



When people thrive, business thrives: the case for human sustainability, Part 2

Host: **David Mallon**, Vice President and Chief Analyst, Insights2Action, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Guests: **Jason Flynn**, Principal – Workforce Transformation, Global Human Capital Trends Lead Author, Deloitte Consulting LLP
Gabriel Sander Muñoz, VP of Human Resources, Jose Cuervo

David Mallon:

Welcome back to Capital H, the podcast where we explore the latest trends and developments to make work better for humans and humans better at work. I'm your host, David Mallon. I'm a managing director in Deloitte's Human Capital practice in the US and I'm chief analyst for our Insights2Action, Human Capital Research & Sensing team.

Today's episode is part of our series on this year's Global Human Capital Trends report. Today's focus is on the trend on human sustainability.

We are operating in a human-powered economy. Organizations are at a watershed

moment, many having transitioned from industrial beginnings to a knowledge economy, and now, to an economy increasingly powered by the hearts and minds and essential human traits of our people. In short, our humanity.

Today, for many organizations nothing's more important than its people, from workers and contractors to customers and community members. For true sustainability, organizations need to create value for all the people that they touch. And it's not just a nice idea, it's central to their ability to create better outcomes for themselves and for humanity alike.

We'll be joined by Jason Flynn. He's one of

the lead authors for this year's report. He's going to talk to Gabriel Sander Muniz, the VP of human resources at Cuervo. They're going to talk about human sustainability and how it pans out in the real world.

They're going to further discuss why human sustainability is important, its challenges and how maybe to overcome them. Jason and Gabriel.

Jason Flynn:

Thank you for joining us today Capital H Podcast listeners. My name is Jason Flynn, I'm a partner in Deloitte's Workforce Transformation practice, and one of the lead authors of Deloitte's 2024 Global Human Capital Trends report. I'm thrilled to be

joined today by Gabriel Sander, chief human resources officer at Cuervo to discuss one of this year's trends: human sustainability. Gabriel, welcome and thank you for joining us today.

Gabriel Sander:

Thank you, Jason. It's a pleasure to be here, and thanks for the invitation.

Jason Flynn:

Let's jump in, maybe just a tiny bit of context for our listeners around human sustainability. It really is one of our anchoring trends in this year's report and gets at some of those critical human outcomes that organizations are having to focus on as they try to really drive human performance, as we called out in the report this year.

And as a reminder, we defined human sustainability in this year's report as: The degree to which an organization is creating value for people as human beings, leaving them with greater health and well-being, stronger skills and employability, good jobs, opportunities for advancement, progress towards equity, and increased belonging and a feeling of purpose. So, a very expansive view of those human elements that we need organizations to focus on today.

In light of that, Gabriel, maybe we could start by sharing your thoughts on why is this focus on human sustainability so important for organizations today?

Gabriel Sander:

I think we continue to talk about all the new trends, right?, and especially now with everything being called artificial intelligence and how it's going to impact. But I think in the end people will always remain the key part of an organization.

I heard a long time ago a quote "Companies are just a lot of conversations going on at the same time."

And what I liked about it is that in the end there's always the interaction of people as the center of whatever will happen in an organization, you can automatize, you can make many things become much better by

using technologies. But in the end, the people that can dream a future, that can set up a new strategy, that can think of the new things to do, will always be individuals. So, across the spectrum you will always require people and that's why this is so key. Because in the end, to me, it's about business continuity and also about business—if not survival, it is about business being able to prosper and hopefully, more so than the competition. So, that's why I think this is so critical.

Jason Flynn:

I love that quote. At the end of the day, we're still going to need the humans to use the technology and really drive organizations forward. And that cuts through all the trends we covered this year.

Digging into that a little bit deeper, what are some of the challenges you're seeing Cuervo's workforce dealing with these days? What are some of the struggles across your organization that you're seeing?

Gabriel Sander:

I read a study just a few weeks ago, and if you read about what people want forget the generations. Because we keep talking about generations. And I think it's important as to how we approach things and how we approach work.

But in the end, mostly everybody still wants a job, which ensures to be able to provide for your family, to provide for a good career. So, I think the basic needs for people to work remain there. Now, how you get it done and how you go about it may differ industry to industry.

But that's why I don't want to forget that in the end, what people want, it's a good job where they can feel safe, with which they can provide for their families or for whatever they decide to provide for.

