

Navigating the Future of Work

keka

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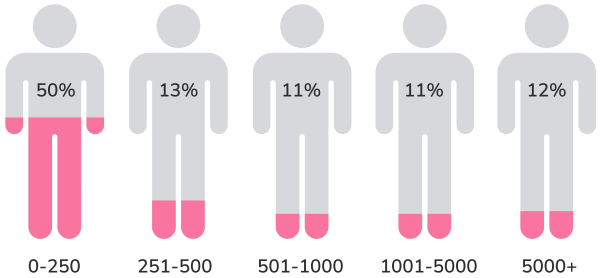
METHODOLOGY

We surveyed 8,725 unique respondents across industries to gain the data points for this report.

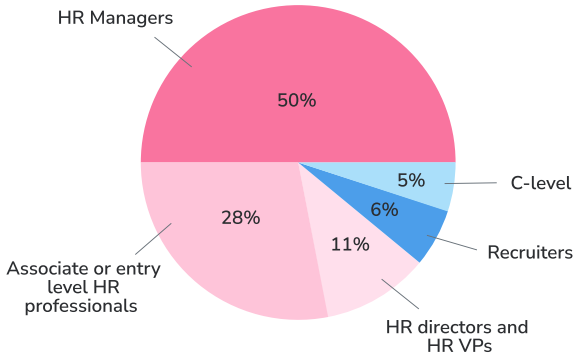
Participants:

8,725
HR professionals and C-suite executives

Organization Size:



Professional backgrounds of participants:



Countries:



1

Crafting workforce resilience



1.1

Bridge The Gap:

Dealing with Multi-generational Workforce



How to Deal With Multi-Generational Workforce

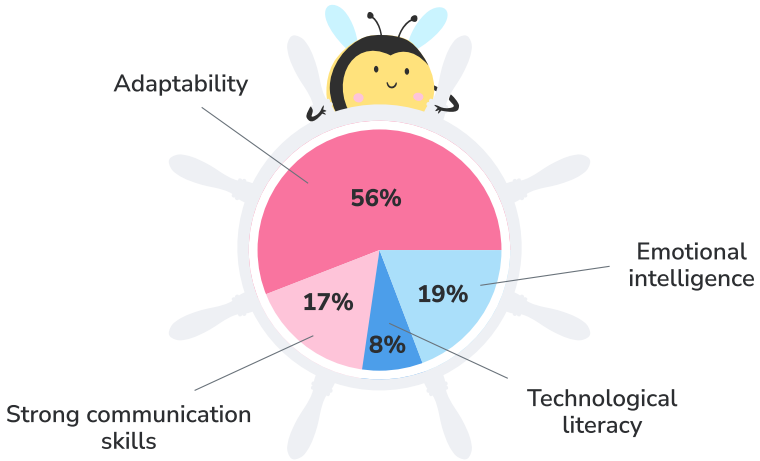
Parismita Goswami, Content Writer, Keka

Some say millennials form the ‘Greatest Generation,' and they take opportunities and possess a variety of skills to create a better future. They are determined to bring change through passion and enthusiasm.

However, to many, they represent the 'Generation Whine' - overindulged and protected people who cannot handle even the most mundane tasks alone.

Despite this, millennials are considered to be an efficient generation of workers, and those with the right skills will be in high demand. They may not only demand creative reward packages but also the where and how of their working operations.

Most essential skill for employees to navigate a multi-generational workplace



Bee findings

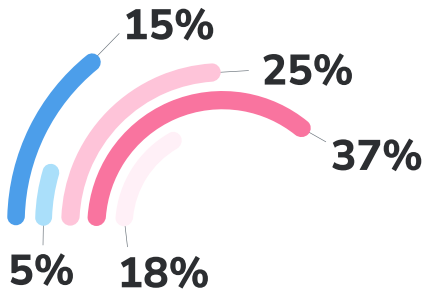
- Value conflict is a challenge in managing teams
- Bridge gap by including both leaders and employees
- Organizations must adapt to changing workforce landscape

Multi-generational workforces pose numerous challenges, and understanding these dynamics is crucial. **Rashmi Mandloi, Co-Founder, Leadup Universe,** succinctly outlines three fundamental aspects to tackle them: individual values, ideal work environments, and working styles.

Furthermore, it’s essential to understand the entirety of the multi-generational workforce's functioning. Bring in inclusivity within the workforce and flexibility within the leadership. You want to create a culture of belongingness. Transparency, here, can be your helping hand.

What can prove most effective in preventing inter-generational conflict at work?

- Promoting diversity and inclusion
- Mentorship programs
- Collaborative decision-making
- Fostering a culture of open dialogue
- Team building activities



It is predicted that millennials would make up half the workforce by 2030, outnumbering their predecessors, Generation X. Also, as life expectancy increases, they will perform more valuable tasks by supporting the older generation. Thus, "Dealing with a multi-generational workforce today is inevitable," says **Gaurish Wagh**, **Global Talent Management & Change Lead, Credit Suisse**.

The HR fraternity must lay the foundation for collaboration, considering diverse individual priorities and setting realistic expectations. Understand individual motivators and consider practicality.

Besides, **Rewa Ravneet Singh**, **Head - L&D, Talent, OD & Performance (GM - HR), Honasa Consumer Limited (Mamaearth)** draws a distinction between millennials and Gen X, highlighting the former's inclination towards autonomy.

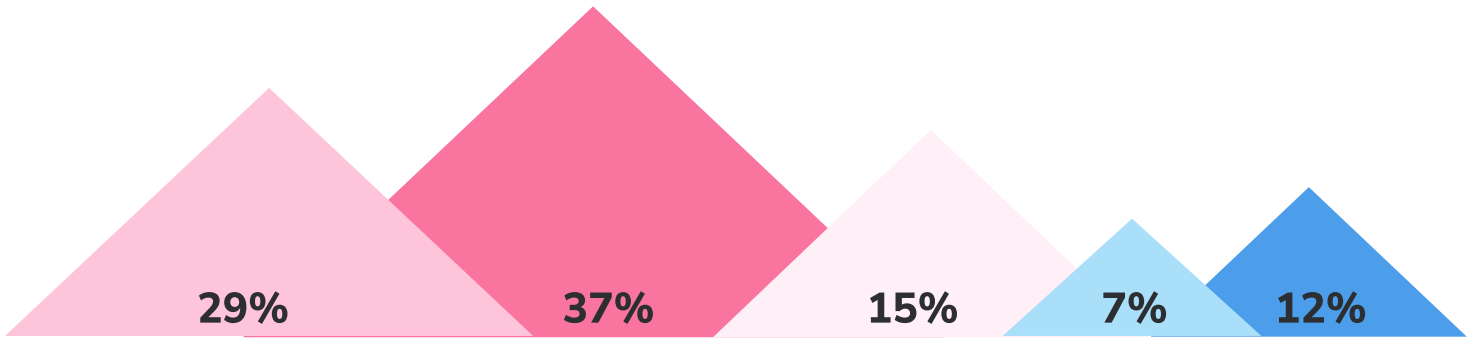
Conversely, Gen Z seeks a balance between autonomy and guidance, indicating a nuanced approach to leadership. She also suggested that a structured intervention for task delegation based on individual strengths and encouraging open discussions without interference will work the best to deal with new generations of workforce.

Gen Z doesn't like continuous feedback; it prefers acknowledgement and recognition.

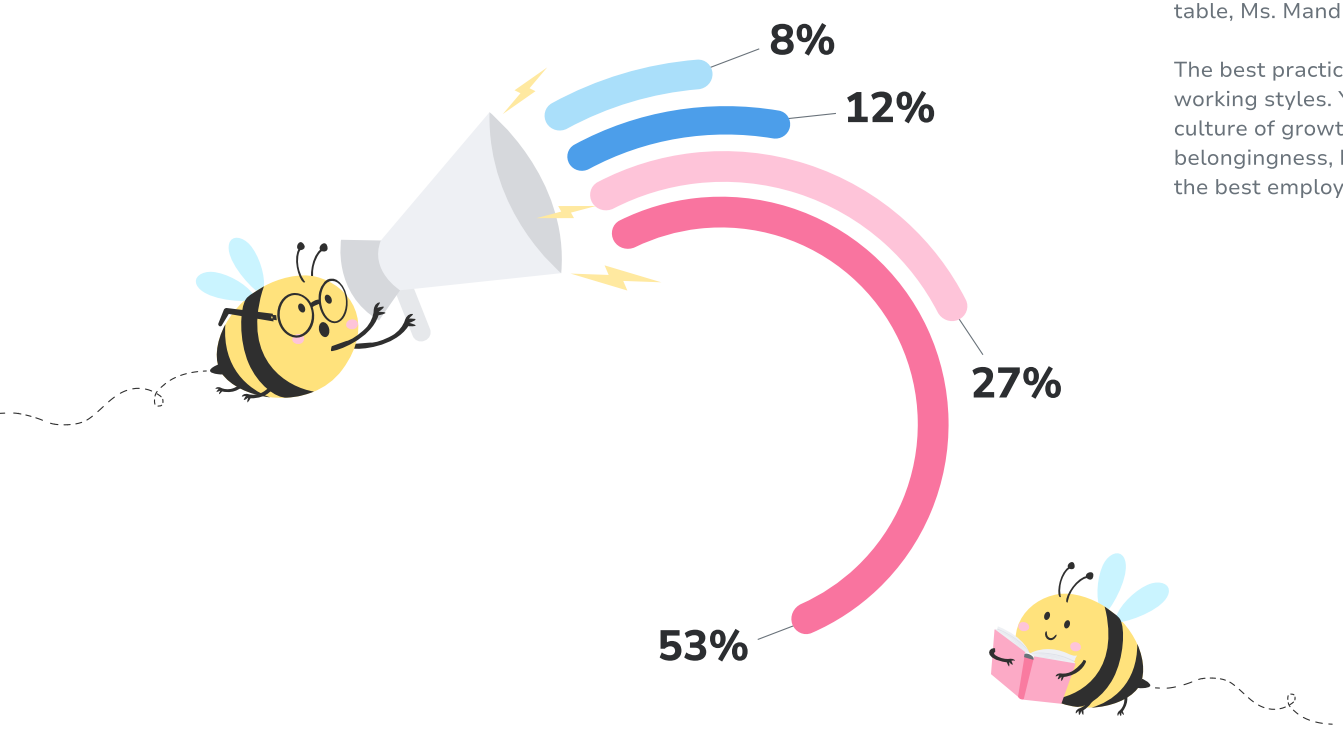
However, cultivating a forward-thinking workforce is imperative. You must acknowledge that a “one size fits all” approach won’t work at cross-functional workspaces. Moreover, creating a psychologically safe environment should be the priority for attracting top talent, with leaders playing a pivotal role.

Leadership's involvement extends beyond encouraging transparency, fostering a positive work environment, and leading by example across all generations. The current workforce demands emotional quotient (EQ) more than intelligence quotient (IQ.) Millennials perceive traditional working procedures as antiquated and restrictive, while GenZs have a completely different perspective on the ideal working conditions.

Biggest barriers to managing multi-generational teams



Most suitable media for inter-generational communication at work



- Email
- Video conferencing
- Instant messaging/chat apps
- In-person communication

So, is your business ready to be reshaped by millennials?

As the adage goes, "What got you here, won't get you there." It's time to change the approach. Make way for the future leaders of organizations.

The call for organizational evolution is evident, with a realization that there's a long journey ahead. To stay relevant, businesses must adapt to the changing workforce, leveraging the unique strengths and competencies each generation brings to the table, Ms. Mandloi points out.

The best practice to reshape an organization is to let go of rigid models or fixed working styles. You must value individual autonomy and morality, while catering to a culture of growth. Nonetheless, leaders and managers must accentuate a sense of belongingness, become better critics, and be role models in the era of change to retain the best employees from every generation.

KEKA EDITORIAL TAKE

Bridge the Gap: Working Across Generational Lines

Generational diversity is a reality.

Ignoring baseline needs and perspectives of each generation can hinder organizational growth. Now is the perfect time to bridge the gap between each generation and create a harmonious workplace.

Organizations must encourage psychological flexibility and confront situations accordingly.

Think of your workplace as an orchestra: violins representing Baby Boomers, flutes representing Gen Xers, and rhythmic drums representing Millennials. It takes a harmonious symphony to play the instruments and bridge the gaps.

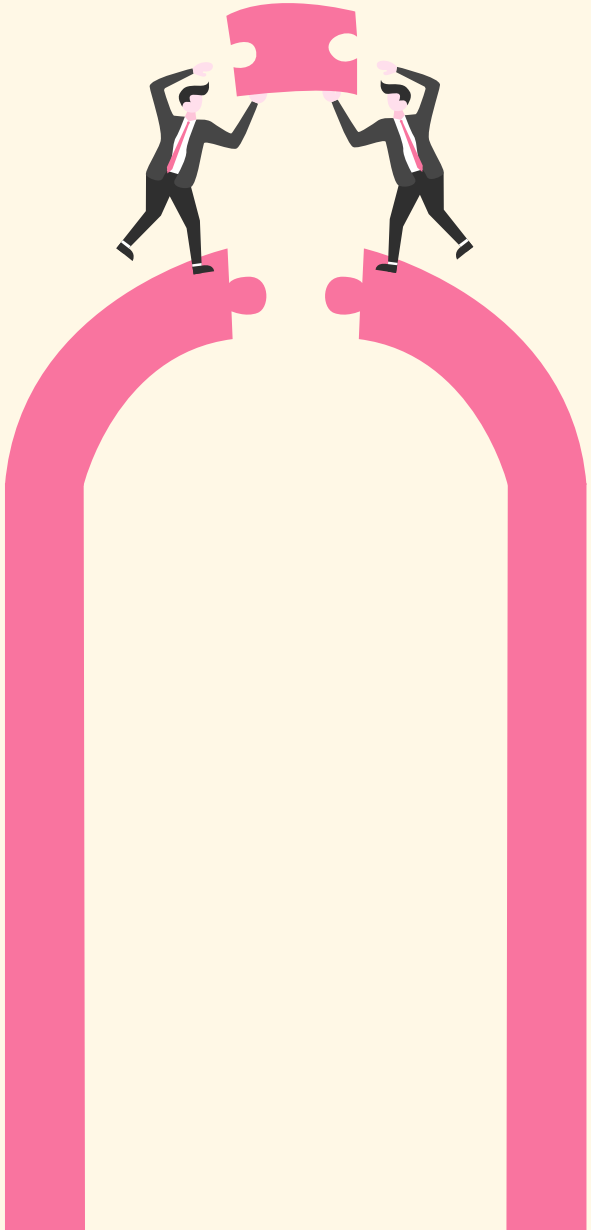
The Need for Harmony: Each generation has its own values, communication styles, and work preferences. Ignoring these differences can lead to long-run problems like:

- Friction due to miscommunication and frustration
- Failing to find untapped potential
- Turnover

With proper training, development, and change management, these problems can be overcome. Training and innovation can support the development of individuals' careers and, by proxy, the organization's success.

To simplify, let's consider it as an intentional **two-way effort,** from the leadership's and employees' ends to bridge the gap. Here's how your organization can use this approach:

	Leadership	Employees
1. Embrace Differences:	Regularly discuss generational diversity and its impact on communication, motivation, and collaboration.	Seek to understand colleagues' perspectives, actively listen, and appreciate their unique strengths.
2. Foster Open Communication:	Create safe spaces for open dialogue, encourage feedback, and address concerns transparently.	Share your perspectives constructively, communicate clearly, and respect diverse communication styles.
3. Leverage Shared Purpose:	Articulate a clear and inspiring mission that resonates with all generations.	Connect your contributions to the larger purpose, fostering a sense of belonging and shared goals.
4. Empower & Celebrate:	Recognize and reward individual and team achievements, regardless of generation.	Celebrate diverse talents and contributions, fostering a culture of inclusion and appreciation.
5. Continuous Learning:	Offer training on generational diversity, communication styles, and unconscious bias.	Embrace learning opportunities, develop new skills, and adapt to changing workplace dynamics.



1.2

Inside Up:

Cultivating Leadership From Within







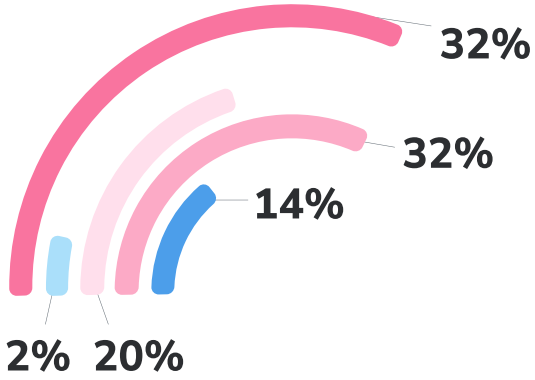
Cultivating leadership from within

Sidharth Yadav, Content Research Analyst, Keka

Organizations need agile leaders to navigate the changing technological and economic landscape. Such leaders must be strongly rooted in company culture and values to sustain organizations through change. Nurturing leaders internally can offer this opportunity.

Spotting and developing leaders internally brings several benefits. It helps companies save costs, strengthen culture and take more informed decisions.

Benefits of growing leaders internally



- Improved employee engagement, retention
- Cost savings
- Preservation of culture
- Better decision-making
- Diversity and inclusion

Bee findings:

- Most firms prefer nurturing leaders internally
- Unclear career growth paths obstruct development programs
- Senior leaders show strongest influence in developing leaders

Cultivating leaders from within internal talent can prove most crucial in improving decision-making and problem-solving, believe 32% of the respondents.

It also keeps employees engaged with their work and helps retain them (32%). Besides, such leaders help reinforce and preserve the organization's culture that nurtures them, according to 20% of the respondents.

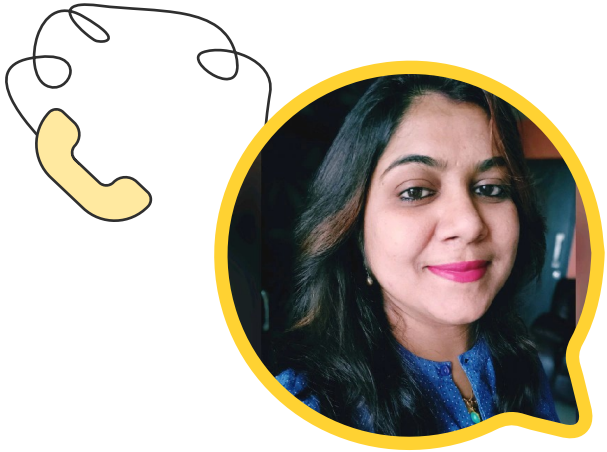
"Leadership can come from anywhere in the organization. There must be at least an opportunity to grow," states Susmita Kaushik, Director - People & Culture, Blazeclan Technologies.
At present, most organizations at 80% prefer internal identification and development of leaders over lateral hirings.

In a multigenerational workforce, adds Ms. Susmita, leadership isn't only about titles but also about "rising up to meet the expectations."

Aspiring leaders must constantly look for fresh opportunities to grow and problem statements to resolve, she believes.

"They must take ownership of projects and execute them. You make it a habit, a mindset," she adds. And eventually, the organization may recognize these contributions.

According to Sujata, leadership is a journey. "In this journey, knowledge is like a compass which can show where you can go. Curiosity is the engine and experience is the map."



Leadership is a journey. Knowledge is the compass which shows where you can reach, and curiosity is the engine that takes you forward. Experience is the map.

- Susmita Kaushik,
Director- People & Culture, Blazeclan Technologies

The HR team bridges the workforce and leaders, addressing to both parties' concerns, suggestions, and feedback.

And to support this journey, involving multiple stakeholders is the key. The senior management (43%) and the HR and training teams (33%) are most influential in creating leaders from within. Next come the frontline managers at 8%.

Whereas for Mayank, to be a leader is to live responsibly. “Whether you’re leading yourself, your team or an organization.”

An encouraging culture nudges employees to be proactive and take leadership, believes Deepak. “When you encourage people for the right things, they encourage others. That’s how such a culture is promoted.”

Moreover, if a culture lets people make new mistakes this advances entrepreneurship and innovation, which are ingredients of leadership development, adds Mr. Deepak. “Leaders must be visible and demonstrative in their behaviors. Appreciation should also be done responsibly. ”

Today, every second organization identifies potential leaders by observing desirable traits in tasks. But 39% rely mostly on performance review and assessments. The least consider tenure in the organization to spot the potential.

Organizations can identify leadership potential by betting on the eager and the willing and observing how they perform in leadership roles, suggests Mohak Aggarwal, Lead Analyst, HRBP, Indian Political Action Committee.

How do organizations prefer choosing leaders?



