

WORKPLACE APAC **2021**

CHRO STUDY

Accelerating Recovery And Growth

WORKPLACE APAC 2021

Workplace APAC 2021 is one of the largest collaborative study by SHRM and Oracle in the APAC region. The study focuses on uncovering emerging trends in technology and preparedness of organizations coming back to work. Workplace APAC 2021 has more than 55 marquee organizations from **Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and India** and focuses on some of the most pressing issues faced by organizations today and their readiness to go back to a hybrid place of work. A few of the themes covered by the study are growth acceleration priorities, new ways of working and related challenges, technology investment avenues and outlook in the post-pandemic scenario.

The last 18 months have been tough for organizations and have posed unique challenges on business continuity, remote working, safety, security and health & wellbeing of employees forcing them to innovate and relook at the traditional and tested methods of management and operations. During the Workplace APAC 2021 study, we have come across novel ways organizations have been dealing with the pandemic, accelerating change through technology and navigating organizations through newer horizons. Workplace APAC 2021 will equip you with the organizational priorities, anticipated challenges, investment avenues and outlook.

The participating organizations have been carefully chosen to include those who are at the forefront of their respective industry and provide a right mix between traditional established industries along with emerging tech and SAAS organizations on the growth path. For the ease of comprehension, the key shifts have been categorized under Hyper personalized EX, Techno-ciency, Total Wellbeing, Heliotropic Culture and Humanising Connectedness. For a quick overview of these shifts, please flip over!



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What started as a business continuity measure during the peak of the pandemic, left an indelible mark on work, workers, and the workplace. Across the globe, organizations responded with great agility and displayed unprecedented resilience. The role of HR evolved and became more complex. Technology emerged as the panacea for most of the existing and emerging challenges. Unlike the western world, HR leaders across the Asia Pacific had to deal with multiple dimensions of workplace and technology transformation all at the same time and emerged as winners across industries and geographies.

As we deep dive into the Workplace APAC 2021 study, we see leaders have provided great details about their present priorities and the future direction. Clearly these 5 shifts that are detailed in the report are taking the spotlight from a focus perspective.

Focus on each individual, individually. While the world was already talking about personalizing employee experience and exploring the use of technology to augment it, personalization has assumed much greater wider connotation. Today employees seek 'Hyper Personalization' that will need fundamental changes in:

1. Way organizations and leaders perceive individual needs, preferences and choices. Companies wanting to thrive now will need to embrace agility in almost all aspects of their being, be it structures, job roles, hierarchies, benefits, compensation models, work timings, devices, deliverables, success measures etc.
2. The above change will need a complete relook at the policy framework. Perhaps it is apt to say that the only viable policy of the future will be the policy of no policy. Meaning that there cannot be a policy framework (statutory compliances excluded) that is rigid and cannot be adapted to suit the requirements of one or many employees.
3. Hyper personalization strategy should come from a core of empathy towards employees and focus on their total wellbeing. That will be a big shift from today, when personalization is largely aimed at driving productivity and engagement.

Enhancing the productivity quotient

As the businesses are getting disrupted and macroeconomic conditions becoming more challenging, operating at the highest levels of productivity has become an imperative. All this with a renewed focus on wellbeing and empathy. Therefore:

1. Technology has toppled training as the enabler of driving higher productivity. Augmenting human abilities and at times replacing human workers with machine is the way forward. Many leading organizations across APAC are on this renewed path of automation, specifically in their people processes.
2. Complex competency models are gradually making way for nimbler skill-based performance requirements that are quicker to develop and simpler to find. A majority of the organizations are relooking at their talent frameworks to make them more granular and start focusing more on independent skills.
3. Irrespective of job and function, digital skills across the board will be of primary importance. The world is moving to a paradigm where everything that can be digitized will be/must be digitized. Therefore, digital skills will become foundational skills going forward.

Care for the whole being

Employee wellbeing is no new entrant to the HR priorities. However now that the work has invaded homes, employees are feeling more vulnerable to mental stress, anxiety, loneliness and disengagement, and they are openly talking about it too. In another study, we found that 76% of people believe their employer should be doing more to protect their mental health. So, wellbeing has assumed new dimensions:

1. Mental wellbeing initiatives are now seen as important considerations in people's intention to continue with their current employers as well as in their choice of new opportunities.
2. Providing psychological safety that includes their family is the next step in evolving employee-employer relationships. Technology is playing a very important role to enable organizations to scale up their well-being efforts.
3. Empathy and mindfulness are turning out to be the top leadership/managerial traits. Ironically both these traits, often, do not come to corporate warriors naturally. Companies are investing in upskilling people managers on empathy, inclusion, and mindfulness.

Evolution of the culture paradigm

As we dig deeper into the insightful conversations, one thing that is coming out as the underdog challenge is that of culture and its evolution.

1. While on one side organizations are struggling to transcend their cultures into the virtual realm, on the other they are contemplating how to change their culture to suit the macro environment that has distributed workforce as the key participant.
2. Having a digital-first workplace that supports virtual work is a basic requirement now. There are elements of culture that will have to constantly evolve – perhaps faster than any time before. Heliotropism, the scientific term for a plant's tendency to turn toward the sun is a cultural quality that organizations must embody. Organizations must and are starting to learn the art of transitioning the direction of their culture while keeping the organization rooted in values and ethics.
3. Innovation in onboarding, learning and engagement has scaled new heights and is raising the culture bar higher, almost daily.

Keeping the humane alive, virtually

Last and perhaps the most profound challenge and therefore focus area is about bringing the 'human aspects' to the virtual hybrid workplace. Like anywhere, people across APAC are missing the pleasures of in-person and real interactions with clients and colleagues. While work continues to be driven virtually, the value of being in physical proximity, sharing aura, and sensing emotions through in person observation are being missed and continue to be irreplaceable. Organizations therefore:

1. Are finding ways to build social interactions in the virtual workplace. Virtual reality is being leveraged, though in a limited manner, to create a more immersive employee experience.
2. Massive investments are being made in collaboration platforms to build those camaraderies across virtual teams that work in virtual environments virtually all the time.
3. Every day humane is showing up more often from the side of the organizations in form of goodies, care packages or simple random acts of humanity building a sense of care in their workforce.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Clearly the APAC HR leaders are directing their energies to things that matter the most, first for their employees and then the businesses. And this seems to be a trend that will remain forever.

1. Work models will change for almost all industries with distributed workforce and Flex working as a business norm across industries and sectors. Very few rules and regulations will need to continue with traditional form of working.
2. While physical offices will remain, clearly the workplace will undergo massive transformation. Significant part of office space is likely to evolve into hubs of social activity and shared space will replace personal offices.
3. As the focus on social, emotional, physical and mental wellbeing increases, new ways of connection and relations will evolve and organizations must continue to adopt and experiment with new technologies. Organizations parallelly must also find ways to enhance the empathy and mindfulness of their leaders – a herculean task.
4. Digital is not a choice anymore; it is the fundamental block of workplace effectiveness. Anything that can be digitized, must be digitized, using agile and future proof technology cloud platforms. Not imbibing technology or investing in wrong technology can be suicidal for organizations.



“As I thank all the HR leaders across Asia who participated and provided these most invaluable insights, I invite you to deep dive into the Workplace APAC 2021 and learn from what the best and the biggest are doing.”

SHAAKUN KHANNA

Head, HCM Strategy & Transformation, APAC
Oracle



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#2 TECHNO-CIENCY

Leveraging technology to deliver efficiency through automation across employee life cycle. Some interesting trends in store for you here!

#3 TOTAL WELLBEING

VUCA world accentuating the need for Psychological Safety and Total Wellbeing. Read to know more about how organizations are tackling this!

#4 HELIOTROPIC CULTURE

What happens to the culture while working in a virtual world. What changes, what needs to be preserved and how people experience culture?

#5 HUMANISING CONNECTEDNESS

Remote working can become lonely and monotonous. Learn how organizations are humanising their connect with a distributed workforce here!

02 FUTURE LANDSCAPE

Where are the avenues for investment? What role does technology play? What are the biggest future challenges, core actionable and more such questions uncovered here!

03 ANNEXURE

Learn about our research methodology, sampling technique and participating organizations.



THE BIG SHIFTS

5 Big Shifts have emerged through Workplace APAC 2021 study. These shifts encompass the aspects of growth acceleration priorities, new ways of working, technology investment avenues, challenges in adopting new ways of working, and outlook in the post-pandemic scenario.

THE BIG SHIFTS



HYPER PERSONALIZED EX

Your Next Competitive Edge!

