

Integrating Sustainability and Skill in the 'vuca' World with Millennials: a Macro-view

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Abstract

Gone are the days when organizational stability was proportional to the duration of employees' stay. Instead, it is the 'skill' basket that has redefined the stability perspective. It also becomes important to discuss the HR issues because of the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) scenario that has encapsulated every organisation and its workforce in the regime of technological upswing. Job rotation once happened to define the sustainability. Today, in the scenario where lay-offs are common, would multi-skilling help overcome the same? We need to understand skills in a totally newer perspective in the age of 'Millennials'. The paper looks at this issue and suggests how skill and sustainability can be intertwined to result in a win-win situation.

Keywords

VUCA, New Age Skills, Sustainability, Millennials

PROEM:

The conception of 'VUCA' was done to describe the more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous multilateral world which resulted from the end of the Cold War. It has been afterwards used in emerging ideas in management and related areas that apply in a wide range of organizations, both business and non-business. In the management parlance, it is mostly used to describe the business organisations who have been embracing change at a faster pace. 'Volatility' indicates the landscape and dynamics of change and the change reagents. 'Uncertainty' reflects the deficiency of expectedness, the wonder scenarios and the sense of awareness and understanding them. 'Complexity' relates to the complex forces that surround an organization (workplace) and its workforce. 'Ambiguity' fetches with the mistiness

of authenticity, the probable for misinterprets, and the mixed meanings of conditions; cause-and-effect confusion. In fact, VUCA stands as a practical code for readiness towards change and acts as a precursor to survival and sustainability!

THE BACKDROP

Given that India will become the youngest country by 2021, with around two-third of its population in the working age group of 20-35, companies need to shape their strategies to remain relevant to this section, called millennials or Generation Y. Who are the millennials? They are persons born between 1980 and 2000. Numerous millennial characters are optimistic—they are serious, positive, seek new skills and display a high level of social awareness. But, they also tend to be demanding, have vast outlooks having been brought up to think

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they are the best, need flatter organisations and crave work-life balance (WLB). These generalizations have their origins elsewhere and there have been infrequent yet principally circumstantial efforts to see whether Indian counterparts are the same. Let us find out.

As per the Deloitte's annual millennial survey 2016, more than half of Millennials surveyed in India wish to leave their current job (read employers) if handed over such a choice and it goes further to the range of three-fourths if we consider the year 2020. Such an intention is more in the emerging economies across the world rather than the well developed or more mature economies. India was one of the three countries where more than 75% of their millennials are likely to make a switchover from their current workplace, others being Peru and South Africa to the same tune. Indian Millennials ranked *opportunities to progress and putting on leadership shoes* as strong enough reason (when salary gets excluded) to stick to an organization for job/work. Around 70% believed that their leadership skills are taking a beating here. This amazing miss of loyalty embodies a solemn task to any organisation employing a sizable number of Millennials, and in a country like ours, Millennials stagger the biggest working segment.

Organisations offering a proper work-life balance are able to serve their clients with good quality products and/or services. India is among the five countries (other four being Indonesia, South Korea, Holland and Belgium) where most of the survey respondents could *work from home*, if they desired. Such a sought flexibility and trust level is also moderately high among senior executives and organisations where employee satisfaction is high, also in parents and those intending to stay for an extended stay (beyond five years) in the

organisation. Moreover, an irresistible majority to the tune of 95% of those surveyed in India opine that success of a business should be measured by more than just financial indicators. Issues like good workplace, possession of a faithful client base, *innovation* and environment friendliness were considered significant to magistrate the triumph of occupational work.

The link between the faithfulness of Millennials and their moods about business are just not a matter of coincidence. It comes from Millennials' *career drives* and *private standards*, as well as providing opportunities to rise up the defined hierarchy. According to the same survey, employees are likely to be greatly satisfied where there is imaginative and wide-ranging working culture rather than a more orthodox approach which is more routinized, uncluttered. Also, if ideas are inspiring and ambitions of youngsters are considered, it proves beneficial. In addition, there is found a high correlation between satisfaction and purpose. The wish to delineate from the ongoing job in the upcoming years is greater among Millennials in emerging markets and a huge number, to the tune of three-fourths, maintain that it has a positive influence on a wider societal base. Millennials wish to invest their precious time in understanding novel ways of office work, *developing their skills*, and being mentored.

