

CHALLENGE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

PROFESSOR AHMED SHAIKH

Researcher and the Managing Director of Regent Business School

The Polycrisis, the Skills Revolution and
Higher Education in a highly disruptive world.



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HR SUMMIT a beeg success!

As a musician, I am very familiar with the concept of an orchestra in which musicians all play their different instruments according to their particular part of the music score under the guidance of a conductor. When that happens, beautiful music is created.

And the same was true at the HR Summit – all of our different partners played their roles to perfection on one day, in one venue and for 2 421 delegates!

There were the speakers doing their thing in the Conference Rooms, the earnest discussions in the small group workshops (the Fishbowls), the one-on-one discussions with experts in the Solutions Cafés and the product demos at the exhibition stands (Demo Pods). And let's not forget the professional associations (ICFSA, IPM, SABPP, SARA, SIOPSA) who hosted their sessions in the evening.

Together, we put on a united front for the HR profession in South Africa and ... created magic!

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. For a sample of the feedback I received, please see the report back on the HR Summit in this issue.

Were there things that didn't work out as well as they should have? Of course! And we listened very carefully to any feedback that helped us identify what we need to do next time. In addition, we've already come up with plans to address and improve on this year's event.

Over the years, the HR Summit has gone through a number of iterations and will continue to do so as we continually tweak our format and formula to make next year's event formidable!

We are nowhere near running out of ideas and next year's HR Summit will therefore top this year's event as we apply the principles both of science and art to staging next year's HR Summit.

A big thank you to every participating partner company and to every delegate who attended the HR Summit. Some travelled from the furthest corners of our country, with some from even further afield, like the LinkedIn team, who travelled from Ireland.



The learning, the conversations, the networking, the relationship building and the professional growth that took place all on one day was phenomenal

I can't wait for next year's HR Summit!

But your learning can continue in the meantime as you absorb the expertise, knowledge and wisdom our local and global thought leaders share in this month's issue. In our Cover Story on page 8, Professor Ahmed Shaikh, Researcher and Managing Director of Regent Business School emphasises the need to train and retrain – advise we would all do well to take to heart! ■



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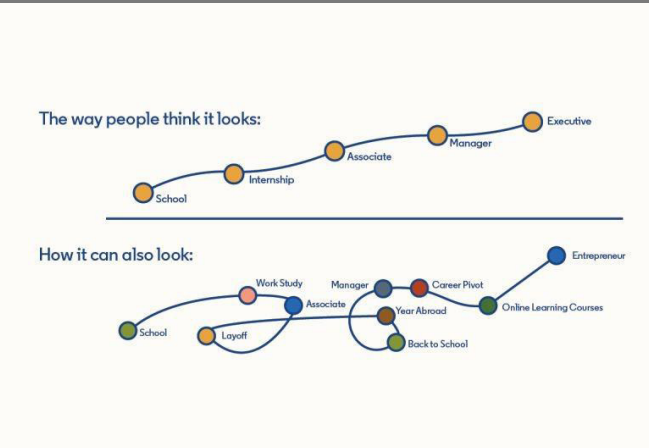
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Challenge for **HIGHER EDUCATION**

The Polycrisis, the Skills Revolution and Higher Education in a highly disruptive world.

FROM SOUTH AFRICA



BY PROFESSOR AHMED SHAIKH

Researcher and the Managing Director of
Regent Business School

Humanity at large seems to be lurching from one major crisis to another with little or no ability to predict the outcomes or where things will land.

With the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, the ensuing economic shock and technological, environmental and political pressures have converged to shape an uncertain terrain of recurring crisis – which the 2023 WEF meeting referred to as “polycrisis” or “permacrisis”. A not-for-profit think tank, The Cascade Institute, describes a global polycrisis as being ‘when crises occur in multiple global systems and become entangled in ways that significantly degrade humanity’s prospects.’

A cursory reflection of the past decade or more proves the absolute assault on the mindset and confidence levels of organisational leaders. One can argue that it started with the dramatic aftermath of the global financial crises in

2008. Volatile financial markets, lingering high unemployment, widening debt crises in economies globally, and eroding consumer confidence combined to create what is widely being termed as the ‘new normal’. This was followed by the significant development and shifts in disruptive and exponential technologies that, in recent years, have become known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. With the recent global health emergency and the resulting crises, organisations across the globe entered into an era that the WEF now terms as polycrises or permacrises.

Beyond the large-scale and fundamental changes unleashed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, global leaders continue to argue that disruptive and exponential technologies also raise difficult questions about the broader impact of automation and AI on jobs, skills, wages, and the nature of work itself.

Amazon currently employs more than two hundred thousand physical robots across its enterprise. This excludes the plethora of digital applications and ‘bots’ used in the course of running one of the world’s largest ‘platform’ businesses. Amazon may be the leader in a pack of global enterprises that has such a formidable hybrid workforce of humans and machines; but, there are tens of thousands of organizations across the globe, in every sector of human endeavour, that are deploying digital and technological resources alongside humans. The first key challenge in this context is: what human capital and skills development strategy is required to fuel this tectonic shift in the new world of work?

NEW LEADERSHIP LITERACIES

A recent study by the Sloan Business School at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology concluded that new leadership literacies and capabilities are required to succeed in this new digitally transformed world of work. This involves conceptualising in a virtual world, handling ever-increasing cognitive complexity,

thinking divergently about new ways of doing things, managing through large, geographically-dispersed virtual teams and making decisions with loads of ambiguity and incomplete information.

In the midst of these complex dynamics, vexing skills training and development questions remain, for example, what are the implications of these profound changes for training and development of graduates for the current labour market? What are the characteristics of the leader who has to navigate the organisation through the era of mass disruptions? What kind of skills and competencies must a Human Capital leader possess in order to effectively manage the talent pipeline of a post-modern business?

For a millennium, higher education institutions have been considered the main societal hub for knowledge and learning and the basic structures of how universities produce and disseminate knowledge. They have survived sweeping societal changes brought upon mainly by technology and previous Industrial Revolutions.

Today, though, higher education institutions seem to be as susceptible to the latest round of technology disruption as other information-centric industries. The transmission of knowledge does not have to be tethered to a fixed location or campus. The technical affordances of cloud-based computing, AI-based learning platforms, massive open online courses (MOOCs), high-quality streaming video, and ‘just-in-time’ information gathering have pushed vast amounts of knowledge to the ‘placeless’ Web. This has sparked a robust re-examination of the modern higher education institution’s mission and its role within society.

Indeed, higher education institutions are being disrupted by a wide variety of social and technological forces. Developments including the globalisation of services work, the increasing value of domain expertise, rapid developments in educational technology and the rise of online open courses are creating both challenges and opportunities for incumbents as well as new entrants. The unbundling of research, educational delivery, content,

and blockchain certification means that new business models and ways of engaging students will be at the heart of a prosperous future for higher education institutions. With the world in a state of major transition there are implications for nearly every aspect of society, not least for higher education institutions.

DECAY OF KNOWLEDGE

Education in its broadest sense is so critical in this seismic shift in the world because the transitions we are experiencing are centred on two essential elements—knowledge and skills. The pace of the decay of knowledge is increasing significantly. A few decades ago, university students would study for a degree, graduate and then live off the fruits of that study for the next 10 years or more. Today, by the time a credential is achieved, the knowledge is already out of date. By just about any measure, the pace of decay of knowledge is increasing.

One of the implications of this rising pace of knowledge decay is that we must be specialists. If we do not have world-class expertise in our domain, we are commodities. As we connect together these pools of deep knowledge around the world, we are seeing the emergence of the notion of collective intelligence. While this idea

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THREE BIG QUESTIONS, WHICH WERE ONCE SO WELL-SETTLED THAT WE CEASED ASKING THEM, ARE NOW UP FOR GRABS: WHAT SHOULD YOUNG PEOPLE BE LEARNING? WHAT SORTS OF CREDENTIALS INDICATE THAT A GRADUATE IS READY FOR THE WORKFORCE? HOW WILL HIGHER EDUCATION REMAIN RELEVANT IN THE 21ST CENTURY AS THE CYCLE OF JOB DESTRUCTION AND JOB CREATION CONTINUES UNABATED?

is not new, it is only in the last decade that we have become so richly connected that it is moving from a dream to reality. This is a shift in who we are, our human identity, and absolutely in how we learn.

A former director of Xerox PARC laboratory, John Seely, wrote a few years ago that the half-life of a skill is five years (and shrinking). This means that half of what we learn today will become obsolete five years from now. This idea is getting a lot of attention among higher education leaders, who must plan for a future in which students will need to keep learning new skills ever more frequently after they graduate.

THE TRIPLE CHALLENGE

The advent of triple challenge of reskilling, upskilling and new skilling (RUN) will be felt most acutely by the graduate professional education segment, which has traditionally been structured around traditional one- and two-year master's degree programmes. Many are of the opinion that workers will likely consume this lifelong learning in short spurts when they need it, rather than in lengthy blocks of time as they do now, when it often takes months or years to complete certificates and degrees.

The most important challenge involves a shift in the way students consume higher education. Participation in tertiary education will increase further, albeit in new formats and types of educational products and services. New information technologies could open the doors to new knowledge for a wider audience, if the current social stratification of access and usage patterns could be overcome.

Consequently, higher education institutions are learning to be more nimble, entrepreneurial, student-focused, and accountable for what students learn. New learning styles and mounting financial and sustainability pressures are impacting the education landscape. Almost every day leaders at these institutions are developing new strategies to leverage these developing challenges and opportunities.

There is no doubt that the world finds itself in a precarious situation where constant

change is ubiquitous and responses are slow. Equally, there seems to be a very large number of trends, pressures, and concerns that society and its political and economic leadership are imposing on higher education institutions. A cacophony of voices, a diversity of expectations, and contradictory requests are all evident.

TRAIN AND RETRAIN

In today's job market there is an increasing need for training and retraining of individuals. Thus, a focus on job-oriented education and on economic participation is driving an emphasis on relevance or on what can be called vocationalism—and thus changing the demand structure for higher education with profound effects on the support of, demand for, and appropriate preparation of participants for a rapidly changing job market that requires 21st century skills and competencies.

In the Fourth Industrial Revolution the number of jobs mostly involving routine skills is shrinking and increasing automation at all workplaces is rapidly replacing them. Artificial intelligence technologies like machine learning are permanently eliminating low-skill jobs in offices, too. Many world economies, especially in the advanced world are turning from manufacturing to service, in which most new jobs do not require advanced education.

Finally, we have to concede that education and training in general, and higher education institutions in particular are incessantly on the brink of huge disruptions. Three big questions, which were once so well-settled that we ceased asking them, are now up for grabs: What should young people be learning? What sorts of credentials indicate that a graduate is ready for the workforce? How will higher education remain relevant in the 21st century as the cycle of job destruction and job creation continues unabated? You be the judge! ■

PROFESSOR AHMED SHAIKH is a Researcher and the Managing Director of Regent Business School.

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Post Event Feedback

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2023 FEEDBACK

“Absolutely informative, I learnt so much, and networked a lot!”
JADE MOODLEY, *HR Business Partner, Dischem*

“The experience was eye-opening and insightful.”
SYBIL MOKOANA, *HR Officer, IMM Graduate School*

“It was such an amazing, informative, insightful and engaged experience. I thoroughly enjoyed it and will definitely apply the learnings to my daily work life.”
NIRRI GOVENDER, *HR Manager, VIP Liquors*

“The experience was eye opening, inspirational and a luxury feast of knowledge that I enjoyed indulging on.”
BEAUTY TSHEHLA, *HR Officer, University of Limpopo*

“The HR Summit was an insightful and thought provoking experience worth my time.”
GEORGE RUKWARU, *L&D Manager, The Co-operative Bank of Kenya*

“It was a learning curve that I will cherish for many years to come. Very informative and practical solutions.”
AKHONA MAYANA, *Skills Development Strategist, The Skills Development Corporation*

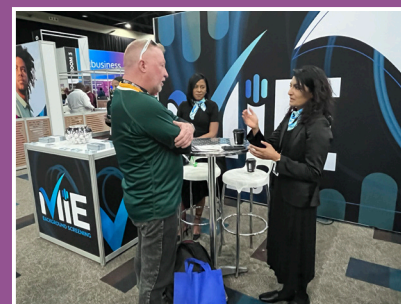
“Indeed it was a great experience for my HR Team to attend the Summit. I liked the variety of topics with the HR Trends probably the top one.”
ANCHERIEN DU PLESSIS, *HR Director, Howden Africa (Pty) Limited*

“A real eye-opener. I wish I had brought my team to share the different platforms.”
SYDNEY MASHILOANE, *Director: OD, The Presidency*

“The HR Summit provided me with a platform to engage with and hear from experienced HR and Executive Leaders who confirmed that HR as a profession is revolutionizing, and one needs to keep abreast of the changing workforce needs to adapt accordingly.”
MEVASHNEE NAIDOO, *HR Director, Knight Piesold Southern Africa*

“So many great things on offer and too little time! My staff loved the Summit as did I!”
SUE ROBERTSON, *HR Director, Rhodes University*

“An inspiration to do better!”
WONDERFUL CHINGWENA, *HR Executive, Ambledown*



How calling on a **TALENT PARTNER** can help companies understand the modern landscape of **RECRUITMENT**

Pablo Millere explains to Alan Hosking how talent partners are reshaping hiring strategies to align with organizational goals and adapt to the evolving recruitment landscape.

According to a study conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 3% of the workforce, which translates to 4.5 million individuals, resign from their jobs annually. Furthermore, a 2022 Talent Acquisition Retention Report reveals that for every 100 job openings, there are roughly 65 individuals seeking employment.

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, marked by intense competition and a heightened demand for exceptional talent, organizations must consider collaborating with talent acquisition partners to secure a competitive advantage in the employment arena.

The role of a talent partner is also undergoing a profound transformation. No longer seen as mere intermediaries, these professionals have evolved into strategic collaborators, ushering in a new era of recruitment.

HOW CAN TALENT PARTNERS ALIGN WITH ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES?

Talent partners are no longer confined to the periphery of HR; they are now vital components of strategic planning. Through close collaboration with hiring managers and business leaders, they can gain deep insights into the organization's long-term vision. This proactive approach enables them to identify talent needs well in advance and craft recruitment strategies that seamlessly dovetail with the company's overarching goals.



FROM THE UK

PROFILE

Pablo Miller is the CEO de Remoti in London, UK.

HOW DOES THEIR APPROACH DIFFER FROM TRADITIONAL RECRUITMENT PROCESSES?

In conventional, transactional recruitment setups, success is typically gauged using

metrics such as time or cost per hire. However, in a strategically aligned recruitment context, recruitment partners shift their focus toward new hire retention and productivity metrics. This shift highlights the pivotal role of recruitment in achieving tangible business outcomes, placing a greater emphasis on results rather than merely efficiency metrics.

SPEAKING OF METRICS, HOW WOULD YOU MEASURE A COMPANY'S SUCCESS WITH A TALENT PARTNER?

There are a couple of metrics to be aware of in measuring whether your partnership with a talent partner is working: Net Promoter Score (NPS) measures client satisfaction and the likelihood of recommending services to others—a score above 60% indicates strong client satisfaction. Secondly, Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) checks overall customer satisfaction and should ideally surpass 80%.

HOW CAN TALENT PARTNERS LEVERAGE AUTOMATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

With increased access to data and advanced analytics, talent partners harness data-driven insights to fine-tune their recruitment strategies. By meticulously analyzing trends, candidate behaviors, and market dynamics, they make informed decisions regarding candidate sourcing, the most effective recruitment channels, and strategies for optimizing the candidate experience. This data-centric approach ensures that every facet of the recruitment process is grounded in evidence, elevating its chances of success.

The future of recruitment is undeniably already entwined with automation and AI.

Talent partners are in a prime position to be at the forefront of integrating these technologies into their processes. From automating resume screening to managing initial candidate outreach and interview scheduling, AI-powered tools are already revolutionizing recruitment. They can even ensure ethical AI usage and guide candidates through virtual interview experiences. This automation not only increases efficiency but also enables talent partners to focus on nurturing relationships with candidates and stakeholders, enhancing the overall recruitment experience in the process.

WHAT OTHER RECRUITMENT TRENDS CAN A PARTNERSHIP WITH A TALENT PARTNER ADDRESS?

The escalating trend of remote work presents a unique challenge—recruiting talent on a global scale. Talent partners are adapting to this challenge by adeptly navigating international employment laws, time zone disparities, and cultural intricacies. This adaptation reflects the evolving nature of the recruitment landscape in an increasingly interconnected world. They facilitate the transition to remote and hybrid hiring, personalize candidate experiences, match skills effectively, and employ innovative sourcing and assessment techniques.

Additionally, there is an increasing demand for niche skills in the context of a competitive



global talent pool, and evolving job market dynamics. They are adept at crafting and amplifying employer branding and providing crucial advisory services, to ensure a seamless and positive candidate experience. In this rapidly changing context, talent acquisition partners play a pivotal role in helping companies adapt and flourish, ultimately securing the best talent in a fiercely competitive market.

CAN YOU POINT TO ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN A COMPANY AND A TALENT PARTNER?

There are countless examples of collaborations between companies and external talent partners. We've worked with Visa for the past few years aiding them to recruit within the LATAM region, and similarly, Amadeus, with its need for high-volume, high-quality hires at a rapid pace. In both cases, teams work exclusively on their accounts, effectively becoming extensions of their HR departments.

WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST ARE THE ABSOLUTE ESSENTIAL STEPS BETWEEN INTERNAL HR AND TALENT PARTNERS?

Effective collaboration between internal HR teams and talent partners is vital for successful hiring. Here's some fundamentals to be aware of to ensure a fruitful partnership:

- 1. CLEAR COMMUNICATION:** Open and consistent communication ensures that both parties have a clear understanding of hiring needs, job descriptions, and qualifications.
- 2. JOB REQUIREMENT DEFINITION:** The internal HR team collaborates with talent partners to define detailed job requirements, leveraging the partner's industry expertise.
- 3. SOURCING STRATEGY:** Talent partners utilize their networks and resources to identify potential candidates beyond traditional channels.
- 4. CANDIDATE SCREENING:** Talent partners conduct initial screenings, including reviewing resumes and conducting preliminary interviews.
- 5. INTERVIEW COORDINATION:** Collaborative efforts involve coordinating interviews between the internal HR team,

- hiring managers, and candidates.
- 6. FEEDBACK EXCHANGE:** After interviews, talent partners gather feedback from both candidates and the internal team.
- 7. NEGOTIATIONS AND OFFERS:** Talent partners can assist in salary negotiations and offer discussions.
- 8. DATA AND ANALYTICS:** Both parties analyze recruitment strategies and candidate profiles to continually optimize the process.
- 9. FEEDBACK LOOP:** Regular feedback sessions facilitate process improvement and strengthen collaboration over time.

“

FROM AUTOMATING RESUME SCREENING TO MANAGING INITIAL CANDIDATE OUTREACH AND INTERVIEW SCHEDULING, AI-POWERED TOOLS ARE ALREADY REVOLUTIONIZING RECRUITMENT. THEY CAN EVEN ENSURE ETHICAL AI USAGE AND GUIDE CANDIDATES THROUGH VIRTUAL INTERVIEW EXPERIENCES. THIS AUTOMATION NOT ONLY INCREASES EFFICIENCY BUT ALSO ENABLES TALENT PARTNERS TO FOCUS ON NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CANDIDATES AND STAKEHOLDERS, ENHANCING THE OVERALL RECRUITMENT EXPERIENCE IN THE PROCESS.

ANY FINAL THOUGHTS BEFORE WE WRAP UP?

Talent partners are no longer an afterthought to help out a bit when the recruitment team is swamped. They have become vital strategic collaborators, harnessing data, automation, and global perspectives to drive success. By aligning recruitment with organizational objectives and addressing current trends, they play a pivotal role in helping companies stay competitive in the evolving recruitment landscape. ■



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REDEFINING work

AI will facilitate collaborative innovation and bridge communication gaps across cultures, geographies and industries.

By the day, we're seeing more and more articles and research describing the ways that AI is already lessening our workloads, increasing our impact and freeing up time for us to do more of the creative and collaborative work we enjoy most. That's been welcome news to professionals. Microsoft's latest Work Trend Index showed that 70% of workers would like to delegate as much work as possible to AI to lessen their workloads and, at LinkedIn, our estimate is that over 80% of our members are in a position to use AI to automate at least a quarter of the mundane and repetitive tasks that we do every day. If you think of AI as an always-available, personalized assistant that you can use across so many things you do, you start to see the possibilities.

For teams and leaders, the opportunity with AI is even bigger. We know that the best ideas come about when people come together and use their collective experience and knowledge to collaborate and innovate. AI has the ability to not only free up more time for you to focus on collaborative work, but it will also make it easier for you to do that kind of work by breaking down barriers that have always stood in the way of personal connection and collaboration at scale. Think of all the barriers we encounter at every step of any collaborative effort. Language barriers across countries and cultures. Knowledge barriers across industries and functions. Skills barriers across experience levels and socioeconomic backgrounds. AI will reduce those barriers, making the context we need to more effectively engage with other people easier to understand. The result will be an era of greater innovation and growth at the companies that invest in it now.

Across LinkedIn, we're using AI to help you focus more on the collaborative and higher-value work where we as humans can really make an impact. Here are some examples of how we're doing that:

- We're using generative AI to help recruiters save time and focus on the more strategic parts of the hiring process – like speaking to and building relationships with candidates. We've added AI-assisted messages in Recruiter to help with the first draft of personalized messages to candidates, which can be customized based on location, skills and workplace type;

- We're also testing AI-powered job descriptions to help you find qualified candidates more quickly;
- To make marketers more efficient, we're rolling out AI-generated ad copy suggestions in Campaign Manager using advanced OpenAI GPT models; and
- We're constantly improving how we use AI across our B2B solutions to help marketers and sellers reach the right audiences with the right messages at the right time, measure conversations with accuracy, train our bidding models, surface insights about accounts and leads, and aggregate signals to connect with buyers.

And if you're looking for new opportunities, we've also launched a number of new Premium features powered by Generative AI to help:

- Personalized profile writing suggestions take existing content on your LinkedIn profile to help you craft engaging Headline and About sections – which can lead to nearly 2x the number of opportunities;
- To make it easier for you to reach out to hirers, we're starting to roll out personalized writing suggestions for Messaging to get you started; and
- Once you land an interview, we have prep tools so you can prepare for commonly asked questions, as well as AI-powered feedback on pacing, how often you use filler words, and phrases to avoid.

AI will reshape the definition of a career path. It used to be that you picked a job, you picked a company and then, for the most part, you spent your career rising up as far as you could in that role at that company. Sometimes you'd switch where you work. Rarely, if ever, would you switch what you did. That 'ladder' mindset was anchored by two truths: first, that stability and predictability were what people craved most and second, that people came into a job with an education that set them up to succeed not only at the start of their career, but across their career. All of that is starting to change.

A while ago I wrote a post about how we all used to see career paths as linear, and are now recognizing that they can also be a squiggly line filled with pivots. AI is only going to accelerate this

FROM THE US



BY RYAN ROSLANSKY
CEO at LinkedIn

trend and make it virtually impossible for a one-off moment of learning to last an entire career. The pace at which we all need to learn, and the need for us to demonstrate what we've learned across our careers, is rapidly increasing. And in many ways, the future of work is becoming intertwined with the future of learning. We all need to have a growth mindset that is able to adapt to the changes starting to happen. But you're not alone. We're all on this journey together, and your network and platforms like LinkedIn can help.

We're also going to start to see employers become educators, "training to hire" into ever-changing jobs through onboardings, apprenticeships and academies, as well as "training to promote" into ever-changing roles through upskilling and tours of duty that take employees into new functions and perhaps even new careers.

At the same time, it's critical that employers, across industries, are thoughtful about what this means for their people, ethical about how they bring in AI, and invest in the training and development their talent needs. We also have to recognize that people who are part of historically marginalized communities are the most vulnerable to change and most at risk of getting left behind. We've seen this happen across past industrial revolutions, where not enough has been done to engage these communities early. Greater cross-sector outreach to these communities and investing in skill building can help. These efforts could help lead to expanded access to opportunity for these communities.

REDEFINING WORK IN THE AGE OF AI

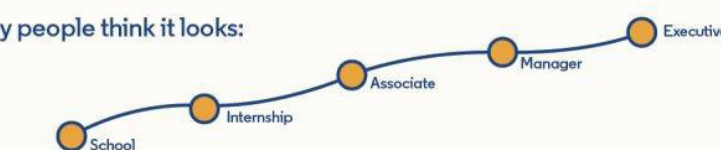
We've seen change like this before. As the internet became more mainstream in the 1990s, the conversation was very similar to the one we're having today. This new technology was seen by many as a threat to people, to jobs and to companies. Sound familiar? Jobs were lost, and there were challenges in the early days. But new jobs were also created. In fact, 60% of employment in 2018 was found in jobs that didn't exist in 1940. Where some companies stalled, others surged, giving way to new sectors and industries and, ultimately, new levels of economic growth all over the world. And now as we look back at the past three decades, the internet has helped people grow their skills, and created new jobs and companies.

I believe the same will be true with AI. In a moment of change, you can dwell in fear and uncertainty or you can rise to meet it. This is precisely where LinkedIn is ready to help. Our platform and community is a place where you can share and gain knowledge about AI, learn and demonstrate new skills, find new opportunities, and leverage the power of our learning, recruiting, marketing and sales products to unlock growth. We're moving quickly to use the context we have from our data, combined with the technological capability we have, to provide you with the tools and insights you need to navigate this moment of change.

We are in the early days of a new era for work, and what it ultimately becomes is up to us. Together we can shape work in the age of AI to be more human and more fulfilling.

RYAN ROSLANSKY is the CEO at LinkedIn based in the San Francisco Bay area, California, US.

The way people think it looks:



How it can also look:



Supercharge your **CREATIVITY** in a crisis

Don't just aim to survive the next crisis. Thrive!

By now, we have all had plenty of practice at steering our businesses through crises. They are coming at us so thick and fast that Collins Dictionary's word of the year for 2022 is "permacrisis".

At Argonon for over a decade we have relied on a crisis management system we call The Flexible Method. First developed during another existential crisis, the 2008 Credit Crunch, it has allowed our company to evolve and thrive, not despite these global crises but because of them.

These crises created opportunities that we would never otherwise have had or would have not seen for many years. Uncertainty and change forced us to think out of the box, and also brought talent to the fore that maybe wouldn't have come through so quickly. So, whilst crises can and have been painful, they have offered up some amazing breaks.

In any crisis, you must be open to new ways

of working, be willing to change your business practices and be flexible, reacting as the situation evolves. In other words, you need to act like a start-up.

During the pandemic, we all had to adapt the way we work but when a tweak is no longer enough, you are going to need an armoury of fresh ideas. This means you need the confidence to innovate, think and experiment. A challenging but positive process.

During Covid here in the UK, for example, a theatre in Birmingham removed its seating to stage an interactive art exhibition where visitors could stay socially distanced. A London restaurant switched to a click and collect takeaway service. The Hallé orchestra in Manchester found a way of getting 40 musicians to play seamlessly together on Zoom from their own homes and then broadcasting their concerts. With travel not allowed, our company switched to using local crews all over the planet for our series House Hunters International instead of flying them out from the UK or US, and we directed everything remotely.

In TV production, creativity is our currency, but I don't believe people should be divided into creative and non-creative. We all have the ability to innovate, think and experiment. You just need the confidence to do it. Creativity can be developing original answers to difficult questions. Flexible thinking is everything.

Just because someone isn't from a 'creative' area doesn't mean they can't think outside the box and solve problems. HR and finance may be process-orientated but they can also help you transform your business using lateral thinking.

Has a crisis ever forced you to innovate and boost your creativity? If so, can you break down the process into replicable steps? We have. One of your first actions when disaster strikes is to set up a war cabinet of your bravest thinkers. They will ideally be a diverse team to ensure you have access to the broadest range of ideas and

skills. This will increase your ability to problem solve and avoid the dreaded groupthink.

Creativity usually comes about through collaboration. I'm sure you can recall instances of a conversation unexpectedly leading to a surprising solution. When a crisis hits you want to supercharge this process with your handpicked team, even if you have to reach out and find them externally.

Being open to new ways of working is now part of our everyday, but some crises change the marketplace so fundamentally that adapting your operations is no longer enough: you will have to come up with an entirely new business model.

A daunting task, but don't try to be perfect. In a crisis, when innovation is a matter of survival don't worry about perfection when you're innovating – just try something new, put it out there, adapting as you learn and grow.

Millennials are exemplary at adapting. It is in their DNA having been born into an age of massive daily transformation as digital technology accelerates change. Unlike many older people who can become set in their ways, Millennials demonstrate flexible thinking and a willingness to try new things. If one thing becomes obsolete, just jump to the next, and back again if needs must.

Creativity is often a messy, iterative process so feel positive about taking imperfect action. Don't be scared of bad ideas either. In my experience, people who don't have bad ideas don't come up with any good ones either. In fact, not changing and clinging to routine are much more worrying for me than change. Change is good.

When you do go for it, you have to overcome self-doubt, trust in your abilities and have the passion, hunger and drive to make it happen.

Make sure everybody is informed and on board. You are going to need all of your team on side for the next stage of this journey. Your HR team will be invaluable for this.

The content of your communications will

change as the crisis evolves. I have found it is best to tailor your communications to the likely emotional state of your stakeholders, focusing on what they need most at that moment.

Your communications should focus on giving people necessary information while encouraging them to remain calm and stay safe. Your stakeholders will have limited attention in a breaking crisis as there is a lot is going on and they can feel frightened and overwhelmed. They are not going to be in a state to be able to process complicated information so keep messages simple, to the point, and actionable.

In a crisis you are going to need to communicate with your staff much more often than you probably think is necessary. Frequent communication reduces fear and uncertainty and ensures that employees have heard the message.

If your communications are going to be effective, your audience must trust you and what you are saying, especially in a crisis. Be honest about where things stand, don't be afraid to show vulnerability, and maintain transparency.

You must give credible and relevant information. If people believe you are misleading them or downplaying risks, they will lose trust. Don't sugar-coat the situation with false optimism. If things are unknown, don't speculate. Acknowledge bad news and uncertainty.

Another trap to avoid falling into is a natural instinct for self-preservation in a crisis. Watching your income, savings, and even essential supplies dry up, it's natural that anxiety takes over and your first thought is to protect what you have and guard it from others. You may think about how to ringfence your clients, even hoard resources.

This may be understandable but it's also an unhelpful response.

Effective collaboration, especially in a crisis, can boost long-term commercial success. It is also good for your health and well-being. It is a win-win.

FROM THE UK



BY JAMES BURSTALL

Founder and CEO of Argonon Group

Collaboration can also make you a better leader. You may be surprised at how much you can learn from your peers. No matter what your problem is, the chances are someone else has already been through it, so surrounding yourself with people who can speak from experience is invaluable.

And if you are stuck for fresh ideas, take a break and do nothing. Leave your to-do list behind and clear your head. Sleep and rest help you generate good ideas. Your mind is more innovative when you are free of the noise and clutter of routine. You will be more inspired when you return refreshed.

During this journey you are going to need your team healthy and onside, so look after their mental health – and don't neglect your own. Self-care is often overlooked but is one of the key qualities of a leader.

As you plan for recovery you may find your spend goes a lot further in a post-crisis landscape. This can be a good time to invest to grow.

We can turn disasters into opportunities. Handled wisely, crises can be a springboard for growth as you exploit once-in-a-lifetime opportunities post-crisis.

By supercharging our creativity, crises can actually be good for us. I don't say this lightly – like you, I carry my war wounds!.

JAMES BURSTALL is the Founder and CEO of Argonon Group in London, UK, one of the UK's largest international independent TV production groups. He is the author of *The Flexible Method: Prepare to Prosper in the Next Global Crisis*, now available from Amazon and good book stores.



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MANAGING MENOPAUSE at work

This is how you can support your menopausal workforce.

FROM THE UK



BY CATHY HASTIE

Social Entrepreneur, Author and HR Director

We monitor remotely, we observe carefully, we listen attentively, and we analyze thoroughly, and then we laugh silently at the mysteriousness of decisions that management are taken. We don't take things at face value.

Read any article on menopause in the workplace and you are likely to learn that menopausal women are the fastest growing demographic in the workplace. For such a significant statistic for employers, there is still a lack of knowledge in organisations about what menopause is and how to support menopausal workers.

WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?

The International Menopause Society describes menopause as the stage in a woman's life where menstruation ends either naturally or because of surgery or another medical intervention such as chemotherapy. There are around sixty-four recognised symptoms

of menopause, and once a woman is in menopause, she is in it for life. The drop in hormone levels can only be rectified by interventions such as HRT.

SYMPTOMS AT WORK

Hot flushes are often referred to as a common symptom of menopause with desk fans cited as the solution, but research carried out by the University of Nottingham¹ shows that, for menopausal workers, cognitive symptoms are much more disruptive.

Top ten symptoms at work:

1. Poor concentration;
2. Tiredness;
3. Poor memory;
4. Feeling low/depressed;
5. Lowered confidence;
6. Sleep disturbances;
7. Irritability;
8. Hot flushes;
9. Joint and muscular aches; and
10. Mood swings.

Although it's not a medical term, brain fog describes the general cognitive fuzziness experienced during menopause and it is a particularly disruptive symptom. An inability to concentrate combined with poor memory can impact confidence and the ability to feel comfortable in progressing a career. A recent report² on menopause in the workplace commissioned by a cross party group of UK politicians contained quotes from women who said that they received a lot of negative comments about their cognitive abilities during menopause.

PERFORMANCE AND CULTURE

Menopausal workers may experience a variety of symptoms at different times. It is a journey and there is not a standard pattern of symptoms for everyone. Employers should think about how individual performance measures might impact menopausal workers. What is the working

environment like? Are there quiet spaces for work that requires concentration? Do workers have some control over their working patterns and workloads enabling them to manage their symptoms better?

Managers should be educated in how symptoms might play out in the workplace and how to access support and resources and critically, how to have the right conversation in the right way with their colleague. Often this is as simple as asking how you are and how can I support you, giving the colleague the space to share as much or as little as they feel comfortable with.

