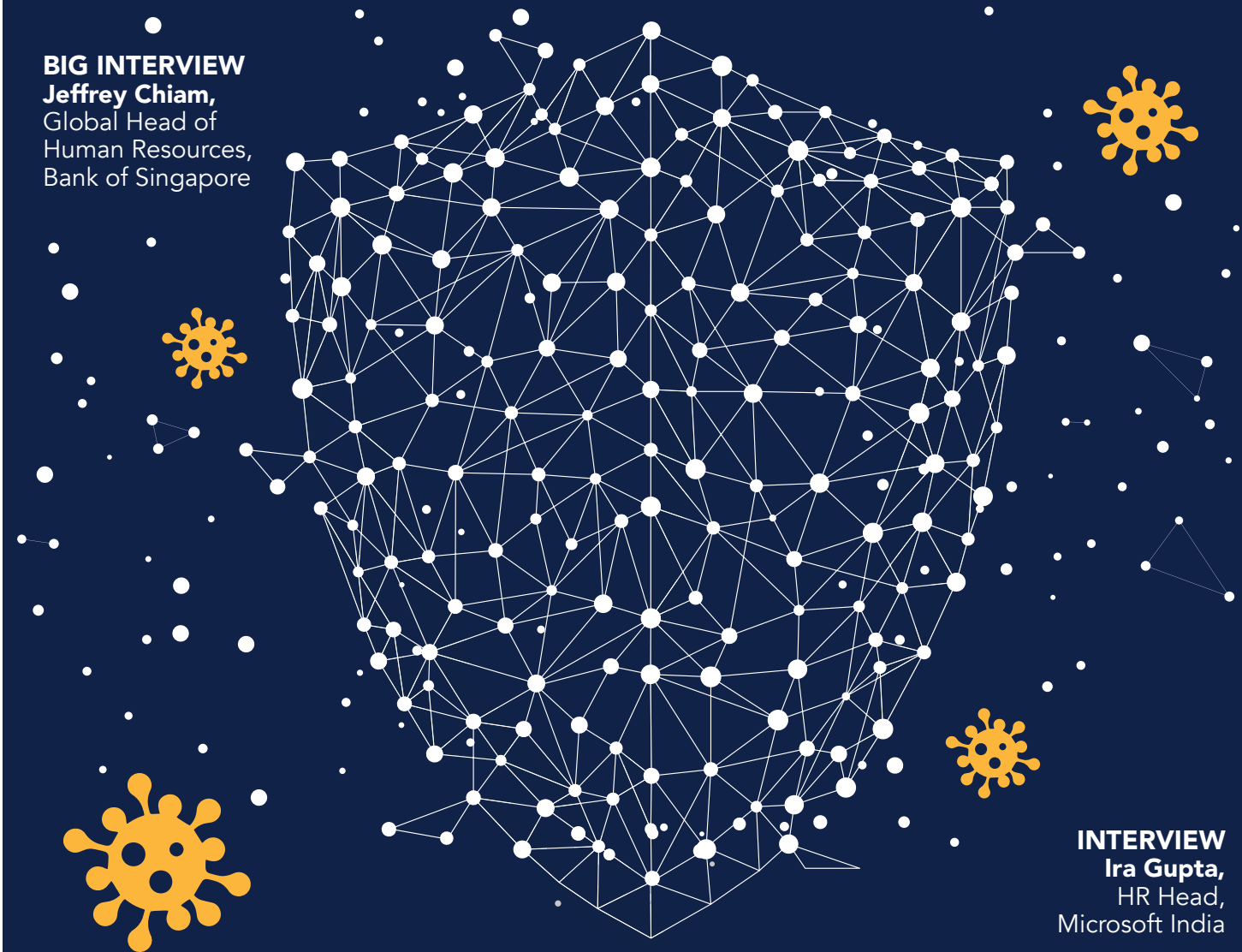
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VOL XI / ISSUE 7 / JULY 2020

₹150

BIG INTERVIEW
Jeffrey Chiam,
Global Head of
Human Resources,
Bank of Singapore



INTERVIEW
Ira Gupta,
HR Head,
Microsoft India

THE NEW DIGITAL RESET AT WORK

*How **COVID-19** triggered accelerated shift to digital technologies paving the way for a major reset at work globally*



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Thank you for making us experience the power of great attendance, audience , sessions and the power of a successful event. We would like to accredit all that to you and your presence at People Matters EX conference.

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Well done team People Matters! The conference experience was great and my team was super engaged! You set a benchmark.

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Head HR, OLX Group
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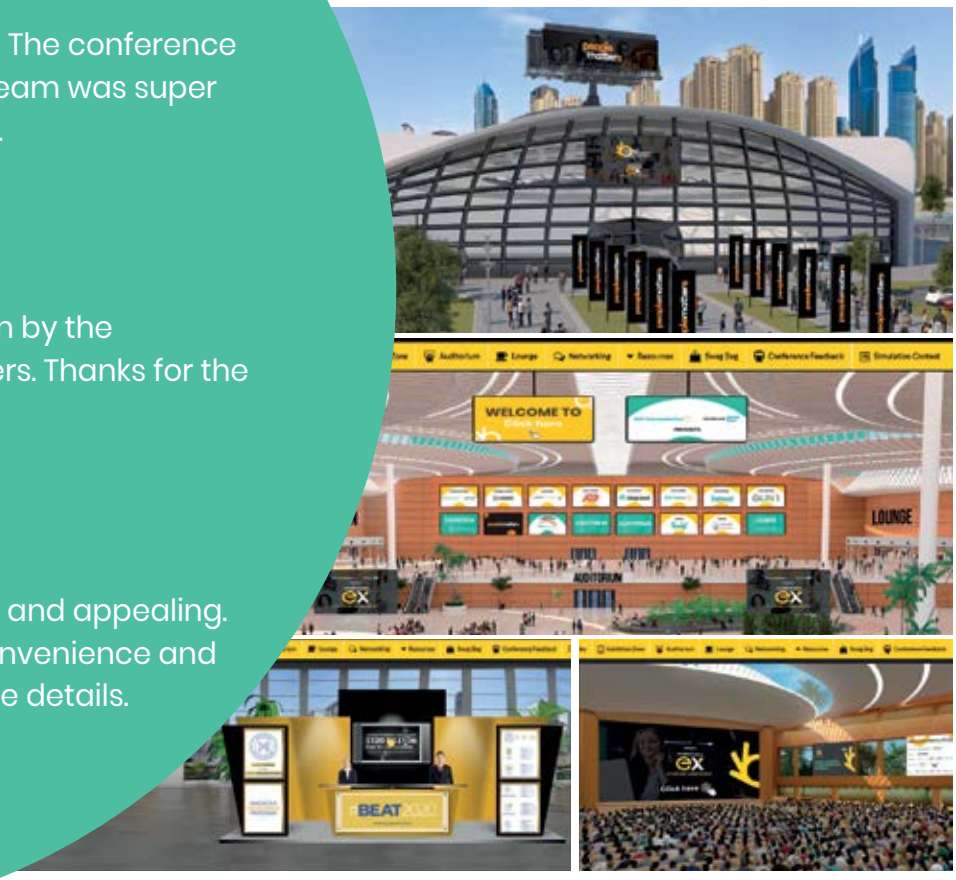
Such a great virtual event put on by the incredible team at People Matters. Thanks for the opportunity to be a part of it!

Casey Swails
Director, Executive Services,
NASA

The virtual environment is great and appealing. Love most of the sessions. Its convenience and meticulous customer experience details.

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The EX experience at a glance



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'Reboot' your business for the post-COVID-19 era

As a leading talent and work platform, we have been talking to top HR and thought leaders globally for years. While we cover work, workplace, and the workforce, we also make sure we hear stories from other sides as well, especially the CXOs talent leaders work closely with. As part of our persistent coverage of COVID-19 and its implication for the talent world, this time we reached out to top tech leaders, digital transformation gurus, innovation officers, and business leaders along with top HR leaders. We realized early that battling COVID-19 would be an uphill task for organizations and that a collaborative synergy of top C-suite executives globally would be imperative to wrestle the flurry of challenges the pandemic has brought to fore. The catastrophe has reinforced the conviction that technology and digital innovations have enormous potential to better our work-life. As a matter of fact, tech innovations have fast-tracked the greater journey of digital transformation businesses across the globe are pursuing – and helped organizations adapt and rebuild the post-pandemic world for a better future.

We interacted with an eclectic mix of leaders to make sure we get the best insights and practical lessons and help businesses leverage the right set of technologies – while keeping in mind important factors such as cost, and a strong rebound. And the responses were truly insightful. After all, these digital and innovation leaders have been at the forefront to innovate and meet the spiraling business demands. They have had to orchestrate the overnight switch to remote work for employees and rev up digital channels to serve customers, at a time when ensuring company's IT infrastructure is crucial given the increasing workloads at the backend.

While the pace of digital transformation across businesses has been phenomenal, business and tech leaders faced hardships they never experienced before. Imagine, a top-notch tech company that was accustomed to remote working with all technical expertise to scale it on a large scale had to wade through tough challenges to go from 20,000 and enable 140,000 remote workers in 10 days and it required a great deal of coordination and teaming across the company. So, it's IT that is at the heart of every company's business resilience imperative.

As organizations continue to innovate and bet on tech technologies, business leaders need to ensure that the digital transformation is comprehensive – focused on value creation, and not mainly focused on technology. Organizations should reconceive themselves to combine human potential with the right set of technologies and implement new ways of working to focus both on the employee side and the technology side.

There is no doubt that Chief Information Officers (CIOs) are navigating change at a pace that is without precedent right now. While the shift to remote work has changed the day-to-day operations of an IT organization, it has also changed how CIOs plan for the future. For instance, some organizations saw value in embracing Cloud as it is giving them access to compute and digital resources in minutes and hours vs. what could have taken weeks in the past. Similarly, Artificial Intelligence is another technology a lot of organizations are betting on including the likes of Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, and Google.

As we see the new infrastructure in the making, we have to watch out for several things in the new normal. Security is one. When 30 banks and financial services companies, as well as e-commerce companies in Southeast Asia, Indonesia, and Australia were asked about how COVID-19 impacted them, fraud emerged as a common issue for the banks and financial services providers.

So, the bottom-line is organizations should understand their current tech architecture and determine what their vision is and choose solutions accordingly, be it Cloud Solutions and PaaS, Analytics, AI, and RPA. Choosing which technology platforms can power businesses is the most consequential decision that businesses can make. This determines how quickly businesses can pivot to new market opportunities, how well they serve their clients and how much they can scale.

There is a long journey ahead and we don't know much as yet. There are several important questions that we need to resolve. How do we facilitate a highly confidential discussion between a salesperson and a customer without the data being spied upon? How do we flawlessly enable remote customer demos with minimum latency? How do we measure and maintain sales productivity in a virtual world? The answer lies in newer ways of doing business. And much of it is in the making. But technology, for sure, will help mitigate many of the problems.

The cover story in this issue takes a look at the larger technology scenario and innovations that organizations are coming up with to battle COVID-19. We try to find out how companies are putting technology to their best use to enable the safety of their employees, meet the needs of customers, and most importantly keep their businesses stable at this crucial time.

For the Big Interview in this issue, we have Jeffrey Chiam, Global Head of Human Resources, Bank of Singapore, who shares his views on navigating the challenging times and how organizations and employees should gear up to adjust and pivot towards the new normal.

We also have exclusive interactions with Steven Yudiyantho, CHRO, Bank Mandiri; and Meng Hin Yeo, Director - Group Human Resources, Keppel Corporation, as part of the special video series - Adaptable HR - The future is now.

We also have an interaction with Ira Gupta, HR Head, Microsoft India, who shares insights on how the world of work has gone through a major reset due to the COVID-19 crisis, what this new normal looks like, and how Microsoft is using technology to respond to the current reality.

The current COVID-19 crisis calls for rewriting the HR tech and Worktech playbook. How do we do that? People Matters TechHR 2020, that brings together the most progressive business & HR Leaders, HR Analysts, and HR Technology experts & Worktech startups from around the globe aims to shine the light on the great reset. This year's theme is AdaptableHR: The Great Reset. Come, join the People Matters TechHR 2020 week from 10th-14th August to focus on finding answers for both the now and the next.

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

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

Happy Reading!

Esther Martinez Hernandez
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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→ ester.martinez@peoplematters.in

THE COVER STORY (BEHIND THE SCENE)



No bare hands please... Gloves are crucial!



Shield for the battle field! NICE!



PHEW!

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THE POST-PANDEMIC WORKPLACE WILL BE HIGH-TECH

A realistic approach to what lies ahead. There is no cure so far and yet organizations are calling employees back to work. Even if at a reduced capacity, returning to office premises remains a threat, given the warnings around the second wave expected in the near future. Several organizations were quick to adapt to a digital working environment. That was, what it looks like, just phase-1. Even those organizations that are looking to call employees back to offices are working on contact-less entry points, digital entry cards, bringing back cubicles for safe-distancing, and leveraging technology as much as possible to keep the connect while maintaining the needed distance. The future workforce will be a hybrid one with some people working at home and some at offices. A high-tech enabled workplace, whether physical or virtual, will be crucial to keep the experience seamless and consistent for employees.

- POONAM NANDAN



JUNE 2020 ISSUE

When 'business as usual' is not an option, we need to focus on helping each other: Betsy Sutter

Prioritizing people and their well-being is no longer a people-first approach, but in fact a business imperative to ensure you have a healthy and productive workforce keeping the business afloat. "As we navigate the pandemic and this challenging time, there is a paradox at play. With roughly half the global population under some form of lockdown, we're experiencing a deeper sense of unity and shared responsibly in our communities." Beautifully captured. In the face of unprecedented circumstances that the global population is experiencing, it extends well beyond work. Personal lives are equally shaken up by the pandemic. Despite the need for social distancing, people have however taken onto maintaining the connection and checking-in on each other. This needs to be replicated in the organizational level as well.

- ADYA SHIRISH

Rethinking employee experience: Breaking isolation, not silos

"There is nothing wrong with silos. The actual problem is isolation!" This saying is truly relevant in the times we live in today. Work and life have now intertwined to such an extent that while on one extreme colleagues crave the camaraderie and want to stay connected 24*7, on the other they want to limit communication and spend that time in quiet. We are well-aware of how problematic the "always-on" culture has been. The dire need to stay connected however screams out loud about how people indeed fear isolation, for themselves, as well as for their loved ones. While that might be a necessity for some, it might become overbearing for those who need that quiet time. How we communicate in these times is bound to have a long-term impact on the digital culture that is currently in the making. Ensuring we don't lose out one essential communication constructs while also addressing personal preferences is key.

- VIKAS GARG

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

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

"In our business, our people are our seed corn. It is important to preserve that competitive advantage so that we can bounce back quicker than our competition and that remains our priority." Very well said. We have seen in recent times how some organizations have unabashedly displayed an absolute lack of empathy when it comes to handling crisis, and communicating decisions that impact the livelihoods of a significant proportion of the workforce. These critical times are forcing leaders to step out of the grey and make transparent life-altering decisions for employees as well as businesses.

- NIMIT GROVER

It's time to reimagine how and where work gets done

I found the inputs well-articulated, especially the segmenting approach into - enabling the survival, adapting to grow, revival into the future. The plan for future work, workplace, and employees has to cater to the short-term as well as long-term. Lack of clarity around the expected timeline for remote work to continue further triggers the need to relook at what work essentially entails. It will indeed be key to redefine job roles and relook at productivity, performance and workplace considerations.

- PAYAL GULATI

A global psychological pandemic is on its way

It is appalling to read the statistics and the mental toll that the pandemic has caused, or rather accelerated. Clearly, we don't just lag behind in having a vaccine to counter COVID-19 but are also far behind in realizing and preparing for the impending mental health crisis. While both life and work need to go on, is that the focus really? Are we becoming ignorant about the basic need for good health, draining what's left of it in stretched working hours and household chores? The entire debate around returning to normal and creating a new normal - what good is either if we still take wellness for granted? We are surely inviting a crisis if we don't switch our approach to well-being as the priority in the current circumstances.

- PRIYAM SINGHAL

Alight's State of HR Transformation Study

Design, experience, and governance will truly be the anchor for HR in the face of a virtual working setup. How quickly HR teams adapt and build on their agility will define their ability to guide business leaders in reshaping and rethink talent and work in changing times. The involvement of HR in enabling businesses will see a steep spike. The demand for HR business partners is surely on the rise and is an avenue to bring in the younger workforce that is currently at a crossroads of completing their education and what appears to be a global hiring freeze.

- SAMAVESH ARORA

twitter

EllEss @LS_elless
#PMEXconf @PeopleMatters2 @Ester_ Matters. What an amazing experience it was. Felt like a real conference. Kudos to you guys for coming up with this idea of a virtual event. Enjoyed every moment.

Paul Dupuis @Paul_DupuisRSTD
Thanks to @PeopleMatters2 for the article, a wonderful summary of the insights from our global book launch of The E5 Movement.

People Matters @PeopleMatters2
In his recently launched book, @Paul_ DupuisRSTD, MD & CEO, @RandstadIndia, writes about the five Es: Envision; Express; Excite; Enable; Execute & presents a unique leadership model to inspire leaders across the globe. https://peoplematters.in/blog/leadership/the-5-

Bhumireddy @BhumiReddy49
Amazing sessions and Good Simulation Activity! Kudos to @PeopleMatters2 for a wonderful initiative and event. Truly appreciate the efforts of the PeopleMatters team for organizing this and providing a rich learning, knowledge sharing and networking experience! #PMEXConf

Deepti V @deep2dejavu
People Matters has redefined the concept of virtual conference totally ..macro learning with micro sessions and great networking! @PeopleMatters2 #PMEXConf

Sameer Miglani -Managing Director HRM Solutions @HRM_Solutions
Thank You @PeopleMatters2 A very enlightening session and so well organized One feels like one has walked into Dubai World trade centre for an all day conference Miss the Caffeine though which is made up by the "Content " of the speakers .

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JOBS

Oil major BP to slash 10000 jobs

Energy producer BP will cut about 15 percent of its workforce in response to the coronavirus crisis and as part of Chief Executive Bernard Looney's plan to shift the oil and gas major to renewable energy. The CEO, Bernard Looney said to the employees that the cuts will affect office-based roles in BP's global workforce of 70,000 people and come mostly this year. The changes are expected to significantly affect senior levels, cutting the number of group leaders by a third. The CEO has spoken to staff about pay, promotions, bonuses, and jobs and how we plan to support all those affected by these tough decisions.

INVESTMENT

WeWork Global to invest $100 Mn in India coworking business

Coworking major WeWork India will raise $100 Mn from WeWork Global for sustainable growth of its business. The move reaffirms the commitment of US-based WeWork to the Indian market. Karan Virwani, the CEO, WeWork India, stated, "The fresh round of capital from our long-term partners at WeWork Global represents a vote of confidence in our strategy and will help us serve our community better."

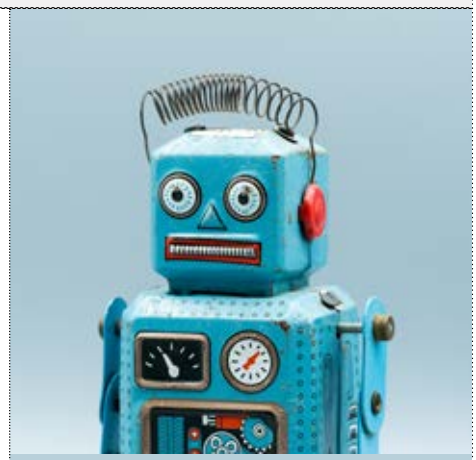




TALENT MANAGEMENT

Edelman cuts its global headcount by 7%

Back in March, Edelman, the world's largest PR consultancy, declared that the jobs of all its 6,000 staff worldwide would be preserved despite the COVID-19 situation. Just three months later that resolution has fallen through as the business goes into the red, and on June 2, owner and CEO Richard Edelman announced that the firm will be cutting 390 jobs worldwide, or seven percent of its global workforce.



TECHNOLOGY

Another failed attempt of AI replacing humans

Last month, Microsoft laid-off dozens of journalists and editorial workers at its Microsoft News and MSN organizations. The layoffs are part of a bigger push by Microsoft to rely on artificial intelligence to pick news and content that's presented on MSN.com, inside Microsoft's Edge browser, and in the company's various Microsoft News apps. Many of the affected workers are part of Microsoft's SANE (search, ads, News, Edge) division, and are contracted as human editors to help pick stories. However, according to recent developments, Microsoft's AI editors are already showing signs of inaccuracy. The AI reportedly used a photo of Leigh-Anne Pinnock on a story about her fellow bandmate Jade Thirlwall's experiences with racism. Thirlwall and Pinnock are the two women of color in the four-member band Little Mix.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

More than 70% of the MSMEs in India to cut jobs: Survey

As per the latest survey by All India Manufacturers Organisation (AIMO), over 70 percent of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and 40 percent corporates intend to cut back on their workforce in order to get their business back on track. On the issues likely to be faced during the Unlock 1.0 period which began this week,



the survey covered various aspects such as the visibility of demand, collection of pending dues, raw materials, future EMI payments along with present interest burden, and salary issues.



EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Cognizant to pay $5.7 MN to compensate for underpaid overtime hours

Cognizant and its former employee Debi Mishra have reached a class-action settlement agreement where the former has agreed to pay $5.7 million to compensate for underpaid overtime hours. Mishra and other employees who were part of the class action worked in the quality engineering & assurance (QE&A) team. Mishra worked in the team for Cognizant's client Blue Shield based in California until he resigned in 2015.

JOBS

COVID-19: MakeMyTrip lays off 350 employees

Online travel company MakeMyTrip has laid off 350 employees due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its business. This is the second time the company has taken a harsh step in order to control the damage due to COVID-19. Earlier in March, the company had opted for salary cuts. The company has said that the current crisis has impacted the travel and tourism sector, and there was a need to "revisit" some business strategies as the company doesn't expect the travel market to bounce back soon.



HIRING

Hiring activity continues to register a decline of 61% in May' 2020

The Naukri JobSpeak Index for May 2020, at 910, marks a decline of 61 percent in hiring activity as compared to May 2019 at 2,346, led by the extension of nation-wide lockdown due to the on-going crisis. This is the second consecutive month



where the hiring activity has registered a dip of more than 60 percent. While the hiring activity is down by 61 percent, it is encouraging to see that more than 50 percent of job seekers are utilizing the time at hand due to the lockdown for self-development and career advancement, as per the latest Naukri survey conducted with 50,000 jobseekers. Data Science & Analytics courses (22 percent) followed by Digital Marketing (20 percent) and Finance and Risk Management (16 percent) were amongst the top courses being picked up by jobseekers to up-skill themselves.

NEWSMAKER OF THE MONTH

Black Lives Matter: The revolution continues



In the midst of a global pandemic, there's one death that has shaken the consciousness of a country and rallied millions of people around the world – the death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, who died after a white police officer kneeled on his neck for over eight minutes.

The protests commemorating the death cut across all fifty states in America and over sixty countries around the world. "I can't breathe," one of Floyd's last words became the rallying cry for protestors who reminded the world that "Black Lives Matter". The BLM movement has grown over the years in response to the disproportionate police violence on predominantly black men.

The incident spawned a number of conversations – the most important of which is racism. Several brands changed their logos in solidarity with the protests, businesses executives pledged millions of dollars towards anti-discrimination efforts and towards supporting black businesses. And there's been a renewed examination of race issues, structural violence and the use of force in business boardrooms.

In a break from the past, many CEOs spoke out about the issue, and a number of companies put out statements in solidarity. Google's Sundar Pichai was the first to order a company level response. Apple's Tim Cook called on employees to reflect on America's painful history of racism and inequality. Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos all issued statements in support.

Josh Bersin in his blog post reflecting on this issue said that HR and business leaders need to think about the importance of trust and citizenship. He said "As employers, we focus on diversity, inclusion, pay equity, and minority representation. But as citizens, we have to think about justice, society, values – what is right, good, and fair." The incident and the subsequent reaction holds several lessons on leadership, on addressing issues of injustice and in engaging with social issues responsibly.

APPOINTMENTS



TIKTOK APPOINTS EX-DISNEY EXECUTIVE AS NEW CEO

TikTok, the popular short-video app has appointed Kevin Mayer as the new CEO. Mayer will also be the Chief Operating Officer of TikTok's Chinese parent company, ByteDance, and report to its founder and CEO, Yiming Zhang. Mayer has previously led Disney's streaming business and was known for his role in building Disney through mergers, including the industry-changing 2019 acquisition of 21st Century Fox's TV and film business that created an entertainment behemoth.



AIMAN EZZAT IS THE NEW CEO OF CAPGEMINI

Aiman Ezzat has succeeded Paul Hermelin as Capgemini's new CEO. Paul will continue to be the Chairman of the Board. During his tenure as Chief Operating Officer (from January 1, 2018 to May 2020) and prior to this as Chief Financial Officer, Aiman reinforced both the Group's position as a global leader as well as its financial resilience. He also played an instrumental role in the implementation of the Group's new operating model.



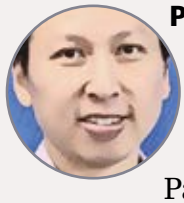
QUALTRICS APPOINTS NEW MD FOR ASIA PACIFIC & JAPAN

Qualtrics, the player in customer experience announced the promotion of Brigid Archibald to Managing Director for Qualtrics in Asia Pacific and Japan (APJ). Brigid replaces Bill McMurray, who has been promoted to the role of Chief Revenue Officer based in the US. Drawing upon more than 30 years' experience, Brigid will provide expert advice and leadership to help businesses in APJ deliver superior customer and employee experiences in today's fast-changing environments.



WIPRO ROPES IN CAPGEMINI'S THIERRY DELAPORTE AS CEO & MD

Thierry Delaporte joins Indian multinational corporation Wipro as Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director. The previous business leader Abidali Neemuchwala will relinquish his position as CEO and MD on June 1. Until then Rishad Premji, Chairman, Wipro Limited will oversee the day to day operations of the company until July 5. Then Delaporte will take over from July 5. Based in Paris he will report to the Chairman Rishad Premji. Until recently, Delaporte was working with Capgemini Group as the Chief Operating Officer and was also a member of its Group Executive Board.



PEPSICO APPOINTS WERN-YUEN TAN AS CEO FOR APAC

PepsiCo announced that Wern-Yuen Tan has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Asia Pacific, Australia, New Zealand and China (APAC), overseeing all of PepsiCo's operations in the region. Tan, who will begin his new role on June 15, 2020, will be based in Singapore and will report to PepsiCo CEO Ramon Laguarta.



GOOGLE ELEVATES PRABHAKAR RAGHAVAN AS HEAD OF SEARCH

Google has elevated Prabhakar Raghavan as the Head of Search and Assistant. Raghavan will be taking over from Ben Gomes who is moving to a new role within the company and will report to Alphabet Chief Executive Sundar Pichai. Ben however will continue managing the commerce and payments business and the Next Billion Users unit. This organizational rejig that will see its search engine, advertising, and commerce business come under the same person.



VOLKSWAGEN APPOINTS RALF BRANDSTÄTTER AS NEW CEO

The Volkswagen Group is reassigning responsibilities for the management of the brand and the Group. The Volkswagen core brand is to be led by the brand's previous COO, Ralf Brandstätter from July 1, 2020. The CEO of the Volkswagen Group, Dr. Herbert Diess, who had previously been responsible for both functions, will therefore receive greater leeway for his tasks as Group CEO. Within the Group Board of Management, he will retain overall responsibility for Volkswagen Passenger Cars and the Volume brand group.

APPOINTMENTS



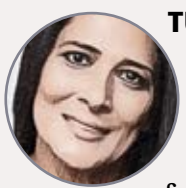
PRADEEP PARAMESWARAN BECOMES APAC REGIONAL GM FOR UBER

Pradeep Parameswaran has been serving as the President of Uber India and South Asia and managing India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka markets. Yesterday, the ride-hailing firm expanded his responsibilities and elevated him to the position of Regional General Manager for the Asia Pacific, beginning June 19. "After capably leading our India and South Asia business since 2018, I know that he will continue to inspire Uber's next phase of growth across this key region," said Uber Senior Vice President of Mobility and Business Operations, Andrew Macdonald.



EX-CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER OF AIRASIA GROUP JOINS REALI

Reali, the real estate technology company transforming home buying and selling, announced the hiring of Varun Bhatia to join the leadership team as the company's first Chief People Officer. Bhatia, who will play a critical role in accelerating Reali's momentum, has more than 30 years of experience spearheading people strategies and leading entire HR organizations for publicly traded and high-growth, global companies. Varun will be responsible for developing strategies that strengthen Reali through its next phase of growth.



TUPPERWARE BRANDS APPOINTS NEW CHRO

Díaz de la Fuente joins Tupperware Brands as the Chief Human Resource Officer, following successful careers in human resources at multinational companies including GE and Herbalife Nutrition. Most recently, she was head of human resources at El Palacio de Hierro, a global retail group based in Mexico. In that role, she led the company's organization redesign strategy to deliver year over year savings and recruited the talent base needed to execute the company's strategy.



CITI SINGAPORE APPOINTS JOEL FASTENBERG AS HEAD OF HR

Citi has appointed Joel Fastenberg as Head of Human Resources for Singapore and ASEAN. Based in Singapore, Joel will be responsible for leading the Human Resources strategy in Citi's ASEAN markets of Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. His role includes leadership development, talent management, HR business partnerships, compensation and benefits, and diversity and inclusion.



SUSAN YUN JOINS INFORMATION BUILDERS AS CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

Information Builders the data and analytics software and solutions company announced the appointment of Susan Yun to its senior leadership team as Chief People Officer. In her role as Chief People Officer, Susan will partner with the senior leadership team to attract and retain top talent, deliver training and performance management, and ensure best practices for change management.



MANTECH APPOINTS PETER WARD AS VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

ManTech has appointed Peter Ward as Vice President of Human Resources and Talent Acquisition for the company's Mission Solutions and Services (MSS) Group. Reporting to Bonnie Cook, Executive Vice President, Operations of MSS, Ward will leverage his two decades of experience in developing outstanding career opportunities to drive the company's top strategic priority: nationwide recognition of ManTech as the government services contractor industry's "employer of choice."



BAJAJ ALLIANZ LIFE APPOINTS SANTANU BANERJEE AS CHRO

Santanu Banerjee joins Bajaj Allianz Life as Chief Human Resource Officer, effective from May 2020. Prior to joining, he was working as Executive Vice President & CHRO at Star Union Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co. Ltd. In his entire career of more than 20 years, Banerjee has spent maximum time working with Aditya Birla Group.

Chia Han Yong Daniel

Head of Human Resources, Samsung Asia Pte Ltd

By **Neelanjana Mazumdar**



1
One thing that makes you passionate about HR?
HR function could directly make an impact on employee experiences. From onboarding to offboarding, it should be properly managed. Why I am passionate about HR is that I can make a difference and lead changes.

2
What was the turning point of your life as an HR professional?
I would say the exposure to Coaching! We are so used to telling our staff what to do and forgot that coaching could help to unlock the potential in them. Coaching was the reason that transformed me from Technical to HR.

3
Next big HR deployment Samsung is working around?
Back to Basic, reintroduction of our Graduate Trainee Program

4
3 key talent priorities for Samsung, currently?
Robust career development. Introducing of coaching. Create a GREAT WORKPLACE environment

You need to unlearn to relearn. Empty your cup first so that you can pour in more water into it

5
Your advice for aspiring HR professionals?
HR is not an easy career, you need to have a passion for it.

6
One perception you wish to change about the HR function?
HR= Headcount Reduction. On the contrary, we always wanted to protect jobs and focus on the well-being of our staff.

