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Intrapreneurship
Vikas Dua

The Latent Energy For
Building Businesses
Pooja Bhasin

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**EdCast Learning Health
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From The Publisher's Desk



The tale goes that Aladdin, trapped inside a dark cave, chances upon an old and rusty lamp, and manages to release the Genie held captive within the lamp. And it was this moment that restored order in an otherwise chaotic world and brought forth peace and prosperity. An analogy can be drawn from Aladdin's tale to Intrapreneurship in today's world, with Aladdin as the intrapreneurial employee, COVID-19 as the dark cave, and the Magic Lamp, the organisational tools. The Genie is the surreal spirit present within the employee and can be brought to life through the right use of the tools. In essence, it is the employer's imperative to provide the right tools and the freedom for the employee to experiment and inculcate the spirit of

Intrapreneurship within an organisation. And Intrapreneurship is destined to make a lasting difference in the days to come. As has been pointed by Vikas Dua, an 'entrepreneurial mindset' is required within corporate confines to break the shackles and open forth newer doors for exploration during times of heightened competition. According to Pooja Bhasin, an intrapreneurial culture can only be achieved through innovative solutions and not by replicating entrepreneurs.

In conversation with Human Capital, Shailesh Singh, Director and Chief People Officer, Max Life Insurance, highlighted the increasing prevalence of Digital Leadership and its relevance in the BFSI sector. In a tête-à-tête with Human Capital, R. Mahalakshmi, Director - Human Resources, Mondelez India, dives deep into how the snacking giant embodies the ethos and agility of a start-up and unpacks their top strategies behind winning the hearts and minds of employees. Swarna Sudha Selvaraj writes that the lockdown has not only blurred the lines between work and family but also between time zones, geographies, functions, and roles. Navneet Trikha writes that during such unpredictable times, the change-agile alone can get going. Dr Saundarya Rajesh writes that now is the time for organisations to drive home the Inclusion and Belongingness agenda.

Carpe Diem!

Neha Jain

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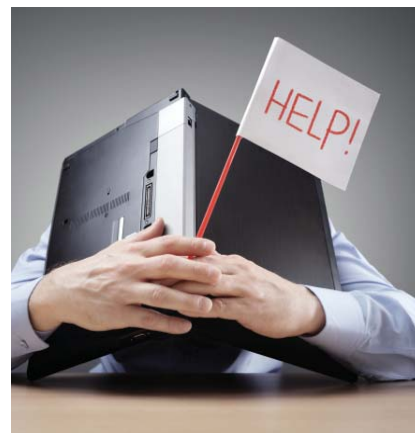
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This issue of **HUMAN CAPITAL** contains 49 pages including cover

87% Business Leaders Prefer Reskilling Over Hiring

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Business leaders prefer to reskill their existing workforce over new hiring, according to Edtech firm upGrad and industry body FICCI report.

The report titled "High-Impact Online Learning at Scale" reveals that 87% of L&D and business leaders upGrad interviewed during the COVID-19 crisis said that they are looking to reskill over hiring. It was also observed that reskilling existing employees is always more economical than hiring new ones. Additionally, 75% of the respondents claimed that they considered reskilling successful in their respective organisations.

Post COVID-19 outbreak, the numbers show that the budgets for online learning for many of the respondents have increased to more than 80% of the total L&D budgets. Online learning comes with a set of challenges that include low completion rates and indifferent learner engagement.

The rapid adoption of new and emerging technologies is imperative for business success in the contemporary world. Across verticals, enterprises witness barriers to this adoption due to a skills gap in their workforces. Such barriers can be crippling, hampering business growth in present-day hyper-dynamic marketplaces. **HC**

93% of Employees Stressed About Returning to Office Post-Lockdown

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

As the coronavirus has irrevocably changed the world of work, around 93% of India Inc. employees are anxious to return to office post-lockdown, according to a recent survey.

The pandemic has left all of India Inc.'s professionals anxious on several accounts. While a majority, 59% are concerned about their health, about 25% said they are anxious about their financial situation, while 16% fear that the crisis will be a prolonged one and this uncertainty lends to high anxiety.

FYI, a health-tech community product, undertook a first of its kind survey conducted by MindMap Advance Research to assess the anxiety level of employees and record a strong desire to do what's right by their co-workers by complying to new health monitoring compliances, along with a high degree of awareness of changes in routine that await them.

The survey suggested that employees expect their employers to take responsibility to ensure a healthy and safe environment for them. **HC**

COVID-19 Impact: Work-From-Home Job Offers for Women Rise

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Amid the COVID-19 enforced countrywide lockdown, more and more companies are offering work-from-home jobs for women, revealed a report. According to JobsForHer report, work-from-home jobs posted on its platform witnessed a 30% rise in March 2020 as compared to the same month last year. Particularly, metro cities including Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Pune saw the rise.

With work-from-home becoming the norm for a majority of the workforce, several companies are

posting remote working jobs, and offering opportunities for women who are looking to begin their career or make a comeback, the report said.

Job roles such as journalist, editor, content writing, telecalling, customer services, QA testing were the ones that women professionals majorly applied for. The report also found that education, IT, recruitment, Internet or e-commerce and advertising and PR are some of the most popular industries for women while searching for jobs. **HC**

Twitter to Allow Employees Work From Home 'Forever'

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Twitter will allow some of its employees to continue working remotely forever if they choose to, even after the end of the coronavirus enforced lockdown.

The social media giant said it was among the first to move to telework amid the COVID-19 pandemic in early March and that it will continue this policy indefinitely as part of a move towards a distributed workforce.

"We were uniquely positioned to respond quickly and allow folks to work from home, given our emphasis on decentralization and supporting a distributed workforce capable of working from anywhere. The past few months have proven we can make that work", Twitter wrote in a blog.

"So if our employees are in a role and situation that enables them to work from home and they want to continue to do so forever, we will make that happen. If not, our offices will be their warm and welcoming selves, with some additional precautions, when we feel it's safe to return".

The San Francisco-based company stated it is unlikely to open its offices before September and any reopening of its offices will be "careful, intentional, office by office and gradual" when conditions permit. As per the blog, there will also be no business travel before September, with very few exceptions, and no in-person company events for the rest of 2020. 



Companies Onboard Interns Virtually During the Lockdown

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

With the coronavirus pandemic prompting millions to work remotely, virtual onboarding has become the new normal in the corporate world. Companies are adopting digital platforms for their internship programs. From induction to mentorship to final reviews, several companies like Airtel, JP Morgan, Samsung and Reliance are onboarding interns virtually.

Airtel has inducted 50 interns from India's Top B-Schools like IIM Ahmedabad, IIM Bangalore, IIM Calcutta, IIM Lucknow, FMS Delhi, MDI Gurgaon, IIFT Delhi, NITIE Mumbai, JBIMS Mumbai & XLRI Jamshedpur and redesigned its "Young Leaders Summer Internship Program 2020". The company has also assigned 'virtual buddies' (company employees) to each intern. These virtual buddies will help them navigate through Airtel's ecosystem and virtually handhold them in their internship journey.

"Innovation is at the core of Airtel's DNA, and we are enablers of digital

lifestyles of our customers. In these unprecedented times, we have transformed every process to make it virtual and made sure nothing within the company has to stop or be postponed. We believe this unique experience will add immense value to the learning of these leaders of tomorrow", said Samit Deb, CHRO, Airtel.

JP Morgan began its summer internship programme with nearly 150 interns.

36 GenZ students from B-Schools have joined Samsung India workforce online during the lockdown. "I would call this batch of interns one of the luckiest because the first lesson that they have been taught is that with technology and innovation, everything is possible. They have joined Samsung in our endeavour to make remote working and social distancing a success," said Sameer Wadhawan, Head of Human Resources at Samsung India.

Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) onboarded 84 summer interns through the 'Virtual Reliance Summer Program'. 



Reinforcing Performance Incentive Practices

'Reinforcement Theory', one among the well known process theories on motivation, identifies positive reinforcements as promoters to enhance the possibility of repetition of desired behaviours.

BY ROHIT HASTEER



A meta-analytic review of Research Studies reveals that the total average effect of all incentive programmes in every work setting and on all work tasks leads to an impressive 22% gain in performance. Given this data point, and motivation theories studied by us in management schools, the adage that motivated people are productive people is a no brainer. Many of us would agree that regardless of the company size, sector or geography, motivated and productive employees enhance organisation performance, and at the same time, aid in building an engaged workforce. 'Reinforcement Theory', one of the wellknown process theories on motivation, identifies positive reinforcements as promoters to increase the possibility of repetition of desired behaviours.

Evolved Performance incentive plans

'Performance-based incentive' programmes stem from the very

belief that individuals will expend efforts to achieve performance objectives which they suppose will lead to valued outcomes. Performance incentive plans of an organisation must evolve continuously to suit organisational needs and the changing trends of talent engagement. One cannot expect the same outcome from a historically run incentive programme unless it is adapted to the changing business dynamics, ongoing employee sentiment and economic scenario. Organisations using performance-based incentives enhance their schemes effectively to elicit the desired behaviour from their people. It is also a good way to drive a performance-driven culture while emphasising on the values the organisation stands for.

Performance incentive plans typically vary along three dimensions, i.e., Individual based, Gainsharing based or Organisation-based.

- Individual based incentive plans are independent of the external

factors and are strictly determined by how an individual performs.

- Gainsharing and organisation-based incentive plans are not a direct function of individual behaviour alone and are influenced by the behaviour of others as also the external market conditions.

According to a study published in the Human Resource Management Journal, performance-related pay was positively associated with job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and trust in management. Profit-related pay did not have similar positive effects; in fact, some levels of profit-related pay resulted in employees being less committed and having lesser trust in management.

Framing performance-based incentives

So, what should organisations focus on while framing performance-based incentive plans?

1. Is your incentive plan lucrative? Too small a reward for large gains that the organisation may achieve by modelling employee behaviour through incentive schemes may not look as exciting for employees, and they may not adopt it fully or get driven towards their competition. On the other hand, too large a reward may not make for a viable business proposition. Your incentive scheme must be just right to keep your employees hooked and fetch you the desired results at all times.

2. Is your performance incentive plan linked to retention? Having an element of deferred pay-out and linking it to employee retention is a good idea to keep the employees tied to the organisation. A high performing employee will keep on building a fortune in this deferred pay-out format and will always double click his options while contemplating quitting. Here, there is also an advantage to the organisation. It does not have to dole out all the money in one go and can judiciously

make cash investments, where required.

3. Is your performance incentive plan triggering the right behaviours? Often, we have heard about performance incentive plans going wrong, where it becomes all about money-making. A classic case of the performance-based incentives plan going horribly wrong is that of Wells Fargo. In the year 2016, Wells Fargo found itself in the middle of a fake accounts fiasco where it was found that its employees were opening bank accounts for customers without the management's permission. The bank had to eventually overhaul its incentive plan where employees were no longer incentivised for opening bank accounts alone but also for other factors like customer satisfaction and usage. Organisations must carefully draft their performance incentive plans to draw people towards the behaviours that they truly value. It could be a combination of input, output and ethics. If customer satisfaction is a key element of an organisation's mission statement, then it may consider rewarding a higher Net Promoter Score along with revenue generation. Employees need to be rewarded and penalised, for imbibing or keeping the company values at bay. Letting employees know vividly that they matter is important.

4. Does your performance incentive plan foster cohesion? If the business is such that it warrants interdependencies on various teams, and collaboration amongst various groups of people is highly valued, having a performance incentive plan based on achievement of team goals can be more effective. However, it is crucial to have well-defined responsibility charts and robust systems in place that can track the performance of every individual in the given ecosystem. Otherwise, it is easier for laggards to ride along with the performers and allow inefficiencies to creep in.

5. Is your performance incentive plan linked to milestones? Linking incentives to milestone achievements help an organisation drive people towards short-term and long-term goals. In a VUCA world, where change is the only constant, annual goals may not always be viable, rather monthly and quarterly goals look more aligned to evolving market conditions. Incentivising people for achieving certain milestones and offering a kicker on the usual incentive scheme works wonders when you want all hands on deck.

6. Is your performance incentive scheme custom-made? Different people have different needs, and similarly, different roles demand distinct motivators. Drivers for your Acquisition team will have to be different from those of the Upsell team, and never should their goals be overlapping, as you may end up paying two people for the same work. Similarly, an incentive scheme that works for Millennials may not work for Gen Z, because intrinsic motivators of both cohorts will be very different, and thus 'one size fits all' approach may not be best suited here.

While above are only a few thoughts, Compensation & Benefits specialists must pay heed whilst designing performance-based incentive plans, what they must also take cognisance of below aspects to ensure the success of their programmes.

1. Well-defined measurable goals - To avoid any ambiguity around expectations from an individual

2. Publish performance data - To bring in complete transparency, allowing individuals to keep an eye on the goal

3. Build effective & real-time feedback mechanism - To help people coursecorrect when the time is right

In order to design a performance-based incentive plan, organisations need to understand what type of



compensation does their employees value? While it is natural to assume that every employee wants more money, monetary incentives may not be the only thing that is valued by employees. Organisations should look at adding other perks as well to their reward offerings like advanced learning programmes, stock options, retirement plans, medical plans etc.

The 'Total Rewards' concept which encompasses not just compensation and benefits, but also personal and professional growth opportunities and employee wellbeing has to be a key part of strategy to engage, motivate and retain talent. Organisations should proceed with caution and factor both the expected and unexpected consequences which come with these compensation plans. Performance based incentive plans, if appropriately designed and implemented within an organisation can greatly benefit both the employer and the employee. 

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.

INTRAPRENEURSHIP



Building A Culture Of Intrapreneurship

An 'entrepreneurial mindset' is required within corporate confines to break the shackles and open forth newer doors for exploration in these times of heightened competition. And this is where 'intrapreneurs' come in.

BY VIKAS DUA

Intrapreneurship is one of those words that does not feature in the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Not unlike its real-world existence where it seems to exist sporadically; in sparks and bursts. But the term Intrapreneurship is regularly heard in corporate boardrooms, management meets and executive training sessions. Interestingly, the word 'intrapreneur' has been defined in the aforementioned dictionary as *'an employee of a large corporation who is given freedom and financial support to create new products, services, systems, etc., and does not have to follow the corporation's usual routines or protocols.'*

Defining Intrapreneurship

So, what is 'Intrapreneurship'? By logical reasoning, it would be safe to define 'Intrapreneurship' as the pursuit of opportunity towards playing the role of an intrapreneur.

Now, the world is very familiar with 'entrepreneurs', ranging from the enterprising individuals who run the neighbourhood 'mom-and-pop' store to the risk-taking 'fresh-from-B-school' MBAs, who kickstart their venture literally from their dorm rooms. These individuals risk resources, be it money or time, and possibly, even their reputation to create something of value.

Most organisations (and teams within them) invariably fall into the 'success trap' - where they continue doing what has worked well in the past and fall short of evolving, which in itself is critical for long term sustainability. To prevent such a thing from happening, an 'entrepreneurial mindset' is required within these corporate confines to break the shackles and open forth newer doors for exploration in these times of heightened competition.

