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Developing Skills in a Hybrid Workplace



Succeeding When Your Office Is Virtual and In-Person

Where are you working from right now? If you are in the office full time, you may still be in the minority. Many workplaces, if they are having people come back in, are allowing hybrid schedules—at least one day in the office, but more likely three, with two at home.

While most employees are very happy with hybrid work, this is not true of managers. An August 2022 analysis by Gallup's Jim Clifton and Chad Holliday found that managers were "more miserable at work than their employees" because they were never taught how to manage a much less attached worker. In our cover article, we share research from MCE, which reveals the key skills needed to help managers and their teams succeed in a changing work environment. Whether employees work remotely or not, now is the time for managers to assess employees' skill needs to ensure they have the tools and resources to perform their best.

Also in this issue, Mitchell Levy explains how leaders can avoid decision fatigue. The key is empowering employees in such a way that they don't only manage, they "own"—taking responsibility for the processes they are leading and ensuring that they and their projects are successful.

Tulika Mehrotra Chopra looks at the reasons diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are faltering at many companies and what must happen to make meaningful, long-term changes.

Debra Corey identifies the eight ways employees express "superpowers" when they are given appropriate recognition by leaders.

Whatever challenges you face, MCE can help build the skills needed to manage the hybrid office of the present and to develop the superpowers leaders need to move into the future.

Christiane Truelove
Guest Editor, *MCE QUARTERLY*

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How Managers Can Succeed in a Hybrid Workplace

Today, nearly two-thirds of all managers oversee a hybrid team. Inevitably, that creates new, sometimes unexpected challenges. But most management training isn't specifically geared to engage remote workers—so we felt it was important to learn what skills managers need to successfully meet the rise in hybrid and remote work.

AMA conducted a nationwide survey on the subject, and the results are summarized in our cover article of this issue, "AMA Research: Developing Skills in a Hybrid Workplace." Among other findings, 62% of managers felt they had to adapt their management style based on the location of their direct reports.

Also, 66% indicated that key management skills, such as conflict resolution, critical thinking, and collaboration, were more important to them than ever when working with remote or hybrid employees—along with communication, resilience, and other related skills.

While flexibility has increased, there's a greater need for specific skills to support the new ways in which we work. Established concepts must evolve to ensure continued success. To make that a reality, managers—first and foremost—need to develop and strengthen these skills so they can better lead their teams across all work environments.

At AMA, we help our organizations identify and prioritize the skills they need so they not only can support and engage employees, but also can improve retention, commitment, and performance and ensure a thriving workplace that is ready and able to achieve the organization's goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Manny Avramidis".

Manny Avramidis
President and CEO
American Management Association



Developing Skills in a Hybrid Workplace

BY CHRISTIANE TRUELOVE

The American Management Association & the Management Centre Europe recently completed research with hundreds of managers that has revealed the key skills needed to help them and their teams succeed in a changing work environment.

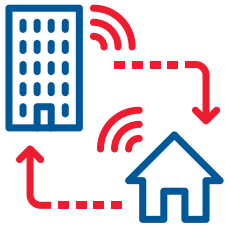
CCOVID-19 no longer dominates the headlines, people have returned to live events, and everyone is back in the office. The first two statements are true, but the third is not. According to a March 2022 Gallup Inc. poll, "The Future of Hybrid Work: 5 Key Questions Answered with Data," before the pandemic, only 8% of employees with remote-capable jobs worked from home exclusively. That number jumped to 70% by May 2020. By 2022, most of these remote-capable employees were still working from home,

at least part of the time, with 42% working a hybrid schedule and 39% working fully remotely.

Don't expect a huge decrease in those numbers anytime soon. AMA/MCE says employers are calling for workers to show up in person at least a few days a week, with six in 10 employees with remote-capable jobs wanting a hybrid work arrangement, according to a Gallup poll in February 2023. For managers, this hybrid arrangement has created new challenges. In fact, while most employees

are very happy with hybrid work, this is not true of managers. An August 2022 analysis by Gallup's Jim Clifton and Chad Holliday of another company study found that managers were "more miserable at work than their employees" because they were never taught how to manage a much less attached worker.

"It's not enough to only provide a regular schedule of mandatory compliance training and industry-specific skills," AMA/MCE experts say.



23% of the people AMA/MCE polled work remotely & 39% are hybrid, working in the office and remotely.

"Managers and individual employees also need adaptable, technology-focused, resilience-building, and key people skills that help them succeed in their changing work environments and with new responsibilities. For managers especially, they need skills to support their teams across all work environments."

To determine how resilience, conflict resolution, collaboration, critical thinking, and other skills play a role in positive, modern workplace outcomes, AMA/MCE asked a nationwide audience of managers about the skills they believe they and their employees need to move forward successfully in a remote or hybrid work situation.

Personal needs of leaders

Breaking down the numbers, AMA/MCE found that 23% of the people polled work remotely and 39% are hybrid, working in the office and remotely. Most important, of the 62% of respondents who are responsible for direct reports, more than half of the managers polled stated that they had to manage their direct reports differently, depending on whether they work remotely or in person. Sixty-six percent believe that there are skills which are more critical for remote employees than for those who are in the office, and 50% believe that the skills required to do their jobs successfully have changed since before the pandemic.

What exactly are those skills that managers say they need more of since the pandemic? Among them are communication, with 67% stating that the requirement has grown. Others are virtual presentation, at 66%; adaptability and resilience, at 65%; technology, also at 65%; motivation, at

52%; and emotional intelligence, with 51% agreeing the need has become larger.

"Communication can be more difficult virtually because you can't see the nonverbal elements and adjust as needed," AMA/MCE experts say. "New communication skills will teach employees how to build connections that foster trust and rapport and better engage with audiences in person and across any digital divide."

AMA/MCE experts state that virtual presentations can elicit jarring challenges, even for the most seasoned speakers, adding, "New presentation skills can help employees take command with style and professionalism regardless of glitchy internet connections."

And the need for technology skills "makes sense," AMA/MCE experts say, as technology "is the gateway to a successful remote work experience, not to mention the fact that it's always evolving."

Some managers say the relevancy of certain other skills for themselves has not changed since before COVID. They remain important now and do not need to be increased. These essential skills are performance review, with 75% saying it



70% of managers stressed that communication is an expanded need for their teams, and 68% identified adaptability and resilience.

