

Employee Experience: Repainting the Canvas During & Post-pandemic

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Pandemic has disrupted the normal life for everyone. Each of us at the individual and organizational levels had to reinvent our ways of working to adapt to the new normal. Organizations would have to find ways to keep going as well as discover and invent their processes for sustainable organizational growth. The current study identifies the challenges and the organization's initiatives to provide a positive employee experience during and after the pandemic. The study is based on secondary data, sourced from the websites and annual reports of five companies which include Reliance, Infosys, and Indian Oil Corporation. The findings show that the role of HR as a change agent is critical for transforming the work during and post-pandemic.

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Introduction

Pandemic has disrupted the normal life for everyone – personally as well as professionally. Each of us at the individual and organizational levels had to reinvent our ways of working to adapt to the new normal. The situation would never be the same as before the pandemic, at least in the near future. Organizations would have to find ways to keep going and discovering and inventing their processes for sustainable organizational growth. All the systems of the employee life cycle need to be re-invented to enhance employee experience at every stage. With a dispersed workforce, virtual connect, digital collaboration, and increased uncertainty, creating a unique employee experience has become even more important.

Employee Experience (EX) is no more an HR-owned practice but requires strategic involvement of the leadership (Tavis, 2020). Employee experience, aligned to business requirements, is one of the crucial factors that differentiate companies from good to

great (Plaskoff, 2017; Lemon, 2019). Though intangible, the positivity developed from the employee experience is long-lasting (Nguyen & Pham, 2020; Tang, et al., 2020). This positivity needs to be developed well before the candidate joins the organization. Employee experience begins to take shape passively even before he/she has no plan to switch jobs. The communication about the organizational culture, work environment, norms, values, etc. attracts the attention of the candidate and stimulates the aspiration to join the workforce of the organization. The employee experience begins when the prospective candidate starts thinking about or aspires to consider a particular organization as part of a career prospect. Technology, social media, and other platforms provide enough information about the organization and the experiences it creates for the employees. Also, employees who exit the organization carry the experiences to share, which becomes an important data point for everyone to know about the organization. Positive employee experience contributes to organizational growth by adding business value, enhancing productivity, and engaging the workforce. IBM's Chief Human Resource Officer Ms. Diane Gherson shared how IBM has brought EX to the center of people management, "We've found that employee engagement explains two-thirds of our client experience scores. And if we're able to increase client satisfaction by five points on an account, we see an extra 20% in revenue, on average" (Burrell, 2018). The current study identifies the challenges and the organization's initiatives to provide a positive employee experience during the pandemic.

Literature Review

Plaskoff (2017) defined employee experience as, "the employee's holistic perceptions of the relationship with his/her employing organization derived from all the encounters at touchpoints along the employee's journey". Employee experience is shaped based on all interactions occurring between employees and the organization (Morgan, 2017). Such interactions are impacted by the physical office space, the organizational culture, policies-processes-systems, and the facilities in terms of tools, technology, equipment, etc. provided by the employer. But the pandemic has changed most of these factors like physical office space, ways of communicating organizational culture, in-office facilities, tools, etc. Nonetheless, the importance of employee experience has increased manifold in these virtual spaces.

There are different views about the origin of employee experience management. Few researchers believe that it is based on customer satisfaction and experience management (Harris, 2007; Davenport & Beck, 2002; Pullman & Gross, 2004) whereas others believe it to have proximity with design thinking (Lemon, 2019; Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends Report, 2017). Pullman & Gross (2004) compared employee experience to the brand experience and explained that just as the brand provides a unique experience to customers which would lead to retention and loyalty; the same experience is provided to the employee by the company in terms of work environment which is

