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SPECIAL ISSUE



## THE BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR IN INDIA

A BT-TAGGD SURVEY



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BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR  
OPENING ESSAY

# TUG OF WAR

**ENGAGED IN A TUSSE WITH EMBOLDENED EMPLOYEES  
WHO HAVE TASTED FLEXIBILITY, ORGANISATIONS NEED TO SOUL  
SEARCH AND CRACK THEIR HYBRID MODEL CODE AS THEY CRAFT  
THEIR RETURN-TO-OFFICE PLANS**

BY **VIDYA S.**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **RAJ VERMA**

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**SOMETIMES, GETTING** into something may be easier than getting out of it. Just ask the HR professionals witnessing up close employees' return to office under hybrid work as companies roll back pandemic-led

work-from-home benefits. If moving tens of thousands of employees into remote work overnight at the pandemic's outset was a challenge, bringing them back to office under a hybrid model suitable to both employers and employees at a time of record-high attrition levels is proving to be a bigger one.

"Today, the heated job market is not helping the cause of bringing people back to office. The ability of organisations to take hard calls is not there," says talent solutions provider Careernet's CEO & Co-founder Anshuman Das, adding that companies are definitely facing resistance from at least a few employees when told to return to office. Agreeing, another senior HR professional who requested anonymity, says: "Employees are saying, 'You don't decide my life, I decide it'. Many of them who have moved back to smaller towns are asking if they need this particular job to cover their expenses."

With vaccination gathering pace, the Omicron wave proving to be mild and India Inc. becoming more confident of managing the virus better, employers' collective chants have also changed from 'the future of work is remote' to 'the future of work is hybrid' to 'one size does not fit all'. Yet to crack a hybrid model that works for them, several companies have been gearing up for more in-office work under a hybrid mode, with specifics varying across industries, management styles and roles.

Employees are back mostly in banking, financial services and even in IT and start-ups, which were expected

to lead the hybrid-work pack given their digital quotient, Das says. "The return of employees to physical offices and workplaces is yet to gain the sense of normalcy that was once present. We are still witnessing low occupancy rates. But as things are picking up pace, we are seeing several organisations resume their 'work from office' practice," says Sreelakshmi Venugopal, Head of HR at Embassy Services, which runs facility management services for large business parks in the country.

Sunjoy Dhaawan, VP of Human Resources at DHL Express (India) agrees that the company's management has debated the topic several times. "People can turn back to us and say, 'Look, in the last two years I've worked very efficiently sitting at home and my work hasn't suffered. So why do I need to come to office?'" Their justification is that the office space becomes necessary for newcomers at least to get a sense of the company culture. But he adds that they haven't had any requests for fully remote work, possibly because they allow employees 10 days of work from home in a month.

Other leading employers also say they haven't received many employee requests to continue working from home. "Our experience has been that a majority of employees are able to manage these situations as long as they have the flexibility to manage their work. They actually look forward to being in office two to three days a week," says Tata Consumer Products (TCP) Global CHRO Amit Chincholikar. "We are encouraging all our colleagues to join us in the office/work the market for at least three days a week and have received good response," says an HUL spokesperson, adding that people with exceptional circumstances can discuss work options with their line managers. Adds S.V. Nathan, Partner and Chief Talent Officer, Deloitte India: "Our experiences and response will evolve as we have just started hybrid working in March."

To be sure, many employees are glad to be back in office. At least there's a clear end to the day, reason some. Others are not ready to suffer the boredom and digital exhaustion of working from home anymore. But there

are also many who don't want to return. Consider this: Naukri.com added a feature in July 2021 for recruiters to tag their job postings as 'Permanent Remote' or 'Temporary Work from Home During Covid'. According to the job portal's findings released in February 2021, over 93,000 permanent and temporary remote jobs were listed. Indian job seekers made over 3.2 million searches for permanent and temporary remote jobs. About 57

**EMPLOYEES MAY NOT HAVE MUCH CHOICE IF COMPANIES REQUIRE THEM TO RETURN TO OFFICE AS LONG AS THE STATE AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENTS' RULES DON'T PROHIBIT THEM**



## HOW LEADING ORGANISATIONS ARE APPROACHING HYBRID WORK

	<p><b>AMAZON INDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce comprises Prime Video, operations team, technology team, Alexa Labs and AWS. Onus on the team leader to decide how many days they need to work from office or home</li> </ul>
	<p><b>GOOGLE INDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Three days in office, two days wherever they work best</li> <li>▶ Flexible work arrangements: Temporarily work from a location other than their main office for up to four weeks a year</li> </ul>
	<p><b>DHL EXPRESS (INDIA)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Started 50:50 hybrid model which includes working from home for 10 days in a month since March</li> <li>▶ Plans to let employees work from an office location nearest to them as the company is present in 52 locations</li> </ul>
	<p><b>HUL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Recently moved back to hybrid work model</li> <li>▶ Employees encouraged to come to office /work the market for at least three days a week</li> </ul>
	<p><b>TATA CONSUMER PRODUCTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Hybrid model: Work from office, work from home or work from anywhere</li> <li>▶ Office capacity capped at 50 per cent</li> </ul>
	<p><b>DELOITTE INDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Moved to hybrid model from early March</li> <li>▶ Each business and service line can choose the approach that best aligns with their unique requirements</li> </ul>

per cent were made for permanent remote jobs during the same time, with the highest search count of over 350,000 in December 2021 alone.

**B**UT IT'S NOT JUST the fear of the virus holding people back anymore, going by the crowds at the malls, theatres and restaurants. Tech giant Google's *Covid-19 Community Mobility Reports* map community movement in India and other countries during the pandemic (February 17, 2020 to March 3, 2022) using data from users who have turned on their location history. From mid-June 2020 to mid-October 2021, the trend graph for community movement in India to retail and recreation spots dipped the lowest from the baseline, while the movement to workplaces stayed well above it, meaning that people went out more to workplaces than to places like restaurants and shopping centres. But the trend reversed during mid-October to December 2021, when movement to retail and recreation spots overtook the movement to workplaces. Going to the workplace may be a response to official mandates, but visits to recreational spots are completely voluntary, indicating a greater level of confidence among people to step out. It may just be a question of convenience as well, with several employees blaming time-consuming commute for not wanting to return.

"A small minority of employees has referenced time spent in commute as well as the nature of their roles—being such that they can be delivered remotely—as reasons to not come back to office," says TCP's Chincho-likar. He adds that most requests are not so much around working from their home town but about flexibility in schedules. Deloitte's Nathan also mentions commute timings and the effort and costs involved in relocation from home towns as key concerns employees have about returning to office. Careernet's Das says his firm surveyed 2,000 employees and found a 50-50 split of those wanting to return to work and those who don't. Among those who don't, time and money saved on travel and stay were prominent reasons, he says. "And they are okay to work from 9 am to 9 pm with small breaks in between to attend to their life, which they can't do while at office full time."

Take the case of communications profes-



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**S.V. NATHAN**

PARTNER AND CHIEF TALENT  
OFFICER, DELOITTE INDIA

sional Mohammed Sulaiman, who is currently living with his family in Chennai. He has to report back at work in Bengaluru for two days a week. Wary of Bengaluru's infamous traffic and mindful of the rent he will have to shell out, he plans to test the waters by shunting between the two cities every week for a month until he works out a good arrangement. "Compared to the previous times, the company is a lot more serious this time about returning to work and there have been multiple follow-ups about returning to work."

Employers, on their part, say they find a lot of value in bringing employees back, despite remote work not affecting productivity. It's not about the productivity, says Deepti Varma, Director-HR for Amazon in APAC and Middle East. "But it is important for us to continue to invest in culture, help the person learn the Amazon way of doing things, and enable social interactions among the teams so that the person feels more belonged at Amazon." The company, which topped this year's BT-Taggd Best Companies to Work For in India survey, allows team leaders to decide how many days employees need to work from office or home.

"If we are going to hire thousands of people and if all of them are just small boxes on a screen, then how are we going to build a connect?" asks HDFC Bank CHRO Vinay Razdan, adding that the lender has not issued a formal diktat to all employees to return. Periodic gathering is required, but within that there is enough flexibility to offer remote working to people, he says. But the reasons also extend to other factors like office space usage and better employee control, adds the senior HR professional who requested anonymity. "Not everybody has given up office space. So, what do you with an empty office? Besides, if you are at work and I've lost your mindshare, I can work on counselling, retention, and a lot of things. When you are not on my premises, I have to keep wondering if that sense of belonging is there."

Be that as it may, the fact is that employees may not have much choice if companies require them to return to office as long as the state and central governments' rules don't prohibit them from doing so. "In such a situation, employees cannot rightfully refuse to return to office if so mandated by their employer," says Rashmi Pradeep, Partner at legal firm Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas. The general opening up of the economy and lifting of restrictions also means that employers can take disciplinary action against employees who refuse to return and the employees would be left with limited legal recourse, she adds.

Naturally, there is no clear hybrid model winner yet, but the bigger companies will be the bellwethers, Das says. "The likes of TCS, Wipro, Google,

# REMOTE WORK STILL IN DEMAND

In July 2021, Naukri.com introduced the option of letting recruiters tag their remote job postings as 'Permanent Remote' or 'Temporary Work from Home during Covid'.

→	Between July 2021 and Jan 2022, over 93,000 permanent and temporary remote jobs were listed from Amazon, Tech Mahindra, TCS, Deloitte, Oracle, PwC and other firms
→	22 per cent of them were for permanent remote roles only
→	Over 3.2 million job searches for permanent and temporary remote jobs were made using these filters
→	About 57 per cent searches were for permanent remote jobs during the same time, with the highest search count of over 0.35 million in December 2021 alone

SOURCE: NAUKRI.COM



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Microsoft, HSBC and Goldman Sachs will have to take a call and say, 'This is what my working model is going to be', and a lot of the industry is going to follow that." Meanwhile, companies will have to work out several finer details. General Manager & Head (India & SAARC) of Zoom Video Communications, Sameer Raje, says the movement of talent to smaller cities necessitates taking infrastructure load off the metros and strengthening capacities in non-metros. "Connectivity can be a challenge and the internet fluctuates in smaller towns." Referring to a proposed IT ministry-Nasscom project to develop 100 smaller cities from where employees can work remotely, he says more such initiatives will be needed.

