

# HumanCapital

REALISING BUSINESS STRATEGY THROUGH PEOPLE

Vol. 25 Issue No. 6 Nov 2021 ₹130

## THE



## TECH OUTLOOK

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**Navigating Your HR Tech  
Deployment Journey**

Vikas Dua

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**A Digital Mindset :  
Now More Than Ever**

Rahul Pinjarkar

**Technology: The Great  
Enabler Of Hybrid Work**

Swati Rustagi

---

**Leaders As  
Technology Teenagers**

Jacob Morgan

**Closing the Expectations  
Gap Through Technology**

Abhijit Bhaduri

---

**Education 4.0: May The  
Fourth Be With You!**

Nishath Usmani

# A Digital Mindset: Now More Than Ever

*With diminishing employee loyalties across companies and the need to hire more quality talent, leveraging technology in this space is the only way forward.*

BY **RAHUL PINJARKAR**



The past decade (2010-20) has witnessed the emergence of new-age, technology-backed organisations redefining traditional business models; from Flipkart and Snapdeal disrupting the retail landscape, OYO rooms disrupting the hotel businesses, Uber/Ola redefining mobility and WeWork redefining offices spaces. Looking back, these business models were unthinkable in the early 2000.

Throughout the decade, as new technologies gave birth to new business models democratising their products and services, traditional industries hopped on to imbibe those new technologies to help them become more effective and efficient. Adopting these technologies brought in a fresh perspective and an incremental

change in their thinking. While most organisations had set up ambitious targets to achieve digitisation goals by 2020, these targets have indeed been met, but with a twist.

2020 was a year that surprised us all, both rationally and emotionally. Like an uninvited guest, the COVID-19 Pandemic challenged all factions of the traditional economy. Businesses that grew without any blip were the ones that had already boarded the technology train far ahead of the others. COVID-19, as the chief digital officer for most organisations, challenged employees to think new. It was during this time that the perils of not being digitally savvy were being felt.

**“While most organisations had set up ambitious targets to achieve digitisation goals by 2020, these targets have indeed been met, but with a twist.”**

During the pandemic, the primary aim among organisations was to keep their employees safe as well as to get the business back on its feet. In the modern retail business in particular, with supply side constraints and customers not wanting to step out due to safety concerns, it became challenging on multiple fronts. With numerous



**AKANKSHA TRIPATHI**

AGM - Human Resources, Xapads Media

“A lot has changed with how HR works during the pandemic - onboarding, engagement, celebrations and mental health - all processes seems to have seen the impact of COVID-19. To be honest, without HR Tech, we might not have survived these unprecedented times. It was evident to see how tools like Zoom, HROne, Deskttime, or Social apps helped to bridge the gap that was forced upon all of us. We owe a big thanks to HR Tech for helping us go through this phase and now that they are an integral part. I am excited to see how it will further evolve to touch more lives in a good way.”

**SRICHARAN C**

Head - Human Resources, WazirX

“It is believed that HR technology has been essential to provide a smooth functioning of the organization for operating and surviving during COVID- 19 and after. HR technologies provide an understanding to the HR team about the level of productivity and motivation to the employees and how to make the necessary changes in order to boost the efficiency of the organisation and adapt to the changing scenarios of the world.”

challenges and trying to figure out digital modes of collaboration, many employees burnt the midnight oil to come up with unique solutions to sustain operations. Ranging from reputed organisations in South Mumbai to government schools in rural India, everyone was left with no option but to restart their operations, but with a different mindset.

To bring all this together, HR had to step up its game digitally for a host of services, some of which were new to the entire HR Fraternity. A range of technologies that had emerged over the past decade, and especially during the pandemic, came to the rescue of HR functions.

There are 4 major areas where we see technologies emerging to redefine HR services:-

- Employee Wellness
- Talent Attraction

- Talent Engagement
- Organisation Structure

## Employee Wellness

Today, it has been experienced that Employee Experience through Employee Wellness has literally transformed in practice and has gained paramount importance since the pandemic, and in my opinion, will continue to be an important pillar of HR. The pandemic has made us realise the importance of physical and mental wellness with remote teams and household duties such as parenting being done parallelly along with work. A range of service providers are now available to provide employees with continuous orientation on physical wellness including pre-loaded daily exercise schedules through their customised apps encouraging employees to practice a healthy lifestyle.