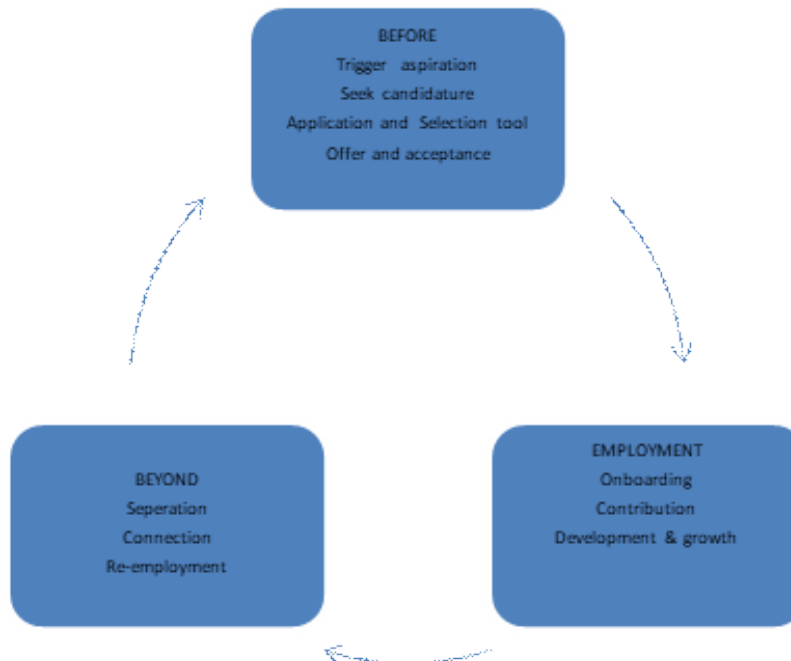
laid on principles of trust, respect, and empowerment.

Organizational culture and engagement practices facilitate the shaping of employee experience.

Experience is the response to the external stimuli and is shaped by the cognitions and effects of an individual toward the stimulus (Belk, 1975; Gardner, 1985; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Zuckerman, 1971). When these experiences are directed towards the realization of needs and want, they strengthen the relationship and loyalty between experience provider and experience seeker (Tang, Xie & Zhao, 2020; Davenport & Beck, 2002; Gobe & Zyman, 2001; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Reichheld, 1996; Schmitt, 1999). When this bond is developed between the employer and the employee it becomes a psychological contract. Organizational culture and engagement practices facilitate the shaping of employee experience. Analytics and artificial intelligence are the important tools that help organizations to analyze employee expectations and motivators and strategize the employee experience for higher satisfaction, productivity, and loyalty (Omar, 2018; Psychogios, 2013).

Satisfied employees can only make customers satisfied and so a positive employee experience could provide a favorable customer experience. But it has been observed by various researchers that the companies fail to provide

the appropriate employee experience as they don't involve in understanding the employee needs and expectations (Schmitt, 2003: 219). Plaskoff (2017) divides the employee lifecycle into Pre-employment, Employment, and Post-employment and discusses the practices important for employee experience at all three stages of the employee life cycle. Pre-employment phase is marked by the application of prospective employees, administration of selection tests, and sending out the decision of the selection process and the decision of the prospective employer in accepting the offer. The organization needs to be completely prepared to provide a positive experience at every point of contact. Irrespective of whether the candidates accept or decline the offer or have been selected or rejected, the overall experience that the company provides at each stage affects the quality of his/her experience towards the company. In the second phase of 'employment' Onboarding, tasks performed, development and growth, physical structure, tools and techniques, and organizational culture leave the marks on the employees' impression of the organization. The third phase is marked by the exit of the employee and beyond. So, the employees' experience during the association with the company defines their positivity even after they leave. This positivity spreads out to the external talent pool and triggers their aspiration to explore more about the company and many times converts into the application for the job. However, the other corporate communication tools also shape the aspirations of the talent pool.

Fig.1 Stages of Employee Experience (Source: Authors' Depiction)

Method

The current study is based on secondary data sourced from various websites like people matters, quantum workforce, and annual reports of the five companies which include Reliance, Infosys, and Indian Oil Corporation. Sample selection was convenient random sampling as the data was pulled out from the sources available in the public domain and had easy accessibility. The analysis was done with the help of qualitative software QDA Miner (trial version). Themes were identified on the basis of a literature review. Literature on employee experience designing mentioned that key practices which are part of the employee life cycle impact the employee experience. Such practices include recruitment, onboarding, performance measures, de-

velopment and growth, compensation and benefits, etc. (Yohn, 2016). The employee experience has become a critical factor for talent management in the organization. Re-imagining and re-inventing the employee experience during the pandemic and post-pandemic is at the core of human resource function.

