Leveraging the
Currency of Networks:
for a sustained competitive
advantage!

Contents

Rashmi Govil

Director (HR) , IndianOil

Dear Readers,

I am connecting with you through the 10th edition of HR Vista with a lot of hope and positivity. Human Resources is a unique function which is "of the employees, by the employees and for the employees". This publication is a celebration of the democratic uniqueness of HR functions that cut across all domains, industries, and hierarchies to be a true voice of HR. It, thus aims to inspire and challenge our perspectives leading to all-round excellence and innovation in the realm of Human Resources.

I extend my heartfelt compliments to the dedicated editorial team for their resolute efforts in bringing forth such engaging and transformative content.

The theme for this edition, "Leveraging the Currency of Networks: for a Sustained Competitive Advantage," is both timely and crucial. In today's interconnected world, the strength and quality of organizational networks have become paramount in driving innovation, collaboration, and overall success. This edition delves into the importance of networks in facilitating cross-group exchanges, introducing new ideas, scaling solutions, and efficiently diffusing resources across organizational boundaries.

In an era where technology permeates every aspect of our work culture, understanding and managing these networks has become more critical than ever. Social technologies have revolutionized our interactions at work, making network dynamics a vital component of talent management and organizational strategy. Companies that recognize and leverage the power of networks and social collaboration stand to gain a significant competitive edge.

The articles and insights in this edition explore how organizations can harness the potential of networks to foster stronger human connections. By analyzing patterns of relationships and interactions, companies can predict and enhance the creativity and effectiveness of individual employees, teams, and the organization as a whole. This understanding can lead to more informed decisions and strategies that promote sustained competitive advantage. Our contributors provide valuable perspectives on how leveraging networks can drive organizational success.

As HR professionals, our role goes beyond adapting to these changes. The insights shared in this edition are designed to inspire and equip you with the knowledge and tools needed to enhance your organization's network capabilities. By fostering a culture of collaboration and connectivity, we can create environments where innovation thrives, and competitive advantage is sustained. Let us embrace the power of networks and work together to build a future where our organizations are more connected, collaborative, and successful.

I am also delighted to announce that we have given our website a new look with better navigation and a more interactive interface. HR Vista has also made its social media debut with a presence across major platforms. While our team is continuously working on improving the webzine reach and presence, we'd love to hear your feedback and suggestions.

I trust that you will find this edition of HR Vista both enlightening and actionable.

Happy browsing!

Subimal Mondal

Editor-In-Chief, HR Vista

Esteemed Colleagues and Readers,

It is with great pride that I welcome you to explore this 10th edition of HR Vista. As your Editor-in-Chief, I am thrilled to present a theme that is highly relevant in today's rapidly evolving work environment: "Leveraging the Currency of Networks: for a sustained competitive advantage!"

In this edition, we delve into the transformative power of networks within organizations. Employee networking involves building genuine connections with colleagues, mentors, and industry peers, fostering a sense of community and support. These relationships are about sharing knowledge, offering mutual support, and collaborating on projects that can lead to innovative solutions and career advancements. Effective networking allows employees to gain diverse insights, learn from the experiences of others, and find opportunities for both professional development and personal growth. This fluid exchange of information and ideas is essential for adapting to the rapid changes in our industry and maintaining a competitive edge.

The advent of social technologies has revolutionized how we connect and collaborate within the workplace. Understanding these technologies can help organizations predict and improve team performance. Our contributors provide actionable strategies and real-world examples of how leveraging networks can lead to sustained success. From innovative approaches to building and managing networks to the role of technology in fostering connectivity, this edition offers a wealth of knowledge and inspiration.

As you engage with the content, I encourage you to reflect on how these insights can be applied within your own organizations. I am confident that the thought-provoking content of this edition will inspire you to rethink and reinvent your approach to networks and collaboration in the workplace.

With the latest edition, we have also revamped our website making it even easier to access your favorite authors and discover articles of interest. We sincerely hope that you enjoy navigating the webzine's new look and feel while exploring its new features!

Your feedback and insights are always valued, and I look forward to your perspectives on this critical topic.

Happy reading!

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Happiness is a Serious Business

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Ms. Saraswathi Kasturirangan
Chief Happiness Officer & Partner at Deloitte

In this edition of Leaders Speak, we are delighted to bring to our readers a rendezvous with Ms. Saraswathi Kasturirangan, Chief Happiness Officer & Partner at Deloitte, South Asia.

With over 3 decades of experience in the Finance/Tax domain, Saraswathi has donned the Hat of Deloitte's Chief Happiness Officer last year. An avid gardener, runner and trekker, her definition of happiness at the workplace translates to ensuring employee's overall wellbeing. She and her team represent their approach to happiness through a bright and cheerful sunflower, which is now displayed across multiple physical and digital touchpoints as their mascot of happiness.

Read on to get more insights on Saraswathi's take on happiness, networking and the value that it creates for the employee and in turn the business.

In conversation with **Karan Gupta** and **Naveli Singh**

Q. It is very impressive to see a designation like Chief Happiness Officer. What exactly is the role of a Chief Happiness Officer?

Frankly, I'm also trying to figure that out (Laughs) Jokes apart, around a year back, I was appointed as the Chief Happiness Officer. It was an unchartered territory then; however, the organization was very clear on the fact that Employee Happiness should drive the productivity of the organization.

With this mandate, we identified six factors that would help us drive happiness in the workplace. These six overlapping themes are denoted everywhere as six petals of a Sunflower.

The first theme or the first petal of our sunflower represents 'Purpose at Work'. Purpose here could mean finding meaning to what I do at work as well as aligning my personal goals with those of the organization. This alignment of personal and professional goals leads to a higher connection with the organization, in turn leading to a higher social impact.

The second petal stands for 'Connections' where

our emphasis is on enhancing the connections amongst employees as well as of employees with the organization. Our focus lies on developing multi-level connections in terms of, say, partners with teams, team leads with their team members, and within team members. And this is important for us because the pace at which we are growing now is very high and we need to keep pace with this growth.

The third and fourth petals highlight our focus on physical and mental health initiatives that play a critical role in the overall well-being of our people.

Additionally, we have developed what we call 'Happy Hubs', as the fifth petal at various places in our offices for employees to unwind during office hours. These Happy hubs are visibly open spaces for people to relax in between meetings and work. Employees can also engage in some games like Carrom, TT etc.

The last pillar of our Happiness initiative is DEI. There are a multitude of things that we do under this umbrella. But our primary focus is on gender, LGBTQ+ plus, people with disabilities and veterans. We're now also looking at handling intergenerational diversity.

So it is through these meaningful experiences that we try to create a culture of belonging and purpose at our workplace. Our philosophy is that Happiness is driven by creating a deeper and intrinsic connection of employees to the organization.

1. Connections' form an integral part of your approach towards creating a happy workplace. How do you think employee connections create value for an organization?

I'll give you an example of my own organization. Deloitte as you know is a multinational professional service network which provides services to its clients ranging from audit, consulting, tax, advisory, mergers, integration etc. But despite our widespread offerings we hardly operate in silos. More often than not clients approach us for solutions that require expertise

ranging across these services. For us, the client has presented us with a problem, and it must be solved. In such a scenario, we do not approach a client solely as a tax, audit or consulting professional. This is where employee networks become absolutely important for us.

There are multiple things we do to ensure employee networking. Some of them are conscious, collaborative measures that we have in place and the other ones are happiness-related events which have a strong impact on getting people to know each other and therefore give them a push to start to work with each other.

From a formal collaboration perspective, we have something called a multi-disciplinary model driven through our performance management system. Whenever somebody does a sale or a client wins during the year we categorize and track these achievements as individual wins, wins for multiple service lines within the same business and or as wins for various businesses. Each of these categories have different weightages. We also track the growth in sales/revenues with the increase in contribution of multi-disciplinary/collaborative teams.

The other perspective we look at is whether an individual brings other businesses to their client ? Again, that would mean that I need to know what the other businesses are doing and who is the right person to connect to. Some of our senior partners are designated as lead client service partners dedicated to building relationships with the client and understanding the client's ask. Once that is done, they navigate the internal territories and come back with the right set of people to perform the task at hand.

These are only a few examples highlighting the value that employee connections generate for the business. There are a lot of other avenues where employee networks can provide a platform for creating value for business.

1. You mentioned some happiness related events that you organize that have an impact

on employee networking. Can you please elaborate? And do these networks provide the organization with any competitive advantage?

I believe Happiness is a serious business!

In addition to the formal collaborative measures that I shared earlier; we focus on three informal measures to enhance happiness and in turn collaborative behaviour within the Organization.

Firstly, we organize activities that pull people together beyond work. We have realized that one always wants to approach a client with somebody they know. It is human nature. So, we do a lot of events that bring people together and give them an opportunity to connect. We have talent competitions done at local, regional and national level. People interact with each other at such events and get to know each other eventually leading to a collaborative and supportive environment.

Another large-scale intervention that we carry out for establishing connections is organizing Family Day at the office so that people feel connected to the organization. It sounds like a routine intervention, but the emotional connections built over such events are unprecedented. People who have hardly had an opportunity to speak to each other, get to talk and introduce each other to their families. We have had leaders coming in with their grandparents, parents and their children. So, all such interactions result in a lot of connections being established.

Thirdly, the happy hubs that I had mentioned earlier allow employees to connect with each other over a sport during office time. People start networking with each other a lot more at these hubs than what they would have otherwise done.

I feel getting involved in activities also gives them internal satisfaction that eventually increases the happiness among employees. These behaviours certainly play a significant role in building great collaborative teams for any organization. Happy employees and Collaborative teams are every employer's dream! Accomplishment of these two feats can put any organization much ahead of their competition.

Navigating the shifting tides of Diversity & Inclusion: An odyssey through Tech's Evolution

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Abstract

This article delves into the evolving landscape of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within the tech industry, presenting two distinct perspectives: that of a seasoned Sustainability and DEI Head and a young Sustainability Manager. Through anecdotes and insights, the article explores the transformative journey towards fostering a culture of inclusivity, from addressing gender disparities in technical roles to expanding the definition of diversity beyond traditional boundaries. Key initiatives, such as Women Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and sustainability drives, highlight the commitment to creating an inclusive workplace where every voice is valued and empowered. The article underscores the importance of embracing diversity in driving innovation and shaping a brighter, more equitable future for all within the tech industry.

Main Content

In the ever-evolving world of technology, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have become paramount in shaping organizational culture and success. From the boardrooms to the cubicles, the journey of DEI has been marked by both triumphs and challenges, with each individual's experience contributing to the mosaic of progress. In this article, we embark on an odyssey through the perspectives of two individuals deeply entrenched in the evolution of DEI within the tech industry: a seasoned Sustainability and DEI Head and a young sustainability manager, each bringing their unique insights to the table.

Stepping Up for DEI – From Ally to Ambassador: Insights from the Sustainability and DEI Head

I was thrilled to take the role of DEI Head! Many of you know me as an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). But before I jumped into this leadership position, I started my journey as an ally. While it wasn't always easy, those experiences were crucial in shaping my understanding of DEI and sparking a deep commitment to it.

Think of DEI as a path with three stages: Aloof, Ally, and Ambassador.

Aloof: This is where someone might be unaware or dismissive of DEI issues.

Ally: At this stage, an individual actively supports DEI initiatives and speaks up against discrimination.

Ambassador: This is the champion stage, where someone actively promotes DEI through their actions and leadership.

Being an ally gave me valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities related to DEI. Now, as an ambassador, I'm excited to use that knowledge to help all of us progress on this journey.

Remember, change takes time. Unconscious bias can be a hidden obstacle. That's why I believe in a combination of patience, gentle nudges, and consistent education/training. By providing microlearning opportunities, and workshops, and fostering open conversations, we can help each other overcome these biases and build a truly inclusive workplace.

Five years ago, my team was entirely composed of men. Through ongoing dedication and concerted efforts, I've successfully cultivated a remarkably diverse team. I distinctly remember a time when the absence of diversity was evident across various roles, casting a stark light on the issue. Determined to address this disparity, we embarked on a comprehensive overhaul of our recruitment strategies, placing a renewed emphasis on diversity and inclusion. The results were profound; not only did we witness a surge in diverse applicants, but we also saw a tangible shift in our organizational culture, characterized by a greater sense of belonging and collaboration.

