

Conclusions Paper

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**TECHNOLOGY: TRANSFORMING
HR PRACTICES**

*In conversation with Deep Thomas, Chief Data and
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TECHNOLOGY: TRANSFORMING HR PRACTICES

Historically, human resources lagged other functions in technology adoption, but today HR plays a preeminent role in this area. Nevertheless, in the race to automate, it is prudent not to lose the ‘human factor’. At a recent India CHRO Forum webinar, Deep Thomas, Chief Data and Analytics Officer of the Aditya Birla Group, shared his experience in the adoption of technology in HR and on the dos and don’ts of managing this process successfully.

Today’s fiction is tomorrow’s reality

DIGITAL AND AI IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE

It is paramount for organisations to demonstrate speed and accuracy in responding to customers and to fast-evolving market dynamics. Also critical, in a 24/7/365 digital culture, is to be able to automate processes, allowing for cost efficiencies whilst maintaining a superlative consumer experience. Digitalisation makes all of this possible – and some technology evangelists believe that it is only a matter of time before AI can match, if not exceed human levels of personalisation, agility and responsiveness.

Multifaceted advantages of automation in HR

APPLICATIONS OF AI IN WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

There are innumerable ways to utilise digital analytics, AI and other emerging technologies in workforce management. Automating the **recruitment and on-boarding** process – such as through chatbots and remote support applications – has made HR support accessible to new hires. Blockchain is being used to build e-Lockers that safely store employee and company documents and streamline on-boarding. In terms of **internal mobility**, AI enables companies to evaluate key indicators of employee success and to run more effective demand-supply matches, which is particularly important for large organisations. It is also much easier than ever to analyse employee behaviour and enhance **productivity**, thanks to the abundance of IoT devices such as sensors and wearables (helmets, wristbands etc); deep learning models; voice and image recognition; and natural language processing (NLP). Mundane **administrative activities** – pre-screening candidates, scheduling interviews – are also being automated, cutting turnaround time and reducing the number of man-hours required. Aside from developing these innovations in-house, corporates have the option of partnering with various organisations with expertise in specific use-cases.

Outsourcing HR innovation

AI IN RECRUITMENT

There are numerous examples of how AI is today being used to simplify the recruitment process and make it more efficient:

Redefining candidate screening...

...analysing conversations...

...digital background checks...

- Physical interview robots and cobots are being deployed for large-scale hiring. This is helpful for large candidate databases – something that is usually quite taxing on HR personnel.
- Conversation analytics can analyse interviews, capturing highlights and extracting certain topics from interviews.
- AI-powered background checks can efficiently scan through multiple social media profiles to understand a candidate’s

*...automated
reference checks...*

- educational and employment background and match their digital persona with the role and values of the organisation.
- OCR (Optical character recognition) and NLP enable automated reference checks that can help HR identify the key aspects covered in a reference document.

*...recruiting internally
from talent
marketplaces...*

- AI-driven talent marketplaces use advanced computation to allow managers to post opportunities for open positions and then match relevant positions to employees across functions.

*...analysing
compensation
trends...*

- Algorithms can help determine compensation for a new employee by factoring in the current distribution of compensation within the organisation, as well as the specific profiles of each employee, including the new joinee.

*Restructuring
business roles and
functions*

REDEFINING ORGANISATION ROLES

By augmenting intelligence, companies can match the personality profiles of entrepreneurs or leaders across diverse industries and identify new CXO candidates for an organisation. Algorithms allow managers to analyse the skills and limitations of their employees. Chatbots and personal assistants like Siri, Cortana and Alexa can improve efficiency and reduce manual processes that would earlier require multiple interactions between HR and individual employees. Machine learning can help foster a culture of diversity and inclusiveness, such as by enabling unbiased interview processes that eliminate possible blind-spots and human prejudices.

*Balancing business
goals with employee
needs*

WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT OPTIMISATION IN CALL CENTRES

Workforce optimisation technologies allow BPOs to train their workforce to better meet customer needs. By monitoring customer histories and employee preferences, it is possible to assign the best-suited agent for a particular account-type. In place of 'one-size-fits-all' policies, especially in organisations with a multi-generation workforce, intelligent ML-based policies better balance various profiles. AI can also bring greater fairness in call-centre operations, such as by monitoring assignment history, fairness credits, volunteerism, work rules and business needs.

