people matters

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₹150



BIG INTERVIEW

Donna Kimmel
Executive Vice President &
Chief People Officer, Citrix





LEADING THROUGH CRISIS

The leadership moment of one of the worst crises of our times

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The leadership moment of the 21st century

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to one of the toughest times in history which has shuttered many businesses all over the world. The humanitarian crisis is extraordinary and fierce. Employers' stress and worry have risen to a record high. Organizations are choosing furloughs and hiring freezes over outright layoffs. Online retail and grocery have had to increase hiring substantially, while travel and hospitality have had to massively slash their workforces.

The catastrophe, thus, brings to fore one of the greatest challenges for leaders in their lifetimes. Research shows that leadership makes the greatest difference when the world around us is uncertain, and we are unsure about what lies ahead. So how do you make the right decisions for your business in the present, while anticipating the future, while being compassionate to the many people who have helped your company become successful – all while knowing nearly everyone is feeling a sense of uncertainty?

Global business leaders are confronted with a heavy set of concerns: how to keep their firms operating, how to keep their employees' welfare in mind, and how to contribute to the global economy. This is certainly the time for leaders to step up and make solid decisions, with all consequences thought through.

So where do you start from? First, it is important to understand that there is no way to overcome COVID-19 by operating with business as usual. Businesses have to change, but exactly how to change is different for each company. Start with reviewing what's most essential – communicating persuasively, and acting decisively.

How organizations treat employees today will have a big effect on whether employees want to join them in the future – when attracting stars will again be more difficult and the job market will become more competitive, especially with the return of furloughed and laid-off workers. It is crucially overriding to both consider the current state of employee well-being and to manage what employers and employees can control.

As studies find, the best way to cope with an unprecedented crisis is to react swiftly and then keep adapting. The need of the hour is the ultimate agile response – a kind of highly flexible, collaborative, iterative approach that technology organizations have been developing for years. This will help frontline business honchos to tide over this pandemic – and think about what the future may hold for their business. Executives need to not only think about digital transformation, but also the workforce transformation that they can achieve over this period.

While businesses must have considered cutting all forms of non-essential costs, workforce-related costs should be among the last to be cut. Businesses must look at government stimulus that is available and look at how they can reduce salaries with business leaders taking on most of the wage cuts to mitigate the effects felt by lower-earning employees. If it does come down to the point where costs have been managed, but an organization still needs to go down a retrenchment exercise, communication is vital. This needs to be done in a transparent and objective manner without any form of

bias to the process but with a lot of care and empathy.

The role of a leader during this time of crisis is to take their people and organization to a better place. We also need to communicate things that we don't know, such as when this pandemic will end. As leaders continue to communicate internally and act on the various permutations and combinations of the business operations, they also need to be honest with employees about uncertainties during this time of crisis.

The cover story in this issue talks in detail about the leadership mantras to tide through the epidemic – from workforce alignment to retaining top employees to complying with the legal aspects of retrenchments to carving out new ways of compensation rewards.

For the Big Interview in this issue, we have Donna Kimmel, Executive Vice President and Chief People Officer, Citrix, who shares her views on the current COVID-19 crisis, the disruptions in HR and talent operations and what they mean for top HR leaders.

This issue also features several other interviews including Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director, UN Women, Saw Ken Wye, the CEO, CrimsonLogic, Sindhu Gangadharan, SVP and Managing Director, SAP Labs India, and many more.

We have a special story in this issue which takes a look at why EX is a top priority for business leaders across the world, trends shaping employee experience in 2020, and more. In an attempt to help businesses design employee experience thoughtfully in the times of turbulence, People Matters in partnership with SAP SuccessFactors brings to you an insightful research titled "Mind the gap: 2020 Outlook for Employee Experience". While 88% of respondents shared that they have the buy-in from the leadership team to invest in EX, only 53% of organizations claim to have the right skills and competencies to design and execute an EX program.

To that extent, People Matters has launched People Matters EX Conference digitally on June 19, 2020. Minimum Fee to attend People Matters EX Virtual Conference is 1 USD. All delegate registration proceeds will be donated to UNICEF COVID-19 appeal. Join us, enhance your EX and do your bit to contribute too!

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

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

Happy Reading!

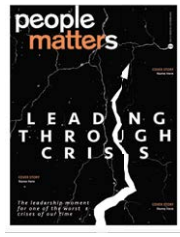
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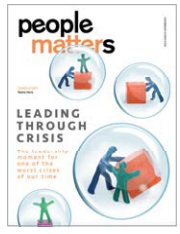
THE COVER STORY (BEHIND THE SCENE)



I like it! But I don't love it...



Next.



Nice! But I hate clay...



PHEW!

contents

MAY 2020
VOLUME XI
ISSUE 5



COVER STORY **48**

LEADING THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The leadership moment of one of the worst crises of our times

BY **MASTUFA AHMED**





CONTENTS

50 Top HR leaders on COVID-19 crisis
BY **MASTUFA AHMED**

50 **KIM SCHMIDT,** *Global Leader - Leadership, People and Culture, Grant Thornton International*

50 **DAVID A. RODRIGUEZ,** *Executive Vice President, and Global CHRO, Marriott International*

51 **DATUK NORA ABD MANAF,** *Group Chief Human Capital Officer, Maybank*

51 **BRAD TAYLOR,** *Director of People, OD & Workplace, CIPD*

52 **AADESH GOYAL,** *Chief Human Resources Officer, Tata Communications*

52 **NHLAMU DLOMU,** *Global Head of People, KPMG International*

53 **FARID BASIR,** *Chief Human Capital Officer, Telekom Malaysia*

54 It's time for governments, businesses to work together
BY **ADRIAN MONCK,** *Managing Board Member, World Economic Forum*

57 Respond quickly and keep adapting amid COVID-19
BY **AMY C. EDMONDSON,** *Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management at the Harvard Business School*

60 COVID-19 is also an opportunity to transform the workforce
BY **SAMIR BEDI,** *People Advisory Services Partner, Ernst & Young Advisory Pte. Ltd., Singapore and EY Asean Workforce Advisory Leader*

63 8 Principles to manage executive compensation during COVID-19 crisis
BY **SHAI GANU,** *MD and Global Practice Leader, Executive Compensation, Willis Towers Watson*
TAN YONG FEI, *Executive Compensation Leader, South Asia, Willis Towers Watson*

67 It's your leadership moment
BY **MICHAEL USEEM,** *Faculty Director of the Leadership Center and McNulty Leadership Program at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania*

70 Battling Corona crisis warrants effective communication across levels
BY **SUREISH NATHAN,** *Managing Director, DDI Singapore*

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THIS ISSUE OF **PEOPLE MATTERS** CONTAINS 122 PAGES INCLUDING COVER



THE BIG INTERVIEW

26

Take a people-first approach to navigating this crisis

Donna Kimmel, *Executive Vice President and Chief People Officer, Citrix*

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



INTERVIEW

40

Organizations must take conscious steps for inclusive leadership

Mohammad Naciri, *Regional Director of UN Women for Asia and the Pacific*

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

16 NEWS FEATURE
Keeping cost in check and employees on the payroll amid COVID-19
BY **BHAVNA SARIN**

22 EMPLOYEE RELATIONS
Helping employees tide over the Covid-19 crisis
BY **ABID HASAN**

34 THOUGHT LEADERSHIP
Finding simplicity in chaos: Beyond VUCA
BY **GLENDA EOYANG,** *Founding Executive Director of Human Systems Dynamics Institute, and* **MICHAEL JENKINS,** *Co-founder of Expert Humans, a Singapore-based company working in leadership, organisation development and intercultural communication*

44 INTERVIEW
D&I should be positioned as a business agenda, not as an HR initiative
AMIT PRAKASH, *CHRO of Marico Limited*
BY **JERRY MOSES**

73 LEADERSHIP
Leadership in the time of pandemic
BY **NITASHA DEVASAR,** *MD, Taylor & Francis India and South Asia and President, Association of Publishers in India*

75 ENTREPRENEURSHIP
The glass ceiling for women is breaking down
VANDANA LUTHRA, *Founder of VLCC Institute of Beauty & Nutrition*
BY **ABID HASAN**

76 INTERVIEW
Create a digital open door
SINDHU GANGADHARAN, *SVP and MD, SAP Labs India*
BY **BHAVAN SARIN**



84 Accelerating employee experience beyond 2020
BY **JOHN GAUNT,** *Chief Human Resources Officer, Synechron*

87 Progressive organizations listen intently to employees' needs
BILL DOCHERTY, *Managing Director in Deloitte Consulting's Human Capital*
BY **MASTUFA AHMED**

89 EX will no longer be limited to the HR function
STEVE BENNETTS, *Head of EX Strategy, Qualtrics*

108 PEOPLE MATTERS RESEARCH
Solving the employee experience conundrum
People Matters and SAP SuccessFactors research
BY **ANUSHREE SHARMA**

114 BOOK REVIEW
Introduction to People Analytics by Nadeem Khan and Dave Millner
BY **ABHIJIT BHADURI**

93 Employee experience is a part of the larger orga-nizational ethos
SHAILESH SINGH, *Director and Chief People Officer, Max Life Insurance*
BY **MASTUFA AHMED**

97 American Express CHRO on creating a holistic employee experience
KABIR JULKA, *Chief Human Resources Officer, American Express, India*
BY **YASMIN TAJ**

101 Build learnings from the pandemic into organizational memory
SHREYA BHAGWANTH, *Head of Human Resources for the India region at 3M*

106 Employee Experience Design: How to make it boundaryless
BY **ABHIJIT BHADURI,** *Coach, Columnist, and Illustrator*

CONTENTS

REGULARS

04 From the Editor's Desk
08 Letters of the month
10 Quick Reads
15 Rapid Fire
116 Knowledge + Networking
118 Blogosphere

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

AADESH GOYAL
ADRIAN MONCK
AMIT PRAKASH
AMY C. EDMONDSON
BILL DOCHERTY
BRAD TAYLOR
DATUK NORA ABD MANAF
DAVID A. RODRIGUEZ
DONNA KIMMEL
FARID BASIR
KABIR JULKA
KIM SCHMIDT
MOHAMMAD NACIRI
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SAMIR BEDI
SHAILESH SINGH
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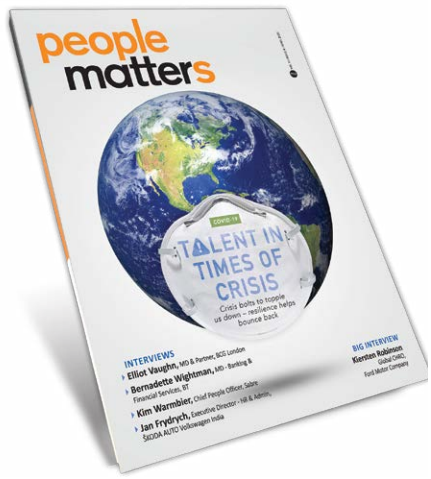
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COVID-19: A CHECKLIST FOR EMPLOYERS

A very interesting and resourceful piece on an employer's checklist. The fact that even now only a mere 38% of employers rate themselves as being prepared to tackle the scenario poses a threat to both the short-term as well as long-term wellbeing of employees and businesses. There is no doubt that the outbreak was something no one could have foreseen or been prepared for and that organizations have been busy with sustaining both people and business amid COVID-19, however, there might be a need to widen that lens. It might be worth considering to look at things from a broader perspective of the economy than looking at one company. Identify what the economy needs to survive, see what role you and your organization can play and simultaneously determine what needs to be done for the organization to stay afloat. Become indispensable to the survival of the global economy, thereby safeguarding your business and employees.

- ANURAG AVANTKAR



APRIL 2020 ISSUE

Employee experience is the next big differentiator

With the bouquet of benefits that companies today work toward to both retain talent as well as attract talent, it is no surprise that employee experience will be the sole differentiator for employees, or at least a key deal breaker. As the workforce today comprises a majority of millennials along with Gen-Z stepping in, employee experience broken down into purpose and growth journey will matter a lot more than competitive compensation and other perks. Employees seek value, both in what they do and how they are treated. If a firm falls behind in either, it can very well make a dent in the employee's sentiment about the organization.

- ANTONY THARAKAN

COVID-19: Impact on compensation and benefits

I resonated with the capacity to pay vs need to pay aspect of this piece. Very well brought out. Also, the aspect around transparent communication, no matter how difficult or challenging the decision is. Every organization has its own liabilities and responsibilities to take care of. What one shouldn't lose sight of is striking a balance between talent and business needs. The fact that every organization works around a different financial year indicates that each one of them will have different fires to put out amid this crisis. There is certainly no one size fits all approach here. With the prolonged impact of the pandemic here to stay, ensuring timely communication of measures, both short-term and long-term must be communicated to employees, giving them time to make adjustments to their life as well.

- ANJALI BATRA

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

LGBTQ employees are not yet openly out at work

It is appalling to know that 50% of the LGBTQ community even today has to live in shadows. On the flip side though, it is encouraging to read that at least 50% of the community has been able to find its place in the workplace, after years of advocacy, awareness, pride campaigns and speaking up. While there remains a significant half of the LGBTQ community to still come forward and conquer what they are capable of professionally, it is reassuring to see how emerging economies across the globe are working towards building inclusive workplaces, and breaking myths around the backlash of being inclusive.

- ASHU BHATIA

Helping the underbanked move their money

Such an interesting story on a result-oriented mindset to help the community. It is great to see how entrepreneurs are taking to addressing real-world problems and identifying mechanisms and processes to not only make it streamlined but also benefit those who continue to be at a disadvantage despite the amount of commitment and skilled work they perform.

- RUHAN DEY

Creating a community culture for better workplaces

While I don't quite agree with the author on his choice of words to call LGBTQ fashionable when speaking for diversity, as it is about basic human rights for people belonging to the community and not an agenda to flaunt, I do agree on the need to create a community culture for better workplaces. Culture is probably among the most overused words, however, it is more truly among the most exploited terms in the dictionary of an organization.

- VANIA SHARMA

Integrate mental wellbeing into business continuity planning

BCP (Business Continuity Plan) has been the talk of the town of late. What we also need is a WCP (Wellness Continuity Plan). Several reports have been published in recent times highlighting the negative impact of the current global scenario and working conditions on the mental health of the workforce. While the no commute time has been a respite for many, what has not been a respite is excessive working hours with blurry lines between personal and professional time. There is no leaving office for the day anymore.

- SAANDRA SK

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@SPJIMR
How can #leaders use motivational language to deliver an energizing talk to spur employee morale especially during these tough times of #COVID-19 crisis. Prof. @VineetaDwivedi article in HR mag @PeopleMatters2 https://peoplematters.in/article/leadership/covid-19-importance-of-motivating-language-25427 #IamSP-JIMR

@SBILife
Mrs. Manjula Kalyanasundaram, EVP and Chief of HR & Management Services, talks about steps SBI Life has taken to manage employee experience during a crisis like COVID-19. Read more here - https://bit.ly/A-pm @PeopleMatters2

@Zendesk
#COVID19's impact on global businesses is undisputed. How can HR leaders help drive business continuity? Zendesk's APAC HR Director shares her thoughts with @PeopleMatters2 : https://zdsk.co/2z3liYI

@Skillsoft
A healthy organisational culture is one that values #learning: "Culture and continuous learning is fundamentally a focus on people," said @RosieCairnes @SkillsoftANZ VP APAC. Read more in @PeopleMatters2

@TCS_News
@DrRituAnand shares her thoughts on the need for equity to help organizations move towards a point of #equality, and how value-based leadership can help drive #inclusion. Read: https://bit.ly/2ynoVZa #UniquelyTogether #Diversity @PeopleMatters2

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C-SUITE

COVID-19: Twitter CEO pledges $1 Bn



Twitter CEO and Square founder Jack Dorsey has pledged $1 billion of his stake in Square Inc, the payments processor that he co-founded and heads, to help fund relief efforts related to the coronavirus pandemic. The amount which constitutes his 28 percent of his wealth, will be donated to his charity fund, Start Small LLC, which would later focus its attention to universal basic income and girls' health and education, mentioned Dorsey.



LEADERSHIP

Sundar Pichai indicates a 'significant' slow hiring in 2020

Alphabet, the parent company of Google, is pulling back on some of its investments amidst the pandemic and it is starting from hiring. In an email to Google employees, Google CEO Sundar Pichai highlighted other areas of cost-cutting, saying the company will be "recalibrating the focus and pace of our investments in areas like data centers and machines, and non-business essential marketing and travel."

Pichai took the reference of the 2008 recession saying preparing early is key to weathering the storm and emerging in a position to continue long-term growth, as the company has done over the past decade.

RECRUITMENT

COVID-19 will wipe out 195 million jobs: ILO



The International Labour Organization (ILO) has warned of job losses in the hundreds of millions as the COVID-19 pandemic stretches out over the coming months. The ILO said that 6.7 percent of working hours globally are likely to be lost in the second quarter of 2020 —the equivalent of 195 million full-time jobs. The bulk of the losses will be borne by the Asia Pacific region, which is estimated to lose the equivalent of 125 million full-time jobs.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Labour ministry to fetch data on layoffs, pay cuts

The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) will call up employees to collect details about their salary clearance, jobs. After collating data on job losses, salary cuts and delayed payment, a



report will be presented to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's repeated appeals to employers to be considerate to employees and ministry's advisory to employers asking them to not cut salaries or fire employees, the government is now looking to further deep dive into the matter. According to the report, the exercise has already begun and particular attention will be paid on the last day of April and May 7 – as salaries are usually paid on a month's last day or the 7th of the next month.

TALENT ACQUISITION

Talent demand in India down by 5% in March 2020: Report

India's nation-wide lockdown to curb the COVID-19 spread has brought most economic activities – including the talent demand – to a screeching stop. India Inc's talent demand in March 2020 recorded a dip of five percent M-o-M and two percent Y-o-Y, as per TimesJobsRecruiteX report.

An in-depth analysis of talent demand in March 2020 showed that only three sectors - Retail, Accounting and IT/Telecom - saw improvements in the M-o-M study. The Retail sector noted six percent rise, Accounting sector registered five percent growth and IT/Telecom sector witnessed two percent uptick in M-o-M talent



demand. Barring these, all other sectors saw a dip in talent demand.

SKILLING

Salaries of analytics professionals grew by 14.3%

According to the sixth edition of the annual study report by Analytics India Magazine and Jigsaw Academy, the salaries in the mid-senior and senior-level have registered the highest median figure over the last four years. In terms of salary distribution across various brackets, there has been a shift to an established analytics market that



commands higher salaries with 45.4 percent of all the analytics professionals fall under the higher income level. In terms of the salary trends across cities, Mumbai emerges as the destination for highest salaries for analytics employees at Rs. 15.6 Lakhs per annum as median salary, followed by Bengaluru at Rs.14.7 Lakhs.

NEWSMAKER OF THE MONTH

Zooming into the future of remote work



Among the many shifts that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has led to, there's one application that has become critical for both work and life – the video conferencing tool Zoom. In just the month of March 2020, the user base of the application grew from 10 million daily active users to 200 million users.

Thanks to the lockdown in countries around the world, businesses that can pivot to a "work from home" model had to quickly leverage digital tools to support their businesses. And Zoom came out to be one of the top go-to tool options.

Zoom's appeal and wide spread adoption could be attributed to the ease of use and simplicity of the platform. But amid its meteoric rise, there's been increased scrutiny of the security and privacy apparatus that the application is based on. There have been a range of issues that security researches have pointed out in the last month –from the ability to track a participant's attentiveness, to hijacking of video conferences to stream porn, to secretly sending data to Facebook. The lack of end-to-end encryption has also added to the apprehensions.

The CEO, Eric Yuan, admitted to the lapses, apologized, and wrote a lengthy blogpost detailing the steps that the company is taking to ensure a better user experience. The company froze all feature development activities for 90 days with the goal of enhancing security on the platform.

The issues that were brought to light with Zoom and the subsequent scrutiny of it could not have come at a better time. Only those companies that already leveraged some form of digital technology tools could deliver a seamless workplace experience to their employees. They were better prepared to manage, support and deliver on employee issues than traditional companies that had not made the shift. In this context, the Zoom episode reminds us of the need to not just digitize, but to make sure that employee needs are met, and that their privacy and security issues are taken care of.

At a time when access to digital tools is important to the seamless functioning of the HR organization, it is necessary to ensure that there are no bargains made while delivering a great workplace experience. As the future of work becomes increasingly digital-enabled, it is the prerogative of talent leaders to play close attention to developments in information technology and security.

APPOINTMENTS



IBM SINGAPORE ANNOUNCES NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR

IBM announced the appointment of Martin Chee as the new Managing Director of IBM Singapore. Martin will harness his experience in spearheading IBM's digital transformation initiatives in Singapore. He will be responsible for business growth and strengthening IBM's partnership with clients for a cloud and cognitive-led digital transformation of their businesses. Martin will report to Patricia Yim, General Manager, IBM ASEAN.



WALMART COO JOINS EBAY AS THEIR NEW CEO

eBay Inc. has announced the appointment of Jamie Iannone as Chief Executive Officer, effective April 27, 2020. He has also been elected to the Company's Board of Directors. Most recently Iannone was Chief Operating Officer of Walmart eCommerce. Before being promoted to COO of Walmart eCommerce, he served as CEO of SamsClub.com, the eCommerce unit for the $57 billion Sam's Club.



SAP ELEVATES EILEEN CHUA TO MANAGING DIRECTOR SINGAPORE

Eileen Chua has been named Managing Director for Singapore by German enterprise software giant SAP. She takes over from Khor Chern Chuen, who held the role for about three years, and is now the Singapore-based Chief Operating Officer for SAP Southeast Asia. The newly appointed MD for Singapore, Chua, will report directly to Rachel Barger, President and Managing Director of SAP Southeast Asia.



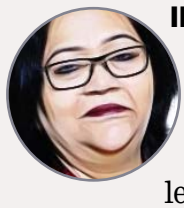
FUJI XEROX SINGAPORE APPOINTS NEW CEO

Fuji Xerox Singapore has appointed Koh Ching Hong as CEO effective April 1, taking over from Sara Cheng. Koh has a long and distinguished history with FXS, having spent 16 years with the company from 1991 to 2007, during the last decade of which he served as Managing Director. During that period, which coincided with the growth of digital solutions in the print space, he headed the transformation of the company's business model from a photocopy firm to a provider of document and print management services.



UBER'S CO-FOUNDER STEPS DOWN

The Canadian billionaire, Garrett Camp who co-founded the ride-hailing giant, Uber has decided to step down from the board of directors. The announcement came in yesterday through a post by him on Medium. As per the post, he will be switching to the board observer's role where he will be spearheading the product strategy for Uber.



IFFCO TOKIO GENERAL INSURANCE APPOINTS CEO & MD INDIA

Anamika Roy Rashtrawar takes over from Warendra Sinha, who retired from the company after leading IFFCO Tokio successfully for the last three years. Rashtrawar had joined IFFCO Tokio General Insurance as a whole-time director on 1st June 2018. She led the company's business transformation project and expanded the company's operations in tier 2, 3, 4 towns.



GROUP CEO & MD OF VIACOM 18 STEPS DOWN

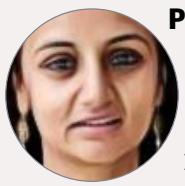
Sudhanshu Vats, Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of media and entertainment conglomerate Viacom18, a subsidiary of Network18, has decided to quit the company after a stint of eight years. He has also been appointed as an additional director of the company effective from 16 April 2020. In his new role at Essel Propack, he has also been designated as key managerial personnel pursuant to the Companies Act 2013.

APPOINTMENTS



L&T NAMES A NEW HR HEAD AS YOGI SRIRAM RETIRES

Yogi Sriram, Senior Vice President – Corporate Human Resources and Member of the Executive Committee, Larsen & Toubro, has superannuated from the services of the company effective from 1st April 2020, after an illustrious career of 43 years in HR. One of the senior most HR persons in the country in service, Yogi headed the Group HR function in L&T for eight years in his last role.



PHILIPS APPOINTS VISHPALA REDDY AS NEW HR HEAD

Philips has appointed Vishpala Reddy as its new human resources head for the Indian subcontinent, replacing Armaan Seth who had been associated with Philips for more than 8 years. Reddy will be joining in the coming few weeks. Prior to this, Reddy was serving as the regional HR director for APAC with Uber. She had joined Uber in 2017 as the Chief People Officer for India and South Asia region.



CHRISTY LAKE JOINS TWILIO AS CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Cloud communications platform Twilio announced that Christy Lake is joining the company as its Chief People Officer. Lake will be responsible for leading Twilio's global People team, driving the company's talent development and acquisition strategy and fostering belonging, diversity and inclusion across Twilio. She will report directly to Twilio's Co-Founder and CEO, Jeff Lawson.



ROOT INSURANCE APPOINTS FIRST CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Root Inc., the parent company of Root Insurance, has announced that Annette Reavis joined the company as its first Chief People Officer. Reavis joined after spending a decade at Facebook, serving as a strategic HR leader for Facebook's product, marketing, growth/integrity, community operations, and partnerships organizations.



QUALCOMM APPOINTS HEATHER ACE AS EXECUTIVE, VP, HR

Qualcomm Incorporated announced the appointment of Heather Ace as Executive Vice President of Human Resources. She will join Qualcomm's executive committee and report to Qualcomm CEO, Steven Mollenkopf. Michelle Sterling, Executive Vice President of Human Resources who has worked at Qualcomm for 25 years, is retiring.



LOWE'S HR DIRECTOR CALLS IT QUITS

Jennifer Weber, the HR leader at Lowes, has quit 'effective immediately', reportedly netting $2.5 million just months after selling off $1.4 million in shares. Weber, who had been Executive Vice President of Human Resources since 2016, sold 12,589 shares at $112.62 per share for a total of $1.42 million in September. Weber's resignation comes at a time when Lowes workers have hit out at what they say is "profit coming before safety" as the stores remain open.



CASHFREE NAMES NEW HR HEAD

Payment gateway firm Cashfree has appointed Sapna Sukumar as the Head of Human Resources. Sapna comes with over 15 years in the field of Human Resources. Prior to this announcement, she was actively working with Medlife as the HR Business Partner since June 2015.

Wing Git Chan

Group Head, Talent & Excitement, Luxasia

By **Neelanjana Mazumdar**



1
One thing that makes you passionate about HR?
Being able to make a positive contribution to the business, while growing personally.

2
What was the turning point of your life as an HR professional?
When I switched from public sector to work in corporate world.

3
One tech/innovation that will transform HR?
Increasing use of data and AI would alleviate manual work and improve people decisions.

4
One perception you wish to change about the HR function?
That HR is a backend support function.

5
What's your learning mantra?
Be open to learning about new diverse topics and trying out new experiences.

Learn about the business, so that you can connect your HR work to support business goals

6
HR as a business partner or HR as a business driver?
Business driver.

7
How do you make decisions when you don't have all the necessary information?
Combination of intuition (from experience) and consultation with peers and team.

8
Next big HR deployment Luxasia is working around?
Global cloud-based payroll system that would facilitate centralized payroll and cost reporting, and employee self-service.

9
Best career advice you've ever got?
"Luck favors the prepared" – so always be prepared to take on new opportunities.

10
In the fast-paced world full of disruptions and challenges, what keeps you going?
My team working alongside me, toward shared goals.

11
One leader you closely follow and one hallmark of that leader
Elon Musk. He dreams big and is relentless in pursuing them.

12
What do you think about when you're alone in your car?
Usually random matters.

Keeping cost in check and employees on the payroll amid COVID-19

To enable their employees to sail through the tough times brought about by COVID-19, companies across the globe have come up with a slew of measures to keep costs in check and employees on the payroll

By **Bhavna Sarin**



The beginning of 2020 has been anything but what it was expected to be. With the universe being thrown a curveball, that goes by the name coronavirus, the world of work has witnessed disruption across all domains and functions. Triggered by COVID-19, resulting in a threat to both life and business, companies are finding furlough as the first way out to maintain business stability. However, in deciding who gets to stay and who is asked to leave, the question remains - is there a way out of furlough?

Hospitality sector, airlines, retailers, and daily wage earners, among others around the world, face tumbling sales driven by COVID-19 social distancing efforts. Specific to industry, retail workers make up a substantial portion of the US labor force, February numbers from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics put seasonally adjusted retail employees at 15.7 million, or about 9.8 percent of all civilians employed. Does that mean that 9.8 percent of all employed civilians in the US, in addition to employees from other at-risk sectors, stay exposed to losing their job?

The relevance of cost and importance of cost-cutting has grown multifold in the recent times, as a result of the widespread coronavirus, that has not only led to forced lockdowns, social distancing and the biggest global remote working experiment, but also poses a threat to the very existence of both mankind and

business. There has been a significant loss in global revenue already, and by further laying off employees, it will only contribute to loss of talent with no one to count on once the situation stabilizes and it's time to pull the gears, put on the blinders and fast forward out of the slump. So keeping retrenchment as the last resort to stay afloat, organizations continue to explore other avenues to control costs and keep the business running.

What's happening across the globe

As an obvious next step to ensure business sustainability, several firms took to ensuring they minimize costs as much as possible, while also working on measures to minimize the impact on talent. However, in this war of talent and cost, for some organizations, minimizing costs led to letting go of talent. In an effort to curtail this practice, governments, organizations and unions, across geographies are working towards building alternatives to retrenchment and furloughs, safeguarding the interest of both the economy as well as people.

Singapore's National Trades Union Congress President Mary Liew shared in a statement with the media, "I think it's important that during this time the employers step forward and also show their appreciation and work together closely with the workers and also reward them fairly and accordingly as well. And moving on when the economy turns around, they will need the workers as well to continue on with their journey."

Among global initiatives, Singapore appears to be at the forefront to tackle the impact and help bring back its economy to stability. Singapore's National Wages Council (NWC) and Ministers have come up with cost-cutting alternatives and guidelines for companies, emphasizing that retrenchment should be the last resort. While wage freeze and increment delays are among the most commonly adopted measures to navigate costs, the Council has also recommended employers to be open to employees seeking part-time jobs to supplement their income. As some organizations implement shorter work weeks to save costs, Council Member Aubeck Kem suggests that employers should be "encouraging and

With a majority of global organizations being quick to adapt to new working models, a similar agility is required to strengthen their financial position as well to secure their standing as an employer



facilitating" employees in this direction. NWC also suggests leveraging training opportunities, introducing new job roles, and creating a time bank where employees are fully paid despite working for lesser hours now, in agreement to utilize those hours for work in the future. Instilling a positive outlook in people, Robert Yap, President, Singapore National Employers Federation shared, "We should look at how we can use this opportunity to do a lot of things that we've been trying to do. For example, flexible work, productivity, innovation, how do we cut costs, how do we create that kind of habit that we work actually in a more digital manner."

