



November 2013



**Thinking Aloud**

HR: The Under-Leveraged Business Function – **Jay**

**Podium**

Interview with **Achal Khanna**, CEO, SHRM – India

**We Recommend**

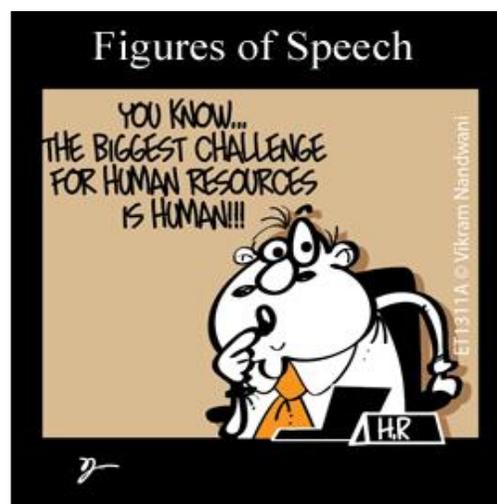
Articles & Videos

**Standing Ovation**

Rakshana, Andhra Pradesh

Dear Reader,

'People are our greatest asset' is probably an adage that many of us are very familiar with. Against a backdrop of economic challenges, increasing pressure is being placed on the HR professional who is reliant on their HR department to carefully manage the employee lifecycle. With the rapidly changing business landscape today, the challenges within the field of human resources are endless. The role of HR professionals is constantly evolving and expanding, with new challenges surfacing beyond operational HR issues. As the business world changes, so does the role of HR professionals and the various unseen challenges that this profession will also have to tide over.



This month, ET explores the challenges of HR professionals. Just a quick reminder, for all your HR related questions you can ask Jay @ELSEmpowered using #Managementquery.

In **Thinking Aloud**, Jay explores the various aspects of the HR function and its challenges. HR today is an under-leveraged business function, and that said, HR professionals today lack the ability to use the power of metrics to make a convincing business case for their contribution. An emerging development is the study of HR Analytics which enables the function to not just present dashboards but also to attempt predictions by mapping trends in the system. A key requirement for the HR function is a strong conviction in the profession. To run today' s enterprise the least HR leaders can do is to upgrade and update their own knowledge & skills to stay relevant to today' s professional requirements.

On the **Podium** we feature **Ms. Achal Khanna**, CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Ms. Khanna has served various HR roles before heading SHRM India. She throws some light on the various challenges the HR community in India faces and how SHRM India is instrumental in resolving these challenges. Further, Ms. Khanna is of the opinion that technology is the single-most significant differentiator in the workforce of today and the

past. Some key deliberates in one of SHRM' s latest conclave titled “ Empowering Change: Workplace of the Future” have also been highlighted.

In **We Recommend**, this month, we share some articles and videos extracted from Harvard Business Review and YouTube. These are put forth by eminent personalities from various walks of management and touch on topics such as leadership and how to manage workforce while at the same time try to create the best workplace on earth. This section also takes a quick look at what goes into making a career in HR.

**Standing Ovation** features Rakshana, an NGO dedicated to uplift the marginalized communities in Andhra Pradesh through various village developmental programs. Its mission is to facilitate the sustainable empowerment of the socio-economic under privileged communities by organizing and capacitating them to eliminate barriers to their development.

In **Figures of Speech**, Vikram' s toon stumbles upon a very ‘ human’ challenge!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Linked In](#) & [Google+](#) - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!

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## Thinking Aloud

### HR: The Under-Leveraged Business Function - Jay

Larry Bossidy (co-author of the best selling ‘ Execution’ ) has famously said, ‘ People before Strategy’ and offered his candid views on what he felt was a neglected dimension in managing a business. Emphasizing his views, he illustrated by sharing how the transformation at AlliedSignals (which he headed and then merged with Honeywell) was a consequence of his philosophy that there is a ‘ job that no CEO should delegate’ . The secret of his value creation was to spend a substantial amount of time in what is considered routine HR jobs – recruitment, evaluating, and people development – key elements of the people process in a firm. Through this he created a team of managers who worked on a strategy of change & executed his game plan to perfection.

