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July 2020

Recruiters of Tomorrow: What to Expect?

In the Spotlight

Madhavi Lall

Head - HR at Deutsche Bank India



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SPECIAL FEATURE

Pg No. 24



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ALL THINGS TALENT

by iimjobs.com | hirist.com

This issue contains 70 pages including cover.

From the

Founder's Desk

Tarun Matta

Founder - iimjobs.com & hirist.com



The ongoing crisis has thrown talent professionals unexpectedly onto a path of life-altering changes and challenges, but it also presents opportunities. From going fully virtual with the recruitment and onboarding programs to being proactive, building networks, adjusting hiring plans, and preparing recruitment tech stack, recruiters have managed to adapt to the 'new normal'. But the buck doesn't just stop here.

Amid these turbulent times, the need of the hour for the recruiting industry is to understand changing business dynamics and re-imagine their talent landscape. We need to become employee-centric as well as customer-centric and work on a new set of more enduring, strategic goals, especially talent recruitment strategy. Hiring people should no longer be a transactional process. In the new world, to get the best talent, employers will have to engage people sooner, more thoughtfully and the hiring processes will have to be more inclusive. To ensure long-term sustenance and make the most of emerging opportunities, recruiters will also have to recalibrate their existing recruitment models and rethink how they approach their hiring game. This will help them transition from their role as labor market intermediaries to the business drivers of tomorrow.

But what lies at the heart of this transition? We talk to some industry stalwarts about it in this edition. For the Spotlight edition we've interviewed Ms Madhavi Lall, Head of HR at Deutsche Bank India, who shares with us her insights on recruitment

planning in the post-Covid world. We also had a conversation with Manoj Kenadath from Atlassian about the changing world of work post-Covid and how new-age organisations can use this situation as an opportunity to showcase their commitment to their employees.

As a part of this edition, we also have some insightful contributions by Ms Geetanjali Wheeler, Mr Ashwajit Singh, Mr Ankur Gautum, Ms Parul Bahl, Mr Sukhpreet Sandhu, Ms Rashmi Agarwal, and Mr Jitender Panihar.

The post-Covid-19 era will be a testament to a new beginning and the recruitment industry will need more than just resilience. Disruption is not going to slow down. It's rapidly becoming the environment in which we are creating and working, which is why recruitment needs to be reinvented to keep the momentum going.

Like Nelson Mandela said, "We must use time wisely and forever realise that the time is always ripe to do right."

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ANATOMY OF A MODERN RECRUITER

The face of recruitment has changed dramatically over the past decade. And so have the recruiters. Modern-day recruiters are tech-savvy, rely on data, and have a seat at the leadership table. Let's better understand the anatomy of this modern recruiter.



DATA ENTHUSIAST

New-age recruiters think and breathe data. 'If you can't measure it, you can't manage it' is the accepted method. Data doesn't only help recruiters make better decisions but also helps them earn credibility among the management.



RESEARCH GURU

Modern recruiters don't shoot arrows in the dark. They want to keep their research to date and make informed decisions by researching about employment trends, compensation details, and candidate pools. Staying one step ahead of the competition is their top priority.



TECH BUFF

Modern recruiters keep up-to-date with the technological developments in the industry, and have the know-how of the recruiting tools that have surfaced in the past few years. They know which tools work best for which stage of recruitment, and are masters in using them.



EMOTIONAL ANALYST

The modern-day recruiter would understand the importance of keeping humane emotions at the centre of the entire recruitment process. Right from establishing a connect at the screening stage to taking interest in candidates' long term goals and aspirations while onboarding them.



MARKETING YODA

Recruiters of the modern-day think like marketers. They understand the importance of storytelling, know how to identify and pitch to the right audience - whether it is about headhunting or promoting their organisation's employer brand.



PSYCHOLOGIST

They decode the philosophy and goals of the organisation, while also getting to understand the ideas and outlook of the prospects- this psychological approach helps them map expectations with resources and find the right fit for the organisation.



TALENT ADVISOR

Business folks rely on the advice of recruiters, irrespective of what their titles are. They work closely with the leadership, inform them about key talent trends, and have a say in any key decision making.



SALESPERSON

They know how to build a candidate pipeline, nurture talent, and close positions - just like a seasoned salesperson. Their people skills and negotiation acumen helps them win for both sides - the organisation and the candidates.



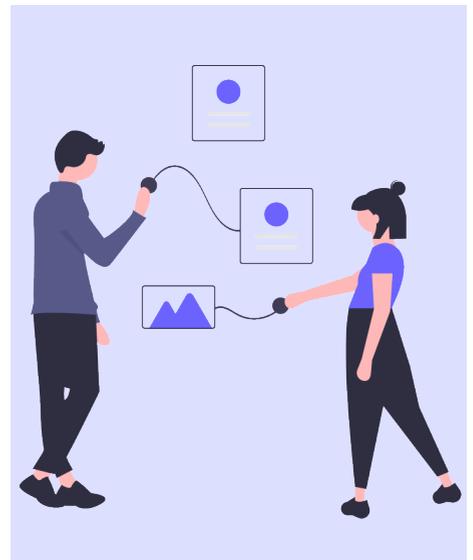
79 Percent Professionals Seek Mentor Access for Upskilling: Survey

A mentorship survey from Springboard, a leading online platform for workforce upskilling, was conducted to find out what mentorship means to Indian professionals. As per the survey, 56.2% of professionals look up to a mentor when they want to discuss career advancement or career transition. 87.9% of respondents think access to a seasoned mentor can profoundly boost their career success and trajectory while 79.4% feel that one of the best ways to transition to a position in a new industry is with the help of a mentor. The survey was carried out on 500+ professionals across the country.

Hyderabad-Based Cyient Launches 'Empowering Tomorrow Together' Initiative

Cyient, global engineering, and technology solutions company, has announced the launch of its 'Empowering Tomorrow Together' initiative. This program will cover activities under four focus areas: education, digital literacy, social innovation, and community development. By bringing all the initiatives under the 'Empowering Tomorrow Together' credo, the

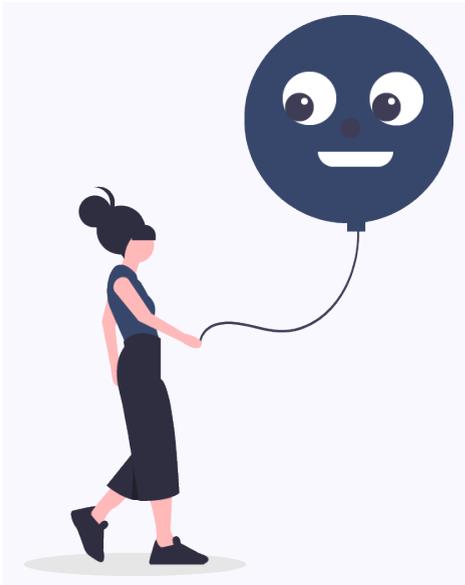
company hopes to expand its potential to create impact and truly empower local communities by touching more lives in the days and years to come, said BVR Mohan Reddy, Executive Chairman and Founder, Cyient. During FY20, the company spent over Rs 8 crore on its CSR programs exceeding the minimum 2 percent spend mandated by the government.



Amazon India Announces 20,000 Seasonal Jobs



Amazon India has announced 20,000 seasonal or temporary employment opportunities in its customer service organisation to ensure customers worldwide continue to have a seamless online shopping experience. The new positions are now open across 11 locations in Hyderabad, Pune, Coimbatore, Noida, Kolkata, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Mangalore, Indore, Bhopal and Lucknow. Most of the positions are part of Amazon's 'Virtual Customer Service' program that provides flexible work-from-home options. As coronavirus cases are surging in the country, consumers are increasingly resorting to online shopping to meet their consumption needs leading to the creation of fresh job roles in the e-commerce industry. Earlier this year, Amazon had announced its plans to create 10 lakh new jobs in India by 2025.

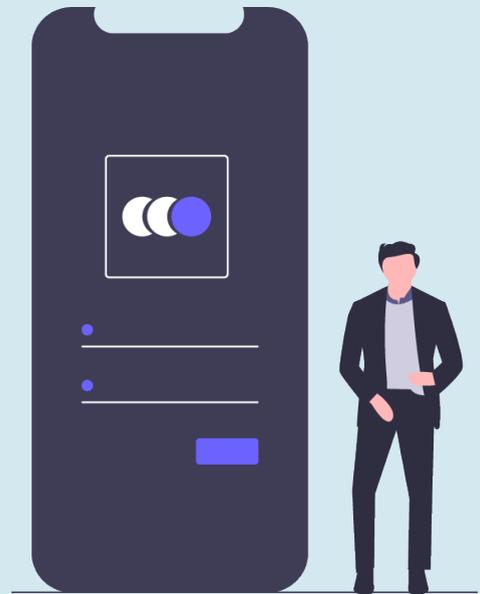


MoEngage Promotes Mental Well-Being of Employees, Gives ‘Paid’ Day Off to De-Stress

MoEngage has been one of the early adopters of the digital workplace norm. In these times of crisis, keeping their employees’ well-being at the forefront, and to take care of their employees’ mental health, the Bangalore-based organisation recently announced a paid-holiday on a Friday. “We wouldn’t stop at anything to ensure our employees are at their best of physical and mental health during any time. To ensure our employee’s mental health is good enough to cope with the work from home burn-out, we announced a paid-holiday on a Friday for our folks to unwind, de-stress, spend time with family and do what they love doing!” said Mr Jitender Panihar, Chief People Officer at MoEngage Inc. The initiative saw a huge positive impact on the employees, them advocating about the MoEngage culture and getting back all rejuvenated.

LTI Launches SafeRadius App to Ensure Employee Safety Across Industries

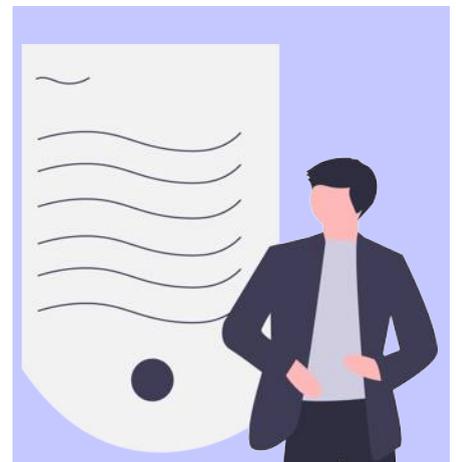
Larsen & Toubro Infotech has introduced LTI SafeRadius to ensure that the health of the workforce remains protected as they return to work in a phased manner across industries. The GDPR-compliant return-to-work app enables organisations to analyse information across locations on LTI’s self-serve analytics platform Mosaic Lens, which offers superior analytics, comprehensive reports, and visualisation for day-to-day decisions. In India, the app is integrated with the Government’s Aarogya Setu app through a survey questionnaire. Some of the key features of the app include ascertaining the overall health of employees, high-risk profiling, incident reporting, seating allocation, staggering work shift schedules, transportation management, real-time alerts on the accidental congregation, highlighting the hotspots, and contact tracing.



Microsoft to Provide Digital Skills to 25 Million People Globally

In response to the coronavirus crisis that has taken a toll on jobs globally, Microsoft has launched an initiative to teach 25 Million people around the world digital-age work skills free of charge by the end of the year. The new initiative will focus on primarily three areas including leverage data to identify in-demand jobs

and skills required for them, giving free access to these learnings, and low-cost certifications and free job-seeking tools. In India, Microsoft has partnered with NASSCOM Foundation and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to directly train 2,000 young women and trainers at the Industrial Training Institutes on skills.





Lubrizol Names RIL's Sumit Neogi as Director - HR

Lubrizol Corporation has appointed Sumit Neogi as the HR Director for South Asia and the Middle East region. Neogi is a seasoned professional with over 17 years of rich experience in HR and Sales & Marketing. An alumnus of XLRI, Jamshedpur, he did his Post Graduate Diploma in Personnel Management and Industrial relations.



Landmark Group Gets New President - Group HR

Landmark Group has named Sandeep Batra as President - Group HR. Batra has 26 years+ of experience in telecom, manufacturing, IT and consumer services sectors. Prior to this, he was working with Vodafone Idea. He is a graduate in commerce from Delhi University and holds a PGDBM in strategy and Leadership from IIM, Calcutta.



Ex AirAsia CPO Varun Bhatia Joins Reali

The real estate technology company, Reali, has roped in Varun Bhatia as the company's first Chief People Officer. Bhatia comes with over 30 years of experience in human resources. An alumnus of XLRI Jamshedpur, Batra will be responsible for developing strategies that strengthen Reali through its next phase of growth.



Lactalis India Ropes in Naresh Kumar Puritipati as Director - HR, India

Lactalis India has appointed Naresh Kumar Puritipati as the Director - HR. In his new role, he will be heading HR for the Lactalis India Group, which includes subsidiaries, such as Tirumala Milk Products, Anik Industries and Prabhat Dairy. Puritipati comes with over 24 years of experience in the HR industry.



Fetch Rewards Hires New Chief People Officer

Fetch Rewards, a US-based mobile shopping platform has announced the hiring of Rukmini Banerjee as Chief People Officer. In her new role, Banerjee will establish training programs, design career pathing models, and recruit new talent to the fast-growing company. Educated in India, Banerjee earned her MBA from XLRI.



Ola Electric Appoints Vithal Acharya as Head - HR

Ola Electricity Mobility (OEM) recently onboarded Vithal Acharya as its new HR head. An alumnus of XLRI Jamshedpur, Acharya is an experienced HR leader having worked with companies like GE, HCL Technologies, etc. He is skilled in Talent Management, Employee Engagement, Recruiting, Human Resources, and Management.



Sterlite Power Taps Ex Reliance Capital CPO as CHRO

Sterlite Power has announced the appointment of Swaminathan Subramanian to lead the HR function as the Group CHRO. Subramanian brings with him more than two decades of experience as an HR generalist. He has done his Bachelors in construction engineering technology from Jadavpur University and completed his MBA in HR from XLRI Jamshedpur.



Subir Sinha joins NetCom Learning as Director of Human Resources

Subir Sinha will be Heading the Human Resource function for NetCom. He joins the organisation with a mandate to ramp up the operations in India and US and bring in contemporary HR practices to the organisation. He comes in with a rich experience of nearly 30 years in the Human Resource Function.

(Compiled from Various Online Sources)

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How Covid-19 Crisis Can Shape the Recruiters of Tomorrow

Before Covid-19 happened, what was one of the most troubling challenges for employers when hiring for talent? Talent scarcity and the growing skills gaps certainly often come to mind, but back then nobody had envisioned that the previous employee marketplace where companies invested heavily in securing the best possible hires, might become a distant memory. Now, with more and more companies seeking to downsize, furlough or lay people off, dipping employment rates, everyone working exclusively from their homes, and a workforce ready to find and participate in the “new norm”, organisations are grappling with a host of new talent issues which is why they must learn to pivot and give way to change as

the future of recruiting arrives. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a seismic shift in the way many companies acquire talent—the fallout has fundamentally changed recruiting and hiring practices overnight. Regardless of the extent of the virus’s impact on recruitment, the crisis has somehow become the catalyst for one of the greatest workplace transformations and how we work, communicate, and of course, how we hire will be changed forever!

It’s time to ask questions like: “What now?” “What next, and where do we go from here?” Well, in the face of current challenges and a still-uncertain set of risks, employers are going to require new out-of-the-HR-box skills and rethink the TA role. From

figuring out how to effectively work from home, conduct video interviews, make successful offers (to candidates whom the hiring manager may not have met), and remotely onboard new hires, the recruiter’s role will become less about finding candidates and more about being strategic in their relationship management to be ready for the future of recruiting. From being administrators, sourcers, and consultants to digital and analytical experts, the crisis has shifted workplace dynamics and the roles and responsibilities of recruiters have changed. Whether you are freezing hiring, laying off, or ramping up hiring; whatever situation you find yourself in, one thing’s for sure—now more than ever, hiring managers must be open-minded during this

unprecedented experience and adapt to a new normal of challenge and opportunity.

