

The top five leadership skills for 2021

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Consumer behaviour and expectations have suddenly leap-frogged and the business must evolve; everyone is playing catch-up. To stay relevant, now is the time to revisit key assumptions of the past.

It is an opportunity like none before to reimagine, innovate and transform business and evolve a new medium of interpersonal communication, engagement, and relationship management.



Business and Leadership:

Today, business leadership is in flux. Fundamental changes are happening all around us in the way business is done. With rapid transformations in work, the workforce and the workplace, the line between the physical and digital worlds has become blurred beyond recognition.

- The management of distributed workforces has become much more complex and this places stress on a leader's ability to adapt to multiple work environments and inter-personal equations.
- On the one hand, limited office access is challenging business leaders to evolve new processes for requisitioning and delivering external support; on the other, suppliers are finding it difficult to coordinate with diverse individualized business needs.
- Today, Work-From-Home employees face numerous challenges - from feelings of loneliness to family distractions, disruption of set schedules, digital and social connectivity, coaching, learning and engagement, team productivity etc. Anxiety levels are abnormally high.

Ideas to dominate Leadership Selection:

During the last eight months, we have had both direct and virtual interaction with hundreds of business leaders in India and around the globe. We have learnt that modern leadership qualities need to be re-evaluated and that there is an urgent need to address the new business and employee challenges in a strategic, comprehensive, and focused way.



As global Leadership Executive Search Consultants, we expect five fundamental qualities to dominate selection and growth of HR leaders in the future.

HR Leadership:

As the nature of work changes irrevocably, the HR leadership has to change significantly; otherwise, it will lose its relevance and impact. There is a common thread of realization that HR Leaders must seize a more strategic role in the new world.

1. **Meeting individualistic team challenges:** As work-conditions and dynamics are different for different employees, the needs and constraints of the workforce are becoming more individualistic now than ever before. The HR Leadership's first and foremost task is therefore to realign its focus towards supporting the team's unique and personal challenges without becoming too intrusive.

2. **Meeting anxiety with empathy:** People's values and motivations are shifting, with self-protection becoming their top priority. Therefore, despite diminishing personal contact, it is imperative to align organizational goals more closely with employees. The time has come for the HR Leader to feel and exhibit real empathy and authenticity and truly become an 'enabler' to win the trust of all stakeholders.

3. **Creating sustainable and agile success routes:** Companies are now focusing on instilling and reinforcing agile execution, resilience and flexibility of working styles to grow productivity. Therefore, they will invest heavily in building a digital infrastructure to realign technology, processes, and organizational structures with the objectives of continued growth and profitability. HR will have to identify and tuneup its role in creating sustainable success routes for employee and organizational satisfaction in these dynamic times.

4. **Influencing in a remote & virtual way:** HR leaders must become more accessible and transparent in their interactions to be able to exert influence in a virtual environment. This requires development of a new and unique management and communication style that would be closely aligned with the culture of an organization. The skill to respond and influence with agility and transparency will be at a premium.

5. **Flexibility and resilience:** HR also faces various functional challenges: remote and virtual employee selection, recruitment and on-boarding, assimilating in the organization culture and ethos, performance assessment, normalization of ratings in a virtual world, the need for imparting new skills and retraining, engaging and motivating. This requires an ability to quickly understand unexpected new issues, be flexible, innovate and integrate without undermining corporate policies and protocols.

What to do:

We believe that now is the time to shake-up the organization. Churn it with a measured, sensitive, positive and directed spin and it can have only two possible outcomes:

1. **The cream (of ideas & innovation) will rise up, and**
2. **The slag/sludge (of lethargy, inefficiency, and toxicity) will settle at the bottom.**

In these difficult times, what is true of HR Leadership is perhaps equally true of all leadership.