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HR - THE BUSINESS ACCELERATOR FOR ORGANIZATION GOALS

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Abstract:

Global Recession and Organization

The global recession sparked by the sub prime crisis in the USA in mid 2007 engulfed complete world economy with varying degrees of recessional impact which was evident world over from falling stock markets, downturn in jobs, cutting down of perks and salary corrections.

KEYWORDS:

Business , HR , Organization Goals , global economy .

INTRODUCTION:

According to the IMF, the global economy is projected to contract by 1.4% in 2009. Initially it was viewed that the fallout of the crisis will remain confined only to the financial sector of advanced economies and at the most there would be a shallow effect on emerging economies like India. The contagion however has traversed across all sectors. The Indian economy though affected by the global recession is showing signs of recovery.

This paper attempts a quick look at the reaction of the organizations to recession, especially on the people front, the lessons learned and the road ahead for HR.

IMPACT OF RECESSION ON HRM

The impulsive reaction of the organizations across the world to the economic slowdown was to cut costs. On the human front the effects of the downturn are

trimming work force levels by layoffs,
cut back in salaries
freezing wages, recruitment
making changes to base salary and variable pay
revising down words rewards programs / incentives
cutting or reducing fringe benefits and other benefits
cutting down
Training & Development
contract labours / overtime wages
travel, etc.

According to Hewitt Associates, salaries in India recorded a modest single digit growth of 5% in 2008 as against 15% and 14.4% in previous two years before recession. The depressed sentiments all across the country with reduced pay checks brought down demand with cascading setbacks in business growth.

Organizations opting to err on the side of caution upset the loyal workforce as well.

LESSONS FOR HRM IN RECESSION

- I. Instead of making the employees the scapegoat as the price of confronting recession, the focus for cost cutting should have been on process improvements, reducing and recycling waste and quality checks
- II. Transparency of management intentions and organization plans would help the employees to be prepared and avoid feelings of insecurity, distrust and dissatisfaction
- III. Counseling by the organizations to help its people affected by recession to withstand its aftermaths of pain and insecurity feelings
- IV. Organizations should find possible alternatives in inevitable circumstances and safeguard its image
- V. Organize workshops to keep the employees motivated
- VI. The Business Continuity Plan / Disaster Recovery Plan (BCP / DRP) of the organization should include recession as a disaster event and plan accordingly
- VII. Create a climate of continuous innovation, creativity, research and development to meet all eventualities
- VIII. Social psychology and neuroscience have revealed that many of the most significant aspects of human behaviour happen at an unconscious level. Understanding why and how human behaviour changes when times get hard can help businesses to survive and even prosper in an economic downturn.
- IX. Economically difficult times are wonderful opportunities for shedding flab painlessly, changing existing business models and assumptions and provide great frameworks for building efficient and lasting companies with people initiatives and participation.
- X. Restructure processes to be better prepared for the future
- XI. Attract and engage the right employees
- XII. Have a balanced approach to total rewards that value the needs of the business and its employees
- XIII. Strengthen performance appraisal system with increased communication with employees and aggressive performance differentiation

The fast turn of events southwards in the aftermath of the global recession did not give time for the management and the HR managers to think and act. The HR managers who excelled championing the cause of people when the going was good were not themselves prepared when the times turned bad. This was more pronounced in organizations where HRM practices had not matured. Organizations which truly believed in HR practices and where the bond between HR and business was strong could withstand the challenging times.

While the global recession did result in job losses in India, the impact was much less compared to other countries. This was mainly because the organizations in India were right sizing and downsizing its manpower after government initiated the liberalization processes in 1991. Business process re-engineering of the organization's functions necessitated restructuring job assignments and rightsizing the work force to make the organization more competitive and productive. Voluntary retirement schemes and golden hand shakes were initiated by both the public and private sector organizations earlier.

HRM in a downturn is tricky for the HR practitioner because of many perplexities involved. It is a different mind game between the HR manager and the employees in the organization. While HR manager would want to minimize staff cost, employees resent the same. Reducing rewards and benefits brings down the morale of staff. Employees would want to be pampered during recession because they have to put in more efforts to increase business, HR manager would want to control the HR budgets. While HR manager right size their organization, employees too right size their roles in the organization. While the performance appraisal becomes stricter, the employee negotiates harder for better compensation. They do not want promises rather they want the HR manager to help them save their money.