So, in our view, we first have to start across our chain, let's say of the value that we add. And I have agricultural workers, so we got to make sure that the people at the agricultural fields are well taken care of.

And it's about making sure that we're complying with all the law, and even more

so, when it comes to how we pay, what we pay, the security we can provide for them on the fields and all those things. And to me, these are basics. And again, sometimes we forget about it, but it goes to human sustainability for the future at that aspect of the job we do.

When we go to factories there's more stuff that you can do because everybody's concentrated in one place. But you can also have experiments at the factory where people can feel like they can belong. You can have initiatives on diversity, on all these things that are also critical for individuals today, and ensure that while they're at work again, they're safe.

Most importantly, they can be themselves and also that they can be proud of where they work. These also backed up with the right type of incentives and income, so that, again, they can be at ease and enjoy life a little better by not worrying about the basics, which to me is important. Then we can get to the corporations. And it's also about creating great careers, and it's about having a decent job. And I was thinking a lot about this before our conversation, and to me, it's how do we as an organization, show up for our people?

We ask people to come and work and give us their best, but how are we showing up? And I think many organizations have forgotten about it. We go through many initiatives that may be nice to discuss, but how many companies are doing restructurings as a way of sustaining themselves for several years in a row?

And in the end, you can have great brands, but you're showing up that way to people, and I think it has to go both ways. And how do we show up to people? How do we take care of them? It doesn't have to be fancy, but it has to be steady, and, in my view, trustworthy. And that's what we're trying to achieve here.

Jason Flynn:

Thank you for sharing all those thoughts, Gabriel, I think you hit on so many elements of the human sustainability definition that I shared. I mean, I think that's part of the challenge, is there's so many different things

the workforce is struggling with and different segments of the workforce as you allude to—those frontline workers dealing with some different challenges.

And I love the way you talk about how you show up as an organization, and that just really gets at the heart of our whole focus on human performance. We have to elevate the human outcomes alongside the business outcomes. It's not one or the other, it's both at the same time.

I guess maybe to get at some of the things you're doing there at Cuervo, what are some of the maybe programmatic things you are doing to address some of these needs in these just different areas of human sustainability?

Gabriel Sander:

Well, I think, and again, let's try to cut a little bit by layers and I'll try to keep it very simple. But as I was saying, my bulk of people are on the fields, they're working for us every day. And even weather conditions, Mexico has just gone through a very intense heat season. And even just making sure that people can be well hydrated, right? That you can adapt to the circumstances so that they feel well taken care of.

And these little things, when we talk to them, and I was just having the conversation with our human resources lead in that section of the business. And she was saying how appreciative people were because we were making sure that they were okay and that they could perform.

It's not only their safety and how we go about it when we do the job, but it's also about what can we provide so that at those specific moments, they know that we care. We can't forget about those little things, and I think that's an example.

When we go to our factories, I think we're sometimes trying to make it more complex than we should and it's about what else do we provide? Again, safe environment, safety first, but also come and be your own and feel like you can always be your own, no matter where you work at—but also what else we can provide? So, we opened a gym for people in one of our factories, the

tournaments that so many people do.

So, it's not only to continue to do what we've done, but also to make sure that people know that we care and that we will continue with those type of initiatives because we know it matters to them. So, it's not just work, but it's about working with the human beings that we do have.

I think we have isolated ourselves because of new technology. I think we have not done enough to continue to work as communities. And the one place where people do get together, it's at work. So, I think providing safe environment, tools so that they can call when they're not feeling okay, which we have, as I was saying, sports and all these things which are not being provided by communities in some places, I think makes a very big difference. And if you think about it, it's not, again, a program that no one has ever done before in the country. It's doing it and doing it well.

And again, if we come to corporate offices—and let me be clear, we're a company that we come to work every day. We don't have working from home and people come here. And what I say, if people are going to be here because we enjoy the interaction, because we believe it's the best way to carry on with our business, are we making it worth their while, while they're here? And that's what we're focusing on.

So, forget about the programs. If you're here, are we making it worth your while? Are we having meetings that are productive but also where being together adds value, versus having meetings and everybody's staying in their place and just joining through whatever tool you're using and video conferencing when everybody's in the same building. So, these types of things, to me, it's about how we show up.

And our turnover has not increased, we are still able to recruit employees, and I believe—and we're going to do our next engagement survey in the coming months—but engagement hasn't dropped. So, yeah, we have to improve many things, but I think we're showing up the right way so that people want to continue to come and continue to give us their best.

