

HumanCapital

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Vol. 23 Issue No.10 MAR, 2020 ₹130

HR FOR STARTUPS AND SCALEUPS

COVER STORY

**HR: The Fuel For
The Startup Engine**

Kenneth W Wheeler

Why HR Is Not An Option!

Sahil Nayar

INTERVIEW

**Enabling The Specially
Abled**

Pranav Desai

Founder, Voice of SAP

PERSONA

**Thinking Bigger,
Aiming Higher**

Prabir Jha

Founder and CEO

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EXPERT TALK

Amarpreet Bhamra

Reetu Raina



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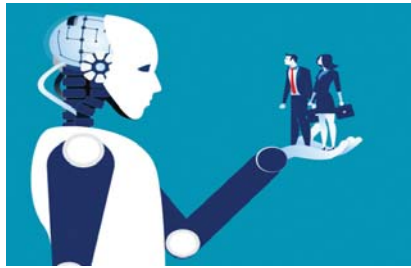
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Published at

4378/4B, Pooja Apartment
1st Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj
New Delhi-110002

Printed at

Upkar Prakashan

care@upkar.in
0562-4053333

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This issue of **HUMAN CAPITAL** contains 76 pages including cover

From The Publisher's Desk



In the March edition, Human Capital elucidates the role that HR needs to play in Startups and SMEs since it has been deemed as the very fuel for the Startup engine. It is essential for Startups to join hands with HR as a comprehensive business partner and provide equal weightage in all key strategic business and people decision-making processes. HR also plays a pivotal role in ensuring that Startups and SMEs develop a unique organisational culture, since culture alone enables them to establish people-centric USPs.

The interview features Pranav Desai, Founder, Voice of SAP, a UN recognised global advocacy organisation working for the enablement of Persons with

Disabilities (PwD). Mr. Desai stressed upon the need by India Inc to embrace “Compassionate Capitalism”, and thereby create avenues to hire PwDs in greater numbers.

In the Learning and Development section, Nishchae Suri outlines the steps to improve the learning health of an organisation. The Case Study delves into the quintessential aspect of work culture and emphasises on the need to lay clear guidelines over work attire to the millennial employees at the time of onboarding.

The Expert Talk column comprises a varied collection of articles by eminent industry leaders, wherein Amarpreet Bhamra talks about the relevance Of Peter Principle, Reetu Raina shares intriguing insights on employee engagement in the era of Artificial Intelligence, and Abhiroop Banerjee writes that it is not necessary to achieve success by making the right decisions at the right time, rather it is essential to reflect and learn from the mistakes that have been committed by us.

This edition also features Prabir Jha, Founder and CEO, Prabir Jha People Advisory in the Persona section, who shares his take on leadership in today's ever-changing business environment and the challenges faced by organisations in embracing a digital culture.

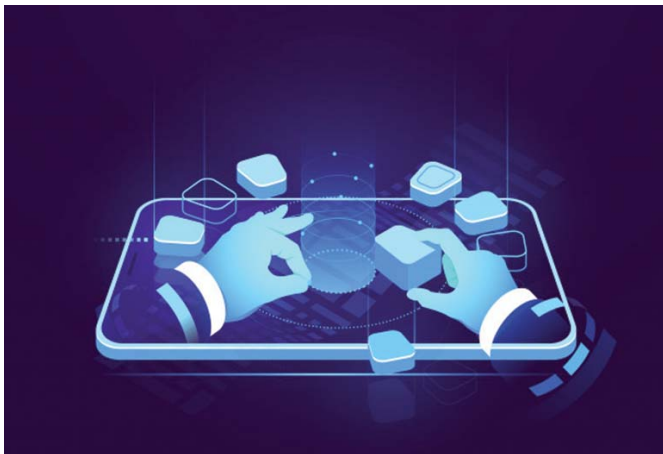
Carpe Diem!

Neha Jain

Managing Partner

More Jobs for Data Scientists in 2020

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH



India is expected to witness 1.5 lakh jobs opportunities for data scientists this year—which is an increase of about 62% from 2019, led by the BFSI (banking, financial services and insurance), IT, manufacturing, healthcare, and e-commerce, reveals a new report.

Presently, 70% of job postings are for data scientists with less than five years of work experience and data science professionals. According to ed-tech company Great Learning, the average salary of data science professionals in the BFSI sector was highest at Rs 13.56 lakh per annum (LPA) last year, followed by manufacturing and healthcare at Rs 11.8 LPA.

“With vast quantities of data being generated, the data science vertical is key to mining actionable insights for businesses. This has resulted in professionals acknowledging the scope of this field, and are working towards upgrading skills to meet the demand. 2020 is set to be a big year for data science in India”, said Hari Krishnan Nair, Co-founder, Great Learning.

In 2019, nearly 97,000 jobs related to analytics and data were vacant owing to a dearth of qualified talent. *“While the current analytics talent, especially at senior levels, have migrated from IT, the next generation will be expected to have specialized skills in data across all prominent industries making upskilling mandatory for a role in the new economy”,* the report stated.

In the contemporary scenario, four unique career paths have emerged in the country, with entry-level job roles being data scientist, data analyst, data engineer and business intelligence developer.

For the study, a survey of data science professionals was conducted with 46% of respondents being executives, 17% managers, and 8% senior managers, among others. 

Unread Emails Make Millennials Anxious

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

As many as 60% of millennials in India feel anxious when they see unread emails in their inbox, reveals a recent study. The modern age workforce across the globe is increasingly getting hooked on to the practice of keeping their inbox empty/near-empty at all times—popularly known as ‘Inbox Zero’.

Hiver, a leading email collaboration solution for teams, surveyed 600 Indian millennials to understand their work email behaviour patterns.

The survey also found that as many as two in five millennials get extremely uncomfortable if they haven’t been able to check their work email for three to four hours at a stretch.

When asked about the first app that they check on their phone upon waking up, 59% chose WhatsApp, 29% mentioned social media apps like Instagram and Facebook, and only 9% said emails.



The report also shed light on how emails affect employee productivity. Nearly 63% of millennials agreed that long emails hampered their workplace productivity, and that they preferred them to be shorter and to the point. Interestingly, another 60% stated that emails could be a good substitute for workplace meetings. 

Hiring Startup Founders: Risks And Returns

Entrepreneurs bring a special value, but must be placed in roles where this value can be best put to use. A routine supervisory role may not make for the best fit.

BY GAUTAM BRAHMA



The select few who had quit their jobs in large companies in the recent past, either to start their own company, or to work for startups, are now looking for opportunities to return. This in itself is hardly newsworthy. People change jobs for a variety of reasons, and movements into and out of a sector or class of company are common. In 2016, Naukri created exentrepreneurs as a separate category of job seekers. However, since this featured as a news item in the business press last month, it appears that the numbers involved are larger than usual. Startups have been getting enormous attention from the government, the investor community, and the media. Therefore, it is natural for such a

development to provoke discussion all around.

The business environment has been challenged to a certain extent over the last year. This could be the reason behind some startups being unable to grow as planned, in turn leading to disillusioned staff, and even failed founders. This is something of a complex puzzle. The more immediate issue is the response of hiring managers in big companies to such job applicants. What should a hiring manager do with applicants who have been entrepreneurs?

The first reaction is to turn them down because of the fear that they are looking for jobs as a stop gap arrangement, before they ride out on their next business idea.

There is also the concern that someone who has been her own boss will not be comfortable working under others. Finally, there is a sense of insecurity in managing someone who probably has managed bigger teams, including people like the hiring manager herself.

What if the applicant has not been a founder herself, but had simply quit a big company to work for a startup, and now wants to move back? In such cases, the first reaction is usually not negative, especially if there has been a general lay-off in the startup, but there is a concern that the person may be easily lured out again by the prospect of making a lot of money in a short duration. There is also the worry that people used to the greater flexibility in a startup work environment will struggle to adapt to a more rule-bound and less collegial culture.

Both set of concerns can be addressed. The case of startup employees is simpler. Working in a small company gives all-round exposure to business, and helps a person relate her work to the larger goals of the company. It also helps her appreciate the concerns and constraints of coworkers in other functions, and makes her more open to collaboration. The frugality of most startups, where present compensation and conveniences are curtailed with the promise of disproportionately large future rewards, helps the employee make do with less, and, therefore, more appreciative of the perquisites and conveniences of a larger company. Returning to a more hierarchical and rule-bound environment may actually be a relief for those employees who are put off by whimsical and inconsistent decision making of the founders, who cannot be questioned in a startup. Also, the flip side of a flexible work environment is the expectation that one will be available for work at all times, and a collegial work-culture makes it harder to draw personal boundaries

and refuse work. All this makes the applicant a willing worker and a good hire.

“Returning to a more hierarchical and rule-bound environment may actually be a relief for those who are put off by whimsical and inconsistent decision making of the founders, who cannot be questioned in a startup.”

In any case, not everyone leaves a big company for a startup merely to make big money. Some are driven to follow a charismatic supervisor or friend. Others are escaping a malevolent boss. Many others are grappling with personal issues, and mistakenly believe that a startup's flexible work environment will help them to better blend work and personal time. A careful interview will usually uncover the real reasons, and help the hiring manager make an informed choice.

The second case, hiring someone who has been an entrepreneur herself, makes for a harder decision. The concerns mentioned earlier are very true. However, one must recognise the value such individuals bring to a bigger company. They are good at selling the company's goals and vision to others in their team, and are also good at influencing team members without using compensation as the sole lever. Having worked with people at all levels while raising funds and selling their products, they often become great communicators. They are comfortable speaking up for their teams and getting work done across departmental boundaries. They also have a good feel for cost control and can be tapped for suggestions on improving work processes and improving efficiency.

People who have been entrepreneurs themselves bring a

special value, but must be placed in roles where this can be put to use. A routine supervisory role may not make for the best fit. They would make a better contribution in a new business, a new project, a new geographical location, or even a new initiative within a traditional function. They may well leave to pursue a new business idea, but it is not as if everyone else stays on forever. It is up to the hiring organisation to make the most efficient use of such people while they are around. One must remember that some of them may have taken the entrepreneurial failure to heart, and may therefore be further motivated to prove themselves.

It must also be noted that not all entrepreneurs truly have the entrepreneurial mindset. There is such a big buzz around the startup ecosystem, and the supposed ease of raising money that many people are driven to emulate peers and win bragging rights. They are ‘spreadsheet warriors’ who cannot pivot out of their chosen business model if required, and underestimate the effort involved in setting up a business, building teams, and getting customers. Once-bitten twice-shy, this subset of former founders is likely to make for especially stable employees. A study in 2014 found that 75% of failed founders went back to corporate jobs.

“There is such a big buzz around the startup ecosystem, and the supposed ease of raising money that many people are driven to emulate peers and win bragging rights.”

There are three other reasons why hiring managers should look forward to hiring people associated with startups, irrespective of

whether they have been founders or mere employees.

- They are likely to have acquired good collaborative business and technical skills in a short time at no cost to the hiring company.
- They are usually multitasked since employees in a startup often pitch in for each other as required.
- Their entry discourages at least some existing employees who may have been planning to leave to join startups as they get a sobering message about the risks involved.

Recruiters should take heart from the fact that their dilemma is not unique. With the long tradition of entrepreneurship, and the acceptance of accompanying failure, there is still reservation among recruiters in the US towards hiring ex-entrepreneurs. The hesitation is valid, but the benefits of hiring are equally valid and should prevail. 

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About the Author

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

HR FOR STARTUPS AND SCALEUPS



HR: Fuel For The Startup Engine

One must develop a strategy to join hands with HR as a comprehensive business partner from day one and provide it with equal weightage in all key business and people strategic decision making.

BY KENNETH W WHEELER

For Human Resources as a domain, the winds of change have gained prominence in Industrial Revolution 4.0. And this newfound influence gains greater significance in a Startup ecosystem. Today's executives bear a progressive mindset and therefore have the ability to comprehend the critical impact that an effective HR setup brings to the table as a strategic business facilitator and partner. And it would be imprudent to interpret that the foundation of HR is needed only during the initial days of company formation, either as a Talent Acquisition representative or a bookkeeping body. It would be equally unwise to assume that it is essential to establish the business first, and accommodate HR at a later stage. It is pertinent to develop a strategy to join hands with HR as a comprehensive business partner from day one, and provide equal weightage in all key business and people strategic decision making.

Today, many points of the work system and trends have led to several HR disruptions, which further uplifts the need for an HR set up to be established from the very beginning.

Some of these trends are:

- Influence by the behaviour of a young workforce
- A new era of 'Youth Leadership'
- The bubble of GIG economy



- Diversity and inclusion norms
- Conscious rise of CSR
- The constant need to upgrade skill sets to be future fit
- Balancing Technology touch with a human touch
- The constant change in business, customer, and employee behaviour

With the above aspects as the premise, let us now deep dive into certain elements of impact and influence to define a few touchpoints that demand HR to be elevated in terms of importance and significance.

Method to madness

In the backdrop of the volatile business environment that prevails today, it has become increasingly complex in a Startup ecosystem. Thus, HR dons the role of your go to champion to define a stable method to madness. The survival of Startups is decided on the basis of the core of innovation and speed of execution. Such a need gives rise to a work environment that is filled with chaos, stress, constant change, uncertainty, unstructured execution, a high need for clear communication, and massive team collaboration on a daily basis.

The role of HR in such a setup is well poised, and at the same time, well-equipped to ensure that they deliver a certain method to this overall madness, remain focused on driving the essence of motivation, and bring about a sense of calm and composure. This is hugely important to ensure that the organisation remains fixated on the larger vision and future goals. With HR maintaining a neutral stance, it stands the best chance to bring different departments to function like a well-oiled engine, and keep them aligned to the company's vision, not lose focus while delivering their own wins, and ignoring what is happening around them.



Promote a growth mindset

Mindset is crucial in a Startup domain. If one does not cultivate resilience to a growth mindset, the survival and longevity of a Startup counters a strong challenge. HR, in the capacity of a coach and a consultant, presents the best equilibrium to promote a culture of resilience and makes room for multiple events in the organisation to showcase a growth mindset.

“HR, in the capacity of a coach and a consultant, presents the best equilibrium to promote a culture of resilience and makes room for multiple events in the organisation to showcase a growth mindset.”

HR strongly contributes towards building and nurturing a platform where individuals become creative, curious, agile, proactive, and comfortable with continuous change by being agile to adapt effectively and produce the best business results for organisations. HR is instrumental in working closely with all the teams/ departments, and be a proactive promoter of the required growth mindset. This indeed goes a long way in deciding the success of the Startup as also every individual employee who is a part of it.

Ownership to hire, develop, and retain talent

23% of the time, businesses fail due to wrong hiring. Today, we are witnessing an increasing deficit in talent, and this has resulted in the war for talent gaining centre stage. It therefore becomes imperative to build the right team today, and be



nimble about it than ever before. With most progressive thinking startups the concept of a lean team adds further pressure to your ability to hire, develop, and retain talent.

To approach hiring without partnering with HR is a certain recipe for guaranteed failure. 70% of your job is done when you hire the right talent, but then it is also important or perhaps more important to not just get the person to be present on the right bus, but to have him/her seated on the right seat as well. When these two factors are finally in place, it is important to equip the right talent with all the tools and ammunition required to set up the individual for success, and thereby, influence a long-term association.

Curator of your unique culture

Startups continue to evolve their culture over a period of time as they grow. However, companies commit a blatant error when they allow the company culture to build on its own, and make no effort to define values that would shape up the culture. This happens to be a poor approach and is dangerous



TUSHAR DESAI
Director - Talent Acquisition,
India, FIS

“Startups and SMEs are the future of world economy that generate a significant part of wealth. Those startups that give equal importance to HR strategy along with finance or the go to market strategy will have a distinct advantage. Startups and SMEs have an edge as far as employee value proposition is concerned. Startups offer an 'infectious' energy at the workplace with differential benefits including stock at all levels and freedom to work from anywhere, anytime, but also through independent decision making and tremendous empowerment that a structured organisation may be unable to do. Also, they can be much more flexible and innovative in their HR practices, rather than being weighed down by conventional methods of managing and retaining talent.”

for the company's overall stability, brand recognition, and ultimately its success.

HR is your key strategic partner to help you curate a culture that reflects your values in the most influential way. HR has just that right thinking element and a balanced mindset to define culture, promote it within the organisation, hire new talent who compliment that culture, and thereby, become the true culture curators that is unique to your company. Such a structure ensures that HR strongly contributes and facilitates a culture which is well accepted, imbibed, and lived by all its employees every day – eventually converting your company as a great place to work!



NICOLAS DUMOULIN

Managing Director, Michael Page India

“Within a Startup, the most salient aspect is hiring talent as well as setting standardised HR practices and policies. Initially, in a Startup or a small or medium-sized organisation, a lot of HR processes will either be outsourced or taken care of by the managing director or founders as part of their organisational tasks. HR in a Startup, primarily begins with ensuring timely payment of salaries followed by recruitment, which moves onto developing talent. Another way of starting the HR practice is to have an operating partner, who, together with the founders, hires the right talent. To ensure the long-term stability of its employees, it is imperative that the organisation establishes a sound HR function.”



DEBASHREE LAD

Head - Human Capital, CredAble

“India is developing and emerging as the third largest base for Startups globally. Every Startup ecosystem demands for the most innovative people to be part of the company. Hence, hiring and retaining top talent is most critical to every entrepreneur, who dreams of raising, nurturing, and growing his Startup. Formulating people strategies is not straightforward, especially when it needs to be aligned to an overall business strategy that is continuously evolving. While the Founder stays focussed on the bottom line, it is HR that aligns people to business goals to ensure they participate and contribute to the growth story.”

“Companies commit a blatant error when they allow the company culture to build on its own, and make no effort to define values that would shape up the culture.”

Flourish a feeling of ‘Belongingness’

This is a crucial element of success for all startups, but is something which is evidently ignored. Building a team for success heavily depends on how each employee feels that he/she ‘belongs’ to the organisation. Since things happen at a rapid pace - the eagerness to deliver is high, the stress of

performance is real time, constant innovation is a must, and the fact that objectives keep changing at a shorter interval – one can quickly feel lost and overwhelmed in such an environment. HR can make a huge difference by creating an essence of ‘belongingness’ for all employees. An environment where employees feel that they ‘belong’ allows them to flourish and bring their true selves to work – they start to behave and act like entrepreneurs, and the sense of ownership multiplies significantly. This directly impacts productivity, but most importantly, also positively influences employee retention!

A Research conducted during the dot com boom highlighted the fact that companies who built the foundation of HR expertise at an early stage were the fastest to go public. Failing to employ HR as a value-add business partner, and a strategic contributor is creating a certain path of failure. You may choose to not have a structured HR, and only create a HR team with limited scope to ‘hiring and firing’ but that would only prove to be a huge mistake. Look to leverage HR as the pivotal embodiment of how you see the future of your company, how you vision your culture and brand, the legacy you want to build, the word of mouth you want your employees to impact – none of it can be made into a reality without Human Resources as your fuel for grand success! **HC**

About the Author

Kenneth W Wheeler is VP Human Resources (L&D), LogiNext. He comes with 16 plus years of rich learning experience spread across industries. Awarded as 101 Top HR Minds (India) 2019 and a certified NLP coach, Kenneth is a well-rounded expert in Envisioning, Strategizing and Leading a robust gamut of HR and L&D framework, contributing to both MNC (Wipro) and the Start-up ecosystem (Ola, LogiNext).

Why HR Is Not An Option!

To build a unique cultural DNA, the focus must be on the customer and the people centric USPs that the Startup wants to create.

BY SAHIL NAYAR



Two months into 2020 and we are still seeking out lessons from the past to tread with confidence in the future. Ironical? But such is life!

As I woke up groggy with a bad headache and not wanting to go to work, I stretched over from one side of my bed to another, overlooked my balcony and saw a friend jogging backwards on the promenade. I was amused at the ease with which he managed to do so. I kept tracking him as long as he was in my view, and as I lost interest without even remembering why I was tracking him in the first place, I went into a state of trance. A soft familiar voice whispered in my ears, “Main Samay hoon.” Although I was running an hour late for work, I went back to the soft familiar voice, and this is how we spent the next hour.

Me: Samay! I am so glad you stopped by. Being a millennial, I am curious to go back into the past and take a look at what I might have missed. I know it is a challenge to travel against time, but why worry when I have “Samay” himself to take me on this retro journey!

Samay: Pleased to meet you too, Sahil. It is indeed interesting that you have chosen to travel back in time while everyone else is talking about the “Future of Work”.

Me: I have been reading and hearing a lot about what to anticipate for the future, and so I

thought, won't I get wiser by picking some learnings from the past? Like a tall tree that has grown from a tiny sapling, a business that has grown big would have begun as a humble Startup. Take me through the life cycle of a Startup- its stages of infancy, teething troubles, adolescence, until it reaches maturity as a stable business.



REENI LIONEL
HR Head & COO, IndiaFilings

“Startups thrive on an innovative and flexible culture, wherein the ability to swerve fast and often is pivotal. Hence, it is imperative to establish a strong recruitment team early on which is capable of attracting the best talents in the midst of evolving processes. HR will be required to primarily focus on fostering healthy work environments and positively impact employee morale and retention. Since a company's culture is set early on and is quite resistant to change as they grow, it is important to set them right early on so that the promoters can focus on achieving the Startup's mission.”

Samay: You do know how to get what you want. So here it goes, the story of a Startup. A bright young girl wanted to break away from her family business and experiment with a new idea. After the idea of a Startup was conceived, she had to wait patiently to validate her business proposal, and remain focused for the entire period of gestation. The fear of an early failure was high!

Me: That sounds interesting! This is so much like the apprehensions and expectations of a mother-to-be. I am sure the young entrepreneur must have got many ideas from neighbours and wise elders.

Samay: Oh yes! A team of people stood with our young lady right from the start. Firstly, they illustrated an excellent framework describing the main stages of a growing company:

In the first stage, the organisation has less than 10 people. It is composed of a “tiny, close-knit team” where the people are “all doers and very adaptable.” At this stage, the key HR challenge is to articulate a compelling vision and mission and to develop the execution capabilities to progress towards it. Also, the right kind of people must be onboarded at the right moment.

Top considerations during this stage would be:

- **Building the company culture:** Startups often wonder

	Org Scale (Employees)	User Scale (B2C users)	Customer Scale (B2B)	Business Scale (Revenue)
OS1: Family	1s	10,000s	0	<\$10 Mn
OS2: Tribe	10s	100,000s	1s	\$10 Mn+
OS3: Village	100s	1,000,000s	10s	\$100 Mn+
OS4: City	1000s	10,000,000s	100s	\$1 Bn+
OS5: Nation	10,000s	100,000,000+	1000+	\$5 Bn+

Source – Blitzscaling: The lightning-fast path to building massively valuable companies. Reid Hoffman-Chris Yeh - Harpercollinspublishers - 2018.



DR. RAKSHITA SHHARMA

VP, Human Capital, Bobble AI

“Vedic scriptures describe Prana (life energy force) as the regulating force that constitutes our Human faculty of Manas (Mind), Buddhi (Intellect), Ahankara (Ego-state), & Chitta (Subconscious), and breathes life into it. Human Capital is the Prana of the organisation, the most crucial building element. Establishing HR early in the company with a specific focus on Establishing Foundational HR Processes and identifying key Organisational Culture & Values as this will lead to Happy workforce (Grooming Leaders), Accountable workforce, Productive workforce (Creative & efficient). A Startup should have at least one HR resource to develop foundational HR processes from Hiring to Exit including Compliance, and engage a senior HR advisor to guide on various aspects. This will instil a strong culture which will be embedded and reflect in the spirit of the company.”

over the ways of creating a good company culture that is suited not only to the current environment, but can also adapt to future

environmental changes. Culture, built on the exploration of what works and what does not, requires the founders and the key influencers to convey clear messages about the type of actions and behaviours that are valued. The culture will be shaped with greater effectiveness by clear and immediate feedback after a given action or behaviour. Also, “reinforcers” are usually more effective than “punishments” for failed experiments in building a successful and sustainable culture. However, non-negotiables and zero tolerance behaviours must be communicated to all, and when such instances occur, some tough calls need to be made.

