people matters

VOL XI / ISSUE 4 / APRIL 2020
₹150



COVID-19

TALENT IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Crisis bolts to topple us down – resilience helps bounce back

INTERVIEWS

- **Elliot Vaughn,** MD & Partner, BCG London
- **Bernadette Wightman,** MD - Banking & Financial Services, BT
- **Kim Warmbier,** Chief People Officer, Sabre
- **Jan Frydrych,** Executive Director - HR & Admin, ŠKODA AUTO Volkswagen India

BIG INTERVIEW

Kiersten Robinson
Global CHRO,
Ford Motor Company

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Governments' bailout plan – why speed matters

The world at this point is in peril. People are dying en masse. Businesses are collapsing. However, the economic consequences of the Coronavirus loom grimmer than the disease itself. While organizations across the world are dealing with the safety of their employees, we are also seeing a flurry of stimulus schemes from governments to get businesses up to speed with their business continuity measures. Having said that, given the scale of the pandemic and the readiness of corporations, worries mount that by the time the pandemic abates and economic activities start picking up, chunks of businesses across industries could be obliterated and millions of workers could be out of work. This makes it explicitly clear that governments and firms must act together – and act swiftly.

It's also important that everyone realizes we all are in the same boat. Public-private cooperation is needed now more than ever. This leads us to some overriding questions. How much money can governments shovel into the economy? How should businesses go about the bailout packages? And, will these stimuli be enough for businesses to recuperate? Given that there are disparities in pain depending on geography and governments' conflicting views about their role in a crisis, these questions are the heart of the debate over the bailout scheme states are coming up with.

There have been announcements of a record number of bailout packages from countries including US, Singapore, India, and UK to stave off the economic collapse. But we need larger and bold conversations and concerted confluence of go-forward plans. We are seeing a record scale of unemployment and people are scared. While businesses are being bailed out, the move to put money in the pockets of people is way too hazy. Not to mention that the bailouts should help companies and their workers, not reward shareholders.

This is the first time a British government has intervened to help pay wages in the private sector with the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, offering employers grants to cover 80 percent of the wages of staff who are on the payroll but not working because of the outbreak. The vigilante Singapore government's S$48 billion Resilience Budget to support hard-hit businesses and employees is commendable. The island nation has also pledged to grant them S$800 a month for three months.

To help small businesses sail through COVID-19, Canada has announced to offer temporary wage subsidies during these uncertain times. The Australian Tax Office is providing relief for some tax obligations for businesses affected by the outbreak.India also announced a medical insurance of Rs. 50 lakh per individual for health workers for three months. For the 4.8 crore employees, the government also amended EPFO regulations to allow workers under EPFO to draw up to 75 percent of their non-refundable advance.

But where do we go from here? It is time for business

leaders and governments to move quickly and enact more radical measures to relieve the burden of layoffs, isolation and quarantine for workers and businesses. The prime goal in anything that is executed now has to be to preserve employment, ensure healthcare, and help rebound businesses.

In 2008, governments bailed out companies, COVID-19 demands bailing out "people" too; and hence we need to sustain stimulus spending to continue to bail out workers and people with low incomes.

The cover story in this e-magazine issue attempts to provide business leaders with a perspective on the evolving pandemic and the implications for their businesses. The issue also features our own study – "People Matters' Guide on COVID-19: Rethinking your strategy on people and work". We touch upon the legal aspects of COVID-19, the cybersecurity concerns emanating from it, how HR policies are being redefined across the region, lessons from connected countries like Singapore, and leadership in the time of the pandemic.

This issue features several interviews including Elliot Vaughn, MD & Partner, BCG London; Bernadette Wightman, MD - Banking & Financial Services, BT; Kim Warmbier, Chief People Officer, Sabre; and Jan Frydrych, Executive Director - HR & Admin, ŠKODA AUTO Volkswagen India.

As an important update, People Matters magazine will go digital to reach more and more readers in a safe way. We are also glad to inform you that the April and May 2020 issues of the magazines will be complimentary for all our readers. Feel free to share with your teams and peers.

People Matters has also increased efforts on our digital channels to give you an overall immersive experience through digital. You can now access our mobile app, People Matters Sphere for free; you can also join our virtual masterclass series with experts from across the world which is also complimentary for our community. This is the time we come together to support each other. Access to information, actionable insights and perspectives are critical for navigating this situation. In case you would like to be included in all our initiatives, please click here and leave your details.

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

Happy Reading!

Esther Martinez Hernandez
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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THE COVER STORY (BEHIND THE SCENE)



I'll start crying, please no.



Who looks like that?



Maybe. Can I see the different masks?



The lockdown is not for ideas honey.



PHEW!

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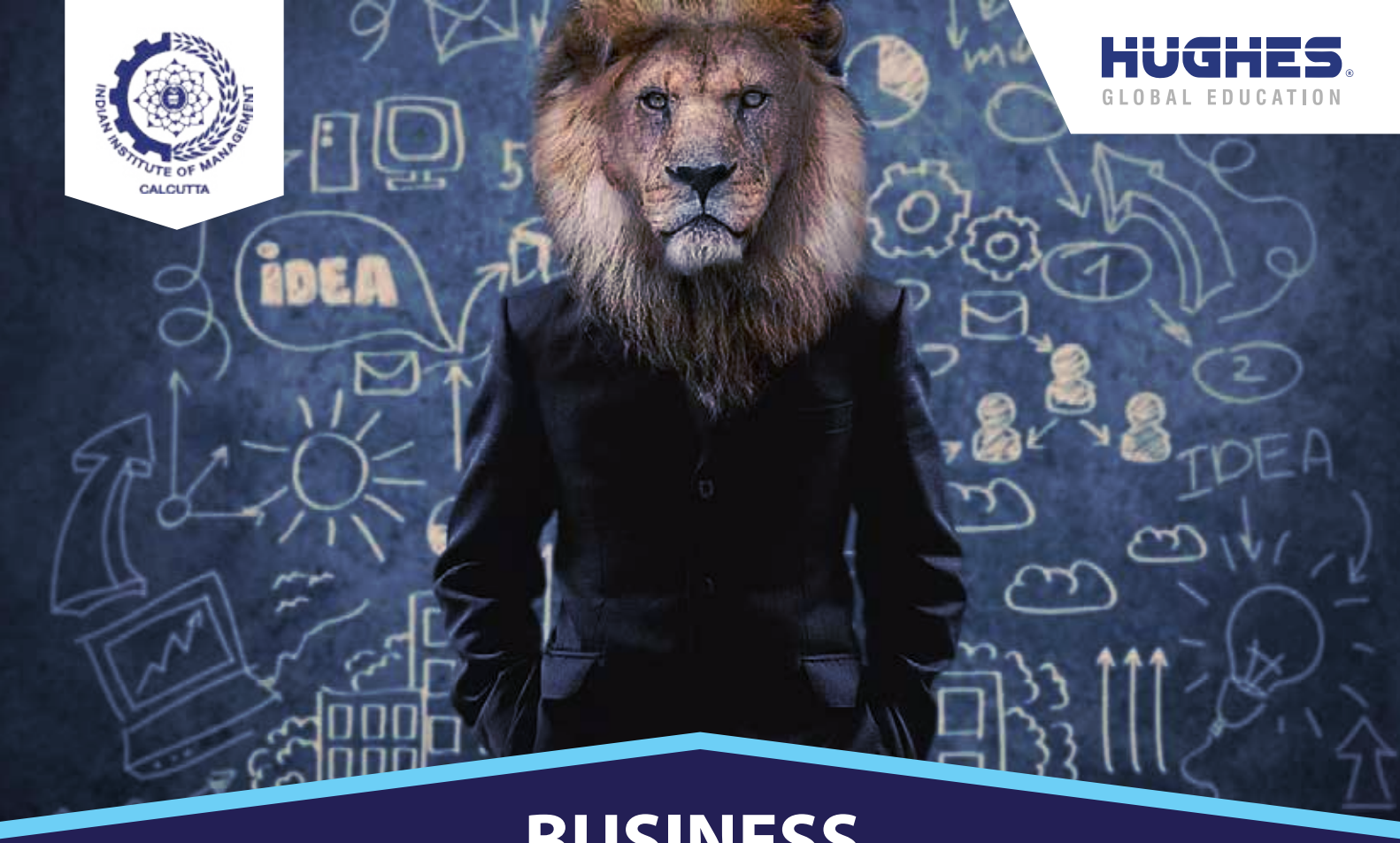
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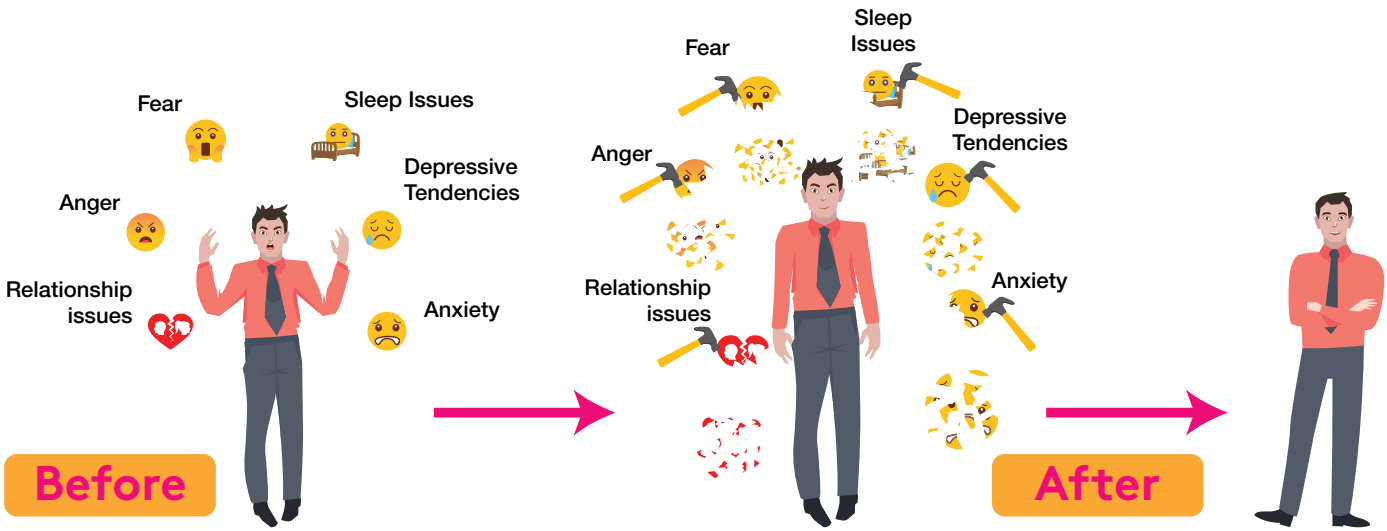
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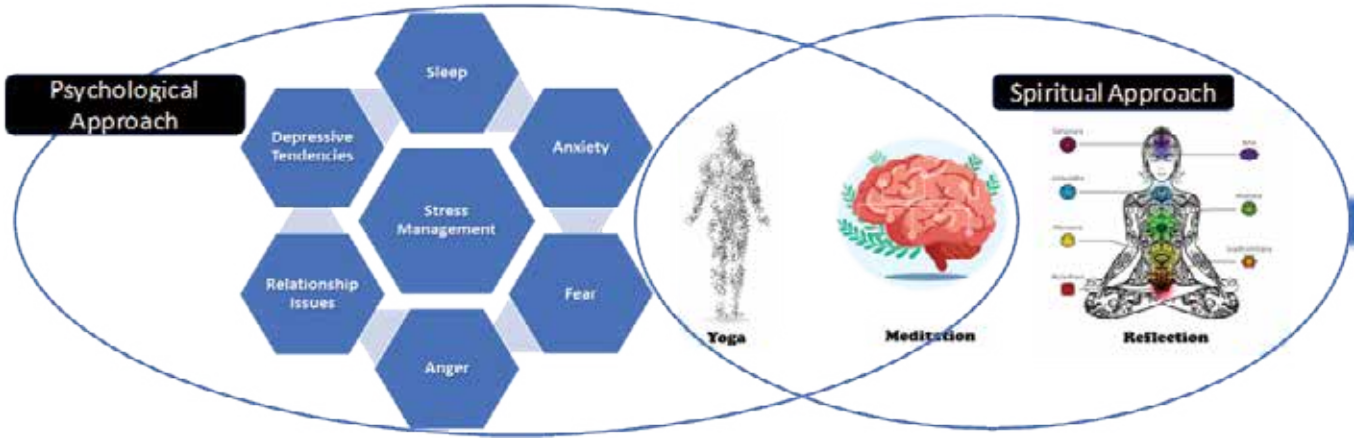
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ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD HAVE CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICERS AT BOARD LEVEL

I couldn't agree more. Initiatives begin with a voice for a change and to make an initiative impactful, it is absolutely crucial to make that voice heard and matter at the executive level. It took HR leaders years before they could enter the board room, we shouldn't make the same mistake when it comes to diversity and inclusion, especially now when it is, in fact, a business imperative. What organizations still don't realize is that hiring for diversity is as important as hiring for ongoing role requirements. With a Chief Diversity Officer being a part of the executive level decisions, there will be a trickle-down effect on talent related decisions all across, to bring about a mindset change and realize that inclusion in fact is about being open to talent all across, with no basis of elimination except for skill and talent. If organizations are able to overcome this blockage in hiring, diversity will flourish without much ado.

- ANMOL MISRA



MARCH 2020 ISSUE

Before fixing bias in AI, let us fix our own

"Before we fix the bias in the algorithms, we need to first fix the biases that cloud our view of the future."

I couldn't agree more. It comes as no surprise that there exists bias in technology, rather AI so to say, given it was given a kick-start by humans, who are anything but unbiased. The geographically varying accepted social norms have only paralyzed and widened the already existing gap in cultures, generations, and what acceptance essentially means. While there was a time when acceptance meant conferring to established social norms, today acceptance holds a deeper meaning, a deeper essence which talks about being accepted for having an individual perspective, preference and opinion, despite being different from the perspectives it is surrounded by.

- SWARNENDU BISWAS

Using design thinking principles to solve recruitment problems

Recruitment is like the troublesome child of talent management. Despite years of trying to understand, refine and implement latest strategies, it remains a constant unsolved issue that refuses to settle down and give its parents some rest. What has come out of all these years of refinement is the clarity that there is no one-size fits all when it comes to identifying the right talent for an organization. With the introduction of design thinking what helps is to refine hiring strategies as per the role you are hiring for and not the brand name. Employees today no longer get pulled by mere brand names, especially with the influx of number startups, and the more recent rising of the gig economy.

- JANVI MAHESH

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

Gender Equality in Asia: It might get uncomfortable

The very fact that conversations and policies around gender equality makes people uncomfortable is a sign of worry. This concern is very well articulated by the author where he shares the results of the survey that indicate the initial discomfort men are likely to experience when they witness more women around. This discomfort might go a notch higher when the discussions go beyond a 50:50 hiring ratio to deeper discussions on pay equity, promotion opportunities and recognitions.

- PRAKASH JAIN

Workplace 2030: How the future of work will look like

An interesting take on what the future workplace will look like, what it will deliver and what it essentially will comprise of. Customization, rather hyper-personalization is surely going to drive the demand in the future. However, one may question, under the present circumstances, will workspaces even exist at all? In no time global organizations have mandated work from home, the situation demands it to be this way.

- AKHILESH MOTIWAL

Workplace 2030: How the future of work will look like

An interesting take on what the future workplace will look like, what it will deliver and what it essentially will comprise of. Customization, rather hyper-personalization is surely going to drive the demand in the future. However, one may question, under the present circumstances, will workspaces even exist at all? In no time global organizations have mandated work from home, the situation demands it to be this way. To pull through the ongoing pandemic, leaders are working hard towards being in a non-panic mode and finding opportunities to sustain and be successful at that, amid the threat that surrounds the population of this planet. I believe it is absolutely unpredictable at this point in time to know how the coming times will shape up, in terms of work environment. If we are realistic, as of today, there is no end date that could determine how long the situation remains so. Who is to say the workforce tomorrow wouldn't demand a 24X7 open cafeteria and a pet-friendly workspace, but rather prefer to work remotely, keeping an eye on things at home, and ensuring an equal commitment to work.

- ABHINAV KUMAR

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Before we fix the #bias in humans, we cannot fix the biased algorithms. https://bit.ly/3dzwdt9 @PeopleMatters2@Ester_Matters

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#JantaCurfew leverages the principle of consistency, a nudge that makes us comply on a 'small & easy' action to ready us for a 'larger and more complex' commitment - will it work?

@IntelIndia
"Leaders need to be 'fearless' to drive the D&I agenda," says Intel India HR Head @AnjaliR82504550 in this interview with @PeopleMatters2. Read her thoughts on how #diversity leads to #innovation and what organizations can do to be more #inclusive.

@OFB_LGBT
Check out this article in @PeopleMatters2 about how companies can take action on #LGBT+ rights around the world, written by our Global Program Director.

@CapgeminiIndia
In an exclusive interaction with @PeopleMatters2@Gay3_ram, Diversity and Inclusion Leader, Capgemini India, shares key things organizations and leaders must do to create diverse and #inclusive workplaces. Read more

@CornerstoneInc
Cornerstone OnDemand launches an educational platform to help users navigate COVID-19 (via @PeopleMatters2) #CornerstoneCares

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP

EngageRocket raises $3Mn Series A funding



Asian employee engagement and performance software company EngageRocket has announced an S$3 million investment to strengthen its presence in Southeast Asia. The transaction was led by Qualgro, a regional VC based in Singapore. Existing investors SeedPlus, Found. Ventures and JobsCentral co-founder, Huang Shao-Ning, were among those who increased their investment into the company. This brings the total funding raised by the company to S$4.5M.

EngageRocket has just opened a new office in Jakarta, in addition to its Singapore HQ, while exploring other Southeast Asian markets. The company aims to triple its revenue in 2020 and double its headcount, specifically adding advanced capabilities in engineering, people science, as well as in customer-facing roles in each SEA market to deliver personalized support.

RECRUITMENT

Unemployment in HK at a 9-year high

The total unemployment rate in Hong Kong hit 3.7 percent in the December to February period, marking the fifth consecutive month it has risen above estimates and the first time in nine years it has been so high. Over the course of 2019, unemployment in the city had been steadily worsening as months of civil unrest took their toll and were added to by the Sino-US trade war; now, with the COVID-19 pandemic weighing even more heavily on the economy, the figures are even less optimistic.





LIFE @ WORK

Singapore retains its top spot as the most expensive city for expats: Survey

The Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) 2020 edition of its worldwide cost of living survey has identified as the world's most expensive city for expatriates for the seventh straight year. This year it is sharing the top spot with Hong Kong and Osaka. "While there was upward pressure in Singapore this year because of rising electricity costs and the strong currency, this was offset by flat or cheaper prices for other goods, such as restaurant meals and supermarket staples," said Simon Baptist, Global Chief Economist.

He further added that it is because the Singapore dollar has been "relatively strong" compared with many other currencies such as the Australian dollar, the euro as well as the Chinese yuan, cities which use those currencies that the others became less expensive when compared with Singapore.



TALENT MANAGEMENT

Automobile companies to close factories in North America

Coronavirus is taking a toll on health and also giving the economy a big blow. With infection fear around rising among the workers and customers, several automakers have decided to idle their plants in the United States, Canada, and Mexico for one week. The decisions will put thousands of people out of work for a brief period, reported NY Times.

Major automobile companies such as General Motors, Ford Motor and Fiat Chrysler — decided to close plants after the United Auto Workers (UAW) union pressured them to do so to protect workers. The company owners started worrying after a worker at a Ford truck plant in Dearborn, Mich., had tested positive for the virus.

JOBS

Coronavirus outbreak can eliminate millions of travel and tourism jobs

The new figure from the World Travel & Tourism Council has suggested that the travel sector could shrink by up to 25 percent in 2020. The outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted the businesses globally and the trade body has predicted the pandemic can further put 50 million tourism jobs at the risk of getting eliminated.

The body has also confirmed that out of the 50 million jobs that could be lost, around 30 million would be in Asia, seven million



in Europe, five million in the Americas and the rest in other continents. The news comes after thousands of international flights were canceled and some insurance firms suspended travel cover for new customers. The tourism industry has been massively affected by the spread of coronavirus, as many countries have introduced travel restrictions in an attempt to contain its spread.



LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

L&D budgets to grow in 2020: LinkedIn

According to a recent report by LinkedIn, '2020 Workplace Learning Report', more than a third of L&D professionals globally are expecting their budgets to grow year over year- shifting from Instructor-Led Training (ILT) to online learning—and executive buy-in continues to build. In fact, 72 percent of L&D professionals in India expect budgets to grow over the year.

According to the LinkedIn's last year report, 2019 was the breakout year of the talent developer.

SKILLING

Data skills gap is costing Singapore companies S$5bn in lost productivity: Report

A new report finds a gap between Singaporean organizations' aspirations to be data-driven and their employees' ability to create business value with data. Accenture and Qlik's survey of 1,000 employees in Singapore found that each year, local companies lose an average of more than seven working days (56.5 hours) per employee. This is the second-highest time globally (after India with 69.5 hours) and significantly higher than the average of five working days (43 hours).



DIVERSITY

Citi Singapore extends 4-week paid paternity leave

Putting International Women's Day 2020 theme 'Each For Equal' in action, Citi Singapore has increased the paid paternity leave to four weeks, twice the duration set in the previous policy, which provided the government-mandated two weeks. The maternity leaves remain same 16 weeks, as mandated by government.



The bank shared that this decision is part of a review of parental leave policies across the bank's global operations. Going forward Citi Bank will be raising leave provisions - paternity, maternity or both - in 74 markets this year.

Citi Singapore's Head of Human Resources Jorge Osorio shared that the adjustments globally were decided on after the bank engaged an external vendor to assess its parental leave offerings against its peers. The bank has shared that the initiative is part of building an inclusive workplace, and comes after its recent commitment to increase global representation of women in assistant vice-president to managing director level roles to at least 40 per cent by 2021 to address its unadjusted pay gap, or the gender gap in median total compensation without adjusting for factors such as job function, level and geography.

NEWSMAKER OF THE MONTH

COVID-19: Unleashing the biggest work-from-home experiment ever



In a matter of months, the global pandemic COVID-19 has become one of the most significant disruptions the world has ever seen. It has already crippled supply chains worldwide, and it is speculated that the world may undergo recession as a result of its rapid spread – which shows no end in sight.

As one of the key ways to combat this spread is through social distancing, businesses worldwide are experimenting with what could be the biggest "work from home" experiment ever. While not all jobs can be done from home, a number of them can be done with the help of a laptop or a phone with internet connection. Many companies were quick to implement the policy -- from IT giants like Facebook, Google, Twitter, Microsoft to even government departments. Speaking to a media house, a Facebook official said, "This decision is based on our desire to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19. The health and safety of our teams, their loved ones and our neighbors remain a top priority."

This disbursed mode of work is not without challenges; companies have had to move quickly to adopt technologies to boost communication and productivity. Companies now also have to face issues that they may have previously not planned for – an explosion of mental health issues due to isolation and lack of social interactions. Leading companies like Microsoft, Deloitte and P&G are partnering with psychiatrists, mental health experts to deal with potential issues. Physical health also tends to deteriorate when employees are at home for long periods of time. Companies will also need to make the effort to understand challenges from lack of motivation and a possible drop in productivity as a result.

APPOINTMENTS



TATA TRUSTS APPOINTS SRINATH NARASIMHAN AS CEO

Srinath Narasimhan, Managing Director, Tata Teleservices and Tata Teleservices (Maharashtra), will start his new role as the CEO of Tata Trusts from April 1, 2020. Srinath Narasimhan had been instrumental as the Managing Director of Tata Telecommunications where he was recognized for helping turn around a company that Tata had acquired from the government.



TVS SUPPLY CHAIN SOLUTIONS APPOINTS JT MD & CEO

TVS Supply Chain Solutions has appointed Ravi Viswanathan as Joint Managing Director. Viswanathan is an industry veteran and before joining the TVS Group, he has worked with Tata Consultancy Services. He will also serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the TVS Group from April 1, 2020 reporting to R. Dinesh, Managing Director at TVS SCS.



MASTERCARD CEO AJAY BANGA TO STEP DOWN

Mastercard CEO of a decade, Ajay Banga, will step down at the beginning of next year. The current Chief Product Officer Michael Miebach will take over from Banga. Banga proved instrumental for the company when he took over the reins in the aftermath of the 2008-09 financial crises and has been witness to Mastercard's revenue tripling during his tenure as the ecommerce sector also flourished across the globe.



XIAOMI INDIA APPOINTS NEW CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER

Smartphone and TV brand Xiaomi has appointed Raghu Reddy as the new Chief Business Officer for Xiaomi India. He was earlier heading all categories and online sales for Xiaomi India. Under his new role, he continues to be responsible for all categories and online sales business of Xiaomi India. Additionally, he will also take up several responsibilities from the Managing Director, Manu Jain.



WEWORK GETS A NEW CFO

WeWork has announced that Kimberly A. Ross will join the Company as Chief Financial Officer, effective March 16. Ross is a highly accomplished executive with more than 25 years of experience in senior financial roles at large, global enterprises. Most recently, she was Senior VP and CFO of Baker Hughes, a role she had previously held at Avon Products and Koninklijke Ahold, which is now Ahold Delhaize.



MICROSOFT APPOINTS ITS FIRST-EVER CHIEF SCIENTIFIC OFFICER

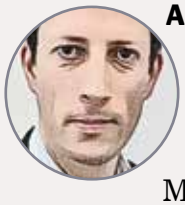
Microsoft has a new chief scientific officer for the first time in its history. The company appointed Eric Horvitz to this role. Horvitz had been a technical fellow and director at Microsoft's Research Labs prior to his promotion. He joined Microsoft in 1993 and worked for 16 years as a principal researcher at the company. He also co-chairs the company's Artificial Intelligence and Ethics in Engineering and Research (AETHER) Committee.



SEIBELS APPOINTS NEW VICE PRESIDENT, HR

Seibels has appointed Pam Ringquist to Vice President of Human Resources. In this leadership role, Ringquist will be responsible for leading Seibels' workforce planning, talent development, and employee relations initiatives that align with the company's long-term strategic goals. Ringquist has over twenty years of human resources and marketing experience. In addition to her role at Seibels, she will also serve as Vice President of Human Resources at Gulfstream Property and Casualty Insurance Company, an affiliate of Seibels, and supports human resource initiatives for other Seibels affiliates, as needed.

APPOINTMENTS



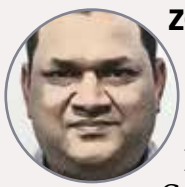
AXA INSURANCE APPOINTS MD FOR RETAIL AND HEALTH

AXA Insurance Singapore announced that Julien Callard will take on the new role of Managing Director, Retail and Health, effective immediately. In this newly expanded role, Julien will lead the Retail and Health strategic business unit, with responsibility for driving the continued growth of AXA's retail business and health business as well as the respective distribution functions.



JINDAL STAINLESS APPOINTS NEW L&D HEAD

Jindal Stainless has recently brought on board Learning and Development (L&D) expert, Nitin Thakur to head the function in the company. Thakur will lead and drive the implementation of leadership development in the Company. He will work closely with Chief Human Resources Officer, Jindal Stainless, S K Jain.



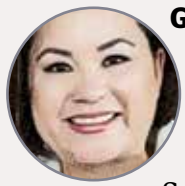
ZOLOSTAYS APPOINTS CHANCHAL GUPTA AS CHRO

Zolostays, has appointed Chanchal Gupta as the Chief Human Resources Officer. In his new role, Gupta will be tackling the strategic direction that the company would embark upon in terms of people management, employee engagement, retention, organizational effectiveness, diversity and inclusion, learning and development, in addition to succession planning.



LEVI STRAUSS & CO ANNOUNCES NEW CHRO

Levi Strauss & Co has announced the appointment of Tracy Layney as Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer of the company. She will join the company on April 20, 2020. Layney brings over 20 years of experience in human resources and organization strategy, including deep experience in apparel and retail. Most recently, Layney was Senior Vice President and CHRO at Shutterfly, where she was responsible for recruiting, employee engagement, talent management, compensation and benefits, HR technology, corporate communications and the Shutterfly Foundation.



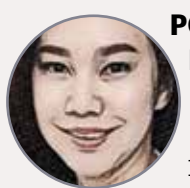
GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY COMPANY ALTAIR APPOINTS NEW CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Gilma Saravia has joined the company as Chief People Officer. Saravia will lead Altair's global human resources organization, including its workforce strategy, talent acquisition and development, as well as employee engagement. In her new role, she will oversee all aspects of Altair's HR functions globally, supporting 3,300 employees across 26 countries.



CAMBRIDGE INNOVATION CENTER APPOINTS NEW CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC), which operates in creating spaces for innovation, has announced that Vanessa Brown has joined the company in a new role as Chief People Officer. In this capacity, Brown will design and implement a global people strategy to drive CIC's continued success as a "talent-led" organization, while fostering a culture of honesty, transparency, and excellence.



POMELO APPOINTS PIYANUCH LIMAPORNVANITCH AS CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Pomelo, a leading omnichannel fashion brand of Asia, announced the appointment of Piyanuch Limapornvanitch as the company's Chief People Officer. With over 15 years of experience leading HR across a variety of companies, Piyanuch will oversee Pomelo's human resources division, driving the company's people experience, development and operations, talent acquisition and strategy, and employee engagement initiatives as the company continues to scale at speed.

Wendy Xia

Chief Human Resource Officer, DB Schenker

By **Neelanjana Mazumdar**



1
One thing that makes you passionate about HR?
Dave Ulrich sums it up very nicely for me - "HR professionals are learners who seek new ways to solve old problems, enablers who make others better, and value creators who help all stakeholders win."

2
What was the turning point of your life as an HR professional?
An employee walked up to me one day, held my hand and shared how a decision I made more than a year ago has positively changed her life. Honestly, I was flabbergasted and did not know how to react.

3
One tech/innovation that will transform HR?
AI driven personalization

4
One perception you wish to change about the HR function?
That HR can be driven by data and analytics. Engineers and mathematicians can be great HR professionals too.

Be humble, listen to the business, leverage your strengths and work together to create value

5
Your advice for aspiring HR professionals?
Keep it simple! Be humble, listen to the business, leverage your strengths and work together to create value.

6
Next big HR deployment DB Schenker is working around?
Launching of a global Performance Management system

7
Self-paced learning or guided (organization-lead) learning?
Self-paced

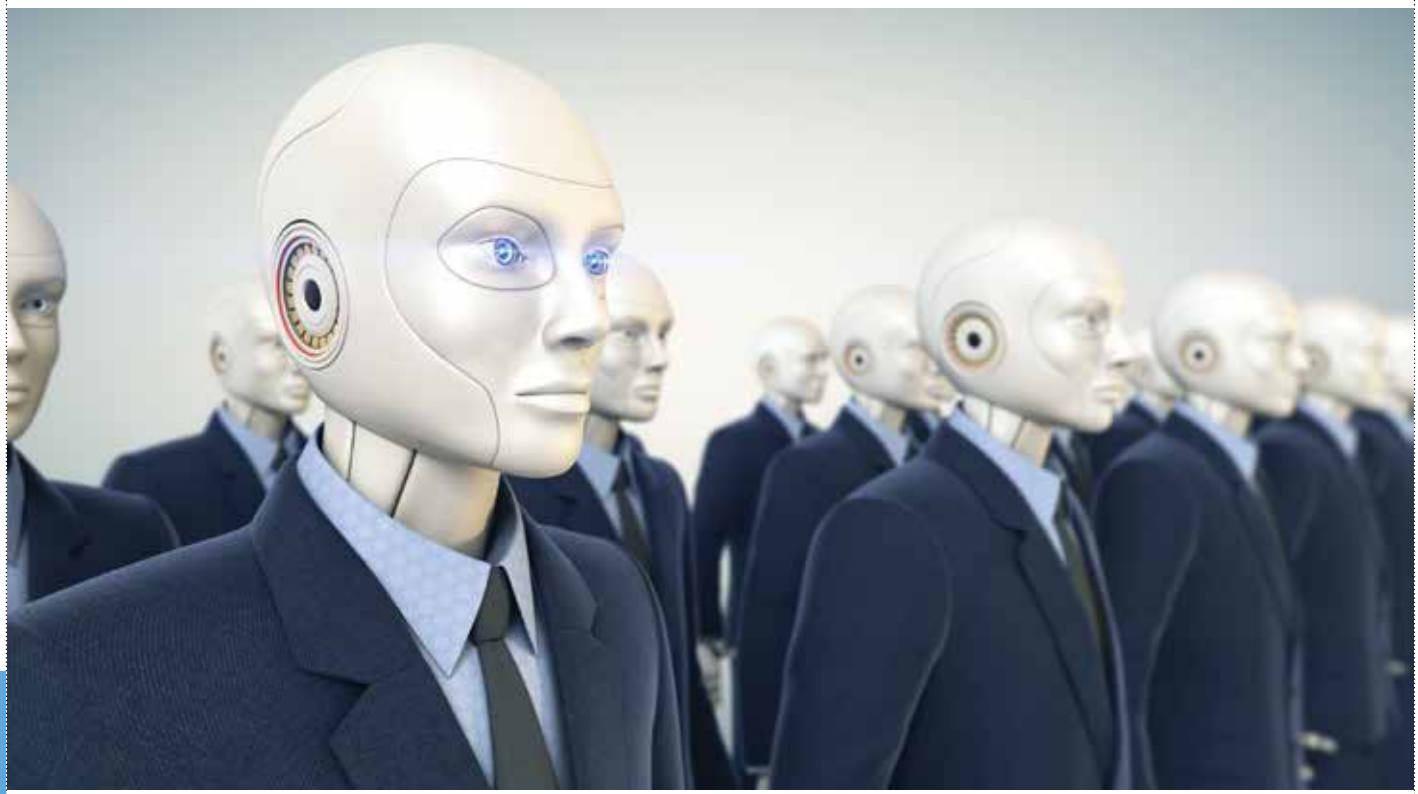
8
Gig Workers or Permanent Employees?
Permanent

9
One must-read book for CHROs and HR leaders
Simon Sinek's "Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't"

10
HR as a business partner or HR as a business driver?
Business partner towards business driver

11
Things HR professionals must keep in mind while implementing tech in any HR process?
Data privacy is not compromised!

12
What do you think about when you're alone in your car?
Nothing. I am a safe driver, staying focused on the roads!



Is AI coming for your job?

