

## The resilience of people management

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We are into the final quarter of 2020 and when we take a few minutes to reflect, we can conclude that this was the year that triggered everyone's acute stress response, you may know it as fight or flight. Among many businesses the early onset panic has somewhat subsided and an adaptation has begun; however, there is that constant change that may alter business plans at any moment. Great emergence of technologies and adaptation has occurred across numerous workplaces and, humans, being one of the most adaptable species, have given it a bold attempt thus far to make the best out of the situations presented. Granted, some businesses have made the decision to close until further notice or completely; however, we have still seen many across Barbados thus far that put up that fight for survival by means of digitalisation.

In speaking about digitalisation, there is often a misconception that it means being paperless however, digitalisation refers to sociality – the changes that have affected the ways in which we relate as human beings. Is it still a must that we have face-to-face meetings, award ceremonies or conferences? Do we have to physically go to a store to make purchases? No, it is not absolutely necessary, and our sociality has such adapted to best suit these circumstances. Workplaces for example have adapted in such a way that many of us are together but still apart and as upon reading more articles from international HR sources, it is shown that HR is adapting to the use of experience management software for assistance in areas such as communication and decision-making, managing the finances of the organisation, documentation, and other organisational obligations – all of which are essential and require continuous monitoring and measurement especially during financially trying times. Full digitalisation may not possible for each business model or each industry however we continue to see that where changes can be made, they are being made and there are even benefits where employers and Human Resources gain a better understanding of who their employees are while integrating these technologies into their new norm.

The virtual world of work has brought employers to a greater awareness and understanding of the balancing act that most of their employees may go through on a regular day pre-pandemic and now during the pandemic. Many are now seeing their employee not just as the employee but as a regular person as personal and professional have met each other due to some persons working from home. We often heard and would say when you are at work, try not to bring home with you however these lines are now blurred because work is home.

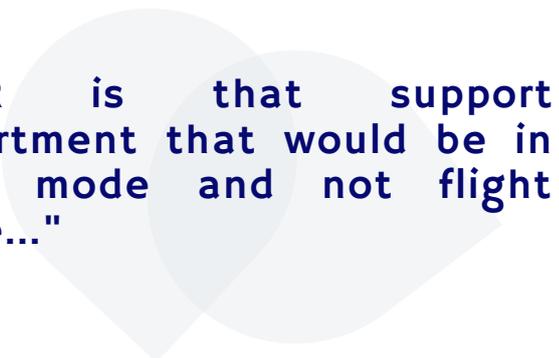
As identified in an article on HR Grapevine written by Michael Abbott and Georgie Adkin, employers and leaders of today will find themselves having to reconsider how they approach being a leader because of this shift in boundaries and the intricacies these times bring as it relates to the employees' regular daily life.

Most meetings, conferences and training are being conducted virtually and if we are being introspective because it was so rushed, it may have started out a bit rocky where you may have heard odd background noises in a meeting such as childcare responsibilities, a rooster crowing, rainfall or even a dog barking but we have all adapted to accommodate the virtual activity. As an employer and leader, this would have been the furthest thought from your mind to consider where you are managing your employees amongst all the unique factors that make up who they really are. What makes you a successful employer and leader now in this ever-changing realm is finding mediums where you continue to effectively communicate with your employees, be able to recognise and, if possible, providing guidance to them on coping with the changes.

Everything work-related has become even more people oriented because of the numerous factors for consideration such as mental health, finances, physical health, family and living circumstances. As the employer and leader, because everything has become so people centric, a task has been placed on the broad shoulders of the Human Resources or People Management team members because they are the "people" people.

HR is that support department that would be in fight mode and not flight mode because employers will be actively seeking assistance in ways to effectively manage their teams who are working blended (from at work and at home), and those who are working fully from home through the use of various technologies. In addition to this, HR would be required to still maintain leave administration, disciplinary matters and grievances, training and more. Hence, those employers without a HR department or simply a single person who may handle HR matters may seek services from employer organisations such as the BEC for support consultancy services in Human Resources.

There is now a rare yet slow opportunity for businesses to be able to resume operations as safely as possible. As you can imagine, HR must take the mantle and provide support to and guide employers and leaders within organisations across Barbados as effectively as possible to ensure they maintain their fight response and not engage the flight response. Considering change may be a daunting thought for not only employees but employers, HR, once permitted should take the lead to build that fusion between personal and professional, so that the organization can readily seize opportunities for the furtherance of the organisation and to successfully work towards resilience.



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