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REFINED HR SCENARIO IN INDIAN IT INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

IT sector is rapidly growing industry in India and HR requirements of Indian IT Industry are quite different from traditional industrial sectors. The IT companies have to be creative, innovative and knowledgeable. This can be achieved through human capital. Perhaps, this is the prime challenge for HR in the IT-industry. The human resource function has gone from the traditional hire and fire role to a strategic partner at the table with main operations, building company politics and corporate culture. Now the role of HR-manager is HR-facilitator who has to involve the whole organization in this process and act as a guide, coach, counselor and, finally, facilitator. Indian IT industry is witnessing a high growth rate. The sector is recruiting more and more technical and professional people. With the immense recruitments and high attrition rate, organizations focus on higher compensation packages. This paper focuses on the role of HR department to create an environment that stimulates the creation of knowledge and discusses the problems and challenges faced by HR and key responsibility areas a HR manager to concentrate to make his role more effective and to create work culture for mutual benefits of the people and the organization.

KEYWORDS

Attrition, Pay-for-performance, Recession, Recruitment, Retention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) has a long history in India, as reflected by Kautilya's accounts in the "Artha Shastra". HRM in the 4th century B.C. was more about logical but simple procedures and dividing the work force into 'Shrenis'. Today, India is more strategically positioned in the global corporate map and HRM has become more complex. Global perceptions see India's human resource as a low-cost, highly skilled, dedicated and knowledgeable workforce hence it has also become a major outsourcing ground. Clearly HR departments are evolving in our country. From an administrative perspective, the focus is now on a strategic outlook where talent HR professionals look at improving the work environment and plan out human resource needs. We are now living in knowledge society. We have also welcomed the new millennium with great fanfare and hope. We have to face broad challenges in this new millennium. We are having fast moving IT companies in this arena; they have shown their business excellence through optimum utilization of IT. This IT boom has introduced great challenges for these companies.

The IT industry is a service industry. The success of an organization is determined by the ability to offer quality service to individuals and organizations. This leads us to the fact that the creativity, innovativeness, knowledge and skill of employees are important assets. How to manage these assets is the challenge that the IT industry is facing. It is not capital or finance or marketing management that gives the competitive edge but rather how to manage the human resources whose intellectual applications drive the business.

In addition to the conventional personnel management tasks, HR in software industries have to focus more on the following human resources management aspects.

MANAGING KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

Essentially, here we are looking at different kind of people who does not obey the principles of management for the traditional group. This boils down to higher educational qualifications, taking up responsibilities at a lesser age and experience, high bargaining power due to the knowledge and skills in hand, high demand for the knowledge workers, and techno suaveness. The clear shift is seen in terms of organization career commitment to individualized career management. Managing this set of people is essential for the growth of any industry but especially the IT, BPOs and other knowledge based sectors.

MANAGING TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

In every arena organizations are getting more and more technologically oriented. Though it is not in the main run after the initial debates, preparing the work force to accept technological changes is a major challenge. We have seen sectors like banking undergoing revolutionary changes enabled by technology. It is a huge challenge to bring in IT and other technology acceptance all levels in organizations.

COMPETENCE OF HR MANAGERS

As it is more and more accepted that lot of success of organizations depend on the human capital, this boils to recruiting the best, managing the best and retaining the best. Clearly HR managers have a role in this process. Often it is discussed about lack of competence of HR managers in understanding the business imperative. There is now a need to develop competent HR professionals who are sound in HR management practices with strong business knowledge.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

It is quite interesting to note that there is less importance given to developing leadership at the organizational level. Though leadership is discussed on basis of traits and certain qualities, at an organizational level it is more based on knowledge. The challenge is to develop individuals who have performance potential on basis of past record and knowledge based expertise in to business leaders by imparting them with the necessary "soft skills".

MANAGING CHANGE

Business environment in India is volatile. There is boom in terms of opportunities brought forward by globalization. However this is also leading to many interventions in terms of restructuring, turnaround, mergers, downsizing, etc. Research has clearly shown that the success of these interventions is heavily dependent on managing the people issues in the process. HR has a pivotal role to play here.

2. HR CHALLENGES IN INDIA

Human resource element works towards the Vision, Mission and Goals of an organization. The role of Human Resource Department is crucial as it deals with the most sensitive yet valuable resource of the company apart from ensuring smooth functioning of the entire business. Apart from domain re-skilling, the emerging HR professional has to be skilled cross-functionally. It has never been better for the right thinking, right-skilled HR professional. Undoubtedly, Human

Resource Management is more than mere recruiting and managing people. The following are some of the most commonly faced hurdles pertaining to the Indian context.

