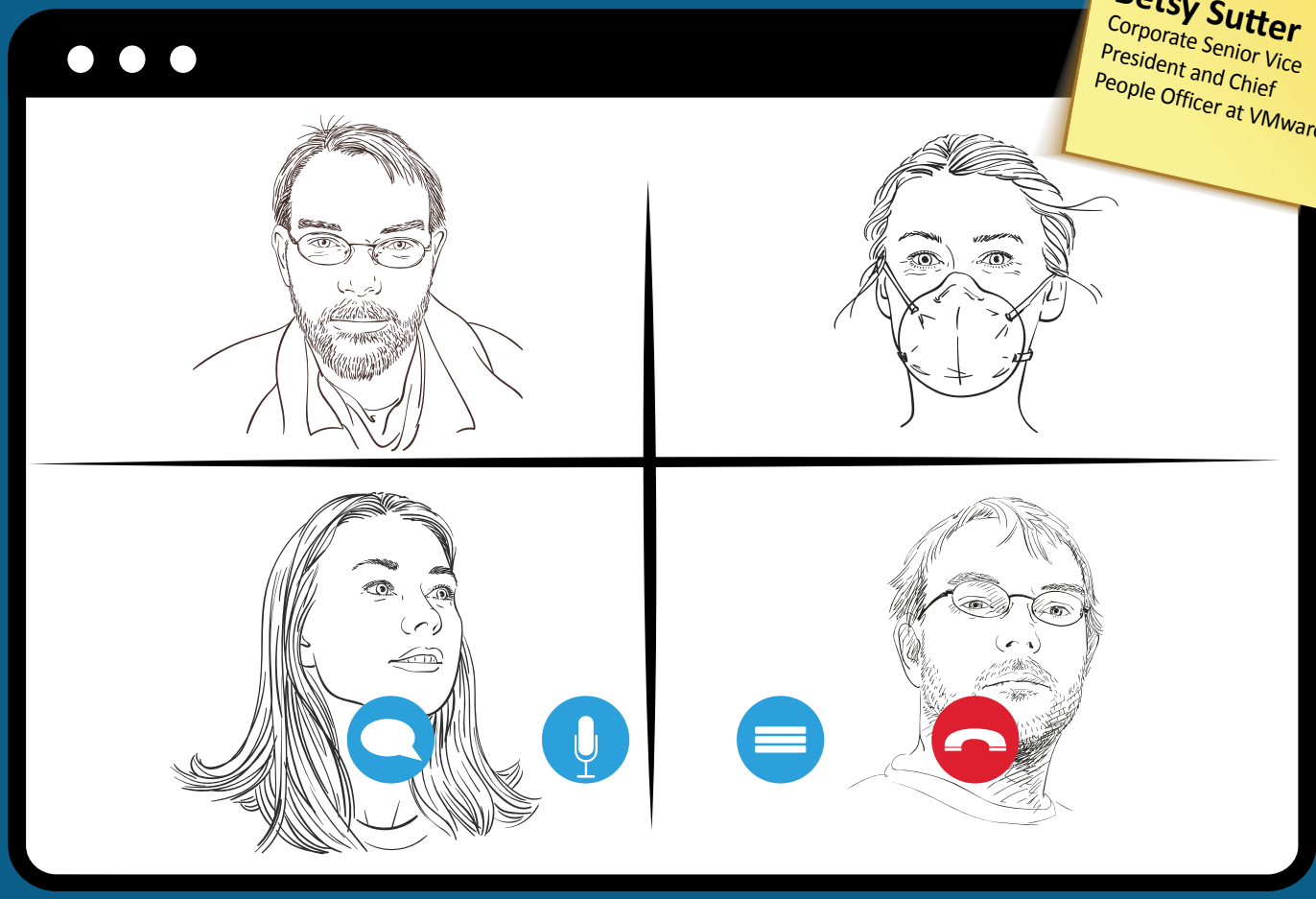
people matters

VOL XI / ISSUE 6 / JUNE 2020
₹150

BIG INTERVIEW
Betsy Sutter
Corporate Senior Vice President and Chief People Officer at VMware



THE NEW WORKPLACE

COVID-19 *has changed the world including the very DNA of our workplace*


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Re-inventing the post-COVID-19 workplace

The COVID-19 era has brought astounding changes for organizations across the world and has challenged the way work has always been done. While we were debating the future of work for the last couple of years, the catastrophic COVID-19 precipitated the conversation to shift to the newer ways of working. What seemed previously implausible has been achieved in no time — making instantaneous decisions, collaborating seamlessly in new ways, running parts of the organization with fewer people, working from home, and so on.

What all this boils down to is the rise of a new workplace which is neither what it is today nor is it going to be typical of what we had envisaged in the current past.

However, the considerations for the "new normal" in the post-COVID-19 era hinge on a set of parameters. Are we actually bracing up for a perennial change in terms of how work gets done? Can the remote model of work withstand the test of time in the VUCA world? What does our hybrid workspace need to look like to support both individual and teamwork in the new environment? How do we learn, lead, and maintain our organizational culture in the new environment? The answers to these questions will vary by industry and business model. But one thing is certain. The pandemic crisis has attested that what once seemed like a distant possibility is now a viable fact.

So, how do we reinvent the future of the workplace as we move past one of the greatest humanitarian crises in history? While some steps being taken are given, others will depend on how long the crisis persists. All social distancing and face-covering protocols are expected to go on with, as will frequent hand hygiene. New engagement rules will likely be framed to administer how meetings are conducted, where, how often, and for what purposes.

There will be a fundamental change to the way we work and leaders must ensure their mindset is open to changes as situations demand. The global experiment on flexible working — which is more than just working from home, has more or less worked for many industries and this is a great opportunity for employers to embrace new elements of "flexibility" that both meet the needs of their business and their employees. If they don't, they run the risk of not being able to attract and retain key talent.

Next generations of technologies and innovations around new use cases will play a critical role as we transition to the post-pandemic world. Considering that the risk of COVID-19 may likely persist beyond 2020, companies will divert resources to transform their companies and embrace a world that is more "high tech". On one side, organizations may upgrade their infrastructure to meet the changing protocols of new work culture, on the other end, this is the proof case for certain companies to be tenacious with their digital efforts that are already paying dividends.

This is a chance for leaders to fundamentally rethink what organizations should look like. There will be a heightened awareness in the need to invest in creating more agile organizations — from supply chain processes to management systems and workforce resilience.

There will be implications of how we learn and upskill our people. In fact, this is one area that can be digitized heavily and democratized making it accessible to everyone. Learning will be more personalized, just-in-time, and ultimately replace much of the structured planned interventions devised by L&D teams.

HR professionals will need to realize that culture building and engagement in the new digital and remote working environments become important to a greater extent. The post-COVID-19 era will be a testament to the new beginning; organizations that will survive the onslaught of the pandemic will benefit from a revitalized and renewed HR. This is one of the most critical times for HR. The need to manage the anxiety, gear for operations as well as ensuring that organizations are able to remain agile for the new normal are going to be some of the most critical problems for HR to solve

The Cover Story in this issue takes a look at the larger picture of the new workplace including aspects such as tools to restart and set the new workplace in action, new challenges that organizations will face, the new normal of remote work, and most importantly, revisiting the HR policies.

For the Big Interview in this issue, we have Betsy Sutter, Corporate Senior Vice President and Chief People Officer at VMware, who shares her views on how to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic given the challenges it poses to the organizations globally and their workforce.

This issue features a special article on the third edition of Alight's State of HR Transformation Study 2020 which explores the anchors of adaptability in the HR function. From the importance of the HR operating models to behaviors that the HR team needs to display, the report details key action steps to improve HR governance and effectiveness.

People Matters has launched People Matters EX Conference digitally on June 19, 2020. The minimum fee to attend People Matters EX Virtual Conference is 1 USD. All delegate registration proceeds will be donated to UNICEF COVID-19 appeal. So, join us, enhance your EX and do your bit to contribute too!

Like the May 2020 issue, June 2020 will also be complimentary for all our readers.

As always, we would be happy to hear your views, comments, and suggestions regarding our stories.

Happy Reading!

Esther Martinez Hernandez
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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THE COVER STORY (BEHIND THE SCENE)



I don't like the window and the colour of the wall!



ZOOM! Nice... but...



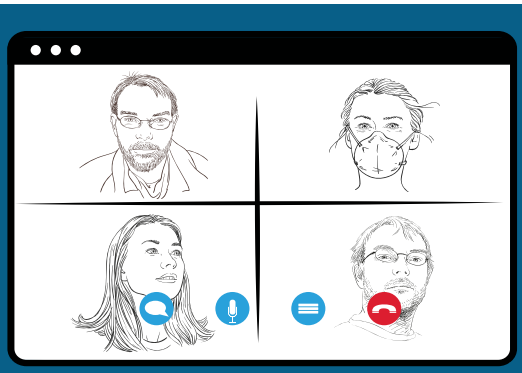
The days are blue not yellow.



PHEW!

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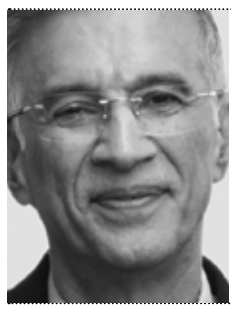


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YASMIN SONI

TOP HR LEADERS ON COVID-19 CRISIS

With the global economy facing disruption like never before, it is reassuring to find HR leaders being uniform in their approach to the crisis - people-first. One of the leaders quoted Jame Allen, "Adversity does not build character, it reveals it." Very relevant in the present scenario where we see a leader like Brian Chesky penning down every thought for the workforce and willing to be vulnerable and authentic as he makes the difficult decision of letting go employees, and at the same time we also are made aware about the unsympathetic layoffs carried by companies like Uber and Bird. While every business will have its own timelines and individual fires to put out, the element of being humane is crucial here, given everyone's livelihood is on the line. In order to keep the business going, Farid hit the nail on its head when he says, "Leaders need to reimagine the next normal by instilling change agility and embed resilience in the organization culture." Agility and resilience are critical in the present day, but what cannot be overlooked is being human.

- PREETIKA PAL



MAY 2020 ISSUE

Solving the employee experience conundrum

An interesting point surrounding the readiness of HR teams has been brought out in the research. 53% organizations admitting that their HR teams lack the requisite skills to get employee experience right is a startling number, given the gradual transformation of HR as a function from HR to HX. Experience can no longer be a priority only when it comes to customers, and the current times make it imperative for organizations to accept that and prepare for that. A significant number of organizations are making use of the time in hand to upskill their employees, in both technical skills as well as soft skills. The need for HR teams to be agile to drive employee experience efficiently is critical for business to be able to sustain themselves in the near future.

- SUNITA SHARMA

COVID-19 is also an opportunity to transform the workforce

Beyond health, economy and the uprising of a psychological crisis, in essence COVID-19 has accelerated the long-due workplace transformation. Entailing every aspect from tools, people expectations, leadership expectations, organizational culture, workplace boundaries, and more, this transformation is not just here to stay, but given the rising concerns around a psychological pandemic underway, this transformation is yet to grasp the multitude of people related changes that organizations are yet to acknowledge and implement. While the focus of leaders has been brought to employee wellbeing and safety, it is far from understanding the stark difference between employee engagement owing to COVID-19, and the surge in mental health-related concerns brought on by COVID-19. There is a need to widen the scope of employee safety and bring forth greater visibility towards the mental health aspect of employee wellbeing before it's too late.

- ANJALI BATRA

People Matters values your feedback. Write to us with your suggestions and ideas at editorial@peoplematters.in

Create a digital open door

Takes me back to the time when adopting an open-door policy was the new trend. When workspace infrastructure was instruction enough to know what's out of bounds and what's not. In that sense when we look at virtual tools, leaders are just a ping/ call away, unintentionally adapting to an open-door policy virtually. However, that does not convey the same message unless it is highlighted and communicated to employees. In such circumstances understanding the importance of having a digital open door and letting your employees be aware of it serves as a useful tool to bridge the distance and establish a stronger rapport with the workforce.

- ADVAITH OJAS

Take a people-first approach to navigating this crisis: Citrix's Global Chief People Officer

"Once an organization shifts its vision beyond the traditional physical workspace, with on-premises data centers and desks with desktops, to intelligent digital workspaces that give people the freedom to work anywhere and the guidance and insight to do their very best work, those organizations open access to new talent pools and deliver the flexibility that incumbent employees crave. Thus, a single technology shift helps with both attraction and retention."

- GYANESHWAR LAISHRAM

Keeping cost in check and employees on the payroll

For months now, the two terms synonymous with business priorities are business sustainability and employee safety. While the need for employee safety has enabled leaders to accept a remote working model, to the extent possible, business sustainability and consequential cost-cutting have driven several organizations across the globe to resort to layoffs. At such a time, this piece comes as a much needed aid to identify alternatives to furlough and retrenchment.

- TANISH BAHADURJIT

It's time for governments and businesses to work together

Golden words said by Adrian. What is important right now is in fact action, and given the swelling unemployment claims that we do witness all across the globe, there is indeed a need to break the operating in isolation model for public and private sectors. Even though reactive instead of proactive, the very fact that governments all over the world are stepping up and offering relief packages to enable employers to stay afloat and be able to cover wages for employees at risk is crucial to keep the global economy from collapsing. We are seeing countries like the US, Germany, UK, Canada, India and Singapore, among others coming forward to safeguard the livelihood of their people.

- RISHI QADIM

twitter

David Green @david_green_uk
Respond quickly and keep adapting amid COVID-19 http://ow.ly/LK4c50zXmUX feat @AmyCEdmondson via @PeopleMatters2 #Leadership #Culture #HR #Employee-Experience

Uma Rao@umrao67
Replying to @PeopleMatters2 @Flipkart and 6 others Absolutely wonderful session and really enjoyed being with the copan-elists. Thanks @PeopleMatters2

UN Women AsiaPacific @unwomenasia
"It's not for women to create the work-life balance, it's the system that needs to change so that we all, men and women, find that balance" - Mohammad Naciri Regional Director of UN Women for Asia and the Pacific. Read his interview with @ PeopleMatters2 bit.ly/3d0scgx

Birlasoft @birlasoft
Thank for featuring @dkpr in the #leader-ship series special! #Leadtheway #leader-shipmuscles #learningcurve. Appreciate the times invested by @drishtipant for this interview. #leader #leadershpduringcrisis #leaders

Oracle India @Oracle_India
Today's global situation has led the existing generations to adapt to a new, yet identical lifestyle of remote work. It's created a novel #GenR, @shakun_khanna discusses with @PeopleMatters2 about how HR must relook at their expectations in a new world.

Tata Communications @tata_comm
At an uncertain time like this, it is important for leaders to communicate with empathy and knowledge. Read this @ PeopleMatters2 article where our CHRO, @aadeshgoyal, shares his thoughts about the impact of COVID-19 crisis.

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RECRUITMENT

COVID-19 will wipe out 195 million jobs: ILO

The International Labour Organization has warned of job losses in the hundreds of millions as the Covid-19 pandemic stretches out over the coming months. The ILO said that 6.7 percent of working hours globally are likely to be lost in the second quarter of 2020 — the equivalent of 195 million full-time jobs. The bulk of the



losses will be borne by the Asia Pacific region, which is estimated to lose the equivalent of 125 million full-time jobs.



TALENT MANAGEMENT

Uber fires 3,700 employees over a zoom call

Ride-hailing app Uber has fired nearly 3,700 employees (14 percent of its workforce) via multiple Zoom calls and each call lasted less than three minutes, with a common message: "Today will be your last working day with Uber". Last week, Uber Technologies announced to lay off some 3,700 full-time employees, in a move to reduce operating expenses in response to the economic challenges and uncertainty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the company's business.

CULTURE

Twitter employees can work from home 'forever'

Twitter was one of the first companies to allow work from home model in the face of COVID-19, and now the company is all set to continue with working from home. The company's Vice President of People, Jennifer Christie said, "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."



JOBS

27 Mn youth in their 20s lost their jobs: CMIE

Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy said 27 million youth in the age group of 20-30 years lost their jobs in April 2020 following a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

According to the CMIE weekly report, the unemployment rate fell from 27.1% to 24% for the week ended May 10 while the labor participation rate rose from 36.2% to 37.6% as the government opens up industries in a staggered manner. Employment rate also rose from 26.4% to 28.6%.



Over 27 million youngsters in their 20s lost their jobs in April. This has serious long-term repercussions. It is during this age that young India builds its career in the hope of a bright future. If the career of this cohort is disrupted or postponed by even a year it will have to compete with the new cohorts joining the labor force after them - arguably, for fewer jobs. Young India will not be able to build the savings it will require later in life.

FUNDING

Hiring platform Workstream gets $10M funding

Workstream, a hiring platform and mobile app that streamlines the sourcing and onboarding of hourly workers, has announced the closing of a $10M Series A funding round. The round was led by Keith Rabois of Founders Fund, who will be joining Workstream's Board of



Directors. Workstream is used by almost 5,000 hiring managers in the U.S. and helps hire front-line workers: caregivers, nurses, delivery drivers, take-out restaurant staff, gas station attendants, etc.

Adopting a unique funnel approach to optimize their efficiency at each stage of the hiring process, Workstream enables hiring managers to reduce time to hire by an average of 70%. The platform also helps employers cast a wider net by posting to multiple job sites with one swipe and leveraging AI to optimize job postings.



LAYOFFS

ZTE India slashes its workforce by 30%

ZTE has laid off almost 30 percent of its staff to nearly 600 amid mounting financial stress owing to declining India business as telecom operators have cut down on expenditure. ZTE is said to not have enough projects in India, although it has traditional customers including Vodafone Idea, Bharti Airtel and BSNL which too are financially troubled. As these partners also look to cut expenditures ZTE's business takes further hit and forces them to cut some internal costs.

C-SUITE

Google Cloud India appoints new VP, Engineering

Google has roped in Anil Bhansali as the new Vice President of Engineering for its Cloud division Google Cloud. Bhansali has joined Google Cloud after working with Microsoft for 28 years. He last served as the Corporate Vice President of Azure cloud division and site leader for R&D team in India.

In this role, Bhansali will coordinate all software development efforts for the search giant's cloud business in India.





HIRING

Indian IT firms hired 25% fewer employees in FY20

India's top five IT services companies – Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Wipro and Tech Mahindra -hired 25% fewer employees in the fiscal year 2019-20. In all, the five software services providers added a net 66,500 employees, as compared to net hiring of 87,060 people in the financial year 2018-19. Together, they employ nearly 1.14 million people, a quarter of India's 4.3 million technology workforce.

NEWSMAKER OF THE MONTH

The global job crisis and its impact on mental health



The world is staring at the biggest job crisis since World War II. 81 percent of the global workforce (3.3 billion) is affected by full or partial workplace closures – that's four out of five people.

The devastating impact of the pandemic is expected to wipe off 6.7 percent of the working hours globally in the second half of 2020 - an equivalent of 195 million full-time workers. There are huge losses expected. The reduction of jobs across regions, according to data released by the ILO stands at: Asia Pacific - 125 million full-time workers, Europe – 12 million full-time workers, Arab States – five million full-time workers.

The sectors that are most at risk are hospitality, aviation, manufacturing, and retail. "Workers and businesses are facing catastrophe, in both developed and developing economies… we have to move fast, decisively, and together. The right, urgent, measures could make the difference between survival and collapse," said Guy Ryder, ILO's Director-General.

In India, the unemployment crisis climbed up to 6.1 percent, a 45 year high even before the pandemic hit the country, now, an estimate by the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy says that the unemployment rate in the country could be as high as 27.1 percent - that's 122 million Indians who lost their jobs in April alone. Among the ASEAN-6 economies, an estimated 21 million workers face job loss due to the pandemic. Observers say that Indonesia and Thailand are likely to face a historically large downturn. So far, only Singapore and Malaysia offer direct relief for labor costs through wage subsidies.

Even as millions of livelihoods are at stake, there's a growing recognition of another crisis brewing within – a mental health crisis. The United Nations has warned that the death, disease, isolation, poverty and anxiety caused by the COVID 19 pandemic are creating major mental health issues. Vulnerable populations include children, young people, healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients.

In addition to the tough job of remodeling business, companies and leaders need to reflect on adequate investment in providing psychological services to their employees. This includes tele-counseling options and working proactively with people who have depression and anxiety.

APPOINTMENTS



INDIAN OIL APPOINTS ITS NEXT CHAIRMAN

Shrikant Madhav Vaidya has been appointed to drive India's largest state-run oil refiner and fuel retailer, Indian Oil. The Cabinet's appointments panel cleared Vaidya, currently director (refineries) in the company, as the next chairman. He will succeed Sanjiv Singh, who demits office on June 30. A chemical engineer from the National Institute of Technology, Rourkela, Vaidya has 33 years of experience in refining and petrochemical operations.



IREIT GLOBAL NAMES NEW CEO

The French asset management and investment group IReit Global has appointed Louis d'Estienne d'Orves as its new Chief Executive Officer. As Executive Director, Louis' responsibilities include sourcing and executing deals across Europe in the office, retail, hotel, and residential sectors, securing external debt financing and capital raising for co-investment opportunities and funds.



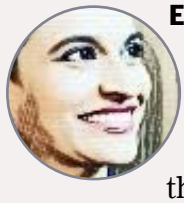
JOE KEEN POON JOINS KAPLAN

A Singapore Public Service Commission Scholar, Joe Keen Poon has been named President for Singapore by Kaplan, a leading global provider of training and education services. In this role, he is responsible for driving business growth and development for Kaplan in Singapore. He will oversee the strategic direction and operations for the institution, spearhead programs to meet industry demand and strengthen partnerships.



ANIL VINAYAK JOINS FORTIS HEALTHCARE AS COO

Fortis Healthcare announced the appointment of Anil Vinayak as its new Group Chief Operating Officer. Vinayak will lead operations for Fortis at a group level. He will be based out of the Corporate Office of Fortis in Gurugram, Haryana. Vinayak is a seasoned professional with a career spanning 32 years and a successful leadership record across financial services, consumer products and healthcare.



EX-CMO OF GODREJ CONSUMER PRODUCTS JOINS LICIOUS

Licious, meat, meat-products & seafood brand, announced the addition of Meghna Apparao as the Chief Business Officer. In her new role at Licious, Meghna will be responsible for ushering in the next level of growth for the company while further strengthening the brand's image, experience, and promise.



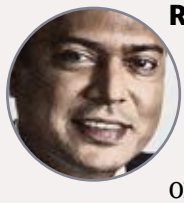
FORMER AXIS BANK CEO SHIKHA SHARMA JOINS GOOGLE PAY AS ADVISOR

Four years ago, former banker Shikha Sharma had termed the launch of United Payment Interface (UPI) as a 'WhatsApp' moment for payments. Then after working in banking for many years, she left Axis Bank at the end of 2018. After leaving Axis Bank she has joined multiple companies, including Tech Mahindra.



EX TATA CAPITAL CEO JOINS STANDARD CHARTERED INDIA

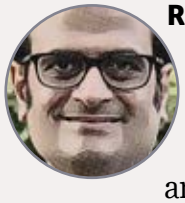
Standard Chartered Bank, India, has appointed Kusal Roy as its new Head of Retail Banking effective 05 May 2020. Kusal brings to the role a wide experience gained over his 25 years plus career in retail banking, the payments industry, and NBFC sector. Prior to joining Standard Chartered, he was the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer at Tata Capital Financial Services Ltd. In his career, he has held various senior roles in ICICI Bank, Barclays Bank, and Citibank India.



RAJESH PADMANABHAN QUITS WELSPUN GROUP

Rajesh Padmanabhan, Director, Group CHRO of Welspun Group has stepped down after four years of stint with the company. The industry veteran is taking the entrepreneurial route after working with Welspun for more than four years. Talking to People Matters he shared that it has been a fascinating 3 decades plus of corporate experience in 6 different domains of BFSI, Manufacturing, Hospitality, IT Services, Consulting and Conglomerate and in across 6 functions.

APPOINTMENTS



RBS INDIA APPOINTS MANEESH MENDA AS THE NEW HEAD HR

RBS India, the innovation and operations hub of the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), announced the elevation of Maneesh Menda as Head of HR, RBS India. In this role, Maneesh will build the organization's talent strategy and capabilities, supporting the Bank to achieve its goals. Maneesh, an HR veteran, and a Chartered Accountant, has over two decades of rich experience where he has held several global and regional roles.



SHELLY HOLT JOINS PAYSCALE AS THE NEW CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

PayScale, which deals in on-demand cloud-based compensation software and data, announced Shelly Holt as the company's new Chief People Officer. In this position, Holt will oversee all of PayScale's human resources functions, including attracting new talent for key positions throughout the company and further developing existing talent as PayScale continues its rapid expansion. With more than 25 years of experience, Holt has held senior leadership roles and built high performing learning and development, talent acquisition and talent management teams across the globe.



TREEHOUSE ELEVATES STEFANI COVERSON AS CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

Treehouse has elevated Stefani Coverson as the Chief Human Resources Officer. The nonprofit organization partners with youth who have experienced foster care so they have a childhood and a future. An accomplished human resources leader with more than 20 years of experience, Coverson first joined Treehouse earlier this year as Director of Human Resources from Clark College where she served as Vice President of Human Resources & Compliance.



BRUCE MAISEL JOINS EBI CONSULTING

EBI Consulting, which deals in the area of engineering has appointed Bruce Maisel to their executive leadership team. Bruce Maisel is the new Chief People Officer, and he will lead EBI's Human Resources function and strategy. He will partner closely with the company's leadership team to continue building a culture of employee engagement.



EMPLOYBRIDGE ROPES IN NEW CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Industrial staffing firm EmployBridge has announced that Deborah Mcfarlane has joined the company's senior management team as Chief People Officer, leading the human resources organization and serving as steward of EmployBridge's culture evolution as it advances its people-first strategy to the next level.



QUONTIC BANK APPOINTS FIRST CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

As Chief People Officer, Mike Lantz will foster a culture where people can grow and develop professionally and be part of the team that sets the pace for innovation in banking. As the bank expands its digital footprint nationally, Quontic is committed to shaping its workplace to attract the best and brightest talent to join its high-performing team. Mike has also served as Vice President of Training & Development at the F.C. Tucker real estate company.



GENESYS APPOINTS NEW CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Genesys, which deal in cloud customer experience and contact center solutions, announced three strategic additions to its executive team, including Eva Majercsik as Chief People Officer (CPO). To strengthen its Multicloud Solutions business unit, the company also named John Hernandez as Senior Vice President and General Manager for Genesys Engage and Raj Patel as Senior Vice President of cloud engineering and operations.

Helen Snowball

Head of Human Resources, Asia Pacific, JLL

By **Neelanjana Mazumdar**



1
One thing that makes you passionate about HR?

We get the opportunity every day to make an impact on the lives of others by creating a compelling employee experience for our people. How cool is that!

2
What was the turning point of your life as an HR professional?

Being promoted to the Head of HR at Coca Cola Amatil. An ex-manager of mine took a bet on me as a "Top Talent" performer and she promoted me to a role that I didn't think I was ready for. Turns out I was ready, and I will be forever grateful for that opportunity.

3
One tech/innovation that will transform HR?

There will be many. One could be Robotic Process Automation

4
One perception you wish to change about the HR function?

I wish that people would see that we're an experience-driven function instead of process-driven.

Some people worry that asking others for advice or input is a sign of weakness - I think the opposite - in my book it's a sign of strength & competence

5
What's your learning mantra?

Be brave, take risks, nothing can substitute the "on-the-job experience".

6
Next big HR deployment JLL is working around?

We have recently deployed Workday as our new HRIS globally.

7
3 key talent priorities for JLL, currently?

1. Future Fit - Building strong diverse succession pipelines
2. Learning - Building future-focused capabilities
3. Well-Being – Wellbeing, mental health comes first

8
Gig Workers or Permanent Employees?

Gig, it's the future!

9
HR as a business partner or HR as a business driver?

Business Partner. I firmly believe the best decisions are those that are made in partnership vs one sole driver.

10
Best career advice you've ever got?

"If somebody offers you an amazing opportunity but you are not sure you can do it, say yes – then learn how to do it later!"

11
What's your favorite holiday destination?

New York City.

The new hybrid workplace

Leaders would now have to focus on creating a safe working environment that gives people the confidence to return to work premises and to adjust to the new virtual/physical hybrid way of working, according to a study by Accenture

By **Drishti Pant**



There's no turning back from the new reality of work. The crisis has put us all in a reset mode. Given the current situation with a vaccine for COVID-19 still a far-fetched dream, many organizations have decided to continue working from home for a percentage of their employees. The workplace will now be a combination of virtual and physical set up, with a portion of the workforce working remotely while others are at office, in the field, warehouses or factories. This creates the need for organizations to accelerate their digital transformation journey and ensure a digitally connected workforce.

Organizations have to be more digital, data-driven, have more variable cost structures, agile operations and automation, and have to invest to create stronger capabilities and also ensure privacy and security.

> The leaders should consider the steps they take to reopen as the first in a long journey of wider transformation

"Companies need to go beyond the transactional to truly understand their employees if they want to create productive, inclu-

sive and rewarding working environments for the long haul," said experts from Accenture, in an email interaction with People Matters.

They shared that leaders should consider the steps they take to reopen as the first in a long journey of wider transformation. A program of active reinvention that outmaneuvers uncertainty starts with five areas – putting people first, designing spaces that work, solving in phases, committing to an elastic cost structure and getting future-ready.

Scaling up the core digital infrastructure

Despite all of the conversations about the digital workspace, it has been challenging for business, IT and HR leaders to plan for the changes required to make the digital workspace a reality. But now it is no longer just an option but necessity with the risk of novel coronavirus to have a more digital, contactless and remote workplace. And hence, many organizations have already started scaling up their current digital infrastructures and those who have not will have to catch up to ensure smooth transition.

Sunil Peter, Associate Vice President – BCP and IT, Maveric Systems said, "Over the past 45 days, there have been significant investments in terms of scaling up the core infrastructure (network and server capacity) with robust security controls. There are automated systems which are enabled to monitor – track – backup the server and network capacity by over 25 percent at any given point of time."

The three focus areas for Maveric Systems have been strengthening the core, bandwidth, and security.

Similarly for Cisco, that was already familiar with the mode of remote working digital-readiness was not an issue. But as the need to be more digital arises, it has also had to step-up its current infrastructure and focus more on security.

Anupam Trehan, Director, People and Communities, Cisco India and SAARC said, "Now, the preference for digital alternatives in the workplace is rising, but it takes time for new normals to take hold. Some aspects that would need to be considered to enable these new normals are security, scale, consistency, and the experiences of employees, teams and customers. It is about reimagining the way work can be done."

Adopting the new digital tools

Some companies already had the infrastructure and tools available at the start of

Some aspects that would need to be considered to enable these new normals are security, scale, consistency, and the experiences of employees, teams and customers



the crisis, but still COVID-19 crisis triggered them to introduce new solutions or use the existing ones in more innovative ways. For other organizations that were not familiar with the culture of remote working, introducing and adopting new tools for the new normal of work was the only way forward.

MSIG Singapore CEO Craig Ellis shared in an interview with People Matters, "Presently, we are evaluating long-term plans for remote working. We will also push forward what has stood up well during the crisis and capture workarounds that can be absorbed into everyday work practices. Where a gap is deemed to be critical, it will be prioritized amongst other technology projects. We will have to keep our eyes on the future and explore more innovative solutions to keep our operations sustainable and flexible during the disruption."

> Find the right 'glocal' mix of leadership, delegating where appropriate but providing central guidance and coordination

Similarly, as AkzoNobel India gears to go back to work but in a mode of new normal, it has focused on the hardware and the software for its people. Anushree Singh, Country HR Director, India Sub-continent – AkzoNobel India shared, "Hardware refers to our preparedness on welcoming employees back to offices and related infrastructure and process changes, while software relates to the minds and hearts of our employees." From the perspective of accelerating digitization, AkzoNobel India has focused its attention on leveraging tools that existed and also innovating and introducing quick, simple and effective ones. For instance, the new medical OPD plan through an app was launched for employees in addition to the hospitalization insurance benefit. Another user-friendly app backed by an insurance program, will provide a seamless digital experience to our employees in availing services like online consultancy, lab tests, medicines and other medical services on a cashless basis.

They also launched AI chatbot to understand the sentiments and mood of the organization, which they will continue to use. Not only AkzoNobel India, many other companies across the globe have either introduced or are looking to utilize digital solutions to capture employee sentiments to better manage their experience.



According to Accenture's 5 priorities to help reopen and reinvent your business report, leaders would now have to focus on creating a safe working environment that gives people the confidence to return to work premises and to adjust to the new virtual/physical hybrid way of working.

Managing employee experience in the hybrid way

For leaders it has become essential to ensure that while they are all working in a different set up now, the workforce still feels connected and engaged with the organization and each other. Accenture's COVID-19 consumer research found that over 64 percent of the global workforce is facing high anxiety over their personal job security. Others are worried that traditional social interaction may no longer be possible. The workforce is slowly returning to work but they are not going back to normal, the way they work, the way the workplace looks, the way they engage with customers, peers, and leaders everything is changing. Hence, while leaders are focusing on building a new safe workplace and scaling up their respective organization's digital infrastructure, they also have to keep their focus on managing employee experience.

Accenture and most leaders we interviewed are encouraging to take a people-first approach, while preparing for the new virtual/physical hybrid workplace.

Experts from Accenture suggest, "Proactively seek feedback from employees and give them a voice. Find the right 'glocal' mix of leadership, delegating where appropriate but providing central guidance and coordination." Further, offer life coaches, mental health support and wellbeing programs to help grieving employees or those managing stress, such as those caring for elderly patients and partners of key workers. It is time to revisit policies, focusing on the most vulnerable groups, such as temporary workers, people with disabilities, single parents or those who lack adequate health benefits.



It is time to revisit policies, focusing on the most vulnerable groups, such as temporary workers, people with disabilities, single parents or those who lack adequate health benefits

Nick Lambert, Senior Vice President, Asia Pacific, Orange Business Services said, "There are three broad areas that companies should consider immediately to support employees: Enable remote collaboration solutions for remote/home working and ensure secure connectivity; run virtual events; and disseminate critical information via omni-channel communication, including via chatbots to answer frequently asked questions."

Businesses that can reinvent themselves—their processes, customer experiences, employee and social contracts, and do so in ways that further their purpose—will be better staged to transition to the virtual/physical hybrid workplace- the new normal of work.



Rethinking Employee Experience: Breaking isolation, not silos

Silos isn't the enemy, it's the isolation that breeds as an outcome of silos. It's time to rethink employee experience and recognize where to dissolve the silos and encourage cross-functional conversations

By **Bhavna Sarin**

When looking at an organization's overall components, be it people, infrastructure, expenses, or revenue pockets, it helps to break them down into individual segments based on their function and similarities in characteristics, and then focus on them one segment at a time. This concept of segmentation, in other words, silos, is often helpful to bring structure into the organization, but ends up creating an invisible distance that is likely to keep the organization from reaching its potential, despite having the best in-house talent.

Structure is critical, and there are no two ways about that. With variations in the size of business, geographical spread, and multiple functionalities, it is essential to have a mould to define each unit within the organization with an individual set of expectations and goals. What gets missed out often is tying up these individual goals and standards of

conduct to an overall unified organizational vision, which if done would not only increase the chances of profitability and revenue, but also contribute to creating a unified employee experience, with clarity in expectations, a common big picture to work towards and individual goals to help move forward towards the bigger picture.

Silos isn't the enemy though. The enemy is not knowing where to dissolve the silos and encourage cross-functional conversations and brainstorming sessions to come up with the best solutions. There is a famous saying that goes like this:

There is nothing wrong with silos. The actual problem is isolation!

The issue again isn't silos, but the inability to recognize when to bring down those walls and allow free flowing two-way communication.

Why break isolation

Functional silos is a great idea to bring all the experts of a field together, and cluster their expertise to identify the most specialized solutions. However, that is likely to work for clients, not for your organization's growth. Such silos is a deterrent to the long-term growth of the organization, making individual departments feel they did all the work, with the marketing team not realizing the efforts put in by the product team, the product team being unable to appreciate the challenges faced by sales, and the sales team being unable to foresee the potential requirements of the creative team to be able to deliver the ideas to the product team. What's the result? Everyone working under pressure, disharmony and lack of coordination among functions, not knowing where one can extend support to the other, and so on and so forth.

Rich Horwath, Founder and CEO of the Strategic Thinking Institute shared in a company blog a while ago about what he calls the StrategyPrint. In his words, "An effective tool I've developed to help leaders set and communicate their business direction is the StrategyPrint. The StrategyPrint is a two-page blueprint for the business. Page one captures the key insights of the business in four areas: market, customers, competitors and company. Page two is the action plan, identifying goals, objectives, strategies, tactics and metrics. By using one common and concise planning instrument, leaders are able to efficiently communicate their strategies to others around the organization so that everyone is on the proverbial "same page"."

One often thinks of strategic expertise and insights being available only to a few. Mostly it is presumed to be the exclusive domain of leaders. However, if you create the possibil-

There is nothing wrong with silos. The actual problem is isolation!



ity of employees coming forward to share their ideas and knowledge, you will be surprised to know the magnitude of impact that can be created by combining the expertise of leaders, and employees from across functions.

According to a BSC survey, 73 percent of companies that outperform their peers have a formal process in place to communicate strategy to others in the company, encouraging both communication and collaboration.



Strike that balance between having specialized expertise and cross-functional talent, to keep your organization on the path to achieving exponential success. Because, when you blind yourself to functional silos, here is what happens:

- Threat to organizational cohesion
- Lack of awareness about internal initiatives
- Inability to appreciate and leverage capabilities and strengths of other functional groups
- Being confined to the same group and skill set for brainstorming ideas
- Lesser innovation opportunities due to lack of cross-functional expertise

How to break isolation

Breaking silos, or rather the isolation that breeds as an outcome of silos, isn't a one-day process and isn't as simple as implementing a new policy. It is an organizational change that demands effective communication, among other things that will be discussed below. The intent is key here. Are you breaking silos for a one-time project or initiative, or are you trying to encourage a more open conversation across functional departments, fostering a collaborative, productive and high performing culture for the long run? This intent will drive the efforts that go behind breaking down silos, and thereby the next phase of the organization's journey.