20%

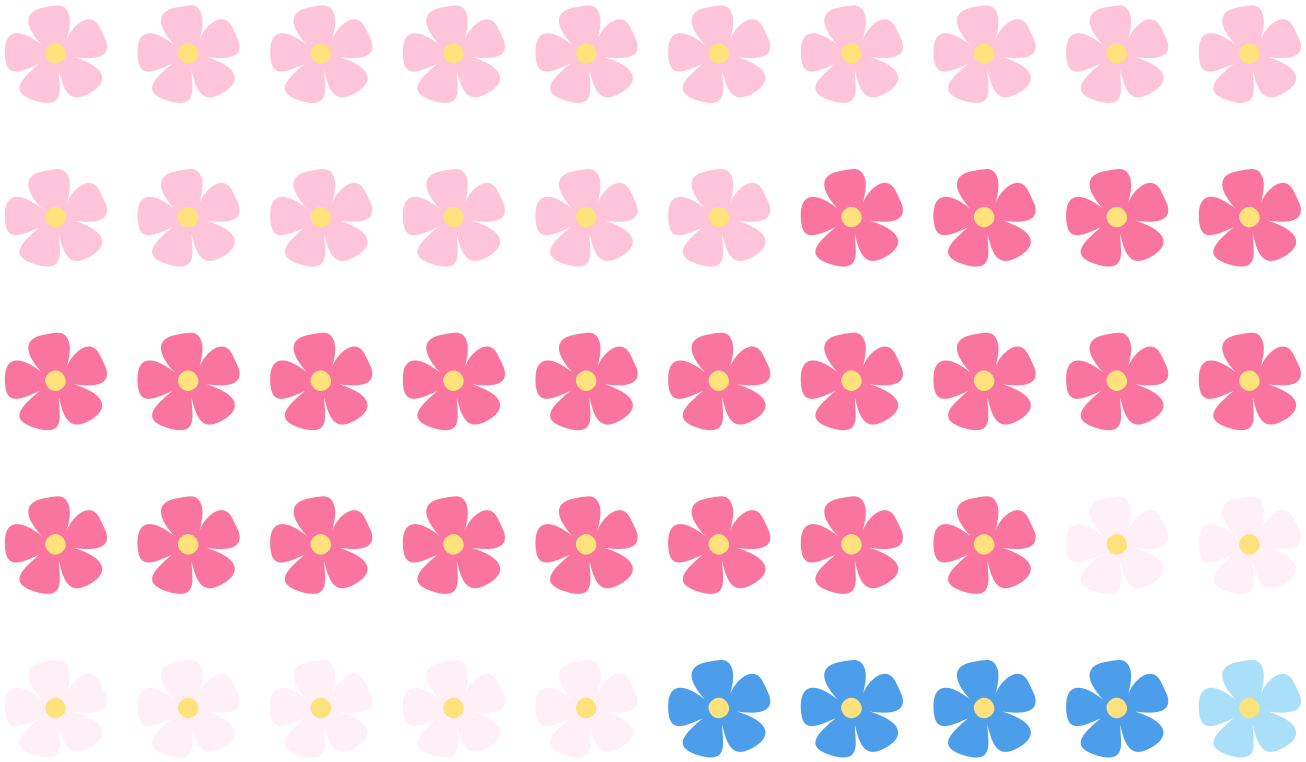
Lateral hiring



80%

Internal identification and development

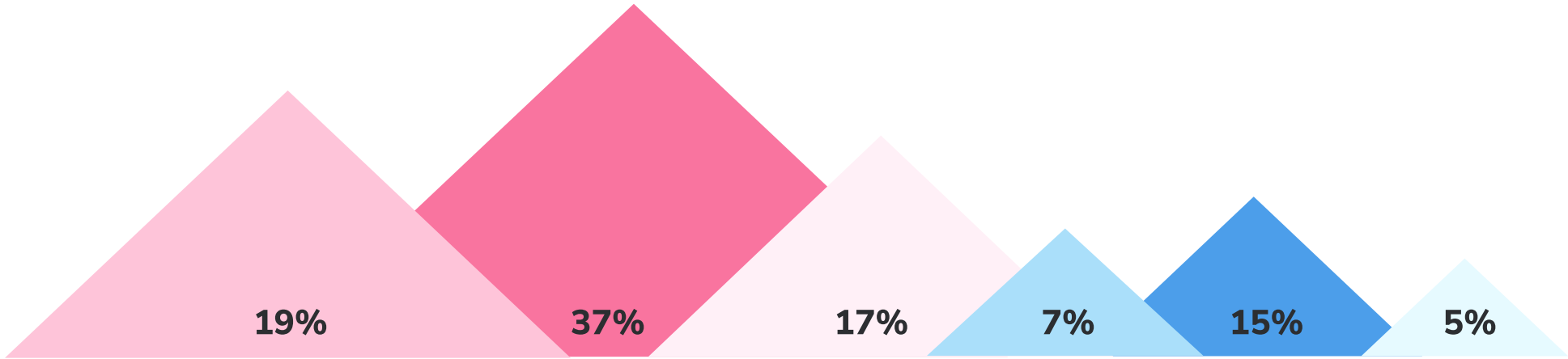
Who most strongly influences internal leadership development



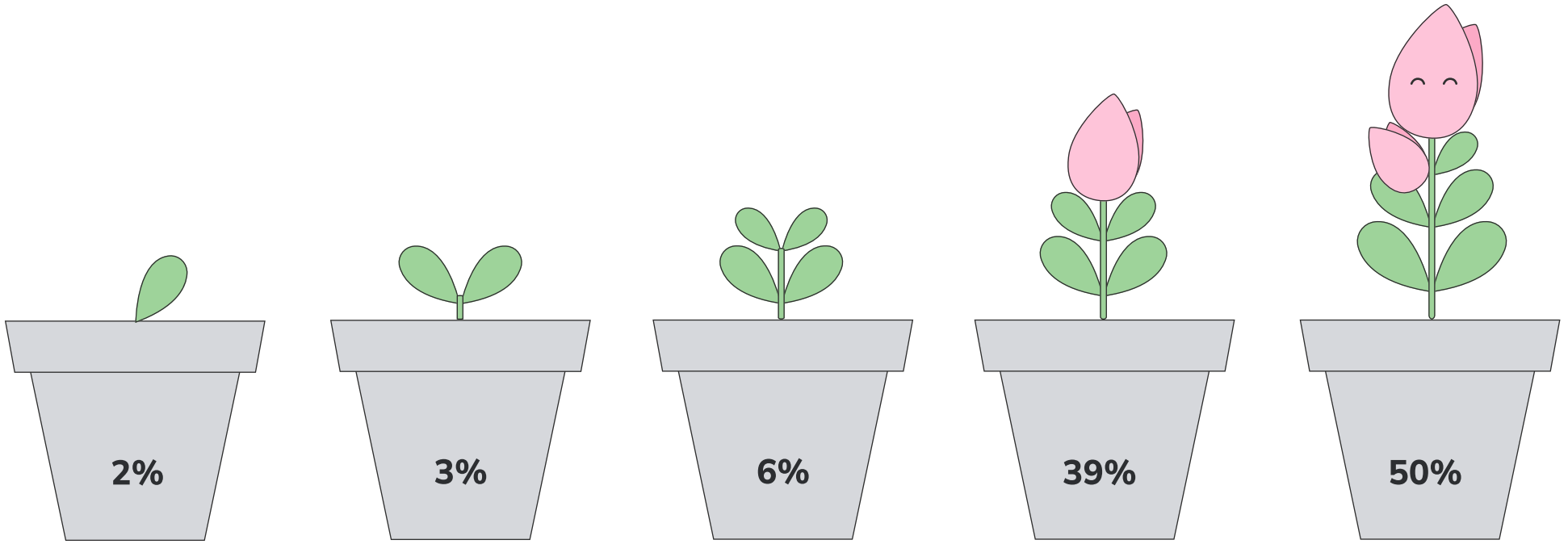
- HR / Training department 33%
- Senior management 43%
- Frontline managers 15%
- Employees 8%
- External consultants, advisors 1%

Hurdles in creating successful internal leadership development programs

- Unstructured training and development programs
- Lack of career growth paths
- Difficulty in identifying potentials
- Limited financial resources
- Insufficient support from top management
- Overreliance on external talent



How organizations spot potential leaders internally



KEKA EDITORIAL TAKE

Leadership Potential Score

Every second organization identifies leadership potential from within by observing leadership traits of individuals in performance of tasks, business professionals told Keka.

But organizations typically gauge leadership potential along vaguely defined parameters. These may be prone to bias of assessors, colored by their backgrounds, rapport and experiences with the candidate and informal feedback of supervisors. Many organizations even shortchange identification by solely relying on performance ratings, hindering a comprehensive assessment.

In addition, individual notions of leadership potential may not always align with the business' leadership needs. This also makes difficult the comparison of one leadership candidate from the another.

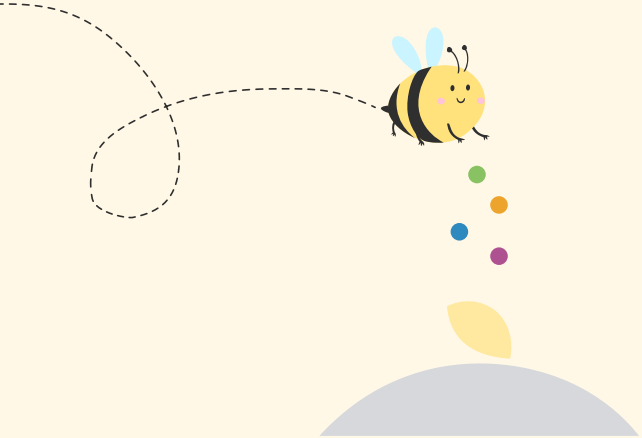
Thus, identifying potential leaders from within must be value neutral and adhere to objective principles. Organizations need to spell out the leadership style most suitable for achieving their objectives. Next, they must specify observable behaviors signifying that style.

President of Quantum Leadership Group Sunnie Giles, based on studies with leaders globally, has identified five leadership competency themes.

To discover how these themes play out, Keka has spelt out observable behaviors in real-workplace settings signifying these competency themes. This is based on industry research and interviews with HR leaders.

Organizations may look for these behaviors in tasks and determine the leadership potential of individuals based on a ‘Leadership Potential Score’.

Leadership Potential Scores and what they mean

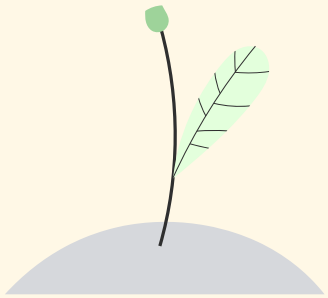


1. Exploring

Aspirational yet potential is untapped

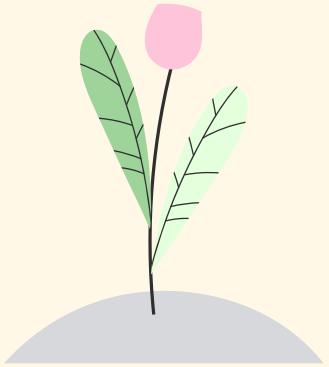
2. Sprouting

Takes initiatives and offers solutions



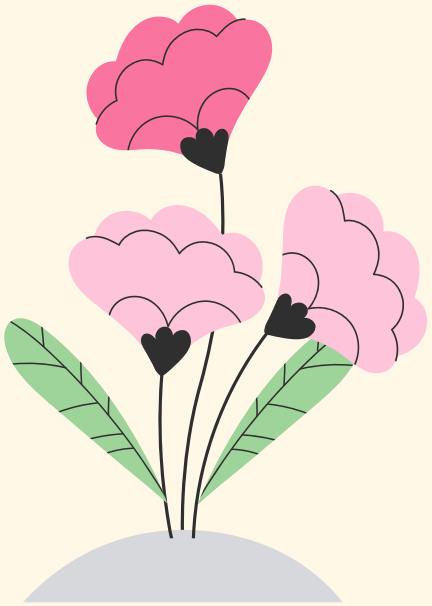
3. Budding

Shows strong communication and problem-solving skills



4. Flowering

Inspires and empowers others, thinks strategically



5. Blooming

Fosters innovation and nurtures open spaces to share ideas

Take these steps to find out leadership potential of individuals:

1. **Rate each observable behavior statement under competency themes on a scale of 5. The higher the score, the stronger the display of the behavior.**

2. **Average the scores of all behavior statements under every competency theme. This represents the score for that theme. It also points to the themes where the candidate is the strongest and the weakest.**

3. **Average scores for all the themes to get the Leadership Potential Score of the candidate.**

Leadership competency themes and observable behaviors under them:

1. High ethical standards and providing a safe environment

- Refusing to compromise on core values and principles even in challenging situations.
- Actively listening to, respecting and including diverse perspectives.
- Creating an environment where employees feel comfortable to report concerns without fear of retaliation.
- Acknowledging and celebrating the achievements of others.
- Adhering to the rules of the game as much as others and being impartial in conflict resolution

2. Empowering individuals to self-organize

- Encourages individuals to take initiative to propose and implement new ideas
- Encourages individuals to organize their own time and work
- Fosters cross-functional collaboration
- Enable individuals to define their growth paths
- Ensure access to adequate resources and learning opportunities

3. Promoting connection and belonging among employees

- Creates a feeling of succeeding and failing together as a team
- Creates opportunities for collaboration
- Performs rituals that foster sense of community and subculture within the team
- Actively seeks feedback from team members
- Lends collective vision to followers and helps them see clearly how their efforts are contributing to a larger purpose

4. Open to new ideas and experimentation

- Actively seeks opinions of others and is flexible to change own opinions
- Creates a psychologically safe space for everyone, regardless of their backgrounds and seniority, to share ideas without fear
- Removes fear of failure from new initiatives. Provides safety for trial and error
- Empowers others to lead innovations and take ownership of tasks
- Provides guidance and enough resources for team to take calculated risks

5. Committed to the professional and intellectual growth of employees

- Actively supports training and learning opportunities
- Advocates for them and promotes their ideas or initiatives
- Guides them in defining their career paths and provides support to help them stay on course
- Promotes knowledge sharing among peers
- Generates growth opportunities in the form of stretch assignments

Key points to consider:

- **The assessment is applicable for identifying potential for leading projects and teams**
- **Conduct assessments over a defined timeline, at least for three months**
- **Team leads, supervisors or department heads may conduct this assessment**
- **Hold briefings with assessors to discuss scoring methodology and timelines. Conduct mid-assessment reviews.**
- **Each candidate must be assessed by at least three reviewers for to reduce bias**

1.3

Find right mix:

Essentials of Building HR Team



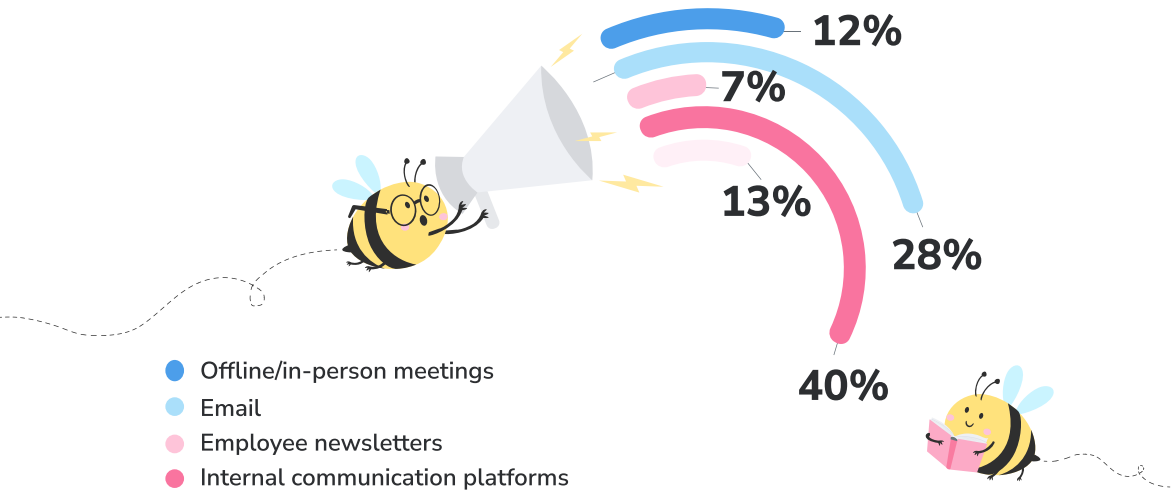
Essentials of building HR team

Parismita Goswami, Content Writer, Keka

Crafting a formidable HR team is critical today. The human resources (HR) function took the worst hit owing to economic and business disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide.

If we assess the journey of employee engagement, marked by the 2021-22 rollercoaster ride, there has been a subsequent decline in effective leadership and decision-making. For the matter, formation of a strategic HR team became paramount, as highlighted by Josephine Groom, Chief Operating Officer , Qlearsite, London.

Methods firms prefer to communicate HR updates to employees



Bee findings:

- Strategic thinking most crucial HR skillset today
- HRs must amplify employees' voices
- AI will impact recruitment and onboarding more profoundly

Amplifying the Voice of Employees

The HR function is indispensable for organizations. From the beginning of an employee's journey, including recruitment and onboarding, to retirement, HR professionals navigate the entire spectrum. Their roles extend beyond mere administrative tasks; they are the guardians of businesses navigating through uncertainties.



Employee voices drive the improvements and deliver the message to leaders to make sense.

- Josephine Groom, Chief Operating Officer , Qlearsite

The HR team doesn't work in silos. They are storytellers. A skilled HR team always believes in recognizing the importance of crafting narratives that align with the organizational ethos and shared vision.

Eventualities Of HRs

The HR team bridges the gap between employees and leaders, valuing their concerns, suggestions, and feedback. This dynamic interaction between HR and employees fosters a culture of open communication, trust, and continuous improvement.

With time, organizations are implementing more flexible work arrangements while reestablishing organizational culture. Thus, HR has evolved from being 'behind-the-scenes' to assuming the role of a critical moderator in the world of business. They navigate the dynamics of employee engagement, leadership, and business evolution.

One of the main issues facing HR managers is proposing, implementing, and overseeing changes to organizational systems and procedures. They must consult stakeholders and propose solutions that are inclusive of diverse perspectives.

As for technology, HRs must update themselves on recent innovations, trends and uses.

"Yet HR needs to be human-centric," said Kate Faxen, Head of OD, London Borough of Hackney, London.

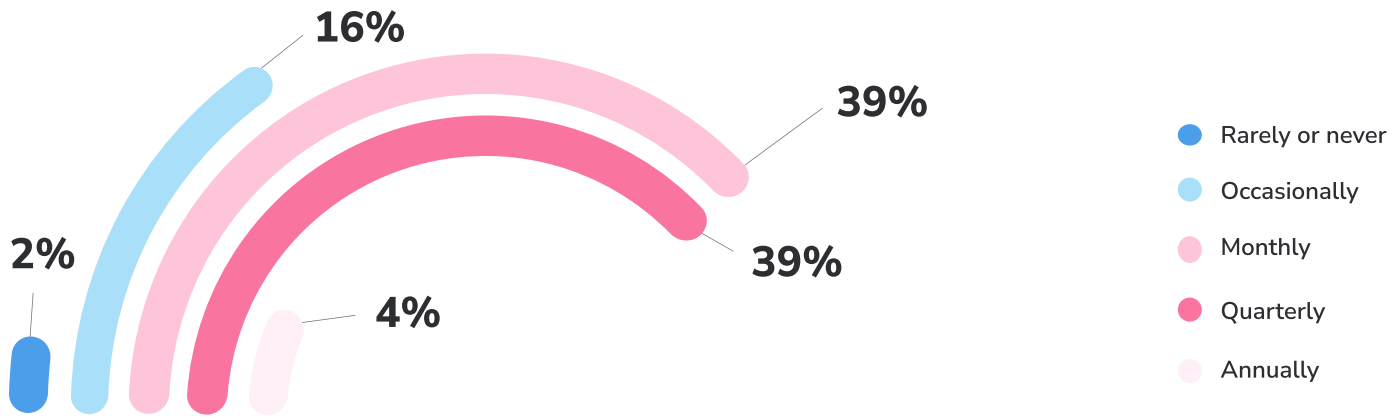
The evolving workforce demands more versatile HR teams. Their competencies should extend beyond regular administrative tasks, including effective communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. HRs are the linchpin for conflict resolution, employing critical business-solving skills to navigate challenges.

The contemporary workplace demands the seamless intertwining of broader organizational and individual goals.

