UNPREDICTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTIES – PREMISE OF EVOLVING AND GAINING NEW STRENGTH AND DEVELOPING NEW SKILLS.

IMPREVIZIBILITATE ŞI INCERTITUDINE – PREMISELE EVOLUŢIEI ŞI DOBÂNDIRII NOILOR FORŢE ŞI DEZVOLTAREA NOILOR COMPETENŢE.

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Abstract: *This year we've seen more challenges and changes than ever before. We have been forced to transform the way we work, learn and behave. Most of us are working remotely full-time and many are simultaneously helping their kids with the new home-schooling model. The need for essential digital skills has never been more apparent as the world attempts to grasp this 'new normal'. Becoming "digital" means being willing to rethink your entire way of doing business. For some companies reaching the digital frontier means developing business from scratch, while for others it may be about identifying and developing valuable ideas in existing sectors. Businesses must calibrate culture, talent, structure and processes to balance efficiency and innovation, but also sustain a measurable impact on the organization as this ongoing transformation takes place. The main **goal** of article is to demonstrate that uncertainty often tend to be the key ingredient of improvement. And how to leverage the digitalization concepts, so that you can benefit from stress, chaos, and unpredictability in your own life and at the workplace. **Methodology used:** in the process of article elaboration, there we used several types of methodology:1. qualitative method – observation; analysis of the existing practical data and theoretical ones. 2. quantitative method - two surveys. As a **result** of this research you will find out about the things in life (businesses) that improve – and actually thrive – when subjected to stress, uncertainty, and disorder.*
Key words: Artificial Intelligence, cognitive platforms, COVID-19, Digitalization, employee experience, Generation R, skills.
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1. Introduction

The transformation is in full swing within the business and that it is a normal outcome of constantly challenging the status quo to do things better. To accommodate the changes taking place in the business around the workforce, the companies have to identify the need for new skills around big data, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity, among others. To achieve these goals, the businesses are working on massive reskilling programs as the answer to this challenge. Focusing on upskilling the workforce and ensuring they have the right capabilities to work in the future-state environment. Upskilling goes hand in hand with workforce shaping, and the scale of learning and development effort should not be underestimated. We have seen the need for design thinking skills significantly pick up for firms.

One of the key activities — and game-changers — of this transformation started with extensive design thinking workshops with hundreds of participants from around the world. Understanding that EX (employee experience) is not the same for all. Experience design extends across the total workforce, not just directly employed people. The growing gig economy means that employees are just one type of user, as a company's talent also includes consultants, contractors, and other contingent workers who range in age from their 20s to their 80s. All these workers need to feel connected to the platform — with a shared experience that meets their expectations and aligns with their motivations. Understanding that EX is composed of more than just the digital experience. It embraces environmental, social, and leadership dimensions.

Two ways HR functions are using analytical insights to drive people performance:

1. Building insights from integrating and analyzing data in real-time across different data sources to understand the signals that point to emerging issues and opportunities. This includes

combining data from all the functions within the company, from the broader organization and external data sources.

2. Taking a hypothesis-driven approach by working with the leadership team to use data to answer critical business issues and questions such as: which capabilities will drive competitive advantage? Which teams create sustainable performance along with team member wellbeing? What leadership factors drive innovation in our business?

The impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution — the term used to describe the convergence of AI (Artificial Intelligence), RPA (Robotic process automation), Machine Learning (ML), and cognitive platforms — is forcing teams to shape their workforces to consist of all worker types, including permanent, gig, contingent, and machine. To use the 4Bs vernacular: buy, build, borrow, and bot.

This Fourth Industrial Revolution has irreversibly altered the genetic make-up of the modern workforce. Indeed, the Big Innovation Centre estimated that 65 percent of our jobs will not exist or will be done in totally new ways within 10 years. [1] Three in five executives from KPMG survey agree, as they did in 2018, that AI will eliminate more jobs than it creates [9]. Yet, the 2019 Global CEO Outlook, in contrast, confirmed again that CEOs continue to be more optimistic on the matter, with close to 70 percent expressing that AI will create more jobs than it eliminates. Regardless of what might happen, we must prepare for it, one way or another.

