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DO EMPLOYEES LACK IN REQUIRED SKILLS: AN ANALYSIS ON SIGNIFICANT SKILLS REPORTED FOR EMPLOYEES IN ORGANIZED RETAIL SECTOR & EXISTING GAP WITHIN

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ABSTRACT

With the existence of hard-hitting competition and distinguished working conditions, now-a-days employees have to deal with more responsibility and assignments. Therefore, it becomes mandatory for them to be loaded with all skills set with which they can perform well in job. It is a well-known fact that skills required by an employee in fulfilling his job requirement largely depend on the nature of job performed by him. Moreover, the nature of job, over again, depends on the sector to which his organization/business belongs. The study here focuses on such significant skills which are required by an individual to perform well in Organized Retail Sector. Attempts are made to understand and identify the required significant skills which should be possessed by the employees involved at various operational areas, departments and job levels in retail business. The Study suggest that based on the level of interaction with consumers and basic requirement of the job, skills required by the employees can be identified and existing gap can be anticipated.

KEYWORDS

Job Requirements, Skills Gap, Organised Retail Sector, Significant Skills, Skill Gap Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

There exist diversified skills set for each individual working in different area. Skills are said to be the cluster of related abilities, behaviour, commitments, knowledge and decision making capability in a job or situation. These skills can differentiate one individual from another and helps in his personal growth as well as of the firm. Based on the nature of the job and the type of the operating industry, criteria of required skills set changes. It is possible that the skills set required in one sector type differs from that those required in other sector. For example, the skills set required in retail sector (like Communication skills, Behavioural Skills, Selling Skills, etc.) are entirely different from those skills required in textile industry (like technical knowledge, leadership skills, etc.). Study here, investigates the required significant skills in the retail sector.

Further, in the retail sector the levels of the required skills are different for each skill. Some of the skills are of high important while others can be of less importance. Based on the necessity of the job performed and with the help of job analysis and job description, it can be conveniently identifying the required skills in an individual.

As no individual can be picture-perfect in every skill, it happens that a person lacks in some of the skills required for performing a job. This gap between the required skills and actual present skills is known as Skills Gap. The study clearly defines the skills gap and its implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before studying the skills requisite in retail sector grounded on the nature of job and the gap prevailing within, it becomes obligatory to understand the scope and implications of organised retail sector as well as skills gap.

ORGANISED RETAIL: CONCEPT & SCOPE

Organized retailing, in India, refers to trading activities undertaken by licensed retailers, that is, those who are registered for sales tax, income tax, etc. These include the publicly traded supermarkets, corporate-backed hypermarkets and retail chains, and also the privately owned large retail businesses [5].

As stated in the Study of Handa et. al. [9], Retailing involves a direct interface with the customer and the coordination of business activities from end to end- right from the concept or design stage of a product or offering, to its delivery and post-delivery service to the customer.

Although, Indian Retail Industry is encompasses unorganised retail in majority, but, organised retail is growing its pace to stand as the fastest rising sector. Organised Retail, 5th largest in the world and 3rd in India, stands as the sturdy mainstay of Indian Economy and contributes to 14-15 % in GDP [1][2]. The analysts and market experts have been making a bet on tough organised retail sector to help boost Indian economy and help it surface as the Asia's 3rd largest economy. The Indian retail market is assessed to be US\$ 450 billion and one of the top five retail markets in the world by economic value. According to NDTV Profit Report [14], organised retail, spreads on about 10% of the market, but is intensifying its coverage at 20% per annum. This is driven by the emergence of shopping centres and malls, and a middle class of close to 300 million people that is growing at nearly 2 per cent a year.

India is one of the fastest growing retail markets in the world, with 1.2 billion people engaged in the industry [3][4]. India's organised retail industry employs about 40 million Indians (3.3% of Indian population). As quoted by FICCI, India's Retail Sector will become a US\$ 1.3 trillion prospect by 2020 [7].

Some Sectors that prominently occupies the position in retail are; Apparel Retail, Fashion & Lifestyle Retail, Food & Beverage Retail, E-Commerce, Consumer Durables Retail, Jewellery Retail, Pharmaceuticals Retail, Mobile & Computers Retail, Books & Stationary Retail and Entertainment Retailing. Some of the major players of the Indian Retail Sector are Future Group, RP – Sanjeev Goenka Group, Aditya Birla Group, Lifestyle and Reliance Retail.