7
One question you ask in every interview?
How do you deal with disappointment?

8
One must-read book for CHROs and HR leaders
The 100 years life

9
One leader you closely follow and one hallmark of that leader
Barrack Obama. He is such a good communicator! When he speaks, the whole world listens

10
In the fast-paced world full of disruptions and challenges, what keeps you going?
A lot of self-coaching and mental toughness

11
What's the last thing you watched on TV and why did you choose to watch it?
It was History 101 on Netflix. Personally I feel knowledge is power and I like to watch documentaries that enriched my general knowledge

Why the AI reality is falling short of expectations



The actual state of AI progression toward taking control of the entire humanity is far from the truth. It has fallen far behind the technological fairy tales we've been led to believe. And if we don't treat AI with a more potent dose of realism and skepticism, the field may soon be stuck in a black hole, forever

By **Anushree Sharma**

With the Coronavirus taking over the world, one thing that has gone silent is the various experiments performed in the field of AI and how it is a potential threat to humans posed by AI. It is amusing to see that one of the most sought-after technology isn't playing the major role some may have hoped for.

"This (pandemic) is showing what bulls--t most AI hype is. It's great and it will be useful one day but it's not surprising in a pandemic that we fall back on tried and tested techniques," said Neil Lawrence, the former director of machine learning at Amazon Cambridge.[1]

Around the world, AI which was one of the most coveted and talked about technologies is recently, increasingly being questioned about its usefulness and ability to drive business outcomes.

When it comes to making the business run better, AI has shown more promises than performance. According to International Data Corporation's survey, global organizations that are already using AI solutions found only 25 percent have developed an enterprise-wide AI strategy. Most organizations reported failures among their AI projects, with a quarter of them reporting up to a 50 percent failure rate.[2]

Why? Too many times, AI fails to deliver the positive impact that businesses really want from the technology, like more revenue, lower cost, fewer customers lost to churn, higher manufacturing quality, and lower waste and fraud.

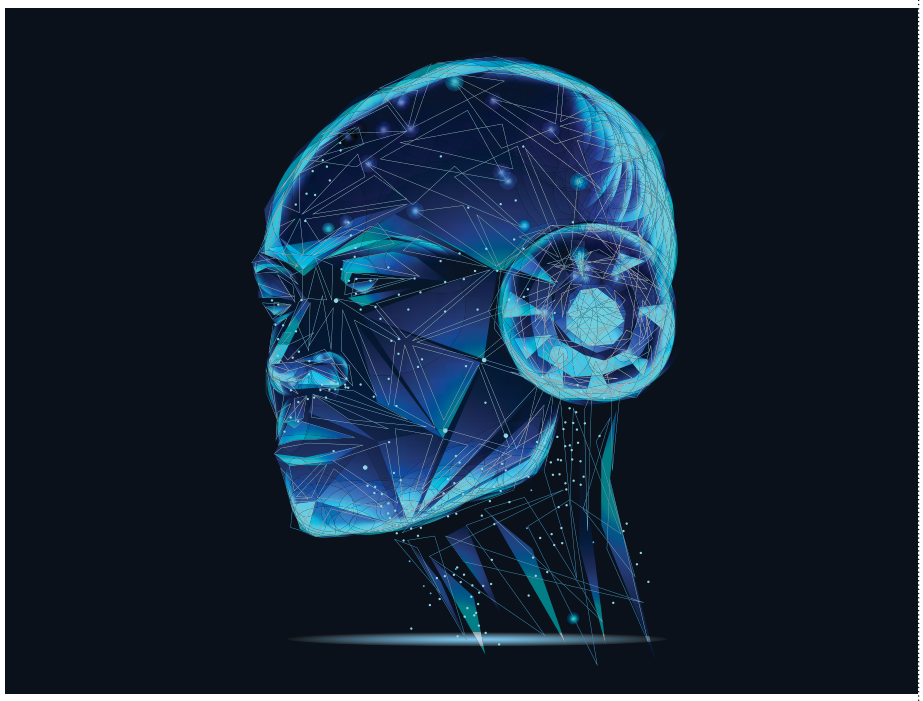
Rather, the outcomes that we are receiving is inaccuracies.

Inaccuracies, a lot of inaccuracies

In May 2020, Microsoft laid-off dozens of journalists and editorial workers at its Microsoft News and MSN organizations. The layoffs are part of a bigger push by Microsoft to rely on artificial intelligence to pick news and content that's presented on MSN.com, inside Microsoft's Edge browser, and in the company's various Microsoft News apps. Many of the affected workers are part of Microsoft's SANE (search, ads, News, Edge) division, and are contracted as human editors to help pick stories.

However, according to recent developments, Microsoft's AI editors are already showing signs of inaccu-

According to International Data Corporation's survey, global organizations that are already using AI solutions found only 25 percent have developed an enterprise-wide AI strategy



racy. The AI reportedly used a photo of Leigh-Anne Pinnock on a story about her fellow bandmate Jade Thirlwall's experience. Thirlwall criticized the company through her Twitter, tagging MSN, Microsoft's news publishing website on her post. "@MSN If you're going to copy and paste articles from other accurate media outlets, you might want to make sure you're using an image of the correct mixed-race member of the group," she wrote.

Needless to say, it was one of the major failures on Microsoft's part to replace humans with AI.

According to recent developments, Microsoft's AI editors are already showing signs of inaccuracy

A machine with inherent bias?

AI and ML have a huge bias problem and while most companies wouldn't have noticed, Amazon ditched its AI-based recruitment technology as what they discovered was the technology had an inherent bias against black people and women.

Or rather, they have a huge problem with bias. And the launch, drama, and subsequent ditching of Amazon's AI for recruitment is the perfect poster-child.

Amazon planned to go big with their recruitment technology where they claimed in media that they literally wanted it to be an engine where they going to give AI 100 résumés and it will spit out the top five, and the company will hire those.

But eventually, the Amazon engineers realized that they'd taught their own AI that male candidates were automatically better. Amazon trained their AI on engineering job applicant résumés. And then they benchmarked that training data set against current engineering employees.

So, from its training data, Amazon's AI for recruitment realized that candidates who seemed whiter and more male were more likely to be good fits for engineering jobs.

Automating conversation with no transformational output

Before we delve deeper into this topic, it is time to put yourself in reverse mode and remember the scene where you were raising a complaint about the online delivery of a product on the company's chatbot. The whole process seems as if chatbots aren't valuing people's time. Most consumers feel as though chatbots talk in circles and give them the runaround until eventually telling them to call a customer service number – wasting their time and increasing their frustration with the brand.

Everyone was ready for the era of the chatbot. Then it all fizzled out. We'd fallen fool to another AI hype cycle. One of the main causes of reality falling short of the chatbot hype was the lack of AI ability available to the bots. That is, they were a lot less 'smart' than people thought.

Instead of intelligent conversation, customers met a brick wall in the form of confused chatbot error messages.

The problem was that, due to this mis-assigned intelligence, chatbots gained too much responsibility too fast. All too often, businesses deployed their shiny new chatbot as a standalone service option. And, as a standalone contact channel, chatbots simply weren't functional enough.

A standalone chatbot isn't capable of anything an FAQ section with a search function can't do. They can provide a conversational interface for customers with frequent questions. But it relies on the customer asking the right questions. They can't take on the challenges that a human agent can. In short, chatbots used as a standalone didn't add enough

value to warrant the disruption they caused. When used instead of a human agent, they fell short. And so too did the chatbot hype.

Can businesses rely on AI for making decisions?

Conventional AI solutions operate inside "black boxes," unable to explain or substantiate their reasoning or decisions. These solutions depend on intricate neural networks that are too complex for people to understand. Companies utilizing conventional AI approaches primarily are in somewhat of a quandary because they don't know how or why the system produces its conclusions, and most AI firms refuse to divulge, or are unable to divulge, the inner workings of their technology.

However, these "smart" systems aren't generally all that smart. They can process very large, complex data sets, but cannot employ human-like reasoning or problem-solving. They "see" data as a series of numbers, label those numbers based on how they were trained, and depend on recognition to solve problems. When presented with data, a conventional AI system asks itself if it has seen the information before and, if so, how it labeled that data last time. It cannot diagnose or solve problems in real-time unless it has the ability to communicate with human operators.



One of the main causes of reality falling short of the chatbot hype was the lack of AI ability available to the bots. That is, they were a lot less "smart" than people thought

Scenarios do exist where AI users may not be as concerned about collecting information around reasoning because the consequences of a negative outcome are minimal, such as algorithms that recommend items based on consumers' purchasing or viewing history. However, trusting the decisions of black box-oriented AI is extremely problematic in high-value, high-risk industries such as finance, healthcare, and energy where machines may be tasked to make recommendations on which millions of dollars, or the safety and well being of humans, hang in the balance. The AI community is thinking long and hard about how it can make itself more useful. Just relying solely on AI will lead us nowhere. According to the World Economic Forum, efforts to leverage AI tools in the time of COVID-19 will be most effective when they involve the input and collaboration of humans in several different roles.[4] The data scientists who code AI systems play an important role because they know what AI can do and, just as importantly, what it can't. We also need domain experts who understand the nature of the problem and can identify where past training data might still be relevant today. Finally, we need out-of-the-box thinkers who push us to move beyond our assumptions and can see surprising connections.



The race to reskill post-COVID-19

Skilling is the only way out of this pandemic and organizations need to follow certain key trends to succeed, according to Mercer's 2020 Global Talent Trends Study

By **Abid Hasan**

If reskilling is one of the biggest opportunities for business to ready their workforce for the future, it is also one of the biggest challenges. Without accelerating our progress on the skills agenda, we won't have the talent to take advantage of the new jobs we are creating. This is both a business and an HR challenge, and it, therefore, demands organization-wide interventions to deliver results. Companies that unlock reskilling at speed and scale will transform at a pace that leave their competitors behind.

Google Health announced that its AI system was just as good, if not better than human radiologists at detecting breast cancer. The implications for radiologists—for example, around selection requirements and on-the-job clinical training—and for those in downstream jobs, such as radiology technicians, are uncertain. This is just the first trickle of such watershed moments to come. Meanwhile, an event like COVID-19 gives us the impetus to think about how the workforce can be reskilled from one sector to another.

Mercer's 2020 Global Talent Trends Study reveals that current realities and unresolved debates weigh us down, even as we see a future full of opportunities in this new decade. An opportunity which, for now, seems halted by COVID-19. The changes we are witnessing, brought about by uncertain times, are not only disrupting our present but will set a new normal in how we live, work, operate, and do business.

Rushing to reskill

The report highlights that skills have been high on the business agenda since technology's impact on jobs became apparent. This year, executives state an urgent and clear mandate for reskilling to drive transformation. Globally, reskilling is seen as the top talent activity most capable of delivering a Return on Investment (RoI) in the eyes of executives. And this RoI assumption makes sense, given that 99% of all companies are both embarking on a transformation this year and reporting significant skill gaps. Combined with executives' increasing apprehension around talent migration this year (up from 4% in 2017 to 38% in 2020), skill supply concerns are high on the priority list.

As agility has become the mantra of transformation, reskilling is the practical lens through which to measure progress. When asked what is most important to "being more agile", only 5% of companies said agile work practices (such as iterative product build and prototype testing) and just 15% said agile organization design. Instead, it was agile teaming—fluid teams that join and disband as needed—and agile workers (30%) that companies said would make them more agile. Concerning, though, is that executives believe only 45% of their current workforce is adaptable to the new world of work. This underrepresents the fact that 78% of employees say they are ready to reskill. The question is not who can adapt, but how best to develop an adaptable workforce.

Reskilling is part of the new work deal

As employees look ahead, there is a clear shift in their perception of reskilling - from a valued opportunity to an essential step in remaining employable. As the reality of new technologies sink in and we witness the economic aftermath of the pandemic, employees' own market value moves front of mind. When asked what helps them thrive, employees' number one response is recognition for their contributions, alongside opportunities to learn new skills and technologies (43% and 42%, respectively). Furthermore, 63% of employees say that they trust their company to invest in their skills and 55% trust their organization to teach them the new skills they will require should their job change or disappear. This notable shift in employee outlook shows how employees equate investment in their marketability as part of their total

78% of employees say they are ready to reskill. The question is not who can adapt, but how best to develop an adaptable workforce, finds the study





reward proposition. In an era of shifting market needs and uncertain futures, continuous learning, job redefinition and redeployment have to become part of the new work deal.

On the other hand, the organization needs to focus on making most of people's time. But, has HR done enough to shift its own mindset? In contrast to business leaders, who rank reskilling as number one, reskilling and measuring the skills gap appear as HR's fourth and sixth strategic priorities for delivering the future of work. The multiple priorities in 2020 will dilute attention to the skills imperative and miss the mark on delivering the required transformation. What's interesting is that HR leaders who come from a business background are more focused on building readiness for change, leveraging the broader ecosystem, and focusing on the deal, whereas respondents with functional HR backgrounds are concentrating on the employee experience and transforming talent practices. Learning is still, however, largely seen as an HR issue, which has significant implications for the transformation agenda. Only two in five CEOs are held accountable for employee reskilling, compared to almost three-quarters of CHROs. Without the business taking shared responsibility for identifying future skills needed and the pathway forward, HR will struggle to have the impact required.

There is also a difference of opinion between employees and HR about what skills are relevant today and what will be in demand tomorrow. And, as businesses flatten

Future of work priorities for HR in 2020

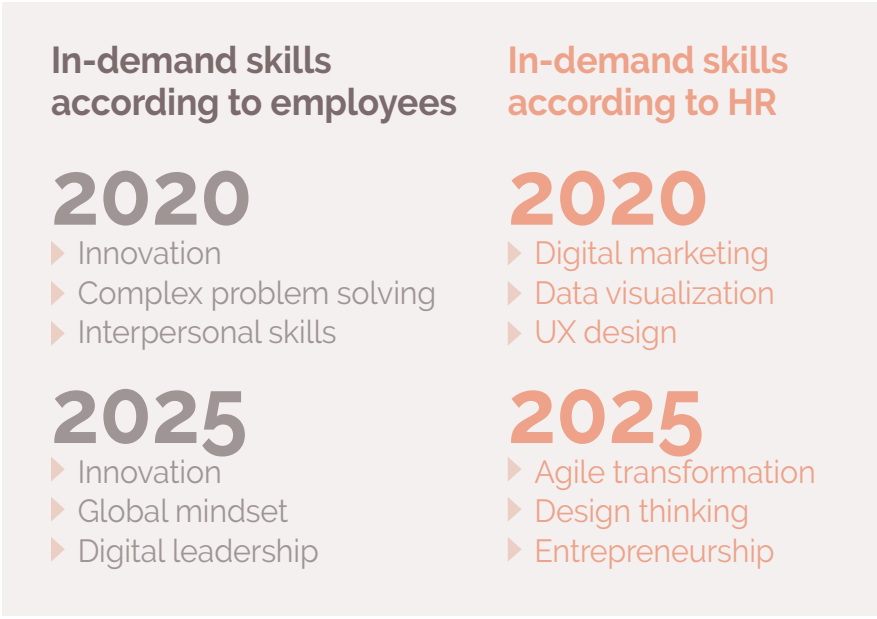
(Functional HR background versus business background HR professionals)



organizational structures and place a premium on technical skills, employees may undervalue some of the skills necessary for the long term, such as being agile, deploying design thinking or being entrepreneurial (the skills HR believes will be most in-demand in five years). This disconnect highlights the need for more aggressive communication to employees.

tunity to enhance the skills of their employees because the workload is less. Companies are helping with special courses and trainings to take the maximum benefit out of this crisis and once they will open, they are ready to focus on the business and not worry about skilling. In order to meet these challenges, companies should craft a talent strategy that develops employees'

Without the business taking shared responsibility for identifying future skills needed and the pathway forward, HR will struggle to have the impact required



The upcoming skilling trends

The learning and development heads should take note of the current situation and consider reskilling and upskilling as the most important project post this crisis. In our interactions with various talent leaders, we got to know that they are consistently working in the direction of skilling employees. A lot of companies are seeing this current situation as a perfect oppor-

critical digital and cognitive capabilities, their social and emotional skills, and their adaptability and resilience. Now is the time for companies to double down on their learning budgets and commit to reskilling. Developing this muscle will also strengthen companies for future disruptions.

According to management consulting firm, McKinsey & Company, organizations need to master some of the upcoming key talent trends.

New skills for the 'distance economy'

The crisis has accelerated the levels of digitization to help reduce avoidable physical interactions. This has meant finding ways to reinvent work and, in some cases, a partial disruption of jobs and changes in the way workers perform them.

For example, the UK healthcare system has seen years of digital evolution take place within weeks. In 2019, less than 1% of appointments took place via video link, with the vast majority in person. Now, doctors assess 100% of patients by phone, with only about 7% proceeding to face-to-face consultations. This shift has meant that clinicians must learn how to do effective and safe remote diagnoses. Discussions are now moving to ways of locking in this progress after the pandemic.

Other sectors have had to train the workforce in new

skills as they repurposed their operations to battle the pandemic. For example, consumer banks needed to increase employee cross-training in specific services as demand for mortgage-refinance applications surged. Banks also had to train employees in empathy as they helped distressed clients use digital tools and new products and services.



Imbalances in talent supply and demand

COVID-19 has changed not only how people work but also how they shop and eat, as well as basic patterns of movement and travel. In this way, the pandemic is setting up what could be lasting employment-landscape shifts that could require the large-scale reskilling of new workers.

For example, the pandemic has accelerated the trend toward e-commerce rather than brick-and-mortar sales. Early indications from China show that new customers—specifically, people aged 36 and older and residents of smaller, less prosperous cities—have begun to shop online in greater numbers through the crisis.

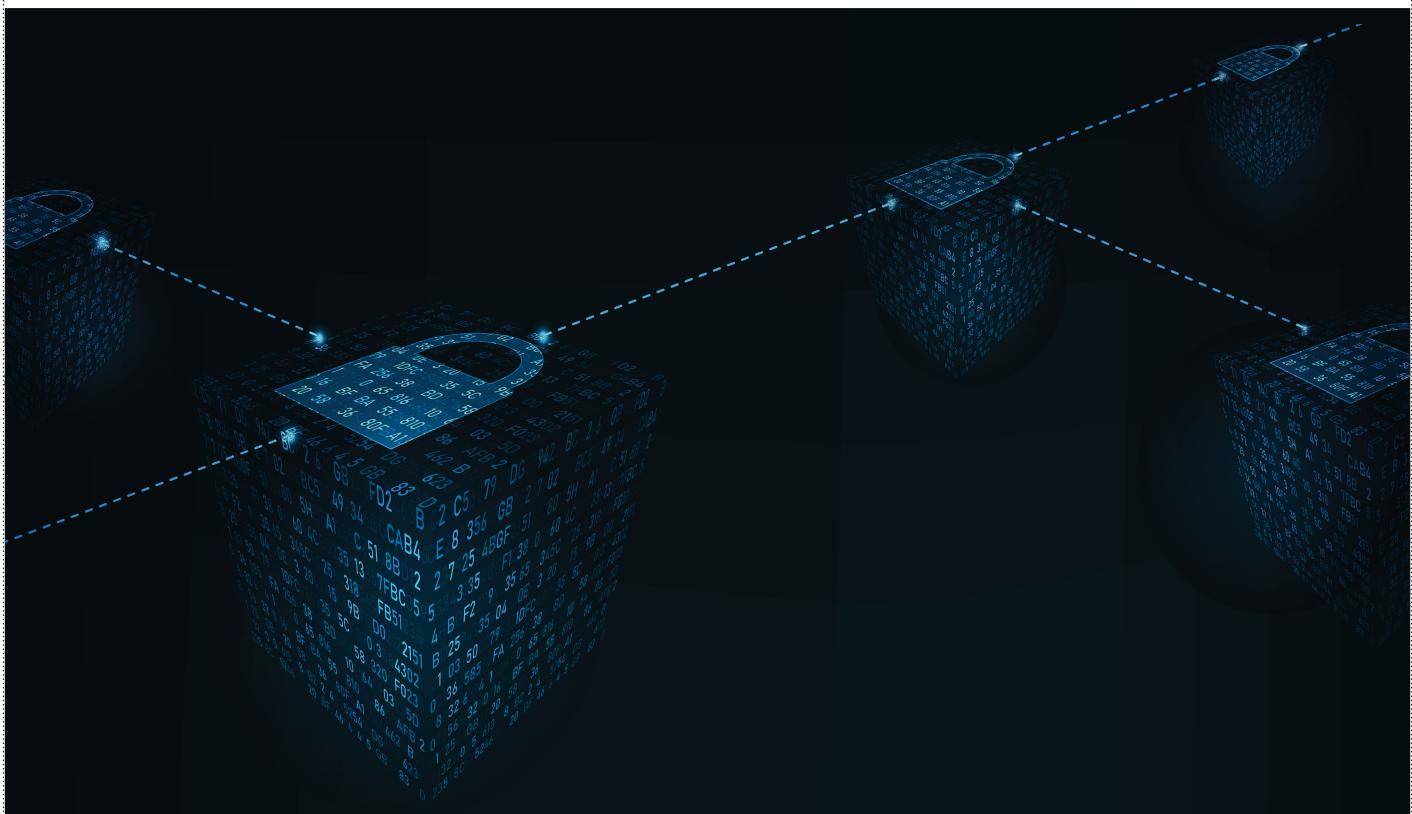
In the United States, the retail and hospitality-and-food-service sectors account for 42% of vulnerable jobs, while some sectors, such as groceries, are hiring two million to three million additional workers. In the United States, Uber introduced Work Hub, saying it is a way for gig-economy drivers to find work, whether internally or at other companies (such as CareGuide, Domino's, and Shipt) that are hiring during the crisis.

Changes to supply chains

With sourcing and production moving closer to end users, the crisis could trigger a restructuring of supply chains. As companies localize or regionalize them, that will shift which skills are needed and where.

Global companies may move production closer to the point of sale. Japan's automakers and South Korea's electronics players may accelerate the diversification of the manufacturing footprint beyond China. In France, President Emanuel Macron has confirmed a pre-crisis program to relocate strategic industries back home. As a consequence, some core strategic or automatable activities will probably be onshored in the next 12 to 18 months to build up domestic value chains for critical products and industries, like food and pharmaceuticals.

In some cases, these changes may require relocating activities to other countries. Companies may pick up talent locally (through talent exchanges, for instance) but then will have to get new employees up to speed on their new roles. This is a reskilling challenge - but not one inside the walls of a company.



What makes Blockchain top the list of most in-demand tech skills?

Blockchain is a technology that has taken the business world by storm. The worldwide spending on blockchain solutions is expected to grow from 1.5 billion in 2018 to an estimated 15.9 billion by 2023. It is clear, for a recruiter, hiring for blockchain will be the next big talent trend (or challenge)

By **Anushree Sharma**

Many consumers may have heard of blockchain technology, especially in relation to cryptocurrency. Recently, the word "blockchain" is rising in frequency in corporate boardrooms and has become impossible to ignore. In fact, it is being noted by multiple media and research companies that the investment in the technology is going to be multifold. Worldwide spending on blockchain solutions is expected



In 2019, the worldwide spending on blockchain technology stood at $ 2.7 billion. It has already disrupted the finance sector and continues to grow in the right direction

to grow from 1.5 billion in 2018 to an estimated 15.9 billion by 2023. Companies in nearly every industry are speeding up their efforts to create value for their business.

In 2019, the worldwide spending on blockchain technology stood at $ 2.7 billion. It has already disrupted the finance sector and continues to grow in the right direction. Another great statistic is the valuation of blockchain in the food and agriculture market which is valued at $ 41.9 million.

According to the results of Deloitte's 2020 Global Blockchain Survey conducted from Feb. 6 to March 3, 2020, 39 percent of 1,488 senior executives and practitioners in 14 countries said they have already incorporated blockchain into production at their companies — a 16 percent increase on last year's figures. The number rises to 41 percent when considering companies with over $100 million in revenue.

Blockchain as an emerging skill for 2020 and beyond

According to a recent study by LinkedIn, it is found that Blockchain tops the list of most in-demand hard skills for 2020.

The promise of blockchain which is essentially a shared digital ledger is huge. Advocates see it as a secure, decentralized, and cost- and time-efficient way to transparently track shipments and transactions of all kinds. Skeptics, and there are many, raise concerns about the lack of standardized protocols, scalability, and excessive energy use (Bitcoin alone consumes as much energy as the nation of Switzerland).

Irrespective of that, the business world is optimistic about this technology. Blockchain has become a line of business for corporate biggies like IBM, Oracle, JPMorgan Chase, Microsoft, Amazon, and American Express, to name just a few. Blockchain is now being used in industries ranging from shipping to healthcare, from farming and food safety to entertainment and gaming.

Salary trends in Blockchain

With a limited talent pool, blockchain techies are in huge demand. Blockchain developer salaries are taking off worldwide as the

demand for blockchain engineers and developers continues to soar. Blockchain developers can pull in a salary that is comparable with Artificial Intelligence (AI) developers. According to the data curated by Simplilearn, an online learning company, from different sources like Glassdoor, ZipRecruiters, The Blockchain Council, Business Insider, and Blockchain101, here is what a Blockchain developer can earn:

India:	₹706,265
United States:	$157,893
United Kingdom:	£50,278
Singapore:	165,000 SGD
Switzerland:	USD 180,000
Canada:	C$136,500
Australia:	A$100,000
China:	¥45k to ¥60k

According to recent data by Blochchain101, here is a comparative analysis of the annual salary earned by a blockchain developer:

LOCATION	LOW END	HIGH END	AVERAGE SALARY
US	$80	$180k	$127.5k
Asia	$100k	$150k	$125k
Remote	$100k	$200k	$145k

The Blockchain job market

Blockchain developer, artificial intelligence (AI) specialist, and Javascript developer will be the most sought-after roles by employers next year, according to the professional networking platform LinkedIn's "Emerging Jobs 2020" report.

The promise of blockchain which is essentially a shared digital ledger is huge. Advocates see it as a secure, decentralized, and cost- and time-efficient way to transparently track shipments and transactions of all kinds

With the refocus on profitability and bringing products to market, there has been an increase in blockchain design, marketing, and sales roles. Compliance, legal, and regulatory-related roles have also seen an increase in demand, which reflects the changing regulatory environment for cryptocurrency companies.

The major employers continue to be cryptocurrency exchanges. Research by The Block found that 42 percent of blockchain industry employees work for crypto-currency exchanges, with another 10 percent for mining hardware manufacturers.

Most crypto job opportunities were found to be in San Francisco and New York. In Europe, the main hubs identified were London and Berlin, and in Asia, it's Singapore and Hong Kong. In Latin America, it's Buenos Aires.

TECHNOLOGY IS KEY TO THRIVE IN THE NEW NORMAL OF WORK:

GLOBAL HEAD OF HR, BANK OF SINGAPORE

THESE ARE INDEED CHALLENGING AND UNCERTAIN TIMES. OUR ROLES AND NEW WORKING ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE DIFFERENT AND ORGANIZATIONS AND EMPLOYEES NEED TO EFFECTIVELY ADJUST AND PIVOT TOWARDS THIS 'NEW NORMAL', SAYS **JEFFREY CHIAM,** GLOBAL HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES, BANK OF SINGAPORE, IN AN INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE MATTERS

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Jeff has more than 20 years of HR experience in global financial institutions, of which about 10 years are senior HR appointments in the private banking business. Jeff was previously Regional Human Resources Manager of ING Private Bank and subsequently Head Human Resources Asia for Bank Julius Baer. Prior to joining Bank of Singapore, he was Managing Director, Organization, and People with Temasek Holdings responsible for employees in Singapore and international offices in China, India, U.S. and U.K.

Jeff holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree from Monash University, Australia on a Colombo Plan scholarship as well as a postgraduate Diploma in Education from the Institute of Education, Singapore.

Q What measures are you taking at Bank of Singapore to keep your employees safe along with keeping the business continuity plan intact? What are your top challenges?

A The health and well-being of our employees are of paramount importance to us.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in February, we have put in place preventative measures at all our offices globally while ensuring business continuity across our

My top challenges are ensuring that our employees remain engaged in a new working environment where face-to-face interactions are absent and for our managers to understand what their team members are going through without the benefit of being physically present





We embarked early on the journey to digitize a number of our end-to-end HR processes. As such, we were ready to confront the current challenge and will overcome it in a post-COVID-19 world

network. Face masks were distributed to all employees, and hand sanitizers were placed in offices. Cleaning regimes in common areas such as the branch lobbies, lifts, corridors, and toilets were also stepped up. Staggered work hours and safe-distancing within the office premises were implemented as well. Similarly, spilled organizational operations and work from home arrangements have been implemented for the majority of employees. Employees whom we deem to be vulnerable - those who are pregnant or have pre-existing health conditions – are amongst this group.

Indeed, this has been a trying time for all of us. Those working from home have had to juggle office work online and Skype meetings with clients and colleagues, and getting things done without the usual access to supporting resources. This is on top of taking care of vulnerable family members at home. My top challenges are ensuring that our employees remain engaged in a new working environment where face-to-face interactions are absent and for our managers to understand what their team members are going through without the benefit of being physically present. Constant communication on work and social level is key. We have encouraged and organized a number of virtual initiatives to maintain our closeness as we continue to spend time apart. They include a bank-wide virtual cooking challenge and individual team bonding activities such as virtual trivia nights and fitness workouts. There are other areas of learning and development, coaching and counseling, where the human touch is especially important and we need to find ways to overcome that.

Q What role would technology play in this new normal of work? Can you throw some light on how can organizations continue to operate effectively if employees have to work remotely for a prolonged period of time?

A Technology is a critical enabler as organizations find ways to thrive in the new normal of work. From an HR perspective, organizations will need to quickly deploy technology solutions to ensure that regular processes such as candidate interviews, staff onboarding, learning, performance management,

feedback, and even regular team meetings continue to meet our goals and objectives. What was done on desktops and paper must go mobile and digital. There is no turning back.

As HR leaders, it is important for us to maintain regular face-time with our team members through video conferencing to better understand them in the absence of face-to-face meetings. From visual cues, we can tell if they are engaged, motivated or stretched, and provide them with the support they need. Without that, it will be difficult for us to tell how our colleagues are really feeling, particularly in a home environment where there are blurred lines between work and family time.

Q Now, more than ever, employees would have to be more agile, adaptable, and would need to constantly upskill their knowledge and skills. How are you enabling and preparing your staff for the future, especially with regards to essential job skills and capacity building for the post-pandemic world?

A We are actively encouraging our employees to make use of this period to pick up new and relevant skills which can make them more effective in the digital world. To facilitate this, we have enhanced our online learning and development initiatives to include, professional development, leadership, new joiner induction and product training. This has also enabled us to extend our training to overseas employees.

Additionally, our employees have full access to our suite of personal and professional development online courses on platforms such as Coursera, LinkedIn Learning and Learn@IBF programs, where they are able to attain certifications in areas such as Python programming, agile methodology and design thinking.

Q As the global CHRO of Bank of Singapore, what keeps you awake at night especially at a time when you don't know when the pandemic will end and businesses will start operating as normal?