- **Managing globalization:** It is important for an HR Manager to study people management practices before implementing new practices which are global in nature. It has become a challenge for the HR to educate its workforce on how globalization can be leveraged and how an individual employee benefits or is affected by it. Instead of thrusting new practices upon them, it is ideal to study the existing practices which are in place.
- **Developing leadership skills:** It is not just about knowledge, experience and expertise it is also about developing the right soft skills to give shape to the future leaders. Since the global economic and industrial scenario is very volatile and dynamic, what is required now is a skill set in the workforce which distinguishes them as team leaders.
- **Managing change:** Change management is the call of the day with big organizations integrating Six Sigma methodologies in their businesses. Change management defines the response of the business to the changing external and internal environment. The industrial growth scenario in India demands that there should be change brought about within all factions of the industry. But there are internal and external forces which resist the change. It is a huge challenge to influence the resisting forces with the organization, manage internal conflicts, motivate them to embrace change and implement the changes.
- **Developing work ethics:** With back to back slumps in the global economy, India has not remained unscathed. Employee morals and loyalty are being tested in a business's day to the day functioning. It has become very important to re-instill cultural values, loyalty, respect for the weak and elderly, and infuse qualities like empathy, charity, austerity, team spirits, ethics and bonding in the workforce.
- **Retaining Talent:** This is one of the major challenges which HRM faces today. Poaching and cut-throat competition has given an impetus to high remuneration to the deserving. People have gained exposure and their yearning to rise is seen them changing loyalty and organizations very frequently. This is especially observed in the IT and ITES sector. To manage low attrition rates and retain talent has become a mammoth hurdle which all organizations want to cross in order to reach their goals.
- **Managing fast changing technological trends:** Most large and medium scale organizations today prefer to be technologically oriented. The technological trends in today's global scenario are fast changing. Educating the human resource about these changes, upgrading their knowledge and motivating them to learn, absorb and come out of their comfort zones is a great challenge faced by many organizations.
- **Developing Accountability:** With the advent of Six Sigma methodologies, organizations have lowered their tolerance levels for mistakes, errors and delays. It is a challenge which HRM in India is facing like its global counterparts. It is not easy to train people to shoulder responsibility.
- **Managing workforce stress and employment relations:** HR is the face of an organization. It hires and fires employees and if the HR of an organization is not empathic towards its workforce it does not help in employment relations. This factor is fast becoming a challenge for HRM especially in sectors like hospitality, IT and allied support services, media and entertainment.
- **Managing inter-functional conflict:** Earlier it was the friction between different levels of an organization and now the new emerging challenge for the HR is to manage inter-functional conflict within an organization. With organizational restructuring becoming common in the past few years, disputes and friction between different functions has been on the rise.
- **Managing workplace diversity:** With globalization and India's economy changing gears to accelerate growth, organizations hire as well depend on a people from different countries, cultures and ethnicity. To manage the diverse workforce who have fairly diverse physiological and the psychological influences, is also a huge challenge for the HR in the emerging Indian economy.

3. HR CHALLENGES IN IT INDUSTRY

HR managers will be able to derive the maximum advantage to successfully develop the people of the organization through effective feedback and by adopting appropriate strategies to align the people with the business of the organization. They would be able to effectively measure and rate performance of the people and scientifically base their strategic decisions like promotion and rewards, training designs, sustaining an environment of motivation and effective work culture for mutual benefits of the people and the organization.

The main challenges to the IT Industry are:

3.1 RECRUITMENT

The major issue would be of getting the right type of person. The issue would be that find a person with the required skills and experience, and also he must be suitable for the organization. Finding such a suitable person is the obstacle that we will have to cross over.

Recruitment planning is most important component in new people management with special reference to IT industry. We have to deal with human assets so it becomes important and have good quality of people in the organization. We have to take the recruitment planning in very serious manner to ensure that we can get best talent in the organization.

The challenge does not stop with recruiting the right person but with how you are going to manage the performance of your employees. The challenge would be to create a performance culture wherein opportunities are provided for enhanced performance and where giving out optimum performance becomes a way of life.

3.2 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

In the IT industry training takes a new connotation. It will not be just identifying training needs and giving the required training. It is foreseeing and anticipating the requirements and develop suitable training so that the employees are well equipped to handle the challenges forehead.

People have to be groomed to get in tune with the performance culture. Creating an environment that stimulates the creation of knowledge, its sustenance and its dissipation throughout the organization will be the challenge for organizations in the future. HR will have to involve the whole organization in this process and act as a guide, counselor and facilitator. Chalk out a suitable strategy for training & development so that employees are well equipped to handle the challenges in advance.