Employee Experience

Employee experience is described as the cohesive, coherent, and complete experience of the human capital of the organization. The Senior Manager of Employee Experience at Marvin Windows and Doors shared that employee experience is, “how our employees experience the offerings, the programs, their workspace, technology, the cultural environment, how they experience

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everything. So, it’s applying the work that we do. It’s about applying the employee lens to everything that we do and create, from the end-user experience perspective” (peoplematters, 2021). This reflects that ‘employee-centrism’ is at the core of business now. This was further reinforced by the senior vice-president at Affine who emphasized that the industry needs to develop ‘a business model that optimizes employee experience and achieves organizational goals’ with an “Employee-first” outlook (peoplematters.com).

Engagement Vs Experience

The difference between employee engagement and employee experience could be observed in the study and seems to be well-absorbed by the organizations. One of the human resource professionals, managing employee experience at the organization quips: “Employee experience encompasses the overall emotions, attitudes, interactions, and observations made and felt by employees, often through the curation and optimization of employees’ technological environments and physical workspaces. So, the employee experience can be thought of as a design-oriented way of framing and interpreting organizational culture. And just as employee engagement is a part of, and influenced by, organizational

culture, so too is the relationship between engagement and experience”. (peoplematters.com)

Human Resource Functions

Some areas of HR have undergone a major shift in their approach. The key areas which have transformed or need re-imagining are identified in this research are as follows:

Talent acquisition: Digital platforms and technology solutions are now an integral part of the talent acquisition practices of the organizations.

Pandemic has necessitated an exponential change in the talent function especially the technological upsurge, digital platforms, and online tools which enabled a smooth recruitment process, though offices were closed. Data and Artificial Intelligence brought talent close to the organization. Various software solutions saved time and effort to find the best talent.

Traditionally selection tests were administered on the company premise, but the pandemic-related protocols have opened the way for virtual modes of connecting with the candidates. So, earlier point of observation like body language, dress, handshake, etc. of the candidate was not available to make a judgment about the candidate. However, the virtual selection techniques were found to be equally effective and have become a plausible option. Appropriate use of online platforms and automation would improve candidate experience and would make

the whole process appealing. It also strengthens the employer brand and creates an impression of an inclusive employer.

Onboarding and Orientation: Earlier it used to be an elaborate affair with welcoming the new joiners, taking them around, in-person meetings, etc. With everything shifting to virtual mode, a sense of personal touch is lost. The employee is in no way aware of the 'real environment', like seeing the office, meeting the colleagues, going around the corridors, getting the taste of the place including office coffee! So, what can companies do to re-create the magic in the virtual onboarding, so that the new joiners connect not only with the office work but with colleagues too? Creating a unique and happy onboarding experience is impactful as it communicates the culture of the organization. Automating onboarding takes care of every nuance, which starts much before joining. On day one, whether an employee reaches the office or operates from home, virtual welcome by educating on the company culture, and values, introducing the team, orientation on policies, HR, finance, and other processes as well as ensuring to narrate distinct stories all along, will create a wonderful first impression. Using technology with a humane approach and selectively calling the incumbent to the office occasionally, will create a delightful onboarding employee experience.

Employee Volunteering: Most companies especially, IT companies, used to give one /two days off for doing the employee engagement/ em-

ployee volunteering activities. With no more personal connections, HR or CSR departments of Foundations of the companies, have to think of innovative ways of volunteering activities. Pandemic has stalled it as a group activity to enhance team-building or reach out to the local shelters to volunteer. But the act of goodness could still be continued through virtual platforms or by recognizing the call of duty in times of uncertainty. Some of the activities considered for volunteering included virtual health and hygiene awareness sessions; virtual activity sessions for children; providing support to the elderly in the neighborhood; collecting food from the houses and delivering them to food banks; providing medicines to the needy; joining the social media group for the cause; supporting the distressed, etc. (<https://benevity.com/resources/reimagine-volunteering-during-the-covid-19>)

Managers should be trained to manage evaluations for the hybrid teams.

