people
matters

LEARNING
LANDSCAPES OF THE FUTURE

LESSONS FROM THE FRONTLINE ON HOW **DISRUPTION** IS FORCING INTEGRATION OF **LEARNING** MODELS AND TECHNOLOGIES

BIG INTERVIEW
Kate Sweetman,
Founding Principal, SweetmanCragun
and former editor at HBR

SCENARIO PLANNING
Daniel W. Rasmus,
CMO of GlobalEnglish

SPECIAL STORY
The Spotlight on
HR Tech Startups

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Who owns learning?

If people lever is at the center-stage of organizational success, so is learning. But who owns learning? Is it the employer or the employee?

Today's learning and development function is in a predicament. From escalating learner expectations, to acting nimbly, and utilizing the available resources, all these have become crucial for the L&D function. With tech penetration to an all-time high, decisions made by the L&D leaders will determine not only the future but also what employee development will be in the future. On top of this, according to StatisticBrain.com, the average attention span in 2015 was 8.25 seconds, down from 12 seconds in 2000. And learners are busy.

The only way to scale learning, making it contextually relevant, consumable by the adult learner when it is needed and where it is needed, can only happen via technology. The technologies of the fourth revolution are about to revolutionize L&D. Although the technologies are still not commonplace, they have the capability to redefine the learning landscape. And future learning will no longer be about information ownership but about presence, context, and experience.

This is what we explore in our cover story, "Learning landscapes of the future"

— how the increasing use of digital technologies and the imminent rise of intelligent technologies have increased the focus on the preparedness of organizations to adopt and adapt to the changes brought by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the paradigm shifts this will cause in the L&D space. Though our thought leaders say that technology will transform the L&D function radically, it cannot be a solution to other elements that are associated with L&D in the organizational context. As Katarina Karalic sums up in her column, "Technology will solve our problem of energy-draining automated tasks that can easily be 'taught' to and outsourced to a machine (just the way we did decades ago on the manufacturing lines). But it will not be the silver bullet that solves all our L&D issues. We cannot outsource the organizational engagement bits – cultivating learning skills and inspiring motivation to learn."

The cover story also includes People Matters- Simplilearn L&D Tech study on Skill Acquisition for the Digital Age that is aimed at exploring the state of L&D function in relation to digital technologies and the inclination of organizations towards online learning methodologies for re-skilling and up-skilling of their employees.

For the Big Interview this time, we have Kate Sweetman, Founding Principal at the consulting firm SweetmanCragun and a former editor at Harvard Business Review, who talks about the age of disruption, reinvention, innovation, leadership and HR tech adoption.

The magazine also features a Special Story on People Matters Spotlight Program that got reinvented this year at TechHR 2017 Conference — from an award ceremony to becoming a mentoring program — this year, the focus of the program was on identifying and recognizing HR technology start-ups in India to provide them with a platform and help them survive and succeed. This feature enlists the 27 emerging start-ups to keep an eye in the space of HR technology.

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

Happy Reading!
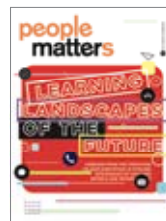**Esther Martinez Hernandez** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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✉ → ester.martinez@peoplematters.in

*THE COVER STORY
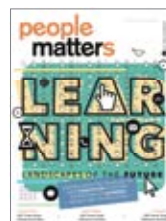(BEHIND THE SCENE)*

what do you think you are making?

really?

no drawing? only type?

what do you mean by 'lear'?

done!

![Skillsoft logo]

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Business & Leadership Skills
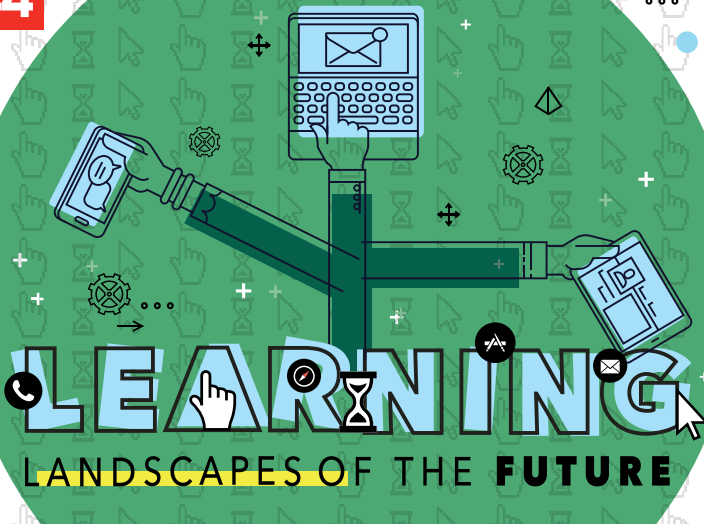
IT Skills & Certification

Digital Skills

Compliance

WE HAVE A SOLUTION

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LEARNING
LANDSCAPES OF THE FUTURE

Lessons from the frontline on how disruption is forcing integration of learning models and technologies
BY **SUPARNA CHAWLA BHASIN**

NOTE TO THE READERS
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Title of the Program	Program Director(s)	Dates	Venue	Title of the Program	Program Director(s)	Dates	Venue
Basic Leadership Skills	Fr.S George, S.J & Sunil Sarangi	July 17-21, 2017	XLRI	Managing Training: Design, Delivery and Impact Assessment	M Srimannarayana	September 18 - 22 2017	XLRI
Assessor Certification Program on Assessment Centre Approach to Competency Mapping	R K Premarajan	July 31, August 4, 2017	Mumbai	Teamwork Competency for High Performance	M G Jomon	September 19 - 22, 2017	XLRI
People Analytics	Gloryson R B Chalil	August 7-10, 2017	XLRI	Business Analytics with R	Amitava Mukherjee	October 5 - 7, 2017	XLRI
Strategic Industrial Relations	Pranabesh Ray	August 7-11, 2017	XLRI	Leadership Excellence through Self-Discovery	Manish Singhal	October 9- 12, 2017	XLRI
Labour Laws for Corporate Managers	P K Padhi & Tina Stephen	August 21-23, 2017	XLRI	Resolving Management Dilemma: Certification Program for Mapping Ethical and Moral Competencies	Fr. Ozzie Mascarenhas SJ & Sr. Doris D'Souza AC	October 9- 13, 2017	XLRI
Financial Time Series Modelling using R	Trilochan Tripathy H K Pradhan	August 21-24, 2017	XLRI				
Improving Productivity Quality and Flexibility in Manufacturing	Abhishek Chakraborty, Dipankar Bose, Trishit Bandyopadhyay	August 23 - 25, 2017	XLRI	CFO Programme	Prantik Ray	October 9- 13, 2017	XLRI
				Happiness and Well-Being	E S Srinivas	October 10-12, 2017	Bangalore
Business Partnering Competency for HR Managers	Gloryson R B Chalil	September 4-7, 2017	XLRI	Team Building and Conflict Management	ISF Irudayaraj M Srimannarayana	November 6- 9, 2017	XLRI
Basic Leadership Skills	Fr.S George, S.J & Sunil Sarangi	September 4-8, 2017	XLRI	Building Business Valuation Skills	Pitabas Mohanty	November 9-11, 2017	XLRI
Spreadsheet Modeling in Corporate Finance	Pitabas Mohanty	September 7-9, 2017	XLRI	Managerial Effectiveness through Self-Awareness	E S Srinivas	November 13 - 16, 2017	XLRI
Financial Leadership	Ram Kumar Kakani Prantik Ray	September 11-13, 2017	XLRI	Human Resource Development	M Srimannarayana I S F Irudayaraj	November 13 - 17, 2017	XLRI
Interpersonal Effectiveness through Communication Skills	Manish Singhal	September 11-14, 2017	XLRI	Leadership Competency for Star Performance	M G Jomon	November 15 - 18, 2017	XLRI
Emotional Intelligence (EQ) for Leadership	E S Srinivas	September 18-20, 2017	Hyderabad	Basic Leadership Skills	Fr.S George, S.J Sunil Sarangi	November 20- 24, 2017	XLRI
Diagnostic Negotiations Methodology	Jerome Joseph	September 18-20, 2017	XLRI	Project Management	Rajiv Misra	November 20- 24, 2017	XLRI
Appraisal and Feedback as ongoing Communication	Fr. Francis Peter, S.J	September 18-20, 2017	XLRI	Leading Mindfully	E S Srinivas & Satya Chaitanya	Nov 29 - Dec 01, 2017	XLRI
				Strategic L&D	Jerome Joseph	Feb 15-17,2018	XLRI

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The Spotlight on HR Tech Startups

The Spotlight Program got reinvented this year – from an award ceremony to becoming a mentoring program – this year, the focus of the program was on identifying and recognizing HR technology start-ups in India to provide them with a platform and help them survive and succeed

BY **AMOL PAWAR**

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FEATURED AND CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS ISSUE

KATE SWEETMAN	GOUTAMI DUTT
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DR SHALINI LAL	PANKAJ N GURSAHANI
ASHISH BHATNAGAR	MONODIP CHAUDHURI
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GOKUL RANGANATHAN	DR. NINA JACOB
KRISHNAN NILAKANTAN	DANIEL W. RASMUS
SUVRO RAYCHAUDHURI	GURUCHARAN SINGH GANDHI
ANITA GUHA	INDREK LEPNER
SUSHIL BAVEJA	ARZAAN MISTRY

PUBLIC PROGRAM
Calendar

MUMBAI

OCTOBER 2017

Business Communication Skills
5th | 6th

Step Up to Leadership
16th | 17th

High Impact Presentations
26th | 27th

NOVEMBER 2017

Action Oriented Leadership
22nd | 23rd | 24th

High Impact Presentations
29th | 30th

DECEMBER 2017

Train The Trainer Masterclass
11th | 12th | 13th | 14th | 15th

Build Influence with Enhanced
Communication and People Skills
18th | 19th | 20th

Master the secret of Charismatic
Leadership
21st | 22nd

DELHI

OCTOBER 2017

Training Design and Evaluation
3rd | 4th

Action Oriented Leadership
9th | 10th | 11th

NOVEMBER 2017

Executive Presentation Skills
1st | 2nd | 3rd

Build Influence with Enhanced
Communication and People Skills
6th | 7th | 8th

Master the secret of Charismatic
Leadership
16th | 17th

DECEMBER 2017

Step Up to Leadership
11th | 12th

Business Communication Skills
14th | 15th

Train The Trainer
18th | 19th | 20th

BANGALORE

OCTOBER 2017

Business Writing Skills
12th | 13th

High Impact Presentations
13th | 14th (Chennai)

Train The Trainer
23rd | 24th | 25th

NOVEMBER 2017

Leadership Training for Managers
8th | 9th | 10th

Winning with Relationship Selling
15th | 16th | 17th

Developing A Self Confident, Assertive
Attitude
20th | 21st

India Futures Train The Trainer
Certification
26th Nov - 2nd Dec

DECEMBER 2017

High Impact Presentations
4th | 5th

Step Up to Leadership
7th | 8th

Train The Trainer
27th | 28th | 29th

Join us on:

Letters of the month

MAIL

AUGUST 2017 ISSUE

Managing the economics of people business

The interview of Ranjani Kearsley, Global HR Head, Fidelity International was really inspiring. I liked her viewpoint on leadership, especially her observation on existing HR leadership and the attributes that are essential for leadership of tomorrow. I agree with her opinion that all leaders including HR leaders need to take holistic view of micro and macro relationships between individuals, markets and the broader economy. She further reveals that besides being patient and tenacious, consistently successful leaders make agile decisions and are able to course-correct themselves, if needed. Talking of future of work, Ranjani explained along with technical skills, life skills including emotional skills are very important.

– SANJEEV BHATT

HR in the world of AI, Algorithms & Big Data

Brian Sommer's article was very insightful. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the Next Wave of technology. He aptly mentions about capability of smart algorithms of future powered by insights from Big Data. He also writes about age of pre-crimes, where new technologies will be able to ascertain corruption, bribery and other malfeasance to be undertaken by employee. He leaves no stone unturned while explaining the impact of technology in every sphere of our lives. In the AI sphere, he says recruiters with the help of AI tools and video interviewing will be able to sort candidates better. Another exciting piece of information shared by him pertained to Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and the way it is replacing workforce by learning how a worker does a repetitive task.

– HETAL TANDON

Ahead of the Game

The special feature on best TA practices has been a great source of learning for me. It was enlightening to read about key talent interventions brought about by organizations. The feature clearly describes the business problems as shared by the organizations and solutions undertaken by their talent acquisition teams. It was fascinating to read about comprehensive design study undertaken by Accenture to solve its existing problem and about Facebook's differentiated hiring strategy.

– TUSHAR KHANNA

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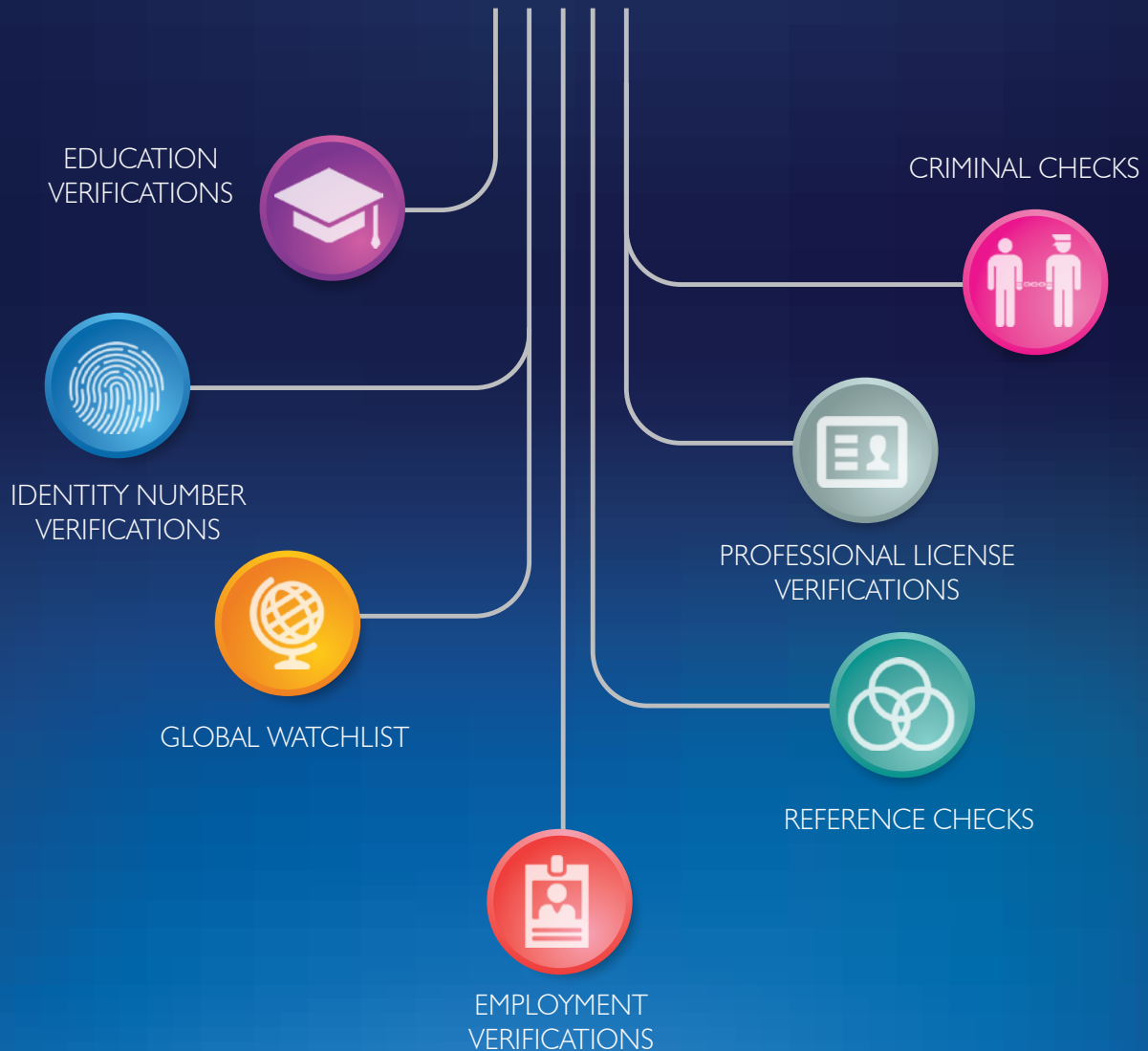
EDUCATION VERIFICATIONS

CRIMINAL CHECKS

IDENTITY NUMBER VERIFICATIONS

PROFESSIONAL LICENSE VERIFICATIONS

GLOBAL WATCHLIST

REFERENCE CHECKS

EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATIONS

M&A

KPMG acquires M&A tax team of BMR Advisors

After Deloitte buying BMR Advisory's corporate tax team, KPMG has announced the merger of transactions (M&A) and risk consulting business of BMR Advisors, a management consulting firm offering a range of Tax, Risk, and M&A advisory services. As part of this merger, ten partners from BMR's deals team, Sanjay Mehta (as an advisor) and Sarabjeet Singh from the risk team are set to join KPMG. Also, chief mentor Bobby Parikh and Vivek Gupta, a partner at BMR are both set to join KPMG. However, the third partner Rajeev Dimri will be a part of the team moving to Deloitte. Although both the organizations involved in the deal have not disclosed any financial details of the deals, media reports suggest that the two firms have spent around Rs 250 crore collectively for this.

Axis Bank acquires FreeCharge for Rs 385 crore

In an exclusive deal, Snapdeal Board has sold its digital payments platform FreeCharge to Axis Bank for Rs 385 crore in cash. The bank is all set to acquire 100 percent equity capital of the company for a cash consideration of Rs 385 crore. Snapdeal had bought FreeCharge with Rs 2,400 crore in 2015, which was the biggest deal in the start-up space at that time. The deal with Axis Bank will help Snapdeal to get the much-needed liquidity in times of the e-commerce crisis which hit them a few months back. While Paytm, and Amazon have been in the race to acquire FreeCharge, Axis Bank gave the highest bid to buy the digital payments platform. Under the deal, FreeCharge will provide Axis Bank with ready high-quality technology in the wallet business.

Apollo Global Management acquires major stake in CareerBuilder

Apollo Global Management and Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board are going to acquire a majority stake in online employment website, CareerBuilder. The current owners of CareerBuilder, Tegna Digital, Tribune Media and The McClatchy Company will retain a minority stake in the company. According to CareerBuilder, the projected deal is expected to close in the third quarter of 2017 and Apollo's investment is being made by the Apollo-managed Special Situations fund. The other companies that are financing this deal and acting as financial advisors to Apollo are Credit Suisse, Barclays, Deutsche Bank, Citigroup Global Markets and Goldman Sachs.

M&A

Willis Towers Watson acquires 49 percent stake in Almondz Insurance Brokers

Willis Towers Watson, a leading global advisory, broking and solutions company has acquired a 49 percent stake in Almondz Insurance Brokers in India. The joint venture will combine Willis Towers Watson's global network and expertise with Almondz's skilled team and wealth of experience in India. The company also announced a change in the Indian leadership. Almondz is a leading Indian composite insurance broker with over 300 associates in nine offices in India serving clients with a broad range of products and services across diversified industries and segments.

TALENT ACQUISITION

'Aspire' – new hiring initiative launched by The Smart Cube

The Global Analytics and Research firm, The Smart Cube has recently launched a new hiring program, 'Aspire' to help the company expand its base and commitment towards recruitment of top quality talent. The initiative is also aimed at enhancing candidates' workplace skills in business analytics. The program encompasses modules on industry orientation, analytical thinking, business acumen, and problem-solving skills and is supported by the collaboration of selected educational institutions across India, to engage students who are pursuing specific management and industry-focused qualifications. One of the premium institutes associated with 'aspire' is Jamia Hamdard University which has been chosen to be Aspire's first partner institution. It will offer a dedicated three-month, on-campus training program, developed in unification with The Smart Cube, for MBA Pharma and M Pharma students.

QR

Noticeboard raises funding from Stellaris

Noticeboard, a B2B Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) company that focuses on frontline staff enabling them with organizational communication through digital platforms, has successfully raised Rs 8 Crore from technology-focused venture capital firm, Stellaris Venture Partners and others. Stellaris led the round while the other key partakers were YuMe cofounder Jayant Kadambi, BlackBuck founder Rajesh Yabaji and other investors from Stellaris' founder network. Noticeboard was founded by Gahlaut, Vishesh Dahinwal and Sarath Chandran, former executives at Myntra handling its marketplace, logistics and product functions. The firm will use the capital raised to strengthen its technology, product and design teams.

SoftBank invests $2.5 billion in Flipkart

Softbank has invested $2.5 billion in Flipkart that marks the biggest private investment in the country's consumer technology sector. Softbank, the Japanese investor, popular for supporting China's Alibaba, has now made its biggest investment in Flipkart, India's largest online retail company. This investment — from Soft-Bank's $100-billion Vision Fund is a mix of direct funding to the ecommerce company and is being seen as primary investment that signals to a partial exit to Tiger Global, the New York-based investment firm, which until now was the largest and most influential investor in Flipkart. Prior to this investment, SoftBank had invested $1.4

billion in digital payments and commerce firm Paytm at a valuation of over $7 billion and is the biggest shareholder in India's Ola application.

Workplace flexibility is most important for job seekers

According to a recent study by ManpowerGroup, the ability to work flexibly is the number one priority for job seekers across the globe. Nearly 40 percent of the 14,000 respondents surveyed across 19 countries are of the opinion that 'schedule flexibility' is one of the most important factors while making a career decision. The research says that about two-thirds of the individuals surveyed believe that they need not necessarily be seated at a desk in order to do work. This makes flexible arrival and departure times, and the option of working full-time from home or location independence as the most desired features of a new workplace. Hence, it shouldn't come as a surprise that 26 percent of the respondents opined that flexible arrival and departure is the most important aspect of a job search, whereas another 22 percent said that the ability to work from home or a location of their choice is the top priority.

ThoughtWorks re-launches Vapasi to bring technical women back –to-work

ThoughtWorks, a global technology company, relaunched 'Vapasi', an initiative to bring experienced women, developers currently on a career break, back to work. The program aims at bridging the gender gap within the senior developer community and will provide a platform to female IT professionals to re-define their career paths and connect with professionals, exchange experiences and support each other in becoming an active member of the IT community. With the help of customized designed four-week boot camp, Vapasi will provide training to female developers to enhance their programming skills through hands-on sessions. This was designed to ensure that, the returning technologists are up-to-date in the ever evolving IT space.

Automatic PF transfer on job change

Provident Fund (PF) account will be transferred automatically in case of a job change. To address premature closing of provident fund accounts, the Employees' Provident Fund Organization has decided to transfer the PF account automatically in case of job change and if an employee has verified his Aadhaar ID. This decision is aimed at solving the problem of premature closure of accounts when a subscriber changes jobs.

Q2 MICHAEL PAGE INDIA JOB APPLICANT CONFIDENCE INDEX 2017

– INDIA'S JOB CONFIDENCE OUTLOOK HIGHEST IN ASIA PACIFIC MARKETS

Michael Page Job Applicant Confidence Index Q2 2017 measures how optimistic job applicants are about the current job market. The Q2 Michael Page India Job Applicant Confidence Index 2017 evaluated the responses of 681 senior-level employees in India, across organizations and industries.

KEY FINDINGS

84% Think that the economic situation will be better in the next 6 months

63% Are positive about the current job market
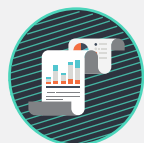
76% Are optimistic that the job market will get better in the next 6 months

51% Currently see good opportunities in their areas of expertise

73% Are confident of securing a job in less than 3 months
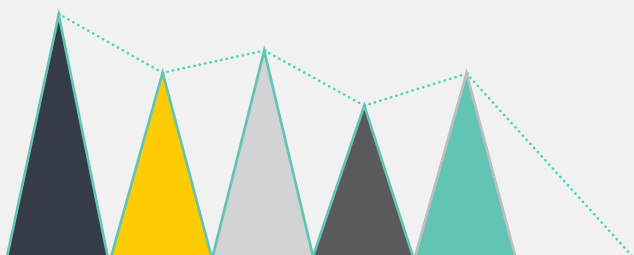
TOP 3 AREAS PROFESSIONALS ARE OPTIMISTIC OF IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS
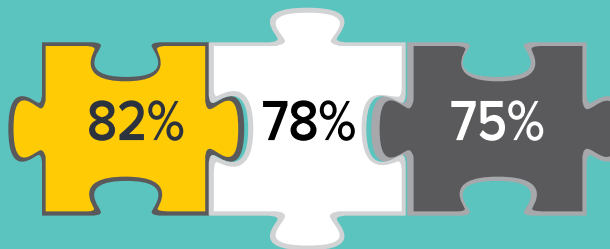
82% Skills development

78% Expansion in scope of functions

75% Better compensation levels

TOP 3 REASONS WHY PROFESSIONALS SWITCH JOBS

51% Skills development

40% Better salaries

34% Work-life balance

Source: www.michaelpage.co.in/2017-job-confidence-index

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QR

NEWSMAKER OF THE MONTH

Exposing biases
- Google's Ideological Echo Chamber

Although many have come out supporting and at the same time denouncing the memo, the real question is whether Google should reconsider its diversity programs and that if its "ideological echo chambers" really instigate "moral biases" against women?

Sexism and unconscious biases do exit. In thoughts, societies, and cultures; and is deeply rooted at the workplace. And today it has become a pertinent business issue.

The instance that brought this phenomenon blatantly to the surface in the recent past has been James Damore's (a Google employee) diatribe (memo) on Google's diversity practices that brings to fore gender gap in tech (software engineering) and argues that these biological differences are to blame for unequal representation of women in tech and leadership.

Damore in his memo mentions that "I'm simply stating that the distribution of preferences and abilities of men and women differ in part due to biological causes and that these differences may explain why we don't see equal representation of women in tech and leadership."

Detailing Google's biases, Damore goes on to mention that Google has created several discriminatory practices, and a few of which are:
- Programs, mentoring, and classes only for people with a certain gender or race
- A high priority queue and special treatment for "diversity" candidates
- Hiring practices which can effectively lower the bar for "diversity" candidates by decreasing the false negative rate
- Reconsidering any set of people if it's not "diverse" enough, but not showing that same scrutiny in the reverse direction (clear confirmation bias)
- Setting org level OKRs for increased representation which can incentivize illegal
- discrimination

Pichai in his note to employees mentioned that "much of what was in [Damore's] memo is fair to debate" although he also mentioned that portions of it violated Google's code of conduct and that "they cross the line by advancing harmful gender stereotypes in our workplace", which is why he got fired from the organization.

Although many have come out supporting and at the same time denouncing the memo, the real question is whether Google should reconsider its diversity programs and that if its "ideological echo chambers" really instigate "moral biases" against women? It's a question worthy enough for organizations to reflect on. 🅿🅼

APPOINTMENTS

MERCER APPOINTS NIKHIL BHANDARE AS COUNTRY LEADER - MCG FOR INDIA

Mercer has appointed Nikhil Bhandare as Country Leader – Multinational Client Group (MCG) for India. Nikhil will be primarily responsible for establishing, operating and growing Mercer's business across MCG portfolio in India in collaboration with its broader India leadership team. Nikhil joins Mercer from 'Strategy&', a part of PwC network (formerly Booz & Company).

CITRIX APPOINTS MAKARAND JOSHI AS AREA VP & COUNTRY HEAD – INDIA

Citrix has appointed Makarand Joshi as its Area Vice President and Country Head for Citrix in the Indian subcontinent. In this role, he will be responsible for accelerating and transforming the business in the Indian subcontinent. Makarand has joined Citrix with over 22 years of experience in various leadership roles that include building sales and partner networks across Asia.

UBER APPOINTS VISHPALA REDDY AS CHIEF HR OFFICER INDIA AND SA

Vishpala Reddy would be taking over as the Chief HR Officer India and South Asia at Uber. Prior to this appointment, Reddy was with American Express and was appointed the Vice President and the Head HR for India in 2014.

AXIS BANK REAPPOINTS SHIKHA SHARMA AS CEO

The leadership ambiguity at Axis Bank finally came to an end after the firm extends Shikha Sharma's tenure as a CEO and MD for another three years. Her current term was set to end next year in June 2018. However, with this news, her tenure will now stretch to June 2021.

SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC APPOINTS MEENU SINGHAL AS VP - INDUSTRY BUSINESS

Schneider Electric, the global specialist in energy management and automation, has appointed Meenu Singhal as the Vice President of its Industry business. In his new role, Meenu will be responsible for accelerating Schneider Electric's growth of the business with a focus on automation and will drive the push for Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) platform across businesses.

ACCENTURE APPOINTS MICHELLE GADSDEN-WILLIAMS AS DIVERSITY HEAD, NORTH AMERICA

Accenture has appointed Michelle Gadsden-Williams to head inclusion and diversity in North America. Before joining Accenture, Gadsden-Williams was the co-founder and CEO of Ceiling Breakers, a consulting organization focused on women's empowerment and diversity initiatives.

PAYTM APPOINTS KIRAN VASIREDDY AS COO

Paytm has appointed Kiran Vasireddy as the company's Chief Operating Officer for its payment business. This is the third instance where Paytm has promoted its own talent to the top leadership. Kiran will be responsible for overseeing all product and business functions for the payments division.

WALMART APPOINTS DEVENDRA CHAWLA AS COO

Walmart India has appointed the former CEO of Future Consumer Devendra Chawla as its Chief Operating Officer. He will be the COO of merchandising, marketing and omnichannel function of Walmart India, and will report to the Walmart India CEO Krish Iyer.

GOOGLE APPOINTS SUNDAR PICHAI AS BOARD MEMBER

Alphabet Inc., the parent company of Google has appointed Sundar Pichai as one of the board members. Pichai has become the fifth insider to join the board among the 13 members.

APPLE INC. APPOINTS DEIRDRE O'BRIEN AS VP OF PEOPLE

Apple Inc. has appointed Deirdre O'Brien as the VP – People. Deirdre O'Brien will be responsible for HR functions and processes at Apple along with handling Apple University. Prior to this appointment, Deirdre was working as Vice President for Apple's worldwide sales and operations.

COMIO INDIA APPOINTS SUMIT SEHGAL AS CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER

COMIO smartphones has appointed Sumit Sehgal as the Chief Marketing Officer of the company. He will lead the marketing for COMIO and will strive for building it into a differentiated and strong brand in the mobile handset market.

ADOBE APPOINTS SHANMUGH NATARAJAN AS MD TO LEAD INDIA OPERATIONS

Adobe Systems has appointed Shanmugh Natarajan as Managing Director for Adobe India. Natarajan was formerly Executive Director, and will continue to lead Adobe operations in India, in addition to his ongoing responsibility as Vice President, Engineering, Digital Media at Adobe.

ATHER ENERGY APPOINTS SUNITHA LAL AS HEAD HR

Ather Energy, a hardware startup has appointed Matrimony.com's former CHRO, Sunitha Lal as the head of human resources. Sunitha has 20+ years of experience across all HR verticals and has a strong hold on aspects such as organizational & leadership development, performance etc.

PEOPLESTRONG APPOINTS RAJUL GARG AS FIRST INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR

PeopleStrong has appointed Rajul Garg as its first ever Independent Director. Garg is a well-known early investor in tech companies and is the co-founder of Global Logic, a global services company, which was sold for $400 million in 2013.

Getting on the AI wagon

KPMG recently published 'Robocalypse: Now? What the Fourth Industrial revolution means for retail', aims to understand how robots and AI will change the world of retail

By **Manav Seth**

The recent public spat between Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg over the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) might represent two polar opposite views; but even the biggest tech moguls cannot deny that AI is set to take over and change the world sooner than one might imagine. Despite the steadfast advancement in the field, one cannot deny that the domain is still in its infancy, so much so that the human mind is incapable of truly comprehending the impact and consequences of changes that will accompany it. And by default, what the human mind is unable to comprehend; it becomes suspicious and doubtful of.

The discourse around machines taking over jobs has gained momentum in the last few years, and intricately woven into this debate is the advent of the fourth industrial revolution. With the survival of businesses on the line, the transition to the new paradigm is of critical importance. Yet, uncertainty, confusion and scepticism regarding the same are abundant. For the uninitiated, the fourth industrial revolution follows the production revolutions that were aided by industries, fuel and electricity, and digital technology. This new era will see further embedment of technology in societies and even the human body. Already, automation of routine tasks means that human involvement in the production process is limited to that of supervision and remedial intervention, which in the future is also likely to be done by intelligent learning systems. Simply put, machines will no longer simply follow command, but also have the power to generate a command, using intelligence and cognition of their own. Lest we get carried away in a worrisome sci-fi plot, there is a need to understand what automation will mean for the businesses, workplace and world of tomorrow with specific context to different industries. In this regard, KPMG recently published 'Robocalypse: Now? What the Fourth Industrial revolution means for retail', to understand how the advent of robots and AI will change the world of retail.

The report is a great resource to understand how different sectors within retail will be impacted by automation and how to best gear up for the change. It says, "The scope of the revolution is massive, and businesses of the future will feel the impact at every level of the value chain and across the entire customer journey — from their basic strategy, right through to their delivery mechanics." It successfully drives home the point that up until this point, we have seen the automation of manual tasks like production, order placement, warehouse management and inventory tracking; but from here on, tasks like investment decision making, mass personalisation, product selection, product design, space optimisation, dynamic pricing etc. will also be machine driven. The report discusses the example of Hong Kong Venture Capitalist firm, Deep Knowledge Ventures, which "has already hired an artificially intelligent algorithm to its board of directors. The 'Validating Investment Tool for Advancing Life Sciences' (Vital, to his friends) uses a complex algorithm to predict which companies will be a good investment. By mixing human intuition and expertise with a machine's logic, the company believes it can build the perfect collaborative team." Vinodh Swaminathan, Managing Director of Innovation and Enterprise Solutions, KPMG, USA, says in the report, "This is not a technology discussion. This is a business strategy discussion; it starts at the top with leadership and stakeholder management."