*Innovative platforms
from Aditya Birla for
a Covid-proof
workspace*

BRAVING THE PANDEMIC WITH AI TOOLS

To facilitate a safe return to office while optimising productivity, the Aditya Birla Group has built two AI platforms, Veda and ABG Care. **VEDA** (Video Enabled Decisions and Alerts) is an AI-based video surveillance framework with state-of-the-art computer-vision algorithms. Scalable and easily deployable, it can process multiple video feeds in parallel, applying advanced video analytics in real-time. It is also configurable around specific business logic and can raise real time alerts, notifications and reports. **ABG Care** is an in-house mobile application that calculates an employee's real-time return-to-work score via machine learning. With the help of its Return-2-Work Index Calculator, the app assesses an employee's feasibility to operate in office premises based on employee data, self-declaration inputs and geo status from open sources.

NAVIGATING THE GREY AREAS IN AUTOMATION

Do we compete with or leverage AI?

While navigating the road to automation, companies might employ a '**3-I framework**': measuring the **Impact** of automation (in terms of revenue enhancement and cost reduction); **Institutionalising** existing domain knowledge; and prioritising **Innovation**, which improves valuations, differentiation and customer recall. However, *innovating for innovation's sake* can have negative implications.

Mentoring facilitation

- Next Play's mentoring app, **Ellen**, facilitates partnership creation and offers resources and reminders post mentor-mentee pairing. Although such apps are quite efficient in promoting a mentorship culture, replacing human connection entirely with technology can be counterproductive.

Diversity and Inclusion promotion

- **Textio** is an AI-powered gender-neutral writing coach that analyses gender-biased writing and suggests alternative wording for the same. In time, such apps can help narrow diversity gaps within an organisation. On the flip side, **Amazon's** recruitment algorithm actually *increased* bias: since it was based on past data, it deselected female candidates for IT positions because the majority of its *current* workers are male.

Candidate screening

- Technology has redefined candidate screening, but *completely* automating the hiring process risks missing out on certain attributes of the individual, which only get expressed in the course of human interaction. Further, this type of automation is more cost-effective in larger companies than in MSMEs, which have much lower employee counts.

Video interview analytics

- Intelligent recruitment platforms like **HireVue** help recruiters analyse a candidate's non-verbal cues, such as facial expression, eye and body movement, clothing details and voice modulation. However, it would be advisable to use such apps to *aid* decisions rather than to *substitute* for them.

THE WAY FORWARD

AI and the evolving role of HR

From analysing applicant qualifications to administering benefit programmes, AI is re-engineering the HR function. This allows HR managers greater bandwidth to focus on productive and revenue-generating activities. For their part, HR managers must embrace a culture of innovation and automation while honing their own skills and staying abreast of cross-industry HR trends. Ultimately, it is HR that must shoulder the burden of up-skilling and preparing the workforce for the fourth Industrial Revolution.

The contents of this paper are based on discussions of The India CHRO Forums with Deep Thomas, Chief Data and Analytics Officer of the Aditya Birla Group, in November 2020. The views expressed may not be those of IMA India. Please visit www.ima-india.com to view current papers and our full archive of content, including an edited video of this session, in the IMA members' Knowledge Centre, accessible via the Login link on top of the page. A podcast version of this paper is also available here. IMA Forum members have personalised website access codes.

The New Labour Code and its Implications

IMA's workshop on the new Labour Code

Session 1: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Break 11:30 am – 12:00 pm

Session 2: 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

To register, click on: <https://bit.ly/36rFSjX>



Rashmi Pradeep , Partner,
Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas



Abe Abraham, Partner, Cyril
Amarchand Mangaldas

To suitably cover the vast scope of the subject, we are hosting this as a half-day event, spread over two sessions with a break in between. The first will unearth the nuances of the codes on 'Wages' and 'Industrials Relations' while the second will demystify the codes on 'Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions' and 'Social Security'.