Some measures you can take to break functional silos are:

• **Overcoming hierarchical blocks:** For any cultural shift aimed at improving employee experience and changing the organizational culture, it is crucial for the workforce to experience the leadership modelling those behaviors. It isn't just functional silos but also a mental block of hierarchical silos that requires greater attention. By increasing leadership visibility and accessibility to the larger workforce

According to a BSC survey, 73% of companies that outperform their peers have a formal process in place to communicate strategy to others in the company, encouraging both communication and collaboration

it will help overcome the mental block of restricting conversation within grades and departments. Regular interactions between leaders, managers and employees will help accelerate moving past such mental blocks by establishing a direct line of communication.

• **Encourage open dialogue:** Both an inferiority complex and superiority complex are enemies here. It is as important for an employee to speak up, as it is for a leader to listen. In this scenario, establishing an effective communication model where people who are believed to have all the necessary insights seek suggestions from others, encouraging participation with the scope of improving on the basis of those suggestions, will go a long way in helping build such an organizational culture.

• **Communicating and reinforcing a clear bigger picture:** While every employee will have their individual career path to progression, it is important to have all such efforts and strategies contribute to the organization's vision. Identifying the organization's and individual's aspirations and aligning the two for a win-win situation is critical to avoid building of isolation. Have a unified goal in place to direct individual strategies aimed at attaining a common goal.



By creating a clear roadmap with vision and values, encouraging transparent two-way communication, and building cross-functional teams with clear KRAs, you can leverage silos and dissolve isolation

• **Modelling knowledge sharing behavior:** Collaboration is core to building a culture of knowledge sharing. Management needs to emulate and foster a culture that encourages resource and information sharing vs resource hoarding.

• **Build cross-functional teams for special initiatives:** The most relevant practice to break down functional silos is the GE Work-Out strategy, implemented by Jack Welch, Former Chairman and CEO of GE. This strategy essentially entails assigning cross-functional liaisons to enable communication and coordination between departments. Such communication helps build strong working relationships, which ultimately becomes the foundation for knowledge-sharing. It also is a great tool to help individual teams become cognizant of how their peers contribute to the overall success of the organization, as departments become privy to what role other departments play and are likely to reach out to each other in the future to seek expertise.

All in all, as highlighted earlier, silos isn't the enemy, it is the isolation that begins to create that divide between functions. Organizations need to work towards helping individual functions understand each other, equipping everyone with both knowledge and the right resources to go to. The purpose of silos is to have structure in place, to be able to scale. By creating a clear roadmap with vision and values, encouraging transparent two-way communication, and building cross-functional teams with clear KRAs, you can leverage silos and dissolve isolation.

COVID-19: What's keeping HR heads awake at night?

All CHROs are on the speed dial of their CEOs nowadays because managing people is not AI's job

By **Abid Hasan**



"All I need is a sound sleep and want to forget what is happening around me, but unfortunately there are things that are keeping me on my toes and awake at night", replied one of the HR professionals when I asked, what is keeping you awake in this crisis?"

Well, sentiments are similar with all the leading CHROs in the industry. Last year, articles were written about what's the future of HR, surveys were conducted to find out if AI will replace HR. But, people indicated that machines can't replicate the human touch. And, COVID-19 proved that right!

All CHROs are on the speed dial of their CEOs nowadays because managing people is not an AI's job or an easy job.

The last few months have seen a whole raft of problems that HR professionals are facing in terms of keeping everything on track. Before this pandemic, people leaders were worried about things such as production, attrition and upskilling. But, the circumstances have changed everything, now these leaders are stressed about things such as employee safety, health, etc.

We spoke to some of the leading CHROs across industries and asked them some of their concerns and what keeps them awake in this crisis. There were multiple reasons shared by them, read below to know some of their major concerns.

Health risks

With more than 100 thousand positive cases of coro-

navirus in India, organizations are scared about their employees because they are prone to risks. Companies are working from home but there are many sectors working from offices during the lockdown and providing facilities to the consumers, and organizations that come under the essential category are among them. All these employees are meeting new people everyday and they are prone to risks.

Rahul Pinjarkar, the CHRO at Trent Hypermarket, said, "I am having sleepless nights because I am in the business where my people are completely prone to risks. What will happen if anyone gets infected?"

He is taking all the necessary steps to make sure that employees are safe at the stores, during their commute and boosting their confidence that the company is with them. CHRO of Tata Power, Himal Tewari echoes the same thought on health risks. He said, "Yes, I have sleepless nights and for us the health of our workforce comes first and it is crucial to deliver the care they require in the current situation. I am keeping a positive frame of mind in order to motivate and support the team working at the plant."

He is taking care of the employees by good planning, monitoring & execution of all health & safety measures for the workforce.

Workers in the manufacturing plants, neighbourhood retail chains, people working in banks are out in the field with high risks. People leaders of these sectors are always awake, trying to find an equilibrium between smooth functioning and a risk free environment.

Job security & salaries

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged all public and private companies to ensure that they do not cut salaries of their staff or resort to layoffs of their employees. But, things didn't turn out that way. It is hard to say how many jobs were lost and salaries of how many people have been stopped due to this crisis. Companies across the sectors have fired people from all the possible roles and have also asked to take pay cuts or go on sabbatical. People leaders are finding it difficult to manage anxious employees, given job security and salary have an upper hand over anything else.



Before this pandemic, people leaders were worried about things such as production, attrition and upskilling. But, things have changed and these leaders are now stressed about things such as employee safety and health



I am having sleepless nights because I am in the business where my people are completely prone to risks

- Rahul Pinjarkar, CHRO at Trent Hypermarket

Deepa Chadha, the CHRO of Vistara feels that the organization's concern is to make sure that the livelihoods of all our employees aren't affected. She added, "We are also

concerned about preserving jobs because we want people to come out of this challenge as winners and it shouldn't dampen their spirit."

In the current scenario, the bigger picture is to do everything that will keep the employees positive. Ajay Kumar, Country HR Head, Continental India is worried about preserving and protecting the employees and managing through the current uncertainty. "We have to understand that our entire life has changed and we have to do whatever we can, for example- counselling services, job security, salaries on time," he added.

Employers will be remembered by the decision they take during this crisis, because even the smallest of the things counts. Going forward the talent ecosystem will pay a premium to organizations who demonstrate resilience, authenticity & transparency in their people decisions during times of crisis.

Amit Das, Director HR, BCCL shared, "As an HR leader, what keeps me awake is the effectiveness of "how" part of various business & people decisions that we make today, which will be the yardstick to measure the attractiveness of our employer brand in future".

Emotional and mental well-being

Employees are following a prolonged work-from-home operating model for the first time, which is causing behavioral and attitudinal change. All the leading organizations are advising employees to adopt simple health measures during this prolonged shutdown to be physically and mentally upbeat.

Aditya Kohli, the Chief HR Officer, Clix Capital said, "I am worried about the mental stress and anxiety that surrounds my people. At the end of the day, if you don't know something then your anxiety level goes up. That's what keeps me awake and I am finding opportunities to support them proactively."

Further, working under the challenging situation of a nationwide lockdown is quite stressful with a negative impact on employees and their family members emotional and mental well-being. It is necessary for the companies to engage with them and keep them motivated. Talent leaders are organizing virtual sessions with counsellors, yoga and meditation with techniques for dealing with anxiety and stress to help ensure that the workforce is safe, healthy,

and motivated at this difficult time.

Post COVID culture

When the lockdown will be over, we will not be going back to the same offices that we have left. Not only infrastructure wise but from the culture perspective too. Things will be different, staff will need to transform themselves digitally, be prepared for remote work and a drastic change in the office culture. The new emerging world brings enormous opportunities as well as challenges. Raymond Ltd CHRO, K Narayan feels that the new consumerism and spending habits would have changed by the time the new normal emerges. He is worried about the new code of leadership and what is the new culture that will make companies succeed.

Dinesh Ramamurthi, the Global CHRO of OYO said that the safety and security of all colleagues is of utmost importance to the firm and also his personal priority.

The CHRO is focused on building capabilities that will help the company emerge stronger, leaner and more resilient from this crisis. This will put the organization in good shape to take on the opportunities that the post-COVID world will have to offer.

Remote employee engagement

Working remotely puts a strain on an employee's ability to build bonds. Creating employee engagement remotely is still a task for the people managers. With the lockdown being followed everywhere, companies are finding it more difficult to engage with the employees. They are coming up with virtual coffee sessions, DJ sessions and Tambola but these are not enough to keep them engaged.

The physical engagement has no replacement, virtual sessions are optional and it comes up with validity. CHROs are feeling the pressure of keeping the staff engaged. Renu Bohra, CHRO, DB Schenker mentioned that she is worried about health and safety but employee engagement during social distancing is a major concern. In a recent report, the World Health Organization has said that coronavirus may never go away. Getting sleepless nights is natural for people managers, but it is also important to re-configure the organization with new wiring. Changing mindsets are not easy but one has to bite the bullet at some point.

It may take some time but hopefully everything will come back on track, and HR heads get that sound sleep, until a new crisis comes knocking at the doors.



It may take some time but hopefully everything will come back on track, and HR heads get that sound sleep, until a new crisis comes knocking at the doors

WHEN 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' IS NOT AN OPTION, WE NEED TO FOCUS ON HELPING EACH OTHER: VMWARE'S BETSY SUTTER

AS WE NAVIGATE THE PANDEMIC AND THIS CHALLENGING TIME, THERE IS A PARADOX AT PLAY. WITH ROUGHLY HALF THE GLOBAL POPULATION UNDER SOME FORM OF LOCKDOWN, WE'RE EXPERIENCING A DEEPER SENSE OF UNITY AND SHARED RESPONSIBLY IN OUR COMMUNITIES, SAYS **BETSY SUTTER**, CORPORATE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER AT VMWARE

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Betsy Sutter joined VMware in January 2001, where she has shaped the culture and employee experience while leading all aspects of VMware's people strategies and functions. In this role, she leads the hiring, development and engagement of the best and brightest, as VMware has grown from 100 employees to more than 20,000 globally.

As the developer of an ever-evolving human resources organization, including innovative expertise centers, service delivery channels and a modernized HR partnering organization, she has aligned the people strategies with the business goals. Sutter has also built (and re-built) a world-class staffing organization and has overseen the successful acquisition of more than 60 companies. In 2008, Sutter founded the VMware Foundation, redefining citizen philanthropy in the corporate world. She is also passionate about bringing inclusion and diversity away from the edge and into the core of VMware's priorities and operating model.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q It's a changed world. Isn't it? Cost-cutting, retrenchments, job losses are now the reality facing businesses and employees across the world.

A The truth is that we are all living through a very stressful and traumatic time.

I can't stress enough how important it is that HR folks and other company leaders check in with their employees and make sure they're getting the support they need



There's a learning curve here, to be certain, and all we can really do is try our best to support our employees, customers and partners. At a time when "business as usual" is not an option, we need to focus on helping each other, supporting our employees, and assisting our customers as they respond and adapt.

Q How can businesses adapt to this crisis which has impacted companies, economies and societies?

A I see a lot of businesses doing right by their employees by offering pandemic leave, flexibility within schedules and workloads and offering the necessary resources to work remotely.

Everything we do at VMware, from how we communicate to the support we provide, comes from an empathetic, individual-centered perspective. Every meeting, phone call and discussion I have with my team starts with "how are you doing?" and "how can I support you?" From a more formal perspective, we also conduct regular pulses/surveys with our teams to understand how they are doing and what they need to do their jobs. In some cases, ensuring that people have a proper home office environment can really help improve their physical and mental wellness.

Q How is the larger conversation between CHROs and CEOs evolving? Given that there is this increasing realization that people are the true assets of a company.

A This is a crucial time for CHROs and CEOs to communicate regularly and work in lockstep on how best to support employees. I feel very fortunate to work with our CEO Pat and the rest of the leadership team at VMware because they recognize how important our people are and are willing to do what's necessary to support them.

We will do our best to support our employees and their needs in the weeks and months ahead. While we are distributed, we are creating a number of resources to support our employees and keep them connected. A few examples include: Employees who take part in our insurance plans have access to emotional support resources and personnel. We also have a pandemic leave policy, which provides time for caregivers to tend

> We can control how we choose to help our people cope. Offering things like extended sick days, flexible work schedules and mental health resources can make a huge difference for employees' mental and physical well-being





Post-COVID-19, we will see employers express more compassion and provide more flexibility to employees. From a tech perspective, I also believe we'll be more reliant on remote technologies than ever before

to their children, parents or other family members.

We've also instituted a number of programs and touchpoints with our teams to ensure we're providing people with mental and physical outlets.

Q Businesses across the world are struggling to make fast, hard decisions, often serving highly diverse customer bases. Do you think leadership diversity matters in handling crises like COVID-19?

A Leadership diversity always matters – especially during times of crisis. VMware values and celebrates the power of human difference, and D&I is woven into the fabric of the company.

This pandemic is affecting different groups of people in very different ways. It's important that leadership represents various groups to ensure everyone's needs are accounted for and met, so that we are providing comprehensive support to employees that meets the needs of a range of people – from pandemic leave policy to give time for caregivers to tend to their children, parents or other family members, to flexible work arrangements for parents who are homeschooling their children.

Q We are victims of one of the most dreadful and far-reaching disasters of our lifetimes. Amid this COVID-19 crisis, what should be the priorities of HR and talent leaders?

A The focus should be on our people. Full stop. I can't stress enough how important it is that HR folks and other company leaders check in with their employees and make sure they're getting the support they need. This is a trying time for everyone for various reasons, and while we can't control the effects of the virus, we can control how we choose to help our people cope. Offering things like extended sick days, flexible work schedules and mental health resources can make a huge difference for employees' mental and physical wellbeing.

Q Times of crisis have historically also been opportunities for change. Are you optimistic that as we emerge from this, it could be a chance to create a better economy?

A Absolutely. We are dedicated to learning from this trying time, growing and coming out stronger in the end. It's clear that the workplace of the future will be forever changed, and we are working tirelessly to ensure our company and employees can successfully adapt to whatever our new normal looks like.

While we'll likely be feeling the effects of COVID-19 for a long while, I'm optimistic this period will serve as a learning opportunity for businesses everywhere and hopefully better prepare us for any similar future events.

Q How is VMware responding to COVID-19? How are you coping?

A First and foremost, we are prioritizing the well-being and safety of our employees, customers and partners. Our goal from the onset of the pandemic has been protecting our people through several actions and initiatives including:

With the continuing escalation of COVID-19 cases around the world and out of an abundance of caution, most of the global workforce is working remotely and we are regularly assessing the situation to adjust or extend, as necessary. In addition, proactive measures are established across VMware offices, such as providing hand sanitizer and other disinfectants in public areas, revising cleanup protocol and having masks on hand for individuals who are not feeling well or exhibiting symptoms of an illness.

VMware's service delivery and supply chains are being monitored regularly by the Global Crisis Management Team to determine our ability to adequately handle business functions and meet corporate, customer and stakeholder obligations. To protect the mental well-being of our employees, VMware has also implemented no-questions-asked pandemic leave and a new wellness program we're encouraging employees to take advantage of. Beyond these safety measures, VMware has also successfully enabled more than 30,000 people in our workforce to work from home. We are also leveraging VMware technology to empower



> I think potential employees' priorities are really going to change coming out of this. Something that will be important for HR leaders to recognize is that people are going to be looking for jobs that offer a lot of flexibility, in case something like this happens again

employees, customers and partners to remain productive.

Q As businesses and economies reopen post-COVID-19, what should be the approach/priorities of business and HR leaders in terms of hiring and recruitment?

A I think potential employees' priorities are really going to change coming out of this. Something that will be important for HR leaders to recognize is that people are going to be looking for jobs that offer a lot of flexibility, in case something like this happens again. People will be paying close attention to things like remote work policy, sick day/leave, hazard pay, etc., and as HR leaders, we need to factor this in carefully to our compensation packages moving forward.

I also think it'll cause recruiters to look at non-local candidates who might not have been considered before this point. Now that we know so many of us can successfully work remotely, the talent pool will open up and allow for more diversity within candidates.

Q The coronavirus pandemic, as experts say, will change the way we work globally. How do you see the future of work, life post-COVID-19?

A It's really tough to say because the impact will be so significant and unlike anything we've experienced before. My hope is that, post-COVID-19, we will see employers express more compassion and provide more flexibility. From a tech perspective, I also believe we'll be more reliant on remote technologies than ever before. There will be a need and desire to make the remote work process as functional and simple as possible.

As we navigate the pandemic and this challenging time, there is a paradox at play. With roughly half the global population under some form of lockdown, we're experiencing a deeper sense of unity and shared responsibly in our communities.

At the same time, we cannot sugar-coat that the pandemic has exposed a fundamental lack of access to healthcare, education, jobs and financial security. This is a defining moment that creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity to challenge old assumptions and drive structural changes that open the playing field in critical areas.



This is a defining moment that creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity to challenge old assumptions and drive structural changes that open the playing field in critical areas



Designing the post-pandemic workplace

Mass quarantines and complete lockdowns, the epidemic has re-ignited and amplified the debate over the future of work

By **Anushree Sharma**

You might remember The Jetsons, the Hanna-Barbera animated series, ran on Cartoon Network. What especially makes it memorable is its opening theme featuring the family flying in a spacecraft, jettisoning to their daily activities. When the main character, George Jetson, arrives at his work, his spacecraft closes up into a briefcase, and then he takes a conveyer into his office, right to his desk. Throughout the show, several robots and smart appliances assist him, pouring his coffee, taking his coat — he even does video conferencing with his boss.

Fast forward to 2020; video conferencing is a new normal today. Remote working is critical, and collaboration tools are a must have for a productive environment. Mass quarantines and complete lock-downs, the epidemic has re-ignited and amplified the debate over the future of work. While corporate giants like Twitter, Facebook, Tata Consultancy Services have announced permanent work from home for their employees, does that mean the beginning of the end of the traditional office typology?

The short answer – No!

The virus definitely won't kill the concept of working in standard office buildings. However, the new normal will have businesses coming back with an open mind of alternative spaces for working designed with the purview of a healthy environment.

As companies plan how to bring their workforce together again in the office, numerous calculations are being made to provide an environment that will keep workers safe, healthy and productive. While some of that strategy involves testing and monitoring employees to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, architects are thinking about the actual physical design of offices.

Automation & voice technology

Technology has been the table stake to respond to the ongoing pandemic and uncertainty. Redesigning the post COVID-19 workplaces would require companies to invest in a new suite of contactless technologies to reduce disease transmission.

Take some inspiration from Zaha Hadid Architects' new headquarters for the Bee'ah waste management company in Sharjah, UAE. The company has come up with 'contactless pathways', whereby employees rarely need to touch the building with their hands.

Office doors open automatically using motion sensors and facial recognition, while lifts - and even a coffee - can be ordered from a smartphone.

Simple technology like Amazon Alexa for Business, for example, could become a new interface and remove the need for physically pushing a button or touching a surface in an office.

Technology could also be used to remind employees of social distancing. Cushman & Wakefield has installed beacons into its office to track employees' movements via their mobile phones, potentially sending alerts when six-feet rules are breached. Similarly, video conferencing would not restrict to work from but also extends to offices to avoid large meetings in conference rooms.

Cubicles will be back

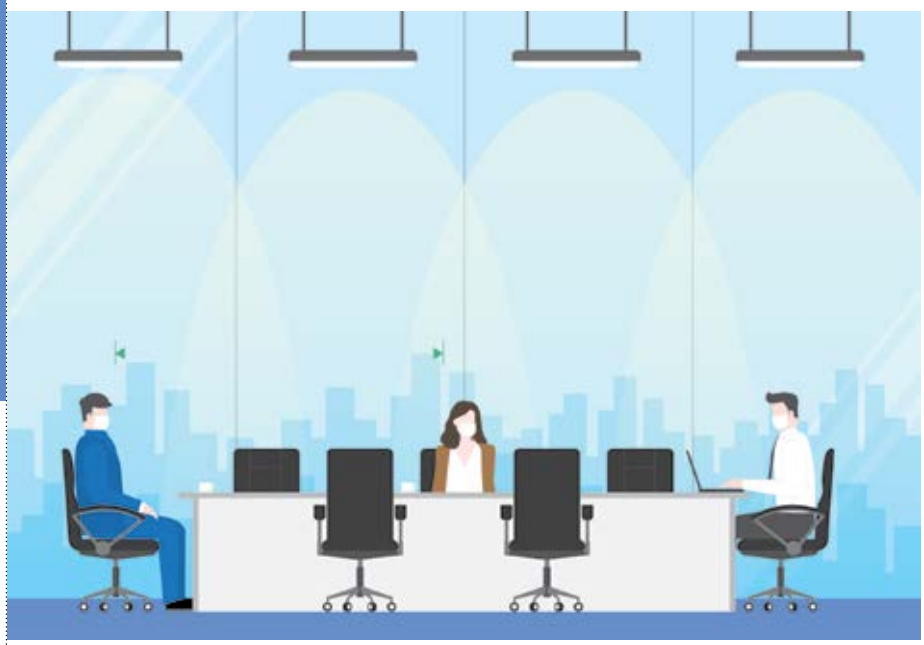
Offices are looking at adding the clear barriers between desks, perhaps even in between sinks in corporate bathrooms as Toyota Mississippi did. Toyota has installed transparent barriers (plexiglass) at the tables

The virus won't kill the concept of working in standard office buildings. However, the new normal will have businesses coming back with an open mind of alternative spaces for working designed with the purview of a healthy environment



and desks and workstations. One Italian design firm reimagined airline seating with clear partitions between passengers. Nike office in Memphis, Tennessee, United States, among others have installed plexiglass as barriers at the desks.

Cubicles which appeared in US offices in the 1960s as a way to encourage personalization, movement, and meaningful interactions among office workers, will get back into trend for altogether a different reason- workplace health & safety.



The six feet rule

Global real estate company Cushman & Wakefield has risen to the challenge with a new design. It's called the Six Feet Office. It's a way of transforming existing offices into places where the six-feet distance rule - which governments may continue to mandate - can be observed.

According to the Cushman & Wakefield's the 6 feet office concept consists of six elements:

- **6 Feet Quick Scan:** A concise but thorough analysis of the current working environment in the field of virus safety and any other opportunities for improvement.
- **6 Feet Rules:** A set of simple and clear workable agreements and rules of conduct that put the safety of everyone first.
- **Feet Routing:** A visually displayed and unique routing for each office, making traffic flows completely safe.
- **6 Feet Workstation:** An adapted and fully equipped workplace at which the user can work safely.
- **6 Feet Facility:** A trained employee who advises on and operationally ensures an optimally functioning and safe facility environment.
- **6 Feet Certificate:** A certificate stating that measures have been taken to implement a virus-safe working environment.

Co-working to increase?

Proponents of co-working spaces have long argued that companies managing flexible office space would be able to weather a recession. While a number of clients at co-working spaces might choose to liquidate their space completely, co-working companies expect an influx of new clients looking to downsize from traditional office space with long lease terms into so-called flexible or co-working space.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, many large companies were increasingly taking advantage of the flexible terms of co-working space rather than taking on long-term leases. That's likely to continue, perhaps even more rapidly.

Reconfigure flex spaces

Workplace spaces like reception, conference rooms, etc. typically operate on a first come first served basis and offer fewer desks than people. The immediate concern with this type of workplace is cleanliness and cross-contamination from multiple people sharing desks. These spaces may need to be used differently until the COVID-19 threat is over.

To reduce the spread of germs plans to phase employees back into these environments may involve dedicating seats to individuals for a set period of time. If alternating the occupants assigned to each desk on different days or weeks, clearly communicating the plan with cleaning services will be paramount for instilling confidence in staff that desks have been sanitized.

To have or not have isolation rooms

In the event an employee begins exhibiting symptoms — whether in building lobbies, common areas, or tenant spaces — organizations will need the ability to isolate anyone who is or becomes symptomatic while at work. Designating and communicating spaces so that every manager and employee knows their location and purpose is necessary for ensuring workers' well-being.

An isolation space can be any type of enclosed room. Considerations should be taken for special cleaning protocols in these spaces, ideally with special ventilation or negative air pressure to further reduce exposure to others in the area.

Physical distancing

An office in Amsterdam designed by Cushman & Wakefield, a property-services group, has desks surrounded by a zone of color-coded carpet to let people know when they are getting too close. At the start of the day workers pick up a paper deskpad on which to rest their laptop, and which is discarded when they leave. Arrows on the floor guide them to move around clockwise.

Offices can also use more cues and stickers like the ones used for road markings. From squash-court-style lines in lobbies to standing spots in lifts, and form circles around desks to lanes in corridors, the floors and walls of our offices are likely to be covered in visual instructions.

You can also encourage employees to walk clockwise, creating one-way flow to minimize transmission, as adopted by many hospitals during the current outbreak.

As we proceed into the months ahead, and plans commence for the return to the office, we hope these considerations can support the balance of business continuity and the safety of workers everywhere.



While corporate giants like Twitter, Facebook, Tata Consultancy Services have announced permanent work from home for their employees, innovative use of technology can help get us back to office which is safe



Q&A

There will be significant focus on reskilling and upskilling: India Skill Development Minister

Skill development and new models of learning will be central to the recovery post-COVID-19, according to Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship of India **Mahendra Nath Pandey**

By **Abid Hasan**

Mahendra Nath Pandey is an Indian politician who is the current Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship of India and Member of Lok Sabha for Chandauli since 2014. He has also served as Union Minister of State for Ministry of Human Resource Development between 2016 and 2017.

In an interaction with People Matters, the Minister shares his thoughts on the current economic scenario due to COVID-19. The economy has come to a standstill because of this current pandemic, with millions

of job losses and labourers returning to their homes are an alarming situation and what is the government doing to keep things under control.

Read the edited excerpts here.

Q You have been the HRD Minister in the past and are now handling the Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. How has the journey been so far? What were some of your significant challenges and achievements?

A While the Ministry of Human Resource Development is focussed on the education of India's citizens, the Ministry of Skill Development is focussed on empowering the youth with skill sets towards being gainfully employed and contributing to the economic growth of the country.

MSDE primarily drives the Skill India Mission that was launched by the Honorable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi and was designed to help India's youth achieve their full potential, hone their skills and help in the economic development of the nation. The journey so far has been full of different functions towards creating an employable and stronger workforce. We have revamped many initiatives from policies for skill development and entrepreneurship, to the Apprenticeship Act and the programs for skilling, upskilling and reskilling of the nation's workforce.

The significant achievements include:

- Over 1 crore youth join the Skill India Mission annually
- Launch of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) to aid those who cannot pay for their skill training and find a means of livelihood for them
- Setting up of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs) – close to 750 state-of-the-art skilling centres for youth
- Introduction of a wide range of reforms to the Apprenticeship Act of 1961, to make it significantly easier for the industry to take on much-needed apprentices, extended it to the service sector
- Reinvigorated the ITI ecosystem through modernization, enhanced pedagogy, revised curriculum, better technology, quality training and an online examination and assessment system
- Introduction of new-age courses in 12 NSTIs. These include Internet of Things – Smart Healthcare; Internet of Things – Smart Cities; 3D printing;

We will have to uplift and enhance our manufacturing and industrial output to reduce external dependency while catering to international and domestic demand



Drone pilots; Solar Technicians and Geo-Informatics among many others.

Q The country is going through an economic slowdown. How are you planning to link skill development with employment in the current crisis?

A Once the nationwide lockdown ends and the COVID 19 crisis is behind us, we expect the country will be at a distinct advantage when it comes to economic recovery. Needless to say, that on one hand while a few sectors will be impacted like travel and tourism, hospitality, automobiles, real estate and entertainment; on the other hand, there will be a few which will likely see growth – like pharma, FMCG, Health, logistics and e-commerce.

With a decreased dependency on China, India will see several opportunities come its way. We will have to uplift and enhance our manufacturing and industrial output to reduce external dependency while catering to international and domestic demand.

This recovery will not only be driven by the above factors but also by the entrepreneurial spirit that we have been inculcating in our students over the years, and the focus we have laid on new-age skills that will become increasingly important in the post Coronavirus world. We expect these new-age skills to become highly in demand.

Also, through our e-skilling initiatives, we have enabled possibilities for many to upgrade their existing skills. The lockdown has given many people time to catch up on their skilling requirements and upskill wherever necessary.

> We have always focused on a job-ready workforce. Now that the opportunity will arise, we will be able to meet these requirements of the industry

Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, we are working on an action plan to reskill unemployed migrant and informal sector workers once the lockdown is lifted. These will not only help rehabilitate those who have lost their jobs because of the coronavirus crisis but also make workforce readily available once economic activity restarts.

Q How closely are you working with the HRD Ministry in the area of employment? Has there been any discussion about a change in the approach of creating more jobs and upskilling more people post this crisis?

A We have been working closely with the MHRD on ensuring integration of skills both at a school and college level so that we can engage with the youth at the right age and tap them at the right time.

Of late, India has been getting queries from the European Union and the US for textiles, homeware, ceramic tiles, engineering goods, furniture, among others as part of one plus one strategy in relations to China. India's electronics industry is heavily dependent on China, importing about $20.6 billion worth of electronic items in 2018-19, which can be now made in India. We should explore this opportunity and should uplift and enhance our manufacturing and industrial output to reduce external dependency.

Degree Apprenticeship is a new education route, recently introduced by the Government, bringing together the best of higher and vocational training. This new option enables university study and the invaluable on-the-job training typical of an apprenticeship. While pursuing a degree course the candidate can undergo apprenticeship training as an integrated component of the curriculum.

Q With COVID-19 impacting all the major sectors and employment opportunities will be limited. How do you plan to deal with this?

A With each challenge and adversity comes an opportunity. While it is right to say that some sectors will take a hit, there will be a few which will see increasing demand. New job roles will be created to meet demand nationally and internationally. As mentioned above sectors like Healthcare, Logistics, Emergency services, Green jobs, E-commerce, Home delivery services, IT/ITeS will see increasing demand for a skilled workforce. We have always focused on a job-ready workforce. Now that the opportunity will arise, we will be able to meet these requirements of the industry.

In a few segments, like in reskilling and upskilling, continuous and quick assessment of demand will be done by a special research team which will be formed soon. There will be a clear focus on employer-led training for the focussed outcome and we will enable fast-tracking approval for additional course. We can expect large scale entrepreneurship led skilling especially supporting the micro-entrepreneurs along with creation of linkages to the credit network. The focus will be on blended model for learning with increased scalability and quick turnaround time.

Q How is the ministry navigating through the challenges brought on by COVID-19?

A Firstly, we are trying to ensure that we keep all our students, staff and partners safe hence all centres were shut with immediate effect of the nationwide lockdown that was announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in late March 2019. All our training centres, including National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs), ITIs and their hostels across the country have either been converted into quarantine/isolation facilities or shelters for the needy and have been extended to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and to the respective State Governments. 40 percent of this capacity is already being utilized for the welfare of the people.

MSDE has also notified all establishments to pay the full stipend to apprentices engaged with them. Currently, 24,884 establishments are engaging 2.42 lakh apprentices in both designated and optional trade. The Government will reimburse stipends to these establishments.

We have made extensive online resources available through the Directorate General of Training for around 2 million students enrolled in industrial training institutes who are unable to attend classes. The complete curriculum is available through video lessons, question banks, mock tests and e-learning content through the Bharat Skills portal and mobile-friendly application.

Q What's your take on the Indian job market at this point? Post COVID-19, how will the future look like?



In a few segments, like in reskilling and upskilling, continuous and quick assessment of demand will be done by a special research team which will be formed soon

A The sections of population that are likely to be most impacted are – workers from impacted sectors, daily wage earners, migrant workers and those working in the formal economy. There must be quick and continuous assessment of demand and blended models for learning which are scalable and have quick turn-around time. There will be heavy focus on reskilling and upskilling. This recovery will not only be driven by the above factors but also by the entrepreneurial spirit that we have been inculcating in our students over the years and the focus we have laid on new-age skills that will become increasingly important in the post Coronavirus world.

Q What is the ministry doing to help people who have lost their job because of COVID-19?

A The nation is witnessing thousands of migrant workers, many of whom have been rendered jobless by the nationwide lockdown imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19, continue to return to their villages and home-towns. The government is planning on using these workers for infrastructure projects, a move that could help address two crucial problems – joblessness and workforce shortage. We are trying to find opportunities to link the semi-skilled and the skilled workers so that they can earn their livelihood and at the same time support the local economy. We are also looking at agriculture, agri-processing and healthcare as immediate avenues to restart skilling with a focus on reverse migrants.

Q What are your plans for the Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in the coming four years?

A We have received a significant amount of feedback and suggestions on what changes we can make to our various initiatives to make them more efficient, with better outcomes. We are evaluating these and making some tweaks to the programs with a continued focus on apprenticeship, reskilling and upskilling as well as certification and standardization of existing skills.

Beyond that, we are all working together to overcome the challenges and continue our work in this environment where there is a new normal in place.

The Ministry is currently in the midst of planning the next phase of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, the umbrella scheme under the Prime Minister's Skill India Mission along with other initiatives like IndiaSkills, Rozgar Melas, etc.

5 Survival skills for future HR leaders

In a constantly changing world, let's explore what's key to surviving the disruption and making it to the future as an HR leader

By **Bhavna Sarin**

"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."
- Malcolm X

The debates and discussions surrounding man vs machine, humans vs robots, and human essence vs AI have been going on for quite some time now without a declared winner. What has come out from these discussions though is that technology is here to stay and humans are irreplaceable. The question is no longer about who will conquer, but about a trade-off, rather balance. How capable is one to strike that balance will determine their future, as well as the future of the ones around them.

These capabilities are not necessarily in-built, these are skills that given the intrinsic drive of humans in the present time, they can be acquired and sharpened over a period of time. As HR professionals and leaders, these skills become even more critical to be able to navigate and lead the rest of the organization through turbulent, uncertain and disruptive times. But what are these skills that will future-proof you as an HR leader as you ponder over your next curve?

As an HR leader, before you plan for the future, you need to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. And helping you look at this bigger picture with the right lens, is none other than Michael Vance, who gives you 8 lenses to filter through the clutter and identify

pillars to strategize. These 8 lenses or as he calls them, 8 equities, are - physical, spiritual, psychological, intellectual, emotional, financial, social and family. While these are broad equities to ponder upon, you do need to streamline your focus on internal skills to be ready for the future.

We bring to you five such survival skills that are critical to boost your ability to survive and capability to lead in a future that remains unknown. Let's find out what these are below!

1 Emotional Intelligence

The world of work is already experiencing turbulence and going through a disruptive phase, and no one yet knows where the path leads. However, what we do know is that this disruption brings with itself opportunities and technology, and both in abundance. What lacks is clarity, and that missing piece triggers fear, anxiety, and stress among the workforce. The rising job insecurity among employees and the resulting fear of financial instability is a trigger for an unhealthy and unproductive work environment. Leaders need to prioritize building their emotional intelligence to combat such man-made worries and not only redirect the energy of the workforce, but also identify and acknowledge their concerns and offer new-age solutions to their diverse set of problems. Some basics to guide you in this skill include:

- effective listening
- making open communication a priority
- valuing ideas and empowering employees in their journey



"75% of careers are derailed for reasons related to emotional competencies, including inability to handle interpersonal problems; unsatisfactory team leadership during times of difficulty or conflict; or inability to adapt to change or elicit trust," according to The Center for Creative Leadership. Need we say more?

2 Ambition

Ambition is no longer just a trait you are born with. You might have not always been an ambitious individual, you make do with what is served to you and have learned to be content. While that is an important human trait to survive, an important trait for future leaders to survive and thrive is being ambitious. HR leaders of tomorrow need to be hungry and driven to learn, driven to get better, driven to scale performance, driven to better performance of others, driven to create business impact, and driven to explore untapped paths that lie outside of their comfort zone and KRAs. The world of work is changing, the role of HR is evolving, and to be successful as a leader in such times, your ambition and craving for performance, results and development will determine your path as a leader.

3



Risk-taker

The term VUCA has been in existence for quite some time now. While it was applicable in pockets and dependent on the nature of an industry, organization and people, it now is more universal in the real sense of the word. And to lead the workforce in such volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous times, HR needs to gear up and be willing to take calculated risks to sail through the disruption, by building an internal ability to take chances, be brave enough to voice contrary opinions, experiment, fail fast, learn, improvise and try again. By embracing change, continuously learning and not being afraid to experiment, HR leaders can elevate not just their role, but also their impact. They need to be willing to challenge the status quo, think beyond HR, build business expertise, develop critical/analytical thinking skills, take initiative and become a lifelong learner.

4



Collaborator

The concept of a leader being the head of the team is long gone. An absolute non-negotiable to become a future-ready HR leader is to be a collaborator. HR as a function no longer works in isolation on just performance management, talent acquisition, employee engagement and so on. Today HR is very much a critical component of ensuring smooth day-to-day functioning of the organization as well as being a strong decision-maker for people and organization related matters. A successful HR leader isn't one with an expertise only on people and operations, but one with an expertise in utilization, cost control and profitability as well. By collaborating with leaders and teams outside HR, upskilling and cross-skilling across domains, and fostering a cultural fabric that bolsters the impact of team work over individual achievements, the future HR leader can reignite dormant potential of the workforce.

> To lead workforce in a VUCA world, HR leaders need to gear up and be willing to take calculated risks to sail through the disruption, by building an internal ability to take chances, be brave enough to voice contrary opinions, experiment, fail fast, learn, improvise and try again

5



Delegate

As crucial as it is to collaborate, it is equally crucial to delegate. As easy as it is to say, delegation is a skill that does not come easily to a lot of leaders. While some leaders have a need to control everything, some lack trust in their teams to be accountable, and some simply don't see it as a possibility. Delegation in other words also means to empower. Leaders often have a lot on their plate and that is a never changing scenario unless they learn to prioritize, delegate and hone the skills of their teams to take up portions of that work and step up in their roles. Delegation is not only about the work in hand, but also about planting seeds of leadership for the future. As said by actor John Cusack about Theo Epstein, a renowned American baseball executive - "His power lies in a paradox, in the knowledge that the only way to keep power is to give it away."