Lasting & **Contextual Experiences**.

Data & Persona driven Individualized Experiences.

Emerging Tech – AI & VR.

Employee EX – a future avenue for Tech.



TECHNO-CIENCY

Automation Shaping Talent Configuration!

Focus on **Digitally Savvy** talent.

Clear expectations from future **Hybrid Talent**.

Employee **Productivity & Efficiency** backed by technology is the focus.

Mature Data Analytics & Visualization for insightful predictions - Need of the hour.



TOTAL WELLBEING

Your Key To Sustainable Wellbeing!

Blurred Work-life Boundaries leading to **Wellbeing Vulnerability**.

Psychological Safety – bedrock for future employee – employer relationship.

Integration with management practices is the key.

Tech enabled **Monitoring & Prediction Tools** on the rise!

Focus on **Empathetic Leadership**.

THE BIG SHIFTS



HELIOTROPIC CULTURE

Centerpiece of Your Digital Strategy!

Integrated organizational view on **Digital Culture**.

Extrapolating cultural practices to the new digital workplace while **Preserving the Core**.

Agile Work Culture accelerated through Hybrid Work Models.

New Talent Assimilation into Virtual Culture – A challenge to address.



HUMANISING CONNECTEDNESS

Building a Cohesive Workforce!

Human side of organization – at the forefront of **Emotional & Virtual Connectedness**.

Need to **Preserve Social Fabric** by blending digital & human touch.

Everyday Collaborations through Technology complemented by Human Touch: A sustainable work model.

Humanised approaches with focus on **Relational Capital**.



THE BIG SHIFT #1

HYPER PERSONALIZED EX

COMPETITIVE EDGE

Organizations are accentuating their competitive advantage by leveraging employee experience. Mapping employee life-cycle journey is enabling identification of experiences that matter. Making EX sustainable and a key differentiator through policy integration and creating an ecosystem of experiences is driving the shift of making EX a key differentiator.

AI DELIVERING SUPERIOR EX

AI is recreating “near-physical-experiences” for employees through AR/VR technologies. Introduction of chatbots is driving EX through prediction of engagement and sentiments. Contextualization coupled with technology to create an impact on the employees.

HUMAN TOUCH & INDIVIDUALIZATION

Empathy, care and concern towards employees is becoming a key for human touch. Leaders and Managers are getting upskilled to bring empathy and care in their conversations with employees. Data analytics is driving the personalization of experiences and will support future decision making.



HYPER PERSONALIZED EX

Best Practices

“We shift to an employee-centric approach to empower employees with the ability to help decide what works best for them when we design our employee Return To Work (RTW) plan after the 1st wave. Using Employees Personas to reimagine RTW journeys, the Agile squad was able to identify employees’ types and their associated challenges and needs.”

MBSB Bank Berhad

“VR (Virtual Reality) / AR (Augmented Reality) would get into the hiring process and play an important role. There would be reinvention in terms of how we interact with each other and the way we work.”

Paytm

“We have introduced an AI driven talent platform that looks at people's strengths and matches them to projects, mentors and internal job openings, to create a constant process of learning within the organization.”

AirAsia Berhad

“We have augmented the number of engagement touchpoints that we have with our employees. So, we have made sure that our managers are in more frequent contact with our employees. We build in a cadence of minimally once every two weeks, but we encourage it to happen once every three days to five days.”

Intrepid Group Asia

“We are definitely looking at Employee Lifecycle Management. We have just implemented a new electronic and talent management system. I feel we are thinking about the human element of the technical system.”

NSW Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network



HYPER PERSONALIZED EX

Your Competitive Edge

Delivering Hyper personalized EX as a Strategic Edge to become a Talent Magnet

Experiences create a lasting impression. EX has brought the attention back to the employees needs. Organizations are redesigning their practices and policies by taking an integrated view of employee life cycle to deliver a differentiated experience resulting in deeper engagement, alleviating stress and anxiety, increasing retention, and sustaining performance and productivity.

EX-becoming a strategic advantage

When processes become employee centered, organizations are able to unearth the pain points and moments that matter to their employees.

Tokopedia, is delivering hyper personalized experience through its “my Nakama” app that enables doctors appointments, well-being consultations, pre-emptive checkups, etc. all of which empower the workforce. Through “my Nakama”, **Tokopedia** is positioning itself as an employer of choice, creating opportunities for employer advocacy and attracting a multi-generational workforce. Many organizations are integrating experience into their policies to make them sustainable and repeatable. Organizations like **Ipswich City Council** are articulating a management philosophy on experience and driving a mindset shift within the workforce.

Singapore University of Technology & Design (SUTD), Singapore, plans to focus on digitalization of the employee life cycle, which will allow for easier connect with employees and alumni. Through digitalization, **SUTD** expects usage of interactive and real time dashboards, and integration with different systems to make sense of the data. A growing realization that by integrating EX throughout the employee life cycle, organizations can create an ecosystem of experiences to create a competitive advantage.



“I think a lot more focus will be in terms of how we look at data analytics and how to drive this process in the future. Employee experience will be crucial for us as well; We want to work on making it a more personalized experience for each employee. The three areas where we will invest are superior employee experience, data and analytics and personalization.”

SAURABH GOVIL

President & Chief Human Resources Officer, Wipro Ltd.



HYPER PERSONALIZED EX

Human Touch & Individualization

Interweaving Technology, Empathy and Care to optimize your EX Strategy

Focus is shifting to hyper personalization of EX. While technology plays a crucial role in delivering the experience, organizations are consciously bringing in a “human touch” to this. Leaders and Managers are getting upskilled in managing remote teams, bringing empathy in their communication and showing genuine concern and care for the employees as well as their families’ wellbeing.

Individualization of experience

AirAsia Berhad, like many in the aviation industry has witnessed tough times and had to furlough a large population of its workforce. While it had to take tough people decisions, it attempted to deliver them with empathy. **AirAsia Berhad** provided outplacement assistance through career fairs and by securing government support as well as maintaining a constant connect with ex-employees they can bring back in the recovery phase.

Organizations like **Titan Company Ltd.**, are leveraging behavioral science to deliver a seamless and positive experience as well as help prevent negative perceptions that adversely impact the culture. **Titan’s** employees made empathy calls through zoom or google hangouts to connect with and support customers. This is yet another example of integrating human touch while extending this experience to the customer base.

Similarly, **upGrad**, an online higher education platform in India, is evaluating future investment in technology to allow them to map the employee life cycle and personalize EX, backed by data analytics. We found that hyper personalization of experience, hinges upon its delivery with empathy and care through technology backed by analytics.



“We had to make sure that our managers had started to think not only about virtual intelligence but about virtual empathy as well. We started programs such as ‘Thriving Remotely’ which helped people and leaders of the organization thrive, manage and support other team members as well as monitor how employees are faring.”

CHAI PING CHUA

HR Director & Country Site Leader, Experian PLC



HYPER PERSONALIZED EX

AI and Technology

EX agenda Augmented by Increasing AI and Tech Investments

AI, Big data and Technology are converging for differentiating and personalizing EX. While EX is becoming a strategic focus area, challenges arise in scaling up, making it consistent and sustainable. This is also the intersection of experience and technology where, through CHRO conversations, a close inter-linkage and augmentation of experience through technology was observed.

Participating organizations are seeing continued investments in technology that can integrate all aspects of the employee life cycle with easy to consume dashboards and build intelligence in contextualizing EX.

Tech delivering near physical experience

Remote working usually creates perceptions of being distant and devoid of the softer aspects of a vibrant workplace. It was observed that organizations are experimenting with emerging technologies to bring a near physical experience to their workforce.

Organizations like **Paytm**, are leveraging chatbots in gauging employee sentiments, carrying out rule-based transactions and addressing employee queries. AI is also recreating experiences for candidates and making the recruitment process seamless in a virtual environment through AR/ VR applications/platforms.

Organizations willing to invest in learning technologies are looking for contextualization of learning and realizing the ROI by maximizing impact on the individual. When contextualization happens, **The Straits Trading Company Ltd.**, one such organization, believes that individuals can bring the learning to the workplace and apply them. This is further reinforcing the earlier observation on hyper personalization of experiences and moving away from one-size-fits-all strategy.



“My priority currently is the recruitment of the right talent. As competition for top talent has become more demanding, I am looking for a competitive advantage by turning to emerging technologies such as AI, Video Interview and RPA to source, attract, select, and ultimately hire the best talent for our bank.”

