

Powering innovation at the frontlines

The article talks about how GCCs today are driving innovation. It elaborates further on the role that talent is playing and will continue to play in defining how well equipped GCCs are when it comes to delivering on their transformation agenda.

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In the not-too-distant past, MNCs viewed their offshore captive centres in India as outposts for executing low-end business processes. Much of the work done back then in these Global Capability Centres (GCCs) was repetitive and monotonous. Given the availability of low-cost talent, it made sense for the parent organisations to shift certain processes to centres in India. All this has begun to change over the last few years.

Today, GCCs are being increasingly tasked with innovating for their parent organisations. From mere process centres, GCCs are transforming into innovation hubs. In fact, much of the work being done in GCCs is in support of the digital transformation that is currently underway in the country.

What drove this change?

A ringside view to a changing India

Over the last decade, much change has been afoot in India. Digital transformation has been underway in India, largely driven by flagship government initiatives like Digital India. Be it the Aadhar or the UPI or even e-KYCs, the government has rolled out important initiatives to digitally transform the country. This has impacted and changed the functioning of sectors like banking, agriculture, healthcare, and retail; it has changed the planning of smart cities and transformed governance and the delivery of citizen services. Driven by Digital India, a thriving start-up culture has also emerged in the country.

What Indians were used to just a decade ago may not necessarily be what they are seeing today. From the way we shop to the way we access healthcare, there has been such a change. The eating-out scene is just an indicator. Due to online food delivery, many restaurants survived the difficult last two years by operating cloud kitchens.

What these changes clearly point to is that India is now a hotspot for both developing and deploying innovations. This is where GCCs offer a terrific advantage to their parent companies. Given that they are already present in the country, GCCs are in a prime position to develop innovations in technologies and sectors that could profoundly impact India in the coming days. This could be in fields like AI, Analytics, Blockchain and IoT, among others.

This is already underway and will only accelerate in the coming days. Already, GCCs are creating valuable technology products in India for India and other geographies taking experience and learnings from India's unique socio-economic conditions. Along the way, GCCs are significantly impacting the Indian economy and creating a world class talent pool of highly trained staff. The creation of this human asset is possibly one of the greatest contributions of GCCs to India. Without their talent pool, GCCs would be severely handicapped.

The transformation of GCCs

For GCCs to truly participate in India's digital transformation, they need to evolve from being process centres to innovation hubs. Staff who were trained to execute repetitive functions now need to innovate and think

beyond the obvious. This necessitates the embedding of learning and development as key enablers within the corporate structure. The learning must percolate across the organization with digital skills training – be it in full stack development, software engineering, cloud, analytics etc – being imparted to the entire workforce. Reskilling, continuous learning and development of specific focus areas of talent will also strengthen skillsets and build proficiencies.

To drive change and enable innovation at scale, special attention must be allotted to middle leadership as it is this set of leaders who must now focus on driving innovation and ideas. It is not enough to only meet the challenges of today – we must be able to innovate to address tomorrow's challenges. Here, a change in mindset and inculcation of leadership competencies are critical upskilling components. This will also call for taking proactive approaches to problem solving, having a customer-centric approach and having a good understanding of global and local aspects in terms of business viability besides having the ability to use technology for greater efficiency. Additionally, mid rung leaders must be able to manage diverse stakeholders and talent even as they introduce design thinking and innovation. The ability to leverage technology, re-engineer processes and negotiate effectively are also must have skills that mid-level managers must have to build GCCs of tomorrow.

Overall GCCs must have learning approaches that have a blend of “whys” and “hows” with the “whys” outlining outcomes and the “hows” showing a path to them. This leads to not just building of skills and competencies but capabilities for a specific role.

These are the Transformative Competencies which will transform talent and prepare GCCs to function as innovation centres. When implemented at either business unit level or at the organizational level, these programmes can truly empower the talent of an organization. This transformation is an imperative for GCCs to successfully make the shift from process centres to innovation hubs.

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