As the HR leaders look to better understand the Covid-19 crisis and plan for the rocky road ahead, social distancing measures have made remote work the new norm. From looking for potential talent to the interview and onboarding process, managing staff procedures, increasing or decreasing headcount, and maintaining workloads, everything has become a remote process. The change may be uncomfortable at first, but since the stakes are high, talent acquisition professionals are up for

the task and how they respond to this unprecedented pandemic will define their relationship with the future hires, staff, and customers. Currently, talent teams are in an interesting position. They are not only responsible for cultivating the skills organisations need for digital transformation but are also facing a digital transformation in their own roles. With new ways of working, changing job roles and a turbulent recruitment marketplace, there is a pressing need for organisations to re-imagine their talent landscape, especially their talent acquisition strategy. The new normal will push everyone toward digital transformation,

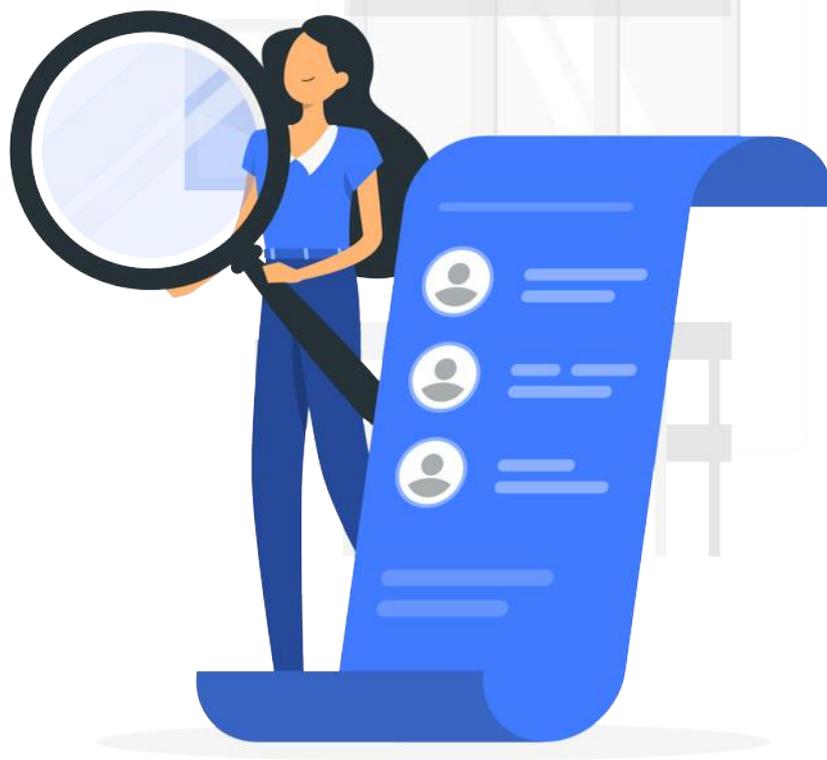
force organisations to reform their workforce strategies, and hiring strategies would evolve to create the right sourcing channels to access talent pools. Apart from interviewing and onboarding candidates digitally, digital transformation in talent acquisition space can help recruiters to solve diverse recruitment challenges, including fluctuating and changing hiring needs, boost internal mobility capabilities, handle higher volumes of applicants by using software that allows them to sift through applications quickly, and make budget cutbacks. Also, digitally transforming recruitment doesn't only mean using advanced tools to hire people, it also means that management needs to upskill recruiters to enhance their skillsets and make them proficient in digital tools and strategies so that your organisation can fully benefit from the transformation. Organisations should provide recruiting teams with advanced training and resources on the tools that they will be using, but also on recruitment analytics and data-driven hiring. Therefore, preparing an organisation for the new era of remote recruiting begins with upskilling talent acquisition first. From shifting processes to leveraging HR technology to facilitate the shift—technology is a key aspect that will help recruiters to manage communications, collaboration, and productivity to keep current talent on track during this time of uncertainty.

The first skill recruiters will need is to have a solid understanding of how to analyze data produced by the AI tools that are sifting through enormous amounts of data to find candidates. This is important since they're also going



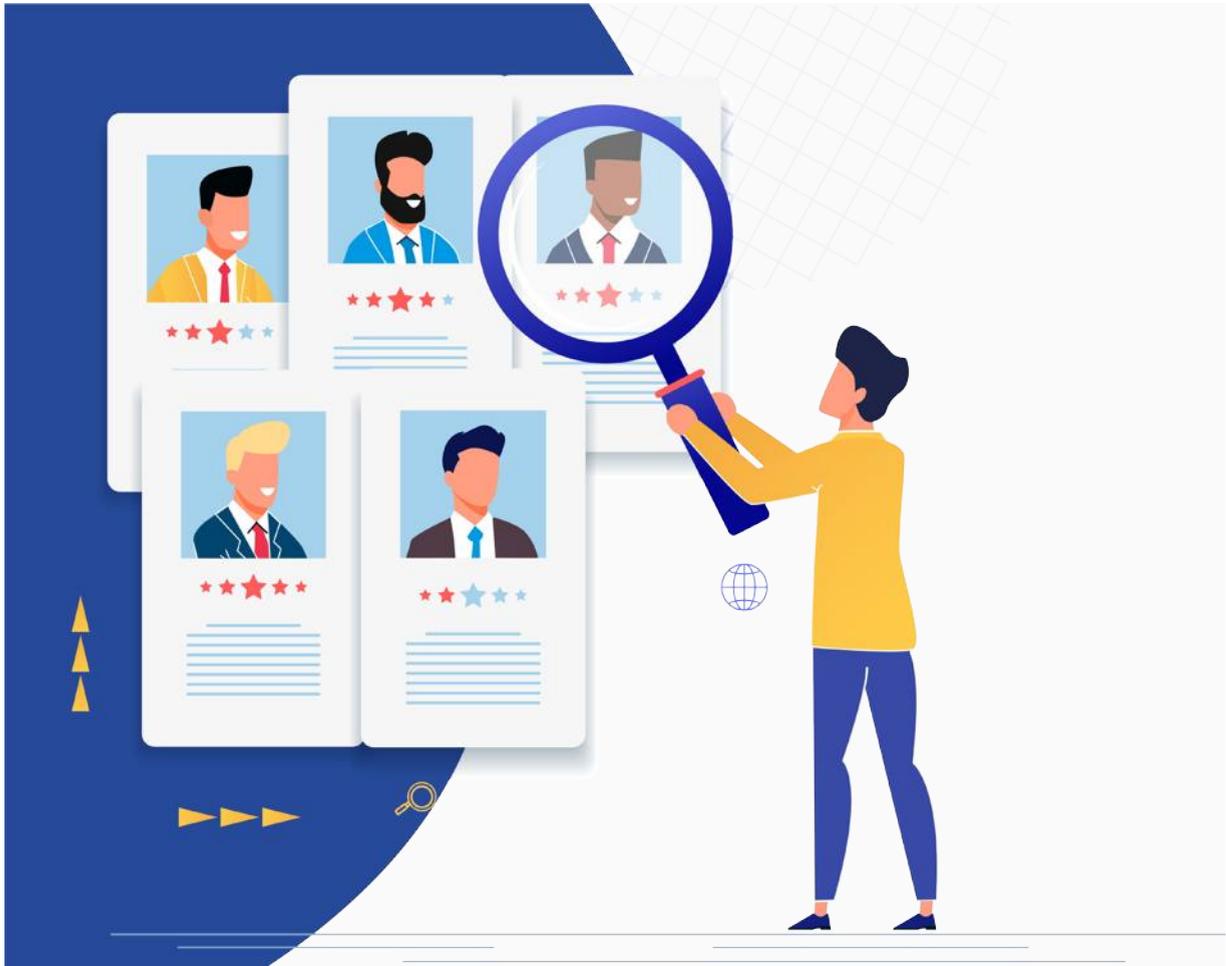
to need to use that data to reveal insights and make predictions. For this, recruiters are going to need to become more tech-savvy since the proliferated use of technology to manage the recruiting process has increased amid the crisis and will likely stick around even in the post-Covid-19 world. As the pandemic continues to accelerate digital recruiting strategies, HR professionals need to quickly adapt to virtual hiring platforms and feature-rich recruiting software or video conferencing tools to effectively conduct video screening and interviewing.

Due to the impact of the coronavirus, many of the HR tools and tactics have been made somewhat or entirely irrelevant in the past few months, which is why TA professionals now have to resort to intelligent automated systems for all aspects from recruitment, interview, onboarding, and even termination and pay. Since in-person recruitment is not possible now, the use of digital job boards, employee and freelance referrals, virtual career fairs and events, more personalized career paths, and greater insights into candidate experiences are quickly becoming the new normal. Furthermore, companies have also started to move their learning and development (L&D) programs online to deliver more training than before. Virtual platforms not only help the recruitment team to stay connected with candidates throughout the entire interview process but also provide a great onboarding experience. Google is conducting interviews via Google Hangouts or using the organisation's videoconferencing service-BlueJeans. Apart from using



virtual platforms for interviews and onboarding, recruiters that learn to incorporate such platforms in new ways can open up a world of possibilities for reaching and communicating with candidates. That's why recruiters need to be prepared to expand their business partner role as these virtual platforms will be one of the most relevant online recruiting strategies in the days to come. That means upping their game on HR technology, social media marketing, and relationship management. During such volatile and uncertain times, organisations need to be more agile. Many companies around the world had to switch

to remote work overnight, and a lot of them were unprepared. A KPMG survey report revealed that 32 percent of the organisations lacked facilities to offer work from home. Only 25 percent of all the organisations had an IT infrastructure already in place. This has accelerated the need for digital transformation and redefine the TA role. Now that the management and HR teams identify the need to work and hire remotely; improving and expanding on efforts, like candidate experience, dealing with data-privacy protection, and recruiter productivity, are still overarching goals with improvements underway, but with resilience, HR



teams and hiring managers can navigate these changes and manage the complexities inherent in their new role.

To sum it up, the crisis unfolds the old adage of adapt or die has never rung truer. For generations, hiring candidates was a rote process-scanning through resumes to having multiple in-person interviews, and finally, extending an offer. What is clear is that hiring professionals can't afford to operate as they have in the past. For the first time, many recruiters are working from home and are figuring out how to both stay productive and stay connected. As hiring managers they need to see all the possibilities, complexities,

challenge perceptions, and lead this disruption of work by leveraging virtual platforms to maintain recruiting efforts. The fast pace of innovation in the HR industry will make the talent acquisition cycle faster, simpler and more effective which will not only enable the sector to be more resilient but could lay the groundwork for a more innovative approach to working practices and recruitment in the future too. In the words of Shunryu Suzuki, author of Zen Mind, Beginners Mind, "In the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind, there are few." For TA leaders this is a perfect opportunity to liaise closely with HR and business executives, redefine the TA role, fully automate

the recruitment process, and emerge from the crisis to a much brighter future.

HR Bytes

A majority of employers (97%) plan to increase their investments in recruiting technology.

Awareness and Planning - Key to Embracing Change in the Post-Covid World



Madhavi Lall

has been the head HR at Deutsche Bank India since May 2015 and has around 30 years of experience. As a member of the Executive Committee at Deutsche Bank, Madhavi is responsible for shaping the people strategy in India and helping in building the employment brand for the organisation. Prior to this she was Managing Director- HR at Accenture. She has also worked with companies like Standard Chartered Bank, ABN Amro Bank, Colgate Palmolive and HCL Hewlett Packard. She was also a Director on the Board of Standard Chartered Finance Limited.

Madhavi has recently been appointed as a chairperson at CII- Indian Women Network for the Western region, India and also has been the member of the CII National Committee on Leadership and HR. She has conducted several sessions on Culture building, Values and People strategy at various management campuses. She is also a founding member of the HR Committee for FICCI.

Madhavi holds an MBA in HR and Systems from XLRI Jamshedpur and has pursued a Master's degree in Mathematics from St. Stephen's College. She has also completed a Leadership Management course from the University of Oxford. Madhavi was conferred the 'Women Leadership Award' by the jury and Council of Board Members of the Institute of Public Enterprises-BFSI in 2010. She has been conferred the Distinguished Alumnus Award by XLRI in 2016.

As times take a turn, we turn to an industry veteran to take her opinion on the changing role of HR. In this special conversation with Ms Madhavi Lall, we asked her about her glorious three decades in the industry, and her insights on recruitment planning in a Post-Covid World. We also talked to her about Deutsche Bank's close monitoring of COVID-19, from both a holistic employee and a business perspective, and the initiatives and programs in place to support the health and well-being of their employees.

JOURNEY

Q With your versatile and rich experience of almost 3 decades across different industries in Human Resource, how would you describe your journey so far? What were some of the challenges and important decisions that helped you evolve into a leader and get where you are today? What is your secret sauce?

A Three decades make me sound really old. Time has flown by probably because I have had a very exciting and somewhat of a roller coaster ride.



In my opinion, there is no single path or formula to success. In fact the definition of success can vary from person to person and can also vary at different points in life. It is important that we accept our choices and make the best out of these.

If I were to bucket the challenges and many important decisions, they would be:

- Take a career break because of family reasons or not
- Move internationally or not
- Pitch for a role I really want and try and make a huge difference when I do get that role.

It is challenging for women and continues to be- because of gender roles and entrenched social conditioning. At many points in my career I did contemplate whether my son needed me at home and it was not an easy decision to make – I had to build a strong support system at home to be comfortable with continuing to work. To be together as a family, I did not

consider international moves either. The flipside was that when I was ready for international moves, the opportunities did not really come through. In my opinion, there is no single path or formula to success. In fact the definition of success can vary from person to person and can also vary at different points in life. It is important that we accept our choices and make the best out of these.

I was not geographically mobile so I did the next best thing – opted for projects which gave me huge learning and exposure. My focus has been on doing more and more and like my generation I believe in hard work, a cue I learnt from my father. And this is not necessarily only about long hours, but also impactful outcome driven work. I do believe hard work and dedication pays off – nothing can really replace that in the long run.

It builds professional capability and reputation.

I got my first big leadership role by preparing a plan in advance as to what I would achieve if I got the role. I probably got the job through onboarding people to my vision and plan. As soon as I got the job, my objective was to set an ambitious agenda based on business needs and truly make a difference.

I would talk about a few “not so secret” sauces.

The first one is what I learned from my mother – always have a “can do attitude.” She was someone who came from a well to do family and had never worked for a living until she turned forty and then had to figure out a way to manage the dire financial crises we were suddenly faced with. Her grit, determination and hard work in bringing up

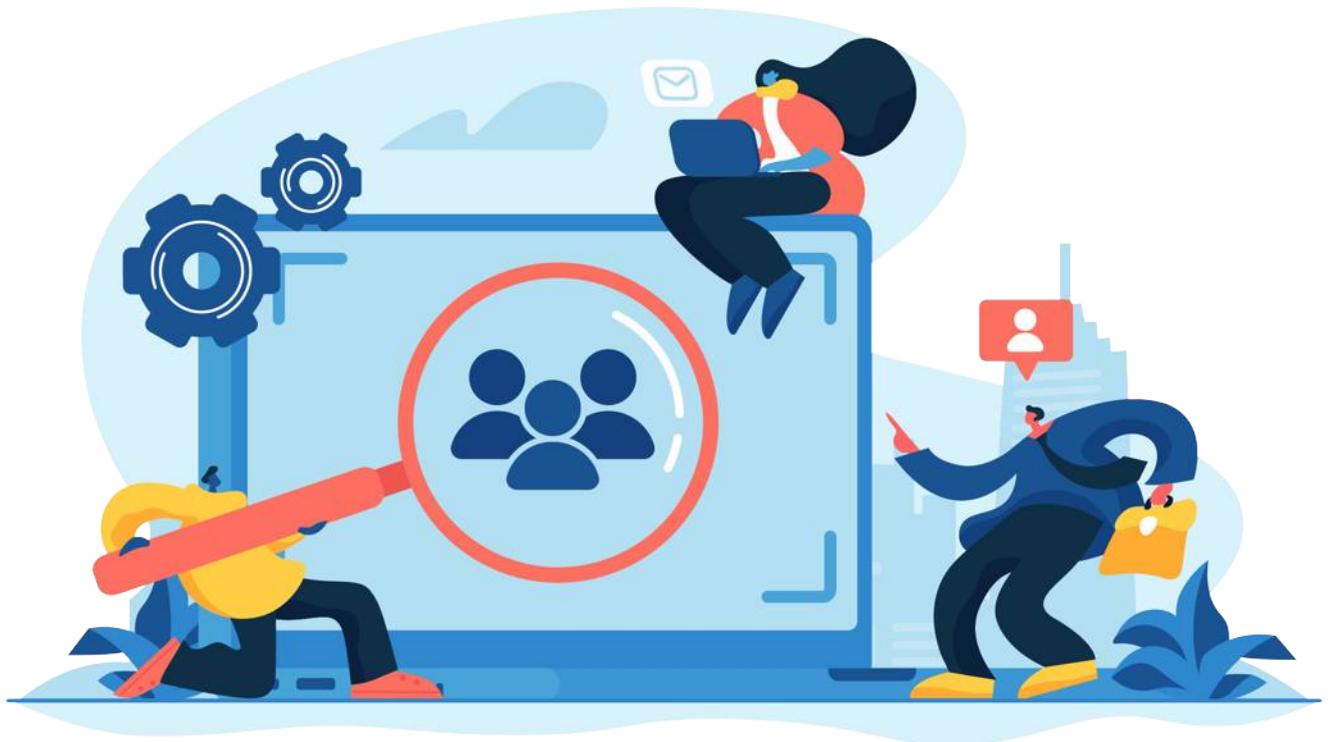
three children is something that continues to inspire all of us. The other sauces that helped me – a fair amount of optimism, hard work, networking (for me that means creating a community of ideas and mutual upliftment), a high level of curiosity to learn new things and great joy in working with people.

HR STRATEGY

Q There has been an increasing need to align talent strategies with business strategies.

What are some of the factors fueling the importance of this alignment and how can it help companies plan for long-term growth as well as uncertainty?

A Talent strategy will be effective only if it is aligned to the business strategy. The goal of talent management is to create a high performance culture to meet the organisation’s strategic, business and operational goals.



With business scenarios changing constantly, jobs are being redesigned and the talent needs are also changing and evolving rapidly.

