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Dear Reader,

COVID-19 UPDATE: FEAR RECEDING, FOG PERSISTING.

“Where shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning or in rain? When the hurlyburly’s done, when the battle’s lost and won....” thus spoke the three witches in Shakespeare’s Macbeth. The COVID-19 hurlyburly persists though it shows signs of easing having exacted a heavy toll in human life across the world. While most people have receded deep into their shells, there are some who are pushing the envelope for a return to the old normal in a manner some consider reckless. But playing it safe goes against the grain of the Wild West spirit that still permeates the new generations of pioneers and trailblazers upon whom will depend the global village’s prosperity in the post COVID-19 period.

But **Dr. Tommy Weir** sounds a word of caution in his piece ‘Life after COVID-19’. “It takes 30 days to build a new habit, so there’s a very real possibility that the activities, interests and behaviors that you have incubated since coronavirus forced you underground now represent the ‘new you’”, he says.

We are privileged to carry the thoughts of **Dr. Jose Luis Cordeiro** on longevity and his planned trip to Mars, and **Sualeha Bhatti** steps up to the crease with her first book “My Life, My Dots, My Connections” and we carry a detailed interview of her life and times. Then we have a profile of Octara’s **Zainab Essajee** voted ‘Best Team Player’.

Asma Sethi provides business leaders with three tips on coping with COVID-19; **Hira Ali** writes about “Boosting Communications”; and **Azeem Azhar** has contributed a piece on “What is COVID-19 teaching us about supply chains”.

In times of war, prepare for peace is an old adage, so even as we hunker down amidst COVID-19’s barrage, we at Octara are planning for the period of peace that must follow once victory has been achieved over this most sly and slimy adversary. In that spirit we have presented for your perusal and wholehearted support Octara’s Calendar for the period May to December 2020. Happy hunting and may Allah keep us all in His protection, Ameen.

Editorial Compiled by Adil Ahmad, Special Correspondent, octara.com
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INSIDE

Labor Day in Corona Times

- Adil Ahmad



Life After COVID-19

- Dr. Tommy Wier



Mars Mania !

- Dr. Jose Cordeiro



My Life, My Dots, My Connections

- Sualeha Bhatti



The Producer

- Zainab Essajee



Coping with COVID-19: 3 Tips for Business Leaders

- Asma Sethi



Boosting Communication

- Hira Ali



What is Covid-19 teaching us about supply chains?

- Azeem Azhar, Exponential View



• Upcoming Octara Training Programs (May- Dec 2020)



Attend any one Octara workshop in year 2020 & avail complimentary TCS Octara Loyalty Card which will entitle you to a at 15% discount on regular fee to all Octara workshops & ‘MORE’ during the whole year 2020.

LABOR DAY

May Day! May Day!

in CORONA TIMES

Article by Adil Ahmad
Special Correspondent, octara.com

Labor Day is an annual holiday to celebrate the achievements of workers, and has its origins in the labor union movement, specifically the eight-hour day movement, which advocated eight hours for work, eight hours for recreation, and eight hours for rest.

With the COVID-19 induced Lockdown a global phenomenon and social distancing the new normal for the foreseeable future, the workers of the world have been hard hit as their daily wages have disappeared in the midst of economies grinding to a near halt with markets and factories shut across the board.

From agitating for 16 hours of rest and recreation in lieu of 8 hours of work, workers now have to contend with 24 hours of rest and 'recreation' as food and drink get delivered to their doorsteps by the state, at least at the theoretical level. However, it is impossible for even the mightiest of states to feed their citizens beyond a certain, very finite point, and the wheels of industry, trade and commerce must be allowed to creak back to life with substantial lubricant provided by the state, the mass hysteria generated by COVID-19 notwithstanding.

The dastardly novel Corona virus has ensured that life will never be the same again. Paradigm shifts in the way we operate and behave are inevitable, but there is little profit in investing our time and energy predicting the uncharted waters which lie ahead. The spirit of the pioneer must possess us in the post COVID-19 period, with the passion for trail

blazing paramount in our daily lives, praise Allah.

At a deeper societal level the Us versus Them Worker-Capitalist paradigm has been shattered irrevocable, and a new mutually supportive equation must emerge that is free from exploitation and brimful with helping hands and shoulders to lean on. Today, the worker is laid low by COVID-19 and destitute. The charity and philanthropy that has been outpouring is phenomenal, but this robs the worker of his or her dignity. The capitalist must innovate the enterprise and put the worker back to work, and pay him or her goodly wage to ensure 8 hours of dignified work and 16 hours of rest and recreation.

May 1 was chosen to be International Workers' Day to commemorate the May 4, 1886 Haymarket affair in Chicago when a bombing took place at a labor demonstration. It began as a peaceful rally in support of workers striking for an eight-hour work day, the day after police killed one and injured several workers.

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In Pakistan labor Day, also known as May Day, was declared a national holiday in 1972 when the first labor policy was devised. Pakistan has been member of the International labor Organization (ILO) since independence in 1947.

Peter J. McGuire, a carpenter and labor union leader, was the person who came up with the idea for Labor Day. He thought American workers should be honored with their own day. He proposed his idea to New York's Central Labor Union early in 1882, and they also thought the holiday was a good idea. More than a century later we in Octara and Pakistan think it's a good idea as well.

LIFE AFTER COVID-19

Blog by Dr. Tommy Weir

Published on April 21, 2020

When all of this is over, will your life return to normal? Will you revert to your default settings and slip effortlessly back into the pre-virus habits that shaped your everyday? Will you view the world the way you always did, before COVID-19 turned things upside down? Cynics say our memories are short. That all the promises we have made to ourselves in recent weeks about becoming a more caring and resourceful society will fall by the wayside as soon as countries re-open for business. But if you ask me, people won't forget that easily.