To keep your power as a leader, you must learn to also give it away. Like they say, sprinkle the stardust. So, how future-ready are you?

The biggest result of COVID-19 is 'change': Dr. Niranjan Hiranandani



In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, 'builder extraordinaire' **Dr. Niranjan Hiranandani** - Founder & MD - Hiranandani Group and President - Assocham & NAREDCO shares his views on what is keeping him awake at night as a business leader, what the workplace would be like post COVID-19 and how leaders can manage business continuity and people strategy simultaneously in these tough times

By **Yasmin Taj**

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely transformed organizations and the way they function. This is a time that we had never seen before. So, it was obvious that riding through this tough wave would not be easy. As the lockdown gets extended in many cities, organizations are trying to find answers to many questions relating to resuming work from offices. But one thing is for sure; the crisis has changed the very ecosystem of the workplace and there will be a "new normal" that we all must learn to adapt to. Leaders too will need to redefine their leadership style to be more effective in these testing times.

In an exclusive interaction with us, Dr Niranjan Hiranandani – Founder & MD- Hiranandani Group and President – Assocham & NAREDCO, shares what is keeping him awake at night as a business leader, what the workplace would be like post COVID-19 and how leaders can manage business continuity and people strategy simultaneously in these tough times. He also highlights how passion and persistence with integral commitment and unwavering efforts is the key to achieve success and scale great heights.

Dr. Hiranandani is known as a Co-Founder and MD, Hiranandani Group, who recently started a distinct Business Unit - Hiranandani Communities. Currently, he spearheads as the National President for National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO), which works under the aegis of Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of India and also appointed President of one of the oldest trade body of India -ASSOCHAM (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry). He has also been conferred with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management with thesis on real estate.

He is known as 'Builder Extraordinaire' and as the visionary man behind redesigning the skyline of Mumbai. With his profound knowledge, sharp business acumen and an ambitious attitude, he has been conferred with the leadership role across various prominent business organizations and apex chambers by Industry pundits.

Here are the excerpts from the interview.

Q In these unprecedented times, what is keeping you awake at night? What is your biggest worry as a business leader?

A My people; and my fellow citizens. I look at thousands of fellow Indians trudging along miles to reach their villages from the cities they were till recently gainfully employed, it breaks one's heart. Why have we let things reach these levels of human tragedy? Profits and losses are a part of business; human suffering which could have been avoided – and wasn't – hurts all the more. If we can't take care of our fellow citizens by providing them with transport back home, how does it matter whether we are a market leader or just another Fortune 500 company. That thought keeps me awake at night.

> As a leader, you have to be the father figure – someone who can be relied on for support when times are tough as also one who plays the role of a strict taskmaster when necessary

Q How has the COVID-19 outbreak impacted the real estate industry in particular?

A Work has ground to a halt; trained migrant labor has been lost to the pandemic fueled worries and the

world we lived in prior to COVID-19 is gone. So the biggest impact, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, is change. Yes, there will be buyers for the homes we build, but the specifications that home buyers will want in the post-COVID world will change the paradigm of real estate. Sales and marketing will complete the shift to digital; automation will increase and new technology that reduces dependence on labor – including usage of prefabricated structures - will get integrated into the work process. In other words, 'driving the need to adapt to change' is how the outbreak has impacted real estate.

Q What is your immediate focus area? How are you managing business continuity and people strategy simultaneously?

A Taking care of your people – the team that worked wonders in good times – this is the immediate focus area for any business leader in challenging times. From the migrant labor on construction sites which we took care of, to ensuring alternative means of productivity for white collar human resources, to ensuring that the planning, architecture and design team keep the changed paradigm in mind while working on projects that will be future-ready – it is all about keeping the team gainfully occupied. The challenges will be met, once the team is provided with the right sort of work profiles – and the platform to create it on. You ensure future success by keeping your team fit and fully functional while passing through any crisis or challenge.

Teamwork in the real sense, especially the willingness of the leader to listen to suggestions from any member of the team regardless of their designation, when they have something constructive to contribute works - even more so during a crisis

Q How can leaders deal with the fear, uncertainty and doubt that their employees are going through?

A You have to be the father figure – someone who can be relied on for support when times are tough as also one who plays the role of a strict taskmaster when necessary. It is a combination of being soft and tough at different times, as required. The team has to be motivated, given new challenges as also rewarded when they perform. One needs to keep in mind that the fear, uncertainty and doubt that their employees are going through is at a much higher level, also being faced by business leaders. It is about keeping calm while helping the team handle its worries and concerns. As the leader, the buck stops at your table, and dealing with issues like fear, uncertainty and doubt are all in a day's work.

Q In this time of crisis, what has worked for you and what hasn't?

A As a corporate entity and as a group of companies, we have faced many challenges over the years so, there's a crisis management template in place. Positive thought and a constructive approach works in a crisis – as it does in normal times. Teamwork in the real sense, especially the willingness of the leader to listen to suggestions from any member of the team regardless of their designation, when they have something constructive to contribute works - even more so during a crisis.

What hasn't worked is the expectation that policy decisions would translate into

actual movement at ground level. So, when authorities announced positive moves, they have not all translated into actual moves at ground level.

Q If you had to take a tough decision, around people (for example, pay cuts, downsizing, cost -cutting measures, redundancy of certain roles), how would you do it? What should leaders focus on and what should be their approach when it comes to making these tough decisions?

A It is the overall good that needs to be taken into account while taking any tough decision. If you are ill and have to take an injection to recover, the pain of the syringe is something you have to deal with as part of the process of healing from the illness. You can't duck out of taking the injection; similarly, pay cuts, downsizing, cost-cutting measures, redundancy of certain roles – these have to be done when necessary. One has to bite the bullet, be transparent and open on why certain unpleasant decisions have to be taken. A leader has to be realistic, look at the bigger picture and figure out how best to deal with the challenges. Delaying the inevitable does not work; one's approach has to be straightforward and direct while making these tough decisions.

Q Many organizations are seeing opportunities emerging in addition to challenges, whether it be in addressing new client needs or opportunities to improve your organization's effectiveness. What opportunities are you seeing?

A Every challenge is an opportunity; at Hiranandani Group of Companies, we have seen this work in the past, across many challenges that have arisen.

In future, it will be a world where virtual and digital will seamlessly combine with the human interface, leveraging automation and technology across new-age work platforms riding on artificial intelligence and machine learning, and bringing the future to us in the present day, today!

COVID-19 brings in a paradigm change in the way we do business and also address the needs of our customers so that we give them a real estate product that is 'future-perfect'. The 'new normal' is still being defined, where we have made a virtue from the adversity of being flexible enough to be able to adapt to the 'new normal', regardless of whatever specifications it finally emerges with. We are integrating automation and technology at a very fast pace, ensuring that we are relevant to the world as it is present-day; as also ensuring that our products and services are 'future-ready'. Marketing and sales activities have adapted to the digital and online platforms, and we are relevant to new-age customers as also the existing customer/ investor base.

Q How is the Hiranandani Group preparing for the new world of work post COVID-19?

A We are already working as per the specifications, which we see defining the scenario expected in the new world of work post COVID-19. It is a world where virtual and digital will seamlessly combine with the human interface, leveraging automation and technology across new-age work platforms be they 3D or virtual reality riding on artificial intelligence and machine learning, and bringing the future to us in the present day, today!

Preparing your business for the future



The companies of today must become the social enterprises of tomorrow, finds Deloitte's Human Capital Trends Report 2020

By **Mint Kang**

Organizations are moving towards a more human approach that balances technology and people, profit and purpose, stakeholder and shareholder needs, according to the Deloitte's tenth annual Deloitte Human Capital Trends Report released recently. The report examines the sustainability of work as it is currently understood and how it can be enhanced by embedding critical values and attributes into the organization.

Erica Volini, principal and global human capital leader, Deloitte Consulting LLP, said: "Organizations need to realize that reinventing work is about building a culture where humans can thrive by creating meaning in work, as well as developing a new level of resilience and adaptability to handle disruptive events. This extraordinary time is when organizations should identify and invest in workers' capabilities, develop new team structures, and evaluate how to best leverage the alternative workforce."

Here are some people-focused takeaways from the report.

Designing work to make people feel welcome

The report shows that belonging

and well-being are considered the most important human capital issues today, and based on statistics from previous years, more important than they have been in the last decade. To create that sense of belonging, organizations need to make their people feel comfortable at work; connected to each other; and have a sense of contribution to meaningful work outcomes. Well-being, on the other hand, arises from work that is designed to reduce unnecessary stress upon the people doing it; whether by providing them with the autonomy to work in the ways most productive for them or by reducing dependency upon any one individual; or simply by providing the resources that are needed. In short, well-being for the employee body as a whole, rather than for disparate individuals.

Creating resilience for a time of growing uncertainty

Workers today need to change their skills and capabilities at an unprecedented rate: the report finds that in 53 percent of organizations, half to all of the workforce will need to upskill within the next three years. Economies around the world are shifting towards an "age of imagination", and success is becoming dependent on increasingly less quantifiable strengths. And the responsibility for equipping employees with these strengths is viewed as resting primarily with employers. But it is no longer enough to focus only on the strengths needed today. Instead, the report



recommends that organizations need to skill their workforce to become more adaptable and agile, capable of adjusting to the uncertainties of the future.

Pursuing a human-centric compensation strategy

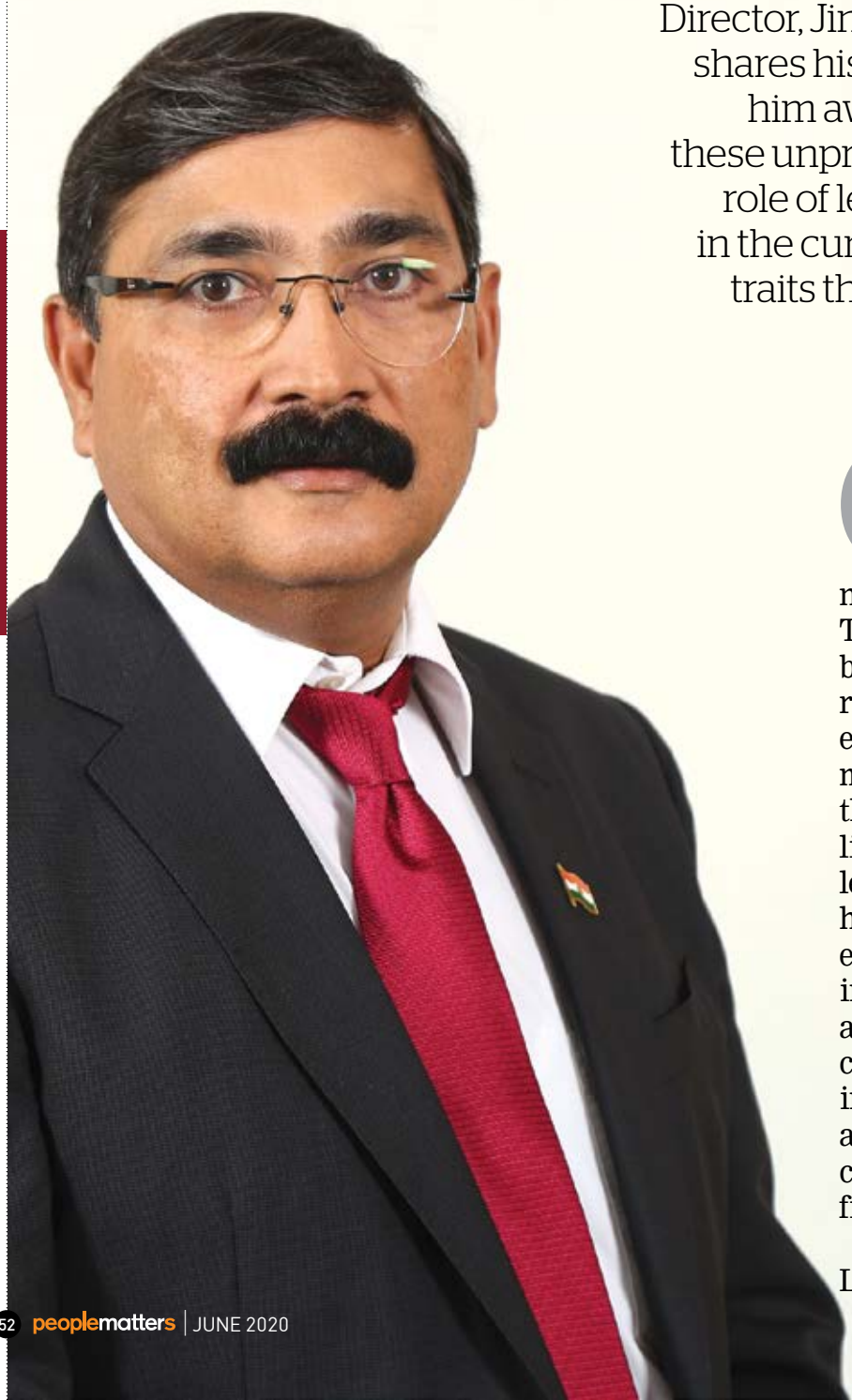
Compensation strategies remain a pain point all around, with the report finding that executives are dissatisfied with their organization's compensation design even as workers demand greater fairness and transparency. To align compensation with the world of work, organizations today need to structure their compensation strategies around human-focused design principles. They need to find better ways of valuing contributions; they need to properly acknowledge and reward changing responsibilities, pay for the development of the skills they need, and reward teams as well as individuals. Most importantly, they must go beyond organizational objectives and acknowledge and meet the priorities of the workforce: ethics, fairness, and compensation that allows socially acceptable living standards.

Q&A

As leaders, we either *Adapt* or *Die:* Director, JSPL

In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, **Sudhanshu Saraf**, Director, Jindal Steel & Power Limited shares his views on what is keeping him awake at night as a leader in these unprecedented times, how the role of leadership being redefined in the current situation, and certain traits that can make leaders more effective in these times

By **Yasmin Taj**



Odgers Berndtson recently conducted a study in association with Harvard Business Review Analytic Services. The findings of the report are based on data analyzed from the responses of almost 2,000 senior executives, managers and board members across the world. Given the current times, the study highlights the importance of strong leaders in times of disruption, however, it notes that there is an evident 'Crises of Confidence' in corporate leadership globally and clearly, *Adapt or Die* is the clear message across industries in these times. Also true leaders are naturally emerging who are collaborating with their teams to find genuine solutions.

According to the report, today's Leaders must find a way to

constantly evolve their business strategy, find the resilience to drive it forward, while also being prepared to seize opportunities. With the pace of change being a major source of disruption in itself, the role of Leadership is being re-defined.

With regards to what it means to be a leader in times of crisis, we spoke to Sudhanshu Saraf, Director, Jindal Steel & Power Limited in an exclusive interaction, where he tells us about what is keeping him awake at night as a leader, certain traits that can make leaders more effective in times of crisis and also gives some advice for leaders and the workforce at large as they learn to adapt to the new normal.

Saraf is best at transforming businesses. He has the competence and deep understanding of transformational philosophies such as Lean, Six Sigma and Theory of Constraints and uses them very well in tandem. He has the change management skills which he acquired in consulting and a razor sharp focus on cash and profit. Experience of 32 years across industries, geographies, functions and verticals, has made him industry-agnostic, a whole-system thinker and a process expert. As a business leader, he has been transforming businesses through coordinated use of improvement philosophies and change management to solve business problems and for creating 2X to 10X increase in the bottom line of the enterprise.

He started working with Jindal Steel & Power Limited (JSPL) as a management consultant from September 2015. The breakthrough results and their significance in everything that he worked on, prompted the promoter to ask him to join the company as its CEO, which he did from January 2019.

We all have seen the impact of one "missing" domino in the chain reaction, and in today's scenario there are multiple missing dominos within the geographical distances between production and consumption sites

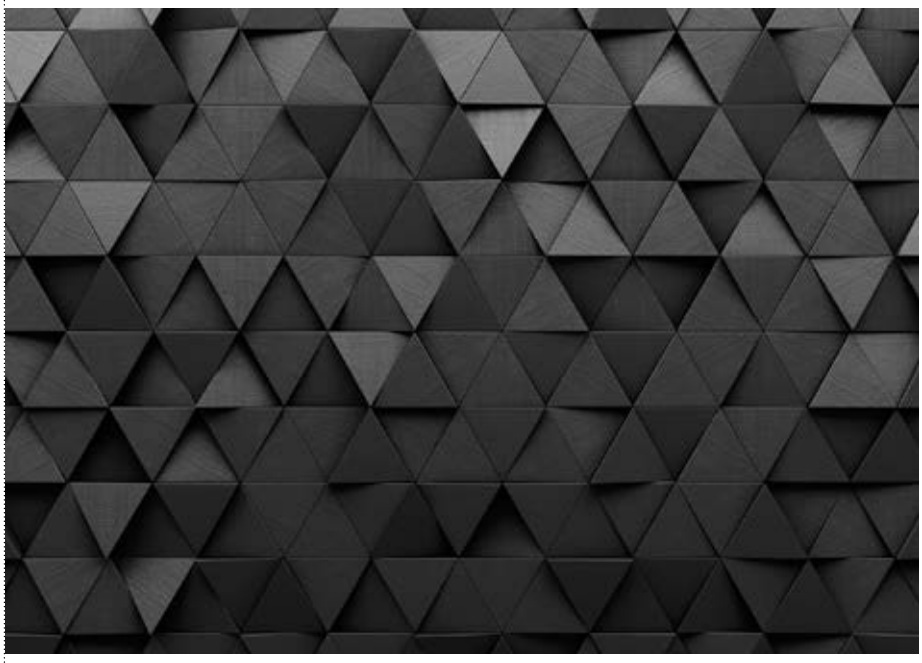
Q As a leader in the unprecedented times that we are facing, what is your biggest worry?

A I am not sure if I have a singular response to this gigantic question! There is so much uncertainty on all fronts and since it is "unprecedented", any understanding of cause-and-effect does not exist. So my response is at three levels: I want to respond at an Indian Steel Industry level, India as a country level, and the global level.

From an Indian Steel Industry perspective, my biggest worry is about the return of truck drivers and labor (of project sites) back to work. We actually have no issues with the availability and inward logistics of the raw materials, so production is not an issue. And since the projects move in phases, progress within a phase (with consumption) gives rise to orders and so on and so forth. So for regaining the lost flow, both drivers and site labour are required.

My biggest worry at the national level is about food security, a famine. Not impacted by drought or lack of rains, but because of broken supply chain and damage to crops, especially the perishable ones.

And at the global level, the worries are on similar lines of poor logistical connection between the supplier and the consumer. We all have seen the impact of one "missing" domino in the chain reaction, and in today's scenario there are multiple missing dominos within the geographical distances between production and consumption sites.



Every industry has their own challenges, own approaches to address those challenges and hence, own solutions as well. There is so much to learn and leverage with the inter-industry cross pollination

Q The Leadership Confidence Index report by Odgers Berndtson in association with Harvard Business Review Analytic Services states that 'Only 15% of business executives worldwide have confidence in their own company's top leadership to successfully manage disruption'. What are your views looking at the current scenario? Where do you think, the problem lies?

A I am not surprised by the survey data. I think the problem is with the board and their selection process for the top job. Still companies want to put an industry veteran in the top slot and have not learnt from the experiments of IBM kind, where they decided in favor of Louis Gerstner. In my view, the ability to innovate or think out-of-the-box would tremendously enhance if the top man or a few people in the top team are from other industries. Every industry has their own challenges, own approaches to address those challenges and hence, own solutions as well. There is so much to learn and leverage with the inter-industry cross pollination.

Q The report states that the way forward is to either Adapt or Die. With the pace of change being a major source of disruption in itself, how is the role of leadership being redefined in the current situation?

A I would say that the fundamentals of business would never change. In my view, a person "A" (or a company "abc") gives money to a person "B" (or a company "xyz"), when the person "B" satisfies a NEED of person "A"; better the solution (satisfaction), more is the money; or higher the intensity of Need (pain/gain), more is the money! This is not changing, nor is going to change. What is changing are the needs and the pace of change of needs. So the role of leadership needs to get aligned with these changes. And hence they need to spend more time and effort in understanding the customer needs and keep doing this on a high frequency.

Biggest change would be required in the design of capital intensive projects which typically have long gestation and pay-back periods. The trade-off would be between built-in flexibility in the design and the project costs.

Q How can leaders navigate the cash flow constraint with limited or no revenue streams, yet ensuring

adequate capital to fall back on to minimize the impact on salaries?

A In my view, the ultimate strength of any organization lies in its people. Laying off people appears to be an immediate, quick and tempting solution. However, this can damage the organization very badly. The damage would obviously happen on the image and culture of the organization; but it also happens on the operational aspects when the fresh recruits take their own time and the remaining ones do not feel like giving their 100%. So, a better solution is to take a proportionate cut across the levels and manage the situation as a team. This approach has a far better probability of survival with a good ability to bounce back quickly. Needless to say, it will also have a positive impact on the whole organization and even the business associates on either side of the value chain.

Q **As per the report, 'humility' is a key trait required by leaders to succeed in today's time. Considering the fact that most leaders do not know how the industry growth scenario is going to play out, do you see a leadership style shift (from controlling to perhaps being humble)? Are there certain traits that can make leaders more effective in times of crisis?**

A "Respect" is my word or the "mantra" I like the most. And in my view, this is not going to change. As I said earlier, it is all about people. And when we talk about people, the biggest need does not lie in the once-a-month pay cheque, or in the swanky office; people basically want to be respected. They want to be respected as human beings, respected for their intellect, respected for their skills and respected for being part of your team. And it must come naturally and genuinely from the leadership. I am okay with the leadership's need to feel important, so long as they are also ready to acknowledge the importance of each and every member of the team.

Q **What are your top three priorities at the moment? What would your advice be for leaders and the workforce at large as they learn to adapt to the new normal?**

A Cash, safety of our people and continuous feed of raw material to our blast furnaces and coke ovens, are currently the top three priorities of mine. In a manner, all the three are about safety … company, people and plant.

My advice to the people would be to give their highest priority to their mental, emotional and physical health in these unprecedented trying times.

My advice to the people would be to give their highest priority to their mental, emotional and physical health in these unprecedented trying times



Board meetings in the time of Corona





The COVID-19 pandemic attack has changed the world in ways none of the scenario - or risk heat-mapping corporations could have imagined even a quarter ago

By **M. Muneer & Ralph Ward**

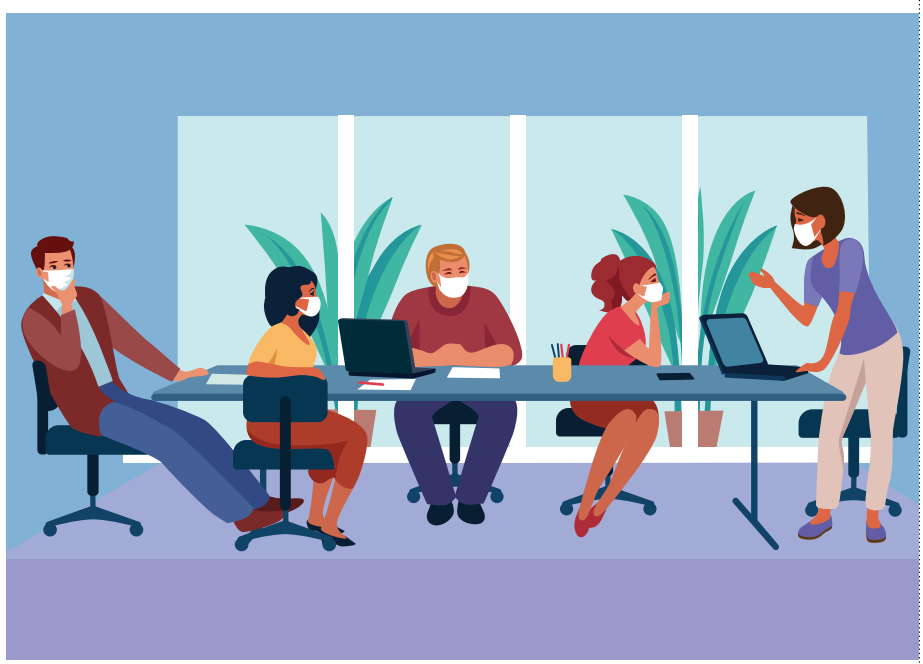
It is that time of the year now when quarterly – and for some annual – board meetings have to be held, especially when the Finance Ministry has clarified that the financial year will not be changed despite the pandemic lockdown and social distancing. The COVID-19 pandemic attack has changed the world in ways none of the scenario- or risk heat-mapping corporations could have imagined even a quarter ago.

Perhaps it is best that tectonic or paradigm shifts occur suddenly – we have less time to worry over them, and instead, have to focus on simply living through the moment. The virus is also a great leveler since it does not discriminate between market leader, manipulator or laggard.

At a time of global pandemic resulting in an economic turmoil both in developed and developing economies, and when we hear such words as "quarantine", "depression", "curfew", and "lockdown" more often across the world, discussion on corporate governance may seem irrelevant and insignificant. But the fiduciary duties of corporate boards – and their legal enforcement – carry on no matter how the world events shape up in the coming few months.

Globally, plummeting stock markets, emergency government controls, crumbling supply chains and evaporating cash flows and reserves slap corporate boards in the face with urgency not seen in our lifetime. If your board lets important filings, approvals or procedures get lost in the viral panic, legal liabilities are certain to haunt the board members and even bite them, maybe even years down the road.

As a board director, your inbox has no doubt been flooded with emails on all

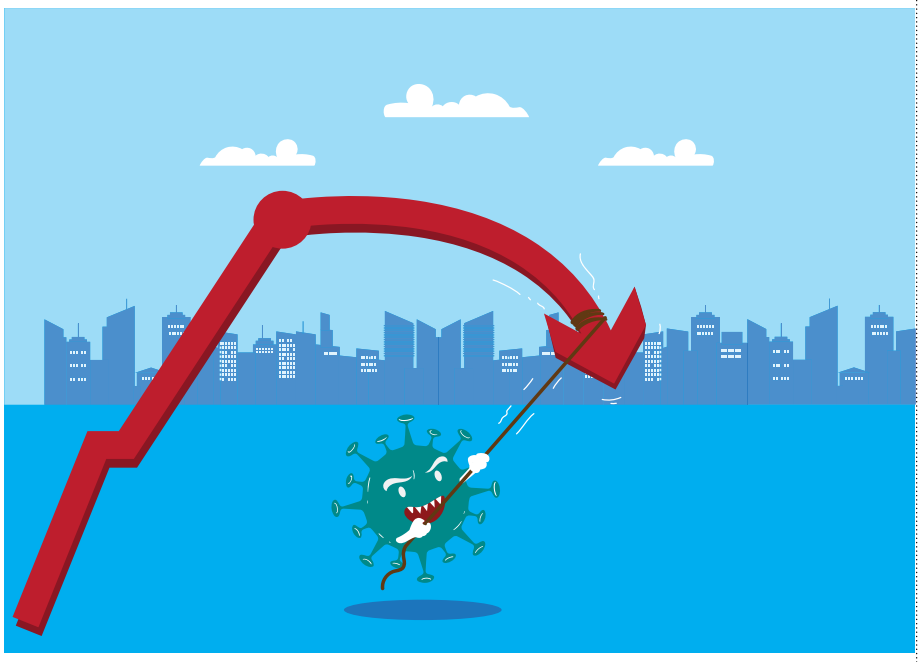


the business, legal, and yes, life ramifications of the moment's crisis. You will also have the mails from Ministry of Corporate Affairs on the steps you need to take for the enterprise you are serving, not to mention random unsolicited advice on how some suppliers can help you work from home. But let's focus on what we can do right now, and bring it into the boardroom.

We could probably write a whole book on the governance issues you'll need to wrestle with in the days ahead, but first things first – how do you even conduct board meetings now when everyone is asked to abandon offices and work from home?

Worldwide, regulators are adopting some relief provisions for virtual business, dropping in-person requirements for annual general meetings and board meetings. Just two weeks or so before, the US SEC lifted in-person voting and meeting requirements under the 1940 Investment Company Act, and India's Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has allowed virtual board sessions here. Expect more of this in the weeks ahead, especially as companies scramble to conduct virtual annual meetings while keeping things legal.

Taking board business online has suddenly gone from being a smart idea



Globally, plummeting stock markets, emergency government controls, crumbling supply chains and evaporating cash flows and reserves slap corporate boards in the face with urgency not seen in our lifetime

to becoming an urgent necessity. Most boards we work with have some experience in this, making use of board portal tech for information, and teleconferencing, often for their committees. But going completely virtual with video Directors' meetings, is still a new thing for most boards, and we know many of you are scrambling to make it work at the moment.

Worse, even board directors that have some background in conducting their business online have likely done so with fairly workaday matters. Now, all boards are facing existential threats to their people, their operations, their cash flows, and the actual survival of the enterprises they serve. Effectively taking your board operations online has jumped from baby steps to running for full marathon within a short period.

The virtual board meetings could be in the form of telephone conferencing, video conferencing or web-based conferencing. Each has its own challenges and benefits. Board members not used to the technologies or etiquettes of not-in-

Worldwide, regulators are adopting some relief provisions for virtual business, dropping in-person requirements for annual general meetings and board meetings



person meetings will have to be educated on the same quickly. The chair and the company secretary need to act quickly and decide on the conferencing and the rule setting for the same.

For instance, the following could be an overall guideline they may want to use to set for all board directors:

- Insist on a strict starting time suitable for all and take into consideration the different time zones the members might be in
- Provide the relevant information to all prior to the meeting, including the clear agenda. This could be on Intranet or on board portal with extra access restrictions if needed. Exchange of documents, comments, and corrections will be easier in the new normal
- If teleconference, ensure that everyone calls from a quiet location and that they keep their microphone mute unless they are speaking
- Ensure that each speaker identifies self
- Designate someone to take notes and minutes of the meeting
- Let older, tech-averse board members be familiarized with e-mails based exchange of information and editing of shared files in a drop box
- Anticipate for hurdles such as poor bandwidth and network issues at some board member's end. Some board members may be awkward with the new zoom call tech. So plan for all that in advance. For instance, allow a starting point and a deadline for communication, and perhaps, permit private schedules
- When everything is recorded or written, board members may not express themselves freely, fearing liability and so on
- Because of the large bytes of messages capturing the minutes of the meeting will be laborious and to identify the essence is a challenge for the chair

The board chair will have a challenging role in the time of COVID-19, no doubt. Getting everyone involved in the discussion is critical to the board function. The chair will have to be very observant without line of sight at times. And indeed, he or she should welcome all to the new normal!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MUNEER is co-founder and chief evangelist at the non-profit Medici Institute and **RALPH** is a global authority on boards; both drive alignment of board with strategy. Reach them at: muneer@mediciinstitute.org

'Employee experience bolsters a company's culture'

In an exclusive conversation with People Matters, **Piyanuch Limapornvanitch**, Chief People Officer, Pomelo Fashion talks about how employers can leverage AI and next-gen technologies to fuel differentiated employee experiences

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



Piyanuch Limapornvanitch is Chief People Officer at Pomelo Fashion, one of Asia's leading omnichannel fashion brand. She currently oversees Pomelo's global human resources efforts, including its HR operations, talent acquisition, and employee experience. Before joining Pomelo, Piyanuch led the HR division in Thailand at Accenture, spearheading learning initiatives across Southeast Asia.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q Why made EX become a priority for business leaders across the world?

A Employee experience bolsters a much stronger company culture, with each complementing the other. More and more organizations are recognizing people as their greatest assets, and additional investment is being placed in employee experience.

Business leaders are also realizing the benefits that a great employee experience can have on recruitment, employee engagement, and the company's bottom line.

Q How do you take care of the 'employee experience' factor in your company?

A While HR owns the employee experience, it is the responsibility of everyone in the organization to create great employee experiences. At Pomelo, we will be focusing on driving a culture of creativity and innovation. As a young organization with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, we will use this advantage to create a stronger culture and to drive performance. We will also

> Employee experience will not just sit with HR. It will be a wider organizational effort that will include C-suite members across different functions

be working on redefining our core values to help employees understand the Pomelo culture better.

Q How do you measure the return on investment for your employee experience initiative?

A Improving employee experience can require a substantial number of hours, money, and effort. That is

why most organizations need more practical justifications to invest in enhancing the employee experience.

One way to determine the return on investment for employee experience is to use metrics that are concrete and easily measurable. This includes employee retention rate, productivity level, customer satisfaction, and company's profitability.

However, it is important to focus on an employee-centric design rather than a process-centric design. This would mean considering more qualitative metrics to determine the return on investment, such as the skills that employees are able to gain.

To create a robust career path, companies need to look at shaping tailored career journeys. This can be achieved by implementing personalized learning and development, which corresponds to their job level, mentorship programs, and workshops. By helping employees develop their skills, companies are able to boost their productivity as well.

Q Are you leveraging technologies such as AI to enhance EX at your organization?

A With AI and next-gen technologies, employers will be able to analyze and better understand their employees' needs for a fulfilling and engaging career experience.



Creating high functioning workforces begins with optimizing engagement across the entire employee lifecycle. Companies can leverage AI tech to individualize the employee lifecycle and apply sentiment analysis to understand employee work patterns better.

- It is essential to customize learning for better learner-experience and job performance that can be enabled by AI-based learning recommendations. AI tools will also suggest career paths and will help employees take career planning in their own hands.
- Employers can look at leveraging tech to improve the design of corporate office spaces and optimize space utilization to cater to diverse job functions.
- It is imperative to institutionalize technologies that align with the Future of Work, enabling remote and full-time office employees to co-work and co-perform.

At Pomelo, we have built our own tools as well as in-house platforms to tailor to the company's needs, such as our supply chain platform, Henry. As we begin to focus on HR and the needs of our employees, I expect that we'll develop similar tools in-house to address our HR needs as well.

Q What are some of the biggest pitfalls you see organizations making when executing their employee experience strategy?

A The underlying issue is that most companies do not create processes that are tailored to their employees. Some other common pitfalls include:

- Soliciting employee feedback and not acting on it
- Analyzing results but not

communicating it to staff members
- Limiting employee involvement in the solution process
- Making big promises to address all engagement issues, but then under-delivering
- Not measuring impacts and levels of engagement to assess progress

Q What's the future of employee experience? Where do you see the EX five years down the line?

A Companies will start placing as much emphasis on employee experience as customer experience. Employee experience will not just sit with HR. It will be a wider organizational effort that will include C-suite members across different functions, as well as workplace design teams, to look at employee experience more holistically.

Employee experience has to be more tailored as flexible and remote working becomes mainstream. There will be a need to cater to new ways of working. Values will also matter more than ever before. Organizations that make their values clear and uphold them boldly will have more chances of retaining key talent as employee experience and employee engagement will be intrinsically tied to how much they feel those values are understood and represented.

Employees should also be involved in designing their own employee experience - an area to think about would be customizing their own benefits based on what they need. Employee experience is the next frontier in business innovation, and companies that can create the best, most attractive workplace culture will garner the top talent and out-perform their competition.

Employee experience has to be more tailored as flexible and remote working becomes mainstream

Q Who are the major stakeholders when it comes to ensuring employee experience in an organization? Is it the sole responsibility of HR to ensure EX?

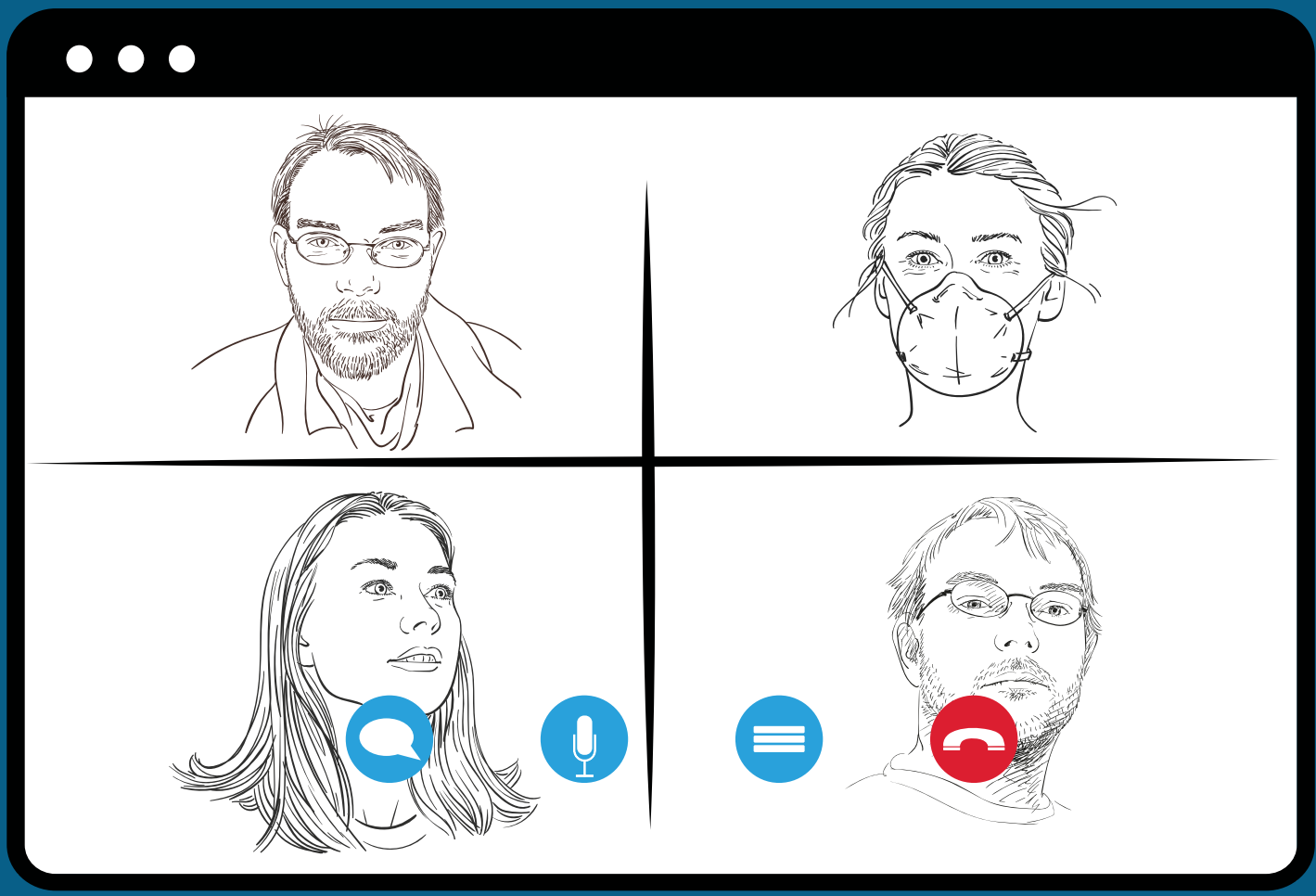
A In order to create an integrated and holistic experience for all employees, the onus for employee experience lies in the entire organization. HR should work closely together with senior leadership to build a culture that people will love, and the company's leadership should champion employee experience by embodying the company culture. The HR team can also actively engage employees by listening to them, monitoring their sentiments, and providing feedback to the leadership.