Charting the advent of AI and its impact on white-collar jobs, reports paint a complicated picture. But preparing for the future marked with an increasing presence of AI becomes extremely necessary

By **Dhruv Mukerjee**

The scope of technological trends influencing business processes is often difficult to objectively quantify while such technological changes are evolving. The economic impact of the rising use of AI and automation on jobs fall under this category. Research and studies have pegged different sets of numbers—all from the mass displacement of employees to the use of AI creating equal number of new jobs in their wake—and while many still speculate how the use of AI will reshape the future of jobs across the globe, there is little doubt in its potential to actively do so. And now studies suggest that previously held notions of white collared, high skilled jobs being impervious to such an impact might be wrong.

Amidst much of the debate on AI, a recognized fact has been on the impact of automation and AI on low skilled jobs. Much across the developed markets across the US and Europe, companies have already begun using technologies like robotics and AI to automate jobs that require relatively less

specialized skills. Instances of such changes have already been noted across sectors like retail, manufacturing, and IT.

With the level of specialization required for some jobs being relatively low, they become vulnerable to be replaced by technology. It is for the same reason reports suggest a significant impact of automation would happen across rural areas where jobs are dominated by fairly low skilled work, a fact especially true for the west[1]. Even across Indian markets, a similar trend has been noted where many of the transactional jobs like managing workflow and customer-facing conversations are slowly being automated. Across manufacturing too, the rise in the use of AI in everything, from the cars you drive to the washing machines you use, would lead to jobs being displaced, impacting the skillset requirements of factory workers.

But this impact of AI and intelligent automation is not going to remain limited to blue-collar jobs only. Recent reports from the Brookings Institute suggest the white-collar jobs too might be under threat of facing competition from their machine counterparts.

Expanding the scope of analysis

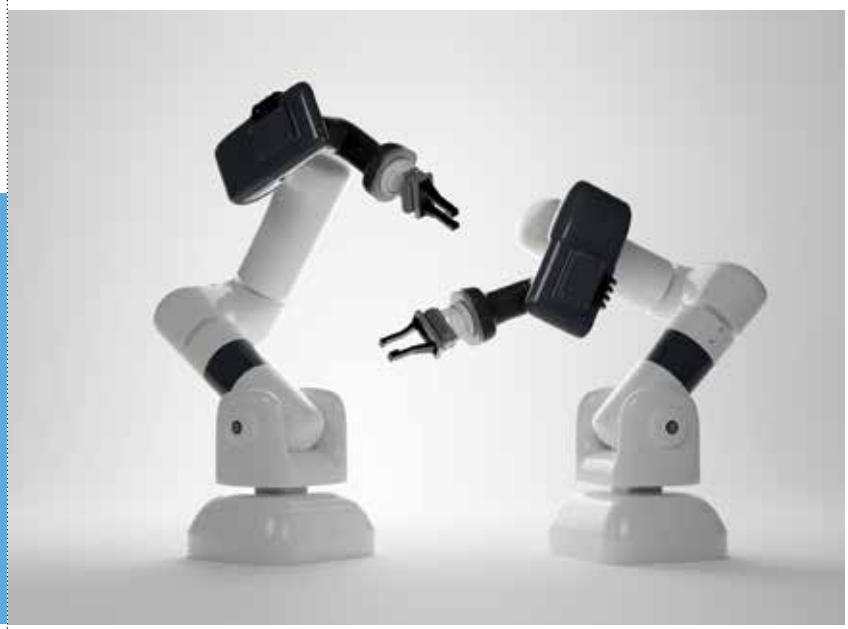
In a study published by the Brookings Institute[2], researchers hoped to assess the potential of jobs being performed by AI programs in the near future. The methodology consisted of going through texts of existing AI patents and comparing them to job descriptions currently being used for such professions. The overlap between the patent text marking what the AI program could do and keywords within job descriptions was then quantified to assess the kinds of tasks and occupations likely to be affected.



Much across the developed markets across the US and Europe, companies have already begun using technologies like robotics and AI to automate jobs that require relatively less specialized skills

Based on the methodology used by Michael Webb,[3] a researcher from Stanford, the study—focused mainly on US job markets—notes that the impact of AI would be pervasive across the jobs ecosystem and that such an impact will not be equally distributed. By

some estimates, the impact on white collared jobs might overshadow that on blue-collared jobs. The report highlights that using this methodology, findings reveal that those with bachelor's degrees will be much more exposed to AI than less-educated groups and in parallel workers in higher-wage occupations (toward the right) will be much more exposed than lower-wage workers.



A reason for this, the report notes, is the inherent ability within such jobs to be impacted by advancements in AI. Portfolios like market research analysts and sales managers to programmers, management analysts, and engineers all stand affected. After performing the analysis, the report concluded that the role of AI will be significant in the future work lives of managers, supervisors, and analysts. One that is will not be limited to traditionally held notions of jobs impact under AI and intelligent automation but would rather shake up all sorts of white-collar work from law firms, marketing roles, and publishers to computer programming.

The report notes that often analytic or supervisory nature of these roles appear to be "heavily involved in pattern-oriented or predictive work, and may, therefore, be especially susceptible to the data-driven inroads of AI, even though they seemed relatively immune in earlier analyses. By contrast, it appears that numerous low-paying, rote jobs engaged in providing hands-on services (such as in personal care, food preparation, or health care) will be relatively unexposed to changes from AI applications. This, for the time being, was possible according to the report.

By some estimates, the impact on white collared jobs might overshadow that on blue-collared jobs

It is important to note however that the study refrains from stating that such tasks will be broadly replaced and result in a loss of work. But rather significant portions of jobs that require a high degree of skill specialization could potentially be exposed to, complemented by, or completed by AI.

Another prediction in a bowl full of others

Predictions and projections about

the future of jobs with regards to developing technologies like AI are often hard to pinpoint. A major part of it is due to the uncharted nature of the progress of AI. According to scholars Erik Brynjolfsson and Tom Mitchell, there is "no widely shared agreement on the tasks where machine learning systems excel, and thus little agreement on the expected impacts on the workforce and the economy more broadly." This puts many predictions made on the eventual impact of the technology on the future of jobs across an entire spectrum of possibilities.

In addition to this, the timeline of such changes is also debatable. Experts agree that across most cases the implementation of AI, from self- driving autonomous cars that can teach themselves to self-improving decision-making algorithms deployed by businesses, has usually been a slow and drawn-out process. Companies investing in AI technologies begin to benefit from it usually after a long period of implementation, improvements, and investments. In many cases, using AI-based programs are currently limited to chatbots and decision making instances where natural language processing plays an important role. Beyond this, AI is usually responsible for incremental changes in businesses that usually aren't inherently digital.

But that is not to underestimate the potential of having an AI-driven future. It might eventually transform the economy—by making new products and new business models possible, by predicting things humans couldn't have foreseen. Studies like this help add another piece to the puzzle, in efforts to provide a clearer picture and prepare both employers and job seekers in ways to deal with changing times ahead. From concepts like Universal Basic Income to having life-long learners, the future would require better safeguards to ensure human employability.



From concepts like Universal Basic Income to having life-long learners, the future would require better safeguards to ensure human employability

Notes

1. Automation and Artificial Intelligence: How machines are affecting people and places: Brookings Institute
2. What jobs are affected by AI?:Brookings Institute
3. The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Labor Market



Q&A

OUR HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN THINKING MAKES US TRULY CUSTOMER-CENTRIC: FORD MOTOR'S GLOBAL CHRO

THE GLOBAL CHRO OF FORD MOTOR COMPANY **KIERSTEN ROBINSON,** IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE MATTERS, THROWS LIGHT ON SOME OF THE DEVELOPMENTS THAT ARE HELPING HR BECOME MISSION-CRITICAL TO BUSINESS, THE CULTURE TRANSFORMATION THE COMPANY IS GOING THROUGH, AND MORE

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Kiersten Robinson is the Group Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at Ford Motor Company. She assumed this position April 1, 2018. In this role, Robinson oversees all global people processes including talent management, workforce planning, learning and development, recruiting, diversity and inclusion, compensation and benefits, and the dealer policy board.

As the senior leader and corporate officer overseeing people processes globally, Robinson ensures the development and execution of business strategies that reflect the global business environment, customer and market needs. She reports to Jim Hackett, Ford president and CEO.

Before being appointed to this role, Robinson served as Ford's interim Human Resources leader, assuming the position in November 2017 after having served as executive director, Human Resources, Global Markets.

Robinson joined the automaker in 1995 as a labor relations representative in Ford of Australia and quickly rose through the ranks, serving in the first of several international assignments in 1997 with the Ford of Europe manufacturing organization. Following two additional positions in Australia, Robinson moved to Ford's headquarters in 2002 to hold a variety of roles of increasing responsibility, culminating in her appointment to vice president of Human Resources for Ford in Asia Pacific in 2010.

In 2016, Robinson was appointed to lead human resources for The Americas, and in early 2017, her role was expanded to include Global Markets.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q How do you see the current COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for the world of work? How are you dealing with it?

A I'm extremely proud of how Ford is keeping our people safe, doing our part to limit the spread of the virus, taking care

Technology is becoming more critical, and we are seeing the most significant impact in human capital management and workforce planning, recruiting, and the future of work

of customers, and managing through the crisis in ways that safeguard our workforce, our business and our partners. We are a company driven by purpose. We put people first and focus on the wants and needs of people to drive human progress.

Across much of the organization, we have asked all salaried employees – except those performing business critical roles that cannot be done off site – to work remotely until further notice. We have technology in place so employees can connect with each other and customers to maintain business continuity. We also temporarily suspended production at manufacturing sites in North America, South America, Europe, India, South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam.

> Not only has technology transformed how HR works, but we also play an important role in accelerating the integration of smart technology and AI to augment the workforce for now and the future

We realize the important role we play in the world and in the lives of people and have joined with 3M, GE and UAW to speed production of respirators for healthcare workers and ventilators for COVID-19 patients. Under our "Built to Lend a Hand" program, eligible new car customers in the U.S. can defer payments for up to three months, and Ford will pay for three months – providing up to six months of payment peace of mind.

More than ever, we are thankful to all our personnel for their resilience and commitment to each other and all Ford stakeholders during this extraordinary period.

Q How do you see the overall role of HR evolving over the last few years and what are some of the significant developments that can help make HR mission-critical to business?

A Over the past few years, we have seen the pace of change pick up rapidly. Technology is changing people's lives. You can now do almost anything with your phone or remotely and social media rapidly spreads information around the globe. To address these changes and enhance the employee experience, we shifted from "one size fits all" to "fit for purpose" HR processes to enhance the employee experience such as:

- Being strategic partners and coaches during our restructuring in 2019, which helped lower costs and change how we work.
- Practicing new methodologies such as human-design thinking to reinvent our processes.
- Learning to work differently, which requires a mindset shift from a traditional organizational structure driven by hierarchy and department to one of fluidity and flexible resourcing.

Q You have been with Ford for more than two decades as an HR leader. What has changed in your company over the years, and what has been your most significant learning? Can you share some insights for fellow HR leaders?

A Technology is becoming more critical, and we are seeing the most significant impact in human capital management and workforce planning, recruiting, and the future of work.

HR and people data technologies are advancing and offer better ways to summarize and analyze workforce data. They provide key information such as volumes of open positions in key roles, capability gaps, attrition risk and more. The challenge is that these tools are wholly dependent on high-quality data such as position and people attributes. The better we get at keeping that information correct and up-to-date, the more useful workforce data are.

Within the recruiting space, companies are now leveraging AI technologies in several ways so that recruiters can dedicate their time to high value candidate experiences, such as chatbots that engage candidates early in the hiring process to help pre-qualify them for positions while reducing biases and identifying the best words to use when posting jobs to attract the people we want to hire. Not only has technology transformed how HR works, but we also play an important role in accelerating the integration of smart technology and AI to augment the workforce for now and the future.



Our culture, employee experience, D&I, and the evolving workplace are not just the responsibilities of HR. Ford is becoming a more customer-centric company through our adoption of human-centered design thinking both internally and externally

Q Can you give us a sneak peek at the initiatives that Ford is taking in terms of cultural transformation, and how do they align with your business strategy?

A Our culture, employee experience, D&I and the evolving workplace are not just the responsibilities of HR. Ford is becoming a more customer-centric company through our adoption of human-centered design thinking both internally



We, at Ford Motor Company, are prioritizing agile ways of working and adopting an agile mindset as part of our HR capability building strategy so we can embed this in the work we do every day

and externally. Our evolved values and behaviors are different and disrupting the systems in place. In addition to trying new ways of engaging with employees, we are excited about the culture transformation currently underway at Ford.

Last year, we adopted Our Truths that guide how we live, act and communicate. They keep us focused on what matters most. At Ford, the culture we create starts with Our Truths and is synonymous with our values: They connect with our behavior and lay the foundation for the kind of living and working environment we create together. We are leaning into those truths and working to build a culture that puts them at the center of our everyday experience. We formed a group of 32 employees known as our Culture Cabinet. This group of individuals represents 14 different countries and all levels of seniority, leadership and diversity provide us with real-time feedback on our success to create new experiences from those viewed by their organization as role models for the way we wish to work.

We put an employee call to action out asking those who are interested in playing a more active role in our culture transformation. This is the group we call our Street Team – they are the arms and legs of this culture movement. We have 6,500+ members globally and counting, and this group is leveraged as change agents within their organizations. They share material about our new values and behaviors, pilot new experiences we are considering for our employee base and provide sentiment from their region in terms of how we are doing.

Q Agile isn't just for tech anymore –it's transforming how organizations hire, develop, and manage their people. How do your agile talent practices look like?

A Our HR team is actively experimenting with and applying agile practices and concepts as we design our talent management practices. Examples include holding sprints, engaging in rapid

prototyping and employing a human-centered approach by including our customers in the design our products and services.

We are also prioritizing agile ways of working and adopting an agile mindset as part of our HR capability building strategy so we can embed this in the work we do every day. We have several initiatives underway where we have taken an agile approach to design our talent processes and policies including:

- Involving new parents in redesigning our US parenting policy to ensure we provide the flexibility needed during this important family transition.
- Launching of a new Compensation and Performance Management process to better support a flatter organization, agile ways of working, and improved employee experience.
- Conducting accelerated talent and succession planning pilots

Q As Ford plans to turn into an automotive and mobility company that could thrive in the future, what does this mean for you as an HR leader? How are you gearing up to get to speed with this positioning?

A We are rethinking our entire people strategy for today and tomorrow so we can effectively plan for, upskill and compete for the talent needed in the future. We must enable a flexible and fluid organization and invest in building our capabilities to ensure we can achieve our aspirations as a company.

We are rethinking our entire people strategy for today and tomorrow so we can effectively plan for, upskill and compete for the talent needed in the future

Q With the impending reskilling revolution, how can manufacturers survive Industry 4.0? How are you reskilling your workforce?

A Technological advances create demands for new skills. At Ford, manufacturing technicians are being trained in electrified vehicle diagnostics. Portable training cells integrate robots, controls and vision systems to provide system-level training and we are experimenting with augmented reality in our manufacturing facilities.

We are envisioning and creating the future. Our engineers and technicians complement mechanical and software engineering skills, ensuring we can move at the speed of software even as we continue to develop hardware.

Expansion of partnerships with governments, universities and early education systems ensures access to new, diverse and skilled pipelines of talent. Ford is a founding partner with the Consumer Technology Association's (CTA) Apprenticeship Coalition to explore new models for learning on the job and preparing workers in nontraditional ways. With CTA and other partners, we are evaluating more than 15 different

apprenticeships for careers in fast-growing fields, including software engineering, data science and analytics, cybersecurity, mainframe system administration, creative design and program management.

Q Navigating disruption is also about learning to battle challenges. Any specific instance of a challenge that you may have faced, and how did you get over it?

A There are always challenges when navigating change. Learning to embrace challenges is an essential component of navigating disruption. I am a big believer in the "pre-mortem" – anticipating what could happen and even "catastrophizing" to answer the question: What if we implement this change and it fails spectacularly? How would that happen and what would it look like? What would the impact be on our customers, employees and stakeholders? This exercise helps surface concerns, resistance and allows you to plan proactively for many obstacles and challenges you could face. The great news is that the scenarios we catastrophize are usually far worse than any challenges or obstacles we may face.

There are always challenges when navigating change. Learning to embrace challenges is an essential component of navigating disruption

Q McKinsey research shows that companies that are more diverse are more productive, more efficient and give better returns to shareholders. What measures are you taking to ensure gender diversity and inclusion at Ford Motors?

A We are focused on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals number 8 – Decent work and economic growth and number 10 – Reduced inequalities. We believe that our most important differentiator is our people. When we create impactful work experiences for our people, they in turn can contribute their best and drive value for the enterprise.

Ford's Global Salaried Gender Pay Ratio, defined as the weighted average ratio of average female salaries to average male salaries within peer groups worldwide, is 98.2 percent. While this ratio provides a rough measure of pay equity, it does not account for individual circumstances such as job titles, education and experience. Such factors may explain much of the difference between the female and male averages. We are interested in providing transparency in how well we are doing, as well as reaffirming our long-term commitment to fairly compensating all our employees.

We have also continued to strengthen our external partnerships, and we are benchmarking with other companies (e.g., maternity and paternity leave and compensation analyses).

Become the hope.
Become the optimism.
Become the passion.



become the answer

12th April 2020
People Matters celebrates the festive spirit of Easter.

JORDAN MORROW

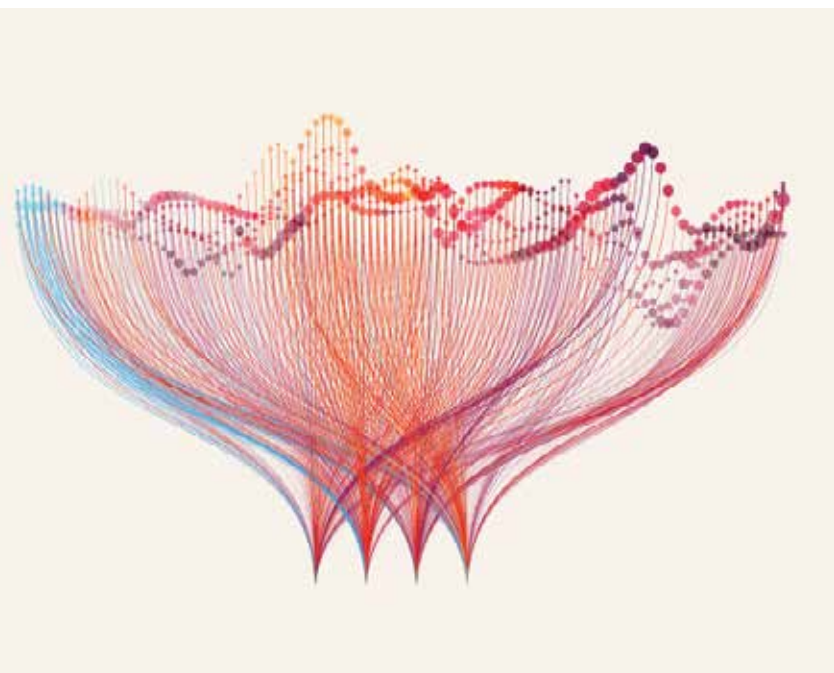


The data-driven workplace: Do you practice what you preach?

Most organizations understand the incredible opportunity that being able to harness data offers them, yet there is a disconnect between what senior leaders believe their teams' capabilities to be and what employees believe

Anyone that's spent more than five minutes on LinkedIn will have come across an "inspirational" post or meme on leadership. Usually they take a supposedly random event and turn it into a lesson on how to lead. However, there is usually some truth buried amongst the self-aggrandizement. One that often comes up is the comparison between being a manager and being a leader. On the former's side, there are words like directing, dictating and demanding; on the latter, coaching, demonstrating and advising. The overall sense is that a manager gets results through control, the leader by guiding.

It's a twist on the notion of leading by example – that leaders set the example through actions



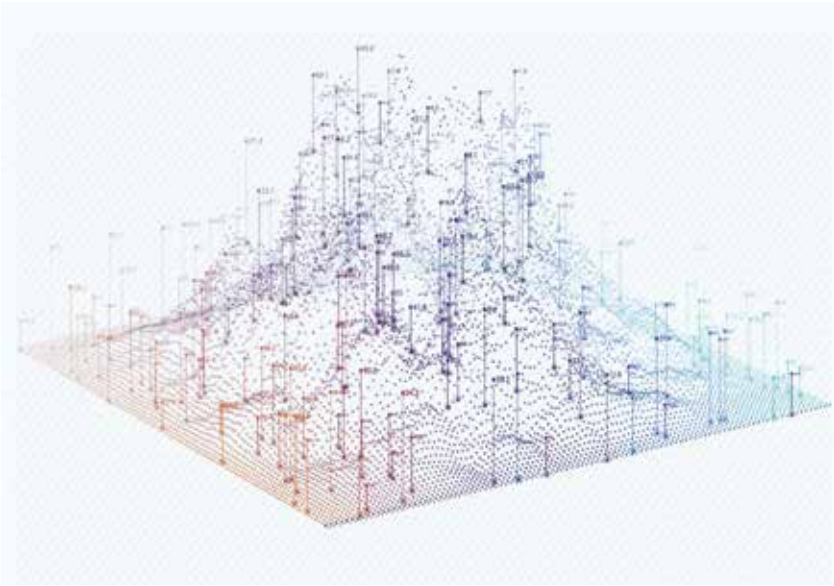
One of the greatest challenges for organizations in the digital age is not capturing data but turning it into actionable insights and value to empower employees to make more informed decisions, improve productivity and drive competitive advantage

and how they operate, rather than simply by telling people what to do. It's a critical part of creating the right behaviors and culture in an organization – if senior executives don't act in the way they want others to, why will employees?

Yet, time and time again we see examples of where the C-suite's expectations of their workforce diverge from the reality those workers are facing. Take the use of data in enterprises. Most organizations understand the incredible opportunity that being able to harness data offers them, yet there is a disconnect between what senior leaders believe their teams' capabilities to be and what employees believe.

The Human Impact of Data Literacy, a new report from Qlik and Accenture, found that three-quarters (75 percent) of C-suite level respondents believe that all or most of their employees have the ability to work with data proficiently, and even more (79 percent) believe that their employees have access to the tools they need to be productive. However, middle managers and below are less optimistic, with half feeling that all or most employees have the right abilities and 50 percent echoing the same sentiment about access.

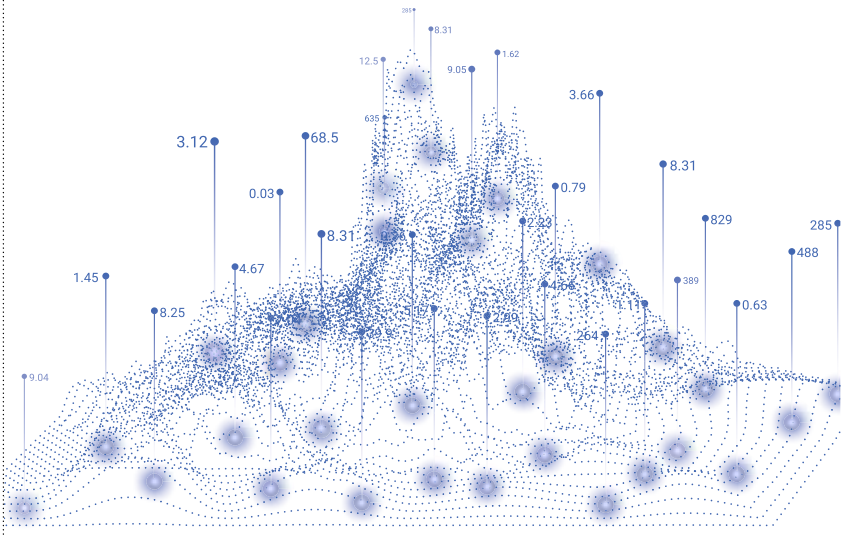
One of the greatest challenges for organizations in the digital age is not capturing data but turning it into actionable insights and value to empower employees to make more informed decisions, improve productivity and drive competitive advantage. That's why to succeed in the data revolution business, leaders must be able to trust the data and therefore enable their employees to become more confident and comfortable in using data insights to make decisions.



While experience and trusting instinct can have value in business, the findings suggest that executives' confidence in acting from insights is impeding some businesses' ability to lead with data

The impending data skills gap

However, with the gap between what leaders believe and what their employees perceive being so wide, enterprises are going to struggle to realize the opportunity if they don't address it. Part of the issue is possibly that leaders are failing to recognize how their own examples are



The most powerful asset for businesses in creating value from data and succeeding in a data-literate world is their people – and education and empowerment should be led from the top down

setting the wrong expectations. Around two-thirds of C-suite executives, senior managers and directors would go with their gut feeling over data-driven insight, compared with just 41 percent of junior managers and those below the last layer of management. While experience and trusting instinct can have value in business, the findings suggest that executives' confidence in acting from insights is impeding some businesses' ability to lead with data.

So, what could be causing this this lack of confidence? For a significant proportion, it could well be a case of data overload. Just shy of a third (30 percent) of global C-suite respondents to the survey said they were overwhelmed with data at least once a day, compared to 14 percent of employees overall.

How can senior leaders address this? Improving their own understanding of data is a good first step – 30 percent said data literacy training would help them be more productive. That's improving their knowledge and ability to read, understand, question and work with data, a skill their own employees would like to improve – just a fifth of the global workforce reported feeling fully confident in their own data literacy skills.

If leaders are serious about turning their organizations into data-driven enterprises, and in doing so improve their enterprise value by up to five percent, then they need to establish the right culture. That can only be done by leading by example – interrogating their own skill sets, investing in training where required, and moving away from gut instinct to demonstrate to their own employees how data-led insights can, and should, be used.

After all, the most powerful asset for businesses in creating value from data and succeeding in a data-literate world is their people – and education and empowerment should be led from the top down.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JORDAN MORROW is the Global Head of Data Literacy, Qlik



Q&A

LGBTQ employees are not yet openly out at work: BCG's Elliot Vaughn

Elliot Vaughn, Managing Director and Partner at BCG in London, discusses with People Matters the Out@Work Barometer that shows that 50 percent of LGBTQ employees are not yet openly out at work, the flag bearers of the progress in D&I so far, and much more

By **Bhavna Sarin**

Elliot Vaughn, Managing Director and Partner at BCG in London, is also the Global Leader of Pride@BCG, the firm's LGBTQ network, and has been featured for a number of years on the OUTstanding 100 LGBT+ Executives list. Elliot also received a Point of Light award from the UK Prime Minister for his commitment to LGBTQ+ activism.

Outside BCG, he is the Founder and Chair of GiveOut, a charity raising funds for global LGBTQ advocacy and serves on the Board of OutRight Action International, the leading global NGO dedicated to the human rights of LGBTQI people around the world. In conversation with People Matters, Elliot talks about the moment that triggered his journey towards D&I, the Out@Work Barometer that shows that 50 percent of LGBTQ employees are not yet out at work, measures to boost innovation at the workplace through diversity and much more.

Q In your corporate experience of nearly 25 years, what was the moment that triggered your journey towards diversity and inclusion?

A My Mum and Dad met in the 1960s at MIT where my

mum was the only woman in a class of 700 men. She could appreciate what it was like to be the different one in the room, and their support emboldened me to come out early on in my life. In fact, last weekend I was at their house, and came across material from a campaign that I ran at Cambridge University as a student 25 years ago called "Assume Nothing", calling on my fellow students to assume nothing about a person's sexual orientation. I think it has a fresh relevance today. But when I joined BCG 15 years ago, corporate culture was not as welcoming of out employees and so I found myself going back into the closet in the corporate environment. So I think that was the moment I realized I was going to have to be a part of the change at the corporate level.

Q How do you see the current global diversity and inclusion landscape?

A Most companies now understand that diversity is not only a moral imperative, but also a business imperative that improves company culture, innovation and ultimately profitability. In a BCG study, companies with above-average diversity on their management teams reported 19 pp. higher innovation revenue and 9 pp. higher EBIT margins.

Media and public attention has increased the awareness on diversity and inclusion which has helped engage corporate and organizational leadership and in turn grow resourcing for the topic. However, this progress is far too slow as we think about representation of women, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ employees, or employees with disabilities. This slow progress in part is because, even with the attention and resourcing to make a difference, it is difficult to understand and apply what can truly drive meaningful change.

Another BCG study found that almost 100 percent of companies have a diversity program in place, but only a quarter of diverse employees feel that they have personally benefited from the diversity program. Furthermore, progress varies by country where legal or regulatory barriers may impede progress. Although, I think there is a myth that companies operating in countries where it's illegal to be gay can't create an inclusive environment. Actually they have clear obligations to do so, as highlighted by the UN standards of conduct for business on LGBTI people. So all in all, I see some progress, but there is still a long way to go.

Q What are the different areas of diversity that organizations need to work toward? What is your advice for leaders to build scalable diversity and inclusion initiatives?

> Leaders should not be discouraged when they don't see positive results immediately. It's better to celebrate the progress their companies are making - while acknowledging that there is still a long way to go

A Most forward thinking global companies focus on gender, ethnic/racial, sexual orientation and disability -and this is a great start. But other kinds of diversity, including work experience, age, educational background, socio-economic background, and cognitive diversity - people with different ways of solving problems - also can create a dynamic and resilient environment that will support company success. A BCG study of 1,700 companies

around the world shows that increasing the diversity of leadership teams leads to more and better innovation and improved financial performance - in this study for example, we looked at 6 dimensions of diversity (gender, age, nation of origin, career path, industry background, and education), and all of them showed a correlation with innovation . To increase innovation revenue by 1 percentage point, companies could (for example):

- Replace 2.5 percent of all managers with female managers
- Hire 1.5 percent managers with another origin than the one the company is headquartered in
- Replacing 3 percent of existing managers with externally hired managers from different career paths

For D&I initiatives there is no one-size-fits all model - underrepresented groups face different challenges at work. Our research shows that racially diverse employees perceive the highest obstacles in advancement, while LGBTQ employees see the biggest challenges in recruiting and leadership commitment.

However, for all diverse groups to thrive, basic conditions/policies/programs must be in place such as anti-discrimination policies or employee surveys or anti-bias trainings that are truly inclusive across all dimensions of diversity. The rewards are worth the work. Employees at organizations who are committed to diversity are three times less likely to be looking for a new role in the next three years.

Q As the global leader of Pride@BCG, what is your take on the progress so far in making organizations LGBTQIA inclusive? Who according to you are the flag bearers of the progress so far?



A I typically see three main types of flagbearers, which are prominent in HRC's Corporate Equality Index:

- Professional services firms (lawyers, consultants, accountants)
- Big tech companies - because of the importance of talent in our businesses. We're in "people businesses" - we need to attract and retain and fulfill our people
- Big global brand names who are in the retail/consumer good space, like Levis, Coke, Pepsi, travel companies, because they realize that consumers care about who they're buying products from and that company values are important

Beyond those traditional groups, we're actually seeing surprising leadership by companies headquartered in emerging markets, where it's harder to live openly as an LGBT person (e.g. Tata and Godrej in India, Natura in Brazil), developing LGBT inclusive workplace policies and marketing campaigns. In fact, 40 percent of almost 100 leading multinationals headquartered in emerging markets explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Many companies now have LGBTQIA networks and promote LGBTQIA diversity, but many haven't yet focused on inclusive work environment. If employees don't feel included as valued, appreciated contributors, they won't bring their ideas to the table and companies won't be able to reap the benefit of diversity. BCG research shows that LGBTQ employees feel 8 percentage points less likely to be their authentic selves and that their perspectives matter at work , and our Out

@ Work Barometer shows that 50 percent of LGBTQ employees are not yet openly out at work.

The work of Employee Resource Groups needs to be embedded into the business with programs such as sponsorship, mentorship, engaging allies and pipeline planning which actively support LGBTQ people and their careers.

Q What are the recurring challenges that organizations come across as they endeavor to build an inclusive workplace? How can they overcome them?

A I see three main challenges. First, cultural changes like building an inclusive workplace need leadership support across all leadership ranks - from the executive level where the tone is set to frontline leaders. In fact, frontline leaders - those who directly supervise line employees - have the biggest influence on employee's day-to-day experience. If they are not committed a cultural change is unlikely to happen. Unfortunately this support isn't always "even" across the organization, or doesn't always happen - and this is a real challenge for many companies (or functions within companies). We know from our research that over a quarter of employees believe their direct managers are not committed to diversity and inclusion - with the alarming result that employees are nearly three times more likely to leave their company than those with consistent leadership support . There are five specific measures to engage frontline leaders:

- Make D&I a part of the company's DNA - integrate D&I into everything the company does - every decision, process, project, and strategic initiative. For example, issuing a clear value statement on D&I and including D&I metrics in the 360-degree feedback for all employees
- Offer ongoing leadership development programs that include training on inclusive and strengths-based leadership and overcoming unconscious biases
- Translate cultural shifts into concrete changes in daily routines
- Provide people management tools that support inclusive personnel decisions
- Communicate expectations, and hold leaders accountable for results

> Companies should do regular employee surveys and listen to what their employees say. It is very important that companies take this feedback seriously and act on it



Another challenge is impatience. Cultural changes take time and are ongoing efforts - improving diversity and inclusion is not a one-year initiative. Leaders should not be discouraged when they don't see positive results immediately. It's better to celebrate the progress their companies are making - while acknowledging that there is still a long way to go.

