

# Boardroom questions

## Workforce reorientation in the post-COVID-19 era

Board Leadership Center (India)



### What will the workforce of the future look like?

The coronavirus pandemic has pushed the world into an uncharted territory, and economic activity around the world has come to a halt or in some places, is moving at a pace slower than usual. The immediate response to the crisis has pushed organisations to adopt new ways of working, and has also acted as a catalyst in accelerating the transition to a digital future.

With this, much is being said about the future of workforce that may open new opportunities for automation, robotics and AI, across different sectors, thus reducing the dependency on human intervention. As a result of the crisis, many firms will need to review and reshape their traditional workforce.



### What should companies look out for?

With the introduction of newer technologies and automated processes, leaders are increasingly required to rethink their workforce strategies that may help the organisations to thrive in the post-pandemic era.

The challenges are significant:

Identify new skills and capabilities that will realistically be required in the future

Identify current employees willing and able to be upskilled



Evaluate alternate workforce — contractors, freelancers and gig workers

Assess a combination of onsite and offsite work that is effective

### Potential risks and opportunities

#### Risks

- Implications of a '6-feet office' on collaboration, culture, interaction and productivity
- Lack of communication with employees might lead to talented people leaving for companies which have transparently addressed the issue
- Competitors may implement a more effective workforce mix leading to greater profitability.



#### Opportunities

- Protect key talent, and also talent in critical roles
- Increase productivity at lower cost
- A planned approach to unleash innovation in the organisation.



## Boardroom questions



- 1 What will our workforce of the future look like including- remote working, freelancers, etc.? How will organisations engage them on work, and keep them loyal to the firm?
- 2 Have the current skills been mapped to/measured against what might be needed in the future?
- 3 Do we have programmes to rapidly reskill the workforce?
- 4 How do we successfully integrate digital and human labour?
- 5 How will we best engage human capacity when these roles are replaced by automation and technology? What does 'career' mean in our organisation?
- 6 Is there a process to build leadership capabilities to manage agility and ambiguity in the future?
- 7 How do we retain and grow employee commitment in an uncertain environment?
- 8 Have we identified employee well-being indicators- health, safety and security?
- 9 How will our operating model evolve to remain relevant and competitive?
- 10 Have we done a risk assessment of the collaborative technological tools?
- 11 How are we positioned from a cybersecurity perspective? Are we covering each aspect of business to protect our resources?

## Questions for senior management

1. Can you identify the new skills and capabilities that will realistically be required in the future?
2. Have you identified current employees who are willing and able to be upskilled and retrained?
3. What are the cultural changes needed to support people and digital workforce of the future?
4. What are the barriers and how can we develop plans for new ways of working and nurturing employee commitment?
5. Is our current Learning and Development function adequately resourced and appropriately organised to deliver the level of re-skilling that the organisation is likely to need?
6. Is the organisation communicating regularly with the employees to instill trust and confidence?
7. Will new operating ways have challenges on bonding and teaming?
8. Will we lose out on the emotional quotient of the workforce in digital environment?
9. Do we have the right skill sets in the firm to support the digital future of work?



## What actions can the boards consider?



As businesses transition to digitisation, the Board of Directors will need to oversee the impact of this transition on the overall strategy



In a collaborative approach, boards and management may have to weigh the costs, benefits and suitability of augmenting their human workforce



Creating workforce plans that re-shape the workforce including developing the new skills and capabilities for strategic execution.



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