It will be interesting to see how society deals with AI, it will definitely be cool

— Colin Angle, co-founder, iRobot

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The real question is, when will we draft an artificial intelligence bill of rights?

— Gray Scott, techno-philosopher

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HR brains debate artificial intelligence at workplace

'AI does not mean people will start losing jobs'

'Those Who Resist New Ideas Get Overruled'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

With internet enabling our societies to do things instantly, there is also a need for a new system of education, tailored exclusively to millennials. "Imagine your grandparents watching you graduate live while sitting halfway across the world," says Nitish Jain, president of SP Jain School of Global Management that has been preparing students for value-added jobs.

So, it begs the question: How does one get a value-added job? "One needs to understand what the talent requirements of the world's most admired companies are. They look for graduates who can operate in the fast-changing world and a key requirement is adaptability. Consider that class participation is now on an app! The environment is such that it unshackles students from conventional learning ways," adds Jain.

This, technology and artificial intelligence were the topics of debate at the annual HR Conclave of the SP Jain School of Global Management in Mumbai on May 4. The event saw the best brains from the human resource (HR) industry exchanging notes and mentoring young professionals.

Much of the discussion centred on the growing emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) at workplace. The marathon sessions included two engrossing panel discussions, one on 'The Future of Digital Enterprises' and the other 'The HR Imperative—Integrating Human and

Technology Environment'.

The first was moderated by Dr Pramod Sadarjoshi, senior director of HCM strategy and transformation, APAC Oracle India. He began by asking what disruptive digital changes organizations will need to negotiate in the next decade.

Panelist Dr Debashis Guha, a professor and director of machine learning at the SP Jain School of Global Management, replied by placing the question within a larger context. "Both AI and machine learning are general purpose technologies, which means they affect not just one sector but everything" said Guha. He also added "science advances funeral by funeral", meaning that those who resist new ideas get overruled. He explained how electricity eventually came to dominate the manufacturing world but

the old guard was initially unwilling to embrace it. "People find it difficult to imagine something new... People's cognitive power actually limits the pace of change."

Other panelists were Madhavi Lall, MD and HR head, India, at Deutsche Bank, Sandeep Batra, SVP and chief talent officer at Vodafone, and Sahil Nayar, associate director of HR at KPMG. While Lall talked about the huge changes in banking—brick and mortar bank branches are slowly becoming redundant and robots are playing a greater role in customer interactions—Batra explained how AI had streamlined Vodafone's recruiting process.

Empathy also found its way into this discussion on AI. Nayar, for instance, spoke about "design thinking", which he described as "empathizing with users to understand the manufacturing world but

derstand their pain points". And all the panelists addressed the issue of ensuring that digital technology and AI do not dehumanize workspaces for employees. "People are scared because the rate of change is too quick," said Lall. "As human resource staff, we have got to understand the concern that people have and help them cope with ambiguity."

The second discussion was a brisk, a rapid-fire Q&A that focussed on integrating the human and technological environment. It featured Gaurav Ahluwalia, managing director, HR, JP Morgan Chase; Kirti Poddar, head, talent acquisition and executive VP, India and APAC of Kellogg India; Tanaz Mulla, head, corporate HR, chief ethics counsellor and chairperson of POSH Trent Limited; Ashutosh Phadke,

HR director, IMEA and head HR for Snacks BU, Asia, General Mills; and Emrana Sheikh, vice president, HR, at Asian Paints.

Moderator Dr Christopher Abraham, CEO and head of SP Jain's Dubai Campus, asked panelists about the various changes ("disruptions" in HR jargon) that AI was bringing in, the skills required to adapt and what HR managers could do to help their workforce.

Mulla said, "As I see from the audience questions here, HR professionals are wondering if they can cope. It is best to ask how to ride the wave rather than (fear you will) be submerged by it." Her firm had interviewed people to be "change coaches" two years ago, and was intrigued to find that the motivators themselves had a low tolerance to ambiguity.

Poddar struck a reassuring tone saying humans had adapted to the floppy disk and pen drive, and AI was just the next step. "Let us call it transformation or climate change rather than disruption which reinforces fear," she said.