Companies like Grab, Gojek, Temasek, Singtel, CapitaLand, BreadTalk, Singapore Airlines, Certis, Sats and Singapore Press Holdings announced pay cuts for senior management, with some also implementing wage freezes. Beyond the corporate world, Singapore's Prime Minister, Cabinet ministers and other political office-holders, and the President will be taking a three-month pay cut. In order to keep layoffs at bay, organizations are taking diligent decisions and reallocating company cash flow towards those who are the most impacted. Several consulting firms, airlines, travel platforms and others have also announced such measures where cuts in Executive and Director level salaries are accompanied with increment delays, wage freeze and CEOs letting go off salaries. From hospitality giant Marriott International's CEO Arne Morris Sorenson to retailer Macy's CEO Jeff Gennette and Chairman of the Mahindra Group in India, Anand Mahindra, among others, leaders are letting go off their salaries for a said period and stepping up to avoid any impact on jobs.

Cutting costs, not talent

Organizations are being cognizant of the impact of the global pandemic on both the professional as well as personal lives of the workforce, and in an effort to enable their employees to sail through the tough times, companies across the globe have come up with a slew of measures to keep cost in check and employees on the payroll.

While the hospitality and travel industries have experienced the biggest impact, other industries have been



With the pandemic putting the global economy through unprecedented losses, cost-cutting is the need of the hour, and it does not have to be a precursor of retrenchment

feeling the weight as well. With the pandemic putting the global economy through unprecedented losses, cost-cutting is the need of the hour, and it does not have to be a precursor of retrenchment. Here are some global practices on cost-cutting that are helping organizations reduce costs and retain talent. Read on to find out what works for you.

Unpaid time-off: With operations and production coming to a standstill, business continuity is of the essence. Balancing out the amount of work, existing manpower and budgeting for the times ahead, asking employees to take an unpaid leave of absence is among the most common measures that companies are pursuing. Urging employees to make use of the same, in an internal memo to employees, Honeywell stated, "Because it is necessary to execute further cost reductions that are commensurate with deteriorating economic conditions, we have made the difficult decision to implement a two-week unpaid leave across our global workforce in the second quarter." The company aims to pull off the two-week unpaid leave through April and May on a rotation basis to ensure continuity in operations, in accordance with local laws of respective geographies.

Shorter work weeks and time banks: If anything, the swift adoption of remote working globally has demonstrated the capability of organizations to not let work stop, at least for those where work does not require physical presence of employees in the office premises. Such flexibility and agility only goes to say that if need be, leaders are courageous enough to take unorthodox decisions to keep employees safe, and business going. Adhering to this nature, there are organizations that are experimenting with shorter working weeks in exchange for a pay cut.

Australian travel company Flight centre circulated an email to its staff of 10,000 members that said that staff can work a four-day week rather than five days with their salary reflective of this change. Speaking of shorter work-weeks, Andrew Barnes, the CEO of Perpetual Guardian, an Estate planning company in New Zealand shared, "Many businesses are considering or implementing reduced hours and reducing pay as well," further adding, "The methodology of the four-day week trial is to have a safe, renewed focus on productivity. The process eliminates much of the unproductive busyness whilst reinforcing trust between employers and employees. Businesses who do this will have a better chance of surviving this temporary crisis and maintaining employment for their people."

An extension of the concept of shorter work-weeks is time baking. Under time banking, employees work for lesser hours without any impact on pay in the short term, in agreement with fulfilling those unutilized working hours at a future date. This will result

With operations and production coming to a standstill, business continuity is of the essence. Balancing out the amount of work, existing manpower and budgeting for the times ahead, asking employees to take an unpaid leave of absence is among the most common measures that companies are pursuing

in more funds for work to be done in the future.

Revising compensation structure and delaying increments: As mentioned earlier, leaders across the globe, across the Board in companies are taking pay cuts to help sustain and leverage funds towards current critical requirements. For some companies, these pay cuts are also being implemented for specific segments of the workforce. Sabre, a leading software and technology company that powers the global travel industry, has implemented a temporary reduction in base compensation pay for its US-based salaried workforce, including a 25% reduction for its CEO.

Emirates, a Dubai-based airline, has also introduced a temporary reduction in basic salary for the majority of Emirates Group employees (excluding junior level) for a period of three months, ranging from 25% to 50%. Presidents of Emirates and dnata, Sir Tim Clark and Gary Chapman, will be taking a 100% basic salary cut for three months. Expressing his take on the same, Emirates Chairman and Chief Executive, HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum said, "Rather than ask employees to leave the business, we chose to implement a temporary basic salary cut as we want to protect our workforce and keep our talented and skilled people, as much as possible. We want to avoid cutting jobs. When demand picks up again, we also want to be able to quickly ramp up and resume services for our customers." Among other companies to follow suit are Air India Honeywell, Lemon Tree, Spicejet, MakemyTrip. In addition to revising compensation structure, companies also need to cut down on all discretionary expenditure including non-essential travel, vendor costs, hiring and consultant costs.

> A statement by the Government read, "In the backdrop of such a challenging situation, all the employers of public/ private establishments are advised to extend their coordination by not terminating their employees, particularly casual or contractual workers from the job or reduce their wages"



Seek government support/ funds: Find out what measures are your local and national governments taking to soften the blow on the economy. Identify avenues that are applicable to your business and seek possible monetary respite before you lean towards laying off the workforce to save on costs. Several governments are also creating fiscal rulebooks and exploring alternatives to furlough in an



With a majority of global organizations being quick to adapt to new working models, a similar agility is required to strengthen their financial position as well secure their standing as an employer

effort to safeguard business and jobs.

While businesses still might have to let go a percentage of the workforce, the UK is providing grants that cover 80% of wages for a furloughed employee, subject to a monthly cap of £2,500. The US is providing loans of up to $10 Mn to companies with employee strength under 500, covering payroll and essential overheads. The Indian Government has also advised employers not to sack employees. A statement by the Government read, "In the backdrop of such a challenging situation, all the employers of public/private establishments are advised to extend their coordination by not terminating their employees, particularly casual or contractual workers from the job or reduce their wages."

New job roles: Look for the needle in the haystack. With all the attention drawn towards controlling costs, the emphasis on performance and productivity has taken a backseat. Look for the enthusiastic talent internally, identify prospects who can contribute across projects and voila. You aren't bearing overhead costs, you are optimizing talent at a much lesser cost. Another advantage - keeping your employees motivated, engaged and instilling a sense of contribution in times like the present.

With a majority of global organizations being quick to adapt to new working models, a similar agility is required to strengthen their financial position as well secure their standing as an employer. How long will COVID-19 and its impact last? That remains to be ascertained, making it more crucial to convert challenges into opportunities and not letting the circumstances hold you down. The strength you show as a business, as a leader, as an employee now, will determine how successful you will be in navigating the uncertainties that lie ahead.



Helping employees tide over the COVID-19 crisis

COVID-19 has put all the companies on the edge and has impacted the world of work significantly. Millions of jobs are at risk and many businesses are on the verge of shutting shop. Amid all this chaos, many organizations are giving financial aids, organizing learning programs and also keeping track of the mental wellbeing of their employees

By **Abid Hasan**

What is common between Amazon, Facebook, Walmart, Reliance, PepsiCo, and Paytm? At the time of COVID-19, all these companies are standing with their employees, and they have got their back. These corporate giants are hiring, supporting their employees with financial aids, and working towards the safety of the employees.

The founder of Paytm Vijay Shekhar Sharma, for instance, has announced that he will not take a salary for the next two months, and he committed the money to the needs of Paytm staff amid the pandemic. Sharma was inspired by Marriott International President and CEO Arne Sorenson, who will not be taking a salary for the rest of 2020. In this time of crisis, companies around the world across multiple sectors are also providing financial aid, giving bonuses, paid leaves, and leaders are stretching themselves by not drawing salaries for the coming months.

Employers stand for their employees

In a letter to the employees, Amazon Founder, Jeff Bezos, said, "Across the world, people are feeling the economic effects of this crisis, and I'm sad to tell you I predict things are going to get worse before they get better. We're hiring for 100,000 new roles and raising wages for our hourly workers who are fulfilling orders and delivering to customers during this period of stress and turmoil. At the same time, other businesses like restaurants and bars are being forced to shut their doors. We hope people who've been laid off will come work with us until they're able to go back to the jobs they had."

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the company is hiring more workers, and employees diagnosed with COVID-19 or placed into quarantine will receive up to two weeks of pay. PepsiCo will also pay 100 percent of their pay to those employees who are in quarantine. The company announced that it would provide enhanced benefits to all US-based employees and additional compensation to US frontline employees – the women and men who make, move and sell products – amidst the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The additional compensation covers more than 90,000 frontline employees at both PepsiCo Beverages North America (PBNA) and PepsiCo Foods North America (PFNA). It consists of a minimum of an incremental $100 per week for full-time employees over the next month. PepsiCo also announced it would hire 6,000 new, full-time, full-benefit frontline employees across the US in the coming months.

> In this time of crisis, several companies around the world across sectors are providing financial aid, giving bonuses, paid leaves, and leaders are stretching themselves by not drawing salaries for the coming months

Global retail chain giant, Walmart has responded to COVID-19 with more hiring and paying extra bonuses to the employees. As part of responding to the current environment, Walmart is also hiring 150,000 new associates through the end of May to work in stores, clubs, distribution, and fulfillment centers.

The company is providing a cash bonus for hourly associates in the time of an unprecedented national health crisis. The bonus is for all US hourly associates in stores, clubs, supply chain, and offices. The bonus will be $300 for full-time hourly associates and $150 for part-time hourly associates and will add up to more than $365 million.

Appreciating the effort of the employees, Doug McMillon, President and CEO of Walmart, said, "Walmart associates have gone above and beyond the call of duty in serving our customers during these unprecedented times. We want to reward our associates for their hard work and recognize them for the work that is in front of us."

The Mukesh Ambani-led conglomerate Reliance Industries issued a statement where it said that all employees who are earning below Rs 30,000 per month would be paid twice a month to protect their cash flow and mitigate any overwhelming financial burden. Facebook is also giving $1,000 bonuses to its employees to support them during the coronavirus pandemic. The company

announced that they are offering $1,000 to use for whatever the employees see fit to support themselves and their families in adapting during this period.

Other organizations from different sectors such as FMCG, Banking, and Retail are coming forward to take care of their employees with all the measures they are capable of doing.

The crisis is taking a toll on the corporates but some of them are going an extra mile to make the situation normal for their employees. Shree Ramkrishna Exports paid full salary for the month of March to the entire workforce of around 6000 employees (Including Contracted Workforce). The company is not setting off any eligible paid leaves which respective employees are already having in their account.

Mental wellness

Panasonic has come up with multiple virtual programs to engage the employees one of the specific initiatives are HR Business Ambassadors. These are in regular touch with all employees to keep a check on their wellbeing and ensure their safety in this critical hour.

Smartphone brand, itel is constantly driving responsible communication and internal engagement campaigns to help employees cope up through spiraling negative thoughts about this uncertain time. The company is organizing comic styled tips & tricks to efficiently manage work from home. The mobile brand has also introduced fitness challenges, quiz and games to keep the employees fit and stress-free.

In order to maintain the wellbeing of the employees, ITC Hotels is maintaining a personal connection with the employees. Each HR Manager calls a minimum of 10 employees daily to enquire about their health and safety and that of their family members. More than 1200 employees have been reached at their homes & extended necessary support.

Amway is continuing with the increments, promotions, and recognition as per earlier plans. Despite the tough times, the employees have received salary corrections effective 1st April 2020.

The company has constituted a COVID-19 Crisis committee comprising select members of the leadership team. The committee is responsible for charting out and guiding the crisis strategy for the employees. The company has rolled out virtual engagement programs, external webinars on a variety of topics to learn new skills and also introduced mediclaim plans that will cover treatment costs arising on account of COVID-19.

In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the L&D team of Clix Capital has launched a channel on the Learning Experience Platform, specifically dedicated to wellness. This channel is regularly populated with content like- motivational videos by senior leaders on themes like how to make WFH productive, articles on mental wellbeing by reputed publications etc.

Digital software networking company, Amdocs has taken the precautions to ensure a safe and healthy workplace at their offices globally while maintain-

> With multiple measures being put in place, the entire world is hoping that this crisis will come to an end soon. And when all of this will be over, every organization will be remembered for what they did during the crisis for their employees

ing an open channel of communication and updates with the employees. To add another layer of support to help the employees during these complex times, they launched the Virtually Together website, and have made large parts of it available to the wider community as it can help everyone. Virtually Together incorporates a wide range of solutions for working from home, well-being and for parents at home with their kids.



Learning hour

Learning and upskilling has become paramount in this time of crisis. All the leading companies are opting for virtual learning classes and trying to get the maximum leverage out of this lockdown. These courses give employees enough time to upskill themselves and stay relevant for the future.

Hindustan Coca Cola Beverages has launched a virtual employee engagement program that seeks to involve our colleagues and their family members online for their physical, and mental wellness. The company is also conducting virtual town halls at all levels of the workforce to keep everyone updated of the latest and seek their inputs on the best course of action, at a given time.

McDonalds India has adapted many of its classroom training modules digitally, and introduced e-learning modules, quizzes, masterclasses by managers and many more creative learning sessions, which employees can access on their phone while in quarantine at home. This initiative by the company is aimed to make sure that the team continues to learn and grow even when they are staying home.

Apart from ensuring the mental wellness of the employees, ITC Hotels has rolled a number of e-learning courses targeted at specific roles and levels through primary channels of e-learning to provide an opportunity for self-learning which can be accentuated through anytime app-based hosting.

Clix Capital is also hosting live e-sessions on their learning platform on topics such as P&L Training, Managing personal finances etc. The company is also encouraging employees to sign up for an online course in their domain on platforms like Coursera that will add to their existing skill set. The company will bear the cost of the course and the certification, if completed within the designated time frame.

With multiple measures being put in place, the entire world is hoping that this crisis will come to an end soon. And when all of this will be over, every organization will be remembered for what they did during the crisis for their employees. They will be remembered for how they sailed through the tough times and fought this long battle. This is not the only crisis that has occurred in history; such crises will come and go; it is about what we learn from this as we prepare for a better tomorrow.

TAKE A PEOPLE-FIRST APPROACH TO NAVIGATING THIS CRISIS: CITRIX'S GLOBAL CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

IN THIS BIG INTERVIEW, **DONNA KIMMEL**, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, CITRIX SHARES HER VIEWS ON THE CURRENT COVID-19 CRISIS, THE DISRUPTIONS IN HR AND TALENT OPERATIONS AND WHAT DO THEY MEAN FOR TOP HR LEADERS. SHE ALSO TALKS ABOUT WHY A BETTER EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE IS EQUIVALENT TO BETTER BUSINESS RESULTS, BE IT IN TIMES OF CRISIS OR OTHERWISE

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Donna Kimmel is the Executive Vice President and Chief People Officer of Citrix. She is responsible for all aspects of identifying, fostering and developing top talent as well as overseeing organizational strategies that maximize engagement and position the company to win in the marketplace.

With more than 30 years of experience in creating and implementing successful global talent programs that drive business results, Kimmel is a trusted Human Resources leader who believes in creating diverse and engaged teams that enable the extraordinary. Throughout her career she has delivered comprehensive people programs, led large scale end-to-end business initiatives (including corporate reorganizations, spin-offs—from public to private to public—and integrations for global M&A activities), and catalyzed cultural transformations.

She is an active member of the community and serves on the Equality Means Business Advisory Board, the largest civil rights organization in Florida dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the Board of Directors for the University of Rhode Island's International Engineering Program.

In this exclusive interaction with People Matters, Kimmel shares her views on the current COVID-19 crisis,

> The global pandemic has, in essence, created a forced experiment. Organizations that may have been reluctant to consider remote work have come face-to-face with a situation that now requires it





the disruptions in HR and talent operations and what do they mean for top HR leaders. She also talks about why a better employee experience is equivalent to better business results, be it in times of crisis or otherwise.

Q How do you see the current COVID-19 crisis and the disruptions in HR and talent operations and what do they mean for top HR leaders?

A The global pandemic has, in essence, created a forced experiment. Organizations that may have been reluctant to consider remote work have come face-to-face with a situation that now requires it. Remote work is not business as usual. It is perhaps the biggest change in the way businesses operate that any of us has ever seen. It represents a totally new way of thinking and operating and can be a difficult adjustment for employees and employers to make. When things become uncertain, it becomes even harder.

But business in a lot of cases must go on as usual, even in times of crisis. And this is where HR can step up and make a difference.

In uncertain times, the role of the HR team is to see things through a lens of empathy. To be the voice of employees, and anticipate the challenges and opportunities they are facing, and develop plans and programs to overcome those challenges.

Q What are the top challenges that organizations face in terms of attracting the right employees and retaining them at a crisis time like this?

A recent Citrix study showed that just behind managers and salary as the top reasons people quit their jobs, was access to good technology

A It is said that if you really want to know a person, watch them under stress. The same is true for an organization. The organization's response, the speed with which they make decisions, the level of communication, and the values that are demonstrated are communicating profound messages to employees and candidates. Even during a crisis, employees have an inner drive to use their strengths and do their best work. Even in normal times, one of the biggest challenges to enable this drive is having the tools people need to be productive and engaged. With knowledge workers shifting to remote work at scale, the need for the right technology is clearer than ever. A recent Citrix study showed that just behind managers and salary as the top reasons people quit their jobs, was access to good technology. So, we have to address those things holistically, and it requires a strong partnership with IT.

To set employees up for success, it is essential to provide a digital workspace that has all of the tools and data a person needs, a physical workspace that fits individual work styles, and a vibrant culture with a sense of trust and community. And this is why the partnership with IT becomes so critical.

To attract and engage talent, technology must be an enabler that removes the 'noise' of lower value tasks and enables people to focus on the elements of the role they were hired to do (and that they enjoy!). This is where human motivation and technology become partners: workplace technologies that create space in a worker's day to do what they love would mean organizations can see higher productivity plus greater motivation and engagement.

Q How is the larger conversation between CHROs and CEOs changing at this crisis

moment, given that there is this increasing realization that people are the true assets of a company?

A At Citrix, we know that our biggest asset is our people, and because of that we have made employee experience the cornerstone of our mission as an organization - both for ourselves and for our customers. The conversations between CHROs and CEOs has been built around a simple equation: Better employee experience = better business results. That's true in times of crisis and in normal times as well. Living in a technology-driven world means that the real change in the larger C-level conversations is the real need for a third voice in the dialogue - the CIO. Improving employee experience isn't just the province of IT or HR in a silo. It requires a "leader of the future" mindset and approach, with CIOs and CHROs collaborating with their CEOs together to ensure that the technologies in place support people's needs, adhere to HR and security policies, and deliver an engaging experience.

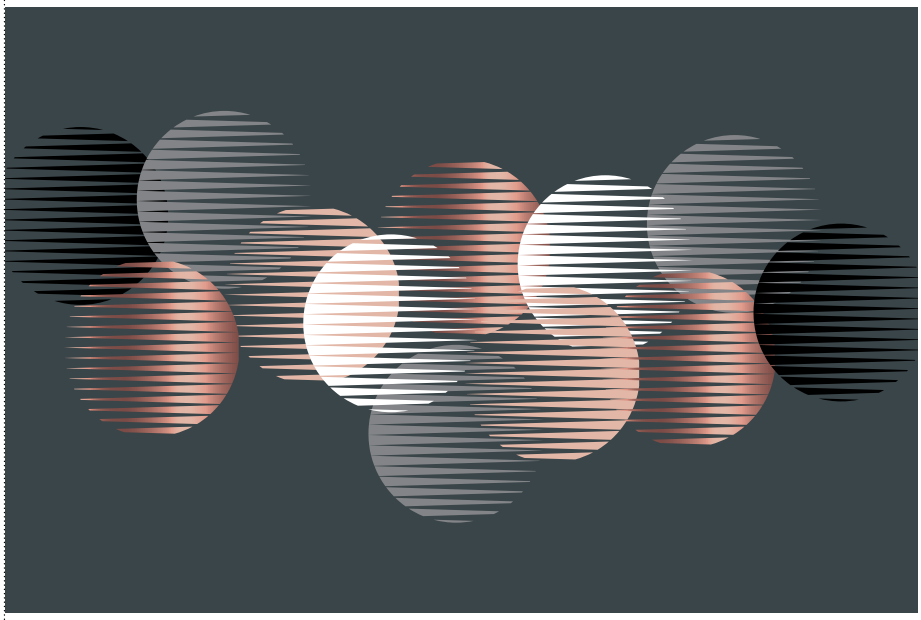
Q What sort of skills and competencies do leaders need to possess to manage crises and help their organizations recover from them? What is your company doing that is unique in this moment of crisis?

A During times of uncertainty, like a crisis, values become especially important. Many decisions have never been made before and they need to be made quickly. At Citrix, our core values of integrity, respect, curiosity, courage and unity, have been our north star. Two additional competencies are critical in crisis: leading with empathy and inspiring the ones who lead with empathy. No matter the size of your team, it's essential to view the situation through the eyes of your people and guide them with their safety and well-being as your top priority. Similarly, we need people who can inspire others by connecting to a bigger purpose. Citrix is taking a people-first approach to navigating this crisis. Just a few examples:

Any Citrix employee will receive 100 percent of their base pay if:

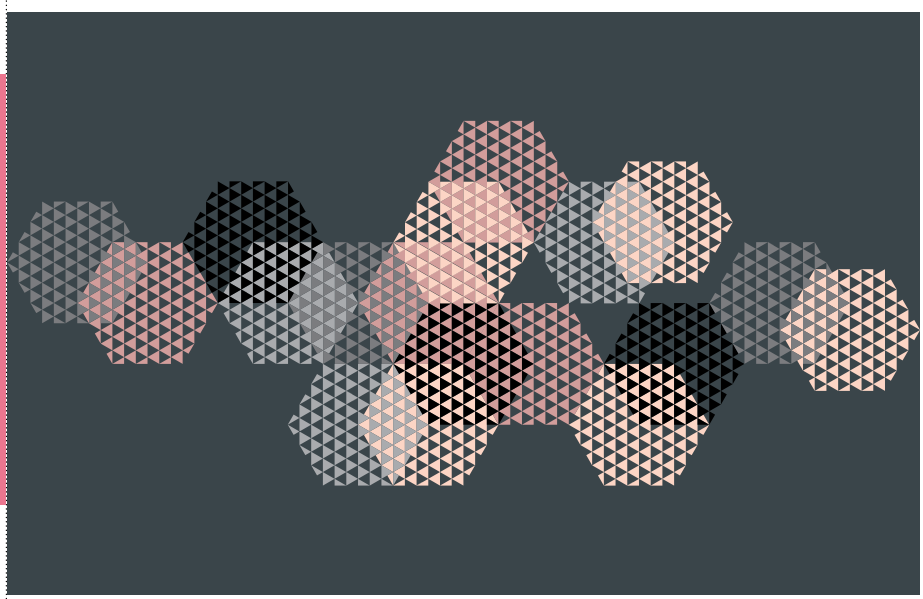
- They become ill due to COVID-19
- Their children or family members become ill due to COVID-19 and require care from the employee
- Their manager says the job cannot be performed at home, and they therefore cannot work

At Citrix, we know that our biggest asset is our people, and because of that we have made employee experience the cornerstone of our mission as an organization - both for ourselves and for our customers



- They have children or family members at home due to COVID-19-related social distancing practices and are unable to find an alternate caregiver and fully work

In addition, we formally notified our vendors who provide labor to us, that we will continue to pay under our existing contracts, allowing them the ability to pay those workers during this crisis.



We have given every global employee a stipend to cover:

- Work-from-home support items, such as monitors, keyboards, headsets, surge protectors, ergonomic desks and chairs, additional wi-fi, etc.
- Unexpected personal and family expenses
- Helping our communities and local businesses in ways such as donations to local charities, purchasing food delivery from local restaurants, etc.

These are just a couple of examples, but hopefully they demonstrate how we are helping our people through this crisis.

Q How do you see the talent crisis disrupting the technology industry given that a lot of C-Suite executives view access to talent as the greatest inhibitor to their growth aspirations?

A While the talent crisis certainly could disrupt the technology industry, I actually see the real opportunity for the technology industry to disrupt and fix the talent crisis. The newest generation entering the workforce were born into a world of technology — it is in their blood. But they are demanding flexible working styles and expect a consumer-like tech experience in all aspects of their work. Traditional enterprise technology that gives them a sense of being locked down and tethered to archaic models of thinking, collaborating and producing results just isn't going to cut it. The technology industry can help businesses feeling the pinch, especially those in more traditional or conservative industries where the talent crisis may be most acute.

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

> During times of uncertainty, like a crisis, values become especially important. Many decisions have never been made before and they need to be made quickly

Companies that embrace the concept can power a

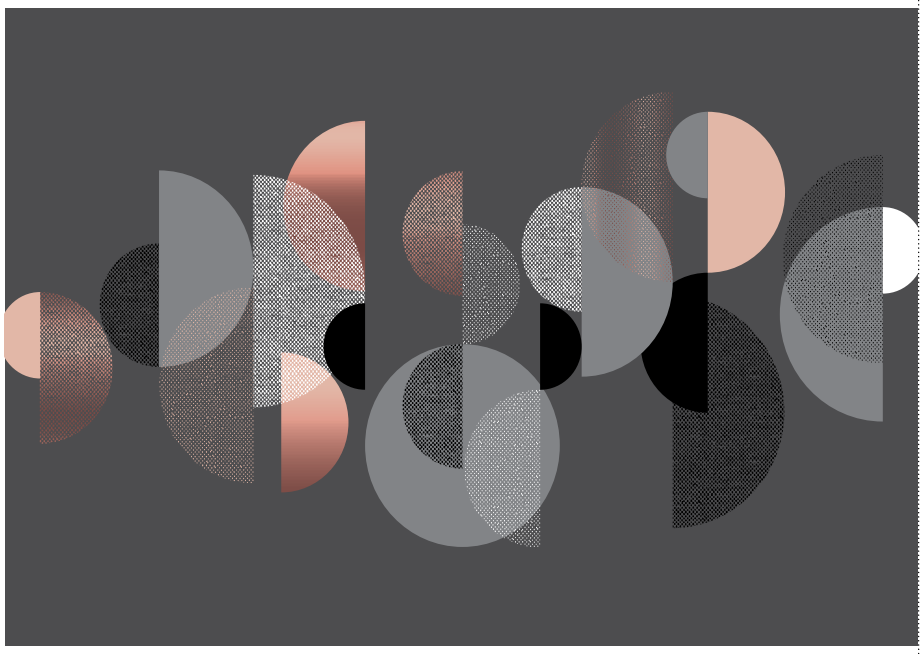
smarter, better way to work and draw the talent they need to unlock innovation and move their business forward. Those that don't will continue to watch as the talent gap widens and swallows their opportunity.

Q Experts' take on the future of work is often found conflicting leaving plenty of room for debate. What does the future of work mean for you?

I see the future of work as being defined by a few key trends: flexible work, digital workspaces, people-centric design, upskilling/reskilling talent, and data analytics.

This means a future of work that is going to have to be agile. The pace of change is only going to get faster, and as we can see from the current crisis, organizations are having to think through and be prepared for the unknown more than ever before. But if we follow those trends, we can see how that future might look.

I have talked about flexible work and digital workspaces in helping to address the talent crisis — they will also help build a more powerful future of work. Similarly, we have discussed here that people are an organization's biggest asset, so you will see more and more organizations leaning on people-centric frameworks for how they design



The future of work will require us to create a better system of upskilling and reskilling our people. The talent crisis has shown us that it's getting harder and harder to find the talent you need outside of your organizations.

their businesses — people-centric cultures, values, programs, practices, and even physical spaces.

The future of work will require us to create a better system of upskilling and reskilling our people. The talent crisis has shown us that it's getting harder and harder to find the talent you need outside of your organizations. Even in a post-COVID world, I still believe there will be a shortage of highly-skilled workers. So, HR professionals more than ever will need to think about how to help people build new skills and learn new expertise while on the job. And finally, the future of work will be data-driven. HR usually isn't thought of as a data-driven function, but we can use technology to get insights into employee behaviors and motivations like never before.

Predicting the future isn't a science. And it can't be done with total accuracy. But when it comes to the future of work, one prediction is certain: organizations that focus on their people and create an environment in which they can engage deeply in meaningful work, harness their full creativity

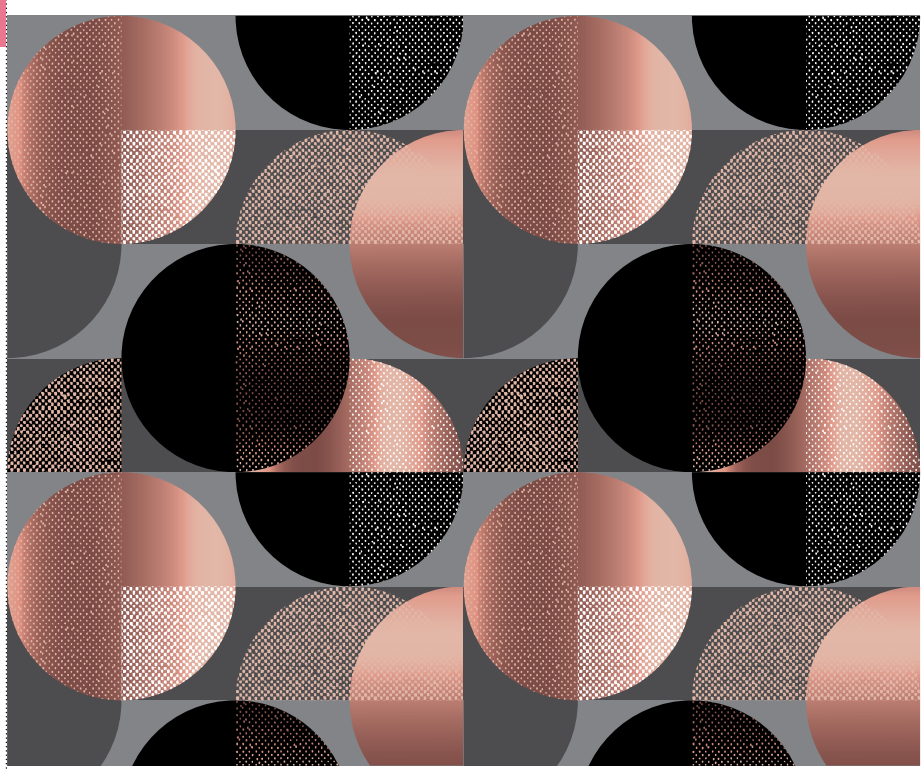
and cultivate their passions and special skills, will see their business thrive.

Q Citrix is making a massive shift in its strategy from product to platform and is moving to a cloud-first strategy. What are the implications of this big shift for you as the people manager of a large tech company?

A Making a fundamental shift in our business model starts with the talent we have in the organization. Because our workforce largely came from enterprise on-prem software backgrounds across sales, engineering, product and other functional teams, our journey has been both technical and cultural.