> Machines will no longer simply follow command, but also have the power to generate a command, using intelligence and cognition of their own

Artificial Intelligence: Changing the face of retail

Every step of the retail chain, right from attracting customers to production, supply and selling of the product is bound to change with AI playing a larger role. While the use of big data, mass personalization and advent of 'retail theatre' to attract more customers and enhance the customer experience is on the cards, physical proximity of consumers will be exploited further for communication. At the production end, the process of designing, pricing, optimizing and selecting a product is set to be automated. Even routine, yet essential, processes like inventory and stocking selection is being outsourced to machines. "The range and volume of data feeds that are used and the ability for the system to learn based on actual performance means that the need for human participation is rapidly diminishing." These developments also mean onshore production has become more affordable and easy. "Manufacturers that, in the past, moved their operations to China or India are returning to Europe as the processes of production become more efficient and cost effective."

While all this will obviously result in a decline in the number of manual jobs, it will also provide an opportunity for organizations to focus exclusively on customer experience. The report says, "... but it also means companies can improve their supply chain and cut their costs, with employees freed up for higher value work consumers can receive a faster, more efficient service." With driverless vehicles, intelligent chatbots, inventory tracking and management systems helping retailers achieve a more optimum balance of labor costs, inventory and availability, one thing is certain that producers and consumers will interact much more dynamically. The mundane grocery-shopping experience is likely to get a complete overhaul, with robots guiding you to your desired product, and softwares predicting what you want before you actually think of it – "an all-channel approach that will ultimately win the day — a 360-degree experience that's seamless, so all the customer sees is the brand and how it makes them feel."

Aggressive pricing and promotion strategies and digitization of shopping carts will also add to the change. Drone-delivery, virtual dressing rooms, robotic in-store assistance, doing away with the check-out are some other ways in which retail is set to evolve. The fact that these machines will be able to learn from their mistakes and experiences, and have the ability to emote and respond like humans, thus blurring the difference between the two, is likely to further their adoption at a swift pace. "Creating an online shopping experience enhanced by technology such as augmented reality and virtual reality or 3D is becoming at least as important as providing convenient and personalized ordering, payment and delivery options" says Willy Kruh, Global Chair, Consumer & Retail, KPMG International.

How to get on the AI wagon?

For businesses to be future ready, the report has a simple and important message: "Think Big. Start Small. Act Now... A safer approach for many businesses is to stay more agile — able to define the right areas of capability in which to test innovations, whilst simultaneously remaining focused on your core business." It says that innovation and experimentation should be based on hard facts derived from data. Furthermore, it advises retailers to have a long-term and short-term vision to respond to trends and deliver agile solutions. "The biggest challenge facing organizations will be creating alignment among senior leadership about what to do and why" it warns. The report consists of a handy and practical checklist that executive teams must follow in order to adapt to the impending changes and also contains examples of retailers who have pioneered innovative AI and are reaping its benefits. Tommy Hilfiger's digital showroom, Adidas moving its production back to Germany, Autodesk using intelligent softwares for 3D printing, JD.com increasing its supply-chain efficiency, Anheuser-Busch using self-driving trucks, The North Face using a new age shopping app, intelligent robots like Amelia and Chloe being 'hired' by companies for their services – it's all in there!

The biggest challenge facing organizations will be creating alignment among senior leadership about what to do and why

The report stops just short of answering the million-dollar question about what will humans do in the world where machines take care of everything. However, it does make an attempt. "Creativity is a big part of cognition... when machines can do that, maybe we will be obsolete. But until then — and I think that's some ways off — I think we have a big future for human beings to do lots of interesting things in the realm of work" says Constance Hunter, Chief Economist, KPMG, US. The report hits the nail on the head when it says that going forward, it will be critical to remember the uniqueness that human touch and emotions brings to a process. ".... it's also worth remembering that humans will always be humans... The trick is to remember that one size rarely fits all. Because ultimately, we're not machines.... There's no doubt that the current technological revolution is a time of great innovation and excitement. But, for many, it may also paint a more worrying picture of the future where armies of unemployed drift from one menial task to the next." A quote by Stephen Hawking best sums up the essence of the report, "... the rise of powerful AI will be either the best, or the worst thing, ever to happen to humanity. We do not yet know which." **Pm**

Positive, yet Cautious Hiring Activity in Campuses this year:
Aon Campus Study 2016-17

The Aon Campus Study 2016-17 seeks to understand the compensation philosophy adopted by companies across different campuses, and aims to provide a detailed view on campus compensation & recruitment strategies for various educational qualifications

By **Manav Seth**

Uncertainty in the job market has been a norm in the past few years. This constant state of flux that India Inc. has been operating in has given rise to unpredictability, ambiguity and volatility in several industries as far as hiring is concerned. One sure-shot indicator of healthy hiring is the placement activity in college campuses. The Aon Campus Study 2016-17 analyzes just that and collates data from 300 organizations across 7 industries "to understand their campus strategies for identified educational qualifications across different tiers for 2016-17."

The study aims to understand the compensation philosophy by companies across campuses, and provides a nuanced understanding of campus compensation and recruitment strategies. The pan India study covered the industries of Hi-Tech, ITeS, E-Commerce, Consumer Products, Hospitality, Services, Financial Institutions, Manufacturing and Life Sciences and was conducted between October 2016 and January 2017. The study looks at campus hiring activities through the lens of educational qualification, compensation, attrition, and type of college, bonus, internships etc.

Positive, yet cautious

The findings of the study suggest that "organizations are adopting a positive yet cautious outlook to their campus strategy." 84 percent of the organizations that participated in the study have stated that the number of campus hires is expected to increase this year, or at least be retained at previous year levels. The remaining 16 percent have reported a decline in the intake of campus hires this year. While Tier 1 MBA institutes have seen a dip of 2 percent in the overall number of campus hires, the number has neither increased nor decreased for B.Tech students. However, the com-

pensation offered at these colleges has remained steady "with Tier 1 institutes continuing to enjoy a pay differential of 1.8 & 2.9 for MBA and 1.5 & 2.4 for B.Tech, when compared to Tier 2 & Tier 3 institutes respectively."

The positivity can be gauged from the fact that 29 percent of the organizations are expecting to increase campus compensation this year. Furthermore, "57 percent of organizations capture early attrition across all campus hires, out of which 52 percent of the organizations define early attrition to be Less than 1 Year." The highest attrition was observed to be that of Graduates at 18.4 percent, followed by MBA at 18.2 percent. Both these figures are relatively higher than the Pan-India attrition of 16.3 percent.

Pre-Placement Talks continue to reign supreme as the number one preferred brand-building initiative at campuses, holding the top position since 2012. 'Opportunity to work on Live Projects' rose two places to secure the second position, followed by 'informal chat sessions', dropping one position. 'Social Media Advertising' rose from rank 7 in 2012 to 5 in 2016. The findings reaffirm the role of the institution in securing a higher starting compensation, and also the importance of previous work experience, in the form of internships and apprenticeships.

Campus Hiring Activity 2016-17

The campus hiring activity for 2016-17 has definitely not dimmed since 2015. While MBA campuses from Tier 1 & Tier 2 institutes saw a dip of 2-3 percent, a rise has been registered in Tier 3 colleges. Nonetheless, 89 percent of the surveyed organizations visit the Top 14 Tier 1 MBA colleges, and Sales & Marketing and Finance have been identified as the preferred functions. E-commerce emerged as the top-paying industry for Tier 1 MBA hires, offering 10 percent and 16 percent higher Total Fixed Compensation (TFC) and Total Cost to Company (TCC), respectively, as compared to Pan-India. The former top-paying industry, Consumer Products, offers 7 percent and 9 percent higher TFC and TCC, respectively, as compared to the Pan-India level.

Hiring from B.Tech campuses from Tier 1 institutes has retained its 2015 level, while that among Tier 2 campuses has gone up and Tier 3 campuses has declined. E-Commerce emerged the top-paying industry for Tier 1 B.Tech graduates as well, offering 33 percent and 45 percent more TFC and TCC, respectively, than Pan-India. Similarly, Consumer Products is offering 32 percent and 40 percent more. 93 percent of the total M.Tech hiring takes place from Tier 1 and Tier 2 colleges. "63 percent of organizations capture early attrition for B.Tech/M.Tech campus hires, out of which 50 percent of the organizations define early attrition to be Less than 1 Year." The overall attrition for M.Tech hires in 2016 is 8 percent, nearly half the Pan-India 2015 Attrition of 16.3 percent, while that of B.Tech hires is 15 percent (2016).

College Matters...

"Organizations are willing to pay Overall Tier 1 campus hires 2.9 times that of Tier 3 and 1.8 times that of Tier 2 campus hires; while Tier 2 campus hires enjoy a pay differential of 1.5 times when compared to Tier 3 campus hires." This differentiation is in tune with the trends witnessed in 2015. While the projected TCC for IIMs is Rs. 21,50,000 for 2017 (up from Rs. 20,00,000 in 2016), the same is Rs. 6,63,000 for Tier 3 colleges (up from Rs. 6,21,000). A similar trend is observed in TFC as well.

B.Tech graduates see this difference narrowing marginally, as companies are willing to pay Tier 1 campus hires 2.4 times that of Tier 3 and 1.5 times that of Tier 2 campus hires, much like in 2015. While the IITs witnessed the TCC to be at Rs. 13,50,000 in 2017 (up from Rs. 12,50,000 in 2016), Tier 2 colleges saw the same to be at Rs. 6,94,000 (up from Rs. 6,50,000) and Tier 3 colleges were at Rs. 4,62,000 (up from Rs. 4,25,000). "The overall TCC median for Tier 1 is expected to increase by 8.0 percent in 2017, whereas the TFC median is expected to increase by 7.5 percent... The average year-on-year increase for Overall Tier 1 compensation, over the last 6 years, has been 8.7 percent while the increase for Tier 2 & Tier 3 colleges has been 9.9 percent & 7.8 percent respectively." For M.Tech hires, the overall TCC median for Tier 1 is expected to increase by 9.8 percent in 2017, whereas the TFC median is expected to increase by 8.4 percent.

Pre-Placement Talks continue to reign supreme as the number one preferred brand-building initiative at campuses

CAMPUS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK
3 STEPS TO A COMPREHENSIVE CAMPUS COMPENSATION STRATEGY

1 ▶ Understand the Market Sentiment

Campus Compensation Strategy

3 ▶ Compensation & Pay Mix
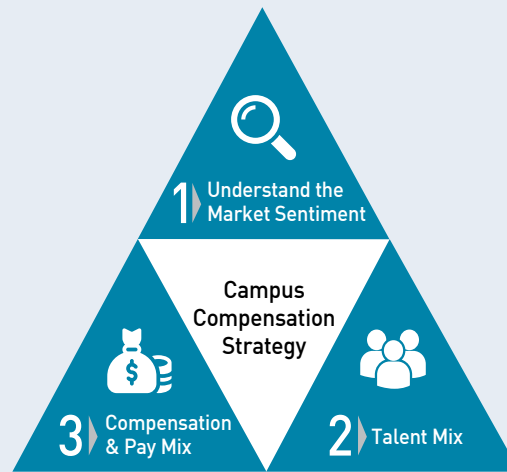
2 ▶ Talent Mix

"
The report covers the 3 steps involved in a comprehensive campus compensation strategies
- Understand the Market Sentiment – Positive / Negative sentiment basis changes in campus compensation and number of hires
- Talent Mix – Talent distribution, Tier Differential and Attrition
- Compensation & Pay Mix – This section covers the compensation and pay mix aspects

India, Aon Campus Study 2016-17

AON
Empower Results®

84 percent of the organizations state that the number of campus hires is expected to increase this year, or at least be retained at previous year levels

Does experience and merit?

56 percent of the organizations reportedly hired management gradates with prior experience. "These professionals are hired as laterals and are paid higher than other management graduates with zero/ less than one year of relevant work experience." This additional compensation that comes with experience is in the range of Rs. 87,500 to Rs. 1,00,000 in 2016 for each relevant year of experience. For 2017, the same is projected to be Rs. 90,000 for 2-4 years of experience. 90 percent of the organizations reported that they offer internship programs at MBA campuses, and the median monthly stipend at Tier 1 campuses is Rs. 67,500 (2.7 times higher than that of Tier 2 campuses). For B.Tech graduates, 65 percent of the organizations reported to offer internship programs, and the median monthly stipend at Tier 1 campuses is Rs. 25,000, which is 1.2 times that at Tier 2 colleges. Similarly, 71 percent of the organizations said that they offer internship programs at M.Tech

campuses, and the media monthly stipend for Tier 1 colleges is Rs. 30,000, which is 1.25 times higher than what is offered at Tier 2 colleges. In addition to stipend, organizations also provide transport and accommodation in guest house to interns. Meritorious CA and CFA campus hires also saw a significant rise in their TFC and TCC, depending on their performance. A similar pattern was noticed in the TFC and TCC of graduates, with the differential interplay of Tiers as well.

In the current economic climate, organizations have recognized the need to adopt a smarter approach to offer campus compensation by reducing the fixed component and becoming aggressive in the 'Pay at Risk' and/or Joining Bonus component. By doing this, they are not only fostering a performance-oriented environment by linking pay with performance, but are also reducing the year on year burden of pay increases linked to the fixed pay component.

Organizations are also starting to revolutionize their campus offerings by using campus graduate preferences as the pivot point while devising their campus strategies. The "one size fits all" approach is slowly starting to fade away and organizations are beginning to realize that they will need to target the specific needs of the hiring demographic in order to offer a more holistic and valuable campus package and thereby position itself as the preferred choice for campus graduates. **pm**

PSYCHOMETRICS: USING MULTIPLE ASSESSMENTS FOR A MORE PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS

Recruitment mistakes remain a reality and despite the proliferation of selection methods its success rate stands at only 54%. That means a recruiter makes one bad decision for every two recruitments.

According to a study by the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), the cost of selecting the wrong person can run up to five times of a bad hire's annual salary. And higher the position and longer the person remains in that position, the more it will cost to replace them. It is also known that in 89% of the cases, the failures are explained by behavioural factors and not by a lack of technical know-how.[1]

Psychometric assessments have already proven their objectivity and reliability in various HR decision-making processes. But their current way of use proves lacking against the evolving organization HR challenges, like emergence of new skills and occupations, perennial dearth of talent, and more than ever diverse working environments.

Better target potentials through multi-criteria assessment approach

Human behaviour is incredibly complex with each person having unique set of characteristics. So, trying to predict how a person is going to behave and perform at work is not an easy task. That is why making a good recruitment decision is not anymore based on "gut feeling" or "liking the candidate"; it is about combining multiple data for a more accurate and predictive analysis of a candidate's potential.

Due to their construction and scientific validity, psychometric assessment matches well the "big data" approach and provide accurate and unbiased insight into people's behaviour and potential.

However, it is well known that psychometrics is not a crystal ball. Psychometric tests have surely shown to have a predictive value in relation to job competencies and overall performance, but their success rate depends significantly on the how well the assessments are used.

Recruitment decision cannot be based solely on cognitive skills evaluation or just a personality test alone. As research has shown that the predictive ability of using a single assessment tools is often moderate. However, when multiple assessments are combined, their predictive analysis enhanced significantly.

This is precisely what Harvard Business School study[2] shows, the combined use of personality and intelligence tests increases recruitment efficiency by 15% compared to a non-test recruitment process.

These significant findings corroborate the Schmidt & Hunter study, which highlighted the predictive values of several selection methods including intelligence tests and integrity assessment. Thus the use of intelligence tests in addition to the structured interview allows to increase the success rate by 12% compared to maintenance alone. More generally, this study shows that the combination of selection tools, when they are relevant, is always more predictive.

"In terms of recruitment algorithms do better than intuition."
Since the results from different psychometric tests complement each other, they can ensures a more accurate assessment. For example, one can combine a personality test, a sales aptitude test with an emotional intelligence test for a more precise and comprehensive evaluation, when it comes to hiring for a sales position.

The only limitation with this approach is that the assessors needs to juggle report results of different assessments to obtain one complete analysis of the candidate's profile.

A psychometric test creator Central Test, understood the challenge and developed a tool called TALENT MAP that uses the multi-criteria approach to psychometric assessments.

It relies on a powerful algorithm to analyse the results of multiple assessments in a single competency framework and job referential.

TALENT MAP offers decision-makers the power to match a candidate profile with 36 competencies and 138 occupations, with just one click. Fully customizable, the tool can adjust to your own criteria and you can define the competency estimated according to your expectations.

The multi-criteria approach redefines the use of psychometric assessments and will significantly increase the success of your recruitments.

In summary, psychometric tests are excellent tools for decision making in recruitment, even though there is no quick fix. This predictive accuracy could be further enhanced by an optimized use of psychometrics, notably through the promising multi-criteria approach.

[1] Hiring for attitude", Mark Murphy, 2012
[2] Discretion in hiring », Harvard Business School, 2015

About the Author
PATRICK LEGUIDE is the founder and CEO of Central Test. With degrees in both Psychology and Management, he is also the head of the Research and Innovation department at the company.

Q & A

A TRUE REINVENTION

In an exclusive interview with People Matters, **KATE SWEETMAN,** Founding Principal at the consulting firm SweetmanCragun and a former editor at Harvard Business Review talks about the age of disruption, reinvention, innovation, leadership and HR tech adoption

By **Suparna Chawla Bhasin**

Kate Sweetman is a Founding Principal at the consulting firm SweetmanCragun, and teaches at MIT's Legatum Institute for Entrepreneurship. She has been a former editor at Harvard Business Review, and has worked in Malaysia as Director of Research and Curriculum at the Iclif Centre for Leadership and Governance. Sweetman's book credits include The Leadership Code: Five Rules to Lead By (Harvard Business Press, 2009), co-authored with Dave Ulrich and Norm Smallwood. Her latest book, with Shane Cragun, is titled "Reinvention: Accelerating Results in the Age of Disruption".

Kate has extensively researched, facilitated, advised, and published on multiple aspects of leadership and organizational development. She has been listed as a Thinkers50 for her body of work throughout her career and has co-authored the best-selling business book The Leadership Code.

Q What is of utmost importance in the age of disruption, both for leaders and for organizations?

A A mind-set of extreme agility with the capability to act on it, and for leaders to keep their energy high and positive is of utmost importance in this age of disruption. In this age, you have to see the possibilities and move faster than the speed of change around you. Since there is no such thing as a steady state anymore, leaders and their organizations need to be in a perpetual flow of learning, shifting and growing – looking out ahead, figuring out what to do and how to do it. The faster that can happen, the better the chances are to stay ahead of others, to be in a position to disrupt rather than be disrupted. Managing this dynamic is the main job of leaders and the organizations that they lead.

Q You stress more on reinvention than innovation? In your book *"Reinvention: Accelerating Results in the Age of Disruption"*, you propose a simple formula, common principles, and set of tools for individuals and organizations facing disruptive and radical change. Tell us more about this.

A We use the word "Reinvention" to distinguish it from innovation for two reasons: 1) Reinvention is more radical and fundamental than innovation; and 2) Reinvention can occur anywhere and in any aspect of the business, where "innovation" is generally associated with products and services. The world is experiencing reinvention of industries, business models, structures and systems, human resource strategy and practice, the digital marketplace — of everything. Our age really and truly is a perfect storm of ideas, approaches and options. We all need to be open to doing things quite differently, and often make that shift with extreme speed and deep commitment — even when outcomes are not clearly known.

Q Your book mentions that true reinvention comes from "Change quotient" — dissatisfaction, focus, alignment and execution. Can you elucidate on this?

A They say that there are really only two human emotions: Fear and Love. And that they motivate everything. Fear is something that you want to move away from. Love is something that you want to move toward: a focal point. So the leader who would be a Reinventor who would help people to tap into their discomfort and dissatisfaction and shift their focus toward a place of higher and better potential — and move from the negative to the positive, from dissatisfaction to renewed focus — from Fear to Love. And once they have become excited about moving to that much better place, they will sustain

> Our age really and truly is a perfect storm of ideas, approaches and options. We all need to be open to doing things quite differently, and often make that shift with extreme speed and deep commitment — even when outcomes are not clearly known

that energy and resolve only when everything reorganizes in support of that new place: structure, systems, rewards, everything. Why? Because everything that currently exists was created in the past. Everything must now reshape itself to create the future. Lastly, and very importantly, the culture and behaviors must also support the new focus. Maybe we need to be quicker, better communicators, more transparent, more accountable. Whatever it is, it needs to happen for the focus to stay sharp and for the desired future to materialize.

Q Most businesses focus on the technical aspects of innovation at the expense of the thinking that goes behind that innovation. But is it only about technology? Is there more to innovation than the tech part?

Ⓐ Great observation. We are working with a major technology company in Silicon Valley right now, helping them to go through a complex spin-off of some parts of the organization and a merger with another entity. It is change on steroids — a true Reinvention. They are finding out what everyone who has been through a major, discontinuous change learns — that you need the technical aspects of the change, of course. But without preparing the leaders to lead (and the followers to follow) in this time of great upheaval, you will fail. People need to be supported and led. They need to understand what they are going through, why and where it will take them. They need to learn new approaches, tools, skills and behaviors that will help them to succeed in the new world they are entering. The reason that the majority of mergers, acquisitions, and other major changes fail much more often than they succeed is exactly this.

Leaders and their organizations need to be in a perpetual flow of learning, shifting and growing – looking out ahead, figuring out what to do and how to do it

Ⓠ **You also mention that "Leaders must change before they have to, and they must enable their organization to surf the incoming global shockwaves with intelligence, agility, strength, and command." So, how can they do this?**
Ⓐ This question picks up on a powerful metaphor from our book: The Message of Mavericks. Mavericks is a very challenging, world class surfing area in Northern California that can only be ridden by the world's best athletes. It is only at its peak a couple of weeks of the year, and the surfers come from all over the planet. They are alerted that Mavericks is ready to ride by buoys placed out in the Pacific Ocean that measure wave action. So, in other words, these surfers need ways to get information, sense the right timing, be physically fit and able. Equally important, because these waves are so gigantic and forbidding, they need the courage and confidence to paddle into the wave instead of paddle away from it.

Ⓠ **In the context of the changes that actually lead to disruption, tell us how crucial is it for a leader to also accept failures to be able to reach disruptive innovation?**
Ⓐ Nothing new ever happens without mistakes along the way. Leaders need to redefine and re-label what they might formerly have called "mistakes" instead as "learning." Not only because that is more heartening for others, but because it is more accurate. All you can hope to do when moving forward into unknown terrain is to move as quickly as possible, learn along the way, course correct and keep going. When the leader instills that attitude in others, they will be much more willing to explore, learn, bring that learning back, and ultimately move forward on the right path.

Ⓠ **In context of HR, how do you think technology integration, innovation and reinvention can facilitate HR in its functioning?**
Ⓐ This is a great question. The best way forward, I think, is to forget for a moment "what is" and imagine "what could be". Forget current reality. Start with a blank page. What is the company trying to accomplish? Where is it going? Engage the business heads fully around that. What, then, would be the perfect HR function? How could it best enable the organization to have the right people in the right place at the right time with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs to make the company truly extraordinary? How could that be made to happen? View this as a creative exercise. And then ask — what parts of that can be accomplished with technology? Do we even know? Who else needs to be involved in this discussion to determine that? I love this question, and think it is the right one to be asking.

Ⓠ **One of the major criticisms when embracing technology especially in HR relates to losing the personal touch. In this tech-HR world, how can organizations, HR per se or leaders balance this?**
Ⓐ Another great question as the debate rages around the wisdom of using AI versus people. The key question here is: What is the effect on the organization of using technology vs. humans in this particular touch-point? Might technology be more efficient – but too impersonal? Or will the speed and efficiency be welcome? I know for myself that I welcome technology that makes an experience more efficient – and that I also welcome having a person available to me when the technology fails or confuses me. The bottom line is the user experience, and so much of that comes from the quality of the design and execution of the system. If you can create a technology solution that is graceful and easy and pain-free (or pain minimizing), by all means do it. If you cannot, then you need to consider whether the human touch is better. Ⓟⓜ

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ABHIJIT BHADURI

Flip the channel
- from multichannel to omnichannel learning

With the Fourth Industrial Revolution bringing in exponential changes, leaders are missing one important element – rethinking the process of learning

> Most people are learning in multiple ways. Paperbacks exist with e-Books. Analog business models exist with digital. Physical stores exist with online formats. There is another word for it – omnichannel, and that is what learning must be

I had just finished addressing a group of executives in their mid-thirties in one of the B-schools. We all know that as a norm, all executives are sponsored by their organizations so that they could build their strategic thinking skills, and so was the case here too. However, during one of the coffee breaks, a participant walked up to me for a discussion. And during our conversation, I could not stop but think that he looked at least a decade younger than the others in that class, and had also been an individual contributor in the session. My curiosity took the best of me and I asked him as to why his employer had sponsored him for this program?

And his answer was: "I paid for it myself. If I have to wait for my organization to sponsor me for such a program, I have to be a Vice President in the organization before they spend this kind of money on my education."

This was one of the many instances where I got to meet executives who were paying for their own learning. And I must add that over the last 3-4 years I have met many more like him. But this is the truth these days — more and more people are taking charge of their own learning today through technology or other channels! This is the new aspect of learning that we are seeing today.

But my question hinges on what's coming next in the wake of the 4th Industrial Revolution technologies where people are already taking charge of their learning needs: Does it mean that organizations need to design learning differently to cater to the appetite of the 4th Industrial Revolution technology?

Learn-earn-retire

We know about the first two Industrial Revolutions. The First Industrial Revolution triggered the need for labor in the textile mills that encouraged people to move from farms to mills, which subsequently also increased the demand for women and children as cheap labor.

The Second Industrial Revolution brought in mass production powered by electricity. The focus moved from textiles to steel. In 1833, the government in the UK made two hours of education a day compulsory for children working in factories. It was only in 1902 that a system of secondary

> Studies have shown that with traditional lectures, there is about a 5 percent retention rate of knowledge; whereas if you have hands-on practice or immediate application, it increases the rate up to 90 percent

schools was established. While the first two revolutions impacted the lives of blue collar workers, the third revolution impacted the white collared workforce with technologies like automation. New disciplines of study like Computer Science came up. And now, a Fourth Industrial Revolution that is impacting the white collared workers, is also blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres — incrementally adding pieces to the existing beliefs about learning that it is inadequate.

Omnichannel learning

Degreed has a manifesto that aims to unshackle learning. Employers make hiring decisions based on the degree enlisted in resumes which could be misleading or inaccurate. A degree seems to imply the end of the first phase of a 3 phase career – learn, earn and retire. In this model, the shelf life of a degree was long enough to last through one's career that spanned decades. If that degree has to have a pedigree (pun unintended) it immediately comes with a steep price tag that is out of reach for most.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is characterized by exponential changes. While leaders are spending time trying to rethink their business models and relationships with customers, they are missing one important element — rethinking the process of learning? Who owns the process of learning? Is it the employer or the learning team or is it the employee?

One look at the results of this survey by Degreed tells us that learning that is left to the L&D department (or the employer) will always be episodic. The organization will periodically get the employees together in a classroom and bring them up to speed. Classroom training that is instructor-led is the most prevalent mode of learning in organizations. Coaching is offered to a select few, while e-learning is cheaper and scalable, they are notorious for their low completion rates and hence ineffective.

Most people are learning in multiple ways. They all need to co-exist. We live in an "&" world. Paperbacks exist with e-Books. Analog business models exist with digital. Physical stores exist with online formats. There is another word for it – omnichannel. That is what learning must be.

HOW THE WORKFORCE REALLY LEARNS IN 2016

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Yearly

SELF-DIRECTED
- Web Search
- Peer Interactions
- Articles & Blogs
- Videos
- Books & e-Books
- Apps
- Online Networks
- Webcasts & Webinars
- In-person Networking
- Online Courses
- Podcasts & Audio Books
- Live Classes (outside of work)

L&D LED
- Coaching & Mentoring
- e-Learning Courses
- Instructor-led Classes
- Conferences & Trade Shows

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is all about integrating the physical, digital and biological world. Learners are keen to do the same. Now it is for L&D teams to take up the challenge and rethink their own roles and skills

$5 billion by 2025. Studies have shown that with traditional lectures, there is about a 5 percent retention rate of knowledge, whereas if you have hands-on practice or immediate application, it increases the rate up to 90 percent. VR, AR and holographic technologies can offer learners clinical training exercises and surgical skills training in "realistic simulated" environments.

Leverage AI for individualization

IBM Watson is helping learners personalize the learning experience, gather insights into learning styles, preferences, and aptitudes of every student. Intelligent Tutor Systems can provide customized, personal instruction at scale. Platforms like Khan Academy can use AI to analyze millions of pieces of data gathered from hundreds of thousands of users. Using AI to optimize instruction can improve student engagement, which will increase course completion rates.

The role of L&D is no longer to create content, but to curate and contextualize it. Degreed.com allows you to create a free account and track all your learning. They suggest videos, articles, books, podcasts that you can watch, make notes, share with others etc. This enables you to track your learning that is both, formal and informal, structured and unstructured. The curation is done by experts and you can access what your peers have recommended. It is a mix of free as well as paid content.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is all about integrating the physical, digital and biological world. Learners are keen to do the same. Now it is for L&D teams to take up the challenge and rethink their own roles and skills. That would be a revolution indeed.

Individualized and interactive

Instructor-led classroom learning is useful for teaching interpersonal skills. It is hard to learn these through e-learning modules. E-learning is a great way to pass on information that can be analyzed and acted upon by the individual. Augmented Reality platforms like Explore! Interactive can enhance the classroom learning processes through experimentation and gamification.

Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality applications for the healthcare market alone will reach

ALISON [+ Connect]	**code**cademy [+ Connect]
Import all courses from my Alison profile daily	Import completed tracks from Codecademy daily
Code School [+ Connect]	**good**reads [+ Connect]
Import completed courses from Code School daily	Import books I have marked 'read' in Goodreads daily
KHANACADEMY [+ Connect]	**pluralsight** [+ Connect]
Import my completed videos and assessments from Khan Academy daily	Import completed courses from Pluralsight daily
pocket [+ Connect]	**treehouse** [+ Connect]
Import articles I have marked as 'archived' in Pocket daily	Import completed courses from Treehouse daily

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ABHIJIT BHADURI is a bestselling author, influencer and leadership coach. He has been voted as a must-read columnist by LinkedIn and his website abhijitbhaduri.com has been categorized as a Platinum Blog.

A Disruptive Interviewing Technology slashes the amount of time, cost, wasted efforts and stress while adding much more speed, accuracy & productivity into your interviewing process, almost immediately!

Monjin's remarkable digital interviewing platform has enabled several organizations (including the fortune 500) to supercharge their interviewing process for good.
If your organization has a complex hiring process wherein you hire multiple candidates, for multiple positions, and for multiple locations then Monjin's unique 'Result Triangle' methodology can best-fit for you, even if you are hiring for domains you have never hired for before.

Monjin's Result Triangle combines - Right Candidates, Right Panel of Experts and Right Technology and it's been stitched together from the ground-up in a completely new way, helping the organizations manifest great interviewing results.

Here's How the Monjin's Result Triangle Works

Right Technology
Let Digitalization and Automation do all the hard work for you. Monjin's Video interviewing platform helps you conduct interviews anytime, anywhere. Once the work flow is designed, the process happens almost on auto pilot.
Technology does the matching and scheduling. Unbound of time and location interviews' are recorded, rated and can be shared with other decision makers.

Right Panel of Experts
Utilize the expertise, domain knowledge and experience of Monjin's empanelled experts to interview your candidates. Monjin enjoys a self-aggregating, ever-growing global army of experienced, even decades long, domain experts, passionately associated with us as Interview panellist. Tapping this exclusive intellectual resource immediately uplifts your interviewing process for good.
Best part, these mid-to-senior level managers working in different organizations, not only brings their own technical know-how but also perform an extensive evaluation to pick the right candidates, for you.

Right Candidates
Pick up already assessed candidates who fsuits best to your role, team and organization. Monjin is packed with a huge repository of pre-assessed, pre-interviewed, and pre-rated Active, Passive and smart supply candidates. Monjin's Interviewer panel evaluates these candidates on multiple parameters, unlike any other platform you would have ever experienced. And how amazing would it be for you to choose your candidates from this thoroughly vetted talent search portal. Imagine the amount of time and energy you will save because Monjin has already done most of the hard work for you.

Quick Advantages
Save 60 percent in your cost per hire. Looking for candidates with specific skill-sets? Monjin's dashboard analytics tells you profiles available for each skill-set. Sort candidates by skill, location, experience, rating, and more. Playback recorded interview as you want. Speed up your next level process with the right candidates.

Customize Your Hiring
Every job is as unique as the person working on it. So, it doesn't make sense to have common JDs. With Monjin, you have the option of creating your own unique JD by entering a range of skills you're looking for. This could be a creative expert with basic experience in WordPress plugins or a Data architect who's proficient with Python.

Detailed Candidate Assessment
You will find that each interview is backed by a thorough analysis of the candidate. This includes an Interview Summary provided by the interviewer, their personal opinion on the candidate, the kind of questions that were asked, etc. You will also find comparative ratings provided by the candidate on their skills versus ratings provided by the interviewer, and further details that provide a 360-degree analysis.

Monjin is the next gen easy and super-convenient recruitment process that takes care of the work, leaving you with more time to focus on what's important. And, if that's what you're looking for, welcome to Monjin.

MURAD SALMAN MIRZA

The Corporate Savviness Barometer

– An Organizational Effectiveness Perspective

Corporate Savviness refers to the enterprising use of a collection of core organizational competencies. What are the Key Savviness Aspects (KSAs) that are needed by dynamic businesses to attain/maintain/sustain formidable competitiveness?

Corporate Savviness is an organizational characteristic that refers to the enterprising use of a collection of core organizational competencies, i.e., Key Savviness Aspects (KSAs) that are needed by dynamic businesses to attain/maintain/sustain formidable competitiveness. It is a proactive trait that buffers progressiveness against paralyzing hindrances from precarious situations and enables a desired pace to business excellence. This article provides a brief explanation of the 15 KSAs and subsequently depicts the Corporate Savviness Barometer (CSB), against which, an organization can be assessed, for appropriate corrective/preventive actions or, in case of being on target, indulge in a 'moment to savor' with renewed affirmation.

The 15 KSAs are...

- **KSA #1: Employee Savvy**
  This refers to the ability of an organization in anticipating the needs and expectations of its employees in a proactive manner. It requires an enlightened approach to Talent Management that is manifested in the delightful measures taken to ensure the best possible journey for the employees as they enter, transition and exit the various roles within the organization during their employment lifecycle. It is a primary driver for maximizing employee engagement and reaps its rewards through selfless displays of 'organizational citizenship' behaviors and in the joyous reflection of the 'psychological contract' fulfillment through 'glowing' employee surveys.