Today, HR functions are leveraging wellness app providers such as TATA 1mg, MediBuddy, Ekincare, etc. to nudge employees over a healthy lifestyle, and are thereby, creating awareness. These apps can also be used to gamify healthy behaviours amongst employees leading to an overall healthy

**BRILLIAN S. K.**

Senior Vice President &amp; Head Human Resources, Times Professional Learning

“The pandemic accentuated the need for organisations to build resilience, agility and responsiveness to address disruptions in work models. Moving towards a post-COVID economy, HR tech will be the key to enhancing efficiencies, facilitating a dynamic work culture, and aiding faster and strategic decision-making. In Industry 4.0, HR tech will be the critical link in ensuring wider adoption of automation and human-AI solutions.”

workplace. Similarly, apps have also emerged on the mental wellness front, making the offerings more accessible. Providers such as 1to1Help and InnerHour etc. offer customised programmes. Wellness helps to improve our overall employee experience. Confidential counselling services too are a part of the package offered by these providers which are most needed at

**SACHIN KHURANA**

Vice President &amp; Chief People Officer, Happiest Minds Technologies

“COVID-19 has impacted businesses and economies across the globe. The organisation's priorities saw a tremendous shift and the CHRO became the CEO ally and a go-to person. Fear, anxiety, business continuity, communication, onboarding all needed to be managed virtually. This has led to the biggest and fastest adaption of HR tech to support the people agenda for the companies. Now, we have strong use cases

in HR Tech in People areas like Doctor on Call, Tele-Counselling, Collaboration and communication platforms, virtual onboarding, employee engagement, hiring platforms etc. The complete employee life cycle is hugely enabled by technology.”

**ANIRBAN DAS**

Chief People Officer, Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan Attorneys

“The pandemic pushed organisations to shift to virtual mode almost overnight. Organisations may not have been prepared and equipped to handle this sudden change, thus making the management of workforce a challenging task. To ensure business continuity without compromising on people safety and productivity, it was essential for the organizations to rely on HR Tech heavily. In my opinion, HR has a significant role in using and leveraging digital technologies that will integrate employee learning and development, engagement and team building, as well as well-being.”

times of crisis. Counselling, which was also traditionally experienced in cushioned chairs in front of an expert, have transformed to provide the same service virtually, improving the convenience of availing mental health services for employees or their families.

## Talent Attraction

Talent Attraction is another big concern staring at HR nowadays. With attrition levels rising across all industries due to various reasons, attracting and selecting the right talent is critical now more than ever. Most employers are leveraging formal social media tools to brand their workplace and attract talent. LinkedIn, the prominent platform, can be harnessed to create advocacy

about one's organisation. Added to this, the talent landscape is also preparing for a shift in the coming decade.

With an increasing number of millennials waiting to enter the workforce, organisations need to anticipate the technological needs of this group to attract and retain them. A traditional talent acquisition policy may not cut the ice with the mobile-only generation which grew up on social media. Robust interviewing and assessment tools have become mainstream, and facilitate talent selection with high specificity. Virtual interviewing tools, robotic interviews and AI-based personality profiling which is generated basis candidate responses and game-based psychometric assessments are gaining popularity amongst new-age organisations. With diminishing employee loyalties across companies and the need to hire more quality talent, leveraging technology in this space is the only way forward.

Seeing blank names with only voices on a Microsoft Teams meeting has become common for almost a year. While this gave comfort to most employees to attend meetings in their casual home clothes, it also made it difficult for managers and

**FABIOLA MENDES E RODRIGUES**

Director & Head - Human Resources, The Bennet and Bernard Company

“The deployment of virtual and interactive digital technologies by companies was fundamentally born out of the pandemic and enabled work from home. While many companies had taken digital initiatives early on, the pandemic accelerated the process of their adoption. This technological intervention is critical as we are considering a four-day work week at office and 5/6th day from home, which will enhance work-life balance too. In all, the digital idiom has heightened work productivity. It is now critical to think out-of-the box for the future and alter our course to a new charter.”

