

# LET'S TALK TALENT

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Edition



*Exclusive - Prabir Jha*

*Spotlight - Vibhash Naik*

## A CONNECTIONS INITIATIVE

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## **PRABIR JHA**

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Prabir Jha is the Founder & CEO at Prabir Jha People Advisory. He is a Human Resources strategist with diverse industry experience. Prabir Jha has been the CHRO of two New York Stock Exchange listed companies as also the CHRO of two Fortune 500 companies. He has helped all companies where he had been the CHRO to make it to the List of Top Ten Best Companies to Work For in India



## EXCLUSIVE PRABIR JHA

Founder & CEO  
PRABIR JHA PEOPLE ADVISORY

### How HR Can Become More Business Relevant

2020 was in many ways a potential turning point for HR. And, in all fairness, along with some other functions it rose to the occasion to ensure business continuity.

Yet the questions remain - has the function been able to get the agenda truly business relevant? Will it forfeit the chance it has secured in 2020? Would it still stay the transaction champion that the business thanks but do not hold an equal, proclamations in countless seminars and conferences notwithstanding? Likewise, when will HR stop its mundane and wasted conferences about begging for its rightful place at the table?

I think rather than bemoaning and whimpering, HR, led by the CHROs must reposition the function, and not wait for a more benign or strategic leader.

Let me share ten thoughts and provocations:

#### 1. Build Credibility:

HR must deliver its basics first, flawlessly. It still has many glitches, it is slow (this is as I experience it being an outsider now!) and more controlling than enabling in many places. Hence, the popular recall is that of an unavoidable evil than a supportive ally. I am not suggesting that HR should appease anyone, but must actually deliver its promise and move away from the classic "we will get back to you" mindset. Unless the basic experience is great, there is no way it has a ticket to the higher floors. HR just has to get the fundamentals right.

#### 2. Understand Your Business:

I don't suggest that HR has to be an accountant, a salesman or an operation expert, just like I don't expect someone else to be an HR expert.

But it must understand how the institution delivers its promise. How does it create value? Where is it leeching value? A strategic understanding of the value chain and its operating environment is of importance. The language of business, the insights where HR can accentuate value multiplication or attenuate value erosion is all that HR needs to master. Without that, its batting will be the classic fishing outside the off stump.

#### 3. Envision & Evangelize:

HR must shed its reputation of being a mere order taking function. A lot of the challenge is steeped in the olden world of personnel & administration. The challenge is that much of the leadership and stakeholders expect very little from HR. It needs the imagination and influence of HR led by its CHRO to help change that, to bring a cohesive agenda to the table. Move beyond incrementalism, set an aspiration that impacts, if not transforms, business, take the conversation to the board. If you don't do it, who else will? Develop a strong point of view and help build a wider ownership. Explaining this perspective and its value to stakeholders is your responsibility and stratagem.

#### 4. Courage and Resilience:

Organisations are political realities. Not everyone will see a new and progressive HR agenda as objectively as you would expect. Repositioning an HR mandate does disturb conventional political power structures. It will upset some people; it will get some knives out.

But it needs a strong and assured HR leadership to stay the course. It must demonstrate the quick gains. It must share credit with the line, as most of the HR experience, good or bad, lies there and not just within the HR function. Learn to lose a few skirmishes to win the larger war.

### 5. Change the Tone of the Conversation:

Not always is there a substantive gap in the quality of effort. However, the HR conversations are often lacking the connect with the business language. Just talking of employee turnover seems a very people issue but if you connect it to market share or top line growth, it gets business to sit up. The flow of conversation must start from the larger business agenda and flow into the HR one. Bereft of that, it seems like a floating island.

### 6. Data and Metrics:

Eventually, data speaks. Even if all HR data does not exist to begin with, start collecting it. Even if there are just correlations, start sharing them with the Board and the leadership. With time, the analytics will get sharper for cause-and-effect. But HR must play quantitative and qualitative trends back to show impact on business. It is a pity that historically leadership nor HR leaders expected HR to be measured. But to be business relevant you must. It will hold yourself and the line managers more accountable for their people decisions and practices

### 7. Manage Enterprise Risks:

Risks in enterprise are no longer only financial. Business risks are increasingly in the quality of talent, its flight, the succession pipeline,

the organisational culture that enables or disables business performance and the leadership fabric that can make or mar a firm's valuation. The list of HR risks is endless and even more difficult to quantify than many non-HR risks. HR must put this in the table firmly and squarely. Not addressed comprehensively and in time, there may not be much business left to salvage or opportunity left to run after.

### 8. Move from Doing to Getting It Done:

It is always tempting to seem busy. A lot of actual people leadership is however delivered by the various levels of line leadership. The way they behave and lead can inspire or despair the talent the firm has. HR, to enable greater business impact, must spend disproportionate portion of their energy to help these leaders get better. It must be their best friend but worst critic, their best internal coach. To earn that right HR must also be experts in their chosen fields. Only then can their advice be sought, and counsel treasured by the managers and leaders. There is a case for HR then to upskill itself significantly and focus on the strategic issues and outsource all possible transactions. In being lighter, it will actually get more business impacting.