Performance Management: The metrics and measures have to be changed to suit the transformed world. It is unlikely that we will go back to the earlier ways of working and with the hybrid teams' concept here to stay for a long time, managers should be trained to manage evaluations for the hybrid teams. Also, the process of completion, automation, approach, the mindset of the employees, everything needs careful change management.

When employees are worried about jobs, health, and safety, performance and productivity are not at their peak (Rajgopalan, 2010). Coping with restrictions everywhere, a herculean task is to keep the sanctity of the performance management process and employee motivation. Managers must understand the nuances of measuring team performances by the use of technology and virtual quality dialogues. They should be sensitive to employees not being able to perform due to isolation, being disconnected from the team, or any other personal reasons (Aguinis, H. & Burgi-Tian, J., 2021).

The new normal has warranted changes in strategic objectives, goals, KRAs, and how we measure performance. Redistributing weightage by giving prominence to safety and wellness, adapting to outcome orientation, including behavioral performance indicators, and giving more weightage to collaborative efforts will prepare teams for success in ever-changing times. For years together, rewards were linked to performance. In the post-Covid world, for obvious reasons, organizations will have to also redesign the reward strategy for organizational sustenance and employee morale.

Learning & Development: Class Room training is replaced by virtual mode, e-learning, bite-sized learning, and self-paced learning. Also, it is more automated than before, as people want to have it very flexible. The need for training can be owed to the employee re-skilling, up-skilling, and new-skilling, which is the

need of the hour. Today's skills become redundant tomorrow and hence, learning has to be real-time, quick, and relevant.

Learning initiatives are given importance in every organization for self-development, career growth, or enhancing talent mobility. During the past years, interesting changes were witnessed in what the employees were expected to deliver. Some new roles emerged, some old ones turned obsolete and some roles just got molded and modified. Those employers and employees thrived who were prepared to face the emerging unforeseen changes.

Taking a cue from this, organizations should constantly invest in re-skilling and up-skilling the workforce, both in their own domain or transferable skills across domains. Creating a personalized learning journey by identifying skills that cut across all businesses and functions like creativity, taking initiative, navigating through disruption, multi-disciplinary thinking, empathy and a humanitarian approach to problem-solving is what businesses should focus on. Also, one should realize that enhancement of learning is not directly proportional to the number of programs created/attended but based on designing need-based learning solutions.

Policies

One of the competitive factors for the organization to establish its employer brand is the culture and policies. Policies communicate the concern, culture, and what the company wants to stand

for. During the pandemic, every organization has made changes and introduced new policies.

Right policies at the right time help organizations to excel. The existing ones will no longer be relevant during changing times. Work from home (WFH), which was otherwise unacceptable in the pre-Covid era, became a necessity. Depending on the type of operations, companies had to decide whether they should shift their entire workforce to remote working or adopt a hybrid model.

Policies on WFH, associated behaviors, technology, and IT support were designed, as this new norm was likely to continue for a long time. Policies were also modified due to a change in government regulations, disciplinary issues, and adhering to the law of the land. Employee wellness, safety requirements, clear accountabilities, and keeping the workforce motivated remained prominent throughout.

The number of new policies introduced during the pandemic was never witnessed before. Employees should be made aware of the premise for these changes to create transparency and adoption of these policies.

Technology

The use of technology, the upgradation, the automation to suit the new hybrid world, new ways of working, to provide quick real-time data, etc. Work-from-Home or even hybrid work has reduced the face-to-face con-

nection of employees with the HR leaders, this requires the organizations to blend technology and high emotional quotient to support the employees during the uncertain times.

Role of HR leaders: Technological interventions have supported the organizations' survival during and post-pandemic. The availability of virtual options for the different functionalities of business has changed the 'future of work'. The role of HR leaders in this transition is crucial and critical. They need to strengthen their role as change agents and make this transition smooth for the employees. All HR functions from talent acquisition to exit have to be developed and knitted creatively and artistically in the virtual ecosystem with the right proportion of checks & balances along with required autonomy.

Employee-centric culture, norms & values are now the competitive advantages of the company.

