better decision-making, teamwork, collaboration, innovation, creativity, customer/market perspectives, talent engagement, and financial

return. The only way businesses can leverage the power of diversity is through inclusive behaviour and by breaking down the existing silos in organisational structures. So how do you really work towards promoting mindsets, behaviours, processes, and practices that embrace differences and remove barriers? How do you work towards realising the full potential of each individual, team, and the organisation as a whole? Well, we need more commitment, concrete plans, and cultural changes.

“D&I is a business imperative. Recruitment, unconscious bias awareness, and mentoring programs alone, or merely celebrating Women's Day/ International Day of PwD/ Pride month won't move the needle when it comes to having a diverse talent pipeline.”

Here are a few ways to accelerate your D&I journey:

1. Define diversity and inclusion in a consistent manner and regularly communicate it organisation-wide through various mediums.



2. Focus on data collection and encourage employees to self-identify. This needs a lot of work in terms of employer branding, inclusive practices, role models, advocates, psychological safety, and overall organisational culture.

3. Fix your internal talent development and management practices. There is a lot of bias in talent decision-making processes/systems; hence, you don't see diverse talent movement in senior roles or across the board, including

cross-functional roles. Think about performance management: How is feedback given to minority talent—constructive or politically correct?

4. Run customised unconscious bias awareness programs to mitigate biases in hiring, promoting, and terminating talent. Incorporate practical nudges in your recruitment, performance management, and succession planning processes.

5. Start a skills initiative to train your minority talent on networking, building relationship capital, enhancing executive presence, etc.

6. Unless leaders are held accountable and compensated for D&I performance, you won't see progress. Set up D&I targets for both reward and penalty. Design scorecards/metrics and tie them to performance bonuses, rewards and recognition programs.

7. Work on enhancing your employer brand by sharing D&I data/metrics internally and externally. Participate in D&I benchmarking surveys. For example:

- Google and Facebook both share their diversity data publicly.
- Hindustan Unilever's MD, Sanjiv Mehta, declared the ambition to achieve full gender parity by 2022.
- Goldman Sachs, in January, announced the setting of a new standard to have at least one diverse board member before taking any company public.
- Citigroup announced its commitment to close its gender gap.

8. For the business to thrive, you need to connect the dots and bring it all under one umbrella—D&I, CSR, sustainability, and health and wellness initiatives.

9. Leverage your Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) beyond celebrations—for developing leadership, driving a culture of inclusion, acquiring talent, onboarding, engaging and retaining employees, identifying new



TAPAN GUPTA
CHRO, PSIPL

“The strength of an organisation lies in its Diversity and Inclusion practices. It can be described as a programme that encourages representation and participation of diverse groups of people, including people of different races and ethnicity, abilities and disabilities, genders, religions, ages and sexual orientations. It could also mean people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, skills, and opinions. Any organisation with distinct viewpoints across various levels helps in improving financial results, organization, and team performance. For any D&I strategy to work, attracting diverse employees is only the beginning. The most important part is to provide an environment where employees feel supported and valued. Any successful D&I strategy should reflect through high retention of a diverse workforce and high employee engagement scores. Diversity is inviting new people to the party; Inclusion is asking them to Dance.”

opportunities, and increasing your market share.

10. Focus and improve your supplier diversity. E.g., partner with women and minority-owned businesses.

For those organisations that have identified the business case for D&I, have secured leadership buy-in, and are looking for ideas on what to do next, here are some actions you can take:

1. To begin, assign at least one senior full-time resource for D&I



POOJA BHASIN
Sr. Director HR & Finance,
Ticketmaster India

“More and more companies today are focussing on having an inclusive culture and bridging the gender gap in their workplaces. I believe that true change and inclusion can be brought about when diversity is part of an organisation's principles and not a binding mandate. We should take pride in a woman workforce which is empowered, and colleagues who can be judged solely based on their talent, capabilities and teamwork, not preferences. Disability is no more an obstacle to success; the physically challenged are today probably striving harder and achieving more success than others. As an organisation, it is our responsibility to encourage such inclusive workplaces and offer recognition where due. Freedom to discuss all concerns and sharing suggestions for the continuous improvement in the workplace, flexible hours, kids' zone within the office and considerate work culture are some of the other measures that go on to nurture a healthy work environment.”

work. Either hire an expert from the market or leverage a consultant to support and enable your team on-site.

2. Identify and make a list of stakeholders to conduct interviews and evaluate your existing practices through a D&I lens. Gather insights on your organisational culture, talent management practices, employee experience, and leadership behaviours to develop the strategic plan that is integrated across the business, HR, and ERGs.

3. Centre your D&I strategy on delivering “must-wins.” Plot a three-year roadmap along with the first-year action plan, including a few quick wins. Examples: Build inclusive leadership competencies;



TUSHAR DESAI

Director - Talent Acquisition
India, FIS

“The pursuit of D&I as an integral part of organisational culture strategy has evolved from being a fad to a primary feature in Talent strategies. Embedding D&I into the DNA of any organisation is like adopting a diet plan. There are no quick fixes and there needs to be a holistic plan with a clear executive sponsorship with enough drive to avoid eventual fatigue. From an Indian context, the Inclusion factor plays a more significant role than Diversity as we are already quite diverse as a nation. Hence, it is imperative that we put clear objectives for each component of the Talent pipeline and tie it back to the organisation goals. This makes the pursuit of D&I participative and seamless through the hiring as well as employee lifecycle.”

design diverse talent acquisition strategies; embed D&I into business strategies; establish and optimise ERGs; educate, develop and advance diverse talent at all levels; and strengthen governance and accountability.

4. Look at talent acquisition from a D&I lens:

- Consider using software such as Textio for gender-neutral language in job descriptions
- Partner with vendors catering to minority hiring
- Analyse the data to see which sources bring you the most diverse hires. For instance, are you hiring only from Tier 1 colleges?
- For senior leadership roles, analyse whether you are considering a diverse slate of candidates who are also being evaluated by a diverse panel
- Run exclusive tailored unconscious bias programs for recruiters and hiring managers
- Look for “culture-add” instead of “culture-fit” candidates

5. Build and enhance psychological safety in teams, including virtual teams, so that every voice is heard to promote inclusion and innovation further.

6. Go beyond your traditional leadership development and mentoring programs and launch sponsorship programs for high-potential, high-performing diverse talent.

7. Policymaking:

- Keep a D&I checklist ready to ensure that each policy is applicable to every last worker
- Communicate the code of zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment
- Incorporate flexible work-arrangements such as work from home, job-sharing, part-time work, etc.

8. Build an inclusive visual environment via pictures of diverse groups.



SHEELA CHARLES

HR Head, Log 9 Materials

“Company policies rapidly evolving and we witness wide acceptance of diversity across levels. It makes good economic sense to hire a diverse workforce, including “Returnees to work after a break” - maternity, illness, and disabilities. But all said and done, the inclusion of a combination of the diverse workforce continues to be challenging due to certain aspects like educational background and skills, especially in companies with niche jobs. Sensitisation of the workforce on “diversity” needs to be undertaken to not lose out on inclusion.”

9. Sensitise all the employees, including your facilities staff in terms of avoiding sexist comments, how to treat and interact with PwD, the LGBTQ+ community, etc.

10. For accountability and results, measure and share the representation reports. Remember, accountability and execution are key to get anything done! **HC**

About the Author

Monika Navandar has 15+ years of multi-industry HR experience and has led many leadership roles in India, USA, Singapore, Dubai, and South Africa, supporting global C-suite leaders. She is the Founder of NeoSeven Solutions and has a dynamic partner team of senior leaders worldwide. She has been on the Harvard Business Review Advisory Council for 3+ years. Formerly, she has worked with Johnson & Johnson, Volkswagen, Merck Pharma, HSBC, and IBM. Monika is also an eminent speaker. Reach out to her at inquiry@neoseven.in.

A Refreshing Perspective on Change Management

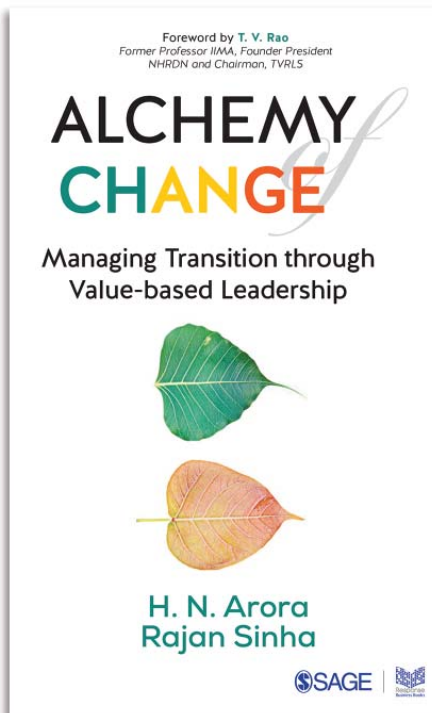
BY DR H. N. ARORA AND RAJAN SINHA

Change is inevitable and usually painful. A spoonful of empathic leadership, a smattering of new tools, and a few sachets of foundational values boil together to create organizational transformation. However, not all change efforts are successful. **Alchemy of Change** shows that value-based institutions, which evolve from the wisdom of the soil, can bring about enduring change.

Introducing the Indian Model of Change, which is based on Indian values of leadership, dialogue, mutual respect, and goal setting, the book explains how the nuances and distinctions of the Indian mindset and cultural backdrop can help to keep pace with today's fast-changing world.

This book, written over several years, is an offering born out of our journey of understanding and discovering the key principles that make for successful change, enriched by the significant ideas and insights on the management of change in academic journals and the writings of management gurus. It attempts to provide basic knowledge on change, leadership, Indian culture and values, without resorting to jargons and statistics.

We have divided this book into eight parts. Part I has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter explains the meaning and nature of change and how it affects organizations. This understanding is a prerequisite for change initiation. The second chapter helps in understanding the change process in its totality. The third and final chapter describes how organizations are coping with cascading change in the present era. In Part II, we briefly review three case studies, all of which are change stories, but in totally diverse contexts and organizational realities. The various interventions in these case studies are discussed appropriately, along with the process of change. Part III attempts to discuss a blueprint for managing change starting from preparation to visioning to formulating appropriate strategy and structure as well as how to manage resistance and sustain change on a



long-term basis. This is followed by a discussion on tactics deployed for successful change in Part IV.

In managing change, leadership is a critical variable that facilitates or makes change happen. The whole concept of **Alchemy of Change leadership** and the type of leader needed for successfully driving change has been discussed in Part V. Part VI is devoted to the role of culture and values in managing change, and the distinctive characteristics of Indian culture and values that could have a bearing on the change process. The insights gained from the change experiences and study of the theoretical framework have helped us propose an Indian model for driving change, a model of value-based leadership. This has been presented in Part VII.

In the section of Epilogue, we seek to address some of these issues and endeavour to situate the proposed model in the contemporary context, offering suggestions on how ideas outlined in the book could be useful to modern change managers and organizations.

Thus, the book is an omnibus reference point for the global and Indian wisdom on the subject of change management. As Dr. T V Rao has written in the Foreword, this book is a must-read for all managers, CEOs, CXOs, management teachers, and students. 

About the Author

Dr H. N. Arora is an organization change specialist. He retired as Group Corporate Head HR and IR, Escorts Group, after having held top positions in Bhilwara group, Reliance, and Indian Rayon, among others.

Rajan Sinha is CEO of Mantrana Consulting. He is a PCC-level certified Life and Leadership Coach from Coach For-Life, Inc., USA. Formerly being the Head of Human Resources with many organizations such as HMT, Escorts Limited, Denso India, and OCM, among others, Rajan is an adviser, trainer and coach to many corporates and NGOs.

Championing Inclusion

*In an exclusive interview with Human Capital, **Jennifer Brown**, an internationally sought-after diversity and inclusion expert, award-winning entrepreneur, highly-acclaimed keynoter, podcaster, and author, shares compelling insights into inclusive leadership, how organizations can foster a culture of belonging where everyone's talents are nurtured and celebrated, the tools that leaders can wield to practice inclusion, the importance of allyship, and why inclusion strategies should be centered around the business pillars of workforce, workplace, and marketplace. Jennifer also outlines the stages of the "Inclusive Leader Continuum", its distinctive characteristics, and what leaders can do to keep growing and improving themselves.*

BY ANKITA SHARMA

Q You have successfully charted an unusual career path from being an opera singer to becoming a successful entrepreneur, bestselling author, and a world-renowned diversity and inclusion thought leader. How do you look back at your professional journey traversed thus far?

A There are a couple of things that were incredibly important turning points. Perhaps the first was being an aspiring opera singer, injuring my voice, and having to reinvent myself by turning to this other thing—my stage experience—which positioned me to be a keynoter. The second equally important turning point was coming out as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and progressively, over the years, across the various roles I have played, becoming more comfortable with that. This coming out element was especially meaningful once I realized how it could empower my business and establish credibility for my consulting work and thought leadership. Now, nearly two decades on from those first two events, a new turning point has been in writing books. It's difficult and expensive, but it has enabled me to get my



perspective across to so many more folks. It's one of my proudest accomplishments because it's a way for me to have a broader impact than I otherwise would have had.

Q In your recent book 'How to Be an Inclusive Leader', you discuss the phenomenal power of being inclusive. What does inclusive leadership mean, and why does it matter?

A An inclusive leader is dedicated to the thriving of others. It might sound simple, but it's far from that—it takes immense courage and dedication to work not only within the workplace but also within oneself. There is so much more to it than this, but learning more about what inclusive leadership entails is worth it: the competencies required of an inclusive leader will, over the next few years, come to be seen as core business leadership competencies. Smart companies are already defining what this means, and requiring and measuring their knowledge and practice of inclusive leadership because they already understand that acknowledging what you don't know, surrounding yourself with difference, and working to ensure that diversity reaches its full potential are keys to organizational success.

Q You recently created the 'Inclusive Leader Continuum' which encompasses four developmental stages to help leaders discover where they stand in their journey of becoming more inclusive. Could you elucidate the hallmarks of each stage, and also share some tips on what leaders could do to advance to the next level?

A The team and I created the Inclusive Leader Continuum* because we identified the need for a way to help folks get started on their journey to inclusive leadership. As with so many other

personal growth aspects, understanding where one is relative to the full scope of possibility is a great first step—but there wasn't a way to gauge that. The continuum has four stages:

i. Unaware, for those who are just coming to understand that there might be a problem;

ii. Aware, for those who believe there is work to be done, but are doing intensive personal work to make their own behaviours more inclusive;

iii. Active, for folks who are ready to move that personal work out into the open and begin to demonstrate allyship for other communities in their place of work; and finally,

iv. Advocate, the stage in which one is truly advancing the cause of inclusivity in the workplace on both interpersonal and institutional levels.

You may be further ahead or behind on one issue or another since we learn about different forms of difference at different speeds. Regardless of where one is on the continuum, we encourage everyone to remember that you're not alone.

**To know where you fall on the Inclusive Leader Continuum, take the self-assessment by visiting jenniferbrownspeaks.com/inclusive-leader-book/assessment/*

Q Storytelling is being increasingly acknowledged as an incredibly effective tool in catalyzing impactful organizational change. How could leaders use storytelling techniques to foster cultures of inclusion and belonging?

A First of all, everyone has a diversity story, and telling that story—no matter who you are—is key to creating more inclusive workplaces. That said, those who tell stories most often have historically been those whose identities are dominant—cis male, heterosexual, white—and we have lost the voices of those who are not in the majority—women, people of colour, the disabled community,

etc. In order to foster change, we need leaders to get more meaningfully involved in sharing their diversity story and to encourage others to do so. The messenger matters these days as much as the message, and it's not just the job of those who are most underrepresented in the workplace to carry the mantle. Leaders need to commit publicly to sharing what diversity means to them. This will help normalize the conversation while having the important simultaneous impact of lessening the burden on those who are struggling the most to bring their full selves to work. This is a great example of an inclusive leader competency I refer to above.

Q Unconscious biases come in many different forms, and can negatively impact everything from hiring decisions to strategic, boardroom-level thinking. What techniques could be used to tackle these biases, and how could technology help?

A Unconscious bias training is important—but it is only a first step. We have to quickly translate those cursory lessons into behaviours and actions backed and supported by institutional accountability. To be inclusive leaders, we need to begin by spotting our own biases and starting to do things differently, as well as pointing out biases that we see daily, thereby challenging the status quo. The best technology I know that helps with diversity, equity, and inclusion, is called **Textio**. It aims to address unconscious bias-related problems: it de-biases job descriptions—for example, looking for a “ninja” or “rock star” tends to attract more men—which is especially important given all the issues we know exist regarding the perceived challenges of finding diverse talent to recruit or hire. But there is a broader movement to broaden the scope of how tech can play a role, and I imagine we will see a more



promotional pipeline and pay equity-related technology in coming years.

Q Creating and sustaining a culture of psychological safety is vital to embed inclusivity within the organizational fabric. From your expert view, what are the top strategies that could be employed to help people bring their whole selves to work every day?

A I think we need more overt and public allyship from those who have not been talking about this forever. Allies are critical to eradicating the covering behaviours that are prevalent for those who are traditionally less represented—and may be fatigued, at this point, by having to advocate tirelessly for themselves. Importantly, diversity manifests itself in both visible and invisible ways—something that's especially important to remember when we talk about covering. From the perspective of companies and leadership, it's necessary and useful to give aspiring allies a concrete road map for things they can do and say to exhibit concrete signals that inclusion is important. For example, the simple act of including pronouns in one's email signature and sharing one's pronouns as a matter of course is a great signal of allyship—as it educates folks about the diversity of gender identities—and also makes it safer for those who might

have non-normative relationships with pronouns to feel comfortable using and asking others to use the language they most identify with.

Another fantastic tool is the creation and support of Employee Resource Groups or ERGs—affinity groups for different minority folks—which is a valuable way for those who might not see themselves reflected in greater numbers to experience a sense of community and solidarity, and to think strategically about their contribution to making the workplace more inclusive for their identities.

Q You advise Fortune 500s and many others on how to build a more diverse and inclusive workplace. What are some of the common mistakes that you see large organizations make when it comes to diversity and inclusion?

A Doing just unconscious bias training without a more formal or robust strategy is akin to checking the box and hoping that change will follow. Part of this is the fact that a lot of people are satisfied with their positive intent and think that is enough. Whether there is a pay gap or a lack of diversity in leadership, people tend to believe they are better at all of this than they are because of their desire for things to be different. But intent and impact are different in all aspects of business, including—and perhaps especially—this one. We all need to take concrete action to intervene on the mechanisms we understand to be holding us and others back. Inclusive organizations don't create themselves—whether they are in the Fortune 500 or they're a small non-profit. Each of

us has to take steps every day to create and maintain inclusive workplaces.

Finally, many companies rest on their communities of identity to bring their full selves and do the education for the company in the form of ERGs or passionate volunteers to determine what strategy should be owned and driven by company leadership. Like anything else, there is a cost to outsourcing that comes in the form of under-resourcing the program and, more wastefully, side-stepping the opportunity to learn, and then finally by exhausting the populations you needed to give place to in the first place.

Q Most business leaders agree that workplace diversity makes good business sense, but many find it challenging to act beyond mere “tokenism”.

What practical advice would you give to leaders seeking to cultivate a strategic diversity and inclusion mindset?

A First, they need to ground their strategy in the business pillars that are meaningful for their organization. We usually say workforce, workplace, and marketplace should be the three foundational pillars of every effective strategy. Initiatives should be spoken about in a way that points back to these strategic pillars. Most critical is that your workforce represents the world you're selling into—and the world is diversifying. Does your workforce reflect what the current (and future) marketplace for labour and customers wants or is looking for? If you're designing products and services for people not at the table, you are not setting yourself up for success. So this is about diversity but also inclusion—about workplace culture—which, as they say, beats strategy every time. If leaders can keep that in mind, they are well-positioned to set themselves up for their own inclusive leader journey and, by association, get their organizations up for the marketplaces of tomorrow. **HC**

Microsoft, SBI to Create Opportunities for Differently-Abled Youth

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Microsoft India and SBI Foundation have collaborated to create opportunities for youth with disabilities in the banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) industry. The three-year program was launched by Jean-Philippe Courtois, Executive Vice President and President, Global Sales, Marketing and Operations, Microsoft and Rajnish Kumar, Chairman, SBI at an event in Mumbai.



With this collaboration, Microsoft and the SBI Foundation will equip youth living with disabilities with the technology and training needed to better prepare them for integration into the BFSI workforce. In the first year of the program, more than 500 youth will be upskilled across five major cities, including Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and the National Capital Region.

The program will be driven in collaboration with various government organisations, industry skilling bodies and non-profits. The goal is to build a sustainable and scalable program that not only empowers youth with the skills they need to find employment in the financial services industry but also advances cross-industry advocacy efforts to drive inclusion for and hiring of differently-abled people. 

PayPal Launches Benefit for Parents, Parents-In-Law of Employees

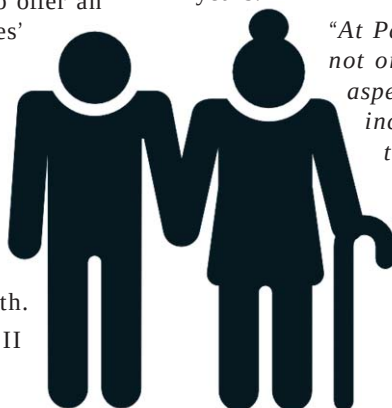
BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

PayPal India has launched a new holistic wellness program, ElderCare@PayPal for employees' parents and parents-in-law. The initiative is part of the company's effort to provide its employees with a supportive environment that enables them to bring their best to work every day.

