

Changing role of HR Managers in Covid-19 scenario.

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Abstract:

HR Managers enhances the organization and its resources through appropriate planning, implementing and through evaluation process. Continuous evaluation and improving has a significant role in the success of organization. In this pandemic scenario, where social distancing is unable to avoid, HR managers find extreme difficulties in implementing and following standard methods of HR policies, which leads to new challenges including mental health and overall wellness of employees. So a transformational shift is important. HR managers are working beyond the time to make employees motivated and productive, to address possible concerns of employees, unable to judge the mindset of employees who are in remote work environment. So this study aims to explore the role of HR in the adverse impact of covid-19, various pandemic HR challenges which would aid to design an employee oriented platform to overcome uncertainty in work and the things to be done by the employees to cope with the current pandemic situation. At the same time, employees should be able to change with current changes. The research articles, online articles and discussions are reviewed to identify the role of HR in the current pandemic situation. The findings provide the suggestions for HR in organisations to make their employees effective and to identify the changing role of HR managers.

Keywords: Covid 19, HR Managers, HR policies, Employee engagement, Transformational shift.

INTRODUCTION

Covid- 19 has taken the world by storm and it brought new forms of working to the world. The entire organizations have to cope with Covid- 19 pandemic. In this situation, role of HR is unavoidable. The organizations should ensure the safety of employees and maximum efficiency. The entire world is negatively affected by the Covid-19. Growth of the economy is

weakening day by day. It is the reality of the current situation. It is in this Scenario the role of HR makes crucial. Role of HR to work behind the closed doors, which is important for driving the company towards success. Because the entire working model or working environment has shifted to a new environment, the style of the employees has also changed. From the offline work environment to online mode of work, the employees can work freely in their comfortable zones.

But the continuity and productivity of the work within the four walls is not at all satisfiable. Providing motivation and increasing the efficiency within the four walls is not at all an easy task. Time to time meeting, interaction between team members and managers is very much important in the satisfaction of an employee. So HR should be able perform quickly considering the short term, immediate consequences of this global crises. Not only that the HR professionals should be able to support and lead the employees by maintaining the HR policies. HR managers must design an employee experience which should help them to overcome the uncertainty and difficulties faced by the employees. Cementing trust of employees is also a major part of the growth of company. Right communications at right time also motivate the employees which in turn increase the growth of company . All these takes everyone feel great satisfaction.

This conceptual study will explain the role of HR professionals and how to manage this in the current situations.

Remote/online management

Faster adoption of online work from offline work is a major issue for some employees, Employees are from different family and different culture, so sudden change to online work feel them uncomfortable. So managing the mind and the productivity of employees is the main responsibility of the HR managers. In this scenario , HR managers have to continuously monitor

and manage the employees. A study by Carnevale and Hatak (2020) concludes that, concerning the need for social relationships, a current panacea for balancing for balancing social connections embraced by many organizations involves virtual socialization opportunities such as lunches, coffee breaks and happy hours. While these practices potentially misfit as a result of the abrupt change in the social fabric of the work environment, it is the role of HR managers to make them good and comfortable. During the covid-19 pandemic, when business leaders quickly shifted operations, and made difficult decisions to close facilities, lay-off workers, or alter supply chains, responsibility of the HR managers became important. Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have been characterized by the capacity of laborers to settle on decisions impacting when, where, and for how long they participate in business-related assignments (Hill et al., 2008; Rahman et al., 2020). Masuda, et al., (2012) named four kinds of flexible work arrangements: flextime, compressed workweek, telecommuting (also known as flexplace), and part-time work. Flextime alludes to an approach wherein the conventional fixed occasions that employees start and finish the working day are supplanted by a system or set of rules inside which employees are permitted some opportunity to pick their beginning and stopping times.