3.3 ATTRITION

IT companies are having high degree of attrition. The challenge facing software companies is how to keep this as low as possible. Various companies adopt different techniques to retain their employees like high pay packets, ESOP, other benefits. It depends on the opportunities that are offered to employees and organizational climate. Employees are given the opportunity to learn and grow in the company itself. They are given a lot of technical training and exposure to various types of project. The challenging work makes it difficult to leave the organization.

3.4 RETENTION AND MOTIVATION

Retention and motivation of personnel are major HR concerns today. People in management of human capital in IT organizations have observed that the average tenure for an IT professional is less than three years. Further, the use of new technologies, the support of learning and training, and a challenging environment ranked higher than competitive pay structures as effective retention practices. Money was a prime motivator for 'starters', but for those into their third or fourth jobs, their value-addition to the organization was more important. Monetarily, offering 'the best salaries in industry' is the minimum every company is doing, apart from performance-based bonuses, long-service awards, and stock options. Many organizations frequently conduct employee satisfaction and organization climate surveys and are setting up Manpower Allocation Cells (MAC) to assign 'the right project to the right person'.

3.5 ATTRACTING THE BEST TALENT

In a tight job market, many organizations often experience precipitous and simultaneous demands for the same kinds of professionals. In their quest for manpower, they are searching talent around the world. In such a seller's market, software companies are striving to understand which organizational, job, and reward factors contribute to attracting the best talent one having the right blend of technical and person-bound skills. This would mean a knowledge of 'the tools of the trade' combined with conceptualization and communication skills, capacity for analytical and logical thinking, leadership and team building,

creativity and innovation. The Indian software industry suffers from a shortage of experienced people such as systems analysts and project managers, and attracting them is a key HR challenge.

3.6 COMPENSATION AND REWARD

The IT industry is one of the high paying industry. This is very competitive industry, we have to attract best talent, offer best possible compensation package to the employees. Increasing demands of technology coupled with a short supply of professionals (with the requisite expertise) has increased the costs of delivering the technology. This makes incentive compensation a significant feature, with the result that software companies have moved from conventional pay-for-time methods to a combination of pay-for-knowledge and pay-for-performance plans. With the determinants of pay being profit, performance and value-addition, emphasis is now on profit sharing (employee stock option plans ESOP) or performance-based pay, keeping in view the long-term organizational objectives rather than short-term production-based bonuses. Skills, competencies, and commitment supersede loyalty, hard work and length of service. This pressurizes HR teams to devise optimized compensation packages, although compensation is not the motivator in this industry.

3.7 ENCOURAGING QUALITY AND CUSTOMER FOCUS

Today's corporate culture needs to actively support quality and customer orientation. With globalization and rapid technological change, quality is of utmost importance for the Indian companies, which earn most of their revenues through exports. Hence, the HR professional as a strategic partner needs to encourage a culture of superior quality to ensure customer satisfaction. To be competitive today, an organization needs to be customer responsive.

Responsiveness includes innovation, quick decision-making, leading an industry in price or value, and effectively linking with suppliers and vendors to build a value chain for customers. Employee attitudes correlate highly with customer attitude. The shift to a customer focus redirects attention from the firm to the value chain in which it is embedded. HR practices within a firm should consequently be extended to suppliers and customers outside the firm.

3.8 RECESSION

This recession affects almost all the fields especially IT field. To overcome the adverse effect of the economic slowdown, we should plan an effective human resource policy at macro level. Human resource plan is designed to pay attention to shaping the priorities of the HR function than on supporting activities relating to the organization's functioning as a whole.

Human resource management is responsible for seeing that employees of an organization are utilized in the most efficient and economical way possible. During recessionary times, when budgets are tight, this vital human resources role becomes even more important to keep a company on fiscal track.

4. CRUCIAL ROLE OF HR MANAGERS

With lifetime employment in one company not on the agenda of most employees, jobs will become short term. Today's high-tech employees desire a continuous up-gradation of skills, and want work to be exciting and entertaining a trend that requires designing work systems that fulfill such expectations. As employees gain greater expertise and control over their careers, they would reinvest their gain back into their work.

HR practitioners must also play a proactive role in software industry. As business partners, they need to be aware of business strategies, and the opportunities and threats facing the organization. As strategists, HR professionals require to achieve integration and fit to an organization's business strategy. As interventionists, they need to adopt an all-embracing approach to understanding organizational issues, and their effect on people.

