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EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES IN THE PERFORMANCE OF HR DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Our world has become a global village. The improved means of communication, technological advancements, computer and internet have brought the horizons closer and changed the functioning of the business world in a great way. Many business functions can be performed speedily and with much more accuracy with the aid of computers and the Internet. The impact of technology has been observed in all areas of business including HR practices. Human Resource Management (HRM) is no longer limited to recruitment and training. It has become an indispensable part of every organization. Technology and HRM both are closely associated to each other. IT has significant impact on increasing the efficiency of recruitment, maintenance, development and decision-making functions. The present paper is an attempt to study the impact of information technology (IT) on HR practices.

KEYWORDS

development, human resource practices (HR), technology, information technology (IT), recruitment, training.

INTRODUCTION

"The HR professionals should remember that employees are the lifeblood of any company. If we create a great workplace experience for them, they'll pay you back one hundred fold in feedback and productivity",

Craig Bryant.

Human Resources are the most significant and vital for the success of any organization. The roles and skills of HR managers have grown considerably in recent times due to the adoption and use of new technologies. The managers are now able to perform the traditional functions of procurement, maintenance, development and utilization more effectively and efficiently. The human resource managers can now take up more challenging roles in the organizations. The growing use of information technology in human resource has significantly increased the efficiency of HR management activities and processes, increased their speediness and reduced cost. It has created an effective and efficient communication system, employee engagement, talent management, employee development, performance management, training and learning. In addition, the use of HRIT provides value to the organization and raise HR professionals' status in the organization (Ulrich, 1997).

The traditional HRM style mainly focused on supportive personnel activities for a company including collecting employee information, monitoring individual performance, and implementing organization policies. The new role of HR manager should understand the business strategy and formulate the corresponding management strategy on human resources to improve delivered service, and act as a strategy partner with top management team (Beer, 1997; Mohrman & Lawer, 1997).

HR professionals should adopt technologies that support organizational changes and create a proper developmental climate to develop innovative and knowledge-based organizations.

Craig Bryant in his paper "Five Predictions for Where HR Technology Is Going in 2014" observed that HR professionals at companies large and small should be ready for a few changes and trends that the new year could bring. A brief description of the challenges before HR is given below:

1. Hiring is likely to be on rise and this would mean, competition for talent will increase. HR managers need to hire people who could increase overall productivity and develop employee's perception in relation to company's overall operations.
2. HR people can spend more time on the human aspects of the workplace, and less time chasing papers and emails. This would lay foundation of good organizational culture. HR would play a significant role of helping employees to learn, grow, and contribute which will be a key differentiator in an increasingly competitive marketplace for talent.
3. Comprehensive HR tools coupled with stunning point solutions for recruiting and performance management are coming of age and are increasingly accessible to smaller organizations. It will help small organizations to compete in the talent market. It is good for entrepreneurship, diversity and innovation.
4. As the technology improves and education makes its way, organizations will have more cost-effective options and will be able to put more choices into their employee's hands.
5. As the economy gains momentum again, would-be startup founders will get more as they will be more confident about throwing their hat into the ring. The newer, tech-centric innovators and professionals will have better opportunity than the traditional HR consultancies.

The HR professionals should remember that employees are the lifeblood of any company. If we create a great workplace experience for them, they'll pay you back one hundred fold in feedback and productivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies have been made and many books have been written regarding the role of IT on Human Resource Management. The use of information technology in HR has grown considerably in recent years. A review of literature reveals that:

The role of IT in HRM can be traced back in the last decade of 20th century. Ruel et al. (2008) have explored that the term e-HRM was first used in the late 1990's when e-commerce was sweeping the business world and e-HRM is internal application of e-business techniques. It helps the management in more effective and efficient flow of information and method of doing HRM. Organizations could manage an increasing number of HRM processes in an effective manner with the improved information technology, thereby contributing to the availability of information and knowledge. This in turn helped HRM professionals to play a strategic role in attaining improved competitive advantage.