The third challenge is that most companies who actively want to improve diversity and inclusion focus on recruiting. While this is important, they have to focus on all parts of the employee lifecycle - recruit-

ing, advancement, retention and leadership commitment - to make sure there is no leaky pipeline.

Q As organizations strive to be more inclusive and understanding of the needs and personal responsibilities of today's workforce, how challenging is it for them to measure the effectiveness of these policies, especially with the increasing focus on caregivers? What kind of metrics can be applied to measure the effectiveness of D&I initiatives?

A There is one very good way to learn what employees value and which interventions they see as most effective - simply ask them. Companies should do regular employee surveys and listen to what their employees say. It is very important that companies take this feedback seriously and act on it.

Measure team outcomes, retention rates, and satisfaction - if possible, before you implement new policies and after to see how metrics have evolved. Also track utilization of initiatives. The reason why for instance new flex work policies are not used by many employees may be that senior leaders don't make use of them, which would send a powerful signal that flexible work could take a person off the track to advancement.

Research we did in Canada showed that diverse employees who feel they have allies at work are 1.6x less likely to perceive obstacles and twice as likely to say their workplace is bias-free

Q From conversation, understanding, advocacy, discussion, acceptance, policy changes, and finally to implementation, the journey to translate diversity conversations into a living, breathing and thriving inclusive culture comes with its challenges. What according to you can accelerate this transition?

A As mentioned before, consistent and visible leadership support across all levels is key. The importance of an inclusive culture should be communicated regularly with diversity and inclusion being part of every company's core values. Engaging all employees, and in particular allies in the conversations and in initiatives is another great accelerator. Research we did in Canada showed that diverse employees who feel they have allies at work are 1.6x less likely to perceive obstacles and twice as likely to say their workplace is bias-free.

It is crucial that leaders role model inclusive behavior. In addition, diverse role models need to be put forward and celebrated to show viable career paths. Focus on the greatest needs in your company. Too often there is an assumption that all diverse groups need the same types of policies or that every company is the same in terms of what they need. What we found instead was a widespread. Figure out what are the specific diversity drivers in your company, focus on them and don't try to address them all at once.

Q Can you tell us in one word what diversity and inclusion means to you?

A Fulfilment. Helping people have more fulfilling lives and careers. When people feel more valued and included in the workforce, they're more productive, the companies they work in are more productive and even at the country level we see higher productivity. Growth and fulfilment and LGBT+ inclusion go hand-in-hand.

ABHIJIT RAO



Tech upskilling - The why and how

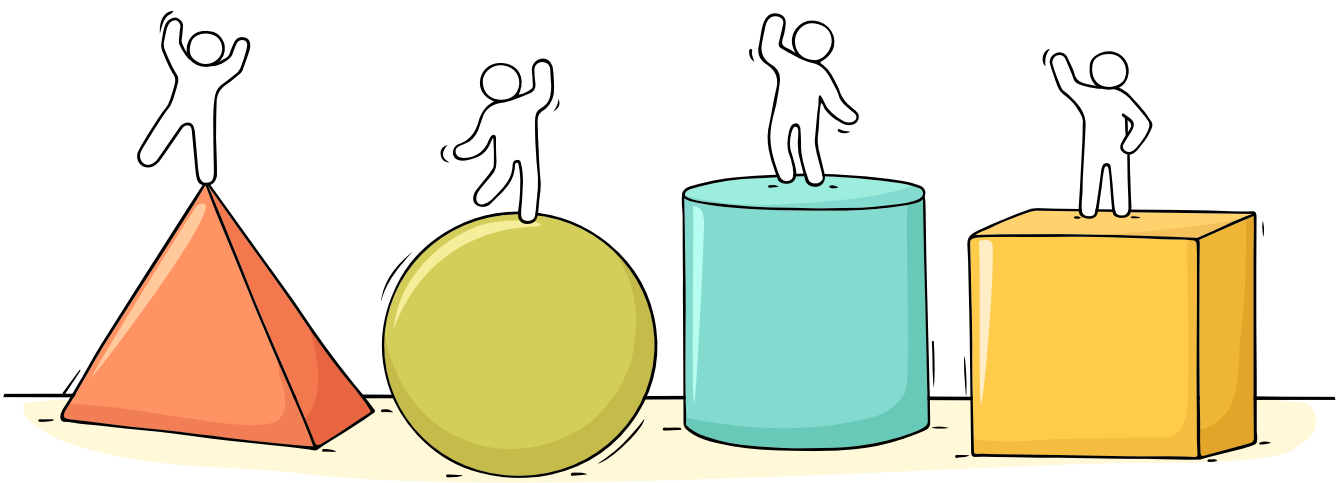
A lot of organizations are struggling with the challenges around upskilling in the context of automation of work. Studies indicate that only 18% of the global IT workforce have a sense of their career path in the automation ecosystem

The world is witnessing a change with new innovations being developed, a new generation of employees entering the workforce, and new styles of working. Transformations in the technology arena are bringing in changes to various industries and business processes, which are directly translating to the workplace. In this rapidly evolving industry, the only way to stay relevant is to upskill oneself throughout one's career.

Unfortunately, a lot of organizations are struggling with the challenges around upskilling in the context of automation. Studies indicate that only 18% of the global IT workforce have a sense of their career path in the automation ecosystem.

Automation, artificial intelligence, and a plethora of other emerging technologies are changing the fundamental nature of work that we have been used to over the past two decades – it is disrupting the future of the enterprise, the future of the workforce, and the future of how work gets done. In this rat race to a digital-first world, it becomes vital to not only understand these shifts, but also keep pace with the evolving technology landscape. The word 'upskilling' is being thrown

Employees play an equal role in ensuring they are prepared for industry 4.0



around as a buzzword quite often, but to what degree should individuals pay attention to it?

Staying relevant for the future

Gartner predicts that, by 2020, AI will create more jobs than it eliminates. A total of 2.3 million new jobs will be created in lieu of the 1.8 million jobs that would become redundant by 2020. With every passing year, this gap is set to increase and give rise to a skill divide. Therefore, it is important to keep abreast of current trends and update one's skills. Every new technology comes with a certain level of disruption. However, technologies like automation allow employees to concentrate on their strengths – creativity, emotion, innovation – while handling the tasks that humans are not designed to do. Organizations will implement these technologies for improved productivity. Therefore, ensuring that individuals are not only focused on the job at hand but also getting experience in management, servicing, career plans, mentorship, etc. will act as a security blanket in this era of digital transformation.

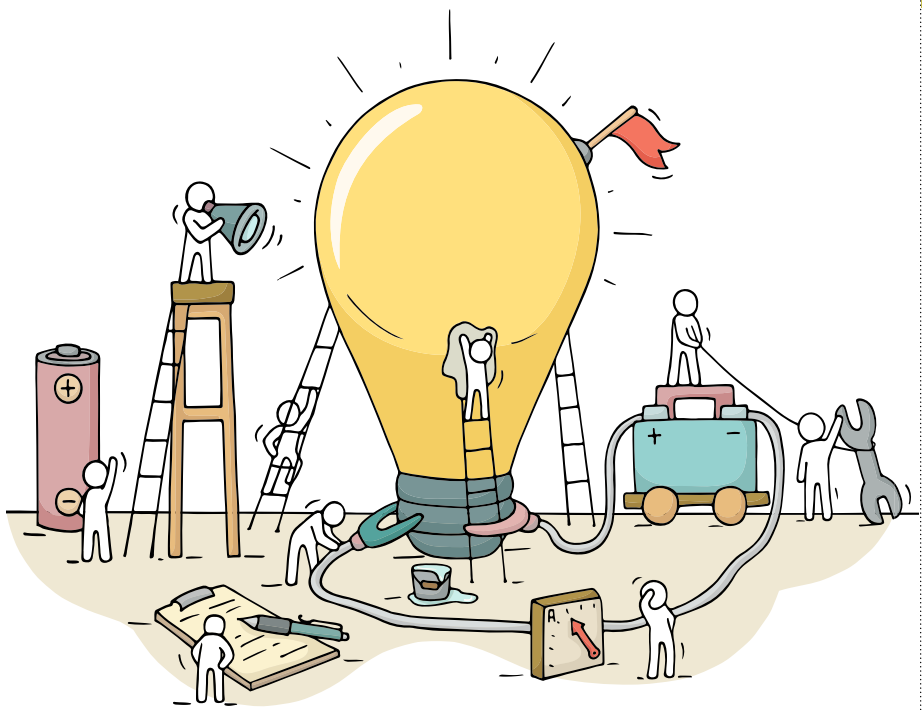
Enriching yourself with new skills

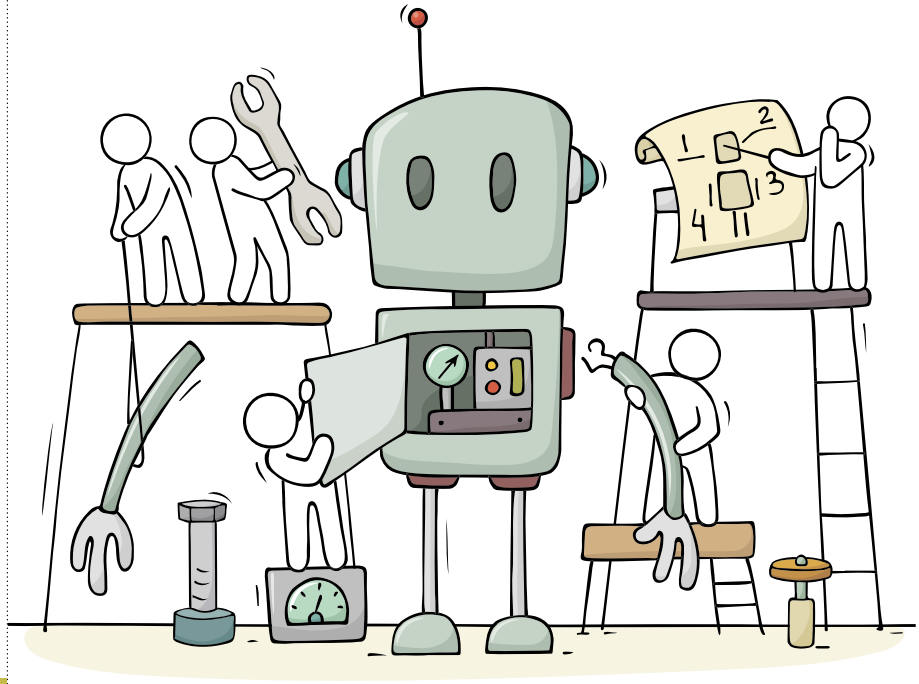
While organizations world-over are focusing on creating programs for upskilling, employees play an equal role in ensuring they are prepared for industry 4.0. Reports suggest that of the four million jobs in the industry today, the nature of at least 60-65 percent is likely to change in the next half a decade, with current job roles changing and newer roles emerging. So, by taking online courses on the latest technologies like AI, ML, RPA, data science, data analytics, etc., employees can diversify their existing knowledge base and be prepared for the impact and change that it will have in the workforce. In fact, companies are also launching in-house programs that one can refer to apart from offering courses on platforms like Coursera.

Boosting employee satisfaction

With upskilling becoming a necessity rather than a choice, employees are eager to learn new skills and abilities. Today's generation of workers, not

Research shows that when people are able to connect the purpose of their organization to their purpose as individuals, they are happier and more engaged at work





With automation, the fear of becoming redundant, layoffs, and concern around the skill gap has also gained traction in the employee community

only look at brand names but are also keen to work with companies that offer first-hand opportunity to work on cutting-edge tech and innovation. Today, for employees to feel valued and satisfied, it has become imperative for organizations to invest in their career development and ensure they have enough opportunities to grow.

Research shows that when people are able to connect the purpose of their organization to their purpose as individuals, they are happier and more engaged at work. This can be achieved with focused training sessions, employee-to-employee skill exchange sessions, reverse mentoring by junior employees to senior ones, and online training programs. These initiatives will help organizations unlock huge efficiency and productivity gains while enhancing workers' job satisfaction.

Increasing organizational capability

Upskilling one's workforce ensures that their skill sets do not become obsolete, and they are updated with the latest industry trends. Training and development programs are not just an investment in one's employees, but also in the company. A knowledgeable and proactive team promises higher ROI and happier customers. Moreover, with technology unifying business processes, employees can also use their newly gained knowledge to identify and experiment opportunities to enhance productivity in their present work, while increasing the organization's capability to compete in the future.

Now, the question to focus on is - how can people go about upskilling themselves?

The first and foremost would be to work with organizations that believe in democratizing technology and empowering people. When everyone has a robot on their desktop, mindsets transform. It takes tech companies with a vision to power up meaningful work for people and companies with a drive for automation. Follow people, industry evangelists, projects, and companies and sign up for open-source certifications. Strong developer communities and forums exist where self-learners upskilling themselves have discussions with their peers' tech experts. There are multiple ecosystems that feature easily downloadable,

secure automation that support self-learners.

At this point, one might wonder, what is the authenticity of these programs? Since RPA is in a nascent stage in India, there is a dire need to create a talent pool of RPA developers who know RPA's nuts and bolts in and out. Democratizing the whole ecosystem helps partners, customers, and the broader developer community to come to connect and build new automation solutions to make a better world. This makes it a win-win situation for everyone. Upskilling is not only for tech experts, it is also for the Center of Excellence leaders, partners, and C-level officers. Automation industry leaders also have alliances with academic institutions to inculcate RPA learning in educational curricula from an early stage itself.

With automation, the fear of becoming redundant, layoffs, and concerns around skills gap have also gained traction in the employee community. There is no denying that there will be a clear shift in the type of jobs offered and the skill sets required for hiring. Companies should pay attention to how automation portfolios are managed, leadership skills are polished, and how employees' value can be maximized. HR leaders need to think of reimagining work & improving continuously. While HR has been an early mover in the space of automation, digitization has left a huge gap to cover. One needs to unlearn the current way of doing work and see how traditional tasks and activities can be automated, and people & skills repurposed. Upskilling is a symbiotic phenomenon for both the employees and the employer. Now is the time to break free of inhibitions, capitalize on the power of upskilling, and acknowledge that it is, in fact, a boon in disguise.

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Cultural integration is the most important aspect of a merger: ŠKODA Auto Volkswagen's Head HR

In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, **Jan Frydrych,** Executive Director - HR and admin, ŠKODA AUTO Volkswagen India, shares some insights on what it takes to make a merger successful from all aspects, and the role of HR and cultural integration in ensuring a pleasant employee experience during and after the process

By **Yasmin Taj**



Jan Frydrych, Executive Director - HR and Admin, ŠKODA AUTO Volkswagen India, has worked in various positions for ŠKODA AUTO since 2004. He began his career in sales and marketing. Since 2007, he has held leadership positions in the field of human resources and has worked in the Czech Republic and other countries since then. In his last assignment prior to joining ŠKODA AUTO Volkswagen India, Frydrych was responsible for HR Management at the Volkswagen Group's Kvasiny plant.

Since April 2017, he took over as the Head of Human Resources division within ŠKODA AUTO Volkswagen India Ltd and is responsible for human resources management and the implementation of the HR strategy within the framework of the 'INDIA 2.0' project along with recruitment, training and administration processes.

Frydrych was a key stakeholder responsible

for the merger of Volkswagen Group India entities and a smooth managerial sync amongst the brands. The group mastered its art of internal recruitment to best meet the suitable candidates for the new responsibilities. He is also responsible for collaborating with social partners and implementing HR synergies among the Group brands in the Indian market.

In this exclusive interaction, Frydrych shares some insights on what it takes to make a merger successful from all aspects, and the role of HR and cultural integration in it. He also shares his views on the impact of technological advancements in reshaping employment in the automotive sector and how organizations can ensure a pleasant employee experience during a merger.

Here are the excerpts from the interview:

Q Innovations in digitization, artificial intelligence, and automation are creating performance and productivity opportunities for business. What will be the likely impact of these advancements in reshaping employment in the automotive sector?

A I am a strong believer of people and while Artificial Intelligence is the talk of the town, real intelligence and experience will be hard to replace. For me, automation, digitization and artificial intelligence are support tools which help improve precision, take over repetitive processes and help bring insights and predictive analysis of even future activities based on historical data.

This doesn't mean that I am writing away the developments and the impact it will bring with it. Digitization is reaching the level of maturity that can replace almost every process there is in business, especially in manufacturing and automotive. While this frees up capacity in favor of strategic interventions, it opens up furthermore opportunity in our ability to innovate, learn and do stuff that we never had time to pursue. And that is where the human angle is irreplaceable. The need to continue to upskill with technology at the core will be imperative for sustenance in the future.

Q What are the significant challenges an HR head faces during a merger? And how do they overcome that to sustain a successful merger?

A To me, a merger is an open-ended opportunity, where along with risks,

During a merger, it is not only that different entities come together to become a single legal entity, but it is also a merger of cultures, work environments, policies, and so on



there is actually a prospective direction to a new future. A merger comes with its host of challenges - new roles, redundant practices, learnings and of course, risks of failing to reach the goals of the merger.

During a merger, it is not only that different entities come together to become a single legal entity, but it is also a merger of cultures, work environments, policies and so on. Bringing different cultures together and getting them up to pace in sync with each other remains one of the biggest challenges. It is important to have proper planning while having an end-to-end perspective defined for all stakeholders prior to the merger, during and post-merger. Identifying the key risks, gains, potential pitfalls and the vision are the most crucial aspects of managing a merger, while keeping a humane mindset.

It is important that everyone from the top management to the last employee understands the 'why' of the process as such. Having an open and clear communication process and building a mindset that's ready for some sort of a short-term compromise for a better future is the best approach to gaining the support of employees on either side of the merger.

Finally, a merger is not a short-term process and doesn't end on Legal Day One, but building the unified culture will take a lot of nurturing and drive to eventually reach the stage where everyone is on the same page and aiming for the same goal.

Identifying the key risks, gains, potential pitfalls and the vision are the most crucial aspects of managing a merger, while keeping a humane mindset

Q How crucial is cultural integration during a merger? How do you bridge the cultural differences between the merging organizations?

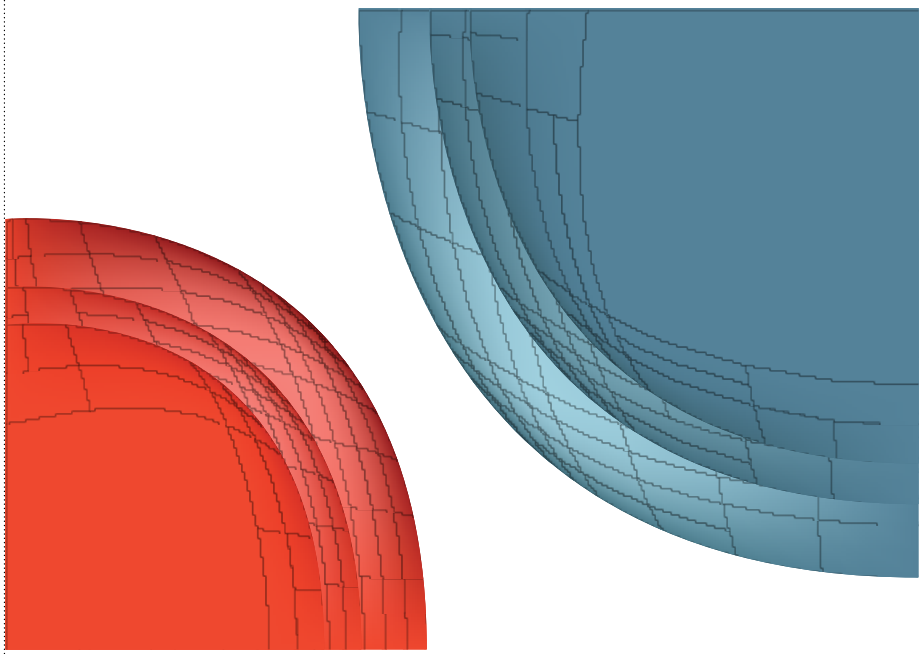
A "Company Culture" or "Cultural Integration" is the most important part. If all the people don't feel that they are a part of the same family, it is impossible to get the best out of them.

Q How can HR leaders leverage technology for successful cultural integration during a merger?

A Multinational companies are continuously looking for expanding their business and growing globally. But what we mostly fail to realize is that this expansion comes with a risk. While the general perspective is that of geopolitical and macroeconomic risks, we forget how cultural differences can affect the businesses. The differences ranging from simple norms and myths to religion and customs can significantly affect the operational strategy of a business. We need to adopt global dialogue, respect and tolerance in the first place for any successful cultural integration, and then we would be able to extract the best out of technology and put it to use.

Technology today is a crucial medium to bridge the gap between the merging entities during a merger. Independent platforms like intranet/websites are merged and collated, bringing all the employees on a common portal. There are times when existing digital media platforms are extended, for example, SAVW witnessed the extension/ availability of an existing mobile app service from one entity to three.

Q 2020 will be the year of the experience economy where employees will be significantly impacting the business bottom-line with their intrinsic willingness to serve the company and its custom-



We need to adopt global dialogue, respect and tolerance in the first place for any successful cultural integration, and then we would be able to extract the best out of technology and put it to use

ers. Organizations ought to gear up and take a hard look at all the gaps - be it cultural, technical, leadership wise, design wise or execution wise - to deliver a winning employee experience. How can organizations ensure a pleasant employee experience during a merger?

A Firstly, as an HR professional, I not only know but believe in the fact that Employee Experience is the intrinsic impetus for a talent to stay on with an organization. And while that is one of the quintessential factors for the success or failure as an organization, employee experience assumes critical importance to manage during a major change such as a merger & acquisition.

The only way to manage to retain the commitment of your employees and even the employees who are being reshuffled to new portfolios or in the worst-case scenario, having to end up helping them find an alternative role outside of the company, is to act with reason, taking a humane approach and having the flexibility to work around solutions which can be a win for all parties involved. After all, talents are rare resources and can't be taken on a ride.

Finally, it is also important to analyze your actions through surveys, personal interviews, match expectations to business objectives and measure outcomes like attrition rates and employee satisfaction index. The workforce at every organization is heterogeneous; hence, it is important to understand their needs and act accordingly. It is essential for organizations to make sure that employees remain motivated, as that's a proven performance boost and contributes to business continuity.

Q During the process of a merger, some employees may be anxious about their job security, roles, and employee benefits. According to you, what should be done to manage such a situation?

A Continuity and trust are important measures to allay anxiety that employees might face during a merger. A proper mix of offering clarity of action and communication is imperative to building the same. HR professionals should not only strive to make sure employees understand the complete picture, but also take the time to follow through the process with individual action plans and

identify ways to solve individual expectations.

Q The recent merger of three former Volkswagen Group entities - Volkswagen India Private Limited (VWIPL), Volkswagen Group Sales India Private Limited (NSC) and ŠKODA AUTO India Private Limited (SAIPL) was a massive exercise and people management becomes a big concern for HR during such times. Please share briefly your personal experience of successfully managing this merger. What was the strategic framework adopted by the company to bring together 5 different brands, three distinct legal entities and their unique processes and organizational cultures to blend as a single unit?

A The formation of ŠKODA AUTO Volkswagen India Private Limited was an exciting journey and quite a number of important measures helped us manage the exercise in a systematic manner.

I joined in the middle of the de facto merger ahead of the planning and the pre-merger stage. As an HR leader, I had two main goals. First, the successful merger including creation of the new organization, formation of the legal entity and finally building the culture over a period of time. While on the face of it, the merger seems pretty straight forward as we were already part of the same group, there is a significant influence of the distinct headquarters that impacted how every employee worked in different units, with unique policies, hierarchies and also distinct goals. The creation of a homogenous talent base from such a diverse heterogeneous mix needed creation of a concrete and sustainable vision for the future and the India 2.0 project with a committed investment of INR 8000 Crore helped in giving a glimpse of the best way forward for all of the group companies.

The formation of ŠKODA AUTO Volkswagen India Private Limited was an exciting journey and quite a number of important measures helped us manage the exercise in a systematic manner

The merger of the three different HR units within the Volkswagen Group Passenger Vehicle units in India was my second important task at hand. I was responsible for sorting the HR structure and helping put the base in order - the same team that was responsible to drive the total process. At SAVWIPL, we approached the topic in a systematic way wherein we took workshops with every department scrutinizing every role and function. We drove up a plan to ensure that none of the employees had redundant jobs or roles. Those positions which were duplicating opened opportunities for employees to develop themselves in different areas of work within the organization. We worked on building their capabilities and making such employees take up responsibilities of other functions and even some new ones that came up due to a new merged entity.

And the results - we had zero job cuts, our attrition is down to by almost 4% and lowest in the auto industry and we improved our employee satisfaction score by five percent than the sum total of the individual entities. Overall, our experience of the merger was a mixture of positive experience that drew the appreciation of management and our empowered-passionate workforce that delivered a winning transition.

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PEOPLE MATTERS AND EMOHA COME TOGETHER TO HELP THE ELDERLY AMIDST COVID-19

Sign up as a volunteer to keep our elders safe.

While the world is battling an unprecedented crisis, it is extremely important for us to protect those who are at most risk-our elders. That is why People Matters has joined hands with Emoha Elder Care, a young & passionate organization dedicated towards serving the elders.

Since senior citizens are stricly advised to stay at home, we must do our bit by helping them with their daily needs while they stay safe indoors.

Join our mission and volunteer to keep our seniors safe.



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Deliver the required item to elder's doorstep



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DR. PAVAN SONI



Fostering an innovation culture

Here's how the Tipping Point theory by Malcolm Gladwell can be used to foster an innovation culture at your workplace



An innovation culture calls for a well thought through workplace design – a milieu with a balance of private and public spaces

It was the prolific Malcolm Gladwell who brought to our consciousness the fact that ideas are like viruses. An idea can spread like an epidemic, provided it is made sticky, is set in the right context, and has the appropriate profile of people rallying around it, which Malcolm calls 'Mavens, Connectors and Salesmen'. Malcolm explained in his bestseller, The Tipping Point, why a few ideas take hold and go on to transform markets, societies, and even the entire humanity, and others don't. If designed well, the Tipping Point theory can be a useful starting point to give the ideas and people in your organization a fighting chance to see the light of the day. I offer a five-point agenda for fostering an innovation culture at your workplace. For many of these, you don't even have to be in a position of absolute authority.

Make heroes out of ordinary employees

One of the first things to understand about good epidemics, such as an organizational culture of experimentation and ideation, is that small changes have the power of bringing about huge and lasting effects. While humans are designed to think linearly, ideas when they spread follow a geometric pattern. Look at how many men have taken to donning beard, or those balding have resorted to shaving their heads! These

For shaping an innovation culture, you must learn to attract and invest in people and empower them to help you reach a tipping point



are unfolding right in front of us. Small changes were leading to disproportionate outcomes. How do you bring about such a change in an organizational context?'

Start by identifying and celebrating heroism amid the behaviors of your staff. Here's an example.

Several years back, Tanishq had a problem of recovering gold from the used silicon carbide crucibles. There were several of these spent crucibles lying in the Hosur factory, and the management had no means of extracting gold from these crucibles. Globally, there weren't techniques available for scrapping precious trapped gold from the crucibles, and, as a result, the gold had to be written off. But not for Rajsekhar, who was one of the operators at the factory.

Being close to the problem, and away from stares of the senior leadership, Rajsekhar came up with a radical idea– why not crush these crucibles? Instead of proposing steep investments in crushing facilities, which may work or may not, Rajsekhar decided to have a go at crushing and brought his friend's road-roller to the factory and to everyone surprise demonstrated that crushing helps recover gold. Through this rusty demo, four and a half kilos of gold was recovered, worth lakhs of rupees. Rajsekhar not only got promoted, but the story has become a story of legend at Tanishq.

The heroics from a shop floor employee will be far more inspiring than countless town hall speeches from the leaders. It's human to get inspired from peers than from somebody who's already arrived. So, actively unearth such stories, because, frankly, they are all around us, often hidden in plain sight.

Identify & empower the amplifiers

One of the most salient insights about innovation is that not everyone is equally capable of triggering and pursuing high impact ideas. There are the mavens – data bank, the connectors- social glue, and salesmen- persuaders, who have a disproportionate impact on the climate of innovation than others. On the importance of such profiles, Malcolm Gladwell notes – "the success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts."

In your organization, you

would always find people who would be in great demand when it comes to seeking new knowledge or perspective. And then those who are so well connected, both internally and externally, that a lunch meeting should suffice to get them up to speed. They are extraordinarily capable of seeding new ideas, rallying people around those ideas, and narrating emphatic, compelling stories for the ideas to almost become legends.



Here is a case in point. As a part of my PhD research work, I got to study Anand Group, one of India's leading manufacturers of auto-components. For its innovation efforts, the group bagged the prestigious Golden Peacock Award in 2017. Two of the practices that stand out about the group are as follows: firstly, the definition of innovation and innovation culture; and secondly, the teams created to evangelize innovation across the group companies. As for the definition, the leaders at Anand define innovation as anything which offers more than 30 percent productivity jump. That's vital and elegant, especially in a manufacturing context where continuous improvement is often confused with innovation.

The leaders there have an even more interesting definition of innovation culture. They say that once 30 percent of the workforce in any unit start to practice creative problem solving methods in a disciplined manner and start showing results, the rest will follow. The 30 percent mark is the proverbial 'tipping point' of an innovation culture. The evangelists, in terms of i5 and i7 teams, were handpicked mavens (information gatherers), connectors (effective socializers), and salesmen (expert storytellers). They could talk about innovation, given every opportunity, demonstrate success stories, and be the change that the company wishes to see. That's how innovation happens. Not every employee is equally effective in being an innovation evangelist. These are the few who often have a massive and lasting impact – it's a social gift – so, pick them wisely.

Don't let your office space be the weakest link

One of the vital attributes of the tipping point theory is the 'power of context'. Where you are is often more important than who you are. Think of how Indians behave at the city bus stands, railway stations and airports. The same person would have a very different attitude towards cleanliness and a different behavior basis the location – you would be more wary of making the airport dirty than a railways station than a bus stand (at least in an Indian context). The context has changed you – known in psychology as the 'Broken Window Theory'. Gladwell notes that persuasion often works in invisible, subtle ways, and

> In a natural environment, everyone feels comfortable, thinks differently, it leads to more constructive discussion, better insights. The energy, vibe, motivation levels—all have gone up

that "simple physical environments and observations can have a profound effect on how we feel and think." He goes on to say, "Epidemics are sensitive to the conditions and circumstances of the times and places in which they occur." And you can't leave the space to chance.

An innovation culture calls for a well thought through workplace design – a milieu with a balance of private and public spaces; where the hierarchy is not obvious; where employees can have solitary time alongside camaraderie; and a place that offers them psychological safety.

One such office that I have been to is the Integrity Campus – the newly formed head office of Titan. The 6.5 acres of biophilic, or nature-loving campus has a natural lake in it, and another bio lake a right at the center of the office buildings. It was designed to bring in glare-free natural light and allows for a continuous movement of breeze with wind tunnels creating a venturi effect. The open-air, asymmetric campus consists of three low-rises, stone-clad buildings, and cascading terrace gardens at every level, sufficient space for employees to walk around and work in open areas. The maximum depth of any workspace is 20 feet so that everyone gets natural light.



The entire campus is designed using a natural palette of materials, with the various departments color-coded and housed in separate buildings and floors and yet connected through voluminous open atriums allowing for a mix of private and public spaces. These are sprinkled with arrays of wide steps, courtyards, product display walls, seating areas, open visitor spaces, and informal meeting spaces. The natural, bio-lake, and green terraces have helped do away with the AC requirements. On how the office architecture encourages creativity, Revathi Kant, Titan's chief design officer, shares: "In a natural environment, everyone feels comfortable, thinks differently, it leads to more constructive discussion, better insights. The energy, vibe, motivation levels—all have gone up."

Titan remains a highly innovative company – a champion of organizing the unorganized by creating remarkable brands, offering great shopping experiences, and retaining talent.

In summary, if you have to make a temperament to innovate, contagious and sticky, in your organization, observe and celebrate simple acts of heroism from around you; identify, unshackle and trust the Mavens, Connectors, and Salesmen (and saleswomen); and pay attention to the context, in terms of your workplace design.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Q&A

Disruption in the financial services industry is inevitable

In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, BT's **Bernadette Wightman** talks about the shifts in skills and the role that business and HR leaders need to play in accelerating learning

By **Jerry Moses**

Bernadette Wightman is the Managing Director for Banking and Financial Services at BT. Her current role involves leading a global sales team across 129 countries that supports top 200 banking and financial customers. Prior to BT, she was with Cisco, where she had a global role working across Moscow, ME and Canada.

Wightman talks about the shift towards digital skills, the need for multiple stakeholders and the emerging challenges ahead for leaders. Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q Two-thirds (64%) of financial services leaders expect to be mass adopters of AI over the next two years, according to one study. What are the new emerging jobs? And what sort of job roles are becoming redundant?

A There is no doubt that AI is affecting financial services at an accelerating pace – in fact, it is to be a key business driver across the industry. According to the World Economic Forum, AI is expected to be used for purposes beyond cost reduction, such as revenue generation, process automation, and even risk management, among others. Within 20 years, 90% of all jobs will require some digital skills. However, as technology starts to gradually alter job functions, disrupt business models and transform business functions, it becomes critical to foster trust and effectiveness in AI adoption.

Digital skills aside, study after study shows that while technology will alter many roles directly, it is also set to have indirect effects. As demand for mathematics, computing and data analysis grows, so too will the need for human attributes like creativity, critical thinking, persuasion and negotiation. Roles in human resources and leadership quickly rise in importance, in areas such as nurturing staff, upskilling, and equipping young people with tools, to ensure that the business equilibrium is not only maintained, but also operating at optimal capacity. That means we also need strong cultures that promote mentoring and the development of soft skills.

Q In one of your articles on the need for reskilling, you talked about the need for lifelong learning. How can companies foster a culture of lifelong learning, given that the initiative is going to be primarily dependent on the individual?

