

Impact of paradigm shift on employee engagement due to pandemic.

Chinnu Thomas

Mar Ivanios College (Autonomous), Nalanchira, Thiruvananthapuram

Dr. Ratheesh R

Mar Ivanios College (Autonomous), Nalanchira, Thiruvananthapuram

I. Abstract

This pandemic situation has brought in new set of challenges in many sectors of the economy. While people are adapting to new normal, organisations are trying hard to maintain uninterrupted flow of work. Since work is done remotely away from standard, employee engagement has become one of the prominent priorities of Human resource management department. Organizations are continuously trying to develop new effective techniques to maintain the same level of employee engagement as before or much higher. This research paper makes a descriptive study on the impact of current pandemic on employee engagement and brings forward the measures adopted by different organisation to maintain same level of employee engagement.

Major question is how employee engagement can be practiced when employees are working remotely, especially when they are apprehensive about other priorities of life. Effective innovative measures will keep employees motivated even in the toughest times like this. Working from home with proper support from organisation will lead to a positive shift. Giving away the usual antecedents and quick adaption to new changes is important for survival of every organisations.

Key Words: Employee engagement, Pandemic situation, Remote working

II. INTRODUCTION

Even before pandemic employee engagement was considered a vital essential fundamental tool for human resource management. Employee engagement is defined in different ways across the organizations. Engagement is the extent of employees' commitment, work effort and desire to stay in an organization.(Vance, 2021)

Employee engagement is a summative concept which includes employee empowerment, recognition, wellness, rewards, workplace culture, career growth, social relations and workforce data. Employee engagement creates sense for commitment and dedication towards his or her job. It increases employee retention and improves productivity and efficiency. It is also considered as an important factor



for work life balance. Engaged employees support the organization to accomplish its mission, vision, execute its strategy and generate substantial business results.

Google LLC is one of the notable example for employee engagement. Their workplaces barely resemble traditional working place, it is full of individuality as they have added elements that aid work, relaxation, exercise, reading and even watching movies. Employees are free to take 20% of their time for creative program to pursue their learning interests or out-of-curriculum projects. Google has a culture of praise and recognition; employees are free to express their ideas and opinions and company accommodates failure as an effective part of innovation.

COVID-19 pandemic has steered a dramatic change in human routine, lifestyle, economies and even in workplaces. It unleashed a new era of change for mankind and business as well. The traditional pragmatism prior to the pandemic was that offices were essential for better communication, productivity, culture, and for attracting employees. There was intensive competition between companies for prime office space in urban centers. But this pandemic situation has redesigned this traditional conviction to remote working or work from home option. They had to acclimatize with technology as businesses had to allow remote working, as it was the only possible solution to survive under this crisis. Organizations' are looking out for innovative options in order to adapt to this new paradigm. This paper will help to evaluate the impact of paradigm shift on employee engagement due to pandemic breakout and describe effective measures adopted by organizations to overcome the situation.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sun, L., & Bunchapattanasakda, C. (2019). *Employee Engagement: A Literature Review*. Employee Engagement: A Literature Review. This paper discusses different perspective of employee engagement by different organizations' and how organization consider it as a vital essential element in Human Resource Management. As per study it creates a positive state of mind, increased self-esteem and more commitment.

Robison, J. (2009). *Building Engagement in This Economic Crisis*. Amid turbulent times keeping employees focused is important. Employees must know that organizations 'care about them and should always encourage their development. In this paper he discusses about the importance of recognition and development.

S, N., & Thomas, P. M. (2018). *The Impact of Employee Engagement on Employee Loyalty*. This paper emphasis that employee engagement leads productivity in workplace as a result, it increases sales and profit in organizations'. An engaged employee is attentive about his work and about performance of the company. This unification between employee and employer is important for the success of any business.



Fallon (2020). *Managing from home. Here's how to keep your team engaged during coronavirus*. This study elaborates the team engagement during coronavirus pandemic. Article explains different innovative ways by which employees can be engaged. This study focuses increased use of information technology for employee engagement.