However, the journey towards diversity and inclusion has not been without its challenges. From navigating unconscious biases to dismantling systemic barriers, each obstacle has presented an opportunity for growth and learning. Yet, amidst the hurdles, there's an unwavering sense of purpose—a shared belief that by championing diversity in all its forms, we can drive innovation, foster creativity, and, ultimately, propel our organization towards greater success.

While recruitment efforts are undoubtedly crucial in fostering diversity and inclusion within the tech industry, it's essential to recognize that the impact of diversity extends far beyond the hiring process.

By harnessing the power of diversity in all aspects of our operations, from sustainability initiatives to product development, we can create a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

A Tapestry of Experiences – Stories from a Young Sustainability Manager

As a young inclusion manager navigating the dynamic landscape of the tech industry, my journey has been shaped by a myriad of experiences, each contributing to the tapestry of diversity and inclusion within our organization.

One particularly transformative experience was my involvement with the Women Employee Resource Group (ERG) at Brillio called WOW (With Our Women). Through empowering workshops, networking events, and mentorship programs, I've witnessed firsthand the transformative power of community and solidarity.

From providing support to aspiring female leaders to advocating for policies that promote work-life balance, our ERG has become a beacon of hope for women navigating the often male-dominated tech landscape.

Beyond Gender: Expanding the D&I Chorus

But D&I is more than just a gender parity equation. As a young manager, I'm proud to witness the broadening of the definition of diversity at Brillio. The Women's Employee Resource Group (ERG) is no longer just about women in tech. It's a vibrant space where everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or ability, feels welcome to contribute their unique voice.

Here's a glimpse into some of the ongoing initiatives that are making a difference:

Inclusive managers: a holistic, byte-sized digital learning journey for all people managers.

Celebrate **Diversity Month** in March / Highlight Women of Brillio for Women's History Month and Appreciation Day.

STEM for Girls-mentoring Brilliant Girl students by women leaders from Brillio, industry visits, and internship/live projects in Brillio, and making them career-ready

Winspire: a 4 to 6-month developmental journey exclusively curated for Hi-pot Women with elements of coaching, mentoring, developmental sessions, case studies, and practice assignments built into it.

Women Tech Hackathonto bring more women workforce to Brillio and create a pipeline of women applicants.

WOW Circle– a peer group initiative on Work-Life Balance, Fitness & Grooming and Continuous Learning provides a safe place for Brillio women to connect, rejoice and explore solutions together.

Looking Ahead: Charting a Course for the Future

As we reflect on the stories and experiences shared, it's clear that the journey towards diversity and inclusion is ongoing—a continuous evolution marked by progress, setbacks, and everything in between. Yet, amidst the challenges, there's an undeniable sense of optimism—a shared belief that by embracing diversity in all its forms, we can create a workplace where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

In conclusion, the two diverse perspectives above offer valuable insights into the evolving landscape of DEI within the tech industry. From challenging gender norms to fostering inclusive communities, these stories serve as a testament to the transformative power of diversity and the limitless potential it holds for shaping a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

The journey towards a genuinely inclusive IT world is ongoing. There will be moments where we hit the wrong note, miss a cue, or deliver a slightly flat performance. But at Brillio, we're committed to creating an environment where every voice is heard, valued, and empowered to play its part in the IT symphony of the future.

Unleashing Competitive Advantage through Network Effects

By - **Mr. NALIN SHARMA, IOCL**

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Abstract:

In the current business world, the barriers to entry are diminishing, the differentiations in products are converging, the products are getting reverse-engineered, and the businesses are becoming easily replaceable.

In the age of quantum computing and Generative AI, there are only a few defenses left to protect the competitive advantage of the business. The Network effect is one such strong defensibility which has the potential to provide a protected environment for a business to flourish and maintain its competitive advantage.

The concept of network and network effects is hard-wired in our DNA by natural selection. First studied by Sarnoff in the early 1900s, the concept of Network Effect has evolved from being used in telecommunications to marketing, and now creating a shield of defence for our business.

Main Content:

1. Introduction

The Dean of Valuation, Prof. Aswath Damodaran, mentions in his initial lectures of the Valuation course the power of network effects. He emphasises the power that the networking giant – Meta harnesses through its social networking platforms – Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Imagine a phenomenon, which is so potent and ubiquitous that it propels companies to the Fortune rankings! Such is the power and importance of network effects that have become a fundamental topic in structured and unstructured teachings.

70% of the value created by technology companies since 1994 is attributed to network effects. One of the first mentions of the network effects was associated with telecommunications during the early 20th

century. David Sarnoff, who founded the National Broadcasting Company, proposed that 'the value of a network increases in direct proportion to the number of users/participants on that network'.

But how is telecommunication linked to marketing?

The foundation principles of marketing, such as Porter's 5 Forces [created in 1979] have transformed marketing. These principles are so powerful that even after 45 years, they are still regarded and practised as the bible of Marketing.

However, these foundational models often overlook the strategic defensibilities necessary to sustain a business built with great effort and dedication. That's where the Network Effects come into play.

Network effects are, in fact, among the most powerful defensibilities in today's digital world. They create a self-reinforcing loop where the value of a product or service increases as more people use it, making it indispensable. Let's explore the core defensibilities that businesses can leverage to secure a competitive edge and ensure long-term sustainability.

2. Core Defensibilities of Business:

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, businesses can leverage four core defensibilities to secure a competitive edge and ensure long-term sustainability:

1. Scale: Expanding the scale of your business both organically and inorganically helps to solidify your market dominance. Scaling up involves increasing your operational capacity, broadening your market presence, and potentially integrating vertically or horizontally to control more of the supply chain and customer journey.

2. Brand: Developing a strong brand image is crucial. A robust brand resonates with consumers, creating a lasting impression that makes your products or services highly sought after. This involves not only consistent and appealing branding efforts but also delivering quality and value that meet or exceed customer expectations.

3. Embedding: Embed your products or services deeply within the customer's value chain or daily routines. This makes your offering indispensable, as customers come to rely on your solutions for their operational success or personal convenience, thereby creating high switching costs.

4.Network Effects: Harness the power of network effects where the value of your product or service increases as more people use it. This is particularly

powerful in platforms or services that connect users, as each additional user adds value to every other participant in the network.

These defensibilities, when strategically implemented, can shield the business from competitive threats and foster sustainable growth in the digital economy.

3.Fundamentals:

Before diving deep into the realms of network effects and how we can leverage them to create competitive advantage, let us first understand some of the core concepts:

1.Network: In the context of technology and business, a network refers to a group or system of interconnected entities or nodes that interact with each other. These entities can be various components, such as computers, devices, people, or organizations. Networks facilitate communication, data exchange, collaboration, and resource sharing among the connected entities.

2.Network Effects: There are a lot of definitions and explanations that exist about network effects. However, one of the simplest explanations goes like this: The network effect is a phenomenon by whose virtue, the addition of any user adds to the value of a product/service for every existing as well as prospective user.

Figure 1: Network - Source - Dalle
There are 16 different types of network effects, hichwe will glance at in the next section.

3. Competitive Advantage: There are a lot of definitions available for competitive advantage, however, my strategy professor gave one of the simplest and most powerful definitions of competitive advantage:

Figure 2: Competitive Advantage - Source - Dalle

The ability to create additional value

Additional value is nothing but the scarcity value, which translates to how much more the perceived value of your product/service in the minds of the consumers is compared to its opportunity cost.

There are three types of competitive advantages – Differentiation, Cost Leadership and Dual advantage [which is very rare and results in the creation of a valuable product at a lower cost]

4. Types of Network Effects

As we understand, the network effects are core to the digital environment. If you think about it, every digital company or for that matter, every business is trying to leverage the network effects to create a defensive barrier as well as expand the business at the same time. The bigger the user base, the stronger the value chain and the more intense the network effect.

Out of the 4 defensibilities discussed earlier, the others asymptote at some point; i.e., the returns for every additional investment in that particular defensibility, flatten out. However, investments in network effects provide incremental returns.

Broadly, there are 16 network effects identified. Each of these network effects has its distinctive features and is grouped into five broad categories:

Direct Network Effects: – Highly Effective Network Effects:

Physical– Physical network effects are tied to physical nodes and usually have physical links. For example, telecommunication companies like Jio and Airtel have physical nodes in place as part of their network.

Protocol– Protocol network effects arise when there are common communication standards or guidelines on which users can plug in and utilize the strengths of the networks as in the case of HTTP/ FAX/ Blockchain.

Personal Utility – Personal utility networks have two key features- the network would have the personal identities of the users tied to it, and they form an essential part of the user's lives, like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, etc.

Personal– Personal network effects occur when a person's identity or reputation is tied to a product. Personal network effects arise from the interpersonal, tribal impulse to build connections with others e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.

Market Networks: A Market Network combines the identity and communication aspects of a personal network with the transaction focus and purpose that typify a marketplace, e.g. IvyMark Headnote, etc.

Hub-and-scope– A Hub-and-Spoke network effect occurs when equal nodes submit content or goods to a central Hub. Then the Hub "pushes" a chosen few pieces out to all – or nearly all – of the nodes.

2-sided Network Effects – Moderately Effective Network Effects

Marketplace (2-sided) The two sides of a marketplace are buyers and sellers. Successful 2-sided Marketplaces like Craigslist are very difficult to disrupt. To break them apart you must have a better value proposition for both parties simultaneously, or else nobody moves. Customers are there for the vendors, and vendors are there for the customers. One won't leave without the other, e.g. eBay, or Alibaba.

Platform (2-sided): 2-sided platforms have supply-side nodes (developers) and demand-side nodes (users), which create value for each other through the intermediary of the platform itself (central node). The platform itself also provides significant value for both sides, e.g. iOS, Nintendo, etc.

Asymptotic Marketplace (2-sided): These types of marketplace networks have an asymptotic relationship with the increment in the nodes of the network.e., the incremental returns as value starts to

decrease with the increasing number of nodes. The returns saturate such as in the case of mobility aggregators Uber and Ola.

Expertise: Products that can develop "expertise" network effects are typically tools used by professionals to do their job — the instruments with which they ply their craft, e.g. Accounting software, CMS Platforms, etc.

Data-Driven Network Effects – 3rdCategory: When a product's value increases with more data, and when additional usage of that product yields data, then you have a Data Network Effect. In a data network, each node (user) feeds useful data to the central database. As the aggregated data accretes, the value of the data for each user also grows, e.g. Google, IMDB, etc.

Tech Performance Network Effects: It is the 4th broad category of network effects. networks with tech performance, the network effects become better (faster, cheaper, or easier to use) the bigger they get. As more nodes (devices) join the network, the performance of the whole improves e.g. BitTorrent, global VPN, etc. Such as in the case of BitTorrent, the larger the number of people who use it, the greater the availability of the data and the better the network performance.

"Social" Network Effects: This is the 5th category of Network Effects and works on the psychology and interactions between people. The network effects under this category are interlinked with one another, and together, they form a very powerful tool. As is with any psychological tool, 'social' network effects are the hardest to deploy, however, they provide a significant competitive advantage.

Language: The language network effect refers to the increasing value of a language as more people use it, enhancing communication, information exchange, and collaboration. This effect is evident in global contexts like business, technology, and social media. English, for example, benefits from a strong language network effect, driving international communication and economic opportunities. As more people adopt a language, its utility and influence grow, creating a self-reinforcing cycle.

Bandwagon: The term Bandwagon figures in Marketing as much as it figures in sociology. The phenomenon is observed when societal pressure causes people to join a network so that they are not left alone. Apple, LinkedIn, Facebook – all these marketing geniuses thrived on the fundamentals of bandwagon effect and resulted in the birth of the most abused word – FOMO.

Belief: Belief is a powerful phenomenon and can create a significant network effect. It derives its prowess from the basic nature of humans being pack animals. The inherent nature of humans is to be part of the 'pack' and to stick to this pack and believe in the pack and its beliefs. Consider the disruptive digital currency – Bitcoin as an example, the more people believe in its utility, the higher its valuation.