I'm looking forward to grabbing coffee in an actual coffee shop and feeling the buzz of city life as much as the next person, but I'm facing the near future with my eyes wide open. Think about it: when the lockdown is lifted and we get the green light to go about our everyday lives, are you going to jump straight on a plane, brushing shoulders with the guy next to you as you take your seat? Are you going to feel comfortable stepping into a crowded elevator or dining in the confines of (your favorite) busy restaurant on a Friday night? Probably not.

And just as some habits will be hard to return to, other things will be hard to give up. Almost overnight, we became chefs and bakers – so much so, flour has become hot stuff. When the lockdown is lifted, will we all hang up our aprons, or will we realize that our newfound hobbies are in fact the source of a whole new kind of satisfaction?

Then there's the facemask. In the western world, wearing a surgical mask in the street would have met uneasy glances from passersby not too long ago. Now, donning a mask has become the new norm and a coveted accessory in short supply, such is the demand. Once all this is over, separating man from mask could be a challenge.

Whether it's facemasks or cake baking, research tells us that it takes 30 days to build a new habit, so there's a very real possibility that the activities, interests and behaviors that you have incubated since coronavirus forced you underground now represent the "new you".

But life under COVID-19 isn't just changing people, it's changing how we work and altering the priorities of companies large and small. Coronavi-

rus has landed businesses in uncharted, unprecedented and unpredictable territory, making a return to normal a near-impossible ask.

With entire economies on hold, companies have been left with no option but to slash pay and let people go in order to keep their heads above water. Meanwhile, those employees who have managed to cling onto their jobs are forced to carry out their work from home, adding to a displaced workforce that, through no fault of its own, is wholly unprepared for remote life.

But make no mistake, remote working is no temporary measure; it is here to stay. Companies that fail to make the shift towards a remote platform will rapidly find themselves left behind and losing valued employees.

What corporate leaders need now more than anything, is a way to help their employees to become more productive, wherever they happen to be. And, with people still grappling with their new remote realities and workforces downsizing by the day, the need for productivity growth is greater than ever.

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Fortunately, while economies sleep, companies like enable are firing up their AI engines and devising productivity solutions for the post-virus world.

By deploying AI-fueled technologies, companies can measure, compare and ultimately improve the productivity of their people, whether they're in the office, at home, or in a café (ahh, remember those days?)

I was recently asked why organizations should prioritize productivity right now, and my answer is this: they have no other option. Productivity drives profits which drives employment – it's a simple as that. COVID-19 has changed many things in life, but that's one reality that remains firmly the same ■

Source:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/life-after-covid-19-tommy-weir/>



Dr. Tommy is the leading CEO Coach in the Emerging Markets. Sitting in their shadow, he typically advises CEOs on growth in the emerging markets. He is exclusively working with Octara for his workshops in Pakistan and was the Keynote Speaker of 17th MAP Convention 2015.

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Dr. Jose Luis Cordeiro's MARS MANIA!

Review by Adil Ahmad
Special Correspondent, octara.com



Octara's celebrated international associate Dr. Cordeiro comes with some heavy duty credentials. He is the Founder of the World Future Society, Lifetime Member of Sigma Xi, Founding Energy Advisor NASA Research Park (California, USA), and Chair of the Millennium Project (Venezuelan Node). In 2013 he was the Keynote speaker at the 15th Management Association of Pakistan Convention.

Wild thoughts?

Dr. Jose Luis Cordeiro is like a man possessed and intent on giving practical expression to his fabulous daydream, that of colonizing Mars. His other daydream is equally fantastic, or so it appears to us lesser mortals focused on our bread and butter pursuits one day at a time. In the next three decades, says Dr. Cordeiro, man would have cured the 'disease' of aging and gained 'immortality'. The interview he gave to the funky YouTube Channel DEBT NATION (tagline - Busy putting debt out of business) could well qualify for science fiction, with a word of caution that truth is often stranger than fiction.

DEBT NATION caught up with Dr. Cordeiro on his birthday as he self-isolated himself in Madrid (Spain), one of the worst hit countries by the COVID-19 pandemic. Wearing a mask he confessed to not having shaved for 20 days and despaired not knowing how long the 'horrible quarantine' would last. On the flipside he said the Virus has caused people to think more about health in a more positive way and focus on the gaps in healthcare, and invest more in future-proofing ourselves.

Exponential change

The optimism Dr. Cordeiro has for the future is infectious and irresistible, and he backs it up with scientific facts. HIV-Aids in the 1980s took 2 years and millions of dollars to sequence the genome and discover the treatment, he says. "The SARS pandemic in 2002 was sequenced in 2 months, while COVID-19 was sequenced in 2 weeks, and in a few more weeks we should have the anti-viral treatment and vaccine. The next pandemic we should be able to sequence in just 2 days, and in 2 hours after that. This is truly exponential change. During the 2020s we should find complete cures for diabetes, HIV Aids, and others. By 2045 we should have cheap rejuvenation treatment and we will be able to live indefinitely for as long as we want in a useful condition." Wow.

Dr. Cordeiro talks about predictive technologies based on Artificial Intelligence that will predict pandemics well before they occur and can be nipped in the bud. But his most remarkable obsession is with the 8 month-long voyage to Mars for which he has been in simulation in a deep cave in Spain with four other crew members as part of the Astroland enterprise (www.astrolandagency.com). "We are from four nationalities with English as the common language. There are 2 engineers,

2 scientists/biologists, and 1 psychologist to sort out the minds during the 8 months voyage in a tiny cramped space."

