

THE NEW BOOK OF JOBS

COMPANIES ARE SCRAMBLING TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE DISRUPTIVE POST-PANDEMIC BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT. THEY ARE CREATING NEW FUNCTIONS EVEN AS THEY CONFRONT A HUGE CHANGE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE WORKFORCE BY **KRISHNA GOPALAN**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ANIRBAN GHOSH**

FOR THE PAST two years, Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) has gone to business schools specifically looking for graduates inclined towards digital commerce. That's nothing unusual, except that traditional sales and marketing functions have made way for new job descriptions. It indicates a changing India where many opportunities have forced companies regardless of size to look for talent but with a difference, and this comes forth in the BT-Taggd survey of The Best Companies to Work For in India this year.

Just what is the change? Today's talent—and there's plenty of that in India—is looking for a new set of challenges and new-age roles. For them, a sales and marketing job is passe. For instance, HUL has created the position of e-commerce manager. Large FMCG companies see around 10% of their revenues in the digital age coming from e-commerce channels, and even the most conservative estimates suggest the number could touch 30% by the end of the decade. Besides, every company recognises the need to have a closer look at their business. That has led to the creation of new positions, with clear job descriptions.

"All this is in line with the change we are bringing about in each of our businesses," says Anuradha Razdan, Executive Director (HR) and CHRO, HUL & Unilever South Asia.

This process will test the mettle of the best companies as the workforce gets reoriented across levels.

REDEFINING ROLES

This change is recent. Around a decade ago, any large organisation had a defined set of positions. There was a CFO, a CHRO, a CMO, a COO and, of course, a CEO. "Today, a Chief Data Officer or a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) are realities," says Aditya Narayan Mishra, MD & CEO of recruitment and staffing services firm CIEL HR. Apart from talent wanting new-age roles, they also see the need to specialise in one area, he adds.

Earlier, only a CTO would suffice; but in several companies there is a need for a CISO as well. "In a lot of industries, data protection is an important piece and a part of the overall boardroom agenda. A generalist may not fit the bill here in an age of such a specialised need," explains Mishra.

Speaking of new-age sectors—such as companies in the tech space—finance is a key role. Mishra points out that these firms tend to have a Chief Accounting Officer as well as a CFO. "For these companies, fundraising is a big part of their overall business. A CFO may be very good with a treasury function, but this is a very different requirement."

Likewise, a CHRO is now complemented by a Chief Talent Officer, who looks after the employer brand and areas related to talent management but will not oversee, say, issues related to payroll.

Digitisation has expedited the extent to which technology dominates business functions in a post-pandemic world. The consensus among experts is that what would have taken a decade to change, has happened in less than two years. The thrust on AI and its impact on our lives has been profound and the stage is set for an extremely dynamic future.

Deepti Sagar, Chief People and Experience Officer at consultancy Deloitte India, says job profiles across levels at her organisation are being driven by technological disruptions, economic advances, and a progressive business ecosystem.

"There are also macro trends like a heightened focus on ESG and an increasing proportion of Gen Z at work. All this means there is a significant shift in client demands and requirements from professional services," she says. The result of this is a greater focus on newer job families and skills. "In the last 12-18 months, this has further been accelerated by the advent of Gen AI."



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DEEPTI SAGAR
CHIEF PEOPLE AND EXPERIENCE OFFICER, DELOITTE INDIA

TIME TO REORIENT

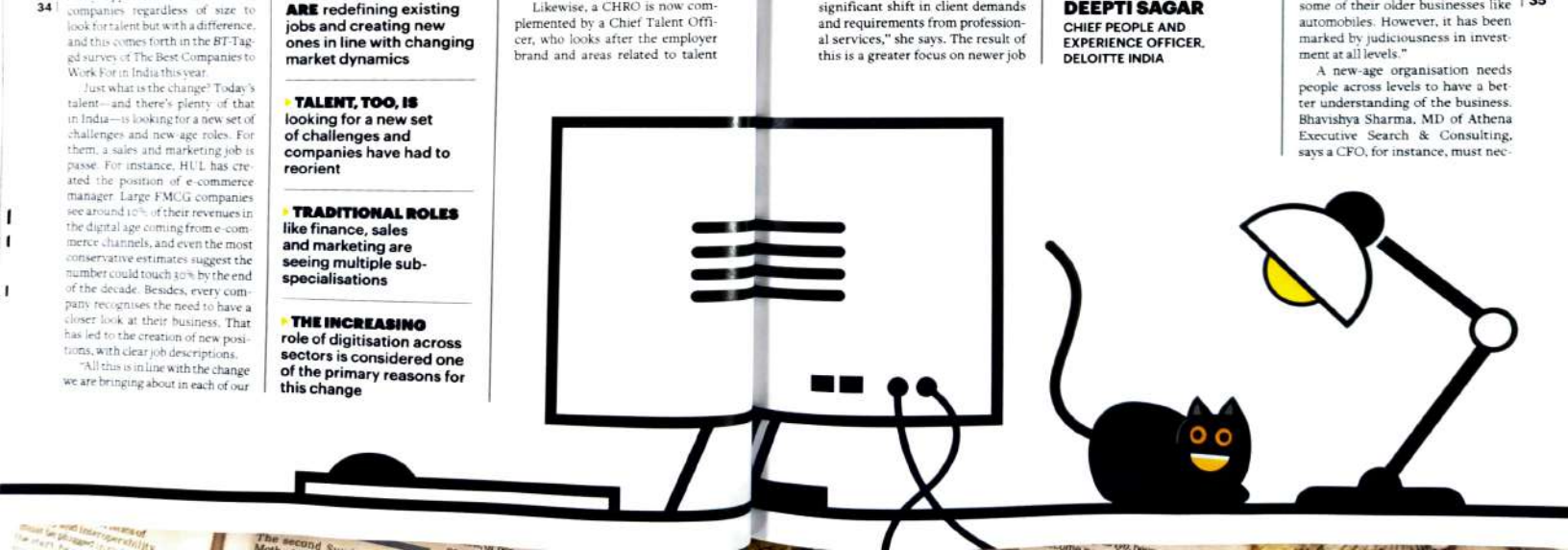
But one can't just bet on tech disruption. For instance, in many industries it was believed that technology would supersede (and even replace) the conventional ways of doing business. But that has not been the case. For example, edtech flourished at one point, but once classrooms were back in vogue, its popularity waned.

