ORGANISATIONAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

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From The Publisher's Desk

Remote working or Work From Home owing to the COVID-19 Pandemic has left organisations in a bind. With almost all employees getting vaccinated and the impact of the pandemic reducing to a large extent, the leadership is keen to bring back employees to the workplace. However, in some organisations, a small percentage of employees who preferred working from home were seen by the leadership to be wielding significant influence within the organisation, a fact that was hitherto unknown to them. This brought the veritable reality of organisational networking and the need for an organisation to carry out Organisational Network Analysis.

The September Edition is therefore focused on the relevance of Organisational Network Analysis and has illustrated its prominent advantages. Vikas Dua writes that an unrecognised element plays an intense role in today's distributed workplaces, and this element emanates owing to the network effect. Geetanjali Wheeler writes that with the usage of Network Analytics there is more to learn about the impact of social capital on the human capital of an organisation.

Interview features Geoffrey Moore, bestselling author and advisor for organisations such as Salesforce, Microsoft and Google, shares how organisations can make the most of wherever and whenever work happens, why we need both leadership and management to thrive in 2021 and beyond. Interview also features Chester Elton, world-renowned culture and leadership guru, who shares actionable strategies for reducing anxiety at work and how leaders can practice gratitude and build daily rituals to replenish their energy levels.

Persona features Amit Sharma, CHRO, Volvo Group India, who shares some of his pivotal "aha!" moments that solidified his leadership foundation.

Case Study features the dichotomy amongst organisations in hiring a CEO from outside or grooming a CEO from within its ranks.

While Organisational Network Analysis provides a data-driven approach to organisations who are bound between the Devil and the Deep Sea while deciding on the working model they need to adapt, it is also worth pondering how the leadership will analyse the problem before them.

Carpe Diem!

Neha Jain

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Demand For Allegiance

Loyalty, in some ways, is ensuring that someone has your back. But in an organisation, the HR team's focus is to ensure that the team members have the organisation's back.

BY **SUNITHA LAL**

*L*oyalty is overrated and probably *passé*. This is what we hear in all the trending discussion forums. Is this true, though?

Loyalty is not overrated, but if it finds itself over-indexed, we are in trouble, and even more so when it is pitted against competence. Because, the deadweight of high loyalty and low calibre has to be carried by some unsuspecting team members who will wake up one day and scream. On the other hand, if we have team members who are not loyal, the moment they see trouble, they may jump ship and look to something else; this would then be like trying to catch a revolving door at a crowded mall.

> **"If we have team members who are not loyal, the moment they see trouble, they may jump ship and look to something else..."**

Misplaced Loyalties

Ravi joined a founder-led organisation as the head of business and was responsible for driving revenue. He was excited to work with a person who was considered a visionary. As he started working, Ravi realised there were members in his team who were not performing and went ahead and hired the best talent intending to act against the non-performers. Ravi felt these team members were an asset to the organisation and was okay with them finding other roles, but felt they were not an excellent fit for his business development and sales organisation.

As he started planning their exit, the founder summoned Ravi and told him that they had been with the organisation since its inception and were invaluable. Yes, the founder was aware that they were not the most productive, but they were loyal. Ravi was baffled. He agreed to let them remain but asked for a team that would deliver. The founder told him not to increase the cost drastically as some budgets were already frozen. For Ravi, six months into the job, he realised his best team had to work double-time to manage the load. After all this, the founder still looked at the new team members as a means to an end, and only trusted the earlier team. After one year, Ravi and those he hired left the system.

The founder's story is that of professionals who are all about maximising their salaries. He never wanted to understand what drove the new team out of the organisation. Many attempts by the HR leader

to discuss this were scuttled as 'too much HR stuff'. But the founder never hesitated to blame the entire fallout on the HR leader as a failure to hire right and retain—the abdication of any responsibility for the loss.

Do You Serve the Regent or the Kingdom?

'Loyalty' and HR leaders have an intricate dance. Most leaders in an organisation expect allegiance from their HR Head and team. But the difficulty is in figuring out what or whom you are allegiant towards. The ask is for the HR Heads to be loyal to the leaders heading the organisations. It is almost like loyalty to the Regent of the kingdom. But a true HR leader has and needs to be loyal to the kingdom; the role is in service of the organisation. If the organisation's head asks for loyalty to them (and not the organisation), then it is probably time to look for a new leader.

Unfortunately, loyalty is earned and cannot be an entitlement. Position and power cannot drive loyalty, nor can a quick trick bring in viral reactions. It is the same reason I hate instant coffee; it kills the whole process of brewing a lovely cup of my favourite south Indian filter coffee. In the same way, there are no instant loyalty mixes. Like trust, it is slow to build.

Need for Control

The context, an internet company with a complex structure; it had BPO, Retail, Field Sales, Product, and Software

> **Most leaders in an organisation expect allegiance from their HR Head and team. But the difficulty is in figuring out what or whom you are allegiant towards.**

engineering verticals within the organisation. Each of these verticals was itself an industry. The founder single-handedly built the organisation up to a level. As the company expanded, he brought in an HR Head, who, in turn, hired the business leaders.

But the founder never trusted them. He continued to decide on every hire in the organisation. He not only got involved in hiring but also took the final call on the salary. He often read and forwarded nuggets from other founders on why they have to be in the centre stage in recruitment and not outsource it to anyone in the organisation. He also decided on every promotion, every increment in the organisation. He felt that he and he alone understood what is required or what is best for the organisation. He looked at the leadership team, whom he hired as necessary, to show the investors that his organisation had matured. He thought of them as

the team to execute his decisions at an incredible speed.

When every decision has to be taken by one person, that person becomes the bottleneck. If one does not trust the leaders one has hired, they will soon leave. The founder might know more and have more context - but how will the organisation scale? Surprisingly, this leader was even willing to scuttle the growth of the organisation. He was not ready to let go, even if it meant jeopardising the organisation's future. What was he struggling with? Why was he missing that which was so evident to everyone else? Why did he not trust the HR head or the leaders?

Maybe he was afraid he would lose control. As one expands, new leaders come in, and they might have their ideas and styles. They will need space to operate in, and more importantly, create trust. The new leaders also had a wall of resistance from the loyalists or early joiners who picked on them as they thought they had the founder's support.

With low trust, the founder was always suspicious of what the new leaders were up to. He was trying to control them through fear. It began with 'I know what is best as I am the founder and the one who built it this far,' but slowly turned into a toxic culture of misplaced loyalties and control through fear. The founder being the limitation is a sad story for any organisation.

Loyalty, in some ways, is ensuring that someone has your back. But in an organisation, the HR team's focus is to ensure that the team members have the organisation's back. It is not about scratching each other's backs but holding each other's back by being accountable.

Thus, the allegiance to the leader is only a subset of loyalty to the organisation.

- Leaders come and go, but how do we create faith in the system?
- How do we build pride in the system? How do you make decisions that are transparent and fair?

These are questions that heads of organisations have to ask themselves and work on with their HR Heads.

This is part of an upcoming book, 'HR, the cuss people and their stories' penned by the author. The book is expected to hit the stands soon!

About the Author

Sunitha Lal is the CHRO at Ather Energy. She is passionate about exploring and curating organisational culture and is a strong proponent of the oral tradition of storytelling. She is the author of Dotting the Blemish and Other Stories, a collection of short stories about women that reflect and comment on the inherent prejudices we have as a society.

How Employee Personal Branding Strengthens Employer Branding

Words spoken by employees carry far more weightage than any marketing or HR campaign your dollars can buy.

BY **MANDEEP KAUR**

A video of a groom working on a laptop at his wedding *mandap* recently went viral. While this might be an extreme example, it is widely acknowledged that the lines between our professional and personal space have blurred.

Conversations at dinner parties and get-togethers often revolve around people's jobs, the projects they handle, their bosses, and the companies they work for. The way people talk about their work and employer creates an impression of the company's brand on the minds of those present. If a person is dissatisfied with their job because of long hours, lack of benefits, little vacation time, or a "Horrible Boss"

type scenario, the organisation's reputation can quickly tarnish.

Now imagine if the situation were reversed. What if people talked about how much they love their company for the flexibility it provides, the interest it takes in employee growth, or the empathy bosses demonstrate? This way, employees become the brand ambassadors of their company, leaving a mark wherever they go (an HR leader's dream come true!). Let's be honest: Words spoken by employees carry far more weightage than any marketing or HR campaign your dollars can buy! Therefore, it is natural for companies to want to provide an experience to employees that encourages positive workplace conversations.

I often wonder what magic formula an organisation needs to keep employees happy. Unfortunately, while that magic potion doesn't exist (which is what makes it interesting), we all must strive to achieve the solution that works for an organisation. Therefore, it bodes well for businesses to put in proactive effort for making ambassadors of their employees. Here are a few tips that have worked for me:

Actively Create a Brand Ambassador Program

Start an HR initiative specifically targeting your brand ambassadors. The first step is to measure your employees' engagement quotient. Identify those who are highly engaged and have an extensive social media reach, and make them a part of the program as your culture champions! Involve them in strategy building and incorporate their ideas in a strong brand advocacy plan, as the best ideas come from the employees themselves. Put together a weekly/monthly communication with key information about the company – from innovative products to culture-related developments to employee well-being initiatives. Encourage this group to share information via different formal and informal online/offline platforms.

Create a Compelling Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

Simply put, EVP is a collection of all the benefits provided to employees either directly or indirectly in exchange for their contribution to the company. It encompasses all the touchpoints of the employee experience. The key lies in making the office more than just a workplace.

of brand ambassadors. They have the power to boost, influence and impact an organisation's brand image and reputation.

> **"It is incredibly critical in today's digital age to understand the value of brand ambassadors. They have the power to boost, influence and impact an organisation's brand image and reputation."**

When you provide an enhanced work experience, people "want to" come to work. Making employees a priority by actions and not just words can do wonders for employee happiness and productivity. Simple acts which reflect that they are valued is an effective way to win their hearts.

Engage Employees

Treat your people as not just employees, but as part of your brand's family, wherein everyone is working towards a shared objective. Share your company's vision and clarify the expectations to them. Ensure the teams are fully aware of how their contribution leads the organisation forward. For example, Google's vision is to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible. That's a powerful reason why people want to work for Google and become its brand ambassador. Find a cause that shows them the purpose of their role!

Provide a Great Employee Experience

- **Nurture talent:** I can't stress this enough: We all know that it is a lot cheaper to retain existing employees than to acquire new ones. However, not much is done to nurture the talent we have. Map your employees' journeys in the organisation and provide them with growth opportunities. If they know that the company is invested in their development,

they automatically become spokespersons. In the current scenario, it is all the more crucial to encourage and help them reskill and upskill to become valuable.

- **Empower employees:** Build a culture of collaboration where everyone can contribute to making the company a better place. Ask employees for their ideas, feedback, suggestions, and make them part of problem-solving when developing new processes, rules, insights or innovations. Once you have their input, make sure you follow through, using it to bring required changes and closing the loop by informing them how their ideas were received or incorporated.

- **Lead by example:** Employees do as they see, not always as they are told. Ensure that all senior leaders walk the talk when it comes to brand and reputation building. Within the company, align all your planning and decision-making with the vision and mission of your brand. Provide your employees with an experience they would be proud to tell others about. If you help your employees grow, your business, in turn, will grow automatically.

Conclusion

It is incredibly critical in today's digital age to understand the value

While, traditionally, good HR practices and policies sufficed to attract talent, this is no longer the case. If current or former team members do not speak positively about your organisation, it will be difficult for you to influence and affect socially connected job seekers. Before deciding whether or not to join an organisation, it is now common for candidates to connect with employees of the company they interview for over LinkedIn and solicit feedback or check out reviews on HR portals such as Glassdoor.

It has become quintessential to join the conversation as your potential candidates are out there listening and ensure as much positive reinforcement as possible with legit brand ambassadors – your greatest asset, the employees! **HC**

About the Author

Mandeep Kaur has over 17 years of experience in leading organizations in retail, logistics, and transportation. She is currently working as the Head of HR for LOTS Wholesale Solutions. She is a results-oriented leader with strong business acumen and extensive experience in large-scale domestic and international operational restructuring, talent management, and mergers and acquisitions.

Facets Of ONA In A Remote Working Era

The pyramids of global cultures have stood the test of time withstanding the vagaries of nature and human conflict, proving beyond doubt that they are stable structures.

BY **VIKAS DUA**

> **"In the modern-day large and distributed workplaces, there is an element that plays an even more intense role in the same. This unrecognised element is a result of the network effect."**

The pyramids of Giza are imposing structures indeed. Located in the Greater Cairo area of Egypt, these were built between 2600 and 2500 BC. Tombs, in essence, these pyramids have enthralled generations who have wondered how these magnificent structures were built sans any mechanisation. While, undoubtedly, the Egyptian civilization comes to mind when it comes to pyramids, there are equivalent structures in varied nations like Spain, Greece, Indonesia, Peru and more. Clearly, this polyhedron shaped structure has inspired many over the centuries. They have literally moved mountains to create these mountain-like structures! And interestingly, they continue to inspire the millions that travel many miles to visit these monumental landmarks.

Closer to recent times, many of us in the professional world are wont to overestimate this pyramidical structure, which we recognise as the typical corporate framework. Introduced to the same during our MBA programmes, we later experience it firsthand when absorbed at the junior level in our organisation. As we notch up victories along the way and get scored on our performance appraisals, we see the pyramid do its magic – we move up the corporate ladder to climb one level higher to the apex. And this is how our belief in that hierarchy-driven organisational structure strengthens validating years of education and execution.

But this is where the dichotomy lies. Anyone with even a few years of experience navigating the corporate machinery would realise that while this structure does support the business operations, it is not the only framework that does. In fact, in the modern-day large and distributed workplaces, there is an element that plays an even more intense role in the same. This unrecognised element is a result of the network effect.

Organisations, even as they attempt to be formal hierarchy-driven structures, become a network because of the simple reality that the boundaries in internal structures are not impermeable. So, a sales representative is quite likely to be having an animated discussion with his colleague from the finance department on the new leave policy

that has been announced, even as they stand in the cafeteria line waiting for the server to dish out their respective plates.

Magnify these conversations and exchanges in other forms like email and you have a classic network effect playing out. To understand the impact of this effect, the science of 'Organisational Network Analysis' proves to be immensely useful.

Defined by Deloitte, Organisational Network Analysis (ONA) is a *"structured way to visualise how communications, information, and decisions flow through an organisation. Organisational networks consist of nodes and ties, the foundation for understanding how information in your organisation is flowing, can flow, and should flow."*

The field of ONA is as interesting as it is complex. A quick glance at the image will enable you to understand why this is so.
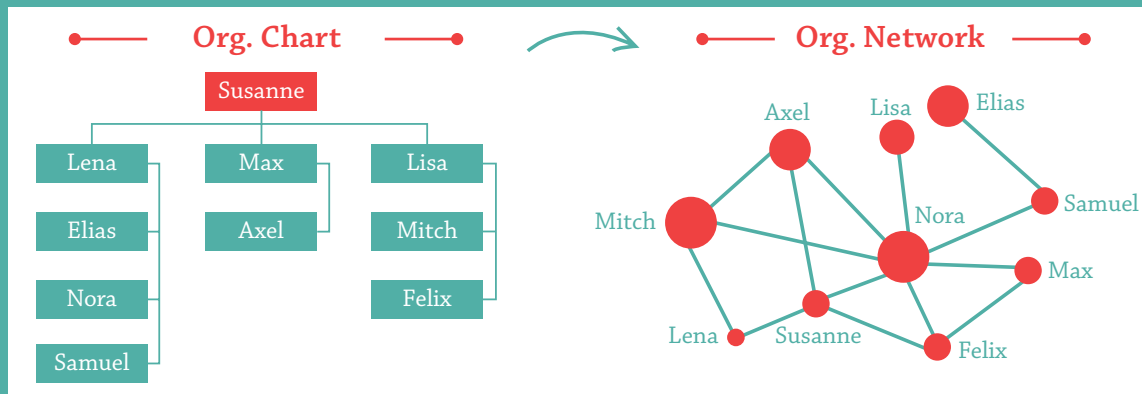
66**Organisations, even as they attempt to be formal hierarchy-driven structures, become a network because of the simple reality that the boundaries in internal structures are not impermeable.**99

- How does one track the multitude of conversations and interchanges in large structures?
- Even more challenging – how does one measure the impact of these?

Like bits of code that zip around our internet, these are as fluid as the thoughts and ideas that birth them. The challenge seems to become more acute as we enter a world powered by remote work and a decentralised workforce.

- How does organisational culture get strengthened when employees hardly have any in-person connects?

KAVITA NIGAM
Chief Human Resources Officer, KARAM Safety Private Limited.

66The prime requirement in any Hybrid Environment is to be able to efficiently engage the workforce and ensure proper customer connect. It is the need of the hour for organizations to deploy methods like ONA that provide concrete solutions for enhancing knowledge sharing within the team, while sustaining motivation and innovation, and maintaining an effective flow of information to the customers. ONA helps identify potential problem areas for organizations to act quickly.99

SJ RAJ

Senior VP HR, Newgen Software

"Organisational Network Analysis tools can prove to be a game-changer if designed and implemented well within the context of the organisation. Visible organisation charts have little resemblance to the web of people who actually execute work. ONA can offer valuable insights during organisational design, making it easier to establish future structures that position employees where they can deliver the most impact. ONA can help identify critical points where improvements in collaboration can generate business value while also providing a direction to the best way to drive change through influencers or by addressing very targeted silos."

- How do leaders drive engagement to foster enthusiasm and ownership towards work?
- What additional measures need to be taken to ensure collaboration does not slow down because people are not physically together?

There are a few fundamental realities that must be understood if one is to even attempt to answer these questions. As the Deloitte study shares, in every organisation, information and ideas are transmitted via people who can be considered to be 'nodes'. Between these people or 'nodes', there exist 'ties', which are nothing but the formal and informal relationships between them. These 'ties' are the determinants that impact the quality and speed of transmission of information within the organisation.

Understanding these linkages becomes important for any organisation, for reasons including the below:–

Enhancing the Speed of Adoption of Change

Within the community of identified 'nodes', lies a sub-group of individuals that are termed as 'central nodes'. These are those individuals who are generally well-liked and have high influencing power. They are well connected and seem to know everyone. They like to be well informed about their organisation and also like to share it ahead with their connections. When it comes to the arduous process of change adoption, these 'central nodes' can play the role of a catalyst in speeding up the process.

Increasing Operational Effectiveness

In any organisation, if one were to slice the workforce into buckets based on their performance, one would surely be able to find a mix. As seen in the annual performance reviews, there are always the high performers, those that just about meet expectations and then the non-performers. Utilising information gleaned from ONA, one could dig deeper down to gain insights that can aid the development of action plans arising out of those reviews.

Driving a Culture of Innovation

One of the primary advantages of ONA is to enable us to identify how information is flowing in our organisation. Critical and careful analysis helps to identify where new ideas are emerging from and how problems are getting solved. By leveraging these insights and focusing on strengthening frameworks and linkages that support these, we can spur innovation in our organisation. The learnings prove immensely useful

ESUPATHAM NELSON

VP, HR Business Partner, Fidelity Investments India

"The world of work is going through massive changes, forcing organisations to prepare for a future where multiple models of work arrangement will coexist. The Organisational Network Analysis (ONA) framework can help organisations work through this dynamic scenario. ONA enables organisations to discover the hidden pattern of relationships among employees, leverage it to unearth valuable insights about the workforce and design strategies for the future of work."

SUKHPREET SINGH

Head of Human Resources, mPokket

"Organisational Network Analysis (ONA) is a structured way to visualise how communications, information, and decisions flow through an organisation. Employees naturally create systems outside the hierarchical structures to solve problems, share information, make decisions or support each other. Through such networks, employees' maximum productivity and efficiency is attained. Having an effective communication structure increases coordination, cooperation and teamwork among employees. Employees are more responsive or less resistant to change initiated and managed through the informal structures. ONA is applicable in many areas of an organisation, like identification of emerging leaders, retaining top talent, employee development and capability enhancement."

in breaking down silos and promoting connectivity between the 'nodes'.

Deploying Talent Effectively

Designing an organisation structure on paper (or on MS PowerPoint, for that matter) is one thing. Getting the individuals plugged into that structure to collaborate and efficiently operate is a different thing altogether. As shared earlier in this write-up, work does not happen in the confined boundaries of positions or titles that feature in a typical organisation. Anyone with even a few years of experience would have resolved an issue with a colleague over a shared smoking break. In our physical office spaces, we often see teams organised on the shopfloor according to their need to collaborate. This is truly a clear mechanism to make sure that a basic ONA study improves the speed of information flow between parties that need to do so, thereby enhancing collaboration and reducing turnaround time.

Driving Revenue Growth

Patterns of information flow, when analysed through the lens of ONA can help in determining the exchanges that are facilitating sales. One can determine the network behaviours of the high performing resources and

encourage adoption of the same by others. Also, the ONA can also help discover those hidden resources who can be leveraged to strengthen the sales engine or identify processes that can be tightened leading to operational gains. All these measures will directly or indirectly lead to higher revenue growth.

Having walked through the advantages of driving ONA in our organisations, we must also be aware of the primary pitfall – excessive information flow. The reality is that we have already embarked into a hyperconnected world. There is just so much data and conversation flowing around, that it can be overwhelming for anyone. Drinking water from a hose cannot be categorised as fun, even with the wildest stretch of anyone's imagination!

Therefore, at a certain point, we need to understand that even as ONA gives us valuable insights to enhance our organisation's overarching performance, an overkill of the same can be debilitating. The pyramids of global cultures have stood the test of time withstanding the vagaries of nature and human conflict, proving beyond doubt that they are stable structures. Maybe that is something that we in the corporate world need to consider before we completely disregard our traditional structures, even as we imbibe the gains arising out of our ONA programmes. **H C**

About the Author

Vikas Dua is an accomplished HR professional, an Author, a TEDx speaker, and a Vlogger and Blogger on HR practices. With over 18 years of high-quality experience in the corporate world, he has worked with both start-ups and large corporations like Wipro and Concentrix. Currently, he is heading the Human Resources function in India for IPG DXTRA, part of Interpublic Group, the world's leading marketing communications company. In his community building capacity, he plays multiple roles including that of Advisor to the BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Young Leaders Programme.