### 9. Review the Composition of the HR function:

From my own personal experience, I can vouch for building greater plurality in HR. While we must build deeper expertise, we must also bring a wider perspective in HR. I have in my CXO life found great value in bringing in my team leaders from line. It gave me insights into how the shoe could be made to fit better on different feet.

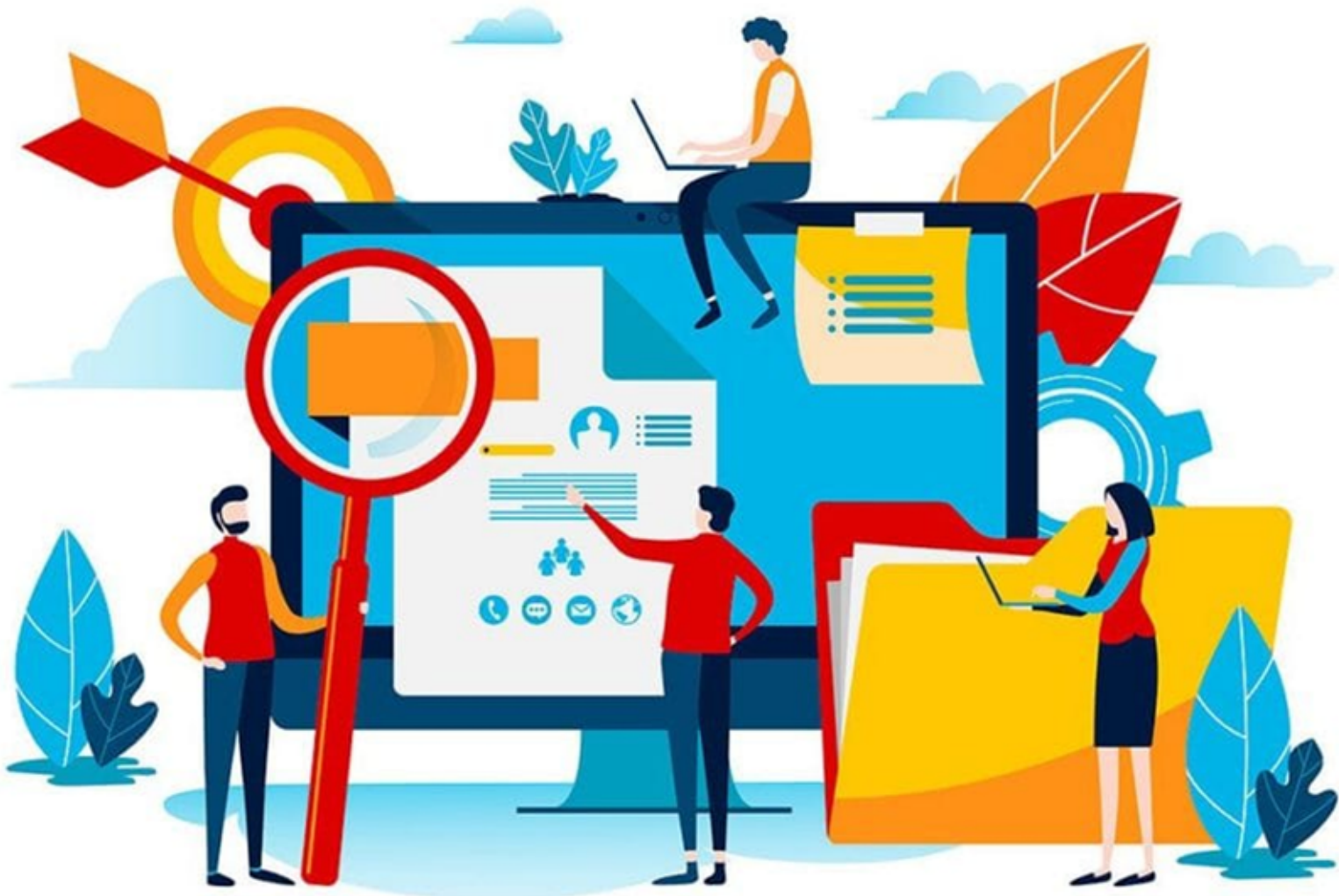


HR solutioning got smarter and the acceptance of the change agenda easier. It is another thing that all these scientists, sales leaders and operations experts chose to build successful HR careers thereon! Equally, there is great value in HR also doing stints in other functions as part of their career. It enhances appreciation of business for everyone.

### 10. Every Company Deserves the HR It Keeps:

If many HR teams are not seen as strong business enablers, it also has a lot to do with the company and its leadership. Not everyone wants a strong HR function. This is either out of ignorance of its strategic role or the political interest of having a more average but pliable pair of hands. They thus keep average HR leaders and teams who will just be their convenient hatchet men (or women!). To expect such teams to then impact business strategically is a misplaced wish. This practice of a convenient marriage is unfortunately very widespread and insecure CHROs just hang on, hire more pliable HR team members and the leaders then have no right to complain.