The program is PayPal's endeavour to offer an elderly care infrastructure for employees' ageing parents. Parents may or may not be living with their children, and may not have access to proper health and wellbeing services or face financial constraints in meeting such needs. Keeping this in mind, the program is designed to touch upon different elements of parental health, from physical to emotional and financial health.

The program would also cover Tier II and III cities besides major cities and towns of the country.

The benefits include a comprehensive health check, doctor consultation, counselling assistance on emotional, financial, and legal topics delivered in vernacular capabilities, home healthcare support such as doctor or nurse visits, yoga sessions, and extending medical insurance cover for parents-in-law up to the age of 85 years.



"At PayPal, inclusion as our core value is not only about including employees in every aspect of their work-life but about practicing inclusion of their families as well. This translates to supporting their families – spouse, parent, children, especially across different stages of their life. The program offers special initiatives and services for their ageing parents and parents-in-law who to help make their lives easier", said Jayanthi Vaidyanathan, Senior Director, Human Resources, and Head of HR at PayPal India. 



Making Inclusion & Diversity Work

***Ashish Kapoor**, Director HR - India at Eaton, shares how inclusion & diversity is firmly anchored in the organization's philosophy, why it is a strategic imperative at Eaton, and how the company is thoughtfully developing and executing best-in-class approaches to foster inclusivity in the workplace.*

BY ANKITA SHARMA

Q What does inclusion & diversity mean to you at Eaton?

A At Eaton, I believe inclusion and diversity (I&D) powers our innovation and sustainable growth. Openness to diversity widens our access to the best talent in the world, and inclusion allows us to engage that talent fully.

Today, Eaton is a power management company made up of 100,000 employees doing business in more than 175 countries. In India, we have 19 sites and more than 5500 diverse employees across the region. We

have always believed that leveraging the diversity of Eaton employees, and driving cross-cultural awareness deepens the understanding of our customers and enables more strategic relationships with them.

Diversity takes many forms—characteristics like age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, and sexual orientation all come into play. At Eaton, we aspire to be a model of inclusion and diversity in our industry—a place where everyone matters and everyone belongs. We want to be known

for the way we welcome all people to the table and include them by listening to what they have to offer.

Q Why is inclusion & diversity important to business success today?

A At Eaton, we know that the single most important ingredient to our success is our people. When we say that we aspire to be a model of inclusion and diversity, it is because we believe that it is the right thing to do for our people, investors, customers, and communities. I&D is much needed to achieve our business vision as when we embrace the different ideas, perspectives, and backgrounds that make each of us unique, the company as a whole becomes stronger. We believe this outlook helps us attract, retain, and engage top talent around the world.

Globally, with 50% diversity on our Board of Directors and around 5,000 Eaton leaders attending I&D training courses, we're firmly committed to setting guidance, targets, and activities that foster greater inclusion and diversity everywhere we do business.

Q How is Eaton creating a culture of inclusivity and belonging? Could you share a few examples?

A For I&D, we have four pillars of excellence which serve as our global focus areas: namely, **talent**—attract, retain, and advance the great talent needed to fuel our growth, **performance**—enable all employees to contribute their unique skills to achieve their full potential and optimize business results, **globalization**—accelerate the process of becoming a global enterprise that can win in all markets, and **innovation**—cultivate and leverage different backgrounds, perspectives, and

thinking to create better processes, products, and service solutions.

Globally, we have eight inclusion Eaton Resource Groups (iERGs) which have been formed to foster awareness, respect, and inclusion within the workplace for a diverse audience. Last two years, Eaton saw a positive membership growth by 32% worldwide. In India, presently, we have three iERGs with more than 1900 members promoting a diverse workforce, including women, millennials, and people with special needs. These groups help us identify priorities, break down barriers to culture change, engage in business projects and get involved in talent initiatives.

Throughout the organization, our teams focus on recruiting, developing and empowering women. For example, we have special programs for hiring women after their maternity/career break; we have focused leadership development programs for employees with diverse backgrounds, and encourage them to learn and lead. To reinforce inclusive

leadership behaviours, in 2014, Eaton launched a unique workshop, “Valuing Inclusion and Diversity at Eaton: The Power of Perspectives”, for thousands of leaders globally.

We fully support and embrace a work/life effectiveness strategy and flexible work environment, as these are designed to drive high performance and create a competitive talent advantage. We want the best people to join Eaton, no matter their circumstances. Our solutions include remote working, flextime, part-time and telework. The Eaton mentoring program is another resource for developing and advancing our diverse talent. Mentors and mentees are paired up to help employees develop and realize their career aspirations. Inclusive leadership behaviours are enabled here to create a sense of belonging.

Promoting science and technology as one of our key community development areas, Eaton in India is also connecting with students and developing relationships with the upcoming talent by unique programs like Pratibha (scholarships for women engineers), Ignited Innovators of India, and the Eaton Excellence Award.

Q Please share anything else you would like readers to know about Eaton.

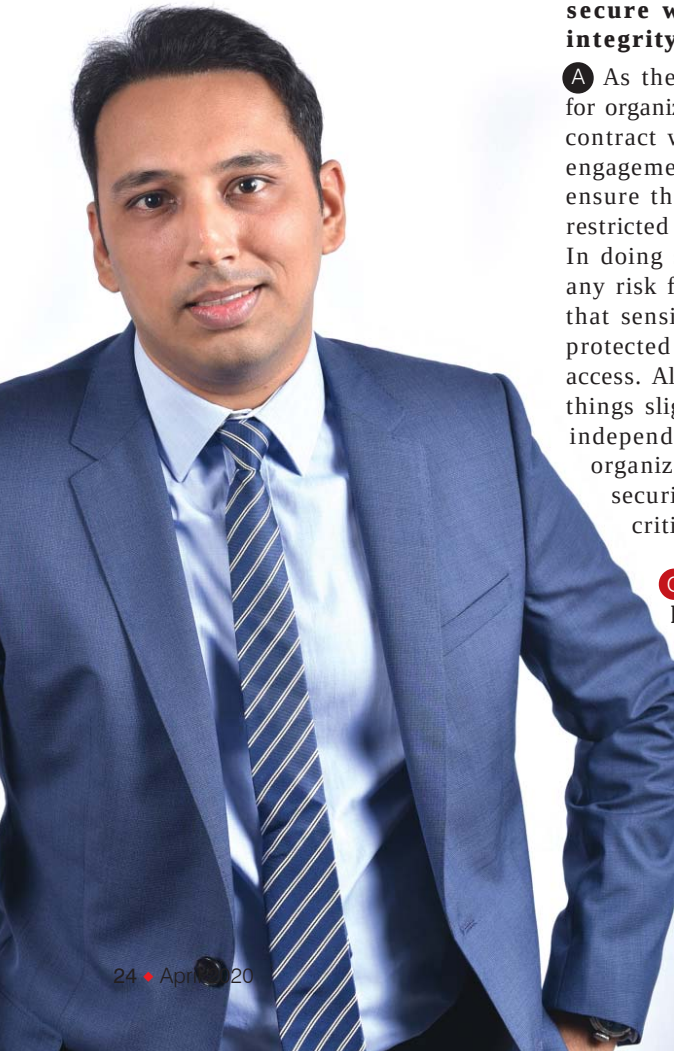
A We've been named one the best employers for diversity by Forbes magazine, as well as one of the best workplaces by the Human Rights Campaign. Eaton has been recognized by the Zinnov Awards for “Enhancing Gender Diversity at the Workplace” in 2015. Recently, in India, Eaton has been awarded the ‘Best diversity partner Award 2019’ by Society of women engineers (SWE). **H C**



Cyber Security as a Business Priority

Parvinder Walia, Director of Sales and Marketing for ESET, Asia Pacific and Japan, shares why organizations need to review and remedy their cybersecurity practices in today's digital age, the importance of cybersecurity education, and why IT security management is everyone's shared responsibility. Parvinder also gives us an inside look into ESET's work culture and what makes it an employer of choice.

BY ANKITA SHARMA



Q In light of the gig economy becoming increasingly relevant in the present-day workplace and with the workforce being employed across multiple companies, what would be your take on making an organization secure when it comes to data integrity?

A As the gig economy advocates for organizations to hire independent contract workers for short-term engagements, it's important to ensure that access to data is restricted to only what is necessary. In doing so, this would mitigate any risk for the company, ensuring that sensitive data remains protected from unauthorized access. Although this may make things slightly inconvenient for the independent contractors, from an organizational standpoint, the security of their data is more critical.

Q According to you, how should companies across Asia brace themselves for the increasing talent gap in the corporate space?

A Talent shortage will always be prevalent, not just in Asia, but globally across various

industries because of how our job landscape is constantly evolving. These days, we are seeing a need for IT professionals, specifically cybersecurity specialists, because of the increased reliance on data usage, prevailing new technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, and overall global digitalization. Organizations should invest in talent development programs for their employees and continue to provide training for skill enhancement. Also, create a positive working environment and culture that people want to work for and aspire to grow with.

Q In the wake of increasing threats in terms of malware and ransomware (e.g., WannaCry) to organizations, what are the ways in which businesses can overcome such threats?

A Cybersecurity is no longer just the responsibility of IT professionals; it has become everyone's responsibility. Organizations need to implement cybersecurity solutions as well as educate their employees on best practices while online.

It is important to note that while there is a myriad of different cybersecurity solutions available in the market, there isn't a one-stop

solution for all. Organizations must first understand what their specific needs and requirements for cybersecurity are. In doing so, they will then be able to correctly identify the right solution that's suited for them.

Cybersecurity education should also be a consideration for organizational employees. There have previously been cases that have resulted because of human errors and unfamiliarity to the ongoing cyber threat landscape. In these cases, the breaches could have been avoided if the employees were educated on how to identify a phishing email or a potentially malicious URL link.

Q What is your assessment of the prevailing skill gap in the IT industry in domains such as network security and cybersecurity? How has ESET been able to ride over the tide in the present circumstances?

A The cybersecurity landscape is constantly evolving due to the widely increasing adoption of digital solutions—both for businesses and consumers. The talent gap within the IT industry is an issue which globally, many are trying to resolve; however, it will not happen immediately. The company culture at ESET has led me to be a part of the organization for over ten years now. Throughout my time here, I've been given the opportunity to grow in different departments and hone different skills. ESET has cultivated a culture that encourages growth internally, which has led to many employees being at the company for longer periods.

Q Articles 17 and 18 of the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) create an avenue for easy transfer of personal data among service providers. As an IT security organization, what is your assessment on the same? Why is such a regulation important for present-day companies?

The value of data has exponentially grown over the past few years. With the implementation of GDPR, organizations are responsible for the way they handle data. As a cybersecurity solutions provider, we see this as a positive step towards organizations implementing cybersecurity solutions to ensure the safety of the data which they are handling. As the reliance on data continues to grow, this regulation ensures that companies are responsible for keeping the data safe.

Q As a part of ESET, how do you foresee Blockchain and AI being implemented in talent acquisitions in the coming years?

A The use of Blockchain and AI has been something that has grown rapidly in recent years. The implementation of AI has generally promoted efficiency in various processes, whilst Blockchain is a growing list of data. Therefore, in the future, companies will rely on AI to shorten the process of recommending the most suitable candidates for specific roles within the organization, based on the data and experience of the individual.

Q What is ESET's success mantra for maintaining an impressive record when it comes to employee turnaround?

A ESET cultivates a learning culture, whereby employees are given the opportunity to gain experience across different departments and pick up new skills. I began my journey with ESET as the Channel Marketing Manager, wearing different hats such as Marketing, PR, Product Marketing, and Product Management. Being exposed to the different roles provided me with a broader perspective and a better understanding of the sales and marketing industry. Another key aspect is people management skills, wherein no two individuals

are the same, and bringing out the best in each of your teammates takes knowing their strengths and weaknesses well.

Q What are the new-age skills that you would advise existing and prospective talent to acquire so as to be prepared for the challenges in the IT security space?

A Cybersecurity has evolved to become so much more than cyber skills. While having the technical know-how is still important, being flexible and adaptable would be beneficial to address the evolving landscape. In today's digital age, the people tasked with defending our digital spaces should be able to rise and adapt to any challenge that they may face.

Q Why do you believe it is extremely pertinent to enforce a cybersecurity policy across the organization? Why is it relevant to sensitize employees regarding the same?

A Keeping an organization secure should be the collective responsibility of all of its employees. A standardized cybersecurity policy to which all employees adhere is necessary to prevent the likelihood of cyberattacks occurring.

Q What is so refreshingly different about the work culture at ESET that it stands out as an employer of choice?

A My time at ESET has been such a fulfilling experience that I had not realized that it has already been over ten years! Everyone is very approachable, and the company culture brings out a sense of comradery among its employees. Overall, ESET has provided me with countless opportunities to learn and grow that have motivated me and kept my passion going. I feel that it is only right that I give back to ESET and do everything I can to make an impact while learning along the way. **HC**

When In Doubt, Learn!

Self-efficacy, in the context of L&D programmes, must incorporate observable traits and be directly linked to the business. Returns are often best captured by way of anticipating and determining the future.

BY **MRINMOY MAJUMDER**

Insia, a teenager, dreamed of becoming a singer. And after a lot of hardship, she manages to get the attention of a music director, who eventually becomes her mentor on her journey to become a YouTube star. That is the story of the movie *Secret Superstar*.

In the real world, David Karp, a teenager bored with formal schooling, eventually dropped-out and started spending his free time learning newer things on the internet. He found his true love, computer programming, by learning it all by himself from his bedroom. He went on start *Tumblr*, (later acquired by Yahoo), a microblogging site in 2007. On the contrary, an English teacher from China, who

was also into international trade, got exposed to the internet in 1995 when on a trip to the US, and started an e-commerce business in China. While the business operated out of an apartment, everyone employed there mostly picked up skills online. That is how Jack Ma came about to establish *Alibaba* - by integrating his trading knowledge with technology.

Leveraging online modules

Similar to how founders learnt and acquired skills through computers and smartphones, without much emphasis on traditional lecture-driven-training modules, organisations, either large or small,

are arguably leveraging online learning. Such initiatives may not be institutionalised, but after the emergence of the internet, individual employees have been leveraging online modules to upskill themselves. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that YouTube was declared as the most popular L&D tool by trainingjournal.com in 2018.

Similarly, a child was forced to rely on home-schooling, albeit informal and unstructured, owing to illhealth. This child mostly read books that were given by his father, and soon, became engrossed in literature and fiction. The child is Ruskin Bond, a celebrated writer.

The above illustrations, however, do highlight the extent to which self-learning, be it online or offline, has impacted individual behaviour. And clearly, the marker here is the success in their respective careers. The question is whether it is possible to determine the efficiency of online learning when it is institutionalised.

Several online learning modules are typically assessed in terms of their return on investment (ROI) based on training measurement tools, mostly borrowed from traditional learning. The Kirk Patrick model, along with tools such as CIRO, remains as the popular tool to assess ROI. Although these tools are good at assessing the impact of L&D modules on employees, and subsequently on the organisation, such tools have also found their ways in the assessment of online or web-based learning.

Capturing the efficacy

Within the context of online learning, can efficacy be captured? Can these tools capture the efficacy which otherwise is not a conventional way of learning, unlike classroom-based or lecture-driven sessions? Efficacy is about getting the desired outcome from an activity or task. While learning from online platforms, behavioural changes may not directly or solely contribute to one's current job, which seemed to be the area of attention. Online learning is boundary-less, and the



primary source for employees to upskill and reskill themselves, often at zero investment. However, online learning modules, freely available on the internet, have been co-opted by several organisations and universities, formally integrating these into their learning and development programmes, thereby saving resources. It also helped employees to leverage their working hours amidst fulfilling their KRAs to learn on the job. On the contrary, organisations are encouraging their employees to assume the ownership of their selfdevelopment, thereby making learning & development an individual endeavour rather than an organisational mandate.

For a long time, learning & development programmes were executed upon the fulfilment of training hours, meant for each employee. This has led the L&D department to function in a manner similar to the sales function, where L&D executives are assigned certain numbers (nominations) for respective programmes to be subscribed from and across departments and functions. Hence, it became a number game, where training is fulfilled by the calendar and modules year-on-year. However, this model is disrupted by the changing global business landscape that primarily emerged from the gig economy, where organisations became lean and agile. In a recently concluded HR Tech conference, Kelly Palmer has said, *"Skills are hard to predict, so learning agility is in high demand."* This has resulted in the creation of what is known as the start-up culture. The impact of this culture is such that the traditional calendarbased training is up for questioning.

Questions are also raised on the self-efficacy of L&D modules, which employees have undergone as a part of enhancing their skills, and more importantly, fulfilling the mandatory training hours. Hence, it is no surprise that organisations once famous for their chestthumping announcements of their premium training budgets, had to introspect

on their existence and business. Among other significant changes, the gig economy has taught organisations to neither imitate nor become a big corporation. A few years ago, Larry Page, the Co-Founder of Google, had stated that Google should go back to its start-up days and operate like a start-up. This indicates that even an organisation like Google can fall into the zone of becoming a traditional corporation, thus enabling bureaucracy to creep in. Hence, the moment such a thing happens, a critical function such as L&D becomes an administrative function rather than a business function. Like the popular quote *'what can be measured, can be managed'*, shifting our attention to numbers since these are easily captured and assessed.

Unlike self-efficacy, which is envisaged as a psychosocial functioning of an individual by Albert Bandura, where an individual without or little incentive produces the desired result. This is how an individual function, that when one believes that their knowledge and skill-set are not only restricted to perform a certain task. However, self-efficacy is too qualitative as a topic, and it cannot be easily captured through traditional training assessment tools, especially in the context of online learning. For example, a financial analyst learning to code from codecademy.com may not necessarily directly contribute to one's current job. However, coding as a skill is inevitable due to global surge of new technological developments.

The Holacratic model

Organisations must consider making learning & development an individual endeavour, while aligning individual learning to the organisational vision and mission. This, perhaps is possible if organisations choose to be agile and work in a Holacratic model as proposed by Jacob Morgan in his book *The Future of Work*. The Holacratic model is a distributed work structure without direct



supervision, where individuals are accountable for their own work and development. According to Morgan, information in such a work structure is openly accessible, and issues are addressed during meetings. Such model, even though not recognised officially, is what is being followed in most technology enabled organisations, who are conscious of their move and immediate future. They would want to keep their practices agile and informal, while infusing and driving new technology at work and for their customers.

The idea is to recognise and appreciate an independent work culture where employees are not bossed but are self-developed while performing their task. In this self-development, online learning, plays a significant role with unlimited supply of learning material, simulations and expert advices. Hence, self-efficacy in the context of L&D programmes, must incorporate observable traits, and be directly linked to business and not to be treated as a mere ROI driven initiative. Returns are often best captured by way of anticipating and determining the future. 

About the Author

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Delicacies of Diversity

The future of work would indeed involve "liquid talent" comprising of a mix of resources—permanent, contractual, gig workers, and non-humans such as robots.

BY AMIT GUPTA

When 'Parasite' created history by being the first non-English film to win an Oscar in the main category, the world started looking up at the East again; when Mohammad Yunus won the Nobel, the world began to talk about microfinancing; when Kahneman bagged the Nobel, behavioural economics became trendy; when Bob Dylan won the Nobel Prize for literature, the definition of literature was set for reinterpretation.

However, there exist schools of thought that fall on either side when novel concepts, practices, and types of people are hailed. In human parlance, scholars and practitioners call it 'diversity'; and refer to the presence of people with different age-groups, creed, ethnicity, religions, backgrounds, and abilities. The diversity discourse revolves around the richness that distinct workgroups bring to the table.

It was a pleasure to witness a live debate on diversity during a recent conference of top-notch HR professionals. The beauty was not simply that the speakers exhibited diversity in age and gender; but also that they were starkly widespread in their domain of thoughts. There was a young girl who cited that diversity has been in our heritage and that the modern notion of diversity was only old wine in a new bottle! She exemplified that



the Sikh Gurus had requested a Muslim named Mian Mir to lay the foundation of the Golden Temple. An opponent vehemently opposed her logic and retorted, "So what?" The house laughed, and an eerie silence prevailed momentarily on the stage. Another speaker jumped in referring to how Lord Rama went beyond the available resources (read: talent) and sought services of another talent pool—the *Vaanar Sena*—vastly different from his existing resources! Yet another opponent steered the conversation back to the topic and defended that a diverse workforce would disrupt the current business practices.

I missed out a moment from the debate to ponder that the future of work would indeed involve "liquid

talent" comprising of a mix of resources—permanent, contractual, gig workers, and non-humans such as robots. If such pools have existed in the past and contributed to our history and legends, why would they be disruptive in the future? Why is diversity sometimes viewed as unsettling? Is it that over the ages, our adaptive capabilities have reduced?

World's top organisations are increasingly promoting diversity and inclusion as pillars of their culture—Microsoft, Google, and IBM, to name a few. Diversity adds little value without inclusion. While affirmative action brings a diverse composition of people to work, the true potential of the talent can be harnessed and brought to life only

when each difference is treasured. Organisations, in many ways, are a microcosm of society which host multiple kinds of people and species (such as robots, chatbots). Hence, assimilation and amalgamation of a large variety is essential, yet equally challenging, for the harmonious growth of the organisation.