Insights That Matter

As we bank more on people analytics with the use of Organisational Network Analysis (ONA) powered by technology, there is more to learn about the impact of social capital on the human capital of an organisation.

BY **GEETANJALI WHEELER**

> **"We are well aware that behind formal organisational structures on PowerPoint slides, there are hidden and informal networks that define and underpin the way work gets done in an organisation."**

The first time I came across the concept of Organisational Network Analysis (ONA), I could not help relating it to how we always knew about it, but may not have been strategic about it.

A very simple analogy for understanding ONA would be large joint families! Think of your own if you have one or someone's family you know of, and if that is not the case, you can always rely on a Bollywood movie! You will often see that in such families the influencers and keepers of secrets or less-known knowledge are not always the head or elders of the family by authority or age. Likewise, in organisations, we are well aware that behind formal organisational structures on PowerPoint slides, there are hidden and informal networks that define and underpin the way work gets done in an organisation.

- So, how do we accurately know who are the key influencers at different levels?
- How does information or knowledge really flow across these organisational layers?

ONA enables and empowers organisations to make decisions driven by insights by analysing their social interactions.

More and more organisations today value their human capital more than their physical capital. The emergence of people analytics in the field of HR is valuable because it empowers an organisation to make data driven decisions to attract, develop and retain talent. As we bank more on people analytics with the use of ONA powered by technology, there is more to learn about the impact of social capital on the human capital of an organisation.

So, how does ONA do this? ONA highlights different roles employees play within an organisation's network with an intent to identify champions. The intelligence from the analysis allows one to leverage the right champions for the right role/project or initiative! There are several pre-existing case studies on the use of ONA in making more data-driven decisions. It can potentially help an organisation investigate into insights that matter and direct its resources to act on that intelligence!

For instance:–

- What behaviours do high performing teams demonstrate?
- How do we choose our future leaders?
- How can we measure the impact of various development interventions?
- How can we foster a culture of problem solving and innovation?
- How do we drive change and transformation in the organisations?

SURINDER BHAGAT

India People Leader, Sabre Global Capability Center

"While the pandemic has forced many companies to opt for WFA/WFH models, weakening organisational networking and collaboration, effective use of Organisational Network Analysis (ONA) can help leaders navigate the VUCA world. Organisational networks provide deep insights into how communication, information, decisions, and resources flow informally within the organisation. By leveraging network visualisation, leaders can identify problem areas and steer the organisation accordingly, which can lead to improved collaboration, accelerated innovation, faster execution, and stronger culture."

NIDHI DAS

Director & Head of Human Resources, UiPath India and South Asia

"At its core – ONA provides a data driven approach for examining the hidden network and relationships within an organisation. ONA can enable leaders to become change agents by identifying the 'true' organisation – its natural leaders, engaged talent, decision makers, trusted networks for enabling flow of information, organisation culture & inclusion. Smart use of ONA allows building trusted networks, thereby, increasing and leveraging the social capital of the organisation to boost engagement, belonging and productivity."

- Which of our employees' risk burnout due to overload?
- Who can help new joiners settle in the organisation as soon as possible?
- Whose attrition is going to impact teams and departments the most?

This makes the usage of ONA very insightful and if one peruses different case studies, I wonder whether they would feel in a similar manner. In my mind, the application of ONA is limitless, and we are yet to explore its full potential. It is a very powerful diagnostic tool in the hands of the organisations to address their current challenges and to build future readiness.

"Active" or "Passive" Tools

The implementation of ONA in organisations can be done using "Active" or "Passive" tools. Active ONA is about using surveys to map formal and informal relationships between employees, e.g. work relationships, social relationships, relationships to exchange knowledge or ideas etc. As I dug deeper to learn about ONA from different experts on the subject, something stuck with me about the use of Active ONA. It is the process of asking employees questions about the nature of the

relationship they have with each other that leads to reflection and a sense of recognition and gratitude.

Passive ONA is where the organisation can use its existing data available in the form of emails, messaging platforms, calendar, document collaboration etc. to understand the relationships. So,

RAJEEV RANJAN

Head, Human Resources, Jindal Stainless

"Organisational Network Analysis helps us analyse people's expectations and align them with our business goals. This helps us shape an effective and sustainable business strategy that enables a systematic, free-flowing, and responsible exchange of information. It is also beneficial in streamlining responsibility and accountability between various teams and management. This accelerates the overall process and transcends into better cross-functional collaboration."

SUNIL RANJHAN
Director HR&MS, LG Electronics India

"ONA is an effective decision-making tool providing insights into the ways people connect within and across teams, support one another, and align individual strengths with organization's goals through building stronger employee relationships. It is very important to not only stress on formal interactions, but also promote informal personal support-related conversations in teams. It has been found that team and business groups having a healthy mix of business and informal networks at workplaces are more productive and efficient."

while Active ONA relies more on responses from employees to further analyse relationships with each other, Passive ONA relies on the existing data, and is therefore, more current. Of course, there are questions on ethical, legal and data privacy that needs to be addressed with Passive ONA.

Another aspect of Passive ONA is having the ability in terms of resources and infrastructure to process such a huge volume of data! There are vendors who are operating in this space who can manage active and passive ONA analysis for organisations. Is it not interesting? So, what should organisations choose? Well, it is said that it depends upon the intent of doing ONA. What relationships do we want to evaluate for the intended purpose? ONA can be applied to individuals, teams, or departments and when all of these data points come together; they provide insights that impact the organisation as a whole. While there are pros in each approach, it appears as though many experts recommend a hybrid approach to get the best of both worlds.

The Importance of ONA

Whether an organisation is deploying ONA or not is another discussion. The point, however, is that if you are a leader, you cannot ignore understanding the importance of Organisational Network Analysis. It changes one's perspective of how high performing teams are created. There will be a difference in the way you think about your team - their development, how they collaborate, communicate, and manage change. There will be an improvement in your outlook towards identifying missing links to create a more cohesive and collaborating team.

The use of ONA helps us to see the social network in an organisation.

VICKY KADAM
HR Head, Hireavilla

"It is true that one cannot operate to full capacity without the other - we are a co-dependent community as much as we are our own talents. The "self-made man" is a myth. We are a fist each finger and a thumb contribute to an impactful punch in the market, having their own expertise in their respective fields."

RAJUL MATHUR

Consulting Head – Talent and Rewards, India, Willis Towers Watson

"The ability of organisations to cascade their strategic direction and collaborate to deliver customer experience, promised quality and innovative solutions is crucial for success. Good ONA solutions should be able to correctly and clearly identify internal network influencers to ensure that key actionable communication is delivered through them. Also, the timing and placement of nudges can be done appropriately. ONA, whilst maintaining individual confidentiality issues, can be a game-changer in a flexible working environment."

This enables us to identify people who are critical to how information flows, influence collaboration and decision-making. Many a time, if these people do not get the visibility, reward and recognition for their contribution they will eventually leave the organisation. That is talent leaving the organisation even without being recognised!

Here is another insightful piece of research from Rob Cross that I would like to share. As per his research, in companies with strong cultures, it can take about 3-5 years for a new joiner to be connected as a high performer. This is, however, not the reality and new joiners can also reflect high performance even in 12 months!

Now, think about this from various aspects e.g., the war for talent or generational diversity.

- What is the impact of this on attrition especially between 1-3 years?
- What can be the impact on the sense of belonging at the workplace?
- How does this impact the organisation's Employee Value Proposition?

Rob goes on to say that ONA has the capacity to identify the employees at the periphery - whose contributions go unnoticed. An understanding of ONA opens mindsets to look at people in teams and organisations beyond who they are as a "box" in the formal organisation structure. **HC**

Credits: The author has used learning from experts on this topic e.g., Rob Cross, Michal Gradshtein, Greg Newman, Arun Chidambaram and David Green.

Disclaimer: The thoughts expressed in this article solely belong to the professional and do not reflect that of the organisation she works for.

NISHIGANDHA S

HR Manager, Fynd

"Tapping into an organisation's communication network gives clarity on the flow of positive and negative information. This knowledge makes it easy to induce a productive ecosystem by strategic restructuring and intentional inclusiveness of talented peripherals. A combination of active and passive ONA can ensure higher success in creativity and collaboration."

About the Author

Geetanjali Wheeler is a seasoned L&D professional passionate about building a culture that promotes learning agility at all levels in the organization. With an experience of about 17 years in varied verticals like Telecom, Airline & E-commerce, Geetanjali has spearheaded both global and national roles. Before moving on to her current role of leading L&D for a global financial services group in India, she worked for a large Telecom company where she headed Training & Development for the Enterprise vertical and led many L&D initiatives within the CoE team.

Building An Equitable Workplace

An equitable workforce brings with itself a diverse range of skills, experiences and perspectives which fosters innovation. Thus, it is a no brainer that there is merit in building an equitable workforce.

BY **ROHIT HASTEER**

> **"Creating and sustaining real change requires organisation-wide efforts where organisations aim to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent equal participation of some groups."**

A study by McKinsey and SHRM evaluated workplaces with different levels of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) and found that organisations that value DEI bring in more sales revenue, more customers, and higher profits.

People in an equitable workplace know that they are valued and cared for what they bring to the table and there are equal opportunities for everyone to grow in their careers.

An equitable workforce brings with itself a diverse range of skills, experiences and perspectives which fosters innovation. Thus, it is a no brainer that there is merit in building an equitable workforce.

Over the years, organisations across the globe have worked towards putting a wide set of programmes and practices to create an equitable workplace. However, there is still a long way to go to provide a level playing field where everyone experiences equal opportunities.

Much of it could be attributed to the fact that most of the efforts that organisations have taken can be perceived as a quick fix rather than preparing the organisation for institutionalising a long-term change. Creating and sustaining real change requires organisation-wide efforts where organisations aim to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent equal participation of some groups.

Some of the critical aspects an organisation must lay emphasis on are:

Lay Down the Intent

To build an inclusive and equitable organisation, as a first step, leaders must pronounce their intent vividly. Significant changes like these need substantial efforts by the leadership in terms of making their commitment towards building an equitable workforce visible to all. At the same time, they must make conscious decisions that allow diverse groups to feel included and valued.

Challenge Bias

One of the potential roadblocks to achieving an equitable work environment is bias. Often, while we may not even realise that there are certain stereotypes and biases which are entrenched so deeply in our belief system that consciously or sub-consciously we tend to make decisions that are often coloured.

In context to the workplace, bias may play a role during hiring, succession planning, performance management, promotions, etc. Many a time, organisations fail to provide equitable opportunities for advancement to their diverse hires that lead to the presence of diversity in low authority jobs, but the lack of it as one moves up the ladder.

"Building an equitable workplace is not just a 'good-to-have' aspect anymore as equitable workplaces not just are more profitable but are also a source of competitive advantage today."

Likewise, in a hybrid setup, are we providing equal opportunities for career advancement to those who work from home versus those who work from office? Hence, it is very important to reduce bias during these engagements.

Fixing Pay Inequalities

Pay equity has been the buzzword for quite some time now and there have been growing voices calling for fixing pay inequalities at the workplaces. Pay equity essentially means that an individual's race, gender, or ability should not influence the pay accorded to them. However, I believe that organisations need to think beyond the traditional lens and try to expand the scope of equity to roles also.

For example, why should someone in an enabling function be paid less than someone at the same level in a business function? The best way to ensure that organisations are paying fairly is to start with a pay equity audit which aims at identifying pay disparities and opportunities to improve equity.

Likewise, it is a great idea to benchmark your compensation practices with the external labour market and understand the gaps if any. Insights received from these audits and benchmarking can help you fix the inequality in pay.

Take Accountability

Creating an equitable workplace should not be wishful thinking and organisations need to set targets and show accountability. To create a culture that is truly inclusive and equitable, one needs to create big picture goals and measure progress with time.

For example, it may be a great idea to commit that a certain percentage of hires shall be from diverse groups or a certain percentage of the population shall be represented in the leadership roles. Setting targets, collecting data, and measuring the changes is crucial in this journey of creating an equitable workplace.

Devise Policies and Practices that Embrace Diversity

Simply saying that you are an equal opportunity employer may not be good enough of your policies do not enable people from diverse groups to find their feet and flourish in your organisation.

It is essential to revisit your people practices and policies to see that they are not leading to any unconscious bias in the minds of people and becoming a limiting factor

to the sustenance and growth of a certain group.

Evaluating if your learning programmes are enabling people from diverse groups to become equal contenders to critical roles is another important element to consider. Diversity in thoughts and ethnicity may be a huge differentiator in today's time when innovation and standing out from the crowd are critical to survival.

Building an equitable workplace is not just a 'good-to-have' aspect anymore as equitable workplaces not just are more profitable but are also a source of competitive advantage today. Leaders across the globe should make this a priority in 2021 and work towards fostering a workplace culture that is truly equal! **HC**

About the Author

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

Succeeding In The Current Era

*In an exclusive interaction with Human Capital, **Geoffrey Moore**, bestselling author and advisor who consults both startups and high-tech enterprises such as Salesforce, Microsoft and Google, shares how organisations can make the most of wherever and whenever work happens, why we need both leadership and management to thrive in 2021 and beyond, and how to implement agile at scale.*

BY **ANKITA SHARMA**
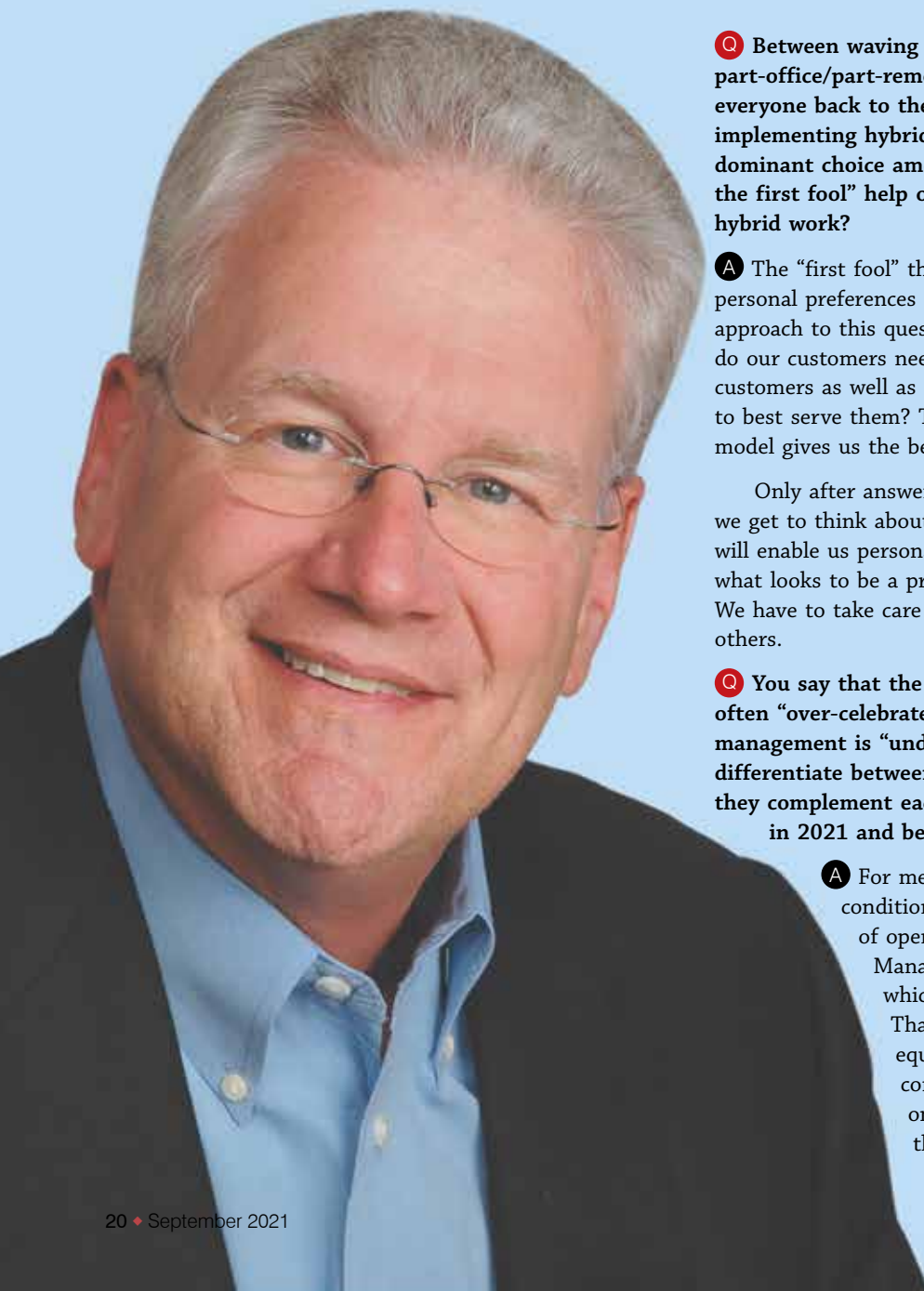
Q Between waving goodbye to the office, adopting a part-office/part-remote working model, and bringing everyone back to the office, the middle option of implementing hybrid configurations appears to be the dominant choice among organisations. How can "being the first fool" help organisations get the most out of hybrid work?

A The "first fool" thing to do here is set aside our personal preferences for the moment and take an outside-in approach to this question. This begins with asking: What do our customers need us to do? This can apply to internal customers as well as external ones. Where do we need to be to best serve them? The next step is to ask this: What work model gives us the best chance to create great outcomes?

Only after answering these two sets of questions do we get to think about ourselves and ask what work regime will enable us personally to deliver our best results over what looks to be a prolonged period of pandemic challenges. We have to take care of ourselves if we are going to serve others.

Q You say that the value of good leadership is often "over-celebrated" while the importance of good management is "under-appreciated". How do you differentiate between leaders and managers? How can they complement each other for driving business success in 2021 and beyond?

A For me, leadership is required under conditions of disruption when the normal rules of operation can no longer be relied upon. Management is for all the other times— which turns out to be most of the time. That's why both need to be honoured equally. The former is about turning the corners; the latter is about accelerating on the straight stretches. You cannot win the race without doing both.

Q **You often talk about a paradox: 1) An organisation cannot digitally transform without software, and 2) Software cannot digitally transform an organisation. Can you explain that?**

A Digital transformation in the current era is not about technology. It is about rearchitecting your enterprise end to end, migrating away from a product-first to a customer-first mentality. You still have the same supply chain, but every function must reorient to adjust to a customer-first approach. You cannot do this without digital systems to detect, analyse, and respond to customer-side signals.

At the same time, just installing such software does not make your organisation customer-centric. That requires everyone in the chain to reprioritise their workflow end to end. As with leadership and management, you need both to win.

Q **Even though embracing DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) is a no-brainer for any organisation that wants to succeed and stay competitive in the marketplace today, many business leaders find it challenging to act beyond mere "tokenism". What are some common mistakes you see tech companies making on the DEI front?**

A Creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce runs counter to the default tendency of all societies to organise around homogeneous social networks. There is nothing wrong with these networks—it really is how we are—but when it comes to recruiting, engaging, enlisting, hiring, and supporting, we are woefully inexperienced, and the number of referral relationships we can rely on are few. Nonetheless, solving the DEI challenge is the single most constructive social contribution businesses can make. We need to mount a bigger effort than we first realise.

The biggest mistake companies make is relying on their existing recruiting channels to expand their apertures. It is not enough. We need dedicated DEI recruiting—full time, year-round. We need to create on-ramps to bring potential candidates into our field of view. And we need to develop DEI-sensitive management skills to retain underrepresented minorities and support them in giving us their best.

Q **Collaboration is a tricky thing to get right. In an effort to become a better team player and create more alignment, people often end up dodging conflict, unwilling to take a contrarian view or engage in intellectually stimulating debates. Do you think low-conflict discussions are a sign of trouble? What are your top tips that organisations could use to crack the code on effective collaboration?**

A Collaboration cultures are at their best when they put themselves in service to their customers and hold each other accountable to doing fully right by them. In this sense, they align not with each other but rather in relation to the customer as true north. This allows them to engage in contrarian views and conflicting opinions as long as these dialogues are in service to their mission. Yes, it is important to get along with colleagues, but not at the cost of abrogating your responsibilities.

Q **According to a popular statistic, only one in 200 startups succeed to become scaleups. From a people and culture standpoint, what are the most common pitfalls startups should watch out for as they start scaling?**

A Like a developing fetus, a scaling organisation needs to bring different systems to scale in sequence rather than all at the same time. So hiring the right person for the right job at the right time is the pathway to success.

At the outset, this calls for a leader to drive breakout innovation— that's what kicks off a new wave of technology adoption. Then it calls for pairing a consultative sales pro with a professional services wizard to win those first few radiating customer references. Then, to cross the chasm, you need to hire a domain expert who is well connected to the market segment you are targeting and back them up with an engineering leader who can reprioritise the roadmap to crush the target use case. Finally, if you have timed things right and there is a tornado market building for your core offer, you need a killer sales leader and a ruthless VP engineering to capture as much market share with as standard an offer as possible in the quest to emerge as the category leader.

Q **A key challenge facing many large companies is how to remain nimble and agile in a rapid, ever-changing landscape. What would your advice be for implementing agile at scale?**

A This is embarrassingly self-serving, but here goes: Read *Zone to Win!* The purpose of the book is to give established enterprises a framework for incubating next-generation businesses while managing their core businesses in parallel. The key idea is that there are legitimate "zones of interest" that support each endeavour—the Performance Zone and the Productivity Zone support the core business, and the Incubation Zone and Transformation Zone support the next-generation opportunities.

Each zone has its own mission and management model, and the key learning is that each model creates success in its home zone and leads to failure when applied in any of the other three. So, the key to implementing agile at scale is to zone your enterprise and then make sure you are applying the right model to the right undertakings. **H C**

A Sense Of Belonging

Only when we feel that the organisation's larger purpose is synchronous with ours will we feel a sense of belonging. It is for us to decide if the one it possesses now excites us.

BY **ASHISH PRADHAN**

"Our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance"

—Berne Brown

As the pandemic wears on, we see companies struggling to come to terms with the changes in the business environment. Some companies have adapted well and continue to flourish, while others are not faring that well. I believe, the main difference between these two sets of companies is the leadership which provides strategic direction and ignites the fire of *esprit de corps* within the team. The former is a function of the collective intellect that the leadership team possesses while the latter is subtler. The feeling of *esprit de corps* is strongly linked to a sense of belonging felt by the employees in relation to the organisation.

