



ACCELERATING DIGITAL HR - THEN, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

A DIGITALLY TRANSFORMED WORLD POWERED BY HR TECH

Given the current work situation, the role of HR is not one that can be undermined. As the nature of work has completely shifted to the digital space, tech limitations and myths are being busted day after day, in a way where industries have forayed online, even if they'd never adopted tech historically. One of the major drivers of change has been the HR industry across businesses and organisations that have weaved in digital transformation seamlessly in their work culture and are taking the lead to ensure that employees are utilising this to the best of their potential.

Inspiring HR leaders and the gurus of HR tech, **Prasad Poosarla, CTO at BI WORLDWIDE**, **Sanjeeva Maithani, Vice President - Total Rewards, HR Technology, HRSS & Global Mobility at Zensar**, **Chitra Gupta, National Head Rewards at Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt Ltd.** and **Sanjay Dutt, Sr. V.P & Global Head of Capability Development and Digital HR Operations, EXL** speak on adopting technology and adapting to the new normal, while sharing their experiences.

HR TECH ADAPTS TO THE ONGOING MASSIVE CHANGE

KEEPING THE WORKFORCE ENGAGED, RECOGNISED AND REWARDED

By Prasad Poosarla, CTO at BI WORLDWIDE

The engagement experience has been undergoing a shift for a while now, owing to the advent of digital and gig employees. With the pandemic, a new type of workforce has emerged that is the remote workforce. While the gig and backend workforce continue to work remote, the low volumes of physical workforce are helping to train bots for all mundane processes, as a result there is a visible doubling up in the current situation.



Prasad Poosarla
CTO at BI WORLDWIDE

Fast forward

HR tech and the future

While the physical workforce will return in much higher numbers than what we see today, there is no going back to what the figures were, pre-COVID.

As we see a new set of remote employees, organisations plan rewards and recognition platforms to integrate them, but even as it accelerates further, we need to look into how to integrate it well. There are three phases to this:

Near phase transformation: Which needs to be done instantly. Employees here are engaged seamlessly and the turnaround time is faster.

- **Visual onboarding and off boarding:** Without meeting face-to-face was unheard of, but today it's all a virtual world.
- **Recognition:** To drive morale with achievements, the focus on recognition has increased.
- **Happiness Tracker:** Is everyone within the firm really happy and working towards a common organisational goal even while apart?
- **Virtual Celebrations:** For employees what matters most is being appreciated by managers in front of peers. We need to replicate that in the virtual world and give them that feeling of importance.
- **Virtual Manager Assistants:** There is a need for tools that give the manager nudges or advice on how to bring forth the recognition. The system should be an easy one with reminders going out to managers, so that they can further send and show appreciation to the employees at the click of a button.

Medium phase transformation: This is the preparation needed prior to the inflection point where we see the world leaving the pandemic behind.

ORGANISATIONS WILL HAVE TO BE READY WITH TECH AND OTHER IMPLEMENTATIONS FOR THE NEW NORMAL, WHICH CAN TAKE 6 MONTHS TO A YEAR, OR MAYBE LONGER.

Firstly, there will be a remote + physical workforce engagement model which means a sizeable workforce will continue to work remotely. We must ensure that in a remote model, employees can be recognised from anywhere, as a permanent feature in the working system.

Secondly, we need to work upon augmenting and virtualising reality, to make it available to the distant employees.

Thirdly, we must provide them with experiences and occasions that help them de-stress and reduce work monotony via virtual simple gaming solutions replicating what physical workforce can leverage in their respective offices. We need to think of every kind of workforce and focus on how to distort them from time to time and how to gamify these experiences.

Long phase transformation: The future is uncertain, and we don't know what the demographics might be, but transformation tech has got to gear up and be flexible to adapt and learn quickly.

- **Employee persona:** Employees have a different persona when travelling, working in office, or working from home. We need solutions in HR to identify the persona at that moment and have the ability to recognise and reward at that time. What will keep the person motivated will change based on where he is working from and what he is doing.
- **Micro-services-driven nimble architecture:** Make solutions so loosely coupled and nimble that you can quickly stitch together solutions that are personalized and can be modified on-the-go easily.
- **Real-time intelligent automation:** A person might be having a hard time on a certain day but may be a star performer on the others. Managers need a nudge to understand that the employee might need some help to boost his morale and that's where we need real-time individual automation through single view of employee across all systems hitting him and connecting back into rewards and recognition at the right time.