- **KSA #2: Technology Savvy**
  This refers to the ability of an organization in seeking out and incorporating/developing the optimum mix of

A key success factor is the judicious use of senior management in depicting an accountable leadership that is strong, unwavering and responsive in its pursuit of business excellence

technology that will result in greater efficiency and effectiveness in strategic and operations management. It requires an honest review of existing and future needs, exploring viable options and maximizing the productivity/quality/cost effectiveness benefits by amicably resolving the dilemma of proportionality between apprehensive

workers and their technological nemesis. A key driver in its smooth incorporation is the speed, with which, the unlearning of old practices takes place to learn and apply the new knowledge with minimal hiccups.

- **KSA #3: Environmentally Savvy**
  This refers to the knack of an organization in appreciating the value of

ecological diversity in its surroundings and taking proactive actions to ensure that any adverse impacts from its products/services/operations are conscientiously alleviated/eliminated as a management imperative. It requires the courage and foresight to invest in technological solutions/workplace practices that may not be popular at the onset, but consequently, generate responsible mindsets, inculcate sound work habits and lead to greater/robust revenue growth among increasingly loyal clients/customers prone to rewarding environmentally friendly organizations.

- **KSA #4: Business Savvy**
This refers to the knack of an organization in understanding the market through careful analysis/diligent deliberations by using tools and techniques such as, PESTLE, SWOT, Balanced Scorecard, etc., and taking insightful business decisions that secure its viability as a 'going concern', and placing it firmly on the path to becoming a 'darling' of the key stakeholders. It demands strategic nimbleness, meticulous resourcing, operational optimization, financial discipline and an unrelenting focus on success while having the resilience to absorb tough losses with a 'learning' attitude. It also requires the adulation of core businesses and the temerity to disengage, without debilitating guilt, from unprofitable and unproductive enterprises.

- **KSA #5: Competitor Savvy**
This refers to the ability of an incisive organization in outwitting the competitors for gaining a predominant position in the market. It requires prudent anticipation, reflective understanding, deferential appreciation and actionable intelligence in terms of developing and deploying effective strategies to marginalize/neutralize the current/potential challengers from jeopardizing an organization's profitable existence. It demands operational synchronization wrapped in a blanket of impregnable confidentiality. It merits supreme confidence in seamless execution complimented by the disciplined disposition to engage in muted celebrations of success.

- **KSA #6: Future Savvy**
This refers to the ability of an organization in peering farther into the labyrinth of the future state of business than its competitors and realize the

Future savviness demands the channelization of the inherent 'surviving and thriving' animalistic instinct within the disciplined ingenuity of a thinking human mind

'first mover advantage' in unexplored/underexplored markets by delving into the essence of the 'Blue Ocean'* strategy. It requires visionary leadership that is unfazed by current challenges and has the fortitude to take profoundly astute, inherently unpopular, staggeringly transformational and emotionally draining decisions that are prone to resistance from less enlightened quarters of the organization. It demands the channelization of the inherent 'surviving and thriving' animalistic instinct within the disciplined ingenuity of a thinking human mind.

- **KSA #7: Branding Savvy**
This refers to the aptitude of an organization in adroitly leveraging its name as the emotional link that conjures up images of excellence in diverse aspects,

e.g., products, services, organizational culture, employee relations, etc. It entails the solicitous application of the Vision-Culture-Image (VCI) Alignment Model* and beckons a loyal following by key stakeholders to its offerings with unremitting confidence. A key success factor is the timely 'brand refreshment' that is necessary for retaining the 'Top of Mind Awareness (TOMA)' shelf space in the thoughts of its ardent advocates to ensure a steady traction for its recruitment initiatives and the unremitting influx of desired talent within its ranks.

- **KSA #8: Community Savvy**
This refers to the aptitude of an organization in harnessing the strength of the surrounding community to vociferously advocate the virtues of its 'natu-

Timely 'brand refreshment' is necessary for retaining the 'Top of Mind Awareness (TOMA)' shelf space in the thoughts of its ardent advocates to ensure a steady traction for recruitment initiatives and the influx of desired talent

ralized' presence. It requires concerted efforts to increase visibility within the community by sincere Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, e.g., developing schools, healthcare facilities, infrastructure, scholarships for bright students from low income families, etc., that breed endearment through the enhanced quality of life. It also demands sensitivity to the broader needs of the community by delicate handling of the simmering political/social/economic/cultural/environmental activism, and any consequent spillage. Beneficial byproducts of such endeavors can include a steady supply of local talent for the future needs of an organization, enhanced reputation, political clout, loyal customer base, etc.

- **KSA #9: Media Savvy**
  This refers to the knack of an organization in leveraging the power of various forms of media in creating, developing, inculcating and reinforcing a posi-

tive image of itself. It requires sound relationships with key decision makers within the various types of media. It demands proactively anticipating problems/issues and devising robust solutions in a timely fashion. It entails the optimum use of available forms of media to reach the maximum percentage of target market and overcoming the challenge of 'inundation' by delivering 'palatable packets' of information. A key success factor is the judicious use of senior management in depicting an accountable leadership that is strong, unwavering and responsive in their pursuit of business excellence.

- **KSA #10: Regulation Savvy**
  This refers to the ability of an organization in navigating through the finer aspects of applicable laws, rules and regulations without transgressing the established legal boundaries. It entails an astute understanding of the

'letter and spirit' embedded within the applicable regulatory documents and ensuring complete adherence accordingly. It demands the religious preservation of 'referable' records to provide the necessary history of compliance. A key success factor pertains to harboring the shrewd knowledge of the 'tensile strength'* of the applicable regulation. Mastery of this core organizational competence is exuded through the infectious confidence in inviting 'outside due diligence' without having dizzy spells.

- **KSA # 11: Supplier Savvy**
  This refers to the knack of an organization in creating/maintaining/sustaining a robust relationship with its suppliers by propagating the virtues of a win-win partnership. It requires the application of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) that are necessary to gain mutual trust for meeting stated and implied expectations as a catalyst for eventually 'going the extra mile'. It entails the consistent honoring of commitments in times of certainty and feverishly finding ways to avoid disruption during times of uncertainty. It demands a genuine interest in the 'corporate health' of the faithful supplier organization and timely provisioning of necessary support to enable a steady stride for keeping up with the growth of the client/customer organization.

- **KSA #12: Customer Savvy**
  This refers to the knack of an organization in maximizing the positive experience of clients/customers, as they come into contact with its products/services, by enriching the value chain*. It reflects a dogged commitment to earning the trust, confidence, satisfaction and loyalty of clients/customers who put their faith in the quality of its products/services. It demands the agility for timely adjustment to meeting/exceeding the changing needs/expectations of clients/customers. It requires humility in recognizing mistakes and willfully taking the necessary corrective/preventive actions effectively. It entails the invigorating freedom to engage in publicized celebrations on gaining high marks for its products/services from delighted clients/customers and forging an infallible determination to continue the same.

- **KSA #13: Change Savvy**
  This refers to an organization's aptitude in being comfortable with change and taking timely proactive measures

to ensure its continued relevance in the market. It requires an honest periodic review, using facilitative tools, e.g., SWOT, Force Field Analysis, Porter's Five Forces, Balanced Scorecard, etc., to analyze an organization's capacity to meet emerging/future challenges that are aligned with the achievement of corporate vision and deploying a systematic approach to reach the desired future state by using suitable methodologies based upon/inspired by 'action research', e.g., Kurt Lewin's Change Model, John Kotter's Change Model, etc. A necessary step for ensuring higher success probability is the unabashed preservation of 'lessons learnt' within the knowledge bank as an indispensible resource for future change initiatives.

- **KSA #14: Partnership Savvy**
This refers to the ability of an organization in developing robust alliances with suitable partners for gaining the maximum synergistic value/cross-fertilization in terms of structural/

functional growth and profitability. It requires prudent due diligence activities that can identify the most appropriate matches. It entails strategic alignment and operational synchronization with the preferred partner under the umbrella of clearly defined common goals/objectives. It is akin to conducting a 'recruitment and selection' exercise for inducting desired talent within an organization and demands paramount focus on effective 'talent management' during the partnership lifecycle.

- **KSA #15: Innovation Savvy**
This refers to an organization's ability in embracing innovation as a core value and ensuring its pervasiveness in all aspects of its operations, employee mindsets and products/services. It is driven by top/senior management as an imperative for generating 'delight factors' for key stakeholders. For example, designing electrifying reward packages for employees, returning higher-than-expected returns for share-

holders, enriching preferred suppliers with unexpected privileges, delivering 'transformational' experiences for loyal clients/customers, elevating 'community engagement' to unprecedented levels, attaining 'role model' status in regulatory adherence, etc. A key success factor is the embodiment of the perennial adage of a 'can do' attitude.

Savviness Calculation and Relevant State Identification Methodology

- Rate all 15 KSAs on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest
- Sum all the individual scores from 15 KSAs
- Compare the overall score with the relevant scale corresponding to the specific state on the CSB (Maximum Score = 15x10 = 150)
- Identify the specific state of your organization on the CSB

> A necessary step for ensuring higher success probability is the unabashed preservation of 'lessons learnt' within the knowledge bank as an indispensible resource for future change initiatives

THE CORPORATE SAVVINESS BAROMETER (CSB)

The Attrition State
(15 ≤ KSAs Score ≤ 75)

The Apathetic State
(76 ≤ KSAs Score ≤ 90)

The Attractive State
(91 ≤ KSAs Score ≤ 105)

The Adorable State
(106 ≤ KSAs Score ≤ 120)

The Adulatory State
(KSAs Score > 120)
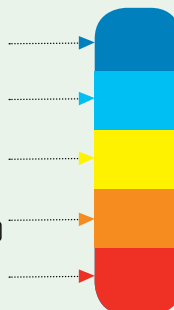
Your Next Move?

- 15 ≤ KSAs Score ≤ 90 - Time to Act & Survive!
- 91 ≤ KSAs Score ≤ 120 - Time to Reflect & Improve!
- KSAs Score > 120 - Time to Rejoice & Sustain! **P**m

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MURAD SALMAN MIRZA is an innovative thinker and an astute practitioner in areas within and associated with the fields of Organizational Development, Talent Management and Business Transformation

RAJITA SINGH

Shifting the gears – from content to context

Technology will always be relevant – but we can make life significant only if we enrich personalized experience beyond the psychological and emotional frameworks

4IR can be described as a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, and impacting all disciplines, economies and industries. It is no longer about change, but about the speed of change, the challenges it poses to the IT world and the various approaches to cope, excel, innovate, and understand.

Technology is neither good nor bad, but how we use it, is what that makes the difference.

Today, we are spending most of the time interpreting profiles on social media, automating sop's by way of having bots answer, Machine Learning applied for hiring, succession planning etc. In reality, the society has become a lot more individualistic while 'the connect' with humans has reduced by far across all ages. There is a growing need to provide an experience and responsibility. As they say there is no time for spectator sport – participation is the key to make it meaningful. If we are aware of what is around us, then we are being perceptive and if we acknowledge it then we are building momentum towards a positive direction and adding the zing aka the intensity to it. The level of experience depends on the level of intensity with which we do something/anything.

To take an example, in the evolution of IT over the years, the revenue growth has come down from the stratosphere almost plateauing with profit margins shrinking. The foundation of this industry is cost, talent and data which continue to remain. With this background, it becomes increasingly important to seek for opportunities and avenue for growth which introduces cognification. A Transparency Market Research reveals that the global artificial intelligence

Technology is neither good nor bad, but how we use it makes a difference

DIGITAL PLATFORMS MAKE IT EASY TO BUILD CUSTOM APPLICATIONS

A Digital Enterprise Technology Stack

Digital Enterprise Use Cases	Customer Targeting and Engagement	Operational Excellence	Workforce Engagement	Risk Management	New Digital Products and Services
	Personalised Experience Targeted Marketing	Warehouse Automation Demand Prediction Churn Prediction	Collaboration Connected Workplace	Fraud Detection Insurance Telematics Risk Modelling	Digital Lockers Digital Wallets DigitalCurrency

Digital Service Outcomes	Social Engagement	Digital Marketing	Mobile Apps /Web Apps	Commerce Platforms	Operational Insights

Digital Technology Investments	Big Data and Advanced Analytics	Cognitive Computing & AI	Internet of Things	Automation & Robotics	VR and 3D Printing	Mobility

(Digital Transformation Consulting) (Design UI/UX)

Infrastructural Readiness	Cloud-centric Infrastructure	Data Lakes	High Performance Compute Architecture	Security Infrastructure (MDM, End Point Encryption)

zinnov

TOWARDS A NEW WORLD ORDER AT WARP SPEED

A Transparency Market Research reveals that the global AI market was valued at $126 billion in 2015 and is forecasted to grow at a CAGR of 36.1% from 2016 to 2024, to reach $3 trillion

market was valued at $126 billion in 2015. It is forecasted to grow at a CAGR of 36.1% from 2016 to 2024, to reach $3 trillion. The Technology stack which would progressively be used by HR is as listed by Zinnov in June this year at its confluence is:

While this continues, for HR to deal with MOI (mountain of information) will become a reprieve. Technology has made us superhuman in capability, however, the key to maintaining sanity is by being inclusive. We can all use modern science and technology to create what we want, and this has constantly evolved, not in its fundamental format but in a way to be presented and expressed — it has to evolve because generations of people are different in their mindset and understand.

The innate outcome of use of technologies is always timeless because though our lifestyles or the external may change, the essential human being will always remain the same. Focus will be on experience and meaning which will impact the quality of work and business we do, for example, people talk about stress as if it is a new phenomenon in the IT industry, but stress is not new. Even the caveman 10,000 years ago was stressed when he did not eat for the day. But how you cope is different given the exposure.

So, the ability to handle technology and its side effects has intensified. It's all about shifting gears from the content to the context. The powerfulness of the experience is so deep that people naturally carry it on from one to another. If you put together 2 parts of Hydrogen and 1 part of oxygen – you will make water, similarly technology will always be relevant – just that the way the oil (i.e. data) is used needs to remain focused. But we can make life significant only if we enrich personalized experience beyond the psychological and emotional framework. Pm

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RAGHU RAMAN

Building a Jigsaw team

In this 6 part series, Raghu Raman, Former Soldier, CEO & Bureaucrat leverages his experience across diverse operating environments to discuss elements of leadership that are domain and industry agnostic and explains the 'FutureSkills©' that leaders will need to acquire in an increasingly VUCA World

Building a resilient and passionately aligned team is the job of every leader. While there are several strategies for creating teams, they fall into two broad buckets — Uniform teams and Diverse teams.

Uniform teams, as the name implies, consists of people who have similar skill-sets and are ideal for tasks that are routine, modular, requiring consistency and standardization. Think of a BPO or a fast food franchise, whose competitive advantage is the ability to provide a similar experience and scale rapidly. In the army, such teams could be equated with Infantry battalions or Armored/Artillery Regiments who have more or less the same tasks, and will be required to work with other infantry battalions/regiments and hence uniformity and standardization allows rapid scaling.

Uniform teams are ideal when the task is clearly defined, the environment is fairly predictable and past knowledge is easily transferable. This is what allows a BPO to learn from one unit and quickly transfer that knowledge to other units or allows a fast food franchise to discern bestselling items on the menu and replicate that across all outlets.

Diverse teams by comparison are smaller, consisting of members who are very different from each other and hence bring different skills to the table. Such teams consist of handpicked individuals with idiosyncrasies and hence by definition cannot scale. But the inherent diversity of the teams allows them to be highly innovative, agile and nimble. High technology companies, start-ups, or highly entrepreneurial environments, necessitate diverse teams because the environment is unpredictable and past knowledge is not only irrelevant but in some cases; can be downright detrimental. That is what allows Elon Musk to build a car which established automotive companies could not conceive of, or enables AirBnB to grow bigger than the largest hotel chain. Similarly 'past knowledge' handicapped Barnes & Nobles' agility in the face of competition from Amazon.

The Army's equivalent in this category, are the Special Forces who consist of teams with immense diversity. For example a five man Special Forces 'Hit Team' could consist of a linguist, a demolition specialist, medic, a sniper and a communication expert who would usually be tasked with a clear strategic intent, but a very nebulous blueprint. Such teams would be inserted into enemy territory with scanty intelligence and expected to improvise on the fly.

Diverse teams are ideal for VUCA environments where the organization is guided by a north star towards a general direction, but doesn't have or cannot have, detailed road maps. It requires the team to be agile, adaptable and appreciate that by

> Diverse teams are ideal for VUCA environments where the organization is guided by a north star towards a general direction, but doesn't have or cannot have, detailed road maps — it requires the team to be agile and adaptable

As organizations move towards an unpredictable world, they have two choices — to try and 'anticipate' every future risk and develop mitigation strategies & to emulate the Special Forces leadership model and create teams whose diverse skills, deep bonding and inherent resilience, helps them discern threats and opportunities faster

definition, their operating environment will be a fog of war, instead of predictable certainty.

To understand this construct better, it is helpful to use a metaphor of "tiled team" versus "jigsaw team".

As we know, tiles are uniform in size, shape and design. Since they are exactly like each other, we can estimate the number of tiles required by simply calculating the surface area of the wall and entire buildings can be tiled rapidly. The tiles fit next to each other, because they have exactly the same dimensions (interfaces). And when a tile breaks or cracks, it can be easily replaced with another tile. All one needs to do is to pry out the tile from its place and glue another tile instead. These are the advantages of a 'uniform' team.

But a 'tiled' team has its downsides as well. There is virtually no diversity as every part of the team looks and behaves exactly like any other. So elements like innovation, improvisation and agility suffer. Secondly, the tiles are stuck to the wall (the organization) and not to each other. So bonding between the tiles is non-existent resulting in very little collaboration. And when one tile cracks or breaks, there is no room for that tile in the team any more. Matter of fact, variance from the norm is the sole reason that broken tiles are replaced or for that matter not selected in the first place. But no matter how strong the tiles are, the mosaic always begins to crack at the joints between them.

A jigsaw puzzle on the other hand, consists of pieces with uneven shapes and sizes, which all fit together to complete the picture. Since the pieces are unique, each brings a different value to the overall result. And every piece is valued equally regardless of its size or shape. Their uniqueness is celebrated, not disparaged because it is the very variances, which allows the puzzle to be completed. More importantly, each piece fits in with several other pieces in very unique ways. Every piece needs to have a 'gap' (deficiency/vulnerability) for the other piece to be able to fit in with its protrusion (strength). If a jigsaw piece breaks, there is no need to replace it because the whole picture is made up of 'broken' pieces anyways.

A jigsaw is harder to build than a tiled wall. A jigsaw team requires the leader to have the vision of the end picture and to handpick individuals mapping their weaknesses more than their strengths. A leader needs to experiment with several pieces to see which one fits best where, but once assembled, a jigsaw team is interdependent, strong and resilient. More importantly, jigsaw pieces can combine in different ways to address different needs and the pieces have more camaraderie because they know that can't fit in tiled organizations. This bond between the pieces is what allows a jigsaw puzzle to be lifted off the table by holding just two pieces in the edge. If you tried that with a tiles arranged to each other, only the two tiles you held in your fingers would come off the table.

All of us are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. We have our strengths, deficiencies, protrusions and gaps. Traditional corporates glorify strong, stoic, unwavering & highly driven personas. But that is unreal and unsustainable. Deep down, we all have our insecurities, egos and fears. The delta between corporate expectations and core reality, wastes immense amount of energies in just 'covering up' – feigning strengths we don't have or pretending to be people we aren't.

Instead of building around strengths, jigsaw teams are best built around vulnerabilities. The leader sets the tone by acknowledging her weaknesses, vulnerabilities and fears. She does this by sharing her back stories, being self-disparaging and brutally honest about what makes her vulnerable. That allows the team to exhale and 'come out' from the personas they have been hiding behind, unlocking enormous energies that were being wasted 'competing' rather than complementing each other.

As organizations move towards an unpredictable world, they have two choices. The first is to try and 'anticipate' every future risk and develop mitigation strategies. But that is a zero sum game. By definition, it is impossible to predict future black swan events based on past experience. The other alternative is to emulate the Special Forces leadership model and create teams whose diverse skills, deep bonding and inherent resilience, helps them discern threats and opportunities faster and react to them decisively, within the window of opportunity. A jigsaw team is certainly harder to build – but then – real leaders are not needed for easy jobs!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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LEADING IN A VUCA WORLD

In the Age of Technology, will HR still matter?

The 4th industrial revolution will be far swifter, sharper and more ruthless than previous ones. So, what then will this mean for the HR function? Will it still be relevant? As technology takes over from humans, what HR roles (if any) will stay with humans? And what will be the skills of tomorrows HR?

▶ DR. SHALINI LAL

▶ ASHISH BHATNAGAR

Today we are at the threshold of the next industrial revolution. The World Economic Forum has termed this the "Fourth Industrial Revolution", and it is likely to be every bit as disruptive as the previous ones. In fact, many experts suggest that given the pace of disruptive technology innovations, the emergence of millennials and globalization, the impact of this industrial revolution will be far swifter, sharper and more ruthless than the others.

So, what then will this mean for the HR function? Will it still be relevant? As technology takes over from humans, what HR roles (if any) will stay with humans? And what will be the skills of tomorrows HR? To find this out, we interviewed HR leaders, HR technology companies, digital technology consultants and futurists. And everything we heard, points in one direction — *The old ways of HR are crumbling; the new ways of HR are yet to be invented.*

Transformative Abilities of Digital Technologies

What makes this moment unique in the human history is the convergence of the maturing of several technologies that had so far developed independently. While the general reader has been hearing of "artificial intelligence", "robotics" or "machine learning" for several decades, this has for many been the stuff of science fiction. In fact till recently, we were often reassured by experts that the time when humans needed to be concerned was far in the future.

All this is set to change now. Largely unseen to the wider world, each of these technologies has developed exponentially over the past few years. In fact, the pace of progress in several of these has astonished experts within these fields.

And this is just the start. Many of the news articles you read on the web may have been written by technology. For instance, Quill uses a combination of AI and natural language processing to write stories, no different from those written by humans. It even adds anecdotes and engaging human interest stories.

And for those who think technology is just for the routine and simple — did you know that an AI developed at an Australian university last year recreated the experi-

> What makes this moment unique in the human history is the convergence of the maturing of several technologies that had so far developed independently

ment that won the 2001 Nobel Prize in Physics in just 1 hour!!

The advances in technology have been so rapid that those outside these specialized fields may just be waking up to their implications.

Today's commercially available HR Tech solutions however, are still in their infancy. This could however change very fast. The recent entry of Google into HR Tech through Google Hire, might be the start of a new era of high tech in HR.

Organization Reinvention and HR Reinvention

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the C-suites of many organizations are concerned about the impact of new technologies on how they connect with their customers or organize their business. Uber and Airbnb serve as ready examples of just how disruptive technology can be to industries.

But this disruption is not limited to business alone. Each function has begun to consider what will stay and what will go. And HR is no exception. In fact, the HR leaders we spoke to were very aware of this challenge.

There are at least two ways in which technology in HR will intensify existing trends.

The first is that more and more work in HR will move to technology. What began with the adoption of HR ERPs, and has steadily expanded to include performance management systems, learning management systems etc. should next be able to replace the work of several of the COEs.

And the second is that much of HR will be available to employees and managers through a technology interface. We have already seen this in access to attendance, leave, payroll information or increasingly learning & development and career pathing. We will increasingly see this being used for employee engagement, culture building, on the one hand and talent acquisition, team development or meeting organizational goals on the other.

The opportunity to leverage social HR in organizations is huge. A strong social HR strategy supports talent attraction and retention, and amplifies an organizations brand to the outside world

Automation, Aggregation and Artificial Intelligence

We see at least three ways in which work in HR will move from humans to technology.

HR Automation 2.0 driven by Social, Mobile, Cloud & Analytics

In the early 90s, companies began by installing core HR systems, such as payroll in-house. In the late 90s, as the war for talent increased, companies started adopting HR-ERP solutions, and focused on these for recording and managing a wide variety of work. Job applications, attendance systems, and performance appraisal systems began leaning on technology. Later, we saw several specialized technology platforms emerge such as Taleo for talent management; SuccessFactors in performance management; and Cornerstone OnDemand, Saba and SumTotal in learning.

This trend towards automation will only intensify as more and more work that is being done by HR can be managed more efficiently by technology. Just as one day the attendance register vanished, and on another travel claims became digital (sometimes GPS enabled), more and more processes are moving to technology, often seamlessly.

Already managed through well-defined processes and decision trees, HR Operations is an obvious choice for automation. "There are significant efficiencies with automation. The HR operations or more conventionally known as HR Administration, of one of our clients came down from 30 people to just 6", mentions Harsh Vardhan, Chief Marketing & Ecosystem Officer, Ramco Systems. Meanwhile, a smoother technology interface is defining the user experience. The newest addition to this is the chatbot for responding to employee queries.

Beyond HR Operations, automation is likely to impact the routine in almost every other function of HR — interview tracking, logistics management for training, or even statutory compliance checks. The possibilities are endless, and many in HR will be thankful for not spending their time on rather tedious yet essential processes.

But that is not all — the opportunity to leverage social HR in organizations is huge. A strong social HR strategy supports talent attraction and retention, and amplifies an organizations brand to the outside world. Solutions such as "Yammer or Juraa (hSenid) are assisting companies improve employee collaboration.

Aggregation

By bringing all players on one platform, aggregators take away the role of the intermediary, and remarkably improve efficiencies. Within HR, we are most familiar with platforms such as Naukri.com or LinkedIn, which act as aggregators for applicants and recruiters.

Old-timers in HR may recall a time when in fact HR spent much time playing the role of an intermediary. This could have been as an intermediary between a hiring manager and a recruiting company or between a training vendor and a business manager. All this should change soon.

We are already seeing a start with Strat-board.com. Good aggregator platforms give business the choice — either to use the services of HR or go direct. Look at how travel aggregator technologies have disrupted traditional travel agents. And just like travel agents, HR might then be called in only in special cases.

Artificial Intelligence

While the first two are easier to predict, eventually it is AI that will bring the most disruptive change. Anything that emphasizes data, logic and cognition, will eventually be done far better by technology than humans. This is a rather bitter pill to swallow for roles that have prided themselves on their cognitive prowess.

Take for example the compensation function. A well-run compensation function relies on good data sets, a compensation strategy and well-designed algorithms that enable the application of this strategy. All of this is exactly the kind of function that is done far more efficiently by technology than by humans. Further, there are undeniable increasing returns to scale when an AI in this area takes over. Instead of periodic compensation surveys, using a subscription model, it will one day be possible to get data on any kind of role by industry, geography, skill-set etc. Payscale has made a start, but there are far greater possibilities.

Or take for example the task of crafting a people strategy. By asking business leaders a series of well-crafted questions, why will it not be possible for an intelligent technology to translate an annual business plan into its implications for talent acquisition or skill development? After all, isn't that what humans do in any case. "Having been in several board rooms, intuition

can only take you so far. Data will give HR people wings to support their intuition and influence business", says Rajan Kalia, Co-founder, Salto Dee Fe.

And there are increasing returns to scale here. As technologies mature and acquire large number of clients, they will not only be able to study patterns but in fact propose solutions far better than humans. Just as increasing returns to scale made the Google search engine better with each user, we may find HR Technology solutions coalesce around a few big platforms.

And then are the areas where humans have traditionally struggled, such as the recruitment interviews. Many within HR will be familiar with the low predictive ability of interviews by untrained interviewers. And yet in most organizations, the bulk of interviews are in fact done by untrained interviewers.

Would it then be a surprise if organizations used trained robots to help shortlist candidates? If this sounds fanciful, you may be surprised to learn that early trials with interviewing robots have been remarkably successful at Australia's La Trobe University.

Early trials show that while some candidates were unnerved by the idea of being interviewed by a robot, many others found it rather pleasant to chat with and felt they were able to open up far more than if there had been a human interviewer.

The possibilities are several, and many of these don't necessarily need humans in HR. For instance, Qilo assists business leaders to accomplish their vision by aligning their organizations goals. What's more is that the platform allows you to anticipate how culture and leadership will impact your outcomes.

Or take Amber, an AI that monitors engagement through the employee lifecycle. You can understand where there are causes for employee disenchantment and intervene appropriately. "Interestingly, we see

> By asking business leaders a series of well-crafted questions, why will it not be possible for an intelligent technology to translate an annual business plan into its implications for talent acquisition or skill development?
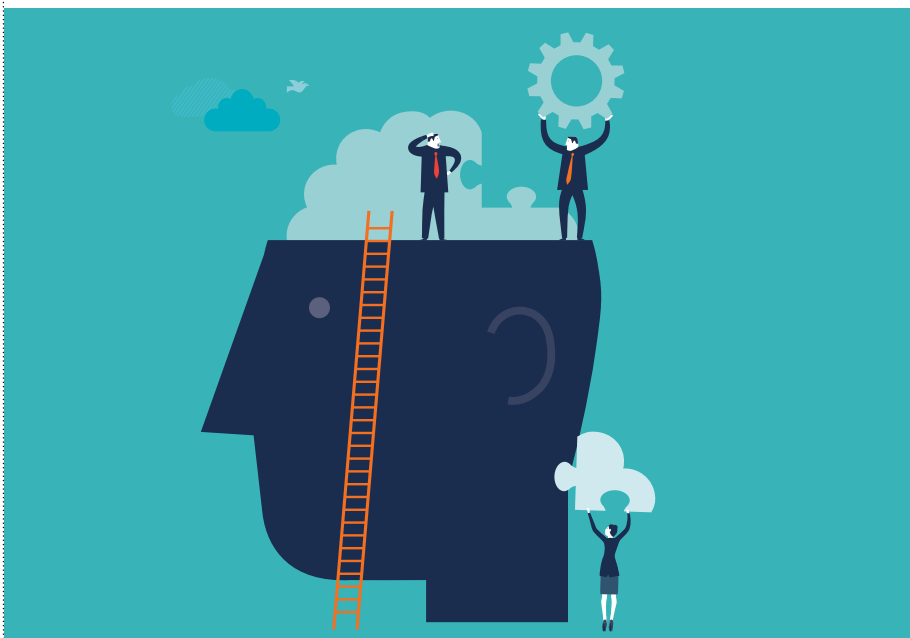
people open up and share more candid feedback with technology than say a person", comments Biplob Banerjee, EVP-Human Resources, Administration & CSR, Jubilant Foods.

These rather unexpected applications are the curved balls that may surprise HR as skills that have been honed over years may simply move to technology seamlessly.

What will this mean for the HR Function?

What will this mean for the HR function of tomorrow? What will stay and what will change?

One thing is clear — the HR function of tomorrow is a combination of human and non-human technology.

Designing the function would mean judiciously selecting deciding how work would be shared between the two. There are likely to be far fewer humans and far more technology. In fact, in private, some HR leaders admitted to new manpower targets that incorporate this emerging reality. In some organizations, this may mean an almost skeletal HR function, as business leaders may choose to directly interact with technology for most HR services. If this is a surprise, look at how many small, medium companies already work with an HR outsourcing model. When much of what the outsourcing partner offers can be done by technology, HR may not have many (or even any) humans.

There are on the other hand, larger organizations where humans in HR would still be needed.

The COEs are likely to be strongly impacted through a combination of technology and outsourcing. "I see the COEs being the most impacted (along with HR Ops), as this work will either get outsourced or automated. On the other hand the HRBPs will continue because the understanding of business is very important" says Kinjal Choudhary, SVP and Group CHRO, Volvo-Eicher. With technology at their fingertips, HRBPs would have to bring far greater business judgment to their role. The advice they give will need to be over

The HR function of tomorrow is a combination of human and non-human technology — designing the function would mean judiciously selecting deciding how work would be shared between the two

and above what an intelligent system could provide, so they will need to upskill.

Roles that can offer high touch interventions such as facilitation, coaching or counseling will survive. In fact, given the amount of organizational change we are likely to see in the next few years, these may even thrive. Not everyone values these skills equally though, and many may prefer to employ consultants.

Some new roles may emerge. For instance, the increasing use of technology will throw up a host of questions around ethics and privacy. As HR sub-systems get more and more linked, and we generate vast amounts of data, privacy and moral use of this data becomes critical. This is a far bigger issue than many realize today.

For instance, if a chatbot collects data on employee engagement, and an employee is unhappy, who should have this information? How should this be used? What about comments shared on internal online communities — should these be monitored, or will that disrupt the free flow of ideas?

Or who should have access to interview data once the employee has been selected? Will this information bias a manager's future interactions with the employee?

Similarly, when using machine learning to recognize patterns and teach technology "How we do things here?" "How do we prevent the reinforcement of existing biases?" Experience with recent AI technologies has shown that as it learns it can incorporate the same biases as the people around them. How does one then use technology to consciously strengthen core values, while ensuring that current unwanted cultural features are not propagated?

All these need new ways of thinking and new models that bring together insights from how technology impacts people and human behavior; a workable model of ethics and privacy in the new workplace; and how each of these impact an organizations culture.

While in the past having good HR systems could set you apart, this is no longer true. Good HR systems are now freely available and a necessary part of an organizations infrastructure. What will set HR apart is judgment and business skills
- Krish Shankar, Infosys

The Evolution of HR

We are therefore looking at an HR function with very different solutions. When HR began almost a hundred years ago, it was tasked with finding answers to a question: How should organizations be built to maximize their human resources? The question still stands — in search of new answers. **pm**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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ASHISH BHATNAGAR is the Founder of ITBirbal.com, a global search and an online review platform for IT Solutions & Services companies. Prior to that, Ashish served as a Director at Microsoft India and Navision India, for a period of 7 years post his consulting career with Ernst & Young. He is an alumnus of XLRI Jamshedpur and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

If you look at the role of HR as cognitive and emotional, a lot of the cognitive work will move to technology, the work that needs emotional intelligence will remain with HR
- B Srikanth, Airtel

LEARNING
LANDSCAPES OF THE FUTURE

LESSONS FROM THE FRONTLINE ON HOW DISRUPTION IS
FORCING INTEGRATION OF LEARNING MODELS
AND TECHNOLOGIES

The increasing use of digital technologies and the imminent rise of intelligent technologies have increased the focus on the preparedness of organizations to adopt and adapt to the changes brought by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. What paradigm shifts will this cause in the L&D space?