**P**RADEEP SAYS EMPLOYMENT contracts are also being tweaked to clarify when employees are required to work from office and when they can work from home, to include force majeure clauses as well as to specify the appropriate conduct in remote and flexible working. Linking pay to location is another topic of discussion among employers. But Deloitte India's Partner (Consulting) Anandrup Ghose doubts companies will implement it. "But they

will have to figure out how performance management and cultural issues can be addressed for a hybrid workforce," he says.

The general consensus is that the next four to six months will be all about experimenting and discovering what works for a specific organisation and its employees, with 2023 ushering in a stable and static new normal of working, provided there are no further serious disruptions. The senior HR professional who chose to stay anonymous adds that employees also need six to seven months to unwind after two stressful years, before they can return to normalcy. Careernet's Das likens the process to trying to build a bridge over a moving road. "That whole discovery and seeing the future road ahead is the bigger problem today. Once you see the road ahead, putting up the guardrails to that era is not a problem."

With the risks of employees losing their advantage when the job market cools off at some point as well as employers driving away good talent with their unhelpful policies, the time is ripe for both sides to get to the negotiation table for a heart-to-heart on how they envision hybrid work. **BT**

@SaysVidya

# ROLL OF HONOUR

The overall champions, sector-wise ranks, and the process we followed

## ► THE TOP 25 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR

Rank	Company	Percentile Score	People Growth Initiatives	Thinking Beyond Business	People Well-being	Engagement and Connect
1	Amazon India	100	9.4	9.4	9.2	8.9
2	Google India	97	9.3	9.1	9.1	9.0
3	Tata Consultancy Services	91	8.6	8.8	8.6	8.8
4	Accenture in India	87	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.5
5	Microsoft India	84	8.4	8.7	8.3	8.2
6	DHL Express (India)	80	8.4	8.4	8.3	8.2
7	Adobe India	78	8.2	8.2	8.1	8.5
8	HDFC Bank	77	8.3	8.3	8.1	8.4
9	Pfizer Ltd	77	8.4	8.1	8.2	8.3
10	Tata Steel	76	8.2	8.2	8.0	8.0
11	ICICI Bank	75	8.2	8.3	8.1	7.3
12	Wipro	69	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.8
13	Hindustan Unilever	67	8.1	7.9	7.8	8.0
14	Abbott India	64	8.0	8.0	7.9	7.9
15	Infosys	60	8.1	7.9	7.7	8.0
16	SAP Labs India	56	8.0	7.9	7.4	7.8
17	Mahindra & Mahindra	55	7.9	8.0	7.7	7.4
18	ONGC	54	8.0	7.9	7.6	7.5
19	Tata Motors	54	7.8	7.8	7.6	7.7
20	Marico	47	7.9	7.7	7.7	7.8
21	Siemens	43	8.0	7.8	7.6	7.6
22	Deloitte India	39	8.2	8.2	7.6	6.8
23	Blue Dart	39	7.7	7.7	7.6	7.6
24	State Bank of India	37	8.0	7.5	7.3	7.6
25	Cisco Systems	37	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.1

## HOW WE DID IT

► **AS ALWAYS**, *Business Today* and Taggd reached out to salaried employees from companies all over India, across industries, to participate in an open online survey. More than 32,000 respondents filled the survey this year, compared to 27,000-plus last year. A certain proportion of respondents were randomly called back to cross-check their credentials and ensure good quality of responses.

We asked respondents to select and rank three companies that in their opinion are the best companies to work for in India. Rank 1 has higher weight as compared to rank 2. Also, the gap between rank 1 and rank 2 was considered to be more significant than the gap between rank 2 and rank 3. This difference was implemented by

using the 90 per cent rule, wherein rank 2 got 90 per cent of the weight as rank 1, and rank 3 got 90 per cent of the weight given to rank 2, and so on. Once they selected these firms, they were asked to rate them on each of four factors—people growth initiatives; people well-being; engagement and connect; and thinking beyond business—on a scale of 1-10 (1 being low importance, 10 being high importance). Once rank scores were computed, the top ranked company was given an index score of 100 and the scores of the other firms were indexed to the top company's score.

The process resulted in identifying the Top 25 Best Companies to Work For in India, and the top five companies across 12 sectors. **BT**



## ▶ RANKINGS BY SECTOR

ILLUSTRATION BY **RAJ VERMA**



### AUTO

1	Tata Motors
2	Mahindra & Mahindra
3	Bajaj Auto
4	Hero MotoCorp
5	Maruti Suzuki India



### BFSI

1	HDFC Bank
2	SBI
3	ICICI Bank
4	Axis Bank
5	Aditya Birla Capital



### BPO, KPO, IT, ITES

1	Accenture in India
2	TCS
3	Infosys
4	IBM Business Consulting Services
5	Wipro



### CONSUMER GOODS AND DURABLES

1	HUL
2	Marico
3	Nestlé India
4	ITC
5	Philips



### INTERNET

1	Flipkart
2	Zomato
3	Netflix
4	Paytm
5	Swiggy



### LOGISTICS

1	DTDC Express
2	DHL Express (India)
3	FedEx Express Services (India)
4	Blue Dart Express
5	Delhivery



### PHARMA

1	Pfizer Ltd
2	Abbott India
3	Sun Pharmaceutical Industries
4	Dr. Reddy's Laboratories
5	Johnson & Johnson



### TECHNOLOGY

1	Google India
2	Amazon India
3	Microsoft India
4	Meta (Facebook India)
5	Apple India



### CORE AND ENERGY

1	NTPC
2	Tata Power
3	ONGC
4	IOCL
5	Power Grid Corporation of India



### CONSULTING

1	Deloitte India
2	KPMG in India
3	EY India
4	McKinsey
5	PwC India



### CONSTRUCTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

1	Ambuja Cements
2	ACC Limited
3	UltraTech Cement
4	JK Lakshmi Cement
5	Dalmia Cement (Bharat)



### MANUFACTURING\*

1	Tata Steel
2	Asian Paints
3	JSW Steel
4	SAIL
5	Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing

\*Excluding Consumer Goods, Automotive, Pharma and Construction

# SCIENCE TO EASE STRESS

At Amazon India, the first tenet is to be a scientific organisation that uses data and anecdotes to make life easier for employees, especially during stressful times

By **Binu Paul**

**48 |** ▶ **JEFF BEZOS HAS** a dream. And no, it doesn't involve space. What he wants is Amazon to emerge as the "Earth's Best Employer". While this dream may be a relatively recent one, Amazon India has been taking feedback from employees for long. In fact, employees begin their day by answering a single work-related question around leadership, recognition and job satisfaction. And this daily survey came in handy when the pandemic led to increased stress levels. The company quickly retuned these questions to understand how employees were feeling about safety, wellness, mental fitness and more. The HR team looked at the score on a daily basis, addressed their concerns promptly and saw the work-life harmony scores improve significantly.

"We could measure and improve employee experience quickly only because we had a tool like 'Connections'. This is part of our approach where we consider HR as a scientific organisation that uses technology wherever possible to make a direct impact on our customers and employees. We look at simple scaleable mechanisms to automate processes wherever we can instead of making them operationally heavy," says Deepti Varma, Director-HR for Amazon in APAC and Middle East. This is one of the many examples of the scientific approach of leveraging data and anecdotes that Amazon's HR team—now called the People Experience and Technology Team—deploys to innovate and invent on behalf of its employees and customers. Amazon India, which has topped the *BT-Taggd* Best Companies to Work For in India ranking this year, says it employs 100,000-plus people in the country.

During the pandemic, when employees and managers



**HYBRID MODE** Deepti Varma, Director-HR, Amazon (APAC and Middle East)

felt constrained about the on-boarding processes, Amazon took the help of its smart assistant Alexa to handle information that was repetitive and common. For people uncomfortable talking to Alexa, it started a chat bot. This experiment was initially carried out in India and later picked up by its global teams to hire thousands of employees during the last two years. It also introduced tech tools to conduct interviews to understand and analyse experience busters for employees and change policies in real

<b>1</b>	<b>AMAZON INDIA</b>
	<b>Top attributes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clarity of company goals</li> <li>● Growth and learning opportunities</li> <li>● Flexibility at work</li> </ul>	

PHOTO BY KRISHNENDU HALDER

## Key HR initiatives

- Action based on daily job satisfaction survey
- Dedicated gender equity initiatives that cover the full spectrum
- Flexible work policies, with leaders having the power to make decisions
- Introduction of two new leadership principles that advocate empathy for fellow employees and accountability to local communities, planet, and future generations
- Launched Project Harmony to help employees share experiences with colleagues and receive tips on handling stress; Alexa and chatbots introduced to on-boarding process to help reduce constraints



time to help it come a step closer to the dream of Bezos.

Meanwhile, Amazon's gender equity initiatives cover the full spectrum with dedicated programmes for the grassroots-, middle management- and senior levels. At the grassroots level, Amazon WoW offers a networking platform for all women engineering students in India. It allows them to connect with Amazon's leaders and recruiters, participate in skill-building sessions, utilise available resources, converse with alumni on their career experiences, and get hired if found suitable. Pinnacle helps middle management women grow into leadership roles. "We realised that this is the time of their career when women go through different life stages including marriage, becoming mothers, having teenager kids or aged parents to look after... We invested in group mentoring so that they can learn from what others are doing to handle the stress," says Varma. At the senior level, Sunshine offers a platform for women leaders across industries to engage with and get mentored by the biggest leaders at Amazon.

Varma says the company is not rushing to get its employees back to office. "There are people operating out of offices, but we have not mandated it. Our workforce is very different, comprising of various departments—including Prime Video, operations team, technology team, Alexa Labs, AWS—so we can't have a one-size-fits-all policy. Our policy is to offer flexibility but give the onus to

the leader of the team to decide how many days they need to work from office or home," she says. Amazon was experimenting with flexi models even before the pandemic, she adds. During Covid-19, it hastened the process of implementing some of these, which helped to fast-track the transition to remote working at the peak of the pandemic.

Varma says Amazon would have a hybrid model. "Amazon had 20,000+ employees joining globally in the last two years. Some of them haven't met their leaders or team in person. So I think there is this excitement to come to office to meet their colleagues and that flexibility is given to the leader [to decide the schedule]."

