



Best Companies To Work For: What Makes It The Best? An Analysis of HR Related Practices among India's Manufacturing Organizations Consistently Ranked in Surveys.

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Received 27 November, 2013; Accepted 30 December, 2013© The author(s) 2013. Published with open access at www.questjournal.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Although service IT companies 'consistently feature and rank in surveys undertaken by Great Places To Work and Best Companies To Work In, more manufacturing organizations are in the present embracing transformational changes. The conviction being increasingly adopted is imbibing sense of employee centricism through a series of proactive human resource practices. The values of trust- credibility, integrity and leadership management, respect- supporting, administration, and caring, fairness- equity, justice, impactability, pride- personal job, work produced, products, camaraderie- ability to be oneself, social and friendly teams are being increasingly considered important to attract people. India's Best Companies to Work For reflects a workplace culture which is defined as a place where you trust the people you work for, take pride in what you do and enjoy the company of people you work for. The focus is on employee wellness like smoking cessation, family involvement, expanding rewards related to metrics and these include wellness programmes, aimed to achieve total well being of social, physical, financial, career and community. Companies are taking steps to give its employees responsibility beyond their job briefs, helping them and in the process reskilling them. For instance, in Abbott Laboratories, for an employee interested in finance is put in the daily profit and loss projection and prepare forecasts for the long term. Gen Y today want work to be more than a mere pay packet. They are interested in work places that are clear leaders in learning, and offer roles that aid their development. This study examined ten manufacturing organizations who share distinct human resource practices. These have been selected from the Great Places To Work For rankings over the past few years as well as the rankings of Best Companies To Work For in India. Although the methodology has been designed differently to secure the responses from the employees, the range of parameters and measures include trust, pride and camaraderie in the former and perceptions and aspirations in the latter, which are not considered to be very distinct from each other. The ultimate litmus test in both the different studies undertaken is the outcome of the HR practices on the employees' engagement and involvement in the organization. The manufacturing companies selected in the study rank in both the surveys over the years and hence have been chosen to detail their HR practices in areas related to their culture, training, diversity, talent management, and community consciousness, considered to be "hot spots" in HR today by researchers and practitioners.

The data and information has been collected and collated from the respective web sites of the companies, interviews with their HR personnel, web sites of institutions like Great Places To Work For and Best Companies To Work In. The companies selected have featured in either of these surveys at least twice before.

Company Profiles

Whirlpool Corporation entered India in the late 80s and today has become a leading manufacturer and marketer of home appliances. The company is engaged in the manufacturing and trading of Refrigerators, Washing Machines, Air Conditioners, and Ovens.

Marico is a Public Limited Company, an Indian Consumer Goods Company, providing consumer products and services in areas related to health and beauty. It was incorporated in 1988. Its total employee workforce totals 3.23 k.

Johnson and Johnson operate its roots in India since 1947 and is engaged in marketing of Baby Powder, Medical devices, Vision care and Pharmaceutical products. Its total employee workforce in India is 2000.

Classic Stripes Pvt Ltd established in 1987 is one of the largest manufacturers of automotive graphics in the world. It is a premium imaging solutions provider with diversified printing, and a strong presence in Fleet graphics and OEM graphics. Its total number of employees is 1000 and its sales turnover last year was Rs 2500 crore.

Larsen & Toubro is an India based conglomerate with diverse interests such as construction, hydraulic equipment, electric and electronic power services and fertilizer projects. It is one of the only two non technology companies in the annual survey of Best Companies To Work For. Its total employee workforce is 14,000.

NTPC is a power trading and coal distillery. NTPC is an Indian state owned electric utilities company and is based in New Delhi, India. NTPC's core business is generator distribution and sale of power to state owned power companies. Its total employee workforce is 25,484 and its total revenue last year was Rs 72,540 crores.

Cadbury Kraft India is a manufacturing organization and operates in the categories of chocolates, confectionery, beverages, biscuits, gum and candy. It has been operating in India since 60 years. Its total workforce is 2050 employees and its sales turnover last year was Rs 2503 crore.

Mahindra and Mahindra Farm Equipment, a manufacturing organization in the area of tractors and farm equipment since 62 years in .Its total workforce is 4000 employees.

