

P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

Warm greetings to readers and fellow members of the Asian Association of Management Organizations (AAMO).

It is my utmost pleasure to present this issue of AAMO's newsletter – "Leading the Way" as the new President of AAMO for the term of 2022-2025. I would like to salute and give my heartiest appreciation to the Members of AAMO for their contribution to the Association. My special tribute is also paid to my predecessor, Mr Rajive Kaul, who led AAMO to remarkable achievements during his tenure, including guiding AAMO through the very tough global pandemic challenges we faced from 2019 to 2022.

After more than two years of the pandemic, the return to "normal" is less than confidently assured, with flare-ups of cases still occurring in various corners of the world, and businesses continuing to struggle. So, we must continue to live with COVID-19 and survive well in its persistent presence.

Through the course of surviving in the pandemic, our learning has certainly focused on the value of agility, creativity, and innovation in dealing with large scale crises. This issue of "Leading the Way" gives us further food for thought that might strengthen our crisis handling ability in many aspects that are not about agility and innovation

but about fundamental aspects of people and our human capital.

Our contributions from India, "De-to Re-Humanizing" explores how Industry 5.0 brings power back to the humans, while "Thoughtful Optimism" stresses the importance of optimistic thinking. An article from Australia and New Zealand on "How to recognize and treat workplace burnout" identifies four workplace burnout situations, their symptoms, and measures to deal with them; while "Quiet quitting: should we be curious or concerned about this emerging trend?" discusses the meaning of quiet quitting and its implications. Another contribution, from Macau, "Thinking in Patterns" explains how patterns organize information and influence receivers' understanding. "Spirituality and Work" contributed by Malaysia discusses how employees reconcile and integrate spirituality-driven life practices into work, while "Mapping the Future" from the Philippines highlights the takeaways from the MAP CEO Conference.

I do hope that you enjoy this issue of "Leading the Way" and look forward to your feedback and suggestions. Also, on behalf of AAMO, I would like to sincerely wish you all a rewarding 2023 filled with wellness, good fortune, and success in your own terms.



S K Cheong

*President
Asian Association of Management Organisations*

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DE-TO RE-HUMANISING

Industry 5.0 will focus on socio-environmental sustainability thereby bringing the power back into the hands of humans.

DR SINI V PILLAI, KERALA UNIVERSITY OF DIGITAL SCIENCES, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY AND
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In the past, manufacturing took place in small workshops with basic tools. The Industrial Revolution marked the transition to newer manufacturing processes in Great Britain, Continental Europe, and the United States. The steam engine, the age of science, mass production, and the rise of digital technology—known as IR1.0, IR2.0, IR3.0, and IR4.0—were the major Industrial Revolutions that changed the world.

IR1.0 was dominated by industries include mining, textiles, glass, and agriculture. Material cost and production time were impacted as demand was greater than supply; hence, there was great pressure on the lower working class. In IR 2.0, electricity allowed factories to develop modern production lines. Ford came to be known as the ‘father of the assembly line’ and ‘automotive mass manufacturing’. There was great economic growth with increase in productivity, but at the same time, unemployment increased as many factory workers were replaced by machines.

IR 3.0, also known as the Digital Revolution converted technology from Analog to Digital. The use of derived technologies—computers, microprocessors, cell phones, the internet, and the use of digital logic resulted in automation and mass production. Combination of physical assets and advanced digital technologies like Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), robots,

drones, autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, cloud computing, and more resulted in a more flexible, responsive and intelligent data driven system in the current era of IR 4.0. Now, IR 5.0 marks the return of humans wherein automation will not replace humans but assist in augmenting their irreplaceable value, offering a fair growth environment.

IR 5.0: Power back to the humans

Quoting Elon Musk, “Humans are underrated.” Musk blamed excessive automation to be a mistake. Humans are the soul of any business, and human creativity, perception, and emotion cannot be replaced by robots. IR 5.0 explores the concept of humans working alongside robots and smart machines, where robots and machines are helping humans to inculcate the personal touch of humans by way of creative, perception, and emotions into automation and efficiency. To make it clear, ‘cobots’ or collaborative robots work amongst humans, and respond in real-time rather than the pre-programmed and isolated manner that industrial robots generally operate on.

Boston Dynamics, one of the pioneers in cobots, has developed Spot and Stretch who are helping industries with dangerous work zones to help humans with data regarding safety checks. Spot is working at Hyundai as a safety inspector. AI-powered robots have already found their space for book arrangement, sorting, retrieval, material handling, and inventory at NY Public Library, Temasek Polytechnic Library, UMKC Library,

University of Chicago Library, Shanghai Library, and so on.

Robbie can scan more than 32,000 books per day at Temasek Library and Bobbie is a social robot interacting with students and guests in delivering newspapers, magazines.

Shanghai library has a humanoid robot which will interact with students and clarify their doubts. The application of the humanoid robot Pepper at libraries in Germany and Switzerland promotes the idea of the library as a place to meet and work together in a pleasing, friendly atmosphere. Humanoid robots will soon find their prominent space in Indian libraries too. The future is that promising with technology.

Additionally, AI-based systems have greater opportunities in robotic surgery and a surgeon has an opportunity to carry out the procedures with telepresence. Hyper customization by building technological platforms capable of expanding to any size and scale offers maximum possible product/service customization flexibility to every customer in their requirements of pricing and convenience. The value of human intuition and associated problem-solving capabilities is irreplaceable even in a manufacturing concern, as there are many tasks that are executed efficiently and safely because of human judgment. There would be reduction in energy use, water use, emissions, waste generation, incorporating life cycle analysis to examine fully the environmental impact of different activities. Interactive products

The value of human intuition and associated problem-solving capabilities is irreplaceable even in a manufacturing concern, as there are many tasks that are executed efficiently and safely because of human judgment.





provide a 3D view of the product and give a user feel to the consumer guiding them on its usage and features in an interactive transparent way.

With the onset of the pandemic, remote and hybrid workplaces became a reality. The four-day week, one of the most powerful applications of human centric IR5.0, aided developing and developed countries in effective workforce mobilization for productivity attainment and vanishing extended hours at the workplace. There were fewer redundant tasks, unproductive meetings, costly consultant hours, expensive on-site expenses; surprisingly all with an increased productivity angle to it. Work-life balance seemed to have been achieved.

