Redefining job roles to build competitive compliance

Express Pharma, in association with SAP India, as part of the Life Sciences Industry Knowledge Exchange Forum, recently hosted a virtual event to discuss and deliberate on building a workforce in the life sciences industry that is future-ready

By Lakshmipriya Nair Last updated Sep 13, 2021

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The pharma industry is experiencing technological disruptions spurred by the need for enhanced speed, efficiency and efficacy in products and processes, evidence-based decision making, shifting market demands, etc. Optimising the use of technology to improve productivity, eliminate redundant processes, scale manufacturing capacity

and build competitive compliance would be the distinguishing feature of the best-run life-sciences companies. In turn, the creation of a workforce with skill levels that is at par with the radical advancements in the pharma sector has emerged as an exigency.

Therefore, as part of the **Industry Knowledge Exchange Series**, *Express Pharma*, in association with *SAP*, recently hosted a virtual event on the theme, **Redefining Job Roles – Employee Enablement for Digital Adoption in Pharma Industry**. The event witnessed industry leaders from different functions and tech experts come together to confer and chart strategies that will help enable users to adopt digital tools, benefit from automation and make data-enabled decisions.

It started with a welcome address by **Viveka Roychowdhury**, Editor, Express Pharma and Express Healthcare. Setting the context for the sessions to follow, she highlighted how the COVID pandemic has redefined many realities of our lives, both on the personal front and as corporate citizens, and said, “It has triggered new ways of looking at both workplace and workforce, with employees working from home or anywhere, and employers taking on the responsibility to keep their workforce safe, not just from the virus but from the disruption that it brings.”

She added that the spotlight was on pharma companies to scale up and deliver life-saving medicines and vaccines to help the human race come to terms with COVID and future diseases. But, keeping track of a VUCA world, the sector will have to skill up and scale-up, to protect the workforce and the workplace.

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> **VIVEKA ROYCHOWDHURY**
> Editor, Express Pharma and Express Healthcare

Next, **Rajesh Kuppuswamy,** Life Sciences and Health Care Industry Advisor, SAP India gave an overview on how the industry was transforming as a result of rising investments, technological disruptions, evolving regulations and growing

collaborations. In this scenario, it was pivotal to relook and make appropriate changes to the workplace and the workforce with the help of technology to make advancements in productivity, quality and compliance.

He also emphasised that as new business models, product mix and technology emerge, ensuring the right people with the right skills in the right place across functions will be crucial to succeed in a future which will comprise both, unparalleled opportunities and challenges.

> We need to have end-to-end visibility and connectivity across the pharma value chain and this can only be brought about with the right technology
>
> **RAJESH KUPPUSWAMY**
> Life Sciences and Health Care Industry Advisor, SAP India

Subsequently, a panel discussion on '*Redefining Job Roles to Build Competitive Compliance*: *Current Status and Way Forward*' ensued. It examined how to empower the user in the post-pandemic world where the pharma industry will be under the spotlight. It also looked at the role of technology in de-imagining business functions such as manufacturing, QA/QC, product development and tech transfer. The foundational and differentiating roles of HR and IT were addressed as well.

Dr Avdhut Parab, Global CIO, Wockhardt; **Namrata Gill Tyagi,** Vice-President, HR, Dr Reddy's Laboratories; **Rajendra Chunodkar,** President, Manufacturing Operations, Lupin; **Dr Rajesh Kumar Singh**, Associate Director, Gennova Biopharmaceuticals; **Rajorshi Ganguli**, President and Global HR Head, Alkem Laboratories; **Antony Prashant**, Partner, Deloitte; and **Sudakshina Ghosh**, Industry Business Architect, Team Lead, Industry & Customer Advisory Practice, SAP India were part of this discussion.

Moderated by Roychowdhury, the panelists assessed the need to redefine jobs, dived into the strategies to address this need and elaborated on how these strategies have been or can be executed.

We present the views and insights shared by the experts and leaders during this session:

Data and digitalisation: Redefining job roles in pharma

The panelists were unanimous in their opinion that emerging technologies and digitalisation was ushering a tectonic shift and altering the traditional styles of working in the pharma industry. In this background, building a workforce that was enabled to cope and adapt to these changes with the help of new skills will be central for the continuous progress of the sector.

HR leaders, Namrata Gill Tyagi and Rajorshi Ganguli, highlighted that while automation and digitalisation have reduced jobs requiring manual intervention, it has also created a need for professionals who can work with automated systems, easily adapt to smart tools, and curate data to gain actionable insights and implement best practices across processes. Ganguli pointed out that even a shop floor employee needs to have digital skills and the industry will have to train its people accordingly.

