



## In The Era of Digitalization Smart And Lean HR Prevails

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### ABSTRACT

In the midst of a major technology reengineering, specifically a digital revolution which is now dominating every sector of the economy, it's bringing with it ubiquitous and unprecedented amounts of change. Technologies that has given new perspective to solutions, more data than ever before, legacy and new systems to tie together, an upsurge in collaboration, new alliances, new startups...new everything. The rise of the millennial generation brings with it not just a new type of customer, but also a new kind of employee with very different outlooks and aspirations. This 'birth of digital' had impacted the functioning of human resource in organization. To cope up with the digital trend HR has transformed its process from conventional to lean and smart HR to meet the demands of their customers.

### KEYWORDS

Digital, HR, Lean , Smart,

The early hours of morning the alarm is now the smart watch buzzes. As you wake up and head to the restroom, your intellectual assistant Mary appears on the rest room mirror that is synced like all other electrical devices in your home and workplace to one another. She alerts you on the meetings for the day. Your first hologram call, she says, is in the next 20 minutes with a client in Paris, so programme your avatar to present for you in the call. After the call, Mary alerts on the next scheduled meeting for the day – your fortnightly performance review discussion with your manager in Canada, an experience sharing meeting with your peer in New York as part of his training and a project progress meeting with your junior in Mumbai. As you on remark on the day not being so bad after all,

A reminder from Mary on the time sharing project with the 3D modelling team. So much for portfolio careers! It will require you to travel to the office that is 2 hours away to attend a client meeting. Hearing you grumble about the time involved in commuting, Mary comes to your rescue finding an alternate travel to the nearest hub that is just 15 minutes from home. Oh!, that's the advantages of technology. While preparing breakfast, your refrigerator alerts you on the low stock of grocery and waits for your approval before placing the order with your registered grocer.

You get into your Benz car and programme it to reach the center while you complete the ten-minute training module on process fineness and mails are responded on the phone using voice activated command. When you reach the hub, the biometric recognition system at the door immediately identifies and you get an alert on your smart glasses directing you to an empty workstation. As you reach your workstation you plug in your access card and the virtual 3D model that is being built by you as part of your time-sharing project appears. Virtually you are able to see the other team members working on the model. While you greet them, through an office drone you receive delivery of a confidential docket of blueprints for the 3D model. You sign confirming the delivery of the docket on the handheld connected to the drone with the date – 2nd Jan 2020. A day in the not so distant future. Welcome to, what is prophesized widely by various prominent creative thinker as, the future of work. 24/7 working is a global norm connecting to the global world and people are constantly connected and online. A world that is, at the same time, highly patchy and isolated physically. But is it really the future? However, the acceleration pace of change in today's dynamic world no longer affords us the luxury of taking the future one day at a time. HR is on the crossover of change manifold forces are shaping the manner in which work will get done in the future. Changes are taking place across all levels, individual's needs, societal, global, and likings as well as in the area of technology,

work tools and spaces. Some key emerging trends are as follows

- Swift expansion that has thrown open challenges on the work-life balance front.
- Value-added interconnectedness at the comprehensive level.
- Universal digitization resulting in conservative business paradigms being questioned.
- Multi-generational workforce with divergent needs and preferences.

Demographics of the workforce is changing. The current generation millennials are profoundly more mobile generation, the rising life probability has also resulted in many more people working beyond the conservative retirement age. Therefore, the rise of a multi-generational workforce is seen. This trend is accommodating aged and experienced employees as well as young and free-spirited millennials. The scale of this task is highlighted by the fact that organizations are becoming flatter. The traditional organization charts are being put to test by the technological advances and the expectations for collaboration and openness set by millennials.

Purpose-driven companies find greater acceptance with the new generation of employees who are attach to higher value to concepts like sustainability and conscious capitalism. These have changed working style in the world and as the future reveals, people management present itself as one of the greatest business challenges. It also possibly throw open multitude of prospects for the HR function. Unquestionably, HR is on the cusp of change. The influence of the above trends on the human resources function has impacted on all facets of its functioning right from the organization structure, functioning of department, the design of processes as well as the usage of technology and tools that enable the function.