Mental support and training

Training makes an employee better and better. It is through the training process the employees understands the basics and style of work in that particular organisation. For the fresh employees it is very crucial, but we should never think that training is crucial only for freshers, who are having no prior experience. Training has a great role in the success of a company. The training to support relationship formation would be well-received at this time when every team member, irrespective of country, is experiencing a similar stress (Caligiuri et al., 2020). The shared stress, anxiety, and frustrations can create ties that further bind already collegial global teams. This shared experience has the potential to enhance cohesion going forward. At a time when employees' desire to learn, grow, and demonstrated competence is heightened, companies that offer access to, or reimburse, employees' online training achieve a clear win-win; they increase talent capability and, concurrently, foster employee motivation. So the HR

professionals have to work hard for 24 hours to make the online training effective, while making the employees comfortable at all time. HR managers should be able to make the work productive and increase their efficiency. The world is experiencing a collective state of stress, but the global economy will not pause for the employees to become ready and to come out of their comfort zone to work again in different countries with people from different cultures. More than ever, human resources managers are needed to foster cohesion during this time of uncertainty by using the selection, training, and support practices. HR professionals should be very much careful on these things, by making sure that employees are comfortable, satisfied and motivated at all the time. A study conducted by Solanki (2020) reports that First and foremost concern and priority of any organization is- employees. Care & emotional support indicates the psychological aspects of leaders, with which employee feel that they are in good trust and care. It is crucial to avoid panic during this uncertain pandemic scenario. So the HR managers should always give mental support more than done before the covid-19. The report prepared by Elsafty and Ragheb (2020), states that motivation is a driving force that enables an employee to become more and more active, reactive, efficient and productive. High motivation of the employees could maximize the potential and satisfaction level of the employees that increases the value and productivity of the companies in particular.

Bounded optimism

According to Dicu(2020) the feelings of isolation and communications gap while working from home are mostly claimed as obstacles in many researches (Forester 1988; Harris, 2003) and are seen as reducing the speed of problem solving and opportunities to find out what was going on(Harris, 2003). Toffler (1980) gave briefly different possible reasons for skepticism like lack of employees' motivation or need for human direct contact.

A study conducted by Solanki(2020) reports that, leaders and employees are fighting themselves in this corona hit timings because the working condition have turned upside down so drastically and it becomes essential to combat actively. Constant changes in policies, dynamic working hours, active participation, increased and challenging goals, team work &

timely feedback is also coming in trend during this crisis. Bounded optimism is a term in the field of crisis management for HR people. It is the result of combining reality with optimism and confidence. Even after knowing the severity of this pathogen, HR leaders are giving a ray of optimism that the hard times will move faster and business will raise again with some modified situations.

Motivation

According to Elsafty and Ragheb (2020) the role of Human Resource Management towards Employees Retention during Covid-19 Pandemic in medical supplies sector employees are backbone of an entity and their existence is more essential for them. Retention of the employees is broad topic, and it takes a lot of companies look serious in this provision to maintain healthy output with their employees (Bisht, Chaubey & Thapliyal, 2016). The retention of the employees is associated directly with the policies made and implemented by the HR Department of a company. It is mandatory for an organization to provide their every employee the mean to satisfy their needs professionally and ethically. According to Al-sharafi, and Alam (2018), the retention of the employees increases with their motivation. Motivation is then divided into two different factors which are intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors. Both of these factors of motivation are essential in generating lots of effectiveness and enhance their provision accordingly. According to Dhanya and Prashanth (2019), motivation is a driving force that enables an employee to become reactive, efficient and productive. High motivation of the employees could maximize the potential and satisfaction level of the employees that ultimately increases the values and productivity of the companies in particular.

Communication

Pandemic resulted in a new paradigm of surrogate decision-making and information sharing (Hyatt, Mhl & Dfashrm, 2020). In normal circumstances, surrogates are often at the bedside,

speaking frequently with staff and physicians, and “come to a place” to make a difficult decision. Usually the family agrees, preparations made and goodbyes said. In these cases, shared decision-making is not possible, they have limited opportunities to speak with the patient, and often do not get the opportunity to say goodbye. This will increase the anger and confusion felt by the survivors, as well as create moral distress for the providers and staff caring for the patient. A clear and consistent line of communication is critical to effective and safe care as well as in decreasing the moral distress of the employees.

Managing health and safety

During this Covid-19 pandemic situation managing the health and safety of employees are very much crucial. Slight changes and careless in the managing health can lead to great problems. so this is the time of HR professionals to take care of health and safety of the entire organization. According to Meri (2020), Health is based overall person and encompasses the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, professional, social and physical dimensions of individuals. The World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not just the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization, 2002). Healthy work is likely to be the one where the pressures on employees are appropriate based on their abilities and resources, the amount of control they have had over their work, and the support they receive from the people who count them. This may include an ongoing assessment of health risks, the provision of appropriate information and training on health problems, the availability of organizational support practices and structures for the promotion of health (WHO, 2007).

