

1ST NOVEMBER 2023



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE
UNIVERSITY OF RUHUNA
SRI LANKA

VOLUME 2



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University of Ruhuna



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ISSN 3021-6818



THE HR DISCLOSURE 2023

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Welcome to the second volume of "The HR Disclosure." It is a privilege to publish this annual magazine in alignment with the commemoration of our department's fourth anniversary.

In today's dynamic world, human resource management plays a pivotal role in shaping and driving organizational success. The role of human resources in contemporary organizations is of paramount importance. It serves as the driving force behind cultural transformations, the empowerment of individuals, and guides organizations toward achieving their strategic objectives. Our magazine, "The HR Disclosure," plays a vital role in emphasizing this significance. It provides a valuable platform for our HRM community, facilitating discussions on the latest trends, best practices, and cutting-edge knowledge in the field. We firmly believe that knowledge sharing is the key to professional development and progress, and this magazine serves as the ideal medium for this purpose.

Additionally, "The HR Disclosure" has been thoughtfully designed to foster engagement and collaboration among our community members. By actively promoting dialogue and exchanging ideas. Our goal is to create a vibrant environment that facilitates growth and mutual learning. It is far more than just a publication; it's a dynamic conduit for interaction and networking among students, faculty, industry professionals, and stakeholders.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Finance, our dedicated students and staff in the Department of HRM, contributors, members of the editorial board, sponsors, and everyone involved in bringing this publication a reality. Your unwavering dedication has truly transformed it into an inspiring and informative resource for all of us.

Dr. G. K. Hemamali Ganewatta

The Editor-In-Chief - The HR Disclosure magazine
Head- Department of Human Resource Management
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FEATURE ARTICLE

Revamping HRM for the Digital Age: How Disruptive Technologies are Reshaping the Workplace

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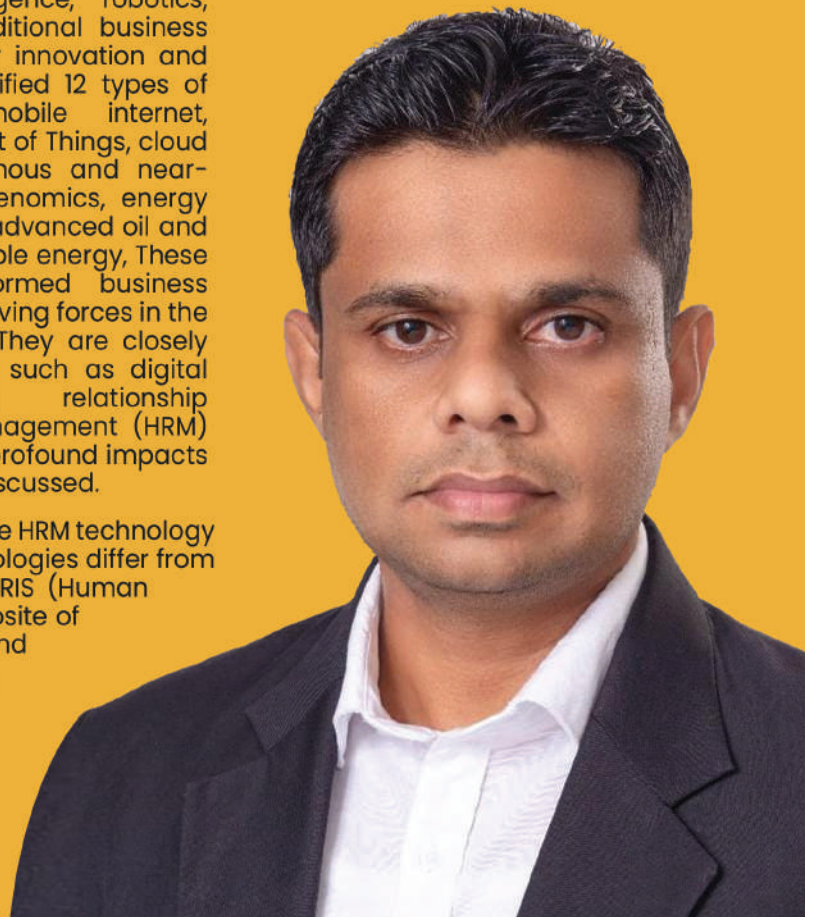
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Disruptive technologies are transforming how we live, work, and interact with the world, due to unprecedented technological advancements (Schwab, 2016). These technologies, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, blockchain, and 3D printing, disrupt traditional business models and create new opportunities for innovation and growth. Manyika et al. (2013) have identified 12 types of disruptive technologies, including mobile internet, automation of knowledge work, the Internet of Things, cloud technology, advanced robotics, autonomous and near-autonomous vehicles, next-generation genomics, energy storage, 3D printing, advanced materials, advanced oil and gas exploration and recovery, and renewable energy. These technologies have significantly transformed business operations and are considered powerful driving forces in the business world (Gupta & Saxena, 2012). They are closely associated with contemporary concepts such as digital business, e-commerce, customer relationship management, and human resource management (HRM) (Gupta & Saxena, 2012). In this article, the profound impacts of disruptive technologies on HRM will be discussed.

There are concepts like HRIS and E-HRM in the HRM technology landscape. First, how disruptive HRM technologies differ from these concepts needs to be discussed. HRIS (Human Resource Information Systems) is a composite of databases, computer applications, and hardware and software used to collect, store, manage, deliver, present, and manipulate data for Human Resources (Voermans & van Veldhoven, 2007). E-HRM (Electronic Human Resource Management) is a term used to describe the automation of HRM



processes using web-based technology (Marler & Parry, 2016). Disruptive HRM technologies, on the other hand, are more advanced and transformative technologies that can revolutionize how HRM processes are managed and executed (Brynjolfsson & Hitt, 2000; Priyashantha, 2022). These technologies can automate tasks, transform how businesses hire, train, and manage employees, and enable new working methods.

The major technology disruptions that impact HRM processes are social media, big data and data analytics, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, and mobile technology (Priyashantha et al., 2022; Waddill, 2018). How do these impact HRM?

Social media technologies and social media sites influence HRM. Social media technologies are the tools and platforms that enable users to create, share, and interact with content online. Blogs are social media technology web-based publications. They provide employee services to HR business partners, analyze inquiries on recurring topics, provide expert information, communicate policy changes, explore new process improvements, and offer informal learning (Waddill, 2018). Photo sharing is another social media technology that allows users to post photos, videos and receive comments. It can be used for internal and not-for-profit activities, such as team building or morale-enhancing efforts that show photos of employees participating in team or organizational activities (Waddill, 2018). Podcasts/vodcasts are another social media technology that distributes digitized audio and video programs over the internet. Podcasts/vodcasts are excellent for interviews that provide excellent content and can be used in training for role plays and storytelling and face-to-face lecturing for trainers and educators (Saldanha, 2023). Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is a social media technology that uses web feed formats to publish frequently updated digital content. It communicates news headlines and notices to employees (Waddill, 2018). Wikis are websites where users collaboratively create content and structure layout directly from the web browser (Waddill, 2018). Wikis can retain corporate information for collaboration and training and organize employees' collective knowledge on various topics (Waddill, 2018).

Social media technologies can be used to create and manage social media sites. Social media sites are specific online platforms where users can connect with others and share content. The most popular social media sites include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and TikTok. Social media has particularly impacted recruitment and talent acquisition (Bersin, 2017). HR departments now use social media sites to

promote job openings, engage with candidates, and showcase company culture, expanding their reach to passive job seekers. Social media provides valuable insights into candidates' backgrounds, enhancing hiring decisions (Sameen & Cornelius, 2015). Additionally, it plays a crucial role in employer branding, employee engagement, and internal communication (Men et al., 2020; Sivertzen et al., 2013).

Big data and data analytics have transformed HRM practices by enabling organizations to leverage large amounts of data for data-driven decision-making. In HRM, big data and data analytics profoundly impact talent acquisition, employee performance and engagement, workforce planning, and program evaluation (Waddill, 2018). In talent acquisition, HR professionals can analyze candidate data to identify patterns and predictors of success, leading to more accurate hiring decisions, reduced bias, and improved efficiency in the recruitment process (Saputra et al., 2022). For employee performance and engagement, data analytics helps HR departments understand factors contributing to satisfaction and productivity, allowing organizations to implement targeted initiatives for employee development and performance improvement (Mello & Martins, 2019). Predictive analytics can also assist in identifying turnover risks and taking proactive measures to retain top talent (Singh et al., 2022). In HR planning, data analytics allows HR professionals to analyze workforce demographics, skills, and performance data to forecast future talent needs and make informed decisions regarding workforce planning, succession planning, and skill development initiatives (Fairhurst, 2014). Data analytics also enables HR departments to measure the impact of HR programs and initiatives by assessing training effectiveness, employee engagement initiatives, and performance improvement strategies (Giacumo & Bremen, 2016; McLean et al., 2016). It helps organizations make data-backed decisions on resource allocation and program refinement.

Cloud technologies significantly impact HRM practices by streamlining and centralizing HR processes, data, and systems. Cloud-based HRIS allows for efficient management of employee records, payroll, benefits administration, and performance evaluations (Waddill, 2018). The cloud enables real-time access collaboration and eliminates manual tasks (Yang et al., 2011). Cloud technologies also provide scalability and flexibility, allowing organizations to adjust HR systems and resources according to their needs without significant investments (Waddill, 2018). Remote access and mobile capabilities support the trend of remote work (Cresswell et al., 2022). Cloud-based

HRM systems collect and analyze employee data to gain insights into workforce trends and performance metrics (Gupta et al., 2012; Waddill, 2018).

