



Blurring The Lines Between Information Technology And Business Management Professionals & Mnc Layoffs A Conceptual Study

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Abstract:

The subject specific compartmentalization is the rule disrupted and discarded by the latest technological innovations across the globe. Either it is a job market or market performance of an organization, both are equally vulnerable. The emerging technological innovations are transforming the entire work space, demanding for cross functional faculties or multiple skillsets. The traditional means of acquiring specialized status of professionals is under rapid transformation. The present-day markets, though highly skill oriented, but with multiple skills, diverse and cross functional areas. The advocacy for multidisciplinary learning with exclusive focus on cross functional faculties, linking with Gig platforms is the need for the day and future.

The job market today is looking for multitasking and multispecialists, more than single domain specialists. The cross functional faculty of studies like engineering with business studies, management supported by legal studies, life sciences with market intelligence on drug research, medicine with criminal law & forensic science, Mathematics with data science and financial performance of markets, Economics,

Geography, History, Psychology and languages supported by information science applications, Architecture town planning studies with health sciences and aesthetics are few notable observations. The proposed study is designed to compile research literature available in support of blurring the lines of differences between IT and Business Professionals and the lack of adoptability which may end up in MNC layoffs.

Keywords: Technological innovations, work space, generalists, multidisciplinary learning.

Introduction

In the context of competitive global environment layoffs have become companies' default response to the challenges created by advances in technology and disruptive innovations. The layoffs are short term strategies to achieve cost savings but companies may gain adverse publicity, higher voluntary turnover and decreased profits in the long run (Sandra.J. Sucher, Shalene Gupta, 2018-Harvard Business Review)¹.

In the long-term employee layoffs can never be pleasing or helpful for the company or for the individual employee. The present-day digital economy and ever-changing socio-technological changes are creating new normal in the workspace (Murray, 2008)². New outlook of the workspaces has created a paradigm shift both job seekers, startup firms and well-established multinational corporations (Sramana Mukherjee, Dushyant Narang, 2022)³. The professional career paths will be more challenging, as most of the professionals will spend the entire working and bouncing from one career to the next, scrambling to learn the skills of a new profession before some computer snatches away the means of current livelihood (Cetron and Davis, 1997)⁴.

Two powerful forces are reshaping the nature of work - automation and increasingly intense global competition. It is the timely demand by every stakeholder of the economy to rethink their workforce strategies, often practicing layoffs are disruptive and painful. Sandra. J. Sucher and Shalene Gupta (2018- Harvard

¹ <https://hbr.org/2018/05/layoffs-that-dont-break-your-company>

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<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372770182> The Future of Work Challenges and Prospects for Organisations Jobs and Workers

³ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13132-022-00896-0>

⁴ Peplińska, Aleksandra & Lipowski, Mariusz & Nieckarz, Zdzisław. (2011). Career and professional development – challenges for employees and modern organizations. Polish Journal of Social Science. 6. 75-100.

Business review)⁵ writes that routine layoffs in the long term both damage employee engagement and company profitability. Some companies, however, have realized that a new approach is required to answer the puzzle of employee layoffs and market & technological innovations (Tripp Mickle, New York Times 5.2.2024)⁶.

LIU, et.al (2020) presented a research report on effects of digitalisation on managerial practices as experienced by managers. It is described that the roles of present day managers may not experience disruptive changes due to automation in near future because managers role requires capabilities that machines are not able to have such as originality, persuasion, social perceptiveness and assisting and caring for others (Frey & Osborne, 2017). However, the transformative changes may end up in destructive and transformative effects on occupations due to digitalization. Transformative effects are related not only to changes in occupation and requirements of human skills, but they also imply an increased machine-human interaction and the Generative AI impact on managerial roles cannot be ignored (Yukl, 2013; Osmundsen et al., 2018; Felten, et.al 2018; Frey & Osborne, 2017; Fuei, 2017; Sorells, 2018, Johansson et al., 2017; Simic & Nedelko, 2019)⁷. The uncertainty of near foreseeable transformations in technology and managerial roles still prevails and studies were not able to estimate how the tasks change, the extent of impact of AI on managerial professions (Dengler & Matthes, 2018; Frey & Osborne, 2017, Spitz-Oener, 2006; Arntz et al., 2016; Autor, 2015). The days are not too far to realise human-robot teams, facilitating division of company tasks and assignments whereby humans deal with the interpretation of data, as well as the creative decision-making processes. Machines, on the other hand, take the responsibilities of summarization and gathering of data. Certainly, there will be a share of division of work, managerial tasks between the managers and Robots (Ancarani and Di Mauro 2018)⁸.

