EMBRACING HR – E-COMMUNICATION HAS CHANGED THE ROLE OF HR IN TODAY'S GLOBALIZED WORLD

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ABSTRACT

Technology & HR-Leverage one for the other "Technology and HR are enablers of business. Integration of the two would mean not only harmonious co-existence but also leveraging one for the other. Leveraging of technology for HR would mean digitizing the mundane HR activities and automating the back office and transactional activities related to recruitment, performance management, career planning, and succession planning, training and knowledge management. The leverage plays a key role in helping world-class HR executives generate significant return on investment in the form of decreased costs, less staff, and a wide range of other efficiency and effectiveness benefits. Another area of HR, which is leveraging technology, is employee development. Programmed learning (PL) i.e. learning at its own pace is one of the most effective ways of adult learning. Companies can harness the knowledge of its employees by cataloging and hosting it on the intranet. Talk to 'Big-5' or not 'so big' consulting companies you will find that main stay of their business is the knowledge repository. Leveraging HR for technology implies managing change associated with technology by way of E-communication, E-training, E-recruiting, and E-employee book. Thus they can play complementary roles."

Technology and communication both have one thing common i.e., both these are enablers of business.

Keywords: Leveraging HR for Technology ,E-communication-training-recruiting E-Employee book

INTRODUCTION:

In recent times, technology has become synonymous with information technology, as hardly any other technological development of the past would have impacted all spectrum of business as information technology has impacted. Technology & HR-Leverage one for the other "Technology and HR are enablers of business. Integration of the two would mean not only harmonious co-existence but also leveraging one for the other. To manage and deploy technology in an effective way, all business Organizations would need knowledge workers. Managing of these knowledge workers is the responsibility of HR function. Hence the integration of technology and HR is an absolute must. Advancements in communication and software technology are creating significant productivity improvements, particularly for the human resource professionals who use contemporary human resource and talent management systems.

Leveraging of technology for HR would mean digitizing the mundane HR activities and automating the back office and transactional activities related to recruitment, performance management, career planning, and succession planning, training and knowledge management. The role information systems plays in HR has become pivotal with the advent of the internet. Information systems in HR also includes the computerization of employee records and databases and to maintain an updated account of HR decisions that have been taken or need to be taken as part of the human resource management plan.

The new technology is likely to result in the substantial modification of jobs, as employees will be required to learn statistical process-control techniques. This new technology and the push for higher quality products will require employees to attend new types of training, and a system which will support the demand of changing environment. Having understood technology and HR in the present context we must understand integration in this context. Integration would not only mean harmonious co-existing but would also mean one enhancing and complementing the other i.e., technology is used to enhance effectiveness of HR and HR functions helps in adopting and managing change which technology deployment brings in.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

For the purpose of the study the following research Methodology was adopted.

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of the study.

1. To understand the implications of E-communication on Human Resource Management in today's competitive world.
2. To gain Knowledge about latest E-communication methods.
3. How an organization effectively communicates and share knowledge across the enterprise of employees, partners, suppliers and customers; educate, motivate and retain employee resources.

SECONDARY DATA:

This data was collected with the help research journals, magazines and text books and various web-sites.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR HR:

HR management as a function is responsible for deliverables like business strategy execution, administrative efficiency, employee contribution and capacity for change. All these are accomplished through what HR people i.e., staffing, development, compensation, benefits, communicate organization

design, high performing teams and so on. In majority of these areas technology is being deployed. The leverage plays a key role in helping world-class HR executives generate significant return on investment in the form of decreased costs, less staff, and a wide range of other efficiency and effectiveness benefits.

E-COMMUNICATION:

Communication which is most talked about management tool has always been a gray area in HR management. In large companies with vast geographical spread communicating with all employees had really posed formidable challenge to HR professionals. Technology has again come for rescue. Starting with telephones, faxes, and e-mails maturing into video conferencing, net cast, web cast etc. communication is one area of HR, which has been greatly benefited by technology.

The new electronic networks provide three main types of connectivity (i.e. inter-organizational, intra-organizational, and extra-organizational) that blur organizational boundaries and yet offer potential for competitive advantage. Mouse & click companies like Oracle, IBM have an intranet which caters to most of the information needs of its employees. Brick & Morter companies like BILT also have made a foray into deploying intranet for internal communication, which has corporate notice board, media coverage, and knowledge corners. Netcentricity also offers the possibility of developing its own networked relationship with employees as a value-added means of enhancing employment relationships, and ultimately positively influencing both employee attitudes and behaviors.

E-RECRUITMENT:

Recruitment is one area where all the companies worth their name leverage IT. There are two different models of e-recruitment, which are in vogue. One is recruitment through company's own sites and the other is hosting your requirement on the other sites e.g., monster .com, jobsdb.com, jobsahead.com, naukri.com, and jobstreet.com & so on so forth. The first models is more popular with the larger companies who have a brand pull for potential employees e.g., G.E., IBM, Oracle, Microsoft, HCL, ICICI, Reliance, Mind tree consulting etc. Other companies prefer to go to the job sites. Some are adopting both.