MOHD FARID SHAH BIN MOHD BASIR
Chief People Officer MBSB Bank Berhad



LEADERS SPEAK



We work to create a workplace model where our people are kept at the forefront of conversations in the organization and also, create an environment that helps utilize the capability of our people to their maximum potential and build a culture that can deliver on the organization's strategy.

COLLEEN HARRIS

Group Chief People Officer, Ramsay Healthcare Ltd.



Enhancing employee engagement by using bots to assess how employees are feeling, reaching out to employees and connecting with them is something our company has already invested in. We are going to see how we work through some of these engagement mechanisms.

ROHIT THAKUR

Ex-Chief Human Resources Officer, Paytm



The other big area of focus is employee experience from a fundamental cultural change perspective. For example, what do employees and leaders expect of each other? What is the 'MO' of AMP which will enable our strategy. A big question for us is on how to build dexterity in our organization. Employees will need to understand that change and transformation are constant.

REBECCA NASH

Group Director People & Chief People Officer, AMP



We are also working on how to get better analytics to understand topics like attrition or engagement. We are working with a company that has AI analytics to look at people within their roles and what one should be expecting in terms of insights and actionable to come up based on it.

SALLY ELSON

Head of People Advisory & Talent, MYOB





LEADERS SPEAK



Being able to continually engage employees and manage workplace experience means good use of “6e Speaks”, our twice-a-month employee pulse program. I see this as one of the biggest wins of using HR technology in managing employee engagement.

RAJ RAGHAVAN

Senior Vice President and Head of Human Resources, IndiGo



Employee experience becomes super important. We have the opportunity to bring human back to the human resource. Our leaders are talking about how can we take care of our people, how can we make sure that we give them time to recuperate because in the middle of everything, they are human beings.

NANANG CHALID

Vice President People, Tokopedia



Technology will play an important role in various tasks we are going to perform and there will be an increased focus on creating a human touch and values to work that would be undertaken in coming times.

NOR SUHAIMI SULONG

Chief People Experience Officer, Telekom Malaysia Berhad





LEADERS SPEAK



Our approach varied depending upon the situation pertaining to different countries and we ensured that we optimized for virtual engagement, not so much for hybrid engagement. For instance, we introduced initiatives like a welfare or wellbeing pack for people who were forced to work from home because of the situation in their home countries.

ALEX PNG

Chief People Officer, Intrepid Group Asia



I am trying to shift our policy towards employee experience and looking at the holistic experience of having an employee-centred design at the core of all our processes and developing customer experience strategies.

TALIA LOVE-LINAY

Manager People & Culture, Ipswich City Council



We also launched a happiness campaign where we use a scientific method of how happiness works and how we can accentuate it. For instance, we used a method known as hedonistic treadmill which talks about, if we are born with a certain level of happiness because of the social and economic background. That line of happiness usually remains constant across the life time of that person. Therefore, small nudges and initiatives can help to have a quest or a drop in happiness level.

ASHISH MITTAL

Head of People Function, Aviva India



BIG SHIFT #2

TECHNO-CIENCY

DIGITAL MINDSET

Digital literacy of workforce has sharply improved. Digitally savvy talent entering organization will shape the future workforce configuration and transform into a competitive edge for Talent. Decisions on hiring, mobility, and growth will be determined by the digital competence of the talent.

AUTOMATION TO AUGMENTATION

Technology is augmenting the work and driving a shift in workforce configuration to manage the future requirements. Increasing demand for data science and analytics will get integrated in the way organizations take people decisions.



TECHNO-CIENCY

Best Practices

“We used video analytics tools to see if there is any breach happening on the SOP. Also, for contact tracing, we used a lot of video analytics and RFID based app. We also came up with a lot of real-time digital dashboards due to the change occurring in the workplace because of the pandemic.”

Tata Steel

“We have defined critical competencies for the future to strengthen our tech capabilities vis-a-vis the competition. This is mainly driven by skills such as cloud computing, personalized marketing as well as other telecom needs.”

DTAC

“We have created a booking system that is based on the principle of reverse engineering. We have turned all our workstations into hot desks in our group office and have allocated sections to teams.”

St.Vincent's Health Australia

“We revamped our performance management process based on Objective & Key Results on our core HR Platform. This shifts people's focus from KPIs to first understanding the business objectives that drive us, then discussing about the KPIs which is how we measure the success of those objectives.”

Central Pattana PLC

“We believe that it is critical to train managers and supervisors to get on-board with managing humans and machines; it is non-negotiable! We are gearing up for the future by enabling our professionals with cross-domain knowledge and cross-functional skills to stay relevant and thrive in the competitive skill landscape.”

Cybage Software



TECHNO-CIENCY

Digital Mindset

Digital savviness differentiating Talent Upskilling, Growth and Mobility

Digital literacy of the workforce, especially in the manufacturing, utilities, entertainment, and infrastructure development sector has witnessed a sharp improvement. After the initial struggle of onboarding the workforce on digital collaboration platforms, organizations have integrated technology as a part of their DNA. Digital literacy, competence and dexterity have become key skills and a pivotal point for talent decisions on hiring, performance, growth, internal mobility and development.

Changing talent configuration

Consumer facing organizations in BFSI and FMCG sectors are leading the race on digital transformation and are extending the digital experience to their employees. Organizations like **Dabur India Ltd.**, have strategically created a Chief Digital Officer (CDO) position and have invested in digital teams to increase their focus on digitalization and business transformation.

Digitally native generations are evangelizing the technology adoption. Digital literacy and competence are the new skills sought after by growing organizations. Some organizations like **upGrad**, are even weighing digital literacy more than functional competence, which is making digital literacy an essential rather than a desirable skill.

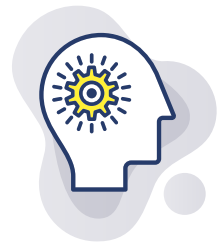
It is further observed that organizations like **MyRepublic Ltd.**, **eClerx**, **Johor Corp**, **HSBC Malaysia**, **IOI Properties Group Berhad** and **CLP India Pvt. Ltd.**, are going to see continued investments in digital upskilling of workforce, which will in turn drive the redeployment decisions for transforming businesses digitally. Others like **Aviva India**, **Thai Beverage PLC** and **Cybage Software**, have clearly articulated their expectation from employees to be more digitally savvy and embrace virtual ways of working.



“We increased our investment in learning programs by 25% at the beginning of the year because we could clearly see an 8-fold return on our learning investments, which will eventually help us in saving cost and generating more revenue. We launched a program as part of our larger plan of a skills university to reskill our employees. We focused on skills such as data visualization and storytelling as there was huge demand for these skills from our clients as well as internally.”

AMIR BHARWANI

Head of Human Resources, eClerx



TECHNO-CIENCY

Automation To Augmentation

Driving Talent Configuration through Data science and Mechanization

The virtual workplace has brought to the forefront new skill sets required to make sense of the business environment and to remain competitive. Integration of technology, while augmenting the work, is also driving the configuration of workforce skillsets required for the future. Predicting workforce sentiments, wellbeing, monitoring workforce pulse, policy introduction and mobilizing talent while working remotely are increasing the demand for skills like data science and people analytics.

Realizing productivity through automation

Priorities have shifted from maintaining connectivity and continuity of work to automation of processes. Organizations where a few basic processes have already been automated, are focusing on more complex ones like employee engagement, well-being, employee sentiment analysis, and Robotic Process Automation (RPA).

Deeper automation is enabling the recording and processing of employee data as well as activities in a structured manner eventually paving the way for analytical insights like never seen before. Banking upon the power of analytics, BFSI leaders like **HSBC Malaysia** who have been at the forefront of digital enablement, are investing heavily in creation of new roles to adapt to consumer banking trends of current and future. Systematic automation of repeatable as well as low value-creating jobs and replacing them with jobs that require deeper thinking and decision making is observed.

Olam International, Top Glove Corporation Berhad, Laminex Australia, Siam City Cement, MYOB and New Zealand Post (NZ Post) are few such organizations investing in uplifting the quality of work at the bottom of the pyramid, through automation.



“We want to remove the human element from few of our projects and we have started using Robotic Process Automation for the same. We are in the process of defining which end to end process we want to automate. So, we would like to invest in technology which can help us to tell the location of our employees in a brief amount of time and automate our different processes.”

ERIC TAN

Group Head of HR, Woh Hup (Private) Ltd.



LEADERS SPEAK

Virtual mode has helped in making employees more punctual and further helped the meetings become a lot prompter and more efficient, as compared to the physical meetings.



