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TOTAL REWARDS STRATEGIES
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employees who wanted to quit their jobs and start their own business. Frank, a company based in the UK, offered its employees incentives in the form of points for the time span in which they stayed away from their phones. Of course, it permitted the use of phones for emergencies. The intent behind this was to ensure that employees got away with the habit of checking their phones every now and then. While these unique reward schemes do appear to be out-of-the-box initiatives for enhanced engagement, things have taken a significant turn ever since the COVID-19 pandemic made its mark.

As mentioned by Amarpreet Bhamra in the cover story, a Gartner June 2020 report has shown that a majority of leaders have been innovative with at least one employee reward. Given the fact that employees perceive that they are isolated, overwhelmed and uncertain, the least that organisations could do is to provide them with a sense of security, respect and belongingness. Bhamra writes that it is only prudent for organisations to weave in their rewards programme with kindness, empathy and appreciation and optimum use of digital tools. In the same column, Vikas Dua writes that organisations invest in employees in varied ways, while employees value critical factors such as recognition, growth opportunities and growth investments.

Interview features Jonah Berger, a professor in Wharton and bestselling author who explains that successful change is not about pushing harder or exerting more energy, but about identifying what prevents change from happening and removing barriers.

Kaushik Chakraborty writes that organisations will savour success on the basis of their ability to connect with every individual within the organisation at a deeper level through technology in these uncertain times.

The pandemic has, in fact, forced us to focus on the lower levels of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs since all one can think of is safety and survival. Since the new normal has led organisations to adapt to newer working environments such as Remote logging, Telecommuting and Work-From-Home, employee rewards programmes need to be unique as well.

Carpe Diem!

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Exit Interviews: Short Term Focus!

One school of thought says that exit interviews should be used to extract learnings for organisation-wide improvements while the other says that it should focus on improving the one process that will be used immediately to replace the departing employees.

BY GAUTAM BRAHMA

Exit interviews have now become an integral part of HR practice. Most companies do exit interviews, and many companies not only carry out a detailed analysis of what departing employees say, they also act on the insights gathered and track improvements. There are several companies which do exit interviews on behalf of other companies. Even a casual search on the internet will throw up ready-made questionnaires for carrying out exit interviews, as well as tools for administration and analysis.

Many companies have embedded exit interviews in their voluntary separation process. Full-and-final settlement of dues is contingent upon the completion of the exit interview. So much so, there are several resources on the world wide web that help people prepare for exit interviews. The logic there, presumably, is that one must come off well even in an exit interview because one never knows whether one will have to interact again with that company or the concerned HR executive. In short, there is now a rich ecosystem supporting exit interviews.

Typically, these interviews ask questions about the employee’s good and bad experiences in the company, reasons for leaving and specific views on the compensation, benefits, appraisal, training and supervision practices of the company. Many exit interviews also include questions around the compensation, benefits, location, responsibilities and designation that the employee has been promised by her new employer. This information, duly processed, can be used to make improvements that can hopefully reduce attrition.

However, there are the usual concerns with exit interviews that plague all interviews and polling. Some employees give bland, unhelpful replies that offer no real insight into their reasons for leaving, either because by this time they have totally disengaged with the company or because they do not want to burn their bridges, should they have to return. Some others badmouth specific individuals to settle scores or just to let off steam. Often, they focus on the higher compensation they are getting because they believe, and it might be true, that that is what the interviewer is most comfortable hearing. Asking management for salary hikes basis the exit interview findings does not hurt anyone.

The organisation that is letting the employee go has its own challenges in processing the findings. Many managers believe that what the employee says while leaving has to be taken with a pinch of salt. If the employee says she is leaving for a higher salary, managers take the position that they want value-driven committed employees and not the money minded variety, so her other comments can be discounted. If the employee says that she is leaving because of better work, learning and growth possibilities, managers say this cannot be true since people generally change jobs for money, and feedback from untrustworthy employees should be ignored. All managers are not so cynical of course, but the underlying weaknesses in the quality of information gathered...
and the prevailing degree of acceptance function to reduce the value of the exercise.

Luckily, not all employees and managers are cynical, and many companies have thought a great deal about making this process useful. One way is to use specialist agencies who are good at making the employee comfortable, probing effectively without non-verbal or verbal judgement, and ensuring that no attribution is made. This anonymisation often leads to an improved quality of feedback. Another way is to filter out the feedback provided by high-performing employees that the company is truly sorry to lose and extract insights separately from that set. The belief here is that the company must pay serious attention to the changes that would ensure stickiness for their star performers.

Typical questions could be:
- How did the employee learn about the opening?
- How did the new employer learn about the employee?
- What was the time between the first contact and the offer letter?
- How many interviews did the employee go through?
- What was the duration of the interviews?
- Were they scheduled in a convenient manner?
- What did the employee like most about the hiring process?

Many more can be conceived along these lines. The chances are that the employee will be unrehearsed for these questions and will see no reason to not share what exactly happened.

There will also be greater acceptance of the findings, by the organisation, because the whole information gathering would have been fact-based, and, by and large, not a search for opinion. The best part of this shift is that most of the learnings would be immediately actionable. Also, the focus will shift from the present to the future. If the interview goes well, the employee can be roped into an alumni programme that has a fee-based incentive for proposing good hires in the future. The discomfort of the employee in the process and the negative energy which often flows into discounting exit interview findings will be largely avoided.

The big resistance for such a shift from long-term to short-term focus would come from the entrenched opinion that exit interviews should be used to extract learnings for organisation-wide improvements. The alternative view that exit-interviews should focus on improving the one process that will be used immediately to replace the departing employees, sounds much less lofty. It should be kept in mind that attrition is a fact of life arising from the new contract between management and employees: the former cannot ensure life-long employment and growth, because of rapid technology change, mergers, acquisitions and divestments, and the latter cannot ensure life-long loyalty. If that is the case, one can justify a more utilitarian approach to the design, analysis and use of exit interviews.

“One must come off well even in an exit interview because one never knows whether one will have to interact again with that company or the concerned HR executive.”

Most of the planned benefits from exit interviews are medium to long term. The learning & development, appraisal, compensation and supervision practices, for instance, cannot be changed in a matter of weeks and months. There are, however, some insights that can be acted upon in the short-term, often with tangible benefits. These have to do with recruitment.

If the company wants to replace a departing employee with an equivalent one, it makes sense to probe the hiring process used by her new employer.

“Attrition is a fact of life arising from the new contract between management and employees - the former cannot ensure life-long employment and growth, and the latter cannot ensure life-long loyalty.”

The ecosystem that has been built around the exit interview practice is not likely to support this change. However, all change begins small and all initiatives leave a mark. If visible benefits start flowing in, the ecosystem will adapt to support it. As always, some managers will make the shift early and reap the benefits. Many will retain the long-term flavour while adding some short-term actionable queries. Some will carry on as before. Again, as always, there is enough room for a multiplicity of practices. To each his own.

About the Author

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

The cornerstone of a rewards programme must be woven around kindness, empathy, appreciation and the optimum use of digital tools. HR organisations need to invest in these behaviours to strengthen the foundation of the reward strategies.

BY AMARPREET BHAMRA

Given the amount of stress involved in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, the workforce in nearly every enterprise across the globe is aspiring for succour. As enterprises await the restoration of normalcy, employees are anticipating support from their employers or the senior management to tide over such an acute crisis. In this context, many enterprises along with their HR teams have begun an exercise on revisiting total rewards strategies and enabling resilience in the workforce.

Origins of Total Rewards
The footprints of total rewards in history date back to the Middle Ages when sportspersons were rewarded for winning sports competitions. A closer resemblance would be the debut of the Olympic Games wherein athletes from different nations were pitted against each other in multiple sports and the winners were rewarded with gold, silver and bronze medals on the basis of their performance. As the Industrial Revolution marched ahead, factories began to reward their employees for increased productivity by doling out monetary rewards in the form of cash incentives and bonuses. The workforce was motivated by money and the more productive workers were handed out a higher cash reward as compared to the others.

With the onset of the 20th century, enterprises started to expand the scope of the rewards. It drew inspiration from B.F. Skinner’s study of positive reinforcement. Skinner stated that employers only reward employees who were more diligent and produced exceptional business results. Enterprises introduced pay
Incentive plans were designed to reward employees for demonstrating the above-mentioned trait. Also, the tenure of the employees was brought under the rewards category by the management since higher tenures would bring about increased productivity. Taking a cue from the military, enterprises kick-started the process of awarding promotions to employees, thereby rewarding them for their outcomes and contributions towards the success of the enterprises.

As the years progressed, enterprises started developing and implementing a framework for rewards by understanding the needs of the employees, evaluating the available options and enabling the desired structures to achieve the stated purpose. The first element in this approach was around cash compensation which included both fixed (salary and allowances) and variable (bonus and incentives) pay. Benefits programme or policy was the second element and included holidays, medical cover, income protection and pension schemes distributed to the scores of workers. These were regulated by a centralised policy and the allocated spend was based on the grade of the employees. Moreover, to keep the workforce skilled enterprises started rewarding employees by launching formal training programmes which constituted the third element.

Modern day Rewards programmes
The late eighties and nineties have propelled the employee rewards programme to include a much wider scope and offerings and the trend has continued in the twenty first century as well. With the workforce becoming more diverse with the inclusion of the millennials, greater percentage of women, the physically challenged and LGBTQ+, the employee rewards programmes have been designed to meet the needs of these groups. Enterprises have also realised that employee satisfaction and engagements are essential for their success, and hence, the rewards programmes are tailored to establish a positive company culture and offer incentives and job perks that excite and inspire staff as well as attract top talent.

As compared to the incentive plans from the yesteryears, benefits and in-house professional development programmes have been retained by the enterprises. Furthermore, the employee rewards programmes are customised to align with the business needs and the aspirations of the workforce. E.g. Mobility programmes have been launched in multiple enterprises by combining the flavour of professional development and reward-for-performance trait. The medical cover under Benefits has been extended to the immediate family members and dependents on the basis of the respective policies among the enterprises. Enterprises have experimented with the idea of differential pay incentive plan and skill allowance/bonus based on performance management and appetite of the workforce to upgrade themselves on the newer skills. The promotion cycle in some enterprises has been made bi-annually to reward the performing employees gradually.

The employee rewards programme has been designed to appeal to the needs of the millennials and bringing in newer elements, say, for instance, Family Day or any other theme day is extremely popular in many enterprises and record a massive footfall. In the realms of professional development, many enterprises have tied up with reputed business schools to undertake management programmes and thereby reward meritorious performances.

"Until the pandemic, employee rewards programmes were striving to keep the workforce fit and happy. Given the looming crisis, there is a need for enterprises to revisit the total rewards strategy to handle an unprecedented situation."
Revisiting Employee Rewards

Until the pandemic, employee rewards programmes were striving to keep the workforce fit and happy. Given the backdrop of the looming crisis, there is a need for enterprises to revisit the total rewards strategy to handle the unprecedented situation. As per a recent study conducted by Mercer, nearly 700 organisations found that 59% of employers are planning to revisit their total rewards strategy in the next six to eighteen months for the entire organisation, and another 18% are planning to reconsider their strategy for specific job families. Going forward, there is also an underlying need to increase transparency and segment the rewards offerings. For the benefit of the readers, the author has articulated a few pointers in this direction as detailed below:

- **Monetary Raises:** Companies need to be empathetic while handing out monetary increments and rewarding employees for sustaining the processes and yielding the desired results in spite of the stressful environment. These measures will surely alleviate the travails of the workforce given that many companies are sending employees on furlough or have implemented job cuts. While deliberating annual compensation payouts, enterprises should be considerate in terms of evaluating the performance of the workforce, keeping in mind the adjustments made by them in the Work-From-Home environment. The emotional strain endured by the workforce

NIKETH SUNDAR
Chief People Officer, QuEST Global

“The world, as we know, is changing rapidly. I would expect Total Reward frameworks to keep pace with this change and adapt. An excellent Total Rewards Framework should be aligned with and enable organisation vision and strategy, balanced in terms of fixed/variable, cash/non-cash, short/long term benefits, career and wellbeing, comprehensible wherein it should be easy to communicate and understand. It should also be deliberate with each element well thought out and delivers specific objective, efficient enough to deliver value at optimum cost and be light on administration and also flexible enough to adapt to different demographics, workforce models, and changing internal/external dynamics.”
cannot be underestimated and must be met with empathy in the appraisal life cycle. These gestures are bound to touch the lower rung employees who have handled the workload seamlessly for their respective organisations. Human Resources teams should strive for a more equitable pay policy which rewards the key or frontline employees on a premium basis as compared to others.

- **Financial:** Total reward strategies must amplify the financial component to build endurance within the workforce. With a large portion of the workforce supporting families and dependents and having financial liabilities like home loans to pay, sound financial relief plans and counselling would come about as a welcome step. It is critical for the Human Resources and Benefits team and the senior management to undertake a study and explore possibilities of altering existing pay, benefits and performance incentives by providing flexibility in these structures. E.g. Scottish Water, a publicly owned utility company, is rewarding its employees by awarding a basic pay increase of 3 per cent which is more than the rate of inflation.

- **Allowances:** Enterprises could explore the possibility of providing allowances or arrange for delivering essential items and groceries, medical supplies, basic health kits, sanitation items by leveraging the home delivery channel. Human Resource and Benefits professionals along with senior management could design and offer niche allowances for hazard work and transportation.

- **Wellness:** There could be options in terms of mental health sessions, affordable insurance cover for COVID-19 and co-pay the health care expenses incurred on treatment for the affected employees.

- **Workforce Management:** Flexible office schedules along with support provided in terms of childcare and counselling sessions could strengthen the revised rewards strategies. Managers and senior management could offer short virtual time-outs or provide flexibility in terms of mandatory personal time-outs to recharge the workforce. Companies could consider providing additional leave allowances and accrued paid time as per the convenience of employees.

MEIYEA NEO
HR Director APAC, Zendesk

“This year has given us a new lens through which to view the employee experience. It’s our responsibility to acknowledge how much has changed, while staying true to our core values - particularly when it comes to Total Rewards. That means not only revisiting salaries and benefits, but deepening the focus on wellness and flexibility, which have proven to be critical in current times. The Total Rewards Strategy also needs to reinforce an equitable and inclusive employee experience given our distributed workforce. Frequent and transparent communication is important so that the message is well understood and the company is able to stay both competitive and relevant in the markets we operate in.”
With changing times, there has been a change in the mindset of employees. Employees look for holistic development and financial growth. Along with salaries, they seek work life balance, holidays on weekends, learning opportunities and growth. ‘Total Rewards’ is one such tool which gives a sense of acknowledgment to employees for valuing their relationship with the organisation. Usually, ‘Total Rewards’ encompass compensation, well-being, benefits, recognition and development for an employee which leads to optimal organisational performance. With the COVID 19 pandemic, most organisations are facing challenges and hence this might not be the perfect time to adopt ‘Total Rewards’. However, going forward, companies would need a transparent ‘Total Reward’ programme to attract and retain talent.

**Enterprises could further leverage predictive analysis to derive new total rewards strategies and cement the bonds with the workforce by identifying with their preferences.**

A recent survey by Willis Towers Watson found that 42 per cent of firms have made or are planning to make significant changes to their benefit programmes owing to COVID19. In the past, employee rewards programmes had largely been a top-down approach in many enterprises. To broaden the programme and make it more transparent, the Human Resources and Benefits professionals could tap into Design Thinking methodology and thereby improve the employee experience and satisfaction. A critical factor for total rewards programme would be to increase the existing levels of communication on what constitutes the design of the same. Enterprises could further leverage predictive analysis to derive new total rewards strategies and cement the bonds with the workforce by identifying with their preferences. In this direction, some organisations have started weaving and focusing more on the non-monetary measures and thereby shift the focus away from compensation which has largely been the mainstream of current rewards programme.

The cornerstone of a revised rewards programme has to be woven around kindness, empathy and appreciation as well as the optimum usage of digital tools. The senior management and Human Resources need to invest in these behaviours and thereby strengthen the foundation of the rewards strategies. A Gartner report published in June 2020 reveals that a majority of leaders have improved at least one reward to help employees through this difficult time. The prudent way to revisit and optimise the rewards is to implement a consistent strategy which is paired with clear objectives. The current topsy-turvy world of the pandemic has shoved work and home lives under the same roof. As the workforce learns to balance both these aspects an agile total rewards program invested in softer nuances would be the best way forward to reward the workforce and salute the indomitable human spirit.

**Gifting:** Virtual sessions like arranging team events by offering food hampers from hotels or restaurant chains, tea and coffee hangouts, gift cards for festivals could be incorporated in the total rewards programme. Senior leaders in the organisations should make the effort to personally thank employees and reward them with spot awards for any noticeable contributions delivered in these circumstances.

The total rewards programme could be further customised for different segments of the workforce. For instance, the needs of working mothers in terms of balancing the home and office chores warrant differential treatment. With the closure of paying guest accommodation in the urban centres due to lock downs, a large part of the workforce has been forced to return to their homes. For such employees, the rewards programme could look in the direction of entering into tie-ups with service apartments or paying guest accommodation at nominal rates on a long-term forward model. Other niche and viable offerings would be to incorporate plans for outplacement and re-boarding to support employees who may be impacted by job displacements.

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**About the Author**

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

While organisations do invest in employees in varied ways, employees value critical factors such as recognition, growth opportunities and growth investments. The 'Total Rewards' strategy is therefore designed to align these thought processes.

BY VIKAS DUA

You are seated at a fancy, Michelin-starred restaurant as the calmly poised Maître d' hands over the menu with exotic-sounding dishes dotting the pages. Unstirred by the numerals latched onto the currency symbols, you proceed to place your order, with the confidence of a student who has just appeared for an examination, which he knows he has aced. Fifteen minutes into the experience, the stewardess arrives with the first of the courses - the soup. As she lifts the cloche and places the bowl of piping hot Potage St. Germain (Fresh Pea Soup, for the uninitiated), vapours of steam rise magically upwards as if Aladdin’s genie has just been released from his trapped drudgery. With great expectations, you dip your silver spoon into the soup and bring the first sip to your lips. And, in that split second, the entire experience that has been building up, shatters like how the cobalt blue skies are ripped apart by the rays of the morning sun. You realise that the salt is less. You want nothing more than making those dollar signs disappear.

But pray, why are we discussing a salt-deprived meal when we are supposed to talk about total rewards?

To answer that, let me briefly take you back in time. In the Middle Ages, salt was an unbelievably valuable commodity on account of its utility in preserving fish and meat. In fact, soldiers in the Roman Army were sometimes paid in salt instead of money. Their monthly allowance was called ‘salarium’; the root of the word being ‘sal’, the Latin word for salt. Fairly sure that you have joined the dots to conclude that the present-day word that delights many of us on the last day of the month, viz. salary, owes its birth to this humble historic fact. Therefore, when it comes to a discussion around rewards, it is imperative that the word ‘salary’ (and by extension, the word ‘salt’) feature right up front and centre.

But this is 2020, and even without referencing the life-altering pandemic that has become the first port of call for many discussions, one can say that when it comes to rewards, one cannot get by, by just discussing salary. So, what else needs to be looked at? And, even with the acknowledgement that this merits due attention, before doing it, it is imperative to do a bit of soul searching and start from ground zero by asking some relevant questions as given below.
1) What is meant by total rewards?
A ‘Total rewards’ encompass the entire gamut of remuneration and benefits that employees receive for playing their respective roles in an organisation. These can be broadly divided into the below buckets:

1) Compensation: Something that most workers are already familiar with and what employees see as their rightful right; the more the better. It includes not only base pay, but also, all other monetary incentives such as bonuses, reimbursements, merit or performance-based incentives, and so on.