Over half (56 percent) of the respondents to survey agree that preparing the workforce for AI and related technologies will be the biggest challenge for all businesses. And while most (87 percent) are prioritizing efforts around how to identify the future workforce composition (the 4Bs) HR leaders still seem uncertain about the best approach to do that.
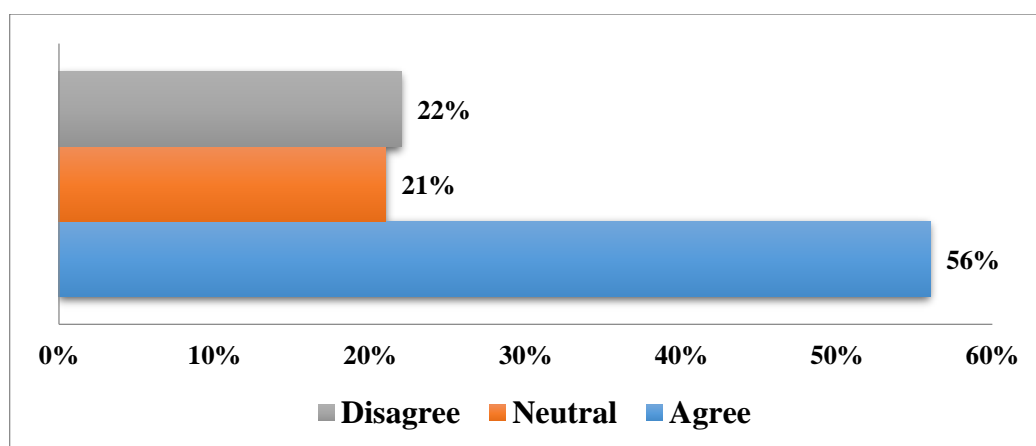

Figure 1. Preparing the workforce for AI is CEO's biggest challenge.
Note: Numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding
Sourse: KPMG International Survey: Future of HR 2020: Which path are you taking?

2. How to Learn in the 'New Normal'

The previous chapter contains the results of the 2019 questionnaire: KPMG International Survey: Future of HR 2020: Which path are you taking. The survey data is based on a survey of 1,362 HR executives from 55 countries with majority representation from the largest economies in the world. The survey was conducted between 27 June and 4 August 2019. The HR executives operate in 31 industries including asset management, automotive, banking, consumer and retail, energy, healthcare, insurance, life sciences, manufacturing, technology, and telecommunications. The plans for 2020 are reflected in the data published in this report. Only these plans had to be realized within 3-5 years. CEOs did not know how fast things will be in 2020.

The world today has evolved from a knowledge worker era to the age of the learning worker. In our rapidly evolving digital environment, learning agility is the most value asset as people are having to navigate unknown challenges, in unprecedented situations, using undiscovered skills. This new dynamic will require a new type of worker – the Learning Worker.

AI is one of the <u>key technologies</u> that can make digital experience truly intelligent. To achieve this, information needs to be accumulated from multiple sources into AI based algorithms that can learn, evolve, and provide the most comprehensive experience to the users. These are called the Neural Networks and they enable deep learning in machines [3].

Much like machine learning technologies, individual self-learning has become imperative for professionals and organizations alike to achieve success. In order to not only survive but thrive, the digital society must also be an active learning society. Organizations and individuals both need to be connected to the 'Neural Networks of Learning' to stay relevant, updated and adapt a continuous learning mentality.

In simple terms, the 'Neural Network of Learning' is an ecosystem of different approaches to learning that helps people create new neural pathways in the brain. These will work to enhance retention, learning, unlearning and relearning.

This learning approach enables all workers to develop new skills. With organizations now being forced to reevaluate their business models, the ability to adapt – whether that's learning new skills, new technologies, or new ways of working – and maintain an 'always on' approach to learning is essential to defining what's next.

Here are 5 best practices to leverage the Neural Networks of Learning:

1. Add human touch to organizational stories: Stories are remembered up to 22 times more than facts alone, so they are the most potent tool of learning. Unfortunately, for many organizations across the globe, it's hard to know how to plug the right organizational stories in the right way. And often, the most impactful stories are lost when key actors leave the company. Most of the time, the best stories do not get shared broadly and the educational value is often overlooked. In order to create a story that drives the learning engine, organizations should help their teams realize the potential of an anecdote as a tool of learning.