Trade unions across continents are advocating the four-day week and some countries are already there, with Belgium having favoured it. The United Kingdom has followed suit by introducing the four-day working week starting June 2022. Microsoft, in 2019 experimented with the four-day workweek concept and that had a tremendous impact on their productivity. As IR 4.0 is still on, the characteristics of IR5.0 will focus on productivity requiring all to think and do differently which require the education system to run beyond degrees to deal with the challenges of sustainability and resilience for human centric interaction experiences. A responsive supply chain is always sensitive to the needs of the customer and does not depend on a physical order.

Blockchain technology is being used to seamlessly collaborate and maintain a trustworthy network between various suppliers, payment platforms, and inventory storage. Walmart is one of the biggest retailers who are successfully using

blockchain technology in their supply chain management. Quick deliveries, customer satisfaction, accommodating seasonal, and open communication lines as agile as a business culture for rapidly changing customer demands by combining cognitive (human) and cyber physical (artificial) intelligent systems highlights the key characteristics of IR 5.0 supply chains. Smart organ printing, which is a 3D bioprinting and tissue engineering, collaborates in the making of live tissues using 'bio-ink'. This technology greatly helps in the formation of tissue-like or cell-like structure, forming the basis for regenerative technology, where severed or amputated limbs/body parts may be regenerated to suit the body intended.

No doubt IR 5.0 is human centric with focus on socio environmental sustainability and brings the back into the hands of humans. Industry 5.0 will bridge this gap to create future systems and services that focus on social and environmental aspects utilizing data and technological advancements from Industry 4.0

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THOUGHTFUL OPTIMISM

Blind optimism does not help solve real problems; practical thinking during setting attainable goals does.

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'Be positive', is the most widely used terminology in organisations, hackneyed by the ginger group of personnel who are perpetually besieged with bottom lines, targets, EBITDA, incessant meetings, gross margins, competition, conversion rates, etc. The phrase finds its solace in the mess of convoluted aspirations of every employee who visualises climbing the corporate ladder faster to the celestial city of success and growth but seldom arrives mid-way to find the lurking disappointments in low appraisal ratings or to the chagrin of the boss's reproof. Positivity coaches (a recently conceived neologism for honchos who give pep talks in return for huge sums from the corporate treasury) harp on the magical power of thinking positively for employee growth. Most of them, positivity coaches draw their inspiration from the nuances of positivity made known to the world by Norman Vincent Peale, Martin Seligman, Napoleon Hill, etc.



The Power of Positive Thinking, a book released in 1952 by Peale, is the very first treatise on positivity and visualising positivity in every ordeal to make life better. Later, the idea of positivity gained traction in the times of Martin Seligman, particularly in the '90s, who amalgamated the notion of positivity and science and deemed it positive psychology. Recently, these ideas formed the foundation for proponents of positive thinking like Anthony Robbins, Ken Blanchard, Wayne Dyer, Rhonda Byrne, etc. Rhonda Byrne took the concepts to an extreme when she wrote the best-selling book *The Secret*, and asserted that having optimistic thoughts was the secret ingredient that would ensure success in practically any circumstance. It was everything anyone required and thus success would follow ideas of success, and failure would always follow the thoughts of failure.

But does the factor of positive thinking affect employees' efficiency? Do visualizing positive outcomes lead to desired results? Is positive thinking a panacea for all organizational problems or is there any other tested way? Let's find out

Rethinking positive thinking

Unfortunately for the proponents of positivity, most of the research in this area indicates that the effectiveness of positive thinking is substantially exaggerated. Dr Gabrielle Oettingen, Professor of Psychology,

University of New York, has conducted in-depth research in this area. He has spent more than 20 years researching this topic and has found that unlike what we think, pleasant imaginations do not always help us accomplish our objectives. Positive thinking really saps our motivation and weakens our determination to complete the necessary activities.

Dr Oettingen critically reexamines positive thinking and provides a more helpful, nuanced view of motivation based on strong empirical data in her concise book, *Rethinking Positive Thinking: Inside the New Science of Motivation*. According to conventional thinking, inspirational dreams should ideally always motivate us to take action.

Dr Oettingen tests this by enlisting a group of undergraduate college students and dividing them into two groups at random. She advised the first group to imagine that the upcoming week will be a knock out: fantastic grades, amazing parties, happy times, etc., and asked them to visualise positive outcomes. Students in the second group were urged to write all of their ideas and daydreams about the upcoming week—both good and terrible ones—calculative neutral visualisations.

Surprisingly, compared to those who were directed to create a neutral dream, the students who were told to think positively felt far less motivated and productive. It turns out that blind optimism does not inspire individuals; rather, as Dr Oettingen demonstrates in a series of analytical studies, it fosters a feeling of ease and complacency. It is as if when we daydream or fantasize about something we want, our minds are duped into thinking we have already accomplished the objective. Studies reveal that simply daydreaming about a desire decreases blood pressure, whereas thinking about the same wish and imagining not receiving it raises blood pressure, suggesting that there may be a physiological foundation for this impact. Daydreaming could make you feel better, but it saps your energy and makes you less ready to take action. It, also, puts our culture's unwavering belief in the docks that, 'if you can dream it, you can do it'. It appears that the key to accomplishing your objectives is to be aware of both your desires and the actual obstacles that you and the outside world erect in the odyssey to success and happiness.

In another experiment conducted by Dr Oettingen, two groups of obese persons were assigned the task

of reducing weight. One group was urged to see themselves as a leaner version of themselves and to think only positive thoughts about losing weight and the other group was asked to visualise practically about the outcome. The findings were startling after a year. The majority of optimistic thinkers dropped the least amount of weight. Why? Again, visualising success might make you feel good and accomplished before you've really achieved it, decreasing the desire to put effort into it. Thus, People fare badly in terms of having real achievement the more enthusiastically they fantasize and daydream about their future success.



Impeding positivity

Researchers forthrightly deny that simply thinking positively does any good and is almost toxic for our personal growth. Dr Susan David is a recognised Harvard Medical School psychologist and one of the top management thinkers. An expert on emotions and the author of the book *Emotional Agility*, she explains what toxic positivity is, how it appears in our culture, and how we as people and leaders may combat it. 'A tyranny of positivity', as Dr Susan calls it, toxic positivity is the refusal to let ourselves or others feel the complete spectrum of emotions, especially the unpleasant ones. When you are an individual, you can appear to be convincing yourself that everything is OK even when it is not. It can appear that you are experiencing an unpleasant emotion, but instead of letting the emotion go, you decide to focus on all the positive aspects of the situation. We have been led to believe that doing this will make us stronger, but

Dr Susan claims that the hypothesis is false and the reverse is true. This is the case because if we do not deal with the unpleasant emotion, it will not go away and the issue will not be resolved.