What is this sense of belonging? We feel belonged to a place when we are accepted for what we are and are respected for our individuality – our opinions are heard, our strengths recognised, our weaknesses accepted and supported, and most importantly, we feel we are treated as equals. We may have different jobs, and all of us are equal stakeholders and everybody's contribution according to their respective job is appreciated. This is not easy to experience – even top-notch professionals feel that they are *"not belonging"* to a group in the beginning. Sachin Tendulkar had shared that at the beginning of his career he doubted if he belonged at the "Test level". Only when he faced down the fearsome Pakistani pace attack, battled on with a bloody nose which he suffered from a Waqar Younis bouncer, did he feel he "belonged". There is a lot to learn from this story.

We could consider this subject from two perspectives – one from an organisational view where the organisation puts processes in place that help cultivate an environment to make an employee feel welcome and the other related to the mental makeup of the employee herself.

There has been a lot of literature on how an organisation can create a healthy work environment that fosters a feeling of engagement and belonging - reward and recognition schemes, people engagement activities like annual days, birthday celebrations, picnics, etc. Employee engagement surveys and subsequent action planning, open feedback culture are some examples of tools that are employed by companies.

One believes the three main drivers for an employee to feel belonged are –

Value Systems

All of us grow up cherishing some values. These values define us - our identity. We look at life and all that is happening around us through the lens of these values. We even judge people based on our value system. The same event can be interpreted in completely contrasting ways by two people who nurture a different set of values. Speaking up in the face of authority is a quintessential way of life in some cultures like Australia, where personal and individual freedom of expression is valued and even celebrated while the same is frowned upon in most Indian families and organisations. In India, we are always expected to "obey" our parents.

> **"Behaviour and demonstration are more a reflection of the values of an organisation rather than a document that is framed and displayed."**

This is not to say which value system is better – it is just the way it is. We feel at home in an environment where we feel the value systems of the larger group – read

the assistance of a colleague. That moment, I had passed my rites of passage - became a leader from a rookie. I sensed a tremendous boost to my self-esteem - I belonged. All of us come to these crossroads and the choice we make makes all the difference between belonging or not.

> **"A modern progressive organisation must provide all the necessary wherewithal to help create an atmosphere that encourages an employee to feel belonged."**

A modern progressive organisation must provide all the necessary wherewithal to help create an atmosphere that encourages an employee to feel belonged. And an employee, on her part, should invest in the efforts of belonging as this could be the difference between success and failure for both the organisation and the employee.

organisation – matches with our own. It follows that it is the employee's responsibility to identify the values she sees demonstrated by the larger organisation, and thereafter, introspect if these match with hers. Here, it is important to note that behaviour and demonstration are more a reflection of the values of an organisation rather than a document that is framed and displayed.

Sense of Purpose

Psychologists say that all of us seek meaningful lives and not necessarily happy ones. What constitutes a meaningful life? This question has been addressed in a Ted talk. The speaker, Emily Esfahani Smith, enlists a sense of purpose as one of the critical factors contributing to a meaningful life. We think we want to lead happy lives, she says, but truly, at a deeper level, we seek a sense of purpose that makes life worth living. An organisation that paints a portrait of a vision that offers a purposeful endeavour gives itself an opportunity to connect with its employees.

Thereafter, it is for the employee to ascertain if this sense of purpose resonates with him. We all want to lead lives with a purpose and these purposes could be different for each one of us. Only if we feel that the organisation's larger purpose is synchronous with ours do we feel a sense of belonging. The organisation

will not change its purpose – it is for us to decide if the one it possesses now excites us.

Self-esteem

Often our own feeling of low self-esteem prevents us from feeling belonged. A way to overcome this is by completing *Rites of Passage*. Baptisms, transition to adulthood, marriage, death are all examples of rites of passage that refer to events that make an important transition.

As a 23-year-old, I was working as a shop floor supervisor in an electric appliance company managing a group of workmen in their fifties. I had in a way no ascendency over them either in terms of knowledge or experience. This was clearly a place I felt inadequate - *I did not belong!* One fine day, I was presented with an opportunity (it did not feel like one at the time, though) to change this for myself.

On having my entreaties for having the aluminium furnaces emptied before the weekend shutdown ignored on account of tools down strike, I had a choice – shut off the furnaces without emptying them which could lead to a loss of production of an entire shift or emptying them myself which was a difficult physical task of at least 5 hours. I chose the second and completed the onerous task with

About the Author

Ashish Pradhan is President, Siegwerk Asia. 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.

Culture Eats Everything!

When an organisation fails or fizzles out after initial success, we are quick to blame the wrong strategy or not adapting to technology as the root cause for failure.

BY **ROHAN LELE**

I am reminded of Peter Drucker's quote, who once said 'Culture eats Strategy for Breakfast'. The quote lays emphasis on the importance of building the right culture in the organisation. We have numerous forums, conferences and webinars wherein there are discussions on Strategy and Technology and how these can be game-changers to build a very successful business enterprise, and I second that completely. I agree that it takes an immense amount of hard work, backed with the right strategy and adapting to technology, to succeed. But, is building a successful enterprise the ultimate goal? Does success ensure sustainability?

The answer to both these questions is a BIG 'NO'. While strategy and technology can help you build a successful organisation in the short term, it is not enough to build a sustainable enterprise.

I am positive that all of us have a nagging question in our minds - what has kept organisations like TATA, Aditya Birla and Mahindra to continue to grow and sustain the brand over so many decades? The secret to their 'sustainability' is an unrelenting focus on building the right 'Culture'.

We have seen many organisations achieve great heights of success, reaching the top and falling down faster. Organisations with great business ideas have fizzled out after a great start. Why do these companies fail? Can we blame it on strategy and technology?

Let me explain this with help of an iceberg:
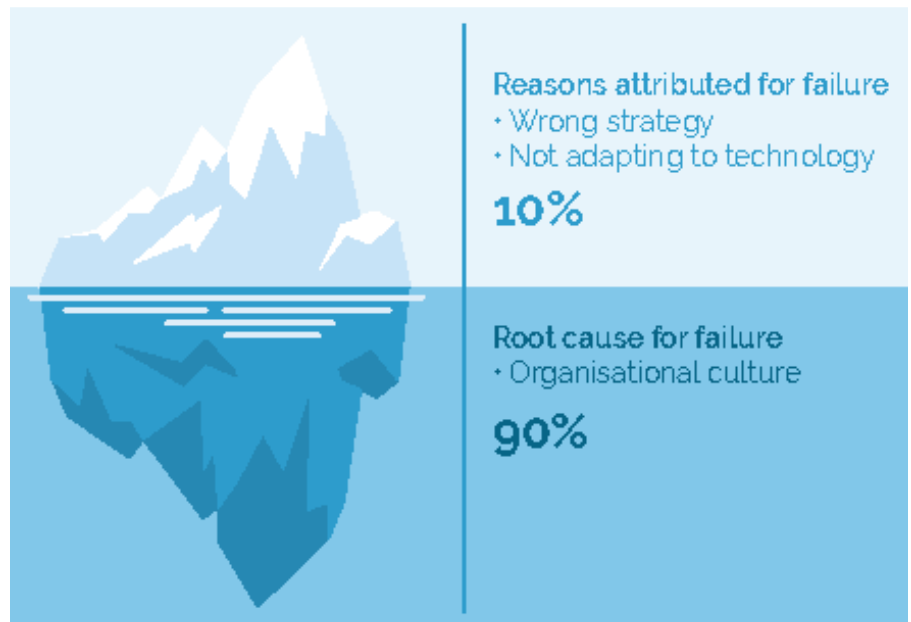
Reasons attributed for failure
· Wrong strategy
· Not adapting to technology
10%

Root cause for failure
· Organisational culture
90%

> **"Culture is the sum of behaviours and if the organisational values are not reflected in the way people behave, it is a sign of weak culture."**

When an organisation fails or fizzles out after initial success, we are quick to blame the wrong strategy or not adapting to technology as the root cause for failure. But, is that really the reason why the organisation failed?

The question is what was stopping the organisation from changing their strategy on the go and not adapting to new technology? And here comes the answer – it was the culture that was stopping them!

As you know, we can only see 10% of the iceberg and the remaining 90% is invisible as it is beyond our line of sight. If we have to put this in an organisational context, we see that 'strategy' and technology' are enablers for success and are also quick to assume the reasons for failure, which is 10% of the iceberg. But as we go deeper and explore, we realise that it is the culture i.e. the remaining 90% which is invisible and the root cause as to why the organisation failed or

fizzled out after being successful for a few years.

What does it take to build the right culture? While I am no expert at this, I believe these are the **FOUR** building blocks for building and inculcating the right culture!

Inculcating Organisational Values

Every organisation has a set of core values, but in most organisations, they remain as a set of fancy words and not something that is reflected deep in the behaviour of everyone in the organisation with no exceptions. As we know, culture is the sum of behaviours and if the organisational values are not reflected in the way people behave, it is a sign of weak culture. For building the right culture, it is important to choose the right values that will help in building a sustainable enterprise and ensure they are understood and inculcated by one and all, irrespective of their

level or position of power in the organisation.

Encouraging diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are the key building blocks for orchestrating the right culture. It is not just about diversity and inclusion in your hiring or career progression strategy, but also diversity and inclusion of thought which is the key to building a sustainable enterprise.

Are we open to:–

- A completely diverse, opposite views and opinions?
- A culture that is inclusive and encourages healthy dissent?
- A culture where the idea or views are respected and valued, irrespective of whether you are in a position of power and influence?

If no, then it is time to re-think and build the right culture!

Communicating and Cascading

Every organisation has a vision, but is it communicated and cascaded to employees across all levels? Do employees understand it, and are they able to make sense out of it, and most importantly, relate to it?

Well, it takes a well-defined internal communication plan to ensure that everyone across the company understands and are able to relate to the vision. This internal communication cannot be a one-time activity or effort, but needs to be done consistently and frequently to ensure everyone across all levels are on board and are able to relate to the organisational vision.

Building Flexibility and Vigour

The corporate world has been discussing about surviving, thriving and sustaining in the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world. This has been a topic of interest and fierce debate for over a decade now.

What does it take to survive, grow and sustain in this VUCA world? Organisations which have been successful in building flexibility and vigour in their culture and make it their DNA are the ones that are able to flourish and grow irrespective of numerous challenges faced by them.

In many organisations, CEOs spend most of the time (about 80%) on strategy, technology, operational excellence, etc. and very little time (20% or less) on building the right culture. In the last few years, this percentage has changed for good and we are seeing a positive trend that CEOs are spending more time on culture, but this is not still good enough! The time spent by the CEO on building the right culture is what differentiates between a good and a great enterprise and one which sustains and grows!

* Views expressed in this article are the author's personal views and do not represent the views of Atul Ltd.

> **"In many organisations, CEOs spend most of the time (about 80%) on strategy, technology, operational excellence, etc. and very little time (20% or less) on building the right culture."**

About the Author

Rohan Lele is Vice President - HR, Atul Limited. He comes with an experience of 16 years and has worked with both Indian and Multinational companies in various HR roles in India and Asia Pacific. Rohan Lele has completed his Masters in Human Resources Management from the Faculty of Social Work, M. S. University of Baroda is currently pursuing his Doctoral Programme (PhD) in Human Resource Management.

SAP India, Microsoft Launch Tech Skilling Program For Young Women

BY **ANUSHRUTI SINGH**

SAP India and Microsoft have launched a joint skilling program, "TechSaksham", for empowering young women students from undeserved communities to build careers in technology.

The initiative will train more than 62000 young women in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, web design, and digital marketing.

The program will collaborate with state collegiate education departments and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to train 1500 teachers.

In the first year of implementation, the initiative will train 1,500 teachers and each faculty trained will be equipped to support over 50 students in one year, impacting 60,000 - 75,000 students.

Edunet Foundation will implement the TechSaksham initiative. It will develop future-ready skills in young women graduating in sciences, engineering, computer applications, and vocational studies. The program offers a core curriculum to understand the application of technology and activity-based engagements to implement the skills under expert mentors, ensuring job readiness.

Students will also get an opportunity to showcase their work to business leaders and experts from local industries, helping establish early linkages with industry ecosystems. ■

Mindtree Introduces Learn-And-Earn Program

BY **ANUSHRUTI SINGH**

Mindtree has launched a learn-and-earn program "Mindtree EDGE" for BSc and BCA graduates in partnership with BITS Pilani.

Under this program, Mindtree will hire fresh B.Sc. and BCA graduates and provide them a fully funded opportunity to pursue an MTech degree in Software Engineering from BITS Pilani while working on client projects at Mindtree.

BITS Pilani's exclusive work integrated MTech programme covers the full stack of technologies and competencies required to accelerate in the software industry today. These graduates will be enrolled in the eight-semester, UGC-approved MTech program on completing a three-month training under Mindtree's Orchard learning program, where experienced Mindtree practitioners help new campus hires learn technical concepts in the context of real-world projects.

Dayapatra Nevatia, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, Mindtree, said "Developing future-ready technology talent is critical for India to sustain its competitive advantage in the digital era and reinforce its reputation as the global hub for technology talent".

To be eligible for Mindtree EDGE, candidates are required to have completed their B.Sc. or BCA graduation in three years at a stretch with Core Mathematics as a subject and at least 60% aggregate or equivalent CGPA. ■

Diageo Announces 26-Week Parental Leave Policy For All Genders

BY **ANUSHRUTI SINGH**

In a bid to create a diverse and inclusive workplace culture, Diageo India has announced a "Family Leave Policy".

All the eligible employees will get 26-week parental leave, comprising all benefits and bonuses, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. This policy takes into consideration surrogacy, adoption, and biological conception.

The leave policy is applicable to all new parents, and can be availed by new fathers anytime within 12 months of the birth/ adoption of the child, thereby allowing the mother to better manage her career as well as other priorities. Aarif Aziz, Chief Human Resources Officer, Diageo India said, "At Diageo India, championing inclusion and diversity is central to our purpose of celebrating life, every day, everywhere.

Our new "Family Leave Policy" is testament to this purpose. With the introduction of this policy, we recognize that all employees, regardless of gender or sexual orientation deserve an equal opportunity to avail of paid parental leave to cherish time with their new family. We believe that this will pave the way to greater equality, and talent is retained and nurtured. We take immense pride in being one of the few companies in India to introduce such a policy, and hope it soon becomes an industry norm.

Additionally, the "Family Leave Policy" offers employees a host of other benefits and opportunities to enable them to optimize their career goals and ambitions, as well as personal lives. This includes 26-weeks maternity leave, flexible working hours, creche allowance, maternity, and surrogacy coverage, up to 10-weeks leave in the unfortunate event of miscarriage, and much more. ■

Textiles: The Now And The Next

Minakshi Arora, CHRO, Trident Group, speaks with Human Capital about how COVID-19 has been a huge turning point for the labour-intensive textile industry, the hard and soft skills required in the post-pandemic era, and how HR and Business leaders can challenge archaic practices to boldly reimagine the future of work in the textile sector.

BY **ANKITA SHARMA**

Q The pandemic caused both temporary and permanent shifts in business models and how and where work is done. Which changes in the textile industry do you believe will be short-term? On the other hand, which transformations are likely to extend into the post-pandemic era?

A The COVID-19 pandemic is compelling companies to find new ways of managing shop-floor performance through remote work. The textile industry is a labour-intensive sector. Complete adoption of remote working arrangements seems far-fetched. The frontline personnel appreciates face-to-face engagement. The feasibility of remote work depends not only on the nature of tasks associated with any given role but also on the shared working conventions. A hybrid model is more suitable for manufacturing to reconfigure operations for long-lasting strategic advantages.

COVID-19 has permanently reshaped e-commerce as we know it. Organisations need to consider timely investments in e-commerce to capture market share and emerge better positioned after the crisis.

Due to the pandemic, digitalisation of customer interactions has accelerated by several years, and there have been huge leaps in product development within the span of a few months. An action plan focussed on delighting consumers is of utmost importance to grab this unique window of opportunity.

Other changes, including the acceleration of Industry 4.0, sensitivity towards technology, organisational changes towards agility, and elevation of human-centred design for an enhanced digital experience, are here to stay.

Q HR leaders across organisations are smack-dab in the middle of reimagining how people and businesses can thrive, rethinking workforce practices and realigning them with the new norms of working. What are the top HR challenges confronting the textile industry today?

A In manufacturing, before digitising a process, it is important to evaluate that process to determine if it can be reorganised and re-engineered to deliver a better business result. Otherwise, organisations risk digitising flawed processes.

More importantly, employees need to be involved in how a designed process impacts them, and what HR will also need to do is convince leaders to embrace more people-centric technologies. Openness towards technology has to be inculcated in the culture for quantifiable results. Even with the hybrid model, HR will need to change their company cultures before they change technology, which poses a challenge.

Many service-based companies and tech giants have made remote working arrangements a permanent option given the potential cost, productivity and talent-attraction benefits. For a labour-intensive organisation, this competition with service-based industries to enable flexibility with the optimal arrangement is a top challenge. Even with the hybrid model, due to the relative dominance of service industries, a complete shift in policies to expand the scope of employees who could work remotely has to happen swiftly to be appealing for high-potential talent and to have access to a diverse talent pool. Industry 4.0 will give us connectivity solutions in order to improve production efficiency and retain employees.

Q While many soft skills will never go out of style and are transferrable across a wide range of roles and industries, the shelf life of hard skills is rapidly shrinking. Which soft and hard skills are becoming increasingly valuable for the textile industry?

A Soft skills are becoming increasingly important, as even with

the rise of AI, these are precisely the type of skills that can't be automated by robots. As the soft skills of the future are going to be inherently human, empathy wins the race. We know that leaders are now taking responsibility for developing the skills of their workforce; therefore, persuasion, entrepreneurial mindset, adaptability and agility have become increasingly valuable for the textile industry. Not only will developing soft skills create a more agile workforce, but it will also help human workers specialise in areas where machines are less likely to excel.

The priority of the manufacturing industry is increasing their employees' capacity to engage with technology and use advanced analytics to enable the adoption of Industry 4.0. Core hard skills indispensable to textiles are people management, artificial intelligence, data science, and analytical reasoning. This change from a traditional mindset to a tech-savvy mindset, from a labour-intensive workforce to automated systems, requires a nuanced understanding of how automation, Industry 4.0, and the human workforce are intertwined.

Q How is the workforce composition of your industry changing? Do you see non-full-time talent as a strategic part of your talent pool?

A The question of skilled resources is key for companies facing the digital transformation to Industry 4.0. The gig/work-from-anywhere workforce is here for the foreseeable future, and organisations that do not embrace it could experience significant retention, engagement, and talent acquisition challenges.

Job flexibility is more appealing and potentially more viable for certain job roles. If we are to reimagine the textile sector, this model can unlock significant value, including more satisfied employees. For example, a

digital marketing and branding team resource can work on flexible timing from anywhere in the world if they are working on a campaign that has to be curated, launched and utilised on an online portal only.

Q What do you believe are the most crucial traits that HR leaders in the textile industry ought to cultivate and demonstrate to help organisations emerge better positioned for the post-COVID future?

A How leaders behave during critical moments leaves a lasting mark on organisational culture. In our industries, cultural & emotional intelligence becomes a crucial trait that HR leaders need to cultivate. If we are aiming for cultural diversity in our organisation, we need people to expertise and drive cultural diversity, curate relevant policies to make the organisation culturally inclusive (as diversity is multidimensional and multi-cultural & demands speed), creativity, and, most of all, humility.

Another important change is that HR executives have become contributors as business partners. The role of HR leaders has evolved to genuine leaders and business partners, where they are equally responsible for change management and successful running

of the business along with business leaders. In a period of unpredictability and a vague timeline, your people are looking to HR for direction and confidence for accurate and authoritative information.

Change management is paramount to match, given the speed at which this crisis has been unfolding and the great acceleration of technology with it. Organisations and policymakers need to be faster, bolder, and more agile than ever before to succeed. **H C**

Mind Your Habits

The causal connection between workplace habits and career growth is evident and all-pervasive.

BY **DR JAYANT KUMAR**

Small things often matter a lot, particularly when they are repeated frequently. Habits qualify as one of those small things which have a profound impact on outcomes.

Habits are usually formed or acquired over a long period of time. Once perfected, they remain as our companions and allies. They become so commonplace that we don't even think of the powerful behavioural patterns that emanate from them. Habits have little to do with our inborn character, and cultivating them is a matter of choice.

Studying habits is a great aid in understanding people, their behaviour, responses, success and missed opportunities. Habits are those underlying exercises that build the ability muscles. Good habits are about developing small, healthy, frequent routines. We then need to stick to the chosen routines until they become habitual and effortless.

There are several intriguing aspects of habits – both good and bad, desirable and undesirable – that are worth examining and understanding. The genesis of a habit can occur in response to or in the absence of a need. During the early stages of life, when habits are formed, some important drivers are one's social environment, the company one keeps, and one's individual worldview. Later on, it's interesting to see out-of-place behaviours and responses of otherwise effective and capable people predicated by a seasoned habit.

People Form Habits; Habits Shape Outcomes

From a long list of commonly observed habits, let's examine listening as a small habit that is desirable and good. Active and careful listening is widely regarded as a virtuous social habit and a sign of politeness. To listen properly is effortless, simple and natural. Yet, we often encounter people who habitually interrupt others in the middle of their sentences, claiming they already understand what the other person is saying. They start replying with limited or no understanding and their responses are likely to be inadequate. More often than not, someone with a habit of not fully listening to others does not correctly comprehend the point being made.

On the surface, it appears to be a minor lack of mannerism that is sometimes innocent and unintentional. However, the magnitude of the loss or damage caused to oneself due to this well nurtured habit is enormous during a lifetime. In verbal transactions, this individual never receives the full benefit that others are willing to offer. Most of the time, partial understanding coupled with conjectures render their responses sub-optimal. When it reaches obsessive levels, others avoid engaging in conversation with them. The aggregate loss of value being inflicted on oneself due to this innocuous habit is beyond estimate. Listening with patience, full comprehension, and deliberate response from all participants significantly enhances the quality and value of any conversation.