At the same time, managers can also empower their employees to engage in regular dialogue and share their ideas. The rest of the employees can do their part by sharing their ideas and making sure their voices are heard.

Q How can companies win the war for talent by giving employees the workspaces they want, the tools they need, and a culture they can celebrate?

A The best talent today expect more than just great benefits and cool office perks. They prefer companies that embrace advanced technologies to make work simpler, faster, and better.

Companies that empower employees to chart a clear career progression path, supported by robust employee awards, benefits, and recognition systems, will also be seen as more attractive. When it comes to internal communications and performance reviews, companies can look at implementing self-service portals, which will give employees access to the information they need and simplifying HR processes so that both managers and employees can make informed decisions.



THE NEW WORKPLACE

COVID-19 has changed the world including the very DNA of our workplace

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

There is now heightened awareness in the need to invest in creating more agile organizations - from supply chain processes to management systems and workforce resilience; agility is a far better insurance against change than any other fixed strategy.

Eugene Chang, Associate Client Partner, Korn Ferry

The world is looking very different amid the pandemic. As we move into the unchartered territories, we will certainly face different challenges especially by the HR professionals, and one of them is workforce re-entry in a different normal.

Tanya Heng, VP, Human Resources, Asia Pacific at IBM

As businesses move forward, there will be a fundamental change to the way we work and as leaders we must ensure our mindset is open to these changes as a result.

Genevieve Godwin, Chief People Officer, PropertyGuru Group

It's very important to both consider the current state of employee well-being and to manage what employers and employees can control. Stress and worry have risen to a record level.

Jim Harter, Ph.D., Chief Scientist, Workplace Management and Well-Being, Gallup

Many parts of the organization could become redundant, and talent will then need to be re-oriented toward new areas. Over time, in some cases, substantial reskilling may be needed.

Faridun Dotiwala, Partner, McKinsey

The COVID-19 era has brought unprecedented changes for organizations and has challenged the way organizations have been thinking about the way to get work done.

Chaitali Mukherjee, Partner, Management Consulting Division, PwC India

Each organization has unique considerations based on the nature of the workforce, availability of alternatives, need for safety, demands for services, use of technology, etc. In many cases, HR policies will need to be revisited and employment practices modified to meet the needs of the new reality.

Richard R. Smith, Ph.D. Professor, Singapore Management University

Standardization, uniformity, and regularity have characterized the design of workplaces for ages. There was no place for emotions at workplace. The new workplace designs have to be spaces that nurture creativity, inspire and energize. They have to build space for emotions.

Abhijit Bhaduri, Author, Columnist & Management Consultant

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world and the way we work. As countries plan its gradual return to working, they need to ensure the health of their employees and the safety of the workplaces as top priorities.

Sarah Davies, VP, HR, Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa at P&G

The post-pandemic workplace will be high-tech: Korn Ferry's Eugene Chang

COVID-19 has surprised the world for being an effective change agent for accelerating the digital agenda, says **Eugene Chang,** Associate Client Partner, Korn Ferry, in an interaction with People Matters

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



Eugene has more than 20 years starting up, managing and advising businesses in the APAC region. He started his career with Hewlett Packard. Later, as co-founder and Executive Director he operated a network of 30 smoothie outlets franchised across 4 cities for 7 years; he was recognized with the Spirit of Enterprise Award 2003 honoring local entrepreneurs.

Eugene works with senior leaders to design and implement integrated human capital solutions from business strategy and organization design to culture transformation and change management. He is the founding architect behind Singapore's national human capital organizational diagnostics tool, a multi-agency initiative under program stewardship of the Institute of HR Professionals (IHRP).

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q Do you see the rise of a new workplace in the post-pandemic world?

A The outcomes from the global WFH experiment will provide varying lessons for different types of businesses. There will be evidence that technology can liberate work from a fixed location and that meaningful relations can still be maintained without physical proximity, promising to alter both commuting to work and business travel decisions forever.

The new paradigm for managers will now be how they can add the benefits and improve on the output of remote working to their existing model of work.

COVID-19 has surprised the world for being an effective change agent for accelerating the digital agenda. The question is whether these conditions will persist long enough for new habits and systems to take root. There are two possible scenarios which will determine the shape of the new workplace.

Scenario 1: If the threat of COVID-19 is eliminated by the end of the year. Many companies will return to the old normal and cease to

> If the threat of COVID-19 persists beyond 2020 (second, third, and subsequent waves anticipated), all companies will be forced to divert resources to transform their companies to embrace a world that is more "high tech, low touch"



make the necessary investments in converting the opportunities revealed by our global WFH experience. Old habits will prevail and only the most progressive of companies will continue to liberate their employees from their desks, thereby widening the competitive advantages their organizations have over the rest of the field in terms of costs, productivity and access to talent.

Scenario 2: If the threat of COVID-19 persists beyond 2020 (second, third, and subsequent waves anticipated), all companies will be forced to divert resources to transform their companies to embrace a world that is more "high tech, low touch" (i.e. contactless). On one end of the scale, companies may just upgrade their infrastructure and choose to operate as close as possible to the current norm with some additional protocols. On the other end, this is the "proof case" for certain companies to "double down" on their digital efforts that is already paying dividends. Each will pursue their own strategies at varying pace, but the digital agenda will gain greater urgency as businesses anticipate when the next crisis will hit and race to be ready for it.

So, what will the new workplace look like in Scenario 2? It will evolve to a rotating workplace of choice model, particularly for knowledge/digital economy workers.

First, where we work will change. A useful concept to describe this is the sociology-inspired term the "Third Place" which refers to another place outside the home ("first place") and work ("second place") that people gather. Contrasting the current models of "hub-and-spoke" or "core-and-flex", where the office remains at the centre and workers gravitate towards it to spend considerable time getting work done there, this new workplace will evolve to become a model that sees the rotation of these three spaces, elevated to "equal standing". As managers realize most staff can be trusted to do good work out of the office, the choice of appropriate space to work will lie with the employee.

In this future, the power of choice (where previously there was none) is key. Which space employees choose depends on how well each delivers the "experience" required to fulfill what we need to get done. For example, if you need a quiet space to do focused or thinking work, home could be a great place to work. If you need an informal but comfortable setting to meet a client or build relationships, a local café (third place) could fulfill this function. And if you need to team more effectively or use specialized equipment, the traditional office is the right choice of workspace.

This new found choice of working environments to help improve both quality of work and life for employees rests on the organization and its leaders' ability to set up strong remote teaming cultures powered by the right infrastructure to make

work truly seamless and boundaryless.

Companies like Google, Facebook and Twitter that are looking at permanent WFH for certain employees could open up a new and rich talent source such as return-to-work mothers or persons with disabilities who would benefit greatly from this form of remote work arrangement.

Second, work will look different when we do come together. All social distancing and face covering protocols are expected to continue as will frequent hand sanitizing. Engagement rules will likely be laid down to govern how meetings are conducted, how often, where and for what purposes.

Until the virus is eradicated, I anticipate meetings will be done in smaller sizes, for shorter duration and in more open spaces. People will be allowed to opt to attend remotely, so a more "remote inclusive" culture must persist to embrace colleagues working from home or a third place. Hopefully, greater mindfulness over the use of physical meetings should prevail, eliminating those purely update in nature that can be caught up in an email.

These will extend to external – client and supplier – meetings as well, reducing travel budgets significantly and putting a premium on face to face meets.

Socializing at work will also change. Sharing food and using common utensils will be an adjustment for Asian cultures. Minimum standing distances and the "contract free" greetings will be unnatural for many. Friendly encounters at pantries will be brief as people are encouraged to retreat to their desks with their refreshments.

Third, there will be implications of how we consume learning and upskill our people. This is one area that can be digitized heavily. Learning will be "democratized" and accessible to everyone. Technology will make learning more personalized, just-in-time, and interest-directed replacing much of the structured planned interventions by L&D teams.

Q How can companies prepare their workforce to adapt to the new world of work? What will the 'New Normal' in the Post-COVID-19 era demand?

A If we believe and accept the world has fundamentally changed, then we will need to find new ways of operating to find success by defining what this environment looks like. However, having a clear vision of a future-state is nearly impossible given the sustained volatility and ambiguity of world events. We cannot revert to old tools such as scenario planning which will lead to an infinite number of possibilities to anticipate.

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We must instead rebuild our systems incorporating the key design principle of robustness over our prior obsession with efficiency (which is vulnerable to single points of failure).

There is now heightened awareness in the need to invest in creating more agile organizations - from supply chain processes to management systems and workforce resilience; agility is a far better insurance against change than any other fixed strategy. Organizations struggle every day to

balance the short-term drive to Perform and the longer-term need to Transform. Transformation is vital to ensuring future performance. Transformation also takes away energy and resources from today's ability to perform.

In the context of businesses that will return to running at maximum speed in the need to regain lost business, people will be pushed harder to do more, the perennial "change the airplane engine while in flight" analogy. Organizations risk losing people who don't have the capacity to change or fall victims to burnout.

People, not technology, are at the core of driving successful transformation and this means an inordinate amount of time and resource should be dedicated to retooling them to redesign work and learn how to learn.

Q What are the top pain points that HR people are likely to face as they gear up to reboot employees' coming back post-COVID-19?

A Employees coming back Post-COVID-19 will need first, to feel safe teaming or meeting clients in close physical proximity.

They will also be coming back to a world where their job processes and skills might be left wanting.

They will need to be supported through this reintegration back to work.

In the short term, three key areas can help ensure physical and psychological safety, and business continuity at the office.

- *First, infrastructure adjustments, layout changes, and maintenance routines.* What do we need to put in place at the office for our workforce to do their job safely and more importantly to do it well
- *Second, HR Policies and benefits updates.* Refine policies around sick leave, childcare and flexible hours. Special insurance coverage and WFH allowances for the new work model.
- *Finally, management system updates.* Definition of goals and performance metrics to be more objective driven across the board and even more so as roles are redesigned or new ones created. Managers will also need retraining on how to implement these effectively.



HR will need to realize that culture building and engagement in digital/remote working environments become increasingly important. The further apart we become physically, the more we need to find ways to bind us together emotionally.

By far one of the most important roles for HR is to figure out innovative ways to build a sense of belonging, deepen alignment to the organization's mission, raise engagement and information transparency in a geographically distributed work model. This will become more challenging with a workforce composition that will increasingly be made up of non-permanent staff like contract and part-time talent.

Q Many corporate CEOs are facing the toughest leadership challenge of their lifetimes. What are the top leadership traits that businesses will require to adapt to the post COVID world?

A Our research found that great leaders possessed qualities that converged into three traits.

Preparedness for the unexpected: Many of these leaders were investing ahead in their workforce and organizational capabilities long before the crisis struck. They didn't predict it, but they were prepared having built in "shock absorbers" into their systems, culture and people rather than optimizing for efficiency and maximum profit.

The ability to act decisively in ambiguity with empathy: to accept the situation for what it is, and to adjust in real-time by listening to customers and employees and responding with speed and empathy.

Balance long and short-term thinking even through a crisis: These leaders empower their teams to take care of the operational zigging and zagging while they seized the initiative to look ahead for what could come next. They invest in key initiatives to help them "accelerate out of the turn" stronger. Performing and Transforming at the same time even when "Perform" becomes "Survive".

There is now heightened awareness in the need to invest in creating more agile organizations - from supply chain processes to management systems and workforce resilience; agility is a far better insurance against change than any other fixed strategy

Q What might the end of furlough look like – and how should HR prepare?

A One of the biggest issues is reintegrating furloughed employees back into their teams from a psychological perspective.

A deep sense of mistrust with management could exist if the furlough was not executed with empathy and objectivity. This means a lack of motivation and commitment for those returning to a workplace that had gone on without them for months.

Some furloughed employees may feel a sense of bitterness and could harbor residual fear… thoughts like "I'm here now when the company needs me but where was the company when I needed it most?" or "will they furlough me again at the first sign of trouble". It is important to make them feel psychologically safe again.

An important role for HR is therefore to make sure the employee's re-entry experience is positive and work to go "above and beyond" in courting the employee and rebuilding trust.

Leadership should be advised to be more sensitive and deliberate in their engagements with this group of employees and thank them genuinely for their personal sacrifices. They are the "invisible heroes" who helped save the company as well and be recognized for it.

There should be an expectation that a fair number may be looking out for employment opportunities elsewhere when the economic situation turns more positive and contingencies should be made. Frequent engagement surveys and focus groups to get a pulse of how furloughed employees are integrating and if they are receiving the right support will be important for assisting line managers to mitigate the situation in their teams.

Q How should employers change the way they

hire and reskill? How does this intersect with the war for talent to open up new perspectives on employee engagement and talent retention?

A First, the shift will be from acquiring to accessing talent.

The organization has to be open to all types of employment arrangements in order to access the highest quality talent it can and move away from "owning" the talent.

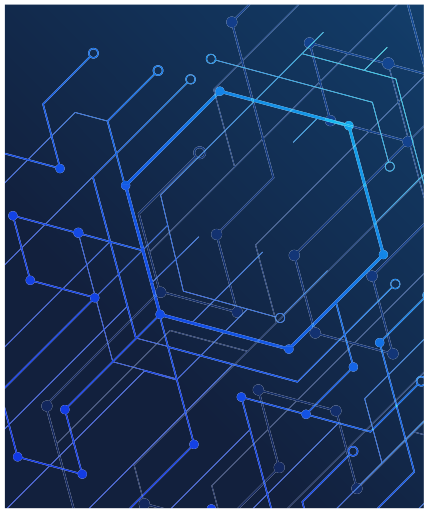
The employee value proposition, a big part of which is its culture, will be necessary to attract and emotionally bind these talents to the firm or to keep them coming back for a great experience.

Selecting talent will start with looking for people who have the ability to keep learning new skills and possess the mental resilience and emotional maturity to handle change and ambiguity well.

They have to be team-oriented in addition to being achievement-oriented. The use of skills-based and scenario-based testing will help remove hiring biases in the selection process. There should be more use of peer hiring panels as fit will be deemed a critical criterion in ensuring a new addition to a high performing team doesn't negatively affect team dynamics.

Learning will eventually be "democratized" with technology providing scale and personalization of the learning journey; all employees will have their own access to resources (such as pre-recorded training videos or "live" experts) to help him/her skill up just enough to get a job done in a short period of time. Learning will be largely unstructured and interest/need driven.

There will be more cross-training to create redundancy for split team



arrangements and a heightened awareness of the importance of succession planning for mission critical (not just senior) roles

L&D professionals may spend more time curating learning experiences and running special programs for selected talent pools to provide enhanced learning experiences through cross-functional projects, job rotations and other applied learning opportunities to accelerate growth, using data to support the organization's investment in such programs

Q How do you see the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work five years down the line?

A Five years isn't a very long time for drastic changes to occur at the systemic level.

A post-COVID-19 world subjected to some soul searching will eventually find more responsible business owners and directors actively reviewing the focus of managers to balance their profit motives with a sustainability and risk management agenda.

As with times before, businesses will be grappling with increased costs. This time putting in place resilient supply chains, retooling their workforce, and maintaining lower density offices (saddled with additional cleaning and sanitizing costs and the like) will force businesses to look beyond reviewing their cost structures and fundamentally change their operating models to survive.

Businesses will look different "under the hood". This newfound resiliency will come in the form different systems but more importantly the types of leaders and diversity of talent innovating literally from anywhere they choose.

It's time to reimagine how and where works get done:

IBM's Tanya Heng

We have to admit that this crisis is personal and experiential, thus HR professionals need to remind business leaders that our people are dealing with intense personal, family, health, and mental well-being issues, says **Tanya Heng,** Vice President, HR, IBM Asia Pacific

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



Tanya Heng is Vice President Human Resources for Asia Pacific at IBM where she is focused on strengthening and accelerating strategies for leadership development, talent management, and employee engagement. Tanya has close to 20 years of Human Resources experience from a variety of senior and international leadership positions at IBM. She has a successful track record of developing and implementing human resources strategies aligned to business priorities.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q What are you most concerned about as an HR leader as you plan to bring employees back to the office?

A The world is looking very different amid the pandemic. As we moved into unchartered territories, there are certainly different challenges faced by HR professionals, and one of them is workforce re-entry in a different normal.

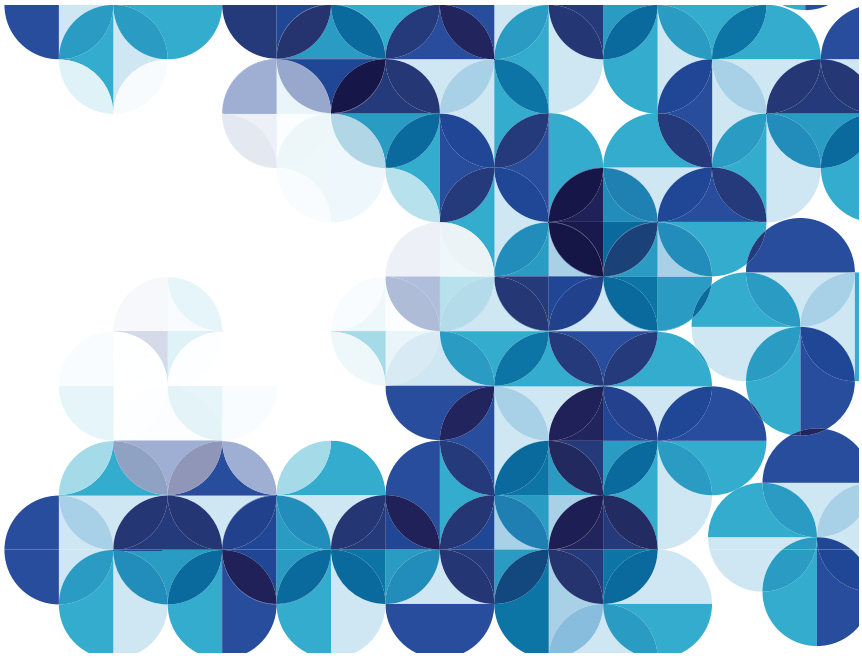
At this moment, there are a lot of things which are on top of employees' mind/their top concerns (based on IBM survey as well as research done by top HR executives):

- 69% employees say that this is the most stressful time of their career
- 38% say that their employer has helped them learn the skills they need to work in this new way of working
- Over 50% said they want a clear crisis communication protocol in place
- About 40% said they want their employers to provide employee opt-in remote work options when everything returns to normal

We feel that there are 4 HR re-entry imperatives that employers and HR professionals need to focus on:

Workforce well-being: The health, safety, and well-being of employees should be the top priority of every employers and HR professionals. We have to admit that this crisis is personal and expe-

> Rather than applying a set of defined standard mandates into our workforce who have shifted working from home, it is critical for us to empower our employees, giving them the space and freedom to adapt and to learn what is the best working style for them



riential, thus HR professionals need to remind business leaders that our people are dealing with intense personal, family, health and mental well-being issues. And given the flexibility, trust and the right amount of support, employees will be resilient and will be able to adapt. HR professionals need to introduce empathy and understanding during this challenging period. Employees will remember how you treat them during a stressful time and how you show understanding and concerns. All in all, COVID-19 is a critical moment when your company culture is revealed. As an example, leaders in IBM have introduced IBM Work from Home Pledge - a way to build trust, flexibility and resilience into our workforce. Rather than applying a set of defined standard mandates into our workforce who have shifted working from home, it is critical for us to empower our employees, giving them the space and freedom to adapt and to learn what is the best working style for them.

Working practices: HR professionals need to help organizations to reimagine how and where work get done with a key focus on redesigning and resourced differently in this new distributed or remote working model. HR leaders need to ensure managers know how to manage their team remotely, their teams can still remain productive, able to make fast decision, able to use the tools productively and able to mentor and coach teams – helping organization reimagining how works and done and how to do things differently

Work policies: HR professionals need to rely on data to reconfigure the HR and Return to Work policies. Eventually, everyone will go back to work, but some employees may not want to. Policies on flexi working arrangement or remote working, taking into account employees mental health and family obligations needs to be in place. We might need to relook at our health and safety policies at work including social distancing practice, work scheduling/ rotation for employees. HR professionals might need to rework on the policies that cover all these. We need to adapt to a new style of communication, one that can address the known, as well as the unknown. Be honest about uncertainty and ambiguity will help instill calm among employees and keep them productive. To do this effectively, we need to rely on data to guide us, not only rely on Government updates on movement and travel, but importantly data about how our employees feel and how they want to see the future of work.

Workforce planning: HR professionals need to help organizations reassess which critical part that HR needs to play in recovery. This is the next set of challenges by HR in helping organizations on the path towards recovery. We need to be realistic that some part of our business might not be able to return to normal. HR skills will be critical

particularly in the area of workforce planning. Helping the business assess as what type of volume and scale, and roles that the company is going to need going forward. HR needs to help with resource allocation, and sure staff take responsibilities on their learning and upskilling to help better prepare them in the operating in the new environment. Using the current data, it is essential to do forecasting and remodeling.

Q Will the CHRO rise to the same level of prominence that the CFO did after the global financial crisis?

A CHROs always have the same level of prominence with any executives even before the crisis has started.

But we see that among the many economic costs that COVID-19 has exacted, the workplace impacts have been among the most significant. The already-considerable challenges of human capital management in a typical work setting—leadership, workforce engagement, productivity, skills—have been moved into uncharted territory.

According to IBM Institute of Business Value report, the work of the CHRO has never been more important— or more difficult during this period. Sustaining communication, collaboration, capabilities and culture in a virtual operating model is now the work of HR leaders around the globe.

When companies are ready to move from crisis mode to a different normal, the return to the workplace is an inevitable hurdle to address on the way by CHRO. An IBV survey of global executives currently in the field indicates that they expect to have two-and-a-half times more remote workers two years from now than they had prior to COVID-19. Thus, the vital longer-term focus for CHROs and the C-suite is building an organization that moves the workforce past crisis-neutral status toward becoming globally resilient and more able to predict crises in the future. Talent leaders and CHROs should be developing a long-term plan spanning re-entry and remote work while we move toward a different normal.

Q How can we refine our assessment of employees' work and the rewards they receive, such that it is a fair and equitable reflection of their contribution to the organization?

A IBM is a high-performance company. We always have been and will always be. Our clients rely on our excellence. We must continue to embody innovation, speed, accountability and expertise to deliver top-notch results at all times.

Managers in IBM are empowered and accountable to measure and communicate the value of each team member's contribution continuously. Rewarding and investing in our strong contributors and acknowledging and encouraging them on an ongoing basis is key. Managers are

encouraged to be transparent and focused on how they will review and measure achievement against these shorter-term goals. Having regular check-ins and tailoring recognition to acknowledge employee contributions under these unprecedented times. We use compensation and recognition programs to differentiate employees ensuring employees with the skills needed for the future and who contribute the most are duly rewarded. Reward and recognition can be in a number of forms. From appreciation notes, points for the purchase of goods, cash awards and may be segmented by the job roles in the company.

Q How can organizations scale the productivity that can come with new ways of working specifically new combinations of virtual and onsite work?

A It is imperative for companies to activate their employees to effectively work and collaborate, and to scale the productivity despite working remotely and onsite, or a combination of both, to ensure business continuity.

These changing times also call for a strong HR partner. Across the globe including in this region, IBM is helping organizations lead in their efforts to empower their workforce in this time of massive change. IBM has a proven set of methods, tools and solutions to co-create a smarter workforce plan, increasing many organizations' agility to serve customers and optimize their workforce—resulting in a new workforce model, a digital HR function, and greater cost efficiencies, under the new ways of working.

According to IBM Institute of Business Value research, the near-term measures that talent leaders and CHROs should have in place now to help their remote teams be productive and engaged.

According to IBM Institute of Business Value research, the near-term measures that talent leaders and CHROs should have in place now is to help their remote teams be productive and engaged

Q What will the long-term impacts of our new normal be on the world of work?

A The ways we work will change for the long-term, providing a range of new business and employee opportunities. To successfully operate in the new normal, it is critical for companies to focus on accelerating a smarter workforce strategy to help achieve cost reduction objectives and to enable adapting workforce planning to the ever-shifting balance of talent demand and supply against business priorities. Companies should give thought to a new digital HR function – one open to embracing the influence of automation and new ways of working.

Though we are not 100% certain on the exact future model, several things are certain:

- Our workforce model needs to allow for remote working
- Role location, whether in-office or out-of-office or even in-country or out-of-country, will be reinvented
- Processes will be automated while offices/plants will be redesigned
- The workforce model needs to be flexible enough to change through time
- The importance of employee experience and transparency will be accelerated
- There will be a focus on cost-reduction, which means automation and outsourcing
- New leadership behaviors and traits will be valued
- We have to focus on teaming and in establishing relationships remotely

COVID-19 is changing the way we work: PropertyGuru Group's CPO

As businesses move forward, there will be a fundamental change to the way we work and as leaders we must ensure our mindset is open to these changes as a result, says **Genevieve Godwin,** Chief People Officer, PropertyGuru Group, in an interaction with People Matters

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



Genevieve has nearly two decades of international experience in human resources across a diverse set of industries including technology, advertising and communications. At PropertyGuru, Genevieve leads the human resource function for over 1200 employees across Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam.

She provides HR leadership to the group with a focus on building strong employer branding including talent strategy as well as organisational capabilities for continued business growth. Leading the HR team across the region, she collaborates with business leaders to further develop and implement strategies that inspire employees toward pursing their goals.

> HR will need to ensure they manage the desire to get back to the workplace with the employees' health and well-being, as well as the implementation of safe workplace measures as per government guidelines

Prior to PropertyGuru, Genevieve was the Head of Human Resources for Telenor's Digital Businesses across Asia Pacific, Europe, and the U.S.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q What are you most concerned about as a leader as you plan to bring employees back to the office?

A The health and well-being of our Gurus has been our greatest concern throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This continues to be our biggest priority in our return to work strategy.

Q How do you see the new workplace post-pandemic? How is this going to be different and how are we going to adapt to it?

A We have definitely seen a shift in the perception of work and remote working as it stands today. There has been a clear move away from traditional thinking where employees must be in the office between certain times, towards one which is ready to embrace flexible working.

As businesses move forward, there will be a fundamental change to the way we work and as leaders we must ensure our mindset is open to these changes as a result. Flexible working is more than just working from home and this is a great opportunity for employers to embrace the elements of

flexible working that both meet the needs of their business and their employees. If they don't, they run the risk of not being able to attract and retain key talent.

Q HR seems at the forefront of many challenges as organizations plan to reopen. What are the top pain points that HR is likely to face as they gear up to reboot their plans post COVID-19?

A COVID-19 is an exceptional event and one where HR professionals have had to move quickly to ensure the safety of their teams. As we return to a new normal, HR will face challenges through the next three phases:

a. Continuation of Restrictions:
Ensuring your organization has clear regular engagement communications and programs, as well as moving face to face interactions online and the technology to support.

b. Post Lockdown Easing of Restrictions:
These challenges can change by the day, however, HR will need to ensure they manage the desire to get back to the workplace with the employees' health and well-being, as well as the implementation of safe workplace measures as per government guidelines. In markets where the guidelines are unclear, HR needs to advise their organization on best practices which is consistent for all employees. Lastly, clear communications and policies underpin these challenges.

c. The New Normal
HR will be challenged with defining the new normal and aligning the business needs and structure with employee needs and flexible working. Businesses need to understand and define specifically what needs to change in this period, educate employees and managers and have clear policies in place to support.

COVID-19 has given organizations the opportunity to create programs and policies to ensure their way of working is renewed and defined. Companies should ensure they have clear policies in place to implement flexible working



Q How can organizations scale the productivity that can come with new ways of working specifically the new combination of virtual and onsite work?

A Flexible working is not a new philosophy and it has been successful in many companies and countries. For SEA we have seen through COVID-19 that employers can successfully have employees working remotely and still have strong productivity.

However, businesses also have to choose the right type of flexible working that aligns the requirements of both business and people. To do this, businesses should cover the following four pillars.

a. People – Understanding the needs of your employees and their roles
b. Perception – How is Flexible working perceived across your business and what gaps are there in its successful implementation
c. Policy – What are the guidelines we need to have in place for a successful implementation and longevity in the program
d. Process – How will we implement and what support and education do we need to give to our employees and leaders

Through this approach, businesses will have the right information to ensure their business is not disrupted and the continuation of strong production and retention of their employees.

Q Now that the nine-to-five is no more suited to the demands of a modern workforce, how should organizations change their policies and procedures to reflect these shifts and make work-life blend part of the company culture?

A Unfortunately, this is not a new challenge. In the past 10 to 20 years with the development of better technology to keep employees even more connected to work, the usual 9-5 has disappeared and employees have been working longer hours than previous generations.

COVID-19 has given organizations the opportunity to create programs and policies to ensure their way of working is renewed and defined. Companies should ensure they have clear policies in place to implement flexible working. This should include guidelines for both employee and manager to be able to have open communication channels on the new ways of working.

Q How should employers change the way they hire and reskill post the COVID-19?

A Overall companies should review their current organizational structure and ensure their programs meet the needs of the business and the workforce. This may mean that a portion of the workforce is remote working either part or full time. Once a company under-



At PropertyGuru our approach was tied to our philosophy that the health and well-being of our Gurus is the priority. This philosophy underpinned the communications, the policies, and the processes we implemented during the crisis



Organizations must ensure the social interactions at work are not lost between employees. The relationships that you make at work are key to business success and we need to ensure these skills are still a priority, even in a virtual world

stands how their roles will be structure going forward, then they can ensure they have the right skills in the business and hire the right talent to meet those demands.

Q Can you throw some light on how can organizations continue to operate effectively if employees have to work remotely for a prolonged period of time?

A To continue to operate effectively whilst having your team working remotely, organizations need to ensure their employees continue to stay engaged with the business. Engagement in this period will be the biggest impact on productivity and strong engagement during this time will also ensure the health and well-being of employees.

At PropertyGuru our approach was tied to our philosophy that the health and well-being of our Gurus is the priority. This philosophy underpinned the communications, the policies, and the processes we implemented during the crisis. Once we had moved all our employees to full time remote working our team implemented key engagement programs, learning paths and communications to connect with our employees.

Secondly, our HR team ensured that we took (previously face-to-face) interactions virtual, including our onboarding program and learning and development programs.

Q How do you see the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work five years down the line?

A The future of work is now open for change due to COVID-19 and companies should be prepared for this. Flexible working will become an expectation, not just a nice to have, from employees. More roles will be able to be done from remote locations and employers may find there are less needs for a physical office and make do with smaller spaces or co-working spaces instead.

However, organizations must ensure the social interactions at work are not lost between employees. The relationships that you make at work are key to business success and we need to ensure these skills are still a priority, even in a virtual world.

'In preparation for the new normal, let's re-evaluate how we do work'

Even as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present challenges to business around the world, we need to prepare for the new normal that will follow. Gallup scientist **Jim Harter** shares some insights into where to begin

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



Jim Harter, Ph.D., is Chief Scientist of Workplace Management and Well-Being at Gallup. He is co-author of the No. 1 Wall Street Journal and Washington Post bestseller, It's the Manager, based on Gallup's largest global study on the future of work. Jim's work has appeared in the Harvard Business Review, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Fast Company and TIME magazine. Gallup has offices in India, Singapore, and Thailand.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q Business leaders around the globe are dealing with the unprecedented challenges that the COVID-19 outbreak has brought to companies, economies, and societies. What qualities do business leaders need to address in this situation going forward?

A Gallup meta-analytics have found four universal needs followers have of leaders:

Trust—be predictable in an unpredictable time. It is hard to trust an erratic or visibly anxious leader.

Compassion—say out loud that you care, and back it up with policy and what you expect of your managers. How you treat people now will be remembered after the pandemic is over.

Stability—clearly define and communicate your process for making decisions. Get people what they need to do their work in a changed work situation.

Hope—Hopeful workers are more resilient, innovative and agile—and better able to plan ahead and navigate obstacles. Tell people what you want to achieve this week, this month, this quarter, and how these goals can be reached.

These four needs are especially acute during crises. When leaders address and meet them, people get the signal that their life will be ok and that they can be engaged in the future—and be a part of the solution.

> Who, when and how should organizations bring some people back to the physical work environment, and in what order?

Q From a business perspective, we have seen an increasing number of job losses across the globe. How will this play out once the crisis comes to an end?

A Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, organizations were increasingly focused on improving their employment brand through the experience they design

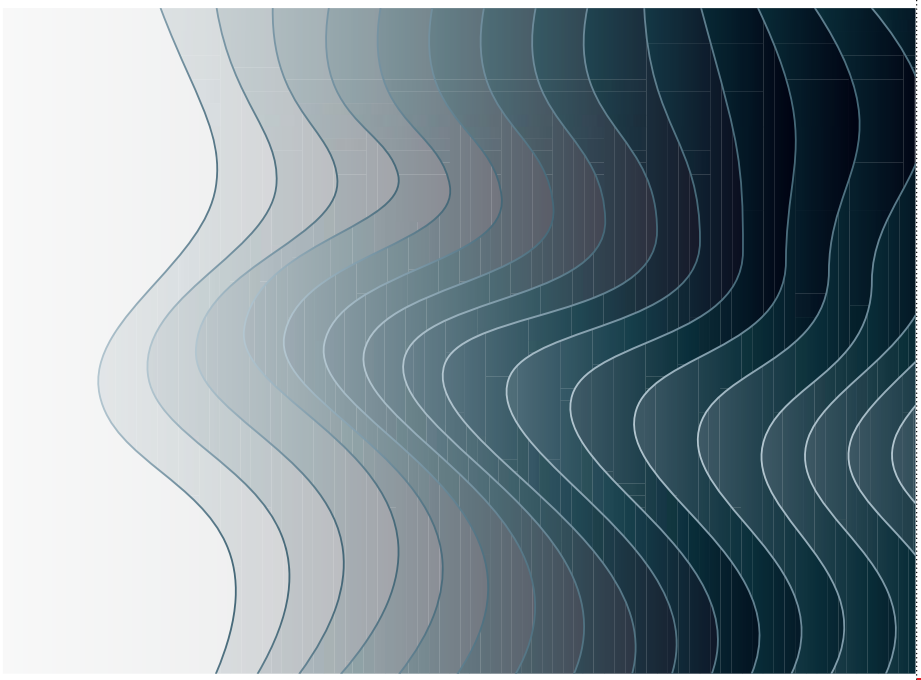
for employees throughout their lifecycle in the organization—with the goal of attracting star employees who were more difficult than ever to find. Even though the massive and rapid increase in unemployment from the crisis has temporarily flipped that script, how organizations treat employees today will have a big effect on whether employees want to join them in the future—when attracting stars is again more difficult and the job market becomes more competitive again, especially with the return of furloughed and laid-off workers.

Q One of the top challenges that business leaders face would be getting their people to follow them through the crisis and out of it. What can leaders do to maintain the confidence of their people?

A Leaders need actions that meet the four needs of followers—trust, compassion, stability and hope—referenced above. Gallup research has identified some very practical and actionable organizational practices to do this. Employees need to strongly agree that the following practices are happening:

1. My organization has a clear plan of action in response to the coronavirus
2. I feel well-prepared to do my work
3. My immediate supervisor keeps me informed about what is going on in the organization
4. My organization cares about my overall well-being

In addition, employers play a major role in setting the expected social distancing norms, either explicitly in terms of how work gets done, or reinforcing what has proven to work in flattening the curve so that everyone can get back to "normal" life or a "new normal."

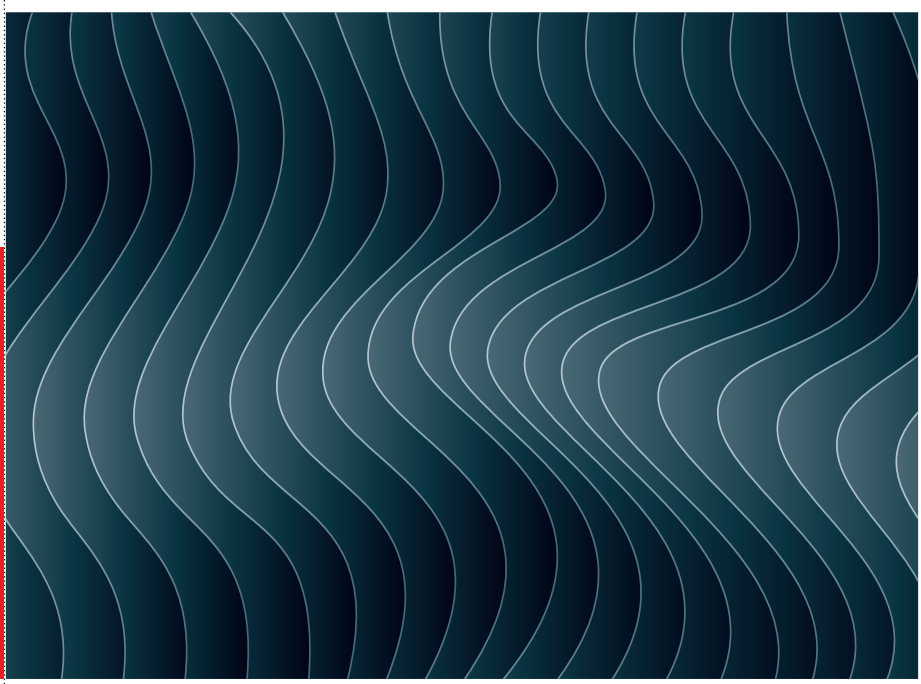


It's very important to both consider the current state of employee well-being and to manage what employers and employees can control. Stress and worry have risen higher in a shorter time period than Gallup has recorded in its history of tracking well-being

Q Employee health and safety must continue to be the foremost consideration of any business even when the coronavirus pandemic begins to subside. How can leaders ensure well-being going forward?