Mishra points out that large conglomerates like the Tata group, Reliance Industries, Aditya Birla Group, and the likes of Asian Paints and HUL struck up a healthy combination of both new-age and conventional methods of doing business. "The Tatas, for instance, launched Cliq and Neu, and even reoriented some of their older businesses like automobiles. However, it has been marked by judiciousness in investment at all levels."

A new-age organisation needs people across levels to have a better understanding of the business. Bhavishya Sharma, MD of Athena Executive Search & Consulting, says a CFO, for instance, must nec-

JOBS ALERT

- **ORGANISATIONS ARE** redefining existing jobs and creating new ones in line with changing market dynamics
- **TALENT, TOO, IS** looking for a new set of challenges and companies have had to reorient
- **TRADITIONAL ROLES** like finance, sales and marketing are seeing multiple sub-specialisations
- **THE INCREASING** role of digitisation across sectors is considered one of the primary reasons for this change



essarily grasp what social media is all about and its impact, without operating in a silo. The new B2C companies run on these fundamentals and that, over time, helps the more conventional businesses become more agile, he explains.

"A large FMCG major today needs to look at its channel of distribution from the perspective of adding digitisation attributes. The reorientation is not only for the freshers off campus, but a reskilling across levels is the big theme." He speaks of a large consumer company that his organisation works with where the requirement was to have a gamification of training for its blue-collar workers. "That was never the case before and it is an indication of how much things have changed."

Deloitte's Sagar highlights how at the entry level, jobs related to technology, AI, creativity, and sustainability are in demand. "At the mid- and senior management [levels], we are witnessing a greater focus on reskilling with a robust understanding of technology. It is pushing them to focus a lot more on cognitive, EQ (emotional quotient) and leadership skills to [get the] best out of the new generation and hone future leaders in an era of AI," she explains.

For an organisation, a lot depends on where it is today and the industry it is in. While bifurcation of functions is very much the "done thing" today, a big development can radically change how the business is viewed. In that context, Sharma of Athena cites the example of, say, a conventional company on a steady growth path, being acquired by a private equity fund. "Suddenly, areas like cloud service and security become very critical. The company starts to invest in that and the composition of the workforce can look very different," he says.

TIME TO REORIENT

While the workforce is changing, where are we in terms of the change cycle? Ronesh Puri, MD of executive search firm Executive Access, says this is the beginning of a phase of much bigger changes. "The opportunities lie in the throes of multiple changes. In the next five years, we will see a transformation across businesses that will be more profound than what we saw over the last two decades."

That will happen because India is getting a lot of global attention and it being the fastest-growing major economy makes for a heady combination, he says. "The quantum of action has increased manifold across industries and we are still in second gear. For companies, the bet is on getting it right tomorrow and to make that possible, it needs to lay the foundation today."

Puri says the need is for transformational leaders who have a clear vision of the future. "Companies are looking for talent with adaptability, humility, maturity, and confidence. The focus is on execution skills, people skills and the ability to look at the larger picture." Much as strategy will be a key ingredient, a sound understanding of the market is necessary.







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MANAGING DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE ACCESS

For recruiters, the FMCG sector was a happy hunting ground for talent. Executives from this space could easily move to industries like telecommunications and insurance, given their experience in sales, marketing and distribution. Sharma says this will not work anymore. People position themselves these days as growth experts with experience across sectors, he says. "Be it consumer or automobiles, they have the confidence to pull it off," says Sharma. That is an indication of how things have changed and are likely to change in the times to come.

Puri of Executive Access says the need for premium talent will always remain, and those candidates demonstrating a hunger for growth will command a higher premium. "Nomenclatures will change when it comes to job titles but the person who can effect change is the one you want to recruit," he says. In the middle of this disruption, employees who have been with an organisation for a long time may not gain substantially if they are unable to be a part of the change, adds Puri. In the coming years, the ability to manage change will command even more premium. "New blood coming in means challenging the status quo. A leaner and hungrier organisation with a constant focus on reorientation is what we are going to see for many years."

As a result of this transformation, functions like data entry and analytics-led jobs have already been replaced, says Deloitte's Sagar. "We see a lot more demand for roles like tech architecture, green UI/UX, cloud engineering, business experience, and insights management," she says. "For example, clients can deploy Gen AI to design a new-age intuitive dashboard but would need help from partners like us for deriving real-time insights and driving a value-accretive call to action." It means her clients need to be served across the end-to-end transformation cycle as opposed to just "advise, implement or operate cycles".

These days, roles and job responsibilities are being aligned with global requirements specifically in the context where a sizeable portion of the tech delivery for global clients takes place out of India. "There could be minor variations to suit the local market, but overall, new-age job families and skills are aligned with global changes," she says.

That only demonstrates how much India Inc. needs to do to get the best out of its talent. But to do that, companies themselves need to continuously go through the process of reorientation. There is no letting up on that.

In the pages that follow, read about how companies are coping with these trends. BT

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