Dr. JACLYN LEE

Chief Human Resources Officer, Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD)



Currently our managers are not adequately trained to be able to manage the performance and work of employees while working virtually. So, we must invest in learning and training modules to help managers change their mindset and provide them with tools and knowledge that can help them to measure the productivity of employees while working virtually better.

KRISTEN HAY

Partner, Head of People and Culture, Knight Frank Australia

I believe incorporating technology in our work processes has greatly helped us to move faster, plan for future and ensure our people are performing today as well as in the future, which is the principle of our HR department.



KEAN MUN LOKE

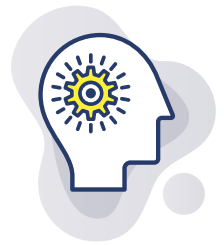
Head of Human Resources, Top Glove Corporation Berhad



We are investing \$170 million in new automated machinery to sort parcels and identify the jobs around the belt, improve our organizational structure and the compensation we pay to our employees.

MONICA AYERS

Chief People Officer, New Zealand Post (NZ Post)



LEADERS SPEAK



We already have a system built on HRIS and people have access to their rosters on their phone. We would like to further invest in this project and make things a lot smoother and streamlined for people to interact with others on roster easily. This will enable people to have access to everything on their phones without having to come in and set up their monitor.

JILL JOHNSTON

Head of People and Development, Sydney Opera House



There were 10-20% employees working in the production line in the factory who had no access to mobile phones. The organization then set up Kiosk where the employees could login via their credentials and put in a leave request or change something in the medical benefits.

ANUTTARA PANPOTHONG

Ex CPO, Group, Siam City Cement



Priority is to develop a contextualized, consistent and reliable taxonomy of the skills required for each company. One size doesn't fit all.

FOO CHEK WEE

Head of Human Capital & Office Administration,
The Straits Trading Company Ltd.



We focused on recruiting hires who were more digitally and technologically savvy. There was an absolute shift in the hiring of employees not in terms of functional competence, but in terms of digital savviness of the workforce.

PREETI KAUL

People & Culture Head, upGrad





LEADERS SPEAK



One of the things I want to do is to create a gateway for employees when they want HR support. We realize that the more we use HR technology, the more productive we will be as both HR function as well as an organization.

RAJ RAGHAVAN

Senior Vice President and Head of Human Resources, IndiGo



A key challenge is to enable or educate employees to make more use of online tools to be more productive. It's about behavior or change in education, so that employees change from the way they currently work and take advantage of the tools that we already have. Another challenge is—"how to re-equip our office with systems that can seamlessly integrate people who are in the office to those working from home.

AKARIN PHUREESITR

Head of People Group, Central Pattana Thailand (CPN) PLC.



We spend 2.5% of our gross salaries only on training. We are spending a lot on the essential skills which would be required in the future like curiosity, resilience and agility. Likewise, we are also spending a lot of technical skills where we have launched an initiative called digital black belt through which we are developing our own data scientists.

SUGUNAH VERUMANDY

Country Head of Human Resources, HSBC Malaysia





THE BIG SHIFT #3

TOTAL WELLBEING

TOTAL WELLBEING AS A MAINSTREAM POLICY

Organizations are leveraging technology to scale up their wellbeing practices into a mainstream Total Wellbeing policy. Inclusion of financial aspects expanding the existing concept of wellbeing covering mental and emotional is observed. Through these practices, organizations are showing their genuine concern and seriousness towards their workforce.

SUSTAINING TOTAL WELLBEING

Creating a psychologically safe work environment is becoming a focus for sustaining and embedding total wellbeing into the culture. Building trust between leaders and employees is creating high quality relationships, which in turn is accelerating psychological safety at the workplace.

TECHNOLOGY SHIFTING THE NEEDLE

Total Wellbeing prediction is achieved through technology. Organizations are shifting towards more continuous monitoring, tracking early warning signs and predicting concerns on employee wellbeing. This ecosystem is being augmented through subscription-based apps.



TOTAL WELLBEING

Best Practices

“We have weekly sessions of yoga and monthly sessions on awareness about various diseases. We have virtual collaboration through zoom to facilitate wellbeing of our employees working from remote locations. We also tied up with hospitals, medical stores and pharmacies to bring this whole ecosystem together.”

Aviva India

“Weekly webinars during COVID to brief leaders about things they needed to know to be more effective.”

National Australia Bank (NAB)

“Created wellness rooms in hospitals for teams to go rest, recharge, for any issue briefings and informal conversations before leaving from work.”

Ramsay Health Care Ltd.

“We have a wellness app extended to all our employees which helped in providing a fitness regime, yoga and meditation courses. We also have employee assistance programs to provide stress/anxiety counselling in WFH scenarios.”

Cipla Ltd.

“We installed a platform known as symptoms checker to daily monitor our employees. The platform used to ask the general questions and look for any potential threats for the virus and would inform the doctor to be in reach with the employee. So, the app helped us to take a proactive approach and determine the employees who had to be tested, kept in isolation or whether to be provided medication.”

Reliance Industries Ltd.

“As a result of pandemic, we trained our staff to become Mental Health First Aid officers and provide mental health awareness sessions for our managers. We had 117 trained Mental Health First Aid officers. They report monthly to the safety and wellbeing team who pull all the relevant data together for executive reporting.”

Ipswich City Council



TOTAL WELLBEING

Evolution of Total Wellbeing as a Mainstream Policy

The Big Shift from Psychological to Total Wellbeing

Organizations impacted by pandemic were quick to realize the importance of total wellbeing of their workforce. Numerous organizations created special purpose task force with a leadership oversight to take immediate care of their employees and their families' wellbeing. Organizations like **SP Setia Berhad**, **National Australia Bank (NAB)**, **Intrepid Group Asia**, **Tata Steel**, **eClerx**, **Knight Frank Australia** and **Telstra**, leveraged technology to monitor the wellbeing of their employees. The focus eventually shifted, from crisis management to making wellbeing an integral part of work practices.

Shifting towards total wellbeing

The concept of wellbeing has been expanding with the systematic inclusion of financial aspects. **Experian PLC** and **CLP India Pvt. Ltd.**, for example, have articulated this in their wellbeing strategy and are addressing this through structured programs. Wellness and wellbeing programs like EAP (Employee Assistance Programs), which were observed widely last year, have become permanent fixtures in the organization calendar.

Holistic and rounded total wellbeing practices are going to see sustenance through policy formulation, complementary employee benefits programs, and by creating an ecosystem to change the habits of the workforce. There is also a greater realization that sustainable total wellbeing will lead to workforce productivity. Organizations like **Cipla Ltd.**, **Hindalco Industries Ltd.** and **Tata Steel** are harnessing this connection and moving towards sustainable wellbeing practices delivered through technology.



"Health and wellness became a huge imperative and big pillar for our HR strategy going forward. The HR technology that we invest in, should help us manage the employee health and wellness. We are talking to multiple providers – expanding and experimenting with many things such as modern hospital management software to wellness solutions."

SAMIK BASU

Chief Human Resources Officer - Hydrocarbons, Hindalco industries Ltd



TOTAL WELLBEING

Sustaining Total Wellbeing

Psychologically Safe workplace as a strong predictor of Employee Wellbeing.

Total wellbeing is the top of the mind actionable for organizations around the world. We already know about the strong linkage between a psychologically safe environment and lower employee stress and anxiety. While organizations are putting together practices that address and mitigate employee wellbeing concerns, deeper and sustainable interventions will be able to address the need for psychological safety at workplace, reaping the benefits of sustained performance and productivity.

Psychological safety accelerated through trust

Trust is an integral part of any psychologically safe work environment and organizations such as **Hero FinCorp** and **Serum Institute of India (SII)** are bringing it to the forefront of their culture. They have integrated psychological safety as a part of their employee wellbeing strategy. Organizations like **Titan Company Ltd.**, **Force Motors Ltd.**, **SP Setia Berhad**, and **AirAsia Berhad** focus on communicating trust and empowerment through their leadership messages. This further accelerates the creation of a psychologically safe workplace.

Virtual Empathy

With the workforce anticipated to remain remote and distributed, trends are emerging on delivering empathy. Organizations are, now more than ever, focusing on building high quality relationships as a foundation for delivering “virtual empathy”. **Aviva India**, **Experian PLC**, **Tokopedia**, **Intrepid Group Asia**, **Titan Company Ltd.** and **Wipro Ltd.** are a few organizations upskilling their leaders on building a non-judgmental environment for employees to talk freely about their struggles and being empathetic while working virtually. A deeper focus and investments in creating “virtual empathy” in employees and leadership is anticipated. Psychological safety will lay the foundation for high quality relationships at the workplace and will make wellbeing practices more sustainable.