There is evidence that menopause symptoms can become worse in a culture that does not support menopausal workers. The additional stress of having to mask symptoms and not feeling supported or valued is not conducive to thriving at work or feeling like you fit in a workplace. Creating a culture of trust where menopausal workers feel like they are valued is key to retention. Employers should:

- Understand their organisation's culture – what is it like to work for your organisation?
- What is the culture like for menopausal workers?
- Make sure menopause is understood and visible in your organisation; and
- Role model respect for mid-life women and menopause.

THE MID-LIFE TALENT POOL

Organisations are still bemoaning the lack of availability of candidates in the talent pool, but there is an important group right under their noses. This gap has highlighted the problems faced by employers of over fifties leaving the workforce, adding to the already significant gap of talent available to fill roles. Employers can't afford for there to be a greater loss of workers. Since the pandemic, the workforce is much more vocal in sharing different expectations they have of a potential employer. It's a buyer's market out there and diversity is at the top of their shopping list and let's face it, it's the right thing to do.

Alongside the economic need to retain employees, it has long been recognised that diversity is good for business. At a very basic level, customers like to buy from people who look like them, diverse teams are more

resilient in difficult economic times and diverse teams are more creative and better at solving problems. Like all the different groups of employees in the workplace, those going through the menopause transition require some differences in approach to help manage symptoms and feel included.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR EMPLOYERS?

Creating an inclusive workplace means creating a culture where everyone can thrive, whatever their individual circumstances. Astute employers recognise that one size does not fit all, and cater for the differing needs of their employees, recognising that they change over time.

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO?

There are practical actions that employers can take to support menopausal employees:

FRAMEWORK - Having a policy is a good starting point, and this sets a framework for actions taken by the employer to support menopausal workers, and expectations of everyone involved. It says to employees 'this is the way we do things.'

EDUCATION - Educate everyone on what menopause is and how symptoms can manifest in the workplace. Many women have limited information about the menopause and may not know what is happening to them. Learning should include what menopause is, and how it affects women at work.

RECOGNISING DIFFERENCE - While there are common symptoms of menopause, everyone has a different journey. Understanding the intersectionality of menopause is key. For example, research shows that Black and Southeast Asian women on average enter peri menopause 7 years earlier than white women, and symptoms of other conditions such as diabetes and differences such as neurodiversity may present more challenging symptoms.

MANAGING ADJUSTMENTS - Learning should also include how to manage adjustments in the workplace and how to have difficult conversations. Adjustments could include where someone works or their hours.

ABSENCE FROM THE WORKPLACE - Managing sickness absence is also crucial,

ensuring managers are aware that there are potential discriminatory risks and that it is often appropriate to manage menopause absence in the same way as managing absence related to pregnancy or a disability.

MANAGING TALENT AND PERFORMANCE -

Create a culture where menopause is a normal part of the workplace and menopausal women can thrive, allowing them to continue to fulfil potential and not be written off during the transition.

of everyday working life and retaining a vitally important group of workers.

References:

1. Griffiths A, MacLennan SJ, Hassard J. Menopause and work: an electronic survey of employees' attitudes in the UK. *Maturitas*. 2013 Oct;76(2):155-9. doi: 10.1016/j.maturitas.2013.07.005. Epub 2013 Aug 22. PMID: 23973049.
2. Women and Equalities Committee. 28 July 2022. Menopause and the Workplace



Mid-life women are a vital part of a depleted talent pool. They have developed skills and experience that are invaluable to organisations, and they are difficult to replace. As we live longer and stay in the workplace for longer, more women than ever will be managing their menopause while working. Employers have a critical role to play in making menopause part

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmwomeq/91/report.html>. ■

CATHY HASTIE (FCIPD) is a Social Entrepreneur and HR Director in the Greater Derby area, UK, and Author of *Menopause Working*, available on Amazon.

THE BIG 5 CANCERS AFFECTING WOMEN IN SA

#2 Cervical Cancer

DID YOU KNOW?

Cervical cancer is the **2nd most common cancer**

Go for regular PAP SMEARS

Cervical cancer can be effectively treated if detected & diagnosed early

Pap Smear = reliable screening test for the early detection of cervical cancer - a swab of cervical cells

Women ages 18 - 25 who have ever been sexually active should have Pap smears every 3 years, or 2 years later after first sexual activity (whichever is later) and continue until age 70

Human Papilloma viruses (HPVs)

Almost all cervical cancers are caused by HPV - a common virus that is spread through skin-to-skin contact, body fluids and sexual intercourse.

Signs and symptoms

- ➔ Abnormal vaginal bleeding between periods
- ➔ Continuous vaginal discharges
- ➔ Menstrual periods becoming heavier and lasting longer than usual
- ➔ Vaginal bleeding or pain during sexual intercourse
- ➔ Increased urinary frequency
- ➔ Vaginal bleeding after menopause

Risk Factors

- ➔ Failure to always use protection during sexual intercourse
- ➔ Sexually transmitted infections
- ➔ Having many sexual partners and high-risk sexual activity
- ➔ Having first sexual intercourse at a young age
- ➔ Being overweight/obese with low physical activity levels
- ➔ Consumption of alcohol (could lead to high-risk sexual activity) and smoking

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Create a great **HIRING** experience

How HR Professionals can meet evolving candidate expectations.

Although hiring managers and other HR Professionals face significant economic volatility, a tight labor market, and other headwinds, the past several years have also catalyzed long-overdue changes in the relationships between candidates and companies. Many hiring trends have accelerated since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic: the demand for flexibility and a healthier work-life balance, the emphasis on transparency and accessibility and the expectation that hiring will be fair and objective.

The 2023 Criteria Candidate Experience Report takes a deeper look at these trends with insights from a survey of over 2,000 job-seekers around the world. While the survey reveals several sources of anxiety and frustration, it also demonstrates that candidates are confident in their ability to showcase their qualifications to recruiters. Candidates have become increasingly comfortable with video interviews, and they embrace objective hiring methods like pre-employment assessments. This is good news for employers, as these developments allow

them to draw from larger talent pools and make better hiring decisions.

The candidate experience has never been more important. Companies can't afford to lose promising candidates in a competitive labor market, and HR professionals need to be capable of meeting job-seekers' needs and expectations while building a more rigorous and predictive hiring process. This begins with understanding how candidates feel about that process and determining which forms of engagement will be most productive.

EVALUATE CANDIDATES ON THE BASIS OF THEIR SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Traditional hiring methods such as unstructured interviews have a poor record of predictive validity, yet many HR teams continue to rely on them. Beyond the fact that this status quo is preventing companies from making data-driven hiring decisions, evidence is accumulating that candidates are ready to try a different approach. For example, the Criteria survey found that 70 percent of candidates agree that assessments help them demonstrate their potential beyond past experience (36 percent say they strongly agree).

It's no surprise that candidates welcome an opportunity to prove themselves on a level playing field – bias has long been a major problem in the candidate selection process. Even AI-powered hiring can be discriminatory. Despite these issues, 84 percent of candidates say they feel capable of demonstrating their full potential to employers, while 68 percent think the hiring process is fair. A remarkable 88 percent of candidates say they're confident that they will find a satisfying job, including over two-thirds who are very confident. Another 81 percent express confidence that they'll be paid enough in their next role.

Candidates don't just want a chance to showcase their skills – they're also eager to improve, which is why 90 percent prefer to receive feedback on their assessment results.

These are all encouraging signs for HR teams: candidates are embracing objective and predictive hiring tools, so companies will be able to build trust by putting those tools to work.

RECONSIDER CANDIDATE ENGAGEMENT

There has been a fundamental transformation of how and where employees work. Our survey found that just 15 percent of candidates would prefer a role that's fully in-person, while 85 percent want some degree of remote work (36 percent want a hybrid solution, but almost half would like to be fully remote). Considering this shift, it's no surprise that candidates are increasingly comfortable with video interviews as well – 80 percent say they like these interviews, including 59 percent who strongly feel this way.

Video interviews can improve the hiring experience in many ways. Over a third of candidates say they've abandoned the recruitment process because it was taking too long, and video interviews can help hiring managers pick up the pace by eliminating the need for flights, overnight stays, commuting, and other time-consuming inconveniences that come with in-person interviews. It's also easy to conduct structured interviews and administer pre-employment assessments remotely.

Video interviews don't just offer convenience for candidates and recruiters – they also allow companies to drastically expand their talent search by moving past geographical constraints in the hiring process. At a time when many roles will be remote or hybrid, video interviews show candidates that the company is forward-looking and focused on providing a positive experience.

COMMUNICATION, TRANSPARENCY AND FAIRNESS ARE KEY

Although the Criteria survey reveals that candidates remain optimistic about their prospects, there are still a few signs of trouble: 41 percent say finding a job has become harder

compared to last year, while just 12 percent say it has become easier. Seventeen percent of respondents say they've been laid off. These are reminders that, while resume gaps are worth paying attention to, HR teams shouldn't dismiss candidates on the basis of these gaps alone. As noted above, over-reliance on resumes can be risky – objective hiring tools like pre-employment assessments provide a more complete picture of a candidate.

Regardless of which hiring methods a company uses, it's crucial to make the process as transparent and communicative as possible. Our survey found that a majority of candidates have abandoned the recruiting process due to poor communication from the employer/recruiter, making this the top reason they stop pursuing a role. It's even more alarming that 39 percent of candidates say they have been ghosted by an employer or recruiter over the past year – a reminder that HR teams should take a close look at the entire recruitment funnel to identify and close communication gaps. Several other top candidate complaints relate to poor communication as well, such as misrepresentations of job requirements or salary.

The core features of any successful hiring process are communication, transparency and fairness. From pre-employment assessments to video interviewing, HR teams have more tools than ever to build the hiring process around these features and put the candidate experience at the center of this process. ■

JOSH MILLET is the Founder and CEO of Criteria in Los Angeles, California, US.

Good OFFICE AIR QUALITY more than a “nice to have”

Improve the quality of the air in your office and you'll improve retention and productivity of your people.

“Every time I hear a company is going back to the office, I immediately start calling their employees. Usually, a third will switch to a competitor.” Quote from headhunter.

As more employers want staff to return to the workplace, Human Resource departments are constantly caught between leadership and a workforce that has become accustomed to working from home. It should be no surprise that, in the battle for quality employees, in-office amenities play a significant role for new hires and employee retention. While most people think of a new coffee machine (and let's be honest, that won't hurt), providing a healthy workplace is high on applicants' desired improvement and that includes clean air. Human Resource employees should be demanding that ensuring air quality in the workplace remains high to

retain employees, hire new ones, and keep current employees productive.

In 2023, improving indoor air quality (IAQ) is more than eliminating Covid. What once was considered a passing thought has turned into one of the fastest growing market sectors of the HVAC industry. More and more employees are beginning to interview not just their employers but their workspace. IAQ today isn't just about preventing one disease, it's about creating a healthy building where indoor occupants thrive. That's why when a building becomes certified healthy, its rent increases by 4-7%.

So how do you turn your office into a healthy building that drives health and productivity? It all starts with air.

As a result of the LEED movement, buildings have become highly energy efficient, and one of the most significant ways to reduce your energy footprint is to create a well-designed building shell, which limits the need for heating and cooling. For example, air conditioning alone represents 6% of all the energy used in the United States. In the last 20 years, we have become very efficient at designing high-efficiency buildings, but in the last five years, researchers have begun to understand the problem with this line of thinking, and it directly impacts the Human Resources Professionals.

The problem with these buildings is that they don't just keep heat and air from getting in, they also keep it from getting out. That means when we exhale carbon dioxide, your boss is sick or your cubemate had a smelly lunch, there's nowhere for the particulates to go. Whether a classroom or a corporate office their air quality trends the same way. It gets continuously worse, until lunchtime, when everyone leaves the building, and then proceeds to get worse again until everyone gets home for the day.

This trend is particularly true of carbon dioxide. I was speaking with a specialist in air quality sensors recently and asked what the biggest takeaway from years of building CO2 sensors was. He told me he was shocked to find that in most meeting places, CO2 levels by the end of a meeting are typically above 1000 ppm. While not dangerous in the long term, at this level, learning stops. That means 45 minutes into your meeting, it might be the speaker, but carbon dioxide has taken over the room. And if the people in the room aren't taking notes, they aren't going to retain the information.

It should be obvious to executives that it is a

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I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT IAQ IS A C-SUITE PROBLEM THAT REQUIRES BUY-IN FROM KEY STAFF. ONLY THEY REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT DOES TO A BUSINESS, WHEN HALF OF A DEPARTMENT IS OFF SICK, OR WHEN THEY ARE BOTHERING OTHERS TRYING TO FIND ALLERGY MEDICINE INSTEAD OF WORKING. AS PREVIOUSLY STATED, THIS APPEAL SHOULD NOT JUST BE ABOUT HOW IT MAY HELP, IT SHOULD BE ABOUT HOW DATA HAS SHOWN THAT IAQ IMPROVES A BUSINESS'S BOTTOM LINE.

poor policy to pay above average salaries to key staff, only to put them in an environment where they will be less effective. For example, based on research, if your office experiences temperature deregulation and frequently hits 60 or 80 degrees, that employee will be 5-10% less productive than in a normal temperature. If that employee makes six figures, your business is throwing at least \$5,000-\$10,000 out the door on that employee alone. More than likely,

the cost to fix the problem is less than this. As Human Resources Professionals, you can show your ability to add to the company's bottom line by explaining these issues in dollars, compared to making emotional appeals to improve air quality.

Looking more specifically at IAQ, similar patterns emerge. When a building goes from poor to high IAQ, employees show up 1.7 days more on average every year. That may not seem like a lot, but let's look at the numbers. Every time I do a speaking engagement, I show the number of having one lawyer create 1.7 more days of billable hours. In Houston, where I'm located, that's between \$2,500-\$6,500 of additional revenue a year per lawyer. If you're thinking that it's just because lawyers have a high dollar billing, you're wrong. My first job was at a construction company, where employees were paid close to minimum wage, and had lunch in approximately groups of 20. If I could get those employees to show up more frequently, I'd create 34 hours of productivity I wouldn't have otherwise. That would be enough to improve my schedule on projects! Again, suggestions that data shows will improve the business's bottom line will always move faster than those that have intangible benefits, but improving air quality has plenty of these as well.

We started our journey discussing IAQ by talking about getting quality employees to return to the office, and this is one of the key intangible benefits. Only your executive team can decide what this is worth, but there is also the intangible benefit of perception. Companies that invest in IAQ will appear (and I argue genuinely do) to care more about their employee's health and wellbeing more than those who don't. This should improve employees' satisfaction, recruitment, and retention. One of the commonalities of all the people I've met who work in a high IAQ building, is the joy they get from using their PTO on vacation instead of being sick. For HR Professionals, though, there's a hidden bottom line benefit in this. If your employees are using their PTO for vacation and illness, this means they are going to the doctors less, which should give you leverage on any group insurance plans your company offers. Again, a tangible way to improve the bottom line.

On the horizon, I see businesses that invest in IAQ having reduced liability as regulations and legal rulings change. While some businesses already either have state regulations or regulations through OSHA based on their

FROM THE US



BY CHRIS ROMANI

CEO and Co-founder at Turing



still promote its IAQ program and great air quality, without incurring large costs. If there is a problem, you can then move towards identifying the

work, most businesses don't. Instead, these liabilities fall on the building owner and are mostly related to ventilation. It is clear, as IAQ awareness is increasing, states may place IAQ regulations on businesses. In the interim, employees are beginning to understand there are situations where the building is making them sick and holding their employer responsible. I am currently working with one local government who is getting consistent complaints from their employees across all their buildings that the building is making them sick. They've paid thousands of dollars to run individual tests every time they get this complaint to show that there is nothing wrong with the building (i.e., mold or fungal growth). For them, even showing they have decent air quality is expensive.

START AN IAQ PROGRAM

By now, hopefully you realize that IAQ is something not just something that is a trendy perk, but is something that can genuinely improve your bottom line while reducing risk; so how can a Human Resource Executive start an IAQ program?

I firmly believe that IAQ is a C-suite problem that requires buy-in from key staff. Only they really understand what it does to a business, when half of a department is off sick, or when they are bothering others trying to find allergy medicine instead of working. As previously stated, this appeal should not just be about how it may help, it should be about how data has shown that IAQ improves a business's bottom line.

Once buy-in is achieved, start with monitoring. It's very possible that your business has decent air quality and minor or no adjustments are needed. If this is the case, your business can

source. It could be that chemical cleaners are used while people are in the building, in which case, you can make a no cost change, to have cleaning employees come off key shift, or switch to different cleaning agents. If there are long standing problems, then you can build an IAQ plan, which would consist of changing filters, cleaning air ducts, and having a localized air purification system. Localized air purification systems should use Upper Air Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UV-C) and create directional airflow, so occupants are immediately breathing recontaminated air.

EDUCATE YOUR PEOPLE

The last part of the plan should be educating employees. There are simple things that most employees can do to improve IAQ. A simple thing is not blocking vents with desks or trash cans so that the room cycles air properly, but can hurt the ventilation of the entire room, decreasing IAQ of everyone in the office. Educating employees is also a great way to show them that you are invested in their health, and to ask them to invest in yours. ■

CHRIS ROMANI is the Vice President of Building Certifications at illumiPur and is a seasoned expert in the field of sustainable building, design, construction and manufacturing. Chris has spent over a decade collaborating on LEED projects and for the last three years, has transitioned to focus on healthy buildings. For the last three years, Chris has focused on the important topic of healthy buildings, including WELL and Fitwell building certifications.

