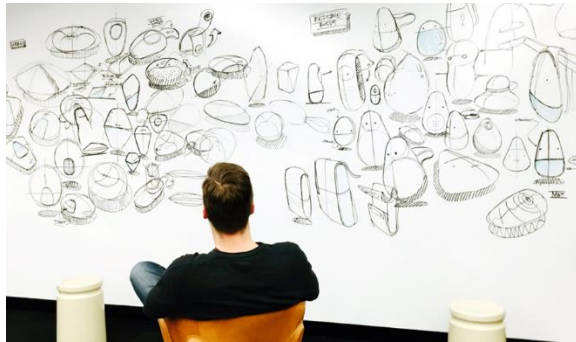


Design thinking is human-centered therefore is the core of HR

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Abstract - Brands like Apple, Google, Nike, Amazon and PepsiCo have been established because of practicing and using design thinking to create innovative products. For example Nike is the best sports company because they have great technology and equipment to boost performance of the athletes. In basketball shoes, Nike provides cushion and lightweight materials to accommodate the sport. Design thinking indeed has led to the success of products design and to the operational processes. Innovation is synonymous with design thinking.

Index Terms - Design thinking, Innovation, Human Resource Management, Employee Engagement, Recruitment, Performance Management, Training & Development, Retention, Compensation, and Employee Morale, Empathy.

I.INTRODUCTION

In this article I want present how design thinking is particularly relevant in the context of Human Resource practices. Quite recently, at Deloitte the company developed HR solutions that focus on creating a positive employee experience by using Design Thinking principles. These HR solutions have built standard operating procedures (SOPs) and processes that put the employee experience in the centre and by doing so made it simple, gratifying, and fascinating. Deloitte incorporated design thinking elements through digital designs to experience work processes,

behavioural economics and much more. Traditional HR solutions are built around process steps, forms and formal training. Individual employees want to experience one on one information and interaction in the organization. The previous format of broadcasting information has been discarded and mails are sent to individual employees pertaining to their scope of work and scope to improvise the process.

Deloitte used Design Thinking to convert HR from a “process developer” to an “experience architect”. From redesigning the physical work environment to optimising the digital workspace and directing how managers use their time, Design Thinking has helped Deloitte reimagine the entire process of hiring, training, engaging, and evaluating employees. Deloitte has invested in their employees, studying how people behave at work to create profiles and personas to model their solutions on. These profiles are specific to the employee demographics, work environment and the set of challenges they encounter. Ideating and prototyping has enabled the company to come up with quicker solutions and effective tools. Feedback mechanisms based on questionnaires have helped them bring specific requirements to light and facilitate learning and awareness. Few companies are even using agile methodologies to teach people to do less and focus more.

Design thinking is a multi-disciplinary tool. It is non-linear. In HR context, the principles of design thinking are applied to answer humanistic questions by assuming challenges faced by people and trying to make them easier. Each individual has a different approach of looking at a challenge in organization; each individual has a different perception.

Design thinking develops an in-depth understanding of people for whom solutions are being designed and involve them in the process so as to come up with out-of-the-box ideas to enhance their workplace experiences. It seeks to integrate the skills and

methodology of designers from multiple disciplines into a collaborative effort. Multidisciplinary designers need to understand how diverse areas of expertise can come together to solve complex design problems.

While brushing teeth, it's not easy to reach the deep inside of mouth, leaving molars and teeth not brushed thoroughly. GE designed an electric toothbrush which made rapid automatic bristle motions, either back-and-forth in rotation in order to clean teeth. A modern electric toothbrush is usually powered by a rechargeable battery charged through inductive charging when the brush sits in the charging base between uses. This is an example of design thinking in production.