2) Benefits: This includes all those additional measures implemented by the organisation that directly or indirectly impact the financials of the employee. These include the leave allowance, health and safety related programmes, etc.

3) Personal Growth: Beyond the duality of the ‘Compensation & Benefits’ piece, lies the much cherished reward of supporting an employee’s personal growth. This includes programmes that aim to support the personal and professional growth of the employees through training, mentoring, coaching, performance management and so on.

2) Why do we need to adopt such a reward mechanism?
The dynamics and pressures of modern work life have led to an evolution in thought with respect to the construct of workplace rewards. Organisations, on their part, realise that increasing compensation with every passing year is not a financially sound mechanism to build a long-term business. In addition, organisations do invest on employees in varied ways, as we learnt in the previous paragraph. Employees, on the other hand, value other critical factors such as recognition, growth opportunities and investments in their growth. The ‘Total Rewards’ strategy, therefore, is designed as a comprehensive, holistic programme to align these thought processes.

Having defined the core requirement and construct of total rewards, it is important to ask the next question that logically flows, which is -

3) What is the approach to be followed when devising a total rewards strategy for an organisation?
Like all well-constructed strategies or programmes, a ‘Total Rewards’ Programme also needs to be developed in a systematic and logical manner. This ensures that it serves the purpose and the people (both, management and staff) that it is purported to. Therefore, in devising a successful strategy in addressing the rewards mechanism in an organisation, the below four-stage process should be followed -

1) Assessment: The first phase in this process involves a comprehensive assessment of the current ‘as-is’ status of the rewards methodology in the organisation. In this, therefore, appropriately named phase, subject matter experts dig into the current processes and unearth relevant data that offers an insight into the current operations and the effectiveness of the same.

2) Design: The data and information received in the first phase serve as the input to the second phase, viz. the design phase. In this phase, the team evaluates varied options and creates multiple

RICHA TRIPATI
Chief Human Resource Officer, Tata Teleservices

“The adoption of ‘new normal of remote working’ has upended the traditional structure of Human Resources across businesses. It has become vital for organisations to manage operations and offer psychological safety, normalcy, and comfort to their employees to enable business continuity. The Reward Systems and Employee Well-Being Programmes should be in line with the evolving business requirements so that it can provide its workforce with the much-needed direction and opportunities to progress in their careers despite working remotely. The reward goals should be readjusted so that it reflects equitable contribution of employees and makes them feel appreciated, retains talent, boosts productivity and collaboration.”

MANSIJ MAJUMDER
HR Head, Manipal Global Education Services

“The Compensation & Benefits team should not be making any assumptions about employee preference. Customising is in, generalisation is out. Surveys combined with HR analytics are needed to understand what the employee really wants - and while at it, one needs to include social media data to understand the employee persona. This level of customisation requires investing in technology which can work seamlessly to help communicate the benefit choices and options being provided by the company. Whether it is a flexible work schedule, choosing work experiences, or a specific benefit - empowering employees and trusting them to do the right thing will make the difference between success and failure of the total rewards strategy.”
options, before zeroing down onto the most suitable one. The selection of the final approach is also highly dependent on the organisation’s mission and culture, and the preferred talent management strategy of the organisation’s leaders.

3) Execution: In the third phase, the rubber hits the road with the designed strategy being implemented in the organisation. Care must be taken to ensure that adequate communication and ‘buy-in’ from relevant stakeholders is taken to ensure that this stage which is essentially a ‘change management’ process gets the support that is needed.

4) Evaluation: In the final and extremely critical phase, the impact of the new total rewards strategy is measured to check whether it has been a success or a failure. In case of the unfortunate likelihood of the latter being the case, a comprehensive and multi-layered evaluation approach should aim to check whether the fault has been in the design or the execution of the strategy.

It goes without saying that this entire process is a cycle, with improvement opportunities that are identified being pushed back into the system in the form of upgrades or enhancements. Newer developments in the fields of business, technology, human psychology and labour laws, make it imperative that practitioners that design such programmes see this as a journey, and not a destination.

With this viewpoint in place, it is only natural to ask the following question: -

What are the key changes that we can expect in the total rewards space in the PoCo (Post-COVID) world?

To answer this question, one has to do a fair amount of ‘crystal-balling’. Fortunately, we do have over six months of experience with respect to this pandemic and first-hand accounts of those whose careers have been impacted. If anything, disruptions of this period have shown us that the ‘Total Rewards’ mechanisms will have to account for some of the below developments to enable our colleagues to work with the same zeal as before.

- Remote working culture: This new paradigm of working from anywhere has resulted in professionals having to largely work from their limited dwellings, sharing the space with their family members. Noting that these environments are not very conducive to high quality, focused work, forwardthinking organisations have already begun to provide their employees with enablers such as desks, chairs, broadband connections and printers. As a Total Rewards strategy is redesigned, it will need to ensure that the organisation proactively offers these supporting elements, rather than waiting for them to ask.

- Wellness impact: As employees struggle to cope with the multi-dimensional impact of this pandemic, researchers have found that the wellness of many of them has been the casualty. While physical inactivity has been detrimental for sure, it is the mental wellbeing of employees that is a huge concern for organisations. In one study, it was even found that cases of domestic violence against women have risen in this constricted environment. While health and wellness has been a part of a TRS, special care will need to be taken to focus on all dimensions of an employee’s wellness including mental, financial, social and spiritual wellness.

- Low Social & High Screen Time: ‘Man’ has always been called a ‘social animal’, right
onwards from the ‘Social Sciences’ textbook shared with us in the sixth standard. Today. However, as employees find themselves having to limit social contact, it is leading to pushing them to adopt behavioural traits that are not in alignment with their true self. Pushed to the screen for both professional and personal engagements, employees find themselves tired to the extent that new terminology like ‘zoom fatigue’ has entered the common vocabulary. Therefore, while incorporating new thought into the Total Rewards strategy, HR practitioners will have to take measures to re-balance the scales once again.

With this understanding, at this point, let us draw you back into the magical meal at the celebrated dining venue at the beginning of the narrative. With the quick draw and shaking of the saltshaker, you resurrect the soup to a satisfying palatable level. While this normalises the experience at that very point of time, it does initiate a multitude of distracting emotions that combine and collide with one another. Apprehension about the quality of the courses that are to follow.

- Disappointment with the attention to detail given by the restaurant’s leaders!
- A level of discomfort with the exorbitant money you know that you will be shortly parting with!

Together, these ensure that the experience you have is not a shade of the experience you were anticipating when you entered the space. In much a similar manner, when it comes to rewards, as tough as it may be, an organisation needs to have a comprehensive total rewards strategy; else, someone, somewhere, will only be left with a bad taste in the mouth.

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**About the Author**

**Vikas Dua** is an accomplished HR and recruitment professional, a TEDx speaker, and a Vlogger and Blogger on HR practices. With over 15 years of high-quality experience in the field of IT and ITES, he has worked with both start-ups and large corporations like Wipro and Concentrix. Currently, he is Chief HR Mentor at Attayn, an HR-tech platform focused at democratising knowledge in the academic space. He is also an Advisor to the BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s Young Leaders Program.
InVideo Rolls Out Unique Hiring Campaign

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Video Editing Platform InVideo has launched a unique initiative with popular comedian Rahul Subramanian to hire talented engineers.

Sanket Shah, Founder and CEO of InVideo said, “The culture of InVideo has always been to speak the truth or not speak at all. We are a passionate young team and our platform is fast becoming the darling of content creators who heavily rely on video editing. We didn’t want to settle with a dull job invite. Our unique campaign is the reflection of our product and the work atmosphere at InVideo.”

InVideo is also going to leverage Subramanian’s Experimental Internet Comedy to hire the best engineering talent in the country. Furthermore, the company will also be using LinkedIn’s algorithm to reach out to engineers across the country.

Dropbox Makes Work From Home Permanent

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Dropbox Inc. has made work from home permanent for employees. The company said in a blog post, “Dropbox is becoming a Virtual First company. Remote work (outside an office) will be the primary experience for all employees and the day-to-day default for individual work.”

The development took place after an internal survey revealed that most of employees (nearly 90 per cent) said they were more able to be productive at home and don’t want to return to a rigid five-day in-office workweek.

Male Government Staffs Now Entitled For Child Care Leave

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Male government employees who are single parents will now be entitled to Child Care Leave (CCL).

Union Minister Jitendra Singh said that the order was passed earlier but not many people were aware about it.

The provision and privilege of CCL will be available only for those government servants who are “single male parent”, which may include employees who are unmarried or widower or divorcee and expected to take up the responsibility of child care as a single-handed parent.

The employees will get 100 per cent of leave salary for the first 365 days and 80 per cent of leave salary for the next 365 days.

The cloud-storage firm acknowledged that back-to-back video conferences can be overwhelming and stated isolation from peers can sometimes lead to miscommunication. To address this, the company plans to facilitate in-person collaboration with existing real-estate or other flexible spaces it’s calling “Dropbox Studios.”

The company further stated, “We’ll have Studios in all locations we currently have offices—whether they’re dedicated spaces in places we currently have long-term leases and a high concentration of employees (San Francisco, Seattle, Austin, and Dublin to start) or on-demand spaces in other geographies. Every employee aligned to one of our offices will have access to a Studio.”
A Better Way To Approach Change

Human Capital interacted with Jonah Berger, Wharton professor and bestselling author, to understand why trying to change people’s minds by marshalling arguments or providing more facts and reasons does not work well. He explains why successful change is not about pushing harder or exerting more energy, but about identifying what prevents change from happening and removing barriers. Jonah also shares effective strategies for catalysing change on both the individual and organisational fronts.

BY ANKITA SHARMA

Q In your highly acclaimed book, The Catalyst, your take on making change happen runs counter to much of the popular thinking and usual approaches that we see in the marketplace. What does your extensive research reveal about the methods that fail to change people’s minds?

A Before answering what methods fail to change people’s minds, it might help to give a context of how I got started writing this book. In 2013, after my book ‘Contagious’ came out, I got an opportunity to work with all sorts of companies and organisations, from Fortune 500s like Google, Nike, Facebook and Apple to small startups and everything in between.

From working with those organisations, I realised that everyone at the core was facing a very similar problem. They all had something that they wanted to change. People in marketing wanted to change consumer or customer behaviour, and salespeople wanted to change clients’ minds. Leaders would often want to transform organisations or organisational culture, and employees wished to change their boss’s or colleagues’ minds. Startups
wanted to transform the way an industry did business, and non-profits wanted to change the world.

But change is hard. As I worked with these organisations, I noticed that they would try thing after thing that often wouldn’t work. Wondering about better ways to change minds and instill action, I started on this journey of writing a book. I interviewed people from top-selling salespeople and transformational leaders to substance abuse counsellors and hostage negotiators and realised they were all doing something quite interesting.

When you look at the traditional approaches to persuasion, it’s often some version of what I call “pushing” – more facts, more reasons, giving people more information, making just one more PowerPoint presentation or thinking if we just tell them a little bit more about why we want them to change, they’ll come around.

If you push a chair in the direction you want it to go, it tends to move in that direction. But there’s one problem applying that same notion of pushing to people. When we push people, they often push back. They often do the exact opposite of what we want them to. Rather than coming around, they put up a lot of resistance, and they don’t change.

What, then, is a better approach to initiate and sustain lasting change?

A better approach actually comes from chemistry.

In chemistry, it often takes a lot of temperature and pressure for change to happen, but there’s a special set of substances that scientists use to make change take place faster and easier. These substances clean the grime on our contact lenses and the engine of our cars, but they don’t add more heat or pressure. They don’t push harder. What they do is lower the barriers or the obstacles to change. These substances are called catalysts.

The same idea is applicable in the social world. Great catalysts don’t create change by pushing harder but by removing barriers. Rather than saying, “What could we do to get someone to change?” great catalysts say, “Why hasn’t the person changed already? What obstacles or barriers are getting in the way? How can we remove them?”

“We should not persuade people but encourage them to persuade themselves. We must stop selling and get people to buy in.”

What are the key barriers that often get in the way of making change happen?

There are five common barriers that inhibit change. I’ve put them in a framework called The REDUCE (Reactance, Endowment, Distance, Uncertainty, and Corroborating Evidence).

Each of these barriers repeatedly prevents change from happening, regardless of industry or situation.

- **Reactance:** When pushed, people often push back.
- **Endowment:** People are attached to what they’re doing already and have a status quo bias.
- **Distance:** If you ask for too much change, people won’t even consider it.
- **Uncertainty:** There is a fear or anxiety around not knowing. New things always involve uncertainty and have some switching costs of change.
- **Corroborating evidence:** Sometimes, it is not enough for one person to say change is needed. You may need multiple sources to provide enough evidence for the change to take effect.

By understanding what these barriers are and mitigating them, we can change anything. Catalysts reduce reactance, ease endowment, shrink distance, alleviate uncertainty, and find corroborating evidence.

In making people understand the science of reactance, you talk about the “Tide Pod Challenge,” which involved people eating detergent capsules and filming it. Why did P&G’s efforts to tell people not to eat laundry capsules backfire?

A Tide, owned by Procter and Gamble, created Tide Pods to make doing laundry faster and easier. When Tide Pods came out, they did okay. However, there was a problem: people were eating them.

You might say, “Well, aren’t they made of chemicals? Why are people eating them?” Indeed, they are made of a lot of chemicals, but a funny video online and a funny article in a major publication meant that young people, mostly teenagers, were soon challenging one another to eat these things online.

Imagine you’re a Tide executive in this situation. You think it’s ridiculous that people are doing this, but just in case, you release a sternly worded announcement saying, “Don’t eat Tide Pods.” You also hire celebrities to tell people not to eat Tide Pods. You post these statements and videos online. You think this will be the end of it and people will stop eating Tide Pods. However, the exact opposite happened. When told not to eat Tide Pods, interest in the Tide Pod challenge shot up, and visits to poison control increased as well.

Essentially, a warning became a recommendation. Telling people not to eat Tide Pods made them more likely to do it.
The reason is reactance—when we push people, they don’t just go along; they push back. People want to feel like they have freedom and control over their choices. When someone else tries to tell them what to do, it impinges on their sense of freedom and autonomy, and they react. They push back, saying, “Who are you to tell me what to do? I will do whatever I want. And rather than doing what you want, I’m going to do the opposite.” It doesn’t matter whether that opposite is eating Tide Pods when someone tells you not to or refusing to buy something when someone encourages you to buy it.

We have an ingrained anti-persuasion radar that kicks in when persuasion is happening and pushes back. We avoid the message, or even worse, we counter-argue. We think about all the reasons why something is a bad idea and go against it.

How can we give people their sense of freedom and autonomy back?

We have to allow people to make choices. We should not persuade them, but encourage them to persuade themselves, not sell them, but get them to buy-in.

There are various ways to do this: from providing a menu and giving people choices, to asking rather than telling, to highlighting a gap.

A simple example is that in meetings, we often present people with one option, and they counter-argue, saying, “Oh, this is why it won’t work. This is why it’s a bad idea.”

Smart salespeople and consultants give people multiple options and then ask, “We could do this or that. Which do you like better?”

This subtly shifts the role of listeners from thinking about all the reasons they don’t like what you’re suggesting to thinking about which of the options is a better fit for them.

We often try to enroll people in change by backing it up with evidence and facts — be these proof that global warming is real or that the current business strategy adopted is not working. Why does this approach to changing minds not work very well?

Part of the challenge is the third barrier I talk about, which is distance.

Anytime we’re trying to persuade someone’s mind, it’s almost like we have different positions on a football field. Think about politics, for example. One end is very conservative. One end is very liberal. Everyone can place their point of view somewhere on that field. Someone might be in the end zone of the liberal side, and someone might at the end zone of the conservative side. Someone might be at the 50-yard line, halfway between conservative and liberal. But, wherever they are on the field, there’s a range of information around that spot that they’re willing to consider. Maybe 5 or 10 yards in each direction is what they’re willing to consider. That’s called the zone of acceptance. But beyond that, information falls on what’s called the region of rejection. It’s not only that they won’t be persuaded by this information, but they won’t even consider hearing it.

When we deal with distance in trying to change minds that are too far away, facts alone are not going to work. While we might think they’re facts, the other side thinks it’s biased information, and so they’re unwilling to consider the information in the first place.

I tell a great story in the book about a doctor who persuaded someone to lose weight. The guy was drinking a huge amount of Mountain Dew, three litres a day. Rather than trying to get him to quit cold turkey, the doctor started by asking him to try cutting his soda intake to two litres and drinking a litre of water. When he eventually went from drinking three litres of Mountain Dew to two a day, she suggested to cut it down to one. Only when he was able to do that, did she ask him to cut out soda entirely.

So rather than trying to move people all the way across the field in one fell swoop, ask for less and then ask for more. Breaking a big change into manageable chunks and starting with smaller asks makes it more likely to happen.

Many change initiatives start with a bang but run out of steam after some time. What can leaders do to keep the momentum from fizzling out and lead successful change within their organisations?

I think the challenge often is that everybody has the status quo bias. Everybody has loss aversion. Everyone’s attached to what they’re doing already.

You might think, “Oh, we’ve been doing this project for a while. We should stick with it, even though it’s not doing great, because we put so much money and effort into it. If we start something new, who knows if this new thing will work.”

It’s important to think not about what you have already done, but about whether you would recommend someone else start this thing. Given what you know about a project or approach, would you recommend it to someone else?

If you wouldn’t recommend it to someone else right now, why are you still doing it? It’s because you have the status quo bias. That’s it. You’re only sticking with it because of everything you’ve invested in it so far, not because it’s worth doing. Leaders must think about easing endowment to make people realise that what they’re doing already isn’t costless. There are a lot of costs to sticking with the status quo.

To know more about Jonah and his work, visit jonahberger.com
**Hits And Misses**

The true DNA of any organisation is palpable at the workplace and the culture and ethos of an organisation cannot be easily experienced in the WFH setting.

BY YASHMI PUJARA

It has been six months since WFH was forced upon millions of people worldwide. Even though people have gradually adapted to the new routine, the workplace is being sorely missed by many. There are several ‘soft’ aspects that the office environment presented us with. While such benefits were hardly noticed during the pre-COVID days, it is being recognised and missed now.

The Misses

A. **Community:** The loss of human-to-human, in-person, daily connect with colleagues has been the bane of this crisis. We all create bonds at the office and derive a sense of comfort and belonging in our groups, these relationships help us fulfil our need for social interaction. People everywhere are missing the water cooler conversations, coffee chats, and shared meals which formed part of our daily life at one time.

B. **Collaboration:** Walking across to a colleague’s desk to seek a quick update, solving problems across the table, and meeting to brainstorm are no longer possible. The pace and efficacy of collaboration as was possible has been affected while working remotely.

C. **Camaraderie:** Team members are united by the sense of collective purpose, shared vision, and common goals. This fellowship ignites passions, drives performance, and delivers high impact results. It was easy to build this camaraderie onsite with practices that were embedded in our culture. With remote, all of us need to recreate these channels for building these professional relationships.

D. **Celebrations:** Awards, Events, and Outings in the workplace help raise the collective fervour, and kindles team and organisation spirits. Many of these physical celebrations are neither feasible nor safe in the current environment.

The true DNA of any organisation is palpable at the workplace and the culture and ethos of an organisation cannot be easily experienced in the WFH setting.

While we are all optimistic that normalcy will return sooner than later, and the workplaces will be throbbing with lifelike ever before, the pandemic has pressed the ‘Reset’ button. Organisations are putting in concrete plans to shift a significant part of their workforce to a permanent WFH arrangement to reduce costs and blunt the economic impact of the lockdown.

