The Recovery Brings the Unique Opportunity to Shift Societal Norms

This crisis has created a host of opportunities to recover with more favorable and equitable terms for everyone.

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During times of crisis, it’s vital that we find ways to creatively keep employees on payroll rather than going on unemployment. America is known for its entrepreneurial spirit, but when the answer is to disaster is to mitigate corporate risk, there is a clear disconnect in what is best for this country.

I’m the head of a talent development organization that works with companies as small as 60 employees and up to the enterprise level. The instability of corporate headcount planning in companies that are 15+ years old with anywhere from 2,000-80,000 employees is real. Though there is less volatility than we admit, often times headcount is directly correlated to earnings because companies are still in the mindset of startup mode. What we need to accept is that we have more control, and companies of this size have enough maturity to forecast turnover to and the needs of the business to maintain status-quo – let alone projected business growth.

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What if we incentivized CEO's to maintain staff in a crisis and build reserves to sustain a company for an entire year or two to survive an economic downturn, and double down on research and development – i.e., ingenuity – during economic strife?

Take Apple, for example. In the 1980s they believed enough in their product and took a risk on the long-game giving equipment to schools, thus creating marketing demand for 20+ years down the road. That kind of leadership and foresight has led to them being one of the top companies of the age.

As we look at strategic investment in entrepreneurship, product development and overall economic sustainability, we need to think differently about how we develop the asset that propels our companies: people. States provide tax incentives to companies, and those incentives are typically tied to people development through job creation and local hiring commitments. We need to shift the mindset of these companies that look at those obligations as liabilities rather than opportunities. Decisions are often made based on the incentive and not on the available workforce.

Our current crises have created a host of opportunities on a global scale to recover in more favorable and meaningful ways than just economically. During this protracted window of uncertainty, companies should be doubling down on people investment. Retraining current staff for the cottage industries to come as a result of our new world order, researching products and services that help some elements of "the way things were" return and be sustainable while agreeing that not all of our old paradigm is worth preserving.

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As we think about what this new world will look like beyond

face masks and distance, we have one opportunity to correct some of the prevailing inequities we've known existed in our hiring strategies but have been ill equipped to address:

1. Reduce income inequality as we begin to rehire
    - Commit to leveling the playing field when bringing people back from furlough and start rehiring. Their old salary doesn't have to be an indicator of their new potential.
2. Recalibrate education requirements around skills and competencies in lieu of pedigree
    - Not all jobs are created equal, so treat them differently by removing degree requirements where a certification, attitude and aptitude will work.
3. Recognize our existing policies and practices have contributed heavily to the perception that we suffer from a talent shortage
    - Change the practices and we'll find a whole new world of potential talent to fill our ever-expanding talent needs.
4. Stratify roles to create more entry-level opportunities in middle-skill jobs
    - Develop new talent by way of committing 15 percent of all job postings to junior titles, for our hard to fill middle-skill roles, that will grow into senior experience
5. Shift business culture to the creation of new talent and not just consumers of a finite and dwindling resource
    - Examine talent acquisition cost by role and invest that in developing net new talent and their mentors – likely the future leaders

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The word recovery should be thought about more broadly – we shouldn't settle for short tenure and loss of institutional knowledge – when looking for new tech talent. Instead, let's create a happy middle ground. We are uniquely positioned, for

perhaps the one time in a century, when we can create the dramatic and diverse changes needed to shift entire societal norms.

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