There are several small habits that people acquire at various stages of life. Despite obvious evidence, many people fail to consider the consequences and impact of their habits carefully. Some of these habits include ascribing reasons of failure on others, not accepting mistakes, taking a casual approach towards timelines, not meeting commitments, not closing communication loops, walking into meetings late, showing up without adequate preparation, hiding facts or information, speaking half-truths, being loud, being obsessed with self-praise, engaging in loose talk, and gossiping about others' personal matters. The list is extensive when we look around.

Similarly, the list of polar opposites is also equally long: respecting other people's time, fulfilling commitments, being dependable, showing gratitude, having an eye for details, helping others, accepting mistakes honestly, being cheerful, smiling, and learning from good and bad experiences. Labels for

brings certainty, definitiveness and predictability in planning, execution and outcomes. High achievement orientation Managers detest surprises against their plans. Managers tend to assign critical tasks to dependable team members.

such habits can be broad or granular depending on the context, but these are generally universal classification regarding whether they are desirable or not.

Evaluate and Reflect on Your Habits

Think of it: life is made up of a series of habits in the form of (semi) automatic choices and decisions that surround us every day. By way of careful evaluation, they become visible. People are prisoners of their habits, knowingly or otherwise. Most of these habits stick with us, defining our character and personality. A few of them do sometimes change, particularly when we go through life-changing experiences.

The human mind is programmed to find ways to save energy. When a habit is formed, the brain stops fully participating in decision-making. So, unless you deliberately fight an existing habit, the loop will continue, and patterns will emerge automatically.

It is worthwhile to carefully examine and reflect on our armour of habits, their genesis, impact and the need for change. Most of the time, it is possible to alter events around us in life and career if we correctly understand the causal relationships of variables. Initiatives and actions are within our control to influence responses that we seek from others.

Instead of focusing on others, we can increase our ROI by working on ourselves and our habits. If I want to be treated with respect, do I treat others with respect? If I want to be valued in the team, do I genuinely value other team members? If I want to be considered trustworthy, do I live up to my promises?

Careful thinking through and modification of personal habits (consciously and not as a forced veil) profoundly impacts effectiveness, relationships, and results. An aggregate of many small items becomes big in toto; the same is true about our small everyday behaviours emanating from habits.

Workplace Habits and Career Growth

Let us zoom in on workplace behaviours and their impact on shaping careers. Managers, for instance, have a collection of habits that makes them effective. They invariably put these habits into practice and apply these as everyday workplace behaviours. Not wasting time is an example. They are able to do more in the same span of time as their peers who are not as conscious of the usage of their time.

Dependability is a great virtue in corporate careers. Effective managers value dependability as a characteristic among their team members. It

fosters steep learning, capability and readiness for higher-order jobs. To be a consistently dependable resource, one must consistently deliver promises made by adequate hard work, patience, perseverance and rigour. Each of these is a personal workplace habit. In case of unexpected delays due to unforeseen events, proactively reverting before a follow-up is another desirable habit that managers value. The causal connection between workplace habits and career growth is evident and all-pervasive.

Long Haul Career Choice

Adopting shortcuts to fast-track one's career may offer thrills and temptations similar to rash and reckless driving on a busy highway, but it turns out to be a risky proposition after a while. To build a sustainable and "all-weather career model", executives need to understand the drivers of career growth, form underlying habits and nurture them towards (near) perfection. 🅗🅒

About the Author

Dr Jayant Kumar is currently Head HR of APSEZ (Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd) and its other entities. Prior to joining APSEZ, he was the CHRO at Tata Power Co. Ltd. He has also worked with Hindalco Industries, NTPC, TPDDL, RCOM, Tata Teleservices and Marico Ltd. An alumnus of XISS, Jayant holds a PhD in the area of Talent Management.

Becoming A Better Leader

*In an exclusive interaction with Human Capital, **Chester Elton**, world-renowned culture and leadership guru famously called "The Apostle of Appreciation", talks about why leaders must foster an emotionally safe work environment and how to lead in the era of the 'Great Resignation'. Chester also shares actionable strategies for reducing anxiety at work and how leaders can practice gratitude and build daily rituals to replenish their energy levels.*

BY **ANKITA SHARMA**

Q **You often talk about fostering emotional safety at work. How similar or different is psychological safety from emotional safety, and what are some ways to make organisations emotionally safe?**

A To me, psychological safety in the workplace is about doing great work. It's about the project, how we ideate together, and how we challenge each other without fear of being considered a naysayer or fly in the ointment.

The emotional safety piece goes over and above the work. Adrian Gostick (my co-author) and I have conducted research on anxiety in the workplace that shows that 90% of employees don't feel safe talking about mental health or anxiety. Well, these are much more emotionally charged issues than "Are my opinions on the project being heard?"

If I've got a personal issue, if I'm feeling unsettled, if I'm worried about the Delta variant, if I'm concerned about my kids going back to school, my having to return to the workplace, or my position on the team, do I feel emotionally safe enough to talk about the issue with my manager? If not, this lack of emotional safety is a workplace dynamic that you need to change.

Psychological safety is a precursor to creating an emotionally safe workplace.

Q While many aspects of leadership are timeless, what new skills and mindsets will be needed to lead effectively into the future when "knowing all the answers" is no longer something we can expect of (or require of) modern leaders?

A If we were to talk about this in the pre-COVID times, we might have said a visionary, a great communicator, and inspiration are the characteristics of great leaders. Now, I believe one leadership attribute matters most – empathy.

You have got to have empathetic leaders in the workplace for all the things we just talked about emotional safety. In many parts of the world, there's a movement that's called The Great Resignation. People want to have a life; they want to have interesting, engaging, and fulfilling work. They want to have time to do things that they are passionate about over and above work. The only way you will attract that kind of great talent is by being empathetic to their whole life.

People might think, "We are getting so soft. Everybody's feelings have to matter. When does the work get done?" My answer to that is, "You've got to invest a little more time into your people and get to know them a little better. Once you've established that trust, once they know that you care about them, not just as an employee, as a person, you'll get a ton of work done."

You need to invest time into your people and your relationships.

Those relationships matter, and those cultures will attract extraordinary talent and get extraordinary work done.

Q Your recent book, *Anxiety at Work*, comes out of extensive research. You've interviewed some of the world's top mental health experts as well as numerous people who suffer from anxiety disorders at work. What does your research reveal about anxiety at work that might surprise us?

A It might surprise people how pervasive anxiety is. We all suffer from a little bit of anxiety. Anxiety disorders are to the point where they're affecting your work—it's hard for you to show up. It's hard for you to get work done.

In our research pre-COVID-19 in 2018, about 18% of employees said they suffered from some kind of anxiety disorder. In mid-2020, right in the middle of the pandemic, that number jumped up to 32%. What was also fascinating is that when we looked at newer employees in their early 20s and early 30s that comprise almost half of the workforce, the percentage jumped to 42.

Another thing we discovered is that the people who are suffering from anxiety are excellent at hiding it. They're good at putting on that happy face. It got a lot easier during COVID-19 because you only had to psych yourself up for that 30-minute Zoom call, and then you could shut down the camera and go into a dark room and cry. I'm exaggerating, I hope. So it becomes crucial for your coworkers and your immediate supervisors to get better at looking for the clues.

Q What are some strategies leaders could use to help employees deal with anxiety at work?

A We've talked to many leaders about normalising the conversation around mental health, specifically anxiety. When we say, "I was out jogging, stepped off the curb, broke my ankle, and need time off," nobody says anything. But when we say, "Hey boss, I'm overwhelmed. I need a mental health day," the reaction is often, "Suck it up, buttercup. Tough it out."

One of the things we tell leaders and coworkers is to look for the signs. People are extremely good at hiding anxiety. Look for subtle changes in behaviour, such as if someone who's never late starts showing up late, somebody who always participates pulls back, or somebody who never participates is now dominating the conversation, those kinds of things.

Let me tell you a story about Chris Rainey, a good friend of mine. He's got an incredible podcast show. If you were ever to meet Chris, you would never think for a second that this is a guy who's had an anxious moment in his life: he's happy, engaging, funny, competent, smart, and has a great little family. You'd think, "Boy, if there's a guy that's just got it going on, it's Chris Rainey." But then, you find out that he suffered from anxiety his whole life, and no one knew. His wife didn't know. His family didn't know. His best friends didn't know. Then, in doing his podcast, he talked to a CHRO about anxiety in their organisation and admitted it on air that he suffered his whole life.

He was surrounded by his team as this was pre-COVID. When he closed up the podcast, he looked around and saw that everyone's eyes were big and their mouths were open. But here's what was wonderful – almost everyone came up to Chris and thanked him for being vulnerable and admitted that they had some kind of anxiety disorder at some point but were afraid to talk about it. By sharing his story, he gave others permission to talk about their story.

Since that moment, Chris has not had another anxious episode. "I've come close," he says. The difference

now is that he's got people he can call.

If you're suffering from an anxiety disorder, you are not alone. There are people you can talk to. When you think you are all alone, it prolongs the episodes. It makes you feel even worse about yourself. That's self-degradation. We all know we're harder on ourselves than anyone else could possibly be. That sense of "I'm being alone. I've got to hide it. I can't talk about it" is where it gets dangerous. Tell your story, and make it safe. Understand that there are people that you can call, and you are absolutely not alone.

Moreover, overload is one of the eight strategies that we talk that we really need to look out for. Overload is a real problem with high achievers. She wants to perform. She wants to deliver, and we've got to be careful with that overload. We've got to be careful with our expectations about people.

Q You've been dubbed the "Apostle of Appreciation," so there's no one better that I can think of to answer this question. Do you believe millennials and Gen-Z employees crave way too much recognition and praise at work? What advice do you have for leaders looking to engage their younger generation teams through recognition?

A Millennials and Gen-Z don't expect confetti and a red carpet when they show up to work. I believe we've misinterpreted recognition with good feedback.

Younger generations want validation that what they're doing matters, their voices are heard, and they're on the right track. Yes, they want more feedback than previous generations. The reason being is it's

a digital generation. They're getting 100 to 200 positive reinforcements a minute playing video games. Now, in the workplace, if you say, "Hey, after five years, we'll give you a pin with a number five on it", it doesn't compute.

It's also good management practice to have a constant communication and feedback loop – whether it's on the Slack channel, a Zoom meeting, text message, newsletter, or team gathering.

Moreover, specificity in feedback is king. General praise like "great job", "way to go", "you're the best", or "you are number one" has zero impact. Tell them why they did a great job so they can replicate that behaviour. Give them the roadmap to why what they did was a great customer engagement or why that was a great report. They will then feed on that and feel energised to do an even better job next time.

Q Leaders usually have hectic schedules, and self-care often falls by the wayside during the daily grind. What simple self-care practices can leaders use even on their busiest days to restore depleted energy levels?

A There are some simple rituals that leaders can build in so that there is time to refresh even on the most hectic day. A great tip that I got from a friend of mine, Scott O'Neill, was don't ever schedule a 30-minute or a 60-minute meeting. Instead, keep 20-minute or 50-minute meetings.

You want that 10-minute buffer between meetings just so that you can get up and stretch, go for a quick walk, get a healthy snack, go to the bathroom—simple things. So often, we book our Zoom meetings back-to-back, and that's unhealthy.

Another ritual comes from a wonderful leader named Mercy Niwe down at the World Bank in Washington, DC. They have a rule on their team: no meetings on Friday. They work as hard as they can Monday through Thursday. On Friday, it's catch-up day. Now it works for her team; I'm not saying this is universal. These are some of their rituals. On catch-up day, they do stuff that they couldn't get to Monday through Thursday. Of course, she has to lead the way.

What a lot of leaders have also done, and what I believe is a great practice, is no emails on the weekend. Some leaders send out emails on the weekend saying, "Don't respond until Monday." You know what? That doesn't matter. You've already stolen their day because all they'll be thinking about on Sunday is how they will respond to that email first thing Monday morning.

As a leader, figure out your rituals. My ritual since the pandemic is that I get out of bed and go for a walk. I make time to meditate every day and write in my gratitude journal. By the way, I don't always get it done, and that's okay too. As leaders, we've got to give ourselves some grace. Be forgiving; hit it next time.

Create rituals that allow you to refresh and replenish during the day, not just during the weekends. Then on the weekends, give yourself time to just be with your family, and do the things you love outside of work and refresh. **HC**

"...Don't Give Way to Hating..."

BY **PRABIR JHA**

About the Author

Prabir Jha is the Founder and CEO of Prabir Jha People Advisory. He has been the CHRO of two Fortune 500s and two NYSE-listed Indian majors.

Many decades ago, I had just begun my second year at St Stephen's, and the session had barely started. I was summoned to the Dean's office and told I had been found ragging some freshers. For someone who was quite the right-of-centre, it was a shocker! I responded with a strong "Me?" as I was sure it was a case of mistaken reporting. The Dean looked at me with disdain and said, "Don't look so innocent!" To cut a long story short, I was suspended from the Residence (as a hostel is called there) for 3–4 days, and a note was sent to my parents.

Even today, I wonder why I was treated the way I was for something I had never done. For years, I seethed with anger. And then, as my career panned out, I had my share of disappointments of being wrongly judged – by promoters, CEOs, peers and even some team members. These were, mercifully, exceptions, but the hurt was always palpable.

Thankfully, the early experience in college helped me stay anchored. You will have times of being misunderstood, of peer jealousy rearing its head to bite you. The odd colleague will throw things at you to hide their slips. You just let it pass. You let yourself heal and move on. In situations like these, I would always read Rudyard Kipling's poem "If—", which has stayed on my soft board since college and calm down. Just trust yourself to do what is always right. And don't worry about the rest.

Knots and Crosses

BY **SAHIL NAYAR**

The game evokes childhood memories and involuntary visions of the checkered box with the Xs and Os. As minds race forward with moves – marking an X, blocking with an O – the game is always about staying ahead.

It's strange how this played out with a striking resemblance when the HR fraternity was drawn against new challenges in recent, unprecedented times.

The conventional HRBP role was about talent management, engagement, and paraphernalia until Covid-19 put us on the board of the Tic-Tac-Toe game.

Gazing into the crystal ball, attempting to figure out what came next, we preempted the needs of our employees and the business – forecasting moves and making contingency plans. "Urgent" and "critical" were the new buzzwords.

From being event managers, the HR Tribe changed their focus and strategy to organize oxygen cylinders, hospital beds, insurance covers, vaccination drives and enhanced focus on employee well-being – thinking one step ahead to stay in the game of life.

Being in knots with each other in the pre-pandemic era, we untangled ourselves and came together with the larger ecosystem to serve a higher purpose of saving lives.

Staying ahead in the game was critical as lives were at stake. It was no longer numbers; these were faces and names we recognized and had real connections with.

Just as the storm has started to pass, we look back at all we learned and lost. We chin up to the neo-normal and draw out the crisscross for a brand-new beginning, once again preempting the twists and turns the new plot of a hybrid work environment will bring. With WFH and remote working as a popular global trend, we are confronted with making bets on the next moves.

Let's see who crosses first!

About the Author

Sahil Nayar, Senior Associate Director – HR at KPMG, is a HR professional whose forte is building an employer brand that helps attract and leverage relevant talent.

Self-care: No Longer An Option

When you start caring for yourself, caring for others would be so much more effective. The best version of yourself largely depends on how you treat yourself.

BY **JAYDEEP DAS**

COVID-19 imposed repeated lockdowns and confinement in the containment zone deprived us from ordering anything beyond essentials on e-commerce platforms. Without realising that the services have resumed, I was surprised to receive a package delivered to me addressed in my wife's name. *"Someone has sent you a gift?"* She asked, *"Really?"* Then with excitement, she looked at the label only to discover that it was something that she had ordered for herself. *"I guess I'm the only one who loves me,"* she teasingly quipped.

Beyond the Transitory Amusement

Beyond the transitory amusement, the need for loving our own self began to take a deeper significance and beyond the momentary impact of such gifts. The domestic chores due to Work From Home led many of us to try different things never tried in the past. Cooking, sharing significant experiences with family etc. made us more active in household chores. Humorous instances of male colleagues dying to be in the office and writing applications to their supervisors also did the rounds. As we unravel the humour, the practicalities involved came to the fore. Those who considered 'official work'

as their 'life' found themselves challenged. We as HR leaders possibly supported our struggling staff in the new work arrangement.

However, I am unsure if it has helped us in the aspects of self-care. It is not always easy to love oneself. Self-pity, Self-condemnation, Self-discounting can be miserable and needs as much attention as does the bitterness felt toward another person. At times, we do not treat ourselves as a well-wisher of self. While we always expect to be treated better by others, let us pause to think if we are treating ourselves any better? With the changing meaning of life, it is high time to pay attention to these facets. If you can love yourself, you are already on much stronger ground.

One of the best things we can do for our future is to learn to be kind to ourselves. Research affirms that choosing to dwell on the negative is unhealthy. Giving back to our organisation or society mandates that we invest in ourselves; as the saying goes, *a healed man can only heal others.*

A man goes to a specialist doctor and complains that he experiences pain irrespective of what is being touched by him.

You gotta nourish to flourish

Instead of treating him to a shot or giving him a few pills like a general physician, the specialist advises a complete scan. The scan showed a broken finger. Let me confess, this was on the lighter side!

Self-care is the Best Care

However, let us not ignore the morals involved, since we, at times, behave in a similar fashion. When we leave our emotional, social, physical, financial, spiritual bruises unattended, we compromise on our mental as also our physical health. How can we envisage a "well workforce" if we are not "well" ourselves? We may be pure in our intent but we are needed to remain aligned as well.

> "How can we envisage a "well workforce" if we are not "well" ourselves? We may be pure in our intent but we are needed to remain aligned as well."

The very familiar commandment 'love your neighbour as you love yourself" has the principle of self-care encompassed within. It means that before you care for others, you must have a healthy sense of self-love or self-care. When you start caring for yourself, caring for others would be so much more effective. The best version of yourself largely depends on how you treat yourself.

It is encouraging to read how organisations have been managing uncompromised work deliveries. And one is positive that as you are

reading this you will be nodding your head in affirmation and remembering your employees. Given the extraordinary circumstances where life has witnessed a harsher reality, personally and closely, it certainly mandates us to take care of ourselves too. Are we feeding ourselves with the required goodness? Taking time for yourself is not a bad thing, rather it is the opposite. Not only does rest enable our bodies to recharge it also allows our mind and spirit to reconnect with the inner self. Take sleep seriously, so that you do not slip into burnout.

What Holds You Back from Self-care?

In our own life experiences, we know our limitations and the realities that others do not. It is also true that we have the potential to deal with those aspects of our lives. There are things that you can change and there are things that you cannot change. Whenever you compare with other people, you are tempted and tend to develop feelings of inferiority and it challenges your self-acceptance. Remember, comparison is the thief of joy.

Why You Should Care for Yourself?

Well firstly, this is an investment that cannot be outsourced. It will be unrealistic to expect someone else to fill the shoes. Secondly, if you do not care for yourself, as leaders, how can we ask people under us to take care of themselves?

How do You Commit to Self-care?

You need to acknowledge and accept that you are what you are. Practising gratitude as our attitude is a strong antidote to deal with the negative vibes. Thank the

Almighty for things that did not happen alongside all the things that happened.

What are the Possible Self-care Movements?

Keep staring at something that is big and provokes you to appreciate the goodness. It can be a sky decked up with shades of clouds; it can be watching nature's beauty rather than watching the increasingly unhelpful and negative news. In addition, doing something beyond the usual is a sure shot boost. Be creative, innovate things, you are surely more than your current self is.

When was the Last Time You did Something Exclusively for Yourself?

Pick up a hobby that refreshes you. It can be nurturing a plant, doing interiors, decluttering your surroundings, warding off the irritants and I can tell you that any good hobby can be a means of joy, peace, and healing.

Practising a different kind of mindfulness can also reduce your anxiety levels. Enjoy some music, play with your children, support your spouse and cultivate a habit of catching people doing the near right things. I know that these things are not rocket science, but the fact is that we still find ourselves challenged to practice these things in our lives. Support yourself with kind thoughts, affirming words, and self-empowering actions.

We need to learn to pay attention to our body's signals and the emotional state of our being to the demands we place on ourselves. Yes, there are seasons that require extra time and energy, but even in those trying times do not compromise on self-care. If you repetitively ignore your body's signals, work without breaks, live on junk food, and run on caffeine you are closer to burnout. Knowing your 'speed limit' allows you to know when it is time to rest, refuel, rejuvenate and reengineer life to restore your energy and soul. It may be the way you have treated your bodies thus far that makes you believe your healthiest days are behind you. The good news is that there is hope and scope. Taking care of yourself is not selfish, it is good stewardship.

> **"Knowing your 'speed limit' allows you to know when it is time to rest, refuel, rejuvenate and reengineer life to restore your energy and soul."**

Let me say that work and life can no longer be viewed through different lenses. Work is an inherent part of life and vice-versa - it all depends on how you work out your life. Remember this, self-care is no longer an option. Take care! **H C**

About the Author

Jaydeep Das is International Head – People & Culture, Children Believe, a part of ChildFund Alliance that works globally in over 60 countries to empower children. Prior to this, he has provided his leadership to leading INGOs like ChildFund International as Director HR, Administration & IT & WorldVision besides other Corporates at a senior level. Jaydeep has been helping organisations to augment impact through people, purpose, programmes and processes by strategic transformational interventions.

Looking Into The Kaleidoscope: Making Succession Planning Successful

When a successor steps into a kaleidoscopic succession planning experience, they feel closer to their boundaryless potential.

BY **NIKITA PANCHAL**

"Life is like an ever-shifting kaleidoscope: a slight change and all patterns alter." — Sharon Salzberg

The above quote holds profound meaning. Every time we turn a kaleidoscope, it shows a different set of patterns with different colours, and so does our life. Our behaviours and actions shape events we might not have anticipated.

While I was collecting my thoughts on putting together a "successful framework for succession planning" at our organisation, my daughter walked in with her kaleidoscope, and that's when I realised what a succession planning experience should look like. Succession planning is an art – it involves the interweaving of various experiences, wisdom, expertise, and perceptions of both the incumbent and the successor. Our role as an organisation is to garner the best from this intersection and channelise it towards a successful outcome.