A These are indeed challenging and uncertain times. I constantly think about how our roles and physical working arrangements would become very different and how effectively the organization and employees can adjust and pivot towards

> We are actively encouraging our employees to make use of this period to pick up new and relevant skills which can make them more effective in a digital world



this "new normal" everyone is talking about. The paradigm shift will present a need to train or shift the mindsets of managers and team members alike to perform just as effectively in an environment where they are not in face-to-face contact with one another. It will also be an organizational challenge to continue to be effective with all these changes.

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

A Through leveraging technology, employees will be able to access information not just from their desktops but via mobile devices as well. This enables them to do work anytime and from anywhere. I'm pleased that we embarked early on the journey to digitize a number of our end-to-end HR processes. As such, we were ready to confront the current challenge and will overcome it in a post-COVID-19 world.

For example, our recruitment process is almost entirely digital. An AI-powered bot has been deployed to screen the CVs of prospective candidates. Employment offer letters are sent digitally to candidates' mobile devices for their e-signatures. Many elements of the onboarding process are also automated. This includes how managers receive digital reminders of their new employees' start dates and "welcome messages" which are pushed via email to new employees.

As organizations look to scale their use of technology, there is also a need to find a balance between digital and the human touch. My HR team remains highly visible and proactive in communicating, engaging, and coaching to ensure that every employee is well taken care of.

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

A A fair assessment should be based on the overall productivity of an employee and the accomplishment of key performance indicators or goals set out by their managers. We should also assess them based on demonstrating core values, teamwork and collaboration, as well as learning agility. These qualities are key to a forward-looking organization. It



Great emphasis needs to be placed on upskilling in the digital economy, particularly when manual processes are being replaced by automation and other forms of technology

should not be based on factors such as the duration of time spent in the office, how long he stays logged on to his workstation or how impressive his presentation deck is.

As more organizations look at implementing curated benefit schemes to incentivize their employees, there is a need to take into consideration the different working circumstances of their employees and customize these benefits based on their specific arrangements. This is especially so with many employees working from home now. For instance, organizations that offer their employees transport allowances may want to consider replacing that with an allowance to cover increased home utility bills or to purchase equipment such as headsets. Tele-consultation can also replace physical visits to the doctor.

Q Every industry has accelerated its own digital transformation. Companies have quickly figured out how to serve their customers and clients remotely, and there's no going back. What implication will this have on the talent especially the demand for highly skilled remote workers?

A Talent has gone global and multi-dimensional. By working remotely, one can work practically anywhere and not be bound by physical limitations of workstations and desktops, "official" working hours or geographical borders. While this means that organizations can tap into a wider pool of global talent with flexible working conditions, they will be faced with the bigger challenge of building and sustaining an identifiable corporate culture and shared values. Our HR policies must be in step with this, recognizing the diversity of the workforce and expectations of employees in the "new normal", or we will lose our talents to companies which change and adapt better.

Through digital transformation, employees will also need to ask themselves if their current skills are relevant for the future. Great emphasis needs to be placed on upskilling in the digital economy, particularly when manual processes are being replaced by automation and other forms of technology.

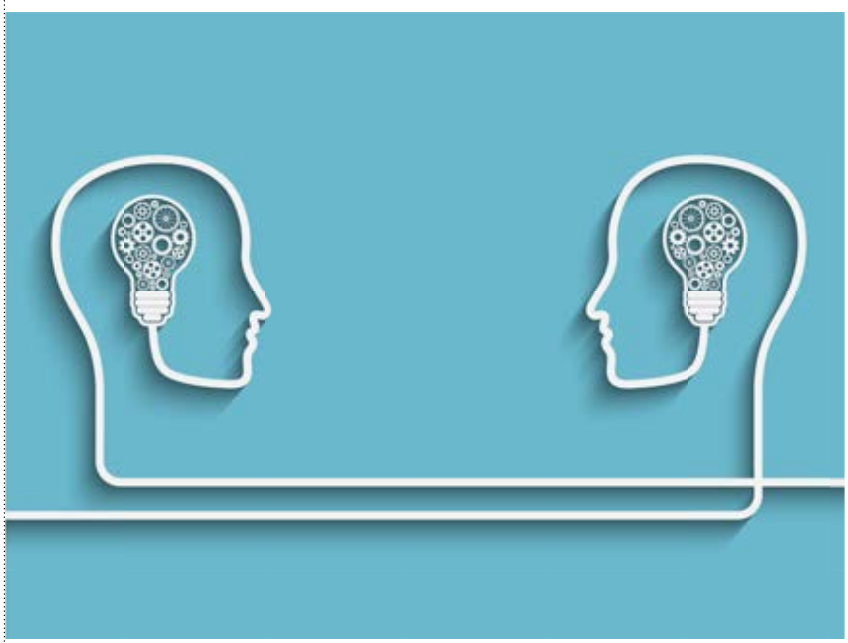
DR. PAVAN SONI



Adopting design thinking to reimagine employee experience

A look at how human resources professionals can adopt the tenets of design thinking to craft differentiated and enduring employee experiences, and why the truest pursuit of customer obsession is always routed through employee obsessions

Design thinking has come to become the dominant approach of designing clever new products and differentiated customer experiences. From its roots in industrial and product design and architecture, the method of design thinking is finding applications in solving technical and behavioral problems in an array of scenarios, in both business to business and business to consumer settings. Thanks to Jeff Bezos and his relentless pursuit of customer obsession, the notion of "customer centricity" has come to mainstream ethos of running organizations. What Steve Jobs brought to design, Taiichi Ohno brought to quality, and Andy Grove lend to operations, Jeff Bezos infused in customer service: passion with purpose. However, a customer centric organization has to be foremost an employee centric organization, or else how would your front-end, customer facing employees go far and beyond the "script" to delight your customers with memorable experiences. And why only the customer facing executives, the entire organization must rally around the "True North".



In this article, I discuss about how the human resources professionals can adopt the tenets of design thinking to craft differentiated and enduring employee experiences, and why the truest pursuit of customer obsession is always routed through employee obsessions. The call for thinking differently towards employee engagement has taken alarming proportions owing to the COVID-19 induced lockdown and ensuing economic and social slowdown, which has pushed scores of employees to adopt sub-optimal

ways of working and spending time with their families and self. This has led to wide-felt and deep-rooted stress and disengagement and unless addressed creatively and urgently this disenchantment can lead to irreversible loss of employee morale and deterioration of organizational culture. Waiting for things to return to normal might be a tunnel dream, for even while employees work from home or are in office for limited durations, their engagement levels are sloping downwards. Drawing from the practice of design thinking, I offer three recommendations on how people managers, from across functions and the organizational hierarchy, can re-energize, re-engage, and re-invigorate their dispersed employee base in time.



Waiting for things to return to normal might be a tunnel dream, for even while employees work from home or are in office for limited durations, their engagement levels are sloping downwards

Engage with the 'human' in your employee

Design thinking starts with "empathy" - being the person you wish to help. As a practicing manager, you would appreciate that empathy does not come easy or cheap. It requires a tremendous amount of patience and practice - to be able to understand one's emotional state, getting to control the emotions in self, graduating to understand others' emotional motivations, and then being able to influence those. Emotional intelligence, says Daniel Goleman, is one of the life's most crucial skills and he rates it above IQ.

Microsoft CEO, Satya Nadella, identifies empathy as core to business. In his book, *Hit Refresh*, Satya narrates an incident from his interview at Microsoft when he was asked the question, "Imagine you see a baby laying in the street, and the baby is crying. What would you do?" Satya, all in his 20s, said, "You call 911." Years later, when Satya reflects on his callous response, he wonders how apathetic he was and the way his life's experiences, especially the birth of his son, Zain, who suffered from cerebral palsy, changed his world view and made him a highly empathetic person.[1] Satya does not claim to have any innate capability of empathy that he was born with. If anything, he says, his life has taught him how to be more empathetic, and that his pursuit is to have a growing sense of empathy for people

around him.[2] It would not be a stretch to say that Satya was hired for his intelligence, but was promoted for his empathy.

As your employees are facing hardships on personal and professional fronts, it is a time to take a long-term view on developing talent and fostering an enduring organizational culture. It starts with identifying the "human" in your employee: the spouse, the parent, the child, the neighbor, the homemaker, the citizen. The pursuit of profits and perfection cannot and should not come at the cost of employee morale. A genuine sense of empathy and human

As your employees are facing hardships on personal and professional fronts, it is a time to take a long-term view on developing talent and fostering an enduring organizational culture

centricity comes through the means of listening with intent, observing with purpose, and deferring judgement. It would help to get a daily beat from your employees in terms of their mood and morale, observing that their schedule is not taxing them (and their families), and parking your judgment in the face of a momentary dip in performance.

Pushing experimentation wide and out

Another crucial tenet of design thinking is experimentation involving rapid and cheap prototyping. The human resources functions have traditionally been not as amicable to experimentation as R&D or even other core functions. Even continuous improvement comes in a very non-continuous manner. For instance, how many novel approaches of recruitment or compensation design have you seen in your organization?

According to evolutionary theory and organizational ecology, during times of high uncertainty and complexity, an organism (or organization) that can introduce improvisation would have a higher chance of survival. The external change must be met with an equal pace of change internal to the organization. In this fractured work environment, where scores of associates and partners are working at disparate locations in desperate situations, no centralized means of change is possible or even advisable. A more organic and measurable means would be a decentralized, dispersed mutation, triggered by employees themselves, well within their own zones of influence. What if an employee has an unprecedented discretion over how she engages with her work, defines the scope, delivers outcome, and measures performance? A centralized, thought-out approach may still not work, as there is no feedback loop working between a grand plan and its flawless implementation. Instead, let the employees be self-directed.

Add gains to overcompensate pains

Lastly, on the asymmetry between

gains and pains. If you are an HR manager, regardless of your role, think of how much time do you spend in addressing your associates' pains versus adding joys and gains to their lives? If your calendar is choked with exit interviews, pep talks, recruitment drives, negotiations over compensation and benefits, amongst others, you are essentially absorbed in alleviating pains. And you know that you can never ever remove all the pain points, for pains are often relative and not absolute. Such as: "My batch mate is drawing more salary than me for a similar profile", or "I don't feel adequately recognized in my current role". I would not suggest you to overlook problems, but you must acknowledge that solving pain areas is akin to riding the curve of diminishing returns. You have to solve the most pressing problems but not all. Instead focus your attention on adding gains to the equation. Well-designed gains can overcompensate pains.

Design thinking can lend in a lot of fresh perspectives to the human resources function, which is becoming core to organizational revival and employee engagement during these testing times

In the realm of employee engagement, there is already more pain in the work and lives of your employees. Instead of putting all your attention to easing that pain, which should certainly not be overlooked, try creative means of adding joy. Such as running hobby classes for a few hours every week, some arts and craft activity to be done along with family, contests unrelated to the work at hand, and so on. In fact, ideas can even come from your employees, who desperately need some healthy distraction.



In summary, design thinking can lend in a lot of fresh perspectives to the human resources function, which is becoming core to organizational revival and employee engagement during these testing times. I sincerely hope that you would try out some of these ideas and share your experiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Microsoft India's Ira Gupta on the 'big reset' at work

In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, **Ira Gupta,** HR Head, Microsoft India shares some insights on how the world of work has gone through a major reset due to the COVID-19 crisis, what this new normal looks like, and how Microsoft is relying on its inclusive culture and using technology to connect, collaborate and respond to the current reality

By **Yasmin Taj**



The COVID-19 crisis has led to some drastic changes at the workplace and in these unprecedented times, the way people work, connect, and balance their lives, have all transformed. As organizations across the world transition to virtual work, it means a deep change in working patterns for their employees, taking into consideration many aspects. Organizations that will adapt to this new normal and reset their workplace at the earliest will be the ones who will survive these times and come out successful.

In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, Ira Gupta, HR Head, Microsoft India shares some insights on how the world of work has gone through a major reset due to the pandemic, what this new normal looks like, and how Microsoft is relying on its inclusive culture and using technology to connect, collaborate and respond to the current reality.

Gupta leads HR for Microsoft across India. In this role, her priorities include aligning the organization's people strategy with business objectives, building a transformational and diverse organization, talent development and implementing effective HR systems and polices across multiple Microsoft entities in the country. She has led large scale change projects across countries and business units. She has worked across functions, including in Sales and Marketing leadership team roles. She serves as an Independent Director on company boards.

Here are the excerpts from the interview:

Q How has the COVID-19 outbreak changed the way we work? What will the new world of work or post-COVID-19 workplace look like?

A COVID-19 has made remote working and learning the new normal and changed every aspect of our lives. I am inspired by how organizations and individuals are using technology to connect, collaborate and respond to the current reality. During this unprecedented time, it is clear that technology will play a key role in the continuity of every aspect of our lives. Tech adoption has accelerated the pace of digital transformation across organizations and industries in India.

In fact, data trends and conversations highlight that the world is realizing that we can effectively connect across distances in a way we've perhaps never thought was possible before. As more people started to work virtually, we saw our customers turn to tools like Microsoft Teams to virtualize their operations. Through this crisis, we have been sharply focused on ensuring our customers stay productive and supported while we continue to innovate to bring them secure, world-class products.

During this unprecedented time, it is clear that technology will play a key role in the continuity of every aspect of our lives

The trends clearly suggest that remote work is here to stay as the world navigates this pandemic. Many industries and organizations which had traditionally not been open to remote work are now actively considering this model and many others are planning to limit the size of their workforce in physical spaces going forward. While remote work offers flexibility and balance, we also have to consider the long-term impact of remote work on mental and physical well-being.

To my mind, it's not as simple as building for a work-from-home future. It's about building for a future where collaboration happens in mixed environments – remote and not. And helping people who might be working on multiple things, with more than one team or organization, find the right places to do that work form, whether its collaborative or focused. Technology needs to be designed in a way that takes human nature into account and builds a bridge for people in and outside of the room. Whether working in the office, from a café, a co-working space or from home, the goal should be to make it the most collaborative, creative and engaging experience possible.

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

A Our CEO Satya Nadella talked about the recovery from this pandemic as being more like a dial than a switch. There are three phases that most companies and countries will go through - respond, recover

and reimagine. For some, the dial will move forward, for others it will jump back before moving forward again.

In all situations, talent will be a key lever as companies look to respond, recover and reimagine. At Microsoft, our people are at the center of the innovation we drive and the support we provide, helping governments, citizens, first-responders, customers and communities in India stay connected and productive. We will continue to work and innovate alongside our customers as their digital transformation partners as they navigate this crisis.

Q What are the best practices companies can embrace in uncertain times like COVID-19? How is Microsoft relying on its culture to create an empathetic and inclusive space for colleagues, helping them stay productive, creative and secure as they work from home? What is an ideal post lockdown strategy, according to you?

A The nature of work is changing, and so are we as we respond to the needs of our employees and their families. At Microsoft, our goal is to better understand the impact of remote work and help our employees adapt to do their best work during these challenging times.

Our goal was to ensure every Microsoft employee has the tools, resources, and solutions to be as productive, creative, and secure as possible, working from any location and on any device. All of us at Microsoft use Teams daily for chat, meetings, calls, and collaboration. Now that we find ourselves working remotely, we have been able to stay productive because we are accustomed to a digital workspace. We also rely on the Microsoft 365 environment to empower employees to collaborate through self-service creation of Office 365 groups within Teams while ensuring appropriate security, compliance, and manageability are in place.



Whether working in the office, from a café, a co-working space or from home, the goal should be to make it the most collaborative, creative and engaging experience possible

For many of our employees, this change is also about being able to build new routines and habits as they adjust to working from home. To support colleagues through this transition, we have created resources to guide employees, with tips to stay healthy, engaged and productive during COVID-19. We have seen a number of our teams schedule no-agenda 'tea-breaks' on a Teams video call. This helps virtualize the water cooler conversation that many miss these days.

Q How is Microsoft better understanding the impact of remote work and helping

employees adapt to this new normal?

A Remote work can create challenges in maintaining a healthy work culture and managing change. While the transition of technology was seamless, we recognized that this was also a period of deep change. Our employees were working in new environments, juggling new, often competing demands, and trying to stay productive while battling the stress of protecting their loved ones. Supporting them and their families was top priority for us.

We introduced a dedicated 24/7 COVID-19 Medical Advisory Helpline for our employees and their families. Available in multiple languages, employees can use this helpline for virtual consultations with medical practitioners to assess symptoms and avail medical guidance, all in a private and secure environment.

We also put together essential resources to support the physical and emotional well-being of colleagues. To support mental well-being, we are encouraging employees to use Microsoft Cares, a counseling service as part of our benefits program.

Frequent employee communication has been a key principle that we have used during this time to ensure employees are heard, leadership is visible, and best practices are shared. The leadership at Microsoft is frequently connecting with colleagues all over the world through live events, one-on-one conversations or informal catchups.

Q Are there certain traits that can make leaders more effective in times of crisis? What would the "new normal" for leadership be now?

The more we seek to understand and address the needs of our colleagues, the more we help create an ecosystem of support that ultimately helps everyone do their best work

A Like with every area of our life, leadership in uncertain times requires unwavering empathy and resilience. I'm privileged to work with leaders at Microsoft have truly modeled what it is to be calm in the face of adversity, to coach others through ambiguity and to demonstrate care when it was most needed by their teams.

As things around us evolve very fast, operating with deep empathy will be critical-empathy for customers as we respond to their changing needs, empathy for colleagues as they juggle multiple responsibilities and also empathy for ones one self.

Equally important will be embracing a long-term view as leaders re-look at business models and new ways of doing things to future proof their businesses.

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

A COVID-19 has disrupted what we see as 'normal' in every way. With so many of us juggling the responsibilities of work and home, including myself, this change can often seem overwhelming. It is important for leaders to address this anxiety that their teams are going through and prioritize care, for themselves and everyone around them. Keeping lines of communication open with employees will be critical here. As leaders, it is important to create clarity, give hope and truly empathize with our colleagues now more than ever. My learning is that now, the more we seek to understand and address the needs of our colleagues, the more we help create an ecosystem of support that ultimately helps everyone do their best work. pm

ANAND SIVARAMAN



Observational intuition:
Making sense of what is staring at us

One does not need to be a genius to make sense of trends and events and capitalize on them to come out better at the end. Instead, if one can observe, understand, and apply intuition, opportunities will reveal themselves

Have you ever had the feeling of being confounded by a clearly observable pattern that is seemingly inexplicable? While the reason is hiding in plain sight right in front of us, it suddenly all falls together with a simple explanation. As individuals, we are intuitively reactive and prepare better for well defined, near term events. Preparing proactively for slowly emerging trends like the consequences of connected markets and digital transformation requires *observational intuition* that most perceive subconsciously, but few act upon. *Observational Intuition can be defined as the process of actively engaging and applying intuition to all the observable, latent information that is otherwise consumed passively to continually create new opportunities.*

These clearly observable events can have beneficial or catastrophic consequences for markets, companies and employees depending on their ability to visualize, contextualize, aggregate and make timely decisions on available, self-evident information. Without that ability, celebrated CEOs (think General Electric or Yahoo) who were considered geniuses have seen their strategies collapse, businesses fail and "lifer" employees become irrelevant.

The commonly accepted notion is that it takes genius to discover or invent breakthroughs, develop and articulate strategic models, or identify market dislocations. However, even geniuses really only extend and build upon an available body of work. Often, the original model fails (remember MySpace, AOL) but the refined versions succeed (think Facebook, Google). You often succeed by not being the first mover, but by using observational intuition to innovate and



improve an existing idea, process, product or service. When markets, companies and technologies transform dynamically, what can employees do to act on observational intuition themselves, even if they are not geniuses?

The typical employee has no pretensions to brilliance or unique insights, but has pragmatic observations and intuitions on the state of affairs at the ground level. Those who don't keep up with change know that they will be rendered irrelevant. And yet, most are paralyzed by inertia to invest in, or reinvent themselves. Your personal interests are served best by your own observational intuition.

Let us consider some successful titans from different fields in research, academia and business who connected the dots, identified niche needs and became iconic celebrities. Their life stories could have been as ordinary as the stories of other brilliant but unknown people who were not intuitive and did not constantly innovate and expand their boundaries. There are lessons of observation, intuition, preparedness, and agility for employees who are not as intellectually endowed, but nevertheless have to survive tumultuous changes by acting on their observational intuition.



How can we proactively prepare for trends such as connected markets and digital transformation? Observational intuition may be the answer

1. Albert Einstein is perhaps the most iconic scientific celebrity, and his equation for the equivalence of matter and energy is the most quoted, but arguably least understood concept. This important theory which is foundational to our understanding of modern Physics was laid out by Einstein in a short paper of just three pages. At the time when Einstein's theories were published, he was not an academic, researcher or part of a prestigious university. He was considered an "academic weakling" and worked as a clerk in the Swiss patent office. What Einstein did was to take the entire body of available information and harvest the data and observations. He applied his intuitive and brilliant insights to identify patterns and predict outcomes. The takeaway here is that he did not think only in logical or mathematical equations, but in relatable images, feelings or even musical structures to visualize the reality that he intuitively assumed to be true. He could see the individual trees and could step back to contemplate the entire forest. He used the body of existing information and had observational intuition on the data that already existed.

As an employee at your workplace,

- Are you content in the status quo or do you exhibit a natural curiosity to take on persistent institutional problems?
- As the "expert" in your current role, do you have an insight on what needs change?
- Are you so lost in the trenches in getting everyday "stuff done" that you are looking at individual trees rather than the forest that encompasses the trees?
- Do you think beyond immediate deliverables to the longer roadmap, especially for yourself?
- Are you better off taking your game elsewhere or even being an entrepreneur before it is no longer your decision to make?



2. Clay Christensen was a Professor at Harvard Business School, advised global corporations and served on the Board of many of those. From his extensive experience of engaging with academic intellectuals and corporate titans, he coined the phrase "Disruptive Innovation". The Economist called him "the most influential management thinker of his time".

Disruptive Innovation does not have to be new or advanced technology, but often novel process changes applied cleverly to an emerging, niche value segment of the market by emerging companies. These start-ups from the fringe have the ability to disrupt the entire mainstream market controlled by traditional incumbents.

For mature companies and their employees who are coasting along, it is analogous to the temperature levels rising for a frog in a pot of "slow-boil" water. The frog does not even realize before it is too late that the water temperature has become too hot for it to survive. Disruption is happening in plain sight. For employees whose current positions are likely to be displaced by disruptive innovation,

- Is your observational intuition having you ponder over the fungibility of your skills or your alternatives?
- What is your "call to action" and the planned time horizon?
- Has your observational intuition enabled you to differentiate yourself in a pool of displaced talent?

> Observational Intuition can be defined as the process of actively engaging and applying intuition to all the observable, latent information that is otherwise consumed passively to continually create new opportunities

3. Elon Musk has pushed

the boundaries of science and space, helped launch several disruptive and innovative companies like Tesla, SpaceX, PayPal, SolarCity and The Boring Company.

Tesla products do not have a combustible engine, are sold and configured on their website in a Direct-to-Consumer model, so no dealers, repair services or intermediaries are needed. This will completely disrupt and dislocate the entire automotive industry as we know it, including its supply chains, dealers, vendors, and employees. The big bet is that all other automotive companies will be forced by markets and customers to abandon current strategies and product lines and convert to Tesla's innovation of electric vehicles.

The future is staring at us, and if you are in the automotive industry ecosystem, the time is now to prepare for the emerging industry of tomorrow.

- As an automotive engineer, would you rather gravitate towards electrical or software engineering to create and power the EV driverless cars of the future?
- Are you preparing to transition your car dealer sales skills or maintenance/ repair skills to another industry or upgrade your skills to support the next generation of vehicles?



For every acknowledged genius who is credited with profound original thinking and execution, there is a veritable graveyard of equally smart individuals whose ideas or work did not capture the public imagination

For every acknowledged genius who is credited with profound original thinking and execution, there is a veritable graveyard of equally smart individuals whose ideas or work did not capture the public imagination. A significant differentiator for the successful ones was their observational intuition, and making sense of what was right in front of them as an opportunity. The typical employee does not have to be a certified genius like the examples referenced. Neither do they need to make monumental discoveries or disruptive innovations. Geniuses and typical employees may share similar destinies based on their ability to actively engage and apply intuition to all the observable information around them, and create new opportunities for themselves. If hindsight is 20:20, perhaps Observational Intuition is a field glass to the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ANAND SIVARAMAN is a business leader based in the US with over thirty years of experience leading strategic business transformation and talent management for technology services companies.



Q&A

‘In the post-COVID-19 world, it’s vital that companies keep their eye on Inclusivity’

Parmesh Shahani, author, and Founder, Godrej India Culture Lab, in conversation with People Matters, talks about celebrating Pride Month in the era of digital existence, the business case for missing empathy as employers make life-altering decisions for employees and the current status of LGBTQ inclusion at workplaces - acceptance and policies

By **Bhavna Sarin**

An author and the Founder and Head of Godrej India Culture Lab, Parmesh Shahani serves as Vice President at Godrej Industries Ltd.

A multi-faceted personality and a role model for many, Parmesh is a part of FICCI's inaugural D&I task force, he is a board member of Khoj International Artists' Association, a TED Senior Fellow (2017), Yale World Fellow (2014), a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader (2014), a Utrecht University-Impakt Fellow (2012), and an academy member of the Global Teacher Prize.

An active advocate and member of the LGBTQ community, Parmesh voices his take on LGBTQ in India and the workplace through his books, blogs, and his presence in the media. His first book Gay Bombay: Globalization, Love and (Be) Longing in Contemporary India was released in 2008 and is being re-published in 2020 as an updated edition. His new book Queeristan: LGBTQ Inclusion in Corporate India is also slated for a 2020 release.

Here are excerpts of the interview.

Q What went behind the creation of Godrej India Culture Lab? What have been some of the milestone achievements for the culture lab?

A Well, it's been 9 years since the lab was created and we are looking forward to its tenth anniversary next year. The lab began very much with the aim of creating a new kind of space in which we could cross-pollinate different people and also different ideas about contemporary India, in an ongoing conversation. The premise was that there were so many people trying to understand contemporary India sitting in different markets, be it in academia, in business, in policy-making, thinkers, writers, filmmakers. We thought why not create an open space through which we can have an ongoing exploration of understanding contemporary India. That was the broad idea.

I met Nisa Godrej and proposed this very open-ended idea to her and she loved it. That's how the culture lab came into being with Godrej as its home. But very early on it was clear that while we were housed at Godrej, it was very much a space for the general public at large, it's for the city and the country.

Through 9 years we have grown so much from that small idea. We have grown into 3 pillars - Curation, Creation, and connection. We have year-round events and while all the physical events happened in our auditorium, now owing to COVID-19 we have moved to online events. Having theme-based events was the center-piece of how we started, and these events are on recurring themes like issues about identity, gender, LGBT rights, women's rights, feminism, issues about seeing the connection between urban and rural India, understanding what digital India is all about, recognizing that we need to pay attention to our environment.

We are very invested in expanding the cultural ecosystem of the country.

> To me, a better normal would be more inclusive, and one which is more intersectional, in which one recognizes that solutions to issues are often interconnected, and challenges are interconnected

Q Pride Month is around the corner and pride marches are one of the highlights

during the Pride Month celebrations every year. What do you think will help keep up the spirits given that the marches are unlikely to happen? How do you plan on celebrating Pride Month this year?

A Of course, the plan was very different originally on how I would spend this month and that plan has completely changed. I am currently in the middle of re-releasing my book Gay Bombay and pre-publicity of my new book Queeristan which is slated to be released around August.

I am spending most of the Pride Month doing a lot of webinars with companies who want to talk about LGBTQ and I think it's vital because especially in a post-COVID scenario, it's vital that companies keep their eye on the inclusion ball. Things like what Pride Circle is doing with the 21DaysAllyChallenge are vital, building momentum around it. What is going to help companies in a post-COVID-19 world? Companies will have to learn how to be innovative, and innovative not just in the products they are offering, but innovative in how they offer these products, innovative in being able to quickly pivot if something is not working.

All the research says that companies that are diverse and inclusive are more innovative. There is a very strong correlation. Whether you look at BCG, McKinsey, or any research, there is a direct correlation between how diverse you are and how innovative you are, so I think it's more and more evident that if companies want to be able to innovate in these uncertain markets, they need to have a wide range of people. How can you innovate if everyone around the table looks and sounds the same as you? You won't be able to know there is a market that is waiting to be served. If it's all men, how will you know what the experience is like being a woman in a post-COVID world? If you are all straight, how will you know what it means to be a queer person at this time? On any dimension, if you are able-bodied, how will you know how difficult is it for someone who is in a wheel-chair or visually challenged to access a Zoom call in a world where every meeting is happening on Zoom?

Companies need to recognize that they need to have a diverse workforce. Who knows maybe that's a big



If it's all men, how will you know what the experience is like being a woman in a post-COVID world? If you are all straight, how will you know what it means to be a queer person at this time?

market for you which you are not even seeing because you don't have that person on your team. Smart companies are the ones realizing that they need a wide range of people and they are upping their diversity and inclusion strategies. The future belongs to smart companies who can use this moment to reimagine themselves. You have to be diverse for your own survival.

I am going to spend Pride month talking to companies, asking them to be smart companies.

Q What are the biggest workplace challenges for the LGBTQ+ community in the wake of social distancing? What would your advice be for organizations to maintain the progress and momentum achieved so far towards LGBTQ+ inclusion?

A I think companies who want to be involved with the LGBTQ+ people have to recognize that it's not just gestures during Pride Month or at moments like the present that count. It is a comprehensive set of things that you do all the time. If you care about LGBTQ people, you should start with basic policies of non-discrimination, you should make sure you offer benefits to all their partners, you should make sure you offer transition benefits for your



employees who wish to transition. All of these things are what's needed at any moment. If you are LGBTQ, and you are insured but your partner isn't, it's a big problem.

Whatever employees go through in general, LGBTQ employees go through the same things as well, in addition to the added burden if one might not be out, or you might be out at the workplace but closeted at home. Companies should at any given point of time offer a comprehensive set of benefits and not just emerge during Pride Month and ask what we can do for you.

Employees value companies when they commit to them for the long haul. Having a comprehensive approach that includes everything from policies to benefits, making sure that you go out and hire LGBTQ people, especially trans people who at this point are the most affected, within the LGBTQ spectrum as well. How can you reach out in your hiring efforts to the LGBTQ people saying we are looking at hiring right now, who can we work with within the community to make sure our message reaches out and we hire LGBTQ talent, making sure you have counseling services available for those who need it and not just for LGBTQ employees, but for anyone because employees are going through a lot and they need someone to talk to. Can you provide for these facilities in full confidentiality? Employees just want to know that companies are treating them decently and care for them.

There is anyway so much uncertainty about what's going to happen. I think companies that will act

humanely and kindly at this moment will really have immense loyalty from their employees, and at any given time they should act humanely and kindly, but especially under stressful situations like the current one.

Employees are stepping up, they are all working hard, they are all working through this uncertainty, and you want to know that the company you are doing this for cares about you, cares about your well-being.



Q Recent reports highlight an impending mental health crisis that the world will soon walk into. What are your thoughts about it? What are your suggestions for leaders and the workforce at large to be prepared for what's being called a 'global psychological pandemic'?

A India is one of the most poorly served in terms of mental health professionals. It truly is a mental health pandemic in so many ways. If we speak of domestic violence, in particular, violence happens across, it is not just people at the lower ends of the socioeconomic strata. It's everyone. A recent video by my friend Nandita Das for UN Women talks about how the lockdown is so much more disproportionately harmful to women, in terms of domestic abuse and violence. How do you then create an infrastructure of support?