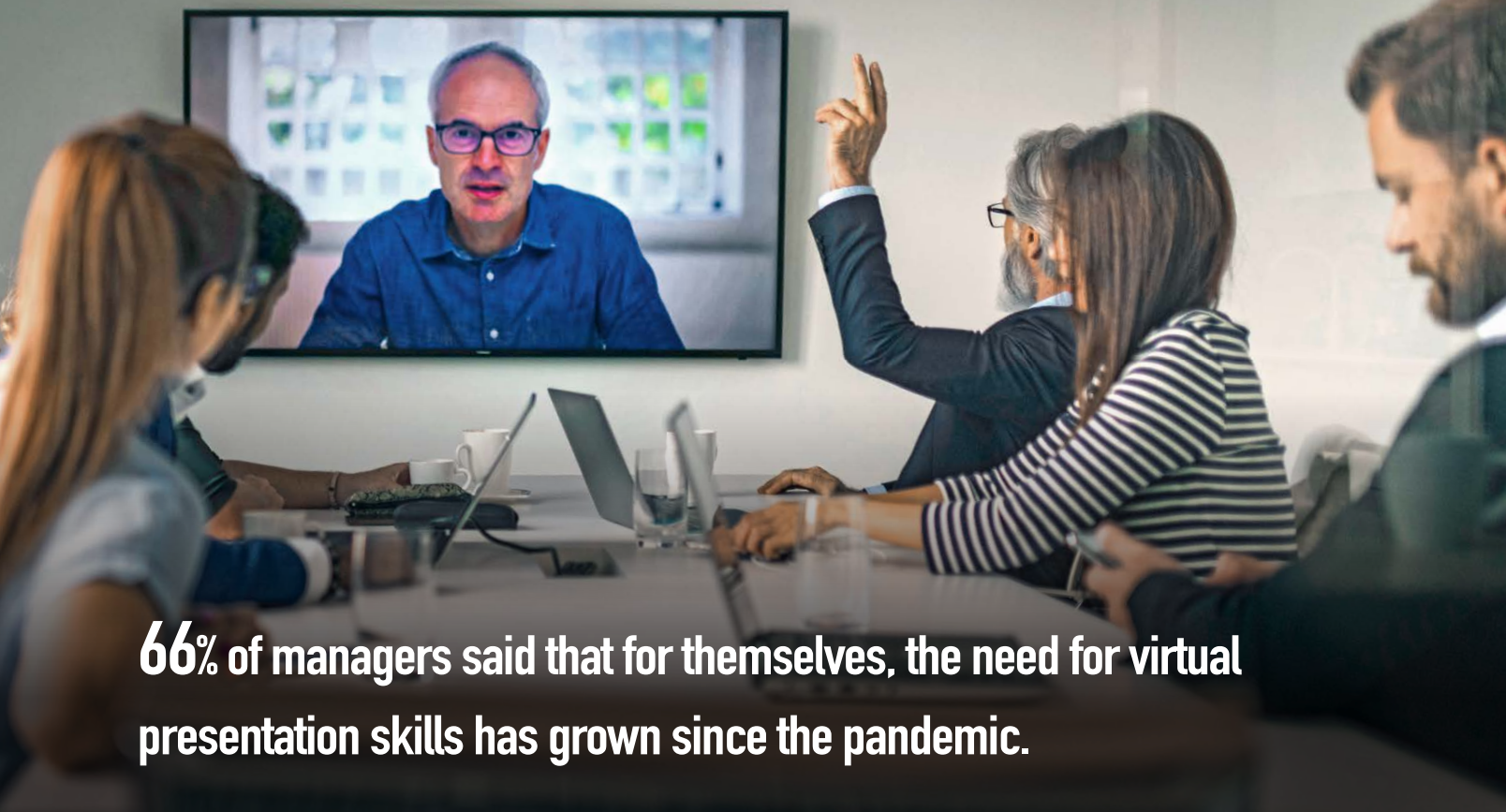
does not need to be expanded; analytical skills at 68%; project management at 66%; conflict resolution at 62%; critical thinking and decision making at 61%; strategic planning at 57%; diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging at 56%; and networking at 53%.

What skills do teams need?

In looking at skills that are more important for their teams since the pandemic, 70% of managers stressed communication, and 68%, adaptability and resilience. Technology was seen as more important by 64% of managers, and 62% cited the increased importance of virtual presentation skills. Productivity/time management and collaboration were cited in this year's survey as important team skills by 61% and 60%, respectively. The importance of motivation increased to 61% of managers polled, and 53% said there was a growing need for emotional intelligence.

In looking at the relevancy of certain other skills for their teams, many managers said the need for these skills has not changed, and the numbers were similar to that of the relevancy of these skills for themselves. For performance review, 77% of managers thought the importance of this skill was the same as before the pandemic and there was no need to expand it. Analytical skills were at 65%; conflict resolution at 64%; strategic planning at 63%; critical thinking and decision making at 62%; project management at 61%; diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging at 60%; and networking at 53%.

AMA/MCE experts say that managers stating they and their teams need more of certain skills could be a balancing issue rather than an efficiency one.



66% of managers said that for themselves, the need for virtual presentation skills has grown since the pandemic.

"Perhaps respondents see their remote counterparts' inability to disconnect as work and home spaces intertwine," AMA/MCE says. "The rise in demand for time management skills could represent the need for teams to be able to shut down at the end of the workday, even if they aren't technically leaving the workspace."

AMA/MCE notes that adaptability and resilience skills rose slightly for team needs as well. "These skills certainly apply to an evolving workplace as turnover, new clients, changing business priorities, learning new technology, and other adjustments can happen regularly," these experts say. "However, a lack of resilience means one may not handle stress well, which could lead to harmful health consequences that impact life outside the office too. Coping with stress in positive ways

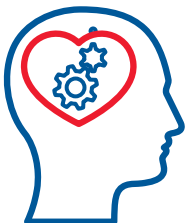
brings many health benefits in terms of longevity, lower depression, and greater satisfaction, according to a 2017 article from Harvard Health Publishing, "Ramp Up Your Resilience."

Another interesting takeaway from the team skills statistics, AMA/MCE states, is the increasing need for collaboration skills without the increasing need for networking skills. "If one has the ability to network remotely, don't they have the ability to collaborate all the same?" AMA/MCE experts say. "It seems these could go hand in hand, as similar hurdles exist for both skills in remote work environments. That said, if professionals are more satisfied in their remote/hybrid environments, they simply may not want to network."

Whether employees work remotely or not, now is the time for managers to assess employees' skill needs to ensure

they have the tools and resources to perform their best. "By prioritizing new skills, organizations can solidify their support for current employees and often improve retention," according to AMA/MCE. "Employers also can use this effort to tangibly demonstrate a commitment to flexible work environments in their recruiting process. This collective skill-building initiative can pay off in the long run with an engaged, thriving workforce that remains committed to the organization and ultimately delivers on its goals."

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51% of managers agreed there is a need for more emotional intelligence skills for themselves.

Avoid Decision Fatigue by **EMPOWERING EMPLOYEE LEADERS**

BY MITCHELL LEVY

The decisions you make as a leader can have a major impact on your company's success.



“By delegating decision-making authority, leaders can reduce their own emotional exhaustion and build a more resilient and effective team.”

Whichever leadership position you're in, you constantly make choices that shape your business. However, with so many decisions, it's easy to fall into the trap of decision fatigue, which is the tendency for the quality of decisions to deteriorate after a long decision-making period.

The impact of decision fatigue can be particularly severe for leaders, who often bear the brunt of the decision-making process. This is why it's so important to empower your employees to make decisions on their own. Doing so can reduce the impact of decision fatigue and increase the overall productivity and performance of your company.

LEADERSHIP IS EMOTIONALLY EXHAUSTING

Leadership is emotionally demanding and can be especially overwhelming for leaders, who often bear the responsibility of decision making and problem solving for their entire company. They face a constant stream of complex challenges and must remain calm, collected, and confident, even under intense stress and pressure. This can take a toll on their emotional well-being and make it difficult to maintain their energy and enthusiasm over the long term.

However, the solution to this problem is not to work harder or to bear the burden of leadership alone but to empower employees to be their own leaders. By delegating decision-making authority, providing support and resources, and creating a culture of trust and collaboration, leaders can reduce their own emotional exhaustion and build a more resilient and effective team.

Empowered employees not only benefit the leader but also help to develop a more capable and motivated workforce. Unlike traditional leadership, which tends to be more top-down and directive, empowering employees to be the best they can be enables them to contribute to the company's success.

THE BENEFITS OF EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE

Employees who are empowered to be leaders can have a profound impact on the success of any organization. An empowered team can drive the company forward and help it achieve its goals, while an unempowered team can hold it back and prevent it from reaching its full potential. One of the keys to organizational success is empowering leadership in employees, focusing on giving employees the resources, support, and freedom to make decisions and take ownership of their work.

There are several benefits to giving employees the ability and resources they need for independent decision making:

Increased job satisfaction for employees. When employees feel empowered to make decisions and take ownership of their work, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. They feel valued and respected, and they can contribute to the company's success in meaningful ways. This can increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover, saving the company time and resources in the long run.

Improved morale and motivation. Empowering leadership can improve morale and motivation among employees. When employees feel like they are making a difference and contributing to the company's success, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated. This can improve overall performance and drive the company forward.

