

1. Summary of the EV company

The electric vehicle (EV) company I chose for my study was the eco-oriented Hylion, which has being “a technology leader in the global fight against climate change by delivering solutions that reduce or negate carbon emissions” as one of its goals. Hylion is part of the Hypertruck Innovation Council, created after the need of a net-zero carbon commercial transportation industry. That being said, Hylion wants to be recognized in the market not only as a leader in negative carbon emissions, but also to promote a viable way to turn its entire sector into an environment-friendly industry.

In this sense, the **key competencies of the company** are mainly related to the idea of making a lasting impact on the environment (mainly), the commercial transportation industry and in customers. So one may take the approach for Hylion’s core competencies as company in the following terms: **1)** it differs even from other EV companies because its goal is not to be carbon neutral, but carbon negative; **2)** Hylion’s trucks are more efficient than diesel trucks and machine learning continuously optimizes power output; **3)** Hylion’s renewable natural gas (RNG) operating trucks can be fueled as fast as diesel trucks and can achieve the same travel range.

Concerning its current market status, Hylion is a company that heavily relies on complimentary partnerships and third parties of the energy sector. In the SWOT analysis elaborated for *Strategic Planning and Market Competition*, such factor is one of Hylion’s main weakness. Not only that, the company has a very low sales rate and only two main products planned: **1)** a system that turns diesel trucks into a hybrid electric vehicle; **2)** the Hypertruck ERX, which is a battery-powered, heavy-duty truck that uses an on-board, RNG generator to recharge batteries during use. In other words, so far Hylion is a mainly speculative company that seeks to make achieve business combination and merging with other companies and to keep attracting investors.

In February 2018, Hyliion moved its headquarters to Greater Austin, Texas area.¹ So far, the new 80,000 square foot, custom designed office is the only reported office of the company, where most of their almost 100 employees work (estimated of 92 on April 2021). This facility houses all departments from research & development, to sales, marketing, IT and administration. When we take into account the hiring categories that Hyliion is currently undertaking, so far we know they are focussing 63,9% on technology employees, 30,6% in sales & business development, then 2,8% in legal and also 2,8% in support.²

2. Key individual competencies

After considering such data, it is necessary to match individual competencies of potential employees with such core competencies of Hyliion. Based upon a study of KSAO related to Hyliion, its is possible to identify key **individual competencies** in the following terms:

1) Knowledge – **a)** knowing the differences between concepts such as “carbon neutral”, “carbon negative”, “carbon zero” and “climate positive” are key information the understand how the company is different from others; **b)** the use of renewable natural gas (RNG) and knowledge of its impact on nature in comparison to conventional natural gas; **c)** general knowledge of how such new eco-friendly technologies impact not only in the environment, but also in customer’s costs and ways of life.

2) Skills – **a)** successfully communicating the key differences of Hyliion’s technology and vision to customers; **b)** IT skills and ease with GPS and mapping devices, since it is necessary to indicate RNG stations to potential customers; **c)** commercial awareness, considering that Hyliion’s vision is to create a net-zero industry.

3) Abilities – **a)** communication, persuasion and negotiation; **b)** cognitive ability; **c)** openness.

4) Other – general characteristics, such as interest in green technologies, environmental causes, political initiatives on environmental preservation etc.

Having these KSAOs considered, key **individual competencies** for matching with Hyliion’s core competencies could be communication, cognitive ability, engagement, effectiveness, strategic thinking, industry expertise and creativity.

3. Selection techniques

¹ Available at: < <https://www.hyliion.com/hyliion-moves-headquarters-greater-austin-texas-area/> >

² Available at: < <https://craft.co/hyliion> >

Therefore, and as Hyliion is a relatively new company (founded in 2015, by Thomas Healy), the most important **selection techniques** would those related to learning agility and job knowledge. And this is so because Hyliion is not only a company which tries to compete in the commercial transportation industry, but wants to make a difference in the planet's environment for its own technology. That means a potential employee must understand (i) how Hyliion's technology work, (ii) how it is both more efficient and more environmental-friendly than its EV competitors and (iii) how and why Hyliion's trucks outperform regular diesel trucks with its technology. Not only these, it would also be necessary to assess creativity and problem-solving abilities, as the company has the challenging goal of redesign itself for a

In Hyliion's case, there is a wide range of possible – and successful – selection techniques. For instance, it would be quite effective to have cognitive ability tests and interviews with peers, in order to assess candidates comprehension of green technologies and related types of knowledges that are useful to the company's daily routine. However, when it comes to creativity and problem-solving abilities, which might be Hyliion's main concern in the current situation, job day trials may reveal themselves as the best option to find committed individuals who are able to propose innovative solutions.

