

A woman with long dark hair, wearing large teal over-ear headphones and a light green button-down shirt, is seated at a wooden desk. She is looking down at a laptop and holding a pen over an open notebook. The background is softly blurred, showing a warm, indoor setting with a potted plant.

# CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP NUDGES

## TO LEAD IN THE TIMES OF DIRECT TO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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Organisations have invested years in shaping up the leadership behaviours and in building a culture of high performance and committed workforce. All of this is at stake today, owing to the ongoing pandemic – one of the biggest health crisis ever – Covid19, pushing every organisation to think differently about their leader behaviours to build a resilient organisation, and a thriving culture.

From open door policies to independent work from home desks, from conference room to dinning table virtual meetings, from a group yoga class to virtual well-being sessions – everything has gone the virtual way. The overall connectedness is in question.

**Dr. Brad Shuck, Strategic & Academic Partner BI WORLDWIDE & Program Director HR & OD, University of Louisville, KY along with Sumit Taneja, VP and Global Rewards Head, WIPRO and Ashok Rai, Director HR, Altran** have put together their point of views across the new leadership behavioral nudges , how organisations are pivoting to digital and role of leaders as torchbearers in digital 'culture' transformation.

# WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO NOW TO PREPARE FOR TOMORROW

## RESEARCH BASED PERSPECTIVE ON LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORAL NUDGES

By **Dr. Brad Shuck**, *Strategic & Academic Partner BI WORLDWIDE & Program Director HR & OD, University of Louisville, KY*

Globally, there remains an urgent need to pivot to a digital, — and in most cases — remote workforce. Work that at one time was done in an office is now being completed on dining room tables and with the need to balance new demands. New routines. New distractions. New requirements. Working from home has been a new reality that almost every employee, in every industry, in every part of the globe has faced.

### **BILLIONS OF EMPLOYEES ARE STARING DOWN THE REALITY OF A VERY NEW EXPERIENCE OF WORK.**

The face-to-face connection and community that was once the heartbeat of organisational culture has shifted. If we are not careful, the value propositions that defined the competitive advantage of many organisations could be diluted.



**Dr. Brad Shuck**

*Strategic & Academic Partner BI WORLDWIDE & Program Director HR & OD, University of Louisville, KY*

Our newest research at the University of Louisville (Louisville, KY) is shedding light on this new reality. Preliminary results suggest that the more each employee feels a part of the social experience of work — the more they are connected to a community that they find meaning in — the more likely they are to stay, offer creative ideas, and navigate the uncertainty of what work will look like. On the other hand, the more disconnected and isolated they feel, the more likely

that are to withdraw, struggle with focus, and perform at lower levels. The pride in work is gone — and the fire they once had for work that was enthusiastic becomes extinguished.

Three quick leadership behavioral nudges could shed light on what leaders can do to navigate through the next few months.

#### **Leadership Behavioral Nudge #1**

##### **Create a Silo Busting Culture**

Instead of keeping information in silos, leaders have to become facilitators who accelerate the sharing of information across a networked organisation, that is now increasingly digital and using technology in new ways. This requires a leader to pivot the internal value proposition from I and Me to We and Us. It changes the organisational narrative, and leaders must lead from the front and tell a new story.

#### **Leadership Behavioral Nudge #2**

##### **Encourage Collaboration that Develops Followership**

The size and quality of a network, not a formal title, determines how much power and influence a leader ultimately has. It also determines how much a leader can get done in a digital context. Building opportunities for collaboration not only strengthens employee engagement, but also allows leaders to build their network and followership. This creates tremendous security that allows leaders to make tough decisions that might otherwise jeopardise their livelihood and builds toward the future. Security is what employees need right now.

#### **Leadership Behavioral Nudge #3**

##### **Clarify the Path to Drive Meaning**

Creating meaning in a digital context means ensuring that employees at all levels understand how day to day work is aligned with the overall mission and purpose of the organization. Without predictable and consistent cues about how goals and expectations are communicated, and whether there is a high degree of fit, the value proposition of work becomes difficult to see. Without a leader clearly communicating — and rewarding — the important milestones and goals, it is left up to an employee, who is remote, working in a new context, and who could be distracted, to define the priorities. The more a leader can point employees to a direct line of sight — and recognise work that aligns with organisational priorities — the more likely employees are to remain engaged.

