

## DIL for HR: The Need of the Hour

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“Give of yourself every day-a smile, a compliment, a moment of your time, a listening ear or a kind word. There is always something you can give others”. -Anonymous

### I INTRODUCTION

Given the fact of equal availability, affordability and accessibility of all other resources, it is the only human resource which can provide the required cutting edge in today's highly competitive environment. Further, recent times have heralded an unprecedented change (from barter to tangible to intangible and now experiential) in the overall environment in which organizations work. Within this ever changing environment one critical party that is often overlooked is employee.

Increased competition requires all organizations to get better at what they do. In this regard attracting and retaining the right talent, coupled with nurturing, hardly needs any emphasis. Rather than just complying with bare minimum standards, employees are now looking for organizations that offer more.

### II WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

In VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex & ambiguous) world of today, HR managers are confronted with so many challenges like workforce diversity, technological changes, information technology changes etc., As a result, there's lot of pressure on HR managers not only to attract but to nurture and retain the taken. The challenge all the more serious because given the equal accessibility, availability and affordability of all other resources it's the only talented human resource that could provide the required cutting edge to the organizations to grow.

Given the cutthroat completion within which the companies are operating, the HR professionals can't afford to ignore these challenges and should come forward with necessary initiatives for developing the skills & competencies of their employees and prepare them to face the emerging challenges.

Today diversity is one of the major challenges for the organizations. Added to these changes in the workforce composition, globalized markets, internal competition. All these bring immense pressure and to survive and prosper companies need to take competitive advantage of diverse workforce. There comes the role and opportunity for the HR managers.

### III HR'S RESPONSE AND THE CHALLENGE

HR departments in the 70s and 80s ran everything in a company, from canteen to travel services to cars to managing drivers. This era was full of forms and the HR department was the original bureaucracy. Over time, HR became a strategic partner, by outsourcing the repetitive and mundane operations and focusing more on aligning its policies with that of organization, i.e., synchronizing its strategy with that of business. In other words, focus was more on adding value by enabling others to do better.

In fact, organizations, given these diverse backgrounds, lifestyles etc., would be in a better position to respond to the emerging challenges. But the problem is now a day's company is challenged both on performance and people. And a company's growth depends on its ability to innovate and separate itself from commoditization. There is no other way except to innovate to stay ahead and to innovate one need a different type of employee and a different type of culture.

As we all know, companies chase ideas to be innovative and ideas are one part of the innovation challenge. Ideas are like seeds that you plant and the soil is the culture. If culture in the organization is arid and dry, no idea will ever grow. Here comes HR's role-HR teams can help in building a fertile soil base. This is no easy task and there are no easy answers. HR teams with outside experts help have come up with many studies, many indices for every important activity such as scores for engagement, belongingness, enthusiasm, staying and leadership. But we have to accept the bitter truth that HR departments with their consultants measure a lot of irrelevant stuff and seek solace in a few numbers. In the process, they also start throwing lot of jargon which neither they nor the employee understand. So the challenge for the HR is to go back to its roots, the roots being bringing meaning to the workplace and not numbers / jargon. In other words, they must work on DIL — Diversity, Inclusion and Loyalty. Let's briefly reflect on these three elements:

#### (a) Diversity:

According to Thomas (7) workforce dimensions cover age, gender, physical abilities, sex, geographical location, religious beliefs etc., In the times to come, if the organizations have to survive and prosper, they

have no other go except to manage these diversities by successfully leveraging the innovative ideas, perspectives this diversity brings along.

In fact, organizations, given these diverse backgrounds, lifestyles etc., would be in a better position to respond to the emerging challenges. According to Prof Roy, (3) diversity creates a more harmonious workplace and organizations could reap the creative benefits of having a diverse workforce. Most of the studies conducted hitherto tell us that diverse workforce on board brings creativity and critical thinking to the table. But if the organizations don't take cognizance if this Golden opportunity they might lose the much required talent to competitors.

So the need of the hour is to think global but act local. And for this to happen organizations need to train their HR professionals in culture related matters do that they could inspire and motivate fellow professionals who are culturally diverse. Further, they need to assure and reassure the locals that they need not worry about the foreign talent as their interests would be protected. In other words, how skillful are the HR managers determines and decides the effectiveness of diversity management.

