

## Leadership Talk

**Speaker: Mr. Sarajit Poddar, Director, People Analytics, Ericsson Global People Analytics & Digital Solutions, Singapore**

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

**Theme: Harnessing People Analytics to drive Organization Strategy**

The first-year students of School of Human Resource Management, XIM University, Bhubaneswar, attended a Leadership Talk on the theme – ***Harnessing People Analytics to drive Organization Strategy*** on September 16, 2021, delivered by our esteemed speaker – Mr. Sarajit Poddar, Director, People Analytics, Ericsson Global People Analytics & Digital Solutions, Singapore.



Mr. Poddar is a global leader of People Analytics at Ericsson, a world leader in the information and communications technology industry. Ericsson operates in 180 countries and employs over 100,000 people.

Mr. Poddar joined Ericsson in Singapore in 2013, where he works with the global leadership teams to implement processes and practices in people analytics. In a previous role in the organization, he led the strategic and tactical workforce planning and analytics portfolio for South East Asia and the Oceania region. Currently, he is leading a global project on implementing a leading analytics platform to extend access to people insights to all business leaders and line managers. Mr. Poddar is a global leader of People Analytics at Ericsson, a world leader in the information and communications technology industry. Ericsson operates in 180 countries and employs over 100,000 people.

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### ***Talk Summary***

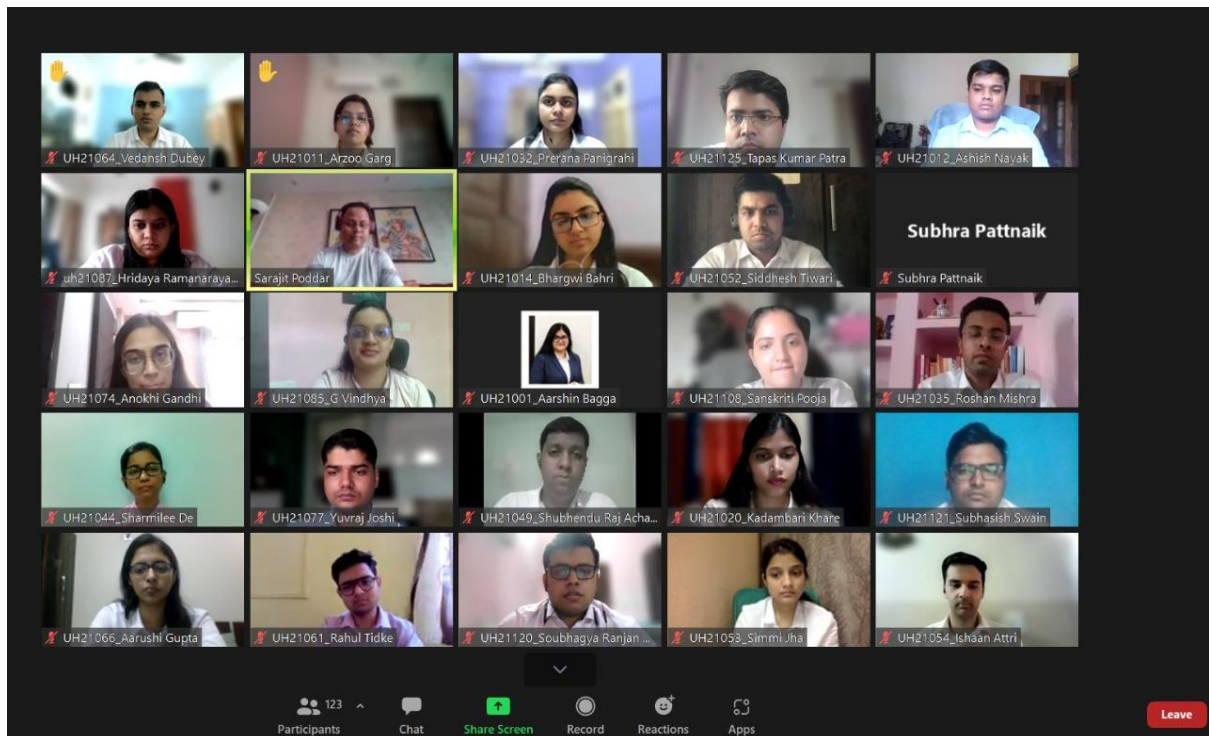
Mr. Poddar spoke about people strategy; he explained how it dealt with questions such as “Where do we grow? Which Geography to sustain in an existing business? Where to launch new products and services? Customer Segments? Overall Business strategy?” He spoke about the linkages of Talent and Business, where he highlighted some of the essential questions a student should ask oneself: What talent skills experience to hire? What is the cost of talent? Target proficiency level? What competencies should we build? From a skills standpoint, what are the areas we need to invest in? Sometimes some skills cannot be hired externally and need to be planned for in advance? Retention costs?