**The Hits**

A. **Virtual Communication:** Communication will be virtual and asynchronous. New channels will evolve for both formal and informal communication. Meetings will have to include an informal component to recreate the comfort of social connect and belonging. People will have to learn to establish a ‘connect’ with their colleagues and clients to collaborate effectively. Organisations will host virtual events, recognition programmes, and engage hobby groups to bridge the virtual divide and rebuild networks that existed in office.

B. **Distributed Teams:** Remote work models permit work from anywhere. People will shift homes to more suitable locations to save on commute time, pursue their passion and lead a better quality of life. At the same time, hiring will become location agnostic for organisations. As the workforce gets distributed across geographies and time zones, there will an imminent need to work synergistically while staying distributed.

C. **Mental Health** – While WFH, the lines between work and home get blurred. Remote workers tend to put in longer hours at work, stay in the always “ON” mode, and do not disconnect. This will impact people wellbeing with health issues and mental stress becoming common. Managers will have to learn to identify such signs early on and intervene proactively.

D. **Learning agility:** People will need to upskill and reskill themselves as technology rapidly transforms our job content. Organisations will need to create learning eco-systems that enable people to pursue learning at will.

People who attune themselves to these new ways of working will survive, sustain, and succeed in the post-COVID world.

**About the Author**

Yashmi Pujara is CHRO, Cactus Communications. She shifted to HR after a decade in marketing and has been with Cactus for more than 15 years. Yashmi has played multiple roles in Human Resources and Organisation Development and has led initiatives spanning organisational culture, values, talent, performance, reward, and leadership development.
I

dia is a land of celebrations, and in every celebration, food plays a very important part. A few years back, my friend from Finland accompanied me to a couple of weddings and then joined my family and me for Diwali celebrations. She was overwhelmed by the food offered everywhere and asked me about the significance of food in celebrating traditions in India. One of the elders in my family said, “We believe in keeping everyone happy and satisfied by providing something as a benefit, and when we overwhelm someone with a lot of good food, they say that they had a lot and ask us to politely stop serving . . . This doesn’t come easily when we offer anything else as a benefit. Would you say to your employer that they are giving you a lot of money as compensation and politely ask them to stop giving?” She did not have a response for a few seconds, and then we just started laughing.

I am reminded of that question now. Free or subsidised food for employees in factories and offices has been present as a benefit for a very long time. The evolution of Compensation and Benefits (C&B) across multiple eras has been phenomenal. The variety and creativity that has been applied by organisations across countries and sectors have almost clearly established the fact that the effort has been to make it a win-win between employee satisfaction and bottom-line management.

What is going to influence C&B in the coming days is a good question to ponder on, and in this article, I will highlight some of my views on factors that could influence the decisions of C&B experts.

The top 5 influences could be the following:

1. Government Regulations
   - Life insurance and healthcare benefits with minimum coverage could be defined by governments.
   - The gender pay gap is an area that could create waves and force changes in C&B.
   - Minimum wage requirements will change with fixed minimum wages, but more flexibility may be given for organisations to hire and fire.

2. Global/Socio-Economic Changes
   - Change in mobility policies and the reflection of the same in C&B could be on the cards as countries modify rules relating to immigration and other visa regulations.
   - The expertise required because of the fast pace of technological advancements might open avenues for more skill-based allowances in organisations.
   - Internships might become a mandate for organisations to provide opportunities for younger talent in the respective countries.

3. Employee Representation Councils
   - A paradigm shift from speaking about wages to demanding benefits is already on the rise in some countries, and this could spread across the globe very swiftly.
   - In organisations today, especially in the IT/ITES sector, where there are no worker councils or unions, there is a high possibility of this starting and becoming an influence on C&B.

4. Expectations from Employee Segments
   - Understanding the broader preferences of the younger generations can be helpful in creating smart C&B models as organisations prepare for them to bring a significant shift in the workplace population.

For instance, the pandemic has shown us the importance of financial security, and recent studies have revealed that many millennials and Gen Z professionals are struggling with financial planning and guidance. Moreover, they are more likely to stick with their company for longer periods of time if provided with financial wellness benefits. Financial fitness offerings on budgeting, short-
and long-term savings, student loan management, etc. through webinars, tutorials, or financial coaching can go a long way in retaining and engaging this employee segment.

Another thing to keep in mind is that younger generations expect rewards that favour performance based on output instead of hours. The pandemic has further increased this expectation by shattering the assumption that the number of hours spent at work is an indication of one’s accomplishments.

- Employees with parenting or elderly care responsibilities might need a model that is flexible, including shorter work weeks.
- Most employees would be keen on health schemes for themselves and their families. Options from the sharing of leave benefits to the distribution of health benefits to all in the family could become a high priority.
- Flex workers would definitely be happy with ‘work from home’ benefits like office furniture, internet, etc.
- Travel policies, city allowances, and car allowances for employees moving from higher-tier cities to lower tiers might need a massive shakeup.

5. Organisational Priorities

- Along with all of the above, there are also organisational priorities, especially in the knowledge industry, to motivate employees to gain newer knowledge and be cutting-edge consultants. Allowances for learning are already on the cards for many organisations.
- Employee mobility based on priorities could also enable changes as there may be expansions and other things that happen.

FOOT: A Win-Win C&B Model

Earlier, the criterion was earning a living; then it became the standard of living; now, for the new generation, quality of life is the drive and mantra.

Based on all the influences, C&B teams must create a model that is:

- Flexible (More variable)
- Output Oriented (Not based on time but on output)
- Transparent (Logical and clear with options)

This model can be useful for permanent, contractual and gig workers across the globe. It might lead to a win-win between employee satisfaction and an organisation’s bottom line to an extent because nothing other than food can win that 100% satisfaction.

About the Author

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Deliver To Dazzle

You may have a module which is well designed and is the need of the hour, however, if you do not facilitate right, knowledge transfers will be stillborn.

BY DIPANKAR DAS

It was the last day of the 10-day residential Leadership Development Programme in a large PSU. The 25-odd participants were tasked with organising the closing ceremony. All the participants and organisations were recognised, thanked and felicitated for the successful closure of the programme. Last but not least, the turn was now that of the Facilitators, Rohan and Deeksha, to be recognised. But the Participants had a special way of thanking them. They had written a song for both of them, and they broke into a beautiful song, the essence of which was saying, a special ‘Thank You, you have changed our lives forever.’

That evening, the adulation and admiration that was being heaped on the Facilitators, was not unusual.

Good facilitators have participants eating out of their hands. But then, what makes a Good Facilitator? The answer is exceptionally good facilitation skills. Public speaking, a part of good facilitation, does not come easy and is listed as one of the biggest fears people have in life. But good Facilitation goes beyond just public speaking. A Facilitator has two main purposes:

- The absorption of the learning by the participants
- To ensure that she has to deliver the learning in the most optimal and effective way

In the Beginning

Well begun is half done. How the session opens, makes a big difference to the rest of the session. Often, facilitators begin with a loud and
dramatic start. Participants may be asked to step out for a warm-up, play Truth or Dare, or something equally dramatic. This author would like to suggest that the opening definitely needs to be impactful, but the focus should be on getting the ball rolling gradually. As a Facilitator, we may have led many sessions, but for the Participants, this is different from their daily routine. They are suddenly in the midst of people; they may not be altogether familiar or even comfortable with. Hence, a balance is required between something too dramatic or too tame. Activities such as Two Truths and a Lie, Cross Introductions with unique stories, are good starters. The ambience should become friendly as this is essential for the participants to feel comfortable to open up and have healthy discussions, essential for productive sessions.

Introductions
What is in a name, asked the Bard. Well, lots! According to research, one’s own name is the sweetest sound anyone would love to hear. Facilitators would do well to learn the names of participants well. One could go through the Roster before the Training, and also use Tent Cards or Stickers on which names can be written and then the stickers can be stuck on the top left corner of the participants’ dress. Also, games could be played on how many names are remembered. Side by side, remember to have a nice self-introduction ready. This influences the way in which people will relate to you, the Facilitator. Short, crisp and absorbing – that should be the descriptors of your selfintroduction.

Starting the Session
Once warmed up, it is time to get down to brass tacks. Keeping Adult Learning Principles in mind, it is good to get a sense of what the participants already know, this will help the Facilitator customise her lesson plan accordingly. Remember, one of the factors of success of the facilitator is how Adaptable one is. No two groups are ever the same, hence your content and style need to change that much, one style or content does not fit all. Seek their expectations and jot them down on the flipchart or somewhere you can refer to later at the end of the session and tick all the expectations. This should be done ritualistically as a closure after every session. Also, share the ground rules. Do not overuse fear, but use it lightly, so that it is there to ensure discipline, but do not have too much of it as it impedes learning. Do not forget to share the Agenda upfront. Sharing the Agenda helps telling participants know what to expect and they gear them themselves accordingly, this tends to improve receptivity.

Get Going
Opening with a few slides and running through them is not a good idea. While, I would not recommend you start with a Bang, but do start with an open-ended question, if possible. Or start with a short story or even a Case Study, but not a complicated one. A study where the answers are not too elusive, gets participants interested and aligned more quickly to the topic in focus. It also brings in the nuances of the topic, thereby giving the facilitator an anchor to refer to during the rest of the session.

Getting Deeper
Now as you cover various aspects of the topic, you may be branching out in more than one direction. This can be tricky. Before closing a section and moving to another, revise the gist of the learning through a summary and then introduce the following topic as flowing from the previous one and glide into the new topic. Focus on a theme that covers both. For example, you are talking of Managerial Effectiveness and the next sub-topic you wish to cover is Delegation. So, while discussing Managerial effectiveness, bring focus on the workloads that Managers have and the importance of nurturing talent in the Manager’s team, and one way to offload some of the tasks, while growing your team members to take

“A Facilitator has two main purposes – the absorption of the learning by the participants, and to ensure that, she has to deliver the learning in the most optimal and effective way.”
more responsibility, is through the act of Delegation.

Good facilitators tend to enable. Remember, you have a room full of experience here. Leverage their experience to come up with experiences where they may have witnessed purposeful delegation and also where it did not succeed. Rather than the Facilitator sharing her examples, the participant’s experience is likely to resonate more with the audience, however, do not allow it to be long-winded or go off-tangent.

Signing Off
All good things come to an end and how you close will ensure whether you will end on a good note or otherwise. Do not forget to go over the expectations that had been mentioned at the beginning of the session. As you go over the expectations, discuss each one of them and elicit responses from the group on each. Next, go over the topics covered and re-iterate the gist of each. Alternatively, if you have divided them into groups for activities, use the groups to play a Quiz and get them buzzing. Additionally, you could ask them to develop a few rituals around some of the topics. This would be fun and help to retain learning. And last, but not the least, disburse with a strong, optimistic positive message with a vision of how things will be if all the learning is positively implemented.

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About the Author

“Rather than the Facilitator sharing her examples, the participant’s experience is likely to resonate more with the audience, however, do not allow it to be long-winded or go off-tangent.”
Conflicts are deeply entwined with our personal and professional lives and may sometimes be resolved by a long shot and sometimes not. Difficult or fluid conflicts often lead to contentious situations. Knowing the basics of effective conflict management is one good way of dealing with conflicts that cannot be resolved quickly, or easily. This also bids fair for a well-defined, also adjustable, conflict prevention and conflict management plan to be put in place before conflicts hit the roof. This will help us to preserve our work and personal relationships.

Conflicts that are resolved amicably have a positive effect on our work, family, health, and well-being. Interpersonal conflicts, for instance, when not managed appropriately, or assertively, can lead to a splurge in eating, abuse of alcohol, and/or smoking. It has also been found that such unresolved conflicts can lead to the return of a latent original problem. One “quiescent” example is — getting into the smoking habit with a vengeance after having kicked the “nicotine allure” in the past.

This is reason enough why knowing the essentials of effective conflict management is, yet again, fundamental for our emotional, mental, and also physical well-being.

It does not matter whether you are at the home, office, or elsewhere. It would do you a world of good if you follow a handful of common processes and put them to work for you and others. This will, in a majority of cases, reduce the risk of differences getting the better of your and others’ emotions, or logic.

Ways to deal with Conflicts

There are a host of techniques for dealing usefully with conflicts. They have all produced tangible results in as diverse as the corporate world, workplace and facilities management, business, relationships, marital counselling, politics, sports, and healthcare. The best part is — these skills can be learned and, with practice, are known to help people move ahead, besides allowing either party enough reason to smile.
Perspective is vital: Research shows that what you think about a situation affects how you feel. Experts also point out that external circumstances reveal whether you are happy in life, career, or not, and how you read the given situation. This will help you respond to a situation effectively. For example, you need to separate a situation you think amounts to “personal” vendetta — something that may have happened for no real reason, including your, or someone else’s, inadvertent gaffe.

Invest in healthy relationships: Our interactions depend on the framework of a relationship model. When relationships are strong and healthy, it is likely that most people, even in the face of conflict, underplay a tricky situation. This will avoid a showdown in most instances and deflect conflicts from taking an ugly turn. In other words, investing in healthy relationships is like investing money in a reputed bank. Also, the stronger the existing relationship, the better it is to put down disagreements without causing ripple effects on either side of the “fence”.

Scan problem areas: All of us have our idiosyncrasies, or peculiarities — enough reason for us to blow through the roof. Once this happens, feelings of anger, unfairness, injury, insult, or hurt may run wild. If you familiarise yourself with your problem area triggering anger or resentment, it will allow you to be aware of what may help them to deal with differences successfully. Though not easy, it is an achievable prospect. All you need to do is to keep on “hold” your physiological response to your anger or angst.
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

This isn’t all — you need to deal effectively with resentment by way of reflection, not reaction. You must act, not react. It means you need to think through a situation and not go for a jugular, including your own. If you persevere, you will be able to balance your emotions — simply, sensibly, and without jargon.

It takes “seven” to “tango” —

1. Don’t be in a hurry to remedy a problem, when you are the affected party, or “opponent,” or asked to tackle a conflicting situation, or when invited to don the role of an umpire.

2. Think of problem-solving as a course of action at a further stage in the process before doing anything.

3. Try to bring to a halt the most likely, or existing, tensions between you and your antagonist. Or, two parties — more so, if you are playing the role of a referee. Try to promote understanding between them.

4. Remember that understanding is fuelled by empathy.

5. Remember: when a person understands the other person’s views and does so with respect, it immediately leads to a resolution of conflict.

6. Remember — you need to be a good listener, more than a speaker.

7. Listening will give the right signal — you, your “aggressor,” and the parties concerned, will all feel that they are being heard.

Be impersonal: This is easier said than done. However, you can still give it your best shot. Remember, when you speak about the other party, or person, in any conflicting “story,” avoid making personal statements, or assessments about either. Convey what you feel without drama. Example: “We need to figure out something that fits the bill.”

United stands best: “United” often works for conflicts resulting in a domestic situation, all right — which is just the reverse of the previous illustration. What you need to do and say may be summed up, thus: “Let us put our minds together and see what best we can do together.”

Avoid cynicism: Never indulge in cynicism. It won’t last, or take you far. It will damage a given situation and lead to a point of no return. Use your language as a modifying tool, not as a handgun.

Blow the “take a break” whistle: If you find the situation going out of control, just allow yourself, your opposite number, or the parties to disperse — to cool down tempers. Wait for a while, and ask them to return and talk it out. This (re)engaging course of action will help to promote a “re-focused” view on thoughts and provide a fresh perspective on the issue to be discussed by the parties concerned.

Brainstorm to solve problems: Once all parties have been heard, you may, as an individual, or arbiter, think of brainstorming. Brainstorming should take into account all possible solutions — even if they sound impractical. The idea is to get as many solution possibilities as you can. They will all count one way or the other. It may also be useful to remember that it is not uncommon for individuals to stumble upon a solution, or set of solutions, that neither had thought of earlier.

Lastly, if nothing works, allow either party to agree to disagree, or vice versa. Let the dust settle down-s-l-o-w-l-y. Everything will fall into place — sooner than you had envisaged.

About the Author

Rajgopal Nidamboor, PhD, is a wellness physician-writer-editor, independent researcher, critic, columnist, author and publisher. His published work includes hundreds of articles in newspapers, magazines, web, essays, meditations, columns, and critiques on a host of subjects, eight books on natural health, two coffee table tomes and an encyclopaedic treatise on Indian philosophy.
 Capability Building During COVID-19

BY SHUBIKA BILKHA

A common COVID-19 grievance of our partners and peers in the training, leadership development, and coaching fraternity the world over has been how budget cuts and shifting organisation-level priorities have adversely impacted their revenue pipeline. And while every industry and profession has had to weather its storm owed to the challenges this period has brought, several training and development providers have gone from packed pre-COVID calendars to barely being able to stay afloat at this time.

A Mckinsey report released during the COVID-19 pandemic has found that roughly half of the in-person programs till June 30, 2020, have been postponed or cancelled in North America; with close to 100 per cent of them being cancelled in parts of Asia and Europe.[1] This may not come as a surprise given the social distancing requirements, even as training providers move quickly to pivot business models and adapt to the online frameworks but with limited to no budgets allocated, there is little respite to their efforts.

A Gallups August 2020 report articulated the sentiment quite effectively by saying “Budget cutting is like pruning trees. You need to do it to help your organisation thrive in the long run. But if you cut too much, in the wrong places, you might damage the tree”.[2]

So, are they receiving the requisite support to enable them to power through?

And while it is common practice to scale back on employee development initiatives when the times are tough, can organisations afford to put capability building on the backburner in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world riddled with a new reality?

Prioritising Capability Building

Our work and research in the space of leadership development during times of uncertainty is based on the model of Flow. It was developed by Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and it found that it requires an alignment of mindset, capability, and challenge for individuals to reach a state of high productive action towards performance.

And at times like these, where the level of challenge is unprecedentedly high, what are organisations doing to support individuals in managing their mindset, nurturing their emotional health, and enhancing their skills and capabilities to ride this new world reality?

A Qualtrics study conducted across more than 2,000 employees globally in March/April 2020 has found that 42% of employees have reported a decline in mental health since the COVID outbreak, 66% have reported higher levels of stress, 28% of employees reported difficulty in concentrating, 20% reported taking longer to do a task, 14.7% have reported difficulty in thinking, reasoning or deciding and 12.4% have put off challenging work and 11.8% are having difficulty in juggling responsibilities.[3]

As a leadership and performance coach conducting webinars and sessions through the COVID period, the challenges that I often see across program attendees and individual
SKILL DEVELOPMENT

1. Balance the virtual and the live: While most organisations have successfully implemented e-learning through cloud-based offerings, virtual or augmented reality, and even AI learning in some cases, the focus on instructor-led or live learning has reduced during this time. For organisations to maintain the intimacy, connection, and individual focus that comes with highly engaged and impactful learning environments, they must adopt a blended approach with the optimum balance of self-paced online and live programs.

2. Focus on Behaviour: With an increased focus on technology and digitisation across industries and job roles, organisations must continue to prioritise behaviour skills. According to a Gallups 2020 report, it has been estimated that 85% of the jobs that will exist in 2030 haven’t been invented yet.[4] The pandemic has in fact demonstrated that leaders have had to carefully balance making business and financial decisions, driving productivity and performance, while simultaneously being advocates of good mental health among their teams.

So, if you are one of those organisations who understand the overall impact of investing in employee development but are restricted by budget, here are five ways in which you can prioritise your investment in capability building at this time:

Clients are in line with the findings of the Qualtrics study. The common difficulties that individuals are facing currently seem to revolve around:
- feelings of low productivity
- decreased motivation
- increase in negative thoughts
- stress and overwhelmed
- difficulty sleeping
- struggles with social isolation and
- increased fear and insecurity over the future.

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psychological safety and trust, motivating yourself and others, and more, have been critical to the smooth functioning of teams during Covid. A Gartner report on the 9 Future of Work Trends Post Covid-19 has suggested that one of the biggest shifts in organisational design is going to be the move from efficiency to resilience.[5] In a fast-evolving dynamic world, resilient organisations will be better positioned to quickly adapt to changing circumstances. And therefore, behaviour skills are key to getting leaders and teams to move quickly and manage change effectively.