Activating your Employee Value Proposition

Adopting digital transformation

From decision day when a candidate decides to work for your organization to the first day of joining, the first few days of learning, everyday achievements, big or small, up to the referral day when he leaves and becomes your brand advocate - let all these be guided by VR, AI, micro-services and any long phase transformation. From an onboarding experience to being tagged based on his job role and personality. From understanding his emotions to entering the picture at the right time and making corrections, **we need data to speak and show whether value systems are actually being followed or not.** We need to make the investment now, to be ready for a post-Covid world and have tech solutions across the Employee Value Proposition.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION INVESTMENTS - THEN AND NOW

FOCUSING ON EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND ENGAGEMENT

By Sanjeeva Maithani, Vice President - Total Rewards, HR Technology, HRSS & Global Mobility at Zensar

Investment #1

App Design

We started our digital journey 4 years ago and had our processes to transform digitally. In the pandemic our focus shifted to what the immediate requirements were. **We designed an app and launched it across the organisation so employees could mark a tick regarding their well-being.** If they felt unwell, a message would reach the emergency response team and they'd check for COVID symptoms, following which the insurance team would get into action. If the person doesn't respond, the system sends a message to the manager, asking him to go and check up on the person. We used the same technology to manage movement among employees who needed to be on site, whether ours or the client's. Digital preparedness helped us a great deal.

Investment #2

Rewards and Recognition Programs

We hosted a CEO club awards show which was conducted on a digital platform in association with an organisation. The best of the best were picked and treated to a digital experience they'd remember for years to come.

YOU MIGHT DIGITALLY TRANSFORM EVERYTHING BUT UNLESS THERE'S A PERSONAL TOUCH, IT'LL RESULT IN DIGITAL FATIGUE.

So far, we have hosted 4 such shows, and we ensured that everyone celebrated with their families as the rewards, bouquets, and chocolates were sent across to the recognised employees. We also interacted with their families and their children to make them join in the celebration. It taught us not to drop some great initiatives for the lack of a platform.

Investment #3

People-driven programs

Look at processes from a customer's perspective, especially while onboarding one. You ask them to join the team and involve your end customers, associates, managers, and stakeholders to be a part of the transformation. If the onboarding requires different

teams, make sure the customer benefits from it in a way that even in case of a problem arising, one can help find a solution to it. Eventually ask all your customers whether the program benefited them, so as to get feedback for improvement.



Sanjeeva Maithani

Vice President - Total Rewards, HR Technology, HRSS & Global Mobility at Zensar

Investment #4

Enabling employee success

If your team leader or manager has been handling employees well offline, he will manage equally well, online too. On the other hand, if he isn't competent enough, he will amplify the problem because he isn't around. Make sure leaders and managers are getting enough support from the organisation to manage virtually. We personally have ensured that our teams undergo small training programs where they learn to be more sensitive, especially in current times. We encourage them to take breaks together and start and complete work by the same time, so timelines aren't stretched. Most recently, if an employee hasn't taken any leaves in 3 months, we send across their attendance records to their managers, so that they can be forced to go on leave and take a break.

ALL THE TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE 24X7, BUT WHAT MATTERS IS HOW WE IMPLEMENT THEM.

DRIVING RESULTS FROM DIGITAL DELIVERY AND EXPERIENCES

MACRO AND MICRO LEVEL ROI

By Sanjay Dutt, Sr. V.P & Global Head of Capability Development and Digital HR Operations at EXL

“On a macro level, as volatility has gone up boardroom agendas have shifted focus from efficiency and cost to resilience with low cost. Those who manage to do that will survive. Given the situation, overall employee job security has taken a hit, but HRs who have managed the volatility with great digital delivery have been able to get through it better than other organisations. That is truly the ROI that should be measured.



Sanjay Dutt

Sr. V.P & Global Head of Capability Development and Digital HR Operations at EXL

At a micro level, employee experience is a key driver to engagement. I believe employees will stay if you get them to do digitally just what they were willing to do physically. Digital needs to focus on employee engagement by making the overall digital process simpler.

CURRENTLY, WORKING ON DIGITAL HAS INCREASED 10-12 TIMES MORE THAN WHAT IT WAS PRE-COVID.