As is the case with all companies that make such a shift, we have had to transition to being a cloud-first company before we shifted from being a product to a platform company. We have invested in existing talent and hired externally to build a culture of change and continuous learning. One example of this comes from our salesforce. Our solutions are now general purpose rather than niche use. More end users within an organization can benefit from our Workspace vs. when we focused only on virtualization.

Overall, our business requires strong technical talent. Many are competing for the same talent; financial, automotive, healthcare, are all 'technical' these days. To continue to grow and support our business strategies, we need to be competitive in attracting and retaining this talent.



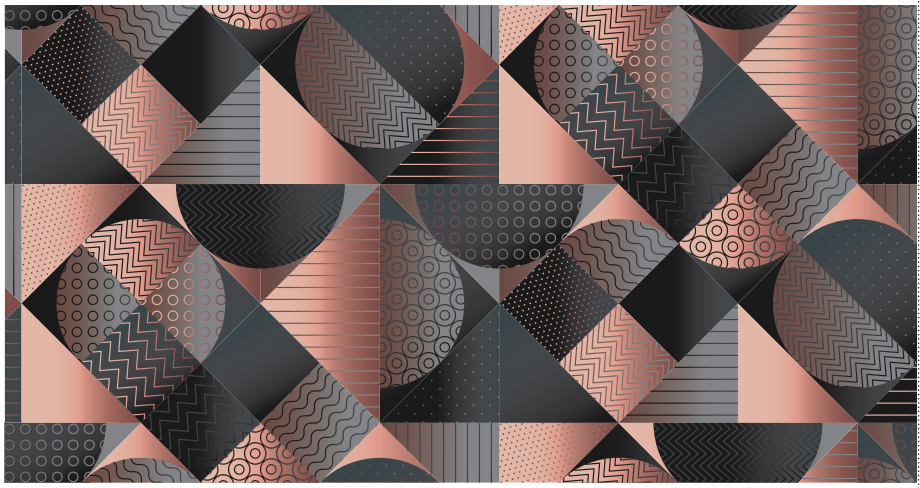
We have wrapped each of these critical components of our journey in a culture that promotes learning and a "growth mindset", and then established a performance, development and reward process that recognizes the values and behaviors that contribute to a culture of progress and performance.

Q You lead over 9,000 people in a global tech company. Can you give us a preview of large scale initiatives from people perspective that you are embarking on to enable the company move to the next level in the changing world of work?

A There are several key projects underway. Interestingly, as we have all felt the world of work transform rapidly underneath our feet, Citrix is positioned to serve our customers, partners and communities even more powerfully by offering our experience in remote work, building a culture of trust and engagement, and understanding of the critical leadership skills required for the future.

Even prior to COVID-19, we have been strengthening our commitment and investment into a strategy and tools for listening to employees. We have always had a focus on employee roundtables and engagement surveys, but in order to

Leaders who aren't rested are scientifically less able to think at their highest capacity and offer their best, innovative and creative solutions



build organizational responsiveness, we are taking this to the next level.

We are also deepening our people analytics capabilities, building robust partnerships with other business intelligence groups across the company. And, we are taking a deep dive into understanding productivity among remote and office-based employee. At Citrix, we are also redesigning our reward systems to ensure managers have the opportunity to differentiate top performance. Interestingly, as the world becomes more aware of the importance of the employee experience, we are also partnering with our sales and marketing team to discuss the technological component of employee experience. We recognize culture, physical space and technology work together to create the overall employee experience and we truly believe the Citrix Workspace can and will make a huge difference in helping C-level leaders solve for challenges in the technology aspect.

Overall, HR teams are at the forefront of building the future of work. Whether it's finding the right talent, developing internal talent, or driving efficiencies that make it easier for the business to do what they were hired to do… HR is driving the health of organizations. Without the right talent, strategy becomes very difficult to achieve.

Q Who or what has shaped who you are, especially your leadership style in the digital era?

A I have had some really great leaders in my life. One in particular was a role model for a healthy balance of high expectations and taking time off. She documented on one of my performance evaluations that I needed to do a better job of taking time to rest, recharge and rejuvenate. She reinforced that I cannot be at my best if I don't make some R&R time.

In our highly connected world, I believe it's getting harder and harder to disconnect and rejuvenate. Unfortunately, I think the vast majority of us have to be forced to slow down and make this time. A couple of years ago, I ended up with an illness that can recur if I don't take time to care for myself. And, as we have seen through the pandemic, we are so conditioned to be busy that many of us have rediscovered a part of ourselves previously lost, now that we are forced to be home.

We have also seen it in crisis leadership. Leaders who aren't rested are scientifically less able to think at their highest capacity and offer their best, innovative and creative solutions.

Taking care of yourself can feel non-essential when we are all moving so quickly. It's a tough lesson that will catch up with us, as it did with me, so I feel it is a critical lesson for everyone to learn.



Finding simplicity in chaos: Beyond VUCA

The concept of VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) is no longer adequate as a framework for evaluating the world: perhaps it never was. Let us instead set it aside, and look at a more constructive, useful alternative: human systems dynamics



Glenda Eoyang



Michael Jenkins

By **Glenda Eoyang** and **Michael Jenkins**

Volatile. Uncertain. Complex. Ambiguous. VUCA. Some leadership pundits recommend that we use this term for anything we don't understand or cannot control. The problem is that the tumultuous events in our world, and the concomitant domino-effects we are experiencing, have completely outgrown that label. In fact, VUCA as a handy acronym has had its day. When we invoke VUCA to explain how things are changing, we risk missing the depth and breadth of the current reality. We excuse ourselves for inaction and passivity. Paradoxically, the term might even obfuscate and confuse our ability to make sense of what's going on right now. We need a more thoughtful way of making sense of our emerging chaos and uncertainty. In short, we need to understand our worlds and ourselves as complex adaptive systems.

Why not VUCA?

VUCA is problematic as a framework for a number of reasons.

First, the terms underpinning VUCA originated at the end of the Cold War. Coined initially by the US Army War College, they were used

to describe the new global order that was emerging at the time. It was an attempt to paint a picture of how the United States saw the world in the immediate post-Cold War period. From the Western military point of view, that picture was indeed volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. It was the 9/11 terrorist attacks that enabled the acronym itself – VUCA – to gain currency. Not long after, the term was appropriated by leadership scholars and practitioners. They used it to describe what they perceived as a business environment characterised by turbulence, the unknown, and the uncontrollable. The term, and the models and tools it spawned, were a convenient way to package everything that was unfamiliar and disturbing. The label allowed people to refer to the complex reality without doing the hard work that would be necessary to figure out what they could know and might reasonably do about what was going on.

Second, VUCA owes its genesis to an American perception of a situation. That means events elsewhere in the world were somehow not very VUCA. It implied that the societal upheavals and ruptures going on in other parts of the world were not significant, but rather things that were just going on in other people's lives and in other countries. For example, the late '50s marked the start of what Mao Zedong called the "Great Leap Forward." That initiative was aimed at an exponential, social and economic leapfrogging which led – estimates vary – to between 19 and 45 million people dying of starvation. Many historians take the view that this disaster cost more lives than those lost in Russia under Stalin (20 million or more). It was something that was happening far away from the United States. For the people who suffered and died, any attempt to characterise their experience as simply VUCA-like would be a grave injustice to those who endured an existence that was in reality, a brutally enforced normality. For as long as it lasted, the Great Leap Forward was the reality of life for millions of Chinese people.



Third, and this is where VUCA is truly problematic and no longer fit-for-purpose: VUCA does not adequately apply to societies where volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity are normal aspects of the world. VUCA does not fit as a descriptor if you have grown up in Haiti, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria or Yemen. It doesn't fit because VUCA is an attempt to describe a deviation from an imagined stable, certain, simple, and clear norm. It is a redundant term because it is culturally biased and takes the perspective of the West and of Western experience as its determinant and starting point.

So, for these three main reasons, VUCA has truly passed its sell-by date. And while we're here, we would like to make a plea for everyone to think carefully about VUCA's cousins: "New Normal" and "Future-Proofing." "New Normal" in its crudest form asks

people to accept emerging exceptional or horrendous circumstances and move on with their lives. If we're not careful with the term, we run the risk of denying ourselves the opportunity to interrogate why we're in such a situation in the first place. "Future-Proofing" is even more extreme. It is an oxymoron. The future is uncertain, and uncertainty carries risk. Any notion that the future can be made risk-free is a delusion of power and privilege.

These terms can be both a distraction from and an obstacle to a deeper understanding of what confronts our world right now. Together they can hinder us in our attempts to gain a better understanding of the nature of change itself. So, let's work a bit harder to make more sense of what's truly going on. Let's acknowledge the things that are unknowable in this moment but be aware and awake to the things we can know and might influence.

A true and useful alternative

Over the past 30 years, a new field of theory and practice has developed to help people see, understand, and influence change in VUCA systems. This emerging field draws theory from the science of complex adaptive systems. Its practice has developed in applications across a wide range of sectors and disciplines. Individuals, groups, and institutions use it to find options for action to tame their wicked, complex issues. This body of concepts, models, and methods is called human systems dynamics (HSD).

Four principles of HSD help people move past a description of VUCA and engage effectively with the challenges they face in uncertainty.

> The VUCA framework is way past its sell-by date, and no longer suitable for today's world—if in fact it ever was. We need a more thoughtful way of making sense of our emerging chaos and uncertainty. In short, we need to understand our worlds and ourselves as complex adaptive systems

Work across scales. In the past, experts chose their domains and answered questions that were relevant there. Nowhere was this pattern more pronounced than in the health professions: Public health, community health, family practice, radiology, cytology, physical therapy, psychology, and many more. Each discipline had its scope of practice, special jargon, and highly developed tools and methods. Complex adaptive systems self-organizing across all boundaries. That is why today's complex issues do not fit into any one of these artificial domains. Social determinants of health, chronic illness, viral epidemics and environmental illness all require that we see across symptoms from cells to international communities. HSD provides a suite of models and methods that work equally well in any context or at any level of system. One of HSD's basic principles is to, "Attend to the whole, the part, and the greater whole." Complex problems can be caused by, diagnosed within, and treated at any scale. Treating a single COVID-19 patient is a totally insufficient response to our current epidemic, and public health pronouncements are equally futile. Family isolation and community supports are important, but alone they will not cure our current ills. COVID-19 interventions must reach across scales,

and the work at various scales must relate in ways to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts.

Focus on patterns, not problems. For the last 200 years, we have solved complicated problems by breaking them into simple parts. Fix the parts, put them back together, and the whole is repaired. In complex adaptive systems, the whole depends on intricate relationships among the parts. Divide it up, and the synergistic problem persists. Fix a part, and it is immediately unfixed by problems from other parts of the system. Put it back together, and it no longer resembles the whole. COVID-19 is a perfect example of a challenge that is a pattern, not a problem. Close schools to reduce spread and put children (best carriers) in the care of grandparents (most vulnerable). Enforce social distancing and increase unemployment claims. Stop health professionals from interacting with vulnerable patients and leave disabled people in chronic pain. When we see the challenge as a series of problems, the solution to one generates more. HSD considers the whole problem, and each of its sub-problems, to be patterns. Look closely at the pattern of COVID-19. You will see that it is infinitely variable, though some characteristics are common. You will also see that it is determined by specific, local, unique conditions, and that any action to improve must be drawn from and sensitive to those local conditions. You will also see that any action, by any person, at any scale, has the potential to shift the pattern for all.



Stand in inquiry. Complex adaptive systems generate deep uncertainty. Not only is the future not known, but some aspects of it are radically unknowable. You may be able to predict broad, system-wide behaviours, but specific outcomes for specific situations are totally unpredictable. Answers are likely to change from place to place and time to time, but good questions are always useful. That is why a discipline of inquiry is the path to successful adaptation in complex environments. Today, we do not know who will contract COVID-19, whose disease will become critical, who will survive, or how long survivors will be immune. We can ask good questions, though. How can we get resources to the places where they are needed? What hidden resources—physical, financial, or human—can be tapped to respond to urgent needs? How would I act if I assume I am carrying the virus?

Keep moving. Finally, our automatic responses to threat are fight, flight, or freeze. In complex environments, none of these is a reasonable response. We are seeing the hopelessness of each of these paths in various responses to COVID-19 today. This is a phenomenon that a lot of people are feeling at the moment – low level constant fear with nowhere to put it; lots of anxious energy when the primary course of action

you're recommended to take is to "stay inside." We don't know exactly how to fight this virus, and nowhere is completely safe to escape it. In the short-term, it might be reasonable to freeze, but given the nature of the situation, freezing is not a long-term option. If all of our automatic responses are impossible or destructive, then what can we do? Adaptive Action. This three-step, iterative process guides individual and collective action, even in the most uncertain and dangerous situations. It asks three questions: WHAT? SO WHAT? NOW WHAT?

- WHAT are the patterns you are seeing in the here-and-now?
- SO WHAT is the most important challenge and what resources and influence are available to you?
- NOW WHAT action will make a difference in this moment and move the whole pattern toward greater health and well-being?

Given the dynamic nature of the complex adaptive system, any movement has the potential to change the pattern and the next WHAT? emerges immediately from the last NOW WHAT? Another benefit of Adaptive Action in the time of COVID-19 is that it scales. Individuals, families, communities, institutions can make the Adaptive Action cycle work. Adaptive Action also flexes to respond to ability and urgency. Some cycles may take seconds, others last for years.

Who will do this work?

We need new heroes in this time of turbulence and uncertainty. The great and good of our institutional structures cannot manage us into this new relationship with uncertainty. Their power is locked in the structures and relationships that are failing to respond to the current COVID-19 crisis. Experts, scholars and pundits are not up to the task, either. Their advice gives one-size-fits-all solutions to the never-repeated-in-time-or-place patterns that emerge in chaos. Complex adaptive systems theory and practice offer a new alternative to traditional power, expertise, and leadership.

Given the dynamic nature of the complex adaptive system, any movement has the potential to change the pattern and the next WHAT? emerges immediately from the last NOW WHAT?



Individual agents determine the emerging patterns

in the self-organizing dynamics of complex adaptive systems. Agents can be individual people, but they can also be groups, institutions, objects, resources, ideas or any other influential entity. When agents interact, they generate patterns that are greater than the sum of their parts. Common examples of such patterns emerging in human systems include culture, trust, and well-being. Not all emerging patterns are positive, though. Other examples include violence, corruption, economic disparities, and racism. The dynamics are the same, whether the emerging patterns serve or damage the common good.

The difference between the constructive and destructive systemic patterns is driven by choice—individual choice. Every agent contributes to the patterns of the whole. Everyone, in every moment, chooses to reinforce health, life, and collective well-being, or they choose to contribute to tribal, selfish, destructive patterns for the whole.

Expert Humans choose life. They cannot do it alone, and the practices don't come naturally to all of us. We must intentionally develop individual and collective capacity to see, understand, and influence our shared, emergent patterns so that each of us contributes to and benefits from a society that supports us all.



Call to action

So, in these troubled times, when all of us strive to do our best and be our best; when interdependency and uncertainty are the rule, rather than the exception; when we are called to act with and for the good of the whole; when each of us can commit to choose life, we must stop talking about VUCA. As Expert Humans, we can stop seeing ourselves as victims of these chaotic times. Instead, we can find the will and the capacity to work within our complex systems, seeking out ways to dial-up our humanity and take full advantage of the altruism, compassion and empathy in all of us. Together, we will thrive, when we see, understand, and influence patterns toward health and well-being for each and for all.

At Expert Humans and the Human Systems Dynamics Institute, we are committed to theory and practice to influence patterns at all scales of human existence. If you would like to find out more about the various streams of our work, or if you want to join us on this journey, you can contact us at info@experthumans.org or info@hsdinstitute.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As the Founding Executive Director of Human Systems Dynamics Institute, **GLENDA EOYANG** leads an international network of scholar-practitioners who develop adaptive capacity in others.

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Q&A

Organizations must take conscious steps for inclusive leadership: UN Women's Naciri

We are not living up to our own commitments to promote women's rights, and we are also harming the prospects for sustainable, inclusive, economic growth that research shows is within reach if we succeed in creating a more gender equal economy and society, says **Mohammad Naciri**

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Mohammad Naciri is the Regional Director of UN Women for Asia and the Pacific. Prior to joining UN Women, Mohammad was the Deputy Country Director of UNDP in Yemen, where he supported the country in the formulation of its Gender Strategy and the Gender Responsive Budgeting process. He has worked in Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Cambodia, dealing with issues from human trafficking to ethnic cleansing.

In an exclusive interview with People Matters, Mohammad Naciri talks about the need to create a level playing field for women to succeed at work. Here are the excerpts of the interview with Mohammad.



Q What are some patterns you've noticed over the years about women at work,

and things they could be doing better to advance their careers?

A Rather than focus on what women need to do better to advance their careers, it is important that we all take responsibility for building labor markets and workplaces that allow all staff members, men and women, to thrive, learn, and ultimately be as productive as they can be. In some cases this means gender specific actions and policies, such as maternity leave but it is also about addressing the unconscious bias of companies that result in, for instance, overrepresentation of one gender in certain job functions, or in inherently discriminatory criteria for promotion.

We also know that across the world, women take on more of the unpaid care work at home and in their communities, such as taking care of children, elders, or household tasks. So let us first ensure that there's a level playing field, that women have as much time to focus on their work and career, and that they are given equal opportunities to grow and advance in their workplaces.

And even then, we still find that gender discrimination and gender stereotypes in the world of work - like everywhere else - have resulted in longlasting impact in the way we all perceive gender and gender roles. For that I have been pleased to see the rising awareness and concrete initiatives where women support and empower other women to grow their leadership ambitions and skills though mentorship programs and role modeling. Also, I am very optimistic about the increased questioning of stereotypes and gender norms when it comes to boys' and girls' choice of studies and careers and the attention to the principle of 'if you can see it, you can be it'.

and we are also harming the prospects for sustainable, inclusive, economic growth that research shows is within reach if we succeed in creating a more gender equal economy and society. We will only achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 if we meet the goals and targets of Sustainable Development Goal 5 which is setting targets specifically for women's social, economic and political empowerment.

UN Women therefore continues to focus on strengthening and promoting the business case for gender equality, and we do that by partnering with the private sector such as under the EU-supported WeEmpowerAsia program, a regional initiative (linked to a global movement), to get more companies on board to actively and concretely integrate gender equality into the way they employ, procure, market and do business.

It is not for women to create the work-life balance, it is the system that needs to change so that we all, men and women, find that balance

Q Despite the fact that the business case for gender diversity is clear, the overall women's progress at work remains stalled. As a leader, do you think it's time for corporations to take bold steps to balance the scale?

A The World Economic Forum has estimated that it will take about a 100 years to close the gender gap if we continue as of now, even longer in the Southeast Asian region where I currently work. This we cannot accept. We are not living up to our own commitments to promote and protect women's rights,

Q What work still needs to be done to level the playing field in the c-suite and boardroom? How do you see the future of women leadership?

A We also need a critical mass to choose from to get more women leaders: organizations must take conscious steps to build appropriate pipelines for inclusive and diverse leadership, and this takes time and effort, and in some cases also special measures, and not only to reach gender parity, but also other kinds of diversity so our organizations much better represent the communities and societies we serve and work with.

Q How can women employees create a great work-life balance for themselves?

As I mentioned before, it is not for women to create the work-life balance, it is the system that needs to change so that we all, men and women, find that balance. In Europe right now there is a lot of discussion about parental leave and family leave as an expansion of or addition to maternity leave, and to institutionalize that men receive their share of care and bonding time with their children for instance. But it is also a recognition of a growing need for other forms of care as populations are aging and social protection systems (and family structures) are changing. But we know that these improvements in people's so called private spheres benefit the economy also – the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report every year shows that economies with a higher level of gender equality are stronger economies. The business case is clear.

Also, much focus right now is on the future of work and the way technology increasingly impact jobs and the ways we work. Let us use technology for the good and ensure, for instance, that some of the unpaid care work that are now disproportionately on women's shoulders be decreased or eased by technology. In developing countries this means better access to drinking water and electricity to ease household chores which are still mainly women's work but this is also relevant in more technologically advanced societies: information technology continues to provide new ways of working remotely or allow flexible time schedules that can benefit work-life balance for both women and men. So let us make sure that women are also part of designing and developing this new technology because they have different experiences and see different ways of use and benefits.



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 organi-

It is not for women to create the work-life balance, it is the system that needs to change so that we all, men and women, find that balance

zations have been able to bet on the resultant advantage. What's your take on this?

A I think it is changing. We see that companies are very interested in doing their share to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and have really taken them on as a way of framing and strengthening CSR and ESG work. The environmental issues may have been what many companies have focused on first but we see that corporations are increasingly interested in working actively with social and political issues such as gender equality. They see it as equally important for their business - for their business outcomes, for their reputation, and for their ability to attract and retain the best talent.

Q Why are companies failing to close pay gaps?

A With the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other partners, UN Women runs the 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' campaign. Again, we see how unconscious (and conscious) bias is unfairly impacting the way women are paid for their work. Also, the lack of pay transparency is making it very difficult to measure and document the gender pay gap. In this regard, we have seen some good initiatives from governments, such as the UK's policy



The lack of pay transparency is making it very difficult to measure and document the gender pay gap

that all employers with 250 or more employees must publish and report specific figures on their gender pay gap. It is when the discrimination is clearly shown with data and documentation that we know what we are up against and we can plan and make changes.

Q How to make equality at the workplace a leadership agenda?

A Gender equality and leadership must be on the agenda everywhere in order to also be achieved in the workplace: in the household, in our communities, in our schools and universities, in our governments and in our businesses. We have enough evidence to show that when women are empowered to lead equally in the social, economic and political spheres, then we have equitable and prosperous societies where no one is left behind. We still need to convince some leaders about this fact. We are working on this and we are winning: because it is smart when women lead companies that serve the fastest growing consumer group (women) in the world; it is smart that women are involved in making the policies that impact them as much as men, and a level playing field is the smartest thing to do to unleash the full potential of both women and men.



D&I should be positioned as a business agenda, not as an HR initiative: Marico's Amit Prakash

In a conversation with People Matters, Marico's CHRO **Amit Prakash** talks about how to implement diversity and inclusion programs

By **Jerry Moses**

Amit Prakash is the CHRO of Marico Limited. He has close to 19 years of experience and has been associated with Hindustan Coca Cola Beverages prior to joining Marico. He has also worked with Delphi, ITC and LG in various roles. Over the years, his experience has covered various aspects of human resources – from performance management & improvement, talent management & planning to career & succession development and organizational development.

In an exclusive interview with People Matters, he talks about the experience of setting up D&I initiatives in Marico, the role of multiple stakeholders in the process, and the right ways to measure the impact.

Q There's a shift in D&I programs. Organizations are going beyond the focus on gender diversity, and are looking at disability, minorities, etc. In this context, how should companies go about identifying priorities?

A Every business will have their own priorities and it's entirely dependent on their reality and needs. From a business perspective, new initiatives should not just be seen as a 'human resource

initiative', because then it's going to be short-lived and not sustainable. There are three factors which we consider as the pillars that we need to focus on:

1) As a consumer sales organization, we realize that our consumers come from various backgrounds and represent different parts of the society. So how does that get reflected at work? That's where we started, the need to represent the society that we are currently trying to serve. It helps us create an efficient decision making structure, more innovation, which will be relevant to the consumer.
2) The second pillar is to be aware of the talent economy. If you continue to hire from a small pool of talent (it may be certain colleges/universities), you may miss out on equally talented candidates elsewhere. If you look at the numbers, it's clear that we need to spread the talent pool, not only gender, and other abilities and preferences that people have.
3) The third pillar is to focus on building flexibility within the organization. There are specific requirements that need to be taken care of. Are we creating an inclusive culture? Are we enabling policies, processes and infrastructure to hire these people?

Q How do you make the employee 'feel' like they belong to the company? Especially when they belong to a marginalized or minority group?

A We need to focus on building an inclusive culture. And having an inclusive culture has nothing to do with access to gender, sexual orientation or specially abled talent. It is about having a thought process in the organization wherein one is sensitive to the needs of an individual, and that has been the biggest journey for us in the last twelve months.

As we spoke to people within the company, we realized a need to sensitize the larger organization, and we created leadership buy-in around inclusive culture. Another thing we did is to create an enabling environment around



systems, policies and infrastructure.

We are also becoming extremely strong in our communication with both sets of people (people who belong to these diverse groups and those who don't) in terms of having open conversations and identifying challenges. That's because people may not always want to come and

talk about the issues and challenges that they are facing. We are also building communication around creating sensitivity through drama-based, theatre-based programs.

Q What is the role of employees in taking the D&I mandate forward?

A We have very open conversations around why change is needed and how we should enable it. Sensitization is a critical process, since that's how mobilization will happen.

There are three factors where the members will focus on –

1) Being proactive in the process, around education, sensitizing the team, identifying the enablers and pushing for the changes in the system.
2) Being responsible and aware of the fact that there are a few members in the team who may not appreciate change, but still be responsible for driving change.
3) Being alert – it's less specific, and about identifying issues with a focus on addressing them.

Q What is the thought process on changing HR policies to gender neutral pronouns?

A When you make D&I related change, you need to change every part of the organization, so when people prefer a non-binary way of addressing people, it is only apt if we change the way we are writing a policy. It is about being up to date in a way that doesn't antagonize people. The other piece of change that we picked up was from a privacy factor – whether that's continuous need of medical treatment, offering flexible benefits, there are other such policies we are reviewing which will help us create a more inclusive workplace.

Q What is the role of the wider business ecosystem? Do other stakeholders play a part in delivering the mandate?

A In Bangladesh, for example, we are focused on specially-abled talent, we partnered with an NGO that works with visually impaired talent in skill building and we hired them as our sales people, it was a process that started twelve months back. Now, we have a fair bit of representation in our sales team. Although it will require

If you continue to hire from a small pool of talent (it may be certain colleges/universities), you may miss out on equally talented candidates elsewhere



partnering with NGOs or government agencies and some investments in building skills, you can create a social equilibrium in that particular geography.

Q How do you track all of these initiatives and programs?

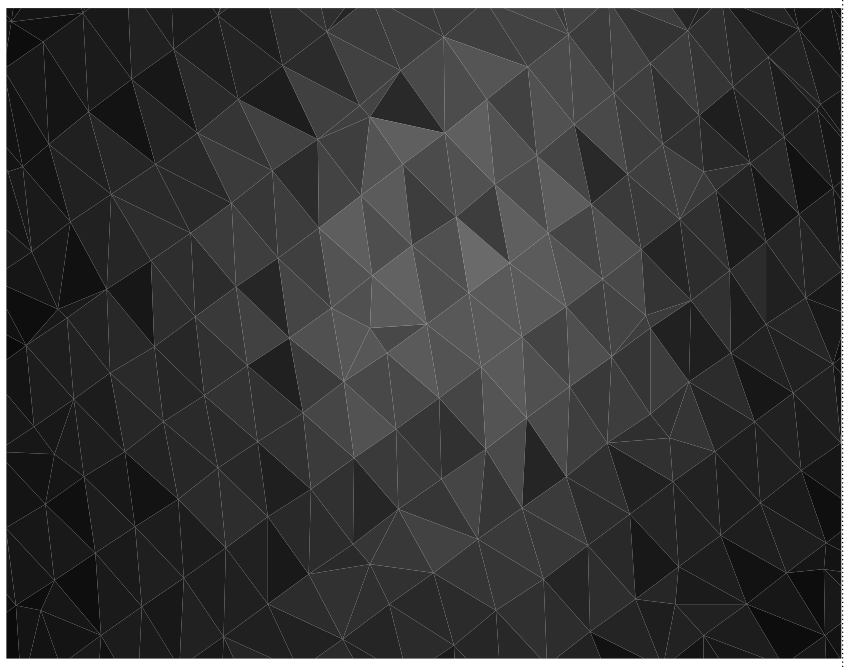
A We track input and output measures. The input metrics are around the culture of inclusion – which can be tracked through our annual engagement survey, and the Chatbot conversations. I keep track of this data on how the culture of the organization is moving. The second metric as an input is how many new candidates are we meeting who aren't a reflection of the population within the organization. Our target is to have 50 percent of our conversations with new candidates. The third thing that we look at is cost related cases to understand whether there are any issues we need to be aware of.

In terms of output metrics, we look at the diversity targets – for gender, thought and ability, and we are tracking it over a period of three to five years. The other outcome metrics we track include retention and people growing internally within the organization.

Q Can you explain thought diversity – What all do you track?

A It is defined by us as an organization and it's not a global definition. What we are looking at is how do we create a workplace that is fairly representative of people from different backgrounds?

Is it possible to have lesser representation of 'Engineer/



Having an inclusive culture has nothing to do with gender, sexual orientation or specially abled talent. It is about having a thought process in the organization wherein one is sensitive to the needs of an individual

MBA' graduates? Can we employ retirees? Can we have employees who are not working full-time? We have profiled the entire organization. Which then drives a better and a more open culture leading to high innovation rates in the organization.

Q If you had to give advice to any HR leader embarking on D&I initiatives, what would it be?

A My suggestion is to make sure it is not driven as an HR agenda but a business agenda. And since D&I is a diverse and upcoming area, it's important to spend time and learn about the area.









LEADING THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The leadership moment of one of the worst crises of our times

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

COVID-19 – one of the greatest pandemics of our times which has caught world leaders off-guard, has demonstrated that some of the powerful governments and their economies are ill-prepared to deal with an aggressive outbreak. While the world fights to mitigate the impacts of the Corona crisis which has unsettled lives, livelihoods, and businesses worldwide, the outbreak also accentuates the need for business leaders to be resilient.

While the top of the line leaders are already hand in gloves in charting the right course to successfully lead their business amid the crisis, leading through a crisis of this magnitude requires more than just a rule book and best practices. The cover story will take a look at the leadership mantras to tide through the pandemic – from workforce alignment to retaining top employees to complying with the legal aspects of retrenchments to carving out new ways of compensation rewards.

Top HR leaders on COVID-19 crisis

We connected with eight global HR leaders to find out how they see the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the world of business and work, and how leaders should gear up to come out stronger from the impending disruption to the world of business. Here are the excerpts.

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Kim Schmidt

Global Leader - Leadership, People and Culture, Grant Thornton International



In order to navigate through this time and ensure that we come out the other side with an engaged workforce and loyal customers, three things are essential - investment in people, maintaining deep connections with clients, and self-care.

Leaders need to be more empathetic, humanistic and encouraging than ever and ensure that people solutions are at the centre of their response to the Coronavirus crisis.

While we have been in crisis mode initially, we now need to transition to a new normal, sooner rather than later. Sustained resilience is going to be key as will support from others, rest, a deep connection to values, and a commitment to learning which will enable them to go beyond this crisis.

David A. Rodriguez

Executive Vice President, and Global CHRO, Marriott International



In many ways, the fundamental human need for opportunity, community and purpose has never been more important or – candidly – more challenged. Ensuring that your business is promoting human wellbeing and making a positive difference in society will be what sets apart companies that thrive over the long-term.

