

Jayanthi Vaidyanathan, Senior Director and Head - HR, PayPal India

"Technologies like AI and ML have played a massive role in developing HRM programmes for organisations," said [Jayanthi Vaidyanathan](#), Senior Director and Head - HR, [PayPal India](#). In an interview with *ETHRWorld*, she further said, "Enabling the organisation and leadership to embrace the change and be a part of it is still a challenge."

### **How has the lockdown impacted the [HR function](#) as a whole?**

The impact of Covid-19 has brought about an unprecedented change in the way we work, connect with one another, and balance our personal and professional lives. The shift to a remote work model has compelled HR and other functions to join forces to frame policies and provide [employees](#) with the required infrastructure to make the transition seamless.

In addition to managing work, the current scenario has made it increasingly important for organisations to refocus on the wellbeing of their people, both physical and mental. It has also compelled organisations to reimagine engagement and communication with employees to keep them excited and informed on what is going on within their organisation. How we address, this will shape our organisational culture and define the future of workplaces.

At PayPal, besides everything else, our key focus is the health, safety, and wellbeing of our employees. We consider this crisis a crucial learning opportunity for us to rethink how we engage with our employees and further strengthen the channels established to support them during these trying times.

### **How has PayPal worked to address HR challenges posed by Covid-19?**

Given that the transition to WFH happened within a short span of time, ensuring our entire workforce has the required technology infrastructure was not a simple task. Our teams worked around the clock to ensure that the equipment required by every employee was delivered and established stringent security measures so they could continue work with almost zero disruption or security concerns.

We have ensured that mental health resources like the Employee Assistance Programme, and other wellness resources are utilized in the most appropriate manner. This provides counselling services for employees and their families on personal, legal, emotional, and financial issues 24 hours a day through-out the week. Apart from the scope of 1:1 sessions, we also initiated group sessions, with trained counsellors on topics like Mindfulness, Building Resilience etc to enable our employees to remain positive during these times especially those who are undergoing trauma or coping with loss. We have also provided for Care/Crisis Leave in case an employee is unable to work due to personal constraints.

Managers are working to devise solutions that work best for their teams to enable productivity and manage their responsibilities at home, with options like Compressed Work week, Flexi-hours, wellness breaks etc.

“ Companies across the world are adopting newer methods of digitizing HR practices and using a data-driven approach to make decisions around promotions, budget planning, compensation, team staffing etc, says Jayanthi Vaidyanathan, Senior Director and Head - HR, PayPal India. ”

We have set-up a Covid-19 Resource Centre where employees can find the latest updates and all Covid-19 related information. We also roll out a weekly [Wellness Survey](#) to understand how employees are doing and what more can we do to ensure that they feel safe and can comfortably continue to work.

**Do you think WFH is the new normal, post-Covid-19? What kind of strategies or approaches needs to be adopted by companies to allow their employees to work remotely?**

It's interesting to see how various businesses are adapting to this situation. While for IT industry, remote or virtual working is not very new. However, any new normal will take its course but I do believe the trend of working remotely will last long after Covid-19 due to its multiple benefits such as zero commute, increased productivity, flexible working schedules and more.

However, to ensure this is sustainable in the long-term, organisations will need to look at it from different lenses. Data security and cyber security investments, rethinking [employee engagement](#), prioritizing on employee wellbeing, flexible work hours will be the key factors that they will need to address.

Most importantly, one cannot forget that the culture of an organisation is created and sustained by its employees. Employee engagement and leadership connectivity will be critical to ensure that employees feel connected to the organisation and we build brand ambassadors.

**In your opinion, does WFH impact productivity in any way?**

No, I do not think it has any impact on the ability of employees to do their work. Even prior to the [pandemic](#), we have had a very flexible WFH policy for our employees. In fact, we are enormously grateful for the great work they continue to deliver and the positive outlook we have witnessed during this period. This only serves to reinforce my belief in remote working as an effective model.

**How are you engaging with your employees during this time? Has PayPal rolled out any new programmes or initiatives that will help support employees balance work and home?**

Frequent and transparent communication has been key for us to ensure all employees are aware of any developments and know how they can avail the support they need. We have also rolled out several virtual programmes and HR initiatives specially catered to help our employees thrive in the new normal.

In addition to some of the initiatives outlined above, we hosted our first-ever virtual engagement initiative, Kids@Work to help support our PayPal parents as they strive to balance work and home. The three-day event was attended by over 600 children and included a host of fun-filled activities like painting contests, Zumba sessions, shadow puppetry workshops and much more. This initiative was aimed to reduce the burden on working parents and provide a platform that would help ensure that their children are engaged creatively and do not miss out on the fun of learning at the same time.

Inclusion and diversity are key values for PayPal. We celebrated PRIDE month virtually by inviting guest speakers and encouraging employees to share their Pride message and videos.

We had recently announced a 'Global Wellness Day' where all employees were given a day off to re-energize and spend time with their families. We organise meditation and yoga sessions for employees and

their families on a regular basis. Our internal Slack channel is constantly abuzz with initiatives like quizzes, poetry competitions etc.

The above-mentioned initiatives reflect PayPal's focus on fostering a strong, supportive culture for our people and their families.

### **How critical is the role of technology in the HR domain today? What are the latest HR-related technologies that have been implemented at PayPal?**

Over the past few years, technology has played a crucial role in transforming the HR function. It has moved from automating backend processes to providing real time data and insights. Companies across the world are adopting newer methods of digitizing HR practices and using a data-driven approach to make decisions around promotions, budget planning, compensation, team staffing etc.

The application of technologies like AI and ML will help create a workspace where every employee feels connected, thus enriching their overall experience. Moreover, these technologies have played a massive role in developing HRM programmes for organisations based on smart data. We are also leveraging technology to our advantage on how we communicate with engagement tools like Slido, Slack, workday etc.

### **What are the top three challenges confronting CHROs? How can they overcome them?**

These are difficult times and it is critical that we set up our employees for success. We must ensure that there is no loss in productivity, give them the required infrastructure, providing them with mental and emotional support and evaluate work models for employee engagement, wellness, and inclusion.

Another challenge we face is that of hiring high quality talent. The skill requirements and working models are changing every day. The larger issue is to enable people to keep abreast with new skills and ensure that we have a robust workforce that is constantly adapting to the changing expectation from a technology and skills standpoint.

The third challenge is change enablement – enabling the organisation and leadership to embrace the change and be a part of it. This could be around technology, business models, working models etc.

<https://hr.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/hrtech/technology-has-played-a-crucial-role-in-transforming-the-hr-function-jayanthi-vaideyanathan-paypal-india/77431037>

---

<https://newsroom.in.paypal-corp.com/transforming-the-HR-function>