

Role of Digital Workforce Capabilities (DWC) in selected Indian Industries

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Abstract

Purpose- The aim of this research is to investigate the digitizing work force capabilities in Indian industrie. These changes require strategic plannin, support, buy in and years of execution with all departments, functions, and businesses on boarded.

Design/methodology/approach – The study took place in MNCs in India. For data collection, a total of 50 employed individuals across different sectors of different industries were approached. Besides this, qualitative data analysis was done to digital capture themes and patterns.

Findings – The results show that employees are seeing the value and clearly saying that implementation of DWC is going to be a critical driver for enhancing employees' experience not only in India but all over the world.

Practical implications – The evolution of business is happening rapidly, and the new-age digital capabilities are speeding up this process worldwide. This has resulted in a need to review and revise the traditional methods to adopt the digital journey irrespective of the industry and relook at the definition and structure of the workplace as it is today.

Originality/value – The research contributes to the firms' cross-industries by highlighting the role of DWC towards employee's experience. It brings out the critical need for organizations to have a strategy around DWC while understanding the role ii plays and the effects on employee's experience.

Keywords Digitization, DWC, Employee Experience

Introduction

Organizations are built around and by employees (Zinck, 2017) to survive and prosper they have realized that they need to relook/reinvent the experience of employees as it becomes the key to engagement, productivity, retention, and ultimately business results (Caplan, 2014; Lauren, 2019).

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The multi-generation workforce today demands the need to reframe traditional approaches to deliver professional/personal growth (Plaskoff, 2017). Businesses these days looking inwards and outwards for that next big idea, product, or service and rely on the talent at hand or to attract talent from outside (Accenture, 2016). Employees are an integral part of any business and for the business to not only remain competitive but also grow, requires providing an environment that leverages digital transformation towards enhancing employees' overall experience end to end of their lifecycle with the organization (Ljubisa, 2017).

Companies to remain competitive and grow, require providing an environment that leverages digital transformation (Nanterme and Daugherty, 2016) by developing a digital ecosystem and identifying new roles to develop, enable and facilitate digital (Chakravarty, Grewal and Sambamurthy, 2013) while working towards enhancing employee's overall experience (Mičić, 2017) and improving job satisfaction (Lauren, 2019). It also enables and enhances employees' capabilities and skills. Organizations are identifying new roles to develop, enable and facilitate digital. Some experts believe that successful digital adoption and workforce capabilities transformation is driven by people rather than technology. (Mergel, Edelman and Haug, 2019). The way forward is to have a digital strategy and develop digital capabilities for the workforce (Khin and Ho, 2018). It is a journey that organizations must or have embarked on and the ones who haven't will have to eventually come aboard to remain competent.

Interestingly, 67% of MNCs see India among top choice for FDI per CII-EY survey, increased commercial activities, market potential and availability of skilled workforce emerged as important top 3 factors (Spotlight, 2016). Nearly 88% of employees working with Indian organizations say that if offered a choice, they would like to switch to multinational companies. It becomes very important to also understand what's critical and driving that workforce, the study carried out as part of this research helps put some light on it. Additionally, MNCs also bring in the transfer of technology, systematic capital investment, increase in exports from India, and global managerial practices that help improve the competition. Today an entire ecosystem is built around digital and online/virtual world presence. Organizations have started to relook at some of their real estate strategy around how to strike a balance that works in favour of the employee and the organization.

Literature Review

Organizations should embrace transformation through the adoption and inclusion of digital technology that enables business improvements. This transformation/change is critical for continuously enhancing customer experience and improving engagement, streamlining operations, and developing new business models, or they will face destruction at the hands of their competitors who have already embarked on the journey (Khin & Ho, 2018). For all businesses, digital transformation is the way forward, and the sooner they understand and integrate it, the greater their chances of remaining relevant and successful. Diverse solutions are required for different scenarios inside enterprises across organizations, depending on their demands, as digital technology is the future and evolving at a quick pace (Shahi & Sinha, 2021).

While there is consensus on the importance of adopting digital technology, most employees find the process complex and slow. Many employees believe their leaders lack urgency and fail to share a vision for how technology might transform the business. Companies that succeed tend to have leaders who articulate their vision and provide a road map, develop cross-organizational authority for adoption, and reward employees for working towards it; they are more likely to succeed (Michael Fitzgerald & Nina Kruschwitz, 2014). Furthermore, for the first time, four generations have joined together in the corporate world, each with their own set of expectations about their work environment. When employees have a favourable experience, 72% of them claim their productivity rises; interestingly, this proportion rises to 92% among younger generations, who will make up half of the global workforce by 2020 (Sage, 2018).