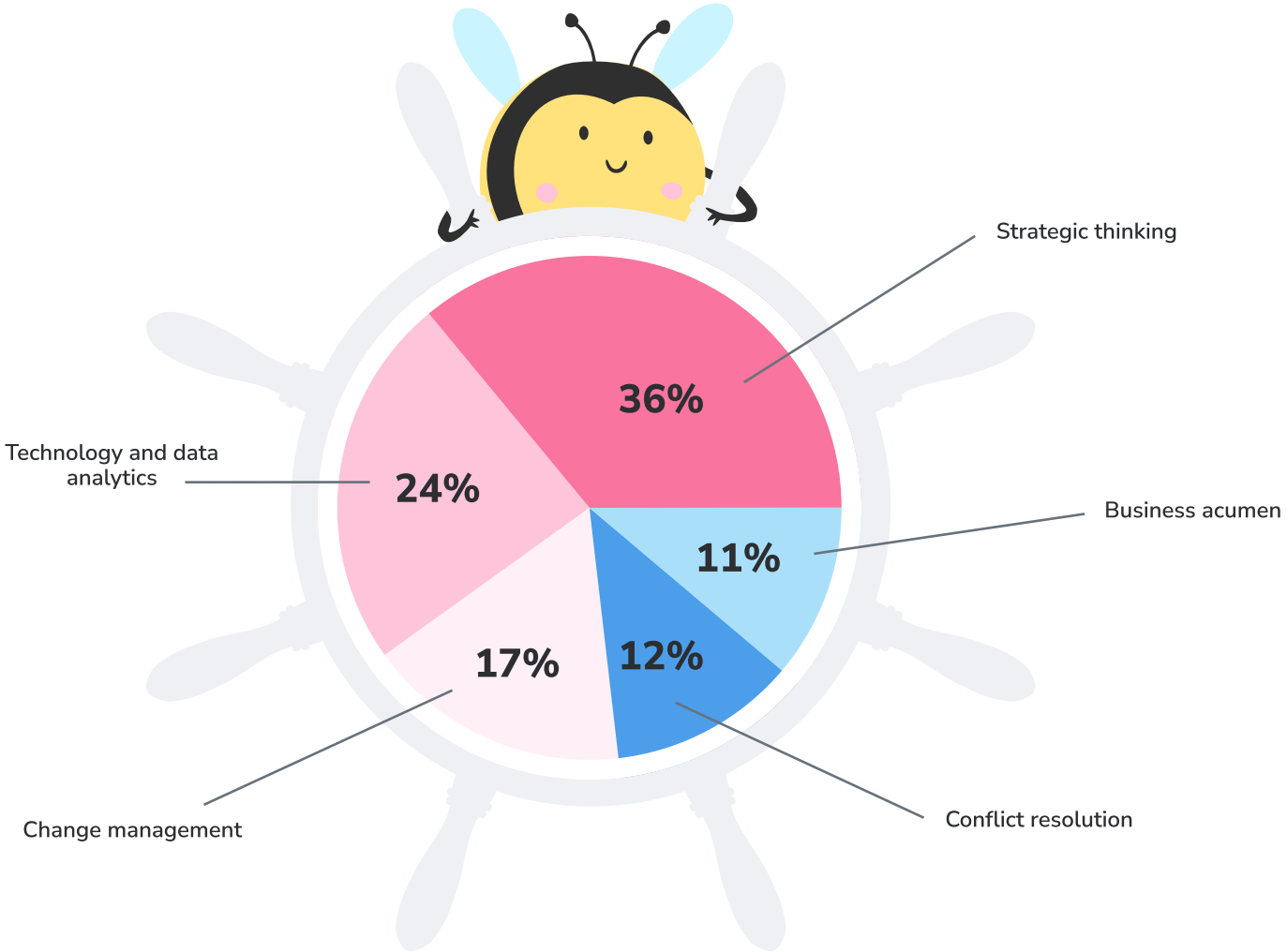
Like any other role, HR professionals must focus on upskilling, empowering, imparting knowledge, and questioning themselves to keep pace with the evolving working culture, growth, and trends.

The surveys suggest that the most crucial skills for an HR team to develop are strategic thinking, technology, and data analytics. A versatile and competent HR team is the backbone of any successful organization.

Frequency of professionals giving constructive feedback to their teams

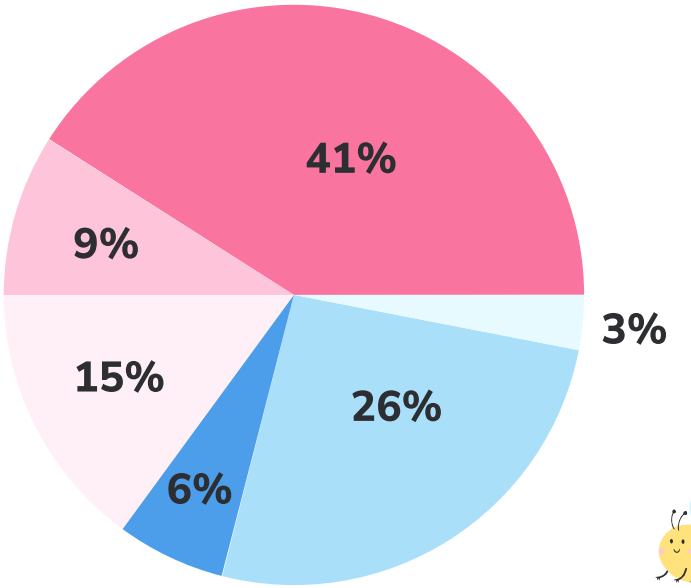


Crucial skills your HR team must develop



Areas of HR strategy where AI will have most significant impact

- Recruitment and onboarding
- Employee experience
- Performance management
- Employee engagement
- Learning and development
- Retention





KEKA EDITORIAL TAKE

Breaking the Matrix: A New Model for Building High-Impact HR Teams

Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Spectrum of HR Practices

Forget the Red Pill (traditional) vs. Blue Pill (modern) binary. Instead, envision a new HR perspective. Essential administrative tasks like onboarding and offboarding are only a foundation. We must move beyond these traditional practices to strategically build a team that is world class and can tackle any challenge.

Building a High-Impact HR Team: The "Digging a Better Pond"

Imagine your HR department as a pond and employees as the fish. This pond is a vital space where talent, company culture, and overall success come together. The quality of this pond directly affects your ability to attract, retain, and develop exceptional employees.

High-Impact HR Teams: More Than Administration
High-performing HR teams go beyond administrative tasks. They play a strategic role in shaping your organization's culture and performance, thereby enriching the pond.

They focus on attracting and nurturing top talent by "digging a better pond" – improving their practices and processes, and shifting mindsets.

Key principles for a thriving HR Pond

- Empathy & Authenticity: High-impact HR teams understand employee needs and aspirations. They build trust through transparency and honesty, fostering engagement and a positive employee experience.
- Agility & Adaptability: These teams adapt to changing workforce dynamics, technology, and business needs. They experiment with innovative tools and approaches to stay relevant and practical.

Old Pond vs. New Pond
Imagine the traditional HR department as an old pond – slow, bureaucratic, and disconnected from employee realities. The new and improved HR pond is modern and agile, actively seeking better "fish" – talent, a strong culture, and increased effectiveness.

The Outcome: A Thriving Ecosystem. By "digging a better pond," HR teams create a thriving workplace ecosystem that attracts exceptional talent, fosters growth and aligns with the organization's goals. They play a crucial role in building a successful company.

Imagine a dynamic HR team, each member embodying a specific "superpower":

- The Empath
- The Architect
- The Data Jedi
- The Learning Guru
- The Tech Wiz

These "HR superheroes "can collaborate seamlessly, adapting to changing needs and leveraging their unique strengths. They collaborate to create a high-impact HR team that goes beyond traditional roles, driving employee engagement, talent acquisition, and organizational success.

The Empath: Builds rapport, resolves conflicts, and creates a psychologically safe space.

The Architect: Designs the employee experience journey, aligning it with business goals.

The Data Jedi: Analyzes trends, predicts future needs, and measures the impact of HR initiatives.

The Learning Guru: Curates personalized learning journeys, equipping employees for the future.

The Tech Wiz: Automates tasks, integrates tools, and leverages technology for efficiency and insights.



2

Data-Driven HR for Tomorrow



2.1

Make it count:

HR Metrics That Matter to CEOs



Metrics That Matter to CEOs

Nikitha Joyce, Content Writer, Keka

The world of HR has changed, and now HRs hold a special place on the business table. Today, the job of an HR professional is not just about employee engagement. They also contribute to strategic business decisions.

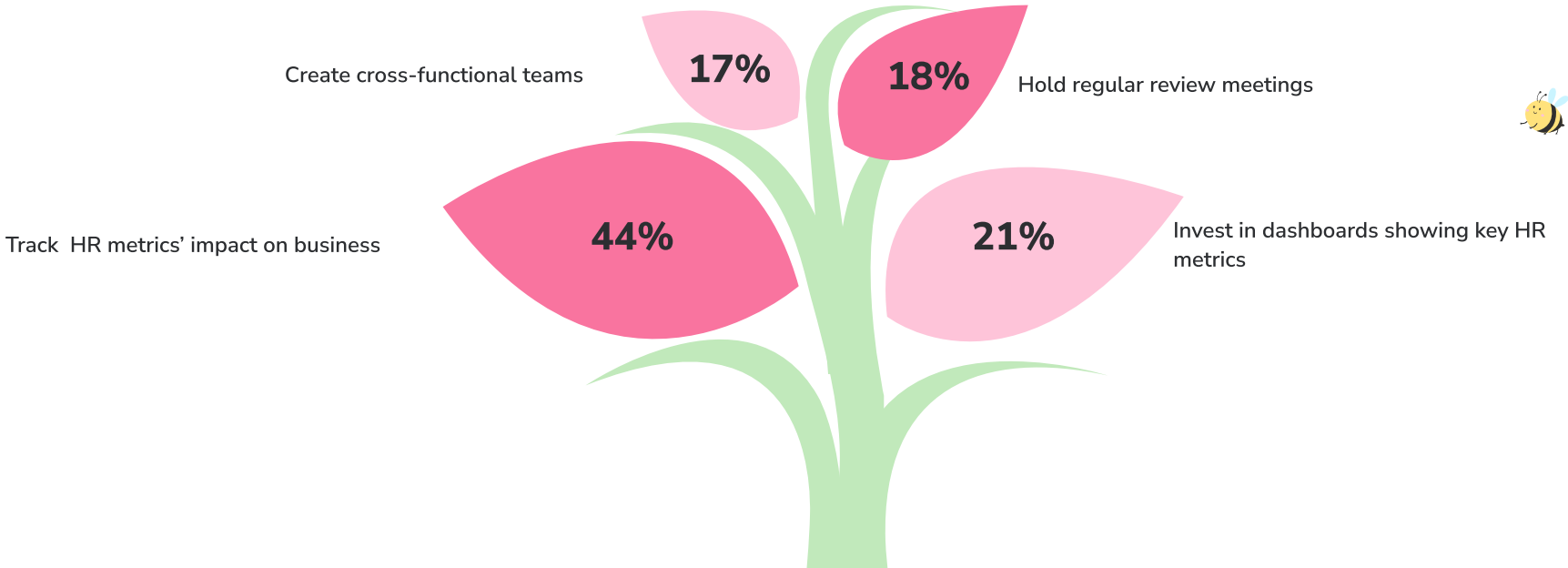
This demanding responsibility has made HR professionals come a few steps closer to the HR analytics. However, the critical question remains about presenting data to the key decision-makers.

How should HRs present metrics to CEOs so they bring value, offer insights and drive evidence-based decisions?

Bee findings:

- Report metrics to CEO quarterly
- CEO must use HR metrics along with other data to take decisions
- HRs must track metrics' impact on business

How can CEOs and HRs collaborate the best to use HR metrics?

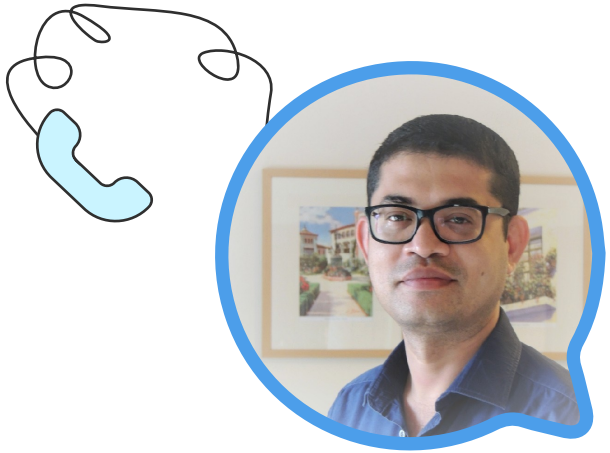


Answering this, **Partha Neog, Founder & CEO of Vantage Circle**, says, “Looking at trends and tracking the improvement in scores can help. Some metrics are quantifiable and some are not, but getting a pulse of the overall scenario can assist in taking key business decisions.”

Another question that HRs struggle with is when to present the HR metrics to CEOs. Should it be sent to the decision-makers at frequent intervals?

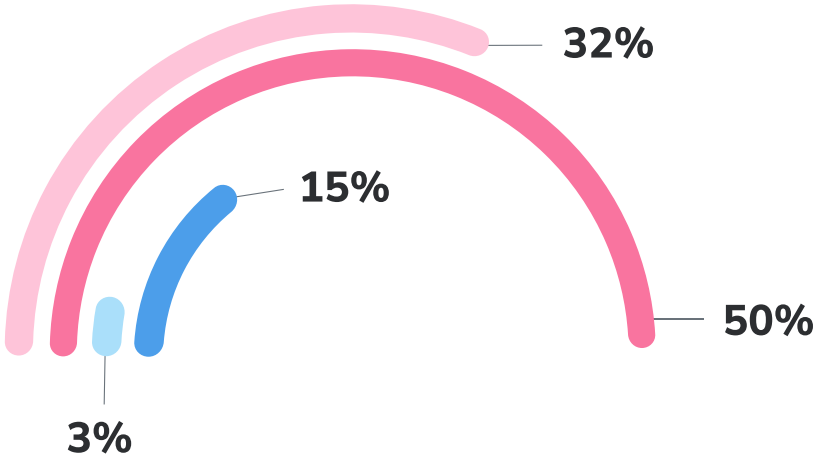
Addressing this question, Mr. Neog mentioned that different metrics must be tracked at different times. However, the frequency of measuring these data depends mainly on the company’s size and its growth.

Almost 50% respondents believe that the metrics should be presented quarterly to the leadership team. Yet 32% indicate that monthly reports will be more useful.



Some metrics are quantifiable, others aren’t. Get a pulse of the overall scenario to assist in decision-making.
Partha Neog, CEO, Vantage Circle

What should be the frequency of reporting HR metrics to CEO?



Do HR metrics differ with work formats?

The world witnessed a change in the office and work dynamics after the pandemic. Offices shifted to remote work, and many continue remote operations even after the pandemic.

Flexible formats

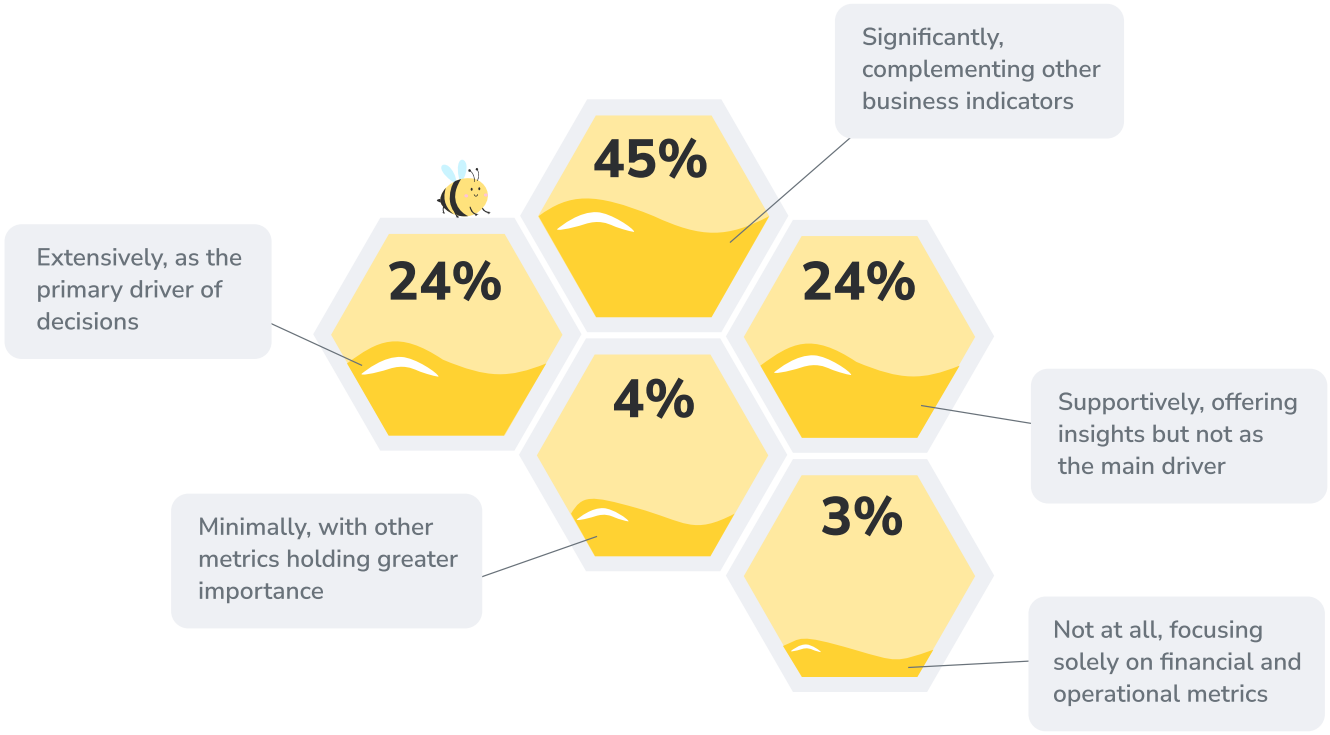
"In a fully remote organization, you have to look at metrics like retention rate, improvement in KPIs, and other metrics to know how this new work setup is impacting your company," says **Anand Timothy, Director-Learning Solutions, Abara LMS**.

Talking about the most complex challenges faced by HRs while presenting HR metrics, it was found that forecasting future trends and proposing solutions was the topmost concern followed by tying HR metrics to company goals. Close to 22% of the respondents indicated that they found difficulty in forecasting future trends.

To make the business reach new growth avenues, CEOs must collaborate with HRs when making business decisions. This can be done by leveraging data and pulling out the insights from that them.

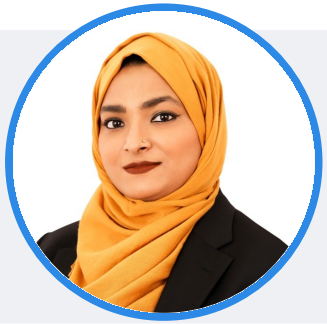
"Measuring the efficiency of processes and developing data-driven approaches is important for organizational growth," says **Venkatesh Palabatla, Vice President Human Resources, Avineon.**

How strongly should CEOs must base strategic decisions on HR metrics?



Leaders Speak

We asked HR professionals about creative ways to show the link between HR metrics and business goals to the leadership. Here are their responses:



A company can improve its decision-making by using HR statistics in multiple ways. Developing customized recruitment strategies, connecting with the right candidates, and measuring and improving employee engagement are initiatives you can take based on data.

-Izma Rizvi
Human Resources Superviser
Muller & Phipps, Middle East



Rising above the transactions and data can help you go a long way. Implementing metrics such as outcome metrics, converting process metrics into trends, and focusing on quality metrics can help you present the data in a convincing way.

-Amol Pawar
Founder Consultant
NUEST Consulting

What is the most significant challenge HRs face while presenting metrics to CEOs?



KEKA EDITORIAL TAKE

HR's Stepping stones to Strategic Impact

The crucial question here is how to convincingly present HR metrics to the leaders.

The numbers should provide insights and help leaders understand the impact of different HR data on organizational growth, employee well-being, and financial performance.

To present data in a convincing way, use the STORY acronym:

S - Strategic Focus
T - Tailor the narrative
O - Organize visually
R - Relate to the CEO
Y - Yield actionable insights

1. **Focus strategically**: Choose metrics that are aligned with the organizational goals. The focus should be on demonstrating the strategic value HR brings to the organization, moving beyond just reporting numbers and towards driving informed decision-making.

2. **Tailor narrative:** Data is powerful, but stories connect. Understand the specific priorities of each stakeholder, instead of presenting a one-size-fits-all report. Translate HR data into business outcomes. For example, show how reduced turnover translates to cost savings, or how employee engagement surveys correlate with customer satisfaction.