To build a unique cultural DNA, the focus must be on the customer and the people-centric USPs that the Startup wants to create. Subsequently, these USPs should get reflected across all the HR strategies and frameworks to bring a sustainable competitive advantage.

- **The first hires:** Often, the hiring needs are loosely defined at this stage. Begin by defining and documenting what the company is exactly looking for. Only then will it be clear where to look and how to determine whether the candidate is a good fit in terms of skills and cultural fitness. There is nothing more detrimental than building an organisation with employees who lack the drive as also the right skills. The first few hires will act

as natural brand advocates to a wider network of people, and send out a strong positive signal for every new candidate, despite the lack of resources, and the young age of a startup. Also, if the right people are onboarded, the culture will take the right shape for success.



DR. SURENDER JEET RAJ

Senior Vice President - HR Operations, Newgen Software

“HR needs to be an active participant before the Startup fully ramps up its operations. To facilitate better productivity from the outset, HR needs to keep an eye on the talent trends and ensure that the laws are adhered to. The next level of HR intervention, however, is to build a brand on the people practices of the organisation. The employer brand of a Startup has the potential to attract the best talent, which provides a thrust not only to the organisation's performance, but also creates the right product brand. While most organisations are struggling to find the right talent, the startups which get their EVP (Employee Value Proposition) right will automatically attract the desired talent.”

• **Hire not just for the count, but for accountability:**

Homogeneity will hamper diversity of perspectives. Although Startups aim to be diverse and inclusive by design, they end up being a group of like-minded people who hire more likeminded people.

Me: This makes sense to me now. During the formative stages, it is very important to provide the embryo with the right nutrition. Let me guess the story from this point forward—it seems like familiar territory.

The second stage is where most of the HR processes and procedures would be developed. The HR



SHEELA CHARLES

HR Head, Log 9 Materials

“We are constantly trying to find a balance between the need of human resource capital versus actual conversion of hiring. Initially, while concentration is inclined towards hiring, managing employee and corporate needs, happiness quotient and value systems take a back seat. With a relatively younger workforce in such organisations, floating and maintaining a consistent organisational culture crops up as a challenge. High speed of work and sometimes demanding conditions, tend to side line employees' happiness. While young companies continuously re-engineer their products and manage stakeholder conversations, they need to structure processes and new-age tools to actively engage employees in human resource management, right from selecting, onboarding, mentoring, curating regular feedback, to the ability of reading early signs of fatigue and value system mismatch.”

professional would need to work on the organisation structure, career architectures, compensation philosophies, performance review procedures, etc.

Here, the key considerations would include the following:

• **Balancing formalisation and agility:** HR professionals often fall into the trap of implementing too many processes and procedures with limited benefits. This often leads people to think that HR is merely wasting time and resources. On the other hand, it is sometimes evident that Startups are lagging and require more formal processes. The key here is to find the right balance between the two approaches.

• **Adhering to industry-specific compliances:** This is often the stage where many legal obligations and industry-specific legislations have to be met. Right from the start, Startups must understand and commit to adhering the applicable laws.

• **Copy-paste HR models do not work:** The temptation to simply copy-paste the best practices in other Startups should be resisted. The HR models that worked well for other companies may doom your organisation to failure. The processes should be designed based on the company's DNA and the marketplace.

(You are a smart reader if you have figured out by now that it isn't “Samay” but my alter ego that is feeding into my ego and the deeper need to be appreciated.)

Samay: Very well said, Sahil! But we also need to ensure sustainability, isn't it? A growing company of 100+ people raises a very different challenge than a Startup with 30 employees. Let me take you through the critical HR focus areas during the latter stages of a growing company:

• **Change management:** A Startup is dynamic in nature and goes through changes at an overwhelming pace. If employees are unsure about the upcoming



BHUPESH SAWANTDESAI

Chief Human Resources Officer, DHL SmarTrucking - India

“Startups and SMBs often begin by focusing primarily on generating revenue, but as the organisation grows, so does the need to build a high-performance team. For a sustainable foundation for the business, establishing the right basics and becoming future-ready should be the top priority. Startups with robust HR processes and policies can attract, develop and retain better quality talent through a structured talent acquisition and compensation model and a well-defined L&D strategy to upgrade functional/behavioural competencies and for employee development. At the same time, HR leaders also need to realign with the evolving landscape by being data-driven, innovative, disruptive and technology-enabled.”

changes, such an uncertainty can drastically reduce motivation and cause valued people to leave. It is critical to help employees understand and accept the need for change, quickly respond to the concerns and resistance that may arise, and be transparent about how it may affect them. HR has a stellar role to play in leading the change management initiatives through a personalised approach.

• **Redesigning processes and working on top to bottom alignment:** At this stage, everything needs to reassessed and redefined for scale and alignment: the compensation philosophies, career management, performance reviews, setting expectations, and so forth. For a rapidly scaling company, HR

policies and frameworks must be viewed through the lens of long-term sustainability.

• **Effective communication:** Clear and consistent communication is required to build a strong employee culture. Weaving a culture with no tangles using the communication thread that runs across the organisation is efficiently done by someone who has the expertise in dealing with people. The developing culture of a Startup initially witnesses everyone to be constantly working at an incredible speed and trying to deliver unbelievable volumes. This seems to work well for a while, but then the enthusiasm begins to dip.

Business heads are often unable to diagnose the problem



AVANTI KIRAN JOSHI

Sr. Manager-HR, Prione

“Small and medium-sized enterprises and growing start-ups come with a flexible culture, which mandates the need to engage with employees on a regular basis. In addition to this, workplace dynamics are changing to include ample focus on people practices. With technology advancements, HR leaders and companies are embracing apps, specially designed for effective employee communication, to ensure a high quality work culture with an emphasis on learning and development, which leads to improved productivity. Not only are these initiatives cost effective, but they also help increase employee capabilities, engagement scores, and customer experience. Startups also have the advantage of agility to adopt new practices and implement these at a faster pace, without multiple levels of approvals”

precisely. And this is where an HR professional wielding the baton of communication appears on the scene to cascade the right messages at the right time. In the absence of a common thread of communication to bind the organisation together, one will see siloes forming within the growing company. While this is an unwritten fact, we all know that communication is frequently overlooked as a key component of successful Startups. Of course, when this happens, who better than the HR guy to clean it up? It almost feels like one is calling the janitor. Who else knows the pulse on the ground so well, who else can help bring the business back on course.

Me: Zoom in for details and zoom out for perspective is the HR mantra for Startups. Everything can change drastically in an instant for a Startup, and conflicting directions can make it hard to know if your company is on the right path. Someone once told me: Do your job well, and you know you are doing it right. In the context of a Startup, the values, principles, and beliefs must be ingrained deeply in its people by HR carrying out immersive programmes for all the employees who hold key positions in the organisation.

Samay: Oh yes! HR adds value not just in spreading the right people culture, but also in understanding the environment. HR quickly builds a network in the environment to share learnings and best practices for positive growth. Startups also believe that it is better to fail early, and there should be no punishment for failing after testing new ideas. It is therefore important to understand that it is good to experiment without fear of failure as failure is a journey to growth. Thus, an organisation is born with its employees having no fear of consequence, and are hence always ready to innovate. All this is possible thanks to the able support by HR – said a business leader

only in the presence of his HR team!

Me: This is indeed true! Many a time, we ignore the fact that there is a lot of effort that goes into building a culture with no fear of consequence. Mature organisations have well-defined cultures, clear targets, systems to measure performance, and processes for the development of skills and optimisation of performance. HR would have been the brain and the spine behind setting these processes in place.

Samay: Of course, HR is all about a perfect blend of three ingredients: **Common sense, people sense, and business sense.** Any organisation, Startup or otherwise, is aware as to how to blend these three perfectly are slated for success. Many a time, employee relations, conflict resolution, disengagement, and finally, employee turnover can be meaningfully handled with efficient HR / HR enabled task forces.

I bade a fond farewell to “Samay” and of course, time travelled back to the present— almost like I had taken a complete round of the promenade, and my waistline felt a couple of inches lesser. I hit the peddle as I raced to work, and the radio flooded me with a series of successful entrepreneurs who leverage Amazon to sell their homemade stuff, about an HR lady who loves baking cakes on weekends and has tie-ups with the Zomatos and Swiggys of the world. I smiled to myself, “And the journey continues. The unbreakable relation between business and HR.” 

About the Author

Sahil Nayar is a Human Capital Professional working at a leading professional services firm in the country. At leisure, you would either find him sharing his perspectives with budding talent at various Business Schools across the country or traversing treacherous roads over various genres of music. Views are his own. He can be reached on Twitter @sahilnayar.

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How Do You Build a Great Career When No One Ever Told You the Rules?

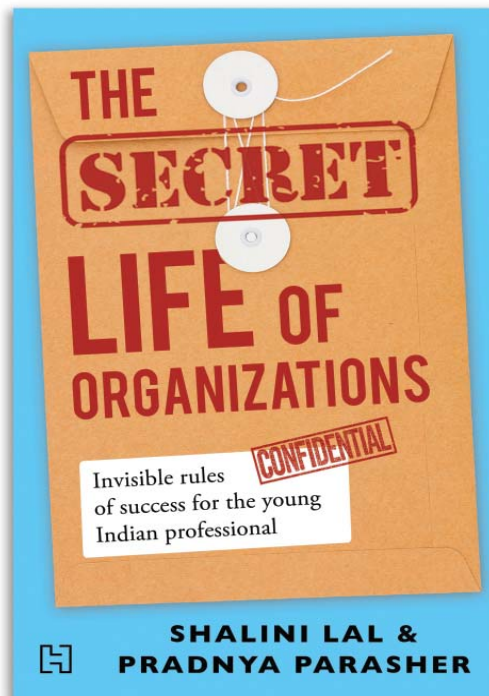
BY DR. SHALINI LAL

Almost all of us want to do really well in our careers. In an ideal world, the brightest people, those that worked hard, would simply rise to the top. But we know that is not always the case. There are many smart people whose potential gets lost to the world because they didn't really know the rules of the game.

Imagine that you were airlifted and dropped into the middle of a game. You see people running around a field, each person kicking their own football around. When you watch them, you aren't entirely sure if there is a particular direction that the football needs to be kicked into. Some players kick it left. Others to the right. Some kick the ball off the field. Others take the ball with them and kick it at home.

In this game, there is no real scoreboard, but every once in awhile, someone comes back with a bigger ball, and then everyone seems to take them more seriously. Yet it is not clear where they got that big ball from. You ask people the rules of the game, and people tell you—it all depends on how well you kick the ball. Yet when you ask them what that means—everyone has their own answer. Well, building a career often feels no different when you don't really know how organizations work and what the real rules of the game are.

In the *Secret Life of Organizations*, Dr. Pradnya Parashar and I draw upon decades of having been in talent discussions, promotion and hiring decisions to share what we have learnt about the invisible rules that govern successful careers. It helps that both of us have PhDs in behavioural sciences, and so in addition to our own experience, we draw upon rigorous academic research to support your career. We ourselves were “slow learners” who realized that despite the



best education in the world, there was so much more to building a great career. We made many mistakes in the early years of our career and often learnt important lessons the hard way. But we want you to be smarter and spell out what you need to know in order to understand organizations and yourself.

The Secret Life of Organizations is a book written for the young Indian professional to help them be wiser and more conscious of how they develop their careers. The book touches on several key lessons that can make or break careers. For instance, one lesson is how understanding your organization's culture is key to being able to really understand what is considered important here.

Other lessons are about developing good relationships—with your peers, your boss, and even yourself. The book speaks about why building great networks matter and how you can develop yours.

Other chapters address questions like “How will you know when it is time to move on?” “How can you make choices when you find yourself at the inevitable crossroads each career does?” And then, finally, “How do you build a career in a world that is changing so fast?” The *Secret Life of Organizations* is a field guide for the young Indian professional who wants the benefit of experience while building their career. HC

About the Author

Dr. Shalini Lal is an Organizational Consultant and Writer. She helps businesses build the leadership and culture they need. Reach out to her at shalini@infinityod.com or shalinilal.com. Her book is now available in bookstores and through Amazon online.

Enabling The Specially Abled

*Human Capital spoke to **Pranav Desai**, Founder, Voice of SAP, an UN recognised global advocacy organisation working for the enablement of Persons with Disabilities. He spoke on the need for organisations to embrace "Compassionate Capitalism" to harness the untapped potential among the Specially Abled. He also called upon HR to promote volunteering among employees and make hiring of PwDs an integral aspect of performance among the business leaders.*

BY S. AJAY KUMAR

Q What in a nutshell is Voice of SAP (VOSAP)? How is it relevant for HR organisations to achieve their Diversity and Inclusion (D & I) goals?

A VOSAP is an advocacy organisation that promotes the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (PwD), since Empowerment ensures that they are included in the society. Thus, our organisation is working towards the creation of an inclusive society for PwD by altering the narrative on disability, and positioning it as an untapped opportunity when one embraces “Compassionate Capitalism”. When we further extend this vision of inclusivity, we see that organisations and business establishments have a huge role to play with respect to their practices - hiring, branding, CSR etc. in empowering PwD. These entities need to be inclusive so that the dream of an inclusive society becomes a reality. While VOSAP promotes and advocates inclusion of PwD, businesses need to fulfil their D & I mandate. Hence, there is a natural overlay of inclusion goals between the two entities.

Q What are your observations among companies in India when it comes to hiring Specially Abled People?

A In India, there are organisations like the LemonTree Group that has hired 1,000 plus Specially Abled People across its establishments in India. This comes to about fifteen percent of their total workforce. Initiatives such as these involve business with an angle of compassion, and has been termed as “Compassionate Capitalism.” In addition, Designmate, an IT organisation based in Ahmedabad headed by Captain Kanwaljeet Singh Brar, has a workforce in which more than seventy percent are Specially Abled. Organisations are hiring Specially Abled People owing to the fact that this is an employee pool which is seen as

very loyal. The hospitality and the IT Industry have always witnessed significant employee turnovers, and hiring Specially Abled People works to offset this aspect. The same can also be followed in the Retail Industry.

+ - https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/pdf-89/accenture-disability-inclusion-research-report.pdf

As per the research report published on Oct 2018 by Accenture+, it has been seen that companies that embrace best practices for employing and supporting more persons with disabilities in their workforce have outperformed their peers.

However, we also have significant data that reflects the fact that mainstream organisations are not looking to hire PwD, since a vast majority of them have been unable to visualise the Specially Abled as a potentially untapped human resource. This has led to a huge unemployment of PwD. This is also a reflection of the fact that people in general have not accepted inclusion as a way of life. This is because people have a perceived opinion that Specially Abled People are unable to perform most of the tasks. Today, we have a variety of assistive devices that can enable the Specially Abled to overcome their disabilities to perform a task, but this initiative needs to be taken to the corporates.

Q Why do you believe that Specially Abled People form a specially skilled talent pool? Why should Indian companies hire People with disabilities in greater numbers?

A Specially Abled People come with certain distinct advantages. For instance, while it is evident that people with learning disability or autism have their short comings, when they are trained for a certain task, they perform that task with the least possible errors. In simple terms, many of the tasks that are performed by people without

disabilities can also be performed by people with disabilities such as back office jobs, accounting etc. Specially Abled People offer inherent advantages to their employer in terms of loyalty and productivity. One such advantage of Specially Abled People is that they come with inherent passion and energy to prove themselves as worthy. Thus, they come forth as a motivated workforce for the employer, helping create a better workplace environment.

“Specially Abled People come with inherent passion and energy to prove themselves as worthy. They come forth as a motivated workforce for the employer, helping create a better workplace environment.”

Indian companies, especially MNCs, need to hire PwD to achieve their D & I goals, as per their corporate mandate in India. The benefits of hiring of PwD is crucial for many companies to be more competitive and profitable as it helps in product innovation, branding etc. This also has a direct economic impact, and contributes to achieve the Indian Government’s dream of becoming a 5 Trillion Dollar Economy, which can be possible only when the PwD are included in economic activities. By employing the PwD, we are converting them as tax-payers instead of spending on their welfare, thereby adding to the money supply. India has approx. 10 crore PwD, and in order to accelerate the Indian economy, this untapped Human Capital can be hired and mainstreamed by corporates, Government, MSME sector etc.

Further, when Persons with Disabilities are hired, they will

need accessible transportation to reach their offices which creates opportunities in the transport or auto sector to provide this service. Further, PwD will need a set of devices or equipment to be enabled in their respective jobs which creates an opportunity for another industry sector. For instance, every taxi in London is PwD friendly since this is the law of the land.

Q How can the Indian Government intervene to encourage organisations to

hire more Specially Abled People?

A The Indian Government is contributing an estimated 15 percent of the salary and labour cost by paying for their EPF and ESI for a period of ten years. This is money on the table for the employers. In addition, the Government is bearing the cost involved in training the PwD. However, the Indian Government needs to educate and publicise these initiatives so that there is wide spread awareness over the

incentives being offered by the Government upon hiring PwD. The Government also need to reduce the procedural delays for getting the benefits of hiring PwD. VOSAP has also been actively lobbying with Govt. of India for comprehensive tax incentives for employers to create demand for hiring PwD. Companies must be provided with tax incentives (accelerated depreciation) for carrying out structural modifications to make their premises accessible and PwD friendly.

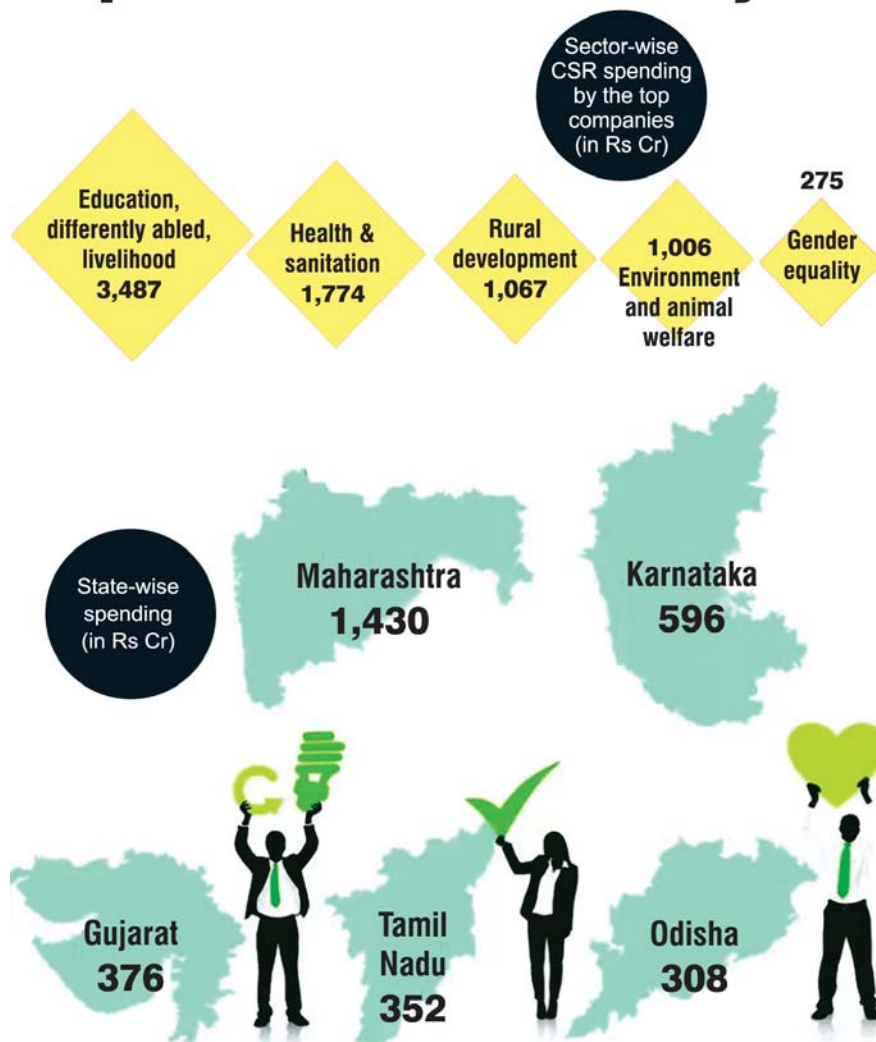
In addition, while the National Skill Development Corporation has come forward to provide with skill development initiatives for the Specially Abled, a lot more needs to be done to execute this vision. They must establish a skill development centre in every district in order to provide skill development training for the PwD. And the Government needs to earmark funds in order to achieve this.

Q What do you believe are the hurdles for PwD that impede the enthusiasm to work or upskill themselves? How do HR organisations help in overcoming this impediment?

A The biggest roadblock is Accessibility. People with locomotive disabilities or those who are visually impaired do not have accessible transportation and also encounter inaccessible infrastructure within the organisation premises. Secondly, people still carry a social stigma, biases, and opinions when they see that their colleague is a PwD. Owing to this, the employer initiative of hiring PwD may not be successful due to the lack of acceptance among the general employee population.

HR leaders are the change champions in an organisation, and play a huge role in building an inclusive culture. This culture must be translated into performance reviews and measurable goals. HR

Where does India Inc spend its CSR money?



Source: National CSR Portal

can work to integrate the annual performance review for the leaders in terms of their efforts when it comes to achieving the organisational D & I goals. They can also influence CSR programmes wherein they can promote volunteering among employees to assist Persons with Disabilities so that employees understand the various aspects related to PwDs.

“HR leaders are the change champions in an organisation, and play a huge role in building an inclusive culture. This culture must be translated into performance reviews and measurable goals.”

We at VOSAP enable our partner corporations through our corporate connect programme and help them in their journey from Point A to B to C in achieving their D & I goals. Through our Technology platform viz. the VOSAP Mobile App, we aid HR to identify the champions in their organisation who can then be entrusted with certain task initiatives. We provide this tool to the partner corporations, HR leaders for free, and also train them, allow them to find out the leader who is ready to take this initiative forward in the company, understanding business benefits and embrace “Compassionate Capitalism.” For instance, we have a module within the VOSAP App that allows employees of an organisation to come forward and take a volunteering pledge. These volunteers are the front runners in taking forward the D & I agenda of the organisation. We then partner with the HR leaders of the organisation to draw a road map in terms of organising awareness events, modifying their building architecture for accessibility, the

kind of skilling required, the means needed to hire PwD, and the assistive equipment required to enable PwD.

Q How can HR organisations achieve their D & I goals when it comes to hiring PwD?

A Organisations and HR should have a clear policy that is communicated to everybody, and have in place a process to identify the change champions among the employees who have volunteered on the VOSAP Mobile App. Most importantly, they should have an achievable roadmap, and also a buy-in from the leaders that they will hire a minimum of 5 PwDs (so they become support group to each other) which must be linked with their performance appraisal. Hence, communication, measurable goals, and use of technology tools to identify and promote employee volunteers are some basic tenets that organisations need to adapt when it comes to achieving their D & I goals.

Q Do you believe that Employee Referral programmes should be incorporated to ensure that Specially Abled People are hired in greater numbers?

A Absolutely, and this should be made as one of the avenues for recruitment in an organisation. Firstly, one needs to identify the job code that can be performed by a type of PwD. Second, provisions must be made in the organisational budget for upgrading bathroom, offices for accessibility and the purchase of assistive devices for this employee pool. Third, organisations need to partner with such entities or portals who have a database of resumes of Specially Abled people seeking employment. Employee referrals is key as many employees would know someone in their community who may be PwD, and looking for a job so it needs to be stepped up in organisations with higher incentives since this can be one of the easier ways of finding Specially Abled Talent. The referrals

also function as an effective engagement tool.

Q How has the journey been for VOSAP so far? What are the programmes that have been planned for the future by the organisation?

A VOSAP has more than 8,300 volunteers which include youth, corporate leaders, and individuals. We have therefore been successful in making people to commit to the cause of the Specially Abled people. Our VOSAP mobile App is our Intellectual Property. VOSAP has been conferred with a Special Consultative Status by the UN Economic and Social Council, which is the highest recognition, access and responsibility for any nonprofit body. Hence, VOSAP volunteers have access to the entire UN offices located in Geneva, New York, Vienna etc. Several of our initiatives have also been accepted by the Government of India such as the passage of a new law for the Rights of Specially Abled People, and our Accessible India Campaign which was launched in Dec 2015 by the Honourable PM of India.

