

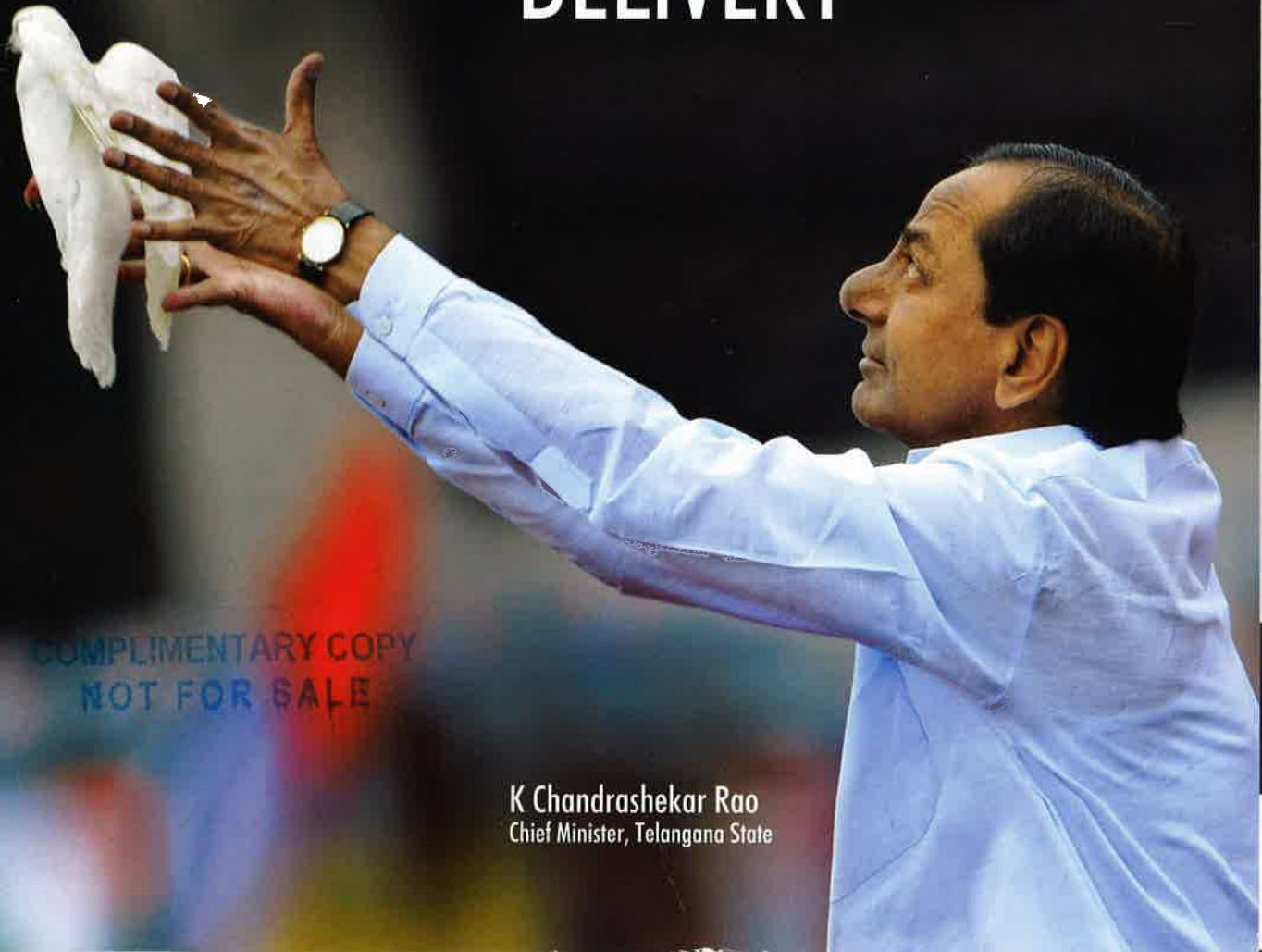
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K Chandrashekar Rao  
Chief Minister, Telangana State

## Reality Bytes The Role of HR in Today's World



# Tapping the HUMAN TREASURE

**Felicitated with the HR Super Achiever Award by Star News at the 20th World HRD Congress 2012 and winner of many awards and accolades, Aparna Sharma is a passionate learner in her journey of over 18 years of intense and expansive work related to human resource. In her diverse roles, Aparna has successfully been a learning partner, mentor and coach to leaders, leadership teams and organisations to build competencies, learning abilities and nimbleness for achieving purposeful performance. She has now launched her maiden book titled 'Reality Bytes - The Role of HR in Today's World' that is meant to be a simple contemporary ready reckoner covering the entire employee life-cycle in an organisation**

### HUNED CONTRACTOR

**T**here has been an endless debate all these years around about whether leaders are born or made. Even now we can continue to discuss this till the end of the world, but what's the point? The bottomline is that there are leadership traits that a person is born with such as authenticity, risk-taking capability, service orientation, etc. while others such as clarity of thought and clear communication, among others, can or may be acquired. Similarly, an organisation is the sum total of the skills and competencies of its people. Employees are hired for specific skills based on the current or future business needs; however once they are part of an organisation, it is important to continue to hone their skills and also constantly upgrade their knowledge and competencies.