Tribal: The tribal network effect is one of the earliest network effects of the Homo sapiens. As soon as our ancestors were created, they had two choices – fight/flight. Those who fought were, well, had their life span shortened, and those who flew were stuck together as a tribe, and as they procreated, this sense of being in a tribe was ingrained in our DNA.
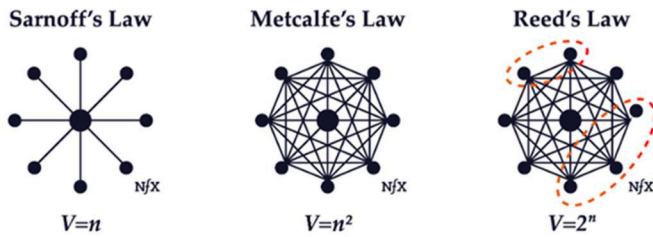
5. Evolution of Network Effects:

The power of network effects has generated a certain degree of curiosity in the minds of researchers. Across the entire 20th century, there have been key guiding principles aimed at deciphering the actual prowess of this puzzling phenomenon. However, the study is still evolving.

1.Sarnoff's Law – David Sarnoff, a titan of the radio and broadcast era was the first one to comment on the value of networks. He tried to decipher the power and value of the broadcasting network and concluded that the power of the broadcasting network is directly proportional to the number of users. This analogy came to be known as Sarnoff's Law. However, this analogy was limited to the broadcasting network [one-many].

2. Metcalfe's Law – Robert Metcalfe, who was one of the inventors of the Ethernet protocol, proposed Metcalfe's Law in the 1980s. According to him, the value of communications networks grows in proportion to the number of possible links among pairs of users, i.e. to the square of the number of users on the network.

3. Reed's Law – With the advent of instant messaging, researchers began analysing the concept of "group-forming networks" – this allows for the formation of clusters at a scale which is much faster than other networks. Reed's Law, published by David P. Reed of MIT in 1999, states that the value of communications in a network grows at the rate of 2^n, where n is the number of nodes in the network.

A visual comparison of these laws is depicted herewith:

Sarnoff's Law — $V=n$
Metcalfe's Law — $V=n^2$
Reed's Law — $V=2^n$

Source: The Network "Laws" – https://guides.co/g/the-network-effects-bible/121725

6. Value Creation While Utilizing Network Effects

We have seen that Network effects play a pivotal role in value creation within digital and traditional business landscapes by exponentially enhancing the utility of a product or service as more users join the network. This phenomenon is especially potent in platforms that facilitate user interaction and data exchange, such as social media sites, online marketplaces, and communication services.

Figure 3: Value creation using network effects - Source - Dalle

As the user base grows, each additional participant adds value not only for themselves but for all existing members. This results in an exponential growth of the value for the entire network.

For instance, a larger network can improve matching in a marketplace, increase the relevance of shared content, and enhance the overall user experience, leading to greater customer loyalty and higher

revenue potential. Businesses that successfully harness network effects can establish substantial barriers to entry, secure a dominant market position, and achieve long-term competitive advantages, ultimately transforming the scale and scope of their operations.

Key aspects and advantages of Network Effects:

The network effects are very powerful because of the simple Maths behind them.

Network effects are native to the digital environment.

The bigger the user base, the stronger the value chain and the greater the network effect.

Other defensibilities are asymptote at some point, while network effects give incremental returns.

The fastest way to grow a company is to design network effects rather than investing money in scale/ etc.

Part of the business evolution journey is to find what network effect to add next in our defensibility.

7. Challenges with Network Effects:

Achieving Critical Mass: One of the biggest challenges with network effects is the need to achieve a critical mass of users for the effect to kick in. Until the network reaches a certain size, it may not deliver much value to its users, making it difficult to attract and retain them.

Quality Control: As networks grow, maintaining the quality of the product or service can become challenging. For platforms that rely on user-generated content or interactions, such as social media or marketplaces, ensuring consistent quality and relevance becomes more complex with more users.

Management of Network Congestion: In some networks, particularly those involving physical goods or services, growth can lead to congestion that degrades the user experience. For example, a ride-sharing service might experience longer wait times or higher prices in times of high demand, which can diminish the perceived value of the network.

Dependence on Network Health: Businesses that rely heavily on network effects can become vulnerable if the network begins to shrink or if user engagement declines. The same positive feedback loop that can lead to explosive growth can also work in reverse, leading to a rapid decline.

Market Saturation: In some cases, networks can face challenges from market saturation. Once a network has captured a large portion of the available market, further growth can become difficult, which may slow the momentum of the business.

Conclusion: In conclusion, network effects represent a pivotal force in shaping the competitive landscapes of digital markets. As businesses increasingly rely on the interconnectivity of users to drive growth and innovation, understanding and leveraging network effects can be the key to unlocking unprecedented value.

Though the points of concern can be acknowledged as dedication towards a comprehensible common purpose and efficient and effective management of the network to avoid confusion and misinformation, yet it has more advantages than perils. The interactive group can participate in a motivated fashion, improve the competitive edge, leverage the value of the operations, enhance the form style of the vital functions, inspire inputs and contribute to factors like the feeling of being trusted peers.

Furthermore, organisations should harness the benefits of network effects to triumph in different aspects of business and trade. To revolutionize economic development, digital marketing is an extremely crucial process. It demonstrates its criticality in industries like Social Media, Content Creation, Data Management and Telecommunications. It is the practice of the future that will incorporate the vision of the organisation in the long run.

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Essence of a Sick Leave

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An HR at IOCL by profession, Mr. Karan Gupta is an artist at heart. He is fascinated by the art of storytelling and is an avid theatre enthusiast and loves to bring out real life stories/lessons through his writings

Have you ever visited a parallel cinema or conventional Movie talkies? I'm not referring to modern cineplexes (PVRs or INOXs) that have the latest built-in technologies and sophisticated ambience but to traditional single-screen theatres. Those were the days when tickets were not bought through the comforts of mobile phones, but one had to rigorously stand in long queues in front of tiny ticket windows. The Stall/Dress Circle/Balcony or the privileged boxes used to be the normal nomenclature, and the big electric fans, not on the ceiling but on the side walls for the comfort of the viewers, were the only facility available inside the hall. No one would have thought of fully air-conditioned halls at that time.

One day, a newly married couple was enjoying a morning show. This movie plan was a special one that required meticulous planning from timely applying for leave in the office to getting the advance tickets booked for the movie. Soon, the interval happened, and they found a gentleman standing in front of them with 02 glass cold drink bottles(01 Gold Spot and 01 Campa Cola) and a veg patty with a request, *"It's a treat for my sick leave".*

Before moving forward, let's take our interval. And here comes yet another adventure of my official life – Essence of a Sick Leave. A significant anecdote from my life that made me realize the power of relationships and friendships in the professional world.

This incident took place while I was around 2-3 years old in the organization. Being in the HR team, I was dealing with various employee-related matters. One day, my HR Head told me that a new batch of engineers was joining for their Induction/Training Module, and I was assigned the responsibility of conducting their training session on *"Leave Rules".* I was surprised as many seniors were there who could have taken that session but my HR Head entrusted me with this responsibility, stating that he wanted the recruits to interact with young executives who would not only teach them but also share their journey with them.

I was excited and thrilled to hear that and accordingly prepared for my session. The session went flawlessly. I spoke in depth about the Leave rules and more importantly, the spirit/intention behind these policies. The Q&A round went smoothly with many of them even asking informal questions about my experience in the organization.

In the evening, while taking a stroll within the township premises, I was approached by Nikhil. Nikhil was one of the newcomers for whom I'd taken a session that day. Being accommodated in the company's guesthouse, I usually met them during my evening walks.

Nikhil joined me on the walk and during our chat, asked a very interesting question.

Nikhil – I want to ask one question about Leave Rules but I'm not sure whether I should ask or not.

Me – Give it a try. Hopefully, It's not a tricky one.

Nikhil – All companies have this Sick Leave Policy, but we see so many Memes on Sick Leave (on social media). Is it true that the majority of employees who avail of Sick Leave aren't unwell?

So, I just wanted to understand the essence of Sick Leave.

It surely was a tricky one. Many of my non-HR friends always mocked this Sick leave joke, but I never knew that someone would pose this question to me one day in this manner.

I didn't have any answer. Nonetheless, I replied, *"Nikhil, I don't have a specific answer. However, I want you to listen to this small story".*

The story, set in the background of the 1980s, is about Vishnu – a happy-go-lucky lad who lives his life in his unique ways. During that time, he was working in a private firm as an Accountant.

One fine Monday Morning at 7 o'clock, Vishnu woke up. It was a normal workday for him, however the conversation he had with his friend last night was still running in his head – "Mr. India – What a classic they have made". Setting all his thoughts aside, Vishnu made up his mind to watch Mr India on the Morning Show itself.

He knew he would not be able to get his leave sanctioned easily. So, he immediately wrote a sick leave application stating he was too unwell to attend office and made his younger brother rush to the house of a colleague nearby to hand the application with a request for further submitting it in the office (Remember those were not the days of Online Portals or Apps for Leave requests with very few having the luxury of landline phones at home).

Thereafter, Vishnu rushed to the cinema hall. Being a big hit, there was a big queue for tickets. Considering his street smartness, he somehow managed the ticket (through Black, of course). He got to his seat and was eagerly waiting for the movie to begin. Everyone entering the hall was rushing towards their respective seats. In between, something happened that gave Vishnu literal goosebumps.

He saw his supervisor, Mr Kant, entering the hall along with his wife. Suddenly, he realized that on Saturday evening, Mr. Kant had specifically told him about his leave plan on Monday and had also advised him to take care of all office requirements during his leave period.

He had completely forgotten, and now upon seeing Mr. Kant, he remembered that conversation. He got anxious and at the same time was furious with himself for this blunder he had committed. He felt extremely bad because Mr Kant has always been very supportive towards him, and today, he had to lie to him and everyone at the office. The movie started and everyone was engrossed in the film, except Vishnu. His mind was still roaming around the fiasco he had done today with his mind telling him to watch the movie cautiously and then leave the theatre without getting noticed by his senior. However, his inner self didn't approve.

And then came the interval. Vishu made up his mind and got up from his seat, bought some stuff from the food outlet and approached Mr Kant and his wife by saying, *"It's a treat for my sick leave".*

Suddenly, Nikhil interrupted and said, *"Oh my God, Mr. Kant would have been so furious over Vishnu."*

Of course, Mr. Kant was shocked to see Vishnu in front of him in the theatre hall, yet he immediately understood the whole situation. He first introduced his wife to Vishnu, stating that Vishnu is one of the most promising youngsters in the team and is bound to achieve great heights. Mr. Kant didn't say anything about Vishnu's absence from office today.

Vishnu wasn't expecting this and immediately apologized for his casual approach. He confessed that he felt guilty and told Mr. Kant that he would be rushing to the office.

To this, Mr Kant said, *"But what about the rest of the movie? "* Vishnu replied, *"Not today, sir."*

And there I ended the story.

Me – Nikhil, I hope this might have given you some perspective.

Nikhil (with a smile on his face) – Certainly. It's our conscience that can truly define the essence of a sick leave. Also, may I know how you know this story?

Me – This story belongs to my father and his subordinate. Although their professional journeys have taken distinct trajectories, their camaraderie is still there. Even today, whenever they meet, they still remember this incident and have a hearty laugh over it.

Networks and Blue Oceans

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Abstract

Blue Oceans represent the vast, unexplored market spaces where competition is irrelevant, and the innovation potential is boundless. This article delves into the pivotal role of networks in navigating these vast, untapped markets, illuminating the pathway towards innovation and differentiation through the lens of co-creation and social networking. Drawing from seminal theories of human needs and contemporary research, including an insightful study on the fashion industry in Bandung, Indonesia, we uncover the transformative power of networks as mediators in the co-creation process, enhancing firm performance and fostering local experience innovation.

At the heart of our narrative is the exploration of how businesses can leverage their social networks to activate co-creation, thereby catalyzing the development of unique, locally-inspired innovations that resonate with consumers' desires for authenticity and connection.

Main Content

In 1943, a pivotal moment reshaped our understanding of human motivation and behaviour. It was the year Abraham Maslow introduced his Theory of Needs to the world, laying down a structured hierarchy that meticulously charted the human quest for self-fulfilment. At the heart of this hierarchy was an element that resonated deeply with the core of human existence: the 'Belongingness and Love Needs.' This concept illuminated the fundamental human desire for connection, belonging, and interaction, underscoring our intrinsic need to form relationships and bonds with those around us. Maslow's early recognition of the importance of networking, in its most elemental form, subtly foreshadowed the monumental role that intricate networks of human connection would play in the fabric of society and business in the years to come.