Datuk Nora Abd Manaf

Group Chief Human Capital Officer, Maybank



While we are being tested on so many fronts in our efforts to preserve lives, we are also being literally pushed into new ways of living, interacting, working and collaborating.

With people and organizations alike more connected than ever through technological advancements, it has shown that this capability is no longer a "nice-to-have" but instead a necessity and critical to the survival of businesses today and in future. Its impact has also "forced" new ways of working and significant mindset change to quickly adapt, or otherwise be left behind. One example that hit everyone hard is ensuring employees who find themselves having to work from home almost overnight are supported in their physiological well-being, to be fit mentally, emotionally and physically while continuing to be focused and productive.

Brad Taylor

Director of People, OD & Workplace, CIPD



Every business should have a strong, well-rehearsed business continuity plan. Yet rehearsals typically centred on bomb threats and power outages. Dealing with a pandemic? It had been a while since we'd thought about that one.

Yet quickly businesses have adapted. We've had to. This is business resilience testing on a massive scale. Whilst some organizations will, sadly, struggle to survive this situation, others will come out of it stronger and more agile.

To be effective, leaders should focus on two things. Firstly, being conscious of how they regulate the level of anxiety of their people. A great leader can both incite fast-action and also be a calming presence who enables others to think clearly and act with self-confidence. Secondly, to think and act strategically in a fast-changing and uncertain environment. That means being able to listen carefully whilst not becoming clouded by the noise of the short-term problems.

Aadesh Goyal
Chief Human Resources Officer, Tata Communications



For business leaders, it is important to understand that COVID-19 is first and foremost a health risk followed by a global economic risk. Leaders need to recognize the importance of safety precautions and ensure not just business continuity but also wellbeing of employees, a large number of whom are working in remote environments for the first time. Communication during this time is critical. For leaders and people managers, it's critical to be available to employees and your teams during this time and communicate from a place of empathy and knowledge.

Employees need to know they're valued and looked after, and leaders have a role to play in building a sense of confidence and calm while alleviating anxieties in these unsettling times. It is also important for business leaders to respond and not react to the situation – read, asses and analyze the data and information coming through various channels and plan ahead. The crisis is equally hard for leaders, but they need to quickly adapt to the situation and demonstrate focused leadership centered around people, values and empathy. Like the American novelist, James Lane Allen said, "Adversity does not build character, it reveals it."

Nhlamu Dlomu
Global Head of People, KPMG International



At its core, COVID-19 is a human crisis but it has highlighted the critical role that business plays in society. The responsibility that businesses and leaders have for their employees' health and well-being has never been more important. Showing care to employees and helping them continue to work in a meaningful way so they remain productive and feel valued is critically important. As is the focus businesses and leaders are putting on preserving jobs during this crisis-induced downturn.

People are being impacted very deeply on a personal level which is re-shaping how individuals find value in their roles. Leaders who help their people see that their work is driving positive sustainable change, and that their organization is united behind a single set of values that shapes decisions and behavior will come out stronger. This focus on "purpose" and "values" is not just important to an organization and its people, it's also shaping how organizations engage with clients, key stakeholders and the communities they operate in.



Farid Basir
Chief Human Capital Officer, Telekom Malaysia

The COVID-19 crisis has already transformed into an economic and labor market shock, impacting both supply and demand. The typical business continuity plans in managing crisis may not be capable of handling a pandemic like COVID-19. Businesses that focus and invest in long term strategic, operational and financial resilience to impending disruption will be more effective to respond and recover.

Leaders need to reimagine the next normal by instilling change agility and embed resilience in the organisation culture.

It's time for governments, businesses to work together: WEF's Adrian Monck

Battling the COVID-19 crisis necessitates public-private cooperation more than ever, says **Adrian Monck** of World Economic Forum, in an exclusive interaction with People Matters

By **Mastufa Ahmed**



Adrian Monck is a member of the Managing Board of the World Economic Forum. He heads the Forum's Public Engagement Team, the Global Shapers Community, the Forum of Young Global Leaders and the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship. Monck brings over 20 years of experience as a news executive as well as professor and head of journalism at City University, London.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q The rapid outbreak of the coronavirus presents an alarming health crisis that the world is grappling with. In addition to the human impact, there is also a significant commercial impact being felt globally. How do you see the larger impact of the crisis to businesses globally?

A Businesses around the world are grappling with the impact of COVID-19. Everyone will be impacted somehow, the question is how much. The urgent need for medical supplies, border closures and the drastic reduction in airliner cargo capacity has sparked fears as to whether supply-chains can get us the goods we need. Beyond the immediate need for supplies, questions are being raised about the risk inherent in current supply chain structures. Over recent decades, supply chains have globalized, specialized and become leaner. They are more efficient, less risky in certain areas, but potentially risker in others. Businesses now need to figure out how they can adapt to this crisis, pivot

> An important part of business resilience is scenario planning. It's important to map out your supply chain and plan for multiple situations

and help where needed and then rebound.

Q How can organizations position their businesses to be resilient in the face of this and the next global threat?

A An important part of business resilience is scenario planning. It's important to map out your supply chain and plan for multiple situations. If you have those plans in place, you can move forward faster once the conditions are clearer.

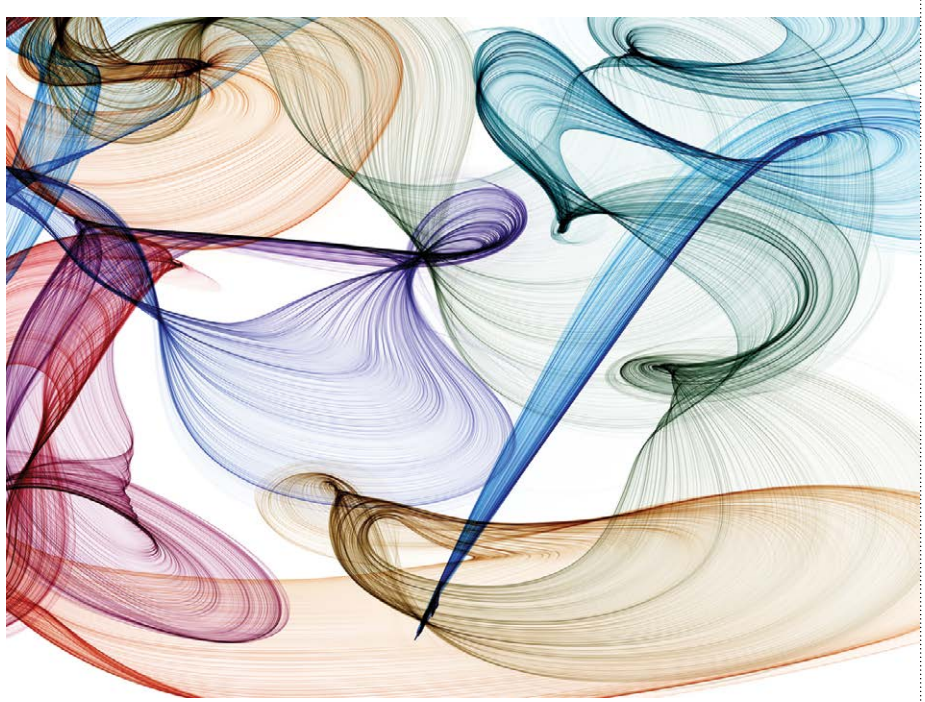
Q Several governments across the globe are coming up with support/ resilience/ stimulus package to help employers tide the crisis and employees to not go jobless. Will this make a difference given the swelling number of unemployment claims and employers struggling to stay afloat?

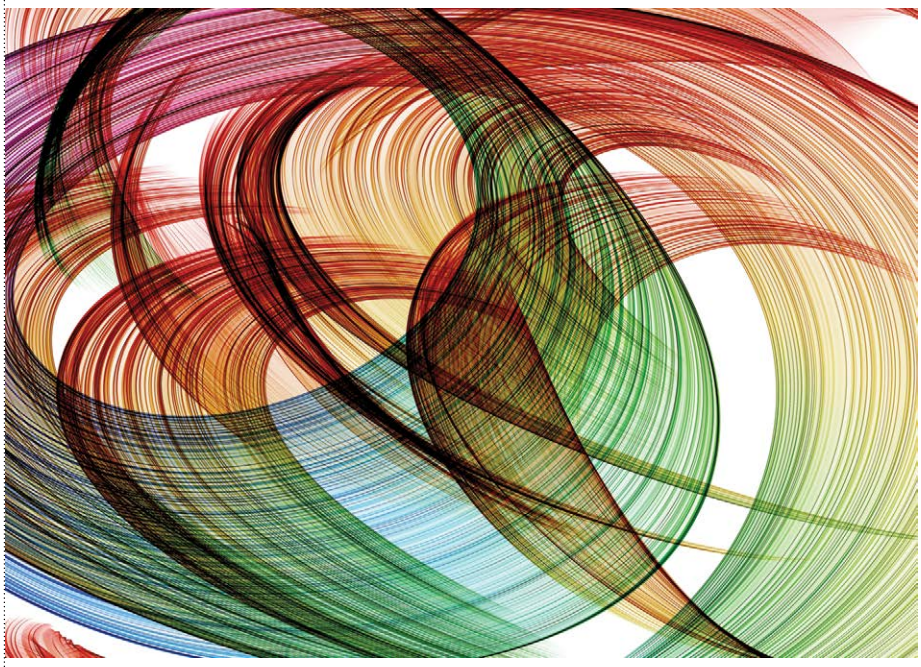
A At the virtual session of G20 leaders, countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore shared lessons learned in fighting coronavirus. This coordination across borders, labs, and communities remains essential. The US has just approved a $2 Trillion stimulus package which includes direct payments to individuals. In Germany, help for self-employed and firms with up to five employees can apply for a one-off grant of up to €9,000 and in the UK, the government will pay self-employed people, who have been adversely affected by the coronavirus, a taxable grant worth 80 percent of their average monthly profits over the last three years. In Hong Kong and the US, we are seeing the implementation of Helicopter Money (direct payments to citizens) to offset the fall of income for many households and businesses.

What is important right now is action. We need governments and businesses to come together and talk about what they need and how to keep moving forward. We are seeing record levels of unemployment, so people are scared. These actions are one way of governments trying to reassure people that help can come. It's important that everyone realize we are all in this together. Public-private cooperation is needed now more than ever.

Q As countries around the world hunker down to control COVID-19, do you think it's right time to plan for the next phase and

Latest research from the World Economic Forum forecasts that by 2025, machines will perform more current work tasks than humans, compared to 71 percent being performed by humans today.





We are hoping to see people communicating and working together across borders, labs, and industries. That is how we will resolve this crisis sooner and where the real leaders will emerge

prepare to respond to future threats, and make the world safer and more prosperous?

A Stakeholder capitalism is about: ensuring the long-term preservation and resilience of the company, and embedding a company in society. This crisis will show us which companies truly embodied the stakeholder model, and which only paid lip service to it. It's a litmus test. Some companies are standing out in how they are preparing now for a better world tomorrow. Unilever donated $50m in soap to the Covid Action Platform, which was set up by the World Economic Forum in partnership with the World Health Organization. Maersk offered ships and cargo space to get emergency supplies wherever they are needed. These kinds of companies understand this global emergency requires all societal actors to temporarily reorient themselves to the emergency response needed. They are the same companies that optimised for long-term prosperity.

Q Thanks to the coronavirus outbreak, working from home is no longer a privilege, it's a necessity. COVID-19 has led to a global experiment on work from home. How do you see in the context of future of work?

A We were seeing workplaces changes, but this crisis has accelerated the switch to digital. Latest research from the World Economic Forum forecasts that by 2025, machines will perform more current work tasks than humans, compared to 71 percent being performed by humans today. We have urgent challenges to enable remote work and building safety nets to protect at-risk workers and communities. While nearly 50 percent of all companies expect their full-time workforce to shrink by 2022 as a result of automation, almost 40 percent expect to extend their workforce generally and more than a quarter expect automation to create new roles in their enterprise. We need to make sure there are safety nets and retraining programs in place so we can fill the jobs of tomorrow.

Q What makes a good leader during a crisis?

A Public private cooperation has never been needed more. What we are hoping to see is people communicating and working together across borders and across industries. That is how we will resolve this crisis sooner and where the real leaders will emerge.

Respond quickly and keep adapting amid COVID-19: Amy C. Edmondson



The Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management at the Harvard Business School **Amy C. Edmondson** talks about how businesses should adapt through this crisis, in an interaction with People Matters

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Amy C. Edmondson is the Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management at the Harvard Business School. She teaches and writes on leadership, teams and organizational learning, and is the author of more than 70 academic articles and several dozen HBS case studies. Her books, *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate and Compete in the Knowledge Economy* and *Teaming to Innovate* (Jossey-Bass, 2012, 2103) explore teamwork in dynamic, unpredictable work environments. Her most recent book, *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth* (Wiley 2019) is the winner of the *Thinkers50 Breakthrough Idea Award* and offers practical guidance for teams and organizations who are serious about success in the modern economy.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q What is it like to make decisions on which the lives of tens of thousands of other people depend? Isn't it the leadership moment for global stalwarts?

A I have been observing leaders across both sectors and nations, and I recognize that it is emotionally and cognitively challenging to make decisions that affect the lives of thousands of people.

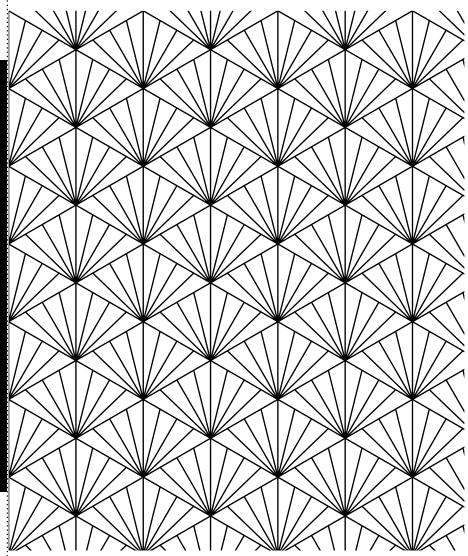
The implications of this are two:

First, it is vitally important that organizations and nations choose leaders

Dealing with this unprecedented crisis calls for an ultimate agile response – kind of highly flexible, collaborative, iterative approach that highly innovative organizations in technology and other industries have been developing for years

who are worthy of these profound responsibilities. This recognition can get lost in times of prosperity and calm, leaving people to fail to take their choice responsibility seriously. The leaders who can best be trusted to make these kinds of crucial decisions are appropriately humble about the limits of their own expertise, and therefore wise enough to draw on the input of experts from different fields. They are also curious and sober-minded about what they hear, and about what they can and cannot do.

Second, no one should make these kinds of decisions alone – they require diverse expertise and extremely high-quality discussion processes, made in an environment that is oriented toward learning and problem solving, to arrive at the best decisions, which in turn must be subject to updating as more is learned.



Q Business leaders around the globe are dealing with the unprecedented challenges that the COVID-19 has brought to companies, economies, and societies. What's your take on how should businesses adapt through this crisis?

A The best way to cope with this unprecedented crisis is to respond quickly and then keep adapting. What is needed is the ultimate agile response. Agile responses refer, of course, to a kind of highly flexible, collaborative, iterative approach that highly innovative organizations in technology and other industries have been developing for years. It is what I call "execution-as-learning" – where people cannot simply wait to act, until they know what to do, because no plan will ever be accurate enough to work in a fast-moving crisis. Further, in my research, I have found that agile responses can only happen in businesses with a psychologically safe environment, where people are not afraid to speak up – especially about the problems they face. Without this interpersonal environment of candor, agility is impossible.

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

A The kind of leadership diversity that I have studied, and which matters for adapting in uncertain and fast-moving contexts, is largely focused on expertise diversity. And yes, diversity is critical to handling crises, but diversity alone is not enough. You also need what I have described as high-quality discussion processes, where conflicts lead to better decisions.

> The silver lining I see in this crisis is a wakeup call that is making all of us more aware of some vital truths about our world. First, we are inescapably interconnected and interdependent and second we have not been paying adequate attention to the fragile nature of our economic and natural ecosystems

I have written about this at some length in my 2012 book, *Teaming: How organizations learn, innovate, and compete in the knowledge economy.*

Q Do you see a silver lining in these difficult times?

A Yes. The silver lining I see is that this crisis is a wakeup call that is making all of us more aware of some vital truths about our world. First, we are inescapably interconnected and interdependent. The 20th century visionary futurist, Buckminster Fuller, pointed out, more than 50 years ago, that we are all crewmembers on Spaceship Earth – our finite, profoundly interdependent planet that is badly in need of devoting its collective energies to working for the good of everyone. No ship sails on for long if the starboard side is busy trying to sink the port side. We are in this together, but we have not been acting like it. Second, we have not been paying adequate attention to the fragile nature of our economic and natural ecosystems, and this crisis is bringing both to the forefront.

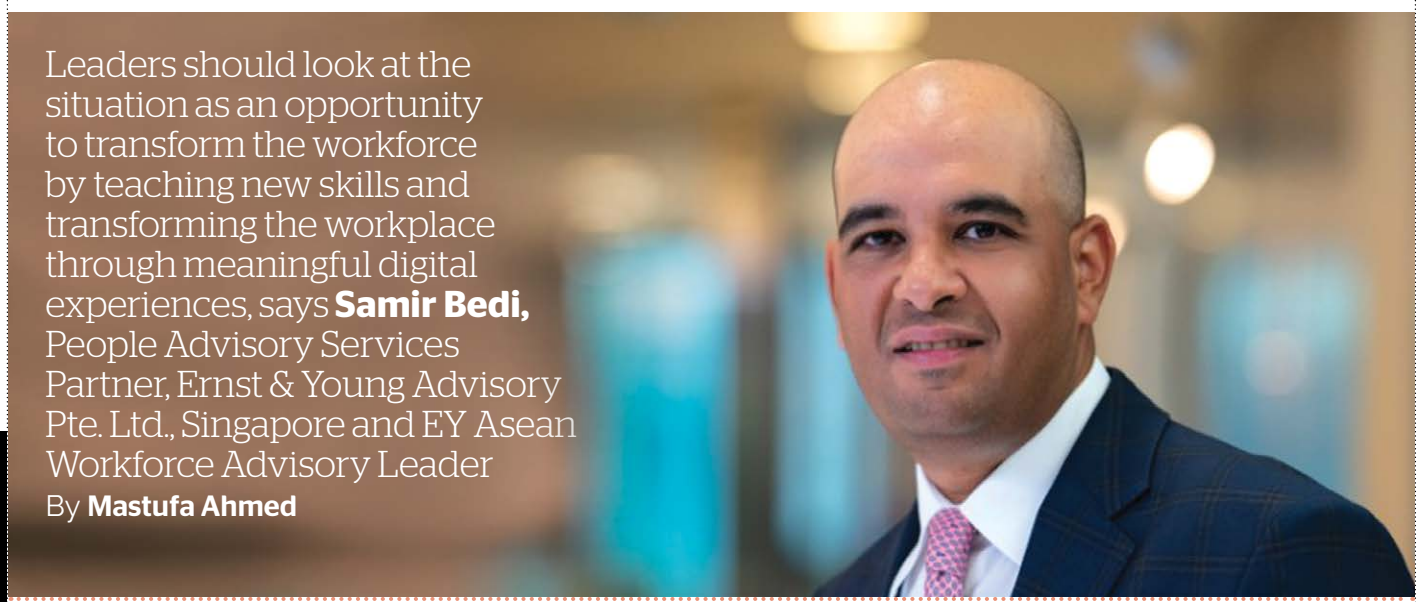
Q Do you see synergies in the way in which this emergency is managed worldwide?

A The synergies I see tend to take the form of experts working across national borders to develop cures, supply urgent equipment and personnel, and conduct various relief efforts. Scientists and researchers across institutions and countries are doing a great deal of this work, and some of it will bear fruit. Too many governments are still wasting precious time and effort in blaming rather than in learning and leading.

Q Can you share some insights from your latest book for our readers?

A My book, *The Fearless Organization,* draws on 20 years of research to explain what psychological safety is (and just as important, what it isn't) and why it matters more than ever in today's workplaces. With so much riding on innovation, creativity, and engagement, today's organizational leaders know it's essential to attract, cultivate and retain talented employees – but they may not always realize that it's even more important to ensure that they are able to speak up. Ensuring performance, and high ethical standards, alike rests on the perceived ability – by everyone – to speak up with questions and concerns, to catch and correct errors and problems quickly. It's full of stories of how a lack of psychological safety contributed to preventable failures (even crises) in business and public sector organizations around the world – and just as many stories of how the presence of psychological safety enabled extraordinary successes.

COVID-19 is also an opportunity to transform the workforce: EY's Samir Bedi



Leaders should look at the situation as an opportunity to transform the workforce by teaching new skills and transforming the workplace through meaningful digital experiences, says **Samir Bedi,** People Advisory Services Partner, Ernst & Young Advisory Pte. Ltd., Singapore and EY Asean Workforce Advisory Leader

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Samir has extensive consulting experience in the areas of business strategies linked to people-organization dynamics across Southeast Asia. His experience includes all areas of human resources, particularly in organization structuring, manpower planning and optimization, integration of performance, reward and talent programs, and HR process review and audit.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q Given the unprecedented crisis facing businesses across the globe in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak, how can business leaders adapt to this crisis?

A This is the time for leadership to think about what the future may hold for their business and to adapt accordingly. What does recovery potentially look like, and how will they tide over this pandemic when they may be faced with lower business performance? Executives need to not only think about digital transformation, but also the workforce transformation that they can achieve over this period. Leaders in government need to adapt by learning to balance the economic, social, and medical aspects of the crisis, while continuing to follow governance processes. As many countries face lockdown, governments need to make sure citizens follow the rules to help flatten the curve as much as possible.

> The general approach recommended to businesses in this time is to cut all forms of non-essential costs, while ensuring workforce-related costs are among the last to be cut

Q We are seeing an increasing number of job losses across the globe. How can business leaders manage cost while ensuring minimal retrenchments?

A Businesses need to answer the perennial ques-

tion of cash, cost, and credit. The general approach recommended to businesses in this time is to cut all forms of non-essential costs, while ensuring workforce-related costs are among the last to be cut.

Businesses must first look at government stimulus and relief measures that are available. Then, look at how they can reduce salaries with business leaders taking on most of the wage cuts to mitigate the effects felt by lower-earning employees.

If it does come down to the point where costs have been managed, but an organization still needs to go down a retrenchment exercise, communication is vital. This needs to be done in a transparent and objective manner without any form of bias to the process. This has to be done with a lot of care and empathy, but at the same time needs to be handled very professionally. While we focus on the employee that has been retrenched, we also need to address the impact on the culture of the organization. Organizations may take the option to sacrifice profits in the short term, for better long term success in driving the right workplace culture.

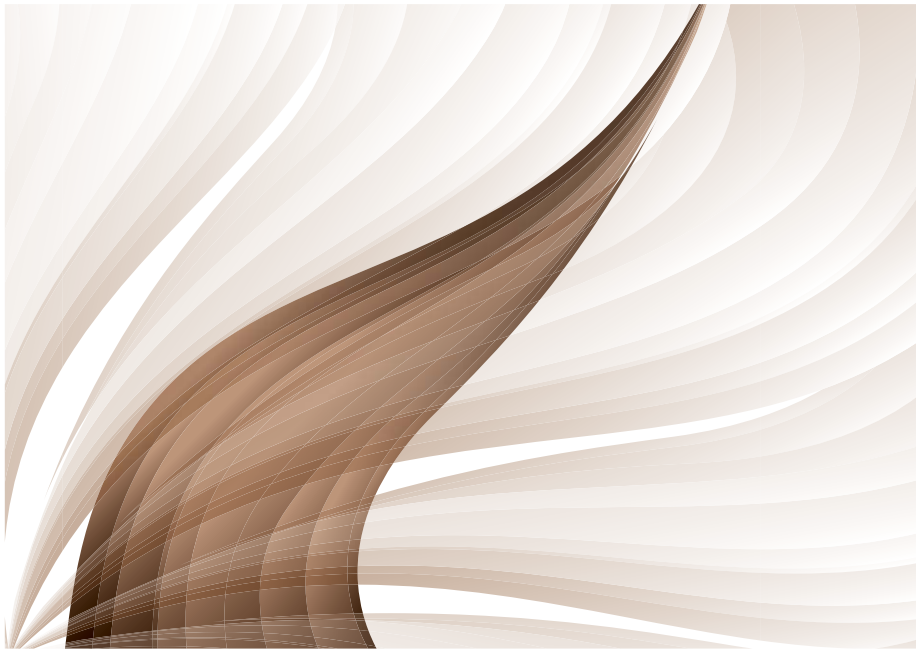
Q One of the top challenges for business leaders at this juncture would be about getting their people to 'follow' them? How can leaders make decisions and make communications transparent, so everyone follows them?

A The role of a leader during this time of crisis is to take their people and organization to a better place. Given that the economy is on a downward spiral, it's likely that every business will be going through troubles and facing problems. For business leaders to be successful, they need to communicate clearly, even to the point of over-communication – over-communicate what the business is going through, how the business is doing, and what the business strategies will be. We also need to communicate things that we don't know, such as when this pandemic will end. As leaders continue to communicate internally and act on the various permutations and combinations of the business operations, they also need to be honest with employees about uncertainties during this time of crisis.

Q Employee health and safety must be the foremost consideration of any business during the coronavirus pandemic. How can leaders ensure well-being alongside business continuity?

A We see organizations trying to embed a couple of different things, such as staggered working hours, more forms of social distancing, better hygiene in offices, and virtual methods of working and customer service deliv-

The role of a leader during this time of crisis is to take their people and organization to a better place



ery to ensure business continuity. However, all changes should be considered from the perspective of employee health and employee well-being. Employees' acceptance of these changes will be critical for organizations in terms of a recovery period. In the past, there may have been organizations whose cultures somehow pressured people who were feeling slightly unwell to come into work anyway.

Post-pandemic, we anticipate that that will change. In this new normal, employee health and well-being must be front and center, more than ever before.

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

A Organizations can take this time to improve their effectiveness and efficiency with digital means and mechanisms available to us today. Things that would have maybe taken years for business leaders to accept, are now reality because of the impact of COVID-19 on our lives. Consumers' expectations of an organization's product or service will also change. Now they're more concerned about whether the right system, methods, and processes have been adopted in order to develop the product or service that they're consuming. These aspects will become more critical and will change the way we consume things, creating opportunities for organizations to leverage this change in consumer behaviour.

We need to consciously recognize that the new normal is now the standard way of doing things. The faster we realize this; the faster organizations can transform and ensure the reskilling and lifelong learning of employees

Q Do you see synergies in the way in which this emergency is managed worldwide?

A Nearly every country is in lockdown today and has similar safe-distancing measures in place. This means most employees worldwide are affected, irrespective of the organization they're working for, be it a Multinational Corporation (MNC), Fortune500 company or an SME with a single-country presence. There are a lot of best practices that could be shared amongst sectors and businesses – for instance, how to manage if an employee has COVID-19, or how to manage fear and uncertainty in the workplace – that could help accelerate our pace of adjustment and galvanise the strengths of the entire industry in the new normal.

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

A Leaders should look at the situation as an opportunity to transform the workforce by teaching new skills and transforming the workplace through meaningful digital experiences with customers and partners. We need to consciously recognize that the new normal is now the standard way of doing things. The faster we realize this; the faster organizations can transform and ensure the reskilling and lifelong learning of employees.

As the lines between work and home become more blurred, we must find some forms of separation to allow us to connect with our families and loved ones. Finding a way to draw these personal boundaries is vital to ensuring that we can continue to work meaningfully and efficiently.

8 Principles to manage executive compensation during COVID-19 crisis

Corporate boards should look at executive compensation plans as an important tool to focus management's efforts on surviving the crisis, and protecting the health and wellbeing of all its stakeholders - including employees, customers, supply-chain partners and shareholders

By **Shai Ganu** and **Tan Yong Fei**



Experience from past downturns, such as the global financial crisis, have fueled concerns that large corporations would end up benefiting from the situation. Very often, many of the senior executives assume lots of risk in bull markets but are protected by government bailouts in bearish conditions. On the contrary, the COVID-19 crisis this time is a different type of downturn, one that unfolds very rapidly, disrupting most industries, economies and directly impacting everyone's lives.

One would have never thought that an unknown virus could become the Black Swan of 2020 affecting how we work, play and interact with one another. Notably, COVID-19 has become a human capital crisis, completely changing the way organizations manage their human capital within a short period of time.

In this context, corporate boards should look at executive compensation plans as an important tool to focus management's efforts on surviving the crisis, and protecting the health and wellbeing of all its stakeholders, including employees, customers, supply-chain partners and shareholders.

What can companies do in the short, medium and longer-term during this downturn?

The following outlines some of the immediate actions corporate boards and management teams have adopted in refining their executive compensation

To help companies get past the survival phase, it is important to channel management's efforts on crisis management. This may lead to some non-conventional approaches in the short term

programs to response to the crisis:

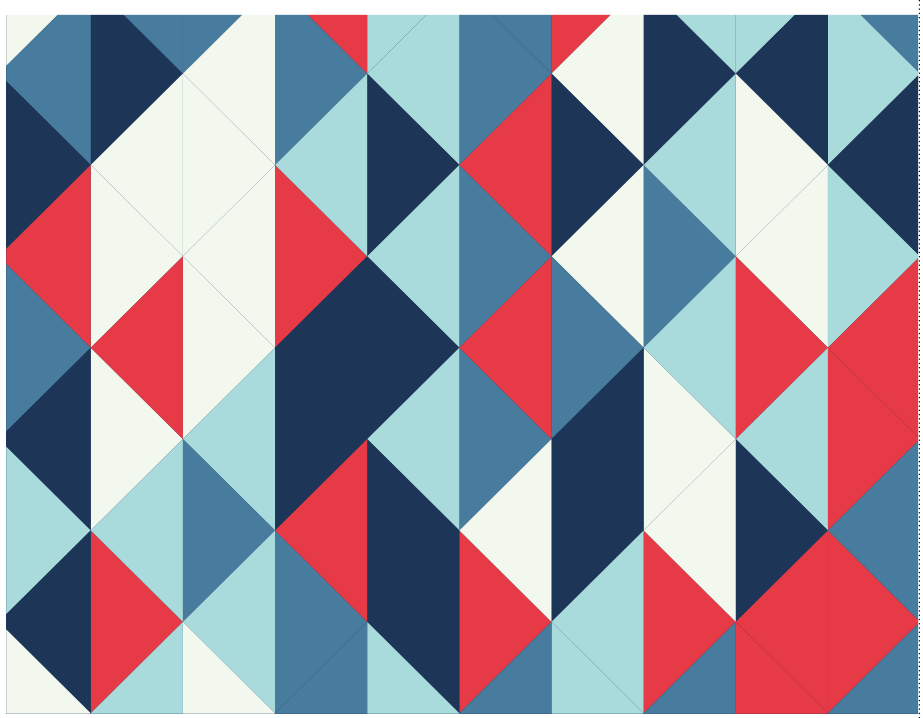
1. Year of two halves: The crisis has necessitated immediate and decisive action by management teams as they focus on well-being of the business, employees and supply chain partners. To help companies get past the survival phase, it is important to channel management's efforts on crisis management. This may lead to some non-conventional approaches in the short term. For example, linking management's KPIs to percentage of workforce who are protected from the COVID-19 infection, or to healthcare and recuperation spending, or preventing job losses, or encouraging social distancing and working from home protocols. Once the business operations stabilize and companies have better understanding of market conditions, then they can resume normal performance measures and targets.