4. Proposal for quality of life and health in Hyliion's team

As mentioned above, the company is facing a continuous decrease of its stocks, since it is still a very speculative company and has very low sales rate, which makes Hyliion particularly vulnerable to negative media review, which drives shareholders away. In this context, it must take care for its work environment not to become a negative one, that might increase depression and anxiety among employees. In the next lines, we will draft a program trying to answer the question: *what Hyliion should do to increase its employees quality of life and health in the current market scenario?*

1. The main problems Hyliion is facing are **(i)** low rate of sales and **(ii)** decrease of shareholders. The first is related to its technologies and the second relates to its business development. In this sense, trying to create an environment of job enrichment, where employees from these core sectors develop autonomy through decision-making will be key to increase individual and team motivation. Not only that, but a job enrichment redesign – which empowers the individual in his/her job – will be highly effective for Hyliion to find creative solutions for its current main weaknesses. For instance, in the technology sector, all employees may be encouraged to test out the hybridizing system themselves, instead of concentrating that in specialists; if such possibility is factual, then such team will have significant increase in skill

variety and, consequently, better insights over the quality and reliability of the product which needs to be sold. Similarly, in business development sector, employees should be encouraged to be more freely active in social media, so Hyliion's content may become trending topics and attract positive attention besides of bad reviews from Investopedia. Just like in Netflix, Hyliion's employees from business development should freely surf through social media with Hyliion's character as an active and engaging profile, making statements and memes related to the company's main values. This might be an effective plan to turn the working environment a much more playful one, where jokes and creative humor related to green-technology awareness may actually help to increase shareholders interest again.

2. One of Hyliion's main strategic goals for 2021 is to sell at least 300 hybrid electric powertruck units. Such figure is quite challenging, since the company has sold no more than 30 up to May 2021. In this sense, the workplace redesign described above will be key to manage and deal with the upcoming anxiety that might increase in Hyliion's team. Having this in mind, two seemingly contradictory measures should be taken: **i)** the goal of selling 300 trucks in 2021 should be abundantly clear for the entire team and this should be a daily concern; **ii)** the workplace must allow high flexibility for employees and training for harassment prevention. The first measure relates to the company's top priorities, so the team's efforts should be calibrated accordingly. One good way of controlling expectations and work rhythm is to turn the 300 in smaller "achievable": first 50 trucks sold, first 100 trucks sold, first 150 trucks and so on. For each achievable, the entire team cumulates benefits. And for the second, Hyliion should have good dialogue between the teams, specially when it comes to decision-making process and individual expectations. Heads and supervisors must be aware and available to family needs and any type of harassment in the workplace.

3. Hyliion's Vision aims at a global net-carbon-negative commercial transportation industry. That is, the company's key concern is the environment and nature preservation. Such vision can be correlated with absenteeism policies. In addition to what was suggested in the previous step, Hyliion should increase team activities that correlate the company's vision with employee's workplace health and assistance programs. From exercising in the workplace, specially for those who work sitting the entire day, to raising awareness against unhealthy habits, Hyliion has great opportunities to develop a corporate culture that unifies the nature preservation idea (Hyliion's vision) with employee's quality of life and health enhancement.

4. Last but not least, Hyliion must always stress the value over team communication and collective work, either by still correlating with the company's Vision or by stressing how such

premise is necessary for a **healthy** and **safe** workplace environment for everyone. Teamwork and reliance will be key aspects in order to build up resilience in though year for Hyliion and to guarantee that employees will deliver high quality performances.

5. Proposal for high-level performance in heterogenous teams

A team might be classified as “heterogenous” from many perspectives, since skills and specialties to individual social background. For this program particularly, and considering this as an abstract prediction of tools and strategies to guarantee good communication, promote mental health in the work environment (deliverable 2) and manage conflict in work environment, we will take the approach of the heterogeneity of Hyliion – which is basically defined by the two main groups of employees: technology and sales & business development.

