Technology - Replacing HR or Reshaping It?

Anuja is a seasoned HR professional with 19+ years of diversified Recruitment exposure in ITES & IT Industries. She has played a pivotal role in setting up 5 International Delivery Locations for Hexaware BPS – Mexico (2015); Russia, Atlanta & Bucharest (2016); Groningen, Netherland & Poland (2017). Anuja has also been instrumental & a key player in taking the organisation from 1000+ employees in 2013 to 5300+ currently.

New technologies and data are disrupting every industry, and HR is no different. With likes of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data taking over recruitment and learning and development, will we see the HR function rise to become technology-first? Or will technology completely take over the HR function? In this special interview with Anuja Niyogi, Global Head Talent Acquisition at Hexaware Technologies, we implore the many ways technology will change the face of human resources, and get answers to these questions.

HR Technology

Q The ability to capitalize on data insights and analytics can make or break a company. Given the focus on data and analytics, what is the future of work and how will HR transform along with it?

A In today's ever-evolving economy and global environment, there is a very thin line which differentiates the best from other good organisations, and data is the king here. The organisations who have figured out or are attempting to extract the real essence from the data sets through various analytical tools and interpretation have been able to carve out the niche for themselves. Looking into examples of Apple, Google, IBM, Nike, Walmart/ Flipkart, BMW, Volkswagen etc., all have the ability to comprehend the unsaid messages from its clients, vendors, suppliers through analytics and better interpret the market expectation and have been able to outperform their peers even in the troubled economic and political global environment. Many technology solution companies, with a niche focus on Transforming Customer Experience, have been handy to support many fortune 500 conglomerates as an extended arm through intelligent automation like cognitive RPA, Machine learning etc. and deploying ML on a large set of data to take faster-informed decisions. As a matter of fact, while building solutions, we as a company ensure that we practice the same in-house to make it real for our own benefit.

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I personally believe HR is the first department which has ample data within its purview to build the right analytical insights engine and a common thread is during the recruitment process. Gone are the days when we used to spend hours on interpreting a CV especially to understand any fraud. Today we have completely moved on from human-based research to Robotic process-based research. For example, we address the entire background verification for one of our global clients where specifically defined websites were to be reached and contact numbers, work history was to be established. A Research Bot was created for this purpose. We know that HR has thousands of CV and when in need the data bank has to be dig, here is where a ML kind of solution is really helpful i.e. if we need to know how many have pythons coding experience rather than basic python knowledge, then as a digital HR my ML-based solution should throw the top 100 CV which not only have Python as a language but also must have done 5 projects globally and are not allocated to more than say 1 project at a time. HR has to lead by example. Even for customer experience clients, if someone needs retail experience then an NLP based solution should be able to guide them. This does not mean that you don't require physical interviews etc. but the fact that they get to choose from the best talent available, organisations always see a differentiated digitally focused HR.

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Quick Facts About Anuja Niyogi