The Internet of Things (IoT) has a transformative impact on HRM practices. It allows organizations to collect real-time data from interconnected devices and sensors, benefiting various HR areas such as employee well-being, safety, productivity, and talent management (Aronica, 2014; Waddill, 2018). Wearable devices and smart sensors monitor employees' health and safety, providing data on physical activity, stress levels, and environmental conditions (Aronica, 2014). This data aids in designing wellness programs and enhancing workplace safety (Bavaresco et al., 2021). IoT devices automate time and attendance tracking, reducing errors and simplifying administrative tasks (Atabekov, 2016). They also offer insights into resource utilization and workspace occupancy, optimizing resource allocation and improving productivity (Godavarthi et al., 2023). IoT enhances the employee experience by creating personalized workplace environments and facilitating collaboration through connected communication tools and smart meeting rooms (Ziegeldorf et al., 2014).

Integrating these disruptions into HRM practices raises ethical considerations, including privacy, data security, and discrimination. Clear policies regarding all these technology disruptions are necessary to define acceptable usage and protect the organization's reputation. Compliance with relevant laws and regulations and protecting employee privacy should be prioritized.

With these technologies, the HRM landscape is expected to undergo significant changes in work, the workforce, and the workplace (Deshpande, 2019). Regarding the changes in work, there will be a shift towards more knowledge-based and creative work and a reduction in the need for manual and repetitive tasks. This will require workers to develop new skills and competencies, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. In terms of workforce changes, there will be an increase in the use of contingent and remote workers and a greater emphasis on diversity and inclusion. This will require organizations to develop new talent management and engagement strategies, such as flexible work arrangements and personalized HR services. In terms of the workplace, there will be a shift towards more flexible and collaborative workspaces and a greater use of digital technologies and automation. This will require organizations to invest in new infrastructure and technologies, such as cloud computing and virtual reality to support,

remote work and collaboration. Overall, the future world of work will be characterized by greater flexibility, creativity, and innovation, as well as new challenges and opportunities for organizations and workers alike (Deshpande, 2019; Manyika et al., 2013; Priyashantha et al., 2022).

Disruptive HR technologies are perceived as desirable by both employees and employers. Employees benefit from disruptive HR technologies' flexibility and autonomy, such as the ability to choose their workstyles, schedules, and tools (Fuze, 2019; Juo, 2017). Employers benefit from the increased efficiency, cost savings, better employee engagement, and informed decisions that disruptive HR technologies provide (Gautam, 2019; Ginac, 2018; Marler & Parry, 2016). However, adopting and implementing disruptive HR technologies also pose significant challenges for organizations, such as the need for significant investments in research and development, infrastructure, and talent management. As a result, organizations must carefully manage adopting and implementing disruptive HR technologies to remain competitive in a rapidly changing business environment.

In conclusion, disruptive technologies are transforming the HRM landscape and creating new opportunities for innovation and growth. However, integrating these technologies into HRM practices raises ethical considerations, including privacy, data security, and discrimination. Clear policies regarding these technology disruptions are necessary to define acceptable usage and protect the organization's reputation. HR professionals must adapt to these changes and take advantage of their opportunities by developing new talent management and engagement strategies, such as flexible work arrangements and personalized HR services. While there may be potential downsides or challenges associated with implementing disruptive HRM technologies, prioritizing compliance with relevant laws and regulations and protecting employee privacy can help mitigate these risks. Fusing disruptive technologies can help organizations stay competitive and thrive in the digital age.

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Inclusive Leadership in Nurturing Team Inclusivity



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In today's fast-paced and interconnected world of business, the concept of 'inclusion' has taken the center stage. It has transcended the status of mere jargon, gaining recognition from practitioners and scholars alike for its profound impact on the enduring success of organizations and the well-being of their workforce. Inclusion stands out as a unique approach to managing diversity, focusing on its positive dimensions, rather than perceiving it as a challenge to be overcome. Extensive research and years of corporate experience have clearly revealed that inclusion is the prerequisite for organizational growth. It fosters a workplace where employees feel valued, engaged, and part of a cohesive team, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and performance.

Inclusive leadership is the ability to effectively oversee and guide a diverse team of individuals, acknowledging and appreciating their distinct qualities in a compassionate and impartial manner. Many authors have presented inclusive leadership as one of the core factors contributing to inclusion, alongside an inclusive climate and inclusive practices. Over the past two decades, a stream of research has been dedicated to investigating the positive impacts of inclusive leadership, such as its influence on psychological safety, engagement in creative work, ability to learn from errors, and work engagement. However, despite the substantial evidence highlighting the significance of inclusive leadership and the attention it has garnered in the literature, it's essential to note that inclusive leadership is a relatively recent development, and fundamental questions concerning its conceptualization and theorization remain unanswered. By actively promoting diversity and inclusion at all levels of leadership, organizations can build stronger teams that thrive in complex and dynamic environments.

Inclusive teamwork thrives under the guidance of leaders who embrace a multifaceted approach. These leaders understand the importance of nurturing employee distinctiveness, fostering a sense of belonging, expressing appreciation, advocating for efforts and change, and championing equal opportunity and equitable outcomes. Each of these components plays a critical role in creating an inclusive and cohesive team environment, where individuality is celebrated, diverse voices are heard, and everyone feels valued. In the sections that follow, each of these leadership components are discussed in detail, exploring how they contribute to the development of inclusive and high-performing teams.

1. Nurturing Employee Distinctiveness

This encompasses a multifaceted approach to leadership that fosters a sense of value and belonging among team members. It involves displaying genuine concern for employees' feelings and interests, creating an environment where their individuality is not only acknowledged but celebrated. In this nurturing environment, leaders offer guidance and emotional support to their team members, showing a commitment

to their personal and professional well-being. Moreover, effective leaders recognize and respect the unique differences that each employee brings to the table, actively encouraging openness and dialogue. They listen to employees' ideas and actively collaborate with them during decision-making processes, recognizing that diverse perspectives lead to more well-informed choices. Ultimately, this inclusive leadership approach extends to helping employees advance their career prospects, creating a workplace culture where their growth and development are central to the organization's mission and vision.

2.Fostering a Sense of Belonging in Teams

This involves a comprehensive commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive work environment. This approach prioritizes employee training to equip team members with the skills and knowledge they need to excel in their roles. It goes beyond skill development, emphasizing moral behavior and unbiased judgment in leadership actions. Leaders who nurture a sense of belonging ensure that rewards are distributed fairly, recognizing and valuing individual contributions. Moreover, they guarantee that every team member is fairly represented, acknowledging the importance of diverse voices and perspectives. This leadership approach is grounded in transparency, as it provides clear and sound reasoning for organizational practices, fostering trust and buy-in from team members through open and transparent decision-making processes.

3.Expressing appreciation

Expressing appreciation is a fundamental aspect of inclusive leadership that centers on recognizing and valuing the efforts and contributions of team members. This approach involves keenly noticing the dedication and hard work put forth by employees and actively affirming their contributions. Inclusive leaders also take the time to praise and celebrate achievements, creating a positive and motivating work environment that fosters both individual and team success. This way, inclusive leadership unequivocally rejects any form of prejudice, bias, or favoritism related to factors such as color, race, and other legally protected attributes, thereby fostering an environment where employees are recognized and appreciated for their individual contributions.

4. Advocating for Efforts, Change

This is again a multifaceted leadership approach that champions employee recognition and embraces organizational transformation. It starts with recognizing and acknowledging the dedicated efforts and valuable contributions of team members. Inclusive leaders in this context exhibit a genuine openness to organizational change, promoting it as a means of seizing new opportunities. They establish a work environment where everyone's voice is heard and valued, fostering inclusivity that is directly related to the organization's mission and vision. Furthermore, these leaders actively facilitate a diverse workforce and inclusion, aligning organizational practices with these principles. They also promote participative management mechanisms, encouraging collaborative decision-making and ensuring that efforts and change are interconnected and aligned to drive positive and lasting impact

5.Championing Equal Opportunity and Equitable Outcomes

Inclusive leaders placed a premium on authenticity and psychological safety, recognizing them as fundamental cornerstones in fostering an environment where individuals can express themselves openly and voice dissenting perspectives without the apprehension of facing consequences. To achieve this, they served as role models by demonstrating curiosity, humility, and vulnerability, setting the tone for a culture of inclusivity, fairness, and open dialogue.

Overall, the significance of inclusive leadership in fostering team inclusivity cannot be overstated. It has evolved beyond a mere buzzword, becoming a pivotal aspect of modern organizational success and employee well-being. Inclusive leadership champions diversity and holds it as strength rather than a challenge to be overcome, resulting in a workplace where employees feel valued, engaged, and part of a cohesive team. This multifaceted approach encompasses various facets, each contributing to the creation of an environment that nurtures individuality, belongingness, appreciation, and openness to change. By actively promoting diversity and inclusion at all levels of leadership, organizations can build stronger teams that thrive in complex and dynamic environments. It is evident that inclusive leadership is not just a recent development but a powerful and evolving force that has a profound impact on organizational growth and employee satisfaction. It calls for leaders who recognize the importance of fostering a culture of inclusivity, authenticity, and fairness, setting the stage for a more prosperous and harmonious future in the team-based work setting.

“Be Committed and Dedicated to What You Want to Achieve.”



Interview with Prof. H.S. C. Perera
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To start the conversation, we would like to know about you and your background.

I am a person who believes that dedication and commitment will improve the knowledge and competencies we have, I am a hard-working person, and I would like to do my best with my fullest effort.

