



Brandon Hall Group
**EXCELLENCE
AT WORK**

Executive Interview

with **Rajesh Ahuja**,
SVP and Global Head of Talent Acquisition,
Infosys

Developing High-Performing Teams at Infosys

About Infosys

Infosys is a global leader in next-generation digital services and consulting. Infosys enables clients in more than 50 countries to navigate their digital transformation.

Recognition

Infosys won 10 Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards in 2021.



The Brandon Hall Group Preferred Provider Program is specifically designed as a single source of truth that can validate your technology selection decisions.

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About Rajesh Ahuja



Rajesh Ahuja is SVP and Global Head of Talent Acquisition for Infosys, a global leader in next-generation digital services and consulting.

In his career of more than 22 years, Ahuja has worked and lived all over the world. Prior to his current role, he had regional responsibilities for Infosys Talent Acquisition across North America, APAC and EMEA.

Ahuja and his family live in Princeton, N.J.



About Rachel Cooke

Rachel Cooke is Brandon Hall Group's Chief Operating Officer and Principal HCM Analyst. She is responsible for business operations, including client and member advisory services, marketing design, annual awards programs, conferences and the company's project management functions. She also leads Advancing Women in the Workplace and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, research and events. Rachel worked in the HCM research industry for 20+ years and held several key management and executive positions within the Talent and Learning Research, and Performance Improvement industries.

Q **RACHEL**

What does the hybrid work environment look like at Infosys?

A **RAJESH**

The current hybrid work environment still looks more remote than true hybrid. The reason is, late last year, we all started to plan and execute return-to-office programs. But then the Omicron variant of COVID-19 arrived and that derailed almost every plan. Now we are back to that place where we're starting to execute some of the return-to-office programs. In some of the countries we operate in, we've just started having people come in one to two days a week to the offices. It's still voluntary; it's not mandatory across the board. This is the approach we want to take because it is inclusive of employees' wishes and needs while fulfilling our client promise that we will provide them with best-in-class service.

Q **RACHEL**

Do you find that your teams are working or performing better in this type of environment compared to how they were before?

A **RAJESH**

I will speak more about the Talent Acquisition team at Infosys rather than the organization as a whole; they have done a phenomenal amount of work and have been working at very high productivity levels in the last 12 months. We have had a lot of additions to our team and have been able to integrate the people well. Even though The Great Resignation affected our Talent Acquisition team, the core of the group remains and that core has been able to bring new people and train and integrate them.

I was talking to somebody who finished three months recently in the team. She's a manager and she felt that the efforts made by the rest of the team to welcome her in and accept her as their manager was so different from previous job experiences. She comes with a lot of industry experience, but when she first joined, everything was remote, so our team went out of their way to welcome her. Overall, we are more productive. Could we be more effective in a hybrid or an in-person environment? Yes, at least in the short run, because there's a lot of pent-up frustration of not having time with colleagues. We are not having that casual coffee or a quick lunch or dinner. And that always brings people together, allowing new ideas to come in and flow. Hopefully, we'll see that very soon.

RACHEL

Q It sounds like some of your more significant challenges in this transition were The Great Resignation and trying to recruit and retain employees. How did you overcome those and what other challenges did you face?

RAJESH

A We're always hiring. I don't remember the last time we saw a hiring freeze before COVID. The first challenge was to stop an engine that was so well run and amazingly delivered. The second challenge was to restart it. We started in a virtual world where everybody was interviewing virtually, but we were used to a predominantly in-person interviewing world. Preparing for completely virtual interviewing involved training the team to use new tools and position them to start thinking differently: "OK, you don't have access to those hiring managers right across the hallway anymore to have decisions made and get meetings done around the next campaign." Now, those meetings must be scheduled and planned out. People were working harder because the work was also increasing. The hiring managers were also in a very different place than before. That was the first challenge: to reposition our thinking of "How do we work? How do we become as effective as we've always worked?"

Then there is The Great Resignation. The hiring demand across the organization went up but at the same time, we saw a phenomenal surge in our growth as an organization; our clients wanted to do a lot more digital work than ever. Our hiring demands were much higher than what they used to be, so there's been a lot of change management in terms of process and policy changes. And luckily, we have been coming out well on this end; our internal clients are happier than ever. Going hybrid helped us be more productive because it saved time on commutes and traveling, among other things, and overall productivity increased. I genuinely look forward to how the hybrid world stabilizes over the next few months because I think it's time to go back to the office. How and when it happens has yet to be formalized, but I think the teams should decide how that process goes, rather than a top-down approach.

RACHEL

Q Do you think we'll ever go back to less of a hybrid work environment, to where we were before?

A **RAJESH**

No. I don't think we will see five days a week in an office anytime soon unless something else changes. I don't believe the five-day week was the most productive way either, but the world will come to a balance. There are multiple experiments on four-day workweeks; some are successful, some got mixed results. The future of how we work will probably be something on the spectrum of hybrid, especially for the knowledge industry. Some jobs require you to be physically present, but those are different industries.

The other thing which I'm very excited about is The Metaverse. Let's take learning as an example — learning in-person versus learning virtually. Many studies are talking about which is the better way of learning. Do you learn better in groups and teams or do you learn better individually? The Metaverse is going to bring a whole new dimension to that topic. You'll still be virtual but you will be much closer to people as compared to a two-dimensional meeting like we are doing today. The availability of new tools and techniques is probably going to change the way we start thinking and we will interact with people differently. I'm very excited about The Metaverse concept and its effect on the working environment.

Q **RACHEL**

Do you have technology or resources to support this type of environment?

A **RAJESH**

We do; we recently launched Metaverse Foundry for our clients.

Q **RACHEL**

How complex is it for an organization to get started?

A **RAJESH**

There are multiple layers to this complexity and each organization will have to figure out which one is the most complex. The easier ones are technical, such as the availability of technology or working with partners like us to build that technology. It's the culture, it's the change management but it will not work for everyone. We can't replace everything we have with The Metaverse. The approach will be gradual and inclusive of multiple environments existing together. That requires a lot more leadership, commitment and empathy toward various ways of learning. Learning is just an example; there are multiple ways of working and being productive in an organization. A lot will boil down to the organizational culture. One of the only advantages we have is time. People don't have to shift to an entirely virtual world just yet; hopefully, we'll be able to do this much better than how we adapted to the COVID world.

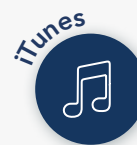
RACHEL

Q What are you doing to help teams perform in this hybrid environment compared to some of your peers and competitors?

RAJESH

A We are trying to be very careful about not conforming to a one-size-fits-all approach. We let the teams have a say in how they want their environment to shape up over the next few months. It's also essential to recognize that whatever you, the teams and the senior leaders come up with will change as we go along, because we're all trying to understand human behaviors in a completely different context. Employee needs have changed, the world's needs have changed. The rules of work have changed in many ways. People don't do the 9-to-5 workday anymore. In our case, there is an added complexity because we work with clients; we're a consulting organization. We're not just governed by our approach to what we do; we also must accommodate our clients. The big question the world is asking is, can consulting be done 100% remotely or do you need that input and connect to be better consultants? As we figure this out, we must be flexible, constantly adapting and rely on a massive data-driven approach. Finally, we must ensure our core focus does not waver. As long as we keep delivering on our client promises, we can build around it and improvise and perfect it. That's the approach we are taking.

Here are some ways to listen to the interview on Brandon Hall Group's Excellence at Work Podcast:



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