Hometown: Kolkata, West Bengal

Things You Value Most: Integrity and Loyalty

Passionate Pursuits: Travel

Favourite Books: Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead by Sheryl Sandberg; Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy by Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant; Don't Hire the Best by Abhijit Bhaduri
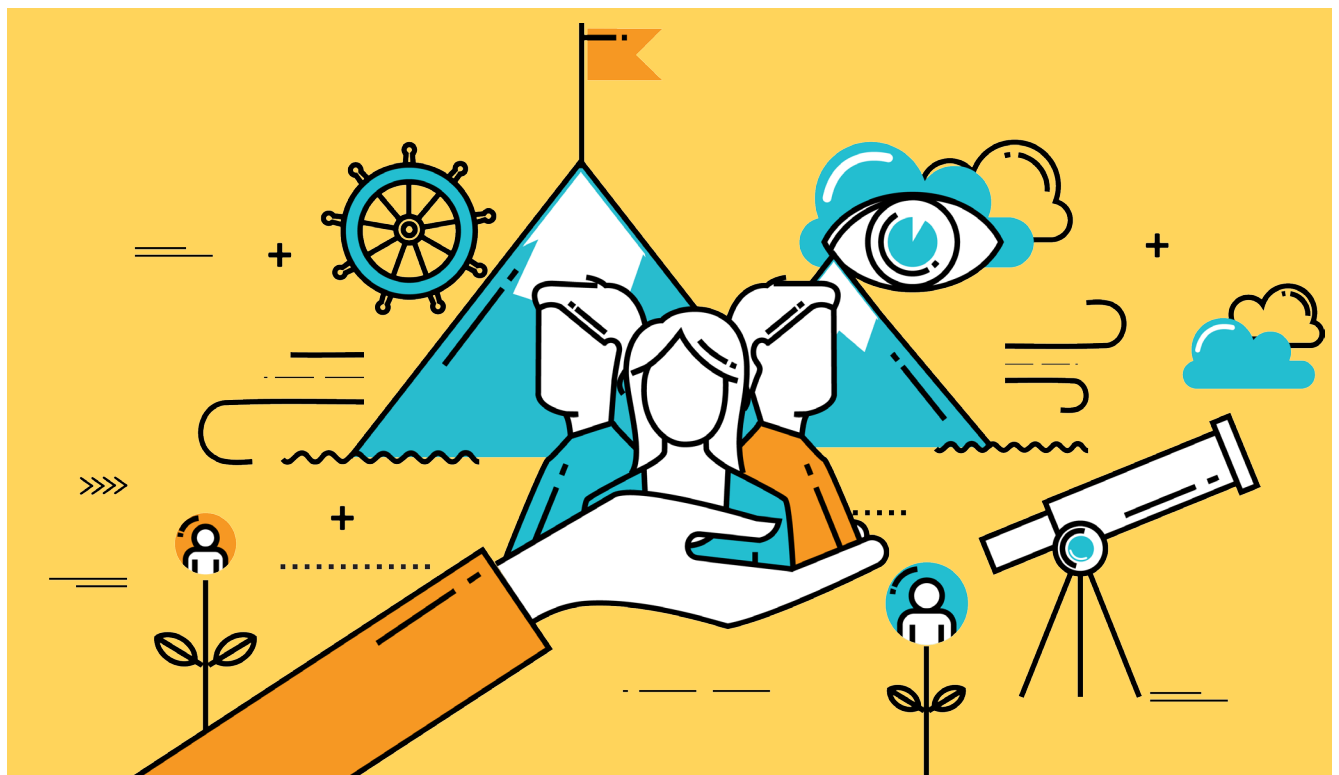
Performance Reviews

Q The need for straight talk and regular, transparent feedback is important to establish a culture that encourages open feedback. In your opinion, how does a forward-thinking organisation create a culture of feedback, including in its performance reviews?

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When I hire for my team, I look at attitude, integrity, willingness to learn, handle pressure situations and top it up with 60% skills. Skills can be learnt while the other cannot be learnt.

A For me it's feed-forward. I am believed to be a candid and transparent manager. I do not believe in sugar coating feed-forward – it loses its essence. And for me, whenever I notice a need, I immediately take action and give the person my two-cents. This way it gives the person to evaluate himself and correct the same. When I hire for my team, I look at attitude, integrity, willingness to learn, handle pressure situations and top it up with 60% skills. Skills can be learnt while the other cannot be learnt.

Apart from reviews and/or feed-forward, it's important for the leader to connect with their directs and his/her entire span. Today we are dealing with Gen Z, GenY, and Gen X. I am a part of Gen X. And my entire team consists of Gen Y & Gen Z. These are an extremely intelligent group of people. They are social, spiritually, emotionally connected, and know a lot more than I personally do. As leaders, it's important for us to not only connect with our team socially, but also keep them involved in some common groups wherein they can exchange ideas, and more importantly imbibe some ideas into their daily work matters.

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I regularly connect with my team – lunch breaks, tea-breaks, movies, outings, and official get-togethers. I am a part of them (work hard and party harder). Then, I am their friend. We also have something called a "Brainbox" in Hexaware. These platforms not only help employees generate new ideas but also conduct a pilot run and if it is successful, implement the same and make it a process for others to follow. These ideas might not be from the same department. Employees are free to study a process or project or a department and implement his/her own ideas for the benefit of the entire organisation. These ideas prove to be better incentives for motivating employees rather than any cash reward. Today's employees are extremely restless about their position as a critical component of their team and the organisation.

For a forward-looking organisation, feedback mechanism has to be unique for each individual but not the standard approach, i.e. while working on projects instead of blocking ideas, allow the team to experiment and fail once in a while, not to demean them but to explore a better way to create a new path. Gen Y and Gen Z not only believe they have it all in them but they also have an insane amount of info

available at their fingertips through internet etc. This makes them better equipped. All they need is guidance to channelize their energy in their areas of interest.

Today's generation does not believe in sugar-coated performance reviews. If there is real data present it there and then, not to pull them down but to challenge them to look at the bigger picture and not be a constraint of only individual performance. The meaning of teamwork has also gone through a revision. It's not just what the team needs to achieve but also how they need to reach there and each member should be clear that they are a value SPOC, not just a SPOC.

New Age Leaders, therefore, have a huge task to achieve.

D&I

Q Let's talk about knowing your company's purpose. How would you define Hexaware Technologies' culture and what makes it unique? What programs are being undertaken to inculcate diversity and inclusion?

A Hexaware as a company is a global leader and the fastest growing next-generation provider of IT, BPS, and consulting services. We are powering the man-machine collaboration, using a combination of human creativity and intellect, the power of ubiquitous data and

powerful algorithms, and plentiful computing.