To deal with the increased stress levels during Covid-19, Amazon introduced Project Harmony—buddies for every team to enable employees to interact with others to understand what they were going through, share experiences, give and receive tips on better work-life harmony and learn how to handle stress. This, Varma says, had a huge impact. It also launched a wellness app for employees, which provided access to health resources offering information on screen time, sleep cycles, nutrition, and mental and physical well-being. Amazon also launched two new leadership principles then. The first was to "Strive to be the Earth's Best Employer" which encouraged leaders to lead with empathy, have fun at work, and make it easy for others to have fun. The second was "Success and Scale Bring Broad Responsibility"; it reminds leaders to be humble and thoughtful about even the secondary effects of their actions and be accountable to local communities, the planet, and future generations.

Then there are initiatives like a launch pad for women who have taken a break in their careers and a platform for employees to recognise the work of their colleagues.

Amazon is using science to make the lives of its employees easier, tough times or not. **BT**

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# THE HUMAN TOUCH

After the pandemic struck, the tech giant reached out to its employees to understand the challenges they were facing and took steps to put them at ease

By **Nidhi Singal**

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► **THE CHARMS OF** a job at Google are many—über-cool offices, an array of gadgets, unlimited food and employee benefits, to name a few. Little wonder then that Google India has been among the top few companies in the *BT-Tag* Best Companies to Work For in India rankings. A great workplace, however, is more than just perks, especially during unprecedented times such as the Covid-19 pandemic. After the onset of the pandemic, Google reached out to its employees—called Googlers—to understand the challenges they were facing.

“The pandemic has served as a reminder that we have a deep responsibility to care for our employees and their families, and it’s important to lean into our values as we think about ways we can best support them during this trying time. This led us to relook at our policies and benefits to ensure we are providing the right level of care. Having a direct line to employees is invaluable and we wanted to make sure we understand how our Googlers are feeling during this time,” says Anny Tampling, Market HR Director for APAC, Google.

Google used multiple data sources—including surveys, interviews and experimental pilots—to get the whole picture about how Googlers feel. Listening to the community has helped its teams and leaders identify where to focus their efforts in caring for Googlers as it returns to offices and transitions to a hybrid working model. For instance, Google saw that caregivers needed extra support, so it implemented a Covid-19-specific carer’s leave extension policy. And when Googlers were feeling burnt out, it introduced global day-offs so that they could take a break and recharge themselves.



**FOCUSSED ON EMPLOYEES** Anny Tampling, Market HR Director for APAC, Google

“We’ve learnt from Googlers that they appreciate the added flexibility especially in a time of Covid-19... so providing the flexibility like carers’ leave, flexible working arrangements and work-from-anywhere weeks make a difference to how our employees feel supported and, overall, about working at Google,” says Tampling.

Once the company realised that remote work had become a way of life, it focussed on ensuring that Googlers continued to learn, grow and develop their skills in this

<b>2</b>	<b>GOOGLE INDIA</b>
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new working environment. For instance, at the start of the pandemic, Google recognised that its managers were key to managing the transition their teams were going through. So, it invested in providing managers with the resources they needed to lead their teams in this ambiguous environment. Google had managers virtually learning from each other, learning in the moment through short videos that provided advice, or through a panel of managers who addressed the most frequently asked questions pertaining to managing remote teams and supporting well-being. It also encourages its leaders to keep learning, and its education reimbursement programme offers eligible Googlers in India from all levels \$4,000 annually to participate in personal or business-critical courses to directly improve a skill outside of what's offered at Google.

For women, it has specific programmes. "We want to do our part to not only offer attractive jobs for women to join tech but also enable more women to develop skills that are vital in the modern digital world," says Tampling. One such initiative is DigiPivot—in association with Avtar and the Centre for Executive Education at the Indian School of Business—that trains women in digital marketing to open up more opportunities for them to pivot into the tech sector or gain new skills as they widen their skill sets. In addition, Google Career Certificates, launched last year, bridges the digital skills gap between job seekers and employers. Google has recently strengthened the programme in India with 100,000 scholarships and a cohort of companies that will recognise these for their resource requirements.

"Whether it's here in India where we have a vibrant community of Googlers or across the globe, we wanted to ensure we were finding relevant ways to keep our learning culture alive by constantly asking ourselves, 'how can we enhance the existing programmes we have?'; 'how can we support our employees further?' and 'what are we missing?'" And it wasn't just for the current workforce but Nooglers (new employees) too. Google redesigned its on-boarding programme in six months, and has partnered with more than 30 teams to brainstorm what Nooglers need to be successful.

Google is also sensitive towards its employees as they shifted aspects of their personal and professional lives from short-term survival mode to longer-term adaptive recovery with new routines. While the company believes in the value of coming together in the office in person, it also believes that Googlers should have the flexibility to work. While employees continue to work from home, Google acknowledges that everyone's experience is different. And hence, it is offering flexible working arrangements among the many options provided.



## Key HR initiatives

- Used multiple data sources to get the whole picture about how Googlers felt
- Introduced up to 14 weeks of paid leave to be used according to employees' personal caregiving needs
- Rolled out global day-offs so that employees could take a break and recharge themselves
- Education reimbursement of \$4,000 annually for personal or business-critical courses; DigiPivot programme for women
- Flexible work arrangements—three days in office, two days wherever they work best; four weeks of work a year from a remote location

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Back in May 2021, Google had announced its future workplace as a hybrid environment where Googlers will spend approximately three days in the office and two days wherever they work best. And for flexible work arrangements, employees have the opportunity to temporarily work from a location other than their main office for up to four weeks per year.

"We know that in terms of where technology is today, nothing replaces the power of human interaction and the chemistry people have when they come together. And this is why we're investing so much in our tools and spaces—to ensure a truly connected and equitable experience for all of our employees," says Tampling. **BT**

@nidhisingal

# A SHARP FOCUS ON TALENT

The big boy in India's information technology industry focusses on keeping its employees happy and motivated

By **Krishna Gopalan**

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► **SEVERAL TIMES THROUGH** the conversation, Milind Lakkad speaks of how important it is to keep his staff happy. Just think about it. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS, as it is better known) is the big boy in India's IT industry with a workforce in excess of half a million spread across the globe. A lot of time goes into identifying the right talent and Lakkad knows his biggest asset is not the offices his company occupies or the number of clients they proudly serve—it comes to people and nothing more.

As Executive Vice President and CHRO of this behemoth of a company, standing still is a recipe for disaster. Two years of the pandemic has hit humankind and industry harder than anything ever. "We used that time well and really believe, that as an organisation today, the bonding in the team is very strong," he says. Take the case of the conventional way of training the staff. "Earlier, it was a schedule over three days in a classroom. Now, we use nano videos, quizzes or a case study," explains Lakkad. The advantage of this is quite simple—the company having upped the game on learning infrastructure sees intensity levels take off quite sharply. "We can do something like a sandbox and the new technology on cloud can be learnt sitting at home," says Lakkad. As a result of these measures, TCS is one of the top companies in the *BT-Taggd* Best Companies to Work For in India ranking this year.

The advantage of a pedigree like the Tatas means that getting the right talent is not very difficult. However, nothing is taken for granted and Lakkad outlines a few points to ensure that the sense of happiness is top priority. "Having a positive environment means you don't have to be pushed to get to work. Putting in place a culture of learning also means a person can quickly move up the value chain and has a more enriching career with us," he explains. Then there is the bit on the workforce needing to feel that they are being heard and valued.

PHOTOS BY **RACHIT GOSWAMI**



**NURTURING EMPLOYEES** Milind Lakkad, EVP & CHRO, TCS

<b>3</b>	<b>TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES</b>
	<b>Top attributes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clarity of company goals</li> <li>● Growth and learning opportunities</li> <li>● Job security and stability</li> </ul>	



## Key HR initiatives

- Elevate programme to develop the next generation of leaders

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- Contextual masters is a significant initiative to facilitate a better understanding of the customer's business

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- Over 36 per cent of the total workforce is made up of women

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- LGBTQ is a priority with respect for individuals being a core value

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- The process of democratising talent is well-established in the company. Beyond professional qualifications, the real hunt is for employees with the desire and hunger to do well

Two years ago, TCS launched the Elevate programme, with the intention to develop the next generation of leaders. Lakkad counts this as one of the big achievements saying it is also open to people who have been around, for say, 10 years. “We want them to become specialists with a sound understanding of areas such as analytics or security. For those with a longer stint, they can become growth transformation leaders and help customers in a big way,” he points out.

The other big one is contextual masters or having a pool of knowledge. “This is useful to ensure there is a greater understanding of the customer’s business. It is a process of upskilling our team and good results create a positive energy across the organisation,” says Lakkad.

Evidently, there is no limit to how much more

knowledgeable a person can be. According to Purnika Ramesh, who has been in the company for 1.5 years, TCS “does not push you in just one direction”. This engineer, for whom TCS was a dream job, is quite kicked about what she is doing. “I can easily go beyond my project and could learn a lot on new technologies for example,” she says.

For the more experienced Lalit Lalwani, who has been around for over 11 years, a big learning has been “the value of people and connecting”. As Global Head (Digital Customer Experience Management), he is constantly speaking to customers, and not just to offer a service. “I have to solve his problem. After moving to TCS, I understood the value of a strong relationship,” he explains.

In a diverse workforce, there are a multitude of issues to be addressed at all times. For Lakkad, a lot of time goes into the area of women’s leadership. On the company’s rolls are 200,000 women, constituting over 36 per cent of the total employee base. “The strategic priority for this year is to increase diversity at both gender and ethnic levels,” he says. Initiatives such as a flexi working policy for young mothers are already in place.

Likewise, LGBTQ is another focus area and Lakkad is clear that at TCS, respect for individuals is a core value. “Our endeavour is to have an equitable and inclusive ecosystem. It is important to create an environment where one is heard,” he emphasises.

In a business like this, the most critical recipe for success is really talent. “The people are our primary assets and we do go to the best institutions to recruit them. But the fact is good talent exists everywhere,” says Lakkad. He brings up the case of a small city in India or even a village where capability does exist. “We will certainly consider that without any doubt or the smallest sense of bias,” he says. Beyond the degree or any professional qualification, the real hunt is for that “desire and hunger to do well”. For that to work out well, TCS looks at the larger picture. “The lack of any opportunity should not come in the way. We believe in the ethos of democratising talent.”