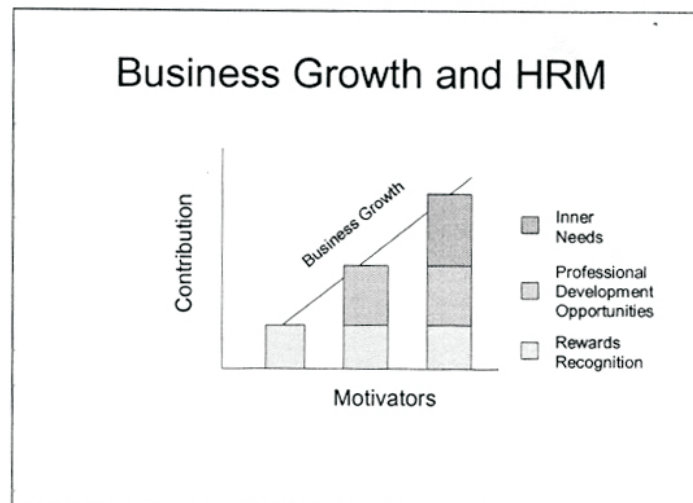
HRM - THE GROWTH ENGINE

When an organization is small, HR is not the concern of the owners who themselves manage their people. As the work force increases with business growth, the interplay of human dynamics compels organization to engage in people management to meet the challenges of growth. HRM therefore grows as organization grows. The health of the organization depends on the health of its people and attitude of top executives towards them. While processes are important, the growth rate depends on HRM policies. That organization grows faster which has better people policies. Satisfied people in organization can get satisfied customers.



In the graph alongside the steeper curve indicates better HRM policies and practices.

Taking a simple example of motivation as a critical success factor, employees can be motivated by rewards and recognitions at the basic level. Over time, for the organization to sustain the motivation level of the employees, it has to provide opportunities for their professional development. Thereby the contribution of the employees would remain high or even increase further. As the organizations invariably are pyramidal in structure with a narrow top, further growth opportunities are limited. Therefore if an organization can shift the HR to a higher gear and address the inner needs of the employees, they would be happy, contented and continue to be positive contributors to the organization. This is illustrated in the figure alongside.



HR TRANSFORMATION

From mundane staff administration functions, HRM has moved steadily upwards to focus on efficiency issues of employees to the present level as a consultative strategic business partner. HRM is becoming transcendental to transform the organization. HRM focuses on developing core competencies in staff by equipping them with multiple skills, including interpersonal, listening, leadership and communication. The table shown alongside gives a panoramic view of the multi-dimensional activities of HRM today which is growing further. It also depicts how HRM has moved from the narrow confines of back-office staff administration to key decision impactor in the organization. HRM today is recognized by organization as a major part of global development strategy and seen as an investment rather than as cost.

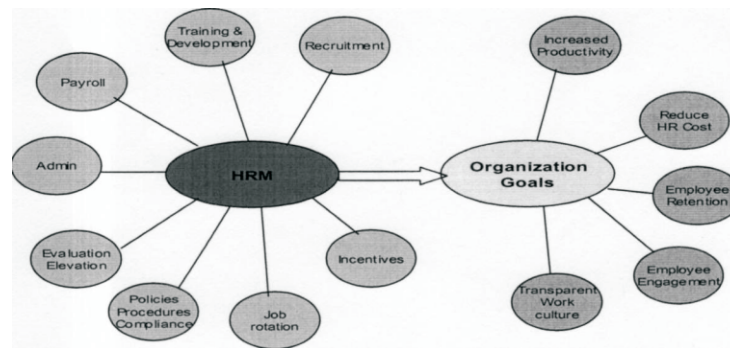
H R	Corp Governance	Strategic Organizational Planning	Top / Board Level	Investme nt Centric
	Corp Transformation			
	Change Mgmt			
	Knowledge Mgmt			
	CSR / CEP			
	HRIS			
	Employment Branding			
	Diversity Mgmt			
	HRO			
	Training & Development	Developmental	Executive Level	
	Ethics/Values			
	Stress Mgmt			
	Rewards/Recognition			
	Career Path			
	Industrial Relations	Staff Admin Functions	Support Level	Cost Centric
	Performance Appraisal			
	Promotion / Job rotation			
	Recruitment/Training			

NEED FOR EXPLORING NEW HR INITIATIVES

The imperatives that emerge from the current and emerging scenario for management of human resources are given in the exhibit below.

