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Dear Reader,

The moment of reckoning has arrived in Dubai as world leaders gather for the COP28 to sort out the mess caused by humanity's addiction to fossil fuels. From carbon capturing high-tech techniques to the accelerated proliferation of renewable energy sources, to worldwide cutbacks on consumption, it's all there on the table; but there is extreme polarization and a general lack of political will amongst governments to take the tough decisions now wanted as of yesterday, even the day before. In our tailpiece on the environment we lead with the curse of smog in Pakistan that has made us notorious as having the world's most polluted cities.

The three pieces that precede the tailpiece address the conundrum presented by it. How do we get meaningful action on the ground in our pursuit of excellence? Or, in the case of COP28, to avoid the inferno that awaits us? The future of human work is imagination, creativity and strategy, writes **Joseph Pistrui** in his 12 minutes read as he dwells on the debate about technology replacing jobs. He emphasizes that humans are strategic while machines are tactical, and that integrating new technology is about emotions.

Roger Martin is up next and talks about the three distinct modes of leadership teams seen as individuals (role clarity), colleagues (collaboration skill) and as a collective (focus and restraint).

The third piece is on how your best content might come from borrowed ideas, with **Cal at Reword** emphasizing that borrowing ideas doesn't mean copying or plagiarizing. It's about exploring concepts and making them your own. "Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way" - Edward de Bono.

The world today has far too much on its plate, and the plate shows signs of cracking under the weight of its burden. However, optimism and hope for the future are enjoined on us as articles of faith. We look to the phenomenal capacity of Humanity to reinvent itself and prevail upon the most debilitating of disruptions that afflict us. May Allah keep us all in His protection, ameen. 🙏

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The Future of Human Work Is Imagination, Creativity, and Strategy



Juj Winn/Getty Images

By **Joseph Pistrui** | 12 min read

It seems beyond debate: Technology is going to replace jobs, or, more precisely, the people holding those jobs. Few industries, if any, will be untouched.

Knowledge workers will not escape. Recently, the CEO of Deutsche Bank [predicted](#) that half of its 97,000 employees could be replaced by robots. One [survey](#) revealed that “39% of jobs in the legal sector could be automated in the next 10 years. Separate research

has concluded that accountants have a 95% chance of losing their jobs to automation in the future.”

And for those in manufacturing or production companies, the future may arrive even sooner. That same report mentioned the advent of “robotic bricklayers.” Machine learning algorithms [are also predicted](#) to replace people responsible for “optical part sorting, automated quality control, failure detection, and improved productivity and efficiency.” Quite simply, machines are better at the job:

The National Institute of Standards predicts that “machine learning can improve production capacity by up to 20%” and reduce raw materials waste by 4%.

It is easy to find reports that predict the loss of between 5 and 10 million jobs by 2020. Recently, space and automotive titan Elon Musk said the machine-over-mankind threat was humanity’s “biggest existential threat.” Perhaps that is too dire a reading of the future, but what is important for corporate leaders right now is to avoid the catastrophic mistake of ignoring how people will be affected. Here are four ways to think about the people left behind after the trucks bring in all the new technology.

The Wizard of Oz Is the Wrong Model

In Oz, the wizard is shown to run the kingdom through some complex machine hidden behind a curtain. Many executives may think themselves the wizard; enthralled by the idea that AI technology will allow them to shed millions of dollars in labor costs, they could come to believe that the best company is the one with the fewest people aside from the CEO.

Yet the CEO and founder of Fetch Robotics, Melonee Wise, [cautions](#) against that way of thinking: “For every robot we put in the world, you have to have someone maintaining it or servicing it or taking care of it.” The point of technology, she argues, is to boost productivity, not cut the workforce.

Humans Are Strategic; Machines Are Tactical

McKinsey has been [studying](#) what kind of work is most adaptable to automation. Their findings so far seem to conclude that the more technical the work, the more technology can accomplish it. In other words, machines skew toward tactical applications.