A good talent plan and strategy can truly help in making an organisation future-ready by enabling its employees to upskill, reskill and successfully adapt to ever changing business and job dynamics.

A few areas of impact would be:

- Leadership building and succession planning
- Fostering a multigenerational workforce
- Upskilling for career development and preparing people for the future and in a way reducing mental stress: This is a big area of focus especially in the current times where people are living in the fear of becoming redundant, losing their jobs to new technologies.



A good talent plan and strategy can truly help in making an organisation future ready by enabling its employees to upskill, reskill & successfully adapt to ever changing business & job dynamics.



Recruiters and hiring managers are already embracing the change – they need to just be aware of and plan for some of the risks associated with remote hiring like consistency of hiring, potential frauds and cultural assimilation. What we will need to build is a further standard interview process and identify the most critical skills for the job.

RECRUITMENT

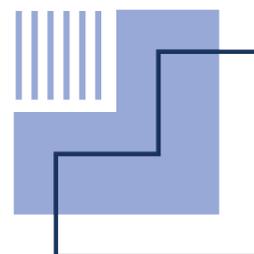
Q Experts believe that the Covid-19 pandemic will have long-lasting effects on the recruitment industry. In your opinion, how will recruitment planning look after COVID-19? How can recruiters and hiring managers prepare themselves to brace the changes and manage the talent challenges of COVID-19?

A Even before the current situation emerged, the way we work and the advancement in technology was disrupting jobs and the skills needed to do them. The pandemic has made the action more urgent and shown us ways we can work remotely and in some cases, better and faster. We need to capitalize on these learnings.

Remote hiring process for us has evolved in the past couple of months. A shift has been noticed even in the mindset of hiring managers - while initially there was some amount of hesitation towards virtual interviews, given the preference for 'in-person' interactions, we have started getting comfortable with virtual interviews.

Recruiters and hiring managers are already embracing the change – they need to just be aware of and plan for some of the risks associated with remote hiring like consistency of hiring, potential frauds and cultural assimilation. What we will need to build is a further standard interview process and identify the most critical skills for the job.

I think one of the areas worth exploring is the availability of new talent pools with remote working - people who are not able to work from office because of personal reasons or persons with certain disabilities, etc. We need to ensure that we tap this huge talent base which is location agnostic.





HR needs to champion the employee experience during these times. We need to realize that some of the talent who are being laid off now can come back to the organisation in the future. At Deutsche Bank, we have a robust internal mobility process which helps us retain and grow our talent.

TALENT MANAGEMENT

Q Outplacement services have become an established mature product in the talent management space. Why is outplacement so crucial and how is it linked to the overall employee experience? What role should HR play in outplacement?

A With the current evolving scenario, businesses will re-evaluate their cost of operations. This might, in some cases result in either redundancy or reskilling / upskilling of employees. The former necessitates outplacement services to support employees' transition to new jobs.

No company prefers laying off people but with the tough economic environment that the world is facing currently, this is a reality. Outplacement services offer practical and emotional specialist career coaching support and enable an individual to circumnavigate the competitive job market and move into suitable new jobs as soon as possible. These services can also balance the demand – supply gap as there could be a downside in some sectors and upswings in certain others.

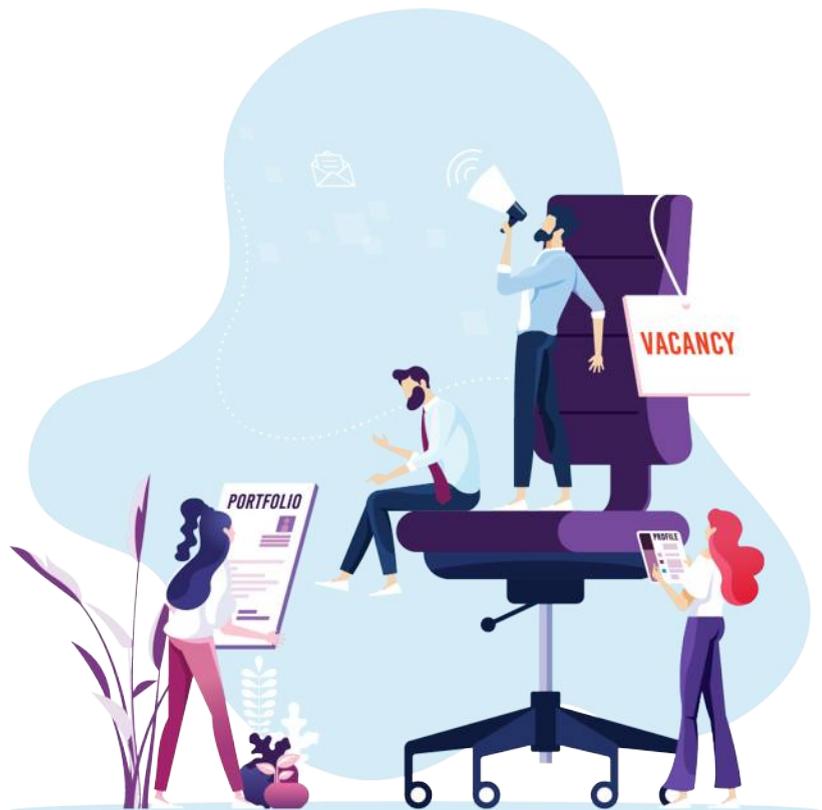
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LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Q As businesses cancel in-person training due to the pandemic, they are widely turning to virtual learning programs. How is Deutsche Bank approaching the upskilling challenge and re-imagining virtual learning and offering online coaching to make employees future-ready?

A Deutsche Bank always had a focus on virtual learning to give staff the flexibility to learn what they like and are passionate about and in their own time. Post-pandemic, we further adapted to the changing needs with agility. The digital learning curriculum has been revisited and reprioritized to enable employees to leverage resources creatively through blended learning methodologies.



We are also leveraging skills of our leaders as trainers and reaching out to a larger audience with short, modular learning sessions.

The pre-pandemic silos are giving way to seamless learning and exchange, no longer bound by constraints of geographies. This is giving people a larger canvas to explore and learn from each other and experience Deutsche Bank in a more comprehensive manner.

We are also evaluating some of the new skills that need focus and working on learning solutions to build these across the organisation.



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ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Q With COVID-19 becoming the accelerator for one of the greatest workplace transformations, what can organisations do to translate the organisational culture into a digital culture, to thrive in today's extremely dynamic, uncertain environment? How will this massive transformation impact the workplace?

A More than just digital culture I would say organisations need to build an adaptive and agile culture which impacts business outcomes

positively. As human interactions move from being predominantly office-based to entirely online, transformation is imminent and can impact the workplace in the following ways:

Organisations will need to instill and reinforce agile execution, better resilience, and flexibility into work arrangements to maintain productivity. The need for critical digital, emotional and social skills is of key importance given the reduced social interaction with teams and customers. Skills like leading the teams virtually, building cohesion in teams and

engaging customers remotely are the need of the hour and important for the foreseeable future. One of the most important challenges would be to figure out how the vision of the organisation will bind the employees, who are spread across the globe. Building a connected culture when most people are working remotely does sound like a challenge but our experience over the last few months has been very encouraging. Even though the workplace has shifted to our homes, the values and beliefs which are very important aspects of the organisation culture remain the same. The question is - how do we ensure people are living the values even as they work remotely, how do we make virtual connections as effective and meaningful as face-to-face connections?

Lastly, we will need to digitize the entire employee life cycle.

Ultimately, all of the above needs to link with the organisation's business strategy.



The need for critical digital, emotional and social skills is of key importance given the reduced social interaction with teams and customers. Skills like leading the teams virtually, building cohesion in teams and engaging customers remotely are the need of the hour and important for the foreseeable future.

Q Furthermore, remote working will likely become the new normal including a shift in employee preferences--and the expectation of a more virtual workplace. In your opinion, how can Service Design thinking help HR to understand and redesign each aspect of the employee experience as they work remotely?

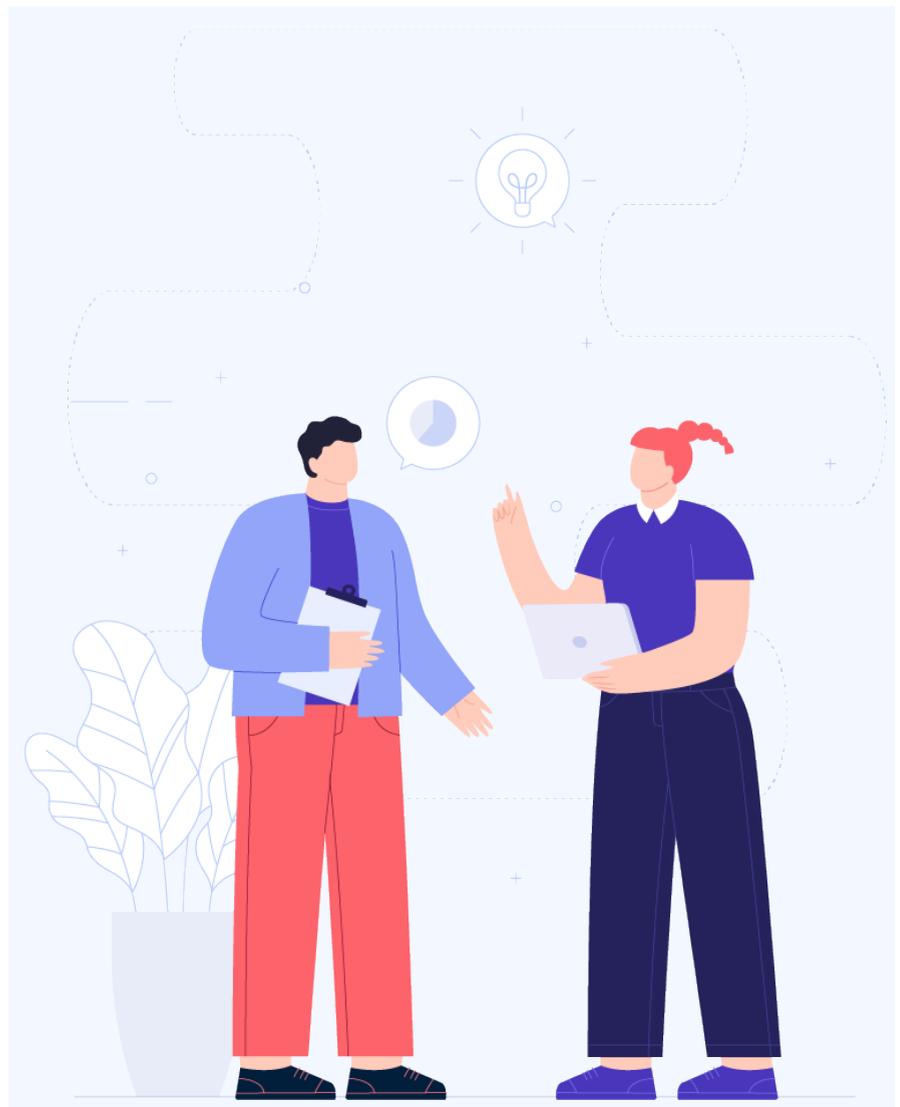
A I would like to share our Virtual Onboarding and Induction processes as an example here:

Since April, we have virtually onboarded 1000+ employees across locations. In line with this 'New Normal', the team collected onboarding documents digitally, we quickly developed a 'Virtual onboarding guide' to enable 'Work from Home' from Day 1 of joining. In addition to these, we supported remote bank account opening, sharing of statutory documents etc. This certainly helped the bank honour the committed start date with the candidate and also resulted in positive onboarding experience for new joiners.

Some of the Design thinking aspects apart from speed of execution that were useful:

Develop a prototype, iterative process – Solicited feedback from HR colleagues and function leads on different versions of the induction schedule, technology solutions etc. Kept stakeholders frequently informed about the progress, open items and challenges. Took feedback from 1st batch on day 1, then implemented the actions on Day 2 and so on and so forth.

Combine & contrast - Content was redesigned to adapt to the new situation. Experimented with larger batch sizes to enable scale.



EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Q Lastly, how is Deutsche Bank monitoring COVID-19 closely, from both a holistic employee and a business perspective? What initiatives and programs are in place to support the health and well-being of your employees during these testing times?

A Employee safety and well-being has always been at the center of our decision making. Deutsche Bank has been quick to adapt to the changes and challenges that came with the COVID-19 crisis. With majority of our staff working from home, the leadership has come together to collaborate and ensure that we are not only able to maintain the business momentum, client engagement and employee productivity but at the same time, balance the needs of the employees. Some of the key initiatives are:

Encouraging Informal virtual connects with co-workers helps a lot since employees tend to miss the time spent in the office with colleagues. With open communication and feedback, on-the-ground issues can be addressed, which helps keep the morale high.

The boundaries between our personal and professional lives are also blurring. Many of our employees may have increased household responsibilities, including those of taking care of children and/or the elderly in their family. We have supported flexible hours of work to help staff cope with this.

We have also provided platforms for mental rejuvenation like meditation/yoga/inculcating hobbies, regular webinars and podcasts to help employees deal



One of the focus areas is also to help staff understand what return to work will mean. We need to help people understand that working from the office is not going to be what it was before lockdown. For example, there will be social distancing which means avoiding shaking hands, mandatorily wearing masks etc. Lunch and coffee breaks will not be the same.

with stress, remote working and overall mental well-being. In fact, we have extended some of the initiatives to employees' families as well, like 'Story Trails' which are leader led storytelling sessions with children of employees.

In addition, we have the Employee Assistance Program for independent and confidential counselling services, a panel of doctors available for tele consultation and 'Wellness Corner' app for regular updates, discounted medicines etc. We also have a global wellness microsite to access information and useful resources dedicated to well-being. This provides access to resources not only within India, but also globally.

Return to work will be in a very phased and staggered approach and keeping in mind the health and safety of our employees. We will continue to support critical employees who are required to come to work, with suitable infrastructure, transportation requirements, workplace sanitisation and safety.

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For example, there will be social distancing which means avoiding shaking hands, mandatorily wearing masks etc. Lunch and coffee breaks will not be the same. We probably will not be able to huddle as teams in conference rooms like we used to. Just understanding that ourselves first and then helping people settle into these ways of working will be a big shift. But that's a while away – right now its work from home as much as possible.



Q&A



Balancing Expectations & Reality - Success Mantra in Post-Covid Work World

In this special interview with All Things Talent, Mr Manoj Kenadath, Head of Talent Acquisition (India & EMEA) at Atlassian talks about the changing world of work post-COVID-19 and how new-age organisations can use the situation as an opportunity to showcase their commitment towards their employees. He also shares some insights about the role the leadership could play in these testing times, how remote work might be the 'new normal', and what Atlassian, specifically, is doing to take care of their employees.



MANOJ KENADATH

is a Talent Acquisition leader with close to two decades of experience with a demonstrated history of working in the computer software industry. He graduated in Hospitality Management from The University of Huddersfield, UK. Manoj started his recruiting journey with a consulting firm and then moved on to being part of large enterprises like Minacs, HP India, and Thomson Reuters. After spending a few years hiring for shared services in technology and financial domains he decided to shift focus towards building a scaling talent acquisition function. Being a firm believer in storytelling and its impact on recruiting, Manoj has played a vital role in building training content and trained recruiters. Over the last few years, he has not only built recruiting teams successfully but also helped scale organisations from ground-up.

JOURNEY

Q Tell us about your career journey, and what led you to your job at Atlassian. What successes are you most proud of in your current role?

A After completing my Hospitality Management graduation, I started my career with Taj Hotels - one of India's leading hotel chains. While my time with Taj Hotels was an enriching experience, I realised I didn't see myself growing in the hospitality industry long term, which led me to explore operational roles in the ITes before I landed in recruiting in 2002.

After transitioning into recruiting, I made some decisions that exposed me to parts of the industry and domain that I was most interested in - eventually leading me to a recruiting consulting firm. From there, I moved to high-volume services and product/ enterprise organisation before ultimately leaving to focus on startups and building teams from ground-up.

Later on, I joined LinkedIn, which became my stepping stone to learning the startup mindset and working with global peers. However, Atlassian is the first time I had the opportunity to explore learning and leadership skills as they relate to developing a team and an office.

My proudest moment - as a leader of this team - was surpassing our recruiting goals set for Atlassian's Bengaluru office during our first year. Reflecting over the last two years, the ability to build a high-performing TA Team stands out as the most significant success.



If you're among those impacted, first and foremost, take care of both your mental and emotional health. It's easy to fall into the trap of feeling like a victim. If you have the liberty to take time off, use it to invest in yourself, revisit hobbies, and focus on something that you weren't able to pursue until now. If taking time off isn't an option, leverage your network and work on building your profile.

Getting the basics right forms an integral part of your success as a company grows and scales. We spend time ensuring we leverage what already exists rather than reinventing during the initial stages. In my opinion, the autonomy offered to us as employees is an instrumental part of Atlassian's culture and success.

RECRUITMENT

Q The effects of COVID-19 are kicking in, and recruitment is not the same as before. How do you view the current talent acquisition landscape? In your opinion, how can this pandemic help professionals to turn these circumstances into opportunities and recreate jobs through reskilling and upskilling?