Enhanced creativity and innovation. Empowered employees exhibit higher levels of creativity and innovation. When employees feel empowered to make decisions and take ownership of their work, they are more likely to be creative and develop new and innovative solutions to problems. This can lead to increased productivity, improved performance, and greater success for the company.

Increased productivity and performance. Empowered employees show increased productivity and performance. When employees believe they can independently make decisions, they are more likely to be productive and perform at their best. This can have a major impact on the success of the company and help it to achieve its goals.

Besides being more likely to be motivated, engaged, and productive, empowered employees can also help identify and address any issues or bottlenecks within the process, which can ultimately lead to more effective processes overall. They also know their responsibilities and become accountable for their actions, decisions, and outcomes.

Empowering employees helps to build trust and credibility with others in the organization, as they see that leaders are capable and willing to take action. When employees are empowered, they can demonstrate their competence and expertise, which can help to establish their credibility. Empowerment enables employees to take the initiative, be creative, and be more responsive to the changing needs of the organization and external environment. This can help to establish them as credible and effective leaders who can adapt and lead change.

Empowered employees take it upon themselves to hold themselves accountable for their actions. Thus, they are more likely to act with integrity and align their actions with the organization's values, which helps them to build credibility with the rest of the team—the stakeholders and other people around them.

EMPOWERED EMPLOYEES DON'T JUST "MANAGE," THEY "OWN"

Empowered employees take ownership of the processes they are leading. They understand that their role is to drive results, and they take responsibility for ensuring that they and their projects are successful. This ownership extends to every aspect of the process, from defining the goals and objectives to planning and executing the work, monitoring progress, and making necessary adjustments along the way.

Empowered employees view their role as one of stewardship, responsible for ensuring that the resources and people they work with are effectively and efficiently achieving their goals. They are proactive in identifying and addressing any challenges or obstacles that may arise, and they make decisions that drive the success of their projects and their team.

Empowered employees also understand that their role is to inspire and motivate their team to help them reach their full potential. They provide support, guidance, and encouragement to their fellow team members, and they help foster a culture of collaboration and open communication where everyone feels valued and respected.

In short, empowered employees *own* the process, taking full responsibility for driving results and ensuring the success of their projects. By doing so, they create a culture of success and accountability, where everyone is motivated and engaged and the business is able to achieve its goals.

WITHOUT EMPOWERMENT, THERE CAN BE NO LEADERS

It's a common misconception that leadership is defined solely by an individual's title or position within a company. However, true leadership is not determined by one's job description but by one's ability to influence and inspire others to achieve a shared goal. This means that for someone to be held accountable for their work, they must first be empowered to lead.

When employees are not empowered to lead, they are unable to make decisions, take ownership of their work, and influence others in a meaningful way. This can result in a lack of accountability and detachment from the company's goals. Employees may feel like they are just going through the motions rather than making a real impact.

On the other hand, when employees are empowered to lead, they can take ownership of their work, make decisions, and inspire others to work toward a common goal. This results in a sense of accountability and a deeper connection to the company's mission. The employee can take pride in their work and make a meaningful impact on the company's success.

Nobody can be accountable for something they are not empowered to lead. Empowering employees to be their own leader is essential for creating a culture of accountability,

ownership, and success. By investing in employee development and providing support and resources to employees, companies can cultivate a team that is truly empowered to lead the company forward.

WAYS TO MAKE EVERY EMPLOYEE A LEADER

Empowering leadership in the employee base is a key factor in the success of any business. It allows employees to own their work, make decisions, and drive results.

Here is a checklist of key actions leaders can take to empower their employees and foster a culture of leadership:

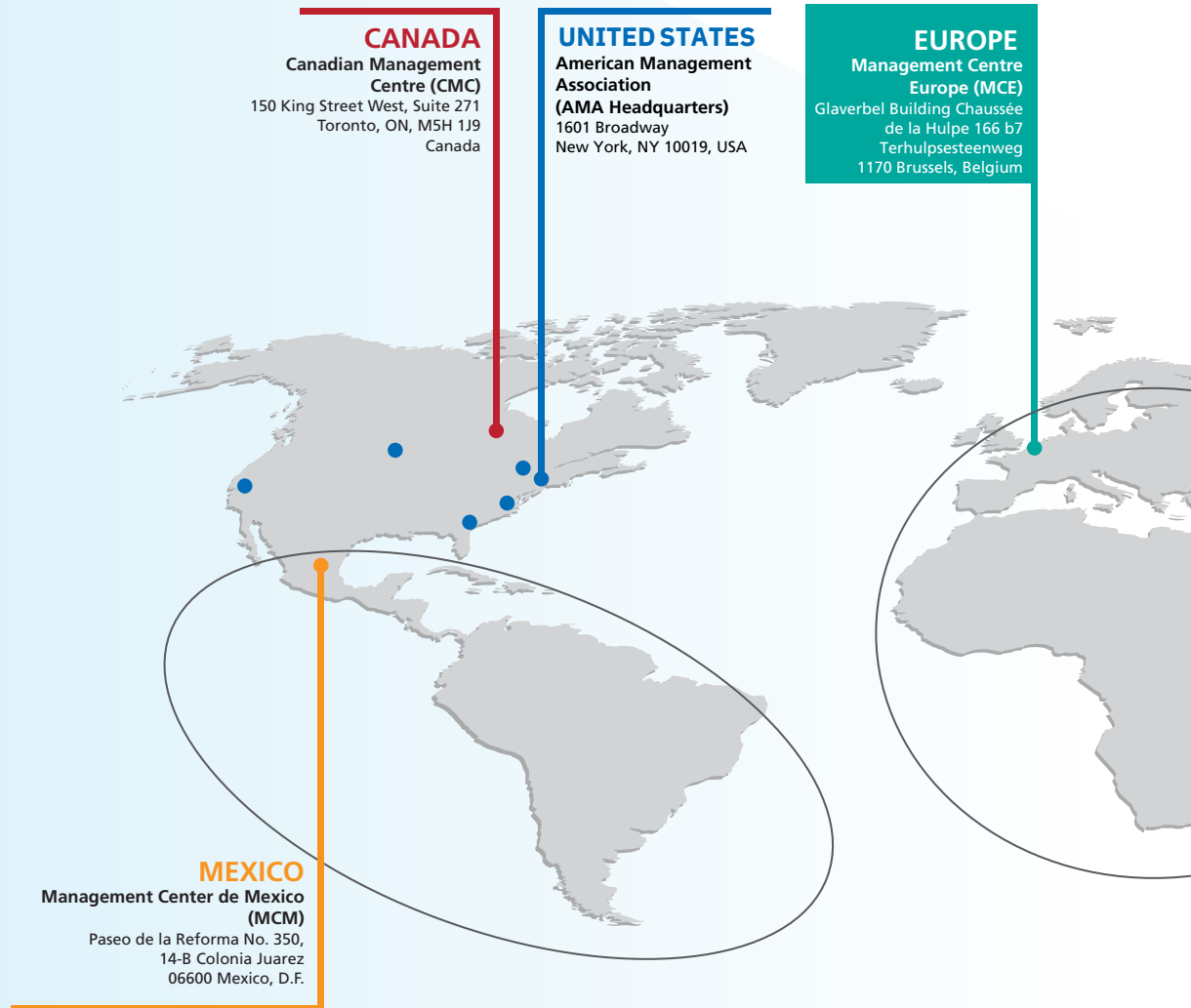
- **Encourage employee autonomy.** Provide employees with the resources, support, and freedom to make decisions and take ownership of their work.
- **Offer opportunities for growth and development.** Invest in employee development through leadership training, professional development programs, and mentorship opportunities.
- **Foster a supportive work environment.** Create a culture of collaboration, open communication, and respect for all employees.
- **Lead by example.** Model empowering behavior by empowering employees to lead, make decisions, and take ownership of their work.
- **Provide regular feedback.** Offer regular, constructive feedback to employees to help them grow and develop as leaders.
- **Recognize and reward success.** Recognize and reward employees for their contributions to the company, including their leadership skills.
- **Encourage innovation.** Encourage employees to be creative and innovative and to explore new ideas and approaches to solving problems.
- **Continually evaluate and improve.** Continue to evaluate the success of your empowering leadership initiatives, and make improvements as needed.

