TO THRIVE AMID THIS CRISIS, COMPANIES MUST BUILD ON THE TRUST OF HEIR EMPLOYEES: AMD GLOBAL CHRO

THE IT INDUSTRY IS HIGHLY ADAPTIVE AND CONTINUOUSLY EVOLVING. THESE ATTRIBUTES HAVE HELPED BIG TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES, INCLUDING AMD, STAY PRODUCTIVE AND CONTINUE TO DELIVER THE PRODUCTS THAT CUSTOMERS EXPECT, SAYS **ROBERT GAMA,** SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, AMD

By Mastufa Ahmed

obert Gama is Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at AMD. Gama works with the global human resources team to solve AMD's most complex people, culture, talent, and leadership challenges. With more than 20 years of business and functional experience, Gama is a proven. resultsoriented leader with demonstrated ability to drive business outcomes through strategic HR practices.

Since joining AMD in 2013. Gama has led efforts to transform AMD in multiple global leadership positions. In his previous role as chief talent officer, Gama aligned AMD HR strategy with business objectives, re-energized corporate culture, and pragmatically transformed HR to drive simplification and accelerate global growth. Prior to joining AMD, Gama held various leadership roles at Lenovo, PepsiCo, and Dell.

Gama is dedicated to driving AMD's culture of inclusion as the executive sponsor for AMD's Employee Resource Groups, and actively works with members of AMD's Pride and Women's Forum resource groups.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

How do you see the impact of COVID-19 on the tech industry? The biggest technology companies seem to be steady amid all this uncertainty. At AMD, we moved quickly to implement best practices to mitigate the spread of the virus while maintaining business continuity for our customers, supporting our communities, and applying our technology and resources to help fight the virus. AMD maintains a robust global supply

chain and while we are not immune to macroeconomic effects. we are laser-focused on our goals of providing high-performance computing and graphics products to customers. The pandemic caused an acceleration of remote working, which in turn has caused an increase in demand for remote working technologies, PCs, and IT services. The IT industry is highly adaptive and continuously evolving. These attributes have helped big technology companies, including AMD, stay productive and continue to deliver the products our customers expect.

• How is AMD weathering the impact of the pandemic on the well-being of workers, the overall business

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performance, and customerrelationships?We went into this

pandemic with a very strong foundation of trust among employees and customers. We spent the last several vears building a culture that centers around trust that continues to deepen year over year. It is demonstrated by our continued gains in our employee survey and our business results. And since the start of this pandemic, AMD has sought to understand and be ahead of the needs of employees during this new reality. We initiated several short surveys about employees' remote work environments and because we are a global company whose locations include China, we had an early understanding of the pandemic and were able to apply learnings from those offices to the rest of the world.

O Can you take us through initiatives that worked for you at this time of uncertainty?

• We went into this pandemic with an extremely strong foundation. We had already embraced work flexibility and remote work environments. We simply doubled down on these initiatives further.

Early in 2020, we made available a clinically validated tool called meQuilibrium or meQ, to help employees build resilience, improve focus and overall well-being. This is in addition to a global Employee Assistance Program that gives AMDers 24*7 access to a variety of resources, tools, and services to help balance work, family, and personal life. Under this, employees or their family members can access free confidential short-term counseling.

And, in the past 12 months, we had increased investment in our Employee Resource Groups and they continue to play an active role in supporting colleagues. These groups offer a collaborative community where employees can freely share best tips and tricks and attend events with experts around successfully balancing work and family.

We did learn that as more homes became offices. many people were finding it difficult to disconnect from work. We recognized early on that this could impact employee well-being. So, we launched a vacation "Recharge" program to make it easier for our employees to take time off. The goal was to have these as no-meeting days and a significant portion of AMDers around the world took full advantage of this opportunity to take time off.

We added a \$250 quarterly allowance to help employees with extra expenses to set up their home office and be productive. As remote learning becomes the new norm for many children, we also announced a one-time/oneper-household technology reimbursement of \$250 for employees to purchase an AMD-based desktop, notebook, or Chromebook for a dependent child.

We made monetary donations to local, national, and

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global relief efforts and organizations to support the communities and countries in which we operate. We have donated \$1 million in funds to local organizations on the front lines of the fight and contributed additional \$1 million through a 2:1 employee gift matching program. Through the employee gift matching program, we donated over \$145,000 to local India organizations including United Way India, Concern India Foundation, and Indian Red Cross.

We created a COVID-19 HPC fund to provide key research institutions with computing resources to accelerate medical research on COVID-19. This included donation of a super computing system to the CSIR Fourth Paradigm Institute in Bengaluru. CSIR 4PI will host and manage this HPC facility and offer secure computational access to researchers and academicians in India working to tackle COVID-19 related challenges.

O Home office, flexitime, telecommuting, digital nomad, and remote working seem to be new trends. How do you see these trends shaping organizations as they come out of COVID-19?