A Technological literacy in the broadest sense is what matters, and BT aims to build better digital lives for not just customers but also our employees, giving everyone access to the digital skills they need and supporting good causes. We recognize the need for a wide-ranging development of these skills, and we are now seeing more and more unique ways to impart these capabilities. BT's Skills for Tomorrow platform offers free online or face-to-face courses to everyone from small-business owners to teachers and parents, helping learners advance from mastering the basics and keeping safe online, to accessing public services and

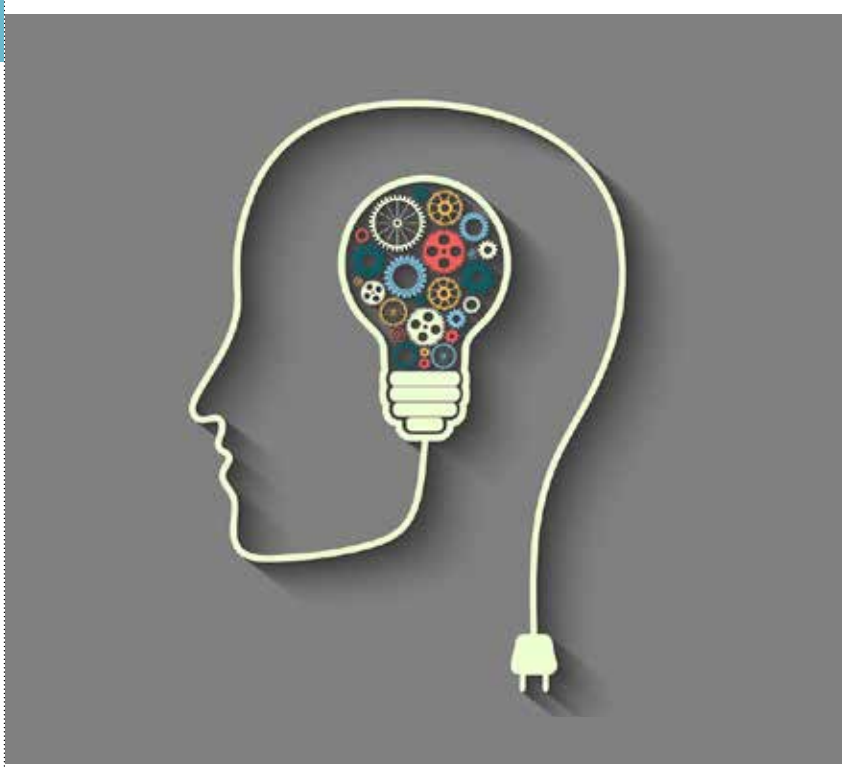
Within 20 years, 90 percent of all jobs will require some digital skills



enhancing wellbeing. At BT, you can also get your degree while working as a cybersecurity apprentice, gaining real business experience, while also learning about security, identity, vulnerability and risks in the digital age. While responsibility indeed lies within the individual, everyone including the organization has a key part to play in ensuring that lifelong learning is an exciting, ever-growing process.

Q There's the need for multiple stakeholders to work cohesively to tackle the skilling/reskilling challenge. Who are all the stakeholders critical to tackling the challenge and what is their role?

A Gradually, there is growing recognition that bridging the skills gap can't be done via several company and government initiatives, and public and private partners are waking up to the idea that working together will generate far more sustainable and scalable solutions. Individuals aside, stakeholders such as social entrepreneurs, educational institutions, industry associations, labor agencies, as well as the government, must collaborate to create the holistic ecosystem for the future of skilling in the labor market. They also need to cooperate on reskilling at a much larger scale now than in the past, given the rapid change of technological transformation. Some partnerships are already in place. Future. Now is a new coalition of leading companies, including BT and Lloyd's Banking Group, as well as civil society groups working in collaboration with government to boost the UK's digital skills initiative. Elsewhere more than 20 multinational companies, including Facebook, Microsoft, Nestlé, BT and Vodafone, have joined up as founding members of the



While the responsibility (for learning) indeed lies within the individual, everyone including the organization has a key part to play in ensuring that lifelong learning is an exciting, ever-growing process

Global Alliance for YOUth, which prepares people for the professional world.

Q How should leaders prepare for the upcoming disruption in the financial services? What is your one advice for leaders who are preparing to future proof their organizations on "people and work" related priorities?

A The upcoming disruption and transformation in the financial services industry is something that is inevitable. However, leaders can exercise the initiative of taking stock of where we are and calling for an end to working in insolation. Executives at every level, and in every industry, must seize this moment to cement their legacy and ask: how can my organization do more? And who can we join forces with to best equip our people for the workplace of tomorrow? Starting early, challenging ourselves to do better and fostering inclusivity throughout the process is key to ensuring that we are well-equipped for the digital future.

Q Given how quickly skills are changing and evolving, what are the other new challenges that the world of work will need to brace up for?

A Another challenge that deserves just as much if not more attention is gender-based digital exclusion. Fewer women than men work directly in ICT roles in almost every country in the world, and a European Commission report found women to be less interested in digital-sector higher education, jobs or entrepreneurship. To ensure that this gap closes rather than widens further, all stakeholders have the ownership to include, upskill, and innovate. This translates into advocating for female entrepreneurs, promoting education, and challenging these stereotypes. While there are several robust initiatives in place with the aim to encourage women's employment in digital, what's just as important is reminding ourselves constantly that we upkeep this strong momentum in social and economic diversity.



Starting early, challenging ourselves to do better and fostering inclusivity throughout the process is key to ensuring that we are well-equipped for the digital future

DR. M MUNEER



Creating a community culture for better workplaces

Here are a few ways to building a culture of community sense within your workplace to make it a better place

Two recent studies reveal that nearly half of India's private sector employees suffer from depression, anxiety and stress. Demanding work schedules, high pressure on key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to higher perquisites, and the "always-on" mobile phone syndrome are the top three culprits. Additionally, sleep apnea, relationship issues, poor eating habits, lack of exercise, lifestyle issues such as EMI troubles and peer pressure to maintain luxurious lifestyles complete the list.

Stanford's Jeffrey Pfeffer and I questioned in one of our columns whether the "great/best places to work" are really the best in the manner by which they are rated or ranked. We also raised flags on ethical issues and serious bias by the agencies that do such ratings.

Worldwide, all types of employees resonated with our conclusion – based on solid research data – that toxic management practices in some of the highly ranked companies in such lists cause serious health hazards to employees, even as the CEOs of the two rating agencies in India went on a denial mode in social media without answering the two

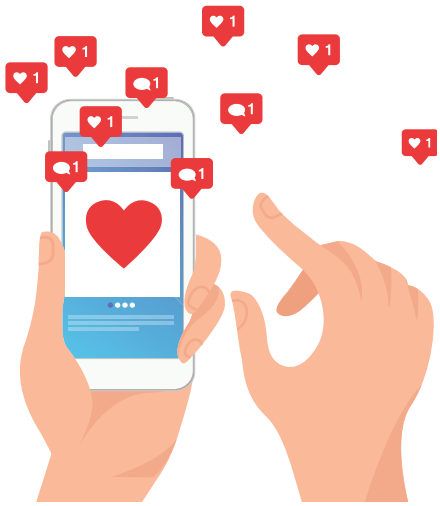


The "management toxicity" is affecting more and more Indians just as it does in Americans. Of the 8,00,000 suicides across the world annually, about 1,00,000 are potentially employed Indians

critical questions we raised: whether they are doing the listing as a non-profit and whether they would find room for improvement in their listing criteria.

The "management toxicity" is affecting more and more Indians just as it does in Americans. Of the eight hundred thousand suicides across the world annually, about 100 thousand are potentially employed Indians. India is the world capital for diabetics, and cardio ailments are affecting people in the 30s. We therefore advocated two changes to the ranking methodology by including health related data and to shift the orientation of the rating agencies to non-profit to remove serious bias.

The companies that attract, retain, and motivate a great workforce, and the workplaces that keep their employees physically and mentally healthy, do so not by offering people cute amenities. People are not that easily seduced by mere trinkets; sleep pods, free food, and letting people bring their dogs to work cannot make up for stressful work environments. I think even the HR heads know that but it is easier for them to keep a ranking as a way to show that they deliver a better work place without doing too much of tough real work. Why waste energy when a better ranking by an external agency on pre-decided



criteria could fetch them better incentives even if employees are unhappy and sick? Last fall, a very highly ranked best place to work revealed in an all-hands meeting that it was confronting soaring medical and prescription drug claims. Clearly, work place health and the best places to work ranking are not the same thing, even though the two seem to have high correlation.

Evidence suggests that having family and friends, and engaging in close relationships have a direct effect on health, and that buffers the effects of various psychosocial stresses. People who were less socially integrated had higher mortality rates and higher incidents of cardiovascular diseases, and even cancer. Which raises the question of precisely how companies can promote a culture of strong interpersonal relationships and social support.

Many corporate honchos I interact with expressed

Allowing employees access to social media such as Twit- ter, FB or Instagram is beneficial in many ways. Taking occasional mental breaks is good for the employees and in turn adds to productivity

concerns such as wasting time on jokes, forwards, selfies, etc if allowed social media access on office systems or even in intranets. But even without allowing, chances are that they are doing it during work hours anyway. According to a research, 77 percent of employees admitted using social media at work.

Allowing employees access to social media such as Twitter, FB or Instagram is beneficial in many ways. Taking occasional mental breaks is good for the employees and in turn adds to productivity. Professional connections they make internally and externally can be helpful to both busi-

ness and to their own career progress. It may result in asking questions and resolving business issues quicker, build stronger bonds with co-workers, and it can be used for improving recognition and retention programs.

Great workplaces aim for harmony and mental peace for their workforce. The first step to creating that begins with deploying a sense of community feeling within the organization. Cohesiveness brings in more productivity than dysfunctional workforce. Enhancing workplace morale prompts employees to deliver their best efforts to everyday work issues. They are also more likely to stay with the company longer even in an economy as bad as India's currently.

Here are a few ways to building a culture of community sense within your workplace to make it a better place:

- Corporate vision should be relooked at with ample inputs from employees – even if the CEO or board thinks the company has a great vision. The way to instilling the community sense is by earning the respect of every employee. Open employee participation or town hall meetings will eliminate boundaries and walls around different levels. Bringing forth the idea that the drivers of the organization are the human capital and organization capital.
- Ensure that all levels of employees comply with corporate policy. It is important to announce that no one is above this rule of following the rules, not even the Chairman. When rules are bent for some individuals or positions, dissonance raises its head in parts of the organization, leading to workplace problems. The way employees will feel valued is when they realise that the same rules apply to all. A simple analogy might be to compare how employees feel in Tata Group and Reliance.
- Bring as much diversity as possible into the organisation. Not just the fashionable LGBT these days with just one or two from each for campaign's sake. That's just the PR gimmick to get brownie points for HR. Do not just stick to the surface level with nice posters at campus recruitment. Not only should you recruit

Great workplaces aim for harmony and mental peace for their workforce. The first step to creating that begins with deploying a sense of community feeling within the organization



people of all castes and religion, but also make sure they feel respected, especially in these times of New India movement. Train people against biases, and ensure zero tolerance for hate or offensive comments or behavior. As Unilever and IBM have done, constitute a diversity directorate to bring in the workplace diversity for innovation. It can then conduct training for ensuring diversity at every level and also conduct events socially to sensitize employees to embrace diverse cultures through fun events.

- Foster positive energy at the workplace by letting people speak their minds without fear of punitive measures. Managers must encourage subordinates to open up and share their frustrations at work. Take employee complaints more seriously than ever and have a whistleblowing policy in place with timely redressal. Those who drive negativism should be trained and if no changes are visible, ease them out. It may be a good idea to reward consistent productivity by employees and teams.
- Constitute a new employee recognition program that will honour those who live the values of the organization. These recognition events can be done quarterly in different departments as a social get together. It will also be worthwhile to find internal candidates as much as possible to next level positions to continue with the value system. Tatas suffered this briefly when Cyrus took over as chairman and brought in a bunch of non-Tata folks to key positions.
- Encourage employees to discover their purpose and align it with the community. As Unilever CHRO was saying, for them, it is important to drive purpose for work-life balance and the harmony within the community.



If human capital is most vital for your organization, as it should be, recruit, nurture and align it with your organization strategy and vision

If human capital is most vital for your organization, as it should be, recruit, nurture and align it with your organization strategy and vision. Those whose values and purpose match with that of the organization will stay longer and be happier.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Q&A

We drive multiculturism as a dimension: Diversity and Inclusion Leader, Capgemini India



In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, **Gayathri Ramamurthy,** Diversity and Inclusion Leader, Capgemini India, shares key things organizations and leaders must do in order to create diverse and inclusive workplaces

By **Shweta Modgil**

An equal world is an enabled world. Be it in our personal lives or at our workplaces, the onus lies on us to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden perceptions, improve situations and help create an equal world where opportunities are not distributed on a discriminatory basis but rather accept and embrace diverse needs of the new-age workforce. Which is where the role of leadership in creating an equal workplace becomes even more important.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q How do you see the current Diversity and Inclusion landscape in APAC?

A At Capgemini, the principles of diversity are a source of creativity, innovation and inspiration for us. We want to be recognized worldwide as a leading responsible company using our expertise for the positive impact we are 'Architects of Positive Futures'. It shapes how we work with our customers, partners, suppliers, and colleagues globally to create greater opportunities for sustainable business and affirms our status as an employer of choice. An inclusive environment makes us all feel welcomed

and valued for the contributions we make, and this requires everyone's commitment. We are committed to equality of opportunity and dignity at work for all, irrespective of caste, religion, race, gender, color, creed, ethnic or national origin, marital status, sexuality and sexual orientation and expression, disability, class or age.

Q Creating awareness around Diversity & Inclusion helps build an inclusive culture in the workplace. Do you think organizations are ready to factor in an inclusive mindset as a deal-breaker at the time of hiring?

A Building a robust D&I framework which incorporates strong governance and defined targeted interventions is key. For hiring to be devoid of biases, sensitization is essential though a structure to the process is absolutely necessary. The structure will facilitate a fair and informed decision-making process. Our structure requires you to stretch your comfort zone and self-reflect on how you make decisions. At Capgemini in India, we have introduced focused diversity hiring initiatives across middle and senior leadership levels.

We have instituted very strong referral programs, especially around hiring women in key technology and management roles. Out of the total hiring at entry-level in 2019, 51% were women hires. In 2019 out of the total VP hires, 47% were women hires. Moreover, there was an increase in women hiring (lateral) from 31% in Q1 to 38% in Q4 2019.

Q How can HR leaders work toward gaining leadership buy-in and ownership toward driving diversity and inclusion initiatives?



A Leadership is about being inclusive and behaviors that drive respect and inclusion need to be role modeled by leaders who will be emulated downstream. Inclusive Culture is reflected through subtle actions and truly tested in decisive moments.

To me, HR is an enabling function and is responsible for communicating on appropriate behaviors. It is leaders who drive the business agenda and make decisions on their talent who need to make the "right "decisions, not limited to just business.

Q What are the different areas of diversity that organizations need to work towards?

A Since 2004, we have driven a diversity agenda across the whole Group. Capgemini's global charter on D&I is the guiding principle based on which we define our regional initiatives. Diversity dimensions that we currently invest in are on gender balance, people with disabilities, LGBT+ talent. Given that we are a global multinational, we drive multiculturalism as a dimension. Additionally, Happiness and Wellbeing is our 2020 agenda which envelops mental health. In India, we have set up a Governing Council to include key members from the D&I function, Business, Marcomm, and Legal.

It is leaders who drive the business agenda and make decisions on their talent who need to make the "right "decisions, not limited to just business

Q What are the key pillars of building a cultural fabric that fosters inclusivity?

A Diversity and inclusivity at the workplace encourage creativity and innovation because every team member with different backgrounds and experiences brings in unique viewpoints and perspectives to the table.

D&I is a business imperative and needs to be positioned as such to impact and build an inclusive culture. Studies tell us that the most obvious manifestation of organizational culture is the explicit behaviors of members of that culture.

Unless we vocalize and express required behaviors, apart from leaders displaying these positive behaviors consistently, even at times of distress; you cannot state that we are fostering inclusion.

> An inclusive environment makes us all feel welcomed and valued for the contributions we make, and this requires everyone's commitment

Capgemini drives diversity and inclusion through 4 focused pillars of delivery:

WinspirE

- **Recruit** - tap into the diversity of women talent across entry, lateral and senior managerial levels through focused initiatives like CAPtivate, REKruit etc.
- **Retain** - pillar focuses on supporting through better-equipped infrastructure like restrooms, doctor's facilities, crèches etc., making the workplace more user-friendly through skill upgrade, the right placement, and personal counseling, pre & post-maternity care through "Engage and Stay Connect" program.
- **Develop to accelerate** - focuses on cross-BU Pilot Program for mentoring / coaching of high potential women employees at mid and senior management level.
- **Corporate awareness** - focuses on building awareness an unconscious bias across levels towards balanced leadership, evangelizing and sharing best practices internally and externally.

For PWD, we focus on the rights of persons with disabilities, such as -

- **Accessibility** - Removing barriers by providing accessible Infrastructure, IT systems, and reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities.
- **Career** - Ensuring inclusion through the non-discriminatory recruitment process, training, and HR policies.
- **Engagement** - Engaging employees by means of sensitization and cultural building.
- **Evangelism** - Evangelizing inclusivity in society through industry and customer connect.

OUTfront initiatives encompass inclusive policies like same-sex partner insurance, coverage of gender affirmation surgery, hiring transgender candidates in supplier community, hiring trans persons to strengthen the diversity of our workforce and supplier community, **among other initiatives.**

Multiculturalism - A global multinational with a footprint in India across 12

cities and employee strength of 110,000+ cannot function at its best if we are not enveloping of all cultures.

Q What kind of metrics can be applied to measure the effectiveness of D&I initiatives?

A Most organizations define metrics that cover tangible targets. We need to go beyond and address VOE – voice of the employee. An ongoing and real-time feedback mechanism is essential and has been very impactful for Capgemini.

In 2019, the following were the metrics met at Capgemini: Increased the women hiring (lateral) from 31% in Q1 to 38% in Q4; women representation in senior grades increased from 16% in 2018 to 20% in 2019; increased women progression (promotion) – 7% increase overall of female promotion over that of our male counterpart in comparison to the gender-wise eligible population headcount; and physical infrastructure like ramps, toilets, office spaces, walkways made accessible for PWD.

Q What are your top priorities for D&I in 2020?

A In 2020, apart from expanding our existing creche facility in Bengaluru to a 100 seater, we commit to setting up facilities in our Pune office location. We will also launch Parents network



Diversity and inclusivity at the workplace encourage creativity and innovation because every team member with different backgrounds and experiences brings in unique viewpoints and perspectives to the table

- Parents@CG is our parental network support program which aims to support all colleagues with parental responsibilities and strengthen their existing parenting abilities and promote the development of new competencies so that parents have the knowledge and skills needed to carry out child-rearing responsibilities and provide their children with experiences and opportunities that promote child learning and development.

We are also taking our OUTfront program a step further and creating inclusion champions, where colleagues will affirm their actions by taking a pledge to be an ally and continue to drive the culture of inclusion intentionally at all levels of the organization. The program called OUTfront Ally Network Group (OANG) is open for all as everyone has a role to play in making Capgemini truly inclusive. We will conduct sensitization sessions at Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Noida for not just leaders and workforce but also the supplier community, guards, office staff, cafeteria vendors, search firm vendors etc.

We are also focusing on building balanced parental leave policy for great equality and flexibility for our colleagues and enhancing focus on hiring Persons with Disabilities.

Q Can you tell us in one word what Diversity and Inclusion mean to you?

A Acceptance.



COVID-19

TALENT IN TIMES OF CRISIS



CRISIS BOLTS TO TOPPLE US DOWN – RESILIENCE HELPS BOUNCE BACK

The declaration of a pandemic is a call to action for everyone including businesses all over the world. The global upheaval is also a call for responsibility and solidarity as nations unite to battle it. While COVID-19 is first a human tragedy that is affecting hundreds of thousands of people, it is also leaving a huge impact on the global economy.

The cover story in this issue provides business leaders with a perspective on the evolving pandemic and the implications for their businesses. We touch upon the legal aspects of COVID-19, the cybersecurity concerns emanating from it, how HR policies are being redefined across regions, lessons from vigilante countries like Singapore, the hiring and recruitment scenario, and the leadership lessons in the time of the pandemic.



People Matters' Guide on COVID-19:

Rethinking your strategy on people and work

Here is a guide by People Matters that can help you stay updated on the policies by the government, employer relation best practices, and how you can escalate your efforts to take timely and right measures in this period of uncertainty

By **Anushree Sharma**

COVID-19 has caught companies and industries off guard, with a shockwave of ripple effects tearing through their supply chains and business models. The challenges faced by workplaces have become a new front in the battle over the coronavirus. Corporations around the world are grappling with how to best keep employees safe, while trying to ensure optimal utilization of their staff and business continuity— by asking employees to work-from-home, creating tag teams, etc. This guide will help you stay updated on COVID-19 – including government policies, employer relation best practices, and more. Our perspective is based on our analysis of our recent survey, People Matters COVID-19 Impact & Measures Survey - March 2020, and interaction with industry experts.

This perspective is current as of 22nd March, 2020.

People Matters COVID-19 Impact & Measures Survey- March 2020

People Matters, in an attempt to bring more clarity on how organizations are managing this pandemic, launched the People Matters COVID-19 Impact & Measures Survey – March 2020 across companies in India and Southeast Asia. The survey captured the responses from 276 organizations.

Key themes that emerge from the questions raised by our survey

• Work-from-home policy

64 percent of organizations have already implemented a work-from-home policy for their employees. And 98 percent of companies who haven't offered work-from-home will implement it if they see the situation deteriorating in the coming days.

While companies do see this practice as one of the effective measures to ensure safety, there still persists a long chain of questions being worked out as this shift occurs - motivation, alignment, connectivity, etc. This is especially going to be challenging for the manufacturing sector, as there are certain roles that could not be performed remotely.

• Pay policy for affected employees

The survey asked participants if they have a pay policy for employees who cannot opt for work-from-home but have been asked to stay away from the work environment. Only 24 percent of companies said they have a pay policy in place. Among those 24 percent, most companies are offering salary under the current leave policy. However, few companies shared that they have extended a special pay leave of 14 and in some cases 28 days.

• Preparedness level

The survey found that most organizations are still not ready to face the crisis that can arise. Only 44 percent of companies agreed that they are well or very well-prepared with policies that can support employees and their families and 47 percent of respondents so far have a cross-functional COVID-19 response team in place. Organizations' efforts seem to be sporadic right now given the uncertainty, but they are acknowledging the situation and actively taking steps to protect employees and streamline business continuity.

Practices like a consistent communication plan in times of crisis (84 percent), suspending non-essential business travels (88 percent), and sanitizing workplaces on a more frequent basis (82 percent) have become a requisite. Different practices that organizations are emphasizing on include reiterating and over-communicating policies around safety/precautions (58 percent), quarantining employees who recently visited highly affected areas (50 percent), restricting outside visitors/third parties (50 percent), quarantining employees

This epidemic is a wake-up call for companies to carefully review the strategies, policies, and procedures they have in place to protect employees, customers, and operations in this and future epidemics

exposed to confirmed cases (43 percent), and monitoring temperature of all employees at the entrance to the building (42 percent).

• Travel and meetings

About 88 percent respondents have suspended non-essential business travel internationally and domestically, and another 50 percent have restricted outside visitors and third parties.

About 75 percent of organizations that participated in the survey have agreed that the outbreak of COVID-19 has halted critical business activities (traveling, meetings, etc.)

How to step-up your crisis management plan

The coronavirus outbreak that originated in Wuhan, China has spread to at least 144 countries and has sickened more than 204,000 people, with more than 8,000 deaths. Governments have shut borders and imposed quarantines, and companies have imposed travel bans. The human and economic impacts on businesses have been stark.

This epidemic is a wake-up call for companies to carefully review the strategies, policies, and procedures they have in place to protect employees, customers, and operations in this and future epidemics.

Here are four steps to rethink your talent strategy:

Things to watch out for:

• ***Employees' Trust:*** Given the pandemic situation, there is a lot of anxiety and fear among employees around the layoffs, compensation, and employment. Organizations need to build a sense of safety, trust, and collective thinking in our people. Focus on your people in a competent and ethical way, and if you listen to



Our survey found that most organizations are still not ready to face the crisis that can arise. Only 44 percent of companies agreed that they are well or very well-prepared with policies that can support employees and their families and 47 percent of respondents so far have a cross-functional COVID-19 response team in place

their needs, you can drive up trust, teamwork, and resilience. The key is to balance short term and long term creatively. Make decisions like work at home, social distancing, paid time off, financial assistance for testing, education on the virus that help individual people feel safe, protected and heard.

• ***Economic Slowdown:*** Economic slowdown is already affecting major industries like hospitality, travel, media, entertainment and many others will follow, and this will result in layoffs and reduced pay.

However, will layoffs and reduced pay really solve the situation?

Researcher Wayne F. Cascio from the University of Colorado's business school researched that cutting jobs isn't the answer. Companies need to change how the business is run as well. He notes that massive cuts lead to fewer sales people, less research and development, and a loss of high-producing individuals. The result is lower sales, reduced product innovation, and decreased productivity due to low morale. Cascio's research also points to increased costs for companies when they reduce the workforce. He mentioned IBM had to spend $700 million in 2008, just for employment restructuring. In Microsoft's case, the company is cutting both professional and factory jobs, many of which will be aimed at current Nokia workers, which were absorbed into Microsoft when it purchased Nokia's mobile division. The company says it will spend between $1.1 billion-1.6 billion to reduce its workforce.



According to our survey, 64 percent of organizations have already implemented a work-from-home policy for their employees. And 98 percent of companies who haven't offered work-from-home will implement it if they see the situation deteriorating in the coming days

Aside from losing talent and increasing some costs, there are implications for a company's stock price as well. According to a research by Cornell University it was found that the stock market may respond positively to companies that announce extensive restructuring, and may briefly lift the company's share price. But in the long term, the majority of companies that have instituted forced layoffs did not realize improved financial performance either on the balance sheet or on the stock exchange.

Organizations that can be innovative in adapting their product offerings, their business models and retain their best and most productive talent with creative ways to compensate them, will survive the test of times.

Key things you need to ensure

- All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of acute respiratory illness and lower the impact of COVID-19 in their workplace in the event of an outbreak.
- They should identify and communicate their objectives, which may include one or more of the following: (a) reducing transmission among staff, (b) protecting people who are at higher risk for adverse health complications, (c) maintaining business operations, and (d) minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains.
- Impact of disease on employees that are vulnerable and may be at higher risk for COVID-19 adverse health complications. Inform employees that some people may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions.
- Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members, dismissals of early childhood programs and K-12 schools due to high levels of absenteeism or illness.
- Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their business infectious disease outbreak response plan based on the condition in each locality.

Coordination with state external icon and local external icon health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside. Since the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities.

Given the unknown variables surrounding the outbreak, it is important to review crisis and business continuity plans, develop different scenarios and put them to the test

Business continuity plans

Works from home, limiting travel plans, and to an extent shutting production, organizations are in a dilemma: How to keep business operations normal without hampering the productivity and efficiency and maintaining the revenue.

A strongly developed crisis response capability is required to ensure the efficient management of incidents in order to minimize associated negative impacts, meet government priorities around maintenance and confidence, and to ensure the continued delivery of critical national infrastructure. Many organizations have these plans in place for the workplace and supply chain but COVID-19 has already unveiled flaws in some. Given the unknown variables surrounding the outbreak, it is important to review crisis and business continuity plans, develop different scenarios and put them to the test.

Focus areas for your business continuity plan

- ***Effective communication:*** Proactive communication for all stakeholder groups, based on factual information, is essential to manage public perception of the outbreak, minimize misinformation and associated panic, and reduce the detrimental impact on the economy and individuals.
- ***Workforce:*** While the priority remains human welfare, we are hearing about other employee challenges. Examples include establishing the tax position of people who are moving between countries on an emergency basis, through to companies having to plan on putting production lines on pause due to supply chain issues, with the associated potential impact of asking employees to stop work temporarily.
- ***Supply chain:*** Where clients are reliant on supply chains in affected areas, rapidly depleting stock levels are becoming a significant risk and clients are working through strategies for alternative sourcing. In certain cases, clients are showing signs of distress and stakeholders (e.g. lenders) are concerned about the future viability of the business. We are discussing different potential scenarios and what these mean for their operations, for example, as cases of viral transmission emerge in different territories.
- ***Information:*** From our experience with working with various organizations during the Ebola and MERS outbreaks, the lack of complete and accurate information was preventing well-considered decisions being made regarding the resources needed to control the outbreak and treat infected individuals. Capturing the correct information and verifying its reliability is vital. Reliable information underpins both crisis planning and response and allows organizations to make informed decisions.



Organizations that can be innovative in adapting their product offerings, their business models and retain their best and most productive talent with creative ways to compensate them, will survive the test of times

Disclaimer: This guidebook was published on 24th of March 2020 from data collected between March 8th to March 22nd 2020. The intent of this guidebook is to help build perspectives on what other organizations are doing and how you could help your organization in this critical time. Please take legal and compliance advisory before applying any of this information in your context.



Leading through COVID-19: A year of two halves

At this stage of the COVID-19 outbreak, many organizations are understandably focusing on short-term measures to deal with the immediate impact of the virus. However, they need to learn to work in ambiguity

By **Tim Wiseman**

COVER STORY

At the time of writing, there have been more than 220,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 across 162 countries and territories around the world, with many countries and regions: EU, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, and more declaring extensive travel restrictions or complete lockdown in a bid to curb the spread of the virus. The ongoing outbreak has been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020, which resulted in governments and businesses taking drastic measures to manage the impact of the virus.

Across the industries, employers are implementing strategies on employee safety, talent/leadership development, performance management, compensation and rewards, corporate affairs, financial modeling, and business continuity, although at varying degrees. Some of the most common measures implemented that we have observed include:

Employee safety: Ubiquitously, businesses are prioritizing the physical and mental health of their employees and families. In a recent Korn Ferry survey of 300 HR leaders in China, 90 percent of surveyed organizations said that they are providing their employ-

Organizations must deal with two equally important factors—namely, keeping employees and their families safe, and business continuity while sustaining operations as best as possible



ees with protective equipment, with more than one third of organizations (35 percent) said that they are also providing employees with psychological counselling services in this difficult time. Many organizations have also restricted non-essential business travels for employees and implemented regular office cleaning schedules.

Compensation and rewards: Some industries – like travel, retail and hospitality – are undoubtedly taking a bigger hit than others. Already, top management and CEOs at some airlines—an industry crushed so far—have announced that they are cutting their own pay by 10 percent to 20 percent. In China, Trip.com, the largest online travel service, the CEO and Chairman have cut their salary to zero. In Singapore, many big organizations like Temasek, CapitaLand, have announced that they are also freezing salaries and pay increment for senior management level, in order to cope with the challenging situation.

Business continuity: Organizations must deal with two equally important factors—namely, keeping employees and their families safe, and business continuity while sustaining operations as best as possible. Most businesses across the world have either begun or enhanced their telecommuting policy, split teams and flexible working arrangements with their employees. Across many functions within the organization, especially in customer-facing industries, digitalization efforts are also getting a boost, in order to minimize physical transactions and enhance efficiency beyond the outbreak.

At this stage of the COVID-19 outbreak, many organizations are understandably focusing on short-



term measures to deal with the immediate impact of the virus. The same survey of HR business leaders finds that HR departments across all industries and company sizes have been forced to adjust their approach and focus more on short-term tactical tasks that deal with the virus outbreak, with long-term strategic work taking a back seat.

But eventually, the virus will subside. And when it does, organizations need to be ready.

In fact, some of the biggest operation and leadership challenges will come after the outbreak. While some businesses have had experienced handling and mitigating against risk in the face of a crisis, many others might be sacrificing long-term growth for reactive and rash-decision making. Over the next 12 months or more, business leaders should be looking at their operations in two phases - the first half will be spent dealing with safety, containment, continuity, and contingency planning and the second half to leverage the pent-up demand in the global economy to grow market share: incentives, recruitment, and leadership.

Here's our advice on how agile and proactive organizations should be thinking about managing their talent over the next 12 critical months.

Calm and prudent leadership to guide the first half of the crisis

The COVID-19 outbreak will test not only the leadership acumen of senior management, but also the ability of organizations to operate through ambiguity. Organizations need to show empathy and engage with their employees and customers with transparency and clarity. Although the two halves of 2020 will look very different, it is impossible to do

well in any cycle without thinking about and planning for the next one.

As such, communicative, action-oriented leadership is necessary during this period. Singapore government's approach to the crisis has been lauded for these exact characteristic – strong leadership, clear reinforcement of protocols and procedures, as well as transparency in sharing critical information at timely junctures are all valuable lessons that every country and businesses can learn from. In addition, leading by example will be critical: people need to know that their business leader cares for them and understands what they are going through. They must lead from the front, role modeling the values and behaviors they expect from the team.

While keeping a close eye on the developments of the outbreak, business leaders should use this time to strategize and plan for the second half. For example, one important tool that they can employ is through the structure of their compensation and rewards system. Our advice would be to move toward two separate performance cycles for 2020. The first should emphasise stability and preservation in the short term, and then once conditions return closer to normal, a second cycle should focus on driving the longer-term strategic agenda. Some short-, medium- and long-term measures that businesses can consider are:

- evaluating existing non-financial rewards that can be expanded to keep up engagement/morale;
- developing retention plans for key talent;
- diagnosing the different performers that require different types incentives (high potentials);
- adjusting individual performance incentives as conditions normalize;
- enhancing incentive designs based on learnings during the outbreak.