2. Encourage volunteering and gigs: People learn a lot and very quickly when they try new things. Whether it is as volunteers for causes they feel passionate about or a gig project where they apply a new skill that they may haven't fully mastered yet. Organizations that want a culture of learning must create an environment that encourages both volunteering and career growth through gig work for all employees.

3. Incentivize reading and instructor-led learning: An organization that incentivizes reading books beyond the scope of a traditional role, and ultimately instills the habit of reading in its people, will have significantly better nourished learners. However, in the current times when the world is overloaded by virtual learning, fake news and rumor mongering, it's easy for a learner to get lost and overwhelmed by the amount of content available. In this instance, instructor-led presentation can help provide more focus for learners on the subtle and the most relevant points of a subject.

4. Allocate time for mental awareness: In our fast-paced lives, we rarely act mindfully and specifically while trying to learn new things. Learning is not something to be consumed as fast as possible, it is to be cherished and contemplated. Organizations need to help individuals develop mental awareness so they can dedicate the time and focus into learning that is needed to be successful.

5. Provide digital learning platforms: The best digital learning platforms enable continuous learning in the most efficient and engaging manner possible, allowing employees to direct their own paths to edification and expertise in a single platform accessible by all.

The sooner organizations adopt best practices of learning approaches, the faster they will be able to succeed in this rapidly changing and complex world.

3. The future of all businesses

COVID-19 has disrupted business continuity, affecting HR professionals across the globe and pushing them to the forefront to lead organizations through unprecedented situations. Current uncertainties have forced organizations to quickly adapt, while building a future-ready workforce,

including transitioning to digital workplaces. This breeds new considerations that guide their understanding of today's market dynamics:

1. An empathetic and stable approach to the workplace, where modern technology at home matches what is at work.

2. The pace of change is forcing companies to react and adapt quickly to market forces.

3. The encouragement of fresh ideas that encourage inventive and out-of-the-box thinking

To be ready for the future and the accelerating pace of change in business, organizations will need to focus on three main areas to respond to ongoing uncertainty and crisis:

Humanity at work. People have become accustomed to the benefits of modern technology in our private lives and workplace technology must be just as modern, intuitive, and helpful. As more people use conversational technologies like Alexa, Siri, and Digital Assistants to solve traditional problems, CEOs must focus on creating more meaning in the workplace with better employee experiences that function across devices, create efficiency, and provide personalization.
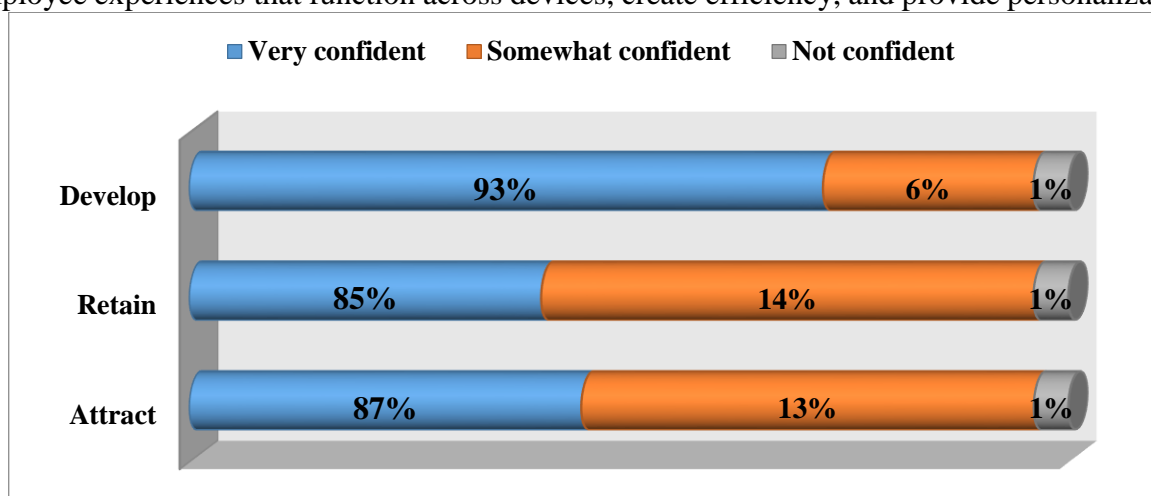

Figure 2. Employee experience as a focus area.
Note: Numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding
***Sourse:** KPMG International Survey: Future of HR 2020: Which path are you taking?*

Employee experience has become a top priority, especially as more work remotely because of COVID-19, and incumbent on-premise systems lack the ability to provide continuous learning and connection experiences required to keep employees engaged and motivated.