- Pressure to deliver consistently high performances in excess of expectations
- Developing talent to the point of excellence
- Real time management of HRM systems
- Steer away from traditional to IT enabled methods
- Need for creativity and intuition rather than quantitative analysis
- Change in the mindset of the HR managers
- Need for speed and new approaches
- Interaction of the industry with the academe
- Work ethics and values

In the changing global scenario, organizations depend on human competencies to achieve their goals. HRM should enable the organization to meet the emerging challenges for sustainable growth. To achieve the corporate objectives, human resource policies, procedures and practices should be congruent to the goals of the organization. HR is therefore becoming a 'strategic business partner' to achieve corporate objectives.



In today's context, HRM process requires a paradigm shift. The focus of HRM needs to be shifted to a higher gear to sustain a high level of productivity of human resources in a better congenial working environment as also to retain the best practices and best persons in the industry with a view to reducing costs and overheads. Key factor for successful business lies in aligning human resources strategies to organizational goals.

EMERGING TRENDS IN HR FUNCTIONS

Every organization will have to tackle change. Change is continuously happening within and outside the organization. Survival and success depends on the extent to which the organization is able to learn, adapt and is willing to change. Rapid changes in the business environment necessitate that organizations create HRM initiatives that enhance their employee's adaptive abilities and dynamism. The pressures of emerging opportunities and challenges for the organizations brought by the change would continue to increase.

Some emerging trends in HR functions and systems in organizations across the world by virtue of the changing trends in the market are:

- Employment branding strategy ensuring the perception of the organization as an employer of choice, thereby simplifying talent retention, motivation and attraction
- Outsourcing of non-core HR processes
- Recruitment outsourcing
- Buying talent (rather than developing it)
- e-recruitment
- Diversity management
- Greater autonomy
- Competency-based HRM, e.g., Competency Based Performance Management Systems, People Capability Maturity Model, etc.
- Effective performance management system to match the compensation policies with HR policies
- E-HRM web based channel
- HR scorecard approach to align HR systems with the company's overall strategy
- Composite cross cultural Training
- Training & Development as the core function to bridge the gap between the changing requirements of the job and the abilities that individuals need to perform these tasks such as self-directed leadership, self-motivated teams and self-generated creativity to excel
- Corporate social responsibility
- Employee relationship management
- Corporate transformation
- Talent management / engagement
- Employee assistance program
- Flexible work option, virtual office
- Multi-level performance analysis encompassing people, teams, and the organization
- Employee engagement and development:
 - Open houses, forums, "study while work" programs
- Competency matrix
- Robust communication vehicles
- Employee service assurance
- Employee satisfaction surveys
- Making employees become environmentally sensitive
- Employing environment friendly and resource efficient practices to complement the vision of the corporate CSR agenda
- Value based management

It is essential that the organization implements the new ideas and systems and also believes in the efforts made and the values that are shared across the organization. Alignment of the HR processes to critical organizational needs is necessary to derive organizational results. For any organization to prosper, recognition of HRM, as a component of the enterprise value proposition in vision and mission achievement is vital.

HRM as leader, manager and guide to CEO

Typically a leader focuses on

innovation,
collaboration,
mentoring,
trust based relationship,
growth opportunities,
open culture,
education,
conflict resolution, etc.

All these are inextricably intertwined to HR activities.

The last two decades saw HR Manager rise several pedestals to enter the board room. He has become the confidante of CEO. According to Jack Welch HR is the second most important function in a successful organization - HR should be as important as the CFO (Chief Financial Officer).

Looking forward next two decades, HR will assume even more importance and we could see a few CEOs from among the fraternity. But more importantly they would continue to play a catalyst role with greater influence. We foresee him as a charioteer keeping the chariot of organization moving.