BENEFITS OF SKILL ENHANCEMENT

The advantage of developing skills are multifold, it augments workers' intrinsic capability to work in addition to finding newer dimensions and definitions of the same. This brings more room for imagination and gratification. The future opulence of any country is directly proportional to the employment scenario and productivity at the workplace. Available evidence firmly establishes that clubbing good education with quality training

is vital and directly proportional to the labour bazaar. It authorizes people to progress to their full dimensions and grasp employment occasions; advances workers' productivity, makes environment innovation and development friendly, boosts both domestic and foreign investment, and hence job progression, lowering unemployment or underemployment, leads to better wages and when broadly accessible, enlarges labour market opportunities and lessens social disparities.

We all agree, quality education is an essential prerequisite for skills development and further enhancement. Integrating this education with training and skills development ensures that workforces will learn the accurate skill mix, especially those essentially needed by the upcoming demands of labour markets, organisations and workplaces in different industrial sectors. Effective tie-ups between governments, employers' and workers' organizations and trainers are critical to augment the learning propositions in the VUCA world. Broad and continuous access to skill development unlocks the opportunities for and welfares of both initial and lifelong learning to all in urban as well as rural zones, to realize their ambitions. Customized policies and actions are obligatory to enable admittance to training and skills development by individuals and groups mired by bottlenecks, including poverty and squat income, ethnic origin, disability and migrant status. Policies related to education / skill become more effective when matched to employment opportunities, social defense, industrial & trade policies. By the use of updated information, those working as trainers can assess the match between the skills they are teaching and those demanded in a typical workplace scenario as of now. When such information is connected to young workforce through employment and vocational guidance

services, it aids them to construct better-informed selections about education and training, and hence, skill development.

MEASURES FOR WORK SUSTAINABILITY

Layoff news come unabated now a day, thanks to the VUCA tornado hitting the market despite the Government saying that such-layoffs are routine and is being hyped for a certain kind of mileage! But let us focus on the issue under the scanner of skill-set, being a management professional. One basic reason is, and will always be, in a techno-world: skill redundancy due to automation or a related mechanism inflicted by the Information Technology. But it is interesting; humans develop technology and make fellow men out of job market! Can robotics replace us? We would still need intelligent humans for that too!

To become indispensable to an organisation, one must upskill self. In fact, 'in house reskilling' could be the modified word for upskilling. Newer technologies will force employees for this option and it would not be necessary for them to go for formal training, intermittent learning at work and during off-project hours could be the answer. Self-paced learning must focus on the areas where transitions are supposed to be high, both in terms of technology and value. Getting a technical qualification or a certification formally would also help.

Another solution could be of entrepreneurial nature. One should try moonlighting (freelancing!). It means working out possibility of a second informal job after normal business hours in the evening or night. The best idea would be to work with newer start-ups that lack tech-talent. Outcomes can be delivered thus making the new entrepreneurial venture earn money and move

towards sustainability. Financial sustainability of the person can also move up.

Gone are the days when workers used to be 'functional', now one can take the leverage of the upcoming techno-knowledge to edge past others. Not necessarily one may remain in the same functional area, in fact there have been clear indications of cross-functional workforce but the new enabler would be the innovative technology like the robotics or cloud computing. By applying a combination of education, change of domain and entrepreneurship, one can easily bounce back to work in this VUCA led scenario across the industries.

There needs to be an attitude change, a person is solely responsible for career movement, this should be the notion in the VUCA time as of now. We empower others and feel happy. Do we empower ourselves and shed dependency. One must revisit all career assumptions with full pragmatism; create a new way of understanding career which we can discover at regular intervals. One must try to build professional relationships beyond our current radius. We should turn our weak links into smarter ones. Candidness could be the new 'mantra' for success!

CONCLUSION

From the aforesaid discussions, we may narrow down to the fact that in the VUCA time as of now, deskilling, reskilling and upskilling have gained prominence. Multiplicity of skills was required earlier also and they are needed now too but one should be clear about possessing those skills which can make the person sustainable for a little longer. The vision that could upscale the person to success should be clear and that would come only with quality education and training. The VUCA effects

would intensify in the coming time!

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