#### **(b) Inclusion**

Inclusion means no one entertains the feeling of being left out on account of gender, age, race etc., An organization might put several policies in place to promote equality and diversity. But if inclusion is not taken care of, all those efforts would be in vain. So creating an all-inclusive work environment is more than giving equal opportunities. It's all about valuing their individual differences; respecting their views and making them feel they matter.

### **IV WHY INCLUSION IS IMPORTANT?**

An inclusive work environment brings cohesion and value creation to the Organization. When people feel valued, respected, fair treatment is meted out they give their best. A saying goes people may forget what you say or do but never the way you make them feel. In an inclusive work environment people work more effectively as a team and bring laurels to the organization.

Last but not the least legal issues that cause a drain on the exchequer, will come down. So Organizations should focus on creating such an environment where discrimination is a non- issue and even if one arises the same would be resolved amicably.

### **V THAT BEING SAID LET'S SEE HOW INCLUSION NEEDS TO BE LEVERAGED**

There's a legal obligation on every employer to stamp out discrimination from its workplace. That means required policies and procedures must be put in place, which is a major challenge, to create such an environment. And for ensuring inclusion effort is required on a continuous basis, as employees need to be monitored regularly to see that they work together. Organization should ensure that:

- (a) Everyone gets involved in training sessions.
- (b) Benefits and perks are accessible to everyone, without any discrimination.
- (c) Employees freely express their needs, which are attended to.

If the Organization fails to ensure the above, employees feel devalued and may get dejected and demotivated there by affecting their performance on the worksite. For instance, Organization is organizing a seminar to improve effective team functioning. While doing so, to ensure collaboration and to avoid competition among employees, employer should keep following in view:

- (i) Venue and timings of these sessions
- (ii) Any clash with employee's prayer timings etc.,
- (iii) Do the timings fixed cause inconvenience to employees who have other obligations like picking up their children from crèche etc.,

In the same manner when the employer is running a canteen where people could socialize while having food, care should be taken to see that such facility is accessible to disable workers as well. Further, menu should be such that it caters to employee's specific beliefs & dietary requirements. Like this there could be so many initiatives for ensuring inclusion. But the most important thing to note is that, employer should think of the impact of such decisions and accordingly move forward. Further, continuous interaction with employees in a free and fair/ transparent manner will enable the management to know their needs and helps in creating an engaged inclusive work environment, where employees give their best.

### **VI NOW, A QUESTION MAY ARISE AS TO WHY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION?**

- (a) **Case for Diversity and Inclusion-** In the contemporary times of today, with competition ruling the roost a company's success to a large extent depends on how diversified & inclusive its workforce. In other words, does diversity & inclusive are part of its culture driving all towards accomplishment of organizational goals.

The benefits from such inclusive culture, characterized by diversity, are as under:

- (i) Protection from legal issues/law suits.
- (ii) Employees feelings of acceptance & inclusion.
- (iii) Improves tolerance levels while reducing potential conflict.
- (iv) Aids in recruitment, retention of talented workforce.
- (v) Workforce composition gets enriched with talented employees being attracted.
- (vi) Involvement of the local population, as a result of diversity & inclusion policy.
- (vii) Company's brand image improves as people are fairly treated.
- (viii) Adaptation to change becomes easy.

#### (b) Loyalty

It is common knowledge that, loyalty in India is more to individuals than to institutions and the challenge for HR and the CEO is to build institutional loyalty. Loyalty is two-way and we should actually start by asking if the organization is loyal to its employees, especially employees, who live, breathe and go beyond the call of duty for the company. In many Indian companies, owners value blind loyalty ahead of talent. Somehow the concept of a talented loyal employee is not understood or desired. Hence, in a departure from the prevailing practice HR has to take a new path in developing talented and loyal employees. Few steps to be taken in this regard are:

- (i) Not to become a prisoner of policy [many times, HR itself drafts the policy].
- (ii) Culture is the collective personality of the organization and not just the leadership team or HR team, hence focus on building that.
- (iii) Look for signs of dis-engagement and intervene quickly.
- (iv) Focus on staying interviews and not exit interviews. While doing staying interviews, tell the employee why he/she is special and why the company values her.
- (v) Treat employees leaving the organization with respect and part as friends and the departing employee becomes an ambassador for your company.