Business resiliency. COVID-19 has shocked businesses around the economy, forcing immediate and critical decisions in a time of uncertainty. This disruption and the response have many workers worried, with a recent Forrester study showing that only 47 % of those surveyed expressing sharing confidence in how their company is handling the pandemic.
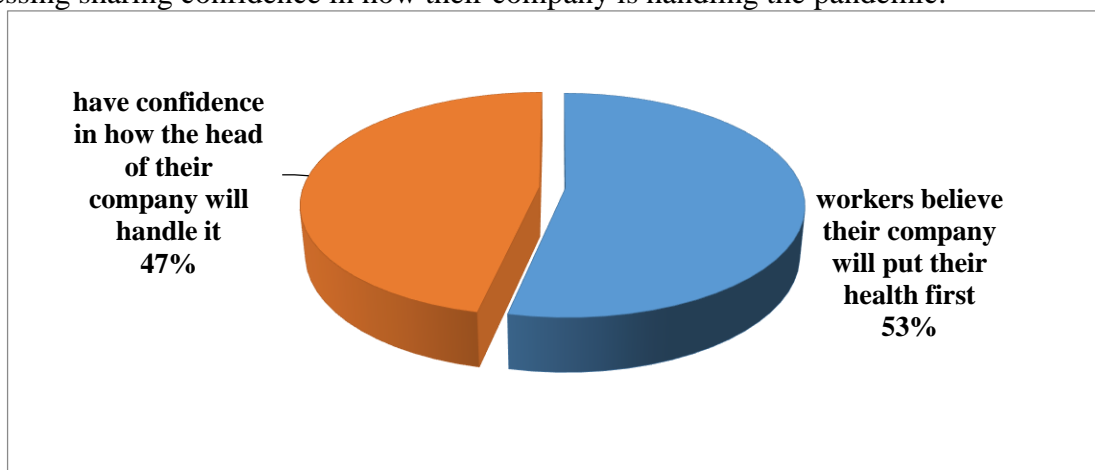

Figure 3: Confidence of the employees in head of their company to "handle the coronavirus situation in the best way possible."
Source: Forrester's Q1 2020 US PandemicEX Survey 1

That said, today's challenges create an opportunity for HR to help their organization through workforce changes, meet compliance needs, and level up the skills of their employees. For those companies who have not moved their systems into the cloud, they may find that their on-premise systems have resulted in a hodgepodge of disconnected systems leading to multiple sources of information, which keeps them from being proactive in creating much-needed strategic plans and processes to empower their employees. Organizations who are successfully navigating through this time on the other hand, are able to align their people strategy to support their evolving business strategy and adjust to a new normal.

I.   **Encourage ingenuity.** Look around today and you'll see many companies stepping up to fight a virus that was not present 6 months ago. As society attempts to return to normalcy, workers need the right tools to feel empowered to perform at their best and further their careers. Encouraging ingenuity – combined with digital transformation – is about finding ways for humans and machines to collaborate efficiently and get the very best from each other. Workers believe AI can present them with important opportunities such as mastering new skills, realigning focuses, and expanding their current role to be more strategic.

The top skill that CEOs will continue to look for in 2021 are [6]:
- ✓ growth mindset;
- ✓ **continuous learning;**
- ✓ **critical thinking;**
- ✓ **survival skills (adaptability, grit or otherwise);**
- ✓ resilience and curiosity;
- ✓ flexibility;
- ✓ dedication;
- ✓ **coaching mindset;**
- ✓ **comfort with ambiguity;**
- ✓ **thriving in a virtual environment**

Undoubtedly, these technologies assist in our fight to overcome COVID-19, providing a more hopeful future. These three areas for digital transformation will continue to grow as we move into the new normal of COVID-19. We believe that we will get through this together.