2. Show solidarity: This should apply to all businesses regardless of the significance of the impact. Some Board of Directors have voluntarily taken a fee reduction in the range of 5 to 20 percent. For highly impacted industries, top executives have volunteered to take up to 100 percent cuts in their fixed salary while maintaining some form of target variable incentive. This could still be motivating to executives especially if the right amount of equity is granted at low prices. For less impacted industries, salary increments of top executives have largely been frozen. These actions can be seen as gesture to preserve cash. More importantly, they can make a positive impact if the funds are set aside for COVID-19 / CSR / ESG efforts. Leaders of leading organizations have shown to take the lead on this and we applaud them.

3. Wait and see: This might be the only time that a "wait and see" approach is deemed reasonable and appropriate. Rather than spending time and energy reviewing incentive plans, forecasting financial outcomes and setting performance goals, Boards and management should focus their attention on human capital management. For example:

- Review severance provisions to understand cost implications of potential headcount reduction proposals.
- Ensure the company is protected against potential takeover actions.
- Review change-in-control provisions to motivate executives to seek out and collaborate on potential M&A transactions that are in the best interests of shareholders.

4. Trust the Board: As the result of the above, the 2020 financial year's short and long-term incentive plans are likely to be in a state of limbo. With annual



increments delayed, the short-term incentive (STI) and long-term incentive (LTI) targets based on budgets approved before COVID-19 would not make sense now. However, what should remain clear is the articulation of the plan's principles as well as key metrics underlying those principles. As for the actual targets, it is best to revisit them at a later stage, the earliest possibly in July or for some companies even after FY2020 has ended. We foresee many Boards exercising, in unprecedented ways, their right to absolute discretion. Needless to say, the level of trust between Board and management is crucial during this time.

In the medium to longer term, companies could focus on these actions to restore stability and return their business back to the 'new normal':

5. Focus on few key things: Employees, especially their wellbeing including physical, mental, social and financial, should be the focus. It is critical to understand managements' actions taken for the broader workforce and assess alignment. Boards should remain briefed on broader workforce actions, for example:

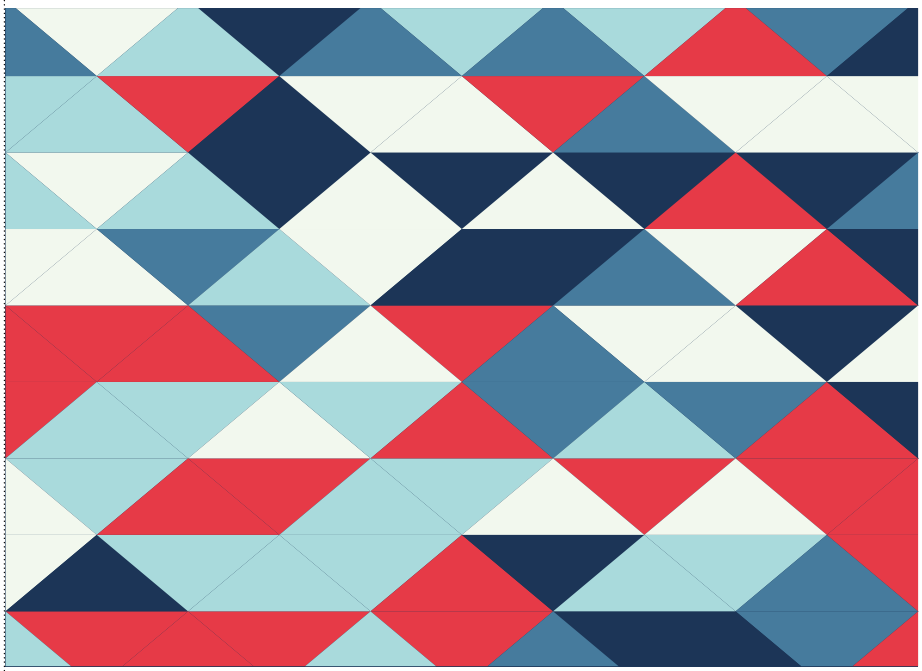
- Continuing pay and benefits for workers impacted by store or factory shutdowns
- Providing paid time-off for hourly associates diagnosed with coronavirus or being quarantined
- Paying hourly workers who cannot work due to office closures or remote work policies
- Providing stipends to support work-from-home arrangements for impacted staff
- Providing additional pay (hourly increases, special bonuses) for essential/front-line workers.

In addition, board should consider ways to conserve cash, particularly for those seeking government assistance, and/or those deploying cash flow and cost containment initiatives. These could be reduced dividend, furloughs and/or employee pay reductions.

6. On-going enhanced communication: During this period, investors, along with other stakeholder groups such as customers and the media, are more likely to scrutinize pay decisions made in 2020. Proactive and effective communication, and engagement with shareholders, employees and the public to manage optics is paramount given the significant changes. We expect on-going communication and implementation of human capital management metrics into incentive plans and/or governance oversight to progress. It is important to document and analyze the learnings from the outcomes of the pandemic and adjust the longer term executive compensation strategies for companies to build resilience.

7. Retention: In times of crisis, business opportunities and talent pool becomes available, and at times, at a bargain. Development and/or enhancement of existing talent retention programme therefore becomes crucial. A simple gesture of annual pay increment for selected few in a potentially zero

> While longstanding compensation principles still apply, this may be a great opportunity for Boards to consider shifting the focus of its executive compensation plans to take a more balanced perspective, such as the increased focus on ESG measures and on all stakeholders



The COVID-19 crisis presents many important human-capital lessons for companies to reflect – the investment in employees, engagement with multiple stakeholders and adoption of a purpose-driven management systems, including its executive compensation plans

percent market increment environment could go a long way. On the other hand, Boards could consider more sophisticated longer term retention plans as well. Furthermore, increasing share ownership requirements for CXOs could signal greater alignment of interest with shareholders. From a talent attraction perspective, a well thought-out and well tenured incentive plan can be modified to include change-in-control provision to facilitate potential M&A activities.

Crises force commonality of purpose. The post COVID-19 world may provide an opportunity for companies to thoroughly review their executive compensation plans and make changes that otherwise would have been difficult to implement before the pandemic crisis.

8. Restructuring priorities: While longstanding compensation principles (align, attract, retain, incent, and hold accountable) still apply, this may be a great opportunity for Boards to consider shifting the focus of its executive compensation plans to take a more balanced perspective, such as the increased focus on ESG measures and on all stakeholders.

The COVID-19 crisis presents many important human-capital lessons for companies to reflect – the investment in employees, engagement with multiple stakeholders and adoption of a purpose-driven management systems, including its executive compensation plans. Rather than trying to find a balance between a shareholder group on one side of the equation and the rest on the other side, companies should focus on all stakeholders equally. Such a balanced model will lead to the long term betterment of employees, consumers, companies and the society.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

SHAI GANU is the MD and Global Practice Leader, Executive Compensation, and **TAN YONG FEI** is the Executive Compensation Leader, South Asia, Willis Towers Watson.

It's your leadership moment



Ample research shows that leadership makes the greatest difference when the world around us is uncertain, and we are unsure about what lies ahead

By **Michael Useem**

What an extraordinary and terrifying moment for us all. The remorseless expansion of COVID-19 across the U.S. and abroad – India and Russia have shut down – has made the daily routines of hundreds of millions virtually unrecognizable. We are victims of one of the most dreadful and far-reaching disasters of our lifetimes.

When hurricanes, wildfires, and now the Coronavirus upend our way of life, they call for everybody, literally every individual, to step into the breach. Not just first responders or care givers, not only state governors or national leaders, but all of us.

We of course still hunger for leadership from the top – would our wartime president please ramp-up ventilators and coordinate clampdowns, for heaven's sake – but we also want leadership from throughout our ranks. Don't we all bear a personal duty to step forward now, to make a difference when we can make a difference, however modest our scope for doing so?

Of course, and here's why. We know from ample research that leadership makes the greatest difference when the world around us is uncertain, when we are unsure about what lies ahead. We also know that the impact will be greatest when it comes not only from the apex but also from the middle ranks and front lines. Not just from public officials and chief executives, but also from those who help run restaurants, service hospitals, and direct schools or just about anything.

Think, communicate and decide

For exercising our own leadership, let's start with reviewing what's most essential. At the top of my checklist from teaching

For exercising our own leadership, let's start by reviewing what's most essential. At the top of my checklist from teaching and researching the subject are thinking strategically, communicating persuasively, and acting decisively

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As a case in point on *thinking strategically:* When Vanguard Group faced the economy's near total meltdown after the failure of Lehman in 2008, its chief executive slashed salaries but laid nobody off. He theorized that when the equity market eventually came back — and it did, of course — he would need all his people to service the returning clients. Vanguard is now one of the largest investment companies on earth, with $6.2 trillion in assets under management. (In 2005, before the financial crisis, that number was less than $1 trillion.)

Communicating persuasively: We interviewed 14 corporate CEOs in 2009 on what they were doing to weather the financial crisis, and they all said: Connect with others. "If in doubt," reported the CEO of aerospace company Northrop Grumman, "communicate." Explained the top executive of Travelers insurance: "transparency in troubled times really matters!"

Consider the near daily briefings by New York governor Andrew Cuomo during the COVID-19 crisis. His deft combination of facts, empathy, and humility make for memorable messaging. What a contrast against White House briefings with their non-facts (advocating a malaria antidote against the virus), non-empathy (governors "should get vital equipment to treat coronavirus patients on their own"), and non-humility ("Every one of these doctors says, 'How do you know so much about this?').



If in doubt, communicate

Acting decisively: The owner of three crowded pizza stores in Johnson City, Tennessee, shut them down in mid-March, not because they were empty but because they were jammed. Patrons were not distancing themselves, so for their own sake, the owner sent them packing. And he did the same for his workers. "[If] I'm uncomfortable in my own spaces, how can I ask my employees to come in?"

There's the question of where to act. The closer to home, the research confirms, the better, since that's the place that we have the most immediate, best informed, and greatest impact

Less than a day later, a nearby restaurant shuttered itself for the same reason, with special thanks to the first mover. "As hard as it is," said the second owner, "it is beyond the right thing to do." He credited the first owner as a kind of catalyst or force multiplier, making his own decision that much easier, as *The New York Times* reported.

Then there's the question of where to act. The closer to home, the research confirms, the better, since that's the place that we have the most immediate, best informed, and greatest impact. Intensive-care nurses can strengthen patient safety on their floors; grocery stockers can ensure safe produce is on their shelves; auto companies can assemble life-saving respirators in their plants.

Another corollary is to act even when others around us are not doing so at first, as in Johnson City. Our neighbors and colleagues could be dealing at the moment with a sick child or isolated parents. Stepping forward quickly can thus be additionally significant, whatever our status or responsibilities, since early exemplars at all levels can help inspire subsequent movers at each of those levels.

Hundreds of volunteers, including survivors of the Andes air crash of 1972 (featured in the book and film, *Alive*), streamed into Chile's northern desert in 2010 to help rescue 33 miners trapped a half-mile down. And some of the latter in turn traveled to northern Thailand in 2018 to help retrieve a soccer team from a remote, water-filled cave.

A personal checklist

Here's a personal checklist for exercising your own leadership, whatever your rank or role in life, when we all need it:

- I can help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus in my own neighborhood or workplace if I act now. Check.
- Here, as I see it, is a short list of my actions that will likely help most. Check.
- Let's make sure that nothing on my list can worsen the health or safety of those around me. Check.
- I will take at least one of those actions today. Double check.



Most of us are not fully or formally in charge of a whole lot, but if we can make a difference, now is the time to step forward to do so, and to do so close to home

Most of us are not fully or formally in charge of a whole lot, but if we can make a difference, now is the time to step forward to do so, and to do so close to home. In good times, we can rely more on our boss or others to get things done, but that's no longer enough.

It is our own leadership moment too. We are all in charge.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Battling Corona crisis warrants effective communication across levels

The leaders of today need empathy and agility to guide their organizations through crisis, says leadership development expert **Sureish Nathan,** the managing director of DDI Singapore. And moving into the future, they must accept the concept of collective leadership and creating new commonalities

By **Mint Kang**



Sureish Nathan, the Managing Director of leadership development consultancy DDI Singapore, has spent over 25 years in leadership development, executive education, and HR across the Asia Pacific, including running his own consultancy. People Matters asked Sureish for his thoughts about how leadership is changing in today's world, and what traits they will need to lead effectively during this period of crisis.

Here are the highlights of the conversation.

Q We are in the middle of an unprecedented global crisis today. What are some leadership strategies that work well for managing this situation?

A One critical thing is to ensure that you have leadership at every level of the organization. You need that in order to get your message out and keep reinforcing it. Communication is essential. And in times like this, you have to over-communicate, and keep communicating. You have to mobilize the people, go right down to the grassroots and ensure that people are able to self-manage. The only way to do that is through communication.

Individual leaders need to conduct themselves with authenticity. The way you communicate has to resonate with people. You can't say one thing and do another.

> COVID-19 is accelerating changes in the world of work, and leaders must evolve their approach to effectively guide their organizations through this crisis and into the changed landscape that will follow

And that authenticity has to be physically displayed: symbols are very important in managing a crisis, because people are paying

a lot of attention to the imagery. They also need to be transparent. It's important that people know what's going on, both the good and the bad. And, the speed of response is important. It lends to authenticity if you're able to step forward swiftly, be vulnerable, and say truthfully: "This is what's really happening."

Q What are some traits that will make leaders more effective during this period?

A They must have empathy. I cannot stress this enough. You might be trying to manage collective safety, but you also need to balance this with individual concerns. Your decisions must be made with empathy. In situations of crisis, you have to look at the grey areas, because you're dealing with perceptions and emotions. Not everything is black and white; you have to manage both the broad and narrow views, the whole range of reactions that people may have. That's where empathy is critical.

Agility is another thing. Leaders must have the agility to understand that a crisis is contextual. The policy you follow may be a good guide, but it may also have been set at a different time, in a different context, and you must be able to step away from that and see what is needed for the here and now.

Q The crisis is accelerating some major changes in the world of work. What do you think leaders today need to be most cognizant of?

A Two things to look out for:

1. People are going to be working longer. The retirement age is being pushed further and further back. And this means a huge range of demographics in the workforce. You'll have some people in their 20s, some people in their 60s, all the other ages in between. And all these generations will have had completely different experiences in life. They will have completely different expectations. And the question becomes: how do you lead across these generations? How do you give people a shared purpose? How do you give them a shared vision of the company?

2. People are going to have multiple careers spanning multiple industries. The concept of staying in one place for your entire career has changed. Instead, you are going to have people who will step out of the company, maybe right out of the industry, and then come back. This challenges the entire concept of employee loyalty, employee retention. You have to reframe it as: how can we keep in touch with this talent and bring them back when we need them?

Q What can leaders do to prepare themselves for managing this workforce of the future?

A It's important to understand the idea of connected leadership and collective leadership, which comes down to how you make decisions. Today's leaders are operating in an ecosystem, not a hierarchy, and ecosystems need more leadership. It's not just centralized in one particular function or role, but it's drawn from across the ecosystem as a whole. Where the knowledge comes from, who the ideas are bounced off—these things have to be reframed. We have moved towards working in teams and

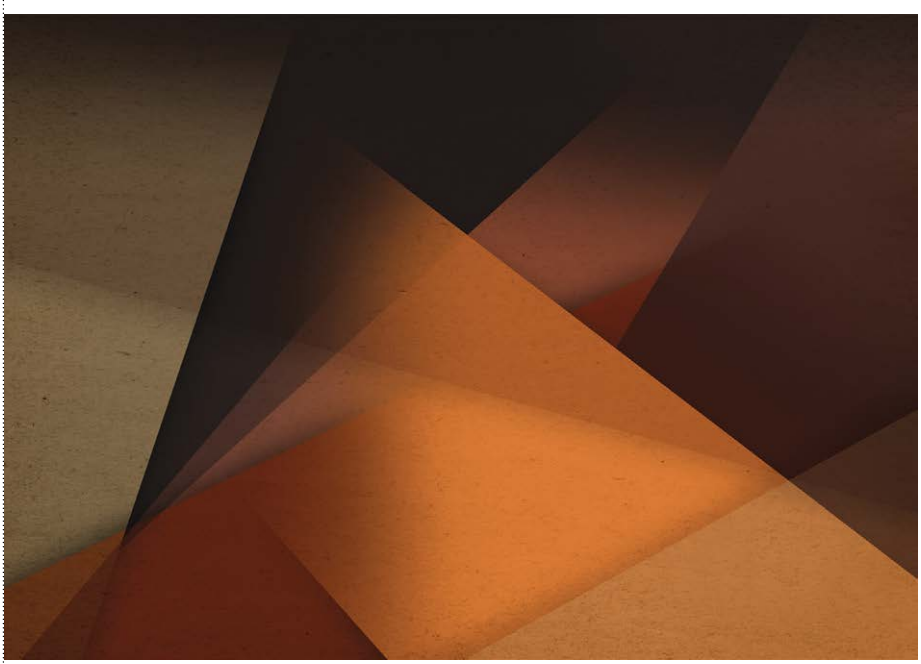
> Certain leadership traits and strategies will emerge as more effective during this period of crisis, and once it is past, the same approach will serve leaders well in managing the workforces of the future

co-creation, the idea that no one person has the solution to anything.

Because of this, leaders have to be able to accept that they don't hold all the keys to decision-making any more. They might be the ultimate decision-maker, but the decision-making process has to involve multiple stakeholders, multiple perspectives, multiple sources of data. In an increasingly data-driven world, you have to rely on different points of view. You have to look at different perspectives, different sources of data. And your people are a very important source of information. If you want to understand what's new and emerging, you might go to your front-line leaders and ask: what's happening on the ground? If you want to understand historical data and draw on institutional memory, you might go to the people who have been there for years. When you have a diverse workforce, you must leverage the experience that everyone brings. You have to be able to tap this collective wisdom.

And in order to do that, leaders need to be vulnerable enough to say: "I don't know what I don't know".

Today's leaders are operating in an ecosystem, not a hierarchy, and ecosystems need more leadership. It's not just centralized in one particular function or role, but it's drawn from across the ecosystem as a whole



The concept of continuous learning applies to leaders more than anyone else. They must be able to continuously adapt. This kind of leadership isn't a skill that can be learned. It's more of a mindset that must be embraced.

Q Going back to what you said about shared purpose: how can leaders create that?

A You can't fix the differences, so you have to find the commonalities. And what I think we're going to increasingly see is a shift towards finding meaning in your contribution, in what you do. That's the equalizing factor. If two people of very different age can agree that the meaning of their work and the quality of their performance is connected to what they do, that thread can be enough to bring them together.

And this goes back to the reason why an organization exists. It goes to the fundamentals of what the organization is about, what is really needed from the people inside. It requires leaders to have a different mindset around what value each person can bring. It requires you to rethink what it actually means to have good employees. That's why, when companies talk about transformation today, it's larger than just business transformation. It's cultural transformation as well. Pm

NITASHA DEVASAR



Leadership in the time of pandemic

Asking for help is a powerful interpersonal tool that leaders and individuals can use effectively, leveraging on existing inter-personal equations

As the COVID-19 crisis deepens, the dependence on good leadership and leaders grows. In a prolonged crisis and one of pandemic proportions we continue to need presence, visibility and clarity from our leaders. But there are other traits which also come into focus.

Prime Minister Modi's first address to the nation displayed the kind of leadership that is the need of this time. Not only was he visible and present to 1.35 billion Indians, he engaged with citizens at a personal level. As behove a leader in crises, he was clear and concise in his message and call to action. However, by appealing to each one of us directly and individually, he went beyond and displayed other necessary leadership traits that leaders at every level can learn from. He asked for help from his citizens, directly, simply and personally. Asking for help is a powerful interpersonal tool that leaders and individuals can use effectively, leveraging on existing inter-personal equations.



A one-day voluntary curfew was the first ask. He called it a "practice drill" indicating more would come. An individual act of all citizens, by all citizens and for all citizens. The next ask, a week later was again personally made, "I said I needed a few weeks of your time and now I ask you for 21-days of your life to save all lives." He went on to say that if we are healthy, the whole world is our oyster. And to save lives we need to stay home in complete lockdown, for the next three weeks. Like a seasoned leader he painted the big picture and showcased collective good as a positive outcome of individual actions.

In the first address he called for "Resolve" and "Restraint" by every citizen, asking them to pay it forward and take on a leadership role individually. Resolve to self-protect and alongside protect others;

and use restraint to do so by practicing social distancing and staying within the confines of our homes. If in pandemic times each of us can be a leader, then this is the time to stand up and be counted by displaying such behavior.

In the second address calling for a 21-day full lockdown, initially self-driven and implemented, he again called for this leadership in every citizen. Like all inclusive leaders he put the onus of his team, his people and he emphasised our collective responsibility. How long this crisis lasts and how sever it is will depend on what we do so the ask is to be responsible individually and collectively or the consequences will be both unimaginable and devastating. Resilience therefore is the need of this time, not panic, not irresponsibility, not ignorance, not fake news or fear. Sign posting cause and effect, individual responsibility and collective action, is another good leadership practice on display.

A few days later, not taking his citizens or their efforts for granted, the PM, apologized, for hardships caused, especially to the urban poor who are displaced and disenfranchised further due to the loss of livelihoods and homes, by the sudden lockdown. He thanked both health workers and citizens for doing their bit and more. And then again, in recent video message he both motivated and prescribed what citizens need to keep doing. In between, he reached out to all Chief Ministers (other leaders) and got their buy in for the current and urged them to think beyond the lockdown to exit strategies and contingency planning. He called upon religious leaders and other social influencers including celebrities, to spread this message amongst their followers, exhorting people to stay home and follow guidelines.

In other words, he displayed textbook leadership behaviors in times of crises. He made it personal and each person accountable. Alongside, he made it about all citizens: "there is no force greater than our collective enthusiasm and contribution". Leaving nothing to chance he got the buy in of other leaders of the Union of India as well as reached out to the influencers, to use their influence to good effect. Most recently, he and his cabinet along with the President and Governors of states, took a voluntary pay cut, leading from the front in the march to save both lives and livelihoods.

> Crises bring out the truth about us and others, about individuals and societies

For positive reinforcement, so necessary in this time of uncertainty and anxiety, he asked for a collective and symbolic gesture of lighting a billion lamps on 5th April to dispel the darkness and reaffirm our faith that together we will overcome.

Crises it is said bring out the truth about us and others, about individuals and societies. What is this crisis going to say about India and Indians? What will we learn about ourselves, our organizations, our teams, our friends and family, through this? How will we judge our leaders, their actions, their foresight or lack of it? How tall will we stand on the other side of this pandemic war? For on the other side we will be, one day, someday, depending on what we do and whether we all share the accountability. Can we find our better selves in this journey? A stronger, healthier more united world, nation, society, family, organization? Only time will tell. But in the interim we have a clear path to walk on and a billion lamps to light.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

NITASHA DEVASAR is MD, Taylor & Francis India and South Asia and President, Association of Publishers in India. A publishing professional of 25 years, she is the editor of Publishers on Publishing: Inside India's Book Business (2018).

Q&A

The glass ceiling for women is breaking down: Founder, VLCC

Vandana Luthra, the Founder of VLCC Institute of Beauty & Nutrition, talks about entrepreneurship, and women leadership

By **Abid Hasan**



What are some patterns you've noticed over the years about women at work, and things they could be doing better to advance their careers?

A When I started VLCC in 1989, one of the challenges I faced was to find qualified talent and subject matter experts who were women and wanted to make careers from what they had qualified in. That has since dramatically changed. I am gratified to see that women are actively seeking careers and not just jobs.

> Maintaining a consistently healthy work-life balance isn't always easy, but you have to keep at it till you get it right

Q What work still needs to be done to level the playing field in the C-suite and boardroom? How do you see the future of women leadership?

A We certainly need to see more women in leadership positions and boardrooms. It is happening, but it is not widespread enough.

Q How do you achieve work/life balance? What tips do you have for fellow women in business struggling in this area?

A Maintaining a consistently healthy work-life balance isn't always easy, but you have to keep at it till you get it right. And the effort to achieve this balance has to come from not just you but those around you. When I am at work, my attention is wholly focused on the job at hand. Likewise, time at home is reserved for family and friends, and my colleagues at work have come to respect that.

Q How do you see the future of work?

A Future of work, from a human resource perspective, will be all about how quickly job-holders can adapt to an increasing technology dependent workplace environment and thereby remain relevant to their respective organizations. pm

Q&A



Create a digital open door: Sindhu Gangadharan, MD, SAP Labs India

Sindhu Gangadharan, SVP and MD, SAP Labs India, discusses with People Matters the need for a digital open door, translating organizational culture into a digital culture, and more

By **Bhavan Sarin**

Sindhu Gangadharan, Senior Vice President and Managing Director, SAP Labs India, is responsible for SAP's development facilities in Bangalore, Pune, Mumbai and Gurgaon. Sindhu joined SAP two decades ago, when SAP Labs India had just set up its operations in Bangalore. She later moved to SAP's headquarters in Walldorf, Germany, working on various products, technology and innovation platforms, and has held several strategic and leadership positions managing global teams.

Her deep technical expertise and business knowledge led her to head the critical integration function in SAP's Technology and Innovation organization in the

Office of the CTO. Sindhu is a strong advocate of using technology to benefit customers and the society. She is also a strong believer in diversity being key for any successful organization and has been actively contributing towards SAP's drive for Women in Technology. As a proud mother of two, she believes the best way to seek work-life balance is to treat them as a continuum and have fun in the process.

Here are excerpts of the interview

Q With over two decades of experience with SAP, what has been the best experience for you as an employee? Which is that one experience that stands out for you?

A There have been several moments or highlights in my two decades with SAP that I cherish and picking anyone would be difficult. However, I would like to highlight that when I was tasked to head SAP's strategic and global Intelligent Enterprise Program reporting into SAP's Executive Board, it was an exhilarating moment. This role put me in the lead position of bringing to life SAP's vision and strategy of the Intelligent Enterprise by orchestrating the end-to-end process delivery roadmaps to rapidly transform data into valuable insights for customers.

Q What according to you is more rewarding to build a great employee experience - consistency or scale? In other words, do little things everyday make a bigger difference or large-scale initiatives every once in a while?

A Putting employees at the center of everything we do is a practice at SAP and many companies understand the importance of doing this. Several studies have proved that employee experience contributes to organizational success. Right from the time an employee joins the organization until the time they exit, employee experience counts, and therefore it is important that the initiative that companies put in place should be consistent and continuous. At SAP, employees grow together through mutual respect and collaboration in tune with one of our core values of building bridges and not silos. We don't create policies or start any initiative because it is a trend, but do it only if we get the buy-in from our employees. Over the years, we have put in a lot of effort to ensure that all our initiatives and policies have a business sponsor.

Q Can you share an example of an employee experience issue that you encountered? How did you approach it, what were the measures you undertook and what was the outcome?

A There are quite a few examples, but the recent one I can relate to is that during this COVID-19 time where every employee is working from home, we have to make sure that they have adequate support to do their work effectively and their concerns are addressed. Much before the lockdown by the government we took proactive measures to safeguard the health and safety of our employees and moved all our events and initiatives to virtual platforms, including engaging virtually with them and their families on health and well-being sessions. We opened

Right from the time an employee joins the organization until the time they exit, employee experience counts, and therefore it is important that the initiative that companies put in place should be consistent and continuous

opportunities for learning through innovative & interactive educational content to support our employees, students, professionals and anyone wishing to continue to learn during this time of crisis. To meet the desire of our employees to participate in giving back to the society, we opened up opportunities for them to contribute and participate virtually.

Q The workforce today is a multi-generational workforce with significantly contrasting expectations from their employees. What is your approach to employee experience with such divergent demands?

A The workforce of today is multi-generational, and each generation has varying traits, needs and aspirations. In SAP, for example, we have a workforce that spans across five generations, with each generation bringing with them different skill sets, passions, commitments, expectations, life experiences and challenges. In the workplace of today the 'command and control' does not apply because every individual irrespective of their age and experience brings value to the organization. To retain and motivate different sets of employees, it is important to get a better understanding of what makes each generation tick so that their needs can be met. The 'one shoe fits all' rule in creating policies and initiatives will not work and therefore it is vital to tailor make policies specific to each generation.

To cite an example, at SAP we introduced FlexBen, a flexible benefit plan which aims to grant employees the freedom to choose benefits based on their individual needs. FlexBen has 4 pillars that employees, as per their priority, can choose from - Health & Wellness, Lifestyle, Diversity & Inclusion and Personal Development. Likewise, we have unique leave policies including entrepreneurship sabbatical leave, surrogacy leave, compassionate leave, etc. to help different sets of employees. We also have openSAP, which is SAP's massive open online course which delivers free courses on technology and soft skills catering to different age groups. Additionally, in-house initiatives like fitness classes, crèche and volunteering programs caters to needs of different people.

Q With the entire world and the way it works being shaken up by the outbreak of COVID-19, what can organizations do to translate the organizational culture into a digital culture, as they are forced to undertake the biggest remote working experiment of all time?

A The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the world and our way of life. Never in the recent past has there been a situation as serious and as disturbing as this. While the health and safety of our employees is our top priority, we also have our professional commitments to fulfill. With social

Leaders in organizations can use a wide range of employee listening mechanisms across a variety of engagement channels to create a "digital open door". By collecting feedback and insights from employees at key touchpoints during the employment lifecycle, leaders can act with precision and in real-time to drive improvement

distancing and remote work being the need of the hour, below are some of the things that organizations can do to translate the organizational culture into a digital culture:

- Equip employees with the best of the communication and collaboration tools to work remotely
- Ensure that the level of business continuity and engagement with customers is not lowered
- Keep the lines of communication open to provide transparent communication and encourage feedback
- Help employees get a sense of control and help them get productive
- Ensure that technology operates with as less glitch as possible and complains are addressed quickly and effectively
- Facilitate online learning, self-development and social interactions
- Keep an updated knowledge repository on COVID-19 that employees can access at any time
- Motivate employees to spend time on their emotional, mental and physical wellness during this time

Q With agility and design thinking being the need of the hour, how are you working towards redesigning employee experience in a virtual setup?