Ahluwalia said HR would soon engage with a blended workforce involving not just regular staffers but those working from home, indeed bots and robots. "You will have real-virtual, part time-full time and bots-people," he said. "I would recommend the adage 'Physician, heal thyself'. Organisations must adopt AI and embrace digital capability before they earn the right to drive change."

Sheikh cited the example of Asian Paints' elderly, unlettered workforce in Ankleshwar that proudly showed off its new skills at automation through cellphones. They were happy they could now do what their grandkids did. By contrast, younger tech-savvy staff in Rohtak were more sure and took the new programme for granted.

67% organizations feel tech adoption is a high priority

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: At the HR Conclave, Christopher Abraham, CEO and Dubai campus head of the SP Jain School of Global Management, presented the findings of a large-scale industry survey of HR professionals across SP Jain's campus locations in Dubai, Singapore, Sydney and Mumbai. The survey had respondents from various industries including IT (15.63%), consulting (14.58%), retail (12.50%), manufacturing and supply chain (11%), pharma or bio tech (9%), logistics (7.29%) and hospitality (4.17%).

When it came to digital and technology transformation, 67% of organizations rated it as a high or very high priority and 53% rated the HR challenge of adopting new technologies as high. This makes sense when you consider that 50% of industries and 48% of organizations report an increase in the adoption of digital technologies. In Mumbai, 63% reported an increased adoption of digital technologies.

The impact of this digital enterprise trend was apparent when 63% of industries reported disruption due to digitization and automation and 62% reported a shortage of skills required for the digital economy. According to most respondents, the departments that would be most impacted by digital technologies would be IT, marketing and

customer service.

Amid fears that artificial intelligence and digital technologies will cause people to lose their jobs, the survey provided a glimmer of hope with 50% of respondents claiming that their projected employee headcount was higher than last year. This was particularly true for Mumbai where 75% of organizations were projecting a higher employee headcount than 2017. It also showed that the general outlook in Mumbai was positive with 100% of organizations anticipating an increase in business performance compared to last year.

Abraham explained that the top skills for success in this digital century would be innovation, entrepreneurship, emotional intelligence, and the ability to handle change and ambiguity. "There is this huge hype about artificial intelligence," concluded Abraham, "but let us remember that it is still artificial and human ingenuity and wisdom far surpasses it."

Pics: Uma Kadam

(Top) L-R Dr Rajashree Gujarathi of EMBA Mumbai, Gaurav Ahluwalia of JP Morgan Chase, Kirti Poddar of Kellogg India, Ashutosh Phadke of General Mills, professor Christopher Abraham, CEO and head of SP Jain's Dubai Campus, Tanaz Mulla of POSH Trent Limited, Emrana Sheikh of Asian Paints; (bottom left) L-R Dr Debashis Guha of SP Jain Global, Madhavi Lall of Deutsche Bank, Dr Pramod Sadarjoshi of APAC Oracle India, Sandeep Batra of Vodafone and Sahil Nayar of KPMG; (bottom right) Sandeep Chaudhary, CEO of Aon Consulting

RAPT ATTENTION

'AI does not mean people will start losing jobs'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The chief of a management consulting firm sought to allay doubts surrounding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) at workplace. In his keynote address, Sandeep Chaudhary, CEO of Aon Consulting, said that AI does not result in people becoming unemployed, it just makes certain tasks redundant.

Earlier, Dr Rajashree Gujarathi, director of academic services, executive MBA, at the SP Jain School of Global Management, Mumbai, had remarked how companies like Kodak and Nokia which were once top brands of their product categories had slumped into decline.

Chaudhary pointed out, "These firms may have come upon bad times but their employees would surely have found jobs elsewhere. At one time, if a man sought a licence as a taxi driver he was expected to know every road, every landmark in the city. Not so now. He has gadgets and technology to help out."

Chaudhary added, "10 years ago, if somebody claimed we would have driverless, fuel-free cars or that life expectancy would rise by 25% or that we could grow food in vertical farms that use 99% less land and 90% less water, would any of us have believed it? The use of AI and content on our planet is growing so exponentially it seems to be the stuff of science fiction."

He made frequent references to the 'Terminator' franchise whose theme details the battle for survival between a beleaguered human race and AI embodied as Skynet. "So will AI replace humans? The answer is no. When IBM introduced computers, it expected that all offices would turn paperless. But use of paper has only grown."