And I would argue it's the same for queer people as well. If any company wants to help at this time, investing in helplines, investing in creating resources, investing in toolkits, investing in things people can share. And not out of any altruistic reason, if employees have good mental health their productivity will go up and they will serve the company better.

Corporates have started talking about it and producing content. More can be done in terms of encouraging good mental health, helplines for people if they have issues, and providing access to someone they can talk to. Sharable toolkits right now that enable self-help or provide access to professionals that companies can pay for. That will be super useful. Organizations need to find mental health resources, put them on platforms, translate them

> Employees recognize that industries are going through a bad time. How you have those conversations, how you choose to keep in touch with employees will ensure that if things get better they will come back to you and they will be committed to you

into multiple languages so they can be accessed not just by white-collar workers but workers across and share, that would be really useful because COVID is not going away anytime soon and anxieties are only going to increase.

Companies need to see the link between the mental health of employees and their own profitability, and that's when they will think of it seriously. Look at it from the point of employees bringing their whole selves to work, their sense of belonging, their sense of wellness and wellbeing, all of that adds to their productivity, loyalty, and happiness. Once companies recognize that, they will make efforts to walk the talk.

We are underserved in terms of mental health professionals but there are a lot of resources that people can use. If companies want to do good they can help in producing more and more of these resources, they can help in facilitating some of this.

Q What is the one practice you hope to start, stop, and continue as we prepare for the new normal?

A This year I wanted to work a lot on queer philanthropy. I really want to start thinking of my queer philanthropy journey and the kind of legacy I want to leave behind.

I want to stop calling this the new normal. I don't want the new normal; I didn't like the old normal as it was. I wrote the book Queeristan because we didn't like the old normal, to create an alternative, positive better world, so maybe we can call it a better normal instead of the new normal. To me, a better normal would be one which is more inclusive, and one which is more intersectional, in which one recognizes that solutions to issues are often interconnected, challenges are interconnected.

I would want to continue just being grateful, being full of gratitude, continue recognizing my privilege, and help others in whatever way I can. There is just so much to be grateful for and to recognize. I want to continue learning always, especially from my team members or the people I come into contact with. I am blessed to be working at the Culture Lab and meet so many different people, all of whom are so inspiring, so I want to continue learning from all of them and just own my own growth and become a better person.

I am blessed to be working at the Culture Lab and meet so many different people, all of whom are so inspiring, so I want to continue learning from all of them and just own my own growth and become a better person





THE NEW DIGITAL RESET AT WORK

How **COVID-19** triggered accelerated shift to digital technologies paving the way for a major reset at work globally

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

The COVID-19 pandemic is still fledging its wings and we are still battling the fire blind-folded. The recovery time might even take more than a year for businesses to come to normal. But as experts say, leaders who can best prepare their businesses for a more digital future will be the winners at the end.

The pandemic has emphasized the vital role of technology and innovation for supporting remote working, scaling digital channels, and measuring productivity. As a matter of fact, COVID-19 has significantly triggered the shift to digital for the majority of businesses globally including enabling employees working from home overnight. A lot of business leaders have already led their companies to digitize to a large extent to safeguard their employees and serve customers better. Banks have transitioned to remote sales through digital outreach initiatives thus enabling flexible payment arrangements for their customers. Grocery stores have shifted to online ordering and delivery as their primary business. Doctors have begun delivering telemedicine. Manufacturers are actively developing plans to leverage robotics, 3D printing, and automation. And there are more.

Companies have already launched analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) initiatives in their operations including software vendors such as IBM, SAP, and Microsoft. IT teams have already delivered at a pace they never have done before.

The cover story takes a look at the larger technology scenario and innovations that organizations are coming up with to battle COVID-19. We try to find out how companies are putting technology to their best use to enable the safety of their employees, meet the needs of customers, and most importantly, keep their businesses stable at this crucial time.

'DIGITIZATION, AUTOMATION, AND SECURITY ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE NEW NORMAL'



The shift from offices to remote working has fundamentally changed not only the day-to-day operations of an IT organization, but also how CIOs plan for the future, says **Ruma Balasubramanian,** Vice President and Chief Transformation Officer, APJC, Cisco, in an interaction with People Matters

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Ruma Balasubramanian's role as Chief Transformation Officer focuses on how Cisco can embrace market transitions and successfully transform its business to thrive in an application-centered, multi-cloud world. She and her team are responsible for shaping and accelerating initiatives that support the largest enterprises in the world on their transformation journey to digital.

Ruma's role spans four programs of work. First, Ruma leads the Digital Transformation Organization that works with customers to bring their infrastructure, applications, and business teams together through Cisco's multi-domain solutions, building on proven industry points-of-view. She also leads Cisco's global customer accounts for APJC. In this role, Ruma is responsible for developing and executing Cisco's growth strategy for the region's largest customers, driving a consistent experience across every location. Connecting these two areas, Ruma also leads Cisco APJC's Services Sales, a core part of the Customer Experience business.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q How critical is the role of technology for the post-COVID-19 world?

A Digital transformation has taken on a new meaning during the COVID-19 global crisis. We've seen that across industry sectors, companies are leveraging technology to future-proof organizations and to ensure that their business is able to handle the challenges of an overnight Work from Home employee base. IT is at the



heart of every company's business resilience imperative, but its role has evolved, from helping the company run better and faster, and ultimately to transform. Equally important is technology's contribution to the customer and employee experience. As our customers take this journey in a post-pandemic world, we are prioritizing and partnering with them on what they aspire to do most, and address what challenges them most. In fact, many of our customers are envisioning wholesale changes to their business models.

Many companies have had to adapt to a post-COVID-19 world. Healthcare is one industry where we have seen seismic shifts. Recent studies have indicated that "demand for virtual care visits are expected to surge beyond 1 billion visits in 20201" alone. Healthcare is adapting to change quickly, and here at Cisco, we strive to enable healthcare providers with the tools they need to extend quality care in conjunction with these changes. As a result of the crisis, we're also seeing shifts in the delivery of care, including the transition to telehealth, rapid deployment of temporary field hospitals and clinics, and increased call center volumes to triage patients. To reduce physical contact between patients, clinicians and care teams, telehealth is quickly becoming the new normal.



The pandemic has dramatically accelerated the IT agenda. Digital transformation is not a 'nice to have' option anymore. What was once deemed as the 'future of work' has turned into a current reality almost overnight

Another industry that has seen significant changes is Banking. The pandemic has shown that trust is more important than ever. According to a recent study by Forester, commissioned by Cisco, customers in some countries say they place an almost equal amount of trust in tech companies to act in the best interest of their financial well-being as they do in their traditional banking providers. The main differentiator for customers is the excellent experience they have when using their apps or websites. This reliance on technology companies like ride-hailing apps that have digital wallets has grown throughout the pandemic and one could argue that the trust dividend is leaning even more in favor of digital banking platforms. Thus, traditional banks emerge into this new normal, they will need to constantly iterate their technology, testing versions of their platforms that work for customers and then quickly discarding products that don't lead to stellar customer experience. In short, the healthcare crisis has caused traditional banks to completely rethink

their business strategy for the future.

Q How are businesses fast-tracking their digital agenda amid this crisis? What was not possible in months earlier are now being done in a matter of a day.

A For some time, we have been talking about how digital transformation would be an accelerant that would cause companies to rethink old models, customer experiences and the workplace. It was always thought to be a milestone in the future that businesses would take incremental steps towards. But the pandemic changed everything and has dramatically accelerated the IT agenda. Digital transformation is not a "nice to have' option anymore. What was once deemed as the "future of work" has turned into a current reality almost overnight.

It's no secret that this has been a difficult transition for CIOs. Our recent CIO Impact study reported that 78 percent of CIOs feel the pandemic has had a severe or major impact on their organizations. Beyond that, some interesting insights emerged. Our survey respondents listed the top stress drivers as security, VPN bandwidth, loss of productivity, and tech outages. The increase in stress from security alone rose by 14 percent since the pandemic began, and half said that their security fears were connected to the sharp increase in remote workers. Another 50 percent said that the move to remote work represented a major cultural shift for their organizations.

As businesses accelerate to a digitized and automated future, many CIOs found themselves accelerating the movement of enterprise applications to the cloud and enlisted multiple public cloud and SaaS companies to provide fast access to employees who were suddenly working from their home offices. These CIOs have found themselves in a complex multi-cloud environment where security becomes the cornerstone to infrastructure resources and access to applications.

There is no doubt that CIOs are navigating change at a pace that is without precedent right now. The shift from offices to remote working has fundamentally changed not only the day-to-day operations of an IT organization, but also how CIOs plan for the future.

The key components of the "new normal" of many business operations now are digitization, automation, and security. With these components, organizations across all sectors, from healthcare to banking to retail to manufacturing, will have the needed flexibility and mobility to scale easily and handle business continuity.

The demands of digital transformation are also significant. Customers need a workforce that is protected anywhere, on any device, a digitized workplace where every part of an infrastructure is safe, and workloads are secured wherever they are running, 24/7. What this pandemic has taught us is that almost any organization will now need to find new ways of operating their business.

When companies face significant changes, leaders may be tempted to focus their attention outward to address upcoming challenges. With COVID-19, the challenges are were both external and internal. At Cisco, we're already accustomed to remote working even before government

With digitization, automation, and security in place, organizations across all sectors, from healthcare to banking to retail to manufacturing, will have the needed flexibility and mobility to scale easily and handle business continuity

mandated work from home measures were put into place, and we have the technology expertise to make it happen on a large scale. But to go from 20,000 to 140,000 remote workers in 10 days was something we've never dealt with and it required a great deal of coordination and teaming across the company. We had teams working around the clock and doing whatever it took to make sure Cisco employees could quickly begin working from home.

Q How do you see the future of remote work and how will technologies evolve to make flexible work easier for employees and employers?

A Remote work is here to stay. We are one of the few companies with the technology, people, partners and global scale to help our customers stay connected, supported, and secure. Our role has never been more important, and our responsibility has never been greater, because much of the world is running on Cisco's technology—from networking to collaboration to security to staying connected, becoming secure, and more productive. We saw, for instance, in the early days of COVID-19, traffic on some of our routes connecting China-based Webex users to their workplaces going up as much as 22 times. We were also seeing 4 to 5 times as many users in Japan, South Korea and Singapore, with average time spent on Webex video meetings also doubling among users in those countries. And, free sign-ups in impacted countries were up 7 times over pre-outbreak sign-up rates.

Customers now also want to remain productive and competitive by keeping technology current. For example, tools to help secure remote workers and power productivity in this new normal are top of mind for many CIOs and CTOs. According to our latest CIO Perspectives Survey that was released recently IT teams are finding help through supportive leadership teams and video communication tools. 86 percent of IT teams are using video for regular team meetings, 79 percent leveraging unified communication tools that enable faster collaboration and iteration and 78 percent are using video for 1-1 meetings.



Q How are you preparing for a post-COVID business? What are your top priorities?

A As the world carefully begins to move towards the next important phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, attention is shifting towards reducing restrictions and resuming normal life. After any major event like this, a new normal emerges. We are supporting our customers, partners, suppliers, employees and communities as we collectively define what's next. We continue to actively monitor our global services to ensure we are keeping up with the needs of our customers – especially during this critical time and we have a well-established process to coordinate efforts during events that impact



At Cisco, we're already accustomed to remote working, and we have the technology expertise to make it happen on a large scale. But to go from 20,000 to 1,40,000 remote workers in 10 days was something we've never dealt with and it required a great deal of coordination and teaming across the company

normal operations. Technology donations to date are helping hospitals create reliable networks, enabling people to continue working and connecting remotely, and enabling frontline doctors and CDCs to conduct emergency video communication and remote diagnosis.

In a nutshell, we're working to do our part by providing solutions, technology, tips and resources to help our communities during this challenging time, including $2.5B in customer/partner financing to support business resiliency, and over $300M in cash, in-kind, and planned giving to support both the global and local response.

Q What all technologies and digital innovations are you employing to adapt to the new normal?

A Cisco has been on a multi-year journey to give customers the industry's best technology and experience. It started by building the broadest portfolio in the market that spans network, endpoint, data center, cloud and applications. We then integrated that backend with our market-leading threat intelligence from Cisco Talos so that our products talk to each other and can see and respond to the threats faster. But we knew that in order for customers to feel the value of the integration, they needed a radically different experience on the frontend where they were doing their daily work and making critical decisions.

So, in February, we introduced Cisco SecureX, a cloud-native platform that connects our integrated security portfolio and customers' security infrastructure to provide a simple and consistent experience across network, endpoint, cloud and applications.

Q How are you collaborating with all your business leaders including the CEOs/CIOs/CTOs to make sure you have the right digital infrastructure post-COVID?

A We have been in a fortunate position that we have had the benefit of cutting edge collaborative and remote work technology. Our workforce has been remote for a long time and we use our in-house technologies to keep our productivity levels up. However, in many other companies, CIOs are navigating change at a pace that is without precedent. The shift from offices to remote working fundamentally changed not only the day-to-day operations of an IT organization, but also how CIOs plan for the future.

THE PANDEMIC IS FAST-TRACKING THE DIGITAL AGENDA: PETER BAKER, FIRST ABU DHABI BANK



Peter Baker, the Group Chief Human Resources Officer at First Abu Dhabi Bank, shares his perspective on how COVID-19 is changing his company's approach

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Peter Baker is the Group Chief Human Resources Officer at First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB). He has the responsibility for driving the Group's people and culture journey to ensure the HR function delivers for their people today and prepares them for what is next at FAB.

Peter has 25 years of experience in Human Resources, Sales and Marketing roles at Procter & Gamble and Maersk Group. Before joining FAB, he served as the Chief Human Resources Officer for Damco, a world leader in logistics and supply chain management, with a presence in over 80 countries. He has vast experience across Asia Pacific, USA and EMEA having lived in Singapore, Netherlands and Denmark. He holds a bachelor's degree in Business from the University of Technology, Sydney.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q COVID-19 seems to be accelerating digital transformation in the workplace across industries. How are businesses fast-tracking their digital agenda amid this crisis?

A The pandemic is accelerating the digital agenda in two ways.

Firstly, in order to keep employees safe, companies have rapidly moved to remote working. In First Abu Dhabi Bank, we did not have a "Work From Home (WFH)" process at all until the pandemic hit. Then, in the space of 2 weeks in March, we moved 90 percent of our employees to WFH. This caused us to challenge many assumptions about what is possible. Today, our employees are able to be fully productive in a remote setting.

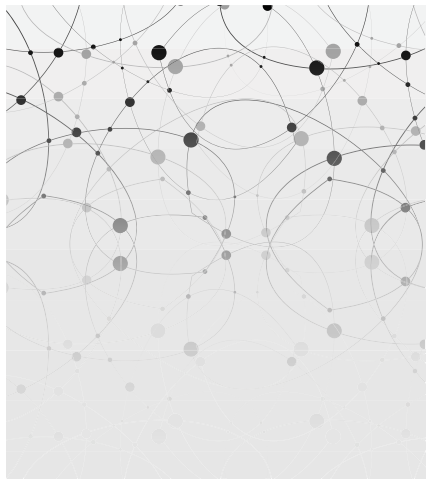


Secondly, customer expectations, and customer behavior, has changed. During the pandemic, many customers who would have previously preferred to do their banking in person in a branch are willing to adopt more digital ways of interacting with us. Now that customers have seen how easy it is to manage their finances digitally, we don't expect that they will go back to the old ways of working in the future.

Q How do you see the future of remote work and how will technologies evolve to make flexible work easier for employees and employers? What are your biggest challenges with respect to this new style of working?

A I believe remote working will be here to stay. Personally, I still see a strong role for the office, as a place where people can meet and collaborate. So we are expecting to create an environment where employees can do their work in whatever location is most productive for them, and based on the work that they are doing each day. Hence, perhaps employees will spend 1 or 2 days per week working remotely, and 3-4 days working from the office.

The biggest challenge in the new setting is not technological but personal. Remote working requires a different type of management and leadership compared to traditional office work, and



The pandemic is accelerating the digital agenda in two ways: how employees work, and how customers behave

requires more discretionary effort from employees. So this has been an adjustment. Our best managers, and our best employees, have adjusted quickly to the new approach, but for other employees it has taken some time and we have to focus on building their capability to be successful.

Q What are your top priorities as you plan for the post-COVID-19 workplace?

A Our first priority is always to keep our employees and customers safe. We are continuing to have most of our colleagues working remotely, and continuing to support our customers to do their banking in more digital ways.

We are re-looking our ways of working and getting ourselves future-ready by adapting to the new technology, re-imaging our culture, eliminating bureaucracy and most importantly keeping customers at the heart of our transformation. In the process, we are focusing on our employees and looking at ways to give them greater empowerment, opportunities to learn and grow, and helping them align their purpose with our mission.

Additionally, COVID 19 has affected many of our corporate and personal customers, and we are working with them to support their banking needs.

Finally, we plan to emerge from the crisis as a stronger, customer focused, and increasingly digitally enabled bank.

Q What all technologies and digital innovations are you employing to adapt to the new normal?

A While, we were looking to keep our employees safe, we also used this opportunity to shift our culture. We have made use of collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams to help teams work together, developed innovative technology to support our customers and are internally working on creating a digitally enabled bank, which removes all unnecessary procedures.

CLOUD, AI WILL DRIVE THE ORGANIZATIONS OF FUTURE: IBM ASEAN'S HR DIRECTOR



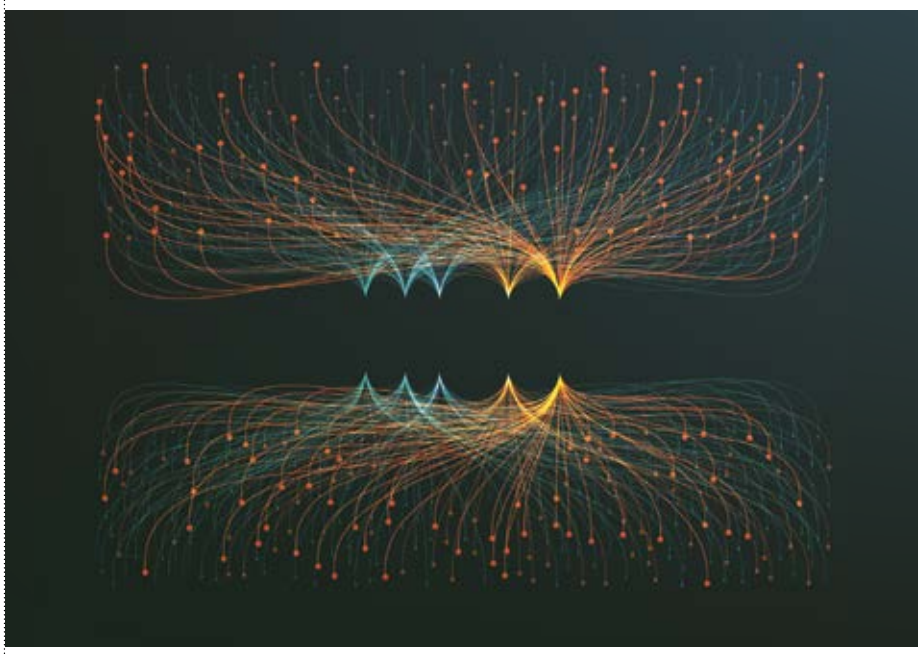
There is greater demand by enterprises to leverage AI and cloud solutions to adopt more agile practices and get better at navigating current challenges in transforming businesses, says **Neha Pareek,** Human Resources Director, IBM ASEAN, in an interaction with People Maters

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Neha Pareek leads IBM's people & culture agenda in Southeast Asia, covering a highly diverse set of countries and businesses. In the current role, Neha is focused on strengthening and accelerating the leadership, skills and engagement charter to drive IBM's success in the ASEAN region.

Prior to this role, in the capacity of chief of staff to the GM of IBM Asia Pacific, Neha ran many large-scale HR programs touching inclusion, diversity, skills and employee experience. She designed and co-led a bold campaign on "Speak Up, Speak Out" covering 120,000 employees to generate awareness about IBM's zero tolerance policy on unethical behavior and harassment.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.



Q How do you see the new tech infrastructure in the making globally that will eventually help organizations rebound after COVID-19?

A If anything, the current crisis accelerates and accentuates the adoption of Cloud and AI for all industries and sectors. IBM CEO Arvind Krishna cited hybrid cloud and AI as "the two dominant forces driving digital transformation – the basis for competitive advantage in the 21st century" and "every company will become an AI company". These technology platforms will determine how quickly companies can pivot to new market opportunities, how well companies serve their clients, how much they can scale, and

how fast they can respond to a crisis like the one we're facing today.

Q What's your take on the different and sometimes divergent strategies organizations are embracing to adapt to the rapidly changing business condition amid the crisis?

A Through the pandemic, IBM continues to sustain the digital operations of the world's most critical organizations: the banks, telcos, retailers, healthcare providers, and government agencies. These are the businesses enabling us to manage our banking digitally and place orders online, they're providing the network capacity to support our grocery delivery apps, and they're powering the services our first-responders require to help address the needs of patients around the globe. IBM is truly essential and more so now. Fundamental to the ongoing operations of these clients and industries is our Public Cloud. IBM has teams around the world right now working to ensure the specific needs of our clients large and small are met, across every industry, and that we are optimizing their cloud infrastructure and services needs so they can continue operating and serving everyone the best they can. I have seen multiple behind the scene images of IBMers and healthcare workers standing side by side helping patients through the crisis – both truly essential.

Q How do you see the criticality of digital innovations as organizations prepare to adapt to the new normal?

A One of the things that the pandemic has taught businesses is the critical importance of technology solutions which enable speed, flexibility, insight, and innovation. In fact, choosing which technology platforms can power businesses is the most consequential decision that businesses can make. This determines how quickly businesses can pivot to new market opportunities; how well they serve their clients and how much they can scale. The pandemic has been a "turning point" for many Governments, industries, and businesses across the globe, as the disruption and uncertainty caused by the crisis has accelerated the digi-

The pandemic has been a 'turning point' for many Governments, industries, and businesses across the globe, as the disruption and uncertainty caused by the crisis has accelerated the digital transformation that for many was already underway



tal transformation that for many was already underway.

We see many of our clients shifting their operations overnight to immediately accommodate a remote workforce, and to keep their businesses running smoothly. IBM collaborated with Singapore Airlines to enhance the mobile apps that support critical functions for its pilots – within just a week using Agile principles. IBM worked with National Centre for Infectious Disease to set up their screening center's IT systems up and running within 24 hours. Our clients are facing unprecedented challenges in how to manage their business continuity considering the burdens this can place on capacity, productivity, and security. We are working hand in hand as true partners, supporting them through this difficult time so they can quickly recover and maintain their path to growth and success. We are fighting this together.

Q What are some of the strategies organizations are pursuing to expedite digital transformations in their workplaces?

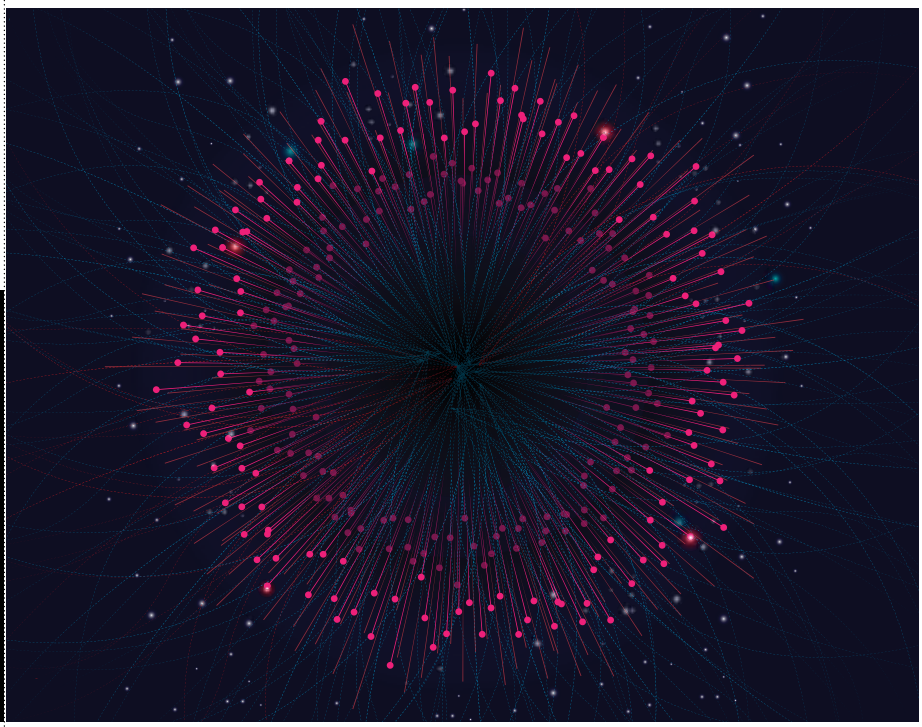
A In the midst of fighting COVID-19, businesses all over the world are facing enormous challenges trying to adapt to the new Work from Home (WFH) environment and to ensure their employees stay safe and well. And as the Fourth Industrial Revolution kicked off, great emphasis was placed on the role of digital transformation in defining how businesses would remain relevant in the future. Up until a few months ago, the actual transformation has been rather slow for many. However, today, it turns out that this pandemic that we are facing has been the greatest catalyst for digital transformation that the world has seen, with companies now accelerating adoption of these future work practices that many have been advocating for years. Digital readiness is no longer optional, it's a must. It is also very important in this new world to use GoodTech to drive innovation and serve the underprivileged – from IBM's launch of the Emb(race) campaign to enabling the future generation with the right skills through our P-Tech schools, we're not only moving fast but also with purpose.

> Amid this crisis, choosing which technology platforms can power businesses is the most consequential decision that businesses can make. This will determine how quickly a business can pivot to new market opportunities

Q There will be large portions of the workforce that will not return to a traditional office post-pandemic. What kind of tech and other support will they need to work that is seamless for both employees and employers?

A Dozens of business-oriented applications are now connecting homebound workers to collaborative tools that enable business continuity. The cloud-based support of video conferencing, file-sharing services, communications platforms, chatbots, and a host of data analytics, graphic design, accounting, HR, and sales management programs have allowed remote employees to continue work as if they never left their offices. This needs to continue and employees have to be enabled to leverage the technology to their best advantage. We are effectively training our teams to get a 'Virtual Collaborator Badge' which ensures that they are able to smartly and effectively use the tools of trade now

to their advantage and be more productive remotely. Similarly, remote developers continue writing code and building applications in cloud-supported containerized environments, while AI-backed internal and customer-facing applications keep humming along



because they are built and managed in the cloud. All this is to enable productivity while employees work remotely.

Equally important are employee wellness and well-being. Redesigning how employee engagement is done and ensuring wellness resources are at the fingertips for all is our key priority as employees work remotely. Staying close virtually as a team is very important when physical distance is mandatory. Customized learning programs delivered virtually, enabling employee assistance programs for psychological wellbeing, creating transparency on careers and making virtual work fun are all very important. What will not change is the high EQ managers and teams need to display while working remotely. In my view, this will be the most important and differentiating skill in the new normal.

Q How do you see remote and flexible working five years down the line? What sort of innovations will make remote work smoother in the long run?

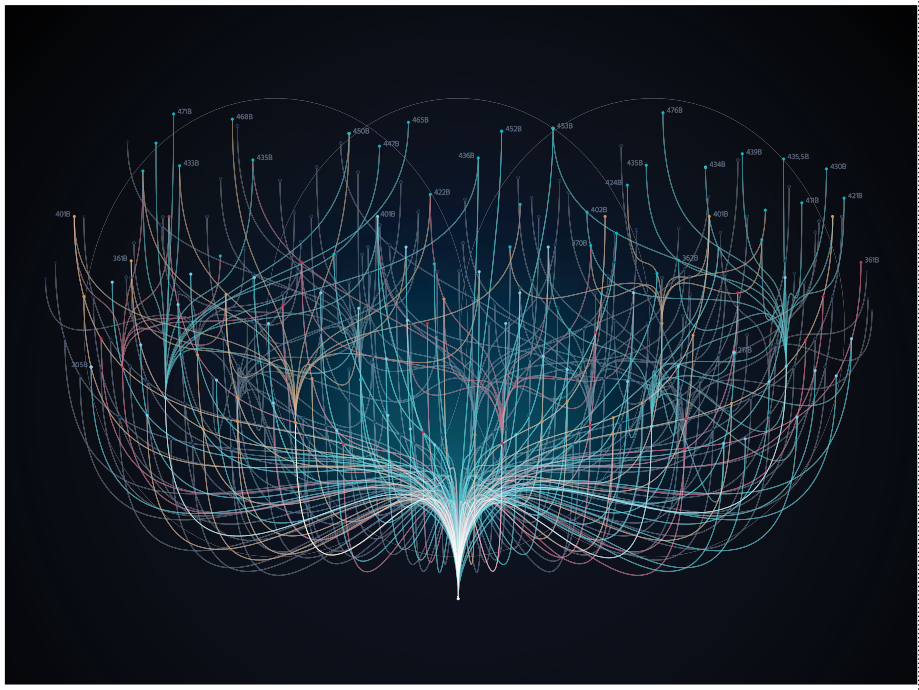
A With remote work now becoming a norm, the value of cloud computing has never been greater. And to date, we've seen many companies move to all-encompassing WFH without much interruption - thanks in large part to cloud. At IBM, we seamlessly moved 95 percent of our workforce to operate virtually very quickly. Dozens of business-oriented applications are now connecting homebound workers to collaborative tools that enable business continuity. We are onboarding and offboarding our employees remotely, conducting many learning sessions and employee engagement and wellness events all virtually thanks to the tools and technology at hand. For IBM, we will ensure that our clients can maintain the same levels of security and reliability as they transition to widescale WFH through their public, private, and hybrid cloud environments.

Q In the post-COVID world which of these technologies will be bet on by companies most and why –IoT, AI, 5G, Blockchain, or cybersecurity?

A There is greater demand by enterprises to leverage AI and cloud solutions to adopt more agile practices and get better at navigating current challenges in transforming businesses. With the increased adoption of AI, embedding trust and transparency will be a key focus with tools like IBM's AI Fairness 360.

Post-COVID will witness the acceleration in the adoption of Public Cloud as businesses look at cloud to not

As we battle the multiple crises engulfing the world today, what resonates with me as an IBM leader are – we are truly essential and we are GoodTech. That's what really matters!



only from a core infrastructure, but also to address multiple issues without having to make large upfront investments. Solutions like Disaster Recovery on Cloud-which ensure high availability of core infrastructure or Virtual desktop solutions on Cloud which will allow the organizations to support remote operation of their teams are some examples of where we are seeing significantly enhanced interest from the customers.

Another area where there would be significantly enhanced investments is Security. Security issues will be further enhanced by the fact that many users are accessing data remotely, as opposed to a controlled access environment earlier. Clients will also revisit service models and look to leverage self-help or self-healing tools which will allow every single user to continue working without significant intervention. This will also lead into the adoption of automation solutions. Technology is the new backbone for any business - not merely a "good to have" - but a "Must Have" imperative for survival and future success

Q While more businesses are turning to tech to battle COVID, according to Gartner, global IT spend will shrink 8% in 2020. How do you see this?

A Digital transformation is a broad term that means applying digital tools and technologies to impact all aspects of the business or the enterprise. The good news, according to the 2020 TechTarget/Computer Weekly IT Priorities survey, 44 percent of nearly 200 respondents in ASEAN cited DX as their top priority, followed by infrastructure modernization (41 percent) and cybersecurity (36 percent). The priorities are not surprising, given that more enterprises are coming under pressure to remain competitive in the face of digital disruption across industries, such as financial services, logistics and telecommunications.

