

A peek into organizations of the Future and the Role of the Human Resources Function in them

Aparna Sharma—Former Country Head- HR Lafarge India, has worked across sectors in large companies like Monsanto, Novartis, UCB (a biopharma company) and Deutsche Bank Group helping them to grow profitably as well as maneuvering them through the rough waters of mergers and acquisitions. As a thought leader, she has authored a book - “Reality Bytes – The Role of HR in Today’s World” which has also been translated in Hindi now. She has also presented many papers in domains across HR. In this first excerpt of her interview ,she tells us with great clarity what organizations of the future are going to look like and HR’s role in them.



What do you think the organizations of future are going to look like?

We have already evolved from hierarchical ones to flat and decentralized organizations.

- 1) **A network structure will evolve in the future.** It will be a neural network linking people with similar goals. Thoughts and ideas will be exchanged and everyone will have not just authority but also responsibility and accountability to deliver business objectives.
- 2) **The competency levels needed would be much higher** and hence there will be emphasis on upskilling or reskilling people.
- 3) Traditional roles will be less than ever . There will be **power sharing**, everyone will be a leader.
- 4) **People will be assessed on their work outcomes.** Bell Curves are already being done away with , in a few organizations. Organizations will become more amoebic; evaluation processes will become more informal with continuous assessments.
- 5) **Appraisals will be real time** and 360 degrees. Will be outcome and milestone based; independent of mid-year or year-end reviews.
- 6) **Organizations will become experimental** in their structure. Technology is helping transform people and processes and will continue to become a **way of life**. Technology will act as a driving force for HR innovations. It will help to find the right people (**Attract**), **Connect**, **Engage** & even **Replace**

What will be the role of HR in future organizations?

- 1) **HR will see lesser people and more AI in traditional roles** with processes getting more digitized. **HR will handle multiple roles- in short ABC which stands for – Ally (Strategic), Business Partner & Coach, Counselor, Consultant.** Hence, they need to be differently wired as such roles do not come naturally to HR folks. They need to become role models , walk the talk and do higher order stuff.
- 2) **HR professionals need to be reborn with a fresh mindset and evolved skill sets to deal with future challenges** which do not have text book solutions. Mere adaptation will not work. We need to break the mould and start from ground zero as it will be a totally different world. So, instead of getting insecure about AI taking over, we need to reskill ourselves to perform the above mentioned five(5) roles. Dealing with ambiguity will be a core competency for any HR person to survive and succeed.

How will people train for such roles?

1) **Functional specialization of HR** will be reduced.

2) **Mindset and skillset to move between HR and Business will be required.** Whoever performs better stands a better chance. The ability of HR people depends on their willingness to unlearn conventional thinking and embrace the ambiguity of business.

3) **Flexibility, adaptability and functional agility are important** to prevent other professionals from business in taking over HR roles.

4) **Training will be purely experiential** requiring risk taking from HR folks. Unfortunately, the HR mindset, thought processes and execution have been too straight jacketed since they are used to going by the book. **They would need to increase their risk taking ability rather than viewing this as criticism.**

Is there anything else you would like to tell our readers?

I am very excited about the challenges posed by the current business environment as it is a great opportunity for HR and other professionals to come up with path breaking solutions; I hope everyone else is too ! The future will become present very soon and we need to be mentally prepared so that it doesn't come as a shock.

I wish all of us leaders all the very best in this journey of exploration and discovery of venturing into an unknown future. May we develop the resilience to deal with the ambiguity which will emerge. I am sure we will rock and cross the bridge together. I want take as many people as I can with me. We shall "overcome" and deal with it together.