3. **Organize visually**: Transform complex information into clear, impactful stories that capture stakeholder attention. But don't overwhelm with too much data; highlight key takeaways and actionable insights. Include data visualization techniques like:

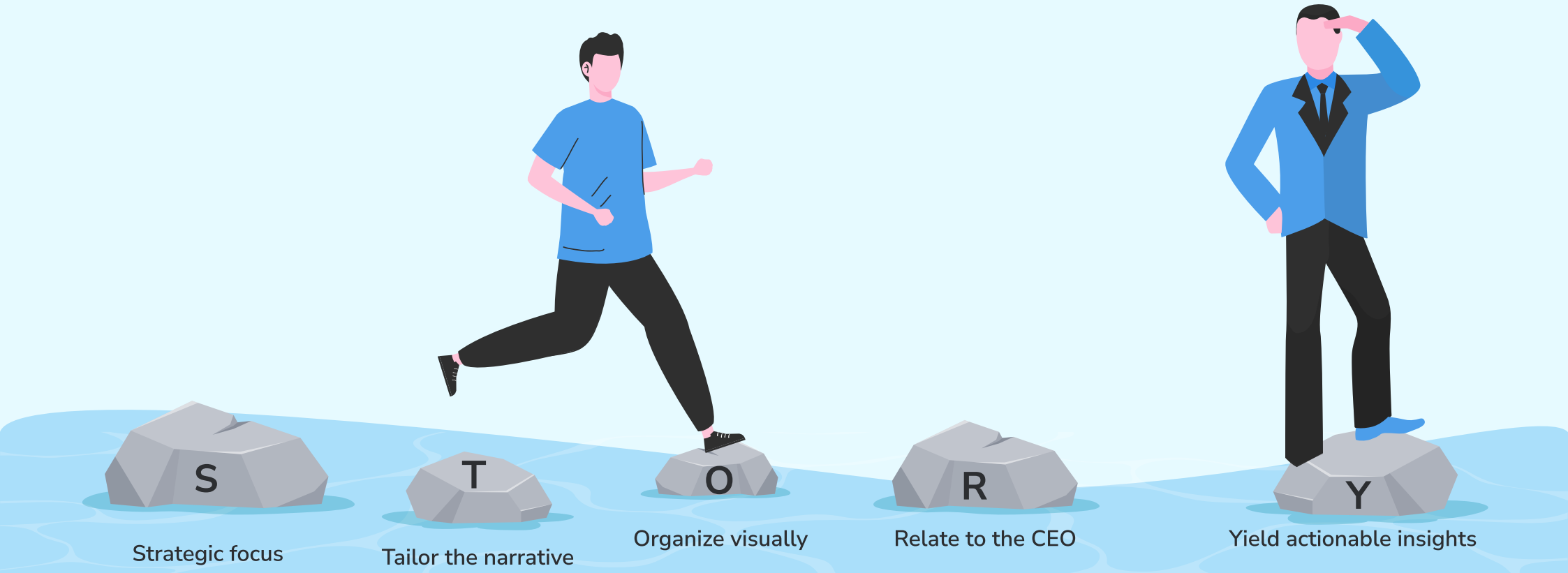
- Scatter plots or heat maps
- Charts
- Matrix diagrams

4. **Relate to CEO**: For decades, HR was perceived as a means to managing people. Today, HR is also recognized as a strategic business partner, driving business outcomes. When presenting HR data, it's crucial to translate them into terms that directly address the CEO's concerns and the bottomline. For example, to resonate with the CEO, HR can talk about:

- Cost savings as well as revenue growth
- Quantitative impact of HR initiatives on business and goals
- Financial performance

5. **Yield actionable insights**: To truly elevate HR's role at the business table, they need to take the next step - proposing solutions and areas for improvement. By presenting data-driven solutions with a clear focus on ROI, HR can demonstrate their ability to contribute to the company's success.

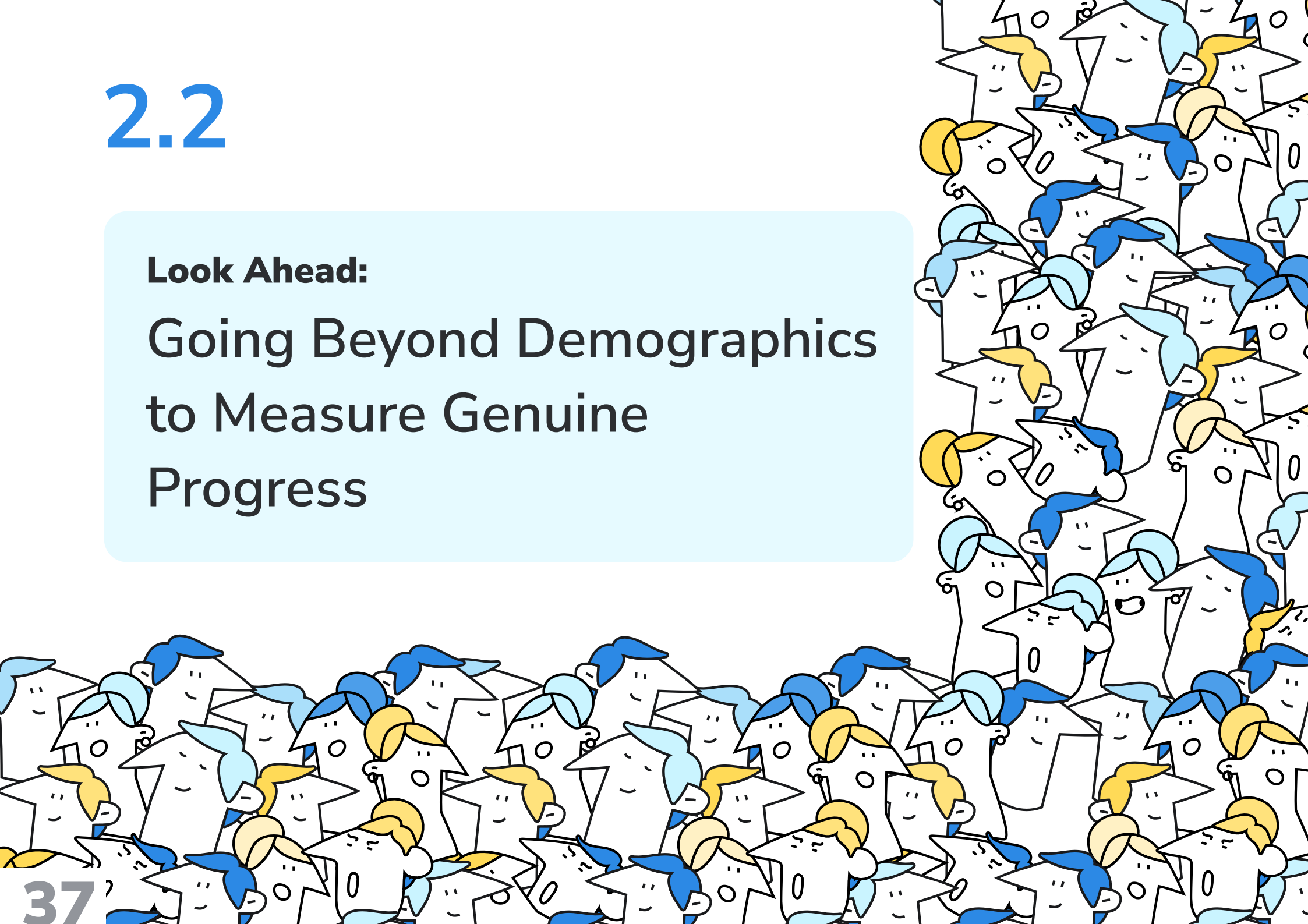
Stepping stones



2.2

Look Ahead:

Going Beyond Demographics to Measure Genuine Progress



DEI Metrics: Going beyond demographics to measure genuine progress

Nikitha Joyce, Content Writer, Keka

Following the civil rights movement, there was a boom in DEI initiatives. This was also witnessed in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and the death of George Floyd. Many companies invested heavily in DEI and even created dedicated DEI teams.

However, when the covid-19 pandemic hit, DEI professionals were the first to be laid off. How did we get here?

One significant contributing factor is the 'last in, first out' approach, but another side is that most organizations never understood or appreciated the benefits of promoting DEI in the first place. This brings us to the question:

What do leaders feel about DEI?

Captain Pranav Prason Thakur, Chief People Officer at TruKKer, says, "If we want to make DEI a success, it all depends on what the leadership is feeling."

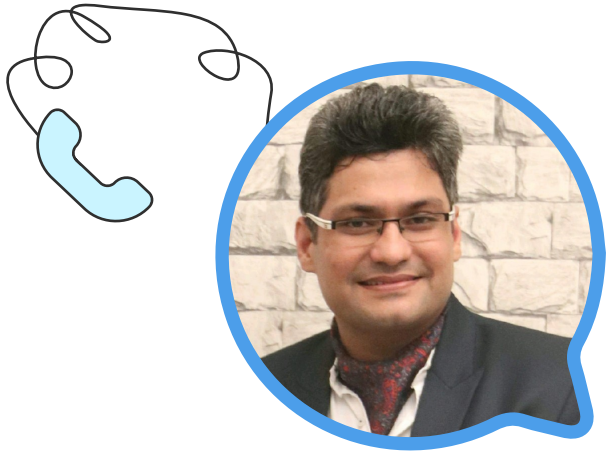
It is about a qualitative metric called 'mindset,' added **Anil Kunuku, Head of HR at Ocean Network Express**.

To measure DEI, data is the foundation. As Mr. Kunuku emphasizes, leaders must ask themselves: "What are we doing with data?"

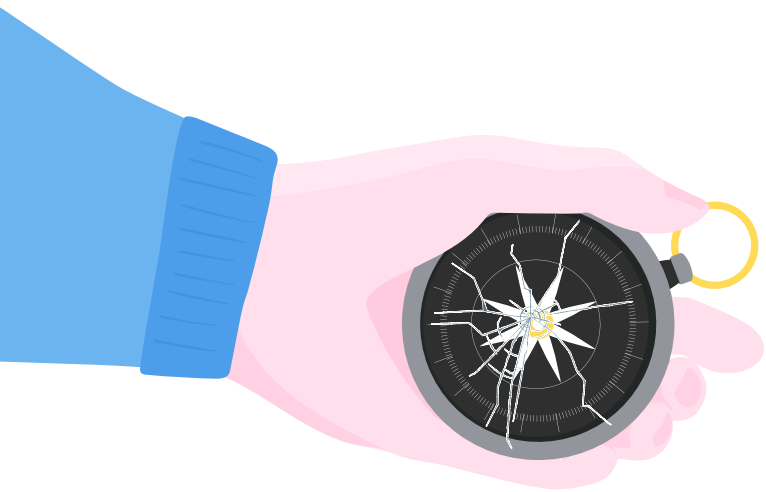
Around 40% of respondents say that integration of DEI goals with strategy is the most crucial indicator of leadership commitment to DEI efforts.

Bee findings:

- Without leader belief, DEI falters.
- DEI thrives with dedicated champion groups
- Representation, not just numbers, drives DEI success



If we want to make DEI a success, it all depends on what the leadership is feeling.
- Pranav Prasoon Thakur, Chief People Offier, TruKKer



HRs need to engage the leadership on two aspects: backup of accountability and the follow-up of strategy or action plans.

After the strategy roll out, examine its reach to the bottom. Any strategy, policy, or direction towards DEI without follow-up would evaporate soon, added **Mr. Kunuku**.

But what's so important about what leaders feel about DEI?

Because if the top is not engaged, the bottom becomes shaky. The leadership becomes disengaged when there's no accountability and follow-up of action plans.

But again, who is responsible for engaging leaders and communicating DEI progress with the stakeholders?

People champions

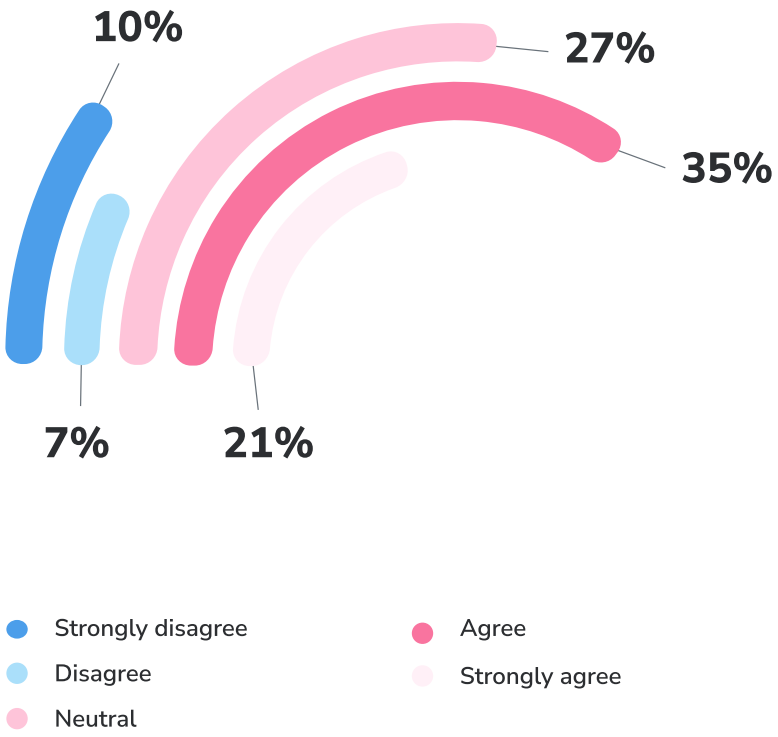
"What we miss are follow-ups. Time flies, people change, processes change, and the environment changes. Now, strategy is nowhere visible," says Mr. Kunuku.

Further, Mr. Thakur shares, "In most successful organizations with DEI initiatives, there are groups which champion, lead, and execute them."

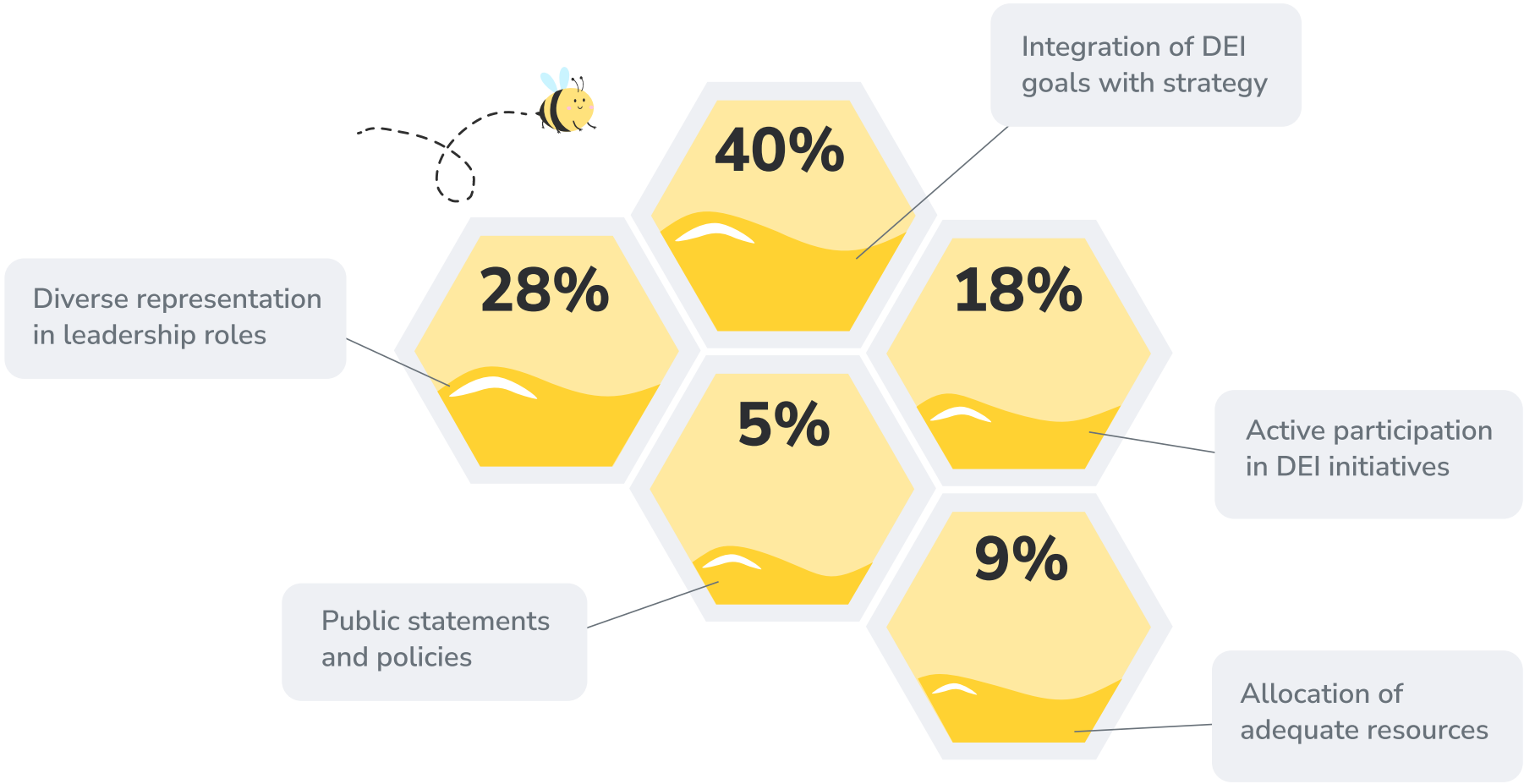
The champions – HR, play a pivotal role by engaging the boardroom through storytelling. To champion this, Mr. Kunuku advises HRs to keep three things in mind:

- Visuals
- Data
- Story

Firms must transparently report DEI metrics to external stakeholders.



What is the most crucial indicator of leadership commitment to DEI efforts?



An HR champion knows what stakeholders expect, what they want to take away, and which numbers matter to them. So, HRs should personalize numbers for each stakeholder.

Mr. Kunuku further discusses that HR should not merely bring up old promises, but narrate the present situation with actual statistics. They should acquire confidence from fellow colleagues and staff members by presenting data in an innovative way.

In terms of reporting DEI metrics to external stakeholders, around 35% respondents agree that it should be done transparently.

Mr. Thakur said, “Having females in decision-making roles is better than just talking about demographics.”

The demographic percentages will be of no use when there is no growth mechanism and rightful representation of females and minority groups at all levels. The same applies for people with disabilities. Overall, the leader’s feeling on the subject is important, he added.

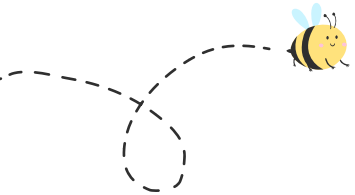
In this case, qualitative metrics take the front seat.

Inclusive decision-making

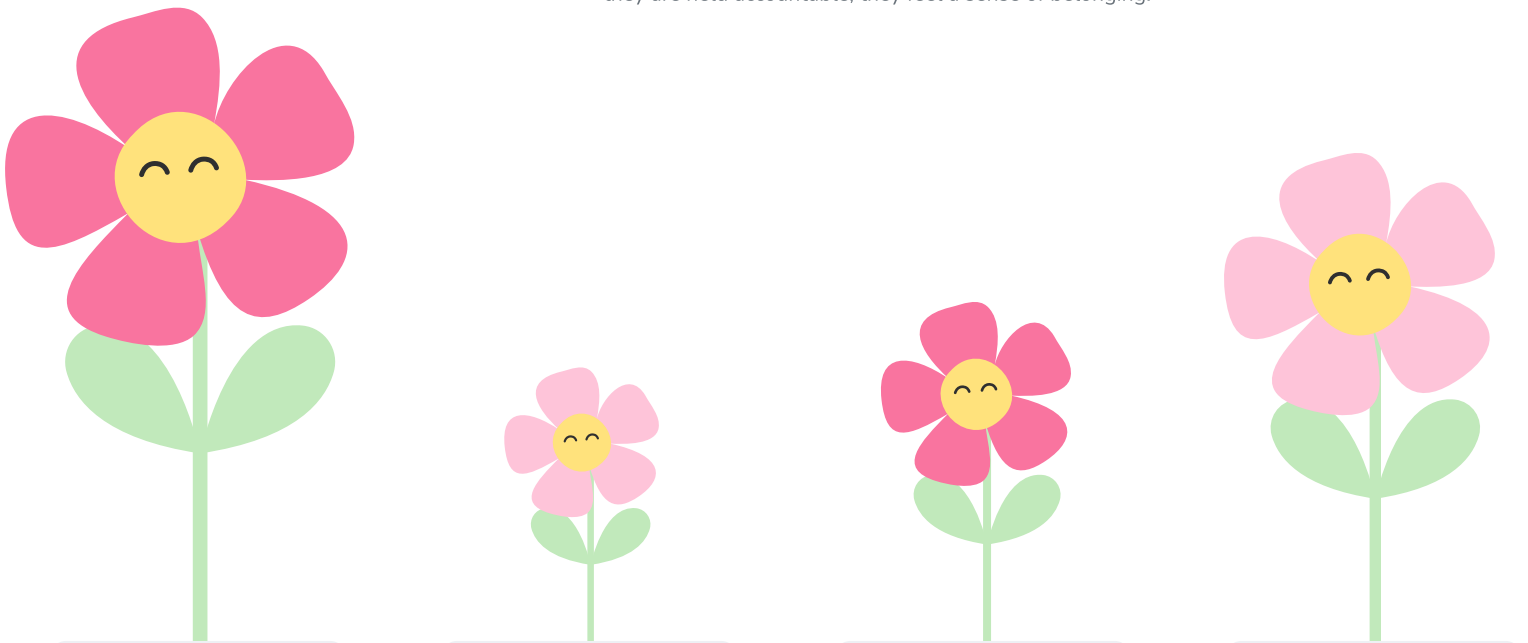
How do women feel when they take part in decision-making? How do their expertise matter?