According to (Morgan, 2017), we've entered a new era of human resource (HR) thinking known as employee experience (EX). Organizations all around the world are undergoing a silent revolution as they try to figure out how to build an environment where employees desire to come to work. Employees that have a great work experience are more driven, well-connected to the organisation, more sensitive to their work, and more productive (Plaskoff, 2017). Organizations must reconsider how they interact with their personnel (employees). The expanding multi-generational workplace needs a new approach to human resource management. Putting the employee's entire experience at the centre results in a fundamentally different approach, one that goes beyond improving incentives or "fancifying" to employee engagement at work.

While digital age and adoption is much more than technology alone, it's about developing the culture, mindset, capabilities, and competencies for the new methods of working (Murawski & Bick, 2017). The significance of the results has surpassed the value of the place from which you work or the hour at which you operate.

Digitizing workforce capabilities

The corporate sector's digital transformation is fuelling the need for / demand for transformations in the public sector as well (Mergel et al., 2019). This involves bringing about evolutionary change by transforming the way services are given and received while encouraging greater transparency, interoperability, and enhanced customer experience. (Gheidar & Shami Zanjani, 2020) has brought out how digital transformation is one of the most hotly debated topics in today's professional and academic debates; others even prefer the term "digital business transformation," which more accurately describes the business aspects of transformation. Human resource (HR) practices, on the other hand, have entered a new phase in today's workplaces known as employee experience (EX). Corporates are taking a new approach to digitize employee experiences within the firm.

(Khin & Ho, 2018) provides insights as to how IT and management commitment to digitalization exemplifies how digitalization success is comprised of sectorial relevance, management commitment, and strategic goals, in addition to IT support. It's important to note that as the organisations place a high value on digital transformation. New positions are also being added, and the organizational structure is altering to new dimensions (Mehrotra, 2019). Digital leaders must constantly challenge their organisations to ensure that the changes result in a competitive advantage and increased productivity (Edmead, 2016).

Despite the fact that some experts feel the customer experience is at the heart of the digital transformation, other crucial groups within the organization sometimes overlook customers. Employees (human resources) are the most important component of any company, and this must be taken into account when undergoing digital transformation because if a company wants to provide a positive customer experience, it must also focus on the employees who will enable the change and are part of the overall digital transformation. As a result, staff productivity and loyalty will rise. (Zinck, 2017) "If you're serious about digital transformation, start with employee experience". According to Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, (2020), Digital transformation is also about talent, not just technology.

Put people first, focus on soft skills, drive change from the top. (Caplan, 2014). In the workplace, a new way of thinking about human resources and how to keep them engaged and empowered is needed. In order to compete, businesses must continue to rethink their relationship with their employees. The report (Sage, 2018) makes us ask ourselves whether we listen enough to our employees/workforce. Digital transformation is human transformation (Satell, 2018).

The current research, studies, and papers on business transformations underway with digital adoption in terms of employee experience are covered from various empirical perspectives such as public sector, private sector, and literature focuses largely on early adopters such as Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The gap seeks to address is where MNCs in India stand in relation to this corporate transformation. How India is working towards improving the experience of its employees, given that India is one of the world's most powerful economies? Therefore, this study will examine the role of digital workforce capabilities (DWC) adoption at MNCs in India.

Research Methodology

By using qualitative approach, this study will assess top MNC's in India's including online surveys with various roles and departments in organizations across industries. Qualitative analysis using NVIVO – 1.5.2 (946) with Google survey analysis (by google analytics for charts and pie diagrams). Open-ended questions seeking free flow of info/inputs, multiple-choice options. The first section of the online survey collected inputs on demography, gender representation, age bracket, individual status, location, education level, organization, years of experience, different roles/positions across the sectors and levels of the organization, industries, employee counts, implementation, strategy. The second section of the online survey collected inputs around DWC (Digitizing workplace capabilities). Multiple questions across different scales were listed with the intent to gather info on variables like organizational strategy, implementation plan/stage, leadership and management onboarding workforce, employee roles and responsibility in achieving overall strategy, strategic communications and updates, communication channels, frequency, change/transformation drivers, change/transformation barriers, facilitate analysis/availability of complex information cross-department/functions, make information more accessible organization-wide for better collaboration and quicker decision making, support flexibility and encourage accountability, enabling

better working and deliveries and impacting overall employee experience.