When you remember your younger self and childhood, what were your inspirations?

When it comes to my beautiful childhood, I was the only girl in my family, and I was raised together with one older brother and two younger brothers. I must say that I had a free and enjoyable childhood. To talk about my family background, my father was a police officer, and my mother was a housewife. What I admire the most in my childhood is that my parents never forced me to study. They gave me proper guidance while nourishing my good manners and values. I remember my father's value of taking meals all together as a family. He needed to see all the family members at the dining table. Through that, I learned how noble the family is, and he showed me the importance of the unity of the family. Those values really helped me to build up my life successfully to face the challenges and to achieve my life goals. The learning, encouragement, and inspiration that I got from my father became a huge strength for me.

I attended Panadura Balika Maha Vidyalaya until the Ordinary Level examination. In those days, I was interested in sports rather than in academic activities. Truly, I was a person who belonged to the playground.

I had gained many sports achievements at the school level, such as the island championship in Netball and provincial championship in Volleyball. I did other sports like badminton, long jump, high jump, and running events. Further, I was the Sports Captain in the school for several years. I wasn't a bright student because my focus was on sports. In the NCG examination (G.C.E. O/L), I was only able to secure 3A's, 4B's and 2C's and failed English. So, my father wanted me to focus on my studies. As the next step in my educational journey, for Advanced Level Examination, I was able to get admission to Horana Taxila Central College, a prestigious college in the area. My achievements in sports enabled me to gain admission to this school without sitting for the usual competitive entrance examination. I tried to balance both academic activities and sports in that school. As a class we understood that NCG results were not accepted to secure a job, hence, we all did GCE O/L Examination in Old Syllabus in commerce stream and I received 7 distinction (D) passes and one Credit pass for the eight subjects. Notably my dedication this time resulted me a distinction pass for English. My life went through a transformation period at Taxila Central College where I met my husband. I tried to balance both academic activities and sports, and I was selected for the University of Sri Jayawardenepura with the second-best result in Kalutara district and I was lucky enough to earn my bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a second class upper division honors. My commitment and the guidance of my amazing teachers of school and university paved the way to secure a place in the university. And it can be considered as a turning point in my life.

Can you tell us about your university life?

I spent a memorable time (1980-1984) in the university while studying, playing and spending time with friends. The main expectation of a university is to provide undergraduates with spiritual development and physical development as well. I believe that I gained both physical and spiritual development during my university life; I tried to keep a proper balance between education and extra-curricular activities. We were not competitive, we were very joyful as a batch and as a group we were very cooperative and helped each other, and still my university colleagues keep in touch with me as my brothers and sisters. Specially, at the university, I was able to participate and contribute to various events like the secretary of the English Association and secretary of the Sports Advisory Board. I was the team leader of the workshop development activities organized by Professor R.A.Perera. That opportunity led me to meet with the directors and managers of multinational organizations. These workshops led us on the path to becoming intellectuals. In addition to what my parents taught me, the values of unity and developing together were integrated into my life through university life.

While you were in university, did you have a specific career aspiration for the future after your graduation?

My main focus was on the corporate sector. After I got the final results of the university end exam in early 1985, I applied for four jobs and I went interviewed for all of them. Among those, I was selected for the Lever Brothers (Unilever, Sri Lanka) as an assistant marketing manager. At the same time, I was selected to Jayawardenepura University as a temporary lecturer and permanent position at the University of Ruhuna. Later, on the 30th of August 1985, I joined the University of Ruhuna, the Department of Economics as a permanent probationary lecturer.

Did you eventually choose lecturing as your career? What motivated you to become a lecturer?

Actually, I had no specific dream of becoming a university lecturer. I would have preferred to become a manager at that time. However, eventually, I became a lecturer, and I am very proud of this accomplishment because I have been able to nurture numerous outstanding students through my career including former faculty Deans Professor Thusitha Gunawardena and Professor Samantha Kumara and the present Dean Professor Manjula Wanniarachchige among many others.

What are your key administrative involvements at the university level?

My university-level administrative roles have been marked by their extensive and challenging nature, with a significant portion of my career dedicated to development activities. In 1997, I assumed the position of the Head, Department of Business and Administrative within the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, becoming the third Head of the Department. My persistent efforts culminated in the establishment of the Faculty of Management and Finance at the University of Ruhuna, which became a reality in April 2003.

Subsequently, I took on the role of the founding Dean of the faculty. This newfound responsibility necessitated the creation of a unique identity for the students, a task that proved to be quite challenging. The idea to establish the Faculty of Management and Finance was met with unanimous support specially by the Vice Chancellor at that time Professor Ranjith Senarathna. In fact, it faced significant resistance, particularly from the University Grant Commission (UGC). The UGC was hesitant to grant approval to the proposed faculty, citing a perceived lack of human resources within our department. We required a multifaceted approach to overcome this challenge. I worked closely with our dedicated students, faculty members, and influential figures such as Prof. Carlo Fonseka to mobilize support and build a compelling case for our faculty proposal. Together, we demonstrated our commitment to providing students with a top-tier education in the discipline of management and finance. The struggle to gain faculty status was marked by countless meetings, presentations, and discussions with UGC officials. I vividly recall the intense negotiations and debates with the UGC chairman, who was initially reluctant to grant our department the faculty-status. This period, often characterized as "Fighting with UGC," tested our resolve and determination. Ultimately, after persistent efforts, we achieved a significant milestone on the 29th of April, 2003 when the Department of Business Administration of the University of Ruhuna was granted faculty status of Management and Finance. This achievement was the result of unwavering dedication, countless hours of hard work, and the collaborative spirit of the entire university community.

How have you managed your work-life balance?

Managing work-life balance has been challenging due to my responsibilities as the Dean of the Faculty and my commitment to establishing the Faculty of Management and Finance. I have two kids and my husband played a crucial role in supporting my career by taking care of our children, allowing me to focus on my academic and administrative responsibilities. It's essential to have a strong support system in both personal and professional life to strike a balance between family and work successfully. I need to share some of my experiences. I often found myself working long hours, sometimes starting my day as early as 8:00 a.m. and finishing as late as 8:00 p.m. My dedication to my role as the Dean and my determination to see the faculty succeed meant that I had to put in the extra effort to meet various deadlines and manage the faculty's growth effectively.

Despite the demanding workload, my family was my top priority. I remember several instances where I would rush home after a long day at the university to spend quality time with my husband and children. My husband's unwavering support was pivotal in my ability to maintain this balance. He understood the importance of my career aspirations and took on the role of primary caregiver for our children, ensuring they received the love and attention they needed. This partnership allowed me to focus on my academic pursuits and administrative responsibilities without feeling guilty about neglecting my family. I firmly believe that achieving a work-life balance is not only about managing time but also about managing priorities.

Can you share the inspiration and vision behind the establishment of the Faculty of Management and Finance at the University of Ruhuna? What were the driving factors that led to its creation?

The vision behind the establishment of the Faculty of Management and Finance at the University of Ruhuna was to provide students with high-quality education and opportunities in the fields of management and finance by giving them an identity. The driving factors behind this initiative were the need to enhance the identity of our students, promote academic and spiritual development, and create a separate identity for the faculty and its students. We tried to elevate the university's academic standards and prepare students for successful careers in these fields. To realize this vision, we conducted extensive research on curriculum development, faculty recruitment, and infrastructure enhancement.

What challenges did you face in establishing and growing the faculty, and how were they overcome?

Establishing and growing the faculty came with its fair share of challenges. "One significant hurdle was the reluctance of the University Grants Commission (UGC) to grant approval to our proposal, which aimed to elevate the Department of Business Administration to faculty status. The UGC cited a lack of human resources within the faculty as the reason. At that time, we had no lecturers with PhD, but there were several lecturers with Master's degree. However, I worked diligently with my staff and students to prove that we had the necessary resources and successfully secured faculty status in 2003 after a

lengthy battle with the UGC. Also I need to mention that we struggled with the infrastructure as we were sharing the premises with the Faculty of HSS. Moreover, with the help of Prof Danny Atapattu and some of my staff members, I managed to commence Master of Business Administration, the coursework based Master's program for the first time in the history of the University of Ruhuna in 1999. With the funds generated from that, we were able to buy the land for the faculty. Finally, I wrote two building proposals and was able to build new administrative buildings and lecture theaters for the faculty. While working to improve faculty infrastructure, I and my staff were able to enhance our program structure. Accordingly we commenced course unit based curriculum system and BBA degree programme in English medium. Notably, in the history of the Management faculties among Sri Lankan universities, we were the pioneering faculty who provide internship training for 240 students in 2003. As the Head of the Department that was a big challenge for me, however, I am very happy that I was able to provide this new direction to the students with the help of my friends and MBA students. Now all the Faculties of Management in Sri Lanka provide internship opportunity as a compulsory course unit of the curriculum.

As a founder and leader in the field, what advice would you give to aspiring students and educators who are interested in pursuing careers in management and finance?

To aspiring students and educators interested in pursuing careers in management and finance, I would like to give this message.. "You should prioritize your spiritual development, not just physical development, as these qualities are integral to your personal growth. And develop a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration so those skills are essential in the professional world. Therefore, embrace dedication and commitment to achieve your goals, as I did when I worked to improve my English proficiency. So, students should remember that English is a valuable tool for navigating the global landscape; don't give up on improving your language skills. Most importantly, always work together and focus on collective growth rather than individual aspirations, as teamwork is the key to success in any field". That's my message to my students.