What was easily evident to Bossidy has not been understood sufficiently by other CEOs. While there is much more lip service than ever before on the importance of human capital, rare is the Business Head who invests ‘ emotional energy & time’ (in Bossidy’ s words) and leverage the Human Resources function. Too often their preoccupation with dealing with the present precludes them from investing in what is really important for sustainable growth of the firm – building the human capital base. Their legacy then, is what I term, ‘ managing episodically from one crisis point to the next’ , all in the quest for today’ s numbers.

However, to blame the CEO for her apathy in this matter is an easy cop-out. The primary failure to my mind is the inability of the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), or whatever be the fashionable title of the day, to make a

convincing case for the function.

Theoreticians (Ulrich et al) will tell you that there are four facets to the modern HR role: Strategic Partner, Change Agent, Administrative Expert & Employee Champion. The issue is that of these aspects, more often than not, the HR functionary is too occupied with routine administrative chores. This is not just indicative of the poor use of technology but also his inability to construct a significant role in shaping & addressing the strategic challenges of the firm. Having said that, there is also a new generation of professionals who are extremely articulate with all the latest buzzwords. However, glib talk can take you only so far; what is necessary is substance to convince the firm that the appropriate people processes can be created for generating better business results.

What is also missing is the ability of HR professionals to use the power of metrics to make a convincing business case for their contribution. An emerging development is the study of HR Analytics to enable the function to not just present dashboards for their function but also to attempt predictions (however fuzzy at present) by mapping trends in the system. And, the longer this is attempted, better the chances of improving your predictive ability and become an effective contributor.

Add to this another key requirement for the HR functionary: an evangelistic conviction in their profession. Without a true belief in their own role, they cannot but be apologists hanging on to the coat tails of the strategic decision makers of the firm. It is sad to see some of the senior members of the profession still wailing about their voice going unheeded in the Boardroom. They have been marginalized as they lack the personal conviction to sell their point of view to the firm. This inability gets accentuated when they have not prepared themselves and stayed current with the changes in their industry and business environment. Consequently, if they expect to run today' s enterprise with an outdated & old ' HR software' embedded in themselves, they are bound to find their actions encountering system rejection.

The least these HR leaders can do is to upgrade their own knowledge & skills to stay relevant to today' s professional requirements. While multiple options are available today, the quest to stay current emerges from a true appreciation of what it means to lead in the function. As Bossidy states, the ' level of excellence didn' t happen by accident.'

For those corporate leaders (in HR and all other functions) who complain of lack of time (and resources) for self-development, I wish to remind them of Thomas Paine' s words, ' Lead, follow, or get out of the way' .

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**Podium**

**Ms. Achal Khanna, CEO, SHRM – India**



**Achal Khanna is the CEO for SHRMI. SHRMI is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the world's largest professional association devoted to human resource management. Achal is responsible for SHRM India, as well as Asia Pacific operations and serves on the SHRM Leadership Team. She is responsible for building SHRM India's brand, expanding its business and developing professional relationships with government agencies and other HR and business associations. Achal has 30 years of work experience. Prior to joining SHRM in 2011, she was the Managing Director for Kelly India operations; Vice President for GE; and Country Manager for Polaroid India. She has also worked with DuPont, ITC and Cosmo Group in various capacities. She is a recipient of the "Best Women Executive in India" Award. Achal holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and a Master's degree in English Literature from Meerut University and an MBA from AIMA, New Delhi.**

**ET: What are the challenges to the HR community in India and how is SHRM India contributing to resolve it?**

**AK:** As we close 2013, it is time to reflect on the year gone by and the challenges that await us in 2014. The recession continued well into this year and shows no clear signs of getting over. Hence the challenges will continue to remain the same – how to optimize workforce, how to clearly link people to business, how to calculate measurable ROI from human capital investments and how to retain mission critical talent. There is a strong need to ensure that the current talent in an organization is highly engaged and motivated, as well as strategically rewarded since cost optimization and increased business growth are both equally important goals for sustainability. Another key challenge is to create a world-class leadership pipeline, which can take the organization to the next level when the markets improve.