“In challenging times like this, when you're not seeing employees face to face, text messages can be interpreted wrongly, and certain words can mean something else. I believe, we need to make sure leaders develop more trust and emotional relationship with employees amid the changing working conditions due to the pandemic.”

NADIAH TAN ABDULLAH

Chief Human Resources Officer, S P Setia Berhad



TOTAL WELLBEING

Technology Shifting the Needle

Predictive measurement of Total Wellbeing for Proactive Organizational Actions

Wellbeing prediction is following the same maturity curve as employee engagement. From periodic measurement and tracking of wellbeing, organizations are shifting towards more continuous monitoring, tracking early warning signs and predicting concerns on employee wellbeing. Technology has the potential to accelerate the maturity curve of wellbeing practices by shifting the needle from tracking and monitoring to predicting.

Predictive Wellbeing

The linkage between wellbeing and productivity has never been more evident. There is a wider realization that productivity and efficiency of workforce can be sustained through wellbeing. While technology is enabling the delivery of wellbeing programs, ensuring workforce safety and rolling out employee assistance programs, it is also playing a role in analyzing and predicting wellbeing trends that can be used by organizations in policy formulations.

Introduction of wellbeing and wellness apps to monitor sleep, and health of employees are being adopted in **CLP India Pvt. Ltd.**, **Tata Motors Ltd.**, **SP Setia Berhad**, and **Experian PLC** for example. While organizations are making such apps available to their workforce, they are also augmenting their ecosystem of wellbeing programs addressing the diverse needs of their talent. Through the apps, employees can subscribe to custom-made wellbeing and wellness journeys that systematically shape their habits, making it part of their lifestyle.



“There will be increased focus in the coming times to improve or monitor the health of employees which can significantly lead to increase in employee productivity. I believe there will be greater focus with the help of technology to use data not only as an information system but also as an intelligent source which can guide and channel us to become more smarter, efficient and productive.”

RAJU MISTRY

President and Global Chief People Officer, Cipla Ltd.



LEADERS SPEAK



War for talent is the obvious one to go to. I think we have more tools in the toolkit to attract talent as well. I think organizations that are getting serious on flexibility and wellbeing of their workforce have a greater ability to attract talent.

LAURA STAPLES

Head of People & Performance, Laminex Australia



The insurance limits, becomes a limiting factor for a lot of companies, so we created a fund to cover the expenses that goes over and above the prescribed limit and whatever extra money people spent, they were paid back the equivalent amount. We gave INR 5000 to each family of the contractual labourers who were working at our sites and were staying near our site premises.

MAHENDRA INGE

Head HR, Serum Institute of India (SII)



I believe that there will be greater focus on employee welfare in the coming times, which will also help build credibility, increase fidelity and give a human touch in carrying out different work in the organization.

RAMCHANDRA HONAP

Head HR, Force Motors Ltd.



We believed in the approach that we are not going to gain anything by scrambling and scratching and trying to save the last rupee but focusing on the mental wellbeing of our employees will be critical for us, beneficial in the long run, and give us a better ROI.

RAJ NARAYAN

Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources
Titan Company Limited





LEADERS SPEAK



As a business, we made two clear choices. One, was putting the health and wellbeing of our people first. The second reason was by moving our office-based people, we could put majority of our leadership management attention to our employees especially the retail staff who were keeping our doors open to our customers.

ALEX BADENOCH

Group Executive Transformation, Communications and People,
Telstra



We launched an app called Nanduri where people could go and talk about their health, diet, and stress, and employees could receive expert counselling from an external source. We have a peer support group within the organization consisting of around 200 employees in 5 countries speaking a variety of local dialects who are trained in crisis management and counselling.

P K MEDAPPA

Chief People Officer, AirAsia Berhad



We launched multiple pieces of support to help people work from home effectively, whether that was wellbeing or leaders teaching people how to use teams. We did drop-in clinics teaching digital tools to everyone who needed to navigate. Our team also introduced 'Wellbeing Wednesdays', in which our team could get some support on wellbeing.

SUSAN FERRIER

Group Executive, People & Culture, National Australia Bank (NAB)



Reliance's holistic wellness initiative R-Swasthya has hosted several physical, emotional, and financial wellness programmes to help colleagues deal with uncertainty and anxiety. Our 24x7 REFERS emergency services, Employee Assistance Programme for mental wellbeing, financial literacy sessions, and daily guided yoga and meditation initiatives are some initiatives that have helped our colleagues through these difficult times.

ASHWANI PRASHARA

Chief Human Resources Officer Hydrocarbons, Reliance Industries Ltd.





LEADERS SPEAK



Business continuity, safety at the workplace and emotional wellbeing of employees and their families have been a huge area of focus for us. We have also focused on getting our employees vaccinated at the earliest. We had launched several initiatives to care of the emotional health of our employees which helped us a lot during the pandemic.

RAVINDRA KUMAR G.P.

Chief Human Resources Officer, Tata Motors Ltd.



We are strengthening our investment and focus on holistic online employee platforms. Counsellors are available round the clock for our employees for mental and physical health. We've extended some of our employee engagement activities to the families of our employees as well.

TINA RASTOGI

VP – Human Capital Management, Cybage Software



We started planning a full-blown wellbeing campaign covering the whole gamut of wellbeing – mental, physical and even financial as a lot of people were going through different struggles.

CHAI PING CHUA

HR Director & Country Site Leader, Experian PLC



THE BIG SHIFT #4

HELIOTROPIC CULTURE

HYBRID WORKFORCE MODELS

Hybrid and remote workforce models will continue and will see introduction of Gig and Freelancers to traditional workforce models. Technology will enable managing hybrid models for performance, engagement and rewards.

TALENT ASSIMILATION INTO VIRTUAL CULTURE

New talent assimilation into virtual work environment is emerging as a new challenge. Assimilating talent creates a shared belief and ways of working resulting in seamless collaboration and teamwork.

FLEXIBLE WORK CULTURE

Remote working is bringing with it a greater call for autonomy and empowerment of workforce. Employees are encouraged to balance their work with life priorities and managers are getting upskilled in managing hybrid teams.



HELIOTROPIC CULTURE

Best Practices

“We are working on a RPA project to on-board our employees through few clicks of a button and a seamlessly automated process. We are giving our employees an e-contract and make sure that they sign off digitally, subsequently click off and undertake few of the digital on-boarding programs.”

Woh Hup (Private) Ltd.

“We are creating platforms which will be able to predict skill requirement across sectors outside an employee’s own sector. We identify the employees who have diverse skillset, train and support them to get paid in skills that are emerging. These skills could be in any sector like teaching, nursing or hospitality.”

Olam International

“We have created an app with backup of our workstations and consolidated office space. The app helps us in mapping all the workspaces in the workstation. It also automatically analyzes whether it would be convenient for an employee to travel to a particular office or suggest them a better option.”

Cipla Ltd.

“We started working on a program to bring more women into mechanical engineering. This was done through talking to colleges to allow them to move into mechanical engineering post their first year.”

Mercedes - Benz Research & Development India

“We underwent a cultural transformation in terms of building workplace with a strong culture, specifically a strong risk culture, whereby we will conduct our businesses in a manner that will ensure that our employees are aligned with expectations of specific behaviors that we want to get treated within an organization.”

Great Eastern Life Assurance



HELIOTROPIC CULTURE

Adapting to Remote and Hybrid Models

Change & Challenges driving new Hybrid Work Models

Hybrid work model is closely integrated with the organization's strategy. Almost all participating organizations have expressed their intent to continue working remotely or adopt a hybrid work strategy.

Organizations were forced to review and shift their strategy to overcome the pandemic crisis. When the strategy shifts, so does the culture to enable the success of strategic objectives. Several organizations made an overnight shift from physical to a virtual world. While organizations in the infrastructure, transportation and manufacturing sectors, were dealing with existential crisis, those in the healthcare, food delivery, IT and telecom went on an overdrive. Employees took time to adapt to remote working. Work from home, which was a privilege and a differentiator for talent, became a norm – something no one was accustomed to.