Jason Flynn:

Yeah. So to your first point, it is the little things that matter. We talk a lot about programs and initiatives and all that stuff, and certainly there's value and merit in all of those, but a lot of it is just the general ways of working and showing that you care and reacting in the moment and to what's going on around you.

And as you said, I think everything you do has got to be culturally aligned to what makes sense for your organization and the tone you're trying to set. So, absolutely. One thing I'd love to hear your thoughts on that's perhaps a little bit more programmatic is how are you addressing concerns around skills or the ongoing employability of your workforce? Obviously, you talk about the importance of having a good job, that's certainly top of mind for most organizations today. What are you doing in Cuervo to think about that element?

Gabriel Sander:

Thanks for that one, Jason, because you and I discussed this when we talked about the report. And just to provide people with a little bit of context: A while ago, someone taught me that companies would be lying if they offer you a job forever. What we got to make sure is that while you're here, you're employable forever.

And I'll build from there, Jason, because I think, as you say, we are a very lean company. OK? We really look out for our resources. And because of that, sometimes, I think we need to improve the way we develop careers, mostly not within functions but also across functions.

Because that goes to the employability point that you and I have been discussing in which to me is what makes it worth the while of those that are working for us. So, what do I mean by that? We still have the fortune, for example, in marketing, to have a marketing team that does everything.

We have not gone into such specialization where no market research gets done just in one place, and then the part of copy and advertising goes in another, and then the brand people just do this little piece. So, I think we're still generalists, let's say,

within the marketing field here, but are we doing also enough so that they can enjoy and cross the lanes to understand and live what sales has to do or trade marketing?

So, I think it is by crossing lanes, if I may call it that way that I can allow the company to remain providing good careers for people, and also to provide better employability for people. And I think that's where really we're getting restarted with that. I've been with the company a little bit less than two years, but I think going back to those basics will make a big difference because then, we're also preparing them for bigger, better jobs and not just siloed jobs, which sometimes, in my view, the market has overdone a little bit of.

Jason Flynn:

I love the focus on employability. Whether they have a job at Cuervo or somewhere else, you need to be equipping them with the right skills to succeed in the future, and that's going to benefit you, but also them.

We focused a lot on the workforce side of things, but maybe how do you think about human sustainability as it pertains to your customers and the communities you serve? Obviously, the workforce is critical, but I think there's a broader angle to this human sustainability concept.

Gabriel Sander:

And let me first focus on, I think customers in let's say, other companies that work with us, in my view, continue to try, right? One way or another. I think they're also working on the same challenge of human sustainability because it goes to their own continuity as I was saying before.

So, I think that I believe one way or another companies are trying to address, but I'm concerned about communities because as I was saying, and I've been reading a lot about this lately, with becoming an individualistic community, and that's not what humans are.

I think the best of human comes in groups, in communities, in societies, and I think social media, and I think the pandemic a little bit, and new technologies have isolated us, and most importantly, have created a mindset of myself versus a mindset of us.

And that's what concerns me the most.

I believe as an organization, we can continue to try to influence it, influence our communities by showing that communities work, that being together, and that having conversations still matters, and I think makes the day a little bit better and more enjoyable by having coffee with somebody than alone in your desk. That's how I personally view it.

So, I think we can influence that through how we're trying to interact here. But I believe all of us as part of our communities, companies, individuals, nongovernment institutions, et cetera, have to understand that if we continue to isolate ourselves, we're going to lose a lot as humans. And what we've been reading about stress, mental health, all these things are just being exacerbated by loneliness.

And I'm concerned because our teens are also going through it, and we need to make sure that we bring the best of communities and not of just individuals. And I'm not providing an answer, it's my concern. And honestly, from where I am as an individual and also as a professional, I'll try to address it without a doubt. I don't know if I answered your question with that, but ...

Jason Flynn:

I don't know if there's a perfect answer. I think to me, this is all about the mindset and how you approach things. Having the idea that you need to be embracing the human element of everyone your organization touches, whether that's your workers or the communities you work in, and I absolutely agree. I mean, this is going to be a challenge for organizations for years to come and not an easy one, but hopefully, if everybody's focused on it, that's going to be at least a way towards improving things if not fixing them, hopefully.