Emerging Trends in HR's Hybrid Workplace Strategy: The importance of employee safety and well-being has increased many-fold. Empathy and resilience are considered more crucial than ever. Employee-centric culture, norms & values are now the competitive advantages of the company. The gig workers would be the major portion of the future workforce and the hybrid work would continue. Technology and data would be more important. The mental well-being of the employee is of utmost importance and organizations are coming forward to

support and help employees who need assistance.

Engagement, Rewards & Recognition, and Benefits

Better employee experience creates an engaged workforce and an engaged workforce; leads to enhanced productivity of the organization. In the post-Covid world, the intangible benefits are the ones that created exceptional employee experience.

Frequent formal and occasional informal virtual meet across teams and functions brought employees together on a common platform to enhance bonding as well as manage the feeling of seclusion due to distant working.

Apart from engagement surveys, having structural initiatives for listening to the concerns of employees, to get real-time feedback will help to set things right then and there. Supporting employees in having a fixed schedule during WFH and managing overlap of work and office space, will create enabling employee experience.

Rewards and Recognition should focus on encouraging innovation, and creativity, teams that collaborate frequently, managers who engage with teams without any specific agenda, learning without intending to gain brownie points and leaders who focus on nurturing relationships.

Benefits were looked at from a very different perspective during and post-Covid. Cross-functional teams, taskforce, and emergency helplines were created

overnight to manage employee concerns. Institutional accommodation facilities in hotels, college hostels, and company guest houses were converted into isolation centers for self-quarantine, which employees can utilize. A corporate buffer was released if the insurance limit was insufficient to meet the hospitalization. What is prominently needed is the emotional connect, round the clock support, constant communication channels, and showing empathy in interactions.

Designing an Ultimate & Impactful Employee Experience

Irrespective of the type of industry, employee experience is predominant and intangible. Businesses emerged stronger which built a better enabling environment for employees where they were able to manage digital fatigue, feel connected amidst scattered disconnection and maintain overall wellbeing – physical, mental, and emotional.

To flourish, it is time for organizations to create an “I am there” feeling for employees. Strong relationships can be built when we are able to sense, touch, feel, listen and create an experience where we are connected through digital mode despite being physically distant.

Tools & Techniques

Employees are supported by the organizations to transit into WFH. The employees are provided with furniture for ergonomics. The wi-fi availability is ensured. The need for any other gadget to facilitate WFH is taken due care of

by the company. The investment in developing virtual infrastructure like Zoom, teams, etc. has facilitated the WFH.

Conclusion

Employee experience is ever-evolving. Post-pandemic the employee experience has gained even more importance than ever and is a competitive edge for the organizations that realize the critical-

ity of re-defining employee experience. The disruption caused due to pandemic has opened the avenues for organizations to redesign the policies and practices to paint the canvas of the 'future of work'. "The pandemic rings the bells of a cultural shift for enterprises and the co-creation of an employee experience will lead to a more engaged, committed, and productive workforce" (Bhambhra, 2020).

Table 1 Themes & Subthemes with Examples from the Data

Theme/Subtheme	Example from the data
Talent acquisition	- Senior Vice president at Affine, "Another aspect that has undergone considerable transformation is the process of recruiting new talent. There are several sectors like health, technology, education, and e-commerce that are ramping up hiring. Reliable technologies through online interviews have made the transition of e-recruitment easier. Job seekers appreciate the safety protocols exhibited by companies through online interviews and high-definition video conferencing allows the talent managers to gauge the candidate well through his body language, posture, and expressions. With such innovations, the concept of the handshake may well be a thing of the past" (peoplesmattersglobalonline.com) "Adapted the hiring process to roll out a Virtual Summer Internship Program. Engaged 84 new hires through remote onboarding, virtual friendly projects, gamification, online learning modules, and virtual assessments for pre-placement offers" (hr.economicstimes.indiatimes.com; Reliance Ltd. Annual report, 2021)
Onboarding and Orientation	- Vice President HR at IBM, "In terms of employee experience, virtual onboarding focuses entirely on the new joiners. From the time they accept the offer, they join our organization and for their first 60 days, there are several tools in place now to help them first learn about IBM as a company, and their job profiles and enable them in terms of the virtual onboarding process, whether its pre-filled forms to AI-enabled help desks, chatbots on how to do different things for their easy reference and more" (people-matters.com). - Infosys used Launchpad which is a remote employee onboarding platform. The employee engagement with Infosys began even before he joins the work. It helps engage with employees even before they join the company and guides them during their onboarding process. (bseindia.com).
Employee Volunteering	The Reliance employees reached out to the needy to provide them with food during the lockdown. "Reliance Retail employees contributed to this program by packing, preparing, and supplying the provisions needed for the program. Reliance employee volunteers from