IMPACTS: HOW THESE CHALLENGES HAVE AFFECTED US

Any organization in the IT industry will have to face these challenges. We are leaders in the industry. And the reason we are leaders is of the fact that we have been able to meet these challenges quite effectively. As far as recruitment is concerned we have been able to address the issue effectively. We have an excellent databank where updating takes place on a daily basis. This serves as the major chunk that addresses our recruitment needs. Further we also use the services of placement agencies. The real catch lies in our selection process. All the probable candidates have to go through a battery of tests that not only test their technical skills but their all-round personality to find out if they will fit into the job as well as into organizations culture. The rigorous selection process ensures that we get people who will fit into a culture that is our own. But this challenge of recruiting the right person is a continuous one and one that needs continuous refinement.

In the software industry where skill decline is very fast and needs giving technical training to the employees on a continuous basis. We are one of the very few who provide our employees with the opportunity to get trained on various platforms. This apart from keeping our employees highly skilled, gives them a sense of security. Training is also given in personality development, team working related areas etc to enhance the quality of life of employees.

As discussed earlier the most important of all challenges is in culture building. Now all our efforts are diverted in bringing about a performance driven culture. The very tight schedule ensures that our employees have to perform to the optimum. Apart from this the various systems that we have put in place like the performance management system helps us to work towards achieving a performance driven culture. We are constantly refining our practices in order create an atmosphere where our employees are able to perform to their full potential.

SOLUTIONS: WHERE HR CAN ADD THE MOST VALUE

Finally, as innovators, they should introduce new processes and procedures, which they believe will increase organizational effectiveness. With the advent of a work situation where more and more companies have to concede that their valued employees are leaving them, a new concept of career and human resource management is bound to emerge. The focus of this new paradigm should not only be to attract, motivate and retain key 'knowledge workers', but also on how to reinvent careers when the loyalty of the employees is to their 'brain ware' rather than to the organization.

- **Start the culture conversation at all levels.** One way to accomplish this is to conduct a cultural assessment or audit of organization through employee surveys, focus groups or interviews. Review organizational history, leadership styles, and HR programming and industry practices to determine what currently drives and reinforces the culture. Finally, what is your customer experience? What cultural elements are obvious to customers? Is culture aligned with business strategy? What needs to change? This can be the basis for healthy discussion at team meetings and employee chat sessions.
- **Develop a business case for cultural change.** Why is the change needed? How will desired changes in culture support the business strategy?
- **Work with the senior leadership team to determine the desired culture.** Core values, desired behaviors and shared vision are essential for a positive culture change effort to succeed. Every leader must embrace the need to change.
- **Develop an agenda or action plan for enhancing the culture or bringing about change.** Start with the highest priorities and work on the toughest issues. For culture to become self-replicating, the way things are done will have to reinforce the core values and the culture.
- **Communicate what needs to change and why.** Solicit input from people. Once the needed changes and process for change is defined, tell people what is expected. What are the rewards for changing, and the consequences for more of the same?
- **Change the organizational structure to enable change.** Find new ways to accomplish work tasks. Use teams for one-time projects. Broaden roles and responsibilities.
- **Acquire talent based on cultural fit.** Identify the characteristics of people who exhibit those behaviors that you've identified as desirable. The people who fit and thrive in your culture will perpetuate that culture in everything they do. If you have to choose between the candidate who has better skills or knowledge but doesn't fit, and a candidate who is slightly less qualified but fits culturally, choose the slightly less qualified person and provide the necessary training or on-the-job experience. Get rid of those who don't fit in the culture.
- **Redesign on-boarding process.** Make sure that every new hire knows what it will take to fit in, and understands the cultural imperatives. Talk about the ways of working that lead to success and those that will derail careers. Create legendary stories of successes and failures.
- **Create cultural messages.** Be sure that every meeting, every training program, every communication to people includes cultural messaging and reinforces the values, mission, traditions and practices.