And this is where 'intrapreneurs' come in.

Kaihan Krippendorff, the Founder of Outthinker, a growth strategy and innovation consulting firm, and the author of *'Driving Innovation from Within'*, has termed these individuals as 'Internal entrepreneurs.' Basis his extensive research in the area of innovation, he presents a very convincing argument that these intrapreneurs have brought in greater innovation and created more value in the world of commerce than the usually hailed entrepreneurs. He argues, *'to tell the true story of innovation, we would have to say that employees conceive of innovations, communities composed of corporations and institutions build them, and then the competition takes over to scale them.'*

Making of an Intrapreneur

But 'intrapreneurs' are a rare breed and hence difficult to spot. More difficult, however, is grooming them and enabling them to flower. Because, when intrapreneurship does exist, it is no orphan. There is almost always a godfather (or godmother, if you will) who champions the cause and encourages its germination.

“When intrapreneurship does exist, it is no orphan. There is almost always a godfather (or godmother, if you will) who champions the cause and encourages its germination.”

The challenge before Founders, especially in large organisations, is creating a culture where



intrapreneurs flourish even as the corporate ship steers steadily towards the chosen destination for the achievement of unified goals. This is easier said than done. But, without letting the task seem too daunting, do remember that iconic institutions like 3M and IBM in the past, and Google and CISCO, in more recent times, have actually managed to do so. The beauty also lies in the fact that they have done so consistently, and it has been rightly said that the intrapreneurial approach has ingrained into the very DNA of the professionals working in these organisations.

It is worth understanding how these organisations lead this thought. The approaches are diverse. For one, Google's path-breaking approach of encouraging its employees to use up to 20% of their time towards passion projects is of course well known. This is the same approach that has spawned many globally successful products ranging from Gmail to Google Maps. In fact, without the latter, local transport could never be as seamless as it has become today. This innovation has in turn germinated entire business models around logistics, food delivery, bike sharing and a lot more, clearly showcasing how Intrapreneurship has an exponential impact on the larger world of business, similar to what has been observed in classic entrepreneurship.

**JOY GEORGE**

Sr. Director and Head HR, CDK Global

“Intrapreneurship has a lot of parallels with selfies, and like selfie lovers, intrapreneurs are high on intrinsic motivation solely because of the outcome they want to create and the satisfaction they draw out of it. Their power of imagination, level of self drive is something that every organisation would like to cash on. Just as the act of taking a selfie is a moment of self-empowerment, intrapreneurial initiatives create a feeling of self actualisation. However, intrapreneurs can survive only in a workplace that has inclusive practices and actively encourages diversity in thinking. They thrive when there is appreciation, reassurance, and reward for daring to be different. Leaders need to have the persistence to steer the intrapreneurs forward, and challenging the status quo has to be interwoven in the culture of the organisation and selfie - do it yourself, make it real and do it now - has to be promoted as a value to derive real outcomes.”

The path followed by CISCO in this direction is markedly different. Since 2016, CISCO has rolled out the Innovation Challenge that encourages every team in the organisation to develop new concepts and products. Besides cash rewards, other benefits such as paid leaves are also on offer for winners for what has become an ongoing programme attracting very high participation. One of their most successful product innovations involving virtual video conferencing was borne out of this programme. So, while the approach may differ, it is apparent that for intrapreneurship to flourish, there must be a

concerted and focused effort, to encourage the intrapreneurial traits of an employee to be given wings.

“It is apparent that for Intrapreneurship to flourish, there must be a concerted and focused effort, to encourage the intrapreneurial traits of an employee to be given wings.”

Intrapreneurial Traits

But, what exactly are these Intrapreneurial Traits?

The League of Intrapreneurs, a global learning community of intrapreneurs and catalysts focused on driving change from within identifies the following qualities of intrapreneurs:

- **Strong capability in spotting patterns:** These individuals are able to connect diverse areas by identifying underlying patterns and ideate solutions that fit.
- **Entrepreneurial:** They have the risk-taking, innovative approach as most entrepreneurs do. They are anti-bureaucracy and aggressive and are able to push their way through.
- **Connecting to Organisational Priorities:** Given that they operate within corporate boundaries, they understand the internal power structures and navigate the same smartly in order to get things moving.
- **Shaping Markets:** Very critically, they have a knack for creating new markets by combining different resources - people, processes, etc.
- **Resourceful:** By design, entrepreneurs push ideas or products that are not in direct sync with the organisation's current core offerings, and hence, they need to

be resourceful to persist in spite of tight budgets and resistance.

It is no surprise then that the league also identifies its assimilated members as being misfits, disruptors, tempered radicals and dreamers who do!

Basis their mathematical models, the league assists organisations in determining the League Intrapreneurship Quotient™ (IQ) of specific teams. The calculation is based on the analysis of four aspects viz. Work Environment, Leadership Competencies, Self Perception and Attributes & Influences. This League IQ™ score enables organisations to take stock

**PRAVEEN CHANDOLA**

HR Business Partner, APAC Region & Head HR, Sennheiser India

“Companies that encourage and reward Intrapreneurships have a great advantage when it comes to retaining the best talents. To create a culture of innovation and learning within an organisation, it is important to recognise employees who possess an entrepreneurial spirit, and help them shape it up. Having a culture of escalating their ideas up the chain will provide them with positivity and confidence. Some ways that companies harness the Intrapreneurship skill is by empowering employees to take charge of assignments and projects by giving them resources and relevant training. The job of intrapreneurs is especially crucial in this unprecedented time in order to device new strategies and share insights relevant for the post COVID-19 world. It will be interesting to see companies coming up with various strategies to bounce back from this difficult time”



VIPUL SINGH

Vice President & Head of HR and Communications ADP Pvt. Ltd.

“The Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, popularly known as 3M, believed in their intrapreneur, Spencer Silver, who created the famous 'Post-it Note'. Such real life examples show us the importance of embracing prudent risk-taking. I opine that organisations need to create a sense of inclusivity through sponsorship and training employees on salesmanship to ensure unique ideas get executed. I also believe that the lockdown due to COVID 19 can be leveraged positively to nurture Intrapreneurship. Working from home is a good opportunity for employees to learn new skills and innovate. This culture can prove to be the X-factor for organisations to survive in the economic downfall that is to follow.”

of the innovation level in their organisation and take constructive steps to increase the potential of the same.

Enhancing the Intrapreneurial Potential

Innovation experts and authors, Hugh Molotsi and Jeff Zias, share a well-researched and comprehensive methodology to build a sustainable innovation platform in their 2018 book, *'The Intrapreneur's Journey'*.

The approach guides to build a culture of Intrapreneurship Engagement on the below pillars: -

1. Time and Freedom: Coming back to the story of Google, when organisations provide employees with time and freedom to explore

their passion outside of their mainline KRAs, like how Google does, the environment facilitates creativity and fresh ideas. What is critical is to ensure that the time blocked for efforts towards innovation or passion projects should be within the existing working hours of the employees and not over and above. If it is the latter case, the likelihood of those efforts being reduced is extremely likely due to a negative perception that will develop.

2. Dedicated Innovation Team:

Having champions within the organisation that drive the Innovation practice delivers a huge boost to driving new ideas. When there is sustained and open communication regarding innovation practices, employees are encouraged to be more engaged and bolder. A competitive framework within teams with rewards and recognition tends to motivate more employees to join in the movement.

3. Design Thinking: To enable employees to deeply understand the customer's needs and create solutions for real problems. Empathy forms the bedrock that fuels the desire in the minds of employees to understand customers better than they possibly understand themselves. This involves rapid experimentation rather than building one standard product (or solution) to iterate.

4. Open Collaboration: 3M's Post-It™ is a classic example of an invention that has come out of this pillar. While a low impact, detachable adhesive was created by one scientist in one arm of the organisation, its application into the form of a bookmark or sticky note, was thought of by another employee of the organisation in another unit.

5. Experimentation: It is supremely important to provide the required tools and data to employees to experiment. Decisions taken at any stage are taken based on data and facts, and not emotions.

This approach encourages very rapid iterations based on customer feedback to create a product or solution that is as close to the customer's requirement as possible. There is truth in the belief that many organisations end up selling a product (or service) which is very different from what they originally were conceptualised to sell.

6. Aligning the Organisation

for Yes: Innovation is everyone's job. Even with the presence of an 'Innovation Task Force' or 'Next-Gen Technology Team' or similar in the organisation, the aim should be for everyone to facilitate innovation and support, rather than create hurdles or be the ones



SAHIBA SINGH

Chief People Officer, Acuver Consulting.

“A routine job tends to bore people at some point and people tend to expect a challenging work environment. Additionally, innovators are always craving to achieve more with limited resources. Given the competition that exists today, it is necessary for an input of fresh and varying perspectives to stay on top. Intrapreneurship plays a key role here. The current pandemic has shown us the great potential of open-innovation in tracking the spread and developing a vaccine. Most companies have untapped employee potential and must bring back the suggestion box, which can be enhanced by technology. Intra-departmental brain-storming sessions, employee training, provision of tools and guidance by mentors. Intrapreneurship success is directly proportional to the freedom provided to employees and attitudes towards ideas that go beyond the business.”

raising doubts. When innovation becomes organic, and all employees start seeing themselves as intrapreneurs, there is increased ownership and commitment towards going beyond their job description-defined role.

Molotsi and Zias assert that such a platform built on these pillars will ensure that the organisations are able to utilise the

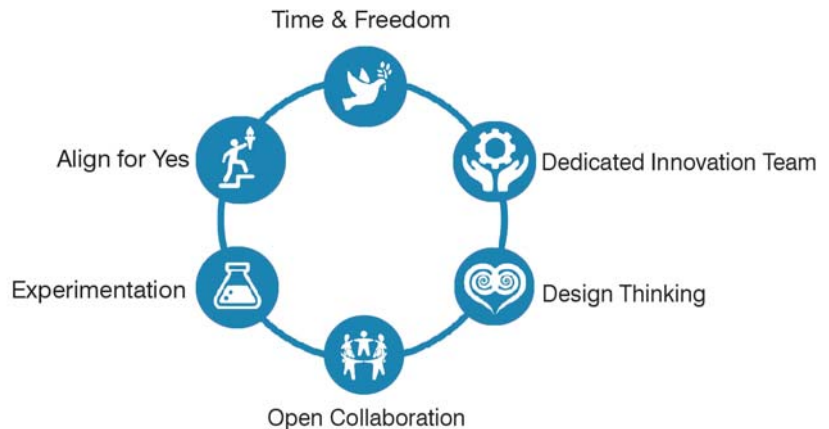


ISHWAR HARITAS

Head, Centre for Entrepreneurship, Incl. Growth & Competitiveness and Associate Professor- Strategic Management, TAPMI

“Some analysts have described the COVID-19 pandemic as the 'Black swan', while others contend that while the pandemic itself was forecastable, the exact economic ramifications over the course of this year and the following 2-3 years are near impossible to anticipate. Regardless of whether it is a 'black swan' or not, what emerges as perhaps the most useful capability for organisations and individuals alike is 'adaptiveness', i.e., the ability to weigh risk and rewards constantly, place multiple small bets and quickly bring to market solutions that gain traction in an agile manner. These are all 'entrepreneurial' traits or 'intrapreneurial' when carried out within an existing business. So, when Mahindra & Mahindra starts to manufacture ventilators or Bacardi brings forth hand sanitizers, Intrapreneurship manifesting as adaptiveness, is in play. Though this could be driven more by good corporate citizenship than by a pure profit motive, this ability to react in near real-time is a clear must-have in the corporate tool kit to maintain relevance and competitive advantage.”

THE INTERAPRENEURSHIP EMPOWERMENT MODEL



biggest under-utilised assets in their organisations – the ideas in their employees' heads.

“Given the hyper competitive business environment and the pace of disruptive technology changes, it is not a luxury anymore for leaders to create an intrapreneurial mindset in their organisations, it is a dire necessity.”

Future-proofing your organisation

Adding to the list of organisations named so far, companies such as Tesla, Intuit, Microsoft, Apple, Amazon and many more, continue to innovate at breakneck speed aided by the focus on driving an intrapreneurial culture in their corridors. This is the reason that Apple managed to create an entire new product category with the launch of the iPad. This is also the reason that Amazon is as well known today as a provider of cloud services, as it is for being the world's largest store.

Therefore, at the risk of sounding clichéd, given the hyper

competitive business environment and the pace of disruptive technology changes, it is not a luxury anymore for leaders to create an intrapreneurial mindset in their organisations, it is a dire necessity. It would be prudent to pay heed to the words of Carl Sagan, renowned American astronomer, who said, "Extinction is the rule. Survival is the exception." It is quite evident that in the 21st Century, organisations that are unable to foster a culture of intrapreneurship stand the risk of going the way of the dinosaurs, albeit in much shorter time spans.



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About the Author

Vikas Dua is an HR expert having worked in Wipro, Concentrix and Startek, driving hiring in the APAC region. He is currently the Chief HR Mentor at Attayn - a disruptive HR Tech firm. A TEDx Speaker, Vikas is also a Blogger, sharing insights under his self-designed 'HR in my Heart' brand umbrella.

The Latent Energy For Building Businesses

Instead of replicating what entrepreneurs do, organisations that create an intrapreneurial culture come up with more innovative solutions for a larger, positive business impact - both for the ecosystem and their employees.

BY POOJA BHASIN



The Cambridge dictionary defines Intrapreneurship as a system that allows people within an organisation to act like entrepreneurs. Simply put, intrapreneurs are self-motivated, proactive and action-oriented professionals who turn ideas into profitable new products, services, and businesses. Gifford Pinchot III, the author of *Intrapreneuring in Action: A Handbook for Business Innovation*, coined the term intrapreneur in 1978. He defined it as “dreamers who do” – employees who do for corporate innovation, what an entrepreneur does for his or her brand/start-up.

With increased global competition, and in crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations are forced to rethink how they produce and deliver products and services. Today, entrepreneurs are innovating with pioneering ideas that are shaping how businesses are conducted. Large, traditional companies are following suit to build a similar environment to stay relevant to the competition. However, instead of replicating what entrepreneurs do, organisations that create an intrapreneurial culture seem to come up with more innovative solutions and build ideas that have larger, positive business impact - both for the ecosystem and their employees.

Why Intrapreneurship?

Intrapreneurship is a puissant source for change and innovation, nurturing ingeniousness and a constant search for solutions to all



AMOL GUPTA

People Leader - India & Philippines, FIS

“Nowadays, organisations are finding ways to support these employees to transform the organisation quickly and effectively. In the era of growing millennial culture at workplaces, organisations strategise to capitalise on the potential of these Intrapreneurs. Companies are encouraging various initiatives like cracking business problems, innovating or delivering a new product idea and incentivising the innovation brought to the table by these internal entrepreneurs to motivate them and reward their efforts. In a quest to make this initiative more practical, companies must launch innovation labs for employees to experiment on real time basis.”

kinds of challenges. Hence, HR departments globally are striving to create organisational cultures, conditions, and processes that facilitate innovation and enable large numbers of employees to move from an employee mindset to that of an intrapreneur. In such an environment, there is a manifold increase in enthusiasm as employees believe they are not only given a real opportunity to think, try, and transform, but will be rewarded for it. Teams become more industrious, consistent, content and efficient.