At TCS, the story is to be in touch with a world where the only constant is change. Lakkad is aware of the complexity involved where the needs of his workforce are effectively aligned with what the customer wants. It is not an easy task to accomplish in the best of times and in a disruptive environment such as the Covid-19 pandemic, it is a tough one to execute. But with a brand like TCS, there is a ready-made platform on which both a robust business and a motivated team can be put in place. **BT**

@krishnagopalan

# BEYOND SPACES & PLACES

The company believes that the focus should be on creating omni-connected experiences for its employees so that they can contribute regardless of where they work from

By **Smita Tripathi**

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► **AT THE AGE** of 28, Shyamala Iyer underwent nine surgeries and 13 chemotherapy cycles to fight breast cancer. She lost all her hair and was mentally distraught. After a discussion with her team leads, she joined back work at Accenture in India to take her mind off the treatment. “I was given the flexibility to work according to my pace. And when the time came, I was promoted. That made me realise that the work I do matters more than any leave of absence that I may have taken,” says Iyer who is a HR Partner Specialist, Corporate Functions at Accenture in India.

Accenture prides itself on its HR policies that focus on strengthening its culture of equality and belonging for all, the holistic well-being of its people and investing in their learning and career growth. It is because of the experience of employees like Iyer that Accenture in India is one of the top names in the *BT-Taggd* Best Companies to Work For in India ranking this year.

In 2017, Accenture announced it will achieve a gender-balanced workforce across the world by 2025. It is close to achieving that in India, where it employs more than 250,000 people. Over 45 per cent of Accenture’s employees in India are women and they comprise over 24 per cent of its leadership team, including Chairperson and Senior Managing Director Rekha M. Menon. Between September 1, 2020 and August 31, 2021, 49 per cent of Accenture’s all new hires in India were women. Last December, women represented 48 per cent of all promotions and 33 per cent of promotions at the MD level in India. “We sustained our focus on strengthening our culture



## Key HR initiatives

- In 2017, Accenture said it will achieve a gender-balanced workforce globally by 2025. Now, over 45 per cent of its employees in India are women
- Curated unique learning and development programmes for women such as CyberHER, High-Tech Women Edge and Quantum Impact
- Life insurance nomination includes partners of people who identify as LGBT+
- People with disabilities can work from home using the right tech and tools
- Options for employees to move across teams, enabling boundary-less career opportunities

of equality through the last year by being even more intentional about how we attract, grow and develop our diverse people—women, people with disabilities and from the LGBT+ community,” says Lakshmi C., MD and Lead-Human Resources, Accenture in India. The company has curated unique learning and development programmes for women. Last year it launched CyberHER, designed to build deep technical skills amongst women employees in cybersecurity. Its High-Tech Women Edge and Quantum Impact programmes focus on fast-tracking the careers of high-performing women technologists.

Accenture also focusses on supporting people from the LGBT+ community and people with disabilities. “In early 2021 we modified our parental leave policies, such as our maternal, paternal, adoption and surrogacy leave, to focus on the importance of caregiving versus gender-

binaries,” says Lakshmi. Its life insurance nomination now includes partners of people who identify as LGBT+.

“We have enabled our people with disabilities to work effectively from home with the help of the right technology and tools including assistive technologies and ergonomic adjustments,” says Lakshmi. It also understands the importance of flexi working. “No one size fits all and therefore our approach to how, when and where our people work will vary by business, team, and the type of work our people do. Accordingly, we are not setting one date for all our people to return to office, because it will vary,” says Lakshmi. Accenture has had flexible working policies for certain roles even before the pandemic, which changed to nearly 100 per cent. To enable work from home, it extended a \$250 allowance to purchase furniture, etc. “When we think about the future of work, we look beyond spaces and places and focus on creating omni-connected experiences for our people to form connections with each other and with our clients so that regardless of where one works, everyone can contribute equally,” says Lakshmi.

Accenture is setting up a presence in cities such as Jaipur, Indore and Coimbatore. “We are ensuring that our people have a healthy balance between the flexibility they need and the in-person connection time which is vital, both to their professional development and growth, and to the success of our client relationships. Our presence in these select cities will provide our people with work options that fulfil both these needs,” says Lakshmi.

Accenture provides its employees the options to move across teams enabling boundary-less career opportunities. Says Mohona Dey, Senior Manager-Functional Strategy, Accenture in India, who made a shift from sales to consulting when she joined Accenture, “The transition was made easy thanks to the accelerated learning path that Accenture offered to me and the hands-on exposure of working across industry sectors.” Last year, Accenture extended a one-time thank you bonus to all employees up to associate director level and promoted a record 120,000 people globally. “Besides our annual December cycle, we added multiple rounds of promotions through the year so as to be more agile as we made investments in our people’s growth and accelerated career progression for our high performers,” says Lakshmi. Accenture is also focussed on building a pipeline of future leaders. “For all critical leadership roles, we periodically look at matching aspirations, skills and opportunities so as to create business resilience. Our ongoing performance achievement process helps us capture aspirations, which then helps us keep our succession plans refreshed,” says Lakshmi. It runs leadership development programmes for existing leaders as well as future leaders. There is a special one for women. “For high-potential women, we adopt a 4R approach—Right



**FLEXI WORKING** Lakshmi C., MD and Lead-Human Resources, Accenture in India

<b>4</b>	<b>ACCENTURE IN INDIA</b>
	<b>Top attributes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clarity of company goals</li> <li>● Growth and learning opportunities</li> <li>● Flexibility at work</li> </ul>	

Skill, Right Role, Right Client and Right Sponsor and have 6-9-month-long on-the-job learning programmes to accelerate their advancement to leadership roles,” she says.

While Accenture does not share country-wise attrition rates, it was 14 per cent for the company as a whole last year. Accenture globally has a strength of 674,000 people. Millennial and GenZ employees make up nearly 90 per cent of the workforce of Accenture in India.

The company encourages employees to set personalised priorities; the performance management process helps managers to focus on these priorities and share continuous feedback. “Our purpose, which is to deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity, shapes our overall growth strategy and priorities,” says Lakshmi. **BT**

@smitabw

# LEARN, GROW, SHARE

The technology behemoth promotes a culture where employees are free to be curious, to experiment and to share the things they learn

By **Nidhi Singal**

▶ **GENIUS, GOES AN** old saying, is 99 per cent perspiration and 1 per cent inspiration. Taking the analogy forward, one could possibly say the same thing about the potential of a person—work hard to learn new things and grow. Microsoft certainly believes in something similar, and calls it the ‘growth mindset’. The potential of an employee isn’t pre-determined—the person can learn and grow, the company says. “Part of the mindset needed for this is accepting what we don’t know and being willing to learn and take action to drive meaningful change,” says Ira Gupta, Head of Human Resources, Microsoft India.

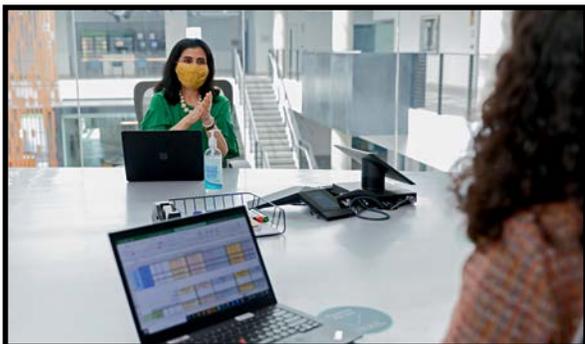
The firm promotes a culture where employees are free to be curious, to experiment and to share the things they learn. No wonder that ‘Growth and Learning Opportunities’ is one of the top attributes for Microsoft India in the *BT-Taggd* Best Companies to Work For in India ranking.

This growth mindset, however, requires constant support, guidance, empathy and resilience from leadership and Microsoft—which has some 18,000 employees in India—has a plan in place. Under its Model-Coach-Care framework, the company trains its leaders and managers to lead through empowerment and accountability. Managers proactively coach team members for success across boundaries and help the team respond to the changing environment and be more thoughtful about understanding individual capabilities and unique circumstances to help them navigate opportunities and challenges. For instance, through its Employee Resource Groups, Microsoft builds a diverse and empowered workforce. Led by Microsoft India leaders, each group taps into a workplace subject and comes together as a self-managed team to drive inclusion around that aspect in the company. “When we think about leadership at Microsoft, a few years ago we identified a set of actionable principles personal to Microsoft, aligned with our mission, ambitions and culture. These are our



**A GROWTH MINDSET** Ira Gupta, Head of Human Resources, Microsoft India

<b>5</b>	<b>MICROSOFT INDIA</b>
	<b>Top attributes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Growth and learning opportunities</li> <li>● Flexibility at work</li> <li>● Focus on well-being</li> </ul>	



## Key HR initiatives

- Model-Coach-Care framework trains leaders and managers to lead through empowerment and accountability
- Employee experience platform, Microsoft Viva, built for the digital era
- Introduced well-being days—five days of additional leave for its employees; Caregiver leave for employees
- Springboard Internship Programme for women to gain on-the-job training, mentoring and re-skilling as they transition back to the workforce
- Employee Resource Groups to elevate the voices of various communities

leadership principles of creating clarity, generating energy and delivering success,” explains Gupta.

Growth and learning needn't be restricted to within office walls. As the pandemic changed the concepts of work, Microsoft acknowledged that hybrid was the way forward. To empower its people for the world of hybrid work and living, last year the company introduced its first employee experience platform built for the digital era. Called Microsoft Viva, it brings together communications, knowledge, learning, resources and insights into an integrated experience, which, the company says, enables people and teams to be their best from anywhere. “Our goal is to ensure every employee has the tools, resources, and solutions to be as productive, creative, and secure as possible, working from any location

and on any device. Technology is playing an increasingly important role in enabling a seamless employee experience in a hybrid world,” says Gupta.

Microsoft also recognises that there is no single way of working that applies to everyone. Its approach to hybrid work embraces flexibility as a standard for most roles and provides employees with the opportunity to determine how and where they work best while making sure an individual's plan aligns to team agreements set with their manager. “Our hybrid workplace is based on a commitment to flexibility that welcomes and enables diverse ways of working, relies on new learning and mindset shifts, considers business and individual needs, and is built on trust and technology,” says Gupta.