Going forward, we will see incredible and continued rapid acceleration to a digital environment. An organizational, social and cultural shift will continue to take place to adapt to post-COVID-19 technologies and the new normal. As we battle the multiple crises engulfing the world today, what resonates with me as an IBM leader are – we are truly essential and we are GoodTech. That's what really matters!

VIRTUAL WAYS OF DOING BUSINESS ARE NOW THE NORM: UNISYS' CTO



Many business functions and processes that are common across industries are being radically transformed amid the COVID-19 crisis, says **Vishal Gupta** - Senior Vice President, Products and Platforms, and CTO, Unisys

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Vishal Gupta is the Senior Vice President, Products and Platforms, and Chief Technology Officer, responsible for driving Unisys' Products and Platforms business through an integrated digital strategy for the company's solutions. He was elected a Senior Vice President by the Board of Directors in July 2018.

He is responsible for driving Unisys' Products and Platforms business through an integrated digital strategy for the company's solutions, including products and services for foundational Unisys technologies such as Unisys Stealth security software and ClearPath Forward operating environments for high-intensity enterprise computing, as well as for vertical-industry applications.

He is also responsible for driving integration of new advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence/machine learning, blockchain, public cloud and software-as-a-service across Unisys' product and services offerings in order to deliver competitive advantage for Unisys' clients. Vishal draws on deep experience in software engineering in enterprise-technology and security solutions companies with complex client requirements, as well as his proven ability to bring innovative software solutions to market.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q On a global level, do you see a new tech infrastructure in the making that will help economies recoup after COVID-19?

A No doubt, the COVID-19 crisis will drive innovation in "technology infrastructure", as have previous human crises. I see three interesting areas to watch out for in the "new technology infrastructure." The first is pervasive Virtual Reality. As physical experi-



ences remain fraught with risk and people seek meaningful interaction that goes well beyond video, VR may go mainstream, finding use cases in areas like student learning and employee collaboration. Secondly, security becomes even more critical in a world where people work from unsecured environments with BYOD. The key, though, will be to secure users, endpoints, and networks with a minimum of customer friction and without adding huge layers of cost and complexity – something that will require extensive innovation. And finally, the massive increase of digital also gives rise to enormous new streams of data on, for example, customers, business processes, and buying patterns. Data analytics will now become a vital part of "technology infrastructure."

Q How do you view the criticality of technology and digital innovation as organizations battle to come out of this crisis?

A All of a sudden, across industries, we have been rudely dumped into a world where new, virtual ways of doing business have become the norm. Many business functions and processes that are common across industries are being radically transformed. Take sales for instance. In many industries and companies, sales



In the past, most companies had at most 10-20 percent of their employees working from home. That number has now jumped to 90-100 percent of employees for most companies in the last three months

(particularly B2B sales) has always been characterized as a high-touch, face-to-face, relationship activity. That model is rapidly being re-conceived and technology will play a critical role now. How does a sales person go from a physical sales-call model to a virtual model that is equally effective? Yes, video-conferencing is part of the answer. But there are many other aspects to this. How do we facilitate a highly confidential discussion between salesperson and customer without the threat of information being leaked or hacked or spied upon? How do we measure sales effectiveness? How do we enable remote customer demos in a flawless manner with minimum latency? How do we measure and maintain sales productivity in a virtual world? Technology will underpin all of this. And sales is just one of many areas that will see a complete rethink underpinned by technology.

Q What are some of the major shifts that you see as organizations continue to fast-track their digital agenda?

A There are at least two big changes that we see now, which are fueled by businesses fast-tracking their digital agenda. In the past, most companies had at most 10-20 percent of their employees working from home. That number has now jumped to 90-100 percent of employees for most companies in the last three months. No one could have anticipated that this change could happen or the fact that employees can be so productive while working from home. Especially in big metros like Mumbai and Bengaluru, there is a significant time wasted in commuting which is now saved. Even a portion of that reinvested into work is driving not just the same but even higher productivity. Second, organizations are now getting even more open to embracing Cloud as they realize that Cloud will give them agility, enable faster business outcomes, and also suit the remote workforce model. Embracing Cloud is giving organizations access to compute and digital resources in minutes and hours vs. what could have taken weeks in the past, for IT to respond.



Organizations are now getting even more open to embracing Cloud as they realize that Cloud will give them agility, enable faster business outcomes and also suit the remote workforce model

Q What are the top next-gen technologies that organizations will bet on most to thrive in the post-COVID-19 world?

A I believe data is the new gold in the digital economy and protection of that data will not only be required from a compliance standpoint, it will also be critical to engender trust and so cybersecurity will be key. I also believe biometrics will continue to become even more important to ensure both convivence and security given credential harvesting is on the rise. I am a big believer in AI as well as AI will be key to make customer interactions intuitive, efficient, and effective and at Unisys, we have now embedded AI in four of our key offerings vs. none two years ago. We have seen that all the biggest global companies by market cap are big users of AI and that includes Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, and Google.

Q While more businesses are turning to tech to battle COVID, according to a study by Gartner, global IT spend will shrink 8% in 2020. How do you see this?

A Even if one agrees with the research you quote that IT spend may see a decline, I believe this will be a temporary blip. The overall trajectory that we are observing is a massive and structural uptick in digi-

Remote work is increasing significantly and the reason for this is because organizations can see that remote workforce is able to not only deliver in many industries but it can even increase their productivity



tal usage across industries and use cases. I refer to this as "digital intensity." And I believe there is no turning back. Can a company that allowed its entire workforce to work from home for several months without productivity declines suddenly demand a return to the traditional office? We are already seeing that in some cases, digital models have overturned traditional assumptions like "we need to sell face to face" or we "we need home buyers to physically see and tour a home before they buy." In a strange twist, COVID-19 has accelerated society's acceptance and comfort with technology. This means, if anything, more IT spend in the years to come.

Q How do you see the security implications of the post-COVID-19 world because data will no longer be confined to corporate offices?

A That is a great question. A post-COVID-19 world will bet big on a distributed workforce that works from where they want. Also, the post-COVID-19 world is going to bet big on the adoption of Cloud and it will be a Cloud-first world. It will also increasingly be a world that requires collaboration with a wide array of ecosystem companies in order to accelerate innovation. To secure the digital enterprise in the post-COVID-9 world will require three key capabilities. First, given the distributed nature of the workforce, the perimeter based firewall solutions will become even more redundant and the need instead will be for Zero Trust solutions that massively reduce the attack surface and encrypt and protect the data, even if there is a breach and these are typically software based micro segmentation solutions. Two, there will be a need to authenticate people in a convenient and irrefutable manner and given that credential stealing is so rampant, I see a big opportunity for biometric-based identity solutions and that is sometimes called third factor authentication. Third, you want to provide the ability for folks to access any applications without having the challenges of VPN and also from any device they want. These solutions are typically called ZTNA or Zero Trust Network Access solutions and they can save cost and provide more flexibility and convenience and Stealth Always On Access is an example of these.

ORGANIZATIONS ARE DOUBLING DOWN ON TECH TO THRIVE IN THE NEW NORMAL: JOHN BROWNRIDGE



The forward-looking organizations are trying to determine not only how to recover, but how to thrive in the new normal. And they are looking hard at how technology can be leveraged on almost every front imaginable, says **John Brownridge,** principal, Deloitte Consulting LLP, in an interaction with People Matters

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

John has been a principal at Deloitte Consulting since 2007, where his primary focus is the Digital Organization and HR Transformations. John is a thought leader on what The Future of Work and The Digital Enterprise means for The Future of HR and The Digitization of HR. John authored Deloitte's point of view on Digital HR and the development of that work into the Future of HR, which incorporates components of Workforce Centricity and Experience, Digital Mindset Development, Advanced Technology Ecosystems and the Impacts to the HR Operating Model. He is now focused on delivering this vision with some of the world's leading brands.

John has been consulting since 1996 and he has served many large global companies in that time, such as: The Walt Disney Company, Disney Parks and Resorts, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Warner Brothers, Apple, and more.

Prior to joining Deloitte, John was a consultant for IBM, PwC, and CMG. He graduated from Sheffield Hallam University.

Here are the excerpts.

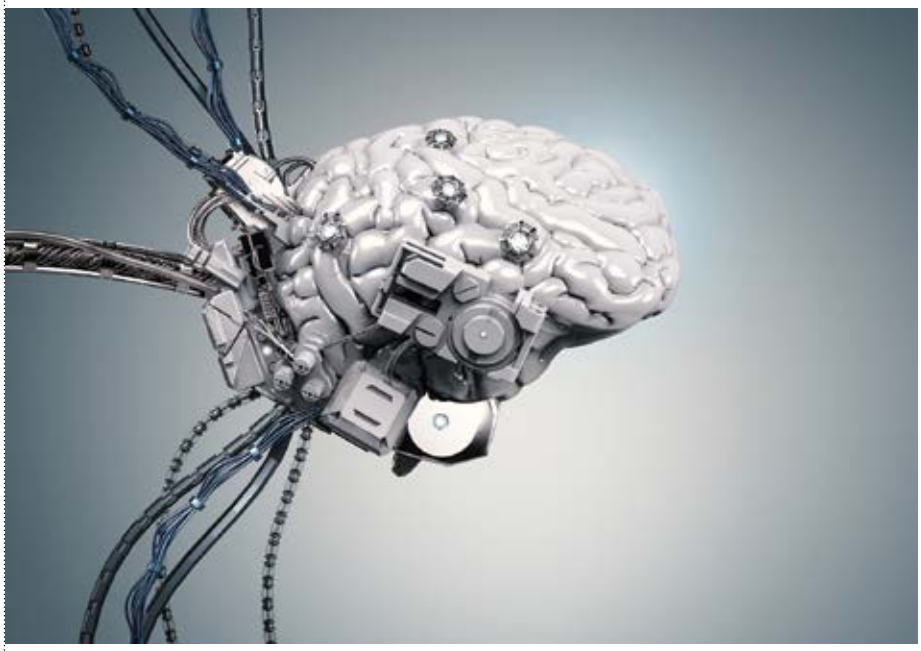
Q Given the situation triggered by the pandemic, do we need a new tech infrastructure altogether that will help economies recover after COVID-19?

A A tech infrastructure that provides a balance between experimentation, universal usage, automation, augmentation, and insights will help organizations position themselves to not only recover but to thrive in the new normal that is yet to be established. These characteristics will enable individuals, teams, and organizations to understand, manage, and measure – ultimately allowing them to drive performance, productivity, and innovation beyond current abilities.

Organizations should take this time to understand their current tech architecture and determine what their "North

Organizations should take this time to understand their current tech architecture and determine what their "North Star" capability vision is for layers like Unified Engagement Platforms, Cloud Solutions and PaaS, Data and Analytics, and AI

Star" capability vision is for layers like Unified Engagement Platforms, Cloud Solutions and PaaS, Data and Analytics, and AI (RPA, Conversational AI, Sensing, and Insights). Then, they must consider what complementary ecosystems they will need to deliver the required capabilities across these layers of technologies in order to drive desired business outcomes.



Q While tech can be an enabler for businesses to rebound from the crisis, how are different organizations leveraging tech innovations?

A Today, we see most organizations coming out of the "respond" phase of the pandemic. Some are planning their recovery, while others are executing against that plan. But forward-looking organizations are trying to determine not only how to recover, but how to thrive in the new normal. They are heavily focused on scenario planning, collecting, and creating insight that will guide them towards better decisions; the bold moves they make today will deliver a competitive advantage tomorrow.

Coming out of the pandemic, organizations are poised to leverage exponential technologies to rethink today's work and how it gets done, resulting in job consolidation, job category redesign, and acceleration of automation and augmentation. However, leading organizations need to think beyond current work and work outcomes, looking ahead to ambitions and future work outcomes by leveraging AI. The change with this approach is to leverage machine learning to drive continuous improvement toward ambitious future outcomes.

Q COVID-19 seems to be accelerating digital transformation in the workplace across industries. How are businesses fast-tracking their digital agenda amid this crisis?

A Many aspects of digital transformation were in the works prior to COVID-19, but the current working environment necessitates that companies adapt now. To date, we have seen most organizations focus on how they can use AI to automate and/or supplement what humans are doing today. Coming out of the pandemic, leading organizations will pivot their thinking and investments in AI toward insights, collabora-

> Leading organizations will pivot their thinking and investments in AI. This is a natural progression for organizations who want to mature their AI capabilities, moving from using AI primarily as a substitution strategy to an augmentation strategy

tion, and teaming. This is a natural progression for organizations who want to mature their AI capabilities, moving from using AI primarily as a substitution strategy to an augmentation strategy – and ultimately to a collaboration strategy.

Aside from the technical accelerations, organizations are racing to infuse a new digital mindset into the workforce by promoting agility, resilience, intentional collaboration, iteration, continuous innovation, and the concept of "Failing Fast and Learning Faster" to better support the digital journey.

Aside from the technical accelerations, organizations are racing to infuse a new digital mindset into the workforce by promoting agility, resilience, intentional collaboration, iteration, continuous innovation, and the concept of "Failing Fast and Learning Faster" to better support the digital journey

Q How do you see the future of remote work and how will technologies evolve to make flexible work easier for employees and employers?

A Organizations that expand their focus on worker well-being – from programs adjacent to work to designing well-being into the work itself – will help their workers not only feel their best but perform their best. Doing so will strengthen the tie between well-being and organizational outcomes, drive meaningful work, and foster a greater sense of belonging. Technologies will need to evolve to replace casual connections that would have been made in the hallway or cafeteria with personalized nudges, for example; these nudges can suggest new people to meet with that may be helpful to your career, project work, and more. Organizations may have to start challenging some orthodoxies to find new ways of working that promote well-being while driving business outcomes. To aid the virtual workforce, knowledge creation and sharing will become increasingly important to organizations, and the power of people and AI working together offers the greatest opportunity for creating and sharing knowledge in human history.

Q While more businesses are turning to tech to battle COVID, according to a study by Gartner, global IT spend will shrink 8% in 2020. What is your perspective on this?

A Initial budget shrinkage is inevitable as organizations recover from the global pandemic, but it is also a big opportunity to take stock of what's important. Companies are struggling to understand what they have, what can be utilized, fixed, leveraged, consolidated, integrated, and more. Yes, they are reassessing spend, but companies will also be looking hard at how technology can be leveraged on almost every front imaginable, especially remote learning, performance management, and workforce/talent marketplaces. Nothing sharpens the mind like a true choice, and organizations should focus on technologies that will make them even stronger as the economy rebounds. We've seen organizations double-down on robotics processing automation, virtual agents for shared services centers, and people technology to better enable remote work. This will ultimately make them more efficient in the coming quarters, and when expansion happens, they'll be able to pour those efficiencies into their core business to serve their customers. pm

FRAUD WILL BE A MAJOR CONCERN IN THE 'NEXT NORMAL': CEO, EXPERIAN APAC



Banks and financial services providers in the Asia Pacific are facing heightened concerns about fraud as a direct result of COVID-19, according to Experian APAC CEO **Ben Elliott**

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Ben Elliott is the Chief Executive Officer of Experian Asia Pacific. He was appointed in April 2014 and has been instrumental in driving Experian's vision of accelerating financial inclusion and literacy in the APAC region.

Ben first joined Experian in May 2012 as Managing Director, Decision Analytics, APAC where he was responsible for overseeing and growing Experian's data insights and analytics business in the region. He then transited to the role of Chief Operating Officer, APAC in March 2013.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q It seems, there is a new tech infrastructure that organizations especially tech companies and service providers are working around to combat COVID-19. What's your view on this?

A As we prepare for the "next normal", data and analytics will play a huge part in the recovery of economies and helping businesses and consumers to get back on their feet. We foresee data and analytics being used positively in several ways. For example, in the United States, Experian created an interactive heat map with data and advanced analytics to show populations most susceptible to developing severe cases of COVID-19. This has guided healthcare and government organizations in formulating plans for re-opening and recovery.

Data and analytics can be used in ways to understand past behavior to predict the future – we see this being used by banks and financial services providers, who form most of our clients, to understand their rapidly changing customer profiles to make informed decisions across the customer life cycle.



Q How do you see the role of technology in the fight against COVID-19? To what extent can tech innovations help businesses come out of the crisis?

A When the pandemic first started in the region, we spoke to more than 30 banks and financial services companies, as well as e-commerce companies in Southeast Asia, Indonesia and Australia to find out how COVID-19 had impacted them. Fraud emerged as a common issue for the banks and financial services providers we work with, and they expressed their concerns about fraud and stolen identity data.

Unfortunately fraud typically increases during economic downturns, and while fraud was prevalent in pre-pandemic days, this will be exacerbated by COVID-19, particularly as more users spend time online. Experian's 2020 Global Identity & Fraud report shows that fraud has increased in the last 12 months for three in five businesses worldwide. With most fraud detector professionals working off-site during the pandemic and having zero or limited access to their on-site systems, some are unable to thoroughly identify and manage fraud cases. In the meantime, fraudsters have identified these gaps and are using malware and phishing campaigns to collect data – this is a trend likely to continue as opportunistic fraudsters take advantage of the situation.



Fraud typically increases during economic downturns, and while fraud was prevalent in pre-pandemic days, this will be exacerbated by COVID-19, particularly as more users spend time online

Technology can help prevent account takeover fraud and scams which are likely to increase at a time when consumers are feeling financial stress from the global health and economic crisis. While the fraud life cycle is an ongoing process, we predict that the specific impact of COVID-19 will be felt for as long as 24 months from now.

We are seeing the most progressive businesses getting ready for the "next normal" and protecting themselves against fraud by employing advanced authentication solutions underpinned by a layered, multi-factored approach and using device digital footprints. When combined with artificial intelligence and machine learning, this ensures better fraud detection for businesses whilst helping to provide a more seamless customer experience.

Q How do you see the security implications of the post-COVID world because data will no longer be confined to corporate offices?

A With data from multiple sources comes a greater risk of fraudsters misusing this data. Fortunately, there are ways to counter this. In Japan, we've helped businesses to detect fraud by using device data, and this decreased the detection of false positives by 78 percent.

On the consumer front, COVID-19 will be a major turning point for data rights and privacy. The pandemic will be a major fork in the road for consumers' attitudes towards data rights and privacy. With increased usage beyond the office comes greater scrutiny. The pandemic will accelerate consumers' awareness of their data rights and privacy, which will lead to the need

for greater transparency into how governments and organizations treat and protect consumer data. Businesses and governments will need to work together to ensure consumer data is protected in a post-COVID-19 world.

Q COVID-19 seems to be accelerating digital transformation in the workplace across industries. How are businesses fast-tracking their digital agenda amid this crisis?

A COVID-19 will bring to the fore any issues businesses had before the crisis and serve as a catalyst for businesses to fast-track their digital agendas. We have all seen more businesses and consumers shift online amid social distancing mandates, which has led to a rise in digital activity.

We observe many businesses now including these priorities in their digital agenda: managing vulnerabilities brought about by the impact of COVID-19, managing customers well to keep them engaged, detecting fraud and mitigating risk, all while keeping in line with their budget and resources.

Q How do you see the future of remote work and how will technologies evolve to make flexible work easier for employees and employers?

A Remote work and flexi-work options will be the norm for companies as governments announce the gradual reopening of economies. The organizations who will be most ready for the future of work are those who will be able to adapt their strategies to utilize technology in a way that ensures their employees are future-ready, keeps business operations functioning smoothly, and makes sure their customers remain engaged.

While the fraud life cycle is an ongoing process, we predict that the specific impact of COVID-19 will be felt for as long as 24 months from now

We were already working on various L&D initiatives before the pandemic, with our program shifting fully online (as opposed to trainers flying in to train a large group in a room) during the "circuit breaker" restrictions in Singapore. Some of these initiatives include "presales clinics" to help our consultants who now must present in a virtual environment instead of their typical in-person approach. We are also providing online product training for our clients with a series of short "how-to" videos to optimize their use of Experian's solutions. Many of the banks and financial services providers that we work with are under increasing pressure to move to digital channels to source for customers and manage them, given current social distancing mandates. As this trend is likely to continue in a post-pandemic world, we are providing them with support via cloud-based and on-premises solutions, so our clients can ensure business continuity wherever they choose to deploy their people.

Q While more businesses are turning to tech to battle COVID-19, according to a research, global IT spend will shrink 8% in 2020. How do you see this?

A Most businesses are being mindful of their overall budgets amidst broader global economic uncertainties.

If their IT spend does shrink, business leaders need to be clear on the reallocation of their priorities. Many leaders will find themselves shifting from long-term strategy to shorter-term tactical measures to tackle immediate business problems. They need to make sure they have enough to spend in critical areas, such as ensuring their platforms remain secure for client use, and that critical data remains protected.

HOW IT AND HR WILL DRIVE BETTER WORK EXPERIENCES POST-COVID-19



Remote work will continue to define the work experience even after the pandemic ends, but IT and HR must closely collaborate to ensure that the experience is a positive one

By **Prem Pavan**

Over the past few months, remote work went from being an experiment or an expectation, to an essential requirement across most industries, with about 88 percent of global organizations, according to analysts, having encouraged or required employees to work from home since March 2020. The global trend is also mirrored across the Asia Pacific, with at least 73 percent of companies based in Shanghai, Beijing, Taipei, Seoul, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Jakarta reluctant to return to their offices.

A recent study, which we did together with research institute OnePoll, has shown that despite some initial hiccups with bedrooms needing to become offices and kids and pets crashing virtual meetings, the majority of workers are managing to remain productive and engaged. In fact, 70 percent of employees polled shared their productivity levels are the same or even higher when working in the office.

And it is these encouraging numbers that raise the questions – will working from home arrangements rise in popularity post-crisis, and what are the considerations that employers must take into account to enable people to be engaged and productive in the environments of their choosing?

Consider technology first

The sobering reality is that today's rapid shift to working from home has given rise to a number of often-overlooked IT challenges. Home broadband and WiFi



connectivity seems to be the biggest issue, and already we have seen a recent trend of home Internet outages in Singapore, which have highlighted the importance of reliable, always-on connectivity. Internet disruptions do not just curtail the after-work evening binge of streaming television, but are now impacting the working experience of employees in the stay home period. Additionally, juggling the use of multiple conference call services, the lack of adequate access to enterprise apps to get work done and dealing with slow, choppy VPN connections can further affect the remote working experience.

Another challenge with the rapid shift to go remote is that sometimes companies may deprioritize security in certain areas over ramping up the ability to quickly get back to normal working. The situation has forced employers to rapidly bring various IT platorms together to fast-track remote working, with an inflated reliance on the connectivity of home networks, which tend to have more relaxed security levels compared to their enterprise counterparts. When most of the company's resources are now sitting outside of the secure networks, there are legitimate concerns raised that employees are being exposed to a wider range of cyber threats.



The sobering reality is that today's rapid shift to working from home has given rise to a number of often-overlooked IT challenges. What are these and how can we tackle them?

We are now also seeing people freely discuss sensitive and private data from home, meaning that proven hygiene and security practices might be the last thing on employees' minds.

Much more can be done to focus on appropriate usage of resources over simply providing remote access. Organizations will need to have flexible and secure digital workspaces that leverage the automation, scale, and ubiquity of the cloud as the foundation of the business model, and allow employees the flexibility to work from anywhere that is demanded by the existing unpredictability, all while keeping organizational data secure.

Why IT and HR both drive the work experience

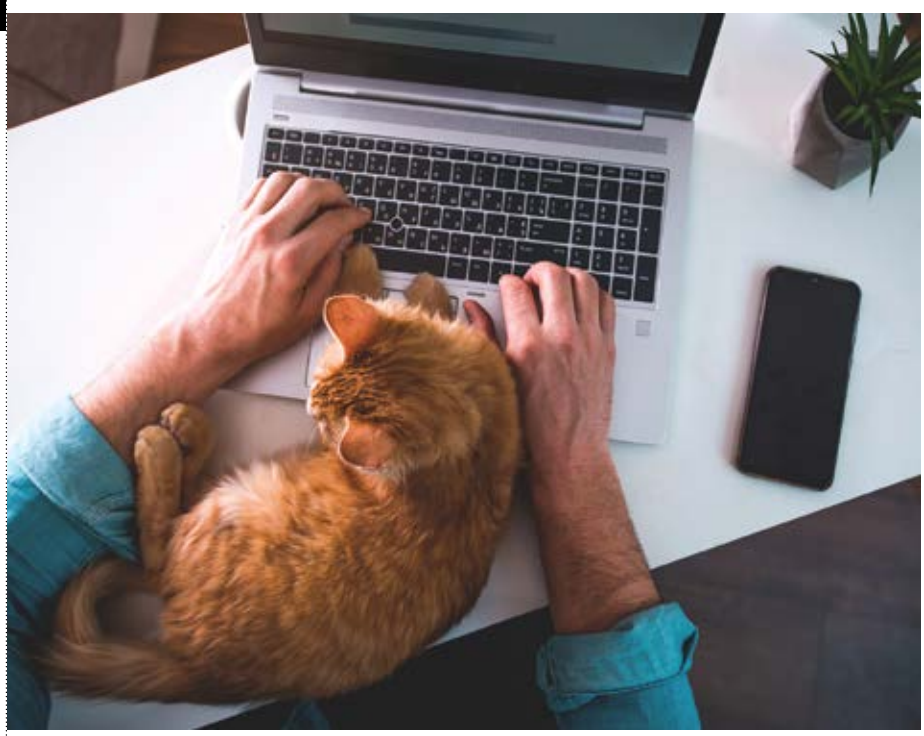
The blurring of the home and the office have caught many off guard, even those used to remote working. While a few workers may already have a home office set up, most employees are finding themselves unprepared to share their work environment with a variety of other household needs, such as constant distractions from spouses, children and even pets. This unprecedented blending

of work and personal life is also bringing with it some unwelcome anxieties. The OnePoll results showed that 36 percent of workers have felt overwhelmed as a result of working from home due to the pandemic. A further 30 percent say they have been unable to focus due to the number of people in the house, and 28 percent are feeling lonely.

As humans are social beings by nature, managing the well-being and personal lives of staff being forced to stay at home needs to be carefully considered. The lack of access to usual human interaction at the workplace, during prolonged remote working, may affect an employee's emotional state, and employers have to acknowledge that the current work from home situation is not normal for most people.

We are also observing a rise in videoconferencing fatigue and remote working burnout. Since commuting and travel routines have basically been eliminated, and with the workday starting as soon as we get out of bed, gone are the usual 9 AM to 5PM workdays. Employers will now need to reassess what productivity really means in the new normal. For example, can we use the time saved on commuting and travel to achieve the same – or even better outcomes – whilst reducing costs, minimizing carbon footprints, and delivering stronger work-life balance?

Will working from home arrangements rise in popularity post-crisis, and what are the considerations that employers must take into account to enable people to be engaged and productive in the environments of their choosing?



The massive shift to remote working means people tend to be "always on" now and responding to work notifications for long periods from home, and consequently working longer hours. Research conducted by Quartz has indicated that the constant pings from colleagues and perpetually switching between apps and systems to respond, is driving about two-thirds of workers to experience burnout, and feeling that their health and wellbeing is being negatively impacted.

Fortunately, these consequences can be avoided or overcome if the right mix of HR and technology is implemented, such as rolling out policies that promote work-life balance and hosting informal virtual coffee chat sessions alongside carefully selected technology that will add value to the employee by scheduling

blocking times, silencing notifications and automating administrative tasks. These practices encourage employees to create clear boundaries built into the day.

Driving positive remote working experiences will hence be about maintaining a delicate balance: enabling people to work from the safety of their homes using the software and devices of their choice, without sacrificing the security of corporate systems and data, while juggling personal lives.

Remote experiences will continue to be the new normal

If there is one thing that will define the workplace of the post pandemic future, it will be about empowering employees to expect greater flexibility and opportunities.

Organizations are therefore likely to continue to embrace flexible work models and maintain remote work programs for the long haul. After all, we are already seeing the positive impact remote working can have on employee productivity, work-life balance and mental health. Yet employers also need to be able to show consistent empathy to allow staff to feel good and motivate them to deliver their best. It is important for employees to know that they have the support from their leaders and colleagues to live a balanced life despite the new normal.



The focus of employers now should therefore be to shift from simply maintaining business continuity, to using the disruption as an opportunity to scale the workforce efficiency coupled with a great remote work experience. Having the right technology, well-thought-out processes and richer communications, will be essential in providing people with work experiences that encourage them to do what they love best without any friction, and ultimately drive success in a post-COVID-19 world.

The focus of employers now should therefore be to shift from simply maintaining business continuity, to using the disruption as an opportunity to scale the workforce efficiency coupled with a great remote work experience

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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FORCED DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION BRINGS CHALLENGES FOR IT: MICHAL SALAT



Organizations should reconceive themselves to combine human potential with machine learning and in implementing new ways of working they need to focus both on the employee side and the technology side, says **Michal Salat,** Threat Intelligence Director, Avast, in a chat with People Matters

By **Mastufa Ahmed**

Michal Salat joined Avast in 2010 as a Malware Analyst and is now Avast's Threat Intelligence Director, leading a team of more than 10 Threat Labs experts. His team's main focus is identification and analysis of new malware strains and threats targeting Avast users.

Prior to working at Avast, Michal Salat worked as a programmer and network administrator. He holds a Master degree in System Programming from the Czech Technical University in Prague, CZ and has also studied Computer Science on Texas Tech University in Lubbock, U.S.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

Q How do you view the accelerated pace of digital transformation drives organizations are embarking on amid the COVID-19 crisis?

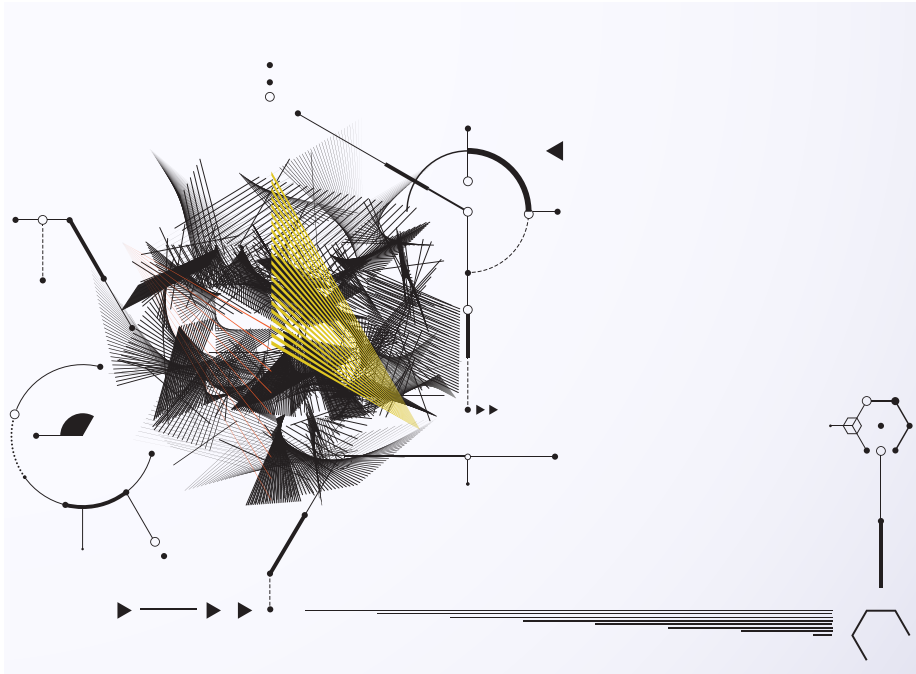
A Many businesses were pursuing or already completed their digital transformation programs well prior to COVID-19, however the pandemic has literally catapulted organizations of all sizes into the future practically overnight, causing a little bit of revolution in a process that was perceived as evolutionary. What was a long-time trend has become an urgent priority. Technology is of course a crucial tool to change the world of work as we all try to adjust to protecting ourselves, and companies that can are rushing to prepare for extended periods of work from home.