SHRM India has been instrumental and at the forefront of advancing the HR profession through its thought leadership, knowledge sharing platforms, panel of experts and reach within the community. At SHRM India, we not only focus on assessing and sharing the future people challenges from a global and India perspective but we also raise the bar of the profession by providing learning opportunities for HR professionals, so that they are better equipped to manage these challenges and make direct contributions to business growth.

**ET: How is technology being used in the HR function undertaken by companies today?**

**AK:** Technology is the single-most significant differentiator in the workforce of today and the past. Therefore, our workplaces need to reflect this difference and utilize technology advancements in an optimal manner. The HR function connects the bridge between technology and people. Using technology platforms for key HR processes such as Performance Management System, Payroll processing and so on have been in place for a long time. However, new-age use of technology by the HR function involves Knowledge Management, Recruitment, Peer-to-Peer Learning and Collaboration and evaluating Employee Engagement. For example, there are internal web tools which enable employees across remote locations to connect with each other, share knowledge and collaborate on assignments, thus allowing for seamless exchange of knowledge. There are also tools to assess employee moods during the course of the day. For recruitment, online games have become an assessment tool. So, as one can see there are immense possibilities for HR with respect to technology, provided we understand the pitfalls of the same.

**ET: How can HR professionals influence the potential of Gen Y through the power of social media?**

**AK:** With the Gen Y workforce of today, the degree or extent of communication is never enough. Online interactions via social networks such as Facebook, instant messages or office chat tools are very prevalent now. Therefore,

driving a holistic internal employee communication strategy is the role that the HR team can play to influence the potential of this generation through social media channels. They can also encourage the managers to maintain a continual flow of information with their teams through such internal tools. Updating about what is happening within an organization, helps in keeping the team motivated.

The other critical role that HR can play to leverage the potential of Gen Y is to empower them to focus on self-learning and development. Learning through virtual platforms is non-negotiable in today's times and HR can play a key role so that these employees attend webinars in their expertise areas, do e-learning courses and join discussion forums on platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter and so on. Since these employees are more technology savvy they will assimilate the learning faster through such channels.

Finally, HR professionals can build the Employer brand through social media. They can influence the thought process and aspirations of Gen Y through this approach. This can help in attracting the right talent into the firm.

**ET: Globally, what are the trends that SHRM has observed in the acquisition and management of talent?**

**AK:** Some key trends in acquisition are related to focusing on new and innovative methods of acquiring talent, workforce planning, hiring metrics and so on. These are all trends which are required to re-align talent acquisition to business needs and goals.

In terms of talent management, key trends are related to having a robust talent identification process, using the right balance of experiential and classroom training for development, creating networks or groups of multidimensional talent and focusing on talent management at all levels instead of just using it as a succession planning approach to develop leaders for potentially key roles in the firm.

**ET: You organized a successful conclave of HR professionals recently on 'Empowering Change: Workplace of the Future'. Can you please highlight some of the key deliberations at this Meet?**

**AK:** Considering the current volatile economic climate and globalized markets, our 2013 Conclave focused on the highly relevant theme of ' Empowering Change: Workplace of the Future'. Among the top companies present were Genpact, Coca Cola, LinkedIn, Yahoo, IBM, ICICI Prudential, KPMG, Monster India, Kingfisher, Raymond, SAP, Flipkart, Sodexo, besides NHRDN and NMIMS and several others.

Our keynoter Ben Casnocha, famous American author and expert on the future of workplaces, underlined that lifetime contracts are certainly not the best bets for agile companies of the future. He mentioned that future-ready corporations will be ones driven by forces like entrepreneurial skills, tours of duty, external networking skills and social media.

We also had a series of panel discussions and concurrent sessions on Emerging Workplace Trends, Global immigration Trends, Intention-based communication, HR Analytics, Diversity & Inclusion, Corporate Social Responsibility, HR Transformation, Employee Engagement, and Skill Enhancement leading to plenty of insights and interaction.

From a global perspective on changing workforce trends, shared by one of our leading experts on Diversity, Shirley Davis, the participants learnt how to evolve a strategy for leading real organizational change. The CEOs in the Arena session was a new format which we tried this year for the second time, around the topic How to Turn Your Generosity into Social Responsibility? Intense discussions between Chief Executives and Intelligentsia followed on

India' s new, mandatory CSR legislation, challenges of CSR integration into core functions of business, bureaucratic hurdles and value of enforced social welfare measures.