	across Reliance sites such as Mumbai, Silvassa, Vadodara, Patalganga, Hazira, Jhajjar, Shahdol, Jamnagar, Dahej, Barabanki, Nagothane, Gadimoga, and Hoshiarpur distributed free meals to marginalized communities in their respective locations. Acknowledging that due to the lockdown, highway restaurants were shut and the truck drivers transporting essentials for the whole country were struggling to find food while on the way, staff members at certain Reliance petrol stations in West Bengal, Kerala, and Odisha distributed free meals to truck drivers” (Reliance Annual report 2021)
Performance Management	• “With a hybrid set-up where most employees are working remotely it may look like each one is making an equal contribution as everyone represents a box on the screen of his team leader. Yet, this is far from true. Employers are being empowered with several digital assets that help measure real employee performance in a remote environment. Besides, the parameters of performance have seen a facelift in the last year with skill-building, time management, number of digital badges earned, reductions in turnaround time and rework, new tools built, and feedback from colleagues and customers all becoming essential indicators for one’s performance measurement”, quotes the manager at Affinity (peplematters.com).
Learning and Development	• “We are also encouraging employees to continue their focus on re-skilling and up-skilling in technologies like Cloud, AI, Machine Learning, and aligning to market needs. The learning hours witnessed a nearly 20% increase as compared to last year on key topics including Cloud and Cognitive practitioner, enterprise design thinking, and automation essentials on our Think Academy digital platform; IBM’s learning program”, quips VP-HR at IBM. He further added, “IBM has ‘Your Learning’ a digital and cognitive platform. It provides employees across the enterprise with a personalized portal to access internal and external learning across various modalities face to face, video, audio, text-based, and a combination of these. The platform proactively suggests appropriate learning based on the learner’s profile, job function, and cognitive learning from past searches” (peplematters.com). • Infosys introduced “36 digital learning kits to help our employees to get reskilled into digital services and have about 900 self-learning courses apart from 1,400 courses in instructor-led training mode” (Infosys, Annual Report 2021).
Policies	• IBM modified the policies and introduced new policies to cope with the changing needs e.g. the employee care policies, “In order to drill down and prioritize different employee needs and varied types of support, we have also tied up with select home care providers to provide telephonic support to affected employees undergoing home isolation. We have set up several employee support groups across cities to provide employees with a platform to discuss issues, challenges, concerns, and coping mechanisms such as managing stress, staying active, and promoting self-care. We have also created a central place that employees can come to which is an IBMers for IBMers squads in each of our locations. Employees can reach out to them through social networks and then the squads can look at their needs

