

“Human dexterity will be the most valuable asset” – Interview with Hari Abburi

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Leadership, culture and workforce models are among the biggest changes emerging in the future of business – outlines Hari Abburi. A global HR professional and consulting partner of Switzerland-based consultancy firm [The Preparation Company](#) will be one of the keynote speakers of HR Fest in October in Budapest.

Who or what will be the most valuable asset in the future world of work?

Brilliant purpose + human dexterity. In the future of work scenario that will experience exponential change with automation, artificial intelligence and robotics, human dexterity will be the most valuable asset. It is a well-founded belief that humans augmented by AI will generate exponential value. This means either humans or technology by themselves will be not be able to generate holistic value. I do believe that an augmented human being will unleash more unparalleled thinking. The way we can realize this opportunity is through human dexterity.

Where is the real change driven from in today's highly competitive world?

The real change in today's world is driven by ideas that are not singular or linear in nature. The future belongs to companies that are masters of three intersections: between multiple industries, intersection between knowledge domains or applications and intersection between elements of future of work (AI, Robotics, Gig Talent). The new breakthroughs in healthcare, consumer products, cars, utilities etc. are an outcome of a strategy mix of industries, knowledge domains or employment models. A good and well-known example of this is Amazon. This was best tweet articulated by Jeff Weiner, "Only one company on earth can buy grocery chain, be rumored to buy enterprise Software Company & in both cases be lauded for strategic vision".

What is the impact on organizations as an outcome of these changes?

I see three big changes emerging in the future of business context.

One, *Leadership*: The leaders of the future need to be able to shape strategy and culture at the intersections of industries and knowledge domains. In recent PWC Study, 56% of the CEOs surveyed expected their business to be disrupted by a player from outside their industry. If we were to take a sample of companies, we most likely will see their definitions of leadership potential, succession criteria or leadership development approaches etc. still not reflecting the future of business thinking. I would strongly argue that the future is here. If leaders cannot change fast enough, they will not be able to drive their companies to be ahead of the change curve.

Two, *Culture*: with the adoption of new technologies, platforms and intelligences, the way we work will be dramatically different. At a very basic level, the speed of accessing knowledge will change for the better. This will in turn collapse hierarchies and traditional knowledge based power centers in organizations. Importantly, customers get much closer to companies as their access to products or services becomes real time and less cluttered by organization levels. Speed, transparency, analytics mindset, simplicity, design thinking will become integral elements of culture.

Three, *Workforce*: The conventional methods of working as we know today are changing fast. Imagine having AI driven assistants for every job. This will make human contribution significantly more meaningful and yet at the same time makes an organization flatter to a customer. This will impact how we design people strategies, practices, processes or policies. An example; companies are feeling the need to overhaul strategic workforce planning. They are now designing this to be integral to business planning and not as a HR owned process. Next the methodology is being designed to mix human full time jobs, AI driven bots or technology-augmented jobs, robotics and gig workforce. While there will be redundancy of jobs as we understand today, there will be new jobs yet fully not known that will emerge. This needs urgent policy attention by Governments to mitigate the large-scale unemployment impact. One such policy area being discussed and being piloted in Finland and in the State of Hawaii is Universal Basic Income. The other opportunity is to migrate displaced

labour into gig workforce through micro financing etc, and for companies to integrate them as an integral part of workforce strategy.

At HR Fest Budapest you are speaking about radical change case studies driven by design thinking in HR. Can you give some insights into your experiences?

Firstly, the best part about my speaking at HR-Fest. The audience will be put in my shoes to experience the business context of a company and will be presented with a choice of decisions to be taken at every stage of anchoring radical change. They will be presented the actual decision made, how it was implemented and the results. This case showcases how simplicity and design thinking for HR can drive radical change in companies.

In my experience in both industry and consulting, the key issue I see is that leaders lack imagination more than resources. This is true of HR professionals or Functions too. What if I was to say that about 30% of people practices that HR functions feel important to business are redundant even in today's context?

I see three characteristics of HR leaders and Functions that have mastered 'Max Q' capability: One, ruthless simplicity and design Thinking: They design practices, interfaces, policies or processes that really overturn known assumptions. Two, they are great at 'insights based story telling'. They drive a compelling point of view that creates empathy for change. Three, they place a premium on 'the last mile'. They are detail oriented execution zealots. They are willing to redesign everything all over again if the last mile experience is not what they wanted in first place.

Hari Abburi will be one of the keynote speakers at HR Fest 2017 taking place on October 26 in Budapest.

Keresés

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