### Slender HR Process

There is a lot that has been written on the evolution of the HR function in this decade. Few literature has gone to the extent of stating that the function will no longer exist with talent management being implanted within business itself. While we are no mystics, we strongly believe that the function will continue to exist. That being said, the HR function would need to grapple with emerging issues such as:

- increasing positioning of stringent performance measurement metrics and techniques,
- the edge between work and home life is endangered,

- the rising importance of social capital as the driver of business success.

The stress on performance and the use of real-time data and analytics will require a 'smart' HR function that helplessly has to engage sophisticated human capital metrics to evaluate corporate activity. The HR function will possibly have greater accountability for delivering specific corporate objectives. This will result in a greater need for HR to quantify itself in respect of how it delivers against the bottom line. At the same time, technological advancement, amplified digitization and emphasis on process and cost effectiveness to remain competitive will continue to drive towards a 'lean' HR function where operational activities are either digitized or outsourced.

The subsequent model of lean and smart HR would increasingly resemble Charles Handy's Shamrock organization that is by his own definition, a 'core of essential executives and workers supported by outside contractors and part-time help'. The emphasis on a cohesive data view and analysis would maybe also drive towards a more collaborative HR department, not constrained by traditional functional boundaries.

### **The Best Way to Envisage the Future Is To Create It**

In terms of HR processes, better connectivity and the advent of the big economy has resulted in compound talent pools that would require to be tapped effectively using various enterprise social networking platforms. The workforce diversity also require different types of work arrangements viz. flexi-working, remote working, etc. to be actively considered and adopted to enable the organization to leverage the power of remote workers and the freelance/ sharing economy. HR need to provide for alternating patterns of work for older employees like portfolio careers, part-time working etc. The other interesting trend is the openness with which people especially millennials are sharing their personal details and preferences on virtual platforms. With professional and personal boundaries clouding, this trend brings in its wake, the opportunity for HR to provide highly customized people practices to its workforce much like the marketing function segments and provides attractive offers to customers. The drive towards continuous anywhere, anytime learning delivered seamlessly through computers/mobile devices in bit-sized modules will continue to impact learning and development interventions. The need for immediate feedback would transform the performance management process with yearly performance conversations replaced by instant and continuous feedback. People engagement itself, will be re-defined as conventional office boundaries perish. With a number of changes in the HR processes being underway and already in place in organizations across the world, the future is in fact already created and existing at this moment. Of a Chief Experience Officer whose responsibility is to craft interesting and enriching experiences for individuals at the workplace is very much a reality. But all these would need to view as mere enablers for the HR function. As Albert Einstein profoundly observed, "The human spirit must prevail over technology." And presumably as an extension over all other material trappings too.

### **Be Proactive and lead the Change**

The world is indeed experiencing makeover on various fronts and with that the nature of work and workforce is being dramatically redefined. We are faced with a host of uncertainties. Despite the unpredictability, we see some constants that have endured since time immemorial. One such aspect is the human need for empathy and recognition. As the workforce becomes increasingly disconnected on the corporeal level, and real-time data and analytics continuously seek to objectify performance, the need and hence the opportunity to make a palpable difference through effective people management assumes an importance of a higher order.

We must however caution that the nature of the beast makes it also very difficult especially since the workforce will no longer be confined to a physical workspace. Fostering cultural elements and

having employees being able to relate to the values and purpose behind the organization, while working out of remote locations connected for all one knows only by technology, is a real dichotomy that we will need to handle. As custodians of human capital, the HR community is entrusted with the responsibility to partner with business to manage talent responsibly. While there is a strong case for embedding talent management as a core responsibility of business, we believe we must as a function more than ever before really own the people management agenda within the organization. There is a significant opportunity ahead of us to truly drive strategy and employ tools and information to become one of the most powerful and influential parts of the operations of the business. However, we need to be proactive and take the lead to be the change before we are rendered irrelevant through either outsourcing or absorption of people management responsibility into other functions. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves - or lose the ventures before us.

In conclusion, to capitalize on the opportunities that lie ahead of us while retaining the core essence of HR function that is, being aligned to business on one hand and on the other hand to employee needs and aspirations. As the famous playwright William Shakespeare so eloquently cautioned in his epic tragedy on Julius Caesar "There is a tide in the affairs of men. Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves - or lose the ventures before us."

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