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GO GREEN WITH GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) is an offshoot of Green movement, a political movement which advocates principles of Environmentalism, Sustainability and Social justice to protect environment and save planet Earth from future man-made disasters. The Green HRM begot from the organizations that follow those practices and ideologies which are directed towards protection of environment and help in ensuring sustainable living. Green HRM essentially involves adopting such practices, policies, behaviours and learning processes which are directed towards attaining and maintaining environmental balance. This can be achieved by way of reduced carbon footprint, judicious use of natural resources, recycling and an active waste management. The present study highlights that Green HRM can play a pioneering role in realizing the aim of sustainable development whilst meeting economic, social and other goals. The biggest boon for organizations that follow Green HRM are in the form of improvised company image, brand image and the improved relationships with customers, suppliers, employees and government. Green HRM can play a central role in generating awareness among employees and other stakeholders for protection of environment and switching to green practices. Apart from this intrinsic benefit, Green HRM can play a useful role in employee retention.

KEYWORDS

sustainability, green hrm, eco-friendly practices, green movement.

INTRODUCTION

Uncontrollable deterioration of the Earth's resources has put us in a situation where earth's resources are getting depleted at a rate which supersedes the replenishment rate of resources. Currently we are consuming more natural resources than our planet earth can replenish. If this rate continues it is obvious that at a certain stage even two planets will not be enough to fulfill our needs.

The dawn of the age of science and technology brought revolutionizing growth and development of human potential. This success followed to the extent wherein, man became a supreme being and stepped into a position where he even defies laws of nature. Rising pollution, shrinking water bodies, reduced forest cover, alarming levels of carbon dioxide and a host of other environmental problems we are facing speaks volumes about the pressure we are putting on the planet. The regular depletion in the quality and quantity of natural resources and the ability of our planet to support a quality life in future is quite apocryphal.

The paramount need to protect environment via controlling deforestation, bringing pollution levels in control and carbon dioxide emissions laid the foundation of Green movement, a philosophy that advocates realization of sustainable living that is living within one's fair share of the planet's resources to improve quality of life without affecting the needs of future generations. The Green movement found its takers in all fields of management, be it marketing management, production management or supply chain management. Green movement ideologies have been incorporated around the central tenants of marketing, production and supply chain activities and the recent inclusion to this movement is Green Human Resources Management Green HRM).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability has become an essential feature in all affairs of life. The adoption of HR practices like knowledge management, employee participation, recruitment and selection, employee training, encouraging diversity and leadership is required to be integrated to environmental improvements for the firm (Gill, 2012). Green HRM refers to practices promoting green initiatives by increasing employee awareness and commitment on the issues of environmental sustainability. Muller-Carmen et. al., (2010) have explained that Green HRM involves an integration of company's environmental management objectives to the HR processes of recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and evaluation, rewards and recognition etc. They further highlighted that the implementation of rigorous recruitment and selection of employees, performance-based appraisal system and introduction of developmental programmes should aim at increasing the employees' environmental awareness. Mishra et. al., (2014) suggested that the companies can take number of initiatives to incorporate green HR initiatives like:

- short term initiation: finding out where the company stands and launches in green projects
- middle term initiation: track performance and build and eco – advantage culture
- long term initiation: drive environmental thinking deep into business strategy.

There are a wide range of factors which influences the adoption of an environmental strategy by a company (Berry and Rondinelli, 1998; Haden et. al., 2009) including financial performance (Sroufe, 2003), stakeholder pressure (Gonzalez-Benito 2006), corporate image and intellectual capital (Boselie et. al., 2001) and competitive advantage (Lin et. al., 2001) as emerging to be the most concerned and important reasons. Cherian & Jacob (2012) identified that employees who are actively involved in environmental management principles may play a vital role in arriving at better environmental strategies to be implemented. Employees may feel empowered to adopt specific environment management principles as a result of promoted human resource policies which present better opportunities for improvements related to reduction of waste and promotion of lean manufacturing. This also may help in arriving at greener products and green savings from waste elimination. The promotion of such values will also indirectly improve consumer satisfaction. Renwick et. al., (2013) worked extensively in identifying literature gap in the area of Environmental Management (EM) and Human Resource Management and observed that some organisations limit their effectiveness in efforts to improve EM as most do not practice the wider initiatives of Green HRM practices.

The phenomenon of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization has created an environment in which organizations are moving beyond the traditional boundaries of profits and shareholders to multiple stakeholders, the realization to the natural environment, planet protection, health of people, empowering poor and development of community by fostering diverse types of innovation is becoming more essential. Towards this backdrop the present study focus on green HRM initiatives to be taken by the organizations towards social and organizational goals.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objective of the present paper has been to create awareness about environmental problems and suggest the ideologies of green movement which can be envisaged through the HRM processes besides the quick benefits that an organization can attain by going green.

GREEN HRM - A CONCEPT

Green Human Resources Management encompasses all those activities, practices and behaviour of the organization which are directed towards maintaining ecological balance while carrying out various activities in HR process including recruitment, selection, induction, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation management. Daily & Huang (2001) observed that an Environmental Management System includes documentation of: commitment and policy; planning; implementation; measurement and evaluation; and review and improvement. Muller-Carmen et. al., (2010) have explained that Green HRM involves an integration of company's environmental management objectives to the HR processes of recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and evaluation, rewards and recognition etc.