In recognizing the 'Belongingness and Love Needs,' Maslow inadvertently pointed towards the future – a future where networks would not just shape social structures but also redefine the pathways to success and differentiation in an increasingly connected and competitive world.

From Maslow to ERG and Acquired Needs Theories

ERG Theory: Among the luminaries who have added depth and clarity to this exploration stands Clayton Alderfer with his ERG Theory. Proposed in the transformative year of 1969, Alderfer's ERG Theory crystallizes human needs into three core essences: Existence, Relatedness, and Growth. It is "Relatedness" that lies at the heart of our story, a thread weaving through the fabric of human existence, connecting us in an intricate web of

personal and professional relationships. Alderfer's spotlight on Relatedness illuminates the rich tapestry of human interaction, capturing the essence of our need to belong, to be understood, and to connect with others on a meaningful level. Alderfer's ERG Theory offers a timeless reminder. It tells us that at the very core of our advanced digital networks pulsates the heart of human need – for belonging, for companionship, and for growth through our relationships with others.

Acquired Needs Theory: In his 1961 book 'The Achieving Society,' David McClelland proposed his acquired-needs theory. According to McClellan, there are only three needs: the needs for achievement, affiliation, and power. At the core of McClelland's theory lies the need for affiliation, which underscores the quintessential human yearning for connection, belonging, and harmonious relationships. This need speaks to the essence of networking and acts as a gravitational force, pulling together disparate minds to navigate the vast expanses of blue oceans.

Redefining Networking for Competitive Edge

Networking, in its broadest sense, refers to the process of establishing and nurturing meaningful relationships and connections with individuals and entities across various sectors and disciplines. In the context of business, networking catalyzes discovering potential collaborators, clients, mentors, and industry insights, thus playing a critical role in achieving competitive advantage and driving organizational success.

We now present interesting research findings and case studies to see how networks have become a cornerstone of modern business thinking:

1. Social Network As A Mediator Of Co-Creation(Astuty and Nugraha, 2020):

Astuty and Nugraha's in an exploratory study on 50 fashion business units in Bandung, Indonesia, articulate how social networks serve as a pivotal mediator, amplifying the impact of co-creation on firm performance from 29% to an impressive 40.9%.Astuty and Nugraha's study validates the crucial role of networks in shaping modern competitive strategies and demonstrates the

measurable impact of social networks on co-creation and innovation processes.

2. The Disruptive Business Model of Airbnb(Jeroen Oskam and Albert Boswijk, 2015):

In the fascinating study by Jeroen Oskam and Albert Boswijk in 2015, they enlighten us about how Airbnb's success story is a disruptive business model that harnesses the power of networking to weave a unique tapestry of value co-creation. It's a model that brings together hosts with spare rooms, guests seeking authentic experiences, and a digital platform that seamlessly connects the two.This vibrant ecosystem crafted by Airbnb demonstrates the art of leveraging networks to carve out a competitive edge in a market ripe for innovation.

3. Leveraging Social Networks for Innovation(Dawn Iacobucci and Steve Hoeffler, 2015):

In their 2015 study, Dawn Iacobucci and Steve Hoeffler take us on an intriguing journey into how social networks (like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) are changing the way new and exciting products come to life. They show us that these online spaces are more than just places to chat and share photos—they're powerful tools for coming up with brand-new products that we haven't seen before.

The heart of their research looks at how certain people in these networks—those who are connected and those whom everyone seems to know—can play a big part in making a new product popular. They talk about how businesses can find these well-connected individuals and use their influence to help spread the word about cool new things.

What's interesting here is the idea that social networks can help businesses create products that are new and different, by getting feedback and ideas from a bunch of people all at once. This means that instead of just a few people in a company trying to guess what we might like, they're asking us directly, making it a team effort to dream up something amazing.

When we tie this into our bigger discussion about Networks and Blue Oceans, it's like finding a secret map to treasure. Social networks offer a unique way for businesses to dive into unexplored market spaces—those "Blue Oceans" where there's room to grow without having to worry about competing with everyone else.

Thinking Inside The Box!

The brilliant concept of "Thinking Inside the Box" was popularized by Kevin P. Coyne, Patricia Gorman Clifford, and Renée Dye in their insightful Harvard Business Review article. Normally, people say "think outside the box" to mean you should be creative and look beyond the obvious. But this idea flips that around. It's about looking closely at the problems customers are already facing with what they use or do and then figuring out how to make things better for them.

So, imagine you're a company that makes backpacks. Instead of trying to invent a brand-new kind of bag that might float or turn invisible (which would be thinking outside the box), you ask your customers, "What bugs you about your backpack?" Maybe they say it's hard to find stuff inside it. So, you come up with a simple but genius idea to add built-in lights. That's thinking inside the box—solving a real problem straightforwardly.

Just like in the studies we talked about, where businesses use social networks to create new products, "Thinking Inside the Box" encourages businesses to pay attention to the real, everyday problems and needs people talk about in their networks. This way, companies can create innovative solutions that matter to people, opening up those wide, open Blue Oceans where they can set sail without competition in sight.

Navigating the Waters of Blue Oceans Through Networks

From Maslow's ideas to the game-changing ways of companies like Airbnb, we've seen how important connections between people have become for business. What started as a basic need to be with others has turned into a key strategy for success. Nowadays, networks are at the heart of new ideas, smart planning, and long-term growth, helping businesses move into new areas they've never been before. This story highlights how crucial it is to stay connected and gives us a clear picture of how being linked with others can change the game in business for the future.

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Unlocking Competitive Edge: Harnessing D&I Networks for Sustainable Success

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Abstract:

In today's fast-paced business landscape, the integration of diversity and inclusion has become paramount for organizational vitality and resilience.

This article delves into the intricate framework of diversity and inclusion networks (D&I networks) and their transformative impact on organizational dynamics. By redefining the essence of diversity and inclusion, examining specific D&I networks, and elucidating their strategic implications, this discourse aims to underscore the profound significance of cultivating inclusive workplace cultures for enduring organizational success.

Introduction:

"Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness." - Ola Joseph.

In the contemporary landscape of Human Resources, the integration of diversity and inclusion has transcended mere rhetoric, becoming an indispensable cornerstone for organizational sustainability and growth. As organizations navigate through the complexities of a globalized world, understanding the transformative potential of diversity and inclusion networks (D&I networks) emerges as a strategic imperative. It is through these networks that organizations can cultivate environments where every individual is valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents. In the words of renowned diversity researcher, Ola Joseph, diversity is not merely about acknowledging differences but rather embracing the richness that each individual brings to the table. With this ethos in mind, this article embarks on a journey to explore the profound significance of embracing diversity and inclusion networks as a blueprint for organizational sustainability. By delving into the intricate framework of D&I networks and their strategic implications.

Understanding Diversity and Inclusion:

Diversity transcends superficial differences; it encapsulates the multifaceted richness of human experiences, backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. In organizational contexts, diversity manifests not only in terms of demographics but also in cognitive styles, communication preferences, and problem-solving approaches. Research by Cox and Blake (1991) also underscored the competitive advantage derived from diversity, highlighting its positive correlation with organizational performance and innovation.

True inclusion goes beyond mere representation; it entails creating environments where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and are empowered to fully participate and thrive. As the philosopher Aristotle aptly stated, "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." Inclusive organizations recognize the inherent value in embracing diverse perspectives, acknowledging that it is through the synthesis of contrasting viewpoints that innovation flourishes.

Empathy – The Catalyst for Building Truly Inclusive Networks:

"Empathy is about standing in someone else's shoes, feeling with his or her heart, seeing with his or her eyes. Not only is empathy hard to outsource and automate, but it makes the world a better place." - Daniel H. Pink.

In today's dynamic and interconnected workplace, empathy emerges as the secret ingredient for fostering truly inclusive environments. Empathy entails not only understanding but also sharing the feelings and perspectives of others. It goes beyond surface-level interactions, delving into the depths of human experience and emotion. As Daniel H. Pink, the renowned author and behavioural science expert, aptly stated, "Empathy is about standing in someone

else's shoes, feeling with his or her heart, seeing with his or her eyes." This ability to connect on a deeply human level is what distinguishes inclusive leaders and organizations from their counterparts.

Empathy is not merely a soft skill; it is a strategic imperative in today's fast-paced business landscape. Research by Harvard Business Review (2019) highlighted the role of empathy in driving team collaboration, innovation, and customer satisfaction. Moreover, studies by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL, 2020) underscored the correlation between empathetic leadership and employee engagement, retention, and overall organizational performance.

Inclusive environments thrive on empathy, as it fosters a sense of psychological safety where individuals feel valued, respected, and understood. It enables leaders to connect authentically with their teams, fostering a culture of trust, transparency, care, and collaboration. By cultivating empathy at all levels of the organization, from frontline employees to senior executives, organizations can unlock the full potential of their diverse talent pool and drive sustainable growth and success.

The Strategic Potential of D&I Networks

As we delve deeper into the complexities of diversity and inclusion, their strategic importance becomes increasingly evident. Building upon our exploration of empathy as the cornerstone of inclusive environments we now turn our attention to the why behind the necessity of D&I networks and their strategic implications.

In today's dynamic business landscape, the strategic importance of D&I networks cannot be overstated. They serve as linchpins in the pursuit of organizational excellence, shaping cultures where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered. By embracing diversity and fostering inclusion, organizations can unlock the full potential of their human capital, driving innovation, adaptability, and sustainable growth. These networks serve as vital conduits for driving organizational success and fostering a culture of inclusion and belongingness. By strategically aligning D&I initiatives with overarching business objectives, organizations can unlock a myriad of benefits that contribute to long-term sustainability and growth. Here's a glimpse into the strategic scope of D&I networks:

● Driving Organizational Performance

D&I networks are strategic enablers of organizational performance, facilitating the recruitment, development, and retention of diverse talent. Research by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2019) highlighted the positive impact of diversity on organizational productivity and innovation. By leveraging D&I networks to attract and retain diverse talent, organizations can enhance their ability to adapt to changing market dynamics and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Moreover, diverse teams are better equipped to solve complex problems and make more informed decisions, as they bring a variety of perspectives and experiences to the table. This enhances creativity, innovation, and overall performance within the organization.

● Enhancing Reputation and Brand Equity

In an increasingly interconnected world, corporate reputation and brand equity are paramount. D&I networks play a pivotal role in shaping organizational reputation by demonstrating a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Research by Edelman (2020) revealed that consumers are more likely to support companies that prioritize D&I initiatives. By cultivating a diverse and inclusive workplace culture through D&I networks, organizations can enhance their reputation and strengthen brand loyalty among customers, employees, and stakeholders.

Furthermore, organizations with strong D&I initiatives are more attractive to potential employees, leading to enhanced recruitment efforts and a more robust talent pipeline. This, in turn, contributes to organizational resilience and long-term sustainability.

● Fostering Innovation and Creativity

Innovation thrives in environments that embrace diversity of thought and perspective. D&I networks provide platforms for the exchange of ideas and the exploration of innovative solutions to complex challenges. Research by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG, 2022) underscored the correlation between diverse teams and innovation revenues, demonstrating that organizations with diverse teams are more likely to outperform their competitors. By leveraging D&I networks to foster a culture of inclusivity and collaboration, organizations can drive innovation and creativity across all levels of the organization.

● Mitigating Risks and Enhancing Resilience

D&I networks play a crucial role in mitigating risks and enhancing organizational resilience. By promoting diversity and inclusion, organizations can reduce the likelihood of bias, discrimination, and legal challenges. Research by McKinsey & Company (2021) highlighted the financial impact of diversity-related lawsuits on organizations, underscoring the importance of proactive D&I initiatives. By proactively addressing diversity and inclusion through D&I networks, organizations can strengthen their resilience and minimize potential risks.

In essence, D&I networks are strategic imperatives for organizations seeking to drive performance, enhance reputation, foster innovation, and mitigate risks. By strategically aligning D&I initiatives with overarching business objectives, organizations can create inclusive workplace cultures where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to their full potential.

Exploring Diversity and Inclusion Networks:

Within the realm of diversity and inclusion initiatives, specific networks emerge as drivers of change. Disability Awareness Networks, for instance, champion inclusivity by promoting accessibility and support for employees with disabilities. Research by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2019) also underscores the productivity gains associated with embracing disability employment practices.