If we experience tough feelings while interacting with a toxically positive culture, we start to think there is something wrong with ourselves. Toxic positivity sounds like individuals in our life telling us desuetude phrases like “Keep your head up” and “Be optimistic” that do not address the real issues when we are trying to understand our unpleasant emotions. When asked how they got to where they are today, successful individuals or those who have experienced objectively challenging circumstances may respond, “I got here because I embraced optimism and believed in myself,” which does not elucidate the complete picture. The superficiality of the narrative makes everyone believe that embracing optimism shall make them stand out or help them become star performers which does not happen really.

Embracing realism

What is the ideal way then? Thinking positively does not help and people seldom think negatively about any prospect unless they are very sure about the outcome, which is a rarity in itself. Some of the critics of positive thinking urge individuals to stop talking positively and focus only on difficulties or hindrances that lie on the way. But this adjustment is too immoderate. According to studies, this tactic is no more effective than having positive fantasies. The best strategy is the hybrid strategy that blends optimistic thinking with ‘reality’ which works wonders according to the research. Dr Gabrielle suggests a technique she calls mental contrasting, which entails first imagining the ideal goal and then the difficulties or impractical barriers that stand in the way of that goal. Gabrielle reasoned that seeing the challenges right after the good fantasy would counteract its calming and dissociation effects and motivate individuals to action. Dr Gabrielle conducted a study and asked participants to select a goal for either their personal or professional lives. She divided them into four groups and asked them to rate how feasible they believed their aims were.



The first group engaged in mental contrasting, where they first entertained optimistic fantasies before considering the challenges, they might encounter. The second group solely engaged in optimistic fantasies. The third group simply focused on the real obstacles. The fourth group had a reverse contrast where they first thought about the practical hurdles and then they had their optimistic fantasies. Dr Gabrielle has discovered that people with attainable goals, which is group number one felt more energized and motivated to work towards them. The idea is not to disparage positivity. It is very helpful in various potential scenarios, but it has to be balanced with prudence. If employees combine optimism with a clear grasp of the challenges to be overcome and the work to be done in the organization, then they shall perform better than the rest who engage only in positive visualization.

Therefore, it appears that today our workforce requires a right union of optimism and realism, and the idea is not old. In the 5th century BC, Lord Buddha endorsed the same idea with a different connotation called ‘*Madhyam-Pratipada*’ (the middle way). The middle way seems to be the only working way for our aspiring personnel who seek achievement amidst all the agony. It worked for Lord Buddha a long time back who sought nirvana and there is no reason it will not work for our burgeoning workforce who seek a ‘corporate nirvana’ of their own.

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HOW TO RECOGNISE AND TREAT WORKPLACE BURNOUT

By Michelle Gander, CMgr FIML

Hheavy workloads have been the norm for staff in corporate Australia and the public sector for years; the ongoing debate concerning work-life balance shows that. Then along comes Covid-19, and burnout seems to be everywhere in the workplace now, alongside people re-evaluating what's important to them.

Let's take a step back for a minute and define what we're talking about here. Most staff at times have felt under stress and overwhelmed; that's the nature of work in the 21st Century. However, individuals have mostly managed this workplace stress without it pushing into a more debilitating syndrome that we call "burnout".

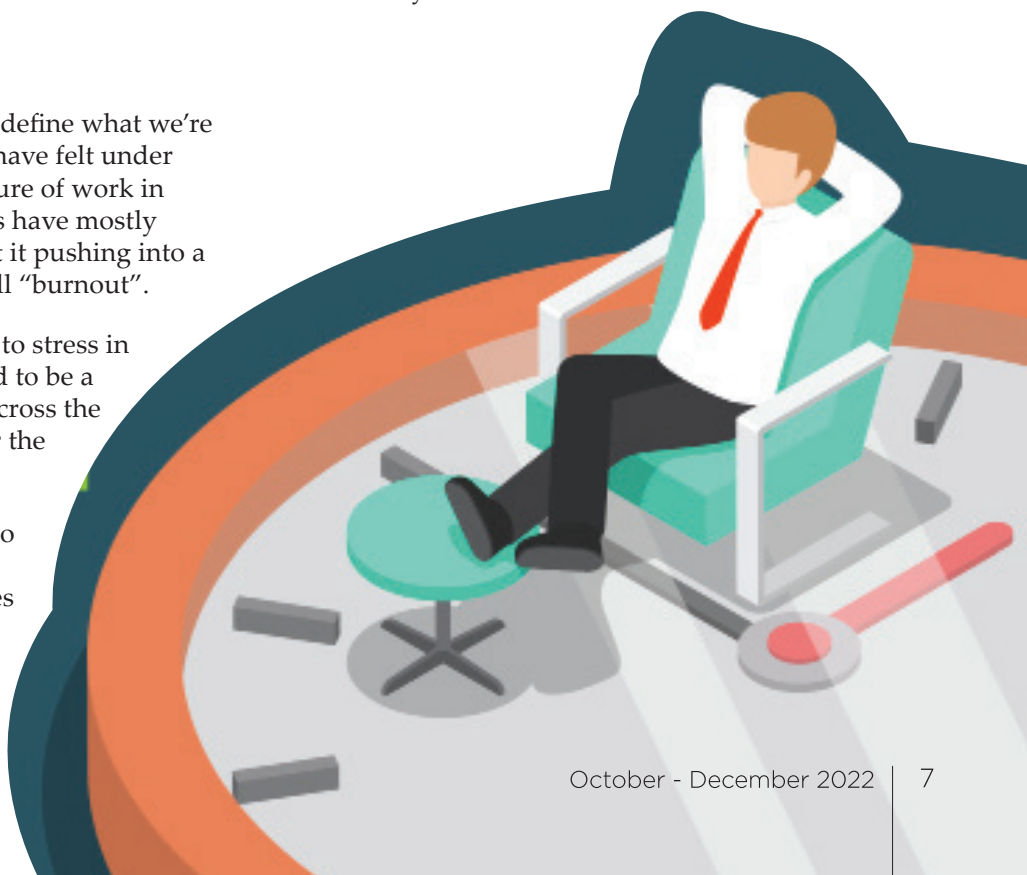
Burnout was coined as a term separate to stress in the USA in the 1970s and has continued to be a workplace issue that is now reported across the globe. It has grown in significance over the last few years for several reasons.