Employee Counselling and Mental Health

Ms. Gayani Kodikara

Divisional Manager - Human Resources
David Pieris Motor Company (Pvt) Ltd.

Can you provide an overview of your background and experience related to Human Resource Management?

I count over 21 years of hands-on experience in HR, including more than 6 years in a managerial role and currently oversee the entire HR functions for startup companies within the David Pieris Group. My expertise encompasses various aspects of HR. In my capacity as a Senior HR Manager, I have gained experience working in diverse industries such as automobile, agriculture, information technology, consumer electrical, etc.

I am also honored to be the part of Ceylon Motor Trade Association and lead the HR forum, where leading professionals from automotive industry convene. In this role, I am committed to promoting excellence in their HR initiatives and fostering collaboration among companies in the motor industry.

Moreover, I have successfully obtained the academic and professional qualifications necessary to excel in my role as a Senior Manager in the HR field, including specialized

courses in psychological counseling, internships, and various counseling-related workshops and training.

Can you please explain to us what employee counseling is and its significant impact from the employee's and organization's perspective?

Employee counseling serves as a supportive process that assists employees in navigating



pivotal role in nurturing emotional well-being, reducing stress, and enhancing productivity. From an organizational standpoint, counseling contributes to higher morale, lower employee turnover, and the promotion of a positive workplace culture. It is instrumental in resolving conflicts, improving communication, and ensuring that employees feel valued, ultimately fostering a harmonious and productive work environment. HR's responsibility is to facilitate and enable a culture that supports this within the organization.

Can you explain the concept of a VUCA world and why it is particularly challenging for employees' mental well-being?

In today's VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world, employees encounter distinctive challenges. The constant change, uncertainty, and complexity create substantial pressure, significantly impacting mental well-being. This environment can be seen as a challenge for some who possess the strength to embrace it, but for others, it can be overwhelming and lead to their struggles. Employees are required to rapidly adapt to new technologies and manage diverse tasks, which often results in stress, anxiety, and burnout. As HR professionals, it is our responsibility to provide robust mental health support, foster resilience, and offer resources to help employees cope with the demands of the VUCA environment.

Within the context of a VUCA world, what role does the HR department play in supporting employees' mental health?

To address the varying capacities of individuals to handle the challenges of a VUCA world, HR needs to tailor its approach accordingly. For those with the capacity to manage their mental well-being, HR can provide motivation and guidance to maintain a balanced approach. For those who may not have the necessary capacity to navigate these

and good health.

HR plays a pivotal role by fostering a supportive organizational culture through training, workshops, and open communication. The implementation of mental well-being programs, open-door policies, and facilitating dialogues up to top management levels contribute to creating a safe and nurturing environment within the organization. Offering counseling services further strengthens this support system. Prioritizing mental health enhances resilience, boosts morale, and equips the workforce to navigate the challenges posed by the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous nature of the contemporary world.

What are some common signs or symptoms that indicate when employees may benefit from counseling in this rapidly changing environment?

Identifying when employees may benefit from counseling in a rapidly changing environment involves recognizing specific signs and symptoms. These signs include elevated absenteeism, declining performance, behavioral shifts, chronic stress, and conflicts with colleagues. Additionally, indicators like overwhelming pressure, disengagement, or mood swings often suggest deeper underlying issues. HR's role is to foster an open atmosphere, encouraging employees to share their concerns. Promptly identifying these signals enables proactive counseling support, empowering employees to navigate the intricacies of our evolving workplace effectively. This proactive approach not only supports individual well-being but also strengthens the organization's resilience in the face of rapid changes.

What strategies can HR professionals implement to destigmatize seeking counseling and mental health support among employees?

should encourage openness and emphasize that seeking help reflects strength, not weakness. Conducting awareness sessions on mental health, stress management, and counseling helps demystify these topics. Sharing success stories, with employees' consent, can highlight the positive impact of counseling. Confidentiality is paramount to ensure employees' privacy in discussing their concerns. Implementing counseling services and having managers set an example in discussing mental health creates a safe environment. Regular awareness efforts, making counseling available and accessible, and integrating mental health into the organization's culture are all essential steps. Normalizing these conversations encourages employees to seek help without judgment.

What key considerations should HR professionals keep in mind when selecting external counseling service providers to support employees' mental health needs?

When selecting external counseling service providers, HR should prioritize qualified professionals with clinical backgrounds, diverse therapeutic techniques, and experience. These providers should also have corporate exposure to ensure an understanding of workplace challenges. Independence

guarantees unbiased support, while availability and excellent communication skills enable timely assistance. Assessing providers for these qualities ensures employees receive personalized and expert mental health support. By emphasizing these considerations, HR can establish a comprehensive mental health support system that promotes employee well-being and fosters a mentally healthy workplace environment.

Are there specific counseling approaches or techniques that are particularly effective in helping employees navigate the challenges of a VUCA world?

In a VUCA world, HR emphasizes counseling approaches such as cognitive-behavioral

therapy, mindfulness, and resilience training. These techniques empower employees to manage stress, enhance adaptability, maintain positive relationships, and build emotional resilience. Solution-focused counseling and narrative therapy can help employees reframe challenges positively. Additionally, promoting a supportive workplace culture, encouraging peer support, and providing access to counseling services are equally vital. These approaches foster employee well-being, enabling them to navigate the complexities of the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous modern work environment effectively.

What advice do you have for HR professionals and organizational leaders looking to prioritize and invest in counseling as part of their employee well-being initiatives in the VUCA world?

Investing in counseling for employees is a strategic way to support their well-being and productivity in a VUCA world. Counseling can help employees cope with stress, anxiety, depression, and other challenges, leading to improved mental health, relationships, and overall well-being. This, in turn, can result in increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and a more positive work environment.

HR professionals and organizational leaders can make counseling accessible and affordable by offering a variety of counseling options and subsidizing the cost. They can also promote counseling as a normal and healthy part of life by providing educational resources, offering confidential counseling services, and destigmatizing mental health.

By investing in counseling, HR professionals and organizational leaders can create a more supportive and productive work environment for their employees.

How can HR departments collaborate with other stakeholders within an organization, such as managers and team leaders, to promote a culture of mental health awareness and support in a VUCA world?

To promote mental health awareness and support in a VUCA world, HR departments can collaborate with managers and team leaders by providing training on mental health awareness, signs and symptoms of mental health problems, and how to support employees who may be struggling with their mental health. HR can also encourage managers and team leaders to openly and honestly discuss mental health with their employees, which can help reduce stigma and make employees feel more comfortable discussing their mental health and seeking help when needed. Furthermore, HR can work with managers and team leaders to develop and implement mental health support programs and initiatives, such as employee assistance programs (EAPs), stress management workshops, and mental health first aid training.

As HR experts, what are some of the challenges you have encountered when implementing counseling programs for employees in a VUCA world, and how have you overcome them?

Challenges often encountered when implementing counseling programs for employees in a VUCA world include a lack of awareness, stigma surrounding mental health, cost concerns, and ensuring confidentiality. To overcome these challenges, HR can educate employees about counseling programs, reduce stigma by providing training on mental health awareness, and promote counseling programs as a normal and healthy part of life. Making counseling affordable by subsidizing the cost or offering counseling programs through an employee assistance program (EAP) can address cost concerns. Ensuring that counseling sessions are confidential can be achieved by developing and implementing strong privacy policies. Additionally, tailoring counseling programs to the specific needs of the organization and its employees and regularly evaluating the effectiveness of these programs are crucial steps in overcoming challenges.

Closing Note: With over two decades of HR experience, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of counseling. From fostering emotional well-being to enhancing productivity, its effects are profound. In today's fast-paced environment, marked by constant change and complexity, HR's responsibility in supporting mental health cannot be underestimated. Through proactive strategies such as open communication, workshops, and counseling services, HR can create a supportive ecosystem.

Destigmatizing mental health is paramount. Emphasizing openness, sharing success stories, and ensuring confidentiality are crucial steps. Collaborating with managers and leaders, implementing stress management workshops, and promoting empathy are instrumental. Selecting qualified counseling services is vital, with a focus on clinical expertise and corporate exposure.

In overcoming challenges, championed awareness, anonymous platforms, and open dialogues. The success lies in addressing mental health as a strategic imperative, fostering a resilient, mentally healthy workforce. Let these insights guide organizations towards a future where employees thrive, resilient in the face of VUCA's complexities.

Labour Trends in Sri Lanka

Can you provide an overview of your background and experience in related to Human Resource Management.

I graduated from the University of Colombo and later completed the PQHRM at CIPM. Interestingly, I didn't initially plan to work in human resource management; it happened after spending several years in different fields.

I started my career at Dialog while I was still in university, and later I worked as a Journalist at the Daily Mirror. However, my career took a different path when I joined hSenid Business as a Project Coordinator. hSenid is renowned for its flagship HRIS software, and I found myself working closely with various departments like Engineering, Finance, and HR. This experience piqued my interest in HR, and with the support of my colleagues and mentors, I decided to make the shift.

In 2015, I found a role at Geveo to establish and lead the HR team, a position I still hold today as the Head of People and a member of the leadership team.

Can you provide an overview of the current state of HRM in Sri Lanka? What are the key trends and developments that are shaping the field?

The field of Human Resource Management (HRM) in Sri Lanka is experiencing a deep transformation, driven by a dynamic interplay of local and global factors. These changes underscore the adaptability and resilience of HR professionals in the Sri Lankan context. The current state of HRM in Sri Lanka is characterized by several key trends and developments that are shaping the field:

One of the most prominent trends in Sri Lankan HRM is the rapid adoption of digital tools and platforms. This digital integration enables HR professionals to divert their energies toward strategic initiatives.