Gen Z Networks, another example of D&I Networks, attuned to the unique preferences of the younger workforce, foster organizational agility and innovation. These networks provide platforms for Gen Z employees to connect, collaborate, and voice their ideas and concerns. Deloitte's global millennial survey (2020) reveals the growing emphasis placed by Gen Z employees on diversity and inclusion in employer selection.

Networks for Working Mothers address the challenges faced by this demographic, promoting work-life balance and organizational loyalty. These networks provide resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities to empower working mothers to thrive both personally and professionally. By recognizing and accommodating the needs of working mothers, these networks contribute to higher levels of employee satisfaction, retention, and productivity. The Working Mother Research Institute's findings (2019) highlight reduced turnover rates in companies with

robust support systems for working mothers.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, diversity and inclusion networks represent not only a strategic move but a moral imperative for future-ready organizations aspiring for sustained excellence. By championing diversity and fostering inclusion, organizations can unlock the full potential of their human capital, driving innovation, resilience, and societal impact. It is imperative for organizational leaders to cultivate environments that embrace diversity holistically, harness networks effectively, and champion cultures of inclusivity for enduring success.

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Navigating Leaves: Balancing Connectivity and Breaks in Today's Workplace

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Abstract

The traditional concept of taking leave has evolved in contemporary workplaces, where technological advancements have reshaped our approach to remote work and connectivity. Professionals now have the flexibility to remain productive even when away from the office, thanks to telecommuting and work-from-home options. Through the narrative of Maya, a dedicated project manager, we explore the complexities of managing employee absence and the impact it has on both individuals and teams. Maya's experience highlights the importance of organizations addressing the challenges associated with employee absence effectively to foster a culture of understanding and support, ultimately promoting employee satisfaction and overall well-being.

The concept of taking leave has transformed significantly in contemporary workplaces, where technological advancements have revolutionized our approach to remote work and connectivity. While traditional leave once implied a complete break from work, today's environment allows professionals to remain productive even when away from the office because of the telecommuting and work-from-home options.

In a bustling office amidst the city, Maya, a dedicated project manager renowned for her commitment to excellence, decided to board on a well-deserved vacation. Despite bidding farewell to her colleagues and setting her out-of-office message, Maya couldn't shake the sense of responsibility accompanying her departure. Aware of impending project deadlines, she meticulously delegated tasks and briefed her team beforehand. Yet, as her plane journeyed towards her destination, thoughts of impending emails and calls lingered in her mind.

The absence of an employee raises important considerations, particularly regarding their role's demands. While physical presence may be essential for hands-on tasks, knowledge-intensive professionals might still find themselves addressing work-related queries while officially on leave. This dynamic can lead to feelings of overwhelm, especially if interruptions disrupt their time away from work.

Meanwhile, back at the office, Maya's team keenly felt her absence. With deadlines approaching and crucial decisions to make, they grappled with challenges requiring Maya's expertise. Despite their efforts to steer the project complexities independently, they missed her guidance and insights. Amidst this uncertainty, Maya's phone buzzed with notifications, each reminding her of her temporarily handed-over responsibilities. Despite planning to disconnect, Maya found herself instinctively reaching for her phone to offer support to her team from afar.

Approaches to managing employee absence vary globally, reflecting cultural and organizational differences. Some regions emphasize work-life boundaries, while others adopt a more flexible communication approach outside standard office hours. Recognizing these distinctions is crucial for organizations to initiate discussions on effective absence management, such as assigning temporary replacements or improving knowledge-sharing systems.

As Maya guided her team through project complexities via calls and emails, she reflected on the evolving concept of "being on leave" in today's interconnected world. Despite her physical absence, Maya realized her role as a mentor and leader surpassed geographic boundaries, enabling her to make a meaningful impact regardless of her location.

Maya's vacation points out the importance of balance in the modern workplace. Refreshed and revived upon her return, Maya committed to initiating discussions within the organization on effective absence management. This ensures team members can enjoy their well-deserved breaks without sacrificing the support and guidance needed for success.

In today's fast-paced workplaces, the notion of taking time off has undergone a significant shift. While the traditional idea of leave often meant disconnecting completely from work, modern professionals now have the flexibility to remain engaged, even when away from the office, due to technological advancements.

Maya's time off during her vacation underscored the need for organizations to address the challenges associated with employee absence effectively. By implementing strategies to support employees during their time off, organizations can foster a culture of understanding and support, ultimately benefiting both employee satisfaction and overall well-being.

Role of Leaders in Team Network Interpersonal Skills

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Network Effect:

Network effect is a phenomenon whereby increased numbers of people or participants improve the **value of a good or service.** The internet is an example of the network effect. Initially, there were few users on the internet since it was of little value to anyone outside of the military and some research scientists.

To lead their team as a leader, employment development strategies must be on top priority with the importance of interpersonal skills and soft skills, which will define the future of the organization and help leaders accomplish with greater ease any goal set.

Utilize the main 6 strategies to support the development of interpersonal skills and help employees grow professionally.

● Lead by example: The process of developing a team's interpersonal skills starts & ends with leaders. If Leaders display the behaviors and soft skills they are asking from their employees, sooner or later, they will do the same thing for you. For example, if leaders don't practice active listening, empathy, & effective communication, how do they expect them to learn these behaviours and use them in the workplace? The truth is that a leader sets the tone for their team & their behaviour is the primary factor that affects the company culture. So, keep that in mind before leaders turn to their employees & ask them to improve their communication skills.

● Practice Empathy and Compassion: Interpersonal skills development is a process that can be rather long and even difficult for some people. So, it's crucial that throughout it, all leaders remember that no one is the same and everyone is trying their best. Being judgmental or too insistent will make things harder for leaders, as it will cause their employees to close up and distance themselves from their colleagues even more. Instead, be compassionate, try to understand where everyone is coming from, & keep a positive attitude. This way, even when their employees are having a bad day, they will feel safe asking you for help, thus contributing to a more supportive work environment.

● To Foster the Workforce's Interpersonal Skills: By giving credit to our employees to communicate openly and effectively. A great way to get your employees to open up is to show your appreciation towards them. Like, don't leaders usually give some form of praise or reward to employees who exceed expectations/accomplish a significant goal? Leaders should be doing the same for interpersonal achievements. When someone goes out of their way to help a team member or expertly navigates their way out of a conflict, he must recognize that. This way, not only do employees feel appreciated, but also their self-confidence grows, urging them to keep striving to better themselves. Cross-functional projects break invisible barriers between different teams and encourage employees to view the challenges other departments face and how they overcome them.

● Give Regular Feedback: Providing feedback on a person's interpersonal skills is sometimes difficult for managers. If not done properly, it can come off as critiquing someone's personality rather than performance, and that's something a leader never wants to do. At the same time, feedback is crucial for ensuring that employees are constantly evolving in their roles. When leaders give employees feedback, make sure they are objective and non-judgmental. Focus on their strengths & discuss areas that require improvement together to reach the best possible outcome. This way, a leader can foster communication & express your interest in helping them grow their soft skills.

● Devote More Time to One-On-One meetings: Often; leaders interact with their reports in a team setting, where, naturally, not everyone gets the same attention. If leaders want to truly know employees and understand which interpersonal skills they lack & how they can hone them, leaders will have to find the time to meet with them one-on-one. These meetings are great for helping leaders foster a personal relationship with their employees, offering them a safe space where they can voice their concerns and aspirations for the future. Together, leaders can discuss which areas require improvement & figure out solutions that are best suited to employees' needs and preferences.

● Encourage cross-functional collaboration: Another way to support the development of staff's interpersonal skills is to encourage collaboration across different departments. Often, employees only work with people from their department, thus limiting their exposure to new ideas and perspectives. Cross-functional projects will break these invisible barriers between different teams & encourage employees to view the challenges other departments face and how they overcome them. This will not only help develop their empathy and creativity but also their adaptability. Moreover, trust will be fostered between employees, thus decreasing tensions, promoting camaraderie, and supporting everyone in developing their communication skills.

Unlocking the Tapestry of Learning and Development: A Journey through Time and Networks

By – **Mr. Nilaya Mitash Shanker, IOCL**
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Abstract:

Exploring the theme "Leveraging the Currency of Networks for a Sustained Competitive Advantage," this article unveils the timeless narrative of learning and development through anecdotes from ancient, mediaeval, and modern Indian history, juxtaposed with contemporary examples from Fortune 500 companies. From Chanakya's strategic insights to Akbar's diverse administration and Gandhi's mobilization for independence, historical echoes resonate in today's corporate ethos. Fortune 500 companies like Apple, Google, and Microsoft seamlessly integrate technology with human networks, predicting and enhancing creativity and effectiveness. The interplay of ancient wisdom and modern marvels emphasizes the enduring importance of organizational networks, shaping cultures and driving performance. As submissions pour in, the article showcases a harmonious narrative, underscoring the pivotal role of networks in the dynamic nature of organizational communication and culture, weaving a tapestry that transcends time.

Main Article:

In the intricate tapestry of organizational growth and development, the theme of "Leveraging the Currency of Networks for a Sustained Competitive Advantage" unfolds through the corridors of ancient, mediaeval, and modern Indian history, intertwined with contemporary examples from Fortune 500 companies. This exploration reveals how the dynamics of organizational networks transcend time, shaping learning and development in profound ways.

Ancient Insights: The Chanakya Chronicles

Delving into the annals of ancient Indian history, we find ourselves in the company of Chanakya, the master strategist of the Mauryan Empire. Chanakya's Arthashastra, a treatise on statecraft, emphasizes the importance of well-established networks for effective governance. He recognized that networks, built on trust and collaboration, are the lifeblood of any successful empire.

In today's corporate landscape, Fortune 500 companies draw inspiration from Chanakya's wisdom. They invest in cultivating robust internal networks that facilitate across-group exchanges, fostering an environment where new ideas and insights can flourish.

Mediaeval Mosaics: The Akbarian Administration

As we transition to mediaeval India, the Mughal Empire stands as a beacon of administrative excellence under Emperor Akbar. Akbar's court was a melting pot of diverse minds, a network of advisors from various backgrounds and beliefs. This eclectic assembly not only enriched decision-making but also paved the way for innovative solutions.

Modern organizations echo this sentiment, recognizing the need for diversity in their networks. Fortune 500 companies actively seek a medley of perspectives, understanding that the scaling of new solutions often requires insights from different cultural and professional vantage points.

Colonial Chronicles: The Gandhian Network of Independence

Fast-forwarding to the struggle for independence in colonial India, Mahatma Gandhi orchestrated a formidable network of individuals united by a common goal. The Dandi March of 1930 is a poignant example of this network's power. Gandhi's strategic use of relationships and interactions mobilized a nation towards a collective vision of freedom.

In contemporary corporate arenas, the principles of nonviolent protest find resonance in the boardrooms of Fortune 500 companies. Companies leverage technology to build stronger human networks, akin to Gandhi's vision of a united and empowered citizenry.

Modern Marvels: Fortune 500 Companies' Networking Triumphs

The present-day landscape witnesses the pinnacle of organizational networking in Fortune 500 companies. Giants like Apple, Google, and Microsoft exemplify the seamless integration of technology and human networks. These companies not only embrace social technologies but actively leverage them to foster collaboration, driving innovation at an unprecedented pace.

Understanding the pattern of relationships and interactions within their organizations, these corporate behemoths predict and enhance the creativity and effectiveness of their employees. The diffusion of resources across boundaries, a concept rooted in ancient philosophies, is now facilitated through digital platforms that connect global teams in real time.

Conclusion: Navigating the Weave of Organizational Networks

As submissions pour in on the theme of "Leveraging the Currency of Networks for a Sustained Competitive Advantage," the tapestry of learning and development in organizations becomes richer. The interplay of ancient wisdom, mediaeval insights, and modern marvels showcases the enduring importance of organizational networks in shaping cultures and driving performance.

In essence, the journey through time reveals that the currency of networks has always been valuable, transcending eras and empires. Today's Fortune 500 companies, recognizing the transformative power of networks, stand as torchbearers for leveraging technology to build stronger human networks. The symphony of thoughts, opinions, and experiences on this theme creates a harmonious narrative, emphasizing the pivotal role of networks in the dynamic nature of organizational communication and culture.