Our next area of focus is to promote the usage of assistive devices to enable People with Disabilities. It is our vision to make India the global hub for producing assistive devices. VOSAP has been providing Assistive devices to its target audience as a part of its Charter. It is our intent to create an enabled and empowered Specially Abled workforce. We are planning to organise an event wherein we want to award those organisations that are highly inclusive in terms of their D & I goals. We are looking at collaboration with the International Labour Organisation to devise a mechanism so that we can reach out to Multinational organisations to share data about the number of Specially Abled People employed by them and the measures adopted by them to make their offices more PwD friendly and in turn provide more data for others to follow. 

Learning Health Is a Journey, Not a Destination

Given that resources are scarce for organisations, it is therefore critical for them to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of learning and skill development initiatives.

BY NISHCHAE SURI

The pace of technology, demographic and socio-economic disruption is fast transforming industries and business models. Moreover, CEOs around the world are wary of slowdown amid the rapid speed of execution today. We all know that highly engaged and skilled employees deliver superior business results. Given that resources are scarce for organisations, it is therefore critical for them to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of learning and skill development initiatives.

“If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it.”

— Peter Drucker.

Organisations are keen to see the ROI on their learning spend; however, only 4% of the CEOs are able to see the ROI. More than half of the learning interventions go in vain as employees do not apply the learning in their jobs. This inefficiency hinders an organisation's ability to raise performance, shift behaviours, and contribute to any real business impact.

Ten simple steps to improve the learning health

1. Align your learning strategy with business strategy

A clear business need is often missing from many programs that are initiated by the learning and

development (L&D) team. As a first step, align your learning strategy with business priorities. Allocate budgets and ensure your plans mirror long-term and short-term business priorities. Link spend on learning to performance metrics such as productivity, quality, retention, compliance, and customer satisfaction; even further, make sure there is an explicit agreement between the business and the learning team.

2. Optimise the learning portfolio

Articulate the few critical priorities and must-win battles to which the company and CEO are committed over the next three to five years. Tailor-make learning initiatives (content strategy and development, program design, courses and certifications, target audiences and personas, etc.) to deliver these strategic priorities. Minimise scrap learning and make a clear shift to get to near-zero learning inventory.

3. Map and define stakeholder value

Map key stakeholders in the organisation and understand how they see value, define and set objectives at different levels for reaction, training, application, impact and ROI, such that there is clarity and a shared understanding in what is expected of each of them, including experience designers, curators, instructors, employees, managers and executive sponsors.

4. Design for relevance, application and impact

Design L&D initiatives for results. Establish “relevance” for the learner, followed by opportunities to “apply” the knowledge gained. Select the right metrics to measure the business impact of applied learning and use the appropriate technology stack, tools and templates to ensure that every learner and each different stakeholder is enabled and provided the right level of support in this journey.

“Design, Execute, and Sustain to establish Relevance, Application and Impact.”

5. Put experience above all else

Experience embodies a “consumerised” approach that is hyper-personalised and multi-modal. The modern-day learner wants the freedom to consume knowledge when, where, and how they want from a wide range of content resources, tailored to their learning needs, style, preferences and interests.

Design micro experiences tailored to learners' preferences, interests, and needs with easy access to content that is displayed in a familiar, easy-to-navigate pattern that appeals to them. Content should be contextual and aggregated from a variety of content repositories, both internal and external.

Leverage the power of AI to pull data quickly and easily, sort through demographics like age, gender, culture, level in the organisation, educational background, previous learning experiences, patterns of employee behaviour, learning needs and goals. Use these insights to create intelligent and smarter-positioned content that's adaptive, intuitive, responsive to a learner's personal journey, and provides a great learner experience.

6. Get agile

Anticipate the needs of the business and employees proactively, and shorten the time and distance required between production, consumption, and application of knowledge. L&D interventions should be both effective and efficient—backed by the right level of investment, designed and aimed at delivering the right business results in the right time frame.

7. Set up a knowledge network and exchange

Learning processes involve the aggregation, creation, curation, collection, interpretation, dissemination and application of knowledge. These include experimentation to develop and test new products and services; intelligence gathering to keep track of competitive, customer, and technological trends; disciplined analysis and interpretation to identify and solve problems; and education and training to develop employees. Orchestrate knowledge flows—volume, variety, and velocity—in the organisation and ensure that they are unobstructed.

8. Measurement matters

Make results measurable and visible. Often, the value created is hidden, which takes away from its importance. Results can be evaluated at different levels using different metrics. Usage is an activity metric. It is useful to measure whether the solution reached the intended learners. This metric measures learning activity—

completions, page or site visits, and learner contributions. Adoption of goals and their measurements are important to gauge change management of an initiative, vision, strategy or project—for example, the use of a new process or the introduction of a new learning program.

Experience is a reaction metric. It is a level 1 metric. It helps measure the reaction—favourable or unfavourable—based on a number of variables: usefulness, relevance, importance, ease and convenience of accessing learning. It is about how, when and why a learner interacts with content. It draws on factors such as social learning, application, and meeting the learner where they are in different moments of learning need.

Engagement is a business impact metric, and it is level 4. It measures the emotional and intellectual attachment of a user to learning. The measure is a composite of lower-order metrics: reaction (level 1), learner knowledge gain (level 2), application and assessment (level 3).

Calculate ROI (level 5) for a few select programs that are strategic and costly (usually 5-10% of programs). Monitor and study the data on an ongoing basis to improve programs so you can generate more value in the future and optimise ROI made in learning and development.

“Design Experience, Drive Usage, and Deliver Impact.”

9. Sell it, don't tell it

Act and behave like product marketers. Get the attention of employees and connect with them as consumers of learning. Catching the attention of the modern learner requires more outreach and higher-impact marketing programs. It requires thinking beyond emails. To get the message out, use a multichannel approach that includes emails, involving leaders and managers, videos, events, signage,



influencer campaigns, contests, awards and more. Partner with the marketing team to design, plan and integrate learning messages into well-established marketing processes and communication channels to create a learning brand that employees strongly associate with. Recognise and reward employees in learning new skills and knowledge. Demonstrate the value of learning to the stakeholders by closing skill gaps which have been identified as critical for the business.

10. Power L&D to power the journey of others

A new set of capabilities and skills required is fast emerging in L&D. These include experience design, content curation, brand and communication, technology and application development, and data analysis. For impactful learning in the organisation and in order to improve its overall learning health, invest in acquiring and building these emerging skills, recognising that without a strong and capable learning function, you cannot achieve your learning ambition and further your learning agenda. 

About the Author

Nishchae Suri is President, AMEA at EdCast. He has over 20 years of rich experience working with clients in over 25 countries in the areas of HR strategy and transformation, leadership and talent management, rewards, and L&D. Nishchae has held leadership roles at KPMG, Mercer Consulting and Hewitt Associates.

Actionable Tips to Improve the Candidate Experience

When it comes to attracting the best talent, many HR professionals are still treading the traditional and rudimentary path.

BY KHALID RAZA

A few years ago, I got a call from a consultant for interviewing with an organisation I had heard about, but of which I did not know the details. As usual, I turned to the internet to find out more about the organisation, using places like Glassdoor, the company website, Quora, etc. I read what the employees and ex-employees shared online, but obviously with a pinch of salt.

I was given a link to update my profile and boy; it was made when MS Paint ruled the world! It was the kind of form that companies use to gather information about the candidate, family, education, experience, blood group, shoe size, name of the pet, and whatnot! Let's call it the "evil form". I went on to watch Netflix as I had decided this was not the type of place I would want to work. The next day, I called the consultant and expressed my intention to be excluded from the process. The person on the other end obliged, and the transactional process ended. What stayed with me? My experience—the **candidate experience!** If I ever have to deal with that brand, I will be cautious.

Candidates are practically customers. Virgin Media found the hard way that a good 18% of rejected candidates were also its customers. Moreover, according to a survey conducted in 2018, 60% of workers in the US reported that a negative experience during the hiring process could affect their positive perception towards the company.

It takes a lot of work to create and deliver a signature candidate experience. The team that designs the experience must walk every step of the candidate journey, right from the first time someone thinks of the brand, visits the company page on LinkedIn, Glassdoor, or career sites, to the kind of communication that will take place throughout the process, and finally when either an offer is made or a closure note is sent.

As my above story illustrates, the candidate experience starts a long time before hiring begins. However, HR leaders fail to note this important fact more often

than not. Social platforms have gained significance in brand selection both from the perspective of the consumer and the potential employee. Yet, when it comes to attracting the best talent, HR functions keep treading the traditional and rudimentary path. But the learning is this: Don't solve the problem until you understand what the problem is. Taking action before absorbing information can severely impact the desired outcome. Sometimes, it can even be detrimental.

The best place to begin is to talk to those who are involved in the journey. Talking to your new



Source: beamery.com

joiners could also be a place to start, but it shouldn't be the only place. The list should include those who applied and were rejected, those who did not wish to join, and your HR teams who manage all the touchpoints: recruiters, vendors, onboarding team, relocation team, IT, transport team, etc.

I am providing a laundry list in no particular order, but it is, however, a must-have list to elevate the overall candidate experience.

- **The first look:** Organisations must ensure that their jobs are easy to find and that the expectations, requirements, and must-have skills are clearly listed. Whether it's advertisements, social media or the company website, the first look is key to finding the right candidates.
 - **The lure:** Job ads must attract candidates. So make them crisp and interesting.
 - **Easy to find:** Clear and concise instructions lay the foundation to exceptional candidate experience.
 - **Brand amplification:** Highlight your employee-related values on the company website, career webpages, and social sites like LinkedIn and Facebook.
 - **Do you have the "evil form"?** Simplified forms help both candidates and recruiters alike. Organisations must leverage available technology, including auto-filling, LinkedIn sign-on, etc.
 - **Mobile-friendly:** The form should be easy enough to fill out on mobile devices.
 - **Leverage technology:** AI systems have made life easier in many ways. Organisations can automate online and mobile device chats with candidates to answer questions during their application process.
 - **Constant communication:** When candidates submit their application, even if you send them a generic thank you email, they will be reassured. Also, use names, not reference numbers. Moreover, can you make the
- communication go through from an email address that isn't a bot? You are now a thinking human!
 - **Timing is the key:** Communicate the rejection or acceptance promptly and clearly.
 - **The precision of communication:** Send a calendar invitation with precise and complete information on all aspects, including:
 - Whom will they meet?
 - Who will be present at the interview?
 - Mode of the interview – in-person or video-based?
 - Duration of the interview
 - Format – case study and/or conversation?
 - Is there a dress code?
 - Directions – GPS, map, etc.
 - Where to park?
 - **Time to deliver:** The onboarding day is your opportunity to deliver. As they say, delivery is the best sales pitch!
 - **Celebrate with them:** Using social media, companies can use hashtags and let employees share their experience with friends and family. However, ensure that the company pictures are posted only through official company accounts.
 - **An element of surprise:** A letter and a small gift for the significant others of candidates will put a smile on their faces. Think creatively, and be different.
 - **Get to know them:** Once onboarded, work towards getting to know the intrinsic drivers and career aspirations of your employees.
 - **Keep the feedback loop on:** Keep listening to the feedback, analyse the outcomes, and take actions. Pat yourself when candidates who aren't offered jobs say they were professionally and adequately assessed.

Final musings

Organisations driven by candidate experience, vision, and strategy will



understand that the learning journey is never over. You need to periodically and religiously assess your processes.

The above pointers are helpful when it comes to making changes in your recruitment process. However, it still won't be enough to create and project a signature experience until you really care about the candidates. How do you communicate a delay or reschedule with the candidate? Offering them coffee or free lunch is par for the course. Think new! How about a gaming zone? You may also send them on a site tour—the idea is to engage them and make them comfortable. Also, use design thinking to make sure everything is perfectly designed for exceptional candidate experience, from application to onboarding. Finally, be empathetic, and do what's right.



About the Author

Khalid Raza is an accomplished talent leader with over 15 years of experience in identifying organisational needs and providing innovative, strategic business solutions. He is currently working as Talent Acquisition Lead for North and East India and Bangladesh at EY. Previously, he has held leadership roles in Altisource and IBM. In 2016, Khalid was recognised amongst the top 25 HR executives under 40 by Workforce Magazine. He can be reached @khalidraza9.



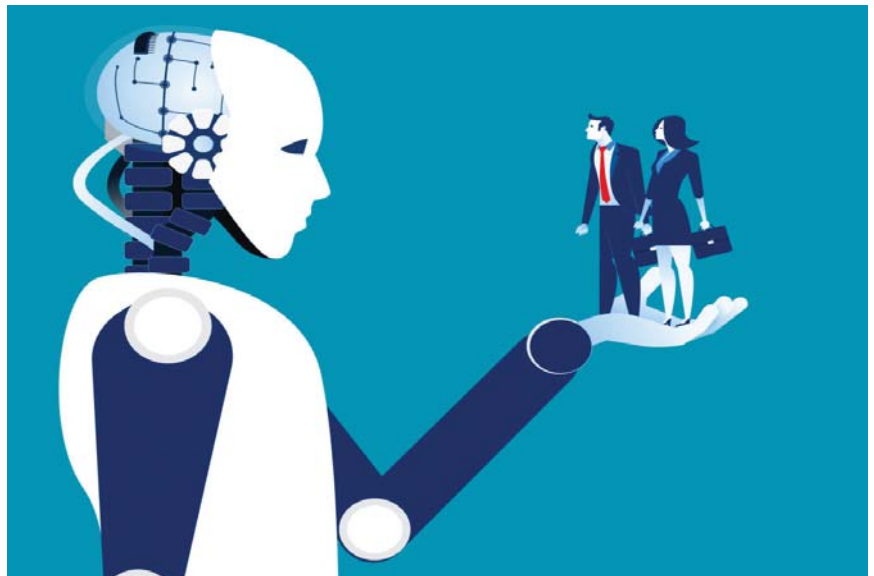
BY REETU RAINA

Engagement in the Era of Artificial Intelligence

A look into recent trends in employee engagement clearly shows the drawback of machines in enhancing human relations. As much as artificial intelligence has made life more comfortable, it has not improved employee engagement.

The last two decades have marked a significant evolution in the world of artificial intelligence (AI), where man and machine now complement each other. Notable changes can be seen in the ways people use technology today, resulting in speedy connectivity and effective self-help. While the growth of AI has contributed to bring the world closer, it has also reduced human interactions. Human connections have now been replaced by artificial intelligence in the sense of self-help and machines.

Undoubtedly, the most significant impact of artificial intelligence is the ease of connecting people. With the advent of digitisation and virtual connections, people can connect with others—anytime, anywhere. While this aspect of AI is beneficial, human relations have also been affected. Despite enormous strides in technology, no machines can replace humans. Humans embody emotions, and machines lack emotions. You cannot program emotions, nor can you install them on a computer. They can only be felt, responded to, and managed—all things artificial intelligence cannot do.



Technology and employee engagement

A look into recent trends in employee engagement clearly shows the drawback of machines in enhancing human relations. As much as artificial intelligence has made life more comfortable, it has not improved employee engagement. Even as organisations focus on engaging employees, their investments in AI do not seem to be yielding desired results. Why? A look into the meaning of employee engagement can help shed some light.

Aon, a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement, and health solutions, defines engagement as the psychological state and behavioural outcomes that lead to better performance. The premise of employee engagement, therefore, is to create a psychological state that gives attention to the employees in order to make them feel connected to the organisation. If this attention is replaced with technology and zero human interactions, problems are created. Emotions begin to build up among employees, eventually leading to

disengagement and attrition. But does this mean that artificial intelligence is all bad?

Artificial intelligence is not a bad thing. However, it is essential to understand what the organisation can outsource to artificial intelligence and what needs human interaction. For instance, AI can be a useful tool for conducting surveys, analytics, and understanding the overall mood of the employees. It can also help to reduce the operational processes associated with employee interactions. However, AI should not be used where human interaction is needed.

Balancing it all

Successful integration of artificial intelligence in an organisation lies in the ability to create the right balance between when to use AI and human interactions. If we look at this conflict from an employee's perspective, engagement could mean something different. Employees are overwhelmed with information and distractions from social platforms. Their attention span is getting shorter with information overload and noise in the ecosystem, making it difficult for employees to hold meaningful dialogues with their managers. With such factors contributing to employee disengagement, AI can replace certain non-human activities. When integrating AI in the organisation, the following pointers are essential:

- Create clear guidelines on what should be outsourced to AI.
- Replace analytics and process efficiency parts of the organisation with AI.
- Keep human interaction alive through meaningful dialogues of employees with their managers.
- Train your managers to coach (today's generation needs that more than ever).
- Make a clear distinction between drivers of engagement and drivers of enjoyment.

As artificial intelligence gains popularity, there is a growing need to understand that certain aspects of employee engagement would remain constant. Employees are looking for meaning in their careers, and managers usually provide them with such directions. At the same time, employees want to work where they feel valued and engaged. While AI is essential, it should not replace every aspect of an organisation's management. Specific vital processes and activities still require the human touch to be effective and engaging. Social interactions are what creates the experience for the employees, giving them a sense of belonging. 

About the Author

Reetu Raina holds extensive industry experience and has worked across sectors such as telecom, BFSI, and IT. In her career to date, she has held leadership roles with domain-leading brands such as TATA, HDFC Bank, and Amdocs. She was Head of HR for Network Software at Sterlite Technologies and previously led the talent management function at Amdocs. In both these roles, she was recognised for leading the HR transformation agenda and creating future-ready structures. Currently, Reetu is Chief Human Resource Officer at Quick Heal Technologies.

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Dress To Win!

Workplace evolution has also brought forth significant changes in the attires worn by employees. With the millennial workforce looking forward to a casual working environment, business casuals are fast replacing formal dresses. However, employers are apprehensive that a lenient dress code may reflect poorly on the culture of the organisation, and are hence looking to introduce dress codes for the employees.

BY **DR. PRAGEETHA G RAJU**

I am comfortable in this dress! What's wrong with this? I remain focused at work, I have been a consistent performer too... I am simply too upset about being rebuked about my dress..." squealed Ananya. "Moreover, each generation has a different idea about what is acceptable at the workplace..." she shrieked.

Ananya Varma (Ananya), 25, was getting ready to attend a meeting when a senior colleague, Anuradha, walked up to her and said, "Ananya, this dress is inappropriate for a meeting, and more so, at the workplace. Henceforth, please change your way of dressing. Please don't mind, I am only saying it for your personal good. Your clothes should not be the cause of embarrassment or have a negative impact over the image of the Company." Though furious and dizzy, Ananya ran to the washroom in order to avoid an argument, and sat there huffing and puffing.

Ananya is a Marketing Executive at Rajini Chemicals and Fertilizers Limited in Hyderabad. Ever since she joined Rajini Chemicals, she has been applauded for her work as she would grasp things at a faster rate. She regularly wears Jeans and tops, mostly sleeveless tops. At times, she would also come to the office with Capris and sleeveless tops. And today, she



had to encounter such a comment from Anuradha Bodki, her female colleague. Recounting the comment from Anuradha vis-à-vis the meeting in which she was also a participant, Ananya began to feel breathless in the wash room. Finally, she washed

her face and walked into the conference room where the meeting is scheduled.

To her dismay, the door attendant stopped her, and said, "Sorry Ma'am, the Marketing Head does not want to you to attend the

meeting as your attire is inappropriate.” She walked away in frustration and went to the canteen to sip a piping cup of coffee. She met another female colleague and narrated what had just happened to her. The colleague replied that she is not clear as to what offended Ananya. She further suggested that Ananya follow what Anuradha had said, since it is better for her survival. This annoyed Ananya even further. She told her colleague that she is offended because, “at my age, I have been taught to express myself. And to say something negative about my sense of dressing is akin to say something negative about me. Why don’t people understand this? For that matter, anyone would be offended when they are rebuked on their dressing.” Her colleague walked away silently.

When she opened the Google webpage and typed, “dress code at workplace,” it yielded more than two lakh search results. She managed to read a few articles, and concluded that while most organisations have “casual” days at work, the number of employers enforcing a formal dress code is on the rise. In early 2000, 56% of employers allowed casual attire every day, but that number has come down to 37% today. Even professional organisations which once allowed casual dress every day, had now shifted to a formal dress code. Surprisingly, the CEO of one of those organisations publicly stated that, ‘when we were casual, the quality of work wasn’t as good.’

This phenomenon of adopting formal dress codes is not universal though, while some firms are strictly enforcing formal dresses, some prominent global firms which insisted on super formals once are shedding it and are asking employees to wear what is comfortable. Thus, employees come to office in shorts too. Employees began feeling that comfortable wear provides relaxation to the body, and thus the mind

works hassle free. While this is too idealistic an example, other well-known international companies too have relaxed their dress codes.

Even sports companies and associations have adopted off-court dress code for its players. Ananya is suffocated with the tightened clause on dress code. She wanted to scream, “For God’s sake, can someone tell me what an ‘appropriate’ dress is?!” But, she mutters, “When I am comfortable, I need not worry. Let me find an organisation that has no dress code and focuses on my work and not my clothes”.

She brashly entered her cabin and drafted a mail to HR requesting for half day’s leave and walked out of the office. She boarded a cab and went to her Aunt, Kusuma Varma’s house, who is a Bank Manager. She burst into tears and explained all that had happened today, and remarked, “Why the hell do companies sell such clothes when they are not to be worn at work? Why do they brand them as casual, semiformals, and formals? Should I wear a sari daily? Would that make me more qualitative than what I am?” She went on..... Kusuma heard her patiently and said, “yes little one, you are right... while there is an increasing preference for Western formals among younger professionals, short clothes and heavy sleeveless clothes as work wear is not a part of the Indian sensibility. Younger women seamlessly switch from ethnic to Western wear, while senior female management in professions with customer interfaces like banking still rely on the sari.” Ananya was visibly annoyed and she yelled, “Should I drape that 6 meters sari to office daily?” Kusuma, unperturbed, continued, “India’s most well-known female bosses wear either the sari or western formals to work. For instance, Chanda Kochhar, the former Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of ICICI Bank,



was usually seen in saris, while Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairperson and Managing Director of the biopharmaceutical firm, Biocon Ltd, is known for tailored formals, worn with scarves.” Ananya wriggled, “okay, I agree. I shall begin to wear saris as you said, but what if they put another rule like the one in Japan? Did you know that women in Japanese front offices are asked not to wear spectacles because they appear intelligent? Are all rules only for women? I hate this ...” Kusuma said, “carving an identity in the contemporary workplace is no longer an easy set task between the binaries of sari versus “Western formals”. The latter is a term, used by Indians alone to denote jackets, shirts, and trousers for women. Menswear does not have this category, even though a majority of Indian men wear “Western formals” to work. 

About the Author

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Analysis By **Ravi Mishra**

This is a classic case of reflecting the gaps in HR processes in an organisation when we contemplate the boarding, induction, orientation, and socialisation of a fresh recruit. On many occasions, these processes are completed on a transactional basis or on the basis of legacy of merely going through the process of checking the boxes.

Anyone in Ananya's shoes is bound to get upset since her beliefs and ideas were outright rejected without any discussion or persuasion. On the ill-fated day, Ananya was first rebuked over her attire by Anuradha, her senior colleague. Subsequently, the door attendant, acting at the behest of the marketing head, denied her entry into the meeting room. While it is evident that Ananya has been working in the organisation for at least a few months now, her employer failed to address the issue related to her attire until it reached a point wherein the Marketing Head was forced to instruct the door attendant to deny her participation in the meeting.

As an organisation, Rajini Chemicals & Fertilizers must review the very process of onboarding fresh recruits. Under this dimension, they must clearly spell out office etiquettes, decorum, behaviour, and code of ethics that employees need to adhere. They should also define the norms about

dresses such as business formal, formal, and casual for different genders as also the occasions, unless mentioned specifically. It is expected of Ananya to be aware of the organisational culture, and know what to wear and what not to wear at the workplace. If at all she had wished to introduce new norms at the workplace, she must discuss it with her team and seniors.