4. A generation evolution and the rise of the generation 'R'

Why are these young generations filled with distrust instead of optimism? Perhaps it's because they're perpetually caught in the crossfire of social, political, and economic commotion. The impact of myriad, radical changes to our daily lives has hit younger generations hard – economically, socially, and perhaps psychologically. Chief among the influencing factors is likely the economic recession of the late 2000s. The complete impact goes deeper than economics. Unlike the postwar 1950s—which were characterized by international cooperation, a baby boom, and economic expansion that benefited most—the past decade has been marked by a steep rise in economic inequality, a reduction in societal safety nets, insular and dysfunctional governments, increased tribalism fueled by social media, radical changes in the contract between employers and employees, Industry 4.0 technologies that are redefining the workplace, and personal technologies that make people both more connected and more isolated [10].

In order to have an overview, we will expose the qualities of each generation:
- ✓ The generation of veterans
- ✓ Boomers
- ✓ Generation X
- ✓ Generation Y/Millennials
- ✓ Generation Z
- ✓ Generation Alpha
- ✓ Generation R

The generation of veterans (1925-1944). Veterans are the children of the recession of 1928-1933 and World War II. They are recognized as having deep-rooted opinions about religion, family, and country. The values are guided by respect for authority, loyalty, hard work and seriousness. They grew up in difficult economic conditions. They are dedicated employees and not only for good compensation for the tasks received, but also to help the company they belong to achieve their goals. They are people characterized by a strong team spirit, who do not disappoint their colleagues.

Boomers (1945-1964). Boomers did not go through the same hard times as their parents. They grew during a period of economic growth and prosperity. Their lives have been influenced by civil rights movements, women's empowerment, the space program, the Cold War. Boomers place great emphasis on youth, health, personal satisfaction and material wealth. They are optimistic and believe that their generation has changed the world. It currently accounts for most of the workforce. They are motivated, they embrace challenges, and some of them have made extraordinary careers.

Generation X (1965-1981). Generation X is sometimes also called the misunderstood generation. Those born during this period have the egocentric Boomers as their parents. Among the events that marked their lives are communism, the 1989 Revolution, the school uniform, the advent of AIDS, the Berlin Wall, the compulsory army, single-parent families. They were the first generation to use the personal computer and the Internet. Their work style is characterized by speed, they are pragmatic, creative, oriented towards meeting deadlines, they prefer direct and immediate communication.

Generation Y/Millennials (1982-2000). Among the events that influenced their lives are: the advent of MTV, the joy of escaping military service, school uniforms and assignments, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, mobile telephony, parental divorces, e-mail, the digital age. Among the predominant features of Generation Y we can list: entrepreneurial spirit, flexibility, short-term attention, optimism, competitiveness, but also tolerance, high energy level, technical knowledge, independent spirit.

The working style of the members of this generation is characterized by: multitasking, participatory leadership, communication by e-mail and telephone, the "can-do" attitude. They also demonstrate an excellent team spirit, want to collaborate and work in an environment where differences are respected, where individuals are judged by their contributions and where talent matters.

Generation Z (1995-2010). Also, known as IGeneration, Gen Tech, Gen Wii, Net Gen, Digital Natives. Among the important events that marked their lives are the emergence of Facebook (2004 – 845 million monthly active visitors), the emergence of Twitter (2006 – 465 million active accounts), the emergence of Skype (2003 – over 300 million monthly users), the exponential development of mobile devices and applications, reality TV shows, but also they faced bullying.

The members of this generation, independent, with an entrepreneurial spirit, super-inventive, will not shy away from anything in order to make their mark on the future. To be heard, messages addressed to them must include emoticons, video material, infographics, and incognito media. They are self-taught and learn almost everything with the help of the internet. Members of this generation are influenced by nano-influencers. Research shows that these young people multitask between at least 5 screens simultaneously. Generation Z is a generation that greatly appreciates honesty, transparency and ethical behavior in whatever they undertake [2].