The Communication Network: Public Relations in the Digital Era

By - **Suman Senapati, HPCL**

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Mr Suman Senapati has been working at HPCL for the past 7 years, in various roles, which include Refinery operations, Technical development and Digital teams. He was re-assigned to the PRCC department in September 2023.

Abstract

The digital transformation era has revolutionized information exchange, emphasizing the crucial role of networking within organizational structures. Traditional PR methods fall short in today's interconnected landscape, necessitating the integration of modern technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) to effectively monitor, analyse, and respond to evolving communication paradigms. AI not only optimizes external communications but also fosters internal collaboration, enhancing productivity and organizational cohesion. By automating routine tasks and facilitating seamless networking, AI empowers PR professionals to focus on strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening internal networks and driving organizational success.

As AI continues to evolve, its integration into PR practices promises endless possibilities. From social media monitoring to stakeholder engagement bots and content generation, AI-driven solutions will streamline communication processes, ensure brand consistency and enhance engagement across various stakeholders. Moving forward, as AI algorithms become increasingly sophisticated, PR professionals will be equipped with powerful tools to navigate the dynamic communication landscape, driving progress and prosperity for all stakeholders. The era of AI in PR heralds a future where connectivity, collaboration, and communication transcend boundaries, shaping a more inclusive and innovative industry landscape.

Main Content

In the era of digital transformation, the way people consume and exchange information has undergone a profound shift, amplifying the significance of networking within organizational frameworks. Social media platforms, online forums, and news outlets have become primary channels through which employees and stakeholders connect and engage, influencing internal dynamics and external perceptions. As organizations navigate this interconnected landscape, traditional PR approaches prove insufficient, prompting the strategic integration of modern technologies to monitor, analyze, and respond effectively to evolving communication paradigms.

Amidst this context, the role of PR extends beyond external reputation management to encompass fostering internal connectivity and collaboration among employees. In this dynamic environment, leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly imperative for PR professionals, empowering them with tools to facilitate seamless networking and bridge gaps both within and beyond the organization. AI-driven solutions offer multifaceted benefits, from enhancing media monitoring capabilities to deploying customer engagement bots and streamlining content creation processes. By harnessing AI technologies, PR teams can not only optimize external communications but also facilitate internal networking initiatives, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation within the organization.

Moreover, AI enables the automation of routine tasks, freeing up time for PR professionals to focus on strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening internal networks and driving organizational cohesion. Through the strategic deployment of AI-powered solutions, PR teams can play a pivotal role in nurturing meaningful connections among employees and stakeholders, thereby enhancing productivity, morale, and ultimately, the organization's overall success. This article seeks to delve into the transformative potential of AI in enhancing both external PR efforts and internal networking dynamics.
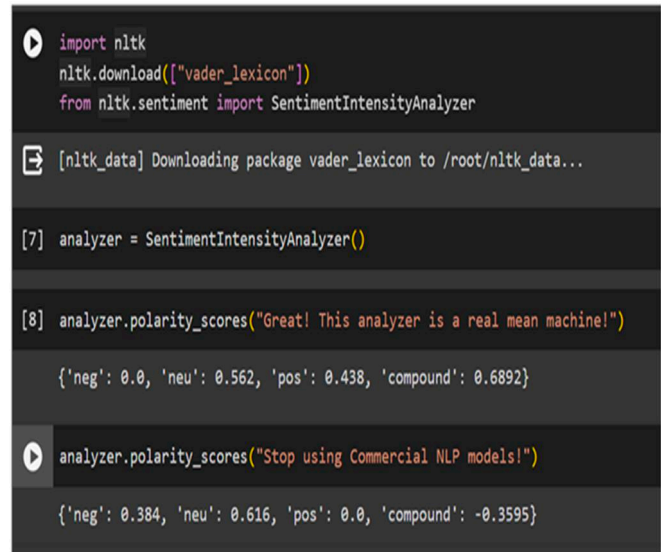
Social Media Monitoring

Traditional approaches to social media monitoring typically involve manual tracking of brand mentions, hashtags, and keywords across various social media platforms. Often, this method heavily relies on human resources to sift through large volumes of data, which can be time-consuming and prone to oversight. Moreover, traditional monitoring tools may lack the

erudition needed to analyze sentiments accurately or identify emerging trends effectively. Keeping this in mind, the development of AI-based solutions, which allow more comprehensive monitoring techniques, is the need of the hour to handle such complex tasks by PR teams. As businesses increasingly recognize the importance of monitoring social media for reputation management and market insights, there's a growing demand for AI-powered tools that can automate and streamline the process.

AI offers a range of advanced options for social media monitoring, leveraging natural language processing (NLP) and data analytics to extract valuable insights from social media data. One such option is sentiment analysis, which involves using classification algorithms to gauge the sentiment associated with brand mentions, enabling companies to understand how their audience perceives them in real time. Another option is trend analysis, where AI algorithms can identify patterns and trends within social media conversations, helping businesses stay ahead of emerging topics and discussions. Additionally, AI-powered tools can automate the process of identifying influencers and target audiences, allowing companies to optimize their outreach strategies for maximum impact. A wide array of options of AI-based social media monitoring services exist that employ AI algorithms, which include Hootsuite, Brandwatch, Sprout Social and so on.

On the other hand, sentiment analysis can be performed using open-source Python libraries like NLTK and TextBlob. NLTK library has a pre-trained sentiment analyser named VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sentiment Reasoner), which is very well suited to handle short sentences, typically used in social media. The polarity scores function associated with VADER returns a dictionary of scores against neutral, negative, positive and a compound score. VADER would ideally work well with Tweets or captions, which have a limited length. Similarly, TextBlob employs a Lexicon-based approach for performing sentiment analysis, which involves the use of a dictionary of words and phrases that are associated with positive and negative sentiment to identify the sentiment of a piece of text. The input text message would be treated as a bag of words, where each word would be associated with an individual score used for computing the final sentiment through a pre-determined pooling operation. The TextBlob algorithm returns the polarity and subjectivity of the

sentence. Polarity returns a score to determine the inclination of the text towards negative or positive sentiment, while subjectivity quantifies the quantum of personal opinion and factual information contained in the input text. These libraries can be used along with Python-based web frameworks like Flask and Django to develop in-house sentiment analysis solutions, which can fetch data from Social media developer accounts using their respective APIs.

```
import nltk
nltk.download(["vader_lexicon"])
from nltk.sentiment import SentimentIntensityAnalyzer

[nltk_data] Downloading package vader_lexicon to /root/nltk_data...

[7] analyzer = SentimentIntensityAnalyzer()

[8] analyzer.polarity_scores("Great! This analyzer is a real mean machine!")

{'neg': 0.0, 'neu': 0.562, 'pos': 0.438, 'compound': 0.6892}

analyzer.polarity_scores("Stop using Commercial NLP models!")

{'neg': 0.384, 'neu': 0.616, 'pos': 0.0, 'compound': -0.3595}
```
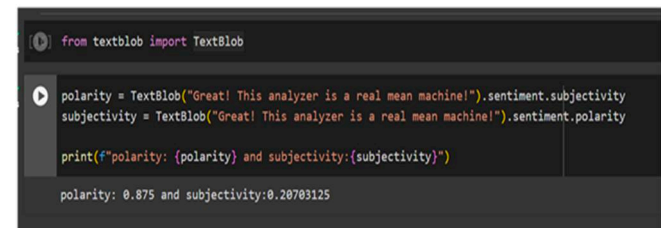
Fig 1. Snippet written in Python showing usage of in-built sentiment analyzer of NLTK library

```
from textblob import TextBlob

polarity = TextBlob("Great! This analyzer is a real mean machine!").sentiment.subjectivity
subjectivity = TextBlob("Great! This analyzer is a real mean machine!").sentiment.polarity

print(f"polarity: {polarity} and subjectivity:{subjectivity}")

polarity: 0.875 and subjectivity:0.20703125
```

Fig 2. Snippet written in Python showing usage of in-built sentiment analyzer of TextBlobx library

Stakeholder engagement bots

Traditional approaches to customer or stakeholder engagement bots often involve scripted responses or decision trees that provide predefined answers to common queries. These bots typically rely on simple rule-based algorithms to interact with users, which can result in limited functionality and frustrating user experiences when faced with complex inquiries or nuanced conversations. However, these conventional methods have paved the way for the development of AI-based solutions by highlighting the need for more intelligent and adaptable systems. As businesses increasingly recognize the importance of providing

personalized and responsive customer support, there's a growing demand for AI-powered bots that can understand natural language, learn from interactions, and offer more sophisticated assistance.

AI offers a range of advanced options for engagement bots, leveraging various deep-learning techniques to enhance interaction capabilities. One such option is chatbots equipped with natural language processing (NLP) capabilities, which enable them to understand and respond to user queries conversationally. These AI-powered bots can analyze the context of a conversation, interpret user intent, and provide relevant and personalized responses, leading to more satisfying user experiences. Additionally, AI-driven recommendation engines can be integrated into customer engagement bots to offer personalized product recommendations or tailored assistance based on user preferences and behaviour patterns. In the present day, commercial AI chatbots, such as GPT-4.0, Drift and Ada, can be easily integrated with existing web architecture providing a seamless chatbot interaction with the customer. On the other hand, many open-source models, such as Bard, are available for tuning and deployment.

Additionally, chatbots can be built from scratch and trained on specific intent using nothing but a tensorflow library which finds application in building neural networks. Based on the extent of exhaustiveness of the training dataset, the accuracy of the chatbot can be tuned.

```
import json
import numpy as np
import tensorflow as tf
from tensorflow import keras
from tensorflow.keras.models import Sequential
from tensorflow.keras.layers import Dense, Embedding, GlobalAveragePooling1D
from tensorflow.keras.preprocessing.text import Tokenizer
from tensorflow.keras.preprocessing.sequence import pad_sequences
from sklearn.preprocessing import LabelEncoder

[3] with open('intents.json') as file:
        data = json.load(file)

[6] training_sentences = []
    training_labels = []
    labels = []
    responses = []

[8] for intent in data['intents']:
        for pattern in intent['patterns']:
            training_sentences.append(pattern)
            training_labels.append(intent['tag'])
        responses.append(intent['responses'])

        if intent['tag'] not in labels:
            labels.append(intent['tag'])

    num_classes = len(labels)
    num_classes
```

Fig 3. Training of a neural network on pre-defined intents to be deployed as a chatbot (Part I)

```
[9] encoder = LabelEncoder()
    encoder.fit(training_labels)
    training_labels = encoder.transform(training_labels)

[10] vocab_size = 1000
     embedding_dim = 16
     max_len = 20
     oov_token = "<OOV>"

     tokenizer = Tokenizer(num_words = vocab_size, oov_token = oov_token)
     tokenizer.fit_on_texts(training_sentences)
     word_index = tokenizer.word_index
     sequences = tokenizer.texts_to_sequences(training_sentences)
     padded_sequences = pad_sequences(sequences, truncating='post', maxlen=max_len)

     model = Sequential()
     model.add(Embedding(vocab_size,embedding_dim, input_length=max_len))
     model.add(GlobalAveragePooling1D())
     model.add(Dense(16, activation='relu'))
     model.add(Dense(16, activation='relu'))
     model.add(Dense(num_classes, activation='softmax'))

     model.compile(loss='sparse_categorical_crossentropy', optimizer='adam', metrics=['accuracy'])

     model.summary()

[12] epochs = 500
     history = model.fit(padded_sequences, np.array(training_labels), epochs=epochs)
```

Fig 4. Training of a neural network on pre-defined intents to be deployed as a chatbot (Part II)

Content generation

Traditional methods of content generation for PR purposes involve not only crafting textual content but also designing visual elements like images and graphics. PR professionals traditionally undertake manual processes that include research, brainstorming, and design to create content that effectively conveys their messages and promotes their clients or organizations. However, these conventional methods often prove time-consuming and resource-intensive, especially when ensuring consistency in branding and visual identity across various platforms. Despite these challenges, traditional approaches have set the stage for the emergence of AI-based solutions, notably generative AI, which offers more efficient and scalable content creation methods.