Other than enabling flexibility, well-being and inclusion are the other key priorities at Microsoft. “We've been on a journey over the last five years to ensure that our benefits not only focus on physical health but also cover emotional and mental well-being,” Gupta adds. During the pandemic, the company introduced well-being days, which were five days of additional leave for its employees. It renamed sick leave to Sick and Mental Health Leave, enabling employees to take time out for mental well-being as they would for physical well-being. In addition, it also introduced Caregiver leave for employees in a caregiving role at home.

The company is also focussed on increasing inclusion and representation of talent across identities, abilities, and backgrounds. “Our commitment involves a wide-ranging set of initiatives geared to provide skilling, training, mentoring and scholarships to build an equitable workforce for the new world of work,” says Gupta. One such initiative is the 16-week-long Springboard Internship Programme with an aim to fostering a more equal workforce. It provides women with an opportunity to gain on-the-job training, mentoring and re-skilling as they transition back to the workforce. Plus, Microsoft's Employee Resource Groups also try to elevate the voices of various communities—women, LGBTQI+, persons with disabilities and others—to create a diverse support system and provide meaningful resources.

The company believes that when employees are encouraged to connect personal passions and philosophies to Microsoft's mission and harness its platforms to pursue them, real and sustainable change happens in the world. Gupta adds that the last two years has made Microsoft more focussed about inclusion. “We are committed to empowering our employees with the tools, resources, and sense of community that enables them to thrive in the post-pandemic workplace,” she says. **BT**

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# PEOPLE POWER

**In an industry plagued by attrition, the average employee tenure at the logistics major remains at 10 years. What did the company do right?**

**By Arnab Dutta**

▶ **WHEN SUNJOY DHAAWAN**, Vice President of Human Resources, DHL Express (India), joined the logistics major in 2013, its business in India was limited to less than ₹3,000 crore in annual sales and women workers made up less than 10 per cent of its employee strength. Fast forward to now and DHL Express's annual revenue in India has grown to over ₹5,000 crore and the share of women employees has increased to 17 per cent—because of the consistent efforts that Dhaawan and his team have put in. And despite spending nine years with DHL, his tenure falls short of the firm's average tenure for an employee—which is 10 years now!

That pretty much sums up the company's success in managing its people—some 4,000 of them—in India. At a time when high attrition plagues most logistics and delivery companies and difficult working conditions of gig workers make news frequently, DHL Express has managed to not only retain talent but is also focussing on making its workforce diverse.

While the average attrition rate in the industry is around 14-15 per cent, at DHL the number is just 4-5 per cent. And at the level of frontline workers, it is even lower—at 2 per cent. This is in spite of the hiring spree all around, especially by e-commerce giants and the thousands of flourishing digital commerce start-ups. "If you look at the past 6-7 years, the Amazons and the Flipkarts of the world, or be it Snapdeal or Zomato... everybody else has hired hundreds and thousands of gig workers. But at DHL Express, the attrition rate in the past five years is less than 5 per cent. So, we are at a third of the industry. The reason why we haven't lost people to them [e-commerce and digital players] is because of the kind of connect that we have with our people, the engagement levels and the working conditions [that we provide]," says Dhaawan.

While poor working conditions, long hours and stressful situations haunt most gig workers in the country—leading to higher attrition and low job satisfaction—Dhaawan credits his company's unique position to its "four pillars". The first is the company's vision to become "the logistics company to the world". Second is its two guiding principles—respect and results—where respect for its employees and stakeholders comes ahead of the results it aspires to achieve. Third comes three building blocks that he calls the "three cornerstones of the company": "How can we be an employer of choice for our employees, an investor of choice for our investors and a provider of choice for our customers?" The fourth pillar is about motivating its people, which the manage-



## Key HR initiatives

- DHL Express (India) has managed to keep its attrition levels much lower than industry despite a hiring onslaught by e-commerce players
- At 10 years, the average tenure of an employee at the logistics major is much higher than the industry
- The company aims to become 'the logistics company to the world' by placing 'respect' (for employees) ahead of achieving 'results'
- It has raised the share of women in the workforce by one percentage points each in last 3 years to 17 per cent. It aims to grow the share of women to 25 per cent by 2027, and to 40 per cent eventually



**LONG-TERM GOALS** Sunjoy Dhaawan, Vice President of Human Resources, DHL Express (India)

ment believes will lead to greater customer satisfaction.

To begin with, unlike most other logistics firms, DHL Express relies heavily on providing comfort to its front-line workers by offering them air-conditioned four-wheelers for last-mile deliveries, instead of two-wheelers, as is common in the sector. According to Dhaawan, this, coupled with a dedicated driver and automated scanning machines, not only reduces stress on the front-line workers but also helps the company retain talent.

Following the global standards on bringing diversity in its workforce, the firm has grown the share of women employees in the workforce by one percentage point each in the past three years. Dhaawan says the target is to increase the share of women employees to 25 per cent by 2027 and to 40 per cent in the long run. A change in perception about the logistics sector and the overall societal and economic factors in recent years make him confident about achieving this target. “Five years ago, to get women to do logistics jobs was difficult. But in the last three years, we have made decent progress on that front,” he says, explaining how DHL Express has grown its share of women employees. Also, of seven professionals in top management, two—its chief financial officer and the head of customer service—are women.

That’s not all. The firm is also trying to attract a younger workforce. “We ensure that we are not only geographically diverse, but also culturally. Because we believe a multi-generational organisation will be able to assimilate and work together. That’s how you get differ-

<h1>6</h1>	<b>DHL EXPRESS (INDIA)</b>
	<b>Top attributes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clarity of company goals</li> <li>● Flexibility at work</li> <li>● Growth and learning opportunities</li> </ul>	

ent perspectives on the table and that is healthy for an organisation... [so that it is able to take the correct] decisions,” says Dhaawan. While the average age of employees is 37 years now, it may come down later, he reasons.

DHL Express also ensures it grooms its managers well. The importance of direct line managers is immense in implementing its “respect ahead of results” approach and its principle of keeping the workforce motivated. The firm has a certified international manager programme in place to not only groom future top leaders but also to ensure that first line managers are dedicated towards implementing the firm’s four pillars. With these measures in place, DHL Express is confident of continuing its success in managing people. **BT**

@arndutt

# A MIX OF DIGITAL & REAL

The innovation-led company is betting on digital-first employee initiatives, while not discounting the power of physical interactions

By **Prerna Lidhoo**



## Key HR initiatives

- Global time-off benefit for employees affected by Covid-19, in addition to regional time-off benefits

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- Flexible work schedules and two paid, week-long company holidays each year

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- Employee assistance programme offers 24x7 confidential counselling, access to well-being apps for free and yearly wellness reimbursement of \$600

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- As part of D&I it has achieved 100% pay parity globally; partnered with entities teaching computer science skills to girls; evolved recruiting practices to mitigate bias; introduced supplier diversity programme

▶ **IN SEPTEMBER 2021**, Adobe India appointed IBM veteran Prativa Mohapatra as its new Vice President and Managing Director. The global tech giant's first woman leader in the country, its employees say, will inspire other female employees to take up leadership positions. "Gender in India happens to be one of the biggest markers of inclusion but for us it's a business initiative and not so much of an HR initiative. We have a global goal of increasing women in leadership positions to 30 per cent by 2025 and India is well on track towards it," says Abdul Jaleel, Vice President, Employee Experience, Adobe India.

Diversity and inclusion are not the only company philosophies that Jaleel—who has been with Adobe India for over 13 years—swears by. He believes that physical collaboration leads to better problem solving; but when the pandemic made that next to impossible, the company's biggest challenge was 'change'. "There's value in coming together because we believe innovation is a social process. It was more of a mindset shift and like growing a new skin and adapting to newer behaviours without affecting work," he explains.

During the pandemic, Adobe India doubled down on its HR initiatives and best practices to help its employees cope with it better. It has introduced a time-off benefit for employees directly impacted by Covid-19, either because they are ill, caring for a family member who is ill or have to take care of a child or elder. In addition, Adobe offers two paid week-long company holidays each year, one in summer and one in winter. Jaleel explains that along with physical well-being, emotional and mental well-being is also a prime focus for the organisation. Adobe's employee assistance programme offers all employees 24x7 access to confidential counselling in addition to meditation and well-being applications like Headspace and LifeDojo being made available for free. The company also has an annual wellness reimbursement programme, which was increased to \$600 and expanded the scope of items covered to include online learning tools, extra-curricular activities, books, activity kits and art supplies to help parents with childcare and remote learning.

"The only asset we have is our employees. We invested disproportionately with regard to ensuring that they are safe, healthy and making sure we had a mechanism to be in touch with them. We ensured that the employees are aware that the leadership team is there to help them in seeing through this challenging period. I would probably rate our employee communication as 10/10," Jaleel says.

Adobe's India offices house around 7,000 employees and have the largest employee concentration after the



**CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD** Abdul Jaleel, Vice President, Employee Experience, Adobe India

7	<b>ADOBE INDIA</b>
	<b>Top attributes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Culture of innovation</li> <li>● Clarity of company goals</li> <li>● Growth and learning opportunities</li> </ul>	

US, which is why India is a big focus for the company globally. “We invest in learning and development of our employees and that will continue to be a focus. We have a dedicated budget for our employees which they can use to add to their skills repertoire,” he says.

Another thing that makes Adobe India a wonderful place to work is the leadership team’s attitude towards the future of work. Jaleel says that in the last two years, while the connection has been virtual, the quality of connect has been real. He’s working on enhancing just that. “We are exploring new digital workflows by combining our own products along with partners like Workday, a company which is into the HR technology space. But our interactions shouldn’t just be based on robotics and artificial intelligence, even though that’s important to achieve scale,” he says. “But we also want to make sure that human-to-human contact remains intact.”

The company, on the one hand, is exploring digital-first initiatives like touch-less on-boarding, technology

enablement and employee engagement through Adobe Campaign, a cross-channel platform created to connect employees to well-being content, podcasts, career section, and other tools. On the other hand, Adobe India doesn’t completely want to discredit the power of physical meetings. “Right now we’re continuing to work from home but once we get back, we’ll make flexible work the default. Employees will have the option to combine work from home and going to office,” he says.