That being said, the digital transformations should be comprehensive, focused on value creation, and not predominantly focused on technology for the sake of it or unnecessarily constrained by existing processes and offerings. Organizations should reconceive themselves to combine human potential with

Companies whose employees are working remotely should prepare for the worst as they must assume everyone is connecting in an Internet cesspool and they are accessing important corporate assets

machine learning and in implementing new ways of working they need to focus both on the employee side and the technology side.

This broad, rapid and forced adoption of remote working brings many potential security issues and companies need to take now and review the settings and tools they have adopted to make sure everything is set up properly and close security gaps.



Q Do you think it's time to think differently and work on a new tech infrastructure that will help organizations recover after COVID-19 especially from a security point of view?

A We have been advising companies to adopt security measures like deploying business-grade security solutions on their employees' devices, and control them via the company's IT department. We also suggested businesses should provide employees with adequate and security-compliant equipment for video conferencing, file sharing, and enterprise-grade team collaboration platforms, such as GSuite or Office 365. We also recommended businesses to provide employees with VPN connections they can use to protect their communications, and to access internal services and tools without making them available directly from the Internet thus reducing potential attack surface. Companies were pretty much forced to take on such measures as they rapidly had to send their employees to the home office, and we hope that they will maintain them following the crisis.

Q What's the future of remote working? How do you see the role of technologies in making flexible and remote work easier for both employers and employees?

A Take Twitter as an example - they now offer their employees to permanently work from home. I believe that the crisis has shown many companies that work from the home office can run smoothly, and can even be beneficial. For example, in the fight for talent many companies in Europe or the U.S. struggle to find people locally to join their development teams. Allowing people to work permanently from home and adapting processes to make it effective opens previously unavailable job markets. Strong and secure technology is the basis for all of this of course, and collaboration tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Slack can facilitate team work across different regions. Embedding them all in a secure environment of course will be key.

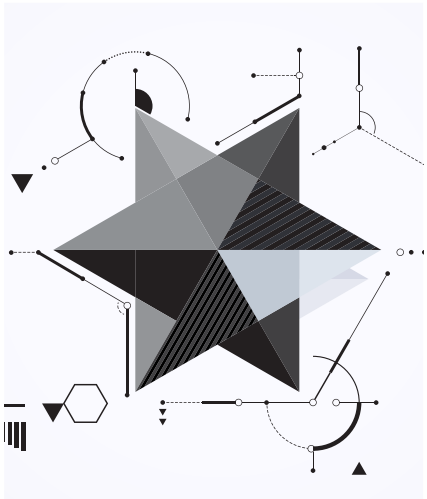
Q How do you see the security implications of the post-COVID world because data will no longer be confined to corporate offices? What kind of security issues are organizations facing?

A The forced digital transformation brings some substantial challenges for

IT and security managers. According to our recent research in the UK security support was found to be an issue for remote workers. With only 26 percent of workers having access to designated IT support provided by their employer, the research points to the majority of employees being left to navigate security's rocky terrain on their own with little or none guidance how to use videoconferencing or keep their devices secure.

While countries around the world have tentatively begun easing lockdown restrictions, ensuring workers can securely work remotely will remain crucial. Even when the lockdown starts coming to an end, there's a high chance that increased remote working becomes the new normal for a long time. Companies whose employees are working remotely should prepare for the worst as they must assume everyone is connecting in an Internet cesspool and they are accessing important corporate assets. This means that they need the appropriate protection, security, and tools to get their jobs done.

And of course there are also the cyber threats because the cyber criminals don't seem to shy away from attacking just because there is a global crisis going on. Among the many targeted



We have been advising companies to adopt security measures like deploying business-grade security solutions on their employees' devices, and control them via the company's IT department

institutions, hospitals are especially sensitive right now, as we have seen recently, when Brno University Hospital in the Czech Republic was hit by a ransomware attack, and we helped to analyze the threat. As home office work can make businesses more vulnerable, the similar situation applies across different industries and organizations, too. Some businesses had to close their facilities for some time, namely shops, restaurants, some production companies, and educational institutions. These already have financial issues and additional harm done by threats like ransomware would be even more painful. Educational institutions are also now relying more than ever on their IT to provide students with learning materials or even to facilitate video conferencing, to give lessons, so attacking them can affect even more people.

Q This is also the time all business leaders, CHROs, CIO/CTOs should work together. What's your take on how they should collaborate and work together to make sure they take the right decisions?

A A holistic approach to leadership is extremely important. Business leaders have always had to balance the immediate short-term needs of the business with the long-term strategies and vision. This is especially true as companies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Leadership teams need to cooperate to formulate return-to-normal plans and adjust workforce processes for the operations recovery in short to medium-term periods while also discerning what longer term impacts the pandemic will have overall.

COVID-19 IS INNOVATION FUEL



COVID-19 is innovation fuel for Starbuck. This Market Shaper created the 'third workplace' and is leading their own 'transformation phase.' Using the crisis to change the business model

By **Abhijit Bhaduri**

Wake up and smell the coffee

Starbucks outlets were based on the number of steps a customer would take to find a coffee shop. There were stores everywhere. Much like the dreaded bell curve of performance management, they closed 100 stores every year. This year they closed 400 of them – many of them fairly profitable. They were preparing the business for the (digital) "transformational phase". Their transformation journey has been picking up pace over the past 2 years.

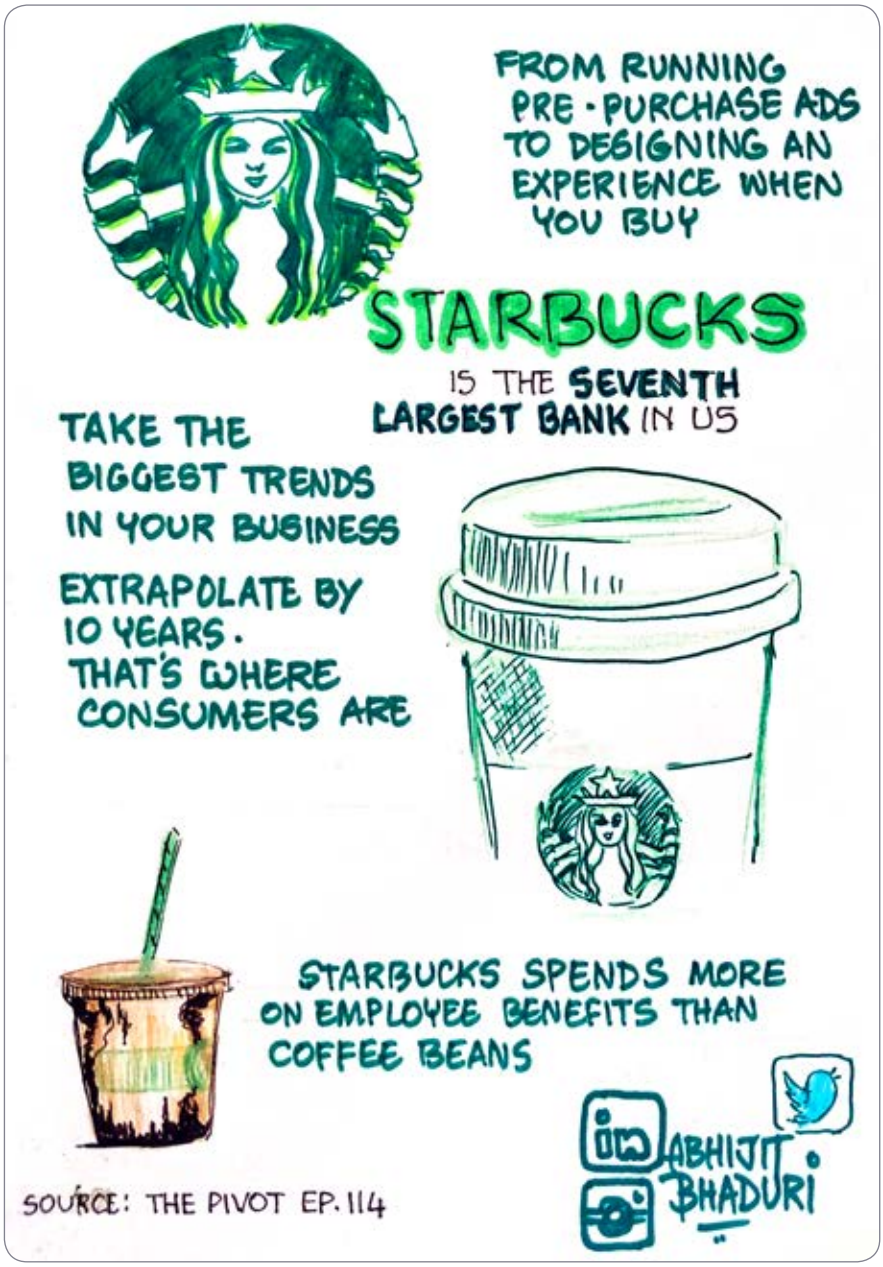
From designing pre-purchase ads, they have moved to designing experiences. Well, it is certainly possible to buy a coffee at a cheaper price anywhere but the experience that they design is what they charge a premium for. The Starbucks store is the "third place" where people would work beyond the office and home, they said. To turn a coffee shop into a remote workplace, they offered free wi-fi. The sign of a Market Shaper is that they change the way we live and work. Starbucks did just that.

Online and offline presence linked by mobile

Starbucks initially launched the Starbucks Card Mobile application along with the MyStarbucks application, which offers a store locator, nutrition information and an interactive drink builder, in the App Store on September 23, 2009. The virtual card soon started to be the default norm by which the customer would track their loyalty reward points. The customer would add money to their mobile app and order ahead for pickup. Some customers chose to get their order delivered by Uber Eats.

The mobile allowed Starbucks to track minute shifts in consumer behavior. The customer was already using the phone to pay for the coffee and also use the money pre-loaded on their card at some partnering stores like Target. In a time-starved world, 80 percent of customers were





not using the store to drink the coffee. That enabled them to optimize the space needed for each individual store. It enables them to get out of expensive leases of store space. That's why they closed 400 stores, some of them profitable.

The 'third place' for keeping money

Some people keep their money in banks. Some keep cash beneath a mattress. Now there's another place that people are depositing their money: their Starbucks accounts. It has made them the seventh largest bank by deposits.

Starbucks has its heart in the right place. It spends more money on employee benefits than on coffee beans. They are able to seamlessly blur the distinction between online and offline. The customers can order anywhere and drink their beverages anywhere they wish.

With more than 80,000 drink combinations, hyper-customization is another way for them to delight the consumer. "The third-place experience begins from the moment the customer and visions their daily Starbucks experience available day enjoy that Starbucks beverage." They have truly turned the experience to be boundaryless.

What does it mean for your business?

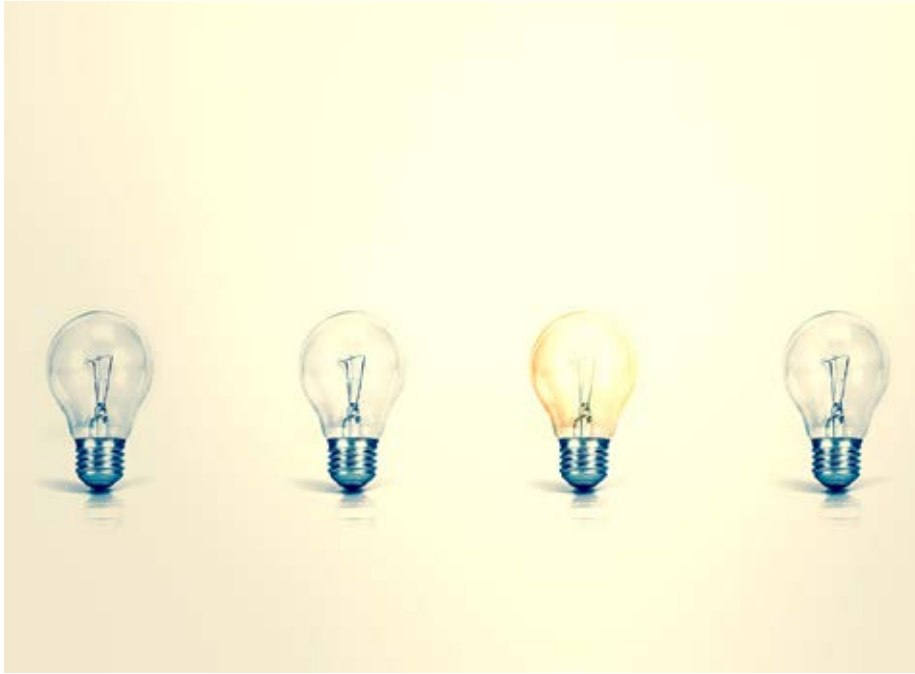
1. Learn about the customer: This is not the customer you had before the lockdown. Is the customer going to be more frugal or more hedonistic depends on the amount of liquidity that they have and whether they're optimistic or pessimistic? Until you know how the customer has changed it is not possible to create new business models to respond to the opportunity and their pain-points.

2. Speed, simplicity and flexibility, not perfection: In times of crisis the solutions offered must be simple, adaptable to the local situation and get deployed with no waiting time. Turning the idling railway coaches into isolation wards to supplement hospital wards

Market Shapers stay in shape by continuously transforming their business – even when it is profitable. That is the best time to innovate

changed the response time. The Arogya Setu app was off the ground faster than what Google and Apple could create. Shops in small villages marked the spots to make it visually simple for people to maintain social distance. Facial recognition-based time and attendance system (RamcoGEEK) which includes temperature recording via thermal imaging technology embedded into an access control screen and an IoT door. The latter can restrict access to staff or visitors with a high temperature. Overall, the system can also monitor the movement of high-temperature staff within the office and send alerts to management and HR.

3. Crowdsource ideas: Crowdsourced platforms like BreakCorona received 1,300 ideas and 180 product solutions within two days of launch. With WFH being an acceptable option, this may be the right time to involve the employees to brainstorm on what HR



policies would have to be redesigned. Each pain point is an opportunity for innovation. If the employee's housing allowance is based on a high cost city like Mumbai, would the allowance change if the person operates from a Tier III city? Inviting employees to weigh-in and find creative solutions is the best engagement program. the Singapore Monetary Authority has kick-started a $1.75 million competition to bring innovative fintech solutions to solve COVID-19 issues. Competition runners have said that over 107 different problem statements were received in 2020 alone.

Innovation fuel is called COVID-19

Using technology to improve operations as well as everything in the workplace is an opportunity. With employees rethinking what career really means, it is also possible to craft new roles. Some people with disabilities stay at home mothers and neuro-diverse talent may be far more productive in work from home scenarios than office spaces.

Market Shapers stay in shape by continuously transforming their business – even when it is profitable. That is the best time to innovate.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ABHIJIT BHADURI is working on his next book Dreamers & Unicorns. More than 800,000 people follow him on LinkedIn @AbhijitBhaduri

FIVE TECHNOLOGY PREDICTIONS FOR THE POST-COVID-19 ERA



COVID-19 could potentially lead to some of the most exciting advances in the history of HR technology. Here are some predictions for the future

By **Clinton Wingrove**

Academics and business gurus are desperately analyzing what has happened over the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, seeking to discover "the magic answer" - what we should do to succeed in the future. They have collected vast arrays of data, analyzed them, and derived predictions. And, guess what! Many have concluded that (a) more people will work from home, (b) the nature of business interactions and processes will change, (c) we will become more technology dependent, (d) businesses will become more dispersed, and (e) the center of cities will evolve. Did it really take an army of PhD's to work that out? And, is that even helpful?

Many of the predictions based on analysis of the past completely miss the point. I love the quotation, often attributed (probably incorrectly) to Henry Ford, "If I had built my company based on research and analysis, I would have bred huge fast horses."

Those who are highly successful don't spend their time trying to predict the future merely by extrapolating how the past was handled. Instead they recognize that all substantial change arises out of either crises or someone's crazy imagination of a step change. They then prepare themselves to handle those situations and create their own future. Indeed, the organizations who are performing best in the current crisis are those that (a) invested in excellent management and leadership skills, (b) listened to the news and realized that some crisis or other was inevitable, (c) structured their organizations, their processes, and their funding to be resilient to a crisis, and (d) used scenario planning to develop their staff to manage a crisis, any crisis!

Many currently strong organizations already had remote working in place, had been using collaboration technology for nearly a decade; had appointed people into management who wanted to be managers and had the skills to succeed; had developed agile and innovative processes; and constantly reviewed the power of contemporary technology, and deployed it to maximum

Organizations that will be most successful in the future will be those that take away this major learning from COVID-19 – out of the four characteristics of our current era (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous), Volatility and Uncertainty potentially cause the greatest damage ...and offer the biggest opportunities

effect. So, what next?

My contention is that mediocre companies will continue to chase the pack or so-called "best practices." They will build hybrid organizations with essential face-to-face roles in fixed locations but many more workers performing from home or locations of their choice. They will assume that remote working, as currently understood, is here to stay and will invest in the now common meeting and collaboration technologies.

I also contend that they will pay the price in the longer term for the impact of those decisions. Cognitive and emotional distance combined with the tiredness, that remote working appears to trigger, will lead to further declines in already unacceptably low levels of employee engagement and productivity. The current uptick in management connectivity with their staff will decline as the novelty decreases and pressures for cost savings and increased sales rise exponentially. Remote working also creates challenges for managers in terms of monitoring and assessing individual performance, especially in terms of how the work is done and the skill development of remote staff. So, decisions about development, promotion, and reward will become increasingly difficult and flawed.



However, I believe organizations that will be most successful in the future will be those that take away the major learning from COVID-19 – out of the four characteristics of our current era (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous), Volatility and Uncertainty potentially cause the greatest damage … and offer the biggest opportunities.

So, in that context, here are my technology predictions following COVID-19.

1. We now know that virtual collaboration tools do not create the strength of relationships, emotional connections, or empathetic responses that physical face-to-face connections do. There are many theories including a hypothesis that current cameras and screens do not sufficiently convey the micro movements in the eyes, face, and body which we unconsciously detect and interpret. Someone, somewhere will fix that!
2. We know that current collaboration tools provide for substandard interactions. When on a video conference, if you look at the picture of the person to whom you are speaking, you cannot be looking at your camera. Hence, the other person does not feel that you are speaking to them. Someone, somewhere will fix that. They will develop a screen that has a virtual camera embedded in it and which continually moves to the spot on the screen where it detects your eyes are looking.
3. We know that it is challenging and often ineffective to have those difficult conversations with others, perhaps over performance, perhaps over a

difference of opinion, perhaps over an emotional issue. Someone, somewhere will fix that! We no longer view speech recognition software as the amazing mystery that it was only a few years ago. Well, AI will be used to analyze (a) facial expressions, (b) semantic use of words and language structure, (c) changes in voice speed, tonality and volume, and (d) timing and sequencing of interactions to identify an individual's emotional state, communication preferences and intentions, and even their level of honesty. All of this will then be presented to the other person in a visual form along with recommendations on how to respond.

4. Managers have always struggled to monitor and assess individual performance in all bar the most simple and repetitive of tasks. But even the most obvious of those e.g., "sales" prove challenging. For example, if a sales person has a target of $1m per annum and hits $900,000, have they "Not met expectations"? What if halfway through that year, a completely unexpected new competitor entered the market, with quality product at 75 percent of your price. Is that the fault of the sales person? Of course not. But monitoring and assessing, "Did the sales person do everything that they reasonably could have done to detect the new entrant early, to collect intelligence for us to work with, to build strong relationships with current customers, …..?" are really the performance questions which most managers can neither track nor objectively assess. Someone, somewhere will fix that! AI will eventually be used to (a) collect data on activities, decisions, and even individual behaviors (e.g., through wearable devices or sensors), (b) integrate and analyze that data, and (c) determine both assessments of holistic performance and potential performance improvements for each individual.
5. We know that current recruitment decisions are seriously questionable in terms of validity and reliability. Someone, somewhere will fix that! AI will eventually be used as in 4. above to take recruitment decisions out of the hands on managers or HR. Algorithms will be developed to analyze and debias data collected from a wide range of sources including social media and crowd-sourced assessments of interview videos. These will produce recruitment and promotion decisions.

> Those who are highly successful don't spend their time trying to predict the future merely by extrapolating how the past was handled. Instead they recognize that all substantial change arises out of either crises or someone's crazy imagination of a step change

COVID-19 has been a wake-up call for the world, countries, organizations, and individuals. We now understand that crises happen and they will happen in the future. It has triggered previously unimaginable uses of technology in all walks of life. This could lead to one of the most existing, potentially scary, phases of HR technology evolution. You heard it here first! So, watch this space.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CLINTON WINGROVE is the Director of www.WantToBeGreatManager.com and www.ClintonHR.com

CORPORATE DIGITAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE LEADERS



Digital innovation brings with it many unanticipated ethical and security considerations. HR leaders can help to alleviate some of these issues by providing guidance or directly intervening to shape an organization's digital transformation

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

Around the world it seems that our laptop computers are constantly toggling between meetings on Zoom, Teams, Skype, WhatsApp, Facetime, and other applications. While these simple connection tools have changed the way we hold meetings and conduct our workplace interactions, many other digital innovations have also been rapidly introduced in areas related to finance, accounting, management processes and other core operational activities.

These activities are quickly bringing about an unanticipated digital transformation in organizations and accelerating the adoption of digital solutions in many companies. While most such innovations provide great business benefits, it is important that HR leaders consider the implications of these changes related to people. In other words, this is a critical point for taking a responsible leadership role by examining the implications of digital changes. Professor Michael Wade at the IMD Business School suggests several areas that comprise an overall view on

With pressure on the financial performance in many industries due to the impact of the pandemic, it can be helpful to pause and consider any unintended consequences of digital innovations



corporate digital responsibility. Six of these factors have a direct link to the role of HR leaders as stewards of the human capital of the firm.

1. Ensuring data privacy protection: Most businesses have taken care to mind the data privacy of their customers and follow regulatory requirements around the world. It is equally important to be mindful of how we use and share the digital information of our employees and others in our workforce. For example, Microsoft introduced a new analytics toolset for their own employees to provide insight on feedback on collaboration patterns, work productivity, application usage and other factors. To make sure this data was not misused, the HR leaders helped to create guidelines related to who would have access, how it would be stored, and how this information would be guarded.

2. Pursuing socially ethical practices: As organizations develop new digital innovations that may create business value, it is important to also consider the impact on other stakeholders such as the local community and others in society. With pressure on the financial performance in many industries due to the impact of the pandemic, it can be helpful to pause and consider any unintended consequences of digital innovations.

3. Promoting digital diversity and inclusion: In some ways, the digital workplace has a way of creating equal opportunities for inclusion due to the nature of interaction and communication. For example, when a regional firm required everyone in the workforce to download a smartphone app to access their services, they neglected a significant segment of their workers who did not own a smartphone. Digital inclusion can take many different forms and HR leaders must consider how to build a digitally healthy workforce.

4. Respecting data ownership rights: Around the world it can be easy to replicate digital solutions or use digital products without securing the rights. In addition, we see new avenues for sharing digital content and often times a blurring of personal platforms and company platforms. These can create potential challenges related to the ownership and access rights with data and other solutions. Having a clear sense and policy can help provide clarity if needed in the future.

5. Ensuring ethical AI decision-making algorithms: The advances in

CHROs have an opportunity to help ensure that organizations are mindful of their corporate digital responsibility. How can HR leaders help enable a bold digital future that enables trust and is sensitive to our human resources?





artificial intelligence have created many improvements in services and automation. However, new considerations are emerging as artificial intelligence and other solutions can be developed with unintended bias or discrimination. Even simple applications of AI such as those in many talent acquisition processes for resume screening and applicant management can be prone to bias. It is important to test and eliminate potential bias related to diversity for example.

6. Following responsible data validation and disposal practices: With the risks associated with maintaining accurate data as well as the compliance needs related to data disposal, it is important that HR professionals have a clear view of the accuracy of data, the retention of data, and the processes associated with disposing of data when it comes to employee as well as other personal data from stakeholders.

As organizations embrace digital solutions to reshape ways of working with the various stakeholders of the firm, CHROs have the opportunity and obligation to ensure corporate digital responsibility. The current situation with COVID-19 is accelerating digital innovation around the world to make long-lasting improvements in the way that people work and live. While many of these advances can be seen as harmless, we are still learning about the impact of decisions in the digital era.

As we all become accustomed to our digital connections on Zoom, Teams, Skype and other tools, we have also placed our trust in our organizations to manage our digital efforts in a responsible manner. In this rapid rise of digital innovation, CHROs have an opportunity to help ensure that organizations are mindful of their corporate digital responsibility. I hope HR leaders will rise to this new challenge to enable a bold digital future that enables trust and is sensitive to our human resources.

With the accelerated adoption of digital solutions in many companies, it is important that HR leaders consider the implications of these changes related to people. In other words, this is a critical point for taking a responsible leadership role by examining the implications of digital changes

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RICHARD R. SMITH, PH.D. is a Professor at Singapore Management University where he also serves as Deputy Dean for the Lee Kong Chian School of Business. He is a Research Fellow at the Indian School of Business with a focus on Human Capital and Leadership.

Q&A

'Digital transformation is the harbinger of a new paradigm of work'

Christopher Tay, Group Chief Admin Officer & Member Board of Directors, Menarini Asia Pacific Holdings, talks about the silver lining of COVID-19 crisis, in an interview with People Matters

By **Drishti Pant**



Christopher Tay, Group Chief Admin Officer & Member Board Of Directors, Menarini Asia Pacific Holdings has almost 25 years of experience. He has worked with companies like Singapore Airlines and HP. Currently, at pharmaceutical company Menarini Asia Pacific Holdings he provides leadership and strategic direction for a broad spectrum of key corporate services functions including Human Resources, Corporate Secretariat, Legal, Compliance and Intellectual Property, Corporate Branding and Communications, Information Technology & Facilities.

In a recent interview with People Matters, Tay shares how Menarini APAC is dealing with the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on business, people, and work. He also talks about the digital transformation the global health crisis has led to.

Here are excerpts of the interview.

Q Among all the sectors, healthcare and pharmaceuticals have gained maximum attention as the world battles one of the worst global health crises ever seen by the history of mankind. What challenges and opportunities has the pandemic brought for the sector?

A Enough has probably been said by now about the unprecedented economic and business challenges the pandemic has brought about and so, let me approach this question more positively by looking at the opportunities that are often the flip side of the challenges we face.

In my view, the biggest opportunities through the current global crisis have probably been two-fold.

Firstly, as governments and the private sector race against time to develop a vaccine and more efficient testing and treatment options for COVID-19, healthcare companies are aptly placed to rise beyond the normal call of duty to devote their best resources into research and development to serve the betterment of society. These companies can make a generational difference to humankind because if not at moments like this, then when? Hence, the channelized attention we are getting even though, just like other companies or industries, each of our businesses may be hurting to varying degrees.

Secondly, I see the acceleration of changing mindsets about telecommuting and digital transformation as the harbinger of a new paradigm of work that will leapfrog many companies into the "virtual reality" age, pardon the pun. For at least a couple of decades, companies have tried to go paperless, operate virtually and leveraged more technology to reduce business travel. Many have succeeded but brick and mortar companies have traditionally faced an uphill challenge to transform because of varying forms of resistance. However, in the blink of any eye, suddenly all these things have become possible and employers who have been resistant to this change in the past have begun to realize that all they needed was a nudge (perhaps with even some government support) to operate in the new world environment. It took a virus for us to finally realize that and we must not lose this momentum!

Employers who had been resistant to change realized that all they needed was a nudge (perhaps even some government support). It took a virus for us to finally realize that and we must not lose this momentum!

Q Has the pandemic enhanced your digital transformation journey in any way?

A At Menarini Asia-Pacific, over 70 percent of our 3,500 staff across 13 major healthcare markets comprise sales and marketing staff. When our medical representatives could no longer visit doctors and hospitals where most of our interactions and knowledge sharing with the doctors took place, it exacerbated the immediate switch to virtual connections with doctors and webinars to facilitate the sharing of product and disease knowledge with our healthcare professionals. The delightful upside was that our representatives were able to channel their commute and often long waiting times to more productive activities, including leveraging technology to better support knowledge sharing.

A subtler challenge for employers was demonstrating care and shoring up employees' morale during prolonged work-from-home policy. As various lockdown measures took hold, employees suddenly found them-

selves physically and socially distant from co-workers and other key stakeholders. Recognizing this, we immediately launched Menarini FM, a weekly virtual broadcast to help our employees stay virtually connected and engaged. The platform delivered key leadership messages, addressed topical subjects like WFH more productively, staying mentally fit, juggling work and family at home and how to live out our brand promise, Invigorating Lives, even



during a lockdown. Overall, COVID-19 was an opportunity for employers to renew the moral contract between employer and employees, one premised on mutual trust and respect that every employee desires to do their best always regardless of circumstances when they know their employer has their back, come what may.

Q How has Menarini Asia-Pacific been dealing with the new challenges brought on by the pandemic? Can you give an overview of how you have been managing the crisis and ensuring business continuity for the diverse markets in APAC?

A Overall, whilst the pandemic may have taken a slight toll on our business this year, the impact was a far cry from how it has torn apart some other industries and companies.

Though it all, our paramount consideration has always been the health, safety and well-being of our employees. Hence, our employees were reassured of their job security, fully enabled to work from home until the environment was deemed safe enough to return to office or the field. More so as a pharmaceutical company, we believe we also have the responsibility to inculcate the right behaviors among employees to remain confident and contribute to society. To exemplify "Invigorating Lives", examples of what the company has done include:

Demonstrating employee care in word and deed: As a family-owned company, we truly believe that every employee is part of the Menarini family. At the onset of the pandemic and upon realizing the impact it would have on the populations, the leadership quickly closed ranks and first and foremost reassured employees that we would do everything within our powers to keep their jobs safe during this time of need. This outright assurance reverberated with many employees, especially our field force, who felt comforted and cared for in an environment where the future appeared bleak.

Supporting Healthcare Heroes: We launched an #ImStayingHome campaign on Instagram across Asia intended to reinforce camaraderie and provide an opportunity for our employees to pay tribute to the frontline healthcare heroes for keeping us safe.

Voice of the Workforce during COVID-19: Beginning with Singapore first, employees participated in a corporate pulse survey to assess employees' sentiments about WFH and the challenges they were facing. The survey provided the management with timely data as it reviewed how best to adjust policies and take meaningful actions to suit the new normal going forward.

Q In a time of economic regression and global health fears due to COVID-19, the reputations of pharmaceutical companies are on the line and their impact on the fight against the virus will not be easily forgotten. What does it mean for your business and workforce?

A As a pharmaceutical company, this is an opportunity to show how the entire healthcare industry is racing to support society during a time of great need – in big or small ways. Our diagnostic arm has been working tirelessly to identify a high potential vaccine candidate and a more efficient testing kit. At our plants in Italy, we have also converted production capacities to produce sanitizer gels.

Q As pharmaceutical companies take center stage, what skills do you think will be critical in 2020 and beyond? How are you building a strong talent pipeline to meet the new demands of the sector?