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>
> **RAJORSHI GANGULI**
> President and Global HR Head, Alkem Laboratories

Gill Tyagi informed that as pharma companies were getting into newer spheres like digital therapeutics they will need employees with a digital-first mindset and specialised skills to aid this transformation. So, Dr Reddy's has introduced a digital learning intervention, DigitalNinja to upskill its employees.

Functional leaders on the panel, **Dr Avadhut Parab**; **Rajendra Chunodkar**; and **Dr Rajesh Kumar Singh**, also reiterated the views expressed by the HR leaders and said that enabling and equipping leaders, managers and employees through upskilling and

reskilling initiatives will be core to ensure sustainability and growth of both, people and organisations, leverage opportunities, outpace challenges and tackle uncertainties in future.

Chunodkar pointed out that there was mounting pressure on Indian generic pharma companies to improve their profit margins. So, the sector was turning towards digitalisation and data to optimise manpower cost, get higher yields for products and reduce utility consumption. This is where data and digitalisation will play key roles. Citing an example, he shared how data scientists, data engineers were helping to make impactful data-backed decisions to improve yields even in complex processes like fermentation, a stark deviation from the way things were done before.

> The pharma sector is turning towards digitalisation and data to optimise manpower cost, get higher yields for products and reduce utility consumption.
>
> **RAJENDRA CHUNODKAR**
> President, Manufacturing Operations, Lupin

Dr Parab advised that while the industry was conversant with the people, process, technology triangle for new initiatives and change management, now it will have to evolve and map it with another triangle formed by people set, mindset and skill set. He informed that his organisation has already begun this practice. Emphasising the importance of the right approaches to get the right impact, he also advocated that the companies should opt for adaptive learning strategies to get the best outcomes.

We are all conversant with people, process, technology triangle for new initiatives and change management. Now we need to map this triangle with people set, mindset and skillset.

DR AVADHUT PARAB
Global CIO, Wockhardt

On the same lines, **Anthony Prashant** recommended that functions can be classified into three broad segments: ones that can be fully automated, processes where humans and robots need to collaborate and those where human intervention is still paramount. And, since the industry works with hybrid models, a mix of skills is required in its workforce.

Sudakshina Ghosh pointed out that the pharma workforce will have to be adept at not only functional skills but also focus on building digital skills, and possess collaboration skills, agility, problem-solving abilities and an innovative mindset. She also said that the role of a total and comprehensive manpower management platform will be vital to source a workforce with the right skills, onboard them properly to deploy them faster, train and upskill them regularly, enable efficient and effective implementation and help in manpower planning as per skills.

It is essential to assess and recalibrate individual employees and look at a comprehensive upskilling and reskilling programme.

SUDAKSHINA GHOSH
Industry Business Architect, Team Lead, Industry & Customer Advisory Practice, SAP India

Strategising to future-proof workforce

The industry, recognising the fact that a forward-thinking workforce equipped with the right skills is intrinsic to its continued progress, is redrawing its blueprint for talent acquisition, training, deployment and retention. Our panel of experts and leaders also shared a few strategies that are being deployed in pharma companies to ramp up their human capabilities and become future-ready:

Accelerate learning and development: Informing that this has been identified as a key goal for Dr Reddy's, Gill Tyagi spoke on the company approach towards this objective by creating an ideal employee profile for each role and categorising the skills sets under 'fit for now' and 'fit for the future'. Based on that, the company has been investing time and money to enable its employees to learn and hone the skills required for the future.

She updated that the company's strategy was to identify and implement the right methodologies to help employees to develop the required skills and knowledge in a timely manner. Thus, it was an approach based on the experience and exposure that the company can offer.

Citing an example, she informed about the company's investment in virtual study machines of different industries from different geographies to help the employees learn from the best in class.

> Keep employee experience and customer experience at the centre of all technology adoption.
>
> **NAMRATA GILL TYAGI**
> Vice President - HR, Dr Reddy's Laboratories

An interdisciplinary approach: Ganguli apprised that Alkem was making huge investments in learning and development. He said that the company's approach was to tackle it with a multi-pronged and inter-disciplinary approach for employees at different

levels. At the mass level, for operating hands, be it manufacturing, R&D or sales force, the company has been running various programmes, for employees to continuously develop their skills based on their current and future requirements in their respective jobs.