> While the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak is expected to be high, markets and business conditions will gradually recover. For organizations to have long-term successes in a volatile business landscape, they must learn to operate in ambiguity

Agile and decisive leaders to shine in the second half of the crisis

Organizations that manage to mitigate the impact of the virus while engaging with their employees in the first half of 2020 will be in an advantageous position to recover and succeed in the second half of 2020. Three key areas will be critical to growing and gaining market share: incentives, recruitment, and leadership.

There's nothing like a crisis or a complex problem to accelerate learning, and the second half of 2020 is where great business leaders will stand out amongst the rest by putting these learnings into application quickly and smoothly. They need to be agile, nimble and decisive when opportunities present themselves. When the virus and it's business implications has run its course, a seamless switch to a pace-setting, "run fast and keep up" style, or a more directive "here is what we need to do to make up for lost time" leadership style may be in order.

During the outbreak, many organizations have opted to halt recruitment, the effects of which will most likely be felt when markets recover. As such, HR leaders will need to

monitor the situation closely and plan to resume or revisit their talent management strategy BEFORE the rebound because the best talent will be well positioned for many new opportunities. For some organizations, this might represent an opportunity to attract top talent from the market, building on how well they have been managing the situation in the first half of 2020.

As conditions normalize, they can also start to consider more taking more long-term actions that will help them prepare for uncertain times in the future:

- refocusing investment strategy on main business goals and growth opportunities;
- involving employees in developing/updating crises response plans, and then test them intermittently;
- comparing data on engagement levels before, during, and after the crisis, and create strategies to address times of decline;
- reviewing your employer branding as new talent will be attracted to a business that managed well through the health and economic effects

While the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak is expected to be high, markets and business conditions will gradually recover. For organizations to have long-term and sustainable successes in a volatile business landscape, they must learn to operate in ambiguity and constant disruption. Building a culture that not only tolerates this climate but also thrives in it will separate the winners from the losers. For the current outbreak, while leaders focus on dealing with the immediate impact of the crisis, they should also keep a long-term view on any measures being implemented to ensure their organisation' success. For HR leaders, this means ensuring that whatever adjustment they make to their approaches and policies now, does not stifle their organisations' growth in the future. Organizations that come out of a crisis stronger typically have leaders who drive change around how they operate, how they engage employees, and how nimble and flexible they are in focusing, engaging, rewarding, and retaining their people.



For the current outbreak, while leaders focus on dealing with the immediate impact of the crisis, they should also keep a long-term view on any measures being implemented to ensure their organization's success

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COVID-19: A checklist for employers

What should employers be doing to tide through COVID-19? Here is a checklist to consider

By **Anushree Sharma**

Companies and their workforces are in unprecedented circumstances, with COVID-19 changing situations and advice on a frequent basis. In this checklist, we have set out below action items to address key issues.

People Matters survey on what should employers be doing in COVID-19 has caught companies and industries off guard, with a shockwave of ripple effects tearing through their supply chains and business models. The challenges faced by workplaces have become a new front in the battle over the coronavirus.

Corporations around the world are grappling with how to best keep employees safe, while trying to ensure optimal utilization of their staff and business continuity— by asking employees to work-from-home, creating tag teams, etc.

According to the survey conducted by People Matters across India and South East Asia in March 2020, we found that only 38 percent of companies rated themselves as well or very well-prepared to support employees and their families and less than 50 percent of respondents have a cross-functional COVID-19 response team in place.

Here is a list of things you should consider doing in-line with your local government advisory:



Policy Management

- Have a dedicated crisis management cross-functional team to track and monitor the situation and update authorities and employees on further steps.
- Develop policies proactively, which adheres to public health recommendations and workplace laws.
- Set policies for remote working or work-from-home, pay and reimbursement for any activities during work-from-home
- Have a clear policy around essential and non-essential travel bans and process on managing employees who are traveling, came back from outside, employees working in a contained area
- Set sign-off process for policy change



Communication

- Select communication channel (email, mail, text messages, hotlines and internal systems) and set protocols to communicate early and often
- Establish two-way communication with employees
- Signage to help reinforce hygiene, screening and other organizational policies
- Leverage social media for public messages



Work from home

- Identify the critical roles and departments that can be offered work from home
- Develop policies and management for roles, which can be offered work from home
- Analyze the infrastructure needs for remote employees and other working models

- Frame and implement policies around pay, health and benefits for people working remotely and work-from-home



Travel

- Follow travel restrictions and advisory released by your country's government
- Defer all non-essential business travels- local or international
- Employees, who have returned from affected regions or other countries, offer them a necessary quarantine for at least 14 days.
- Offer necessary support to employees who are residing in contained areas for business activities



Workplace norms

- Sanitize workplace and common areas frequently
- Encourage social distancing and non-handshake greetings
- Limit meeting size and encourage virtual meetings
- Avoid employees to attend any business and learning events
- Close on-site gyms, cafeterias and common areas
- Implement shifts to reduce overcrowding
- Temporarily close office areas in affected areas
- Discontinue biometrics and technologies that require multiple individual interaction
- Engaging with medical experts, health bodies and government
- Get your mitigation plan reviewed by medical experts
- Engage with your legal experts to review your people and work management policies
- Follow your local government portals to keep track of advisories and policies
- Follow and monitor the situation as released by the World Health Organization



Setting up a crisis management team

- Set up the basic protocols and guidelines for this team
- Every member of the team, from executive leadership down, should know who is doing what.
- Cross-train team members to perform critical functions in the event of an unexpected absence or quarantine of another team member
- The team should prepare a contingency plan. It is essential that the crisis plan outlines how information will flow and that everyone has confidence in its veracity. Strong data also reinforces a central element of crisis planning, exploring different scenarios and how they could affect the business in the short, medium and long term
- Make sure your crisis team have further sub teams that:

(A) Public relations and communications teams: They're responsible for developing and delivering the organization's messaging internally and externally.

(B) Legal and regulatory teams: Their role is to understand the organization's risk exposures and advise on appropriate responses.

(C) Operational response teams: They essentially handle everything else – including establishing the facts that the other two groups need to do their jobs.

Our perspective is based on our analysis of our recent study, People Matters COVID-19 Impact & Measures Survey- March 2020, and interaction with industry experts. This perspective is current as of March 22nd, 2020.



Click here to watch what the story entails from the author

Integrate mental well-being into business continuity planning

Amid COVID-19 outbreak, many organizations are swiftly activating their business continuity plans to minimize the impact to their business and ensure that they can continue to effectively operate their businesses and provide necessary services

By **Pheona Chua**

The rapid spread of COVID-19 has placed tremendous pressure on countries to deal with, both the public safety aspects of the outbreak, as well as its associated economic impact.

To mitigate the spread of the virus, many countries have closed borders, banned flights, barred visitors from affected countries, as well as issued mandated quarantines orders to residents. People who are affected have found themselves thrown into an isolated world full of uncertainties.



The uncertainly of not knowing when the outbreak will end, coupled with a constant stream of unfavorable and conflicting news from both mainstream and social media, will inevitably take a heavy toll on people's wellbeing, psychologically and emotionally.

Stress at the workplace

COVID-19 has also caused work disruption on an unprecedented scale. Many organizations in the region swiftly activated their business continuity plans (BCP) to minimize the impact to their business and ensure that they can continue to effectively operate their businesses and provide necessary services.

Across Asia, many employers implemented remote working arrangements, established split teams for critical operational functions, as well as granting other mutually agreeable work and leave agreements. In many countries, companies came up with policies suspending business travel to affected areas, providing personal protection supplies such as surgical masks and hand disinfectant for employees who need to return to the office to perform their job duties. Organizations have also asked employees to work from home and/or limit travels.

While the priorities are to safeguard employee health and ensure business continuity, many employers may not have given due thought to the potential emotional impact to employees. Those who are not accustomed to working remotely, do not have the necessary infrastructure at home to work

productively, or simply miss having a team to interact with, could find themselves demotivated and anxious.

A pandemic situation can lead to fear and anxiety, compounded by the effects of social media. In China, the stress and anxiety of the outbreak earlier has driven many people to turn to helplines for mental and emotional support, straining the small population of mental health professionals in the country. In South Korea, those living in special management zones are avoiding contact with others as the number of infected increases. Many countries have also experienced a run on essential items (e.g. rice, canned food) as people embarked on panic buying out of fear and anxiety, aggravated by the social media.

A culture of health can make a difference

Organizations who have over the years built a culture of health and well-being in their workplace will be better equipped to help their employees better cope in light of the current pandemic. In these organizations, thanks to on-going education and awareness efforts, employees would already be aware of how to cope with stressors and have the necessary resources to be able to manage them. Managers are also more assured that their employees' wellbeing is taken care of and they can focus on ways to ensure their team's day-to-day work continues as usual or with minimal disruption.

> The COVID-19 situation has highlighted the value of comprehensive BCPs, especially those that can be adjusted quickly to unforeseen situation and keep organizations moving forward

In 2018, the International Organization for Standardization released guidelines for a people-focused approach to business continuity planning in the event of a disaster, outlining the role of an employer in ensuring the well-being of the workforce during and after a period of crisis. These guidelines include analyzing the needs of employees beforehand, providing support through learning and development, providing support during the disruption and assistance thereafter to handle stress or trauma. These guidelines can be a starting point to help employers form their own plans and mental health initiatives, as part of their well-being package and as a component of their BCP.

Mental well-being – a key consideration to business continuity

While these broader health and well-being concerns are taken into consideration, safeguarding employees' mental well-being isn't always factored in as part of the key considerations to a BCP.

The findings from our 2020 Global Medical Trends Survey underlines the importance of mental well-being. Insurance providers in Asia Pacific predicted that mental and behavioral conditions will be among the three most common and most expensive conditions within the next five years. This topic of mental well-being certainly should not be neglected.

Mental health professionals have spoken out in support of integrating emotional well-being with BCPs. Their suggestions highlight the need for proactive measures and early interventions to build mental resilience.

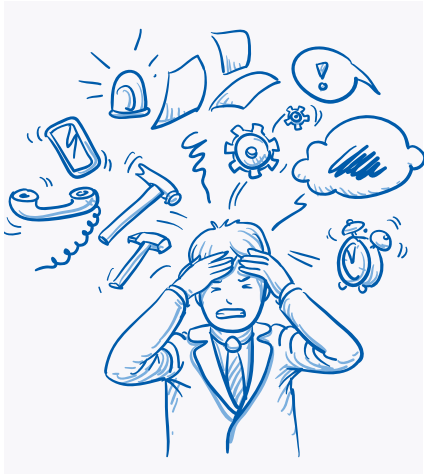
At its core, BCP must balance business needs with people needs. It must, firstly, reassure employees that they are safe and healthy

while fulfilling their work. The negative impact of stress, anxiety and mental illness on productivity is well-documented. Our research found these could cause US$16.3 trillion in economic losses by 2030 if they remain unaddressed. A holistic approach to well-being amidst a stressful and uncontrollable environment can greatly reduce long-term distress for employees and the rising healthcare costs for employers.

Taking a proactive approach to employee mental resilience

Today's digitalized economy comes with a surge of technology providers that offer a variety of technological tools and platforms that employers can leverage to provide the necessary support and assistance for employees' mental well-being. Among these are mobile apps that have interesting features for users to have mental well-being tools at their fingertips, very much catered for busy professionals.

One example is a mobile app that can facilitate various mindfulness exercises on the go for employees to encourage usage. A simple yet practical tool surprises us in how much it can benefit employees. These include various ways for employees to de-stress, reduce distraction and impart them with knowledge and skills to better cope with anxiety and anger. We have seen how such a tool can become a companion for employees in some organizations in the region.



A holistic approach to well-being amidst a stressful and uncontrollable environment can greatly reduce long-term distress for employees and the rising healthcare costs for employers

This entire initiative not only builds up the resiliency of the employees, it also supports their emotional and psychological well-being in difficult times. We know that they are better prepared with more self-awareness, especially at this junction of vulnerability where we are facing a pandemic that has no end in sight.

The COVID-19 situation has highlighted the value of comprehensive BCPs, especially those that can be adjusted quickly to the unforeseen situations and keep organizations moving forward. While factors such as technology and physical well-being are important elements in a successful BCP, employers in Asia Pacific need to understand that employee mental well-being is also a crucial component to ensure business activities continue with minimal disruption.

It is important to keep employees mentally resilient during a crisis period like this and that they can bounce back faster when organizations return to business as usual.

** Willis Towers Watson 2020 Global Medical Survey*

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Ensuring remote worker cybersecurity

For IT and HR teams of most organizations, maintaining cybersecurity in the face of this office exodus presents significant risks

By **Sherif El-Nabawi**

This week, the World Health Organization called for "aggressive" action in Southeast Asia to combat the fast-spreading COVID-19 disease. As governments in the region impose measures like the closure of all business premises – other than those selling daily necessities or providing essential services like water and electricity, or issue advisories on social distancing measures at the workplace, we are experiencing a level of social and economic upheaval that is unprecedented in modern times.

Companies are facing sudden and profound challenges as they seek ways to quickly support nationwide directives for employees to vacate offices and work from home instead. For IT and HR teams of most organizations, maintaining cybersecurity in the face of this office exodus presents significant risks.

> Strong security policies may already exist, but it is important to review them and ensure that they are adequate as your organization transitions to having more people suddenly working from home than in the office

Challenges of implementing the work-from-home experiment

Globally, 50 percent of employees are telecommuting for at least half of the work week*. However, COVID-19 has triggered more – if not all – organizations to immediately embrace remote working arrangements. Apart from the pressure this puts on IT teams, network architectures and perhaps even equipment suppliers, there are real cybersecurity challenges organizations need to consider. HR's expertise



in engaging with employees and demonstrating the importance of protecting business-critical information is also crucial.

Here are six key factors that can help IT and HR implement remote worker cybersecurity:

1 **Making sure that the current cybersecurity policy incorporates remote working:** Strong security policies may already exist, but it is important to review them and ensure that they are adequate as your organization transitions to having more people suddenly working from home than in the office. Security policies need to encompass remote working access management, the use of personal devices, and updated data privacy considerations for employee access to documents and other information. It is also essential to factor in an increase in the use of "shadow IT". All of this should of course be included and communicated as a part of HR's broader set of corporate procedures and guidelines for employees.

2 **Planning for a surge of BYOD (bring your own device) devices connecting to your organization:** Employees working from home may use their personal laptops or smartphones to carry out their respective job functions, especially if the organization has a limited number of company-owned devices to issue on short notice. Personal devices will need to have the same level of security as a company-owned device. IT and HR must therefore consider the privacy implications of employee-owned devices connecting to a business network.

3 **Sensitive data being accessed via unsafe Wi-Fi networks:** Employees working from home may access sensitive business data through home Wi-Fi networks that do not have the same level of cybersecurity controls that are being used in traditional offices. More connectivity will be happening from remote locations, which will require greater focus on data privacy, and proactively hunting for threat actor intrusions from a greater number of entry points.

4 **Cybersecurity hygiene and visibility more critical than ever before:** It is not unusual for personal devices to have poor cybersecurity hygiene. Employees working from home can result in an organization losing visibility over devices and how they have been configured, patched and even secured.

5 **Continued education is crucial, as coronavirus-themed cyberattacks escalate:** The WHO and the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore (CSA), for instance, have already warned about malicious cyber activities like phishing and scam campaigns leveraging the COVID-19 situation. Being best equipped to understand the people issues that inhibit effective organizational change, HR must step in and help IT facilitate continuous end-user education and communication. In addition, companies must ensure that remote workers can quickly contact IT for advice and consider employ-

Security policies need to encompass remote working access management, the use of personal devices, and updated data privacy considerations for employee access to documents and other information



from a spike in the use of managed and unmanaged devices.

With that said, maintaining strong cybersecurity requires coordinated action across the three fronts of people, process, and technology. HR, in close collaboration with IT, can help employees – wherever they are – navigate technology and digest updated policies, thereby converting them into partners in securing the organization

Maintaining strong cybersecurity requires coordinated action across people, process, and technology. HR, in close collaboration with IT, can help employees – wherever they are – navigate technology and digest updated policies, thereby converting them into partners in securing the organization

ing more stringent email security measures.

6 **Crisis management and incident response plans must be executable by a remote workforce:** A cyber incident that occurs when an organization is already operating outside of normal conditions has a greater potential to spiral out of control. Effective remote collaboration tools – including out-of-band conference bridges, messaging platforms and productivity applications – can allow a dispersed team to create a "virtual war room" from which to manage incident response efforts. If your organization's plans rely on physical access or flying in technicians for specific tasks like replacing compromised machines, it may be prudent to explore alternate methods or locally based resources.

During this period, IT will no doubt be turning to scalable cloud-native security architecture and advanced endpoint protection solutions that can be deployed and operationalised with no boots on ground, to facilitate the provision of computing resources that support more remote workers and managed threat hunting across every device. At CrowdStrike, we are doing our part to help organizations cope, by introducing two cost-free programs that address the challenges they are – navigate technology and digest updated policies, thereby converting them into partners in securing the organization. The COVID-19 crisis is likely to be with us for a while, with companies and their employees being forced to make hard choices and adapt quickly. Enabling a remote workforce is one of such decisions and while there are undoubtedly risks involved in accomplishing this at speed and scale, the security of the organization's networks, devices & data should not be amongst them.

** International Workplace Group. The IWG Global Workspace Survey*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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COVID-19: Legal obligations for businesses to their employees

While many countries have imposed hefty penalties including jail time for individuals who don't comply, what's less well known is that companies can be penalized as well. In Canada, for example, a company can be fined if its employees break social distancing regulations

By **Mint Kang**

The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected many industries and companies, whether because they are losing business like the tourism industry or have had their supply chains disrupted like the automobile industry. Salary freezes, large-scale layoffs, and business closures are common in the news these days.

However, the pandemic does not absolve companies of their legal responsibilities towards employees. During this period, as business leaders consider how best to strategize, they should also remember to consult the local employment laws where they operate, and ensure that their cost control and business continuity measures do not inadvertently cross out of sound practice.

Here are some areas where companies should be cognizant of their legal obligations to employees.

Comply with regulations around business travel and social distancing

Governments around the world have put in place heavy restrictions on travel. While the details vary across countries and states, the general gist is that all non-essential business travel should be deferred and employees returning from overseas or from specific countries must observe an isolation period. Many coun-

tries have imposed strict social distancing as well, prohibiting large gatherings and ordering the closure of locales where people congregate socially.

While many countries have imposed hefty penalties including jail time for individuals who don't comply, what's less well known is that companies can be penalized as well. In Canada, for example, a company can be fined if its employees break social distancing regulations, and its directors may also be held liable for individual penalties imposed on the employees. Unsurprisingly, some companies have resorted to firing employees who knowingly break such regulations. This is legally permissible under most countries' employment laws.

Provide a safe and healthy workplace

Almost every country in the world has occupational health and safety legislation that obligates employers to provide a safe and healthy working environment. In some jurisdictions, such as France or the Philippines, this also includes psychological health, and in others where the law does not explicitly state psychological well-being, such as Malaysia, it is nevertheless interpreted to cover mental health as well.

During this pandemic period, maintaining a safe and healthy working environment involves taking steps to reduce employees' exposure to infection and stress from fear of getting infected. This might include extra cleaning, restricting visitors to the premises, providing additional protective equipment, or simply ordering everyone to work from home.

Accept that people will be concerned about their health

Employment law in many countries contains various clauses that give workers the right to ask about whether their workplace is safe, to request that it be made safe, or to ask to be reassigned if they find the workplace is unsafe. In some countries such as New Zealand, they may even decline to work and still receive their pay if the working environment is unsafe and their requests for reassignment are denied.

Companies should not be surprised if the number of such questions and requests rise sharply during these few months, and while giving a reasonable reply and offering accommodations to concerned workers is of course ethically correct, it is also the legally correct thing to do.

> Almost every country in the world has occupational health and safety legislation that obligates employers to provide a safe and healthy working environment



Continue providing medical benefits to affected employees

Employers in many countries are legally required to provide some form of medical benefit to their employees, even if this only involves paying for their medical insurance. Depending on the jurisdiction, employees may be entitled to paid sick leave, reimbursement for medical consultation, accommodations for medical conditions, and other benefits. The COVID-19 pandemic does not change this; for example, if the law or the employment contract states that employers must cover the cost of their employees' hospital visit, they need to do so regardless of whether the visit is due to a COVID-19 infection or some other condition.

Employers in some countries may receive assistance from the government in the area of medical costs. For example, the Singapore government has committed to covering certain medical bills for those who have contracted the coronavirus. However, such assistance still does not relieve employers of their legal responsibilities.



Continue paying salaries on time and in full

Employment law in most jurisdictions gives companies the freedom to raise and lower the salaries of employees as they see fit, subject of course to applicable laws and the terms of the employment contract. And indeed, many businesses are already cutting bonuses, freezing wages, or effectively implementing pay cuts by asking employees to take unpaid leave.

While the law may permit this, any salaries owed, along with any other statutory requirements such as social security contributions, must still be paid within the window of time permitted by the law and/or the employment contract. Not doing so is considered an offense; employees can seek legal recourse, and employers caught in the act will typically end up paying large penalties unless the company has already been declared bankrupt. Some countries, such as Thailand, even

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require the employer to pay interest on late salaries.

Nevertheless, it is common enough for companies, especially SMEs, to rely on the goodwill and understanding of employees to let delayed payments pass during periods of financial difficulty. As easy a solution as this may be, it may still be considered illegal in some jurisdictions and companies should refrain from exploiting it wherever possible.

Adhere to regulations around retrenchment

As seen in the massive layoffs now taking place across the aviation and hospitality industries globally, many companies are retrenching staff to cope with the downturn. Like salary reductions, this is permitted by the laws in most countries. But as most employment law stipulates, the company must show just cause for the retrenchment, such as genuine financial constraints or restructuring. The COVID-19 pandemic in itself is unlikely to be sufficient legal cause for laying employees off.

Furthermore, companies must observe any requirements for retrenchment benefits. This will vary widely between jurisdictions. In most jurisdictions, severance pay is pegged to the length of an employee's service, subject to a cap. Some countries, such as Indonesia, subcategorize it into multiple types of compensation, including not just severance pay but compensation for other forms of benefits such as unused leave or housing benefits. Still other countries, such as Singapore,

It is common enough for companies, especially SMEs, to rely on the goodwill and understanding of employees to let delayed payments pass during periods of financial difficulty

have no statutory retrenchment benefits at all and employees must depend on whatever had been previously agreed in the employment contract.

Continue behaving ethically during this period of disruption

Many of the legal obligations listed above are also ethical obligations that a good employer will do its best to fulfil, intended to protect employees, the company, and society at large. Although this time of disruption is profoundly trying for many companies, and will likely continue to be so for several months, employers can do their part to control the spread of the virus, reassure employees, and help keep society together.



How COVID-19 is changing hiring patterns

Even as some businesses slash headcount, others are sticking to their hiring plans or even stepping up recruitment. E-commerce, logistics, and e-services companies find themselves in particularly urgent need of manpower

By **Mint Kang**

Today's job market looks increasingly pessimistic day by day, as the COVID-19 pandemic takes its toll on the economy. Consumer demand has plunged, hitting business revenues and margins. Supply chains have been disrupted, leaving retail shelves empty and production lines out of material. Stock markets are tumbling, and companies fear they will not be able to get investor funding. Business expansion plans have been replaced by business continuity plans, or simply by panic. The worst affected industries, travel and tourism and their related sectors, are freezing pay and hiring, or carrying out massive layoffs.

Some industries remain stable or are even seeing growth

Even as some businesses slash headcount, others are sticking to their hiring plans or even stepping up recruitment. E-commerce, logistics, and e-services companies find themselves in particularly urgent need of manpower, as people take their shopping and other activities online to preserve social distancing: Amazon, for example, is increasing its US workforce by 25 percent and wants to absorb the laid-off workers from other sectors.

Recruitment firm Robert Walters, which specializes in professional disciplines, told People Matters that despite the impact on industries such as aviation and hospitality, hiring activity for HR, finance, and other specialist fields has remained stable. Furthermore, according to Robert Walters Singapore director Dominic Salomoni, the technology sector is still buoyant. "Technology hiring continues to demonstrate high levels of demand and a shortage of good quality talent in the market," he said.

Randstad Managing Director of search and selection for Greater China, Natellie Sun, also commented that hiring activities in her

region have continued to be vigorous in high-growth sectors such as technology, life sciences and functions within banking. "Many employers would have planned their hiring activities for the first quarter as they know that's when job seekers are open to new opportunities after bonus season. Given this trend, it's business as usual for many organizations that still have vacant roles to fill and targets to hit," she explained.

Those who have staying power are planning for the future

Some companies have also taken a more future-oriented stance to their hiring, and are planning for an eventual upswing and a job market that may be wildly different from today's landscape.

Tamara Sigerhall, market leader for Korn Ferry's professional search division across ASEAN, observed that a portion of companies are now investing in keeping talents in their pipelines. "This includes reassessing roles that can be filled by contract workers, prioritizing most critical roles to hire, rethinking of the current talent management strategy and looking at alternative methods to recruitment practices," she said. "We have observed forward-looking organizations balancing immediate crisis management with talent strategies that will position them well for the future."

There is also a good deal of caution from both employers and job seekers, which manifests in both a reluctance to take risks and an urgency to find stability. On the one hand, employers are taking advantage of the crisis to overhaul their entire hiring and retention strategy. On the other hand, constrained by uncertainty, they are holding back, a caution that Salomoni predicted will be particularly great over the next two to three months.

Many are asking questions around financial stability, and focusing on innovation and social responsibility when evaluating opportunities

Job seekers, meanwhile, are understandably open to opportunities but remain prudent about moving roles, taking an approach that Salomoni described as "better the devil you know" and Sigerhall called "a flight to quality". "Many are asking questions around financial stability, and focusing on innovation and social responsibility when evaluating opportunities," she observed.

Recruitment processes are adapting to social distancing

Downturns and upswings in the job market are an unfortunate fact of life and the economy, but with this pandemic, one of the biggest changes in recruitment is likely to be how the hiring process itself is conducted. With in-person meetings off the table, job interviews now have to be conducted remotely, by phone or videoconferencing. Many tech companies have already been doing this for some time: large ones such as Google, Amazon, Microsoft, IBM, and smaller companies that are far enough ahead on the curve to have adopted video calls as a common form of communication.

"We have seen a far higher utilization of teleconferencing technologies such as Skype and Zoom for interviews," Salomoni observed. "Some parts of the hiring process have taken longer to complete as clients are prioritizing their measures to manage the COVID-19 situation. HR professionals are also heavily involved in managing business continuity plans.



HR leaders will need to ensure that whatever adjustment they make to their approaches and policies now, does not stifle their organizations' growth in the future

As a result, some interview processes have slowed down or been put on hold for now."

On the bright side, he added, many key decision makers are now more readily available, partly because of travel restrictions that have cleared their schedules, and that speeds up the processes which do continue.

Onboarding is another area of recruitment which has now gone virtual. Mike Pritchett, CEO of cloud video tech firm Shootsta, told People Matters that he is seeing more enterprises looking for ways to communicate across their organizations in the absence of face-to-face meetings. "There is a real risk that reduced engagement and communication between employees will dramatically impact company performance," he said, pointing out that technology now offers alternatives such as animated explainer videos, interactive webinars, and podcasts to improve the onboarding process.

Employers need to really think ahead to stay on top of the curve

The companies whose large-scale job cuts make headlines around the world inevitably say they are doing it for survival: that they need to slash costs to make it past the crisis. But experts think otherwise.

"Although it may seem sensible to focus on labour cost efficiencies if revenue takes a hit, short-term reactions may leave organizations vulnerable and business continuity disrupted," Sigerhall told People Matters. "HR leaders will need to ensure that whatever adjustment they make to their approaches and policies now, does not stifle their organizations' growth in the future."

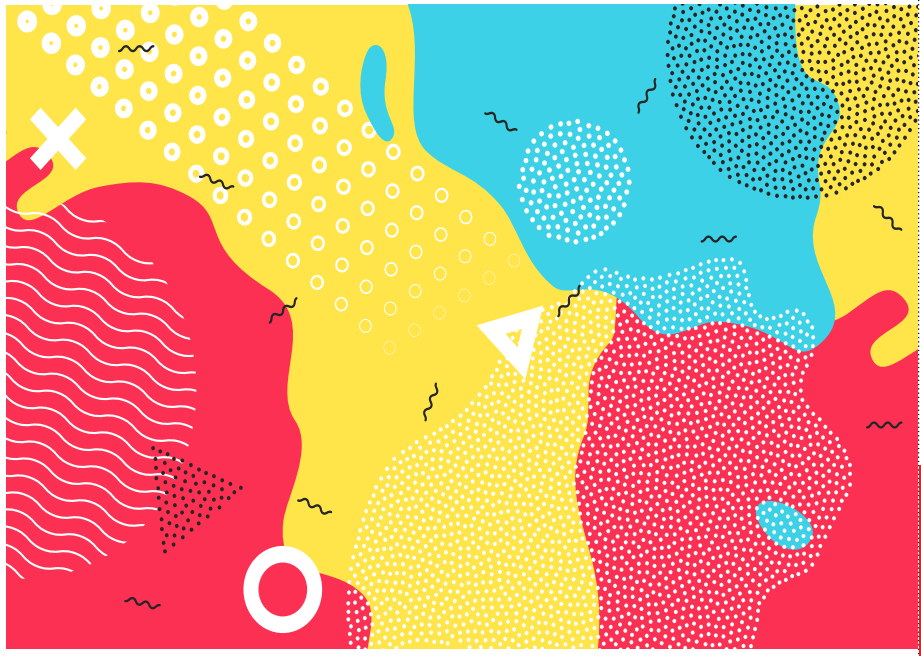
She suggested a couple of practices that may help employers balance present and future needs: firstly, recruiting for resilience. "Recruitment is essentially a way to build new capabilities and enable strategic changes to business models and culture," she said. "Take the current downtime and consider how this shapes the talent you need now, and in the longer term. For example, if banks want to develop virtual capabilities, they will need to get that in place now— before the market comes back and everyone is after the same talents."

Secondly, employers need to re-evaluate what they consider to be "ideal" candidates. The top qualities to look for in candidates at all levels, she suggested, are high learning agility and the ability to work and communicate effectively across digital channels.

Opportunity in the time of the Coronavirus crisis

In these times of crisis, however hard, there still lies a lesson - a chance for us to turn the tables and come back with stronger ecosystems –be it health or work or life

By **Shweta Modgil**



"You never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that it's an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before."
- Rahm Emanuel

The first few weeks of 2020 are exactly those kinds of weeks. As the Coronavirus pandemic continues to ravage the globe physically, socially, mentally, and financially, work and life of billions across the globe have been thrown out of gear. Entire countries have shut down, the normal routine has been disrupted, business are losing billions, healthcare systems have been delivered a jolt, the travel and tourism industry is starting in the face of worst-ever losses, markets are tumbling, global health stands compromised and the global economy is looking at a downward spiral in the coming quarters.

For businesses, in particular, the epidemic poses the challenges of business continuity and business growth and puts a question on-is there a way of work that can help us navigate such black swan events relatively unscathed? Is there a way we can find a way out of this crisis to overhaul our work ecosystem? In these times of crisis, however hard, there still lies a lesson- a chance for us to turn the tables and come back with stronger ecosystems-be it health or work or life.

The death of the office?

One of the first things that businesses did to fight the effects of the virus on work was to allow and enable their entire teams to work from home. As more and more businesses allow work from home, it brings up an opportunity for them to help people accept that work can be done without going to office daily or meeting in-person unless it is absolutely necessary. This change of mindset can save both the employer and the employee a lot of money, a lot of commute time, and increase productivity. For the employers, in particular, lies an opportunity to affect a mindset change and discipline in employees to be their productive best even when working from home. In the future of work, the office

is mobile, where you want it to be and not a fixed building you go to every day.

More so, when a work from home culture goes beyond Tier 1 cities and urban areas to Tier 2 cities and non-IT sectors, people can work remotely from those areas without having to relocate or endure high costs of living. This crisis should be a reflection point for more and more businesses as to how can they source talent from non-urban areas.

Tech to the rescue

When traveling and meetings are out of the question, businesses have to heavily bank on technology to deliver seamless work. Technology cannot replace the human touch but it can certainly augment by enabling everything that can go online-be it events, education, interviews, conferences- online. This epidemic could be that push to develop more sophisticated technologies for automating, conferencing, team collaboration that can ensure seamless delivery of work. It is an opportunity to figure out how we can use drone deliveries effectively or make government processes fully online in order to make the lives of millions smooth even in difficult times.

In particular, when it comes to skilling, development of edtech and a greater push for it will help millions skill and continue their education without moving out of their homes in times of crisis. Here is an opportunity to transform the education sector, make it truly seamless online so that normal routines are not hampered despite a contagion.

Casslynn Ong, who heads HR for ASM Technology Singapore Pte Ltd avers, "There are predictions about the role of technology under such circumstances and this may instead spur businesses to push for digitalization and hence greater demand for more advanced solutions."

> The current situation is yet another opportunity for the naysayers of globalization to harp upon the risks of globalization. A disease that started from one part of China has reached to every continent except Antarctica thanks to globalization and an interconnected world

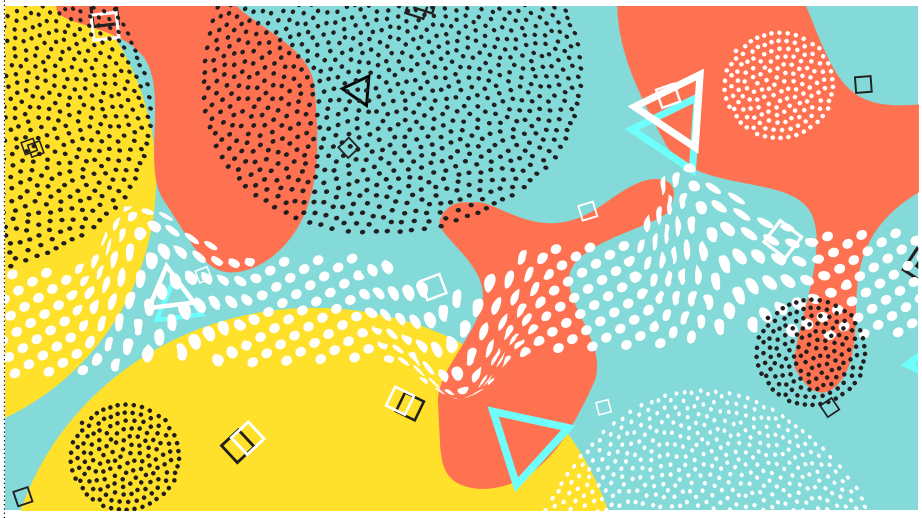
Diversify, de-risk and develop

When the Coronavirus epidemic started in China and hit the manufacturing industry hard globally, it was then that the realization dawned upon global businesses on how it is important to diversify their sourcing base. Businesses all over the globe are feeling the need to de-risk their supply chains and here lies an opportunity for a country like India to develop its manufacturing sector and become a viable alternative in some respects. This would further lead to creation of jobs locally.