In Sri Lanka, data analytics has become a crucial factor in shaping HR decisions. Data analytics has become essential for making informed HR decisions. The goal is to identify trends and patterns that can inform HR strategies and enhance decision-making. Data-driven HRM practices enable organizations to not only respond to current challenges but also to proactively plan for future workforce needs.

Sri Lanka is witnessing the rapid expansion of the gig economy, leading to a more diverse and flexible workforce. This evolution necessitates HR professionals to adapt by developing policies and procedures that accommodate gig workers. Organizations in Sri Lanka are placing a stronger emphasis on employee well-being. HR professionals are actively involved in designing and implementing programs that support both the physical and mental health of employees.



Ms. Nilmani Ruwanthika Menikge
Head of People, GEVEO

In recent years, what are the most notable changes or advancements in HR technology that have had an impact on local HRM practices?

In recent years, advancements in Human Resource Technology have profoundly influenced local HRM practices, shaping the way organizations manage their workforces, from recruitment to retention. While many of these trends are global, their implementation and impact can vary based on local conditions, including market dynamics, regulatory frameworks, and cultural factors.

One of the most transformative changes has been the widespread adoption of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS). These platforms enable organizations to streamline operations, reducing paperwork and automating repetitive tasks such as attendance tracking and payroll processing. In Sri Lanka, where small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) form a significant portion of the business landscape, the cost-effectiveness and scalability of HRIS platforms have been particularly beneficial.

Another significant advancement is the rise of analytics in HR, commonly known as HR analytics. This involves the use of data to make more informed decisions, from hiring strategies to performance evaluations. For instance, predictive analytics can help organizations in Sri Lanka anticipate talent shortages in critical sectors like IT and healthcare. While still an emerging practice in the country, it is quickly gaining traction as businesses recognize the value of data-driven decision-making.

Remote work technology also stands out as a game-changer, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tools for virtual collaboration, project management, and remote supervision have allowed companies to maintain productivity even when working from physical offices was not possible. In Sri Lanka, this was particularly impactful for the IT and BPO sectors, which could continue operations with minimal disruption.

Additionally, advancements in learning and development platforms have modernized training programs. E-learning and microlearning platforms allow employees to acquire new skills or update existing ones without the need for extensive off-site training. In a market facing talent scarcity in specialized roles, such technological solutions offer a viable pathway for upskilling the workforce.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning are also making inroads into HR technology. From automated chatbots for handling routine HR queries to advanced algorithms that sift through resumes to identify the most promising candidates, these technologies are becoming an integral part of modern HRM. In Sri Lanka, larger corporations and multinationals are at the forefront of adopting these sophisticated tools, setting the trend for smaller companies to follow.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced HRM in our region, and what lasting changes do you anticipate in terms of remote work, employee well-being, and workplace policies?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most sectors in Sri Lanka shifted to full-time remote work, embracing HRM trends like digitalization. However, the IT sector stood out as an exception. Given its adaptability and reliance on technology, the IT industry swiftly embraced remote work and digital HR solutions.

Yet, even within the IT sector, there's a notable push from some companies to return employees to full-time office work. This situation highlights a tug-of-war between company preferences and the demands of employees for flexibility. Many IT professionals have experienced the benefits of remote work and are keen to maintain a flexible work arrangement.

In the post-pandemic era, a balanced environment is expected to emerge, catering to both remote work enthusiasts and those requiring a physical office presence. HRM will play a pivotal role in crafting policies that foster this equilibrium. Overall, the IT industry serves as a trailblazer in adapting to changing HRM dynamics, offering valuable insights and best practices that can inform other sectors in Sri Lanka seeking to strike a harmonious balance between remote and in-office work arrangements.

These enduring trends signify not just temporary adjustments but a fundamental shift in the way HRM is practiced in the country. They are expected to continue shaping the workforce and workplace in the post-pandemic era, underscoring the adaptability and resilience of HR professionals in the Sri Lankan context.

What are the main reasons that drive Sri Lankan workers to seek employment opportunities abroad? Are there any specific industries or sectors that are more popular among migrant workers?

Brain drain has historically been a concern in Sri Lanka, primarily affecting skilled workers and white-collar professionals. Nevertheless, the recent economic crisis has exacerbated this issue to an unprecedented extent. Sectors such as IT, Engineering, and Healthcare have witnessed a significant outflow of talent as professionals seek better opportunities abroad.

In addition to economic factors, various other drivers contribute to migration from Sri Lanka. Political instability, conflicts, and violence can compel individuals to seek safety and stability elsewhere. Limited access to education, healthcare, and employment, along with social and religious persecution, can also propel migration. Environmental factors, family reunification, quality of life, educational opportunities, healthcare access, and personal reasons all play a role in people's decisions to migrate.

How has labor migration from Sri Lanka evolved over the years, and what factors have contributed to these changes?

Economic reasons. In the mid-20th century, migration was largely unregulated, with individuals seeking employment opportunities in countries like the Middle East and Europe. Policies and regulations have evolved to better protect the rights and welfare of migrant workers.

The types of jobs sought by Sri Lankan migrant workers have evolved. Initially, manual labour in construction and agriculture was prevalent. However, there has been a shift towards skilled professions, such as IT, Healthcare, and Engineering, reflecting the growing skills and qualifications of Sri Lankan workers.

Improved access to education and skill development programs in Sri Lanka has led to a more skilled and qualified labor force. This, in turn, has opened up opportunities for Sri Lankans to seek higher-paying jobs abroad, especially in professional sectors. Friends and family members who have successfully migrated often encourage others to do the same.

Increased awareness of labour rights and advocacy efforts by non-governmental organizations and international bodies have contributed to improved conditions and protection for Sri Lankan migrant workers.

How can HR professionals contribute to the successful reintegration of returning migrant workers into the Sri Lankan workforce?

HR professionals in Sri Lanka contribute significantly to the successful reintegration of returning migrant workers. HR professionals assess returning workers' qualifications and experiences, matching them with suitable job opportunities in Sri Lanka to maximize their contributions to the local workforce.

Additionally, they conduct programs to provide returning workers with essential knowledge about the local job market and labour laws. Mentorship programs pair returning workers with experienced colleagues who provide insights, share reintegration experiences, and offer guidance for professional and emotional support.

Facilitating networking opportunities, HR professionals encourage participation in industry-related events and provide platforms for connecting with potential employers and industry professionals.

In summary, HR professionals in Sri Lanka offer comprehensive support to returning migrant workers, spanning practical, emotional, and cultural dimensions.

What are the negative impacts of excessive labor migration from Sri Lankan labor force?

Excessive labour migration not only has immediate consequences but also poses long-term challenges for a country's development. When a significant portion of the skilled workforce migrates, it can lead to shortages of qualified professionals in critical sectors like Healthcare, Engineering, and IT, resulting in a "brain drain" of the brightest talents. Families left behind may experience social disruptions, and some migrants face exploitation abroad, especially in low-skilled jobs. Additionally, the departure of young, skilled individuals contributes to an aging domestic workforce, while returnees may struggle to find suitable

employment due to skills gaps and changing job market dynamics.

In the long term, this continuous migration trend can hinder a country's ability to break out of the cycle of poverty. Over many generations, the individuals who are supposed to contribute to the nation's development, innovate, and drive economic growth have left the country. This loss of human capital can impede progress, as it becomes increasingly challenging to build a strong, self-reliant economy when the skilled and talented workforce has been depleted due to prolonged migration.

In what ways can HR professionals and organizations contribute to the well-being and protection of workers?

There is a clear imperative for HR professionals to be receptive to the needs and concerns of employees within their organizations. Unfortunately, many employees often hold a less-than-favorable view of the HR department. A pivotal first step towards improving this perception is dismantling the perceived barrier between the workforce and the HR department. This entails fostering a culture of approachability and demonstrating genuine care for people's concerns.

By bringing the HR department closer to the employees, a more authentic understanding of the challenges individuals face in their roles can be gained. This heightened proximity enables HR professionals to proactively identify and address these issues, thereby promoting a more harmonious and supportive work environment. Ultimately, the closer HR is to the people it serves, the more effectively it can contribute to the well-being and success of both individuals and the organization as a whole.

How can HR professionals collaborate with educational institutions and industry associations to strengthen the talent pipeline and workforce development?

I believe the approach should be reversed: educational institutions should collaborate closely with industries to identify necessary changes for producing a relevant and capable workforce. HR professionals can play a crucial role as facilitators in fostering such partnerships. To do this effectively, a significant portion of HR practitioners should possess a profound understanding of the specific business domains within their organizations, enabling them to make meaningful contributions to shaping the future workforce.

Regrettably, a significant portion of HR professionals often lack this comprehensive understanding due to the exclusive focus of their course curricula on HR-related topics, rather than interdisciplinary knowledge. A viable short-term solution would involve revising curricula in disciplines such as engineering, finance, and medicine to incorporate content related to Human Resource Management (HRM). This adjustment would open avenues for professionals from various backgrounds to pursue careers in HR.

For instance, an HR manager with a background in software engineering would not only comprehend the challenges faced by technical staff at a deeper level but also provide valuable feedback to educational policymakers regarding necessary curriculum changes. This collaborative approach can bridge the gap between academia and industry, resulting in a more adaptive and skilled workforce in the long term.

Looking ahead, what do you foresee as the biggest challenges and opportunities for HR professionals in our region over the next few years?