A Unfortunately, COVID-19 has impacted industries of every size and vertical, without any exceptions. The impact on talent, which is a big part of any organisation, is also real. Different organisations are approaching the

situation differently and have tried to tackle what's most important to them.

For some companies, it's about slowing down hiring, and for others, it is about accelerating. But in most cases, I suspect this shift is temporary - and once things get back to normal - we don't know how or when their strategy will change. The companies that stand by their values or culture are the ones that will emerge as real stars. This period is a clear opportunity for many organisations to showcase their commitment towards employees and demonstrate their core values through action.

How can we convert our current circumstances into opportunities? I want to reframe my answer into one fundamental question: What is our long term career aspiration or motivation?

The conventional advice might be to use this time to learn a new skill so that you're a stronger candidate when things improve. And while I

certainly encourage skill building, my additional advice is case-by-case:

- If you're among those lucky ones who are still employed, look for ways to contribute beyond your core skills to help your organisation navigate these tough times; this helps build your credibility and acquire new skills for a more prolonged impact.
- If you're among those impacted, first and foremost, take care of both your mental and emotional health. It's easy to fall into the trap of feeling like a victim. If you have the liberty to take time off, use it to invest in yourself, revisit hobbies, and focus on something that you weren't able to pursue until now. If taking time off isn't an option, leverage your network and work on building your profile. You can additionally look into part-time or contract opportunities while still looking for a full-time role.



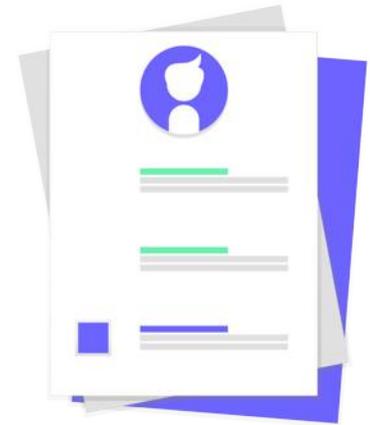
Ideally, the best way to progress once you've completed your Journey Mapping is to apply the Service Design principles, but these shifts take time and are complicated because Journey Mapping can aid in surfacing outdated philosophies and values that no longer serve the company or organisation.

- For those open to exploring new opportunities, be clear on what you're looking for in your next role. Is this the right time to start a new journey? Does the opportunity in front of you help achieve your long term goal?

Q Journey mapping is slowly gaining traction in the talent acquisition space. Can you tell us how to use a candidate journey map to improve the entire hiring process and ensure the best results? Could service design also prove useful for that purpose?

A Journey mapping always existed in some way or another. Still, it's essential to remember that many organisations rely on TA professionals. TA professionals often become additionally responsible for ensuring a great candidate experience/creating a positive brand impact, even when they aren't necessarily experts in some of those areas.

Journey Mapping became more of a structured process when



organisations started realising the importance of having dedicated talent brand teams - looking at each brand touchpoint in the candidate process allows your organisations to drive more relevant and focused actions.

In recent years, the reason a candidate chooses your company over a competitor has evolved. India's talent market has evolved from being a predominantly compensation-driven market to a more balanced one. What are the company's vision and mission? What are the culture and values? These all play a significant role in someone making a career choice.

So if these are important aspects for your Total Addressable Market (TAM), then you need to look at how you're engaging your TAM. Examining your market gives you a competitive edge over others, especially when operating in a highly-competitive talent market like ours.

Often, many don't realize the number of teams involved in recruiting. Recruiters, Interviewers,

hiring managers and back-end operations are to name a few and in the midst of all these, naturally, candidate experience is the last thing one focuses on. So applying service design helps us look at it holistically.

HR TECH

Q Stay-at-home policies and social distancing have made it a challenge to find candidates to fill the necessary positions. How can companies leverage automated and virtual hiring solutions to minimize the loss of potential candidates? Further, can you tell how SaaS-based ATS and HRIS tools can help HR professionals to recruit effectively, screen, and onboard workers in a decentralized and distributed manner?

A I don't agree that COVID-19's impact has made it challenging to find candidates unless an organisation has failed to evolve. For any progressive organisation that has adopted technology effectively in their hiring process, this transition can make it easier to source candidates and make faster decisions.

While I won't name any specifically, there's an abundance of tools designed to help organisations screen and interview candidates. From startups to well-established products that have been in the industry for years - everyone is using AI and ML to facilitate the same level of effectiveness to traditional recruiting practises. At the same time, the human component is still very necessary.

The biggest opportunity for a company to make its brand resonate with potential talent is its digital presence. Are you publishing relevant jobs and roles that attract the desired talent? How seamless is your application process? All of these factors map back to your ability to hire top talent. COVID-19's impact on onboarding - both positive and otherwise - has pushed organisations to think beyond showcasing their offices, snacks & meals, and leaders welcoming you in-person. It is now calling for organisations to implement and use tooling to supplement in-person training, meet new partners, as well as 1:1 syncs, and more.

TALENT STRATEGIES

Q Post lockdown, many companies are planning for a return to the workplace. How can employers set up a support system for employees as they return to work and adjust to new realities and emotional challenges presented by the pandemic? How can framing a 'COVID-19 Safety Policy' help employers manage this change?

A It's entirely possible we won't return to physical workspaces like we had pre-COVID, but this potentially will have less to do with health and safety concerns and is more tethered to organisations evaluating how much employees were able to accomplish while working remotely.

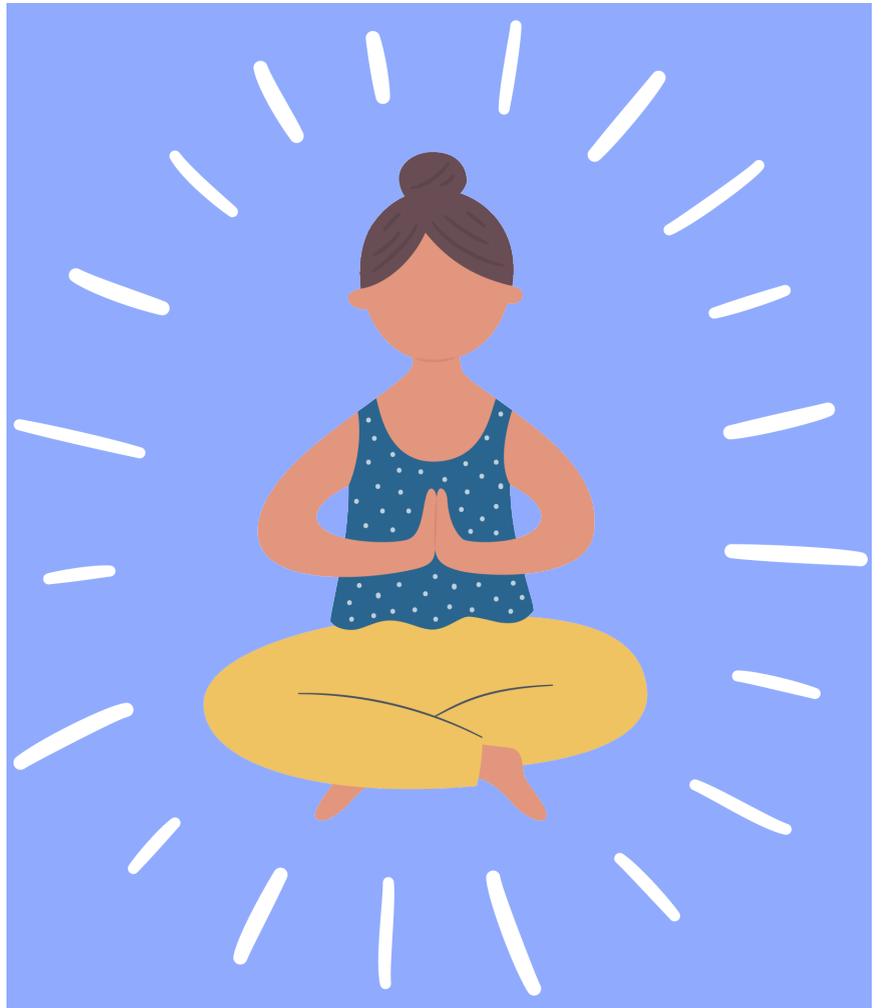
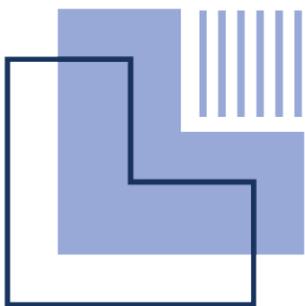


Although no one knows what post-lockdown life will look like, the idea of physical workspaces may look very different. This shift will likely be linked to companies assessing employee productivity and less to do with health concerns and safety. If the same or more can be achieved, do we need to continue to invest so much?

Alternatively, there is a percentage of employees who are now enjoying the freedom of remote work and these set of employees always considered remote work as an ideal employee benefit, while the others still struggle to find a work-from-home rhythm that works for them.

Successful organisations are those that can balance these expectations. Because of that, they are seen as more progressive and can attract previously unavailable talent.

Organisations have to find new ways to financially support employees so that they have the required infrastructure to invest in mental/emotional health programs and more importantly, train managers on managing teams remotely. And no matter how long WFH continues at this scale, the need for ongoing investment in employee resources will continue to grow.



EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Q More than ever, promoting employee health and wellbeing has become a key focus amid the COVID-19 pandemic. How important is it at Atlassian to help people stay focused and mentally healthy in the face of such significant change? How do you ensure it?

A Atlassian is a very people-centric organisation - for both our customers and the employees who build, support and sell our products and services. Physical, mental, and emotional well-being has always been a priority for us. Remote working isn't entirely new

to Atlassian. Even before COVID-19, about 10% of the workforce was remotely employed.

We look at how to support not just the employee but their entire family. As I mentioned earlier, working remotely throws different challenges at different people, so we ensure that all employees get additional time-off if they have dependent family members who need support. We have also partnered with qualified professionals to educate the importance of mental health and the need to stay healthy. Our key focus has been on how to best

remove blockers or distractions for employees as they navigate these tough times - one less thing to worry about means a lot for everyone.

LEADERSHIP

Q Through this crisis, managing expectations of employees has become even harder. In your opinion, how can we, as managers and leaders, expertly lead and support our teams through this 'new normal'? What should be an appropriate strategy for steady leadership during such testing times?

A The reality is, the organisation's goals and the objectives haven't changed. So as leaders, it's much more challenging to balance expectations. The "new normal" applies to everyone, independent of the role they play in the organisation. So the essential attribute, which I feel all leaders need to accept is, not all employees are at the same stage in their journey. Once you accept that, don't shy away from openly addressing it so that you are seen as an empathetic leader.

Over-communicate. When working and leading remote teams, non-verbal communication is out of the window. Opportunities to have a coffee chat to discuss your personal and professional life don't exist.

Encourage team members to use their time wisely. We always hear, "I always wanted to do this, but I don't have the time." Now is the time to go back and look at what you wanted to complete or take up.

That brings me to the most important aspect of what we're



striving towards: The mental and emotional health of everyone. Encourage the team to focus on mental health. These are testing times, more than ever. You don't need to be an expert, and the

expectation is not that you should have solutions as well. Offer yourself for conversations and be an active listener, and you will see the impact.



Organisations have to find new ways to financially support employees so that they have the required infrastructure to invest in mental/emotional health programs and more importantly, train managers on managing teams remotely. And no matter how long WFH continues at this scale, the need for ongoing investment in employee resources will continue to grow.

Today, recruiting the best talent has become a more convoluted and difficult process than ever before. Candidates care about everything like the 'culture' and the 'brand'. Recruiters understand that since candidates are the ones driving change in the talent market, they need to develop and communicate an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) to them in the same way marketers present products to the customers. Recruiters who think like marketers and more strategic in the way that they map their candidate experiences have the edge in today's candidate-driven talent market.



Geetanjali Wheeler

is a seasoned L&D professional passionate about building a culture that promotes learning agility at all levels in the organisation. With an experience of about 16 years in varied verticals like Telecom, Airline & E-commerce, Geetanjali has spearheaded both global and national roles. Before moving on to her current role of leading L&D for a global financial services group in India, she worked for a large Telecom company. During her stint there, she headed Training & Development for the Enterprise vertical of the company and then progressed to lead many L&D initiatives within the CoE team. As the Enterprise L&D lead, Geetanjali was instrumental in winning a prestigious award from the Indian Society for Training & Development for innovative training practices. In the same year, Dun & Bradstreet also published a case study in its yearly compilation of HR best practices about an L&D intervention designed and led by her.

A Journey with Many Destinations...

“There is a lot at stake to not get this right. The fact is no matter how airtight our plan is, there will always be a “future” in the making and we must anticipate disruptions as we transition into this future.”

In the talent market, your recruiters are the marketeers of your brand. They are responsible to use the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) most effectively to attract talent and are regarded as the face of the organisation in the market. The candidate experience that they manage matters a lot in this age of social media as it's very easy to land up with damaging comments and ratings. The recruitment function is also characterized by KPIs & Dashboards that have the attention of the business leaders. Recruitment is, therefore, often referred to as the Sales & Marketing function of Human Resources. No wonder, recruitment is usually one of the most progressed and sophisticated parts of a company's HR digital story.



Many big organisations have already embarked on a journey to create their future of recruitment through digital transformation. I feel that we are in one of the most exciting and yet most challenging times because we have only begun to see the application of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Big data in this area and there is more to come! There is a lot at stake to not get this right. The fact is no matter how airtight our plan is, there will always be a “future” in the making and we must anticipate disruptions as we transition into this future.

Following are some of the considerations that are worth thinking about as we continue to evolve:

- **Let's Not Adopt Something like a “Fashion Trend”**

Digital transformation will no doubt enable HR to become more strategic but it is not a magic wand. Sometimes, it looks as if organisations are in a race to have a digital story without a purpose or foundation in place. They spend millions and end up with a tool or a platform that does not justify the ROI. This happens mostly because the journey is broken or not integrated for the transformation to truly come alive.

Normally, we see that in the Sales, Marketing and Customer Service functions, the transformations are mapped

to the customer to create CXX (Customer Experience Excellence) as a business driver. If we even keep this as the benchmark, then the approach adopted to create transformations in the HR function is often questionable. Let's look at some recruitment specific scenarios:

How many clicks does it take for someone to apply for a job on a company website?

Are candidates proactively updated about their application status?

How many times is feedback closed with unsuccessful candidates?

Wondering if these are important? Let's just ask

ourselves if we believe it would impact the candidate experience?

- **Analytics and More of Analytics:**

All credit to the digital world we are in today, we have the 3V's of data – Volume, Velocity & Variety. Forget the ability to just process structured data, now there is a huge appetite for unstructured data. How can an organisation with so much data not use it to make data-driven decisions? Yet surprisingly, only a handful of organisations as per various industry reports are close to using data analytics to its advantage. Again, data analytics in the context of Sales and Marketing is normally given more importance and so, unfortunately, many end up even thinking it is not relevant to HR professionals. Thankfully, HR analytics is gaining awareness and attention it deserves because of its potential. As I learnt very recently from a leader, analytics is all about asking the right questions. If we are satisfied with the information on how effective and efficient our recruitment is, then that's the answer we will always get. The raising of the bar to predictive and prescriptive analysis will elevate HR by leaps and bounds in its strategic contribution to the business.

- **Competencies of Future Recruiters:**

We need to remember that as we progress into the future, the complexities and the challenges it brings along will

keep changing. The spectrum will range from hiring a gig workforce to managing Robots as a part of a hybrid team. No matter whether in recruitment or any other function in HR, we cannot afford to not understand how the newer technologies will impact or change the way we work at a business level.

“We need to remember that as we progress into the future, the complexities and the challenges it brings along will keep changing. The spectrum will range from hiring a gig workforce to managing Robots as a part of a hybrid team.”

We already discussed analytics above so let's take another example. Blockchain is not new but when we heard about it first, did we fathom the use of technology in the HR domain? With blockchain, recruitment can be focusing on aspects that matter more to get the right talent for a role rather than checking references, scrutinizing the candidate's CV, accreditations or professional certifications.

A proactive outlook of the recruiters for improving “candidate experience” can go a long way in establishing

credibility in the talent market. It speaks of the culture of the organisation and more than what the EVP shows on paper metaphorically, what matters is how it is targeted to the talent pool, how their journey is mapped from the candidate's point of view.

And finally, I'd like to close with this point:

- **Keep the “Spirit” Alive:**

Since most of us love cinema, let me explain this with an example. One of the things that movies like ‘Million Dollar Arm’, ‘Chak De India’, ‘Ocean's 11’ have in common is the “spirit” demonstrated by the recruiter to get the right talent for the team. Therefore, it is critical that business strategy and organisation culture is at the core of decision making. The most competent or skilled person may not be the right candidate for a job. Every touchpoint in the candidate journey is responsible to do the best in the interest of the organisation and often the accountability of the Hiring Manager is ignored in this process.

So, keeping this “spirit” alive was important in the past, has not lost its importance today and will not be replaced in the future.

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

UNVEILING

A BRAND NEW JOB POSTING EXPERIENCE POWERED BY AI



✔ **New Improved UI**

✔ **Advanced AI**

Job Posting has always been one of our most popular products at Naukri. With all the new enhancements, Naukri Job Posting will now deliver even better.