E-recruitment has gone a long way since its start. Now these sites have gone global. Sites like jobsahead.com and monster.com have established global network, which encompasses separate sites for jobs in Australia, Denmark, Belgium, and Canada etc. Job seekers are able to search job by region or country and employers target potential employees in specific countries. For example, 3 Com recently posted a company profile on the Ireland site that highlights the contributions of 3 com's Irish design team in its global projects.

In the early days e-recruitment was plagued with flooding the employers with low-quality bio-data's. Again technology has come as a savior. Now pre-employment testing like the one introduced by Capital One, a US based financial company, help in filtering the applicants. These tools test online e.g., applicants for call centers. 'Profile International' a Texas based provider of employment assessments, has developed tools that allow instant translation of assessment tests between languages. Further developments like video- conference specialized sites, online executives recruitments and combining online and offline methods are leading to more and more companies adopting E-recruitment at least as a secondary recruitment method. Arena Knights Bridge, a US based IT company conducts video based interview of its prospective employees and only short listed employees are met in person. Even Cisco was to launch the same.

E-TRAINING:

The E-Training system is an effective tool for Organizations / Institutes who intend to conduct training courses on the Internet / Intranet. It not only provides effective learning for the participants but also assists the organization in evaluating them.

The major features of the E-Training System include;

- User Defined Courses
- Exhaustive Databank
- Exhaustive Question bank
- Interactive Notice Board
- Online Test Papers generated on-the-fly with Computerized Evaluation
- Online Feedback

E or electronic training has many advantages over conventional approaches and methodologies. For one it is cost effective and has a deeper reach without facing the hurdle of time constraint. Not only the Expert knowledge is communicated, but more importantly captured, with good e-learning and knowledge management systems. Moreover, it is not a one time affair, and can also be customized as per the changing need of the trainee. Leveraging enablers like technology so as to penetrate deep into the organization is possible through e-training. Companies like Dubai Headquartered Knowledge Horizon are doing excellent work in this area.

E-LEARNING:

E-learning is mostly associated with activities involving computers and interactive networks simultaneously. The computer does not need to be the central element of the activity or provide learning content. However, the computer and the network must hold a significant involvement in the learning activity.

Web-based learning is associated with learning materials delivered in a Web browser, including when the materials are packaged on CD-ROM or other media.

Another area of HR, which is leveraging technology, is employee development. Programmed learning (PL) i.e. learning at its own pace is one of the most effective ways of adult learning. Use of technology for this purpose can't be over emphasized. Aptech Online University and 'The Manage mentor' are some of the Indian sites, which are in this business knowledge management, which is an integral part of any learning organization, which cannot become a reality without technology. Companies can harness the knowledge of its employees by cataloging and hosting it on the intranet. Talk to 'Big-5' or not 'so big' consulting companies you will find that main stay of their business is the knowledge repository. Technology has enabled them to retrieve it swiftly. In the competitive environment where speed is the name of game technology driven Knowledge Management constantly provides a strategic advantage.

If you look at HR module of ERP solutions like people soft, SAP, Oracle and Ramco they provide you with a comprehensive package which helps in man-power planning, recruitment, performance management, training and development, career planning, succession planning, separation and grievance handling. A transaction happening in all these areas are digitized and form a closed loop ensuring employee database is always updated. E.g. a joining letter of a new employee is system generated. It will be printed only when all mandatory fields of information are entered. Similarly a transfer order or a separation letter is issued from the system only if that transaction has been carried out in the system.

For career planning, success planning, skill and competencies matrix methods are used by most of these systems. They search an employee with the required skills first in the in-house database of

employees. Once put in practice in letter & spirit, this system not only enhances business results by matching the right candidate for right job but also improves retention of employees.

Processing payroll, churning out time office reports, providing HR-MIS are some other routine activities of HR which have been off-loaded to technology.

E-EMPLOYEE BOOK:

E-Employee book is perhaps one utility of IT, which has relieved HR of most of mundane tasks and helped it to improve employee satisfaction. E-Employee book is a plethora of each very activity, which was earlier carried out by employee through administration wing of HR. These are employee code No, Time keeping information, , leave rules, leave administration, perk administration, etc. Earlier all these rules and information were in the custody of HR. Every user employee was expected to reach out to HR and get it done. Now with deployment of ESS in most of the companies, employee can request online for, fill his/her T.E. bills, apply for leave, log time sheet and see his perks value disbursed and due etc. E.g., in Ballarpur Industries Ltd. leave administration is completely digitized in its corporate office. It is working towards digitizing travel related activities, perks and even compensation management and performance management administration. 'Digitize or outsource all the mundane and routine focus only on core and value add' - Vineet Chhabra V.P. –PDC BILT.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR EXCELLENCE:

All HR professionals, preaching or practicing, learning or experimenting, teaching or studying have experienced leveraging technology for HR. But most of us come across a situation where we need to leverage HR for technology. Let us understand what we mean by this.