On the other hand, work that requires a high degree of imagination, creative analysis, and strategic thinking is harder to automate. As McKinsey put it in a recent report: “The hardest activities to automate with currently available technologies are those that involve managing and developing people (9 percent automation potential) or that apply expertise to decision making, planning, or creative work (18 percent).” Computers are great at optimizing, but not so great at goal-setting. Or even using common sense.

Integrating New Technology Is About Emotions

When technology comes in, and some workers go away, there is a residual fear among those still in place at the company. It’s only natural for them to ask, “Am I next? How many more days will I be employed here?” Venture capitalist Bruce Gibney [explains](#) it this way: “Jobs may not seem like ‘existential’ problems, but they are: When people cannot support themselves with work at all — let alone

with work they find meaningful — they clamor for sharp changes. Not every revolution is a good revolution, as Europe has discovered several times. Jobs provide both material comfort and psychological gratification, and when these goods disappear, people understandably become very upset.”

The wise corporate leader will realize that post-technology trauma falls along two lines: (1) how to integrate the new technology into the work flow, and (2) how to cope with feelings that the new technology is somehow “the enemy.” Without dealing with both, even the most automated workplace could easily have undercurrents of anxiety, if not anger.

Rethink What Your Workforce Can Do

Technology will replace some work, but it doesn't have to replace the people who have done that work. Economist James Bessen notes, “The problem is people are losing jobs and we're not doing a good job of getting them the skills and knowledge they need to work for the new jobs.”

For example, a [study](#) in Australia found a silver lining in the automation of bank tellers' work: “While ATMs took over a lot of the tasks these tellers were doing, it gave existing workers the opportunity to upskill and sell a wider ranges of financial services.”

Moreover, the report found that there is a growing range of new job opportunities in the fields of

big data analysis, decision support analysts, remote-control vehicle operators, customer experience experts, personalized preventative health helpers, and online chaperones (“managing online risks such as identify theft, reputational damage, social media bullying and harassment, and internet fraud”). Such jobs may not be in your current industrial domain. But there may be other ways for you to view this moment as the perfect time to rethink the shape and character of your workforce. Such new thinking will generate a whole new human resource development agenda, one quite probably emphasizing those innate human capacities that can provide a renewed strategy for success that is both technological and human.

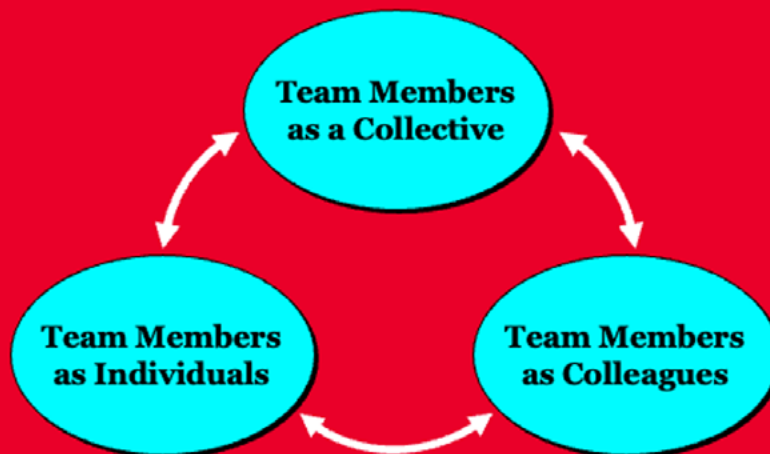
As Wise, the roboticist, emphasized, the technology itself is just a tool, one that leaders can use how they see fit. We can choose to use AI and other emerging technologies to replace human work, or we can choose to use them to augment it. “Your computer doesn't unemploy you, your robot doesn't unemploy you,” she said. “The companies that have those technologies make the social policies and set those social policies that change the workforce.”