HR has indeed come a long way. But it must realise that most companies will fall short on their aspirations without their HR. There are no invitations to parties anymore. There is only assumption of responsibilities. In my own experience, if HR wants to move mountains it will. And it will get the sponsorship it needs for it. The question is do we want to get out of our mindsets and personal insecurities? No one can stop a person, a function or an agenda whose time has come.





## VIBHASH NAIK

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Vibhash Naik is Head - Human Resources, Learning & Development at HDFC Life. He is an experienced Human Resources and L&D professional with a demonstrated history of working in the Banking, Financial Services and Insurance industry. Vibhash is a strong human resources professional skilled in Talent Management, Compensation and Benefits, Talent Acquisition, Personnel Management, Employee Engagement, and Organizational Development.

## SPOTLIGHT

## VIBHASH NAIK

**Head - Human Resources Learning & Development  
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**1. Having worked in HR for so many years, what were some of the high impact roles, opportunities & challenges that helped you evolve into a great leader?**

- ◆ I will try to answer this question from the perspective of what has helped me evolve as a professional over the years. There is no one thing that shaped me as a professional. In my career spanning twenty-two years, I have had the experience of working with different organisations, on diverse set of assignments and roles. I also was privileged enough to work with some very inspirational leaders and talented team members and peers. All this has played an important role in my professional life. I will mention a few that I cherish the most!
- ◆ I have been part of at least four organisations at different times of my career, which were in their initial years of setting up operations. While a couple of them were start-ups and the entire business model was new, the others were large corporates that were starting their operations in India. The learning opportunities in such kind of start-up is tremendous. The whole atmosphere is like that of a family because everyone's new and have passionately come together to chase a dream. The thrill of starting from scratch and laying down the foundation of the organisation is immense. In this phase of the organisation, one is expected to think, strategize and execute all by themselves. One is expected to roll up your sleeves and do things themselves. One does not always have the luxury of having too many resources at their disposal and so have to learn to do anything and everything. It's fun when you see this dream finally coming true. Not all start-ups that I was a part of, succeeded though and these failures have also helped me change my perspective of things over the years. Working in this start-up like environment I think has played an important role in shaping me as a professional.
- ◆ I have also seen my current organisation transgress through its various phases of growth. From being a start-up, to being in its teens and then entering into adulthood - the experience of working in its various phases of growth is tremendous from a learning perspective. Organisations in some sense behave like humans during its various stages of growing up! The personality of the organisation evolves as it grows and the things that one needs to do to help nurture it and succeed need to change at every stage. One needs to shift gears and change the approach. I feel I am lucky to experience these different phases of evolution within the same organisation and also learn from my seniors, colleagues and team members at each stage.
- ◆ Lastly, COVID-19 and the challenges associated with it, and the need to be agile and quick in a fluid, ever-changing environment, will go down as one experience that I will never forget. While this posed a lot of challenges, it did throw up a lot of opportunities for one to grab and change the way we work too. This certainly is one such watershed moment in the life of most HR professionals like me.

## 2. With a percentage of employees coming back to work from office in some industries - how should HR balance between Business priorities and employee wellness?

Every organisation/business has its own set of responsibilities towards its stakeholders i.e Shareholders, Customers, Employees and Society. A good organisation tries to balance all. When one is hit with a crisis like the current pandemic, it's not very easy. Having said that, I think Corporate India managed this pretty well. If we were to assess the current pandemic, one saw three different phases - dealing with the unknown in the initial days, to being slightly more aware and prepared, to having signs of hope with the vaccine getting released.

One had to demonstrate empathy and resilience in the initial days, ensuring that the employee well-being was kept paramount. Other stakeholders understood that these were challenging times and were willing to compromise on their expectations from companies. Most of the stakeholders were rational and understood the environment in which one was operating. Now, the situation is a bit different. People are slightly more hopeful with the vaccine getting released. The sentiment has shifted from being pessimistic to being cautiously optimistic! The lockdown forced organisations to experiment with various work models to ensure continuity of business. Depending on the industry that one belonged to organisations adopted a relevant approach. With the worst-case scenario, hopefully behind us, these learnings are coming handy now. Thankfully the vaccination program has begun and things are inching back to normalcy.

With the unlockdown, companies are getting their employees back to work. There cannot be one fit all size approach to deal with this situation though. As mentioned earlier, every company, depending on the industry that they operate in have to select the right strategy.