# HOW ORGANISATIONS ARE PIVOTING FROM DIRECT TO DIGITAL

## LEVERAGING THE CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS TO ENGAGE THE VIRTUAL WORKFORCE

By **Sumit Taneja**, VP HR and Global Rewards, WIPRO

### Reflection on the New Leadership Behaviours

Couldn't agree more on the points made by Dr. Brad. I will add what we are seeing on a day to day basis - employees are feeling lost, stressed and don't know where all this is leading to. The news of impact on people affected by Covid, it's rapid spread is aggravating this stress. The normal coping mechanism are completely not working in a lockdown scenario. And in stressful situations to keep employee motivated requires that they have a larger picture to depend on - That's why purpose becomes highly important, they want to look up to the role models and leadership behavior is scrutinized even more at times like these of pandemic

**WE DID A SURVEY AT WIPRO, WE HAD APPROX. 50000 RESPONSES AND IT WAS INTERESTING TO NOTE THE TWO QUESTIONS WHICH SCORED LOWEST WERE - EMPLOYEE FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO MANAGE A WORK LIFE BALANCE AND EMPLOYEES WANTED TO BREAK WFH AND COME SOON TO WORK.**

I would like to add here two important points:

#### **Communicate - Clearly, and Repeatedly to Drive Meaning**

In times of stress negative news impacts much faster so leader in these times has to learn to over communicate. This does not mean adding few more Teams or Zoom calls but keeping everyone updated on all the decisions company is taking and clearly explaining why.



**Sumit Taneja**

VP HR and Global Rewards, WIPRO

Let me explain with an example, like all companies we have taken some decisions on policy changes to cope up with the impact on business, what we have witnessed is if not explained well a seemingly simple harmless change is not well received by employees.

#### **Practice Empathy to Encourage Collaboration**

Secondly because there is stress every leader must therefore start thinking how I not add more to stress. What needs to change in my operating style and how can I be more empathetic. A great example comes from one of the leaders at Wipro who has never been easy to speak with and how he learnt to be more empathetic - he mentioned it took him only two genuinely asked questions - how are you doing? and how could I help? to have a lot more relaxed and empathetic conversation.



## Major Changes While Pivoting To Digital

Interestingly in the initial days we saw increased collaboration as I guess crisis gave a lot of meaning to people and they got together to get operational from WFH. For a company of our size it was surprising to see various teams – HR, Legal, Operations, Delivery, IT coming together in no time to enable 95%+ employees to work from home in a week or so.

**AT WIPRO, WE ALSO SAW A LOT OF INNOVATION IN HOW WE DELIVER FROM WFH – WHAT CYBER SECURITY PROTOCOLS, DELIVERY MECHANISM THAT PUTS CUSTOMERS AT EASE, AND HOW TEAMS WILL WORK TOGETHER IN WFH SCENARIO.**

However, large work was required to be done on training managers and leaders.

When the pandemic started I was in a Business partner role, it was amusing to see that 3 different unit leaders were so uncomfortable with WFH that they all started daily stand up to capture how many hours were worked by each team while at home and questioning why not full hours, few of the managers released daily forms to be filled asking minute details on how you spent your work day at home. Managers, Leaders were very uncomfortable and instead of building trust and relationship they were destroying it. Many managers did not know how they can add value and added umpteen reviews over video calls. These managers had to be taught how to behave in the new ways, they had to be taught new skills, given simple Do's and Don'ts to practice. Again kudos to training teams they came up with DIY learning kits, video modules for managers and employees to cope up with this change.

Leaders also had to be taught digital tools, personally I have had to explain to a few CXOs on how to screen share, and manage Video call features. However now the comfort is so much that they have started enjoying video calls, and want each call to be a video call!!!