3. Create a Platform for Individual Conversations: The pandemic has demonstrated that there is no one size fits all and that while we are all in the same storm, it has become incumbent on all to successfully steer their boat. While it is near impossible to control how employees experience the world outside the organisation at this time, creating a platform that provides the requisite guidance is important. Coaching conversations with expert coaches, emotional health sensitisation programs, support groups, and frequent check-ins will be key to addressing individual challenges as they happen.

4. Future of Work skills: As organisations continue to work from home or adopt hybrid work models even in the medium or long-term, skilling individuals and teams to develop the future of work skills will be essential. Learning and development activities will need to move away from a tick box approach to an outcome-based one. Skill-building relating to managing virtual teams, conducting online meetings, building collaboration in silos, managing mindset, innovative thinking, developing agility, building commercial awareness and more will be important to develop to ensure that teams thrive in the new reality.

5. Make it Fun and Engaging: With reduced social interaction during Covid, an almost transactional approach to life and work, no water cooler chats, lunchtime workplace gossip, or post-work plans, these learning and development programs can play a significant role in employee engagement and improving morale. Whether it is in building a network of learners or throwing in that new dimension to the employee’s workweek, these programs can provide the necessary fun and relief that we could all do with as we navigate the mid-phase of the pandemic. 

“The pandemic has demonstrated that there is no one size fits all and that while we are all in the same storm, it has become incumbent on all to successfully steer their boat.”


About the Author

Shubika Bilkha is a dynamic leadership and performance coach who has worked with several professionals, CXOs, and senior-level executives across corporates, industries, and educational institutions. She is a Partner of EdpowerU that specialises in working with managers, leaders, entrepreneurs, and founders on their workplace behaviour and personal leadership development. Shubika was also awarded the “Most Promising Motivational Trainer 2020” at the Mumbai Achiever’s Awards.
The digitisation of work has changed the working style globally and has also impacted the nature of what we know as workplace sexual harassment. It stands to reason that the new normal of virtual workplaces, remote working and work from home, call for a reboot of the prevention of sexual harassment mechanisms. Sexual Harassment can happen ‘virtually’ and the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH) covers work from home under the ‘extended workplace’ definition.

As organisations adapt to virtual workplaces it is imperative to ensure that our POSH mechanisms are running parallel to our virtual workplaces.

**POSH Policy**

One of the most important aspects to be addressed is the POSH policy of the organisation. As the definition of workplace includes remote working, the first step to take is to amend the POSH policy to help employees understand that work from home is covered under your organisation’s POSH policy. The POSH law over the course of years has had various myths in its implementation and in the current pandemic, it poses new myths like -


**Sexual harassment at workplace**

- Discussing an employee’s sex life in front of others
- Sharing sexual rumours about colleagues in the office
- Making sexual gestures; touching, ogling
- Showing inappropriate images/videos on one’s phone
- Following in office
- Non-verbal sexual gestures

**Sexual harassment at Virtual workplace**

- Discussing an employee’s sex life on official calls or through personal chats
- Sharing screenshots taken while on video calls making comments on appearance
- Sending inappropriate messages
- Sharing sexual jokes/links with explicit content on WhatsApp
- Digital stalking
- Unnecessary use of emoticons

- “How is sexual harassment possible in a work from home setting”,
- “Sexual harassment is not applicable in work from home settings”,
- “One needs to be in physical proximity for sexual harassment to take place”.

These questions arise from a lack of awareness about the POSH policy and thus, it is important to update employees, consultants and stakeholders across all levels about the application of POSH on remote working.

Furthermore, we must help employees understand what constitutes virtual sexual harassment. The policy should help people understand, via illustrations, that inappropriate and unwelcome incidents that take place through social networking platforms such as WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Instagram, or via e-mails, among others, are also covered.

By making small additions to the Annexure of the POSH policy and circulating the revised policy with employees, consultants and stakeholders, the application of work from home and POSH can be re-emphasised.

**Internal Committees**

The next step is to ensure that your Internal Committee (IC) is virtual-workplace ready. The role of the IC is integral in both preventive measures and redressal of Sexual Harassment Complaints (SHC). In a virtual context, it becomes important for the IC to be sensitive to the various inhibitions and challenges that employees might face in both filings and in the investigation of SHCs. It is vital for IC to have Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as reference for online inquiries.

A quick checklist for organisations to understand if their IC is equipped for virtual workplaces:

1. Does your IC know how to receive POSH complaints online and conduct online enquiries?
2. Do people in your organisation, stakeholders, consultants know how to file complaints online?
3. Does the IC know how to manage their biases in online inquiries?
4. What would the IC do if the complainant/respondent/witness says that they cannot be a part of an online inquiry as they have not informed their family members of the POSH complaint?

5. What protocols the IC has put in place for ensuring confidentiality?

**Sensitisation Workshops and Capacity Building**

Sensitise, sensitise, sensitise! You must conduct sensitisation and awareness workshops for employees to help them understand POSH 2.0. Over the past few months, different companies have adapted to the impact of COVID on their POSH mechanisms in different ways. In a recent virtual roundtable that we organised, a common learning that emerged from most panellists was the belief that it is extremely pertinent to generate awareness about sexual harassment and the multiple aspects it covers.

For instance, commenting on someone’s clothes and home surroundings may be offensive to some while others may be indifferent to such a discourse. It is essential to sensitise employees, consultants, stakeholders to help them understand boundaries.

In the shift of work from home there have been several moments in workplaces where professional and personal lines have gotten blurred. It is essential to create dialogue, conversation and debate on the definition of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. Discuss examples such as:

(a) Unscheduled video calls during non-work hours

(b) Comments on a person’s personal appearance during a video call

(c) Clicking pictures without consent and informing on video calls

(d) Inappropriate screensavers during a video call that requires you to screen share

(e) Inappropriate posters in the background of a video call

It is also essential to engage in Capacity Building exercises for the IC members who should be equipped to record evidence and statements in an online inquiry and obtain digital signatures.

**POSH 2.0 Checklist**

Below listed are some pointers for creating safe virtual workplaces. These act as a checklist for employers, HR professionals, senior management, organisation leaders and consultants to quickly find whether your organisation is POSH 2.0 ready:

- Amending the organisation POSH policy to include WFH & virtual sexual harassment
- Circulation of amended POSH policy with employees, consultants, interns and stakeholders
- Conducting awareness and sensitisation sessions on sexual harassment in a WFH environment
- Circulating posters on virtual sexual harassment at the workplace
- Vetting of other policies of the company to align work protocols such as dress code, anti-harassment policy
- Setting up of anonymous portals - chatbox, complaint box for reporting inappropriate behaviour
- Circulation of IC e-mail id and contact numbers of IC members
- Conducting anonymous employee surveys and check-ins to know their comfort level
- Setting up of SOPs for IC for POSH inquiries
- Training IC members on methods of conducting POSH procedures while WFH
- Preparation for mandatory annual report filing

“The complete transition of communication to digital platforms requires us to help the employees understand the dos and don’ts of virtual workplaces.”

**About the Author**

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Grabbing Talent Through Campuses

It is anticipated that there will be enhanced recruitment of freshers by mid-2021 in the Job market. So, the big question to campuses across the country is - Are you ready with your talent pool?

BY KESHAV SRIDHAR

The COVID-19 Pandemic has tremendously impacted people across the globe. One among the biggest learning has been that we cannot take things for granted irrespective of who we are. And the other point worth pondering is that, at times, coiling back helps us to unwind, introspect, and bounce back with renewed vigour and purpose. Let us hope that the events of 2020 coach us to rise a lot stronger than what we would have been, minus the swotting of such a hell of a year!

By the end of 2020, the elections in the US would have concluded. The ongoing war-like situation or even a probable (mini) war between India vs China-Pakistan would have most likely ended as well. The growth rate of most of the countries would have further deteriorated into a negative. Many people would be restarting their Career / Business from zero or even worse, below zero. The race for vaccines would have ensured that the one which is best and the strongest makes its place in the market. And, all said and done, all of us vaccinated mortals would be eagerly craving for an opportunity to bounce back into form, to the good old normalcy!

Anticipations in the new normal

Irrespective of whether the pandemic was natural or a deliberate and unpardonable manmade mischief or an irresponsible and an extremely costly accident; there has been worldwide damage. The extent to which the entire world has been pushed to has created a huge imbalance in the overall business ecosystem. However, a ray of hope is that people would henceforth be more health-conscious, hygienic and caring about themselves and their surroundings.

The new normal is by no means an acceptable and viable for the majority of the people in our country, as most of them are employed in the unorganised sector that does not provide the cushion of working from home. Talking about MSMEs, reports suggest that most of them have hit rock-bottom and the only way forward is to double-up one’s efforts in taking the surge.

However, we will be required to be cautious as we move ahead. With the arrival of the winter in India, and the Government easing up the restrictions imposed during the lockdown across the country for the festive season, people need to be more careful in the
next 2-3 months. As health care experts say, viruses, in general, are more active in cold weather.

**An improved job market**

Moving on, analysts say that by mid-2021, the Job market will be a lot better and there will be a noticeable demand for recruitments, especially for the entry level talent. A point to note here is that companies have been heavily focusing on employing fresh talent through Internships, more so post-COVID, owing to reduced budgets. So, most of the companies would be very actively looking towards Campus Recruitments to fill up their entry level openings.

Let us observe a few interesting snippets with regard to Campus Placements in India.

- Campus Placement is among the top 3 channels of Recruitment
- As per recent reports, 85% of students are unable to make an informed Career choice by the end of their Graduation. As you can see, though Campus Recruitment is a suitable option for companies to meet their bulk-hiring requirements to fill the entry level vacancies, only a handful of Campuses are able to provide quality talent
- As per the QS World Graduate Employability Rankings 2020, only 10 Indian Institutes feature among the top 500 Universities Globally w.r.t Employability
- Tier 2 & 3 Institutes are facing tough competition from Online Education platforms which have tie-ups with Tier 1 Institutes, and in fact, they are also providing better Job Placements to the candidates

Let us discuss the Recruitment preference of companies.

- Recruiting companies prefer a well assessed, mapped and segmented Talent Pool up for grabs from the Campuses. Unfortunately, very few Institutes are able to provide such a Talent base
- Companies are increasingly focusing on Talent acquisition through Internship, as it is a win-win situation for the candidate and also the Institute
- Workforce Diversity continues to be one of the major points with regard to Talent acquisition across various levels
- Companies value affiliation with premier Institutes. However, it is observed that many recruiters are increasingly moving away from Tier 1 to some promising Tier 2 Institutes, due to a better joining ratio of the candidates and also, almost similar quality talent would be available for a lot lesser cost-to-company
- As most of the attrition and training wastage happens due to lack of some very critical Soft Skills, companies prefer campuses which gives a learning ecosystem wherein candidates are able to develop a holistic personality

**The impact of the pandemic**

The Impact of the pandemic on Campus Placements in Tier 1 Institutes (as compared to last year) is as follows:

- The mode of engagement, of course, has been virtual Campus Recruitment
- The number of Companies participating for Campus Placement has dipped by up to 40%
- Number of selections has dipped by around 50%
- Drastic dip in Non-IT Placements. Majority of the companies recruiting are from IT sector
- The Focus of companies is a lot more towards hiring through Internships

It is anticipated that there will be enhanced recruitment of freshers by mid-2021 in the Job market. So, the big question to the Campuses across the country is - Are you ready with your talent pool?

**About the Author**

**Keshav Sridhar** is a HR Consultant & OD Specialist. A seasoned HR Professional, he wields an experience of 15 years and has worked with Google, Partygaming, Aditya Birla Group, BITS Pilani University etc. Keshav holds a degree in Mechanical Engineering and a Post Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management. He can be contacted at connect@keshavsridhar.com.
Organisations that excelled in taking care of their people during these unprecedented times have already won a part of the talent war, for a considerably longer time, against the employers who chose not to change with the times.

In just a few months, the world has seen the most unexpected transformation. While the overall impact of this black swan is still vague, organisations are moving with the new shift. They have walked that extra mile to take care of their people and business, but there is more to be done to meet employees’ needs to create a sustainable growth model.

It has been a rollercoaster ride for most employees. The fear of being laid-off, becoming infected, balancing work-life, and many other severe vulnerabilities are lingering around. They were all just lost, or probably still are! As the virus continues circling the world, policymakers are proactively redefining and redesigning strategies to meet today’s and tomorrow’s needs. The new and the next normal are getting reviewed and reworked every day.

Power of Rewards Program

The pace at which everything around us is changing has baffled our minds and bodies to an unrealistic level. The most basic needs are the essential ones now. We have learned to live more of every day with less of everything.

The power of a well-designed and well-executed rewards program is miraculous. Dale Carnegie aptly stated, “People work for money but go the extra mile for recognition, praise, and rewards.” It can generate business results by enhancing and improving employee loyalty and workforce morale. The value for existence is received and decoded well by employees if this philosophy stays intentionally benefitting and purposeful.

The formalisation of strategies depends on the capacity of the organisation and the nature of the business. Companies show take into account a few essential criteria while redesigning the processes in the COVID-19 era.

Total Rewards Strategy should be:
- REALISTIC
- EMPATHETIC
- WELL-BEING CENTRIC
- ADAPTABLE
- RESET-ABLE
- DIGITAL.

Realistic: With uncertainty being the only certain scenario, an individual’s way of looking at basic needs have dramatically changed. The total reward system should aim to give what is needed and shouldn’t be a mere tick mark initiative. It should be real, attainable, and transparent. The guidelines should delineate how employees can earn rewards or become eligible.

Empathetic: Adopting humility is the key. Organisations need to put aside the preconceived baggage of opinions, understanding, biases, and relevance. Policymakers should have intensified awareness of employees’ needs, wants, and motivations. They should then purposefully align these needs with their strategies to get to a win-win state. As rightly stated by Julie Bevacqua, “In order to build a rewarding employee experience, you need to understand what matters most to your people.”

Well-being centric: Looking at the current scenario, where there is more stress than anything else, along with empathy, well-being takes an important place in the “MUST-HAVE” list. Organisations should consider designing and deploying total rewards programs considering people’s well-being depending on their life and career stage. Emotional and mental well-being should not be compromised, ever!

Not many organisations, before COVID-19, had focused on well-being programs and policies for their employees, but new research says, 87 per cent of the organisations have included well-being as a base of their total rewards strategic planning system.

BY DR ANKITA SINGH
Adaptable: Organisations have to ensure that the strategies defined are in line with company standards, market, current scenario, and the current need. The Total Rewards System should be nimble and straightforward enough to get adjusted, modified, changed, and made relevant as many times as needed. The rigidity in the system steals the essence of its essential existence.

Reset-able: Policymakers, generally, have a not-so-good habit of retaining their precious policies because it was well thought through and did miracles when launched. Due to scenario thrusts, like the COVID-19, we sometimes agree to tweak those a bit but refuse to replace them. Policymakers have to understand and accept the relevance concept. Research – evaluate – plan - implement – evaluate. If the result is not as expected, accept and if need be, CHANGE! RESET!

Digital: Those days are long gone when there was a high dependency on conventional strategies and approaches. COVID-19 has washed away all our claimed benefits of in-person perks and benefits. Management has to rethink and realign all their non-monetary rewards with the digitally explored and exploited world of work. The rewards strategy has to look and feel real in this virtual world to keep our multi-generational workforce connected, collaborated, and motivated. Otherwise, as Doug Warner indicated, “In the world of Internet Customer Service, it’s important to remember your competitor is only one mouse click away.”

Organisations can gain a leg up in today’s competitive era by adopting a comprehensive total rewards philosophy. Various critical components do not reflect in our conventional strategy. We have been very prominently talking about TRS components as base pay, health insurance, paid time off, employee physical wellness, and similar elements. Employees seek financial, physical, mental, and social well-being and a little more from their organisation.

A few need-based initiatives that should be considered to meet the need of the hour are:

Add-ons: Mental Health Counselling, Wellness Counselling, Health Monitoring and Support, Reimbursement for Health and Well-being Expenses.

Redefine existing policies: Sick Leave Policy, Remote Working Policy, and Annual Incentive/Bonus Plan.

Short-term initiatives: Unpaid Sabbatical Plan, Swapping Budgets, Supplemental lump-sum Payments, Choices against Layoffs, LWP, and Proportional Pay.

Moreover, this pandemic is a phase when people, rightly and rightfully, want that little more of every little thing to help them in any little way. Consider it!

"If you don't create a great, rewarding place for people to work, they won't do great work." - Ari Weinzweig

About the Author

Dr. Ankita Singh is the Senior Vice President & Global Head of HR at CIGNEX Datamatics. Ankita has over 19 years of experience in managing various aspects of HR spanning across domains of IITES. She holds a PhD in Management and was named one of Forbes India’s Top 100 Great People Managers.
E-Grocery: The Now and the Next

In an exclusive interaction with Human Capital, Hari T.N., Head HR, BigBasket, shares his views on how the e-grocery industry is being transformed by the COVID-19 pandemic and how the new labour codes have brought about long-overdue reforms.

BY ANKITA SHARMA

Online grocery, which was a $1.9 billion market in 2019, is poised to reach $18 billion-plus in India by 2024 with the catalyst of the pandemic, according to a joint report by RedSeer Consulting and BigBasket. How do you see the job market in the e-grocery industry now and after COVID-19 abates? Which are certain in-demand skills that will be the top job drivers?

About 90% of the workforce is unskilled or semi-skilled, traditionally referred to as blue-collar. Growth in these jobs is almost linearly related to growth in the revenue.

We believe that COVID-19 has helped move some demand permanently from offline grocery stores to online grocery companies like Bigbasket. A good number of these new customers will continue to shop
online. So, COVID-19 helped accelerate the movement from offline to online. What may have taken a few years was accomplished overnight, resulting in a one-time reset.

Online grocery/commerce tends to rely a lot more than the offline grocery/retail on technology, analytics, data sciences, product and digital marketing. These skills will be the top job drivers.

Over the last few months, the breadth, depth, and scale of the novel talent challenges experienced by e-grocers have been astounding—be it addressing workforce shortages to meet the massive demand surge or motivating people to come to work during the course of the lockdown. What are the biggest pain points for the sector right now? How do they need to be tackled?

All the initial challenges have been overcome. In the early days of lockdown when there was a surge in demand coupled with a huge shortage of manpower, we rejigged several processes, including the assortment, to increase labour productivity multifold. This helped us serve the spike in demand.

People have been returning to work, and companies have been strengthening safety and hygiene standards at the workplaces. There are no particular pain points now worth calling out, except for the regular problems that any business faces.

How do you see the impact of the labour codes—which have been recently cleared by Parliament—on e-grocery startups? For an industry with a business model relying on the gig economy, do you believe the Social Security Code, which brings informal workers, gig workers and platform workers under a social security net, will come about as a boon?

The labour reforms have been long overdue. These reforms address three major issues:

(a) By bringing a few hundred labour laws under four broad codes, simplification has been achieved. Compliance is easy, and the contradictions and inconsistencies in definitions across different labour laws are mostly a thing of the past.

(b) Bringing 85% of the unorganised workforce under the purview of these laws has ensured that they are now covered and provided adequate protection.

(c) The ease of doing business has been significantly enhanced by a variety of measures, including making it difficult to resort to strikes and lockouts. Shutting down unviable businesses has also been made much easier.

We still need to see how the provisions of extending social security to the gig workforce will actually work on the ground without jeopardising the fundamental beauty of this win-win model that aligns the interests of the gig workers with those of their associated companies.

When it comes to addressing key concerns such as changing business needs and boosting employee morale, what are the vital points that function as an imperative for an organisation in your sector?