For helping people find safe water sources near them is one of the ways in which non-profit tech start-up mWater has improved thousands of lives. mWater apps and software let users find, monitor and map the quality of water and sanitation sites. This also helps local authorities detect water infrastructure gaps. Designed for field use, the apps work both online and offline – using the cloud for automatic data syncing when online and GPS for finding locations offline. With over 10,000 active users in 93 countries, mWater already has a database of over 350,000 public and private water sites around the world.

Innovation is at the core of businesses. Delivering differentiated and satisfying customer experiences can lead to boost in loyalty, market share and revenues.

Imagine what a similar focus on employee experiences could mean for business. Leading companies are already recognizing that the employee experience is the new battleground for competitive advantage.

Organisations and world economies are constantly evaluating ways and means that can restore balance and help jumpstart slumping livelihoods. In the ongoing Covid pandemic, and at this critical juncture, organisations are leaning on Human Resources (HR) to restore employee morale and boost confidence in the company's future. Adapting to this rapidly changing environment requires a renovated approach. The HR fraternity has been prompt and agile in shedding the old ways and facing the unprecedented challenge with new and innovative ideas. HR plays a crucial role in enabling organisations to transition from working-at-office to working-from-home, almost overnight. In short, the pandemic catapulted HR teams to occupy a seat on the strategy table from being just a support function.

Design Thinking in HR can enable organizations in understanding, envisioning and designing how employees experience work, perceiving the employer-employee relationship through talent solution platform, storming, norming and forming ideas quickly with employee experience ideas and prioritizing action to ensure consistent employee experience as described in team development by Bruce Tuckman.

It is difficult for organisations to attract and retain talent. Regardless of a company's location or size, attracting and retaining talent at top, middle and bottom positions. Employee expectations are racking up against HR as comparisons are made to frictionless customer experience outside of the office. Organisations are expecting the HR teams to build agility in the internal and external environment. Organizations demand HR to help in making better decision making, for giving actionable insights, increasing creativity in all processes for making better people decisions. How can HR help the organisation, its employees and themselves?

For changing expectations of customers requires new ways of thinking about people and designing people management strategies. Design thinking helps in this area. Design thinking and design research help in making strategic decisions at many levels. This is an example of how AirBnB's strategic team uses data to address current user experience challenges on the social media platform. The year 2009 was tough for Airbnb as it was very close to going bust. The start-up as registering only \$200 per week as revenue and were nowhere close to making a sustainable business out of their initiative. The founders noticed a pattern that all their listings in New York had poor images and it was very difficult for customers to see what they would be paying for. One of them – Graham suggested a completely non-scalable and a non-technical solution to the problem. He advised travelling to New York, renting a camera, visiting all the properties to take good quality images and replace the old amateur images with the new high resolution and beautiful ones. Even though the resolution was not backed by data, the results were amazing. After improving the quality of images for the listings, the revenue generated rose to \$400 per week. Design thinking requires strong backup data as well as customer feedback.

Design Thinking enables HR to think beyond the typical process and pragmatic approach to service delivery and focus instead on the experience and outcomes that it is looking to drive. The principles of repetition, trying, failing, retrying and improving are critical to success in design thinking. It cannot be a do it once approaches, where one solution is rolled out, the program ends and then for years it's never improved or assessed.

Design Thinking is based on understanding the in-depth needs of different stakeholder profiles; to conduct design thinking is to firmly put your feet in the shoes of your stakeholder. This is why empathy is a crucial element of the practice. Its goal is to generate solutions that bring value to all stakeholders. In the case of HR, this could be the managers, employees, or candidates that experience any part of the HR process. Since HR primarily handles the recruitment, employment experience and the exit-process of employees and represents the company, understanding human needs and executing accordingly becomes crucial. In HR design thinking focuses on building a structure, a design for operations which would align the goals of the company with its employees. It starts by building the problem statement to find ways of resolving that. In most organizations fast-paced work environment demands quick solutions to the challenges of humans. Unlike machines, humans are after all, not engineered to deliver automated accurate results around the clock. Innovation is the only way to meet this challenge and design thinking is capable of driving that innovation. Tim Brown, one of the pioneers of Design Thinking believes that "leading through questions" is the best way to drive innovation. Questions bring us closer to stakeholder requirements and help us understand the scope of improvement. In the following areas of HR let's see how design thinking helps:

HR PLANNING

HR planning involves recruiting, selecting, hiring and training the right candidates to make them ready for the job. This is one of the crucial processes for any company since it builds the branding for them. Design thinking can optimise this process by incorporating empathy. It can help recruiters to create a welcoming environment for new recruits at the company. Continuous interaction between both employer and employee seeking the job opportunity helps set

expectations. Empathy will also help the HR team to identify any intrinsic challenges and address them. Ideation, another crucial step in design thinking encourages users to be creative and think of newer ways of addressing an issue. Interactive sessions and understanding the core characteristic of employee is vital to innovation. HR teams must discard conventional approaches for driving innovation in recruitment policies.

CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance management aims at recognising the meaningful work that employees do and rewarding that appropriately. Employees feel elated when their good work is lauded by the organization. For understanding human potential, organizations must have measurable HR tools for assessing performance. Employees like to get recognition for their talent and domain knowledge. Design Thinking can make this process more effective by using tools of surveys to connect and empathise with the employees and understand their concerns and expectations. The HR teams in organizations must keep updating their performance management policies and tools.

RETENTION POLICIES

Sense of belonging is most important for human relations. When employees feel that they are cared for by the organization they put in more efforts; when they are appreciated, their productivity augments. The HR department is responsible for maintaining a harmonious relationship between the employees and the company. The biggest problem is faced when organisations do not have clear communication channels with employees. Lack of a proper communication channel can lead to various issues and misunderstandings. Employees must stay well connected with the organization. Design Thinking can enhance this process with an empathy-driven approach towards issues that concern both parties. By using the design thinking methods, the HR team can assess problematic situations with good solutions that pacify both equally.

COMPENSATION

Compensation and benefits comprises a large part of what the HR department handles. Right from the time a candidate joins a company, gets promoted to the time he quits or retires, the HR department reviews and updates his/her compensation. Design thinking methods can help the HR team to understand the requirements and expectations of the employees and the budgets of the employers and optimise the compensation accordingly in cash and kind. Even while designing policies, an empathy driven approach can help formulate policies that meet the needs of the employees and truly benefit them.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

This is a priority area for HR. Design thinking can offer variety of practices to create inspiring workplaces. There are many organizations which make workplace environment fun filled. The tagline “all work and no play make Jack a dull boy” is brought into practice. Monthly/Quarterly outings, monthly get-togethers, recreation nights, pipe music played during work hours are some examples how employees are kept entertained. User-friendly IT systems, weekly changing canteen foods made as per choice, and some other welfare practices are some ways of cooperation in which the employee feels cared for. The aim is to improve engagement, creativity and productivity. Empathy is a basic requirement of design thinking.

DESIGN THINKING IS AT CORE OF INNOVATION

Many organizations fail to create innovative work culture. Design thinking helps in infusing innovation culture in organizations. Some organizations have succeeded. One such organization is 3M Technologies. In 1968, Spencer Silver, a scientist at 3M's headquarters was working to create a strong adhesive. Accidentally, he developed a new material that was light enough to easily remove and peel apart. Silver felt that he had invented something unique and useful but struggled to find what that use could be. Another employee Art Fry used Spencer's adhesive to anchor his bookmark in his hymn book which became one of the stellar products of 3M. Few years later Fry utilized 3M's sanctioned "permitted bootlegging" policy to develop the idea. Design thinking flourishes on empathy, expansive thinking, and experimentation.

CONCLUSION

Modern HR and design thinking go hand. Employee experience is most important in employee value proposition and their retention. It helps engaging employees more actively in organisational change and by creating an environment and experiences that inspire people and make them more creative and productive.

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