He adds that the way forward is a mix of physical and virtual meetings. “Physical meetings are designed for collaboration and given we’re an innovation-based company, we understand that it holds value. We have disproportionate investments for enabling managers to be able to operate in this hybrid world, something which we’re still exploring,” Jaleel says.

In Adobe India’s internal reviews, it has found that work from home doesn’t hamper productivity. “Hybrid is going to be even more beneficial. We will be able to leverage the best of both. That’s going to be the new reality. We need to learn and work on the rules of engagement in a hybrid world,” he adds.

Jaleel says that the future of the company will be defined by Adobe’s core values—genuine, innovative, involved and exceptional. “People are at the heart of our organisation. These values are core to our work culture. We are committed to creating an exceptional experience for our employees which helps them grow professionally as well as personally,” he says. **BT**

@PLidhoo

# THE FUTURE IS HYBRID

HDFC Bank has not issued any diktat for all employees to return to office and plans to have a hybrid working strategy going forward

By **Ashish Rukhaiyar**

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► **THE TRIGGER MAY** have been Covid-19, but management guru Peter Drucker had seen the signs in the late '80s, says HDFC Bank Chief Human Resources Officer Vinay Razdan. Drucker was of the view that the experiment of moving people from Tier II/Tier III cities into urban centres for employment wasn't working out because people were stressed as they spent more time on roads and their quality of life had suffered. "He said we should shift information to people instead of shifting people to information," says the CHRO, when asked about his experience of managing the bank's employees across the country during the pandemic.

Razdan, who has spent nearly four years at HDFC Bank, believes the pandemic has brought about an irreversible shift globally in the way we work, and while a shift in strategy was needed, it had to be one with a long-term view. The solution seems to be a hybrid mode of work, but more on that later.

First, let's go back to March, 2020. As the pandemic spread, HDFC Bank knew there was a lot of anxiety among employees. So, the first communication that went out to them was that the bank was not considering any reduction in headcount; in fact, the lender hired around 12,000 people during the pandemic.

Further, the bank asked each employee, on a regular basis, three simple questions: 'Are you okay?', 'Is your family okay?' and 'Do you need any help?'. "Some of these things you can't really quantify in money terms. These make a big difference to the lives of employees and those are the moments of truth in which you form and build trust or enhance the trust factor with employees," says Razdan, who has been in the field for three decades, and has worked with companies like ITC, HCL Technologies and Idea Cellular.

HDFC Bank also put in place a 'compassion package' for the families of employees who succumbed to Co-

PHOTO BY **RACHIT GOSWAMI**



**LONG-TERM VIEW** Vinay Razdan, CHRO, HDFC Bank

<b>8</b>	<b>HDFC BANK</b>
	<b>Top 3 attributes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clarity of company goals</li> <li>● Culture of innovation</li> <li>● Growth and learning opportunities</li> </ul>	



## Key HR initiatives

- Regular communication with employees to reduce stress and uncertainties

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- Compensation package for families of employees who succumbed to Covid-19

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- Bank reached out to former women employees to check if they wanted to rejoin the lender

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- June 21 declared as annual 'Inclusion Day' to check progress on diversity and gender issues

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- The bank has tied up with an NGO to encourage employment of persons with disability

vid-19. The package included monetary benefits, education assistance for children and certain waivers in terms of loan or credit card outstanding repayment. The bank also initiated modules on how to deal with stress and how to manage teams virtually, adds Razdan, an alumnus of XLRI Jamshedpur and Delhi University.

While everything ultimately fell into place, it was no mean feat, considering that HDFC Bank—the only banking entity among the top 10 in the *BT*-Taggd Best Companies to Work For in India ranking this year—is the country's largest private sector lender, and employs more than 120,000 people, and has 5,779 branches and 17,238 ATMs spread across nearly 3,000 cities and towns.

While the bank has scored well on clarity of company

goals, its culture of innovation, and growth and learning opportunities, Razdan says the bank's culture is built around six pillars—inclusion, innovation, integrity, humility, execution and collaboration.

Interestingly, no discussion with a CHRO is complete without talking about inclusion, diversity and gender issues. The last couple of years have made these all the more important as work from home was not particularly similar for men and women as the latter had to do more to balance home and office. "Last year we took a formal stance on this. On June 21, 2021, our Executive Director, Kaizad Bharucha, launched our diversity initiatives and we declared June 21 as our 'Inclusion Day'. On June 21 every year we will revisit where we have come and what distance we have travelled," says Razdan.

The bank also reached out to many women who had left the organisation in the last five years, to check if they would like to come back. "We got a few hundred women back to the organisation," says the CHRO. The bank also looked at internal female talent and started a career accelerator programme in which it has around 120 women leaders. It has also tied up with an NGO, Youth4Jobs, which focusses on education and employment of persons with disabilities.

With the worst phase of the pandemic hopefully behind us and with organisations slowly and steadily trying to move back to a normal work environment, a new kind of challenge has emerged for companies and HR heads, in particular.

Many companies are facing challenges in terms of getting employees back to office as the last couple of years have shown that certain roles or responsibilities can be managed efficiently from remote locations as well.

"We have not issued any diktat that everyone has to come back to office but we will be taking a formal position on hybrid working and that is our intended strategy going forward. I don't think there is virtue in saying that there should be zero attendance in office," says Razdan, adding that there are many people in the organisation who are in a formal hybrid mode and are going to stay that way.

A start has been made at HDFC Bank on the hybrid mode and Razdan believes that the organisation has showed that it will stand with its employees and be there when they need it the most. "You can either change by revolution or evolution. Covid-19 is kind of a revolution that has changed many things very quickly. Thirty years back, Drucker had said it can be done and should be done but it has taken 30 years to happen," he says. **BT**

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# TIME FOR CHANGE

The biopharmaceuticals major has introduced various measures to groom and transform the employees of today and tomorrow

By **Neetu Chandra Sharma**

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► **HEALTH IS A** state of complete harmony of the body, mind and spirit. Biopharmaceuticals major Pfizer Ltd, too, is trying to reach that kind of a state with its employees. Among the steps it has taken, one is renaming the HR function People Experience.

“This name represents the work we do and speaks to the vibrant and inclusive experience we focus on creating for our colleagues. The team continues to re-imagine the way we work to realise the company’s potential as a more focussed and innovative biopharmaceuticals company,” explains Shilpi Singh, Director-People Experience, Pfizer Ltd, among the top firms in the *BT-Tagg* Best Companies to Work For in India ranking this year.

Pfizer believes that a healthy workforce is an asset and has introduced an immunisation programme to protect employees and their families from vaccine-preventable diseases such as flu and pneumonia. It has also rolled out an on-site Covid-19 vaccination drive for them. “Our wellness initiatives encourage colleagues to practice effective energy management and strive for holistic mental and physical well-being. Towards this, colleagues can avail of a slew of options such as Wellness Day Leave, partake in the corporate immunisation programme, and also access well-being tips and ideas from Thrive—a leading global behaviour change company,” says Singh.

In these stressful times, the company has focussed on digitising the HR function and bringing in new training and development tools. It recently launched the HR



**TRANSFORMING TALENT** Shilpi Singh, Director-People Experience, Pfizer Ltd

Digital Assistant, a chatbot that enables managers to become self-sufficient in completing day-to-day transactions that pertain to critical life-cycle events of their colleagues.

With virtual ways of working becoming the new normal, Pfizer has made significant progress in automating the talent attraction process with tools such as HireVue and HiredScore. These automate the screening and in-

<h1>9</h1>	<h2>PFIZER LTD</h2>
	<h3>Top attributes</h3>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Growth and learning opportunities</li> <li>● Clarity of company goals</li> <li>● Job security and stability</li> </ul>	

PHOTO BY **RACHIT GOSWAMI**

## Key HR initiatives

- HR Digital Assistant, a chatbot that enables managers to complete day-to-day transactions
- Pfizer Learning Academy, an interactive learning platform that curates content from external and internal resources
- Transition Coaching for high potential women leaders to take up new and challenging assignments
- Fine Balance Workshops to equip managers with leadership and behavioural skills
- Leadership Effectiveness Journey to train current leadership and the next generation of leaders



interview process and simplify the overall hiring cycle for the hiring manager and the candidate.

Globally, Pfizer has launched the Pfizer Learning Academy, an interactive learning platform that curates content from external and internal resources and provides a one-stop solution for the learning needs of employees, who can learn at their own pace. “With a sharp focus on learning and constantly adding new skills, our one-stop digital learning platform enables colleagues to curate personalised learning journey plans focussed on growing in their current roles and also re-skilling for future roles,” explains Singh.

With the pandemic creating opportunities for employees to work remotely or off-site, Pfizer has introduced a ‘Log In for your Day’ policy which gives employees the flexibility to work in a hybrid model. Employees can consult with their manager and determine when they need to be on-site or off-site. “As we gradually return to more on-site operations, we recognise that hybrid working allows all of us the flexibility to strike good work-life integration,” says Singh. “Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) goal is to be as diverse as the patients and communities we serve.”

The company is taking initiatives in grooming women leaders and encouraging gender diversity. Pfizer has two goals—increase women’s representation in the field

force to 10 per cent as compared to 7 per cent now and increase their representation in the leadership team to 20 per cent, from 14 per cent. To promote gender diversity, the company has introduced differentiated rewards for diversity hiring.

As part of these efforts, Pfizer has launched an initiative called Transition Coaching for high-potential women leaders to take up new and challenging assignments. “Our persistent focus on achieving a gender balance in our workforce has facilitated an increase in the number of women in our frontline sales roles as well as in our leadership team. [The] Transition Coaching programme enables senior women colleagues to make successful role transitions,” says Singh.

The company has also tied up with a leadership consulting firm to co-create a transformative Leadership Effectiveness Journey for the current leadership team and the next generation of leaders. This programme focusses on enabling leaders to reflect and develop a growth mindset, lead with agility, and build resilience. It has also partnered with a leading consulting firm in the DEI space to co-create Fine Balance Workshops which equip managers with leadership and behavioural skills to help their colleagues realise their true potential.

