

# DIRECTORS UPDATE

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# Why does the human capital need to become more resilient?

Tremendous forces are changing and reshaping business, as we know it. Although companies are affected differently, no one can avoid the common denominator: Employees and Human Resource Management will have to adapt faster than ever to the changing business environment.

By Audhild Haugeberg

 - Future employees are not resilient enough and the evidence can be seen in the numbers of different studies. In Denmark, for example, 35,000 Danes are on daily sick leave from work because of stress, depression or anxiety, says Klaus

Dahl Tindborg, former Global Head of Human Resources at Maersk and now Partner and Executive Coach at EmpowerMind Aps.

With over 30 years of leadership experience from the Danish Army, HR and line

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management, Klaus Dahl Tindborg has developed in-depth competencies within areas such as people and change management. Going forward, he has realized that teaching employees to be resilient has become one of Human Resource Managements (HRM) most important task.

### **The most important personal skill**

What are you surrounded by when you step into an office? Of course, your co-workers, as they are the heart and soul of every business. Their effort is what will make the machine go faster, better and stronger. But what happens when we push the engine too far and don't get a refill in time?

- In line with an everyday life dominated by new technology and inputs, people have

started to demand a lot from themselves and their organization. We are living in a "presentation culture", which in turn has led to a tendency of employees going down with stress, Tindborg says.

Tindborg points out that some people might be bothered when they hear him say "we have to become more resilient", since it indicates that it is each individual's responsibility to be resilient enough to preserve good mental health. However, it is not only the employee that has to ensure this.

- The new paradigm in stress research is based on a thesis that says stress is caused by the individual's inability to handle the stressful environments they are exposed to. In this case, it means that "coping" is the

strategy that might be the only long lasting solution against stress. The company and the employees will therefore have to facilitate focus on what may be the future most important personal skill, mental resilience.