(1) Managing virtual heterogenous teams. Although Hyliion moved its headquarters to Greater Austin in a very big, galpooon-like structure that works both as showroom for its EV trucks and as “general store”, the pandemics would have certainly affect the dynamics of Hyliion’s team. It is safe to assume that at least both the sales & business development and legal teams, which represents 33,4% of the entire employee body of the company, would be working in virtual teams. Of course, both technology and support teams would be working virtually too, but it is highly speculative of what percentage of them would make such shift. For this first challenge, it is interesting to have in mind the AHRI guidelines for managing performance in virtual teams.

That means, in particular, **(i)** havig a one-on-one time with each team member, **(ii)** clarify priorities and break down objectives and **(iii)** identify what has changed for the business and discuss the changing direction with employees. In Hyliion’s case, as studied in Strategic Planning and Marketing Competition, the company is facing a very serious threat because their stocks may keep falling since it remains purely speculative and has almost no sales. That also means that, in the short run, Hyllion might be losing partnership opportunities if can’t sell the amount of trucks predicted for 2021. For the case of virtual teams, on the one hand, clarifying the priorities mean remembering probably the company’s main goal for 2021: to sell at least 300 hybrid electric powertruck units. On the other hand, there’s also the need to cope with the new dynamics of business during the pandemics and how to attract customers and investors.

A good way of engaging employees in **(ii)** might be developing gamification strategies in the workplace. That is because Hyliion is facing a big challenge that will probably will be quite stressful to achieve during 2021, which is the selling of the 300 trucks. With gamification, the managers may “break” the amount of trucks to be sold in phases to be colectively achieved – turn one main goal in many smaller goals, which are more palpable to the work routine – and

reward the employees when such phases are done. Concerning **(iii)**, one of the most important things is to understand that sales will shift to an entirely virtual environment, which means that customers will probably not have access to a test-drive or even physical contact with the product. Therefore, sales & business development will need a very different approach into calling the attention of potential customers and – at the same time – building trust towards a product that used to be tested by clients before the deal. As suggested in the previous deliverable, a good strategy for this is investing in a team more freely active in social media. If Hylion's employees build a strategy to socially engage with customers just like Netflix does it, they might tackle two problems at the same time: refresh the workplace and feel responsible for this new kind of performance in extraordinary times, as well as working towards the main goal of the company for 2021.

To sum up this part, it is important that teams develop a performance improvement plan for this sector of the company that will sensibly change its dynamics. The list below will give some ideas of what should be done, taking **(ii)** and **(iii)** into account:

a) Have an open communication channel between the entire team, where everyone can talk freely and update the entire sales and business team with anything of relevance (a *whatsapp* group might be an interesting tool and it is commonly used);

b) The managers of the sales and business team must have a virtual, every-week “alignment meeting” with the entire team so they can assess not only the performance and assertiveness, but also have “human contact”³ with every employee so the needs of close interaction and identification of emotions are met in a space where they will collectively talk about the goals and the strategy;

c) Regular individual meetings, preferably when asked, should also be on schedule to meet with personal demands and to discuss if there is any underperformance or problem that should be known and need solution.

(2) Managing on-place heterogeneous teams. Technology employees, which represent 63,9% of Hylion's entire team, might be the ones who will still be working on place, since they are assigned with developing and testing the green-tech of the company. For their case, it is understandable that the biggest change will not be in the nature or place of work, except for sanitary and security standards, but with the social experience of being in contact with less people than they used to be and with the feeling they're the only ones doing the “hardest job”.

³ Even though it is still through camera.

Such experiences with technology workers should encourage managers to also use “alignment meeting” strategy to identify not only the workplace needs, but also to emotional needs. When there is a discrepancy with the teams’ – technology and sales & business development – strategy during the pandemics, it is common to have workstyles conflicts, since some people will prefer to work from home and others will be more productive on-place. Managers should also be flexible to rationalize the need for technology employees to be working at Hyliion’s headquarters, sending them home and/or setting a schedule of rotational replacement – when a part of the team work on-place and the other at home, but after some time they change places.

The most important thing is, like in virtual teams, to have a clear and open channel of communication between employees and managers so collective and individual needs can be addressed. Of course, this is a general postulate that simply means nothing without planning and strategies to identify problems. In this sense, both group and individual dynamics, inserting gamification when possible, as explained above, would be core to achieve a sustainable high-performance team.