The first that hit us was having access to digital work tools in the home through the now ubiquitous use of smart phones to access email, Teams and so on.

This ready access to digital tools does improve work flexibility but for many it blurs the lines of personal and professional life. How many times do you hear the ping of a new message and feel the need to respond to it immediately?

Second is the move to less secure work. Even those individuals with 'good' jobs can often work with the unspoken threat of redundancy over their heads.

Third is the pace of change, the often-overwhelming amount of work, and the need to make decisions quickly in a fast-paced environment, which can all lead to stress and eventually burnout.





Fourth, and the most current, is the impact of Covid-19. Organisations had to, or chose to, re-structure the workforce. We all needed to work from home to a lesser or greater extent. A consequence of this is missing the social cues for coffee/lunch break and home time. How many times have you found yourself absorbed in a task only to discover it is 2pm and you haven't had lunch? Additionally, some of us had to act as a full-time teaching assistant for children as they attended school online. All this additional pressure – which was on top of the general feeling of too much work and too little time – pushed many people into burnout. Women are reported to have borne the brunt of this additional work as they carried out most of the labour associated with looking after children in the home during this time, whilst also trying to hold down their own work commitments (Smith et al., 2022).

This type of burnout at its worst can lead to death – Japan has a specific term for death by overwork, 'karoshi'.

Recognising burnout

Burnout is now identified as a genuine occupational issue and included in the International Classification of Diseases. It has become a global workplace phenomenon and research has identified burnout in various occupations including teaching, nursing, academia, medics, and other healthcare workers. The following factors may contribute to job burnout (Mayo Clinic, 2021):

- You have a heavy workload and work long hours
- You struggle with work-life balance
- You work in a helping profession, such as health care
- You feel you have little or no control over your work

Burnout can also be brought on by personality traits and mindsets such as perfectionism, pessimism, needing to be in control, and feeling unable to say 'no'. Of course, some of these traits can also be triggered by the workplace, so we do need to understand if being unable to say 'no' for example is coming from someone's

personality or from the understanding of the workplace environment where saying no is not accepted.

The symptoms that have been identified with burnout include (WHO, 2019):

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- reduced professional efficacy (for example, feeling unsuccessful or ineffective at your job)

What can managers do to help?

If you think you recognise that your staff are starting to show signs of burnout, what can we do as managers to help? At an individual level we should immediately discuss the situation and help the person put in place coping mechanisms such as providing some additional cover for specific tasks, re-distributing work to other team members, suggesting time off (as long as the work doesn't pile up of course), and counselling support through an EAP (employer assistance program). This is a short-term intervention to immediately provide relief but there is also more we can do. This, of course, will take more time.

One of the contributing factors of burnout is poor job design. So, we can start to evaluate people's particular job descriptions to determine if they can be improved. Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Theory laid the foundation of job design that we use to this day. According to this theory there are five characteristics of good job design: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and job-based feedback. If we can re-design jobs to have as much of these requirements as possible, this should result in fewer feelings of burnout.

What can individuals do?

There are also activities that individuals can do to work through burnout and come out the other side, and to ensure that they do not fall into the burnout trap again.

1. Always take your annual leave. Everyone needs time to recharge their batteries and taking the leave owed to you or making time in your own business cycle to take leave, is critically important for your health.
2. Learn to set boundaries. Understand what is important to you in your work and career and then learn to say 'no' to requests that don't meet your core needs. It sounds easy, and I recognise it isn't always, but it is something that can be practised, and it gets easier with practice.
3. Accept the things that aren't in your control. As employees or even business owners there are plenty of external influences that aren't under our control. Learning how to not let them stress you out is key – identify the issue, accept it, and move on to something you can control.
4. Take regular exercise. Yes, I know that for nearly every ailment exercise is prescribed as a solution, but exercise has been proven to lower stress hormones, which are a key component of burnout. Even a short daily walk outside is enough to lower cortisol levels (Hunter et. al., 2019).
5. Sleep. Getting your 7-8 hours of sleep a night sounds like a luxury when you're so busy, but guess what, you will feel far less stressed if you do get the right amount of sleep. Sleep is so crucial that even a slight deprivation can affect short-term memory, judgement and mood and long-term sleep issues result in high blood pressure, obesity and an increased likelihood of dementia. Research has shown that up to 45 per cent of Australian adults do not get enough good quality sleep (Adams et al., 2016).
6. If you have work tools such as Teams or email on your phone disable notifications outside of your standard working hours so you don't feel obliged to quickly check that message.

Burnout doesn't suddenly happen, there are plenty of warning signs before we get to a crisis state. As managers we should be on the look-out for red flags that might mean that individuals are heading to being burnt out and take appropriate actions before that point.

If you need more information about managing your digital life, check out Smart Work.



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- URL Slug:** /workplace-burnout-recognise-and-treat-it



QUIET QUITTING: SHOULD WE BE CURIOUS OR CONCERNED ABOUT THIS EMERGING TREND?

By Anna Hebron and Sara Keli

In amongst the viral recipes and endless dancing videos, TikTok in 2022 has also given us quiet quitting.

Is this just another social media trend? Or is it something managers and leaders should be worried about? Whether you're curious, confused or concerned about the impact of quiet quitting, we take a deeper look at the trend and the forces behind it.

Quiet quitting explained

At a high level, quiet quitting is when a person stays in their job but only does the minimum requirements of the role. They start work at 9am, log off at 5pm and don't take on any work in addition to what is absolutely required. It's a withdrawal of sorts with the individual stepping away from expectations of going above and beyond.

Anna Hebron, Managing Director of Anna Hebron & Associates Pty Ltd explains that [Gallup employee engagement research](#) might have some insight into the prevalence of quiet quitting.

"The Gallup research shows that about 20% of employees are actively engaged," she says. "A similar number is actively disengaged. This type of disengagement is very toxic and can spread within the workplace. That leaves close to 60% of employees who sit in the middle. They are neither engaged nor

disengaged. This is where we tend to find the quiet quitters."

In Australia and New Zealand, the Gallup research shows that engagement is lower than in many other regions across the globe. Anna says that employee engagement has been declining over the last 10 years.

