Upcoming Issue Nov - Dec: Employee Engagement - a Super-strategy for Sustainability?

Companies of all sizes and across several industries have realised that business sustainability now goes far beyond environmental issues, as the need to behave responsibly becomes a key aspect of strategy and operations, maintaining brand and reputation and seeking good growth.

It is clear that managing in a more responsible way is essential, for both individual organisations and the economies and societies in which they operate. However, on the other hand, the major focus of all organisations today, is around employees in business sustainability. It is a fact that fully engaged employees are actively involved in and enthusiastic about their work. They are willing to go the extra mile to ensure customer satisfaction and make the organisation a success, spreading enthusiasm within the team and beyond.

To gain an insight on the role of human resources in business sustainability and responsible business practices, the Nov-Dec issue of People and Management brings you the views of HR experts, representing different industries.

Find out what experts say:

Santanu Chatterjee, Senior VP – HR and Admin, Himadri Chemicals & Industries Limited, India

The paradigm shift from viewing Socially Responsible and Sustainable Business Practices as a peripheral issue related to Brand Perception and Public Relation to a strategic issue beckons significant leadership challenge to HR Professionals. The relevance of Sustainability as a concept of HRM now stands on postulates:

- Organisations operate in Economic and Social Environments and HRM cannot neglect societal issues on Sustainability;

- Due to scarcity of Human Resources, ageing populations and increasing work-related problems, Sustainability of HRM itself becomes essential;

- HRM must implant sustainable approach to managing employees in Business Strategy and Employees’ Growth, Gender Equality, Fair Rewards, Health and Safety Issues etc should be accorded value;

- Holistic HRM should address the diverse objectives of Business: Financial and Social. Through Community Development, HR Department can bring out sensitive issues of the Community where Organisations can play a Proactive, Co-operative and Collaborative Role and HR Professionals act as a strategic Business Partner and contribute to CSR Policy Formulation and Implementation.

Armed with a strong and committed Business Culture reinforced by responsible HRM Practices, an organisation can gain societal approval for its existence.

Manmohan Bhutani, Vice President – Human Resource, Fiserv, India Region
Today HR not only works as a catalyst to promote CSR, it also helps formulates the CSR strategy and drives such initiatives. ‘Fiserv Gives Back’ is an enterprisewide programme to encourage our employees to volunteer. We have created a portal to post ongoing CSR projects, where our employees can submit ideas. Our CSR intent is directed towards contribution towards a financial support. We have empowered our employees and it has helped us to positively engage our employees.

Aparna Sharma, Country Head, Human Resource, Lafarge India

The HRM function can use its skills, knowledge and HRM tools in three ways to help the organisation embed sustainability - APE.

Aligning: HRM possesses the most important tools to support implementation of a sustainability mission. All core HRM processes in an organisation must be brought into play to support sustainable business strategy.

Partnering: The experience of many organisations suggests that HRM leadership can play a vital role in helping articulate the organisation's social mission, expressing the role of the business in society beyond that of simply making a profit.

Engaging: HRM must engage both internal and external stakeholders to identify an organisation can contribute to the social and environmental vitality of those mission critical company's actions. Engaging may include building partnerships with external organisations and non profit associations that can help identify or address the impacts of the company's actions.

Mervyn Raphael, Managing Director, People in Business India

In a VUCA world, Employee Engagement is more than just sustainability. It is a necessity. If employees do not feel a part of the organisation they serve, or feel that there is a gap between and that of the firm, they feel disconnected. People represent a significant, valuable and dynamic resource for the organisation's sustainability drivers, including processes and technology. People management needs to be replicated. However, building a robust culture takes time and consistent effort which leads to attracting and retaining people.

Pallavi Pareek, Founder, iLeaders

Not all businesses need to lose their sleep over employee engagement. However, if your business is dependent on highly talented, motivated people, then you must seriously invest in employee engagement. An engaged and intelligent employee will not be satisfied merely with pay rises. They want self-esteem, lifestyle and public image. In the planning phase, the HRM function can use its skills, knowledge and HRM tools in three ways to help the organisation embed sustainability - APE.

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