“Pfizer is on a transformation journey and is focussed on bringing unique and breakthrough health solutions for patients in India. Our colleagues play a critical role in our ability to develop and introduce breakthroughs. They are the true champions of our cause, which is to make this world a healthier place. They are driven and passionate to innovate, which shows in their ability to think beyond the obvious. Our colleagues believe that Pfizer’s employee value proposition is about how each one of us can be the breakthrough,” says S. Sridhar, MD, Pfizer Ltd. **BT**

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# FLEXIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

The steel major believes that flexibility empowers people and empowered employees give the best results

By **Ashish Rukhaiyar**

▶ **TATA STEEL IS** a steel company, right? To Atrayee Sanyal, the company's Vice President of Human Resource Management, Tata Steel isn't just a steel company. It is also a large mining firm, the largest engineering & projects entity and the one with the biggest IT & digital teams in the sector, she says.

66 | Not to forget the many other businesses related to materials and services, she adds. Perhaps, that's why the company—founded 115 years ago—scored high on 'Growth and Learning Opportunities' in the latest *BT-Taggd* Best Companies to Work For in India study. "There are so many opportunities [for employees] and therefore probably you have... [such high scores]," says Sanyal, a Tata Steel veteran of nearly 15 years. "If they [the employees] want to be in the steel business, whether it is manufacturing, procurement, digital supply chain, e-commerce, new materials, durables or even R&D, the opportunities are huge within the company," she says.

However, managing 35,000 employees with a median age of around 40 years is no easy task, given the last couple of years when the pandemic forced companies and their HR chiefs to put in place a completely new strategy in terms of work culture and environment.

Interestingly, around a year ago, Tata Steel launched an internal AI-based platform that allowed employees to upload their profile—something on the lines of LinkedIn—and also apply for various projects within the company. It is like an internal gig-working platform where people can experience any kind of career within the company, says Sanyal, adding that over time the platform will become more intelligent and even suggest mentors and showcase the progress of employees.

Another parameter on which the company scored high was 'Flexibility at work', which many companies have been forced to adopt in the last couple of years. But Tata Steel, Sanyal says, embarked on the journey much be-



**EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES** Atrayee Sanyal, Vice President, Human Resource Management, Tata Steel

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**TATA STEEL**

**Top attributes**

- Clarity of company goals
- Growth and learning opportunities
- Flexibility at work



## Key HR initiatives

- Internal AI-based platform for employees to switch profile, apply for new roles

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- Satellite working, sabbaticals, directed learning leaves, transgender leave for parental requirements; policies specifically aimed at the LGBTQ community and people with disabilities

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- Menstrual leave for women; they can also travel with children and maids

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- Identified roles for permanent work-from-anywhere model

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- Customised flexibility based on business and team needs

for the pandemic struck. “As a diverse company having all kinds of people, we started working on very forward-looking policies around 4-5 years back. We had things like satellite working, sabbaticals, directed learning leaves, mothers’ leaves, paternity leaves. We even had transgender leave for parental requirements and menstrual leave for women that they are authorised to take on their own terms out of their sick leaves. Women can even travel with their children and maids if they want to,” says Sanyal, an alumna of Calcutta University and INSEAD.

The foundation that was laid around 4-5 years ago enabled the company to put in place two working models—a flexible working model and the absolute work from home model—with flexibility built into each of them.

Further, the company also identified around 200-

500 roles that could be managed from anywhere and office space was given up. What’s interesting is that parts of the office space vacated were used to build digital twins of blast furnaces and other processes so that people did not actually have to go to the plant to operate these. Some space was also converted into hot desks and employees could just book a place through an app.

But with the worst phase of the pandemic probably behind us, would Tata Steel announce that everyone has to come back to office? “The answer is a big no. We have decided that we will be flexible for good,” says Sanyal. “It continues as it is so the flexibility remains on whether you want to come to office [or not].” She adds that it would be announced that offices were “open to accept the people who come”; who won’t come into office “would depend on the team and the function that they belong to. So, it is customised flexibility left on business needs. There will be no one-size-fits-all policy in the company anymore.”

This assumes significance as women constitute 7 per cent of the total workforce at Tata Steel, with the company focussing a lot on inclusion and diversity issues. It has also put in place policies specifically aimed at the LGBTQ community and people with disabilities. Tata Steel also has policies for the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) community. “Our journey on diversity started somewhere in 2015-16 and today we have reached a stage where employees know what LGBTQ is and they say they don’t have any issue if we hire them. We already have 38 transgenders working in the company and 70 more are in the process of joining,” says Sanyal.

It is often said that details matter and the finer details matter all the more. As part of its commitment towards diversity and inclusion, Tata Steel replaced the word ‘spouse’ with ‘partner’ for availing medical or even PF benefits—thereby enhancing the quantum of benefits available for the LGBTQ community. The progress can be corroborated by the fact that the HR department no longer needs to drive diversity as it has spread like “wild-fire” within the company, says Sanyal.

The company may well have put in place many policies much before the pandemic forced the world and companies to change but there was no dearth of learning from the global virus attack. “The biggest learning has been that flexibility gives the best results. We had our historic best performance financially in the two years of Covid-19 and with almost 80-100 per cent of our white-collared workforce at any point of time working from home. Flexibility gives the best empowerment and empowerment gives the best results. That has been the complete learning over the pandemic period,” says Sanyal. **BT**

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# THE SOCIAL SCREEN

Your digital breadcrumbs may cost you a future job. Employers are looking for clues into a prospective hire's personality on social media sites, sometimes rejecting candidates based on what they find online

By **Vidya S.**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **RAJ VERMA**

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**E SAW THIS** candidate's Instagram account and this person is always travelling. So, how can you say that this person will work hard?" Found-

er Vikram Ahuja of Talent500, which enables global companies to set up remote teams, was recently privy to this conversation with a recruiter about a potential hire. While this is an extreme instance of how your social media presence can be perceived by a prospective employer, it's an example of why you may want to hold off on tweeting your impassioned and radical views on a politically charged topic. Chances are it could cost you your future job.

Recruiters and hiring managers are not just stopping by your digital avatars to cross-check factual information but also to size up whether you are a match culturally for the organisation; in some cases they are rejecting the candidate based on what they find online.





A 2020 poll among 1,005 hiring decision-makers by US-based staffing solutions firm Express Employment Professionals found 67 per cent respondents saying they use social networking sites to research potential job candidates. A 2018 CareerBuilder survey carried out in the US found the number to be at 70 per cent. While a similar study could not be found in India, several recruiters and experts in the field admit they do pick up on the digital breadcrumbs left behind by jobseekers. Those, along with their résumé, interviews, psychometric tests, panel discussions and other assessment tools are used to make hiring decisions.

Pooja B. Luthra, Group Chief HR Officer of Trident Group, who has also run her own HR consultancy firm, says it is common these days for most organisations to go for “social media screening” of candidates. “Many of them are even rejecting candidates based on what they find on social media,” she says. APAC President Manish Sinha of background verification company Sterling RISQ, which also conducts social media screening, says, “It is a very natural extension of the normal screening any company would do. You would typically check two aspects of a profile—minimum standards such as criminal history, education, employment background, as well as alignment with corporate culture.” He says many of his top high-volume clients are in India across telecom, media, insurance, consumer banking, staffing firms, accounting and audit firms. Power and gas, private equity and technology firms are also big on social media screening, he adds.

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### **BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY**

For organisations, social media screening is a way to identify red flags and sidestep any potential bombs waiting to detonate because recruitment is expensive as is brand damage. And the latter is often difficult to undo, especially with almost instant social media amplification.

“When an unflattering news article comes out about a person, the organisation’s name also gets dragged in. That tells people the organisation doesn’t have control over the talent it hires. It’s such a difficult thing to manage if you are employing 30,000-40,000 people,” says recruitment firm Randstad India’s Chief People Officer Anjali Raghuvanshi. Trident’s Luthra says you don’t want to feel foolish later on for missing obvious behaviour clues the person had left in the public domain. “Earlier we used to do reference checks by calling up people. Now the person is offering that information. So why not?”

That’s why it is not restricted to industries requiring

## HIRING SOCIAL POSTS, THE NEW TOOL

digital skillsets. "Obviously, I don't expect a regional sales person for a pharmaceutical firm to have social media skills. But I'm looking for a certain personality profile—leadership ability, interests and ambition," says Aditya Mishra, Director and CEO, CIEL HR Services. Their LinkedIn posts and network serve as a window into who they are, he adds.

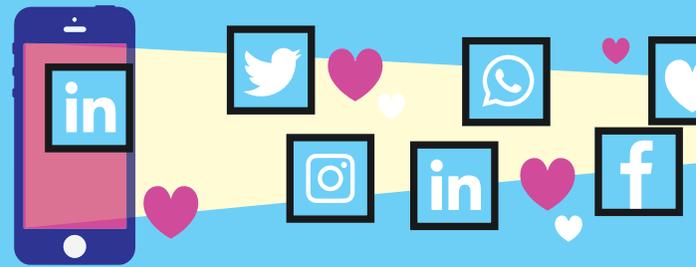
LinkedIn and Twitter are the usual suspects when it comes to the sites looked at, agree recruiters. But Facebook and Instagram are not entirely ruled out. Sterling also looks at Pinterest, YouTube and news sources. Still others prefer peeking into software development platform GitHub, question-and-answer website Quora and corporate community knowledge base CiteHR as well to glean domain-related insights about the candidates. But all experts say they only look at publicly available information. However, they also agree that many organisations do resort to probing into private profiles and data scraping without consent.

Depending on the seniority of the role, the hiring manager and the organisation, the checking varies from a cursory glance at the websites to a full-blown analysis. Sterling, which uses technology, applies filters or keywords like drugs, misogynistic and violence, that throws up problematic content by the person, if any. Used in various combinations and across volumes of data available online, says Sterling's Sinha, it becomes impossible to do just a manual check. "It has to first be done by a machine and then summarised for a human eye to look at."

The process assumes more significance for senior management and strategic positions where a hiring misstep works out to be a lot costlier.