- **Involve everyone.** Southwest Airlines has a culture committee, but there are many ways to get people involved. Try focus groups around topics. Form cross functional teams. Call random groups of employees together for monthly breakfast or lunch meetings. Engage the help and support of a group of passionate, committed people to identify cultural disconnects and recommend remedies.
- **Build an internal brand that supports the external brand.** Make a promise to deliver a consistent employee experience. Be sure that your employees know the differentiating elements in their experience in the organization that will enhance their work lives and careers. Begin to create an employer of choice reputation internally and externally.
- **Recognize and reward results.** Your recognition and rewards should support the culture that you are working to reinforce.
- **Cultivate leaders who promote your culture.** Develop excellent leaders who will propel the culture down the ranks. Identify high potential leaders and promote them. Invest in leadership development programs. Be sure content reinforces cultural messages. Keep the good ones, and get rid of those who are unable to pass the culture on.
- **Make it interesting and fun.** Create contests, activities that enhance the culture. Decorate the office in inspiring ways. Celebrations and events can reinforce the message.
- **Use of HR tools.** Something as mundane as the annual benefits enrollment can be a source of key cultural messages. Every training class should reinforce the basic behaviors and values that reinforce the culture. Performance review forms should measure cultural fit, as well as, job performance.
- **No one should be locked out of the efforts to build a high-performance culture.** Culture has to become the DNA that forms the building blocks over everything else. So the entire organization must have a role in keeping it alive. Work with corporate communications, advertising, and marketing to capture the culture messages and tout these internally and externally.

5. KEY RESPONSIBILITY AREAS OF HR MANAGERS

As HR Managers, the deliverables are quite diverse. The key HR Manager Responsibility areas to make HR role effective are constantly evolving based on the life stage of the business and organization. The following are some mandatory activities to be taken care of in Human Resource Department that forms an integral part of HR Function in any organization.

HR TEAM EFFECTIVENESS FOR HR EFFICIENCY

- Frame a clear and easily implementable HR Policies
- Nurture and develop a motivated HR Team to meet business requirement
- Develop the collective knowledge of the HR team to handle complex and crisis situation arising due to dynamic and changing business environment
- Create a complementing skills based team such that various HR aspects can be addressed and there are varied competencies and skills the team has to be handle the entire gamut of HR responsibilities ranging from HR design to HR delivery. E.g. recruitment specialist, L&D experts, Business HR
- Plan and implement an effective HR Plan that is aligned to Business Plan and overall organization people agenda

DELIVER BUSINESS EXPECTATIONS TO ATTAIN HR CREDIBILITY

- Execute manpower planning and budgeting to have a road-map for recruitment assignments
- Manpower hiring as per the recruitment plan agreed along with the Business heads/department heads
- Keep ears to the ground and reach out to all employees through communication with employees at regular intervals to gather insights @ workplace and feed them back appropriately to the leadership team of the organization
- Plan and execute suitable interventions to keep the employees motivated
- Act as a business partner and provide dashboards/analytics to business heads/department heads to help them have a pulse of their team
- Provide employee development and counseling assistance to employees /team members to enhance employee performance and productivity
- Take adequate measures to retain good employees, ring fence high potential employees

HR DELIVERY AGENDA TO EXECUTIVE EFFECTIVE HR PRACTICES

- Ensure Statutory Compliant status at all times
- In case of a widespread organization, HR visit calendar to all locations is made and followed
- Executing "Employee Engagement" initiatives to keep people together and make the workplace exciting, rewarding and engaging
- Drive an effective Learning and development agenda that impacts the employees and the businesses
- Evaluate and Improve the current HR Practices to keep with time and external benchmarks
- Update HR policies in line with the business and organization requirement
- Keeping and updated Employee Handbook with all relevant details and information
- Design, update and share SOPs of all HR processes
- Conduct periodical employee surveys to collate insights @ workplace and in turn design employee interventions accordingly to address concern areas
- Support and counsel business managers to effectively manage teams to ensure higher employee productivity
- Have an updated repository of Job descriptions for all roles in the organization along with measurable performance indicators for each role
- Maintain employee records and files in order for ease of reference (both On-line and physical copies of the records)
- Communicate with employees and business heads for better alignment
- Be smart to handle dynamics at the workplace and help employees to overcome crisis situation

6. CONCLUSION

'Knowledge workers' has become a buzzword in today's IT scenario. Software professionals are professionally qualified and young knowledge workers with very high levels of ambition and aspiration. The growth of IT companies worldwide depends on its people and the intellectual capital it possesses.

HR managers in Indian IT Industry must keep the sensitive nature of IT professionals and state of greater opportunities outside in mind for devising HR policies for their organizations. The role of HR manager is shifting from that of a protector and screener to the role of a planner and change agent. HR managers will be able to derive the maximum advantage to successfully develop the people of the organization through effective feedback and by adopting appropriate strategies to align the people with the business of the organization.

Finally, HR is a heart of IT Company and a helping hand for the top-management, developers, company growth, working atmosphere and entertainment. Successful HR practices in IT organizations, apart from cultivating a motivational work culture, bring in effectiveness, efficiency, quality, productivity, innovation and profitability.

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