By following these guidelines, leaders can empower their employees to be successful leaders and drive the success of their company. Empowering leadership in the employee base is crucial in creating a positive and productive work environment. When leaders foster an atmosphere of trust, encourage open communication, and empower employees to be their own leaders, they can drive innovation and growth while also promoting job satisfaction and employee engagement. [AQ](#)

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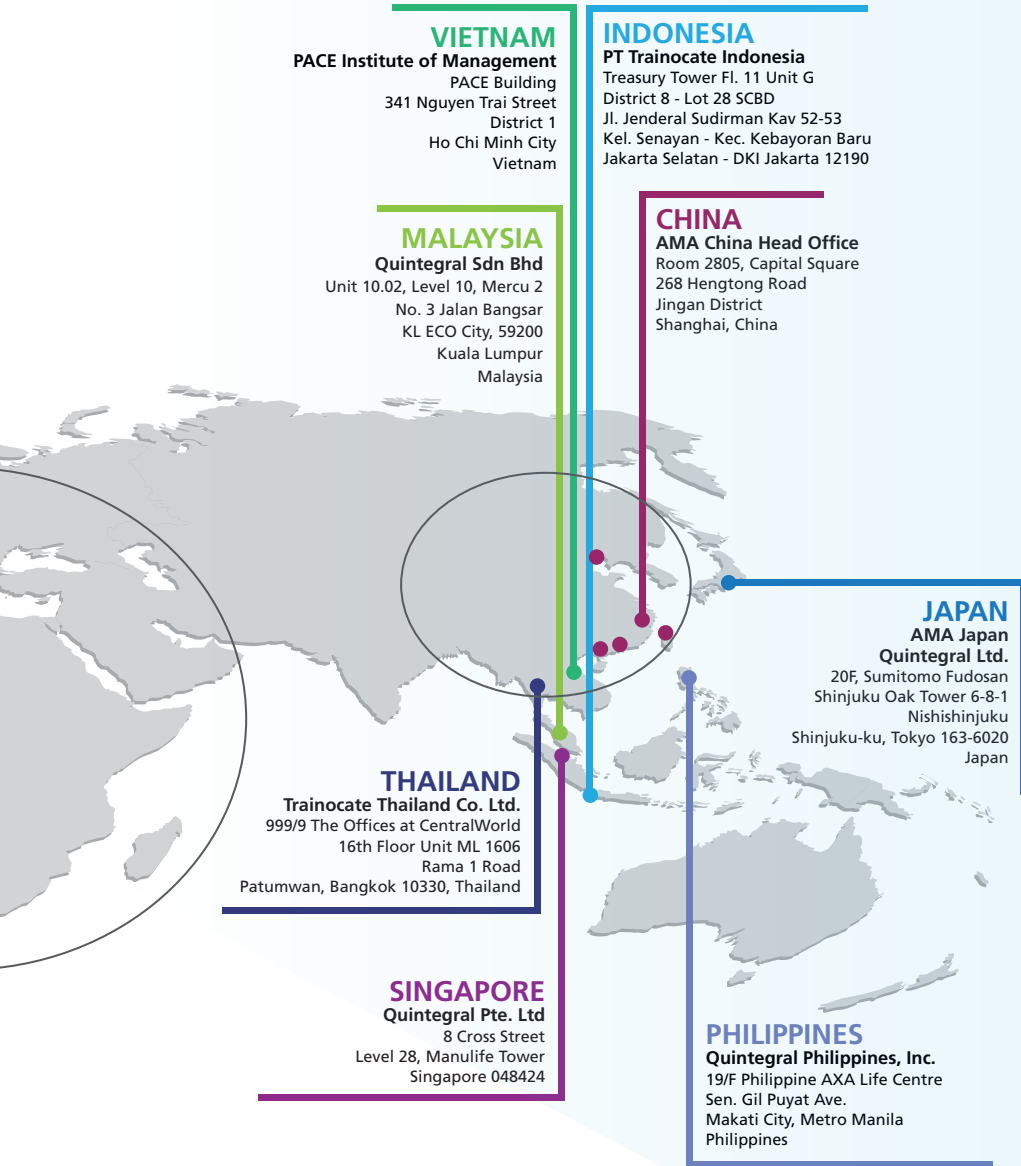
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What's Wrong with Current DEI Initiatives and WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

BY TULIKA MEHROTRA CHOPRA

Systemic changes are needed to make diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives sustainable and effective.

In November 2022, amid the tech layoffs already disproportionately affecting Black and Latinx professionals, Elon Musk reportedly dissolved all of Twitter's employee resource groups (ERGs), including Blackbird and Twitter Women.

These groups had been formed to look after the career development and safety of workers from marginalized groups. Founded by Shavone Charles, Blackbird was known as an impactful business resource for Black tech employees and allies. To many Black professionals, Musk's axing of ERGs at Twitter is representative of how DEI initiatives have been dismissed in the professional world as a whole.

"For many Black people, Blackbirds is the reason they chose to work at Twitter," said Blackbird member Siobhan V. Massiah in a LinkedIn post at the time the layoffs took place. "We supported Black people who had never worked in tech to excel in their new spaces." In an industry dominated by White men, it has always been a challenge for diverse professionals to begin a tech career. With DEI efforts seeming to fall by the wayside, encouraging women and people of color to pursue a career in fields such as tech is becoming even harder.

To remedy the shortcomings of DEI initiatives, business leaders

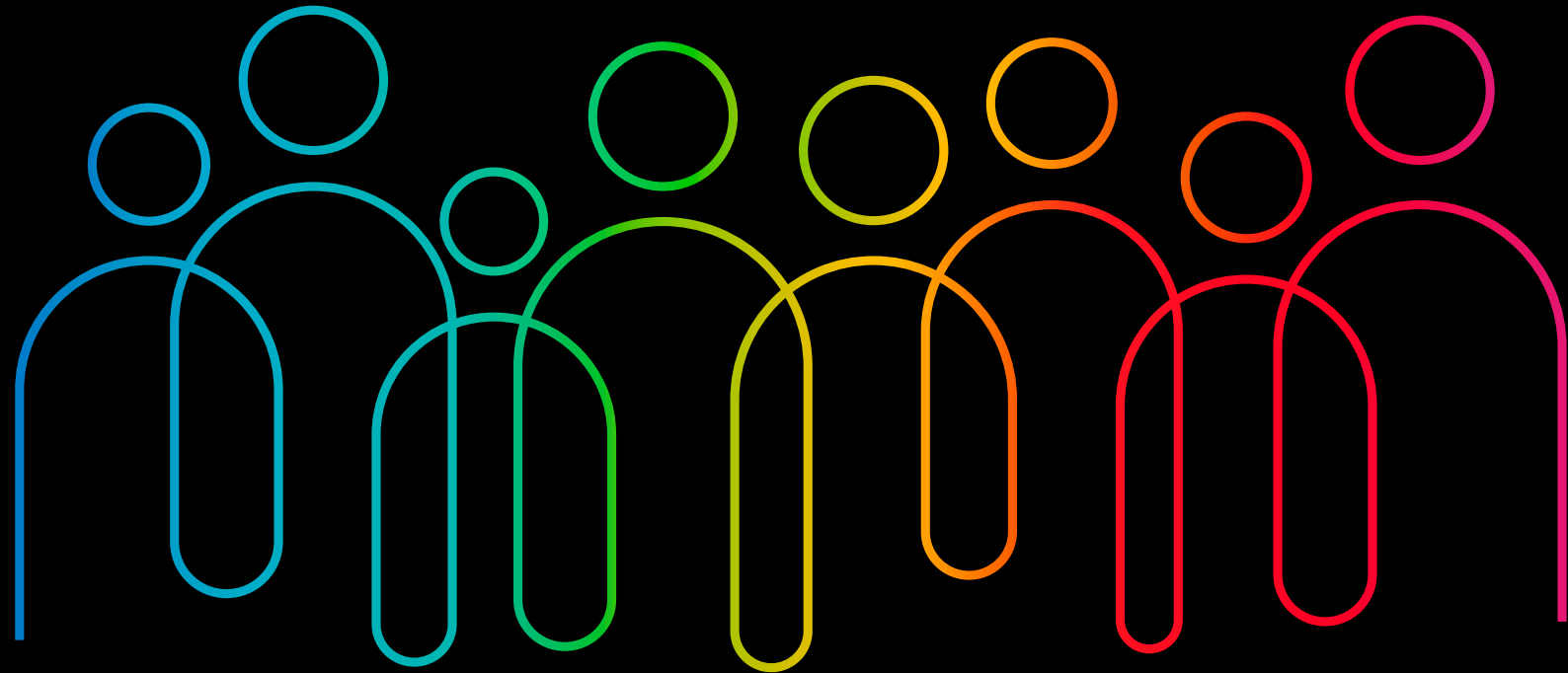
need to learn from past mistakes and take a more authentic, thought-out, and long-term approach to creating real change.