The survey respondents represented both genders equally, men 50% and women 50%. Diversity, including gender balance and gender perspectives, is important to bring out a perspective that implies biological and social gender is reflected in research content. This helped in enhancing the scientific quality and social relevance of research. 30% of respondents are between ages 21-30, 42% respondents are between ages 31-40, 24% respondents are between age 41-50 while 51 to 60 age are 2 % and similarly 61+ are also 2%. Different age groups' representation in the survey brings in varying psychology levels, maturity, experience, and even different priorities in professional and personal life. To have a holistic view of the experience across age brackets, we reached out to one and all in the MNCs to gain better insights for this research. 60% Masters, 6% Diploma holders, 32% Bachelors, while 2% choose not to share the education background. This classification helps describe the characteristics, behaviours, exposure, field of formal learning, and participants' overall knowledge across different education levels. the survey respondents are 72% married, 26% single and 2% divorced. As the world changes frequently, each one must be heard irrespective of their personal status/commitments/preferences. Therefore, we have had good participation that helps us understand that the value employee put on DWC and HWA remains important with the different statuses. It does not change with gender.

4% AVP/VP, 4% Business / Function Leader, 8% Business / Function Manager, 6% Director, 2% Doctor, 2% Finance, 8% Head of Department, 2% Teacher, 22% Individual Contributor, 2% Project Manager, 2% Proprietor, 12% Team Leader, 12% Team Manager, 14% Team Member. This also brought in the likes of employees who are not just decision-makers but the ones who are also the recipients. It helped us ensure that we look at the two drivers, DWC and HWA, from all lenses, irrespective of the designation and influence levels in the organization. We had 14 roles across 17 industries participate in the survey. survey respondents represent various industries. 2% Automobiles, 2% Buying agents, 4% Chemicals, 4% E-Marketplace, 18% Education/Edu Tech, 2% Engineering Design, 2% EPC, 8% Financial / Banking / NBFC, 2% FMCG, 26% IT/ITES, 4% Manufacturing, 2% Material Science, 2% Medicine and Academics, 10% Pharma / Medicine, 2% Solicitors, 2% Stationary and 8% Telecom / ISP. All industries are not alike and do not adopt DWC and HWA at the same pace; this survey reached out to various industries in our attempt to cover as much ground as possible. Overview of participants' responses from over 17 different in-

dustries/ domains bringing in views from across segments.

2% with 1 year working experience., 2% with 2 years working experience., 2% with 3 years working experience., 4% with 4 years working experience., 6% with 5 years working experience., 4% with 6 years working experience., 2% with 7 years working experience., 12% with 8 years working experience., 2% with 9 years working experience., 6% with 12 years working experience., 4% with 13 years working experience., 2% with 14 years working experience., 12% with 15 years working experience., 2% with 16 years working experience., 6% with 17 years working experience., 4% with 18 years working experience., 14% with 20 years working experience., 4% with 22 years working experience., 2% with 24 years working experience., 4% with 27 years working experience., 2% with 30 years working experience., and 2% with 40 years working experience. As individuals gain experience, their views, preferences, and outlook also change over time. This survey captured views from as many years of experience as possible to provide a more realistic view as they participate irrespective of years of experience; DWC is seen as critical drivers of employee experience. We have participants representing 22 different years of experience.

Data Analysis

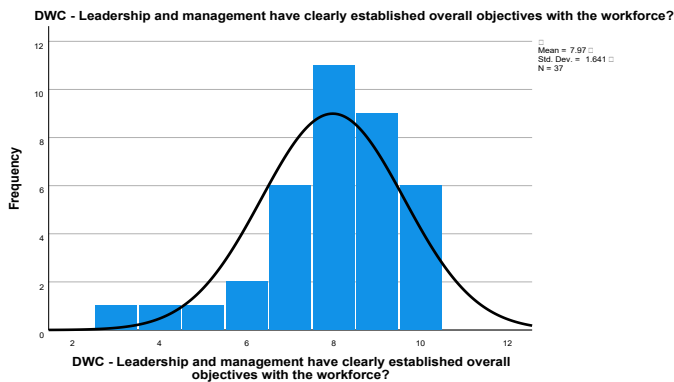


Figure 1: Leadership and management have clearly established overall objectives with the workforce

Source: Author's own (extracted from NVIVO)

Figure 1 shows 37 respondents participated with good mean = 7.97 and standard deviation of 1.641 which is below 2 and represent measurements that are more closely near the true value.