For example, Google follows a rule titled ‘20% time’ where employees are allowed to spend 20% of their time to come up with ideas, projects, and concepts that would be most beneficial to the company. Interestingly, Gmail, Google News and AdSense were created by Google employees who followed this policy. Twitter, Slack and Groupon began as side projects, and the best part was that the people who built them had the company’s resources at their disposal. Unleashing this intrapreneurial culture fostered an environment of self-motivated, proactive, and action-oriented set of employees who pursued innovation in products and services, not just from their novelty factor, but also as a business proposition that created customer value and higher ROI.

Fostering an intrapreneurial culture

That said, in order to foster innovation and an intrapreneurial culture, companies need to have a direction from their HR and leadership. It is not about innovating blindly in all directions! Companies need to set some paths for innovation and be clear on the areas where it wants to create value for its customers. Without direction, efforts can be scattered and will not lead to a holistic cultural or business change. The culture of Intrapreneurship must consider and combine the varied abilities of employees – which can only be achieved if the organisation understands its employees.

Organisations must understand that even though every employee may not be an intrapreneur, they do exist in almost all companies. HR functions must discover these individuals, nurture, and encourage them. The culture of Intrapreneurship allows individuals from different departments to voice their views and freely bring forth their ideas – positions and hierarchical levels have nothing to do with it. A study published by an economist from Chicago stated that younger recruits in an intrapreneurial culture usually think outside the box because they have not got used to the 'box' yet. They are conceptual innovators who come up with ideas and are eager to implement/execute them, as their fresh perspective drives their approach. On the other hand, employees who have spent a couple of years in the intrapreneurial set-up, tend to be experimental innovators who solve problems using trial and error. Employees with an intrapreneurial spirit learn and evolve with time, space, and a multitude of failures to take calculated risks, rather than being swept away by uncurbed enthusiasm.

A big part of success in a corporate intrapreneurial set-up is to promote independent thinking

and equip employees to make decisions. This not only leads to creativity and innovation, it, most importantly, brings in a process of change and ownership, which translates into better products. Corporate HRs need to inculcate a feeling of ownership for the improvements and the advancement that intrapreneurs generate. Also, they must be encouraged to create solutions independent of hierarchy. The higher the encouragement, the bigger the motivation to be an intrapreneur! Appreciating intrapreneurial successes and the people behind them, whether they are individuals or teams, instil positive reinforcement and provide the incentive to integrate value and contribute to the future.

“Corporate HRs need to inculcate a feeling of ownership for the improvements and the advancement that intrapreneurs generate. Also, they must be encouraged to create solutions independent of hierarchy.”

Since an organisation's employees know the business, processes and products, they are ideally placed to develop new ideas and facilitate them from scratch. Hence, it is important to have a combination of collaboration and competition to develop a culture of Intrapreneurship. Collaboration is needed for teams to work together and make ideas and solutions a success – leveraging collective intelligence. At the same time, they need a healthy competition so that they are constantly challenged. They need to set new benchmarks to keep them motivated.

To cover the twin aspects of collaboration and competition, HR



NEERAJ SHARMA

Vice President - Human Resources, FourKites

“A moment of adversity is the genesis of an intrapreneur in an organisation and COVID 19 is one such moment. Organisations that had 'farmed' intrapreneurs with a culture of innovation and creativity are surely at an advantage today. Intrapreneurial organisations have quickly formed nimble task forces and empowered their "farmed" intrapreneurs with quick decision-making powers and resources. This intrapreneurial inventory which has an inherent bias for action and creativity, has rapidly innovated a new set of alternatives and rules around their company's offerings. Dare call it the COVID version, intrapreneurial organisations have re-invented competitive edge. "The COVID Model" of thinking and adapting could well be the next competitive tool for organisations to perfect in an uncertain future!”

departments in organisations need to develop and support activities, workshops, and courses that improve the effectiveness of intrapreneurs. Companies can offer training around the skills of ideation and organisational priorities, and the appropriate channels that can support the development of new ideas. Organisations can also provide employee incentives to align intrapreneurial thinking with corporate priorities and drive behavioural change. HRs can communicate the intrapreneurial efforts to encourage awareness and participation and come up with avenues for support – from the leadership or industry experts –

that make intrapreneurial employees feel engaged and able to drive value.

Intrapreneurial efforts such as these within an organisation not only engage existing employees, but also attract new, high-potential individuals into the company. The value of these networks often spread beyond active participants, especially when such activities are provided as a premium offering.

Today, many leading global conglomerates have their versions of intrapreneurial cultures that often translate into products that bring business success. For example, Facebook Likes was not

the brainchild of Mark Zuckerberg. Rather, it was developed by coders and engineers participating in a hackathon for creating and developing ideas. Another example is DreamWorks, the studio that has created animation masterpieces like *Kung Fu Panda* and *How to Train Your Dragon*. It offers its employees free training on script development and pitching, and puts the ideas in front of the leadership – if the idea sails, they put it into action.

The culture encourages employees to go beyond their KRAs and teaches them to make a cost-benefit analysis to achieve business success. Like entrepreneurs, employees take ownership and since they are still a part of the company, follow processes and functions while making business decisions. However, by developing an environment of co-creation, the organisation not only focuses on making the workplace intrapreneurial, but also provides a great employee experience. It can have a positive impact on everything – from having a happier work culture to retention, to positive business revenue impact. Today, companies that succeed are those that boost wellbeing and productivity, and also develop client-focused products.

The way forward

Like entrepreneurs, companies will be better off looking internally through the lens of intrapreneurship to build and sell their products, rather than leaning more on external marketing or sales focus. It allows companies to utilise and optimise existing resources and products while embracing innovation – a key element of lasting growth and profitability.

An intrapreneurship culture has far-reaching implications beyond the four walls of a company. The out-of-the-box ideas have resulted in products like Sony PlayStations, Shutterstock and Java Programming language, among several other



MANSIJ MAJUMDER

HR Head, Manipal Global Education Services

“As companies struggle to come to terms with the new reality, it presents a golden opportunity to encourage employees to come up with radical new business improvement ideas that are cost effective, solve a burning customer need, or reduce opex. Employee advocacy forums can serve as an incubation centre for ideas - where people bounce concepts off of each other. They can then test the ideas in a maker's lab, and those that are successful can be implemented. The secret sauce for an intrapreneurship programme to succeed is trust. Employees need to know that they will not be ridiculed or penalised for ideas that fail - fail fast, learn fast needs to be the motto.”

successful intrapreneurial ventures. Apart from creating new job opportunities required by these new intrapreneurial ideas, the efforts create value for both business and society. They also resonate with a new generation of managers who believe in the power of business to change. **HC**

About the Author

Pooja Bhasin is Senior Director - HR & Finance, Ticketmaster India who also manages the Legal and Compliance functions. She wields a professional experience of more than 25 years and has worked in leading organisations such as Motorola, GE, Citigroup, Fidelity and the ICICI Group. Pooja has an MBA in Finance and Marketing and is a highly passionate writer.



SUDHIR DHAR

Executive Director - HR & Admin, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

“Intrapreneurship is only successful if you empower your employees, provide them freedom, build openness, transparency, and ensure safe space. As an organisation being apolitical, transparent, open and non-hierarchical provides opportunities to employees across levels. In order to build Intrapreneurship, "you need to get your hands dirty." Thus, it is important for every individual to first know the ground reality. Acceptance of ideas and mistakes is crucial if you have a culture of 'do as directed' than it does not encourage ideation / intrapreneurship. A few learnings in wake of the current scenario include independent accountability, building independent work styles and patterns for increased effectiveness, and minimum monitoring with maximum efficiency. As remote working has become routine, identifying new, innovative and alternate solutions for working and effectiveness is crucial.”

A Unique Recipe for Success

*In an exclusive tête-à-tête with Human Capital, **R. Mahalakshmi**, Director—Human Resources, Mondelez India, dives deep into how the snacking giant embodies the ethos and agility of a start-up and unpacks their top strategies behind winning the hearts and minds of employees. Talking about driving bold and rapid corporate transformations, she asks leaders to answer important questions around purpose and the "why" behind those transformations, the result of which will determine the success or failure of the organisation to create breakthrough value.*

Mahalakshmi also renders her perspectives on how the coronavirus crisis has created an impetus to turn massive uncertainty into unprecedented opportunity.

BY ANKITA SHARMA

Q You have worked across diverse sectors with top tier global and Indian corporations. Take us through your journey and the key learnings. Also, what makes you passionate about what you do?

A I am passionate about two things: leaving a legacy and continuous learning.

These two have pretty much defined my choice of roles and what I did in those roles. I have worked in business consulting with firms like Hewitt, Arthur Andersen, Ernst & Young, and thereafter in global COE leadership roles and HR head roles across industries!

With my passions driving my life journey, I have enjoyed roles that gave me an opportunity to reimagine what can be, to leave a legacy, and put me at the heart of quite a few turnarounds and large-scale transformations.

“Now more than ever, the focus is on doing more with less, and this will surely be a great time to get creative about how we optimise the dollar on pay, benefits, learning and engagement.”

Q Mondelez India is one of the best and most admired companies to work for as it continues to ‘lead the future of snacking’ while creating ‘the right snack, for the right moment, made the right way’ for consumers. Could you share some of the top strategies put in place at Mondelez to attract and retain the right talent in

the right place at the right time?

A At Mondelez (MDLZ), we offer the opportunity to work in a **multi-billion-dollar global enterprise with the ethos of a start-up**. Our strength lies in our growth mindset and the opportunities we provide to talents to be partners and co-shapers of our growth. Also, agility is a core value. We have multiple experiments that allow for testing and learning as we look to unlock growth. This has gone a long way in ensuring consumer centricity, speed and agility in our approach to people, processes and products! In addition, these approaches make MDLZ a great place for talented individuals to learn and grow every day.

Our employer brand proposition **“Make It!”** also gives an invitation to talents to “make it uniquely yours”—and with that, we are connecting with everyone’s dreams and aspirations, whilst providing the opportunity to shape the future of a large snacking player.

We are also very conscious that we have a **multi-generational workforce** at play. As high as 70% of our colleagues are millennial or centennial—and our **propositions on learning, career, pay, and benefits** cater to the segmented needs of each demographic!

It is my privilege to lead the People function in this organisation where leaders truly lead with head and heart. It’s little wonder that our colleagues tell us that **they join the company for our brands and stay for our culture!** And on that note, I must call out how our inclusive growth culture allows folks with diverse styles to contribute and thrive!

Q Evidence has mounted that “culture” is a key driver of bottom-line results and a significant source of competitive advantage amidst the changes



and uncertainties facing businesses today. In your opinion, how can organisations create and sustain a culture of growth that enables the best people to do their best work?

A Culture is certainly key, and is evinced in how each of us lives, behaves, and makes decisions (more than what might be written in posters and induction kits). At MDLZ, we have been intentional about living our leadership imperatives of: “Love Our Consumers and Brands”, “Grow Everyday” and “Do What’s Right”. It is lovely to work in an organisation where people are at the heart of everything we do. We aim to create some of the world’s most loved brands and sustain a great work culture, with a people strategy that is segmented for our diverse demographics, keeping colleagues engaged through our investments in capability and providing opportunities for them to shape their careers in their own unique way through an approach branded “My Career Launchpad”.

Mechanisms like Shark Tanks, which are future-forward growth projects led by cross-functional teams, keep the spirit of innovation

and entrepreneurship thriving. Moreover, all of us strongly live the ethos of **“Growth is a Team Sport”**—pulling the combined passion of all functions towards realising our vision.

We are also strong believers in “giving back to the planet more than we take from it”, and our sustainability agenda keeps our talents focused on being part of something greater and meaningful. Hence, by fostering purpose as a core driver of strategy and decision-making, we at Mondelez India are driving successful innovations and business growth.

“Transformations are great opportunities for leadership teams to boldly redefine ambition, and strong HR folks can play a seminal role in facilitating that conversation and helping articulate the business ambition and vision.”

Q How does the work culture at Mondelez India reflect its diversity and inclusion goals? Could you share examples of ongoing or past initiatives implemented by the company to level the playing field and support diverse groups to flourish at work?

A At MDLZ, we focus on providing equal opportunities to all. This is true not only for gender but also for people with very different thinking styles, communication styles, and demographic backgrounds. Of course, within that, gender continues to be a focus, too, and it is one of the nine business KPIs that we track globally.

I am proud that all our policies are gender-neutral (e.g., we have parenting leave, sabbatical availed by men and women as well as WFH options leveraged across the organisation), and I believe that is one way we will (hopefully) impact the fabric of the society, which is seeped in gender stereotypes (including who cooks, who is responsible for caregiving, etc.)

We are also very proud that our **manufacturing plant at Sri City**, which is in the interiors of Andhra Pradesh, has 50% gender diversity, with women on the shop floor. And to sustain this, we ensure that our policies are gender-neutral; we develop equal bosses; and we are intentional about providing life-stage support to our colleagues to manage parenting, caregiving and other key life stages. Additionally, processes around mentoring and the presence of active communities enable our talents to learn from each other and thrive.

We have also identified that both men and women require backend support to get to the level playing field of opportunities; therefore, there are **flexible working hours** and **work-from-home** policies that apply to men as well as women. In addition, we run **unconscious bias** programs



using the creative form of theatre. Lastly, we are very proud to have **zero gender pay gap** at Mondelez India.

Q Businesses today must continually adapt to the dynamic and rapidly shifting workplace realities. You have led multiple transformation projects in various organisations. From your expert perspective, how can HR play a pivotal role in driving successful business transformations?

A Purpose plays a big role in this. So you must ask: What is the purpose with which the HR function exists in your organisation? That holds the key to what HR can do. At MDLZ, we have co-created our purpose, which is “to unlock the true growth potential of our business and our people”. This purpose stokes all our actions and puts the HR function at the heart of all key business actions, including transformation.

The most important aspect, of course, is knowing the WHY. Why is the business seeking to transform itself? That then defines all actions, whether it's reimagining the structure, the decision processes, the capabilities needed to deliver or even what is measured and rewarded. All these levers can deliver a breakthrough in value.

The other big role you play is to represent the voice of your employees on the decision table—bringing head and heart into defining the pace and how the change gets implemented. HR also holds the position of calling out the impact of all management actions on the talent brand during any transformation.

More often than not, transformations are also great opportunities for leadership teams to boldly redefine ambition, and strong HR folks can play a seminal role in facilitating that conversation and helping articulate the business ambition and vision.

“What is the purpose with which the HR function exists in your organisation? That holds the key to what HR can do. At MDLZ, we have co-created our purpose, which is to unlock the true growth potential of our business and our people.”

Q The scale of the coronavirus crisis has fundamentally altered and disrupted the workings of the world. What are your views on COVID-19 and the future of work?