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These are the thoughts of Aparna Sharma, a leading human resource professional, who is the author of 'Reality Bytes - The Role of HR in Today's World' which was released in Pune recently. After completing her post-graduation in Personnel Management & Industrial Relations from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, Aparna began working with Nocil and moved into different roles in the HR function in organisations like Monsanto, Novartis, UCB, Deutsche Bank and Lafarge. Beyond her corporate role as an HR leader, Aparna also contributes to the discipline of HR through her associations with Indian Society of Training & Development (ISTD), All India Management Association (AIMA), National Institute of Personnel Management (NIPM), National HRD Network and Sumedhas, where she actively participates in disseminating her acquired knowledge and building the HR fraternity by creating future leaders.

"Written out of a deep conviction that today and in the future too, the single most competitive edge for any organisation is its 'people', the book covers the entire life-cycle of an employee in any organisation. From recruitment to retention, competency mapping to rewards, and finally, best policies for succession and exit, everything is presented in this book for a student or manager, employee or employer, to get maximum value and insight into their roles," explains Aparna. The first book by a woman who has received many awards and recognition for her work as a thought leader in the HR sector, this book is an attempt to further her quest to learn and give back to the budding HR fraternity.

Elaborating about what it means to harness human talent, Aparna

says that this can be done internally through training needs identified by the learning and development (L&D) team and through providing in-house inputs or by nominating for external programs and courses. "However, the key is that those skills or competencies need to be relevant for the current and near future role and also in the context of the organisation. The organisation would not be interested in investing to develop one's personal interests," she says. Citing an example, Aparna elaborates: "If an employee working in a French MNC wants to learn German, the organisation will surely not support it. However, if he or she wants to learn French and that is considered important also from the role and interface point of view, the company may encourage the same by even sponsoring or reimbursing the course. The latter is surely a win-win scenario for both since it is beneficial mutually."

Another example could be that an employee has a keen interest in dancing and wants to learn Salsa. This is neither related to the job nor to the organisation, unless someone is an artist or works in the entertainment industry. This would surely need to be pursued as a hobby in one's personal time. "Having said this, given that we are dealing with multi-generational diversity, the new age businesses such as IT, ITES, media, entertainment, BFSI, etc. do encourage employees in the Gen Y or Gen Z category to develop a multifaceted personality. Sponsorship of higher education, reimbursement for gym subscription or enrolling for hobby classes, etc. form a part of the employee engagement programs and employee-related HR policies. It forms a part of the employer value proposition (EVP) and helps in employee retention. On the other hand, an employee must

deploy his or her knowledge, skills and competencies fully to deliver the goals as well as further overall business objectives. This forms a part of the EVP," Aparna adds.

The emphasis on 'fully' is the key here, since if done half-heartedly or sparingly, it would not benefit the organisation as much as it could, given the potential of the employees. This could lead to lower productivity and eventually impact the profits of the organisation. "Employees must harness their full potential to maximise benefits to the organisation and in turn for themselves too. If one were to examine the WIFM (what's in it for me) syndrome from an employee's point of view, one finds bonus, promotion, career growth and development opportunities besides personal satisfaction and professional fulfillment. All of these have significant value, both intrinsic and extrinsic, both for the organisation and the individual employee too," she states.

An organisation may have the most talented set of employees as part of the pool but if it does not reflect in topline and bottomline growth and contribution one needs to sit up and deep-dive into the real reasons. "Each and every employee needs to be aligned to the overall vision and purpose of the corporation whether it is in the government or private sector," Aparna points out. All the knowledge and human capital pool of the organisation, community or nation would be futile if it is not directed towards focused, purposeful delivery and output, both at the macro and micro levels. "The KSA (knowledge, skills and abilities) of each individual employee are critical and add to the whole," she adds.

To illustrate how this works in real



life, Aparna recounts a case study of a senior colleague who was earlier an IAS officer and later joined the private sector as an HR leader. "During their training and induction for IAS, they were taught law and once during one such class, the instructor narrated a case of a very difficult militant situation which required to be handled smartly in the interest of the nation's security. All the IAS trainees rattled out various solutions and sections of the IPC etc. They were meant to be the best, most talented future civil servants. This went on for a while, when the instructor interjected in a loud voice and said to the class that in such a situation only one of two things mattered, leave alone all the

knowledge and intelligence they possessed. It was either presence of mind or absence of body. The rest was insignificant given the critical nature of the situation," Aparna narrates.

Of the firm belief that for an organisation, community and nation, focused efforts, clarity in thought and action, taking people along in the team are most important to reap the benefits in any given context and environment, Aparna has herself benefited from these principles. "All entrepreneurs too should bear in mind that as an organisation grows and the number of employees increase, the right kind of HR policies will work

wonders in the seamless growth of the company. Interestingly, some of the things that she likes to engage in outside her domain of professional work have to do with connecting with people. "For instance, I like to travel because it gives me a chance to interact with people of so many different geographies and culture. I am also an amateur photographer," she says.

Priced at Rs 200, Reality Bytes - The Role of HR in Today's World consists of 192 pages and is available at bookstores across India, as well as on Flipkart and Vishwakarma Publications' online book store, [www.vpindia.co.in](http://www.vpindia.co.in).

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