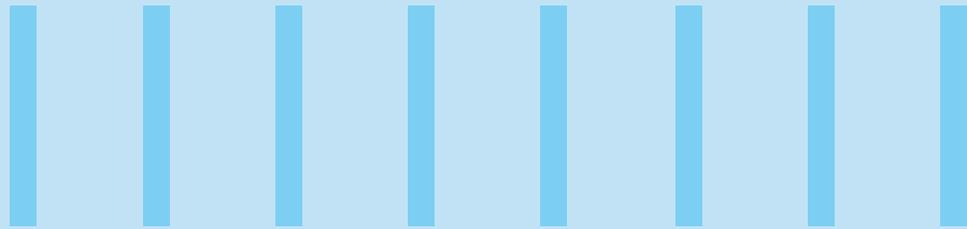




## REIMAGINING THE HR FUNCTION IN THE POST-COVID ERA



The COVID-19 pandemic has proved how critical employees are for an organization's success – for they define an organization's resilience and its ability to endure a crisis. An earlier point of view, "[The resurgence of human capital](#)" captures how this shift in a company's mindset occurred.

Not only has the priority accorded to employees elevated, but the recent turn of events has also reset work trends. In this context, HR leaders must evaluate the employee lifecycle from planning to recruitment, management, performance and experience in a completely different way. These trying circumstances have pushed organizations to seek digital ways to provide better employee experience and keep morale high. At the same time, HR practitioners must understand the permanent changes that organizations will experience and get ready for it.

We predict five pivotal changes -

1. **Amplify the skills of an individual** – an employee was expected to possess a narrow set of skills aligned to the job function they were performing when working in an office environment. The virtual office environment of the last few months has necessitated a significant shift. Now, employees must display a wide range of skills depending on their role, including cognitive, leadership, social and digital skills. The reasons for this expectation are simple.
  - a. Those employees with good communication skills and who are adaptable and resilient are navigating the uncertain situation better.
  - b. Employees must now be digitally-savvy and trained to work effectively from remote. In addition to the technological skills, we believe a need for a common communication

language will surface and expect the English language to fulfill that need.

- c. As automation renders certain skills redundant, organizations will need their employees to upskill and reskill in adjacent areas.
2. **Engage in more dialogs with automations** – HR practitioners will experience an exponential increase in the volume of communication as an offshoot of a virtual office environment. During stressful times, more communication helps dispel anxiety to some extent. Every interaction will be of a longer duration to compensate for the dearth of in-person conversations. Consequently, technologies that simulate human behavior, such as voice assistants, will gain favor. Another technology that will play a key role is the Internet of Things (IoT), as voice-based interactions with devices increase.



**3. Safeguard your employee's mental health** – Organizations globally acknowledge that employees are more stressed than ever owing to the pandemic. This situation has compelled employers to go beyond their usual support mechanism for physical health and venture into mental health. Employees now spend long hours at work, handle more emails and calls, and are forced to alter the way of working, including how they structure their schedule in the new context. Unfortunately, not every employee can cope with these sudden and massive changes.

Companies recognize that an employee's professional success is aligned with their physical and mental wellness. Mental health will no longer be a confidential matter as employers offer support, and employees accept it. Helplines are reactive at best, and we expect more

proactive measures to strengthen social and emotional skills. Examples include institutionalized mental health checkups like a physical checkup, more holistic testing of candidates during recruitment using engaging formats such as gamified assessments and adoption of wearables.

**4. Become a tech-savvy organization** – with new norms such as remote working and social distancing here to stay for the foreseeable future, the reach of technology in regular activities will increase. Technology solutions can balance seemingly conflicting priorities. For instance, it can nurture the organizational culture in virtual workplaces but with less human or physical contact. Artificial intelligence, automation and self-service technologies will drive employee onboarding, collaboration and engagement.

**5. Go beyond boundaries** – HR functions must prepare themselves for fundamental changes in the way they operate in addition to an expanded role. Gone are the days of a fixed schedule; instead, companies and employees will focus on outcomes. As boundaries between personal and professional lives blur in the virtual work environment, employees will need flexibility around their schedules. A recent study by the Adecco Group confirmed this shift<sup>1</sup>. In another complete switch from traditional practices, organizations will lean towards gig workers to tide over the uncertainty in the business environment. Finally, HR processes must gear themselves to address a significant increase in governmental regulations and laws, especially data privacy issues. For example, how will organizations handle employment related rules when working with a gig workforce? Problems of this nature are bound to occur.



## Closing thoughts

The HR function is in for a significant transformation. Organizations must question the efficacy of human capital management (HCM) software to take on this wave of change. Present-day HCM software is not designed to address these new requirements. If organizations aspire to thrive in a post-COVID era, they must

start acting now. System integrators like Infosys can play a vital role in building solutions that help organizations bridge the transformation chasm. Infosys possesses an intimate understanding of the client context, enabling it to construct a critical bridge in the form of customized solutions.



## About the Author



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Jitendra is an Industry Principal with Infosys and has invested 26 years in HR domain and IT consulting across different industries and countries. While he manages SAP SuccessFactors practice globally for Infosys, he also is an active mentor for new breed of consultants, while propagating the diversity mantra in leadership situations. In his spare time, he is an avid reader of short stories.

## References

1. Resetting Normal: Five Trends in the Post-Pandemic Workplace

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