

The Evolving Needs of Our Employees and the Way We Work

The pandemic has caused great disruption in our lives and has brought about profound changes in the way we function as a society. As a result, the corporate world has been confronted with certain gaps in its fabric, impelling companies to swiftly adapt themselves to the new landscape.

The HR representatives have been at the helm of driving these changes for companies. In the post pandemic era, the focus of HR practices has shifted towards sustainability and the well-being of employees. Today, most HR goals are grounded in longevity, relevance, and sustainability. It is imperative to discuss and evaluate the multifaceted needs brought to the fore by the pandemic and highlight the importance of acclimating to the evolving demands of our workforce.

Increased Sense of Purpose

One significant aspect that ties together the changing landscape and HR's role in driving the changes is the increasing emphasis on a sense of purpose. While previous generations sought stability in their careers, millennials have shown a greater inclination towards finding meaning and purpose in their work. The COVID-19 pandemic has only served to amplify this focus on purpose, as individuals reflect on the impact and contribution their work makes to society. With this shift in mindset, organizations must proactively address the need for purpose-driven initiatives to attract and retain millennial talent. There is an increasing demand witnessed from employees who want work that is meaningful, customers that want brands that inspire, and societies that want companies that are responsible.

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According to a study by Cone Communications*, a whopping 64% of millennials won't take a job if a potential employer doesn't have strong corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, and 88% say their job is more fulfilling when they're provided opportunities to make a positive impact on social and environmental issues. Similarly, 33% of consumers choose to buy from brands with a social or environmental purpose.

Embracing a purpose-driven approach not only aligns with the values of current and future employees but also appeals to socially conscious consumers or clients, creating a win-win situation for both the company and its stakeholders. Therefore, companies must have a defined sense of purpose if they want to provide a holistic experience to their employees.

Empowering Employees to Focus on Work-Life Balance

Nowadays, the well-being of employees and their families takes center stage as a critical aspect of a holistic work experience. Considering the rising medical inflation and the financial impact of the pandemic, companies have recognized the significance of comprehensive medical and life insurance benefits, as well as supportive parental schemes.

By prioritizing the well-being of employees, companies not only demonstrate a genuine concern for their workforce but also provide a valuable safety net during times of uncertainty. Furthermore, the provision of parental schemes acknowledges the needs and responsibilities of employees. Offering comprehensive parental leave policies, flexible work arrangements, and childcare support can significantly contribute to employee satisfaction, retention, and work-life balance. By valuing the well-being of employees and their families, companies foster a supportive and inclusive environment that nurtures loyalty and commitment.

* [Cone Communications Millennial Employee Engagement Study](#)
Cone

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Flexibility has become a fundamental aspect of work culture. For instance, one of my friends got a call from a large Indian company with over a billion-dollar revenue but the conversation ended as soon she got to know that they work alternate Saturdays and all days of the week from office! Organizations must recognize the evolving needs and expectations of the workforce in order to attract and retain top talent. Embracing flexibility in terms of work hours, remote options, and alternative work arrangements is imperative for companies to remain competitive.

Upleveling Employees

In their quest for career advancement, employees actively seek opportunities to enhance their skillsets, enabling them to progress swiftly within the corporate hierarchy. By offering comprehensive training programs that not only address the immediate needs of their current roles but also embrace future-oriented knowledge, companies can significantly enhance employee satisfaction. Equipping individuals with skills that are relevant to the evolving landscape ensures symbiotic growth, benefiting both the employee and the organization.

While creating a conducive environment for overall well-being is essential, it is equally important to recognize and nurture qualities such as grit, tenacity, and resilience. By prioritizing the cultivation of these attributes, organizations can empower employees to embrace challenges, persist through obstacles, and view failures as opportunities for growth. More and more employees today are appreciating organizations who empower their growth mindset.

Creating a Culture of Ownership

The prosperity of both an organization and its employees rely on the cultivation of an environment that fosters new ideas and encourages innovation. Therefore, it is essential for HR and senior management to collaborate in creating a conducive atmosphere that supports these endeavors. Additionally, for an organization to successfully achieve its objectives, it is imperative that employees take ownership of and champion these goals.

Inclusive Diversity: An Essential Mandate

Inclusive Diversity is the most fundamental HR practice that not only promotes social equity and fairness but also fuels long-term organizational success. By nurturing an inclusive and diverse workforce, companies create a resilient foundation that adapts to evolving challenges, fosters innovation, and attracts top talent, leading to sustainable growth and competitive advantage in the dynamic business landscape. Recently at Alvarez and Marsal India, we implemented a 2-month paternity leave for new fathers (from 2 weeks) and emphasized on fathers taking equal responsibilities alongside the mothers. It is important for companies to play a role in defining society and its norms.

Emphasis on Empathy

Ultimately, a strong sense of empathy is indispensable in achieving holistic success. As we go through tough times, struggle with burnout or find it challenging to find happiness at work, empathy can be a powerful antidote and contribute to positive experiences for individuals and teams. As HR managers, the primary objective is to comprehend the employees' perspectives, desires, and effectively align their needs with those of the organization.

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A 2021 survey by a leading consulting firm confirmed that 90% of US workers believe empathetic leadership leads to higher job satisfaction and 79% agree it decreases employee turnover. Another research conducted by Tracy Brower a Phd candidate's article published in Forbes indicated that demonstrating empathy is not just limited to creating positive people experience but also significantly impacts innovation and retention. Empathy today tops the list of skills that leaders must have.

Empathy and compassion serve as the essential elements that empower us to become accomplished people managers, fostering meaningful connections and facilitating mutual growth.

Building a Sustainable Future

Together, all the above aspects form the cornerstones of sustainable HR practices, enabling organizations to thrive, adapt to change, and create a positive impact in the long run. The rising emphasis on employee well-being in organizations reflects a growing recognition of the symbiotic relationship between individual and organizational growth. As more organizations adopt practices that prioritize employee happiness and development, they understand that the success of the organization is intricately linked to the well-being and growth of its employees. Investing in employee well-being becomes a catalyst for mutual growth, where the success of the individual and the organization become intertwined, leading to a brighter and more sustainable future.



Nimisha Rana Pathak

Nimisha Rana Pathak is the HR country head for Alvarez and Marsal India ltd. She and her team are responsible for designing and driving initiatives for A&M India that makes it a state-of-the-art firm with evolved and sustainable people organization. Prior to her current role, Nimisha was the HR business head for The Boston Consulting Group, India, and before that she worked with Accenture consulting for a span of 7 years.

Her 16 years of HR experience across various consulting firms, has given her a unique perspective about this industry and has helped her carving the most appropriate people agenda for the firms. During her tenure at A&M India, Nimisha has seen the headcount grow double and the Human Resource function has developed a holistic approach to deliver people solutions. Nimisha comes with an undying zeal and passion for her job and is known to possess energy that is infectious. She is known to be a people's leader. A leader who brings with her the right blend of technical, sectoral and people skills. With a career spanning over 16 years, she believes in providing a customized experience to every individual in the firm.