Generative AI presents a groundbreaking solution for content generation in PR-related roles. By harnessing machine learning algorithms and vast datasets, generative AI systems can automatically produce not only written content but also visually captivating images and graphics tailored to specific communication objectives. These AI-driven tools streamline the content creation process, enabling PR professionals to address diverse content needs more effectively while upholding brand consistency. With generative AI, PR teams can generate compelling multimedia content at scale, thereby freeing up time for strategic initiatives and augmenting overall communication endeavours. Moreover, the utilization of generative AI facilitates the creation of content for both external and internal communications,

enhancing engagement and connectivity across various stakeholders within and outside the organization. Several commercial content and image generators are available, which include GPT-4.0 for text generation and Midjourney for image generation.

Similar results can be achieved through open-source fine-tuned models developed for either text or image generation. Among available open-source models, SpaCy and Stable Diffusion are some of the most well-known models for text and image generation, respectively. These models can be downloaded in any Python environment directly from the Python package manager or GitHub.

AI and beyond

The seamless integration of AI-driven solutions into PR practices not only enhances external reputation management but also fosters internal connectivity and collaboration among employees. In this ever-expanding realm of technology, as time progresses, various other use cases would be revealed, which would leave a lasting impression on how PR is practised throughout the industry.

As AI algorithms evolve and AI-driven solutions become increasingly sophisticated, PR professionals will find themselves equipped with powerful tools to navigate the dynamic landscape of communication with confidence and effectiveness. With a commitment to embracing innovation and harnessing the potential of AI, organizations can pave the way for a future where connectivity, collaboration, and communication surpass all boundaries, driving progress and prosperity for all.

Aarohi – As The Flight Leaves The Land.
Theme- Diversity and InclusionAnd Learning & Development

By - **Aparna Bhargava, IOCL**
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Author information

A Civil Engineer by Education, Project Manager by Profession and Champion of Sustainability and Green practices presently involved in a Project to set up IOCL's State-of-the-art New Energy Campus of the R&D Division. Passionate about Women's Leadership, strongly believes in teamwork and keeping teams challenged, motivated, and empowered.

Abstract

IOCL conducts a flagship Women Leadership Programme for Middle Managers called "Aarohi," which means "One who ascends." I have been fortunate to have undergone "Aarohi 6.0" at the IndianoilInstitute of Petroleum Management. This program focuses on all-around grooming and developing Leadership Skills & EQ to not only deal with day-to-day challenges but also develop strategic thinking for future leadership positions.

There are engaging classroom sessions with many hands-on activities and Field trips to each Division and verticals of IOCL. The programme concludes with challenging projects and presentations on topics related to real challenges before IOCL analyses and proposes solutions and ways forward.

It provides unique opportunities for a group of 20 women executives from different Divisions and Geographies to come together to go through an intense process of Unlearning and learning and upgrading oneself in the process. Lifelong bonds are formed, leading to a network of strong like-minded women facing challenges with courage, pride, and joy.

I feel that this programme, Aarohi, reflects the commitment of IOCL towards promoting Diversity in a true sense. While going through the program, I was inspired to write a few lines in the form of poetry reflecting the very essence of it all.

Main Content- Poem

- Watch out, behold, Admire, bequeath!
- Here come the Arohians unstoppable, unsheathed!
- While you hear our unbridled laughter and a lot of noise
- And at the very next moment,
- We display impeccable grace and poise;
- Leaving far away our work teams & family
- We get our finishing touches to lead naturally;
- We may hold within a flood of emotion.
- But when it means business,
- You just can't sense our internal commotion;
- We have mingled and jingled, shared, and cared
- Together, we have learnt to assess how we've fared;
- At Mid rung of the corporate ladder,
- Handling the experienced superior cadre;
- We are performing the tightrope walk
- Leading the Millennials & Gen Z by walking the talk;
- Manoeuvring through the old ways of living,
- "Aarohi" brings into our life a breath of fresh air;
- Building tiny habits, Breathing, stretching, Coaching,
- All nudged to jettison the mundane and update our flair.
- As the details about transformational IOCL unfurl
- Exploring this Ocean of Energy and finding its pearls
- Ability, Agility, Adaptability, Acceptability,

Accountability

- The success Mantra of the 5As reinforced;

- And the formula of being Power Women perfectly induced;

- Our Power icon coaxes and convinces us to let our Courage, Confidence and Conviction unbottle

- And keep our engines running Full throttle;

- As the flight leaves the Land towards dreams sublime

- We Aarohians take off and fly high.

- Leaving footprints on the sands of time.

Boost Your Productivity with the Pomodoro Technique

By - **Milton Bain, IOCL**
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Abstract

In an age where distractions abound and attention spans dwindle, the quest for productivity has become more critical than ever. Among the myriad of strategies and methods devised to combat procrastination and enhance focus, one technique stands out for its simplicity and effectiveness: the Pomodoro Technique.

Developed in the late 1980s by Francesco Cirillo, the Pomodoro Technique is a time management method that encourages individuals to work in focused intervals, typically 25 minutes long, separated by short breaks. The technique derives its name from the Italian word for "tomato" (Pomodoro), inspired by the tomato-shaped kitchen timer used by Cirillo during his university days.

Main Content

At its core, the Pomodoro Technique revolves around breaking down tasks into manageable segments called "Pomodoros" and employing a timer to track these intervals. Each Pomodoro session is dedicated to a single task, free from interruptions or multitasking, fostering deep concentration and flow state.

The simplicity of the Pomodoro Technique belies its profound impact on productivity and focus. Here's how it works:
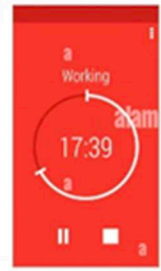
1. Set Clear Goals: Begin each work session by identifying the task or tasks you intend to accomplish. Clarify your objectives and break them down into smaller, actionable steps.
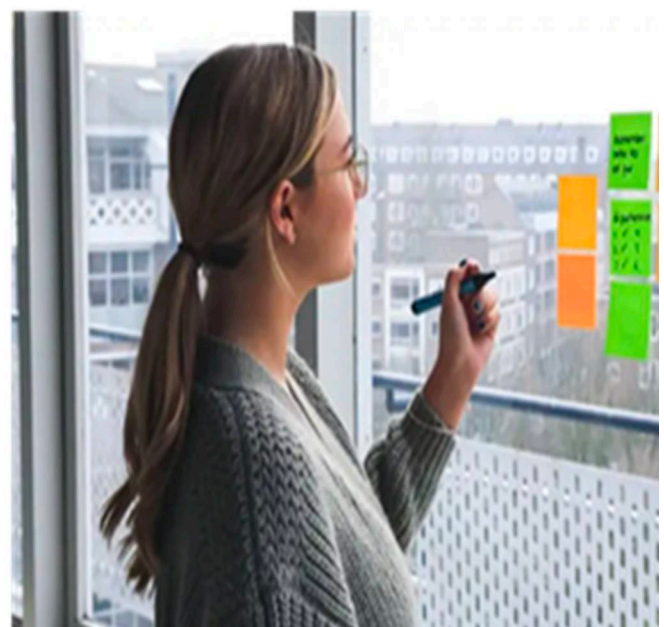
2. Set the Timer: Set a timer for 25 minutes—the duration of a typical Pomodoro session. During this time, commit to working on the designated task with undivided attention.

Pomodoro Timer   Pomodoro App

3. Work Intensely: Dive into your task with full concentration, striving to maintain focus for the entire duration of the Pomodoro. Resist the temptation to check emails, scroll through social media, or engage in unrelated activities.

4. Take a Short Break: Once the 25-minute Pomodoro session concludes, reward yourself with a short break lasting 5 minutes. Use this time to stretch, hydrate, or engage in a brief relaxation activity to recharge your mind.

5. Repeat the Cycle: After completing one Pomodoro session and the subsequent break, return to work for another focused interval. Repeat this cycle—25 minutes of work followed by a 5-minute break—until you've completed four Pomodoros.


6. Longer Break: After completing four Pomodoros, reward yourself with a more extended break, typically lasting 15-30 minutes. Use this time to rest, reflect on your progress, and prepare for the next work session.

The beauty of the Pomodoro Technique lies in its adaptability and flexibility. While the standard Pomodoro interval is 25 minutes, some individuals may find that shorter or longer intervals better suit their preferences and cognitive rhythms. Experimentation is encouraged to determine the optimal Pomodoro duration for maximum productivity.

Moreover, the Pomodoro Technique is not solely reserved for professional tasks or work-related activities. It can be applied to a wide range of endeavours, including studying, writing, creative projects, household chores, and even exercise routines. By breaking down daunting tasks into manageable chunks and allocating focused time intervals, individuals can overcome procrastination and make steady progress towards their goals.
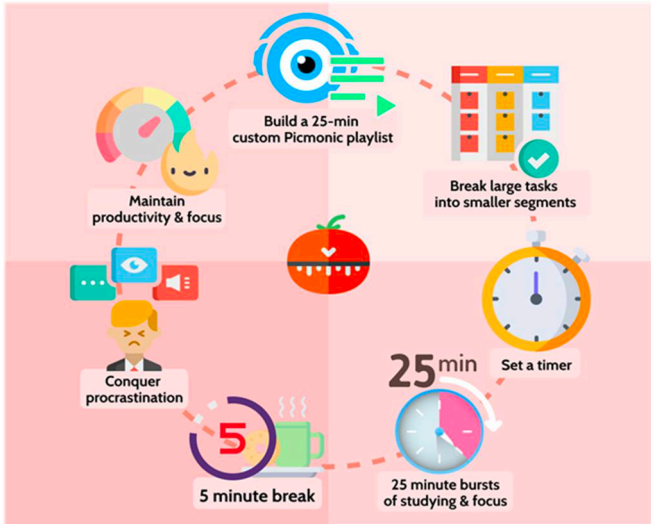
THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE
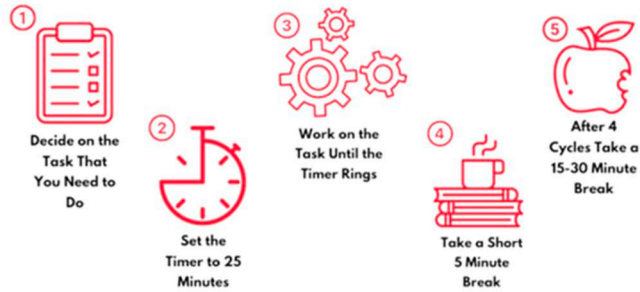
Beyond its tangible benefits in enhancing productivity, the Pomodoro Technique offers psychological advantages as well. Imposing time constraints and promoting focused work intervals, alleviates feelings of overwhelm and anxiety associated with large or complex tasks.

The Pomodoro timer serves as a tangible symbol of progress, motivating individuals to stay on track and maintain momentum throughout their work sessions.

Furthermore, the structured nature of the Pomodoro Technique facilitates improved time management and prioritization. By allocating dedicated time blocks to specific tasks, individuals gain clarity on their priorities and allocate their resources more efficiently. This proactive approach minimizes the likelihood of succumbing to distractions or succumbing to the allure of procrastination.

Despite its effectiveness, the Pomodoro Technique is not without its challenges and limitations. Some individuals may struggle with maintaining focus for the entire duration of a Pomodoro session, especially if they're accustomed to frequent distractions or multitasking. Overcoming these obstacles requires practice, discipline, and a willingness to cultivate mindfulness in one's work habits.

Additionally, the Pomodoro Technique may not be suitable for every task or work environment. Certain types of work, such as creative brainstorming or collaborative projects, may benefit from longer periods of uninterrupted focus or spontaneous bursts of inspiration. In such cases, flexibility in adapting the Pomodoro Technique to accommodate specific needs and preferences is essential.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Pomodoro Technique stands as a powerful tool for enhancing productivity, managing time effectively, and cultivating focus in an age of constant distraction. Its simplicity, versatility, and proven effectiveness have earned it a devoted following among students, professionals, and creatives alike. By embracing the principles of focused work, periodic breaks, and mindful time management, individuals can harness the full potential of the Pomodoro Technique to achieve their goals and unleash their productivity.

In a world where time is a precious commodity and distractions lurk at every corner, mastering the art of the Pomodoro Technique offers a pathway to reclaiming control over one's attention and maximizing one's output. So, why wait? Grab your timer, set your goals, and embark on a journey of focused productivity with the Pomodoro Technique by your side.

Eat Healthy, Stay Healthy, Think Healthy, Feel WEALTHY!

