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Cover Feature

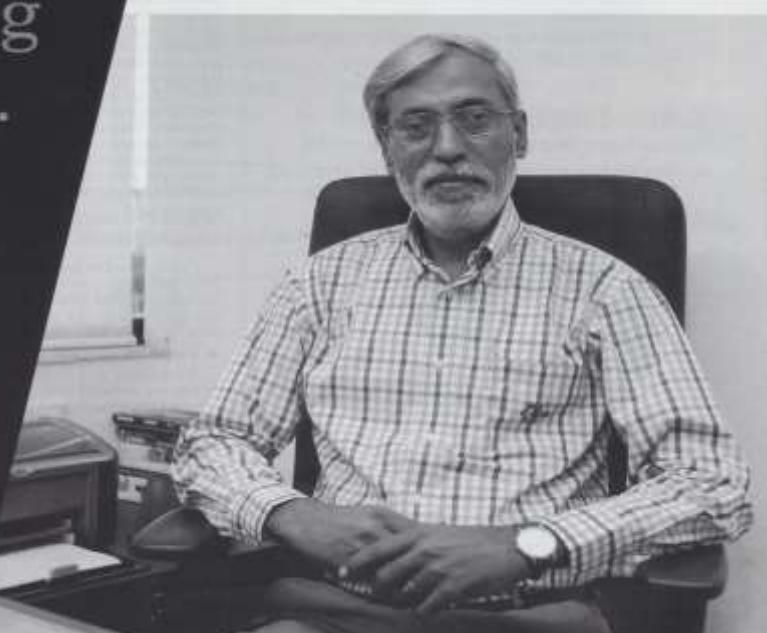
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Human being would still remain a driving force...

The article divulges into the different facets and facts of workplace of next decade, and the author shares some interesting facts for the readers to ponder about. Let's explore.....

To anticipate the future is an onerous task, especially when we know from our knowledge that civilizational progress has not always moved in a linear direction or on predictable lines. The rise and fall of various empires, cultures and civilizations in different eras are the proof of that.

Until not long ago, the generation gap was considered to be 20 years, now it has come down to 5 years. While talking about the generational changes, if we look at the pace of advancement, even 5 years ago would look like an ancient era.



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The line between the driver and the driven is becoming thinner and thinner all the time. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to say whether we are the driving force behind the technology or we are being driven by it. Yet, hope springs eternal in our hearts and one thing I can safely say that nothing would alter the primacy of horsecaptains. At least, I hope so.

While talking about the workplace 2020, we can't take workplace 2020 in isolation. It has to be seen within the context of world 2020 or/and India 2020. The workplace is a subset of the society, the country and the world that we live in.

Virtual workplace 2020

When we talk about workplace 2020, there may not even be a physical workplace in 2020. The virtual workplace may become the reality. We can see around us and try to visualize some of the saplings growing into tall trees down the line. Virtual workplace is really one of them. People will work from their homes. Instead of board room meetings, there will be tele-conferencing. There will be tele or web based sales. Routine manufacturing activities in the plants will be taken over by the Robots. All transportation, vehicular movements, communications will be driven and controlled by satellites. Distant learning would become the norm rather than being the exception. Some of these things are figments of imagination as all of them are happening today, though in different degrees. They will become widespread.

As already seen, knowledge, unlike earlier years, cannot reside in one's domain for long. Today, a new practice, a new idea practiced and generated in any corner of the earth would get copied/relicated in another corner in a very short time. In that sense, physical boundaries will shrink, but the ideas generation and dissemination would be epidemic. This is an irreversible historic progression.

Are we ready?

We better be and I think we are. India is a rapidly growing economy and is likely to be among top 3 economies of the world in 2020. We have the biggest number of growing middle class. We are there with the best in IT & communications technology. Many of our companies are competing with the best in the world and not found wanting in any sphere. Above all, our main strength, the youngsters of today don't carry any baggage of the earlier generation. They are a confident lot. By saying baggage of the earlier generation, I don't mean to deride the earlier generation. By baggage, I meant the legacy of centuries of enslavement and the burden of building the new born nation. And they have done a grand job. They have built the foundations on which today's young generation is building the grand edifice.

HR challenges

Let me now come to the challenges which HR is likely to face in 2020. Like I said earlier, despite all the technological advances, change in practices and so on, human beings would still remain the driving force. Though the skill-sets required in 2020 would be vastly different than they are now. And it would not be any different for HR personnel. They will have to be more technology savvy, more attuned to the changes and more in sync with the changing business needs. They will have to deal with the multi-cultural, multi-national workforce. HR policies and the frameworks will have to undergo changes to suit the demands of that era. Despite all these, the basic people management skills would not change - people will need to be listened to, their grievances will have to be attended, their aspirations will have to be channeled and things like that.

To conclude

I just have an apprehension and I hope it is proved wrong. And this apprehension comes from looking at the societal values around us. And as the workplace is the microcosm of the society that we live in, I have a growing feeling that certain traits and human elements which exist today would be found missing down the road. Today there is that human touch. We know our colleagues, our vendors, our customers and almost all the stakeholders. We call the group of all employees as "members of a family". We are as attached to our work place and its members, as we are to our family and its members. We are sensitive to the likes and dislikes, preferences and otherwise of our colleagues, superiors and subordinates. Workplaces are ranked not only on the basis of how well they financially compensate the employee, but also on the basis of the work atmosphere, work culture and job satisfaction they provide. I doubt whether these human elements, these sensitivities and the corresponding feeling of belongingness and ownership will exist in 2020. I want to be proven wrong on this, otherwise to me, the winning organizations would be those who are able to balance this and manage to value and sustain these sensitivities without losing out on the technological advancements.

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