Helen Pluut et.al (2020) presented a report on “Dual role of life style behaviours in association with the blurred worklife boundaries, healthy life and well being”. The study evaluates the impact of blurred work-life boundaries on lifestyle and subjective well-being of organisational workforce. It is observed that the higher levels of blurred work-life boundaries predict negative changes in happiness through enhanced emotional exhaustion, which adversely influence the employee work hour productivity. When work

⁵ <https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=54502>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/05/technology/why-is-big-tech-still-cutting-jobs.html>

⁷ <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1435701/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

⁸ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326031846_Reshoring_and_Industry_40_How_2_Often_Do_They_Go_Together

(persistently) encroaches on and intrudes personal or family time, it might become more difficult to psychologically detach from work, results in stress and burnout.

The burnout results in deterioration in healthy lifestyle behaviours, which in turn was related to reduced happiness, which affects both family life as well as work life. Emotional exhaustion is a component of burnout and is characterized by a negative state of physical and emotional depletion due to work stress. The study concludes that the blurred work-home interface is an emotionally exhausting experience that may reduce employee happiness and deteriorates work life balance. Employees may be tempted to engage in work-family multitasking more than usual as they attend to personal or family matters during the workday, even some times employees may be tempted to engage in moonlighting activities. Moonlighting is the most often cited reason for employee layoffs or termination of the job contract.

The benefits of working from home and blurred family space and work space are not sustainably good, may also pose a risk for 'employees' health and subjective well-being. The blurred work life boundaries result in reduced happiness, focus on emotional exhaustion and due to which employees may be declared less productive, culminating in either layoff or termination of the employer-employee contract.

Milan Jcevski (2020) highlighted a Business model Innovation in the field of Retailing through blurring the lines between Physical and Digital spaces. Retailing across the globe is under tremendous transformation, both in the form of technology innovation and multiple skillset. The retail industry is advancing toward more sophisticated omnichannel applications.. There is an exponential demand for the work force in the areas related to sales associates, data analytics, content developers, market researchers and behavioural experts. Since the past decade the move to blur the line between digital and physical spaces was evident and is persistently on role. The retailers have developed web-based stores and mobile apps, increased the number of customer touchpoints throughout the digital space and started merging the physical and online worlds as part of their omnichannel agenda. Key innovation areas such as applications of instore technology, Soft skills of sales associates, leveraging of mobile applications, Data analytics, collaborations with event management firms and commendable Public Relation (PR) skills are vital to accomplish milestones of success in retail business.

Gerald C. Kane et.al (2015) presented a research report on digital strategy, technology drives the digital transformation. The maturity of digital transformations and its adoption is largely driven by the level of maturity in integrating digital technologies. The services of transforming business and landscapes of

technological applications needs to fit into social relevances to deliver social and economical equity. The leaders of cultural and political changes largely play a vital role in fostering technological transformation to digital progress. The leaders of new age change should be concerned with all age groups of workforce, so that they are attracted, trained, retrained and retained.

The report highlights that the scope and objectives of digital strategy, maturity of the digital organisations to build skills, synchronisation of workforce to work with digital leaders, developing a new norm to accept digital literacy as a culture for emerging times and the digital agenda driven from top, down to the workforce.