Perhaps, in two-three years we will reach a point where we call women leaders just ‘leaders.’ Afterall, what is DEI without a sense of belonging?

Every person in the organization must be held accountable for branding and driving DEI. When they are held accountable, they feel a sense of belonging.



What is the most effective way for delivering DEI training to employees?



50%
Hybrid approach combining online and in-person sessions

8%
Individual coaching and mentoring

15%
Online interactive modules and e-learning

27%
In-person workshops

KEKA EDITORIAL TAKE

Blossom your DEI

Greater workforce diversity is powerful – it brings greater innovation and can boost the bottomline. That means broad data collection encompassing not just racial and ethnic diversity, but also sexual orientation, gender identity, and social mobility.

But, what after data?

Demographic information is only the first step towards greater diversity – it's just the beginning. Companies need to act after gathering this data, as simply presenting it isn't enough.

Imagine this: demographic data is like a field of colorful flowers – having them is beautiful, but without watering them, they will wilt and die. Similarly, a diverse workforce needs leaders to water them with:

Decision-making opportunities: A diverse workforce needs to feel that their skills matter, experience valued, and expertise leveraged in decision-making. Leaders who truly value DEI empower their workforce with decision-making authority, fostering a sense of inclusion. Without real decision-making opportunities, diversity statistics are potentially masking underlying discrimination.

Pathways to leadership pipeline: A company that truly values DEI doesn't just nurture a diverse workforce. It extends that diversity to its leadership positions too. This is crucial for:

- Inspiring others from similar backgrounds
- Fostering a culture of diverse thought and innovation
- Implementing more effective DEI initiatives

But how can underrepresented groups reach the leadership pipeline?

Career advancement: For DEI to flourish, leadership intervention is needed. This means providing opportunities for career advancement for the diverse workforce. Equity – not just equality – plays a crucial role. Investing more resources in those who have been disadvantaged shows commitment and value. The real test of DEI is seeing promotions and leadership roles for underrepresented talent.

Leaders need to intervene, but for true DEI to blossom, the work environment itself needs to be fertile ground, with the right nutrients. Otherwise, it is akin to watering plants without proper nourishing soil. Creating a work environment that fosters inclusion and empowers all employees, regardless of backgrounds, is the true mark of a company where DEI can blossom.

Diverse workforce being watered with



Watering them is not enough, they should be placed in the right environment that supports a diverse workforce. These are the essential 16 nutrients for promoting plant growth (DEI):

N – No discrimination

P – Policies and procedures to encourage representation

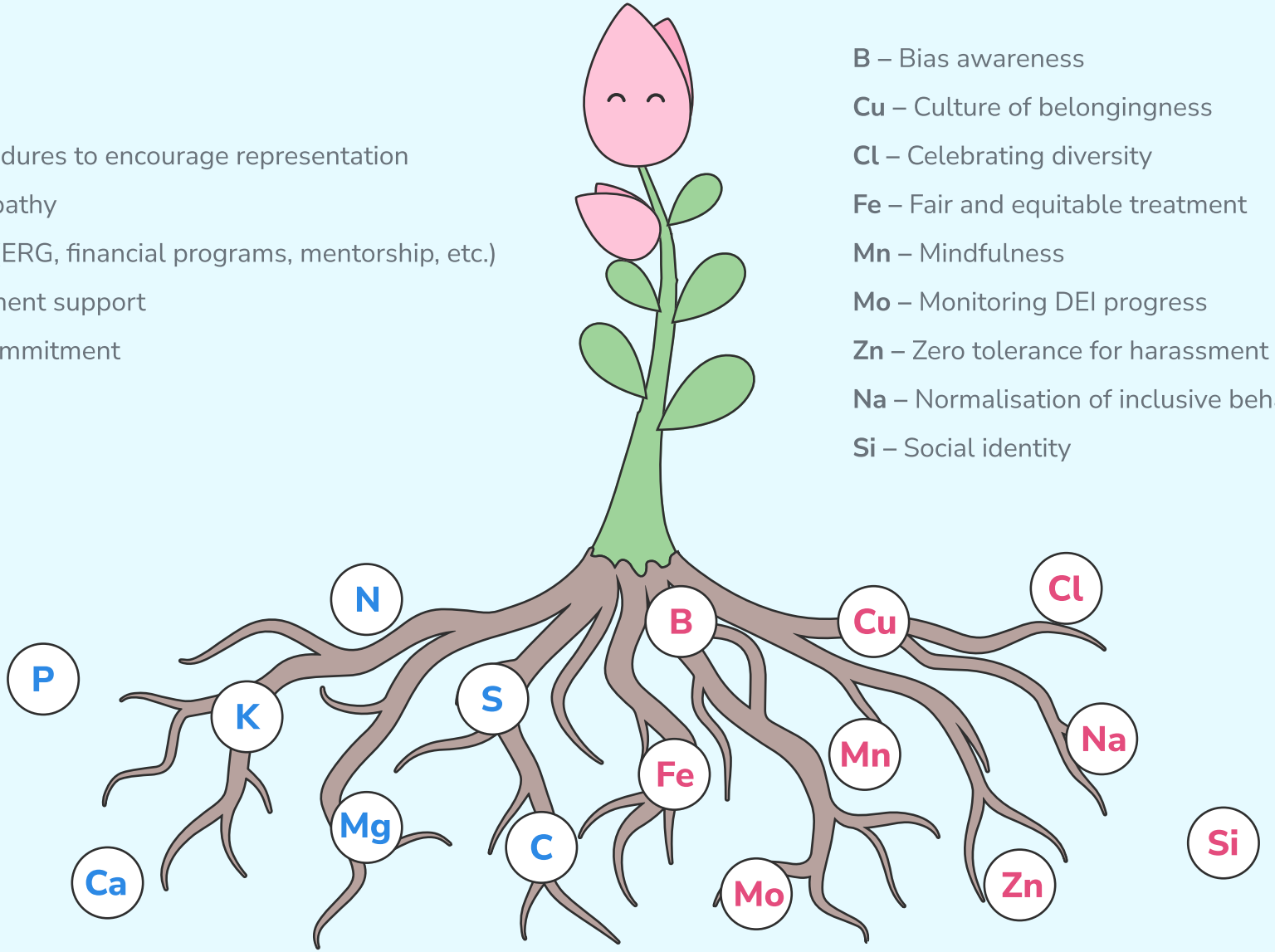
K – Kindness and empathy

S – Support systems (ERG, financial programs, mentorship, etc.)

Ca – Career advancement support

Mg – Management commitment

C – Closing pay gap



B – Bias awareness

Cu – Culture of belongingness

Cl – Celebrating diversity

Fe – Fair and equitable treatment

Mn – Mindfulness

Mo – Monitoring DEI progress

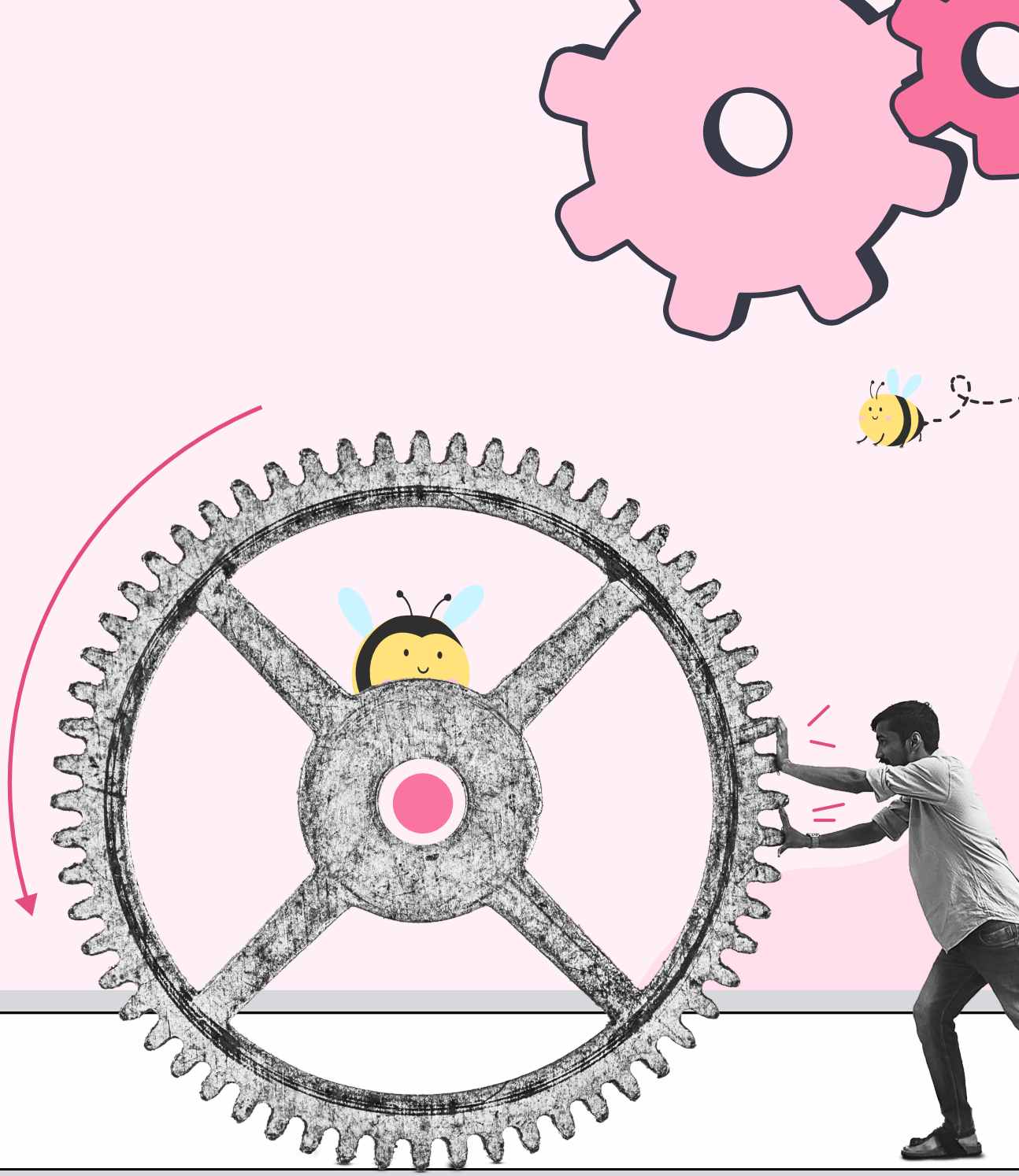
Zn – Zero tolerance for harassment

Na – Normalisation of inclusive behaviour

Si – Social identity

3

Marking the Agile Shift



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3.1

Good to Great:

Moving From Employee Wellness to Well-Being



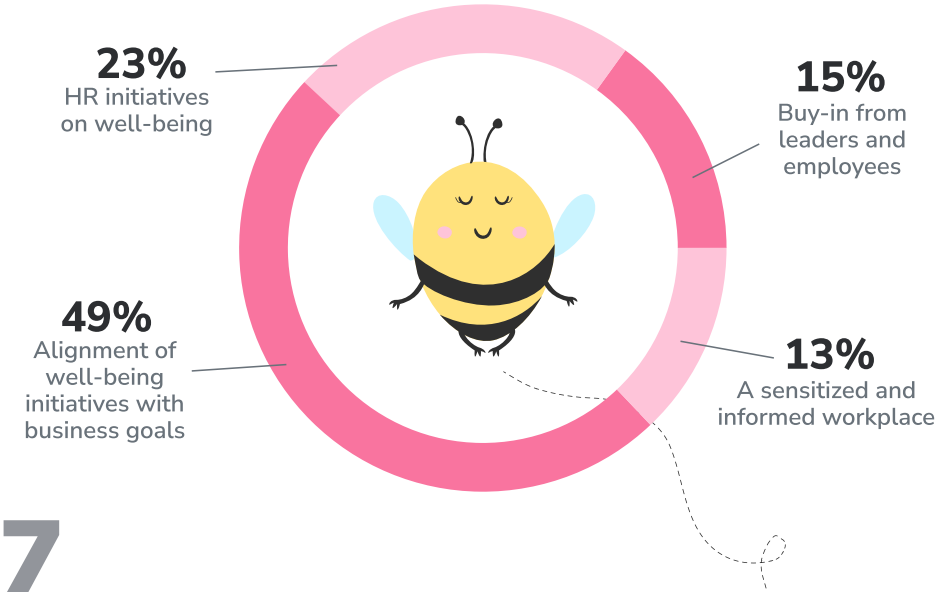
Moving from Employee Wellness to Well-Being

Nikitha Joyce, Content Writer, Keka

In the 1950s, employee wellness activities were designed to benefit the company more than employees. While there was increased safety and productivity among employees, the programs were intended to ultimately reduce risks and manage costs.

The past few decades brought a change, which was accelerated after the covid-19 pandemic struck. It transformed the perception towards employee wellness as a holistic concept encompassing several aspects.

Factor to nurture company culture with well-being at center



Bee findings:

- New generations seek well-being diversity
- Positive culture trumps all for employee well-being
- Link initiatives with business goals to create suitable culture

Brick by brick: Pillars of well-being

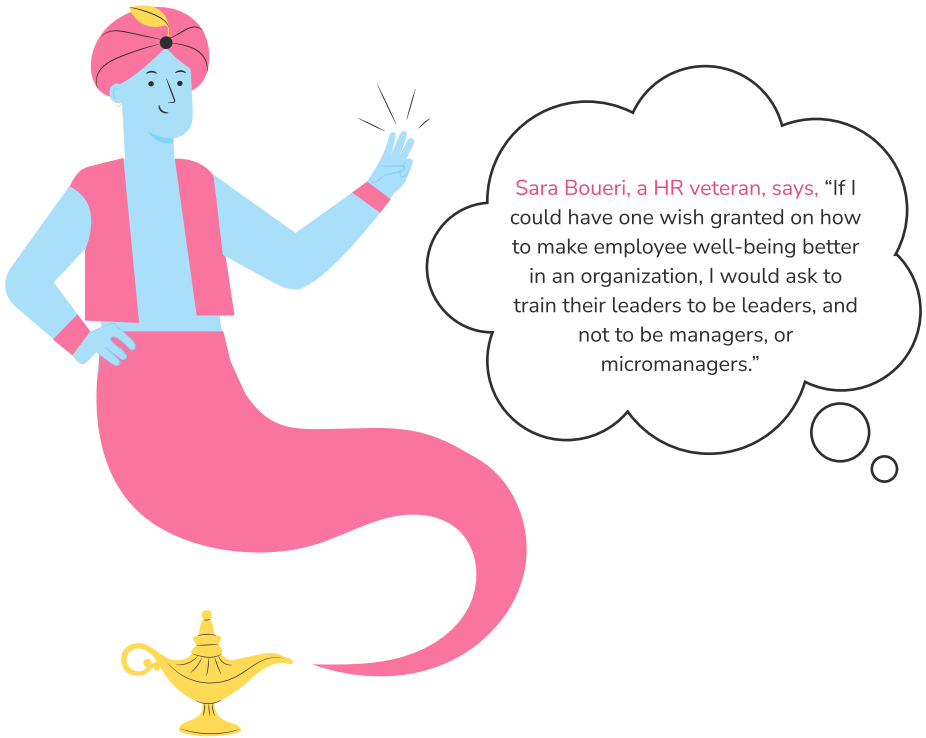
Initially, employee wellness was just an add-on, something that was nice to have. Post covid-19, it moved to the forefront, becoming a necessity for employees and a crucial investment for employers. The new generation demands a more comprehensive well-being experience, with different choices and needs.

Moushumi Dhar, CHRO at Blox.xyz, highlights the four pillars of employee well-being: Emotional, Social, Professional, and Physical. With physical wellness being honed by companies for decades, it is an aspect that is naturally expected from companies.

HR the sculptor

HR is the enabler and the sculptor of these pillars, but, as Moushumi emphasizes, “Businesses need to make it their business to ensure all these fronts are taken seriously while also taking them forward.”

For companies whose cultures center on employee well-being, 50% of respondents believe that the most important factor is to align well-being initiatives with business goals.



No vision, no foundation.

Are business leaders inherently responsible for promoting employee well-being?

The current workforce is stressed and disengaged – which is caused when any of the four pillars of employee well-being starts to crumble. This is traced back to ineffective leadership.

Perhaps the most important question to ask is, what produces ineffective leaders?

Sara Boueri, Vice President of People at CAFU, points out that this happens when people are promoted for the wrong reasons: performance, sales numbers, revenue, and so on. A leader is not only operational, but also nurturing. She further adds that the most innovative way of ensuring well-being as HR is to promote the right people.

Employees stress over the role they will hold in the future, impacting their professional and emotional well-being. They should be empowered to own their learning and development, suggests Gary Hazel, the Vice President of Talent Development at Injazat.

Gary also adds that learning is one of the most significant factors of employee well-being, as it acts as the foundation for the third pillar – professional well-being.



Promote *people*, not just performance.
- Sara Boueri, Vice President of People at CAFU

Initiatives that enhance psychological well-being at workplace

34%



Clear communication and transparency

11%



Skill development opportunities

5%



Task variety and autonomy

14%



Recognition of achievements

36%



Positive company culture

While not new, digital transformation has been shaping the landscape of learning for years. How does this technological evolution lead to better productivity, safety, and psychological well-being?

With regard to improving psychological well-being, around 36% of HR professionals say that a positive company culture is the most significant initiative.

~~Replaced~~ Empowered by AI

With roots extending back over a century, human behavior consistently revealed a reluctance and a fear to embrace change.

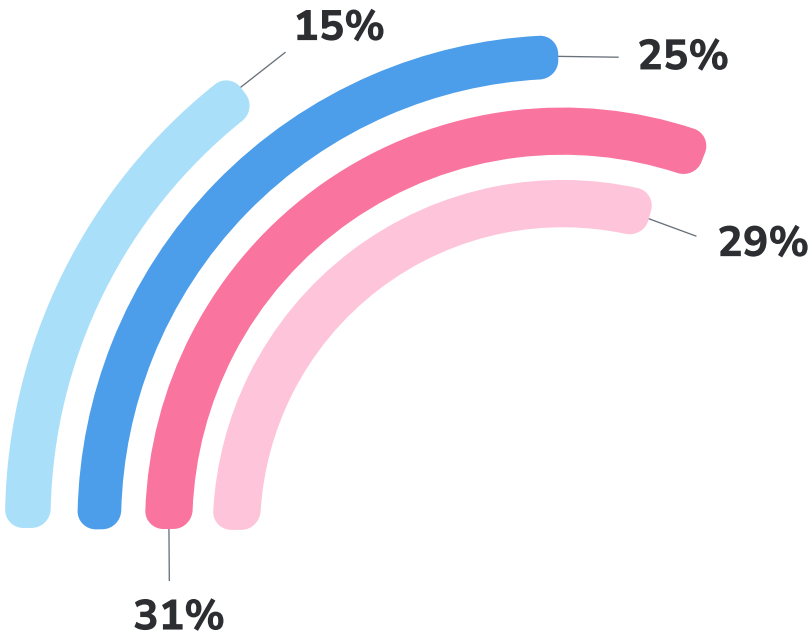
As Sara Boueri says, in the 1890s, working 100 hours per week was the norm. That is, until the 40-hour work week was introduced to improve productivity and employee well-being. It stirred fear and apprehension towards change.

The common concern of AI is also the fear of change. It reduces administrative tasks and non-priority work, leading to less work and more time to focus solely on high-priority tasks. The key here is to not worry about the jobs lost but to embrace the new ones, comments Gary Hazel. Upskilling plays a vital part in helping employees adapt to modern technology.