Of course, China will be quick to bounce back and reclaim its status but the epidemic should be a reflection point for businesses to understand where they can de-risk their supply chains, what can be produced locally, and how more effectively, the Make-in-India initiative can be leveraged. The government also needs to invest more in such sectors in order to be not caught on the back foot in times of such a crisis that affects manufacturing chains and supplies.

The rise of remote healthcare and healthtech

If there's one industry that sure has the opportunity to change the face of any more such future pandemics, it is the remote healthcare and healthtech industry. The Coronavirus epidemic has put a heavy strain on traditional healthcare systems and countries are struggling to contain the fallout. From China to Italy, the story of overburdened healthcare systems has played out and is playing out globally. There is a dire need to overhaul the healthcare industry. And sadly, this realization should not have taken a pandemic to happen.



There is also the need and opportunity to develop more sophisticated remote healthcare and telehealth systems to reach all who are affected, and unburden doctors and healthcare systems physically. There is also a big opportunity for personalized wellness technology firms and more immolation in the field of affordable & quality healthcare and vaccine development. Expect more development in the fields of vaccine development specifically.

Neeraj Balani, Managing Director, International SOS, India, validates the increasing role of teleconsultation adding, "Telehealth or Teleconsultation service platform helps to provide the relevant medical information, advice, and referrals round the clock to people traveling or working abroad. Through an integrated solution, one has immediate and complete access to security & medical experts for real-time information and advice, plus access to local video-based teleconsultation services delivered in compliance with local regulations and clinical best practices. In addition to immediate reassurance to employees, TeleHealth solutions also help to reduce the cost, time and the disruption usually associated with visiting local healthcare providers."

Consequently, it helps organizations to ensure business continuity, deliver Duty of Care and H&S requirements, minimize travel security risks, reduce medical costs and provide a global health care solution for the traveling workforce. He further adds that in many instances where organizations have asked employees to work from home and self-quarantine, International SOS is advising its members to call its assistance center for advice or if they feel unwell. With an efficient TeleConsultation service, its members can see a local doctor face to face but in a virtual environment demonstrating how these services will have a bigger role to play in the future.

In addition, the epidemic has laid bare the need for people to embrace a healthy lifestyle and change behavior for the good. It is an opportunity for employers and governments to launch schemes to incentivize this behavioral change to be better prepared for future catastrophes.

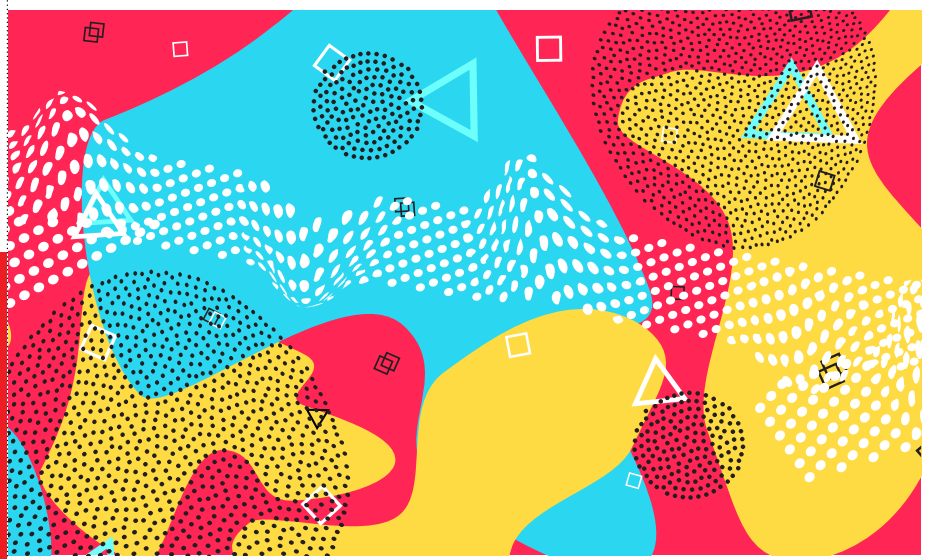
The changing face of globalization and climate change

The current situation is yet another opportunity for the naysayers of globalization to harp upon the risks

of globalization. A disease that started from one part of China has reached to every continent except Antarctica thanks to globalization and an interconnected world. While globalization has endured many attacks on it and will continue to do so, the epidemic calls for a changed model of globalization that is able to battle its vulnerabilities in a better way, while at the same time delivering its benefits to businesses and regions alike.

Historian and philosopher Yuval Noah Harari rightly says, "Many people blame the coronavirus epidemic on globalization, and say that the only way to prevent more such outbreaks is to de-globalize the world. Build walls, restrict travel, reduce trade. However, while short-term quarantine is essential to stop epidemics, long-term isolationism will lead to economic collapse without offering any real protection against infectious diseases. Just the opposite. The real antidote to epidemic is not segregation, but rather cooperation."

In particular, the epidemic is a direct call for economies and businesses to pay more heed to climate change. Scientists are increasingly finding that deforestation and climate change are facilitating the rise of zoonotic diseases as deforestation drives wild animals out of their natural habitats and closer to human populations, creating a greater opportunity for zoonotic diseases. Hence it is becoming more and more important for the business to balance business outcomes with nature in order to limit the havoc wrecked by such epidemics.



It may be the darkest hour of our life, yet there is an opportunity to emerge out of it with a more evolved and agile mindset and an improved way of working and living, one that does not endanger life on and of the planet

What's needed right now is a mindset change. A mindset change that values work from home can lead to a positive impact on climate change as one less vehicle on the road means less pollution. It also means more productivity. Governments, businesses, employees-all need to come together to take steps in order to build sustainable businesses and ecosystems and leverage technology and talent globally to maximize productivity and well-being yet at the same time minimizing damage to our vulnerable natural ecosystems.

It may be the darkest hour of our life, yet there is an opportunity to emerge out of it with a more evolved and agile mindset and an improved way of working and living, one that does not endanger life on and of the planet.



Click here to watch what the story entails from the author

COVID-19 HR challenge: Lessons from vigilant Singaporeans

Lessons from Singapore that may benefit global HR business leaders in caring for the health and well-being of the workforce during this challenging time

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

While Singapore was the location of the film Crazy Rich Asians, a more current view of the city-state might be better described as Crazy Vigilant Singaporeans! The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed this busy hub of human activity to a place of quiet diligence as a new normal. I have been impressed with the preparation, rapid response, and overall vigilance on an island that hosts more than 20 million visitors a year. While we still have a long road ahead as we work to contain the spread of the virus around the world, I wish to share my personal lessons from Singapore that may benefit global HR business leaders in caring for the health and well-being of the workforce during this challenging time.

Anticipation and Forecast – On 22 January, I was hosted by a few health leaders in Singapore at the new Center for Healthcare Innovation (CHI) which is also located at the National Center for Infectious Diseases. The purpose of our meeting was to explore collaboration by bringing more management research into the context of healthcare. However, the COVID-19 outbreak distracted our discussion as China had just reported a second death and the USA had just confirmed their first case in Washington State. While there were no detected cases at that time in Singapore, emergency planning meetings had already started taking place as the busy Chinese New Year holiday was approaching. The idea that this could be a pandemic was already shared and business leaders were alerted. How often do we carefully consider the impact of overseas events on our own businesses?



Proactive Planning – After SARS outbreak, many employers learned important lessons across East Asia. As a result, most organizations have risk management plans that include a pandemic response and have mitigation measures in place (e.g. issued personal thermometers to employees, no system log-in without temperature reporting, no system log-in without travel declarations, physical barricade plan for health screening before physical site entry, etc.). It is clear that Singapore has learned from the SARS challenge 17 years ago and put

measures in place- just in case. While no amount of planning can prepare for the unknown, this pragmatic approach is showing benefit in Singapore. If your business has not yet been affected by COVID-19, what is your plan when it comes?

Communication Channel Management – During a crisis, communication must be centralized and clear both at a national level as well as for each business. While there is a lot of information already out from news sources about the importance of personal hygiene and the reduction of human contact, it seems important for the employees to hear this directly from their bosses as well. Eliminating large gatherings, holding virtual meetings, distributing hand sanitizers around the office and factory areas, enhancing the workplace sanitation, and reinforcing the washing of hands are all critical. Most workplaces clean the lift buttons each hour and completely disinfect offices each night. However, it is important that employees take personal responsibility for their own area and items (cleaning mobile phone, keys, computer, desk, etc.) regularly. Do you have a communication command centre that is communicating the essentials to your workforce to help them prepare?

Temperature and Travel Declaration – In many complex organizations, it is hard to know where everyone is at any point in time and even more difficult to know who is not feeling well. Most Singapore businesses (and all education institutions) have mandatory travel declarations to outline where you have been and where you are planning to go for both personal and business travel outside your immediate home/work areas. In addition, all employees must take and record their temperature two times a day and report it on a company system or smartphone app. This is carefully monitored to better understand the movement and general health of the people in the organization. Do you have people monitoring systems in place to protect your workforce?

Eliminating large gatherings, holding virtual meetings, distributing hand sanitizers around the office and factory areas, enhancing the workplace sanitation, and reinforcing the washing of hands are all critical

Holistic Stakeholder Management – While the focus on HR leaders is centered on the employees in the organization, the virus does not discriminate and is always looking for the next human host. It becomes quite critical to take a holistic view of human interaction within the workplace and with the workforce. This includes contract cleaning services, cafeteria services, catering services, delivery support, security services, customers, suppliers, outsourcing partners, etc. It is great to have good measures in place for your employees, but if the same safety and screening measures are not in place for others, then the containment is compromised. Do you have a clear view of the human interactions in your workplace beyond the employees? How will you manage other stakeholders for a holistic perspective?

Rewire Cultural Signals for Health – To create high-performing organizations and minimize labor costs, many organizations encour-

age people to work hard and don't seem to mind if they work while they are not feeling well. In fact, for several types of workers many employers provide no paid sick days, which means no pay if one is home sick. During a pandemic, we need people to stay home if they are not well. Singapore implemented a mandatory 5-day MC policy for any fever or respiratory ailment – no exceptions. Most employers have responded positively by providing paid workdays for those who are affected. While the duties of work are important, HR leaders need to perhaps re-wire the cultural signals to help people at all levels understand that when you don't feel well, you must stay home. How can HR and business leaders help create the right incentives and cultural acceptance of putting health first?

Split Team Work Arrangements – Since the start of February, most businesses here have been operating with split shifts to reduce risk. In other words, Team A works from home during one week and Team B works from home the following week. In case of an infection in one group it will only affect half of the team in a particular area (e.g. - imagine having your entire finance team in quarantine during quarterly closing). This can be a challenge



in some areas that require secure files or physical work effort, so some organizations modify this to split the teams to different locations each week. How will you ensure business continuity in the event of a virus infection in your workplace?

Contact Tracing – Since I moved to Asia just after SARS, the idea of contact tracing is new to me. Given the contagious nature of the virus before symptoms are evident, it becomes important to re-trace history of someone exposed. In other words, if you were sitting in the company cafeteria three days ago next to someone who now has the symptoms of the virus, how would you know? In Singapore, most companies use a combination of manual tracking (e.g. - sign in to meetings, restaurants, etc.) along with digital tracing (e.g. – badge swipes, security cameras with facial recognition, photo taking, etc.). It is therefore possible to call people immediately to let them know that they were potentially exposed to someone and that they should self-quarantine until the testing results are confirmed. This can be a major burden for the security and HR staff, but critical for early detection and containment. How well is your organization prepared for contact tracing?

The global COVID-19 challenge will undoubtedly change many things in our daily human lives as this unfolds in the coming months and year. The size and economic strength of Singapore has helped it to address the pandemic challenge. The nation also benefits from the trust in leadership and a collective culture, which is also risk-averse by nature. As the global situation develops, each business and country will address the pandemic in their own unique way. While I am not an expert, I do hope that the lessons from the Crazy Vigilant Singaporeans can provide some benefit to others.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Leadership in the times of pandemic

This is the time to step up, step forward and be counted for doing something meaningful, something out of ordinary, something generous, something humane, or to support others who are taking the first steps toward tomorrow

By **Nitasha Devasar**

What constitutes good leadership in a time of crisis? This is a question I ponder on continually these days. When countries are either locking in or shutting out people, subjectively, collectively, selectively. Irrespective of their politics, their culture, their histories, they are responding in unsurprisingly similar ways. Ours first, then the rest! Companies are following similar tracks, in a global connected world, where locations don't matter but geographies seem to, where protocols for business continuity are similar but practicalities are localized, and people everywhere matter. And when people matter leadership has to matter too!

If we look at designated leaders in our immediate vicinity, which is something all of us do as a default, especially in tough times, one thing that immediately stands out is PRESENCE- just being present. The other, is CLARITY and/or CONSISTENCY in the messaging. Why is Presence important? Look to the Pope, he knows something about Presence in times like these: last week he was (physically) Present to wave and bless his followers from a window in the Vatican after delivering his Sunday services over video. This week he got Italian authorities to keep churches open even as they shut other public spaces. He recognizes that Presence—in this case of God, for believers—is as important as precautionary and preventive measures, especially for those who come into churches (and temples) despite the advisories.

Interestingly, Presence is just as important for leaders as it is for followers, and this is again something the Pope alluded to, to explain his compelling need to go to that window overlooking St Peter's Square to wave to his flock after his Sunday sermon was broadcast on giant video screens rather than in person. For it reinforces the bonds and the commitments of the relationship between the leader and his followers and gives solace to both.

If we look at designated leaders in our immediate vicinity, which is it that all of us do as a default, especially in tough times? One thing that immediately stands out is PRESENCE- just being present. The other, is CLARITY and/or CONSISTENCY in the messaging



Similarly, when there is confusion, ambiguity and anxiety all around you, you tend to appreciate CLARITY and consistency and when it comes from someone you look up to, it is doubly reassuring. The most effective way of achieving both presence and clarity in organizations is via direct Communication. For this, the leader must step up, out and upfront. Why? Because in this case, what the leader is saying and what people need to understand must be the same. Much depends on this.

Isn't this usually the case, you may ask? The answer is NO—what people hear or see (and then understand) depends on specific filters of identity, character and experience. A cynic would say, people see (or hear) what suits them. So, like many other things in leadership, the leader cannot do this messaging singularly. He needs a linked chain of leaders and managers at every level of the organization re-enforcing the exact same message, with the necessary packaging appropriate for their teams, locations and situations.

One way this can happen organically is when these leaders understand not just the message but the ethos underlying it (many leaders will signpost this for their audience in many ways during communication), and then keep to the basic message, simply and clearly. Using the exact same words as in the initial message is an easy way to do this and resisting the temptation to embellish is always sensible. This is very much in the hands of those of us who are transmitting the core message.

The other important link in this leadership communication chain is accountability and ownership and that depends on individual managers, team leaders, and ultimately each employee across the organization. Employees being able and willing to take ownership often sits within the DNA of an organization, its organizational culture. Of course, top leadership impacts and drives this by their words and deeds but equally each of us contributes to building, shaping, transforming and sustaining the organizational culture we are part of. So, we each have a role to play, an impact to make, a change to shape.

Unusual times, pandemic times, call for unusual measures and provide unusual opportunities. This is the time to step up, step forward and be counted for doing something meaningful, something out of ordinary, something generous, something humane, or to support others who are taking the first steps towards tomorrow. So wherever in the organizational hierarchy we stand, we have the choice to take ownership and be accountable, social distancing notwithstanding. In pandemic times each of us can be a leader.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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COVID-19 crisis: Impact on compensation & benefits

As businesses across sectors take a hit with the COVID-19 outbreak, Morgan Stanley and Goldman declare that a global recession could be underway. Let's explore how the impact of the coronavirus crisis on businesses and economies is affecting or could affect the compensation and benefits decisions of employers

By **Drishti Pant**

A recent Willis Tower Watson global survey titled "COVID-19 Hourly Employee Pay Practices 2020" revealed that about 54 percent of the surveyed employers perceive "moderate to large negative impact" to business results in the next 12 months.

Traveling is banned or asked to be minimized, hotels can't host large events, and dine-in restaurants in many cities across the world are now closed as well. Several countries are in a state of lockdown and businesses have suffered a great setback. As no one really knows when the situation will get better, leaders revisit many people and business decisions with extreme uncertainty. Managing costs among several

Globally, companies can see the imminent economic downturn and are trying to balance "capacity to pay" vs. "need to pay", while keeping in view their employee expectations

other things becomes critical. But at the same time employers have to retain their best of the best talent and also support their staff and ensure their job security. How do talent and business leaders strike a balance? What compromises should be worth making? As we can already see in many reports and latest updates, some CEOs and business leaders have stepped up and taken the bold decision of taking pay cuts to support their respective companies and other employees.

Some employers, especially in the aviation and hospitality sector had to take the harsh decision of laying off employees. Hiring for many companies has been stalled and the news is that for some of them even

appraisals might also push back.

For instance, C P Gurnani, CEO of Tech Mahindra recently shared with ET, "Bonus, variable pay or any increment is right now on hold. At this stage, most of the world is addressing their first priority: keeping people safe"

Capacity to pay vs. need to pay

Based on our interaction with the leaders and experts in this space, we identified that organizations today are sailing in three boats, one where appraisals have closed and letters have been distributed in January, since they follow a calendar year of performance. So, no COVID impact on them.

Second, companies which follow the financial year for performance reviews and are watching out for what other companies are doing, since nobody has the right or wrong answer.

Ruchika Pal Verma , Group Head- Corporate HR, Apollo Tyres Holdings (Singapore) shared, "Globally, companies can see the imminent economic downturn and are trying to balance 'capacity to pay' vs. 'need to pay', while keeping in view their employee expectations."

Then there is a third category of companies, for them the increments are due in June-July and they have more time to react and respond to the economic situation and they also have the option to follow the practices of the second group of companies.

"But the COVID-19 impact on the appraisals is imminent and here to stay." believes Verma.

Rajul Mathur, Consulting Leader India – Talent and Rewards, Willis Towers Watson, also agrees and reiterates, "While globally the organizations are still assessing the larger impact amid keeping their heads above water, a critical issue to be addressed would be the impact on employee rewards (bonuses & increments)."

Bonus payouts

For companies in the first group, following the January - December cycle, bonus payouts may have already happened and hence likely there may not have been much impact on quantum. For companies that follow the April - March cycle, the performance period is in its last month (March 2020) and there may be very little or no impact. For instance,



The current situation is surely going to impact overall sentiment and hence may lead to slightly conservative bonus payouts and not necessarily a complete washout

a report indicated that Tata Consultancy Services has already completed its annual appraisals for the year, but has not yet decided on the payouts.

However, Mathur shared that the current situation is surely going to impact overall sentiment and hence may lead to slightly conservative bonus pay-outs and not necessarily a complete washout. There are two more trends that he predicts could take shape:

Muted salary increases: Mathur shared that anticipating tough quarters ahead, and business getting further impacted, there is a chance that employers may give low percentage increases.

Delay increments by at least quarter: Given that employers continue to monitor the situation closely, some employers have decided to delay the increments by a quarter. Should the situation improve, or change for the negative, we will likely see an appropriate response from them.

"The majority of Asian employers have maintained pay and benefits for employees unable to work due to COVID-19. It would be fair to say that employers are taking an informed but compassionate approach to compensation amid continuing uncertainty," said Mathur.

Given that employers continue to monitor the situation closely, some employers have decided to delay the increments by a quarter



Informed but compassionate approach to compensation

Some employers have already rolled out contingency plans. Some have already declared pay cuts. But most employers are currently taking a cautious wait and watch approach and are contemplating on how to tackle this problem.

There may be a possibility that the actual increase may be lower than projections, especially in the sectors where the impact of COVID is more severe, said Mathur. Appraisals are going to be affected, added Verma.

But talent would be of utmost importance for businesses in these times of crisis. As Nicolas Dumoulin, Managing Director, Michael Page India, highlighted while some sectors could be under pressure and look at optimizing their cost structures just to stay afloat, retaining talent would also be key.

To ensure business continuity, to identify opportunities in times of crisis, to innovate, plan and operate new viable business models, companies would need their people and their teams in place. In fact, Dumoulin shared that if

all of this settles down, and the situation gets better and the economy bounces back in a few months, employers would need more and more people.

So even if some companies have to make difficult decisions like pay cuts or layoffs, transparency is key, suggested all the three experts, People Matters interacted with.

"Employers need to manage employee expectations and at the same time, also need to ring fence their top talent. The best way is to be transparent in communication and table all the facts clearly, so that all employees know what is coming their way," said Verma.

She further added that it is imperative, if employers want to give clear indications to their performers, that they should share the year-end ratings. Keeping everything in abeyance will not be a good strategy, if companies really want to retain their talent. More than the immediate reward, top talent needs to be told that they are the top talent, and communication on the ratings is a step in that direction. This will also indicate to them that when the economic climate is turning positive and companies announce increments, they will get their due.

"Hence, it is important to keep communicating, and call a spade a spade!" exclaimed Verma.



The challenge for business and talent leaders would hence be on how to make informed but compassionate people decisions amid the COVID-19 crisis

Vipul Dave - Head (Human Resource), Cosmo Films, told People Matters that, "It is in fact, time for companies to stand by the employees because there is fear and uncertainty all around."

Way forward

The fear of COVID-19 further impacting 2020-21 is looming large and now, organizations are trying to make ends meet, with imminent lockdowns, production halts, supply chain disruptions and lack of workforce participation. Verma suggests for employees, it's best to hold their grounds. She said, "We all need to do our bit and stand together in tough times."

Well! No one can really be blamed. It is a difficult time for all and what everyone can do best at this time of crisis is keep trying. Keep trying to find that balance between maintaining employees' and customers' health and ensuring business continuity. The challenge for business and talent leaders would hence be on how to make informed but compassionate people decisions amid the COVID-19 crisis.



This CPO role is more strategic and integrated with the leadership team than before. While, at one time, human resources may have been seen in some organizations as a peripheral function, it is now deservedly at the core of any forward-thinking business

Q&A

The future of HR is People: Sabre's Kim Warmbier

No matter what technological or economic changes come, HR's future will always be driven by what is important to people, says **Kim Warmbier,** the global Chief People Officer of Sabre

By **Mint Kang**

Kim Warmbier, the global Chief People Officer of technology company Sabre, has been dealing with the intersection between human resource strategy and the realization of business goals for almost 20 years. She has worked in a variety of consumer-facing companies including Pepsi/Frito-Lay, JC Penney, and Dean Foods, and also ran her own people management consultancy before joining Sabre in 2018.

At Sabre, her work involves developing and executing human resource strategies to support the company's business plan and strategic direction. But technology has been changing the nature of her job in the last few years, and Sabre, itself a technology specialist that serves the travel industry, is no stranger to this form of disruption.

In an exclusive conversation with People Matters,

Warmbier shared her thoughts about how technology is transforming her field, and how she and her team are preparing for the changes.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q As technologies such as AI, ML, big data, and IoT continue to transform traditional jobs, how do you see HR roles changing alongside these new tools?

A There's no doubt that technology is changing every aspect of how we live and work, and Human Resources is no exception. But any technological transformation is not about the technology itself, but about how that technology and data can be used to help create a culture and employee experience that attracts, retains and nurtures talent.

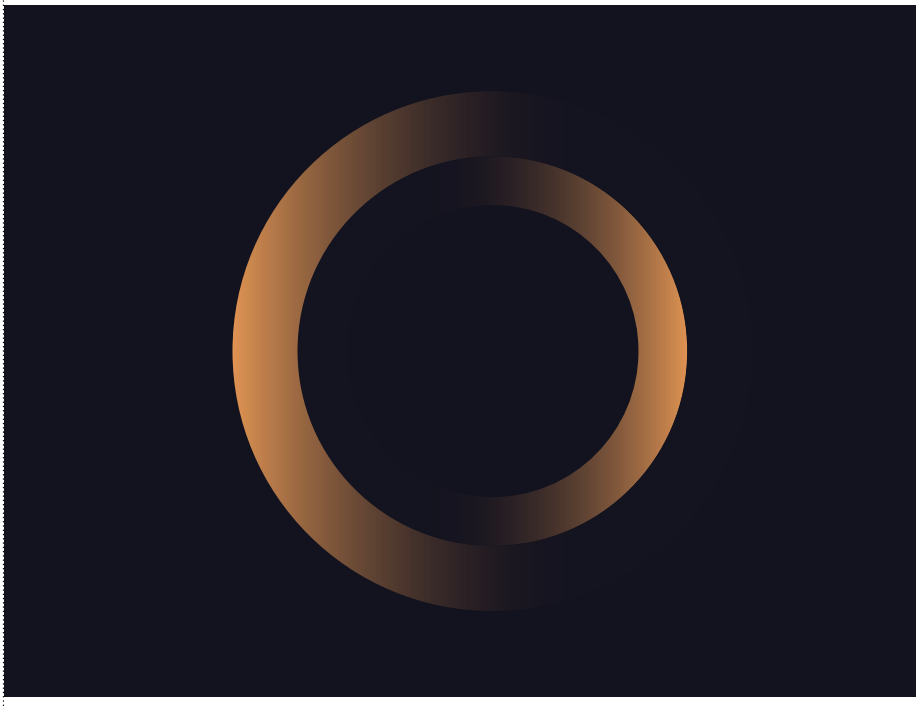
Let me use Sabre as an example. We create technological solutions that make travel happen. Our people in the business are the fuel behind these solutions. The "People Team" is the engine behind our people. We help ensure they are able to deliver the business strategies which align with their aspirations. Because we are the team that connects our people to our business, our technology should always act as an enabler, never a replacement. Any people-focused technology we develop must also support Sabre's key values: passion, curiosity, transparency, partnership, rigor and accountability.

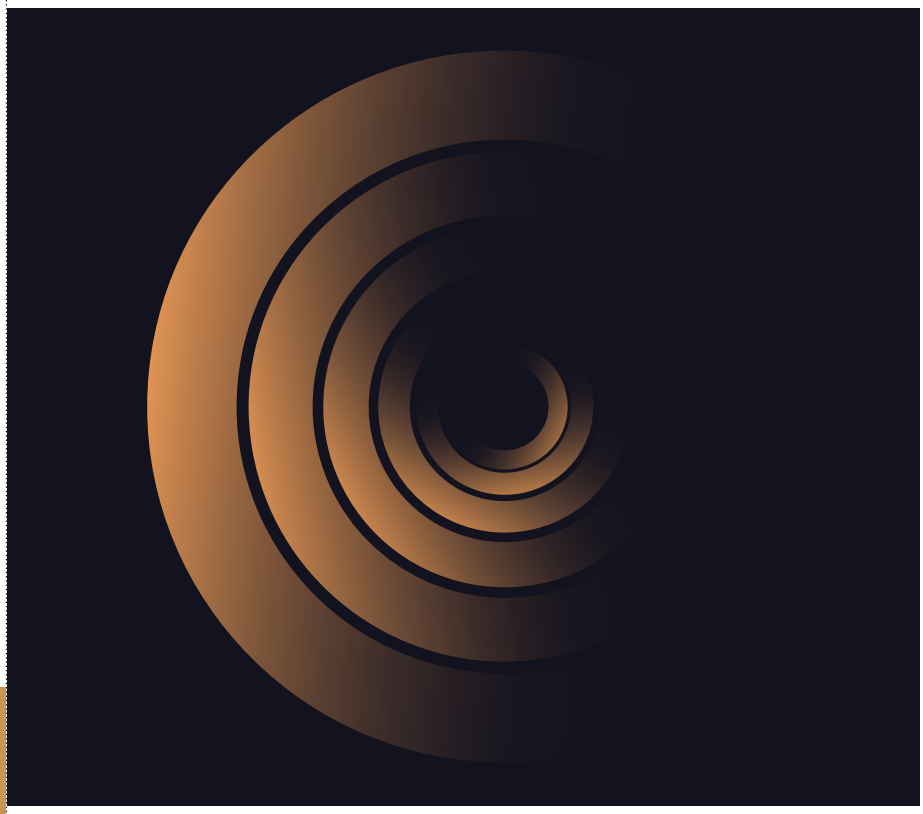
Q What are two key aspects of your present role that have undergone or are now undergoing a significant change due to technology?

A The "People Team" has already experienced key changes as a result of technology. Tasks which can be automated and completed more efficiently by AI have freed time for me and my team across the business to enhance our focus on the people in the business. Being part of the people team is less about processes and functions, and more about talent scouting from within and outside the business, as well as supporting, coaching and ensuring the right people are in the right roles with the right tools and training to fulfil our business goals.

While technology may have traditionally focused on automation, it is about much more now. As a business we have moved away from the notion of "managing" team members, to one of leading and enabling team members to do their best work, as they carry out their roles in ways

Talent recruitment and retention are likely to become increasingly challenging across all sectors as a result of a more transient workforce





Talent recruitment and retention are likely to become increasingly challenging across all sectors as a result of a more transient workforce

which suit their working styles while delivering business objectives, and which enables them to improve their skills, fulfill their goals and achieve balance in their lives.

Q Do you think the Chief People Officer role will continue to exist in the future of work in its current form?

A The role of Chief People Officer (CPO) constantly adapts and evolves, demonstrated by the change in title from Chief Human Resources Officer.

This CPO role is more strategic and integrated with the leadership team than before. While, at one time, human resources may have been seen in some organizations as a peripheral function, it is now deservedly at the core of any forward-thinking business. At Sabre, the CPO is a strategic partner to the CEO and Executive Leadership team to articulate, represent and push forward the people agenda continuously. There is nothing more important to a business than its people. This integrated approach reflects that.

Q Automation in HR may constitute one of the greatest disruptions to the field today. How is it impacting the way Sabre manages talent?

A We often think about automation as a way to make something easier. But it is actually a way to make it better. Automation is not a way to disengage from team members by having fewer interactions. Far from it. It is an opportunity to leave standardized procedures to automation and free up time to spot and nurture talent within the business. Machine-learning can also give us opportunities to understand how we can improve productivity and identify talent gaps. The real opportunity for automation in Human Resources will not be how we use technology to carry out standard functions, but how we enable technology to transform the way we find our new team members and support the people already within the business in their growth and development.

Q What is your vision for HR in the future of work?

A I will use the travel sector as an analogy. A drive for personalization impacts

the travel sector as a whole. Airline passengers and hotel guests, for example, are no longer seen as individuals who must be "processed" for check-in. Our clients focus on building relevant and personalized traveler experiences in order to build relationships and engage on a personal level.

The most successful companies in the world are those who invest in people. That is why the future of HR can be summed up in one word: People

What our clients do for travelers and what we do for our team members is very similar. Team members are not simply individuals who come into work and are paid a salary; our current way of working and our future vision is less transactional and more personal.

Talent recruitment and retention are likely to become increasingly challenging across all sectors as a result of a more transient workforce. With a significant worldwide footprint, Sabre is in a position to offer opportunities across the globe. We want to engage with and start to build a bond with potential team members even before they start to work with us. This people-centric approach must continue at all stages of a team member's time with Sabre, and we clearly demonstrate that we listen to our team members so we can create a positive, productive working environment which aligns their wants and needs with our business imperatives.



Q What are some of the things you've done to better meet team members' needs?

A When our team members told us parental leave and volunteering matter to them, we introduced global paid parental leave, ensuring a global minimum benefit across the business, no matter where a team member is based. As well, team members may take one day of paid time off each quarter to "Give Back" when they volunteer anywhere that matters to them. And, because we want our team members to know that they are appreciated, and not just by the leadership team, our "Say Thanks" tool enables people across the business to recognize the efforts of others.

The future is about continuing to be driven by what is important to our team members. The most successful companies in the world are those who invest in people. That is why the future of HR can be summed up in one word: People.

SUKHDEEP AURORA



Click here to watch what the story entails from the author

Why workforce agility is now a pressing reality for businesses

True workforce agility is a state when an organization, in response to a business requirement, is able to quickly draw upon specific skills, expertise and know-how available both within and outside the organization. Here, we talk about how organizations can create workforce agility

The speed at which change is impacting all of us, has never been witnessed before. It already feels like many decades since the time the term VUCA was first coined. Changes are not only restricted to technological advancements but has various other connotations. This includes socio-political developments, economic disruptions, consumption patterns, competition from unexpected fronts, product life cycles, regulations, demographics and much more. These changes are increasingly pushing organizations, especially the large established ones, to move towards a "fluid" state; one which allows organizations to be nimble, continuously evolve, adapt to or, better still, move ahead of some of these changes, thereby bringing in sustainable growth.



Organizational agility is the interplay of multiple dimensions –strategy, structure, processes, people and technology. While organizations focus on each of these dimensions, in the journey to become truly agile, they are finding the "people" dimension to be at the core

No wonder that today, organizational agility has indeed become the buzzword and management teams globally are increasingly exploring agile ways of working. However, we are far from achieving that says a recent McKinsey Global Survey. The survey defines Organizational Agility as the ability to quickly reconfigure strategy, structure, processes, people and technology towards value-creating and value protecting opportunities.