Source:

https://hbr.org/2018/01/the-future-of-human-work-is-imagination-creativity-and-strategy?utm_campaign=hbr&utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social

The Work and Workings of Leadership Teams

The Three Distinct Modes



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Roger Martin | 7 min read

I often get asked questions about how to organize the work of executive leadership teams. There is often frustration with their effectiveness and efficiency, a feeling that they have become bureaucratic. Because of this pervasive vexation, I have decided to dedicate my 49th Year III Playing to Win/ Practitioner Insights piece is on: The Work and Working of Leadership Teams: The

[Three](#) Distinct Modes. You can find the previous 159 PTW/PI here.

Background

There is always an executive leadership team of some sort in any organization. It is commonly defined as the managers that report to CEO of the organization. It goes by many names — including no name in small companies — but it includes Executive

Leadership Team, Executive Committee, Senior Management Team, Global Leadership Team, and others. For simplicity, I will refer to it LT for 'leadership team.'

Often it is the object of frustration for its members, seen as slow and bureaucratic, a waste of time. Matters keep coming back to it and it is unclear who is doing what to whom.

I believe that the key to LT effectiveness and efficiency is segmentation of tasks. There need to be very different modes of working and the only way to do them well is to segment them into three chunks: LT Members as Individuals, LT Members as Colleagues, and LT as a Collective.

LT Members as Individuals

LT members operate as the senior executive of their own respective domains. In terms of the holistic effectiveness of an LT, this is the most important variable. Typically, companies are managed through their LT, the members of which typically control all (or nearly all) of the company's operating and capital budgets. For any company to succeed, the individual LT members need to do their jobs well. Nothing can save the effectiveness of the LT from bad individual performance. I have never observed collective LT action be able to make up for substantial individual LT failure in their jobs.

In my experience, a key, if not the key, to individual LT member effectiveness is role clarity. The CEO needs to delegate certain decision rights — and not others — to each LT member. What decisions does the CEO make? What decisions does the LT member make alone? And what decisions does the LT

member recommend for ratification of the CEO? Unless these decision rights are laid out clearly and sensibly, there is little chance for individual LT effectiveness. In fact, it wouldn't be possible to evaluate effectiveness if the criteria aren't clear.

When it comes to clarity in decision rights, I observe a consistent problem, and that is with what have come to be called "span breakers" — that is, an executive whose primarily (if not sole purpose) is to reduce the number of direct-reports to the CEO. That is, a CEO puts in place a direct-report whose sole job is to serve as a span breaker between the CEO and a number of other executives who would otherwise be direct-reports to the CEO. I have often seen span breakers who have no real decision rights other than a vague sense of coordinating the executives below them. The CEO typically tells the span breaker (in some form or another): "Just make sure those businesses are doing fine." The business executives below the span breaker have the power, but the CEO holds the span breaker responsible for their performance. It just doesn't end well.

The span breaker needs a real job or will become a useless bureaucrat. Everyone needs a challenging and fulfilling job and coordination is neither of those for a senior executive. Making decisions that drive performance is a real job. But that always begs the question, over what decisions does an LT member have jurisdiction?

Clarity of the decision rights of every LT member is the first task in LT effectiveness. Once those are assigned, the CEO needs to insist on performance in that job. And if there isn't performance, the CEO's duty is to replace the LT member — now, not later.

LT Members as Colleagues

A complicating factor for the clear assignment of decision rights to LT members is the fact that every large global company is a matrix. The minute a company becomes a multi-product and/or multi-geographic entity, [it operates as a matrix](#), whether that is what it calls itself or not.

That creates a challenge in defining jobs. They aren't as singular and independent as would be handy. Other than the CEO of the modern company, executives aren't fully in charge of everything related to their domain. They have to coordinate with colleagues, and that means colleagues at the same authority level as themselves. Product executives have to coordinate with geographic executives and functional executives, and vice versa.

In every company, there will always be the need for each LT member to collaborate with other LT members in the matrix. And the quality of that collaboration will dramatically impact LT effectiveness. For the collaboration to be effective, two things must be present. First, LT members must want to collaborate and second, LT members must be good at it.

The matrix structure requires the resolution of tensions across executives. This is, of course, not unique to the matrix structure. All executives have to resolve tensions within their own domains — spend on this versus spend on that; go faster to outpace competition or go slower to protect quality. But in these decisions, they can optimize within their own domain, of which they are in charge.