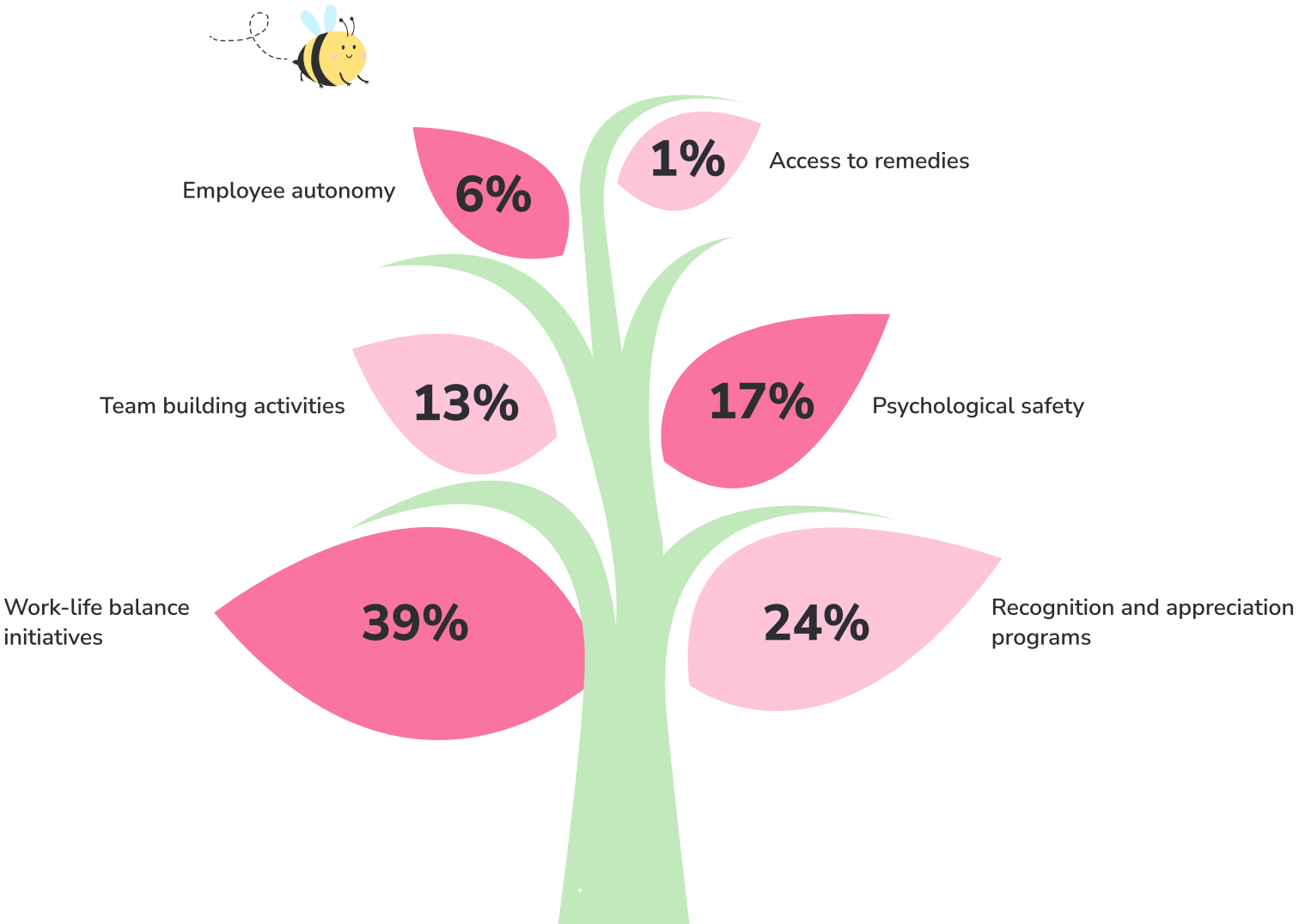
HRs build this transition by ensuring employees feel safe and motivated towards technology. It leads to better productivity and safety, strongly impacting the well-being of an employee.

Moushumi Dhar adds, “Some fears, in the dark ages and even today, come from ignorance.” Rise of innovative and new technology is recurring, but consistency in upskilling oneself is important to understand what is for us, and what is not. The aim is to evolve through AI to improve skills, cognitive abilities, and emotional intelligence. This is how employee well-being is also affected," continued Moushumi Dhar.

How open do you believe your employees are to discussing mental health concerns at work?



Factors for nurturing emotional well-being at workplace



Leaders Speak

We asked HR professionals about creative ways to enhance employee well-being at the workplace. Here are their responses:



Mental health booths and mental health related games where employees can talk about things that affect them 'silently'. Here they can make their invisible struggles, hopes, dreams and desires visible not with seriousness but with the intention of 'play'.

-Harsha Baid
Psychologist and Founder
RAHA



A company could establish a peer-led wellness council, composed of employees from various levels and departments. This council would address well-being issues, provide support and create initiatives

-Andre Shojaie
Chief Executive Officer and Founder
HumanLearn



Companies can consider implementing mandatory downtime policies. This approach ensures that all employees, including managers, have protected time to relax and recharge. The downtime experiences should then be shared.

-Thomas Lim
Dean
Thrive Consulting & Academy



Fundamentally prioritize your own health and wellbeing. This might sound obvious, yet many of us drastically compromise our health by making work more important than our own physical, mental and emotional health.

-Sally Clarke
Burnout Author, Speaker and Expert

KEKA EDITORIAL TAKE

The Building Blocks of Employee Well-Being

Companies provide discounted gym memberships, health coaching programs, free meditation apps, employee assistance programs and so on. They pour money into these offerings but may still miss the mark. Employee burnout rates are still increasing, and employees are still stressed out.

Numerous studies show that these well-being programs are not doing so well.

The problem?

Employee well-being programs are a good start, but work processes and management practices need to change too. Otherwise, companies are essentially building their well-being initiatives on a house of cards. Employee well-being is more than just a fleeting trend, it needs a focus on building a solid foundation and addressing core employee needs.

First, focus on getting:

Stakeholders' support: Employee well-being programs go beyond the HR function and extend to the C-Suite. Engage all executive leadership, management, HR representatives, and employees. Then, develop a plan with them on the development and implementation of well-being strategies. Make sure to clearly outline the benefits, addressing turnover, stress, burnout, and so on.

You can also:

- Establish a stand-alone committee of employee health and well-being ambassadors
- Hold the ambassador network accountable for supporting, developing, and promoting well-being initiatives

To achieve the goals set with the stakeholders, companies would also need to take a look at:

Organizational structure: Instead of focusing only on employees and HR for well-being action, organizations need to take a hard look at the organizational structure. It is an overlooked factor that plays a vital role in well-being.

What systems and structures are creating well-being crises at work? What do we need to be thinking differently? How do we change those things?

Organizations should critically review:

- **Communication channels.** A lack of transparency leads to frustration and stress.
- **Autonomy and decision-making power.** Micromanagement and reduced autonomy affect well-being immensely.
- **Teamwork and collaboration.** Is there a sense of camaraderie and collective achievement? This factor is detrimental to employee morale and productivity.
- **Work-life balance.** Long hours of work and rigid structures cause burnout and job dissatisfaction.
- **Recognition.** A fair and transparent performance appraisal system is essential to acknowledge hard work and achievements.

Resources are the essentials for successful employee well-being initiatives. Some key areas that need attention are:

- Health benefits
- Work-life balance initiatives
- Professional development opportunities
- Physical workplace
- Wellness platforms

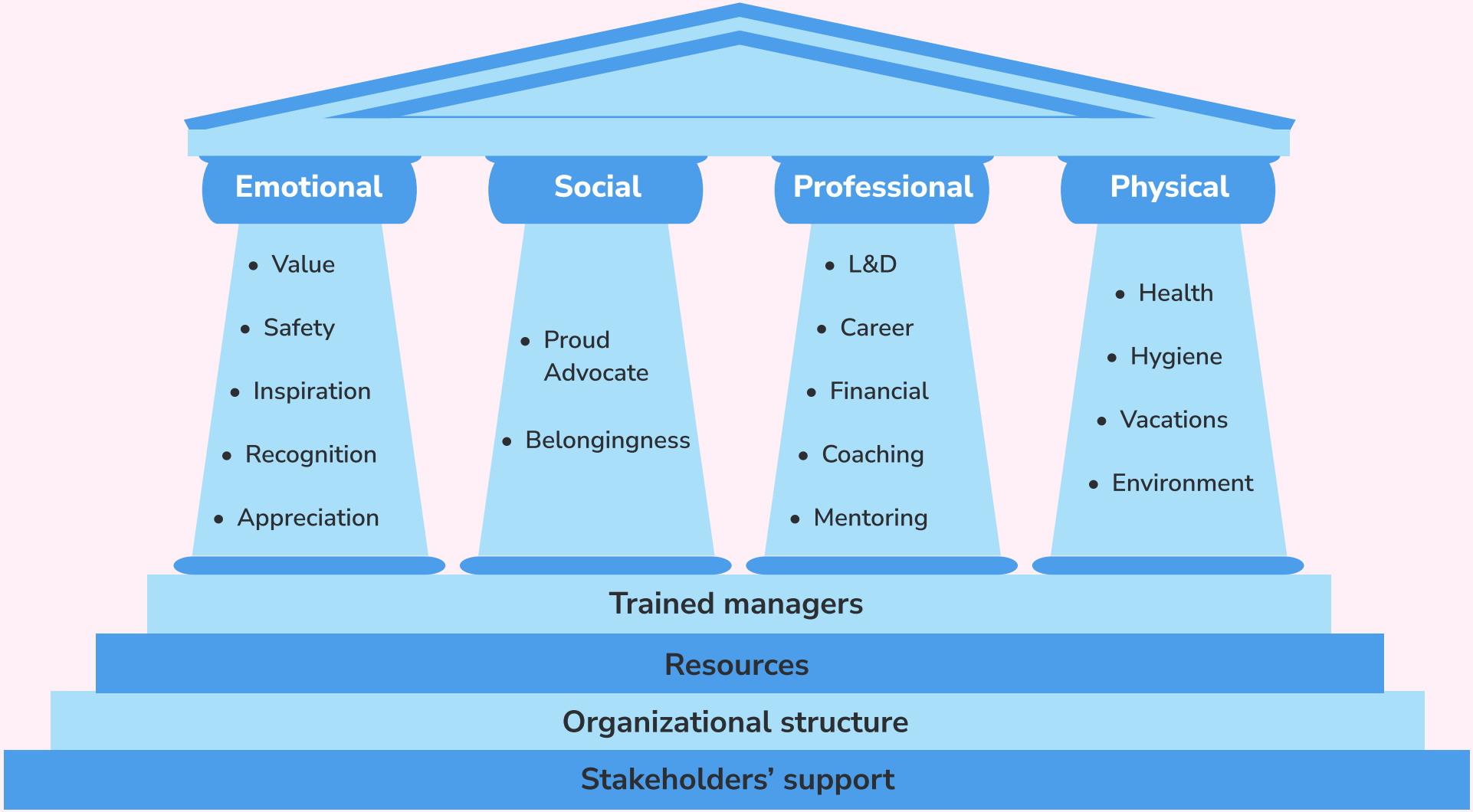
Training managers are crucial as they are the first line of defense against poor well-being. As they are best positioned to resolve issues, they can be trained to address:

- Mental health challenges
- Burnout
- Decline in productivity and engagement
- Communication gaps
- Collaboration issues

Managers are the gatekeepers of employee well-being – they nurture employees to access health benefits and resources.

They can also be trained in skill sets that support mental health and positive relationships. Without their buy-in, these opportunities are essentially pointless.

Pillars of Employee Well Being



The foundation upon which the pillars stand should never be compromised

3.2

HR Jobs in 2030; powered by ChatGPT



Future of HR Jobs

Sidharth Yadav, Content Research Analyst, Keka

Advancements in technology in particular is reshaping the role of HRs. Even as automation and AI-led interventions take over repetitive tasks, HR the professional remains relevant today.

This is owing to the need to lend a 'human touch' to people practices as divisions grow, flexible work formats become more popular and organizations hire globally. Thus, new technologies and HR professionals will complement each other.

Bee findings:

- Empathy most critical skill for HRs of future
- Automation to simplify recruitment and onboarding most strongly
- Combine wisdom with data to retain human touch in AI use



As technology takes over operational tasks, HRs can reflect better on their own function. They can relook their processes and execution strategies.
-Saurabh Shah, Head of People Ops at KRAFTON India.

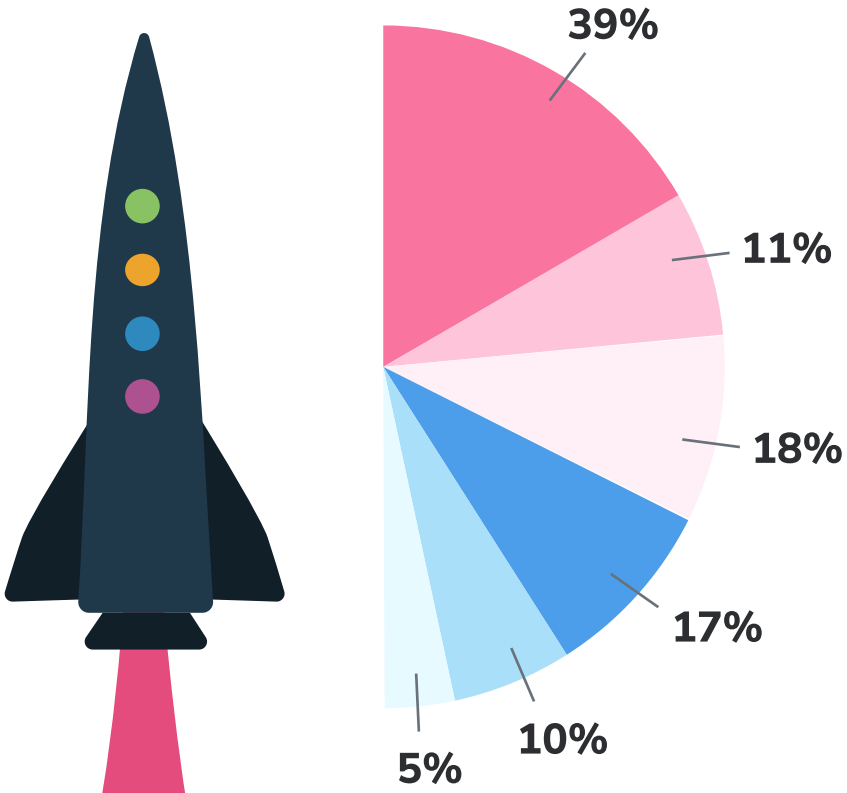
HR: Amplifying Voice Of The Employees

As traditional jobs of HR are being taken over by technology, including AI, HRs are left with more bandwidth to invest time in strategic tasks, believes Saurabh Shah, Head of People Ops at KRAFTON India.

This is evolving the role of HRs in organizations in multiple ways:

1. Teams are more motivated now and have better learning opportunities
2. They have begun understanding business much better and began to be recognized as business partners, rather than being coordinators to implement daily operations.
3. Because of strategic initiatives, HRs now understand their workforce in a better way. This is helping them address the concerns of employees more efficiently and connect with them on a regular basis.
4. HRs can now reflect better on their own function. They are relooking processes and the execution strategy.

Areas of HR that show scope for highest automation levels



In view of rapid technological advancements, business professionals believe several aspects of HR show scope for undergoing automation. Most professionals at 40% believe the recruitment and onboarding function will see the highest level of automation.

Besides, professionals anticipate greater automation in performance management (18%) and learning and development (17%).

According to Head of Talent Acquisition Operations at ANSR, Vishwanadh Raju, before organizations implement new technologies to resolve people problems, they must consider the following questions:

- **What are we trying to solve for?**
- **Which technology can help solve this problem?**
- **How can that technology be used for the resolution?**
- **What benefits will the implementation of the technology yield?**

Mr. Raju adds either companies enabled change or reacted to it. The first kind of companies create trends for themselves. “When AI came 50-60 years back, around 10 companies embraced it and now they are far ahead of others,” he says.

But organizations must maintain the human touch amid all technological interventions, stresses Ashish Mittal, Group CHRO - Sreenidhi Educational Group

- Recruitment and onboarding
- Employee engagement
- Performance management
- Learning and development
- Employee experience
- Retention

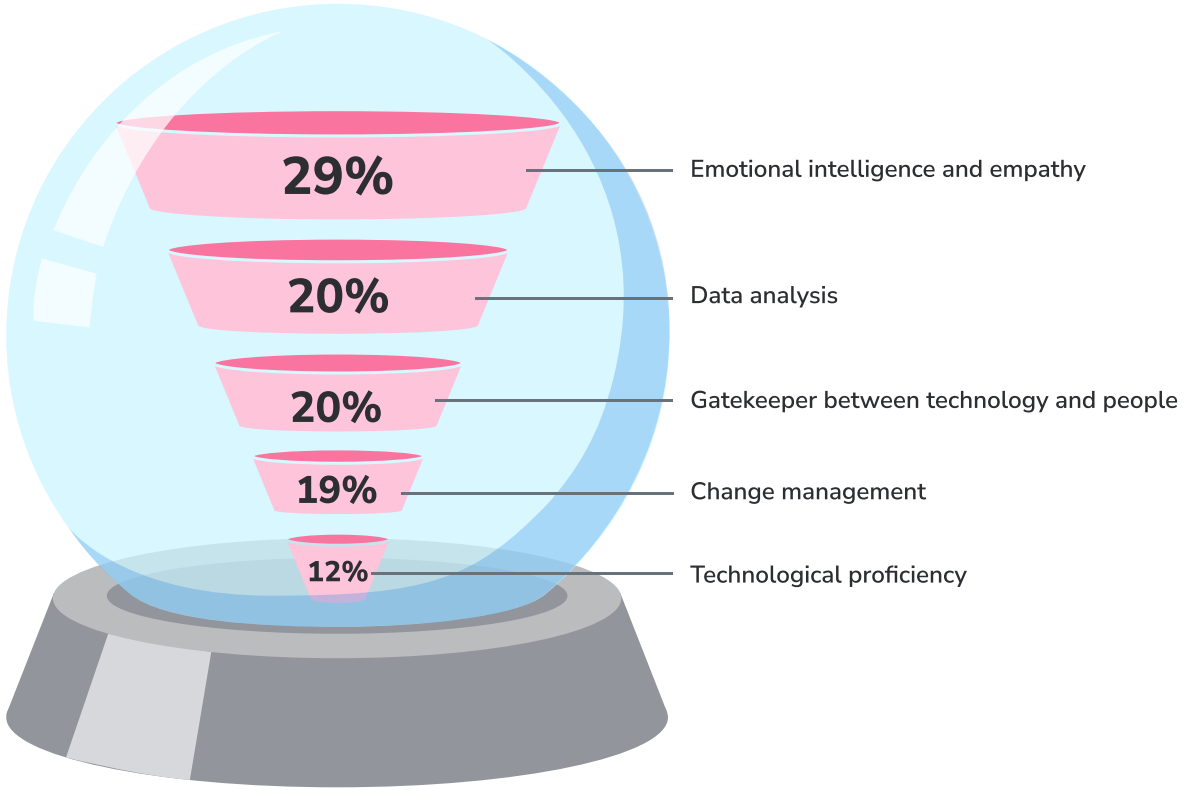
As for the most critical skills HRs would need by 2030, most business professionals at 29% point to emotional intelligence and empathy. Besides, they also believe being a gatekeeper between technology and people will be an important role HRs will play in the future.

Adding to the skills needed, Mr. Raju says data and prediction skills will be important. “You need not be a coder to be an AI expert. You must use AI to solve problems,” he adds.
But there are limitations to the use of AI in HR. Mr. Shahs maintains that its rampant use may impair creativity among people. Further, Mr. Mittal believes it may lead to frustration among employees who may pine for a human touch to resolve their concerns.

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Critical skills for HR professionals by 2030



KEKA EDITORIAL TAKE

Human High Five for Ethical AI

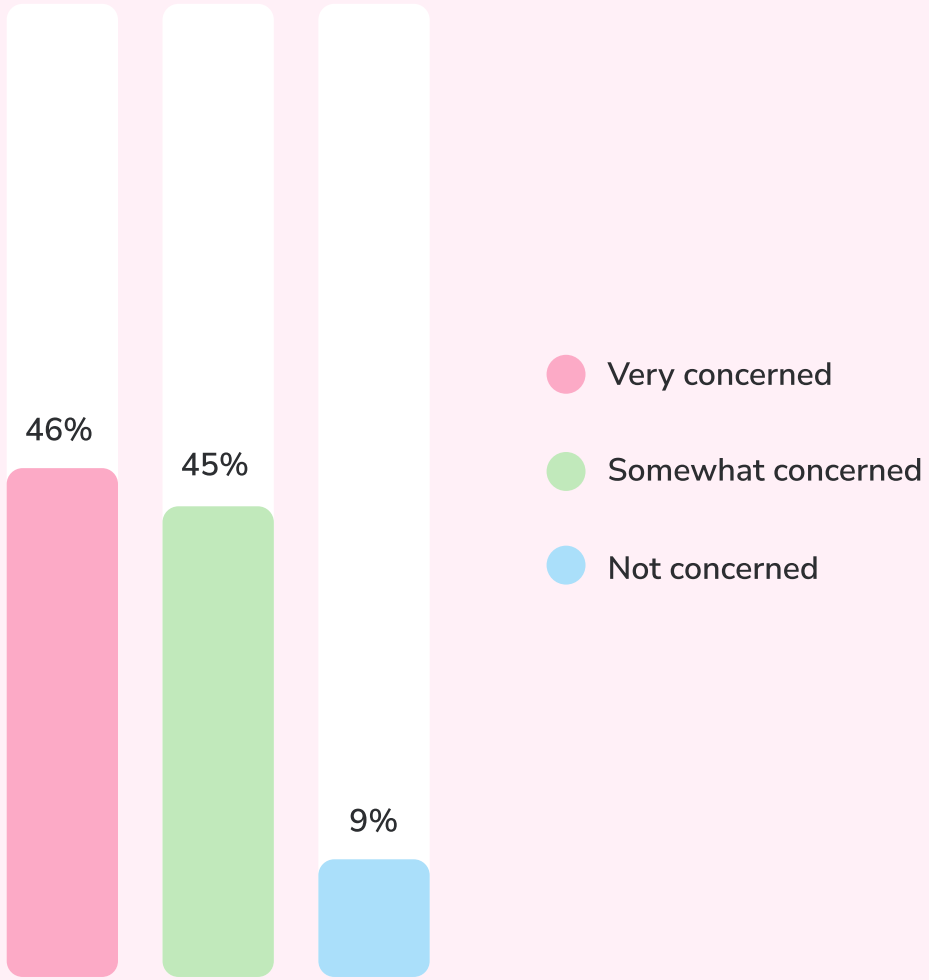
The application of artificial intelligence in human resources has presented fresh opportunities. It's aiding specialists automate repetitive tasks and capture patterns in people's behaviors. The use cases of AI span several touch points of employee journey, from recruitment to exit.