For instance, for the sales force, the focus of these learning programmes have been technology and digital skills because the ways to reach out to doctors and influencers have transformed over the last two years.

At the mid to senior level, the company's focus was on a different set of skills such as harnessing creativity, enhancing problem-solving and decision making abilities, enabling them to utilise data science etc.

Ganguli also informed about the organisation's focus on spotting the right or emerging capabilities at the hiring stage itself.

Align reskilling to business objectives: Prashant from Deloitte shared the example of another pharma company that adopted this strategy to good effect through a three-filter method to meet their immediate requirement of bringing a product to market.

First, it defined what work was going to be disrupted and through which technology, i.e. robotics, AI, cognitive technology. Next, it focused on the talent continuum and addressed how to develop the critical human capabilities, if needed, i.e. train or hire or crowdsource. Lastly, it looked at the most effective ways to get the work done. i.e. virtually or at a physical location.

Thus, once the business objectives are set, the strategy and investments to meet talent needs became clearer. The operating model defines the requirements.

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ANTHONY PRASHANT
Partner, Deloitte

Project-based or metrics-oriented approach: Giving an understanding of Wockhardt's method to deal with evolving talent needs, Dr Parab said that the company had a project-based or metrics-based process. He informed that in each project, an experienced person with the required expertise was given the responsibility to train three more people on the skills needed. Likewise, whenever the company entered a new arena, it certified the project team. He also spoke on collaborating with external consultants to make the training process easier and hassle-free. He said that the takeover process, later on, became easier and attrition was managed since people were being groomed to grow and got direction.

He also stressed that as a highly regulated industry, any new implementation in pharma is a technical-compliant implementation. Therefore, people working on any of these projects should also have an understanding of regulatory compliance.

A multi-pronged strategy: Chunodkar informed that Lupin has adopted two approaches. One was to identify projects where enterprise systems can be implemented and then help people go through a learning curve to optimise the use of these systems. For instance, the organisation has introduced a programme called *Adapt* to help employees learn and understand digitalisation, data modelling and analytics.

The other approach was to hire people with certain skills and then enable them to train others within the organisation to acquire those skills. So it is a two-pronged approach, a mix of hiring and training.

Build leaders internally: Dr Singh said that digitalisation enables better use of manpower. Now companies should allow them to grow their skills and progress. Companies should hire intelligently and have a roadmap to utilise their talent effectively in the long run for the benefit of the organisations and the employees. He also stressed that opportunities should be given for leaders to emerge from within the company.

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DR RAJESH KUMAR SINGH
Associate Director, Gennova Biopharmaceuticals

Making strategies work

It is said that every idea or strategy is only as good as its execution. So, the conversation veered towards how to execute the strategies successfully.

Highlighting how key communication is to the success of any strategy, Rajorshi informed that this will aid in dealing with resistance to new technologies, changes more effectively. Understanding the benefits of a technology help employees adopt it better.

Tyagi Gill recommended incentivising skill development with growth and keeping employee experience and customer experience at the centre of all technology adoption.

Prashant advised companies to keep individual career paths in perspective while transforming and communicate to them clearly. This will encourage employees to acquire new skills and keep them motivated about their growth within the organisation. In turn, it will ensure that the talent stays back in the company and it will be able to effectively leverage the time and effort invested in upskilling its employees.

Technology: An enabler

Ghosh emphasised that SAP would like to be part of the pharma industry's transformational journey with the help of its solutions. SAP was working with its customers to help them gain intelligence and insights that are crucial to their job roles

across functions with technology solutions. The goal is to make technology as easy to use and adopt as possible and build a connected ecosystem of intelligence to drive patient-centric healthcare.

Key learnings

The session had several insights for the attendees. Some of them are as follows:

- Talent management, defining job roles and business goals should go hand-in-hand.
- Traditional learning and development models will get replaced by digital learning mechanisms
- Technologies are enablers of change, but it is important to put proper systems and processes in place and create a learning culture to make employees adaptive to changing job roles.
- A design approach while drawing out strategies to upskill and reskill will make them more effective.
- Co-create transformation with your workforce rather than imposing it

A key takeaway message was also that agile talent management strategies, adaptable workforces and inspired work ecosystems will be the norm soon.

Alkem | Deloitte | digitalisation | Dr Reddy's Laboratories | Employee Enablement | Gennova Biopharmaceuticals | Job Roles | Lupin

Lakshmipriya Nair

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