"If I do a wrong CEO hire, I could be bringing down the P&L and dragging down share prices a couple of notches. So, the impact is much higher," says Sushant Dwivedy, MD (India and the Philippines) at talent

**MANUAL SOCIAL MEDIA SCREENING CAN COST ₹900 PER EMPLOYEE. A COMPREHENSIVE BACKGROUND CHECK INCLUDING TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED SOCIAL MEDIA SCREENING CAN EVEN COST CLOSE TO ₹3,500. THE RATES VARY DEPENDING ON THE VOLUME**



## LENS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Candidates' social media accounts are increasingly under scrutiny from recruiters



● A 2020 poll among 1,005 American hiring decision-makers by US-based staffing solutions firm Express Employment Professionals found 67 per cent respondents saying they use social networking sites to research potential job candidates



● Among them, 55 per cent found content that caused them not to hire the applicant



● But 21 per cent said they are not likely to consider a candidate who doesn't have an online presence



● A 2018 survey of 1,000+ hiring decision makers by employment website CareerBuilder also threw up similar results of 70 per cent, 57 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively, for the same metrics

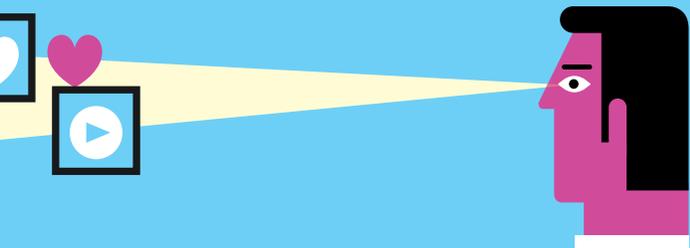


● While a similar study is not available in the Indian context, the red flags pointed out by several HR experts and the study were almost the same

screening firm SHL. The digging can go back as far as seven years, which Sterling considers the gold standard in any kind of data analysis. Luthra prefers breadth over depth, going back only a year across activities, giving candidates the benefit that they may have changed over the years.

But it's not always done with the intention of digging up dirt. "It's like getting an insurance policy. You would hope you don't need it but in the event that you do, you just feel terrible to not have done it," says Sinha.

The information gathered can also serve as conversation starters during the interview,



## ONLINE ETIQUETTE 101

Here's what could cost you a future job, what you shouldn't do and what you should



### WHAT CAN COST YOU A FUTURE JOB

- Provocative or inappropriate photographs, videos or information
- Information about drinking or using drugs in public
- Discriminatory comments related to race, gender or religion
- Bad-mouthing previous/current employer or fellow employee
- Abusive language/bigotry/hate speech
- Overtly political, religious or militant views

### DON'T



- Scrub off all online presence. It can alarm potential employers
- Air radical views on public forums like social media sites
- Post something online that you don't want to be seen by an employer

### DO



- Audit your profiles to make sure they reflect a positive version of you
- Assume that potential employers will comb through your entire social media history

sometimes to seek clarification on concerning posts. "If they posted or commented about something, I will just pick that up in the interview I will have with them," says Dwivedy. At other times, it comes in handy to understand the candidate beyond their CV. "If he likes music, it gives me a new dimension about him although it is not required for the job... Post-joining dissonance is lesser if I get to know the candidate better," says CIEL's Mishra.

Hiring decisions, however, don't entirely hinge on social media presence. K. Sudarshan, Regional Managing Partner (Asia) and MD of EMA Partners India, says it is premature to assess the cultural fitment of a candidate based just on what they have posted online. Recruiters accord it varying degrees of importance, but only in conjunction with other more objective assessment tools. But the findings, if serious enough, can prove to

be deal-breakers. "He could be a great guy, but he is not the guy for us," says Luthra, adding that she has rejected candidates on the basis of their social media posts.

## RED FLAGS AND REJECTION

Luthra and Sinha both agree that it doesn't happen often, though. Overtly political/religious/militant views on social media sites are among the top offences in the eyes of recruiters. "As an organisation, we want to come across as being politically neutral because the company has to thrive no matter who is in power," says Randstad India's Raghuvanshi. Abusive language, bigotry and hate speech, sexism, misogyny, inappropriate sexual behaviour including gestures, alcohol or drug abuse, bad-mouthing previous/current employer or fellow employees in the form of photos or text can all drive away potential recruiters from your profile, they say.

But you may want to press pause on plans of scrubbing away all your evidence from the cyberworld. Having no digital footprint is a red flag on its own, too. The Express Employment survey found that among those using social networking to research candidates, more than half (55 per cent) found content that caused them not to hire the applicant. But 21 per cent said they are not likely to consider a candidate who doesn't have an online presence.

"They may not be active on social media, but they have a profile, a few friends, some likes, etc. If they don't, that scares me a little bit about where this person is coming from," says Luthra. Sudarshan points out that it is no longer a matter of pride to say you are not available on social media. "If you're a CXO and say that, it's a cause for concern actually," he says. CIEL's Mishra says that he looks for work-related posts. "The fact is working people spend 60 per cent of their active life in employment. If you have never been able to talk about it in your social circles, then it's something to really think about." The way to go about it, the experts say, is to have a positive social media presence.

## BIASES AND PRIVACY

But there are pitfalls for recruiters, too. Biases creep in against the candidate even before they appear for an interview. "It is highly subjective and the system is already riddled with a lot of biases," says Talent500's Ahuja, who cautions recruiters against social media screening for cultural fitment. Agrees Luthra, adding that the sooner you do it in the process without meeting the person, the likelihood of you not forwarding a candidature because of your bias is much higher than



**IF I DO A WRONG CEO HIRE, I COULD BE BRINGING DOWN THE P&L AND DRAGGING DOWN SHARE PRICES A COUPLE OF NOTCHES”**

**SUSHANT DWIVEDY**

Managing Director (India & the Philippines), SHL



**WORKING PEOPLE SPEND 60% OF THEIR ACTIVE LIFE IN EMPLOYMENT. IF YOU’VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO ABOUT IT SOCIALLY, IT’S SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT”**

**ADITYA MISHRA**

Director and CEO, CIEL HR Services

spotting a serious red flag. She prefers checking social media only when she sees merit in taking the candidature forward. Sterling, Sinha says, conducts checks only after the employee has accepted the offer and consented to background verification and social media screening. “At the interview stage, there is no explicit permission or implied clearance,” he says.

Arun S. Prabhu, Partner and Head of Technology, Media, Telecommunications practice at law firm Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas, says it is not illegal when carried out with informed consent, which is what most

reputed organisations do. Even if the consent form doesn’t explicitly say so, as long as the information is not in a private profile, it can be argued that the information which was made publicly available by the candidate can be reviewed, he says. “But there are people who do this in a more intrusive way by checking private profiles or pages, or looking at material which, in its context, was shared with a reasonable expectation of privacy. This is a much greyer area.”

As Luthra points out, it takes just one candidate to get irked by what you know about them and it will be all over social media. “That’s the end of it.”

It goes back to how Ahuja handled the situation with the recruiter who had a problem with the Instagram account of a prospective employee. “We had to escalate it and say, ‘You cannot bring these biases when you are recruiting someone.’” **BT**

@SaysVidya

**LINKEDIN AND TWITTER ARE CHECKED THE MOST. BUT FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM ARE NOT ENTIRELY RULED OUT. SOME ALSO LOOK AT PINTEREST, YOUTUBE AND NEWS SOURCES. STILL OTHERS PREFER GITHUB, QUORA, CITEHR AND OTHER DOMAIN-EXPERTISE SITES**

# TUNED IN TO EMPLOYEES' NEEDS

Factors which make a company a great place to work

By **Devashish Sharma**



► **THE DYNAMICS OF** the talent market have evolved significantly in the last year, owing to the ongoing talent war and palpable skills gaps. Employees today hold greater sway over negotiations with employers and there's much more at stake than just compensation. The workforce is now keen on learning about the work culture, perks and benefits, work flexibility, growth plans, and wellness initiatives that employers have to offer. For employers, the employee engagement mandate has grown beyond team building efforts and must, now, reflect in every employee interaction and offering.

This cohort of employee aspirations is burgeoning and HR leaders must rise to the occasion by building a visionary employer brand that fulfils employee expectations. Through our annual survey, we aim to help HR leaders craft such a brand, one that bridges the gap between employee sentiments and organisational offerings. For almost two decades, this survey has been bringing out not just the top 25 listing of the Best Companies to Work For, but also the perceptions and aspirations of India's workforce. This year we continue the endeavour with new insights.

## HOW FLEXIBLE ARE YOU?

Over the past two years, our world has been reshaped at breakneck speed due to shifting attitudes about work. Rapidly changing work schedules have led many people to evaluate their priorities and make big changes in order to redefine productivity.

If there was one thing the workforce wanted the most last year, it was people care. A focus on people growth initiatives and nurturing employee well-being emerged as critical factors in evaluating an organisation. As we witness a transition from on-site work to remote and hybrid models, an organisation's intent of 'Going Beyond Business' becomes an undoubted advantage. According to this year's survey results, clarity of company goals and well-drafted growth and learning opportunities continue to be the top two influencing factors that add to the appeal of an organisation as a Best Company To Work For, while the growing need for flexibility at work is the new driver for today's workforce.

Today, employees are cognizant of what they want

from their career and have a clearly laid out road map. They have become more aware of the industry norms and best practices and are interested in personalised workspaces that understand their requirements to grow in tandem with one another. Therefore, it becomes imperative for HR leaders to manage employer-employee relations by aligning the respondents' perceptions and aspirations.

## CHANGE IS INEVITABLE, BUT PREPAREDNESS IS IRREFUTABLE

As companies continue to explore the post-pandemic workplaces and best practices, one thing is here to stay: the coexistence of various formats of work—hybrid, remote, or work from office. We asked people questions about their preferred type of work and the results mirrored a hopeful indication of an agile workplace. As our survey reveals, more than one-third (36 per cent) of Indian employees prefer the hybrid work model, which involves working from the office premises for some days and working from home for the others, whereas another 36 per cent prefer to work from office.

With safety measures in place, flexible working hours, renewed leave policies, intuitive digital tools, and a whole lot of heart, leaders of corporate India are empowering a new way of work, harnessing means of interaction and engagement that inspire action. This year's listers scored high on people growth and well-being initiatives. It reflects that these companies not only understand the changing needs of the workforce but take active measures to keep up with the change. Employee well-being has emerged as one of the key focus areas for employees. Given the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and the growing emphasis on employee health and safety, employers are stepping up to cater to this expectation.

As we welcome new avenues for digital acceleration in the coming year, employees desire a wholesome "workspace". Businesses can leverage these insights to map their employer branding to the aspirations of the Indian workforce. **BT**

*The writer is Founding Member and President, Taggd*