A It's very important to both consider the current state of employee well-being and to manage what employers and employees can control. Stress and worry have

risen higher in a shorter time period than Gallup has recorded in its history of tracking well-being. Compared to 2019, reports of daily worry have increased from 37 percent to 60 percent of the full-time working population. Daily stress has increased from 48 percent to 65 percent.



There is almost certainly a compounding effect of multiple negatives at once that is causing these spikes in stress and worry. So, the question is: How can employers best reduce the stress and worry? Employers can have a direct influence on the practices listed above—a clear plan for dealing with the crisis, preparation to do work, supervisors who keep people informed. In fact, doing these things well can improve employee well-being.

Employers also show they care about what Gallup has discovered are the five elements of well-being: career, social, financial, physical, and community well-being . Employers can influence these elements through multiple channels—policies, physical space, incentives, recognition, virtual events, and development. The key conduit to communicating and individualizing these to each person's situation is the manager.

Q Many organizations are seeing opportunities emerging in addition to challenges, whether it be in addressing new client needs or opportunities to improve your organization's effectiveness. What opportunities are you seeing?

A Organizations are learning to re-examine methods of doing work and practices—what is necessary and what isn't. For example, many organizations have assumed that having most people in the office is the only way to get work done—and to avoid an "out of sight, out of mind" employee mentality toward work.

I think assumptions about remote work will undergo a drastic re-evaluation. Organizations will discover that some people can get more done in a work-from-home environment—or that the difference in quality or productivity is minimal. Many organizations may notice star performers they hadn't seen before. I've heard people say that video meetings bring a certain democratization to the workplace. People meet coworkers and their families in different ways too. Crises can introduce newfound budgetary discipline, too, whether it involves reconsideration of travel expenditures or other past default spending.

I also think organizations are seeing, in a different light, the value of great managers—the role

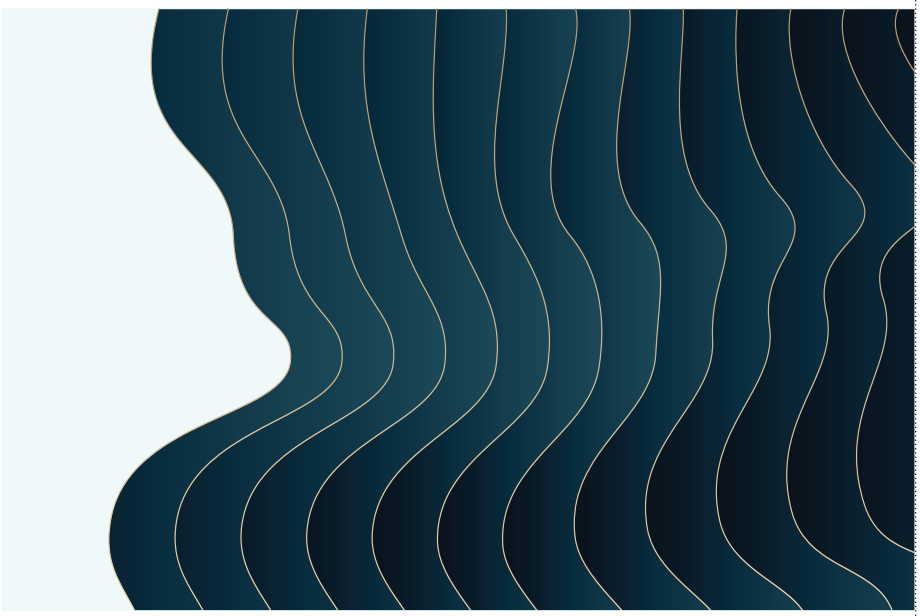
How should organizations go about preparing for and prioritizing the transition to a new normal?

of managing was already complex, but in a remote setting it becomes even more so. Employees may need many more intentional quick connects, check-ins, and developmental conversations with their managers. Also, managers need to help each person to blend their work and personal life into a formula that gets work done while not deteriorating from thriving well-being.

Q What are your thoughts on how the world will be different after COVID-19, and how are you moving to address that new world?

A One of the most often asked questions of our team is "how should organizations go about preparing for and prioritizing the transition to a new normal?" Organizations are already considering who and how they bring some people back to the physical work environment and in what order. This requires considering many factors simultaneously:

1. Which job responsibilities align best with remote vs non-remote work? We have been forced to learn how to work in new ways. In some cases, remote work was easier than imagined, in other cases very difficult. There has been a learning curve for many organizations. Re-examining jobs according to the actual value of in-person collaboration and the measurability of work outcomes will be key.



Every organization will need great managers to adapt to these idiosyncrasies to create work that is productive, fair, and maximizes well-being

2. What's the state of the pandemic during transition stages? Assuming a vaccine isn't widely available for a year or two but social distancing is eased and parts of the economy open back up, there will likely be a need to maintain some distancing. This will require different considerations of office space and different types of physical interactions among workers. Protocols like keeping six feet apart and wearing masks to the office may become new norms, at least temporarily.

3. Not all people will have the same psychological "readiness" to go back to work. Currently, most people are hesitant to go back to work as normal. This may change as things progress—so having a pulse on segments of your workforce and their "readiness" will be very important. Flexibility on this front will be crucial.

4. Life situations will vary by person. Some have kids who will not yet be transitioning back to school or daycare. Some have elderly care that needs to be considered. Every organization will need great managers to adapt to these idiosyncrasies to create work that is productive, fair, and maximizes well-being.

Reboot your workplace with the 4 Rs: McKinsey's Faridun Dotiwala

In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, **Faridun Dotiwala,** Partner, McKinsey talks about how drastically the world of work has changed due to the COVID-19 crisis and how organizations and leaders can prepare for the 'new normal' by following the four steps of: Resolve, Resilience, Return and Reimagine

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



Faridun Dotiwala leads talent-management work for McKinsey in Asia. Since joining McKinsey, he has helped executives pursue operational and performance transformations. This work typically involves deep engagement with the organization, including fostering mindset and behavior change, supporting leadership development, and helping top teams achieve greater alignment.

While directing performance-transformation initiatives, Dotiwala seeks to shape the organizational culture by changing how people work together and what performance targets they set. The goal is to help organizations be more agile—able to move quickly to seize opportunities. By improving the performance and health of leading companies, he aspires to improve the lives of all employees. He also helps drive leadership development at scale.

> Organizations have to grapple with a lot in these times. From the basics of keeping everyone safe, to ensuring here and now resilience and getting people back to work and finally preparing for the 'new normal'

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

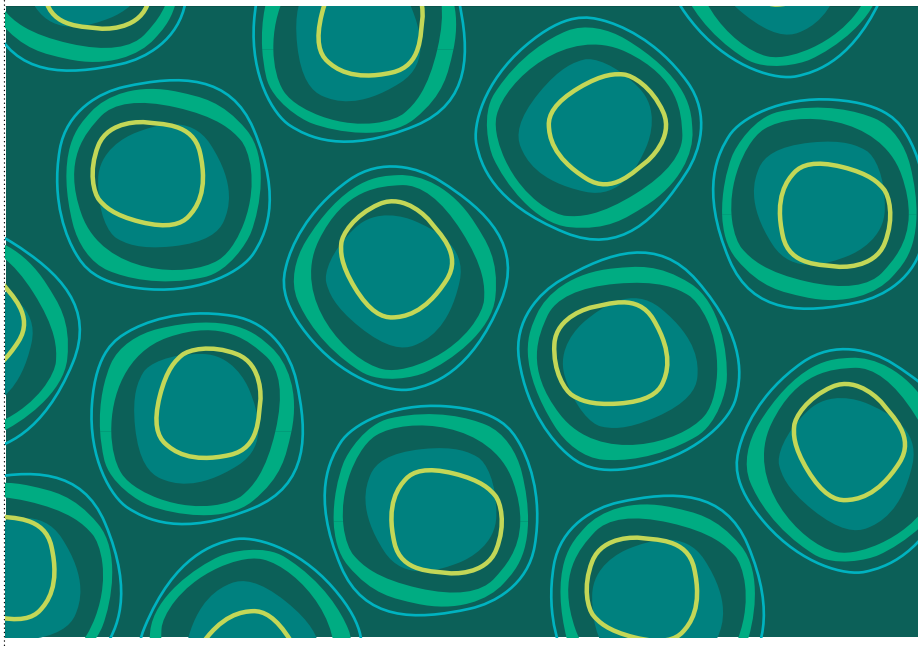
Q The world has changed and so has the world of work. Will the workplace we left be the same workplace we join post-COVID-19? How do you see the rise of a new workplace?

A At the outset, I think it is very important that we be humble with respect to trying to foresee how all this will pan out and what will happen. The fact is there are many things – both about the pandemic itself and its implications that we simply don't know.

That being said, I believe there could be significant changes in the world of work. This is not a new phenomenon. For the past 4 to 6 years, organizations around the world had already begun to experiment with elements of what we could call the 'organization of the future'. This includes being more purpose driven, agile ways of working (breaking down hierarchies, moving to fluid ways of organizing), new norms and ways of decision making, working through ecosystems and putting a greater focus on

talent. There was already a felt need that the way the workplace runs - which is at the highest level pretty much the same for the past 50 years - has to change.

COVID-19 will probably dramatically accelerate this on account of two things. One, the harsh economic reality that companies face as a result of this crisis will certainly force changes. Second, the response of organizations over the past few months has amazed leaders of organizations. What seemed previously impossible has been achieved (making decisions in hours instead of days, collaborating seamlessly in new ways, running parts of the organization with fewer people, working from home, less travel and so on). This has led to the shattering of many of the old paradigms organizations held opening up new possibilities of such paradigms can be immense.



How exactly this will pan out will depend on many factors. A few paradigms have certainly changed. Some of these are, "We all need to be in the same place to be effective (or travel)", "We need a certain level of processes and checks and balances", "We have to meet our customers face to face", "We need at least xx people for a certain function". The emergence of new possibilities with the shattering

Q Organizations across the globe are hand-in-glove with their business continuity measures to restart their organizations. How can organizations prepare their workplace and workforce for the 'new normal' in the post-COVID-19 era?

A Organizations have to grapple with a lot in these times. From the basics of keeping everyone safe, to ensuring here and now resilience and getting people back to work and finally preparing for the 'new normal'. It is helpful for organizations to think of four steps:

1. **Resolve:** Keep all employees safe and well informed while ensuring business continuity. This includes the basics of checking on everyone safety, ensuring there is clear communication.
2. **Resilience:** Manage resources carefully while adopting a through-the-cycle mindset. This includes managing cash and resources on a day by day basis.
3. **Return:** Support employees in getting back to work, productively and in good spirits. This step can be quite complex and could include how to man and run operations in shifts, manage supply chains.
4. **Reimagine:** Rethink operating model and ways of working in the next normal. How can we start to create the organization of the future based on what matters most going forward as well as what we have learnt during the crisis?

What matters here is to realize that the "resilience", "return" and "reimagine" are very different in nature.

And getting the same people to work on all three is a mistake - as they will always be stuck in the here and now. Hence, organizations need to create three distinct teams - one for each. So, the 'reimagine' team does not have to worry about the day-to-day issues of returning to work.

Q HR seems at the forefront of many challenges as organizations plan to reopen. What are the top pain points that HR should gear up to tackle when it plans a workplace post-COVID-19?

A Indeed, the role of HR is of top priority. COVID-19 is fundamentally a humanitarian challenge - at a collective and individual level. I foresee five top focus areas (or pain points) HR needs to gear up to tackle.

1. **Safety and well-being:** It goes without saying that this is priority #1. Whereas a lot has been said about this and many governments and organizations have put a set of protocols in place, there is still a lot unknown about the way the virus acts and behaves. HR needs to be ahead of the curve on awareness (does it spread over 15 feet or 6 feet, should everyone wear a mask?) and so on. Critical is also the well-being of employees. In many organizations and for many people, this is a time of high stress - both economically (salary cuts, possible job losses) as well as emotional fear of safety.
2. **Communication:** Organizations typically under communicate to a factor of 10. At times like these, engaging and communicating becomes even more important. A simple mantra is "one story, one voice, many times". It is imperative that top management creates a clear narrative around the crisis - what are we doing, why we are doing it, what we expect people to do and what is likely to happen. HR has to ensure that this is communicated in one voice by the senior teams (everyone must say the same thing), and communicate it many times.
3. **Organization of the future:** HR needs to take the lead on what the organization structure would look like during the return. Will it look the same or be different? Will some parts of the organization move to other parts? What structure will best serve the emerging strategy?
4. **Role clarity:** If the world outside has changed, what people do in organizations must change too. When the return happens, people will assume their role is exactly the same as before. This is not true. HR needs to clarify to each person how their role has changed.
5. **Re-orient and reskill talent:** Many parts of the organization could become redundant, and talent will then need to be re-oriented towards new areas. Over time, in some cases, substantial reskilling may be needed.

Organizations typically under communicate to a factor of 10. At times like these, engaging and communicating becomes even more important. A simple mantra is "one story, one voice, many times"

Q The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to reposition the organization for the future, as experts say. Isn't this the right time to leverage digital technologies, automation, and AI for organizations to move to the next level of work?

A Yes. This is an opportunity to reposition towards the organization of the future. Whereas digital, automation and AI will play an important role, they are not the only elements that will make a difference. This is a chance for leaders to fundamentally rethink what organizations should look like. In addition to automation, three other trends are worth mentioning. These are increased connectivity, lower transaction costs and changed societal expectations. All these together demand an organization of the future.

Fundamentally, we need to think of organizations of the future on three dimensions:

1. **Identity:** How do we redefine ourselves in this crisis (purpose, culture, strategy)?
2. **Agility:** How do we work in more agile ways (structure, decisions, talent and the technology to support)?
3. **Scalability:** How do we setup for rapid scale (data platforms, ecosystems, people)?

Q How can organizations scale the productivity that can come with new ways of working, specifically the new combination of virtual and onsite work?

A New ways of working over the past few months have opened the eyes of organizations as to what is possible. As in any crisis, the inefficiencies have bubbled up to the top and become visible. A common refrain from CEOs around the world is, "We never imagined we could respond in this manner" and "We now know we can never go back to our old ways of working".

First organizations need to "collect" or put together all the new ways of working that have come about. These include combination of virtual and onsite work, making decisions faster, dealing with customers virtually and getting by with many less people. Some organizations are running "hackathons" to surface and prioritize these. Once that is done, there are two things that need to happen. One, of course, is to institutionalize some of the high value actions already taken and make them a way of life. Of more value is to reflect as to what old beliefs and paradigms are now broken. If we adopt a new set of paradigms, we can see immense new possibilities. And that allows organizations to truly reimagine the future.

Many parts of the organization could become redundant, and talent will then need to be re-oriented towards new areas. Over time, in some cases, substantial reskilling may be needed



It is time to redefine work and the workplace:

PWC's Chaitali Mukherjee

In this exclusive interaction with People Matters, **Chaitali Mukherjee,** Partner with the Management Consulting division of PwC India shares her views on how the world of work has changed since COVID-19 and what the new workplace would look like

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



Chaitali Mukherjee is a Partner with the Management Consulting division of PwC India, and leads the People & Organization Practice for India. She brings 19+ years of extensive experience spanning across consulting and business. Mukherjee specializes in Business Strategy, Leadership Development and Organization Transformation with extensive International Business and General Management experience. She brings her own leadership experience of having led businesses in India and across the Asia Pacific and Middle East region.

In this exclusive interaction with People Matters, Mukherjee shares her views on how the world of work has changed since COVID-19 and what the new workplace would look like.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q The world has changed and so is the world of work. How do you see the rise of a new workplace?

A The COVID-19 era has brought unprecedented changes for organizations and has challenged the way organizations have been thinking about the way to get work done. Whilst in the past, organizations were thinking about the newer ways of working, the COVID-19 crisis has created the burning platform to shift to the newer ways of working, including building newer ways of working. The new workplace is neither what it is today nor is it going to be what may have been in the current circumstances. It will have to be a newer, more matured and a more inclusive workplace that takes into account the needs of the organizations, the 'human experience' that's right for the employees and at the same time, the motivations to maintain the balance between the employer-employee relationship.

Q What's your take on how can organizations prepare their workplace and work-

Whilst in the past, organizations were thinking about the newer ways of working, the COVID-19 crisis has created the burning platform to shift to the newer ways of working, including building newer ways of working



force for the 'New Normal' in the post COVID-19 era?

A To prepare for the new normal, organizations would need to redefine the work itself that gets done and where the work gets done. Depending upon the work and the tools required, it will be important to understand the environment that's required to deliver on it and that will govern the workforce models as well as the workplace dynamics. It will be critical that organizations align their systems, processes and practices, workforce models as well as the policies and employment contracts.

The important thing to keep in mind about the new normal is that it is not the short term thinking but the short, mid and long term thinking that leadership will need to keep in mind at the same time. There are immediate problems to be addressed, but whilst addressing them/ reacting to them, organizations can't take the short term lens. They will have to continuously think of the repercussions of their decisions/ actions on their brand, employees and the ecosystem in the mid to long term.

Q HR seems at the forefront of many challenges as organizations plan to reopen. What are the top pain points that HR should gear up to tackle when it plans a workplace post-COVID-19?

A This is one of the most critical times for HR. The need to manage the anxiety, gear for operations as well as ensuring that organizations are able to remain agile for the new normal are going to be some of the most critical problems for HR to solve. Most importantly, keeping the communication going, ensuring that the organization manages to balance the short term and the long term employee and organization needs and ensuring that they enable the agile operating model for the organization would be critical.

The role of HR can be divided into three core streams:

- Enabling the survival: Taking charge of health, wellness, communication and engagement of the employees to manage these challenging times
- Adapting to grow: Focusing on workforce model, costs, enabling an adaptive workforce/ workplace model and ensuring productivity and performance are designed for the new normal. This would also mean defining the policies, processes and incentives to manage the new operating model
- Revival into the future: Focusing on the capability, experience and the brand of the organization to enable the organization is geared to operate in the new normal

Q The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to reposition the organization for the future, as experts say. Isn't this the right time to leverage digital technologies, automation, and AI for



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organizations to move to the next level of work?

A Whilst there are a lot of big shifts that the organization needs to make, one of the biggest shifts for the future is going to be the consideration for automation and the opportunity for balancing white and blue collar jobs with metal collar jobs. The need to redefine the jobs to be done and how it needs to be done to balance productivity, performance and workplace considerations will be an important consideration to decide the degree and type of automation. AI and automation for repetitive as well as less skilled jobs is a given. The big ask in the future is also going to be about moving from a factory/ in person set up to a virtual/ hybrid and/ or less contact mode. This would mean rethinking the job/ activity to be done because this would entail the real use and application of automation.

Q How can organizations scale the productivity that can come with new ways of working, specifically the new combination of virtual and onsite work?

A Scaling productivity in the current context would entail redefining how the job gets done, how to build for continuity and consistency as well as balance white and blue collar workforce with automation as well as a distributed strategy for getting the job done. Thus, at the core of deriving this productivity is not just compression of jobs and identifying leakages but also identifying how the job will need to get done to support an onsite/ virtual/ hybrid model.

Q How can we refine our assessment of employees' work and the rewards they receive, such that it is a fair and equitable reflection of their contribution to the organization?

A As this is a big shift, the focus of assessments and rewards will have to balance between designed for driving performance and for driving the success of the operating model in itself. The newer way of working is expecting people to redefine a lot of what they have done and how they have done. As employees need to take the workplace to their homes, it may require a complete rethink of the policies and experience. Similarly, incentives will also have to be rethought.

Most importantly, jobs of the future will not be the same as the past. Hence, the need to rethink the jobs would mean assessments can't necessarily be on past performance but ability of the leaders to scale agility, envision and lead without prejudice.

Implementing new workplace practices

HR policies will need to be revisited and employment practices modified to meet the needs of the new reality

By **Richard Smith, Ph.D.**



All around the world, I hear hopeful sentiments about returning to work or getting back to normal by going to the office, holding meetings, and having lunch meetings in a post-COVID-19 world. We have all been dealing with a painful change and are ready to get back to "Normal." Unfortunately, it does not seem that we are able to bounce back to our old ways of working… instead, we must define a "New Normal" depending on our workplace, context, and industry.

Each organization has unique considerations based on the nature of the workforce, availability of alternatives, need for safety, demands for services, use of technology, location, and regulation. In many cases, HR policies will need to be revisited and employment practices modified to meet the needs of the new reality. This will require a swift and significant change that must be well executed for each organization. As we consider how to define and implement a "New Normal" it seems appropriate that we take note of a few good change management principles as noted by Dr. John Kotter. Here are a few considerations in managing your migration to the "New Normal" in your organization:

• **Create Case for Change** – While it may seem that there is a clear case for making changes (i.e. – possible death from virus), it will be important for each organization to anchor each change to a strong case for change. Implementing new measures such as social distancing, work from home, wearing masks, etc. each must be anchored in clear rationale. For example, if certain areas of the workplace are off limits to many employees, a "Keep out" notice may be less effective than explaining that the area is reserved for high-exposure distribution personnel. To help reinforce the case for change with each measure, it is often helpful to support the new action with specific

It will be important for each organization to anchor each change to a strong case for change. Implementing new measures such as social distancing, work from home, wearing masks, etc. each must be anchored in clear rationale

rationale, examples, consequences, and measures.

• **Form a powerful Coalition** – When it comes to making business decisions, most firms have clear lines of authority and accountability. However, in a crisis situation we must have more central decision-making with multiple considerations. A central crisis management team is often needed to address and consider the impact of proposed actions and policy changes. Due to the human nature of this crisis, HR is usually at the head of the table, but it is equally important to have representatives from all the key areas and from multiple levels in the organization.

• **Create a Vision for Change** – In most change situations, we have a clear sense of where we are going with an ultimate strategic goal. This helps to provide people with a degree of certainty and clarity about the future. When it comes to changes due to COVID-19, we have an unknown future and unclear vision of what lies ahead. One of my golden rules in managing change is this: "People need certainty: We can either provide this through certainty of outcome or certainty of process." Since we don't know the future, we can only provide certainty of process (e.g. – we will re-assess in October and again in January based on how the situation evolves).

• **Stakeholder Management** – To address the changes to the workplace and HR practices, care should be taken to fully consider the stakeholders in the organization. This must include people that work with the company who may not be employees (contract staff, suppliers, customers, etc.). In addition to considering stakeholders by job group and type, we may also wish to consider the unique personal needs of our people. Which employees are dealing with extra demands due to home schooling, family illnesses, or other COVID-19 impacts? Spending extra time to segment stakeholders in multiple ways will help to identify the impact of future measures on not only the physical, but also the mental well-being.

• **Remove Obstacles** – While we may do our best to think through the new workplace and define a "New Normal" there will be challenges along the way. For example, we may decide that

It is always a great idea to monitor progress to the "New Normal." While this may seem unnecessary in light of the pandemic, it is important for everyone to feel a part of the success and potentially involved in developing new solutions



the finance department can work from home, but we may later find out about system access limitations or audit requirements that prohibit some of these processes. It will be important for the central team to surface these challenges and remove them in some way or create work-around solutions. To manage the changes associated with the new workplace practices and policies, we must encourage the raising of issues to improve acceptance and reduce stress associated with the changes.

• **Create Short-Term Wins** – Along the way, it is always a great idea to measure, monitor, and publish progress to the "New Normal." While this may seem unnecessary in light of the pandemic, it is important for everyone to feel a part of the success and potentially involved in developing new solutions. For example, one company published photos from the security cameras in the office showing no people in the office as a part of a congratulation to all employees for doing their part to work from home. Celebrating staggered work hours, social distancing, mask-wearing, and other measures may take some creative approaches – but will be needed to help reinforce ongoing compliance behaviors.

• **Anchor in Corporate Culture** – As the new practices and policies are developed for our post- COVID-19 world are developed, it is ideal to anchor these in the principles and values of the corporate culture. For example, one firm with a strong value for mutual respect posted reminders about wearing masks in the office noting the corporate value statement related to mutual respect. Times of crisis can test corporate values and culture and this is a great time to show people what the organization stands for and reinforce the desired culture for the future. Of course, the specific actions and policies may change, but the feeling and manner by which the organization deals with the change will be remembered for a long time.



While the future is yet unknown, each organization will need to assess and develop their own future when it comes to a "New Normal" for the workplace. In doing so, it is important to adopt some clear management principles and approaches for managing the change process. We have all been thrust into this new reality due to COVID-19 without choice. However, we now must deal with the situation and manage changes, which is now a matter of strategic choice in how we manage our human capital for the future. While we will not be bouncing back to our old ways soon, my hope is that we will take a change management approach to bounce to a new human-centred future.

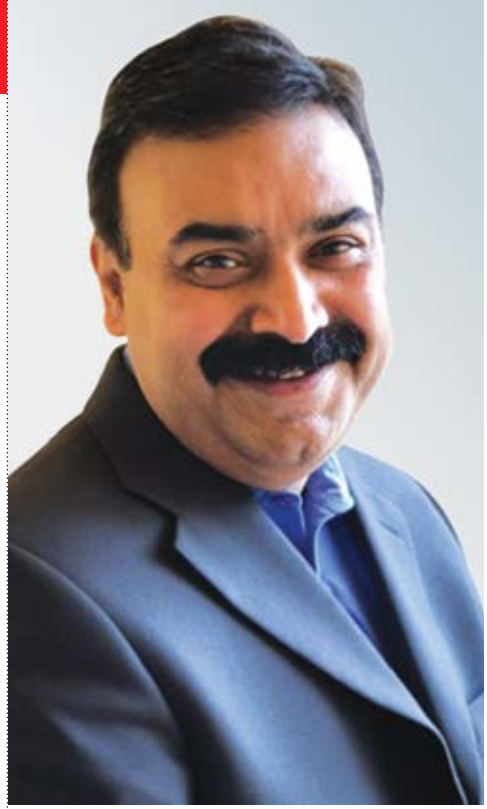
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Wash away the dusty old workplace

During the lockdown, the world changed. The employees changed and so did the workplace. The new workplace designs have to be spaces that nurture creativity, inspire and energize, and they have to build space for emotions

By **Abhijit Bhaduri**



Standardization, uniformity, and regularity have characterized the design of workplaces. There was no place for emotions at workplace. The new workplace designs have to be spaces that nurture creativity, inspire and energize. They have to build space for emotions.

Social distance will upend power distance

Before we go back to the workplace we must ask, "Why do we need to go anywhere to work?" For the first quarter of 2020, the entire world learned how to work, learn and celebrate without leaving home.

In a connected world, a workplace is just a notion. One Wi-Fi hotspot and a mobile phone can create workplaces anywhere. Anywhere any time is how we have to start thinking of workplaces. The physical office space will soon learn to exist with virtual office space the way e-books co-exist with paperbacks.

In a connected world, a workplace is just a notion. One Wi-Fi hotspot and a mobile phone can create workplaces anywhere

Before the pandemic, employers worried about who would have the privilege to work from home. The biggest challenge now is about deciding who can work from the office.

Office spaces will have to be thought of like an aircraft. Even the economy section will have no middle seats just like the business class. Will it create a less hierarchical workplace? What will be the new signaling device of the rich and powerful? Tech companies are letting employees work from home for the entire year. Will having an office to go to, become the new perk? Will offices issue monogrammed, designer masks to reward high performing employees?

The coffee machine and the cafeteria will raise the alarm. It may take less time to drive from home to the office, but the queues will begin after that. Waiting to get screened and tested every day and climbing stairs will be the new normal. Some offices have already marked elaborate one-way walkways on each floor to maintain social distance. What happens if the CEO decides to cut across the floor instead? Every cough and sneeze will be the subject of speculation and gossip. We have to wait to see how the new workplace gets built.



Workplace design will become an important agenda in boardrooms. Ensuring the workplace and the workforce are safe for everyone, every day is going to raise new challenges

A hygienic workplace will build trust

Workplace design will become an important agenda in boardrooms. Ensuring the workplace and the workforce are safe for everyone, every day is going to raise new challenges. How to screen, test and respond to every employee and visitor every day will have to be worked out. Under what circumstances can a boss call for a meeting in the office building will have to be agreed upon.

Many offices take photos and collect mobile numbers of visitors (which often end up in unwanted hands). Add to this the health data and you have a database that is every hacker's dream. Data collection and privacy norms will have to be agreed upon in workplaces. Would employees need to declare the health conditions of their domestic partners and the people they share their home with? Can the employer insist on attendance at an office conference or all-hands briefing? In the past, Yahoo and IBM called back several remote workers to be in the office. How would employees respond to such a measure today?

When Twitter announced that its employees need not come back to office, it made headlines. Google and Facebook employees have their work from home options limited to the end of the year. Will the office buildings in the heart of town become a relic? Will satellite offices come up in locations where the employees are clustered? Or will the employers insist that workplace team members stay close enough to each other and use meeting spaces everyone agrees upon?

Questions we have never asked before

As office leases expire, the leadership teams will discuss whether to let people continue to work from remote locations. Every choice will have its second-order effects. If the office is in Mumbai, and the employee now chooses to operate out of a tier 3 or tier 4 city, would the person's salary get reduced to reflect the lower cost of living? Should the employer incentivise employees to stay in clusters near the office or would that increase the risk? Would women and people with disabilities or transgender find remote work more inclusive?

Communication norms in the workplace will be challenged. Humans are used to observing non-verbal signals like smiles and frowns to understand the other's responses. Masks will take



For once, we need the psychological safety of being able to be strong enough to cry and wash away the dust of the old workplace

away a lot of these cues. Will remote work lower the level of office politics or will your digitally savvy colleague still have an edge over the digitally naïve? The organizational culture is formed through written and unwritten rules of the workplace. In case of a distributed workforce, new approaches to culture building would need to be devised.

Debates about the health conditions of the resort staff will bring teams closer together than any team-building offsite ever has. Managers will have to rely on options other than team building exercises because social distancing norms will render most of them obsolete.

Is this just a state of confusion we will live with until the vaccine is discovered? Will access to the vaccine be the new perk of the workplace?

The unspoken emotions in the workplace

When employees come back to the workplace, we have to keep in mind that this is not the workplace that we left when we hardly said a goodbye as we picked up a laptop and went home. During the lockdown, the world changed. The employees changed and so did the workplace. The pandemic made us look at death in the eye. Someone had described 80s looking at a tiger in the eye. Humans understand their mortality and helplessness.

From the billionaire to the migrant labor walking back home, three feelings were universally experienced – uncertainty, mortality, and loneliness. We were uncertain about our jobs, our future and worried if we would die alone, unloved and isolated from our loved ones. Imaginary scenarios of being left without any income and with a mountain of unsettled debts crossed every human's mind. When a loved one noticed our melancholy, we made up an excuse to get ourselves a glass of water and wiped away a tear.

We have always been told that the workplace is not a canvas for emotions. It is a place for only rational thoughts and actions. For once, we need the psychological safety of being able to be strong enough to cry and wash away the dust of the old workplace. We build our greatest strengths as we embrace and acknowledge the three emotions of uncertainty mortality and loneliness. There may be social distance at work, but let that not come in the way of our emotional closeness.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ABHIJIT BHADURI is India's most read columnist on workplace issues. His upcoming book Dreamers & Unicorns deals with the Post-COVID Workplace

COVID-19 changed not just the world, but also the way we work:

P&G's Sarah Davies

Sarah Davies, Vice President, HR, Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa at Procter & Gamble (P&G) shares how the company has been managing its transition to the 'new normal' of work with an increased focus on employees' safety, their mental well-being and adopting a culture of remote working

By **Drishti Pant**



A company like P&G, the products of which are used daily for cleaning and sanitizing homes had to ensure regular supply chain, employees' safety and a smooth transition for the rest of the remote workforce even amid lockdown. In a way, P&G has already been working in a physical/digital hybrid work mode, which companies from the other sector gear up to adopt as lockdown in most parts of APAC eases.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q The pandemic has hit almost the entire globe and affected all industries. However, there are many unique challenges for every region and sector. How has the pandemic affected business and people decisions at P&G in the diverse markets you cater to?

A The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world and the way we work. At P&G, our commitment to protect our people, serve our consumers and support our communities remains unchanged.

Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa (AMA) represent two-thirds of the world's population. During this unprecedented time, everyone at P&G AMA – and around the world – is working diligently to maintain the production, distribution and availability of all our brands for our consumers. Many P&G products are used daily for cleaning and sanitizing homes, businesses and other places.

Other P&G products are critical for helping consumers maintain proper hygiene, personal health and healthy home environments. Our commitment to serving our consumers and communities begins with healthy employees. The safety of our people and our work environments is our top priority. We have enabled those who can work remotely to do so by working from home. We also gave employees the flexibility they needed to manage work and personal commitments. For example, during this time, many parents had to facilitate their children's e-learning. We work with our employees on work

HR has been at the forefront of ensuring every employee is safe and can work productively, whether they are at home or they are part of the essential operations in our workplaces

schedule flexibility to enable this.

For those who need to be in our manufacturing facilities, robust measures with guidance from medical professionals and local authorities have been put in place to keep employees safe while at work. We



implemented temperature checks, physical distancing and shift rotations to keep our employees are safe. Many countries in the region also implemented varying degrees of restricted movements. Where needed – for example, if public transportation was not available – we also provided transportation to safely take employees to our manufacturing & distribution facilities.

HR has been at the forefront of ensuring every employee is safe and can work productively, whether they are at home or they are part of the essential operations in our workplaces.

We are also helping our business navigate rapidly evolving local guidelines – which can vary from a country-level down to a city-level – to keep our business running. We are constantly evaluating and updating the robust measures to help our people stay safe. We partner with our employees individually and proactively to ensure they feel — and are — protected and safe to serve our consumers, customers, and communities.

Q As most of P&G's product lines come under essentials and the importance of personalcare and hygiene has only increased, how have you been ensuring a regular supply chain and employees' safety amid COVID-19 crisis?

A Many of our facilities are running around-the-clock with additional shifts to ensure our products are available when our consumers need them.

With guidance from each country's government and medical professionals, we are constantly evaluating and updating the robust measures that are already in place to help our people. This includes:

- Access control measures such as temperature scans, shift rotations, queueing avoidance, and physical distancing wherever possible.
- Personal protective equipment such as masks are provided for every employee.
- Comprehensive, methodical cleaning of all production areas, including regular sanitization and surface disinfection that exceeds

> As each country plans their gradual return to working from our offices & innovation centers, we will be criteria and principle-based

the most rigorous health authority standards.

Additionally, we are working with our employees to address their specific needs, such as staying at home if they are part of high-risk groups or have pre-existing medical conditions. We also understand that this crisis may affect not only our employees' physical well-being but also their mental well-being. Hence, we have a helpline with trained professionals available for our employees or their family members 24x7.

We have also been more deliberate about making connections with each other even while working remotely through informal video conferences. We are doing whatever it takes so that our employees feel engaged, connected and are protected and safe.

Q How are you preparing for the post lockdown phase? Are you redesigning your workplaces? Will you be taking a similar approach for all the regions or you have specific plans for different markets?

A The health of our employees and the safety of our workplaces continues to be our top priority. As each country plans its gradual return to working from our offices & innovation centers, we will be criteria and principle-based. We have established regional guidelines but will implement detailed plans at a country level to ensure the health and well-being of our employees and compliance with local government and health authority regulations.

In general, our employees will return to the office in phases, gradually increasing to 50 percent of our capacity. We will continue to enable working from home and reduce population density through alternating Team A / Team B access.

In our offices, we will enhance existing safety measures, such as temperature checks, safe distancing protocols, use of face masks, etc. We will also implement any specific measures mandated by each country's local government and health authorities. Flexibility will be at the core of this criteria and principle-based approach, as are the safety and personal considerations of each employee.

Q How do you think the future of work will now get redefined? How can HR and business leaders prepare for this new normal of work?

A This crisis has forced unprecedented rapid change to the way we live and work. Working from home is the new norm, with technology as an enabler and flexibility being a necessity.

Prior to COVID-19, P&G already enabled flexibility for our employees through flex@work. This helped our employees perform at their peak to meet business objectives while meeting their life's objectives. Among other things, this included employees having the freedom to regularly work from home on predetermined days. Despite



having this in place before the pandemic, it was also not as simple as increasing the number of times our employees worked from home from once a week to five days a week.

As we expect more people to work from home more frequently in the "new normal", *we need to re-evaluate if we are giving our employees the right support to work productively at home especially in a new dynamic where we have employees split between home and office.* This may include hardware and software so that employees have same access to information and tools at home as in the office. We also need to recognize that, when employees regularly work from home, they may have to attend to their children or other tasks. We need to ensure we are truly giving individuals flexibility in their work schedule to address their personal needs.

More than these simple changes, *HR and business leaders must also be more deliberate about nurturing a sense of community.* This crisis has taught us all to appreciate productive corridor conversations, energizing coffee breaks with others, and effective face-to-face meetings. When more people are working across both the office and from home, we need to rethink how we strengthen connections so that we can still have that shared sense of community.



Q How is the role of HR changing with the pandemic? What do you think are the core competencies the HR of the present and the future need to build?

A Our role in HR to take care of our people has never been truer and more holistic than during this crisis. In companies like P&G, HR is at the forefront managing these changes for our employees. *Through employee support and benefit programs, HR became the link between providing P&G people with the resources they need to care for themselves and their families.* HR also enabled continued business operations by keeping people safe at work for essential activities. We would not be able to do this successfully without our skills in effective employee relations, use of data & technology, and change management.

