

HR should be known as business partner: Yashwant Mahadik, LupinHR should be known as business partner: Yashwant Mahadik, Lupin

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Yashwant Mahadik, President - Global Human Resources, Lupin

[Yashwant Mahadik](#), also known as Yash, is President – Global Human Resources at [Lupin](#), a leading multinational pharmaceutical company based in Mumbai. He is a global [HR](#) leader with three decades of experience in multinational corporations like Philips, Sun Pharma and Johnson & Johnson. He has diverse experience across sectors (Technology, Consumer and Healthcare) and geographies (India, UK, Japan, US, ASEAN and Europe).

Mahadik’s areas of expertise include Strategy (Business, Workforce and HR); HR and Business Transformation; Leadership Development; Organisation, Culture and Capability Building; Workforce

Design & Planning; Talent Management and Succession Planning; Merger & Acquisition Integration; and Executive Coaching.

He believes in sharing his earnings and time with social developmental causes related to education for the underprivileged. Yash is an avid golfer and enjoys travelling, reading and photography.

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Edited excerpts:

How has the role of HR gone beyond the necessary functions to keep the engine running over the last year and what's the way forward for 2021?

If 'to keep the engine running' means 'business continuity', then HR has played the biggest role ever in the history of the corporate world, in keeping the [industry](#) running, because they are the ones who have been leading from the front, when it came to [employee safety](#), their safety at workplace, [wellness](#), mental wellness, access to healthcare, dealing with the insurance company. All of that was led by HR. Any company which had very effective HR mindset was very successful in dealing with the pandemic.

Now, what changes in 2021, it remains to be seen what really changes, because if the vaccine is successful, which we all believe will be, then we get back to normalcy. But having said that, having learned from this experience is going to come in handy. In case, you were hit with a similar situation, God forbid, ever going forward, organisations will be well-prepared to deal with a global disaster or scenarios like a pandemic.

What are the new measures taken by the company to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its employees?

There are so many of them. Social distancing, as the workplace is the biggest; continuous education to employees and their families on how to stay safe in this pandemic; making sure that people are not unnecessarily exposing themselves while commuting to work; and if they cannot come safely, then wherever possible, especially like in office scenarios of working from home; supporting employees and their families during this crisis, when they were stuck at their homes; looking after their mental health and wellbeing, those are some of them.

With the Covid-19 pandemic forcing companies to close their offices and move into a remote working environment in the interest of business continuity, how technology is serving as the bridge between employers and employees?

Technology has been the biggest bridge. It was technology which allowed us to work remotely. And technology did not just allow remote working, it also enabled healthcare applications, ability to e-consult with doctors, ability to be able to reach your customers and being able to serve them without interruption. It was a 360-degree application of technology for your customers, for the society, for your stakeholders, for your employees, for everyone. I think technology always existed; it's not that technology was invented during this pandemic; a lot of innovations had already happened earlier. But what has really happened now is the adoption of the technology and its usage

was accelerated because of the pandemic.

What is Lupin's approach to reopen its workplace? What percentage of the company's workforce has returned to the office?

Our factories and R&D have been working 100 per cent; they never shut down. During the lockdown, of course, at that point of time, it was not 100 per cent because there were some difficulties, but we kept on working, and after the first two months of the lockdown, we were almost at 95-96 per cent back at our levels.

So, our factories and R&D have been working 100 per cent; our field force, for the past four months, has been working 100 per cent on the field. Only our city offices, which are in Mumbai or Delhi, because of the high infection rates in large cities and because of the lack of public transportation, we have had kept them shut, then from 4th of January, we have soft-opened our offices in Mumbai. We are not forcing anyone, but we are just encouraging people to come in. We are operating with 10-15 per cent of the people, though we are prepared to make 30-40 per cent of our people work from office.

We'll see how it goes up, and how it's maintained. The idea is we stay open for the people who need to come into office and let them come in and work from office, and those who can continue working from home, let them continue to work from home. We will see how we can get back to the normal state, as the vaccination happens and as the environment becomes safe. So, that's what Lupin is doing.

Why is it important to make Lupin a differentiated transnational company in the global healthcare industry? And what role are you playing in this transformation journey?

Each country, each region has its own challenges. For example, the US was getting back to normal and the second wave has sent it back to almost where they were before UK which had come out and has become normal, has again gone into a shutdown. So, to continuously keep dealing with these challenges and these issues, which are very-very local and also very global in nature, the entire global HR team has worked as one global team, where your approach is global, but you are locally relevant. That is one.

Second is, the ability to engage with our workforce. Using technology, which was not easy, we were able to do that, there were various leaders and HR people, from time to time, at a global level and at a country level, who were engaging with the employees and keeping constant touch with them. The communication was largely driven by the HR team.

Third is, the ability to develop very quickly the learning and training solutions and offer them to the people while they were working remotely. And I'm very proud of the fact that it was done exceedingly well, globally.

The most important was, HR played a key role in not only ensuring business continuity, but also ensuring very high standards of employee safety and health at the workplace. Because we, as a company, kept on operating; we did not shut down even for a day. Also, because we are under the Essential Commodities Act, Pharma being under the essential commodities. But it was not easy and the way it has been done and the way it has been achieved, it really makes me very proud of my

team.

How many people were added to the workforce last year and what's the hiring plan for this year?

We have pretty much remained flat this year, as compared to the last year. And that was the goal. So, whatever was our exit numbers last year, we have tried to fill that. The whole idea is to stay at that same number, or lower maybe. So, we didn't add much. Going forward, after two or three quarters, we will see how things look up, and depending on the economy, depending on the uptake, which is rarely very positive, if we see a positive trend, then we would be adding; how much, we don't have an estimate of that right now.

Do you think HR should be known more as human relations than human resources?

HR should be known as a business partner. It's not just dealing with operations and functions like payroll and stuff like that, which traditionally HR has done, in my view, keeping an emotional connect with the company is a very large part of HR today. But again, that is every leader's job, not just an HR's job. In great companies, every leader does that. That is what of great importance.

I think the answer is yes. But it's not only that. Why would you like to have an HR in your company which is only focused on human relations? You would want HR in your company, which is not just focused on human relations, but is more business driven, is creating more value for the organisation in all its businesses, in all its strategic initiatives. That's what HR should stand for and that's what the new definition of HR is today.

What is your top priority this year?

It's executing the business strategy, making sure that the employees and talent is engaged, ability to attract top-class people continues, ensuring that we efficiently manage our cost architecture, when it comes to all the human resource or manpower costs, and also ensuring that we are always prepared for any wave that may come up this pandemic, by maintaining our very high standards of health and safety.