However, natural human biases often make deep-rooted prejudices and therefore, instill non-acceptance. Research suggests different methods to overcome such biases and enhance sportsmanship towards welcoming diversity rather than considering it a disruption. Inclusion can prevail only when these parasite-like biases perish. But how?

As I kept musing, my thoughts were in search of a paradise which would have room for everyone to groom; where a donkey and a nightingale could co-exist without anxiety, assessment and opposition; where all diversities would assimilate to strike a chord.

“Chaman meñ i khtilāt-e-rañg-o-bū se baat bantī hai ham hī ham haiñ to kyā ham haiñ tum hī tum ho to kyā tum ho. (Co-existence of both fragrance and colours add beauty to a place; what am I just being me, what are you just being you?)”

My search continued as I stole a few hours in the evening to spend with a friend, who took me out to a place for a culinary sojourn. Starting with a creamy *lassi*, followed by a plate of sizzling *chhole bhature* and then the fresh, crispy *jalebis* were perhaps, only an introduction. Thereafter, I succumbed to my friend's suggestion of having the delicacy of the town, a stuffed *kulcha*. I ate it all only to find a specially prepared *faluda kulfi* in front of us—ready to be consumed lest it melted away! Eating a variety of dishes in a short span of a few hours needs appetite as well as energy. As we moved ahead, he pointed at a patisserie on the way and offered the next specialty. I literally, held his hands and pulled him back into the car.

“What enables you to digest so many different things so quickly and that too, with a lasting smile on your face?” I curiously inquired. He replied promptly, “Simple—a rich variety is always inimitable! Once you realise this, you will not only develop the ability to absorb but also create a unique place for yourself in the society. The world knows us for our progressive and yet, liberal culture, which I believe is also rooted in our gastronomic passion!” “Aah!” I exclaimed. Perhaps, my search had been rightfully answered. I had got the real taste of delicacies! 

About the Author

Amit Gupta is a senior HR Executive with Indian Oil Corporation Limited and has vast experience in Sales and Human Resource Development. He is a passionate writer, storyteller, and public speaker. He pens real-life stories regularly under the title *Myriad Musings* for The Times of India—<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/myriad-musings>. He also contributes to leading HR magazines. Amit can be contacted on amitonearth@gmail.com.

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The King Among Customers!

When the Owner-Lead Anchor of a widely followed media channel which is well known for its political leanings, and an equally famous stand up comedian, get involved in an unpleasant, albeit unwanted, banter onboard a leading private airline, the implications are always far-reaching. However, the moot question is the position to be taken by the organisation viz. the airline concerned, in such situations, since public opinion can simply erode the organisational Brand Value.

BY DR. SANTHI PERUMAL

Ms Sita, an HR consultant, was thinking about the consultation assignment that she has undertaken at present. Her assignment was to help *Relaxed Eats*, a restaurant chain that had encountered some issues while dealing with its premium customers. And she had to make a presentation to Mr Neel, the Founder Director of *Relaxed Eats* and his team in three days, over the ways of responding appropriately to the situation at hand.

Relaxed Eats was a Bangalore based restaurant chain that had commenced operations in 2003. The chain had four branches in Bangalore alone, and it operated four more restaurants in Chennai, New Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata. Mr Neel, the Founder of the chain, was planning to expand his business by opening more branches in each of the four cities in which they were already operating.

Mr Neel was thinking about the industry in which *Relaxed Eats* operated. Restaurants came under the hospitality industry, and for any business to succeed in the hospitality industry, customer satisfaction and reputation is the topmost priority. And these two factors are crucial for the business to either flourish or flounder. Hence businesses in the hospitality industry are always conscious of



these two indices and are constantly monitoring them. Once a business loses its customers, it is difficult to regain its reputation and survive in this industry.

Mr Neel was pondering over the current situation at *Relaxed Eats*. It had happened as a result of a confrontation between two important customers in one of their

premises. An ego clash that was never associated with the restaurant or its services. Now, *Relaxed Eats* got linked with a controversy that was becoming highly publicised for all the wrong reasons and no fault of theirs. Neel was mulling over the possible ways of appropriately resolving the issue without ruffling anyone else's feathers in the process.

Relaxed Eats had established itself by focusing on providing a relaxed atmosphere, excellent food, and superior service for its patrons. The main clientele of *Relaxed Eats* were business class customers who came here on formal occasions to have business discussions during their meals or alternatively to unwind with their friends. *Relaxed Eats* was famous for providing a wide variety of cuisines, and was equally well known for its well-mannered staff. The restaurant focused on making their customers feel happy and satisfied. It was known for its ambience of having a relaxed atmosphere along with meticulous service. So many well-known personalities from a variety of professions frequented *Relaxed Eats*.

The problem began when two well-known personalities, with a huge online following, visited one of the *Relaxed Eats* restaurants at almost the same time and were waiting for their friends to arrive. One among them was Mr Ram Kumar, a well-known TV anchor, who was famous for his aggressive stand on various issues and having proestablishment leanings. The other, Mr Lakshman Kumar, was also an equally famous standup comedian, who was known for alternate perspectives on various issues. The two of them, their radically different views and approach notwithstanding, were waiting a few tables away from each other. The problem came to a head when Mr Lakshman Kumar approached Mr Ram Kumar and began a conversation. When Mr Ram Kumar did not respond to any of his queries, Mr Lakshman Kumar was further prompted to become more persistent in trying to engage Mr Ram Kumar in a conversation. As a follow-up for such silence from Mr Ram Kumar, Mr Lakshman Kumar started video recording the conversation with Mr Ram Kumar, and persisted that the latter react to his questions. This situation caught the attention

of the other patrons as well. Eventually, Mr Lakshman Kumar was requested to go back to his table by the *Relaxed Eats* staff. He had complied with their request, but the tranquil atmosphere in the restaurant had changed by then.

Following this, Mr Lakshman Kumar tweeted the video of the incident. This prompted Mr Ram Kumar to complain to the management of *Relaxed Eats* that his privacy had been invaded, and that Mr Lakshman Kumar must be banned from entering the premises of *Relaxed Eats* across India. The management of *Relaxed Eats* was caught in a dilemma as to how to handle this problem and similar such issues in the future. Both the people in question are well known with a huge social media following. This was followed by political pressure to Mr Neel to heed to the request made by Mr Ram Kumar. Additionally, this incident was also reported in the media at a national level apart from some international media channels. Mr Neel was in a fix over the manner in which he should be responding to this recent controversy, with everybody watching and waiting for the response from *Relaxed Eats*. He was wondering as to how he could handle this situation and respond to Mr Ram Kumar's request. At the same time, he was thinking over the ways of treating important influential customers, and how *Relaxed Eats* needs to convey to all the customers and the media that everyone is important, and do so without offending anyone in the process. This was because appearing to support either Ram Kumar or Lakshman Kumar would create a diametrically opposite image of what *Relaxed Eats* stood for. This invited the risk of *Relaxed Eats* losing its existing clientele and creating an unintentional bad image for itself.

Ms Sita was looking for instances of such problems faced by any other restaurant or hotel. She held a meeting with her team and asked



them to look into similar incidents that had occurred in the past in any other restaurant or hotel, and how the situation was resolved in each case. Sita realised that this incident mirrored another incident that had taken place at a leading Airlines. She also understood that in the case of the Airline industry, the Civil Aviation authorities were involved in providing directives to the Airline. She and her team, therefore, needed to look whether any directives were previously issued by any authority in the case of restaurants. Also, she had to look at ways of implementing the concept of “customers are the kings” in this context. Is a particular customer the king? In case of conflicts that take place due to ego clashes or difference of opinion between customers on issues not related to the service provider, she needed to provide directions to the concerned service provider on the ways in which it should be handled. 

About the Author

Dr. Santhi Perumal is an Assistant Professor at Institute of Management Technology, Nagpur. Her areas of research include Managing Relations at work, Technology Management, Sustainability and Research Methods. She has completed her PhD in Management from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.



Analysis By **Ravi Mishra**

If the present situation at *Relaxed Eats* is not dealt with in an effective and timely manner, its reputation remains at peril. With social media playing a highly invasive role in our lives, an individual's or institution's image can be dented within a few seconds. Mr Neel's concern is only natural, since as the Founder-Director of *Relaxed Eats*, an immediate and affirmative action is needed from him to avoid further damage. And the action plan must be so devised that it prevents such incidents from recurring in the future, and if at all it happens, the staff at *Relaxed Eats* should be competent enough to handle it effectively.

Ms Sita has the task of contemplating options that are most suitable and effective to implement, without impeding an individual's privacy and comfort, since it is the USP of *Relaxed Eats*. People like Ram Kumar or Lakshman Kumar cannot be controlled, and hence, the staff needs to be suitably skilled so that they can come about with on the spot solutions. Also, unlike the Aviation Industry, the hotel industry does not have an ombudsman that can deliver a verdict or a guideline. The incident at *Relaxed Eats*, albeit rare, is sufficient to blemish its image to a great extent, and can even lead to

an irreparable loss to its reputation and profitability.

Sita must suggest *Relaxed Eats* that they highlight the thought process behind establishing the company to their customer in a very artistic manner viz. paintings and murals with subtle messages. Secondly, the seating arrangements must be designed in a flexible manner that ensures that the conversation of one group does not disturb the other patrons. It must also be ensured that the pictures/selfies taken by one group does not include another. It may be a good idea to utilise partitions such as Kashmiri screens for those seeking privacy.

Thirdly, the senior supervisor must be skilled and vigilant to handle special guests, personalities, and celebrities. And whenever such people arrive at the restaurant, seating arrangements must be made quickly so that they are settled down, and staff deputed to take special care and satisfy their egos.

Ms Sita should recommend a code of conduct for the customers to ensure that everybody's privacy is respected. She can also recommend *Relaxed Eats* to learn from Barista, Starbucks or Airport lounges on the ways of handling such situations, and the precautions taken by them to avoid such eventualities.

Last but not least, social media posts/comments must be dealt with quickly and efficiently before they go viral. In the current scenario, if Mr Neel had approached Mr Ram Kumar and

candidly shared his helplessness, it was likely that the damage and exposure to media could have been minimised. As far as the present crisis is concerned, Mr Neel should meet Mr Ram Kumar with a bouquet of flowers, and request him with great humility to forget the incident, that should otherwise not have transpired. He should also commit to ensure that it will not happen in the future, and share the list of proposed action if needed. Mr Neel can also offer a personal invitation to welcome him along with his family to the restaurant next week as a special gesture, and thereby, eliminate the smoke around *Relaxed Eats*. 

About the Author

Ravi Mishra is Senior Vice President-HR for Global Epoxy Business, Aditya Birla Group. He is associated with the Group since 2005, and has worked in different businesses i.e. Grasim Chemical, UltraTech Cement, and Birla Carbon. Prior to joining the Aditya Birla Group, Ravi was associated with diversified organisations such as, Nicholas Piramal Group, Mardia Group of Industries, and Nova Petrochemicals Ltd.

Analysis By **Rohit Hasteer**

‘Customer is king’ is an age-old business mantra that accentuates the importance of customers in every business, and most organisations endorse this as a motto while serving customers. The reputation of a company is one of the key drivers for its success i.e. how the stakeholders view them basis their actions, and can be a factor which sets them apart from their competitors. But there have been umpteen occasions wherein customers do not hold the same values for an organisation. Customers, at different points in time, behave in an unreasonable manner with their outlandish demands, which in fact are against the very ideals of the host organisation. Hence, does it make sense to let go of a customer than compromise the very principles on the basis your organisation stands? The present situation at *Relaxed Eats* is a perfect depiction of this conundrum.

On the face of it, it is evidently an ego clash between two customers, and does not pertain to issues with the service provider i.e. *Relaxed Eats*. However, they are on slippery surface since two distinguished celebrities with a huge social media following are in the fray. Therefore, *Relaxed Eats* cannot afford to support one customer over the other because that would mean antagonising one of them as also his supporters. Hence, it is important for them to take an informed decision without offending either parties in the process. Also, as a brand which takes pride in providing a relaxed atmosphere for

people to unwind with friends and colleagues, it is crucial that *Relaxed Eats* gives a clear message that they care for the safety and privacy of their customers.

In the verbal fight that ensued, it was wrong on the part of Mr Lakshman to intrude into the personal space of another guest, instigate him, and record him without his permission. While Mr Ram Kumar did not react to any of this, and maintained the decorum of a public place, there were chances of him getting agitated and getting into a brawl with Mr Lakshman, thereby raising a security concern for others in the restaurant. Hence, Mr Neel should speak to Mr Lakshman and sensitise him of the same and explain assertively that how his act could have had repercussions on the other patrons, and that he should refrain from the same in future. He also should be told that as a customer, he has the responsibility to be cognisant and respect the value system of the organisation (viz. *Relaxed Eats*). The restaurant may not be willing to treat him or any other customer as a king if their act is against restaurant norms. At the same time, Mr Neel should apologise to Mr Ram for the incident and explain that privacy and security of their customers is paramount for them, and as a restaurant, they were quick to intervene by instructing Mr Lakshman to go back to his seat. As Mr Lakshman complied with the instructions, it may be a tad too harsh to impose a ban on him from entering the restaurants across India. The



customer in Mr Ram needs to be explained that it may not be possible for businesses to accommodate every wish of the customers and as a business entity they need to respect the human rights of all its customers.

So, which customer is the king? The customer who does not stand between the ideals and values of the organisation is the king. **HC**

About the Author

Rohit Hasteer is the Group CHRO for Housing.com, Prop Tiger.com and Makaan.com. He has an experience of more than 20 years in the domain on Compensation Benefits, Talent Acquisition and Talent Management, Training & Development. He has worked with companies like CITIBANK, Make My Trip, Aviva Life Insurance and UT WorldWide. He takes keen interest in building Organisation culture and People Development. He is an MBA from IMT, Ghaziabad.

Walking In The Wrong Shoes...

It is all fine to own the prettiest pair of ballet shoes, but the entire exercise is futile when one is unable to walk in them!

BY KALPANA BANSAL



The present-day obsession among companies when it comes to selection and fitment of “talent” truly reflects the increased focus on effective ROI on Human Capital. Indeed, organisations have come a long way from the days when they ran simple tests to ascertain the aptitude to using sophisticated instruments to assess

the ‘right fit’ to a role, as well as to assess the potential for growth. In a few instances, assessments have also been used to plan Succession pipelines and identify Board level incumbents.

However, a lot remains to be said when it comes to a suitable assessment framework for the selection of key talent. For starters,

it minimises the risk of bringing in someone who is a misfit for the role at hand. And it also reduces the loss that arises out of attrition of the existing teams who might find that the new incumbent is simply unsuitable for the role.

Besides, such an assessment also provides organisations with a quantifiable, objective way of being able to segregate talent pools, totally excluding unsuitable talent, and focusing energy and resources on the top twenty percent talent pool.

Despite the many obvious advantages in using some kind of cognitive or psychometric assessment tool, there has been a lot of obvious disgruntlement in various circles about the indiscriminate use of tools. And not every gripe is unfounded. A large part of the disillusionment comes from the fact that some tests are proving to be a rather poor indicator of future success in job roles, and some part comes from the confusion around interpretation and usage of tests results.

The criteria for investment in tools

Any decision taken by an organisation that chooses to invest in a selection tool mechanism needs to be based on certain criteria. The most critical criterion for the selection of these tools is the deployment and contextualisation of the tools to the milieu. For instance, a small to midcap company in India with a regional base would not find it suitable to use tools like the Occupational Personality Questionnaires (OPQ), that rely heavily on English as the medium of response. Local participants may sometimes find the questions to be difficult to interpret, and at other times, find the context impossible to relate to. Contextual validity also relates to the type of test deployed vis – a – vis the nature of the business. For instance, a business that is service driven and largely dependent on spoken communication would do best to avoid written tests, and focus more

on fluency than grammatical accuracy of language.

The second critical aspect that one needs to consider is the reliability and validity of the test being used. Reliability indicates that the repetitive use of the same test over a period of time would yield results that are more or less consistent on every occasion. Validity of a test means that it measures what it is supposed to measure. E.g. if it is a trait-based inventory, does it tell you something about the traits of the incumbent? Validity comes in different forms, but the most important measure is the predictive validity of the tool. In the parlance of test construction, predictive validity is the extent to which a score gets predicted on certain parameters. For example, the validity of a cognitive test for job performance is the extent to which the score on the test will correlate with the incumbent's performance on the job, which could be measured through performance ratings or supervisor feedback on a rating scale.

These days, the need for quick adaptation and accessibility means that the tests must be enabled to run through technology as a channel of deployment. Technology presents advantages as it implies that the test can be translated into any language, contextualised to different users, and also rendered in cultural adaptations. However, in the race to personalisation, the test design may face challenges related to standardisation, normalisation of the score, and the overall effectiveness of the test in itself. At times, Face Validity of the test may be called into question.

“Creative organisations do not care much for cognitive or personality tests, and tests such as DISC or OPQ are impractical when it comes to predicting their success on the job.”

An inherent defect

Tests also suffer from an inherent defect in the sense that they are likely to measure inherent aptitude or probably personality preferences in personality inventories. However, these may not exactly play out in the real world as other environmental factors come into play. On the job, there are other factors such as social interactions, complexity of the environment, extent of ambiguity, changing leadership, and external pressures which could impose constraints on the ability of an incumbent to be able to maximise his potential. While simulation-based immersive tests hold promise in terms of being able to predict the impact of these variables on test performance, they are not always capable of real-world predictive accuracy.

Personality inventories suffer from some other handicaps as well. As an example, the MBTI clearly specifies that it is not to be used as a basis for selection. However, organisations continue to use it as a means of elimination. Other tools such as OPQ and Kolbe's are designed with the intent of working with individual strengths and abilities. However, if not suitably interpreted or in the right spirit, they could be misused and reject otherwise capable candidates. Additionally, many large companies run quasi-assessment methods like exercises using a combination of tools and come up with detailed reports. These reports can be problematic at times, and organisations also tend to sometimes go with some standardised tools and measure the wrong competencies entirely.

The recent wave of startups has completely disregarded this stringent approach to fitment and focused on considering capabilities. Within the larger framework of diversity and inclusiveness, this makes greater sense as we need to learn to work with and build on differences, rather than harmonising similarities. Besides, many cutting-edge organisations are



completely disregarding qualifications and aptitude tests and focusing on outcomes. Creative organisations do not care much for cognitive or personality tests, and in my experience, tests such as DISC or OPQ are impractical when it comes to predicting their success on the job.

It is always uncomfortable when the shoes do not fit right. With the multi-generational workforce that is available today, there is a divergence of thought, skills, and abilities, and many of these leading selection tools were created in the era bygone and been tested on a fairly homogenous population. Sampling and validating costs time and money, and one is uncertain how many of these have been recalibrated in the light of changing times. Talent acquisition teams need to pay due consideration to the tools they select, evaluate them for purpose and context, and ensure that they measure what needs to be measured. It is all fine to own the prettiest pair of ballet shoes, but the entire exercise is futile when one is unable to walk in them! **HC**

About the Author

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Challenges Women Face to Break the Glass Ceiling

Women continue to face a multitude of challenges that act as an impediment to their success. Addressing these issues is fundamental to creating an equitable and inclusive workplace.

BY ASHU KHANNA



In the last couple of decades, there has been a significant conversation about gender diversity. Many conferences, organisations and publications have been organised on this subject. When a head of state like Sanna Marin, Finland, was appointed, we celebrated the possibility of a woman leader breaking the glass ceiling. To reduce the gap and ensure that women get equal opportunities, the 2013 Companies Act (Section 149) and SEBI regulations made it mandatory for certain companies to appoint at least one woman director. On the one hand, I celebrate that women are being encouraged to work at the leadership level; on the other hand, it's abysmal that a law had to be instituted to make that possible.

How can we make it a norm for women to be empowered and climb the top echelons of corporations? As a woman professional, I have experienced and observed a multitude of reasons that act as an impediment to the success of women.

- First and foremost, culture and social pressures result in young girls being treated less than boys from birth. This attitude creates a series of beliefs that limit their ability to lean into situations. There are some stereotypical expectations, such as a woman has to manage the home and children alone, adding pressure on her to be a superwoman. As a mentor for women empowerment on a social platform, I have come across hundreds of women who have taken a sabbatical from work due to marriage or children or other family commitments. A common concern is how to get back into the job market because either they have lost their confidence, or they don't know what alternate profession to pursue that will help them balance their life, or they lack family support.
- The cultural issues lead to fewer women joining the ranks in organisations, management institutes, engineering colleges, and several other professions. I was speaking to a client in the insurance industry, and their organisation has just 10% of women employees. In a male-dominated organisation, women feel overwhelmed to have their voices heard and needs addressed. Fewer women apply for hard-core technical jobs, and many fall

“I remember that when I was looking for ways to have it all and balance it all, a senior leader at an organisation suggested that I should stay at home since I did not have economic reasons for working. He also told me, in a very blasé way, that I would need to work harder to prove myself.”

off the block after mid-management due to lack of support or systemic issues. In my own experience, although organisations treated me equally at a professional level, there was a lack of awareness and policies on the needs of women, such as daycare for children, flexible hours, safe travel after hours, etc. This made it challenging to manage transitions with ease.