A While none of us is clairvoyant, one can easily see that the Covid-19 period has accelerated the pace of change and brought the future closer. So the future of work is very much right here! This is a fantastic opportunity that all of us in HR can leverage. In many ways, it provides us with an opportunity to do a pilot/test and learn about the future of work! What can one focus on?

- Partner with the business in assessing consumer patterns and reimagining how we organise our work, workforce and policies to fulfil the new asks of the consumer.
- Use the opportunity to experiment with workforce models, including gig and flexible work constructs. Working from home has, of course, found adoption in interesting ways—not only in head office roles but even in non-traditional areas like sales!
- Accelerate the adoption of digital tools—not only as an enabler of virtual work but also

as an enabler of learning, hiring and engagement!

- Lastly, continue leveraging the organisation's purpose to inspire the right talents who have a purpose resonance to join your workforce and find ways to achieve their personal purposes while working in your organisation.

Now more than ever, the focus is on doing more with less, and this will surely be a great time to get creative about how we optimise the dollar on pay, benefits, learning and engagement.

Q Lastly, could you give a few quick tips for HR practitioners who are newly transitioning into a leadership role?

- Be who you are. Find a way to leave your unique thumbprint in any role.
- Continue to learn and be agile. See how you can power business growth and leave a legacy.
- Take ownership of your own development. Seek sponsors, mentors and mirrors (who can provide feedback) and keep progressing.
- Ensure you focus on developing others. Pay it forward, as that is what will give you a sense of fulfilment and get you real followership. 

The Ascent Of Digital Leadership

Human Capital spoke to **Shailesh Singh**, Director and Chief People Officer, Max Life Insurance, over the increasing prevalence of Digital Leadership and its relevance in the BFSI sector.

BY S. AJAY KUMAR



The large-scale tech-driven transformation at workplaces today has made organisations to prefer that their incumbent CEO wields technical expertise as against a background in Finance or Marketing. Such a vision, apart from driving a technical overture, also ensures continuous learning, a forward-looking perspective, and a culture of innovation within the organisational precinct.

Q Given the dynamic workplace scenario today, how do you view the rise of digital leadership?

A In the backdrop of automation, shifts in technology and innovation headways, the rise of digital leadership is inevitable to achieve formulated business goals. To ensure the success of digital leadership, organisations, in addition to making strategic use of their digital assets, will have to constantly adapt, appeal to and engage with employees in a meaningful manner. In today's dynamic digital oriented workplaces, the use of digital processes and strategies enable simpler experiences for all constituents, drive operational efficiencies, and help in decision making by leveraging vast amounts of data collected through internal sources.

To strike a balance with today's dynamic workforce, it is important to nurture an ecosystem of collaboration where digital leadership can shed new light on the meaning of innovative management and creativity, thus make the organisation a force to reckon with.

“To ensure the success of digital leadership, organisations, in addition to making strategic use of their digital assets, will have to constantly adapt, appeal to and engage with employees in a meaningful manner.”

Q How can digital tools drive meaningful employee progress?

A Today, digitally adept companies have a host of robust tools that are paving the way for employee progress. As traditional roles and workplace structures change, these tools are constantly improving operations in the HR domain. From performance management to appreciation, digital tools aid in planning individual goals, monitoring progress, evaluating work, rewarding effectiveness and upgrading employee objectives in accordance with changing work cultures.

Q Could you tell us how digital communication has helped promote engagement and productivity in the BFSI sector?

A Technological intervention and automation have changed the way employees communicate within an organisation. Increased usage of apps, chatbots, social intranets, webcasts etc. led by Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning enhances connectivity and redefines the employee experience.

In the BFSI sector, as scale and dynamics evolve, companies are promoting peer-to-peer or leadership engagement initiatives via frequent business strategy webcasts and several sessions for informal interactions to grow a

distinct culture across geographical zones. Working towards creating unified self-service offerings for employees leads to a simplified experience that help enhance the work culture and employee productivity. From streamlining access to payslips and planning leaves to digital referral and recognition of colleagues, digital initiatives are enabling productivity by bringing about a remarkable reduction in queries raised via internal ticketing system and improves turnaround time. Also, innovative sales face digital tools ensure that agents and last mile employees are empowered to take instantaneous decisions and hasten business closures that helps boost productivity and entail seamless transparency.

Q Can you walk us through some agile digital employee facing practices in the BFSI sector?

A The BFSI sector has redefined employee experience by improving digital connectivity to increase productivity while enabling instant gratification. Today, the BFSI sector is increasingly utilising a host of digital initiatives to increase the overall nimbleness of operations across the entire recruitment chain. For instance, the usage of multiple AI-based solutions to onboard and engage with the distributed workforce real-time along with adopting various tools to enable employees to have real time interactions on key life cycle processes and “moments of truth”, driving accessibility of data with speed helps enable performance, engagement and superior quality experience.

Q Why do you think nurturing cultural values is critical for an organisation more than ever in the digital era?

A In an age where digital intervention drastically reduces the

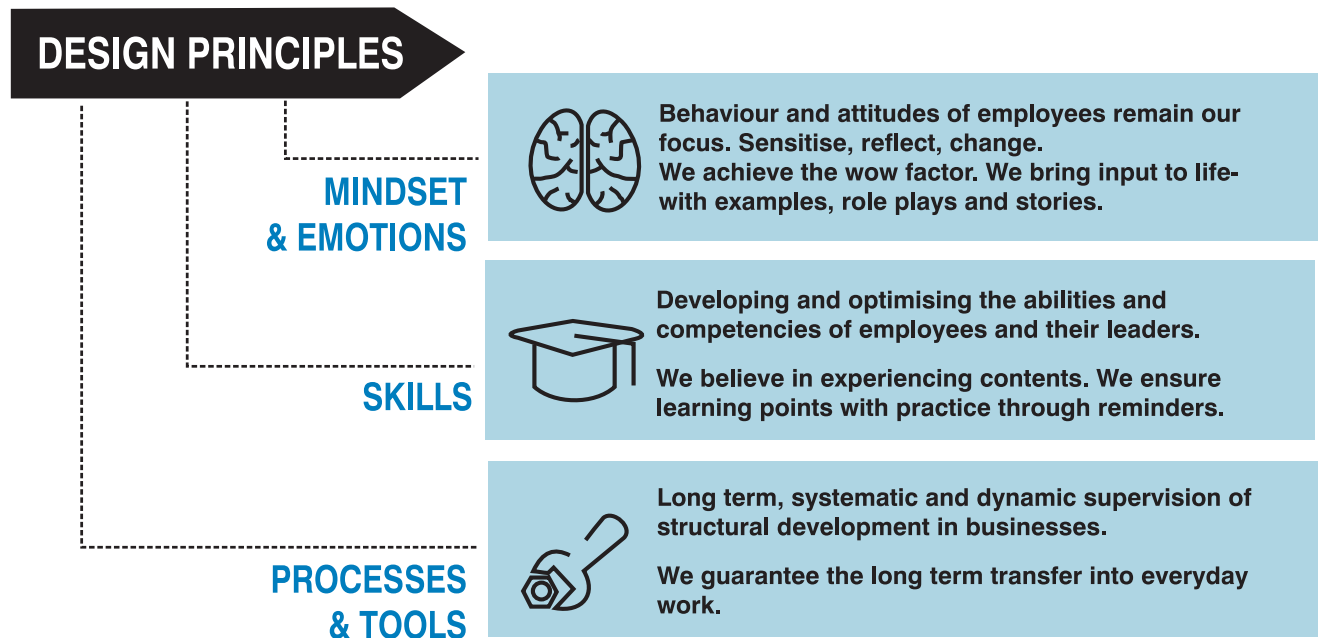
time spent on manual operations in a business, there is greater demand for strategic and cognitive skills. To amplify the synergy of technology within an organisation and innovative ideation, high level of cognitive involvement should be embedded into the cultural values. This requires businesses to drive positive attitude towards change and engage employees in collaborative sessions to cultivate a mindset of growth and openness. Creating digital oriented cultures by aligning employee values to digital corporate strategy is imperative to promote a common purpose within the organisation while co-creating business results.

“Creating digital oriented cultures by aligning employee values to digital corporate strategy is imperative to promote a common purpose within the organisation while co-creating business results.”

Q The workforce today is constantly curious, and intellectually and culturally diverse. Do you think retaining talent is becoming increasingly challenging for organisations?

A Retention of culturally and intellectually diverse workforce becomes less of a challenge if you have the right set of leaders at the forefront of any organisation. At Max Life Insurance, we have highly motivated, digital-savvy leaders who are keen to interact with the employees - both online and offline - across day-to-day operations.

By communicating with employees frequently about the benefits and keeping them



Source: Inspireone.in

uptospeed on organisational transformation, we are constantly investing in capabilities that empower the workforce of the future and unlock their full potential in unconventional, yet rewarding ways. Access to adept recruitment apps that allow us to deliver value propositions during onboarding, training and ongoing stages, today, provides us the scope to harness talent more effectively than ever before.

Q How can HR and Business Leaders work together to nurture an environment of impactful learning?

A Collaboration across functions is important to foster a high-performance and sustainable environment. To make judicious use of organisational talent, leaders should work closely with HR stakeholders to structure teams where flow of information, skills and talent can be made seamless. Organisations which do this efficiently create an ecosystem that promotes learning and ideation between different teams leading to effective communication and seamless integration and achievement of organisational goals.

The senior management, by way of introducing channels such as feedback surveys, open discussions and workshops helps transform employee experience and build a culture of trust and appreciation. Additionally, by creating a larger organisational atmosphere that helps optimise employee capabilities is just as important as investing in technology which enhances customer experience. Charting out training sessions to upgrade cognitive skills for every department integrates the workforce architecture with business requirements and helps build impactful learning mechanisms.

Q In view of the lockdown owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, what have been the learnings for Digital Learning for the BFSI Sector when it comes to usage of tech platforms for remote working and Work from Home?

A Given the current need for social distancing, the emphasis on digital collaboration is greater than ever before. Investment in remote user technology such as virtual desktops and VPN is essential to ensure the BFSI sector continues collaborating and servicing

customers seamlessly through this period of lockdown. Companies have embraced techled solutions to enable hyper-connectivity through various tools for video conference, application & network support, service desks, etc. which is driving work from home efficiency. There is a clear realisation to push digital adoption in the interest of speed, process efficiencies, consistency of deliveries and employee safety.

At Max Life Insurance, the early adoption of such tech platforms enabled us to quickly ensure that 80% of our employees could work from home effectively within 3-4 days of the lockdown announcement. We are systemically leveraging tools like employee app, workplace, MS Teams and Zoom where our leaders engage with broader teams and instil a culture of collaboration across functions and processes. Our employees are efficiently using our digital assets and employee apps to consume as many HR processes as possible like Payroll, learning and development and PMS. We are also loving the fact that our customers are responding well and adopting digital solutions/interactions much faster than we thought. **HC**

Accenture-Built Hiring Platform Connects Companies With People Who Lost Jobs

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Leading companies from multiple industries such as Accenture, Lincoln Financial Group, ServiceNow and Verizon have joined forces to launch an employer-to-employer platform that connects companies laying off or furloughing people with those companies in urgent need of employees.

People + Work Connect, a platform designed by Accenture, is aimed at keeping people employed during the coronavirus pandemic.

"By providing real-time visibility into which companies need people and where, People + Work Connect is designed to lessen



the economic and societal impacts of the virus and help us work together to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people," Ellyn Shook, Accenture's Chief Leadership and Human Resources Officer, said in a statement.

Till date, the participating companies are ADM, Baxter, Blue Apron, Cargill, Frito-Lay, Lincoln Financial Group, Marriott, Mondelez International, Nordstrom, ServiceNow, Walmart and Zenefits. Additionally, over 250 companies are anticipated to onboard over the next week, and the platform will soon add public sector jobs, according to Accenture. 

EPFO Allows Employers to Register Digital Signatures via E-Mail

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

In a bid to ease compliance procedure, Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has allowed employers to register their digital signatures online through e-mail, due to the COVID-19 enforced lockdown. Usually, authorized persons of employers have to visit the EPFO offices to get their digital signatures registered.

In the contemporary scenario of the lockdown and other disruptions, employers are not able to function normally and are witnessing problems in using their digital signatures or Aadhaar-based e-sign on EPFO portal, the labour ministry said in a statement. Due to the lockdown, many employers are facing difficulties to send the one-time registration request to the regional offices, it added.

In view of this situation and to further ease the compliance procedure, EPFO has decided to accept such requests through e-mail too, the ministry stated.

Several tasks like KYC (Know Your Customers) attestation, transfer claim attestation and others are

being done online by the authorized persons of employers using their digital signatures (DSC) or Aadhar based e-sign on EPFO portal. For using DSC/e-sign, one-time approval from EPFO's regional office is required.

Further, it said such establishments, whose authorized officers have approved digital signatures but are not able to locate the dongle, can log in to the employer portal and register their e-sign through the link for registration of already registered authorized signatories.

If their name against the approved digital signature is the same as that in their Aadhar, the registration of e-sign will not require any further approval, it added.

Other authorized signatories can register their e-signs and send the request letters approved by the employers and seek approval of the concerned EPFO offices, it said.

As per the ministry statement, an employer can send the scanned copy of the duly signed request letter to the concerned regional office through e-mail. Official e-mail addresses of the regional offices are available at www.Epfindia.Gov.In. This facility provides relief to the employers and EPF members adversely impacted by the pandemic. 





Managing People Sentiments In Difficult Times

During times of uncertainty and distress, emotions go into a flux, and it becomes incumbent on the leaders to step up and carefully navigate a variety of sentiments within their teams and organisations.

BY SHUBIKA BILKHA

As we move into lockdown and extended lockdowns, and continue to find innovative ways to manage 'life' from home, people leaders are faced with a unique challenge - one they were never quite prepared to contend with.

During times of uncertainty and distress, emotions go into a flux, and it becomes incumbent on the leaders to step up and carefully navigate a variety of sentiments within their teams and organisations. Feelings of fear, insecurity, frustration, demotivation, isolation and overwhelm are rampant. Whether it is increased uncertainty over their jobs, feeling let down on account of pay cuts, low increments and withheld bonuses, or being stuck at home managing their kids and families, the emotional challenges being faced by executives is having a direct impact on the workplace.

A unique challenge

While it is no easy feat to be a leader, today's environment places a particularly unique challenge to those in people leadership positions. Organisations and leaders have to be prepared to not just look at key business and planning components, but also provide the requisite support to carefully balance elements of mental health, performance, and productivity for smooth functioning. They have to manage difficult

situations, sentiments, and conversations in a difficult environment.

For many of us, being able to find that consistency to survive, maintain and thrive while inspiring others, can seem arduous to achieve. And for the best of us, even with the right tools at our

disposal, it is natural to question this very test that we are being put through.

As a leadership and performance coach, with further extension of the lockdown, I see a number of clients going through a series of emotional challenges. And many of them oscillate between feelings of



overstimulation to slack and back. For the leaders, it has become imperative to self-manage, unlock capacities, build capabilities, make difficult decisions, have hard conversations, while still looking ahead in an evolving environment.