Green HRM has emerged as a crucial area of management which can have profound impact on people working in the organization and on the organization towards addressing environmental issues. Adopting HR policies and practices which address green issues can play unparallel role in generating awareness about environment issues. Human beings can invent eco-friendly materials, equipment etc. but unless the thinking and behaviour of human beings is made conducive to support the cause of green movement, all other efforts won't prove much fruitful. In this scenario, Green HRM can shoulder the responsibility of encouraging and motivating workforce towards adopting green practices and switching over to more responsible and sustainable activities. The way offices are lighted, vehicles are driven, factories are run on fuel and similar other actions have an impact on our planet. Green initiatives like carpooling, recycling and reducing use of paper, telecommuting waste management and Eco-driving can be significant in developing an environmentally aware culture.

The organizations which are working towards developing Green issues will enjoy competitive advantages over rivals who aren't Green conscious. The Green organizations will reap the benefits of addressing environmental concerns in the form of improvised corporate and brand image, cordial relations with stakeholders, increased employee satisfaction and their retention.

FROM HRM TO GREEN HRM

The human resource management of any organization is involved in carrying out various functions like recruitment, selection, induction, training and development programs, performance appraisal and reward management. The HR department can take green initiatives in all these functions to help build a green organization. The contemporary HR managers have responsibility of incorporating green philosophies down into various functions to develop an environmental friendly organization. This can actively happen by taking a green approach while carrying out the following activities:

A) RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

Recruitment and Selection can turn out to be a key factor in highlighting the green concerns of an organization. Job descriptions can be used strategically to attract candidates who share similar ideology with organization regarding their concerns about environmental sustainability and preservation.

The remarkable progress in the field of science and technology has revolutionized the pace and mode of communication. The on boarding process of HR can employ video-conferencing, teleconferencing, online tests to carry out recruitment and selection of employees. The use of advanced technology can make recruitment and selection more paperless and quick in action. The Green initiatives in recruitment and selection can help companies find alternative cost effective methods to bring down costs. In spite of banking on traditional modes of advertising and communication, companies can post the vacancies in their organization on their website and other job portals. Resumes, cover letters, offer letters, acceptance letters and all other forms of notifications and responses can be submitted and accepted online. These methods will not only assure significant reduction in advertisement costs but will increase the reach of their advertisements besides being Green.

B) TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training and development can be tailored to focus on the green issues. While designing Training and Development Programs, it should be taken into consideration that whenever and wherever it is feasible, online training should be preferred over offline modes of training. The course material to be essential part of the training and development should be made available online, thereby reducing paper consumption.

The training and development programs should comprise of workshops, lectures, demonstrations and sessions that promptly focus on the environmental issues and the numerous ways in which individual and team efforts could be effective in fighting pollution and ensuring sustainable living. Training and development programs can be used to generate awareness related to crucial environmental issues like waste management, energy conservation, reducing carbon footprints etc.

C) PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance Appraisal and Performance Management should be designed in such a way that it attributes significant importance to green skills, green targets and green behaviour in key performance areas. Whilst establishing benchmarks of performance and setting standards for measuring performance of employees, the green initiatives taken by the employees should be made countable. The creativity and resourcefulness shown by employees in shouldering the ecological responsibility of the organization should be acknowledged by the management. The individual and team efforts taken by employees towards creating awareness about environmental problems and suggesting Green solutions to such problems should be appreciated and positively reinforced to ensure repetition of such behaviour. The green habits of employees like eco-driving; carpooling, waste management should be encouraged. Negative reinforcements should be awarded to those who don't take care of the green concerns of the organization.

D) REWARDS AND COMPENSATION

The compensation management should be developed and designed to acknowledge the green initiatives taken by employees in the form of increased pay, incentives and other benefits. The compensation system should be tailored to reward green behaviour and accomplishment of green targets by employees. In this context, both monetary and non-monetary rewards can be allocated to green achievers in order to encourage them and motivate others to maintain a Green attitude in their activities. Monetary rewards can be allocated in the form of increased pay, cash premiums, bonuses, special discounts on purchase of company's products. Non-monetary benefits could be allocated in the form of special holiday leave, gifts, promotions etc.

The companies can also confer special recognition based awards to green achievers like assigning special titles e.g. Mr. Green of the year, publicity among rest of workforce by holding special ceremonies to appreciate achievements of green achievers, etc.

CONCLUSION

Green HRM can play a pivotal role in making organizations environment friendly. There is a growing global consensus that organizations should actively incorporate Green ideology in management practices. The growing awareness of the people related to environment issues is transforming the world into a green economy. Against this backdrop, organizations which address green issues and take green initiatives, should integrate environmental management into human resources management. In response to ever growing expectations of customers and other stakeholders the organizations are likely to enjoy competitive gains in the form of improvised corporate and brand image. The green conscious organizations will be seen as a responsible entity in the market. Green HRM can help organizations build a strong relationship with customers, suppliers and government agencies. An organization that shows concern for environment is seen as a good corporate entity and this image will help organizations to build their loyal customer groups and gain the confidence of this group in times of difficulties.

Apart from the built in benefit of addressing environmental issues, the biggest boon for green organization lies in the noticeable improvement in work force's faith in the quality of vision and mission statements. Going Green can help organizations motivate its workforce positively, reduce their burnout and absenteeism and ensure greater productivity. Green Image of organization has the effect making it easier to attract and retain people in top management. This can be assumed from the fact that most people want to be associated with something good and what can be better than being recognized as a person who is associated with a responsible Green organization.

Green initiatives will help organizations significantly reduce the costs, by adopting green practices like waste management, carpooling, eco-driving and recycling, while simultaneously reducing their carbon foot-print.

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