- Additionally, women often feel that they need to work harder and prove themselves more as against their male counterparts. Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo, said in an interview, *“...especially as a woman CEO, you are the focus of everybody, and they're looking to see what you do wrong so they can really bring you down.”*

Therefore, women require more strength and courage to make it to the top. I remember that when I was looking for ways to have it all and balance it all, a senior leader at an organisation suggested that I should stay at home since I did not have economic reasons for working. He also told me, in a very blasé way, that I would need to work harder to prove myself. This archaic and discriminatory attitude is prevalent in several large organisations, which prevents women from assimilating into an organisation.

- I have also noticed that women find it relatively challenging to brand themselves or do business development. This behaviour emerges from a series of beliefs and societal conditioning.

Recently, I was speaking at a Technical University where, even after 50-plus years since inception, the enrollment of women is in single-digit percentage points. Interestingly, a common suggestion that emerged was that not only do men need to be empowered, but they also need to be the champions for inclusion of women in different verticals of society. Only empowering women is not going to resolve this issue. It's a much deeper cultural issue and, hence, needs to be addressed with all stakeholders.

- I have conducted workshops at organisations to address beliefs that obstruct women from communicating openly or asking for support from their male bosses. I remember I was coaching a senior executive while his team

member had taken maternity leave. He kept his team member completely out of the loop while she was on leave because he felt if she were his wife, he would not like to disturb her. On the other hand, she was feeling isolated and concerned about how to transition back into her job after maternity leave. In the executive's endeavour to be sensitive, he forgot that his team member was also a professional, not only a woman. That subconscious lens itself sometimes blocks the interaction at an equals' level.

Women are close to 50% of the world population. Women's empowerment is critical to the furtherance of any society. It is heartening to note that global institutions like the IMF and the UN are led by women. The heads of state of some countries are women. India has been progressive to have women as their Prime Minister and President. On a note of hope, the outbreak of coronavirus may open opportunities for women to work from home. Organisations have been forced to undergo digital transformation at a much faster pace. Also, this period is helping organisations adapt to the concept of work from home, and they are designing processes and policies to make this effective. It's a significant cultural shift that is occurring at a systemic level and possibly expanding the minds of many to newer possibilities and ways of working to be more inclusive, agile and productive. 

About the Author

Ashu Khanna is a leadership coach and CEO of Arka Capital Advisors. Over the past 14 years, she has successfully partnered with many CXOs to help them expand their self-awareness and deepen their relationship with the authentic self. Her clients include several Indian and multinational companies. Ashu is a keynote speaker at leadership, HR and coaching conferences and has published three books that share insights from her journey of transformation. She has been the Founder President of the Mumbai Chapter of International Coach Federation (ICF) and has actively contributed at ICF India, Regional and Global committees. Ashu is a Chartered Accountant who has worked in India and South-East Asia.



Building A Customer-Centric Culture

The Business truly prospers only when employees strive to benchmark a seamless customer experience. And in a digitally savvy era, it is extremely critical that we retain the 'personal humane touch' in every conversation.

BY UMA MAHESWARA SARMA TATIPATI

‘A satisfied customer is the best business strategy of all.’— Micheal LeBoeuf

On any given day, an organisation revolves around three main pillars – Product, People, and Customers. And even if one of them is out of the equation, the process becomes incomplete. If organisations have been admitting that ‘Customer is King’ then why do customers switch brands? Is it because they found a better value deal? Or because they experienced a disconnect with the organisational representatives that they connect with?

Despite a meticulously planned business strategy, the right ‘Customer experience’ is delivered through careful packaging of service and apt marketing. Customers are bound to lose their trust in an organisation due to poor customer service experience.

Here are five ‘I’s’ that will empower organisations to build a better customer-centric culture at the workplace.

Insights: According to Gartner, about 67% organisations compete on the basis of customer experience. Facts driven by data can help analyse where the gap lies. Just as organisations have a 360-degree appraisal system, a pre-during-post survey can be designed to examine what the customers ‘ask for’ and what they ‘actually need’.

Induction: Orientations on the importance of ‘listening’ versus merely ‘hearing’ is essential! Similar to any other on-boarding process for a fresh recruit, creating a quick checklist or a detailed SOP on the

‘Do’s’ and Don’ts’ while addressing customers would come about as a great asset. A situation-based training on roleplays can help to further engrave the importance of polite conversations.

Introspection: Rather than chasing the right solution, encourage employees to think of all the possible solutions that can be applied to a given situation. Just as every conversation gets recorded for training purposes, making a list of ‘what worked best’ and ‘what can be worked upon’ will further help understand what the customers really need. During such situations, product/service knowledge can prove to be the best ingredient to fuel the conversation.

Impact: Mapping customer satisfaction to the service provided is a common practice across industries. Just like any other post sales service, a mechanism that helps employees measure the effect of the solution provided by them must be instilled. Understanding how they have been able to make a positive difference to a customer’s life or add valuable inputs to ease their process of decision making will prove to be a great source of motivation and learning.

Interaction: Instead of standardised templates for communication, encourage employees to have an interactive conversation. Customers will not remember the amount they paid or the expense they incurred. However, what they shall retain is ‘how they were treated.’

Proactive building of a rapport is equally important. Empathy is key when dealing with customers. This is where aligning the employees with the organisation’s vision comes handy.

A study by Gallup states that organisations that have a high percentage of engaged employees surpass competition by 147%. Thus, in order to instil a customer-centric culture, organisations should work upon their employee engagement initiatives.

A culture that promotes customer centricity leads to greater employee retention. And today, retention has indeed become one of the greatest challenges confronting HR. It is interconnected and interdependent. And one will always be incomplete without the other. Business truly prospers only when employees strive to benchmark a seamless customer experience. And in a digitally savvy era, it is extremely critical that we retain the ‘personal humane touch’ in every conversation. **HC**

About the Author

Uma Maheswara is the HR Manager at SmartDrive Systems. He has an experience of more than 12 years in Strategic HR Management in IT/ITES business with a key focus on talent development, employee retention, and optimal utilisation of resources. In his professional journey across organisations, Uma has displayed a positive people centric approach and successfully benchmarking industry best practices.

Is Your Training Programme Disabled Friendly?

To have a successful training programme, you have to offer both accessibility and inclusion. It must therefore be ensured that trainers are adequately training in universal design and inclusive training practices.

BY ELAINE FREEDMAN



Hiring managers increasingly realise that recruitment and retention need to be a part of the same effort. Many companies concentrate their efforts almost exclusively to ensure that their recruitment processes are inclusive of people with disabilities (PwDs), then discontinue those efforts after their first day. However, replacing a worker costs the organisation up to one-third of the employee's salary, which quickly adds up with high employee turnover.

A 2012 U.S. Census Bureau report has reported that 1 out of 5 employees is a PwD, and in 2015, the Federal Bureau of Labour Statistics has revealed that 17.5 percent of the US workforce are PwDs. Increased focus over retaining employees with disabilities has a huge impact on an organisation's bottom line.

One of the often-overlooked aspects of retention is training. When organisations do not try to ensure that their training programmes and avenues for professional development are inclusive, they signal to employees with disabilities that the organisation is not invested in their career growth.

Building Training Programmes for the Employees

An employer not being aware that he/she has people with disabilities on their payroll does not mean that they are non-existent. Many employees may choose not to disclose a disability to their

employer. As has been stated by Derek Shields, a consultant and trainer for the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN), existing employees participating in training and development offerings might not be as successful because the programmes are not inclusive. And by creating training programmes that are more inclusive, an organisation is set to receive a bigger return on its investment.

Include Employees with Disabilities in the Training Process

Robin Nagel, a consultant and ADAAA/FEHA compliance practitioner who specialises in work disability prevention and management, says that inclusive training programmes must be created by learning from employees with disabilities about their needs.

Shields says that training must be devised on the basis of preference and the tools needed for participation. It is also essential to involve the stakeholders at all levels of the process including the design, testing, and implementation. He further adds that the effectiveness of the programme can be enhanced if they are regularly reviewed.

Programmes to be Accessible and Inclusive

There is a difference between accessible and inclusive, and

accessibility is only the starting point. As an example, Shield illustrates: - If you offer an in-classroom training programme, but your building does not have an elevator and the class is on the third floor, a person in a wheelchair or scooter will be unable to participate. That is an accessibility issue. However, if a person with a disability can get to the classroom, but finds the experience in the classroom is exclusionary, that is a problem with inclusion. To have a successful training programme, you have to offer both accessibility and inclusion. It must therefore be ensured that trainers are adequately training in universal design and inclusive training practices. And organisations such as EARN and The Campaign for Disability Employment offer resources for creating inclusive training programmes. 

About the Author

Elaine Freedman is a skilled communications and marketing professional with over 15 years' experience writing original content for publications, websites, and managing social media and marketing campaigns. She is currently the Senior Communications Manager at HRCI and manages publications across digital and traditional channels for the organisation. Elaine received her bachelor's degree with a concentration in Broadcast Television and her master's degree in Journalism, both from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Your Very Own Lemon Squeezer!

A Lemon Squeezer makes unpopular decisions keeping the best interests of the organisation in mind. These decisions include limited staffing and work intensification, possible options for downsizing, and wage freezes.

BY KRISHNAN BANGARUSWAMY

A nice and cool lemonade is always welcome, and more so during hot summers! Not only does it quench our thirst, but also provides us with a zing of freshness and bolsters our energy levels. For those who have squeezed a lemon for its juice know the relevance of the kind of pressure to be exerted on the fruit, the right amount of twist and the squeeze.

Before you develop a feeling that the content to follow is aimed at sharpening your culinary skills, let me clarify that I am here to introduce the Lemon Squeezers - a special set of leaders in many organisations known for their style of leadership. They are so termed because they are known to typically apply the art of squeezing when the heat for business is on!

Styles of leadership

Successful leadership is contingent upon the various stages in the business. It can vary in its style subject to the context and situations, and more importantly, the phases of the organisation. To quote*, a champion leadership style is preferred for new ventures that are focused on the company's mission and vision, plan for growth, and potential. Focus plays an important role at a growth stage to drive the top line, and thereby, increase the client base. Therefore, it is preferable to assume the style of that of a commander of a fleet of battle tanks. A House Keeper style is appropriate when the

organisation is at a point of maturity, and is focusing on profits and sustainable business. But when the organisation is going through a phase of decline, the style which is most needed is the lemon squeezer leadership.

supported by banks that are willing to take risks by offering huge amounts of investment to run a profitable business. Such support necessitates the need to bring in higher profit margins within a short time-span. Most managements

Organisational stage	Type of leadership needed
New ventures	Champion Style
Organisation at a point of maturity	House Keeper Style
Organisation in a phase of decline	Lemon Squeezer Style

Organisations are operating in an era of economic globalisation, open markets, and hypercompetition in highly dynamic and volatile environments that were never experienced in the business world. Almost driven by casino capitalism*, many private businesses are

are finding it difficult to balance increasing client expectations for lesser pricing and the growing overhead cost, not to mention the competition breathing down their neck. As a countermeasure, they are continuously looking at ways to reduce costs, and often focus on innovation for higher revenue and



profit margins. And this is where Lemon Squeezers can add real value for organisations.

Survival of business

For the Lemon Squeezers, survival of the business is the topmost priority. Their area of focus is improved financial control and cost cutting, but they are not your CFOs. In other words, a Lemon Squeezer is willing to make unpopular decisions, keeping in mind the best interests of the organisation. Some of the decisions include limited staffing and work intensification, possible options for downsizing, and wage freezes. At the same time, they complement these decisions by way of encouraging creativity and innovation. They are open to new ideas and are willing to take calculated risks. They are happy to delegate, and always provide autonomy within the budgetary constraints. Such Empowerment by the leadership can be very inspiring, especially at a time when it is most needed by the organisation. Most often, this brings out the best in people, and in turn, that ends up as the difference between winning organisations and the others!

“Lemon Squeezers set new standards every time, challenge the team to experiment for best results, and are willing to accept first time mistakes.”

Confidence building capabilities

It is well-known that employees naturally tend to embrace predictability in their jobs. Any sort of volatile and pressure environment puts them on an edge. But this is where Lemon Squeezers walk the talk. They instil confidence and energise and inspire people around them. A key attribute

is their ability to build trust in the organisation when the walls around are seen to be seemingly weak. Trust builds an agile workforce and promotes the much-needed innovation for the organisation. This is simply because Lemon Squeezers set new standards every time, challenge the team to experiment for best results, and are willing to accept first time mistakes.

“A true leader is one who turns it around for the organisation from a phase of adversity, or even from brink of death itself, towards a path of success and growth.”

A classic example is that of Steve Jobs after he took over the reins at Apple for the second time during the late 90s. He exhibited the Lemon Squeezer leadership at a time when the stocks of Apple had plummeted. Though he had to shut many of the existing projects, he made that decision conspiring the value of each of the projects. During this period, he also rebuilt a culture of trust, which in turn paved the way for innovation. Eventually, not only did he bring Apple out of bankruptcy, Jobs created history by making it one of the most successful companies!

When in action, Lemon Squeezers may not be seen as popular leaders since they may bend rules, limit budget allocations, challenge the best practices etc., things that puts most of us out of ease. However, we surely concur on one thing. A true leader is one who can turn it around for the organisation from a phase of adversity, or even from brink of death itself, towards a path of success and growth, a quality that sets them apart! They drive it with such tenacity that they are willing



to take decisions boldly, not through an autocratic approach, but in a way of responsibility guarding the interests of the organisation, and importantly its people. Yet, all of this is done without any self-interest, and with a strong new vision for the company through a progressive culture. Again, all through, their focus is not just the present survival, but also the future sustenance in competitive businesses. Now think about your own organisation and the faces of the lemon squeezers will flash in your head. Their squeeze provides the juice that contains an antidote of revival to enable you to soar along the path of success and growth! 

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About the Author

Krishnan Bangaruswamy is endowed with comprehensive experience in Human resources and Organisational development spanning more than 18 years. He is currently the Senior Director-HR at Omega Healthcare. As a Certified coach from the International coaching federation, he is a proponent of an empowerment-based work style. He inspires and energises team members/employees toward turning themselves into talents. Krishnan is a 'Corporate Leadership Columnist' for several mainstream publications including Human Capital.



Building A Thriving Learning Culture

Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision (of teams), Team Learning and Systems thinking are the pillars of building a firm where employees think critically and challenge the status quo.

BY NISHATH USMANI

At 87, the legendary Michelangelo wrote, “*Ancora Imparo*”, meaning “*I am still learning*” alongside his painting. Organisations today would benefit if they inscribed these words in their boardrooms and hallways. And you will not in a minority if you assume that these are paeans from an enthusiastic organisation learning evangelist!

Work today, learn tomorrow!

Indeed, most organisations believe that relentless execution, where employees work efficiently are sure shot pathways to great financial success and customer delight. However, such a belief is unfortunately not true. Even the best execution cannot guarantee enduring success in the digital knowledge economy. When organisations are too busy ‘doing’- they fail to pause, experiment, learn and unlearn. Kodak, a company that once dominated the photographic film market, blew its chance to lead the digital photography revolution. Steve Sasson, the Kodak engineer, who invented the first digital camera back in 1975, went on to say that when he first presented it, the management’s reaction was, “*that’s cute—but don’t tell anyone about it!*”

What are learning organisations?

Peter Senge, Faculty at MIT Sloane School of Management and the

author of ‘*The Fifth Discipline*’, first mentioned about learning organisations during the 1990s. He identified five interrelated disciplines. According to him, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision (of teams), Team Learning and Systems thinking are the pillars of building a firm where employees think critically and challenge the status quo. A good example for a learning organisation is Southwest Airlines, built on innovative concepts for its industry like point-to-point travel, no assigned seats, rapid loyalty rewards, continues to thrive through constant innovation and an unflappable commitment to customer service. And Disney, with its solid core values viz. innovation, quality, community, storytelling, optimism, and decency, continues to invent newer forms of entertainment.

Wow! Let’s do it, then!

The nagging question is that if a learning organisation is synonymous with a successful organisation, why are all the organisations not doing it? It is difficult. There are three primary reasons for this. First, because most organisations just profess that learning is important, but when the ‘rubber hits the ground’, (read sending employees for training programmes)- you find business priorities taking over. In one’s experience, the drop rates for in house training programmes is as high as 50%, and the situation gets worse with a senior profile.

Secondly, most organisations fail to create the all-important ‘*what’s-in-it-for me*’, for learners. The CEO and senior executives get it, but people down the line have no idea how a training programme will help them. Finally, the biggest hurdle is the ‘touch and go’ nature of most learning interventions. Organisations consider learning to be a one-time event; done with much grandeur, but those that do soon get lost in the sands of time.

“The biggest hurdle is the ‘touch and go’ nature of most learning interventions. Organisations consider learning to be a one-time event; done with much grandeur, but soon get lost in the sands of time”

Creating a learning organisation

Watkins and Marsick (1993, 1996) provide an integrative model of a learning organisation. Their proposed learning organisation model integrates two main organisational constituents: people and structure. They also went on to create the Dimensions of the Learning Organisation Questionnaire (DLOQ), designed to measure learning culture in organisations

(1997). According to Watkins and Marsick, there are three levels of organisational learning.

- Individual level: Composed of continuous learning and inquiry.
- Team or group level: Reflected by team learning and collaboration.
- Organisational level: Contains four dimensions of organisational learning - embedded systems, system connections, empowerment, and provide leadership for learning.

Getting the research to work

In my view, learning culture is built on four foundational principles

Principle 1: Build self-efficacy:

The seeds of learning culture first need to be embedded at the individual level. Here, individuals need to be convinced that once the learning happens, they have the power to change things. There must be a definite and visible gap that they can see, which they believe the learning can help close. This can be termed as - the *belief of change*. If individuals are convinced that they can become better influencers at the end of the 'Influencing Skills programme'- they are more likely to attend it. And that is where the first seeds of a learning culture are planted- in the individuals.

Principle 2: Make others care about it:

Most learning is difficult. It means investing in time away from work or life. And it becomes important to create the learning organisation culture we need to build a system where learning matters. If individuals can share, talk, evangelise, even 'show off' their learning- then they are more encouraged to learn - an important link that most learning strategists fail to recognise. If learning remains a personal endeavour, it can never become part of the culture that encourages learning.

Principle 3: Create the systems & tools:

Gone are the days when creating the learning calendar, finding the best faculty, and

creating the best learning experience were important for building a good learning culture. Today, what you do after the training, that truly matters. The systems and the processes that will sustain the learning is far more important than the learning itself. Are there people in the system who can become the 'go-to-resources'? Are there learning aids? Learning repositories that one can access, when one is struggling with that learning attribute? A strong learning management system is a key enabler to sustain the learning culture.

Principle 4: Bring in the

leaders: Like in all aspects of organisational behaviour, the role of the leader hugely influences the learning culture. When leaders actively question and listen to employees', people in the institution

feel encouraged to learn. If leaders signal the importance of spending time on problem identification, knowledge transfer, and reflective questioning, these activities are likely to take roots. When people in power demonstrate their commitment to learning by taking classes or attending classes, or even encouraging alternative points of view, employees feel emboldened to offer new ideas and options.

It also works when these four principles are taken in isolation. Indeed, most organisations would have one or more of them working in tandem. However, it is only when these come together starting from the individual, to the team, to the systems and finally to the leadership that it really starts to create a learning, thriving organisation! 

Individual Level:

- Create continuous learning opportunities
- Promote enquiry & dialogue

Team Level:

- Encourage collaboration and team learning
- Empower people toward a collective vision.

Organization Level

- Connect the organization to its environment
- Establish systems to capture and share learning
- Provide strategic leadership for learning

Nomological Network of the Dimensions of Learning

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About the Author

Nishath Usmani is responsible for leadership development of senior leaders at KPMG. She comes with an experience of more than 18 years in leadership development, learning strategy, talent management, facilitation, coaching & learning communications. She has worked previously worked in Capgemini's Corporate University and Deloitte Consulting. Nishath is presently pursuing Ph.D. in management (HR).

HR Tech: A Game Changer for Staffing Companies' Value Proposition

With constantly changing industry trends and continually evolving technologies, workforce management today is a hurricane of challenges to overcome and master.

BY RAGHAV POOJARY

Humans are the driving force behind the rise and fall of every business in every industry. Recruitment and HR Tech is a colossal market globally, growing big by the year and estimated to be worth \$30 Billion by 2025, according to a report by Grand View Research Inc. With constantly changing industry trends and continually evolving technologies, workforce management today is a hurricane of challenges to overcome and master.

HR Tech Adoption in India

Most organisations are outsourcing staffing and other HR-related functions to subject matter experts, who add value in managing them and setting benchmarks. With the rising need, leading players in the HR outsourcing industry are trying innovative means to transform key HR processes, automate them, minimise manual intervention in routine tasks, eliminate redundancy, and cut operational costs.

Top staffing service providers have accelerated their HR tech adoption rate to enhance their value proposition to clients and offer them a competitive edge in their business. They are streamlining the end-to-end staffing function with tech tools, from demand management, sourcing, assessments, interviews, selection and offer management to documentation,

onboarding, attendance, payroll, invoicing, compliance, and employee self-service. A Sierra-Cedar report revealed that 70% of organisations in the APAC region would spend more on HR Tech, although they are lagging compared to companies in the US and Europe. Furthermore, the adoption of mobile HR technology is no longer an emerging trend, with over 50% of companies already using it.