By **Suparna Chawla Bhasin**

We are amidst uberization of the workforce. Organizations are becoming agile and so is the workforce. From liquid workforce, talent on demand, independent workers to an app-driven labor market — these are the new norms that are and will make an impact on everything — including the traditional learning models. And this is the kind of disruption we are experiencing in a hyper connected world that is driven by innovation.

So, how will IoT impact L&D professionals? What specific learning technologies will dominate and enable the Internet of Things? How can these technologies create new, innovative learning experiences for employees? How IoT may change the roles, responsibilities, and rules of running your learning organization?

In a bid to seek answers to such questions, we reached out to thought leaders in the L&D space and asked them what they think about the changes that the 4IR is generating, and what it would do to the L&D space.

The cover story also includes *People Matters-Simplilearn L&D Tech Study on Skill Acquisition for the Digital Age* aimed at exploring the state of L&D function in relation to digital technologies and the inclination of organizations towards online learning methodologies for re-skilling and up-skilling of their employees. The study has focused on three aspects of the L&D function.

- L&D Strategy: What are L&D priorities in context to digital and automation?
- Delivering Knowledge and Skills: Understanding the best way to deliver training content.
- Training Methods of Digital Age: The new modes of delivering training to skill, upskill and reskill your employees

Skill Acquisition for the Digital Age

The People Matters and Simplilearn Research studied how companies are building competencies and acquiring skills for the digital age. With responses from 102 organizations, findings for this study showed that the most important competencies for the future will be 'enabling a digital mindset' and 'building a culture of collaboration'.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL DISRUPTION AND AUTOMATION

Top L&D priorities

75% Enable digital mindset at leadership level

70% Building collaboration as a competency

68% Benchmark current skills and streamline jobs for future

67% Identify next gen learning offerings
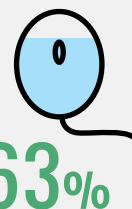
63% Design interventions to foster a culture of digital thinking

Organizations are focusing on acquiring skills vs acquiring talent

28% prefer skill acquisition but don't have resources to implement

33% prefer skill acquisition and have resources to implement

20% prefer lateral hiring for more than 20% projects
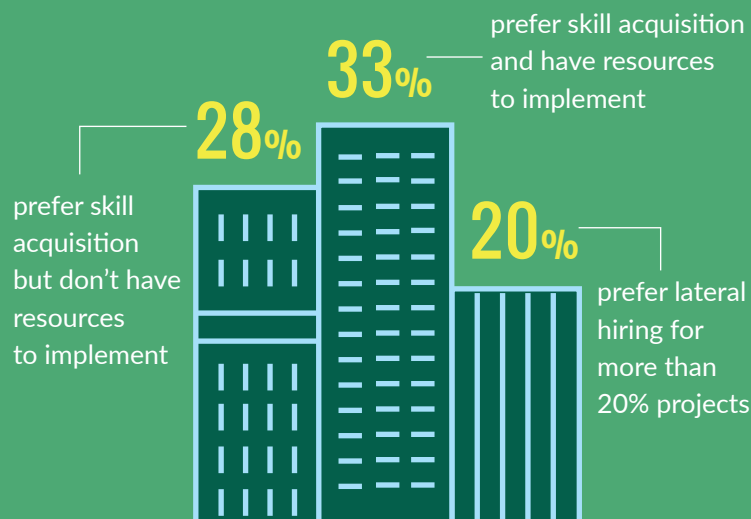
Top technology areas where re-skilling need will be highest in next 12-18 months
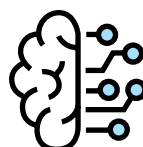
41% Artificial Intelligence

32% Machine Learning

25% Big Data Analytics

20% Mobile & software development

Training ownership is moving towards business

Key decision makers on key competencies and courses

37% CEO

36% HR Head/CHRO

13% Line Managers

A view of shifting ownership

44% Business teams are taking more ownership

32% Shift is happening but it is only marginal

23% Ownership remains with L&D

PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS

Top attributes assessed for evaluating employees' train-ability

Willingness to learn

Adaptability

Perseverance and Commitment

Resourcefulness

Seeks mentors and assignments in new areas

Maturity of L&D systems to impart competencies required for the digital age

4% Don't know

11% Mature

54% In process

30% Not Mature

Top 3 motivators for encouraging learners to complete courses

31% Career path: fast track/promotions — 2

39% Rewards & recognition — 1

17% Gamification of the training program — 3
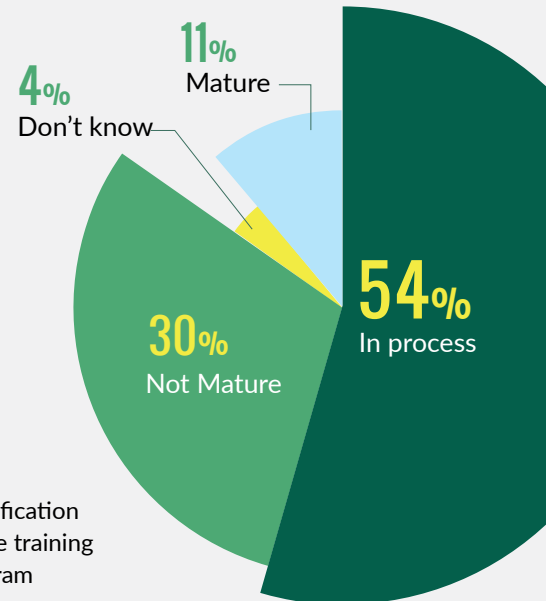
A VIEW OF ONLINE COURSES

Top reasons for preferring online courses

☑ Self-paced learning **79%**

☑ Easy integration into existing processes **67%**

☑ Regular updates **62%**

☑ Validated certifications **48%**

Wish list - Top attributes for online courses

80% Valid certification

77% Great user experience

74% Assessments
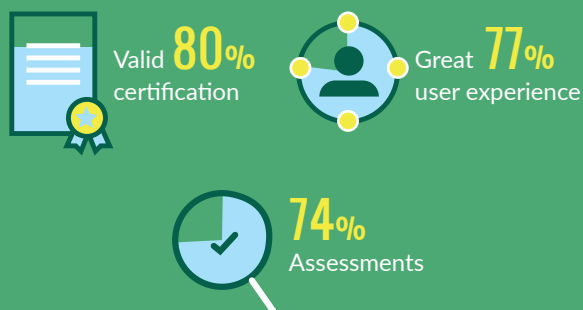
DEMOGRAPHICS   102 companies

Industry Type

Industry	%
IT & Communication	21%
Manufacturing/Engineering	19%
Banking, Financial Service and Insurance	8%
Automotive	8%
Pharmaceutical/ Medical Devices/ Healthcare Services	6%
FMCG	6%
Real Estate/ Infrastructure	2%
Energy	2%
Telecommunication	2%
Retail & Wholesale Trade	1%
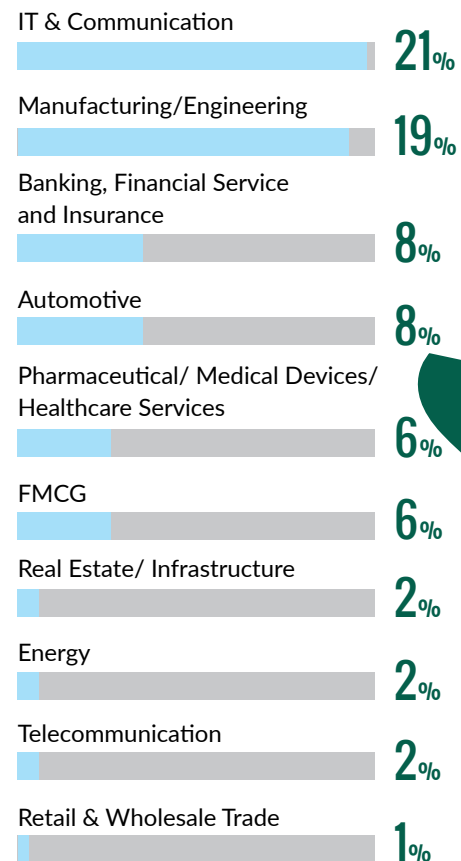
FINDINGS

1 STRATEGIC DECISIONS REGARDING L&D FUNCTIONS

Skill acquisition preferred over talent acquisition

Traditionally, it has been believed that skilled talent is in great demand and the supply is far short of expectations. Among the surveyed organizations, more than 60 percent preferred to train and redeploy existing talent, i.e. skill acquisition instead of hiring skilled talent from outside. The advantage of this approach has been seen in saving talent acquisition cost and increasing talent retention. A substantial percentage (28 percent) also felt that they were pressed for time and resources to achieve skill enhancement; and thus, L&D teams need to come up with innovative methods to train employees fast and with minimum resources.

L&D needs to prioritize building digital mind-set and benchmarking

In the face of the ongoing digital disruptions and the imminent automation wave, it is evident that reskilling and upskilling are going to be major responsibilities of the L&D teams in the immediate future.

Respondents identified the most important L&D priorities as:

- Instilling a "digital mind-set at the leadership level" (75 percent); and
- "Benchmarking the current skills level in the organizations which will help in streamlining future job roles" (67 percent).

Clearly, organizations feel that leadership will require imbibing digital technologies in their thought processes and working towards developing skills in their employees to tackle new roles. This also points to a possible gap in awareness between the L&D professionals and the top leadership regarding digital technologies and their impact.

It is interesting to see that new-age sectors such as IT & Communication, BFSI and Telecom attach a greater importance to a culture of collaboration and are willing to invest in L&D initiatives.

Establishing linkage between L&D initiatives and business outcomes continues to be a priority

The most difficult task that any L&D manager faces is to establish a clear link between L&D initiatives and improved business outcomes. Our respondents have indicated that this will continue to be a priority while investing in upskilling employees for digital disruptions.

While a substantial number of respondents (15 percent) do not measure L&D's ROI, the most common means of reaching a number are: Performance pre- and post-training (41 percent) and qualitative feedback from employee (28 percent).

L&D programs should demonstrate a clear performance enhancement in participants post training and generate positive feedback from employees. Therefore, while designing skill enhancement programs, care needs to be taken while ensuring that these two parameters are clearly measurable.

However ROI alone will not drive up-skilling initiatives. Key challenges for L&D professionals will be getting 'Executive Buy-in' and 'Aligning L&D' initiatives to the overall strategy of the organization. Even after tackling all these challenges, lack of interest among employees is likely to be a spoiler in upskilling efforts.

Business involvement in decision making is growing

Business teams are emerging as key stakeholders in deciding on domain and technology specific courses to be imparted to employees. This increase of ownership is felt strongly by 44 percent of

New-age sectors such as IT & Communication, BFSI and Telecom attach a greater importance to a culture of collaboration and are willing to invest in L&D initiatives

the organizations covered and marginally by 32 percent. It is a huge positive for the L&D teams that business teams are starting to see value in learning and that the L&D function is evolving from a 'good-to-have' mindset to a 'must-have' mindset.

The final decision on the key competencies to be developed and the skills to be imparted rest majorly with the CEOs or HR Heads in equal measures, which also supports the above finding that management is increasingly participating in L&D decisions instead of leaving them to the HR leaders.

② DELIVERING KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS: TRAINING PROCESSES

Once an organization has moved beyond the planning stage on skill enhancement programs, it has to decide on the audience and best mode for delivery of the content.

a. L&D processes and systems need maturity to handle challenges of digital disruption

While most organizations (84 percent) plan their calendars 1 year in advance, the maturity of current practices in being able to handle the demand for upskilling is also crucial. A majority of the respondents (88 percent) felt that their L&D processes and systems still need to mature to handle the new challenges of digital disruption. This represents an opportunity for external partners as they can fill in the gaps with their expertise and become important stakeholders in skilling efforts of organizations.

b. "Willingness to learn" is the key indicator of trainability

All employees are not equally amenable to re-skilling and up-skilling programs and organizations need to identify which employees should it invest time and money on.

The success of training initiatives depend on choosing the right audience and this has been reflected in the responses where 67 percent chose "willingness to learn" as the key indicator of trainability.

③ TRAINING METHODS FOR THE DIGITAL AGE: ONLINE COURSES & CERTIFICATIONS

a. Current Scenario

The availability of online courses and certifications has increased exponentially in recent times.

Organizations that have incorporated this mode of training feel that it has distinct advantages such as self-paced learning, it is easy to integrate into L&D strategy and processes, and it can be updated regularly with the latest content.

> "The exponential advancement in technology, penetration of Internet and encroachment of computational power has forced leaders to go back to the drawing board and re-design their business models to deliver better outcomes to customers and stay relevant in the market. In order to improve productivity, optimize costs attached with processes and for accomplishing a better customer experience, going digital is indispensable for organizations. And as this disrupts the ways of working, skilling, re-skilling and upskilling, talent becomes pivotal in setting up businesses for success. Hence, the role of Learning and Development (L&D) function is more critical than ever before in today's world."

KRISHNA KUMAR
Founder & CEO
Simplilearn

Online learning has an edge when it comes to acquiring a new skill quickly, because online content can be made available faster than designing a formal classroom training program. In conversation with People Matters, Chetna Munshi, Head L&D of Ericsson echoed similar sentiments, "One of the advantages that we have observed with online courses is that when there is a time gap between the formal course availability and the business readiness, in such events, online courses or MOOCs are an excellent way to acquire skills in a shorter span of time."

Most organizations are optimistic about the readiness of employees to imbibe this new method of enhancing their skills and knowledge — as many as 42 percent of respondents felt that more than 70 percent of their workforce can be trained using digital technologies. Currently, organizations are using this mode of learning for roles ranging from Entry level to Middle-management levels, which indicates that the need for skill enhancement is present throughout organizations.

Rachita Sahgal, Head - L&D, GE South Asia, says "We currently have people skilled in mature technologies and need to re-skill them on emerging or nascent technologies".

The success of training initiatives depend on choosing the right audience and this has been reflected in the responses where 67 percent chose "willingness to learn" as the key indicator of trainability

> The most radical shift that has to be brought about is in the employee mindset, starting from the leadership, that analytical thinking and data comprehension will be increasingly important to drive business efficiency and productivity

greater incentives to drive its adoption within the workforce.

b. **The way forward:** The future of online learning as a preferred medium of training depends upon its ability to meet the expectations of organizations on 3 key parameters:
  - The course should be appealing to end users;
  - It must include a valid certification; and
  - It should include a component of assessment.

It is also evident that online learning will be adopted for the newest technologies that are emerging, namely Artificial Intelligence, Machine learning and Big Data & Analytics. These 3 emerging fields have been ranked as the most relevant areas for reskilling and up-skilling by the respondents.

Conclusion

The study provides some key insights to both L&D teams as well as service providers that operate in the L&D ecosystem.

The efficacy of online courses and certifications is currently challenged by low course completion percentages and to overcome this, these programs must be appealing to the end-users and organizations alike. Any online learning initiative that demonstrates a measurable performance enhancement will help L&D teams in establishing a positive ROI for their training efforts.

A majority of employees in organizations at the entry to the mid-level are amenable to online learning, with key indicators of trainability being the willingness to learn and adaptability of the individual. Online learning possesses some inherent advantages as it can be updated regularly with latest content, can be easily integrated with current L&D practices while allowing the learner to pace their progress as per their wishes.

The major demand for skill enhancement will be in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine learning and Big Data-Analytics and online learning initiatives can provide latest content related to these faster than traditional modes of training such On-The-Job and classroom training. With business teams taking greater interest in learning initiatives in most organizations, the onus is on content providers to demonstrate their ability to partner with L&D teams in handling the challenges of these new technologies.

The most radical shift that has to be brought about is in the employee mindset, starting from the leadership, that analytical thinking and data comprehension will be increasingly important to drive business efficiency and productivity. **pm**

Despite this, the current penetration of online courses/certifications is low with 85 percent of surveyed organizations using this mode to implement less than 50 percent their training sessions. One of the reasons for this could be low completion to enrolment ratio observed by organizations. Percentage of course completion remains below 50 percent for majority of the organizations.

Organizations use a variety of methods to encourage learners on their learning journey, most popular being linking certifications and course completion with Rewards & Recognition as well as Career Progression. Most organizations (67 percent), however, do not have a policy of reimbursing employees after successful completion of their courses, which could be a challenge in adoption of this learning mode by employees.

Given the advantages that this medium of learning has over the traditional methods, it would be beneficial for organizations to offer

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- Automatically process large volumes of CVs

- File types and data output

- Data privacy and Security

- Normalization and Ontologies

- 16 global languages

CAREER BUILDER

WILL L&D BE REPLACED BY A CHATBOT SOON?

Technology, as tempting as it may seem, is not a solve-it-all; L&D professionals will need to invest significant effort in translating technology into a meaningful experience for the learner

Katarina Karalic
Learning & Development Leader, Procter & Gamble (Indian Sub-continent, Middle East & Africa)

Most of us in Learning & Development field battle with technology every day and the role it should (ideally) play in our lives as HR professionals and even more so in the lives of our employees.

Many solutions exist in the market and we are often tempted by the idea that a 'Big Bright Technology Enabled Future' will bring answers to all issues. But the reality is – it probably will not.

Technology will solve our problem of energy-draining automated tasks that can easily be 'taught' to and outsourced to a machine (just the way we did decades ago on the manufacturing lines). But it will not be the silver bullet that solves all our L&D issues. As the field of corporate knowledge becomes increasingly fragmented, technology is a welcome ingredient of simplifying tasks like identifying the right content, tracking the learner's consumption or facilitating connections within peer groups or reaching out to experts. Many of us are using LMS platforms that are doing most of the above with the varying degrees of quality.

However, we cannot outsource the organizational engagement bits – cultivating learning skills and inspiring motivation to learn. Recent research reports say we are dealing with an overwhelmed learner. Battling daily demands of an ever-changing world, an average employee today has less than 1 percent of mind-space available to dedicate to higher consciousness activities such as learning. Our learner probably has just enough time to browse for that simple tip on how to deal with a specific problem in hand — just-in-time, now and fast. If the attempt of finding an answer looks more cumbersome or time-consuming, it will go on to-do list, but not always being attended to. Days of lengthy training sessions are gone. No one has the capacity or patience.

And while learning professionals will argue that the process of obtaining and memorizing new information has not changed regardless of the dynamic environment we live in today, there are two clear trends which are emerging:

- A need for micro-learning (short content available on demand to find an answer to a specific problem); and
- New learning skills — the ability to prioritize, detach from everything demanding for our attention and the focus to build skills more strategically.

The former could be supported with technology — a hyper-effective knowledge management system that archives and retrieves all the content you have within your organization; and serves as an advisor on how to navigate the database and where to find the experts. I can help even with everyday tasks like finding that 1-page document on influencing styles or getting a seat on the next leadership classroom training. Chatbots are becoming increasingly popular as messaging services are taking over social media apps in markets across the globe. To build and train a bot is no longer science fiction as the price is affordable and not just an exclusive right of big corporations. But will this meet all the needs of our learners?

This situation is like giving a new toy to a child — you might think it is cutting-edge in the toys industry, but the little one might not share your enthusiasm and will probably still ask for your attention once the initial infatuation fades away.

Digital learning tools should free up time of L&D professionals so that they can invest it in more strategic tasks and focus their energy on better understanding of the both learners' and the business needs. With advancement in technology, L&D professionals have a make-over task ahead of them and will need to learn some new skills. As more parts of our work become replaceable by technology solutions, our businesses will expect us to be more involved in the changing dynamics — to be able to better diagnose the capability needs and direct learners to the right solution in a sea of options.

The conclusion is quite simple — no matter what investment you are planning for your next L&D technology solution, ensure that you have thought through the organizational engagement plan and one for honing your own skills.

How will you communicate the benefits of the solution to your employees and why should they engage with it? Is it indispensable enough to deserve space on their smartphone home screens? How will their day-to-today work become better, simpler and of higher quality because of this solution? Are you creating a meaningful experience for the learner?

If your answers to these questions predict just marginal improvement (or increasing complexity), you are better off not investing.

> Technology will solve our problem of energy-draining automated tasks that can easily be 'taught' to and outsourced to a machine, but it will not be the silver bullet that solves all our L&D issues

Real Time Compliance Management

Avoid non-compliances taking place than a post mortem after the damage is done.

Organizations have to adhere to many compliances under Labour Law , Factories act & similar laws. By implementing Labourworks you not only send advance Email/SMS notice about a possible non-compliance likely to happen & give an opportunity to the contractor to take corrective actions. But if the corrective action is not taken in time then you can simply block the entry of the worker & avoid non-compliances from taking place in a real time mode.

Some of the compliances that can be implemented in real time mode are

- Working without a weekly off
- Maximum work hours exceeded in a week
- Contractor Labour License expired
- Labour License Capacity exceeded
- Medical Check up not done
- Induction training not completed
- Work Order expired
- Work Order Capacity exceeded
- Female worker entry during night shift
- Debarred worker entry

There are many more compliances which can be handled in an offline mode as well.

Labourworks™ is an Enterprise Contract Labour Management System which helps you streamline various processes using SPC Methodology™ . SPC Methodology™ are industry best practices in Security , Productivity & Compliances. Organizations have also observed up to 10%* cost reduction on Contractor billing by implementing SPC Methodology™. There are more than 350 installations of Labourworks™.

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BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO MAKE ORBIT-SHIFTS

Organizations need to not just reskill or upskill their workforce; they have to fundamentally repurpose them

Gokul Ranganathan
Partner Consultant, Erehwon Innovation Consulting

Ingenuity of human thoughts, leading to mind-blowing breakthrough business opportunities and possibilities, can never be replaced by bots. That the mundane and day-to-day is taken care of by the 'wired' organism — AI, bots and machines floating over Clouds; it's time to unleash the organization and people towards making Orbit-shifts.

The organism is getting lots of love and affection from businesses and its spreading fast. The possibility of a full blown colonization seems very real — quite an unsettling thought. However, this change, like any change, presents us with exciting opportunities, only if we choose to see and embrace it. The most seductive and powerful of these opportunities is 'Building an innovative workforce'. With the right culture, practices and methods, systems and structures, an innovative workforce will be able to conceive, pursue and execute game-changing leaps and transformative solutions leading to quantum impact. In essence, a workforce that will pursue Orbit-shifts, create new value as against merely maintaining the current — a dire need for every organization today.

Given the colonization, what makes 'Building an innovative workforce', a great opportunity?

Firstly, any successful pursuit of the innovation agenda, manifesting as a differentiated offering, process, business model or strategy, is fundamentally a human endeavor. A successful innovation pursuit calls for having the mindset of a 'challenger', with the ability to uncover unstated market needs, challenge wide-held industry and organizational mental models and come up with creative business propositions — things that the organism can't. The 'wired' organism can powerfully learn logic, develop algorithms if fed with volumes of data. More often than not, this data is representative of current and past trends/scenarios. The organism can 'predict, suggest' and may be even decide but never 'imagine' — a trait solely vested with us humans. Ingenuity of human thoughts can never be replaced by bots. Hence, creating an organization that unleashes and channelizes people's imagination becomes mission critical.

Secondly, talking of businesses, in the last decade and a half, receptivity towards innovation has tremendously increased. What was earlier a desirable, nice-to have corporate brand badge is today seen as a key driver for growth and profitability. 'Optimization', which is pursed rigorously today, is going to become a commodity with the advent of the 'wired' organism, forcing organizations to differentiate through innovation. An innovative workforce with the right paraphernalia is going to provide a 'ready-state' for organizations to think and action their innovation agenda, thereby creating powerful end-market differentiation.

> To build organizational innovation capacity, the role of L&D needs to undergo a tectonic shift — not just catalysts, evangelists or partners but Strategic Capability Architects

Thirdly, the attraction and traction points for today's workforce are fundamentally different. Conventional drivers like stability, security and flashy perks are secondary for them. Their primary ask is a powerful, meaningful 'purpose' to work towards. They are 'experimenters' deriving their gratification from pursuit of 'out-of-the-box'. An 'organization for innovation' would provide a fertile, infectious playground for this workforce, for it democratizes innovation which otherwise would continue to remain elitist.

There are some great examples of initiatives taken by organizations towards building an innovative workforce and the rich dividends they have earned as an outcome is there for us to see.

Take the case of Titan Jewelry Business, which created the famed Innovation School of Management for its supply chain division. Employees, in teams, work on impossible, current and futuristic innovation challenges in front of the business. In a span of 20 weeks, teams navigate these challenges systematically to come up with breakthrough solutions and prototype them as well. These teams have thought of and executed possibilities which have left even the leading domain experts across the world speechless.

One team has created a 420X jump in the productivity of a globally benchmarked manufacturing process — a first in the world while another, tripled the capacity of their plant without adding any manpower and several more such Orbit-shifts were achieved. Today about 60 percent of the workforce are innovators and the innovation school has contributed significantly to the bottom line of the organization. Anand Group, a USD1.2 Billion auto-component group, has institutionalized innovation in 7 group companies. Anand group has created a robust innovation ecosystem where innovation happens by-design. About 1300 employees have been enabled to pursue innovation challenges on an on-going basis. For every six yearly KRA, each of these innovation champions, taken on an impossible innovation challenge — Innovation is a habit here.

These organizations have not just reskilled or upskilled their workforce. They have fundamentally repurposed them. Quantum Leaps achieved in these organizations cannot be achieved by an algorithm running on a machine. These were solely the outcomes of a passionate, creative human pursuit; outcomes of an innovative workforce. Instead of letting innovation be accidental and personality-centric, they have created a workforce who can make innovation happen by-design. Instead of innovation being a cream layer of skill, limited to high performers, they have made every employee achieve high performance through innovation. Innovation has become a norm of engagement within these organizations.

Every business rides on a 'factor of eternal assurance'. A laundry business's deep, unstated belief is that as long as there are human beings, they would clothe, which would need a wash-cycle, assuring an eternal continuity of business. For insurance, it is 'life security'. For automobiles, it
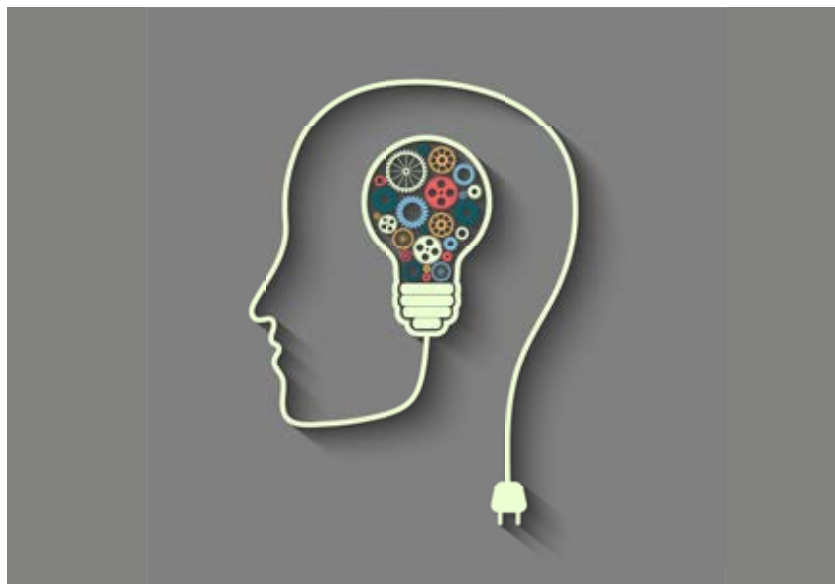
Ingenuity of human thoughts can never be replaced by bots; thus, creating an organization that unleashes and channelizes people's imagination becomes mission critical

is 'mobility'. These factors of eternal assurances are anchored around the market needs, which as we know, would undergo massive changes time-to-time. The future 'factor of eternal assurance' which organizations should build and capitalize on is the 'innovative workforce'. Such a workforce can never put an organization out of business even if the entire industry shuts down, for they would have already identified newer core opportunities and adjacencies for the organization.

Now, what does this mean for the L&D function?

L&D plays a critical but often a thankless 'supplier' role within an organization — mid-year performance reviews, identifying capability gaps, personalized training plan and interventions, catering to specific requirements from the business leaders — the services offered are cool and plenty. There is consensus omnium amongst L&D fraternity around 'evolving to stay relevant & valuable'. However, to build the organizational innovation capacity and for businesses to successfully leverage the innovation opportunities, the role of L&D needs to undergo a tectonic shift — not just catalysts, evangelists or partners but Strategic Capability Architects. Architects who can influence and shape the business vision and innovation agenda, whose business and end market understanding is superior, who are able to create and catch market trends and influence the business to build the innovation capability needed for them to be cutting-edge in the market. And the new role sounds cool too!
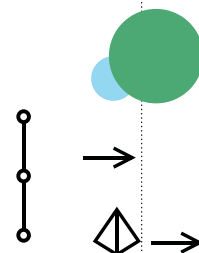
ALGORITHM-DRIVEN INTELLIGENT LEARNING

We are heading towards an algorithm driven intelligent learning that will disrupt the learning industry like never before

Krishnan Nilakantan
Vice President - L&D & Head Learning Architect, Reliance Industries Ltd.

"The future is already here — it's just not very evenly distributed" - William Gibson

This is what the famous science fiction author is reported to have aired in an interview to Fresh Air, NPR.

With the turn of the modern era, one cannot agree with him more. Such has been the influence of technology in today's world. A mere sifting of a few online news feeds and interaction with people, throws light on how technology is moving ahead at a phenomenal pace. If you look at the technology trends that have been covered in the news you would be awestruck with the technology and the potential it has in shaping our tomorrow.

Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Automation, Intelligent Apps, Internet of things, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Blockchain, Conversational UI (Bots), Drones… the T-list is virtually endless. Technology has become so powerful that it is now influencing human behavior in terms of way we think and act, I believe this time around technology is heralding the change.

Yes, I could indeed vouch for the same as I have experienced it all in my own domain.

My interactions with various leaders in Learning and Development space reveal that some organizations have successfully implemented micro learning, real-time video learning, and courses from open source. Over the past 5 years, we have made a significant improvement in making learning available at any time and offering content using different form factors.

A significant shift has also been witnessed in terms of the approach to foster learning culture.

Learning Management Systems have moved from being the principle employee experience systems to a background enabler. Many organizations have successfully implemented gamification as a mainstream learning element and it has reported to have helped them achieve great results. Organizations have started using design thinking and have laid greater focus on learning experience than in the past.

We are heading towards an algorithm driven intelligent learning and I would like to call it "Gen I". Things required for this change to happen are just falling in place as we are discussing this topic.

> With the cost of technology coming down and mobile devices becoming more adept at handling VR/AR, it is only a matter of time before learning and development is able to leverage the technology to improve employee productivity

The next three to five years are going to be exciting and I believe the below highlighted technology trio will disrupt the learning industry like never before:

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence, as we see it, is a collection of multiple scientific disciplines, supported by technologies, which enable machines to sense, comprehend, act and learn, either on their own or by augmenting human activities. Some of the disciplines are Natural Language Processing, Video Analytics, Ontology, Deep Learning, Robotic Process Automation, Sensor Processing, Mini Bots, Knowledge Representation, Expert Systems, Facial Recognition, Computer Vision, Machine Learning, Inference Engines, Neural Networks, Reinforcement Learning, and Gesture Recognition.

Learning and development industry has shown a keen interest in the usage of AI. I have tried to capture some use cases of AI application in learning and development. You would have come across some of the use cases already and some would are slated to become reality in the near future.

Use Case 1: Hyper Personalization

One of the key forces disrupting the learning and development today is hyper personalization. Every learner is unique and is ready to do what they need to do to learn effectively. With advancements in data analytics and Artificial Intelligence, we are now able to provide hyper personalized learning and development recommendations. Edcast and Degreed have emerged as learning experience platform that uses AI technology to offer hyper personalized content. Cornerstone, a leading HRMS solution provider, has announced the launch of its new version of LMS that offers hyper personalization, "Netflix-style" User Experience, Curated Content and Learning Paths. The system also will automatically identify the best learning paths by role or career trajectory to help employees pursue their ambitions. One of the largest and leading retail chain outlets in India recently has started using Edcast for training and developing its employees. A noticeable improvement in learner experience and performance has been observed.

Use Case 2: Career Coaching

Even though most organizations have career paths and have linked competencies required at each of their job roles, employees struggle to visualize various career progression paths. Imagine a situation where a career coach bot is able to engage in meaningful conversations with employees and suggest different career paths and at the same time recommend an optimal path based on his/her personal facets such as competency, experience, innate attributes like traits and drivers. I believe such
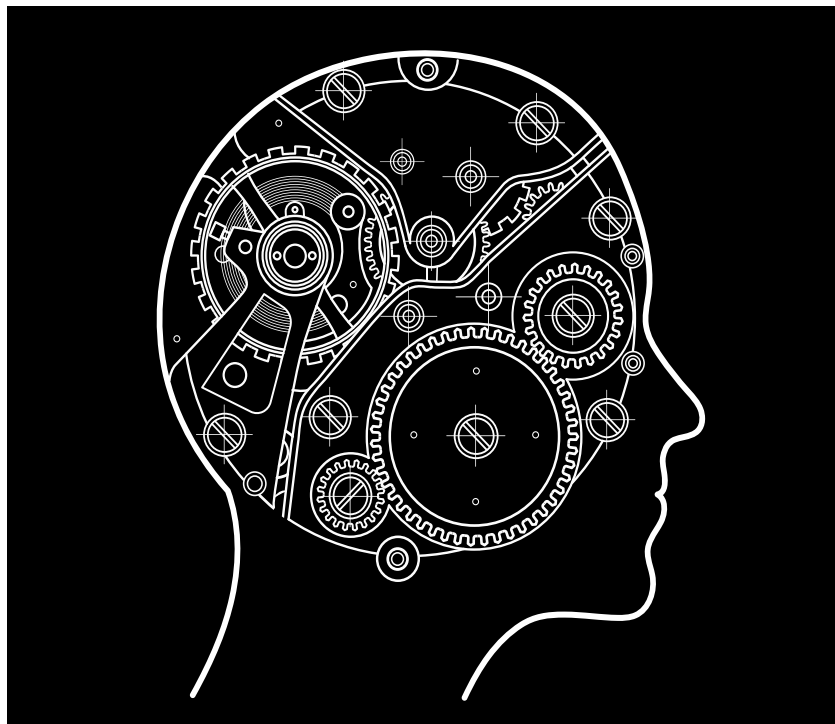
Tools like Blue Prism, Automation Anywhere and Phantom FTE could be used to automate many learning administration tasks and freeing up the human capital to focus on the more critical aspect of improving the human potential of employees

recommendations would empower the employee and would allow them to own/script their career. This would also unravel patterns in the career path maze in terms of the nature of career paths that are most suited for employees with similar persona (competency, experience and innate attributes like traits and drivers, etc.)