HR teams to gauge the engagement levels of employees. If companies want to maintain a healthy level of engagement in the digital age, technology disruption is no longer a mysterious figure to be frightened of. It has evolved into a valuable friend in ensuring that employees are productive, happy, and healthy.

**SWETHA HARIKRISHNAN**

HR Director, HackerEarth

“When we talk of technology in hiring, we often focus on the benefits of a certain tool to the extent of forgetting about the individual operating those tools. Recruiters and hiring managers have their own unconscious biases, and even the best technology is no cure for these human fallacies. Technology has to be accompanied by a behavioural and mindset change, to obtain an effective, objective hiring process that prioritises skill; or else it will only serve to amplify prejudice.”



**SURINDER BHAGAT**

India People Leader, Sabre Corporation

“Enterprises that were relying on legacy systems are now making a beeline for HR stacks that are crisis-proof. With the introduction of remote and hybrid work policies, there is an increased demand for cloud, automation and AI solutions ranging from talent management to employee engagement. Adoption of such HR Tech solutions will help organisations accelerate digital transformation.”

***If companies want to maintain a healthy level of engagement in the digital age, technology disruption is no longer a mysterious figure to be frightened of.***

**AKASH SANGOLE**

Head - Human Resources and General Administration, Panasonic Life Solutions India

“Technology is omnipresent, it has revolutionized the modern workplace and will continue to bring more disruptions and transformation in the HR space. The past one and a half years have just worked as a catalyst in accelerating technology adoption. Globally HR Teams across the organisations are grappling with issues related to managing the global workforce, virtual teams, bonding among the employees, motivating employees, counselling, etc. As the workplace land space is transforming, challenges faced by HR have also become diverse and have impacted the way people work and interact. Hence it is imperative for HR to work with a well-balanced approach and remain simple, agile, innovative, most importantly “understand the need of employee and business.”

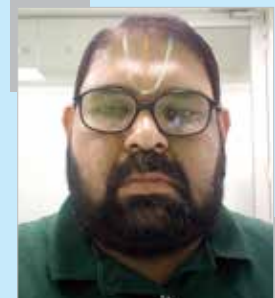
Of course, digital innovation does not automatically lead to increased engagement. It boosts the company’s engagement culture by offering the required communication and collaboration tools. They can only better comprehend the company’s strategy, performance measures, and people-based procedures if they have platforms to engage with one another. Technology may assist with anything from pre-onboarding through performance reviews to tenure recognition. The following are some examples of tech-driven engagement strategies:

- Using intranets and closed-circuit portals to centralise information, employees can pick and choose what information they wish to learn about the company
- To better comprehend company procedures, virtual instructions can be accessed via chosen devices
- Gamification to make knowledge acquisition easier and to keep colleagues informed about their own development
- Internal platforms to increase employee relationships and improve network linkages
- A platform for hosting workshops and sharing best practices
- Bite-sized learning videos/

learning modules that can be assessed through mobile devices / web to deliver the content when required and when the learner is ready to learn

Many organisations have had success using AI-enabled Chatbot that interacts with staff at certain internal locations. Employees can voice their dissatisfaction, uncertainties, and unedited input through the channel. If employees provide unfavorable feedback, the Chatbot continues the conversation to learn more about the fundamental reason. Post this, the HR team conducts an analysis and collaborates closely with line managers to address the issue.

I believe it is critical for HR

**NANA VIJAYARAGHAVAN**

HR Platform Lead, Fidelity Investments India

“The pandemic has accelerated the need for HR technology adoption beyond traditional workplace management and data analysis. HR organisations today need to embrace the hyper-personalisation of data and services, and the technologies that enable them. They should develop platforms and services that would enable them to manage diverse offerings, such as hybrid working, customised learning, personalized benefits, careers analytics, and remote counselling, and derive actionable employee insights from such programs that could drive the business forward.”