- and filter them accordingly and see whether they need a support group and what kind of help they can get in terms of doctors, etc. We also have partners who are supporting us in terms of various specific needs that the employees may have like the requirement of essentials in a particular city, emergency transport needs, getting folks emergency transport to hospitals and for medication and more” (peoplesmatters.com).
- Technology
- At Infosys the management reported, “We set up global communication channels to ensure constant updates of status, consistent communication of decisions and to alleviate concerns of our employees and clients. These included a 24x7 helpdesk, regular teleconferences and video conferences with the Company leadership, employee town halls, and extensive email communication. We also set up counseling sessions for employees to provide them emotional support and health tips for their well-being in the current situation” (Infosys, Annual report, 2021).
 - Qandle ‘s co-founder shared the insight, “HR leaders need to be the change agents in this scenario and ensure employees are given access to proper tech tools to ensure they are able to raise their concerns, provide feedback, and connect with colleagues easily, even in the virtual environment. Some HR tech to help are - AI chatbots to help employees with their queries, track their issues, and collaboration tools for employees to engage and interact with work colleagues and friends. From the organization’s point of view, HR leaders need to ensure there are proper tools to assign, measure and monitor the tasks and goals, that employees need to complete, in order to move the organization in the forward direction. Some HR tech to help here are tools which help assign and track the progress of tasks, OKRs, and goals; and those that can help conduct regular one-on-one and business review meetings.” (peoplesmatters.com)
 - IBM professionals added, “Also, in the last year, digital collaborative technologies have completely transformed the way we work. We have a gamut of digital collaborative tools like virtual video conferencing, virtual whiteboards, design thinking tools, file-sharing, chat, and voice tools that have empowered employees to be agile and work seamlessly by collaborating virtually”. (peoplesmatters.com)
- Role of HR in technological transformation
- Chief HR officer at Property Solutions India, reflected, “Currently, the imminent challenge is of human or social disconnect which is impacting the mental wellbeing of employees across the board. While technology offers the ‘how’ part of the business the HR leaders need to look at the ‘why’ part.” “HRs need to improvise the training of team leaders to stay effective, connected, and relevant. Focus has to be on the content of virtual meetings and the way they are conducted, equally; and coaching managers on how to engage virtually with their teams effectively, providing flexibility within the team ambit, for example, facilitating Flexi working hours or split working hours for parents who have online classes so that they are able to balance things at home.” (people matters.com)

Emerging trends	• “For the staff visiting their office, a safe work environment becomes critical. This will also impact the brand equity of the employees and their commitment in the long run. Provision of medical first aid as per the new normal and hospital assistance, if needed, will be a part of business as usual. A safe food & transport service, if possible, would become the newly mandated requisites from the staff at offices. Respect holiday or leaves of employees and provide proper downtime, the insistence on mandatory leaves, strict end-time of work-day (in terms of deliverables and working hours both), working from anywhere, flexi-working hours, focus on employee wellbeing both physical and mental, increase in contract staff, gig workers rather than full-time employment are the emerging trends,” CHRO of a leading company shared. (peoplesmatters.com) • The employee at WeWork shared, “Demonstrating empathy, having open and honest conversations and building a culture where employees can collaborate, learn and grow, will never go out of fashion. At our organization, we missed the human connection and warmth that is an integral part of our culture and during the pandemic, we hosted several virtual events led by the employees to keep that connection alive.” (peoplesmatters.com) • “One of the major trends would be the increased role of the HR teams in maintaining employees’ social, mental and emotional wellbeing. Second is “now that a lot of organizations have experienced the huge sums of money, they can save with the WFH model, and employees have gradually shifted and continue to deliver quality work on time, a hybrid model may become permanent. Third and most important, reliance on technology will continue to increase. Once companies begin assigning tasks and tracking deliverables, tech and data will become more important. HR leaders, who are technology savvy, will be in huge demand from growing organizations”. (peoplesmatters.com)
Employee engagement & rewards	• “In the present time, employee engagement has become a prominent priority for organizations to focus on. HR teams are persistently working on creative and innovative initiatives to engage employees healthily. Remote working can cause isolation, team disconnect, and a lack of a sense of belongingness. Yet, online celebrations, social hang-outs, virtual birthday parties, and e-events help in building a shared experience of fun, excitement, and social interaction for heightened employee involvement. Health First In tough times health becomes the priority – both physical and mental. Organizations need to exercise empathy towards their employees and be accessible round the clock. Companies that remain compassionate and flexible participate in creating a safe and comfortable work environment for their employees. It’s essential to show genuine interest in people’s well-being and create a culture of regular follow-ups with those on sick leave. By ensuring their welfare you earn unflinching employee loyalty in the long run”. (peoplesmatters.com)
Tools & techniques	• Affine’s senior manager quips, “With WFH becoming the new norm, organizations are supporting policies that foster a healthy work environment for their employees as they struggle to stay productive in the noisy and distracting surroundings of their homes. Right from equip-

ping them with necessary tools for end-to-end solutions like gadgets, high-speed internet, and new technology to sprucing internal communication, India Inc. is striving to rethink remote working arrangements to keep employees at their prolific best. With privacy compromised and work, hours stretched there often become a blur in personal time and work time. By respecting schedules, personal commitments and allowing flexibility in timings companies are making remote working pleasure for their employees". (peplematters.com)

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