“For the leaders, it has become imperative to self-manage, unlock capacities, build capabilities, make difficult decisions, have hard conversations, while still looking ahead in an evolving environment.”

Ways to support teams

Some ways in which you can support your teams and organisations in such testing times have been outlined: -

1. Empathy: In trying times, as teams look to balance competing interests of work, life and family, it is imperative for leaders to demonstrate greater tolerance and understanding. Being empathetic to individual challenges, understanding the impact of the environment on their team's mental health, and being reasonable about their demands during this time will be essential to maintain productivity and performance. Going away from the expectation of 'perfection' to getting comfortable with just 'managing' and 'surviving' will help build endurance to ride the tide.

2. Social Sensitivity and Communication: As each one of us navigates the world of 'life from home' not just 'work from home', it is the individual and not just the colleague that is showing up to work each day. For leaders, it means greater insight into each person's life, and the ability to successfully demonstrate that social sensitivity to provide the requisite support during such testing times. The

world of work from home has also highlighted a common platform of the challenges that we all face, be it is your kid coming into the frame during a video call or the internet buffering during a pitch or needing to rush out on an emergency grocery run during work hours. It is important for leaders to dial up the communication, personalise their approach to their teams, and demonstrate authenticity. This only serves to make you more real and connected with your teams at this time.

3. Trust: As each person works from their own zone, core values such as trust and responsibility come to the forefront. With colleagues no longer being next door or easily accessible, there is little room for micro-managing. People leaders now need to give their teams more leeway to complete their tasks. Using the time to build a circle of trust and assuring teams of how much they are valued will be key in building loyalty and team spirit that will serve you well in the future. It is a great time to let go of the uncontrollables, and just trust and believe.

“Using such the time to build a circle of trust and assuring teams of how much they are valued will be key in building loyalty and team spirit that will serve you well in the future.”

4. Psychological Safety: In the ultimate VUCA world, as teams and organisations grapple with feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and anxiousness over their jobs and the future, it is the responsibility of leaders to address and help manage these sentiments. Communicating regularly, being transparent about the situation, being real about the task at hand,

setting small and manageable goals, providing the requisite support, while demonstrating an understanding of individual difficulties is essential to creating a sense of security at this time. Working in gratitude can enable you to create an environment of appreciation and camaraderie that will serve to support all at this time.

5. Culture of Collaboration: In trying times, the value of the system over the individual becomes particularly relevant. Collaborating while working independently requires each of us to buy-in to the organisational purpose, imbibe core components of our culture, live the values and make it less about the individual and more about the collective. For organisations and leaders, dialling up the communication and finding ways to simulate the fun components of the workplace- coffee catchups, office chat, Friday lunches, etc can ensure greater team spirit and integration during work from home.

Times like these require all of us to fix the car while driving it. While things may not seem to be in our control at the moment, what we can do is ensure that the new normal has more empathy, understanding, appreciation of ourselves and the others, as we look to do our bit to support our teams, organisations and the humanity at large. 

About the Author

Shubika Bilkha is a dynamic leadership and performance coach who has worked with several CXOs and senior-level executives across corporates, industries and educational institutions. She is the Founding Partner of an organisation that specialises workplace behaviour and personal leadership development. Shubika has worked with large companies such as Deloitte, London and a few leading start-ups. She is a published author who regularly contributes to key publications. She can be reached on Twitter @shubika.



EdCast Learning Health Index (LHI) Study 2020

Skillings is at the heart of transforming nations. It is indeed the biggest opportunity and challenge of the decade. The speed and scale at which organizations are able to upskill and reskill their workforce may well become their only sustainable advantage. In this race, agility is a key transformation lever and organizations must invest time and money to reskill their workforce to adapt and adjust quickly to this new order of work.

Corporate mortality rates are expected to soar owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the frequent shifts in the market conditions and uncertain futures, continuous learning is integral to the 'Future of Work'. Bridging the skill gap with a comprehensive solution to address the systemic challenges and learning disabilities in organizations has become a mission-critical priority for businesses across the globe.

EdCast launched the first edition of the Learning Health Index Study, with the objective of creating a deeper understanding of learning health in organizations across corporate India using a validated research approach. Based on the survey results and interviews with 17 leading Global CHROs and CLOs, the study provides actionable insights on key bottlenecks and opportunities to power the L&D community in their endeavour to build smart, healthy and sustainable learning organizations.

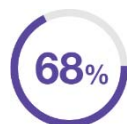
The Learning Health Index (LHI) is an aggregate of scores on each of the 8 dimensions of learning health across a 5-point scale. The study covered 104 leading organizations across industries and revealed that the average **LHI for corporate India stands at 67**. This shows that learning in organizations is still largely underserved and underutilized, and while there is greater executive sponsorship, L&D functions in India are yet to operate as agents of transformation.

With 32% of organizations 'Coping' and 45% of them 'Developing', there is still a lot of ground to be covered to truly tap into the tangible and intangible benefits of being a healthy learning organization.





Despite the availability of cutting-edge learning tools and technologies, and organizations recognizing their benefits, over **75%** of them are yet to make technology an ally in their learning endeavours. While this is a perceived area of weakness, it presents organizations with the greatest opportunity to improve their learning health.



Organizations aspire to nurture keen and active self-directed learners, but **68%** of them fail to provide a conducive infrastructure and an environment to drive employees to take ownership and cultivate everyday learning habits.



Designing personalized learner-centric journeys that drive engagement is high on the priority list. However, data shows that **91%** of organizations do not consistently personalize learner journeys to accommodate individual goals, preferences and learning styles.



While learning metrics are used by L&D to make decisions, **70%** of organizations are using basic, lower-order metrics to measure progress and are yet to adopt more sophisticated, business impact related metrics. **96%** of the organizations surveyed are yet to use advanced, real-time analytics.



Learning is aligned to business requirements and integral to business success in **82%** of organizations with leaders playing an active role. L&D functions are responding with agility and readjusting learning priorities based on changing business needs.



The role and expectations from the L&D function are fast evolving, and **44%** of organizations report that L&D professionals are not adept at meeting such growing demands. They must urgently invest in their own development to power the learning journeys of others.

The LHI Study also identifies areas of excellence and opportunities for improving learning health and provides remedies for how organizations can become more agile and adapt to the 'new normal' by fostering a culture where learning and working are synonymous, thus building more collaborative and enriching workplaces.

The 8 Dimensions of Learning Health

#1 Learning Strategy & Business Planning

The extent to which the current and future needs of the business drive the learning strategy. How are L&D budgets prepared and allocated? How agile is the learning function in course-correcting and responding to business requirements?

Learning strategy should be driven by business requirements. This is the prerequisite for any learning ecosystem. The study reports a healthy LHI of **83** on this dimension. Of all the eight dimensions, this one scores the highest.

Insights:

49% of the organizations report complete alignment of learning strategy with their business strategy.

21% of the organizations consider learning agenda to be an integral part of business planning.

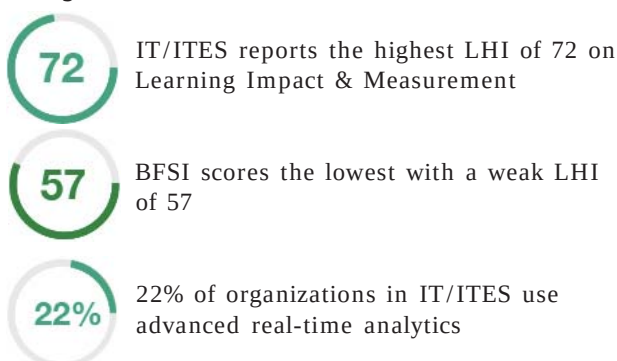
L&D leaders should develop a learning strategy based on business goals and talent strategy. They must take a hard look at employee capabilities and ascertain which ones are most essential today and what needs to be developed for the future. They should re-evaluate this alignment on an ongoing basis and make quick adjustments to ensure they are creating a people-capability agenda that embody business priorities and strategic objectives.

#2 Impact & Measurement

What learning metrics are used to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of learning? To what extent are data analytics, predictive modelling, etc. used in making decisions related to talent and learning?

L&D's responsibility is not only to impact change but also make results measurable and visible. The study reports a frail LHI of **60** on this dimension. It scores the second lowest across all eight dimensions surveyed.

Insights:



Organizations are keen to see the ROI on their learning spend; however, most organizations still rely on traditional metrics viz. usage and satisfaction scores on learning programs. They lack formulating or capturing data against outcomes-based metrics such as the impact on individual performance, employee engagement, team effectiveness, business process improvement, etc. This hinders an organization's ability to enhance performance, improve behavioral skills, and significantly contribute to any real business impact.

#3 L&D Policies & Processes

Learning processes involve the aggregation, creation, curation, collection, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge. They include experimentation to develop and test new products and services; intelligence gathering to keep track of competitive, customer, and technological trends; disciplined

analysis and interpretation to solve problems; and education and training to develop employees.

For holistic talent development, policies and processes must continuously reinforce everyday learning and its value in relation to growth, advancement and performance. The study reports a modest LHI of **66** on this dimension.

Insights:

26% of the organizations report content is created and curated internally on a regular basis. Policies and processes encourage active experimentation and are mostly tolerant of failure. L&D is strongly linked with performance management, career pathing and succession planning.

5% of the organizations report internal creation and curation of high quality learning, ensuring an optimal balance of variety, volume and velocity. Policies and processes always encourage active experimentation and are tolerant of failure. L&D is seamlessly linked with all other relevant HR systems and processes.

The L&D function cannot work in isolation. It plays a crucial role in talent acquisition, onboarding, performance management, promotion, job rotation and succession planning. The connectedness of learning with HR processes enables organizations to create and curate knowledge for all key 'touch points' across the entire employee lifecycle.

#4 L&D Portfolio

The type and complexity of solutions & services the function is entrusted with viz. performance consulting, knowledge management, change management, instructional design, business intelligence, content development etc.

The portfolio of solutions & services L&D provides is a critical determinant of the overall learning health of an organization. The study reports a healthy LHI of 76 on this dimension. This dimension scores the second-highest amongst all eight dimensions surveyed.

Insights:

47% of organizations report that their L&D function challenges the business on requirements, leads content development and advises on opportunities to enhance business performance by addressing skilling needs through a mix of traditional and modern modalities. The range of learning services rendered by the team largely address technical and behavioral skill gaps within the organization, keeping employee experience considerations in mind.



Conglomerates report an LHI of 86—the highest score on this dimension. IT/ITES ranks as a close second with an LHI of 83.

In many organizations, L&D is still tactical and operational. A few have raised their game by continuously reconfiguring the learning ecosystem, enabling key performance outcomes through consulting, orchestrating and managing knowledge flows, driving change in learner mindset and designing learning experiences suited to the modern-day learner. They actively use instructional design to power specific learning outcomes, mine business as well as employee data to improve the quality of decision making and curate content well-suited to the organizational context.

#5 Learner Experience

Experience embodies a ‘consumerized’ approach that is hyper-personalized and multi-modal.

The key to enhancing learner experience is giving learners the freedom to consume the knowledge ‘Anytime – Anywhere,’ from a wide range of content resources tailored to their learning needs, styles, preferences and interests. The study reports an average LHI of **63** on this dimension.

Insights:



IT/ITES sector reports the highest LHI of 76 on Learner Experience.



BFSI scores the lowest with an LHI of 55.

The growing popularity of Learning Experience Platforms (LXPs) can be attributed to their ability to tailor experiences suited to learners’ preferences, interests, and needs with easy access to content that is displayed in an easy-to-navigate pattern at all times. AI is leveraged to pull data quickly and easily, sort through demographics like age, gender, culture, level in the organization, educational background, previous learning experiences, patterns of employee behavior, learning needs and goals. These insights are used to create intelligent and smarter-positioned content that’s adaptive, intuitive and responsive to a learner’s personal journey, and provides for enhanced learner experience.

#6 Learning Culture

What importance does the organization place on learning? Who takes accountability, and what are the consequences? How are learners recognized and rewarded? What roles do leaders, managers and team members play?

Learning culture is a collection of beliefs, processes and practices that enable individuals to learn and grow continuously. The study reports an LHI of 64 on this dimension.

Insights:



IT/ITES and Conglomerates tie on this dimension with the highest LHI of 77



BFSI ranks the lowest with an LHI of 57

Organizations should drive learning initiatives intrinsically to ensure commitment over compliance. The value of continuous learning needs to be reinforced through a comprehensive, organization-wide R&R framework that incentivizes learners across all learning programs where individuals experience work as an opportunity for self-discovery and corresponding growth.

#7 Tools & Technologies

What technologies are being used and to what extent in leading, enabling, managing and supporting L&D as well as the ‘learner’? How are learning technologies integrated with enterprise systems and with one another?

Technology platforms and applications are significant enablers for just-in-time learning. The need of the hour is for organizations to evangelize technology to lead, manage and support the needs of the learner. The study reports a weak LHI of 50 on this dimension. Amongst all eight dimensions, this dimension scores the lowest.

Insights:

37% of organizations do not leverage technology to create, deploy and manage learning solutions.

23% of organizations use basic tools & technologies to deploy and manage learning solutions.

The advent of new technologies and tools has been at the forefront of the learning revolution. A Learning Experience Platform (LXP) addresses the inherent inadequacies of the traditional Learning Management System (LMS), which was primarily built with the objective of controlling and managing learning. Though still considered core to the learning tech stack as it serves as a 'system of record' for training administration, tracking, and reporting compliance, organizations have added LXP as an intelligent platform to drive and enable a learner-centric approach, resulting in a shift from a 'system of record' to a 'system of intelligence'. The need for a sophisticated integration framework is evident, which allows seamless knowledge flow between systems and tools, delivering a single user interface with the primary objective of enhancing learner experience and engagement.

#8 L&D Competence

At what level of proficiency is the L&D function operating within an organization? What are their strengths and areas of development?

Probably the most fool-proof way to make learning impactful and improve organizational learning health

is to invest in L&D competence. The study reports an LHI of 69 on this dimension.

Insights:

32%

of organizations report that competencies required for executing L&D are well-defined and most members of the L&D team role model learning behaviors by soliciting opportunities as well as by evangelizing learning platforms to boost adoption. The L&D function often leverages latest developments to deliver a superior learner experience and addresses the current and future skilling needs of the organization.