Back to being Cavemen!

The Cave is 2 kilometers deep with temperature ranging around +10 degrees Celsius. "In Mars at its hottest it's -10 Celsius and can drop to -60 Celsius. "Mars is full of lava caves created by volcanic activity millions of years ago and they are safe places to protect against radiation. Mars colonies in the future will be in caves. We lived underground in a dome named Ares (Greek God of Mars) for 4 days after having spent 3 days training above ground."

Terraforming Mars

The Astrolanders, as they called themselves, had monitors strapped to their arm to check their vital signs and oxygen supply. "It took 30 minutes for pressurization and depressurization when departing and entering Ares. Space suits are heavy at 30kg and complicated. Right now Mars does not have an atmosphere and that will have to be created using bacteria which created Earth's atmosphere in the first place. Terraforming Mars has been talked about a lot by Elon Musk and others."

The radio waves take 10 to 30 minutes to communicate with Planet Earth depending on the orbits of Mars and Earth. "Between 7am and 11pm we did experiments and activities decided at the Command Center on Earth which was manned by a crew of 10 specialists. As the community builds on Mars the use of AI will reduce the number of people needed at the Command Center on Earth, and also a lot of control will transfer to Mars itself."

3D Printers vital

There was a 20 minutes lag and sometimes they had to take action in an emergency. "Once we were without heating for 6 hours. On Mars we might have died, but here at +10C it was not that critical. 3D printers are fundamental because we can't rely on our base on Earth. We must print everything on Mars locally. In 2010 there was developed at Singularity University a 3D printer that work in space in zero gravity. It's now deployed in the International Space Station. The design can be received via email and it can be 3D printed locally, including food."

Sprinting to Space

In the old space race there were just 2 countries, the USA and USSR, says Dr. Cordeiro. "Now we have USA, Europe, Russia, China, India, UAE, Israel and many other countries. Then we also have entrepreneurs – Elon Musk with SpaceX, Jeff Bezos with Blue Origin, Richard Branson with Virgin Galactic, and many others that will come soon. We could be colonizing small asteroids and the Moon."

Mars has a day of 24 hours and 37 minutes, says Dr. Cordeiro, and the gravity on Mars is 1/3rd of Earth. "People will feel lighter. It will be a separate human civilization, separated by 8 months which could well be reduced. Apollo took 3 days to go to the Moon which was very slow. We could do it in a day today. The Chinese sent a spacecraft for the first time to the dark side of the Moon and discovered many interesting things. Richard Branson of Virgin Galactic is all set to take tourist to orbit Earth and the Moon, and is selling tickets for \$200,000 each."

The Future of Humanity

During his quarantine in Madrid Dr. Cordeiro has been reading Michio Kaku's "The Future of Humanity" that addresses space travelling and terraforming, and David Sinclair's "Lifespan" which talks about why we age and why we don't have to. Dr. Cordeiro's own book "The Death of Death" soon to be published in English also talks about longevity.

"Every day 100,000 people die of age related diseases. Aging is the mother of all diseases and we have to cure it. COVID-19 is felling the aged and we have to rejuvenate these people. The right to life is the only human right. We are between the last mortal generation and the first 'immortal' generation, and the last Earth based generation and the first multi-planetary generation. This is an incredible time to be alive. ■"



Sualeha Bhatti bares her Soul My Life, My Dots, My Connections



She is the Chief Consultant and CEO of Winning Edge is one of Pakistan's leading names in the field of training and development. Sualeha Bhatti holds a master's degree in Business Administration from UK and has had the privilege of interacting with and learning from some of the best known names in this field such as Tom Peters, Robert Holding, Robert Benninga, Ron Kaufman, Omar Khan, etc.

Her 27 years of experience in corporate change and creating transformational learning experiences has exposed Sualeha to a multitude of businesses and organizations both in Pakistan as well as abroad.

She relies heavily on NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), a branch of behavioral psychology also known as the science of human achievement, to engage the hearts and not just the minds of the participants. Sualeha believes that training should be both a combination of self-discovery and skills, for one without the other fails to make a long lasting impact.

Having worked in manufacturing organizations she later ran several continuous improvement projects in factories in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, hence she has a well-rounded knowledge of the key functions and the unique business environment of organizations with production facilities.

"Pain and tragedy can either destroy us or set us off on a journey of self-discovery," writes Sualeha, giving the background of her first book **'My Life, My Dots, My Connections'** which is now available from Amazon Kindle.

"Thankfully I took the latter route. As my mother slipped deeper in the dementia my frustration, pain and confusion grew as well. I have always believed that everything happens for a reason and I wanted to understand what life was trying to teach me through this pain. As my focus turned towards the reasons rather than the events themselves my outlook began to change, rather than being negative and pessimistic I became grateful and began seeing opportunities to learn everywhere.

The journey of self-exploration widened into exploration of ideas, events, concepts ... thinking became my favorite pass time. Watching a show on TV or observing people would suddenly give me an insight into something totally unrelated. 'Connect the dots' was a phrase which kept echoing in my mind.

I'm not an intellectual and definitely no genius but I am an expert on one thing - my own life. The dots I connected were all mine and the resulting insights were all mine as well. They may not be earth shattering or even correct perhaps, but they are mine."

Sualeha Bhatti graciously consented to field a series of questions from OCTARA.

octara.com: *Congratulations on your first book 'My Life, My Dots, My Connections' available from Amazon Kindle. Please provide us with a sneak peek at what lies in between the covers.*

Sualeha: My Life, My Dots, My Connections is my take on my own life and things I observe. I went through a really rough patch when my mother was very ill with dementia and during this period I grappled with some fundamental questions which plague most people such as why this could be happening and why did life take such a drastic turn etc.