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Beat UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

There are many forms of unconscious biases in the workplace.

Very few of us will openly admit that they are biased. It feels a little like admitting we are bad humans. Yet, bias shows up for all of us, frequently and often outside of our awareness. Commonly referred to as unconscious bias, these show up as attitudes, preferences and beliefs that influence our behavior subconsciously. Despite being unaware, unconscious biases have serious implications for hiring, promotions, performance reviews and other career defining decisions and interactions.

So, how do we eliminate or control what we are unaware of? The simple and most obvious answer is to become more aware of the many forms of bias that exist. Educating ourselves allows us to actively work to recognize and overcome these unconscious processes.

Leaders and managers who do not investigate and better manage their biases are often major contributors to an organization's inability to make sustainable change around diversity, equity, and belonging. Recognizing where unconscious bias is most problematic (hint, talent decisions) and then putting in intentional processes to educate and eliminate is one of the first steps companies can take to ensure equitable and inclusive workplace practices. We often discuss the desire for meritocracy but forget that we need to be intentional and conscious to make it real.

The less obvious answer to eliminating and controlling our unconscious biases is to ensure that managers and leaders have the time, space and presence when making decisions about their people. Our unconscious biases are often there for efficiency purposes allowing us to make decisions quickly when we are at capacity and trying to manage stress and urgency. But as the old adage goes, garbage in = garbage out. If our brains are filled with unconscious messages and beliefs about others, then the decisions that are made will be representative of those. Organizations can build their talent processes and requirements in a way that creates more time and space for real and impactful conversations. Instilling



FROM THE US

BY CRISTINA JIMENEZ

Senior Partner and Global Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at RHR International

curiosity and insight in talent management is a perfect way to create new thinking and teach us to see diversity in all people.

There are many forms of unconscious biases that occur within the workplace, especially for hiring managers and leaders who are making employment decisions regularly, often with limited time and information. Regardless of the approach we take, familiarizing ourselves with the most common forms of bias can help us identify and control their influence in the future.

FOUR COMMON BIASES IN ORGANIZATIONS

Biases often occur the second we encounter someone or learn any information about them. For example, we might learn that a job candidate went to our alma mater, and unconsciously favour them because of it. We then subtly look for other information that demonstrates they are right for the position and ignore information to the contrary. This is commonly referred to as confirmation bias, which is the tendency to seek out information that confirms existing beliefs and dismiss information that contradicts them. This can lead to tunnel

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

vision in hiring processes and the inability to consider alternative perspectives from others.

Naturally, we want to surround ourselves with people we see as safe, trustworthy and predictable. Unfortunately, we tend to assume safety and trust exists with people that are most like us, like the alma mater example. When not controlled, this can lead to the biased hiring or promotion of individuals that are more "like us", also referred to as affinity bias. When it is not controlled, this can result in the hiring or promotion of people based on affinity instead of qualification or fit. Over time, patterns of affinity bias become evident to employees, leading to resentment and disengagement from employees who see themselves as not "like us".

Bias can also be influenced by organizational cultures, which shape our perceptions of the "right" way to work. This often presents as conformity bias, where we fit our beliefs or behaviours to align with the majority opinion, even if it doesn't necessarily reflect how we truly feel or act. This is common in organizations with strong, well-defined cultures and in companies where dissent is discouraged or punished. While it may be easier to conform to majority group beliefs, it limits creativity and innovation, and it reinforces perfectionism and decreases psychological safety for people who don't conform. This holds back the growth and development of organizations and employees.

ADDITIONAL BIASES EXPERIENCED IN THE WORKPLACE

Subtle nonverbal biases can impact our impressions of others and guide our beliefs about competence and leadership. Take, for example, beauty, height and physical biases, where we tend to unconsciously prefer and favour people who are more attractive or aesthetically acceptable and even taller. This can lead to favourable treatment based on appearance rather than qualifications or abilities.

In addition, nonverbal biases about personality impacts our perception of leadership abilities. For example, we might make unconscious assumptions about a person's leadership based on their level of charisma, extraversion, or very specific speaking skills. We often rely on these traits to make judgments due to stereotypes about what makes a good leader, and that definition can even be further biased when aligned with stereotypes we have about gender and/or different ethnic/racial groups.

Unconscious bias can also shape how organizations work and function. This includes

everything from what gets recognized, who gets promoted or other opportunities, and even how we define success or build relationships. While unconscious biases can often be subtle and seemingly harmless, they often result in cultures where favoritism thrives, and many employees feel excluded or devalued.

WHY DISMANTLING UNCONSCIOUS BIASES IS A MARATHON NOT A SPRINT

Many organizations have spent an extraordinary number of resources deploying unconscious bias training throughout the business. This is also the training that gets the most scrutiny and push back in the media. Does it work? Does it change behavior? Or is this another way to convince organizations to pour money and time into something that has no ROI?

Dismantling unconscious bias will never happen through a 90-minute online program. In fact, the research is very clear that unconscious bias training is incredibly effective when coupled with other programs and a shift in process or policies. For awareness to work, creating a culture of belonging and equity must matter to the organization. It must live in our conversations about how we work and how we talk about our talent. Leaders must be more intentional about how they build trust and relationships and increase their overall awareness of their impact. This allows what is unconscious to become conscious and for decisions about people to be thoughtful, fair and objective.

The marathon is about creating cultures where people thrive as a long term and critical part of organizational success. Dismantling bias involves implementing training programs, developing leadership capabilities, changing policies and procedures, and ensuring that diverse voices are represented in decision-making processes. While doing so requires time and effort, it will help organizations find the best talent and create a more equitable and inclusive workplace for everyone. ■

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Benefits of **GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE** for Employees

Your employees are the backbone of your company. They dedicate the majority of their lives to help grow your business and your bottom line. So, it makes sense that, given the state of public healthcare facilities in South Africa, you allow your staff to gain instant access to private doctors and hospitals.

IS HEALTH INSURANCE WORTH THE COST?

The benefits of health insurance range from day-to-day cover, such as GP visits, medication, specialist visits, to hospital cover, family death cover, and much more.

WHY SHOULD I GET HEALTH INSURANCE FOR MY EMPLOYEES?

Regardless of whether your employees can afford their own medical aid, purchasing health insurance as an employee benefit will not only benefit your employees' wellbeing and health but their loyalty and productivity too.

Big brands like Google and Apple realised years ago how well-looked-after employees will look after their company. Which means that when you show your employees that you care about their wellbeing and want to help them afford private healthcare bills and stay healthy, this will

create a company culture of respect, loyalty and happiness.

By providing your staff with adequate medical support whenever they need it, they are more inclined to feel settled and happy in your company. This means that you will be able to retain your current employees and ensure their loyalty to your brand. To put it simply: people won't leave companies that cater to their needs and demonstrate that they want to make sure they are looked after when they need it the most.

WHAT IF MY EMPLOYEES ALREADY HAVE THEIR OWN MEDICAL AID?

We understand why you'd think health insurance is not worth the extra cost if your employees can afford their own medical aid.

But here's the thing: Health Insurance can act as a form of gap cover and make up for the costs where medical aid falls short. And as previously mentioned, the benefits of health insurance cover so much more than just what a hospital-only medical aid plan covers. Health insurance would give your employees a range of extensive benefits to help cover routine and preventive healthcare costs as well as the more expensive hospital admissions.

HOW ONEPLAN WILL HELP KEEP YOUR EMPLOYEES HAPPY AND HEALTHY

Funeral cover and health insurance in one plan

With most medical aids, the purchase of a funeral cover or accidental disability cover is a separate benefit to your medical aid and is, therefore, an additional cost. Oneplan includes accidental death and funeral cover in all of their health insurance plans. Which means that if your employees have a health insurance policy with them, the financial burden and stress of

your employees' loved ones having to pay for their funeral is significantly reduced.

Dread disease cover

Cover for serious (and often incredibly expensive) diseases such as heart attacks, cancer and strokes are included in three out of Oneplan's four health insurance plan options.

Value-adding benefits

When it comes to health insurance, finding one that best suits your company's budget as well as the healthcare needs of your employees is not always easy.

HERE'S WHY ONEPLAN HEALTH INSURANCE IS VALUE FOR MONEY:

- Employees can preload funds for day-to-day benefits BEFORE visiting the doctor;
- Employees can easily manage their policy and claim through the Oneplan App and are all issued with a Onecard which is where they load day to day benefits upfront;
- Employees can keep their current doctor or visit any doctor of their choice;
- Range of plans to suit various healthcare needs and budgets;
- Extensive in-hospital cover;
- Accident and illness cover;
- Maternity pre-birth benefits;
- Day-to-day benefits include dental cover, optometry cover, medication, x-rays, and more; and
- Discounted, tailored rates for companies of more than 50 people.

Want to know more? Click [here](#) to chat with the Oneplan Team and get answers to your questions, or fill out the Group Scheme registration form [here](#).

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Future-proof your **RECRUITMENT** and **RETENTION**

Help employees ease the cost of living pressure while on a budget.

With inflation soaring over the last 12 months, employers are under increasing pressure from employees to ease the burden of the rising cost of living. However, with businesses feeling the financial strain too, pay rises simply aren't possible for many employers. Here are alternative methods for motivating and supporting staff through the cost of living crisis without breaking the bank.

The rising cost of living has had a substantial effect on all bill-payers. Everything from rent and mortgage repayments to energy bills and food shops is now costing us all considerably more than they did pre-pandemic. As a result, many employees are finding it harder than ever to keep up with their monthly costs, let alone save. With the challenge unlikely to improve in the short-term, employees are increasingly turning to their employers for support.

Whilst in an ideal world, employers would support by offering pay rises to employees to help keep up with inflation and increasing living costs, this just isn't possible for many businesses, where finances are already tight. For these employers, it will be crucial to find alternative methods to engage and support staff, or risk losing workers and undergoing the costly process of recruiting and training new employees.

So, what options are there available to employers?

OFFER FLEXIBLE WORKING

One cost which has risen significantly in recent years is the price of commuting. The cost of public transport, petrol and parking have all risen in the last year. In fact, in a survey conducted of London employees, it was found that the average amount spent commuting added up to £64.19 a week. This equates to over £3,330 a year.

Whilst the simplest way to reduce this cost is to introduce remote working, this option is not available to all workforces. For example, deskless workers such as those in the care, construction



FROM AUSTRALIA

BY ROB BRIGHT

CEO of Cloud Assess

and hospitality industries cannot work from home, with the majority of roles reliant on in-person duties. One way around this is by offering employees flexible hours. By starting and finishing work earlier or later than usual, employees will have more control over their working hours and can better manage their subsequent commuting costs. Plus, it allows employees to find a working schedule that suits the needs of both the business and themselves. This type of lifestyle benefit is an effective way to boost an employee's loyalty, and can often be valued more than a small pay rise being offered by a competitor.

INVEST IN EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Another powerful way for businesses to engage employees amid the cost of living crisis is by providing effective training. By investing in employee training and development, employers can help staff develop new skills, allowing them to take on new roles and responsibilities, and increase their earning potential to offset the rising cost of living. Not only this, but investing in upskilling employees can also help to improve

RECRUITMENT

job satisfaction, which can reduce turnover and improve retention rates. When employees feel valued and have opportunities to grow and develop, they are more likely to stay with the company long-term.

In fact, in our recent survey we found that two-thirds of workers agreed training opportunities have a strong influence on their loyalty to their employer. This is echoed by LinkedIn's Workplace Learning Report 2023, which found that the most common way businesses are addressing concerns relating to employee retention is by providing learning opportunities.

Creating an effective learning programme for employees will require some financial investment, which will vary based on the delivery and training required. If carried out effectively though, the investment should be considerably less than company-wide salary increases and have the additional benefit of upskilling employees.

One of the most impactful and cost-effective forms of training delivery is 'micro-learning'. Delivered in short, concise doses, micro-learning, which focuses on a single learning outcome in a brief session, is ideal for businesses looking to integrate learning into busy work schedules. When conducted effectively, employees can supplement their existing work schedule without needing to take extended hours or days away from their day-to-day duties to train. Not only does this save the business money and resources, but it also means productivity remains unaffected. This method also aligns best with a human's natural learning style. So, it's no surprise that studies have found that companies that have already adopted a 'micro-learning' approach have witnessed a 75% increase in employee engagement and an 80% improvement in learner retention.

OFFER COST-EFFECTIVE BENEFITS

Alongside training, there are a multitude of other benefits that can be offered to employees that only cost a fraction of rolling out company-wide pay rises. Perks like sell-back holiday days, free onsite parking, health insurance, subsidised lunches, and uniform provisions can often be relatively inexpensive for businesses to roll out but make a difference to individual employees and their day-to-day costs.

Small benefits like these can also go a long way in demonstrating to employees that they are valued, which will impact loyalty. In fact, a 2022 study by WTW found that companies with a benefits package that meets the needs of their employees have a 37% higher retention rate than those that don't.

PROVIDE FINANCIAL EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

Aside from benefits, another valuable way

an employer can help their employees during the cost of living crisis is by offering financial education and support where possible. Many people struggle to effectively budget and manage their finances, particularly when living costs are so high. According to the Money and Pensions Service, a quarter of UK adults have less than £100 put away and will struggle to cope with unexpected bill increases.

There are several ways that employers can help support workers with this challenge.

Workshops or seminars on budgeting, saving and investing are usually good places to start, offering free advice to employees looking to maximise their salary and minimise their costs.

Going a step further, employers could consider offering workplace ISAs as well as pensions to encourage their staff to save with minimal risk. Workplace ISAs usually offer a discounted annual fee, meaning employees can benefit financially from setting up an ISA directly through their employer. Plus, payments come directly out of the employee's paycheck, meaning they can be treated the same as tax or pension contributions, making it much easier for an employee to save every month.

Employers could also offer assistance with setting up financial planning tools or apps that can help employees track their spending, set savings goals, and manage debt. There are a few of these services on the market, such as MoneyHelper's budget planner, which can help educate and inform your employees on how to save whilst costs are high. While saving may be daunting for many employees, businesses can play a role in helping workers feel more confident about their financial situation and improve their mental wellbeing, which will inevitably have a knock-on effect on their attitude and performance at work.

CONCLUSION

With the cost of living crisis showing no sign of easing, this will continue to impact the things that people value and prioritise most from their employer. As businesses look to future-proof their recruitment and retention strategies, it's crucial that they take these important factors into consideration. Supporting employees through rising inflation doesn't have to take the form of expensive mass pay rises, but action is needed if companies are to maintain loyal, engaged and productive workforces during these challenging times. ■

ROB BRIGHT is the CEO of Cloud Assess, in the Greater Brisbane area, Australia. For more information about Cloud Assess and the value it offers to its clients, visit cloudassess.co.

Breaking LANGUAGE barriers

The importance of overcoming language obstacles in global business.

FROM THE US



BY RICK HAMMELL

Founder and majority shareholder of Atlas

Stepping into new markets is always challenging as you try to understand your new audience. It's even harder when this audience uses entirely different languages and cultures.

The art of communication is key to global expansion, not just in transferring messages but also in building relationships and fostering a shared culture. The need for effective communication becomes even more prominent when we consider the subtleties introduced by language barriers.

WHY LANGUAGE BARRIERS ARE IMPORTANT AND WHAT GETS LOST IN MISCOMMUNICATION

Multilingual individuals often perceive and interpret languages differently, which can shape their reactions depending on the language used.

A Journal of Research in Personality study found that the personality traits of bilingual individuals can exhibit variations based on the spoken language at any given time.

Localization emerges as a powerful tool in this context, helping to convey the intended message without the risks of cultural misinterpretation.

During onboarding, communicating in the local language can foster a better understanding of the company culture, steering away from unintended interpretations. The same goes for unfortunate cases in which an employee needs to be terminated — those moments are already tense, and you wouldn't want to make it worse with improper communication.

So, what's the cost of getting it wrong?

Miscommunications stemming from language barriers can have wide-reaching consequences, from damaging reputations to legal complications. It can adversely affect customer experience and employee productivity, with misunderstandings potentially leading to conflicts and errors. Moreover, it can render market research ineffective, creating inefficiencies and escalating costs.

Potential legal complications include disputes that arise during contract negotiations that can lead to possible legal actions. An incorrect translation or different interpretation of a term can result in agreements not being upheld.

Additionally, companies might inadvertently violate local regulations due to a lack of understanding of the language nuances, resulting in fines and legal penalties. It can happen when, for example, a company fails to correctly interpret or adhere to specific regulatory guidelines in a non-native language.

The same goes for a company's interaction with consumers. Miscommunications in a press release or advertisement can lead to public relations incidents that damage a brand's image, including a backlash on social media. Customers who feel misunderstood or receive bad information due to language barriers are likelier to leave a negative review.

This said, the failure to address language barriers can place a company at a competitive disadvantage.

6 STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Acknowledging the depth of the problem, companies should institute strategies to overcome language barriers. A company can foster unity and effective communication among employees who speak different languages and with their customer base by implementing a combination of language-related resources, training and cultural sensitivity initiatives.

By prioritizing inclusive communication practices, organizations will be better prepared to achieve common goals with a diverse team, ensuring all employees are on the same page.

