The Biggest Challenges That Keep Leaders Up at Night

And What This Means for Workplaces in 2019

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2018 has seen game-changing developments across many fields: The waves of progress in artificial intelligence and big data analytics; countries rising up to tackle climate change; and mental health awareness rapidly growing as a top priority in the workplace.

A year full of powerful initiatives — from the [#MeToo movement](#) that inspired women to speak up, to promoting gender equality, to encouraging diversity in the workplace.

These developments have not only impacted and influenced the future of the workplace, but also presented challenges for CEOs and business leaders to consider and act on.

Let's examine some of these challenges and their implications in 2019 and the future of the workplace.

Winning the War for Talent with Competitive Employee Benefits

When it comes to looking for the best talent, the competition is fierce nowadays. CEOs are looking into what could make their businesses stand out to retain current employees and recruit top talent.

Competitive employee benefits is a huge factor in a job searcher's decision-making process. When you offer competitive employee benefits, attracting talent becomes easier.

> Companies are going a step further to keep their star employees engaged by offering benefits outside of a standard salary package.

These are often referred to as 'benefits in kind', considered to be the secret weapon in the war for talent. This strategy has been increasingly popular for companies, as employee expectations regarding benefits in the workplace grow.

Here are some new benefits that are becoming common amongst businesses:

- ☑ Flexible work hours
- ☑ Work from home
- ☑ Free breakfast or lunch
- ☑ Day care benefits for parents with young children
- ☑ Comprehensive health & wellbeing programs

Implication for 2019:

Employees are aware that they are spending most of their waking hours at work and that they would prefer to spend these hours working for companies that invest in their people.

If you want to be seen as a desirable company to work for, hire the best talent, and increase employee retention, start thinking about how you can provide more value and benefits to your employees.

The Struggle with Establishing and Changing Culture

Company culture is an important factor of all businesses. Culture isn't just how you do things in the organisation, but the set of attitudes, values and behaviours that lends to the exclusive social and psychological atmosphere in the workplace.

A survey by Deloitte revealed that majority of the executives (94%) and employees (84%) believe that a standout company culture is essential to business success.

> It's culture that drives recruitment, and it's the backbone of an engaged workforce.

It's one of the ultimate reasons employees stay, and as a result, it has a positive impact to your bottom line.

Modern leaders are faced with the challenge of embedding a genuinely good work culture.

01. It takes years to build it.

As a leader in charge of transforming your culture, you need to be intentional about how you live out and communicate the change you want to see.

02. Once a culture is set in place (consciously or otherwise), it's difficult to transform.

Your culture is a reflection of what you value and what you believe in. Transforming it requires you to first understand your existing culture and know which direction you'd like to take it. A change in culture will not happen if it's not supported by the individuals in your organisation,

so you will need to ensure that they buy in and decide to change their behaviour.

03. It takes consistency.

If you and your leaders hold yourselves to the same standards as the rest of your team, and not a personal agenda, then it's easier to get buy-in from your team and it's easier for them to live out the values you have set.

Implication for 2019:

Take necessary steps to build or improve your company culture. To do this, remember the following tips:

01. Create a culture your team will love by learning how to listen first.

There is great value in listening to their feedback and letting them know that they are heard and valued.

02. Give emphasis on purpose.

In recent years, employees are seeking purpose and meaning in what they do, and these contribute to their satisfaction.

03. Prioritise your employees' overall wellbeing.

This includes physical, mental, work, and social wellbeing.

04. Appoint culture champions.

These are people who embrace the culture and the purpose of your business company, a social leadership model approach.

Keeping Up and Coping with New Cybersecurity Issues

Cybersecurity continues to be a big concern for CEOs and businesses. Survey results from 2017 revealed that Australia had the most number of cybersecurity issues, amounting to 9,432 incidents in one year.

> Microsoft reports that these cybersecurity breaches are costing Australian businesses $29 billion per year, and this is just the direct cost. For a large enterprise with more than 500 employees the stakes are higher. If they fall victim to a cybercrime, they can incur an economic loss of over $35 million.

These breaches most certainly affect businesses and consumer confidence as well, where data breaches can shake up consumers' perception of a brand, and it takes years to rebuild that trust.

Implication for 2019:

Cyber threats are evolving and getting more complex. In order for CEOs and business owners to keep up, Itay Glick, CEO of Votiro, advises that the keys to good protection against these threats are training, detection, and protection. As we move on to 2019, leaders need to focus on training the staff on the basics of cybersecurity and some best practices that they can implement.

Constant Change Management

Leaders often introduce new technology to the workforce with the purpose of increasing work efficiency. As a result, the workforce is disrupted as they are compelled to learn how to use it.

> The pace of technological evolution means that by the time they master it, it's already outdated.

Apart from new technology, the workforce is also constantly disrupted by the innovative ways of working.

Here are some of 2018 trends:

- ☑ Automation has transformed the nature of people's work — from doing mundane to providing high-value work.

- ☑ Telecommuting, or working outside of a traditional office, is making distance irrelevant - largely increasing employee retention.

- ☑ Virtual meetings are proven to be very effective, especially if your team is spread out across the world - with a plethora of applications supporting this way of working.

- ☑ Business can opt to hire independent contractors or empoylees depending on the needs of the business

With all these advancements happening, the amount of choice increases and decision-making becomes extremely complex.

There is more pressure on CEOs now than ever before. Change must be thoughouly researched and carefully considered to ensure its stickiness.

Quickly adapting to new features, platforms, roles and responsibilities with little disruption will eventually become a normality in society. But for now, CEOs and businesses also need to be aware that our workforce is going through a tough time as we try to keep up with this pace of change.

Implication for 2019:

The workplace is constantly evolving. CEOs need to optimise their decision-making to ensure that change initiatives are not a waste of time, effort and money. With all these advancements happening, our workforce continues to endure the necessity of adapting a state of constant change. It is a skill that can be learned. As a CEO and business leader, it's your responsibility to understand, empathise, and incentivise employees to ensure that the change you are leading will be supported and sustained.

Work-Related Mental Health Now a Major Issue

Previously never a consideration, people are putting more blame on companies for their mental health issues. The fast-paced and physically demanding environment at work and the high expectations from their bosses, means employees are working even harder and experiencing high levels of anxiety along the way.

Last year saw an increase in employee absences, with 9.7 absences per annum per employee. One can easily argue that a major contributor to this is mental health.

> Leaders cannot just remain silent whilst employees (and even leaders themselves) suffer from this crisis.

Organisations should engage in preventive measures. This takes more than a motivational speech from the CEO, an inspirational poster or a once off workshop.

Implication for 2019:

Invest in your people's emotional and mental health, understand your workforce mental health needs. Start with some simple <u>initiatives</u> you can implement:

- ☑ Foster a culture of trust, where employees can feel that they belong and that they are safe

- ☑ Promote mindfulness and schedule short breaks to enable this

- ☑ Ensure that someone (an advocate of mental health) is readily available for them if they need someone to talk to

- ☑ Implement a sustainable mental health program that addresses and supports your workforce needs.

Looking Forward

The digital age has brought with it fresh challenges facing business leaders, but it also comes with new solutions to age-old problems as well.

The world of work has changed, and business leaders across industries need to rethink their ways of working to improve the bottom line.

Rethink your business's ways of working

Contact us to find out more

Written by
Samuel Samhan

Sam is a seasoned Business Strategist with 15+ years of experience and verifiable success in assisting businesses unlock their potential, providing strategic leadership through crucial periods of transformation and expansion, driving appropriate and efficient commercial decisions and outcomes. Sam is passionate about Health & Wellness, Health-tech & Start-ups.

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