We are focussed on maximising Straight-through Process (STP) through our strategy to Automate Everything, Cloudify Everything, and Transform Customer Experience. The main aim is to fast-track enterprises into the digital era and intrigue a culture of innovation within the organisation. We are building a culture where the employees are incentivized for automating work using cutting edge technologies. We aim to become a 50% digital workforce by 2020.

We have created an inspiring workspace, fostered on a culture of innovation and automation, driven by our passionate employees, all while placing our customers first. As the fastest growing organisation, Hexaware gives great growth prospects, opportunity to work along with the brilliant minds and a diverse range of high profile clients, as well as an ideal work-life balance. Today, we have brought together the most talented leaders in the industry to create a positive, passionate and fun filled work culture!

Hexaware has adopted a simple philosophy of creating a 'Happy environment' for our employees as we truly believe in life beyond work and help our employees strike a healthy work-life balance through

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SPECIAL FEATURE

various employee assistance programs.

Below image gives an overview of the culture at Hexaware.

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There are no programs for this. It's a Culture.

Organisation Culture

Q **Every company has a set of core values that shape the culture and define the character of the company. According to you, what are the ingredients to build a successful, enduring culture, and how do you sustain that culture?**

A Some of the key quotes to focus on in order to sustain the culture of any organisation are as below:

- Size of the organisation doesn't matter. It is a big dream that works.
- Do not follow the herd. Create your own path and work towards achieving it
- Allow people to fail. It will prepare a culture of innovation in the organisation.
- Not just serve the customer

1 AUTOMATION FIRST
Culture of automation first; no fear of cannibalization

2 FOCUSED GROWTH ASPIRATIONS
Fierce integrity & laser focus on acquiring only two to three customer per quarter, globally

3 CROSS SKILLING
Focus on cross skilling: e.g. SDET

4 ANTI PYRAMID
Automation of low skilled activities; Slow rotation of Senior Consultants, non-FTE based scale

5 BOTTOM UP INNOVATION
Culture of bottom-up, client-centric innovation

6 FOSTERING A CULTURE OF DAVID VS GOLIATH
Chip on the shoulder attitude

7 WORLD'S HAPPIEST CUSTOMERS
Top industry scores in loyalty, customer advocacy, satisfaction and value for money

8 DIGITAL-FIRST 'NEW-AGE' CULTURE
Instrumenting a digital-first 'new-age' culture in our clients automating process through AI and bots

9 RATED TOP 2 IT OUTSOURCING SERVICE PROVIDER TWO YEARS IN A ROW!
Ranked No. 1 among the top service providers in overall customer satisfaction in White lane's 'IT Outsourcing Study' & highest level of satisfaction in the IT services industry.

10 FASTEST ORGANICALLY GROWING IT SERVICES COMPANY
Organic revenue growth of 12.9% CAGR from 2014-2017

completely different business vertical. In today 's economy, it is the people of the organisation who form the core raw material to differentiate rather than the product, considering the fact that today market is more of pull-based/ need-based rather than push-based (some may still be a push but its far and few). HR cannot just wait at the wings and see things evolving rather they are expected to create the knowledge leaders who will act as the core raw material for each business as well as have the ability to pick and learn new skills shrugging off the old value systems to create future markets. This is where leaders are looking forward to HR heads to take the lead and without business understanding how that can be possible. Over and above, in today's gig economy HR has to play the prime role to tap the best of breed from larger ecosystem to address the need of specialized skills for specific projects and this is where, again, business understanding is a must.

Today, the industry is talking about disrupting their own thoughts and ideas. It's ever-growing and re-defining it's course every other day.
3 things are important: (1) Read, (2) Read and Re-define (3) Read & Relearn.

the best, but make them the happiest customer.
Talking about Hexaware, the company has grown multi-fold, and so have I. I joined Hexaware BPS when it was known as Caliber Point, way back in mid-2013. And since then in order to be, we are continuously evolving, disrupting, and redefining our value.

Our culture is Disruption. Our culture is cannibalization.

Leadership

Q Do you agree that for any HR leader to succeed merely HR skills aren't enough, business acumen skills are equally important? In your opinion, why are HR leaders lacking in this critical arena of human resource skills and, most importantly, what can they do about it?

A As leaders, we are dealing with a lot more sensitive and intelligent group of people. Therefore, we need to keep ourselves more agile

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We need to have business acumen. Unless we have a larger business sense, we will cease to exist very soon and someone else will take over. Every forum that I have been a part of, internally and externally, talks about HR as a Business Partner. Being aware of market situations, industry news, and technology is the basic requirement of any HR of today.

In my opinion, HR is not just personal management rather a large conglomerate that constitutes numbers of business units in itself and each unit may even have a