

HUMANIZING BUSINESSES

FOR A BETTER
WORLD OF WORK



EDITED BY

RADHIKA SHRIVASTAVA
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Better World of Work**

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Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL.

First edition 2024

Editorial matter and selection © 2024 Radhika Shrivastava and Kokil Jain.

Individual chapters © 2024 The authors.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83797-333-0 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83797-332-3 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83797-334-7 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Foreword

Radhika Shrivastava and Kokil Jain

Acknowledging the dynamics of technological business transformation, which now include a diverse set of intelligent social actors who are beyond biological human beings (Gladden, 2018), the ambition of the book is to bring forth and drive academic and practitioner discussions and debates around the importance of humanizing business within the context of this evolved landscape. By putting forward a human-centric approach to reimagine and reinvent future organizational structures, workplaces, and the workforce, the book provides distinctive perspectives on the main theme, *Humanizing Businesses for a Better World of Work*.

Academic debates on the topic have recognized the inadvertent need for businesses to respond and adapt to the evolving world of work by adjusting to more humanized thinking (Bowie, 2022; Guest et al., 2022; Lazarova et al., 2023; Mhatre & Mehta, 2023; Rotatori et al., 2021). The businesses need to be redefined by human norms, taking care of and allowing employees to be human (Dion et al., 2022). There is a well-grounded argument that businesses are integral parts of society and thus have a moral responsibility to build workplaces that promote employee dignity, work-life balance, and personal growth. Humanistic values can serve as a valuable resource in solving complex business challenges.

One of the key innovations necessary is the shift towards more flat, decentralized, and networked organizations (Mourtzis et al., 2022). These structures allow for greater autonomy and empowerment of employees, leading to increased engagement, motivation, and creativity. Furthermore, businesses need to recognize the value of diversity and inclusivity in the workplace and create structures that promote these values. This can include implementing flexible working arrangements, creating employee resource groups, and developing mentorship programs.

Organizations must redesign work models and environments to create meaningful experiences for employees, including gig workers and freelancers, by offering flexible working arrangements, remote options, and collaborative workspaces (Babapour Chafi et al., 2022).

Finally, organizations should cultivate their brand's personality and values by engaging with customers through co-creation and feedback and involving them in their mission and values to build stronger customer relationships and drive growth.

The scholarly debate on humanizing businesses implicates multidimensional perspectives involving ethical, strategic, and pragmatic deliberations. As we

progress, this discourse will become stronger, asserting the role of businesses in redefining a more humane, inclusive, and sustainable world.

This book reflects the ongoing trajectory on the topic and features nine new studies on new-age management challenges, work–family balance, gender-based skewness in entrepreneurship, participative practices for engaging employees, ambidextrous leadership, upskilling & reskilling, the conceptualization of employee voice, human-centred organizational design and employee-centred CSR. The studies make meaningful contributions to the progression of scholarly and practice thinking in the area.

The selected chapters provide an important strategic perspective on how organizations can transform their structures and practices to accommodate a more humanized, people-first workplace in the face of the fundamental transitions happening in the post-pandemic world.

The book will be of great value to management scholars working on the ‘human’ aspect of business across different disciplines. The book can also be a teaching resource across graduate, post-graduate, and doctoral programs. It can bring interesting perspectives in courses on ethics, human resource, organizational culture & behaviour, and others.

For practitioners, the book will provide pertinent insights and perspectives into topics important for business decisions.

A global call for chapters invited scholars researching at the forefront of the theme to submit their work on the following broad sub-themes – Remote work and virtual teams, Employee engagement and well-being, Sustainable practices, Diversity, equity, and inclusion, Human-centred design, Employee autonomy, and empowerment & Human-heartedness. After multiple rounds of rigorous review, nine articles were accepted to feature in the book. The following section briefly outlines a summary of the research articles curated in this book and how they contribute to advancing the chosen theme are included below.

In their paper titled, *Outlook on Upskilling and Reskilling Capacities for Industry 5.0*, authors Sachan, Chauhan, and Agarwal (2023) are motivated to explore the dynamics that accelerate the gap between corporate skill demand and academic education in the face of the dynamic human–machine interaction-focused production model termed industry 5.0. By analyzing training and development approaches through the survey of HR Directors and T&D specialists in 14 sectors, and employing the non-linear best-worst method technique for analysis, the research provides valuable insights to address employability challenges in Industry 5.0. The authors contribute by advocating for a more human-centred, dynamic, and adaptive education and training system that underlines the necessity of early career clarity, literacy, and a focus on domain-specific skills.

The next chapter in the book is an opinion article by Kanupriya (2023) which is an attempt at bridging the divide between contemporary literature on the new age management challenges and India’s journey to Target 2047 that marks the 100th year of the country’s independence. Titled, *Target 2047 and New-Age Management Challenges: An Indian Perspective*, the article employs a simplistic review of literature-cum-personal analysis-based approach, to critically comment on the interaction between the challenges of a rapidly evolving workplace and

the pre-existing socio-economic roadblocks in the country, to tell India's development story. It contributes by advocating for concerted action for employee welfare, adoption of the latest digital technologies, improving inter-and intra-team communication, upgrading the skills of employees, promoting innovation, and employment of women in decent jobs with robust wage and social security structures.