Our simplified interface and new AI algorithms will help you post a job quickly, reach out to millions of relevant jobseekers and get quality applies in your inbox.

People often unknowingly rely on unconscious bias to make a hiring decision. To overcome this problem many recruiters are turning to AI tools to tackle discrimination in hiring and cut down on the effect of these human biases. However, these advanced technologies aren't a magical, one-size-fits-all solution to every hiring problem, though. Instead, companies must consider a combination of both the approaches where our human judgment is aided by AI to address any biases and improve hiring processes, internal cultures and end goals.



Parul Bahl

is an evolving HR professional working as the Senior Manager HR at DLF Limited. Prior to this, she worked as the HR Business Partner at the TATA Consultancy Services. She has been recognized as a Global Top Performer in Resource Management for the year 2013-14. She is passionate about providing the best candidate experience and thinking out of the box to create business value. Her specialities include- Talent Engagement, Performance Management, Learning and Development, and Resource Management.

Using Technology to Eliminate Hiring Bias

“According to a study conducted by McKinsey, hiring bias can negatively affect the bottom line of your organisation. The study further states that gender-diverse companies are 15% more likely to outperform those who aren't gender diverse, likewise ethnically diverse companies are 35% more likely to outperform those who aren't ethnically diverse.”

Hiring targets and shortage of skilled resources may be giving recruiters nightmares, but another important phenomenon that is eroding recruiters' efforts is 'unconscious bias' in the hiring process. Right from sourcing, screening, shortlisting candidates to interviewing them, each step in the recruitment process is usually affected by unconscious bias. Unconscious bias is so deeply ingrained in the human mind that it affects the thinking and decision making of both – the recruiter and the hiring manager, without them even realizing it.

According to a study conducted by McKinsey, hiring bias can negatively affect the bottom line of your organisation. The study further states that gender-diverse companies are 15% more likely to outperform those who aren't gender diverse, likewise ethnically diverse companies are 35% more likely to outperform those who aren't ethnically diverse.

To eliminate unconscious bias the only reliable solution as of now is Artificial Intelligence or AI as we know it. MNC's such as Loreal use chatbots for screening potential candidates using a standard set of questions on the basis of qualifications and cultural fit, after which the list of best-fit candidates is mailed to the recruiter thus saving the recruiter's time and reducing the risk of unconscious bias. Similarly, Tech Mahindra uses UVO, an in-house developed bot that helps recruiters in filtering suitable profiles based on the job description. In addition to screening profiles, UVO also helps in answering candidates' queries,

which is a win-win since bots are available round the clock to answer queries and the response time is in milliseconds.

Platforms such as HireVue, an online video interviewing platform, are helping organisations in digitally accessing and ranking video interviews of candidates to shortlist the best fits. Hilton was one of the first hotel chains to use AI in its recruitment process. It uses AllyO to screen the numerous job applications received on a daily basis. In addition to using AllyO, Hilton uses HireVue which allows the hotel chain to interview multiple candidates at the same time without the recruiter being present. This takes care of the first level of screening with ease.

However, like there are two sides to every coin, the use of artificial intelligence in hiring does not come without its flaws. A case in point being that of Amazon. Amazon's recruitment tool was found to be biased towards women candidates' CVs. The tool had taught itself to screen out women CVs based on the last 10 years of hiring data that was fed into it, to begin with.

Points to Consider before Considering AI for Recruitment

1. Decide What Area to Use AI for – Based on the size and skillset of your organisation one can decide in which step of recruitment AI needs to be applied, does your organisation want to use AI tools in screening and sourcing alone or its use can be extended to testing the skills of the candidates as well through customized tests.

2. Human Touch – Using AI in the recruitment process cannot mean the absolute lack of human intervention. Positive and candid interaction with a recruiter who is well versed with the area of hiring can uplift the candidate's experience and provide a great first impression of the company. While bots may be available round the clock and may be able to answer almost all queries that a candidate might have, nothing beats the human touch and involvement.

3. Equip the Teams – Before your organisation joins the bandwagon of companies using AI for recruitment, consider the change management requirements for the various stakeholders involved. Do they have the necessary training to comprehend the outcomes of the AI tools? Do they understand why these tools are being used instead of the traditional approach? Are they onboard with using these tools? Diving straight into the use of technology without taking all involved parties on the same page may turn out to be a wasteful exercise.

Takeaway

While many organisations are still following the traditional approach of involving recruiters right from the start to the end of the recruitment cycle, it might be time to consider the use of technology which uses a data-driven approach leading to hiring diversity. Neither of the approaches is 100% foolproof, but with time and using a combination of both the approaches one can be assured of a workforce that is truly diverse.

The rapid migration to digital technologies driven by the pandemic has accelerated the need for digital recruitment. With so many business disruptions happening, HR functions increasingly feel the need for effective digital solutions and a new reformed agile recruiting approach to anticipate and meet the changing needs of the business. The article explores how a recruiter can become more equipped with the required agility and future skills to respond to the changing hiring needs and ensure business growth.



Sukhpreet Swaran Sandhu

is a people advocate and culture evangelist who focuses on doing conventional things unconventionally. He, currently, Heads Human Resources for Spinny wherein he is responsible to drive the organisation growth from zero to one focusing on getting the right set of talent in the system and managing them with highly people-oriented practices. He comes with over 12 years of progressive experience in the field of human resources. In his previous stints, he worked with Denave, Tolexo and Jabong. His keen areas of interest include building most-loved workplaces, leadership development, talent management, and culture.

The Agile Recruiters of Today, Tomorrow, and Ever After

“Covidization has brought the real digital revolution, which will stay forever. This digital revolution has brought some of the key agilities that each recruiter must start learning and be open to unlearning what they already know which is the most difficult aspect.”

With so much dynamically and drastically changing in the current scenario, its impact is being observed thoroughly not only on the economy, business models, financial transactions, and organisation's stability but also on how businesses wish to evolve their strategic talent planning. This also calls out for the overall ecosystem impact on the new question of "buying talent" v/s "building talent" in various contexts of the organisations' goals. No matter how much we shy away from accepting, this is the real "VUCA" experience for everyone across the geographies. This is the real change management; with simple, easy to adapt, and highly impactful methodologies leading to highlight an equally sustainable approach can really turn the tables around.

The traditional approaches and mechanisms have seen a digital topping on making it highly experiential & effective for the talent scouting for jobs and organisations aiming to fulfil talents. The next question arises, how a recruiter can become more equipped; not only with sufficient resources but also with a new set of agility to ensure the business support is even more favourable and candidate experience goes ultra-positive. Needless to mention, that such agilities will play a pivotal role in making all TA enthusiasts highly competitive & skilled as per future market demands. After witnessing and being a part of numerous discussions within & outside the industry, I have realized a 360-degree shift on how



a recruiter sees themselves in terms of their current agilities & competencies v/s what the future market demands. Whilst it's going to be a long and comparatively slow process, I do anticipate it to give a positive twist towards adapting more agile & sustainable ways for new-age digital recruiting.

Be an Influential Story Teller:

Sounds fancy, right? This is one such agility which a recruiter must start adapting & keep improvising. Ever spoken about an organisation's journey that makes any listener/ audience extremely hooked to what you express? If not, then here's how you must start narrating the organisation's journey or business model explanation in a screenplay format; be your own writer and direct it as unique as possible.

This is not just confined to how you narrate in a conversation, but also in the ways you design your presentations. **Bring about the message at the core and on the periphery, have the stories of the brand or the business ecosystem, add vicissitudes with each learning that made it realize the importance of being what it is in the current landscape.** Do ensure the key message is delivered to the listener(s) whether it is the role of selling or the organisation selling.

One way to make your storytelling more interesting is how you introduce the role (job) to the entire scene. Example: let's say, you are speaking to someone with the potential to fulfil customer experience. Talk about the journey of the organisation with respect to where it has been so far, with

respect to customer experience, and what problem statement it's trying to solve via getting someone from the market. Highlight how they will play a concrete role in bringing "that change" which the organisation demands in that domain. Such conversations are less mechanical or Q/A based and come with more dynamism & depth. It leaves an ever-lasting favourable impact on any listener(s) or candidate(s).

The Digital Digestion:

The era for the real digital mindset is right now! The last 90 days have given each of us quite a few revelations on the business side and otherwise as well. With more than 80% of organisations now moving to 100% digital interview method, being digital-savvy takes even a priority spot for every recruiter. It is not just confined to using the platforms. Everything has become digital now; almost everything is possible virtually these days. *Covidization has brought the real digital revolution, which will stay forever. This digital revolution has brought some of the key agilities that each recruiter must start learning and be open to unlearning what they already know which is the most difficult aspect.* How would a recruiter assess the skill sets and competencies of the potential talents digitally is going to decide the real success measures of any talent fulfilment process.

From using artificial intelligence to natural intelligence, a few of such intangible aspects would definitely change how the interviews are being done. One key change and impact it would bring will be the turnaround time of the entire hiring process. The

introduction of panel interviews can be another aspect that can be looked upon while working on some strategic hires. This calls for a more collaborative outcome with a common rating mechanism, which assessors can refer to make informed decisions. Keeping everything in mind, a bias-free interview approach needs to take a more structured competency-based hiring method. A pre-work on such aspects such as customized parameters for each scenario or question, asking more situational questions and mapping the desired behaviours as outcomes, etc. can help the organisations give a practical interview experience. The interviewing panel also has the liberty to access the archived discussions and also track real-time data & supporting readings shared by candidates at each stage. All that is needed: proactively adhering to an experiential interview journey & more objectively assessing the talent over judging them.

"It is scientifically proven that people prefer to socialise with people who are similar to them. The term has been coined as affinity bias, which refers to the tendency to warm up to people like ourselves. This results in the need to 'fit-in'."

Big Thinking & Action:

Yes. It's not just a ballgame only for the C-Suite population in the organisations anymore. This one

behaviour needs to be demonstrated by everyone contributing to the business growth in every possible form. For recruiters, it's all the more needed to think outside of the traditional hiring ecosystem and start linking things more with business drivers. This is one string gap that I have observed in most of the hiring processes and even fixed largely. In these times, each recruiter must start acting as a P&L head themselves- entrepreneurship spirit with a strategic mindset is all that it demands. Every role, every position, and every talent that is being fulfilled must have a business outcome & orientation especially when it comes to capturing their experience. Circle back to each of your hires and see how they have been working and performing. Such facets help you get a sense of some of the unseen parts in any candidate's journey from becoming a potential hire to a top performer.

Cognitive flexibility has been described as one of the future-skills. It means the ability to adjust the way of thinking to new situations, along with the ability to overcome our customary automatic responses or thoughts and adapt them to the new reality. You can bring reforms in your hiring process and bring substantial changes in the overall candidate experience with such findings. One thing that's going to be an everlasting behaviour from each TA professional will be "being a strategist and hands-on" as well. Set stretched goals for yourself and the business, look at the most unseen/ unheard ways of optimizing the recruitment cycle, and see the kind of self-led entrepreneurial ways of work that would define the entire voyage of greater attainment.

Datafication- The Dominant Driver:

When it comes to data and driving insights independently, the first thing that comes to my mind is how would a recruiter look at the key business data points with hiring metrics at micro and macro levels? There are more elements to take into consideration other than cost-consciousness and the total timelines. These are important, but often conventional metrics restrict the view to even narrower than what one would expect it to be.

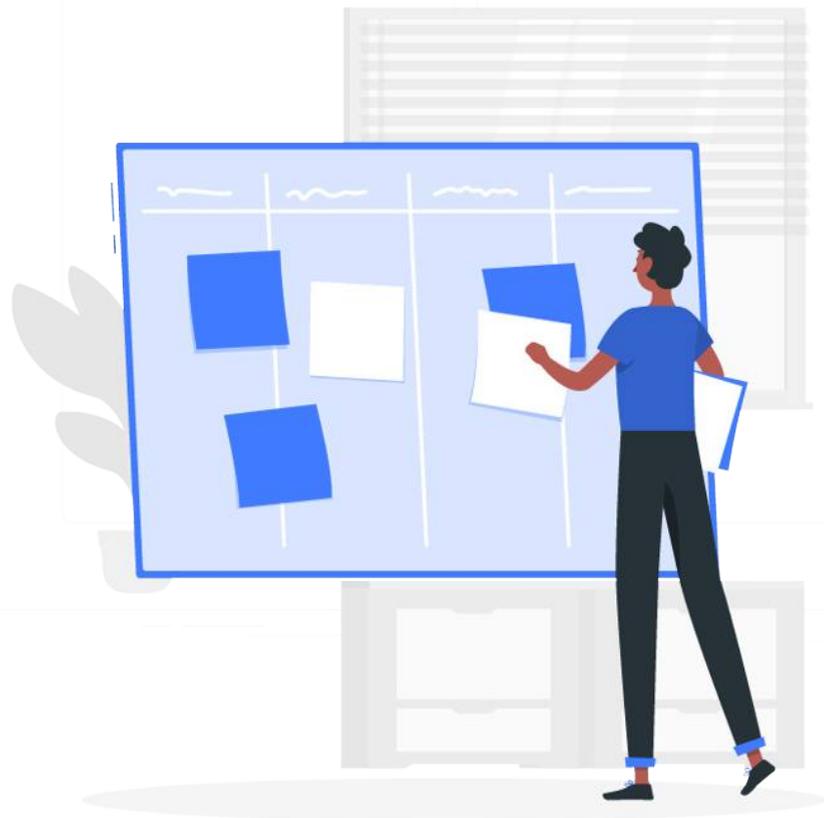
“Cognitive flexibility has been described as one of the future-skills. It means the ability to adjust the way of thinking to new situations, along with the ability to overcome our customary automatic responses or thoughts, and adapt them to the new reality.”

Let's talk about ageing of the interview at every stage, reasons for such delays, and how it impacts the candidate experience overall should be some of the points a recruiter must also consider while defining their own success measures in any hiring lifecycle. This can help them do a comparison in their individual performance in one v/s another fulfilment. Citing another example can be how their hires have performed & contributed to the business. A recruiter can

also check and ask for their hires' first productivity milestone and add on to the overall scorecard to showcase the impact of the talent they brought. A business should not shy away from sharing the success of the growth by talent with the one who actually brought them (You must be thinking, it's subjective. Yes! this is quite subjective, however, can be tweaked for every business unit/ model).

Also, in the absence of data points, how a recruiter deep drives into various themes that decides their and business' performance collectively; talks volumes about collaborative ways to identify, define, solve, and manage the key problems that may impact the overall hiring landscape of the ecosystem.

Well, nothing works with a knee-jerk reaction! Everything takes time to develop, nurture, and show signs of its impact on a larger growth. Change is the only thing we must start looking forward to and be ready to adapt certain things instantaneously and some eventually. HR folks are expected to wear business hats! High time for businesses to also wear HR hats and add people related digital analytics into their overall scorecards. The world has experienced and witnessed how hiring trends and processes have changed over the last few years and with the current landscape, it's imperative for every recruiter to “partner” with the business and upskill themselves with the required agility and future skills to outshine and make a difference to the entire fraternity.



Emotions Vs Stats: Our Take on Recruitment



The recruitment process can be a complete rollercoaster of emotions - different stages amounting to recruiters thinking and feeling differently. In this infographic, we attempt to highlight some important statistics related to recruitment and capture the emotions recruiters might feel when thinking about them. Sounds, interesting? Let's get started!



**1st Application
is Received
Within 200
Seconds of
Posting a Job.**



**On average, each
corporate job
offer attracts
250 resumes.**



The average time a recruiter spends on scanning a CV is between 5 and 7 seconds.



Almost 50% of recruiters report that screening candidates is their biggest time drain.



52% of recruiters reveal that their time-to-hire is 3 weeks or more.



The best candidates are off the market within 10 days.



Recruiters that take the time to develop a strong hiring experience realized 70% improvement in the quality of hires.



1 in 3 recruiters rejected a candidate based on something they found about them online.

Note: The emotions depicted are our attempt at light humour. Please consider them for graphical representation only.

From donating medical supplies and free food to donating money and opening hospitals, Indian corporates are taking a lead in response to the Covid-19 crisis. As Covid-19 sweeps across the world, the role of business in society continues to evolve. It's encouraging to see how even in the midst of challenging times, corporate India is contributing generously both financially and philanthropically and embracing corporate social innovation to support society, their employees, and the economy at large.



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is the Founder and Managing Director at IPE Global, the largest development sector management consultancy firm in South Asia. He has over 30 years of extensive experience in development consultancy and advisory services. Mr. Ashwajit Singh has provided strong leadership and strategic direction to IPE as the Managing Director. He is also the Chairman of Triple Line Consulting (an IPE Global Group company), a UK based international development consulting firm and Director of Ajooni Impact Investment Advisor Private Limited – a social impact fund. He is a qualified Chartered Accountant, Company Secretary (Gold Medallist), Certified Internal Auditor certificate holder, inlaks Scholar and an alumnus of the London School of Economics.

Covid-19 – Is it the CSR Propeller for the Private Sector?