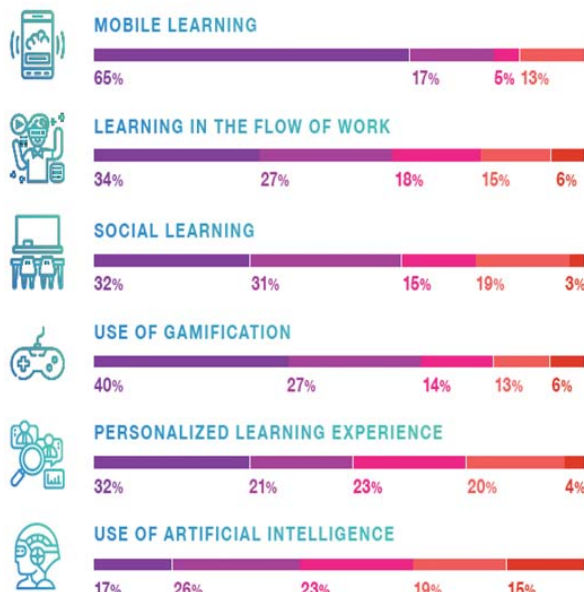
19%

of organizations report that competencies required for executing L&D are loosely defined and some L&D team members role model learning behaviors in an ad-hoc manner. The L&D function largely focuses on establishing efficiencies within the existing framework of systems and modalities, sometimes leveraging latest developments, but not always in a structured manner.

The L&D team should regularly scan the learning horizon, leverage the latest developments, use insights to tweak the Talent Strategy and address the current and future skilling needs in collaboration with the business to meet organizational goals.

Future Forecast: Technology

The technological transformation will continue to act as a primary business disruptor with far-reaching implications on workplaces. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote working and digital learning tools. Work is now being conducted 'Anywhere and Anytime'. Workplaces are also fast adapting to this new order and are being redesigned to suit the needs of the fast-growing remote workforce. There has been a shift from the traditional classroom-based ILT (Instructor-Led Training) towards digitized platforms that empower learners to leverage learning resources on their own discretion and terms.



Already under implementation

Planned for implementation within the next year

Planned for implementation within the next 2 years

Might get implemented, but unsure of timeline

Haven't thought about it

Top Technology Trends

1. Mobile Learning

Mainstream and here to stay

- Mobile ('Anytime - Anywhere') learning has emerged as the top tech trend, with 65% of the organizations already implementing it and 17% planning to implement it within the next year.
- Mobile learning is being implemented in 3 out of 4 Conglomerates and by 89% of organizations in the Manufacturing & Engineering sector.

2. Learning in the Flow of Work

No longer a buzzword

- Most organizations recognize that for learning to really happen, it must be made available within the systems of productivity/business applications which are used by employees.
- 34% of the organizations surveyed are already implementing this while 27% plan for its implementation in the next year.
- 44% of organizations in the Manufacturing & Engineering sector have already made learning available and accessible to their employees at the point that they need it to do their jobs, while the exact same percentage of organizations in IT/ ITES has planned for its implementation in the next year.

3. Social Learning

Building bridges

- Organizations see immense value in adding social learning tools to the mix as it connects learning to the daily lives of the learners and also builds social cohesion.
- 78% of organizations are already implementing it or have planned its implementation in the next one to two years.
- Nearly 40% of Conglomerates and organizations in Life Sciences, Pharmaceuticals & Healthcare have already adopted social learning. However, 17% of organizations in the Retail & Consumer Goods sector are uncertain about its timeline for implementation,

and 11% have not thought about imbibing social learning as a probable remedy to their learning needs.

4. Use of Gamification

Gaining popularity

- Gamification in learning is a pleasant reality as 40% of organizations report its implementation and 27% have planned for it in the next year.
- Gamification is popular across industries with 56% of organizations in Manufacturing & Engineering and half of the organizations in Life Sciences, Pharmaceuticals & Healthcare sectors already implementing it.

5. Personalized Learning Experience

Front & Centre

- 32% of organizations are already personalizing learning experiences, while 44% of them plan to do so within the next one or two years.
- On the one hand, 41% of organizations in BFSI report that its implementation is planned in the next two years while on the other, 30% of organizations in Life Sciences, Pharmaceuticals & Healthcare do not have a stipulated timeline for its implementation.

6. Use of Artificial Intelligence

The future is here

- With nearly 50% of organizations planning for the use of AI in the next one to two years, the future of learning looks exciting!
- 56% of organizations in IT/ITES plan to implement AI in learning in 2020, and 40% of organizations in Life Sciences, Pharmaceuticals & Healthcare have planned it for 2021.
- However, in relation to the other technologies, the present adoption of AI in learning is the lowest with only 16% of organizations reporting its use. 

More Than A Motto

Diversity and inclusion are all about engaging the top leaders, getting them to believe, adopt and model the right behaviour so that it trickles down to everyone below them.

BY SAKSHI SOOD



An equal world is an enabled world. We are all responsible for our own thoughts and actions. But choosing to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden our perceptions, and celebrate women's achievements is a conscious decision. Together, we can help create a gender equal world.

This year the theme for the International Women's Day, which was celebrated on 8th March 2020, was #EachforEqual. But let us take a moment to ponder whether equality is a women's issue or a business issue.

The business case for Diversity & Inclusion (D&I)

1. Diversity fosters a more creative and innovative workforce. A diverse workforce is better suited to capture

a greater share of the consumer market.

2. Recruiting from a diverse pool of candidates means a more qualified workforce which helps businesses avoid employee turnover costs.

3. Research studies increasingly show that D&I can help increase a business' bottom line, drive innovation, attract more talent, and create more opportunities for growth.

4. Collaborating and engaging through initiatives such as resource groups strengthens team bonds and esprit de corps.

Gender equality is essential for communities to thrive. The race is on for a gender-equal boardroom, a gender-equal government,

gender-equal media coverage, gender-equal workplaces, gender-equal sports coverage, and better gender equality in health and wealth, but there is a long road ahead of all of us.

“Gender equality is essential for communities to thrive. And the race is on for a gender-equal boardroom, a gender-equal government, gender-equal media coverage, and gender-equal workplaces”

How are organisations fostering the D&I agenda?

Most of the early D&I programmes were created to right organisational wrongs such as blatant discriminatory hiring and promotion practices, by focusing on legal compliance. Their notion of promoting diversity was some combination of training seminars, speaker programmes, heritage month celebrations, and parade sponsorships. But as has been proven with time, such an approach almost always fails to generate sustained engagement. D&I efforts must shift from being HR owned to being owned by senior leadership teams. Diversity and inclusion are really about engaging the top leaders, getting them to believe, adopt and model the right behaviour, so that it trickles down to everyone below them.

A refreshing perspective on D&I

Diversity' and 'inclusion' are not just abstract concepts — they are core values and strategic business imperatives that deliver business results. Global Diversity and Inclusion drive businesses by breaking down barriers and changing mindsets so that the

powerful potential of employees can be unleashed.

Some classic D&I mistakes:

1. Going for the easy fix.
3. Promising something impossible.
4. Going for best-in-class prematurely.
5. Focusing on representation and not on the pipeline.

A closer look at gender diversity

As per research by SHL, the global leader in Talent Assessment, accelerating gender diversity increases the potential leader talent pool, and women are better prepared to face the most urgent and impactful business challenges. And when it comes to Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ) scores, women surpass men in many dimensions that are positively correlated with performance.

Gender Diversity: Mind the Gap

Typically, women are under-represented in leadership, partly due to the subconscious bias on what makes an effective leader that emphasise more male-oriented traits. Once you consider the traits associated with success in specific contexts – women are likely to stand out on more success dimensions than men.

Three misconceptions that hinder diversity efforts

1. The playing field is already level
2. Men have innate advantages over women in leadership roles
3. To have more women at the top one needs to hire more women

Are we really measuring our progress on the D&I front?

Diversity and Inclusion Index is designed to measure the relative performance of companies against factors that define diverse and inclusive workplaces. Nowadays, there are multiple companies who

benchmark D&I best practices across companies and create an index of diversity.

What works in building an inclusive culture?

- **A top-down approach is not enough:** Top-down approaches drive compliance but not commitment. It is imperative that everyone in the organisation, right from senior leaders to frontline employees, understand their role in creating the company culture. It is critical to identify differences in employee experience and values across the organisation so that the change can be made to be relevant for everyone.

- **Establish a sense of belonging for everyone:** For each individual to bring his or her best self forward, a sense of belonging must first be established. Feeling like a part of the organisational family helps in generating greater engagement and creativity in the workplace.

- **Forget 'fit' and focus on helping individuals thrive:** The inequities in society can easily become embedded in an organisation — optimising to hire, train, and reward people who "fit." Creating a culture where every individual can contribute their full potential requires investigating the systems and processes in an organisation to uncover sore spots and blind spots, and then finding ways to reimagine them.

- **Quotas do not automate inclusion:** Hiring goals may boost diversity numbers, but this will not automatically create an inclusive culture. Very often, leaders focus diversity and inclusion efforts disproportionately on the employee pipeline, but the employee experience continues far beyond an offer letter. To retain and nurture top talent, it is critical to take an honest look at the end-to-end employee experience, with an eye toward creating conditions that promote inclusion on a daily basis and designing ways to measure the



impact. Unfortunately, this is a highly ignored aspect of inclusion.

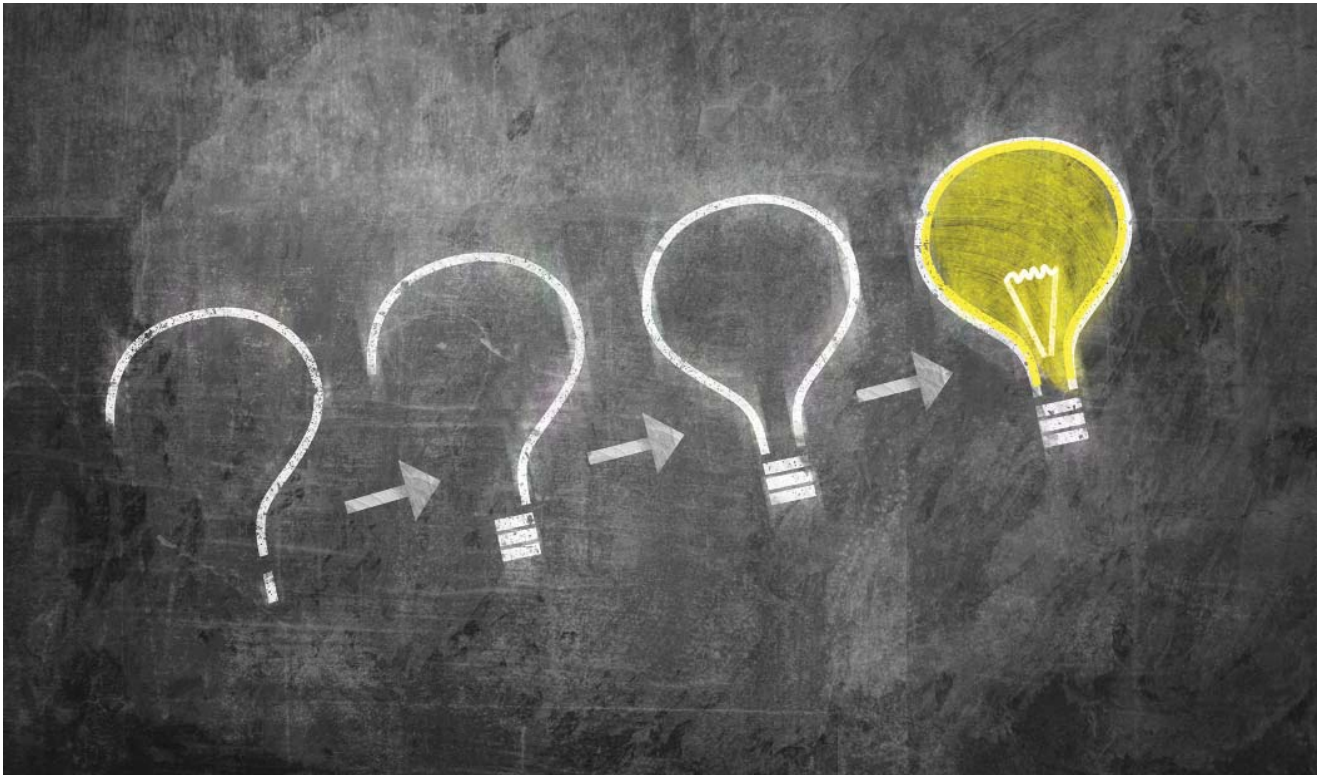
- **Inclusion is an ongoing activity:** It is not enough to merely teach about inclusion and be done with it. Like any form of behaviour change, inclusion requires individuals to identify key moments in which to build new habits or micro-behaviours. And when these habits are put into action in an environment that supports honest conversations and healthy tension, real change becomes possible.

Time to build a gender equal world

#EachforEqual is about 'Collective Individualism'. We are all parts of a whole and our individual actions, behaviours and mindsets can have an impact on our larger society. Collectively, we can make the change happen. Collectively, we can each help to create a gender equal world. While the change will take time but we all need to choose to be **#EachforEqual**. 

About the Author

Sakshi Sood is an HR professional, currently works for a pharma major in Mumbai. She has worked with reputed organisations across different sectors in the past. She is an Electronics Engineering graduate from NIT, Surat with MBA in HR from SIBM, Pune. Sakshi is an avid reader, she takes keen interest in the current happenings in HR world.



Coping With The New Times

When the going gets unpredictable, the ones who are change-agile get going!

BY NAVNEET TRIKHA

The unprecedented situation that mankind is experiencing has left us unnerved and gasping for solutions. Not only is nature making us aware of the increasing relevance of staying safe, maintaining hygiene, investing in health and pausing a bit, but it is also compelling us to redraw personal and professional strategies at a scale never envisaged before.

In many instances, the very basic tenets of businesses are experiencing tremors of the highest order. The struggle to manage the COVID-19 crisis and to find quick-fix solutions on the one hand and ensure business

continuity planning on the other has assumed prioritised focus for almost all the organisations. Many coping mechanisms are being dissected at the strategy table, and a variety of responses are being explored.

Learnings from the 2008 recession have shown us that organisations which stayed connected with their customers during troubled times were able to rise much higher and faster as the economies started bouncing back. The responsibilities of employees in customer-facing functions, to this effect, need to be built in by the leadership teams. While it would be too soon and

“In many instances, the very basic tenets of businesses are experiencing tremors of the highest order. The struggle to manage the COVID-19 crisis and to find quick-fix solutions on the one hand and ensure business continuity planning on the other has assumed prioritised focus for almost all the organisations.”

straitjacketed to adopt a single perspective, consumers and employees remain a common denominator for all such approaches.

While understanding consumer preferences in the new normal way remains a challenge, it is essential to follow a detailed approach on the employee front—an approach that involves continually and intensely a) speaking from the heart, b) connecting with employees, c) reassuring them that they are our first priority, d) reassuring them that the organisation cares for them, and e) telling them that we are listening with empathy.

A few measures that walk the talk on this precinct involve initiatives like putting protocols with ‘Safety First’ as the focus, which means proactively initiating work from home to minimise risk to employees and their families, taking extra caution, improving the speed of response, and ensuring collective responsibility toward each other. Other measures are investing and enabling technology that seamlessly connects people and teams, actively encouraging self-isolation for people even with an extended potential of contact with the infection, and, wherever possible, proactively ensuring employees, who are working away, are sent back to be with their families, within the government lockdown regulations, of course.