A leading Indian conglomerate is putting together a system that analyses how employees in the past have progressed in their career and how successful they have been in each job role. The career path modeling system is able to learn dynamically more about the employee persona and what attributes are emerging as the key differentiating factor for a successful persona.

Use Case 3: Virtual Mentors

CEB conducted a survey in 2016 covering over 9000 employees to better understand what learners value the most. Analysis of the same revealed that ease of learning has 2.7x times greater impact

in terms of application of learning compared to engagement focused learning strategy.

Virtual mentors could make this a reality. Identifying what an employee needs at the right time and offering information/tools/support that would help address the need is the key to making this happen. A virtual mentor would be a bot that is constantly on the lookout for events where employees would need additional support or simply a nudge. The virtual mentor would constantly scan and learn from your communications (email/chats/messages), search, emotions transmitted through facial recognition. As a self-learning system, it would be able to identify the trigger events and also the chronological sequence of activities. These virtual mentors would be able to communicate via email, chat with the employee and offer timely information/guidance that could help the employees improve performance on the job.

Amelia (from IPSoft) and Nuance are some of the examples of what an intelligent bot could do to an enterprise. Affectiva is an emotion recognition technology that collects insights from consumer's emotional responses. Affectiva SDK could capture learner's facial expression, body movements and processes it using its patented machine learning algorithm. Affectiva's AI algorithm uses computer vision, machine learning and deep learning methodologies to train algorithms that classify emotions. This is just the beginning! Imagine what we could do with this technology to improve learning in a corporate context.

Use Case 4: Automation of Learning Administration

More than 45 percent of the employees in the learning and development function mostly focus on learning administration related tasks. Learning administration has been an area where automation has not been attempted in a big way. The LMSs available today too have not attempted to solve this as the focus has always been on the learning experience. Robotics Process Automation (RPA) is the answer to bringing efficiency in the learning administration space. In short, RPA is all about configuring specially designed software (mini bots) to capture and interpret existing applications for processing a transaction, manipulating data, triggering responses and communicating with other digital systems.

Tools like Blue Prism, Automation Anywhere and Phantom FTE could be used to achieve automation in the learning administration space. A large IT major has used RPA to automate many learning administration tasks and have thereby freed up the human capital to focus on the more critical aspect of improving the human potential of employees.
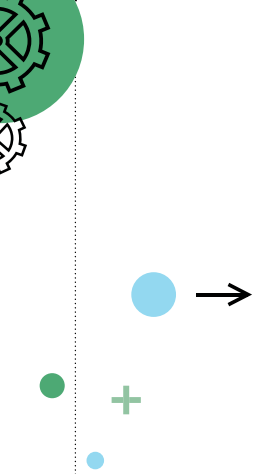
Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)

Pokémon GO game has highlighted to the world the power of VR/AR. VR/AR and has changed the way we people interact with the system and with the environment. VR/AR has found its way into the education sector, many schools have started exploring the use of VR/AR to help students experience near real life experience with what they are learning. Adoption of VR/AR at enterprises has been slow, but nevertheless, the adoption is bound to increase with the cost coming down and with tools now available for enterprises to create their own content.

An LRS is a system of records that stores any kind of learning activity that is happening within a formal or informal context; and by implementing LRS, L&D teams can expand the way in which the learners are able to learn and get credits

In the recent article published by Google "Daydream Labs: Teaching Skills in VR" they have highlighted how people using VR could outperform others who do not use VR but used YouTube to learn how to make a coffee. This experiment proves beyond doubt that VR/AR based learning would improve the performance as it reduces the knowing-doing gap.

EON Reality, a start-up is taking a very different approach to the educational space. They provide the tools for educators to create their own applications. Using the EON Creator, educators can create their own VR/AR content and use them for training and development.

Many organizations in the manufacturing industry have found training their employees using VR/AR very useful as it has helped them become better prepared to operate the machines and reduce safety incidents. General Motors uses Google Glass to train factory workers in real-time. This technology also helps connect the workers on the floor with others in the back office and allows for more collaboration and communication.

With the cost of technology coming down and mobile devices becoming more adept at handling VR/AR, it is only a matter of time before learning and development is able to leverage the technology to improve employee productivity.

Learning Record Stores (LRS) /xAPI

The world of learning and development over the past two decades has been so obsessed with Learning Management Systems that L&D functions would seldom think of ways and means of developing a skill if it could not be accommodated in an LMS. Today's learners have changed and they do not want to be constrained by what an LMS can provide. L&D function conventionally looked at learning with the perspective of courses and programs that are available within an LMS, but today learning is everywhere. We have MOOCs, TED, YouTube, e-books and hundreds of content sources from where the learner could learn. The learner is no longer keen on being controlled or limited by an LMS within an enterprise. Further, apart from their desire to augment their knowledge from different sources of learning, they also expect the L&D function to recognize their learning that is happening outside of the LMS.

The solution to this interesting problem is the Learning Record Stores (LRS). An LRS is a system of records that stores any kind of learning activity that is happening within a formal or informal context. Corporate Universities would establish an LRS to which LMS would be able to write records of learning taken up by learners, similarly, other systems could also write into an LRS when a learner learns something outside of an LMS. When a learner reads an e-book, watches a video, completes a coaching session an LRS
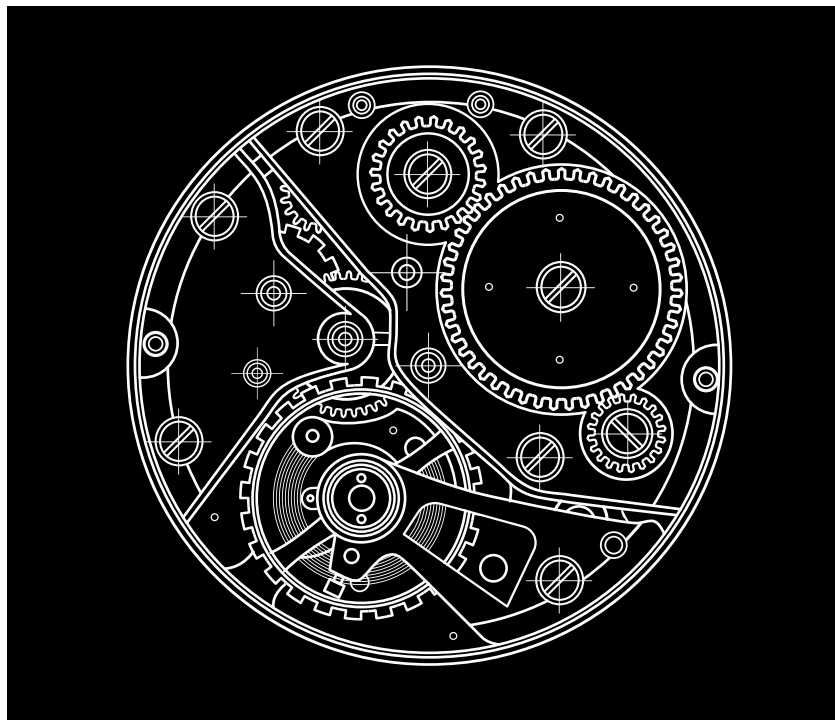
The world of learning and development over the past two decades has been so obsessed with Learning Management Systems that L&D functions would seldom think of ways and means of developing a skill if it could not be accommodated in an LMS

record could be created for each of them. By implementing LRS, the L&D team is able to expand the way in which the learners are able to learn and get credits.

GrassBlade, Watershed, Learning Locker, Wax LRS (from SaltBox) are some of the LRS solutions that are available. Additionally, organizations will be able to gain better insight into their employees' informal learning activities via Cornerstone. We could clearly see a trend where LRS is getting integrated into LMS or enterprises are implementing it separately to provide their employees the required freedom with respect to informal learning.

So, get ready for the Gen I era of learning and development. **Pm**

https://www.blog.google/products/google-vr/daydream-labs-teaching-skills-vr/
(Source - www.americaninno.com)
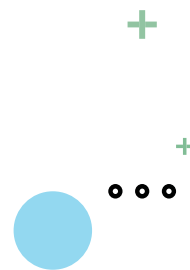
LEARNING ENABLERS IN A HYPER-CONNECTED WORLD

Technology is a great learning aid, but does not change the fundamentals of learning or impact comprehension but shows lesser retention
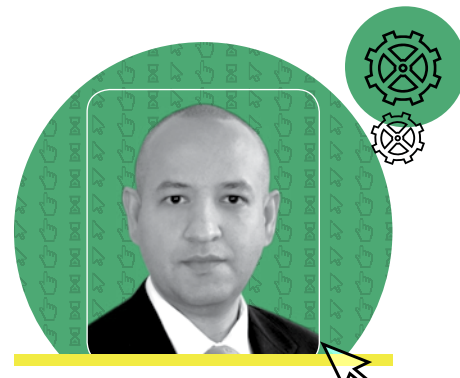
Suvro Raychaudhuri
Assistant Vice President - HR,
Parkway Healthcare India Pvt. Ltd.

Learning as a sub-set of intelligence (the other elements of intelligence being capacity for logic, self-awareness, planning, creativity, problem solving, etc.) has been re-defined in the world of futurism, context and change. The intelligence of learning therefore spans across several variables – and we do not have enough epistemological validation to determine how many variables there are, to learning. But that is simpler of the issues.

Whereas the world is obsessed with the 4th Industrial revolution (4IR) around convergence of Artificial Intelligence, Machine-learning, IoT, there is real intelligence that is slipping past in all of this – the ability of the learner-system interface to manage complexity arising out of the multiple variables and also irrational patterns and non-linear problems. The larger challenge it poses however, is the assumption that machines will help us do that.

Leave intelligent machines for a while. Flynn effect related to measurement of rise in human IQ has been questioned by James Flynn himself, on the ground that very large increase in IQ does not measure intelligence but only a minor sort of abstract problem-solving ability with little practical significance. Additionally, simple reaction-time measures that correlate substantially with measures of general intelligence (g) and are considered elementary measures of cognition, have been found to have declined by around 1.16 points per decade,

> Whereas the world is obsessed with the 4th Industrial revolution (4IR) technology , there is real intelligence that is slipping past in all of this — the ability of the learner-system interface to manage complexity arising out of the multiple variables, irrational patterns & non-linear problems

INTELLIGENCE OF LEARNING ACROSS VARIABLES

1. Convergent forms of intelligence
- Naturalist
- Musical
- Logical/Analytical
- Social (Inter/Intra-personal)
- Kinesthetic
- Linguistic
- Existential

2. Learner Preference
- Tactile
- Auditory
- Visual, etc

3. Identity of Learning - Chronological interconnectivity
- Reconstructed past
- Perceived present
- Anticipated future

4. Unknown Variable (s)
- ...
- ...
- ...

5. Output of Learning
- Attitudes and perceptions
- Acquisition and integration
- Extension and refinement
- Retention and Application
- Institutionalized habits and practices

6. Medium of learning
- Technology
- Language
- Tool-based, etc

7. Commercials of Learning
- Cost
- Time and effort

through a meta-analysis of 14 age-matched studies from Western countries between 1889 and 2004, according to a study by Woodley, Nijenhuis and Murphy.

As a human resource professional, my concern is less about how many jobs will be erased due to automation, and more in tracing general intelligence (g) in employee life-cycle processes related to personnel selection and talent management, due to it its pervasive utility in work-settings because it is essentially the ability to deal with cognitive complexity. I do not see a near-future where artificial intelligence and machine-learning will help complex Union negotiations, engagement at workplace through metadata-input on previous success, change in motivational processes leading to constructive leadership behavior. Alan Turing's statement in London Mathematical Society in February 1947 on Artificial Intelligence ("… It would be like a pupil who had learnt much from his master, but had added much more by his own work…") has a large element of assumption. Developing an equivalent of Caudate Nucleus or Basal Ganglia is not easy, because human brains learn through the variables cited above including genetic construction.

Since human intelligence created machines to do jobs, jobs being taken by machines appear to be a 'circular reference' error. As more jobs get automated, more jobs can be created to keep it automated. Organizations that have implemented HR technologies at some point in time to rationalize FTEs, have also down the years created employment through 'diversity', 'HR data analytics', 'Employee Wellness' practice-areas and applications at workplace. The fact is, 'linear and standard operating procedures' that was thought of as automatable, may actually be non-linear and non-standard. Two close-to-home possibilities and examples:

1) Payroll automation has freed transactional elements of a job (read linear and standard in this case) to be able to create opportunities and deeper focus on benefits program design that has resulted in custom-payroll solutions which are not standard.

2) Data shows automated query-resolution machines (tier-1 in customer query systems) that has had years of 'possible responses' programmed into it, under more than 73 percent cases, lead to a tier-2 escalation requiring a 'manned' response. Though an inherent assumption in this case is that at least 27 percent of the jobs can be done away with, tier-2 escalations result in higher customer dropouts due to the tier-1 experience of automated query-resolution (or lack of it). Users complain of going through the frustration of a programmed half-intelligent system that cannot 'converse' and has no 'aesthetics' required to interact (Intelligence, to my earlier reference on Gardner, has 'Social' (Inter and Intrapersonal) intelligence as a subset).

In a small conference-room, experiment related to pattern-recognition (which is a significant element of AI and in general, problem-
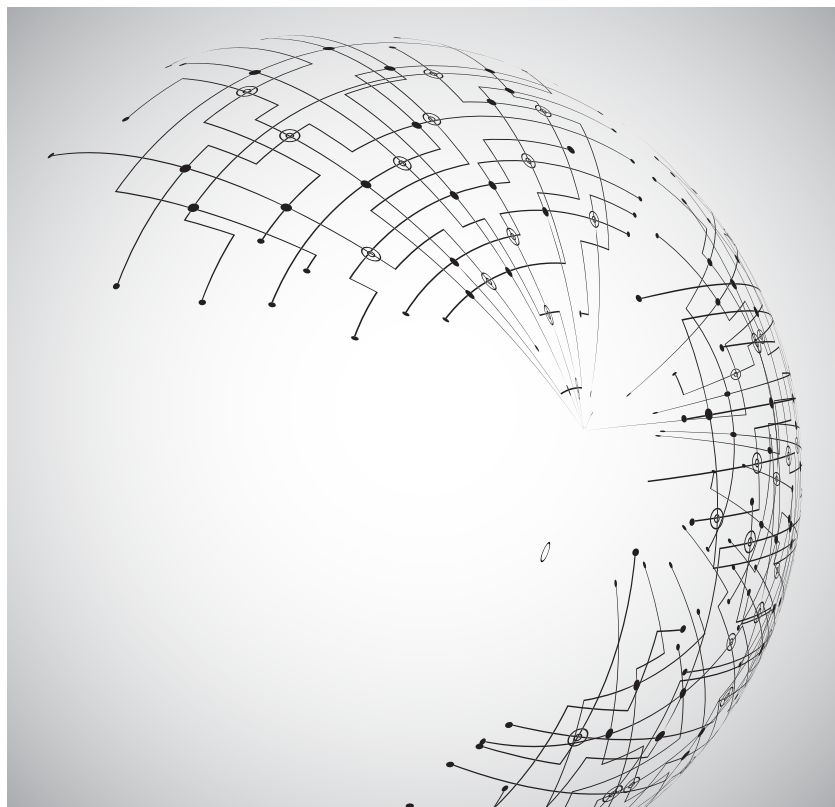
There seems to be a paradox and inherent contradiction in the thought process that we need Artificial Intelligence and machine-learning to aid our process of learning, when the rate of build-up of that intelligence is slower than the rate of change around us

identification), I had asked multiple participants on their expectation of unlocking the phone screen through a pre-set pattern set by the user of the phone. To unlock the phone screen, should it matter on how one etches the (direction of) pattern?

TO UNLOCK THE PHONE SCREEN, DOES IT MATTER HOW ONE ETCHES THE (DIRECTION OF) PATTERN?
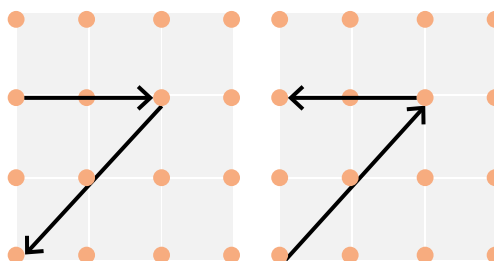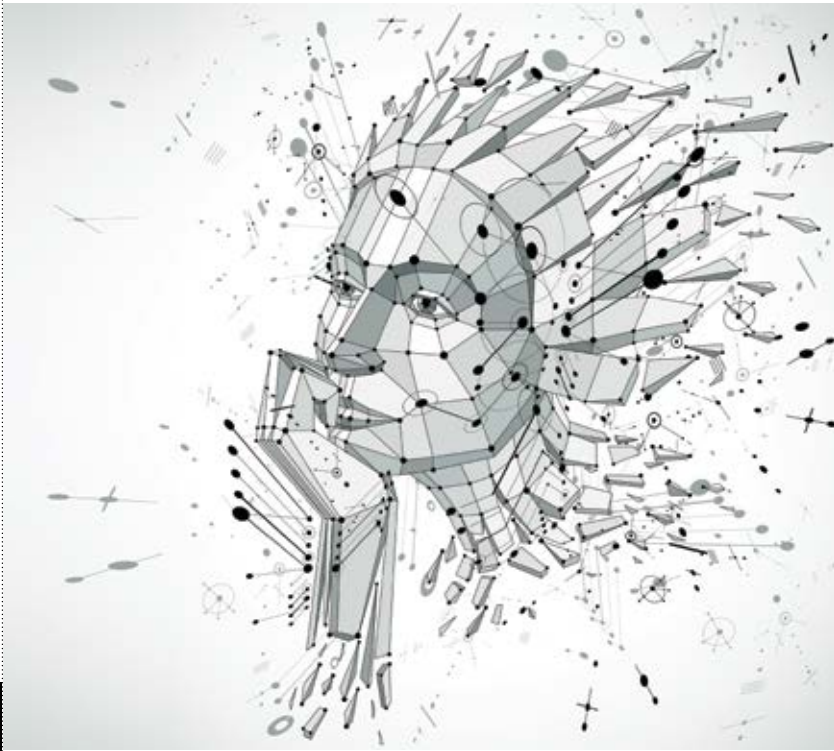
Rush on conversations related to Learning in the 4IR environment has possibilities of mistaking novelty as innovation, and intelligence to be artificial

The assumption that "…certain initial instruction tables, so constructed that these tables might on occasion, if good reason arose, modify those tables…" is a very large one. It also somewhere risks assumptions of aesthetics being lesser in importance to structure (in paintings), emotions being lesser in importance to process (in social interactions), distortions being lesser in importance to notes (in rock music), volume being more important than essence (in literature) and artificial intelligence willing, people-line being less important than top or bottom lines (in business).

There seems to be a paradox and inherent contradiction in the thought process that we need Artificial Intelligence and machine-learning to aid our process of learning, when the rate of build-up of that intelligence, either through the auto-evolution of information inside the machine or through ongoing external inputs, is slower than the rate of change around us – and is bound to be so.

There are absolute possibilities, however, of magical and deliberate outcomes that result in increased productivities and efficiencies, faster learning, wider exposures, etc. We need to know the solution however, to the following school-level problem:

There is a train that is moving towards a station. At any point in time its speed is same as its distance away from the station. When will it reach the station?

Machine-enabled learning to be able to combine optimal number of variables resulting in "transfer" (application of skill, knowledge or understanding to resolve a novel problem or situation) will take the same time as the answer to the above problem. Rush on conversations related to Learning in the 4IR environment has possibilities of mistaking novelty as innovation, and intelligence to be artificial. There will always be a lag between artificial intelligence and human intelligence, the latter going first.

Learning and Development will therefore strategically focus more on the following, in organizational and employee life-cycle management:

1) Reduce information-overload from a hyper-connected world of IoT, to provide targeted inputs on situational learning (and applications) through a convergence of multi-domain intelligence for possible and reasonable solutions to a problem.
2) Non-linear and aperiodic sequence studies applied to talent turnover and predictability of successful engagement.
3) Pattern recognition techniques over longitudinal periods for sustainable decision-making.
4) Irrational decision processes and image-generators to synchronize heterogeneous team dynamics.
5) Exceptionally simple technology applications that change behavior.
6) Custom-learning content that is congruent with actual abilities, skills and knowledge; and pivoting on reflectiveness, prior and emerging experience, creativity, originality and imagination.

Technology is a great learning aid, but does not change the fundamentals of learning. Reading through a digital medium has 20-30 percent performance deficit than reading through a paper-book (Kak,Muter, Wright and Lickorish et al), lesser accuracy (defined in different ways by Creed, Wilkinson, Robinshaw) for cognitively-demanding tasks, causes higher fatigue and ocular discomfort. Technology-enabled learning possibly does not impact comprehension (Gould, Egan, Muter and Maurutto, et al), but my own experience shows lesser retention (that maybe because we grew up reading from non-digitized interfaces).

If one wishes to go to the extreme of assuming that Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning is the way to go, one would be liable to find that it is gained at a price of intolerable loss of intelligence itself. For a true learner, therefore, learning happens at a museum, with a machine-interface, over a run and work-out, story-telling with children, 3600 social and official interactions, playing/listening to music, setting up a camp, controlling self-behavior, etc. There can hardly be anything artificial in this. 🅿m

WHO'S AFRAID OF MR. BOT?

In the future, there will always be space for creativity, curiosity, imagination, intuition, instinct and emotional sensitivity — but we do need to keep relearning, reskilling and re-equipping ourselves — to make sure we keep one step ahead of Mr. Bot!

Change brings opportunity – Nido Qubein.

Nanorobotic heart surgery is already being conducted in advanced hospitals. Uber is testing flying cars. NASA is working on a Robot-soldier that can take down a terror camp. Elon Musk wants to start a human colony on Mars.

Technology is driving us to a brave new world, the Internet of Things is changing the landscape dramatically, our devices are alive and talking to each other, robots have entered the workplace and are performing increasingly complex tasks and Artificial Intelligence is making machines smarter every day.

The question is how much smarter? Will they take away our jobs? Will they take over our lives? Will they eliminate the need for us altogether?

Fear is not an Option

I think the more important thing to worry about is how to keep our minds flexible. We need to constantly learn new skills, adapt to the changing environment, stay alive to new possibilities, learn, unlearn and relearn. Anyone who does not see an opportunity in times of critical change is liable to perish. This is not about humans vs. machines; this is about humans and machines.

AI, VR, RPA and a whole slew of other Cloud-based and digital delivery platforms are going to determine how the businesses of tomorrow operate and the jobs of tomorrow are defined. This in turn will impact the kind of roles and skills required in the workforce, which in turn will necessitate the creation of a new learning eco-system of the future. We will need to partner, collaborate and co-create in order to facilitate innovative commercial models for participants in the value chain to invest in skilling and reskilling. Disruption is creating such a redundancy of skills that learning is more critical than ever before, making it necessary to completely reskill ourselves every 7-10 years, while also learning continuously.

Learning to Survive

When people today are asked "what percentage of the knowledge required for your job do you have", they typically answer in the 50-60 percent range, down from over 90 percent in the mid-20th century. Ask an employee today, "Who do you go to, to learn about a new topic", and very few will point to either their boss or a training program, they will probably say "Google" or a "community" or some "forum". Our learning ecosystems now extend far beyond formal training to non-traditional assets such as expert forums, search engines, open-source content, peer networks and knowledge management. For people to be job-ready and relevant, they will need to invest in

their skill development, and in addition to that, the Government, companies and universities need to work very fast to put in place the right enablement programs.

This process has already begun — work is underway on proficiency levels and certification types, curriculum and content, delivery systems and assessment programs. These enablement programs will probably be delivered differently from before. They will need to be more digital and virtual-led, so that students can avail of a bank of knowledge from around the world, versus being limited to only what a specific teacher can teach. We need a skilling process that is continuous and based on self-learning, rather than a one-time certification system. The good news is that people know that this is needed and have already begun to work with speed and urgency to make this a reality. As an example, Genpact is building one of the world's largest and best Robotic Process Automation (RPA) capabilities. We are rapidly training large numbers of people to take on RPA

Amit Aggarwal
SVP - Learning & Development, Genpact

Genpact is building one of the world's largest and best Robotic Process Automation (RPA) capabilities, and is rapidly training people to take on RPA developer and Architect jobs

developer and Architect jobs. This is being done through a combination of videos (using the best open source content from across the world), classrooms (using the partner eco-system that is rapidly developing to support this), and lab work/coaching practices (the basics of operations training that a firm like Genpact has always excelled at).

The Human Element: Have you got it Mr. Bot?

I would like to think that in the future, there will always be space for creativity, curiosity, imagination, intuition, instinct and emotional sensitivity. What makes us human is a unique combination of objective and subjective reasoning. And all of life cannot be reduced to an algorithm. But we do need to stay agile and alive to change, and we do need to keep relearning, reskilling and re-equipping ourselves — to make sure we keep one step ahead of Mr. Bot!

LEARNING AS A SERVICE

In this as a Service ecosystem, don't buy a learning organization with its bureaucracy of administrators and facilitators; instead, outsource your requirement to benefit from Learning as a Service
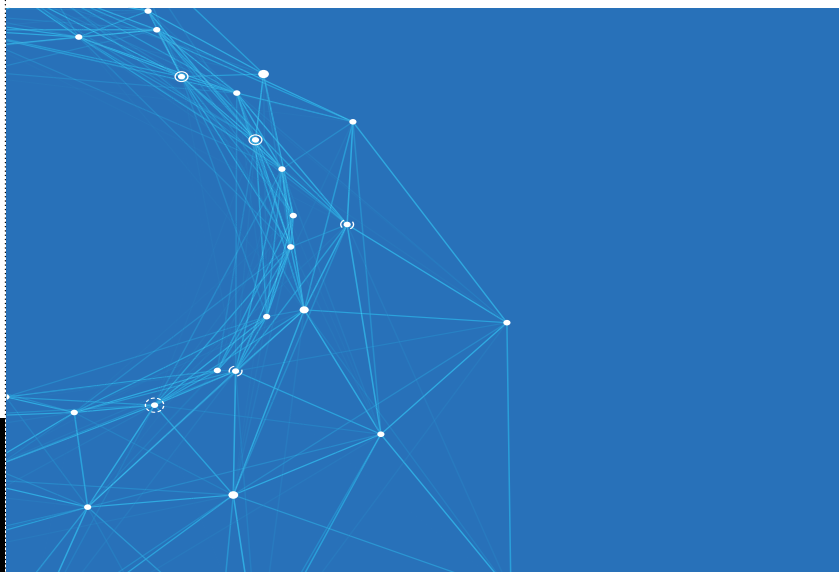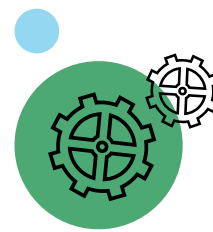
Anita Guha
VIO Talent Advisor, IBM

The expression, "uberization of the workforce" requires some explanation. What does it really mean? At the outset, it is linked to a trend that is growing in almost every sphere of our lives — that of *"as a Service"* or *aaS for short. Don't buy an asset, such as a car; instead, use an uber/driver/car drop facility as a service. Don't buy a collection of videos and DVD's; instead subscribe to Netflix, Entertainment as a Service. Likewise, don't buy a learning organization with its bureaucracy of administrators and facilitators; instead, outsource your requirement (with some qualifiers) to benefit from Learning as a Service.

There are many advantages to 'uberization'. From a client perspective, I can: (a) get immediate gratification in the here and now; (b) at a cheaper price — be it a car drop (vs. investing in a car), an evening gown for a night (versus maintaining an inventory of designer outfits that I seldom wear) or a learning workshop (vs. the cost of maintaining a learning department). I can also (c) take advantage of upgrades that become available due to changes in the technology (like subscribing to Adobe's Creative Cloud versus enduring the sunk cost of out-of-date software) or — in the learning arena — progressing seamlessly from e-Learning to Digitizing content to Virtual Reality and beyond. Finally, (d) I can cater to changes in my whims and fancies (like wanting to travel in a Mercedes vs. a Fiat or switching from Indian apples to New Zealand kiwi fruit). With so many advantages, one must wonder why uberization did not take off in an earlier era. What is it that makes us so eager to embrace this trend today?

*aaS has some limitations when it comes to customization — one can benefit from a cheaper cost per class, a seamless transition to using new technologies, and a celebrity motivational speaker for a special occasion, but the service provider/s may not always prioritize organization's needs ahead of other customers', especially at short notice

Our VUCA world is probably a big part of the answer to that question. We don't know what will happen tomorrow and that uncertainty is not conducive to making a heavy investment. It feels wiser to rent a cheaper, mobile, temporary service than to buy a more expensive, static, permanent asset. Investing in real estate makes sense in a world that is stable. Our VUCA world is anything but! The rate of change in technology and our own expectations from technology have also risen exponentially. Our grandparents bought a Sumeet mixie and it lasted them 35-50 years; we want a new kitchen gadget every 3 or 5 years! And then there's the mobile revolution: the software platform offered by mobile telephony enables the aggregation of similar needs with matching service providers. It achieves economies of scale, while still catering to the demand for customization. So, the VUCA world, exponential changes in technology and the mobile revolution have, collectively, created conditions in which uberization can thrive.

There are some disadvantages to uberization, however. The biggest is more psychological than real: (a) the perceived dependency on the service

provider. If I have my own car and I know how to drive, I am self-sufficient. There's a certain comfort in knowing that I am independent in addressing my transportation requirement. But if I don't invest in buying the asset i.e., a car, then I am beholden to whomsoever is providing the service. Another disadvantage is that (b) *aaS has some limitations when it comes to customization. I may be able to get quality vegetables delivered to my doorstep but if I like to choose each *bhindi* when I go shopping (as my mother tends to do!) then I may not find the personalization of the service sufficiently satisfying. And so it goes with Learning as a Service: I can benefit from a cheaper cost per class, a seamless transition to using new technologies, and a celebrity motivational speaker for a special occasion. But my service provider/s may not always prioritize my organization's needs ahead of other customers', especially at short notice. Also, their trainers may not be so successful in customizing programs that truly align with my organization's unique culture.

And that really brings us to the topic of how 'Learning' must change to better serve an uberizing workforce. Consider that Learning has three core components: *Education, Exposure, and Experience* (3Es). Of these, *Education*, the more formal classroom type training, is the one that is easiest to outsource. Consequently, the generic parts of *Education* – soft skills for employees, beginners & intermediate level technical training, even basic leadership skills – will increasingly become outsourced to external service providers that will deliver more efficiently. Corporations can reap significant savings by paring down on the visible and invisible costs of delivering generic learning in-house. Delivery of education of a more strategic nature should probably remain within the organization, however. These learning interventions are seen as core to the company's competitive advantage. That means learning facilitators must upgrade their skill-set to focus on delivering the organization's strategic learning needs.

While refocusing their *Education* initiatives to the strategic, Learning teams must also expand to contribute in the *Exposure* (e.g., mentoring, job shadowing) and *Experience* (e.g., international assignments, job rotations) arenas. These are not one time but ongoing interventions that, if executed effectively in partnership with the business, have potential for real culture change. Success requires building commitment not only from the learner but also from other members of the organization (the coaches, mentors, leaders, etc.) who must demonstrate behaviors the organization wants to foster. So, learning facilitators and administrators (especially those freed up from delivering generic education) would be wise to grow their consulting skills – engaging with the business to understand learning needs and providing expert advice toward positive cultural change. Further, they must enhance their project management skills to co-create and then oversee a medium to long term learning intervention with the business.

Strategic Learning Delivery, Consulting, and Project Management Skills are emerging as three core skills learning departments must nurture to satisfy an uberizing workforce

Strategic Learning Delivery, Consulting, and Project Management Skills are, thus, emerging as three core skills learning departments must nurture to satisfy an uberizing workforce. These skills are harder to outsource and will remain value adding in-house. To these I would add one more – neither knowledge nor skill, rather, the *attitude* toward change. Learning Teams must embrace the VUCA world instead of merely managing around it. This mindset orientation, which is not limited to Learning alone, can be encouraged in an organization that is adopting agile principles: (1) clarity on the outcome for the customer; (2) listening, iterating, and course correcting versus aiming for perfection; and (3) encouraging self-direction of teams to unleash innovation. These principles and the practices that go with them will help Learning to adapt and course-correct, while continuing to add significant value to the business.

Many forward thinking established Learning departments, including IBM's, are already in the process of reinventing themselves in line with the above. The journey is not without hurdles as one must move forward not only by learning new ways of working but also by unlearning and letting go of old ways. For organizations that are young and not entrenched in an alternative operating mindset, there is a very real opportunity to leapfrog over existing stalwarts by truly embracing uberization of the workforce. But young or old, large or small, what is undeniable is that a significant change is under way in Learning – ride the wave or risk floundering in the shallows! 🅿ⓜ

TECHNOLOGY IN LEARNING IS A BIG BUSINESS ENABLER IF DONE WELL...

Learning in times to come ought to get much more on-the-go, fast paced, responsive, experiential and engaging to meet the capability requirements of any business or organization

Sushil Baveja
Executive Director – HR,
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Technology in my view will dominate and influence every aspect of workplace and learning, therefore, it cannot be an exception. Technology is playing the role of an enabler to give a concrete shape to the larger agenda of consumerization of learning. Learning in times to come ought to get much more on-the-go, fast paced, responsive, experiential and engaging to meet the capability requirements of any business or organization. Knowledge, Skills, Competencies that are relevant today are likely to get largely irrelevant tomorrow in the new competitive context in which businesses gets done. The speed of replacement and enablement of new knowledge and skills can be managed only with a robust, technology-led learning tools, systems or infrastructure.