In the short term, we anticipate challenges like skill shortages and the integration of remote-hybrid working models. However, the most significant challenge in the coming years will revolve around the evolving landscape of technology. This transformation will not only change certain job categories but also eliminate some of them entirely. Additionally, we'll witness the relocation of jobs, both white collar and blue collar, to other countries. These shifts, influenced by geopolitical and economic realities, will impact organizations and, consequently, create workforce-related issues.

The evolving landscape will redefine the role of HR professionals, necessitating a broader skill set encompassing areas like data analytics, technology, psychology, and business strategy. Automation and digitalization will become integral parts of HR operations, requiring HR to adapt to a more strategic role. Self-service HR tools will empower employees, and HR professionals must prioritize user experience and technology usability.

To stay competitive, HR professionals must commit to continuous learning and adaptability, keeping pace with evolving trends in technology, workplace dynamics, and legal regulations. HR is transitioning into a multidisciplinary, self-service-oriented function, leveraging technology and a broader skill set to navigate the future workforce landscape.

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Ahead of the Curve:

Reinventing Performance Management in the Digital Age



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Advanced technologies have changed the way people and processes work across the globe. A global survey conducted by Accenture in early 2021 revealed that corporate leaders accelerated their investment in core and emerging technologies to create a corporate environment boundaryless and adaptable and aligns human performance and the processes strategically (Accenture, 2021). It urges the need to reconsider the effectiveness of organizational performance management systems in measuring employee performance towards strategic directions. Traditional performance management systems rooted in old management models for specialization and optimizing discrete work tasks seem no longer productive in evaluating employee performance in the digital era. Reinventing a performance management system requires approaches that are nimble, real-time and personalized—something at the fingertips of the parties involved in performance evaluation and focused on fueling future performance rather than in the past.

Performance management refers to a continuous process of measuring and developing the performance of employees and workgroups in a way that is consistent with the strategic goals of the organisation (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Aguinis, 2021). Managing employee performance has been paramount to improving the firm performance, although we cannot visibly notice the effect in numbers in routine work. In the digital age, performance management systems are required to be more transparent and flexible to fit along with artificial intelligence (AI) and social technologies that enable employees to set their performance goals and adjust them during the year with the changing business needs and external requirements. Traditional year-end performance evaluation

appears to be a 'broken' and 'incongruent' approach than ever in the digital world of work. Modern performance management systems have evolved to curate performance data and offer timely feedback to employees. This makes firms much more sensible for talent-dependent businesses and uses real-time performance information for decision-making.

What's new in Performance Management Systems around the world?

An electronic performance management system is not new and is an integral part of Human Resource Management systems and business models. However, the use of advanced technologies, AI and social technologies such as chat apps, AI-based platforms, online forums and cloud-based platforms are still emerging and show high potential to further evolve with changing technology in the post-pandemic business world. When exploring how these digital technologies take control of performance management systems across the work and what changes have been made to the existing performance management processes, a few corporate examples can be discussed. Featuring IBM's journey on embracing a digital performance management system, Kiron and Spindel (2019) described IBM's new crowd-sourced performance management system, 'Checkpoint' which focuses on ongoing feedback and less on assessment and their mobile application, 'ACE app' in filling employees real-time coaching needs. It was a well-executed journey of transformation, from the annual performance assessment cycle to real-time performance feedback and witnessed the success through their annual employee engagement survey. Another piece of evidence is from General Electrics (GE), where they replaced their annual ranking approach with a new application for performance development- 'PD@GE' for continuous feedback and real-time coaching (Quartz, 2015). Evidence of AI-enabled applications for performance advisory, personalised performance recommendation and coaching was evident in an Indian subsidiary of a global technology MNE that helped the firm improve HR cost-effectiveness and overall employee experience (Malik et al., 2021).

The above corporate examples evidence the use of digital and social technologies is promising and effective in managing employee performance in the modern world of work. Employees feel connected and stay true to themselves when their performance is recognised and monitored in real-time and encouraged to seek support through their immediate supervisors. Ongoing feedback guarantees continuous professional development and helps them feel a sense of connection and psychological safety at work (Aguinis et al., 2021).

What would HR Managers do to embrace the new change?

Embracing new technology and tech-enabled applications could be challenging due to their inherent limitations of bias, fairness, privacy and extreme objectivism associated with algorithm-driven performance data that would affect the trustworthiness of the performance management process (Tambe et al., 2019). Better configuration of digital technologies and human judgement is essential to harness in corporate cultures. Human Resource Managers and the top management have a pivotal role in managing new changes in performance management systems to elevate the overall performance of employees and, thereby improve firm performance. The following tips could be useful:

- Upskilling for adopting emerging technologies in performance management systems:

HR managers and corporate leaders should encourage employees and all evaluating managers to improve their tech literacy at work for better human-AI or advanced technology interplay at work (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018), particularly in assessing performance data.

- Ensuring active and visible support from top management on the use of the new performance management system:

Support and encouragement from the top management help cultivate a collaborative eco-system that can promote employees' adopting new approaches and responding to feedback on the changing business needs.

- Designing a user-friendly and easy-to-access performance management system:

All HR managers and related parties should think through robust yet user-friendly systems for performance management. Evaluating performance is a complex task, and the new approaches should be designed carefully to minimise resistance to embracing new technologies and efficiently change the mindset to adhere to the guidelines of performance evaluation from goal setting to tracking feedback.

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Work-Family Balance in the 21st Century



Ms. Vidyanee Vithanage

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Work-family balance is a sub-set of work-life balance. According to Clark (2000), work-family balance is "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum role of conflict." Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) define it as the "accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains". Both definitions focus on satisfactory conciliation between work and family.

Work-family balance is "one of the most challenging concepts" (Clark, 2000). It is a "central issue in twenty-first-century societies" (Lewis et al., 2003). With the emergence of the Industrial market economy, organizations took control of production from families thereby creating two distinct spheres, namely work and family. "The adoption of new technologies which may require or permit continuous working; and growing customer expectations in many sectors of the economy for a 24/7 service" (Woodward, 2007). In that context, people have to play various roles mainly as father, mother, husband, wife, employer, and employee. Successful performance in each role determines the success of the work-family balance. Hence, every role player should reconcile his/her obligations with one another.

"Gendered division of labor, with the wife caring for the family and the husband assuming the breadwinner role, is no longer a viable option for many couples" (Higgins et al., 1994, p.144). When both parents are involved in their work, they have to face time pressures and have to confront an overlap between work and family. Balancing work and family life is more challenging for them as it could lead to role conflict as the role demands on one sphere (work or family) are incompatible with the role demands of another sphere. Balancing parenthood and career is very challenging for all professionals who engage in careers. It is a consequence of the ever-changing workforce demographics that have emerged with the Industrial Revolution.

Dual-earner couples exercise a trade-off system in their life to have a balance between work and family. In the trade-off system, both parents have to sacrifice one role for the other, to some extent. It exists because of the scarcity of time experienced by individuals. However, successful work-life balance will contribute to the success of the organization and those who receive workplace support through family-friendly policies have a high productivity level at the workplace.

Modern-day organizations take steps to implement family-friendly policies and flexible work schedules or arrangements to support employees on their work and household chores. To reap the essence of family-friendly policies, organizations should have a supportive work-family culture. In an unfriendly culture, employees may be reluctant to use their entitled leave due to the fear of missing tenure or other opportunities. Indeed, organizations should show their employees that they are supportive by persuading their members to follow organizationally established family-friendly policies. Though it is a cost, it is an investment. Effective family-friendly policies could be used to address work-family conflict and eventually, it leads to a balanced work and family life of employees and in turn develops a better labor-management relationship within the organization and eventually, it leads to a balanced work and family life of employees and in turn develops a better labor-management relationship within the organization.



Unlocking Employee Engagement of Gen Z in the Workplace

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A new generation enters the workforce each decade, bringing with them distinct perspectives, expectations, and values as the workforce changes. The mid-1990s to early 2010 birth period is known as Generation Z. Organizations are faced with the issue of understanding and engaging this generation when they enter the workforce in substantial numbers to foster a productive and harmonious work environment.

In this article, I will examine the dynamics of Generation Z employee engagement, including the causes that drive them, the difficulties they encounter, and the approaches that businesses may take to successfully engage this generation at work.

Wisdom of Generation Z

The characteristics of Generation Z, often known as Gen Z, include a close relationship with technology, a voracity for fast knowledge, and a strong need for authenticity. They are renowned for having a strong sense of social responsibility, diversity, and entrepreneurship. Organizations must be aware of these traits and make adjustments in order to engage this generation.

Generation Z in the Workplace: Challenges

- **Short Attention Spans:** Because of the internet and social media, Gen Z is accustomed to consuming information quickly. They may have trouble completing lengthier, more conventional labor tasks, so they need different, challenging activity to keep them interested.
- **Different Expectations:** The workplace should value inclusivity and diversity, according to this generation. Companies that don't put these values first may have trouble keeping Gen Z personnel.

- **Desire for Purpose:** Generation Z seeks employment that is consistent with their values and interests. When employees believe their work has a larger impact on society or a broader purpose, they are more likely to be engaged.

Engagement Tactics for Generation Z

- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Generation Z values having the option of flexible work schedules and locations. Their job satisfaction and productivity may increase if you provide them with remote work options and flexible hours.
- **Opportunities for ongoing learning:** Generation Z prioritizes chances for professional advancement. To keep employees interested, employers should make investments in career advancement, mentoring, and training programs.
- **Authenticity and Inclusivity:** Foster a culture of inclusion in the workplace that values different viewpoints and encourages open conversation. Encourage sincerity and offer avenues for criticism.
- **Work with a purpose:** Emphasize the significant influence your work has had on society and the world. Highlight how their efforts fit with the goals and objectives of the organization.