Being employed in the Chemicals and Fertilizers sector, it is a tad too much for Ananya to expect a dressing culture which is synonymous in a new age economy or western world. Another point in case is Ananya's arrogant behaviour. To validate her point of view, she has intelligently attempted to understand the other person's idea and influence or impose his/her thoughts. Even though almost everyone differed with her beliefs, and endorsed organisational practices, Ananya was nevertheless argumentative and unprepared to buy in to their advices. This is a common problem experienced by HR professionals at the workplace while dealing with millennials and Gen Y. The new generation employees are intelligent and impactful when it comes to speed of execution, communication, and presentation. They however err when they become opinionated that the idea and practices of the earlier generations are no longer relevant. Such an attitude creates a problem for them as also the organisations.

B-Schools and Universities have the responsibility of developing and guiding students before they embark on their journey from campus to corporate life. For

instance, no one wears sarees in Italy, but Mrs. Sonia Gandhi very rightly does so. Likewise, we can cite examples of Kiran Majumdar Shaw or the first lady chairman of State Bank of India, Ms. Arundhati Bhattacharya.

A more holistic approach for a good organisation is to avoid such incidences in the future. The organisation must therefore share the Code of Ethics and Etiquettes along with the job offer so that employees like Ananya can exercise their choice and think about accepting the job offer. While it is an employee's personal choice to decide what to wear, it must be done without deviating from the pre-designated policies within the organisation. 

About the Author

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

Analysis By **Rohit Hasteer**

Over the last few decades, workplace attire has undergone a significant change, and when it comes to dressing up, “smart” is now open to myriad interpretations. With the representation of Millennials and Gen Y in the workforce reaching 50%, the lines between what’s appropriate and what’s inappropriate are getting blurred. It is therefore crucial for organisations to find that perfect equilibrium. And Ananya’s case is a perfect depiction of this conundrum.

For someone who is often applauded for her work, Ananya is not entirely wrong for feeling offended after she is barred from partaking in a business meeting owing to her attire, and at the same time, getting rebuked by her colleagues. Ananya is unable to understand why her workplace attire should be an area of concern if she is good at her job. However, she needs to be mindful of the fact that every culture has certain haves and have-nots. Since she is in Marketing, she will be required to meet a lot of external clients, and hence needs to be cognizant with respect to their sensitivities too. Ananya’s perceived notion that a negative feedback on her attire is akin to a personal attack is a tad overstretched. A person’s appearance is at times construed to be an indicator of their social status or character. However, in this case, the concern of her manager and colleagues seems to stem more from a business perspective and the image of the company, and is aimed at criticising her physical appearance, or judge her in any manner. Ananya should have

handled it with maturity by speaking to her manager to share her point of view, and also understand her manager’s point of view, rather than over-reacting by taking half a day’s leave from work.

Employers across the globe are not wrong if they lay down a structured dress code policy in their organisations. Most often, dress code is seen as an extension of a company’s culture. On many occasions, companies tend to adopt a more formal dress code which can help in creating a professional and positive image in the eyes of clients and customers. Many organisations also feel that a dress code helps in fostering a feeling of oneness cohesion within the team. However, several studies have shown that employees are most productive when they are not bound by a dress code, and when dressed as per their comfort they exude more confidence. Hence, it is wise to re-examine workplace attire in order to create a culture that evolves with time, and yet remains to represent a professional organisation.

The necessity for a dress code at the workplace is usually determined by the need for interaction of employees with external clients, but not everyone is in a customer facing role. In fact, every organisation is different, and so are the diverse range of individuals who work there. Hence, it is prudent that the dress code policy be structured keeping the same diversity in mind. Employers today need to trust their people as they are mature enough to take informed decisions about their attire. A sales professional may not



dress casually if that could spoil his or her chances with a client. Likewise, it is futile to expect engineers working in the technology domain to wear formals, as it does not impact their work. Today, many companies, especially the start-ups are moving away from documented dress code policies as they feel that work is not defined by attire. Corporates need to have an open frame of mind when it comes to workplace attire because one size fits all may not be the right strategy here. **HC**

About the Author

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



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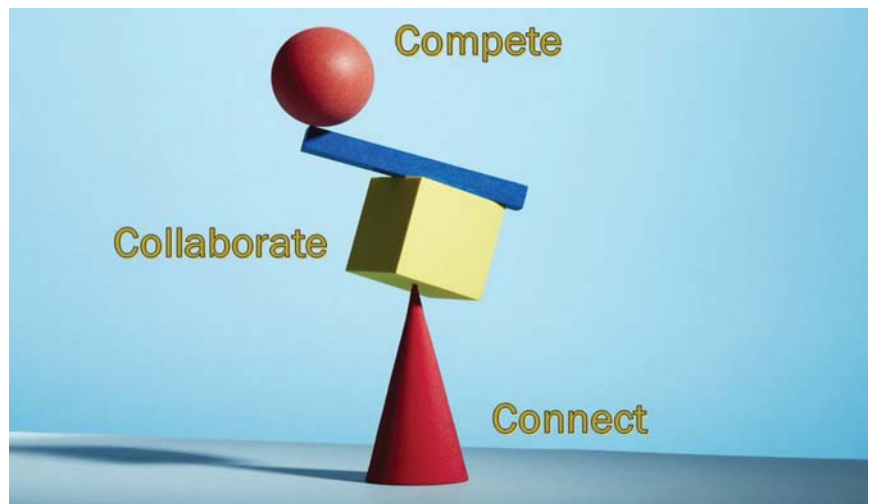
BY SWARNA SUDHA SELVARAJ

People, processes, and systems have been the key driving factors in organisations for decades. However, recent technological changes are spearheading and driving significant changes across processes as well as organisational and people capabilities. Today, it is all about agility and breaking down processes into smaller, chewable parts. People are coming together as self-empowered teams consisting of experts with multi-disciplinary skills. In the past, an individual player could win it for a team; now, it must be the team and everyone in the team who contribute towards success.

Each person in the team needs to connect, collaborate, and, at the same time, compete to win. The best examples could be picked up from relay races, where every person has to compete with their best possible effort to complete their part of the race, and connect and collaborate with their team for crisp baton exchanges.

Examples from the 2008 Olympics

Very few times in the history of Olympics have the United States of America not appeared in the medals tally of 4x100mts relay race, but 2008 was one of those years. The men's relay team did not qualify for the Olympics final for the first time since 1912, and the women's team for the first time since 1948.



The shocks started for the USA fans when men's anchor Tyson Gay could not get the red metal stick from the third-leg runner Darvis Patton, and the baton was dropped. The USA men's 4x100mts team was out of the race in the heats itself. The fact that Tyson Gay was part of the team that won the previous year's relay world championship did not matter; the performance on that specific day was the only thing of importance.

Then, within half an hour, the USA 4x100mts women team's anchor missed her baton exchange as well. Lauryn Williams, the anchor, did pick up the baton and complete the lap, but it was all over for the women's team, too. They finished 6 seconds after the first-place winner but were disqualified.

While this was happening, the Jamaican athletes were dominating the sprinting events. They were now clearly the favourites in both men's and women's 4x100mts relay final race. The Jamaican men's team not just won the gold with their amazing run, but also created a new world record.

The Jamaican women's team was ready for their final run. The expectations were very high. Out of the eight teams that ran the race, only six teams completed the race. The Great Britain team and the Jamaican team did not complete the race. Once again, the problem was with the baton exchange for both teams.

For all the sports enthusiasts across the world, this became a conversation for more than a year. There were funny remarks as well,

hinting that all the baton exchange flaws could have been a “Butterfingers Curse.”

Lessons from the baton exchange

Connect:

In the baton exchange that happens in a relay race, the rule is clear that the baton must be exchanged within a 20-metre change-over zone. The athlete receiving the baton can commence their run 10 metres before the change-over zone. If the exchange doesn't happen in this change-over zone, then the team is disqualified. For the connection to happen seamlessly, both of the runners must have a very good understanding of each other's speed, hand position (right or left) for the exchange, shortcomings, etc. to exchange the baton in the shortest time without any glitches.

For agile teams that are coming together for assignments, the situation is not any different. The sprints are timed, and it is important that the connections are made on-time in order to be an effective and efficient team.

Collaborate:

In the relay team, situations might change on the day of the event, even after all the practice that went into preparing for the race. Runners must support each other based on the situation where, if required, one of them must be slower or faster to make sure the baton exchange happens right. The collaboration that the runners' display is the key differentiator in their team winning the event.

The best teams and runners have failed due to poor connection and collaboration. Meanwhile, even comparatively slower teams and runners have won because of a perfect baton exchange with a perfect display of connection and collaboration. The 2008 Beijing Olympics relay races have very good examples of this perfect collaboration.

The same goes for projects and assignments in the corporate world. These require multi-disciplinary experts to come together and support one another to ensure that top-notch work is delivered within the given timeframe.

Compete:

Each racer competes against their own best records and against the other runners who run the same leg as theirs. Their capability impacts the final results of the team. Therefore, each runner tries to give their best. When Usain Bolt finished the 4x100mts race in the 2008 Olympics, it was his third gold medal in that tournament, and every runner had aimed to time their best to win it for their team.

In a professional environment, if the same competitive spirit to outperform themselves can exist, and if there is a common intention to ensure that the project is successful, then the team will be better able to quickly conquer difficult situations.

Some practical tips

As a professional working with different teams in different assignments, I believe that having these simple defined ways of working with people in teams can lead to graceful and effective baton exchanges with trust. Our personal brand as a team player would go a long way toward making ourselves and the teams successful.

To Connect:

- Communicate frequently and consistently with the team
- Clarify to avoid misunderstandings
- Be honest and transparent in all the levels of team interactions
- Accept mistakes as a normal part of teamwork
- Resolve conflicts positively

To Collaborate:

- Listen more than you talk

- Spend quality time with team members
- Appreciate the effort of others
- Take and give constructive feedback
- Celebrate small successes with the team
- Provide mutual support during failure

To Compete:

- Compete with self to improve your expertise and performance through continuous learning and implementation
- Learn and share with others who have similar roles in other teams

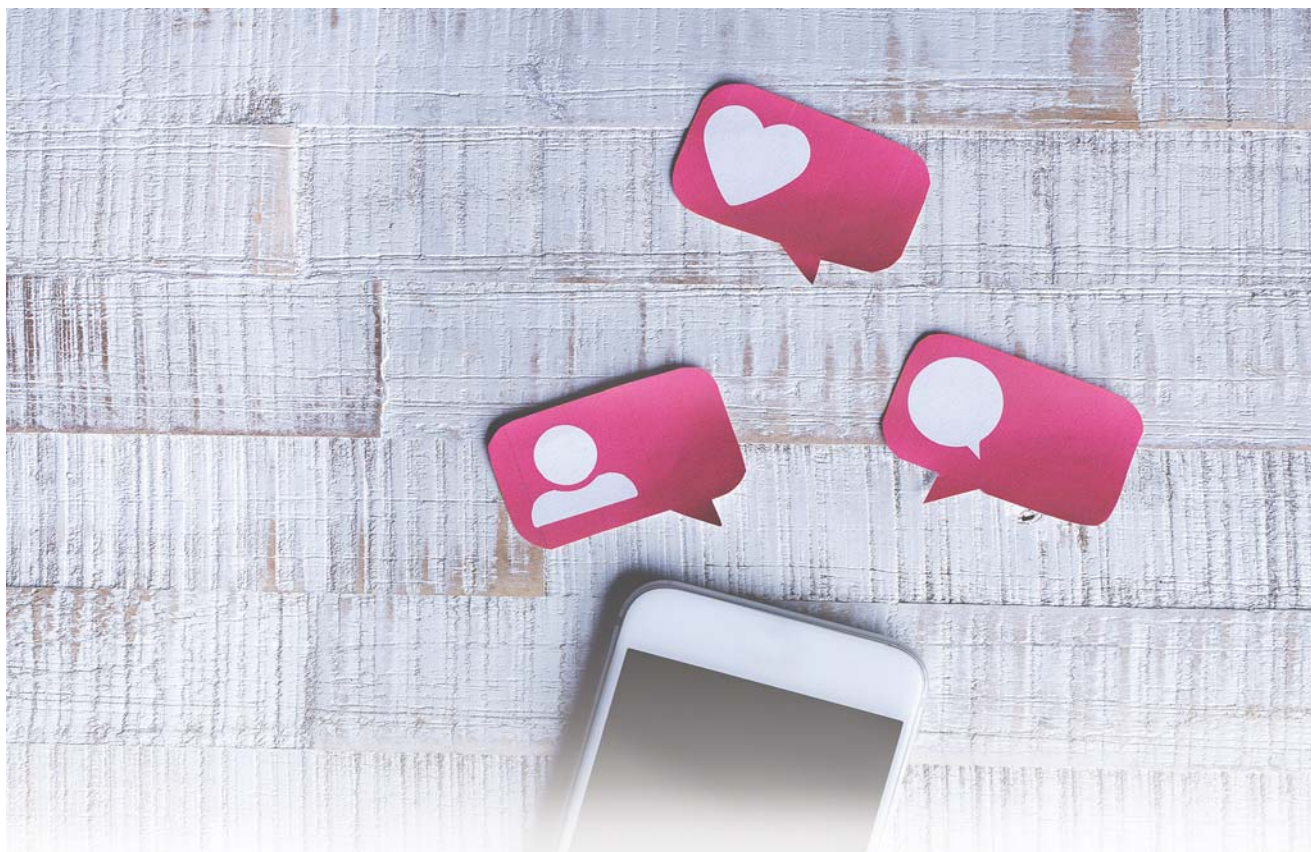
Everyone has a role to play

The more connected, collaborative, and competitive the team members are, the better the team's performance. This can be easier with co-located teams than with virtual teams. However, technology today is providing various options to stay in touch and communicate often, and it depends on the teams' efforts to use these opportunities and stay connected.

There could be a question on, “What if others are not willing to connect and collaborate?” Leaders play a key role in enabling this by providing a direction and bringing the team together with a common objective to win. Every member of the team must be a role model and influence the team towards connecting, collaborating, and competing. 

About the Author

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Leadership In A Networked Era

Leaders have complex ideas about who they are and what they are required to do. The complexities of self-concept are critical organising influences of an individual leader's development as a global leader.

BY KALPANA BANSAL

The chief qualification of a mass leader has become unending infallibility; he can never admit an error –Hannah Arendt

The internet led revolution has heralded a new era of young leaders, virtual offices, global pricing, and thereby altered the very way in which businesses grow and enhance revenue. The economic environment is less about ownership and old-fashioned capitalism than about sharing, thus moving away from the traditional

pyramid corporate structure to cloud enabled platforms.

While the internet has broken the shackles of monopolisation and capital access, it has also brought people and networks closer than ever before in a value creation exercise. It has introduced significant changes in human behaviour, and the consequences on power and

leadership structures in the new economy.

Arendt's Beliefs

Hannah Arendt, a prominent German-American philosopher, has stated that the human condition can be understood through the three-fold interaction of labour, work, and action.

- Labour allows humans to meet their basic biological needs.
- Work “provides an ‘artificial’ world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings...[and] the human condition of work is worldliness” which provides humans with the ability to procure wants, instead of only meeting basic needs.
- Action occurs without desire for meeting basic needs or wants, but is undertaken in recognition of the multiplicity of man’s existence.

Arendt writes, “Action, the only activity that goes on directly

between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the Earth and inhabit the world."

Through action, human beings have the opportunity to insert themselves in the common world and interact with others, to engage new experiences, and to embrace new opportunities that permit the shaping of diverse worldviews. By engaging in new experiences and interacting with man's plurality, we experience a sense of natality through action. And in today's networked world, it has never been more obvious. Communication, interaction, and exchange are immediate and global. As we immerse ourselves into new situations; interpersonally or organisationally, we experience a sense of newness, a birth, that brings new perspectives and insights to the creation of our own identities and a larger sense of existence. And these can be experienced in the day's internet economy, where Facebook, Google, and Amazon have changed the way human beings interact, transact, and work.

Arendt describes the interactions of man within the world as a web of relationships. Within this web exists narratives or stories that ground our actions and function as moral guide posts. The world then implies where we exist and also how we exist. The internet economy has created a world where relationships, networks, and connectedness have led to mass actions and crowd sourcing.

Authentic and Toxic Leadership

In her article titled *"The Authenticity Paradox"* in the *Harvard Business Review*, Professor Herminia Ibarra writes that authenticity can inhibit our ability to evolve, to expand beyond our comfort zone, and ultimately, to adapt to new

challenges. While companies have encouraged leaders to discover and promote their "true-self" as a way to restore trust in management, and to increase employee engagement, Herminia proposes leaders to empirically try multiple versions of their "self" to help define an "adaptive self" that can evolve according to new challenges.

The idea of a person showing different aspects of her personality - keeping aside personal and professional personas - into a celebrity in the cyber space seems enigmatic. Worse yet, it may seem narcissistic and even sinister—a lot like *Harry Potter's* Lord Voldemort, who breaks his soul into seven far-flung pieces in an attempt at immortality.

The internet has fuelled an economy of self-promotion, self-grandiosity, and immediate gratification. PR driven polls and surveys measure the most influential leaders on social media, who are then lauded through award ceremonies. This has led to people putting up their better selves online.

“PR driven polls and surveys measure the most influential leaders on social media, who are then lauded through award ceremonies. This has led to people putting up their better selves online.”

In India, we have witnessed the impact of multiple personalities through the cases of Asaram Bapu and Radhe Maa. These self-professed "spiritual leaders" with a humongous following later emerged as nebulous personalities with allegations of sexual assault, money laundering, and various other criminal activities. In the recent



past, we have witnessed dramatic examples of social-media-enabled revolutions, viz. Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street - crowd-sourced revolts without a distinct agenda or obvious leader. In India, however, we witnessed a porn ban by the government that was reversed within 72 hours, due to outrage on social media. Here the leaders and prime motivators were not political leaders, but website followers pushing for a turnaround.

Followings in Social Media

An important dimension to the leaders of the cyberworld is the power they exert over the followers. Power and leadership are connected. A good leader who uses situational leadership may use different kinds of power in different circumstances. Take the instance of a high school teacher, who adjusts her method of teaching based on the attitude of the learners and the medium used. Thus, a good leader is able to well utilise the interest of his/her followers to persuade them to do what is deemed as right.

Additionally, leaders have complex ideas about who they are and what they are required to do. It even affects global leaders. The complexities of self-concept are critical organising influences of an individual leader's development as a global leader. The complex self-concepts of global leaders drive

greater sense-making, sense giving, and overall effectiveness in the complex cultural environments in which they operate. This internal struggle and the ever-changing personality of leaders, gives them a new face every time - a new identity.

The advent of social media has further intensified this issue. The need to be constantly in the limelight and to seek attention has caught on. This is apparent from recent trends in social media habits like 'Instagram-ing' and 'Selfies' and 'Checking in on Social Media'. The driving force behind these is the approval and attention of their so called followers. This has a connect to the thoughts echoed by Hannah Arendt while explaining the concept of *Totalitarian*. Hannah Arendt in her book, *"The Origins of Totalitarianism,"* argues that totalitarian movements owe their strength not to the collusion of mob and bourgeoisie, but rather to the entirely "selfless" adherence of another fraction of the population, the group she calls the "masses." These "masses" for Arendt are neither the population at large, nor the members of any particular social class. According to her, "masses" are agglomerations of individuals, not belonging to any settled class or other stable social interest group.

As the social media image is created largely due to one's profile, there are many ways of only putting your best foot forward. The leaders can often create a fantasy world of their own, and change their colours like a chameleon, as per the need of the hour. Take the case of the Housing.com, an Indian startup. There was a lot of online drama due to its exCEO, Rahul Yadav, who was known more for his tiffs with the venture capitalists than his leadership. His social media profile showed obscene photographs and his tall promises to employees and partners alike were vastly different from the reality. After a

series of controversies, investors of Housing.com, whom he had once abused, fired Yadav. He later posted on his social media page regarding his new venture, *"All Indian internet companies put together < My next venture. Let me show you a good game this time! Not to earn money but just to show you guys that it can be done. And, that too without sweating much!"* Thus, he created a very different image online versus how the media projected him, and how he actually was in his real life.

The digitally connected world today allows leaders to have multiple personalities as it suits them. The high hysteria around a star and the hype they have leads them to believe they are akin to God. They can do what pleases them, they are the master of their destiny and can rule the roost. Their momentary success is largely determined by the masses' approval of the same.

“Social media has become a necessary social evil, connecting leaders and providing an opportunity to many entrepreneurs and businessmen to genuinely connect with people who would otherwise have been unreachable.”

Let us look at the example of Sir Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Group, who manages the group as well his multiple identities on various social networking sites. A position of power comes with the responsibility of keeping up with the trends and react in real time. It is like the followers are just waiting to hear from him. And he delivers. While his real life might or might not match to the

positioning created online, it certainly works for the followers.

In all, social media has become a necessary social evil, connecting leaders and providing an opportunity to many entrepreneurs and businessmen to genuinely connect with people who would otherwise have been unreachable. But, with this reach comes the responsibility of actually delivering and remaining truthful to the audience. After all, the show must go on. At the end of the day, it is the true face and the truth that shall prevail. Truth cannot be hidden for long, and it is only a matter of time, before the so called masses, figure out the true leader of the pack. 

About the Author

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The Relevance Of Peter Principle

Firms tend to promote top sales workers into management, even though they emerge as the worst managers. And organisations tend to hasten their decline both in terms of growth and culture.

BY AMARPREET BHAMRA

In the late 60s, Doctors Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull authored, *“The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong.”* The underlying crux of the book is that everyone in the organisation is promoted until they attain a level of incompetence. The book was a best seller for many weeks, and is printed even today –45 years since it first hit the stands!

Post *The Peter Principle*, the constructs of both organisations and leadership have undergone multiple changes. More specifically, most organisations have invested in programmes to develop managers as well as leaders, introduced panels for promotions for mid and senior levels, initiated guidelines for promotion, and decided to consider inputs from 360-degree feedbacks for promoting employees. However, this does not address the point that the next level can actually render a high performing employee to be incompetent.

The premise of *The Peter Principle* is largely based on the managerial role, which exerts power and controls employee growth in large hierarchical structures. Managers would reward employees who demonstrate loyalty, and would act as per their directions. Of course, there are other reasons like promoting employees on the basis of their tenure in the current role or organisation, and cultural aspects, wherein the management is associated with upward movement. The fallout of these practices is that employees are promoted without having the skills and the depth to

handle the responsibilities at the higher level.

Most of these reasons have resonated in one's professional work experience. An underlying factor is that one of the tenets of employee engagement is clearly linked to promotions. HR partners have been championing internally that growth and career prospects of employees are dependent on promotions. Many organisations advertise promotions as a value add for all their employees. However, what gets ignored is that promotions place great heft on the present performance, as against the fit for the next higher role. The book also states, *“You will see that in every hierarchy the cream rises until it sours.”*

A recent study published by Alan Benson, Danielle Li, and Kelly Shue in HBR⁺ examined data on the performance of salespeople and their managers at 214 firms. The study found that among the people who were promoted, better salespeople ended up as bad managers. In other words, organisations tend to hasten their decline in terms of growth and culture, due to low productivity and poor management.

At the time of writing the book, startups and unicorns were non-existent. Given their new age employee policies and open workplace practices, the interest in startups peaked in the market. However, in the past two years, the bubble has burst with many startups' folding up. One among the many documented reasons which hastened their downfall was

how inexperienced employees were promoted to the next level and expected to deliver on the newer responsibilities.

To overcome the Peter Principle, there is heavy lifting required in terms of the performance management lifecycle and the roles in the organisation. Investing in a dual career track for individual contributors and managerial positions with similar job levels and perks could mitigate the imminent consequences of the Peter Principle. Firms could look in the direction of establishing or strengthening their Organisation Development function to constantly evaluate the existing and/or newer roles and benchmark the same against industry practices. Else the Peter Principle would only have existed in someone's imagination.



+ - Do People Really Get Promoted to Their Level of Incompetence? (March 2018)

About the Author

Amarpreet Bhamra is a business process management professional with 20 years of work experience in organisations such as Ernst Young, AP Moller Maersk, Tech Mahindra Business Services, Synchrony Financial, TATA Business Support Services and GE Capital International Services. Amarpreet holds a double post graduate in Communications and English respectively. He has an Advanced Diploma in Financial Management from Indian School of Business Management and Administration.