"Why?" Is an extremely important word in my life, I have an innate need to process my own circumstances and emotions so as to get clarity. During that phase of my life I turned to many things such as Religion, Law of Attraction etc. But every question led to more questions rather than answers. Over time I realized that everything is connected. The answers do not lie in one area but rather they cut across many schools of thoughts. If something is true, then it stands to reason that the truth would hold up regardless of the lens through which it was being observed.

This evolution in my thought process led me to examine not just my own life but what was happening around me and in time, this area of introspection widened and I started seeing connections in seemingly opposing ideas such as Islam and

science, religion and Law of Attraction, mythologies of different religions etc. In a nutshell this book is the answer to many 'whys' for me; but since they are my whys and my answers, hence the title.

octara.com: *What prompted you to put pen to paper? And why was it such a long time in coming?*

Sualeha: I have always found writing to be cathartic, putting things on paper is a means of working them out of my system otherwise they keep bothering me. I get a sense of closure with the last 'full stop' put in place. My biggest problem is that I cannot write unless I'm moved to do so - it just doesn't happen on demand and not on subjects I am not emotionally connected with. My turmoil is the key to my creativity, so when it is smooth sailing writing takes a vacation.

I have also maintained that one should write about something which is theirs and theirs alone, not a rehash of other people's theories and ideas and therefore I never really felt that I had anything original to contribute. One day I was going through my blog entries and realized that over the past 10 years or so I had produced a rather large body of work which was original. So I compiled and re-wrote them with the wisdom of hindsight and the result was this book. My big goal is to write a biography of my mother and the extraordinary circumstances of her life.

octara.com: *With an MBA from the UK, why aren't you at the helm of a Fortune 500 company today?*

Sualeha: Simple answer – I'm not ambitious enough. Unlike the truly driven people around me I really have no ambition at all – at least not the kind which propels you to such levels of success. My definition of success is also different from most people, yes I like money and yes I want to be financially stable but that is just about it.

My definition of success is to live my life on my own terms, have many experiences, and learn about many things. My prime directive is happiness and I am pretty successful at that.

octara.com: *How do you view the field of training and development in Pakistan?*

Sualeha: The current scenario of COVID19 has forced all of us to revisit our methods and make a bigger shift towards e-learning. I'm not saying that all training should or can be converted to remote learning, there are certain programs which simply do not lend themselves to it, but many can be very successful as e-learning modules. For me personally that is a great way of doing the work and continue to earn while I spend more time doing other things I enjoy.

octara.com: *Helping people realize their potential and be the best they can be is a tall order at the best of times. Why is Pakistan so badly on the back foot when it comes to developing its much vaunted demographic dividend, the youth bulge?*

Sualeha: Learning means growth and growth means getting out of our comfort zones. Unfortunately we are taught from an early age that being uncomfortable is a condition to be avoided at all times! Anything which challenges us emotionally is shunned.



Octara Workshops facilitated by Sualeha Bhatti in 2010-11

I have touched upon several aspects of this in my book and in fact most of the book may make some people feel a certain level of discomfort, but if it forces them to think then my objective is achieved.

In my trainings also, I let them know at the start of certain programs that at some point or the other they will feel uncomfortable and they should celebrate that because it means internal wear and tear is taking place so that the old makes way for the new.

octara.com: *Please recollect some of your interactions with, and impressions of, the giants of your field such as Tom Peters, Robert Holding, Robert Benninga, Ron Kaufman, and Omar Khan.*

Sualeha: I am blessed to have had the opportunity to have observed these people in action and learn from those who are at top of their games. Omar Khan was a big influence on my training style, especially my ability to 'connect' with the participants and engage them. From Tom Peters I learnt that people pay top dollar not for great delivery, but great thinking. His power lies in his knowledge. Robert Benninga taught me the importance of loving yourself before you can love others. With Robert Holden I developed a very nice bond and he taught me how important it was to smile and laugh despite your circumstances.

octara.com: *You have worked in manufacturing organizations and run several continuous improvement projects in factories in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. What is your advice to the*

industrialists of Pakistan?

Sualeha: Your managers are not the only problem solvers in your organizations. The solution usually lies with the person(s) who faces that problem and that person could be your lowest ranking employee. This is because he/she lives and thinks about that problem constantly. Ask them. Intelligence is not always directly proportionate to educational qualification.

octara.com: *How do you unwind and manage stress?*

Sualeha: The way I manage stress is to work out exactly what it is that is stressing me, asking myself what is the worst that can happen and what would I do if the worse does happen and then I try and find a solution or at least take some action to alleviate that stress. My mantra is 'every problem has a solution you just need to look for it'. Just the act of figuring out the solution lifts me up because then I take the control back in my hands. As for unwinding, it's books and TV for me and to avoid news channels at all cost.

octara.com: *What kinds of books do you like reading?*

Sualeha: My book selection method is a bit strange, I usually go to the book store and just look at all the titles without really knowing in advance what I want, I let my sub-conscience guide me and usually I gravitate towards a certain book which compels me to pick it up. Unlike most corporate professionals I will not claim that I love to read the latest leadership or business titles, I don't (I read those as part of my work) I enjoy reading fiction, personal development, history, ancient mysteries and mythology.

octara.com: *What sort of food are you partial to?*

Sualeha: I love home cooked food. And again, as with everything else in my life, there is no set list of preferences. It totally depends upon my mood, but I do enjoy our desi snacks, the chats and samosas, but I try not to have them too often.

octara.com: *How are you faring during the current COVID-19 lockdown?*

Sualeha: I work from home and I live alone, so really for me it has not been much of a difference. I am somewhat of a recluse and having been an only child I am used to being alone, besides which I really like my own company. This time has given me the opportunity to be really productive by being able to focus without interruptions and that is why I could publish my book during this time.

octara.com: *Please allow us a peep into your family and early life going through school, college and university.*

Sualeha: I'm an only child of an only child and have no family or relations per se. I had absolutely wonderful parents who gave me all that I desired and more but never gave in to demands. As a kid in school I was somebody who day dreamed a lot, laughed a lot and spent all spare time in the school library.