The pandemic has thrown an unprecedented spotlight on succession planning, with many organisations awakening to the sudden disruptions in their normal ways of functioning. In a race to brace themselves in this situation, many organisations have begun to view succession planning as a goalpost to be reached or as a means to an end. After drawing out an elaborate succession plan, most organisations tend to keep it aside and consider their job done once the successor is identified, wishing that the transition will materialise smoothly when the time comes. However, such a fragmented approach ignores the holistic impact of succession.

In reality, succession planning is a continuously evolving journey. It needs to be regularly reviewed for it to re-align with changing organisation dynamics and individual aspirations, with a future perspective ingrained in the process. It's like looking into a kaleidoscope in which a slight turn produces a different pattern. A succession planning process cannot be designed for a perfect fit for the transition. As I called out earlier, it is an art that must consider both subjective elements of human behaviour and perception and the objective approach of providing a structured framework to align with the organisational needs.

Looking into the Kaleidoscope

There are many reasons to develop a robust succession plan: talent risk mitigation, planning for critical

vacancies, creating space and growth opportunities for key talent, and so forth. Given its manifold benefits, organisations must start looking at the succession planning process closely.

For organisations that are starting, planning for succession is understandably daunting, considering the anxiety, concerns, and disruptions it might cause across various levels of employees. However, certain key elements to succession planning can help make this process easier and set it up for success. They are outlined below:

1. Identification of roles for succession planning
2. Creation of success profiles
3. Identification of successors
4. Assessing for talent readiness and fitment
5. Designing the development journey
6. Managing the final transition

instance, (N-1) roles that are next in line to the C-suite, critical roles for the organisation, or niche roles with a high risk of talent attrition or retirement. It is beneficial to have a set of criteria to identify these roles, which could then be revisited regularly.

Creation of Success Profiles

After you've identified the roles for which you need to find successors, the next step is to define success behaviours for these roles. To effectively evaluate successors, it is important to articulate key competencies, experience, and exposure required to succeed in a role. While creating a success profile, there is a natural tendency to get caught in a web of perception bias and design it for the role holder rather than the role. This is a good opportunity to review the success profile with multiple stakeholders and create space

complex at higher levels and needs careful consideration. While you evaluate homegrown talent, it is also imperative to carry out an external benchmarking exercise for an effective trade-off evaluation for a Build or Buy decision, allowing for an unbiased review of internal talent. Due consideration must also be given to the decision triggers on timelines, for instance, role holders due for retirement soon.
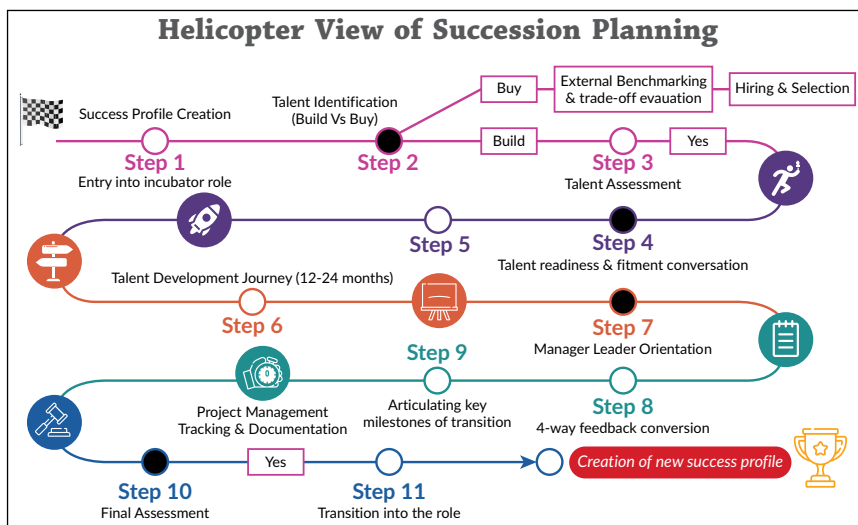
Assessing for Talent Readiness and Fitment

At this stage, the identified pool of successors is put through a series of assessments – 360-degree, role fitment, psychometric, etc. – based on the success profiles for the role. To establish shared accountability and ensure an objective evaluation of successors, it's a good practice to form a governing body or council involving senior business leaders from across the organisation. This council could become the main decision-making authority for critical points along the journey.

Designing the Development Journey

This is the most crucial part of the entire journey, often not given the attention it deserves. It is vital to have a clear and agile development and transition plan to groom the successors and a set-up mechanism to review it in regular periods to ensure alignment with the strategic priorities of the business.

Post-talent readiness assessment, the 4E framework (*Education, Experience, Exposure and Ecosystem*) provides an easy reference to create a holistic transition impact and deep dive on the focus areas for potential successors to align expectations and customise their development journey.

- **Education:** Based on the focus areas, identify the knowledge capabilities to be built and

Helicopter View of Succession Planning

Success Profile Creation — **Step 1** — Entry into incubator role

Talent Identification (Build Vs Buy) — **Step 2**

Buy → External Benchmarking & trade-off evauation → Hiring & Selection

Build → **Step 3** — Talent Assessment → Yes

Step 4 — Talent readiness & fitment conversation

Step 5

Talent Development Journey (12-24 months) — **Step 6**

Step 7 — Manager Leader Orientation

Step 9 — Articulating key milestones of transition

Step 8 — 4-way feedback conversion

Project Management Tracking & Documentation

Step 10 — Final Assessment → Yes → **Step 11** — Transition into the role → *Creation of new success profile*

Identification of Roles for Succession Planning

While C-suite is a priority, it is also essential to think beyond it to ensure a steady talent pipeline at all levels. You need to identify the roles for which you would want to invest in succession planning, for

to bring in a fresh approach, and reconfigure the profile from a future perspective.

Identification of Successors

This is an essential step in the process, which can get quite

possible coaching interventions required. An external coach or a seasoned business leader can be brought in to mentor the participant throughout the journey.

- **Experience:** Decide on the necessary experience required for the role. Before the actual transition, it would be a good idea to create an incubator role for the successor post-discussion with the current incumbent. A portion of the responsibilities can be co-held or transferred to the successor to help them understand the actual potential for performance in the role. Herb Henkel's framework (2*2*2*5), which states that a leader should experience at least two businesses, two geographies, two functions and five stages of a business cycle, can also be a good reference point for framing the right experience for senior leaders.

- **Exposure:** Providing the right exposure, bringing in an outside-in perspective, giving access to forum memberships and re-aligning accountabilities

and responsibilities to create space to learn in the new role are also crucial in enabling the participant.

- **Ecosystem:** For a successful transition, it is imperative to create support systems by redefining norms or compensation structures that help garner stakeholder and management support.

Managing the Final Transition

The final part of the succession planning journey, the transition itself, is a delicate experience to manage. On the one hand, the current incumbent goes through mixed emotions of letting go and creating space for the successor; on the other hand, the successor tries to step into the new role carrying a weight of expectations and legacy left behind by the previous role holder. It is also the time for the final evaluation of the successor to decide whether they are indeed the right fit for the role. Hence, the transition plan should feature an appropriate time for the incumbent-successor orientation and panel evaluation of the successor before they move into the new role,

paving the way for the creation of a new success profile. Thus, the journey continues.

Conclusion

Though it may seem formidable at first, it is important to institutionalise succession planning to build a healthy organisation and ensure a strong talent pipeline. Featuring the factors mentioned above would help ease the process to a large extent. While the pandemic has evoked a strong response to succession planning in many organisations, I hope they cash in on this momentum and design the journey with an eye to the future. When a successor steps into a kaleidoscopic succession planning experience, they feel closer to their boundaryless potential. **H C**

About the Author

Nikita Panchal is a global leader with over 18 years of experience in organisation development, talent management, diversity & inclusion, and creating future-ready organisations. She has worked for TATA Asset Management and Motilal Oswal Securities and is currently associated with ACG Worldwide as Global Head – OD, Talent Management & Development, D&I.

Can Remote Working Foster Organisational DEI?

As organisations realise that remote working could actually enhance employee productivity, they have also cited that it could be a boon in disguise for fostering organisational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

BY **DR SUBHRA PATTNAIK, SUGANDHA SINGH** AND **SAHIL SHARMA**

> **"While navigating this pandemic, the focus of bringing back people to HR is growing. Organisations are realising the need to foster compassion and belongingness as people battle through gloomy and lonely times."**

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been referred to as a "landscape scale crisis" that forced the world to stay indoors and explore newer methods of work and life that came about as the 'new normal'. It introduced disruptive changes that left us with little choice but to adapt faster than ever before. One of the biggest changes of these times has been the widely adopted practise of remote working or work-from-home that saw a sudden surge in the virtual workforce across the globe. Organisations have acknowledged remote working to be a reality. As Parekh, the CEO of Infosys, says, *"Work-from-Home is here to stay"*.

Deloitte's Annual Readiness Report 2020 states that at least one-third employees in the Asia Pacific will continue working from home even after the pandemic ends or vaccine is administered. As organisations realise that remote working could actually enhance employee productivity, they have also cited that it could be a boon in disguise for fostering organisational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). While navigating this pandemic, the focus of bringing back people to HR is growing. Organisations are realising the need to foster compassion and belongingness as people battle through gloomy and lonely times.

Thus, organisational DEI has assumed greater salience than ever today. DEI is not a new concept and has been the focus of organisations across the globe for a while now. Harvard Business Review has stated that diverse organisations show at least 19% higher revenues than their counterparts. Creating a diverse workforce is not the challenge. The real challenge lies in providing equity and inclusion to diversity. Sarah McKensey, Head of Executive Search, Global Corporate Functions & Asia Pacific Commercial, Johnson and Johnson, has said, *"When we provide*

from-home", says Sushmita Pattnaik, Senior HR Manager, Codaemon Softwares, a Pune-based mid-sized IT firm.

How does remote working foster organisational 'Compassion'?

As per a 2021 Mckinsey Report, advancing equality for women at the workplace can contribute 12 trillion dollars to the global economy by 2025. However, this can materialise only if leaking pipelines for female talent are plugged. The high attrition rate of female workers in their late 20s and early 30s is attributed to marriage and relocating with the husband or maternal responsibilities. Most women are unable to join back work even after maternity leave as child care does not really end in a few weeks. However, remote working prevents women from dropping out of their jobs for these reasons, thereby lowering female attrition significantly. Those mothers who left their job previously for child care are now reapplying for jobs, given that it can now be managed from home. As per an article in Business Standard, 38% women prefer working from home as it allows them the flexibility to manage work and family better.

A remote working environment can also be more compassionate for differently-abled people who are not comfortable at the workplace due to lack of proper infrastructure like ramps at the right places or lifts with brail scripts or proper transport arrangements to work (especially in India). Though companies like Google or PwC work towards inclusivity by providing sources to these employees, such companies are far and few. Even in these companies, there are challenges of inclusion of such employees amongst colleagues due to lack of awareness and sensitisation of other employees while dealing with a

our undivided attention to talent and create an easy environment for them, they perform at their best."

Does remote working provide such an environment to foster DEI? Let us look at some aspects of this where remote working could actually prove to be a catalyst for enhanced organisations DEI through the 3 C Model – Connect, Compassion, and Culture.

How does Remote Working Help Organisations 'Connect'?

Organisations like Nagarro have been able to attract diverse candidates across geographies by reaching out to a wider talent pool by advertising *"Work from anywhere"*. The option of remote working makes recruitment flexible and dissolves geographical barriers while sourcing a talent pool. Earlier, distance or geographical barriers filtered out many potential candidates owing to long distances or relocation. For instance, a common

trend for a tier-II city candidate was to relocate to a metro where the effective income was reduced due to the higher cost of living and a compromise on the quality of life. Individuals with ageing parents or children also found it difficult to relocate or travel long distances. With remote working, such challenges could be easily addressed.

"Companies can build diverse teams with the power of global mobility. DEI creates engaged work cultures and drives the kind of innovation that makes companies more competitive", says Peggy Smith, CEO and President, Worldwide ERC, a nonprofit that promotes global mobility. As per a McKinsey study, ethnically diverse companies are likely to perform 35% better and gender-diverse companies are likely to perform 15% better than their counterparts. Sourcing women candidates has become a lot easier by providing flexibility of remote working to them. *"Many women prefer us just because we allow them to work-*

> **Remote working creates a more equal and flexible culture by preventing the formation of strong social groups. It gives equal opportunity for all voices to be heard and employees to show case their talent and potential.**

differently abled co-worker. With the ability to work from home in their own setup, these employees do not have to worry about perceived social barriers or micro-aggression from co-workers at the workplace. Hence, they would be more motivated to join mainstream work and would continue working for a longer period.

Similarly, the inclusion of the LGBTQ community has always been a grey area in the context of Corporate India. Though there have been recent initiatives by employers like Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) to hire LGBTQ employees, the problem of equity and inclusion at the workplace persisted. Work-From-Home can provide a comfortable space for these employees to operate and showcase their talent to the organisation and earn respect from co-workers, without facing an apathetic society.

How does remote working build an inclusive organisational 'Culture?

A Physical workspace does provide opportunities for employees to bond closely and generate rich social capital. However, it also leads to the formation of strong social groups based on region or language that, at times, enhances office politics. Such strong social groups can dominate official decision making, thereby leading to exclusion of other employees from organisational processes since their voices are left unheard. Hence, after a point of time, these employees withdraw from organisational processes. This could inhibit creativity and innovation in the organisation. Remote working creates a more equal and flexible culture by preventing the formation of strong social groups. It gives equal opportunity for all voices to be heard and employees to show case their talent and potential.

Similarly, surveys say that introvert employees are shining in remote working as they find it extremely comfortable to express themselves through different modes of communication available in an online meeting. For example, a reticent employee could type his views in the chatbox in a Zoom call in case he finds it difficult to air his views while the more active members are busy discussing. Various features work to increase the beauty of online meetings and provide introverts with better means of communication. Mita Mallick, Head of diversity and inclusion, Unilever, has stated in the New York Times that she found it difficult to even get in a word during an online meeting. Sensitising employees on online meeting etiquettes and explaining the rules of the meetings will help overcome this barrier.

Remote working is gradually creating a culture where organisations are moving beyond 'culture fit' to 'culture add' and start recruiting diverse talent who could add on to the perspective gap in a particular organisation. **HC**

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IKEA India, Tata STRIVE Collaborate To Create Employability And Entrepreneurship Opportunities

BY **ANUSHRUTI SINGH**

IKEA India (part of Ingka Group) and Tata Community Initiatives Trust (TCIT) - Tata STRIVE have collaborated to create employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth.

The partnership aims to develop 'workplace-ready' young professionals through knowledge acquisition, skill development and behaviour development through short-term courses. These courses will be focused on job roles of interior design support and assembly of furniture.

In this pilot project, youths from Mumbai will be trained at state-of-the-art infrastructure skill development in Airoli (Navi Mumbai).

IKEA India and TCIT- Tata STRIVE will bring together their respective expertise to train, and develop assemblers, kitchen and wardrobe installers through a course duration which spans across 7 weeks. The state-of-the-art infrastructure skill development centre will help to impart practical knowledge and hands on experience to the students.

The program also offers accreditation of course by respective sector skill council ensuring national recognition to all the trainees. ■

Licious Rolls Out Its First-Ever ESOP Buyback Option Worth Rs 30 Crore

BY **ANUSHRUTI SINGH**

Licious has launched its maiden Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) monetization option for its employees.

With this buyback event, for the first time ever, the blue collared workforce along with other eligible employees, will be able to monetise their ESOPs.

The buyback option worth INR 30 crore will benefit close to 600 employees, providing meaningful and real time wealth creation opportunities.

Abhay Hanjura and Vivek Gupta, Co-Founders, Licious said, "Over the last 6 years, Licious has been responsible for resurrecting the animal protein category and creating one of the most inspirational brands of our times. This journey would never have been possible without the dedication, support & expertise of the team. Licians (employees) are a force to reckon with! They have stood against all odds to create India's largest D2C food brand."

"We have always believed in providing employees collective ownership of the organisation's destiny. All our policies reflect that. The ESOP program enables this core belief. Earlier this year, we issued grants to more than 1100 employees, recognising their contribution to the company. And now it is time for us to enable the monetisation process", he added. ■

Hero Electric Unveils 'Hero Care' Program For Employees

BY **ANUSHRUTI SINGH**

Hero Electric has introduced Hero Care, a flexible benefits policy for its employees that takes care of their and their family's hopes, dreams, and aspirations at various milestones of life.

The program will cover every employee who has completed a minimum of 2 years in the company.

Under Hero Care, employees between the age groups of 20-25 years will be entitled to education loans and scholarships to pursue higher education based on performance. They will also be offered Flexi timings during exams and short term company sponsored courses.

It will provide opportunities to spouses of employees getting full time/part-time employment in the company and on priority vehicle loans apart from existing benefits of Flexi hours for 3 months and additional leaves.

The program will further provide low interest loans for school admissions, organise get togethers for children of the same age group, family holiday vouchers to ensure they get to spend time with family and experience a new city every year.

The program will not only provide scholarships and loans for meritorious children to pursue a course of their choice, Hero Care will also give offer paid internships and support them in skill enhancement and job search so they are placed in the best institutions

It will help employees who retire at Hero Electric to kick start their second innings by getting them inducted into a prestigious Ex-Hero Club to avail benefits of Annual Heath check-ups for upto 5 years. Such employees will also get opportunities to consult and mentor at other organisations through Hero. ■

The Relevance Of Attendance & Holidays

Today, when it comes to HR policies, hybrid culture and remote working, it gets us back to the drawing board. These create an employee experience, and to an extent, define the culture of the organisation.

BY **ABHA NAIR**

> **"The virtual world and the lack of social interaction and real human connect and in-person conversation has transformed us into machines, sans any emotion and empathy since person-person contact has been thrown out of the window."**

Today, when it comes to HR policies, hybrid culture and remote working, it gets us back to the drawing board. These create an employee experience, and to an extent, define the culture of the organisation.

There is a need to ask the right questions. When we are evolving in terms of the way we do business, we need to evolve in the most critical space i.e. *"People space"*. Earlier, employers claimed with some pride, *'the most critical Asset walk in and out of my Work Place every day'*. Now, these Assets work from the *'Work Space'* of their choice (home/office/co-space), depending on the profile they are entrusted with, and thereby, rendering greater justice to their health, family and overall wellbeing. This ensures that they remain more productive and focused.

- In such a scenario, does attendance play a role anymore?
- What is the importance of an attendance policy in this *'Work Space productivity-driven culture'*?

The Clock-Watchers culture

The 'clock-watchers culture' may hardly be relevant in the corporate arena today since daily/weekly/monthly task sheet closures that are aided by innovation and special projects may rule and define real work. The Attendance policy requires a paradigm shift. And the emphasis must be more on giving employees 'Holidays' as he/she is working 24/7, without weekend breaks, due to this shift in Hybrid digital working. Since the office is *'omnipresent'* and one can access the office on any device and from anywhere, be it the phone, laptop, iPad etc., one neither has *'your space'* nor *'your holiday'* any longer. The virtual world and the lack of social interaction and real human connect and in-person conversation has transformed us into machines, sans any emotion and empathy since person-person contact has been thrown out of the window.

However, for people working in factories or a production-process environment in any domain, where touch and feel and physical presence and timeline orientation is a must, 'Attendance policy' remains critical and crucial for sustenance and existence. Therefore, workforce Analytics and profile mapping become imperative for policy construct and organisational redesign.

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs states 5 stages of needs for a human being i.e. Physiological Needs, Safety Needs, Love & belonging Need, Need to Fame & Self-esteem and finally the Need for Self-actualisation.

Baby boomers and Gen X experienced the 'Industrial age' of 'Ji huzoori', working hard to fulfil the Physiological needs with limited choices at hand. This is when the system of attendance was instituted.

Gen Y experienced the Information age and were concentrating for a better lifestyle and worked their heart out for fame and Self-esteem. The 'Digital Attendance policy' did matter, but not to an extent, where the creation of co-working spaces like the Café Coffee day and Starbucks were born, it showcased the 'IT culture' considered 'Cool'.

We now live in the Digital/ Social Virtual culture, where one seeks Self-Actualisation, wanting and working to find their 'True North'. With the pandemic taking over our lives, Gen X, Y & Z are all sitting on the same plane where Health, Safety and Mental well-being has gained prominence. Here, real work and productivity are more important than the ticking of the clock! The time at which one comes and leaves from work is hardly relevant. The only thing that matters is what one has delivered and the level of productivity and efficiency, and therefore, one works 24/7 and on all the days of the week.

HR professionals need to think of the means to provide breaks to employees for rejuvenation, and be in the 'No Work Space' so that they come back bright and happy bursting with ideas for some great innovation at work!

Culture, Capability, Credibility and Contribution

Culture, Capability, Credibility and Contribution are the key to the success of any organisation in any given phase. Workplace bonding, the main motive of 'fun pills' or emotional engagements in the physical

> **"HR professionals need to think of the means to provide breaks to employees for rejuvenation, and be in the 'No Work Space' so that they come back bright and happy bursting with ideas...!"**

workplace was the main flavour. And this demonstrated the Culture of the organisation and set the equilibrium between hierarchies, age groups, gender or class while celebrating a birthday or a festival or even playing a sport etc. This has taken a massive hit in the Hybrid mode of work.

Creating hobby community clubs like 'Human Library' for book lovers, 'Company Chefs club' for those interested in culinary pursuits, 'Fit-athone club' for physical fitness freaks, 'Tune Buddy club' for music lovers, and of course, a wonderful relaxed time with one's family and loved ones with 'No-work mind space'

and 'forced leave' are few Real breaks/ holidays which we need to plan, propagate and introduce through our policy and culture framework. This enhances the value proposition for the employees in this Hybrid culture.

In this ecosystem, the workplace design and architecture as also the policies need to be changed, since they impact innovation and productivity directly. This phase is not for the weak-hearted with the traditional mindset of 9.00 am to 5.00 pm work definitions. Here, both the employee and employer both need to be agile, vulnerable to learning and change. 'Dynamic' is the word and 'Flex' is what we need to imbibe in this ever-changing world. We give incredible 'power of choice' we get incredible 'power of creativity & Innovation' which creates Value for the organisation and that is the need of the hour! 🅗🅒

About the Author

Abha Nair heads the HR function as VP–People at Spykar Lifestyles Pvt Ltd. She is an accomplished HR professional with 18 years plus experience in large conglomerates such as the Hinduja Group (IndusInd Bank), TNT India Ltd., Essar Group etc. Abha has strong credentials in defining HR strategy, identifying key operational HR processes and tools for Talent Management, Talent Acquisition, Engagement and organisational culture.