HR Tech Tools to Adopt for Your Staffing Business

- **Demand Management:** As an aggregator of demands from various clients across industries, it is important to create a centralised platform where these demands are created, stored, allocated, and tracked. A mobile app for recruiters, vendors, and managers that empowers them to manage demands on the move would be a game-changer.
- **Sourcing:** As the nature of demands varies with clients, industries, and expertise sought, staffing companies should build a strong sourcing engine for 24/7 operation, parsing and mapping profiles to open requirements, while creating a solid candidate database. Moreover, wielding AI and ML's power to rank profiles and recommend them for future requirements will bring immense value. For general staffing, which

requires a multi-pronged approach and recruiters to be on the ground for sourcing talent, a mobile app for field recruiters would streamline the sourcing process.

- **Screening:**

- **IVR-Based Interest Check:** Manually calling candidates to check their interest in the job can be tedious, especially when hiring in volume. An interactive voice response (IVR) based interest screening tool can come handy. Automated IVR calls can screen out candidates who are uninterested, cutting down the time and effort spent in shortlisting profiles.

- **Assessments:** An assessed candidate is more valuable than a manually evaluated resume. Having a psychometric/aptitude/skill-check assessment to filter quality profiles will prove as a differentiator among other service providers.

- **Interview Management:** Rather than scheduling and tracking interviews manually through emails and excel sheets, it is a better practice to have a centralised tool to create and schedule interviews and manage the candidate line-up.

- **Offer Management:** Gone are the days when offers had to be manually created, and tracking the offer release and candidate's acknowledgement was time-consuming and subject to misses.

An integrated offer management module would generate templated offers and release them to candidates on the click of a button. Subsequently, push notifications can be sent to probe the candidate's acknowledgement.

- **Digital Onboarding:**

Documentation during onboarding is tedious and often requires a lot of paperwork and manual intervention. A digital onboarding tool can be used to collect and store candidates' documents and personal information on to a central database, which can automate Aadhaar verification, KYC, and background verification.

- **Attendance Management:**

Biometric-based attendance may prove efficient for cases where the employee reports on the same location. However, for staff who tend to be on the move (such as salespersons, security personnel, delivery personnel, etc.), having a GPS-enabled mobile attendance app can ensure the accuracy and authenticity of attendance data. The same input can then be pushed to a payroll engine. Leaves and approvals could also be an integral part of this tool.

- **Payroll Management:**

Having a full-fledged payroll module as part of ERP will streamline payroll management. It will act as a centralised platform for tax management (such as investment declaration and flexi-benefit management), help automate salary and reimbursement reports, and allow access to payslips —anywhere and anytime.

- **Invoice and Collection:**

Integrating an OCR (Optical Character Recognition) component to automate the data entry of vendor invoices in a system-preferred format, and having smart bots to dispatch invoices and send out collection reminders would greatly reduce the time and effort put into such non-value-adding processes.

- **Employee Self-Service Tool:**

A great way to boost candidate/

employee experience is by deploying an employee self-service tool that will give them 360-degree support throughout their stay in the company. A self-service tool can encompass a range of features, including leaves, reimbursements, access to view and download offer/appointment letters, payslips, PF, ESIC, insurance, contract extensions, and appraisals. A bot-based helpdesk as part of the tool will ensure grievance redressal.

- **Employee Engagement:** In a recent survey by PwC's Consumer Intelligence Series, 71% of the respondents say employee engagement is critical to achieving overall organisational success. Benefit portals can be great engagement tools and will provide access to a marketplace with offers, rewards, discounts, cashback, and other benefits. Integrating these tools into an HRMS would be a valuable addition. Such services come with no associated costs for both the service provider as well as the client.

Deploying the Right HR Tech Solution

Leveraging tech can help staffing organisations achieve operational efficiency across a spectrum of functions, including recruitment, employee engagement, workforce management, payroll, compliance, and analytics. When carefully implemented, HR tech tools can help to:

- Streamline staffing and HRO processes.
- Establish a centre of excellence across departments.
- Improve statutory and regulatory compliance standards.
- Build a centralised database with controlled access.
- Set up a real-time analytics and reporting engine to offer actionable insights.
- Reduce costs, effort and time, while adding value to customer service.



These are just a few of the many benefits of implementing tech within staffing companies. However, a thorough analysis is critical to ensure a positive impact on the client's business. Deploying a bulk of tech tools won't necessarily bring operational efficiency. Instead, staffing and HR service providers must evaluate the pain points of the client's business and design an HR tech deployment strategy backed by a data-based fact check. All the key stakeholders must collaborate to build a business case and define clear outcomes with an estimated ROI.

As a preferred staffing partner, your goal is not only to help your client achieve operational efficiency but also transform the client's HR department from being an administrative division to becoming a centre of excellence whose strategies align with the company's business goals. That is the value-add that every staffing/HR tech service provider must aim for and deliver to their clients. **HC**

About the Author

Raghav Poojary is a subject matter expert with more than 16 years of experience in full-lifecycle of recruiting, including RPO, consulting, technology transformation, and business operations. He has worked with companies like Merit Trac, Pratian Technologies, CareerNet, Adecco, PeopleStrong, and Qness Corp. Currently, Raghav is VP - Business Operations and Process Automation at First Meridian.

Reimagining The Portfolio

HR should be able to capture and conceptualise both the macroeconomic narrative and the sectoral narrative. And from platform-oriented thinking, the narrative becomes the raw material for all human development practices.

BY **B. GANESH**



The answer to the quintessential question of whether is HR a function, a Team or a Department is that it is probably all that and more. Therefore, the role of HR beyond a function needs to be explored. One of the expected, yet unmandated imperative is to graduate HR from a function to a platform. HR should be able to capture and conceptualise both the macro-economic narrative and the sectoral narrative. In the context of platform-oriented thinking, the narrative becomes the raw material for all human development practices.

The three interconnected parameters of verbalising the narrative that encompasses a vital

portfolio of an HR leader have been cited below:-

Elevation of HR from functionary to facilitator

The future of the HR function will include more strategy, and the role of an HR specialist will change from that of a functionary to a facilitator. In this, an individual should focus more on bringing in 'expertise diversity' - expertise and insight diversity from unconnected sectors for a cross-section of roles where technologies are not involved. For instance, in the event of recruitment, an imaginative talent acquisition specialist will look at attribute convergence rather than

evaluating the functional competencies. One of the key performance indicators will be to fill 5-10% of the available roles from a cross-section of industries. Jet Airways carrying out their Golden Handshake programme and a special recruitment drive by Taj Hotels to induct some of Jet Airways' customer care executives is a truly inspirational example. Even though the industries were different, they were able to get a plug and play resource to act as a real-time customer service agent.

The major challenge when it comes to recruiting someone from the same industry or sector is that many of them would already be victims of sectoral and functional bias, and would not be able to change embedded thought structures. In such a case, it has become imperative to start identifying people from a cross-section of industries so as to mobilise and use the diversity candidates to push the envelope of creative change and a radically enriched visualisation lens. These individuals will be recognised as our Change Ambassadors in the organisation.

In a nutshell, if you summarise the roles:-

- A Functionary looks at task completion, while a facilitator person looks at the task conceptualisation
- A Functionary looks at the content, a facilitator looks at the element of creativity
- A Functionary looks at the output, a facilitator looks at the aspiration

Problem-oriented thinking to purpose-oriented thinking

As HR professionals, we cannot remain insulated from the fact of where we truly stand. We are the true custodians of connecting, communicating, and caring for diverse cultures, considering four generations are working under a single umbrella. During this

journey, it is pertinent that we become a proactive problem finder than a reactive problem solver in true spirit and intent. We should gauge and convert the immediate problems into fundamental and fundamental to foundational problems. In a platform-oriented thinking, an HR has to wear the cap of a data scientist to really understand the root cause (Family, Social, Cultural) of certain behavioural changes in people.

The manifest culture and invocation of higher purpose are potent agencies of selfinitiated personal transformation. According to me, an HR should work towards creating a higher purpose dimension in the organisation. They should act as guardians of culture and create a sense of higher purpose, both being crucial agents of human change. Identification and initiation of higher purposes in life to the mental and emotional vocabulary of people should be one of the responsibilities of a HR specialist. Research has shown that purpose-driven professionals prove to be an extremely valuable talent - 30% are more likely to be high performers and almost 50% are likely to be promoters in their company.

“Value and purpose-driven institutions equalise and normalise the incalculable human heterogeneities around the basic premise of shared values, which greatly reflects in its approach to the most sensitive touch points like fairness, retrenchment, ethical choices, governance paradigms.”

In a purpose-driven organisation, an employee will be able to accept all the disappointments, setbacks, challenges, and ambiguities faced by him. This is owing to the improved maturity level to cognise the indispensability of constraints and failures in the process of a larger goal. It gives an employee a social image and profile of being affiliated to the institution that values human, social, and planetary wellbeing. It evokes the most constructive form of pride of affiliation.

Value and purpose-driven institutions equalise and normalise the incalculable human heterogeneities around the basic premise of shared values, which greatly reflects in its approach to the most sensitive touch points like fairness, retrenchment, ethical choices, governance paradigms. Many organisations are talking about fairness, but are we really fair to the last mile?

“Execution has always been a buzzword around HR, but the call of the time is to graduate into imaginative HR, where interconnected stakeholders and shared values are not fashionable statements, but factual endorsements.”

Marrying the will, work, and worth

Will emerges as the resolve of the senior leadership to give meaning, creativity, a sense of direction, and larger gratification to the role holder. This would emerge in the dimension of work as the right blend of autonomy and accountability. The causal effect is the deeper and higher sense of self-worth, wherein an individual literally knows and



feels the exact touch point of value created by him in the value proposition of a company.

Execution has always been a buzzword around HR, but the call of the time is to graduate into imaginative HR, where interconnected stakeholders and shared values are not fashionable statements, but factual endorsements. The ancient yet timeless wisdom bears an eloquent testimony to this very powerful question that we should ask ourselves - does my decision pass the test of propriety and institutional morality? Data aids in justification, but integrity and propriety legitimise it from recruitment to retrenchment. Purpose-driven HR is their guide and gospel that answers this question. 

About the Author

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Occupational Safety, Health And Working Conditions Code, 2019

BY RASHMI PRADEEP AND ANKITA RAY

After the Presidential assent to the Code of Wages, 2019 (“**Wages Code**”), the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019 (“**Code**”) was introduced in the Lok Sabha, which was seen as the next step to the Union government’s agenda of consolidating and simplifying Indian labour laws. The Code was then referred to the parliamentary standing committee on labour (“**Standing Committee**”) for examination, which tabled its report before the Rajya Sabha with its recommendations. The Code consolidates 13 labour laws relating to occupational safety, health and working conditions, such as the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, Factories Act, 1948 etc. The Code seeks to and provides a single yet broad legal framework to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for employees while ensuring the ease of doing business for employers. Some of the key features of the Code are mentioned below.

The Code applies to:

- (i) All establishments where any industry, trade, business, manufacture or occupation is carried out in which 10 or more workers are employed
- (ii) A factory, motor transport undertaking, newspaper establishment, audio-video production, building and other construction work or plantation in which 10 or more workers are employed
- (iii) A mine or dock work (irrespective of the number of workers)

(i) to (iii) collectively referred to as “**Covered Establishments.**”) Currently, separate legislations regulate health and safety conditions in factories, mines, plantations, and docks. Companies having offices and factories or mines or plantations, and therefore encounter administrative difficulties in complying with multiple legislations. Under the “Code”, a single legislation will govern all Covered Establishments across all sectors (manufacturing and services sector alike) concerning safety, health and working conditions of employees, leading to easier compliance.

Workforce covered under the Code:

The Code has a broad definition of ‘employee’ to include individuals performing skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled, manual, operational, supervisory, managerial, administrative, technical or clerical work. It also introduces the concept of ‘worker’ as a subset of the definition of ‘employee’, to cover all individuals who are included in the definition of ‘employee’ but excludes: -

- (i) Supervisors whose monthly salary is INR 15,000 or more; and
- (ii) Those employed in managerial and administrative capacities.

Accordingly, the Code would also apply to managerial and supervisory employees. Working journalists and sales promotion employees also come within the scope of ‘worker’, and specifically excludes apprentices from its scope. Importantly, ‘contract labour’ has been excluded from the definition of ‘employees’, lending clarity to the concept that there is no direct

employer-employee relationship between the principal employer and contract labour.

In keeping with the times, conceptual changes, such as individuals engaged in digital audio-visual work being included within the concept of ‘cine and theatre workers’, and individuals engaged in electronic media/e-paper establishment or radio being included within the ambit of ‘journalists’ have been effected.

Common registration and license and notice of closure:

While the current set of legislations require establishments to obtain separate registration under all such legislations, the Code provides for a common registration for all Covered Establishments and for deemed registration in case of non-registration by the authorities within a specified time. This is a step in the right direction. However, employers need to ensure registration, since under the Code, an unregistered employer is prohibited from engaging any employee.

Further, under the Code, an employer can also apply for a common license to operate a factory and to engage contract labour. An obligation has been cast on employers closing down their establishments, to notify the appropriate officers of closure, and also certify that all dues have been duly paid to all employees.

Duties of Employers and Employees:

General obligations have been cast on employers to *inter alia* provide a hazard-free and safe workplace, to comply with appropriate health and safety standards, to report any accidents and outbreak of diseases etc. Employers are also responsible to provide certain welfare measures for workers, including adequate washing facilities, bathing places, separate toilets for men, women and transgender employees, medical facilities including first-aid and ambulance, canteens, treatment of wastes, ventilation, and potable drinking water.

Employers also have additional duties, such as;

- (i) Disposal of e-waste in an appropriate manner
- (ii) Issuing an appointment letter to all employees
- (iii) Providing free annual health examinations to all employees (this requirement will result in the escalation of employer costs)
- (iv) Providing crèche facilities (where Covered Establishments ordinarily employ 50 or more employees).

Duties have also been cast on employees to comply with safety and health requirements, to co-operate with their employers in complying with the Code, and to report any situation which is unsafe or unhealthy that comes to their attention.

Employment of women

employees: The Code specifies that an employer may make women employees work between 7 PM and 6 AM after obtaining their consent in this regard, provided the employer is compliant with all the prescribed conditions in relation to working hours, health and safety norms. Further, the authorities also have the power to prohibit women from being employed in certain work.

Working hours: The Code allows the appropriate government to determine the limits pertaining to working hours, weekly hours, overtime hours, intervals for rest etc. Under the current framework, limits in relation to the same are statutorily fixed under specific legislations such as the Factories Act, 1948.

Appropriate Authorities: Under the Code, Central and State Governments may respectively constitute the National and State Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Boards to advise on various issues relating to health and safety of employees.

Further, the Code also provides for Inspector-cum-Facilitators (**"Inspectors"**), whereby such Inspectors are also required to advise employers to facilitate

compliance with the Code, in addition to their duty of conducting inspections. In keeping with the times, the Inspectors may conduct web-based inspections. Separately, the appropriate government may also designate a safety committee, medical officers etc. to fulfil the objective of the Code.

The major criticism from India Inc. with respect to the Code is its applicability – there was an expectation that the employee threshold over the applicability of the Code would be pegged at a higher number. Workers' are also unhappy with the Code on grounds of the wide discretionary powers given to the authorities to determine certain safety standards.

Further, the Standing Committee has raised certain concerns over the provisions of the Code, such as:-

- (i) Loose usage of terms 'employee' and 'worker' in provisions related to health, welfare facilities and working conditions
- (ii) Absence of definition of the terms 'wages', 'workplace', 'supervisor' and 'manager' in the Code
- (iii) Varied definition of terms used in the four labour codes
- (iv) No explicit provision for safety measures
- (v) Imposing responsibility of setting up crèche facility on even small-scale industries, rather than provisioning for a common facility set up by the appropriate government or pooling of resources to set up a common crèche facility
- (vi) Lack of coverage of different types of contract workers within the definition of 'contract labour'
- (vii) Indistinct differentiation between the core and non-core activities
- (viii) Ambiguous demarcation of responsibility between the Central and the State Governments.

Despite the issues noted above, the Code is a necessary step in the right direction in further simplifying the complex labour law regime in India. However, certain operational issues

will remain due to dual legislation by both the state and the centre on overlapping matters. The real test will be to see how state governments accept the Code enacted by the Centre, and whether they use their legislative powers to dilute the simplicity promised by the Code by enacting onerous state legislations.



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Ankita Ray is a Principal Associate at Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas in Mumbai. Ankita has 9 years of experience in labour and employment laws. She specialises in matters relating to advising/ strategising on the reduction of workforce and severance of employment of senior management persons, advising on transfer or acquisition of workforce, closure of units under various corporate structures. Ankita is a graduate of Symbiosis Law School, 2010 batch.



Q Some of the matters/topics covered in the Code are also addressed in the local shops and establishments legislations. Does this mean that the local shops and establishments legislation will cease to apply?

A The Code does not subsume the local shops and establishments legislation (“**Local S&E Acts**”), which will continue to subsist. Therefore, establishments that fall within the ambit of the Local S&E Acts and the Code would be required to comply with both legislations (once the Code is enforced). Accordingly, establishments would still be required to obtain a registration under the Local S&E Act. For example, if there is a commercial office which employs 10 or more persons in Karnataka, such an office would require to obtain a registration under the Code, and also under the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1961. The dual coverage of certain matters/topics indeed creates confusion. One example is the issue of women workers working night shifts. Certain Local S&E Acts provide blanket permission to women employees in certain sectors to work during the night shift (subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions by the employers), whereas the Code requires employers to obtain express consent from women employees to allow them to work during night shifts. As of now, it is to be seen whether these overlapping issues are ironed out before the enactment of the Code. Till such time, employers should continue to

carry on their operations on an as-is basis, as per the Local S&E Act and other labour legislations currently applicable to them.

Q What does the Code say about a contractor and principal employer? Is there anything that a principal employer employing contract labour has to be mindful of?

A Under the Code, a contractor is defined as a person who undertakes to produce a given result for the establishment (other than a mere supply of goods) through contract labour or supplies contract labour for any work of the establishment and includes a sub-contractor. An ‘employer’ also includes a contractor. Therefore, a contractor will be responsible to comply with the provisions of the Code in terms of its employees who he deploys as contract labour at client sites.

Manpower supply contractors who have employed 20 or more contract labour on any day in the preceding 12 months, are required to obtain a license prior to supply or engaging of contract labour or undertaking any work through contract labour. The license will be issued by the appropriate authority upon fulfilment of requisite qualifications by the contractor. However, to ensure ease of doing business, the Code provides that where the contractor is unable to fulfil such qualifications, they can obtain a work-specific license for a particular project. Under the Code, contractors are also required to submit information on the work order to the appropriate authority,

prior to supplying contract labour or executing contract labour.

Principal Employers should note the following points: (i) For employers engaging contract labour through an unlicensed contractor, the Code specifies that in such situations the contract labour engaged through such contractor shall be deemed to be employees of the employer; (ii) welfare facilities in relation to provision of canteens, rest rooms, drinking water and first aid is required to be provided by the employer. This may entail substantial costs and employers should negotiate with the contractors regarding their engagement and fees bearing the same in mind.

Q What are the penalties under the Code?

A In order to deter employers from committing any act of non-compliance, the penalty amounts are high. For any breach of the Code, where the penalty is not specified, the employer may be penalised with a fine up to INR 3,00,000. An offence that leads to the death of an employee is punishable with imprisonment of up to 2 years, or a fine up to INR 5,00,000, or both. Further, courts may direct that at least 50% of such fine be given as compensation to the heirs of the victim. There is also a provision for compounding of offences. **H C**

Learning & Development Budgets to Grow in 2020

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

More than a third of Learning & Development (L&D) professionals globally are expecting their budgets to grow year over year—shifting from Instructor-Led Training (ILT) to online learning—and executive buy-in continues to build, according to a report.

As per '2020 Workplace Learning Report' by LinkedIn, 72% of L&D professionals in India expect budgets to grow over the year. For the survey, LinkedIn asked L&D professionals, people managers, and learners across 18 countries about their priorities, challenges, and what really inspires them to learn. Amongst the countries surveyed were the United States, Canada, India, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, France, Benelux, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland.

Interestingly, 64% of respondents believe that online learning helps them scale learning across the organization. While, 54% claimed "email campaigns" is a technique to encourage employees to engage with their learning content, only 21.53% spend time on building/sourcing learning programs/content for their organization.

58% of L&D professionals from India said "keeping up with the fast pace of technology change" is the trend that most impacts their learning programs in 2020.

The report also shed light on challenges faced by L&D professionals in India. The top three challenges faced by learning and development professionals in an organization are—getting managers to make learning a priority for their teams (53%), creating a culture of learning (43%), and increasing employee engagement in learning (36%).

In the survey, 40% of L&D professionals mentioned that "enabling self-directed learning with online learning solutions" is the key area of focus for them in the next 12 months. Moreover, 60% of them said "AI and machine learning to drive more accurate personalization" would significantly impact online learning in the upcoming five years. 

Small Firms Hire Fewer Women Employees to Save Maternity Leave Costs

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Nearly half of early-stage startups and SMEs in India claimed that they had hired fewer or no women in the last 12 months due to maternity costs. The government's Maternity Benefits Act 2017, which grants six-month paid leaves, was pointed to as a prime reason for this reduction, according to a survey by community platform LocalCircles.

The survey, based on 8,500 responses from startups, SMEs and entrepreneurs, showed that 49% of companies hired fewer or no women in the last 12 months compared to the previous year.