The third chapter in the book, *Relation Between Working Over Office Hours and Lengthy Commutes on the Work–Family Balance: The Moderating Role of Perceived Organizational Support*, is unique in its adoption of extrinsic variables in work–family border theory to measure the work–family balance of IT-BPM employees. In exploring work–family balance, which is aligned with employee engagement, well-being, and human heartedness, the study authored by Sankar (2023), is an inferential statistics cross-sectional study utilizing data from 437 full-time employees of IT-BPM companies in five metropolitan cities in India. The implications from the study enhance the work-family balance's theoretical and practical effects, by filling knowledge gaps and adding to the literature on the importance of work–family border theory, and providing a competitive benchmark for IT-BPM managers, administrators, and governing bodies of employee well-being.

The Pink Billion Dollar Club: Women Entrepreneurs, Public Policy and the Rise of Unicorns in India, authored by Srivastava and Jain (2023), examines the gender-based skew of women-led unicorns in India, and especially the impact of public policy on start-ups and women entrepreneurship in India. The study is of interest to policy-makers, researchers, and academicians who wish to study the gender patterns of the best-performing companies in the country. Using secondary data, the authors have hypothesized and tested the challenges associated with the success of women-led entrepreneurial ventures and conclude with suggestions for improving the policy framework in India.

Participation Practices and Engagement: Inducing Results in Service Sector of India, by Gupta and Agrawal (2023), connects two themes in the extant literature – ‘Employee engagement and well-being’ and ‘Employee autonomy and empowerment’ to explore the types of participative practices for engaging employees in service sector organizations in India. Using exploratory factor analysis on primary and secondary data, the authors have analyzed practices related to employee participation which includes delegation, empowerment, and autonomy as a tool that leads to mental peace, satisfaction and ultimately retention of the workforce in the organization. Their findings contribute to service sector employers devising effective employee engagement strategies.

Employee Voice Behaviour: Envisaging the Role of Ambidextrous Leadership and Employee Thriving, by Choudhary, Naim, and Peethambaran (2023), is a conceptual study that examines the relationship of ambidextrous leadership with employee voice behaviour, considering the intervening role of employee thriving. It contributes to theory by expanding the literature on leadership style, particularly ambidextrous leadership, employee thriving and employee voice behaviour. The proposed model in the study, that delves into unexplored territory of ambidextrous leadership acting as a catalyst for enhancing employee voice via the lens of employee thriving, is ripe for a future empirical study.

Beyond Dollars and Cents: Unveiling the Positive Influence of Employee-Centred CSR for a Better Workplace, authored by Low and Loh (2023), focuses on employee-centred CSR (ECCSR) which concerns the psychological and physiological well-being of the employees. The empirical evidence that generated through the study holds promise for theory, practice, and policy setting. Future researchers can extend the framework proposed to explore additional determinants that mediate or moderate the relationship between ECCSR and employees' well-being. For organizations, the study contributes strategies to implement ECCSR and reap its multifold benefits. For policy-makers, the study proposes good practices of ECCSR for both the organization and national well-being.

Explorative Study on Understanding the Human-Centred Design to Nurture the Employee Experience, by Wadhwa, Wadhwa, and Khaliq (2023), aims to develop a nuanced understanding of the outlook of corporate professionals towards the scope of AI with humans to create human-centred design (HCD) in order to nurture the employee experience (EX). By spotlighting HCD as a problem-solving methodology, the mixed methods study finds that companies can attract and retain top talent, increase employee engagement and productivity, and gain a competitive advantage by integrating robotics and EX design into their HCD efforts. The study thus advocates for striking a balance between automation and human interaction to positively impact employee experience.

The last paper in this collection by Hosseini, Sabokro, and Salamzadeh (2023) titled *Conceptualizing Employee Voice Within Organizations: A Systematic Literature Review Based on Five Decades' Studies*, is a maiden attempt to conduct an employee voice systematic literature review based on the definition of key factors and the complex relations in an employee voice process. A unique contribution of the study is to present a coherent conceptualization of employees' voices, which was previously a multi-dimensional, emerging field that has been the subject of definitional debates in the literature. Through the study the authors have progressed the discourse on employee voice from conceptualization to its implementation, thus making a sound contribution.

Acknowledgements

The co-editors would like to thank the Emerald Publishing team for allowing us to contribute to a very relevant and timely research topic. We would also like to thank all the contributing authors for their valuable and pertinent contributions. A sincere thanks to all the reviewers who contributed greatly through their helpful and invaluable suggestions and recommendations for the authors, greatly improving the quality of the selected manuscripts.

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