A SAP has always fostered a flexible work culture as part of our policy and hence, the transition was smooth. However, this being a prolonged situation, we have taken measure to ensure business is as usual and work is not hampered. All our employees are equipped to work from home and have all the required connectivity and mobility tools. We have made a free online resource called Remote Work Pulse by Qualtrics available which will help us understand how our employees are doing, what support they need as they adapt to new work environments and enables them to stay connected. We're also sharing the best practices of work from home with employees through videos and photos. We're constantly communicating with our employees via emails, video calls, conducting virtual entertainment programs and group sessions to keep their mood positive. At SAP, we're leveraging this time to connect with our employees by providing learning and development solutions, communicating consistently to build a bond that will further strengthen at the end of this crisis.

Q As a leader, what have you observed as some of the biggest challenges in replicating successful employee experience practices?

A Employee experiences is a cumulation of moments that matter, from the first interaction as a candidate until the time they exit or retire. Organizations that put employees at the center of whatever they do will not find it a challenge to replicate successful employee experience practices. That said, we cannot discount the challenge in replicating successful employee

experience practice as the workforce of today is highly dynamic, with ever-changing needs and expectations. Constantly relooking at the benefits and initiatives has become mandatory. As said earlier, in organizations like SAP where five generations of employees work together, benefits and policies need to be regularly tweaked to meet the needs of different demographics. As an example, we recently announced a new policy under which employees could avail leave to take care of their family members in times of illness or need. Family members under this policy include spouse, partner, children, parents, parent-In-laws, siblings, grandparents and also pets. Technology also helps here. Leaders in organizations can use a wide range of employee listening mechanisms across a variety of engagement channels to create a "digital open door." By collecting feedback and insights from employees at key touchpoints during the employment lifecycle, leaders can act with precision and in real-time to drive improvement.

We're leveraging this time to connect with our employees by providing learning and development solutions, communicating consistently to build a bond that will further strengthen at the end of this crisis



Q What are some of the key factors organizations must keep in mind to ensure a seamless experience for employees as they work remotely?

A During these unprecedented times, organizations should keep in mind few factors like the safety and wellbeing of their employees, ensuring business continuity and protecting client confidentiality and data privacy. Everyone is equally responsible to do their best to protect teams, clients and their organization at large. Prior to the COVID situation many organizations that had not accepted the concept of working from home, will now realize the importance of embracing it.

Q 2020 began with a lot of enthusiasm towards trends that were predicted to rule the world of work this year. However, the last three months have been nothing short of disruption, shocks and finding ways to sustain both business and life. What are you doing at SAP, both across the globe and at regional levels to stabilize the situation for business and employees?

A At SAP, ensuring the safety of our employees while being committed to our clients is of utmost importance for us. We have asked all the employees to

work remotely as much as possible. We are in contact with our large family of suppliers continuously to maintain service levels with precautions. We have developed Business Continuity Plans to respond to disruptive incidents, such as COVID-19, while minimizing the impact of services provided. Business continuity is top of mind for us as 77% of the world's transactions touch an SAP system, and therefore we are completely committed to making sure that business systems of our customers are always operational.

Keeping in line with our purpose of helping the world run better and improving people's lives, we are doing all we can to help our customers and the society at large by throwing open an array of our solutions for free. These include Remote Work Pulse by Qualtrics, SAP Ariba Discovery, COVID-19 Pre-Screen & Routing by Qualtrics, and SAP Litmos.

We have also announced a new digital learning initiative offering innovative, interactive educational content to support students, professionals and anyone wishing to continue to learn during this challenging time. This dynamic initiative is based on three educational pillars - massive open online courses (MOOCs), learning journeys for universities and the SAP Young Thinkers program all of the offerings are accessible through the openSAP platform, our most popular online learning initiative.



In this time of crisis, global leaders should be strong, effective, innovative, and agile. They should set aside their differences and collaborate strongly, pool their resources to quickly find a remedy and mitigate the suffering

Q What is your message for global leaders as they strive to combat the circumstances the pandemic has led to?

A COVID-19 will be a global phenomenon in history. It is a large-scale humanitarian tragedy that continues to disrupt millions of lives. Governments across the world are struggling to combat the virus. In this time of crisis, I feel that global leaders should be strong, effective, innovative and agile. Leaders need to be transparent in communication and take strong and stringent measures to bring down the scale of suffering and disaster. Global leaders should set aside their differences and collaborate strongly, pool their resources to quickly find a remedy and mitigate the suffering.





EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE IN 2020

Managing employee experience (EX) has specially become critical for organizations in the wake of the Coronavirus epidemic and will become more and more important as the world of work undergoes further disruption and embraces digital. The crisis calls for creative ways to balance the employee experience amidst business constraints. Thus creating an employee experience that differentiates employers and actually retains talent is going to be critical in all aspects.

Our special story in this issue takes a look at why EX is a top priority for business leaders across the world, trends shaping employee experience in 2020, challenges that organizations face while ensuring employee experience, pitfalls organizations make when executing their employee experience strategy, and the future of employee experience.



ACCELERATING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE BEYOND 2020

Corporates have started thinking beyond the ordinary and evolving their strategies and programs. The recent pandemic led us to believe that there should be a fresh emphasis largely on creating a culture of well-being, exploring employee creativity, and boosting employee morale and connect, albeit in a virtual way

By **John Gaunt**

Twenty-20 is spelling out a whole new norm in employee experience. Technology is evolving, labor laws are re-shaping and unemployment is decreasing – these are quintessential signals for HR professionals to know that talent and industry are responding to each other. The hit of COVID-19 pandemic had a different plan in store for all businesses though. Organizations augmented their messaging and workplaces to come across as responsive and responsible for employee welfare and safety. While lockdowns were pronounced and directives came in force, an HR leader was required to commit to well-being of every employee, each team, and the organization as a whole.

The pandemic resulted in corporates thinking beyond the ordinary and evolving their strategies and programs for employee benefit. Emphasis is now largely on creating a culture of happiness, exploring employee creativity and boosting employee morale and connect, albeit in a virtual way. An employee needs to feel an affinity to the workspace and the work even in the times of telecommuting. How can organizations make a difference? Here are a few areas that corporates need to explore effectively to do so.

Time to give 'em some space!

While many organizations were starting to think, it could not get better than the good old cubicles, employee workstations have evolved dramatically. These spaces aid an open flow of ideas, accessibility and moreover, better collaboration and transparency. Several organizations have come up with Idea Cocoons, Think Pods, Brainstorming Zones, and more. Fitness at work, being a popular industry trend, has many organizations rethink their office space for the health of their employees. However, social distancing became the new normal almost overnight. Spaces which were earlier growing by leaps and bounds are suddenly going to follow short, as a mandatory 6 to 8 feet gap is mandatory between two workstations.

A well-known digital transformation company in the financial services space

AS EMPLOYEES HAVE BEGUN SPENDING MORE TIME AT WORK AND COMMUTING TO WORK, OFFICES AROUND THE WORLD HAVE REALIZED THE CRITICAL ROLE OF GAMING ZONES, MULTI-CUISINE CAFETERIAS, HEALTH FOOD PANTRIES, GYMNASIUMS AND EVEN RELAXING EQUIPMENT SUCH AS MUSCLE RELAXANT CHAIRS, TO ENABLE A HAPPY AND PRODUCTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

recently introduced the idea of a desk bike across all its global offices. It is a desk that has a built-in bike, which allows you to spot-pedal and exercise. The critical role of gaming zones, multi-cuisine cafeterias, health-food pantries, gymnasiums may soon be required to revamp to adapt social distancing as a way of life

The 3 C's – communication, collaboration, and connectivity

With telecommuting becoming a practice in times of COVID-19, the cliché email also became very important in areas where network connectivity wasn't great. As employees were required to work from their home base, the benefit of office wifi connectivity was lost, leaving them at the mercy of local internet speeds. However, certain urban landscapes blessed with high-speed broadbands enabled employees to use Skype and Microsoft Teams to connect with colleagues and clients. Voice and video conferencing have taken a major leap of faith to survive on the power of the Internet. Messengers, Google Duo, Slack, VPN, or even the WebEx have become effective communication companions. Yammer the corporate twin of Facebook, has become a popular engagement channel in various companies.



Podcasts and webcasts have born and reborn. Employees are always on the lookout for better communication tools; and faster network to run them. Empower your employees with these and you have won them!

Nothing artificial about it

Onboarding turned a new leaf as it got virtual recently. Despite COVID-19, a few companies are still recruiting for business-critical roles. Employees unable to join physically and offices unable to open, both as a result of lockdown, benefitted immensely with virtual onboarding. Even recruiting is set to evolve with artificial intelligence. AI-based recruitment tools enable faster screening when going through a large flood of applications. Even before 2020, on an average a recruiter would take 23 hours to screen applications for a single post. AI-powered recruitment tools will help to filter high volume of resumes and pre-qualifying candidates based on the job description and skills. In my view though, employers while hiring, should look at the skills and attitude that an employee brings rather than the pedigree. We are all moving towards the concept of New Blended Workforce that involves - humans and bots. Today, any given multinational company has chatbots for internal functions such as incident management, library management, insurance facilities or even ordering food in the cafeteria, and I am hopeful these will be a boon with the newly altered work-place advisories as a result of the pandemic.

Make way for intelligence

Even before 2020 hit us, the

wave of upskilling did. Thus now, an organization is quickly popular if it fosters the learning culture within its employees. Employees look for organizations with a "growth and development" mindset and they then know that the brand wants them to grow along with it. Recently a leading FinTech Service provider firm based in New York outdid all its peers by getting an enterprise wide Udemy license for all its employees to benefit from. Each and every employee has access to more than 3500 courses on the Udemy portal and can also access all these training sessions on the Udemy for business app, on-the-go. Now that's what we call a gamechanger. According to sources, the employees of this company are finding this immensely useful in today's work from home times.

Next-level Engagement

Employee engagement has gone digital and will stay so for most part of 2020 till employees are able to come back to office. Several corporates had come up with corporate clubs and forums that cater exclusively to employee hobbies. From running innovation labs to book clubs, photography forums, dance, drama workshops, sports events to talent hunt competitions, companies are willing to turn everything virtual through Zoom or Webex to keep employees, happily motivated and appreciated.

The gratitude attitude

Organizations need to make a revolutionary change in ways and means to appreciate employee effort. Rewards and Recognition (R&R) have always been close to an employee's heart. The fame and the benefit that comes with it, motivates the winner and the aspirant equally. A robust, and moreover an unbiased reward-and-recognition program is the need of the hour and helps create a difference. Every organization rewards outstanding performance, but how many reward creativity? Almost all companies nowadays give merchandise, but how many do reward an employee with a holiday or a sponsored upskilling program?

A fast-growing Fintech MNC, truly responsive to its employees' potential and performance, not just rewards the winners of their R&R regime but also the nominees. The same firm recently introduced a reward category called Cheers to Peers – a one-of-a-kind reward program, which allows colleagues to reward colleagues. This program not just involves HR and the line managers, but also peers making it more transparent and relatable, serving a wider purpose. This sort of a framework is not just exciting but also empowering. What more? The recent pandemic has left the framework unfazed, as the organization made it more powerful by running the awards functions on Zoom.

From my perspective, employers have come a long way to meet their employees' demands. But the journey will keep evolving. The recent stressful times have made all HR leaders think and rethink their ideas and strategies on how to keep employees connected and motivated though from a distance. Many avenues have opened already. Communication can see a new channel with virtual reality. 2020 is just the beginning.

TODAY, ANY GIVEN MULTINATIONAL COMPANY HAS CHATBOTS FOR INTERNAL FUNCTIONS SUCH AS INCIDENT MANAGEMENT, LIBRARY MANAGEMENT, INSURANCE FACILITIES, OR EVEN ORDERING FOOD IN THE CAFETERIA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOHN GAUNT is the Chief Human Resources Officer at Synechron



PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZATIONS LISTEN INTENTLY TO EMPLOYEES' NEEDS: DELOITTE'S BILL DOCHERTY

Organizations have always been focused on customer experience but that has not always translated to the same focus on employee experience, says **Bill Docherty,** Managing Director in Deloitte Consulting's Human Capital, in an interaction with People Matters

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Bill is a managing director in Deloitte Consulting's Human Capital practice and the general manager of ConnectMe, a digital workplace platform that uses data and insights to connect the workforce to what they need, when and where they need it. Bill has more than 25 years of experience in leading the delivery of enterprise software development, with a special focus on Human Capital Management (HCM) platforms.

Bill is also a recognized leader, speaker, and author in the areas of learning and talent management. He currently serves as the talent group leader for Product Management & Development within Deloitte's Human Capital as a Service offering.

Bill graduated from Syracuse University with a master's degree in Mathematics.

Q Why has employee experience become a top priority for business leaders across the world? Has it not always been about customer experience?

A You are exactly correct. Organizations have always been focused on customer experience but that has not always translated to the same focus on employee experience. The combination of employees' expectations of their experience in the workforce being informed by their consumer experience and the realization of organizations that they can leverage their successes in providing an exceptional customer experience to deliver the same to their employees has accelerated that focus. Employees are now demanding an employee experience that provides them with the empowerment and the technology to address many of their needs in a self-service manner and a seamless experience when they need support.

Q Employee experience remains a top talent concern for HR leaders, yet 46% of surveyed employees report they are largely dissatisfied with their overall experience at their organization, according to a study. Why are organizations failing to provide the best employee experience?

A In many cases, organizations have not fully defined what they consider an optimal employee experience and a roadmap on how to transition from their current state to that desired objective. In addition, organizations may have chosen to build customized technology solutions as part of their employee experience without fully appreciating the investment required to maintain and evolve these solutions. This is why you have seen the rise of off-the-shelf solutions such as the Deloitte's ConnectMe offering that takes industry best practices in world-class employee experiences and enables organizations to rapidly evolve the services they deliver to employees.

Q What are some of the techniques that companies can pursue to track and measure EX in their organizations?

A Organizations that excel at continuous improvement of their employee experience not only listen to what their employees say about their experience but also use advanced analytics to identify workflow and usage patterns that uncover latent needs that are critical to improving that experience. The most progressive organizations listen intently to what employees say about their experience via surveys and social listening and measure the actual experience they have through advanced interaction analytics that track their navigation/usage experience and measuring service delivery metrics such as employee case resolution time and satisfaction.

Q How can employers leverage AI and next-gen technologies to fuel differentiated employee experiences?

A Advanced machine learning and natural language processing solutions can assist organizations in empowering employees to address their most common workplace challenges in a more rapid self-service manner. Most employees would prefer to be empowered to resolve a workforce need on their own without having to reach out for assistance. Technologies such as chatbot solutions are enablers. Along a typical employee journey, there are several areas where a chatbot can reduce friction and add value by automating processes and simplifying employee inputs. For example, imagine an intelligent online agent walking you through every aspect of the workflow that is required when you need to go on a leave of absence or upon the birth of a new child that needs to be added to your benefits plan. The additional benefit of empowering employees to address the most common workforce or HR needs on their own is that enables the team members that have traditionally fielded those inquiries to focus on strategic initiatives that advance the mission of the organization.

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

A One of the biggest pitfalls is that many organizations start from the perspective that they are a "unicorn" and have completely unique needs and challenges that will form their employee experience strategy and their technology choices to support that strategy. This has led many organizations to develop completely customized strategies, policies, communications and technology solutions that are too costly to sustain. Organizations that are able to leverage the successes of peers and adopt employee experience strategies and solutions that serve as a strong foundation that they can build upon and configure to their unique circumstances typically develop a more sustainable employee experience that they can evolve more rapidly and cost effectively in an agile manner.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST PITFALLS ORGANIZATIONS MAKE IS THAT MANY ORGANIZATIONS START FROM THE PERSPECTIVE THAT THEY ARE A "UNICORN" AND HAVE COMPLETELY UNIQUE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES THAT WILL FORM THEIR EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE STRATEGY AND THEIR TECHNOLOGY CHOICES TO SUPPORT THAT STRATEGY



EX WILL NO LONGER BE LIMITED TO THE HR FUNCTION: QUALTRICS' STEVE BENNETTS

To truly make a difference, EX must be integrated with multiple other aspects of the business: customer experience, brand experience, product experience, and so on. Qualtrics Head of EX Strategy **Steve Bennetts** shares some pointers

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Steve Bennetts is the Head of EX Strategy and Solutions for Qualtrics in APJ, leading a team of specialists in guiding organizations to optimize EX at every point in the employee life cycle.

He specializes in EX and human-centered technologies, and is one of the region's most experienced EX specialists. A passionate psychologist, he utilizes the crossover space between creativity, psychology, and digital technologies to create a positive experience on our planet. Here, he shares his thoughts on today's EX landscape and how employers can create and implement a good EX strategy.

Q What are the top trends shaping employee experience in 2020?

A The way we work has been changed forever by COVID-19, with individuals, teams, and entire companies working from home. It's the first time flexible working programs have been tested at such scale, meaning leaders and HR managers are faced with new and sometimes unexpected challenges. This new world of work means it's more important than ever for businesses to engage their teams in two-way communications. During times of change, research shows that employees want to provide feedback—and importantly, individuals will reward those that listen and act with increased engagement. Throughout this period of change and uncertainty, regularly understanding and actioning employee feedback will be a key enabler to helping businesses run effectively and seamlessly.

Q Why is EX more important than ever, such that it has become a top priority for business leaders across the world?

A EX is critically important on two levels.

Firstly, insight into your EX when everyone is working remotely helps businesses understand how effective their programs are, and whether networks and services are performing as needed. For example, if there is a known issue accessing the company VPN, a step-by-step guide can be created and shared across the company. Understanding your EX also helps prioritize employee well-being by

"NOW IS THE CRITICAL TIME BUSINESSES NEED TO LISTEN AND ACT ON EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK, WHICH WILL HELP US ALL SUCCEED IN THE LONG-TERM." EMPLOYEES WANT TO FEEL HEARD, AND THEY ARE WILLING TO GIVE THE REAL, GENUINE FEEDBACK THAT PROVIDES EMPLOYERS WITH THE MOST VALUE

using engagement channels to deliver support and maintaining team interaction and collaboration.

On a commercial level, EX is fundamental to a good customer experience - which is paramount in the current economic climate. When employees are more engaged and satisfied, they are more motivated to provide superior customer experiences, and positively reflect the brand too.

Q How does the EX scenario look like in SEA? How does EX vary across organizations and industries? Which trends in the employee engagement space are you tracking in 2020?

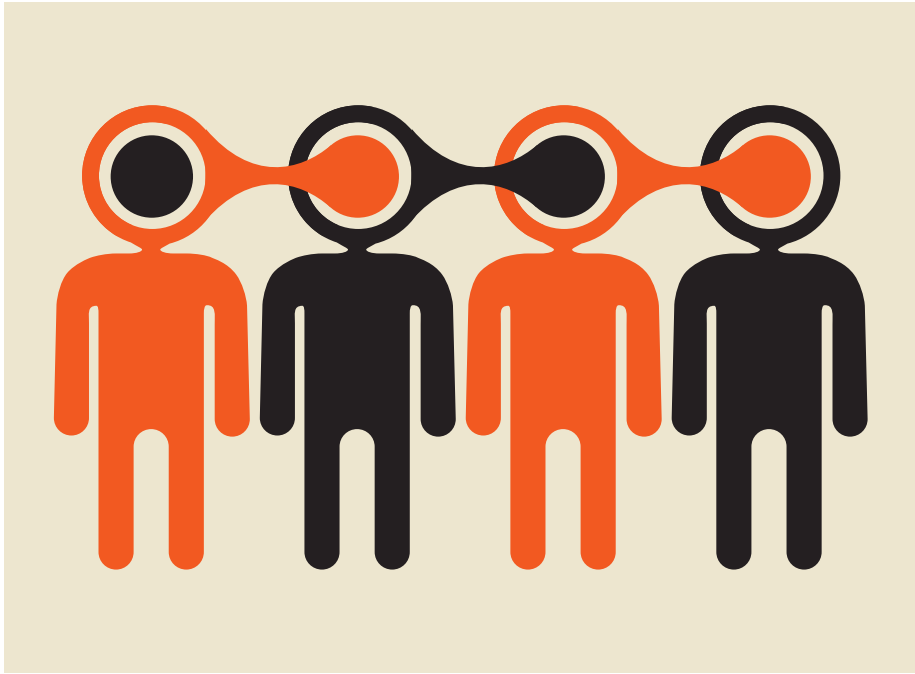
A Southeast Asia may be characterized as a single market but is very diversified in terms of its development. Generally, we are seeing more organizations in the region investing in employee experience and genuinely interested in keeping their employees engaged and motivated.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 I've had many conversations with leaders around how to remain connected while teams are working outside of the office. The answer I always give to this is to be able to listen, and act.

Q Whilst the level of investment in employee engagement initiatives is growing, employee engagement scores aren't growing. How does the cumulative effect of an employee's experiences shape their engagement at work?

A Cultivating a great EX and reaping its rewards takes time. Engagement naturally improves over the course of the employee's employment. Our research shows employees are most engaged when they are with their company for about four years (54 per cent). They are least engaged during their first year of employment (31 per cent).

The drivers of engagement also change as well during the course of their employment. For example, the most important engagement driver for employees with under two years of tenure is 'a link between work and the company's objectives' whereas 'confidence in senior leadership' rose to the top for employees with over four years of service.



Our research also told us that employees want to feel heard by employers. This means they are open to giving real, genuine feedback. Acting on these insights is what is really going to move the needle on engagement, demonstrating the importance of providing a program that evolves and changes over time to meet the unique needs of each employee.

All this means it's crucial employers commit to an EX program of action and remain dedicated to fulfilling it if they are going to achieve lasting success.

Q How can employers leverage AI and next-gen technologies to fuel differentiated employee experi-

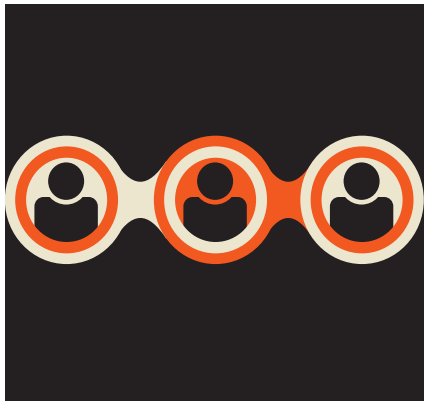
ences? How important is people analytics and why is it good for the company and its people?

A Artificial intelligence and next-gen technologies help employers identify key themes and priorities that they should act upon. For example, artificial intelligence enables employers to rapidly analyze open text feedback based on what employees write in the comments section as part of the employee engagement survey.

AI also provides insights on which combination of team members work best together or which employees would be well-suited to take the lead on a certain project — saving time, negating gut feel and creating a huge impact on operational efficiency. Similarly, modern solutions like Guided Action Planning can provide leaders with expert advice on how to respond in certain situations.

But although AI is becoming ubiquitous within EX, the general consensus is that it can never fully replace humans. The best results will be achieved with humans and AI complementing each other. This is necessary as AI is missing a fundamentally crucial aspect of HR: empathy.

This includes things like being able to predict resilience and emotional intelligence. Despite this, we'll undoubtedly still try — but by using AI to predict these aspects of potential, we run the risk of falling further into an already deep human-based bias hole.



"BY INTEGRATING EX WITH CUSTOMER, BRAND, AND PRODUCT EXPERIENCES, BUSINESSES CAN MEASURE THE IMPACT OF EX IN A MULTITUDE OF WAYS." EX IS ABOUT STAYING CONNECTED, AND ABOUT BRINGING IN OTHER PARTS OF THE BUSINESS TO CREATE A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Q What are the world's leading organizations doing around employee experience?

A The world is in unprecedented times right now, and the situation is changing quickly all the time. My conversations with various businesses reinforced my belief now is the critical time businesses need to listen and act on employee feedback, which will help us all succeed in the long-term. Businesses like Ford and Goldman Sachs have put in place measures helping them remain connected with their teams, such as daily or weekly check-in surveys. Others are continuing their annual census but significantly changing their questions to focus on what's important now. Ultimately, focus on what is salient and important to employees right now.

Another thing we are seeing is different types of employee listening, such as open ended questions and always on-channels. We've implemented these programs ourselves at Qualtrics.

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

A Collecting employee feedback through various means such as pulse surveys, 360 performance reviews and new hire surveys but not listening and taking action on the

feedback. When no action is taken, employee engagement takes a dip. In our study that was conducted last year, 65 percent of respondents reported having an opportunity to give feedback; however, only 25 percent of them indicated their company turns their feedback into action "very or extremely well."

Q Many business owners say they don't focus on employee experience because they don't have the budget to. Is it something that requires big spending?

A While investing in modern tools is beneficial and makes the program more efficient, the fundamentals and foundations must be first set in place. It all starts from engaging with their employees, listening to their feedback and acting on their feedback. The engagement program will naturally undergo multiple iterations for them to answer the right type of questions and obtain the right type of actionable feedback. These programs are scalable over time and business owners can progressively increase their budgets where they deem fit.



Q Which are the ways in which HR leaders can measure the effects of employee engagement?

A By integrating EX with customer, brand, and product experiences, businesses can measure the impact of EX in a multitude of ways. Modern EX platforms will help organizations correlate high employee engagement with customer satisfaction or product innovation. Doing so enables the profession to demonstrate the critical value it brings to the business.

Q What's the future of employee experience?

A EX has been thrust onto the main stage due to the current world we are living in. As a result, the importance companies put on EX is changing forever.

In the immediate future, EX is helping businesses maintain business continuity and employee safety. And as we emerge into this new world of work the elevated role of EX will see it become an integrated function combined with customer experience, product experience and brand experience. It will not be an area that's only limited to the HR function given how business leaders are placing employee experience as a strategic priority.

Many functions will be part of the wider effort from the IT teams to the finance teams to the workplace design teams as all of these functions have meaningful interactions with the employee. For example, the IT team has a relationship with employees pertaining to all IT matters such as teething issues with hardware and software. As for the workplace design team, they will be engaging with employees to collect feedback on what they expect to have in their workplace.



EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE IS A PART OF THE LARGER ORGANIZATIONAL ETHOS: MAX LIFE NSURANCE'S CPO

In this exclusive interaction with People Matters, **Shailesh Singh,** Director and Chief People Officer, Max Life Insurance shares his views on how a valuable employee experience is becoming a priority for business leaders across industries today and how Max Life Insurance is aiming to assimilate innate digitized workplace practices with management and human resource practices to build the next level of employee experience

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Shailesh Singh, Director and Chief People Officer, Max Life Insurance is responsible for developing and implementing successful Human Resources strategies that support long term growth and transformation of the organization. As part of the organization's transformation agenda, Singh is spearheading Max Life's journey to becoming a 'Great Place to Work' while benchmarking organizations culture and people practices to the very best. Singh introduced the Organization & Talent Review process across the organization to systematically and proactively build organizational talent pool and succession plans. Under his leadership, focus on supervisory capability and accountability of people agenda has been further strengthened. Singh is a firm believer in making Max Life Values come alive through leadership role modelling and embodiment of Values via Business and HR processes. Singh is responsible for the company's societal connect and leads Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.

In this exclusive interaction with People Matters, Singh shares how a valuable employee experience is becoming a priority for business leaders across industries today, how can organizations measure the RoI, success, and impact of their EX initiatives, and how can they ensure that employee engagement tricks translate to a more productive or happier workforce. He also talks about how in their constant quest to enhance employee experience at Max Life Insurance, they aim to assimilate innate digitized workplace practices with management and human resource practices to build the next level of employee experience.

Q Why has employee experience (EX) become a top priority for business leaders across the world?

A Employees are integral drivers of value which is the cornerstone of successful relationships with customers. Positive experiences shape employee perceptions, nurture workplace engagement and in turn deliver a more productive and customer-oriented workforce. A valuable employee experience is therefore

STABILITY, INNOVATION, COMPETENCY, AND RESILIENCE, ARE KEY TRAITS THAT PEOPLE-CENTRIC ORGANIZATIONS ARE PUTTING AT THE FOREFRONT OF EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES

SPECIAL STORY

becoming a priority for business leaders across industries. Stability, innovation, competency, and resilience, are key traits that people-centric organizations are putting at the forefront of employee experiences.

Q How do you see the EX scenario in India? Where do most organizations sit on the employee experience maturity curve in India?

A In relative terms, India sits considerably high on the employee experience curve. As per a 2016 IBM report, Indian organizations were found to be 84% "favorable" on the Employee Experience Index . With greater technological intervention and automation in the picture, more and more Indian companies are expected to climb up the curve in due course of time. As the time and energies of manual operations in business are significantly reducing, the demand for more strategic and cerebral skills is only improving. The same is bringing about opportunities to relook, reflect and evolve employee experiences in line with the organization's most identifiable business goals.

Q Which trends in the employee engagement space are you tracking in 2020?

A In a world where employee expectations are constantly evolving, high-performing organizations such as ours must push the envelope beyond the industry benchmarks to drive engagement. As a new-age employer, we look for trends that would help build positive, long-term relationships with workers, to understand the employee's needs and values.

For instance, while technology is assuming a bigger role in building an engaged workforce, the need of the hour is to merge technical prowess with a human approach. Blending the two, we at Max Life Insurance are developing a set of unified self-service offerings that can create a simplified experience for employees. From streamlining access to everyday employee activities like pay-slip generation, planning leaves, employee benefits to digital referral and recognition of colleagues, digital initiatives are enabling productivity by bringing about a remarkable reduction in queries raised via internal ticketing system and helps increase overall nimbleness.

Q Can you give us a peek into the EX initiatives you are taking for your employees? How are you leveraging next-gen technologies such as AI or people analytics to fuel differentiated employee experiences at your organization?

A At Max Life Insurance, we are incorporating a host of employee engagement initiatives that transcend across various verticals and help accentuate employee experience further. As an organization, we celebrate personal and professional milestones, engage our employees in social and cultural initiatives both at local and organizational levels, and constantly seek their feedback via intuitive platforms



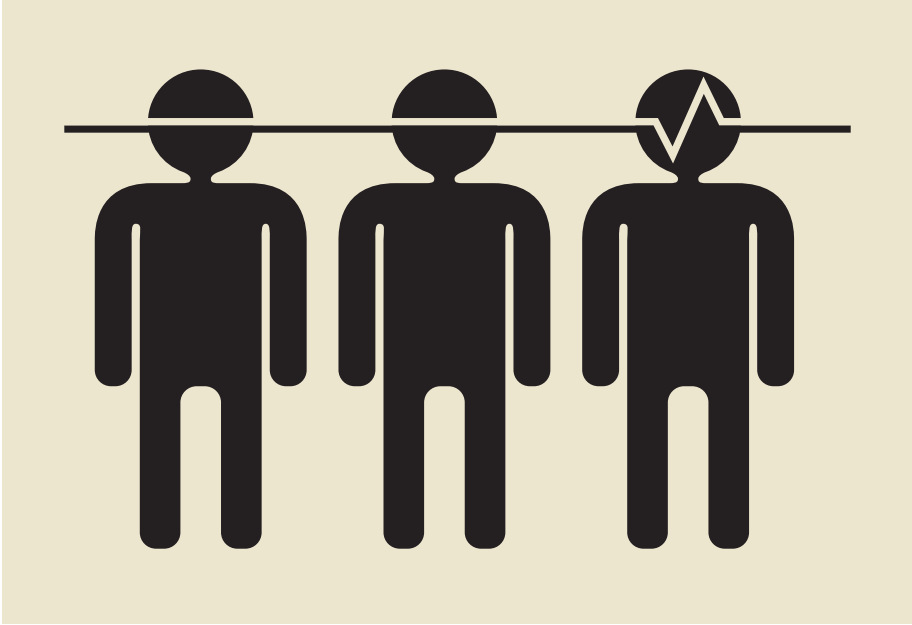
such as annual employee engagement surveys.