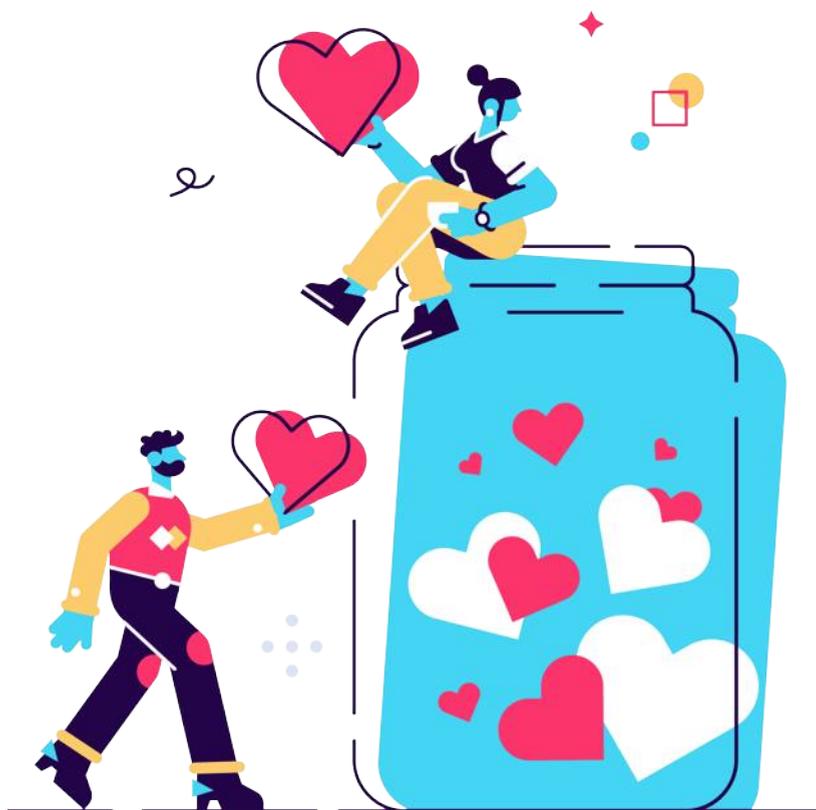
“As the country limps back to the new normal, it is an opportunity for the corporates to expand their CSR footprint.”

When God blesses you financially, don't raise your standard of living. Raise your standard of giving.

This aptly summarizes the demands of the current pandemic and the need for corporates, private sector, and philanthropic organisations to work together to fight the war against Covid-19.

10 million-plus and counting! Around the world, as the infection tally increases the pandemic is all anyone can talk about. The crisis is testing families, communities, healthcare systems, and governments. Across nations, it is being dealt with by governments with support from the private sector where the leaders are trying to protect their workers and, at the same time maintain business continuity.

Several countries have already built private sector capacity into their Covid-19 response. England, France, Germany, the Lombardy region in Italy and South Africa, are engaging with the private health sector to increase testing and add extra hospital beds, ventilators and health workers to augment their response capacity. Countries such as Australia and Spain have authorized government bodies to call for private sector support, equipment and staff as needed. The world over countries and organisations are stepping up their philanthropic efforts. As on June 26 total contributions received under the WHO Covid-19 Response Fund amounted to 724 million USD - nearly 41.6% of the 1.7 billion USD, an estimated requirement till Dec 2020.



India Inc. is no exception. The CSR spent by the companies has shot-up to provide relief funds, food donations, masks, sanitisers, and PPE kits. Recent findings by Crisil Foundation reveals that out of 130 companies analysed, 113 (or 87%) have pledged support either through cash or kind. Of these 113, as many as 84 (including support through the corporate group) have contributed an approximate INR 7,537 crore during March-May 2020 that can be classified as CSR spend. Over two-thirds of this amount (INR 5122 crore) came from the private sector companies. Interestingly, Delhi and Maharashtra – the states most affected by the crisis - received the maximum contributions. With the government's announcement on spends undertaken for fighting Covid-19 being a legible CSR activity, it may impact other causes

India Inc. is supporting. But, there is no denying that the corporate sector is now a crucial partner in the war against the pandemic.

Corporate India is contributing generously both financially and philanthropically - donating money, medical supplies and opening hospitals. From setting aside of Covid-19 contingency fund by ITC, Adani, JSW, Hero Cycles, Vedanta, Bajaj and so on; ordering diagnostic kits from South Korea by Hyundai India; helping establish smart classes in 1,000 government higher primary schools in Karnataka by Infosys Foundation; opening India's first 100-bedded hospital in Mumbai, giving masks, free food and fuel to the needy by Reliance Industries they are doing it all. Spiritual organisation Radha Soami Satsang Beas recently approved

setting up of a 10,000-bed makeshift hospital for Covid-19 patients under a sprawling tent in South Delhi - the largest such facility in the city so far. The work at the facility is helping those migrant workers who chose to stay behind not only earn money after a prolonged period of unemployment but also contribute to the pandemic relief efforts.

According to WHO, a critical lesson learned from the 2014-16 West African Ebola crisis is that both the public and private sectors need to work in tandem to respond to such a global large-scale crisis. With nearly 70% of healthcare provided by private hospitals, clinics and nursing homes as per the National Sample Survey Office's 71st round, the private sector in the country can play an even more important role in its response to Covid-19.

Corporates are proactively opting for a more hybrid approach. While tech companies are incubating medical technology, automotive companies are making ventilators, masks, sanitisers. There are others who are providing free cab-hailing services to medical personnel, subsidized e-learning services and daily food and ration to the needy by teaming up with NGOs.

Across the world, governments, tech companies and health authorities are joining hands to find solutions to this health crisis. In this spirit of collaboration, Google and Apple recently launched an "exposure notification" tool which through Bluetooth radios within smartphones allows public health authorities and governments to reduce the spread of the virus. Close on the heels are others

"According to WHO, a critical lesson learned from the 2014-16 West African Ebola crisis is that both the public and private sectors need to work in tandem to respond to such a global large-scale crisis. With nearly 70% of healthcare provided by private hospitals, clinics and nursing homes as per the National Sample Survey Office's 71st round, the private sector in the country can play an even more important role in its response to Covid-19."

like HP which are providing 3D printing resources for COVID-19 containment apps while there are others like SingularityNET, Ocean Protocol and Nth Opinion collaborating to combat the crisis leveraging blockchain technology and AI.



The crisis is unprecedented. As the country limps back to the new normal, it is an opportunity for the corporates to expand their CSR footprint. Instead of opting

for the easier route and putting their money into designated funds, they can take a more professional approach, forge new partnerships with NGOs and work with the local administrations to use their CSR funds more judiciously. Several companies have begun integrating Covid-19 response in their business operations itself rather than direct monetary assistance.

Most corporates view CSR spending as something that meets the minimal monetary threshold mandated by law. CSR, which has till now been mostly limited to an occasional social good, armchair discussions, sporadic employee engagement appears to be shifting focus to the actual delivery of value. Unlike the 'before corona' CSR efforts, focused mostly on optical visibility and label, corporates now seem to have a new sense of purpose and urgency in wanting to take forward CSR and deliver value by the deployment of important resources. The efforts have begun and will not only complement the efforts of the government but also set a precedent for the future.

How AI Empowers Recruiting at Different Stages



Artificial Intelligence (AI) utilizes data trends and history to understand processes and predict outcomes. This is why some industry experts are looking at it as a beacon of hope to bring about the impending shift in the age-old recruitment process. Let's understand how AI can simplify recruitment and make a modern recruiter's life easier.



IDENTIFYING A VACANCY

Machine Learning capabilities identify historical candidate data and become adept at predicting outcomes. This can considerably reduce the average 44-day job vacancy and allow recruiters to prepare for more vacancies.



DEVISING A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

By analysing details about previously successful recruitment drives - where did the candidates come from, what was the JD, etc. - AI helps in filling the gaps and improving the process.



SHORTLISTING CANDIDATES

An average recruiter spends almost 3.5 hours every day scanning resumes. AI helps minimize the time spent on this and shortlists resumes even as new applications for a job advertisement keep pouring in.



SCREENING PROFILES & CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

On an average, recruiters spend 2.5 hours on calls every week! AI powered chats can conduct the preliminary screening interviews based on historical data. This gives recruiters more time to focus on nurturing top talent.



HIRING A CANDIDATE

By streamlining the entire recruitment process, AI helps reduce the workload on recruiters by 35% and empowers them to hire better, hire faster.

As the Covid-19 crisis continues to disrupt companies around the world, Diversity and Inclusion may now recede as a strategic priority for organisations. However, it's important that leaders understand that diversity has never been more important for businesses, especially at this time. In this article, we learn why D&I initiatives are critical for business recovery, resilience, and reimagination.



Jitender Panihar

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Moving the Needle on D&I During a Pandemic

“Many founders feel that diversity and inclusion initiatives are “non-essential” aspects when starting a business which leads to a culture of lacklustre perspective which in turn leads to lower employee engagement and high attrition.”

The COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on businesses have been massive and to a certain extent, the previously much-prioritized conversations around Diversity and Inclusion have taken a back seat for many. Against the backdrop of this new normal, employees are often seen struggling to juggle work, life, homeschool kids, physical and mental wellness, and a lot more all together! It certainly has a major impact on how working women are trying to maintain that work-life balance. And for this reason, diversity and inclusion should become more important than ever. Flexible environment, empathy, and a decentralized approach will definitely go a long way when it comes to providing an inclusive work environment for all employees during the time of crisis.

While the number of start-ups in India has considerably increased in the last few years in India, the focus on diversity and inclusion, in general, has been missing from the early stages since entrepreneurs are only focused on building the right product/services, achieving desired product-market fit and getting the economics of their business right. However, they often fail to realise that there is another factor that determines the success or failure of a startup - company culture and diversity. Many founders feel that diversity and inclusion initiatives are “non-essential” aspects when starting a business which leads to a culture of lacklustre perspective which in turn leads to lower employee engagement and high attrition. Most founders wait until their company goes from about 50 to 300 people, but by then, culture has already been established and



“Personal connections and transparent communication have helped us navigate through this situation with our very own diverse workforce. Diversity only creates wonders when every part of it feels included!”

it becomes very hard to course correct, hence, it becomes critical for startup founders to start thinking about these efforts from the onset.

A report by Boston Consulting Group indicates that for every dollar of funding, startups founded

and co-founded by females generated 78 cents, while startups with male founders generated less than half that — just 31 cents. The research doesn’t end there. McKinsey, Bank of America/Merrill Lynch and the Peterson Institute for International Economics all found that having a high percentage of women in a company’s senior leadership results in significantly better financial results. This stark contrast suggests that companies with diverse leadership result in better financial performance. But diversity doesn’t just stop at gender, or at age, ethnicity, culture, language, education, sexual orientation, it also encompasses the diversity of thought, differences in perspective or information processing styles, and cognitive diversity - which is the key to innovation and productivity

in the workplace. Workplace diversity and inclusion is not just a well-decorated fad but a serious competitive advantage for organisations, and more so in times of crisis.

Fluid Organisations Fuelling the Rise of Diversity

As more and more organisations embrace remote work as the new normal, the need for physical infrastructures and the so-called barriers would vanish leading to an opportunity for those whose physical movements are restricted. The untapped or under-tapped talent pool of marginalized communities like differently-abled people can be huge leverage that organisations should definitely aim for. Empowering hiring managers to target a healthy diverse ratio in individual teams, building a pipeline of leaders within the organisation, and revamping the recruitment process is much needed during this time. In a world full of uncertainty, diversity in the workforce will definitely lead to a more resilient team.

Empathy for Inclusion

Managing and engaging Millennials and Gen Z workforce require some serious understanding and creativity. Engaging a global and diverse workforce is not easy and is only possible when inclusion is of prime importance in the company culture. The initiatives and activities when it comes to employee engagement and learning should be designed to cater to the diverse workforce and should be inclusive of all. Multicultural workforces contribute to creativity

and innovation thanks to diverse perspectives and experiences. We, at MoEngage, ensure to curate initiatives that involve and appeal to all. A very small example of this is, being sensitive to time-zone differences. Since we have our folks working across four geo timelines, we have to make sure our teams come together at a time which is most conducive to all. Also, this pandemic has taught us to be more mindful of what people might go through. Personal connections and transparent communication have helped us navigate through this situation with our very own diverse workforce. Diversity only creates wonders when every part of it feels included!

“Creating the focus on diversity and inclusion at a leadership level and changing behavioural standards are two main pillars in carving out an inclusive culture in any organisation.”

With the household support system of maids and cooks getting disrupted and families also having to homeschool their kids alongside household chores and work has posed a huge challenge in the much-discussed work-life balance of both men and women. We conducted focussed group discussions with Women at MoEngage in Q2, 2020 to discuss and gather insights on the as-is situation and the challenges related to gender diversity during the new normal of remote work

due to COVID-19. The objective was to identify key themes based on the qualitative inputs and design an action plan to bolster up our diversity initiatives and learning and reach out with help wherever required. The next few quarters have been ear-marked to have a series of initiatives/ programs dedicated to addressing the challenges that most working women face especially in making work-life balanced during the COVID pandemic. This would include making the organisation more fluid and flexible, more sensitization workshops on biases and effective communication, POSH action strategies, mental wellness sessions for working women and mothers, etc. Mentorship by role models internally will be another way to address critical operational challenges.

Building an Inclusive Culture

Creating the focus on diversity and inclusion at a leadership level and changing behavioural standards are two main pillars in carving out an inclusive culture in any organisation. Training people at all levels on unconscious biases and holistically educating folks on communities and their challenges will take any organisation a long way in its diversity strategy. D&I shouldn't only stay as a policy in the policy handbook but you need to walk the talk too. Inclusive leadership can successfully navigate through these unprecedented times with the help of diverse thoughts and value ads.

As a global organisation spanning across multiple geographies and

servicing the best to our diverse customer base, diversity & inclusion is rightfully one of our key focus areas in 2020 at MoEngage. Also, diversity for us is a lot of things beyond gender and ethnicity as well. As the world geared up to observe Pride Month in the month of June to recognize the influence LGBT+ people have had around the world and raise awareness of current issues being faced by the community, we being a socially responsible organisation had partnered with Pride Circle to participate in their #21daysAllyChallenge along with 108 other organisations. The objective was to take conscious steps to recognize & neutralize biases and stereotypes about the LGBT+ community. MoEngage is one of the very few start-ups to participate in this challenge along with biggies like Infosys, Capgemini, GE, IBM, Unilever, PnG, Dell, Cognizant, etc and together we

have reached the 67th rank in the total tally.

Although, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic diversity and inclusion might not be a business priority, remember it still matters! This pandemic is a perfect opportunity to rethink and redesign our diversity policies and inclusion strategies. The new model of remote work will give an advantage to recruiters to look at diversity hiring in a revamped way. Fluid organisations even mean better prospects in differently-abled hiring. As we navigate through the pandemic, we realise there is no perfect solution, but genuinely showing effort and commitment to diversity and inclusion will go a long way.

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.” – Confucius.

“Engaging a global and diverse workforce is not easy and is only possible when inclusion is of prime importance in the company culture. The initiatives and activities when it comes to employee engagement and learning should be designed to cater to the diverse workforce and should be inclusive of all.”





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As the Covid-19 crisis unfolds globally, organisations across the world are dealing with an unplanned conundrum of managing talent and productivity. Read on to know how organisations can restructure and re-evaluate their existing HR handbook to test their crisis management readiness and ensure a smooth recruitment cycle from onboarding to separation.



Ankur Gautam

is the Senior Manager - HRBP at Unicode Systems Private Limited. He is a seasoned human resource professional with over 15 years of work experience in various facets of HR. He is a post-graduate in International Business from Pondicherry University. Previously, he has worked with organisations like Sahara India, Sigma Trade Wings and Energy and Fire Tech India Private Limited. As per him, employee happiness can make any milestone achievable.

Restructuring of Employee Handbook for Covid-19 Scenario and Post-Covid-19 Environment

The COVID-19 pandemic has scathed almost every corner of the Indian economy, but it has hit the job market particularly hard. There are now more job seekers than the vacancies available in the market. In addition, we have other open challenges of managing talent in times of such crisis. Here we will discuss those challenges which may create an unnecessary chase in closing positions and post joining.

The Millennial generation has a drastically different outlook on how work gets done and what they expect from their employment experience. They need more clarity about their role, growth within the organisation, future path, learning & development, and compensation, etc. Baby boomers were very much flexible with offered terms and conditions of employment but millennials are more focused on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation factors. Today, candidates have complete awareness about the domain market and their own worth in this market to encash their value. This calls for the need to make major adjustments in the recruitment models. Therefore, we need to focus and re-evaluate our existing HR handbook with Covid-19 & Post-Covid-19 scenario which is important for the end to end recruitment cycle.

Conventionally, we have some set of questions for the initial screening of candidates for any role which varies from industry to industry. These sets which we hand over to our recruiters or recruitment agency for shortlisting the candidates will be now more enhanced because of

the Covid-19 situation. If you are from an IT industry or any industry which works in all shifts then you'll have to be very specific with the choice of candidate for the shift. You need to clearly understand the interest of the candidate and the purpose of applying in your organisation along with few terms and conditions in written with validation from candidates to avoid post joining confrontation, e.g. when hiring, a candidate should be properly informed about the type of role offered, employment conditions, job location (during Covid-19 and post-Covid-19), shift timings as well as the working process so that the candidate could take the right decision, which will decrease the chances of drop out in the last moment. The organisation must be clear with its expectations and employment conditions with

the candidates. Job description, compensation in terms of work from the home environment, work from the office environment, direct and indirect benefits, reimbursement policies, IT and data privacy policy everything should be ready to share with candidates during the onboarding process to understand and acknowledge.