There are some basics that one can follow though:

- **The first mantra is to avoid overcrowding at offices and call only the most critical functions/role holders at the work place.**
- **Considering this, HR may want to categorise and segregate jobs/roles based on the criticality of their need to be at the work place. There are many jobs, especially staff jobs, that may not require employees to be at the work place all the time. These employees can continue to operate from home, if their absence at the work place does not have a significant impact on the productivity.**
- **The other approach is to roster employees and have a maximum number that can operate at work at any given point of time.**
- **Mandatory use of masks/face shields, Maximum physical meeting attendance guidelines, visitor meeting guidelines, travel guidelines need to be put in place.**
- **All safety norms related to the physical office space also need to be adopted - Social distancing norms, regular sanitisation, temperature checks of employees before entry, touchless water dispensers/-door openers/sanitiser or similar procedures need to be adopted.**
- **Continuous communication on health and safety need to be followed.**
- **At the core of everything is to adopt a philosophy of trusting your employees! Focus on how you can get the work done, and improve productivity, rather than just focusing on getting people to work, when you think of a WFH/WFO policy!**

While all the above points relate to physical well-being, Mental well-being also is something that shouldn't be ignored. The sudden change in routine and the challenges of balancing work and home has taken a toll on the mental well-being of a lot of people.

HR employees need to think of Emotional and Mental well-being programmes to help deal with such stress and anxiety. They also need to introduce interventions that can help employees maintain their mental balance. This is something that takes a back seat and often ignored, but is something that is becoming more and more important in these current VUCA world.

### 3. How do you think performance management and goal settings has evolved during COVID 19?

"Uncertainty is the only certainty there is, and knowing how to live with insecurity is the only security"- This probably sounds like a cliché now, but is most likely going to be our new normal. If organisations have to succeed in this environment they will have to quickly figure out how they can drive performance and recognition in this new environment. The balancing act of driving performance while ensuring employee safety in this pandemic, or for that matter in this fluid environment of uncertainty, has become a bit of a challenge.

The traditional performance management process is today under the scanner. It's a pretty linear process that involves - Goal Setting - Review - Feedback - Reward and recognition is not necessarily being very effective.

Setting annual goals/targets is not very easy, especially when one doesn't know how the environment will play out. There have been issues delivering what is expected, in this dynamic environment of uncertainty. Also, with teams working remotely there have be challenges for manager to witness performance first hand and assess input and output granularity and provide sharp feedback to team members. So, in summary, the traditional performance

management system needs a review and a bit of a tweak.

Setting SMART goals is still relevant but one needs to enable flexible goal setting. Flexi goal setting with multiple short review cycles, and opportunities being provided for employees to adjust their goals and identify ways they can upskill to remain relevant in the new work environment, is the need of the hour. Also, one may be needed to recognise contribution and not just performance in an extremely uncertain environment. Managers need to discuss work plans, may be weekly or monthly, and help employees view work in more manageable chunks.

### 4. What is your view on changing landscape of HR in future with digitisation as a focus area?

There are various trends that are emerging and HR has to adopt to these changing times. While digitisation is something that one has been speaking for a while now, it has only got accelerated in the recent times. I am mentioning below a few important trends (beyond just digitisation) and the consequent changes expected out of an HR professional, that are likely to emerge in the near future.

Shift in the mind-set is required for a HR professional when one thinks of Digitisation - Don't just think of automation and digitisation of processes for operational excellence and for their administrative ease, but think it from the perspective of improving employee experience. **Improving employee experience** is going to be very critical and the organisations that focus on this will have an edge!

**Employee Well-being - Physical, Mental and Financial wellbeing** has not been so important ever! One cannot emphasise how important this is likely to be in the years to come.

This will have a significant impact on employee productivity and HR will have to take centre stage in bringing this to fore and not relegate it somewhere in the background.

**Unlearn-Learn-Relearn** is becoming more and more important. Employees need to shed old beliefs and pick up new skills and gain knowledge to stay relevant for the future. HR professionals have to think of a multitude of elements in learning the eco system to improve the learning agility of their employees and help them adapt and thrive in this volatile, fast changing environment.

**The concept of time and space in work contracts is being challenged.** The new work environment is likely to be offer flexibility of all kinds. Gig economy is likely to expand and talent will be utilised for their skills and not be necessarily tied to the organisation. HR professionals have to shed their deep rooted beliefs of how a work place and a work contract looks like and be agile enough to adopt this change.

**Diversity and Inclusion at work place** is something that has been discussed for a while now. While a few progressive organisations have taken strides in this direction, I think the faster an HR professional takes steps in this direction, better will it be for the organisations.

With the new normal, it critical for HR to **prepare the Leaders/Managers** in an organisation to succeed, especially in an environment where teams work remotely. Authority based on the skills you bring to the table may be more critical, authority based on seniority of an employee may cease to exist and cross functional teams may be a norm.

## **5. Your success mantra and advice to future HR leaders?**

There is no one silver bullet that helps one succeed. Different things, for different context and different times. There is no set formula or a template for success. So, the first mantra is don't just copy something that has worked for someone else. Get inspired by these ideas, but adopt them only if it suits your purpose.