Yet the application is not without its challenges. These include ethical concerns around fairness and bias and issues relating to data privacy and security, regulations and depersonalization of people management.

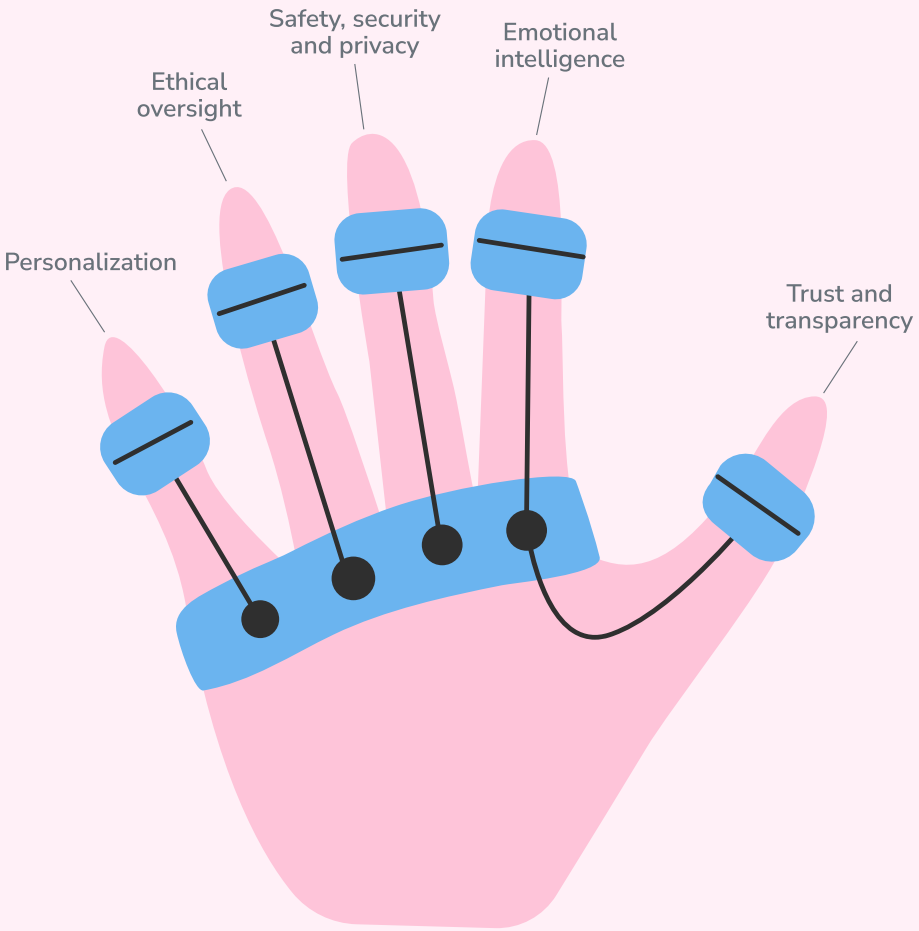
In fact, in a 2023 study, Keka found almost 90% of the 1,969 business professionals surveyed were concerned about the ethical implications of AI implementation in HR.

To combat AI-related concerns in HR, most professionals believe retaining the human touch is the need of the hour. Based on extensive research and surveys, Keka proposes the 'Human High Five with AI' to retain this touch.

Concern about ethical implications of AI in HR



Human High Five for Ethical AI



The approach stresses human-centric AI application in HR. It views the human touch as an organizational imperative to ensure oversight, diligence and gatekeeping during AI implementation and reassure the workforce.

The high five – human hand with AI applications, can help alleviate perceived fears around the technology. It imagines a synergistic ecosystem, where both human and AI tools are not antagonists but partners in improving employee experiences.

Most business professionals also support the collaborative approach. More than 75% of them believe both AI and HR professionals will coexist, with AI even empowering the HR function.

The fingers in the ‘Human High Five with AI’ approach represent human touchpoints organizations must spot, secure and operationalize – emotional intelligence; safety, security and privacy; ethical oversight; personalization; trust and transparency.

Emotional intelligence

1. Train leaders on self-awareness, empathy and active listening.
2. Establish feedback loops to gather inputs and concerns relating to AI-driven initiatives.
3. Make emotional support resources available to employees.
4. Base AI-backed decisions on individual contexts and priorities.

Safety, Security and Privacy

1. Collect and store only minimum amount of data necessary for analyses.
2. Conduct regular security audits to spot and clear possible vulnerabilities in AI systems. Hold regular privacy impact assessments.
3. Seek informed consent of users before collecting and processing data. Clearly state the need for it and expected outcome.
4. Implement robust access control protocols and enforce data anonymization and encryption.

Ethical oversight

1. Create an ethical AI framework, clearly stating principles of fair and responsible use. Communicate the framework organization-wide and create mechanisms to redress violations.
2. Embed ethical considerations during the AI development lifecycle. This must include data collection, training of models, deployment and monitoring. Place special emphasis on diverse representation to train models.
3. Set up an ethics committee that safeguards against ethical aggressions. This may include diverse stakeholders such as auditors, AI experts, HR leaders and data scientists.
4. Appoint AI gatekeepers across areas of implementation. For critical business and people decisions based on AI output, involve the gatekeepers to ensure fairness.

Personalization

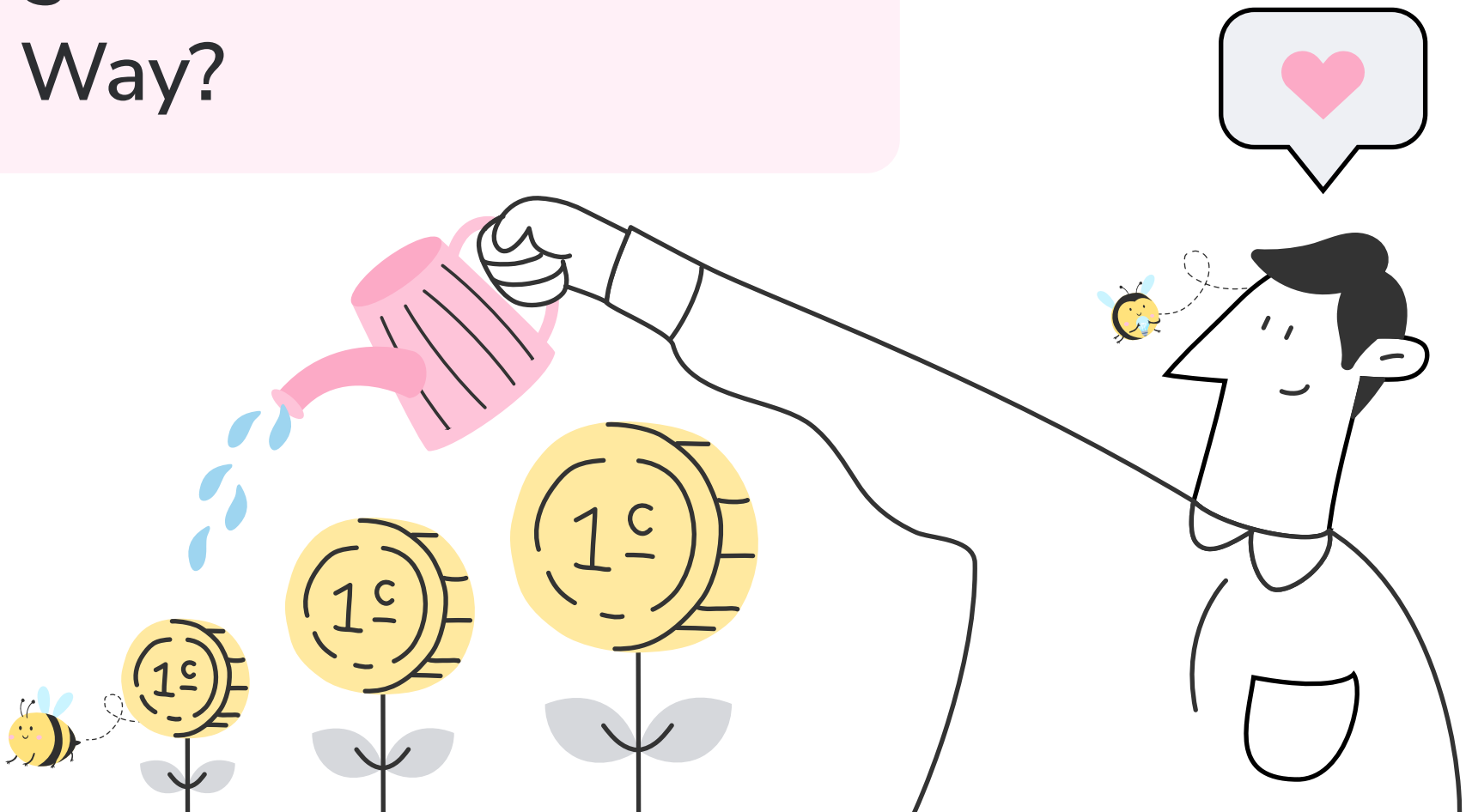
1. Use AI tools in a recommendatory a capacity with the final decision-making power resting on relevant stakeholders.
2. Base business and people critical decisions not just on hard data but also on soft, qualitative data gathered through interviews and interactions.
3. Before using AI to personalize learning or growth pathways for employees, take informed consent of employees and adhere to privacy principles
4. Maintain opportunities for individual interactions to foster trust and understanding.

Trust and transparency

1. Clearly communicate to employees the need for using AI in HR and the intended benefits for them.
2. Be transparent about the data processing lifecycle, including methods of data collection, how it's used and who uses it. Prioritize anonymization of data.
3. Create redressal mechanism in case of violations of ethical principles and breach of data privacy
4. Consider opt-out options for employees uncomfortable with data collection for AI use

3.3

Scaling Workforce For Scaling Business. Is There a Right Way?

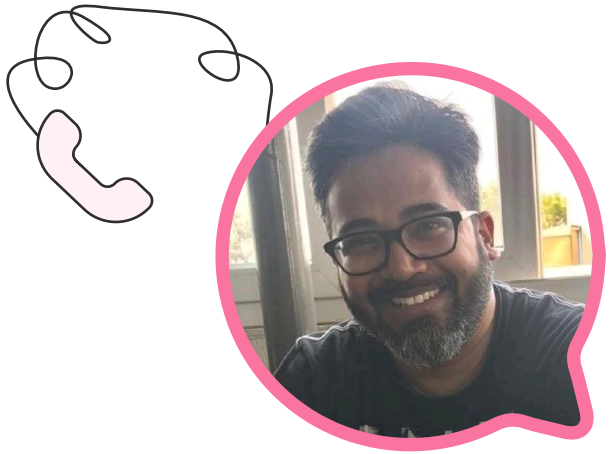


Scaling workforce for scaling business

Sidharth Yadav, Content Research Analyst, Keka

Crafting a formidable HR team is critical and crucial in today's era. Human Resources (HR) has been at the forefront of the worldwide economic and business disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

If we assess the nuanced journey of employee engagement, marked by a 2021-22 rollercoaster, there has been a subsequent decline in leadership, decision-making, and perception of how customer-centric businesses act. For the case, the strategic construction of an HR team became paramount, rightly highlighted by Josephine Groom.



The culture-fit norm goes against creating diverse workplaces. Hire people not to fit your culture but to add value to it. They can be culture add-ons.
-Abhishek De, Vice president of Talent Acquisition at High Radius

Bee findings:

- Employee retention a hurdle while scaling workforce
- Many paths, even non-linear, can take you to top of corporate hierarchy
- Balance needs of new and existing employees to sustain company's growth

HR: Amplifying Voice Of The Employees

At times of scaling workforce, integration of new employees with the culture becomes a challenge. According to Dinesh Menon, at the Founder Office at Onsurity, HRs perform the role of enablers and influencers for cultures.

He points to varying operation of culture at smaller and larger organizations. In the smaller ones, culture depends on how founders set it up and their vision. "It's also about how much they do what they say. This is a say-do ratio," suggests Mr. Menon.

Whereas in larger organizations, the culture, core values and principles are already defined. "Employees align to these." He advises recruiters to hire for experience and behavioral attributes align with the culture.

To bring greater alignment, organizations should enhance capabilities of those involved in recruitment, says Gurpreet Singh, Director of Human Resources at Tata 1mg. "Interviews must be trained on the structured formats. Not everyone with considerable work experience may be a good interviewer."

However, Vice president of Talent Acquisition at High Radius Abhishek De doesn't subscribe to the 'culture-fit' norm. "That goes against creating workplaces with diverse talents and mentalities."

Cultural integration starts before an employee joins a company. It starts with the recruiter's first call.

He emphasizes cultural add-ons instead. "You must hire people for their competencies and see how they could help grow your culture. This is regardless of the organization size," he adds When companies hire, they must account for company subcultures. "This is a function of who the product is sold to and the people building the product," he explains.

In fact, he says cultural integration starts before the day of joining. "It begins on the first call with the recruiter. And every step thereafter either reinforces the culture or doesn't. The bigger the gap, the bigger the dissonance," he claims.

Organizations must hire mindfully during phases of rapid business growth. They must take hiring decisions based on several factors, with emerging technologies impacting job roles & skills demand (29%) and market trends and industry projections (22%) being the most essential.

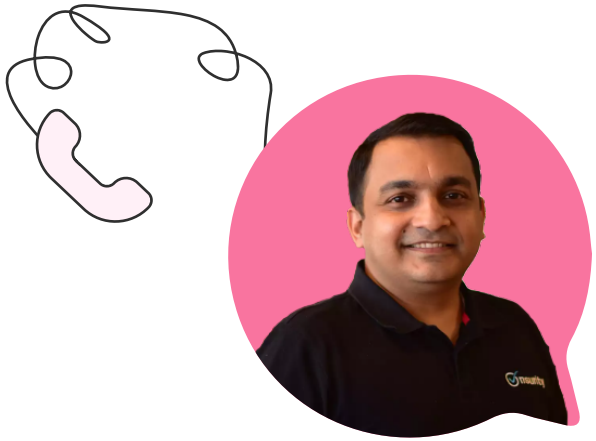
For many business professionals, expanding the workforce strength comes as a natural response to growing business, believes Mr. Singh.

"Organizations should hire optimally after taking stock of the current workforce capabilities. You should examine whether your organization could enhance employee productivity, crossutilize skills and upskill employees," he says.

Also, business growth could be experimental or definitive and organizations should plan talent accordingly.

Further, organizations can also identify leadership talent from within while scaling. Mr. Menon claims managers and HRs must be aware of what a team member is good at, what they aspire to do and how the organization could help them reach there. "Honesty and open communication is the key here," he says.

"I tell my team members – your career is your problem as much as it's mine. But you must lead it. My job is to facilitate it. If I don't facilitate it, that's my failure," adds Mr. Menon, cautioning organizations against tying performance ratings to the 9-box grid, which primarily segments employees on potential.



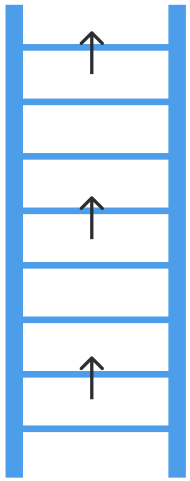
To retain employees, organizations must let them grow. They must grow personally by learning more and professionally in terms of compensation and recognition.
- Dinesh Menon, Founder Office, Onsurity

Organizations must also create fit-for-purpose organizational structures, advises Mr. De. "They must ask themselves – Does the structure allow people to grow into other roles."

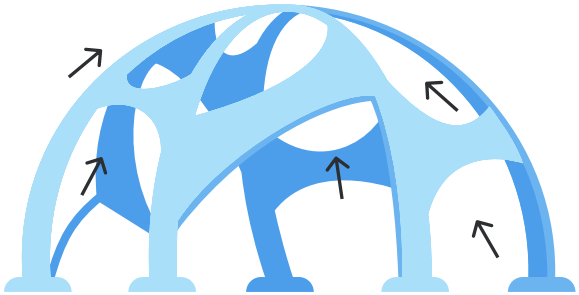
He also advises organizations to be honest with employees on their growth journeys. "It's ok to let your top performer look for other job options if you don't have the space from them to grow into," he says.

To link workforce scaling initiatives with business goals, organizations must understand the available skillsets within and their own culture, believes Niranjana V., Solution Architect at Workline.

Career Jungle Gyms

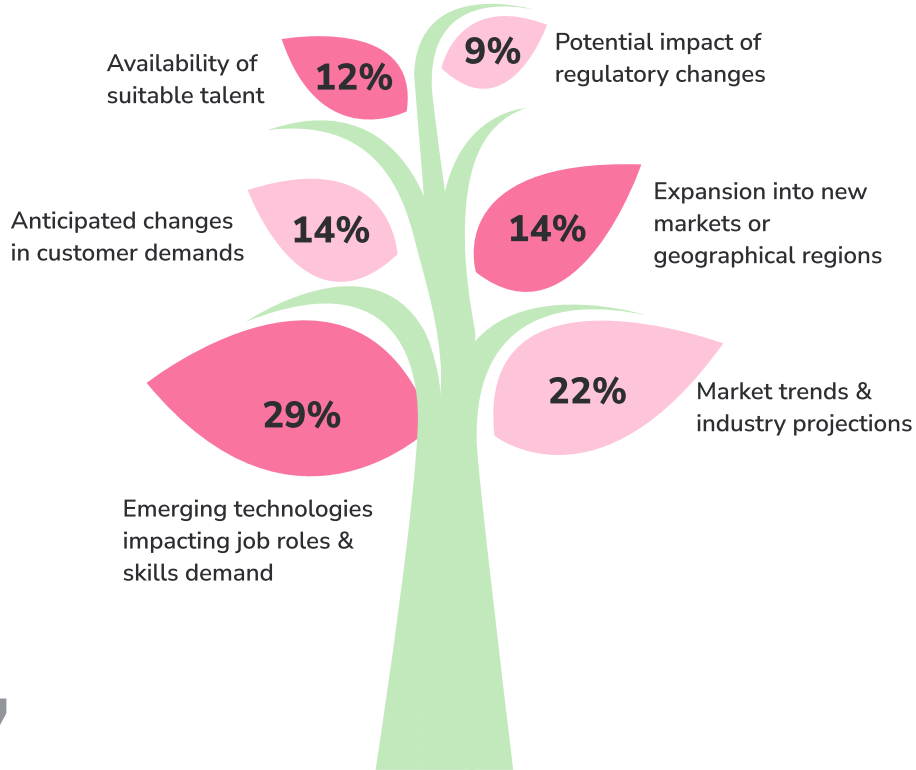


A. **Career Ladder -** Only one way to reach the top



B. **Career Jungle Gym -** Many paths, same destination

Factors that must be considered while forecasting workforce growth needs



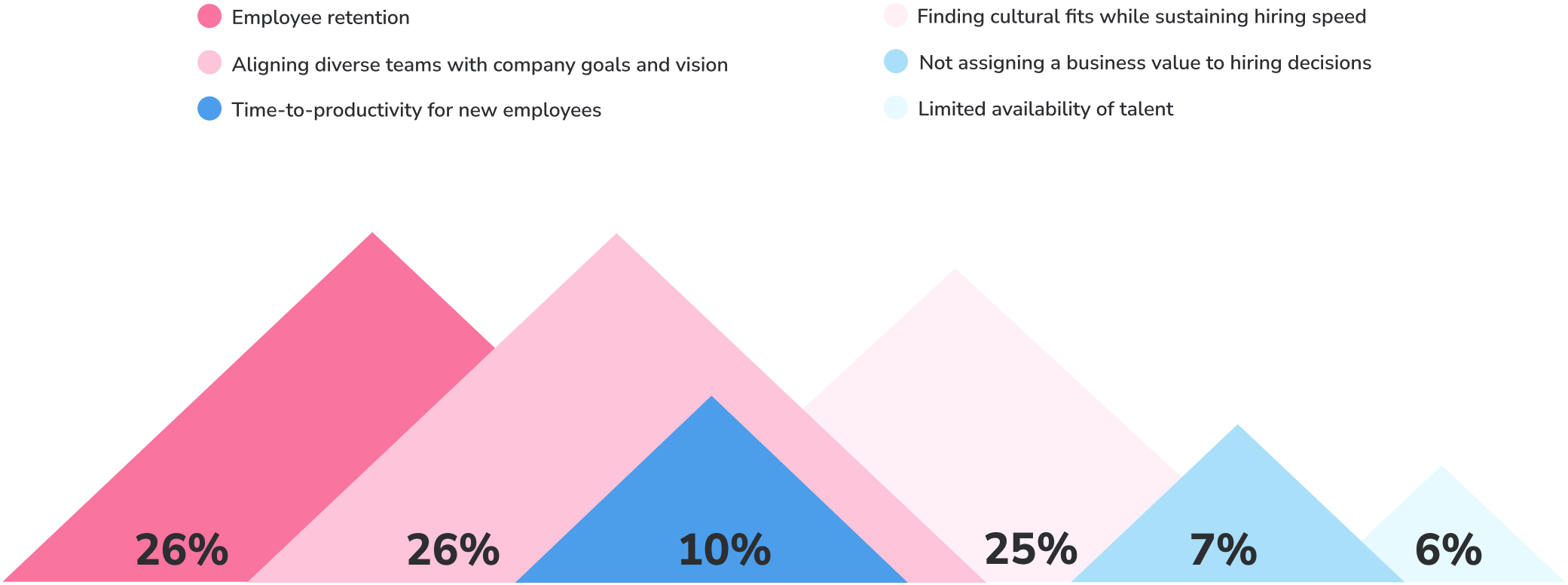
In case of a gap between business needs and available skillsets, organizations must develop develop targeted training, recruitments, or restructuring programs, says Sharanya Buttala, Human Resources Generalist at NCompas Business Solutions Inc.