Incorporating innovative digitized engagement mediums has helped us increase employee engagement and traction by ways of real-time organizational updates, interaction amongst varied employee communities and engaging leadership communication which has helped enhance employee experience and fuel the company's high-performance culture.

Also, in an endeavor to encourage paperless organizational behavior, we have developed eCube – a Max Life intranet platform. eCube contains within itself employee digital assets that enable employees to access organisation-wide knowledge repository, training materials and references that are accessible at the ease of a button. With more than 78% active employee users of eCube, Max Life is leading the way in leveraging next-gen technologies to democratize differentiated employee experiences at the organization.

Q How do you measure the RoI, success, and impact of your EX initiatives? How do your employee engagement tricks translate to a more productive or happier workforce?

A Employee experience at Max Life is measured by a combination of variables that include quantitative aspects including employee-centric programs, and qualitative inputs like continuous employee engagement surveys and interviews to arrive at a common measure of employee experience. Our employee experience metrics have resulted in us being placed constantly amongst the top pedestals of Great Places to Work, wherein we have seen a constant increase in rankings on a year-on-year basis and a current standing at the 35th position. We believe that this is been resultant of a productive and happier workforce that prides in being a part of the Max Life family, and constantly demands better employee experience which we have been able to provide continuously.



A FLAT ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE THAT RENDERS ROOM FOR THE AGILITY OF DECISION MAKING AND RAPID PROTOTYPING CAN BECOME A CATALYST FOR SMOOTH IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

Q How is the enterprise work culture changing in response to the needs and demands of generational groups like Millennials and Gen Z? What kind of experience do they look for in their organizations?

A Millennials are the workforce of the future that companies must appeal to and engage with. The demographic isn't transactional in its approach to work. Millennials care about how they are being valued by their organization. They

typically seek more fluid and flexible organizations that make them feel empowered by driving their efficiency and job satisfaction in an atmosphere that is meaningfully charged.

Enterprises today are rising to the occasion by transitioning from traditional hierarchal structures to more personal, agile and holistic environments. Organizations are increasingly creating more meaningful exchange at work, offering alternative work arrangements, and presenting smaller but well-deserved incentives that validate millennial employees' performance. Companies across the board are responding to the needs of the Gen Y workforce and are reframing employee value propositions to not only explicitly state, but also meet their evolving demands effectively.

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

A More often than not, it is the failure to translate the organization's purpose for its people, which becomes challenging to the implementation of an employee experience strategy. It is therefore critical for the leadership to ensure that teams from all over can be involved in decision making, thereby doing away with traditional hierarchies that could pose some obstacles.

Secondly, a flat organization structure that renders room for the agility of decision making and rapid prototyping can become a catalyst for smooth implementation of an employee experience strategy. It is most important to hold clear and consistent communication across verticals, employ transparency of thought, and drive effective training programs to execute a seamless employee experience strategy.

IT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO HOLD CLEAR AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION ACROSS VERTICALS, EMPLOY TRANSPARENCY OF THOUGHT, AND DRIVE EFFECTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS TO EXECUTE A SEAMLESS EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

Q Many business owners say they don't focus on employee experience because they don't have the budget to. Is it something that requires big spending? Can you share some numbers in terms of the kind of investment you make to enhance EX at Max Life?

A Employee experience is a sum total of organizational culture, employee engagement and value systems and hence, more than monetary investments, it requires collective human efforts. For Max Life Insurance, employee experience is more than an investment and is a part of the larger organizational ethos that defines what we stand for.

Q What are your future priorities with regard to your plans around employee experience? Anything specific you want to embark on?

A In our constant quest to enhance employee experience at Max Life Insurance, we aim to assimilate innate digitized workplace practices with management and human resource practices to build the next level of employee experience. In this quest to build employee experience 2.0, we are increasingly incorporating digital tools along with integrated employee platforms to enhance the experience further. Our priorities remain on building intuitive avenues like employee journey maps, employee net promoter scores, and design thinking to measure and enhance employee experiences.



AMERICAN EXPRESS CHRO ON CREATING A HOLISTIC EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

In these testing times, when employee experience has become all the more critical, **Kabir Julka,** Chief Human Resources Officer, American Express, India shares his views on why companies must break down every key touchpoint throughout the colleague's journey and weave the business strategy into its people strategy and employee experience framework to facilitate success

By **Yasmin Taj**

Times are tough and organizations that will emerge as winners from this would be the ones that will ensure that they take care of their employees along with their business lines. The COVID-19 crisis has given way to unprecedented challenges at the workplace, and progressive organizations today are finding newer ways each day ensure they keep their business lines running along and their employees motivated. After all, an ideal employee experience will lead to an ideal customer experience.

In this exclusive interaction with People Matters, Kabir Julka, Vice President & Chief Human Resource Officer for American Express India, talks about how they have redesigned their HR function to the 'Colleague Experience Group' and what Colleague Experience means to them as an organization. He also shares how, at the heart of it, an organization and its leadership should prioritize its people, since colleagues enable strategies and deliver towards long-term value creation.

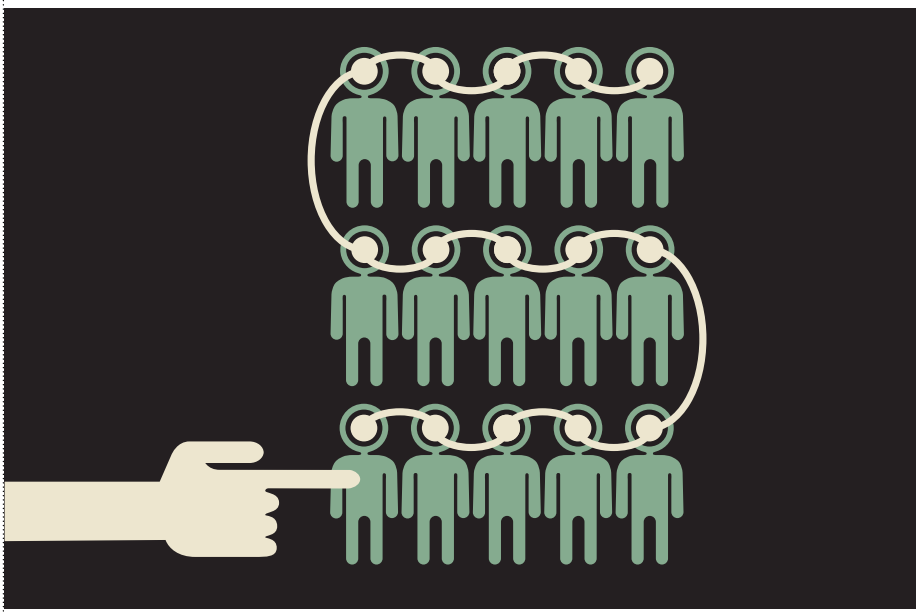
Julka is also a member of the Board of American Express Banking Corp. and American Express India Private Ltd. He has been with American Express for 11 years, with an overall experience of over 17 years spanning across multiple leadership roles in India and Asia. In his current role, Julka leads the HR function for American Express in India partnering with business leaders to drive people strategies that enable achievement of the company's strategic business goals in India. His team enables business growth through platforms that deliver on talent, leadership and culture priorities across One AXP India. He is also focused on leading business through change in partnership with senior market and global leaders.

Here are the excerpts from the interview.

Q What does "Employee Experience" stand for in today's workplace context?

A At American Express, we call our employees as Colleagues. We have redesigned our HR function to the 'Colleague Experience Group' and created a powerful vision, mission and three-year roadmap

WE BELIEVE, A GREAT COLLEAGUE EXPERIENCE CAN HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON EVERYTHING - RIGHT FROM HAVING A HAPPIER WORK CULTURE, TO RETENTION, AND POSITIVE BUSINESS REVENUE IMPACT



WE FEEL THAT COLLEAGUES ARE THE BACKBONE OF ANY SUCCESSFUL COMPANY, THAT IS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO CREATE A COLLEAGUE EXPERIENCE THAT BOOSTS PRODUCTIVITY AND COLLEAGUE WELL-BEING

designed to help us be much more connected to our colleagues and seek to truly understand and improve their current and future experiences.

From the moment a colleague joins a company, till the time he/ she leaves the organization, the overall journey of that person at the workplace is 'Employee aka Colleague Experience'. At American Express, we obsess over understanding our colleagues at a deeper level. We co-create simple and great ways of working that enable everyone to be and deliver their best. We believe, a great colleague experience can have a positive impact on everything - right from having a happier work culture, to retention, and positive business revenue impact.

Q How is Employee Experience different or evolved than things like organizational culture, employee engagement, etc.?

A There are multiple aspects of colleague experience and engagement is only a part of the overall journey. For example, colleague engagement may be defined as the degree to which colleagues feel zealous about their roles, have a commitment to the organization, or even have an emotional connection to the job and workplace. However, after more than a decade of companies focusing on the idea of colleague engagement, studies show that most are not making progress, and colleague engagement in the many parts of the world is stagnant.

Experts believe this is due to companies equating engagement with a narrow focus on basic perks, such as free food. Such aspects could be an end outcome of a colleague experience strategy. It does not supplant a holistic and long-term approach to creating happy, loyal and productive colleagues. Thus, colleague engagement is a vital part of the colleague experience, but it is not all encompassing. At the heart of it, an organization and its leadership should prioritize its people, since colleagues enable strategies and deliver towards long-term value creation.

Q If you want to improve your employee experience, productivity, wellbeing, and output, what should you do? Where do you start?

A We feel that colleagues are the backbone of any successful company, that is why it is important to create a colleague experience that boosts productivity and colleague wellbeing. Building a colleague experience framework begins with an assessment of colleagues'

needs, considering their perspective and creating a personalized workplace. This allows companies to understand what their colleagues require to feel fulfilled and develop a sense of pride for being part of an organization. Companies must break down every key touchpoint throughout the colleague's journey and weave the business strategy into its people strategy and colleague experience framework to facilitate success.

- ***Develop new ways of working to unlock enterprise value:*** Create an environment of continuous improvement, innovation, agility and enterprise design where wellbeing is a focus for all colleagues.

HR MANAGERS TODAY NEED TO KEEP UP AND ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO BE WELL-VERSED WITH WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS FOR SHAPING AN EVOLVED STRATEGY IN LINE WITH THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Aiming at creating an enriching culture and productive workplace, our global vision for 2020 and beyond revolves around three strategic pillars:

- ***Delivering a great colleague experience:*** By creating an inclusive environment and integrating inclusive leadership behavior and diversity practices. We have designed products, processes and tools that revolve around colleagues, based-on colleague data and insights.
- ***Growing the best talent:*** We aim to create a high-quality, end-to-end candidate experience for all stakeholders and develop best-in-class leaders who will ensure colleague growth through performance and development feedback.

Q What are the advantages for companies investing in it? Does it help to retain talent?

A We believe that when colleagues' feel a strong sense of belonging with their organization, they choose to stay, grow and drive results. We are committed to providing our colleagues a variety of resources to support their overall wellbeing, whether it is physical, financial, psychological or social. Positioning colleagues as brand ambassadors also encourages them to demonstrate their loyalty and pride for the organization. This helps build a strong employer brand eco-system, resulting in retaining and attracting talent.

Q How do people managers play a part in designing employee-centric moments for employees?

A A colleague's leader contributes in a large way to how the colleague perceives and experiences the organization. Leaders are key stakeholders in a colleague's lifecycle and their ownership of colleague experience is central to driving a superior experience. At American Express, we emphasize growing great leaders, who not only support team members but strive towards ensuring their well-being, development and growth. Our leaders 'walk the talk' and have the back of our colleagues every day, in every situation. They co-create colleague-centric solutions with HR for practicality and relevance.

Q How is the gig economy redefining employee engagement and how can organizations incorporate this aspect into crafting a well-rounded employee experience?

A In today's era, people no longer have fixed work schedules and they operate in a dynamic environment. This has given rise to a gig economy/ flexible working environment. HR manag-

ers today need to keep up and organizations need to be well-versed with workforce requirements for shaping an evolved strategy in line with the organizational culture. While crafting a well-rounded colleague experience, the organization needs to gain a deeper understanding of their current and future requirements and needs. We find the work-life fit that is best for them and the business and take a holistic approach to provide benefits beyond physical health to cover overall well-being (physical, financial, emotional and social).

Q What are some challenges that HR managers face today with a distributed workforce, especially in terms of employee experience?

A HR strategies need to constantly evolve as per the changing trends and requirements of the workforce, especially in times like today. It requires a deep understanding of the overall scenario and ensure the practices are in sync with the organization and in line with the needs of the colleagues. Some of the key challenges that HR managers face today include:



- ***Colleague development and engagement:*** Like most strategies, colleague development and engagement doesn't happen overnight. It requires a persistent, intentional effort, along with a long-term plan, for it to take root and thrive.
- ***Diversity in workplace:*** The requirements and needs of the colleagues are likely to differ, necessitating strategies that are inclusive and cater to varying needs. When we think of diversity, we need to lead with the lens of practicing inclusion across a diverse colleague base and varies working styles/arrangements.
- ***Changing environment:*** Developing experiences that are relevant for the colleagues as per the current trends and socio-economic environment requires a constant touch with the external environment and best practices.
- ***Colleague retention:*** HR managers need to constantly work towards providing best of services and solutions to the colleagues along with a holistic work and learning experience.
- ***Wellbeing of the colleagues:*** It is every organization's responsibility to ensure that the colleagues lead a healthy and happy life as it directly impacts their quality of work, innovation and growth.

IT IS EVERY ORGANIZATION'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT THE COLLEAGUES LEAD A HEALTHY AND HAPPY LIFE AS IT DIRECTLY IMPACTS THEIR QUALITY OF WORK, INNOVATION AND GROWTH



BUILD LEARNINGS FROM THE PANDEMIC INTO ORGANIZATIONAL MEMORY: SHREYA BHAGWANTH

Shreya Bhagwanth, Head of Human Resources for the India region at 3M, in an exclusive conversation with People Matters, talks about the company's efforts to stabilize business, translating organizational culture into a digital culture and etching learnings from the pandemic into organizational memory

By **Bhavna Sarin**

Shreya Bhagwanth, Head of Human Resources for the India region at 3M, is an experienced HR Leader with expertise in the areas of strategic business partnering, driving change, leadership development, talent management, development frameworks, HR strategy formulation, career frameworks, diversity & inclusion, and employer brand management. Her previous stints include multiple roles in companies including Hindustan Unilever Limited, People Insight, Aditya Birla Group, and Siemens.

In an exclusive interview with People Matters, Shreya discusses the importance of consistent leadership communication, the benefits of having strong rooted cultural pillars and stabilizing business and employee experience amid COVID-19.

Here are excerpts of the interview.

Q As an industry leader with over two decades of experience across consumer goods, consulting, mining, electronics, and industrial engineering, what was the best experience you had as an employee? Which is that one experience that stands out for you?

A There are two experiences which stand out for me. I started my career with Hindustan Lever. After completing my training, I was given independent responsibility as HR Manager in a manufacturing plant. The company was true to its employer brand of giving large and consequential responsibilities to young managers. It stayed true across other assignments and was career defining.

> EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE IS ROOTED IN THE ORGANIZATION CULTURE. ANY ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WITHOUT THE CORRESPONDING SYNC WITH CULTURE WILL HAVE LIMITED AND SHORT-TERM IMPACT

The other experience that I will call out is in 3M - my current organization. The response of leadership of 3M to the global COVID-19 situation, as a provider of personal safety solutions and as an employer has been outstanding. I could not be prouder of working in an organization that prioritizes people - our employees, healthcare workers and the general public, above all. Times like these are the ultimate test for leadership in organizations and reveal true character. This experience has reinforced my



CULTURE PILLARS LIKE - CUSTOMER CENTRICITY, COLLABORATION, AGILITY WHEN STRONGLY ESTABLISHED IN THE ORGANIZATION BOTH FACILITATE AND ARE REPLICABLE TO A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT. CONSISTENT AND CLEAR LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION REINFORCING THE CULTURE PILLARS AND SHARING SUCCESS STORIES AROUND THEM GOES A LONG WAY TO REINFORCE THIS DIGITALLY

desire to contribute to the organization.

Q What according to you is more rewarding to build a great employee experience - consistency or scale? In other words, do little things everyday make a bigger difference or large-scale initiatives every once in a while?

A It is the "Daily" that matters. The small little things that are reiterated and reinforced regularly. For example, 3M focuses on "Respectful Workplace" being the cornerstone of how employees deal with each other, even in difficult, challenging times. What matters here is the consistency of experience day after day, across locations, businesses, people managers, hierarchies and geographies. Consistency of this employee experience represents the underlying culture of the organization. It does not need to be explained and it speaks for itself. Employees see through "Flavour of the Month" initiatives which reflect in the short term only.

Q Can you share an example of an employee experience issue that you encountered? How did you approach it, what were the measures you undertook and what was the outcome?

A 3M in India has established a strong process for performance management for our technical associates (blue collar employees). During 2019, the HR and manufacturing teams worked closely together to strengthen this process with the intention of enhancing their employee experience. We did some brainstorming, created templates with greater detail, strengthened the midterm feedback process and enhanced supervisor training for this process across our manufacturing plants. The EPR process is key to our employee experience for the TA cadre. It is important to 3M that we spend similar time and energy across employee groups for this critical process. It is also reflected in our signature Learning program - ACT - Associates Contributing Together - which we run at our shop

floor. We were delighted to complete coverage across all our manufacturing units last year. We are now working on Version 2.0 of this program. Consistent focus on our TA employee experience and shop floor culture has enabled us to run our manufacturing operations for respirators and sanitizers with great engagement and dedication from the employees, even in these challenging times.

Q Employee experience is often replaced with employee engagement. To what extent do you think they overlap, and on what levels are they different?

A I look at it as a virtuous cycle - the stronger and more consistent the employee experience, the greater is the employee engagement. An engaged workforce feeds into employee experience and swift addressing of outliers. Different sides of the coin - rather than different processes. Traditional models of employee engagement have often captured it as the discretionary extra which employees bring to work, even if they don't have to. In today's world, I will take it a step further, it also connects to advocacy - for the organization. Employee Experience - consistently curated and felt across the entire employee life cycle, becomes a crucial enabler in this process.

Q As a leader, what have you observed as some of the biggest challenges in replicating successful employee experience practices?

A Employee Experience is rooted in the organization culture. Any attempt to address the employee experience without the corresponding sync with culture will have limited and short-term impact. An additional challenge is the capability of People Managers. Notwithstanding the best laid processes and standards set out by an organization, the key to the employee experience is the role of the supervisor / people manager. We have multiple touchpoints and programs with People Managers to ensure common understanding and execution of the employee experience.



Q With the entire world and the way it works being shaken up by the outbreak of COVID-19, what can organizations do to translate the organizational culture into a digital culture, as they are forced to undertake the biggest remote working experiment of all time?

A Digital and virtual collaboration tools exist and are available across organizations. The mindset in the organization and leaders is key. Culture Pillars like - customer centricity, collaboration, agility when strongly established in the organization both facilitate and are replicable to a virtual environment. Consistent and clear leadership communication reinforcing the culture

pillars and sharing success stories around them goes a long way to reinforce this digitally. Establishing new archetypes and role models and celebrating their success is necessary.

Q What are some key factors organizations must keep in mind to ensure a seamless experience for employees as they work remotely?

A Organization cultures that place a premium of inclusion make this shift to remote working seamlessly. Leadership communication - to ensure there is consistency and clarity of messaging across the organization reinforces the employee experience and builds trust in the organization. Performance evaluation processes that advocate scheduled check-ins enable greater trust and communication in the remote working times. Ensuring equitable access to information is also key – whether internal job postings, or development programs or customer related information on Salesforce or other internal portals. Employees must feel empowered in the remote working zone, not constrained and cramped. A part of the sales workforce in most organizations is used to working remotely. The challenge is to upskill employees and team leaders who are not used to it. A focus on wellness programs - emotional / mental - enable employees to deal with the ambiguity and stresses of working remotely. Toolkits for team leaders to manage their remote teams is another enabler. Self care tips for employees to prioritize their own health and wellbeing is important. Ultimately, the organization can provide a menu of options as facilitators. We must recognize that employees will pick and choose what works for them in their individual context.

Q 2020 began with a lot of enthusiasm towards trends that were predicted to rule the world of work this year. However, the last three months have been nothing short of disruption, shocks and finding ways to sustain both business and life. What are you doing at 3M, both across the globe and at regional levels to stabilize the situation for business and employees?

A The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed created a new reality for the world. At 3M, our highest priority is the safety of our people and the public. We are committed to supporting public health and government response to the outbreak. Global demand for supplies used to help protect people and prevent the spread of illness, such as respirators, is currently exceeding supply. 3M is increasing output by 40% globally. In the US we are working shifts 24/7 utilizing our surge capacity for their market. In India too we have increased production of our masks and respirators by working closely with our suppliers



A NEW NORMAL WILL EMERGE POST THE IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES BOTH IN BUSINESS AND WAYS OF WORKING - AGILE MINDSET IS KEY AND EARLY ADOPTERS WILL LEAD THE WAY HERE. THE LEARNINGS FROM THE PANDEMIC CHALLENGES MUST BE BUILT INTO ORGANIZATIONAL MEMORY



to understand how COVID-19 will affect their ability to serve our requirements on near and long-term continuity of supplies. We also work with our raw material suppliers, many of whom are in Europe and Korea, to ensure an uninterrupted production of masks at our plant in India.

During the lockdown we are getting excellent support from government agencies both at the State and Central level to ensure unfettered movement of essential commodities. Our plant employees have been working throughout this time on high production output of masks and sanitizers. 3Mers in India and around the globe are committed to the global initiatives to flatten the COVID-19 curve. We always had an engaged virtual learning calendar and we have dialed it up significantly in the last few weeks. Performance everyday - our new performance system, enables better connect between employee and supervisor both real time and in the virtual format. Our Asia leadership just launched a self-development challenge to encourage employees to seek personal and professional development in these times. Working the job from home includes video calls, with kids, spouses, pets making appearances to reduce any feelings of disconnect and isolation. We are building fun friday communications and much more to stay connected with and engage our workforce.

Q What is your message for global leaders as they strive to combat the circumstances the pandemic has led to?

A Prioritize people over business. A new normal will emerge post the immediate challenges both in business and ways of working - agile mindset is key and early adopters will lead the way here. The Learnings from the pandemic challenges must be built into organizational memory. It is important not to fall back to some of the "bad habits" that we see today in our ways or working. Always have the BCP/ BRP plans updated and ready. The last few weeks have reflected how important they are. Build the growth mindset muscle. We will then use this opportunity to get better. Lastly but most important, stay authentic in interactions with all stakeholders.



EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE DESIGN: HOW TO MAKE IT BOUNDARYLESS

There's a need to build trust – that is the cornerstone of delivering a great employee experience. Here's what you should know about improving workplace experience

By **Abhijit Bhaduri**

When a human insight is translated to generate a positive emotion in someone, it is an experience. Technology is just the enabler that makes it personal.

Insight plus technology

The walls of the Seonreung subway station in downtown Seoul came to life in 2011 with virtual displays of over 500 of the most popular products with barcodes, which Tesco customers could scan using the app on their smartphones and get delivered right to their doorstep. South Koreans have amongst the longest working hours in the world, with young, upwardly mobile executives often too busy to go shopping for groceries at a traditional store. That insight, when combined with technology, created the magic.

Digital assets can be tangible, like servers, routers, online-purchasing platforms, etc. The larger value comes from intangible assets. That could be the proprietary designs that create digital experiences; the digital capture of user behavior, contributions, and social profiles, etc. In the digital world, intangibles can make up more than 60% of the firm's value. We clearly know how to design customer experiences. Why can't the same understanding drive creation of great employee experiences too? Firms that are known for great employee experiences are four times more profitable and make twice the average revenue per employee.

What does great Employee Experience (EX) look like?

To begin with, it is based on the same principles as Customer Experience (CX). A good quality product sold at the right price is just the start; a great experience goes on to create a pull. It could be that it simplifies things or makes something aspirational available, something more than what is expected.

Trust is the foundation of all EX

Do the employees trust the intent of the leaders? Without trust, even the best of EX designs will be looked at with suspicion. Is the leader fair? Does the leader have integrity? The biggest element for great EX is to co-create it. The company's policies reflect the assumptions the employer has about the employees. When Netflix said they offered unlimited vacation, they said the employee could be trusted not to misuse it. The same organizations that said they did not believe in a work-from-home policy are now discouraging employees from coming to work given the coronavirus threat. Offices that relied on biometric attendance logging had to do away with attendance tracking to prevent spreading the virus through

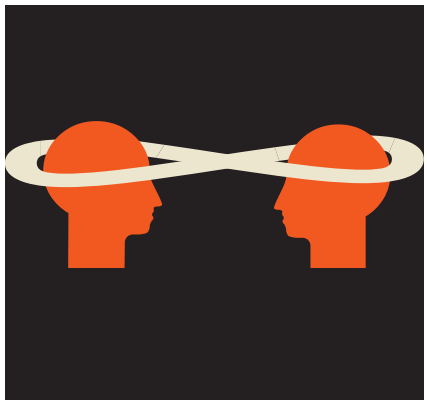
WE CLEARLY KNOW HOW TO DESIGN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES. WHY CAN'T THE SAME UNDERSTANDING DRIVE CREATION OF GREAT EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES TOO?

these fingerprint scanners. Maybe marking attendance is a ritual that we can drop since we expect people to respond to calls and emails even after office hours. That would be fair.

Do employees who work from home get rated and rewarded at par with those in the office every day? Is there gender pay parity? Are people with a disability or transgender employees given the same opportunities for going to conferences and career options as the rest? Trust generates positive intent in everyone. When a departing employee refuses to divulge the name of the prospective employer, it is a clear indication that there is no trust between the employer and the employees. Any exit interview post that interaction is a farce. The departing employee is going to play it safe and not tell you what you don't wish to hear. Truth and candor are the by-products of psychological safety and trust.

Separate me from a demographic cluster

A 25-year-old once told me, "I am sick of these generalizations about millennials. It stops people from knowing how I am similar to other 25-year-olds but also how I am unlike any other millennials." Very often, our stereotypes about demographic clusters can limit us from designing EX that connects



TRUTH AND CANDOR ARE THE BY-PRODUCTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND TRUST

to the very group we are trying to reach.

Algorithms are often good at matching a candidate pool to the job description in an ad. I have often hired people who may not have met the requirements of educational qualification etc. but excelled because of their sheer determination to succeed. When machines identify traffic violations, they may not make an exception to the mother, who is trying to make sure her child is not late for the exam. Justice is better done by machines. Humans understand mercy.

When the organization gives the new hire a loan (that he or she was not eligible for), to tide over a life event, it creates a great EX not just for the beneficiary but even for the rest of the employees. A famous pediatrician told me that the trick was to make every parent feel that their child was special. Having bots answer queries may be a smart way to address employees. Until the bot is up and running, the employee answering every query with a smile. Human beings have an amazing ability to sniff out a fake smile from a genuine one.

What would be a six-star experience?

Airbnb often asks customers what they would define as a five-star experience. Then they ask what needs to be added to the five-star experience to deliver a six-star experience. Just when the customer has run out of ideas, they are asked what would turn the six-star experience to a seven-star experience. That could be a great model to design a great EX in your organization. Maybe you could start by asking whether the experience design would be limited to the "employee" or if it could encompass contractors, freelancers, alumni, and even candidates. As one employee had told me once, "Just for one day, can I be treated the way the CEO is treated?" That may be the organization's equivalence of seven-star employee experience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ABHIJIT BHADURI is a coach, columnist, and illustrator. He is the author of the upcoming book Dreamers & Unicorns. You can follow him @AbhijitBhaduri

SPECIAL STORY

SOLVING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE CONUNDRUM

People Matters and SAP SuccessFactors research

With COVID-19 pandemic quickly re-prioritizing the employee expectations, delivering on the promise of great employee experience will be a key differentiator for organizations

By **Anushree Sharma**



Today's workforce is experiencing a turbulent uncertain times. A global health crisis has exacerbated an already dynamic and volatile environment for both workers and companies. Unforeseen changes to the workplace, remote work, and heightened pressure to deliver under challenging conditions are just some of the obstacles that enterprises and their employees are facing.

Business operations today are all about continuity amid the crisis. But are organizations ready? Are corporate clients fully prepared to leverage flexible work as a strategic approach to mitigating risk?

Albert Einstein once observed that our most significant problems cannot be solved at the same level of thinking at which they were created. The global outbreak of COVID-19 presents a significant problem.

However, amid the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, lies the hidden opportunity for us: Technology. Technology is playing an integral role in determining the success of the new ways of working and is revolutionizing employee experience.

In an attempt to help businesses design employee experience thoughtfully in the times of turbulence, People Matters in partnership with SAP SuccessFactors brings to you the research, "Mind the gap: 2020 Outlook for Employee Experience"

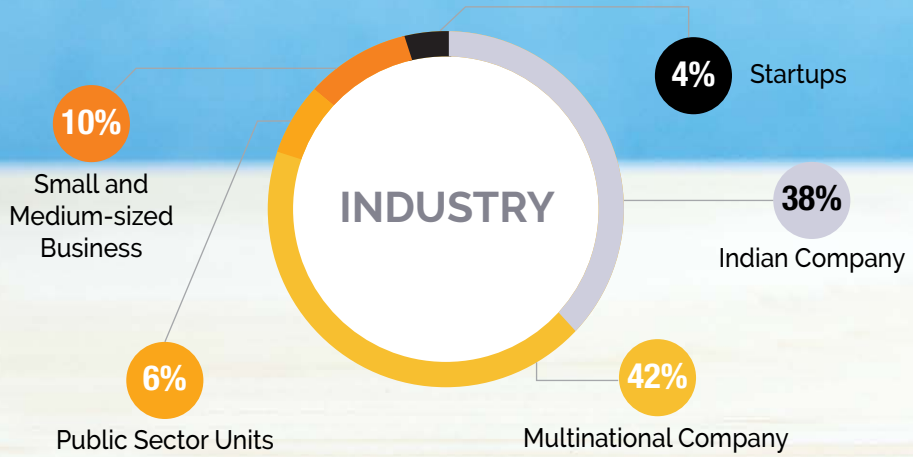
In this new reality, where predicting the future is beyond our reach, leaders need to think differently about their role in creating and maintaining employee experiences.