The emerging role of HRM can best be explained by the Chariot Model of HR Manager.

CHARIOT MODEL OF HR MANAGER



- | | | |
|---|---------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Chariot | Organization |
| 2 | Chief Occupant | CEO |
| 3 | Charioteer (Driver) | HR Manager |
| 4 | Reins | HR Processes |
| 5 | Horses | Employees |

The organization is depicted by the Chariot. CEO is the chief occupant of the chariot. The horses symbolize the employees who drag the chariot, viz., the organization. HR Manager is likened to the charioteer, the driver, as he has to navigate the chariot for a successful and smooth journey. The processes are depicted by reins because they are directly connected to the horses (employees) which are guided by the driver (HR Manager).

An able driver (HR Manager) takes control of his reins (activities) connected to the horses (employees) to properly guide the chariot (organization) and the Chief Occupant (CEO) towards their destination (organization goals). The CEO (Chief Occupant) can thus reach the desired destination by proper use of all the employees guided by the Charioteer (HR Manager). The CEO (Chief Occupant) cannot reach the destination (organization goals), if any of the employees are not controlled and coordinated properly. The Charioteer knows the CEO's destination (organization goals) and takes the chariot (organization) to the destination by guiding the horses (employees).

The model depicts how closely the organization, the CEO, employees and HR are interlinked. The model also depicts the road map for HR.

Like Lord Krishna, HR Manager should play versatile role, lead and guide the CEO and the employees, be a strategist to align the HR strategies to organization goals and needs, and be kind, helpful and benevolent.

Lord Krishna was not only the driver for Arjuna, he was also his friend, philosopher and guide. Similarly, the HR man would emerge not only as the 'chauffeur' to the CEO carrying on the tasks of driving the organization but also friend, leader, manager and guide not only for the CEO but also for the employees. While he advises the CEO, he tends the horses (employees) so that they are agile and strong.

Leading and managing are not mutually exclusive. To successfully lead is to effectively manage. Lord Krishna successfully led Arjuna and won the war.

Road Ahead HR 2030

To catapult the Country as a developed nation, HRM would have to move away from the basic needs approach to need based approach bringing the best practices from across the globe dove-tailed to Indian culture and ethos and local requirements.

Indian business, industrial, services sectors are in need of a revolutionary transformation for not only meeting current constraints and competition but also for facing future challenges.

Business strategies should drive organizations to prepare for future competition, which requires out of the box thinking and involves the ability to set and establish unrealistic goals, zeal and innovativeness to create best practices and above all the willingness to give up obsolete established systems, procedures, products, rules, processes, etc. Speed is of essence in this highly competitive world.

Corporate objectives can be achieved when human resource policies, procedures and practices are satisfying the needs of the organization. Success of any organization in the coming decade would depend upon the effectiveness of its HR functions. The current economy brings with it immense opportunities and new challenges wherein effective human resource management is vital ingredient for change and success eventually.

The key differentiator today is the competence of organization's human resource. Hence effective management of human resources is a crucial component of organizational success. An efficient and satisfied work force is the most significant factor in organizational effectiveness and managerial excellence.

The markets have started changing continuously and unpredictably. To be successful in this situation, the HR managements require creativity and intuition rather than quantitative analysis. They will have to be proactive with speedy response to competitive environment instead of being reactive. They will require permanent flexibility with leadership from every body according to requirements. Consequently information has to be shared with efforts to reinvent competitive advantage and create new markets. This means a change in the mindset of the managers.

While modern day business imperatives require inducting technology in massive doses and automating processes thus dehumanizing the work force, HR manager has to empathize with the work force and humanize the organization and develop work values.

Technology innovations enable new ways of working. This applies to HR as well. If HR service deliveries are e-enabled, it would provide employees and managers and executives with greater opportunity for self-service in an e-enabled environment. By automating day-to-day HR administration and operations, HR manager will be free of mundane, repetitive tasks and responsibilities and will have more time to manage other complex HR matters. He can thus participate more effectively in organizational issues and concerns.