Here are six approaches to consider:

1. LEADERSHIP REPRESENTATION: A critical step is ensuring that leadership comprehends and effectively represents the diverse linguistic landscape of the market. Leaders cognizant of the linguistic nuances can foster a culture of inclusivity, blowing past potential communication roadblocks. In effect, they can guide strategies with a deep understanding of various market demographics, proving beneficial in product localization and global marketing strategies.

2. LANGUAGE TRAINING: Offering language training to employees is a great proactive solution that fosters good communication from the ground up. This initiative also empowers employees, fostering a workspace that respects and nurtures diversity. Companies like Rakuten in Japan have adopted English as their official language, providing language training to all their employees. This strategy has led to a more global mindset and expanded business opportunities.

3. LEVERAGING TRANSLATION TOOLS AND PROFESSIONAL INTERPRETERS: Utilizing the innovative stride in technology, companies can bridge communication gaps effectively using translation tools and experienced interpreters. Tools like Google Translate have come a long way, offering real-time translation services for smoother communication in multilingual settings. However, for critical business communications, professional interpreters ensure accuracy and maintain the formal decorum of the boardroom.

4. CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING: An enhanced understanding of local customs and nuances through cultural awareness training can prevent potential misunderstandings, fostering stronger relationships. It aids in creating a cohesive work environment where respect for diverse cultural backgrounds is a norm. It also provides employees with the tools to interpret messages accurately and consider

the cultural context, ultimately reducing the scope of misunderstandings.

5. LOCALIZATION AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES: Adopting strategies such as utilizing visual aids and simplifying language can facilitate better communication. In this context, localization extends beyond language, embracing local customs and preferences in communication styles to appeal to a broader audience. Clear communication guidelines, on the other hand, foster clarity and prevent potential miscommunications, steering teams toward a more harmonious environment.

6. FEEDBACK AND PATIENCE: Building a culture that encourages input and demonstrates patience is fundamental in nurturing positive relationships. It allows for a two-way street where employees can voice their concerns and seek clarifications without hesitation, promoting a holistic understanding and mutual respect.

In the end, companies must be discerning enough to tailor their approach based on the inherent dynamics of their organizational culture. Individual voices matter; you want to maintain a flexible approach toward work environments and ensure everyone feels heard.

Nonetheless, implementing a mix of language resources, training and cultural initiatives will help build a shared foundation for your employees and customers regardless of their languages.

MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS AND ADAPTING AS NEEDED

Communication is the glue that holds everything together. And when you're venturing into the global market, understanding each other isn't just nice. It's essential.

Having a regular rhythm of check-ins and feedback loops with your employees — I'd suggest quarterly — will help you keep a finger on the pulse of how things are going. It's about keeping the lines of communication clear so everyone can share their thoughts, and strategies can be tweaked as needed to foster a better understanding. ■

RICK HAMMELL is the Founder and majority shareholder of global tech firm Atlas, a groundbreaking Chicago-based company he established in 2015. Prior to this, he served as the Global Vice President of Human Resources and Services for a prominent government contractor.

The crisis in teen MENTAL HEALTH

How lifestyle psychiatry can help address teen mental health.

Those of us in the mental health care professions have known about the crisis in adolescent mental health for many years. However, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) just released a report, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, that highlights the problem with statistics that everyone can understand: In 2021, 42% of high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, 22% seriously considered attempting suicide, 18% made a suicide plan, and 10% attempted suicide. For teen girls, the figures are even higher: 57% felt persistently sad or hopeless, 30% seriously considered suicide, 24% made a suicide plan, and 13% attempted suicide.

With nearly half of our teens experiencing depression and about a quarter considering suicide, the situation meets the definition of a crisis. Any yet, our mental health system is already overrun. There simply aren't enough adolescent inpatient psychiatric hospital beds, and there aren't enough adolescent mental health providers to accommodate this tidal

wave of young patients.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

CDC proposes that school based mental health be expanded. But would more help at school alone be enough? Is there anything that parents and other caregivers can do within the home?

Fortunately, the answer is, "Yes". Lifestyle Medicine arrived as a board-certified branch of medicine in 2017. Lifestyle Medicine provides evidence-based recommendations for how to improve health, including mental health, in six domains: nutrition, exercise, sleep, stress reduction, social and emotional connectedness, and detoxification from chemical substances. Lifestyle Psychiatry, emphasizing the recommendations specific to mental health, has also arrived; its first textbook was published by the American Psychiatric Association in 2019. The recommendations of Lifestyle Psychiatry are readily implemented in the home.

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF LIFESTYLE PSYCHIATRY?

1. For optimal nutrition to prevent, reverse, and treat deficiencies associated with depression, implement the Whole Food Plant Based diet, supplemented with vitamin B12. "Whole" means natural and unprocessed. "Plant based" means 90 to 95% plants, rather than animal-based products;
2. For optimal fitness and to guard against a sedentary lifestyle, which can contribute to depression, teens should exercise 300 minutes each week. This could be 30 minutes 5 days each week, or 150 minutes each weekend day, or any combination of these that still adds up to 300 minutes per week;
3. For adequate sleep, adolescents require anywhere between seven and nine hours each night. "Sleep hygiene" is the set of evidence-backed guidelines that promote restful, refreshing sleep. Research shows that, of all sleep hygiene recommendations, the most important is getting adequate

- sunlight, which can mean anywhere between 20 and 30 minutes, depending upon the time of day;
4. Stress reduction, which consists of four things: decreasing the stressful events and requirements in teens' lives down to manageable levels, increasing their resilience to stress with coping strategies, decreasing their perceptions of stress with therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and increasing their awareness of support from family and friends;
 5. Social and Emotional Connectedness, which speaks for itself; and
 6. Avoidance of or detoxification from chemical substances such as alcohol, nicotine, cannabis, and others that have been shown to be harmful to the adolescent brain.
- The crisis in adolescent mental health is deep, and sufficient professional resources are lacking.

But Lifestyle Psychiatry provides clear and definitive guidelines with which parents and other caregivers themselves can contribute to the mental and emotional well-being of their teens. ■

DR. CHERYL L. GREEN is a lifestyle psychiatrist based in Southern California and the author of *Heal Your Daughter: How Lifestyle Psychiatry Can Save Her from Depression, Cutting, and Suicidal Thoughts* and *The Heal Your Daughter Workbook: Six Weeks to Feeling Good with Lifestyle Psychiatry*. Green works part time at the Loma Linda University School of Medicine, and part time in her own private practice based in the greater Los Angeles area. She holds degrees from Harvard University (A.B.), Princeton University (Ph.D.), and Stanford University School of Medicine (M.D.). She is board-certified in Psychiatry, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Lifestyle Medicine. Her passion is inspiring others to achieve vibrant physical and mental health.

FROM THE US



BY DR. CHERYL L. GREEN
Lifestyle Psychiatrist and Author



Get **COMPENSATION** right

Use remuneration to create ideal jobs for your employees.

In the new age of work, higher compensation is part of the recipe for attracting and retaining devoted employees. If you want people to join your organization and stay long-term, you must help your team members overcome the years of income inequality that have left many of them behind. Now, as you'll see throughout this book, for many workers, pay isn't everything. But for some workers, pay is the driving force behind job switching, because they have no choice.

For them, it's not about greed – it's about survival.

When a person can't make ends meet, they have to find a way to earn more. Some may ask for a raise or a new role. For others, or in the absence of internal options, it means considering a move to a new organization. After all, the fastest way to an increase in salary is to change employers. If you want employees to be committed, unpoachable, and consumed by the belief that you pay them not only well but better than they would be paid elsewhere, then you must do just that. The math tells us that it's almost always in your best interest to retain an employee instead of hiring and training a new one. Most experts agree that it costs a company, on average, one-half to two times an employee's salary to replace that person.

Getting compensation right in your organization – in a way that plays a part in achieving Employalty and unlocking commitment – will depend on several factors. Budget is certainly one. Market forces, revenue, staffing needs and benefit costs are clearly others. But numbers alone aren't the only aspect of compensation that might need attention where you work. There may also be an obstacle that exists in the ten or so inches between your ears.

BELIEFS ABOUT PAY

There are many beliefs that people have about what some people “deserve” to earn in their jobs. Some of these are tied to education and qualifications. Others relate to experience or



BY JOE MULL

HR veteran with nearly 20 years of experience

the specific value that someone adds to an organization. Often, these beliefs are informed by the markets and industries we operate in—I doubt that a restaurant owner would argue that servers should be paid six-figure salaries, for example. But what also shapes our thinking about pay are some broken beliefs we hold about ambition and work ethic. There are those that cling to the unflinching and romantic idea that prosperity is available to all if we are simply willing to work hard enough to attain it. But this is magical thinking. For many workers, it's not that the American dream is inaccessible. It's that the race has gotten four times longer. Some are asked to run that race with a weighted backpack, dragging two young children beside them, while others began the race on mile marker ten and had access to a golf cart.

It's the Myth of Lazy at work again. The idea that people who don't earn more just don't want it badly enough ignores more than forty years of legislators and corporations suppressing the wages of low earners while the cost of living increased four times over. It also ignores

the advantages some people had and others didn't. Yes, you worked hard. Yes, you got an education. You took risks and paid your dues. But if you had a middle-class childhood, early access to a computer, food and housing stability, and consistent participation in education in a good school district, you enjoyed a considerable head start that not everyone else got.

And yet when lower-wage workers push for higher pay, beyond what their respective professions have typically paid, they are often called greedy or unrealistic. Are we really going to call someone clawing their way to a living wage, trying to provide a better quality of life for themselves and those around them, greedy? As part of your journey to create a more humane workplace, I encourage you to examine your beliefs about what people have a right to earn. Pay attention to where you encounter resistance and question the source of that conflict.

I'm reminded of a physician I met a while back who asked me to settle a debate on what they should pay the medical assistants in their practice. In California, where they are based, the average pay was sitting at \$20 per hour, and the practice—a specialty provider that required mas to have a bit more expertise and skill than in other areas of health care—was struggling to fill these important roles. I told him that if he wanted to keep his existing talent and fill the pipeline with qualified candidates eager to join his organization, that he might want to jump up to a starting wage of \$25 an hour to stand out in a crowded market. His face twisted in irritation, and he scoffed immediately, declaring that “there's not an MA alive that's worth \$25 an hour!” before he stormed off.

To find and keep the very best talent, employers must shift from a company-first mindset on wages to people-first practices. Gone are the days of operating at the lowest threshold of staffing while paying the lowest wages possible. If you want to unlock all the benefits that Employalty can create, you may simply have to pay people more. Decide that prosperity is no longer the province of owners and executives only. Start by evaluating whether you are paying a living wage.

If possible, consider a move to more generous pay. Implement raises that account for inflation; otherwise you end up paying people less to work than you did the year before. Identify additional benefits and services that enhance quality of life for employees. Get these right, and you're on your way to creating an employee's Ideal Job and becoming a destination workplace. Compensation is the first box to check to seed Employalty.

This piece is an excerpt from Joe Mull's forthcoming book *Employalty: How to Ignite Commitment and Keep Top Talent in the New Age of Work*. ■

JOE MULL is an HR veteran with nearly 20 years of experience, based in Greater Pittsburgh. He is the author of three books including the forthcoming *Employalty: How to Ignite Commitment and Keep Top Talent in the New Age of Work*. He is also host of the popular Boss Better Now podcast and founder of the BossBetter Leadership Academy. He is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) and has been featured on Good Morning America, Forbes, and Newsweek.

Believe in your WOMEN OF COLOUR

Help women of colour overcome the challenges they face in the workplace.

The term 'Women of Colour' refers to those who identify as Women, and who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities'. The experience of women of colour is personal, individual, and unique. Women of colour are not a monolith and as such getting to know your colleagues, creating a safe space for dialogue, and listening well are the most important actions that you can take to understand their experience. In this article, I share some specific challenges that are common to women of colour, but this does not mean that they are universally experienced.

If you've been working towards advancing gender equality in your organisation, you may wonder why you'd need to consider an additional focus for women of colour. After all, aren't women's issues every woman's issues?

The pioneering scholar and writer, Kimberle Crenshaw, describes the need for an intersectional approach so that we see the way various forms of

inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about gender inequality as separate from inequality based on race, class, sexuality, or immigrant status, but they intersect. Gender equality initiatives may not take into account the challenges of women due to their ethnic backgrounds, such as judgement about their accent or behaviour and stereotypes like being called angry or timid. Women of colour experience racism and sexism and that has a compound effect of discrimination, one plus one doesn't equal two on this occasion, it equals so much more.

Take a moment to think of the most senior women in your organisation, does one type of woman's career escalate while others stagnate? According to PWC's Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2021, Caribbean women are the lowest female earners, earning as little as 70p for every £1 earned by the average White British man. For full-time workers, this amounts to a difference in earnings of around over £8,000 a year.

Pay is just one part of the story - women of colour experience systematic structural inequalities across the labour market that see them overrepresented in insecure jobs, and at a higher risk of being underemployed, as well as facing discrimination in the workplace.

According to a 2019 TUC Report, a staggering 54% of women of colour who belong to the LGBTQ+ community experienced unwanted touching, compared with 33% of their white counterparts, although any figure above zero is not acceptable.

Research from LinkedIn and McKinsey also found that 59% of Black women have never had an informal interaction with a senior leader at their company; less than half (47%) of white women are in the same position.

The Runnymede Trust recently published extensive research on the experience of women of colour in the workplace.

- Institutional racism is common in all sectors and in all organisations:
- 75% of women of colour have experienced

racism at work, with 27% having suffered racial slurs;

- Forced to mould to conform: 61% of women of colour report changing themselves to 'fit-in' at work, from the language or words they use (37%), their hairstyle (26%), and even their name (22%);
- Well-being is being impacted: 39% of women of colour stated their well-being had been impacted by a lack of progression compared to 28% of white women while being refused promotion led to the loss of motivation for 43% of women of colour;
- Locked out of progression: 28% of women of colour (compared with 19% of white women) reported that a manager had blocked their progression at work, and 42% reported being passed over for promotion despite good feedback (compared to 27% for white women); and
- Recruitment discrimination: 52% of women of colour experience discrimination - such as being asked for UK qualifications or English as a first language and being asked for ethnicity information outside of monitoring processes.

On a day-to-day basis, women of colour experience more personal scrutiny, being told, "Don't be so aggressive," or "You need to be more assertive and confident." They experience microaggressions, such as being asked to take notes or serve refreshments to colleagues even when they are the most senior in the room. Their ability is consistently underestimated and overlooked, and questioned, and they are not given the grace to make the mistakes that other colleagues are. They are even judged on their natural hairstyles being deemed unprofessional. Beyond the workplace, women of colour are also contending with unique biological and medical issues, such as sickle cell disease, and overactive thyroid and are four times more likely to die in childbirth, than white women in the UK. If they experience mental illness or disability, they may experience added stigma in communities of colour. Family issues, such as abuse, neglect, violence, and rigid expectations of women of colour, and their roles in the home and family can also play a part in their experience. Women of colour who are of mixed heritage may not feel they belong anywhere, and report feeling not quite black enough, not white enough. In their culture there may be assumptions about women's roles, what makes a good daughter, mother, sister, partner etc. and be expected to be a resource and support to others. Many women of colour have a strong religious faith, which can be tested, and they can experience spiritual crises as a result. Some women of colour may feel deeply connected to the pain that their ancestors experienced, for

example those who were enslaved.

The result of contending with these issues is that women of colour may adapt in ways that aren't helpful for them or their careers, such as:

- Maladaptive perfectionism, the unhealthy setting of unrealistic standards by themselves or others combined with harsh self-criticism and low self-esteem. (Laio, Wei & Yin, 2019)
- Self-silencing - not speaking up and silencing certain feelings, thoughts and actions in order to maintain relationships (Jack & Dill, 1992)
- Emotional inhibition - Always being on guard, not feeling safe to show how they really feel for fear of consequences, such as disapproval or shame.

Isolation and loneliness, because they think that they should hold on to their issues and suffer alone and often experience burnout as a result.

What women of colour need are allies in the workplace, colleagues who will:

- Support their goals by helping them focus on their longer-term;
- Share their knowledge by helping their message, success and skillset reach further than it would with them speaking alone and opening doors and introducing them to new networks;
- Influence others on their behalf by amplifying their message and agreeing with their points so that others take notice, and speaking positively about them to audiences that they don't have access to; and
- Offer protection, friendship and advice so that they do not feel alone, and act as a sounding board, a trusted critical friend and an advisor, and help them to navigate organizational politics.

Ultimately, women of colour need: to be believed in and given opportunities, for colleagues to engage with them with humility and openness. To be able to speak up without adverse consequences and be given the time and space to develop trusting relationships.

Transparent data on how women of colour progress in the organisation is essential. Get to know your colleagues who are women of colour, stop underestimating their competence and capability and lead by removing the barriers that exist in your organisation to their success ■

JENNY GARRETT OBE is an award-winning career coach, leadership trainer, speaker and author of *Equality vs Equity: Tackling Issues of Race in the Workplace*.

FROM THE UK



BY JENNY GARRETT

Award-winning career coach, leadership trainer, speaker and author

DEI is not dead

An authentic, intentional approach based on stakeholders and audiences will transform your DEI initiative.

