

With change sweeping across every aspect of our lives, HR cannot afford to conform to traditional practices. It ought to be disruptive at its core.

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Lead the change

Technology has made inroads into the various facets of our lives, effecting a tremendous impact on our lifestyles, societies, economies, and the environment. To keep pace with the fast-changing world, we need to bring about changes in the way we deal with people, and with the systems and processes we have been pursuing for long.

We no longer live in insular societies where our social well-being is dependent on a set of known factors. Technological advancements have shrunk the world and our day-to-day lives are affected by happenings in countries far away. Also, we have come a long way from leading linear lives. As we moved from agrarian economies to the Industrial Age, we started leading multiple lives—the concept of work life and personal life emerged, and a need was felt to separate the two. However, there seems to be a palpable mismatch between the exponential growth of resources and the pace at which linear thinking is undergoing change, and this is causing disruptive stress.

How can we, as HR professionals, think exponentially to not only solve problems but also create something sustainable that will

contribute to the happiness and well-being of mankind in general. The country of Bhutan measures prosperity by determining its citizens' happiness levels, not the GDP. It is a developing country that has put environmental conservation and sustainability at the heart of its political agenda. In the last 20 years, Bhutan has doubled life expectancy, enrolled almost 100% of its children in primary schools, and overhauled its infrastructure. Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim too spoke in this vein, when he suggested a three-day work week—'with three work days a week, we would have more time to relax; for quality of life'.

Thirty years ago, HR systems ran on mainframes and were back-office systems built to automate, store, and manage employee data. They handled payroll and attendance, stored employee data, managed performance reviews and training administration, and drafted vacation policy. These systems, which were primarily used by HR managers, are automated, and hence accessed and handled by employees themselves.

Along with the processes, the need of the hour has also changed. People are no longer content looking for jobs; they look

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for experience. Moreover, recruitment systems today run on mobile phones and applying for a job is just a click away; online assessments are made and interviews conducted via

a smartphone's camera. The most attractive candidates may not prepare a resume—they would probably link to their LinkedIn profile. Therefore, it should be the HR department's aim to make recruitment software not just easy to use, but also fun.

Internal HR management systems of today are too complex, and this creates the need for an army of consultants to build self-service front-ends. The systems need to be simple and easy for people to update their status, find and take courses, complete onboarding for a new job, locate skilled professionals, assess candidates, and set or monitor goals.

The way we look at hierarchy has to change too. For example, US-based Fishbowl, a manufacturing and warehouse management solutions for QuickBooks, has two people for one leadership position. Every person is a leader, paired with another, and supported by a team, thereby promoting personal growth

and allowing twice as many people to have leadership opportunities. It also helps in fostering strong employee growth in addition to company and revenue growth.

The above example essentially questions the status quo. Most HR policies, processes, and benefits have been around for decades; they have served the industrial age, and in some cases even the agrarian economy. However, we now live in the knowledge age that is soon likely to transition into the space age, considering the growing interest in this direction. It is key to stay grounded and not forget the core reason for human existence—the endless search for good health, happiness, societal harmony, co-existence, and peace. It is imperative for HR professionals to be responsible for people, to acknowledge this fundamental truth, and usher in transformational practices. They have to look beyond rudimentary activities such as recruitment, induction, performance, policing, and partnering. This will entail thinking exponentially and disruptively, intensifying R&D in human behaviour, building a compelling perspective on economic prosperity, ensuring true happiness and environmental harmony, and keeping people at the heart of all decisions. ■



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