It is interesting to note that organizational agility has been defined as an interplay of multiple dimensions i.e. strategy, structure, processes, people and technology. While organizations focus on each of these dimensions, in the journey to become truly agile, they are finding the "people" dimension to be at the core. This dimension, also called "Workforce Agility" is the hottest topic today not only for CHROs but also CEOs and business leaders.

What exactly is workforce agility?

Andrew Karpie, a thought leader on the topic suggests that the term workforce agility on one end of the spectrum narrowly refers to sourcing, management and integration of an external workforce in an organization. While the other end of the spectrum is used to refer to a much broader concept of "human capabilities management" within organizations that are evolving to respond to a new business environment characterized by rapidly changing markets, hyper-competition, digitization, advanced technology



Workforce agility is no longer "good to have" – it is a pressing reality. Agility fosters productivity and thus is key in delivering value to shareholders by optimally utilizing capital

and, last but not the least, insufficiency of talent/skills. He suggests that one should understand workforce agility in this broader context of an organization that is evolving its models, practices/processes, culture and infrastructure in response to broad, persistent and challenging environmental challenges.

Thus, exploring multiple staffing models to augment existing people capabilities is just one part of moving towards workforce agility.

So how does one create workforce agility?

True workforce agility, arguably, will be a state when an organiza-

tion, in response to a business requirement, is able to quickly draw upon specific skills, expertise and know-how available both within and outside the organization through a carefully defined architecture of organizational structure, culture, technology, knowledge/information management, policies/processes and people development. Let us explore these "contributors" in more detail.



1. **Organization structure** - Aspects of the organization structure will need to be designed in a manner to allow multiple staffing models i.e. full time, part time, contingent, giggers, outsourced, offshored etc., thereby catering to the ever changing talent needs. Also, the structure will need to accommodate the need to form teams for varying objectives and varying durations so that the organization appropriately responds to changes. Imagine a project team comprising of full time, part time and contingent workers and giggers working from different locations brought together to find a solution to a critical customer need within 30 days. The org structure will have to be robust in terms of defined practices to enable such diverse people to work together and at the same time nimble enough to allow such project teams to be put in place in the very short time and be able to disband once the objective is met.
2. **Culture** - Given the need for such fluid structures, the success will be dependent on how these are supported culturally in an organization. Policies and practices, while important to lend stability to such structures will only have limited impact. People behaviours, starting

The organization structure will have to be robust in terms of defined practices to enable the diverse people to work together and at the same time nimble enough to allow such project teams to be put in place in the very short time and be able to disband once the objective is met

from the leadership team, will hold a lot more weight in the success of such structures. Ownership, collaboration and leadership behaviours at every level of the organization will need to be established and encouraged. Also, organizations will need to practice these structures as a way of doing work and develop this as a strength. It will be very difficult for an organization to suddenly establish this as a response to a change. These structures will need to be in the 'muscle memory' for an organization to really be able to use them to its advantage.

3. **Technology** - Technology plays an important role in helping manage diverse teams spread across geographies. Not only does it pick up repetitive and highly operational tasks thus freeing up human bandwidth for more skilled tasks, it enables flow of real time information to ensure that teams are able to work with the latest data and information.

4. **Knowledge Management** - Coupled with and using technology, a robust knowledge management system enables an organization to effectively and efficiently utilize its capabilities. Such a system enables teams to dive into relevant data and collective expertise of the organization quickly, thus

Organizations will need to invest in continuous skill development of its internal talent through a robust system which is able to forecast future needs, identify gaps at different levels and then put in place monitored skill development plans



avoiding the need to re-create or re-invent each time a similar business problem comes up.

5. **People Development** - Organizations will need to invest in continuous skill development of its internal talent through a robust system which is able to forecast future needs, identify gaps at different levels and then put in place monitored skill development plans. Most L&D functions are by design internally focussed, trying to establish skill gaps and then fulfilling them. To be business relevant, they will need to have a strong external interface, helping them understand changes that are impacting or will impact their business and how they can support business teams in responding to such changes adequately through re-skilling and up-skilling. They will also need to understand the limitations of developing internal talent and help business make quick 'build-or-buy' decisions.

Real estate sector in India is currently going through a huge crisis and never has it been more critical than now for organizations in this sector to review their operating models and move towards being agile organizations if they want to survive this economic tsunami

Today we are seeing consulting organizations across the globe helping companies traverse this journey towards workforce agility. Right from playing an advisory role to offering technology solutions and multitude of staff-augmenting models, these organizations are playing a pivotal role in helping businesses respond to ever-changing talent requirements. Real estate sector in India is currently going through a huge crisis and never has it been more critical than now for organizations in this sector to review their operating models and move towards being agile organizations if they want to survive this economic tsunami.

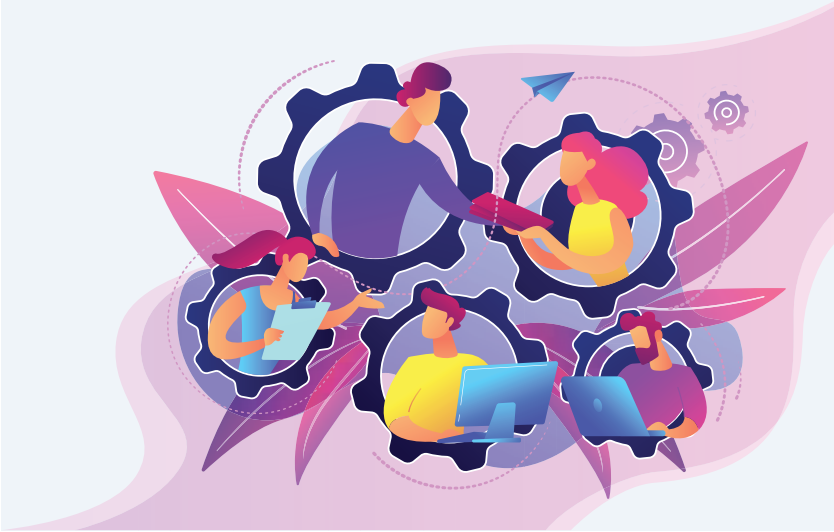
Thankfully the industry is also witnessing the rise of highly professional consulting organizations. These real estate consulting organizations bring together their in-depth understanding of the sector and use of latest technology to offer a myriad range of solutions to help organizations in cutting costs and becoming agile. Following are some:

1. **Increased agility in workforce planning to clients** – These consulting organizations provide highly skilled marketing and sales teams, and thus cost-conscious companies do not need to hire their own sales and marketing teams, since they are outsourced and scaled up or down as per their requirements. This enables developers to focus on their core business competencies of project design and development.
2. **Use of multiple staffing models** – Consulting organiza-

tions themselves are investing in workforce agility. They use multiple staffing models viz: full time, part-time, retainership, project based (giggers), third party roles, etc. to be able to respond to the changing needs of the industry.

3. **Technology solutions** – Another key facet of delivering such agility is technology. On one hand, the consulting organizations have invested heavily in technology to help their own workforce to be truly agile. Technology solutions are being used to manage information and data flow, creating dashboards with productivity metrics for managers and leaders and enabling data driven staffing decisions. Technology is also being used to create knowledge management platforms by enabling research and database management. On the other hand, they also have their own teams creating digital and technology solutions as a value-add to their staff-augmenting services. Some of them have progressed to a level where they are able to provide stand-alone tech platforms and digital services configured to the needs of the organization. Thus, real estate organizations no longer need to upskill their own employees or invest heavily in hiring digital and technology teams.

By the same coin, consultancies that accept such mandates make heavy investments in upskilling and multi-skilling to build a highly fungible talent base. These consulting organizations are placed well to take advantage of



Workforce agility is no longer "good to have" – it is a pressing reality. Agility fosters productivity and thus is key in delivering value to shareholders by optimally utilizing capital

aggregation of the ever-changing talent needs across multiple companies in the real estate sector, and thus are better placed in providing services to the real estate companies in their attempt to become more agile.

Workforce agility is no longer "good to have" – it is a pressing reality. Agility fosters productivity and thus is key in delivering value to shareholders by optimally utilizing capital. Given the fast-changing business environment organizations do not have much of a choice but to quickly start their journey towards being truly agile.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Q&A

Helping the under-banked move their money: Shuttle One CEO Lim Hong Zhuang

After seeing first-hand the difficulties that migrant workers face with remittances, **Lim Hong Zhuang** started a blockchain company to offer them a cheaper and more transparent alternative

By **Mint Kang**



Back in the 2010s, Lim Hong Zhuang took a break from corporate life to run a small farm in Malaysia. Every month, he would calculate the salaries of his 20 Indonesian workers, drive to the bank to withdraw cash, and pay them the cash. Upon which, the workers would pass him back a portion of the cash and ask him to remit it to their families overseas. He soon discovered multiple issues with the remittance system. It was time-consuming; he had to drive 45 minutes each way to get to the remittance agent located in town. It was costly; the workers paid seven percent in fees on average. And there was no transparency or accountability; the workers relied heavily on the trustworthiness of all the intermediaries, including himself.

"Anyone could just keep the money and tell the workers it had been sent, and they would have no way of knowing for sure," he told People Matters.

Despite these problems, the traditional remittance system remains the most accessible, simply because so many overseas workers are not recognized by the traditional banking system. They are unable to hold bank accounts because they do not meet minimum sum requirements, or because they are in the country illegally; even when cooperative

banks accept them, they are still not able to send small amounts on short notice.

Where there is a gap in services, an alternative can always be found

Lim had been interested in cryptocurrency for some time, and he decided to see if he could put his knowledge to use in solving the remittance issue. In 2018, he and his team at Shuttle One created a digital commodity, using blockchain technology, that could be used for payment across borders. The idea was that anyone could access it, any time, anywhere; that there would be full transparency because the movement of the commodity was visible at all times, yet complete security because blockchain technology makes it impossible for anyone but the actual holder of the commodity to change its value or ownership.

This method of payment would also make the fee structure of remittances much more transparent, he found. The amount remitted, the exchange rates, the various parties involved, and the fees chargeable would all be visible to end users, removing the asymmetry of information that often plagues the financial industry and reducing costs as a result. Shuttle One is able to carry out money transfers at a fee of three percent, which is the target set for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 10.

Lim Hong Zhuang decided to solve solving the remittance issue. In 2018, he and his team at Shuttle One created a digital commodity, using blockchain technology, that could be used for payment across borders



Moreover, it was fast. "When the digital money goes across to the recipient, it takes place in less than a minute. They see how much was charged as fees, they get a receipt," he said. "They can send small amounts on the spot, which is what they really want: to send a few dollars for their child to buy a textbook today or to pay a utility bill. Whereas even the cooperative banks have a minimum amount for transactions and a few days of lead time."

Start by solving the intermediaries' problems

Lim could not approach the workers directly, though. To get them to accept his idea, he had to work with the existing, established institutions: the remittance houses. "You have to solve their problems before they are willing to champion our product to their customers," he explained. "And we quickly realized that one of their biggest problems is that they have a lot of working capital tied up with their partners in other countries."

If a remittance house located in Singapore, for example, anticipates sending US$1 million a month in remittances to its partner in Malaysia, it will have to send that money in cash, upfront, to the partner even before it receives the inflow from its customers. The system is entirely based on trust, Lim said, and each remittance house has millions of dollars locked up with its various overseas partners.

But if the remittance houses were able to adopt Lim's digital commodity as a way of transferring money, they would no longer need to pay their partners that much money in advance. "They realized that for the first time in financial history, this was going to help them," he said. "And because of that, they were willing to go to their customers and say, 'I can now help you transfer money quicker, better, cheaper'."

Shuttle One launched its system in early 2019, and slightly less than a year later, the company has some 652,000 users across the region



A drop in the bucket, but with potential to expand

Shuttle One launched its system in early 2019, and slightly less than a year later, the company has some 652,000 users across the region. This is not even a dent in the 1.3 billion informal workers that the International Labor Organization estimates to comprise Southeast



We are probably the first company trying to tackle a very boring problem - not only the dry issue of compliance, but also how little attention is paid to the difficulties that migrant workers and those in the informal economy face when trying to send their earnings home

Asia's informal economy, and Lim is unable to make a firm guess as to how long it will take before digital commodities can make a significant difference in the system. His main concern at the moment is compliance with regulations. The remittance houses he works with are all regulated under the financial system, and Shuttle One needs to ensure that it, too, is similarly compliant with local laws. Security is another issue: like the system it aims to replace, Shuttle One operates on the basis of trust, and to maintain that trust, cybersecurity is paramount.

"We are probably the first company trying to tackle a very boring problem," Lim says, half-jokingly referring to not only the dry issue of compliance, but also how little attention is paid to the difficulties that migrant workers and those in the informal economy face when trying to send their earnings home.

To the individual workers struggling with long lead times and high fees, though, it is not boring. The remittance industry in Southeast Asia is worth perhaps S$200 billion (US$143 billion), and if his company is able to reduce agent fees from seven percent to three percent for even a fraction of the system, that adds up to a great deal of additional income going to improve the lives of workers and their dependents.

VIKRAM BERI



Are happy individuals productive professionals?

Here's a quick look at the importance of taking care of employee mental health at the workplace

Stuck in traffic, Irfan stared at the traffic signal waiting for it to turn green with still 108 seconds to go. He wondered how his team and client would feel about this. Traffic, after all, is a lame excuse for being late.

It had started as a good year, both personally and professionally. He had been promoted to a role he had been vying for over two years. He finally popped the question to Sarah, and they were slated to marry in three months. However, the promotion brought challenges he hadn't anticipated. Irfan barely had time for himself, let alone Sarah and the putting together a wedding. The new role was taking a toll on his personal life. Irfan felt like he was disappointing both his manager by being late and his partner by working too much.



A study conducted by Optum in 2016 found that 46 percent of the workforce in India face some or the other form of stress. The popular belief goes that a certain amount of stress is necessary for bringing out the best in people. Still, not many people realize that prolonged stress that sustains can turn chronic, and manifest

While work itself contributes to growth and happiness, not knowing how to manage stress emanating from it can have dire outcomes for the human mind and body



Research shows that emotionally upsetting events either in personal or professional life lead to changes in perspective and may result in behavior such as a dip in performance, absenteeism, and low morale, a phenomenon known as the spill-over effect

itself as anxiety, temperamental changes, changes in appetite, insomnia, and sometimes depression. Other detrimental changes remain unidentified and could be mistaken for a physical ailment.

The spill-over effect

Research shows that emotionally upsetting events either in personal or professional life lead to changes in perspective and may result in behavior such as a dip in performance, absenteeism, and low morale, a phenomenon known as the spill-over effect. Displacement is a typical example of spill-over; for instance, when one cannot vent out frustration caused by a superior, they are likely to take it out on the family. When we go to work unhappy, we aren't very productive. Unproductive days and poor employee well-being lead to an economic loss of roughly 1 trillion USD per year. So if unhappiness, poor health, and sore relationships aren't good reasons to address growing wellness concerns, at least, a loss of trillion dollars should be?

Psychologists come across cases of burnout quite often, and usually, most people don't realize that they are going through a burnout. This year, the WHO has classified burnout as a disease. And it can arise from various factors in the workplace and at home. The challenge is that

it often remains unidentified and unmanaged. As reported by ASSOCHAM, nearly 56 percent of corporate employees sleep less than 4-6 hours due to a high-stress work environment. Unmet targets, competitive environment, aggressive deadlines go back home with most individuals leading to poor sleep quality and insomnia. Evidence also suggests that people with insomnia have a ten-fold risk of developing depression compared with those who sleep well.

Should I discuss these challenges with my manager?

The small minority of people who realize that their mental health is not okay and they need help usually refrain from disclosing such information at their workplace. While people don't hesitate to share physical health concerns or to call in sick when they are down with a fever, mental health challenges are rarely discussed. Several apprehensions such as loss of credibility, unprofessionalism, being judged, or unfairly treated and appraised may discourage one from sharing. Confidentiality is another concern when the cause of stress is in the workplace. Say, someone reaches out to the HR to report a tough manager or excessive workload, lack of measures to protect their privacy could affect their

The small minority of people who realize that their mental health is not okay and they need help usually refrain from disclosing such information at their workplace



career. Hence, even organizations that have in-house counselors, or policies to address burnout, fail to encourage employees from seeking support.

Mental health at work: Luxury or necessity?

With more individuals relocating for work, continually competing with peers, it is natural that loneliness and anxiety to creeps in. Employees don't always find the required social support and are unaware of how to deal with significant changes and transition in life. It's time we acknowledge a growing need for mental health awareness, equip employees on how to cope with work-life conflicts, and support them in leading a happier and healthier life.

The good news is that employers are taking cognizance of the issue, and some leading organizations have Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) to help identify and redress red flags before they snowball into bigger challenges. American Express is one notable example wherein 98 percent of the over 50,000 employees registered satisfaction from its Healthy Minds program. Such programs usually start with a pulse check at the organizational level and help identify pressing concerns that are commonly experienced by employees. The assistance plan incorporates interventions at three levels; organization, manager, and individual. Several initiatives are then put in place to encourage conversations around mental health, build resilience, and offer blended therapy support and self-help programs.



In today's day and age, it is all the more important to have a preventive approach to mental well-being rather than reacting to the challenge once it has deepened

While work itself contributes to growth and happiness, not knowing how to manage stress emanating from it can have dire outcomes for the human mind and body. In today's day and age, it is all the more important to have a preventive approach to mental well-being rather than reacting to the challenge once it has deepened. Incorporating wellness with mental health benefits is, therefore, no longer a luxury but a necessity in today's corporate world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

VIKRAM BERI is the Founder of BetterLYF.com

Q&A

It's time to move diversity to action: Head of People, WeWork

In conversation with People Matters, **Priti Shetty,** Head of People, WeWork India, discusses how organizations can work towards building religious inclusion and diversity, the roadblocks of making organizations LGBTQIA+ inclusive, and the verdict on the need of the hour - equity or equality

By **Bhavna Sarin**

With close to 20 years of experience in the HR industry, Priti Shetty, Head of People, WeWork India, is a seasoned professional with knowledge and expertise in the avenues of performance management, employee relations, rewards and recognition, management and leadership development, talent development, engagement and retention.

With a special focus on the development of women, Priti has been instrumental in spearheading multiple initiatives to make workspaces inclusive and diverse. Prior to joining WeWork India, Priti worked in leadership roles across Flipkart, HSBC and Shoppers Stop, and led initiatives at the global and regional levels.

In an exclusive conversation with People Matters on #EachForEqual, Priti talks about an inclusive mindset as a deal-breaker at the time of hiring, the correlation between a diverse leadership



team and profits, how organizations can work towards building religious inclusion and diversity and more.

Here are excerpts of the interview.

Q With diverse experience across retail, banking, ecommerce and now coworking industry, what according to you is the key to building a cultural fabric that fosters inclusivity?

A I think inclusion is imperative to building a great culture and plays an important role in successful businesses. When people bring their whole selves to work and can be comfortable with their choices and preferences, it helps them reach their full potential. This is only possible when all these values form the basis of the workspace culture in any organization.

As much as it's important to have a diverse workforce, it should go hand in hand with inclusion. Inclusion is a continuous process where each member of the workforce feels heard and valued, so everyone can work towards the company's goals and mission. This encourages employees to perform at the optimum, contribute their thoughts and ideas and represent the diversity that an organization aims to build in the long-run in their target customer base.

Q Do you think organizations are ready to factor in an inclusive mindset as a deal-breaker at the time of hiring?

A Absolutely! We just need to consider inclusion to be as important as assessing other skills and capabilities. Embedding inclusion into the culture bar in the organization's hiring process can be an effective way of doing this. Non-inclusive behaviors should be called out and not accepted; leaders play a big role in setting the tone for the team.

Q A report by McKinsey says there's a positive correlation between a more ethnically and gender-diverse leadership team and an increase in profits. But not many organizations have been able to build on such diversity. What's your take on this?

A Yes, I agree that there is a direct and positive correlation between a diverse leadership team to profits and company's success. Yet, it is unfortunate that we still need to make a business case for gender diversity, even today. This reflects the need for education through workshops/seminars as well as HR and company policies directed towards an inclusive work environment. Having a diverse leadership team automatically reflects a company's commitment towards D&I, which further helps in hiring and retention of employees from all walks of life. This leads to minimal employee churn, saving time and money the company spends on recruitment and training. In short, it creates a positive domino effect.

Having a diverse leadership team automatically reflects a company's commitment towards D&I, which further helps in hiring and retention of employees from all walks of life

Several studies have also stated that having more women leaders on top will attract more women workforce to join and stay at the company, as they can also see themselves in top positions someday. At WeWork India, we have a 52:48 male to female gender ratio overall, and 58:42 at a leadership level. Gender diversity continues to be one of our critical OKRs for 2020.

Q What according to you is the need of the hour - equity or equality?

A I believe the need of the hour is equity and I believe it is actionable today.

Through people policies and practices, it is possible to provide an environment of gender equity. Also, equality makes most sense when it's a level playing field and every player is starting the race from the same point. That is not the case in our society, never has been and might take years to be achieved in the future. Whereas equity ensures people emerging at the same level, irrespective of their beginnings.

insurance coverage, celebrating Pride month with great fervor every year and introducing internal forums to support LGBTQ employees, to drive the spirit of inclusion.

I think the key challenges are lack of awareness and letting go of our preconceived notions, stereotypes and unconscious bias. And the only way to do that is through education and awareness. Another challenge would be the under-

I think the key challenges are lack of awareness and letting go of our preconceived notions, stereotypes and unconscious bias. And the only way to do that is through education and awareness

Q What is your take on the progress in making organizations LGBTQIA inclusive? What are the key challenges in addressing this segment of diversity?

A I believe this journey is a long one, but equally critical now, more than ever. We are taking steps in making everything in WeWork India more LGBTQ friendly, from our policies to our people. With an aim to build a more diverse workforce, we have already introduced initiatives like including the LGBTQ partners of our employees in our medical

representation of minorities and diverse sectors of our workforce due to lack of visibility and fear. If we can make our organizations truly inclusive, safe and holistic, people will bring out their most authentic selves, live without inhibitions and feel satisfied with their jobs.

Q WeWork India recently extended medical benefits to partners of LGBTQ employees. Can you share what went into translating the intent into an actionable organizational policy?

A I think it's critical to take the diversity charter to the next level - from mere conversations to action that makes a difference in people's lives. If we are truly inclusive, benefits should be extended to all employees and their dependents regardless of sexual orientation.

Q Religious diversity in the workplace is among the least prioritized areas of diversity. How can organizations work towards building religious inclusion and diversity?

A In a country as diverse as India, most of us are exposed to different religions and practices. This means awareness of various religions has been established. Similarly at the workspace, the first and foremost way to build religious inclusion and diversity is through acceptance which becomes the everyday reality for everyone.

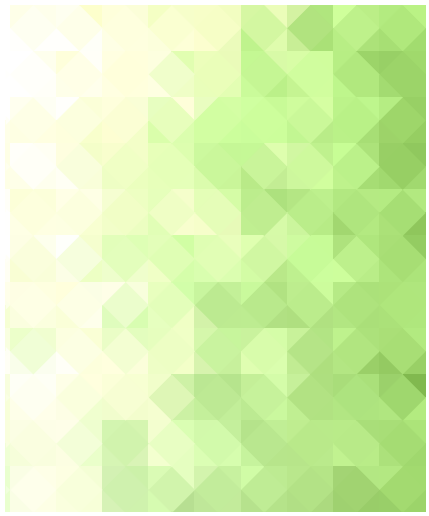
There are simple ways where companies can build religious inclusion and diversity. For starters, employees should be allowed to include their religious attire in their workwear. There should also be policies to allow everyone to take time off to celebrate their cultural festivities including the ones not covered in public holidays. Talking about celebrations, it can be a good practice to create events during festi-

vals which allow employees to understand the importance of that particular festival, as well as allows more interactions within the company. Lastly, education of the employers and hiring managers is most important in encouraging religious acceptance to avoid bias. Talent and meritocracy should take precedence in all processes like recruitment and selection, performance management and promotions, etc.

Q Conversation, understanding, advocacy, discussion, acceptance, policy changes, and finally implementation. The journey to translate diversity conversations into a living, breathing and thriving inclusive culture comes with its challenges. What according to you can accelerate this transition?

A Awareness and education makes a big difference. Culture setting happens from the top and leaders need to demonstrate behaviors that reflect diversity in thoughts and actions. That sets the tone for the rest of the organization. Calling out behaviors that are not inclusive and taking necessary action when bad behaviors are a pattern, is equally important.

We need to celebrate diversity and make inclusion a way of life and every employee has a role to play there. Over-communication



Education of the employers and hiring managers is most important in encouraging religious acceptance to avoid bias

around unconscious bias and inclusion is required to sensitize people, as more often than not people start hearing and internalizing the messages only when we get tired of over-communicating those core messages.

Q What different initiatives is WeWork undertaking to create an equal workplace for all?

A WeWork as a brand has always believed in leveraging the diversity of our people to help them make a life and not just living. We have various policies to create an inclusive space for our employees which include Day Care policy for our working parents, gender neutral hiring practices, transparent and unbiased performance management, quarterly promotions etc. We are reviewing our parental policies to aid the return of new parents, and assimilate them back into the workspace. With over 500 employees in India, we are the first collaborative workspace provider in the country to offer health insurance cover to partners of all LGBTQ employees. Through all our efforts, I can proudly say that we are on the journey to becoming an almost equal representation of genders working across all our spaces in the country.

Q Can you tell us in one word what diversity and inclusion mean to you?

A It certainly means "empowerment" to me. I believe all our efforts towards D&I lead to empowerment finally. Only when employees feel empowered, they know that the company values the skill-sets and perspectives that they bring to the table as a result of their diverse backgrounds. This translates into better understanding of the diversity in our members as employees experience greater engagement and reach their full potential. Happier employees lead to happier members!

GANGADHAR MUTATHI



Accountability with higher purpose

Here is an account of how organizations can establish accountability with higher purpose

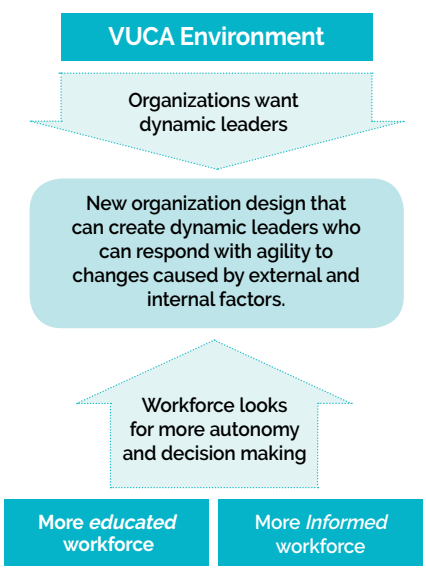
For leaders in organizations, establishing accountability is still a challenging issue. Many perspectives have been provided by leading management practitioners and academicians on establishing accountability within an organization. Most of them try to approach through a behavioral angle to establish accountability and these desired behavioral changes are directed at two levels. At one level experts urge the employees to adopt new behaviors by developing leadership and change management skills. The other level at which it is targeted is the top leadership (typically the CEO and the core team) or HR function. This core team along with HR function is expected to be a role model to all others and this role modelling comes with a list of "To dos" to create a culture of accountability.

The other approach is where some experts take the perspective of processes to establish accountability. This is done primarily by establishing job or role descriptions with KRAs and KPIs.

In the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world, employees require more than the above two. And this shift in requirement is triggered by two main things: More educated workforce, and more informed workforce.

The workforce is more educated today. It is better equipped with technical and managerial processes and methods in organizations. They are better at analytics, decision making and in using many management techniques such Six sigma, Lean manufacturing or Agile framework.

Today the workforce is more aware of the changing needs of the customers, competition, suppliers and complementors. They are better informed of the changes in the political, economic, societal, technological, environment and legal areas. In addition, they get informed faster than before.



> Organizations can leverage shifts in their workforce characteristics to redesign their organization structures to meet the challenges of VUCA and gain sustainability

Due to this change in characteristics of the workforce, organization structures that limit delegation and authority do not appeal to them. Moreover, the rigid structures stifle the entrepreneurial spirit and creativity. Consequently, organizations are unable to maximize their return on intangible assets including human capital. In order to maximize their return on human capital investment, organizations have to change the way they provide authority, responsibility and accountability to their workforce by providing a new framework of working, decision making and collaborating in the organization.



Organizations can leverage the above major shifts in their workforce characteristics to redesign their organization structures to meet the challenges of VUCA and gain sustainability. The main change that can be adopted by the organizations is by innovatively delegating, not just responsibilities, but accountabilities with higher purpose. And this new structure should take into account the organization's value proposition to its customers. Many organizations miss this aspect while redesigning their organization structure.

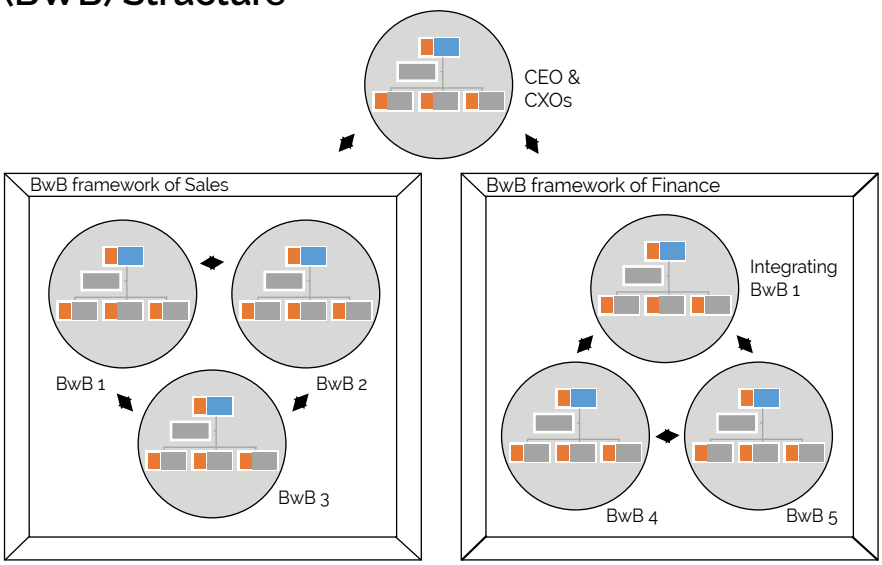
So, what can an organization do to establish accountability with higher purpose in an organization?

One option is to redefine the organization structure such that there are a network of Businesses within Business (BwB model). The key assumption is that people are more engaged when they become entrepreneurs in a nurturing environment and they will use their knowledge, skills and behavior to deliver higher returns to themselves and the organization. A BwB model gives autonomy with accountability and a higher purpose of running a business profitably. It provides an architecture for leaders to make business decisions and to grow and scale up the organization.

In order to maximize their return on human capital investment, organizations have to change the way they provide authority, responsibility and accountability to their workforce

Consider a Regional Sales Manager. Currently, he/she would be managing all sales in the region according to the current structure, roles and responsibilities. But, he/she is competing with many other wholesalers and dealers who are owners of their businesses. These owners can decide many more things than the RSM. But they do it within a framework. Apparently

Transforming to an agile Business within Business (BWB) Structure



Each BwB is created based on a framework, guidelines and governance structure. These guidelines will vary for divisions or functions. Accountability is delegated to create business leaders who can run and scale up their businesses. Each business is provided with a Performance P&L (different from Accounting P&L).

A BwB model gives autonomy with accountability and a higher purpose of running a business profitably

most RSMs require approvals for more things than the number of decisions they can make. Often approvals are required for market promotion programs, hiring, dealer appointment, discounts, and so on. Most often what they can approve is predominantly administrative in nature such as leave, conveyance, phone bills, LTA, sundry expenses related to printing, binding, etc.

Other department managers too have similar nature of role. So these managers are at a disadvantage in terms of making decisions which impacts their speed of response to the challenges they face. But a BwB model changes this and helps in resolving, to great extent, the disadvantages of the current structures in the organization. It provides agility of a start-up while providing a rich landscape of an organization.

How to define businesses within a business

The change to be made is to make the RSM and others a network of business units. The organization can have many small business units that are networked. These entrepreneurial business units are defined by the corporate using strong business guidelines. This is a key step in the process of establishing businesses within business. The framework to establish a business within a business should be able to cover all the functions in a company.

For example, a set of rules in a framework for sales businesses can be a combination of geographical revenue,

Illustrative Guidelines that can be used to define Businesses within Business (BwB) for two functions

SALES Parameters that can used to define BwB	HUMAN RESOURCE Parameters that can used to define BwB
Sales Value (INR)	Sales / Production value supported
Sales Units	Number of people supported
Number of sales people managed	Number of HR people managed
Number of customers / Wholesalers / Retailers served	Number of locations supported
Number of territories	Number of programs managed
Number of Physicians attended (for a Pharma company)	HR Budget managed



lines of the government to follow). The Network business head can make several decisions within the framework and guidelines where more authority and accountability is provided to them. They are also provided with a modified P&L account of their small business. This P&L is different from a regular P&L of any business as the purpose of the P&L is to give a sense of direction and achievement to the business owner.

The organization can have many small business units that are networked. These entrepreneurial business units are defined by the corporate using strong business guidelines. This is a key step in the process of establishing businesses within business

number of customers/ wholesalers/dealers, number of units sold, and number of employees. The set of criteria will depend on the industry and nature of business. Support units businesses can be defined by the number of employees, number of processes, percentage of Sales & Production businesses etc.

Layers of businesses

The framework should also define various layers of businesses. Some businesses could be integrating businesses just as the whole company is an integrated business of businesses.

This framework for defining businesses within business should be a prepared by the corporate in consultation with the various divisions/functions so that appropriate parameters have been defined and understood. The functions can then use the framework to actually establish the businesses and log them in the system.