Newer models of workforce

With hybrid workplace and continuous automation, we are observing increased demand for newer skillsets like cloud, cybersecurity, IoT, and data analytics. While **Telekom Malaysia Berhad** is aggressively inducting such skills to support new ventures and models, **HSBC Malaysia** is investing in building its own talent pool in few of these time critical skills. Alternatives to accessing these emerging skillsets through Gig model & Entrepreneurship were seen in the case of **Dabur India Ltd.**, through their program Dabur Yodha.

Tata Steel is actively evaluating such models to suit their operations. There is, however, an agreement, that using such models in a scalable manner will require investments in technology that facilitates identifying, reviewing and rewarding the Gig workforce.



We have redefined our leadership principles. We are focusing on digital transformation, flexibility and new ways of hiring. We are complementing this principle with certain game changers like agility, empowerment, purpose, and learning. With an average age of 31, we are making these principles relevant for our workforce.

MAHESH MEDHEKAR

Vice President Human Resources

Mercedes-Benz Research & Development India



HELIOTROPIC CULTURE

Flexible Work Culture

Empowerment is the centrepiece of delivering a Heliotropic Work Culture

The concept of hybrid work culture has been much debated. For many organizations, the concept of hybrid includes the methods of employee collaboration, which in turn facilitate exchange of knowledge and information. Organizations are experimenting with newer models of hybrid work culture and workforce configurations.

Building a flexible work culture

A widespread realization by organizations to be agile and responsive to external triggers was largely observed. This involved building flexibility and responsiveness in their work, worker, workplace strategies, workforce skillsets and decision-making processes. While there is an element of mindset shift, organizations like **Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC)**, expect to continue as a hybrid model, and feel as long as the employees are productive, there's no real problem.

Autonomy and empowerment

Getting work done in a virtual setting requires a totally different skill set. For managers, it meant trusting the employees to manage their time, and task completion with minimal supervision. Employees' experienced autonomy and empowerment, which they handled well by being more conscious of their time, and further stretched to achieve business objectives as well. Several organizations reported an increase in the workforce productivity while working remotely.

Organizations like **Aviva India, AMP, Top Glove Corporation Berhad, Knight Frank Australia, Sydney Opera House, Siam Commercial Bank** and **Hero FinCorp** have initiated this journey of providing autonomy to their workforce and trusting them with day-to-day decisions, a stepping-stone towards making the work culture flexible.



"We want to make our company an agile organization, less hierarchical and more end to end. We want to be a customer centric organization and give customers the priority they deserve. We also have the cultural transformational agenda to support this."

NARDRERDEE ARJ-HARNWONGSE
Chief People Officer, DTAC



HELIOTROPIC CULTURE

New Talent Assimilation into Virtual Culture

Workforce convergence with the larger organization ethos is an emerging challenge

IT, Banking and new age technology platform organizations have seen a growth in headcount during the pandemic. With new talent joining, organizations quickly solved the issue of virtual onboarding by way of process automation. The deeper challenge, however, was to assimilate the talent into the culture. This entails a shared understanding of work, ways of working, language and adoption of organizational practices. Owing to remote working, new joiners did not interface with the physical artefacts and practices which made it difficult for them to experience the culture, a challenge that organizations like **Wipro Ltd.** have realized, and are solving it through technology.

Changing business model also saw the induction of Gig workforce and freelancers. While such arrangements provided efficiencies in cost, organizations are forced to think about the induction of Gig workforce into their unified ways of working. Several organizations like **Tata Steel, upGrad, and Intrepid Group Asia** have expressed their intent to experiment with Gig workforce to support their strategy.

Accelerating talent assimilation

Advanced virtualization technologies like AR and VR are providing a near physical onboarding experience to employees. To supplement virtual onboarding, organizations like **Intrepid Group Asia**, are not just blending in-person meeting of the local team(s) to accelerate talent assimilation but also foresee mushrooming of entire cottage industry with offerings like reference check and job/culture fitment in hybrid setup.



“We would like to hire gig workers and freelancers in the coming times as they do not need to come to office regularly and they are not part of the benefits given to the permanent employees. They may work based on a certain project or certain assignment rather than working full-time only with us.”

AMRAN ZAKARIA

Head of Group Human Resources, Johor Corporation



LEADERS SPEAK



“Despite being in the manufacturing sector, we are also looking at different employment models and prospects of a gig workforce in our organization. While the contract workforce has been there for decades, we are working on trying to mobilize and start the concept of a gig workforce in many of our branches and getting engaged with employees working remotely.”



VIPIN SHARMA

Head HR – Strategy, Analytics & HR Innovation Labs, Tata Steel



We recognized that permanent remote working is not something that we subscribe to, due to the issues around cultural indoctrination and collaboration, but rather hybrid working model is the way to go which offers a balanced approach for both employees as well as the organization.

SIU MING HONG

Senior Vice President - Head People, Culture and Group Rewards, Great Eastern Life Assurance



The workforce to have a culture that is fluid and dynamic would be actually very important in the coming times. I believe that there will be shift in the use of technology in the workplace every 5 years.



AGAPOL NA SONGKLA

Chief People Officer, Thai Beverage PLC



We have engaged with management and implemented Work from Home Policy or Hybrid Model for functions that are able to do so. The WFH model is here to stay post pandemic therefore a holistic approach is needed to formulate policy and develop workable plans to adopt a hybrid work model in the long run.

BHUVANES KRISHNASAMY

Head of Group People & Culture IOI Properties Group Berhad





LEADERS SPEAK



We are currently working to change the mentality and trying to inculcate the notion of how we are all under the same umbrella, responsible for managing the culture, customer experience and finances.

ALLANNA KELSALL

Executive General Manager, People & Culture (Care Services),
St. Vincent's Health Australia



Employee experience will also help in building that advocacy, which then through a referral line attracts more candidates. With, friends coming into the organization, it also creates resilience within the batch.

NANANG CHALID

Vice President, People, Tokopedia



We have a very delivery - oriented meeting, where a lot of different decisions are taken and implemented immediately. We don't have to wait for the approvals. The decisions taken are percolated to the required personnel and the work starts to happen on it.

BIPLAB BAKSI

Executive Director and CHRO, Dabur India Ltd.



We train our people to get used to the tools as well as the new culture. We try to maintain the level of productivity we have implemented. We changed a lot of the processes from manual to automated. We are providing SIM card access to all employees along with a VPN to enable work from anywhere policy.

PATRAPORN SIRODOM

Chief People Officer, Siam Commercial Bank (SCB)





LEADERS SPEAK



Another area of focus for us is to manage culture change. The pandemic has facilitated the need for this cultural change. We need to train our workforce to be agile, be ready for changes, and to have a mind-set that things are not going to be static.

Dr. JACLYN LEE

Chief Human Resources Officer,
Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD)



Flexibility is going to be a key differentiating factor in attracting and retaining talent. Hybrid working model will be the norm in the future specifically for those working in offices (non manufacturing, location based and non sales) where employees may have more flexibility and freedom to decide the number of days they want to come to office or work remotely.

VISHAL DHINGRA

Human Resources Director, Goodyear India Limited



The biggest challenge for my organization is that we are putting a lot of systems and processes in place to have talent pathways, this has been done by default and not design.

MICHELLE EASON

Director-Organisational Development,
NSW Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network



Remote working for all the possible jobs would be more acceptable and new policies would come up that will increase the acceptability and adaptability of employees and organizations. The workplace in an office will continue to be relevant in our organization. The percentage of business that gets done and transacted online might go up, but brick and mortar retail will not disappear.

RAJ NARAYAN

Executive Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer
Titan Company Limited





THE BIG SHIFT #5

HUMANISING CONNECTEDNESS

BUILDING EMOTIONAL CONNECTEDNESS

Employer-Employee Relationships are becoming more human. Organizations are driving emotional connectedness by building trust with employees and clarifying performance expectations.

BUILDING VIRTUAL SOCIAL FABRIC

Interpersonal connections and social interactions lay the foundation of culture in any organization. This moving virtual, everyday connectedness is facilitated by technology. Organizations that blend human touch with technology are experiencing more effective connectedness and recreating their social fabric virtually.



HUMANISING CONNECTEDNESS

Best Practices

“Reaching out to employees staying alone or separated from their families due to the pandemic or the ones who tested positive and offering the required support, most of it done digitally.”

Hero FinCorp

“We developed a program known as work field happy campaign program which guided employees on how to better manage their personal finance and take care of their physical and mental wellbeing.”

Aviva India

“We connect twice as a leadership team in a week amongst ourselves. Monthly Townhalls at locations for all employees and Quarterly Global and Regional townhalls.”

Goodyear India Ltd.