Organizations have a big role to play in creating an ecosystem that enables leveraging of technology in the area of Learning and Development. With passage of time we will see greater investment by progressive organizations in creating a learning ecosystem, infrastructure encompassing contemporary tools and technologies so that they are able to aggressively work towards realization of their growth ambition of becoming a significant

Technology is playing the role of an enabler to give a concrete shape to the larger agenda of consumerization of learning

player at the market place. The L&D strategies of such organizations need to ensure that technology is adopted in the learning space to the extent that every single member of an organization has access to the relevant content and tools that make him have a contemporary perspective, knowledge and capability to be able to make a significant contribution to the business growth.

The starting point to driving adoption of technology is the Management or Leadership's commitment and appreciation of the fact that technology is going to be a game changer going

forward in the learning space as well. This then needs to result in the requisite investment needed to bring the latest technology tools at the work place for adoption. It, however, needs to be supported by a large scale change management initiative to bring the rest of the stakeholders around to the contemporary perspective that technology is getting indispensable for the business.

The conventional ways of doing things or learning will lead only to conventional outcomes and the radical shifts needed for the competitive edge can happen only through an aggressive ownership technology in learning and development. There needs to be a realization across all the stakeholder segments that technology in learning has a unique value proposition for each of them and is a business enabler in terms of ensuring the capability bandwidth needed for the business to perform and deliver in the global market or landscape.

With so much happening in the technology or digital space, technology adoption will always be a journey. The digital disruption coming in various shapes and forms, like Internet of things or artificial intelligence and more will continuously challenge organizations to review and upgrade the technology infrastructure and support systems to ensure that the tools, techniques, processes, content etc. are latest, contemporary and relevant. There has also been a realization that no single technology or solution meets all the learning requirements. Organizations will, therefore, have to continuously look for various Cloud based solutions to make the learning journey engaging, innovative and transformational.

While technology enablement is the starting point, the way it gets applied is extremely crucial to its being effective and purposeful. L&D professionals need to reach out to all stakeholders to understand the unique requirements and ensure that the tools deployed, the content provided is relevant, meaningful and unique to each segment of the population of the stakeholders. When things don't go well, technology cannot be blamed. What really makes the difference is in the innovative application of the technology to the unique situations and needs of the various organizational segment. If that gets done well, it will ensure that learning is purposeful, engaging and impactful for the business outcomes.

LEARN, UNLEARN AND REINVENT

As learning professionals, if we don't learn, unlearn, and reinvent the wheel ourselves, we will never see the change we want to see in the L&D domain

Taking a cue from the adage 'Culture eats strategy' and if one were to extend this meaning, then in today's 4th IR, sans a learning culture, strategy ends up eating its humble pie. The ubiquity of learning resources, the proximity that one has to learning resources is actually the very reason why L&D must ensure that there is a 'method in this madness', else it will be the proverbial cat and mouse chase story.

Building flexible learning infrastructure, that is truly agile and purely customer-centric is a big ask from the learning function. The ask is not the problem, the bigger problem is what can L&D do

What can L&D do if there is already an influx of learning options in myriad formats, and learners are particularly inclined towards those options where learning & technology meet?

if there is already an influx of learning options in myriad formats, and learners are particularly inclined towards those options where learning and technology meet.

The first challenge in building a flexible learning infrastructure is to do a good dip stick to figure out the preferred 'learning styles', going beyond the Visual, Auditory & Kinesthetic. The one common style to be added on to this is 'Digital', and hence ensuring that the learning options that we choose has to be the 'Perfect Blend' of all the options available. At OLX India, we ensure that learning need goes through three 'touch-points', as we call them. And each of these touch-points addresses the same learning through different senses, digital being one of them for sure.

The next step towards building a flexible learning structure is to offer 'empowerment to learners'. The freedom to learn when one wants to learn, what one wants to learn and how one wants to

learn is the success mantra. There is much more ownership when the learning structure is flexible and not 'timetable' based. At OLX, access to 'My Academy', our internal learning portal is one of the big perks as I call it. 'My Academy' offers the best in class online courses from the likes of Udemy, Big Think, Code Academy etc. One is free to choose courses ranging from app development to Big Data, and then meander towards storytelling or yoga and fitness. This 'freedom to learn' is a big 'pull' towards creating a flexible learning structure.

The third and final step that I recommend is to build a learning infra that is 'Involving'. The moment we involve our learners in this entire journey, there is a sort of magic that gets created. Dale Carnegie said 'Make the other person feel important, and do it sincerely'. Here is a generation who can teach us a thing or two, who know some things more than we do, so why not make it a win-win by involving them as Subject Matter Experts, and build in a culture of 'reverse mentoring' as well. Very recently, we organized a series of workshops ranging from monetization at one end to Behavioral Event interview techniques at the other end, and both these were taken by our in-house experts.

As learning professionals, if we don't learn, unlearn, and reinvent the wheel ourselves, we will never see the change we want to see in the L&D domain. ⓟⓜ

Goutami Dutt
Head - L&D, OLX India

NEW LEARNING PARADIGMS

In the learning space, there are many disruptions that are affecting the way we learn and that are bringing in a need of having an integrated platform that provides a unified user experience

Arun Taneja
Head - Learning & Development,
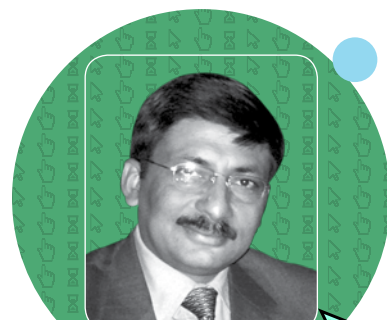India North, Tata Consultancy Services

We are in the Digital Transformation era where technology is disrupting the way we do business, avail the services from government and industry, and even education or learning in the organizations. The situation is changing because of global connected world, easy access to information, informed decision making, rising younger populations, growing economies, shorter product life cycles, and urgency of the business to capture the customer requirements and thereby the market share. In essence, we would like to do more in less time.

In the learning space too, we are witnessing new trends and there are many disruptions that are affecting the way we learn or learnt.

We have a growing and large millennial population that is looking for instant and just about sufficient learning. Long travel times resulting in lower time availability at ones' disposal makes learning on the go inevitable. This, along with improved bandwidths and deep mobile penetration makes it possible to learn on the go a reality

This brings in a need of having an integrated platform to cater to learning which provides the same user experience across diverse platforms – whether it is a desktop or a mobile, irrespective of the operating system or the network used. It doesn't matter if the user shifts from office to home to a mobile network.

With the average age of the people in the organizations, especially in the services industry, going down, learning content needs to be highly engaging apart from providing unified experience across platforms. The content needs to have higher interactivity and should have the opportunity for creating scenarios for practicing the learned skills, making gamification and simulations extremely important as part of the content strategy and delivery.

User Experience and User Design have become extremely important in learning to make the content well organized and have the right colors, font and sizes. To have the same experience across devices, learning content also needs to get adjusted to any form factor automatically so that the content is rendered suitably across devices used. The content also needs to cater to the Accessibility Design aspects for the people with special needs.

The complexity of continuity of learning makes tracking across platforms complex. This complexity increases if there is multitude of content from external and internal sources. The external content and internal content needs to be meshed up well. The desired content should fulfill the needs for learning as well as competency building.

It's obvious that the organizations' focus is shifting from learning to competency building as the learning options are plenty thanks to the large open source content available. The bigger challenge is how content is organized meaningfully and tagged to the organizations' competency needs.

In this era of digital transformation, if digital technologies are becoming important so are the digital platforms for learning. The expectation is

Learning systems and content needs to be agile, modular and re-usable to enable quick creation of programs and to meet skilling needs
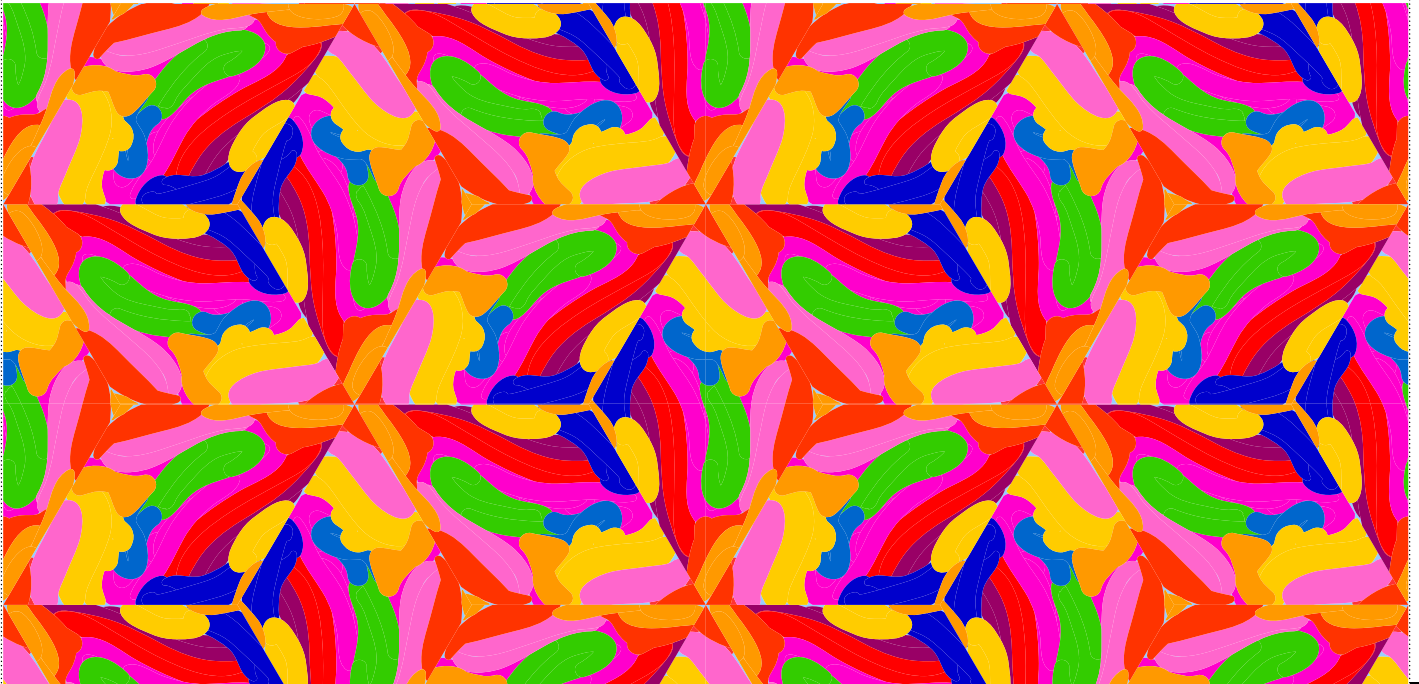
that if we can fulfill our banking, insurance and other business and personal needs through an app, why we can't do the same with learning.

The content today resides on a Cloud and assessed through a mobile. The social learning is part of the learning platforms and lot of peer learning happens through the learning platforms. The faculty interactions in a virtual learning environment are largely being done through social media.

Artificial Intelligence is playing a bigger role in the organizations today and this century is going to see a lot of Artificial Intelligence based solutions in all industries. We are already seeing Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality based solutions in learning. The scenario based learning and gamification is already helping in experiential learning. The Defense used it, since many decades, for training personal in battlefield surveillance, war gaming, ship simulation etc. The Airline and Manufacturing industry have also used it in the simulation of the flight or navigation and for training pilots and drivers using AI based systems.

The services industry is seeing the disruption too on three counts. One is on automating the tasks that requires repeat response from a set of standard responses. Machine assisted response systems can do few jobs more efficiently than the humans. Second is the business simulation using VR/ AR based solutions and pre-emptying the failures. These intelligent systems help build and diagnose situations where the systems are prone to failure. Third area pertains to learning which is a direct corollary of the Second area in the area of learning using these systems.

Internet of Things or IoT incorporates multiple sensors, such as position, vibration, thermal, acoustic or optical sensors that provides inputs to the systems to give a complete picture of a scenario. IoT has a huge application in training people in the Manufacturing, Airline and Defense in training and

Learning on the go — shorter, mobile-enabled, need-based learning in the form of nuggets and micro modules is the need of the hour

learning space. IoT has not been explored much in the Services Industry for training people. Some of the early applications could have the use of sensors in un-proctored exams and learning using optical, positions and other sensors.

In the IT Industry, as companies are becoming agile, there is a need to work closely with the customers on a pro-active and continuous basis, and thus need to cross skill employees more swiftly. The learning systems and content is also required to be agile and modular and re-usable to enable quick creation of programs and meet skilling needs. In other sectors, people need to be skilled faster too as product life cycles are getting shorter and so is the time to market.

Learning on the go — shorter, mobile enabled, need based learning in the form of nuggets and micro modules is the need of the hour. The learning should be able to provide content on technology, domain, processes, marketing, changing buyer behavior, and change management to quickly adopt to this fast changing learning paradigm.

With the digital transformation, agile business environments, younger task force and increased innovation culture is changing market dynamics dynamically. The learning systems thus need to support the changing needs as a pro-active rather than a reactive option. **Pm**

(The opinions expressed in the column are authors' own and are not linked to any organization or department.)
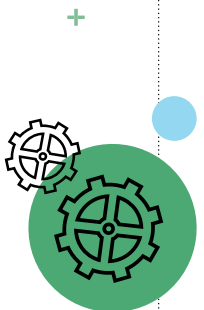
DRIVING IMPACT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY ENABLED LEARNING

Technology has made it easier for organizations to build or buy content at a lower cost, scale up quickly and deliver it to remotely located employees. But while costs have come down, we need to assess the impact
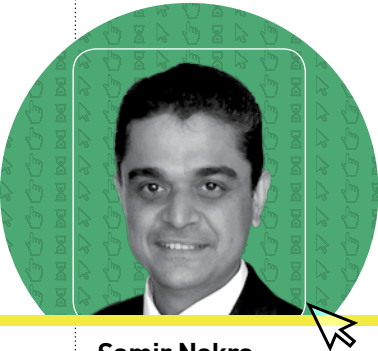
Samir Nakra
Director - Performance
Excellence, HR, RBS

The PESTEL framework mentions technology as one of the key factors impacting strategy. For many decades, the impact of technology was limited to better machines in factories leading to improved (lower cost, increased output, more throughput) production. The framework itself was, one amongst many available in management books and sometimes forgotten. The world has changed now and the framework's come alive with technology impacting almost every aspect of our lives. Innovation has been driven by lower cost of manufacturing, higher computing power and access to funds by entrepreneurs working on new ideas.

Typical reactions to change have usually been reactive and the training world's not been any different. Any change has its early adopters (called evolution in simpler terms!) and followers and it's been the same in the training world as well. More and more curriculum has moved to the virtual world with apparent advantages. It's made it easier for organizations to build or buy content at a lower cost, scale up quickly and deliver it to remotely located employees.

While costs have come down, we need to assess the impact. Through my numerous conversations with training professionals I have arrived at a set of principles that should help us leverage virtual learning, without diluting the benefits of traditional, face to face interactions.

How are we tapping emotions and empathy as we start delivering content via technology?

Principle One – Don't Ignore Kolb. Even after so many decades, Kolb's experiential learning cycle remains, probably the most referred to Model in the training world. Humans have largely developed new things through a process of tinkering! From pre-historic times, when the best hunter in a tribe probably tinkered with the feathers on his arrow to make it go faster and more accurately, to engineers at Google, who could spend time working with ideas and tinkering, we have always developed through a process of doing things. Experiential Learning, is therefore something that Instruc-

tional Designers need to consciously build the into the learning experience. Concepts and ideas are useful, but need to be built upon with real, hands on practice and reflection in a group.

Principle Two – Remember Malcolm Knowles. Adults learn differently and learn best from each other and within the right context! Virtual Learning content and designs can sometimes run straight through, delivering the content in a series of Modules to the learner in the most efficient way possible. While these are undoubtedly efficient, are they as impactful as they could be if they were run in a face to face format in small groups? If not, then how can we learn from that experience and build those elements into our sessions.

Principle Three – Reflect on Bloom's Taxonomy. Benjamin Bloom along with David Kolb and Donald Kirkpatrick have probably given the three most powerful frameworks to Learning & Development. Bloom's levels help us visualize, design and deliver for impact; while the first two levels are simpler, it's imperative that we design and deliver at all levels if the situation demands. This might not be easy in a virtual world, but the challenge sits with us as instructional designers and training professionals innovate with designs and approaches that make this happen.

Principle Four – Leverage Emotions & Empathy. Humans have evolved the fastest amongst all the species on the planet and one of the reasons we have managed this is our ability to read and work with other's emotions. Research done by Dr V.S.Ramachandaran talks about mirror neurons — our unique ability to feel the other person's emotions as they are going through an experience. How are we tapping these emotions and empathy as we start delivering content via technology? It's imperative that people see, feel and experience each other's emotions as they go through an experience. A virtual experience may take the human element out of the equation and might deprive us of our biggest strength. Ignoring that would be akin to ignoring the biggest lesson we have learnt from a million years of evolution.

The training world has adapted well to technological changes and undoubtedly there will be more changes in the years to come. The ball sits in our court as L&D professionals to balance efficiency, with comes with technology with effectiveness, which comes with design principles. It will not be easy but we need to use technology as an enabler for designing better interventions to deliver business impact. 🅟🅜

LEARNING PARADIGMS OF AN UBERIZED WORKFORCE

The workforce of tomorrow will be expected to continuously learn and re-skill itself virtually on-the-go, thus creating the need for LaaS or 'Learning as a Service'

The none-too-distant future would see an Uberized workforce, a gig economy and the lifespan of skills getting much shorter than before. This would transform the nature of work, disrupt the employer-workforce relationship and bring huge focus on swift skills transformation and employability. An average worker of tomorrow would have to continuously adapt to new roles or changing job requirements during the entire career span. All this would make tomorrow's worker to be a 'hyper-learner' – deeply self-aware and extremely focused on the need to continuously learn and re-skill himself, virtually on-the-go.

Hence, tomorrow shall belong to 'Learning as a Service' or LaaS for the individual worker. Through LaaS, the skilled workforce of tomorrow would search, order, deliver and consume learning through an app just like cab services or food deliveries. It would all be need-based, on-the-go, instant, cutting through the value chain and being delivered directly to the consumer. In short, each one of us could virtually order a 'new skill' instantly through an app and 'pay per use'. This mass customization and personalization of learning will be facilitated by emerging technologies like IoT, AI and SMAC as they all contribute to the ongoing digital disruption in the economy.

Although today LaaS is still a concept that learning tech vendors have started talking about, soon it would become a popular consumer product or 'must have' service. Just as tech giants have adapted ERPs for the small enterprises in the last decade, they would be able to adapt them further for each individual @ n=1. Imagine learning systems and tools being owned and managed by each one of us!

Users have already had a glimpse of this personalization in the form of G-suite, free LMSes and learning content from multiple sources across disciplines being seamlessly accessed through TV channels. With onslaught of MOOCs or online courses from credible sources being available either free or at throw away prices, appification of learning portals and the ability to host a course is now available to anyone who has access to a laptop & internet.

Thus, learning is transforming from being a 'Business initiative for employees' or a B2B product to a 'Retail Product for every individual' leading to its eventual commoditization. This is obviously going to impact the L&D professional's role. From being a 'provider & controller,' the Learning Manager would become an 'orchestrator and product manager' interested in getting the product right and enhancing its use.

> Learning is transforming from being a 'Business initiative for employees' or a B2B product to a 'Retail Product for every individual'

Just like it's happening in healthcare today where patients have Googled & chatted threadbare even before they meet the doctor, it would happen in learning too where the skilled workers would be aware of their learning needs and courses even before the learning manager comes into play. The learning professional hence would need to become more of an integrator who can mass customize on one end as well as provide an n=1 solution that blends the unique individual needs with that of the organization. Deep business understanding, learnability, domain knowledge, diagnostic capabilities, digital acumen and solutioning skills would acquire hygiene status – just for the learning professional to remain employable. Life and soft skills of synthesizing, integrating, personalizing, empathizing would then be differentiators between the great and 'also ran' L&D professionals. And the latter would most likely be extinct.

How the L&D community responds to this challenge remains to be seen. I do feel that the times were never as exciting for the L&D professional as they are now. However, they would have to first transform their own approach towards learning before they can drive the transformation of the emerging uberized workforce. **Pm**

(The views expressed in the column are author's own and do not represent that of his employer.)
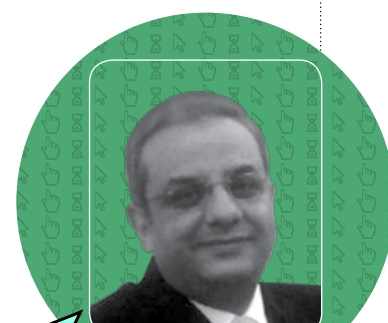
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EVOLUTION OF L&D IN THE ERA OF DIGITIZATION

The business of learning is undergoing a transformation and today, and digital technology is making it possible for people to access learning content at a faster, more efficient and cost effective rate than ever

Pankaj N Gursahani
Director - Sales Training,
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Being a part of HR and L&D fraternity, we are on the brink of experiencing two major changes at the functional as well as at the organizational level. The first one is Digital Revolution i.e. 4IR and the second one is the millennial population.

It has been wide 'n' clear that by 2025, millennials will make up approximately 50 percent of our workforce. Take a second to think about the impact of that statistic — if more and more millennials will be around in just a short amount of time, then more and more will also continue to make up a significant portion of large corporates. Likewise, as we speak, we are witnessing the complete transformation around

> Digital technology is making it possible for people to access learning content at a faster, more efficient and cost effective rate by providing on-demand learning that meets specific skillset needs

digital revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another. If you try connecting both the dots together, you may find them complementing each other or sort of having live-in relationship of *Cause 'n' Effect.* Millennials are the individuals born between the years 1982-2002, and the same period also saw the arrival of digital revolution characterized by a fusion of technologies, which has been evolving at an exponential pace since then. Perhaps it also explains why millennials are also referred to as "Digital Natives". Since they had an early exposure to such changes, their access/comfort with information and technology and digital media is far greater than any previous generation.

Challenges and opportunities for L&D

The business of learning is undergoing a transformation as well along with these broad changes. Today, learning and education is in great demand like an entertainment industry. Digital technology is making it possible for people

to access learning content at a faster, more efficient and cost effective rate than ever before, by providing on-demand learning that meets specific skillset needs. Moreover, the millennials believe in bite size learning and that to at their own pace and space. Such developments suggest that it is a very exciting time for L&D, however, many obstacles will need to be overcome before these opportunities can be embraced.

Most L&D professionals are well aware of the need for change. There is a prevailing sense that traditional courses, both online and face-to-face, no longer address the way that people learn at work. And in today's business environment, organizations are gearing up to be more responsive and agile than ever before, to find ways of building workforce capability at a much greater rate. Businesses are increasingly looking at L&D as Strategic Partners or Change Agents that will help build critical skills in the millennials workforce, rather than just as a group of people managing training calendars and delivery.

Is something holding L&D back?

Among the key factors that hold L&D back is a lack of confidence and not being tech savvy – many L&D professionals are not confident in harnessing technology to increase the effectiveness of L&D interventions. One may call it a skill or will issue, but it has also been coupled with lack of organizational support. Therefore, the answer lies with us to rethink L&D's value proposition at both the functional and organizational levels. At a functional level, we need to get on board with digital (Delivery) and embrace quality learning design & material (Content). At an organizational level, need to influence the top table and shape L&D strategy. We are expected to understand and respond to the 4IR factors affecting business today — digital trends, gamification, project-based active learning, operating in virtual teams, social learning platforms (Chatter, Yammer, Jive, Curatr & Salesforce1) and above all, the arrival of the millennial population to the workforce. Once digital capability is there, along with an understanding of quality learning design, it's important to not just simply align L&D strategy with existing business strategy, but to influence business planning by putting L&D at the heart of the organization.

L&D need to apply both Science & Art for their own existence!

It looks so scientifically right (at least on paper) that by going digital, we are addressing the learning needs of millennials and embracing the impact of 4IR. Wish this would have been so true 'n' simple. In its most pessimistic, dehumanized form, the Fourth Industrial Revolution may indeed have the potential to "robotize" humanity and thus to deprive us of our heart and soul.

Once digital capability is there along with an understanding of quality learning design, it's important to not just simply align L&D strategy with existing business strategy, but to influence business planning by putting L&D at the heart of the organization

And engaging millennials in the era of such transformation requires amalgamation of science and art. To do this, we must develop a comprehensive blended learning strategy which has not only digital learning platforms but human touch as well. For example, you may use digital platform for process and technical training but for softer skills one may choose face to-face or project based interventions. Research has shown that such blended learning packages provide better outcomes through a richer learning experience. Hence, choosing the right intervention at the right time is a true game changer for any L&D expert.

In the end, we are dealing with people in the era of digitization — digitization that can complement human interventions. Therefore, we do need to be aware of past before we take a leap towards future because, as I often say to millennials at present *"if you don't know where you have come from, how will you appreciate where you are going?"* @m

MONODIP CHAUDHURI

Errors of judgment –
the deadly sins of hiring

There's so much more science involved in hiring talent these days. But even today, companies pay dearly for continuing to repeat the same mistakes they made in the past. A look at what needs to change!

"The more things change, the more they remain the same."

Nothing describes the process of hiring talent better than this old adage. I've been closely involved in hiring decisions since I began my career in 1974 and clearly, a lot has changed in both the hiring and talent eco-system. The demand for quality talent has grown several folds as both established companies and start-ups look for ambitious and capable professionals. The sheer number of IIMs and IITs spewing out young talent has risen along with the number of companies visiting campuses. These days, headhunters are available in every nook and cranny with the likes of LinkedIn, naukri.com and monster.com, making the search process simpler and data analytics improving the chances of making the right choice.

Yet, despite all these spectrum changes, I'd argue that many companies continue to make the same mistakes in hiring that they did before technology was even a blip on our radar.

Why do I say so, you ask?

Well, over the years, I have witnessed and alas, been a party to many horrendous mistakes made where an obvious cultural misfit has been hired purely on the basis of a good-on-paper CV, buttressed by glib confidence during the interview.

As industry professionals, we have failed to probe the matching of values of an individual with that of the organization and we have strangled ourselves in our searches by foolish restrictions based on the perceived notions of our self-image. Particularly unfortunate is the fact that we have misused the tools that technology provides us to abrogate our roles than facilitate them.

On the face of it, many of the mistakes we make while making hiring decisions may seem a tad bit obvious. Yet, as you read on, I'd challenge you to critically examine just how many of these 'deadly sins', as I call them, apply to your own firm and your industry.

Hire in haste, repent in leisure

The entire process of 'search' is prefixed and suffixed with the 'need for speed'; and we clearly forget that we are not out shopping but making a long-term investment which can impact the company either way. The internal customer stresses speed and HR carries the need to hurry much more closely than the specifics of the job requirement. As a result, a consultant or a head hunter is given an inadequate brief but told that "speed" is crucial.

With a vague brief, a consultant remembering the need for speed inundates you with CVs galore and the confusion is well underway. If the need for a warm body was kept in the background and a little more time had been spent on giving clear job descriptions, then the need for speed would have spoken for itself and a lot of wasted toil could have been avoided.

While pedigree matters, caliber and character are just as critical

Many organizations restrict themselves up by only looking for candidates from certain educational institutes or with backgrounds from certain companies. In certain cases, of course, backgrounds from similar industries are warranted but please do bear in mind that there are excellent people available from lesser known institutes and from lesser reputed companies who are extremely capable, much more down to earth, affordable and can adjust to varying cultures. Tragically, they often go abroad and prove their mettle. This perverse love of self-image is only to our detriment.

If you're keen to seek validation, ask for placement data from some of the lead-

> As industry professionals, we have failed to probe the matching of values of an individual with that of the organization, and we have strangled ourselves in our searches by foolish restrictions based on the perceived notions of our self-image

ing business schools in the country. Or look at the internal data inside your own company. A leading business school[1] found that nearly 70 percent of students ended up changing their first jobs within nine months to a year after graduating!

Always trust, but verify

Mushrooming consultants, professionals dealing with psychometric tests and agencies carrying out reference checks are welcome and a useful aid to the process; but that does not mean they start doing our jobs for us. We have to grind through the mill and expend elbow grease.

I know of one instance, where on the basis of a Skype interview, a marine engineer with "excellent" credentials was hired for a role at the factory in rural India. Nothing wrong withmarine engineers, but a face-to-face rigorous interview would have shown that a lifetime in the high seas may not suit a rural milieu and that too in a factory. The end result? You can guess. Another aspect is the pre-employment medicals. Once a candidate is selected there is such hurry for him to join that insufficient care is given to the medicals. A case comes to mind where a genuine good person was engaged in a printing factory because he was clinically found fit. Two months later, he was found to be color blind.

Give it your full attention, your company's future is in your hands

The actual interview is often not conducted with the due intensity that is warranted. How often do you find an interviewer keeping the candidate waiting? The tendency to cast furtive glances at the computer, get carried away on the mobile, keep looking at the watch are invariably routine. Another mistake is to call five or six candidates at 15 minute intervals and when there is a queue outside to hurry. This is not just bad manners but a failure to perform. This is not the way to hire a person who could make a difference either way to your company's performance.

Look not just for raw talent, but also for values

This has been touched upon earlier but needs to be underscored. When recruiting, insufficient focus is given to the match between a company's culture and a candidate's value system. Added to this, we tend to rely on outsiders for reference checks. It is an open secret that the IT sector went overboard in depending on outsourcing

The entire process of 'search' is prefixed and suffixed with the 'need for speed'; and we clearly forget that we are not out shopping but making a long-term investment which can impact the company either way

background checks and paid the price. Others may also have done so as well and probably remain ignorant of the consequences. It stands to reason that if the reference check is misleading, the experts do not suffer, it is the company. If a candidate is worth hiring, it is always preferable to get involved in the ultimate stage.

Onboarding without handholding

It may be argued that this last one is the most difficult to control and its impact is the worst. Having gone through the pain of finding a suitable person, many organizations (again in a tearing hurry) find it unnecessary to have a proper hand holding, induction or mentoring. This often leads to systemic non-acceptance of the new comer who flounders, feels rebuffed and ultimately leaves and you are left to go through the whole grind again.

In conclusion, I have to add a rider: not all companies are guilty of all these sins, but most do commit some and there are many doing a lot — and what's more, they aren't even aware of the consequences.

None of this is really rocket science. All it takes is a touch of humility and loads of perseverance to ensure better outcomes in hiring. And although technology has made things easier for us, it has also made us lazy. So the next time you're involved in any hiring decision, remember that the future of the enterprise depends on you. **Pm**

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VISTY BANAJI

Make JOBS in India
- A New Way to Nudge Businesses to Generate Durable Employment

A lack of labor reforms and incentives for organizations to employ more people are the twin obstacles to greater job growth in the organized sector. Let's look at a new approach to fiscal incentives that could quickly prompt the organized sector to add jobs

Perhaps the greatest problem facing India on the economic front today is the lack of sufficient job growth in the organized sector. Before going any further, let me give you some reasons as to why our focus should be on 'formal' employment in the organized sector of the economy:

- Productivity is far higher in the organized sector. As Brian McCaig, Assistant Professor of Economics, Wilfrid Laurier University, pointed out in a paper[1] published by the World Economic Forum:

"Informal firms… often lag in productivity far behind formal firms,… As a result, countries characterized by an abundance of informal firms suffer from low aggregate productivity (Hsieh and Klenow[2] 2008)…

Overall, our results highlight the importance of policies that promote the growth of the formal sector and consequently draw workers out of the informal sector. Such policies not only provide for occupational upgrading and increased earnings for individuals who switch, but also facilitate gains in aggregate productivity in formalized sectors."

- A higher proportion of the workforce in the organized sector would reduce levels of inequality in society. Quite apart from the imperatives of basic fairness, a growing body of research tells us how important greater equality in income distribution is for sustained economic development. An IMF note[3] puts it well:

"It turns out that many of even the poorest countries have succeeded in initiating growth at high rates for a few years. What is rarer—and what separates growth miracles from laggards—is the ability to sustain growth. The question then becomes: what determines the length of growth spells, and what is the role of income inequality in duration?

We find that longer growth spells are robustly associated with more equality in the income distribution."

- Even measuring progress (or the lack of it) in creating jobs within the informal sector is a hit and miss affair. What with full-time employment, partial employment, seasonal employment and disguised unemployment, statisticians seeking to give accurate estimates are just about as likely to succeed as the blind man who goes into a dark cellar at

Incentives need not be one-way traffic — while not intended as a revenue generating measure, a higher incidence of tax on organizations that reduce long-duration employment can partially offset the cost of the fiscal incentive

midnight without a light looking for a black cat that is not there!

Let's come back to the problem of low employment generation in the formal sector that is troubling the country's leaders and economists (other than the ones of ostrich parentage). Most experts identify the lack of labor reforms and incentives for organizations to employ more people as the twin obstacles to greater job growth in the organized sector. Because of the legislative and other impediments facing meaningful labor reforms (which I have addressed extensively elsewhere), in this column I would like to present a new approach to fiscal incentives that could quickly prompt the organized sector to add jobs.

The Need for Strong Medicine

It may well be asked whether it is really necessary to deprive the state of revenue through one more tax concession. To me this question appears similar to a typhoid patient wanting to avoid antibiotics because they cost more than paracetamol. Here are some reasons fiscal incentives are important for mitigating jobless growth in the short and medium term:

- The Government has already announced plans to bring down rates of corporate taxation. If we agree that economic growth is simply a means of bringing prosperity to as many people as possible, what better way can there be to use this as one-time opportunity provided by the (already committed) tax reduction, and directly funnel a part of the benefit to encourage corporate employment generation?

- The anti-employment pulls exerted on strategic decision-makers by increasing automation, protectionism and 'contractualization' are just too strong to respond to analgesics like preaching and prayers for redeployment in higher quality jobs elsewhere in the economy. In the first place, the potential recruiters in hi-tech have their own plans for staffing and recruitment, in which middle-aged terminees from other industries have little place. Secondly, while the providers of 'upgraded' jobs may not be facing market downturns, they have to cope with exactly the same employment-contracting pressures already mentioned. In the longer term, and most worryingly, many of these high-quality jobs may just not be created in India. In a telling article[4] on "The Real Threat of Artificial Intelligence" Kai-Fu Lee, Chairman and Chief Executive of Sinovation Ventures, writes:
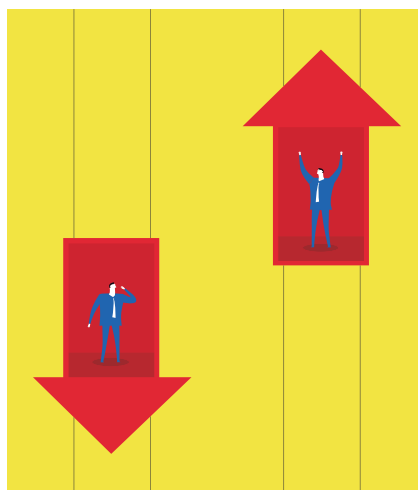
"… what about other countries?