Becoming a Person of Integrity, Trustworthiness, and Conscientiousness

We all have a new set of yardsticks to match and excel in our new brave world.

BY DR. VIRENDRA P SINGH

Did Yudhishtira lie on the battlefield of Kurukshetra to decapitate his guru, Dronacharya, and win the war of dharma and righteousness unfairly? Did Rajat Gupta, ex-Managing Director of McKinsey, fail the test of conscientiousness in his interactions with Srilankan associate Raja Rajaratnam, a hedge fund owner? Did Chanda Kochhar, ex-CEO of ICICI Bank, violate the standards of morality and trustworthiness in dealing with matters related to NuPower-Videocon?

These questions, their multiple variations, and our answers to these questions define us in many ways. One may also ask if personal qualities like integrity, conscientiousness, and trustworthiness are relevant in an era of AI, IoT, and VR. Daniel Goleman, in his magnum opus *“Working with Emotional Intelligence”* (Bloomsbury, 2013), asserts in the affirmation that the rules for personal and professional effectiveness have changed. *“We are being judged (today) by a new yardstick: not just by how smart we are, but also by how well we handle ourselves and each other. This yardstick is increasingly applied in choosing who will be hired and who will not, who will be let go and who retained, who passed over and who promoted.”*

Goleman has listed 25 personal and social competencies which mark a “star performer”. We seek to understand some of them,



including integrity, trustworthiness, and conscientiousness, herein.

Being Integrated

Integrity is a far more comprehensive concept than honesty and transparency. It is reflected in the practice of being undivided—integrated—in adherence to moral values. A person of integrity acts morally and in accordance with deeper human values even when no one is watching. When one's action is driven by a code of righteous conduct, one generates acceptance and respect for one's well-meaning behaviour.

It's no wonder that Goleman declares that credibility stems from integrity. People follow you when you are integrated, moral, and value-based.

Huberts (Routledge, 2018), in his interesting work on integrity, describes nine types of integrity violations:

1. Corruption: Bribing,

2. Corruption: Favouritism,
3. Conflict of interest (through gifts, jobs, etc.),
4. Fraud and theft of resources,
5. Waste and abuse of resources,
6. Disregard for rules/misuse of power,
7. Misuse and manipulation of information,
8. Indecent treatment (e.g., intimidation and discrimination), and
9. Private-time misconduct.

When Yudhishtira mumbled, *“अश्वत्थामा हतः इति नरो वा कुंजरो वाः (Ashwathama hatah iti naro va kunjaro va)”*, he didn't speak a lie. He was not dishonest when he spoke those words in a low-pitched voice, surrounded by the deafening sounds of conch cells. But his utterances violated ethical principles and values. One can't prosecute him for lack of disclosure, yet he failed the “transparency test”. He rightly disclosed that the

Ashwathama was vanquished yet concealed that it was not the progeny of Guru Drona but the elephant Ashwathama. (Refer to item no. 7 above in Huberts' taxonomy.)

Integrity is an act of integration, fullness, and completion. It is an act of renunciation of all nine manifested behaviours of Huberts' taxonomy above.

Being Trustworthy

People with this competence, Goleman highlights, (i) act ethically and are above reproach, (ii) build trust through their reliability and authenticity, and (iii) admit their own mistakes and confront unethical actions in others.

One builds trust, researchers found, by engaging in a set of facilitating behaviours. Some of the behaviours involved in establishing a climate of trust are enumerated herein below:

1. **Sharing:** When one shares personal events, experiences, and feelings without trespassing into the world of privacy.
2. **Vulnerability:** Not projecting oneself as an all-knowing persona and letting other people notice your limitations, warts, and molls. If one is perceived as human, fallible, and thereby vulnerable, trust is generated.
3. **Loyalty:** Commitment to other person's well-being, including goals of the organisation.
4. **Accepting others:** One may not agree with others but accepts/respects another person's perspective without necessarily concurring with other views.
5. **Involving others:** The other person may have some unique information. When you use others' input in decision making, you build credibility.
6. **Valuing others:** One's willingness to exchange ideas and ideals with others contributes to enhancing credibility.
7. **Awareness:** Being sensitive to others' needs.

8. **Communicating:** When one communicates without inherent contradictions, one generates trust.

9. **Openness:** Willingness to explore new experiences adds to trustworthiness.

10. **Honesty:** Honesty is more than telling the truth. Yudhishtira did not tell a lie, but he didn't avoid a deceitful statement.

Chanda Kochhar, looking back, failed to pass the test of these trust-building behaviours, particularly items 1, 3, and 10, and maybe many more.

Like respect, you earn trust by becoming trustworthy first.

Being Conscientious

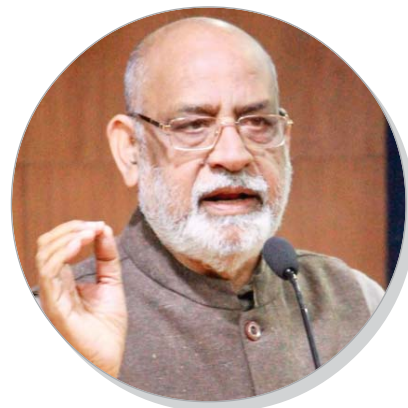
People with the competence of conscientiousness (i) meet their commitments and keep promises, (ii) hold themselves accountable for meeting their objectives, and (iii) are organised and careful in their work.

Conscientiousness is a foundation of success. People with this competence engage in "everyday signs of conscientiousness". They are punctual. They are careful in doing even mundane work. They are scrupulous in attending their responsibilities, routine or vital. They follow the rules, help out, and care for their co-workers.

Contrast all these signs with Rajat Gupta's confession in his memoir "*Mind without Fear*" (Juggernaut, 2019).

- "I was a human being guilty of nothing more than an all too human misjudgement of human character." (Page xiii) This statement was a part of his self-defence.
- "I was jailed for alleged personal gain, for a fabricated white-collar crime, and, at most, a careless mistake." (Page 11)
- "I should have never mentioned the board meeting." (Page 46)
- "Looking back, I was naïve, to say the least." (Page 53)

Rajat Gupta didn't engage in insider trading with his friend Raj Rajaratnam, yet he was naïve and



indiscreet in sharing classified information. One must, however, acknowledge that Rajat Gupta had the courage to accept that he had a chink in his armoury (refer to his list of four confessions above), unfortunately long after the moral battle was lost.

In fact, Rajat Gupta, undoubtedly a vulnerable hero like Yudhishtira, proves the point that we all have a new set of yardsticks (i.e., competencies) to match and excel in our new brave world.

Integrity, trustworthiness, and conscientiousness are overlapping values. Becoming a person of these competencies requires courage to delay immediate gratifications for long-term goodness in and around us. Such individuals will be needed and venerated in the age of AI and IoT. Why and how? Because technology and 'things' depend on them to make tomorrow a lot wiser and more humane. **HC**

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Dr. Virendra P Singh has been Advisor and Distinguished Professor with two private universities and Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow, Indore and Jaipur. Earlier, Dr. Singh was OD Advisor with Patanjali, Haridwar.

Amazon Launches Rekindle 2.0 to Help Women Resume Career After a Break

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH



Amazon India has launched 'rekindle 2.0' to help women coming back from extended breaks resume and rebuild their corporate careers.

The program which was initiated as a pilot in 2016 has been re-launched with new features and benefits such as structured onboarding, focused mentoring, flexible work options and on-the-job learning that will help women integrate into the workplace more smoothly.

Under the program, women candidates will have access to flexible work options, including work from home, and flexible shift options as per their respective job roles. Amazon will facilitate peer learning circles that will help with specific skills gaps while offering roles and assignments that empowers women to perform effectively on the job. Responsibilities will be given in stages to help women cope with work and gradually get back into the world of work.

"A diverse workforce is integral to the growth of the company and the growth of the economy. Through unique initiatives like rekindle 2.0, we are providing an opportunity to women who were on career break to resume their corporate careers through structured onboarding, focused mentoring and on the job learning" said Deepti Varma, Director HR, India and Middle East, Amazon.

The program is for tech and non-tech job roles, including working on live projects across different functional areas. A minimum of twelve months of career break will be considered for women to be a part of 'rekindle'. They will be selected on the basis of their previous experience that matches job requirements for the identified positions. **HC**

Three Indian Companies Featured in the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Tech Mahindra and Wipro have joined the 2020 Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index (GEI), which recognizes companies committed to advancing women's equality in the workplace. While the India-based IT giants made their debut, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories has retained its spot on the index for the third consecutive year.

The reference index is calculated on the basis of five parameters, i.e. female leadership and talent pipeline, equal pay and gender pay parity, inclusive culture, sexual harassment policies, and pro-women brand.

The index comprises 325 companies across 50 sectors headquartered in 42 countries and regions. Last year, the GEI had 230 companies from 36 countries and regions.

The GEI tracks the financial performance of the companies committed to supporting gender equality through policy development, representation, and transparency. Firms included in the index have a combined market capitalization of USD 12 trillion, up from USD 9 trillion as compared to last year.

Through disclosure of gender-related metrics using the GEI framework, the companies included in the 2020 GEI have provided a comprehensive look at their investment in workplace gender equality and the communities in which they operate. The aforementioned firms were included in this year's index for scoring at or above a global threshold established by Bloomberg to reflect a high level of disclosure and overall performance across the framework's five parameters. **HC**



The Secret Of Power

The secret to success lies beyond making the right decision with the right resources and at the right moment. This is because success can be achieved by learning the mistakes committed by us.

BY **ABHIROOP BANERJEE**



Every Indian family is driven by the fear of failure during examinations since the fear has been ingrained in our minds since childhood. Today, faring well in examinations is considered to be the basic survival instinct, since the society has taught us that success is essential for a sustained livelihood. Unfortunately, the educational/ societal system does not provide us with the tools needed to bounce back from failures and setbacks. Also, it does not guide us to visualise failures as the stepping stone to a successful journey in a life that has been bestowed as meaningful by the Almighty.

We refrain the younger generation from partaking in experiments, to leave room for errors, pursue their goals, and follow the path where their heart lies. And we make them to choose a career which is in greater demand in the market so as to enable them to lead a respectable life. But why do we not teach them to deal with setbacks, stressful moments, and heart breaks in addition to the way in which the corporate world functions?

The secret to success lies beyond making the right decision with the right resources and at the right moment. This is because success can be achieved by learning the mistakes committed by us every time, and discovering a new experience so that we evolve

better, and find newer ways to the journey as per our vision.

A successful leader experiences failure on several occasions in his/ her journey. These experiences enable his/her to evolve and widely explore the right path to be chosen, and steer away from blunders. This has always been valued in the society and the corporate world to bring about an effective impact.

In today's organisations, mistakes are viewed as threats to progress. However, in order to make it big and to be innovative, we are bound to experience initial setbacks that will enable us to improvise and recreate a better version. Chandrayaan-2, ISRO's ambitious space mission, taught us the need to strive and bounce back, even if it takes a life time to achieve the desired results.

Creativity comes to life in those organisations where innovations, ideas, and experiments are embraced to pave the way for new inventions along with the synergy of people, talent, and dedication. Some of the greatest leaders and personalities in the corporate world and the political arena hail from underprivileged families, are school dropouts, have made various mistakes in their initial ventures. However, they have emerged to be visionaries and leaders and have forced the entire world to follow their trail. Incidentally, they have

more stories of their failure than success to share. And they have achieved their present position owing to their consistent efforts at excellence with hard work, ethics, dedication, and resilience, and have managed to bounce back every time they tasted failure.

We often hear motivational speakers talk about the milestones of those people who have emerged to be successful. However, we need sessions to learn the failures/ setbacks that these leaders faced in the past. In today's competitive world, we need to understand that we cannot be successful in achieving our goals on every occasion. However, we can be trained, coached, and mentored to bounce back with resilience to combat the challenges, and find solutions to become stronger and withstand the challenges of the corporate world at any point in time. **HC**

About the Author

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



Listening Deeply

The noise of our thoughts and the swirl of our emotions clutter our ability to listen to the crux of the conversation. Silence your thoughts to listen beyond words.

BY ASHU KHANNA

I awakened to the distinction between hearing and listening when I started my journey of transformation in 2006. Until then, most of my conversations occurred by focusing on the words rather than the intention and emotion behind them. Hearing is limited to the faculty of perceiving sounds and hence, it is an information-gathering exercise. On the other hand, listening requires a person to give their attention to a sound and therefore, goes beyond the basic function of hearing.

“Let go of your mind and then be mindful. Close your ears and listen.” — Rumi

All human beings are a bundle of emotions. Our emotions influence our actions and state of being. Our language alters as and when we feel sad or happy. Our tone is loud and words harsh when we are angry or frustrated; our actions are hasty or aggressive when we feel the need to prove ourselves; our behaviour is compassionate when we come from love and understanding. Hence, our emotions and the ensuing thoughts dominate our words and expressions. To understand the true meaning of what is being said, it is essential to focus on the underlying emotions rather than just the words.

Each person perceives and expresses life differently based on their experience and culture. When

we listen only to the words, we miss what a person may be trying to say. I remember while coaching a fellow coach, there was an underlying need to prove my effectiveness as a coach. After some time, I felt as if I had hit an internal wall. I threw my hands up and vulnerably shared with the client that my attachment to wanting him to have an “aha” moment was obstructing me. That was his moment of truth. He said, “I now know that my attachment to outcomes is blocking me from unleashing my potential.” I was able to be a reflective mirror to the client when I let go of trying to control the conversation and decided to trust my inner self.

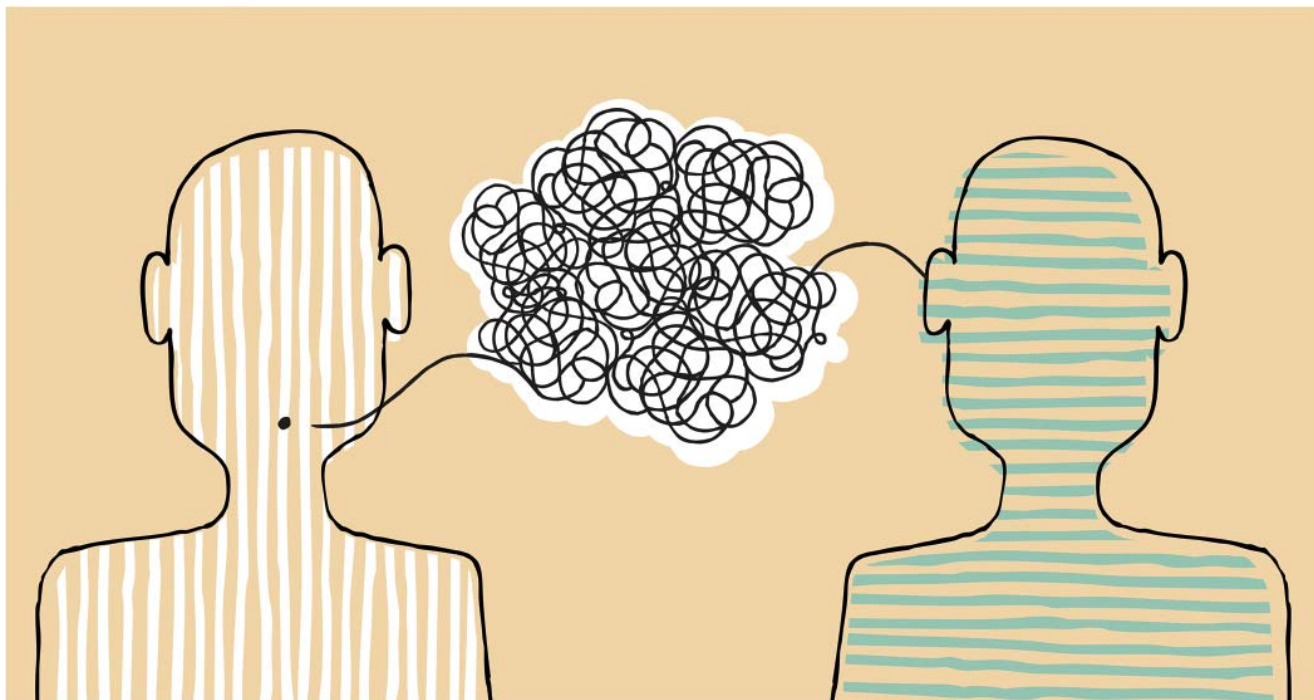
“When we express authentically, we can positively influence our relationships, because then there is no gap between intention, emotion, and action.”

The art of deep listening

The noise of our thoughts and the swirl of our emotions clutter our ability to listen to the crux of the conversation. Deep listening is an art that requires us to be completely

available, conscious, and open without any judgement, attachment, or preconceived notions. To give attention to any sound or word, we need to be able to focus completely on the verbal and non-verbal cues such as body language, tone, and the pace of communication. This undivided attention or the ability to observe objectively facilitates us to understand emotions beyond the words.

I recall having a coaching conversation, where the client was frustrated with his habit of procrastination. Although there was a deep desire to change, the client was feeling frustrated by his failure to remain motivated and committed to moving forward. I noticed that the self-confidence of the client was rather low, as there was a feeling of lack of achievement. Also, as I listened deeply, I noticed a sense of grief in his voice. I asked him, “What are you grieving about?” That question suddenly unlocked his emotions because he had not realised that a feeling of grief was holding him down. He shared that he was grieving about the “lost time and effort” and “what could have been possible”. I offered that since the past could not be reversed, would he like to consider creating a new future? That possibility sparked a renewed motivation to look for solutions. He realised that wishful thinking and judgments were blocking his ability to access his authentic self.



Making an impact

We all desire to be understood. But do we truly understand ourselves? When we let go of our assumptions and expectations and listen openly, we feel understood, accepted, and acknowledged for who we are. Similarly, a coach is an observer who acts as a catalyst to another unfoldment. To be effective as a coach or observer, we need to shed our conditioned thoughts and reconnect to listen deeply to our inner voice. Our inner voice is the voice of love that guides us on how to be in the moment. When we express authentically, we can positively influence our relationships, because then there is no gap between intention, emotion, and action.

A client, a successful CEO, was very good at managing the business. To expand the business to the next level, he knew that he needed to develop and empower his team. Keen to improve his interpersonal relationship with the team, he opted for coaching to understand how to motivate and influence his team to perform better. As his self-awareness expanded, he realised

that he needed to pay attention to understanding his team members, rather than expecting to be understood. The leader started hosting town hall meetings to invite participation, ideation, and hear out the problems of his team members. He also offered group coaching conversations to each team to understand their strengths and discover solutions on how to grow in alignment with the organisational vision. Letting go of his need to control everything and opening the space for dialogue enabled the client to leverage the team and grow the business more than threefold.

In 2016, Forbes reported that 65% of employees felt that, more often than not, a communication breakdown hampered the effectiveness of their job. Further, a study by Gallup in 2017 revealed that almost 85% of the global workforce was actively disengaged from their jobs. This brings us back to the fact that communication is not just the ability to speak in a dialect or language. Even though it may seem simple, sometimes one lifetime is not enough to master this skill. All relationships hinge on

our ability to say the right words at the right time.

With awareness, we can be alert to the impact of our state of being on others and choose how to be in any moment. Rachel Naomi Remen said: *“A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.”* Therefore, a conversation is effective when there is space for the expression of emotions. While we listen, when we trust our awareness and trust the wholeness of others, we can create magic in any conversation!



About the Author

Ashu Khanna is a leadership coach and CEO of Arka Capital Advisors. Over the past 14 years, she has partnered with many CXOs to help them deepen their relationship with the authentic self. Ashu is a keynote speaker and has also published three books. She has been the Founder President of the Mumbai Chapter of International Coach Federation. Ashu is a Chartered Accountant who has worked in India and South-East Asia.

Contractual Employees' Entitlement To Provident Fund

As per Section 16 of the EPF Act, apart from the other types of establishments mentioned therein, it is not applicable to establishments under the control of Central/State Governments whose employees are entitled to receive provident fund or employee pension.

BY K V SINGH AND NACHIKETA GOYAL

The Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 ("EPF Act") is applicable to establishments covered by it and employing 20 or more employees. However, as per Section 16 of the EPF Act, apart from the other types of establishments mentioned therein, it is not applicable to establishments belonging to or under the control of Central/State Governments whose employees are entitled to receive provident fund or employee pension under any scheme or rule framed by the Central or State Government governing such benefits.

The Supreme Court in its recent judgment of *M/s Pawan Hans Limited & Ors. vs. Aviation Karmachari Sanghatana & Ors.* [C.A. No. 353 of 2020] dated January 17, 2020 has *inter alia* held that employees eligible under the EPF Act, employed with entities belonging to or under the control of Central/State Governments cannot be denied benefit of EPF Act, as well as any scheme or rule framed by the Central/State Government governing such benefits, on the ground that they are contractual employees and not regular employees.

It may be pertinent to consider the facts of the case. On 1st April, 1986, M/s. Pawan Hans Ltd. (**Appellant**), a Govt. of India registered company (**"Company"**) framed and notified the Pawan Hans Employees Provident Fund Trust Regulations (**"Regulations"**)



to provide provident fund benefits to its employees (as the company was a non-scheduled operator under Rule 134 of the Aircraft Rules, 1937). Clause 2.5 of the Regulations defined employee as "any person who is employed for wages/salary in any kind of work, monthly or otherwise, in or in connection with the work of the Corporation and who gets his wages/salary directly or indirectly from the Corporation, and excludes any person employed by or through a contractor or in connection with the work of the Corporation, but does not include any person employed as an apprentice or trainee." Thus, the Company provided provident fund benefits only to regular employees and not contractual employees.

The Central Government, vide its notification dated 22.03.2001, made the provisions of the EPF Act applicable to aircraft and airlines establishments employing 20 or more persons, excluding aircraft or airlines establishments owned or controlled by the Central or State Government w.e.f. 01.04.2001. Since the Company was an aircraft and airlines establishment, the trade union (**Respondent**) made representations before the Company to provide contractual employees with provident fund benefits. However, the Company failed to take heed of the representations of the trade union. The trade union filed a civil writ petition against the Company on 20.12.2016, praying that contract workers be granted with PF

benefits. The High Court directed the Company to enroll all eligible contractual employees under the EPF Scheme, and deposit their contribution with the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner from the day they became eligible till remittance, and thereafter, till they are in employment of the Company. Aggrieved by the aforesaid Order, the Company preferred the Appeal.

The counsel for the Appellant argued that since the Appellant was a Government of India Company, it was excluded from the provisions of EPF Act. However, the Supreme Court of India reiterated the twin conditions laid down in *Regional Provident Fund Commissioner vs. Sanatan Dharam Girls Secondary School* [(2007) 1 SCC 268] for seeking exemption from the applicability of EPF Act which are:

- i. The establishment must be either “*belonging to*” or “*under the control of*” Central or State Government; and
- ii. The employees of such an establishment should be entitled to the benefit of contributory provident fund or old age pension in accordance with any scheme or ruled framed by the Central Government or the State Government governing such benefits.

If the aforementioned conditions are fulfilled, an establishment can claim exemption/exclusion under Section 16(1)(b) of the EPF Act.

The Supreme Court held that the Company fulfilled the first condition, however, it did not fulfil the second condition for seeking exemption. Although, the Company had its own Scheme viz. the Pawan Hans Employees Provident Fund Trust Regulations (“**Regulations**”) in force, it restricted the application of the Regulations only to ‘regular’ employees. Further, the Regulations were not framed by the Central or State Government, nor were they applicable to all the employees of the Company.

The Court observed that the Company does not satisfy the

second condition since the members of the trade union and other contractual workers were not getting the benefits of contributory provident fund under the Regulations framed by the Company, or under any Scheme or any rule framed by the Central Government or the State Government. Consequentially, the exemption under Section 16 of EPF Act would not be applicable to the Company.

The second issue which came up for consideration before the Court was whether the members of the trade union were entitled to the benefit of provident fund under the Regulations or under the EPF Act. Clause 2.5 of the Regulations defines an “employee” to include *any employee* who is employed for wages/salary in any kind of work, monthly or otherwise, or in connection with the work of the Company, and who gets his wages/salary *directly or indirectly* from the Company. Clause 2.5 only excludes a person employed by or through a contractor in connection with the work of the Company, and any person employed as an apprentice or trainee.