We are fortunately part of a sunrise sector and hence do not have problems with employee morale. Employee morale is usually a problem with sectors that are fading into the sunset or being decimated by social distancing (e.g., restaurants, malls, physical stores, airlines, hospitality, etc.).

What, according to you, is the biggest transformation that the pandemic has brought forth for your sector?

The biggest transformation that the pandemic brought to this sector is undoubtedly accelerating the migration of shoppers from offline to online retail. What may have taken years was achieved overnight. Suddenly, many people have realised that their bias against online shopping was misplaced. The lure of convenience plus a lower price point that online grocery offers is an unbeatable and irresistible proposition.
Building A Talent Pipeline

The talent pipeline model renovates the outdated hiring process and makes it a holistic and wholesome experience for both the company and the candidates.

By Amol Gupta

People are the currency of any organisation. They are vital to business growth and success. But, many businesses have a responsive approach to hiring talent, and wait for an employee to quit before looking for a replacement. The absence of pre-emptive recruitment can compromise the current team and halt the company’s growth. No matter the industry, it is crucial to have a talent pipeline framework in place to attract the right candidates, and thereby, enable business growth. Therefore, it is paramount to build and develop a talent pipeline.

Developing a fruitful candidate pipeline for serious roles is an awfully long process and can take years. A talent pipeline is a growing set of people that a business may want to employ in the future, either as alternatives for the existing critical positions or for newer roles that may open up in the future. Building a pipeline involves developing longterm relationships proactively with prospective candidates who align with the company’s talent needs, both in the present and in the future. Companies need to shuffle their HR plan from a passive recruitment model to one where the next-gen talent is sought after.

Talent pipelining is proactive recruitment at its best. Building it will help organisations fill positions faster. An organisation can cherry-pick from an extremely qualified group of candidates who are already acquainted with the organisation. Every organisation, regardless of size or industry, stands to benefit from building a sustainable talent pipeline. In addition to better candidates, talent pipelining allows to diversify the talent pool, deliver bespoke candidate experiences, and improve the overall business brand.

1. Recruit as per the business strategy

To build an impressive talent pipeline framework, it is indispensable that HR teams understand the company’s premeditated direction, both in terms of current needs and growth needs. Before creating a recruitment plan, it is important to recognise roles which are critical to reaching the business goals and gain visibility on any planned projects or future growth and expansion plans.

2. Discover the right talent

It is crucial to scour the right talent. Instead of the push strategy for recruitment by listing roles on job portals, one needs to attract the right people through a pull strategy by developing one’s brand and carry the required appeal for the right job seeker. This reduces the time needed and actively spent by the team to find talent to fill the pipeline.

An organisation’s talent pipeline should contain a mix of both internal and external candidates. Hence, it is vital to build a talent pool of internal candidates who can fit in any of the key roles or take on new roles on course with the growth of the company. For external candidates, it is important to have a consistent approach to
WORK CULTURE

is also about the ongoing development to put them in the best position possible for success. An organisation can have multiple programmes, such as regional or global leadership development programmes, to help these candidates excel and also serves as a great marketing tool to attract future talent.

Initially, building a talent pipeline may appear to be too much of an effort, but it is a sensible investment for any company. It will definitely streamline the recruiting process by helping a business to hire more qualified, engaged, and happy candidates who will make a difference in the company.

All said, companies with an excellent talent pipeline will be able to draw the best and brightest to work for them. The talent pipeline model renovates the outdated hiring process and makes it a holistic and wholesome experience for both the company and the candidates.

4. Assessing the talent

The next step in the talent pipeline model is talent assessment. One needs to create criteria for assessment based on qualitative and quantitative needs like the skills and competencies of the candidates to succeed, future challenges, experiences to overcome these challenges and so on. It is advisable to work with the hiring committee and top executives to develop a list of criteria and refer back to this when assessing candidates.

E.g. The criteria for assessing talent for leadership positions would be managing the manager, employee satisfaction score, Client satisfaction score, performance ratings, business/revenue growth or cost-saving or innovative approach saved/gain revenue etc.

5. Developing the talent

Building a talent pipeline is not just about finding the right candidates. It identifying the right people to the talent pool – even if they are not actively searching for a new role.

“It is vital to build a talent pool of internal candidates who can fit in any of the key roles or take on new roles on course with the growth of the company.”

94% of employers mentioned that talent planning has positive impacts on their employee’s engagement level

70-80% of success rate shows promoting the leaders within

source: CEB Gartner

About the Author

Amol Gupta is Chief Human Resources Officer, India & Philippines, FIS. With an overall experience of 23 years in Human Resource Management he has held different positions at Barclays Technology Center India, SunGard, Infosys BPO, Lupin Ltd. and a few others. Amol, an alumnus of UC Berkeley Extension, SIMS, Symbiosis Law College and Delhi University and has additional certifications like SPHR, HRMP and SHRM – SCP.
COVID-19 And Digital Transformation

The success of organisations will depend on their ability to connect with every individual within the organisation at a deeper level through technology in these uncertain times.

BY KAUSHIK CHAKRABORTY

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered everything overnight in almost every sphere of life. And this has made way for what has been termed today as the ‘new normal’. The terrifying manner in which COVID-19 infections have spread has left the world completely flabbergasted. The rising cases around the globe have challenged people from every walk of life. While we have witnessed history’s worst outbreaks like H1N1, Swine flu and Ebola among others, for many of us, COVID-19 has shown us the true picture of a pandemic.

The present-day digitalised world stands as proof to the fact of how technology drives human lives in every horizon. We no longer sit back or get petrified with news related to COVID-19 stagnating our survival. Instead, we have chosen to acquaint ourselves with the new normal through the aid of technology which is now an integral part of our lives. Technology has been aiding us to be fed, clothed, educated and healed amidst this pandemic. There are two sides to every story and so is the case with COVID-19. Though the pandemic has drastically digressed our normal way of life, it has also paved a path of improvement and enabled us to prepare for a better world.

Accelerating the ‘new normal’

It is time for us to remember those prophetic words of Lyndon B. Johnson, the 36th President of the United States of America, “If future generations are to remember us more with gratitude than sorrow, we must achieve more than just the miracles of technology. We must also leave them a glimpse of the world as it was created, not just as it looked when we got through with it.” The present-day deployment of technology has accelerated the ‘new normal’ life. Corporations and authorities around the world have opted for flexible working conditions such as workfromhome and remote logging to run the show. Technology pertaining to connectivity and channels of communication has been streamlined to accompany every individual amidst social distancing.

Cloud computing and social media platforms have led to technology trends thus shifting people’s focus to a new amplified digitalised working atmosphere. Nonetheless, virtual platforms like Microsoft (Teams), Google (Meet), Zoom, Workplace etc. have been in the digital market since long. These technologies are not new for organisations since they were already subscribing to them. However, the current situation has forced companies to revise the traditional investments and channelise expenditure towards building a virtual empire rather than one which is brick and mortar.

As mentioned previously, there are two sides to every story. While technology has paved the way for the new normal, challenges persist since organisations adapt to the current situation. Every organisation and more so the human resource team has to establish various new measures to keep their employees motivated through this hard yet transformational path and create more employee-
friendly engagements. Also, staying indoors for long spells can also take a toll on one’s mental wellness. Hence, it is extremely important for organisations to create a digitally engaging company culture.

**Ways to emerge stronger**

Certain aspects that can enable organisations to step up and emerge stronger in a pandemic struck world have been cited below:-

**Heart-to-heart connect:** The success of organisations will depend on their ability to connect with every individual within the organisation at a deeper level through technology in these uncertain times. Creating a heart-to-heart connect among employees will be the key to future success where social distancing is the new norm.

**Discovering innovative ways:**

Discovering innovative ways to create a closer relationship with customers through the digitised world will be a key differentiator. Effective communication in the virtual world will be vital to an organisation’s success. Therefore, employees need to be trained in various virtual platforms that are used by the organisation so that they can utilise the platform to effectively connect with clients or teams. For example, a virtual platform for a group presentation of a business pitch needs to be immensely different from a oneon-one meeting with a client representative.

**Using technological upgrades:** An organisation needs to make use of technology to upgrade the knowledge curve of the organisation through different digitised learning interventions. Microlearning, podcasts, video streaming are the new ways of enhancing the learning curve of employees.

**Zero travel hours to the advantage:** With almost zero to less travel time, there has been an increase in the productive work hours available to the employees. We are increasingly hearing business development professionals getting more windows for virtual meetings with prospective clients than what they could get during the pre-COVID times. It is always a matter of how organisations can make the best of the given scenario to enhance their new business prospects.

**Managing human emotions:**

Leadership success in the new normal will depend on the ability of leaders to manage human emotions and subtle psychological upheavals of fear and anxiety during such uncertain times. Apart from managing oneself, leaders need to know how to coach, counsel and connect with their teams in the new virtual world. A future-ready leader today is the one who is able to absorb and navigate the multitude of ‘COVID’ emotions that engulfs individuals, teams and organisations. The one who shows character today and adapts the digitised platform will be having higher prospects and expansion in the post COVID world.

Like Steve Jobs, almost 20 years ago, said, “Let’s go invent tomorrow instead of worrying about what happened yesterday,” organisations which will emerge stronger and future-ready are the ones which are focused on a transformational digitised journey in this COVID times.

**About the Author**

**Kaushik Chakraborty** is Director, Human Resources, Savills India. He comes with an experience of more than 20 years and has worked in leading organisations such as JLL, ABN AMRO, RBS, Max Newyork Life, ICICI Prudential and Blue Dart. Kaushik is a well-known keynote and motivational speaker at conferences and events and has also been invited to speak in multiple TEDx events in India.
Leading with a Beginner's Mindset

Despite being seen as a role model by many in the HR industry and his title bearing silent testimony to his accomplishments and successes, Saurabh Govil, President and CHRO of Wipro, does not consider himself an expert. Not limited by expertise, Saurabh is seeing the fruits of retaining a beginner’s mindset come to life in today’s time of upheaval and rapid change where, in many ways, we are all beginners. We’re facing new challenges and a completely new business world in which many proven paradigms are no longer applicable. Having been a witness to the changing face of the HR function for over three decades and approaching situations with an attitude of curiosity have enabled Saurabh to thrive through professional rigours and reimagine people strategies.

By Ankita Sharma

With more than 1.8 lakh employees globally, how did Wipro pivot to working remotely en masse in such a short time? What are some new developments in the ways of working at Wipro?

Working from home is not new to the IT industry. However, when we had to get 90% of our workforce to WFH in a short span, it was a different ball game. We were able to move the needle on this because of the excellent BCP processes we had set. Equally important was the support we got from customers, the government, and our employees.

It is easy for us to imagine WFH when we have all these comforts, such as laptops, a good electrical connection, a separate room to work, etc. However, many of our employees stay in shared accommodations and work on desktops in the office. We realised this early on and shipped over 35,000 desktops to employees’ homes and enabled over 30,000 data card connections. Our delivery leadership worked closely with customers to ensure all approvals were in place and gave them the confidence that appropriate security measures were undertaken. All internal teams worked together to make this happen.

Never before in the history of the organisation have so many people worked from home at the same time. We are experimenting with new approaches. What worked in the initial phases of the pandemic may not be working well now, so it is a process of learning and evolution.

Our adoption of collaborative tools has increased manifold, and the entire learning set up (technical and leadership) has moved online. Hiring and onboarding are happening in a virtual space, and leadership connects have increased—these are some augmentations to ways of working. Most importantly, there is a greater realisation that WFH can be successful if managed in the correct fashion.

Despite all the good press about working from home, many organisations are grappling with issues of building cohesion within teams, keeping “human” connections going, and handling the feelings of disengagement that remote working throws up. Moreover, the cultural integration of new employees has become a challenge. How can culture and collegiality be built within digital work teams?

At the core of any company’s culture are its values. Employees see how values are manifested, and a
crisis offers the best example, though unfortunate, of how a company lives its values.

Leaders must play an active role in maintaining company culture. For many employees, it is their leader who is the face of the company. Since today we are not physically at the same location, open discussions on what we value and what is acceptable are important.

At Wipro, our Chairman has been actively involved in spearheading culture change through an extensive communication campaign where he is reaching out to employees across all levels. We have a Culture Office that ensures that culture is permeated throughout different mediums in the organisation. At all levels, leaders are active and visible in practising the elements of our culture that are enshrined in habits at Wipro. This, to my mind, is the most significant element of building a culture.

Positive people-focused actions during the pandemic and commitment to social responsibility have ensured that employees (new and old) see alignment in practised and espoused values. All our people processes, ranging from performance management to one-on-one discussions, are completely online. All these, along with new engagement practices such as virtual All Hands Meet, HR hour, and Fun hour, bring the culture alive and pave the way for cultural integration.

Remote working is not disconnected working. If we look at the IT/ITES industry, there are many employees who, even before the pandemic, were always either at client sites or in sales roles. They were working remotely, yet Wipro culture reached them.

While there is merit in being together in the office to experience the physical aspects of culture, we should not reduce it to just those. Culture runs much deeper. Our people practices and leaders’ actions have ensured a seamless transition.

**“Remote working is not disconnected working.”**

**With flexible work schedules, remote teams and the gig economy all on the rise, how do you see the rewards and benefits landscape evolve and what are the important considerations to keep in mind when planning for FY 2021?**

There are several changes happening in the industry and ways of working. Reward systems need to align with these changes.

I see emotional wellbeing becoming more important than ever. Health and safety will be important considerations.

Secondly, with hybrid work models, employers will have to think about different benefits and reward structures globally. For instance, how do we compensate for the increased infrastructure costs of employees? How do we look at travel and meal allowances? How do we define flexible working vis-à-vis remote work and the policies around them? Rewards will have to incorporate such considerations.

Thirdly, reward structures will have to get highly integrated with the operating models to re-evaluate labour costs since organisations may have gig workers, hybrid models, and part-time employees spread...
across geographies, which will add to the complexity.

Another important consideration will be how the company communicates this to employees. Transparency in reward decisions will ensure there is no perceived inequity.

“While there is merit in being together in the office to experience the physical aspects of culture, we should not reduce it to just those. Culture runs much deeper.”

Does the new work environment demand a new approach to performance management? What should leaders and managers be prioritising on this front, and how can they be more robust?

We do not know how and what the new work environment will be. From the current estimates, we are likely to see a hybrid work arrangement. Along with that, we are also likely to see a larger play of technology via automation, etc.

At one level, it can be argued that organisations will continue to work as per their purpose; hence, there need not be a change in the performance approach. Yet, performance in the current times and the foreseeable future will be in the shadow of COVID-19. We will definitely need to bring more empathy in the process.

There are two aspects to be considered, the first being performance management as a people process and the second being how managers enable performance. Both are interlinked.

An important shift, which has already started taking place, will be towards a developmental system with frequent check-ins. At Wipro, we have a quarterly check-in process that focuses on coaching and development conversations.

Secondly, managers will have to spend more time understanding employee circumstances and providing meaningful enablement for performance. The focus should move from evaluating performance to facilitating performance.

Thirdly, managers will need to gather data from multiple sources to avoid biases based on their old ways of working, which might cloud their judgement. It is more a change in the mental models.

Lastly, if remote working is the norm, then from a process perspective, managers will have to be more aware of how they are impacting the team members so that discussions are not derailed.

Treating performance management in the same fashion as before may prove to be a costly mistake. Instead, managers and leaders need to think about how to make it a better system that reinvigorates employees.

“A hybrid model does offer more flexibility to employees and promotes a better work-life balance. However, it needs to be managed well.”

Rather than going all-remote, many organisations plan to go hybrid, combining the benefits of co-located and remote work. While the goals of offering employees the “best of both worlds” are noble, hybrid-remote can make employees feel presented with “the worst of both worlds” if not approached properly. What new challenges and horizons will this new working arrangement create for organisations?

A hybrid workplace is an option that many organisations are considering. However, even in a hybrid setup, there will be roles that always need to work from the office and roles that can work from wherever.

In the past, organisations have had hybrid models, but they have been mostly due to employee requests. When an entire organisation wants to opt for a hybrid model, like a large IT organisation, several considerations need to be made, such as the following:

- There will be complexity in terms of the operating model. Who will come to work, and how will the method work? What policies should we create?
- There is an implicit assumption that all employees are fine with working from home and would prefer that. We may be grossly wrong on that.
- Communication and decision-making gaps need to be addressed. The same challenges that we see in terms of different time zones will be observed here as well, only at a larger scale. For example, if a key decision-maker is in the office and some employees are WFH, will that individual ensure that the remote workers are involved in the decision-making process? How do we account for informal conversations in the office that commonly lead to reprioritisations or new ideas?

Having said all this, a hybrid model does offer more flexibility to employees and promotes a better work-life balance. However, it needs to be managed well. Organisations will have to invest heavily in building the right culture by educating employees and practising values. The focus will have to be on inclusion – out of sight cannot be out of mind. To that end, promoting collectivism will also be important. It will be a process of evolution, and organisations will have to be nimble about it.
Go-Global: From 'Desi' To 'Videshi'

We are long past the time when Indian businesses primarily focused on growth on their home turfs alone. The last decade has seen multiple Indian companies establishing a footprint across the globe. Taking on the emerging industry globally is a dynamic process. But if well planned and executed, it can take the business to scale newer heights.

BY DR. DEEPIKA PANDITA

Hitech Motors is an established domestic player in the automobile market in India. They are mainly into the manufacture of commercial vehicles and passenger vehicles in the budget and subprime segments. They have been planning to expand overseas for more than a year.

Essence is a world-renowned luxury car brand owned by Sigma Motors, which decided to sell it off as part of a corporate restructuring exercise. It is a very palatable opportunity for Hitech Motors to venture into the international market using Essence’s brand, infrastructure, and technology. However, owing to failure in their current product, it is going through a financial crunch.

On a Monday morning, over tea in his 31st-floor cabin, that overlooked the entire city, Rajesh Dutta asked Sameer Sethi, his Mergers and Acquisitions Director, “Do you think it will work for us?”

Rajesh Dutta is the CEO of Hitech Motors that dominates the budget and sub-prime segment of passenger cars and the largest commercial vehicle manufacturer in India. Almost 75 years into the
business, Hitech has leveraged its competencies to become the country’s sole indigenous auto-maker. While it also has manufacturing units in low-cost countries like Bolivia, Brazil, and Mexico, it targets the Indian markets for over 90% of its revenues.

With innovation and customer service driving its core values, it has not always been smooth sailing for the company. The latest product launched by Hitech Motors has placed it in a spot. With perpetual growth and improvement in living standards over the last five years, the company identified a market section that was willing to switch over from two-wheelers to a budget passenger car. This scenario presented Hitech with an opportunity to increase the size of the market by designing a product that can be priced predatory and be marketed as the common man’s vehicle. This would enable them to ensure that a broader perspective and aspiring customers get converted into sales.

It was at this point that Venus was perceived. It was Hitech’s most ambitious project, in that it entailed a plethora of challenges. Hitech had to borrow heavily from the market, shift its manufacturing base from one state to another due to an altercation with the former’s ruling party, and faced other political challenges because it could not provide an optimal price for Venus. The major challenge for Hitech concerning Venus was product positioning. It had positioned Venus, not as an aspirational product, but as an upgrade. This led to an inadvertent build-up of consumer perception of the work being sub-standard in the passenger car industry, and this is where Venus failed. The sales responsible for the car have been immensely cold, and Venus is now a loss-making business.

Amidst the background of a global economic meltdown, Sigma Motors, a leading multinational automaker based out of the USA, bore the financial brunt. With worldwide growth rates plunging to record lows and consumer demand taking a hit, the automobile industry is now among the worst affected.