Invariably one can fall in the trap of getting carried away by the HR purist mind-set and forget the business objective. So, one mantra that has certainly helped me and I would prescribe to all HR professional is - understand the larger objective and the purpose of your organisation. Understand your business model. Adopt a talent/people strategy that is aligned to the business and/or the larger objective, rather than just doing something because it sounds good!

And finally Unlearn- Learn- relearn. No idea or piece of knowledge is cast in stone. So unlearning and relearning is equally important!

Wish you all a very healthy, safe and fulfilling new year!



## SAKSHI ARORA

**Head of Talent Acquisition & HR Business Partner  
Clix Capital**

Sakshi is a HR Professional offering 12yrs of rich experience in the entire gamut of Human Resource Management and several high impact projects in BFSI sector. She brings in Strategic Thinking and Thought Leadership with multifarious experience in Talent Acquisition, HR Business Partnering, Coaching, Resource Planning, Organization Development, Talent Management, Performance Management, Diversity & Inclusion and Employee Relations with Leading Global Banks and a Start-up. She has worked with companies like Bank of America, Deutsche Bank and currently working with Clix Capital Pvt. Ltd. (Erstwhile known as GE Capital) as Head of Talent Acquisition and HR Business Partner



Point of view

**SAKSHI ARORA**

**Head of Talent Acquisition & HR Business Partner  
Clix Capital**

**Virtual Recruitment - Is this the new normal?**

As we hopefully reach the end of COVID-19 crisis, the dust is starting to settle and everyone has now accepted remote working and the processes that comes along with it as the 'new normal'.

Recent months have been fast-paced and have required an enormous shift for most companies in respect to technological, practical and cultural shift. Organizations had no choice but to adapt to the hyper transformation to digital processes both on the business as well as Human Resources front. Hence, it was imperative for organizations to realign their talent acquisition strategy.

The change may be uncomfortable, but talent acquisition professionals are up for the task. In person interviews have moved to virtual and video interviews. This not only helps to speed up time-to-hire, but also helps remove unwanted bias during interviews. Recruitment professionals can assess gestures, expressions, engagement and body language. Virtual recruitment not only speeds up the process but it has open doors for a wider talent pool with companies shifting to remote working concept.

For organizations looking to hire, reliable technology is already available to help. Virtual recruitment is a go-to method to keep hiring processes moving and ensuring high quality resources. Organisations have realised that waiting for an in-person interview may only lead to losing candidates to a competitor.

While reliable technology is a key ingredient, recruitment professionals new to video interviewing platforms should keep best practices in mind, and test the software before their first meeting with a potential employee. Today's Gen Z are smart and appreciate tech savvy organizations. Recent data suggests they will not even apply for a job with an organization if they think its recruitment methods are outdated.

Hence organisations looking for top talent, even during this pandemic, will need to ensure a good employer brand and an employee value proposition that not only gives quality work, flexibility and employee wellbeing but also has cutting edge technology.

While some roles might not require in-person meetings or interviews, there are others that mandate the same. How are employers planning for this mix in the hiring model? Additionally, are employers equipped with the right technology to enable virtual hiring in the long-term? Will technology enable recruiters to deliver the experience expected of them?

All said and done, as companies move forward amid the COVID-19 crisis, the digital recruitment process is what every employer needs to master. Because even after this crisis subsides, most people are expecting to carry over most of these virtual practices to the “post-COVID-19 normal”.

Working from home is here for a long haul. In the new normal and in the era of virtual recruitments, companies need to ensure their recruitment process is completely digital, easy and simple.

One thing that is certain in post COVID-19 is uncertainty. It is important to be resilient and adaptable to balance short term and long term priorities.

History shows that resilient organizations recover quickly in changing market conditions and fast-moving disruptions. Updating your Talent Acquisition strategy to be more resilient is key for optimizing a bounce back. One needs to adapt to the remote working recruitments to take advantage of the opportunities available.

Technology and pandemic have solved a wide range of tasks and has a no. of advantages when it comes to recruitment. Pandemic has pushed organizations to realign their talent acquisition strategy. There are so many new solutions and tools available in the new virtual era. The traditional hiring has taken a backseat with the new ways of virtual recruitment and the advantages it offers.

Assessing remote capabilities & experience is yet another important criterion. A dedicated workspace and internet access are essential for candidates who will be working remotely. Does the candidate communicate effectively via video? Did real-life interruptions occur during the interview? Do they possess the drive and discipline needed to work alone and unsupervised?

Virtual recruitment not only makes it possible to keep the hiring pipeline moving, but it also upgrades the candidate experience and boosts your employer brand. Many companies have quickly shifted and adapted to a remote workforce and are discovering the benefits of this approach. Namely, their talent pools have expanded exponentially.

Once upon a time (a few months ago!), the majority of search parameters for talent were regional, or national at most. Today, because of the prevalence of virtual work models, companies can post positions that are location-agnostic, literally opening up a new world of qualified applicants.

With the technology available today, including cloud platforms, AI-powered analytics and automation, virtual recruitment may become the new normal and remain the preferred approach, even when many of us return to the office.