He further spoke about how the company’s senior management discusses the strategy and HR aligns the business strategy to people strategy while understanding the underlying risks for the business strategies. He spoke about the importance of answering these questions and quantifying them. He further explained that when one speaks of quantification, one is speaking of analytics. Further, he explained that when we talk about people analytics – we need to start from the Business itself. Start by asking how the HR function is enabling and driving Business. From a business strategy point of view, the important functions highlighted by him were:

- ✓ Maintaining Market Share
- ✓ Growing Market Share
- ✓ Launch New Product
- ✓ Research and Development
- ✓ Setting up of new offices

Further, from a People strategy point of view, some of the critical functions that he emphasized were:

- ✓ Attracting the right talent
- ✓ Retaining the best talent
- ✓ Engaging the talent
- ✓ Defining the right organisation design
- ✓ Focusing on the right skills
- ✓ Defining pay structure attuned to business needs



He told students about how earlier it was believed that "Developing a people strategy was once a straightforward matter of figuring out how to create the best possible workforce to execute an already defined business strategy." He added that now BCG believes that "People strategy today involves much tougher choices and trade-offs. It may drive the business strategy as much as business strategy drives it."

Sir explained the concept of Workforce segmentation to the students. He said workforce groups carry out different functions, and there are always people who have unique skills, which are known to only people who have experience within the organisation. As HR professionals, we need to identify these segments from a unique standpoint and we need to align all people strategies basis the segmentation. We cannot use one size fits all, and we need to focus on these groups based on the segmentation model.

He emphasised on the role of the analytics function in an organisation. He highlighted the criticality of the function since leaders need to make decisions after knowing the entire "data." Singular occurrences in the past instances cannot constitute a trend. In an industry that is changing so fast, we need data from all sources. In today's times, professionals need large volumes of data set to make the proper judgment within the organization. Analytics is a critical function that feeds into the organisation's decisions.

He outlined a broad framework, that measured what matters:

- ✓ Identify Stakeholders- Who needs to decide what to measure?
- ✓ Define Objectives- What to Measure
- ✓ Define OKRs- How to measure this?
- ✓ Periodic Review- How frequently we need to review the OKRs
- ✓ Identify Risks and Concerns- Do we notice some issues or potential issues?
- ✓ Mitigate risks and address concerns- What actions need to be taken to mitigate the risks?