The Court observed that even though the appointment letters refer to employees as ‘contractual’ employees, they were not engaged through any contractor. They were being paid directly by the Company. The Court observed that the members of the trade union have been in continuous employment with the Company for long periods of time. Further, Clause 2.5 of the Regulations covered all contractual employees who have been engaged by the Company, and draw their wages/salary directly or indirectly from the Company. The Court further observed as per Clause 2(f) of the EPF Act, the definition of an “employee” is an inclusive definition, and is widely worded to include “any person” engaged either directly or indirectly in connection with the work of an establishment, and is paid wages. However, since the Regulations were in force, it would be preferable to direct that

the contractual employees are granted the benefit of provident fund under the Regulations.

In a nutshell, an establishment can claim exemption/exclusion under Section 16(1)(b) of the EPF Act and frame its own scheme or rules, but the scheme or rules cannot be such that they deny contractual employees the benefit under such scheme or the rules. **HC**



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Q We are a company in Gurgaon. A case was filed against my company by a workman claiming alleged withheld dues and compensation under the Payment of Wages Act, 1936. The labour authority under the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, passed an order against my company directing us to pay the workman an amount of Rs. 8,00,000/- and to deposit the same with the authority within 30 days. I wish to file an appeal against the order of the labour authority. I do not want to deposit the amount with the labour authority as the same may be released to the workman by the authority. What is the appropriate recourse for me?

A The Payment of Wages Act, 1936, makes it mandatory for the employer to deposit the amount directed to be paid by the Authority in order for the appeal preferred by the employer to be entertained. Thus, you will have to deposit the amount with the Authority and obtain a proof of such deposit. However, while submitting the cheque/ demand draft, you may mention in the accompanying application that the cheque/demand draft deposited by your company may not be released to the workman as your company would be filing an appeal against the order. Further, while filing the appeal against the said order before the District Court, an application may also be made to the District Court to stay the order passed by the Authority during the pendency of the appeal, and to direct the Authority not to release the sum deposited by you. Under Section 17(3) of the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, if an

employer prefers an appeal, the Authority against whose decision the appeal has been preferred may, and if so directed by the Court, shall, pending the decision of the appeal, withhold the payment of any sum deposited with it.

Q I am a manager in an Information Technology company in Bangalore. One of the former employees of our sister concern (which is a separate legal entity) has made us a party to a suit claiming reinstatement. Further, the former employee has not made our sister company (the company which employed him) a party to the suit. The matter is pending before the District Court. What would be the best possible way to tackle this situation?

A I understand that the contract of employment is between your sister concern and its former employee, and your company is neither party to the employment contract nor has the employee ever worked for your company. Thus, prima facie, the suit appears to be ill-conceived and you should consider moving an application under Order VII Rule 11 of Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 for dismissal of the suit as the plaint does not disclose any cause of action against you. You are likely to succeed if you are able to convince the court, based on the plaint and the documents filed therewith, that the plaint does not disclose any cause of action against you. **HC**

Executive Presence: The Wow Factor for Leaders

Each one of us has an executive presence, and it is a skill that could be enhanced through practice.

BY MONIKA NAVANDAR

Imagine yourself in these situations: interviewing for your dream job or the next step in your career; leading a team; presenting in front of senior executives, board members, and venture capitalists; or simply addressing a big crowd. There are so many other similar situations in which you are trying to establish your credibility and positively influence others. What is it that keeps your audience excited and engaged? What is it that makes your audience want to listen to you, believe you, and follow you? What is it that in closed-door meetings and in your absence, would make the senior leaders in your organization go out on a limb to advocate for your next opportunity? Well, executive presence is one of the answers to these ever-tricky questions. You know it when you see it—some call it gravitas, but how do you really define it? Is it a skill that you can build? How do you maintain it in the long run? How does one sustain it, especially under high-pressure situations?

While there are multiple definitions on the internet, executive presence, for me, is a person's ability to read the room/situation, to manage one's emotions by not letting anything affect the way one plans to deliver the message, to be authentic, and to be confident in one's skin. It is the ability to communicate effectively and establish credibility that influences and motivates others to believe

you, collaborate with you or follow you to accomplish the desired outcome. Executive presence can help you achieve your personal as well as professional goals through effective, ethical persuasion^[1]. For example, as a leader, when you see that energy is scattered all over the place, executive presence means bringing in that anchor to centralize the energy and positively influence others to act.

Each one of us has an executive presence, and it is a skill that could be enhanced through practice. Executive presence involves everything: think about your first impressions, interpersonal skills, mannerisms, maturity, confidence, wisdom, values, integrity, temperament, social presence, demeanour, consistency, courage, etc.

While many of us struggle and want to put our best foot forward under high-pressure situations, and while there are multiple ways to deal with anxiety and other emotions, what works best for me is focusing on providing value. Sustaining executive presence needs self-awareness and continuous monitoring.

Tips to improve your executive presence:

- Start by reading Harrison Monarth's bestselling book on executive presence^[1].
- Invest in an assessment tool to get evaluated on your executive presence.



- Set clear criteria and seek 360-degree feedback on your executive presence.
- For high stake meetings, you can never over-prepare: preparation, practice, and managing your anxiety are critical. Make notes, practice in front of your colleagues/friends, meditate or do anything that helps you relax; for me, it is listening to music and singing.
- Lastly, dress for the occasion, work on your relationship capital, improve your listening skills, and work on enhancing your public speaking skills. My personal favourites are people who speak clearly and to the point—articulation is quite an art! 

Reference:

Monarth, H. (2010). *Executive Presence: The Art of Commanding Respect Like a CEO*.

About the Author

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

Mindfulness For Executives

Mindfulness is an awakening to recognise what is happening in the present moment. Executives are rarely mindful, and are usually engrossed in distracting thoughts or opinions about the happenings at that very instant.

BY **DR. K N VISWANATHAM**

Executives operating in the contemporary volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world are susceptible to a plethora of concerns such as stress, anxiety, confusion, and psychological disturbances. Emotional suffering is the common denominator for executives across every level in an organisation. Empirical evidence of documented research reports that mindfulness practices will aid in improving the mental health of executives.

If executives are less distressed by events in their lives, their suffering will eventually decrease. But how can executives be shielded from disturbances by unpleasant experiences? An executive's life is undoubtedly a roller coaster ride that includes suffering. The mind and body instinctively react to painful experiences. Mindfulness is a skill that allows executives to be less reactive to what is happening in the moment. It is a way of reducing suffering and increasing well-being. Mindfulness is an awakening to recognise what is happening in the present moment. Executives are rarely mindful, and are usually engrossed in distracting thoughts or opinions about what is happening in the moment.

The various activities of mindlessness that executives often get involved in are:

- Hurrying through activities without being attentive to them



- Breaking or spilling things owing to carelessness, inattention, or thinking of something else
- Forgetting a person's name almost as soon as they have heard it
- Failing to notice subtle feelings of their physical tension or discomfort
- Finding themselves preoccupied with the future or past
- Snacking without being aware of eating

The science of consciousness

Mindfulness focuses the attention of individuals on the task at hand.

When executives are mindful, their attention is not entangled in the past or the future, and they are not being judgemental about what is occurring at the moment. An attention of such a kind generates energy, clear-headedness, and joy. This is a skill that can be taught to executives.

While the subject mindfulness has been credited with a long history, it has currently occupied the space of the science of consciousness. The central tenets of mindfulness are awareness, attention, and recollection. Brown and Ryan (2003) define awareness and attention under the canopy of consciousness. Consciousness encompasses awareness as well as attention. Awareness is the background “radar” of consciousness that continually monitors the inner and outer environment. One may be aware of the stimuli without them being at the centre of attention. Attention is a process of focusing conscious awareness, and providing heightened sensitivity to a limited range of experiences. In reality, awareness and attention are intertwined such that attention continually pulls “figures” out of the “ground” of awareness, holding them in focus for varying lengths of time. A pressure cooker whistling in the background may eventually command our attention when it gets loud enough. Similarly, one may carry out several activities on autopilot. Mindfulness is the opposite of being on autopilot; it is paying attention to what is salient in the present moment. Mindfulness also involves remembering, but not dwelling in memories, to reorient our attention and awareness to current experience in a wholehearted, receptive manner. This requires an intent to disentangle from our reverie and to fully experience the moment.

A stress buster

Mindfulness is used to reduce stress and is termed as mindfulness-based stress reduction that consists of multiple forms of mindfulness

practices, including formal and informal meditation practice, as well as hatha yoga (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). The formal practice consists of breath focused attention and body scan-based attention to the transient nature of sensory experience, shifting attention across sensory modalities, open monitoring of moment-to-moment experience, walking meditation and eating meditation. Informal practice entails brief pauses that involves volitional shifting of attention to the present moment of awareness. Together, this package of mindfulness practices aims to enhance the ability to observe the immediate content of experience, specifically, the transient nature of thoughts, emotion, memories, mental images, and physical sensation.

“Awareness is the background “radar” of consciousness that continually monitors the inner and outer environment. One may be aware of the stimuli without them being at the centre of attention.”

The qualities of mindfulness moments are illustrated as under:

- **Non-conceptual:** Mindfulness is awareness without absorption in our thought process.
- **Present-centred:** Mindfulness is always about being in the

present moment. Thoughts on our experience are removed from the present moment.

- **Non-judgmental:** Awareness cannot occur freely if we want our experience to be other than what it is.
- **Intentional:** Mindfulness always involves an intent to direct attention elsewhere. Being attentive in the present moment gives mindfulness continuity over time.
- **Participant observation:** Mindfulness is not about being a detached witness. It is an intimate experience of the mind and body.
- **Non-verbal:** Experience of mindfulness cannot be captured in words because awareness occurs before words arise in the mind.
- **Exploratory:** Mindful awareness is always investigating subtler levels of perception.
- **Liberating:** Every moment of mindful awareness provides freedom from conditioned suffering.

Mindfulness and its advantages

Practicing mindfulness helps executives to: -

- a) Develop insight into psychological functioning,
- b) Respond skilfully to new situations, and
- c) Be less entangled in their ruminations

In view of the above, there is a compelling case for the present-day



executives to value the importance of mindfulness, and executives across all functions and domains must keep the following pointers in mind:

1. Overcome activities of mindlessness which are understandably common in organisations.
2. Information and knowledge related to mindfulness must be disseminated to all executives in the organisation by the leaders of learning & development.
3. It is imperative for executives to value the importance and practice of mindfulness and recognise that mindfulness is a significant antidote to VUCA environment.
4. As a strategic initiative, all key personnel in the organisation must undergo a twoday mandatory learning programme on mindfulness in view of its efficacy and overarching health and psychological benefits. **HC**

About the Author

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

The growing interest in the field is reflected in Harvard's course catalogue. This spring, Lazar is teaching "Cognitive Neuroscience of Meditation," Ezer Vierba leads an expository freshmen writing course on "Buddhism, Mindfulness, and the Practical Mind," and Metta McGarvey teaches "Mindfulness for Educators" at the Graduate School of Education.

The pioneer of scientific research on meditation, Herbert Benson, extolled its benefits on the human body - reduced blood pressure, heart rate, and brain activity - as early as 1975. He helped demystify meditation by calling it the "relaxation response." Benson is director emeritus of the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital and Mind/Body Medicine Distinguished Professor of Medicine at HMS.

Retrieved from : <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/04/less-stress-clearer-thoughts-with-mindfulness-meditation/>

Some portions of the content of the article has been drawn from <https://buddhistinquiry.org/article/what-is-mindfulness-and-why-is-it-important-to-therapists/>



So how are they different? The table below offers some indications on the differences between employer branding and talent branding

Employer Branding: It is the approach adopted by an organisation to position itself as an employer of choice by sharing its unique strengths and offerings. It is an outreach programme primarily to create an exclusive brand for talent attraction. Two of the most utilised platforms are LinkedIn and the Careers section of the organisation's website.

Talent branding: It is more social, and is an employee driven feedback about how it is to actually work in an organisation. This is referred to by prospective employees to enable them during their decision making process of choosing to work with an organisation. Some of the most common platforms are Glassdoor, Indeed, Great Places to work etc.

While the purpose of the two approaches are different, both tend to meet at the intersection of talent attraction strategy. This implies that an organisation cannot have a great employer branding strategy alone, and should pay attention to the feedback being generated on talent branding platforms. Some futuristic organisations have started to look into the feedback that is shared on these platforms as their insights on areas of development.

Talent Branding: A Holistic View

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

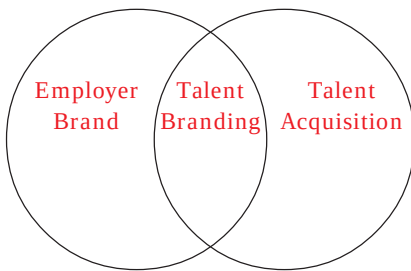
BY PINAKESH MUKHERJEE

Historically, organisations have made use of various channels to create employer branding and position themselves as an employer of choice. With the onset of social media, the channels of communication have undergone a change. However, the approach has remained the same i.e. to speak about the quality of work that happens within the organisation or the growth opportunities or about work life integration, or, in most cases, a combination of all of the above. It is therefore natural that terms such as employer branding, talent branding, and

employee value proposition have begun to find a recurring occurrence in the organisational parlance.

Employer branding	Talent branding
Is the approach to create awareness amongst prospective job seekers about the organisation and its unique qualities	Is the feedback of the employees who have worked or are currently working in an organisation
Is a marketing approach for creating a brand of preferred employer	Is a list of pros and cons of an organisation as experienced by an employee
Idealistic /perfect world scenario	Actual events that transpired within the organisation
Uses platforms like LinkedIn, business magazines to share the narratives	Uses platforms like Glassdoor, Great Places To Work, Indeed, and of course, the company's own website

The common ground



The Venn diagram highlights the common ground between employer branding and talent branding, and also how both of them contribute to the talent attraction strategy. It may be argued that most organisations run a pulse/employee engagement survey to seek feedback from employees on various aspects of the organisation. However, the surveys are often restricted to specific areas around organisation strategy, ease of working, quality of work etc. and does not necessarily get into the details of each experience area. Also, in some cases, there is an underlying caution that is demonstrated by the employees, though the surveys tend to be anonymous. In the case of talent branding portals, the identity is completely anonymous, and it becomes extremely difficult to identify from the vast talent pool of the organisation. Therefore, the feedback is more specific and realistic on several occasions.

Basis the underlying principles of each of these approaches, here are the 4 tips to ace talent branding for the organisation

A) Role of a talent brand manager:

In order to create a compelling employer brand, it is absolutely essential to have the position of a talent brand manager. He/she would be looking at different talent branding platforms, read the feedback, comments, and discussions. This forms the basis for all development strategies for increasing the employer brand. In simple terms, this means that the talent brand manager looks at the

top topics that people are talking about- what they did not like about or would like to see more of about the organisation. The employer branding strategy then incorporates those insights and works to improve those experiences.

B) Building a talent branding section on the company's website:

This is a useful approach in the talent branding strategy. In fact, it also welds well with the employer branding strategy. A lot of progressive thinking organisations have started incorporating a talent branding section within the company's website, and are connecting it to their employer brand. The approach here is to share direct feedback about what an employee feels, and their experiences with the organisation on a day to day basis. So, instead of the organisation highlighting some of the top attractions like quality of work, great working environment etc. they let their employees share their experiences on their website and also on other social platforms.

C) Seeking constant feedback:

Staying tuned in to employee feedback is critical for positive talent branding. A communication mechanism needs to be built to share the updates and progress on the feedback shared by the employees on different talent branding platforms. Talent brand managers play a significant role in sharing the top topics of feedback to the leaders of the organisation, and also create an ongoing communication around the work that is being done to improve the employee experience.

D) Leadership sponsor: Any employer branding initiative will find it difficult to retain sustainability if there is no leadership sponsor to promote the brand. The strategy needs to be sustainable and should cut across different media, keeping its target audience in mind. Leaders not only have the responsibility of communicating the value proposition to external stakeholders like



customers and potential employees, but also to the internal stakeholders viz. the employees as well. Any work done to improve the value proposition needs to be well articulated to ensure people in the organisation become aware of it and volunteer to provide feedback about it.

With the mismatch in the demand and supply of talent acquisition getting increasingly skewed, organisations need to have a clearly articulated employer brand proposition which has its unique positioning – something that should also focus on not just the employee experience, but also have a clearly defined purpose which transcends the commercial purpose. A value proposition that connects to a purpose which appeals and resonates with the audience shall automatically garner greater positive talent branding from those who experience the organisation. 

About the Author

Pinakesh Mukherjee is a seasoned HR professional with over 14 years of experience in domains including talent acquisition, performance management, recognition, M&A and learning. He has worked with multiple sectors in organisations such as ABN AMRO Bank, RBS, HT Media digital business, Vodafone Shared Services etc. Pinakesh holds a PGDBM from XLRI Jamshedpur and a bachelor's degree in Marine Science.

Thinking Bigger, Aiming Higher



Prabir Jha, Founder and CEO of Prabir Jha People Advisory, chooses to live a life of convictions rather than consequences, and his story is one of immense motivation. He set out in his professional life as a young civil servant. However, a new dream, a desire, and destiny brought him outside the walled gardens of the famed civil services and into the corporate world, where he achieved phenomenal success and contributed profusely for over twenty years towards transforming the HR landscape of some of the best-known global corporations. Determined to explore newer avenues of opportunities

and promote people practices that will help more businesses, he took yet another bold leap forward in 2019, transitioning from the corporate world to entrepreneurship by launching an advisory firm. Widely regarded as an influential HR leader, Prabir believes that HR has a fantastic opportunity to challenge archaic practices and impact modern workplaces. He calls for CHROs to boldly reimagine the HR agenda by demonstrating more self-assurance and strategic insight.

BY ANKITA SHARMA

Q You have diverse industry experience—from engineering, information technology, pharmaceuticals, and automotive to top business conglomerations. Take us through your journey and the key learnings. Also, what got you to leave the civil services for the corporate world?

A Certain scripts in life and in careers seem ordained. Accidents, cross-roads, and serendipity do influence a lot of what we do or become. Coming from Bihar, the decision to write the UPSC exams and become a civil servant was almost a given decision. All my choices in education were in support of that. I got selected for civil services even before I finished my MA exams. It was almost a strategic accomplishment to have those coveted initials after my name and join the Academy.

Yet, almost seven to eight years later, despite all the trappings of comfortable civil service life, I was restless and wanted to study more. Given that I never enjoyed the dreary world of accounts, and that civil services seemed at cross purposes with sales and marketing, I chose HR as my MBA specialisation, that leveraged my years of experience in the civil services handling a wide gamut of personnel and industrial relation matters of the Indian Ordnance Factories. Writing the XLRI examinations then became the obvious wild card thought.

I had never ever thought that I would leave the civil services after my MBA. A career in the government looked all so set at the end of almost ten years. But indifferent handling of the reimbursements of my XLRI expenses got me to take my first principled exit decision—to give up on what was almost the only dream and enter an absolutely new world of the corporate with fifteen thousand rupees in the bank and two small children in arms!

I have three sharp career insights from my two decades of corporate life:

- I have always lived a **life of convictions rather than consequences**. My career has been about making each day matter rather than building a safe resume. God and the people I have served have been generous and allowed me to follow my heart, including my current entrepreneurial experiment of running my own advisory!
- The second insight is that **your team builds you, so build them**. I feel proud that tenure after tenure, I have developed a team of the best professionals, many of them better than me. Giving them a strategic direction and providing them with all the support and freedom has ensured a consistent and step-change impact in every company in quick time. And getting them to enjoy playing as one team is a huge leadership acumen to acquire. That I could count 32 CHROs who were once on my team is the biggest career satisfaction. And I am sure the number will easily double.
- The third learning is showing **courage and vulnerability**. For most of my corporate career, I've been a CHRO of some of the

Rapid Fire

Favourite quote: “If your actions inspire others to dream more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” — John Quincy Adams

The best book you recently read: *Trillion Dollar Coach* by Eric Schmidt, Jonathan Rosenberg, and Alan Eagle

A movie title that best describes you: *Dabangg!*

Describe today's HR in one line: The more you do, the more you need to do!

What comes to your mind when you hear these words?

CHRO: Move beyond your title to do beyond your title.

Gen-Z: Help us set the new alphabet!

Diversity: Why are you stopping short of true plurality in thinking?

largest companies and have driven the agenda for large-scale transformation. That was never easy, strategically or politically. Willingness to recognise one's own vulnerability, building a team to supplement our efforts, and setting an audacious agenda sets us apart. I have never believed I know all answers, or for that matter, all questions. But one must be willing to be stupid enough to ask the most basic question because often



Up Close and Personal

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

A One of my favourite memories of 2019 was attempting something I had never done before. To leave a top paying corporate job to start a small strategic advisory venture of your own is never easy. Yet it is your own baby, and every small thing about it—the name, the logo, the first invoice, the first client—is a wonderful memory. And it is nicer because I, yet again, followed my dictum of conviction, not consequence.

As for 2020, I would love to learn to play a musical instrument. I have always felt inadequate without it. Let's hope it happens!

Q What is one myth that you would like to dispel about the HR profession?

A That HR is an easy job! This is as misplaced of a stereotype as one can think of. I believe it is the most difficult job. You only realise it when you become the CEO. Everyone from the doorman to the chairman has a view on HR (and they often believe that theirs is the only right view!). You need to wade through it all. The credit is always someone else's, but the blame is always on HR, which functions as a convenient fall guy. HR has created its own PR problem by focusing on doing a lot of transactional stuff

(including things that should be done by the employee or the manager), rather than focusing on the strategic agenda. Finally, it is the only function that has to deliver an agenda through almost every manager. Poor line managers make HR the bad boy again.

Q What are your top productivity hacks?

A There is nothing dramatic here! I follow my calendar seriously as it keeps me focused. And I avoid wasting time on issues that don't need my decision.

Q How do you maintain work-life balance?

A Actually, corporate life does not allow you that luxury, unfortunately. Yet I don't typically carry work tensions home nor vice versa. This has worked for me. I also do a fair bit of the household chores, some quite well! These and other activities such as cooking, listening to music, and reading books de-stress me. Earlier, my dog also got my mind off work. And I never compromise on my eight hours of sleep!

Q What would we be surprised to learn about you?

A I am quite an open book person, so you often get to experience me as you see me! But some may be surprised to know that I once was a reasonably proficient horse rider and a squash player.

the problem is right there. When you challenge the status quo, you will build critics and enemies. When you win, you will evoke jealousy. Through it all, keep your head down and march on. Neither criticism nor adulation should get your focus to shift.

“Building a digital culture is more a behavioural challenge than a technological one. And yet, most of the efforts that one sees are around the deployment of a technology platform.”

Q The bar continues to be raised on HR, with talent

acquisition, retention, and engagement being dramatically reimagined, and the world of work being continually redefined by technology. To handle the tsunami of change in HR, are there new habits and approaches that leaders need to put into practice?

A Beyond the specifics, CHROs must boldly reimagine the new reality. Most of them are still unable to visualise the new picture. Unless we do that, we'll continue to think the classic parts incrementally and perpetually play catch-up. And we've got to show courage. CHROs need to set the agenda better than just taking instructions for action. HR has an amazing opportunity to challenge historical practices and impact modern workplaces by combining business, technology, and culture. HR leaders must get their key stakeholders to understand the difference between HR, the

function, and HR, the agenda. It needs CHROs to demonstrate more self-assurance and strategic insight. The individual pieces will fall into place once you are clear in your vision and can get all key stakeholders to share it.

Q Workplace culture is often seen as one of the biggest impediments to digital effectiveness. How can organisations manoeuvre past this barrier to transform digitally?

A We must first recognise there is no ideal, great cookie-cutter culture. It is either strategically aligned or misaligned. It is also not a given. We shape and change cultures as part of our strategy choice.

Building a “digital” culture is more a behavioural challenge than a technological one. And yet, most of the efforts that one sees are around the deployment of a



technology platform. Most digital shifts support information democracy, transparency, agility, accountability, and experience. One needs to act decisively on each of them beyond personal biases or tenure of association. However, not everyone wants to practise them, even if they say so because the leadership turfs get impacted, some roles become redundant, and some blockers get identified. This is where the penny drops.