Technology enabled HR management will impact organizational processes, capabilities and culture in as much as there will be a change in the way HR contributes in the organization. HR needs to foresee its future role carefully. Implementation of HR Information System (HRIS) will provide a fully integrated organization-wide electronic network of HR related data, information, services, applications that are generally accessible at any time by employees, managers and HR personnel. Managers and employees can view and obtain all HR related information on the click of a mouse. They can perform routine HR tasks like leave applications, submission of travel bills, downloading salary details, etc. directly with the use of self-service tools. HRIS brings all HR elements together. It is a central repository of employee information which HR department pools to analyze and display the record of employee skills, training, work profiles, etc. Once HRIS is established, HR will have more time and resources for its role as a consultative strategic partner.

HR plays dual role of employee welfare and increasing productivity. It has to therefore create a transparent, open culture so that employees feel free to approach HR for assistance. This will also open a channel of communication for the HR to know the ground realities and get informal feedback on HR and other matters of concern. It should pay due attention to employee growth. While caring for the employees through openness, HR has to ensure that employees are honest with them.

HR department has to be versatile. Human psychology and behaviour is difficult to understand and HR is often called upon to analyze this aspect. This has to be done by maintaining balance between organization interest and interest of the employee concerned. It has to view things dispassionately and in fairness. Like Lord Krishna, HR manager should unhesitatingly purge a wrong doer but give unflinching support and encouragement to a person who is right. Taking another analogy, HR has to tend the staff like a grand mother would, and wave the stick like a mother does.

In a dynamic and competitive environment, there is a need for cross pollination between the HR functions and the rest of the business to bring synergy and congruence of HR practices to organization goals. But lack of business insight within HR is impeding the deliverables. Therefore cross pollination would help HR gain knowledge about how the HR functions can be better leveraged to improve overall organization systems.

Like grooming employees in an organization to take up higher responsibilities, HR persons can be put in other departments as part of their extended orientation program. This way they can understand the work processes as well as the working environment. Such experiences would broaden their horizon and help them take better informed decisions when they assume direct and bigger roles in HR. As reverse osmosis process, persons from other departments can be given job rotation in HR department. Senior executives from other departments being groomed for higher responsibilities in the organization can be given a stint in HR. Greater value can be derived by making HR a standard rotation for promising leaders to prepare future CEOs.

The major areas of concern for the HR Manager in the next two decades would be:

- ethical behaviour and value systems and corporate ethical practices
- environment concerns
- corporate social responsibility
- corporate governance
- employee welfare
- risk management
- stress / motivation of employees
- knowledge creation & management / learning / training
- conflict management
- OD intervention
- HRO

The two issues of immediate concern for the HR Manager are Employee health and Ethical behaviour.

a) Work and health concerns

The urge to excel and grow rapidly is having telling adverse effect on the workforce. They are today characterized by

- burnout
- depression / anxiety syndrome

lifestyle diseases
restlessness
self centered.

Some measures by which HRM can address the health concerns of its employees are given below:

I. Depression and anxiety are the biggest challenges faced among workforce. Stress management / Conflict management therefore are very crucial. Stress management programs, compulsory annual vacation, health checkups are some ways of addressing this issue.

II. There is a need for lifestyle intervention for executives working under stress caused by internal and external environmental factors. Many organizations conduct Art of Living Programs and other similar programs for their workforce. The techniques of relaxation, breathing exercises and sessions on developing skills for adapting to changes bring about perceptible changes in group dynamics and better management of stress. It is aimed at eliminating stress, creating a sense of belonging and restoring human values.

III. Swami Vivekananda said Science and spirituality will eventually meet. With appropriate spiritual intervention, one can reinvent the lifestyle so as to cope effectively with stress and integrate oneself with the work place, family and the society. Yoga and meditation can be gainfully employed for bringing all round development of human beings.

IV. HRM interventions based on Indian ethics / culture / ethos can bring about profound changes in the lifestyle patterns of executives. It can help in developing skills for dealing effectively with the negative emotions. It can foster a spirit of camaraderie in them resulting in improved work culture at the office.

V. Motivation is the fountainhead of performance. Freud identified pleasure as the single dominant motivating factor. Over time, this slowly shifted to gaining power. This was evident in corporate world as well as in war. Today according to Victor Frankly one can achieve motivation through understanding life i.e., meaning of life. People want self development and personal improvement. They look for achievement, satisfaction and for inner peace. HRM actions should therefore move in this direction.