The research studies revealed that early stage companies are falling into trap of focusing on technology over strategy to deliver the benefits to the society at large. On the other hand, in the case of matured companies, digital technologies are more clearly being used to achieve strategic ends, than mere the technology alone.

Deepak Datta (2012) writes that the mass layoffs resulted in decline in stock prices, decline in profits, the survival employees shown reduced performance and effect is termed as neutral to negative. The decline in stock price persisted for at least 3 years. A study by the University of Tennessee found that companies that undergo layoffs are twice as likely to file for bankruptcy compared to those that do not.

The digital platforms are creating revolutionary changes, upfront and left-right, irrespective of sectors of economy from an ordinary shop floor worker, accountant and the CEO at the topmost (Invest India, February 2024). The new normal is to set new guidelines for the industrial organizations or Multinational Companies and even the prospective job seekers to prepare for cross domain knowledge (Janna Anderson, Lee Rainie, Emily. A.Vogles, 2021)⁹

The better way to minimize the impact of layoffs is acquire faith and learning in inter domain skills. One way of doing this is at the institutional level, where the students or prospective job seekers gain multidisciplinary knowledge, and the other way is to convince the industrial organizations to sponsor

⁹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/02/18/experts-say-the-new-normal-in-2025-will-be-far-more-tech-driven-presenting-more-big-challenges>

executive learning opportunities for their employees to acquire the cross functional knowledge and skills (Kettle 2010)

Yoram Wind (2006) demonstrated mental models of business and industrial marketing and consider the implications of the blurring of the lines between industrial and consumer marketing. It is observed that core principles of marketing from the consumer side could be modified and applied to business-to-business interactions for goods and services as well as the sale of raw materials to “industrial” buyers. The development of the internet and the growth of small businesses have led to the convergence of B2B and B2C markets.. The blurring of supply chains through a flexible, virtually configurable network of suppliers across many different countries has drastically resulted in mass layoffs of workforce. The evolution of e-CRM technologies has resulted in the blurring of relationships with customers, employees within the firm and suppliers across the globe, emphasised on cost cutting strategies.

Noelle Chesley (2005) demonstrated the concept of blurring boundaries by linking technology use, spillover, individual distress and family satisfaction.. It is observed that though information technology is deep-rooted in every nook and corner of individuals, it is not well proven that whether technology is a bliss or it upsets the individuals and their families. Several authors argue that the computing and communication technology increases permeability of work/family boundaries (Haddon & Silverstone, 2000; Lewis & Cooper,1999; Valcour & Hunter, 2005).

The technology enables the wokforce the adavantages of anywhere, anytime and convenient work places and schedules. As a result work/family boundaries are “increasingly blurred, causing new challenges, both at the work places and at the family level. The spatial, temporal and psychological overlap of work and family roles often may end up, causing the negative forms of spill over and is linked to increased distress and lower family satisfaction. The work and family lives of IT and modern employees are asymmetrically shaped: men's work demands often spill over into family life, while women's family demands frequently spill over into the workplace.

It is concluded that the workforce in the future have to accept blurred boundaries between family and work place as an imminent choice. The worries strongly persist as consequences associated blurred lines of boundaries will result in negative spill over effects on family and organisational workplace establishments if not dealt with rational measures.

Conclusion

MNC layoffs is a multidimensional phenomenon, which indeed requires the interface of policy makers, academic researchers and industry partners. The underlying reasons for MNC layoffs, in principles are manifold and of diverse in nature. Blurring the line of difference between IT and Management professional roles is the need of the hour. It assists to leverage synergies among the business establishments, but with careful and proactive monitoring aspects, ensuring Blurring the line of difference between IT and Management professionals not turning the tables disastrous, neither for employees, nor for employers/business firms.

With the help of multidisciplinary approach at the university level of education, as well as cross functional training programs, Executive development and Management development programs designed and delivered by the MNC's could probably resolve the challenges of MNC layoffs. Such initiatives are highly appreciated, by better equipping the workforce with higher adoptability quotient to meet the challenges of blurring the lines between IT and Business Management Professional roles.

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