It was found the financial strains of maternity leave were too much for many smaller organizations to take on. Nearly 33% of respondents said they didn't hire women at all, while 16% stated they had added fewer women employees than in the previous year. The findings, however, indicated that 44% of respondents wanted the current policy to stay.

As per the survey, the collective demand of startups and SMEs operating in India is that companies with an annual turnover of less than Rs 10 crore should be exempted from the six-month paid maternity leave. Instead, the earlier three-month rule should apply to them.

"If this is done, the startup and SME industry will be better motivated to give equal opportunities to women and would look to hire them without any prejudice or bias", the LocalCircles survey found.

When asked what should be the maternity leave allowance in India from their perspective, 37% respondents said it should be a three-month paid leave while 6% stated should be a one-month paid leave. Meanwhile, 6% also claimed that there should not be any maternity leave allowance.

Nearly half (44%) of respondents found that the current law of six-month paid leave should be kept unchanged. 

The ABC Of Executive Effectiveness

There is a compelling case for senior executives in today's organisations to get an understanding over cognitive fitness and adequate emphasis should be given not only to physical fitness but also to cognitive fitness.

BY DR. K N VISWANATHAM

Neuroscience has made its foray in the domains of Management, Leadership Development, and Executive Education. Brain research has brought about a momentous and a paradigm shift, and has enabled us to understand the functioning of the brain in great depth, and it also includes cognitive fitness among executives.

Executives are burdened with work pressures, performance, and fulfilling KRAs, and therefore, it is equally important for them to develop an awareness of ABC (Affective, Behavioural, Cognitive) processes of Executive Effectiveness. Affective and behavioural processes have been given enough importance for a long time, and these aspects are generally taught in Executive Development programmes. Since the recent past, adequate attention is being paid to the subject of “Cognitive Fitness” in Executive Education programmes in global business schools. Therefore, it becomes important to get a broad understanding of cognitive fitness.

Understanding Cognitive Fitness

With increasing ages, a decline in the physical abilities of the executives is the law of nature. Many organisations provide on-site gymnasiums and health centres and create an opportunity for the executives to remain fit and

healthy. Similarly, executives, with growing age, develop issues pertaining to the human brain and cognitive skills. Needing more time to process information, lack of alertness, increased reaction time, decreased concentration, inability to connect the dots, overlooking appointments or social engagements more often, missing out the train of thought or thread of conversation, increasingly overwhelmed by making critical decisions are some of the features of cognitive decline.

Cognitive fitness can be defined as the ability to learn, reason, recognise, remember, communicate, and adapt newer thinking and decision-making processes. The core cognitive skills are sustained attention, response inhibition, speed of information processing, cognitive flexibility and control, multiple simultaneous attention, working memory, category formation, and pattern recognition. And these collectively form executive abilities. Research has indicated that if the executive is cognitively fit all through his/her life, the better equipped their brain will be against the perils of ageing, and enable them to prevent specific brain problems from occurring in the first place. Cognitive fitness is the *sine qua non* for executives for a rewarding career. A wellknown body for neuroscience research has documented that declining cognitive processes is a concern that can be addressed effectively.

Good brain health results in effective brain function and cognitive fitness.

“Cognitive fitness is the *sine qua non* for executives for a rewarding career. A wellknown body for neuroscience research has documented that declining cognitive processes is a concern that can be addressed effectively.”

The concept of neuroplasticity

Brain is an interactive system with synaptic transmissions between neurons. Tasks that stimulate one part of the brain can easily stimulate several other parts of the brain. In this context, it becomes pertinent to understand the concept of neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is one of the pivotal discoveries in neuroscience. An understanding of the functions of the brain translated and transformed the pathways of executive development. Teaching and training the executives over neuroplasticity can have a huge impact. The central tenet of executive education is to educate

how the brain changes during learning. Neuroplasticity is the ability of the brain to change, remodel, and reorganise for the purpose of better ability to adapt to a new situation. Neural networks are not fixed, but occur, disappear, and reoccur in a dynamic manner. Repeatedly, practising an activity will help in forming new neuronal circuits. Once we stop practising a certain activity, the brain will redirect neuronal circuits by a wellknown “use it or lose it” theory. Santiago Raman y Cajal, the Father of modern neuroscience, has aptly quoted, *“Every man can, if he so desires, become the sculptor of his own brain.”*

Strengthening one's cognitive abilities

Neuroscientists have indicated that the activities mentioned below will help strengthen the cognitive muscle in executives:

1. Develop other handedness:

Writing every day with the non-preferred hand for a few minutes. Also brushing with the non-preferred hand at least once a week while ensuring that one does not hurt his/her gums. Using a mouse with the non-preferred hand while operating a computer may stimulate the brain.

2. Expanding one's reading universe:

Reading subjects that are not part of one's regular mainstream work.

3. Playing word games and doing puzzles enhances one's brain stimulation.

4. Memorising a poem will stimulate cortical pathways in the brain.

5. Learning new technology, new language, musical instruments will help in doing mental gym resulting in the creation of new neuronal pathways.

6. Doing mathematics calculations by hand and avoiding the usage of a calculator also helps.

7. Managing by walking around will make executives to get into

unfamiliar territory and broaden their perspective.

8. Visualising, imagining, and theorising function as deep stimulation to one's brain.

9. Watching TV in mute mode and figuring out what happens also enhances brain stimulation.

10. Practising by expressing various emotions in front of the mirror.

11. Counting numbers backwards and playing chess with an intelligent individual is a good cognitive fitness exercise.

12. Getting into the old habit of handwriting every day for a few minutes also benefits.

13. Tackling with small fix-it jobs which will make you to think through will help you gain.

14. Creativity, innovation, and new initiatives matter not only in the development of an organisation as also an individual's cognitive development.

15. Memory minerals/foods/nutrients: Garlic enhances spatial memory. Egg white facilitates verbal memory. Apples and beans help in increased alertness for learning.

16. Vitamins that improve thinking: Vitamin B1 helps in attention and reaction time. Vitamin B6 enhances working memory. Vitamin B12 improves in concentration, working memory, and learning. Vitamin C facilitates in general memory.

17. Exercise enables the release of neurotransmitters, which are the essential life energy of the brain. Brain is not an island. The Human system is highly connected and interconnected. Biochemical changes flow through your blood vessels and reach your muscles, your joints, your bones and your brain.

18. Practising sleep hygiene: Quality sleep functions as restoring mechanism for human brain.

Eclectic perspectives have revealed that cognitive fitness intervention should incorporate exercise, stress reduction, social



interaction, nutrition, sleep and stimulating activities. Reportedly, shaping and securing good mental fitness is not a dream come true.

As Roderick Gilkey And Clint Kilts (November 2007) put it, *“Cognitive fitness can affect every part of life. On an organisational level, it may be the ultimate lever for sustainable competitive advantage.”*

In view of the above, there is a compelling case for senior executives of today's organisations to get an understanding on cognitive fitness and adequate emphasis should be given not only to physical fitness but also to cognitive fitness. Intellectual inputs on “cognitive fitness” from psychologists should be provided to senior executives in the organisation by the leaders of learning & development. As a strategic initiative, all key personnel in an organisation must undergo a mandatory learning programme on cognitive fitness in view of its efficacy and overarching brain health benefits. 

About the Author

Dr. K N Viswanatham is a Senior Faculty Member at the State Bank Institute of Leadership, Kolkata. He comes with an experience of more than two decades in teaching, training, consulting, and research. Dr. Viswanatham has a Master's degree in Psychology from Andhra University, and an M. Phil & PhD in Clinical Psychology from NIMHANS. He can be reached on consultdrv@gmail.com.



Corporate Expectations From Fresh Talent

Historically, organisations have made use of various channels to create employer branding and position themselves as an employer of choice. With the onset of social media, the channels of communication have undergone a change.

BY **PROF. SUSHIL J. LALWANI AND DR. SHWETA LALWANI**

It is natural for employers and employees to have expectations from each other, but corporate expectations are equally important too. An experienced industry professional has stated, “A dream does not become reality through magic, it takes sweat, determination and hard work. Some of the new employees come in with high expectations, but get dejected when the expectations do not match. And soon, they start finding faults in the

organisation and look for other opportunities.”

When it comes to discussions on workplace expectations, employers and employees seem to be on different pages. It, therefore, becomes essential to understand corporate expectations from fresh recruits.

Review of Literature

The impact of future technology on jobs and workers has been discussed

by academics, policymakers, and corporates. Frey (2013) has predicted large-scale job losses. Arntz (2016) has challenged this view by suggesting that when a task-based analysis is considered, only 9% of jobs in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) economies are potentially automatable. However, technology will continue to shape the world of work.

Ghosh Debabrata, Deepak Bhatnagar, Jancy A, Neeraj Saxena and S K M (2009) depicted that by way of involving industries while drafting the syllabi for recruiting trained students, fresh recruits may create a potential Human Resource Centre to come up to the expectations of the corporate sector. Zahid (2008) revealed that IndustryAcademia interactions are the need of the hour for course upgradation.

M. Vijayakumar and Dr. S. Ramalingam (2012) undertook a *'study on competency needs analysis and quality factors for new recruits'* and discussed the big gap between what the corporates expect and what fresh recruits identify as employable competencies. Meenakshi Sharma (2009) carried out a survey on 'How important are soft skills from the Recruiter's Perspective' and discussed the role of soft skills in different managerial roles and future promotions, and concluded that the industry prefers corporate manpower with experience in addition to other qualities like technical skills and adaptability to new technologies. It was emphasised that interpersonal skills and adoption of the corporate culture are equally important, and hiring managers are not happy with the new workforce drawn from institutions.

Paliwal (2009) talked about tripartite coordination with Industry, Academia and Government for delivering good recruits to fulfil corporate expectations. Hannan (2003) advised a high faculty-student ratio for better teaching skills, and further advised regular revision of syllabus as per the suggestions of the

industry to ensure better cultural and social well-being of fresh recruits.

Eileen M. Trauth (1993) carried out a research on 'The IS (Information System) Expectation Gap: Industry Expectations Versus Academic Preparation,' and brought the recent changes in information systems technologies, their applications, and the need of industry for the future. However, it was found that there is an "expectation gap" between industry needs and academic preparation. He quotes that the Industry and universities must work together to close this gap. Modi (2009) opined that fresh graduates need at least six months to two years of rigorous training because there is a gap between theory and practice. Another important research on 'An Empirical Study on Expectations of Industry from Academia', Prof. Neeraj K. Dubey, Dr Saurabh Goyal, Prof. Ravindra Pathak and Dr Uday Singh Rajput found a definite gap between corporate expectations and fresh recruits. He suggested several determinants of employability such as soft skills, leadership qualities, suitability, analytical power, ethical component, dressing sense, language, appearance, manageability, training needs, industry's view and professional commitment.

When corporate expectations are not met then absenteeism, conflicts, poor job performance, and HR turnover prevails in the industry. On the other hand, when corporate expectations are met then HR is found to be engaged and motivated to perform at their maximum.

Employer Expectations further explored

Honesty pays. An honest HR is loyal to organisations and they have the ability to understand directions. Accordingly, HR achieves targets and completes the task in a praiseworthy manner. Reliability is another corporate expectation. The ability to work in a team is highly expected of employers. Teamwork is fostered through a positive attitude. A further,

“When corporate expectations are not met then absenteeism, conflicts, poor job performance, and HR turnover prevails in the industry. When corporate expectations are met then HR is found to be engaged and motivated to perform at their maximum.”

corporate expectation from fresh recruits is organisational commitment. Commitment to an organisation's goals determines the future of fresh recruits with the organisation.

The corporates can clarify their expectations by:

- Defining organisational culture
- Defining business goals and challenges
- Identifying current problems with fresh recruits
- Sharing accomplishments of fellow HR
- Discussing past performance reviews
- Redrafting job description

Corporate expectations can be summarised in a nutshell as in Table 1:

Expectation variable	Corporate Expectations: DO'S	Corporate Expectations: DONT'S
Organisational commitment	• Dedication to business • Hardworking and not who hardly works • Contribute maximum • Appropriate Dressing	• Criticism of all types and therefore, remember: Before you act, listen Before you react, think • Before you criticise, wait • Don't think what organisation can do for you, think what you can do for organisation
Your Interest and appearance	• Always interested in assigned work • Communicate your ideas • Happy & cheerful • Helping hand to co workers	• Go for bare minimum work • Compromise with quality • Be uncooperative • Have a fault-finding attitude
Perfection	• Work on time • Complete assigned task as per your schedule • Communicate to superiors when you miss work due to illness • Apply for leave only for legitimate illness	• Reach at work late • Do not achieve your assigned target • Do not express absence to employer • Abstain from work always • Always go for excuses
Honesty	• Always accept your mistakes • Give the right piece of advice whenever required	• Take organisational assets for your own use • Mislead superiors
Continuous Learning	• Listen to instructions • Ask questions only when you do not understand • Innovation • Mistakes work as teachers	• Ignore superiors and their orders • Appreciate advise • Asking questions for the sake of asking questions

“Employees are often promised work-life balance during their job interviews; the reality is starkly different. There is a need for organisations to humanise the workplace and move beyond traditional HR approaches.”

The following corporate expectations must be kept in mind:

1. The aim is to create a high-performance workplace so take initiatives and responsibility
2. Stay Curious for more learning
3. Jack of all trades and master of one
4. Be confident and think yourself as the owner
5. Think workplace is changing always and ensure your adjustment with the changed environment

While corporates think that they possess excellence in managing

talent, employees refuse to be impressed by such efforts. Still, it seems employees have trouble understanding their importance, and how they make a difference. Employee job satisfaction is tied to how useful and connected workers feel and whether they can provide meaningful feedback. Generally, corporates forget their promises. Employees are often promised work-life balance during their job interviews; the reality is starkly different. There is a need for organisations to humanise the workplace and move beyond traditional HR approaches. 

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Dr. Shweta Lalwani is Assistant Professor, School of Management, Sir Padampat Singhanian University (SPSU), Udaipur. She has been in the academics for more than a decade and is presently working on a European Union funded-Erasmus+ project as the Project Co-Ordinator for SPSU. She has published articles in reputed management journals and has presented many papers in National and International conferences in HRM and OB. Dr. Shweta is an MBA and Ph.D. in Management and has undertaken a Research Project funded by ICSSR in the area of OB.

Shaping Future Leaders

Jacob Morgan has charted a bold path to becoming what he is today—one of the world's foremost authorities on leadership, employee experience, and the future of work. In his first job out of college, he was told he'd be doing all sorts of exciting, meaningful, and impactful work. However, a couple of months in, he was stuck doing unrewarding tasks like data entry, cold calling, and making PowerPoint presentations until he decided to venture out on his own, without having to work for anybody else ever again. Since then, Jacob has been passionate about "creating organizations where people want to show up to work." In this exclusive interaction with Human Capital, the four-time bestselling author, renowned speaker, and futurist shares unique insights into the future of leadership by drawing on extensive research and discussions with the world's top business leaders.

BY ANKITA SHARMA

Q We must begin on a congratulatory note with well-merited kudos to you on your new book *'The Future Leader'*. In what unique ways does this book address the question on the future of leadership?

A Thank you very much! This was the hardest book I've written, and I think it's the world's most unique leadership book for a few reasons. First, it's focused on the future, looking out over the next ten years. Second, it's based on exclusive interviews with over 140 of the world's top CEOs from companies like Oracle, Unilever, MasterCard, Verizon, Audi, InterContinental Hotels Group, and dozens of others. Third, it's also based on a survey of nearly 14,000 employees around the world done in partnership with LinkedIn. This means that I was able to compare the perspectives and insights from employees across a variety of seniority levels to see where the gaps are.

Q What does your extensive research reveal about the leadership mindsets and skills that will be needed to thrive in 2020 and beyond?

A From the 140 CEOs I interviewed, I found there are a set of four mindsets and five skills that are essential for future leaders. All of these are important today, but many of us work for and with leaders who don't



possess them. In the future, these skills and mindsets will become like air and water. I call these the **Notable Nine**.

The four mindsets are:

Global Citizen: Leaders need to understand and appreciate new cultures, actively seek out diverse teams, lead employees with different backgrounds, and have the know-how to enter and succeed in new global markets.

Servant: The mindset of the servant means that you practice humility and that you serve four groups: your leaders (if you have them), your customers, your team, and yourself.

Chef: Just like chefs balance numerous ingredients to create masterful meals, leaders must balance the two most important ingredients of any business: humanity and technology.

Explorer: Just like explorers had to learn continually, leaders need to be super perpetual learners and practice curiosity.

The five skills are:

Coach: The future leaders need to appreciate employees as individuals, as opposed to viewing everyone as just workers. The best coaches and leaders develop their people to be more successful than themselves.

Futurist: Futurists consider multiple scenarios and think through new possibilities.

Technology Teenager: Teenagers seem to always be current on the latest technology, and future leaders must be the same way.

Translator: Translators are master communicators. They listen to understand and do more than just hear what people are saying.

Yoda: In the future, leaders need to be emotionally intelligent like Yoda and develop their empathy and self-awareness.

Q What are some of the common mistakes you see organizations repeatedly make

in developing next-generation leaders?

A There are a few things to consider. First, most employees don't start leadership development programs until they are in their 40s, yet they actually become leaders in their 20s and 30s. This means that people spend 10–20 years of their life leading others, without actually being taught anything about leadership! We shouldn't be shocked that so many employees around the world are not engaged in their jobs. Another common mistake is not taking a step back to actually define who a leader is and what leadership means. How is it that in the same organization, you have some leaders who everyone admires and wants to work with and other leaders who everyone hates and stays away from? It's because the people who promoted them have different definitions of "leader" and "leadership". For some, leadership is about driving business performance at the cost of everything else. For others, it's about putting people first and truly caring about those who work there. We don't spend enough time defining and explaining

Rapid Fire

Favourite quote: "Be a leader, not a follower." This is something my dad told me when I was a little kid.

The best book you recently read: I don't read business books, but I did just finish reading the *Annihilation* series of books, which is science fiction.

I strongly believe in...creating organizations where employees genuinely want to, not need to, show up to work every day. Doing this starts with leaders.

What comes to your mind when you hear these words?

The future of work: Possibility and opportunity

Democratization of Learning: Connecting people

Diversity: Belonging

these things because we all assume that we know what they are, but we don't! How you define "leader" and "leadership" will determine the type of culture you create and the filters you have in place to promote other leaders. From the 140 CEOs I interviewed, I received 140 different responses!

Up Close and Personal

Q What's one of your favourite memories from the past year? Also, what's something you are doing or want to do in 2020 that you've never done before?

A From the past year, my favourite memories are taking trips with my wife, playing in my first chess tournament, and eating at a few famous restaurants! As far as something I want to do, I try to do one new thing each year. In the past, this included things like starting a podcast and creating online courses, among others. For 2020, I've started doing a daily unfiltered vlog where I record a short video (about 3–8 minutes) each day sharing an idea, something I learned, an article I read, or something I'm pondering.

Q What are your top productivity hacks?

A I don't check email or social media until 4 pm every day. I have disabled all social media and email notifications to my phone. I don't have meetings on Mon/Wed/Fri of each week, and when I do have meetings, I batch them together. I also say "no" to a lot of things.

Q What would we be surprised to learn about you?

A I play competitive chess and racquetball!



Source : thefutureorganization.com

Q Technology is rapidly seeping into every fibre of business and society. How will powerful technology like artificial intelligence impact leadership?

A AI and technology will make it blatantly clear who the bad and good leaders are. Leaders typically focus on two things. The first is decision-making, and the second is getting people to move in the direction of that decision. We are already starting to see the influx of technology now, which is making decisions faster and more accurately than humans. You can imagine what this will look like in the next decade. So if you're a bad leader who just focuses on telling other people what to do and making decisions, then what good are you if technology handles that?

However, if you're a great leader and you also focus on the human aspects of leadership like emotional intelligence, coaching and mentoring, engaging and motivating others, and the like, then your value to the organization increases tenfold!

Q Adopting a 'growth mindset' has been hailed as one of the most significant pieces of leadership success in today's modern, fast-changing times. How can traditional leaders foster and internalize this mindset?

A Having a growth mindset is, of course, important, but when you look at the mindsets that the CEOs identified, then having a growth mindset is maybe just 10% of the total required mindsets for future leaders. Leaders, to create a growth mindset, must view obstacles and challenges as something to overcome. Leaders must also accept that their abilities are not fixed, but can be grown, developed, and improved. Then, the last part of this is to actually spend the time and energy to learn and grow!

Q Employee engagement is a timeless business topic full of diverse viewpoints and solutions. You often say that while investment in employee engagement is growing, the

scores remain at an all-time low. Why might this be, and how can this be countered?

A The problem is we view employee engagement like an adrenaline shot inside of our organizations; we wait for our employees to hate their jobs, and then we introduce something like free food or hot yoga to try to make them more engaged. Most companies view employee engagement as a perk as opposed to changing the core workplace practices at their organization. This is why I focus so much on employee experience, which is a collection of three environments: culture, technology, and physical space. Focusing on employee experience is what leads to an engaged workforce. Experience is the cause, and engagement is the effect. **HC**

To learn more about Jacob, visit TheFutureOrganization.com or email him directly at Jacob@TheFutureOrganization.com

Me Time Secrets for Successful Leaders

What we earn for every second invested at work is directly related to the quality of every second spent in rest.