The term **Generation Alpha** applies to children born between **2011** and **2025**. According to McCrindle [5], an estimated 2.5 million alphas are born globally every week. Alpha kids will grow up with iPads in hand, never live without a smartphone, and have the ability to transfer a thought online in seconds. These massive technological changes, among others, make Generation Alpha the most transformative generation ever. These children are expected to be the wealthiest, most highly-educated and technologically-connected group to date.

This newest generation will have a high share of children with foreign-born parents and children who are foreign-born themselves, representing more countries around the world than previous generations. As we get into this new generation, this will be something that in a way defines them in terms of their ability to accept people of different backgrounds, and the idea of racial division may not exist to them to the extent that it exists in our country now. This generation of children will be shaped in households that move more frequently, change careers more often and increasingly live in urban, not just suburban, environments. McCrindle also believes those in Generation Alpha will stay in education longer, start their earning years later and thus live at home with their parents later than was previously the case – even into their late 20s [7].

Generation R (2020 - ?). The global pandemic has kick-started the growth of an entirely new generation, and it has nothing to do with age. If anyone were to try to guess which generation was most likely to thrive in the pandemic lockdown, other than generation X, few would have thought it would be the much-maligned boomers. Even fewer would have believed that the generation that would struggle the most was the millennial. The digital natives didn't find comfort in digital isolation. However, within the tropes of gen X, millennial and boomer has emerged a new generation, one that isn't determined by age but by the pandemic – generation R. This generation is defined as those individuals who have proactively prepared for the new normal of work – learning new skills, how to use remote tools, achieving goals and being more effective with time.

It's difficult for some people to find productivity in a remote setting, but those who can, are exceptional at it. They work long hours, shift the boundaries of work and play, and engage across multiple platforms and channels.

Generation R is the group of individuals who, during the lockdown, have developed new skills, embraced new paradigms, and have re-adjusted their worldview. They have given up their old way of thinking and have developed a new point of view.

This generation feels much more in control, more resilient, and more comfortable with ambiguity. They are preparing to work harder than ever before and are finding new ways to achieve productivity, balance, and a sense of purpose.

Generation R workers share these four characteristics [4]:

1. They are proactively preparing for a new normal of work: Gen-R workers believe that the world of work is going to change significantly when the current challenges are solved, and they're preparing for it now. They feel the future workplace will become more competitive, impacting their career direction and future opportunities. But instead of just waiting for it to happen, Gen-R workers have committed to learning at least one new skill during the lockdown. They plan to have multiple sources of income and try new roles and jobs once the world returns to normal.

2. They are finding productivity in remote work settings: While many workers prefer working in pre-defined, fixed office hours, Gen-R prefers the remote work options. They believe the flexible schedules and technology available allows them to <u>be more productive</u> when working from home.

3. They are prioritizing a balance between personal and professional: Despite the lockdown blurring boundaries between home and work, Gen-R workers have learned to juggle both personal and professional lives successfully. With managers showing an understanding of new schedules and offering appreciation for hard work, these employees are finding new ways to achieve a work-life balance.

4. They are becoming more environmentally conscious: Interestingly, as a result of the lockdown, Gen-R perceptions around the environment and sustainability have shifted. Having realized the impact that humanity has on our environment, they believe they owe more to society and the environment than before.

The <u>future workforce</u> will be coming back to a post-pandemic world with new beliefs, skill sets, aspirations, and work ethics. They will have new expectations and priorities as employees,

forcing organizations to adapt and evolve to meet new demands. Here are four ways businesses can accommodate:

1. Revisit employee mobility: When employees return to a state of semi-normalcy in the workforce, many will want to try new challenges, test out new skillsets, and find new roles. Organizations should find ways to provide these types of opportunities within the enterprise. Offering mobility to pick up projects for new teams and try new roles in addition to their usual jobs will provide the growth opportunities they're looking for. It is like opening a gig economy to existing employees so they don't have to look outside.

2. Enable true flexible work environments: For those who find increased productivity and efficiency in the remote work setting, organizations should consider supporting these working conditions with the right technology and processes. This would mean removing functional limitations for remote workers and providing high-security platforms and cloud applications that can run full force anytime, anywhere, and on any device.