> Working from home is the new norm, with technology as an enabler and flexibility being a necessity

The role of HR in ensuring employee engagement and productivity through virtual tools, effective connects & team building plus organization-wide communication done virtually is also a critical new capability. This experience also underscored the need to continually hone our skills in crisis management so that we can be effective leaders in ensuring the continuity of our business.

Remote working: The new workplace reality





Over the last few months, most of the organizations have started learning to adopt to this new reality of Work From Home in various forms and degrees

By **Rajita Singh** & **K Srinivas Rao**

Often, we hear the comments that work from home cannot work in the Indian Context to its optimal potential because of lack of infrastructure or nature of the industry or lack of discipline among our workforce. At times it is even brushed off as a passing "Fad" of some of the new age companies with western counterparts which we are trying to emulate.

For good or for bad, in the last few weeks (courtesy COVID 19) all those options and opinions have gone to the back burner and most of the organizations have started learn-ing to adopt to this new reality of Work From Home in various forms and degrees, based on the Nature of Role.

An unbiased review reveals some heartbreaking scenarios of low productivity/output, lack of consistency, lack of any cutting-edge thoughts in contributions and other aspects. So, what changed to cause this sudden dip? Well, the ecosystem of the work en-vironment did.

Let us explore the Indian context specific challenges and why it is still considered as an "Alien Concept" by many of us. Some of the challenges are as follows:

Conversations & Socialization are productive tools for us, not distractions: As a collec-tive society we are more productive when we engage in conversations and socialize. We need those intermediary breaks and informal chat & chai breaks to re-energize ourselves and this is infectious. We miss this element completely in WFH.

Our schooling and lessons of discipline thereof: Indian society during its formative years, outsourced the self-discipline role to our education system. We have been wired to this extent that we look for similar reinforcements at offices and ecosystems to stay disciplined, like policies, hierarchies, reporting structures etc. Home is a place we relax, which is why we are far more free.

Our locus of control is external: It's like my belief that my success and failure is directly linked to my co-existence in my tribe. External locus of control again triggers the lack of self-discipline. We find it extremely tough to say NO, resultantly we are distracted and end up conversing with anyone and everyone during

> Work from home is still considered as an "Alien Concept" by many of us. However, the traditional way of work is going to change and work from home will be a crucial part of it

work hours else it will be rude is the assumption.

Lack of understanding of corporate work ethos: The percentage of the population which works in a formal corporate ecosystem in India is still negligible compared to the working population. Due to which players find it rather difficult to comprehend the rules of this game. For example casual dressing is fine at home, can't that call wait, have you been punished to sit at a place and work and so on.

The big change we are proposing is that instead of enforcing the concept of discipline from Outside, we should bring the awareness Inside. Let us explore as to what this concept means and how to roll it out

So is WFH a doomed concept in the Indian context? No. The big change we are proposing is that instead of enforcing the concept of discipline from Outside, we should bring the awareness Inside. Let us explore as to what this concept means and how to roll it out.

The New Journey from Outside to Inside

It is our innate nature to follow instinct and do our own thing which fills us with energy, opportunity, and excitement. And there is always a thrill in doing things of our choice. But then the moment it is made mandatory, a sense of resentment, aversion and feeling different creeps in. We all like to believe we make our own choices and invest our time the way we like. But one can always break the conditioning and choose to take this journey inwards, to a new way of life. The onus of this journey lies on the individual.

The dual pillars on which we can build a New Way of life are **OM** (Overcoming Guilt and Mindfulness).

Overcoming Guilt

Some of the insights to cultivate among ourselves and employees through programs are as follows:

- Being joyful is critical to growth and to life. Working from home is neither an entitlement nor an enforcement, but the demand of an unforeseen situation and crisis. So, for that if you take a break for lunch, or decide to respond to a few work calls / emails late, you need not feel guilty.
- Similarly, while working if you are not able to pay attention to your loved ones or other stakeholders, do not get into guilt mode.
- Maintain a structure to set boundaries for both work and home, as work has blurred the boundaries.
- During these times, both work and home ecosystems, tend to consume a lot of your time, energy and take you for granted. En-sure, you start early, prioritize, maintain a schedule and stick to it.
- Guilt is often a result of our lack of understanding the social ecosystem and a belief which propagates an emotion to only negate self. To avoid this confusion, have healthy conversations around these at home.

Learn to appreciate the context and be ok with not being OK.

Mindfulness (Self Awareness)

To simplify the concept, mindfulness is a deep dimension and a state of being in the present moment. In the current 'knowledge economy', intellect is disproportionately magnified, resulting in a divide of self, experience, and life.

It is important to remember that comprehending 'self' is key. A process of existence and inclusiveness is possible at our very home.

This happens when our body, mind and energy are aligned.

- Awareness exists at different levels based on our experiences, making it paramount to be able to balance that working from home in the current scenar-io is not really a personal choice but a need of the hour for mankind. An aware-ness on this magnitude helps appreciate this fact.
- Create a 'me' time wherein you can reflect, introspect and calm the mind in the chaos. Make your '25th Hour'.
- Work has come home so home cannot lose its significance. Be mindful of the overlap as the coexistence of Work and Home is new. In a Video call if your baby shows up take it in your stride with pride.
- Feeling extremely due to a bad conversation, insult or being yelled at work, is common. However the informal setting of Home where the naturally defined power structures (like office) do not exist, chances of getting into these mo-ments unintentionally are high.



Feel free to engage in anything that comforts you, walk alone, listen to music, meditate? It only reduces stress and anxiety.

- Being mindful needs preparation at three levels- the mind, the heart and the gut. To get the best out of it, 1) Prepare your physical body for it. Practices like yoga help gain the ability to sit for long hours, straighten your body posture, help relax your breathing, get your focus back and notice your thoughts and emotions. 2) activate your mind and muscles towards synchrony and harmony - riding a bike, a treadmill, as workout, swimming, etc. 3) Self-discipline helps get regulated and a happy lifestyle. These steps enable and make life even more nourishing and satisfying.

> It is important to remember that comprehending 'self' is key. A process of existence and inclusiveness is possible at our very home. This happens when our body, mind and energy are aligned

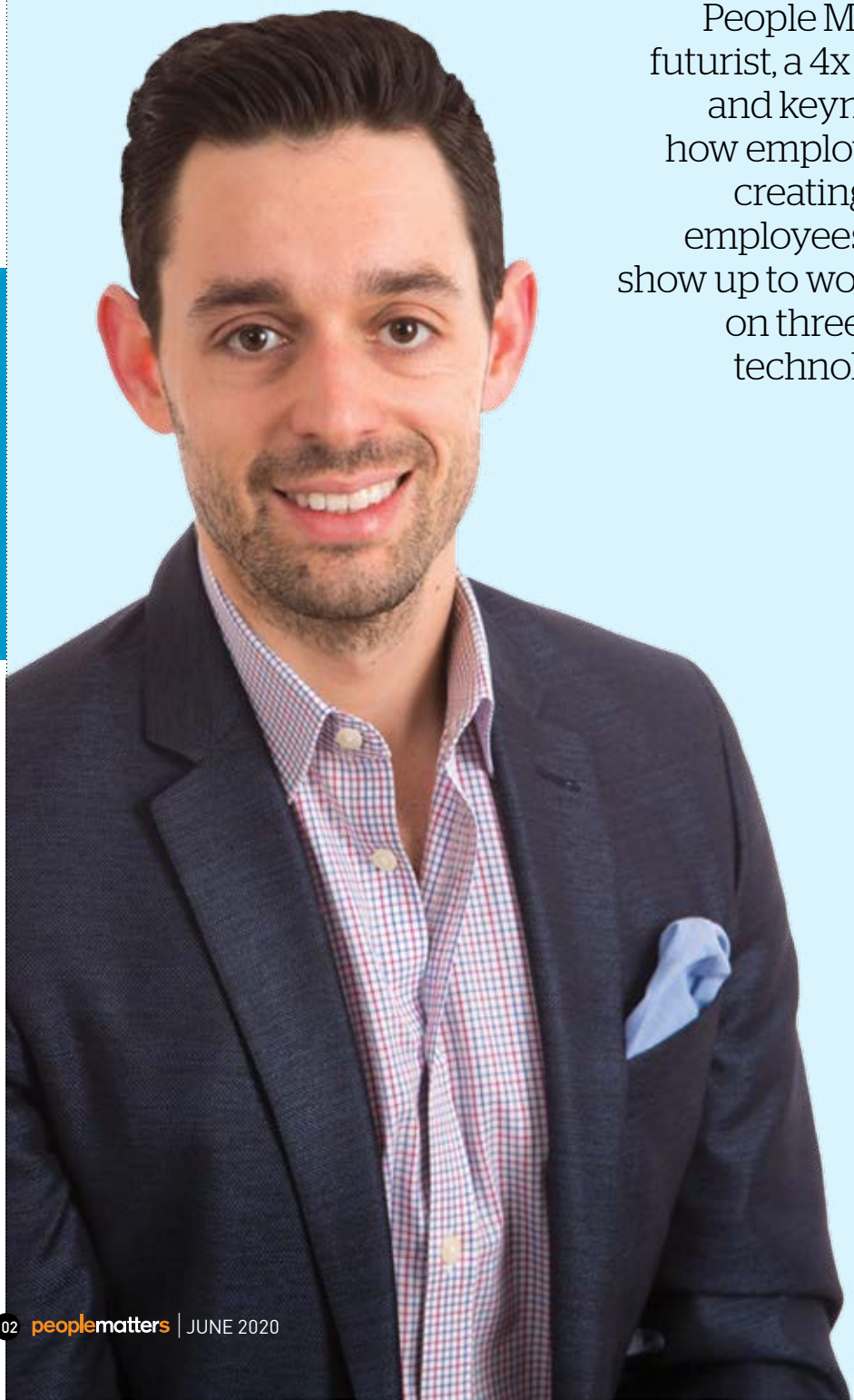
In conclusion, we need to reorient WFH and become Work From hOMe, where the onus shifts from being an organizational driven structural intervention to an individual adopt-ed behavior for the betterment of self and others. This shift is titanic coz individuals can become aware and awake 'only what they are aware of exists, else it does not!'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Q&A

In the age of machine, people matter even more: Jacob Morgan



In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, **Jacob Morgan,** a futurist, a 4x best-selling author, TED and keynote speaker, talks about how employee experience is about creating an organization where employees 'want' and not 'need' to show up to work each day by focusing on three environments: culture, technology, and physical space

By **Yasmin Taj**

As the world undergoes tremendous changes due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations are being forced to rethink their business and people strategies. Businesses that will work on creating an environment of trust during these times will emerge as winners in the long run. And employee experience will be at the heart of all these multiple changes organizations are going through.

We talk to Jacob Morgan, a 4x best-selling author, TED and keynote speaker, futurist, and creator of FutureofWorkUniversity.com on the changing dynamics of the workplace during the

time of COVID-19 and what employee experience means today. Morgan is a highly sought after keynote speaker and speaks at conferences and events around the world on the future of work and employee experience. He believes in creating organizations where we all 'want' to show up to work, not where we 'need' to show up to work.

In this exclusive interaction, Morgan talks about how employee experience is about creating an organization where employees 'want' and not 'need' to show up to work each day by focusing on three environments: culture, technology, and physical space. He also suggests how organizations should figure out the moments that employees care about most by asking them and then creating experiences around them.

Here are the excerpts from the interview.

Q In the age of the machine, do you think people matter more than ever, especially in times like COVID-19?

A Absolutely, we are seeing this especially with the Coronavirus as well. Much of the conversations around automation and AI have completely been replaced by the need to connect, to be human, to practice empathy, and to just be kind to one another. It's unfortunate that a virus had to make us realize this. Business is still about relationships and relationships are one of the things that make humans so unique. In a technology driven world, it is going to be these "soft skills" that will matter most.

Q Why has EX become a top priority for business leaders across the world, especially in times of COVID-19? Can you throw some light on the competitive advantage of employee experience?

A I looked at 252 organizations around the world and found that only 6% of them do an amazing job of investing in employee experience. These organizations are on average 24% smaller, have over 4x the average profit, and almost 3x the revenue of non-experiential organizations. They also have superior stock-price performance! Examples include Cisco, Microsoft, Facebook, Rio Games, AirBnb, Hyland Software, and others.

A recent study by Linkedin actually found that Employee Experience is the #1 talent trend for 2020. From my research of interviewing over 140 CEOs around the world, I found that attracting and retaining talent is one of the top trends for leaders over the next ten years. The smart leaders out there realize that it is no longer about paying people more money. Employees care about more than just money which means we need to move to creating better experiences for them so that they actually want to show up to work each day.

So, why is employee experience becoming such a priority? Because, leaders are finally waking up to this realization. Instead of people convincing you why they should work for you, it is now YOU that needs to convince people why they should work for you.

> Business is still about relationships and relationships are one of the things that make humans so unique. In a technology driven world, it is going to be these "soft skills" that will matter most

Q You have always insisted that Employee Experience is not Employee Engagement. Why is that so and what are they key differences?

A For decades we have

invested in employee engagement programs but around the world the scores are still terrible, that doesn't make any sense. The problem is that engagement is the effect but it is the employee experience that is the cause of an engaged workforce. Most organizations around the world view employee engagement programs as a type of short term adrenaline shot to temporarily boost employee satisfaction. They do this with things like free food or hot yoga! The problem is that there are no changes made to the core workplace practices of the organization. Employee experience is exactly that, it is about creating an organization where employees 'want' and not 'need' to show up to work each day by focusing on three environments: culture, technology, and physical space.

In short, employee engagement has become about investing in short-term perks whereas employee experience is about making core changes to the organization.

> Instead of people convincing you why they should work for you, it is now YOU that needs to convince people why they should work for you

Q There has never been more money spent in trying to create employee experience, yet surveys show that nearly 7 out of 10 people report being disengaged at work. Where lies the rub?

A That's actually not true. The money was spent in employee engagement programs that I talked about earlier. Employee Experience is just now getting more traction and momentum. Organizations are now making core changes to their workplace practices.

Q Who are the major stakeholders when it comes to ensuring employee experience in an organization? Is it the sole responsibility of HR to ensure EX?

A I created a ripple model which starts at the CEO and C-level. These are the people who must be the evangelists for all things employee experience. They need to be the biggest cheerleaders for this stuff! One layer out of that is the HR team, these are the people who are basically the employee experience task force. They develop the strategy, the tactics, and the plan and help make it all become a reality. One layer out of that are all of the leaders inside of an organization. It is their job to make these employee experience strategies and tactics come to life by implementing them with their teams. The final layer out of that is "all employees", because it is up to everyone to make sure that they speak up to share their ideas and what they care about and value.

Q How can employers leverage AI and next-gen



technologies to fuel differentiated employee experiences?

A We are just starting to see more of this happen now but I think a few things will happen. First, AI and tech will help us create more personalized experiences for our people because "it" will know employees better than a single leader ever could. AI can help recommendations for the types of work we should be doing, what roles we would be best at, when we are getting burned out, etc. In fact, all of these things are happening today. Second, AI and technology will help us automate routine and mundane tasks so that employees can focus more on the human aspects of work, this too positively contributes to the overall employee experience.

We have to remember that from the three environments I mentioned earlier, technology is 30% of the overall experience. The best thing that an organization can do here is to give employees the best tools and resources so that they can do their jobs as effectively and seamlessly as possible while at the same time making the organization more human.

Q What are some of the biggest pitfalls you see organizations making when executing their employee experience strategy?

A First is not completely understanding what employee experience is. Remember, it's about three environments: culture, technology, and physical space. Free food and hot yoga are not a strategy, changes need to be made to the "engine" of the organization vs just repainting it. Second, employee experience is NOT just an HR thing, it is an organizational thing. Everyone needs to be involved here, not just the HR team. Third, understand that this is never ending. We will be in a rapidly changing world which means that our workplaces practices will change; just take a look at what Coronavirus has done. All of a sudden, employees at organizations around the world are being told to work from home when many of these companies never had flexible work programs!



The best thing that an organization can do is to give employees the best tools and resources so that they can do their jobs as effectively and seamlessly as possible while at the same time making the organization more human

Q What is the future of employee experience? Where do you see EX five years down the line?

A In the next five years, I expect to see great progress made in this area. My hope is that most organizations around the world will have teams in place to address this, that the term "employee experience" will become mainstream, and that organizations will constantly be revisiting their workplace practices. We all deserve to be a part of an organization where we WANT not NEED to show up to work each day and in 5 years, I would like to see more people around the world fit into that category. This means we can expect more investment in workspace design, technologies which dictate how we work, and cultural investments in things like leadership, health and wellbeing, learning and development programs, and the like.

VISTY BANAJI



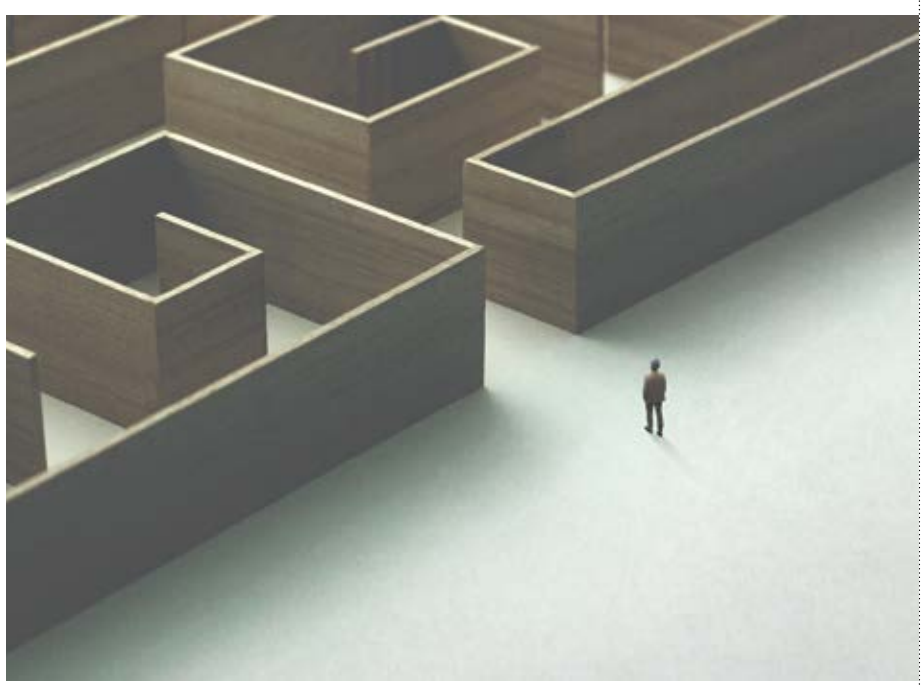
Wolves in HR clothing

We are rightly scared of the Psychopaths among us, But what if some HR departments show Psychopathic traits?

I don't ever go to pubs. I never eavesdrop. I lie. I was eavesdropping in a pub while waiting for a friend to turn up. As I was nursing my glass of RO water and pretending to read the wine list while listening to a group of youngsters at the next table sharing their work woes. They were from a range of companies and each outdid the other in their fulminations about how perfectly horrid their HR department was. They shared lurid examples of the deception, heartlessness, and trickery they had experienced at HR hands. My friend arrived at the agreed time and I lost track of the griping at the next table. By the next morning, the stories I had clandestinely heard were all a blur (as was the conversation I had with my friend – a phenomenon known as the Maltese memory eraser). Strangely though, the pejorative descriptors the youngsters had used for HR kept surfacing in my mind as if I had come across just those terms in another context recently. Then the ten-paise coin dropped: the déjà vu was triggered because those words had stayed in my mind from a book I had read recently. Unfortunately, the book was called 'Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us'[1] and (after washing out the expletives and the derogatory nicknames) the adjectives the people at the neighboring table had been using for HR were Hare's terms for (you guessed it) Psychopaths. Words like callous, manipulative, shallow, and egotistical kept recurring in both narratives. Could this be sheer coincidence or do some HR departments really display some Psychopathic traits (at least metaphorically)? This column attempts to answer that question.

Psychopaths in Corporates

Before reviewing the extent to which some HR set-ups display Psychopathic symptoms, we need to be clear about what these are. While



Psychopath (frequently abbreviated to 'psycho') is colloquially used to describe anyone who appears mentally unbalanced, which is far from how psychologists employ the term. Let's take Hare's help in defining the term: "Psychopaths are social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way… Their hallmark is a stunning lack of conscience; their game is self-gratification at the other person's expense… A self-centered, callous, and remorseless person profoundly lacking in empathy…" Hare goes to give the key symptoms of Psychopathy in two categories:

Emotional / Interpersonal
- Glib and superficial
- Egocentric and grandiose
- Lack of remorse or guilt
- Lack of empathy
- Deceitful and manipulative
- Shallow emotions

Social Deviance
- Impulsive
- Poor behavior controls
- Need for excitement
- Lack of responsibility
- Early behavior problems
- Adult anti-social behavior

From the above it should be very clear that Psychopaths are very different from Psychotics (though the words sound confusingly similar) who usually have sensory experiences or beliefs with no basis in reality. While Psychopaths have glaring gaps or abnormalities in their emotional responses, many of them are well able to cope with the demands of organizations and can play astute, if ultimately damaging political games. "Corporate Psychopaths are characteristically insincere, arrogant, untrustworthy and manipulative in their personal style; insensitive, remorseless, shallow and blaming in their interpersonal relationships; impatient, erratic, unreliable, unfocused and parasitic in their organizational maturity; and dramatic, unethical and bullying in their social tendencies."[2] Despite these obvious handicaps, it speaks volumes for our selection and promotion criteria that our topmost corporate echelons are revealed to have a higher proportion of psychopaths in their midst than exist in the general population.[3] Manfred Kets de Vries explains why people with Psychopathic tendencies (who he calls SOBs, for Seductive Operational Bullies) make it to the C Suite: "SOBs thrive on political sabotage, power play and turf wars. Ironically, many of the qualities that indicate mental problems in other contexts may appear appropriate in senior executive positions, particularly in organizations that appreciate impression management, corporate gamesmanship, risk-taking, coolness under pressure, domination, competitiveness, and assertiveness. Even those traits that reflect a severe lack of human feeling or emotional poverty (lack of remorse, guilt, and empathy) can be put into service by SOBs in situations where being 'tough' or 'strong' (making hard, unpopular decisions) and emotional slickness work in their favor. Their innate charm, their deceitfulness, their need for thrills and regressions', can turn into a very heady effective package. Their destructive backstabbing behavior, and ruthlessness toward their adversaries, can be highly effective."[5]

> Just as good roads, crime-free neighborhoods, and honest politicians don't make the front page, super-helpful HR just isn't a juicy story to laugh at (or curse)

Psychopathic HR Organizations

Hopefully what I have written so far will be endorsed by anyone conversant with the behavioral sciences in general and Abnormal Psychology specifically. Now it's time to walk on a more interesting pathway by comparing certain organizations to Psychopathic individuals, if only metaphorically. Not that we are in totally uncharted territory. Gareth Morgan identified eight perspectives from which organizations could be viewed.[4] One of them (that of organizations becoming psychic prisons in which people are trapped by their mindsets) seems intriguingly close to the destination where we are headed but, at best, takes us only a part of the way there. We shall focus only on the cell occupied by Psychopaths in the prison and in the wing dedicated to HR organizations.

How do such perverse HR set-ups, that contradict all that we have been taught (and which we preach ourselves) originate? One obvious answer is that the HR department is embedded within an organization that has Psychopathic characteristics and, even if HR hasn't imbibed them from the start, it is only a matter of time before it does so. We have already reviewed these traits but Dr. Tarja Ketola matches the personality characteristics of Psychopaths with examples of organizational (mis)behavior.[6]

> Not all employees can react immediately to the treatment meted out by Psychopathic HR by lifting their voices in protest or their feet to exit

The more relevant sequence (from our point of view) is when the Psychopathic rot starts from HR and then spreads to – or is rejected by – the rest of the enterprise. There are three major ways in which HR becomes the first bearer of a Psychopathic culture. The first is when an SOB (in de Vries' sense) is appointed to the CEO's role and needs the HR function to operate in a consonantly vicious mode (much as a Hitler needed a Himmler). If the CHRO does not conform s/he is replaced until there is one who does. Similar pressure (followed by replacement, if necessary) is brought to bear on the CHRO when the organization is acquired by another that already carries the Psychopathic virus. In these cases, the point of origin for the malaise is either the global/regional business or functional leadership. Carrying tales about and ultimately 'hatcheting' the local CEO is frequently the proof of loyalty the CHRO has to provide for survival in such cases. Finally, there is the newly chosen CHRO who is the prime carrier of the deviant culture. S/he may, of course, be chosen for precisely this reason as the replacement for a more value-driven CHRO (as in the two situations just considered) or because the prime job spec is a tough character who can be cool under pressure. The SOB CHRO may also have crept in because the enterprise has superficial or warped criteria for judging internal HR leaders or when naïve CEOs try managing CHRO selections on their own.[7]

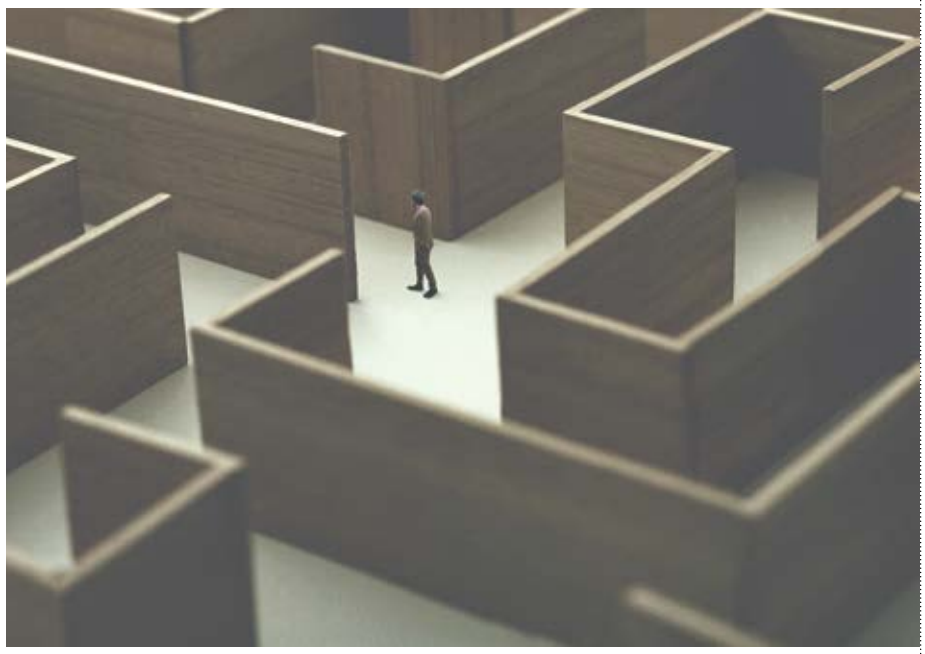
Let me emphasize here that it is certainly not the majority of HR organizations that can be described using the Psychopathic metaphor, nor is it even a significant minority. At the same time and for the same reasons as for CEOs, the incidence is not as low as the 1% Psychopaths amount to in the general population. However low the actual number of vitiated HR

departments maybe, they harm the image of the profession that is disproportionately high. The pub story with which this column opened did not contain a single positive episode of HR going out of the way to help someone in the group though I am sure there must have been plenty of such occasions. Just as good roads, crime-free neighborhoods, and honest politicians don't make the front page, super-helpful HR just isn't a juicy story to laugh at (or curse) over drinks. Unless the number of Psychopathic HR departments approaches zero, we shall all suffer from the angry tarring and feathering their behavior elicits as a reaction from the general employee population.

Organizational Costs

The damage Psychopathic HR departments do to the standing of the profession is only collateral damage. The primary casualties are inflicted within the organizations housing such departments.

Apart from the HR team itself, the first to spot the flaky fakery and ruthless self-aggrandizement of Psychopathic HR are employees themselves, starting with those who are in the way of or instrumental to the HR-serving schemes that



start ricocheting around the firm. The impact on them is threefold. Worst of all is the erosion in the trust that ought to be HR's most prized asset. A classic symptom indicating this is that employees with problems, instead of turning to HR for solutions, avoid it desperately for fear that HR will only exploit the situation or the employee's vulnerability while betraying confidences. Not all employees can react immediately to the treatment meted out by Psychopathic HR by lifting their voices in protest or their feet to exit. That doesn't, of course, mean they forget the mistreatment or manipulation to which they have been subject and they store up the resentment till they can give it form that can maximally hurt or embarrass the company and its HR. Lastly, the steadily increasing population of such employees provides ready recruits to the ranks of the disengaged – that fearsome category of people who dilute the claims for positive actions taken by the company and amplify all its slips with unvarying cynicism.

Peers are a bit slower to realize that (to paraphrase Donalbain[8]), "There are daggers in HR's smiles". Once they do, however, they tend to form coalitions against HR which put paid to any grandiose schemes of improvement and change championed by HR, most of which then wither on the vine without linebacking. It is only a matter of time before the team spirit of the entire company is torn to tatters by cliques, cabals, and conflicts. As an active game-player, HR is obviously unable to play the role of honest broker or

mediator and, what could have been a minor hiccup becomes a paroxysm of progressively escalating tits for tats that severely impede organizational performance. People say a company is known by the kind of people it has. It's perhaps even truer to say a company is known by the kind of people it loses. When there is a whole stream of otherwise highly competent and professionally esteemed people flowing out, it is symptomatic of a Psychopath in the system – usually the CEO.[9] When the flow becomes a flood, it's indicative that the CEO is supported by a Psychopathic HR department.

Finally, even partners and outsiders, whether vendors, union and community leaders or labor department, and other authorities realize the consequences of a Psychopathic HR function. The nature of the skin-deep blandishments and the exact form of selfishness may vary but they also spell doom to win-win, non-exploitative relationships. Vendors providing commoditized services with clear deliverables are relatively unaffected in dealing with Psychopathic HR. All they need to do is to give the HR leadership pride of place in major events and the lion's share of credit in presentations to top management and professional bodies. Matters are not so simple for consultants dealing with issues that touch the political innards of the organization. They find it more challenging to stay on the preferred service provider list while retaining their professional integrity. Particularly in such cases, a perverse version of Gresham's Law comes into play: advisors who are willing to aid the machinations of a Machiavellian HR, crowd out ones who tailor their advice primarily to the needs of the organization.



It is not only more manipulative and pliable consultants and other outsiders who flourish in partnership with Psychopathic HR. Even internally, such HR departments can recruit a crop of informants and disinformation planters from the general employee population. At more senior levels too, there are always a couple of peers who are happy to share in the distribution of spoils (that flow from HR sponsorship rather than performance), thus preventing the normal immunity reactions of the organization from rejecting Psychopathic HR and the infection of politicization and conflict that accompanies it.

Early Surgery

The prognosis for Psychopaths is not a happy one. "Indeed, many writers on the subject have commented that the shortest chapter in any book on Psychopathy should be the one on treatment. A one-sentence conclusion such as, 'No effective treatment has been found,' or 'Nothing works,' is the common wrap-up to scholarly reviews of the literature."[1]

Organizations too, that have allowed a full-fledged

Psychopathic HR department to mature, have few options other than the excision of the malignancy. The extent of removal depends on the time the Psychopathic culture has had to seep into the culture of the function. In the early stages, simply the expulsion of the CHRO and a couple of key lieutenants should suffice, and for this to happen an alert CEO and a watchful Board[10] are essential.

The outcome is far grimmer if HR has turned Psychopathic in response to the CEO's demands. There is a view that organizations that respond primarily to the dictates of shareholders display a Psychopathic streak. Joel Bakan writes: "The corporation, like the psychopathic personality it resembles, is programmed to exploit others for profit. That is its only legitimate mandate." He reports his conversation with Dr. Robert Hare, the psychologist and internationally renowned expert on psychopathy who we have quoted several times already: "A lack of empathy and asocial tendencies are also key characteristics of the corporation, says Hare – 'their behavior indicates they don't really concern themselves with their victims', and corporations often refuse to accept responsibility for their own actions and are unable to feel remorse… Human psychopaths are notorious for their ability to use charm as a mask to hide their dangerously self-obsessed personalities. For corporations, social responsibility may play the same role. Through it they can present themselves as compassionate and concerned about others when, in fact, they lack the ability to care about anyone or anything but themselves."[11]

Apart from the HR team itself, the first to spot the flaky fakery and ruthless self-aggrandizement of Psychopathic HR are employees themselves

While I will not go so far as to paint all businesses in the same scarlet color, it is a fact that there are several which follow the credo of profit maximization very closely, regardless of the attendant (non-financial) costs. In such cases no amount of surgery internal to HR can help. India is rightly proud of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code that was passed by parliament in 2016. Obviously, it deals only with the financial collapse of corporations. The kind of malfeasance we are dealing with here demands a Prevention of People Exploitation and Moral Bankruptcy Code. When should it trigger the closure of a Psychopathic organization? Watch this space after my next eavesdropping session at the pub.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Q&A

COVID-19 has tested all our assumptions regarding work: BCG's Rahul Guha



In this exclusive interview, **Rahul Guha**, Managing Director and Partner & Recruiting Chair, India, Boston Consulting Group talks about how the world of work has changed since the outbreak of COVID-19 and how it will impact the recruitment industry in particular

By **Yasmin Taj**

COVID-19 and the lockdown has challenged all our assumptions on effectiveness and working models. In the face of the outbreak, there has been a huge shift towards remote working

As the world of work faces the disruption brought forward by the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot has changed and needs to be changed in the way workplaces function. The pandemic has accelerated the need to ensure that people around the globe have the necessary technology skills and access to do their jobs. Talent development too has now become a totally new ball game for talent leaders. So, what would the workplace look like when it resumes normal operations? Would organizations go back to old ways of working and managing talent or will these new ways of working remain as the new normal? The future is uncertain, but organizations have already started working on what it would mean for them.

In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, Rahul Guha, Managing Director and Partner & Recruiting Chair, India, Boston Consulting Group, talks about how the world of work has changed since the outbreak

of COVID-19 and how it will impact the recruitment industry in particular.

As Managing Director and Partner in the Mumbai office of Boston Consulting Group, Guha leads the Healthcare & Life Sciences Practice focused on Pharma and Process industry. He has worked across the Health Care & Life Sciences practice both in India and the US. He is also a topic expert in commercial operations, cost & throughput efficiency, smart simplicity and organization design.

Guha is also the Recruitment Chair for BCG India and has previously led the People and Organization Practice in India. A significant portion of his work lies in these core areas – Commercial excellence - Digital – Cost reduction – Throughput improvement - Pricing – Building mega brands – Agile development in R&D. He has extensive project experience in Pharma and Medtech and actively participates in Industry forums and bodies helping them with Industry inputs.

Q How has the COVID-19 outbreak changed the way we work?

A COVID-19 and the lockdown has challenged all our assumptions on effectiveness and working models. In the face of the outbreak, there has been a huge shift towards remote working. We are now more remote than ever, more flexible than ever and funnily, quite connected with our clients and peers. The work-from-home model is working quite well for us, with most of our teams using remote work platforms to interact with the client and team. To be honest, we haven't seen a significant decline in productivity.

Q What will the new world of work or post COVID-19 workplace look like?

A COVID-19 has tested all our assumptions. It has established new ways of working which will likely hold true for times to come. We see us being more comfortable with remote working, supporting all kinds of flex models which we can explore to engage and retain our staff. Leaders are more comfortable with virtual collaboration and have now seen the benefits and convenience of using these tools.

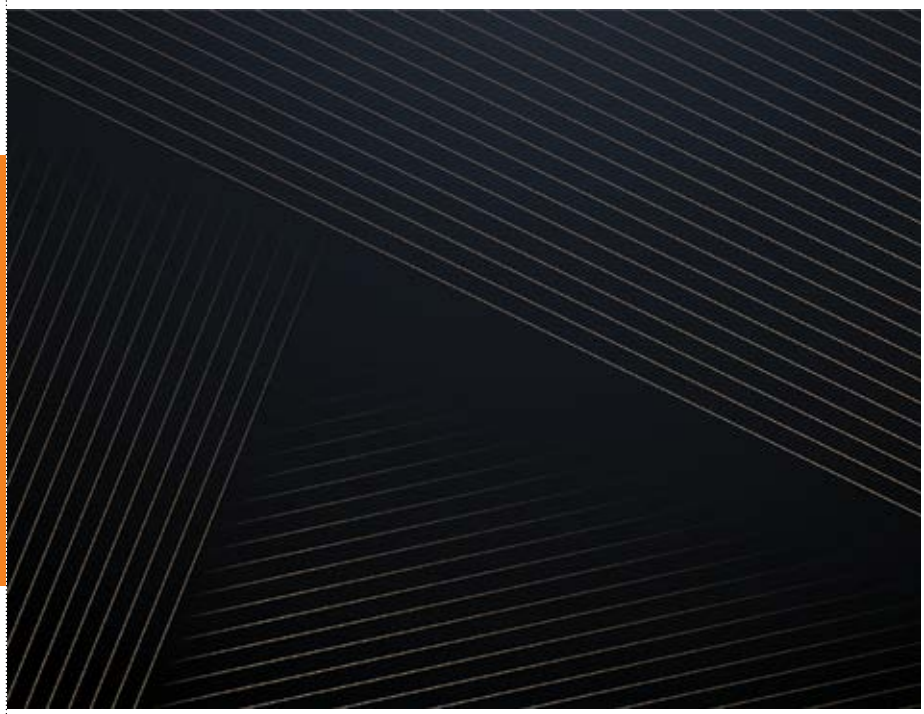
Q How will organizations look at talent post COVID-19? What are the biggest worries keeping talent leaders awake at night?

A For us, talent require-

We see us being more comfortable with remote working, supporting all kinds of flex models which we can explore to engage and retain our staff



ments will remain the same – our talent pool is quite specific. However, what is keeping us awake is whether our talent search model will scale to the current reality. We will need to ensure our recruiting process scales to the new reality as soon as possible. We are finding ways to connect with talent virtually, exploring virtual events.



Q How will the recruitment industry change post COVID-19?