IV. OBJECTIVES

1. To study the impact of pandemic situation on employee engagement.
2. To analyze various innovative techniques adapted by organizations.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study entitled “Impact of paradigm shift on employee engagement due to pandemic” is descriptive in nature. Secondary data is used for the study. Data relating to the study are collected from various published and unpublished sources.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

Any sudden shift in standard design of work will have an impact, but adaptive ability of humans helps to colonize changes. Even though the sudden confinement created sense of anxiety, they soon get adapted to the changed system for the common good. According to study conducted by McKinsey & Company among Americans, indicated that 80% of people enjoy working from home and 41% feel more productive than before. Long travels, pressure to complete work within shift time and disparity in work life balance were few reasons which impacted employee’s productivity. Since all these factors are now eliminated, employees found more productive ways to spend time with greater flexibility which resulted in increased productivity.

Below are few innovative transformations adopted by organisations to encourage maximum employee engagement even in midst of pandemic:

- **Rethinking the traditional workplace** - Technology will play a central role in connecting remote employees. Use of virtual tools such as Google meet, MS Teams, WebEx, Skype has helped in maintaining employee engagement online. Reports suggest that there has been a sharp increase in employee’s collaboration not just within, but cross teams as well. Major mindset shifts in adoption of virtual collaboration tool has fastened decision making and effectiveness of leadership due to decreased hierarchical boundaries. Not only formal prerequisite but also informal requirements such as venting frustration, sharing a hobby or motivating and supporting each other to uphold a healthy lifestyle is possible. The main aim of this shift is to keep the flow of communication constant, so that everyone feel more connected and less lonely.
- **Hybrid working model**- It refers to work pattern that gives autonomy to employees to choose between working remotely and working in office. Some people would like to go to office due to non-availability of resources to conduct business efficiently, lack of privacy or in order to connect with other people, but still want to feel safe and healthy. This flexibility to choose in accordance with their needs promotes work life



balance.

- **Screen time off-** Unlike proper office time, work from home may turn out to be 24x7 work. Earlier employees had the opportunity to take a break from screen and detach from digital realm by in between commutes, watercooler breaks, coffee breaks. But now those natural respites have been eliminated by no to little break, as person must hold himself rigid for hours to stay inside camera's range. This adds more fatigue, mental and emotional
- **exhaustion than before.** To reduce the stress, employees can work with managers to decide on everyday screen time off.
- **Encourage employees to track their screen time off**, so that they get enough break time thus decreasing the work pressure.

- **Encourage virtual growth and development** - As on the job training or vestibule training is not possible, management has decided upon providing online courses and training to keep the employees motivated towards their development. Organisations are providing free access to different online course portal such as Udemy, Goskills, Designlab. Employees have the freedom to choose between variety of courses in their own convenient time slots.

- **Employee assistance program-** Mental stress, anxiety about future, depression, loneliness are few among the problems faced by employees during pandemic situation. Organisations are finding out different innovative assistance programme to keep employee motivated and guide them through this shift. Online personalised counselling such as Talk to Doctor creates platform to discuss their issues, problems and seek proper assistance. Virtual wellness programs are encouraged by organizations', to keep them aware about its importance and to make them physically active. This can be achieved by setting workout milestone which when achieved are awarded with redeem points. These redeem points can be used by the employees for their purchases. According to studies physically active employee contribute more and are mostly engaged. These programs help employees to cope with sudden changes to working lifestyle by providing counselling, legal assistance, financial consultation and crisis intervention.

- **Virtual recognition ceremony-** One of the main impactful factor of employee motivation is public recognition. Employees expect recognition for their hard work and dedication but recognizing employees publicly has become more difficult. One idea is to conduct group video call and highlight their success in social feed. Another innovative way is writing them a LinkedIn recommendation, that is anyone who views their profile can read these recommendations. It projects publicly, professional endorsement of their skill and dedication.



- **Virtual recreation club-** Sometimes great ideas come from casual discussions, but due to social isolation employees doesn't have a platform for brainstorming and to discuss ideas. Taking into consideration the situation organizations are encouraging employees to create virtual club, where employees with common interest meet once a week to discuss and share their views. This helps employees to eliminate feeling of social isolation and to keep them motivated.