I was an average student and managed to pass each year in the top 10 rankings but never the top ranks and my parents never pushed me to come 1st or 2nd. They just wanted me to be the best I could be, no more, no less. They provided me opportunity to explore my talents in every possible way, so when I wanted to try my hand at painting, dad made sure I was well supplied with paints, canvases the works.

I think I am so well rounded because of that quality of my parents. They never said "No focus on your studies first". College and university were all about freedom and hanging out with friends. Again I was never possessed with getting top ranks and really only actually learnt any subject because I enjoyed it and liked the teacher who taught that subject. All else was cramming for exams. In short I was always very unremarkable ■

On that very self-effacing note, thank you Sualeha Bhatti.

Interview conducted by Adil Ahmad (Correspondent, OCTARA.COM)

Zainab Essajee

THE PRODUCER

Voted Best Team Player at Octara!

In November 2015 Zainab Essajee, a Josephine with Graduation in Software Engineering and Masters in Marketing from Bahria University, joined OCTARA as Conference Producer with a wide ranging mandate that has her interacting with intellectuals and high-powered governing bodies of the Management Association of Pakistan (MAP), Institute of Chartered Accountants Pakistan (ICAP), and Kinetic Pakistan.

Prior to joining Octara, Zainab had already clocked considerable corporate time beginning with an extended internship with M&P in 2004 followed by 7 years as manager communications with Ecommerce Gateway Pakistan, and a short spell with the real estate giant Abdullah Group in marketing for Sindh.



Official Dinner of Team Octara #Flashback



Substantial portfolio

From conceptualization, formulation of agenda, research and correspondence with global keynote speakers and national industry thinkers, to the promotion and execution of conventions, conferences and seminars, Zainab occupies the hot-seat at Octara to the complete satisfaction of her clients and colleagues alike.

She has also worked closely with the marketing team of DAWN Education Expo in the execution of **Octara's Career Compass Workshops** for students entering the job market and executives looking for new challenges.

The Pakistan E-commerce Consortium has also benefited from her presence and she has executed a series of ecommerce sessions for startups and entrepreneurs with well-known Pakistani mentors under the title of **TCS Octara 4UM**.

Her passion for digital marketing and understanding of design and creativity ethics has also landed her the responsibility for digital media marketing of all Octara training programs and events on social media, website and other medium, a task in which she has the full support of her creative and design teams.



An important part of Zainab's portfolio is publishing the widely disseminated **octara.com e-newsletter** that carries insights of global future trends and interviews of national and international industry thinkers and experts.

As a talent scout Zainab Essajee is always on the lookout for subject specialists who can as **national trainers** can share their corporate working experience and learning with the next generation of industry leaders presently at mid-level in corporate businesses. Within Octara she tends to **HR matters** as well.

Pivot to Virtual Space

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown that has prompted a radical change in how businesses operate, Zainab has managed a fairly seamless pivot to the virtual space necessitated by the Work-From-Home culture that has swept the world. *"Lucy Cornell's free webinar is our first virtual event from the Octara platform, and we are learning new things like using the Zoom App and online registration. But we have to harness e-banking and move quickly to paid trainings to run the business."*

Work-from-Home routine with Team Octara


Meanwhile, Team Octara has adapted to the new conditions obtained and are working from home. They are maintaining the 9am to 6pm office timings and clocking in on their  WhatsApp Group with a wave of their hands at 9am. 

Zainab then prepares her To-Do List for the day and quickly scans the headlines of the e-newspaper to stay current with what's happening in the world, along with taking inspiration from the positive quote sent in by the CEO Jamil Janjua. "I equate those beautiful words with that refreshing and amazing cup of tea at our office served by everyone's favorite happy-go-lucky Shahzad Bhai who is greatly missed."

Between 11am and 1pm Zainab is in flow responding to emails and WhatsApp chats or calls from Octara's stakeholders, global & national experts and vendors, noting items for discussion with the team and progress on previously assigned tasks. Then she posts content related to Covid-19 on Octara's social media platforms, and before taking a lunch & prayers break she sends personal audio messages to her team mates to build that atmosphere of chilling out at the office cafeteria during lunchtime.

"I personally drop a message on our WhatsApp Group that I will be away from my workstation for prayers and lunch and will update when I get back. These are some rules I learnt from a webinar for free-lancers/startups on remote working."

2pm to 4pm is Zainab's favorite time of the day because she connects with her teammates on Zoom, does virtual meetings with clients and trainers, and reads some interesting daily blogs and articles posted on LinkedIn by experts.

Between 5pm and 6.15pm Zainab tallies her To-Do List, scrolls down different Chat groups in search of interesting free webinars and gets herself registered for them. The last task of the day is to mark her attendance on TCS Octara's online portal and wave  to her teammates as she logs off.