Attracting, retaining, and motivating employees, meeting the demands for a more strategic HR function, and managing the "human element" of technological change in the future has been enabled by advancements in IT to meet the challenges of HRM (Ashbaugh and Miranda, 2002). HRMSs can meet the challenge of simultaneously becoming more strategic, flexible, cost-efficient, and customer-oriented by leveraging information technology (Snell, Stueber, and Lepak, 2002).

Adewoye, 2012 in his paper "The Impact of Information Technology (IT) on Human Resource Management (HRM): Empirical evidence from Nigeria Banking Sector - Case Study of Selected Banks from Lagos State and Oyo State in South-West Nigeria" has mentioned that the interaction and intersection between IT and HRM lead to the emergence of HRMS. It merged all HRM activities and processes with the information technology field while the programming of data processing systems evolved into standardized routines and packages of enterprise resource planning software.

Walker (1982) states that an HRIS is a systematic procedure for collecting, storing, maintaining, retrieving and validating the data needed by an organization for its human resources, personnel activities and organization unit characteristics. It can support long-term planning in relation to manpower (Kovach et al., 2002) including supply and demand forecasts, staffing, separations and development with information on training program costs and work performance of trainee. It

can also support compensation programs, salary forecasts, pay budgets, employee relations, contract negotiations etc. Communication and information technologies have added value to HR applications which helped in developing a human resource information system (HRIS).

Pinsonneault, 1993 observed that the use of IT in HRM to organizations has helped to free the HR staff from routine roles and enable them to concentrate on strategic planning in human resource development. In the present context of increasing globalization, Tansley and Watson (2000) observed that the organizational environments have become increasingly complex. Managers in these organizations face growing difficulties in coping with workforces as they are spread across a variety of countries, cultures and political systems. Managers can utilize IT as a tool in general as well as in human resourcing functions in particular to increase the capabilities of the organization.

Highlighting the impact of IT applications on HRM in banking sector, Iraz and Yildirim (2004), explained the role of IT in e-learning.

From the above mentioned studies, it can be concluded that HR is now being considered as an integral part of the organization. It is not limited to procuring and utilizing manpower only. It is equally significant in cutting costs by keeping record of employee data, their potentials and performance as well. New software is being developed for strategic planning, manpower forecasts, managing training and manpower budget, compensation system management, bettering employer-employee relations etc. Information Technology has made a great impact on the increasing the effectiveness and widening the role of HR function. HRIS system helps employees to add and modify information relating to them and view their reports. However, little research has been made to explore the impact of IT on HRM.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To study the changing role of HR function, many researches have been undertaken in the past. Today HR is not restricted only for procurement of manpower. With the use of latest technology, HR professionals are rather involved in complete transformation of HR processes. The use of IT in HR is likely to improve service, reduce cost and achieve effectiveness. The present study has been undertaken keeping these facts in mind.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to explore the answers of the following questions:

1. Traditional HR Dept functions performed.
2. Recent changes taken place in HR function.

METHODOLOGY

Secondary data has been used for the present study. This data has been collected from world-wide web, various published materials and through library. The study has been made to examine the IT tools used for HR Processes.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is of great significance to the business organizations as it highlights the various technological tools applied by HR professionals from time to time, the changing role of HR and likely impact of technology on HR.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

To achieve the above objectives, let us analyze the Traditional HR Functions and New HR Functions:

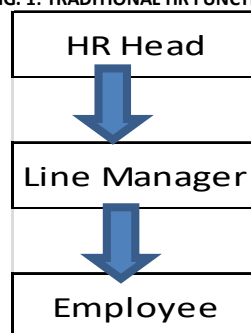
TRADITIONAL HR

Storey (1995) has stated that – “The traditional personnel managers paid attention to labor management, but did not participate into a company’s planning and strategy decision. They paid great attention to control their employees, including carefully designing the contracts and rules for monitoring the employees.”