3. Strengthen workplace culture: Employee expectations towards empathy and understanding will be permanently altered once normalcy returns. Work-life and personal life have become the same, and the importance for teams being understanding and flexible for personal matters will continue. Leaders and managers will need to evolve their leadership and managerial styles accordingly. It will be important for organizations to identify and strengthen their workplace culture by empowering and supporting their employees through whatever 'new normal' we find.

4. Provide purpose-driven opportunities: The current situation is placing a new sense of purpose on people's minds. Employees will be looking to their organizations to assume greater corporate social responsibility to support the greater good. Companies who are irresponsible corporate citizens will find it increasingly difficult to attract, recruit, and retain Gen-R talent. Simple things like wellness and volunteering initiatives can help support organizations in this shift [4].

How the world will evolve after the current crisis is unpredictable. However, some of these trends will signify the beginning of a new era. Generational differences are losing relevance and Generation R commonalities will be front and center in the future of work.

5. Return to 'normal' in 2022

CEOs of the world's most influential companies are planning what a return to 'normal' will look like, but their workforces' lack of access to a COVID-19 vaccine is forcing them to rethink their strategies. With only one-third (31 percent) anticipating a return to normal in 2021, nearly half (45 percent) expect normality to resume in 2022. Significantly, 24 percent of leaders say that their business has changed forever.
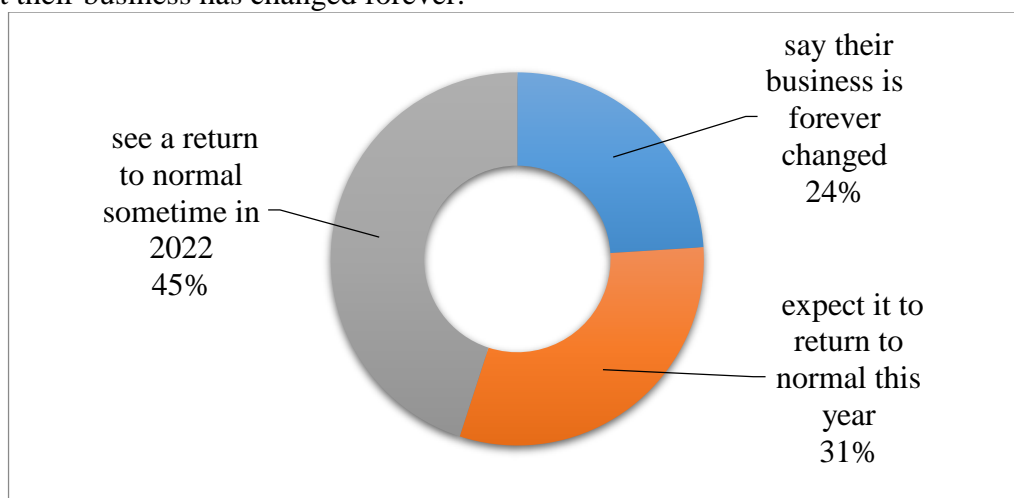

Figure 4. What a return to 'normal' will look like
Source: KPMG 2021 CEO Outlook Pulse

Though many factors can influence CEO predictions, the perceived pace of vaccination distribution is prominent. More than half (55 percent) of business leaders state they are concerned that not all of their employees will have access to a COVID-19 vaccine, which could put their operations or certain markets at a competitive disadvantage.

As a result, nearly two-thirds (61 percent) of companies will await a successful vaccine rollout in key markets before they ask staff to return to the office. Prudently, three-quarters (76 percent) of companies will wait for governments in key markets to encourage businesses to return to normal, whereas just 5 percent will do so based on the actions by their competitors or similar businesses. A significant majority (90 percent) of CEOs intend to ask employees to report when they have been vaccinated, which will help organizations consider measures to protect their workforce. However, one-third (34 percent) of global executives are worried about misinformation on COVID-19 vaccine safety and the potential this may have on employees choosing not to have it administered.

Safety of their staff dominate CEOs' plans to operate in the new business landscape. For example, 21 percent of companies will ask clients and visitors to their facilities if they have been vaccinated. They are also taking a cautious approach to business travel, with 26 percent planning to cut down on international travel until the pandemic concludes. Companies are definitely transforming key aspects of their workplace and service delivery, with 61 percent stating they will build upon their digital collaboration and communication tools. More than half (57 percent) plan to conduct customer engagement and queries predominantly via virtual platforms such as chat bots, telephone, web and social media.