"Compounding that decline is the pandemic and this other concept of the great resignation," explains Anna. "People are reshuffling and rethinking work life balance. People are searching for more. They want more meaning, more connection and more purpose. Quiet quitting can come about when they aren't getting that."

So what?

Is this rejection of expectations a bad thing? Or can organisations and employees learn and benefit from quiet quitting?

Anna says that there are pros and cons for both individuals and organisations.

"There was lots of evidence that people took on more during the pandemic, particularly with remote working," she says. "People were working from home and really didn't have that demarcation between work and home. In a way, stepping back and reclaiming some time is not necessarily a bad thing."

“As leaders, we want people to be healthy. Working 24/7 is not sustainable. It can lead to burnout, disengagement and other mental health issues. It’s a positive thing for an employee to want to reclaim more time and balance.”

On the flip side, Anna says that quiet quitting can have implications for an employee’s future career progression and prospects if they are disconnected or disengaged.

“It’s a double edged sword,” she explains. “It can depend on the motivation behind it and how it’s perceived. Are they disengaged? Are they checking out? Or do they simply want to shake off the expectations of the corporate hustle culture?”

What employees want

If employees are rejecting traditional models of corporate culture, what is it that they are seeking instead? Anna says that employees – particularly younger employees – are searching for more than the traditional employment contract. They want more than to be paid for doing their job.

“People want to be valued,” she says. “They want to bring their whole selves to work and be appreciated for who they are. They want to be able to do work with purpose and meaning. They want to know that their contribution is actually doing something and creating value.”

But is this also good for business? Interestingly, [research by The Corporate Rebels](#) uncovered the characteristics that define a fun organisation. These are factors like prioritising purpose and values over profit, supportive leadership styles and radical transparency across the organisation.

“When an organisation embodies these ‘fun’ characteristics, they are able to more effectively engage employees,” explains Anna. “From there, innovation goes through the roof. And with it, so too does their profit.”

For young people, there is a level of uncertainty around their future. Many of the jobs that exist today won’t in the future. Automation is increasing and they are conscious of that. They are also more conscious about environmental issues and social responsibility than the generations before them. This is also playing into the shift in what they are looking for from work.

“Money isn’t as important for people now as it has been in the past,” adds Anna. “Flexibility is now more important. People want to go to the gym or do their volunteering or fulfil their caring responsibilities while still engaging in work. Learning and development is also important so we need to allow people space and time to continue learning. The more we can embrace and foster the concept of curiosity and continuous learning in the organisation the better.”

Stepping into the future

Is quiet quitting something to view as simply a passing trend? Or is it an opportunity? Anna says that ultimately it’s about upskilling leaders to have quality conversations with their employees.

“This isn’t just a once a year tick-in-the-box performance conversation,” she says.

“It’s actually about having really regular and meaningful connected conversations, particularly in remote environments. We have a duty of care to ensure that our employees are heard, respected and that we’re offering them a way to find purpose and meaning at work.”

People are now looking for a different relationship at work. They want a relationship that’s more connected, more personal and one that speaks to their values.

Remote and hybrid working has been embraced. There’s more flexibility and there’s also more opportunity for people to create the roles and jobs that they want.

“Position descriptions are often outdated from day one in a role,” says Anna. “This leads to a disconnect when people say that they aren’t working in their job description. How can we leverage that and give people an opportunity to create jobs they love and they’re good at? Of course, there’s a governance element and the role needs to sit within the deliverables and outcomes of the team and organisation. Outside of that, there is a huge need and opportunity to tap into people’s individuality and individual capabilities to really get the best out of people.”

Anna says that if nothing else, it’s an opportunity for organisations to step back and make an honest assessment of how they are connecting with their employees. Quiet quitting may be a social media trend but it’s worth looking across the organisation and actively finding ways to increase engagement and connection.





THINKING IN PATTERNS

By: **Brian Tang**, *Corporate Training Consultant*

Alan was a business analyst of a management consulting firm. His boss, Melina, has tasked him to conduct an analysis on the industry trend for a client and provide recommendations. Alan was a hardworking guy. He spent days and nights researching the related information and compiled a report. However, Melina was not impressed when he gave a verbal presentation of his findings. Her facial expression signaled impatience and annoyance. Half way through the presentation, Melina asked Alan to stop and come back when he has “revised” the report and presentation. She quickly went off to another meeting. Left alone in the meeting room, Alan was scratching his head – What went wrong? What did his boss want?

Alan’s case is hardly uncommon in the workplace. When we were in Alan’s shoe, we tried to provide a lot of seemingly valuable information to others only to receive a puzzling face. When we assumed Melina’s role and tried to digest a sea of data and facts, we had a hard time distilling it into something meaningful. More often than not, it has to do with how the information is organized. Let’s face it – we are all busy at work. When we are at the receiver end (Melina), we want to receive information in digestible and easy-to-understand formats. We simply don’t have the patience or the extra cognitive power to make sense of a large amount of information. That explains Melina’s frustration – Alan provided a lot of details, valuable or not, but not in a way that can be easily absorbed. In other words, the presenter, Alan, must be able to organize the information in a way that can be understood by the receivers. In this article, I want to talk about how to organize information in patterns.

Patterns are information organized in a regular, predictable, and universally understandable formats. For examples, kids at a young age have played sorting games in which they are given a bunch of different shapes: triangles, circles, squares. They need to sort them into categories – putting all triangles in one pile, circles in another pile, and so on. That’s an activity that trains the pattern recognition power of the kids’ brains. As our brains get developed, adults are able to recognize patterns that are more complicated and conceptual. In fact, many IQ tests are based on pattern recognition abilities.

Human brains love patterns. When we are able to find structure in the information coming to our brains, “near-magical results ensue. We no longer need to remember a mountain of data; we need to only recall one simple law”¹. Put simply, our brains work better in patterns. For the presenter, thinking in patterns organizes our thoughts. It facilitates logical reasoning and helps us think more clearly. It also helps us communicate in a memorable and understandable manner. Patterns, by definition, divide information into buckets. It helps the receivers better able to grasp the ideas and increase the possibility of buy-in.

It looks like Alan can use patterns to organize his findings and make it easy for his boss to understand. I will introduce a few common patterns and use Alan as a case study to illustrate.