## VIKRAM KHANNA

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Vikram Khanna, Group Head Talent Management & OD- Magma Fincorp, is also the BHR Head for Magma Housing Finance and SME Business. He has 20 years of HR experience across geographies and industries like Procurement Consulting, Telecommunications, Retail Supply Chain, Retail Micro finance, Investment Banking sector.

## Special Coverage

## VIKRAM KHANNA

Group Head Talent Management, OD & HR Head  
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## The Leadership Dialogue

Companies with flat structures, reward employees for doing more with whatever resources or funds are available. As a result, employees in a leadership role, focus more on doing and less on leading. The plot thickens when organizations base their promotion policy only on the technical/sales know how and performance of the employees. They miss the most important ingredient, "Leadership Potential" thereby failing to provide the requisite skills for these promoted employees to do their jobs better in their new role as a leader rather than an executer. Leadership is more about managing your peers and superiors and less about the people reporting to you. Building relationships, within or outside the organization, is the key. Effective and meaningful conversations provide the tools to perform the balancing act.

**'Leadership that communicates effectively gets noticed'**

Leading is not everyone's cup of tea, some of us are comfortable working alone. Irrespective of whether one is a leader or an individual contributor, one always has layers of ideas and experience that can be leveraged. It depends on how one chooses to communicate these to his/her surroundings.

**'Effective Dialogue is one of the key tools of Leadership'**

Leadership that makes a difference, knows that effective communication and dialogue can bring them larger gains eventually. It is the art of effective oration and motivation that makes legions follow them. Dialogue that makes people recognize issues, fetches ideas that can be turned into sustainable solutions, creates accountability and fosters effective decision-making. Perspective shift is the pivot on which the delicate balance of leadership thrives. When one starts leading instead of managing, his/her mind needs to start thinking like a leader. With each increasing stripe on one's shoulder, the need to have true, sincere and committed followers becomes imperative as the stakes rise each time and the consequences of failing become graver.

**The need for an effective leadership dialogue:**

When leaders invest their time in a dialogue across organizational hierarchies, it helps in avoiding wrong decisions and saves the time and energy required to mend or deal with the ill effects of those decisions.

It improves trust within teams, thus facilitating flow of information and facts, which results in accurate and timely decisions. When a leader does not often indulge in a dialogue with his team, he is at a risk of taking critical decisions based on assumptions, which may cost him dearly in times of business uncertainties. The dialogue though should be objective, positive and incremental for the team's alignment to their goals. Leaders need to learn which battles to fight and which to let go.

An "Effective Leadership Dialogue" should involve:

- Giving clarity and setting right expectations.
- Informing the purpose and vision.
- Being cognizant of emotions of each stakeholder, either internal or external.
- Being agile to the changing business landscape - always be on the lookout for new cheese.
- Developing a bond, a connection to bring people in synchrony and harmony.

### **Key points to follow for the effective leadership dialogue – creating a foundation**

- Make sure that everyone understands and agrees to your strategy, vision and the acceptable behaviour in line with the strategy.
- Ensure there is periodic alignment check to see if each team member is sailing on course or is a little off course. Give nudges, a positive pat or constructive correcting tone, based on the merit of actions of the team member.
- Remove barriers if any, situational, organizational or self-made. Encourage team members to ask for help if need be, collective problem-solving promotes camaraderie.
- Ask where you can help to live up to that commitment. Team members test your promises and build their trust on the count of fulfilled ones.
- Leadership dialogues are not meant to blame anyone; they are made to deduce accountability and promote corrective behaviours.

### **The Dialogue Glossary – use the appropriate one**

**1. The Relationship and Trust Dialogue** – We tend to build a professional relationship based on an action. Managers tend to focus more on transactions but as leaders the focus needs to be on the bigger picture. For one to be effective as a leader, one needs to foster these relationships internally as well as externally. Building these strategic alliances often provides an edge to a leader. Building these relationships need careful nurturing and a farmer's patience to cultivate a rewarding crop of trusted followers. Texting and emails seldom help in these areas. Physical presence and phone calls often succeed in the endeavours to foster trust in other people. Showing respect by listening and acknowledging are vital traits of a leader who garners reverence and audience in return. He values diverse views as they might show him a blind spot, but one needs to be careful and keep an open mind. Keep your mood in check, do not let words of others control your emotions and reactions.

**2. The Developmental Dialogue**— A leader's success is often decided by the quality of his followers. The sharper they are, the more penetrating is the effect. As the leaders grow in their careers, it is equally important that they enable their followers to grow with them. Developing the team, must be one of the key areas for the leaders to concentrate. The advantages of spending time with the team and doing a developmental dialogue helps the leaders gain loyalty. For a leader to rise higher, there should be someone to take his position. Leaders let their teams find what they are better at and help them be the best in that. They budget substantial time for career path discussions, do not hesitate to criticize but they do it constructively. Leaders find them pertinent coaches and facilitate the team's coaching journey.