A I think the cost structure of the recruiting industry will change. A lot of the meeting / travel cost linked to candidate selection will go away. Scheduling interviews / meetings will be easier and therefore time to select will become faster as well. Things will move faster to closure, and recruiting companies that have invested in technologies to keep pace with this change will emerge as winners. Specifically tools to enable remote scheduling, interviewing, etc. will really pay dividends.

Q According to the ongoing People Matters COVID-19: Impact & measurement survey, 73% of the participating companies do not have a post lockdown strategy. What is your take on this?

A I think the perspective is closely linked to timing. In the last few days, as clarity has begun to emerge, many companies have started to shape their post lockdown strategy, typically with a visibility of approximately 100 days. That makes sense, as the priority is to kick-off, but it is important for companies to refresh their strategy and factor in key upsides/downsides emerging from the COVID-19 situation.

Q What are the best practices companies can embrace in uncertain times like COVID-19? How can they prepare to bounce back?

In our business, our people are our seed corn. It is important to preserve that competitive advantage so that we can bounce back quicker than our competition and that remains our priority

A If you are a farmer, you know never to eat your seed corn. In our business, our people are our seed corn. It is important to preserve that competitive advantage so that we can bounce back quicker than our competition and that remains our priority. Standing by your promise in the market will make the difference on attracting and retaining talent in the future.

Going back to normal will be gradual: Keca Ward, Phenom People

In an exclusive interaction, **Keca Ward**, Sr. Director Talent Experience at Phenom People, throws light on the future of work and the new normal as we move through the age of COVID-19

By **Shweta Modgil**



Talent experience had been highlighted as one of the major HR trends for the year 2020. Before COVID-19 struck. But even as organizations move through the age of the COVID-19 world and prepare themselves for the new normal, talent experience will occupy the center stage in the global HR market which is more than a $400 Bn, with over $32 Bn spent on technology solutions. In order to optimize talent experience for millions of job seekers, employers require data and automation throughout the entire journey in order to personalize and optimize every talent experience. This is the gap that firms like Phenom People aim to address.

The Philadelphia based leading Talent Experience Management (TXM) platform founded in 2010 by Mahe Bayireddi, Hari Bayireddy, and Brad Goldoor offers a single platform that eliminates the need for multiple HR tools—connects the four key stakeholder experiences in the talent lifecycle and reduces time-to-hire and cost-per-hire while improving talent quality and productivity.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

I foresee large organizations creating Chief Safety Officer positions and other Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) jobs

Q What are some of the changes which Phenom has introduced in the workplace as lockdown comes to an end?

A We're still following shelter in place regulations, but

we are preparing to go back. First, we will observe other companies' success in the transition. From there, we will take volunteers who are interested and willing to be the first to enter the office. It will be a gradual process but we want to ensure our employees' safety first and foremost.

I guarantee that we will maintain the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended guidelines at the office. Face masks, hand sanitizing stations, and social distancing will all be enforced. We have an open office floor plan, so the first thing to implement is a healthy gap between employees while sitting at their computers—likely every third desk is where we'll assign seats.

We will have daily office cleanings, hand sanitizer stations, and we'll disassemble common areas to avoid any gatherings. Since we'll practice social distance in the office, we'll repurpose conference rooms and break rooms as desk space.

For the kitchen, we plan to limit its use to a certain number of employees at a time. And we're going to provide only disposable utensils, plates, and cups for the time being.

Q What percentage of the workforce has been brought back to the office? How was that decided?

A When the quarantine ends, we'll let willing volunteers go back to the office first. They will be our eyes and ears onsite for areas and rooms that receive a lot of foot traffic and should be cleaned more often. This will establish a safer migration back to work. However, we will not make anyone go back who does not feel comfortable. For those who want to continue working from home, may do so.

Q How will HR ensure that people working from home do not miss out on the same employee experience as the office?

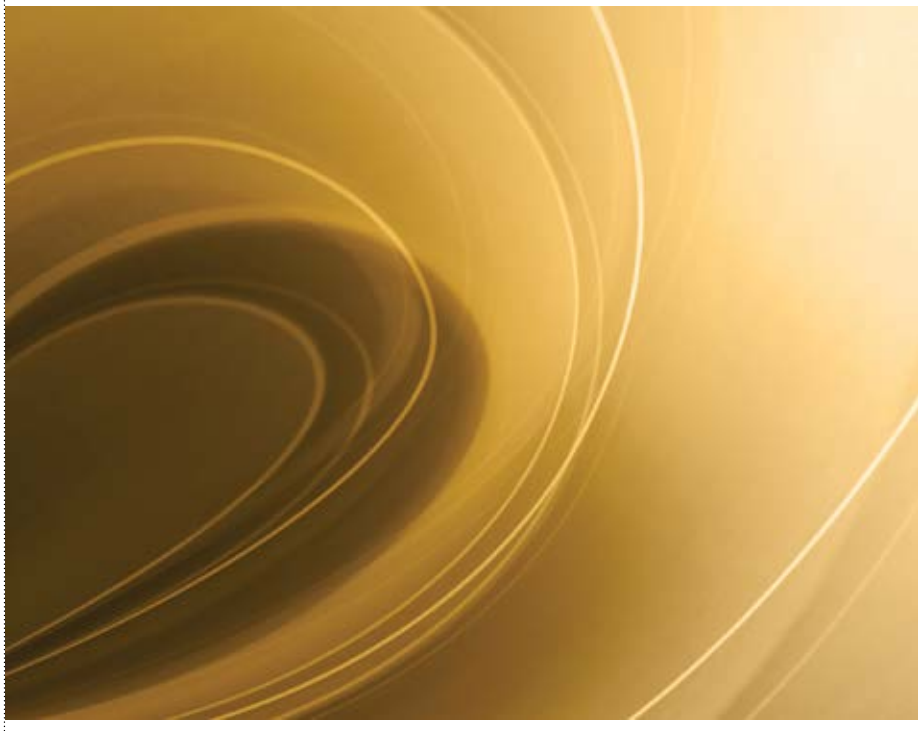
A Before the pandemic, we were a hybrid workforce of in-person and remote employees. We've been prepared to deliver the same employee experience for everyone by using video conferencing for company-wide meetings and award ceremonies to make sure we all feel connected and all have the same Phenom culture experience.

Q What are some of the HR policies that have been tweaked at Phenom post-COVID in the workplace?

A We've updated our Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) policy to include

We will see a new line of health and safety jobs open-up post-pandemic. In fact, companies who don't hire for these types of jobs could be at a disadvantage in the future





any employee who comes down with COVID-19. We have to be very flexible especially should an employee or their loved one have to recoup and recover from the virus. Working from home for long periods requires an elevated level of attention to life; working parents are homeschooling their children and some employees are caring for loved ones with COVID.

We are discussing a plan that will enact workforce coordinators whose focus is on a COVID-free office space and practices. They would enforce CDC guidelines such as social distancing, mask wearing, and cleanliness. I foresee large organizations creating Chief Safety Officer positions and other OSHA (The Occupational Safety and Health Administration) jobs.

We will see a new line of health and safety jobs open-up post-pandemic. In fact, companies who don't hire for these types of jobs could be at a disadvantage in the future. Employees want to work for an employer who puts the utmost concern on their health, well-being, and safety.

Q What are some of the challenges that Phenom is facing while the majority workforce operates from home?

A We've made a substantial shift from focusing on the candidate to employee. Companies are in hiring freezes but their internal talent still needs to be addressed. We have pivoted our TXM solution to better enable virtual events, upskilling of employees, and matching employees with project-based work in areas of the company that have higher demands as a result of this pandemic.

Q What are some of the trends that will become the norm in the post-COVID workplace in the coming six months?

A There will be several new trends in our work lives after this pandemic, including:

1. Social distancing within the building
2. Health and safety officers enforcing CDC guidelines and practices
3. Limited or no office visitors and more virtual meetings with clients
4. Traffic patterns on floors
5. Posters and flyers for best hygiene practices and symptom checklists

Q How will the employee experience of employees be different in the post-COVID workplace compared to before?

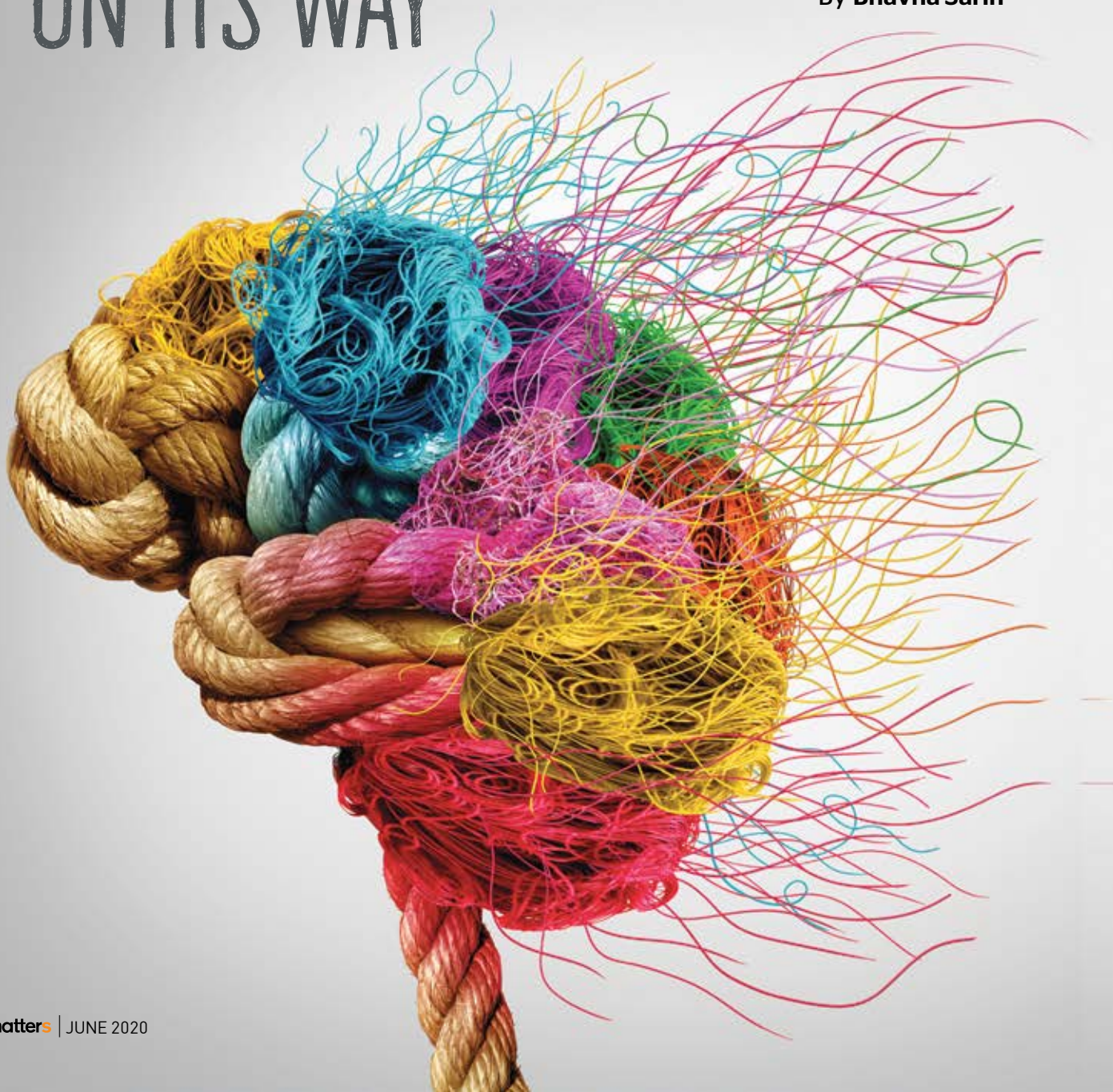
A Since common areas, kitchens, and cafeterias will have to change, we will have to get creative to cultivate that 'togetherness' feeling and provide a space for breaks. In the short term, I'm sure we will see more people eating their lunches and conducting meetings outside.

Going back to normal will be gradual, and part of that process will include a portion of the workforce telecommuting the first half of the week and in the office the second half. pm

A GLOBAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PANDEMIC IS ON ITS WAY

The mental and emotional impact of isolation and quarantine life has already begun to make its way through the global population with extreme, moderate and low level responses. Before it's too late, let's identify measures in time to not let this become another pandemic the world was not prepared for

By **Bhavna Sarin**



While we have been addressing several issues from physical safety, resuming work from office, lockdown to economic relief packages, we are either being ignorant or have missed out on the next big crisis knocking our door - a global psychological pandemic. How is that worse than COVID? Social distancing and quarantine will not be enough to contain it, rather that might become, or in fact has already become a trigger to the biggest psychological threat to the world.

Before we begin addressing mental health in this story, let's get some facts in place.

Global research reports indicate some of the biggest COVID related consequences, beyond health related consequences, to be panic, mass unemployment, poverty and homelessness, and social distancing induced isolation. The mental health consequences of these are as below:

- **Surge in suicide risk:** Given the number of suicides owing to COVID-19 and the lockdown so far, experts argue that lockdown will cause more deaths than COVID-19 itself amid recession
- **Enhanced** anxiety and depression
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** A medical condition that delays psychological recovery from any trauma or terrifying experience. Quarantine and fear of contracting COVID-19 is already instilling a profound and lasting fear of shared spaces including hotel lobbies, restaurants, theatres, flights, trains, and so on

In the current climate, the lines between work and leisure are increasingly blurred, and this, combined with the feelings of isolation that are caused by the limited interaction that comes with social distancing, can lead to excessively elevated levels of stress

- **Xenophobia:** Prejudice against people of specific countries. With China being the epicenter of COVID-19, the country is already being held responsible by several global leaders for the massive outbreak and inadequate measures to contain it, with multiple conspiracy theories doing the rounds

Be it the SARS outbreak back in 2003 leading to a citywide quarantine across China and Canada or the 2014 Ebola outbreak that led to several Western Africa countries having to quarantine themselves, we are not new to the concept of quarantine. While it might not have been possible to estimate the extent of the coronavirus pandemic beforehand, we are nearly four or five months into it, and yet have not emphasized the psychological threats it carries with itself. Quarantine is critical to contain further spread of COVID-19, however, are we prepared for the apparent psychological costs? Let's find out!

Lives lost on account of fear

Research, historic and recent, has shown that the consequential impact of isolation, arising out of the need for quarantine bears a distressing outcome for mankind. Here are some incidents that have been reported over the last two months, owing to COVID-19:

- **Emily Owen, 19 year old, female, Britain:** The

youngest reported suicide victim amid COVID-19. The young girl took this drastic step triggered by the fear of an anticipated prolonged isolation.

- **K Balakrishna, 50 year old, male, Indian:** Reportedly the first suicide victim of COVID-19. After consuming unfiltered and limitless content on COVID-19, Balakrishna fell prey to the human tendency of feeling scared. In the fear of feeling that he had contracted coronavirus and was a threat to his family, he took his own life.
- **Zahidul Islam, 36 year old, male, Bangladesh:** The first COVID-19 related suicide in Bangladesh. Zahidul on return from his travel from Dhaka, reached his hometown with fever, cold symptoms and weight loss. Based on the information they came across, Zahidul and the villagers feared he had contracted COVID-19, leading to avoidance by people of his village (on the lines of Xenophobia), without confirming if he in fact was positive or not. The circumstances led to Zahidul taking his life. The autopsy results found that he did not have COVID-19.
- **Daniela Trezzi, 34-year-old, female, Italy:** A nurse at the San Gerardo Hospital in Italy, feeling deeply traumatized, suffering from compassion fatigue, emotional burnout, hopelessness, and the fear of contracting and spreading the disease to others, Daniela gave up her life.

These are only a few of the reported cases so far. What did they have in common? They lived in a time of a pandemic, and were overwhelmed by how they could be a threat to others, accompanied by a sentiment of hopelessness. Does that sound familiar?

According to media reports, India alone has recorded 338 suicides during the lockdown period. Major causes for these suicides were found to be:

- Feeling of loneliness
- Fear of testing positive for COVID-19
- Deaths triggered by withdrawal symptoms - alcohol, drugs, etc
- Starvation
- Financial distress

The ongoing crisis is not only a threat to the mental health of those predisposed to mental illness, but for anyone and everyone experiencing any similar symptoms. In addition to managing work and chores, people are also are at a constant battle with self-destructive thoughts, depression, anxiety, isolation, and other concerns with no possible parked time to deal with them. Given the uncertainty surrounding the end of COVID-19 or the lockdown and imposed distancing restrictions, it is imperative to contain and manage the impending mental health crisis, before it's too late.

The prolonged social distancing and quarantine life augments the need for virtual employee resource groups to maintain the continuity of support groups and allyship

Understanding who is predisposed to taking extreme decisions

According to a 2019 WHO report, "One in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. Around 450 million people currently suffer from such conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide."

Taking into account WHO numbers, experts are of

the opinion that the most vulnerable in the current times are those who have existing mental health issues - depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, addiction, insomnia, and anger issues, to name a few. The people in this segment often have low self-esteem, can be easily triggered by any unpleasant comment/ information, and this threat increases exponentially under isolation.

With restricted movement, their routine which they had been working on to get better, which could involve a walk in the park, visiting psychiatrists/ therapists, attending meetings with support groups, playing a sport to get fit both physically and mentally, and more, that routine to improve their mental health has been distorted, leaving them to depend solely on technology to stay connected with the outside world, the same technology where in the middle of a video call with a family member or friend, there is a news alert on COVID cases, or any other disturbing news, sending their minds back into a shell that only keeps shrinking and drawing out all hope for a better tomorrow, triggering negative, and often self-destructive thoughts.

While the danger is higher for those with an existing mental health issue, it also poses a threat for the remaining segment of the population. For instance, for families with younger children or older parents and a working couple, the stress to manage work and home, and guilt of not being able to be there 100% for family members makes their situation worse. A majority of this segment of the workforce relied on caregivers, day care providers, crèches, and now have to not only continue to work, but work with the sense to be omnipresent. For nuclear families with/ without children, reports have experienced a spike in cases of domestic violence, which could be triggered by increase in alcohol consumption, substance abuse, or really just the fact that there is nowhere to go, causing increased irritability for those who suffer grave inability to rationalize thoughts, and therefore become a threat to people around.

Another at-risk segment is students. Around this time of the year, a large number of students step into the corporate world to begin their careers, or are amid



Break down work and personal activities into time slots and accomplish those tasks one after the other, in a manner that works best for you and that aligns with your requirements at the personal as well as professional front



tions of anonymity, a significant number of employees admit this is the reality even in the present day, despite the reinforced need to draw boundaries between work and personal time.

Head of Thought Leadership at The Myers-Briggs Company, John Hackston, recently said in an interview, "In the current climate, the lines between work and leisure are increasingly blurred, and this, combined with the feelings of isolation that are caused by the limited interaction that comes with social distancing, can lead to excessively elevated levels of stress."

"Perhaps the most important advice, however, is for leaders to recognize that remote working will affect each member of staff differently, including themselves. It is therefore crucial that managers recognize their own styles of working as to not impose their preferred work patterns onto employees. In turn, if employees understand how they work to the best of their ability, they are better equipped

Perhaps the most important advice, however, is for leaders to recognize that remote working will affect each member of staff differently, including themselves. It is therefore crucial that managers recognize their own styles of working as to not impose their preferred work patterns onto employees

their internships, however, the ongoing pandemic has led to a majority of organizations having to pull back job offers and decline internship opportunities. This has triggered anxiety among the younger workforce with respect to their career and job prospects, accompanied by self-doubt and the fear of being left behind, leading to added stress, especially for those who are living all by themselves.

Another unfortunate experience for many amid the crisis has been losing their loved ones and not being able to travel to be present with family for the last riots. Being paralyzed by the circumstances and unable to be present physically to help each other through such difficult times also has a deep and lasting psychological impact on people.

Contribution of workplace related factors

According to a 2016 Myers Briggs survey, 31% of employees were expected to be responsive to work emails outside working hours, both by employers as well as clients. On condi-

to cope with remote working. By understanding what strategies work for them, how they can best switch off, avoid information overload, set boundaries and find a form of work-life balance that suits them, they can reduce their stress levels, which will in turn help to combat the rise in stress during this difficult time," added Hackston.

John Gaunt, Chief Human Resources Officer, Synechron shared with People Matters, "For employees working from home, multitasking would mean caring for elder parents with health conditions, looking after a toddler, or even domestic chores along with the usual office duties. Employers, thus, need to watch out for several signs that employees may show such as increased anger or irritability, lack of motivation, procrastination, persistent sadness, excessive worrying or anxiety, poor sleep patterns, lack of creativity or innovation, negative or pessimistic thoughts, increase in substance use/abuse or even reckless behavior."

What can organizations do?

Here are some action steps for organizations to protect the mental well-being of their people:

Educate: Lack of awareness is the biggest contributor to the uprising of widespread mental illness and its growth. It is crucial to emphasize and caution the workforce about the rising threat to mental health that has been exponentially magnified by COVID-19 as well as the measures needed to sustain life and business post its advent into the global space. Educating the workforce and helping them understand the psychological impact of the trauma induced by the current circumstances, recognizing symptoms, encouraging conversations, engaging in healthy habits to stay mentally and physically fit and maintaining consistent communication is critical to ensure mental wellness of the community. Organizations can issue a handbook for coping mechanisms to assist those who are struggling, and also encourage them to sign up for therapy if needed, through calls (telephonic/video) provided by a host of mobile applications.

Virtual ERG's and 24*7 helplines: The prolonged social distancing and quar-



It is crucial to emphasize and caution the workforce about the rising threat to mental health that has been exponentially magnified by COVID-19 as well as the measures needed to sustain life and business post its advent into the global space

antine life augments the need for virtual employee resource groups to maintain the continuity of support groups and allyship. Virtual ERG's are an absolutely critical element to keep a check on rising mental and emotional outbreaks. Aptly said by Moody's D&I Lead DK Bartley in a recent interview, ERGs are a way to rise to the occasion.

In addition to virtual ERGs, partner with NGOs, counselors, therapists and psychiatrists to ensure availability of a 24*7 helpline, for employees, and extending it to their family members as well, to help manage any sudden emotional, behavioral or mental breakdown. By providing assistance through helplines, leaders can do their bit to ensure their employees have someone to speak with and share their feelings. Beyond employer assisted helplines, share a verified list of global helpline numbers with them to reach out to in case they have been experiencing suicidal thoughts, increased anxiety and panic, have been feeling depressed or feel the need to seek help.

Tap into emotional intelligence: Another actionable measure at this point is training leaders and the workforce in emotional intelligence (EI). EI is not just a critical skill for leaders, but quite close to being a life skill that one must build on. The number of people who are currently facing a mental illness is quite significant, which makes it even more crucial to be trained in being emotionally intelligent to make the community a safe space for one and all, curbing the casual remarks and comments one often passes. Marjet Andriesse, Managing Director of Telstra, APAC, shares with People Matters, "We have always believed that work flexibility means different things to different people, so remote work arrangements need to be tailored to the individual. Our leaders are proactively and regularly talking to their teams, to understand their needs and adjust accordingly."

Respect personal time, draw boundaries between work and life: Organizations today in their intent to stay connected with employees, feel an increased need to engage employees in activities to maintain a strong bond. While the intent is justified, it is important here to realize that the priority is about ensuring employees are doing well, and sometimes it might be a good idea to give that time back to employees rather than enforcing a fun/party hour. The need is to have

Employees suffering from a mental illness or feeling low might find it overwhelming to be asked "why so quiet" or "why don't you share something".



meaningful conversations and find opportunities to destress. Employees suffering from a mental illness or feeling low might find it overwhelming to be asked "why so quiet" or "why don't you share something".

Acknowledge as a leader that work and personal lives have collided. That constant feeling of not being able to deliver, too much work, not enough time, irritability in morning huddles, the restlessness in attending video calls while also preparing meals for the family, no one was ready for this. Help your employees pause and figure out what all daily activities need their dedicated time and focus. Recommend breaking down work and personal activities into time slots and accomplishing those tasks one after the other, in a manner that works best for them and that aligns with their requirements at the personal as well as professional front.

Internship opportunities for students: This is one area which can benefit not only the passive workforce but also the organization. Identify roles and projects which can leverage the help of students. The finance part is the question here. While organizations are struggling to keep existing employees on the payroll how do they bear additional costs? For this, organizations will need to partner with educational institutions and identify an approach. If not a stipend, can they consider gaining credits for work experience? Any benefits package that can be extended to the interns if not a monetary compensation for their contribution? Any free certifications that would otherwise be charged? By engaging with the younger workforce, organizations can benefit from the extra pair of hands at work, and students can benefit from the work experience. This keeps them from feeling dejected and hopeless about their future prospects.



The mental and emotional impact of isolation and quarantine life has already begun to make its way through the global population with extreme, moderate and low level responses

We weren't prepared for COVID-19, but are trying to protect ourselves to the extent possible by following protocol. The mental and emotional impact of isolation and quarantine life has already begun to make its way through the global population with extreme, moderate and low level responses. Before it's too late, let's take corrective action in time and not let this become another pandemic the world was not prepared for.

Q&A

Don't just invest in employee experience, actively shape it as well

Employee expectations have grown and will continue to grow. **Caroline Walsh**, VP in the Gartner HR practice, shares how organizations can match these constantly evolving expectations by shaping the employee experience

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



Caroline Walsh, vice president in the Gartner HR practice, leads a team whose qualitative and quantitative research looks into the top challenges facing today's HR leaders and the best practices that make HR teams more effective. In this interaction, she discusses some of the insights from her team's work on employee experience and how these apply in practice.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q Why has employee experience become a top priority for business leaders across the world? Has it not been always about customer experience?

A Employee experience is hugely important for organizations, in part because of all organizations have done to improve customer experience. We now see employees expecting consumer-level experiences from their work. Moreover, when they are dissatisfied, employees are more likely than ever to complain publicly, with 45 percent of employees

likely to share negative work experiences publicly.

We also know that a good employee experience has real impact on both talent and business outcomes. Employees who are fully satisfied with their experience are 60 percent more likely to report high intent to stay and 69 percent more likely to be a high performer, compared with those with an average level of satisfaction. Organizations whose employees are fully satisfied with their experience are 48 percent more likely to meet organization customer satisfaction goals and 89 percent more likely to meet organizational innovation goals, compared with those organizations with an average level of employee experience satisfaction.

Today, as organizations across the globe figure out how to move their workforces remote, the employee experience is changing dramatically—and will likely continue to be changed after the pandemic. Understanding and managing the employee experience will only continue to grow in importance.

Q Where do most organizations sit on the employee experience maturity curve? How does it vary across markets?

A Most organizations have made initial ad hoc investments in the employee experience and are measuring how employees respond to those investments. These organizations now are moving to what we consider the "developing" employee experience maturity which entails HR leaders investing in employee



To take the "investment" approach to EX, or the "shaping" approach? Caroline Walsh, VP in the Gartner HR practice, shares why the one is a better strategy than the other

listening techniques to identify and design HR experiences that matter most to employees. This is great place for organizations to be starting! This is still what we consider an investment approach that focuses on selecting the right experiences from the employee perspective. We find that this approach also mostly focuses on HR experiences rather than all potential experiences an employee could have at work. Most organizations have yet to consider how to improve employees' experiences with other functions across the organization or how to shape employees' perception of the experience investments that have already been made.

We typically see similar trends across markets. However, the types of investments being made vary based on market. For example, we definitely see technology organizations and startups as some of the first movers with new investments in the employee experience because of the tighter talent market in which they are competing.

Q What makes employee experience a top consideration for business leaders?

A It's not that organizations are failing across the board to provide the best employee experience—it's that employees' expectations have grown, and continue to grow, so it becomes harder and harder for organizations to actually meet employee expectations. In fact, organizations are investing heavily—our conservative estimate is that organizations spend an average of US$2,420 per employee on the employee experience. But with each investment, employees' expectations rise, necessitating still more investments. Instead of simply investing in the employee experience, our research finds that organizations should shape how employees

Instead of simply investing in the employee experience, our research finds that organizations should shape how employees feel about their experience—an approach that focuses on improving and influencing employees' perceptions of their experience



feel about their experience—an approach that focuses on improving and influencing employees' perceptions of their experience. Organizations pursuing a "shaping" approach to the employee experience will improve employees' experience satisfaction by 32 percent--and will spend 32 percent less—each year relative to organizations using an investment-focused approach.

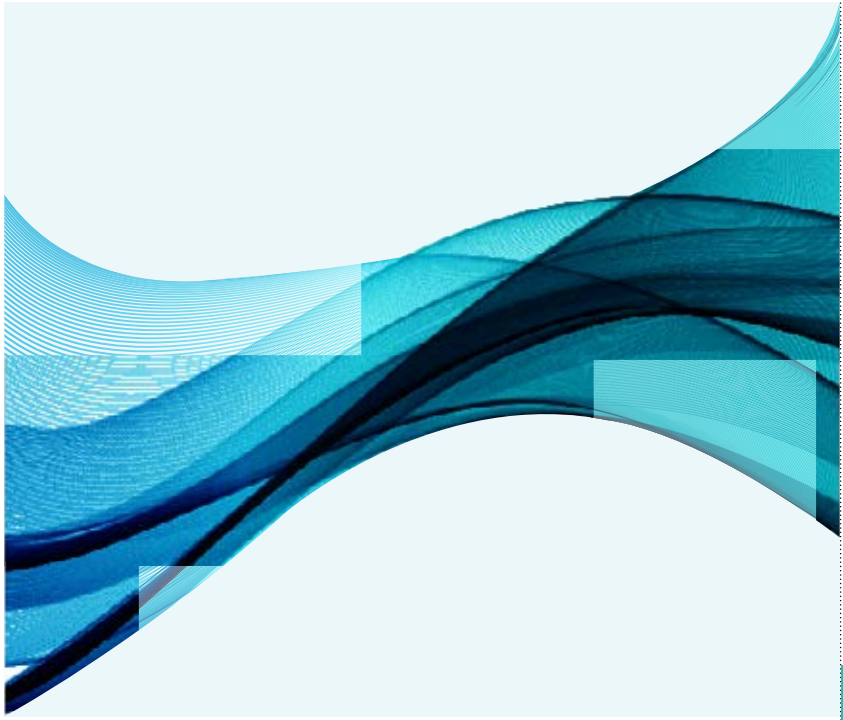
Q How can CHROs and other HR leaders create and execute a holistic employee experience strategy that drives both employee and organizational outcomes?

A We know that employee experience is directly linked with both talent and business outcomes, as mentioned above. We know that the best way to improve employee experience satisfaction is through pursuing a "shaping" approach. Shaping is a more comprehensive, holistic approach to understanding and managing what influences employees' perceptions of their experience over time. CHROs and HR leaders can drive a shaping approach by ensuring employees understand the intended value of employee experience investments and sustaining positive feelings over time through a broad focus on what drives long-term employee perceptions of their experience.

Q What are some of the biggest pitfalls you see organizations making when executing their employee experience strategy?

A One key pitfall is being overly focused on investments alone. Organizations today are often concerned with where they need to invest to improve the employee experience. Investments are important, but as above, we've found that organizations are already investing heavily. Instead, organizations should also focus on shaping the employee experience.

Another pitfall is going it alone. The employee experience may report through HR, but it is a cross-function issue. HR leaders must work across the organization to manage the experience.



Many organizations start by investing in EX and measuring the outcomes. But by moving to a "shaping" approach, they can get 32 percent more results with 32 percent less investment

YASMIN SONI



Decoding human interaction with sociometers: A new face of AI

The use of a sociometer, a badge that captures the metrics of group communication, can help to advance our knowledge of team performance. The author explains how this works

Charles Darwin wrote in his book The Descent of Man, "Individuals which took the greatest pleasure in society would best escape various dangers, while those who lived solitary, would perish in greater numbers" (1871). Group activities including communications never fail to provide enigmatic results. Group communication and its capabilities to produce synergistic results have been the paramour of researchers. Humans have evolved with a common medium to communicate i.e. language. But how often do we communicate through words? A conversation can be broken down into tangible and intangible aspects. Although humans tend to be the talkative species, we put little faith in the words and more on the honest signals; we have a second channel of communication that revolves around social relations (Adolf & Stehr, 2015). Honest signals include human behavioral signals like facial expressions, body gestures, non-linguistic vocalizations, and vocal intonations (Pantic et al. 2007). A study of these gestures can provide a meaningful understanding of a situation and it opens an ocean of potential research in predictive analysis. Organizational research has tried to capitalize on group communication for optimal organizational performance. Most studies have incorporated the traditional methods to deconstruct group communication; surveys and observation have resulted in a subjective understanding of reality. A new technique is in vogue to analyze group communication from a rather scientific perspective, incorporating a sociometer to measure and analyze the honest signals.

> How can we use technology to better assess, understand, and predict team performance based on the communication and interactions between the individuals within the group?

A sociometer is a badge developed at the MIT Human Dynam-

ics Lab, it is capable of producing sociometrics which comprises the data reflecting the intangible aspect of the communication i.e., the vocal features; body movements; relative location (Pentland, 2012). Sociometric badges are capable of measuring face to face communication, conversational time, prosodic style, physical activity, physical proximity (Pentland, & Olguin, 2009). Honest signals are oblivious pointers shown amid social communications. Individuals show blends of genuine signs when they expect distinctive social jobs, for example, exploring, listening, teaming, and leading. For example, the social job of exploring joins low consistency and high movement. The job of listening shows low consistency and low movement. The teaming job requires a blend of high impact, high mimicry, and high consistency. While receiving the job of leading there are high dimensions of impact, high movement, and high consistency.

How does a sociometer operate?

• Physical activity

A 3-axis accelerometer signal should be sampled at 30 Hz to capture the range of human movement since 99% of the acceleration power during daily human activities is contained below 15 Hz (Mathie et al. 2004).

• Speech Activity

The speech signal must be sampled at fs _ 8000 Hz since the voice frequency band ranges from 300 to 3400 Hz approximately. The voiced speech of a typical



adult male has a fundamental frequency between 85 and 155 Hz, and that of a typical adult female between 165 and 255 Hz. (Baken, 1987).

• Face to face interaction

Infrared (IR) transmissions can be used as a proxy for the detection of face-to-face interaction between people (Choudhury & Pentland 2003).

• Proximity

The Radio Signal Strength Indicator (RSSI) is a measure of the signal strength between transmitting and receiving devices. An average threshold can be determined experimentally to detect when two people are close to each other by collecting RSSI measurements over an extended period under different environmental conditions.

• Social Network

Social network attributes can be calculated using the number of



Face to face communication represents an important form of the network resulting in information exchanges, socialization and informal communication

IR and radio detections as the link strength between two actors. We will be using conventional social network analysis as described by Wasserman & Faust (2005).

Alex has identified these honest signals based on the evolutionary evidence, he points out four types of signals including influence, mimicry, activity, and consistency (2008). He further explains influence as the extent to which one person is affected by the speech patterns of another person. Sociometric badges are well equipped to detect overlapping speech patterns and help to identify the dominant one. Mimicry is explained as reflexive copying of one person by another during a conversation, resulting in an unconscious back and forth trading of smiles, interjections, and head nodding. Activity explains the interest and excitement. Consistency is explained in terms of a consistent mental focus resulting in a lower variability. This signal can be captured by analyzing the timing, energy, and variability of speech and body movement patterns. Analysis of the honest signals can decode the conversational dynamics and provide us with the linkages; we can also identify the dominant, high influencing person.

Implications for the organization

We are living in a world where we leave digital breadcrumbs of everyday behavior. (Adolf & Stehr, 2015). Often an item kept in the basket on a particular website pops up as an advertisement on another website. Our online activities are data points for third parties, later to become part of big data and analyzed to derive meaningful patterns. Organizations are not exempt from this wave, two forms of networks dominant in an organizational setting are digital network and face to face network (Lepri et al., 2012). The digital network comprises extracting conversational data from e-mails, blogs, chats, instant messaging, and phone calls to examine social network structure (Aral, Brynjolfsson, & Alstyne, 2006). Though the digital network acts as a primary form of communication, face to face communication cannot be ignored. Face to face communication repre-

sents an important form of the network resulting in information exchanges, socialization and informal communication (Whittaker, Frohlich, & Daly-Jones, 1994).

Organization data mining endows the user with the quintessential tools and techniques to enhance the knowledge and decision-making process by converting the intangible aspect of the organization into knowledge points (Nemati & Barko). The sociometric badge will help the organization to understand the internal ergonomics of a group and provide us with the patterns to re-engineer the design in a way that ensures enhanced organizational performance. The sociometer has empowered us to recognize social patterns, interrelationships, visualize the organizational dynamics.

Virtuality and the vague team structures play an important role in comprehending member interdependence. Measuring performance becomes a difficult task as members move more fluidly and juggle team membership. An organization faces new impediments as they embolden self-forming and self-governing teams. As the how and why of collaboration evolves, new opportunities arise to assess methods that can capture the nuances of a team and create synergies. Earlier research on face-to-face communication shows evident proof to support the fact that verbal interaction patterns can lead to better understanding and predicting team performance (Curhan & Pentland, 2007).

Finally, sociometric badges are also scalable and record continuous streams of interaction data for indefinite periods. The captured data makes a couple of things plausible: (a) objective data-supported real-time interventions and (b) extensive causal analyses of team processes, their mediators, moderators, and outcomes. In particular, real time data along with the existing data



in forms of diaries and surveys, holds a great potential to explore potential discrepancies between self-reported and objective data capture (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). Research in the field of social dynamics provides access to untapped pool of knowledge.

Not much has been explored in Indian organizational context. A little investment in sociometric badges can help to reorganize, comprehend, predict and channelize team performance.

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'Put your employees first'

Liz Smith, Chief Human Resources Officer, Mobiquity Inc., shares with People Matters her thoughts on the future of work beyond digitization, accelerating the mindset shift from crisis to opportunities, and more

By **Bhavna Sarin**

Liz Smith is the Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at Mobiquity Inc, leading the company's employee engagement, talent acquisition, and human resources initiatives. She has been working in HR for 25+ years, having worked for healthcare, financial services, and professional services industries.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q What are some of the leadership lessons that have guided you in the current times of crisis?