They face two insurmountable problems. First, most of the money being made from artificial intelligence will go to the United States and China. AI is an industry in which strength begets strength… It's a virtuous circle, and the United States and China have already amassed the talent, market share and data to set it in motion…

The other challenge for many countries that are not China or the United States is that their populations are increasing, especially in the developing world. While a large, growing population can be an economic asset (as in China and India in recent decades), in the age of A.I. it will be an economic liability because it will comprise mostly displaced workers, not productive ones."

Clearly antibiotics are in order!

- Incentives need not be one-way traffic. While not intended as a revenue generating measure, a higher incidence of tax on organizations that reduce long-duration employment can partially offset the cost of the fiscal incentive.

It is worth reiterating at this stage that a lasting cure will demand repeated and intensive sessions of labor reform therapy.

A New Approach to Making Job Generation Worthwhile for Business

Many people (myself included) have tried figuring out ways to encourage job creation in the formal sector through fiscal means but have floundered against the problem of the incentives just rewarding higher wage costs without raising employment (especially at the lower levels). To my knowledge, this is the first time there is a proposal which, while being flexible about the form the fiscal incentive can take, man-

dates that it must conform to the following three principles:

1. The fiscal incentive should be linked to the change in the average permanent headcount for a business entity. Simply incentivizing wage bill increases could actually mean 'fat cat' packages get more obese while employment goes down. By linking headcount in this fashion we will encourage the creation of jobs at the lower levels of the hierarchy.

2. There must be a disincentive for headcount reduction. Apart from making the overall proposal more economical for the Government, this would discourage gaming of the system by adding people in one year only to reduce them in the next. This should also leverage the loss aversion principle (enunciated by Kahneman & Tversky[5]) which shows that people strongly prefer avoiding losses to acquiring equivalent gains.

3. There should be a fiscal cost for 'contractualization' or 'uberization'. The scheme should curb the rapidly growing tendency to replace a permanent workforce with non-permanent employees or (so called) non-employees.

Given below is just one simple way these criteria could be met. The model has been intentionally kept simple to exemplify the concept. Further refinements can be added to check unintended consequences and misuse.

1. Each organization would be required to report its average permanent

> There should be a fiscal cost for 'contractualization' or 'uberization' and the scheme should curb the rapidly growing tendency to replace a permanent workforce with non-permanent employees or (so called) non-employees

head-count for a given financial year (the Reference Year) and for the previous year. The extent to which the Reference Year's average permanent headcount is higher (or lower) than the previous year's would be computed as a percentage figure (the Head-count Change Percentage or DH% for short).

2. An amount equal to DH% of the Reference Year's Payment and Provisions for (permanent) Employees would then be computed. This amount would be multiplied by a Job Growth Multiplier (JGM). While it would be for better economists than I to work out what the JGM should be, back-of-the-envelope calculations suggest it may have a marginal impact if it is lower than 2.

3. The amount computed in step 2 (above) would become the Employment Generation Tax Advantage (EGTA) and be available as an additional deduction while computing Taxable Income for the Reference Year provided the Head-count Change Percentage is positive. Conversely, if the Head-count Change Percentage is negative, the amount computed in step 2 (above) would become the Employment Reduction Tax Increase (ERTI) and an equivalent amount from the Payment and Provisions for Employees would be unavailable as a deduction while computing the Taxable Income.

A couple of further guidelines will be needed:

• Since the Indian Government has no call to subsidize employment in other countries, both the permanent employee count and the wage costs should be limited to employees in India.

• In order that the computation is not unduly influenced by changes in top-level compensation, the payments and count of the costliest employees (say using the criterion specified for reporting employee income under Section 217 of the Companies Act) should be excluded.

As stated earlier, wiser minds than mine can devise more sophisticated and fool-proof (as well as swindle-proof) models without deviating from the three basic principles and put them through a variety of simulations before making a final choice.

Following Shibi's Sanskara

When I sounded out to economists as well as top-level Finance and HR leaders, most felt this new approach could well tilt the strategic decisions taken by corporates to the employment-positive side. A few of them, however, were less certain about this approach. If I leave out self-interested criticisms (e.g. their companies were embarking on massive downsizing) the main objection was that it was the shortage of adequately skilled people rather than job opportunities that prevented more employment. Now I don't doubt for a moment the importance of skill building as a prerequisite for employment in the formal sector. But it is far from being the entire story. Unless there is strong demand-side suction, all the massive investment that is

underway and planned for skill building will lie fallow. Even this argument didn't convince objectors who were actually passing a moral judgment on those who could not gain employment (in the formal sector), blaming their lack of skill on a lack of will. Since their 'principled' fundamental attribution error[6] proved remarkably immune to argument, I decided to tell them a story.

I reminded them of the fable of King *Shibi* whose compassion was tested by *Indra* and *Agni.* When *Shibi* tried to save the dove (into which *Agni* had turned himself) from *Indra* (who had taken the form of a hawk), the latter asked the king not to deprive a raptor of its rightful prey. *Shibi* offered an equal weight of his own flesh as a substitute but when the dove was put in a weighing scale it turned out (leaving out gory details of sliced body parts) that nothing short of all of the King's body could balance the scale. At this stage, the deities revealed themselves, restored the king's physical self and praised him fulsomely. I pointed out that, as much as I had searched, I had been unable to find a different ending to the story with *Shibi* advising the dove that if only he had exerted himself to retrain (perhaps in self-defense or faster flying) he could have been saved – and then complacently leaving the dove to become *hawk's d'oeuvre.*

Apart from corporate skeptics, the tale of *Shibi's* compassion driving him to make a major sacrifice has a message for another group. If India's economic ministries are serious about generating employment, rather than jobless GDP growth, they will have to demonstrate some of *Shibi's* spirit and put their fiscal muscles where only their vocal muscles have been so far. ⓟ

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DR. NINA JACOB

Regressive or radical — One-day menstrual leave

Awarding a one-day menstrual leave once a month to female employees – is it regressive or radical?

The decision of a Mumbai-based company, Culture Machine Media Pvt. Ltd., to award a one-day menstrual leave once a month to their female employees has generated a fair share of discussion and debate. Following close on the heels of Culture Machine Media Pvt. Ltd., Mathrubhuni, a Kerala-based media company has also introduced the one-day menstrual leave in its company. The debate even reached the United Kingdom, with the Guardian publishing an article on July 19, 2017 entitled "'Silly and regressive': Indian firms introduce period days". India is not the first country where such leave has been granted. The concept was invented by the Japanese in the last century.

The effects of menstruation vary from woman to woman. Beginning on a personal note, I have never taken leave because of menstruation. But then, I am an academician, and my work does not entail extreme physical exertion. Even if I could avail a one-day menstrual leave every month, I would not do so as that would lead to a build-up of work. I am at my place of work today, and I need to be here today, to, among other things, take a class. (I teach MBA students). If I do not take that class today, I would have to take that class tomorrow, in addition to the two classes assigned to me for tomorrow. This would be burdensome. It would also unsettle my students who will not be able to attend classes in an organized, structured fashion. Additionally, the scheduling of classes will become a nightmare.

I do, however, recognize that not all women experience menstruation the same way. Since we are interested in creating humane organizations which nurture employees, we should be supportive of those women who find menstruation and its attendant side-effects difficult. In that context, a one-day menstrual leave in all organizations, including educational organizations, can be considered positively.
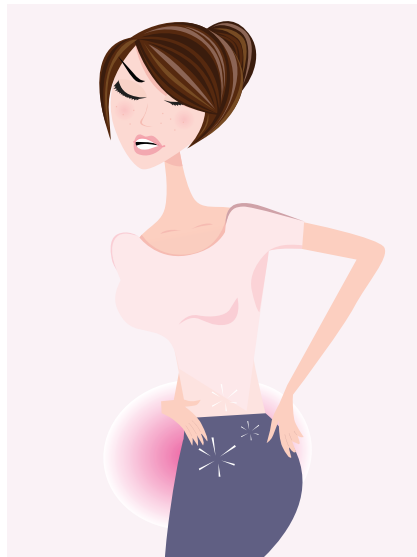
However, my personal experience as a professor of business administration so far has been that female students do not ask for leave of absence from classes on grounds of menstruation. Once, (and only once) a female student took sick leave on grounds of anemia and cited menstruation as a secondary reason for leave application.

The flip side of awarding a one-day menstrual leave will make competitive companies hesitate to hire women. Women and men working in high-performance companies cannot afford to take a day off. Employees who need to take a day off once a month, regardless of the work-related negative consequences are not going to be valued by their employing company. The suspected suicide death of Sarvshreshth Gupta in New York, an analyst at top Goldman-Sachs investment banking company in June 2015 has highlighted the long work hours demanded by aggressively-oriented investment banking/financial services companies, every day. These companies are unlikely to hire women, however competent, if they are required to give a monthly day off to them.

> Not all women experience menstruation the same way; and since we are interested in creating humane organizations which nurture employees, we should be supportive of those women who find menstruation and its attendant side-effects difficult

In many instances where affirmative action has been taken to cater to the special needs of a group of people, individuals who do not belong to that group have suffered from reverse discrimination. Thus to avoid this, and to ensure gender parity, men should also be allowed a one day leave of absence every month. That day could be called the one-day rejuvenation day. Perhaps the one-day menstrual leave day can also be called the one-day rejuvenation day. 🅿️ⓜ

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The Spotlight on
HR Tech Startups

The Spotlight Program got reinvented this year — from an award ceremony to becoming a mentoring program — this year, the focus of the program was on identifying and recognizing HR technology start-ups in India to provide them with a platform and help them survive and succeed

By **Amol Pawar**

Looking back at the first issue of People Matters magazine this year, we explored the theme, 'Is 2017 the year of HR Technology start-ups?' While the figures revealed that the HR tech startups in India alone saw $16 million funding in the year 2016, the total funding around the globe in such startups was USD 19.68 billion.

However, it is a fact that venturing into HR technology space comes with a wide variety of challenges. And while there are diverse products and technologies existing in the market, the core challenges for many organizations venturing into this space pertain to ascertaining the right product-market fit, creating a radical value proposition, differentiating from the competition, and letting HR decision makers know that you have what they need.

For the last four years, People Matters TechHR Conference has been providing a platform for young HR technology entrepreneurs to showcase their products. Until last year, the format was of competition where a few startups would win Spotlight Awards in various categories and were recognized. But, for a growing HR Tech industry and a thriving entrepreneurial setup, this lone platform was proving to be limited. Based on conversations with HR Tech entrepreneurs, investors and HR Industry leaders, this year the format was changed to ensure that a wider number of HR Technology startups got an opportunity to showcase their products to the HR community. This year, People Matters reinvented the TechHR Spotlight – from an award ceremony to a mentoring program, and aimed to identify and recognize HR technology start-ups in India and provide them with a platform that enabled them to get a wider recognition, and survive and succeed.

The Industry

HR Tech industry has been growing globally and within India. As per estimates, there are more than 5400 HR Tech companies globally and this number is close to 700 in India. Over the last 2-3 years, interest in HR Technology has been on the rise primarily due to the consumerization of digital technologies. Some big funding rounds like USD 150 million for Ceridian and USD 100 million for Snagajob in recent years have further increased interest in this space.

HR processes like recruitment, performance, training and payroll processing are some of the basic activities that organizations of all sizes need to perform in order to conduct their business. This is one of the reasons that many local and global players are jostling for this space.

One of the common challenges while analyzing HR tech industry is of categorization of the HR Tech solutions as there is no demarcation when it comes to defining categories or sub-categories. While there are some universally accepted categories like HRMS, Recruitment, Performance, Learning and Benefits, many HR tech solutions either cross over into multiple categories or address a specific problem within a category. For the purposes of this feature, only the broad categories have been mentioned.

Spotlight 2017 – Applications

This year's Spotlight Program attracted about 100 applications from a diverse range of HR Tech startups. More than 40 percent of the applications received were from recruitment related HR Tech startups, which is in line with global trend in HR Tech. The total estimated HR tech funding in 2015 - 16 was USD 5 billion, of which USD 3.5 billion (about 70 percent) was invested in recruitment related technologies alone; hence, it is no surprise that Indian HR tech entrepreneurs have also been looking to solve the problem of recruitment in innovative ways.

As per estimates, there are more than 5400 HR Tech companies globally and this number is close to 700 in India

The next big category at application-level has been Engagement. This category seems to have caught the attention of most entrepreneurs primarily due to the perceived lack of engagement at workplace globally. As mentioned in an article by Josh Bersin1 published in 2015, we see 3 of the 4 categories of engagement related tools coming up in the Indian HR tech space. We expect the 4th category mentioned in this article, Open Suggestion Box and Anonymous social network tools to make an entry in the existing engagement solution space in India soon. With some analysts pegging the opportunity in engagement market alone at USD 74 billion, we expect interest and investment in this category to grow in future.

Both these data indicate that Indian HR tech companies and entrepreneurs are following the global trends and most HR technology innovation happening in the global market is quickly picked up by the Indian HR technology startups. However, we also see local innovation based on Indian market realities coming into picture and in fact some of those innovative and category creating solutions finding their way into the final list of 27 Spotlight showcase companies.
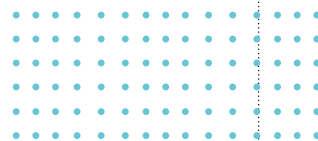
THE 27 STARTUPS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

BRAND NAME	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
ChatChit by Voxta	Assessment	ChatChit AI mobile platform for spoken & written English assessments, & training. Hire faster & cheaper! Train teams to communicate!
Crossbow	Background Verification	Crossbow is a Disruptive Technology Solutions Provider, using Digital Innovations & AI, enabling you to better engage with your customers.
PayReview	Compensation & Benefits	A digital on cloud solution for deciding salaries at critical touch points like hiring, salary increments, incentives, retention etc.
Storecheq	Compensation & Benefits	The new, easy and preferred way to reward our employees, customers & business partners.
FeetApart	Compensation & Benefits	FeetApart is a social and gamified employee engagement and wellbeing solution.
Seek	Engagement	SEEK, demonstrates behavioral change, builds skill & increases employee engagement for a high performance organizational culture
Zenseek	Engagement	A gym for the mind & behavioral analytics tool - Mood, anti-stress, antianxiety. Mapping mindsets, Driving mind-fitness.
Happyness Quotient™	Engagement	An innovative, patent-pending People Management Tool that provides a real-time indication of the level of happiness across your organization.
Tweedl	Engagement	Tweedl offers a white-label SAAS mobile app to help organizations measure and improve their employee engagement.
inFeedo	Engagement	Meet Amber... she is our smart A.I. chatbot who can talk to your employees and proactively find those who are unhappy or most likely to leave.
Hyphen	Engagement	Hyphen is an employee listening & engagement solution that helps companies get a pulse of their people in real-time.
Leena AI	Engagement	Leena is an intelligent ML & AI enabled virtual Human Resource Chatbot Our mantra - "Empower, Engage & Inspire People through conversation."
Pepal	Engagement	Pepal is the intelligent social HR platform for small and medium businesses. This platform enables companies to engage and manage their human resource in more efficient manner.
LitmusWorld	Engagement	An 'Always On' employee engagement company offering solutions to create structured conversations with employees across their lifecycle.
Sleave	Learning	Sleave's mission is to facilitate creation of innovative and engaging learning that run seamlessly on all devices.
Oust	Learning	Gamified mobile micro-learning for enterprises with a large distributed workforce that is customizable, personalized and in a local language.
Tydy	Onboarding	Tydy combines software, machine intelligence & content solutions to engage, educate & retain employees at businesses like yours.
Quikchex	Payroll	Quikchex is a cloud-driven, HR platform that automates and streamlines HR processes like attendance, leave, payroll, expenses, benefits and compliance.
Karma Notes	Performance	A revolutionary performance enhancement tool that enables instant anytime feedback and feed-forward for your employees.
Synergita	Performance	Synergita, a cloud based, complete Employee Performance Management, Development & Engagement Software.
Param.ai	Recruitment	Param is a India based SaaS company that applies the latest technologies in AI and data science to help companies Discover, Match, Engage and Retarget potential candidates at scale.
Recruber	Recruitment	An intelligent sourcing solution that works across multiple channels and automatically profiles candidates to return the best match fastest.
hiringplug™	Recruitment	hiringplug is a curated marketplace of recruiters that enables employers to hire quality talent faster.
eTeki	Recruitment	A technical interviews-as-a-service company helps recruiters & hiring managers separate contenders from pretenders for IT job openings.
Scriptifi	Recruitment	Leverage the Human Intelligence of our Recruitment Experts & Machine Intelligence of our Algos to redefine Speed, Quality & Cost of Hiring!
Shortlist	Recruitment	Shortlist is a tech platform that manages top-of-funnel screening for a variety of junior/mid-level white collar roles — beyond just the CV.
Autogram	Recruitment	Autogram is an Audio/Visual Recruitment Platform for the smartphone where Candidates can SHOW and TELL how good they are.

The Process

With a conspicuous objective to showcase the most relevant HR technology startups to the community during the TecHR event, every application was thoroughly researched, the applicants were spoken to to understand their business models and the specific problems their solutions addressed — all was done to ensure that what was finally presented during the event added value to all parties involved. All applicants had to explain how technology was central to their offering and the focus was on start-ups that had strong technology foundation.

With more than 50 percent companies in recruitment and engagement categories, we saw a clear reflection of the overall application level trends in the final list. It is noteworthy that traditional and established categories like payroll, assessment and compensation are also being challenged and attacked by innovative HR tech entrepreneurs to solve specific problems. We also saw interest in new categories like compensation solutions which is indicative of the space for functional innovation in the HR tech space.

Many startups also talked about the use of latest technology tools like Speech Recognition, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Chatbots among others to help create unique solutions. Most startups also seem to focus on user experience and some are even talked about a mobile-first environment.

The Trends

A look at the profile of entrepreneurs of the Spotlight startups and you would see a wide variety of experience and educational backgrounds. While 40 percent of the startup founders were from engineering background, close to 20 percent also had qualifications and prior experience in HR. 10

out of 27 entrepreneurs had Ivy League education credentials from India and abroad including IIM, IIT, Wharton, Yale and Carnegie Mellon amongst others.

The entrepreneurial bug seems to have bitten individuals from all experience categories with almost equal distribution of entrepreneurs with less than 5 years of experience, up to 10 years of experience and more than 10 years of experience range. There were about 5 serial entrepreneurs who seemed to have now taken interest in HR Tech thus indicating the wide ranging appeal this space has for entrepreneurs.

Many entrepreneurs have worked with large organizations like Google, Motorola, BBC, AOL, Reliance, Infosys and TCS amongst others. This diverse mix of entrepreneurial activity in HR Tech space augurs well for the ecosystem and it is nice to see HR professionals are joining to solve challenges in this space while still dominated by non HR professionals. Roughly, about 40 percent of the Spotlight startups are bootstrapped. A couple of startups have been in operation for 4 to 7 years. This means that the startups are willing and able to fund themselves and generate the funds from their business revenues itself. The average age of the bootstrapped startup

> While many startups use latest technology tools like Speech Recognition, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Chatbots to help create unique solutions; many are also focusing on user experience
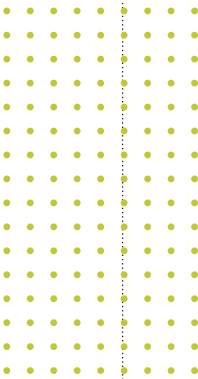
Many startups showed keenness and awareness of other HR Tech vendors with whom they are actively looking to partner and would prefer to approach customers together

is 1.5 years; and this is an important lesson for any entrepreneur in general and a tech entrepreneur in particular. If you are planning to enter the HR Tech space, be ready to fund your startup for a minimum period of 2 years or till you get to critical customer base. This is further confirmed when we look at 60 percent of the startups who have raised capital. The average age of these startups is 2 years, indicating that one should consider a period of 2 years before one is able to raise funding.

About 20 percent of these startups are doing business with more than 20 customers. The average age of these startups is about 3 years. This indicates that most HR tech startups would need up to 3 years to acquire critical mass of customers. Considering HR tech is a crowded space, this is expected. Many HR

tech companies and especially startups will have to be prepared for longer sales cycles and skepticism from their HR buyers. Positioning and communicating product benefits clearly are hence crucial aspects for most HR tech startups.

The Startups speak

Most startups chose to participate in the Spotlight program to get exposure to HR decision makers, other HR tech entrepreneurs, Investors and mentors. Some startups were also focused on gathering feedback about their product during the event, while some were focused on getting some leads.

Many of them were also looking at acquiring critical mass of customers over next 12 months while focusing on sales and marketing related challenges. And while some were hoping to get a few pilot customers, some were also looking to scale quickly in next 12 months to get over 100 new customers. Most such projections indicated the awareness of product maturity and specific customer challenges they were solving.

Many startups also cited long sales cycles and the time it takes to convince HR buyers to try new technology tools as the key challenge they wish to overcome over next 12 months. This is quite telling of the task at hand for these entrepreneurs.

Many startups showed keenness and awareness of other HR Tech vendors with whom they are actively looking to partner and would prefer to approach customers together. This again shows the global trend where startups create point solutions, which then get integrated with existing category solutions. While some were looking for some specific tie-ups, some others were focused on building integrations to allow for a larger playing field.

All in all, the startups and their solutions seemed to be on the right track. Just like any other product, many of these startups will have to ensure their positioning and branding is sharp to ensure they are heard, seen and noticed in the crowded HR tech marketplace.

Mentors Speak

The Spotlight Program partner was The HR Fund, India's first HR focused private investment

PEOPLE MATTERS SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM FROM HR TECH START-UP MENTORS
Investors, HR Practitioners, and Entrepreneurs who were a part of Spotlight at People Matters TechHR 2017

Anand Vemudi
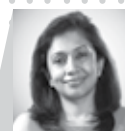
Anuranjita Kumar

Bhavna Agarwal

Dev Khare

Gagan Adlakha

Indrajit Chatterjee

Joyeeta Chatterjee

Karan Mohla

Prabhakar Lingareddy

Prasant Srivastava

Rahul Khanna

Rahul Malhotra

company set up in 2011. With portfolio companies like PeopleStrong, Knolskape, Sheroes and PiQube, they have recently started a 6 month mentorship program for HR startups in India with an aim to provide functional and strategic mentorship from senior HR professionals.

Utkarsh Joshi, Partner at HR Fund, mentioned that "I like the energy, and the buzz is awesome. It's great to see predominantly young non-HR entrepreneurs, solving HR problems using technology. We seem to be at an inflection point, and the focus is now shifting from talent acquisition to talent engagement. "He also highlighted the fact that while they are open for investing in non-tech HR startups, almost 90 percent of the deal flow is HR tech startups. This clearly indicates that the focus on using technology to solve and scale HR challenges is very high in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. When asked about his opinion about point solutions he said, "I feel point solutions are good as they can plug into a larger solution."

The mentors evaluated the elevator pitches on the following parameters:

a. Discovering product fit
b. Understanding the buyer
c. Vision & Strategy
d. Pricing & go-to market
e. Fund raising
f. Building a solid team

Each startup then received diverse perspectives from a group of HR professionals, Investors and other entrepreneurs to help them reflect on their solutions, their approach to the market and also validated their thoughts and ideas.

Some of the advice that mentors had to offer to these startup entrepreneurs hinged on the following:

- Talking to customers about benefits beyond cost
- Seeking feedback from customers about the idea; re-clarifying the problem being solved based on the feedback
- Listening to customers
- Pricing is a fine balance between the value the customer is willing to pay and the cost below which the entrepreneur is not willing to sell
- Are you creating a platform or an ecosystem?

22 mentors and 27 entrepreneurs came together for 2 days to give HR tech industry in India a memorable event

In Conclusion

22 mentors and 27 entrepreneurs came together for 2 days to give HR tech industry in India a memorable event. The fact that these entrepreneurs were positioned at the entrance of the conference ensured they were seen and heard by everyone who visited the conference.

The Tech HR ecosystem in India is following its global counterparts very closely. With recent success stories of Cocubes and Peoplestrong, one is convinced that the action in this space is only going to increase.

The Tech HR industry in India is surely coming of age and we are all very excited at the possibilities it will create for entrepreneurs, HR professionals and investors in the near future. **P**m

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Ranjan Wadhwa
Sairee Chahal
Sandeep Sinha
Sanjay Jarapur
Shailesh Vickram Singh
Sonali Srungaram

Srikanth Balachandran
Sumit Dhanuka
Tarun Kahli
Tejasvi Mohanram
Utakarsh Joshi
Varadarajan Srinivasan

97
Partners

1489+
Attendees

1,066
Twitter Contributors

People Matters Spotlight Program for HR Tech Start-ups - **27**

22,183
Interaction on App
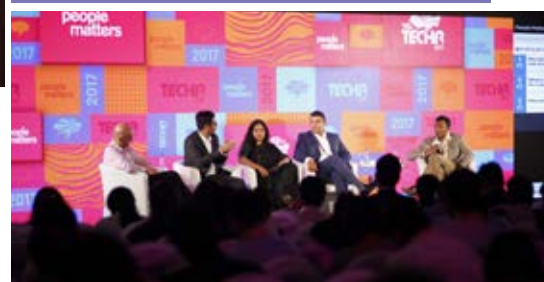
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DANIEL W. RASMUS

Scenario Planning for Human Resources:
Your Key to Agility and Anticipation

Are your plans flexible enough to manage through the next ten years of disruption? As much as we want to believe that trends will inform us and help us make better decisions, the only way to really improve decision-making is to embrace scenario planning

If we all knew exactly how the future would turn out, there would be no need to negotiate plans. We would simply accept the future and decide how best to provide for the needs of our organization — paths forward would be clear, and deviations will become choices, rather than necessities.

Unfortunately, despite what many futurists and forecasters say about the certainty of trends, their pronouncements, often delivered with great authority, come without context. Trends rely on social, political, economic, environmental and technological assumptions regularly unarticulated by those who dogmatize trends. Any change to the underlying assumptions, and the trend may well derail, leaving its followers reacting to change, rather than navigating it.

As much as we want to believe that trends will inform us and help us make better decisions, the only way to really improve decision-making is to embrace uncertainty and deal with the underlying complexity of the world. The discipline best suited for this work is called scenario planning.

Scenario Planning Fundamentals

Scenario planning comes out of war game analysis from the 1950s and 1960s. It has since been adopted by many of the most profitable and sustainable organizations around the world. At its core, scenario planning creates multiple, purposefully divergent stories about the future. These stories emerge from research, understanding and synthesis of the uncertainties facing a company, an industry, a nation or an NGO.

The first task involves defining scope. In scenario planning, scope employs a focal question. For this article, assume the question: *"What will HR mean to an organization in 2030?"* In order to help the teams think even deeper about the influences on not just their roles, but why their roles exist, the question could also be broader, such as *"What will work look like in 2030?"*

For the scenarios to be meaningful, the organizations conducting the scenario work must look well beyond what they comfortably know. The next phase of most scenario projects involves what is known as "outside-in thinking", which means that the teams look to the factors that influence the market, the resources, the regulations

Scenario planning creates multiple, purposefully divergent stories about the future that emerge from research, understanding and synthesis of the uncertainties facing a company, an industry, a nation or an NGO

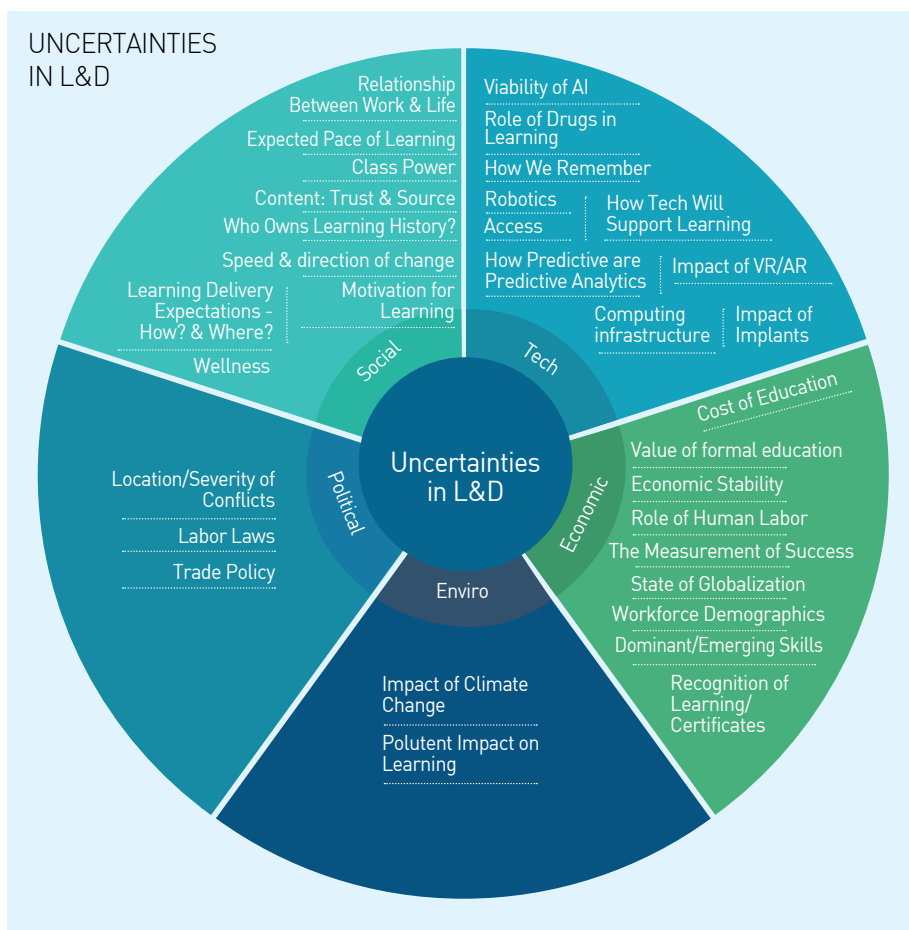and other elements that create organizational context.

This research should include diverse voices. Homogeneous groups tend to feed confirmation bias, so scenario planning seeks a variety of inputs to initiate and feed its divergent stories.

Even if the incoming presumption for several factors points toward certainty, divergent viewpoints on topics quickly demonstrate the underlying uncertainties hidden behind unchallenged assumptions.

As a simple example of uncertainty, think about regulatory labor frameworks. In the United Sates, for instance, a rising "Gig Economy" exists. In the Gig Economy, many people take on jobs where they behave more like independent contractors than employees. This, combined with outsourcing, challenges traditional notions of employment which results in questions like: *Who is responsible for talent management development in a Gig Economy?* The failure to grapple with uncertainties often results in the unexpected undermining of plans because false assumptions get revealed too late. The rise of the Gig Economy disrupts labor-intensive markets like transportation and hospitality (Uber, Lyft, Airbnb) — others prove equally unprepared to leverage the positive economic benefits of the emergent idea had they embraced it earlier. Active scenario planning helps both the disrupted and those who may find new competitive advantage in anticipating the impact of change.

And in India, the uncertainty may be more about how disruptive the Gig Economy will be, and what it will mean within a regulatory and employment environment that is fundamentally different than the one found in America. Globally, the disruption of regulatory frameworks may lead to the very idea of employee and employment emerging as uncertain.

The next scenario planning phase involves documenting and sharing uncertainties. A common practice results

SCENARIO UNCERTAINTIES

Scenario 1 | Scenario 2
Uncertainty 1
Scenario 3 | Scenario 4
Uncertainty 2

UNCERTAINTIES IN L&D

Social
Relationship Between Work & Life
Expected Pace of Learning
Class Power
Content: Trust & Source
Who Owns Learning History?
Speed & direction of change
Motivation for Learning
Learning Delivery Expectations – How? & Where?
Wellness

Tech
Viability of AI
Role of Drugs in Learning
How We Remember
Robotics Access
How Tech Will Support Learning
How Predictive are Predictive Analytics
Impact of VR/AR
Computing infrastructure
Impact of Implants

Economic
Cost of Education
Value of formal education
Economic Stability
Role of Human Labor
The Measurement of Success
State of Globalization
Workforce Demographics
Dominant/Emerging Skills
Recognition of Learning/Certificates

Enviro
Impact of Climate Change
Polutent Impact on Learning

Political
Location/Severity of Conflicts
Labor Laws
Trade Policy

Uncertainties in L&D

Uncertainties gain value that act internally consistent with each story, but may differ wildly from story to story

in extremes for each uncertainty. In the example above, labor regulation might be documented with *Supporting Traditional Employment* on one side, and *Empowering Emergent Work Relationship Models* on the other. The L&D Uncertainty Illustration provides a sample of several areas that cause consternation to those thinking about the future of their organizations.

Diverse teams then vote on their perception of the factors based on which both are uncertain AND which are critically important to the question of HR's role in 2030.

The highest vote getters become the critical uncertainties that form the matrix for the scenario plans. Usually more than two uncertainties rise to the top. This results in multiple matrices that must be evaluated. Scenario practitioners help teams hone down the assortment to a matrix that offers meaningful divergence and a rich story canvas in each quadrant. The next effort involves writing deep

stories about the future—creating alternative answers for the focal question. At the end of the process, four very different futures emerge. Uncertainties gain value that act internally consistent with each story, but may differ wildly from story to story. Traditional employment has its story, as does the Gig Economy. Through the process, additional ideas emerge, that suggest other, mixed or extreme models of employment — each one offering an alternative context designed to answer the focal question.