From 2019 to 2021, DEI initiatives jumped from 29% to 43%, according to statistics cited in Glassdoor's November 29, 2022 post "Who Cares About Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?" Through the third quarter of 2022, this number dipped to 41%. In 2023, DEI initiatives are still lacking. The Monster 2023 Work Watch Report stated that only 5% of recruiters see DEI as one of their top three priorities for 2023. In the same report, 10% of respondents said diversity initiatives are among the "first to go" in the unstable economy.

These are the key reasons why DEI initiatives have not been effective in a sustainable way.

THE PROBLEM OF INAUTHENTICITY

If employees do not trust their employer to have their best interests at heart, they become disengaged and unsatisfied in their positions, which is costly for organizations. When there is a lack of trust regarding DEI efforts, employers lose trust not only among their employees but also their consumers, stakeholders, and the general public.



In a May-June 2020 *Harvard Business Review* article, "Begin with Trust," Frances X. Frei and Anne Morriss break down the driving factors of trust—the Trust Triangle, they call it.

The Trust Triangle is made up of authenticity, logic, and empathy. They write, "People tend to trust you when they believe they are interacting with the real you (authenticity), when they have faith in your judgment and competence (logic), and when they feel that you care about them (empathy)."

Organizations will benefit from applying the Trust Triangle to their DEI initiatives. By now we know that inauthenticity plays a huge factor in the failure of DEI efforts. When employees and consumers detect performative allyship, they do not trust that the organization will see its goals through.

Weak logic comes into play when business leaders do not incorporate facts and tangible metrics into their DEI initiatives—that is, if an organization's plan solely consists of vague aspirations with no tangible action steps or key performance indicators (KPIs).

Leaders show empathy by demonstrating that they truly care and believe in their employees. In terms of DEI, this looks like investing in diverse employees as professionals and people. A great way to implement an empathetic approach to DEI is to promote long-term career development for diverse employees in all departments and at all levels.

BLAMING THE ECONOMY

When the economy is in a vulnerable place, DEI positions

become an easy scapegoat and vulnerable to cuts. While most positions affected by the surge of layoffs were in the tech and startup industries, it begs the question, why were DEI professionals some of the first to be let go?

Many corporations hurried to demonstrate their dedication to DEI, focusing more on the optics than the movement's true purpose. As a result, many organizations did not take ample time and care to invest in the proper resources and map out the proper objectives.

If thoughtfully implemented and monitored, DEI initiatives will lead to more diversity, higher employee engagement, and greater innovation among teams. DEI programs and their leaders will be as mission-critical as the CFO regardless of the state of the economy.

MISGUIDED RESOURCES

In response to the demand for more DEI initiatives, many organizations allocated resources to presentations and workshops centered around diversity and inclusion.

While initiatives such as sensitivity and unconscious bias training may seem to be positive steps in the right direction, they can be severely damaging to trust if there is no follow-through with continuing DEI initiatives. Without follow-up efforts, these trainings end up looking more like a band-aid solely meant to appease employees and stakeholders.

Further, employees are often led to believe that one-off presentations are the beginning of a long-term commitment to

“Creating real, lasting change in DEI requires business leaders to implement medium- to long-term interventions that alter the structures of power and resources on a systemic level.”

DEI, setting them up for disappointment down the road when nothing further is executed.

Not only do leaders need to implement ongoing, consistent DEI initiatives, but they need to bring in the right experts. Many organizations look to the most visible “DEI influencers” to deliver one-size-fits-all talks and workshops to their entire workforce. Instead, business leaders need to spend time researching and vetting DEI leaders and looking into ones who specialize in their industry and a specific department (that is, finding a DEI leader who specializes in working with C-suite executives in the consulting industry) for maximum impact.

HOW TO CREATE REAL CHANGE IN DEI

Creating real, lasting change in DEI requires business leaders to implement medium- to long-term interventions that alter the structures of power and resources on a systemic level.

An organization that has found success in its DEI efforts is Progressive Insurance, which claimed the top spot in Forbes’ “America’s Best Employers for Diversity” in April 2023. Progressive recognized that the best way to earn their employees’ trust was to demonstrate their dedication to DEI through action.

Here are some action steps organizations can take to model Progressive’s success in DEI.

PUT YOUR RESOURCES TO GOOD USE

While Elon Musk was dissolving Twitter’s employee resource groups, Progressive was strengthening its own—all nine of them.

According to Progressive’s website, ERGs “act as a valuable resource for our business by providing first-hand knowledge and information about our customers and the marketplace.” In the past two years, Progressive’s ERG population has grown 28%, making a total of 42% of the company’s employees members of at least one ERG. Progressive has credited ERGs for improving employee engagement a promotion.

Forming and maintaining ERGs is a far better investment of resources than one-off inclusion workshops and sensitivity training. With these groups in place, organizations not only give underrepresented employees support but also give them a voice. Another way to manage resources is to have those doing the work inform the budget for it. Too often, executive-level leadership hands off these responsibilities to HR. But DEI touches all parts of a business, including both the employee and consumer experience.

PUT DIVERSE VOICES IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Zippia reported the following chief diversity officer statistics in the U.S.:

- 54.5% of chief diversity officers are women, while 45.5% are men.
- 76.1% of all chief diversity officers are White, 7.8% are Hispanic or Latinx, 7.7% are Asian, and 3.8% are Black or African American.
- Chief diversity officers who are White have the highest average salary at \$93,981, while Black or African American chief diversity officers have the lowest average salary at \$89,538.



These numbers reveal an ironic juxtaposition in which the very roles meant to champion diversity in the workplace are still dominated by the very people who are getting paid considerably more than people of color. This data reinforces the trust problem in current DEI initiatives.

If employees from traditionally marginalized communities feel represented in DEI leadership, they will have more trust that their employer truly has their best interests at heart. Seeing people who look like them in higher-level positions is empowering because it demonstrates an opportunity for career advancement.

Further, business leaders need to put more diverse voices in all leadership positions. The benefits of diverse leadership stretch beyond morale. In a sample of Fortune 500 firms, according to a study titled “Demographic Diversity in the Boardroom: Mediators of the Board Diversity–Firm Performance Relationship,” featured in the May 26, 2009 issue of the *Journal of Management Studies*, researchers found a positive relationship between board racial diversity and firm reputation and innovation, along with a positive relationship between board gender diversity and innovation.

One of Progressive’s DEI objectives reads, “Our leadership reflects the people they lead.” The company also says it must double the representation of people of color in senior leadership by the end of 2025.

Collecting and analyzing data is a standard procedure for companies to keep an eye on how different procedures are working, so why shouldn’t DEI initiatives be measured too?