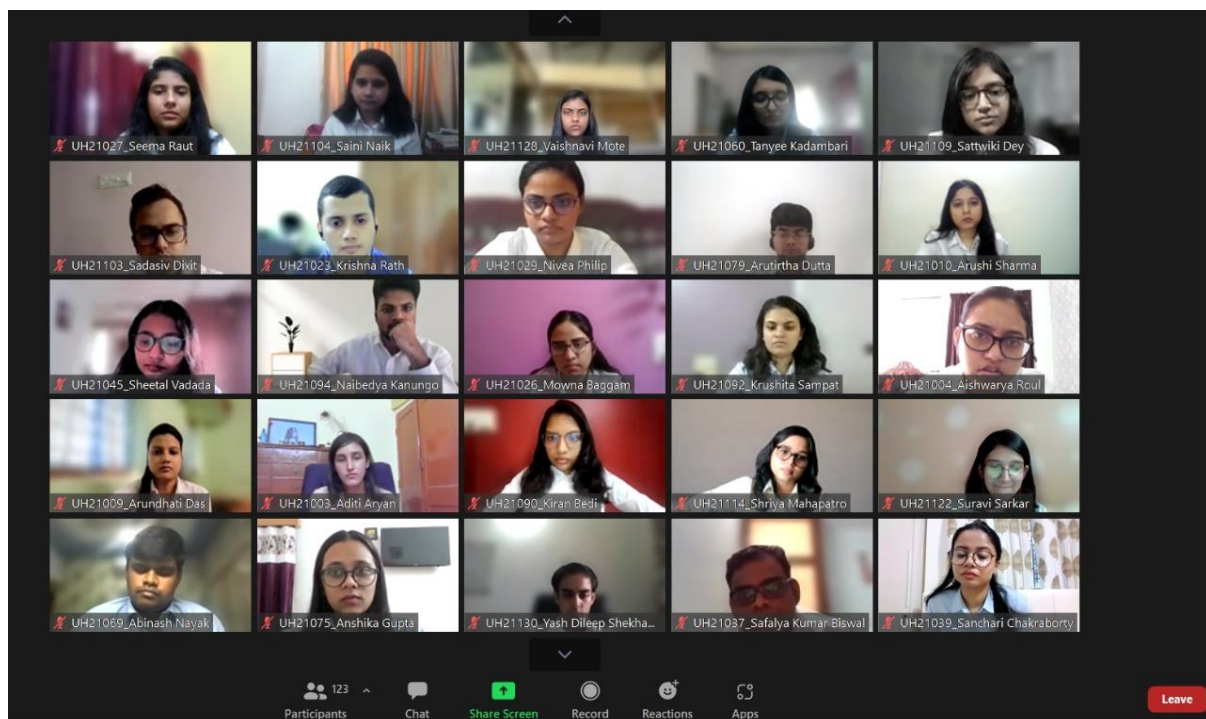
He encouraged students to ask themselves how do they measure this data? How does one determine the metric? He told them that they would need to start by defining a good set of OKR. If any of this breakdown it would be like not knowing how much fuel one has, which would mean that we don't see how far we would get. Therefore, we need to identify the risks and update it. He explained that the OKRs to be measured should be based on the priorities set up by the Business and the People strategy. One should know what to measure amongst the myriad of possibilities.

He told students that Human resources are a very diverse function with many sub-functions like Talent Management, learning & development, People Operations, Recruitment, etc. What we need to measure in each area is different. E.g., the Criticality of job roles would become an essential indicator in Workforce planning. Similar variables can be mapped to Talent Acquisition, Total Rewards, Talent Management, Learning and Development, and People Operations.

He explained that just because one has data, it does not mean one can use it. Organisations are always bound by data privacy. To ensure that data privacy is maintained, organisations start by classifying the data. Next, they look at access management; this ensures that the concerned people have timely access to the data, while ensuring that said information remains classified unless the organisation is legally required to furnish this data to an external body.

He concluded by explaining that Analytics helps in driving people strategy through:

- ✓ Predictive modelling – deployed in workforce forecasting, attrition
- ✓ Decision support – data modelling involving machine learning, uncovering hidden trends
- ✓ Self Service Analytics- Identifying unique needs of employee groups
- ✓ Root causes analysis- understanding causality of existing problems
- ✓ Operational reporting – AI, Machine learning



One of the students' questions to Mr. Poddar was regarding creating policies that are acceptable to geographically diverse organizations?

In large organisations like Ericsson, they have a centralised and a decentralised structure. The centralised team guides all policy-related matters, and the different geographies (market areas) adapt practices, dashboards, and policies to adapt to their local needs.

Students also enquired about the skills they would require to be a part of the Human Resources Analytics function?

To this, sir stated that for HR aspirants, who would be in demand from a skill stand in People analytics require:

- ✓ Business and Financial Acumen
- ✓ Knowledge of people policies and processes
- ✓ Consulting and Advisory Skills
- ✓ Data Science Knowledge
- ✓ Ethics, GDPR, and so on

Depending on the size of the organisation there are different teams. They have a diverse group of Business Analysts, People from Data Engineering, Advanced Reporting Knowledge, Data Information Stewards (who ensure the sanctity of data), Process experts (HR professionals), System Experts – Basically, and so on. Analytics requires a diverse set of knowledge to ensure the clients come out with the right insights. He explained that there exist several elements to people analytics; however, it is not difficult to get started. One doesn't have to start big – have a business question? Then sir recommends that students try it on excel, and if it aligns with what the organisation wants to know, they will have more resources

***Compiled by:*** Ms. Hridaya Ramanarayanan

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