A When the future is unknown and uncertain, especially with unprecedented events, scenario plans often get tossed out of the window. What businesses need to respond to the new normal depends on how the businesses must evolve. At such times, strong leadership, resourcefulness, agility and empathy would be core attributes for leaders to adapt their businesses to the new normal. At Menarini Asia-Pacific, we seek to attract and retain talents with these attributes so that come what may, we can rely on our talents to be resilient, adapt and move forward.

Q How are you dealing with this crisis? What are some personal challenges you think leaders often face these tough times? How are you ensuring that you keep calm, sail through and help others also in these tough times? Share your tips.

A Stay positive and believe we can. Leaders must see a silver lining in every crisis and encourage their teams to hope and believe that together we can overcome. There are rich lessons to be learned from every crisis and we can turn every crisis to an opportunity.

Communicate incessantly with your teams and appreciate them. Build, not erode, TRUST in all you do.

Q Going forward, how are you looking to use technology as a transformation driver for better employee experience, organizational productivity and business growth?

A Digital transformation and going paperless for sustainability reasons are finally becoming a reality for most businesses today and we must leverage this momentum caused by COVID-19 to evolve as a 21st century workforce. We are no exceptions, even at Menarini, despite having done much to tap technology to improve business processes, we will keep working towards providing tools and enabling staff to be more productive and stay well connected with their stakeholders. We realize that much more can be done to advance the total employee and customer experience.

> Overall, COVID-19 was an opportunity for employers to renew the moral contract between employers and employees, one premised on mutual trust and respect that every employee desires to do their best always regardless of circumstances when they know their employer has their back

VISTY BANAJI



The Faustian Triad

The Corporate race is not for the faint-hearted. Nice guys – who are unwilling to hit back, practice deception or abandon 'has-beens' – generally finish last

Ever since Paulhus and Williams described the three undesirable personality traits of Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Machiavellianism as the Dark Triad[1] there has been considerable research on the subject. It shows that those scoring high on these traits are more likely to commit crimes, cause social distress and create problems at work. They exhibit several characteristics, including disagreeableness, callousness, deceitfulness, egocentrism, lack of honesty-humility, and tendencies toward interpersonal manipulation and exploitation."[2]

What if there were a triad of behaviors, morally perhaps equally reprehensible, but which are almost essential for getting ahead in the corporate world? What if even perfectly decent executives have no choice but to enter into a Faustian pact that requires them to display a significant level of Vindictiveness, Deception and Abandoning in return for becoming the top dog or make it at least to the top pack? The decades that I have observed the corporate world (and I am sure anyone who has been a C-suite participant in a reasonably large company will agree) tells me that there is such a triad and this column will explore each of these distasteful traits in turn.

An eye for an eye

In the days when Manufacturing was king and organization charts simply followed geography (matrix being pronounced 'mad tricks' then) two huge production facilities within a single company were headed by barons who we shall call S (as in Sweet) and V (as in Vindictive). The rivalry between the plants was fierce and the stakes for the barons were high. They both hoped to succeed the aging monarch. While each had much going for (and against) him, one characteristic differentiated them utterly: that of holding a grudge. While S would allow a slight or jab to pass



or be forgotten (especially if followed by an apology), V would invariably retaliate in one form or another. The cumulative effect was telling: S, Succumbed and V was Victorious.

Revenge has a long, long history. Many of our epics (the death of Duryodhana or of Penelope's suitors), plays (Medea, Hamlet), novels (The Count of Monte Christo, Murder on the Orient Express) and movies (Munich, Kill Bill) would be both literally and figuratively bloodless without this vital ingredient. Vindictiveness is the internal choice to respond to an injury by taking revenge rather than, say, display forgiveness. " 'Do good unto them that hurt you' is an ethic for saints; to refrain from doing disproportionate harm would seem to be difficult enough counsel for most human beings to follow."[3]

The historical lineage of vindictiveness is not surprising considering its evolutionary roots According to Evolutionary Psychologists, revenge serves three adaptive functions: "First, the mere possibility of revenge deters potential transgressors. Individuals with reputations for being vengeful are less likely to be victimized because the potential costs are high. Second, if a transgression does occur, revenge deters further harm by penalizing wrongdoing. Finally, revenge fosters cooperation by preventing individuals from taking advantage of the work carried out by others (free-riding) ... Using computerized tournaments, Axelrod demonstrated that a tit-for-tat strategy (cooperating after one's partner cooperates, defecting after one's partner defects) was the most effective way to establish and maintain cooperation."[4]

> What if there were a triad of behaviors, morally perhaps equally reprehensible, but which are almost essential for getting ahead in the corporate world?

Societies that have primitive legal frameworks or are weak in their abilities to enforce laws are also rife with blood feuds, revenge killings or violent vendettas. Large corporates, where the top management is too distant or has allowed its eyes and ears to be blocked or beguiled, presents a similarly unpoliced landscape for senior executives. In such scenarios (and the proportion of these in the general population of corporates is far from negligible) the only safeguard against a stealthy stiletto in the side is the fear of a retaliatory rapier in the ribs. A reputation for vindictiveness then becomes an essential part of an executive's survival and progression toolkit. Of course, to make the threat of retaliation credible, executives need to have gathered sufficient power to launch at least an asymmetric strike against the transgressor.

As in societies, the only way to reduce the general level of vindictiveness and political in-fighting within the organization is to have a functioning system of procedural justice that can correctly identify, pursue and effectively pull up or punish the initial transgressor.[5] It requires a politically aware CEO, who is cognizant of the undercurrents and personal agendas flowing in the top team, to nip conflicts, plots and stratagems in the bud and, most importantly, to avoid getting used in the games Cassios play. Tit for tat also remains within limits if the responders opt to play the corporate game with a modicum of decency. To do so they must hobble themselves voluntarily with no-first-use and non-escalation restraints. The reputation to aim for is being above-board and never picking a fight but not shying away from respond-

In many ways, self-deception can be the most self-injurious of the Faustian triad because, like any other distancing from reality, it has huge costs and risks, some of which are particularly disabling in HR roles



ing (only in equal measure) to encroachments or other forms of aggression. Finally, the players need to keep their responsibility to the organization uppermost (or at least midmost) and anticipate the consequences retaliatory games will have on it. Particularly when there is a substantial power asymmetry and internal redress is unavailable, the temptation for the weaker responder may be to exercise a nuclear option, such as going public. Choices like this inflict virtually irreparable damage on the organization and should not even be last resorts (as long we are talking of power plays and not serious value infringements). Once the only effective response is MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction), there is no shame and much credit for abandoning that yuddha bhoomi and seeking fresh organizational pastures.

Don't know thyself

What could possibly be the gain from upending the universally prescribed mantra that knowing oneself is the essential prerequisite to any other knowledge? Once again, Evolutionary Psychology provides us at least three good answers.

"… [B]y deceiving themselves, people can better deceive others, because they no longer emit the cues of consciously mediated deception that could reveal their deceptive intent. Self-deception can also facilitate the deception of others in a more general sense, in that it can help us convince others that we are better (e.g., more moral, stronger, smarter) than we really are…. [B]y deceiving themselves about their own positive qualities and the negative qualities of others, people are able to display greater confidence than they might otherwise feel, thereby enabling them to advance socially and materially. Finally, it is also possible that this system of self-deception that evolved to deceive others becomes applied in intrapersonal domains because of the good feelings that it brings the individual… [S]elf-deception evolved for interpersonal purposes, but people found a way to use it to enhance happiness when circumstances conspire against other methods. As with optimism, happiness has important interpersonal consequences; people experience increased social and financial success when they are happy."[6]

For HR leaders, in particular, each of the facets of self-deception holds special attractions. Not only does it make pulling wool over the eyes of others less effortful but it provides seemingly honest deniability when one is found out. The appearance of confidence is especially vital to champions of initiatives and programs that are not ROI-defendable. And can HR really be an evangelist for people happiness[7] without itself wearing a non-feigned version of the upbeat sentiment?

these pretentions are soon stripped away and, in reaction, the half-empty glass made to appear totally dry. Even before such a denouement, the effectiveness of HR is sapped if a self-deceiving leader is too confident to take warning signals (say, of dissatisfaction, safety risks or unrest) seriously and victimizes dissenting voices instead of listening to them. When such self-deceit pervades an entire organization, we have major catastrophes like the Challenger space shuttle disas-

industrial (and industrial relations) disasters.

Because most of our promotion systems select for confidence and optimism (among other traits), it is difficult to find senior executives who have below-average self-deception quotients. A lot of the burden for moderating this blindness must, therefore, fall on the process checks and balances (including Board supervision) that demand regular reality checks. Incidentally, this reality gap is one reason for the failure of start-ups

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In many ways, self-deception can be the most self-injurious of the Faustian triad because, like any other distancing from reality, it has huge costs and risks, some of which are particularly disabling in HR roles. Ignoring one's personal, functional or organizational weaknesses may boost morale for a while but, when confronted with a capable opponent (a rival CXO, an irate internal customer, another normative function bent on finding fault or a hostile trade union)

ter, which was brilliantly investigated by the physicist Richard Feynman. "... NASA chose to minimize the problem and the NASA unit assigned to deal with safety became an agent of rationalization and denial, instead of careful study of safety factors. Presumably, it functioned to supply higher-ups with talking points in their sales pitches to others and to themselves."[8] Sounds familiar? O, for a Feynman-mind to examine the true causes of our own all-too-frequent

which have yet to institute such processes (or where the Board is in too much awe of the entrepreneur's brilliance and fire to carry out their oversight role). By definition, self-deception is not easily self-cured. There is some research, however, that indicates self-deception inhibits peoples' sense of humor.[9] It may not be an unwarranted inference to hope that activating the impulse to laugh (particularly at oneself) might have a mitigatory effect on self-deception. Permitting others

the liberty to pull one down to earth is an option for those whose sense of themselves is too inflated to permit self-deprecatory laughter. Medieval monarchs often had court jesters whose role "was to upend logic, to relieve tension, to say the unsayable, invoking a kind of benevolent mayhem in order to restore the monarch, by means of laughter, to his full human nature – to sanity, in fact."[10] HR people are often called jokers by the rest of the organization. From there to a jester's role should not be too great a leap. Jokers apart, while self-deception may be curbed, it is not an easily cured member of the triad.

Abandon the sinking ship

As Secretary of State for the US from 1949 to 1953, Dean Acheson was one of the most influential people on the world stage. During the notorious Alger Hiss affair, despite knowing the damage he would potentially do to himself, Acheson stayed loyal to the former state department official by saying, during a press conference, "… I do not intend to turn my back on Alger Hiss." It was not only personal opprobrium and the consequential stress Acheson suffered in those McCarthyite days, "He was damaged goods; he had exhausted his moral capital. [But] by showing his moral courage in the defense of Hiss … Acheson was true to himself, and brave."[11]

During the 1968 US Presidential campaign, Henry Kissinger, a close associate of the liberal Republican contender, Nelson Rockefeller, and occasional adviser to Democratic administrations, smartly switched sides to Richard Nixon, once he saw the latter headed for victory. "Kissinger, … used his contacts in the outgoing Johnson administration … to acquire information about the negotiations [between Washington and Hanoi], which he then passed on to Nixon's campaign. In turn, Nixon's people used the intelligence to preempt a possible truce [which would have helped Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic candidate]. Nixon won the election and, in gratitude, gave Kissinger the job of national security adviser."[12] Kissinger went on to be Secretary of State as well.

Two people who held the office of Secretary of State displayed loyalties of very different kinds. Repugnant as the 'moral' of this story may be, it was the one who abandoned the sinking ship who gained substantially as a result. The corporate world (and, dare I say, the world of politics and the



It may not be an unwarranted inference to hope that activating the impulse to laugh (particularly at oneself) might have a mitigatory effect on self-deception

civil services) is so full of instances of shifting and self-serving allegiances being leveraged for advancement that they are part and parcel of every significant organizational change and, in particular, help both to determine succession struggles and the coat-tail holders that benefit or suffer as a result of the outcomes.

Out of the Faustian triad, while self-deception may be the most likely cause of career or organizational disasters, disloyalty is by far the most morally corrosive. To make it a little less so one can at least stay aloof from the plotting and conspiracies to decapitate an incumbent and position an alternative. Not many of us command the high moral sense that Shakespeare attributed to Brutus of knowing when it is time to betray our mentors for the sake of the larger good and it is best not to enter the murky waters of corporate assassinations. At the other extreme, it is a quixotic and career-curtailing blunder (mea culpa) to let hero-worship of the departed or departing CEO become obvious to the successor while s/he is still insecure in the role. But this certainly shouldn't preclude continuing to show respect and willingness to interact with a person who has become powerless to influence one's fortunes.



It is a quixotic and career-curtailing blunder (mea culpa) to let hero-worship of the departed or departing CEO become obvious to the successor while s/he is still insecure in the role

Devil to pay

Admittedly the palliatives that have been prescribed for each of the Faustian triads are just that – palliative. They are as effective as paracetamol (or prayer) in curing cancer. Make the antidotes any stronger and you risk losing the competitive advantage the triad provides for winning the corporate rodent race. Moreover, once you have entered the contest (as Johnny Cash concluded one of his best-liked songs), "you've still got the devil to pay'".

And let's not be too harsh on the devil for our desire to push ahead either. As James Anderson wrote: "In all those stories about people who sold their souls to the devil, I never quite understood why the devil was the bad guy, or why it was okay to screw him out of his soul. They got what they wanted: fame, money, love, whatever – though usually, it turned out not to be what they really wanted or expected. Was that the devil's fault? I never thought so. Like John Wayne said, 'Life's tough. It's even tougher when you're stupid.' "[13]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Keppel Corporation's HR Leader, Meng Hin on 'Adaptable HR'

Meng Hin Yeo, Director - Group Human Resources, Keppel Corporation shares that technology and a greater focus on analytics will be a key to turn around the game of HR Adaptability

By **Anushree Sharma**



"Like people and plants, organisations have a lifecycle. They have a green and supple youth, a time of flourishing strength, and a gnarled old age... An organisation may go from youth to old age in two or three decades, or it may last for centuries.

The need for organisations to continuously adapt to the external forces cannot be explained better by the above quote by John W. Gardner, the father of campaign finance reform.

While, empathy, compassion, and resilience have emerged as critical people skills in times of uncertainty, forward-thinking HR leaders would need more than just traits to manage talent in these unprecedented times

To help you through these tough times and accelerate your adaptability quotient, Alight Solutions in partnership with People Matters, recently launched Asia Pacific's largest study on the State of HR Transformation 2020. As a part of this launch, we bring to you exclusive insights from some leading CHROs on what 'adaptable' means to them in today's context.

Reflecting on the enablers of successful transformation from the Asia Pacific's largest study on the State of HR Transformation, it was found most of the success comes through when HR is willing to change itself. In fact, resistance to change from HR is the biggest barrier in realising transformation.

In this exclusive interaction, Meng Hin, Director - Group Human Resources, Keppel Corporation reflects on the findings of the study and shares how Keppel is approaching a logical, disci-

plined, and impactful strategy towards the art of becoming adaptable.

Here are the excerpts from the interview:

Q What does adaptability mean to you in today's context?

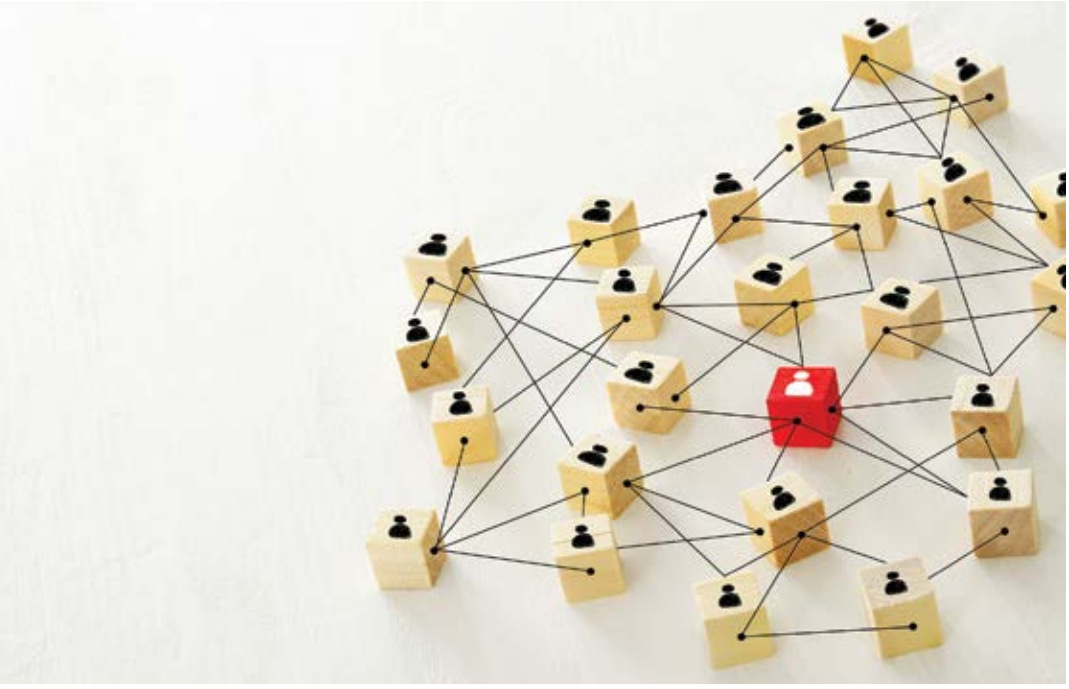
A In a nutshell, if we talk about resilience in the current context, it means to be a lot more flexible and agile, and not being stoic in front of an obstacle. So, most HR leaders have learned a lot especially during this period of changes created by the pandemic. This has evolved the role of HR into being more business-driven than people-driven.

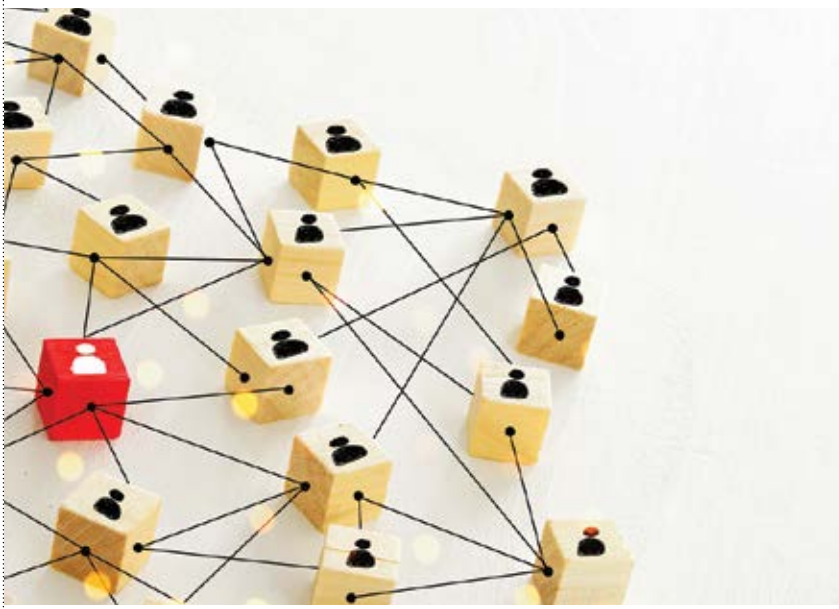
To elaborate further, if I may divide the situation of the overall pandemic into two phases:

Phase I: Reacting to the pandemic: Quoting the example of Keppel, the CEO of Keppel Offshore & Marine decided to shut down two parts of the yard as the cases of COVID-19 started emerging. HR had to be very adaptable by assessing the situation of overall projects which were mid-way, maintaining business continuity, and all this while making all the upcoming advisories and people policies by keeping people's safety in focus.

Phase II: Embracing the pandemic: Now, once we had assessed the situation, framed guidelines for the workforce, and released advisories for the functioning of people and work, our next aim was to engage people. Hence, we saw the HR team role changing to adapt to the current crisis and create an ecosystem where employees are engaged, are safe, and making them adaptable to new normal.

The HR function has been subject to an array of stereotypes, from the complaint centre to the benefits specialists, to the hiring—or firing—department





Getting the human-interface digital tools in to manage the workforce can actually help businesses, not only by impacting the bottom line but by creating a more impactful, human experience

Q Going through the State of HR Transformation Study 2020, what are some of the trends you relate with the most?

A While, empathy, compassion, and resilience have emerged as critical people skills in times of uncertainty, forward-thinking HR leaders would need more than just these traits to manage talent in these unprecedented times. They would need to ask the right questions about business impact. and automatically get on-the-spot answers. The compelling need to flatten the curve would come from acknowledging the power of data in a crisis.

Q What are some trends that will be relevant for tomorrow?

A COVID-19 has made work from home a norm - telecommuting, shifting from traditional to the more flexible structure will continue to be a big trend. Then, there will be far greater pressure on adopting people analytics. And like it was mentioned in the Alight and People Matters, State of HR Transformation Study 2020, the need for data would be centered around managing outcome rather than process. In the upcoming future, the greater questions about the analytics technology would be about how it can guide our decision-making process.

Q How are you looking at accelerating your HR function to make it more adaptable?

A Getting human interface technology can accelerate the HR function. The HR function has been subject to an array of stereotypes, from the complaint centre to the benefits specialists, to the hiring—or firing—department. New technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning continue to infiltrate the HR space and automate an array of processes, many employees fear that the "human" aspects are falling to the wayside, leaving employees alone to deal with cold user interfaces that offer facts without the personal human touch that gives HR its appeal. Hence, getting the human-interface digital tools in to manage the workforce can actually help businesses, not only by impacting the bottom line but by creating a more impactful, human experience.

DR. M. MUNEER



Practical steps to make change stick

The first step to driving change in order to build a strategy-focused organization is to mobilize change through aligning senior leadership

The oxymoronic "change-is-the-only-constant" is heard everywhere in corporate corridors, yet change is ever elusive. A Google search on the very term "change management" turned up 21,600,000 results – that's twenty-one million citations.

Annual HR allocation of budgets for driving change is by no means small. Yet, very few organizations have done strategic change management well for a variety of reasons including lack of commitment of the top leadership, alignment, training that is superficial, but most importantly, the inability to execute the change agenda.

It is well documented that 9 out of 10 organizations fail to execute their well-crafted strategies. Our research and work with organizations over the past two decades clearly show the following fundamental issues for the execution fiasco:

- There is no commonly accepted way to describe change strategy and most companies do not know how to translate it well to operational terms.
- 95 percent of employees do not understand strategy. How do you expect them to do what the top management wants done?
- 60 percent of organizations do not link budgets with strategy. While a new change strategy may require new initiatives, budgeting has always been an aggregation of projections from existing initiatives or businesses.
- 75 percent of management does not have incentives linked to organization strategy.
- 85 percent of managers spend less than one hour per month discussing strategy.

Most of the reviews tend to move around operational issues and chasing the ever-elusive targets.

Strong leadership is essential to the success of any change effort. Imagine the performance of General Electric without the leadership of Jack Welch, although we know now that would not suit today's



times. Think of what Microsoft would look like, if not for Nadella's organizational skill and strategic vision. Even Indian cricket team is unlikely to excel without someone like a powerful captain Kohli. If your organization has used Kaplan and Norton's Balanced Scorecard the right way – not just as a performance measurement system – you will have realized its power to drive change. The first step to driving change in order to build a strategy-focused organization is to mobilize change through aligning senior leadership.

The BSC can be made an effective leadership tool for managing change. What you need to do is adapt the right processes for it. The most popular and powerful 8-step Leading Change framework of John Kotter can be mapped with BSC steps to drive serious strategic change as shown below:

Even if you don't have a basic BSC, you can still build one quickly for the strategic change agenda you desire in a simple three-phase plan that we call as Refresh, Change and Sustain. The first three BSC steps fall into Refresh, the next two in Change and the last three into Sustain.

Refresh Phase

To convince your organization that BSC is a powerful tool for driving strategic change, visualise where the organization is today and where it should ideally be in the future, and emphasize the chasm to be bridged. In this phase, you must revisit and validate your enterprise vision, do a SWOT analysis, align the leadership team by getting them to agree on vision plus the strategy to achieve it and by getting their commitment to the process, and finally getting them to develop the new vision and strategy. Steps 1-3 define this phase.

JOHN KOTTER CHANGE MODEL	BALANCED SCORECARD STEPS
Establish a sense of urgency	1. Creating a case for change
Create a guiding coalition	2. Aligning the leadership team
Develop your vision & strategy	3. Developing the vision and strategy
Communicate the change vision	4. Communicating the strategy
Empower employees	5. Identifying change agents
Generate short-term wins	6. Generating short-term wins
Consolidate gains	7. Viewing the BSC as a journey
Anchor new approaches	8. Integrating the BSC into management processes

Step 1 Create a case for change

Craft a consistent, memorable story about where your organization has been by asking:

- "What is our mission – why do we exist? Is that still valid?"
- "What are our greatest accomplishments? How do these support the overall mission and vision?"
- "In what ways have we fallen short in achieving our vision?"

CASE EXAMPLE

Our client, a telco, started off with a series of strategy workshops for senior leaders. In preparation for these workshops, we asked participants to assess the effectiveness of their current vision. 73% responded that the vision was 90% on target with the current direction.

Though only a minority felt it was off-target, the executive leaders decided to address their concern. Why? A significant minority, if ignored, can jeopardise any strategic change execution.

Based on the suggestions for improvement that included focussing less on short-term reactions to market and more on purpose, and simplifying vision statement, the team arrived at a concise, purpose-driven vision:

"Be the most cost-effective and innovative telecom infrastructure company in the world in the next 7 years."



Once the assessment of as-is is done, evaluate the current Strengths and Weaknesses (internal attributes) and Opportunities and Threats (external attributes), and map it to the familiar four BSC perspectives: Financial, Customer, Internal Process and, Learning and Growth. For a detailed questionnaire to accomplish this, you may contact me.

Step 2 Align the leadership team

Building consensus and commitment are critical for a successful execution of change agenda. Getting leadership team to agree on where you want to be is easier than getting them to agree on the plan to reach there. Building a consensus around the strategy is an iterative process and a series of discussions will be key to accomplishing this.

The following pointers are proven useful:

- Review the strategic issues and objectives, and finalize the strategy map
- Debate and define the objectives, metrics, targets and strategic initiatives
- Agree on the implementation plan for scorecard-based change management
-

A consensus without commitment to implementation plan is like India government plans: Nothing gets done. It is best to get the leaders to walk the talk with actions and words, force them to take ownership of objectives across the organization, make them understand that the cost of failure will be tremendous and finally get them to put resources where it matters.

CASE EXAMPLE

Apple was in need of a reinvention in the '90s to stay competitive. Steve Jobs returned and crafted a brilliant strategy together with his leadership team and sought commitment from them to deliver the changes.

By launching iMac and iBook, Jobs demonstrated his commitment to attracting new generation of users to Apple, and set the pace for introducing new and innovative products that are aesthetically appealing to the young and young-at-heart alike.

With different divisions, he shared leadership by involving all of his business units in the design and product development phases. Jobs ensured that his leadership team had shared-responsibilities for achieving the corporate objectives. He established consequences for non-support by categorically laying out the bleak situation at Apple if they continue the status quo and not embrace the new change plans.

Step 3 Developing the vision and strategy

Take a serious relook at strategy and vision to further refresh your organization. Since most of the readers are familiar with the visioning exercise, I will only emphasise the importance of meeting what we call **AIM-AT** criteria for vision statement. (See the table on next page)

Aspirational	Creates a feeling of excitement and ambition to achieve the vision
Inspirational	Describes a high-level noble effort that surpasses individual gain
Measurable	Specifies how the organization will know if it has achieved the vision or not
Attainable	Clarifies a vision that is within reach, though stretched
Time-bound	Attributes the time frame for achieving the vision

The vision statement can be built in one of the following ways:

Based on past performance:
- What do shareholders expect from us?
- Given our core competencies what do we deliver to our shareholders?

Based on future trends:
- What opportunities in the macro and micro environments that we can take advantage of?
- What new opportunities and threats to our organization will the future bring?

Based on future outlook:
- Where do we want to be in 5 years?
- What do we want our organization to look like in the future?

Communicate the vision statement (The thumb rule is 7 times in 7 different ways) across the organization using all possible channels, just as Jim Collins advocated.

Change Phase

Change we must, as things will never be the same post Coronavirus and other global outcomes. You can't just wish change to happen even if you have done a Refresh and identified the path. Behavioural change takes years. You need to get all employees on board for the journey. The next two steps (4&5) deal with mobilizing this phase.

Step 4 Communicating the strategy

Some leaders argue that letting everyone know of strategy is dangerous but according to our experience with organizations globally, the probability of a competitor succeeding with your strategy is 0.1 while that of you succeeding without your people knowing about your strategy is 0.

An effective communication plan will enable delivering a consistent message and motivating the employees at all levels, helping people internalize the changes planned, and creating an effective bottom-up feedback loop.

Our clients typically use a one-page graphical representation of strategy, called the Strategy Map, to describe it visually. Along with this, you can create a document for use by the leadership team as a resource to explain to different levels of employees. This document should briefly cover the mission and vision statements, why you are changing, the strategic objectives and the cause-and-effect linkages between them, metrics, targets, initiatives, etc. It should also contain the strategic choices you had and why you chose this particular one, and how employee can contribute to its success. Some clients

> Building consensus and commitment are critical for successful execution of change agenda. Getting leadership team to agree on where you want to be is easier than getting them to agree on the plan to reach there

even included FAQ and put it on the Intranet.

A leading hotel chain entrusted its entire top management to communicate the change to worldwide employees and created a ripple effect in delivering the message faster.

Step 5 Identifying change agents

Typically, you should look for top performers with deep cross-functional knowledge, who have peer respectability, good rapport with top leadership and the ability to sell the change initiative within the organization.

In order to help them deliver their assignment, top leaders must visibly show their support and guidance to them. That sends the message to the rest of the organization about the seriousness of the change initiative and how much the top leaders count on the support of all. We have seen this in action, encouraging everyone to commit to the cause. (Some clients have done the fire-walks in town hall meetings).

Sustain Phase

Once you reach this final phase, you have already come a long way in driving strategic change. Here's where you generate real momentum for breakthrough change. The final three steps (6-8) will guide to sustain the momentum.

Step 6 Generating short-term wins

Notwithstanding the change-is-the-only-constant, change is the most difficult thing to do. Early successes keep employees motivated by convincing them that it might just be possible to actually believe the top management and get ahead of the trying times. Generate short-term successes by looking at both internal and external environments and identifying what excites employees. Focus on those targeted wins and show results.

Some examples: More effective management meetings with better data analysis; Reduction in time and frequency of non-strategic meetings; use of scorecard for faster on-boarding of new recruits; elimination of dormant initiatives that have no strategic impact.



Step 7 Viewing the BSC as a journey

Balanced scorecard is not a metric system, and if used right, you can reap great change benefits in 2-4 years. Make strategy everyone's job by aligning KPIs to strategic change objectives as depicted in the strategy map, and link incentives to achievement of the same. Plan for cascading the scorecard to every level of the organization from the corporate level to SBUs and functional units. This will bring in alignment through horizontal and vertical integration of goals.