Too often, organizations focus solely on what they do on the front end—the resources they allocate to DEI initiatives and the

number of diverse employees they hire—when they should be spending more time measuring the long-term outcomes of their efforts (how employee demographics have changed or not changed years after DEI efforts are initiated).

DEI leaders should set tangible goals for how they want their DEI initiatives to affect the organization in the long term, such as how many diverse voices are in leadership positions five years down the road.

“These indicators and metrics allow an organization to hold stakeholders accountable, identify and celebrate an initiative’s success or failure, measure return on investment, and make important decisions to tweak or change initiatives that aren’t working,” writes Lily Zheng, DEI strategist, consultant, and speaker in her December 1, 2022 article in *Harvard Business Review*, “The Failure of the DEI-Industrial Complex.”

By formally measuring the outcomes of DEI initiatives, businesses are communicating an authentic dedication to their efficacy.

The backlash from Elon Musk’s dismantling of ERGs and the success of Progressive’s DEI initiatives can guide business leaders in transforming how their businesses foster diversity and inclusion. By investing resources where they matter, empowering diverse leaders, and measuring outcomes, leaders will raise the standards of DEI efforts to generate widespread, long-term change. [AQ](#)

Tulika Mehrotra Chopra is chief digital officer at Peterson Technology Partners, and a former entrepreneur with a strong focus on DEI, digital marketing, communications, and branding strategy.



Use Appreciation to Create Employee 'SUPERHEROES'

BY DEBRA COREY

Eight “superpowers” can arise when employees are given recognition by their leaders.

We all love superheroes. They possess supernatural or superhuman powers to do things better than mere mortals, and they can use these powers to fight evil and protect us from supervillains, which in the business world are external forces and, at times, our competitors.

But that's just in comic books and movies—certainly we don't have superheroes in the real world, in the workplace? Wrong! Time after time, I've seen employees turn into superheroes, doing extraordinary things to help their companies innovate and succeed and overcome obstacles and challenges. The good news is that one of the tools that managers can use to turn employees into superheroes is appreciation and recognition. They may not become the kind of superheroes that are able to leap tall buildings or lift a bus, but the superpowers derived from recognition have been proven to help employees feel and be at their best, which is good for them and for your company.

THE EIGHT SUPERPOWERS OF RECOGNITION

Here are eight of the superpowers that arise from leaders' recognition:

Employees are more engaged. Let's start with employee engagement, something that most companies focus on and measure because of the power it can have on their business. Recognition has been proven to be a key driver of employee engagement, with Deloitte's "Talent 2020" study finding that employee engagement was 14% higher in organizations where they practice employee recognition than in those without recognition. This should come as no surprise, for a key driver of engagement is to feel valued, which is a direct result of recognition.

Employees are happier. Employee happiness, like employee engagement, can also have a positive impact on a business. In his book *The Happiness Advantage*, Shawn Achor talks about how happiness leads to employees who feel more positive, are more creative, are better at solving problems, and are more effective collaborators, all of which contribute to a more successful company.

And what is that connection to recognition? Well, according to a 2014 Boston Consulting Group study that ranked the 26 factors of happiness on the job, the most important single job element for all people is appreciation for their work, which occurs through recognition.

Employees have better relationships with their manager. Engagement and happiness are greatly impacted by the relationship that employees have with their manager. If it's good, they're more likely to feel engaged and happy, and if they're not, the opposite occurs. Recognition has been proven to have an impact on this relationship, with a 2012 study by Bersin & Associates, "The Employee Recognition Maturity Model: A Roadmap to Strategic Recognition," finding that 58% of employees felt their relationship with their manager would improve if they were given more recognition.

According to the Bersin & Associates study, part of the reason for this is based on trust, with trust being a key factor in any relationship. And again, recognition can impact this, with one study showing that employees who were recognized were 34% more likely to trust senior leaders and 33% more likely to trust managers compared with those who had never been recognized.

Employees are less burned out. With burnout on the rise due to symptoms of the more fast paced, complex, and demanding modern workplace, it's something that we all need to take seriously. Recognition can contribute to preventing and/or reducing burnout as it addresses some of the factors that can lead to it, such as feelings of unfair treatment at work, unclear communication from managers, and lack of manager support.

Supporting this, a May 2022 study by Gallup, "Unleashing the Human Element at Work: Transforming Workplaces Through Recognition," found that when recognition is done well, 73% of employees are less likely to always or very often feel burned out.

Employees have a better sense of awareness. This next superpower moves from how the employee feels as a result of being recognized to what they receive: an increased sense of awareness. This happens through feedback, which is formally and informally given each time an employee is recognized. It lets them know which of their efforts are most appreciated and valued, giving them a sense of achievement and an awareness of which actions and behaviors they should continue to lead to greater success.

Employees are more productive. It's not just employees who benefit from recognition. The company does as well. One way is through an increase in productivity, since having employees who are engaged, happy, less burned out, and more aware naturally leads to a more productive work environment.

Gallup's 2016 "State of the Global Workplace" study showed that 79% of employees would work harder if they felt their efforts were being recognized. And according to Achor, employee productivity can increase by 30% when employees receive just one piece of praise a day.

The company has stronger business results. Next is that these other powers will ultimately help your company be more successful and achieve higher business results.

According to "The Employee Recognition Maturity Model: A Roadmap to Strategic Recognition," companies that excel at employee recognition on average are 12 times more likely to generate strong business results than their peers. And to make it even more compelling, according to another Gallup report, 2019's "State of the American Workplace," if organizations would double the number of employees who receive recognition for their work on a weekly basis, they would experience a 24% improvement in quality and a 10% reduction in shrinkage, both of which contribute to achieving company goals.

The company has better employee retention. Finally, recognition can have an impact on employee turnover, with employees staying longer because they feel valued and appreciated. We often believe that pay is the number one reason people leave a company, but in fact, research by O.C. Tanner, "Why Employees Leave—And 4 Ways Recognition Can Slow Resignation," found that 79% of employees who quit their job cited a lack of recognition as the key driver.

And for those who have not left their company, Gallup found in its 2016 study "Employee Recognition: Low Cost, High Impact" that employees who do not feel adequately recognized are twice as likely to say they'll quit in the next year.

IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

So that's the good news. But this leads to the bad news: Although 87% of companies have programs in place to appreciate and recognize their workforce, many are not working, according to a 2019 report, "Trends in Employee Recognition," by WorldatWork and Maritz Motivation. Too many employees are not being recognized. A survey by Reward Gateway in 2018 found that almost seven out of 10 employees (65%) have not been appreciated in the last year and don't feel appreciated, and a survey by O.C. Tanner in 2017 found that almost seven out of 10 employees (66%) do not feel appreciated.

Going back to what I said at the start, employees may be recognized, but they don't feel appreciated. Part of the reason for this is that too many company recognition programs are stuck in the past, grounded in strategies and methodologies that I was following back when I began in HR over 20 years ago.

And it's not just me thinking this. The O.C. Tanner "Global Culture Report" survey in 2021 found that almost nine out of 10 employees (87%) feel their recognition Programme is "stale, outdated, or used as disguised compensation." If our employees see and say this, then certainly we need to see and address it.

THE FOUR GOLDEN RULES OF APPRECIATION

As managers, we don't fully understand why, when, and how to recognize employees and deliver what I call the "appreciation feeling." Here are the "four golden rules of recognition," the four things we "MUST" do. Together, they create a call to action, what we must do to achieve recognition objectives and create more superheroes. Here is a high-level overview for each of these rules:

M – Make recognition meaningful

This is critical so that the recipient truly feels recognized. It happens when you deliver meaning in both what you say (the words you use to recognize your people) and what you do (the actions and rewards you use to recognize your people).

By doing this well, you show your employee that you see, value, and appreciate their specific contributions. And in this hybrid world, when you're managing a mix of remote and office workers, this is more important than ever, so that all employees, regardless of where they're working, genuinely feel seen and valued.