“At the beginning of the pandemic, we started calling all our 9000 employees over a 1-0-1 call of 20-30 minutes to understand their needs and challenges.”

eClerx

“We will drive significant efficiencies in terms of human collaboration but there’s an element of being human – the empathy to deal with issues, I think that will be critical to manage especially in HR.”

Wipro Ltd.

“We used technology especially for communication, not only for our white collared people or executives, our factory managers and leaders connected with our workmen, and even their families using Facebook Live and other such tools so that we could keep our employees connected and engaged.”

Tata Motors Ltd.

“The biggest agenda we are having at this moment, when it comes to HR technology is developing tools around collaboration and engagement of employees. We have started using chat box in managing many of our employee queries.”

HSBC Malaysia



HUMANISING CONNECTEDNESS

Building Emotional Connectedness

Relational Capital is shaping the Future of Employer-Employee relationship

The human side of organizations came to the forefront during the pandemic. With the workplace getting distributed, there is a fundamental human need to connect with their peers. This connection once established, leads to trust between the employees as well as with the organization. It will also pave the way for seamless collaboration, learning and knowledge sharing. The trend of bringing empathy in conversations is observed all across. The importance of physical proximity can not be undermined.

Building relational capital

We have observed some very interesting practices of building social connections amongst the employees. **SP Setia Berhad**, one such organization allows bringing children and pets in virtual meetings every Friday. This de-stresses the environment and triggers social exchanges between employees resulting in relational capital. Similar initiatives were also observed in organizations like **Tata Motors Ltd.** (Counselling & telemedicine services), **Tata Steel** (having an already strong relational capital is exploring ways to build them through technology) and **AirAsia Berhad** (Crisis management and counselling).

Connectedness with the organization also has another dimension. **St Vincent's Healthcare Australia**, for example, is driving connectedness by way of clearly defined KPIs for all employees. This enables autonomous working and role clarity which is imperative when the workforce is operating in a virtual environment.

Building and sustaining connectedness with the Gig workforce remains to be a challenge. While organizations prepare to induct Gig workforce, they must also prepare to integrate them into their ways of working, beliefs and shared language to derive the most of newer work models.



“There was a lot of work required in the training of managers to help them understand how to lead in an empathetic manner using a digital medium, this was a big initiative we undertook.”

PREEMITA SINGH

Chief HR Officer & Head CSR, Hero FinCorp



HUMANISING CONNECTEDNESS

Building Virtual Social Fabric

Technology driving everyday Collaboration through Human Touch

In a physical workplace, organizations are concerned about creating an environment that facilitates collaboration, breaks silos and allows free and seamless exchange of information for faster decision making. While the same principles apply in virtual workplace as well, the methods and techniques of collaboration have changed. We have seen an increased adoption of collaboration platforms across industries and geographies. Organizations are leveraging them to break silo working and facilitate seamless execution of business objectives.

Blending technology with human touch

After heavily investing resources in upskilling workforce to adopt collaboration technology platforms, many organizations are realizing a need to complement it with human touch. Communication, delivered only “digitally” has risks of misinterpretation which can easily be mitigated through human touch. Physical workspaces provide ample opportunities for social and interpersonal interactions. Over time, these develop into trusted relationship amongst employees, creating a social fabric that enables getting the work done. Virtual social fabric we believe will be accelerated by blending technology with human touch.

Sustained remote working is also making it difficult for managers and team members to pick up signals of stress, anxiety, and need for help from the co-workers. This is triggering systematic practices of leadership connecting regularly with employees one-on-one. **Aviva India**, one such organization is systematically addressing this through its Happiness Campaign.

While technology is the foundation for everyday collaboration; organizations, going forward are exploring ways to maintain a personal connect with employees.



“Each country initiated a COVID task force and they had to take decisions as per the situation in their country. We were providing them with best practices that we were seeing implemented across our organization. We used technologies where we could get the reports immediately, as soon as we launch the survey to get a sense of the pulse of our employees.”

JOYDEEP BOSE

Managing Director & Group CHRO, Olam International



LEADERS SPEAK

“ We do not want to become a manually operated labour intensive organization but rather a one which focuses on constantly improving its processes, bring out automation to carry out different tasks and inculcate innovation in different activities. We are also using technology to connect with our customers.

SAXON FRANCIS

Director, Time Recruitment, MyRepublic Limited



Due to the pandemic, internal communication became not just a technical issue, but more a strategic issue as people were working remotely or had different slots to arrive in office. So, we needed to work to ensure that connectivity, collaboration and messaging gets aligned and indoctrinated in a very concise manner across the organization.

SIU MING HONG

Senior Vice President - Head People,
Culture and Group Rewards, Great Eastern Life Assurance



“ Our company has been up to date when it comes to digital initiatives but whether our employees are ready to embrace the grasp and share that with our clients is what we are figuring out.

ROWENA SUBIDO

First Senior Vice President and Group Head, Human Resources
Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC)





LEADERS SPEAK



Technology can be an enabler but cannot replace the human touch. So, we will have to make sure that we use technology to make routine work easier and help provide us insights which would otherwise not be available. There has to be an optimum balance between personal touch and technology, which would be a key strategic differentiator for an organization.

GOPINATH GOVINDAN

Director Human Resources, CLP India Pvt. Ltd.



Our team also dialled up our communication to a level we've never done before. We ran daily live streams for all our employees, we communicated on topics they needed to know about how we were supporting the people, what tools and tech was there for them, what seminars, extra leave and care was there for them. That ability just to connect with leaders on a daily basis became very important.

ALEX BADENOCH

Group Executive Transformation Communications and People, Telstra



We started planning a full-blown wellbeing campaign covering the whole gamut of wellbeing – mental, physical and financial. We sent care packs to 900 employees which included standee laptops, UV sanitizers and chairs, if needed; Provision of psychologists for employees; Activities like pixelated art and planting to get our people out of the workspace since the line between work and home is blurred.

CHAI PING CHUA

HR Director & Country Site Leader, Experian PLC





FUTURE LANDSCAPE



WORK MODELS

Need for Agility driving Experimentation

- » Building **organizational agility is becoming a necessity rather than a strategic choice**. Agile ways of capability building will drive the need to revisit established workforce models.
- » Existing workforce composition is **leaning towards digitally savvy talent**. Experimentation and adoption of newer model of deployment like Gig– both internal and external – will see more traction.
- » Digitally savvy talent will be **more productive in working remotely** and will thus fit well into future workforce strategies.

94% of the respondents believe that Hybrid working is the most optimal workforce model for future.

PRACTICAL ACTIONS

Organizations need to reassess the skill pool required for sustaining their competitive advantage. Accessing and utilizing the skill pool will be through experimentations in newer workforce models. Choice of a suitable model will depend upon the evolving business challenges and changing workforce priorities.



RE-ENGINEERING WORKPLACES

Rethinking Office Space

- » Parts of workforce will continue to work remotely, and most **organizations will adopt hybrid work models.**
- » **Rationalization of office space** will continue. Only roles requiring mandatory presence at workplace will use office space.
- » Office space will transition to become a **social hub –facilitating exchange of knowledge, socializing and ice breaking.**
- » Redesigning office space requires flipping the concept of physical workspace into one that **promotes ideas, innovation, connection and interaction.**

2 out of 3 organizations are dedicating in excess of 10% of their overall budgets.

PRACTICAL ACTIONS

Organizations need to re-evaluate the role of physical office spaces in facilitating employee interactions. The mindset of a dedicated and static workspace will shift to a more dynamic one. Organizations must formulate their strategies to enable seamless exchange of ideas and promote innovation. Physical workspaces are only a subset of the larger plan.



BUILDING RELATIONAL CAPITAL

Common thread for a Distributed Workforce

- » Deeper connectedness with organization will be emotional – one that forms on the foundations of **care, empathy and concern**.
- » Workforce getting distributed, regular physical interactions will continue to be scarce. **Emotional connection with organizations' purpose and beliefs** will unify the talent.
- » Leaders and Managers will have a critical role to play in **delivering the experience of empathy and care**.
- » **Virtual collaboration will be seamless** when peer-to-peer relationships are established; organizational culture must facilitate creation and strengthening of such relationships.

1 out of 5 organizations have already articulated a wellbeing strategy encompassing empathy and care to augment their relational capital.

PRACTICAL ACTIONS

Organizations need to reset their relationship with the workforce. The new age relationship will hinge upon how well they communicate and showcase their concern, care and empathy towards their workforce while working remotely. Practices need to be further strengthened in creating “virtual cohesion” amongst the workforce.