During the pandemic, life has changed a lot for many who were international business travelers and globally mobile employees in their current “grounding” may mean they are experiencing a sense of loss (Caligiuri et al., 2020). Their frequent travel, hotel accommodation, and business dinners have been replaced by stay-at-home restrictions and virtual meetings. The stress caused by the demands of virtual global work is real; many employees are experiencing long work hours to accommodate time zones and performance challenges in less than ideal remote working conditions. These tangible work challenges all occur with the backdrop of job insecurity

and future economic uncertainty. The changed work conditions during the pandemic present new challenges for employees' health and safety. Clear and consistent communication from managers and HR about health risks and available health resources is important. So HR professionals should help their employees to work from home in a safe and healthy manner. For that encouraging healthy work practices such as working within regular hours and taking regular work-breaks will help employees to switch off from work, communicating clearly and managing work expectations will help employees to maintain their family responsibilities. (Adamovic, 2018; Chen & Fulmer, 2018).

Providing adequate information

Providing necessary information for the productive and efficient working of the employees is important. Missing those information may affect the organization itself. Access to information and updates on pandemic with financial benefits is the most suitable and effective benefits that provide by the entities to their end-users (Elsafty & Ragheb 2020). Especially, during the hard times such as Pandemic, an organization should not get away in providing provisional healthcare benefits to its employees, as it is one of the most important retention techniques available to them. As per the opinion shared by Khoshnevin & Gholipoui (2017), there are companies that give certain bonuses to their employees during hard times in order to tackle the situation. The same factor is applicable in the context also. Because the variables are totally different during pandemic scenario, the HR managers should consider some important variables. Missing enough information of the management plan and reaction responding to pandemic situation, Not enough clear guidelines, on what to do and what to avoid while in workplace, No clear or eve sudden information on financials during pandemic are having a vital role in the success and growth f the organization.

Leadership skills

During this pandemic situation, HR professionals should have a good leadership quality. HR have to make swift decisions in the consequences, and also should be able to communicate effectively with stakeholders and also with manage resources. HR professionals should have the adaptive skill in every situation, especially in the pandemic situations. But the fact is that most of HR professionals are not able to direct their employees in an effective way through the online mode of work (Caligiuri et al., 2020). Harvard Business Review experts created a list of 10 key recommendations for leaders on how they can offer support during this unprecedented time. According to Dicu (2020), the first advice is to communicate clearly and be decisive, set the priorities in order for employees to know on what to focus. Leaders have to maintain both the health of the employees and even the health of the business. They should express clearly what tasks could be taken off, the new goals and rules for the company and offer more trust and delegate more because time is crucial in crisis periods . Hence managers should try to inform regularly and organize more often videoconference through which to update employees on what it happens within business and how covid -19 impacts them as employees. Even if everything is uncertain it is important to be visible and stay close (even if it is virtually)with the employees. Leaders should try to be engaged and authentic because during these times the real face of managers and their behaviour is important influencing employees. Specialists say that managers should alter their expectations because there is a fundamental shift in people's life. Besides work employees focus also on their family life, physical and mental health during this period . Some organizations understood very well the challenges of the new working environment and even lower the working hours but keeping the same salary. Work is not the only thing on people's minds right now, their familie, their bills, childcare and school closures and the economy needs to be managed a lot(Dicu, 2020). It is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect someone to be fully present eight hours a day, when they have a three-year-old with crayons drawing on the wall, or an elderly parent who needs help navigating the stairs”(Gerdeman, 2020,b para 23.)

Conclusion

It is the HR professionals to motivate and give enough support to the employees in the sudden change of mode of work. Through this article it is clear that HRM has a wide range of opportunity in the current and also in the future, but at the same time they have vital role and unavoidable responsibilities also. So for that HR professionals should focus on forward thinking, building on the assumption that grant challenges can be done through the changes. Towards this end, current discussions provides a step by giving direction of highlighting some implications of covid-19 for employee adjustment and their well-being.

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