Saira Awan, Vice Chairperson & Group CEO of TCS Holdings greeting Zainab & Ayesha from Octara on Women's Day



Zainab & Jason D'souza with Volunteers & Team at Octara Career Compass Workshops



Zainab with Keynote Speakers, Kate Sweetman; Shane Cragun of MAP Convention 2016 and MAP & Octara Team



Zainab with JJ, Muhammad Arif, Ushna & Keynote Speakers - Dr. Jose Cordiero & Francisco Palao of MAP Convention 2017



First Solo International Tour to BAKU City



Zainab mentoring TCF students



Zainab & Officials of Khunjerab Pass – China Border with group of travellers



Zainab with Polish Travel Vlogger, Eva Zu Beck, who promotes Pakistan Tourism



Zainab is leading a group of trekkers for Nanga Parbat (26,660 ft) above sea level

Volunteerism

As a conscientious citizen Zainab has volunteered with **The Citizen Foundation (TCF)** as a Mentor in its Rahbar Program since 2018. The **Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP)** has also had the benefit of her volunteerism at the Expo Centre and Governor House during international events.

Great Outdoors organizer!

“Apart from this corporate world, I find my soul relaxes when I can sight-see the unexplored beauty of Pakistan,” says Zainab. “I feel energized by the beautiful landscapes of Pakistan from K2 to the Arabian Sea.”

Since she was in grade 6 in school Zainab has been exploring Pakistan with random groups of people centered on friends of her cousins and her college friends and faculty. It was a bit challenging in the beginning going with people she didn't know too well but it helped her develop her interpersonal skills with firm values. In December 2019 she engaged in her first solo tour to Baku, Azerbaijan to fully enjoy her annual leave. *“I enjoy cycling a lot and have been riding to office as well.”*

Zainab is passionate about hiking and loves watching vlogs of female mountaineers. From doing it herself she has taken to encouraging 'gharailu' housebound females to get out and about in the Great Outdoors and has started a tourism company on a small scale as a Co-Founder in 2015 with taking a small group of friends and their friends to Kund Malir in Balouchistan to visit the ancient Hindu Temple which was an unexplored spot at the time, and the ball got rolling with RnB Tours being formed.

Today RnB Tours is a flourishing enterprise with a vibrant social media presence on Facebook (www.facebook.com/rnbtours) that takes the enterprising types, young and old, on the trips of their lifetime discovering and reveling in the many splendid natural treasures that Pakistan's been blessed with, Mashallah.

Family

Zainab is the eldest of five siblings, four sisters, and one brother who passed away recently at the tender age of 24, and one cannot possibly imagine the great sense of loss that she endures with great stoicism.

“I come from a family of entrepreneurs with ancestors in Sistan, Iran. We are pioneers in Pakistan for producing Pastas & Vermicelli under the brand of CRISPO. Both parents are pure Karachiites. I am the daughter of an ambitious person who is known for his god-gifted knowledge of machine engineering among pasta manufacturers in Switzerland, Spain & Pakistan. My Mother is a house wife and gold medalist from the Mama Parsi Cuisine Class. After my father's critical CABAG heart surgery I have taken the major responsibilities for my Family. My sisters are married and housewives.”

Reading Habit

Zainab admits to not being inclined towards reading books but has managed to complete some interesting books during her education and while nursing her father for 10 months - **Art of War** by Sun Tzu; **Rich Dad Poor Dad** by Robert T. Kiyosaki; **Kite Runner** by Khaled Hossein and **Seven Habits of Highly Effective People** by Stephen Covey, and is trying to read them again during the work-from-home period to detach herself from techy-life for some ME-TIME. Her recent read has been **The Quick & Easy Way to Effective Speaking** by Dale Carnegie obtained from the CEO's personal library.

Future hope

Being fully independent in taking personal decisions within the prescribed family standards, Zainab wished for and succeeded in getting females out of their family limitations to manage their own travelling and explore the beauty of Pakistan.

“I believe meeting strangers in your relaxation mode cracks up the shell of fear in Pakistani females. I would like to see the same openness and confidence in our professional females, and for that our male gender has to realize that women can lead teams if they are provided that space to perform professionally & psychologically for any business to grow.” True that.

Interview conducted by **Adil Ahmad** (Correspondent, OCTARA.COM)

Coping with COVID-19: 3 Tips for Business Leaders

Article by Asma Sethi

Business leaders in Pakistan are deeply concerned about business continuity, keeping employees engaged and managing work performance under WFH situation. There is immense psychological pressure resulting from uncertainty and fear of failure. We are trying to figure out the present situation and gauge effective strategies we could work out smartly, not knowing how long this will last.

In this piece, I present three key areas which leaders could consider taking control of the situation:

1- Strengthen Connection with your Team

- Communicate with compassion, courage and honesty. This is the first step towards creating acceptance of the situation.
- Your character in this crisis will give you credibility and earn you trust.
- Inspire confidence in your people. Talk about the collective fears and anxiety, while reassuring them about an optimistic future.
- Take difficult decisions and communicate.
- Provide motivation continually. Give them feedback. Have coaching conversations.
- Use digital collaboration tools for instant, fast-paced and frequent communication.

2- Re-prioritize Business Goals

- Draw inferences from the market, engage industry leaders and use **collective wisdom** of your leadership team to make decisions. There will be guideposts available, no matter how few.
- Pair those with your **intuitive ability** to help you craft a clearer way forward.
- Focus on what's in your control.
- **Do not fear failure.** You may find yourself experimenting to assess what works best for your business and people.
- Engage in scenario planning to develop an action plan with your team. Identify critical time-bound projects. Revise people goals to make them SMART-er.