It is far trickier when decisions span across

executive domains. The optimal answer may be great for me within my domain of responsibility and bad for you in yours — or vice versa. If I am not committed to collaboration, in the latter case, I might just say no, I am not doing that. Or vice versa in the former case if the other isn't committed to collaboration. 'No' tends to be the easy answer. Collaboration requires the creativity to resolve the tension in a productive fashion (about which I have written two books — [The Opposable Mind](#) and [Creating Great Choices](#)). That requires both the desire to work together and the skills in working together. For this to happen in any company, the CEO needs to encourage and, in fact, insist on it and help executives build their skills in collaboration.

LT Members as a Collective

The third component of LT effectiveness is the LT as a collective. CEOs are given their title because they are responsible for the executive decisions that span across the entire organization. It is in their purview to make those decisions entirely on their own or based on successive individual consultations with members of their LT. However, most CEOs utilize their LT to act as a collective in tackling certain decisions.

In my experience, this approach varies widely in effectiveness. At its best, it provides huge leverage to the CEO. At its worst, it is a stultifying time sink. The key variable is the degree to which the collective work of the LT is carefully defined to play to its strengths. When the definition is unnecessarily broad, the team does work at which it is not superior and takes the work from people or groups that are.

That leads to (not unwarranted) charges of bureaucracy and slow decision making.

That is why I favor a tight definition of the role of the LT as a collective. I like to see most of the decisions made by individual LT members under the authority of the CEO or made jointly by the CEO and a single LT member or made jointly by the CEO and two or three relevant LT members.

I am also not keen on routine matters going through the LT — i.e., by routine, x must pass through the LT before it can be approved by the Board. Most such things don't need the LT as a collective to weigh in before going for CEO and/or Board approval. For example, the financial statements don't need to be reviewed by the LT — just the CEO and CFO. If we decided to build a new factory and its capital budget has been approved by the Board, we don't need the LT to opine on the annual spending plan. That is just bureaucracy.

I am most keen on the LT identifying, working on, and resolving issues that are broadly important to the company and aren't being tackled by anyone in the organization yet — which is why the identification task is really important. Novel, one-off issues are often the most challenging and those are the ones that I like to see the LT tackling as a collective — in part because it is often not clear at the outset, in whose responsibility area(s) does it primarily fall.

In this respect, I see the LT as much more project-based than routine-based. Projects are tricky and the LT can be a great aide to the CEO in chartering and completing projects with company-wide implications. Of course, while guiding these projects, the LT should utilize other members of

the organization in the work. But the responsibility would be that of the LT as a collective.

To be a highly effective and non-bureaucratic aide to the CEO, the LT as a collective should spend approximately 90% of its time on unique projects and the remaining 10% on recurring matters. And the recurring matters should be evaluated regularly to determine whether they can be more efficiently or effectively done by the CEO and a single LT member or a subset of the LT.

Practitioner Insights

Many reading this won't be an LT member of a company right now, but very many will at some point in their careers and almost everyone will have the moral equivalent — their team — working for them at their level. Everyone needs to understand how to help their team be more effective.

The overarching takeaway should be that LT effectiveness needs to be understood at three levels. With respect to LT as Individuals, the key imperative is role clarity that is understood and agreed upon by the CEO and the LT member. With respect to LT as Colleagues, the key imperative is collaboration skill, the development and utilization of which should be strongly encouraged by the CEO. With respect to LT as a Collective, the key imperative is focus and restraint. Of all the things the LT could do, it needs to focus relentlessly on what it should do — and that is complex company-wide projects.

Source:

<https://rogermartin.medium.com/the-work-and-workings-of-leadership-teams-519edd7d7830>

Your Best Content Might Come From Borrowed Ideas

3 min read

Ever sat staring at a blank screen, struggling for a new topic to create content around?

You're not alone.

Marketers and content creators constantly attempt to differentiate their brand and products through content.