Figure 2: Employees' understanding of their role and responsibilities aligning with organizations strategy.

Source: Author's own (extracted from NVIVO)

Figure 2 shows 37 respondents participated with Mean 8.00 and standard deviation of 1.546 which is below 2 and represent measurements that are more closely near the true value.

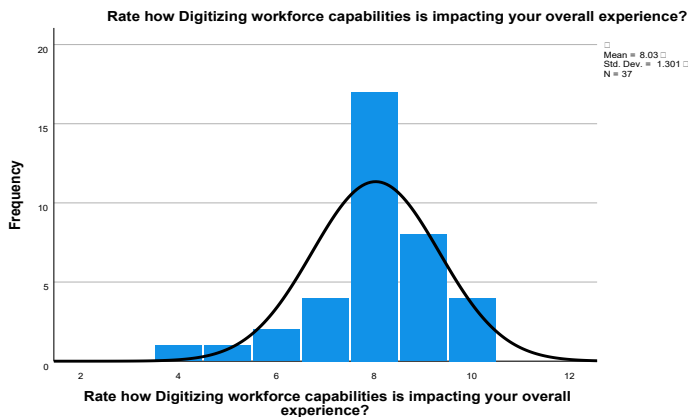


Figure 3: Digitizing workforce capabilities impacting employees over all experience.

Source: Author's own (extracted from NVIVO)

Figure 3 shows 37 respondents participated with Mean 8.03 and standard deviation of 1.301 which is below 2 and represent measurements that are more closely near the true value.

Digitizing Workforce Capabilities – Participants inputs (free text)



Figure 4: Top 3 Factors driving this change / transformation.

Source: Author's own (extracted from NVIVO)

As shown in the Figure 4, the survey participants when asked about the top elements that are driving this the change / transformation in their organization. Technology, Quality and Demands came out as common themes with consumer, remote working, business trends and expectation right behind those as second set of drivers.

ments that needs incorporated in order to eliminate the barrier based on their experience and observations. Need right tools, better policies and more importantly leadership support.

Conclusion

The inputs and responses were founded on respondents' (employees) knowledge and personal experience. During the analysis, comparisons were made followed by data interpretations, discussions of findings, and conclusions. The results presented here from the survey highlight that both the drivers DWC and HWA are instrumental in resulting into a positive experience for employees, they do see a lot of value it has made in their lives. It was noticed that organizations have embarked on a journey with a clear set of strategies for employees and have made sure there is clarity given to employees around their roles and responsibilities in this whole journey.

The inputs also bring out the fact that employees want to grow and have an environment that supports their ability to function better. Employees see how this is helping them access information easily, better collaboration, self-servicing is providing better accountability and flexibility. How revision of policies and SOPs are making life and overall delivery experience better for them. With employees feeling more engaged and involved, an organization can only expect better results and productivity.

This study also identified what it means to build DWC and have HWA for the employees and their positive experiences. Toward this end, the current discussion provides a step in that direction by highlighting the implications of the actions taken by the organizations. The results show that employees are seeing the value and clearly saying that implementation of DWC and HWA a critical driver of enhancing employees' experience.

Limitation

The sample size is small. There were 50 participants who took part in the study. The participants were selected from a variety of industries, with different years of experience and roles and responsibilities. The respondents were all based out of India. The business environment and local regulations and policies also differ from one country to another. Therefore, this study is limited to the Indian context.

Further research

Building on this research study in the future, the research can be conducted pertaining to a specific industry, sector, or particular aspect of the business or even a country or geography. This will give more clarity to the organizations of a particular sector/industry as to how to go about carrying out the transformation. The questionnaire can be more focused on one or many variables based on the requirement and the targeted industry or a particular sector. Additionally, personal interviews could also be carried out for specific areas using various tools and solutions available out there. Consequently, the present study integrates value to the DWC and HWA models by bridging the gaps and offering an avenue for future researchers to elongate the research model.

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