Whenever technology is deployed afresh or upgraded it involves a change. The change may be at the activity level e.g., applying for leave through the intranet or at the mental model level e.g., digitizing the process succession planning which have been HR professionals forte. The people have always registered adopting change. This is one area where HR professionals are to deliver i.e., become change agents and lead the process of technology and change adoption. The resistance to change is directly proportional to speed of change. Now speed of change has increased and hence resistance.

Just to take an example, most of ERP implementation in the world has not been able to deliver all the expectations. Some of these have failed to deliver at all. While analyzing the cause of failure it has been observed that 96% of failures are because of people related issues and only 4% are because of technology. To manage and deploy technology in an effective way, all business Organizations would need knowledge workers. Managing of these knowledge workers is the responsibility of HR function. Hence the integration of technology and HR is an absolute must.

It is the people who make the difference; hence HR should exploit its expertise to facilitate the adoption of technology. I would like to put together some of the thoughts on what HR should do for this.

At the time of recruitment, stop hiring for skills rather hire for attitude and a learning mind. Skills of today are no longer valid tomorrow. Managing ever changing change is the only criteria for success. Functional or technical skills can be acquired during the job. Hence recruitment in the technology era needs to undergo a paradigm shift i.e., from a skill/competency based it needs to be attitude and learning mind/ ability based interview. That would translate into hiring for skills for future. In IBM every employee has to fill in his/her individual development plan where the employee commits its learning one/two new skills every year thus remaining competitive every time.

If we look at the chemistry of resistance to change it is either a skill issue or a will issue. To address the will issue we need to work at a comprehensive solution starting from recruitment (as discussed earlier), reward, compensation and leading to organization culture which promotes change. A living example is

3M, a US based company, where innovation is way of life, where 10% of revenue must come from new products every year. For them change becomes way of life.

To address the will issue further organization need to prepare a communication strategy which creates a 'pull' for the technology. For example, in Ranbaxy, when they went for SAP implementation they anticipated resistance. To address this they started a house journal, which was aimed at educating the employees on the benefits, which will result from adoption of ERP, SAP. This created a need rather a potential need or a latent need was brought out. Adoption of ERP did not become much of a problem.

At times adoption of technologies is perceived as a threat by the employees e.g., automation leading to reduction in workers, office automation leading to retrenchment of clerks etc. HR needs to be associated with the technical adoption right from the beginning till the end. At the selection of technical stage if HR is associated, it can map the skills required and create a pull during implementation and adoption. Post adoption it can release the excess non-re-allocatable employees.

To understand this process more clearly we can take example of ERP implementation. ERP is taken as an example as this is one technology adoption which affects employees across the org. irrespective of function and position. Any other automation may have affected only a segment of organization. ERP implementation in any organization goes through the following stages.

1. Selection of package
2. Business analysis
3. Solution design
4. Configuration and customization
5. Conference room piloting (CRP)
6. Go-live and production

At each stage HR has to play a role, which will help in mitigating resistance to change.During selection process, the change agent can understand the business benefit ERP would bring. This would help him to draw a comprehensive communication plant aimed at creating a 'pull' for the change. The communication plan may use its various weapons from the armory. The obvious examples are Newsletters, Newsflash. In-house journal, addressing by the top management, web cast, open house sessions, meetings formal and informal.

During the business analysis phase implementation team is supposed to analyse the existing business processes. At times this leads to surfacing of some data which is not very desirable by the process owners, leading to resistance at this stage, HR has to be again proactive and carry out a detailed stake-holder analysis. Such an analysis should give a lead to potential areas of problem and potential champions of change.

Solution design involves defining 'To-be processes' i.e., the way business would be carried out in future. At this stage HR has to play the role of catalyst to turn the heat on. The idea is to ensure to make maximum out of an opportunity of package enabled business transformation. HR can play a role by arranging to educate and train the right people on best business practices, just before this phase.

During the configuration and customization HR has to keep on beating the drum, the customization of a standard package is a big no-no. Similarly, during the conference room plotting (CRP) it should help in identifying the right persons to be involved in CRP. A thorough testing at this stage would result in lesser pain at the time of going live. This is also time to focus on training of end users, the employees who are going to use the system once implemented. Training- retraining –training to ensure all the prospective users are comfortable with usage of software before the system goes live.

During the go-live stage HR has to work over time to keep the motivation levels high. This is the time when management starts loosing patience as one glitch after the other keeps appearing and virtually

bringing the business to halt. At this stage, HR has to play 'conscious keeper' for the top management once into product relocating the surplus is a challenge for which it has to be prepared before it.

This example makes it clear that involvement of HR during the entire life cycle of technology is valuable. ERP is not an isolated case. It is true for any other technology adoption only finer details may vary. Hence HR must play a proactive role rather than being just a silent spectator or mere executers of the wishes of business or chief technology officer in case of technological changes.Having set the case in different perspective, it seems only logical to leverage technology for HR and vice-versa.

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