But complete differentiation is nearly impossible.

Mark Twain said, ***"There's no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope."***

In his article, [Out of Content Ideas? Try Borrowing One or Two](#), Robert Rose states that uniqueness isn't a requirement for content marketing success - and it never was.

His tips on how to reuse or repurpose ideas include:

1. Borrowing ideas

This doesn't mean copying or plagiarising.

It refers to picking up concepts, strategies, or insights from other sources and applying your own perspective.

One of the best ways to generate fresh content is by observing what your competitors are doing.

2. Choosing the right ideas to borrow

A key part to successfully borrowing ideas is to

give them your own unique spin.

It's all about taking an existing idea and molding it into something that fits your brand and appeals to your audience.

This way, it doesn't feel like a rip-off but rather a fresh, new take on a proven concept. [See this example.](#)

3. Use the 'parallel play' concept

In a nutshell, parallel play describes a scenario where children are playing in close proximity to each other but, instead of interacting directly, they are deeply involved in their own activities.

Even though they're not physically playing together, they remain observant of what others are doing.

Interestingly, they borrow ideas to help them achieve something.

[Businesses targeting new markets echo this kind of play.](#)

Remember, borrowing ideas is not merely recycling.

It's about exploring concepts and making them your own.

"Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way."

- Edward de Bono

Cal at Reword <cal@reword.com>

Nature Calling for Action Stations (NCfAS#21)

Shortcuts in race for riches debilitating human race



Lazy, extractive mindset to blame

Harrowing Headlines

For the past few weeks the headlines have been harrowing, to put it very mildly. “Breathing poison” screams the editorial of the Dawn (November 16th); “The killing air” (Omar Mukhtar Khan, Dawn Op-Ed (October 30th); “Out of breath” (Masood Lohar, Dawn Op-Ed, November 14th); “Cost of bad air” (Farrukh Saleem, The News on Sunday Op-Ed, November 12th); “Dark Winter” (Editorial, The News International, November 10th); “Smog: Facing unsustainable management, again” (Dr. Muhammad Khurshid, The Express Tribune, October 30th); “The air is toxic” (Editorial, The News International, October 23rd); “Industries say cost of cleaner air is too high” (Lydia Depillis, The New York Times, November 16th).

Absent writ of the state

In just the month of November 2023 I have curated over 50 press reports on this subject, one worse than the other, and all pointing in the same direction - the writ of the state has eroded to the

point where it has stopped packing a punch by a long shot. Farmers keep burning crop stubble unhindered by the state in the rural landscape. This makes a substantial contribution to the smog and filthy air. Across the divide when the state did flex its writ and registered FIRs for burning crop residues, the farmers demonstrated in Amritsar against the East Punjab and central governments demanding the withdrawal of the FIRs registered against their colleagues (Dawn, November 21st).

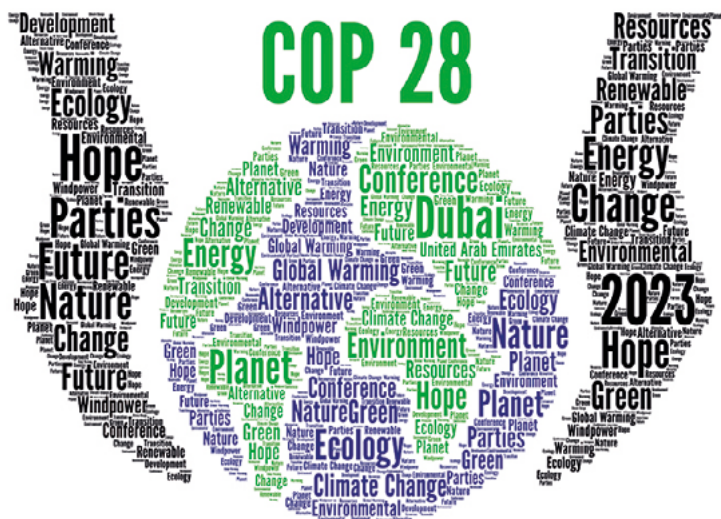
The urban landscape this side of the divide is just as immune to the law of the land. The members of a judicial commission constituted by the Lahore High Court reported that industrial units which had been sealed for violations were found functional again on inspection (Dawn, November 21st).