During the financial crisis, Sigma Motors is looking to uphold its sustainability by cutting down on costs and shedding its workforce. As part of a corporate restructuring exercise, it plans to sell off its non-core assets, including Essence, which is its marquee luxury car brand operating in the executive, sports, and SUV segments.

Contemporaneously, Hitech Motors has been planning to expand its operations geographically and venture into new markets. However, due to intense competition in the international automobile market in terms of technology, brand value, and price optimisation, Hitech is hesitant to enter the global market with a new brand.

Also, the word in the market is that Sigma Motors is planning Essence’s selloff. Sameer, the M&A director, comes to Rajesh with this information. “This is a very palatable opportunity for us to venture into the international market. All the odds are in our favour. Hitech can arrange for the finances, and in return, we get a world-class brand with its state-of-the-art technologies and manufacturing assets. If we work this right, we could establish a strong foothold in the global market in a matter of two years. This is the perfect amalgamation of two very trusted entities that could come together to deliver exceptional customer value. Not to mention, a tailor-made opportunity to enter the global market and work towards multiplying the business manifolds!” said Sameer to the CEO, proposing an acquisition of Essence.

Post this pitch, Rajesh being the astute businessman that he is, does a quick mental calculation. “With Venus failing in the local market, we already have a substantial debt burden upon us, and due to this our credit ratings have come down dramatically. We can channel funds from the business’s reserves towards this deal, but would it be worth considering the volatility in the global automobile industry? Factoring in the economic crisis, is this the appropriate moment to invest in a luxury car business when there is a serious threat facing job and income security?” he asks Sameer.

About the Author

Deepika Pandita, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in Symbiosis Institute of Business Management Pune at Symbiosis International University. She comes with an experience of 12 years and teaches post graduate and Executive MBA courses in the area of human resources, organisational behaviour, leadership and talent management. Dr. Pandita has a graduate degree in Management and post graduate degree in Management and Human Resources.
Analysis By **Ravi Mishra**

Rajesh and Sameer should go back in time to June 2008, when Ratan Tata, the Chairman of Tata Motors acquired *Jaguar* and *Land Rover* from Ford Motors. The deal was very complex since Ford motors had put forth a clause that both the brands shall be sold together, and Jaguar was going through continuous losses. It was also the time when the automobile sector was going through one among the worst recessions, and Ford, a member of auto giants club - popularly termed the 'Big Three' - was bleeding, and had decided to exit from both the brands which had originally been acquired from the British manufacturer.

Another piece of learning comes from the historical shift in October 2008, when Tata Motors decided to relocate the factory that produced *Nano* - conceptualised as a dream project and tagged the 'people’s car'. Owing to political bias and agitation by the farmers, this project was shifted from Singur in West Bengal to Sanand in Gujarat, even before it could take off. Due to the time-lapse, followed by the long recession, increased cost due to the delay, this brand could not bring in the anticipated success in the market.

Hitech has been planning its overseas expansion since the last year. And today, Rajesh feels that he is very close to his dreams, and acquiring *Essence* as the right opportunity, and discusses it with Sameer, an expert in Merger and Acquisition (M&A).

The perpetual threats: -

- The slowdown in the auto sector
- Hitech’s financial position due to high debt
- The failure of *Venus*, an ambitious project
- Fear of accumulating losses if *Essence* fails to perform
- Intense competition in the international automobile market in terms of technology, brand value, and price optimisation, Hitech fears of entering the global market with a new brand.

**The opportunities:** -

- In the current geopolitical situation, it is very difficult to launch a greenfield project
- Business is always cyclic, and more so in the auto industry
- The cost of acquisition is very low since Sigma is keen to move out from this vertical
- The company can use the reserve fund very productively to exploit the situation
- Sigma motors is known for its technology and infrastructure and has established *Essence* in the luxury segment globally
- Normally during a slowdown, it is the mid-segment cars and not the luxurious cars that are impacted
- Over and above, *Essence* is known for its presence as a luxury car, hence it will be easier for Hitech to build it further as a big giant automobile company in the sector
- It will be a great opportunity to get the benefits of brand loyalty, which will help in expanding beyond the domestic market
- After the addition of *Essence*, Hitech will have the entire segment in the auto sector from budget to luxury car and the geographical reach from local to global
- Company will get readily available infrastructure and technology, which will help and add value to the other segments of passenger and commercial vehicles of Hitech
- The strength of its people’s power and the expertise of innovation and customer service will take *Essence* to another level and failure of *Venus* will be well compensated in capacity utilisation for *Essence*’s expansion in India

Given the overwhelming opportunities for growth and prosperity to Hitech as compared to the threats, it must acquire *Essence* since it is the best way to enter the international market. Secondly, it is a golden opportunity for Hitech to use the reserve funds over *Essence*’s low valuation due to a near-distress sale by Sigma. Thirdly, given the slowdown in the auto industry, fewer companies may be interested in *Essence*, thereby posing no challenge or competition to Hitech. Rajesh and Sameer should therefore decide to acquire *Essence* and establish Hitech in the international market.

**About the Author**

Ravi Mishra is Senior Vice President-HR for Global Epoxy Business, Aditya Birla Group. He is associated with the Group since 2005, and has worked in different businesses i.e. Grasim Chemical, UltraTech Cement, and Birla Carbon. Prior to joining the Aditya Birla Group, Ravi was associated with diversified organisations such as, Nicholas Piramal Group, Mardia Group of Industries, and Nova Petrochemicals Ltd.
As the CEO of Hitech Motors, whose recent ambitious project was unsuccessful, one can understand Rajesh’s apprehensions in taking a plunge into the international market through an acquisition. And more so during a slowdown in the global economy and the debt that was undertaken by Hitech. However, as the M&A Director, Sameer should respond to Rajesh’s reservations by highlighting the brighter side of the proposed acquisition. The acquisition is the perfect vehicle for Hitech to enter a newer market segment, and it also offers a quick path to incremental growth. In fact, a recession can be the perfect time to find a bargain investment and the right deal can catapult Hitech to the next level. An analysis by Bain & Company of more than 24,000 transactions between 1996 and 2006 show that acquisitions completed soon after the recession of 2001-02 generated nearly thrice the returns as compared to the acquisitions in the preceding years. Hence, the odds are definitely in favour of the acquisition.

Given the prevalent business opportunities and challenges, one would always recommend the acquisition. While Hitech does have a failed launch on its back, as the country’s leading automaker, it is best positioned to take this risk. It has years of goodwill and expertise and a single unsuccessful project does not imply that Hitech cannot think big.

It makes strategic sense to pursue this acquisition as it gives the following to Hitech Motors:

- A broadened geographic footprint that it has been eyeing for some time now
- An increased market share
- Enhancement of its technological capabilities. Today, consumers are keen on buying cars with latest technologies and designs. The acquisition shall give Hitech Motors access to Essence’s technology and research
- Diversify its product portfolio. Its core brand products mostly consist of commercial vehicles and passenger vehicles in the budget and subprime segments

With the acquisition, Hitech will gain access to all vehicles from Essence which would primarily be the luxury cars operating in the executive, sports and SUV segments, thus ensuring that Hitech has covered all segments in the automobile market.

Some of the other ways through which Hitech can work around to expand business globally would be:

- By going solo in the international market like it has in low-cost countries. This approach, however, requires a lot of investment and legal hassles. Also, it is not easy to find one’s feet in the new market as one has to start from scratch. However, once successful, the company gains access to new customers in a new market and the revenues surge.
- Hitech Motors can also go for a merger with Essence. This would not burden Hitech financially, and at the same time, it gets an opportunity to enter the market globally. However, mergers often lead to diseconomies of scale where the company becomes so large that cost per unit increases. This also leads to increased prices which may not always find resonance with the customers.

A hasty acquisition or a wrong deal can cripple a company, and in the long run, even pull it out of business. However, if planned and executed well, an acquisition at the time of recession gives an organisation larger room for negotiation as the other organisation which is looking to uphold its sustainability may not be in a position to bargain. Hence, a well-thought acquisition can definitely lead a business scale to new heights.

Analysis By Rohit Hasteer

About the Author

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

There have been numerous instances wherein potential leaders were not equipped with readymade Playbooks for navigating the pandemic. However, mentoring programmes provided by the employer completely transformed their leadership style.

BY ROHIT SHENOY

“Papa, what date is it tomorrow?” Shouted 8-year-old Saisha. Her dad Nikhil looked up from his home office desk and checked the calendar before telling her, “It’s 12th November, 2021, Satish, and the day after tomorrow is Vijayadashami. You remember your dance performance for your online yoga class na?”

As he said this, his thoughts raced back to 12th March, 2020 which was the last day he physically went to the office. It seemed like such a long time ago now! As the Head of Sales for one of the product lines, he recalled the sudden panic that had gripped his sales team and the entire company. The memory of his CEO announcing an immersive senior leadership development programme – CEO Next – during April 2020 seemed to be totally counter-intuitive. Remarkably, during this time, Nikhil had also steered the company into a new era of leadership in the digital service line. Now as he successfully completed the CEO Next leadership development programme and achieved a business milestone, it was time for some celebration and reflection. His thoughts went into what made him successful in the last 18 odd months. He began writing down his reminiscences in his journal:

The success of the programme and enabling Nikhil to steer his business

Strong Leadership buy-in: Neha, Nikhil’s CEO, had been working with a crossfunction team of sales, business and HR leaders to design the leadership development programme. She was convinced that this is the future of the company and completely sponsored the programme. She had also convinced the sceptical board members about the importance of this investment and had got their agreement to continue the investment even during the Pandemic. She spoke about the programme in internal and external forums and personally spent time in the design and review of the programme. She believed ‘Leaders build Leaders’ and spent significant time in the leadership development programme. In summary, Nikhil knew this was worth his time and effort.

Integration with business: Since CEO Next was designed along with heads of businesses involvement, it was strongly aligned to the business. The CIO brought in the strong need for digitalisation of the business. The function heads got in their insights from supply chain, Government policy, Business Development, Design and engineering and other areas to build an innovative and optimised leadership programme well integrated with business needs. The learning team got their insights on how humans learn, business understanding and digital learning platforms.

Silo breaking Social Learning: The CEO Next programme Cohort across the globe met regularly on Zoom meetings and also had a fun online-offsite. He got to understand other functions and geographies which gave a leg-up to collaboration between his team and other teams. He also made some best friends for life.

“Customer preferences changed rapidly during the Pandemic. Amazon and Flipkart witnessed double sales in a few months and the valuation of Zoom increased from 20 Billion to 160 Billion!”
Building Digital Competencies:
As part of his programme, he was sent on a 4-week digital externship (a take on the term ‘Internship’) with Flexenture IT services where he (figuratively) rubbed shoulders with the tech whizzes who were working on real customer challenges. This was a life-changing experience. He practically saw that the best way to learn something is to get into a group where what you want to learn is the norm. This immersive experience transformed him from a digital dinosaur to a digital-savvy sales Leader.

Reverse mentoring: As part of the programme, Nikhil got a 22-year-old technology (reverse) mentor – Aparajita. She was such a wiz at everything technology and could articulate with amazing clarity! He came face to face with his tech dinosaur self and resolved to overcome his ‘tech disability’. With determination and focus, he scaled up on analytics, basics of data science and learnt quite a bit about the tech landscape and even did an intro course to Python! He was shocked to hear that Mukesh Ambani had recently learnt python, and he said to himself, ‘when the richest person in India is also learning coding, it definitely makes sense for me!’ As a result, he was now able to suggest various changes to how data is analysed, how reports are visualised and also inputs on new offerings for their digital service line.

Coaching and Reflection: This was something that surprisingly had maximum impact on Nikhil! As part of CEO Next, he was given a coach on the ‘Coach-Online’ Platform. It was phenomenally effective and personalised! His weekly 45 minutes conversations with his coach, Melinda, based in California, was something he was very sceptical about at the start of his learning journey. Now, he could not wait to have his next coaching conversation! He did not even realise how his relationship with his dad as a child was still showing in his aggressive, and at times, mercurial leadership style. Melinda got him to reflect deeply on his motivations, past behaviour, the impact of work and personal life on each other, and her skilful questions helped clarify quite a few ‘fundas’ of life for him in his mind. Melinda’s nudges through the mobile app gently reminded him even of things like setting-up time for important selfcare routines. He also got practical insights on his delegation style and how he held his team accountable which proved to be invaluable. His selfcare practice that started with a 21-day meditation became a regular and precious part of his mental and spiritual wellness routine.

Self-paced Social learning with global cohort and live online classes: When the pandemic set in, customer preferences changed rapidly. People stopped visiting malls and the sales of Amazon and Flipkart doubled in a few months. The valuation of the online conferencing tool, Zoom, increased from 20 Billion to 160 Billion! Food and Hygiene spends increased while discretionary spends reduced. Cosmetics sales decreased, but mascara sales increased! Everything
“Just like an airline pilot who can afford to learn and make mistakes in a flight simulator but not in war, one could make mistakes in this virtual world.”

went digital, including his ageing parents’ Satsang group! In this scenario, he wanted to understand customer preferences better and find out what other companies were doing. His company’s subscription of an online live training platform (similar to Hone) with participants from across the world from different industries helped him establish this connect and understand changing customer preferences and insights from across industries.

**Immersive VR skill-practice experience**: His most memorable experience was the Virtual Reality (VR) conversation experience. After a session on Manager connect and empathy, he had a one-on-one check-in conversation with a fictitious team member (a virtual character powered by AI). Only after the detailed analysis of the conversation with the bot did he realise some of his derailing behaviours like not listening to the team, starting with ‘yes, but’, cutting others and not encouraging diverse views. Just like an airline pilot who can afford to learn and make mistakes in a flight simulator but not in war, he could make mistakes in this virtual world. This built his ‘muscles’ to be a much more effective communicator with his team and externally with clients.

**Immersive gamified, adaptive online learning**: Nikhil was never a fan of online learning and thought it was a total waste of time. He was again pleasantly surprised to see not just personalisation, but adaptive technology in the new AI based learning platform- Talent Flix. Talent Flix did not just prescribe learning based on his role, but adapted intelligently to what he was interested in. This ensured he did not have to search for relevant content and most relevant micro-learning was available when he needed or sometimes even before he needed it! For instance, when he received a video on negotiation and contract management just when he was getting ready for a crucial price negotiation with a client. Talent Flix had accessed his calendar and nudged him with the most relevant video which helped him in his negotiation. He loved the idea of learning something, applying it and going back to work without spending hours on learning itself.

**Contextual Nudges**: His LMS synced with his calendar and gave not only just-in-time prompts but also proactive nudges. He remembered the one time when he got a nudge on the app which asked him – ‘Have you listened to the quietest person in the room?’ Very much unlike his normal self, in the next virtual meeting, he asked the quietest team member to share his view. To his surprise, he got some insights that were completely new and would make a big difference to the team’s effectiveness. He also got hyper-personalized nudges encouraging him to schedule time for strategic thinking which helped in coming up with quite a few out-of-the-ordinary ideas.

As he completed his reflection, he realised that though he did not have any readymade Playbook for navigating the pandemic, the overall CEO Next programme had transformed his leadership style. He was also proud to be a digital ready leader now. What is more, he was sure Saisha would also be proud of her dad’s transformation!

Author’s note: This is a fictitious case of a leader who goes through the modern leadership development Journey during the Pandemic. The ideas have been inspired by the latest thinking in Leadership development and the below articles in particular:
- https://app.honehq.com/
- https://joshbersin.com/2019/07/why-leadership-development-feels-broken-and-how-were-fixing-it/

**About the Author**

Rohit Shenoy leads Organization and Talent Development for Sterlite Power - a Vedanta group company. He wields an industry experience of over 16 years and has worked in DDI, Infosys, Accenture and Siemens. Rohit is a Mechanical Engineer and an MBA-HR and Marketing from SIBM, Pune. He is a certified Neuroleadership coach and has received an OD certification from Tata Institute of Social Sciences.
Building Self-Awareness In Leaders

It is widely accepted that decision making and related processes are cognitive in nature. However, there is enough evidence that our feelings drive our decisions in more ways than we are aware of.

BY ASHISH PRADHAN

“One of the most important skills of leadership is self-awareness”

– Robin Sharma

Several thought leaders have established a clear link between leadership and self-awareness. Leaders who are self-aware

• Know their strengths and weaknesses
• Understand the motivation for their drive
• Remain in sync with their feelings and emotions

Thus, they are sensitive to the impact they are creating on others. Being self-aware makes one empathetic and emotionally connected with the people one interacts with. Leaders who are successful in establishing this emotional connect with their teams can motivate them to greater heights, and thus, achieve sustained success. All this seems straightforward and logical, but one would hazard that there is more than what meets the eye here. If it were to be so simple then one is likely to come across several leaders who are self-aware. However, we have experienced the fact that there are far too many leaders who are found to be lacking such an important facet among leadership skills as compared to those who do.

So, how does one develop self-awareness? Is this an inborn trait that cannot be developed? And, if it can be developed, is there a methodology that one must follow? How does one realise if one is self-aware? Is it a long process? Certain self-awareness processes that have proved to be right have been mentioned below. Though presented in a certain order, the three steps outlined below are interchangeable.

1. To Question Oneself

Once, there lived a wise old monk at the top of a mountain. One fine day, a young man, who was in search of wisdom, arrived at his doorstep. He was highly educated and erudite and therefore wanted to embellish his knowledge with the crowning glory of wisdom. The old monk offered him tea and while pouring it into the young man’s cup, he did so until it overflowed. Reacting to the young man’s annoyance, the old wise monk said since the cup must be empty to make room for more tea, the young man was required to empty his cup to accept something new.

Hubris is an insidious way of operating and develops blind spots among the best of us. Knowing and being aware of this is important for a leader as it then allows him or her to re-examine the situation and her response to it. Information and judgement could change over time. The information available now could be different from what we had during the time of decision-making. Our experiences and beliefs could have changed in the ensuing time, thereby, impacting our sense of judgement. Clearly, this is enough reason to revalidate our assumptions, challenge our judgement, and finally, reassess our decisions. This questioning and sometimes backtracking requires courage which leaders need to demonstrate by being emotionally detached from their decision. Confirmation bias remains as one of the most common pitfalls in cognitive thinking where one tries to find “evidence” which supports “his” decision and conveniently ignores information that may prove otherwise.

“A leader must find time to reflect. She must reflect on her strengths, weaknesses, the motivation behind decisions, emotional makeup, and the impact her responses create on others. One is aware of these at an intuitive level.”

2. Reflection
A leader must find time to reflect. She must reflect on her strengths, weaknesses, the motivation behind decisions, emotional makeup, and the impact her responses create on others. One is aware of these at an intuitive level. However, a successful leader must have the ability to raise
this intuitive knowledge to a conscious level where she can articulate this lucidly. If one is successful in doing this, then one can truly get in touch with one’s inner self and raise one’s awareness to a higher level. The Johari window model gives us a simple but effective framework for understanding ourselves. The ‘blind area’ in the model – an area where others know more about ourselves than us – is an area that can be reduced by seeking feedback.

Seeking feedback requires openness to question ourselves and the courage to accept some unpleasant truths. This is an important source for self-reflection and introspection. The most difficult area to tackle in the Johari window model is the ‘hidden area’ – an area that is unknown to both our colleagues as well as us. This is an important area as many of our subliminal biases and past conditioning that drive present behaviours sit here. It is not natural for many of us to access this, but this is where a coach or a sparring partner has a major role to play. A coach does not provide any answers, but only asks the right questions. The process of finding the answers is through dialoguing which has the potential of increasing one’s self-awareness immensely.