Enabling Employee Performance In The New Normal

The fundamentals of performance management are evolving to become more flexible, continuous, and development-oriented.

BY **PRADYUMNA PANDEY**

> **"To effectively engage teams focused on common goals, companies can develop team KPIs rather than individual KPIs."**

The year 2020/2021 has brought a new dawn upon us with experiences that no one could have envisaged. Individuals, families, and businesses are embracing change and adapting with resilience and agility in these uncertain times. The pandemic has compelled us to reimagine the workplace and transform from an in-office to a remote/hybrid workforce. For companies across sectors, it became important to determine whether they fit into the new work-from-home paradigm, as opposed to the conventional work-in-office approach, and secure business continuity while migrating from a rigid in-office setup to a full/partial remote work arrangement.

An organisation's success is the outcome of employee growth and productivity. Thus, performance management strategy is of paramount importance for companies. As we juggle numerous work and life responsibilities, we have the opportunity to reflect on our challenges as well as the tools and resources at our disposal. Organisations have created new playbooks to drive performance amongst employees and ensure their productivity and success.

Employee Engagement

Organisations should lay out effective employee engagement techniques targeted at engaging employees at all levels. A highly engaged employee is more productive and committed to the organisation. Employees must have access to options like remote working and flexible office timings. Prioritising career growth and professional development, implementing corporate wellness programs (including mental health), and providing a stress-free work environment need to be on management's agenda for employee engagement.

Transparency

In today's world, organisations should foster an environment of trust by being authentic, positive and transparent. Companies must instill a culture of empathy and support more than ever before. It is heartening to see how companies across sectors have reassured employees and taken great strides to boost their morale.

Team Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

To drive performance within employees, companies can develop

> **"Organisations have created new playbooks to drive performance amongst employees and ensure their productivity and success."**

team KPIs rather than individual KPIs. This could help in the effective engagement of teams focused on common goals and bring in a more agile pattern to reprioritise competencies.

Rewards and Recognition (R&R)

Who doesn't like being rewarded and recognised for their efforts? Rewards are vital in uplifting morale and driving performance. With changing times, R&R programs must be redesigned with new-age terms and scenarios. Millennial-friendly benefits such as tech upgrades, paid fitness memberships, and vacation time are now gaining popularity. The need is to offer unique, flexible benefits and perks, as well as the right kind of HR tech integrations with the R&R process. Many companies are now adopting point-based reward systems, giving employees more freedom over their benefits and perks.

Work-Life Balance in the Work-From-Home Era

With employees managing both home and office from one place – maintaining their work-life balance should be imperative for organisations. Institutions should also pave the way to provide the desired infrastructure required for employees

to function remotely. This, in turn, reassures employees and gives them the confidence to deliver.

Learning and Development

Learning is a never-ending journey. Given the dynamics we see today, it has become vital to learn and impart new need-of-the-hour skills. Digitisation being the talk of the town, organisations must adopt new methods, such as mobile learning, microlearning, free online learning courses, gamification, personalised learning experiences for training and development, thereby engaging and encouraging employees to deliver better.

Efficiency in Work Delivery

Organisations need to focus on creating clear roadmaps for technology, automation, and tools to drive the efficiency of processes, thus facilitating a more effective way for employees to perform and deliver.

Reduced Complexity

Taking steps towards reducing complexity in the operating model result in faster decisions and enable better employee performance. Therefore, targeting more clarity of roles through organisation redesign

is something that needs to be on the agenda.

Empowerment and Enablement

The pandemic has cemented that employees thrive when given the freedom to work. Companies must do away with one-way evaluations in favour of more frequent one-on-one meetings between managers and employees, set clear expectations, and create a superior employee experience by moving away from traditional performance programs.

The fundamentals of performance management are evolving to become more flexible, continuous, and development-oriented. As we look ahead to the future, now is a good time to reflect on the lessons and resolve to build on them. **HC**

About the Author

Pradyumna Pandey is an HR professional with over 30 years of experience. He is the CHRO of Mother Dairy and is responsible for providing strategic leadership by articulating Human Resource needs and plans and focusing on organisational capability building, people development, performance management, employee communication, policy development, legal compliances, industrial relations, and nurturing, shaping and sustaining the company's overall culture strategy.

The Enigma Of Networking

There is ample literature highlighting the pros of networking. However, there is an equally prominent voice that disdains networking and views it as an inauthentic means of furthering one's selfish interests.

BY **AMIT GUPTA**

> **"The need of the hour is to think with one's heart and unwind the boundaries of rigid mindsets. Nothing is perfect, and neither is networking."**

We five, friends from those days when we were all unemployed, had decided to meet. The venue was the residence of one of the five. The gathering was to include families – ten adults and ten children.

I had to travel five hours to reach the venue. I was very excited about this get-together (my first one since the onslaught of COVID-19), and my wife was also looking forward to it as a welcome change. However, both of my children (teenagers) were not very enthused and joined us reluctantly.

As we all gathered, the *gupshup* was very diverse – ranging from the college stories, professional issues, national development, Corona, diameters of the belly, family matters and of course, a lot of satire and humour.

I noticed the children had started their own conversations, and some of them were also discussing matters like the new education policy with some of the uncles and aunts.

The return journey was more interesting because it was apparent that our teenagers had also enjoyed the visit to some extent.

My son asked me, "How do you retain contact with so many people after several years?"

"That is one's nature of making friends," I said. "And that is what is called networking," I added after a pause.

"Oh! Networking. Isn't it something that people resort to for their petty personal or professional interests?" he retorted promptly.

Of late, networking is emerging as a strong leadership trait and is being promoted as one of the paths to minimise gender biases. However, since the world is full of both introverts and extroverts, the approach towards networking is also ambivalent.

My son's response and apparent aversion reminded me of an HBR article titled "Learn to Love Networking", wherein the authors had brought out that many people found professional networking distasteful and that it made them feel dirty. The authors had asked about 300 employed persons to write about times when they had engaged either in professional networking for career advancement or social networking to make friends. After that, to ascertain their subconscious preferences, the people were asked to complete word fragments, such as W _ _ H, S H _ _ E R, and S _ _ P.

Most of the participants who recalled professional networking wrote WASH, SHOWER, and SOAP — words associated with cleanliness. In contrast, the participants who recalled

social networking wrote neutral words such as WISH, SHAKER, and STEP. The inference was that most participants viewed networking to enhance their careers as dirty and distinctly negative – perhaps, a feeling of moral contamination.

My son, studying at a professional institute, was apparently influenced by a similar thought.

There is ample literature highlighting the pros of networking, and this space may not be utilised for the eulogy. However, there is an equally prominent voice that disdains networking and views it as an inauthentic means of furthering one's selfish interests. The need of the hour is to think with one's heart and unwind the boundaries of rigid mindsets. Nothing is perfect, and neither is networking, but the expanding notions and awareness of networking in the professional and social arena must be acknowledged.

As we moved back closer to home, we counted a few friends my wife and I had in different geographies. They belonged to various associations – school, college,

workplace, professional contacts. The beauty of having so many friends – or in communications terminology, 'a network' – was underscored by my son as he recalled meeting many of them and the richness of his several engaging conversations with some uncles and aunts. He cited a few examples where exchanges with different people had opened new vistas of learning for him.

I felt that the dirtiness of networking was perhaps withering out of my child's mind.

We were barely a few minutes away from our home when he got a call from his friend who lived in West India and was coming to North India for a break. They discussed the travel itinerary and planned a few things.

He ended the call and shared some details with us. I asked him where his friend would stay. He said that his friend was searching for a place for 2–3 days.

My wife, in her characteristic Punjabi hospitality, said to our son, "Why don't you invite him to stay with us?"

A sense of scepticism shook my son. His eyes were asking a question: "Is it possible?" However, the smile on his face was unparalleled, though masked under his disbelief and hesitation.

I looked into my wife's gleaming eyes and seconded her invitation.

After a moment of silence, our son picked up his phone to call his friend back.

I accelerated with enthusiasm, much relieved that the dirtiness had disappeared, for that moment, at least.

About the Author

Amit Gupta is a senior HR Executive with Indian Oil Corporation Limited and has vast experience in Sales and Human Resource Development. He is a passionate writer, storyteller, and public speaker. He pens real-life stories regularly under the title *Myriad Musings* for The Times of India. He also contributes to leading HR magazines. Amit can be contacted on amitonearth@gmail.com.

A Human Leader

*Leaders who shed their "superhuman" image and focus on being more human will be the most effective in times to come, says **Amit Sharma**, CHRO, Volvo Group India. Being human is about having the humility to accept the fact that we do not have all the answers. Amit does not consider himself an expert in all areas but knows when to lead from the front, when to give charge to someone else, and when to be in the gallery. In this exclusive interview, Amit shares how leaders can thrive amid disruptions and become nimble enough to take advantage of any opportunity that arises. He also reveals some of his pivotal "aha!" moments that solidified his leadership foundation.*

BY **ANKITA SHARMA**

Q **After a year of quick and bold pivots, how are you navigating the second year of the pandemic at Volvo India? What are some new challenges you're experiencing?**

A The first COVID-19 wave caught all of us by surprise, but its spread was more gradual. However, the end of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 also brought hope, as the curve almost flattened, and the vaccines were ready to be rolled out. There was a sense of (false) exuberance that we had won against the pandemic, leading to complacency in people. As we lowered our guard, the second wave hit us with full vengeance. The curve was sudden and steep! The arrangements made during the first wave were found to be inadequate. It underscored the significance of "staying on your toes rather than your heels" once more.

This situation also stressed the need of embracing the *"power of AND over the tyranny of OR"*. If the first COVID-19 wave was about prioritising employee safety over business, the second wave was about prioritising employee safety, business continuity and contribution to community. The biggest challenge was managing and balancing this trio, which looked conflicting on the face of it. The business was recovering, but employees

were scared. Where employees were resilient, the community around them was in despair. The news reports all around were not uplifting, but the SENSEX was moving up!

In such a scenario, it was a key challenge to maintain employee morale and ensure customer success (which is one of our core values). Supporting employees in their hour of need, especially when they were not in an office location but at their respective hometowns in the country's far-flung areas, was a significant challenge. Helping our employees deal with their personal losses due to the highly virulent second wave was a challenge. The ability to meet customer requirements around after-sales support, financing, and supplier quality, without impacting our employees' safety was also a challenge. Maintaining steady production at our factories in order to ensure that the customer was not losing due to product unavailability was a challenge. Running the operations with headcount constraints was also a big challenge.

We overcame all these challenges and ensured that we supported employees and their respective families with medical assistance, hospital admissions, vaccinations,

Up-Close and Personal

Q **While early job experiences may not be the most challenging or monetarily rewarding, they certainly are formative. Could you give us an account of an unforgettable experience at your first corporate job?**

A The workforce of Indian Oil represents the regional diversity of our country. While I was managing the Performance Management function in the refinery, especially for the blue-collared workforce, I realised that there's so much thought diversity in our country based on the region people come from. People from different regions and backgrounds had different aspirations. There is no one truth, but various truths depending upon the context and background of each person and the situation.

My first job opened me to varied perspectives and made me a more inclusive professional who accepts and understands differing viewpoints.

Q **Have you had an 'aha!' moment when you learned and experienced something so profound that it changed you forever?**

A When I joined Indian Oil, my first job was as a Shift In-charge of the Time Office of the refinery. I was like, "Is this why I did my MBA for and joined this organisation – to come in shifts, manage the attendance and payroll of workers, organise employee transport and supervise the canteen in off general shift hours?" I wanted roles in recruitment or Comp & Ben or Industrial Relations. So I spoke to the Head of HR of the refinery, who listened patiently and advised me to remain in this role for at least a year before discussing my reflections on the work and exploring alternative opportunities.

I came back disappointed and reconciled to the situation. In the next year, I managed various heated employee relations situations arising from payroll errors, timekeeping machines not working, delayed or contaminated canteen food, worker protests, etc.

During my year-end conversation with the Head of HR, we reflected on everything that happened that year. He enumerated various instances where he saw me managing employee relations effectively. And that was an "aha" moment for me!

I realised how much those experiences developed me as an HR professional. I cultivated the knack of understanding the situation, diffusing a potential crisis, managing employees with sensitivity while ensuring no compromise on organisational interests, keeping attention to detail and ensuring flawlessness in Comp & Ben matters. I also understood the importance of building relationships with employees and leveraging such networks to tide over situations. All of that in just one year, just by being the Shift In-charge of the Time Office!

This experience taught me the importance of every role and the learning opportunities that come from "seemingly not so glamorous" HR roles, the importance of being connected with employees, the importance of ensuring that we do our basics right, since unless hygiene factors are taken care of well, no amount of "seemingly strategic" HR work will cut the ice with employees. Credibility needs to be built by delivering on the basics – that's the foundation.

Q **What's something you are doing or want to do in 2021 that you've never done before?**

A This pandemic has shown us the value of human connections, personal time, hobbies, mental health, and family and friends. In 2021, I have decided to focus on pursuing certain hobbies which got left behind in this daily rigmarole of life.

Q **What's your most significant learning from the pandemic experience?**

A The most significant thing I learnt from the pandemic is the phenomenal power of human resilience. It amazed me how quickly we all adapted to the new digital world, new ways of working, and the world of virtual connects, overcame all odds – personal as well as professional – and still delivered with the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness.

The pandemic has further reinforced my belief that there is nothing impossible once the human spirit embraces something and resolves to achieve it!

Q **What would we be surprised to learn about you?**

A You will always find me having a lighter moment with the team whenever I am not at my desk. It's such a connecting and stress-busting process!

additional support leaves, enhanced insurance options, food delivery, etc. We supported the community by setting up multiple COVID care centres, vaccination programmes, distribution of sanitisers and PPE kits to COVID warriors, etc. We met our customers' expectations through seamless support and deliveries.

It was all about dealing with such challenges by embracing the "Power of AND" and Volvo Group employees staying connected, leading the way, and coping with unpredictable situations sustainably and effectively.

Q **While many aspects of leadership are timeless, what new skills and mindsets will be needed to lead effectively into the future when "knowing all the answers" is no longer something we can expect of (or require of) modern leaders?**

A You've touched on a very pertinent point in the realm of leadership principles. These are indeed times in which no leader can claim to know the answers to the current problems. In our cultural context, the leader is put on a higher pedestal and is expected to "know all" and "guide all", a situation that directly impacts his self-esteem. The question running in his (and I am deliberately using a masculine pronoun here as this mindset comes from the masculine approach) mind is, "How can I show myself as an ignoramus in front of my followers?"

Hence the need for moving away from the *Superman* image of a leader to a more human leader – who has not only the vision, passion, commitment and ability to lead but also the humility to accept that "I don't have all the answers; I am open to being led by someone

A Workday in the Life of a CHRO

Q **Do you have a morning routine that helps you get a good start on your workday?**

A My commute to work in the morning allows me to catch up on reading articles that I downloaded the day before. It provides a curious and absorbing start to the day and primes the mind to be open to varied opinions and new learnings.

Q **How do you typically unwind after work?**

A Evenings are the time to listen to ghazals and Sufi songs while spending time with family. Nothing relaxes me like soulful music and the company of my loved ones.

Q **What's your favourite indulgence when you need a break from work?**

A During the day, it's walking up to our team bay and cracking a joke or two or having a quick coffee table chat about amusing things in the organisation.

From a day's (or more) break perspective, I love going on a long drive into nature and spending quality time with family and friends over there.

Q **What are some productivity hacks you use to make the most of your workday?**

A Adequate sleep to ensure freshness of mind and body, meeting-free days for focused conceptual work, light music playing in the background, organising the mailbox in terms of "To" and "CC" emails, disabling email notifications, using the power of Positive No, ensuring that accountability is put where it needs to be are some of my productivity hacks.

who has better knowledge on the way towards the resolution of the current issue", who has the ability to leverage networks, who is not hierarchical, and who knows when to lead from the front and when to lead as a shepherd.

In an uncertain future, successful leaders will be those who know when to be in the ring and when to be on the sides. Leaders who will be the most effective in the times to come will be those who engage the entire organisation and don't come across as authoritative experts; those who shed the entrenched ways of working to find win-win solutions through better stakeholder engagement; those who can shift mindsets and bring in a new way of thinking through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits and loyalties; and those who are ready to learn.

In a nutshell, leadership that is adaptive and flexes its style based on the situation is the future.

Q **How easy or difficult is it for people to work remotely or in a hybrid-remote setup at Volvo India? For the share of the workforce that can work from home (or from anywhere), do you see the office as a hub for accomplishing the kind of collaboration and creativity that cannot be achieved virtually?**

A COVID-19 has forced every business to review and rethink how they perform and from where. A higher level of flexibility is needed than ever before to prepare for the "new tomorrow" and increase the speed of transformation. The continuous war for talent challenges us to adopt new ways to enhance employee attraction and retention.

From the point of view of the future workplace, we need to balance two aspects: 'Being a Responsible Employer' and 'Being a Responsible Employee'. We have defined our Workplace Principles based on four imperatives:

- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Collaboration, Engagement, Openness & Growth
- Performance in relation to business needs and flexibility aspects
- Legal & compliance in local and global dimensions

Our workplace reflects that the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees is our top priority. We need to spark pride, collaboration and innovation with an attractive work atmosphere. Our work environment must enable continuous learning, growth, speed and agility. For us, performance, learning and achievements count, no matter where we work. All employees have different responsibilities, and each business is empowered to decide where they work from; hence, managers decide where work is performed in dialogue with the employees.

A significant proportion of our work is best done on work premises and with colleagues working together. For example, Product Development is primarily a team effort. Innovation, teamwork and lifelong learning are best facilitated by colleagues being in the same place.

Colleagues value the social aspects and benefits of an attractive company work environment while retaining the flexibility of working remotely. It is feasible to operate more flexibly than historically. With new digital collaboration tools and with clear expectations on work tasks, we see more remote/hybrid working after the pandemic than was the norm before. Having a compelling workplace proposition will become even more important in attracting and retaining talent.

Q With many organisations pursuing audacious and ambitious digital transformations, there will be a lot of pressure on HR to speed up culture change and quickly shift people's mindsets in embracing the digital future of work. How can HR approach this challenge?

A Culture change is a larger leadership responsibility rather than just HR's. CHRO can program manage it, but leadership must be provided by all, especially the CEO. For an effective culture change initiative, the first and foremost step is to listen to the stakeholders — employees, customers, managers, suppliers, external partners, etc. Seek their views on what's making them *glad*, *sad*, and *mad* and their suggested way forward. Be present as a complete leadership team to acknowledge their perspectives. Basis the feedback, articulate the behaviours to be adopted, identify specific projects to build the desired culture, and ensure high leadership focus. It's a long time-taking process, but the organisation needs

to travel that path to get the change ingrained in its DNA.

When it comes to embracing the digital future, some of the areas HR needs to focus on are:

- Understanding that digital and digitisation are different.
- Adopting an agile way of working. Ensuring consistent collaboration with stakeholders and continuous improvement at every stage.
- Design thinking with the end customer at the centre of it. Ultimately all our internal processes are designed to help employees achieve customer success.
- Ensuring a deep understanding of data analytics and its interpretation.
- Creating transparency in the processes and systems.
- Adopting digital tools in managing the processes.
- Ensuring that digital is embraced not just from a process perspective but also an outcome perspective. **HC**

Rapid Fire

- **Describe the year 2020 in 3 words:** Perfect VUCA example
- **Describe the year 2021 in 3 words:** Hope, Resilience, Humanity
- **What's the one thing you miss most about pre-pandemic times?**
  I miss meeting people over coffee and lunch in the office. The insights gained from such conversations are priceless.
- **Complete these sentences:**
  - ➢ **If not an HR, I would have been …** a branding and communications specialist.
  - ➢ **I strongly believe in …** the power of relationships.
  - ➢ **I'm grateful for …** having some great mentors in my professional life.
  - ➢ **I wish …** everyone realises their dream.
- **What comes to your mind when you hear these words?**
  - ➢ **Resilience:** The human spirit
  - ➢ **Curiosity:** Questioning every answer
  - ➢ **The future of work:** Hybrid, flexible, agile and digital but with a heart

7 Talent Development Lessons From Tokyo Olympics

Organisations preparing themselves for high performance must invest in the infrastructure so that people who are motivated by policy have ways and means to improve their skill sets.

BY **HARJEET KHANDUJA**

You might be thinking, what does Tokyo have to do with talent management? Tokyo truly has nothing to do with talent management in particular. However, the Olympics have something to do with it. India has won 35 medals in the past 120 years at the Olympics. Of these, 20% came from the Tokyo Olympics. Do you not wonder how India got 7 medals all at once? Was it luck? Or is there a concerted effort behind it?

In this case, India could not hire talent from outside, so the only option was to identify the talent and develop it. This was not a game of luck. If you see it from the eyes of HR, you will appreciate the factors that made it happen. The beauty is that you can replicate the same kind of things in your organisation for superior business results.

So, how does it work?

There are 7 principles that were instrumental in these superior results. Although this is the story of India, it started from Haryana. In the past 12 years, Haryana has won 50% of Olympic medals for India. Haryana has given a baseline to some of these principles of talent development.

1. Aspirational Goal Setting

In 2000, the Chief Minister of Haryana announced an award of 1 crore to anyone who brings gold in the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Nobody won. Yet, the word spread. That was when it all started, with an aspiration of superior results.

Similarly, organisations need someone in leadership to articulate expectations and set aspirational goals for people. That is the first step towards talent development. If people want to touch the sky, only then will they begin thinking about flying.

2. Commitment

Aspiration is key, but it is not enough. Aspiration needs to be supported by organisation level commitment. The commitment is not merely a feeling. There is a method to commitment.

a. Policy

Haryana formalised its aspiration by creating a sports and physical fitness policy, which ensured that it is not a mere initiative. On similar lines, the central government created a programme called Target Olympics Podium Scheme (TOPS) in 2014 which supported the high performers to achieve success.