COP28 – lame duck getting lamer

“Earth to warm up to catastrophic 2.9 degrees Celsius: UN” screams the scary headline on the back page of the Dawn (November 21st). The UN Environment Program’s annual Emissions Gap

– Adil Ahmad, author

UNEP said “the world is witnessing a disturbing acceleration in the number, speed and scale of broken climate records”.



“Earth to warm up to catastrophic 2.9 degrees Celsius” – UN Environment Program’s (UNEP) annual Emissions Gap report

Taking into account countries' carbon-cutting plans, UNEP warned that the planet is on a path for disastrous heating of between 2.5C and 2.9C by 2100. Based just on existing policies and emissions-cutting efforts, global warming would reach 3C.



“Emissions are up 1.2 per cent from 2021 to 2022, with the increase largely driven by the burning of fossil fuels and industrial processes” – UNEP

But the world continues to pump record levels of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, with emissions up 1.2 per cent from 2021 to 2022, UNEP said, adding that the increase was largely driven by the burning of fossil fuels and industrial processes. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for the COP28 talks to outline “dramatic climate action”.

“Leaders can’t kick the can any further. We’re out of road,” he said, denouncing a “failure of leadership, a betrayal of the vulnerable, and a massive missed opportunity”. He said the world “must reverse course” and called for a clear signal at the COP28 meeting that the world was preparing for a decisive move away from polluting coal, oil and gas. That is not about to happen, much to our collective regret.

Abandoning fantasies

As the Chairman of ADNOC has already stated in his capacity of the COP28 Chair, “we cannot unplug the energy system of today before we build the new system of tomorrow. It is simply not practical or possible.” Sultan Al Jaber called for governments to abandon fantasies such as hastily ditching existing energy infrastructure in pursuit of climate goals (AFP report in The News International, Monday, October 09, 2023).

All that remains, it seems, is for the world to embrace with renewed vigor its spiritual quotient, and pray for the Creator’s mercy. But prayers alone will not suffice. We will need to walk our talk with the Creator, and mend our ways post haste if we are to avert the inferno that awaits us. The Creator helps those who help themselves. For the longest time we have been axing our own feet by

engaging in our feverish pursuit of conspicuous consumption fuelled by fossil fuel.

In Brazil the recent heat wave approached dangerously close to Wet Bulb levels. Temperatures soared to 41 degrees Celsius (105 Fahrenheit), with a heat index of nearly 59 C (138 F). Taylor Swift was in Rio de Janeiro for her three days Eras Tour and the dangerous heat wave left legions of her Brazilian fans angry and disappointed. After tens of thousands of fans had spent hours lining up in the heat, Swift announced on Instagram that it was necessary to postpone the show “due to the extreme temperatures in Rio.”

Fantasies brought to life

Dubai and Rio are many miles apart. What they have in common, however, is an extravagant view of the good life. When the COP28 Chair Sultan Al Jaber, the Chairman of ADNOC, calls for governments to abandon fantasies, he should first perhaps take a look at the front page cover story of The New York Times (Arielle Paul, November 21st)

“It is a failure of leadership, a betrayal of the vulnerable, and a massive missed opportunity. Leaders can’t kick the can any further. We’re out of road”

– UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

that highlights “Dubai’s costly water world” where visitors can scuba dive in the world’s deepest pool, or ski inside a megamall where penguins play in freshly made snow. Now THAT’s a fantasy, if ever there was one, and that too in a water starved desert landscape, brought to life by fossil fuels that power Jebel Ali’s 43 desalination plants. The UAE produced more than 200 million tons of carbon in 2022, which is amongst the highest emissions per capita worldwide, writes the NYT; a penny for your thoughts on carbon footprints, Mr. Chairman.

Column by Adil Ahmad, Correspondent, TCS Octara.Com