VI. HRM should continue to emphasis on the importance of daily exercise, a healthy diet and a balanced lifestyle to its employees.

VII. HRM should also look into the emotional intelligence of groups e.g., team work through love and compassion.

VIII. For HRM with Indian touch there is an imperative need for R & D of HRM as integral part of an organization.

b) Ethical Behaviour and HRM

Scandals continue to rock corporate world with telling regularity. This is despite the best practices being put in place and intense scrutiny by regulators. Ethical behaviour will be the greatest challenge confronting HR. People continue to get tempted and adopt unfair means for self aggrandizement. There is a growing tendency to ignore values in the pursuit of material prosperity. Ethics and value systems would need to be ingrained at the individual and corporate / board level.

Ethical intervention of human resources has not been given the degree of importance it deserves. This will engage the HR managers in the coming decade. Ethically rich human capital can contribute positively to the healthy growth of the organization. HRM should search ways for Corporate Ethical Philosophy as an important Corporate Mission. Corporate governance must ensure best Corporate Ethical Philosophy.

CONCLUSION

The unprecedented pace of technology and process changes in global scenario makes it imperative to initiate and speed up changes in the HRM system as expeditiously as possible.

Aligning the HR strategies with that of the business can catalyze the HR efforts to produce desired results. HR in the next two decades would take up the central stage and play an essential role in building and shaping enterprise-wide strategy. Since HR strategy emanates from business strategy, HR manager should have strong organizational business knowledge and sound HR management practices.

Human behaviour is a complex matrix to understand. Since HRM deals with people it would transgress the limits of management and enter more into the field of behavioral sciences and psychology.

Motivated and competent labour force makes organization to grow and achieve goals. Therefore, an organization to be successful must ensure the dynamism, motivation and competence of its people. As Stephen Covey says "An empowered organization is one in which individuals have the knowledge, skill,

desire and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to collective organizational success".

As succinctly said by Henry Ford, "You can take my factories and burn up my buildings, but give me my people and I'll build the business right back again".

With rapid technological advancements, increased competition and changing lifestyles, HRM has to respond itself for the proper use of the single inexhaustible resource of mankind. For India to emerge as a dominant force in international comity of nations, its HRM should be based on Indian values, ethics, principles and practices.

According to Maslow's theory, people work for five reasons viz., physiological needs, safety, social status, esteem and self actualization. HRM would be increasingly concerned at the last two viz., esteem and self actualization. For this HRM must not only link with ethics but soak in Indian ethos.

The basic covenants of principle centered leadership are

love,
patience,
forgiveness,
selflessness, and
dutifulness

The characteristics of future HR manager are

strategic thinker,
leader,
manager,
expert in technology,
change manager
visionary, and
behavior system creator.

Therefore, the expected and emerging roles of HR manager, are

synergiser
team builder
culture builder
ethical performer
competency builder
value based developer

The above fits in appropriately with the Chariot Model of HR Manager described above. For HRM to be effective in India it has to be ingrained in Indian ethos, philosophy and culture.

Gita, the epitome of all scriptures, contains vast treasures of knowledge and wisdom. It is a guidebook to good management extremely useful to all. It explains what a man ought to do not merely as a social being but also as an individual with a spiritual destiny. Gita enjoins every human being to do work to perfection. It advocates the leader to work ceaselessly. The greatest lesson one gets from Gita is that 'work is worship'.

The other Indian scriptures too contain vast knowledge for the HR Managers for mining and warehousing. The ultimate goal of the Indian ethos is to create the complete man -complete individual who combines the executive dynamism and heightened rationalism of administration with deeply ingrained respect for the innate divinity of fellow human being and the holistic values of life.

Going forward, we foresee HR as the driving and guiding force for successful businesses by 2030. We also foresee principle centered leadership emerging soaked in Indian philosophy, culture and ethos.

Yatra yogesvara krsno
yatra partho dhanur-dharah
tatra vijayo bhutir
dhruva nitir matir mama

Wherever there is Krsna, the master of all mystics, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will also certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power, and morality.

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