



Excerpts from an interview with

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What is HR's role in Changing World of Work?

The new world of work is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA). HR's role has never been as crucial as it is now in supporting the business during this time, where people are at the center of the crises and play the leading role in the success of a business.

HR needs to support leaders to adapt to the new normal. Leaders need new skillsets to be able to competently lead an organisation business in today's complex business environment, as it is no longer about achieving results and hitting targets alone, but also about empowering and motivating the people within the business.

There is a strong need for leaders who are able to connect, support and empathise with their teams and show relentless support despite the pressure to deliver on the results and keep the business afloat during challenging times. Also, leaders will need to adapt their leading style as the one-size leadership approach will not fit all.

As most companies are adopting the hybrid model to return back to work, leaders need to know how to balance their approach in order to lead virtual and on-premise teams in a way that eliminates perceptions and views of inequality & favoritism. Inclusion becomes very critical, & leaders will have to be at the forefront of change to help organisations & their teams navigate through these changes.

The role of HR professionals as change catalysts should be to provide the necessary tools, resources and support to leaders to enable them to become effective leaders. Engagement and culture are what will keep the talents within the organisation, as what attracted your talents to your business will no longer keep them there. Thus, agile talent management is needed throughout the employee lifecycle - from sourcing to exit. Ultimately, the way in which we retained talents in the past will not keep them in this changing world. HR needs to help organisations to redesign their talent management and skills retention strategies. The landscape of the workforce has changed, and HR has to partner with the business to redefine the strategic workforce planning (SWFP) so that it is aligned to the new capabilities that are imposed as a result of these exponential changes.

"Today's Challenges are becoming tomorrow's trends and opportunities", what are your views about this statement?

Opportunities emerge when change is embraced. Indeed, today's challenges will become tomorrow's trends and opportunities. Evidently, as we have seen how the challenges of unprecedented COVID-19 impact has accelerated many businesses in positive directions amid the crisis. In a short space of time, companies were able to adjust to the normal ways of working. The long spoken about but seldom actioned work from home (WFH) principles were

forced onto companies overnight, and many organisations thrived, managing to keep their employees engaged and in fact, improved performance throughout these disruptions. Most research and polls done indicate that employees are experiencing more productivity working from home as the results of not having to juggle traffic and being interrupted in the office.

They also indicated that virtual meetings were more effective than boardroom meetings due to the limited duration one can spend on a virtual meeting.

Performance management is also changing, because managers are now learning to manage output and not the presence of their staff. In this way, employees cannot hide by completing attendance register. Poor performers as well as key talents are more easily identified.

For learning organisations, the challenges of COVID-19 impact made it impossible for classroom learning methodology to continue taking place. This required companies to adjust the way of fostering learning culture in their business. Learning took a different shape, during the crisis e-learning proved to be the most effective pedagogical method.

We knew that this is the future, but the pandemic accelerated this user experience. This will reduce the time spent on training significantly, and now more people can develop their skills without any time, distance or space limitations. Digital transformation became top of the transformational agenda for most businesses, and we have seen that e-commerce trade was the most successful ones at achieving this, as the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic changed consumer shopping behavior overnight. Today, most companies are adapting their business models to maximize on the benefits of e-commerce. On-trade has proven to be the least effective during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, this was the method that most companies have been using over years. As a result, many businesses were hit hard due to inability to switch in a short period of time in order to adapt. Now going forward due to the experiences learnt during the challenges of today, organisations are working on optimising their businesses in order to work smart and save on operating costs. None of these approaches are new, some have been in the pipeline for years with no pressure to give them a full trial.

Smart organisations are redefining capabilities which will set the winners apart from the losers. Challenges of COVID-19 also force companies to review their Employee Value Proposition (EVP). The most sought-after talent will be choosy and will prefer to work with visionary leaders who demonstrated people skills. The future world of work is redefined by our current challenges, and this can be used as an opportunity to thrive. Agile organisations that will be quick to adapt will be ahead of their competitors and will capture their market share and win talents by the storm.

Ultimately, the opportunities that accompany the current challenges are endless.