Hopefully, all companies have made COVID-19 SPOCS for each location to ensure focused, connected support with measures like a daily survey on the health and well-being to track employees’ safety and any emerging possible supportive action that may be required. Leaders at all levels have a challenging role to play now. They will have to establish contact with their respective teams, as well as ensure business continuity and personally connect at different levels. Communication has become paramount, with special emphasis on reassuring communication from top leaders of the organisation. Senior leadership focus is actively transcending towards People pillar,

along with managing business risks and scenario planning.

The HR function has the most important role to play, and in many cases, are informally and proactively connecting with employees and responding one-on-one to any concerns, sharing best engagement practices across locations, and working on guidelines for safety once regular operations resume. This time is also a great opportunity to lay special emphasis on self-driven learning and development through relevant courses, articles, webinars, and encouraging individual capability building and to give L&D a new vigour and dimension.

New situations also have their own set of revelations, like giving birth to informal channels and support systems within the organisation. People are sharing that at an individual level, some are learning to better connect with themselves, being aware of their own apprehensions and aspirations, and discovering their inner resources. At a professional level, some are exploring self-leadership, their approach towards inter-personal work-based relationships, and the balance between independence and collaboration, centred around organisational objectives.

There are some interesting insights too—the self-concept of being an ideal parent is being revisited, engaging kids has come up as a big challenge, the work-life accord has developed as a new learning curve (despite a set of work-from-home protocols and guidelines), and team leaders’ empathy towards their team and their individual reality as a potent dimension is also becoming visible. 

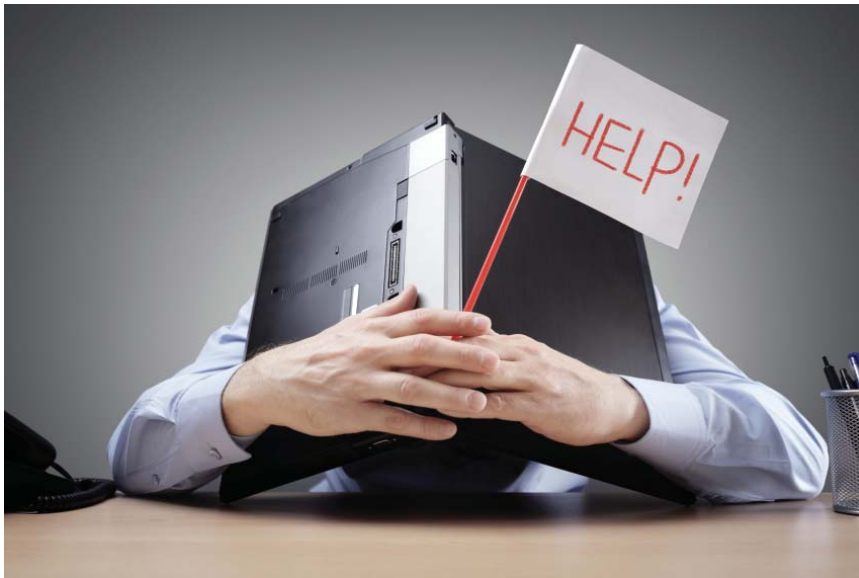
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COVID Reaction: Calendar Overload

Lines have blurred not only between work and family but also between time zones, geographies, functions, and roles, to name a few. All these are causes for calendar overload.

BY SWARNA SUDHA SELVARAJ



I'm not finding time for myself. I am either joining meetings or sending reports or homeschooling or managing household chores. I am struggling to draw that line that I used to have very clearly earlier. I miss those one-hour workouts, some interesting reads, time to get creative with some new concepts, and fun time with family. I have tried my best to understand what has changed, but I'm unable to manage this," confessed a professional after weeks of adjusting to the new circumstances posed today. On the one hand, some have reacted to COVID-19 well and have managed their schedules admirably, but for many,

the current situation has caused a calendar explosion or overload, and the voice at the beginning of this paragraph is a representative example.

As to whether the number of online meetings has increased, the answer has been predominantly yes. This fact cuts across employee levels and functions, but it's truest for leaders, HR and IT professionals.

Could we assume that productivity has gone up? The answer has been mixed. I think it also depends on the nature and segment of the work, as well as on the teams' and the individual's working style. There is no scientific study measuring productivity levels, so this is still a grey area.

The unconscious blurring of the lines between work and life is a reality now and is not a good symptom for the mental and physical wellbeing of employees. It is also not a good sign for the organisation because the creativity and productivity might go for a toss.

Current Situation: Blurring Lines, Loading the Calendars

Lines have blurred not only between work and family but also between time zones, geographies, functions, and roles, to name a few. All these are causes for calendar overload.

Blurred time zones

In global organisations, from an employee perspective, meetings start early in the morning, and there are meetings later in the evening as well, to accommodate different time zones. Meetings have increased, and the time for execution outside meeting hours is almost nil, sometimes leading to frustration.

Blurred geographical boundaries

Cross-geographical teams were formed in global organisations to proactively resolve issues. This has been very effective and has proven to be much-needed, as centralisation to manage the crisis was essential. While some organisations have moved to a decentralised model once again, many still continue with the same number of meetings, leading to calendar overload.

Blurred functional and role boundaries

Professionals continue to do their specialised functional role and are also expected to support generic crisis management. There is definitely a blurred line there, and if an empathic distribution of available time and activities is not done, it can lead to calendar overload.

Moreover, in many organisations, voluntary networks and cross-

functional teams were formed, and members were scaling up to handle the crisis. This role was in addition to their regular tasks. These crisis teams were run by leaders who also worked on operational activities along with other members, which was very inspiring to start with. But as we progress, there is more generation of ideas leading to more work. This leaves the calendars overloaded for everyone across levels, adding to the work performed in their regular roles.

Overwhelming invitations

There are overwhelming invitations to multiple engagement initiatives, policy awareness sessions, infrastructure setup guideline meetings, learning programmes, wellbeing initiatives, and many more activities on the calendar. Anxiety and personal interests play around, and too many accepted invitations lead to calendar overload.

The future could be better: Help people help themselves

The social work philosophy of “helping people help themselves” holds up very well at this juncture. It is all about having all the doors displayed so that employees can decide which doors to open when. The keys are to be with them so that they can decide when to explore and benefit from unlocking the doors, based on their priorities and interests. Some doors could be already open and could lead employees to those that are closed and are optional. It is best to remember that “one solution doesn’t fit all”.

The open doors

This situation is there to stay for a bit longer than expected. Many organisations have already set their direction towards more remote working even when the situation returns to normal. So, it is crucial to have all the **IT system support** required for the employees set up seamlessly, as

this becomes very important in a remote work environment.

New and revised policies on using internet at home could emerge to support employees working from home. At the same time, there may be client requirements of tracking employees’ activities through several mechanisms, mainly in IT consulting organisations. It is important to create awareness and make employees understand the need for it rather than a feeling that they are being tracked due to mistrust. If hacking can be ethical for all good reasons, this is similar to that and could be termed **“ethical stalking”**.

The closed doors with keys

The doors of learning offerings, wellbeing offerings (physical and mental), and counselling support on job security and other related concerns could be created in the form of virtual engagement calendar that provides a view to everything, but the choice whether or not to move it to their own calendar is left with the employee. Also, those responsible for working out the calendars must make sure there is no overkill of anything.

“On the one hand, some have reacted to COVID-19 well and have managed their schedules admirably, but for many, the current situation has caused a calendar explosion or overload.”

Trust is the key to creativity and productivity

At an operational employee level, setting clear goals with deliverable timelines and having a good way to measure is crucial. Daily



management of activities or checking progress every day could become very annoying for employees. Giving them options to choose from could provide more autonomy.

At an organisational level, transparency in the communication of salary increments, promotions, job-related changes would build trust and would enable easier and faster decisions. Policies to support employees in the new normal would result in higher trust that leads to an increase in creativity and productivity.

With all this effort, there is a high possibility that there would be streamlined and not overloaded calendars. **HC**

About the Author

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Getting Closer In The Post-COVID World

It is imperative for an organisation to drive home the Inclusion and Belongingness (I&B) agenda in order to save employees from the adverse physical and mental conditions to which they are exposed.

BY DR. SAUNDARYA RAJESH

Prehistoric humans began tracking the movement of the Sun, and this emerged as the determinant of all their activities. We now have a new visitor on our radar who has become the central point of our existence. However hard it is to follow this new guest, it is, unfortunately, the sole reality. Among the zillions of articles on the internet, COVID19 has gained prominent space – covering both good and bad about the disease – indicating the burden of an uncertain future for millions of people.

“Among the zillions of articles on the internet, COVID19 has gained prominent space – covering both good and bad about the disease – indicating the burden of an uncertain future for millions of people.”

Even though leaders around the world have acknowledged the positive impact of remote working that has seamlessly enabled their BCPs, job security and stability seem to be in a state of fuzzy logic. From hoaxes affirming the repetition of the Great Depression to reality confirming the actual intensity of the cases, it is only natural for the layperson to absorb the worst of it



all. During such a panic phase, it is imperative for an organisation to drive home the Inclusion and Belongingness (I&B) agenda, to save employees from the adverse physical and mental conditions to which they are exposed.

Why I&B is critical in COVID-19 times?

VUCA as intense as the ongoing pandemic is unprecedented. Despite organisations implementing successful BCPs, the crisis has brought out yet another challenge, which does not come under the criteria of functional or technical. It is nothing but the essential strand or foundation of any conglomerate - human resources management.

With studies confirming an increased rate of psychological

pressure among employees, who are anticipating an impromptu send-off, several organisations are already keeping vigil to bring the tension down to incorporate a healthy and inclusive virtual working environment.

The top three fears in the minds of today's workforce globally are:

- % Health - Physical & Mental
- % Job - Security & Stability
- % Finance - Availability & Continuity

Organisations, small and large, are on track, helping to curb the issue of insecurity among their employees. A majority of organisations have started emphasising on utilising Emotional Intelligence (EI) more than financial support, since the need of the hour is to breathe in a feeling

of belongingness. And hence, they have been tirelessly working towards implementing various people management practices to reassure their support and care.

By being the ally and having an ally: Sometimes we need someone to just listen. The COVID time has been intensely terrible for those who have been living apart from their families, and financial constraints get added on to the pile. An act of assurance and extending the required help will enable a positive outlook on the organisation and render peace of mind to the employee. Offering financial stability or rolling out benefits, in the manner in the way in which Ally Financial has acted is appreciable. The finance company spared no time and sent home those employees who were categorised as vulnerable as per CDC guidelines, with full salaries. A similar, commendable initiative was carried out by ITC Hotels, wherein each HR Manager checks on at least 10 employees every day.

By bringing the We together: With virtual collaboration and communication ruling the front, engagement and socialising have never been so easier. Initiatives by McDonald's India and Panasonic of bringing the employees closer through multiple virtual programmes like masterclasses, quizzes etc. was aimed at keeping the team productively engaged.

By being fair in work distribution: An equity-driven environment is always a healthy place to work in. The less feasibility of remote working for some has unbalanced work and pay. However, certain companies also went the extra mile to help their employees during the time of need. SRK exports, a leading diamond manufacturer, paid its entire workforce, including contract workers, full salary for March. Its combined workforce actually comes to around 6000.

By bonding with an inclusive mindset: Employees may come from different backgrounds and at present, bear unpredictable mindsets. This is the time during which inclusive leadership plays a critical role. Everyone is vulnerable to the unpredicted situation and it is essential for a leader to understand this diverse population and their needs. The pledge by Paytm's CEO to contribute two months of his salary for his employees, and Amazon paying two-weeks pay to those quarantined or diagnosed with COVID are some praiseworthy initiatives.

“A majority of organisations have started emphasising on utilising Emotional Intelligence (EI) more than financial support, since the need of the hour is to breathe in a feeling of belongingness.”

Reverse the VUCA – and emphasise it!

VUCA needs to be managed with Inclusion even more than before. Cited below is a simple acronym to ensure how the VUCA we know (Volatility-Uncertainty-Complexity-Ambiguity) can be reversed in our respective environments to Vision-Understanding-Clarity-Agility :

- **Vision:** Articulation of Vision to a greater extent becomes the responsibility of the leader. Unilever's Sanjiv Mehta addressed the organisation to reiterate the vision of the company, once again unifying the organisation's energies.
- **Understanding:** The Vedanta Group, a 100 Best company for women, has not declared a pay cut, and has in fact gone ahead with the promised increments and

bonuses for the financial year. The understanding displayed by the company in assisting with the average employee's financial situation has created a great amount of pride and belongingness.

- **Clarity:** Accenture's Ellyn J. Shook worked with other leaders to ensure that the core business needs were immediately addressed. The clarity in addressing business problems and communicating the same to all stakeholders has resulted in Accenture worldwide reaffirming its raison d'être to customers around the world.
- **Agility:** The Tata group worked on a work-from-home policy in record time and ensured that every single member of its large business expanse, was aware of how the business would function and proceed. The rapid response to COVID-19 in terms of ensuring that employees felt the coming together of the leaders and the quick decisions taken, underscored the agility of the organisation.

Emphasising inclusion and establishing belongingness is crucial at a time like this. When every leader –designated or otherwise, decides to wear I&B with pride, reach out to as many people as possible, and just give the comfort of the thought – “We are all together in this!”, the post-Covid world will be one which is more inclusive. 

About the Author

Dr. Saundarya Rajesh is an inspiring speaker and a very sought-after D&I strategist who has forever challenged the inequities in the workplace. A pioneer in the space of gender diversity & inclusion in the workplace, her work is quite unparalleled in India. Dr. Saundarya, through her organisation, which specialises in Diversity and Inclusion, has helped several companies hire thousands of women professionals.



Enhancing Experiences

Instead of looking at the enhancement of employee experience as a liability, organisations will be best served if they see it as an opportunity to work with highly motivated individuals who can make a difference.

BY **AJAY TREHAN**

If you are wondering why Employee Experience Enhancement is suddenly a hot topic in 2020, here's something to chew on - talent has gotten scarcer than ever. Rising global unemployment trends might indicate a war for jobs, but as far as employers are concerned, it is going to be a battle to attract and retain the right talent which can impact the bottom line. Research has vouched that top talent will be eight times more productive, whereas the "failure to attract and retain top talent" is on the top of the minds of CEOs today.

Even as the importance of Employee Experience Enhancement becomes clear, it is not easy to get it right simply because organisations

are slow or reluctant to spend time, money, and effort in understanding what today's talent wants. Gallup, a Washington-based analytics and advisory company, has reported that engaged employees are more likely to improve customer relationships, with a resulting 20% increase in sales. Trillions of dollars are spent worldwide in understanding customer journeys vis-à-vis sophisticated tools and technology, but employee journeys, if at all, receive little attention. Diana Dosik, Partner, Boston Consulting Group, has disclosed in her Ted Talk that business leaders spend less than 5% of their time in understanding what truly drives talent. This is despite the fact that happy employees lead to happier customers.

