



## Keeping an Outcome Focus – Thriving to the Next Normal for Online Retail

An interview with Klaus Duetoft,  
Vice President - People International of eBay

Klaus Duetoft, a 18-year veteran of online retailer eBay, leads the People Business Partners and People Experience teams supporting all eBay employees across the Asia Pacific region including Turkish, International Cross Border Trade and Global Buying Hub based businesses.

Klaus is also a firm believer of bringing a commercially orientated human resources approach to businesses, which are pragmatic and down-to-earth as well as being progressive and innovative, therefore creating long term business value and doing that in a way that is sustainable.

The Covid-19 crisis has undoubtedly led to dramatic shifts in consumer behaviour. These abrupt shifts have left many retailers scrambling to effectively serve customers through other channels.

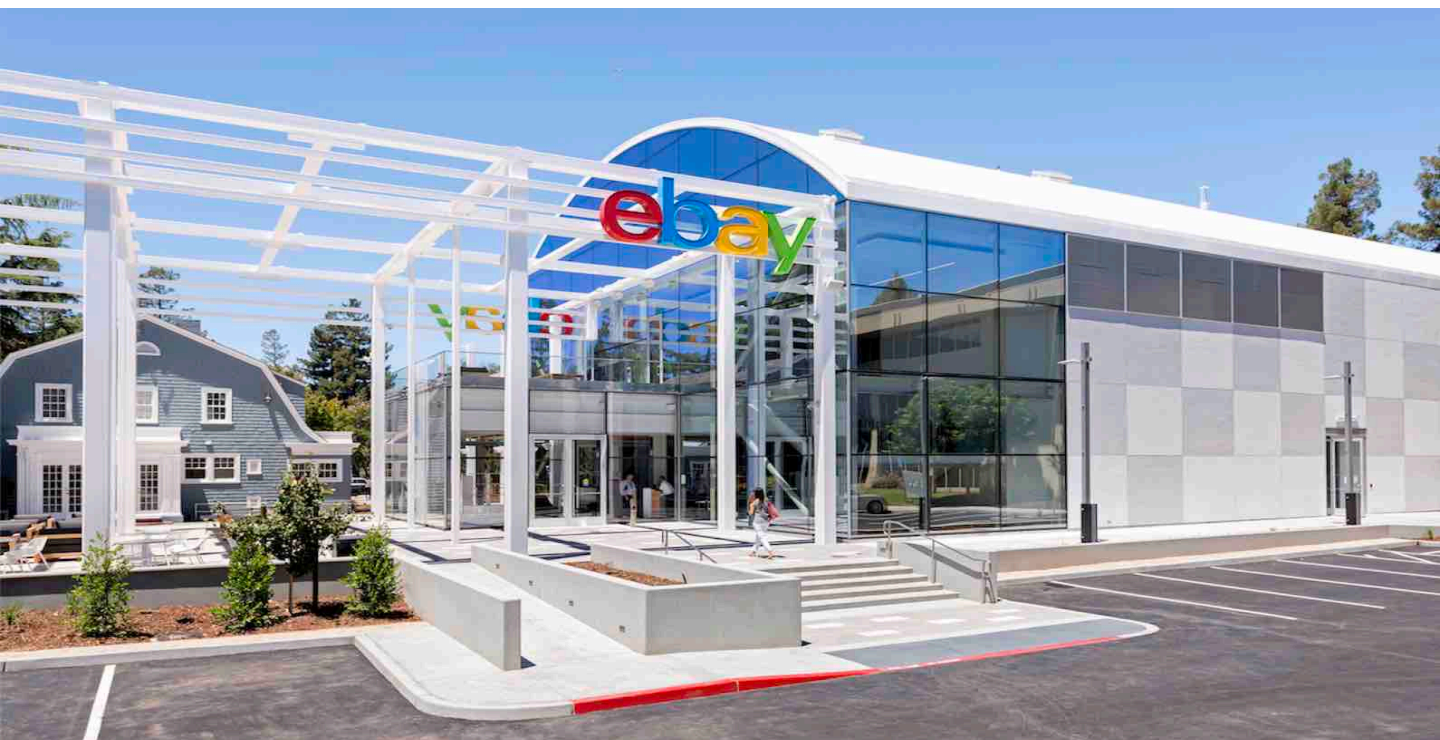
Despite eBay's stature as one of the globe's most recognisable internet brands – 1.7 billion live listings and 185 million buyers worldwide, the firm is not content to stay where it is at.

eBay continues to be at the forefront of changing consumer experiences, making it a magical place for Sellers, Buyers and the broader Employee population. It is also in this environment that Klaus brings his commercially orientated and strategic HR experience to play.

In this interview with Leadership Advisory Inc, Klaus talks about his career journey prior to his current role at eBay. He also discusses about how the Covid-19 crisis has changed his priorities at work, the nature of his role as a senior HR leader, and his views on how the post-Covid-19 workplace will look like in the future. *An edited transcript of the interview follows.*

**Leadership Advisory Inc:** You have been as eBay's Senior HR Leader since the beginning of 2008. Tell us more about your career journey prior to where you are today?

**Klaus Duetoft:** Firstly, can I say that I am very excited to have this opportunity, especially as I have read some of the past senior executives that have been profiled with keen interest! I hope I can do your readership justice.



In my experience, some of the most successful individuals that I know have had broad ranging career journeys, and my career path is no different. Early in my career, I had the benefit of working in various Government agencies in Australia ranging from Industrial Relations, Electricity Generation, Vocational Education to Justice. This developed a strong community and service mentality in me.