U – Make recognition unified

This golden rule focuses on designing recognition programs that are unified and inclusive. It's important that recognition does not create workforce "haves" and "have-nots" based on factors such as location, department, manager, or function.

Instead, recognition needs to be universal, making it available for all to give and all to receive, which increases your chances of creating a recognition culture and achieving recognition objectives. Practice equal opportunity recognition, looking at recognition through an inclusion lens and making sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to be noticed, appreciated, and recognized.

S – Shine a spotlight on recognition

In the past, recognition was done in a very private way, between the sender and the receiver. But over the years, we've come to see the importance of putting it under the spotlight. The benefit is that it showcases what "good" and "great" look like to your workforce, and it multiplies the impact as others see and get involved with the recognition.

In this new hybrid world, spotlighting recognition plays an even more important role. When you share recognition in moments such as team calls and meetings, it helps connect your people in a positive, meaningful, and uplifting way whether they're working remotely or in the office.

T – Make recognition timely

Focus on the "when" of recognition. We've made strides in this area, reflecting on what we've learned and how we've responded to changes in the workplace, but there is still much work to be done.

Timely means to do something in an appropriate time frame, which is a bit wishy-washy. What does "appropriate time frame" really mean? Does it mean giving recognition once a week, or once a month? Instead, we should focus the definition and our efforts on the gap, the time frame between the moment the behavior or action happens and the moment the recognition occurs. If we remove the hurdles and make giving recognition easy, there is no excuse for waiting, and we can all move to what is commonly called "in the moment" recognition.

Embrace these golden rules. Use them to release the superpowers in your people and let them soar and succeed—for themselves and for the company. [AQ](#)

Debra Corey is a highly experienced and award-winning HR consultant, world-class speaker, and five-time bestselling author who has been named as one of the top 101 global employee engagement influencers.



Is Your Strategy Complete in the Digital Economy?

BY MOSTAFA SAYYADI

Organizations need to develop a complete strategic approach to ensure their future.

In the digital economy, organizations that lack a complete strategic approach cannot avoid the risk of being imitated by competitors, and this risk ultimately excludes them from having a competitive advantage. A complete strategy, effectively integrating all organizational components, can increase the chance of overcoming competitive challenges and help organizations reach their highest possible potential.

Designing and implementing strategy in today's digital economy is difficult and complicated. In a competitive environment, where organizations constantly seek emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and capitalize on data-driven customer preferences, the importance of new digital technologies must be embraced. Ignoring the importance of these technologies leads to a reduction in complexity, and as a result, competitors

become more capable of imitating what made a business successful and taking a larger chunk of market share. Thus, fatal neglect often results from not having a complete strategy that provides the right course of action and the analytics needed to support this course.

A lack of strategic initiative leads to only fleeting successes. Without a complete strategy, organizations will neglect the development of capabilities that are necessary to maintain their competitive advantage. This article outlines the main elements of a complete strategy in the digital economy to show managers how to develop and implement such a strategy. These elements were revealed in interviews with 116 managers from eight countries (Australia, China, South Korea, the United States, and four European countries).

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

There are four factors that are essential to building successful strategic initiatives in the digital economy.

Detailed analysis of the external environment. This component, sometimes referred to as a SWOT analysis, examines all the trends and changes in the external environment so that the organization can make the best proactive changes. For example, what opportunities and threats does climate change create for your business, and how can you prevent potential threats and make the best use of opportunities?

Dissemination of data. After carefully analyzing the external environment and recognizing existing opportunities and threats, organizations should incorporate all the necessary mechanisms to address these findings in the form of a business model. This business model should be structured in a precise way, with a detailed delineation of all tasks, resources, costs, and revenues. Some examples of how to do this are to create teams in an organization and create a flatter organizational chart.

Application of a clear tactical vision. Once the business model and data dissemination methods are designed, organizations should add a clear tactical vision to the strategy. The focus here is on building a competitive advantage and attracting customers by creating unique value for them in the short term. The organization must create digital transformation and develop appropriate technology infrastructures with the aim of creating the required complexity. This factor will prevent competitors from imitating and data dodging. This will also stem employee discontent reflected in trends such as “quiet quitting” or even leaving to join direct competitors (such as what Tesla has reportedly experienced).

Application of a flexible long-term approach. Along with applying a clear tactical visionary approach (usually six months to two years out), organizations should add a flexible long-term approach (three to 10 years out) to their strategy to ensure they're identifying the capabilities needed in the future. This long-term approach must be flexible so that the newly required capabilities can be gradually added for unforeseen environmental factors. An example of this would be how Toyota, an organization that holds its cards close to its chest, plans to blow away the competition with an electric car that may lead that automobile segment.

IDENTIFYING AND AVOIDING PITFALLS

Executives are often plagued by a one-time-change-fits-all mentality. The problem is that the legacy of the past era of stability may not hold into the future. Another pitfall is inertia, as some managers believe that a new approach to strategy is not always necessary. Unlike the stable era of the past, however, today's digital economy calls for a complete strategy that creates a long-term relationship with customers and ensures a company's long-term survival by considering their needs.

Furthermore, many more centralized organizations lack an accurate routing or dissemination of information and knowledge. For example, Tesla's business model emerged from market analysis and recognition of its trends and changes, but the attractiveness of the electric car market and the need to mitigate climate change will attract strong competitors such as Toyota or Porsche. The entry of competitors that are technically more capable may ultimately lead to the failure and removal of Tesla from the market. Although Tesla has a strong foothold in the electric car business now, it doesn't mean that it will remain a competitor forever.

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY

Designing a complete strategy does not guarantee an organization's success in the digital economy. Success requires the creation of appropriate infrastructure and the development of capabilities needed to implement the strategy.

Today, strategy implementation is not a one-time change, but rather a foundation that provides the conditions for continuous and gradual improvement. The company must design and implement a strategy, along with developing the infrastructure and capabilities that cause continuous improvement, continuous innovation, and gradual changes in this strategy.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Entering the digital economy means opening new doors for a business to interact more effectively with larger ecosystems. With the emergence of new technologies such as advanced artificial intelligence, companies will be able to have a better understanding of customers and their needs.

This agility plays an important role in all four components of the complete strategy. For example, the data obtained through artificial intelligence is important in analyzing the external environment to understand trends and changes. This data also leads to the design of a better business model and a more accurate tactical view by providing better solutions that create unique value for customers. Artificial intelligence will also play an important role in recognizing possible scenarios in the market, leading to the application of more effective long-term approaches that can respond quickly to environmental changes.

Having a complete strategy in the digital economy is a competitive advantage. The effective design and implementation of this strategy will increase the probability of success and may keep companies from falling into the abyss of destruction. By effectively implementing the four components of a complete strategy, organizations can move successfully in the digital economy, which will benefit not only the organization but also society at large as we reap the benefits of effective and efficient planning. [AQ](#)

Mostafa Sayyadi works with senior business leaders to effectively develop innovation and helps companies—from start-ups to the Fortune 100—succeed by improving the effectiveness of their leaders. He is a book author and a longtime contributor to business publications.



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Coach, Leader, or Manager

Do You Have to Choose One?

BY MILLIE FULLER

As the business world evolves, so does what is expected of those who lead and support teams. It's not enough to be polished, professional, or simply punctual.

There are three commonly used terms in management—coaching, managing, and leading. While these are often used synonymously, they have different functions and approaches to motivate, develop, and drive team members. In this article, we'll explore the differences and similarities.

Determining which of the three to use, and when, is complex and challenging, but the information presented here will give you a clearer understanding.

WHAT IS A MANAGER?

Managers oversee the operations of a team, department, or organization. They perform a variety of tasks to ensure that the business runs smoothly and achieves its objectives. These include:

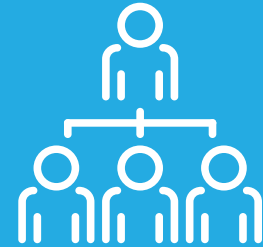
Planning. Management involves comprehensive planning and goal setting. The process begins with analyzing the current situation and making future projections. This evaluation allows

managers to formulate strategies and set goals that drive the organization toward success.