**3. The Decision-Making Dialogue** – We rarely have enough time, information and the right conditions to make a decision in an ideal context. Leaders make better decisions when they can draw on multiple perspectives and gain as much data as possible to aid their judgment. Leaders tend to set up talks to gather data, determine their options and gain broad buy-ins for decisions. They remain open to the idea of building consensus around a compromise. Instead of concentrating on problems, they set the tone of the conversation by asking probing questions that open up possibilities and empower everyone in the group.

**4. The Action Dialogue** – Alignment of team members seldom guarantees action. The leaders need to ensure they keep their team members co-opted and committed to action. They need to keep the team ready to sniff any change of circumstance and adapt to it accordingly on the fly. While acting, leaders must encourage teams to take decisions based on facts and not feedback, assumptions can be based on biases and hence detrimental to one's cause.

**5. The Reflection Dialogue** – This is a very effective way of learning facilitation, since it involves reflections and feedback, two very useful techniques to enable human learning. If done correctly, with care and with an intention to genuinely help a team member, it often yields the desired change in the team member's behaviour. However, if this is used to reprimand someone with a blaming tone or has some hidden motive then it breaks the trust, thereby hurting the relationship. Having a regular dialogue with your teams is a lengthy process, it takes a lot of time and grit, but it is the glue that creates the emotional bonding between co-workers. These dialogues unearth ideas, foster commitments and ensure action. Dialogues and conversations help you create wider reach internally and externally so that you can align, persuade and achieve the desired goals and display the leadership competencies that matter, well arguably of course.



## ABHIK SINHA

**Senior Vice President & Head Business HR (Asset Finance)  
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Abhik is a passionate HR leader with more than 16 years of experience in handling HR in BFSI sector. Having worked with some of the large Banks and NBFCs, he has multidimensional exposure in handling large Business HR and COE teams. He has his expertise in leadership hiring, talent management, compensation and benefits, HR operations, Policy formulation and HR Business Partnering. He strongly believes that human capital is the most important asset for any organization and plays a pivotal role in its success.

Abhik is a computer engineer with a MBA in HR from IBS, Hyderabad. He is currently working with Equitas Small Finance Bank as Senior Vice President and Head Business HR for Assets Business.

## Point of view

# ABHIK SINHA

Senior Vice President & Head Business HR (Asset Finance)  
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## Digital transformation of HR

The HR function has always played an important part in an organisation's working and keeping it efficient is one of the function's primary objectives. The growing importance of the HR function as a strategic arm of business has made digital transformation even more important for HR leaders.

HR digitisation is the transformation in the way HR functions, using technology to guide all areas of HR: Talent Acquisition, Talent Management, payroll, benefits, performance management, learning and development, rewards and recognition.

### The goal of digital transformation in HR may be manifold:

- To automate processes and reduce the time spent on repetitive tasks.
- To enhance employee experience.
- To use the freed-up time to strategize and ultimately benefit the business bottom line.

The digital transformation changes the way the HR team works and how it interacts with the employees. At the same time, it changes the HR team itself. You will need new skills and competencies that match the digital revolution. Another aspect which requires a major relook in the digital era is how you innovatively use technology as cutting edge for attracting the best candidates from the market and enhancing the candidate experience.

This change may require hiring new people with desired competency in the HR Department or training the current staff. One of the biggest challenges is having the ability to lead digital projects, understand their features, and avoid their drawbacks. While the returns would be high in the longer run, digital transformation needs a substantial investment from management both time as well as budget.

However, digital transformation is just the first step towards a digital way of life in the **HR Department**. Technology is here to help you. Whether you want a digital HR transformation by choice or forced by the business environment, remember that digitalization doesn't have to be a rough process. Establish your goals and follow them step by step. Engage the entire team and transform the process into a connecting and growing experience.

But the sole application of new technologies is not what makes HR digital, however. As **Jeff Mike, from Bersin** puts it: "Digital HR should also align culture, talent, structure, and processes to balance efficiency and innovation, as well as to sustain a measurable impact on the greater organization as it continuously transforms."



## **NAGA SIDDHARTH**

**Head - People and Culture  
Supr Daily**

Naga Siddhartha has handled Chief HR Officer / Head HR roles across multiple organizations and industries from 2011 onwards. He has built organizations from x to 2x and 10x in short bursts. He also built out HR processes to support such growth. Naga is known for his business centric HR solutions that have resulted in clear business impact.



## Point of View

# NAGA SIDDHARTH

Head - People and Culture  
Supr Daily

## HR Trends in 2021 and beyond

Hindsight, Insight and Foresight are the three phases of prediction in an analytics world. In the real world, foresight is often the observation of qualitative learnings.

2020 was a year when the world took a pause from self-imposed boundaries and assumed "should's". What was possible as remote working, but denied due to personal prejudices and deeper motivational need of control in those who held authority, came crashing down. Much like in any behavioural change, no implication, no change!