All this is fine, but how to about? So let's look at the proposed Diversity, Inclusion and loyalty Framework:

#### (c) Diversity, Inclusion and loyalty Framework

The Department/Division entrusted with the responsibility of Diversity, Inclusion and loyalty should first conceptualize, concretize & implement a framework that will build diversity, creates an inclusive work environment resulting in employee's loyalty & commitment. First

management should identify the existing best practices in the area of inclusion and diversity. Once this is done task of accomplishing sustainable inclusion and diversity becomes easy. Because we know the best and what more remains to be done to improve the situation further. When the management adopts thus sort of approach a feeling of care and share approach gets created resulting in employee's loyalty. While identifying such elements individual differences have to be kept in view, as every human being is unique with his talent.

#### (i) And the said elements include:

- A well informed & committed leadership.
- Coverage of all goals and activities of the organization.
- Synchronization of departmental & organizational goals.
- Committed resources.
- A focused Learning & Development Program.
- Periodical review of policies /programs.
- Accountability and responsibility.
- Measuring the impact evaluating the same for improving.

#### (ii) Purpose, Vision and Values

- **Purpose:** Diversity, inclusion & loyalty are an integral part of Organizational processes, which are constantly to be reviewed and revised.
- **Vision** – To have a strong & vibrant work environment that attracts, develops and retains talented workforce.
- **Values:** We accept, respect and value individual differences and wish to work on their diverse backgrounds/experience of employees. Further, inclusion will be ensured by identifying and removing barriers, if any, in processes to attract, develop & retain talented employees. And our efforts in this regard will result in effective and meaningful participation of all in high performance of organization.

The Learning and Development program will be designed in such a way so as to meet diverse/specific needs of every employee. And this will help the employees to improve their skills and enable them to contribute better to the cause of organization. Since the employee's differences are respected & accommodated in designing & implementing the learning & development programs everyone chips in with their best. When all these steps are taken, a culture automatically gets created where people are respected; their problems are resolved while respecting individual differences and contribution is valued. In other words, when the Organization ensures required autonomy to express their views, enables their best contribution by respecting their

individual differences and starts valuing their contribution a strong and vibrant work environment gets created resulting in outstanding contribution from all the employees.

## VII CONCLUSION

Many of us might have witnessed this: A senior police official passing through with his paraphernalia without even knowing the name and thought process of the traffic constable, who facilitates smooth passage of his vehicle. In Munnabhai MBBS movie, after Munna gives hug the janitor starts crying, because no one cared to recognize that he too is a part of the big picture. An employee's inclusion and involvement could be known from this anecdote:

On coming to know about a hospital being a Great place to work, a TV team visits the hospital for interviewing all the concerned to know the best practices which keeps the employees and visiting patients happy. After completing the work when they are about to leave, the team head notices a person in cramped clothes leaning to the wall. Then the head out of curiosity asks that person " what's up", the person doesn't respond. When the head repeats then the person, in an animated mood, realizes that he is being enquired, looks at himself and the background and says

"Can't you see; I am the person who saves 100-150 lives per day". Then the head realizes that he is a janitor and was standing outside ICU. So what he meant was he is a janitor entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring hygienic conditions in the ICU. The moral is when the employees are made to understand how they contribute to the Organization they give their best. Many of the managers just go by their job description. But there are few great managers who go beyond that to know their employees, their needs and do their best to resolve/ fulfill them.

The most important thing for the success of Diversity, Inclusion and loyalty initiative is top management's total support & commitment. Every action of theirs should send a message across the organization that a sincere effort is being made to create an equal opportunity atmosphere, where individual differences and their creativity would be leveraged for the benefit of organization. Needless to say successful organizations are those which capitalize on the diversity of their employees on a continuous basis with a regular review and revision of policies in the direction of ensuring a diverse – inclusive environment, which creates loyalty among its employees inspiring them to give their best for the organization's growth.

Lastly, let's not forget that, as rightly said by Maya Angelou, **people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.** We would like to conclude by reminding all our HR friends that Talent not only has to be attracted to join your company, but more important, it needs to be motivated to stay. **So, let's work to get DIL at work?**

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