Shareholders are saying, 'If you're not as diverse as we want you to be, there are going to be economic consequences.' Margaret Neale, an organizational behavior professor at Stanford Graduate School of Business

According to a 2020 report by the Society for Human Resource Management, DEI roles increased by 55% following the murder of George Floyd. But, by the end of 2022, the attrition rate for DEI roles was 33% compared to 21% for non-DEI employees. Revelio Labs, a company that uses data to analyze workforce dynamics and trends, determined that Amazon, Applebees, and Twitter lead the way with DEI layoffs from July 2022.

Why DEI hires are among the first to be laid off Monster reported that only 5% of recruiters see DEI as one of their top three priorities for 2023. In the same report, 10% of respondents said diversity initiatives are among the "first to go" in the unstable economy.

A lot of people who were hired as a result of DEI initiatives are seen as expendable. But the employees are not to blame; a lack of support

from higher-ups has set many employees up for failure. Companies have also put little care into hiring people with the right qualifications and skills.

GAP BETWEEN INTENTION AND EXECUTION

Organizations which implemented DEI "efforts" for optics are learning the hard way that the lack of authentic, intentional efforts to improve DEI only makes them look worse. Reyhan Ayas, a senior economist at Revelio Labs, says, "I always say it is so easy to make public statements and commitments because no one will eventually check if you're committed to the things that you committed to."

Many other DEI experts have pointed out the problematic performative nature of diversity efforts. "It's going back to checking the box versus hiring and keeping qualified workers who can impact change in the company," says Chris Metzler, senior vice president of corporate DEI and environmental, social and governance strategies at the National Urban League. He adds, "They have the title; they don't have the authority. In some cases, they don't have the budgets, so it's difficult to navigate that terrain."

Tai Robinson, a Human Resources Professional in Houston, notes that, even though these employees were being paid high salaries, "they were wearing golden handcuffs, unable to do but so much because the organization's leaders didn't want much done."

INAUTHENTIC DEI EFFORTS DESTROY TRUST

The inauthenticity exhibited by executives who care more about image than real diversity, inclusion and equity has consequences, especially in terms of trust. If employees do not trust their employer to have their best interests at heart, they become disengaged and dissatisfied with their positions, which is costly for organizations.

Paul J. Zak, CEO of Immersion Neuroscience and founding professor of the Center for Neuroeconomics Studies at Claremont Graduate University, has found that, compared to those who worked for a "low-trust" organization, employees who worked for

a "high-trust" organization experienced 76 percent more engagement and 50 percent higher productivity.

When employees feel truly valued by their employer, they not only stick around, thereby avoiding costly turnover for the organization, but they also do better work.

REPRESENTATION WHERE IT MATTERS

A recent survey found that Black employees represent only 3.8% of Chief Diversity Officers overall, while White people make up 76.1% of the roles; meanwhile, those of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity make up 7.8%, and those of Asian ethnicity make up 7.7%.

Wade Hinton, founder of Hinton and Co., a DEI firm in Chattanooga, Tennessee, noted the importance of ensuring DEI leadership "reflects the diversity of our communities and this country."

Most DEI professionals report to non diverse HR colleagues, who are often White men and women. These HR Professionals are not fully trained to handle the nuance and wide spectrum of DEI issues. This is why many argue that C-suites should hire Chief Diversity Officers and give them the same authority as CFOs.

Evidence shows that, when non-white employees do not see people who look like them in leadership positions, they have reason to believe they are in a dead-end job. Tai Robinson, a Human Resources Professional in Houston, points out, "When a White Human Resources person listens to African Americans voice their concerns, they can end up sounding like complaints, although they are just concerns. And that's a problem." When non-white employees see other non-white people in leadership positions, they feel comfortable and safe voicing their concerns and sharing their ideas.

DEI IS NOT DEAD, IT'S TRANSFORMING

Old approaches to DEI may not be working, but that doesn't mean DEI is dead. To see real, lasting change, leaders need to reassess what authentic DEI efforts look like.

CHANGING FACES

Many experts believe that DEI efforts have failed because many people, whether consciously or not, are put off by the "wokeness" associated with the movement. This has led some to wonder if DEI should shapeshift, or "change faces" as HR Drive puts it.

Changing the face of DEI means changing the language. Cinnamon Clark, McLean and Company's practice lead of diversity, equity and inclusion services, says, "I think that - and there's lots of evidence to prove that - 'employee experience' is the new way of saying inclusion without being off-putting to some audience." Clark suggests an authentic, intentional approach based on stakeholders and audiences.

DEI IMPLEMENTATION THAT BETTER REFLECTS THE WAY WE WORK TODAY

Adapting to today's workplace landscape is necessary for all organizations, especially for those looking to implement real DEI efforts.

Evidence suggests that employees are more engaged when their employer provides them with learning opportunities. Asynchronous work can yield remote learning opportunities, including in-depth training for DEI professionals.

Employers should also explore updated ways of hiring and onboarding - looking for appropriate soft skills, for example. Organizations like Gallup have developed research-based methods for finding candidates with appropriate skills for different roles. Soft skills for DEI professionals may include communication, emotional intelligence (EQ), conflict resolution, and stress management.

CONCLUSION

DEI touches all components of a business, not just employee well-being and not just public relations. Authentic, intentional DEI efforts is about hiring qualified professionals from diverse backgrounds into leadership positions, providing them with enough financial and developmental resources, and fostering trust between employees and higher-ups.

For work landscape to benefit from DEI efforts, leaders need to hold each other accountable. "I'm optimistic because I consult with clients every day," says Hinton. "I know first-hand that there are organizations that truly want to see progress made. But collectively we've got to make sure that we're encouraging those organizations to encourage their peers to work with them to advance this work." ■

TULIKA MEHROTRA CHOPRA is the Chief Digital Officer of Peterson Technology Partners in Chicago, Illinois, US.

FROM THE US



BY TULIKA MEHROTRA CHOPRA

Chief Digital Officer of Peterson Technology Partners

Why your business needs a **DIVERSE** **WORKFORCE**

Effective inclusion strategies have many benefits for a company.

According to McKinsey, diverse and inclusive organizations have a 35% higher chance of outperforming their competitors. Another study shows that companies with high gender diversity in executive teams are 25% more likely to experience above-average profitability. The benefits are obvious, and businesses are now including diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives as a core part of their mission.

However, although most people associate diversity with gender, race and ethnicity, this is just a fragment of the full spectrum. Organizations also need to recognize other groups, including refugees, immigrants, veterans, ex-offenders, Head Start families, people without a college degree, senior citizens, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ communities.

So, how can including these marginalized groups when building a workforce be another game-changer for companies? Let's jump in.

UNCOVER HIDDEN TALENT

Did you know that more than 60% of Americans who are 25 or older do not have a bachelor's degree? This proportion is especially high among certain demographic groups, such as Black Americans (72%), Indigenous populations (80%), and individuals who identify as Hispanic (79%).

Despite this reality, many companies still use the bachelor's degree as a filter when filling positions – even for the roles that do not require that level of education.

Without a doubt, overvaluing credentials has consequences: Those who are already from marginalized groups continue to take the biggest hit. And companies are missing out on talented individuals who might have the necessary skill set for the job but lack the educational background, which creates obstacles in hiring for open roles.

Forward-thinking business leaders have already

started to take action to tackle these issues. Elon Musk, for example, eliminated the college degree requirement for most jobs at Tesla, aiming to attract and retain bright minds.

If you are unsure how to start a skills-first hiring process, try putting together a list of positions where a new hire can learn the necessary skills on the job or by attending courses and training programs.

LOWER YOUR TAX BILL

Hiring diverse teams can help businesses gain tax benefits in the form of tax credits and deductions, allowing them to improve their bottom line.

For example, the US government has been offering the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) since 1996. This means private sector employers that hire from targeted groups – and certify through the IRS form 8850—can earn a tax credit, which can go up to \$9,600 for each qualified new hire.

These targeted groups include a wide range of communities associated with high unemployment rates, such as veterans, ex-offenders, qualified summer youth employees, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients.

Although there is no limit to the number of eligible hires for an employer, the WOTC counts as a one-time credit that businesses can receive once for each new hire.

POSITIVELY IMPACT PEOPLE'S LIVES

Studies highlight that steady, gainful employment plays a crucial role in reducing vulnerability, increasing stability, and creating greater economic outcomes for individuals from diverse backgrounds and their families. But achieving this type of employment can be a real challenge for many communities.

Consider millions of Americans who have a

FROM THE US



BY MATT STRAUSS

CEO and Co-Founder of RiseKit

criminal record. Years of incarceration can leave them with the daunting question: How can I secure employment?

Not too long ago, I met someone who was struggling to find an answer to this question. He had been in prison for over 10 years and lacked the necessary skills to compete in the job market. Expectedly, he believed that reintegration into society was nearly impossible.

After receiving job training, emotional support, and financial aid for transportation from the recruitment agency, he finally overcame his limiting beliefs and began to trust himself. And it paid off—he landed a job in Chicago, where he is still employed to this day.

This is just one example of how employers and organizations can provide individuals from under-resourced communities with the right support and tools and have a profound impact on their lives.

CREATE A CHAIN REACTION FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

For starters, valuing diversity allows businesses to call themselves socially responsible, fair, and forward-thinking organizations, which results in an improved brand image.

A positive brand image also acts like a magnet, attracting talented individuals. A Deloitte report states that 47% of millennial employees look for

diversity and inclusion while seeking potential employers.

When companies have access to a wider talent pool, they can create stronger teams that generate innovative business solutions and design more effective products and services. As a result, both the organization and its workers benefit from better profitability and equal opportunities.

Added to that, improving brand image through diversity can be a game-changer when looking for new funding sources from a wide range of venture capitalists. Think about it: Investors or shareholders can be comprised of individuals with varying beliefs, ages, sexual orientations, genders, and backgrounds, looking to invest in companies that align with their values.

BREAK BARRIERS: STEPS TOWARDS A MORE DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

It is crucial to remember that hiring from overlooked communities takes time and energy: Companies must put in place certain initiatives during and after the recruitment process to harness the true potential of a diverse workforce.

FOCUS ON A MARGINALIZED GROUP

Prioritizing diversity does not necessarily mean hiring someone from each marginalized community. Instead, business leaders and teams can focus on providing extra support for a specific group, such as LGBTQ+ members, immigrants, veterans, or ex-offenders.

To find the approach that aligns with the company culture, employers and employees can come together to discuss the causes that matter to them. When you start seeing positive outcomes, you can expand your efforts to include more groups.

UPDATE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Adjectives like dynamic and fresh can convey a message that hiring managers want young candidates. Or gender-coded words such as dominate and competitive can reduce the number of women applying for a position. That's why rewriting a job description and using more inclusive language can minimize bias.

What's more, incorporating a diversity and inclusion policy into every job ad can show job seekers that your company focuses on creating

a workplace culture that welcomes individuals from diverse backgrounds.

PROVIDE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT CANDIDATES

Without stable financial income, marginalized populations face various barriers when it comes to obtaining professional attire and finding transportation for job interviews. As a result, qualified candidates might miss out on opportunities, which perpetuates a cycle of poverty and exclusion that is difficult to break.

By providing the necessary resources, employers and organizations can pave the way for a fair job market and ensure that all candidates have an equal opportunity to score a win.

BUILD TRUST

Encouraging open and honest communication among a diverse team is crucial in creating a safe workplace where employees can freely express themselves. Employers can achieve this by demonstrating shared human experiences and fostering an environment where vulnerability is embraced.

This social experiment that involves CEOs, senior citizens, athletes, ex-offenders, and young people is a great example. As the interviewer asks personal questions such as "Who was the class clown?," "Who has been bullied?," and "Who is a stepparent?," individuals from various groups start stepping forward. The takeaway? Despite our differences, there is more that brings us together than sets us apart.

PROVIDE TRAINING PROGRAMS

If companies truly want to embrace a skills-first hiring approach that delivers tangible results, then offering internships, apprenticeships, and training programs is an effective way forward. This helps them tap into a diverse pool of talent and empower marginalized groups to achieve their financial and career goals.

SUMMING UP

Embracing DEI initiatives opens up numerous

opportunities for businesses – no wonder 60% of organizations have a DEI program in place. But to unlock the full potential of building a diverse team, decision-makers must broaden their thinking and look beyond the typical demographics that they usually tap into. When combined with effective inclusion strategies, companies can improve their bottom line, empower marginalized groups, and fuel both business and societal progress. ■

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STRATEGIC FORMULATION

now a world-wide phenomenon

Viewing the future of strategic management through the post-pandemic and the Ukraine war lens.

FROM THE US



BY MOSTAFA SAYYADI

Senior Management Consultant at The Change Leader Consulting Inc.

The post-pandemic world is upon us and how we manage from this point on will determine our success. This article proposes a cadre of ideas in a world that has completely changed. The crucial role in preparing an organization for the post COVID-19 world is at the heart of business acumen today. A new definition of the role of corporate strategy in managing knowledge is crucial for success. A world that we once knew no longer exists. What does exist is you reading this article. Congratulations on your successful survival of the worst pandemic since the turn of the century.

In the wake of the worst pandemic since the turn of the century, strategic formulation has developed into the world-wide phenomenon. As organizations begin to migrate back into the office, settling in has taken on a new sensation.



FROM THE US

BY MICHAEL J. PROVITERA

Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior at Barry University

"Sitting at my desk on a Monday morning after being home for two years working remotely, I felt surreal," said Vic, in Manhattan, New York, as he reminisced his entire career in a moment. It was knowledge management and technology that kept the dialogue going via large platforms of remote use. Now, respect for these two factors removes the barriers to developing more supportive workplaces for in-organization stationed workers and remote workers.

In this article, we ask the question: What will the post-pandemic corporate strategy look like? Your answer is your own personal journey, but we can imagine a workplace that is not the same and, perhaps, never will be again.

A LOOK AT THE INNER WORKINGS OF CORPORATE AMERICA

The world went under an edict of quarantine for

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

many months of 2020. At that time, the mole-people were the predominant residents roaming the streets of Manhattan.

Viewed as pejorative by the very folk it denotes, the term "mole people" describes those who live in the tunnels under Manhattan's Grand Central Station, Penn Station, Port Authority and Riverside Park.

The mole people had no idea of what knowledge management and corporate strategy had to do with them. They embraced the wandering streets and endured as they always do, successful in any environment. They did not know that behind the scenes that the COVID-19 recovery was going to usurp them once again. They survived many decades of crowded streets, and they know that they will prosper as the Island of Manhattan begins to populate with a cadre of commuters once again.

The tumultuous post-pandemic is a survival ground as concerts, broadways plays, restaurants, and organizations open for business. We wondered if knowledge management is a precursor for the post-pandemic recovery. We answer, "Yes!" because a few decades ago, various prominent scholars shed light on the crucial role of the knowledge-based strategy^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6}. In particular, these scholars highlight organizations as communities that have been developed to create organizational competitiveness through using and generating knowledge and new ideas. Hence, the post-pandemic recovery requires that organizations determine strategic initiatives required so that they as a whole more effectively manage knowledge. Ergo, post-pandemic recovery is a success.

The post-pandemic recovery is contingent upon the strategic initiatives' performance as the facilitator of competitive advantage. Two prominent scholars by the names of Charles Hofer and Dan Schendel see strategy as a "fundamental pattern of present and planned resource deployments and environmental interactions that indicates how the organization will achieve its objectives"⁷.

In today's world, executives strive to meet and exceed the strategic goals of both the stockholders and the employees. Goals are the keys to business success if they best fit the relationship between the two as the world manages the lingering effect of the pandemic. Therefore, the goal is to develop more effective corporate strategies to efficiently

deploy organizational capabilities and better manage internal and external sources, aiming at increasing and building rapport with the business environment, inspiring employees, and increasing their satisfaction with their careers so that they can become engaged and productive. Enter the Ukraine invasion by Russia and we have more havoc as supply chains are affected by oil prices, transportation, and the rising cost of goods.

Two predominant strategies come out of strategic formulation, one being analysis strategy, and the other being pro-activeness strategy. Both are geared toward recovery, but they also are imperative for survival. When the pandemic surfaced, executives need to intervene in the system and exert effective change at the organizational level to set a more effective analysis strategy for their organizations to create better and more innovative solutions for business problems.

A pro-activeness strategy determines proactive approaches required so that the organization as a whole searches and prepares to be better positioned in the external business environment^{8, 9, 10}. Pro-activeness strategy is applied more often today as all levels of the organization change and prepare for the post-pandemic crisis.

IN CONCLUSION

This article offers novel insights into the direct impact of organizational strategies for post-pandemic recovery. The key is to develop a solid foundation that can be built upon to secure a vast future that can withstand any tumultuous activity facing organizations. Organizational strategy and knowledge management could help organizations better perform in the post-pandemic world. To continue to thrive today, corporate strategies can assist knowledge management to survive the pandemic. ■

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References of this article appear in the online article.

AUTHENTICITY builds TRUST and RAPPORT

You can't be a cardboard cut-out leader if you want to inspire your people.



BY JEREMY CAMPBELL
CEO of performance improvement and technology business Black Isle Group

In recent months, several people have called with an intriguing dilemma, "We need our leaders to be more inspiring. Can you help?" The inquiries have come from a variety of businesses – the newly appointed CEO of a major multinational; the Chief People Officer of a famous bank; and the Chief Executive of a charity facing existential financial challenges.