Your orientation and induction strategy should be pre-written and shared with candidates and concerned team members so that they can connect over skype, zoom, or Microsoft team, etc tools to complete their introduction process as per schedule. If joining is at the office, then candidates should be asked to bring the latest medical fitness certificate along with other joining documents, like the Covid-19 test report especially in the scenario



where we have asymptomatic people around us. So, by practising this activity we can avoid the spread of infection in your team by new hires. Being an HR, we must ensure such processes should be followed without fail. HR should arrange a proper notification module which should be delivered to every employee desk through email about social distancing, a list of do's and don'ts, and various other precautions to avoid Covid-19 spread within office premises and outside the office. Such emails will create awareness in employees. We should make them understand that if someone is creating a distance from them while talking, then not to take it otherwise - maintaining this kind of distance from each other can help prevent the spread of Covid-19 between people which is good for both of them and for everyone in the office. Applaud and cheer those people who practice social distancing. This will create harmony in the environment and motivate others to pursue the same action in the future. Our notice board should be covered with animated images which will attract employees to see them and learn from them about the Covid-19 spread and its preventions. Administration staff and HR should create a proper policy for organizing meetings in the office - client meetings and any employee's internal group activity - while following required precautions. These policies and notifications should be properly pasted at the meeting room's entrance door to remind the team what to do and what not to do.

Policies for issuing company assets to employees and their maintenance part and its uses should be properly

“Policies for issuing company assets to employees and their maintenance part and its uses should be properly documented for each role. Policy structuring is required for each department whether it's related to compensation, statutory compliances, employee engagement activity participation, performance management systems, and exit policies in detail.”

documented for each role. Policy structuring is required for each department whether it's related to compensation, statutory compliances, employee engagement activity participation, performance management systems, and exit policies in detail.

Employee engagement activity should be drafted in a manner that employees working from home and employees working from office should have equal opportunities to participate in birthday celebrations, office events, etc. Office events should be broadcasted through social media channels so that remote employees who are not present in the office due to social

distancing or any other reasons feel included and part of the company celebrations. This will boost the connection among cross-functional teams and keep employees engaged.

Training programs should be conducted for those who are working from home but are not much accustomed to the online conference/meeting tool's functionality. This should be a compulsory process of training for both onsite and offsite teams. This training module will educate them with proper custom and uses of meeting tools to avoid delay in execution like sharing the screen, private chat during a group meeting, how to add a new member



in the chat group and other basic things like making proper calendar invite before scheduling the meet for different time zones (if the team is connecting from different offshore locations), how to make the host of the meeting and co-host of meeting, etc.

Training for using online tools to connect with the team will help the inside team to conduct the KT process, training & development process for all employees whether they are working in an office or performing their duties from remote areas. This session can be recorded to share with those team members who could not attend due to any specific reasons. Training feedback from post online training will help employees to fill the gaps.

Exit interview process and exit formalities should be defined for work from home employees especially during the Covid-19 scenario when travel is almost stopped in the fear of the spread of the infection. So, documentation and execution of the process in which company assets handover, full and final payment, relieving documents, and other required processes are included should be well defined within turnaround time for settlement.

Employee grievances should be acknowledged on priority especially for work from home employees, any delay in response can make them feel undervalued. The HR team should be responsive enough to address employee concerns wisely and document every communication for the future course of action. Employee mental health and well-being is genuinely concerning matter during this pandemic



situation as no one was prepared for 100% work from home environment in the pre-COVID-19 world. Some of us have accepted the new reality but most of us are still struggling since it is hard to suppress our profoundly human and evolutionarily hard-wired impulses for connection. We, human beings, love to interact with people face to face, hanging and eating out with family and friends and now that we are bound to stay in one place for months, we still don't know when things will get back to normal. During this period, organisations must encourage employees to eat healthily, exercise regularly, limit the intake of information pertaining to the virus, and stay in touch with their family and friends. Teams should also actively be encouraged to take collective tea/coffee breaks while they work with each other online, just as they did during coffee and lunch breaks in the office. Organisations can also

arrange online yoga classes and free counselling sessions for their employees which can help them buffer the negative effects of social isolation and stress.

By following these basic approaches especially in startups and middle-size organisations, leaders and managers can help employees to manage their day to day challenges between onboarding to the separation process with ease.



Humans have always naturally craved to seek affiliation through families and tribes. With industrialization and globalization, the linkages to the natural tribes like family weakened over time but the tribal instinct still survived, which is why people are constantly looking to be part of new tribes to meet their evolving needs. The article attempts to explain how as organisations, we can try to leverage this pursuit to fit in to have a more engaged and productive workplace.



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Spiral of Pursuit

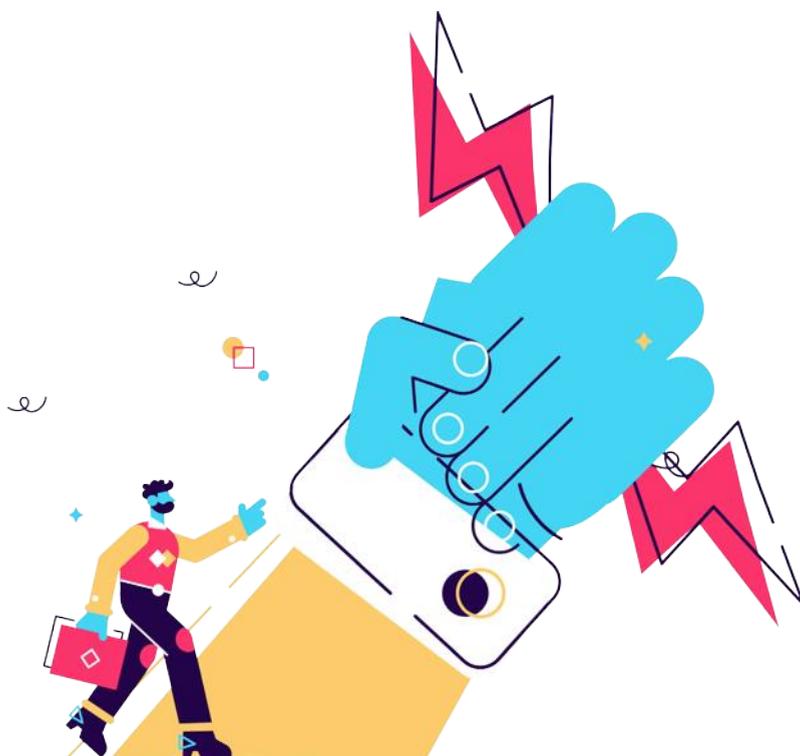
“We seem to be in an infinite spiral where we are always toiling for something and working on ourselves to reach the next milestone or to acquire the next shiny thing. The upside of it is the exponential development in the society which is resulting from this constant pursuit and the downside is the dissatisfaction, stress and the associated mental disorders arising from the constant struggle to fit-in.”

Survival of the fittest, the Darwinian Theory coined in the nineteenth century suggests that the species which develop to better compete for resources eventually survive.

A behaviour which has proved to be equally important for existence is 'Tribal instinct'. If we refer to the animal kingdom, monarchy of the jungle, the wild cats are endangered whilst animals like elephants, deers are thriving. Is it because the cat family lives alone, predated alone and consequently is preyed upon also alone!

We humans have lived in 'Tribes' from the beginning when we were leading just a nomadic life and were dependent on hunting for food. Initially, living in a tribal community, helped us meet the physiological and the safety needs. Gradually, we learned to grow and store food, dependence on nature reduced, commerce also developed and self-sufficiency kicked in. 'Security' became a state subject with the evolution of societies. With this, the tribes that provided us with food and security have outlived their utility however the tribal instinct has still survived.

With industrialization and globalization, the opportunities for education and jobs got created more in certain locations compared to others which resulted in migration of people. Following this the linkages to the natural tribes like family and neighbors have further weakened along with the coupling effect of digitalization. Therefore, humans are lonelier than ever and are longing to be part of new tribes at some level of consciousness.



Having met our basic and security needs, we are now looking for tribes to meet our love/belonging, self-esteem and actualization needs in line with Maslow's needs hierarchy pyramid. And, different people and different communities may be at a different level of the pyramid.

While migrating, our primary exposure to a tribe is at the workplace or colleges where we look for relationships and support and feel the need to be accepted as part of a micro tribe. The quest for fitting-in starts then and there.

It is scientifically proven that people prefer to socialize with people who are similar to them and has been coined as Affinity Bias. This results in the need to 'fit-in'. Initially, when people lived and died in the communities where they were born, the fit was natural.

However, with the migration and looking for new communities, we face constant pressure to fit-in the new world.

The same can manifest in many ways and pursuits. The need for getting rid of 'Mother tongue Influence' (MTI) is an example of disassociating ourselves from the old tribe to associate ourselves with the new tribe which could be at our workplace in metros or bigger cities.

In this phase of adjusting and adopting people unlearn and relearn the new norms of existence. The mere change in lifestyle like getting branded clothes, footwear and accessories and the constant endeavor to climb the brand ladder also comes from the need to fit in. The people aspire to move from local brands to national to global

and then to the luxury brands even if it burns one's pocket. As we rise up the Brand Ladder, the incremental value addition of the product becomes subjective, however the brands help people meet their self-esteem needs and also qualifies them for certain tribes. At the zenith, ignoring the stereotyping, the females look forward to own solitaires, Gucci or LV and similarly the males aspire for a BMW or a Rolex.

"It is scientifically proven that people prefer to socialise with people who are similar to them. The term has been coined as affinity bias, which refers to the tendency to warm up to people like ourselves. This results in the need to 'fit-in'."

Similarly, people are willing to spend exorbitant sums to own i-phone sometimes just to fulfill their self-esteem needs. The brands like Harley Davidson and Royal Enfield are classic examples that have leveraged the tribal instinct successfully with their brand clubs. People buy these brands to up their cool quotient for the world by being part of associated tribes.

Like for everything, we are moving to digital even to fulfill our social needs. The flourishing of apps like Tinder, Meet-up, Hinge indicates that we as human beings are more than ever looking for avenues to meet our 'love/belonging' needs.

Either we have moved out of our hometown or our friends have moved out of our hometown, thus the generations born in the late 70's and later are looking to establish those connections virtually with real people. This concerns the organisations at large because this refers to the population under 45 years of age which form the majority of the active workforce today in formal employment.

Alas! Even in order to meet their self-actualization needs, people are seeking for groups which meet their need to be a better version whether it is through art, happiness or any other group. The affinity bias plays a huge role in gaining entry to these tribes hence the constant striving comes into play.

We seem to be in an infinite spiral where we are always toiling for something and working on ourselves to reach the next milestone or to acquire the next shiny thing. The upside of it is the exponential development in the society which is resulting from this constant pursuit and the downside is the dissatisfaction, stress and the associated mental disorders arising from the constant struggle to fit-in. The spiral appears to be unending and so does the pursuit.

In the ideal world, we would like to emotionally operate in personal and professional silos however more often than not we don't succeed in the same. The inadvertent osmosis of emotions, both positive and negative takes place inevitably. As per a recent study employees on an average spend about 32% of their time on social media during working hours. Needless to say this results in the loss of productivity



as well as engagement at the workplace. This has been partially even recognized by most of the engagement models where they talk about the importance of having the best friend at work but is that enough?

What can organisations do to cater to the tribal instincts of its employees so as to reduce this decrease of productivity? Some of the organisations already are trying to leverage this tribal instinct by creating common lingo, symbols, vision and mission for its employees. In the process they are able to tap into the loyalties and energies of the employees to different extents. More organisations need to follow suit in spirit and not just in letter. However, this probably is not enough as observed through the amount of time being spent on social media.

We as human beings are evolving and so are our needs, expectations and aspirations. So organisations need to up their game. One of the approaches to steer the needs can be creation and encouragement of interest groups within the

organisations. The idea is age old but now more than ever the organisations need to implement them with more vigor and sincerity. If it requires a day off every fortnight or so to employees to connect and socialize in these groups, giving right nudges for employees to truly adopt these groups by choice, organisation should go for it full throttle. Once the initial inertia is overcome, the groups are likely to become free flowing and not bound by the space and time given by the organisations. However to give that initial thrust, organisations need to make it their strategic priority. The groups should be created and managed by the employees with minimal linkages to other organisation processes. Participative approach is the lever which can make this idea a successful initiative where the

onus of success is co-owned by both employees and the management. There can be numerous approaches nonetheless there is no hiding from the fact that the lines between

“We will not be able to take the employees out of the ‘spiral of pursuit’ by being proactive, however, by providing a safe space to pursue their interests and aspirations, we are more likely to leverage the tribal instinct better to have a more engaged and productive workplace.”

personal and professional spaces are blurring. When organisations expect employees to take work in their personal space the reverse is also bound to happen. So it may be best to take it head on rather than brush it under the carpet.

We will not be able to take the employees out of the ‘spiral of pursuit’ by being proactive but by providing a safe space to pursue their interests and aspirations, we are more likely to channelize the pursuit to have a more engaged and productive workplace.



Dear Recruiters, We Understand These 9 Challenges You Face Each Day! Here's How You Can Solve Them

RECRUITMENT



A prevalent misconception that most people have about the HR function is that there isn't much to do. They consolidate the responsibilities of an HR professional into one brief phrase - 'hiring and firing'. However, this is far from the truth.

73% of HR leaders say managing HR issues has become increasingly difficult in their role, with recruiting the right talent, a top challenge.

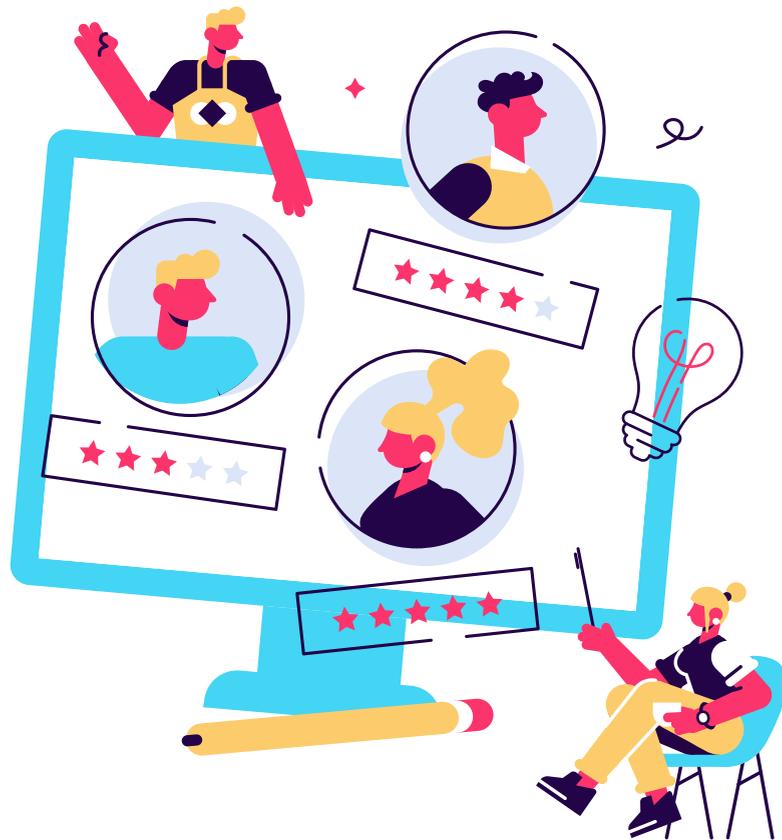
Recruiting is no easy job! When it comes to recruiting, there are no good experiences or bad experiences, just learning experiences. The field of recruitment is replete with challenges, so much so that as soon as you pass one tide, another one awaits you.

What Makes Recruitment Challenging?

Posting a job description and hoping that it will be filled automatically is now a thing of the past. Today, recruiters are expected to actively participate in the process, rather than just writing job descriptions.



Candidates enjoy the upper hand by selecting the organisation they want to work for. This means that you no longer get to pick the talent, but 'talent picks you'!



This is because of the ever-changing needs of the job market that ultimately puts talented candidates at the top of the equation. Candidates enjoy the upper hand by selecting the organisation they want to work for. This means that you no longer get to pick the talent, but 'talent picks you'!

This has created an atmosphere of intense competition. There is a growing need for recruiters to adopt innovative strategies in order to attract the right talent.

Top Challenges the HR Face in the Recruitment Process

Below are the top challenges all recruiters face today. After all, as recruiters, you need to buck up and "live in the now" to be able to take

up challenges and quickly resolve them:

1. Sourcing the Right Talent

Finding the right fit for the job in hand is no easy feat! Nevertheless, it certainly is rewarding when you manage to find the perfect match, isn't it?

In a healthy economy, employers are more than willing to expand and hire new talent. However, the challenge lies in finding enough quality candidates. For industries that require special skills and niche expertise, it becomes harder.