3. Action
This is the stage when one tries to implement certain changes which have been concluded as required in the quest to becoming an inspirational leader. One must take risks and take the plunge. Risk-taking is a key attribute for any successful leader - No risk, no reward. These risks are more inclined to the nature of changing the process of decision-making, changing the strategic direction, personnel decisions, etc. An important part of this step of action is the feedback loop. Any change in one’s approach is a change in the stimulus which evokes a change in response. It is critical that this process is well monitored and documented. It tells us what works and what does not, and, more importantly, why. This information provides additional information that can be used in the process of self-awareness while reflecting or dialoguing with a sparring partner or coach. Here, it is important to get an impression of one’s feelings about the change. It is widely accepted that decisionmaking and related processes are cognitive in nature. However, there is enough evidence that our feelings drive our decisions in more ways than we are aware of. This is counterintuitive and is hence likely to be missed.

Mahatma Gandhi comes across as one of the most self-aware leaders that one has studied. He relentlessly pursued the quest of understanding himself through questioning, deep introspection, and experimentation with audacious approaches to leadership with the courage to discard that which does not fit his own ever nuanced understanding of his values, motivations, and convictions. This is brilliantly chronicled in ‘My Experiments with Truth.’

“Carefully watch your thoughts, for they become your words. Manage and watch your words, for they will become your actions. Consider and judge your actions, for they have become your habits. Acknowledge and watch your habits, for they will become your values. Understand and embrace your values, for they become your destiny.”

—Mahatma Gandhi

About the Author
Ashish Pradhan is President, Siegwerk India & Greater China. He comes with over 25 years of experience in the Packaging industry and has worked in Huhtamaki, Positive packaging, Henkel, and International Paper. Ashish is a Mechanical Engineer with a Management Degree and holds a Diploma in International Trade from the Indian Institute of Materials Management and a Diploma in Packaging from the Institute of Packaging, UK.
Beyond The Bounds Of Reason

Behavioural Economics permits us to dig deeper into unconscious cognitive biases and the unpredictability in human decision making. It makes for an important field of study for introducing cultural change.

Workplace policy and systems work on the premise of predictability and rationality of human behaviour. For most of us who work in people professions, there is a realisation that human behaviour is anything but predictable.

Organisations demand a set of standard processes and systems which are largely the outcome of rational thought. However, employees in organisations bring their own selves to work, and the culture in an organisation is a dynamic interplay of individual cognitive responses within a larger rational ecosystem.

Organisational transformation requires behavioural change intervention. Behavioural Economics allows us to dig deeper into unconscious cognitive biases and the unpredictability in human decision making and is an important field of study for introducing cultural change.
(Reddy, 2018). Priming intentions and nudging people to change behaviours in alignment with organisational strategy is an important part of the HR agenda of the future.

Setting the context for Behavioural Economics

The traditional economic theory set store by the rationality assumption of people behaviour that individuals can make better economic choices for themselves than they can make for others, or others can make for them. People are assumed to be interested in maximising their own welfare, and as a natural corollary, it is assumed that they can make rational decisions after considering all aspects of the matter at hand.

However, it is seen that people do not always think through a problem in a rational manner and do not make utilitarian decisions at all times. They do make impulsive regrettable choices and are sometimes driven by factors other than what is optimally best. Behavioural economics aims to bridge the chasm between this rational approach and the cognitive decisions made by people (Lee & Clark, 2017).

Behavioural economy is now being adapted and increasingly integrates multiple areas from big data to structural models to neuroscience. It is also being applied in all kinds of domains to bring an added layer of insight into making descriptive economics about people decisions more meaningful (Thaler, 2018). The advent of bounded rationality (Simon, 1955) and the developments in behavioural economics have a profound impact on workplace policy and processes, especially people processes. Behavioural economics posits the following: -

- People dislike uncertainty and have a propensity to stick to the status quo
- Perceived Fairness is more important than the absolute to people
- People sharply discount the future compared to the present which is the principle of discounting

These principles imply that people generally do not put in a lot of effort to find optimal solutions, preferring simpler decision-making strategies that require minimal effort. This has implications for people processes as people would tend to:

- Stick with what they know
- Tend to follow social norms
- Settle for ‘good enough’ over the best
- Procrastination is normal for people, from savings to delaying process completion
- People stick with the default option that is prescribed as it requires effort to make a switch
- If decisions are complex and involve multiple elements, such as most performance management processes, they will avoid it altogether if they could

HR professionals could use the following propositions suggested by Behavioural economics to amplify the success of their interventions and guide people towards the desired outcomes.

“HR professionals need to proactively assess required behaviour modification in employees and use options such as choice architecture, nudging and priming or even discounting as the case may be to effect the changes.”

Choice architecture and nudges

Thaler has famously stated, “Most provocatively, is it possible to help people make better choices, even if they are already fully informed (say about the relative merits of ice cream and salad)” (Thaler, 2018)

Choice architecture is like designing a menu of different options to present choices to the consumer, which in the case of HR, would be the internal employee. The manner of presentation could influence the choices made by the employee. E.g. if employees are told that they can encash leave, employees tend to forego their leave and prefer to accumulate them. However, a policy modification that leave cannot be encashed and automatically lapses leads to an increase in leave availed by employees. A simple change ends up aligning the organisation perspective on work–life balance.

A Nudge is a concept in behavioural sciences, now adopted in behavioural economics as well. It is the manner of influencing human behaviour in the desired direction through positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions. Nudging contrasts with other ways of achieving compliance, such as statutory enforcement or literacy/awareness. Gamification and incentivisation are all forms of nudges.

Reminders and Prompts

Filling mandatory forms, sticking to stipulated deadlines and completion of prescribed courses are all instances where reminders and prompts are constantly used by HR professionals. Positioning and timing of reminders and prompts are useful in directing behaviours, especially in the area of ethical and value-based actions.

Default settings work better than reminders in terms of behaviour modification techniques, simplifying
options and not providing too many choices is actually a better manner of enforcing compliance. People tend to get confused with too many options and delay their course of action or decision making. The trick is in creating a sense of freedom and choice while not leaving it too open-ended and ambiguous.

**Primming**

Primming refers to unconscious amplification or enhancement through associated words, symbols or meanings. It is extremely powerful and could be extensively used for performance management. Employee motivation and drive are by nature, cognitive, and could be suitably modified using priming techniques.

Through a study of call-centre employees, Shantz and Latham (2011) explored the impact of primed goals on employee performance.

“**Behavioural Economics is presently at the throes of creating an impactful realignment in workplace strategies and could have immense potential for application in the areas of enhancing workforce engagement and productivity.**”

**Impact on Human Resource processes**

Behavioural economics could have much to offer for Workplace interventions as a simple and cost-effective manner of assisting employees to bridge the gap between personal intention and action. For the HR professional, its applications could span many contexts such as:

- Corporate compliance
- Minimising the effect of employee procrastination
- Retirement savings through PF deductions
- Lifestyle modification through appropriate nudges
- Energy efficiency
- Health compliances
- Learning challenges, and more recently in talent management

It can profoundly affect performance management and productivity. Thaler and Sunstein (2008) make a strong case for nudging at the workplace by pointing out various instances where individuals fail to comply with their clearly defined goals.

HR professionals need to proactively assess required behaviour modification in employees and use options such as choice architecture, nudging and priming or even discounting as the case may be to effect the changes. Behavioural economics has created profound changes in policy and implementation strategies at government and global public policy level. It is presently at the throes of creating an impactful realignment in workplace strategies and could have immense potential for application in the areas of enhancing workforce engagement and productivity.

As fields of study become more interdisciplinary, Thought Leadership in the Human Resources field would also embrace insights from multiple fields to interpret and analyse cognitive data on human behaviour. Behavioural economics could be used to enhance the effectiveness of translating the intention of an intervention into action. From improving compliance to instilling savings behaviour to an increased focus on healthy lifestyle choices (Srivastava, 2012).

Environmental nudges could usher in awareness and suitable adaptation to an environmentally conscious contribution (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). HR professionals need to work towards actively assimilating a scientific approach to their intervention design and explore other sciences in more depth. It is all in the choices!

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**References**


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**About the Author**

Kalpana Bansal is Head - Competency Assessment and Development, Reliance Industries Ltd. She comes with an experience of more than 20 years and has worked in organisations such as Tata Unisys, Star TV, IMRB, Mudra Communication and Watson Wyatt (I) Pvt. Ltd and the RPG Group. Kalpana has an MBA and has completed her Executive Masters in Consulting & Coaching for Change from Said Business School, Oxford University.
Appreciative News: What Society Can Learn From Organisations

While the context, contours, expectations, and requirements are different, there are certain key takeaways that daily newspapers can take from the organisational newsletters say Mouli and Ray.

BY VV CHANDRA MOULI, SABYASACHI RAY

The daily newspapers and the various agencies associated with it – namely the owners, editors, information syndicating organisations, journalists, columnists, (press) photographers, etc., have a responsibility to serve the citizens news that generates positivity and hope while focusing on reality.

As individuals, we need to show the same positive bias that we have as ‘organisational citizens’ when participating at a societal level – thereby demanding from the influencers of our thought process (aka media) information/data which will enable us to create more positive and richer surrounding and hopeful tomorrow.

Sometime during the latter part of the ’90s, a new area of Psychology called Appreciative Inquiry (AI) started first in the academic circles and then slowly, owing to appeal, spread to other areas. While in recent times, the practitioners of AI have included those from varied walks of life, such as governments, NGOs, and educational institutions, a relatively vast majority of them have designed, developed, and deployed successful AI-based interventions in organisations.

While the reasons for this could be myriad, the quintessential fact remains that organisations have managed to use the principles of AI quite effectively, for driving large scale change and for improving the output of small team-based projects. However, one area where organisations may have applied the principles of AI, albeit subconsciously, happens to be the Internal Communication process in general and Organisational Newsletters (ON) in particular.

Let’s quickly understand the principles of AI.

Appreciative Inquiry
The research on Positive Psychology, essentially done by Martin Seligman, discovered a total of 24 virtues and were further clubbed into the following six categories
- Wisdom and Knowledge: creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective
- Courage: bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality
- Humanity: love, kindness, social intelligence
- Justice: citizenship, fairness, leadership
- Temperance: forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence, self-regulation
- Transcendence: an appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality

Many of the above principles are subconsciously applied in an ON, while most are seldom focused upon in the mass news medium (print and TV).

Organisational Newsletter
In the early ’70s, as organisations began to grow and geographical spread, there came a need for them to find more effective ways of staying connected with the employees. While other Internal Communication (IC) tools and platforms were already in use, newsletters found a niche slot in this space. Newsletters had existed for a long time and were published by clubs, religious houses, NGOs, societies, and associations, to provide information of interest.
However, in the organisational context, they saw increased usage, acceptance, and results. Riding on the growth of various technology improvements, newsletters today are richer in content, more frequent, and more accessible. The exact number of companies that publish newsletters does not exist, it suffices to say that most leading national and multinational companies have some kind of an ON. While newsletter contents vary from company to company, they usually include:

- Message from the CEO/MD/ Promoter
- Editorials, Employee Corner, Interviews
- Customer Speak (or equivalent) Case Study, Industry insights
- Product Launches, CSR activities
- Opening of new offices and other similar information

Depending on the size, and nature of the organisation, the contents could be a combination of some or all of the above, with additional titbits. Our analysis has found certain features that stand out in all these ONs.

Let us first start with a name:
A name triggers the first thoughts and sets the basis from which one views or ‘decides’ to view the contents of a paper, magazine, book, etc. Most of the organisational newsletters are named in a manner that evokes uniqueness, positivity, and enthusiasm. For example:

- GE Power calls its newsletter Inspire, which is self-explanatory and obviously directed at inspiring its employees along multiple fronts, including performance and innovation.
- Tata Projects, one of the top 10 EPC companies in India, calls its newsletter Concre@te, which may mean, co-create, or concentrate.
- Dr. Reddy Laboratories, the Indian Pharma MNC, calls it Elixir. While the word, Elixir, could find a greater anchorage in the pharmaceutical world, it nonetheless evokes the image of a potent solution.
- IBM in a recent recast of its employee newsletter, to embrace the new technologies, calls its newsletter, #mobilise. This obviously denotes a movement or mobilisation.
- Communique is the newsletter from IFCO –TOKIO, the general insurance company, and the Indian arm of the global giant TOKIO General Insurance. The name, Communique, is obviously a combination of communication and uniqueness, as denotes the organisational desire to communicate and tell its internal stakeholders how it is unique in the offerings and in the marketplace.

It would be enough to say that organisations seem to be positively inclined to provide a name or title for their ON which conjure images of hope, inspiration, positivity, new trend, and the like.

**“Over the past five years, the circulation of newspapers has increased by over 16 per cent and continues to be a main source of information for the bulk of the literate people across the world. It goes without further emphasis that Daily News Paper continues to exercise a tremendous influence on people.”**

Key Content Elements in a Newsletter:
A typical newsletter starts with a message from the CEO or MD. The message usually connotes some of the good things to come or that has already happened. Another significant section is about people and their success or contribution. Typically, these would include a tough situation that has been handled, a problem that has been solved or contribution that is made, which is impactful not just for organisation, but many a time to the industry itself.

One another section is the CSR related activities of the company. Organisations like to inform their internal stakeholders and even their external stakeholders about the social dimension to their activities – and how they are pursuing objectives beyond the financial dimensions. As research has found employees tend to stay and work more with organisations that are known to pursue goals that serve people at large and the society.

**ON Vs Daily News Paper (DNP):**
While it is generally felt that with the penetration of the internet and TV, the readership of newspapers has decreased, it is far from the truth.

Thus, the DNP and the various agencies associated with it – namely the owners, editors, information syndicating organisations, journalists, columnists, (press) photographers, etc., have a responsibility to serve the citizens news that generates positivity and hope while focusing on reality. So, let us look at why this doesn’t seem to be happening with respect to DNPs.

Let us start with the name of the DNP. While we saw in the case of ONs, the names were mostly those words – verbs, adjectives, or mashed versions of the same, which connote inspiration, hope, positivity, and the like, the same cannot be said of DNPs. An analysis of the top newspapers in the world, with a circulation of more than 1,000,000, throws up interesting information. The top three common
Another interesting observation with regards to DNP is that, because of ownership and other issues, there are hardly any ‘direct’ communications from the Head of the State. That is, while the Radio and TV continue to have to a certain extent (such as State of Union in the US or Man Ki Bath in India etc.), papers don’t have communication from the Head of the State to the citizens in general.

In terms of what the State intends to do for its people (subjects), where the State is ‘headed’, the challenges being faced, so on and so forth.

What DNP can Learn from ON:

1. The names of the papers can include more positively oriented words; it could be adjectives or morphed words like in the case of ONs (say for e.g. Morning Dews, YesNews!).

2. The reporting of good news. While people need to know about things that have gone wrong, it is also to be noted that there are a lot of good things happening in the world. A conscious effort should be made so as ensure a judicious mix of news.

3. DNP may have to explore ways and means in which they break away from the conventional construct of papers in general and explore having special provisions for allowing leaders to connect with their constituents.

4. Finally, and most importantly, there may be a need for the papers to have specific sections celebrating individual citizen achievements. In countries like India, we have evolved Page 3 – devoted to the world of men and women of ‘new money’, while we do not have an equivalent for celebrating ‘the acts of common citizens’.

It is often said that all entities – society, organisation, and family are all a part of the same microcosm, which is the individual, who in turn influences and is also influenced by these larger systems. As individuals, we need to show the same positive bias that we have as ‘organisational citizens’ when participating at a societal level – thereby demanding from the influencers of our thought process (aka media) information/data which will enable us to create more positive and richer surrounding and hopeful tomorrow.

About the Author

VV Chandra Mouli is the Founder Director of UniTol Training Solutions. He has an MS in Engineering from the US & and SHRM from IIM, Ahmedabad. He has 25+ years of consulting and Industry experience in India and abroad and has been involved in Strategy, L&D Consulting assignments with some of the leading companies in India including Tatas, Adani, and Murugappa group of companies.

Sabyasachi Ray is a post-graduate in Economics from JNU, Delhi and has an MBA in HR from XLRI, Jamshedpur. He is currently the VP HR for Bajaj Auto. He has more than 16 years of work experience. He is a certified coach, MBTI practitioner, talent analyst, and assessor in CII-Exim Bank business excellence & HR excellence models.
The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the dynamics of work, workforce, and workplace forcing organisations to revisit their strategies to align with revised business goals. However, due to an imbalance in supply and demand for all resources, most employers have adopted a cost optimisation approach for business continuity. The partial weight of cost optimisation came in the form of layoffs, salary cuts, hiring freeze, deferred incentive pay-outs, promotions without a hike, or no salaries, eventually disturbing the compensation structure of fixed remunerations, incentives, and benefits pay-outs.

Human capital is the key resource and thus, it becomes challenging to strike a balance between motivating the workforce to be productive remotely and saving cash at the same time. With employee safety and well-being being the priority, the new normal of remote working is expected to stay for a while. Recently, an Amazon spokeswoman informed its employees in an email statement that “Employees who work in a role that can effectively be done from home are welcome to do so until
June 30, 2021”. Similarly, companies like Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Twitter, etc. have a similar proposition on the extension of work-from-home duration.

Consequently, performance and rewards metrics for employees working remotely will have to be thoughtfully designed keeping the need of employees and business requirements in mind.

Evaluating Employee Performance
Evaluating the performance of employees working remotely will require consideration of the COVID-19 effect. It may have to be more empathetic as each employee is dealing with different circumstances at a personal and professional level.

Following are some of the evaluations criteria adopted or that may be adopted in the new normal:

Clear Goal Setting: Most performance experts suggest that the time has come for frequent evaluation — shifting long-term goals to short-term goals by breaking them down to a weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis.

Communication of the Objectives and KRA to employees with clear direction is mandatory to avoid any discrepancies later. The focus should be on output than the process as the productive hours of each employee might differ due to the physical setup.

Upskilling & Innovation:
Employees have an opportunity to make themselves more employable by learning new skills and providing finesse to their existing skills leading to better performance. Metrics of performance may be:

- Did the employee take advantage of learning platforms provided by the organisation? What kind of innovative and unique solutions did the person find for problems?
- Did the employee show a sign of flexibility and adaptability to adjust to new norms?

Leadership: One may evaluate how managers pulled the team together in this hour of crisis and met project goals with empathy for the team. They can be rewarded for the mentoring and coaching they provided to improve the performance of their teams by constantly giving feedback or reviews. It would stand organisations in good stead to reward frequent, open, and transparent communication that drives trust and empowers teams to take ownership and accountability resulting in a self-motivated workforce. Hard conversations on performance improvement, if any, should be encouraged and acknowledged too.

“Reward strategy will have to be focussed on driving productivity and performance in the new normal with revised goal setting and Key Results Areas (KRAs) through innovative steps supported by empathy and flexibility offered by the employer.”

Reward Strategies for New Normal
Communication of business and individual/team goals with proper mentoring is a key to keep employees engaged and motivated to perform. The focus of employers should be a reward strategy with a holistic view of how the three components of compensation – fixed, variable, and benefits & perks can be restructured to cater to the new normal. Interventions like dipstick surveys or informal discussions to understand the needs of employees may help to frame the new reward strategy.

Variable Pay: Rewarding employees fairly with what is necessary for survival in the current scenario is the priority. In these turbulent times, employees may be temporarily fine with deferred variable pay-out, delayed merit hike, deferred/suspended promotions, or no incentive pay-out than getting furloughed or laid off. At the senior and mid-level, some organisations may consider converting a portion of fixed compensation to variable pay and linking it to employee performance and productivity.

Such measures may help to save cash for now and act as a retention lever. It will also push employees for ownership and accountability of KRAs assigned. Promotions with pay hikes later can also be one of the ways to retain top talent. It’s effective and a win-win situation for both parties.

