

Editorial: *Business-Educational Partnership, Doing Work Better Across Time and Space, Integrating the Growth Triple Play, and Teamworking for Performance*



Focusing on what matters most now living in a so-called pandemic era, while being at the intersection of digital transformation and digital entrepreneurship, let us think of the right to learn (including by re-imagining the campus experience for a hybrid world, and transforming the learning function), expecting to move up in a world where it is a hard life for most people looking at what skills do employers look for. According to Garcez, Silva and Franco (2021), organizations and the world in general are changed by the digital transformation caused by the digital technology, the social, environmental and cultural changes in velocity being also experienced by the higher education institutions challenged to adapt accordingly in the current digital economy where knowledge is both intensive, and disruptive.

The retailing's giant Walmart Inc. (NYSE: WMT), a leader in sustainability, corporate philanthropy and employment opportunity (this largest U.S. private employer is employing 2.2 million associates worldwide; almost 10,500 stores and clubs under 48 banners in 24 countries and eCommerce websites), announced on July 27, 2021 that it will pay 100% of college tuition and books for associates (who can earn college degrees or learn trade skills, starting Aug. 16, meaning approximately 1.5 million part-time and full-time Walmart and Sam's Club associates in the U.S.) through its Live Better U (LBU, launched in 2018) education program (Walmart, 2021). Beyond its already existing partners (Brandman University, Penn Foster, Purdue University Global, Southern New Hampshire University, Wilmington University and Voxy EnGen), Walmart is adding four new academic partners (Johnson & Wales University, University of Arizona, University of Denver and Pathstream). It was also interesting to note that within a traditional RetailWire's discussion organized just two days later, one of the participants, Principal and Founder, Retail Strategy Group, stated: *"Investing in employees through education and personal growth can only benefit the retailer as the employee will be empowered to stay with the brand for years. It's authentic, it's valuable, and it's a way for retailers to truly give to invest in their communities and it will be reciprocated. I love this and hope that more retailers bring on these type of programs"* (Anderson, 2021).

Now it's time for organizations to see new approaches to development and changing issues, becoming learning organization by faster adapting as technology capabilities evolve and achieving better outcomes with data driven decision-making, doing work better across time and space (both, digital and physical), confirming this way the lessons learned from COVID-19 pandemic and shaping a robust operating model maximizing your time and energy (De Smet et al., 2021). The operating model must also consider the so-called by Forrester's valuable "Customer obsession" approach (VanBoskirk and Leaver, 2021), which amplifies the business model, helping to pursue in a responsible and consistent way companies' growth opportunities, based on both what is convenient to organization's expression of customer obsession (what customers want from companies with each expression such as: "Count on us", "At your service", "On your side"), and applying the hallmarks of this approach (growth strategies being customer led, insights driven, fast, and connected, so as to be more sustainable) to organization's best options to determine how to proceed along (how it applies to the growth strategy), customer obsession sustaining growth strategies, delivering effectively value to customers (as confirmed by Forrester's The State Of Customer Obsession 2021 survey).

In order to lead, shape, and drive the growth agenda (according to June 2021 McKinsey Global Institute report, "Getting tangible about intangibles: The future of growth and productivity?"; more than 860 executives across the globe were surveyed with regard to how they are prioritizing investments and capabilities helping accelerate growth), 78% of CEOs are now depending on marketing leaders (CMOs) in these "no normal" times (Cvetanovski et al., 2021). By integrating the so-called "growth triple play" (creativity, analytics, and purpose) across marketing activities' full spectrum, CMOs can take advantage of this opportunity to ensure rapid value creation and sustainable growth, taking into account the following aspects concerning the most successful CMOs (based on their achieved level of customer knowledge): they are using already the precision and rigor of analytics in a clever way, and this in order to anticipate and satisfy customer needs; they can better understand their customers' motivation and can identify customer behavior changes nearly before these changes manifest.

We are all consumers knowing that our behavior is influenced by a mix of social, economic, and technological trends, some of us also knowing how trend forecasts are used by designers to develop scenarios envisioning our probable responses to changes across sectors and markets, while a company – in order to better connect with us as consumers and serve us – could expand its goods and services beyond the core, offering us (with the help of designers) distinct value, what involves (within the context in which the company's business ambitions and capabilities are aligned with high-growth areas as the foundation stones of an ecosystem strategy focused on these areas) a design-led approach to ecosystem planning (Joshi, Khan and Rab, 2021). McKinsey's expertise has confirmed that as the global pandemic accelerated consumers' migration to digital, it was an obvious increase of the appeal of ecosystems (defined as "interconnected sets of services through which users can fulfill a variety of cross-sectoral needs in one integrated experience"), an ecosystem adoption having three phases (strategy definition,

ecosystem design, ecosystem building), and being more likely to succeed with design-led ecosystems if a company is keeping some principles in mind as those shown in the figure below:

Companies that keep the following principles in mind are more likely to succeed with design-led ecosystems.



Figure no. 1: Companies that keep the following principles in mind are more likely to succeed with design-led ecosystems

Source: Joshi, N. H., Khan, H. and Rab, I., 2021. A design-led approach to embracing an ecosystem strategy. [pdf] McKinsey & Company, Design Practice, July, p. 6 (work cited)

And allow us to end only by making reference to another significant approach of McKinsey's representatives, presented twenty years ago and entitled "Teamwork at the top" (Herb, Leslie and Price, 2001), in which it was highlighted (as shown in the figure below), among other aspects, that: *"One reason for the difficulty of improving a team's performance is that interaction, direction, and renewal are interdependent – teams need to go forward simultaneously on all three fronts to make real progress"*.

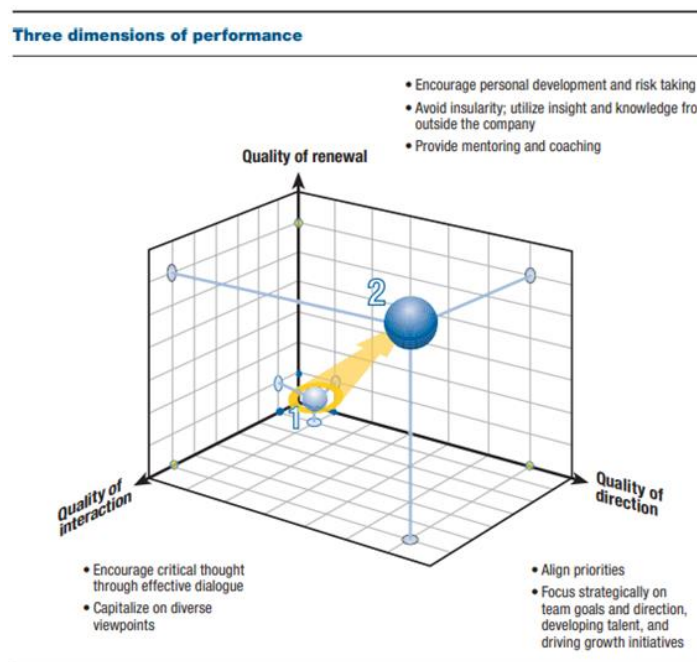


Figure no. 2: Three dimensions of performance

Source: Herb, E., Leslie, K., and Price, C., 2001. Teamwork at the top. [pdf] The McKinsey Quarterly, 2001, Number 2, McKinsey & Company, p. 35 (work cited)

Indeed, a great team consists of great people, proving individual commitment to this team effort of translating to great performance...

A quote from “*Twenty Years After*”, by Alexandre Dumas, come to my mind: “*Great people only thank you for doing the impossible; what’s possible, they say they can effect themselves*”.

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