Understanding Generation Z's particular requirements and motivations is essential since it is a key component of any organization's success as they take center stage in the workforce. Organizations may successfully engage and utilize the potential of Gen Z employees by catering to their preferences for flexibility, purpose-driven work, and a tech-savvy atmosphere.





How Remote Work Can Help Shatter the Glass Ceiling

Ms. C.D.R. Ponnampereuma (4000 level)

DID YOU KNOW THAT,

According to the Labor Force Survey Annual Report 2022,

- The majority of females (58.8%) are economically inactive as a result of household responsibilities.
- Even though millions of working-age females in Sri Lanka, only about 3 million are in the labor force.
- Another notable fact is that 87.9% of males contribute as employers, whereas only 12.1% of female employers work.

The "Glass Ceiling" is the name given to this overwhelming condition in the HR literature. It emphasizes the numerous hurdles that women face when climbing the corporate ladder (Damunupolaa & Sutha, 2019). For decades, women have been reluctant to compete in the workplace with men. Men and women develop their careers in several distinct manners. Women's careers are more likely than men's to include job changes owing to family responsibilities, and they balance work and family in their professional development (Amin et al., 2020). It appears that recognizing the constraints that lead to the glass ceiling effect is crucial to resolving workplace issues about disparities in gender and devising measures to address and improve rules to prevent such problems.

Greater prospects for Sri Lankan women to climb to managerial positions have arisen as a result of recent technological advancements, globalization, and a more liberal business environment in Sri Lanka, as well as the entry of women into the labor market. The traditional workplace has always been a challenging battleground for women seeking to break through the glass ceiling, however, the advent of remote work provides new alternatives for women seeking to level the playing field. So,



it's time to look into how remote work might help break down obstacles to women's career advancement, fostering greater gender equality and empowerment in the workplace.

According to the Labor Force Survey annual report of 2022, 78.1% of female employees contribute to the Sri Lankan economy as family workers. These findings exhibit that household is a significant factor leading to women becoming economically inactive even though women wanted to work at the workplace and their family responsibilities have to bear interfere with it. That's why remote work can be considered one of the best solutions for the glass ceiling in Sri Lanka. Remote work allows women to better combine their career and personal lives. This is particularly beneficial for females and careers, who frequently have to choose between a profession and a family. The flexibility to work from home and choose one's schedule can alleviate the restraints that the standard 9-to-5 office employment imposes on women. Working from home does not imply isolation. Through virtual meetings, conferences, and online forums, women can continue to create strong professional networks and mentorship relationships. These networks offer chances for mentorship, funding, and assistance, all of which are critical for breaking through the glass ceiling.

Women have made significant achievements in breaking through the glass ceiling and becoming effective industry leaders. A notable example is Indra Nooyi, who took over as CEO of PepsiCo in 2006. She was the first female CEO of a Fortune 500 business? and has been widely lauded for her leadership, receiving multiple awards and distinctions during her career. Kasturi Angela Chellaraja Wilson, Group Chief Executive Officer of Hemas Holdings PLC, is one noteworthy example from Sri Lanka. She is Sri Lanka's first female Group CEO of a publicly traded business. These ladies have all made significant contributions and serve as encouraging examples of what can be accomplished when women are allowed to lead.

Stress Management of the Organizational Community



Ms. B. M. Lokuge (3000 level)

To attain organizational goals and objectives both employers and employees should give their full contribution by maintaining high emotional, physical, behavioral, and mental stability. For this purpose, should be decided and executed strategies to stress management of the organizational community.

First, let's identify what stress is...

Stress is different for each person. It means various causes are affected for stress. They can be classified into four types in common. Those types and their explanations can be shown in the following figure.

1. **Physical Stress:** This is often the most obvious form of stress. It might present itself as headaches or other aches and pains, or you might notice an increase in your heart rate. Other common signs include getting sick more often than usual or noticing tension throughout your body.
2. **Mental Stress:** This form of stress is also quite common, and fairly easy to recognize. Mental Stress often presents itself as memory problems, an inability to concentrate, or anxiety.
3. **Behavioral Stress:** This can be more difficult to self-diagnose. Behavioral stress is indicated by a change in your typical habits, such as food intake (eating more/less than usual), sleep patterns, isolating yourself from others, or avoiding your typical responsibilities.
4. **Emotional Stress:** This is another tough one to diagnose. When the body is experiencing stress emotionally, it tends to prepare its "fight or flight" response, which can manifest in sneaky ways. Signs of emotional stress can include an increase in agitation or moodiness.

Source: <https://healthlibrary.telus.com/en/telus-health-care-centres/the-4-types-of-stress>

Stress may be caused for the positivity or negativity of people. Some positives are, increased efficiency of working, motivated to complete tasks quickly and successfully, and also productivity may be increased when working under stress. Some negatives are stress can cause various diseases, it can lead to conflict situations, downtime may be increased, and productivity may decline.

So, managing those stressors is essential for anyone to balance the positives and negatives of stress. From here, we will discuss what stress management is and how to do it.

What stress management is and how to do it...

Stress management has been introduced in different ways by different scholars. Some examples are,

"Stress management encompasses processes and activities that individuals employ to modulate the impact of stressors."

[Richard S. Lazarus, Susan Folkman, 1984]

“Stress management is defined as the tools, strategies, or techniques that reduce stress and reduce the negative impacts stress has on your mental or physical well-being.”

[Tchiki Davis, 日付不明]

According to those definitions, *stress management is a technique for managing people's stress in a better state to improve positives and reduce negatives*. The reasons for stress management in an organization are,

- Job insecurity
- Increased productivity
- Difficulty making decisions
- Greater job satisfaction
- Harassments
- Improved employee health
- Lack of autonomy
- Relationships at work

When managing stresses in the organization's community, Stress Management Interventions (SMIs) are very helpful. There are three types of SMIs. They are,

- **Individual Interventions**
E.g.: Meditation, Exercise, Relaxation techniques, Cognitive approaches, Time management
- **Organizational Interventions**
E.g.: Organizational structure, Job design, Selection and placement programs, Working conditions, Training and development
- **Individual/organizational interfaces**
E.g.: Job analysis, Participation preference-practice, Coworker relationships

From managing the stress of people, many benefits can be obtained as an organization. Such as, by reducing the stress of employees they can fulfill their tasks effectively, increase employee job satisfaction, strengthen employer-employee relations, reduce costs to employers, and minimize injuries and illnesses of employees.

However, two major disadvantages can be identified by managing the stress of people at the workplace. Those are, the beneficial effects of stress on symptoms are often short-lived and many organizations overlook important root causes of stress because they focus on the worker and not the environment.

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Artificial Intelligence and HRM



Mr. W.T.S.L. Botheju (3000 level)

Technology is an important factor for every business organisation today. The business world is constantly evolving due to globalisation. In this dynamic environment, every aspect of an organisation plays a pivotal role in achieving success, and human resource management (HRM) occupies a particularly essential role. Human resource management is the efficient and effective use of human resources to achieve the goals and objectives of an organisation. It is also known as the ability to acquire and develop a skilled workforce. (Schemerhorn, 2001). As human resources are the backbone of any organisation, the focus on HRM is paramount.

Artificial intelligence has been around for years and has become a popular concept nowadays. Simply put, artificial intelligence is about replacing human thinking with a machine. Artificial intelligence is sometimes described as a machine, robot, computer program or software. Artificial intelligence helps in making business activities easier and faster.

The HR department, an integral function within an organisation, has traditionally involved the physical maintenance of company records, documentation, and information. This manual approach involved significant costs and labour. Later, using technology for human resource management, these activities were carried out through various systems and software using digital tools. At present, the use of artificial intelligence for the human resource sector in the business world has become a new turning point in the business world.

Currently, the utilisation of artificial intelligence in human resource management marks a significant transformation within the business world. Artificial intelligence is used in human resource management for employee procurement processes, which comprise four essential tasks: employee recruitment, selection, hiring, and induction. The conventional employee procurement process is complex and costly for organisations. In the present day, technology-driven businesses are leveraging AI for employee procurement. Also, When there is a job vacancy in an organisation, it tends to attract a substantial volume of applicants. Then, each person has their own problems related to the application or job, and the organisation has to offer solutions for these issues. This process can be quite challenging for the organisation. Therefore, modern organisations employ artificial intelligence to automatically address these issues. Artificial intelligence helps out by offering automated solutions. It lets applicants get answers to common problems and job-related queries through a chatbox. For example, Facebook Company uses this chat box method. Furthermore, today's business organisations use artificial intelligence to select applicants, conduct interviews, analyse resumes and forecast historical data. For example, HR departments conduct interviews based on artificial intelligence.

As mentioned, many companies have strengthened their human resource management departments with artificial intelligence. By doing so, the organisation's work can be done easily and various benefits can be obtained. These are,

1. Enables the organisation to attract and develop new skills.

Business organisations have to adapt quickly as customer needs change. Therefore, the use of artificial intelligence helps human resource management departments to acquire and develop employee skills in line with market demand changes by analysing information.

2. Improved employee experience.

In today's society, employees engage in work hoping for something different. Failure to support the change will result in employee alienation from the organisation. Artificial intelligence helps in developing employee skills and aligns the employee to the skill level required by the business.

3. Supporting strong decision making.

Decisions taken by the organisation regarding human resource management should be more accurate and strong decisions. Therefore, artificial intelligence helps businesses to make decisions through thorough analytical studies.