Organisations serious about talent development need to have a documented policy for the same. This can be called by various names like Performance Management Policy, Career Planning Policy, Long Term Incentive Policy, Talent Management Policy, Leadership Development policy. Written down policies show commitment.

b. Resources

A Policy does not merely mean jotting lines in English with vision and values. It must have an action plan by committing resources. What will people get? Who will showcase the ability to be

> **"Organisations need someone in leadership to articulate expectations and set aspirational goals for people. That is the first step towards talent development. If people want to touch the sky, only then will they begin thinking about flying."**

part of the policy? Haryana has a policy, which is a 64-page document, that states the reward for winning each medal. Organisations need to set a budget aside to induce superior performance.

c. Implementation

The proof of the pudding is when you can eat it. When people see that the policy delivers what it states, that is when the real momentum gets built. Implementation gives credibility to commitment.

3. Alignment

Haryana had a problem of youth unemployment and increased influence of drugs. By promoting sports, they were able to solve the problem. At the same time, sports became an economic driver of the state. Talent Development initiatives need to tie into business objectives for sustainability. This ensures that

a change in leadership does not dilute the programme.

4. Infrastructure

Gopichand opened a badminton academy in 2008 in Hyderabad. India got 3 badminton Olympic medals. Abhinav Bindra got a shooting range for himself. India got an Olympic gold medal. Creating infrastructure creates high performers. India has systematically invested in creating sports infrastructure, and today, we have more than 100 sports facilities with international standards.

Organisations preparing themselves for high performance must invest in the infrastructure so that people who are motivated by policy have ways and means to improve their skill sets.

5. Culture

The best part of the story is how Haryana went through the journey of skill development which can be adopted by corporates.

a. Competitions

Skill development happens when there are competitions. Haryana created competitions at every level. Even panchayats can fund sports events. Other states lag because athletes do not get enough opportunities to compete.

There is a need for creating platforms where people can compete with each other to develop critical skills required for business. This is like creating internal hackathons for solving management problems.

b. Public Involvement

Haryana started with physical literacy for all. They also introduced the education of children and parents on the basics of various sports. The increased awareness

> **"Talent Development initiatives need to tie into business objectives for sustainability. This ensures that a change in leadership does not dilute the programme."**

created an interest among the public in sports, which gave audiences to the platforms.

At times, organisations undermine the importance of creating awareness for skill sets important for their success. Educating everyone in the organisation creates an ecosystem and positive energy which improves holistic development of critical skill sets.

c. **Collaboration**

The Haryana sports authority did not do everything on their own. One of their mantras was collaboration. They collaborated with education, health and recreation sectors, taking the help of community organisations, service providers and corporates.

In the same manner, organisations must not hesitate in collaborating with multiple businesses, functions, industry-specific forums, vendors, partners who can help in sharpening the skills of the talent.

d. **Incentive for Learning**

Haryana had a policy that if a child meets the basic criteria of a sport and the child commits itself to the sport, then they are given a scholarship. This incentive for learning gave better results in terms of focused talent development and public involvement. Competition, rewards and recognition further strengthened the skill development.

Introducing incentives for learning a skill that is important for the organisation is one of the best ways of creating a culture of learning. Monetary incentive works. At the same time, skill competitions, challenging assignments, public appreciation and recognition give the desired boost to learn at a faster pace.

6. Coaching

The best of the best from various states are selected through the Target Olympics Podium Scheme (TOPS). TOPS does the same job for these selected sportsmen. It provides the infrastructure, facilities, support staff, participation fee for competition, and a financial incentive for learning. Apart from these, it provides world class coaches - the way Neeraj Chopra had a German coach, Sindhu had a south Korean coach and the Indian hockey team had an Australian coach.

The best of the best who have a chance of winning for you must get world class coaching apart from all the other things. This is something which must not be compromised.

7. Patience

TOPS was started in 2014. Haryana started its efforts in 2000. We are able to see the results in 2021. These are systematic investments. They take time to materialise. That is why elements like commitment, culture, and business alignment play a critical role in the success of such programs. These elements ensure that talent development is not dependent on one person. It goes on.

About the Author

Harjeet Khanduja is an international speaker, author, poet, influencer, inventor and an HR leader. He is currently working as the Senior Vice President HR at Reliance Jio. He has 2 published patents and his book "Nothing About Business" is an Amazon bestseller. Harjeet has been a LinkedIn Power Profile, TEDx speaker, Guest Faculty at IIM Ahmedabad, Board Member of Federation of World Academics and Global Digital Ambassador. Harjeet features in Top 100 Global Thought Leaders 2021.

Harnessing The Power Of Informal Networks

BY **SWARNA SUDHA SELVARAJ**

Global organisations have quoted communication as one of their major challenges for many years now. There have been instances where many employees are unaware of an organisation's vision because of the lack of efficacy in organisational communication.

"Messages travel faster than light," my grandmother often said. She even used to demonstrate it to my siblings and me. She used to spill a secret message at night, wanting it to be heard by any one of our family members and prove that most members in our large joint family knew it before sunrise. It didn't matter if the message was even true; it would travel very fast from ear to ear. What my grandmother said is now applicable beyond a family or a community to the digital world.

Hierarchical vs. Networked Communication:

Here are some interesting facts published on media usage as of August 2020 by Statista.com:

- There are 41,666,667 messages per minute shared by WhatsApp users.
- 1,388,889 voice/video calls are made per minute across the globe.

- 347,222 stories per minute are posted by Instagram users.
- 150,000 messages per minute are shared by Facebook users.

In her book *Digital Body Language*, Erica Dhawan brings out a beautiful point on the new age of listening and empathy by mentioning that "reading carefully is the new listening, and writing clearly is the new empathy". People with common interests tend to listen to each other more carefully and empathise more naturally. There are many informal and formal networks in organisations that naturally have strong communication. Younger generations, which occupy large parts of the hybrid workforce, tend to be connected outside their office networks as well as through common interests.

The erstwhile communication of top-down hierarchies could easily be replaced by networked communication if organisations put strategies in place.

Informal Networks and Influencers

A McKinsey study revealed that only 26% of transformation initiatives succeed in organisations amongst the many launched. They also mentioned that one common success factor in transformations was that "change is driven through empowerment, not mandated from the top." This is more applicable in hybrid work environments.

Networks in organisations are effective influencing channels to exercise any change, and this is understood well by some global companies that use their networks as change agents. The best example is how organisations bring together their Inclusion and Diversity networks not just to drive the message on D&I but also on any organisational communication.

Sometimes organisational charts and formal relationships might mask the influential informal networks and influencers. These networks and influencers build a culture that actually gets work done, especially in knowledge industries that are increasingly becoming collaborative.

News and Views

Between countries or between teams, what best works is a relationship. We have examples of countries who have been in a tug of war because the leaders of the countries were not on good terms, and the same two countries have been allies when the leaders of the countries were on good terms.

A view expressed gets a million hits in less than an hour, and real news takes 10x more time to reach the same number of people. The communication style and the group that accepts the style make the person sharing the views very successful and, at times, authentic. The same things happen in organisations through networks and influencers. When views travel faster than news, why not use them effectively in organisations? **HC**

About the Author

Swarna Sudha Selvaraj is the Head of Talent Development for TCS Europe, UK & Ireland. She is a vibrant HR leader with over 18 years of work experience gained from association with TCS and Murugappa Group.

An Insider Or An Outsider?

BY **DR DEEPIKA PANDITA**

Tom Conner is the CEO of Chrysalis Ltd. Founded in 1901, it is one of the world's leading conglomerate companies headquartered in the USA. The company has its presence in 12 countries through 20 offices. Tom has been with Chrysalis for the last two decades and has witnessed its growth from a national player to an international player. Such a development has been possible by acquiring several global companies and product line extensions. After serving for many years, Tom has decided to step down as the CEO, and this has come about as a matter of concern for the board of directors and stakeholders. A difference of opinion has arisen among the board members over choosing the new CEO - an insider or an outsider?

The board members came up with their valid set of opinions. The members supporting an internal candidate believed that an insider is well acquainted with the business and understands the organisation's working culture, ethics, and business strategies that have been in vogue for many years and have led to the company's success. However, the other members stated that an external candidate would bring in fresh and innovative ideas that were well tested and proven in his previous organisation, and would eventually add up to the existing set of skills of the company.

It was a pleasant Sunday evening when Tom, 55, and his wife, Rita, 48, were sitting in their backyard, enjoying their tea. Tom was very particular about maintaining a balanced work-life balance. Due to Tom's ill health, he was advised by his doctor to take a few days off from work until the cause of his illness could be diagnosed. As they were sipping tea, the telephone rang. Rita grabbed the phone. At the other end was Lily, the doctor's secretary. They spoke for a few minutes before hanging up. Just when everything was going smoothly, there was some bad news. Lily had called to let Rita know that the doctor wants Tom to sincerely look after his health and take a break from his career.

Rita was quiet for a few minutes as she tried to process the news before passing over the information to Tom. It was a big jolt for Tom, but losing no time, he immediately called for an urgent board meeting to convey the message to the board members. The following few weeks were challenging for the company, and finally, the board came to a consensus to appoint a new CEO for Chrysalis.

However, the big question ahead of the board and Tom was to decide the best fit as the CEO of the company. While the committee arrived at a consensus to appoint a new CEO, Tom named Clifford as his choice for the same. Most of the board members were sceptical about Clifford, since the board thought that as an outsider he was hardly aware of the company's core values and culture. But according to Tom, Clifford had the potential to provide a new direction to the company, and could, therefore, run a big organisation like Chrysalis.

It had been a month since the board met, and with each passing day, the pressure on the board started to build. But the question of who will be the next CEO of Chrysalis Ltd. remained to be an unsolved puzzle, and Tom was needed to act fast before a sense of insecurity threatened the company's existence.

Meanwhile, Tom was in constant touch with Laura, the CHRO of Chrysalis Ltd, sharing his views on Clifford. After graduating in Human Resource Management, Laura pursued her Master of Science in Human Resource Management from the University of California. She had an industry experience of 20 years and had been with Chrysalis for the past ten years.

Clifford Francis, 47, Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Matrix Solutions.

Background:

- **Strategic community banking leader** recognised for sweeping improvements to efficiency, products development, and marketing, with oversight of $860M in deposits and loans, plus a $140M investment portfolio.
- **Trusted Board advisor** conceptualising and creating revenue opportunities by leveraging the "Main Street Bank" theme. Champion for significant expansion, including six new branches.
- **Area of Expertise:** Strategic Planning, Leadership development, market Research, Risk Mitigation, Market Research, Change Management, Board Collaboration
- **Increased profit** ($4.6M decrease in the cost of funds)-Even after economic pressures and declining rates.

Education:

- **University of Nebraska** – South Graduate School of Banking, Kearney, Nebraska
- **Executive Program Diploma** – American Bankers Association, Dickinson College, Newark, New Jersey

- **Master of Business Administration (MBA),** University Of Phoenix, Mesa, Arizona

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

While Tom was busy scrutinising his candidate, the board, in the meeting that followed, came up with their choice of a candidate who was none other than Henry Turner, one of the firm's executive committee members.

Henry Turner, 58, Executive Vice President, ChrysalisLtd.

Background:

- Technical Customer Service Manager (TCSM), Federal Systems Group.
- New Product Development, Service Product Leader for the Quadra and the PowerBook lines.
- Public Sector Marketing Manager 1993 - 1996 (4 years)
- International Product Marketing at Compuware August 1996 - December 1999 (3 years five months)
- Executive Director and Co-Founder at Chrysalis Ltd. December 2010 – Present

Education:

Emory University BA, History, 1980 - 1984 Activities and Societies: Editor of the Emory Wheel, AEPI (Alpha Epsilon Pi) fraternity San Jose State University MBA, Marketing (Apple Mgmt. Masters Pgm), 1991 - 1993 Activities and Societies: Apple Mgmt. Masters Pgm

Honours and Awards: Featured member in the monthly NASE Self-Informed magazine.

Today's issue, however, was volatile. While Tom typically approached problems in a focused, business-like way, succession planning, Tom had found, was likely to set off a tirade. 🅗🅒

About the Author

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Analysis By **Ravi Mishra**

It is surprising that a company like Chrysalis, a leading conglomerate in the world, does not have a succession plan in place or a list on watch as part of shadow sourcing if they do not have an internal candidate with potential. Though the situation of letting go of Tom was hardly anticipated, the pipeline at the top must always be planned, especially when the current incumbent has already completed two decades.

Sometimes, the board of directors do not bother over the importance of looking towards topline management staff as long as the company is doing well. But in the case of Chrysalis, they should have thought of a new leadership option even if Tom has not decided to leave the company. He had been at the helm of affairs for a long time and the time was appropriate to give the company a new direction. And this may be to expand in a new horizon, diversification, transformation etc. Here Laura's role as the CHRO of the company is crucial to let the board take note of a future plan to replace the CEO. It must be part of a strategy meeting at the top along with the board in the area of Human Resources.

Even after the board learnt that Tom is quitting, it did not utilise the critical time in terms of high-level discussions and brainstorming about his replacement. And it appears that the CHRO was working with Tom in isolation to find a replacement. Both were considering the external candidate Clifford Francis seriously, and in the meantime, the board of directors had declared Henry Turner as the new CEO. It is apparent that neither Laura, the CHRO, nor Tom was involved in this decision. As a business case, it would have been better if both were involved and feedback on Henry should have been invited and deliberated. It is important to learn as to why Tom failed to consider recommending Henry's

candidature to Laura or the Board. At 58, Henry's age is not on his side, since he is older than Tom by three years. Internal candidates generally have certain advantages over external candidates in terms of understanding the culture, system and the current business strategy to continue. This is normally known as smooth sailing.

Only time can prove the merit of the board's decision to install Henry as a new CEO. However, if we evaluate Clifford's candidature, he appears to be a better choice and could have been considered. This must have helped in bringing a new perspective in the company when businesses are not only changing their strategies, but shifting to a new horizon and practice. And, it was rather a good opportunity for the company to experiment, albeit with a little risk.

Tom did not appreciate the casual approach of the board in the manner in which the final decision had been taken over his replacement without involving him.

Sometimes, the comfort of staying on the same path for a long time is a risky choice as we recall the Kodak Moment or the fall of Nokia from grace to grave. This also reflects the fact about how HR is still failing to make their presence in critical decisions of their domain. Are we still considering the role of HR as a ritual limiting its wings to Personnel and Administration? **H C**

About the Author

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

Analysis By **Kalpana Bansal**

This case study brings back memories of a similar mandate with a large industrial client, who needed to appoint a CEO successor. In the running were two internal candidates and one external candidate. I was faced with the tough job of putting them through structured unbiased assessments and providing a recommendation to the Board. And while the assessments were fun, the decision-making process most certainly was not! In yet another incident, I had to recommend internal promotes to senior positions in a leading bank, and the challenges were similar to the one I had in the earlier case.

One of the most important learnings I had while undertaking these mandates is that human behaviour is more about 'shades of grey' than black and white. While many things could be measured, assessed, and evidenced, the 'right fit' for the role may not always be the most suitable or the best performing candidate. It was a tough lesson to learn, but one that has stood me in

good stead through other mandates and in my personal career choices.

Succession planning has always been about replacing a person whose purported value add to the role renders him as – valuable and rare. Often, the decision of finding a successor becomes more about finding an equivalent for the individual than about finding a fit for the role at hand, and therein lies the root of the challenge. Individual traits are unique and divergent, and similar professional trajectories of incumbents may not guarantee similar business outcomes. Outgoing role holders such as Tom in this case, often like to believe that they can influence the choice of candidate for the future. However, it is not often that they have a good understanding of what that future entails.

Leaders tend to identify successors who are like themselves. Their choices may tend to be limited by their personal interactions with the candidate, Clifford, in this case, and his perception of comfort or familiarity. Often, Boards and other managers may have a different perspective of the situation.

A perpetual dilemma in successor identification is the difficulty in being able to predict future scenarios. In the uncertain, disruptive world that we have today, five and ten-year horizons are extremely ambiguous and open to constant change. Succession is not about past performance alone; it is about potential. Even the best measure of potential, at best, tends to be hazy. Standing in the here and now, it would be difficult to predict the better choice - Clifford or Henry. Either of them would bring their own

personalities and life experiences to the table, and an organisation that is transforming would require them to rapidly adjust to the changes around them.

At the senior levels of leadership, it is more about integrity and resilience than it is about skills and expertise.

- Can the leader inspire in others a sense of purpose?
- Would he be able to steer the organisations through uncertain waters?
- Would she/he inspire others to do their best and create innovation and value for all involved?

There are no right or wrong answers to such questions, and the best that organisations can do is to make a conscious judgment call given the circumstances they are able to foresee. A resounding reminder that caution is key to such decisions is the Cyrus Mistry debacle in the TATA group. In a nutshell, leadership succession is as much about minimising the odds that things could go wrong, rather than maximising the chances that things could go right.

HC

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.

D&I: A Thought, An Agenda, Or An Emotion?

The essence of D&I is measured by the sustainability of everything we do to promote it and translate our vision into reality.

BY **MEENAKSHREE NANDA**

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) are the buzzwords and top priorities for most organisations. From establishing strategic pillars to specific interventions, we see a lot of great work done by professionals on the D&I front. However, we should all ask ourselves whether D&I is a thought that stems from a view of equality and freedom of expression, an agenda that has the potential to achieve critical business objectives or a deep emotion that unveils the layers of belongingness.

D&I focuses on the workforce mix in terms of key demographics, including gender, race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, educational background, experience, and so on.

Various initiatives that organisations take to enhance the D&I mix include hiring talent from different industries, geographical

backgrounds, qualifications, etc. There is also a massive focus on attracting more women, differently-abled resources, and the third gender to bring more diverse perspectives in handling business operations. After hiring, the next step is to onboard and nurture them by creating an ecosystem that supports a diverse workforce by honing people managers' mindsets to enable diversity in their teams and organisation, adopting the right inclusion practices and having requisite infrastructure pertaining to employees' health and hygiene needs.

Organisations are also focusing on building capabilities for their workforce to have diverse representation in senior management. Moreover, there is now a lot of diversity in roles that were previously not so diverse.

We also come across a lot of social media content about D&I Meets, Roundtable Talks with industry experts advocating D&I Best Practices at work and pledging to leverage more diversity within their organisations. However, the bigger question is whether D&I is just demographics, structured thoughts of business leaders or sets of activities around special occasions.

For me, D&I is an emotion, a sense of belongingness, an absence of unconscious bias, and a rendition of feelings in the workplace. Ambitious numbers, hiring targets, strategising

various meets, conducting focus group discussions, organising workshops, and creating awareness amongst all employees ensure that we are off to a good start. However, the essence of D&I is measured by the sustainability of everything we do to promote it and translate our vision into reality.

Here are a few ways to get the desired outcomes from your D&I strategy:

Leadership Buy-In

It is imperative to discuss the 'what' and 'how' aspects of attracting, building and retaining a diverse workforce in multiple forums for key stakeholders to see the value of the D&I proposition. When any initiative is pursued, leadership buy-in will have a ripple effect to ensure that everyone in the organisation is aligned with the larger intent.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and Forums

Every organisation should strive to have structured ERGs that include employees from different organisational levels, genders, departments, backgrounds, etc. These groups should meet consistently and hold forums to discuss new initiatives that can be implemented to strengthen D&I as an emotion. The best part of ERGs is the team itself, which represents the very essence of

> **"We should ask ourselves whether D&I is just demographics, structured thoughts of business leaders or sets of activities around special occasions."**

D&I, making conversations and idea-sharing more relatable, natural, and organic.

Outside-In Perspective

Internal team members should have regular discussions with colleagues from previous organisations and friends in different work streams so that external practices that have worked wonders can be customised and replicated with pride in your organisation. There could be a quarterly meeting with open interaction and a fluid agenda to encourage people to speak up and share their perspectives on how D&I could become an emotion.

Vision Board with Clear Goals

The most integral part of any strategic focus area is a vision board with S.M.A.R.T goals and defined timelines so that the year-on-year progress can be tracked and deviations discussed and worked on for course correction. For example, suppose you are planning to increase the gender diversity to Y% from the existing X%. In that case, it is important to ascertain the current vacancies, study the hiring trends of the past, analyse attrition, define clear channels of hiring, set targets for business leaders and hiring managers, and track those targets with set timelines (say, quarterly, bi-annually or annually).

Conclusion

Strengthening D&I has various pros, including opening up a world of opportunities for untapped talent, boosting productivity and employee engagement, fostering creativity and innovation, facilitating faster problem-solving, broadening the internal talent pool with diverse skill sets, and making the organisation an employer of choice. It is about time we infused the D&I focus into organisational DNA to improve the overall work culture and develop an intrinsic emotional bond with and among employees. **HC**

About the Author

Meenakshree Nanda is a diversified HR professional with 11 years of rich experience in various verticals of HR. She is currently working as a Senior HRBP at DP World. She holds a dual Masters in Human Resources & Labour Law and is a Certified Facilitator, Instructional Designer, Emotional Intelligence Practitioner, and HR Analytics Professional.

Developing First-Time Managers

Being the most productive team member and helping others become more productive are two entirely different things.

BY **SUSHMA BHALKIKAR**

Being the most productive team member and helping others become more productive are two entirely different things. An individual contributor can be an outstanding performer, but to also be a manager of an exceptional team, one needs to possess and exhibit a different set of skills.

As Charles Dickens wrote in *A Tale of Two Cities*, we seem to be living in "the best of times" and "the worst of times". Rapid, massive, and disruptive changes on the one hand, and a diverse, multigenerational workforce on the other with varying levels of expertise, are revolutionising the way we work. One such radical change is a younger workforce increasingly transitioning into managerial roles.

Studies indicate that millennials comprise 50% of the global workforce and are estimated to increase to 75% in the next five years. According to a recent survey, approximately 62% of millennials are moving into management roles and have direct reports. Moreover, many of them become managers in their 20s and early 30s.

When someone becomes a manager for the first time, they carry their first-hand knowledge and experience as a point of reference. Being a good manager is a skill rather than an entitlement, and if not oriented well, it could turn out to be disastrous not only for the individual but also for the team and the organisation.

Do organisations have a process to identify first-time managers?

Excellent individual performance is a significant criterion for promotion. As a result, when someone is elevated to a role with direct reports, their capability to lead a team is seldom examined or assessed. It is presumed that in addition to the enhanced role, one will also manage the team. Hence, the initial few months of being a first-time manager is a unique experience coupled with excitement and confusion.