To me, companies that have served this new HR delivery form are keeping better benefits than others.

Make tech an enabler

Driving digital success with data

Companies need to understand that tech shouldn't be used only for the sake of it. Have a clear

transformation goal and objectives for using digital tech and transformation. Over the last six months, the digital phase has only revolved around growth and moving forward, but we still need to excel in certain focus areas.

UNDERSTAND WHAT THE NEW WORLD MEANS TO THE EMPLOYEES AND THEN DECIDE HOW TO COMBINE HUMAN AND DOMAIN EXPERTISE, COUPLED WITH TECH, TO DELIVER THE BEST.

At EXL, we haven't just digitised onboarding, but the HR digital transformation leaders also study different employee touchpoints and then try to transform it. Since there is no physical connect, we make sure they aren't missing out with small gestures, be it sending flowers to new employees or a thank you note to someone who has served us for years. The trigger sends a reminder to the manager who then, at the click of a button, sends across the wishes to the employee. Going digital generates a huge amount of data, so if you study this data and analyse it, you can enhance business decision making.

Re-skilling core competencies

Reaping the benefits with analysis

Since we don't know what'll happen tomorrow, we have the opportunity to actually re-imagine the future. This can be done via a deep understanding of the outside world. The first capability which any organisation hopes to build is an outside-in perspective. Study the market, do your research, understand the situation - with a better perspective, you're better prepared. Whether you are in HR or in any business or finance role, analysing data should be the second capability.

The third capability is business acumen. Since there are no boundaries and no departments anymore, everyone has to come together and work in an integrated manner. These three would combine the overall digital capabilities a firm needs to succeed.

CLEAR OBJECTIVES TO LEAD THE WAY

TECH PAVES THE WAY FOR LEARNING AND GROWTH

By Chitra Gupta, National Head Rewards at Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt Ltd.

All digital initiatives have 2-plan objectives - the first is to look at efficiencies and remove the mundane part. The second is to simplify lives and enhance overall employee experience. From personal experience, we saw a huge increase in adoption of the chatbots that we implemented.

All company-relevant communication was put out via a chatbot and we coupled that with a COVID health check where employees had to check in everyday and declare the health status, which was then tied back into the physical response system who called to check up on symptoms. We noticed that employees stayed truly connected via the chatbot.

The second success we noticed was with learning. An unprecedented amount of digital learning initiatives were incorporated and we observed great participation. **The employees clocked in 34,000 learning hours and the rate of participation went beyond 85%** and we loved that we could address each one which we otherwise couldn't in large classroom trainings. Some senior leaders even turned teachers and taught online classes.

Making a difference

Today and Tomorrow

When we set out on this journey, we knew that the front end was priority because that's where all the sales come in from. We targeted a lot of initiatives towards them, because the more time you provide to them for sales, the more revenue they bring in. We also have a lot of training and learning materials so they can build their skills on the go. With this, we connected with them and made them feel like a part of the journey.

Another solution is to provide them with reports of stocks, availability with the distributor, daily sales and more, which they can actually use for decision making at the right time. What continues to be a challenge though, is adoption. A lot of capability needs to be driven from the top management. So far, we have provided them with a rewards and recognition platform in partnership with BI WORLDWIDE, where they can execute it on the go and continue doing their job efficiently. The same goes for backend workers too. The idea is to connect the entire ecosystem via digital transformation.



Chitra Gupta

National Head Rewards at Hindustan
Coca-Cola Beverages

Planning long term

HR professional competencies

Business acumen is our key focus because we have people who work closely, albeit from a distance right now; for them to know the business is something that enables them to be much more effective is key.

I BELIEVE IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO JUST STAY CONNECTED WITH YOUR TEAMS, ESPECIALLY IN THE CURRENT VIRTUAL WORLD.

Having coffee sessions and moving away from the workplace is now lost, so that is something we need to replace. How do we find ways not just in HR but as leaders, to really stay connected with our teams and go beyond work-related aspects? Eventually, we just need to be role models for everyone else, across all these aspects.

Sharing their final thoughts on the subject, the leaders agreed that some of the major changes adopted by organisations, that are here to stay, include digital learning, a remote workforce, virtual management of engagement, and the flexibility of being able to operate from anywhere.

Digital transformation is currently being led by HR tech, and seems like it is here to stay.