According to KPMG in India’s COVID-19 HR practices survey report, 2020 titled “Cutting through the crisis” which had responses from 319 organisations across 20 industry sectors, “Almost 50 per cent of the respondents have reported that their organisations have deferred/suspended promotion cycle, except for junior management. More than 50 per cent of the responding organisations have reported either a deferral or freezing/suspension of the planned increment cycle across levels”.

Learning Opportunities as Reward: This is a time when employers have learning & development on top of the list to upskill, reskill, or cross skill their employees to make them relevant...
Some of the reward strategies trending in organisations are –

- One time payment or reimbursements for work facilities at home
- Personal Recognition, flexible working hours, time off etc.

**Digital Learning**
- Rewarded for upskilling & innovation

**Additional Benefits for WFH**
- Informal Rewards

**Health Care Benefits**
- Well being of employees

**Learning Opportunities**
- Variable Pay

**REWARD STRATEGIES IN THE NEW NORMAL**

- Cover cost related to COVID patient
- Sessions for physical, mental & emotional well being

- Increased variable pay and reduced fixed salary for mid/senior level
- ESOPs for variable pay out
- Deferred incentives, promotions, merit hike etc.

in the future ahead. Rewarding employees with relevant and engaging digital learning/course content supported by effective learning tools/technology can create a good employee experience. Employees are also keen on self/career development to make them more employable. Upskilling and innovation achieved through availing this opportunity can be criteria for performance evaluation too.

**Health Care Plans:** The medical insurance plan benefit in terms of coverage, terms, and conditions may be reworked to include hospitalisation costs for COVID, quarantine, and diagnostics costs, if any, along with seamless support for execution of the same through TPAs or internal teams.

**Employee Well-being:**
Organisations must think of sessions related to Yoga, Covid awareness, lifestyle management, ergonomics, music, family or kids’ entertainment, online medical counselling, etc. Psychological support should be encouraged in the form of teleconsultation for employees who are on the verge of burnout due to stress.

**Additional Benefits to support WFH:** To create an office like set up at home, employees should be facilitated with the required infrastructure. Organisations are supporting one-time purchase or reimbursements for ergonomic chairs, laptop/desktop tables, broadband connections, headphones, and keyboards among others.

**Informal way to reward:** At times, non-financial rewards like personal recognition, name on leadership boards, a thank you note/appreciation e-mail for a specific task, time offs, virtual paid lunches, flexible working hours, or customised leave can boost up the morale of employees to deliver in the current situation.

Reward strategy should be reset in a way that benefits the end-user, employees in this case, and is aligned with business priorities. To have a win-win situation, a balance between the interests of both parties is the key to survive in the turbulent time of this pandemic.

**About the Author**

Nidhi Negi Dixit is a qualified HR professional with over 9 years of experience in Talent Acquisition and general Human Resource Management. She has extensive experience in Leadership hiring with companies like Teleperformance, NGA Human Resources, and Lanco Infratech. She completed her MBA - HR from IBS, Hyderabad.
Work Hours: Labour Laws In India Vis-À-Vis ILO

BY ANSHUL PRAKASH, PRACHI VIJAY AND ABHISEK CHOUDHURY

Regulation of working hours has been one among the oldest and persistent concerns of legislatures globally. The schedule of 8 (eight) hour workdays and 48 (forty-eight) hours workweeks was the key demand of working class all over the world, even before the International Labour Organisation (“ILO”) was established. Governments across the world aim to offer the best possible working conditions, without reducing productivity.

The ILO has overseen several conventions on employee working hours. The very first convention of the ILO was the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919. It set the basic principle for 8 (eight) working hours a day and 48 (forty-eight) working hours a week. The subsequent ILO convention, 30 on Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices), 1930, reiterated this principle that has now become the basis of the laws in many countries for daily and weekly working hours. The Reduction of Hours of Work Recommendation, 1962, specified that normal hours of work should be progressively reduced without any reduction in the wages, and where the duration of the normal working week exceeds 48 (forty-eight) hours, immediate steps should be taken to bring it down to this level without reducing the wages. Further, the 1962 convention also laid down that any work over and beyond the normal working hours would be overtime work, and the same should be remunerated at a higher rate or rates more beneficial than those applying to normal hours of work.

In India, the regulation on overtime work has set 2 (two) thresholds:

- The maximum standard working hours (i.e. normal working hours), setting out the point
beyond which any work done is considered overtime; and
- The maximum total working hours including overtime.

There are several statutes that regulate working hours, overtime hours, and overtime payments in India. The working hours for the manufacturing sector are governed by the Factories Act, 1948 (“Factories Act”) and for a commercial establishment, it is regulated by the state-specific Shops and Establishments Act (“S&E Act”). As per the Factories Act, no adult worker shall be required or allowed to work for more than 9 (nine) hours in a day and more than 48 (forty-eight) hours in a week. In case of a commercial establishment, the normal working hours is set at 8 (eight) or 9 (nine) hours. Employees may be required to work overtime hours by their employers subject to the limitations imposed by the central or the state government. Any work done over and above the aforesaid normal working hours is deemed overtime work and is paid for at double the ordinary rate of wages. It must be noted that India has ratified the ILO conventions in this regard, which would imply that the Indian laws have been brought into conformity with the provisions of the ILO convention. Therefore, the daily and weekly limits prescribed under the Factories Act and S&E Act (among other labour legislations in India) are in tandem with the ILO conventions.

The limitations on working hours and overtime hours may be temporarily extended within the framework of flexible working time arrangements. It is important to note that the working hours limit and the rights and benefits of workers, as well as the employers, depend upon various factors including the socio-economic development of the nation. Therefore, the possibility of national and state laws indicating minor differences over working hour limits cannot be ruled out. ILO conventions are considered as guidelines by a country while drafting the laws as a sovereign. In this regard, therefore, the provisions of the ILO do not have any overbearing impact on the provisions of the Factories Act and the S&E Act. From the standpoint of the Indian law, the requirements of the Factories Act and the S&E Act need to be adhered to.

Moreover, the Factories Act does allow for some departure from the abovementioned working hour limit in case the factories obtain prior approval from the Chief Inspector of Factories. However, this exemption is subject to a maximum of 10 (ten) working hours a day and 60 (sixty) working hours in a week including overtime (this limit may vary from state to state). Please note that while the Chief Inspector of Factories has the authority to grant such exemption, the instances of an actual grant of such exemption is sparse.

Overtime work entails extra costs for employers in terms of the overtime payment that is paid at twice the rate of ordinary wages. Further, the possibility of reduced productivity during overtime hours cannot be ruled out. Therefore, it is important for employers to facilitate the participation of the workforce in the process of determining overtime work and working hours within the parameters of applicable laws. It is imperative to note that not all employees may benefit from overtime. Regular long working hours can adversely affect employees’ health and personal lives. As such, overtime work should be viewed as an exception based on work exigency as opposed to a practice that is deemed as a source of additional income by the workforce in the absence of necessary internal approval mechanism for any overtime worked by an employee.
Is the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, applicable to all employees?

The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, (‘IDA’) is applicable to the workman category of employees and the term ‘workman’ under IDA includes any person who is employed in an industry to undertake manual, unskilled, skilled, technical, operational, clerical, or supervisory work. However, the definition of the term ‘workman’ does not, *inter alia*, include such employees who:

- Are mainly engaged in a managerial, or administrative capacity; or
- Being employed in a supervisory capacity drawing wages in excess of INR 10,000 (Indian Rupees Ten Thousand) per month, or
- Exercise, either by the nature of the duties attached to their office, or by reason of the powers vested in them, functions, which are mainly managerial in nature.

As mentioned above, the definition of ‘workman’ does prescribe a wage threshold of INR 10,000 per month. However, it may be noted that the remuneration payable to an employee is not the determining factor for assessment of workman or non-workman. It is the duties and responsibilities undertaken by such an employee which need to be taken into consideration.

**Is there any limitation period for filing money recovery claims by a workman under IDA?**

As per Section 33(C)(2) of IDA, if a workman is entitled to receive any money from the employer, and if there is any dispute to the amount of money due or the amount at which such benefit should be computed, then such disputes must be decided by a labour court. It may be noted that the IDA does not prescribe any time period within which such claim needs to be filed.

As regards to the time period for filing such disputes, the Supreme Court in the case of *Nityamand M. Joshi v. Life Insurance Corporation of India & others*, 1969 II LLJ 711(FB) held that Article 137 of the Limitation Act, 1963, only contemplates application to Courts. The scheme of the Limitation Act, 1963, is that it only deals with applications to Courts, and the Labour Court is not a Court within the Limitation Act, 1963. While there is no such prescribed time period for filing, a recovery claim under IDA, the Supreme Court of India in *Nanoo Ram v. Mahesh Chandra & another*, 1990(Supp) SCC 752 held that a claim filed after a delay of six years was rightly refused by the labour court on the ground of laches.

Also, the Supreme Court in *Co-operative Stores Ltd v. K.S. Khurana & others*, 1996 II LLJ 682 (FB) held that the facts and circumstances of the case that caused a delay beyond the period of limitation need to be considered for excusing the delay caused for filing such application. In this regard, even though there is no period of limitation under Section 33(C)(2) of IDA, various courts have clarified that stale claims without any proper reason for such delay, should not be allowed as it would lead to a chaotic situation from industrial relations standpoint.

**Is there any limitation period for filing money recovery claims by a non-workman?**

As mentioned above in query 1, the ‘non-workman’ category of an employee is not governed under IDA. Accordingly, any recovery claim by a non-workman against an employer would not be adjudicated in accordance with the IDA. Any recovery claim by a ‘non-workman’ needs to be filed in civil courts and not labour courts. Considering the IDA would not apply to such claims and the civil courts’ jurisdiction is within the purview of the Limitation Act, 1963, the limitation period for such claims shall be governed as per residuary article which provides for a time period of 3 years from the date when the cause of action arose.
The ‘Humour’ In HR

Humour is responsible for the chuckles, giggles, laughter and LOLs. And they have been broadly termed as laughter. Laughter is the best medicine and is available for free.

BY HARJEET KHANUJA

When the news spread that Pradip was coming for the meeting, their enthusiasm plummeted. Pradip’s presence would intensify all their meetings. He believed that the louder you speak, the better you are heard. But this meeting was different. Ravi, a new executive, was attending the meeting for the first time. Ravi sat next to Pradip. As usual, Pradip started screaming at the top of his voice. In reaction, Ravi covered his ear with his hand and cried, “I can’t hear from my left ear”. Everyone broke into laughter!

Humour is another H in HR, which and is worth reflecting upon.

Humour is one of the most fundamental skills widely used to build great organisations. While I have been using this skill myself, I realised its relevance only a couple of years ago. An IIM student, involved in arranging several management lectures with CXOs told me, “All executives from good companies have one thing in common. All of them have a good sense of humour.”

I assumed that this was only a random observation. When I began exploring, I found an HBR article by Alison Beard (May 2014) which states that research from ‘serious’ institutes like Wharton, MIT and the London School of Business says that every incident of humour delivers a host of benefits to Business.

How does Humour help?

Humour is responsible for the chuckles, giggles, laughter and anxiety in that particular instant. However, endorphins do not limit the positivity during the timespan of the laugh and extend it even after the laugh. Laughing apart, even listening to other people laughing provides us with a feeling of hope and positivity. This is the reason behind the insertion of background laughter in comedy shows. Famous personalities like Navjot Sidhu and Archana Puran Singh are paid to be a ‘prime audience member’ to trigger a positive emotion in the minds of the audience.

3. Improves social interactions: Our social interactions complete us as human beings. At times, social interactions lead to conflict and create bitterness, especially in an organisational setting. The trick to this problem is shared laughter.

1. Improves Physical Health:
Every time you laugh, your body reduces the levels of stress hormones like dopamine and releases endorphins. Endorphins are the feel-good chemicals of your body. In simple terms, they give you a feeling of overall well-being. They relax your muscles for up to 45 minutes and can even take away the sensation of pain temporarily. It also improves blood circulation and is therefore good for the heart.

2. Improves Mental Health:
When one is laughing, he/she does not experience sadness, anger or...
Shared laughter helps in lowering the guard. People become less defensive and are able to see things from the other’s perspective. That is how humour strengthens relationships, creates empathy, reduces conflicts and improves teamwork.

“Social interactions lead to conflict and create bitterness, especially in an organisational setting. The trick to this problem is shared laughter since it helps in lowering the guard.”

Why is Humour Needed?

1. Business (Life) is all about managing situations

Business gains when it serves its customers well. The formula to win over and serve customers has a direct correlation with the behaviour of the very people who make the business. We generally assume that we are in control of our businesses when we hire people with the best behaviour.

Interestingly, people behaviour is not a function of their genes or their personality. It depends on the people around them and the situation they are in. Situations are created by customers, suppliers, society, government and many other such stakeholders. If employees are able to handle situations well, an organisation thrives in general.

2. Situations demand Skills (like Humour)

Handling tricky situations is a skilful task. When an irate customer walks into your office, you first calm the customer down by offering some water and listening to him/her. This is one of the popular techniques to handle an irate customer. You, thereafter, dwell on common interests, origins and introduce humour to diffuse the situation. Besides diffusing the situation, humour also functions to develop a bond with the customer for commencing a long-term relationship with the brand.

Can Humour be learnt?

Some people believe that you need to be a stand-up comedian to learn or apply humour to situations. Humour is really just an amalgamation of the situational observations and timing, both of which being skills instinctively inherent in everyone. So really, if you are human, then you are capable of humour. Humour is a skill. That means it can be learnt.

How to be Humorous?

You do not need to remember jokes to be humorous. That is not what it requires. Here are the 3 most easy methods to be humorous:-

1. Start with a Smile, Share Laughter: Humour begins with a smile. Exchange a smile. If you can laugh, it is even better. Laughter is contagious. For example, take Baccha Yadav from the Kapil Sharma show. He cracks a joke and then laughs his lungs out. People do not always laugh at his jokes, they laugh with him on his laughter. It is important to share laughter.

2. Start watching a comedy show (Create a reference point): Start following a comedy channel or a comedy show. It can be Kapil Sharma, Mr Bean, or Arnab Goswami! Honestly, it does not matter who you follow. This creates a reference point. You can recommend the channel with the people you interact with, after which you can create references from that show and laugh on the common knowledge of humour.

3. Your own stories: When I was studying at INSEAD, I went to Singapore for coursework. My phone did not work in Singapore. I found a technician after a week and told him my sob story about surviving without connectivity for 7 days. He looked at the phone, then he looked at me. Then he asked, “Why have you put the SIM card in the opposite direction?” This was my first story. When you tell your own stories, your candidness makes them humorous.

When should Humour be used?

This is sheer discipline. Like any other skill, humour needs practice. Here is the prescription for using humour.

1. Three times a day: Like any medicine prescribed by a doctor, make it a practice to use humour at least three times a day.

2. Once in every meeting: Whether you are in a meeting or a call, spread the essence of your laughter, reference or a personal story.

3. When things are serious: When things are going pretty intense, even an icebreaker like, “Itna sannata kyon hai bhai?” from Sholay, or addressing the elephant in the room in a candid way can do the magic.

About the Author

Harjeet Khanduja is an International speaker, poet, inventor, influencer, HR Leader and author of the best-selling book "Nothing About Business". An alumnus of IIT Roorkee and INSEAD, he is currently working as Vice President HR at Reliance Jio. He has 2 published patents and has been conferred with the HR Leadership Award, Pride of the Nation Award, HR Personality of the Year, Top 100 HR Minds, Global Digital Ambassador and Global Learning Award.
Uber To Provide Free Rides To Child Care Professionals

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Uber will provide 30,000 free rides to help childcare professionals to commute and attend children in distress.

The app-based cab aggregator has partnered with Childline India Foundation (CIF), backed by the Union Women and Child Development Ministry, the nodal agency that operates Childline 1098 emergency helpline service for kids.

The three-month association from October to December 2020 worth over ₹63 lakh, would extend across all 83 cities where Uber operates. It also includes mobility support to CHILDLINE 1098 personnel in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai, where the CIF has their contact centres.

Anjaiah Pandiri, Executive Director, CIF, said, "With their support, we will be able to respond to and reach children in distress whenever and wherever needed."

Prabhjeet Singh, President, Uber India, and South Asia, stated, "We are thrilled to partner with CHILDLINE 1098, a phone number that spells hope for millions of children across India, and work towards building a brighter future for India's youngest citizens."

Microsoft, NSDC To Empower Women With Digital Skills

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

In a bid to enhance skills for employability, Microsoft and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) have joined hands to skill underserved women in India over the next ten months.

This initiative is an extension of Microsoft’s partnership with NSDC to provide digital skills to more than 1 lakh youth in the country.

The collaboration is focused on enhancing women’s workforce participation by equipping underserved young women from rural communities with the skills required to thrive in a digital economy.

As part of the partnership, more than 70 hours of course content will be made available free of cost, covering topics such as digital literacy, enhancing employability, nano entrepreneurship and communication skills.

The program will curate a series of live training sessions and digital skilling drives to help create opportunities for young girls and women, particularly first time job seekers and those whose jobs may have been impacted by COVID-19, to join the future workforce.

The live training sessions will be conducted online through the Microsoft Community Training (MCT) platform. The MCT platform will also allow the trainees to access rich content already available on MCT as well as provide a forum to engage with peers.

Tech Mahindra Launches 'Gift a Career' Initiative

BY ANUSHRUTI SINGH

Tech Mahindra Ltd. has launched 'Gift A Career' initiative to upskill the youth across India.

Under this initiative, the company will launch an Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) mobile app to power training in IT (information technology) and digital, conversational English and workplace readiness.

The training will be offered through Tech Mahindra Foundation’s SMART centres and academies across 11 locations in the country.

The program will be distributed as SMART+ for persons with disabilities and SMART-T for technical skills and offer training in more than 45 domains.

People across the age group of 18-30 years with class 10 certification will be eligible for this training program.

'Gift A Career' initiative will also offer hiring/placement assistance in the open market, post the completion of the course as a part of the company’s initiatives for greater good.

The beneficiaries can be identified and recommended by the employees of Tech Mahindra.
Star Health & Allied Insurance Appoints Dr. Sriharsha Achar As CHRO
Star Health & Allied Insurance Company has appointed Dr. Sriharsha Achar as Joint Executive Director and Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO). He has more than three decades of experience in aligning HR strategy with business goals across Manufacturing, BFSI, IT/ITES, Health Insurance and Healthcare domains. Achar has pursued B.Tech from Mumbai University, and holds two post-graduate degrees. He also holds a PhD in HR management from Azteca University, Mexico.

Kotak Mahindra Bank Appoints Shweta Pathak As VP-HR
Kotak Mahindra Bank (KMB) has appointed Shweta Pathak as Vice President-Human Resources. Before KMB, she served as Assistant Vice President - Change & Engagement at EdCast. Pathak is a Talent Branding, Strategic Recruitment Marketing and Talent Experience Specialist. She is an alumna of the Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS).

Capco India Appoints Neelam Sharma As HR Head
Capco has appointed Neelam Sharma as Head of Human Resources for its India operations. With almost 15 years’ experience working in the HR space, Sharma has joined Capco from Infor, a global management and technology consultancy. She holds a Master's degree in Business Administration from ICFAI College, and a Bachelor's degree from SIES College of Commerce and Economics.

Mercer Appoints Achim Luder As CPO
Mercer a business of Marsh & McLennan has appointed Achim Luder as its new Chief People Officer (CPO). He has pursued Master's in Business Administration from the University of Tuebingen, Germany. He is a Certified Public Accountant (Wirtschaftsprüfer) and a Certified Tax Advisor (Steuerberater). Achim is based in Frankfurt, Germany.

Prada Appoints Malika Savell As Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer
The Prada Group has appointed Malika Savell as Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer for North America region. Previously, Savell served as the Director of Cultural Diversity- Partnerships & Engagement of Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH).
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