Vertical integration of objectives is done for more depth and it goes from more strategic to lowest level of operations, and creates a line of sight for top leaders. Horizontal integration

BARRIER	HOW THEY MANAGED IT
Oversight	Developed the strategy map and scorecard to define a balanced change agenda shared by all of the city's stakeholders
Strategy/Policy	Focused the change agenda on key aspects the city could control to achieve its vision of becoming the smartest city in the country
Transparency	Held reviews of various departments' progress against objectives every six months and made reviews publicly available; set stretch targets in just a few key objectives that are key to achieving the vision
Compensation	Budgeted for incentives in kind and perks to employees who achieved their KPIs aligned to the city's key objectives
Cause and Effect	Linked outcome objectives in the Finance and Customer perspectives with the driver objectives in the Process and Learning perspectives
Collaboration	Divided objectives into specific themes according to desired outcomes, not organizational silos; got diverse departments to work together on these themes

is about creating breadth across organization's key management processes.

You can expect a few speed breakers in this journey and here is an example of a government organization.

Step 8 Integrating the BSC into management processes

To make any change stick, you need to embed it into your organization's DNA. It is easy to embed the BSC into many management processes.

Here are a few possibilities:

- Make management meetings more strategic with analytics from scorecards.
- Discuss cause-effect linkages of the change objectives regularly first at operational level and then at the monthly strategy review meetings.
- Align your SBUs and functional units by requiring performance updates and reviews to directly apply to the scorecard
- Build SLAs with your partners, suppliers, and hopefully, large customers by sharing common objectives, metrics and targets.
- Use the strategy map and scorecard to align planning and budgeting.

Research shows that there is no commonly accepted way to describe change strategy and most companies do not know how to translate it well to operational terms

- Communicate frequently the strategy and performance to all stakeholders
- Align personal goals with scorecard objectives.

Suggested Additional Reading:

- Kotter, John; Leading Change; Harvard Business School Press; 1996.
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Q&A

A crisis can be a huge motivator to change your life: Dmitriy Akilov

In an exclusive interaction with People Matters, **Dmitriy Akulov,** tech innovator and entrepreneur, shares some of his learnings from living through a crisis, how he managed to keep the passion for his work alive even during the time of war, and gives suggestions on how business leaders can persevere through hard times

By **Yasmin Taj**

They say people who have seen tough times up, close and personal, are the ones who can teach others how to manage a crisis better than those who haven't faced such times. Personal experiences, the empathy that is needed and the rational thinking that one needs to rely on during tough times, is something that people with experience can pass on, because they know what worked and what did not.

Dmitriy Akulov, tech innovator and entrepreneur, has a great story about how

business leaders can persevere through hard times. He lived through war in Eastern Europe and remembers days when he would have to find the strength to tune out the bombings to work on his brand.

In this exclusive interaction with People Matters, Akulov shares some of his learnings from living through a crisis, how he managed to keep the passion for his work alive even during the time of war, and gives suggestions on how business leaders can persevere through hard times.

Akulov is a leading force behind some of the largest names in the tech world including: PerfOps, jsDelivr, and Prospect One. Akulov started jsDelivr, a free-multi-CDN for open course projects, at the age of 16. Today, the platform is one of the largest in the world, serving over 65 billion users on a monthly basis.

Here are the excerpts from the interview.

Q What are some of the leadership lessons that have guided you in the current times of crisis?

I pull a lot of my experience with the conflict in Eastern Europe to help guide me here. I have lived through war, I innovated during a time of war. And this is very similar. People are scared, lives are being lost, people are nervous and somehow they have to perform at work. I try to understand the external stresses and issues people have to face in their everyday life and take that into consideration regarding work. I have to make sure my team is mentally healthy and thriving in order to expect them to perform well for me.

Q You have lived through war in Eastern Europe and have spoken about days when you would have to find the strength to tune out the bombings to work on your brand. Tell us more about how you managed to keep the passion for your work alive through such tough times.

You need to keep your mind free from bad thoughts. I was basically ignoring and tuning-out the whole thing and focusing on my work.

When you are focused, you can't think about anything else. On the other hand, the war also worked as a huge motivator to change my life as quickly as possible and change it for the better. Which I did.

Q Are there certain traits that can make leaders more effective in times of crisis? How can business leaders persevere through hard times?

Rationality over emotions is important. Decisions must be made based on data and logic and not as an emotional response. This means making hard decisions that will impact real people but will preserve the company and the rest of the team. Another important thing is to see the opportunities when everyone else is afraid. Most will miss them but if you keep looking out, you could come out of the crisis a winner.

Another important thing is to see the opportunities when everyone else is afraid. Most will miss them but if you keep looking out, you could come out of the crisis a winner

Q A majority of the leaders have their own unique leadership style. How challenging is it to break this set mold and remodel leadership behavior in times of such uncertainty?

A It is challenging but you must be open to new ideas. Don't assume you are right, and don't assume what has always worked will also work now. Read a lot and try

to learn from the mistakes of others.

Q According to a survey, 93% of high performing organizations believe crisis uncovers talented leaders. In your experience of managing crises, how relatable are these results?

A The survival of the fittest never went away and it is definitely true in a corporate setting. Nepotism, unqualified, emotional and unprofessional employees and leaders will be filtered out. Some could take down whole companies with them.

But at the end, as always, only the strongest and most talented will survive. And unfortunately, it will probably include many unethical people as well.

Q There have been debates surrounding the impact of remote working on productivity for a while, however, the outbreak of COVID-19 has forced the global sphere of work to switch to this working model. Doubt and lack of trust can lead to disharmony among an already distant workforce. What can leaders do to break such stereotypes and foster a culture comprising both trust and high performance?

A The worst thing leaders can do in a remote setting is keeping a remote and on-site workforce at the same time. Once that happens, all of the remote workers will automatically feel alienated and start underperforming because they assume it is notifying their good work. Productivity will lower in this case.

Keep 100% of the team remote. Have video calls to see them face-to-face and read their emotions. Give a chance for everyone to speak. And make sure to say who does a good job. In an office setting this might be easy and natural, but in a remote conference, interrupting someone just to say they have done a good job is weird, so most will avoid it all together.

Q Can you name a leader who you consider an inspiration when it comes to dealing with a crisis?

A Bill Gates is definitely the biggest one. Not only did he donate millions, he also invested into multiple companies to speed the development of a vaccine.

While at the same time, not being afraid to advocate for tightening of quarantine measures and distributing cash to people in need.



It is challenging but you must be open to new ideas. Don't assume you are right, and don't assume what has always worked will also work now

Making office cafeterias COVID-19 safe through digital management



Once the hub of all office interactions and buzz, the office cafeteria is undergoing a huge change where sharing snacks and food is out, and adoption of staggered lunch hours in

By **Shweta Modgil**

The lockdowns in many countries have now given way to unlock initiatives. As businesses over the world open up offices and start bringing employees in, those employees will find they have entered an office that was not the one they left behind. Masks, thermal screening, social distancing marking all over the office, sanitization tunnels, open windows to allow the circulation of fresh air, an office layout which helps ensure a separation of six feet between employees at all time, are some of the new normal rules welcoming them in the office.

To add to it, traffic flows in office spaces are being designed to go in one direction to reduce "pinch points"— those crossover points where people may collide, as per Cushman & Wakefield, the global real estate development company, that helped 10,000 organizations in China move nearly one million people back to office spaces.

Rohit Raj Puniani, Senior Director, Business Operations, of leading multinational workplace design consultancy firm Space Matrix headquartered in Singapore with a specialization in design and build, shares that to ensure business continuity and help clients navigate these uncertain times, Space Matrix developed the Workplace Reboot Programme – a tool kit of 5 key service offerings to craft bespoke solutions for their clients. Critically, the solutions address Workplace Readiness - how organizations return to the office safely; and Workplace Redefinition - how they transition to a 'new normal' regardless of existing or new build workplaces. For instance, employees will

regularly come into contact with common surfaces such as doors, switches, buttons, tabletops, etc. Leveraging smart workplace technology and systems is a modern, logical way to address this. IoT-driven solutions and measures such as motion sensors for doors, creating more partitions and installing sensor-based switches and taps in the common areas can be safer alternatives to touchpoints.

And similar dramatic changes are brewing in that company hotpot of all action-the cafeteria. Once the hub of all office interactions and buzz, sharing snacks and food may now be passé with the adoption of staggered lunch hours. While some organizations are on one extreme of the spectrum and have asked employees to bring their own lunch and eat at their desks or have closed cafeterias in favor of vending machines, there are others that are leveraging technology to make their cafeterias COVID-19 safe.

Rohit adds, "We can issue directives like restricting entry to the cafeteria during lunch hours, but what if a delay on the part of the pantry staff leads to a crowd build-up in the waiting area? Smart crowd management systems and token-based digital ordering from one's desk would help in eliminating such scenarios."

One such solution is powered by HungerBox, leading institutional food-tech company that has unveiled a robust solution based on FSSAI (Food Safety & Standards Authority of India) and WHO guidelines and the GOI's AarogyaSetu App to make cafeteria operations 'COVID-19 safe.'

The risks of transmission inside cafeterias broadly fall into four areas:

1. Transmission due to overcrowding & lack of social distancing, especially during peak hours
2. Transmission due to handling of currency notes used for placing orders inside cafeterias
3. Transmission due to food or staff involved in kitchen operations
4. Transmission due to food or staff involved in cafeteria operation

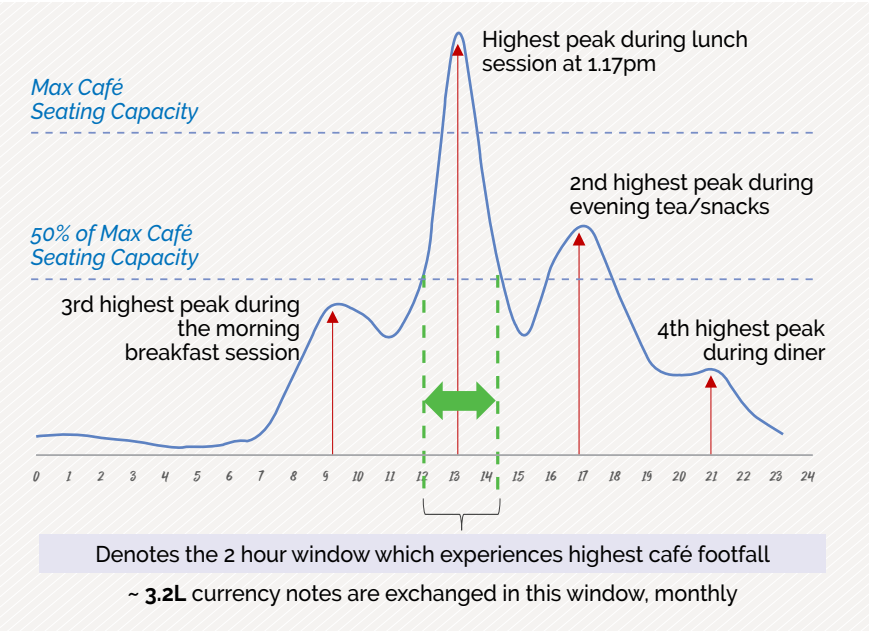
"We can issue directives like restricting entry to the cafeteria during lunch hours, but what if a delay on the part of the pantry staff leads to a crowd build-up in the waiting area? Smart crowd management systems and token-based digital ordering from one's desk would help in eliminating such scenarios"

- **Rohit Raj Puniani,** Senior Director, Business Operations, Space Matrix



Cafeterias, one of the most crowded areas in organizations, pose great transmission risks requiring mitigation...

Hourly trend of people visiting cafeterias[1]



Denotes the 2 hour window which experiences highest café footfall

~ **3.2L** currency notes are exchanged in this window, monthly

As the graph denotes, cafeterias receives a constant influx of people throughout the working day with 4 significant peaks.

Due to this, cafeterias pose the following risks of transmission:

- R1 Transmission due to overcrowding in cafeteria & lack of social distancing, especially during peak hours
- R2 Transmission due to handling of currency notes, used for placing orders inside cafeterias
- R3 Transmission due to food or staff involved in kitchen operations
- R4 Transmission due to food or staff involved in cafeteria operations

Sources: **1)** HungerBox Database. **2)** Source: SBI "Ecowrap report" dated March 17th 2020 (SBI website: sbi.co.in). **3)** Source: RBI statement published on March 16th 2020 (RBI website: rbi.org.in)

...through innovative use of technology & food safety protocols for social distancing & optimal utilization of café resources

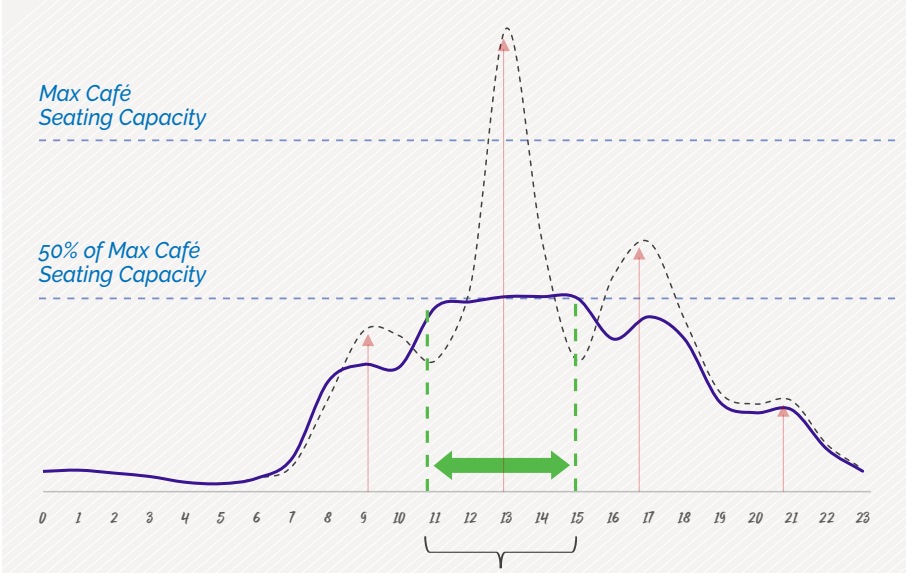
Levers to tackle COVID	What should it achieve	Risks Mitigated R1	R2	R3	R4
Technology	▸ Social distancing inside cafeteria through ML based time allotment algorithm ▸ Contactless payments ▸ Optimal utilization of cafeteria resources ▸ Proof of compliance for social distancing norms	✓	✓	✗	✗
Consumer connect & communication	▸ Physical marking of spots to ensure social distancing in all cafeteria spaces; like tables, queues for hand-wash, etc. ▸ Communication to instill confidence regarding all the safety measures taken	✓	✓	✗	✗
Tech enabled training of operations personnel	▸ Protocols that allow only the "Fit to Work" personnel to be involved in the overall food process	✗	✗	✓	✓
Tech led monitoring of cafeteria perations & kitchen operations	▸ Digital monitoring of all important aspects related to cafeteria operations, kitchen operations such as daily tracking of temperatures and making it visible to the cafeteria owners	✗	✗	✓	✓

Overcrowding of cafeterias & other risks are mitigated through COVID-19 safe café management solutions

Hourly trend of people visiting cafeterias[1]

(with & without COVID safe café management)

- ---- Hourly trend of café footfall without COVID-19 Safe
- —— Hourly trend of café footfall post-COVID-19 safe implementation



Denotes flattening of the curve & spread of footfall over a longer window as opposed to the previous 2 hour window

No Currency Notes are exchanged in cafeteria

COVID-19 safe café management by India's largest digital café company



Source: HungerBox

While cafés receive a constant flow of users through the day, HungerBox data shows that cafeterias in an institutional setting experience a peak flow at 1:17 pm. Apart from the crowding, cash transactions can also result in an increased risk of transmission of the virus. To mitigate these risks due to overcrowding and handling and decongest cafes, HungerBox employs a combination of technology, clear and consistent communication to prompt adherence, tech-enabled training of personnel, tech-led monitoring of cafeteria and kitchen operations.

Office cafeteria in the new normal

Before we delve deep into the technology, one thing we need to understand is that office cafeterias are not going to be the same again for a long time to come.

Sandipan Mitra, Co-founder and CEO, HungerBox says, "Besides the obvious function of being a place where staff had their food, cafeterias were also used to hangout and have a conversation and catch up. Digital manage-

ment of cafes will be an absolute imperative and not a 'vanity' metric anymore as cafés will be prime real estate and will need to be regulated carefully."

Sandipan further adds that food preferences will shift to contactless options like food vending machines. Food safety and hygiene will take center stage as a vendor's success will depend solely on that metric alone and 100% of payments will be made, digitally. In the current scenario, people's entry and exit, seating arrangements, temperature checks, constant sanitization of food counters, all of these will have to be closely monitored.

Tech on the deck

The HungerBox 'COVID-19 Safe' solution follows a five-pronged approach that envelops aspects such as technology, user connect and communication, WHO-prescribed supervisor training, and enhanced protocols for kitchen and cafeteria operations including rigorous checks on operations personnel and a tech-led monitoring system that encompasses a 360-degree view of cafeteria operations.

"Using AI/ ML, the HungerBox platform regulates user flow into cafeterias and enables decongestion and enables enhanced crowd management. This ensures that users visit the café only when it is safe and social distancing can be maintained."

HungerBox has also implemented improved safety protocols inside the kitchen as well as in the cafeterias. Only those 'fit to work' and handle food will be allowed to operate as Café Experience Managers. Regular temperature screening of staff and monitoring of compliance with food safety standards at the kitchen, food counters, and cafeteria are executed with the help of HungerBox's tech. In addition to this, all leading contactless payment options are provided to eliminate the risk of virus transmission due to cash handling.

As part of the solution, kitchen operations based on prescribed FSSAI standards envelop raw material handling, food preparation, kitchen hygiene standards, and food transportation with 11 different records being maintained at HungerBox partner kitchens. These include several logs for sanitization, cooking temperature, cleaning checklists for premises, transport, etc. Once the food reaches clients' cafeteria, the focus on stringent standards is maintained across areas such as food service & ordering, counter hygiene, café hygiene, and café monitoring.

But have office lunches been changed forever? Or will people go back to the status quo when things are settled? Well, we can implement several measures to ride over the situation

Lunch with technology

But have office lunches been changed forever? Or will people go back to the status quo when things are settled?

Sandipan believes that humans crave social interaction and will adapt their behavior in line with what is required.

The same thoughts are echoed by Rohit, who believes that unlike the past, employees will collaborate more by using digital technology and the past practice of huddles and coffee table interactions will no longer be preferred.

For now, social distancing and de-congested, COVID-19 safe corporate cafeterias powered with digital are here to stay.

Q&A

COVID-19 is changing the workplace design: Gensler's David Calkins

Work-from-home is here to stay, but office space is not going away either; and it's likely that most of the changes made to the office will be temporary for now, according to award-winning architect and interior designer **David Calkins**

By **Mint Kang**



INTERVIEW

People Matters asked David Calkins, the Regional Managing Principal of Asia Pacific and Middle East for Gensler, the world's largest design firm, to share some thoughts about how COVID-19 is changing office spaces. David, an award-winning architect and interior designer, leads the senior management team in setting strategic priorities and oversees growth initiatives and client activities in the region. Here are the highlights of the conversation.

Q With remote work proving so successful, many business owners are saying that they won't need office space any more. What are your thoughts on that?

A The effectiveness of working from home has been a pleasant surprise. We surveyed all the staff in our region—for me that is the Asia Pacific and Middle East, extending from Sydney to Tokyo, Bangalore, and Abu Dhabi—and we found that the majority of our people, 68 percent, were satisfied or highly satisfied about working from home. They felt that they were trusted by their manager and were more empowered and productive than when

they were in the office.

But on the other hand, we miss the socialization; we feel that the boundary between work and life is somewhat lacking, and we're working longer hours. We miss the interactions, the collaboration and feeling that we're a part of our various organizations. And so, we're going to have to



be careful about saying that we don't need office space any more. The character of that space might change, but the sense of culture in the organization is so important. That culture is played out by us being in the same office, working together, spending time with each other.

Q In other words, we still need the office space to create and maintain a culture?

A The culture of a company isn't defined by its space, but it can be enhanced by it. The spaces for community, for collaboration and socialization, are hugely important. Take our own offices for example—we're architects and designers; we're very visual people. We like to have our work around where we can see it and touch it and show it to our clients and visitors. The guiding principles of our culture, our identity, are manifested in our space; they are constant reminders of who we are and what's important to us. And if you are not in that space, you don't have those things in front of you as much.

Q What do you think will happen to office spaces then, if companies really do reduce the floor area they occupy?

A If the decision is made that a particular company is going to take 50 percent less real estate, there are implications for the layout and for the character of the space. And if that's what will happen going down, the character and the functions of the office are going to change significantly.

One thing we think could happen is that the office will become more of a collaboration hub, a social hub, and a meeting hub, than an actual work hub. So people might come to the office for meetings with clients, or with teams to exchange ideas and collaborate on solving problems, but the heads-down, focused work will be done offsite—remotely, at home or some other location.

Also, in these days, company culture is really important. We can't ignore the war for talent; the quality of employee experience is really important to us and to our clients, who know that in order to have the best people, they have to have the best office space, the best way of working.

Q Is there a way for employers to somehow replicate a good office experience for people who are working from home?

A That's challenging. One of the things we have tried to respond to is our employees' need for ergonomic comfort in their home working setting. Some of our clients in Silicon Valley have given significant amounts of money to their employees

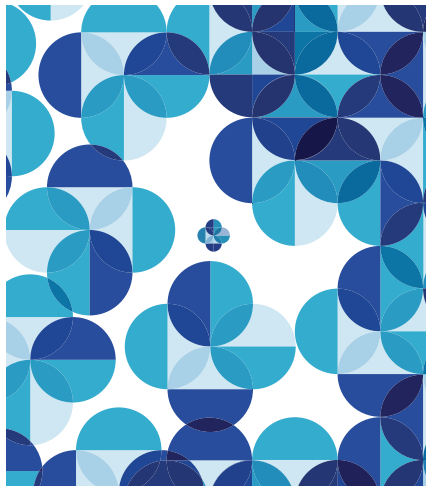
to outfit their home offices, whether with adjustable chairs or suitable working surfaces, so that the setup doesn't take a physical toll on employees who are working long hours.

People are also adapting to working virtually with video calls or online happy hours, but I still don't think it takes the place of face-to-face interaction. For instance, we had a couple of new people join the firm during this period, and trying to onboard them virtually has been challenging. I think many of us are ready to get away from the working-from-home situation.

Q Working spaces will have to change in some ways as people go back to work—what are the more significant changes you're seeing?

A We're advising our clients not to make monumental changes at this particular time: to leave layouts as they are, to reduce density, and to do some studies on how things will have to operate in the future. We have identified a list of the top 10 issues to work on, the first one being reducing density: where we might have had a certain occupancy on a particular office floor, we're now looking at cutting that in half. In other words, vacating and keeping vacant every other workstation.

Likewise, the density of collaboration spaces like cafes and meeting rooms has to be reduced: taking away excess furniture that might have people randomly coming into close contact with each other.



We can't ignore the war for talent; the quality of employee experience is really important to us and to our clients, who know that in order to have the best people, they have to have the best office space, the best way of working

Also, we're advising our clients to go to assigned seating instead of hotdesking or other arrangements that might have multiple people using the same workstations during the day.

Q What about physical interventions—where do you see those going?

A There will be some interventions that are quite valuable, one of them being around how visitors come into the space with the registration and temperature screening process. There would be changes around how the air conditioning system works, such as to provide the highest quality of air filtration possible and how much outside air is brought into the space, which is really important to disperse contaminants. There are various disinfection methodologies that could be used within the air conditioning itself.

Other physical interventions might be the installation of equipment that makes the space as touchless as possible, such as motion-sensing doors and light switches. We might even see the designing of spaces without doors at all, to remove surfaces that multiple people are touching.

Then there is the possibility of upgrading materials used in the space, to materials that are treated with anti-microbial coatings, or have natural anti-microbial properties. Overall, we see a lot of positives coming out of this, because we've been talking about designing spaces that promote health for quite a while, and this brings it more strongly to the forefront.

Past Month's events

How to create an internal mobility strategy – Skill inventory, technology and process

ORGANIZERS: People Matters & Degreed
DATE: 16th June 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: As more companies look for ways to streamline their business operations, and optimize their talent strategies, upskilling their existing workforce will play a critical role in re-inventing the business. While some jobs are getting transformed, newer jobs are being created. In this context, there's a need to have a plan to move talent internally. With the right strategy, you can maintain worker morale and build greater organizational agility and cross-functional knowledge.
In this webcast, Veena Deshpande, Senior Director at Capgemini shared her views on how to get started with a mobility strategy. What roles of technology in scaling a learning organization and what values you can derive from a skill inventory.

People Matters EX: A virtual conference

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 19th June 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: People Matters EX Virtual conference was a full-day event that featured two virtual tracks and took 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 covered 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. Read insights from the session on our website and explore how EX has translated in every decision in the talent strategy.

L&D Readiness: How to build a sustainable talent pipeline

ORGANIZERS: People Matters & UpsideLMS
DATE: 30th June 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: Identifying skills gap, nurturing talent, and filling vacant positions through L&D and HR interventions is a critical priority for the success and growth of any organization, which calls for a sustainable talent pipeline that consistently identifies and prepares talent for open positions across the organization. In this webcast, we explored how successful organizations like Gulf Oil focus on succession planning with HR interventions through L&D programs at mid, junior, and senior levels.

Upcoming events

People Matters TechHR India 2020

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 10th-14th August 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: In Business-As-Unusual, there is no play-book to follow, there are no experts to guide, there are no tried and tested methods.

This time, at People Matters TechHR, we will encourage and empower our community to try new things, to learn along the way, and to find answers. If we are able to solve enough problems not only do we get to survive as businesses BUT we also get to redefine distinctiveness and business value for our organizations and our industry. This year's theme, AdaptableHR: The Great Reset underscores the fact that the new reality is vastly different and the RESET that was needed earlier has transformed into a GREAT RESET at all levels of the business. It also means that HR needs to be adaptable as never before. We must realize that this is a journey and not a destination or project that will ever be completed. And to do that, we're going to need to have the courage to be open-minded and flexible, able to listen to other people with understanding and empathy, be keen to learn, be resilient and be willing to face uncertainty and challenge.

Awards - Are You In The List 2020?

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 8 August 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: As we enter into 2020, the beginning of a new decade, a lot is expected to change. Business models will change, the way we work will change, and technological shifts will transform every facet of how we work. Organizations will have to equip themselves to deal with the rapid rate of change and all sorts of crises. And one major factor which will determine who will come on top of all the shifts is leadership. More than ever now, organizations need leaders who can be agile, lead the change, and be the answer to everything related to People and Work. People Matters Are you in the List 2020? Awards in association with DDI for the 9th year in the row, along with Behavioural Learning Partner Harappa Education aims to identify these very emerging HR leaders who can become the answer to the challenges in the People and Workspace.

This year too, the awards will endeavor to identify a handful of such talent powerhouses who have it in them to successfully chart the course of future for their organizations amidst all the crises and disruptions that will ensue in the future.

People Matters TechHR Singapore 2020

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 1-3rd September 2020
VENUE: Online
THEME: People Matters TechHR Singapore 2020 will help untangle the digital context. Themed around 'BY DESIGN', the conference on 1st September will examine the purpose of technology, its impact on business, how it can accelerate change in talent practices and the ways in which we can architect digital culture while keeping the digital transformation agenda at the fore.

Additionally, the week also includes certification workshops on 3rd September and the keenly anticipated People Matters Study Tours across some progressive companies in Singapore on 2nd September 2020.

Blogosphere

» **PROF. SARIT PRAVA DAS** AND **DR. TANVI RANA**



Using HR Technology in the time of COVID-19

HR leaders must focus on more concrete long term solutions. In this regard, amalgamating technology with HR is a fantastic solution

"Crises and deadlocks when they occur have at least this advantage that they force us to think."
– Jawaharlal Nehru

The current crises have compelled organizations to switch to technology-based disruptions in the traditional work settings. Be it IT, Banking, Education, or FMCG industry, all are able to operate remotely with the help of tech-based solutions. Online meeting platforms like Zoom, Cisco WebEx, Google Meet, etc., got a sudden hike in downloads in the past one and a half months. HR leaders of companies like Titan, Cognizant, Axis Bank, Deloitte, Saint-Gobain India, Whirlpool, etc. opine that virtual workplace settings are here to stay for long.

Therefore, HR leaders must focus on more concrete long term solutions. In this regard, amalgamating technology with HR is a fantastic solution. Companies have started switching to virtual workspace mode to cut facility costs in order to increase investment in intelligent HR technologies. TCS has already announced a 25/25 business model wherein 75 percent of its workforce will work from home till 2025. As quoted by NG Subramaniam, COO, TCS - "The new model will require only 25 percent of the workforce at the facilities to give 100 percent productivity."

> Finally, tech-based HR is coming into practice. But how should we prepare for it? Let us see

HR-Tech functions in the current scenario

The HR functions like CV screening, on-boarding, recording employee database are handed over to bots. These are intelligent bots and are capable of making condition-based decisions without human intervention. This trait is extremely useful in the current situation as employees are not physically available all the time.

Training for employees working from home for the first time is possible through virtual training programmes only. HR managers are suggesting employees take a suitable Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on platforms like Coursera and Edx for Learning & Development. Mathematical algorithms do the performance

tracking and grading for Performance Appraisals. End to end encrypted software are calculating Compensation and Benefits for the employees.

Aditya Birla, TCS, Reliance, etc. are engaging employees through Zoom sessions by stand-up comedians, motivational speakers or lifestyle coaches. Free-of-cost meditation apps like Headspace are used for employee wellness. AI-enabled emotions monitoring is helping to understand employees' varied emotions like anger, frustration, happy, etc. while working from home.

Yes, finally tech-based HR is coming into practice. But how should we prepare for it? Let us see:

Organization

Transitioning traditional HR systems into tech-based HR demands large investment in IT infrastructure. Before investing the HR leaders should ask themselves: is my organization ready for tech-based HR? Should we make or buy technology? Which technology is the best for my company? The market is full of technology providers, the HR managers must select reliable, efficient, and user-friendly technology solutions.

HR Department

Seeking clarity on various HR processes is the prerequisite for infusing technology into the HR department. The method is to conduct a HR audit for each process, identify the hindrance and rectify it in a timely manner. CHROs are investing in technology for HR processes like hiring, talent management, performance evaluation, employee development, CTC calculation, etc. The biggest concern is data security. Cloudflare is a software that guarantees safe access to data from remote work locations. Besides, HR leaders are developing in-house IT teams to create secure data-sharing channels.



Employees

The ultimate user of technology is the employee. Some companies are proactively training their employees on future preparedness and handling technology with responsibility and effectiveness. Employees are being motivated to enrol in online courses and utilize the lockdown time for self-learning. In this transition phase the leaders must learn to forgive the mistakes of the employees and incentivize those who use technology more and more. It is truly said: "To win the marketplace, you must first win the workplace."

The road ahead looks rough. Leveraging the HR functions with technology is the most reliable solution today. As they say, 'as you sow, so shall you reap.' Therefore, it is the right time for developing people and practices to combat future uncertainties.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

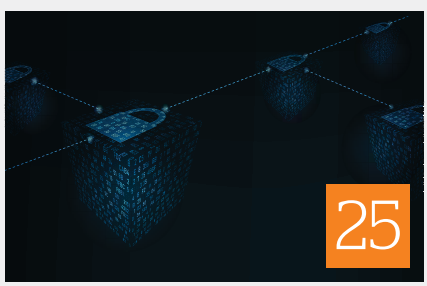
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Real Time Compliance Management

Avoid non-compliances taking place than a post mortem after the damage is done.



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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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