They may work in different worlds, but they have much in common. They are all facing an urgent need to deliver major transformation. They've never experienced so much change at such an astonishing pace. The stakes are high. The economic headwinds are worrying. If they are to meet these challenges successfully, they all believe they need to change the way their people lead. Cardboard cut-out leaders just don't cut it anymore. Command and control were killed by COVID. Now they need their leaders to trust and inspire. It's a complex quandary. There is no easy fix. What should they do?

HOW DO LEADERS BECOME TRULY AUTHENTIC?
First, let's consider what authentic leadership looks like. It is a style which is especially personal. Remember, style is a choice. The road to authentic leadership begins by you defining who you are. Consider your three personas. The public you – how you show up at work; the private you – how you show up to your nearest and dearest; and the personal you – who you are inside when you are alone. If these are poorly aligned, you might struggle with authentic leadership. The knack is to bring these three versions of yourself as closely together as possible. For some, this may be a fundamental shift.

Next ask yourself, "Would I follow myself? Would I trust myself? Would I inspire myself?" This deep introspection will begin to shape the way ahead. As any coach knows, self-awareness is the first step in any self-improvement.

To be an authentic leader you must display certain traits consistently every day. The big five are:

- 1. Walking the talk;
- 2. Vulnerability;
- 3. Empathy;
- 4. Connecting; and
- 5. Inspiring.

The starting point is 100% walking the talk. You must live by WYSIWYG – what you see is what you get. Your words must match your actions. Your actions must match your words. When they don't, that's hypocrisy. There's no road back from there.

Vulnerability is the second key to authentic leadership, underpinned by openness and transparency. Tell people what you don't know. Admit you're not the smartest in the room. Delegate, empower and listen to the experts. Authentic leaders speak last. Apologise for mistakes. Open the books and share the plans. Be as transparent as possible.

The third trait is empathy. Authentic leaders genuinely care and show they care. They demonstrate compassion. They make the smallest of gestures which have the greatest of impact. They know about their people. They know about their people's families and the hobbies that stir their passions. They share in their triumphs and their disappointments.

Fourth up is connection. Whether it's a first date or a new client or a comedian who you've never heard before, initially a barrier stands firmly between us and them. Authentic leaders need to knock that barrier down and make connection. Comedians talk about winning the opening minute. If they knock the barrier down in the first 60 seconds and connect with their audience, they are onto a winner. If they don't it's going to be a long night with not a lot of laughs. The authentic leader connects. They do this by finding common ground quickly. They find shared beliefs, common experiences, connections from the past. They involve people. They don't transmit. They show shared understanding. They display sympathy. They give praise and recognition. They repeatedly find a way to connect with the people they lead in a genuine and impactful way.

Last but not least is being truly inspiring. Please note, inspiring and charismatic are not the same thing. Introverts will be pleased to learn that. To be inspiring, you need to practice the first four traits everyday in life but add a fifth piece of magic dust on top. We could write a whole book on this. But let's focus on just one area for now. Inspiring leaders tell inspiring stories. They dump the corporate bullshit and speak from the heart. Their stories are peppered with striking metaphors which people remember in a way that they won't remember the cold company speak of OKRs, KPIs, business plans and strategy documents. To be inspiring you need to be an inspiring communicator.

HOW AUTHENTIC LEADERS COMMUNICATE
You can't be an inspiring, authentic leader unless you can communicate in an inspiring and authentic way. It's just not possible. We are used to helping leaders achieve clarity, brevity, and impact. Now, to meet this growing need to help people become more authentic we have developed that into "The Seven Secrets of Inspiring Leaders." Through this work we help

leaders find the power to communicate in an inspiring and effective way.

So many leaders find this skill one of the most difficult of all. It petrifies many. Others struggle to be memorable and leave their people with a blank canvas. The answer lies in helping leaders focus on the process, rather than the outcome. That's why breaking the art of inspiring speaking into seven areas is so successful. Imagine a championship golfer or an international tennis star in the heat of the moment. They fall back on a carefully rehearsed process breaking their swing down into small parts rehearsed to perfection. That too is the foundation on which to build the communication skills of the authentic leader.

EVERYDAY ACTIONS
So, back to our dilemma which we raised at the start of this article: how do you make leaders more inspiring? In an ideal world – which is not the one we live in – you would just get them to read this article and hope they go off and practice what we preach. But that will never happen. Instead, we believe the answer lies in the theory of "Everyday Actions". It's based on the process that an Olympic athlete adopts in the four years before they bid for gold. We took that thinking, and we suggested it would work for changing the behaviours of a group of senior leaders. It is based on six steps. Here is what we suggested.

STEP ONE – Be clear on the goal – TO BE MORE INSPIRING LEADERS EVERYDAY. Make sure that everyone involved is bought in – as much as that is possible in any fundamental change. Organize a ten-week sprint. Get everyone together and motivate and inspire them to take personal responsibility for their part in the programme. Make sure this comes for the top – from the CEO.

STEP TWO – Sit down with each leader and be very specific about what they need to do every day to be more inspiring. Encourage them to act small and often. Encourage them to focus, not be distracted, and stick to the task.

STEP THREE – Measure progress and make sure that everyone can see what everyone else is doing. To do this you can use an app called Nudge, which does two things. It nudges people every day on their phones or PCs to carry out

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their key individual actions. It also gives the whole leadership team access to high quality tracking and insights about how they are getting on. This creates transparency and competition!

STEP FOUR – Next, encourage everyone to aim for progress and not perfection. It is consistency we are trying to achieve not 100% infallibility.

STEP FIVE – Make everyone accountable. So, everyone gets a coach. At the end of the week every leader on the team has a coaching session to discuss their progress, their challenges, and their approach to the following week's effort.

STEP SIX – Finally, each week, celebrate the small successes. Call out the achievements of individual leaders, especially where they have demonstrated genuine authentic leadership and inspired others to deliver great things.

With the right commitment, this approach can't fail to shift the dial!

When it comes to authentic leadership it is not something we can switch off and on. It is a mindset and behaviors which we need to live 100% of the time. It is summed up by the adage, successful people consistently do what others only occasionally do. That's the difference between true authentic leaders and the rest. ■

JEREMY CAMPBELL is the CEO of performance improvement and technology business Black Isle Group in the Greater Oxford area in the UK. He is an expert on behavioural science and an executive coach.



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The **MYSTERY DECISIONS** leaders make

Why do leaders make strange decisions when it comes to people?

We monitor remotely, we observe carefully, we listen attentively, and we analyze thoroughly, and then we laugh silently at the mysteriousness of decisions that management are taken. We don't take things at face value.

Cynicism and distrust are rampant in today's business environment. Eighty percent of employees want nothing to do with their organizations, or the managers who run them. Great management principles, once the backbone of successful companies, are now often used and manipulated by corporate leaders for their own gain. If left unchecked, these formerly great principles turn into malpractices that damage morale, thwart productivity and destroy companies.

The mystery decisions refer to unethical, illegal and/or ad-hoc decisions by managers that harm the organization, its employees or its stakeholders. They can include actions such as embezzlement, insider trading, harassment, discrimination, abuse of power, and negligence. In addition, to causing financial losses, management malpractice can also damage the reputation of the organization, leading to a loss of trust from customers, investors and employees. It can also result in legal action, regulatory fines, and even criminal charges.

To prevent management malpractice, organizations should have strong ethical guidelines and compliance programs in place. This includes educating employees on ethical conduct, promoting transparency and accountability, and establishing clear reporting channels for misconduct. It is also important for organizations to regularly assess and monitor their risk exposure to potential management malpractice and take appropriate measures to mitigate those risks.

Mystery decisions refer to decisions that are made without a clear understanding of the underlying reasons or motivations behind them. These decisions are often made in complex or ambiguous situations where there is a lack of clear information or conflicting information. Mystery decisions can be challenging because they require individuals to make choices without a full understanding of the consequences or risks involved. This can lead to uncertainty and anxiety, especially if the decision has significant implications for the individual or the organization.

To navigate mystery decisions, it can be helpful to gather as much information as possible and seek advice from trusted sources. This can involve conducting research, consulting with experts and seeking out the opinions of colleagues or mentors.

It is also important to be aware of biases or assumptions that may be influencing the decision-making process and to approach the decision with an open mind.

Ultimately, when making mystery decisions, it is important to recognize that there may be no clear or perfect solution. Instead, it may be necessary to weigh the available information and make the best possible decision given the circumstances.

Here are a few examples of these decisions that many of us have witnessed through the years:

1. In pursuit of finding professional people to join the organization, we keep looking for talented and competent members that have the right educational background and experience, going through hundreds of CVs and numerous of interviews. Then, we find the candidate, but we make two mysteries' decisions:

FROM EGYPT



BY PROF. DR M AMR SADIK
VP Dimensions Consulting Ltd. UK

- a. The candidate is overqualified (nonsense statement), so we drop them;
 - b. We offer less than what the candidate deserves.
2. During the annual performance review, the employee, accomplished all objectives and tasks as required, perfectly done, but we insisted on making two mysteries' decisions:
- a. We give 4 out of 5 rating, because there is always room for improvement;
 - b. We give 4 out of 5 rating, so the employee can't ask for a raise or promotion;
 - c. We give 4 out of 5 rating because this is company policy.
3. We came up with the annual training plan as well as career development for individual employees who will be promoted, but once again make these mystery decisions:
- a. The employee must sign a declaration that he/she will continue with the organization for at least two years after returning from the career development program, otherwise the costs will be deducted from his entitlements if resigns;
 - b. Attending the training program will be after official working hours.

WHERE THINGS WENT WRONG

Instincts and hunches may have a comforting influence on day-to-day decisions, but when it comes to major strategic choices and matters of great complexity, intuition doesn't often get a seat in the C-Suite. Leaders are more likely

to rely on hard evidence and data, logic and rational analysis to support their biggest and most important decisions. But these kinds of decisions the mind can't comprehend, and they also don't make any sense.

Decisions are the coin of the realm in business. Every success, every mishap, every opportunity seized or missed stems from a decision someone made – or failed to make. Yet in many firms, decisions routinely stall inside the organization, hurting the entire company's performance. The culprit? Ambiguity over who's accountable for which decisions. Think of the above-mentioned meaningless decisions and ask yourself the following questions:

- Were the decisions right?
- Were they made with appropriate information?
- Were the right people involved, in the right way?
- Was it clear for each decision?
- Who had the final say?
- What is the impact on moral?
- Was it matching with organizational culture?
- Were the decisions based on appropriate facts?

From my own personal analysis, people decisions in the majority of organizations are taken randomly and spontaneously with no considerations for the general impact of moral or deep analysis on the consequences.

Personally, I, remember that, at the beginning of my career, I faced a similar decision. As an Assistant Personnel Manager, I was running the entire department without a department head, and was ready to take up the post of Personnel Manager, since my performance was above management expectations, but, one day, the General Manager called me to his office, and ironically said, "We know that you are up to the post, but we can't promote you as the company policy dictates that we have a European department head."

A few months later I resigned to join another company. So, companies hide behind policies when it comes to people decisions.

Peter Drucker once wrote: "People decisions are the ultimate – perhaps the only – control of an organization. People determine the performance capacity of an organization. No organization can do better than the people it has. The yield from the human resource really

determines the organization's performance."

There can be a multitude of reasons why people make such decisions. Here are some possible factors:

- 1. LACK OF INFORMATION:** Sometimes people make decisions without having all the relevant information or without fully understanding the implications of their choices. This can lead to poor decision-making;
- 2. COGNITIVE BIASES:** Our brains are wired to take shortcuts when making decisions, which can lead to biases that distort our judgment. For example, confirmation bias, where we only look for information that confirms our pre-existing beliefs, can lead to poor decision-making;
- 3. EMOTIONS:** People may make decisions based on their emotions rather than rational thinking. For example, they may make decisions based on fear or anger rather than careful analysis;
- 4. PRESSURE:** People may make decisions under pressure, such as time constraints or social pressure from peers. That can affect their judgment;
- 5. LACK OF EXPERIENCE:** People may lack the necessary experience or expertise to make informed decisions in certain areas;
- 6. OVERCONFIDENCE:** People may be overly confident in their abilities to make good decisions, leading to overestimating their knowledge or skill level;
- 7. PERSONAL VALUES AND BELIEFS:** People's decisions may be influenced by their personal values and beliefs, which may not always align with what is objectively the best choice;
- 8. RANDOM CHANCE:** Sometimes even the most informed and rational decision can turn out to be wrong due to random chance or unexpected events.

BLACK HOLE OR BLACK BOX

In the context of Human Resource Management (HRM), a "black hole" typically refers to a situation where job applicants or employees feel that their job applications, resumes or inquiries are disappearing into a void without any response or feedback from the company. As for the term "black box" it refers to a situation where the decision-making process

of HRM is not transparent, and it is difficult for employees or job applicants to understand why certain decisions were made.

So, whether you want to call it this or that, this phenomenon needs to disappear because such decisions are harming the organizations and its culture, and eventually it impacts on the brand and degrades performance.

We don't want to manipulate employees' career progress, we don't want to give untruthful hopes, we don't want to give false statements (people are the most important assets), but we need to practise what we preach and be human.

Human capital is a valuable asset of a company. If managed properly, these assets can create sustainable competitiveness for the organization. Therefore, the effective management of these assets is imperative. Human capital in the form of competencies, motivation, skills, innovation owned by employees is an important factor that can improve company performance.

Satisfaction with HR practices plays a role in influencing employee attitudes and behaviors, there is a positive relationship between HR satisfaction and affective commitment.

CONCLUSION

There are no more important decisions within an organization than people decisions, and it ought to be said that thorough analysis can prevent the collateral damage and harm that will be created by mysterious decisions. We need to carefully think things through. Prof. Dr M Amr Sadik is VP Dimensions Consulting Ltd. UK, based in Cairo, Egypt. He is an HBR Advisory Council Member, Adjunct Professor IPE Management School, Paris, and of Middle East Programs for, Victoria University, School of Management, Switzerland and HR Professor and Board Member GUEST, Latvia. ■

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ChoiceScreening

7 Healthy Work Habits



1 STRETCH

Reduce muscle tension by frequently stretching throughout the day.



2 DRINK WATER



Increase energy and relieve fatigue by drinking 8 glasses a day.

3 STAND DURING CALLS

Maintain blood sugar levels and reduce back pain by standing when you can.



4 EAT A HEALTHY LUNCH



Increase your stamina throughout the workday by eating healthily!

5 TAKE QUICK BREAKS

Re-charge by taking quick breaks throughout the day.



6 COLLABORATE



Build a spirit of camaraderie within your team with collaboration.

7 UNPLUG

Taking time off helps maintain a healthy and fulfilling work/life balance!



What **LONG EXPERIENCE** teaches us about HR

HR Professionals need to become like master craftsmen who have learned their craft well.

HR is a field where long experience can make a big difference. One reason for this is that the topic is nuanced, and humans are complex. Another reason is that it often takes many years for the effects of an initiative to be revealed; what looks good in year one may end up looking like a mistake a few years down the line. Finally, the world of consultants and HR technology is oriented towards selling products and, like any sales professional, they will tend to over-hype the value of their products.

Let me share a few lessons I have picked up.

WHAT IS MISLEADING IN HR?

There are two common phenomena that mislead young HR Professionals: the lure of new ideas and the temptation of magic answers.

There is very little new in HR. If you are excited by an idea because it is presented as being new, then you are likely on the wrong path. For example, the idea of more 'democratic' management might seem like a great new idea but it's just a rehashing of the concept of 'participative' management which was a big idea in the middle of the last century. If you are interested in that leadership approach you ought to investigate what has happened with the idea in the last 70 or 80 years, and if it is a good idea, what has prevented it from being universally adopted. If you don't understand the barriers that have stood in the way of participative management in the past, you will slam into those same barriers.

Another misleading notion is that some magic answers will solve our HR problems. Almost everything we do in HR involves nuance and difficult trade-offs. Magic answers and silver bullets make good stories so that's what we hear from the press. A seasoned HR Professional knows that it's rare for these to deliver what is promised.



FROM CANADA

BY DAVID CREELMAN

CEO of Creelman Research

It's disappointing that the most exciting and well-publicized ideas in HR usually lead to dead ends, but it's a lesson that needs to be learned.

WHAT WORKS

It's possible to become cynical about HR initiatives, however there are things that long experience has shown to work. For example, getting to deeply know the people and processes in an organization pays off. An initiative that introduces talent reviews is likely to be effective if the members of the talent review committees are well-acquainted with the individuals they are evaluating. That knowledge matters more than the structure of the review process.

We also know the importance of involving stakeholders, running pilots, and doing testing. In other words, favouring slow, careful, and steady progress instead of racing ahead will likely lead to lasting success.

We know good leaders make a difference, so HR's investment in selecting and developing leaders will pay off. That payoff may take years to show up, so patience is essential.

HOW TO LEARN HR

Many of the useful insights on good HR management come down to simple tips such as "seek to understand before seeking to be understood" and in change management be ready for the question, "What's in it for me?" You can learn a lot from reading; however, you get the best insights from talking to seasoned people and this includes front-line employees and other managers, not just those in HR. The seasoned people will share the full story, what really happened, what's gone wrong, what's disheartening, and what tips have worked for them.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT HR

Henry Mintzberg says management is a craft. If we think of an HR pro as being like a skilled

carpenter, then that might be a better mental model than thinking of them as a clever engineer.