Equally, to support the shift to digital culture, every HR (and other functional) sub-system needs to get rewired—behaviours of leadership right from the top require change. If you say you want to be paperless, you must not need prints! If you want to have sharper meetings, we must stop holding daylong courts of physical attendance like political rallies! The shift is therefore of pure will to move every nerve and sinew beyond the vocal cords!

Q From your perspective, how can HR professionals build their personal brand and change negative, outdated perceptions of the human resource function to gain more influence and impact?

A Personal brands rest on making a consistent breakthrough impact. Just doing long hours of status quo activity doesn't get you into the orbit of a cutting-edge HR shaper. You need to challenge your own way of thinking and articulate your distinct point of view. Also, make sure you mentor and support a cross-section of talent within and beyond your company, and let every informal interaction count. These shape the lunch-table conversations about you. Give away more than you get or take and slowly, your reputation will precede your resume.

As a leader, when you lead the thinking and doing into orbit-

shifting changes, the HR rank and file begin to believe in themselves very differently from the past. Their sense of self-worth increases and the HR brand rises, both within and outside the company, as you take them away from the expectation of routine HR chores to strategic transformation. My personal experience in company after company confirms this belief. But it needs courageous and imaginative leadership to help breakthrough. CHROs cannot get away by simply extending their tenure without delivering a refreshed agenda and a stronger HR brand.

“You cannot solve pediatric problems with geriatric solutions.”

Q What are some of the common mistakes that you see large organisations repeatedly



make in understanding the new workplace and workforce dynamics?

A You cannot solve pediatric problems with geriatric solutions! Period. This is my experience of commonplace challenges facing companies today. Our individual and institutional success of the past is the biggest blind to thinking anew. It is good to be proud of our past but stupid to be a prisoner of our legacy. Human ego and frailty prevent us from acknowledging a new world. And tenured court-poets or freshly hired survivors shy away from showing the true mirror. There is nothing more than the humility to be open to constructive criticism; have the agility to learn from anyone and everywhere (beyond the clichéd line I have always heard—"We are unique!") and the willingness to repudiate anything of the past that impairs your future.

Technology disruptions, generational shifts in demographics, new leadership behaviours, cultural complexity, shorter business cycles, shifting customer and employee loyalty, and sharp shifts in employer

brand strength will all flow from the honesty of intent at the top.

Q As we step into the 2020s decade, what are the top trends you're watching out for in the HR space?

A In my view, talent and productivity will be the two biggest priorities for the coming years. There will be a key talent deficit across levels, functions, and industries. We will see more of new-age skills in demand, either to be met by reskilling or by new hiring. And yet the market will continue to demand more from less.

Organisations are going to be redrawing their architecture across the board. Leveraging technology options will also be a given. While the focus will be on productivity, I expect the accent on employee experience to be a concomitant gain. In addition, investment in leadership will remain critical. I also hope that there will be more emphasis on middle management talent than in the past.

My overarching sense is that strategic transformation will be the biggest key priority for HR. This

is also the most significant gap I see today in terms of HR capability. The change will need to be both led and enabled for a variety of reasons specific to the industry and the firm. So the year will present an opportunity for many in HR to pick this skill from the agenda that I foresee.

CHROs will need to manage some apparent contradictions between "human" experiences and "digitally" supported efficiencies. New digital shifts will force the rethinking of business models, triggering changes in workplaces and the workforce. Many may not be amenable to reskilling or new behaviours that adversely affect their impact and relevance. This situation will need to be dealt with firmly yet fairly. The modern workplace also requires a more agile culture, and HR will need to better manage this duality of hard and soft. Those who anticipate and respond quickly and comprehensively would be the ones that the decade ahead will celebrate. **HC**

Is it Lonely at the Top?

Executive isolation is an omnipresent critical malaise of the corporate world today. Not only does it threaten the ongoing well-being of the person at the helm of affairs, but it also creates tension in the environment, overall.

BY DEBJANI ROY

The crown that sits on the head of a top executive in an organisation is by no means an easy burden. Over the years, climbing the hierarchy as a manager, nurturing the team, and clocking milestones all have their highs. Things, however, are different for the person on the top, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Company.

The CEO's day typically starts with multiple thoughts: funding, profitability, board concerns over performance, people issues, competition woes, disruptive strategies, and so much more. The CEOs must also suffer from their share of personal problems at times, which neither makes it any easier to maintain balance and equanimity nor helps in going about the multiple responsibilities with gravitas. The sheer stress levels that come with the territory, along with the role when it comes to that of a CEO, is unnerving. Having been a Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) to many CEOs for almost twelve years of my career, I had the good fortune to watch, up-close, many such CEOs in action, which were lessons in themselves.

Given the above, could anyone call this job easy? Can anyone become a CEO, or does it necessitate possessing certain competencies that significantly influence the

direction for a company as well as determine, in multiple ways, the future of a large number of people? Also, why is it said that the CEO is actually a very lonely person at the top?

This sense of loneliness, often experienced by the person on the hot seat, is not so much "lonely" as we understand the term, but more of being in a continuous state of being "on the edge" (a phrase coined by the pioneering loneliness researcher, John Cacioppo). And why not! Executive psychological isolation is an omnipresent critical malaise of the corporate world today. Not only does it threaten the ongoing well-being of the person at the helm of affairs, but it also creates tension in the environment, overall. But I always felt that this continuous feeling of isolation, while it creates a sort of invisible wall around the role-holder, also in many ways helps them preserve their energies and strategise against naysayers.

In one of my stints with an American MNC, I had the onerous responsibility to sit across the CEO at his table for the first few minutes when the anxiety pangs initially struck him. No words, discussion, or actions were required. Another CEO with whom I worked very closely would suddenly withdraw from normal circulation almost a week before a scheduled meeting



and then break into inane jokes before the start of every board meeting or a hastily called business review. What would you call these idiosyncrasies or foibles? Something other than "being on the edge"? Is it a lonely spot at the top of the pyramid, where one miss could bury your future without so much as a whimper? Well, that is a tough call! And yet, it is no pipe dream today that the majority of the corporate world lives in the hope of becoming a CEO or Head of Business someday. **HC**

About the Author

Debjani Roy is an industry stalwart and domain expert in the field of Human Resource with over 25 years of functional experience across companies such as Bharti, HCL, Bentley Systems, Kuoni, and SRL Diagnostics. Till March 2019, Debjani was with SRL Diagnostics as CHRO. Currently, besides being the Chief HR Advisor to Mind Your Fleet (a software start-up), she is a visiting professor to a number of reputed B-Schools. Debjani is also a sought-after speaker, an author, an education-activist, as well as coach and mentor to students in the academic space.

Ways to Grow Your Professional Network

Networking is all about establishing and fostering long-term relationships.

BY FARZANA SURI



What does networking mean? A roomful of people? Business cards being swapped? Hard selling of people, products and services? New business opportunities? New connections?

I've asked this question to hundreds of people, and they more or less have the same response. Some love networking, like me, and some loathe the very thought of the word. Whatever the case may be, networking plays a vital role in your growth curve and cannot be discounted, especially in a job search, whether you are looking for a new job or keen to progress in your current role. Scores of studies done on job search confirm that you are about ten times more likely to land a job opportunity when a referral has endorsed your application.

What is networking?

Networking is all about establishing and fostering long-term relationships.

These mutually beneficial relationships with the people you meet can take place anytime, anywhere—whether you're at the shopping mall, cheering your daughter at the Sports Day, visiting your friend at the hospital, or attending a work conference. Look around! There are networking opportunities everywhere.

Why is networking important?

- To establish new professional relationships and strengthen existing ones.
- To power up your knowledge of the industry, its people, processes, and to gain new insights.
- To lead the way into possible job opportunities, make valuable connections for referrals, and obtain key market information.
- To be top of mind by leveraging your personal brand and being remembered for your strengths

and specialties. Networking is your personal brand booster.

- To deepen the trust in relationships. Online networking is not enough. Face-to-face meetups build strong, lasting relationships.

Who do you network with?

First of all, make a list of the 25 most important professional relationships in your life right now. These are the people you must stay connected with at least three to four times a year. Then, identify those contacts that have helped you or could be helpful in the future. Stay connected with them by following them on social media and lauding their achievements.

Seek out ways to widen your network. Networking opportunities can take place anywhere if you go beyond a fleeting 'hello' and nod to asking questions. Initiate a small talk. This is how meaningful relationships transpire. Have conversations with people wherever you are.

Attend industry-specific conferences and seminars to meet opinion leaders and colleagues. Your school or college alumni, past colleagues, family and friends groups also constitute people you can network with.

How to network?

Go with the networking style that suits you

You may wish to explore different networking strategies to figure out what works best for you. For instance, if you are an introvert, you may choose to network one-to-one over coffee or attend smaller, intimate events. And later, as your confidence grows, you could network at events with a large number of attendees.

Research

Knowing who the event organisers, attendees, and speakers are will help you get familiar with the lay of the land. Also, going through

their LinkedIn profiles and searching about them on Google would keep you abreast about the participants.

Start with the end in mind

What do you expect from a networking opportunity? Having a goal is imperative. The goal may be to connect with two new people in your industry or bring back one new insight to share with your colleagues.

Ask questions about them

While networking, the temptation is to use the opportunity to pitch yourself, and wax eloquence about your achievements and brilliance. These are turn-offs. Make the person you meet as the centre of your conversation by asking them open-ended questions using 'why' and 'how'. Be patient; you will get your chance.

Be a Giver

Offer to help the people you meet. This is a sure-shot way to networking and getting referred. In case you are keen to connect with someone, then I recommend you to look out for a way to *help* that person. Giving is a remarkable way to stay top of mind.

“Scores of studies done on job search confirm that you are about ten times more likely to land a job opportunity when a referral has endorsed your application.”

Think out of the box

While industry events and conferences are a great way to network, how about going beyond traditional networking? You can volunteer at a sapling planting drive, attend the housing society Annual General Meeting, cheer or

attend a marathon event and explore many more innovative platforms to network.

Incidentally, a client of mine once received a referral for a hi-profile role in a coveted organisation from a conversation with someone he had met at a funeral! There are stories of sales teams using Uber carpool and getting a foot in the door of companies through discussions on the long drive.

F&F networking

Have you ever tried networking with your family and friends? You may be surprised at how little your family and friends know about your work, and how little you may know about them. Use these meetups as opportunities to get to know them better and understand what they are looking for. Your sister-in-law's neighbour could be the Head of Sales you've been dreaming of meeting! Do not underestimate your F&F network.

Networking Do's and Don'ts in a nutshell

Do's

- Prepare your elevator pitch in less than ten words
- Carry your business cards
- Dress for the event. In case you are unsure, take a look at past photos
- Bring your enthusiasm and positivity with you
- Work the room
- Network online as well through social networking sites
- Follow-up

Don'ts

- Demonstrate negative, egoistic, and aggressive behaviour while networking, even though you may have had a terrible day
- Go on a card-giving spree
- Ask for favours or sell your product/service
- Monopolise the conversation



- Be seen texting on your mobile phone or busy on calls
- Use negative body language
- Discuss politics, religion, or be too personal and inquisitive
- Show a lack of inclusiveness

Final thoughts

Networking works when you get out there and work on it. And, it begins post-event through the follow-up, which is the most vital step in the networking process, and yet many seem to ignore it. It can begin with a simple LinkedIn request, a valuable share, a specific reason to reach out to the people you've met at an event or an endeavour to stay connected. The depth of your network depends on this key process. Networking is a process to meet and connect with people, not to get them to buy your products and services or sneak a favour. Also, while you are networking, **“think people, not positions”**. People remember how you made them feel. Relationships are built on feelings and emotions, and trust is built over time. 

About the Author

Farzana Suri, a former ad professional, is a Victory Coach and Leadership Trainer. She inspires people to see themselves as victors who win in life, personally and professionally. She has coached and transformed over 5500 people in a span of eight years.



Dumbing Down To Rise And Shine

Being unintelligent or just plain stupid may not be all that bad for innovative ideas to come through.

BY DIPANKAR DAS

The movie *Forrest Gump* was a reservoir of earthy wisdom. *Life is like a box of chocolates since you never know what you are going to get, or, stupid is, as stupid does.* The supposedly stupid man or woman has been the laughing stock of history. The clownish Big Moose of Archie's Comics fame could barely comprehend the world around him. And his stock retort, for things good or otherwise, was a standard, 'Duh'.

Life is known to be a cruel master with no quarters given to

lesser mortals accused of being stupid. But stupidity has its uses. Don Quixote was Quixotic, to say the least. He could fight imaginary windmills and stick his neck out for damsels in distress. He could do things that most of us cannot even conceive in our minds, far less act out in life. Yet, his was a legendary albeit offbeat approach to doing things, real or imagined.

Innovate or Die

Today, differentiation is key to business success, and innovation has become the life blood of

business, but it is not easy to come by. As the Apple tag line goads - how do we think different? Einstein had famously said, the definition of insanity is to expect different outcomes, while we did the same things again and again. But in order to do different things, we need to be off the beaten track, be off guard, inhabit a fail-safe environment, and be encouraged to take chances. Once we veer away from the conventional track, we may ask questions which may appear to be positively juvenile, if not infantile. It may even seem messy and stupid.

However, one need not worry, since there will be more than enough opportunity down the line to clarify and filter and sort through your mess in order to bring a meaningful creative product to life. But in the beginning, generating fragments is the name of the game: half-ideas, quarter ideas—perhaps they should not even be thought of in terms of

ideas, for “idea” implies too much completeness and commitment, and it is just too early for that.

Mr Right is Wrong

Now is the time to just let all that weird meaningless stuff that is jostling around in your head to make its way into the world. The problem is allowing ourselves to be this undisciplined in our thinking is not easy. Despite our beliefs, it does not come to us naturally. Even if we did have a talent for unfocused activity as children, it certainly was schooled out of us early on. The lure of linear thinking hovers over us like a wraith, and we succumb to its charms.

“Our talent for unfocused activity as children was schooled out of us early on. The lure of linear thinking hovers over us like a wraith, and we succumb to its charms.”

Sweat it out

In the age of instant answers, there is little time or interest in agenda-less exploration. Even creativity is hijacked by process discipline, and if you are suspected to be out of the box for too long, it may become difficult to get back into the box at all.

And we all love to be good conformists at the end. How uncomfortable would it be to linger in the mind’s no-man patch? However, as they say, practice makes perfect. It is something that can be learned. A temporary suspension of clever insight does no harm. Instead, it is important to take a break from knowing and suspend belief to discover ideas anew. It is this delicate to and fro, flirting with possibilities that

should be the bedrock of genuinely innovative solutions. In this blurry zone, one needs to be wary of GIGO (Garbage in, garbage out). Lateral thinking has a charm and utility of its own, the untried and untested should not be allowed to shrink into unusable ideas and practices, less politely put, garbage.

“A temporary suspension of clever insight does no harm. Instead, it is important to take a break from knowing and suspend belief to discover ideas anew.”

Brainstorming your way to Innovation

Let us start with brainstorming. One is commonly aware that brainstorming is best when

- We keep it to be a no holds barred session
- We Let the wildest idea win
- We allow quantity to matter and not quality

And no one is allowed to be judgemental about the ideas that come across. What next? Should we then revert to our default mindset, the annoying and judgmental smart guy inside our heads to get the better of us. Go for a walk. Take in a movie. It is time to dumb down. And that is what is required. Start to enjoy all the random stuff that spews out onto the page before us, some of it may even be completely idiotic. But let us hold judgement at bay.

Then, without even realising it at first, things begin to take shape. A direction starts appearing. The somewhat messy outpouring starts appearing to be not so messy after all, perhaps may even seem cogent in bits and pieces. Allow the annoying smart guy to return



inside our heads and help out. And after a while—sometimes a short while, sometimes a long while—stand back and look at it. It works. It holds together. Sure, it may not be the only right answer, but it is *an answer*, and it feels right.

And before a method appears in the madness, one way to have good ideas, as Linus Pauling said, *“is to have lots of good ideas. Some may appear idiotic at first glance, but let that be.”*

Moreover, there is one thing that becomes clear. Perhaps we would not have crossed this milestone if we had not given ourselves the license, for a while at least, to act like a fool. Once again, being stupid is a smart move to make. 

About the Author

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



Motivating Your Team in Challenging Times

In this dynamic era, where change is the only constant, keeping ourselves and others motivated to ride the tide and look ahead can seem challenging, to say the least.

BY SHUBIKA BILKHA

“The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change their future by merely changing their attitude.” — Oprah Winfrey

If the start of 2020 is anything to go by, we are living in an unstable, unpredictable and uncertain time. The recent financial budget has done little to instill confidence, and the sentiment of concern that prevails extends across all realms—political, economic, business, technology and climate change, to name a few.

Businesses are in firefighting mode, and leaders are remapping their visions while balancing liquidity challenges. Executives are concerned over stability, job growth and increments, while individuals are trying to prepare for the uncharted terrain that lies ahead. As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, it is important to acknowledge the feelings of anxiety and overwhelm that this continually disruptive world brings with it.

In a recent survey, it was estimated that 95% of Indian millennials and 89% of Indians, in general, are stressed^[1]. Stress-related complaints increased to 16% with a three-fold increase in anxiety-related disorders across Indian corporates last year^[2]. A Forbes study has highlighted that there are five key triggers to



individual workplace stress—confidence in the future, work-life balance, access to tools to do your job, workplace politics and a purpose/direction at work^[3].

In this dynamic era, where change is the only constant, keeping ourselves and others motivated to ride the tide and look ahead can seem challenging, to say the least.

Motivational theories, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Sirota's Three-Factor Theory, McClelland's Motivational Theory

of Achievement-Affiliation-Power, Amabile and Kramer's Progress Theory, the Pygmalion Effect, or the commonly used Expectation Theory, all suggest that motivation extends across the extrinsic and intrinsic realms. While people tend to believe that money forms the main motivator when it comes to making professional choices, research has indicated that only 12% of people leave on account of money. As high as 79% leave on account of appreciation^[4].

Amidst this difficult environment, as leaders or managers, keeping our teams aligned and excited about our vision requires additional focus and action. In my work as a leadership coach, I am constantly approached by organizations to work through team motivation and improve sentiment for greater trust and thrust.

“Businesses are in firefighting mode, and leaders are remapping their visions while balancing liquidity challenges. Executives are concerned over stability, job growth and increments, while individuals are trying to prepare for the uncharted terrain that lies ahead.”

If you are looking to improve sentiment and motivate your teams, here are some thoughts on how you could approach your challenge:

- **Internalize your pitch:** It is important to remember that motivation begins with our own energy and outlook. If the expectation is that our teams and organizations should be motivated, it is first important to look within to understand our own drivers. How we show up and communicate speaks volumes for how we truly perceive our own narrative. It is important to keep all of these in check!
- **Check the cortisol:** The hormone cortisol, which is popularly known as the stress hormone, is released during challenging times. In bursts, it can motivate and drive us forward. However, prolonged stress or being

overwhelmed results in high cortisol levels. This can have an adverse effect on brain function and immunity while reducing trust and receptiveness to our own reward system. It is important to minimize the angst to ensure that the release of cortisol does not have a ripple effect across our teams and organizations.

- **Acknowledge the challenge:**

As team leaders, it is equally essential to be open and authentic in order to accept that these are difficult times that need different measures. Acknowledging the challenge will allow you to manage expectations and build a sense of trust and commitment towards the objective. It is important to remember, however, that there is a fine line between being honest and being negative. So be careful not to cross it!

- **Be a mentor:** A strong support system, as well as inclusive leadership, guidance and mentorship, are important in crunch times. Team members will become more motivated if they have a platform to share their concerns, feel that they are a part of an ecosystem, are allowed to fail, and be adequately backed up by their leaders.

- **Appreciate:** A little appreciation will go a long way. Many people leave jobs on account of poor managers and low to no appreciation or because they feel undervalued or undermined or excluded from decision making. Take a moment each week to appreciate the efforts of the team towards your vision. Being fair about their contributions and in their reviews is equally important.

- **Understand their drivers:** It is important to understand each person on the team—what motivates/drives them. In crunch times, it becomes even more pertinent to align individual motivation to organizational purpose in order to enhance productivity, performance and retention.

- **Have fun:** It is helpful to understand that nobody feels motivated all the time and that nobody has an unlimited supply of motivation. Challenging situations are a part of all cycles, and enjoying the ride is as much as a part of the process as accomplishing the goal. Remember to take time with your team to have fun, appreciate and celebrate so that work doesn't exist in a silo and becomes a place of inspiration and growth for all. 

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About the Author

Shubika Bilkha is a dynamic entrepreneur, leadership and performance coach, author, and a prominent media spokesperson. She is the Founding Partner of EdpowerU (www.edpoweru.com) that specializes in working with millennial and Gen-Z managers and leaders on their workplace behaviour and personal leadership development. Shubika has worked with large companies such as Deloitte as well as been the Managing Director of two early-stage startups in technology and education. She can be reached on Twitter @shubika.



BY VIKAS DUA

Six Mindsets for Making Gigs Work

By all estimates, the gig economy is here, and it is here to stay. The flux in the environment will continue to rise as business models evolve and everyone, including the founders, leaders, workers, regulators, and governments across the world will strive hard to establish the new "normal"—if it even exists.

My six-year-old daughter scooted into a room and declared enthusiastically, “I’m going to be a ballerina, an air hostess, a doctor, and a singer!” Her animated proclamation immediately triggered a flashback in my mind. As a child, I aspired to be an astronaut, a pilot, an office worker, and even a dancer. But, there was a fundamental difference. My aspirations arose at different points in time through my growing years. They never existed in parallel for me, as expressed by my daughter.

Is it possible to consider that as we glide into the “gig” (or “shared” or “collaborative”) economy, the very hard-wiring of our future generations would undergo a transformative change? While I won’t hazard a guess either way (with my complete lack of medical and scientific knowledge in this area), I would say that if it is indeed so, it wouldn’t be out of line with Darwin’s Theory of Biological Revolution. In this treatise, Darwin essentially established that all species of organisms develop themselves to enhance their ability to compete, survive and reproduce.

By all estimates, the gig economy is here, and it is here to stay. Noble House Consulting, a leading HR talent marketplace, conducted a survey amongst top 150 business leaders and 300 HR leaders in India

in H2FY’19. As per their findings, only 6% of the participant organisations hadn’t employed a single gig worker during the previous 24 months. This clearly signifies that the flux in the environment will continue to rise as business models evolve and everyone, including the founders, leaders, workers, regulators, and governments across the world will strive hard to establish the new “normal” — if it even exists.

So, how do I lay the groundwork to ensure that when my daughter is old enough to join the workforce, she is adept with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude needed to traverse the gig landscape? In many ways, the groundwork will not be very different from what any professional today needs to do to insulate themselves from the

vagaries that are already emerging. In my opinion, the gig professionals willing to succeed in their workplaces will need to subscribe to multiple mindsets, such as the ones mentioned below.

A Learning Mindset

In a way, these are the best of times. No longer do individuals who have taken up a profession “need” to stay wedded to it for their lifetime. Opportunities are emerging for newer and more varied roles every day, just like newer apps being uploaded to the Play Store. But this also means that these willing individuals need to acquire the required skillsets to make a successful transition. Sometimes, this shift may be driven internally, but there are equally high chances that the rapidly



changing environment may cause it. Therefore, professionals will need to be in a lifelong, perpetual 'schooling' process. Sanjay Lakotia, Co-Founder and CEO, Noble House Consulting, rightly shares that "Learning, unlearning and relearning will be the fuel for the executives to keep themselves relevant for extended careers in the future".