In an attempt to help businesses design employee experience thoughtfully in the times of turbulence, People Matters in partnership with SAP SuccessFactors brings to you the research, "Mind the gap: 2020 Outlook for Employee Experience".

The COVID-19 pandemic has quickly re-prioritized employee expectations. Today, employees need to have access to digital tools and technologies to get work done, they also need a supportive workplace culture to help them navigate new business realities. Delivering on the promise of

DEMOGRAPHICS

509
Unique Indian Companies





great employee experience will be a key differentiator.

Mind the gap: Bridging the employee experience gap, a research by People Matters and SAP SuccessFactors measures the current state of the employee experience in Indian organizations. The survey was conducted across India which captured the responses from 509 unique companies from different industries and employee size.

While conducting this research, we aimed at understanding the three questions:

- What is the current state of the employee experience in India
- What are the opportunity areas in different aspects of life cycle to enhance the experience
- Finally, how to measure the success of your employee experience strategy

Here are some key insights from the report:

Importance, Readiness and Gaps

- *Buy-in:* 88% organizations shared that they receive great support from leadership and have their buy-in to take employee experience priorities to business outcomes.
- *Industry-wise readiness* to deliver a great employee experience across employee life-cycle: Banking: 3.72, Professional Services: 3.5, Life Sciences: 3.17, Consumer Products: 3.09, Automobile: 2.87.

KEY FINDINGS

EX AS A DRIVER TO INVEST IN HR TECH

90%

Organizations prioritize employee experience as an important criteria while decoding to invest in an HR technology

2020 EX PRIORITIES FOR LARGE CORPORATIONS

66%

Large enterprises/ MNCs employee experience priority for 2020 is to align HR strategy with business

2020 EX PRIORITIES FOR SMALL CORPORATIONS

72%

Small & Medium enterprises prioritizes building an organizational culture where employees feel valued

GAP IN HR ABILITIES TO DELIVER ON EX

53%

Organizations shared that their HR team does not have the requisite skills & capabilities to achieve employee experience priorties

LEADERSHIP BUY-IN FOR 2020 EX PRIORITIES

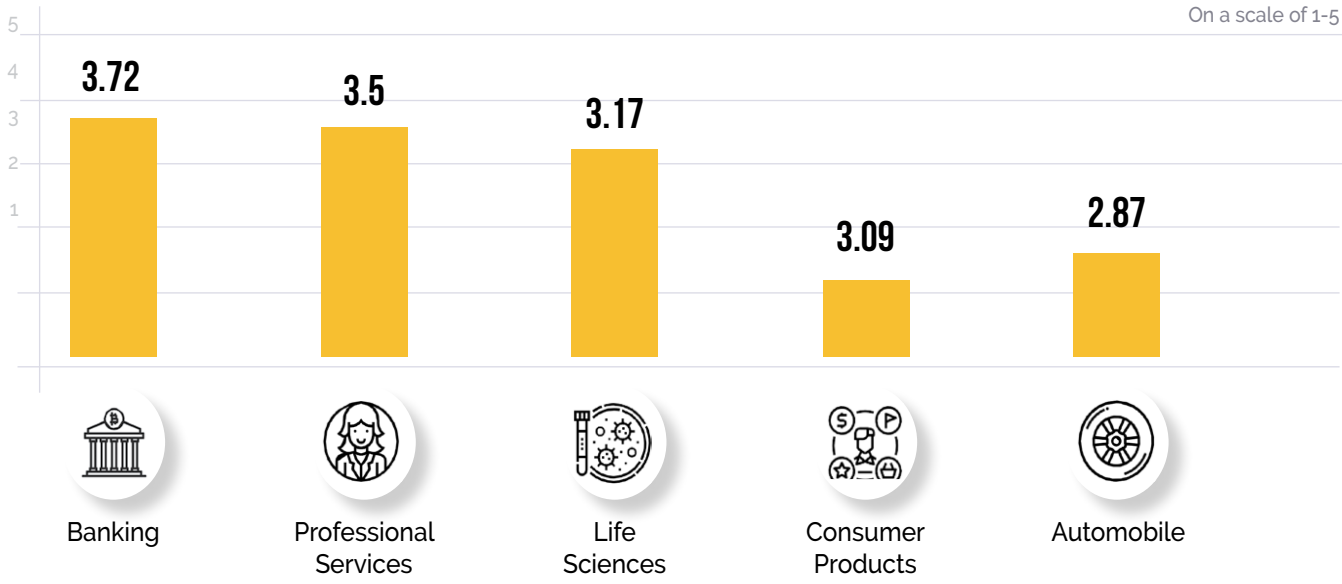
88%

Organizations have leadership buy- in to take employee experience priorities to business outcomes

IMPORTANCE, READINESS AND GAPS

Industry-wise readiness

to deliver a great employee experience across employee life-cycle:



- *Why is there a gap?* 53% of organizations shared that their HR team does not have the requisite skills & capabilities to achieve employee experience priorities. Embracing & Designing EX: The awareness around embracing a culture of EX is high, however, only 10 % of organizations have a culture that is tuned to implement actions required to achieve employee experience priorities in 2020.

Infrastructure, Tech & HR Operations

- *90% of organizations prioritize employee experience as an important criterion while deciding to invest in HR technology.* Technology emerged as a critical means to enhance employee experience. New communication, data collection, and feedback capabilities are harnessing the power of technology and culture initiatives to position employees as culture builders. Through technology, HR becomes less transactional and more human.
- *Technology is an enabler for scale, consistency & efficiency.* A subpar experience can have a ripple effect across the organization, shaping everything from how engaged people are to their enthusiasm for delivering a superior customer experience

IMPORTANCE

Leadership Buy-in:



88% organizations have their leadership buy-in to take employee experience priorities to business outcomes.

Embracing & Designing EX: High on Awareness, low on the urgency



Only 10 % of organizations have a culture that is tuned to implement actions required to achieve employee experience priorities in 2020.

WHY IS THERE A GAP ?

HR Skills



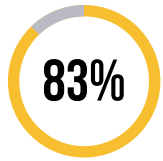
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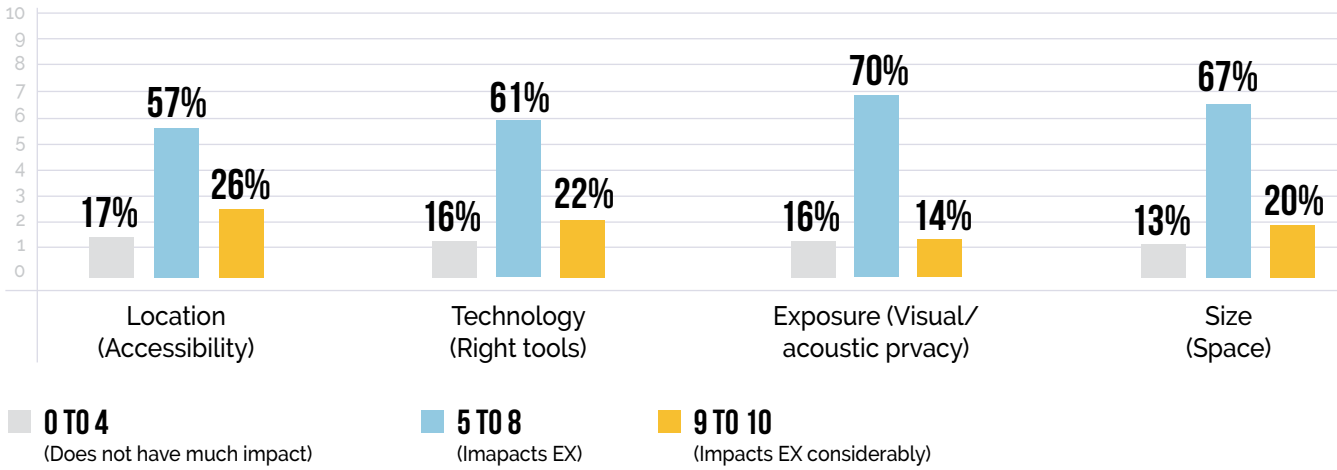
INFRASTRUCTURE, TECH & HR OPERATIONS



90% of organizations prioritize employee experience as an important criterion while deciding to invest in HR technology.

Having the right tools/ technology can have a greater impact on ex







We believe that taking care of your teams, your people, your leaders, will determine the extent to which each one of them will care for your customers and care for each other

Key areas of HR functions to improve EX

- *TA:* Throughout the talent acquisition process, the research disclosed that experience offered in the three areas of talent acquisition is very critical: Interview Process, Selection Process, and Assessing the Candidate for Job Fit.
- *L&D:* Appeal to a Multi-generational Audience, Learner Engagement, and Learner Needs Identification are the top opportunity areas for designing a world-class learner experience.
- *Performance Management:* Measuring and Tracking Goal Progress, Ratings and KRA Assessments, and Rewards Processes are the key areas that need more focus

KEY AREAS OF HR FUNCTIONS TO IMPROVE EX

Talent Acquisition
- Interview process
- Selection process
- Assessing the candidate or job fit

Learning & Development
- Appeal to a multi-generational audience
- Learner engagement
- Learner needs identification

Performance Management
- Measuring and tracking goal progress
- Ratings and KRA assessments
- Rewards processes

HR Operations
- Communication process
- Process optimization
- Ease of use of technology solutions

HOW TO MEASURE EX?

Employee feedback is the most prevalent method among employers to measure employee experience across employee life-cycle:

62% Talent Acquisition

83% Learning & Development

79% Performance Management

81% HR Operations

in improving employee experience in performance management.

- *HR operations:* Communication Process, Process Optimization, and Ease of Use of Technology Solutions are the key top opportunity areas of HR Operations that can improve the employee experience.

COVID-19 has taken all of us by surprise, and the entire world is suddenly in a tizzy. Further, nobody knows how things will get from here or how long will it take. What matters is what you can do about it? What's in your area of control? Employee Experience is!

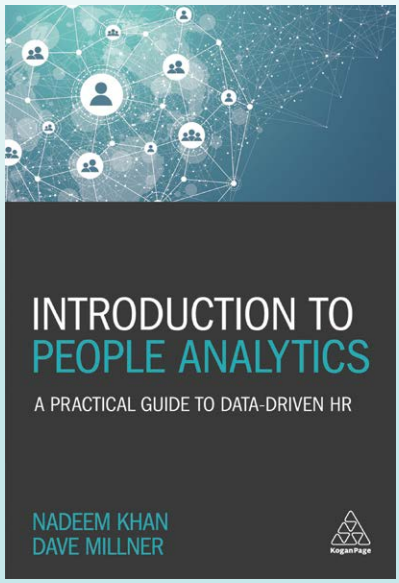
We believe that taking care of your teams, your people, your leaders, will determine the extent to which each one of them will care for your customers and care for each other. "TRUST is at the core of building a genuinely authentic employee experience. HR teams need to lead the way proactively - with speed, experimentation & authenticity"

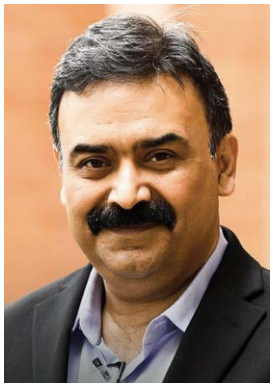
To download your exclusive copy of the People Matters and SAP SuccessFactors research, *Mind the Gap: 2020 Outlook for Employee Experience*, scan the QR code here.

BOOK REVIEW

INTRODUCTION TO PEOPLE ANALYTICS

BY NADEEM KHAN AND DAVE MILLNER





When people write a book, they always worry about finding the right date and time to launch the book. Introduction to People Analytics has a great business case in the backdrop of the pandemic. This new scenario is the biggest reason for HR people to read this book

By **Abhijit Bhaduri**

People decisions are always difficult

The pandemic has affected every business and forced them to take decisions for which there has been no precedent. During these difficult times, Human Resource Departments have to make the toughest decisions that impact the employees. Many sectors like airlines, hotels, etc. have been at the frontline of impact. Businesses have dropped by as much as 90 percent to 100 percent in many cases. Think of the decisions that have to be made that impact employees.

The pandemic has only accelerated the pace of decision making and complexity. This is when HR leaders can play the most strategic and central role by the use of analytics. They can impact the bottom line of the business with every decision.

Data or opinion: One of the airlines announced up to 25 percent pay cuts across the organization. The CEO is taking a 25 percent pay cut, while his other senior colleagues would be taking a 20 percent hit in their salaries. The cockpit crew members will be taking a 15 percent pay cut. The lowest bands have been spared pay cuts. In the absence of data-based decisions, every decision is an opinion or hunch. Analytics can help create alternative scenarios which can be predictive and have the best choices recommended.

Projects of strategic importance: Businesses had to ensure the employees could work from

home. What has been the impact of this decision on productivity (and the bottom line)? Which managers have been able to keep the teams more engaged and have emerged ahead of the pack? HR has to focus on putting its best people on projects that have strategic importance for the business.

Predictions: Can the interviews predict which candidate will be the best fit for the role and who is most likely to succeed in the next role? Which people management practice has the greatest impact on performance? When teams are being formed, what is the best combination of team members to be put together who can finish the project ahead of any other combination of team members?

Intangible assets

Over the past three decades, 80% of the balance sheet is made up of intangibles like workforce deployment, organizational culture, innovation, talent brand, organizational competence, knowhow, etc. The ability to draw insights based on performance data, demographic data, recruitment and retention data, skill data and opinion data, HR can provide valuable insights to business leaders. This is the future that HR has been pushed toward because of the pandemic.

Quick take

If you want to get a view of how to move from data to information to knowledge, this book provides the road map. The world of work has had a reset where HR as a function will be most impacted. They have a choice to take center stage or be a spectator.

People decisions have been created in a world where everyone is co-located in the workplace. Workplace rules, norms and regulation will have to be created for a workplace which is in every workers home. How do we build a people function that is relevant for this setting. HR will need to offer measures of productivity, engagement and skills.

Analytics can be a great conversation starter, because it is hard to argue with insights that are data-driven. This book can be a good read for everyone in HR. The line that stayed with me was, "HR will not be replaced by data analytics. But HR people who do not use data and analytics will be replaced by people who do."

THIS BOOK CAN BE A GOOD READ FOR EVERYONE IN HR. THE LINE THAT STAYED WITH ME WAS, "HR WILL NOT BE REPLACED BY DATA ANALYTICS. BUT HR PEOPLE WHO DO NOT USE DATA AND ANALYTICS WILL BE REPLACED BY PEOPLE WHO DO"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

With over 850,000 followers on social media, **ABHIJITBHADURI** is one of the most followed authors on all things talent. His next book - Dreamers and Unicorns is due for release later this year.

Past Month's events

Managing employee experience in a high growth market

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 30th April
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.

How positive accountability can make employees happier at work

ORGANIZERS: People Matters & DOOR International
DATE: 17th April 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: Accountability in business can, though, sometimes feel like an unattainable standard, a light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel full of business challenges and disengaged employees that hinder the organization's growth. In this webcast by People Matters and DOOR International Southeast Asia, Ricardo Lillo, CEO, DOOR International, Germany discussed the four Steps to accountability: See It/Feedback Seeking; Own It/Psychological Ownership; Solve It/Creative Problem Solving and Do It/Taking Effective Action.

Staying connected when apart

ORGANIZERS: People Matters & Workplace from Facebook
DATE: 29th April 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: The recent outbreak of COVID-19 has shown just how important it is to maintain open lines of communication with employees at all times. This is easier when businesses are connected. A 2018 Gallup study found that connected companies - ones that have high levels of employee engagement - are 21 percent more profitable, 17 percent more productive and have 40 more less staff turnover. In this webinar, Abby Guthkelch, Global Communications Solutions Lead, Workplace from Facebook discussed the importance of staying connected on a daily basis and various approaches to building a connected culture with a remote workforce.

People Matters Virtual Sessions: The roadmap to success in People Analytics

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 16th April 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: People Analytics employs data patterns to aid performance improvement and decision-making. 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. In this session by Sola Osinoiki, Senior Director Global People Technology, Naspers, we deep-dived into understanding the roadmap to success in terms of digital and human steps.

Faster, higher, stronger: Building a future-ready workforce

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 23rd April 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: In today's dynamically changing world, organizations need to go the extra mile to prepare employees for the future. This involves facing the fundamental challenges of motivating employees, investing in them, and making such programs scalable. In this virtual masterclass by Dean Tong, MD, Head Group HR, United Overseas Bank, discussed what it means to go the extra MILE to prepare employees for the future and how UOB has addressed the four fundamental questions/challenges of MILE through the Better U program.

Myntra's transition into a remote work culture with greater employee experience

ORGANIZERS: People Matters & Qualtrics
DATE: 14th April 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: In response to the uncertainties presented by COVID-19 and country-wide lockdown, companies have asked their employees to work remotely. People Matters in association with Qualtrics brings to you this live case study of Myntra on how this e-commerce major is transitioning successfully into the remote working culture by keeping its employee experience index high.

Upcoming events

Digital Transformation & Learning: Connecting the dots

ORGANIZERS: People Matters & UpsideLMS
DATE: 5th May 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: If we asked you what inspired your Digital Transformation - 1. CEO 2. CTO or 3. COVID-19, chances are we'll all be selecting the latter. That's not to say that a global pandemic has single handedly ushered in adoption of digital tools and technologies for working, learning and doing, but it surely has set digital transformation in motion across industries and geographies at scale. It has also raised a pertinent question on our "readiness" to transition to digital "everything" and adapt to the new normal. The webcast will focus on the what, why and how of Digital Transformation and relooking at organizational L&D from the POV of: Employee Development, Change Management, Organizational Culture.

Perspectives 2020 by SkillSoft & SumTotal

ORGANIZERS: SkillSoft & SumTotal
DATE: 13th May 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: Skillsoft and SumTotal Perspectives 2020, a virtual conference is a global digital experience that will run 24 hours live and follow the sun across four continents - beginning at 9 am AEST in Sydney, Australia, and ending the day at 4 pm PDT in San Francisco, CA. We've packed it with what you need to upskill and reskill for whatever your future holds. From world-class keynotes to thought-provoking panels and deep-dive product sessions. It's completely free and available to all. Perspective virtual sessions will fill your screens and minds with live content. We'll also feature product demo power workshops, panels on business continuity planning (yes, timely), as well as exclusive content and badges for learners that won't be available anywhere else. Don't miss it.

People Matters EX: A virtual conference

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 19th June 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: People Matters EX Virtual conference is a full-day event which will feature two virtual tracks and will take a deep dive into different aspects of the EX with keynotes, case study sessions, panel discussions, and dedicated virtual exhibition space for service providers to showcase their latest offerings. It will cover the foundations of EX to maximize business success, accelerating the development of a consumer mindset to solving people & work challenges in order to attract and retain future talent, bolster productivity and ultimately build happier workplaces, which makes more business sense in the long run. So come, learn, interact, and network virtually with over 2500+ delegates and explore how EX translates in every decision in the talent strategy.

Blogosphere

» **UPASNA A AGARWAL** AND **VINEETA DWIVEDI**



Tackling a global crisis: Why language is critical

The choice of words gains critical importance for leadership communication that has come into sharp focus as the COVID-19 crisis looms large on the world

Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas –Samuel Johnson.

Words are important. The "right" spoken words have energy and power that can create a united and hopeful world that is struggling to come to terms with an unprecedented crisis.

The choice of words, the language, gains critical importance for Leadership Communication that has come into sharp focus as the COVID-19 crisis looms large on the world.

From the Queen of England to Presidents and Prime Ministers, from governments to local communities, world organizations to local bodies, large corporates to small businesses, world leaders are taking to public platforms to address their countrymen as they deal with grief, financial pain and grave uncertainty while also tasked with encouraging the morale of health professionals struggling to control the impact of the novel corona virus.

Words and language used by those in responsible positions is incredibly important and can impact morale and motivation

Words and language used by those in responsible positions is incredibly important and can impact morale and motivation. It is also one of the main sources of problems, as means of communication often break down or become overloaded in the midst of a crisis.

Leaders' speak

In a landscape-scale crisis like this, people's minds turn first to their own survival and other basic needs, according to a recent report by McKinsey; crisis communication by leaders should be thoughtful, and frequent showing that leaders are following the situation and adjusting their responses as they learn more.

Leader speech, the words and language used to communicate are a powerful medium [leader talk] to forge psychological connect with the individuals. This is especially critical during times of crisis, such as today. Leaders are likely to feel impelled to be engaged, to be involved in decision making and communication about the situation—and perhaps to be (and be seen as) "in charge", marshaling

courage and showing directions.

A unique leadership communication model: Motivating language theory (ML) developed at Texas A&M International University, is an interesting framework that provides a schemata, a theory-in-use to demonstrate how leader-to-follower speech can impact employee well-being employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational outcomes.

ML identifies three kinds of speech acts: (a) Direction-giving and uncertainty reducing language, those that reduce employee uncertainty and increase his or her knowledge- how to do the task at hand by, for example, giving easily understandable instructions, good definitions of tasks, and detail on how performance will be evaluated.; (b) Empathetic language or those that implicitly re-affirm the employee's sense of self-worth as a human being and; (c) Meaning-making language, that facilitate the employee's construction of cognitive schemas and scripts, which will be used to guide the employee in his or her work.

The three elements of ML when used in the right mix with the audience and context kept in mind can work as a great pep talk which may be the need of the hour for the beleaguered population of countries; cloistered due to COVID-19 lockdowns.

MLT in address to the nation

In a crisis emergency like today, when large swathes of the country are at a standstill, lives have been turned upside down - our social interactions, our physical contact, even our walking around - simple things that we take for granted have changed when so many millions have been displaced and their livelihoods shattered, the role of a leader and his/her words cannot be underplayed .

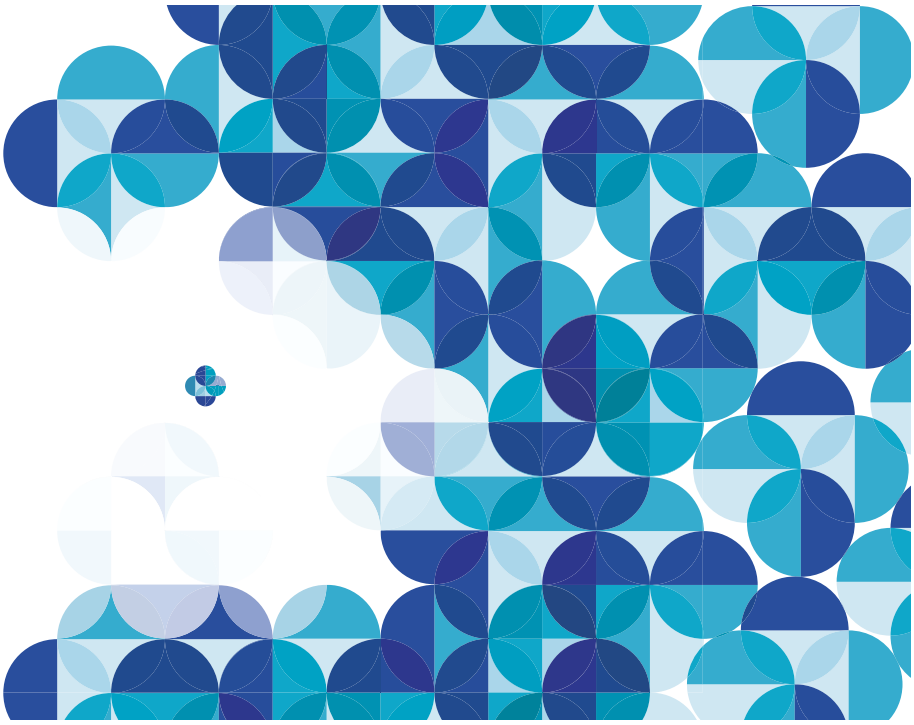
A case in point is PM Narendra Modi's recent speech. A study of the speeches delivered by the PM indicates that all three elements (empathy, meaning making and direction giving elements) are included. In a crisis situation, first using empathetic language is key to connect with the audience.

PM Modi's use of words of courage, acknowledgment and praise creates a connection with the public. Using words such as : "Corona is a fight between life and death; we have to win in this battle" applaud using "thank you", 'setting an example to the world' 'janta jandardan' (public is God), forged the connect.



Learnings for managers

Drawing from Motivation Language theory, recent ongoing research in India by Communication Faculty, Prof Upasna A Agarwal of National Institute of Industrial Engineering and Prof Vineeta Dwivedi of SP Jain Institute of Management and Research of over 300 managers has found that the impact of immediate supervisory oral communication (direction giving, empa-



It is significant to note that leader's language plays an important role in strategic communication that is integral to sustaining businesses in such troubled times

thetic and meaning making) positively impacts subordinate's participation-Voice behavior, commitment as well as mental wellbeing.

Current developments and the ongoing research suggest the following as some of the learnings:

1) Leaders, across domains need to be mindful of their speech type, since the ability to deliver an energizing talk can spurs employees to better performance is a prerequisite.
2) Most winning formulas include ALL three key elements- direction giving, expressions of empathy, and meaning making, but the right mix will depend on the context and the audience.
3) A leader needs to know when and how to use which one the direction giving, empathy, and meaning making. In crisis situation, a leader needs to begin with empathy element "I can imagine what you must be going through. It is not easy and leaves one anxious". This should be followed up with direction offering insight on a basic informational (uncertainty-reducing) content since people have been confronted with an unprecedented situation— *"we don't have a choice but to go for complete work stoppage and work from home till we hear next"*. The speech needs to end with a meaning making—an emotional rallying cry that connects the stakeholders to a bigger goal and leaves the group energized: "Fight against Corona is a fight between life and death; we have to win in this battle.

While in routine situations, leader's speech and communication style may not need as much focus but in times of an unprecedented world crisis like the Corona pandemic, this becomes critical. It is significant to note that leader's language plays an important role in strategic communication that is integral to sustaining businesses in such troubled times.

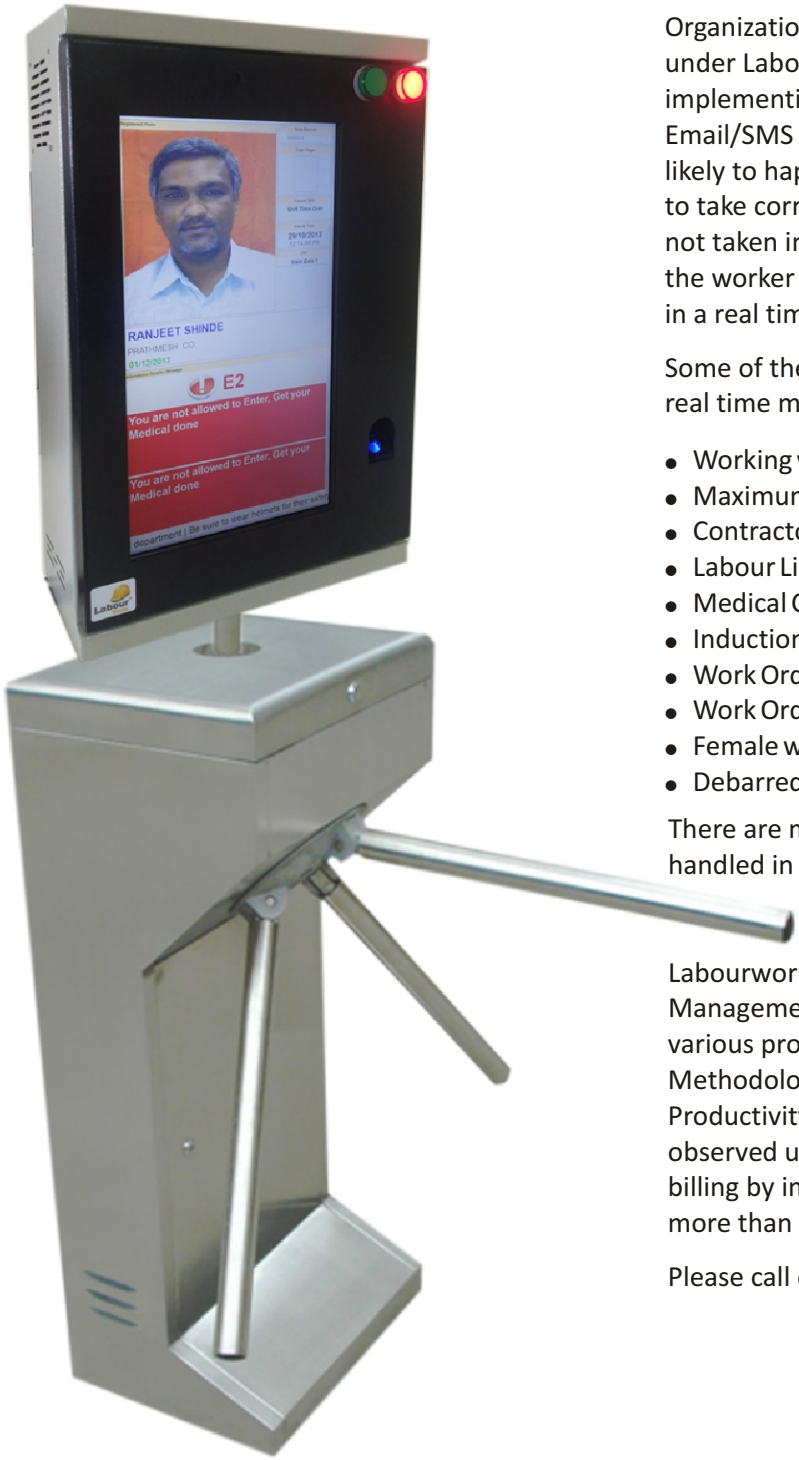
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

UPASNA A AGARWAL is Associate Professor, Human Resource and Organziational Behaviour, National Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE).

VINEETA DWIVEDI is Assistant Professor, Business Communication and Head, Digital Communication at Bhavan's S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR).

Real Time Compliance Management

Avoid non-compliances taking place than a post mortem after the damage is done.



Organizations have to adhere to many compliances under Labour Law , Factories act & similar laws. By implementing Labourworks you not only send advance Email/SMS notice about a possible non-compliance likely to happen & give an opportunity to the contractor to take corrective actions. But if the corrective action is not taken in time then you can simply block the entry of the worker & avoid non-compliances from taking place in a real time mode.

Some of the compliances that can be implemented in real time mode are

- Working without a weekly off
- Maximum work hours exceeded in a week
- Contractor Labour License expired
- Labour License Capacity exceeded
- Medical Check up not done
- Induction training not completed
- Work Order expired
- Work Order Capacity exceeded
- Female worker entry during night shift
- Debarred worker entry

There are many more compliances which can be handled in an offline mode as well.

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- Pandemic Flu Awareness
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