One last question here. We've put a lot of focus on this human sustainability trend, we've had lots of great conversations with our clients around this topic. One of the things we do here is sometimes like how do you get the rest of the organization, if you will, to buy into this? There's lots of priorities at organizations these days. Financial

performances, depending on the industry, can be choppy right now. How do you get leadership to really buy in and focus on this human sustainability topic? What do you think is critical from that regard?

Gabriel Sander:

I'm a big believer in small victories. I don't think it's that leaders don't believe, sometimes they've not experienced it before. And sometimes we want to make, again, big campaigns and try to force things into whatever we're trying to achieve.

And in my view, and especially when it comes to human sustainability, I believe that you got to find your little pockets of success or pockets of excellence within your organization and make sure that they are known.

I believe that it's natural to have early adopters, and I think if you take on those that are willing to enjoy it, to go through it, to suffer it, but in the end get the results, and if we make sure that the other ones see this and see the benefits, then they'll join in.

I believe in so many change efforts that I've been through in my life, we focus on the detractors and how to bring them in. And I learned a few years ago with several people that I worked with, that we better focus on those that really want it to happen. And we start showing what results can bring and what that looks like. And I think the others just come along. So, I think that's the way to do it. Because it is through showing how you get it done, why it works, but most importantly, they're going to want it because now, they understand through results, through actions, the benefits that it can bring. So, I go for those that want it and start working with them, and probably the rest will join in. Some won't want to, but I think there's a point where those that don't want, the system itself will start—sounds awful but rejecting them, right? And I think that's how I would go about it. Because it's a long-time effort. The thing with this thing is it takes years to build and even more to sustain.

So, I don't think this is about a sprint. Quick, good hits, and then create let's say the need by others wanting to be like that. That's how

I plan to do it, and so far, I think we're starting and doing well at it.

Jason Flynn:

No, that's great. Spot on, and that aligns pretty well with a lot of what we cover in our leadership trend this year in terms of how do you bring people along on the journey and amplify those positive results you're having.

And the topic is so big and so meaty, you can't tackle it all at once. But how do you find those areas where you can have an impact and measure those and just go from there.

Gabriel Sander:

I just think that detractors sometimes take too much focus, and you forget about those that are willing to, and you're not maximizing the benefit and the attention they need so that they succeed and then you carry on.

Jason Flynn:

Right, for sure. Well, this has been a great conversation. I really appreciate you taking the time to be with us today, Gabriel, and sharing your perspectives both broadly and some of the great things you're doing there at Cuervo. So, thank you so much for joining us today.

Gabriel Sander:

It's a pleasure, Jason.

David Mallon:

That brings us to the end of this episode of Capital H. I want to extend my thanks to our guests for joining us and sharing their own perspectives on the crucial role of human sustainability in the future of work.

I also want to thank my Deloitte colleagues and co-authors of this year's report for their contributions to the conversation. As we move forward, we all need to remember that human sustainability should be a core focus for all organizations, not just an add-on.

It's essential for creating value for all the people that organizations touch as human beings, ensuring health and well-being, enhancing their skills and their employability, and fostering a sense of belonging and a connection to purpose.

Thank you, listeners for tuning in today. We hope that you found today's conversation valuable and maybe picked up an actionable strategy to navigate your own shift towards human sustainability. We look forward to continuing this conversation with you in our next episode.

To learn more about our human capital trend study, you can find the full report at deloitte.com/hctrends. Let us know what you think of Capital H. Rate us on whatever service you used to find us and look us up on social media, we'd love to hear from you.

Thanks again, and we hope that you continue to join us in future episodes as we explore the topics and trends that focus on putting humans at the center of work. Until next time.

This podcast is produced by Deloitte. The views and opinions expressed by podcast speakers and guests are solely their own and do not reflect the opinions of Deloitte. This podcast provides general information only and is not intended to constitute advice or services of any kind. For additional information about Deloitte, go to deloitte.com/about.

About Deloitte


Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a UK private company limited by guarantee ("DTTL"), its network of member firms, and their related entities. DTTL and each of its member firms are legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also referred to as "Deloitte Global") does not provide services to clients. In the United States, Deloitte refers to one or more of the US member firms of DTTL, their related entities that operate using the "Deloitte" name in the United States, and their respective affiliates. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see www.deloitte.com/about to learn more about our global network of member firms.

Copyright © 2024 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved.



Learn more

 Visit the [Capital H podcast library](#)

 Explore our [Capital H blog](#) for additional insights

 Join the conversation on Twitter [@DeloitteHC](#)