Scenario Planning and HR

Creating stories is just the first major milestone in the process, and the least integrated with day-to-day work. At the end of the workshops, consultants lead teams through implications exercises that explore the impact of these alternative futures on roles, plans, processes, relationships and structures.
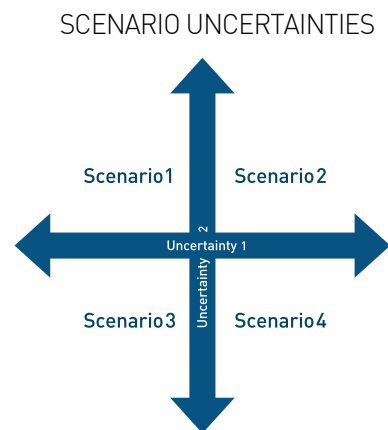
Scenarios eventually lead to deeper HR-implications like: *Learning must be delivered in a fundamentally new way by 2030? We must be prepared to integrate the diverse employment models in a way that skills and performance meet our needs. We must plan for transitions as more-and-more robotics displace workers.* Every scenario ends up with its own set of implications that suggest what needs to be done.

The real work comes while revisiting existing plans to make them more flexible and adaptive in light of the implications — and of change in general, now that the organization recognizes, perhaps even questions, the assumptions underlying them.

Some organizations create contingency plans, others create early warning systems that monitor the uncertainties so they can better anticipate change. As disruption evidence mounts, organizations should modify their plans to better navigate the emergent reality.

Even in organizations that don't apply scenario planning strategically, the discipline can still pay dividends to the HR function.

Many organizations create ideal futures and work towards them. Believing that these *visions* can be achieved dismisses uncertainty. Single-mindedly working towards a particular future causes organizations to lose peripheral vision. When this happens, they become more vulnerable to unrelated events because they simply aren't paying attention.

Scenario planning reminds HR leaders that there is more going on in the world than their daily experience permits them to see. Putting a list of uncertainties on an office door, or cubicle wall, acts as a reminder that even today's work may shift in importance because of factors outside of our personal, organizational or even governmental control.

Onward to the Future

HR faces many challenges as globalization, economic distribution and access to talent evolves. There is no right answer, and no trend watcher who will provide the answers. Each organization must understand the factors that influence its industry, and create scenarios that help it anticipate change, challenge assumptions and avoid surprises.

The most important function of scenarios comes from their ability to help **people practice the future.** Without a framework, imagining the future proves hard, and the results, inconsistent. People usually collapse their speculations and mix them with their hopes and dreams to weave
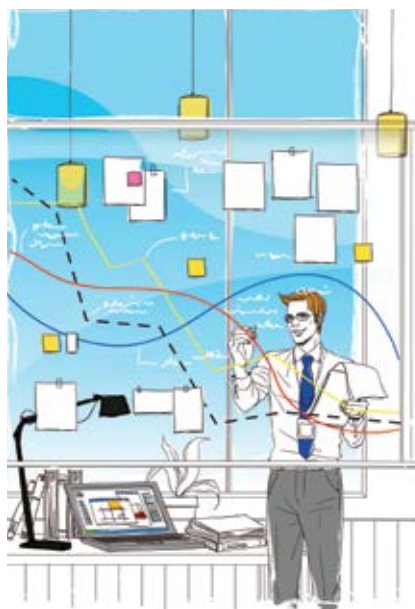
> ## Scenario planning reminds HR leaders that there is more going on in the world than their daily experience permits them to see

a plausible story that doesn't reflect robust analysis through challenging assumptions, or the existence of equally compelling alternative narratives. Scenario planning enforces both, while offering up a robust set of futures that help organizations confront the future, and themselves.

Three Steps Forward

Readers who want to embrace scenario thinking today should consider the following three activities to get started:

- For every item you "control", write down at least one external factor that will influence, positively or negatively, the thing you think you control. (For example, hiring policy — hiring policy is influenced by local and national regulation; regulations are influenced by elected and appointed government officials and legislative bodies).
- Create a list of influences and forces shaping HR for which you are uncertain as to their ultimate role, or if they will even be an influence in the future — and keep it where it can be easily reviewed.

SCENARIO PLANNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Scenario planning offers an interesting side benefit often overlooked by its practitioners: agile thinking. Many job descriptions express the desire for agile thinkers, and many L&D leaders seek to teach this elusive skill. Scenario planning provides one of the few ways that force people to confront their own biases and intransigence in a constructive way.

Let's say a division HR leader has just worked up a compensation plan. Taking that plan to the scenarios it quickly becomes apparent that the assumptions underlying the plan don't hold for most of them. Should that future happen, it would mean reworking the plan to meet objectives, which might themselves change depending on the scenario.

The scenarios place the HR leader into a visceral set of alternative realities.

After facilitating scenarios for over twenty years, I find that most who engage actively come away more not only more agile thinkers, but also more open and less defensive of their philosophical positions.

- As a leadership team, have each member write down five "facts" about HR you believed ten years ago that are no longer true, and five "facts" about HR today that you don't think will be true in ten years. Are your plans flexible enough to manage through the next ten years of disruption?

If these exercises lead you to the conclusion that your plans, and your organization, are not as agile as they should be, a deep look at scenario planning may be required. 🅟🅜

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DANIEL W. RASMUS is the CMO of GlobalEnglish, the leader in technology-empowered Business English learning experiences that give a voice to global talent. Rasmus, who also teaches at Bellevue College, is the author of Listening to the Future and Management by Design.

SCENARIO PLANNING

GURUCHARAN SINGH GANDHI

Fickleness

Fickleness comes camouflaged as many things – it comes cloaked as ideation, generating multiple options, flexibility, and worst of them all – as responsiveness. If only we could measure the fickleness index of leaders and the impact it has on the loss of productivity of teams and individuals!

Nothing troubles team members more than fickleness in their leader. Fickleness comes camouflaged differently and so might be difficult to gauge in what form and shape it will come each time. Most leadership development journeys bypass this attribute, perhaps with the assumption that this is assumed to be present in the leader. One only wished it was true!

The dictionary meaning of the word 'fickle' is fascinating - "changing frequently, especially as regards ones loyalties or affections.". This says it all in the context of the workplace.

We expect our leaders to be steadfast in their beliefs, although distinguishing it from being inflexible or rigid. We want them to be aware of the foundations of what positions they hold, the philosophies they espouse and hence see inconsistencies in their decisions, policies and prescriptions. This clarity or the lack of it is at the heart of a subordinate's ability for meaningful and productive action. In a world turbocharged with flux and characterized by ambiguity enhancers, this clarity has a premium on its head – and to say that it is rarer than what we assume, is to state the obvious.

Fickleness emerges from shifts of the two dimensions mentioned in the definition above – either there is a shift in loyalties or the affections. Loyalties shift with shift in the winds, political equations or power dynamics within teams or amongst teams. The brunt of these shifts in loyalty is often borne by the last man standing. My favorite, however, is shift in affections – for this is the purest form of fickleness, for it emerges from the deepest recess of the individual. It is just that the leader wakes up from a different side of the bed that particular morning and voila – the sands have shifted! All reasoning and explanations happen thereafter. The fads of all kinds, the fancies that catch our attention

> Fickleness at the macro level means a shifting strategy or strategic elements even before the previous strategic choices have had time to settle, mature and give results

and the whims that govern us are born out of this very affliction – that the affections have shifted. Hell hath no fury, than a boss who just had a brainwave!

The team member who is at the receiving end of this fickleness can only be pitied. He does not even know what is going on. What was till yesterday sacrilege has become the toast of the town now – and vice versa. What was old fashioned, repetitive and a shameless attempt to ape the competition has been raised to a pedestal suddenly and hailed as the next breakthrough. What was 'paralysis by analysis' yesterday is now a sharp insight based on deep analysis – and vice versa. Even before the team member settles into the new normal, the kettle is stirred again, and guess why? — the boss just had a new brainwave!

Fickleness comes camouflaged as many things – it comes cloaked as ideation, generating multiple options, flexibility, and worst of them all – as responsiveness. All the cloaks are worthy virtues in themselves if pursued purely and honestly, but as cloaks they become ornamental, hollow and mere sloganeering. They generate only cynicism. If only we could measure the fickleness index of leaders and the impact it has on the loss of productivity of teams and individuals! Fickleness afflicts both at the macro and micro levels. At the macro level,

it means a shifting strategy or strategic elements even before the previous strategic choices have had time to settle, mature and give results. It means modifying and in worst cases reversing directions and decisions that were taken with so much fanfare only recently. It is not uncommon to see the swings between expansion and consolidation, growth and cost cutting, centralization and decentralization, hiring and firing every few years if not every few quarters.

Fickleness at the micro level is more entertaining. Let's take the case of a presentation taken to a boss and you may meet with any of the following three responses.
1. 'Not-sure': You have worked through the night to make the presentation the leaders asked you for only to realize that the brief changed the next morning. The multiple briefs make it the game of perpetually shifting goal posts, all in the name of 'continuous improvement'.
2. 'Lets-make-it-better': You have submitted the tenth version but it still can be made better – so what if the difference between the first version and the tenth one is only the change in the color scheme of the slide!
3. 'Something-is-missing': This is the toughest one because this boss is an artist; he purses his lips, raises eyebrows, rubs his face with Socratic thoughtfulness and passes the verdict – 'something is missing'. Never, ever make the mistake of asking 'what'!

So what is the last word on this? There is no last word actually. I might change my verdict soon and be charged of being fickle! 🅿🅜

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INDREK LEPNER

Making HR valuable – Evidence-based mindsets

HR leaders have done a good job improving both, their business and HR specific knowledge and skills; however, there is still room for improvement as far as critical thinking skills and evidence-based decision support are concerned

We need to go beyond gut hunches when evaluating knowledge claims and making critical business decisions & HR can raise its own game by focusing developing critical thinking skills and relying on an evidence-based decision making

Most companies can copy strategy, technology, manufacturing processes, products, and services. However, HRM practices and culture tend to be much more difficult to imitate. It puts more pressure than ever on HR to do the right things the right way. In general, HR leaders have done a good job improving both, their business and HR specific knowledge and skills. Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement as far as critical thinking skills and evidence-based decision support are concerned. We gather information from a wide range of sources — other people, books, articles, Internet sites, media etc. We make choices and decisions on a daily basis that affect organizational performance and results. Common sense or intuition may serve us well in some situations. However, we can't always trust our common sense because our raw perceptions can deceive us. So we need to be prepared to go beyond gut hunches when evaluating knowledge claims and making critical business decisions. HR can raise its own game by focusing on two interrelated areas: (1) developing critical thinking skills and (2) relying on an evidence-based decision making.

Critical Thinking Skills

Learning to think critically requires HR leaders to become aware of typical sources of error and learn to compensate for them. All kinds of myths seem to be much more fascinating than what is actually true. Myths easily fit into a broader view of human nature that many of us find plausible. Nonetheless, accepting erroneous claims is very likely to result in poor HR decisions. I am going to address some of the most common sources of error from an HR perspective.

First, human beings tend to confuse a statement's familiarity with its accuracy. The fact that we have heard a statement repeated over and over again doesn't make it correct. For instance, we all have repeatedly heard a claim that the more we pay our employees, the better they will perform; and we have heard it so many times that we believe it is true. However, studies show that higher financial incentives do not always work. When it comes to cognitive tasks, higher financial incentives have even been shown to have a negative impact on overall performance. As people focus too much on getting rewards, their creativity suffers significantly. As a result, the overall quality of work declines. Second, we have a desire for easy answers

and quick fixes. We can easily fall prey to books or courses that offer foolproof promises of enhancing performance or changing behaviors rapidly and painlessly. For example, a consultant that promises to turn your high-potentials into effective managers in three 60-minute leadership development sessions sounds too good to be true. As a matter of fact, it is too good to be true. Although most people have the potential to develop effective management skills, it takes a large investment of time and energy. From research, we know that it takes around 10,000 hours of education and practice to become a competent manager*.

Third, we think that we can make most of our choices and decisions based on common sense. The problem with common sense, however, is that it depends on the context, knowledge and experience of the person. As knowledge and experience is limited and contexts vary, our common sense can only go so far and is not an answer for most questions. For some reason, we inherently tend to evaluate studies and surveys on the basis of what our common sense suggests. So we prove knowledge claims that confirm our common sense and disregard those that contravene it. There are many valid studies out there that show the opposite of what common sense would advise. For instance, many of us would believe that cohesiveness will result in more creative ideas and that suspending criticism and focusing on consensus is the key to creative solutions. Studies, however, suggest that teams that debate and criticize others' ideas in a constructive manner tend to generate more creative ideas. Moreover, disagreement can also be useful for elaborating on individual ideas and weaving them together into a comprehensive whole.

Fourth, we also have the tendency to conclude that if two things co-occur statistically then they must be causally related to each other. Too often, case studies, benchmarking studies of best practices, or consultant surveys are presented as studies that reveal cause and effect. Just because the best-performing companies are using a practice doesn't mean the practice is causing the performance. Let's suppose a company introduces a no-layoff policy. A year later, the company's profitability has improved and its stockholders' returns have increased. It would be tempting to infer that the no-layoff policy led to better financial outcomes. However, it may not necessarily be the case. We also need to consider competing explanations. For instance, the company's business performance could have improved because it lowered production costs or increased its profitable sales.

Studies show that higher financial incentives do not always work — when it comes to cognitive tasks, higher financial incentives have even been shown to have a negative impact on overall performance

Fifth, another typical source of error can be explained by our selective perception and memory. We have a propensity to remember our hits and forget our misses. This can lead us to see a variety of associations that are actually not there. We use cognitive shortcuts to make judgments fast and in the process, leave out a lot of relevant information. For instance, an HR professional remembers that she has hired great employees using neither a structured interview nor any tests. That's why she is tempted to act the same way again. Those hits are still fresh in her mind. The truth is that all of us get lucky sometimes. However, it should never lead us to dismiss the best practices in selection. Our chances of hiring the right person are much higher when we rely on an evidence-based approach. Evidence-based practices will eventually result in many more hits than misses. Non-evidence practices on the other hand will lead to more misses than hits.

Sixth, many of us leap to the conclusion that because A precedes B, then A must cause B. But many events that occur before other events don't cause them and are not related at all. Let me give you a hypothetical example. We decide to do research into Fortune 500 senior managers to find out what accounts for their success. As a result of this research, we discover that many of them liked to solve crossword puzzles when growing up. It would be tempting to infer that solving crossword puzzles in childhood led those managers to develop excellent leadership skills as adults. However, the question of whether solving crossword puzzles is associated with leadership abilities needs a broader investigation. We would also need to figure out whether there are successful senior managers among those who didn't solve crossword puzzles in the childhood. In addition, we would need to investigate whether there are those who solved lots of crossword puzzles in the childhood, but never made it to a Fortune 500 company senior management. It is very likely that solving crossword puzzles merely coincided with other factors. Graduating a top notch business school, having great coaches, being disciplined and committed to professional growth might have been some of the factors that contributed to their success in the corporate world.

Seventh, if we run into performance issues we tend to jump on the training bandwagon. There are, however, a variety of causes for poor results. Lack of skills or knowledge is only one of them. Poor performance often has to do with one or several of the following areas: (1) structure/process, (2) information, (3) motives, (4) resources, and (5) wellness. Research suggests that more than 80 percent of the time performance problems aren't caused by a lack of skills or knowledge. This means that training can easily become an irrelevant tool in many cases. Training is effective only if poor performance is caused by a lack of some specific skill or knowledge. So it is first necessary to analyze what causes poor performance and only then find an appropriate intervention. Throwing training at all or most performance issues is likely to result in wasted time and money.

Putting it all into practice

When it comes to improving critical thinking skills, the first step should be to become aware of these typical sources of error. The second step is to share and discuss it within the HR teams. Encourage your team members to challenge each other on knowledge claims. Moreover, hold each other accountable for always providing the evidence in support of your opinions.

The third step could be to ask line managers you work with to support their opinions with facts, examples and sources. Mere speculation just won't do. They at least need to bring data to the table when arguing their points. Managers tend to mistakenly believe that they do make evidence-based decisions. The reality, however, is that those managers often make decisions rooted solely in their personal experience.

Another trend seems to be that managers also take the work practices of other companies as evidence. Before we copy what other companies are doing, we shall evaluate whether these practices are effective and whether they are likely to work in a different context. The fact that some companies choose to call their management practices the best practices doesn't make those practices universally applicable.

We also need to pay attention to managers who like to defend their actions by stating that: "This is how we have always done things around here". The problem is that it tells us nothing about the effectiveness of those long-standing practices. Doing something consistently over a long period of time doesn't automatically make it effective. It needs to be evaluated to see what has worked and where improvements are needed.

The fourth step in the process is to make funds available for training in data analysis, statistics, simulation or any other similar areas. Finally, it is crucial to recognize and reward those who take the lead in using data.

Various surveys indicate large discrepancies between what HR practitioners think is effective and what the current research shows. This is quite thought-provoking, isn't it? When we are suggesting certain HRM practices to be implemented, we always need to provide the scientific rationale behind it. So it is not sufficient just to say what needs to be done, but also explain why it makes sense to act in a certain way. It would be the right step towards creating a culture that reinforces critical thinking and evidence-based decision making. Our job as HR leaders is to communicate expectations and lead by example.

When you are hearing a presentation at a conference or reading an article on the Internet, it would be worth paying attention to the following questions. These simple questions help us critically analyze and make sense of the information we are receiving:

- What is the expertise of the speaker/author in this area?
- What might be the possible motivation of the speaker/author?
- Are the claims supported by evidence? Is that evidence relevant?
- Are the claims internally consistent, free from contradictions and logical errors?
- Is that information up to date? What are other authors writing about this topic?
- Does the speaker/author acknowledge counter-claims or limitations of her own knowledge?

Evidence-based Decision Support

'Evidence-based' is not just some nice buzzword. An evidence-based approach teaches us to distinguish science from folklore, data from assertions, and evidence from beliefs or personal opinions. Moreover, research suggests that evidence-based practices lead to high performance. Before making an important decision, we need to ask ourselves: "What is the best available evidence?" It is critical to draw evidence

> Research suggests that more than 80 percent of the time performance problems aren't caused by a lack of skills or knowledge but by factors related to structure/process, information, motives, resources, and wellness

from multiple sources to develop a better understanding of the issue at hand. I would recommend you to consider the following four main sources for gathering evidence: (1) scientific evidence (findings from scientific research), (2) organizational evidence (organizational data, facts and figures), (3) experiential experience (professional experience and judgment), and (4) stakeholder evidence (input from the employees who may be affected by the decision).

The first source of evidence is scientific research published in academic books and journals. It doesn't mean that we should only read academic literature. It is essential to read HR-related articles in academic journals, trade magazines as well as in newspapers. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that the reliability and validity of information presented varies from one source to another. Peer-reviewed journals bring scientific rigor to understanding issues in the field of HRM. For instance, research in selection has consistently shown that integrity tests are highly predictive of dysfunctional work behaviors

such as theft. However, we don't know how reliable recommendation letters are. When it comes to compensation, research tells us that more hierarchical pay structures are related to greater performance when the work flow depends more on the individual contributors. However, there is practically no research on the optimal size of the promotional increase or its effects on behavior, satisfaction, or performance.

A second source of evidence is organizational data which can come in many different forms. It can be data taken from financial reports or customers through various feedback surveys, or data derived from employee opinion surveys or engagement surveys. Organizational data can be "hard" numbers such as employee turnover rates, errors or productivity levels. It can also be data that includes so-called soft components such as attitudes towards management or perceptions of the organizational culture. Both hard and soft data matter and should factor into decisions. It is critical to collect organizational data consistently for being able to identify important trends and spot problems early. I would also recommend using the same tools for a longer period of time in order to get comparable data and more consistency for evaluation purposes. If you keep trying out new tools every year, it makes it harder to get an adequate picture of what is going on in an organization. Also, you want to ensure that the data you have in your corporate systems would be correct and up to date. Wrong data can do more damage than no data at all.

A third source of evidence is experiential experience. It refers to making decisions based on professional experience. It is crucial to not confuse professional experience with intuition or personal opinion. Everybody can act on an intuition or personal opinion. Professional experience, however, reflects the specialized knowledge gained by repeated experience and practice of specialized activities. It is essential to emphasize here that professional experience in and of itself doesn't create much value. What makes experience valuable is your ability to analyze it, learn from it and adjust accordingly. It is also necessary to consider the specific context when evaluating your experiences. For instance, we as HR leaders can ask the managers we are coaching the following questions. What do you think went well/wrong in a particular situation? Why do you think so? Are there any alternative explanations? Have you received feedback from others? What do they say? What would you do the same way/differently in a similar situation next time? What are the key learning points that you are going to take with

> 'Evidence-based' is not just some nice buzzword; an evidence-based approach teaches us to distinguish science from folklore, data from assertions, and evidence from beliefs or personal opinions

you from this experience? Such kinds of conversations stimulate deeper reflection and learning.

Stakeholder evidence is the fourth source of evidence. All HR decisions affect employees to some extent. The bigger the impact of the decision, the more critical it is to involve employees. Even if you can't let them make the decision, at least find out what they think and feel about the question at hand. Unfortunately, what we often see in companies is the management making decisions solely based on what they think is best for the employees. Sometimes they guess it right, at other times they don't. The point is that decision making should have nothing to do with guessing. It should be based on the input received from stakeholders. For instance, when (re)designing office environment, it would be tempting to just follow recent trends in office design or let managers decide what could be best. If you want your employees to be truly happy and engaged, you need to design their workspace based on what they prefer.

HR decisions directly affect both individual and organizational performance. The quality of those decisions determines business outcomes. HR leaders need to look for ways to create more value. One of the fundamental things to do to add more value is by embracing an evidence-based mindset. It requires HR leaders to develop their critical thinking skills and encourage evidence-based decision making in organizations. **Pm**

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

INDREK LEPNER works as an HR Business Partner at Danske Bank, Estonia Branch. He holds a Master's degree in Human Resource Management from Rollins College, FL, United States & has also served as a visiting lecturer in Estonian Business School

Jobs of the week

Client of Universalhunt
Head HR / General Manager - HR
Location: Mumbai
Job ID: 20524967
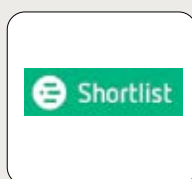**Description:** Responsible for the HR practices and objectives that will provide an employee oriented.

dEEVOiR Consulting Services Private Limited
Business Partner HR
Location: Pune
Job ID: 20779198
Description: HR Relationship Management - Employee Relations - Performance and Talent Management- Recruitment, Joiner and Transfer process.

Shortlist Professionals Inc
Talent Acquisition Head
Location: Hyderabad / Secunderabad
Job ID: 21104694
Description: Deliver on open positions against timeline, budget and quality of resources needed.

Addtobuy Internet Private Limited
Sr. HR Manager
Location: Ahmedabad
Job ID: 21097504
Description: Ensure activities meet with and integrate with organisational requirement for quality management, health and safety, legal requirement, environmental policies and general duty of care.

Sampoorna Computer People
HR Manager
Location: Other India
Job ID: 21094166
Description: Minimum of 8 to 10 years managing big teams, Strong analytical skills.

GlobalHunt India Private Limited
Regional HR Manager - East Region
Location: Kolkata
Job ID: 21068255
Description: Ensure regular track of the manpower budget vs actuals and direct corrective steps with the resourcing manager whenever required.

Synergy HRD Consultant Private Limited
Manager - HRBP
Location: Pune
Job ID: 21044635
Description: HRBP is responsible for R&D & Sales unit,Managing end to end HR Operations, Capability building, Talent acquisition and OD.

Incedo Inc
Recruitment Manager - US Staffing
Location: Gurgaon
Job ID: 20939975
Description: Ideal candidate must have at least 8+ Years of experience in US recruiting industry.
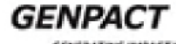
Past Month's events

Storify your impact: Leverage data to influence (Social Hiring Masterclass - Module 4)

ORGANIZER: People Matters & LinkedIn Talent Solutions
DATE: 10th August
VENUE: Online
KEY TAKEAWAYS: In the final session of social hiring masterclass, data elements that lead and lag indicators for the hiring practices of the organization were identified. The session helped to understand the fundamental tenets of building compelling stories using data and developing a framework on how you can have a data based approach to social recruiting. The key takeaways of the session were:
1) Understand the key tenets of building compelling stories using data
2) Looking at data through candidate lens
3) Build a framework on how you can have a data-based approach to social recruiting

Wellness strategies from engagement to measurement

ORGANIZER: People Matters & Sanofi
DATE: 9th August
VENUE: Online
KEY TAKEAWAYS: With healthcare expenditure skyrocketing year-by-year and wellness budgets getting limited, it creates challenges for HR Leaders to engage employees in wellness activities. And while wellness programs have proven effects on reducing absenteeism & improving productivity at the workplace, many HR Leaders still face challenges. The webinar presented following key aspects at the session:
1) What kind of wellness activity engages employees of all levels?
2) What wellness activities will give quick pay-off?
3) Of the many options in the market, what wellness activities need to prioritize?

TechHR'17 Conference & Exhibition

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 3rd & 4th August 2017
VENUE: The Leela Ambience, Gurgaon
KEY TAKEAWAYS: TechHR - Asia's Largest HR Technology Conference & Exhibition 2017 brought together the best of businesses, HR Leaders, HR Product & Service experts, HR Technology partners and start–ups from around the globe. The much sought-after conference focused on providing expert insights, information and exposure to business leaders, CHROs, strategic advisors and senior HR professionals. From leaders like Fons Trompenaars, the global guru of culture and transformation; and Kate Sweetman, author, speaker and a leadership consultant, to Brian Sommer, global technology industry expert and many more, TechHR had leaders from across the world shared their perspectives and insights on a variety of themes.

Strategic people imperatives - How to find & retain the best talent

ORGANIZER: People Matters & Oracle India
DATE: 27th July
VENUE: Online
KEY TAKEAWAYS: The scale and pace of digital disruption has ensured that companies both new and traditional are able to reach a global marketplace regardless of where they are based out of. With the incoming digital natives, retaining top talent is one of the biggest talent challenges in 2017, according to Forbes. In this context, the webinar presented expert views from a technology perspective. Some key questions addressed in the session were:
1) What are some macro trends that are impacting hiring talent today?
2) What are some of the challenges that companies have in attracting top talent?
3) How are companies planning to retain talent?

HR Summit

ORGANIZER: NASSCOM
DATE: 20th - 21st July, 2017
VENUE: ITC Grand Chola, Chennai
KEY TAKEAWAYS: The future of work impacts all three levels of HR — Strategic, Functional and Operational. NASSCOM's HR Summit – 2017 was joined by futurists, technologists, business leaders who witnessed the change from the front and HR masters who are walking through the storm of the change. The two-day summit comprised discussions on talent strategy revolving around the following themes:
- Organization culture: Innovation by design
- Maximizing HR's value as a Technology Buyer
- Diverse skilling and reskilling HR
- Developing leaders to navigate through change
- Deploying artificial intelligence
- Becoming a learning organization
- HR as a bot
- Moving from predictive to prescriptive analytics

Leadership: Authority Vs Influence

ORGANIZER: People Matters & O.C.Tanner
DATE: 19th July
VENUE: Online
KEY TAKEAWAYS: How should leaders lead? Everyone seems to have a theory, but none of them really challenge the basic assumption of leadership: that leaders need positional authority to lead. Niel Nickolaisen, Chief Technology Officer of O.C. Tanner discussed in a webinar about influential authority vs. positional authority. He also shared importance of the trust/ownership model and the macro leadership cube.

K+N Knowledge+Networking

Upcoming events

Global Skills Summit 2017

ORGANIZER: FICCI
DATE: 15th September, 2017
VENUE: FICCI, New Delhi
THEME: In ever evolving workplace, disruptive changes and new business models will have a profound impact on the employment landscape over the coming years. Automation lies in the vanguard of the 'fourth industrial revolution', a process in which the interaction of cyber and physical systems will transform the established economic and social structures. Many of the major drivers of transformation currently affecting global industries are expected to have a significant impact on jobs, ranging from significant job creation to job displacement, and from heightened labor productivity to widening skills gaps. The 10th edition of Global Skill Summit's theme "New Age Skills for Today and Tomorrow" aims to take deeper look at the automation potential in the global workplace today and its impact on employment and productivity.
HOW TO REGISTER: To register visit FICCI events section

9th NASSCOM Design & Engineering Summit

ORGANIZER: NASSCOM
DATE: 21st-22nd Sept, 2017
VENUE: Bangalore
THEME: The summit will focus on where Engineering and R&D sector is heading to, with the new disruptive technologies that would impact the world and how to develop products to enhance customer experience. The event will comprise innovative sessions, high-powered speakers, and an early peek at the products, trends, and services.
HOW TO REGISTER: To register, visit NASSCOM events page

CII Telangana HR Conclave 2017

ORGANIZER: Confederation of Indian Industry
DATE: Sep 20, 2017
VENUE: Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC), Hyderabad, India
THEME: This conclave is an attempt to break the myth that Gen Y is only good at those challenges that the current ecosystem is spending most of the time questioning; but is also equally good at solving some of the current challenges by bringing in different and radical perspectives and at times provide great insights on some of the contemporary issues we are grappling with. The conclave will have 3 concurrent tracks focusing on Learning & Leadership, Culture & Wellbeing and Policies & Branding.
HOW TO REGISTER: To register visit CII events section.

L&D League Annual Conference & Expo 2017

ORGANIZER: People Matters
DATE: 11th October
VENUE: Taj Lands End, Mumbai
THEME: Workplaces are being re-imagined. Learning is being transformed. Career is a fast-altering concept. To enable and empower leaders to stay ahead on this curve and spearhead the capability building agenda at their organizations, People Matters presents L&D League Annual Conference, where 400+ global thought-leaders and experts will spark-off thought-provoking conversations on critical aspects of the entire learning life-cycle. Bringing the latest trends, innovations and best practice, all under one roof, the conference is designed to help leaders set the right foundations for success.
HOW TO REGISTER: To register, visit: https://lndleague.peoplematters.in

Digitizing MSMEs: The Way Forward Capturing Next Growth Level through Finance, Technology, Marketing & Capacity Building

ORGANIZER: ASSOCHAM
DATE: 21st September, 2017
VENUE: Hotel Pllazio, Gurugram
THEME: The objective of the summit is to provide assistance to the regional MSMEs in connecting with fund providers, technology providers, and marketing gurus as per their needs ranging from collateral-free loans, receivable financing to ERP implementation and digital marketing among others. The event will enable MSMEs going digital in various domains.
HOW TO REGISTER: To register visit ASSOCHAM events section

Industrial Innovation Summit

ORGANIZER: Confederation of Indian Industry
DATE: Oct 24- 25, 2017
VENUE: The LaLiT New Delhi, Barakhamba Avenue Connaught Place New Delhi
THEME: Industrial Innovation Summit 2017 will be the platform to look for latest technologies and innovations that Indian industry has in offer. The Summit will consist of sectoral sessions and exhibitions spanned across two days where each sector will showcase leading innovations and technologies. The primary objective of the event will be to advocate suitable policies for building industrial innovation and technology capability to attract maximum FDI, aligning with the goals of "Make in India". The Industrial Innovation Summit will consist of sectoral sessions and exhibitions spanned across two days where each sector will be represented by industry with leading innovation and technology offerings
HOW TO REGISTER: To register visit CII events section.

Blogosphere » ARZAAN MISTRY

Only 12 percent of the companies that first made it to the Fortune 500 list in 1955 still remain there whilst others have either gone bankrupt or merged with another venture. So why is it that most success stories are so hard to replicate?

Replicating success – Easier said than done

Like everything around us today, success is also demanded in the form of 2 minute noodles. Achieving success, however, is often equated with remaining successful. This couldn't be farther from the truth, for the latter requires a particularly different mindset. One needs to showcase persistence and foresight, be willing to adapt to change (and affect it as well) and most importantly, given the nature of businesses today, demonstrate a willingness to innovate.

To stay ahead of the curve, successful businesses have created disruptions in their fields of play through a host of innovative measures. A cursory glance at the current Fortune 500 list will showcase that only 12 percent of the companies that first made it to the list in 1955 still remain there whilst the others have either gone bankrupt, merged with another venture or, if still existing, are nowhere near the top 500.

So why is it that most success stories are so hard to replicate? Let us look at some of the reasons for this:

Turning a blind eye to competition

In 1996, ranked as the fourth most valuable brand in the US with 90 percent share of the camera film market, Kodak was the most recognizable camera brand in the world. 6 years later they filed for bankruptcy as digital cameras and smart phones took away their business. Failure to recognize where the competition is coming from and turning a blind eye towards it can be fatal. While companies at the top of their game constantly look for ways and means to stay there, their competitors aren't exactly twiddling their thumbs. The motivation to dethrone the market leader is reason enough for someone to put not just their heart and soul into it, but also their money. A lot of money!

Failure to build on your past success

Michael Schumacher didn't let up on his intensity simply because he became World Champion in 1994. In fact, he trained harder than before and ended up winning five titles in a row and seven in total. On the flip side, the Leicester football team which won the 2015-16 English Premier League barely managed to stay afloat last year. Getting to the top is one thing. Staying there is a completely different ball game. The truly great performers not only work hard to get to the top, but work harder to stay there.

If it worked for them, it can surely work for us

In 2015, Indian startups received $9 billion in funding, equivalent to the entire amount received in the 2010-14 period. It slowed to almost $4 billion in the subsequent year. One of the reasons for this was the market being flooded with identical products or service offerings and therefore, the relevant segment not being profitable anymore. It is said that mimicking is a form of flattery. That would hold true only for showbiz. Truth be told, believing that

because it worked for others and it will also work for you is akin to 'Hara-kiri'. Research indicates that 42 percent of startup failures are primarily due to the fact that there is no real or sustained market need for the product.

Adapt™ Be a Crocodile, not a Dinosaur

Crocodiles have been in existence on this planet since the time of the dinosaurs. How then did they survive while the dinosaurs didn't? The answer lies in their ability to adapt. Crocodiles changed their methods and reinvented themselves at every stage. Dinosaurs could not and hence, they're extinct. Successful businesses are constantly evolving and, in some cases, undergoing a complete makeover. History is replete with examples of companies being knocked off their pedestal after reaching the top. Free market access, friendlier policies and a more positive economic environment globally, have encouraged a more competitive eco system overall.

With every passing day, the digital revolution is also redefining success at every level. It is time for companies to wake up and smell the coffee, otherwise they await a fate similar to those Fortune 500 companies from the 50's and 60's which slipped out of the rankings; and this time, there will be no looking back for any of them. ⬤m

(The views expressed in the article are author's own and the author's employer does not subscribe to the substance or veracity of the views expressed herein)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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