4. Facilitating the work of human resource department.

The organisation uses modern technology to facilitate business activities. There, the use of artificial intelligence helps the HR sector in employee attraction, employee recruitment, enhancing employee relations, employee retention and employee development.

5. Increased efficiency.

AI significantly enhances operational efficiency within the organisation. Automating repetitive tasks, streamlining processes, and optimising resource allocation allows the human resource department to achieve more with fewer resources, ultimately boosting productivity.

6. Developing workplace learning.

Artificial intelligence plays a pivotal role in fostering continuous learning within the workplace. It enables the creation of tailored learning experiences, personalised training modules, and adaptive skill development programs, ensuring that employees can continually acquire new knowledge and competencies to stay relevant in a dynamic business landscape.

Finally, the use of artificial intelligence in human resource management functions helps in the overall growth of the organisation. Maintaining the fine line that can exist between technology and humanity, will artificial intelligence depend on human resource management in the future? This is something we could revisit on.

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Leveraging Social Media for HR :

A New Frontier in Talent Acquisition

Ms. M.J. Navodya (3000 level)



In today's digital age, social media has evolved from being a platform for sharing personal experiences to a powerful tool for businesses, including Human Resources (HR). HR professionals are increasingly recognizing the potential of social media to streamline recruitment processes, enhance employer branding, and engage with candidates. This article explores how HR can effectively harness the power of social media in talent acquisition.

Building an Online Presence

Establishing a strong online presence is the first step for HR professionals looking to leverage social media. Creating and maintaining professional profiles on platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and even Facebook allows HR to showcase their expertise and connect with potential candidates. A well-crafted profile reflects positively on the organization and its commitment to transparency and communication.

Employer Branding

Social media provides an ideal platform for HR to shape and promote the company's employer brand. Regularly sharing content that highlights the organization's culture, values, and achievements can attract candidates who resonate with the company's mission. Additionally, showcasing testimonials and success stories from current employees can lend authenticity to the employer brand.

Job Postings and Recruitment Campaigns

One of the most direct ways HR can utilize social media is by posting job openings and recruitment campaigns. Platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram are excellent channels to reach a wide audience of potential candidates. HR can create eye-catching job posts, use relevant hashtags, and target specific demographics to ensure job openings receive maximum visibility.

Passive Candidate Engagement

Social media allows HR to engage with passive candidates – those who may not be actively job searching but could be valuable additions to the organization. By regularly sharing industry insights, company updates, and thought leadership content, HR can pique the interest of passive candidates and eventually convert them into active applicants.

Employee Advocacy

Employees are often a company's best advocates. Encouraging employees to share job postings and company updates on their personal social media profiles can significantly expand the reach of HR's recruitment efforts. Employee-generated content adds authenticity and credibility to the organization's messaging.

The integration of social media into HR practices is no longer optional but a necessity in today's competitive job market. By building an online presence, focusing on employer branding, strategically using social media for job postings and campaigns, engaging with passive candidates, encouraging employee advocacy, and ethically screening candidates, HR professionals can unlock the full potential of social media for talent acquisition. Embracing this digital frontier can lead to improved candidate quality, enhanced employer branding, and ultimately, a more efficient and effective HR process.



Handling Grievances Boosts Workplace Productivity

Ms. G.N.M. Perera (3000 level)



Workplace productivity is a cornerstone of organizational success. A critical yet often overlooked aspect of achieving and maintaining high levels of productivity is the way in which grievances are managed within an organization. Grievances can encompass a wide array of workplace concerns, from interpersonal conflicts to unfair treatment and working conditions. Let's take a closer look: does handling grievances effectively have any impact on workplace productivity and overall organizational health?

Understanding Workplace Grievances is a significant concern here. Workplace grievances are a common occurrence in almost every organization. They are

concerns or complaints raised by employees regarding their work environment, treatment, or relationships within the workplace. Grievances could manifest in various forms, including disputes with colleagues, dissatisfaction with management decisions, or issues related to compensation and benefits.

If the management or HR department is unable to address grievances within the organization, it can lead to the Hidden Costs of Unresolved Grievances. Furthermore, failing to address grievances can have detrimental consequences for both employees and the organization as a whole. Unresolved grievances can lead to a toxic work environment, low morale, and reduced employee engagement. The resulting decline in productivity often goes unnoticed until it begins to impact the organization's bottom line.

Many researchers have explored the culture of open communication needed to enhance workplace productivity. Organizations must cultivate a culture of open communication and conflict resolution to harness the power of grievance handling for increased workplace productivity. This culture ensures that employees feel safe and encouraged to voice their concerns without fear of retaliation. When employees believe their concerns are genuinely heard and valued, it fosters trust and a sense of belonging within the organization.

Are there any benefits to handling grievances towards effective productivity? Certainly, it boosts employee morale. Timely and effective grievance resolution sends a powerful message to employees that their well-being matters. High employee morale is closely linked to increased motivation and productivity. Not only that, it leads to reduced stress and anxiety, strengthened team dynamics, and encourages innovations, among other benefits.

Last but not least, practical strategies for organizations such as clear grievance procedures, the use of mediation services, and the implementation of training programs to educate employees and managers about grievance resolution can directly impact the overall productivity at work. Recognizing and addressing workplace grievances is pivotal for maintaining a thriving and productive organizational culture. By promoting open communication and timely resolution, organizations can boost employee morale, reduce stress, strengthen team dynamics, and encourage innovation.

Neglecting grievances, on the other hand, can lead to a toxic work environment, diminished productivity, and hidden costs that impact the bottom line. Therefore, proactive grievance management is a crucial aspect of organizational success and employee well-being.



Alumni Triumph



Ms. Sadusha Kodikara
Assistant Manager – HR & Administration
Silvermill Group

Ms. Sadusha Kodikara graduated from the University of Ruhuna in 2014 with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, specializing in Human Resources Management. Her commitment to professional development shone through as she completed the Professional Qualification in Human Resource Management (PQHRM) from the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM) in the same year. Ms. Sadusha pursued and successfully achieved a master's degree in Labour Relations & Human Resources Management from the University of Colombo in 2020 highlighting her commitment to continuous learning and professional development.

During her undergraduate years, Ms. Sadusha displayed exceptional leadership skills by serving as the Vice Secretary of the Human Resource Development (HRD) Circle. Her active involvement and commitment to engaging all members in HRD circle activities showcased her natural aptitude for HR and her ability to foster teamwork and collaboration.

Ms. Kodikara commenced her career as an HR intern at Brandix Apparel Solutions Ltd in 2013. The following year, in 2014, she took on the role of an HR officer at Union Apparels (Pvt) Ltd. In 2015, after a year with Union Apparels, she moved to Atlas Axilla Company (Pvt) Ltd, a subsidiary of Hemas Holdings PLC. During her tenure at Atlas Axilla, she demonstrated her dedication, earning promotions to the positions of Senior HR Executive in 2018 and Assistant Manager – HR in 2020. Since 2022, she has been a member of the Silvermill Group, where she serves as an Assistant Manager – HR & Administration.

Ms. Sadusha has a valuable message for HR undergraduates who are about to embark on their HR careers:

"If you aspire to be an HR professional in the future, first, you must ensure that your SWOT analysis considers both internal and external factors and aligns them with your HR inspiration. Equally important is the identification of your unique talents, as this will provide you with a competitive edge in today's HR job market. In her view, HR isn't just like any other profession; it is, in fact, an art of managing emotions based on situations. Therefore, it's imperative to develop this emotional intelligence. Furthermore, gaining exposure to HR practices and accumulating real-world HR experience from the industry is just as critical as academic knowledge. It plays a pivotal role in your HR career's success and contributes significantly to your personal branding."

Alumni Triumph

Ms. Rose Martin, a distinguished alumna of the University of Ruhuna, graduated in 2006 with a BBA degree specializing in Human Resource Management. She pursued a Master of Business Administration, solidifying her commitment to continuous learning.



Ms. Rose Martin
Deputy Director, Human Resources
Urban Development Authority

Her career journey commenced with internships at Sri Lankan Air Lines, where she served as a Human Resources Intern and later as a Project Coordinator in 2006 and 2007, respectively. Subsequently, Ms. Rose transitioned to Dialog Telecom PLC, holding the position of Human Resources Officer from 2007 to 2008. Ms. Rose then joined Hemas Hospital Pvt Ltd in 2008, progressing to the role of Business Partner – Human Resources, a position she held until 2021. Currently, she serves as the Deputy Director – Human Resources at the Urban Development Authority since 2021.

Ms. Rose's career journey reflects her dedication to staying informed about evolving employment laws, industry best practices, and emerging HR technologies. Throughout her professional life, she has emphasized the importance of building a robust network, staying connected with peers, and actively participating in knowledge sharing. Beyond administrative tasks, Ms. Rose has played a pivotal role in fostering positive workplace cultures, attracting and retaining talent, and ensuring compliance with labor laws.

In a message to current students of the University of Ruhuna, Ms. Rose encourages them to savor the university experience, acknowledging it as a unique and transformative phase of life. While emphasizing the importance of dedicated learning, she encourages students to create lasting memories, enjoy themselves, and acquire meaningful experiences. Recognizing the students as future leaders, innovators, and change-makers, Ms. Rose advises them to stay committed and passionate, assuring them that their efforts today will contribute to a brighter tomorrow.

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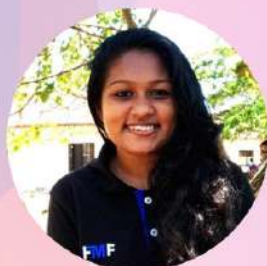
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