The network is run by well-defined frameworks and guidelines. These frameworks and guidelines provide the organizational context to the entrepreneurs (just as the owners have the framework and guide-

Implementing such a change requires continuous communication and training to the employees. The communication and training will provide them with the clarity on their roles as well as expectations from their roles. Finance and HR will need to put up these training programs of building the leaders.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Q&A

In startups, people matter too: Golden Gate's Jeffrey Paine



Startups are notorious for being poor in HR and hard on people. However, with the support of investors who consider people management an important part of doing business, they can shape up as they grow, says venture capitalist **Jeffrey Paine**

By **Mint Kang**

Startup culture, especially in fast-moving sectors such as tech and IT, is notorious for poor HR and workplace practices that are less than ideal. Many investors may be inclined to overlook this, focusing instead on the company's growth and financial returns. However, some investors do pay attention to the people management aspect of startups, and they take an interest in whether the company is hiring and retaining people well.

People Matters approached one of these venture capitalists, Singapore-based Jeffrey Paine, whose firm, Golden Gate Ventures, focuses heavily on Internet and mobile startups in Southeast Asia. A former Silicon Valley entrepreneur himself, Paine is highly active in the startup ecosystem around the region: he heads the Singapore chapter of the Founder Institute, the world's largest pre-seed startup accelerator. He has said before that startups need to take

care of their people so that the business can take care of itself, and People Matters asked him for his thoughts on how this can happen in today's startup workplaces. Here are the highlights of the conversation.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q We seldom hear much about the importance of taking care of employees in startups: startups often seem to get a pass on people management, even if they have obviously poor practices. Can you shed some light on why this is the case?

A It may be an issue of perception, in the same way that people, rightly or wrongly, perceive big corporates as being slow and rigid but also stable and profitable. Startups are subject to a different kind of stereotype. For startups, the default state is death. You are climbing a hill with obstacles strewn in your way; you have to disrupt established organizations, who are trying to disrupt you right back.

Startups have a certain mentality as a result. They have to be ready to break existing patterns, to charge ahead, to move very fast. And this affects the way the business works; the way people in the business work; the expectations of the people in the business. Look at job scopes in startups, for example. You have one job description, but you might actually be doing five jobs.

I think this issue is most noticeable to people who join startups from corporates. They are shocked by the pace, how chaotic the structure can be. Often, they cannot take it and they leave.

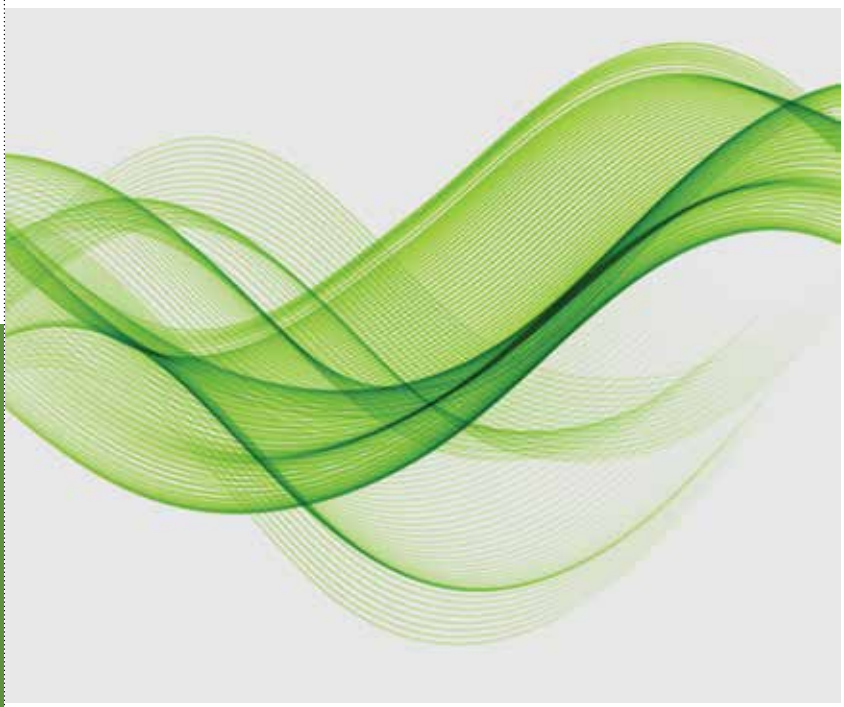
Q When investors examine startups, they usually look at financials and business models, and hardly ever consider the people aspect. It's only recently that VCs such as yourself are beginning to think of people as part of the business model. What does this approach involve?

A Certainly when we judge startup founders, one of the aspects we look at is whether they know how to hire the right people at the right time and then retain them. And whether they know how to get rid of people fast. There are some cultural differences. American companies are good at it. Japanese and Korean companies are more likely to take the attitude that if you join me, you're with me for life. Singapore is somewhere in the middle: culturally speaking, it's still difficult to get rid of people.

When we judge startup founders, one of the aspects we look at is whether they know how to hire the right people at the right time and then retain them. And whether they know how to get rid of people fast

So startup teams really need to know their own values, how they work best, and they need to hire based on that self-awareness. With a startup, the first 10 people

are critical, because the next 10, the next 20, the next 200 will follow the pattern that this first team establishes. That includes the hiring pattern: if they somehow hire people who are of lower caliber than they need, they will end up continuing to hire that same caliber moving forward.



With a startup, the first 10 people are critical, because the next 10, the next 20, the next 200 will follow the pattern that this first team establishes

Q How do you, as an investor, help startups that appear to be having trouble with their hiring?

A When they are small, they don't have any resources, and many founders don't have a HR background. They usually come from a product or engineering department. Very few have MBAs, and if they do, they're usually fresh. So we try to introduce them to consultants who can help them develop their culture and values. We try to get them to establish a sound hiring process that includes the post-hiring follow-up.

I think the HR part of the business tends to get forgotten when they are small. But once they get bigger, reach a headcount of maybe 50 people, they will realise that they need a hiring manager. And from that realisation, they will also move on to making sure that they have processes in place, that there is training and performance management, coaching, salary and bonus reviews. And that in turn leads on to having the tools, the software to track the workforce.

All this does not come easily to people who do not have a HR background. To get them in place, the team has to come to the realization that certain things are needed, and then take the first step of getting a consultant in to set the stage.

Q Are startups usually receptive to this advice?

A Yes. They know very quickly when they have made mistakes: hiring too fast, hiring someone with the right skillset but the wrong culture, letting something get out of hand so that the company culture suddenly becomes toxic.

Many founders don't like to do a lot of hiring or firing, especially in Asia. So after they have to fire someone for the first time, they often sit down and start thinking very hard about how to avoid hiring the wrong type of person

again. Hopefully, they are able to do that at the start, before they arrive at the stage where they have to take drastic action.

Q What are the signs that a startup might be getting into trouble with their workplace culture or people management approach?

A The first sign is how the co-founders talk to each other: are they getting on well, are they civil to each other? Then there is the workplace itself. As investors, we have the access to go on office visits, and we can gauge the vibe of the place. We also do a reference check, where we can approach senior team members who have left and ask them about their reasons for leaving. And of course, we can look at Glassdoor reviews—although we do take those with a pinch of salt.

Sometimes, as investors, we go in with our eyes open. We may already be aware that the CEO is a person who can rub others the wrong way. For such startup founders, we try to help them understand their own strengths and weaknesses and build a team that can balance and complement them.

Q What do you think startup founders need the most to help them manage their teams better?

A Running a company—managing people, leading a team— is like a sport. You need a coach. But we never think of that in the world of business. We always rely on the boss to teach us. But for startup CEOs, they are the boss. And there is no one to coach them. All the best startup coaches are in America: if you look around Singapore, there is no one person who has that depth of expertise in coaching startup CEOs, who can spend one hour a week visiting CEOs and talking with them, helping them work through the issues they face.

And so as the company grows bigger, the CEO becomes weaker: they become lonelier and less certain of themselves. Things like how to run a meeting, how to communicate with direct reports who are 20 years older than themselves: they are scrambling to acquire soft skills, but they are way too busy on a daily basis to actually sit down and figure it out themselves.

As investors, we check workplace cultures. We go on office visits and gauge the vibe of the place. We also do a reference check, where we can approach senior team members who have left and ask them about their reasons for leaving

We try to connect them with other people, encourage them to find someone whom they can talk to every now and then. Sometimes we try to be a listening ear. But realistically, they need professional support. Perhaps that support will become available here one day.

Q&A

Employee experience is the next big differentiator

In an interaction with People Matters, **Rajeev Bhardwaj,** VP HR Sun Life ASC, shares how digital will be increasingly leveraged to enhance employee experience in 2020

By **Drishti Pant**

2020 will be the year of the experience economy where employees will be significantly impacting the business bottom line with their intrinsic willingness to serve the company and its customers. In an interaction with Rajeev Bhardwaj, VP HR Sun Life Asia Service Centre ASC, we dive deep into the several reasons driving the increased focus on employee experience.

Rajeev shares some of the key pillars of creating an employee experience and discusses how digital will be increasingly leveraged to enhance employee experience in 2020.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q How would you define a 'great employee experience' which has been a top priority for HR and business leaders in recent times?



A The question is why 'employee experience'? I think it acts as a great differentiator for an employer's brand, as almost all organizations in our sector are by and large, pretty equally placed.

When it comes to having policies in place for compensation, perquisites, workplace facilities, most of the organizations have similar things to offer. There are not going to be huge variants. But what makes an employee gravitate to a particular brand or an organization is the experience which they have or hear about from others. From ex-employees, current employees to potential employees, typically, the experience is a sum total of their interactions with an organization.

It is the moment of truth with their day to day work; their growth potential in the organization; the way conflicts are resolved, and the way business is serving society, customers and clients. All of this together constitutes employee experience.

Over and above some basics that everyone expects from their workplaces, elements that organizations offer employees additionally and give them their "AHA" moment are what adds up to creating a great employee experience. It could be something as simple as paying attention to detail or the way you have used technology to streamline a certain process. Most importantly, to ensure great employee experience, the employer has to be consistent in its efforts of creating that environment for its employees. Employers, today, have to continuously work towards excellence and always be on a quest for perfection. The approach that businesses have had for so long for client experience has to be there for employee experience as well.

Q Who do you think drives the agenda of creating a great employee experience in the organization?

A There are multiple stakeholders. Especially in the service-oriented sector, everybody has a stake in it. While HR teams give a direction or guidance owing to their expertise, everyone else has to drive the agenda of creating a great employee experience every day. Consistency is key when it comes to ensuring a great employee experience. An element of it is present in each touchpoint employee has every day in the organization. From entering the office to the first meeting with the team to a discussion with a manager to applying for leave, there are multiple moments in any employee's typical day that shapes his/her experience.

Q What are some initiatives that you have led in Sun Life ASC to create such an experience? What impact have these initiatives created?

A In addition to the regular meetups, town halls, we have leveraged technology and taken a digital route to enhance our employees' experience. We have signed up with a virtual engagement bot Amber, who based on predetermined timelines, reaches out to a different set of employees and helps capture their voice and emotions. It is helping us capture a lot of insights and helping us address employees' challenges timely. Employees often don't articulate their challenges unless they are huge, but with this element, minutest of emotions are captured.

Additionally, we also provide an Employee Assistance Plan with a focus on mental counselling. While the program offers multiple experiences like financial counselling and legal counselling, we focused more on mental counselling given today's more stressed business ecosystem. Under this initiative, if anyone is undergoing any sort of mental stress or going through depression, they can connect with a specialist.

Our first operating mantra is that employees shouldn't get surprised. Further, when introducing any initiative for employees, ensure it is agile and flexible

Further, we also digitized the whole employee wellness aspect. Until recently, employee wellness was limited to paying for medical bills and reimbursements. But now, as the world is moving towards more proactive contact, we at Sun Life Financial have on-boarded a virtual doctor called Doctor Insta. It provides medical facilities 24X7 at the touch of a button. There's been a massive uptake in our employees about that.

Q As creating a great employee experience, is a job easier said than done, what are some of the challenges that you have faced in leading this endeavour and how did you overcome them?

A Challenges are part of the process. When it comes to HR tech implementation, there are two phases, adoption and sustenance where most challenges emerge.

Here's where the HR aspect of change management comes into play. HR leaders have to introduce the change and drive the whole process to ensure its smooth implementation. Starting from working on the 'what's in it for me?' aspect for employees to ensuring if you are receiving the expected ROI. Our first operating mantra is that employees shouldn't get surprised. Further, when introducing any initiative for employees, ensure it is agile and flexible. Acknowledge and address their feedback and course correct if required.

VISTY BANAJI



Why great business leaders are rare

Our staffing and selection methods prevent us from getting outstanding CEOs. Can we change the odds?

Considering the huge amounts corporates are willing to pay even on pale approximations of greatness[1], it is surprising no one has been able to increase the supply of this more-precious-than-gold talent. In a population the size of India's, surely there should be sufficient raw talent with the vision, social intelligence, personality, deprivation[2] and desire that all go to make great leaders. What are the systemic sins of selection that eliminate the best leaders in the vast pool of talent surrounding us, from making it to the top?

A great leader is a person who successfully overcomes environmental, competitive, technological, or organizational challenges that are stiff enough to overwhelm above-average leaders. In the absence of such demands, mediocrity topped with oratory and flash can pass off for greatness. To rise to extraordinary challenges, great leaders must be able to meld together disparate internal elements and make ordinary people rise to extraordinary heights (even under extreme stress) for attaining the leader's vision, purpose, and transformational goals for the organization. The leader of a large organization is obviously not an expert in everything, and one who cannot judge which expert to trust for what is doomed. S/he also needs to be unfailingly fair both for retaining the trust of employees at large and to sustain external collabo-

For organizations with developed talent management programs, seeking top leadership from outside must be the exception rather than the rule



rations and partnerships. Lastly, great leaders should leave their organizations strong and invigorated when they pass on (rather than overstretched or exhausted) and in hands that are well able to meet prospective opportunities and difficulties.

There are primarily three sources modern business enterprises use for CEO successors. These are:

- Internal talent
- Owner families
- External stars

How do we miss great talent from each of these channels?

Infirmities in internal identification

All things considered, internal talent should be the most promising place for finding leaders and the least likely to yield unpleasant surprises. Yet, in the absence of some important precautions, which many organizations ignore, we can land up overlooking or eliminating the treasure under our noses and leave the dross to float to the top.

There were several ways traditionally managed organizations choked off the flow of the best leaders from reaching the top, and some still follow these. The hoariest method was to cling to seniority as the sole basis for progression. While this may have some merits when the choice is for a predominantly value-guardian role or where the goals of the selectors may diverge from those of the institution the person is to lead, this is so rarely the case for corporate CEO roles that we can dismiss this anachronistic practice with the derision it deserves. More insidious and, therefore, more difficult to counter is the bureaucratic solution to eliminating contenders in an ever-narrowing pyramid by converting prerequisites into the ultimate differentiators for selection. For example, while above-average performance must be an eligibility criterion for progression, making a mechanistic ordering of contenders based on the number of A+ performance ratings in the previous so many years may well favour the fortunate and leave truly brilliant leaders by the wayside. Moreover, such an approach encourages what could be the most pernicious misuse of traditional evaluation systems i.e. gaming them. An earlier column has dealt with our predilection for and expertise in manipulating systems.[3] Advancing the careers of favorites and sabotaging those who are brilliant but outspoken (or do not belong to the evaluator's 'group') brings out our greatest gaming skills and our worst instincts. Several of my friends who have had brilliant careers but didn't make the final cut to the top, share one characteristic: they speak their minds and can't suffer fools or knaves regardless of the latters' levels. It needs just one rater who feels an uppity executive needs to be put in place for the rating to turn lukewarm. In a highly competitive situation, lukewarm is sufficient to drive a competitor out of the reckoning. Some brilliant contenders do make it to the top even in these circumstances but they need to add upward servility to their genius and

> Most modern processes for judging leadership potential are helpful in narrowing the field and identifying people with above average promise for filling future leadership roles after suitable development

competence if they don't wish to be 'lukewarmed' out.

Assessment centers and other newer methods for identifying high potential talent are a clear improvement on the purely subjective screens of the past. While these methods (when well implemented) can certainly improve the pool of internal talent from which top leaders are picked, their impact on decisions about the actual choices of top leaders have been marginal. The reasons are not far to seek. Most modern processes for judging leadership potential are helpful in narrowing the field and identifying people with above average promise for filling future leadership roles after suitable development. However, they cannot identify individual CEOs with pinpoint accuracy. As such, they are best used to build pools of fast-track talent rather than for making individual picks.[4] However, the modern techniques we use cannot generate talent where none exists. As such, they need to be integrated into full-featured manpower planning systems that inject diverse high-quality sources at critical inflow points throughout the organization. Even the best raw material can be wasted through the vagaries of the internal promotion system where biases eliminate some of the best before (and, tragically, sometimes after) they are put through relatively impartial potential assessing systems. The use of these conventional progression processes is inevitable since assessment centres cannot be used for each level change. Moreover, unless HR is particularly active to provide cutting-edge learning and structured experiences to Hi-Pos as well as to save them from the jealousies of their peers and seniors (and from their own conceit and arrogance) during the first few years after repositioning, the organization can end up with a lot of Icarus crashes dotting the horizon and very few undamaged executives available for entering the final CEO / CXO sweepstakes. One final reason the new methodologies have limited use for CEO-level leader selection is that they attempt to evaluate (in an artificial setting[5]) a generic set of leadership competencies which usually have been chosen simply based on the face validity of the constructs and their congruence with CEO / CHRO preferences. In very few cases, attempts are made to validate these with actual performance, but there are too few data points available in the past for such inferences to hold. Moreover, new demands emerge just too fast for anyone to be confident that whatever non-motherhood-and-apple-pie competencies are identified will still be linchpins for future success.

The most frequently used method of internal CEO selection is choice exercised by the incumbent CEO, with varying degrees of Board involvement and influence. Research published by the Graduate School of Business, Stanford, summarized the pitfalls of CEOs selecting successors: "First, most CEOs have minimal experience in evaluating CEO talent. The decision to promote or reassign a senior executive to a new functional area is very different from a decision to give that individual primary

> A great leader is a person who successfully overcomes environmental, competitive, technological, or organizational challenges that are stiff enough to overwhelm above-average leaders

responsibility for the entire organization… Second, despite their interest in the long-term success of the organization, CEOs are also concerned with their personal legacy. A retiring CEO might want to ensure continuity of the strategy that he or she has put in place when instead the company requires change. Other CEOs might actually want their successor to fail – or at least perform worse than they did… Third, strong and successful CEOs … are more likely to steer the choice of a successor toward one who has characteristics similar to themselves. However, these individuals, because of their long association with the company, might lack perspective on how the organization needs to change going forward."[6]

Further muddying the waters is the effort of internal aspirants who play on the pet preferences and predilections of incumbent CEOs making the choices. Some CEOs think they can get unbiased views of internal candidate capabilities by having informer-confidantes implanted at strategic points in the organization. These precautions are usually sabotaged by the smarter aspirants who either 'buy out' the informants or pump favorable information through them. As a result, it is the most politically savvy



Force-fitting owner-scions into leadership roles increases the probability of a sub-optimal choice

rather than the greatest leaders who edge the others out. Clearly, there is room for a Chanakya-style advisor (with discriminating judgment of people but no stake in the succession) to guide the CEO. Such advisors are rare – and so are great successors.

Dynastic dangers

Risks of getting mediocre leaders are maximal when the selection-pool is limited to members of the promoter's family. Even that wisest of Roman Emperors, Marcus Aurelius, left the empire to the soon-to-be mad Commodus when he limited his search to his progeny.

The findings of recent research by Francisco Pérez-González are revealing and unequivocal. "The evidence shows that family heirs hurt firm performance. Firms in which the succeeding CEO is related by blood or marriage to their predecessors consistently underperform… The costs of heir-underperformance are large … It is not surprising that the share of firms that are replacing their retiring family CEOs with professional managers is on the rise… The findings may also imply that managerial ability, like other individual physical or performance characteristics, such as height or earnings, tends to mean-revert… Finding a competent heir from the offspring of the current

head is often disastrous."[7]

Force-fitting owner-scions into leadership roles increases the probability of a sub-optimal choice by several orders of magnitude. The problem of circumscribed choice is considerably aggravated because dynastic successors evade the winnowing process for eliminating the unfit that the normal climb up the organizational ladder imposes on others. I have yet to see an owner-family member chucked out for incompetence or misbehavior (unless it is with another from the anointed family). Consequently, when they are catapulted into leadership positions, they are like wide-eyed innocents, open to the blandishments of the smartest operators in the senior eco-system of the organizations. Not having competed in their way to the top, they lack many survival and leadership skills, among the most critical of which are:

- Judging the true character and worth of people
- Making tactical compromises and diplomatic collaborations with people whom one may not like
- Facing setbacks and the consequences of one's own poor decisions without looking elsewhere for parking the blame or oneself

Empirically, there are certainly many cases where



scions have led their inherited empires perfectly well if not brilliantly. Such favorable circumstances occur particularly when networks, net worth, and stakeholder belief in dynastic magic reign supreme. These benign scenarios are further bolstered when barriers to entry and relatively stable industries keep competition in check. Conversely, when organizations have to operate under tremendously competitive or environmental challenges and just being above average is not enough, this source of leadership shows its greatest limitations. At such times of stress, the best available talent cannot be substituted by the best available person within a family without great long-term damage to the organization. As Warren Buffett put it, this limitation is like "choosing the 2020 Olympic team by picking the eldest sons of the gold-medal winners in the 2000 Olympics."[8]

Riskier roulette

For organizations with developed talent management programs, seeking top leadership from outside must be the exception rather than the rule. Certain situations, however, may leave the organization with no other option. Even when they have not been remiss in pulling brilliant talent to the second rung, the best of these aspirants may seek options elsewhere if the incumbent CEO is too long in the role (this is one of the reasons corporate Titans tend to be followed by pygmies). Another consequence of charismatic CEOs who stay on and on is that potential successors at the next level tend to clone the CEOs in terms of style and mannerisms even if they can't match the incumbents' sheer genius. All of these become severe impediments to making internal choices, especially when organizations need to be triaged, turned around or transformed. Imported leaders are then the only choice.

While the chances of finding great leaders internally are limited primarily by the richness of the talent pools enterprises start with (and the validity of their progression processes) external selections are additionally constricted by the representativeness of the behavior that can be extracted for observation during selection (and the validity of

the inferences drawn from it). Leaving such selections solely to the outgoing CEO brings us again to the problems we identified at the end of the section on 'Infirmities in Internal Identification'. About a year back, I wrote a column on what can go wrong in CHRO selection.[9] Most of those warnings apply to choosing CEOs as well (though the cost of errors can be considerably higher for CEO selections) and are summarized here:

- Over-specifying the job results in a needlessly restricted shortlist of mediocre jacks-of-all-trades or CV inflators.
- Relying primarily on unstructured CEO interviews almost guarantees sub-optimal choices.10
- Reference checks that are inadequate hurried or left to the search firm (instead of marshaling all available senior contacts and Board resources to weave a virtual 360° picture) provide false comfort while actually being useless.
- Discovery of wrong choices is delayed because people are as reluctant to tell an emperor he chose a lousy successor as they are to tell him he is wearing no clothes.

Perfectly adequate CEOs can emerge from selections vitiated with the shortcomings listed here. However, the chances of finding a truly great business leader



For organizations with developed talent management programs, seeking top leadership from outside must be the exception rather than the rule

in this fashion are about the same as stumbling across the Kohinoor while struggling through the metro-dug streets of Mumbai.

Marginal cures

Broadly speaking, unless a major culture change is exigent, we are probably best off finding leaders from within. This, of course, assumes there is a robust process for identifying (without eliminating the hidden gems), fast-tracking, and providing accelerated and structured development opportunities to a few and having discriminating and disinterested advisors guiding the final choices. Equally fundamental is filling the funnel mouth with relevant diversities. Apart from the diversity of gender and sexual orientation we must have a multiplicity of intelligence[11], educational backgrounds[12], castes[13], ethnicities and communities. If we do not make extraordinary, and unconventional efforts in sourcing (rather than limiting ourselves to elite educational sources which do much of the pre-selection and homogenization for us) and progression planning, those who could have become leaders of true genius may never enter the portals of business organizations or grow in them. They may simply wither unknown in menial or mundane jobs without providing the outstanding leadership they could have:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air. [14]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

VISTY BANAJI is the Founder and CEO of Banner Global Consulting (BGC)

Past Month's events

Selecting the Right Coach

ORGANIZERS: People Matters Media and C2C-OD
DATE: 26th March 2020, 3 PM - 4 PM IST
VENUE: Online
THEME: Coaching is an important tool today in Individual Development Plans or in Organizational Development. In the present environment, in which coaches are abundantly available, what things are to be taken into account when choosing an executive coach? C2C-OD, an OD organization, has certain pointers that help us to identify what we need to do to hire the right coaches. In this webcast by People Matters and C2C-OD, we helped you find answers to questions like; what challenges do you face when hiring a coach? How can you identify those factors when you interact with the coach? And many more.

Augment HR functions with a digital workforce

ORGANIZERS: People Matters Media and Automation Anywhere
DATE: 24th March 2020, 3 PM - 4 PM IST
VENUE: Online
THEME: The workforce is changing, and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) empowers organizations to be able to adapt to the changing workforce. RPA enables organizations to get "more work" done and at the same time put the "Human" back into HR. while ensuring all the important but tedious tasks are efficiently carried on. This webcast discussed some burning questions like can automation make work more human? How are RPA and AI impacting the HR function? And how can organizations apply insights in the context of your organization?

The Recruitment Technology Roadmap: Buying, Investing, Measuring

ORGANIZER: People Matters Media
DATE: 20th March 2020, 11 AM - 11:45 AM SGT
VENUE: Online
THEME: Advancements in technology have reshaped the world of recruiting. Businesses now have access to a wide variety of tools and software that impact the way they source, engage, and recruit candidates. Technology can help recruiters streamline every part of the hiring process, the challenge is, given the vast amount of recruiting tools and technologies on the market, how do you decide which technology to invest?

William Tincup, President, RecruitingDaily helped discover what is relevant and what is hype with regards to recruitment tech, what works in the context of your business. Throughout this masterclass, you would learn how to create a recruitment technology roadmap, understand how to measure ROI from technology investments, and maximize adoption success.

10 Burning Questions facing GICs to become Future Ready

ORGANIZERS: People Matters Media and Enparadigm
DATE: 24th March 2020, 3 PM - 4 PM IST
VENUE: Online
THEME: The Global In-house Center (GIC) model accounts for over 25 percent (US$38–42 billion) of the global offshore services market. The contributions of a GIC are an integral part of an organization's overall value chain. It is no surprise that global players all over the world are now making astute investments to build strategically strong and well-positioned GICs in regions best served for rapid growth. GICs in India now number about 1,100, employing more than 800,000 individuals and generating approximately $23 billion in revenue. But how do GICs enable their growth and become the GICs of the future? In this webcast by People Matters and Enparadigm, we uncovered how the GICs can become a world-class talent hub and how can they continue to be the center of efficiency by being at the vanguard of productivity enhancements.

Upcoming events

Virtual Masterclass: The roadmap to success in People Analytics

ORGANIZER: People Matters Media
DATE: 16th April 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: Over the last decade, the world has seen the rise of People Analytics as HR professionals have recognized its importance in the future of HR. Join this session to know the journey to people analytics, the Nasper's way!Sola Osinoiki will be discussing what the roadmap to success in People Analytics in terms of digital and human steps looks like. How data insights will lead to driving business values by utilizing new and current automation tools available in the market.

Managing Employee Experience in a High Growth Market

ORGANIZER: People Matters Media
DATE: 30th April 3:00 - 3:45 PM SGT
VENUE: Online
THEME: We live in a world of unprecedented transformation: Geopolitical, Economic and Social. The #1 job for leaders today is to ensure their organizations are not left behind in this era of disruption. Technology has also infused a lot of anxiety and is at an all-time high. Companies are concerned about the well being of their people and are highly focused on creating a radically different experience for their people at work. People too are bringing different levels of expectations to work- a place where they can learn, develop, grow and feel safe. So for us as leaders, it's all about creating those micro-moments at work where we can really bring out the best experiences for our talent. Kartik Krishnamurthy, MD, Asia, Cornerstone OnDemand will share with you how companies in high growth economies are managing the experience of their employees. Also, learn about Cornerstone OnDemand's story of crafting a phenomenal employee experience journey that goes beyond their daily roles.

HOW TO REGISTER:
https://qrgo.page.link/QFqJk

People Matters EX Phygital Journey

ORGANIZER: People Matters Media
DATE: 3rd July 2020
VENUE: Conrad, Bengaluru
THEME: People Matters EX Phygital Journey - A 360-degree immersive experience is a combination of Virtual Conference, Bootcamps, Virtual Masterclasses and will close with the Physical Conference. This phygital journey initiative aims to move the focus from touchpoints to journeys. The need for a phygital journey is necessitated by the turbulent times through which businesses are going through on account of COVID-19. This period shows the challenges which businesses might face in the future because of more such unexpected disruptions. Yet at the same time, business and learning need to continue unabated.

It is in this spirit that People Matters has transformed People Matters EX Conference to People Matters EX Phygital Journey, in order to provide a more immersive and intensive learning experience to delegates in the realm of employee experience.

HOW TO REGISTER:
https://www.ex-conference.com/site/register

Blogosphere

» PROF. ANKUR ROY



COVID-19: Here's how you can ensure maximum productivity while WFH

Historically, work from home (referred to as telecommuting in social science) was advertised as a cost (effective option for improving employee performance in case of dual) earner couples

With more than 150,000 people infected with COVID-19, working from home is the new reality for many employees in affected countries. Federal governments have requested organizations (both public and private) to follow work from home guidelines. In response to this multinational organisations like Amazon, Google, Facebook, and Twitter, etc. announced that much of their workforce won't be coming to office. In India, organisations like Tata Motors, Cognizant, Flipkart, Ola, Wipro and Tech Mahindra, etc. have offered employees the option to work from home. However, several industry bodies believe that work from home could hurt operations especially the traditional firms which have never practiced this before.

> Research has shown that higher the percentage of co-workers working from home, the worse the individual performance of the employee

Historically, work from home (referred to as telecommuting in social science) was advertised as a cost-effective option for improving employee performance in case of dual-earner couples. This type of work arrangement produces concrete and measurable business results as well. Given the benefits of telework, US Congress and European Union have long ago approved legislation supporting telecommuting arrangements for both private and public workers.

Tips for teleworkers to improve productivity

Establishing working hours. Research has shown appropriate telework hours increase labour productivity. Employees most likely will be able to maintain their office productivity while working remotely by adhering to usual office timings. Household chores, errands, and spending time with friends need to happen before or after work or may be during lunch hours. Adhering to organisation's work from home policy will help as a guideline here.

Moreover, scholarly journals have reported that telework increases the stress of balancing work and domes-

tic chores. But stress does not directly reduce labour productivity. Thus focusing on work during the established office hours and not getting distracted by home issues will help to eliminate stress.

Structuring the work for the day. The defined work that has to be accomplished should be made clear in consultation with the telecommuting manager at the beginning of the day. Some of the work may require more creative and intuitive thinking which could be accomplished at the beginning of the day. More mundane and routine tasks may be scheduled for the second half of the work day.

Research has shown that higher the percentage of co-workers working from home, the worse the individual performance of the employee. For managers, interaction with colleagues, whether or not someone is working from home, is the key to cooperation and efficiency, and it is a challenge to construct teams in which teleworkers work productively.

Establishing a boundary with others. It is better to explain to friends, family, and other acquaintances one's availability hours. Work from home is not synonymous with staying at home. It is better to settle in a quiet section of the house where one can shut the door and be out of sight. A silent room acts as a catalyst to productivity. Unexpected guests could be dealt diplomatically or can be entertained by family members.

> Working from home is associated with fewer interruptions resulting in more productive hours

Get rid of distraction. Many of the electronic and electrical gadgets could be a distraction which may include smartphones, musical instruments, etc. Even newspapers and books could be a distraction. Packing them off to another room might be better to limit disturbance.

Try to get comfortable. Office furniture is designed differently from home furniture. Given the limited time (may be few days till the virus outbreak subsides) when teleworking will be required, it's better to get a good quality chair with back support on rent or from friends. One may consider an adjustable table or desk that can be raised to a perfect height. A comfortable work desk with necessary communication accessories will give an office-like feeling.

Declutter the office area. The home office space has to be cleared of children's toys, school books, stationary items, wrappers, etc. The work area has to be cleaned every day. This will help in increasing concentration. Usually in the office, there are housekeeping staff to manage and clean the work area. The same function has to be managed at home with own resources to get the most out of a day's work.

Natural lighting can be a mood booster. Look for areas where natural light flows in the apartment. Work desk can be moved close to windows while strategically positioning it to reduce glare. Curtains can also be added to help manage the amount of light that enters the workspace each day, particularly in the afternoon.

When working away from the office, teleworkers are able to significantly reduce contact with other co-workers which is similar to social distancing being advocated by medical experts and industry bodies. Research has shown that working from home is associated with fewer interruptions resulting in more productive hours. Moreover, as nobody is physically monitoring the teleworking employee, teleworkers have shown greater discretion in how, under what conditions and sometimes when they can complete tasks. More autonomy and flexibility may lead to higher productivity. So, work from home comes with some perks like better work life balance, staying away from traffic congestion, and of course a healthier life away from COVID-19.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

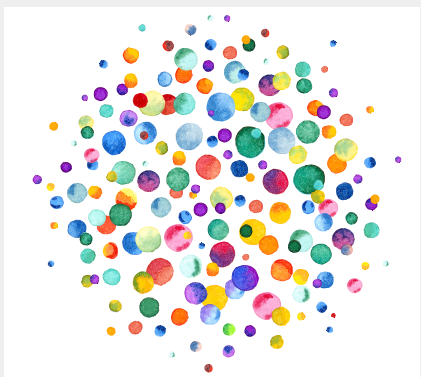
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- Work Order Capacity exceeded
- Female worker entry during night shift
- Debarred worker entry

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