Pattern #1: Internal and External

This is one of the most common patterns in business. Information can be divided into factors internal and external to the company. For example, Alan could bucket the findings of his research into factors that are internal to the client’s firm (profit margin, human capital, product turnover, stock price) and external to the company (industry trend, economic situation, competitors’ offerings). The famous SWOT analysis tool is essentially an extension of the Internal VS. External pattern. The Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors, while the Opportunities and Threats represent external factors. When data is presented this way, it instantly gets easier to digest.

Pattern #2: Past, Present, Future

While the Internal VS. External pattern is related to the “space”, this pattern is concerned about the “time”. Information can be organized across different time horizons. For example, Alan could compare his client’s performance in relation to the industry in the past, present and expected future. When data is presented along the time horizon and augmented by visual graphs, we can often discover trends that might be indicative to the future. When you have data points that stretch different time horizons, consider using this pattern.

Pattern #3: Level 1, 2, 3

Another way to bucket information is to invent layers by which you sort the data. Generally, you may call it Level 1, 2, and 3, but in reality, you would tailor it to the context of your situation. For instance, Alan wanted to recommend a training course in blockchain technology to the client’s Finance department. Staff members of the Finance department will attend a series of self-paced E-learning course on a proprietary platform. When he stated the benefits of this learning program, he might say:

For the individual staff, this program is a much-needed professional development opportunity that enhances their expertise.



¹ Bor, Daniel. (2012). The Science of Consciousness Explains Our Insatiable Search for Meaning. New York: Basic Books

For the Finance department, this program levels the playing field and ensures everyone speaks the same language.

For the company, this program is a critical first step to being a blockchain-ready organization.

Basically, Alan bucketed the benefits of his recommendation into three layers, which in this case, pertains to the individuals, department, and organization. You can customize the three layers to suit your needs. For example: Local, Regional, Global; Family, City, Country; Teenagers, Adults, Elderly; Body, Mind, Spirit. The possibility is endless. However, keep the number of layers at three. It is a magic number and people can easily remember buckets of three.

Pattern #4: Why, How, What

In his bestseller “Start with Why”, Simon Sinek argued that the best leaders in the world all communicated with the same pattern. They started by telling the Why – Why we do what we do. “Why” is the cause and the fuel that drive what we do. Then they told the “How” – by what means do they achieve the Why. The “What” – product and service offerings come at last. This is a powerful pattern. Not only did Sinek offer us with the actual buckets (Why, How, What) but he also told us the sequence the buckets should be presented. Alan can leverage on Sinek’s proposition by categorizing his recommendation in Why/How/What buckets. For instance:

(Why) Cryptocurrency is gaining traction in the industry. Our competitors are already on the move. We are falling behind in this arena. We stand to lose some market share if we don’t catch up.

(How) We must first beef up the blockchain and cryptocurrency knowledge of our Finance staffs. Then we need to prototype small projects to test the water.

(What) To get started, I recommend that the Finance staffs attend a self-pace “Blockchain 101” training program.

By presenting information in this manner, Sinek argued that we speak directly to the part of the brain that makes decisions. The clearly labelled buckets help the receiver digest your information in bite-size chunks.

If Alan’s proposal contains a plan of action, he could add the “When” and “Who” to the bucket list, outlining who will be involved and by when things ought to get done.

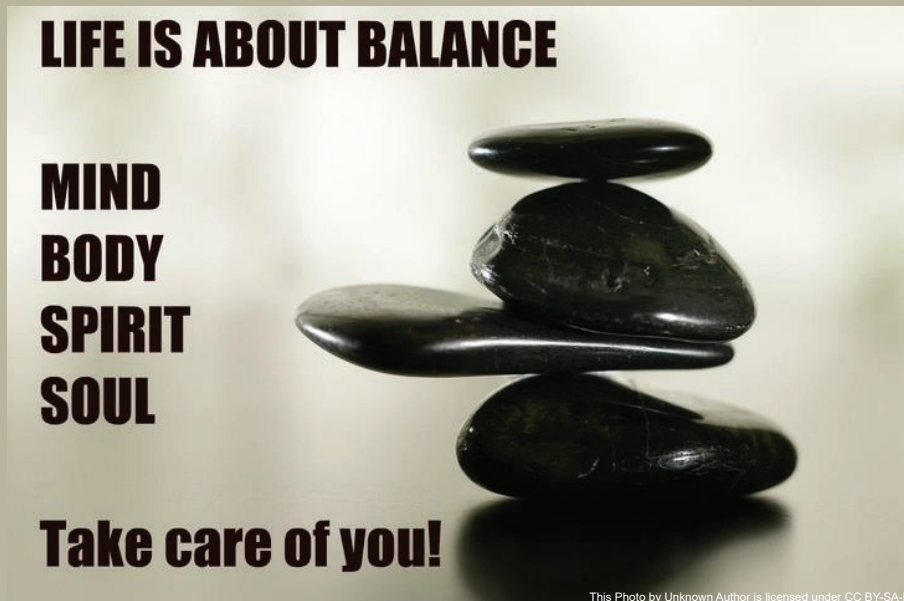
We have seen a few typical patterns to organize information and I believe we are only scratching the surface. The number of patterns you can use is endless. However, if you struggle to begin, there is a “Master Key” of patterns that almost work in any circumstances:

1. xxx
2. xxx
3. xxx

Bucket your information in bullet points can help divide it in bite-size chunks, even if there are no clear relationship between each bullet points. This is less than ideal but better than not bucketing information at all. If Alan had organized his report and presentation in some kinds of patterns, his ideas may have been better received by his busy and impatient boss.



² Sinek, Simon. (2009). Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action. Portfolio.



SPIRITUALITY AND WORK

Murali Dharan, *Empoweris, Sydney, Australia*

“I slept and dreamt that life was joy, I awoke and saw that life was duty, I acted and behold, duty was joy”.

- Rabindranath Tagore

Ideally, we could and should find joy and happiness at work, in execution of our duties.

Unfortunately, many find it challenging to subscribe to work as purposeful, meaningful pursuit in their lives, providing any sense of joy and happiness.

Recent Gallup research shows that 70% of employees, consider themselves to be disengaged at work with 60% emotionally detached and 19% feeling miserable in their work experiences. These are disturbing trends and only likely to get worse given the global turmoils.

We do spend more of our life, certainly half or more, working.