Organised Retail Sector is comprised of numerous internal and external, core processes which require various sorts' of skills set to actively complete it. Prerequisite of certain skills set in an individual can be determined by the nature of the job and level of dealings in various core process of the retailing, with consumers and colleagues from varied department. Individuals should possess efficient skill set so as to attain well in the relative job in retailing. Insufficiency in any of these skills leads to skills gap, which consequences in diminished performance and eventually leads to insufficient performance of the retail industry.

FIGURE 1: CORE PROCESS IN RETAIL



SKILLS GAP: CONCEPT & IMPLICATIONS

ASTD (American Society for Training & Development) in its report published in the year 2009 defines a skills gap as – “a significant gap between an organization’s current capabilities and the skills it needs to achieve its goals”. It is the point at which an organization can no longer grow or remain competitive because it cannot fill critical jobs with employees who have the right knowledge, skills, and abilities [9].

In simple verbal, Skill Gap is the dissimilarity in the skills requisite on the job and the actual skills possessed by the employees. More precisely, skills gap can be stated as “the difference amid the skills desirable on the job and those inherent by the applicants”.

Whenever the shortage in the skills occurs, there exist skills gap. As Individuals on job in retail sector comes from different cultural, educational and behavioural background and thus, there can be numerous chance that they may lack in some or other skills. Skills shortages are defined as “a shortage of suitably skilled people available in the labour market” [12].

It is necessary to keep a frequent check on the skills levels and requirements as it can prove to be a significant factor in gaining a competitive advantage in the industry. On the flipside of a coin, skilled employee in the retailing activities can convince and influence more and more customers to turn towards organised retailing and thus, provide boost to the retail industry.

The frequent check, as talked above, can be kept through the “skills gap analysis”. Skills Gap Analysis is the common tool used in the assessment of the difference (or the gap) in the current state of the prerequisite skills and the current requirement state of the skills.

An Employee Skill Gap analysis helps achieve the following objectives [11]:

- Helps one refine and define skills the agency needs, now and in the future.
- Make employees aware about the critical skills they’ll need to grow.
- Helps in recruiting efforts when current employees don’t have the skills or the interest.

SIGNIFICANT SKILLS IN ORGANISED RETAIL SECTOR & SKILLS GAP

The organised retail industry delivers employment to huge number of people and because of its consistent and efficient growth, this number is increasing rapidly. It offers large job roles, right from operational activities to supply chain management, including sales executives, store managers, merchandising planners, market research personnel’s and decision makers. Some of the skills needed for same are [6]:

- Conceptual understanding.
- Analytical skills.
- Detail-orientation.
- Fair understanding of customer’s psychology.
- Observations skills.
- Project Management.
- Operational Skills.
- In-depth product knowledge.

A. SKILLS REQUIREMENT AND SKILL GAP IN STORE OPERATION

Store operation involves proper merchandising, maintenance of store, selling, customer service and transaction process [13].

The following table shows the skills requirement and anticipated skills gap of the individuals involved in store operations of retail.

TABLE 1: SKILL REQUIREMENT & SKILL GAP IN STORE OPERATION

Level	Skills Requirement	Anticipated Skills Gap
Store / Department Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Skills. • Computer Proficiency. • Decision Making. • Negotiation skills. • Objection handling skills. • Man Management Skills. • Inventory Management skills. • Target Achieving skills. • Leadership Skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequacy in Decision Making, Negotiating, Objection Handling, Inventory Management. • Lacking in Communication Skills, Man management skills. • Low Adaptability & Leadership Skills.
Transaction / Billing Associate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick Processing Skills. • Computer Proficiency. • Accounting skills. • Oral communication skills. • Interpersonal & Interaction Skills. • Language Proficiency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate Accountancy skills. • Inadequate knowledge of computer & software. • Lack in interacting with consumers.
Customer Service Representative / Sales Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling skills. • Knowledge about store offerings • Consumer Objection handling Skills. • Convincing skills. • Communication skills. • Interaction skills. • Presentation skill. • Reporting skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient soft skills. • Inadequate presentation & objection handling skill. • Lacking in store & Offering Information. • Lack in convincing skills.

Source: NSDC Report (2012)

B. SKILLS REQUIREMENT AND SKILLS GAP IN MERCHANDISING

The process of merchandising involves choose and exhibition of the various offerings of the retail store. Merchandising plays a significant role in popularising of an outlet and is the vibrant activity that has to be in accordance with the customer trend and need, and which differentiate the store with other.

TABLE 2: SKILL REQUIREMENT & SKILL GAP IN MERCHANDISING

Level	Skills Requirement	Anticipated Skills Gap
Merchandising Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative & innovative skills. • Planning & organising skills. • Oral communication & interacting skills. • Analytical Skills. • Comp. proficiency. • Knowledge about current market trends, consumer behaviour & behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacking in creativity & Innovativeness. • Inefficient in Communication & interacting skill. • Inadequate understanding of merchandise & Customer Behaviour. • Insufficient soft skills.