TECH DRIVING FUTURE OF SKILLS

Hybrid strategy built on Future Skills

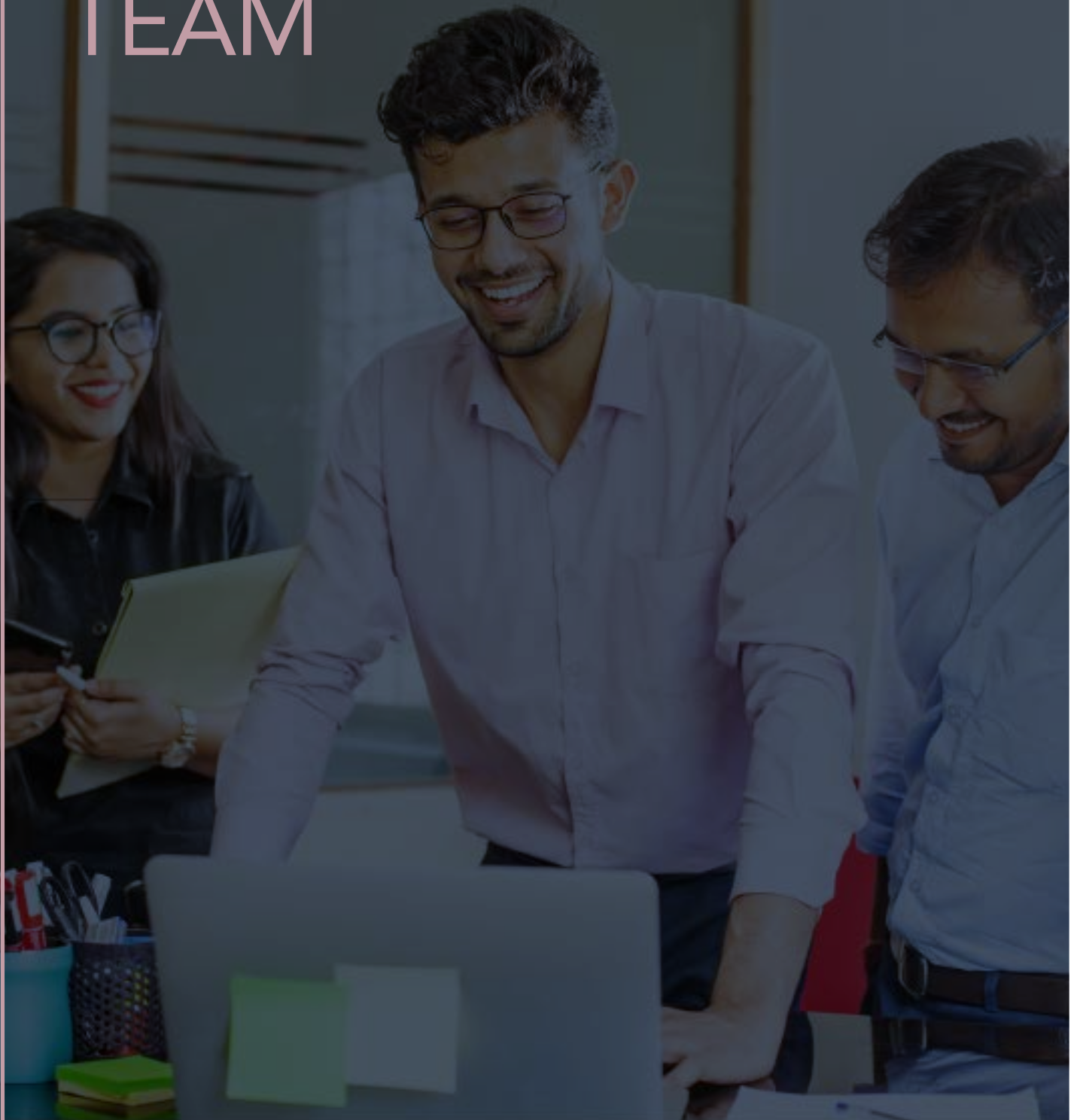
- » **Repetitive and rule-based tasks** across employee life cycle will be **automated**. HR will be expected to deliver the right EX.
 - » Changes in workforce composition will require different management skills. **Wider and deeper use of AI** across will drive talent decisions.
 - » **Breaking down work into micro-skills** will lead to time bound staffing choices. Creating a framework for Gig workers and leveraging their skills will be a key ask from HR in the future.
 - » A **psychological safe environment will encourage tech adoption, experimentation, change and learning from failure**. Leaders and Managers who do this will stand out.
- 1 in 4 organizations are channelizing investments in building efficiencies and future skills in their workforce.*

PRACTICAL ACTIONS

Technology has become a backbone of organizations in conducting their business and enabling collaboration. Organizations need to rethink the quality of work at the bottom of pyramid and reorganize work by blending functional skillsets with digital mindset.



RESEARCH TEAM



RESEARCH TEAM



SHAAKUN KHANNA
Head - HCM Strategy &
Transformation,
APAC, Oracle



ROWAN TONKIN
Senior Director,
HR Transformation,
Oracle



JOHANNES ECKOLD
Director, HCM Strategy
& Business Development,
ASEAN Oracle



HARDEEP SINGH
Head of HCM
Transformation,
Oracle India



PREETI MAHARA
Director Marketing,
Oracle India



SRINIVASAN KJ
SME,
SHRM India



SAURABH SINGH
Senior Knowledge
Advisor,
SHRM India



DEDEE PYA AJITH JOHN
Director - South
& Advisory Services,
SHRM APAC & India



ARCHANA JERATH
Director Operations,
SHRM APAC &
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ANNEXURE



METHODOLOGY

- 1. Identification of participating organizations:** Marquee organizations at the forefront of the industry in every country. 55 organizations were carefully shortlisted across India, ANZ and ASEAN countries and invited to participate in the study.
- 2. Qualitative data collection:** One-on-one interviews with the Leaders in HR and People function were conducted. Structured interview methodology was leveraged to gather responses and views on priorities for accelerating growth, challenges faced, role of technology in the new ways of working, avenues for technology investment and general future outlook.
- 3. Quantitative data collection:** The interviews were further supplemented by a short multiple choice survey capturing specific responses on technology investment priorities, and general business outlook.
- 4. Analysis:** Results of qualitative data collected were coded under the relevant questions. Subsequently, affinity exercise was conducted to arrive at the emerging themes in the study. The quantitative survey data was analyzed in parallel to reveal some insightful trends in business priorities.
- 5. Insights:** Emerging themes were synthesized from qualitative and quantitative data, to put together a comprehensive and insightful report depicting APAC trends and focus areas.

Workplace APAC 2021 is a joint study by SHRM and Oracle on the emerging trends in people and technology in accelerating growth.

CHROs / HR Heads participated from organizations across Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and India.

These organizations belonged to diverse industries ranging from traditional manufacturing and large organizations to new age SAAS firms. Diversity in participating organizations provided a holistic perspective of the emerging shifts.

DEMOGRAPHICS

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

India

- Aviva India
- Cipla Ltd.
- CLP India Pvt. Ltd.
- Cybage Software
- Dabur India Ltd.
- eClerx
- Force Motors Ltd.
- Goodyear India Ltd.
- HeroFinCorp
- Hindalco Industries, Aditya Birla Group
- IndiGo
- Mercedes-Benz Research & Development India
- Paytm
- Reliance Industries Ltd.
- Serum Institute of India Ltd.
- Tata Motors
- TATA Steel
- Titan Company Ltd.
- upGrad
- Wipro Ltd.

Australia & New Zealand

- AMP
- Ipswich City Council
- Knight Frank Australia
- Laminex Australia
- MYOB
- National Australia Bank (NAB)
- New Zealand Post (NZ Post)
- NSW Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network
- Ramsay Health Care Ltd.
- St. Vincent's Health Australia
- Sydney Opera House
- Telstra





ASEAN

- AirAsia Berhad
- Central Pattana (CPN) PLC
- DTAC
- Experian PLC
- Great Eastern Life Assurance
- HSBC Malaysia
- Intrepid Group Asia
- IOI Properties Group Berhad
- Johor Corp
- MBSB Bank Berhad
- MyRepublic Ltd.
- Olam International
- Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC)
- Siam City Cement
- Siam Commercial Bank (SCB)
- Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD)
- S P Setia Berhad
- Telekom Malaysia Berhad
- Thai Beverage PLC
- The Straits Trading Co Ltd.
- Tokopedia
- Top Glove Corporation Berhad
- Woh Hup (Private) Ltd.



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