‘The time one spends working should be joyfully and purposefully spent, contributions should be a source of meaning and fulfillment and social interactions

should be a significant source of community and connectedness.’ argues Mr. Paul Gibbons in his recent book, ‘Spirituality of Work and Leadership’

This raises an important question. How can we bring more alignment of our purpose, perhaps through our spirituality, that we recognise, practice, and positively experience in our private lives, into our professional lives, so we can make a difference at work and in our life.

Challenges of functional world

As we spend more and more of our lives, thinking and striving for success in the competitive world, how do we relate them to our innate search for higher purpose? How do we reconcile and integrate our spirituality-driven life practices such as meditation, prayers, compassion, devotion, giving, serving the community, oneness with nature, contemplative thinking, renunciation, mindfulness and other beliefs and even long held ancient wisdom, with those of new-world corporate practices such as working from home (wfh), fast-fail, quick-wins, agility, resilience in the age of disruptions, online gig-work, digital loyalty and advocacy in gaining new customer experiences etc. Could our spiritual resilience support and sustain a better physical, emotional, and mental or even digital resilience expected of us in this ultra-competitive climate of work? Could critical corporate



disciplines of tomorrow, gain from our spiritual traits of yesterday?

Yet, our desire to keep our lives and spirituality private, remains. As more and more of our corporate life overlaps our private lives, we are compelled to perform across times, while sacrificing our spirituality, to the world of material wealth, driven by targets, financial results and short-term gratifications. In this functional world, we are challenged and rewarded, for our performance. We dedicate our body, mind, and sense complexes to excel in our chosen specialty. We seek and we fight for recognition, often competing with our best friends and partners, to gain name and fame and hopefully a place at the higher end of the social strata. We identify ourselves with this functional world, with titles, power, and positions, unleashing our ego, while subordinating our human core. Often, we fail, we are rejected, our ego is bruised, and many disappointments turn into a life of unhappiness. Until we resign or retired into an acceptance of reality. Our families and our communities offer solace, and we rediscover ourselves and our higher purpose, once again, relying on our innate spiritual and human core strengths.

Realisation of human qualities

Increasingly, corporations recognise this alienation at work (for example, steps to understand and mitigate 'great-resignations') and striving to bring about greater meaning and purpose in their corporate strategies, to bring about an alignment and thereby bring about more happiness and harmony at work.

Smart companies recognise that their employees know how to balance being professional with being human and thereby stay engaged and happy, both at work and at home. It is a critical balance of body, mind, and spirit across work and living spaces.

There is no doubt that being-human is fundamental to our success as professionals. Success at work cannot compromise being-human. Now that the boundaries of work vs home, career vs family, success vs happiness are overlapping more than ever, our spiritual vs functional needs and experiences are also becoming mutually inclusive.

Purposeful engagement

Studies have shown that motivation for employees come from a sense of purpose, meaning of life and work. Higher purpose defines us, our very real existence. Who are we? What are we doing? Purpose brings a meaning and a sense of direction to where and why we are heading, with a visionary sense of intention. It is far reaching, a steady goal or alignment, in which we happen to function every day.

“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” — Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Spirituality is the overall reality of who we are and everything physical or energetic is a part of that reality. So, duties can be performed sincerely in selfless, spiritual attitude, with purpose. We can experience life as a spiritual beings and, as humans, we can learn and evolve and grow.

Increasingly alignment of individual purpose with corporate purpose is sought by employees, across the demographic spectrum, given the increasing knowledge of and impact of climate change, preservation of nature, diversity, and happiness of all people. Employers are also defining their organisational purpose beyond narrow boundaries of profit, process, productivity to include larger planet and people issues. ESG, diversity, inclusivity, compassion, charity and global peace are elements of higher purpose in which humans are taking a deliberate stand, whether in private lives or professional lives. This brings the alignment with employee-employer expectations. By having a clear, over-arching purpose under which all employees are motivated to perform helps create better results and greater harmony. This helps improve customer experience and facilitates better employee engagements leading to overall happiness at workplace.

Duty, as part of wholeness in life, brings joy and the joy of duty brings success to the organisation and the communities in which we operate and ultimately to global peace and harmony.

“Mapping the Future” Column in INQUIRER – October 17, 2022



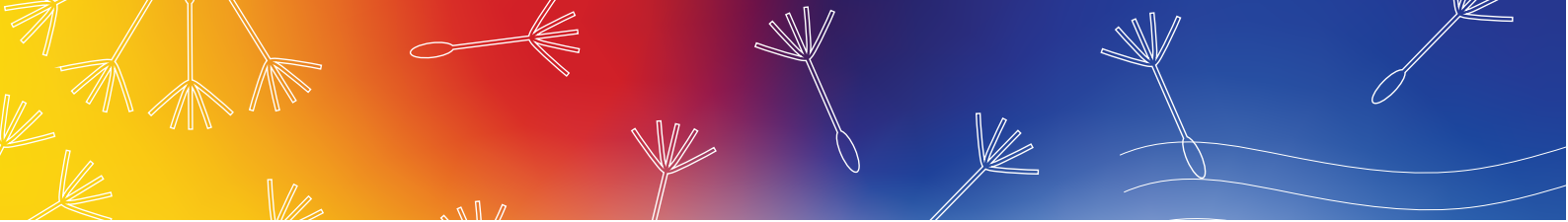
Takeaways from the MAP CEO Conference

Junie S. del Mundo

The global industry has faced significant setbacks because of the ongoing pandemic but the most important thing here is that our speakers and guests for the September 13, 2022 MAP International CEO Conference on “THE WINS OF CHANGE: Thriving in a World of In-Betweens” have provided us with insights on how best we can move forward, an overarching theme here is being agile and adaptable.

In our first session, Mr. Mark Koziel of Allinial Global provided us with a purview on how to manage the blurring lines in a hybrid work setup. Pivotal changes in the workplace, in efforts to address widespread employee burnout, has led to a flexible approach towards management, such as listening to employees’ preference for a flexible working model, and how likely organizations are putting talent at risk when full on-site work is implemented.

Mr. Koziel also touched on how technology, automation, and outsourcing can affect organizational changes. As he stated, technology by itself cannot fix all our problems, but it can definitely help if used and managed well; especially if proper guidance and training opportunities are provided to the emerging workforce. His advice in establishing and implementing a responsive hybrid work setup through empowering employees by collaborating on the right strategy and taking note of the best practices that have been raised by those already working under remote setups are a welcome value added to our ongoing conversation on future-facing working environments. Issues on staffing,



which has since plagued businesses long before the pandemic, can also benefit from these points raised by Mr. Koziel through technology, automation, and outsourcing.