It was also a year when corporations learnt to care for employees, rather than trying to cure them. This is one trend that will slowly, but surely take off in the future. The growth trajectory would be exponential, while the timelines might be sequential. This would also be the need of working with the new generation of employees. Understanding their world would be key to the success creation of the corporations of today. Quite of a few of them tend to experience constant nervous energy and a calming reassuring environs of the workplace would help them be productive at their best.

Workplace counselling using clinical psychologists would be the differentiator between employers and great employers. The route to workplace performance is to explore values, beliefs and paradigms. Having workplace counsellors would help the next generation employees open up to their own feelings in the present moment and rewire themselves for wholesome efficacy.

The "T" shaped careers would be those to build for individual employees. Spoken about in the Harvard Business Review in the 2000s, this would hold job potential for the future. Individuals who have one area of deep expertise and a fairly good exposure to areas like people management would be sought. Those with pure horizontal capabilities would need to find expertise that would keep them employable.

Self-learning and development would hold key. Organizations spending on upskilling individuals is going to see fewer and fewer budgets. Startups in this space would do well to scale.

Counter intuitively, the traditional time office will make its appearance in different guises in this year. Combined with business productivity pressure and need to ensure work delivery with flexi work hours, time office avatars will get implemented.

The new codes around employment expected in India are likely to see margins getting readjusted and hence, lesser hiring and open positions. Propensity to move more towards products instead of manpower is just going to get speeded up with this move of the codes getting implemented. Alternately, if individual contracts-based employment were to somehow become more of a norm, along with fixed term employment, the combination would help drive up employment drastically across industry.

5% to 10% of the credentialled coaches present today would continue to deliver greater impact and long-lasting positive difference to individuals. Their contribution to workplace success would be recognized at the board level in the months to come.

HRIS companies would need to ramp up the capabilities of their systems. Those who provide working applications that are fairly well customizable by the users, along with having a per user cost between Rs. 30-40 would find themselves in a winner-takes-all market. Traditional and recent behemoths in the making would find themselves in an advantageous position if they focus on customer needs now.

Staffing functions would need to become more perceptive of the hiring manager needs rather than focus purely on sourcing. Some level of human process work would help them to become much more effective in their roles.

There would emerge two clear sets of employers. Those who are in it for the short term and valuation and those in the long term game. The contrast would become clearer and it is but anyone's guess who will become the preferred employers!

Happy 2021! Make it the best till now!



## CONGRATULATIONS!

**Vikram Tandon** joined as the Group Chief Human Resources Officer at the Adani Group, one of India's largest and fastest growing conglomerates.

Before taking up this current role at Adani, he was the Head of Human Resources at HSBC, India, prior to which I was the Regional Human Resources Director, Mediterranean, Middle East & South Asia Region for the American International Group (AIG).

Vikram Tandon has an MBA in Human Resources Management from XLRI, Jamshedpur, India and is deeply interested in Business strategy, HR consulting, dealing with complex commercial issues and being part of a digital future.



**Chitbhanu Nagri** joined as Senior Vice President People Operations at Razorpay.

Prior to this he was Director Human Resources at Moonfrog Labs. Mr. Nagri has experience in leading Human Resources in various technology organisations from large MNCs to young fast growing start ups.

His other areas of interest include: psychology, investing (equity markets)

& leadership. At a personal level - he is a complete foodie, enjoys escapades into forests and loves driving.

Chitbhanu Nagri is an alumni of The Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

**Paresh Jain** has joined as the People Leader at PwC Acceleration Center Kolkata. In Paresh's new role he would be leading and driving the overall people agenda at the Acceleration Center.

Paresh is an outcome driven HR leader with ~17 years of rich industry experience in reputed organizations like General Electric and Accenture. Paresh's expertise lies in leadership coaching, change management, talent management and leading large teams with passion and purpose.

Paresh Jain is an MBA from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune.



## CONGRATULATIONS!



**Dr. Shashank Teotia** joined as the Group Head Human Resources at Paras Healthcare Pvt. Ltd. Dr Shashank will aim to maximise the value of the organisation's human resource department and bring in new ideas and innovations to ensure efficient business operation.

Prior to this he was the Chief Human Resources Officer at LEAD school. Dr, Teotia has over 16 years of experience in FMCG, Life Insurance, e-commerce, Consulting and Food Retail industry.

A strong advocate of 'Learn While You Earn', he has been instrumental

in a number of interventions which has added huge value for a person to move up the value chain while continuing to pursue one's career.

Dr. Shashank Teotia is a PhD from Faculty of Management Studies, Delhi

**Amit Malik** has been appointed as CEO and MD, Aviva India.

Amit joined the Aviva Team in December 2012, as People Director, and over the years expanded his portfolio to lead critical functions such as Operations and Customer Service. He has had an experience of over 22 years in leadership roles across organizations.

Amit Malik has a Bachelor of Engineering degree and an MBA from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune. He is an Alumnus of School of Industrial and Labour Relations, Cornell University and Said Business School, Oxford University





# Team Talent



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