We plan to come back next year with another thought-provoking HR conclave to accentuate the growth of HR and business professionals alike.

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## **We Recommend**

### **Articles & Videos**

The World Wide Web offers us a plethora of management-related literature, but this month we share with you links to resources from gurus who offer their viewpoints on various topics:

#### **1) Why Did We Ever Go Into HR?**

Matthew D. Breitfelder and Daisy Wademan Dowling takes a quick look at what goes into making a career in HR. They are of the opinion that things are changing as talent management becomes a make-or-break corporate competency with a shift from managing the monetary levers of human resources to increasing the asset value of human capital.

**Link:** <http://hbr.org/2008/07/why-did-we-ever-go-into-hr/ar/>

#### **2) A Market-Driven Approach to Retaining Talent**

Peter Capelli in his article delves into a market-driven retention strategy that begins with the assumption that long-term, across-the-board employee loyalty is neither possible nor desirable. Though moving to a market driven strategy to retain talent is not easy, it is the new reality: the market, not your company, will ultimately determine the movement of your employees.

**Link:** <http://hbr.org/2000/01/a-market-driven-approach-to-retaining-talent/ar/1>

#### **3) Creating the Best Workplace on Earth**

After three years of investigating the question – “ Suppose you want to design the best company on earth to work for. What would it be like?” authors Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones considers that the “ organization of your dreams” is one where individual differences are nurtured; information is not suppressed or spun; the company adds value to employees and one which stands for something meaningful; the work itself is intrinsically rewarding; and there are no rules. They put forth to us the “ Dream Company” Diagnostics.

**Link:** <http://hbr.org/2013/05/creating-the-best-workplace-on-earth/ar/1>

#### **4) Leading Quietly by Adam Grant**

Adam Grant of Wharton is among the 40 best business school Professors under the age of 40 and is the youngest tenured Professor and single highest-rated teacher at The Wharton School. Grant' s research focuses on the drivers of work motivation and how these motivations help to improve employee work performance. He looks at such factors as expressions of gratitude and the advantages of introverted leadership in the video link below.

**Link:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YC0G-ZA8gU>

#### **5) Reimagining the path to growth by Lynda Gratton**

Having worked with several corporations globally, Lynda Gratton, Professor, London Business School, discusses the "future of work." In her video, she describes the five areas affecting companies today and why and how collaboration will be the key to business success.

**Link:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5Q\\_NT44u-8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5Q_NT44u-8)

**Note:** To access the entire article, you are required to register online on Harvard Business Review

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## **Standing Ovation**

### **Rakshana, Andhra Pradesh**



Rakshana is a non-profit, non-governmental voluntary organization, operational in 140 villages in various parts of Andhra Pradesh. Formed by a group of social workers, Rashana facilitates the sustainable empowerment of under privileged communities by organizing and undertaking various projects to eliminate socio-economic, political, cultural, physical, psychological and environmental barriers to development.

Since its inception, the organization has been very active in taking up several village developmental programs in partnership with respective rural communities for the empowerment of poor and marginalized communities such as Fisher Folk, Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and other backward classes.

Some of the projects under Rakshana include:

#### **Projects**

- Women Empowerment
  - Informal Banking Groups

- Income Generation Programs
- Skill Development Programs
- Sanitation
- Health Care
- Child Rights
- Education
  - Early Childhood Care
  - Mainstreaming
  - Supplementary Education Centres
  - School Improvement Program
- Disaster Risk Management
  - Early Warning System
  - Disaster Preparedness
  - Restoration and Rehabilitation
  - Livelihoods
  - Capacity Building
  - Collaboration
- Non-Pesticides Management
- Tribal Development Program
  - Crop Development
  - Introduction of new crops
  - Promotion of Livelihoods

To know more about Rakshana, you can visit their website <http://www.rakshanaindia.org>

Here' s to Rakshana for their noble cause!

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**Empowered Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd.**

101, Lords Manor, 49, Sahaney Sujjan Park, Lullanagar, Pune – 411040, Maharashtra, India

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