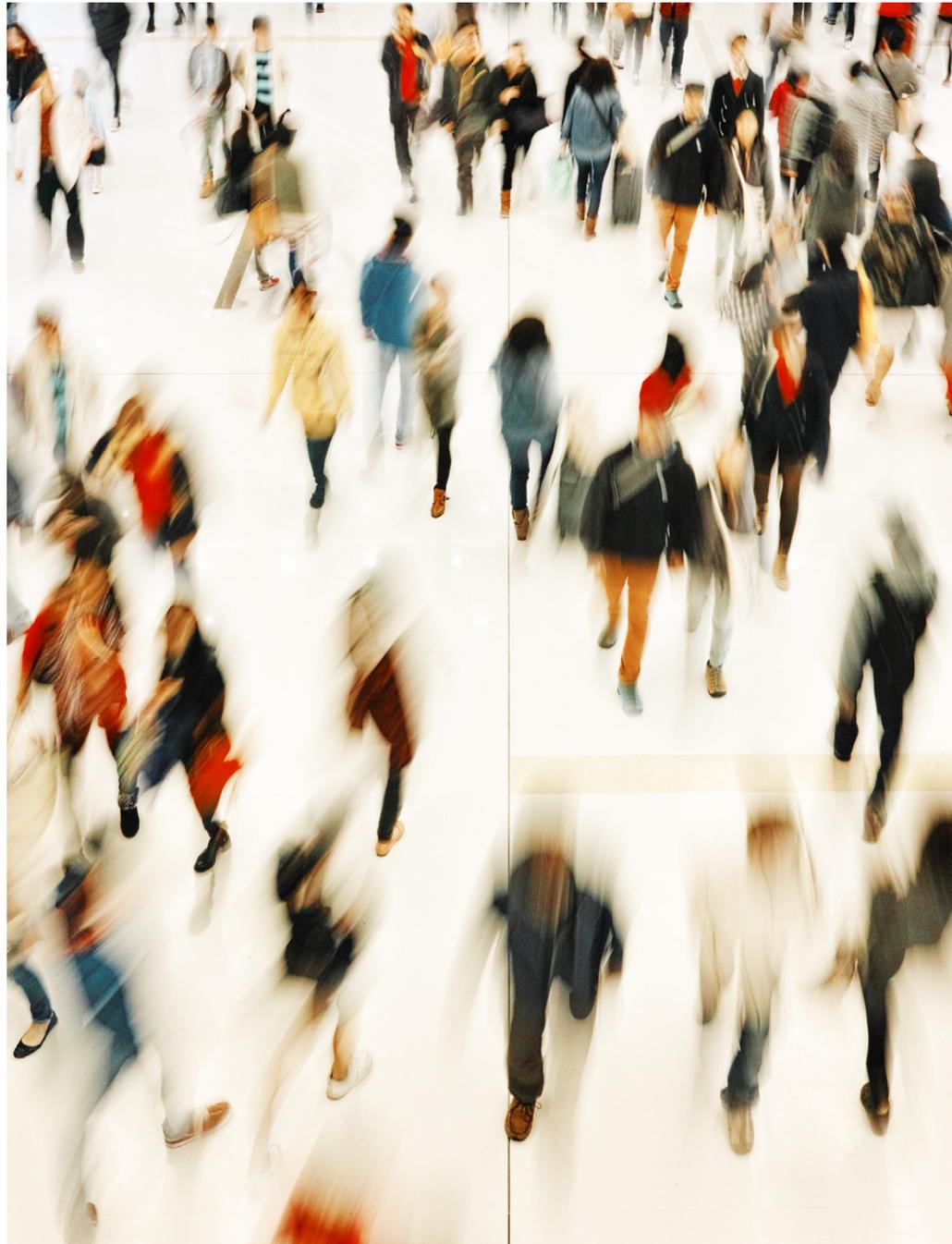
### **Become pro-active**

Each day an employee is on sick leave is very expensive both for the business as well as the society. By having a pro-active attitude in relation to this health problem, the company may save significant amounts of resources and money. Therefore, it is important to have a plan that protects the health of your employees. To offer resilience training, is according to Tindborg, a potential solution. This can be preformed in two ways:

- For example, by consciously learning and training people to use hands-on tools that can help them to deal with important things like mind control and opinion, strengths, beliefs and reactions patterns. This form of training teaches the individual specific techniques that can be translated as a beneficial coping strategy in everyday life, Tindborg says.

- Another kind of resilience training, which is new and perhaps the most effective, is mental training, which can be done using 15 minute sound files. Mental training is a discipline that was originally conceived for professional athletes to perform optimally. Now it is also implemented by many businesses worldwide.

- In recent years, mental training has gained a foothold in Danish companies. A major research project has shown that more than eight out of ten mental athletes, after a few months of training, experienced a signifi-



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cant and permanent increase of their so called “never mind limit” (in Danish: PYT), which is one of the most clear signs of resilience, Tindborg says.

Annette Nyström, HR director for the Nordic Straumann subsidiaries in Scandinavia agrees with Tindborg upon a pro-active approach when talking about securing the human capitals performance.

- To ensure that the employees and the company perform their best, it is important to know what your employees can manage and what circumstances they perform best under. The human capital means everything to a company and this is something the leaders have to understand. Performance management and coaching is

therefore something we have to take seriously. It is all about working together so that we can create a good workflow that augments the financial flow, Nyström says.

#### **The new generation**

In addition to making the human capital more resilient and ready for what tomorrow brings, companies have to invest more energy and work when facing the new generation of employees that are entering the market today.

- I believe in movement and a bigger rotation of people in the future. We can already see tendencies of this today, as young people have a greater urge to change work lanes and places. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it will challenge companies.

Therefore, it is important to create a strong employer brand and corporate culture, which hopefully will make them want to stay long enough, Nyström says.

HR Director at Hewlett-Packard in Finland, Marjut Lauronen also recognises what Nyström is pointing out, but to hold on to the new workforce will however not be the only challenge.

- How to foresee the future needs of workforce and talent in a rapidly changing environment is one of the biggest challenges HR will face in near future. Long-term planning is very difficult. Talent development will therefore move over to learning by doing since rapid changes will require quick adaptation, Lauronen says.



Furthermore, Lauronen emphasizes that the global job market and social media will be the future of the HR environment; this is also where the best and most suitable talents will be found.

#### **A more strategic position**

Talking about the future and what lies ahead for HRM, one can predict and anticipate many things. Going forward, there is however one trend both Tindborg, Nyström and Lauronen are hoping to see:

- We have to connect HR initiatives to business results and eventually make HR a more strategic partner. We have to focus on gathering data and information, so that we can convert HR initiative to show a connection to the bottom line results, Tindborg says.

- HR should take part in strategic planning because HR is the key driver in the implementation of strategy. Without human touch the companies have no soul, organizations don't exist without people. Personnel should therefore always be the one key element in the strategy work.

Nyström agrees and adds that there is a need of a system that can create a synergy between the financial and human resource aspect within a company.

- We will need a system that makes it possible to connect the work and money flow. If we can create that, then we can estimate and show where to place human capital in order to create even better business goals and results. We have to work together in order to create something greater, Nystörm says.