Source: NSDC Report (2012).

C. SKILLS REQUIREMENT AND SKILLS GAP IN LOGISTICS

Logistic function in retail includes transportation, warehousing, documentation and distribution. Choice of proper logistic function by an individual in retail plays a significant role as it includes lots of time and money.

TABLE 3: SKILL REQUIREMENT & SKILL GAP IN LOGISTICS

Level	Skills Requirement	Anticipated Skills Gap
Logistics Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation skills. • Proper maintenance of inventory & storage. • Oral & Written communication skill. • Directing & decision making skill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate negotiation skills. • Lack of skilled labours in the department. • Inefficient decision making skills. • Lacking in soft skills.

Source: NSDC Report (2012).

D. SKILLS REQUIREMENT AND SKILLS GAP IN MARKETING

Marketing activity focuses on pulling prospect customers to store and pushing them to the store merchandise and motivate (or influence) them to purchase. Therefore, it becomes a challenge for marketing personnel in retail to ensure both, increase in footfall and conversion ratio.

TABLE 4: SKILL REQUIREMENT & SKILL GAP IN MARKETING

Level	Skills Requirement	Anticipated Skills Gap
Marketing Manager.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient analytical skills. • Sound knowledge of consumer behaviour. • Convincing Skills. • Negotiation skills. • Oral & written Communication skills. • Surveying skills. • Observation skills. • Creative & Forecasting skills. • Team Work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inefficient in forecasting & analytical skills. • Inadequate Negotiation, convincing, surveying & observation skills. • Lacking in communicating skills. • Effective coordinating skill.

Source: NSDC Report (2012)

E. SKILLS REQUIREMENT AND SKILLS GAP IN PURCHASE

Centralised purchasing involves the purchase of right product, in right quantity and at right time for the store, that to in accordance with customers taste and preference. So, dealing with right purchase decision is yet another area where the presence of skilled personnel in retail is of utmost importance.

TABLE 5: SKILL REQUIREMENT & SKILL GAP IN PURCHASE

Level	Skills Requirement	Anticipated Skills Gap
Purchase manager.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation Skills. • Relational Skills. • Inventory Maintenance skills. • Oral & Written communication skill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate Negotiation Skills. • Lack in soft skills required. • Inefficient relational ability.

Source: NSDC Report (2012)

F. SKILLS REQUIREMENT AND SKILLS GAP IN CORPORATE SERVICES

Corporate services include all the support function in retail such as finance, IT and HR. Personnel engaged in these activities should be skilled enough to ensure smooth functioning of all the related activities.

TABLE 6: SKILL REQUIREMENT & SKILL GAP IN CORPORATE SERVICES

Level	Skills Requirement	Anticipated Skills Gap
Heads of Various Depts. (finance, IT, HR & Admin.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making skills. • Directional & Co-ordinating skills. • Interaction skills for communicating with various depts. • Proper planning & maintaining skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate in decision making skills. • Inefficient in coordinating & directing skills. • Ineffective planning & maintenance skill.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY ARE

- To define and understand the Skills Gap.
- To identify various skills required by an employee at different designation in organised retail sector.
- To find out the anticipated skills gap with respect to the identified skills in organised retail sector.

CONCLUSION

Skills are the most vital aspect for the achievement of both, an individual and a retail org as well. Present study advocates the key skills essential for personnel employed in a retail sector bestowing to the job performed by him. Some of the recognized noteworthy skills like communication skills, interpersonal skills, objection handling skills, soft skills and technology proficiency skills are significantly required by each and every personnel operational at numerous levels and operations of retail industry. It is obligatory to identify the prevailing skills gap in the organisation and to shrink and nullify it for the smooth functioning of the organisation. Moreover, with proper skills employees can generate more business and help in the rapid and consistent expansion of the retailing industry.

RECOMMENDATION

As suggested in the research study, skills set hold the vital position in shaping the career of an individual. So, an individual should make an effort to assess his existing skills set and try to develop it in relevance with the skills set required for performing the allotted job roles. Employees should concentrate more on some of the generic skills set such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, convincing skills, etc., which necessary to succeed in every organization are belonging to numerous sectors. Moreover, organisations should also frequently conduct assessment programs and provide proper and relevant to its employee to enhance skills set. Employees with enhanced skills set will lead to efficient achievement of the organizational goal and thus, helps to create a success story.

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