The transition of a manager from a junior or middle-level position to a leadership role is taken seriously. Organisations typically have structured programs to assimilate the new leader into the role. A Learning Plan is developed after several initiatives like skip-level meetings with all stakeholders, 360-degree feedback, coaching and other tools.

However, first-time managers go unnoticed, especially when they are at a lower level in the hierarchy with only one or two direct reports. Without proper training, they are left on their own to understand the nuances of being a manager and the accountability to develop their direct reports.

HR's role in developing first-time managers

What got you here won't get you there; what got you promoted won't make you a great manager! HR and Business leaders have a collective responsibility of not only attracting and retaining talent, but also developing individuals so that they understand that knowledge is important, but it is okay not to be the smartest person on the team. When that happens, the cliché "people leave managers, not companies" no longer holds.

There should be a process to identify and induct first-time managers, followed by training, the majority of which should happen on the job with programs focusing on the following aspects:

1. Managing Self

You cannot manage other people unless you manage yourself first. —Peter Drucker

For first-time managers, the immediate shift in roles means developing empathy, managing emotions, guiding and coaching others, investing in people's growth, and anticipating challenges. Some skills are innate, some we gradually learn, and others need time and attention to develop. HR and Business leaders need to design programs that prepare employees for their new roles and help them build these capabilities.

Constant learning and a growth mindset mean different things when you do it for yourself versus when you do it to develop others. Goal clarity, adherence to timelines, being healthy, having humility and decisiveness are qualities that team members look for in managers. Acquiring and practising these skills is a long-term goal, not just for first-time managers but also for seasoned leaders. One should be open to learning and transforming by imbibing these qualities, not just for self-development but also to lead a successful team in all aspects.

2. Managing People

Simply put, managing people entails ensuring that everyone on the team is effective and engaged in their work. The route to achieve this is by focusing on others' performance development, as that is how managers are assessed.

The key differentiator that brings this effectiveness at work is giving timely and constructive feedback, which provides scope for independent decision-making, effective engagement, and conflict resolution. While doing all this, develop every team member and be better equipped to manage relationships.

Initially, it may be discomforting to give difficult feedback, step into the role of motivating and coaching others, and enhance engagement levels or develop listening skills that are a basis for communication. The entire approach towards becoming a manager requires a 180-degree shift in perspective – less of doing and offering solutions, and more of helping others in finding them; not 'managing people', but becoming the 'People's Manager'.

All this may not come easily, and that is precisely what HR can facilitate in the initial days – by providing tools and techniques to help first-time managers traverse smoothly into their new roles.

3. Managing Tasks

Managing tasks entails more than just the completion of work. Stretched goals, right delegation, collaboration and communication with agreed timelines and transparency in performance assessment are necessary skills for a manager to be effective in any task.

Knowing what not to do is also a vital trait. Most of the time, it is easy to get into the mode of doing or jump in to fix things. Effective delegation is a significant challenge for both first-time managers and seasoned leaders.

Understanding what to delegate, whom to delegate it to, and how much to delegate with clarity on expected outcomes is a niche skill that needs to be developed early in one's managerial journey.

A task-oriented manager works cross-functionally, creates a bridge between people and organisations, and is adept at decluttering the mess for impactful work. All this is a gradual and steady process for which an organisation should have structured programs to prepare first-time and other managers.

4. Managing Business

The fourth quadrant concerns knowing every aspect of the business— institution-building and having a holistic view of both the internal and external environments with a strategic orientation, as this will affect day-to-day operations. On a micro level, one needs to ensure that every team member is aligned to VGOS (Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Strategy) in order to foster a culture of transparency and vulnerable trust.

Conclusion

Developing the capability to do everything mentioned above is a huge responsibility, and HR leaders should prepare new managers for the transition so that they can eventually motivate their teams to give their best. A manager's ultimate success is when they know how to handle the strange catch-22 situation of pushing the team harder for results while being a good manager. **HC**

About the Author

Sushma Bhalkikar is currently heading the HR function for GMR Varalakshmi Foundation (GMRVF), a CSR arm of the GMR Group of companies. With more than two decades of multi-faceted experience, she has extensively worked in the areas of talent acquisition and management, compensation & benefits, L&D, policy formulation, etc.

Pay Parity Between Temporary And Permanent Employees

BY **K V SINGH**

Temporary employees employed by various government departments continue to struggle for recognition as permanent employees, though it is common knowledge that many such employees have put in their entire productive life in the service of the government. The struggle for recognition has less to do with job security and more to do with achieving pay parity and other benefits that permanent employees enjoy. For instance, one has to only visit a forest guest house, and you would note that many of the employees who have been working in the forest for decades are still 'temporary' and are paid abysmally low wages.

The principle of *'equal pay for equal work'* in a welfare state such as India cannot be ignored as it emanates from Article 14 of the Constitution. The state cannot discriminate between two employees as the State is the ultimate guardian for such rights vested in the constitution. Apart from this, pay parity has other benefits, as it helps to keep the morale of the employees high leading to higher productivity and efficiency.

The constitutional principle of *'equal pay for equal work'* has been upheld by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in *State of Punjab and Ors. v. Jagjit Singh and Ors*[1]. Herein, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has ruled that temporary employees performing similar duties and functions as discharged by permanent employees are entitled to wages at par with the permanent employees.

However, the devil is in the detail. The question is how to determine 'equal work' to be able to render 'equal pay', as the 'equal pay for equal work' implies and requires equal treatment for those who are similarly situated. How will one identify whether the temporary employees are working equally or at par with permanent employees? The difficulty was recognised by the Hon'ble Court. It is well settled that equal pay must depend upon the nature of the work done, and cannot be judged by the mere volume of work done; there may be qualitative differences as regards reliability and responsibility. The Functions may be the same, but the responsibilities and duties make a difference. There is no

1   AIR 2016 SC 5176

straight-jacket formula to apply in such cases, and also, the principle is not always easy to apply as there are inherent difficulties in comparing and evaluating the work done by different persons in different organisations. Thus, the differentiation in the pay scales of persons holding the same posts and performing similar work on the basis of difference in the degree of responsibility, reliability and confidentiality would be a valid differentiation.

It is to be kept in mind that the claim of equal pay for equal work is not a fundamental right vested in any employee though it is a constitutional goal to be achieved. The Punjab & Haryana High Court has analysed the question as to whether temporary employees (daily-wage employees, ad-hoc appointees, employees appointed on casual basis, contractual employees and the like) are entitled to the same wages as that of permanent employees, and if they discharge similar duties and responsibilities as that of permanent employees.

The Court, in *State of Punjab & Ors. v. Rajinder Singh & Ors[2]*, took the view that temporary employees would not be entitled to the minimum of the pay scale as was being paid to similarly placed permanent employees. However, the same question came up before the Supreme Court in the *State of Punjab and Ors. v. Jagjit Singh and Ors.*, wherein the Supreme Court observed that this issue called for a bird's eye view on the underlying ingredients which govern this principle for equal pay for equal

2   2009 (8) SLR733

work. The various observations made by the Supreme Court are of utmost importance, as the Supreme Court observed that not paying the same wages, despite the work being the same, is violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India and amounts to exploitation in a welfare state committed to a socialist pattern of society.

The right of equal wages claimed by temporary employees emerges, *inter alia*, from Article 39 of the Constitution. The claim for equal wages would be sustainable where an employee is required to discharge similar duties and responsibilities as permanent employees and the concerned employee possesses the qualifications prescribed for the particular post. In a claim for equal wages, the duration for which an employee remains or has remained engaged, the manner of selection/appointment etc. would be inconsequential, insofar as the applicability of the principle is concerned.

The classification of workers (as unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled), doing the same work, into different categories, for payment of wages at different rates is not tenable. Such an act of the employer would amount to exploitation and shall be arbitrary and discriminatory, and therefore, violative of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution. If daily-wage employees can establish that they are performing equal work of equal quality, and that all the other relevant factors are fulfilled, a direction by a court to pay such employees equal wages (from the date of filing the writ petition), would be justified.

The underlying principle behind all these observations is that an employee who is engaged for the same work cannot be paid less by the state than the other who performs the same duties and functions. This besides being demeaning and demoralising, affects the very foundation of human dignity. The Hon'ble Supreme Court observed that India being a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966, there is no escape from the obligations thereunder in view of the different provisions of the constitution. The principle of equal pay for equal work constitutes a clear and unambiguous right and is vested in every employee, whether temporary or permanent.

Thus, right to pay parity between temporary employees and permanent employees clearly exists. However, temporary or ad-hoc employees continue to be treated differentially, and it is fallacious to set such parameters which would deny the temporary employees their fruits of labour. The basic principle that an employee employed for the same work cannot be paid less than his counterparts cannot be done away with, certainly not by a welfare state. **HC**

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K V Singh is a Senior Partner at Kochhar & Co., one of the leading and largest law firms in India with offices at New Delhi, Gurgaon, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Dubai, Riyadh, Jeddah, Singapore, Tokyo and Atlanta (USA). The firm represents some of the largest multinational corporations from North America, Europe, Japan and India (many of which are Fortune 500 companies) in diverse areas of corporate and commercial laws.

Q&A

Q **"My company 'X' has decided to outsource one of its divisions to another company 'Y'. Consequently, it has offered me to join the transferee company. What are the remedies available to me if I join or do not join the transferee company?"**

A Section 25 FF of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 provides for Compensation to workmen in case of transfer of undertakings. Section 25FF is divided into two parts. The first part provides that in the case of a transfer of undertaking, every workman who has been in continuous service for not less than one year would be entitled to notice and compensation in accordance with Section 25F, i.e. he would be entitled to: (i) one month's notice in writing or wages in lieu thereof; (ii) compensation equivalent to fifteen (15) days' salary for every completed year of service or any part thereof in excess of six (6) months.

The second part of Section 25FF is a proviso which states that the aforesaid notice and compensation would not be required to be paid to the workman if the conditions specified in sub-clauses (a), (b) and (c) of Section 25FF are satisfied. In short, the notice and compensation requirements would not apply if the service of the workman is not interrupted by the transfer, the terms and conditions applicable to the workman after the transfer are not in any way less favourable to the workman and the continuity of service of the workman is maintained for the purposes of retrenchment compensation as specified in Section 25F.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court in Management of R.S. Madhoram and Sons Agencies (P) Ltd. vs. Workmen 1963 (5) SCR 377 has held that the ownership or management of the entire undertaking should be transferred before Section 25-FF comes into operation and a partial transfer does not trigger the requirements of Section 25FF. Nevertheless, a distinction has been carved out by the Hon'ble Court where an undertaking is running several industries or businesses which are distinct and separate.

In such cases, the Hon'ble Apex Court has held that the transfer of one distinct and separate business may involve the application of Section 25FF. However, even for the application of Section 25FF in such cases, the Hon'ble Court contemplated that distinct and separate businesses would normally be run on the basis that they are distinct and separate, employees would be separately employed in respect of all the said businesses and their terms and conditions of service may vary according to the character of the business in question. In such a case, the organisation of employment would indicate clearly the distinctive and separate character of the different businesses.

Therefore, if the employer changes and you are being transferred, the provisions of Section 25FF will apply only if ownership and management of an undertaking is transferred from the employer in relation to that undertaking to a new employer. As long as the provisions of Section 25FF are being complied with by the new employer, there is no material default. You will also not be eligible for compensation under Section 25FF if at this stage you voluntarily resign from your services.

Q **I am employed with a top consulting firm, ABC, in India and I am currently on probation. My work performance is satisfactory, and managers are happy with my work.**

However, I am on sabbatical leave with my previous employer, let us say XYZ. This was communicated to ABC at the time of hiring and I was offered the job for one year. Now, it appears that ABC has lost all paper trail of this, and is asking me to resign from XYZ in order to continue with ABC. I intend to not resign from XYZ. If ABC lets me go for this reason can we sue them for unjust termination (while I am on probation)?

A In the case of V.P Ahuja v. State of Punjab, AIR 2000 SC 1080, it was held by the Supreme Court of India that a probationer is also entitled to certain protection and his services cannot be terminated arbitrarily, nor can those services be terminated in a punitive manner without complying with the principles of natural justice. The order of termination was held to be stigmatic, and could not have been passed without holding a regular enquiry and giving an opportunity of hearing to the appellant. ABC consulting company can be sued for wrongful termination, as the order, if any, passed for terminating the employment may qualify as a stigmatic order if the same is passed without holding an enquiry and giving an opportunity to you, to be heard. Hence, any termination order that may be passed by the company would be arbitrary in nature and would defy the rule of natural justice in the absence of an enquiry.

Q We are an MNC dealing in pharmaceutical products based in Gurgaon. The Employee Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) had imposed a labour penalty on our company along with interest. We had requested the PF authorities to waive off the penalty, however, there has been no reply from their side. We want to know that if there is a way by which we can pay only the interest amount? Also, will the interest be charged on the interest amount till the time we clear off the interest payment?

A It is not possible to pay only the interest amount without paying the penalty amount as the challan generated by the EPFO is a consolidated one and cannot be bifurcated. While there is a provision to generate miscellaneous challans, it would not be possible to link/map the miscellaneous challan with the already generated challan (towards interest/penalty). Please note that when you pay the challan (penalty + interest), the EPFO portal would automatically distribute the interest in the PF accounts of individual employees (against their UANs).

This distribution would not be possible in case a miscellaneous challan is generated (as you do not know as to how much amount would be distributed into which account). Therefore, we are of the view that it may not be possible to pay only the interest amount. Further, please note that interest will not be charged on the interest amount after the date of payment of arrears by your company. In this regard, reference may be made to Section 7Q of the EPF Act, 1952 which states as under:

"The employer shall be liable to pay simple interest at the rate of twelve per cent per annum or at such higher rate as may be specified in the Scheme on any amount due from him under this Act from the date on which the amount has become so due till the date of its actual payment."

In the case of Kalanchipatti Primary Agricultural Cooperative Bank vs. The Assistant Provident Fund Commissioner, the Madras High Court had not imposed interest over the interest amount calculated in terms of Section 7Q and the Petitioner therein was required to remit only the initially calculated interest amount (under Section 7Q). Further, in Pawan Hans Ltd. vs. Aviation Karmchari Sanghatana, while the matter pertained to the applicability of the statute on Pawan Hans Limited, the Supreme Court had directed the company to pay simple interest @12% p.a. on the amount payable by it towards PF contribution for the past period as per Section 7Q and did not impose future interest till the date of payment of the said amount. **H C**

The Future Of Work

The first stage of the pandemic was about ensuring the work gets done. Having come to terms with the new normal, the question of culture-building has begun to surface.

BY **NIKHILESHWAR SINGH**

The world that was, 18 months ago, does not exist anymore. The Monday morning blues, the rush of morning office traffic, and the not so tasty office cafeteria food that you complained about are deeply missed. The new mutations and variations of COVID-19 that are apparently cropping up, make the erstwhile abnormal as the New Normal. Thanks to the digital revolution, mental proximity and social connections still persist despite the Covid-induced "social distancing".

The workplace that we spent one-third of our weekdays on, went through a never seen, never imagined transformation. I had never imagined that I will not set foot into my office for almost 18 months after having joined my new job, and it feels so normal! There are many others who have not had a change in the way they work. The bakers, the transporters, the sanitation workers, the health care workers and many others who have been instrumental in ensuring we remain supported during the pandemic, continued to stretch and deliver despite the risks they were exposed to.

Many of us continue to be in our virtual offices, working with virtual colleagues and clients.

- Where do we go from here?
- Will we ever go back to the normal ways of working?
- Will we continue to work from home?
- Will the companies adopt hybrid ways of working?

Having spoken to many of my peers in the industry, business leaders and colleagues, I feel it is an evolving situation.

Factors that Determine the Future Ways of Working

- **Nature of Industry/Workforce:** There will be jobs that need physical presence in the workspace to deliver an outcome. Most jobs in manufacturing, logistics etc. essentially require physical presence and will not offer the flexibility to be performed remotely. Knowledge workers, on the other hand, will be able to work remotely. The pandemic has "forced" firms to validate their assumptions, and in many cases, the results have been pleasantly surprising. Who would have expected a bank relationship manager to operate remotely?

- **Technology Adoption and Advancements:** It will not be an exaggeration to say that collaboration tools have been instrumental in running the world efficiently during the pandemic. The ways of working will continue to be impacted by these advancements and we may see even better collaboration tools/applications in the future.

- **Legislations/Legal framework:** Many IT/ITES professionals could not formally work from home in the past due to the regulations mandating physical presence in the tax-exempt IT parks/zones. There are state/country-specific labour laws that apply depending on their work locations. It gets even more complicated with international workers because the country-specific immigration laws come into effect. Most of these will need to be interpreted appropriately, simplified, and in many cases, changed to enable future flexible working models for firms.

- **The organisational vision of its culture:** This will play a big part in future ways of working. Some organisations may be extremely comfortable with distributed/remote teams while others may want to have employees meet with each other regularly. Both have their own advantages and drawbacks and may suit each organisation differently. Organisations will deploy the strategy that helps them define and build their workplace culture.

- **Cost will be a key decision driver:** Organisations have realised that they are able to deliver effective outcomes without getting employees to the office on a regular basis. The fear of failure in a remote working environment seems to have dissipated. This has created an opportunity for the firms to evaluate their real estate strategy. We are seeing firms give up real estate space to align better to their "future ways of

work "strategy. Add to this the reduced cost for employee travel/transport, cafeteria, stationary etc. and the advantages become even more pronounced. Optimisation of real-estate space and lower operating costs is inducing firms to adopt flexible working models.

> **"The fear of failure in a remote working environment seems to have dissipated. This has created an opportunity for the firms to evaluate their real estate strategy."**

Challenges Owing to the New Model

This new model, however, does have its challenges. In the past year, we have got used to distributed teams and remote working. We have, however, started seeing newer issues triggered by the remote work arrangements and must address them proactively:

- In a country like ours, with employees from diverse economic backgrounds, the location/city-specific infrastructure issues, not everyone is equally enabled to work from home. Smaller homes, internet connectivity issues, power cuts etc. make it extremely challenging for employees to be productive. Firms have begun supporting them by enabling Technology infrastructure support, ergonomic workstations, allowances etc. Proactive benefits and policy formulations around this aspect will help address current challenges.

- Being constrained in homes and social isolation has led to the physical and mental well-being issues. We are seeing increased asks/requests from employees to work from the office. We need to invest more time and effort in ensuring physical and mental wellbeing of employees. Healthcare tie-ups, insurance support, mental health sessions, counselling sessions with colleagues have seen an increased focus across organisations.

- Managerial capability building has become a big need for the future ways of work to be successful. Investment in building managers who can manage teams virtually and are able to create high performing teams will lead

to positive productivity and colleague engagement.

The first stage of the pandemic was about ensuring the work gets done. Having come to terms with the new normal, the question of culture-building has begun to surface. What strategies will we adopt to build it? The industry peers I talk to, acknowledge the need for "in-person" meetings to promote team bonding and building a high-class work culture.

> **"It is important for us to have our "back to office" strategy so that we can leverage the opportunity when it arises."**

Most firms, where the situation permits will move to a hybrid mode of working, where the staff will be splitting the work hours between office and home. Office space will primarily be used for building collaboration and culture. Effective engagement initiatives, better communication, collaboration tools, managerial capability building, and infrastructure enablement will help. They will, however, never replace the camaraderie, the relationships and collaboration that gets created on account of physical presence within the office. Thus, it is important for us to have our "back to office" strategy so that we can leverage the opportunity when it arises. H C

Disclaimer: The views expressed are the personal views of the author.

About the Author

Nikhileshwar Singh is the HR Business Partner for Technology, NatWest Group, India. Nikhil brings in 18 years of rich experience in various HR functions and has previously worked in AECOM, British Telecom, Accenture and Deutsche Bank leading HR teams within and outside India. Nikhil is a Mechanical Engineering graduate and MBA in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations (PM&IR) from XLRI, Jamshedpur.

Appointments

Capgemini Appoints Sonal Bhardwaj As Head - Talent Acquisition

Capgemini has appointed Sonal Bhardwaj as Head of Talent Acquisition, Financial Services, UK. Bhardwaj has over 16 years of recruitment experience in the Information Technology industry. Most recently, she was Head of Talent Acquisition, Europe, at Wipro. In this role, she led the Talent Acquisition function for Wipro and its group companies for Continental Europe and Africa. Bhardwaj pursued PGDPM in Industrial Relations and HR from Xavier Institute of Social Service and B.Com from Sarojini Naidu College.

Willis Towers Watson Appoints Kristy Banas As Global CHRO

Willis Towers Watson (WTW) has appointed Kristy Banas as its Global Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO). Banas presently serves as the organisation's global talent adviser for human capital and benefits. Following her joining WTW in 2011, she most recently led global HR teams responsible for workforce planning and talent engagement, as well as for colleague development, retention, coaching and advising. Additionally, she has also looked after HR integration planning and implementation activities.

JCB Appoints Umesh Hota As Executive Vice President - HR

JCB India Ltd has appointed Umesh Hota as its Executive Vice President – Human Resources, Administration and CSR. Hota is an MBA from Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management, Kolkata, MSc (Chemistry) and a Law Graduate from Sambalpur University, Odisha. He has over three decades of diverse experience and deep expertise in various facets of Human Resources. Prior to joining JCB, he worked with Aditya Birla Group in leadership positions in two of their flagship manufacturing companies — Hindalco and UltraTech.

Subex Appoints Asha Subramanian As CHRO

Subex has named Asha Subramanian as its Chief Human Resources Officer CHRO). In her earlier stints, Subramanian was associated with the companies such as Goibibo, Ness Technologies, LG CNS Global, etc. in HR leadership roles. An alumnus of Bangalore University, Subramanian began her career with LG CNS Global as lead – human resources, in 2004.

Honeywell Appoints Rekha Radhakrishnan As Director- HR

Honeywell has appointed Rekha Radhakrishnan as its Director- Human Resources. Radhakrishnan has more than 17 years of experience in human resources. Prior to joining Honeywell, she was associated with Dell Technologies as HRBP Leader. Radhakrishnan pursued her Executive Programme in Human Resource Management from Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, and holds an MBA from the University of Madras.