BY BRIGADIER SUSHIL BHASIN

How can we be progressively more joyful, creative, productive, peaceful or exhilarated in every second that we invest in various activities? Well, the answer from the Indian tradition as well as modern psychology is that deeper you enter the state of rest, the better you become at any action. Even if you do not add to your existing skillset and remain the same person that you are, merely by deepening your level of relaxation, you can get more out of your time than you have been doing so far.

To be a contemporary person is to be switched on 24x7. I have myself been guilty of boasting how my busy schedule does not allow me to sleep enough. There are hundreds of studies that highlight the severe damage that lack of sleep inflicts on memory, intelligence, problem-solving abilities, decision making, creativity, physical fitness, and mental health.

Three hours of work after eight hours of sleep are more productive than eight hours of work after three hours of sleep. This is true for all kinds of work, including processes involving manual labour. You can put in more hours or push others to put in more hours by brute force, but you cannot force them to be as present, alert, and creative in those hours.

Rest management is the foundation of time management. Time investment, which is a step further down the road, is not a profitable venture for those who are not adequately rested. On sleeping well, I suggest everyone in the business of managing oneself and others to read Arianna Huffington's seminal book 'The Sleep Revolution.' Her own turning point was when she involuntarily fell on her face due to sleep and fractured her cheekbone. It was a wake-up call that made her write the book.

The thing with sleep is that the hours lost cannot be made up for by sleeping through the weekend. Hours once lost damage the organs, dull intelligence, lower your immunity, and keep you from enjoying your waking hours fully.

The hours of rest are one subject. The quality of restfulness in those hours is another. Restfulness does not just have to do with the hours spent in lying down or sleeping; it is also about cleaning your waking hours of excessive noise, distractions, engagements, duties, and screen time. Here are a few tips for living a more balanced and restful life:

Meditate: Join a meditation group to learn a path of meditation that helps your brain (which tires itself by engaging in thinking 24x7)

enter a state of rest and reach progressive levels of thoughtlessness. Put your mind to rest so your thoughts can soar.

Develop body, mind, and

impact: Acquire skills that make you more efficient. This helps you use your body well, enables you to use your mind better, and facilitates the impacting of others in your sphere of influence.

Engage socially: Humans are social animals. To not interact with 'your tribe' is a mistake. It deprives you of warmth, friendship, human contact, and the feeling of being a part of the whole.

Serve: Self-worth is closely connected with the idea of 'seva' or service as an act of gratitude. To be in a state of being a servant-leader is to understand that leadership is an opportunity to serve. **HC**

About the Author

Brigadier Sushil Bhasin is a time investment strategist, global speaker and author of two books *Design Your Life* and *Million Dollar \$econd* published by CNBC TV18. As a TEDx speaker and corporate trainer, his stated mission is to help create a world conscious of time as a vital resource. He can be reached on sushil@BrigSushilBhasin.com





Read Your Audience Well

We have often heard that Communication is a two-way process. For working professionals, effective communication is important for success, but for Facilitators, it is not just important, but business and life critical.

BY DIPANKAR DAS

As Facilitators and Speakers, the one skill that is needed to be mastered is how to read your audience like a book, and once read, know the ways to adjust how you come across to your audience. During Train The Trainer certification, we learn to differentiate between different kinds of audience. You have the argumentative knowalls, the shy and timid ones, the incessant talkers, the Questioner, etc. Each type has its own challenges. So, the first key task is to read your audience accurately and deal with them in an appropriate way. As a Trainer and Facilitator, this author believes that generally 10-20% of your audience will warm up to a Trainer within the first hour of the session, and another 10-20% may never warm up to you at all, even if you are the 21st Century avatar of Dale Carnegie! But irrespective of how your audience reads you as a Trainer, your job is to ensure that the learning from the session is internalised by your audience, even if a fifth of your audience remain unmoved by your style.

“As a Trainer, your job is to ensure that the learning from the session is internalised by your audience, even if a fifth of your audience remain unmoved by your style.”



Some tell-tale signs that can provide us with strong cues have been mentioned below:-

Nod and Smile: Good Trainers are used to these signals from the audience. When participants are nodding and smiling, chances are that they are lapping up your training. The challenge here is to sustain the momentum.

Active Note Taking: Some participants are very diligent and try to capture all the key ideas being shared. They assiduously take notes. Such profiles, you can be assured are serious, and make as much from the session as possible. This is more common in functional Training sessions than behavioural sessions. However, if you are engaging enough as a Trainer, the pens and notebooks will be out in any session.

Making Eye Contact: The audience follows you as you move around. And move around you should, and not be an armchair Facilitator. Eyes, as they say, are the mirror to your soul. No experienced Trainer can miss the expression and look in the eyes of the participants. If they are alive with curiosity and interest, you have a good thing going here. If, however, they are glazing over (rampant in post-lunch sessions), you know you have an uphill task here.

Laugh Easy: No good Facilitator should stay away from humour. If your humour is good, the first 20% mentioned earlier, will love your session. Your jokes may even have them cracking up with laughter. However, humour is also a litmus test, which tells you, who the other 20% are, who may not be easy to move or get a reaction out of. Expressions may remain unsmiling, even dour. Often, Facilitators feel demotivated when their audience does not respond to their humour and other cues. Do make an extra effort to win over this constituency. However, do not allow them to bring down your mood. Do not

ignore, but do not take it to heart either.

Asking Questions: When participants ask questions, and insightful ones at that, it is a moment of arrival for the facilitator that you are on the right course. Facilitators are trained to reflect and deflect, but also engage and answer. Remember, while the more articulate participant may ask, it is probably a question that the other participants too had in their mind. Good style is great, but the power of a facilitator comes from expertise, and this is the chance to show the depth of your knowledge. Do so, by all means.

The facilitator is on his toes, and in a session, he or she has to deal with real-time challenges as they come up. Some participants will always be doodling or daydreaming as you give your best with energy and enthusiasm. Doodling may not always mean participants are distracted, but is often a way people concentrate on their thoughts. But daydreaming, having side conversations, Whatsapping under the table, constantly checking time, looking disinterested etc. all show a dip in interest or even active indifference. In such cases, the Facilitator can do a host of things.

“Anyone can be a good facilitator, provided you read your audience cues well and then adjust your style to match the need of the audience.”

Energise: The way the day begins is different from the energy level in the Training Room after lunch. Remember the human mind is good at accepting information in slots of 45 to 60 minutes at a time. So, ideally do short energisers which bring out the smiles even on the dour ones and break the monotony.

Discussion Mode: Get into a two-way discussion mode to use the inputs to gauge the level of the audience. There can be wide differences between a group of middle managers versus C-Level executives. Discussions give you hints on how to pitch your content at their respective wavelengths.

Activities: Remember, we are all different kinds of learners. Even besides that, cognitive learning tends to the default way to learn, but it should be re-inforced with activities, role plays, videos to ensure that multiple senses are engaged and the participant is not merely thinking his way to learn something new.

Tell Stories: Stories and anecdotes are what get the participants hooked. They appeal to our emotional side and cut through cognitive filters in our mind. When you tell stories, participants connect at an emotional level and are more accepting.

An impactful facilitator is one who not only works for a living, but shapes minds, beliefs and indeed lives. Anyone can be a good facilitator, provided you read your audience cues well and then adjust your style to match the need of the audience. 

About the Author

Dipankar Das is the author of *Cracking The CSAT Code at the Call Centre*. He has worked in diverse organisations, including Genpact, Concentrix and with the Tatas. He is currently, Vice President and Global Head of Skill Development at iSON Experiences.

Leading The Way!

As workplaces become populated with younger people and millennials, fed on newer and broader values of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), there is a distinct change on corporate campuses.

BY GAYATHRI RAMAMURTHY

A “First Day of Period” leave for female employees by Culture Machine, a Mumbai-based company has got corporate India talking. Indeed, India Inc. is changing! As workplaces become populated with younger people and millennials, fed on newer and broader values of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), there is a distinct change on corporate campuses. But truth be told, the industry got into action mode on D&I much earlier.

Successful companies do things differently

Forward-looking companies identify natural differences among their people, understand the requirements of each group, and inject a culture that brings out the best in them. And studies show that a diverse workplace makes good business sense, increases a company's bottom line, builds a better work culture, and more.

Consider this- A World Bank survey says \$32 Billion is wasted each year as a result of LGBT+ discrimination in India. An ILO study puts the cost of overall social exclusion of people with disabilities between 3-7 percent of a nation's

GDP. A McKinsey study stated that a 10 percent rise in women employees will add \$700 Billion to India's GDP by 2025.

The notion that companies are promoting D&I based on the principle of “What's in it for me” is untrue. There is a strong culture of D&I in corporate India because organisations know it to be right. While diversity is rightly held up as a key differentiator in organisations, it is the inclusive practices that make a real difference at the workplace. When we talk of diversity and inclusion, three areas attract attention owing to targeted policies: LGBT+ people, women employees, and persons with disabilities.

Women's equality – the essence of diversity

A Nasscom study says women constitute more than 50 percent of employees at the entry level in the IT industry which diminishes drastically owing to the need to balance work and home. For example, a Gender Balance India Survey claims that over half of women employees quit after childbirth. At a time of continuous technological and other workplace changes, it is critical to help build

a workplace connect for women during their long absence from work. And the good sign is that several companies are doing this successfully.

PayPal's ‘Recharge’ programme is a ‘back to work initiative’ for women, focusing on building skills in women technologists to pursue careers returning after long breaks. Vodafone's ‘ReConnect’ welcomes back women who have been away from work for as long as several years, and who wish to return, but face problems in making the professional connections or refreshing the required skills.

Likewise, Capgemini's *fare Welcome* initiative assists in transitioning during office to maternity leave, help stay connected with the organisation and colleagues, and ease ‘back to work’ after the gap. It provides employees an opportunity to constantly upskill their technical knowledge in this ever-changing world of technology.

PWD inclusion – it is about a mindset change

“My disability exists not because I use a wheelchair, but because the broader environment isn't accessible,” said Stella Young, an Australian

comedian, journalist and disability rights activist. And despite proven abilities, PwDs have long faced discrimination in the workplace. With over a billion people worldwide with disabilities, and 40–50 million in India, PwDs represent a large pool with employable talents and skills. But things are changing, and yet again, India Inc. has taken the lead.

For example, IBM Research-India has created “*Spoken Web*,” a voice-enabled technology to complement the Internet and help people with impairments to access information and perform business transactions. The company’s Human Ability and Accessibility Center in India initiative is to use technology to make the workplace more manageable for people with all forms of disabilities – sensory and physical.

In fact, Titan Industries pioneered the use of sign language at the workplace way back in the 1980s to accommodate people with speech and hearing disabilities. The practice has caught on well. Today, several industries such as hospitality have dedicated policies to enlist PwDs, which has greatly pushed up people’s confidence levels and the need for “positive discrimination” to reinforce equality.

“In many companies, the formation of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and same-sex partner benefits have instilled tremendous confidence and become a game-changer in the LGBT+ journey.”

Also, where physical infrastructure is an inhibitor to accommodate PwDs, many companies have embraced the concept of “universal design,” which is based on designing products and infrastructure for use

by everyone irrespective of age or ability. It is true a lot still needs to be done in the area of PwD assimilation at the workplace. But the tide is turning, especially with strict government legislations outlining the treatment and assimilation of PwDs at the workplace. I am proud that the corporate world has done a fair bit of work here.

LGBT+ rights – a question of Pride

When Godrej Culture Lab showed *Ek Madhavbaug*, a play about a mother reading her gay son’s diary, many mothers claimed it struck an emotional chord with them and made them want to embrace their own sons. Just like the play, Godrej Culture Lab – a Godrej group of companies initiative– has played a powerful role in changing mindsets about LGBT+ people. As an experimental space that picks up social currents ahead of time, the hub is worthy of emulation across.

“Godrej Culture Lab has played a powerful role in changing mindsets about LGBT+ people. As an experimental space that picks up social currents ahead of time, the hub is worthy of emulation across.”

A strong employee connect goes a long way in addressing LGBT+ discrimination. Microsoft’s GLEAM is the company’s people resource group, where members connect via events like the ‘Ignite’ talks, network with LGBT+ groups, raise funds, interact with community leaders on gender and sexuality, and host sports and cultural activities.

In many companies, the formation of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and same-sex partner benefits have instilled



tremendous confidence and become a game-changer in the LGBT+ journey. The coverage of gender reconstruction surgery under corporate medical insurance is a case in point. India Inc. has played a critical role in making LGBT+ groups a part of the mainstream workplace culture.

D&I is more than an industry punchline

From frugal medical insurance to covering gender reconstruction surgeries today, from aversion to maternity leaves to granting leaves for “First Day of Period,” and from coldshouldering PwDs to having regular audits on their progress, the journey towards an equitable workplace has been tough, but worth it. When companies create an inclusive environment, they are not merely strengthening their reputation and their brand. In a world of acute competition, that is the need of the hour. And in terms of fairness, it is simply the right thing to do! Indeed, India Inc. is leading the way. 

About the Author

Gayathri Ramamurthy is Lead, Diversity and Inclusion-India, Capgemini. In her previous role with Capgemini, she was a Global Business Partner for Strategic client accounts. She was also the lead for the Leadership COE in Talent function, where her responsibility commenced from induction, through their journey in the organisation. Gayathri commenced her career as a lecturer in a reputed college in Madras and went on to teach at management level.



BY VIKAS DUA

The Lost Art of Mentorship

An organically arising mentoring relationship delivers more bang for the buck, given that it is not something that has been mandated as a deliverable by the organisation and subsists because of a relationship.

If you ask any thoroughbred professional to list the top three critical factors in their achievements, there is a very high likelihood that they will mention a mentor among them: an experienced person who played the role of a trusted advisor as the professional navigated the route up the corporate ladder.

Even though many professionals enter the corporate workplace armed with protective armour in the form of bachelor's (and often, master's) degrees, these are not enough to fend off the vagaries that arise in the competitive landscape. What then assumes paramount importance is the comforting and guiding support of a leader who has, as they say, *"been there, done that."*

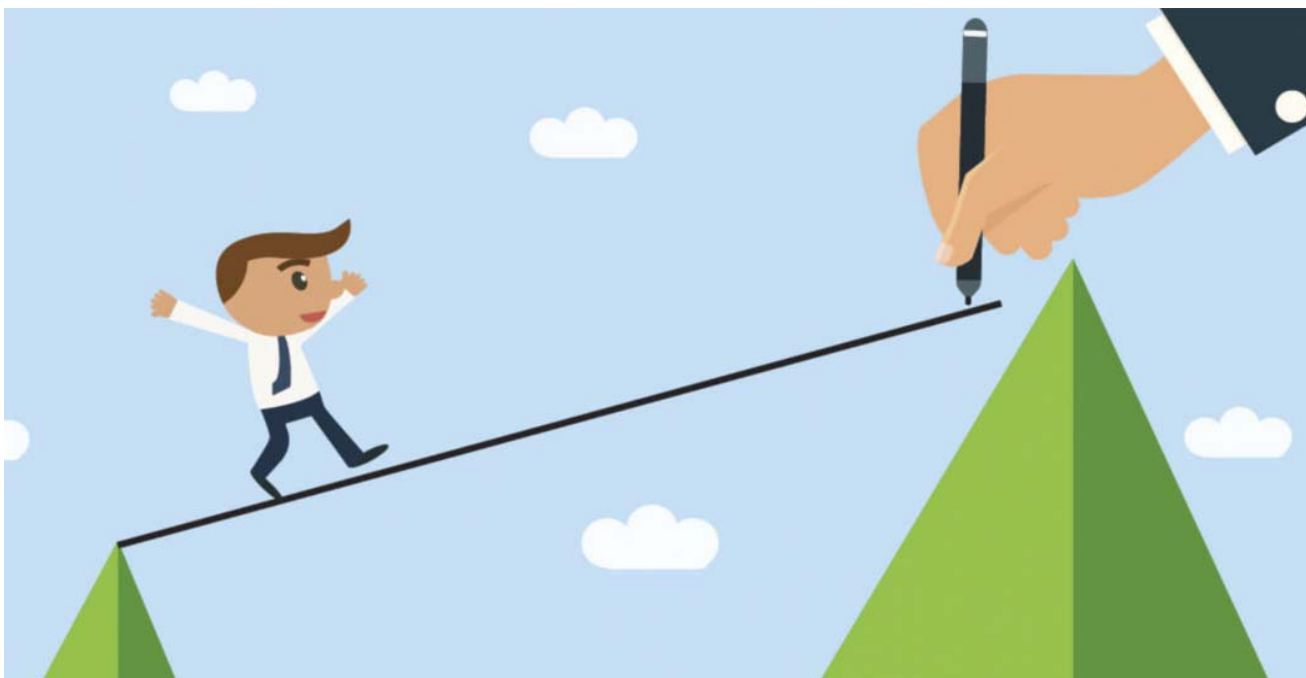
This isn't completely surprising. After all, the importance of a guide cannot be emphasised enough. This is not to say that the presence of a mentor will ensure that the sun will shine brightly, a path of roses will magically appear before the fledgling professional, and lilting music will play in the background, even as they score victory after victory.

The corporate environment is not a predictable one by any standard. Both internal and external dynamics play a defining role in the ever-changing direction that businesses need to take on a daily basis. Many leading organisations have, therefore, put in place a "Management Training Program" or an equivalent for the young professionals to get them familiar with the multiple work dimensions and set them off on

the right footing. Some of the more forward-thinking ones created a "Mentor-Mentee" program that extends beyond the initial joining phase and plays a formative role for mid-level managers, with the aspiration to strengthen their capabilities and prime them for more senior roles.

Beyond this lies the organically arising mentoring relationship, where a senior leader (usually a boss) assumes the role of a mentor for a professional because the two develop a rapport and comfort after having worked together for some reasonable amount of time. This, in my humble opinion, is the one that delivers more bang for the buck, given that it is not something that has been mandated as a deliverable by the organisation and subsists because of a relationship. There are no reports to fill, and no "activity completed" markers to update, but there is a strong will to learn and an equally powerful will to contribute to the other's development. A relatively well-established feature of corporate environments of the past, I see the role of this organic mentorship as a (sadly) dying art. The reasons I, to hazard a few guesses, would be:

1. Shorter tenures in roles where either one of the two potential partners moves out before the working relationship reaches a level worth translating into the mentoring format.
2. Fast-moving career tracks that have individuals with younger ages and experience gaps playing the manager and subordinate roles, which may not lend well to a mentoring relationship.



3. The emergence of qualified “coaches” who come with the specialised knowledge and scientific tools to add qualitatively to someone looking for professional growth.

4. In light of today’s business reality, professionals’ focus gets limited to the current month (or quarter, at best), and they lose sight of their own long-term growth requirements.

5. At a time when all professionals are at the razor’s edge, devoting mind space, energy, and time to another’s development is an agenda item that gets dropped easily.

Whatever the reasons, the fact is that organisations are at a loss due to the diminishing presence of this ad-hoc mentoring process. While management books and corporate SOPs have more than enough content, there is no greater tutor than experience. When shared by a well-intentioned guru, experience brings in the element of protection alongside the facilitation of growth. In a world that is dynamic and challenging, given the pace of changes all around us, this is something that anyone at the receiving end of mentoring will treasure above all else.

For those who are keen to be mentored, as you open yourself up for mentoring, you should, however, also

be cautious and avail of the support in a measured way. Treat it like a limited-serving appetiser and not a water fountain to be drunk out of. In other words, accept the mentoring and savour it, but combine it with your own beliefs and thoughts as you take further action.

And for those critical leaders or mentors, without whom the mentoring can never take place, treat it as your noble deed or meditation, even. It may be your best way of giving back to the very company or industry that helped in your development. The art of mentoring is disappearing. The chance to recharge it and help future leaders is in your capable hands. **HC**

About the Author

Vikas Dua is an accomplished HR and recruitment professional with over 15 years of experience in the field, having worked with both start-ups and large corporations like Wipro, Concentrix and Startek Aegis, driving hiring in the APAC region. Currently, he is Chief HR Mentor at Attayn.co—a disruptive HR Tech firm working on enhancing and democratizing knowledge sharing in the academic space. A TEDx speaker, Vikas is also an active Vlogger and Blogger, who shares insights under his self-designed ‘HR in my Heart’ brand umbrella.

99.8% of the Indian IT Sector Workforce Incapable of Remote Working

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Amid the coronavirus outbreak and ongoing countrywide lockdown when organisations are engaging employees in remote working environments, a study has revealed that 99.8% of the workforce in the IT industry is incapable of working from home.

The SCIEKEY MindMatch Report indicated that only 0.2% of employees are Work from Home Champions and showcase highly productivity attributes. Furthermore, it was found that 99.8% of the workforce lack at least one of these qualities, including resistance to learning and exploring (95%), lack in practical communication skills (65%), and lack in planning and execution (71%).

The report suggested that to drive successful business outcomes, companies need to encourage high productivity for their remote working employees. Employees need to possess crucial traits for a productive work-from-home regime.

The study claimed, 16.97% of the employees are challenge-driven. Such employees should be given challenging tasks as they can work seamlessly with minimum intervention. It was also identified that 17% of employees are instruction-driven and need a clear cut direction to deliver a task. While engaging with such employees, especially under the remote working scenario, one should pay close attention to the details of the tasks assigned to them.

The report is based on insights from 10,559 respondents, mainly including IT professionals from different domains such as Software Developers, IT Infrastructure, Technology Support, Project Managers, Architects, Support Engineers, Business Development, Digital Marketing, UI/UX Engineers, etc. between the age group of 22 to 47 from states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana and West Bengal. 