During business growth, organizations confront the challenge of employee retention. Business professionals believe this is the biggest challenge (26%) while scaling workforce for growing business. Other challenges are aligning diverse teams with company goals and vision and finding cultural fits while sustaining the hiring speed (25%).

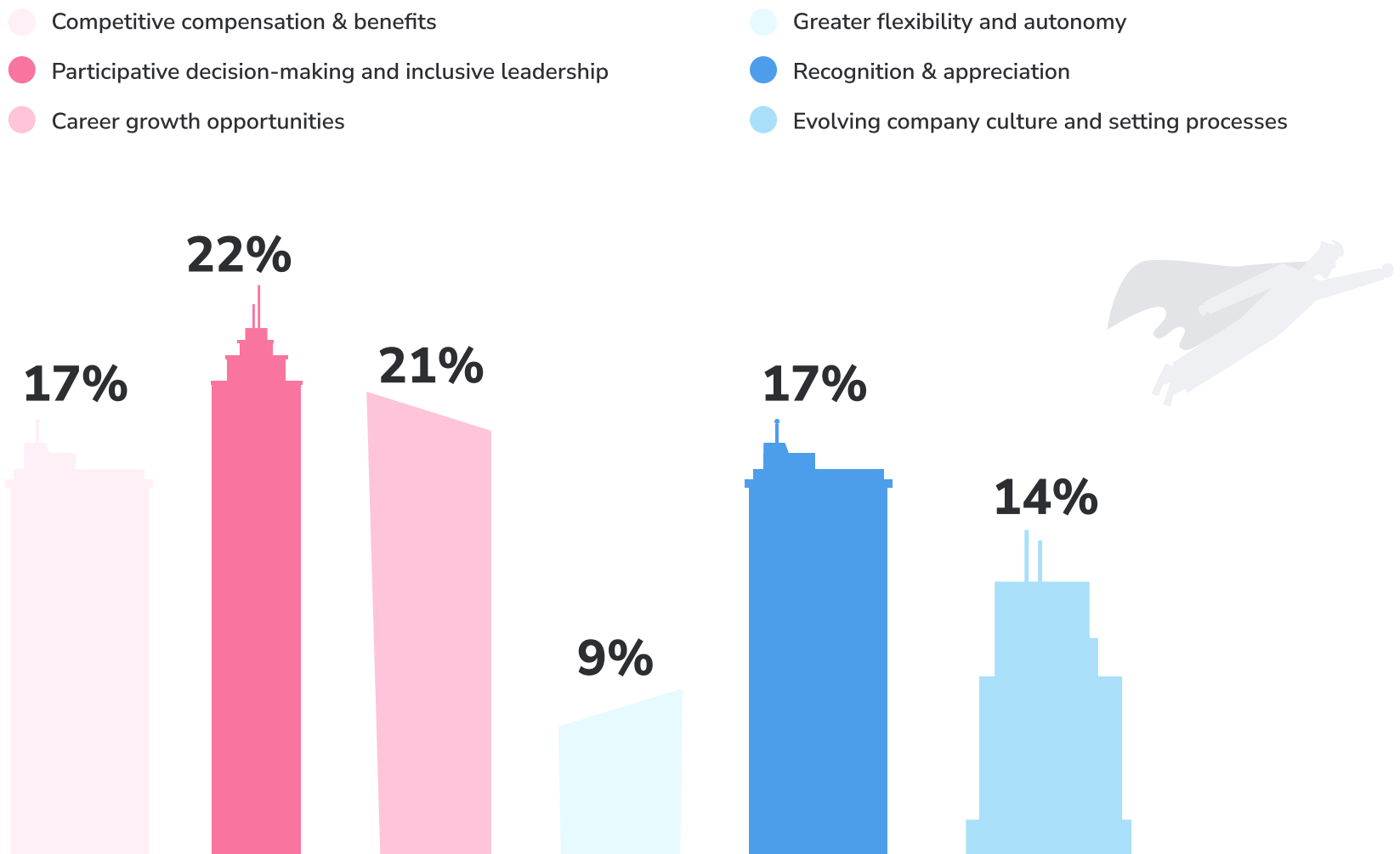
In a bid to retain employees, organizations must “let them grow”, says Mr. Menon. “They must grow personally, in terms of learning. Professionally, they must grow in terms of compensation and recognition,” he adds.

Business professionals surveyed echo this sentiment. Close to 22% believe participative decision-making and inclusive leadership can help retain employees. Whereas, 21% believe it’s career growth opportunities. Employee recognition is third most important factor at 17%.

Significant challenges in scaling workforce for growing businesses



Which approach can prove the most effective in retaining employees while scaling workforce?



KEKA EDITORIAL TAKE

Ascend to retain

Employee retention is among the most significant challenges organizations face while scaling business. Diverse working styles, processes, cultures and power equations during growth phases may impact new and existing employees uniquely.

The legacy employees, more used to preexisting relationships and work styles, may resist change. Whereas, new employees may seek a departure from a status-quoist mindset.

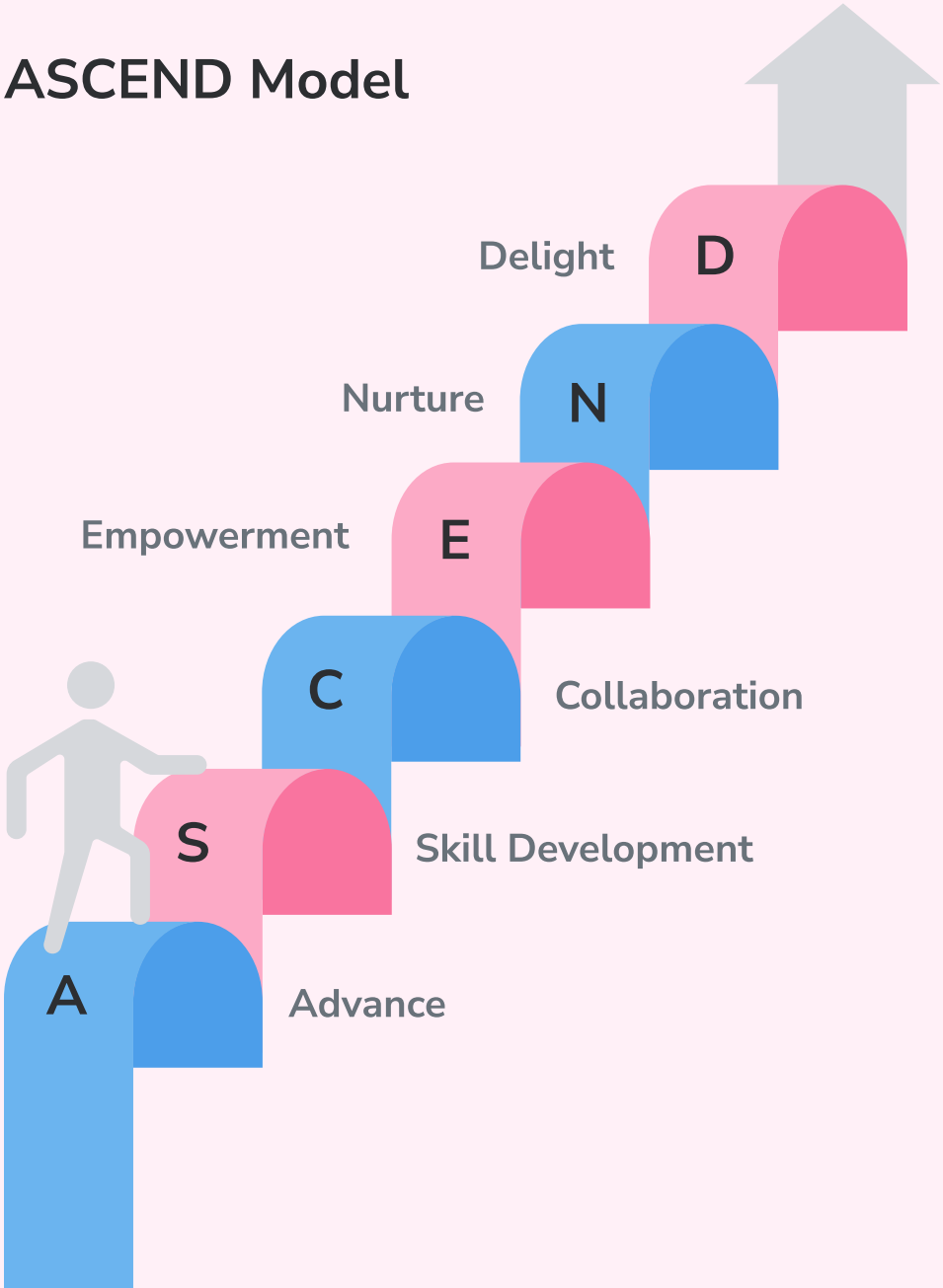
They may believe a change in work styles and structure is an organizational imperative to suit changing organizational needs.

When employees sense these expectations are not being met, it may lead to disengagement and even result in turnover.

In a bid to retain employees during business growth, Keka proposes the ASCEND approach.

Organizations may follow the approach to bolster engagement and retention as their business scales, for both existing and new employees.

ASCEND Model



1. Advance

Develop growth and development paths for employees accounting for their competencies, aspirations and interests. Hold periodic check-ins to review progress and update paths based on changing aspirations. Guide employees and provide an enabling ecosystem with enough resources for them to stay on the course.

Desired outcome:
Employees acquire clarity about their journeys in the company, fostering long-term commitment.

2. Skill Development

Offer upskilling and reskilling opportunities to employees based on competency gap analyses. They may include formal training programs like workshops and courses.

Desired outcome:
Employees thrive in their current roles and can adapt to the evolving needs of the business.

3. Collaboration

Foster cross-functional cooperation opportunities through special projects and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Pay attention to composing diverse teams, including both legacy and new employees.

Desired outcome:
This creates an ecosystem of learning and empathy. Employees learn from one another and begin appreciating alternatives viewpoints. This creates stronger working relationships and sense of belonging.

4. Empowerment

Delegate tasks, and promote autonomy and task ownership among employees. Provide resources to employees to help them realize this autonomy.

Desired outcome:
Ownership of work allows employees to feel fulfilled at work. This motivates them to take initiative too.

5. Nurture

Invest in well-being initiatives around social, mental, financial, emotional and physical aspects. Set up redressal mechanisms and make them accessible to employees. Measure impacts of interventions periodically. Foster psychological safety at workplace so employees could voice concerns without fear.

Desired outcome:
Employees feel valued, supported and empowered. The enabling ecosystem lets them work to their full potential.

6. Delight

Celebrate achievements of teams and individuals, both big and small. This must be done both formally, in public recognition announcements, and informally, through peer recognition programs.

Desired outcome:
Employees feel valued for their contributions. This also boosts motivation and engagement levels among them.

Understanding Workplace Culture and Its Impact

Parismita Goswami, Content Writer, Keka

Strategy is not just critical to business success but also to culture, believes Ester Martinez, CEO, People Matters.

The idea of culture is not limited to you and yourself. In the bigger picture, your corporate culture—the language and behavioral norms you adopt—mirrors those of your workplace culture. A company's culture may seem intangible and amorphous, but it shows itself directly in its ability to attract and retain top talent.

A culture strategy equips leaders with clear priorities to transform team culture and drive people-centered outcomes. It offers a road map for consciously creating the employee experience you crave.

Culture is a strategic advantage that sets a company apart. As a famous corporate leader said, "Culture is the way we do things here," emphasizing the significance of ingrained organizational behaviors and norms.

Making Culture Strategic

Gone are the days when strategic positioning alone could ensure long-term success. Maintaining a sustainable advantage requires more than a static stance in a world where competitors can quickly mimic market positions. Instead, companies must focus on creating and preserving unique value propositions that resonate with customers and stakeholders.

Nurturing and Designing Culture

Nurturing and designing culture requires a multifaceted approach that considers various stakeholders and expectations. Starting with the foundation of customer-centricity, companies must align their culture with their target audience's evolving needs and desires.

At the heart of this strategic approach to culture lies the **Culture Wheel**, a framework that emphasizes consistency, alignment, and intentional design. As the adage goes, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast," stressing the implication of nurturing a culture that complements and reinforces organizational objectives.

Bee findings:

- Valuing customer/clients is the core to workplace culture.
- Companies can only outperform rivals if they can establish a differentiated culture.
- Business strategy and behavior drives the workplace culture, and existing employees to sustain company's growth

Keys to culture strategy in the workplace

- **Behaviour:** Cultivating a culture of high standards, curiosity, and continuous learning fosters an intellectually stimulating environment where knowledge sharing thrives.
- **Business Strategy:** Aligning culture with overarching business goals ensures that every action and decision contributes to the company's long-term success.
- **Stakeholder Expectations:** Meeting stakeholders' expectations, including customers, employees, and investors, is paramount in building trust and fostering sustainable growth.
- **People Practices:** Embracing practices such as accountability, expertise, and transparency eliminates barriers and promotes a culture of collaboration and innovation.

Culture and people are Inseparable

A customer-centric, agile, and strategically aligned culture serves as the foundation for sustained success. Therefore, a well-crafted strategy informs and guides decision-making and the right set of behaviors. Following the approach of 'customers are supreme' reinforces and amplifies strategic initiatives, driving the company towards its goals.

Culture wheel



KEKA EDITORIAL TAKE

A great work culture goes beyond free lunch and unlimited work from home opportunities. It is about how employees are trusted and valued for who they are.

There is no denying the value of bonuses and benefits, but what needs more attention are business, behaviors and a sense of belonging (B3).

Many organizations struggle to retain employees, clients, and businesses. The reason behind this is their strategy, which often fails to incorporate the 3 Bs.

Great Workplace Culture = B1 + B2 + B3

Where:

- B1 represents the effectiveness of business practices, including strategy, operations, and innovation.
- B2 signifies positive behavioral norms and practices within the workplace, such as teamwork, communication and respect.
- B3 denotes a strong sense of belonging among employees, fostered through inclusivity, diversity, support, and recognition.

Research by OC Tanner has pointed out that 79% of people who quit their jobs said that lack of appreciation was “a main reason” for their decision.

Most surveyed (60%) said they are “more motivated by recognition than money.” The only way to win is to have a strong workplace culture to set your company apart from your competitors.

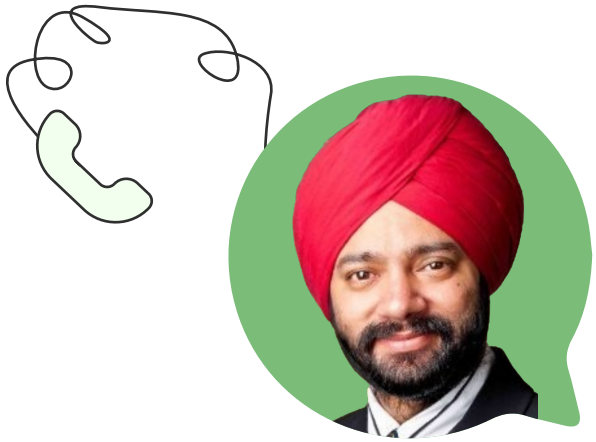
Behind the smile: The silent cost of faking emotions at workplace

Sidharth Yadav, Content Research Analyst, Keka

"All of us wear masks as we live different lives, says Harjeet Khanduja, Senior Vice President Human Resources at Reliance Jio. "We behave differently at home, at the workplace and with friends."

In the movie Spiderman, for instance, the protagonist goes as Peter Parker in his personal life. But professionally, he is the spiderman. "But unlike us, he can't share his professional life in his personal life."

You shouldn't hide your emotions at the workplace, advises Mr. Khanduja.



Carry your emotions to work as they affect the quality of work you do. Bring your authentic self to office.
- Harjeet Khanduja, Senior VP, HR, Reliance Jio

Bee findings:

- Not talking about emotions at the workplace can lead to attrition
- Be selective in building relationships at workplace
- Don't entirely separate personal, professional lives

As in the Hindi movie Chak De! India, the personally hurt hockey coach channelizes those emotions to perform better professionally.

"You must carry your emotions to work because your emotions make a difference to the quality of work you do. Bring your authentic self to the office," says Mr. Khanduja.

But this doesn't mean removing your mask completely. "If you remove it, you should ask yourself are you timing it right and whether the context is right for it," he cautions.

But keeping your mask on fully at the workplace has its perils:

1. Pent up emotions lead to an outburst later. This can burn bridges and damage you professionally
2. Keeping a strict separation between personal and professional lives creates confusion and loss of credibility
3. Not talking about emotions at the workplace can lead to a break up or attrition. This is damaging both for the individual and the organization.
4. Not dealing with emotions may cause health issues including depression and hamper productivity.

Thus, having a sense of belonging at the workplace, where you have meaningful relations and could share emotions, is essential, says Mr. Khanduja.

“You must have friends at the workplace you could share emotions with. This will prevent you from feeling heavy in the head. You no more feel plastic,” he adds.

How can employees feel the sense of belonging at the workplace?

For this, Mr. Khanduja suggests the CLAWS framework.

1. Clarify – Who you are and who you aren’t. In case of values conflict, you may miss satisfaction at work.

2. Listen – Without the hurry to act. Listen carefully to others, especially with those you want to build relationships with.

3. Ask – principle-based questions. Organizations must create psychologically safe spaces for this, that means not punishing those who ask questions.

4. Work – on the feedback. When you ask questions, you receive feedback. Be results-oriented with that. How you deliver to customers without showing your emotions matters the most.

5. Share – your vulnerabilities and be authentic. This can make you seem more reliable and trustworthy.

Yet having a sense of belongingness doesn’t mean building relationship with everyone.

“Be selective,” says Mr. Khanduja. Connect with you supervisor and field information about personal life with them. This will help them understand you better.

Next, you must connect with peers you trust and influencers within the organization, he suggests.

And don’t share everything, even with people close to you. “Be selective with what you’re sharing. That information shouldn’t be used against you. Share things you want to let go of so you can manage emotions better,” exhorts Mr. Khanduja.

So, bring your mask down, but only a little bit so you are able to breathe at the workplace. “Removing the mask completely isn’t good for you,” says Mr. Khanduja.

CLAWS framework to feel belonged at workplace

Clarify
Listen
Ask
Work
Share





Credits



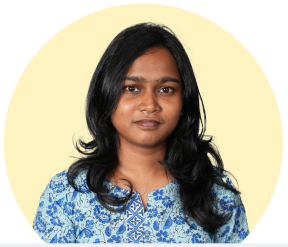
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- **Josephine Groom**
Chief Operating Officer , Qlearsite

- **Partha Neog**
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- **Pranav Prasoon Thakur**
Chief People Offier, TruKKer

- **Sara Boueri**
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- **Saurabh Shah**
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- **Abhishek De**
Vice president of Talent Acquisition, High Radius

- **Dinesh Menon**
Founder Office, Onsurity

- **Harjeet Khanduja**
Senior VP, HR, Reliance Jio

keka

About Keka

Everything you need to build a great company

Keka is your people enabler. From automation of people processes to creating an engaged and driven culture, Keka is all you need to build a good to great company.



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