

Conversations for tomorrow

Quarterly review
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SHEILA JORDAN
Chief Digital and Technology
Officer, Honeywell



ACCELERATING THE PACE OF DECISION- MAKING WITH REMOTE WORKING

Honeywell

As chief digital technology officer, Sheila Jordan is responsible for defining the vision and strategy for digital transformation at Honeywell, the US-based conglomerate.

In this role, Sheila is responsible for the technology associated with corporate IT as well as the technology used by strategic business units and functions such as legal, finance, contracts, and human resources.

The Capgemini Research Institute spoke to Sheila about how virtual working will evolve in a post-pandemic world and the upcoming trends in the world of technology.

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE FUTURE OF WORK

How did Honeywell, a traditionally office-based organization, respond during the pandemic?

— When the pandemic hit, Honeywell was not a work-from-home organization. A quick decision was made to shift 80,000 employees to remote working across about 70 countries and to redesign our network to accommodate remote work in just eight days. Employees at our manufacturing sites, however, have been working on-site throughout the pandemic with adequate safety and security precautions.

We are evaluating hybrid models, but at this time our focus is to return to the office. While for certain jobs we have seen an uptick in productivity with employees working from home, we are not yet prepared to make decisions based on these observations. We would continue to take feedback from our employees to decide what the best model is for certain job segments. We are focused on adopting a data-driven approach to assess the impact of remote working and maintain consistency across geographical regions.



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How was the productivity of your team affected by remote working?



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— The productivity of my digital team has increased, and we have been able to deliver strong results. In my opinion, this is due to the fact that we are all working much longer hours. I would attribute this to the

fact that since people were working in a remote setting they gained their commuting time back. Therefore, I am unsure if this uptick in productivity will be sustainable in the long run, but that might be offset by the social ability to run into someone in the hallway or cafeteria, which could result in a quick decision verses a formal meeting. Collectively, we need to take the productivity of what we learned by working from home and augment that with the social aspects of being in the office again when you can easily pop into an office or have a quick chat with someone to continue moving things forward.

How do you see the in-office employee experience changing as a result of your experience in a remote environment?

— Firstly, I believe that when we get back in offices there will be a continued focus on health and safety. Secondly, I think the virtual platform for meetings gave everyone an equal voice, and I hope this is a learning we carry forward. For example, we will continue to have global meetings, where some members will join remotely. So, we need to ensure that everyone on the call has an equal voice, and the discussions are not dominated by the people physically present in the room.

Furthermore, I really think people have now realized the importance of social interaction and building relationships more than before. This means we need to put in some thought



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about how we bolster social aspects and in-person interaction, which have been missing from our lives for the last 14 months. On the other hand, in a remote setting everybody is always available, so some decisions can be made faster.

How can organizations and employees ensure a work-life balance in a hybrid model?

— I have a different take on the concept of work-life balance. When I hear that I think of a scale that is perfectly balanced. As a working mother throughout my entire career, some days are more focused on family and others are primarily focused on work. In total, it balances, but certainly not every day. I like to think in terms of work-life integration. With technology advancements, you can literally work from anywhere such as the office, home, the soccer field, or Starbucks. This has both pluses and minuses. I think an organization's responsibility is to create an environment where not everything is critical; some things can indeed wait until tomorrow. The individual employees must also set their own boundaries for what works for them. For example, when my children were younger, dinner time was sacred. I would protect that time from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. as best as I could and finish something up after they went to sleep. Companies should create an environment to understand and protect those boundaries. A more balanced employee is far more productive in the long run.

TRENDS IN TECH: WOMEN REPRESENTATION, AUTOMATION, AND SKILLS

Why do you think the technology sector as a whole seems to struggle to attract women?

— I am disappointed by the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership roles in the technology field. I have studied this for a long time and, despite concentrated efforts, women constitute only 10% of senior leaders in the technology field. To increase the number of women in technology, we need to start early with girls who are interested in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education and coding. Moreover, a significant number of women are unable to return to work if they quit their job. Nearly two million women left the workforce between February and October last year. It is an opportunity for HR leaders to look at what unique programs need to be instituted, so we can attract and retain women in the workplace.

In what ways do you think digital transformation will redefine businesses in the near future?

— I believe digital transformation now has the power to realign the structure of businesses. Even today, most companies are organized by verticals – such as finance, marketing, and sales – and the focus is on optimizing vertically. But data has the ability to cut across verticals, and that is how IT thinks – horizontally. Every digital experience intersects with multiple business functions. Take, as an example, when a person uses an airline’s mobile application to book flights. In order to create a seamless experience, the customer

journey needs to cut across various domains, such as marketing based on the customer’s earlier purchases, finance to do the payments, operations to assign a seat number, and so on. In essence, you have to look horizontally to create an incredible customer journey. Great customer experiences come together when



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Discussions

you connect horizontally as well as optimizing vertically. And, as a company matures in its digital journey, it discovers ways to begin operating horizontally and developing end-to-end, data-driven processes..

What are the most in-demand skills required on your team and how do you think automation will affect the workforce?

— Data is now critical for success in any business. Unsurprisingly, data science is a skill that is in high demand and will continue to be for us. With billions of devices generating data at an unprecedented rate, data scientists need to be focused on understanding the taxonomy of data, cleaning data, and analyzing that data in aggregate to enable business leaders to make more informed decisions.

Fundamentally, drawing insights from data comes down to the application of critical thinking. I believe companies need to utilize their human resources on tasks that require critical thinking. On the other hand, collection of data is a monotonous task and can be automated. I believe that the process of gathering data is where automation is widely applicable. Automation enables machines to perform the tedious task of collecting data at scale, while employees must be trained to look at data from various viewpoints and draw actionable insights that can drive value for a business. For example, we are investing in Smart Factory (Industry 4.0) along with Digital Supply Chain, where we are focused on 16 of our top manufacturing facilities driving common process models and modern machine connectivity. We are also driving Operational Technology and Information Technology Data Liquidity while deploying standard solutions across our landscape.



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