Altruism will elevate the CSR to the next level

By - **R Vengadasalapathy, IOCL**
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The author is currently working as a senior production engineer in IOCL Gujarat Refinery and has a work experience of over twenty years at Panipat Refinery. The author is also a trained counsellor.

Abstract

A short note on corporate social responsibility will be more effective by practising Altruism and empathy in the workplace and how it will boost up the physical and mental health of employees and society.

Main Content

"Moving the CSR needle: Aligning with the National Priorities."

Corporate social responsibility is extremely important nowadays to control and compensate for the effects of industry on society aimed at maintaining the profits and brand name of the company. Based on this, most of the public sector and some of the private sector companies concentrate on the social welfare of the society in education, skill development and livelihoods, agriculture and rural development, health, safe drinking water and sanitation, environment, sustainable development and solar energy Infrastructure fields. This is a great support for the people in the society living near the company.

Providing service to society through CSR activity gives a sense of pride to the company and the employees who are working in the company. Company and society are not separate domains in the sense that members of a big company are also a subset of society. That's why the company is taking care of its employees and their family health and welfare.

When we talk about the consequences of COVID-19, we come to know that the Mental Health crisis increased significantly after the pandemic. This was the time when corporations had to concentrate on this issue on their employees and society in general. According to the studies, the main issues within the company are distress, anxiety, depression, and phobia, which we consider as the starting state of mental health disorders.

Many big companies are taking countermeasures, as they are arranging for psychiatric consultation and counselling through online/offline webinars and creating awareness about mental health issues among their employees. But this is very much limited as on a primary front, it is being organized by large corporations who can fund these events and on a secondary front, if events are being organized, they are not reaching the lowest strata of workers of society.

At different levels of society, these above issues arise due to unplanned action, communication gaps, discrimination, inequality, and urgency to achieve the target.

Employees being a part of society, they all should work together to mitigate the issue, which is a good CSR role in the mental health of the employees in the workplace. If an employee is in good mental status then his family will live happily which becomes a catalyst for society to grow.

Corporates can do it successfully because they have employees with administrative power, implementation and execution power and are well aware of the employees' physical and mental health issues according to the workload and how to manage the stress of the employees. That's why the government has given this duty to the corporations to do better in CSR activity, which benefits the company to grow along with the employees and gain good profit and brand. Here, people should also try to altruistically help each other, work together in society, and grow with the company's growth.

Altruism and empathetic workplaces are a very important part of a company's working culture.

The most important aspect is nurturing a community within the company, creating a space where everyone has a voice and allowing people to get to know each other inside and outside of the office. Altruism and caring for others are part of daily activities, an empathetic and empowered workspace provides a good platform to work together as a company to express itself and make a real difference in society. Working culture should inculcate openness and honesty about altruistic intentions and let employees contribute their ideas, time, and energy to causes that they find significant. Many companies have corporate social responsibility initiatives, but they should also implement them to bring change to the world, which is very powerful for productivity and morale.

Everyone should develop an altruistic nature to help individuals with work-related issues and family-related issues.

One should positively perceive others and give out healthy communication to help others in combating anxiety and distress-related circumstances in the workplace.

Encouragement and motivational talks with coworkers to create a depression-free environment, at the same time, everyone should be aware of their strengths and weaknesses and come forward to develop the skill to change weaknesses to strengths from the resources to achieve self-development.

What we should adopt:

- Individuals must accept their weaknesses without hesitation.

- Do not be overconfident.

- To clarify self and others' confusion on personal, work-related problems without hesitation.

- Develop an ego-free environment.

- Practice openness and altruism in the workplace.

- Realistic expectation and environment.

- Practice Work-life balance

Conclusion

Corporate social responsibility allows Companies to do their bit for society, the environment, and the country. It allows all the employees of a company to contribute towards society. Since every individual is a part of society and wants to use the platform provided by the company through CSR, they should use these platforms to help each other in an altruistic way and should positively perceive others to work together to make a working environment free from mental health issues.

As the former president of Starbucks Coffee Company, Howard Behar said, "It is about putting yourself last and your people first." It means being humble, ensuring that you are there for others, and finding solutions to problems by which everybody wins.

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The Busy Professional's Guide to Self Care

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One of the easiest ways to manage mental health and well-being is to build some self-care practices and routines into your day. Most of us are well aware of at least some of these practices, like regular exercise, meditation, sleep, indulging in hobbies, spending time with friends and family, travelling and taking time off.

Regular self-care ensures that we are giving our minds and bodies ways to process emotions and information. Self-care also allows us to recover from physical, emotional and mental fatigue. It allows us to build resilience and to stay focussed.

The challenge with most of our lives today is that we are always pressed for time. And all of the self-care practices are good at times when our schedules are easy to manage and we have time on our hands.

But for most of us, when the workload increases, our focus on self-care goes down.

Some of us may also be balancing a lot of personal and professional priorities, and that inevitably means that we don't have enough time for ourselves. At moments like this, it may also feel that taking time for self-care is selfish because you could be doing so many more important things at that time.

And this is not surprising because most self-care practices require time and energy. And when we are busy and don't have time or energy the easiest thing to let go of are these self-care practices that help us take care of ourselves.

The unfortunate paradox is that our busy and stressful times are when we need self-care the most. This is because it is during our busy and stressful times that we are using our mental, emotional and physical resources the most. We are in a constant depleted state. So, we need to have ways to be able to balance and build our energies.

Think of your energy reserve as a bank account. You need to deposit money to be able to withdraw it.

Sometimes, we convince ourselves that we don't need self-care because we are "strong" and resilient. And perhaps many of us can keep going for some time. But eventually, the wear will show up in the form of fatigue, a drop in performance quality or burnout.

Self-care is your prevention from all of the above. And prioritizing yourself is not selfish.

But how do you find time for self-care when you are super BUSY?

An easy way is to have a list of self-care practices that take < 5 minutes and minimal effort.

I like to think of these as the pitstops that Formula One cars make for refuelling and tyre changes. The stops are quick, but they ensure that the car can keep going.

Here are some of my go-to ideas for quick and easy self-care, but just because they take less time and effort does not mean they aren't effective.

1. Sip a warm beverage slowly and listen to your favourite song: As simple as this sounds, it is a great way to engage your senses. The beverage engages your taste, and the warmth of the liquid calms your gut nerves. Music is a great way to change your energy state. And depending on what state you need to listen to music that energizes you. Or calms you. Or takes you on a pleasant trip down memory lane.

2. Breathwork: Close your eyes and bring your attention to your breath. Start to count your breath backwards from 50-1. Breathe in at an even number and breathe out at an odd number. This is a short-form meditation that allows you to centre yourself and bring your energy to a more calming and focused state. It does not take more than 2 minutes, and it leaves you in a more present and calm state.

3. Make a list: Lists are a great way to organize the many thoughts and actions running in your mind. It helps the brain organize information and take the pressure off from remembering everything. Sometimes, ticking off the actions on the list also creates a sense of achievement, which is a positive signal to the brain. It also helps you to acknowledge the progress you have made.

4. Engage your senses: Take a few deep breaths. Now focus on three things that you can hear. These could be sounds close to you or far. Notice them. Become aware of them. Hold these in your attention. Now focus on three things you can see. These could be things close to you or far from you. Observe them. Become aware of them. Hold these in your attention along with the sounds. Now focus on three things you can feel. These could be your clothes, the taste in your mouth, the feeling of the ground below you or perhaps something you are holding in your hand. Observe them. Hold them in your attention along with the sounds and visual objects for 5-10 seconds before bringing your attention back to the room. This exercise allows your mind a quick break and to refresh its focus

5. Stretch: Stress tends to make us constrict our bodies. This tightens the muscles and limits the energy flow in our bodies. Stand up and stretch your arms as high as you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Now open your arms and stretch them wide and back to the extent you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Building a stretching routine that you can do every 2 hours allows you to release stressful energy and open up your energy flow.

6. Light incense: Or a scented candle. Or a diffuser. Aromatherapy is a great way to find calm amid chaos. So, keep some of your favourite smells close. Lavender, peppermint and green=manium are the best essential oils for calming the mind.

These few quick and simple self-care practices are a great way to ground yourself, focus your mind and take a quick break. Feel free to try them out. If these are some practices that you follow do share them in comments as well.

About the Author:

Rachel Gojer is a Leadership and Team Coach who works with high-achieving individuals and teams. She helps her clients to stay focused, manage overwhelm and move ahead with confidence and power. She has worked with CEOs, Executives and Entrepreneurs globally to help them create their unique success formula and stay on top of their game. Before becoming a Coach, she worked for 14 years as a Technology and Business Leader.

Mental Health @ Work

By - **Dr. Athar Quershi, CIMR, Mumbai**
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The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. The definition includes the words 'work well,' indicating the importance of positive mental well-being at work. One must understand that mental health does not always mean a state of insanity that needs rehabilitation. It exists on a complex continuum. Mental health issues range from an optimal state of well-being to the most draining states of emotional pain and suffering.

On average, as working adults, we spend a minimum of 1/3rd or more of our day at work. Thus, our workplace is a very important part of our life and routine. How many of us have felt anxious, had palpitations, felt stressed, or just had a headache at the thought of going to work or being at work? Well, almost all of us have at some point in time. It is estimated that close to 15% of the world's working population experiences a mental health disorder at any given time (WHO). There could be various reasons, and I would like to broadly classify them into three main reasons:

● Negative work environment (long work hours, workload, organizational or job changes, deadlines, lack of resources, lack of opportunities, burnout, lack of inclusiveness, etc.)

● Relationship with colleagues or superiors (harassment, discrimination, inequality, competition, bullying, over-supervision, lack of autonomy, etc.)

● Personal (insecurities, social issues, lack of skills, etc.). Studies have shown an increase in mental health issues in recent years. Many mental health issues originate at a personal or social level, but the work or the workplace might amplify them further.

It is a well-known fact that poor mental health impacts the performance and productivity of the workforce. The person's engagement with his work is impacted due to poor mental health.

Communication with colleagues, co-workers, juniors and superiors is affected. It largely affects the daily functioning and the physical capability of the individual. Mental health issues do not discriminate. It is seen that mental health is an issue amongst all levels of employees, amongst all genders and age groups at the workplace. Negative work environments are linked with a greater risk of developing anxiety, depression and work-related stress. Poor mental health threatens physical health and can precipitate various illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, etc. It is thus important to address mental health at the workplace for a very basic reason. Positive mental health leads to a more agile workforce, and an agile and productive workforce helps the organization and the nation to grow.

So, what are the remedies for positive mental health at work? The primary step is to acknowledge the problem and start seeing the impact of negative mental health on the workforce and the organization. It is important to chalk out a clear plan at two levels: the organizational level and the individual level. The foremost design is to work around creating a positive work environment. It means to reshape the physical, social and economic characteristics of the workplace. It is imperative for organizations to also acknowledge the importance of work-life balance. Human resource policies that reflect the willingness to provide a positive work environment and mental health support are crucial. These need to be implemented in letter and spirit.

Creating awareness around mental health is next, and it will help to break barriers and to a greater degree, address the stigma around mental health. There have to be training and workforce development programs that not only focus on developing skills but also help develop positive relationships and team building amongst the team members. Measures to identify individuals facing difficulties need to be in place. The next and most

important step is a mental health support system. Peer-led primary intervention to professional help-all need to be part of the support system that needs to be provided to any individual who needs it. In all of this, the foremost consideration is confidentiality around the whole process.

At the individual level, it has more to do with developing the skills of the individual experiencing mental health issues. Skills to manage stress, control anxiety, interpersonal skills, communication skills, etc. need to be imparted. Various tested techniques and tools can be employed, such as yoga, guided meditation, music or aromatherapy, laughter therapy, etc. to help the individual cope with negative mental health issues. It is also vital to educate and promote lifestyle changes to such individuals, such as diet, nutrition, exercise and most importantly good sleep. The 'me-time' concept is

also much needed to strike a balance in our lives. One must pursue hobbies that will not only help divert the mind from problems but also make the person happy. The causes of negative mental health beyond the workplace also need to be addressed, and the individual must be motivated to resolve and mitigate them.

Mental health and our approach towards addressing mental health have changed over the years. We have come a long way from the era of taboo and stigma to the age of realization, acceptance and providing support. But there is still a lot to be done. As rightly said by Glenn Close, "What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candour, more unashamed conversation". Let us promote positive mental health at work and create a difference.