From there, I jumped into the Pharmaceutical and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods sectors. These experiences taught me to drive hard towards outcomes - in effective and efficient ways, and the importance of consistency and balancing short- and long-term thinking. It was also during this period that I started supporting countries in East Asia. I loved it - the cultures, the pace, energy, growth and every day was different. And most importantly, the amazing people!

In 2003, I wanted a much faster and more dynamic environment, so I found myself in the Telecommunication and High-Tech sectors. The resilience, agility and responsiveness that I developed during that career period led me to build and run a successful Human Resources Consulting business.

Ultimately though, the combination of community and service experiences linked with fine tuning my outcome and impact drive, combined with strong resilience, agility and drive - set me on the path to find my entrepreneurial mindset - which meant I found a perfect fit at eBay!

I think in any diverse career, the range of experiences, people, situations, approaches and styles, ultimately help make you a more pragmatic, adaptable and seasoned individual.

*“Being creative, focused, thoughtful and engaging are important attributes given that we know how dynamic and dispersed our International Region is.”*

**Leadership Advisory Inc:** How has Covid-19 changed the nature of what you do, and how you do it?

**Klaus Duetoft:** Interestingly, most of the Business Leaders that I support are broadly spread, ranging from China to Mexico, down to Australia and across to Turkey. So being fluid in terms of meetings and video calls was already part of the way I managed my role.

Fortunately, I have an amazing group of People teams co-located with our biggest employee populations, so there is also that direct contact. I think the biggest change as a result of Covid-19 is probably more around how we support our colleagues. And how I build a sustainable rhythm for how I operate in my role on a day-to-day basis, as well as for the businesses that we support.

Being creative, focused, thoughtful and engaging are important attributes given that we know how dynamic and dispersed our International Region is.

**Leadership Advisory Inc:** Has the pandemic also changed your priorities as a leader, or otherwise affected how you lead?

**Klaus Duetoft:** No, not really. I have a fundamental belief that as leaders, we should measure the impact of what we do and what our teams deliver. So, an outcome focus rather than only an inputs focus.

Putting that in another way - my focus is on how I empower, enable and support my team and the broader organisation drive success. Whereas I think in a lot of instance, people measure inputs such as individuals working certain hours or are they are their desks etc...

In a pandemic environment, there is probably no difference to how you measure someone's outputs versus there are clearly changes in relation to where a person is or whether they are at a desk for a certain number of hours and how they deliver.

Having said that, there clearly have been changes like navigating the complexities, ensuring our colleagues are safe and well, focusing on supporting an individual's mental health, putting in place practices where individuals can continue to be successful wherever they are based is important. Setting and communicating clear direction and purpose are critical.

“Focusing on supporting an individual's mental health, putting in place practices where individuals can continue to be successful wherever they are based is important.”

**Leadership Advisory Inc:** In early February this year, Chief Executive Officer Jamie Iannone said in an interview with Reuters - eBay is stronger coming out of the pandemic than going in. Has the Covid-19 pandemic reaffirmed eBay's approach to digitisation?

**Klaus Duetoft:** I think Jamie since he has been our CEO has driven a very strong focus on understanding our customers, and how we leverage a Tech led reimagination of where we want eBay to be.

eBay plays a very special role for an enormous number of Sellers around the world, as well as a platform for Buyers to have choice. As a purpose led business, Jamie has continued to reinforce that belief and how critical it is that we retain those attributes that makes eBay a magical place for our Sellers, Buyers and our broader Employee population.

I do think eBay has an amazing business model and plays an important role in society. So yes, I think that has been reinforced.

## Global Scale & Reach



Live listings on the eBay Marketplace



Buyers on the eBay Marketplace



Mobile Volume



Revenue from International Operations

**Leadership Advisory Inc:** The trend to shop online is certainly here to stay. As we navigate through the next normal, are there capabilities that you want to focus on building - either in people or in the organisation?

**Klaus Duetoft:** Yes, I think the way people shop continues to evolve though I would not say it is a trend, as that implies that it may cease. In my view, for a lot of people it has driven choice, efficiency and access. I know for me; online shopping is an important component for how I buy a lot of the items that I am personally interested, including what we use as a household on a day-to-day basis.

As online shopping continues to mature and broaden in reach, there are a range of capabilities that I feel organisations need to buy and build. Some of these capabilities include Digital Marketing, SEO Optimisation, Analytics, Engineering, Logistics & Cross Border Trade knowledge to name just a few.

**Leadership Advisory Inc:** Looking ahead, what do you think the workplace of the post-Covid-19 future will look like?

**Klaus Duetoft:** This is an interesting question. The 'Future of Work' is a global discussion that our Executive Leadership team is having, particularly in terms of what type of working environment do we want to evolve towards, enabling people to succeed, feeling connected and engaged, whilst retaining those unique attributes that culturally makes eBay such a special place to work and make a difference.

“Progressive organisations will end up with talented individuals, who will make discerning choices on the type of culture and environment they want to be.”

In my opinion, as I mentioned earlier in the interview, I believe in an outcome focus not an input focus. So where and how a person delivers against their commitments is really up to them. I think we will need to be clear on expectations and what the role of remote working versus office working is. Maybe remote working is for more individually driven, deeper thinking or transactional work. Whereas office working may be more about connection, collaboration, project work, team catch ups or huddles etc.

Once we understand the relevance of each one, we can then think about how we set the right expectations, what needs to be in place for an individual to succeed in either, how leaders navigate managing their teams whether remotely or within the office. And the agility and adaptability of navigating various scenarios with different team members are equally vital.

Ultimately, I suspect where progressive organisations will end up with talented individuals, who will make discerning choices on the type of culture and environment they want to be.

*This interview was conducted by Daniel Soh, a Managing Partner in Leadership Advisory Inc's Singapore office.*



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