A Solution-Oriented Mindset

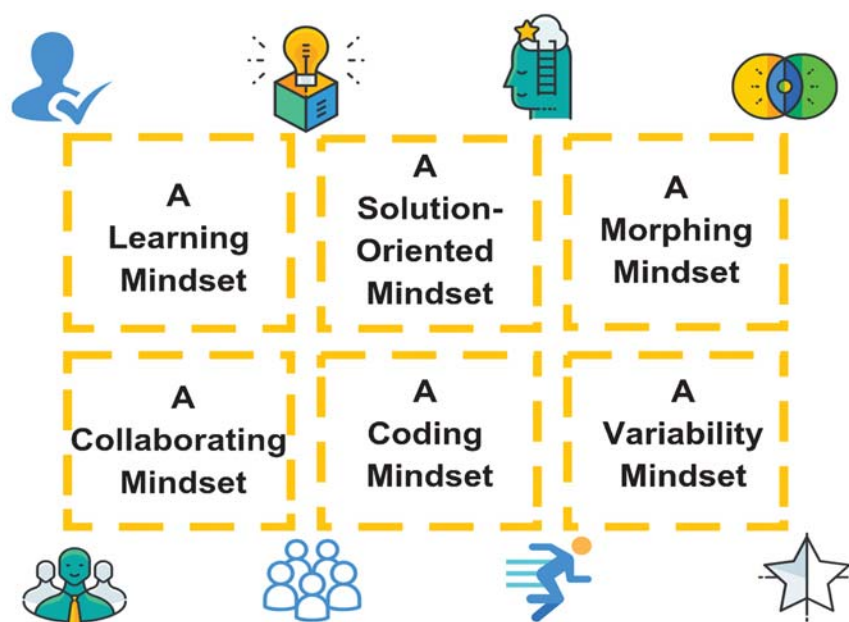
Gleaning from the world of cinema, where specialists (or experts) come together under the guidance of a director to produce the end product, the collaborative economy also places a premium on those who come with specific capabilities to perform an assigned role or task. For those who want to contribute effectively in such a scenario, it would behoove them to come ready to the gig market with their own USP (unique selling proposition) to solve real-world problems.

A Morphing Mindset

Ever since the T-1000 morphed dramatically in the movie *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* in its battle with the lead star, Arnold Schwarzenegger, humans across the world have been fascinated about doing the same form-shifting. Now, it is the right time to do so figuratively, even if not physically. A gig economy will see many more dynamic professionals like Priyank Vajpai, an established, high-value HR professional at Pepsico on weekdays and a roaring band vocalist on the weekend. Whoever said you can't have your cake and eat it too, was obviously living in the pre-gig economy!

A Collaborating Mindset

Gone in 1.9 seconds! Yes, that's the record for the fastest-ever Formula 1 tyre change, set by the Williams team in 2016 in Baku. Imagine the level of collaboration that would have gone into that historic moment. Also, imagine the action and



approaches involved in the prior preparation that would have facilitated this. Similarly, as business environments get re-engineered to accommodate more and more gig workers, the latter will need to step into their 'projects', sync up with the other 'subject matter experts', execute their deliverables seamlessly, and move on to the next gig.

A Coding Mindset

In present times, when even the humble toaster is smart enough to transmit a few bytes to inform you that the bread has been beautifully browned, it is imperative that everyone amongst us know at least some form of basic coding. Thankfully, computer languages have evolved incredibly from the time when they resembled an alien's language! Coding and understanding the resulting data generated will add immense value to business growth.

A Variability Mindset

Amidst the pitfalls of the gig economy, the seemingly trickiest one is the superfluous concept of fixed monthly salary that becomes redundant. Managing expenses within a variable income stream requires a mindset that is often witnessed in artists and

entrepreneurs and not really in the white-collar salaried workforce. Aspiring gig workers will need to be adept at financial planning to ensure that they continue to live the life they aspire to, even while they juggle multiple revenue streams.

Given that incorporating such a multi-dimensional mindset will not be an easy task by any measure, it will be prudent for professionals across the board to take mindful steps in this direction. Only then will they, in a certain way, be the human equivalent of 'Hydra'—a small, freshwater organism native to tropical and temperate zones, which has the capability to regenerate. Only then will the "gigsters" be better placed to navigate into the uncertainties to unveil an exciting, challenging, and fulfilling future! 

About the Author

Vikas Dua is an accomplished HR and recruitment professional with over 15 years of experience in the field, having worked with both start-ups and large corporations like Wipro, Concentrix and Startek Aegis, driving hiring in the APAC region. Currently, he is Chief HR Mentor at Attayn.co—a disruptive HR Tech firm working on enhancing and democratizing knowledge sharing in the academic space.

ESOPs Tax Benefits Announced in Budget 2020

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

In a bid to promote growth and employment in startups, the Indian government has proposed deferral in tax payments on the allotment of shares under employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs) by five years.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget 2020 speech acknowledged that most of the startups use ESOPs to attract and retain talent during their formative years. Presently, ESOPs are taxable as perquisites at the time of exercise. This often creates cash flow problems for employees who do not sell the shares immediately and continue to hold the same for the long-term.

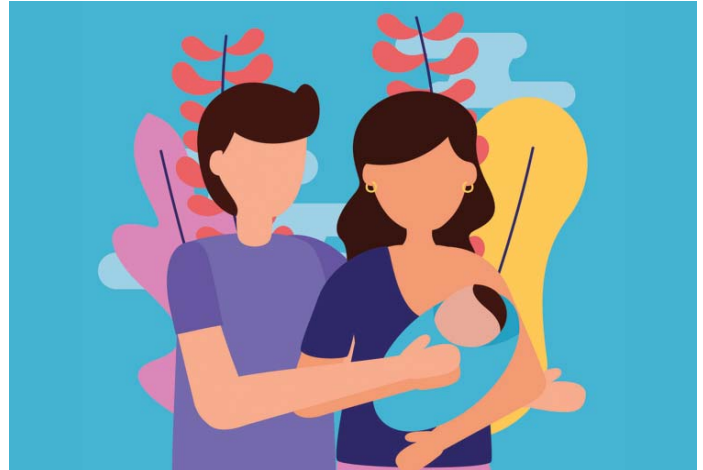
"In order to give a boost to the startup ecosystem, I propose to ease the burden of taxation on the employees by deferring the tax payment by five years or till they leave the company or when they sell their shares, whichever is earliest," Sitharaman said.

The Minister also proposed an additional benefit. *"An eligible startup having turnover of up to Rs 25 crore is allowed deduction of 100 per cent of its profits for three consecutive assessment years out of 7 years if the total turnover does not exceed Rs 25 crore. In order to extend this benefit to larger startups also, I propose to increase the turnover limit from the existing Rs 25 crore to Rs 100 crore. Moreover, considering the fact that initially, a startup may not have adequate profit to avail this deduction, I propose to extend the period of eligibility for claim of deduction from the existing 7 years to 10 years",* she said. **HC**



Swiggy Launches New Childcare and Parenthood Policy

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH



Food-delivery platform, Swiggy, has announced childcare and parenthood policies and benefits for its employees. Considering the needs of new-age parents, the company has crafted its policies to help parents pursue their careers while managing their domestic work.

The new policies will offer support to not just biological parents but also adoptive parents, single parents and LGBTQ+ parent. Girish Menon, Vice President, Human Resources said: *"We started as a brand that provides convenience to its users five years ago, and we continue to demonstrate the same philosophy of delivering convenience to employees through an array of benefits that support their diverse needs."*

The policy entails benefits like supporting the primary caregivers (biological, commissioning or adoptive mother, single parent or LGBTQ+ parent) through adoption, fertility care, and surrogacy. Focused on gender neutrality, the primary caregiver can avail 26 weeks of leave while the secondary caregiver can avail 15 days of leave.

In a bid to ensure a stress-free experience, Swiggy will provide employees with a range of benefits such as ergonomic seating, reserved parking space, support for domestic travel (for child and caregiver), travel reimbursements, wellness session reimbursements and ongoing bonding leave for up to 15 days.

The company also endeavours to support its employees through some of the challenges that come with parenthood such as miscarriage or medical termination of pregnancy. Apart from six weeks of miscarriage leave for the employee, one week of paid leave would be provided to partners who support their spouses. **HC**

Time Surfing for Perpetual Adolescents

Master the art of predicting, navigating, and thriving in the tsunamis of disruptive innovation

BY **BRIGADIER SUSHIL BHASIN**



Let me begin by explaining the whacky title. The perpetual adolescent is a metaphor that I use to describe myself with a passion for mastering the digital world and eagerness to leverage technology to engage a wider audience for my keynote speaking business and readers for my books 'Design Your Life' and 'Million Dollar \$econd'. Life has not ceased to excite me for the last 68 years I have spent on earth as a time surfer.

Time surfing is about negotiating change, which is like a wave in the ocean of time. To surf is to anticipate a wave on the horizon, navigate it, and ensure that we stay on top of it when it comes to us. Living as we are in an age of digital disruption, only the time surfer champions who play with change will stay in the game. The rest will find themselves either in the water struggling to stay afloat or at the bottom of the ocean, out of action. Time surfing is, of course, a metaphor for negotiating change that disruptive innovation will keep bringing at an ever-quicken pace. Only an always-willing-to-learn attitude will come in handy in this new age of fresh tsunamis at every moment.

The question, dear reader, is how to we become time surfers in such a world? Firstly, by training one's reflexes as we do it in the

army, building stamina, developing emotional intelligence, and being open to customizing one's response to every challenge. Then, we train ourselves to predict changes that are on the horizon and time our ascent in a manner that will find us on the top of the wave instead of under it when the wave achieve its maximum height. This is a matter of timing, which always involves an element of gambling. Not all predicted changes will come to pass exactly in the way predicted, but the factors that will create the world-to-be are already present—rising population, worsening environmental conditions, internet revolution, and further spread of globalization and transnational trade.

Once we form a clear idea of the nature of change that will become an on-ground fact, we have to prepare for it by flexing our muscles in anticipation of the arrival of the wave. In the real world, this involves continuous re-education in new ways of thinking, emoting, expressing, and working. It may also include a hard component like mastering new technology.

A change—any change—can impact an individual, a family, a team or an organization in three ways. Either it affords an opportunity for improvement, or it threatens old ways of thinking and

doing, or the new wave of change has minimal or zero impact on them. In all three cases, one has to have a response plan that will help one stay relevant and competitive in the changed context in which they are operating. Only if this understanding is clear can an organization keep changing. Only then can it meet emerging challenges and thrive by exploiting new opportunities the Amazon, Ali Baba, Facebook, or Netflix way.

New tsunamis are on their way. Are you a good enough surfer to ride the waves to success? Are you adolescent enough to learn new tricks? 

About the Author

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

PAST EVENTS

Manthan 2020

DATE : February 7th - 9th 2020

VENUE : TISS, Mumbai

ORGANISERS : TISS, Mumbai

Manthan, the Annual Management and Cultural fest of Human Resource Management and Labour Relations program of TISS, Mumbai, held from February 7th - 9th 2020 and the inaugural ceremony took place on February 6th.

The 24th edition, 'Manthan 2020' was truly remarkable and witnessed unprecedented success in all the events. It has set new boundaries and achieved new heights.

For the inaugural ceremony vocal experimental band, Euphony Official, showcased a spectacular performance, following which the occasion was graced by the awe-inspiring Mallika Dua who is an actress, writer and comedian known for her on-point comic timing.

Eminent personalities like Arundhati Bhattacharya and Tahira Kashyap Khurrana visited the campus



across the four days. There was a panel discussion on the topic 'Women & Workplaces in the Past Decade'. The panel members were Kalpana Gopalan (IAS Officer & IIMB faculty), Vidya Manwani (Director & HR Head, Nivea India), Mahnaz Shaikh (HR Head India & SAARC, Godrej) and moderated by Sujata Deshmukh (Founder & CEO, Tutul Consulting).

The event concluded with an MTV Music Nite on February 9th. ♦

Anveshan 2020

DATE: February 15th - 16th, 2020

VENUE: Goa Institute of Management

ORGANISERS: Goa Institute of Management

Anveshan - 2020 - Forging Connect sponsored by Deccan Fine Chemicals (India) Pvt. Ltd. organized by HRiday - the HR Club of Goa Institute of Management was held on February 15th- 16th.

The eighth iteration of Anveshan was a huge success with participants from top colleges competing for various competitions and winning amazing prizes. It had Pramerica as its Associate Sponsor, TOPSIM as Simulation Partner, People Matters as the Media partner, Safexpress as the Official Supply Chain Partner, Tangentia as the Technology Partner, Human Capital as the Knowledge Partner, Herald as the Print Media Partner, Mac Hotels as Hotel Partner, Gastronut.

The event started with the opening ceremony 'Gyaanodaya'



on Day 1, where Animesh Kumar, Chief People Officer at Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) in his address spoke about the importance of working with people, motivating them, creating culture, and building teams. Day 1 concluded with one of the much loved competitions which comes under Anveshan, Samiksha - The National-level live HR case study competition. Team HRiday took a live HR problem from the industry, prepared the case entirely from scratch and published it to finalists of Samiksha only to receive solutions from brilliant minds across the b-schools. The finalists presented their solutions in front of eminent judges from which winner and runner up teams were chosen.

The fest concluded with an insightful workshop conducted by M P Sriram from Aventus Partners. The workshop was based on how Assessment Centres can be used to test different competencies for an individual in an organisational set-up. Sriram explained how Assessment Centre with a correlation of 0.65 is the best evaluation method. ♦

National Seminar: IMS Ghaziabad

DATE : February 22nd, 2020

VENUE : IMS, Ghaziabad

ORGANISERS : IMS Ghaziabad University

IMS Ghaziabad University Courses Campus organized a National Seminar themed "Future of HR and Evolving Workforce" on February 22nd, 2020.

The event witnessed intersection of ideas from gamut of eminent speaker like Amazon, Samsung, NTPC, Accenture, Team Computer and Fortune Architect to name a few to discuss the important issues faced by the workforce in digital era.

Dr Sapna Rakesh, Director IMS Ghaziabad UC Campus Highlighted the intellectual discussion about making the Human Resource Specialization relevant for the youth who are mostly attracted towards Data Analytics. The event also saw the release of HR Magazine titled 'Unveiling the Journey of HR Millennials @ IMS' which comprises of articles have written by the students and industry veterans.

The Seminar also organised a panel discussion to understand about Future of HR & Shaping the Future Workforce. The discussion focused around the National goal to be a 5 trillion economy and that requires approximately 16 hours of working per day. Panelists also discussed the retention of the employee and emphasized upon the need to



build up candidate experience rather than only to hold that employee for a longer time.

To understand the insights about the issues and challenges of research Publications a Research Workshop organized during National Seminar for academicians, research scholar and students. After an informative workshop the next session was Paper Presentation. The motive behind organizing the paper presentation competition was to provide a platform to various academicians and research scholars to present their learning and brainstorm new ideas related to the theme. There were two categories of awards for academicians and research scholar/students presented at the end of the session.

The event was supported by HUMAN CAPITAL-Knowledge Partner and CYBERKART. ♦

AccelHERate Conference and DivHERsity Awards : JobsForHer

DATE : February 25th, 2020.

VENUE : Radisson Blu, ORR, Bangalore

ORGANISERS : JobsForHer

AccelHERate 2020 conference and DivHERsity Awards organised by JobsForHer, held at Radisson Blu, ORR, in Bangalore on February 25th, 2020.

The conclave was all about accelerating recruitment, retention and promoting women in the Indian workplace.

The event witnessed a diverse group of key stakeholders, like HR leaders, diversity and talent acquisition heads,



employer branding leaders, as well as business heads, CEOs and senior women leaders, who discussed about the importance of role that women play in advancing the economic growth and transformation of Indian businesses and society.

Speakers such as Tina Vinod, Head - Diversity and Inclusion, Thoughtworks, and Gopal Iyer, Associate Director - Talent, EY, Shalini Koshy, India Diversity & Inclusion Program Leader, Amazon, shared their success stories and lessons learned with the purpose of recognising and overcoming unconscious biases. ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

UN Global Compact Network India's 1st Sustainable HR Conclave

DATE : March 12th-13th, 2020

VENUE : Hotel Eros International, New Delhi

ORGANISERS : UN Global Compact Network India

Global Compact Network India, the local arm of United Nation Global Compact, is organising its 1st Sustainable HR Conclave on March 12th-13th, 2020 at Hotel Eros International, New Delhi.

The Conclave is led by Mr. Rajeev Dubey, Group President-(HR & Corporate Services) & Chief Executive Officer (After-Market & Corporate Services), Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. as the Conclave Director and Mr. Biswajit Roy, Director (Human Resources & Business Development), Oil India Ltd. is the Conclave Co-Director. Industry experts from renowned corporates, government and the UN will speak at the Conclave and share their experiences and ideas on how to promote Sustainable HR Practices which will give a competitive advantage to their companies.

Global Compact Network India has been acting as a country level agency in providing a robust platform for Indian businesses, academic institutions and civil society organizations to join hands for strengthening responsible business practices. Its '10 Principles in areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment & Anti-Corruption' provide a common ethical and practical Framework for Corporate Responsibility. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all 195 Member States of the United Nations, including India, are understood and



1ST SUSTAINABLE HR CONCLAVE

"HR Practices for Responsible and Sustainable Businesses:
The Only Way Forward"

DATE : 12th - 13th March, 2020

VENUE : EROS Hotel, Nehru Place, New Delhi

TIME : 9am - 5pm



interpreted by businesses around the world, regardless of size, complexity or location.

The SDGs are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership and organisations need to play a major role if India is to achieve them by the year 2030. It is imperative that Organizations across the country lead from the front in building a culture of Sustainability and take the Sustainability Agenda forward with all stakeholders.

This makes the role of Human Resources (HR) department paramount. HR has the responsibility of working as a strategic business partner of the company and create systems and processes that are sustainable. To enable this drive, HR Professionals need to expand its role to support the organization in the pursuit of

Sustainability by implementing Responsible & Sustainable Policies. "Responsible & Sustainable HR is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and, more generally, promote the cause of environmental sustainability".

It is with this focus that UN Global Compact Network India is organising its HR Conclave on the theme - 'HR Practices for Responsible and Sustainable Businesses: The Only Way Forward'. It is a unique initiative of GCNI that will bring together HR Leaders from across industries to deliberate and devise an agenda/roadmap to design HR practices, systems and processes in the quest of Sustainability. ♦

Appointments



Syngenta Appoints Armaan Seth As Head HR- APAC

Syngenta has appointed Armaan Seth as its new Head- Human Resources for Asia and Pacific region. In his new role, Seth will be part of the Global HR Leadership team and report to the CHRO based in Basel, Switzerland. Prior to this, Seth served as HR Head for Philips India. Before this, he was associated with Marico Industries across several roles such as sales, OD, rewards and as a business partner. He is an XLRI alumnus and a noted thought leader who is part of Industry associations like the FICCI HR Committee & SHRM in India.



Aegon Life Insurance Appoints Sunita Rath As CPO

Aegon Life Insurance has roped in Sunita Rath as its Chief People Officer (CPO). She will oversee strategy and processes related to building and retaining talent, including reskilling and multiskilling of employees. Rath has more than 25 years of experience in developing talent, designing and delivering modern HR strategies globally. She has been associated with Deutsche Bank, JP Morgan Ltd., Mastek Ltd, Blue Star Infotech, Silverline Industries & Coal India Limited. Rath is bachelors in Physics and pursued her M.Phil (PM & IR) Training & Development from Utkal University.



Chanel Appoints Sally Wong As Talent Management Head- APAC

Chanel has snapped up Sally Wong as its new head of talent management for the Asia Pacific region. Prior to this, Wong spent four years at US confectionery company, Mars, where she served several key roles including people organisation director and global talent effectiveness director. Wong is Masters in English linguistics from Hong Kong Baptist University. She holds certification in organisational coaching and change management, among other aspects of HR.



Luminous Power Technologies Appoints Niharika Mohan As Vice President - HR, Admin and CSR

Niharika Mohan, after successfully spearheading the HR function of Global Business Line “Strategic Customer and Segment” at Schneider Electric has been elevated as the Vice President HR, Admin and CSR of Luminous Power Technologies, the retail brand of Schneider Electric India. Mohan has spent almost 21 years in the industry and has been a catalyst in driving growth in every position she has previously held. Over the past few years she has worked across multiple industries and has spent much of her career in the variety of business transformation roles including diverse HR practices, with a specific focus on Organizational Design and Restructuring, M&A Integration, Compensation and Benefits, Succession Planning, Change Management, Diversity & Inclusion and Talent Management.



Zolostays Appoints Chanchal Gupta As CHRO

Zolostays, has named Chanchal Gupta as its Chief Human Resources Officer. In his new role, Gupta will be responsible for company's people management, retention, training and development, talent acquisition, organisational effectiveness, employee engagement, diversity and inclusion, in addition to succession planning. With over 15 years of experience in the HR industry, Gupta has previously led roles at Amazon, Accenture Services Pvt. Ltd. and Citibank Global Services Limited.

Gupta is an alumnus of XLRI, Jamshedpur. He has pursued B Tech in electronics and communication from the Malviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur.



WATConsult Appoints Mahesh Nazare As Director - HR and L&D

WATConsult has appointed Mahesh Nazare as its new Director - HR, Learning and Development (L&D). Nazare will be responsible for the HR vertical at WATConsult with a strong focus on L&D. He will also mentor the team to build and ensure a robust and great organisational culture within the agency. With more than 18 years of experience across the Indian and Asian diaspora, Mahesh specialises in leadership and management development, creative thinking, communication and effective team building.



The Real Realm of HR

BY LUCKY DAFTUAR

What is the greatest fear in the world of startups? Ironically, the fear of failure is one of the greatest concerns for any new venture even though the initiators of such startup businesses are probably one of the most fearless professionals. When they set on this journey, they hold a dream in their eyes. Soon they encounter numerous hurdles. Some of the major pain areas usually happen to be timely decisions as well as ample support from the right team.

So, in what ways could an HR professional or an HR Consultant be of help here? The first step is to tell the entrepreneurs that **HR professional services** are much more than mere recruitment services. This might astonish many, but this is a fact. Most founders are unaware of the realm of HR. Many of them think HR professionals are just recruitment professionals. The HR function is way more extensive, complicated, richer, exciting, and expansive than recruitment services alone.

The HR function is like an iceberg, where the tip is visible in the form of operational HR. And recruitment services are merely a part of this operational aspect. Here is a model of HR services that will bring more clarity and understanding of the HR function.

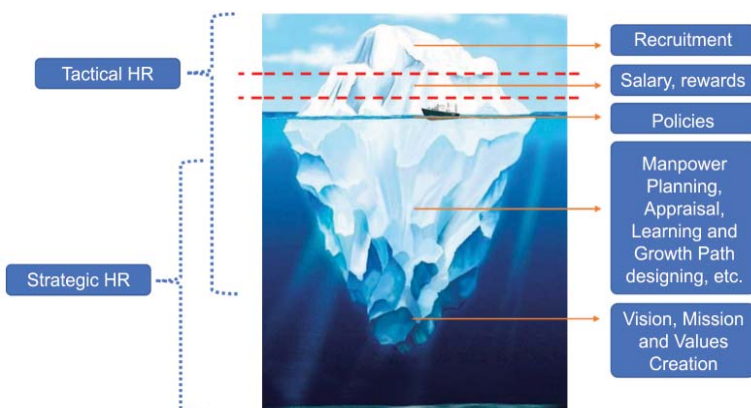
Startup organisations are like toddlers learning to walk, talk and understand the world around them. They need a lot of hand-holding, which can be provided by an experienced HR consultant who can guide at a strategic level right from the beginning and help them stand firm while they are toddling around for physical, emotional and social stability.

The role of HR starts as a **coach** right from the start. S/he will understand the traits of the entrepreneur and help her/ him build the **vision, mission and goals** based on her/ his dream and passion. Further, developing **core competencies** can be the next step. The core competency for a startup is as essential as the string that keeps the beads together. Once key competencies are decided, all the policies and HR functions can be designed based on them.

With this short introduction of the real realm of HR, I call upon all the entrepreneurs, technopreneurs, solopreneurs, founders and cofounders to adopt such a path right from the foundation day. **HC**

About the Author

Lucky Daftuar has more than 20 years of extensive experience in training, OD, assessments, psychometric testing and competency Mapping. Currently, she is the Director of PlanMyTrainings.com (Xcelanta Services).



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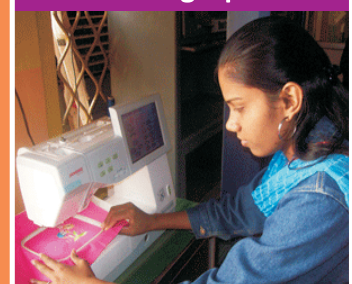
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