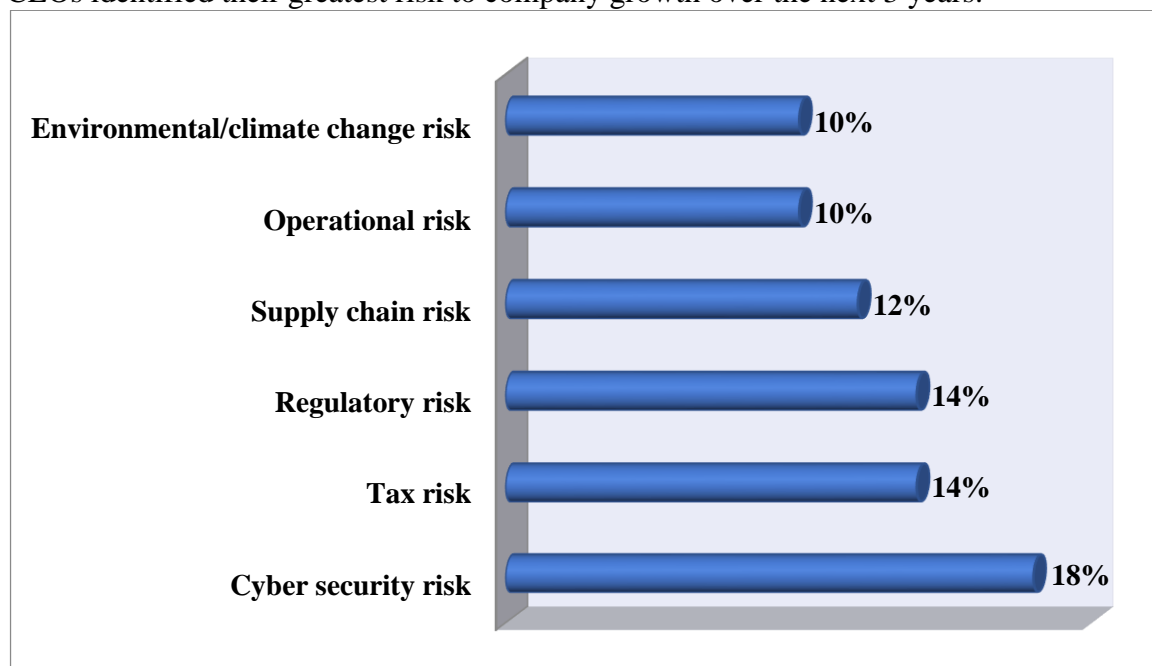CEOs identified their greatest risk to company growth over the next 3 years.

Figure 5. Which of the following risks poses the greatest threat to your organization's growth over the next 3 years?
Source: KPMG 2021 CEO Outlook Pulse

Though the pandemic prompted many organizations to rethink their existing strategies, it only served to intensify business leaders' commitment to digitization. In fact, as companies move from crisis mode and attempt to normalize operations, CEOs are shifting their focus to cyber security issues and differentiating themselves through their digital connectivity with customers.

Three-quarters (74 percent) of business leaders report that the digitization of their operations and creation of a next-generation operating model, have accelerated by a matter of months, up from 50 percent in August 2020. A sizeable majority of leaders have reported

acceleration of new digital business models and revenue streams (69 percent) and to develop a seamless digital customer experience (56 percent).

Conclusion

The power of the next generation isn't in pursuing disconnected capabilities; rather, it is in creating a holistic and mutually reinforcing "whole system" approach to building the workforce (and organization) of the future. It lies in an organization's ability to integrate new capabilities, taking a worker-centric view while addressing cultural shifts and embracing an increasingly digital workforce.

This year, CEOs plan to spend more on digital technologies than last year, with 52 percent prioritizing data security measures, 50 percent focusing on customer-centric technologies, and 49 percent committed to digital communications, such as video conferencing and messaging capabilities.

They will also pursue various avenues to bulk up their digital capabilities, since 61 percent state that their M&A appetite over the next 3 years will be driven mainly by the desire to acquire digital technology to transform their customer experience or value proposition.

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