Lastly in our experience some decisions to keep operations healthy were inevitable. However, the flip side was the negative news over mass media, social platforms were shaping how employees were thinking and we had to learn quickly to communicate well to a large audience through this platform and take control. This brings us back to my first point on how stress can impact individual perception and one has to learn to deal with negativity.

## Greatest Successes Over The Last 4-5 Months

Surprisingly collaboration over matters to sail through crisis has increased. We had a good quarter result and it was a direct factor of cross functional leaders' focused and collaborative approach to the new normal. At Wipro, it was heartening to see leaders who always had opposing objectives – Revenue vs Cost were on the same table and looking at the issue comprehensively. Leaders not travelling, comfortable on Video was a blessing to get them together despite time zone differences and busy schedules.

We also saw BCP teams and HR teams able to quickly create solutions for large employees to get settled in the new ways – few examples are training modules for managers, enabling work from home, etc.

Also saw leaders adapting and realizing, for a well-distributed workforce like ours, how effectively technology can be used. We are undergoing a cultural transformation and our Chairman has covered more than 3K employees across the globe through online workshops. This was unthinkable earlier.

## Trends Coming Over In Next Few Months

As I see it, the Hybrid model is going to stay. By hybrid I mean for some days in office and some days at home. Complete office or complete WFH model won't be sustainable. More WFH but office is going to stay.

What this will do is add a lot of pressure on managers. They will be required to build new skills to manage remote workforce, the new norms will have to be built on how to manage – simple rules – when to put video call, when can one skip meetings, when to not disturb, etc. Moreover, managers will need to figure how to build quality relationships even when they are not meeting in office as often.

If I have to give some advice to managers I will suggest to focus on three principles: Don't add to the stress, Build quality of relationship with teams and peers and communicate as much as possible – don't get worried of overcommunicating.

# WHAT'S THE ROLE OF LEADERS TO ENABLE DIRECT TO DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

## AS TORCHBEARERS IN DIGITAL 'CULTURE' TRANSFORMATION

By **Ashok Rai**, Director HR, Altran

It is more important than ever for leaders to be authentic, be responsive to the needs of their people (& their families), provide clarity & create focus, generate energy and help people develop.

It is imperative for leaders to, first, manage the primary concerns of their people: Job security, Health and Safety, access to IT infra while working from anywhere etc. and contribute to the society with whatever support possible. And then focus on additional aspects to enable the digital 'culture' transformation.



**Ashok Rai**  
Director HR, Altran

### Ensure That The Company Culture Survives

With remote working expected to continue for long and even then not all employees will be returning to offices (several employees will continue to work remotely with changes in work models), it is imperative for leaders to ensure that employees continue to live the same set of values that they were living before. For instance, team work and collaboration is still happening in the same spirit, employees are taking accountability, they are still having fun while they are working remotely, they are appreciating each other etc. At Altran, we have launched several initiatives in line with this context.

### Strengthen The New Muscle - 'Virtual Connection'

Connecting with people virtually all the time is tricky, building trust is difficult.

**TO ENSURE PEOPLE CONTINUE TO TRUST MANAGERS, THEY MUST DO REGULAR COMMUNICATION AND GIVE A PERSONAL TOUCH TO THE COMMUNICATION WHENEVER REQUIRED.**

And in future, with expected increase in the workforce diversity (more Part-time employees, more Freelancers, more women joining workforce with remote work being an option), and several of them working remotely, strong 'Virtual connection' muscle will be the game changer for leaders.

### Leaders Must Have A Digital Mindset

A better digital strategy is required for fueling the transformation and growth. With work from anywhere becoming a new norm, digital platforms that are accessible 24x7 from anywhere, are robust enough to meet Customer & security demands and are ready for future of work, is need of an hour. Leaders also need to break silos and empower their people with intuitive and user-centric tools.

### Pre-Covid Or Post Covid, Future Is 'Intelligent Industry'

It is applying digital technologies to connect the entire end - to - end industrial value chain from design, research & development, and engineering, through to production, operations, supply chain and support – realizing the inherent value of data within manufacturing and the wider industrial world. With that, **Products become smart, Factories become smart and Resource use becomes smart.** Future being the 'Intelligent Industry', leaders who lead digitally will have an edge.