And it may sound strange to say but the best HR pros don't have an HR mindset. They don't come into a situation thinking in terms of the usual HR priorities. Instead, they try to understand what's going on and address the business needs.

Becoming a master HR pro is like becoming a master craftsman. It takes years of diligent effort and careful observation. You can become a master, but there are no shortcuts. ■

DAVID CREELMAN is CEO of Creelman Research, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He helps to elevate the analytics and business savvy of HRBPs, and is best known for his workshops on Agile Analytics, Evidence-based Management and the Future of Work. He is the author of the book *Management for Scientists and Engineers*.



UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT 63 of 2001

Make sure your reason for termination is above board.

The Labour Court of South Africa, in *Swanepoel v KPMG Services (Pty) Ltd* (2022) 33 SALLR 16 (LC), considered the following important issue:

(a) We are sure that many employers have dealt with the following scenario or a variation thereof. The employer and employee had entered into consultations in terms of s189 of the LRA. A settlement agreement terminated the employment relationship. Under some pressure from the employee, the employer completed the unemployment insurance form indicating the reason for termination as 'involuntary resignation'. Once the employee establishes that he will not get any unemployment insurance benefits based on this reason, he further tries to pressurise the employer to change the reason for dismissal as 'retrenchment'. The Labour Court recently had to deal with this set of facts and its approach should be a warning to those employers trying to accommodate their employees in such regard by, in fact, lying about the reason for termination of the employment relationship. What are the serious consequences identified for the employer in this regard by the Labour Court?

OVERVIEW

In this application the applicant sought an order in the following terms:

1. 'That the respondent be compelled to amend the applicant's UI-19 form, insurance claim form and all other necessary documents to reflect the reason for the termination of employment with the respondent to be 'retrenchment';
2. That the respondent be compelled to amend the applicant's UI-19 form, insurance claim form and all other necessary documents to reflect the reason this



FROM SOUTH AFRICA

BY DR BRIAN VAN ZYL

Presenter of the South African Labour Law Report Seminars

- Honourable Court deems appropriate for the termination of employment with the respondent;
3. Ordering the respondent to pay the costs of this application in the event of opposition;
 4. Further and/or alternative relief.'

PERTINENT FACTS OF THE CASE

The applicant was employed as a senior manager within the respondent's internal audit risk and compliance service.

Performance issues were raised with the applicant and he was given an option to resign or be subjected to a disciplinary process.

The parties concluded a settlement agreement to terminate their employment relationship

on a mutual basis. The respondent issued the applicant with a certificate of service and a UI-19 form. The reason for the termination of employment recorded therein was 'involuntary resignation'.

The pertinent clauses of the settlement agreement read as follows:

1. Introduction
 - 1.2 The parties have reached an agreement on the Employee's departure from the Firm on the terms of this agreement, the last day will be 30 November 2017...
5. Certificate of Service

The Company shall provide the Employee with a certificate of service stipulating the period for which he was employed by the Company and the capacity he was employed at the date of the termination of [his] employment.
6. Full and final settlement
 - a The payment to be made to the employee and the benefits to be afforded to the employee in terms of this agreement are in full and final settlement of all and any claims of any nature whatsoever that the employee has or may have against the Company, its holding Company or directors arising out of his employment with the Company or the termination hereof and whether such claims arise in contract, delict, statute, or otherwise.
 - b. In particular, and without derogating from generality of the foregoing, the Employee will have no claim against the Company in terms of the Labour Relations Act and/or The Basic Conditions of Employment Act.'

The applicant was advised by the Department of Labour that, in terms of Unemployment Insurance Act 63 of 2001, as amended ('the UIA'), involuntary resignation was not a recognised reason for termination.

FINDING OF THE LABOUR COURT

In terms of s16(1)(a) of the UIA, an unemployed contributor is entitled to unemployment benefits

if the reason for the unemployment is:

- (i) the termination of the contributor's contract of employment by the employer of that contributor or the ending of a fixed term contract,
- (ii) the dismissal of the contributor, as defined by section 186 of the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995); or
- (iii) insolvency in terms of the provisions of the Insolvency Act, 1936 (Act No 24 of 1936)...

The respondent conceded that the reason stated in the UI-19 form and service certificate was not the incorrect reflection of the terms of the settlement agreement. Yet, it denied that it had retrenched or constructively dismissed the applicant. Instead, it asserted that, when properly construed, the settlement agreement constituted a termination of the applicant's contract of employment on a mutual basis and in full and final settlement of all claims that may have arisen from the contract of employment.

In *Natal Joint Municipal Pension Fund v Endumeni Municipality* 2012 (4) SA 593 (SCA), at paragraph [18], the supreme court of appeal set out a proper approach to the interpretation of written documents, including contracts, stating that:

'The present state of the law can be expressed as follows: Interpretation is the process of attributing meaning to the words used in a document, be it legislation, some other statutory instrument, or contract, having regard to the context provided by reading the particular provision or provisions in the light of the document as a whole and the circumstances attendant upon its coming into existence. Whatever the nature of the document, consideration must be given to the language used in the light of the ordinary rules of grammar and syntax; the context in which the provision appears; the apparent purpose to which it is directed and the material known to those responsible for its production. Where more than one meaning is possible each possibility must be weighed in the light of all these factors. The process is objective, not subjective. A

sensible meaning is to be preferred to one that leads to insensible or unbusinesslike results or undermines the apparent purpose of the document. Judges must be alert to, and guard against, the temptation to substitute what they regard as reasonable, sensible or businesslike for the words actually used. To do so in regard to a statute or statutory instrument is to cross the divide between interpretation and legislation; in a contractual context it is to make a contract for the parties other than the one they in fact made. The “inevitable point of departure is the language of the provision itself”, read in context and having regard to the purpose of the provision and the background to the preparation and production of the document.’

The Labour Court outlined the contextual circumstances that led to the conclusion of the settlement agreement. The scope and purpose of the settlement agreement was not only determined on the basis of that background and context but the words used by the parties were equally important (see *South African Football Association v Fli-Afrika Travel (Pty) Limited* [2020] 2 All SA 403 (SCA), at paragraphs [45] to [46]).

The introductory clause of the settlement agreement clearly stated that the parties had reached consensus on the applicant’s departure. It was common cause that mutual separation was an option chosen by the applicant himself, instead of his having to

face a disciplinary enquiry on allegations of poor performance. As such, the only sensible construction to be accorded to the words used in the settlement agreement was that the applicant’s contract of employment had terminated on a mutual basis and in full and final settlement of all obligations and claims that may have arisen, particularly in terms of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, as amended (‘the LRA’), and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, as amended (‘the BCEA’).

The Labour Court noted that the respondent had been prepared to rectify the error in the UI-19 form to reflect that the applicant’s contract of employment had terminated on a mutual basis in terms of the settlement agreement. In fact, the applicant’s private insurance claim form reflected the same.

The applicant, on the other hand, insisted that the respondent had to state retrenchment as the reason for the termination of his employment contract, or any other reason that would have enabled him to claim unemployment benefits.

There were two hurdles confronting the applicant. Firstly, the jurisdiction of the Labour Court is regulated by s66 of the UIA which provides that:

‘Unless this Act provides otherwise, the Labour Court has jurisdiction in respect of all matters in terms of this Act, except in respect of an

offence in terms of this Act’.

Section 64 of UIA provides that:

‘(1) No person may –
(a) knowingly make a statement or cause a statement to be made which is materially false or which results in an incorrect payment of benefits in an application for benefits in terms of this Act;
(b) wilfully make any false entry on a contributor’s record card or any other book, record or document relating to either a contributor’s employment history or to a contributor’s claim for benefits; or
(c) contravene, or refuse or fail to fully comply with any provision of this Act or of any regulation or notice issued in terms of this Act.
(2) Any person who contravenes subsection (1) (a), (b) or (c) is guilty of an offence.

Given the Labour Court’s finding that the applicant’s contract of employment had terminated on a mutual basis in terms of the settlement agreement, the recordal of ‘involuntary resignation’ on the UI-19 form obviously constituted a false entry in terms of s64(1)(b) and was a criminal offence in terms of s64(2) of UIA. As mentioned above, the Labour Court lacked jurisdiction to deal with criminal offences in terms of the UIA.

Secondly, even if the Labour Court had general jurisdiction in terms of s66 of the UIA, the relief sought by the applicant, to compel

the respondent to record the reason for the termination of his contract of employment as retrenchment or any other reason other than mutual separation in terms of the settlement agreement, was fallacious. In essence, the applicant sought an order directing the respondent to lie about the reason for the termination of his contract of employment in order to claim UIF benefits and, in turn, commit an offence in terms of s64(1)(a) of the UIA. The applicant’s counsel prudently conceded that this claim was flawed.

All things considered, the applicant’s contract of employment had terminated on a mutual basis in terms of the settlement agreement. As such, the applicant’s claim failed as it was ill-conceived and unjustified.

The circumstances of this case dictated that each party should pay its own costs.

The application was dismissed and there was no order as to costs. ■

DR BRIAN VAN ZYL is a Director and the Presenter of the South African Labour Law Report Seminars. He is one of South Africa’s most respected Labour Law Practitioners, is the author of numerous legal publications and regularly practises in the Labour Courts and the CCMA of South Africa.

PARENTING in a disruptive world

As a parent, you can play a key role in preparing your children for the new world of work.

FROM SOUTH AFRICA



BY ALAN HOSKING

Publisher: *HR Future Magazine* and CEO of Osgard

There was a time when the word “disruptive” was used almost exclusively by teachers (educators in today’s terminology) or parents to describe a child who was not compliant at school or in the home. Disruption was dealt with firmly to ensure it was eliminated at all costs.

As we all know, the term has now been adopted by the business community to describe the world in which we live and work. The meaning of the word has therefore expanded from once meaning “causing trouble and preventing something from taking place” to “rapidly changing traditional ways in which things have been done to new, faster and more effective ways”.

Parents raising children today would therefore do well to raise them not to be disruptive but to be able to deal with disruption. Here are three things you can do to achieve this.

1 RAISE THEM TO BE SECURE WITHIN THEMSELVES

There are millions of insecure adults in the world because their parents didn’t give them a sense of physical and/or emotional security as they were growing up. This is one of the greatest gifts you can give your children by making your home a safe space and yourself a safe person for them. For example, fathers can play a major role in their daughters’ lives by being a “safe male” whom they can trust without question. Don’t be surprised by that. There are many men who are threats to their daughters.

A child who has grown up in an unsafe, insecure family environment will most likely grow up to be an adult who has internal insecurity issues. And those are people who find it very difficult to cope with external insecurity issues such as the disruptions that have become a part of our “normal” lives today. Simply put, insecure people can’t deal very well with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity – words that make up the acronym VUCA that describes today’s disruptive world and workplace.

Of course, we’ve moved beyond VUCA to a BANI world – a world that’s Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear and Incomprehensible. So if ever there were a need for businesses to hire emotionally secure talent, it’s now. Question is: are you helping your child to be able to take their place in such a world?

Give your children a sense of security by providing consistency in their lives. That doesn’t mean you control everything they do. You can’t. What you **MUST** do is provide a consistency in your love for them. You do this by saying to them in action and word, “No matter what happens, no matter what you say or do, I will always love you. I might not agree with what you say or do, and I will tell you so, but I will always love you.”

Children who grow up with consistent, unconditional love grow up to be far more secure adults than those who have grown up unsure



of parental love. They don’t have to deal with all sorts of issues inside themselves and can get on with dealing with the uncertainty and disruption of the 21st century. That makes them a lot more successful in the workplace than their emotionally insecure counterparts.

2 TEACH YOUR CHILDREN DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

It’s a fundamental principle that the speed of business is determined by the speed of decision-making. Many large, successful corporates have become comfortable and lazy because their decision-making has slowed down dramatically. They are now at risk of losing their positions and profits in the market to agile start-ups who make decisions at ten times the speed of the larger organisations.

If you want your children to thrive in a world of rapidly increasing speed, let them learn how to make decisions from a young age. So don’t make all their decisions for them. Give them age appropriate decisions to make as they’re growing up. For example, ask your toddler, “Do you want a pink ice cream or a white one?” And as they grow older, get them to make increasingly complex, age appropriate decisions.

By acquiring decision-making skills from an early age, when your child enters the world of work, they will be quite comfortable making serious decisions that affect themselves and others.

3 TEACH YOUR CHILDREN FLEXIBILITY

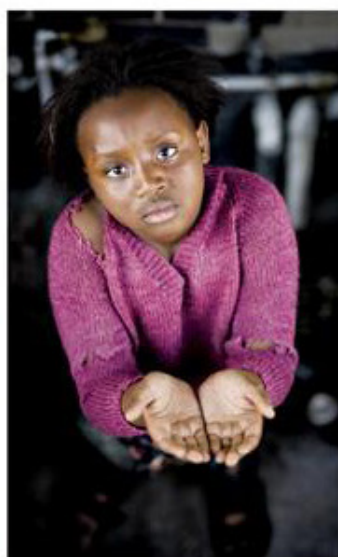
In an increasingly unpredictable world, people need to be flexible enough to deal with unexpected changes and developments. Teach your children flexibility by demonstrating flexibility to them as they grow up. Yep, it’s about the example you set. If you’re rigid and inflexible as a parent, chances are you will raise inflexible children. Be accommodating where appropriate and teach your children how to be flexible themselves.

There is so much more you can do as a parent to prepare your children for a disruptive world. That’s what makes parenting both frightening and exciting! ■

ALAN HOSKING is the Publisher of *HR Future magazine*, and a Leadership Development Expert who specialises in developing both young and experienced leaders. He is the author of the best seller parenting book *What Nobody Tells a New Father*.



See how easy feeding the hungry can be?



Feed SA is a charity dedicated to feeding disadvantaged people throughout South Africa.

Despite the rapidly growing numbers of homeless and hungry people on the streets, more fortunate citizens tend to drive by and ignore them.

We were briefed to help Feed SA target consumers more efficiently in order to increase contributions.

We placed decals of hungry, begging street children at the bottom of supermarket shopping trolleys bearing the Feed SA website and the line, "See how easy feeding the hungry can be?". Any food placed into the trolley appeared to be given to the child.

Collection tins were also placed at the till points and bins for food contributions were positioned at exits. Our message was seen by hundreds of shoppers every day for the cost of a few decals, resulting in a marked increase in donations and a significant boost in website traffic.



THE BIG 5 CANCERS AFFECTING MEN IN SA

COLORECTAL CANCER

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT **1** IN **75** SA MEN WILL DEVELOP COLORECTAL CANCER

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

(You can have early colorectal cancer without symptoms)

- Change in bowel habits
- Rectal bleeding
- Stomach pain
- Weakness
- Weight loss

TREATMENT AND PROGNOSIS

- Treatment depends on how far the cancer has advanced.
- Treatment may include surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, or a combination of these therapies.
- Prognosis also depends on how far the cancer has advanced. For early (stage I) cancer of the colon or rectum, the five-year survival is about 75 percent.



REDUCE YOUR CANCER RISK:



SCREENING

- Colorectal cancer can be found early with a screening test called a colonoscopy.
- Other screening tests are also available.
- For most men, screening should begin at age 50 and be repeated every 10 years depending on your risk.



Toll-free 0800 22 66 22
www.cansa.org.za



Research • Educate • Support

RISK FOR COLON CANCER INCREASES WITH AGE (50+)





THE BIG 5 CANCERS AFFECTING WOMEN IN SA

#2 Cervical Cancer

DID YOU KNOW?

Cervical cancer is the
2nd most common cancer

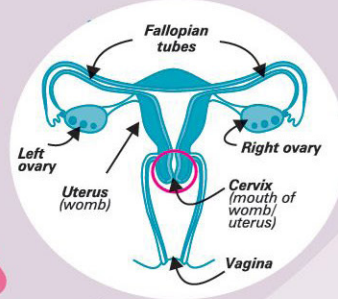


Go for regular PAP SMEARS

Cervical cancer can be effectively treated if detected & diagnosed early

Pap Smear = reliable screening test for the early
detection of cervical cancer - a swab of cervical cells

Women ages 18 - 25 who have ever been sexually
active should have Pap smears every
3 years, or 2 years later after first
sexual activity (whichever is
later) and continue until
age 70



Human Papilloma viruses (HPVs)

Almost all cervical cancers are caused by HPV - a
common virus that is spread through skin-to-skin
contact, body fluids and sexual intercourse.

Signs and symptoms

- ➔ Abnormal vaginal bleeding between periods
- ➔ Continuous vaginal discharges
- ➔ Menstrual periods becoming heavier and lasting longer than usual
- ➔ Vaginal bleeding or pain during sexual intercourse
- ➔ Increased urinary frequency
- ➔ Vaginal bleeding after menopause

Risk Factors

- ➔ Failure to always use protection during sexual intercourse
- ➔ Sexually transmitted infections
- ➔ Having many sexual partners and high-risk sexual activity
- ➔ Having first sexual intercourse at a young age
- ➔ Being overweight/obese with low physical activity levels
- ➔ Consumption of alcohol (could lead to high-risk sexual activity) and smoking



CANSA offers Pap smears at
our CANSA Care Centres at an
affordable rate