If we remember to make sure that the culture surrounding a hybrid workforce is healthy, then the Philippine business landscape is on its way to creating a more resilient workforce. We now must also evolve our approach and make the most of our people in the best ways that we can.

While Mr. Koziel touched on managing change through business strategies, the second session led by Mr. Stephen CuUnjieng gave us insight into viewing the changed business landscape with a new lens, one that fits well with the challenges that were posed by the pandemic. He posited that the last time that the economy took a backseat in being the primary driver was in World War 2 and that this is the first induced recession in our lifetime.

So given these items, we are now posed with questions on how you approach an instance such as the pandemic - what separates companies that sink to the bottom versus those that ride the high waves?

Mr. CuUnjieng showed that being proactive, through strategizing, planning, and building, has created increased business resilience in the face of crises. Instead of basic responses to events, those who have put sound strategies in place have brought their companies through exceptionally difficult times such as the pandemic. Proper planning, instead of merely responding to events, has also proven effective not just in the private sector, but also for government processes as demonstrated by his presentation. Lastly, taking the time and effort to build on businesses, instead of having a trading mindset, will maximize opportunities for improvement in both our individual firms and the national economy.

All in all, we see that to succeed, we cannot just rely on what our strategy is and how successfully it is executed - we must also take into account all other factors that do not stay the same - thus our plans must be nurtured, adapted; or if needed, changed or abandoned. In short, our strategies and implementations will always need continuous improvement no matter how flawless these may seem.

After that inspiring talk of Mr. CuUnjieng, we listened to Atty. James Grandolfo, Partner at Millbank LLP, as he related to us how best to

address challenges in the capital markets - how do we "Trawl" and I don't mean heckle, but trawl, as in search for investments that help deliver a balance of equity, growth, and sustainability.

- Challenges faced in the Philippine Capital Markets which has oldest stock exchange but has fewer stocks listed:
- There's still room for improvement to streamline processes for listings - to improve ease in transactions;
- Policy reforms have already been implemented but there's more room for policy reform to deepen the Philippine Capital Markets, such as
 - ▶ expanding the capital base from abroad to help provide liquidity and improve pricing for investors
 - ▶ developing policies to encourage GOCCs to list will also raise needed capital for government
 - ▶ sustainable integration with global markets
 - ▶ development of independent and accountable regulators and creation of new ones like a mortgage regulator
 - ▶ transparent rules and regulations
- Taxation - encourages development of capital markets

Atty. Grandolfo's session was complemented by Professor TY Sim, a former consultant to the United Nations, who gave an incredibly informative talk on the national implications of long-term structural challenges for tax reforms including three mega trends and policy directions on taxation.

1. The tectonic shift in tax rates

- The period of moderation of tax rates appears to be ending.
- However, the need for higher tax collection has to be met. So the question is - How to fill this gap since corporate tax collection is only a small slice of the total? Thus, more of the shortfall will have to come from other tax sources, like personal income taxes, consumption taxes

2. Shift

FROM north-south divide between well-off, developed economies vs developing countries which favor capital exporters



TO a digital divide - between digital leaders, like US and China, that dominate the internet space vs countries, like France and India, which are not so e-commerce heavy.

The implications of this divide on taxation bring up issues that change the landscape.

As no tax without physical presence, data becomes the new factor. Challenge: how do you tax data?

To level the playing field, there's a proliferation of digital services tax laws in an effort to capture part of the global profits that are missed out due to the absence of digital transaction taxation.

3. Hyper transparency: data is the "new oil"

With hyper transparency happening, the likelihood is high that authorities may know more than you about your company. Prof Sim then closed by posing a question for us - Are our Audit Committees and CFOs aware of these issues and are our tax functions prepared?

Dr. Nicolas Pascal, CEO and Executive Director of Blue Finance, expounded on how the future of business should be blue and green where a blue economy revolves around anything to improve marine conservation, working with coastal communities and other stakeholders to make it sustainable for a long-term future.

He shared in particular their experience as a social enterprise in Mindoro where they are piloting a business run in a sustainable, ecological way to show that such an enterprise can produce environmental benefits while remaining sustainable as a business.

He also shared about how they are funding their enterprise through a blended finance facility which involves both grants and debt instruments.

Managed by a multi-disciplinary team of marine scientists, philanthropists, impact investors, and development agency partners and banks, from their experience, what they have seen is that they are able to raise passion capital. It is available. It is possible.

Our day ended with Mr. Bhushan Sethi, Joint Global Leader for People and Organization at PwC USA, speaking on the Global Workforce Hopes & Fears for 2022. It was reflected that "The Great Resignation" is very real and happening right now, with 1 out of 5 employees being likely to switch to a

new employer, it was also gleaned that Gen Z workers who are from ages 18-25 lead this movement.

Following this movement is the pressure to increase pay and what factors make up the mind of an employee who is likely to resign.

In this in-between world that we currently function in, it is important to factor in pay but also purpose, and authenticity if we want to attract the best talent and retain them.

We also touched on empowerment and skills, political and social issues in the workplace, the demand for transparency, and the future of hybrid work in this in-between world we are in. These points tell us where we can put our focus for the next few years because while the pandemic has slowed down, its effects whether physical, mental, or emotional are here to stay, whether it be on our business, our employees, or the culture in general.

While you'd think that businesses used to be so black and white, where work is within the 4 walls of a tall building in the metro, you'll now find that these lines have been blurred, work no longer exists in one place - the existence of cloud networks and a shift in the mindset of workers have brought us to an in-between world where everyone is flexible, adaptable, and prone to change.

To recap, here are the key takeaways from all the interesting discussions.

Our speakers and guests have all spoken about how best to approach and win in a changing landscape that none of us have explored. I guess all we have to do now is ride that wave of change and hope for the better.

(The author is Vice Chair of the MAP CEO Conference Committee, Chair of the MAP Health Committee, and Chair and CEO of The EON Group. Feedback at <map@map.org.ph> and <junie.delmundo@eon.com.ph>.)



About AAMO:

AAMO is a partnership of National Management Organizations (NMO) whose purpose is to share and actively leverage resources to enhance the achievement of their respective missions. AAMO is an independent, nonpolitical and not-for-profit Association of NMOs, which promotes, facilitates and supports the development of professional management in the Asia Pacific Region.

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