To top it, once you find the right candidate, they might not even be available on the job market when you finally decide to hire them. Delay in the hiring process can deter recruitment and make you

lose out on top talent if you don't keep them informed.

Solution: Build a strong employer brand. This will enable you to start building the demand for the top talent, instead of chasing them.

Another great solution is to devise an effective employee referral program. Word of mouth plays a huge role in finding the right fit for the job and what better than your own employees promoting your search.

2. Engaging Qualified Candidates

In a candidate-driven market, it is tougher to find the right talent. Once you find qualified candidates, it is even difficult to hold onto them. This is because the best candidates have multiple offers at once.

Not just active candidates but passive candidates also seem to have multiple offers since there is a growing demand for skilled professionals.

The problem as stated by the VP of Talent at Academia is, "If a passive candidate decides to chat with me, and they decide to interview, a very high percentage (nearly 100 per cent now) will also ping their friends who've been asking them to interview at their new startup, or will ping that other recruiter they like".

Solution: Make the whole process, right from the initial conversation to interviews, pleasant for the candidates. When a candidate has to choose from multiple offers, often the interview process is a strong deciding factor.



When scheduling multiple rounds of interviews, ensure to stay in touch with the candidate. Also, it helps a great deal to have an employee from senior leadership to have a brief conversation with the most sought-after candidate. This will evoke the trust and interest of the candidate in your job offer.

3. Hiring Managers Don't Cooperate

The search for the right candidate is a collaborative process. It starts with the hiring managers sharing the requirements of a particular role with the recruiter. At times hiring managers don't feel it's important to share information or feedback with the recruiters.

On the other hand, some are even unclear about what they want and thus fail to communicate.

In a study done by Bersin and Deloitte, they found a critical factor in a recruiter's performance is their relationship with the hiring manager.

Solution: The key to having a strong relationship with the hiring manager is communication and collaboration. Talk to the hiring manager before embarking on your search so that both parties are clear about the expectations. Also, seek feedback from the hiring manager and involve him/her in the process to make any readjustments.

4. Building a Strong Employer Brand

A resilient employer brand is important to attract quality candidates and engage them. Organisations that invest in employer branding are three times

more likely to make a quality hire.

However, this is a continuous and collective effort that requires you to put more effort. From ensuring to deliver a positive candidate experience to promoting your organisational culture on social media, building an employer brand is not a simple, one-time process.

Solution: Check online reviews—the good, the bad, and the ugly — and reply courteously. Build a strong social media presence, constantly publishing stories about your workplace and co-workers. Above all, be a good employer and it will automatically show.



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5. The Pressure to Fill Open Positions

Vacant positions cost money and delay operations. So, there is a nagging need for hiring teams to hire as fast as possible. Yet, depending on the type of role, hiring can take several months. From finding quality candidates to reaching a consensus on hiring a

candidate, you might struggle to fill the gap sooner.

Solution: Hiring should not be done hastily with all that pressure since a bad hire could cost double the money. Therefore, evaluate your hiring process and streamline the stages for an efficient and quick process.

Use an Applicant Tracking System to automate your recruitment process. Look at the right places to fill candidate pipelines.

At times, it is not necessary to wait for a position to be open. You can always screen for top quality talent and be ready. For recruiters, targeting passive candidates who already have a job is a great way to meet their needs and yours!

6. Stiff Competition in the Job Market

The number of job openings is greater than the number of active unemployed job-seekers. Even if you add in passive candidates who are not really seeking new roles, the demand is still high.

In addition, recruiters find themselves in a market in which they have to look for five different types of generations with different expectations. The millennials especially seek more involvement with a consumer-like recruiting experience.

As a result, recruiters need to know how to shift gears in order to be successful with candidates from each generation.

Solution: Understand your candidates and their different expectations so that you are able to create a win-win situation

for the employer and employee. For instance, millennials possess significantly different characteristics than baby boomers or Gen-X. .

In order to satiate the expectations of millennials, provide millennial-friendly benefits like flexible working hours, training and mentoring opportunities, etc.

7. Utilizing Data-Driven Recruitment

With Big Data and Analytics coming into play, recruiters struggle to sort through and harness data collected from multiple platforms. Yet, there is a growing need for recruiters to find and assess top talent using data from disparate systems. Collecting and processing data can be a cumbersome process. Hiring teams need an efficient way to track, compile, and organize data in order to decipher trends and insight.

Solution: HR professionals should work with data analytics experts to understand various data points and how to harness them. Using applications like Google Analytics or other analytical software can help to extract insightful reports and organize data efficiently.

This will not just aid the recruiting process but also help you understand how you can improve your hiring process and make more informed decisions.

8. Recruiting Fairly and Being Open to Diversity

Diversity – all companies desire it, but only a few understand how to get it right. Diversity hires are not something that can be accomplished within a set timeline.



At times, it is not necessary to wait for a position to be open. You can always screen for top quality talent and be ready. For recruiters, targeting passive candidates who already have a job is a great way to meet their needs and yours!

It takes years to achieve diversity in the workplace, but for that, you need to have an inclusion plan in place. Especially in the tech sector, recruiters find it difficult to get enough candidates from ethnic

minorities, women, and other backgrounds.

Solution: Recruiters should use targeting tactics in order to appeal to diverse sections. Find out where job seekers from certain groups are predominantly active. Relay messages through social media platforms that resonate with them. Testimonials from others in their group who have been working can often be effective for the same.

9. True Culture and Company Fit for Both the Company and the Candidate

Finding candidates who have a genuine interest to work for the company is very difficult. Of course, you will be able to find qualified candidates, but a rather elusive goal is to find candidates who actually “want” your specific job.

The candidate will be a better match if they have a genuine interest in

the culture, mission, and products or services of your company. A big challenge is to create a company culture that attracts and retains the best talent.

Solution: Create a culture and business that people are really excited to work for. This way, you will not lose people and word will spread about what a great workplace your company is.

You can try to reward people with higher pay and perks. But, ultimately people will leave the job if their manager is toxic or because the company’s culture isn’t acceptable.

The goal is to provide an authentic work environment that will help you not just attract talent but also retain them in the long term. Now, that’s what we call two goals in one shot!

The Best Practices to Overcome Common Recruitment Challenges

With the current focus on candidates, there is a major shift in the recruiting paradigm. Recruitment is not a defined box anymore - it shares space with marketing, branding, building a bright organisational culture and forging a connection with employees.

Here are some tips to incorporate some best practices into your recruitment strategy:

The Importance of Inbound Recruiting – Inbound recruiting is a strategy where you proactively and continually attract candidates with a mission to become their next employer.

- **Building the Best Candidate Experience** – It is the overall perception of your company's recruitment process. This is important because candidates who feel positive about your company are more likely to accept your offer, reapply in the future and refer others to your company.
- **Create a Talent Pool** – This refers to a database of top candidates including sourced candidates, candidates who have applied for a position, referred candidates and more. Maintaining such a database will come in handy for your current and future needs.
- **Social Recruiting** – Leverage the power of social media networks and websites to find, attract and hire talent. 49%



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of employers who use social media found improvement in candidate quality.

- **Use Recruitment Automation Tools** – Have a uniform automated system to streamline the various stages of the recruitment process, making it faster and more efficient. From

Applicant Tracking System to Recruitment Marketing Software invest in a good tool to lessen your burden.

- **Collaborative Hiring** – In order to improve the quality of new hires, all departments need to work together to find and hire the right talent. HR should tie-up with relevant departments and always be aligned with the overall business strategy to move the business in the right direction with the right people.

Super-Charge Your Recruitment Efforts

Challenges are inevitable in the field of recruitment. The important thing is to accept these challenges and face them head-on with intelligent solutions. The best way to meet these challenges is to break off the status quo, be creative and adapt to the changing trends in the market. Happy Recruiting!



Work-from-Home vs Work-from-Office: A Perspective Beyond COVID-19

REMOTE WORK



Every office goer, at some point in time, has complained about the great ordeal of commuting to and from office. Or the monotony of office cubicles, and the many unnecessary round-table meetings. These factors at times also result in lower employee productivity and a lack of motivation.

For employers, keeping their employees productive and motivated is paramount.

With the radical advancement of communication technology and the Internet boom, we have seen a rise in the work-from-home trend. This was a boon for many employees for whom travelling 5-6 days a week was a genuine ordeal. For employers, it also meant lower overheads.

However, despite the benefits, work from home didn't really gain a strong impetus.



A popular survey has found that nearly 65% of employees are more productive in their home office than in a traditional workplace. But we all know that one statistic cannot be the answer to all the questions and apprehensions.

But it all changed with the COVID-19 crisis. Even companies who never thought work-from-home was possible for them, had to make the shift.

The lockdowns that followed the pandemic saw offices, both big and small, shutting their doors, and it pushed a big part of the global as well as the Indian workforce to work from home.

Even when all of this ends, the idea of “social distancing” and the fear of another health hazard will continue to loom over the minds of individuals. Work-from-home is bound to remain a part of almost every organisation across the globe. But does this mean the work-from-office will be a thing of the past? Can work-from-home completely replace work-from-office?

Work-from-Home vs Work-from-Office: Evaluating the Arguments

The debate on the viability of the entire organisation or some of their employees working from home has been going on for decades. A popular survey has found that nearly 65% of employees are more productive in their home office than in a traditional workplace. But we all know that one statistic cannot be the answer to all the questions and apprehensions.

So, let's start by evaluating the arguments for and against this emerging phenomenon.

Commuting

The biggest relief for employees working from home is not having to undertake long, tedious commutes. According to a study, on average,

Indians spend 7% of their day commuting to the office. That equals roughly two hours on the road per day. That's quite a lot of time and a lot of boring traffic, right?

All that time can essentially be saved by telecommuting. Telecommuting simply means working remotely or from home by making full use of the internet, email, and phone.

While there are still some people who enjoy the travel and want a separation of home and office, there are others who think differently. People would rather prefer to spend more time with their family or indulge in their hobbies than spend it cursing the traffic.

So, given a choice, people would like to escape the rush hour commute and settle to working from the comfort of their homes.

Communication

According to the 2020 State of Business Communication Report, face-to-face communication is still the most preferred communication method among employees. And no, this doesn't include video conferencing.

This is something that one can get only in an office space. This also opens up immense opportunities for networking. Apart from business planning, human beings are social creatures and crave active conversations. Sharing a cup of coffee or interacting during lunchtime can go a long way in building lasting relationships.

Even for an employer, communicating with the employees

may be a cause of concern. Many believe that a Zoom call cannot be as effective as a round-table conference. A face-to-face chat can often be more clarifying than phone calls. A widely-accepted rule is that communication is only 7 percent verbal and 93 percent non-verbal. The non-verbal component was made up of body language (55 percent) and tone of voice (38 percent).

Communication still happens when you're working remotely, but its nature differs. Face-to-face communication translates to video calls. Short conversations turn into Slack messages. Emails...well, they never stop piling up.

Flexibility

Working from an office is about following a strict office timetable. The dreaded alarm clock will buzz at the same time every day, and even if one is behind schedule, they would go to superhuman lengths to be at their desks before anyone else notices the delay.

Well, that has changed with working from home. If a company is new to this, the chances are that they will stick to the 9-to-5 (or 9-to-6) schedule, but even then, employees will have the option to get an extra hour of sleep and will get to choose their own lunchtime. Moreover, employees can choose to work from anywhere - their bedroom, their living room, by the balcony, provided they get good internet connectivity in those places. The need for a well-groomed, formal look round-the-clock isn't a necessity anymore.

As more companies adopt a remote-first policy, working hours are likely to shift to fit the employee's

schedule. This means more flexibility and freedom on the part of the employees and for employers, lesser stress in managing them.

However, the downside to this is many employees struggle to disconnect when working from home. With the start-time being flexible and with the absence of a rigid routine, it can easily put employees off track and they might end up spending even more time in front of the computer.

Productivity

In a popular survey, 47% of employees said they strongly agree that flexible work arrangements "would or do allow me to be more productive" and 31% said they somewhat agree. This is commonly attributed to fewer interruptions, less stress from no commute, minimal office politics, and a personalised, quiet environment. Consistent research has also shown that remote workers usually log longer hours than their office-bound counterparts.

However, one great boon of office life is the productive vibes from the coworkers. It's always bustling with activity, and this can keep a person motivated to get through the heap of work. If an employee is prone to procrastination, then they are likely to have more opportunities to do so at home than at the office.

Financial Costs

A key benefit for organisations choosing to have their employees work from home is that it helps them cut down on some otherwise essential costs.

Going by popular opinion, nearly 77% of executives believe allowing employees to work remotely may

lead to lower operating costs. A company entirely based on working from home won't need to pay the office rent. Utility bills and other management costs can be significantly lowered as well. For employees, too, this is a win-win deal. They can save big on transport costs and the expenses of maintaining a formal wardrobe and are less likely to be tempted to go out and spend money on happy hours, or eating out frequently.

But working from home has its own unavoidable expenses. There is an initial investment in setting up the right workplace and cutting down these will only result in lower productivity. Typically, these expenses include desks, chairs, network routers, and monitors. There is also the monthly broadband expense, which some organisations may choose to bear but others will not.

Employee Onboarding & Training

'Out of sight, out of mind' is a true saying. Despite the list of work-from-home benefits, physical distance adds a few of its own challenges. For instance, interns and new employees get a lot more value when they are sitting side by side with their manager, mentor, and peers. It effectively eases the learning curve, something that's harder to achieve when they are all working from home.

Virtual onboarding can be a bit more complex. Logistic issues also show up while setting up the employee's workstation with a laptop, access keys, etc. Getting a new employee acquainted with the team also becomes more difficult.

Team Building & Work Culture

An organisation, be it of 20 employees or of 2000, is a collective entity. Team spirit and work culture are the two defining characteristics of every company. While not outright impossible, working remotely poses challenges to team building. If a company has two sections of employees, some of them based out of the office and others working from home, it might lead to involuntary discrimination. Knowledge barriers can creep in as there is a chance that someone won't get invited to a meeting, or someone will not receive important communication.

Simply speaking, brainstorming sessions with employees before a physical whiteboard is likely to be more productive than 'cyber whiteboarding' with people in remote locations. A collaborative work culture creates a sense of belonging for a team and boosts team spirit. It is also easier for employees to absorb the company culture if they are physically present at the location.

What does the Future Look Like?

Working from home is still a relatively new trend but a very promising one.

One study by Upwork estimates that by 2028, 73% of all departments will have remote workers.

But can this new trend overwrite the good, old office cubicles and round-table conferences? Well, that needs to be seen. The global pandemic will definitely have its implications. In a post-COVID

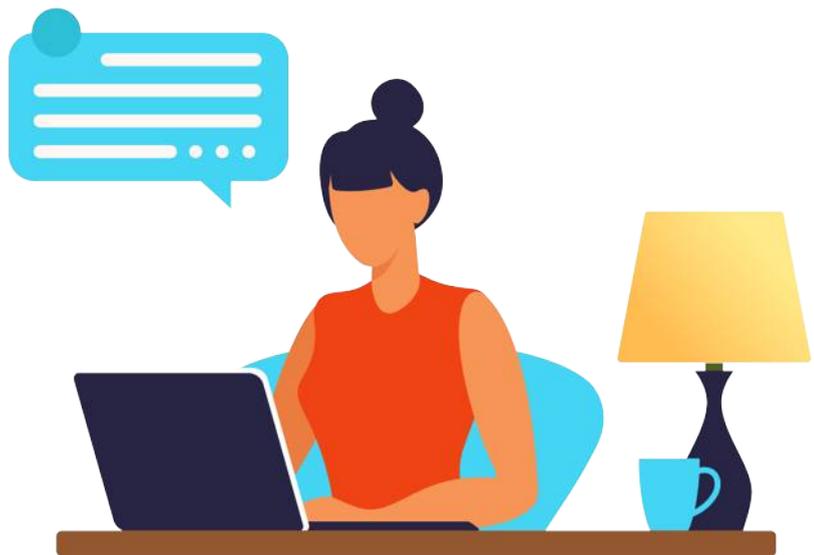
world, the dynamics of office culture have changed. Being forced into work-from-home due to the lockdowns has helped to bust some myths and cleared many scepticisms against remote working.

Remote working, with all its benefits, though, will not be effective for every company. Some jobs require people to be at the office or in the field. Also, it has been found that older workers or people who live in places with lousy broadband access can struggle to work remotely.

However, in India, telecommunication and accessibility to the internet are booming. This has contributed to the growth and spread of the work-from-home culture.

Statistics show that 69% of millennials would give up other work benefits for a more flexible working space. Another survey has found that companies that allow remote work have 25% lower employee turnover than those that don't.

So, even as the lockdowns ease and offices open their gates once again, the rules of social distancing are likely to stay for long. The employers have to now decide on how to best accommodate their employees, while also keeping the interests of the organisation in mind. A mix of work-from-home and work-from-office is something we expect to see become a new norm in the 'new normal' world.

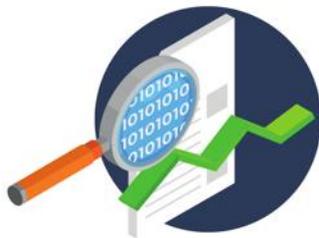


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