The Effect of COVID-19 to Be Felt Beyond Six Months

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Awhopping 72% of the organisations in India opined that the impact of COVID-19 would be felt beyond six months, according to a recent survey by EY.

The survey titled 'HR resilience planning - COVID-19 impact and preparedness' incorporates the first-hand perspective of HR Heads/CHROs of over 100 organisations across sectors in India on the impact of COVID-19 and their preparedness to tackle the current situation.

Around 70% of the surveyed organisations believe that the single biggest concern for continued remote working is a fall in productivity. Additionally, more than 70% of the organisations are now moving to virtual methods of recruitment, and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Robotic Process Automation and Machine Learning are leading this change.

As the current pandemic has changed the way of working, there will be a cascading impact on the different HR processes as well. Most organisations claimed that in the near-term, one of the most impacted processes would be talent acquisition.

From a medium-term perspective, organisations need to focus on business continuity (i.e. reviewing hiring pipeline, prioritising critical positions, and high-cost replacements to be reconsidered) and smarter ways of delivering work (i.e. leveraging gig economy for workforce rationalisation and agility, talent redeployment, and job rotations). However, from a long-term perspective, role profiling & workforce alignment and technology adoption will be two key aspects for organisations to consider.

As per the findings, less than 50% of organisations are prepared to manage this unprecedented crisis, less than 35% are prepared if the crisis escalates, and less than 10% have undertaken contingency and scenario planning.

The survey observed that 55% of the surveyed organisations foresee a medium-to-significant impact on employee cost, while others are still unclear. Many organisations have adopted an employee-centric view and are trying to protect the junior management. A few are also offering additional pay-outs, hazard pay to support their workforce through these tough times.

Only 22% of organisations are thinking about manpower optimisation in the short-term (maintaining an employee-centric view), while 35% of organisations want to look at optimisation in the future basis business impact and in line with the newer ways of working. 

Appointments



DXC Technology Appoints Lokendra Sethi As HR Head For India

DXC Technology has named Lokendra Sethi as Vice President HR for India. Sethi has two decades of experience working with some of the best-in-class IT and consulting organizations.

He comes to DXC from AECOM where he served as global HR talent services organization and supported the establishment of its Global Delivery Services network. Previously, he was at Accenture as managing director of HR service delivery for India. Sethi is an XLRI and IIT BHU alumnus.



Levi Strauss & Co Names Tracy Layney As CHRO

Levi Strauss has appointed Tracy Layney as Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer of the company. She has more than 20 years of experience in human resources and organization strategy. Most recently, she served as Senior Vice President and CHRO at Shutterfly, Inc.

Layney has also held numerous senior leadership roles at LS&Co, Gap Inc., including Senior Vice President, HR for Old Navy and VP, Gap Inc. Global HR Strategy, Technology, and Operations. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Pennsylvania.



Magic Bus India Foundation Gets New CHRO

Magic Bus India Foundation has roped in Chandrasekhar Mukherjee as its CHRO. Previously, Mukherjee was heading the people function at South Indian Bank. Before this, he served as the group chief people officer at Srei Infrastructure Finance.

With an experience of over two decades, Mukherjee has worked with organisations, such as National Stock Exchange (NSE), Colgate and Bennett Coleman & Co. (Times Group). He holds a master's degree in HR.



Saba Adil Joins Raheja QBE General Insurance As CPO

Saba Adil has joined Raheja QBE General Insurance, as its Chief People Officer (CPO). Most recently, Adil was CPO at Avanse Financial Services, where she was responsible for HR, CSR and administration.

Adil has rich experience of more than 19 years in diverse roles including human resources, project management, customer insights and operations. Before Avanse, she led the charge at Aegon Life Insurance as Chief Operating Officer(COO), and CPO, and drove the strategic goals and operating plans for the organisation.

She holds a bachelor's degree in science and has pursued masters in HRM from Aligarh Muslim University.



Icertis Appoints Pranali Save As CHRO

Icertis has named Pranali Save as its Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO). Before this, She was the HR Head for India and Global HR Partner for the Tieto Centres of Excellence across 5 European countries.

In her earlier stints, she served various leadership roles in US, Europe, and India, giving her diverse global experience across different industries, cultures and geographies.



Top Focus Areas for CHROs in 2020 and beyond

The new decade will continue to pose unique challenges—and opportunities—for HR professionals to reimagine the future of work.

BY VIEKAS KHOKHA

Over the last decade, HR has undergone an enormous transformation in its role and impact in driving organizations globally. Today, HR is seen as one of the most dynamic functions for shaping and leading the rapidly shifting realities of work, workforce, and workplace. And the new decade will continue to pose unique challenges—and opportunities—for HR to reimagine the future of work. Based on my own experience and industry interaction, I am scanning through some of the key

aspects that HR leaders must focus on in the 2020s decade.

Broadly, there are three areas where HR leaders need to focus their attention:

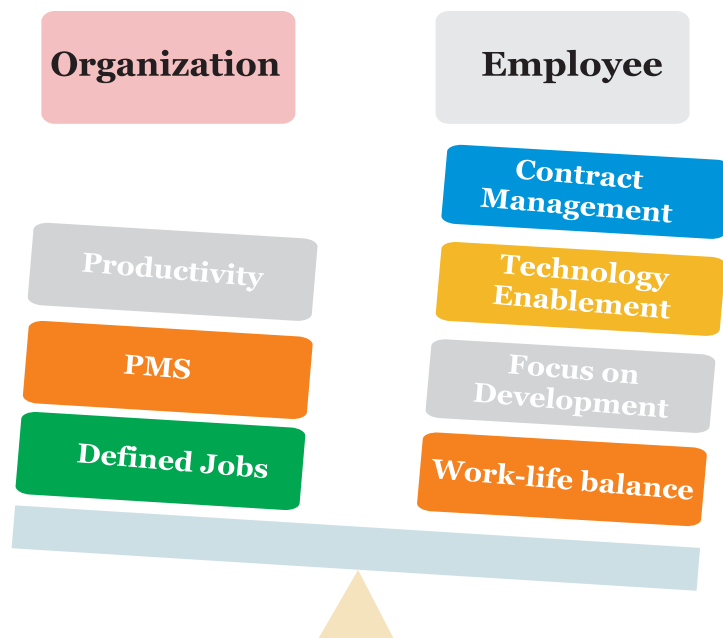
1. Managing shifts in employees' needs vis-à-vis organizational requirements;
2. Aligning to the changing trends in work culture by acting as change agents; and
3. Building required leadership competencies to succeed and thrive in this decade.

• Work/life balance

With the increasing trend of work flexibility in terms of location and time, frequent power-breaks from work, the need to use technology for engaging the workforce is bound to lead to complex requirements. There will be extended focus towards employees' work-life balance, and the challenge facing CHROs is to define workplace norms in synchronization with the rapidly changing employee needs, while also focusing on employee productivity. Rudimentary procedures need to be shunned in shaping the work environment to support the new organizational requirements. All processes, policies, and practices need to be co-owned by line managers and HR managers to foster flexibility at the workplace.

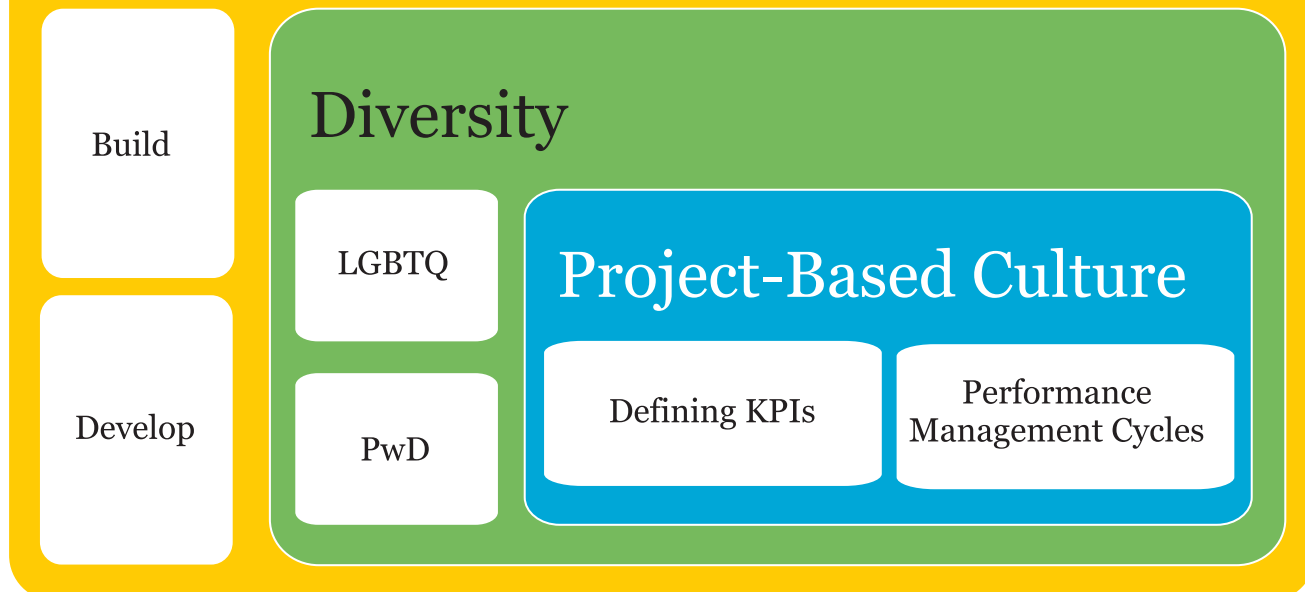
• The impact of employee development plans

Employee development is essential in order to maintain and develop the capabilities of both employees and the organization as a whole. In this decade, the key focus will not only be on customizing programs as per the needs of employees, but also on extracting the ROI from the developmental plans that have been put in place. Focus also needs to shift from deploying effective tools for future needs' assessment to efficiently conducting impact measurements with accuracy. The



Managing shifts in employee needs

Compliance Capability



A few critical aspects of the work culture dynamics

budget of the organization is no longer cast in stone and will move more fluidly in tandem with the changing business needs.

- **Project-based work assignments**

There has been an exceptional increase in team-based, output-driven KPIs, which are largely dependent on collaboration rather than on individual accountability. Such project-based assignments will increasingly become prevalent as organizations become more interconnected. CHROs will need to redefine performance management processes and cycles to suit the dynamically evolving workforce and workplace.

- **Contract management**

As the modern-day workplace comprises of part-time, project-based, third party and consultancy-based jobs, CHROs are challenged to manage such work arrangements

seamlessly through effective contract management. The ability to manage multiple contracts in terms of designing, monitoring, and managing would be a critical concern area for HR leaders in the coming times.

- **Building a culture of compliance**

As we become sensitive to “doing the right thing” at the workplace, it is a major challenge for HR leaders to act as effective gatekeepers to reinforce correct habits, behaviours, and actions. Amid talent scarcity, organizations cannot afford to lose talent for compliance reasons. Leaders need to move beyond the rule book and instill correct values and a strong work ethic by facilitating effective coaching and communication.

- **Technology Enablers**

As change agents, HR and business leaders have, over the past decade,

got to grips with technology improvements while focusing primarily on overcoming change barriers, managing adoption costs, and sourcing skilled talent to navigate the technological advancements. However, in order to make technology enablers such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, machine learning, robotic process automation more efficient in driving business innovation, the emphasis needs to be shifted to the measurement of cost efficiency, human precision errors, algorithmic bias, and deriving productivity as a true measure of success.

- **Situational Leadership**

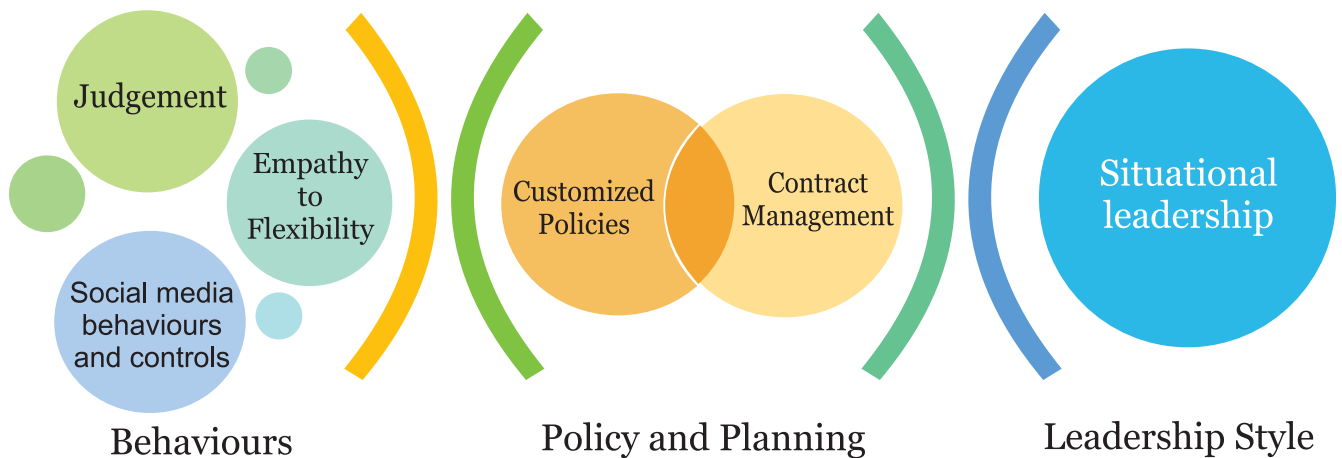
There is a consistent dialogue amongst the C-suite to revamp and modify their leadership style for the future. Traditionally, the approach to leadership has been largely based on what has worked well in the past. Today, there is an

imminent need for leaders to continuously—and quickly—adapt their style and behaviour to future needs, threats, opportunities, and possibilities. Building situational leadership competencies is, therefore, a challenge for new-age leaders as they not only need to handle immediate crises situations, but also have to achieve business success in fast-changing, complex, and unpenetrated market segments.

• **Employer branding through social media**

Employer branding is no longer limited to attracting talent, but it impacts every facet of the business—from talent acquisition and retention to productivity and profitability. Branding initiatives would need to be facilitated through more valuable sources such as corporate ambassadors (e.g., ex-employees), word of

highly adaptive to the unique needs of employees. Giving employees the freedom to choose their own benefits helps both employees and employers alike. The challenge, however, is to continuously monitor, analyze, and adjust the benefits offerings to meet the changing needs of employees and strengthen their holistic well-being. Moreover, in the near-term future, the



Leadership focus areas in terms of behaviours, style, policy and planning

• **Diversity & Inclusion**

Diversity & inclusion would remain one of the key focus areas for organizations to meet the diverse demands of a rapidly changing business environment in the 2020s decade. *It is common sense—if not common practice*—that the future of work hinges on inclusiveness and belonging. While many progressive organizations are already building diverse teams, including LGBTQ, PwD, among others—inclusion remains a challenge. Policy-making and mere hiring of people from diverse pools does not translate into the creation of inclusive cultures where everyone feels respected and empowered.

mouth, exchange of dialogues over social media on policies and practices, comments from prospective employees, and employee stories and experiences shared across social channels. Social media would continue to have a strong impact on the stock value of the organization and thus pose challenges and exert pressure on leadership.

• **A holistic approach to employee benefits**

Benefits and policy harmonization are emerging as critical needs of the hour for a CHRO. Organizations are increasingly designing and offering employee-centric benefits that are holistic, customized, and

associated independent consultants, such as gig workers, would also be largely dependent on welfare benefits than merely the defined contract terms. 

About the Author

Viekas Khokha has more than two decades of multi-industry experience in handling the entire gamut of HR functions, including strategic transformation projects. He has worked in senior leadership roles at Zimmer Biomet and Bharti Airtel. He can be reached on LinkedIn at-Viekas K Khokha.

Towards An Employee's Heartfulness

It is a continual challenge to synergise new talent with the existing employees, synchronise them to the common wavelength of the company's cultural values, ethics, and performance-driven competencies.

BY **ABHIROOP BANERJEE**



A Talent Acquisition Specialist strives to hire the best talent for a given role to deliver the desired performance in the long run. Interviewing processes have hence evolved by incorporating various psychometric assessments, coupled with credential verification agencies to map the certainty of alignment with the company culture, values and competencies. But to synergise new talent with the existing employees, synchronise them to the common wavelength of the company's cultural values, ethics, and performance driven competencies is a continual challenge.

To assess the levels of employee motivation, many organisations carry out engagement surveys to quantify the satisfaction index along with predevised action plans to address critical issues that may affect individual and team performance. This could then lead to potential attrition of talent, which is otherwise well invested upon by the company.

Performing surveys to satisfy the requirements of the external customers/auditors is done so for compliance alone. However, this tool is effective as long as we comply with the action plans derived from surveys. If appropriate measures are not taken as per the timelines, the sanctity of conducting satisfaction/engagement surveys is impacted.

The trend in the corporate world is to hold departmental Town Hall

meetings with the Management Team in planned intervals and record the SWOT issues. Open to & fro communications for deriving feasible solutions using the Six-Thinking Hat Principles become essential, followed by a get-together to exponentially magnify the departmental team cohesion.

There is a need to aim for higher dimensions of employee satisfaction consciousness by incorporating employee-centric interventions. This leads to enhancement of the Competency quotient, Leadership quotient, and Emotional quotient of each individual in respective roles to enrich the team. Overall, the organisation blossoms with the fragrance of creativity, innovation, mutual trust, appreciation and empathy to enlighten each individual towards an ecstatic heartfulness experience.

Heartfulness quotient/Happiness factor of each employee can be felt with the physical, emotional and behavioural attributes, which is an integral factor for leveraging the performance level of the individual.

Treating employees as nurturing plants or trees, which in due course play the role of a saviour of the mankind/organisation, needs continuous monitoring. Caring to withstand the dynamic environments of the nature/corporate world is an imperative.

Heartfulness quotient can be experienced from the feedback by the employees' family members during family day functions or

Employee Family meet or informal vacations with employees' families. In a truer sense, the employee satisfaction survey must contain a few closed-ended questions strategically designed for the family members so that they can share the happiness factor of the employee when he goes home from the workplace.

Mindset orientation of employees towards mutual development, growth, appreciation and care leads to achieving the individual/team goals without uncertainties of failure. It rather boosts the team morale to achieve impossible targets by the enormous power of positive mind that can be materialised in reality by setting the orientation towards a big mutual goal of achieving business results in a heartfulness way together. 

About the Author

Abhiroop Banerjee is Training Specialist, Plasser India Pvt Ltd. He wields an experience of more than 15 years in the Manufacturing and Corporate arenas. He is an NLP practitioner and hones a certification as an Internal Auditor for Integrated Management Systems and a certificate for Solution Focus Implementation strategy from Oxford University. Abhiroop has an MBA in Human Resources and a Diploma from ISTD (New Delhi).

A Fulfilling Journey of Growth

Shwetanshu Patel, Director of Aims Industries Private Limited, reflects on his journey, describes the legacy and future plans of the company, and shares how Gujarat Employers' Organisation is committed to living its mission of growth through cooperation.

BY KRITIKA SINGH

Q You have more than 17 years of rich experience in the Gas business. Take us through your journey and approach towards work.

A The journey so far has been quite enriching, considering the fact that the learning process never stops. The opportunity to meet and work with different individuals provides you with insights into different thought processes. This, in turn, helps you to understand how people think. Understanding and managing people is the only way to be successful in business, and this is an ability which I consider to be most important for my approach towards work.

Q Aims Industries Private Limited is a 58-year-old company involved in manufacturing and trading of industrial and medical gases in the state of Gujarat. What are the values and skills that you consider in the hiring process?

A The legacy of Aims has been built upon a strong foundation of values and principles. Hard work and perseverance are something that are highly valued at our organisation. We are a value-based

organisation that believes in progress through co-operation and rightfulness. We give importance to values over skills while hiring people as we want them to share the same values and principles which have been the foundation of our organisation since the last 58 years.

Q Aims, currently, is the largest gas bottler in the state of Gujarat. What are your plans for 2020 in terms of new projects, expansion, and services?

A We have grown slowly but steadily over the last few years, and this year is no different. We have diversified in bulk hydrogen supplies over the last four years, and we plan to grow that business stronger this year. There is also a plan to install a bigger capacity liquid plant at our Daman location in the next financial year.

Q You are also associated with GEO (Gujarat Employers' Organization). Could you brief about its mission "Growth through Co-operation"?

A I have been associated with GEO for the past 11 years. I have seen the organisation grow over the years while keeping the interest of all its stakeholders intact – Employers, Employees, and Government. We have continuously strived to improve members' services by having programs and training as per their needs, interacting with government bodies for clarification and ease of business, and organising industrial visits.

Seminars and conventions are planned on a bigger scale for exposure and keeping the members updated with the latest trends in the field of IR and HR. We have been a catalyst between the government and industry for notifications and clarifications of labour laws, PF, ESIC. GEO is on the verge of completing four decades of its existence, and it strives to grow, but by taking everyone along and thereby being true to its mission of "Growth through Co-operation". **HC**

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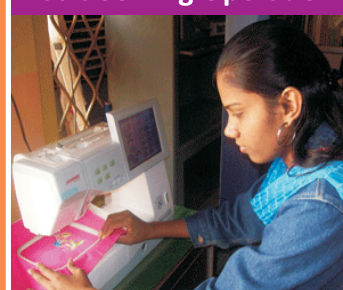
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