Till the last two decades of the 20th century, HR function was designated as the personnel management performing the functions of personnel administration and industrial relations including recruitment, selection, training and development, performance appraisal, rewards and industrial relations. HR was not given due importance in the organizations. The role of HR manager in the organization was limited frame rules and regulations for employee management. Actual decisions were implemented by the line managers as they were responsible for building employee relations and maintaining peace.

During this period, there was a shift in the role of HR professionals as they were being considered for strategic business issues. Scope of HR was widened to some extent with new HR functions relating to strategic business issue. Besides, performing the routine HR issues at the operational level and procurement and maintenance of workforce at managerial level, he was involved to higher level in policy formulation to get talented and qualified people and analyze long-term manpower demand. Thus, HR professionals began to be included in organizational policy framework. However, it was still mainly involved with routine administrative matters only in most of the organizations. It can be inferred from the above discussion that HR in its traditional role was concerned with administration of HR function, making decisions on issues of industrial relations and forwarding them to line managers. Later a new role was added i.e. to participate in policy framework for forecasting long-term manpower demand.

FIG. 1: TRADITIONAL HR FUNCTION



NEW HR

There was considerable change in the role of HR professionals in the last decade of the 20th century. Ulrich (1997) defined four roles of HR professionals including - role of strategic business partner, change agent, administrative expert and that of employee champion. As strategic business partners, HR professionals work with top executives to develop, implement and appraise competitive business strategies, HR strategies, policies and practices and supportive business strategies. In their role as change agents, they manage the Organizational changes and create new culture where its employees are motivated to participate in the new situation. As administrative experts, they help in designing organizational processes, building organizational capacity to gain competitive advantage, reducing cost, adding value and better HR services to make HRM works more effective and efficient. In the role of employee champions, the HR professional plays a significant role of motivating the employees and provides them training to enhance their competencies. He represents the voice of the employees and is responsible for enhancing their commitment, skills, knowledge and capabilities of the employees.

FIG. 2: NEW HR FUNCTION



The various tools used by HR professionals for HR functions are mentioned below:

1. Procurement: Procurement is the most significant function of HR. It includes employee recruitment, selection and placement. Hiring is becoming more and more complex. To seek information about the job seekers and jobs both employers and employees use job portals and other technological services as mentioned below:

- Employers post their positions and qualification. Job seekers select their expertise and apply online through e-recruitment web portals.

2. Compensation: A good compensation system motivates the employees to work. Compensation is yet another important function of HR. Use of Payroll, e-compensation, Compensation settlements Flexi-reward Packages helps the employees to calculate their CTC(Cost To Company).

3. Human Resource Information System (HRIS): HRIS is also very useful function of HR in the modern times. The information is made available to the employees, managers and the external parties on internet, intranet and company portals in no time. The availability of information throughout the organization via intranet, employee portals and access of information on employee feedback boosts employee morale and brings in transparency.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, there is an immediate change in HR functions from traditional personnel functions to strategic business issues and policy formulation. During the beginning of decade of 21st century, HR professional was assigned new roles including functional expert, human capital developer, strategy partner, and HR leader with a series of activities. Later, the policies on globalizations and liberalization had increased the use of IT in HR. The new technological tools has simplified the task of HR professionals and now they can spend more time on strategic planning, framing policy and take care of such issues.

Through the use of computers and IT tools, different HR functions can be effectively managed. For example, the functions of employee selection, recruitment, workforce planning and employee management are managed through Internet, video conferencing, web portals, etc.; The role of technology in HR management in near future is likely to increase in the coming years. In the last 20 years, the significance of HR function in the organizations has increased much. Many new roles can be added with the changing scenario. Newer appraisal systems like 360 degree feedback, employee retention, talent acquisition, compensation, rewards, competency mapping, etc. are the new roles that can be added. In these new assignments, the technological tools and new software will definitely help the HR professional. Needless to say, the participative role is HR will be more challenging in the organization.

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