6. Proposal for an enhancing acknowledgment, career development and talent retention

(1) Enhancing acknowledgment. When we are talking about enhancing acknowledgment, the first thing we to understand is that, since people are different, what will drive their motivation and interest will also differ in the workplace. It is very common, and such has been debated during the course, that people will be motivated to stay in the company when they find an environment which is able to “develop a sense of purpose”. Meaning: does the work provide some inner feeling that the person is doing something meaningful for him/her and for society? Although purpose is “something” strictly intimate and might be immeasurable at some extent, this can actually be provided once the company – when selecting possible employees – identifies **(i)** key competences and **(ii)** personal interests and/or goals that an employee is seeking in his/her life. When company is able to assess what “drives” someone, it is far easier to modulate both expectations and which functions the employee will be able to be responsible for.

But “sense of purpose”, of course, is not the only thing necessary. There’s even a common joke that tells your purpose goes as far as your paycheck. Many people, if not most, are driven by financial reward. Even though it is safe to say that money is not the best retention strategy in the market, poor payment will certainly be a factor influencing anxiety and absenteeism in workplace as it is a source of demotivation.

Last, but not least, it is value appreciation. To put it bluntly, people want to be seen; people want to feel that what they do have value and such value is recognized and appreciated in their families, social gatherings and, of course, workplaces. Managers should be encouraged to clearly let their employees know that their efforts are being seen and appreciated; also, it is important that all necessary criticism comes as uplifting, in order for the employee to seek improvement.

Taking into account Hyliion's context, of a very heterogenous team, with parts working on-place and others in virtual environments, it is recommendable that managers promote public appraisals for the teams everytime a goal is achieved, taking care to mention – if possible – the names of every person involved in such achievement. If only managers are being publicly praised, then workers in the base might feel underappreciated. Such strategy for enhancing acknowledgment should also make possible for a big team (Hyliion has more or less 100 workers right now) to share bonds with people from different sectors.

(2) Career development. Just like it was explained in the third deliverable, Hyliion is faced with the challenge of selling at least 300 hybrid electric powertruck units in 2021. Such fact brought the idea of putting up a gamification strategy to work that main goal of the year in many smaller goals. Meaning, the managers may “break” the amount of trucks to be sold in phases to be collectively achieved – turn one main goal in many smaller goals, which are more palpable to the work routine – and reward the employees when such phases are done.

That's where a plan of career development would fit in. While pursuing such goals, employees should undertake training exactly to understand and be capable to “attack” what is being asked of them. Good employee training should address weaknesses identified in the new workplace environment (due to the pandemics) in order to both improve performance and to allow Innovation in a context where the market is in need of different strategies for sales and business. Hyliion's values, in such context, are key do organize what a career development program would look like, as they put them: *“deliver the practical advantages of hybrid and electric technology to commercial fleets; accelerate innovation and reduce costs in commercial transportation and logistics; be a technology leader in the global fight against climate change by delivering solutions that reduce or negate carbon emissions.”*

In this sense, the main point such plan should take into consideration is addressing both orientations of the company's policies, rules and regulations, but also lectures that capacitate employees on green-tech and contemporary reasearch. In this way, it is more likely that employees will apply such acquired knowledge in workplace and personal lives.

(3) Talent retention. The talent retention is all about making your employee want to stay and grow in the company. Not only what was said before of necessary implementation, the strategies of retention vary a lot.

Communication, as always, is a key element for these strategies. The manager should proactively connect with each staff member on a regular basis to get a sense of their workload and job satisfaction. Close to this is the need for continuous feedback on performance, which is core to the training and development, in a way that the employee feels like he is being appreciated and also improving his/her skills. Related to the many times mentioned gamification, there is the acknowledgment of milestones, when managers promote public appraisals for the teams everytime a goal is achieved, taking care to mention – if possible – the names of every person involved in such achievement.

(4) Criteria for discharging people. Very briefly, such criteria, in Hyliion's case, should be:

- a) Resistance to communicate problems;
- b) Inability to communicate to customers the technological type of innovation of products and services provided;
- c) Repetitive absenteeism in trainings and “alignment meetings”;
- d) Lack of commitment to goals of the company and/or loyalty with other members of the team.

Such criteria will vary in the way they will be measured, but a good reference for them should be the “smaller” goals of the gamification strategy for the Hyliion's 2021 main goal of selling 300 trucks. If the employee is having most or all these problems, maybe there should be a strategy for transitioning him to a different kind of company. In the discharging process, the skills and abilities of the employee should be considered while he/she is looking for another job while employed.