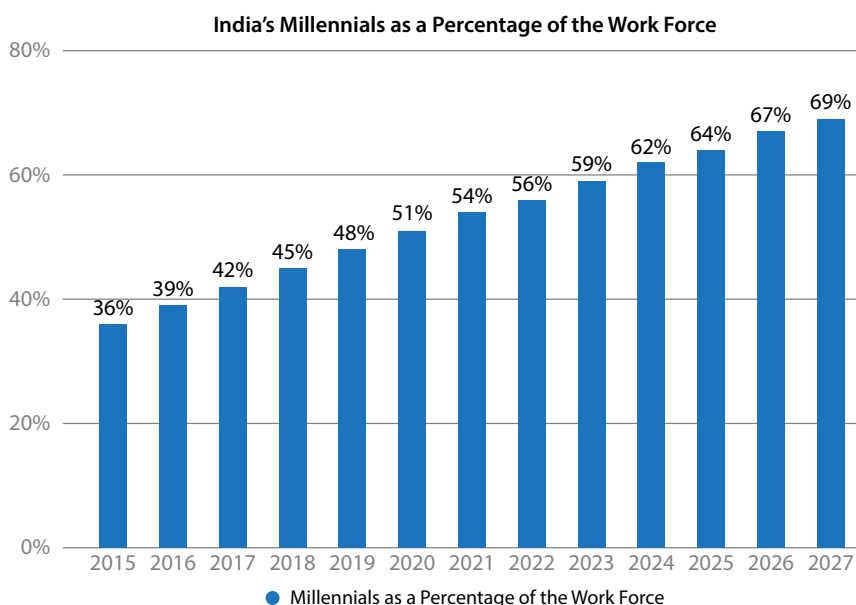
professionals to quickly grasp the behavioural power of modern technology, to comprehend how technology triggers, directs, and reinforces human behavior and to maximise the synergies between employee personality traits and organisational goals.

The last but the most important aspect technology is changing is the organisation structure. With the adoption of rapid communication technologies such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Microsoft Teams; communication has become swift and effective, reducing time and adding greater value. Communicating something as important as a vision or strategy can happen in a span of minutes, thanks to these technologies. On the other hand, there are technologies that have also digitised various aspects of work such as data reporting, dash-boarding, data analysis, etc.

With key aspects of jobs such as communication, engagement and reporting being digitised, this puts pressure on the hierarchical organisation structures as such structures go contrary to the speed of technology. More such technologies in the future will force large organisations to return to flat hierarchies to keep up with the pace of the market, demanding organisation structures to be simple and lean. Flatter organisations will have the advantage of being agile to transform swiftly in the face of uncertainty.

Besides the mentioned four areas, there are many other areas of HR that are increasingly seeing technological disruption. With rampant changes in the business


context and the need to be more digitally savvy, HR often finds themselves lagging on this agenda taking a reactive approach. The coming decade (2021-30) will be a true test for the HR function as the new generation entering the workplaces is a digital-first generation and will discard any organisation norm rooted in traditional thinking (see fig). With digital access growing rapidly across the country, we will soon find organisations moving to digital-first processes. HR should ensure that we not just onboard ourselves on this journey but navigate our organisations in the right course.



Source: morganstanley.com

Change Management is never easy and so is the case with digital change management. For starters, HR function needs to re-group at their drawing boards to answer four major questions facing them today.

- How can HR improve access to all HR services across the organization?
- How does my new talent landscape look like and what are their preferences?
- What kind of employee insights helps my organisation gain a competitive advantage in the industry we operate in?
- How can I make my organisation agile to the VUCA times we live in?

While the above list of questions is not exhaustive, it surely is a start. With a well laid out long-term plan on digital accompanied by careful implementation, moving to a digital-savvy culture is possible. As mentioned in my first paragraph, moving to a digital approach fundamentally requires a shift in mindset and the rest follows! 

#### About the Author

**Rahul Pinjarkar** is Chief Human Resource Officer & Ethics Counsellor for Trent Hypermarket. He has over 22 years of professional experience covering all aspects of HR functions across Pharmaceutical, Consumer Durables, Financial Services and Manufacturing industry. He has worked with Novartis, Philips, Saint-Gobain and Tata Group. Rahul has a Masters in Human Labour Studies from Mumbai University and is also a certified HRD Auditor and MBTI Accreditor.

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