AMD has always supported flexibility. We see the desire for flexibility to increase as the future state will include more balance and variety in terms of how workplaces look and feel. At the end of the day, we know that health and family come first for our employees, and we want to make sure they feel supported while we continue to drive the business forward.

• The role of HR and people managers has evolved amid this pandemic. What is the way forward for people managers to help businesses come out stronger and embrace the new normal? The HR team continues to work with these leaders to remain connected with their direct reports. We launched several trainings and learning initiatives for them on how to better lead virtual teams. Feedback from employees have been that they appreciate the careful listening from their leaders. They trust that their managers have their best interests at heart.

I also firmly believe, that one of the most important things leaders can do, is lead by example. This includes taking time off, communi-

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▲ As a company of more than 13,000 employees, we really had to rely on our people managers and leadership network to support our employees during this time. We have always had a culture of transparency and trust – a culture of overcommunication and no surprises. Our manager quality scores for the past several years have been best in class and continue to rise. cating openly, and participating in meetings via video, for a more in-person touch to the discussions. The leader must do these things consistently to drive the same behaviors in the team. That has always been important but due to the number of employees that may remain virtual, this will become critical to maintain connection and productivity.

Organizations including the traditional ones are increasingly leveraging tech innovations to adapt. Do you think it is time for HR leadership to employ technologies such as AI to move to the next level of work?

A HR is in a unique position to leverage technology including AI to transform our function with a focus on creating personalized experiences optimized for each employee. Of course, we can use AI to process HR transactions more efficiently, but the opportunity we have ahead to improve the lives of each individual employee are much more inspirational. Anywhere there is an abundance of data and transactions, there is an opportunity to leverage AI to automate and personalize. Here are just a few examples:

- The approach can be used for sourcing external candidates. For example, we are already using tools like LinkedIn Talent Insights and Talent Neuron to identify sources of talent with the skills we need across the globe.
- We use AI to assist in our job postings. We use Textio to ensure our postings are effective and reach the diverse candidate population we are looking for.
- AI is perfect for making sense of feedback from employees. Acting on information gathered from our employee surveys is crucial to ensure we maintain trust and earn that feedback in the future.

In contrast to previous crises, women's employ-

hour?
With COVID, the persona of the employee as a caregiver has never been more pronounced. Companies must acknowledge they hired a whole employee, an employee with responsibilities outside of the workplace, and provide resources to enable the employee to balance the demands of work, school, home, and parental care. AMD always had a stron framework with flex time, generous leave balances

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that threaten to exacerbate

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terms of gender equality in

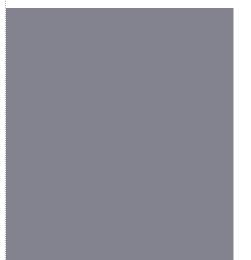
the labour market. What do

vou think is the need of the

AMD always had a strong framework with flex time. generous leave balances and back-up care support. We have doubled down on these to meet the needs of employees during this new reality. With so many kids and elderly loved ones in need of extra help, AMD's Caregivers **Employee Resource Group** has become a resource to employees. By sharing tips, resources, and webinars on working remotely and managing family obligations, we support each other as a community. The Caregiver group has also

partnered with our Women's Forum and women in leadership positions to host sessions on resilience and happiness.

What are some of the top questions that leaders need to ask to prepare for the future of work as we strive hard to come out stronger from this pandemic?
 At AMD, we were already driving a culture of trust, transparency, and feedback. This allowed us to be more resilient and continue to focus on our mission and vision of the company while



caring for our employees. We were already in tune with our workforce, market and customers and were able to quickly reset the business to brace for what could be a challenging year. We had the trust of the employees behind us embracing our moves, walking with us vs. pulling them along!

To continue to thrive, companies must ask themselves – Do you have the

trust of your employees? And if the answer is no. then how can you begin to build that trust for the new normal? How will you continue to connect employees to one another and to the organization through purpose in their work and how does that tie to the greater mission of the organization? What are the technical hurdles and opportunities? While it's a challenge to plan in an uncertain environment, when you have the trust of your employees and your finger is on the pulse of your organizaour employees to learn new skills. As we move forward, we want to ensure we are being proactive about the skills we will need. Investing in skills development training is critical. AMD has over 4,000 online courses available to our employees. We have found that since the pandemic, virtual attendance has increased, and employees are really taking advantage of skills development. These include LinkedIn Learning, SkillSoft, Udemy for Business, and GlobeSmart among others. From online technical courses to intercultural

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^O With remote work now the norm, how can organizations continue a highimpact learning culture in their organizations?

AMD has a strong eLearning platform and had already embraced a variety of digital platforms for education to industry articles from prestigious educational institutes, we are encouraging our employees to access these resources at their own pace to upskill themselves. We have found that offering trainings with flexibility is the key. Our employees have the option to take full day workshops or short 45-minute sessions depending on their availability. Com