- Understand, that organization does not have to run at full speed and **focus on making progress.**
- Empower and hold teams accountable. **Monitor results** not the pace of work.
- Ensure discipline is followed; do not give non-performance a pass.

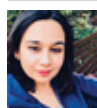
3- Encourage Mental Health, Overall Well-being and Reflection

Energetic and healthy employees will be more productive than anxious employees. Create a communication plan for employee wellness.

- Inspire by walking the talk. Start from yourself.
- Exercise to maintain a **healthier body** and mind.
- For **mental calmness**, encourage practicing mindfulness, yoga, meditation or deep breathing.
- Introduce online mental health counselling as a part of employee assistance program
- Identify and create awareness of the **need for intangible skills:** such as building emotional resilience, sailing with uncertainty, embracing vulnerability as a strength.
- Use faith or other **spiritual relaxation** techniques for expanded awareness.
- Encourage reflection on life's purpose, sense of belonging, personal values and priorities in life.

Finally, this is the time when strength of the company's culture will take precedence and keep the ship from drowning. The organizations values, practices, resilience, and employee's trust in leadership will be tested, and will affect the progress.

Remember we are living a world-wide crisis and there will be no one solution. Know in your heart and communicate that whatever effort you and your team are making will get them through this ■



Asma Sethi is a seasoned HR professional who is a strong advocate of digital transformation and innovative organization practices. She has done her Masters in Entrepreneurship and Innovation from Queen Mary University of London, while specializing in Human Resources.

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Boosting Communication

Article by Hira Ali

Published on April 17, 2020



In just a matter of few weeks, the corona virus has become an all consuming global pandemic wreaking havoc in the business world and in our personal and professional lives.

Businesses are now facing an unprecedented double bind – they not only need to look out for their employees' and clients' well-being but also ensure business continuity.

The majority of the world's population and large organizations have adopted remote working quicker than anyone could have expected. Wherever you're working, what's most critical is how and what is communicated by the business leaders to their teams.

Develop a Unified Communication Model

In an emergency or fast-evolving situation, you need a centralised communication model and all information needs to be disseminated from this source rather than dispersed spokespersons. In this time of uncertainty, it's important for people to receive timely and regular updates from a single, trusted and central source.

Involve Key Stakeholders

You need to communicate early and often with all your key stakeholders throughout this crisis. Studies have evidenced that leaders play a critical role in alleviating anxiety, whether they are communicating in-person or online.

Your foremost communication responsibility lies with your employees who are your most important stakeholders. Simplify the communication for them, put their mind at ease as much as you can, and inspire hope for the future.

For customers, focus on what is important to them given the current situation. For example, many restaurants, coffee outlets, home stores and retail stores are sending out information on the extra measures they are taking to ensure safety and hygiene including cleaning procedures and contactless deliveries.

Share the steps you are taking to contain the contamination at your end. If you can afford to, provide relief.

JetBlue was one of the first airlines to waive change and cancel fees for coronavirus-related concerns. The epidemic has perpetuated intense volatility in the financial markets in the last few weeks and we seem to be heading towards a recession so it's important to reassure stakeholders as well.

Finally, your actions around the coronavirus will impact communities surrounding you. You can share ways in which you're supporting your local, national or global community and thereby establish trust and long lasting relationships.

Communicate Timely and Often

It is important to share information in a timely fashion rather than waiting to be aware of all the answers. No one really expects you to know everything so share whatever is known and make the information visible

through email, the company intranet, company website or social media. A lot of companies are communicating internally on a daily and even hourly basis.

Show Empathy

Do your best to de-mystify fear and reduce panic. Focus on showing concern rather than creating selling opportunities. During uncertain and vulnerable times, it's more important for leaders to act empathetically than cautiously. Be attentive about any miscommunication and be quick to rectify without worrying too much about the repercussions.

At this point in time, people will appreciate genuineness more than anything else. The COVID-19 crisis has been emotionally draining for many people, impacting their day-to-day life in unimaginable ways and it's crucial to reflect consideration and understanding in all your communication.

Be Transparent

Even if you're uncertain and still trying to understand the impact of the situation and all that is involved, honesty and candour will help maintain credibility. Be as transparent as you can. Share what you are aware of, be honest about what you are unaware of and include your sources of information.

Stating the facts as they are and signposting stakeholders to timely, accurate information from NHS, WHO, the government and other relevant sources is helpful. Provide stakeholders with autonomy so they feel empowered to deal with any quickly changing situation.

Be Succinct

Long-winded explanations and jargon-filled messages will only be confusing or misunderstood. Summarise company policies, especially those relating to attendance, and clearly articulate work-from-home policies. If your organization supports remote working practices, share procedures and expectations and ensure employees have the resources.

Promote preventive actions employees can take (hygiene and avoidance) in line with recommendations from the government, provide clear instructions about what to do if employees suspect they have been exposed to coronavirus, and clearly highlight how you can and will support in such scenarios.

If you can be anything at the moment, be in touch, be kind, be considerate and keep communicating! ■

Source:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/boosting-communication-during-pandemic-hira-ali/>



Hira Ali is an author, writer, speaker and executive coach focused on women's and ethnic leadership development, closing the gender gap and breaking glass ceilings. She is the Founder of Advancing Your Potential and International Women Empowerment Events and Co-Founder of Career Excel and The Grey Area.

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What is COVID-19 teaching us about supply chain?



Article by **Azeem Azhar**
Influencer, Founder of Exponential View

Published on April 12, 2020

Photo by chuttersnap on Unsplash - Azeem Azhar

BI recently spoke to Pierre Ferragu, the head of the Global Technology Infrastructure research at New Street Research. Our conversation revolves around the potential impact of the pandemic on the tech industry. We looked at the future of supply chains, with some real-life examples, and the potential impacts of Covid-19 on the international economy.