Budgeting. Having a clear understanding of a department's or project's financial needs means that resources can be allocated appropriately, and goals made achievable. This is where a formal budget proves invaluable. Identifying the necessary expenses and planning accordingly involves an analysis of past and present data, as well as projections to determine future outlay. Furthermore, doing so helps to monitor progress, enabling managers to adjust if necessary.

Setting key performance indicators. KPIs are metrics that help in measuring the progress of a project, the business, or an individual. These metrics are established to track progress and enable data-driven decisions, assisting managers in performance management.

Managing performance. Managers carry out performance reviews of team members to evaluate the quality of their work,



skills, and areas of potential improvement. Before, during, and after performance reviews, constructive feedback is an indispensable tool for continuous performance management and creating a culture of learning and development.

In the event of unsatisfactory performance, however, implementing a performance improvement plan (PIP) may be necessary. This involves outlining clearly where performance needs to be improved, setting timely and measurable goals for the team member, and outlining steps necessary to achieve them.

Organizing and staffing. Managers are often involved in hiring. This not only means conducting the interviews but also outlining the responsibilities of each role and producing a specification. To further support team members, policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) may need to be created to provide guidance on best practices, quality standards, and more.

Promoting order and stability. One of the key responsibilities of a manager is to ensure that consistent results are produced by the team. As a role model, managers set the tone for workplace culture and behavior. By modeling the expectations and demonstrating the desired behaviors, they can influence their team to follow suit.

WHAT IS A COACH?

At its core, being a coach is about helping people to develop their skills, knowledge, and capabilities. When coaching team members, you do not just provide them with instructions or tell

them what to do. A coach asks questions that ultimately help team members to achieve on their own.

The GROW Coaching Model, developed in the 1980s by Graham Alexander, Alan Fine, and Sir John Whitmore, provides a framework:

Goals. What do you want to achieve?

Reality. What's the current situation?

Options. What can we do to reach the goal?

Will. What can we commit to?

In the first stage of the GROW model, Goals, the coach and the team member work together to define and articulate desired outcomes. This involves identifying specific, measurable, and achievable goals that align with the individual's personal and professional aspirations.

In the Reality stage of the model, the coach helps the team member assess the current situation to identify anything that might impact their ability to achieve their goals. This includes the person's strengths and weaknesses and any barriers or constraints that need to be addressed.

The Options stage involves brainstorming and exploring various strategies and approaches that could help the team member achieve their goals. The coach encourages the employee to think creatively and consider different possibilities.

“Managing, coaching, and leading are three distinct approaches, each with a different impact and different results. People need to constantly change their approach according to organizational factors and their own skills and experience.”

Lastly, the Will stage involves the team member committing to a specific course of action, with the support and guidance of the coach. This includes setting milestones, timelines, and action plans that enable them to move toward their goal(s).

WHAT IS A LEADER?

The work of a leader is all about change. According to business leader John Mattone in his June 6, 2022 blog article, “History’s 5 Best Leaders,” a leader guides and influences others to deliver on a vision of theirs or another’s. The specifics of the vision are unclear due to never having been done before.

Leaders must:

Motivate and inspire others. A leader’s inspirations can take various forms, such as personal anecdotes or motivational speeches.

Align and bring people together. A leader should know how to align and integrate individuals from various backgrounds into one cohesive group. This demands keen analytical skills, excellent communication, and empathy.

Establish direction. A leader must establish a clear direction that is unique, realistic, and achievable. Without a clear sense of direction, a team’s endeavors can lose momentum and direction.

Promote change. To create and bring about change, a leader must tackle fears of the unknown. New circumstances and possibilities can then be embraced, leading to novel approaches.

MANAGE, COACH, OR LEAD?

Managing, coaching, and leading are three distinct approaches, each with a different impact and different results. Rarely is just one approach used, even in the same conversation. In reality, people need to constantly change their approach according to organizational factors and their own skills and experience.

The organization’s current goals will change what a manager focuses on. In general:

Leadership is needed in times of change and uncertainty. It requires someone who can provide clarity, direction, and a sense of purpose to their team. Effective leaders have a clear vision for their team to believe in and are able to communicate it in a way that motivates and excites. Furthermore, leaders must be able to adapt to changing circumstances, think creatively, and make decisions quickly during times of uncertainty.

Managing the status quo means maintaining efficiency and stability within the organization. This demands a different set of skills, such as an operational mindset, a keen eye for detail, and the ability to make data-driven decisions.

Coaching is all about developing people and helping teams to reach their full potential. It’s particularly important as organizations need to continually upskill and reskill their workforce to stay competitive. Effective coaching equips employees with the necessary skills, strategies, and tools to enhance their own performance.

IDENTIFYING WHERE TASKS AND SKILLS FIT

Certain tasks naturally fall under coaching, managing, or leading by their nature.

Leading tasks typically involve communicating. For example, conveying team goals. Strong leaders inspire the team to work together to reach a common goal. They have a clear vision, which instills a sense of unity and purpose among the team.

On the other hand, **coaching tasks** focus on people development. For example, helping individual team members identify their skills or address behaviors that are hindering performance. Coaches can provide emotional support and encouragement.



Managing tasks are more administrative in nature. For example, organizing the staff rota. Effective managers are able to prioritize tasks, delegate responsibilities appropriately, and maintain a sense of order and structure within the team.

Skills can also be categorized as leading, coaching, or managing. Although communication is a skill needed and used in all three of the approaches, the way in which we do so depends on whether we're leading, coaching, or managing:

Leading. Conveying the significance of the grand scheme and vision demands a passionate employment of short sentences, hand gestures, and inclusive language. The leader inspires the team by explicitly articulating the objectives and goals with an unwavering conviction.

Coaching. The focus here is on the team member's growth and development. According to Scotwork in "Is Body Language Important in Negotiation?," coaches should adopt body language that mimics the individual they're guiding, putting the person at ease and facilitating an open conversation. The team member is encouraged to reflect and respond to introspective questions, which elicits greater insight.

Managing. A task-driven approach necessitates clear and concise wording with a neutral body language that focuses entirely on the completion of the task at hand. The manager has a structured approach, sets deadlines, and prioritizes tasks, which creates a framework for the team to follow.

THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness in the mainstream means living in the moment. However, in a business setting, it allows for nonjudgmental observation of the situation without emotion. In this way, it allows us to choose the best action objectively.

Employees can develop a sense of heightened awareness and attention to detail simply by embracing mindfulness in the workplace. Individuals are encouraged to view their thoughts and emotions as temporary phenomena that can be observed and managed, rather than feeling overwhelmed or ruled by them. This can lead to a more productive environment where individuals are able to work through any challenges that may arise in a rational and composed manner.

It's often an unconscious choice to apply and use our natural abilities. B. Leach, in a July 12, 2021 blog post, "Born Leaders vs. Made Leaders: Are Leaders Born or Trained?," states that it can be both: A person can be born with natural leadership abilities and can learn how to be a good leader at work. While we tend to lean into what we know best or where we're strongest, behaviors can be learned, developed, and overridden with deliberate practice and effort.

Furthermore, this process doesn't have to be formal. It can be achieved informally through peer-to-peer mentoring, shadowing, or reading relevant literature.

Coaching, managing, and leading are terms often used synonymously in business, yet each is a distinct approach with different uses and impact. Leaders inspire others to see the bigger picture, managers get the task done through directing, and coaches help others to help themselves.

Which one you choose to employ will be down to organizational and personal factors. You may even use all three approaches in the course of one conversation, beginning with directing what you see as needing to be done, asking the team member how they think they'll do it, and ending by explaining how these goals fit into the wider goals of the business to emphasize the importance of the task. [AQ](#)

Millie Fuller is a creative copywriter.



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