Since the understanding of what talent really wants is limited, most organisations working towards enhancing employee engagement mistake it for:

- A perk-led initiative
- An exercise concerning only current employees
- Limited to employee engagement
- A time-bound activity to be facilitated by a tool, an app or a system
- The job of the HR department
- Only beneficial to employees and not employers

What talent truly wants?

People's experience at workplaces today is a crucial factor that contributes to their overall happiness. This contrasts with the baby boomers who primarily expected their work to meet ends and pay bills, and hardly viewed it as rewarding. Millennials and Gen Z expect their workplaces to match their consumer experience i.e. customised, userfriendly, seamless and meaningful. Similar to how

customers look beyond the product/service to a brand's reputation and reviews, social media presence and supply chain, employees also pay attention to wider needs. In contrast to the earlier days, employee-employer relations today is a two-way street where both parties want the best for themselves, and at the least, expect the other to meet them midway. Today's Talent wants employers to recognise, facilitate, and even celebrate moments that truly matter in their journey, starting at recruitment and ending with separation.

“Employer branding initiatives by many forwardlooking companies target prospects with strong brand messages at platforms candidates best engage with. This is to generate awareness, interest, and eventually consideration.”

What's working for organisations?

It is not surprising that the top trends around improving the experience of employees today are digitalisation and technology-led. Organisations are relying on data and analytics-driven decisions to not only attract the best-fit talent, but also to nurture longterm relationships with the talent which was lost to competition. Employer branding initiatives by many forwardlooking companies target prospects with strong brand messages at platforms candidates best engage with. This is to generate awareness, interest, and eventually consideration. Falling under the umbrella of Recruitment Marketing and Candidate Relationship Management, these

initiatives, rooted in technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, are like the proverbial killing of two birds with one stone. They are leading to better workforce planning, skills gap analysis, assessment and retention and are saving costs big time.

Digital Onboarding - Making first few experiences count

For today's tech-driven generation that highly vies for convenience, the first few interactions with the brand impact the overall brand impression. Interviews, form filling and onboarding are processes during which a candidate's mind registers many impressions and derives multiple conclusions - consciously and subconsciously.

Onboarding the new employees digitally so that all the departments are on the same page and all actions associated with hiring are defined, allocated and completed on schedule is working miraculously to affect employee retention. A 2019 report titled Trends and Applications in Employee Onboarding by SilkRoad Technology revealed that organisations with a clearly outlined onboarding process enjoyed 82% higher retention of fresh recruits as well as a 70% uptick in productivity. This makes sense when one considers that filling fifty forms before they get to their workstations is not exactly the kind of beginning that today's talent anticipates at a new job. Additionally, by relieving the HR and hiring managers from the manual and laborious tasks associated with onboarding, one can allow them to create more customised and personal welcome experiences for employees.

Aligning an organisation's learning and development agenda with its employees' needs is bound to fan the feeling that employers 'get' their aspirations. This is especially true in today's time



when skills are becoming obsolete in a matter of a few years. Because they realise that meaningful work matters to talent, successful organisations today communicate and clearly substantiate how an individual's job directly affects the bottom line.

Instead of looking at the enhancement of employee experience as a liability, organisations will be best served when it is seen as an opportunity to work with highly motivated individuals who can make a difference. It is also crucial to understand that while a great employee experience today might be technology-driven, it really is about making our workplaces more humane. Since every individual is designed to work in their own best interest, it makes sense for organisations to uncover these interests, water, feed and align them to organisational objectives so that they contribute to the growth of individuals as well as employers. 

About the Author

Ajay Trehan is an entrepreneur from India with over 26 years of experience in building and operating successful businesses. He founded a data solution company in August 2005 which today offers authentication and onboarding solutions. And through his vision he has managed to nurture it from a largely services-based organisation to a highly tech-enabled business model.



Covid-19 And HR Issues

BY K.V.SINGH

The national level lockdown announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs (“MHA”) on March 24, 2020 and subsequent extensions thereto, has led to much confusion amongst HR managers. The first in case was the advisory dated March 20, 2020, which appeared to be in the nature of a recommendation. Thereafter, MHA proceeded to issue an order dated March 29, 2020 under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (“DMA”).

On account of COVID-19, most employers have allowed their employees to work from home. However, due to productivity loss,

employers have explored the option of reducing the number of working days in a week, encouraging employees to apply for leave on one additional day every week, etc. to reduce their financial burden in these rather challenging times. Reducing the number of working days could help the employer in setting off the productivity loss against accumulated paid leaves without reducing the take home salary of the employee. However, on account of differing interpretation of the MHA order dated March 29, 2020, employers have generally avoided taking such measures without the consent of the employee concerned.

Further, there is much confusion in respect of whether service providers/contractors who provide services such as housekeeping, security, etc. through their workmen are to be paid or not for the duration of the lockdown. The obligations of the service recipient as the principal employer under the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970, also arises only when the contract workers have worked at the establishment. The straight logic being that when no services have been provided then there ought to be no payment obligation. Further, the order dated March 29, 2020, states that *“All the employers, be it in the Industry or in the shops and commercial establishments, shall make payment of wages **of their workers**, at their workplaces, on the due date, without any deduction, for the period their establishments are under closure during the lockdown.”* From the point of view of the service providers, if they are responsible to make payment for the lockdown period to their employees who were working prior to the lockdown at the client's office, the client ought to pay their bills since there is no other way to pay the workmen in terms of the order dated March 29, 2020.

The interpretation that the order applies only to employees on rolls is fortified by an advisory dated April 22, 2020, issued by the Ministry of Labour & Employment. The advisory recommends payment to contractors so as to enable the contractors to pay salaries to the outsourced workers. This subsequent advisory dated April 22, 2020, would not have been necessary unless the order dated March 29 meant otherwise. However, the States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have passed notifications specifically including an obligation upon the principal employer to pay for the third party employed contract labour.

As per section 51 (b) of the DMA, whoever, without any reasonable cause, refuses to comply with any



directions passed thereunder, is liable to be punished with an imprisonment or fine or both. Further, Section 3 of the Epidemic Disease Act, 1897 prescribes a punishment under S. 188 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 in case of disobedience of any order duly promulgated by a public servant.

Various writ petitions have been filed before the Supreme Court seeking quashing of the order dated March 29, 2020 (*Nagreeka Exports Limited Vs. Union of India & Ors.*, *Ficus Pax Private Limited Vs. Union of India*, *Ludhiana Hand Tools Association Vs. Union of India*, etc.). No interim relief has been granted. Adjudication will take time. 

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Business Lessons From Busy Bees

A self managed team leverages on every team member's unique skills to get things done. It tends to be resilient and can react to changes rapidly, and outputs of such teams are of higher quality.

BY RAJESH NAVANEETHAM AND HARINI SREENIVASAN

Social distancing, enforced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is playing a major role in our lives today. And this has made us take some time to observe the activity around us. We are even trying to pick a few lessons from Mother Nature. In such trying times, a little girl, found a beehive growing on a tree trunk when she looked outside her window, and asked her mother, “Mom, the bees are ever so busy, who tells them what to do?” Seizing the opportunity, the mother, a successful project manager, explained to her how bees are the perfect example of self-managed teams. “The bees keep the common goal of the hive as a priority and work towards it. If one bee is suffering or falling behind, the others step up and do the work, making sure that collective productivity is never reduced”, said the mother. Forced to stay indoors, she apparently had been reading the book, “Bee Time: Lessons from the Hive”¹ by Mark L. Winston.

The Lessons to be learnt

As we attempt to build sustainable organisations of the future, there are quite a few lessons that can be learnt from the life of bees.

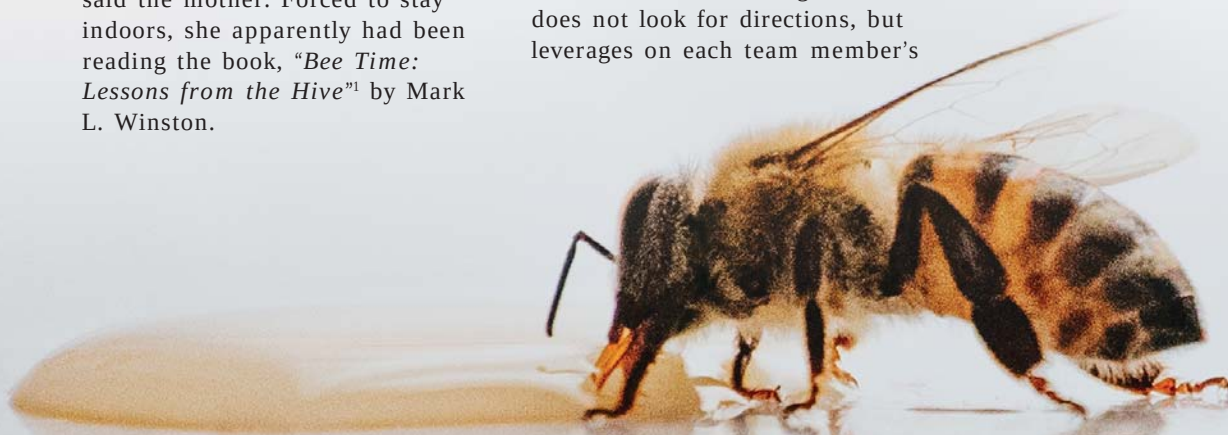
Our workplaces provide us with a fair degree of freedom to carry out our duties. And as we grow in our career and learn to take on more responsibilities, this freedom increases. While this is true at the individual level, it is worthwhile to contemplate the outcome when teams are provided with freedom. Perhaps, it would be good if we loosen the strict controls and encourage sharing of ideas. It can be beneficial to allow our teams to take the initiative and organise their work, and accept greater accountability. This is the essence of self-management the outcome of which is seen to be more engaging, and hence a more charged up workforce. A self managed team does not look for directions, but leverages on each team member's

unique skills to get things done. Self-managed teams tend to be resilient and can react to changes rapidly, and outputs of such teams tend to be of higher quality.

An ‘Agile’ way of working

The concept of self-managed teams which form the very core of the ‘Agile’ way of working, present multiple benefits. It frees up senior management bandwidth to focus on strategy and long-term issues.

It is indeed difficult to build self-managed teams, and hence it cannot happen overnight. And it is an even greater challenge to sustain them to turbo power your business. This, however, is the future of work and hence needs to be mastered. As a term, ‘Selfmanaged’ may be misleading since it implies that such teams do not need managers. In fact, they do need managers, not to control and direct, but to coach and facilitate. This means that the role of the manager needs to be re-purposed. If such a thing is not done, the manager could feel lost and become insecure as the team's dependence on him comes down. This results into huge expectations from the manager and needs to be contracted and understood clearly. Remember, selfmanagement is not about eliminating managers, but about enhancing their contribution to the team.



“It is indeed difficult to build self-managed teams, and hence it cannot happen overnight. And it is an even greater challenge to sustain them to turbo power your business.”

When it comes to teams, the comfort of having a manager around needs to be replaced by building psychological safety. One way to do this is to define boundaries of action. Boundaries of action tell the team the minimum set of conditions that they need to comply with. To start with, these boundaries can be narrow and gradually expanded as the team matures. The role of the manager is to protect the boundary conditions of the team - not like a parent as in the case of a hierarchical organisation - like a facilitator to support the team members to co-ordinate their work.

“The role of the manager is to protect the boundary conditions of the team like a facilitator to support the team members to co-ordinate their work.”

Further, this change is required to be communicated with clarity. Self-management is effective and sustainable only when each individual in the organisational ecosystem understands its importance and its benefits.

Sustainable self-management is not really about breaking down organisation structures, but only blurring the rigid lines of bureaucracy and maintaining it. It

is about creating safe spaces for individuals to bring their best selves to work and take accountability to deliver a common goal without being instructed at each step. Here are the key steps for building sustainable self-managed teams –

- Communicate the intent and provide a clear business direction
- Design roadmap for teams to grow and mature in practising self-management
- Define appropriate boundary conditions for free thinking
- Support mid-managers to assimilate the change and help them champion the change

While summarising the book ‘Lessons from the hive’, Sam Jaroudi, the Canadian life coach, has aptly written, “Colonies have queens, without the bureaucracy or the dictatorship. The queen knows her role and she performs her duties without interfering with the work of her subjects. Bees have an innate sense of responsibility. They are driven by the desire to work, produce, and sustain the colony. Bees are deeply engaged with each other. They keep each other informed about changes in

their environment. They never break contact with the group and are constantly passing on information they receive. They are continuously evolving. If relocated from one region to another, they quickly scout the new environment and communicate their findings, then get to work in as little as an hour. They are not discouraged by change. They work hard with unwavering dedication and discipline, but they also get plenty of rest in order to recharge.”

If the bees could do it and sustain, can we humans not? **HC**

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Work In The Wake Of COVID-19

Work From Home may not entirely ease things for employees since such a setting often expects employees to remain 'connected to the system'. And the traditional perception of work will turn out to be equally precarious.

BY **MRINMOY MAJUMDER**

These days, while scrolling networking platforms, it is inevitable to come across posts about how the present health crisis is leading us to the new future of work or how this has come about as the 'new normal'. Most of the influencers build on the fact that Work From Home (WFH) is a moment of solace for individuals to catch up on their hobbies, upskill themselves, or even learn a new craft. However, if this emerges as the new normal, things would collectively not come about as highly bright. We are treading the precarious line of converting work into labour.

Labour consists of all the activities carried out by individuals as a part of their daily routine. Sayers (2007), in his paper, 'The Concept of Labor: Marx and his Critics', mentions that labour is the direct appropriation of human beings' natural condition. Hannah Arendt, in her famous book, *The Human Condition*, defined labour as "...the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process ..."

Whereas the concept of work is assessed merely on the grounds of performance, and once work shifts

home, the usual innate activity of individuals such as care and home support is merged with their existing work activity. And, to derive a balance among the two would be a challenging task for individuals, as 'work' includes measurement. Hence, it is no surprise that even when people are working from their homes, there is an overt sense to be hyper-productive and of achievement.

In all this, digital technology plays the vital role of wiring human beings to their work and organisation. In such a wired environment, employees sitting at home must operate like digital natives. Digital natives across the world curate their lives and leave digital traces across different digital platforms such as Zoom, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter among others. The courses they undergo, the people they mentor, their writeup trends and the causes they believe in are all digitally achieved.

Surely, WFH would formally be a part of HR policies. However, the work lives of individuals, especially women employees, are bound to be hectic with the stress of logging into their respective platforms vis-à-vis caring and supporting their families. WFH arrangements may further glamourise *hustle-based* culture,

which seems to have become an institutional norm in the digital universe.

In such a context, enterprise-led WFH may lead to employee burnout. As in the realm of work-labour, the personal-professional would be bound to have a similar spatial setup, with employees navigating their home chores along with meeting their professional deadlines. While we cherish every moment to be at home with our loved ones, WFH may not entirely ease things for employees, as such a setting often expects employees to be 'connected to the system'. The traditional perception of work, if replicated in the digital universe, will be equally precarious. 

About the Author

Mrinmoy Majumder teaches courses on people strategy, industrial relations and qualitative methodology. He can be reached on mrinmoy.majumder@imi.edu.

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