Highlights from our conversation are below – [you can listen to it in full here.](#)

Azeem Azhar: From an investor's perspective, what are the particular hallmarks of this crisis that make it distinctly bad compared to the ones that we've seen over the last 25 years?

Pierre Ferragu: "If I were to qualify the crisis over the last 25 years, you usually have two elements in them. One is, you have a crisis that is driven by an overheating of the economy. You are in a situation where you end up having too many investments and you have oversupply, not enough demand, and things collapse. And as things collapse, of course, there is capacity destruction. When you reach the bottom of the crisis, you need to rebuild capacity to drive growth again.

Today, we are not in a situation where there was a very material and easily documented overcapacity in the economy. We actually have an economy running strongly, but on a fairly healthy basis that suddenly stops and it stops for one week, for two weeks, for three weeks, but capacity is still there. So we don't know how we get out of that. There won't be much to rebuild. The infrastructure is still in place. That's also a very significant difference.

Azeem Azhar: What are we learning about supply chains amidst this crisis?

Pierre Ferragu: "Supply chains are extremely efficient and tight, so you don't have that much slack in it. It's not like in the old days where you had three or four months of inventory used to deal with any disruption. When you analyze the capital employed of a PC manufacturer, you realize that the most important capital cost is your inventories. So you are a student, and from your bedroom, you start a computer company that has no inventories. You crash a remedy because you have far less employee capital in the business. But today, you realize that not having any inventories can actually put you in trouble in a very extreme situation like today.

Then, the second aspect of the supply chain is that they are very global. There is a virus that was considered at the time, a very local phenomenon in China. The whole region of China was locked down, but there were some factories in that region. What investment analyst and strategy consultants and business planning people realized, is that they had to figure out whether or not they were exposed to a factory that was in that area of the world. That's not that easy to figure out because things got so global, so complex."

Azeem Azhar: So if you're a consumer electronics brand in the US and you have 200 different components, you don't necessarily know which factory in which city has produced this little widget that you need to finish your TV.

Pierre Ferragu: "I'm pretty sure that from an institutional perspective at the scale of the company, the knowledge exists. But when it comes to briefing your CEO, before his breakfast, you struggle to find the information. Now, the thing is that in China, most factories came back online so you can reasonably worry about the impacts of a resurgence of the virus if there is a new outbreak in China, but that's the only risk you're facing there. Now, what you're facing is that the whole chain is actually being disrupted by the lockdown, so you don't have logistics anymore. So, now we are facing a problem that is completely different from where it was two weeks ago. Today's problem is the whole world has come to a stop ■"

Pierre and I go on to discussing how to build more resilience into supply chains.

[Listen to our whole conversation here.](#)

P.S. On Tuesday, 14 April, I hosted a live discussion on the state of the crisis and the post-pandemic world. [Read more.](#)

Source:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-covid-19-teaching-us-supply-chains-azeem-azhar/>



Topic	Day/s	Trainer	Month
Being Anchored in an Age of Turbulence	Half-day	Abbas Husain	May
3D Ramazan- Direction, Drive and Discipline	Half-day	Umair Jaliawala	May
Creating Content that Sells	Half-day	Hira Saeed	May
Smart Selling Skills for Front-line Professionals	Half-day	Faizan Ahmed	May
Certificate in Maintenance Planning / RCM	2	Ben Stevens	June
HR Leadership Using HR Metrics & HR Analytics	1	Talha Asim	June
Business Communications Masterclass	1	Catherine Bentley	June
Designing Agile Organizations	2	Frederik Haentjens	July
Digital Marketing Masterclass	2	Dr. Frank Peter	July
Service 4.0 Transforming Customer Interactions	1	Asim Rashid	July
Managers as Coach	1	Shiraz Ahmed	July
Post Budget Workshop	1	TBC	July
Cyber Security Management	1	TBC	August
Key Account Management	1	David Vachal	August
Visual Merchandising & Shopper Marketing	1	TBC	August
Microsoft Power BI Including DAX & Queries	1	Irfan Bakaly	August
Corporate Etiquettes for Sales Professionals	Half-Day	Ghaus A. Jafri	August
Understand the FinTech Space	3	Petros Geroulanos	September
Effective Marketing Techniques	Half-Day	Dave Nelissen	September
Effective Selling Techniques	Half-Day	Dave Nelissen	September
Emotional Intelligence for Leadership Excellence	1	John Bentley	TBC
Measuring Return on Investment of Training	1	Jack J Philips	TBC
Interviewing Tomorrow Workforce	1	Uzma Chishti	TBC
Creativity & Innovation using Design Thinking	2	Rody Vonk	TBC
Channel Management	1	Tony Lewis	TBC
Crisis Response and Communication Management	1	Ben Pronk	TBC
Successful Product Launching and Brand Positioning	2	Darren Coleman	TBC
Health Care Operation Management	1	David Ben Tovim	TBC
Learning and Development Management Program	2	Ian Thomson	TBC
Agile Project Management	2	Kevin Charlesworth	TBC
Enterprise Risk Management	2	Philip Griffith	TBC
Team Building using LEGO	1	Pete Smith	TBC
Leadership Code	1	Kate Sweetman	TBC
Project Management & Lifecycle Costing	2	Ben Stevens	TBC
Certified Google Adword	2	Dr. Frank Peter	TBC
Strategic Marketing	2	Graham Hollins	TBC

* All training programs are subject to change as per the guidelines from GoP on CoVID_19

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