A Managers know that in times of crisis, they need to rally their teams, project deliberate calm and empathy, take decisive action and communicate effectively. It may be very tempting for leaders to centralize control - to put themselves at the center of all activity and decision making. The trick is to balance central control with delegating responsibility locally.

In times of crisis, leaders need to become more aware of how they are being perceived. The whole leadership team should be very disciplined in presenting a unified message to the organization. Leaders also need to maintain a balance in their message to employees. They should not be too negative nor should they be overly optimistic.

During times of crisis, there is a great deal of uncertainty. Employees look to their organization's leaders to provide honest information and stability. One way to provide stability at such a time is through structure and regular communication. Bringing some structure - such as a regular cadence of employee meetings and published updates- into the lives of employees when so much has been turned on its head can be really helpful.

It is in the time of a crisis

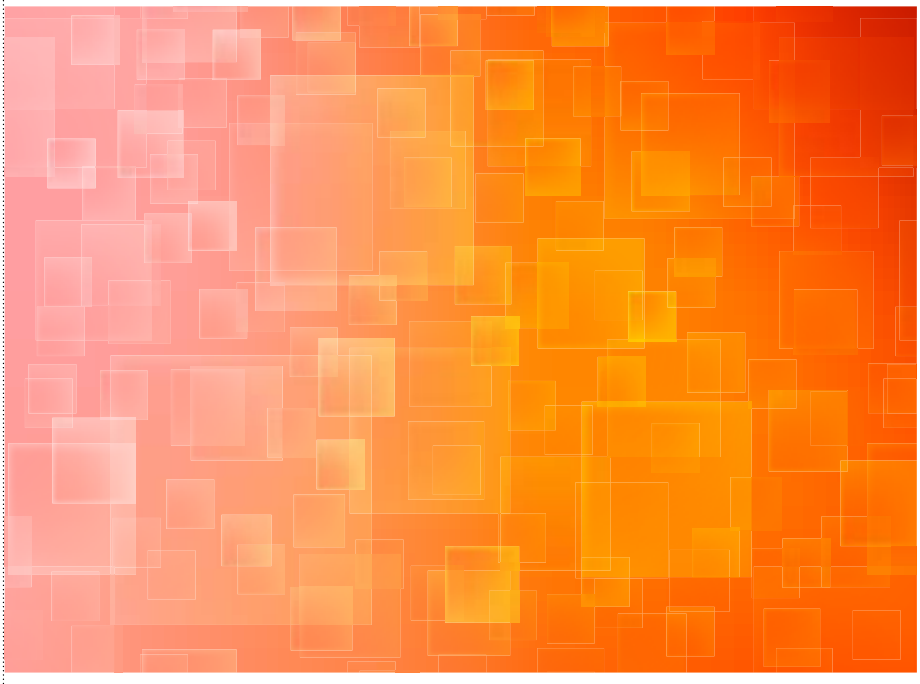
that we ask more of our employees. We need their commitment and energy during the crisis itself and then during the period of growth after the crisis.

When stressed, people often revert to types of behavior that are comfortable and familiar and sometimes that behavior can focus on preservation rather than collaboration. Leaders need to model the behavior they want their employees to follow.

Leaders need to show employees they value them. They need to remember that employees react more positively and will grow in a crisis when they feel valued and empowered.

As leaders, we need to remember our employees are people first. We need to recognize that there are a number of outside factors competing for their attention. Employees are worried about their own health, the safety of their families and the economy - along with all the regular stresses that are associated with their jobs. It is in times of crisis that employers have an even greater responsibility to safeguard employee engagement.

When stressed, people often revert to types of behavior that are comfortable and familiar and sometimes that behavior can focus on preservation rather than collaboration. Leaders need to model the behavior they want their employees to follow



Q A majority of the leaders have their own unique leadership style. How challenging is it to break this set mold and remodel leadership behavior in times of such uncertainty?

A Nothing about what we are experiencing today is ordinary. Since we are going through exceptional times, it only stands to reason that leaders need to adapt their own leadership style to fit this exceptional situation.

All leaders have preferences on how they communicate with employees, what they emphasize and how they spend their valuable time. With the global pandemic and all the challenges associated with it, leaders' personal preferences are secondary to what employees truly need from them.

When leaders view the situation in this light, it becomes a lot easier to adapt styles.

Right now employees have a strong need for direct and clear communication that is followed through with behavior that shows them that their leaders are reliable and trustworthy. Even though employees need the facts, those facts should be presented with as much kindness and compassion

as possible. Employees are dealing with so many different types of stress right now-not just stress from their jobs.

Employees need their leaders to be honest and consistent in both their communication and behavior. Leaders need to meet regularly with employees, provide status updates and find ways to engage with employees. Leaders need to make time to care for their people, schedule one-on-one sessions, and create opportunities for employees to socialize. Leaders need to listen and pay careful attention to what employees are saying, what they are concerned about and what help they need. These meetings are not meant to be rushed. They are intended to slow down the chaos and bring people together.

It's times like these that leaders get to demonstrate their true executive presence by showing both composure and compassion. The most important thing for any leader to remember is that it is less about what they want to do and much more about what their employees need from them.

Q Many organizations are seeing opportunities emerging in addition to challenges, whether it be in addressing new client needs, improving your organization's effectiveness or increasing employee engagement. What opportunities are you seeing?

A The opportunity to be innovative is more important than it has ever been. Organizations, leaders, and employees are getting creative in how they approach new challenges and adapt to the changing and evolving landscape. It's important that we allow space for these new ideas to come to life.

The bright spot in all of this is that some of these methods may carry over well after the crisis is over. We can learn from experience new ways of connecting, problem-solving, and boosting efficiency.

In our organization, we are committed to our stakeholders. That has not changed in the face of crisis. For our employee stakeholders, we remain committed to collaboration, engagement, and culture. We've moved our programs to digital platforms and have provided more opportunities for employees to share their talents with each other, socialize, and come together as a team. For our clients, we're uncovering innovative ways for them to remain sustainable. Our teams have created accelerators to fast-track digital solutions for customers, such as curbside and contactless digital platforms.

Digital transformation and innovation are topics that we talk about regularly at Mobiquity. In the face of crisis, these concepts can help organizations overcome challenges, increase efficiency, and engage employees.



With the global pandemic and all the challenges associated with it, leaders' personal preferences are secondary to what employees truly need from them

Q It takes a while before one can switch their perspective and look at a crisis as an opportunity. How can leaders guide their teams to accelerate this transition?

A Once a crisis is in motion, turning it into an opportunity may require new ways of thinking and responding.

As the crisis is unfolding, we need to make sure that we understand its nature and process. We have to ensure the right people are working on the problem and they have access to the right information. We might need to reframe the problem or look at the issues through a different lens.



People are more willing to offer needed creative solutions and new perspectives in an environment that does not penalize its people for taking risks. Sometimes only after everything else fails do the really creative solutions emerge.

Leadership based on understanding and not control - trusting that people know what to do - allows employees to challenge existing ways of doing things.

Q The year 2019 had been all about tech adoption and digital transformation, with conversations surrounding what the future of work would look like. How do you see the future of work now?

A Employers are doing more to support employees during the pandemic. Companies have been forced to consider employee well-being more than ever before. They are offering services and providing employee engagement activities, which employees like. Companies are learning how important employee engagement and motivation activities are and no matter where employees are working (at home or in an office), employers will most likely continue to provide a greater level of support for employees after COVID-19. One way employers are tackling this is with employee mobile apps, to help foster greater connection, collaboration, and productivity.

During this health crisis, there has been a great deal of focus on employees feeling isolated and overwhelmed. Benefit providers are promoting their mental health services and programs because of the new importance on mental health during the crisis. Perhaps after the crisis is over, there will be more widespread support for enhancing mental health coverage in employee benefit plans.

Going through tough times together can strengthen bonds between employees. Participating in more virtual events together - especially mixing with employees who you don't regularly see or deal with - gives us all a greater appreciation of other team members. We get to know more about them as people and that always helps in strengthening our work relationships.

After having been home so much, managers and colleagues will have new respect for life's demands and appreciation for all things family. Work will become more flexible and employers will need to rethink their approach to the workplace. We will also have a new appreciation for the importance of the office, the critical nature of face-to-face interactions and the ways the workplaces must support employees.

DRIVING HR OPERATING MODEL THROUGH A COMPLEMENTING HR TECHNOLOGY IS THE ESSENCE OF ADAPTABILITY

Alight's State of HR Transformation Study

The third edition of "The State of HR Transformation Study" explored the anchors of adaptability in the HR functions. From the importance of the HR operating models to behaviours that the HR team needs to display, the report details key action steps to improve HR governance and effectiveness. Here's a preview of the key findings

By **Shaswat Kumar** | **Vikrant Khanna** | **Allison Jialin Chew** | **Anna Lim Li Wen** | **Yasmin Taj**



Businesses are experiencing breakthroughs faster than ever, lifecycles for innovation are shortening, and more importantly, innovation and technology are the new fuels to reinvent the traditional ways of working and disrupting business. The definition of work, the definition of workers and more importantly, the boundaries and reach of organisations are also evolving.

Amidst these changes, people remain the only constant responsible for bringing in disruptions, executing on change and shaping the new realities of our world. As we think of the HR function of the future, it will be the notion of adaptability that will enable the HR function to be a guide for businesses, people and perhaps, the society at large. To do so, adaptable HR organisations will need to address both the forces impacting the stakeholders that HR delivers to and its own ways of working internally.

This year's Alight HR Transformation Study in partnership with People Matters is focused on Adaptable HR. The theme could not have been more relevant than today, when everything at the workplace is undergoing dramatic transformation. In fact, what the HR function might have planned for the future is something that it has to deliver now!

Adaptable HR

There are three anchors of adaptability that are interconnected with five dimensions that HR needs to consider for all transformation initiatives. Here's a model for organisations and talent to build the workforce of the future:

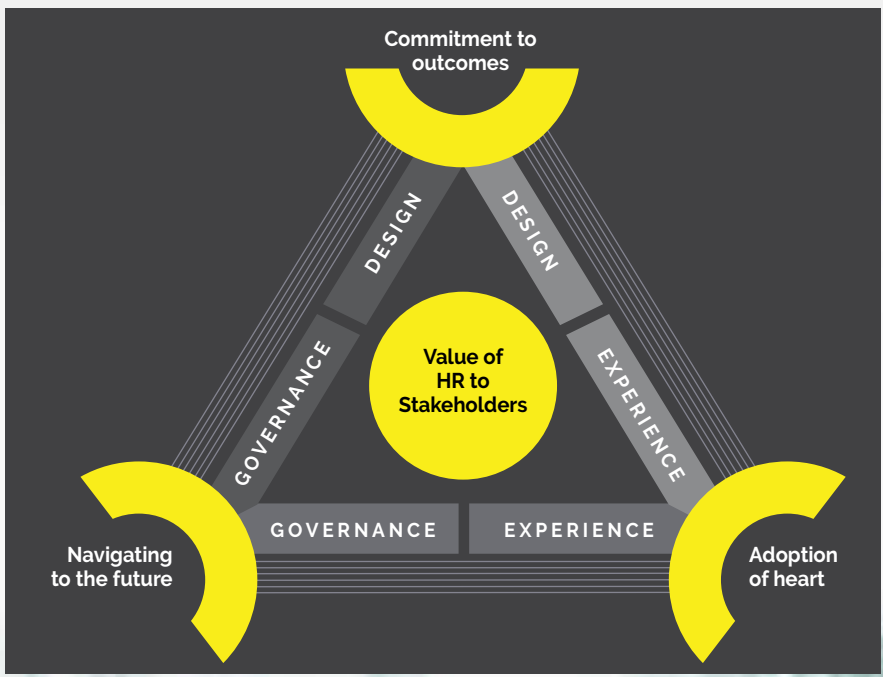
Commitment to outcomes: Outcomes are closely aligned with what the organisation, leaders and individuals value. Typically, these break across the traditional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are HR functional and domain driven.

Adoption at heart: Adoption matters. Most organisations neglect the adoption and focus more on the implementation of programs. An adoption-driven view to programs ensures completeness of design both on domain and customer centricity.

Navigating to the future: How can HR shape the future rather than react to it? Program adoption yields actionable insights on program outcomes and effectiveness. HR should take action on these insights to sharpen the program outcomes through ongoing course corrections in the form of constant calibration and adjustment.

Alight's Framework: Adaptable HR™

This model represents the equilibrium needed to guide Design, Experience and Governance to achieve the North Star and deliver on the stakeholders' desired value.





The purpose of HR sets the North Star on the values that the function aspires to deliver and will need introspection with regards to the context of organisation, individuals and leaders

What will be critical to the ways of working in HR?

Ways of working in HR form an important bridge between the anchors of adaptability. Put simply, think of them as bridges as you move from one anchor to the other

Design: The new ways of working will think of design holistically (e.g. from purpose to policy, process, platform, and insights).

Experience: Services from HR will need to be frictionless across interactions, administration and channels.

Governance: Being adaptable demands collaboration and data-backed decisions instead of anecdotes that have little credibility.

The combination of the above three will guide HR towards the ideal structure and roles that will be most relevant to the organisation. These dimensions are fundamental elements to any organisation regardless of maturity or its adaptability.

Clarity on HR Operating Model complemented by HR Technology Strategy is the essence of adaptability

Exploring the anchors of adaptability in HR functions, it has been consistently observed that HR Operating Model plays an important role in driving confidence in execution and productivity. The traditional view of fixing the HR Operating Model first followed by thinking of the associated HR technology is no longer appropriate. Adaptable HR organisations will need to think of both their Operating Model and Technology together. This year, we have also explored a new archetype of Outlier organisations in response to feedback received from our patrons and participants.

The 4 archetypes referred to throughout the study are:

- **Ad-hoc:** Organisations with limited/ no clarity on HR Operating Model.
- **Defined:** Organisations that have either their HR Operating Model or HR Technology Strategy defined and established.
- **Mature:** Organisations that have their HR Operating Model complemented by HR Technology Strategy that have not realised the full value of their initiatives.
- **Outliers:** Organisations that are a subset of Mature Archetypes who are highly satisfied with their Technology deployments.

Here are the key findings of the study:

1. Focus of HR Transformation is all about enabling Business Transformations

With the pace of change accelerating, the speed at

which HR function transforms itself will determine the ability of businesses to respond to the changing environment.

The study finds that highly adaptable HR organisations (Mature Archetypes) are not only looking at addressing risks that are closer to the business, but they are also more ready to address these risks driven by stronger governance, right capabilities and the right platforms. This results in Mature Archetypes taking the lead with nearly 2.5 times more productive.

2. Combination of HR Operating Model, Digital tools and Disciplined Governance drives success

Consistent with previous editions, we observe that success needs a well-thought through HR Operating Model complemented by the right HR Technology. Alongside these, the ability of HR to use governance as a lever to navigate to the future is key to reap the benefits.

The study finds that organisations, with this combination of HR Operating Model and complementing HR Technology Strategy, are confident in their ability to adapt. We observe this in Mature Archetypes (organisations who have clarity on HR Operating Model and HR Technology) that are almost 2 times more confident in their ability to adapt and 2.5 times more productive. Outlier Archetypes (those that are highly satisfied with their technology stack) are a new introduction to this study and they are a subset of the Mature Archetype. True to their description of being Outliers, they are nearly 4 times more confident in their ability to adapt. Outliers excel on all adaptability anchors, but notably they excel the most on Navigating to the Future that is closely linked to the governance practices in HR.

3. HR Function always had clarity on HR Effectiveness agenda; yet the top gaps remain consistent

For the last three editions, we have observed that HR always had a packed agenda when it comes to driving effectiveness. Capability development in HR has remained a top focus for organisations along with the need for an integrated Talent Management process. This indicates two possible causes:

1. A lack of focus and follow through in solving some of these problems;
2. HR is driving programs from a siloed focus without elevating the solution lens which could help solve multiple problems together.

There is evidence that HR Technology is also acting as an important catalyst to transformation by forcing organisations to think through their HR Operating Models

Investment priorities for HR in the coming 12-24 months

Below is the list of key technology areas that HR teams are most likely to invest in

RANK OF INVESTMENT ARES

	2020	2019	2017
Upskill HR capabilities	1	1	1
Drive a better employee experience	2	2	8
Better integrate talent management processes	3	4	2
Cultural alignment to new business models*	4	Added in 2020	Added in 2020
Organisational capability planning*	5	Added in 2020	Added in 2020
Drive manager effectiveness	6	8	-
Change strategic direction of HR	7	9	4

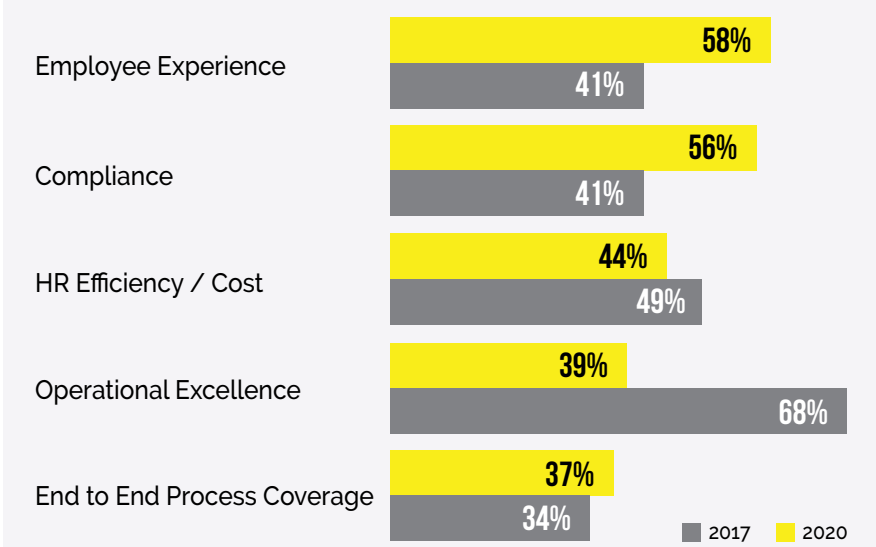
- Employee Experience has been a consistent focus for organisations in their quest to address the broad spectrum from creating a sense of purpose to the ease of transactions.
- Combining investments in capability planning and alignment to newer business models, we see a strong theme of driving organisational change becoming a priority, this also resonates with the talent risks that organisations are trying to address.
- Managerial effectiveness sees greater priority as compared to the past, this is a linked focus stemming from the need to drive employee experience and change for both of which managers are a critical pivot.
- Process integration and simplification remains a top priority as it ties in with the focus on employee experience and reducing transactional burden across stakeholders.

4. Digital is key for HR to deliver on both Employee Experience and Compliance

75% of our participating organisations have an established service delivery model that is either partially or completely established. Increasingly, complementing technology and governance of the model will play a key role in establishing the effectiveness of the model.

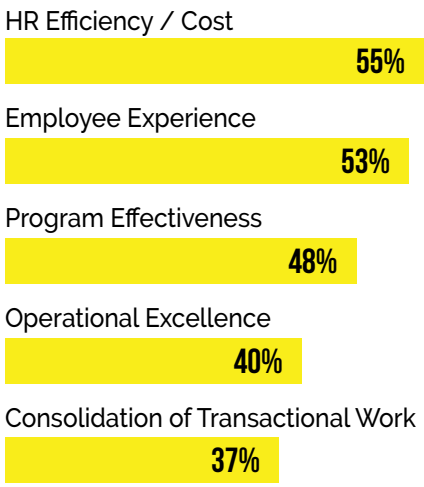
Change in design principles

The below chart shows the shift in design principles from 2017 to 2020



Dominant design principles in Mature Archetypes

The below chart shows the key principles among companies that are classified as having a mature archetype



Employee experience and compliance are the dominating service delivery design principles. This accentuates the role that platforms play in the realisation of the service design.

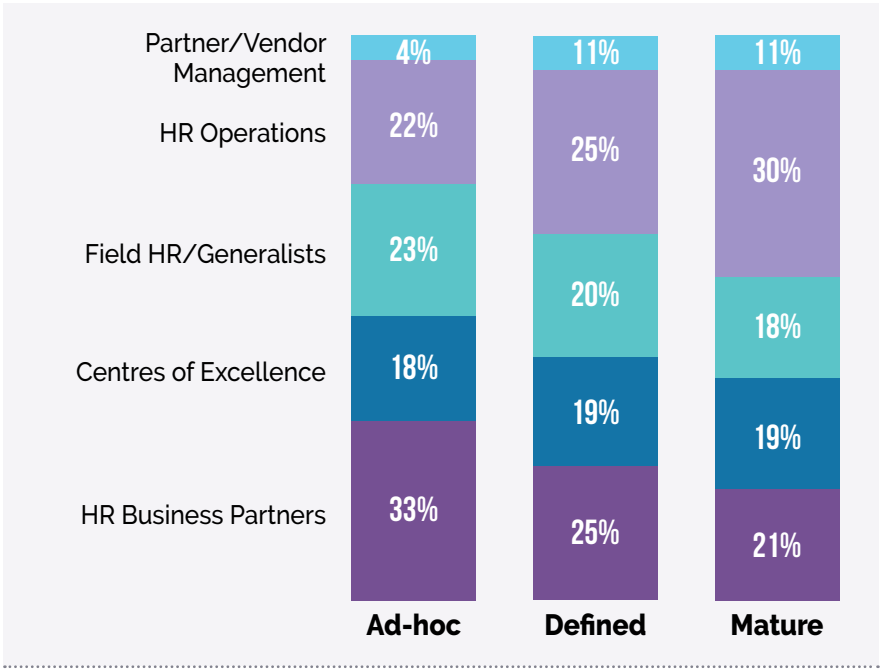
Employee experience and compliance are the dominating service delivery design principles. This accentuates the role that platforms play in the realisation of the service design

5. HR Organisations' pure three pillars HR model is a myth; think through model-specific roles

Consistent with the investments in HR capability, our study observes that there are gaps in the clarity of roles within HR. These gaps result in confusion in the ways of working and erode both value delivered to

Organization archetype and role distribution

The below chart describes the prevalence and weighted distribution of the percentage of roles in HR by organization type



stakeholders and experience of stakeholders (including HR incumbents).

Some of the top priorities for HR in the coming 12 to 24 months are:

- HR Organisation needs to have roles that serve specific needs of the business. For three editions, we have seen that about 20% of the HR organisation consists of Field HR roles that are specific to business context.
- Field HR role holders are being looked at to deliver the last mile. This role is a critical anchor of Employee Experience, relationships with managers and driving organisational values through domains like Employee Relations.
- Emergence of Change Management, Analytics Orientation and Creative Solutioning are key capability asks for Centres of Excellence.
- HR Business Partners (HRBPs) are increasingly expected to play the role of advisors and consultants to business leaders and will get measured on business impact and outcomes.
- HR Services/ Transaction roles continue to gain more importance as Technology and People Analytics become central to the success of HR.

6. HR Technology satisfaction improves as buying behaviour changes

Technology Satisfaction is on the rise as the buying behaviours both on platforms and deployment partners are changing. The study observes that:

- Increasingly, organisations will use an optimised technology stack to balance both "High Touch" and "High Tech" in the context of the users, business need and the aspiration of efficient operations.
- Percentage of respondents that are highly or somewhat satisfied with their HR Technology has risen by almost 1.5 times as compared to 2017.
- Polarisation of evaluation parameters center around aspects of Analytics, Experience and Total Cost of Ownership. The rise

Field HR role holders are being looked at to deliver the last mile. This role is a critical anchor of Employee Experience, relationships with managers and driving organisational values through domains like Employee Relations



of concept (as opposed to the common view of just looking at licensing and deployment fees) indicates improved maturity and this supports the shift to cloud.

- Organisations need more than just implementation. The deployment partners of choice will be those that can help them realise the combination of HR Domain, Adoption, Operational Excellence and Application Management.

7. Robotics and Cognitive technologies are a huge opportunity to tap on but this requires readiness and maturity within organisations

Automation is increasingly becoming an essential add-on to the efficiency arsenal of HR Services. While there is overall increase, we also see caution in responses with Mature users percentage going down.

- Close to 80% of our participants are in their journey to adopt robotics and cognitive technologies in HR, however, only one third of organisations are able to move ahead with their scale-up plans. Key reasons are: maturing of core enterprise and talent platforms that reduce the need for buildout; automation is viewed as an IT only project; and niche cases preventing investments for scale-up.
- We expect to see a sharp rise in the application of Robotic Process Automation in Contact Centres, Payroll and Workforce Administration, Recruiting and Analytics.
- Mature Archetypes with Shared Services are almost 2 times more advanced in adopting Robotic and Cognitive Technologies. This is indicative of the much-needed partnership between HR Operations and Technology to solve for efficiency and experience needs.

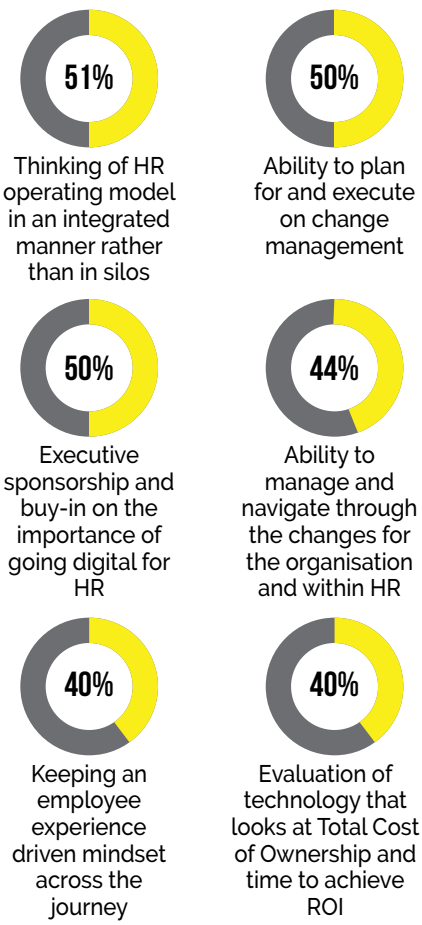
Conclusion

HR Transformation is not a project. It is an ongoing journey across Planning, Execution and Realisation stages. This cycle should not end but repeat on an ongoing basis. What changes is the fact that continuous calibration and discipline reduces the time it takes from Planning to Realisation.

As we step back and ask how to de-risk failure of HR Transformation initiatives, we need to think of the following:

Enablers of Successful HR Transformation

According to participants in the study, the following steps enabled a successful HR transformation



For organisations to fully succeed with their HR Transformation, they will need to be prepared for and focused on the longest stage of the transformation (i.e. Realisation). Organisations will need to proactively plan and exercise discipline for Adoption, Insights, Actions, Experience and Change Enablement

- HR Transformation will get executed across four interconnected disciplines: Outcomes and Program Design, HR Organisation and Capabilities, HR Services (including Technology) and Analytics and Governance.
- A piece-meal approach that addresses only one or two of the disciplines mentioned above will be ineffective.
- The ability of the transformation journey to affect change in the HR and the organisation at large will be the eventual success.

Planning is the most important step of this journey. A well thought-through plan saves HR a lot of possible rework and frustration downstream. Amongst the many things that happen during the Planning stages, the study will specifically shed light on the following: Value Realisation, Vision of the Future, Executive alignment, Experience and Change Enablement.

HR leaders and involved team members will need to convert the alignment done at the Planning stage to a granular level of integration and ensure collaboration across teams and roles to achieve success. At the execution stage, it is important to focus on: Capability, Collaboration, Transparency, Experience and Change Enablement.

For organisations to fully succeed with their HR Transformation, they will need to be prepared for and focused on the longest stage of the transformation (i.e. Realisation). Organisations will need to proactively plan and exercise discipline for Adoption, Insights, Actions, Experience and Change Enablement.

Organisations who get their HR transformation right and establish the right set of capabilities will be able to realise outcomes on an ongoing basis. This will give them a competitive edge as they navigate to the future. They will be able to use a variety of existing and new tools to deliver the changing outcomes as demanded by the business and refine their employee experience constantly.

Adaptability sets forth a lifestyle for HR that will constantly reduce administrative and transactional burden by driving a "near zero" operations focus. In turn, this creates bandwidth and capability for driving the anchors of business outcomes, adoption and improvement that enables them to emerge at the forefront. Adaptability will change the ways of working for HR to deliver on these anchors that drives the way programs are designed, experienced and governed. The role of the CHRO will be to initiate adaptability and drive behaviour and governance changes to ensure this becomes the only way we all think.

Download the in-depth report with additional insights and data
< https://bit.ly/3goo4sR >

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Past Month's events

Purpose self-driven organization - A new narrative

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 28th May 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: Luigi Maria Fierro, Global Head HR Strategy & Transformation, ING, in an exclusive masterclass shared his idea of creating a self-driven purpose organization that results in better employee engagement & higher productivity. He also shared that there are no silver bullets to crafting a purpose-driven organization instead it is a journey. This masterclass also discussed about the importance of investing in developing a purpose-driven organization and how a purpose-driven organization could bring value at different levels and what are the essential drivers to it.

Building a business case for your L&D program

ORGANIZERS: People Matters and Coursera
DATE: 28th May 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: The pace of change organizations across the globe have to keep up with as they find themselves amidst a global pandemic is unprecedented. Enterprises across the globe are looking at digital learning solutions to develop critical skills of the future for their workforce and at the same time, reap tangible business benefits of their talent transformation programs. This webcast discussed how organizations can pivot their skill development program at a time when L&D budgets are threatened to ensure that they maximize the value of learning and align it to their business objectives.

Launch of Asia Pacific's largest HR Transformation Study

ORGANIZERS: People Matters & Alight Solutions
DATE: 21st May 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: In these volatile times like COVID-19, can a company maintain an unchanging talent strategy? It may be a cliché—that change is a constant—but companies that want to win in the market must expect change and be able to adapt. This is the minimum criteria for any player wanting to do well in the global marketplace. Adaptable HR, could not have been more relevant than today when everything at the workplace is undergoing a dramatic transformation. In fact, what the HR function might have planned for the future is something that it has to deliver now! Being Adaptable is no longer a choice, it is imperative, it is inevitable. Alight Solutions and People Matters in this exclusive virtual session had launched the third edition of the State of HR Transformation Study focused on the theme 'Adaptable HR'.

SAP HR Connect 2020 Virtual Conference with People Matters

ORGANIZERS: People Matters & SAP
DATE: 20th May 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we work and managing employee experience has especially become critical and will become more and more important as the world of work undergoes further disruption and embraces digital. Addressing the employee experience needs to be a business priority for not only HR leaders today, but also the CEOs. And the crisis calls for creative ways to craft an employee experience that is holistic, progressive, technology-driven, and future-proof. We had stalwarts sharing their thoughts on what organizations, especially talent leaders should do to adapt to this new normal and how can they manage the employee experience now with the expanded working world and disruptive technology.

Upcoming events

Navigating Total Rewards in the New Normal

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 5th June 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we work, and these changes are permeating far beyond the peak of the contagion. As companies navigate these uncharted waters, they are dealing simultaneously with immediate measures for employee wellbeing and business continuity as well as starting to plan what normalcy or rebound to growth for their employees and business would look like. Join this live masterclass by Puneet Swani, Senior Partner and Career Business Leader, International Region, Mercer who will talk about the latest COVID-19 developments and employer implications and Mercer's point of view on the actions you can take to navigate through this crisis and be ready for recovery.

Chaos drives opportunity: Reboot your workplace for the post lockdown era

ORGANIZERS: People Matters and Ramco Systems
DATE: June 10
VENUE: Online
THEME: With business profitability and sustenance in question organizations need to ensure that they rethink and reboot their businesses for a better future. From an employee perspective too, trust and experience in the post lockdown phase will become of paramount importance. As HR & Business owners, how do you manage a post lockdown comeback when revenues might have shrunk significantly? Learn how to create an employee experience (EX) that is in tune with the expectations of the workforce and it begins with Lim Chee Gay, EVP Group HR, TDCX and Virender Aggarwal, CEO, Ramco Systems.

People Matters EX: A virtual conference

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 19th June 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: People Matters EX Virtual conference is a full-day event that will feature two virtual tracks and will take a deep dive into different aspects of the EX with keynotes, case study sessions, panel discussions, and dedicated virtual exhibition space for service providers to showcase their latest offerings. It will cover the foundations of EX to maximize business success, accelerating the development of a consumer mindset to solving people & work challenges in order to attract and retain future talent, bolster productivity and ultimately build happier workplaces, which makes more business sense in the long run. So come, learn, interact, and network virtually with over 2500+ delegates and explore how EX translates in every decision in the talent strategy.

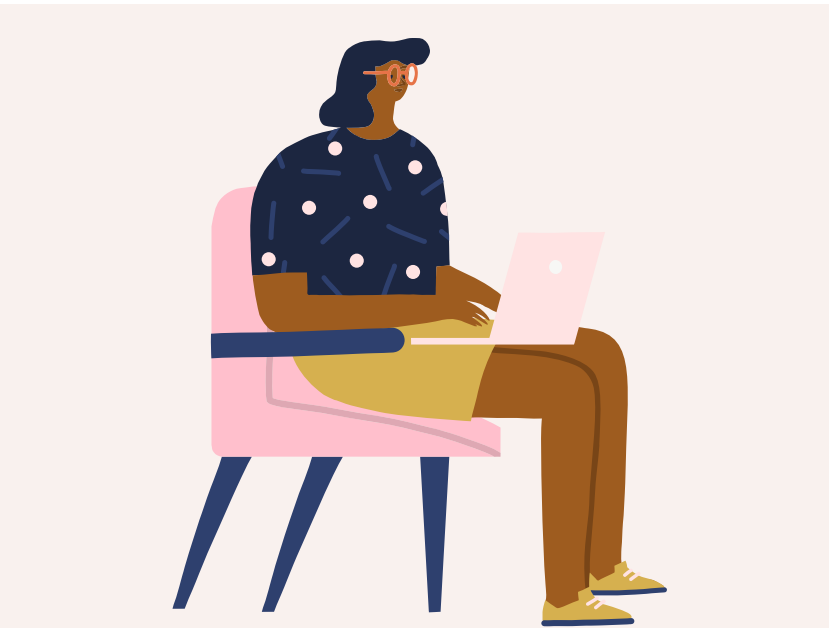
Blogosphere » VIPUL SINGH



'Switching-off' when working from home

With all the uninvited distractions at home, the absence of commuting to and from work, not having to rush with the meals, and several other factors, employees would have more of both diversion and time to catch up

When one is in the workplace, it is much easier to understand when to stop for the day. It's either because one would want to beat the traffic to home, get back to their family, reach a dinner meeting with friends in time, or fundamentally have a perfect work-life balance. Although this doesn't guarantee efficiency all the time, it surely does make employees effective; which means they can do the right things ~80% of the time.



Now, what about when one is working from home, especially during a lockdown? With all the uninvited distractions at home, the absence of commuting to and from work, not having to rush with the meals, and several other factors, employees would have more of both diversion and time to catch up.

With so much of time in hand (seems like all the time in the world) it is only human to involuntarily wanting to fill the available time with the quantum of work that one has. According to Parkinson's Law – which is built on the 'self-interest' principle – some would maximize the time it takes to accomplish a task or a series of tasks in order to fill a paid workday. An approach like this towards work makes it diffi-

cult for some people to understand when to switch off from work because nothing seems more pressing than the task in hand.

Once I started doing my own research on how to get used to this new business arrangement, I stumbled upon this interesting Zeigarnik Effect. This suggests that the mere completion of a task can lead to it being forgotten, whilst incomplete tasks help to ensure the employee remembered the tasks. The Lithuanian psychologist, Zeigarnik, asserted that interruption during a task that requires focus can improve a person's ability to remember it afterward.

While the gig workers, millennials and Gen Z would be thriving in this work arrangement, many traditional workers, who have had a set routine for several decades will need to get used to this new normal until things resume to being business as usual.

In this scenario, I believe that there are a few things that employees can do to maintain a good work-life balance when working from home:-

Designated workspace at home: We all know that creating a designated workspace at home enhances productivity. In addition, building an office-like atmosphere will help one keep a track of designated working hours because it would seem like working from office, cut-off from family and friends for most part of the day. While this necessarily doesn't mean bringing the office to home, it can surely help focus on work during work hours and take care of personal life afterward.



The Lithuanian psychologist, Zeigarnik, asserted that interruption during a task that requires focus can improve a person's ability to remember it afterward

Retain Routine: Just because one doesn't have to worry about commuting to and from office doesn't mean one can break their routine. If you always had a daily schedule of waking up early, working out, doing household things, getting ready for work, cooking food, sleeping early etc., do not break it.

Habit Formation: Despite staying committed to a routine, there will still be some free time left for a few. These 30 to 60 minutes of free time can cause more confusion that anything else because you'd usually spend this time commuting or ironing your clothes for the day or something similar.



Despite being subjective, several experts opine that a good work-life balance means not carrying the work baggage back home

Instead of trying to drag your work into these hours, you can read a book, pick up a hobby, take online interactive courses and do a lot more. These are just some examples; I'm sure everyone has a habit of interest or subjects one would want to expertise in. Therefore, leveraging the available time is the way to stay engaged and hone your skills.

Additionally, you can also follow the below tips to promptly switch on for work and off from work:

- In reference to the Zeigarnik Effect, start those tasks that you can complete efficiently to avoid thinking a lot about those that you haven't completed.
- Prepare a to-do list before you start working to ensure your thoughts are organized. This can also help you in spotting potential issues and think of a solution proactively.
- Shut down your work phone and laptop after work.
- Leave the designated work-place after you have completed all tasks in your to-do list and gradually switch to a relaxing work, such as changing clothes, taking a shower or cooking a nice meal. This would mean your brain is getting ready to switch off from work.

Work-life balance is important, more so in today's world of work where many of us catch ourselves thinking about work despite leaving office. While some work overtime to make ends meet, some love what they do truly and clock out late out of free will.

Despite being subjective, several experts opine that a good work-life balance means not carrying the work baggage back home. But when you're working from home, building these practices and switching off from work can help you save yourself from damaging your health and overall well-being.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

VIPUL SINGH is the Vice President & Head of HR and Communications at ADP Private Limited.

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- Work Order Capacity exceeded
- Female worker entry during night shift
- Debarred worker entry

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