VII. Future work strategy model designed by deloitte :

For accelerating future of work, a structured Future work readiness assessment is necessary to enable organizations to prioritize investments in physical and digital strategies, as well as adopting new workforce models and hybrid workplace models. Any future work strategy should incorporate the following elements:

VIII. CONCLUSION

The usual methodology of doing things has been changed. People have already accepted it as the new normal. Even after vaccination employees would prefer to work from home and physical meeting will only be a matter of necessity. Organizations' perspective of doing business would change, more importance would be given to IT and hybrid working pattern. This will benefit organizations by reducing cost on physical asset. This unpredicted situation has brought a positive shift in minds of people, they have become more receptive and are willing to go beyond standard norms.

To reap the benefits of this positive shift, HR department must confront the challenge of maintaining employee engagement virtually. Employee engagement is very essential for all the organizations during this COVID-19 pandemic situation. In lockdown situation, employee engagement practices keep them motivated, dedicated, satisfied, and contented in this tough time.

IX. REFERENCE

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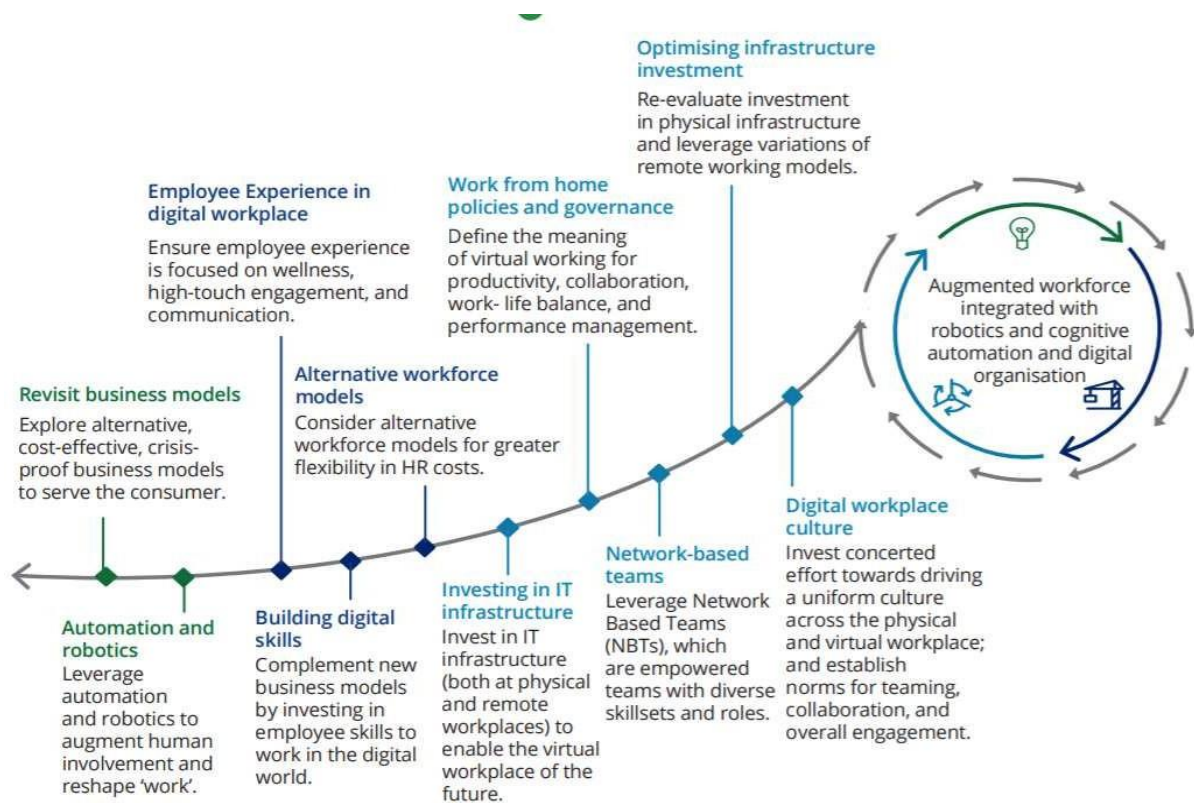


Figure 1

Source: Secondary Data