Godrej Consumer Products Ltd is an FMCG manufacturing company engaged in the manufacture of personal and household care products. Its total employee workforce is 2.04K.

Forbes Marshall is a manufacturing organization engaged in building steam engineering and control instrumentation solutions that work for process industry, since the last 50 years. Its total workforce is 1480 employees and its sales turnover last year was Rs 800 crores.

II. CULTURE OF CARING

Organization Culture dominatedly emphasizes the value of people of caring. Most emphasize the shared values and assumptions that are communicated extensively both verbally and non verbally (Tung, 1995). Culture is enacted principally by a company's upper management, which in turn influences the behavior of managers and employees throughout the organization. It is also reflected in the organizations' artifacts, ceremonies, rituals and stories. Most elements mentioned below exemplify the employee driven philosophy in several ways. Another philosophy in many companies is acquiring innovation based culture, in terms of thinking in many boxes and not necessarily out of the box. At Forbes Marshall, a culture of accepting mistakes is to encourage innovation. There is a thin line between failing and not doing things properly and sometimes companies will need to be "willing to lose money to make way". Forbes Marshall has policies on Safety and Sexual Harassment through formation of various committees at the workplace. The spectre of going to employees to understand the alignment of perception, aspiration and reality is being adopted. Employees look at hard core reality with meaningful returns for his or her career. Organizations need to realize that the employee is on the path to becoming his or her own boss. He is significantly not impacted by employees' supervision. Change

Workplace changes such as reporting relationships, remote working of teams and customer onsite roles has enabled the changes. Organizations are facilitating a pay performance connect of learning opportunities, higher job responsibilities and value based leadership. Jack Welch said, "if the rate of change inside is less than the rate of change outside, then there is end in sight." Ingersoll Rand has a special cell called entrepreneurial cell, to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship at work and hence facilitate innovation and a spirit of family and oneness. Cadbury Kraft addresses its culture as a listening organization where inputs at all levels are considered for all decisions and actions. It strongly believes in the culture of employee care. It measures a Care Quotient" and a People Care Index, single metric score which measures and maps care, excitement in work place. In Marico, there is an open environment, wide empowerment and an emphasis also on job content. It fosters a friendly and an informal work atmosphere. Marico's culture and systems of flat hierarchy empowers people to foster a culture of innovation. Their philosophy of great people delivering great results is reflected in their hiring of right people and retaining talent. Their exercise at grooming the next generation leaders as a part of their succession planning involves providing challenges early in their career and a sense of early responsibility at work. Consequently the team members are enthused and motivated to put in their best efforts. They have a special programme called TAREEF (Talent Referred to by Mariconians).

High Performance Culture

At Whirlpool India, the company believes in a high performance culture revolving around three stakeholders- employees, shareholders and customers. In order to promote the culture of high performance, continuous learning programmers, challenging work assignments, leadership development programmers,

identifying game changers, values for inculcating a spirit of pride and integrity are acutely promoted. The leadership skills assessment exercise is programmed to discuss the career path of the employees and its metrics is extended to provide classification of employees based on performance, potential and behavior. At Whirlpool India, several initiatives and programmes are run uniformly to promote the spirit of transparency, trust and team work, empowerment, freedom to choose and a design of high impact roles. The characteristics in the working include the focus on multiskilling, job rotation, self directed work teams, 360 degree appraisals and employment flexibility. Johnson and Johnson promote the culture of honesty, integrity, respect and dignity. Employee development takes the form of skilling related to current roles as a 70 % and 40 % related to employees growth and development. Career road mapping is systematically undertaken for the employees. Classic Stripes has a culture of every "Monday Meetings" in order to break the morning blues and promote the recitation of the company's vision and values like a pledge and an oath.

Values and Wellness

The core values espoused by Classic Stripes are first time right, innovation, passion, commitment and enthusiasm, along with ethics and empowerment. It has a profit sharing programme for all employees, fun perks for top performers, fun celebrations, and even gifts items like scooters and motorcycles for good and top performers. It believes in the culture of give more and get more. Its wellness programmes include the employees and all their family members, counseling sessions, medical camps and get together. Its values of accountability, first time right, 360 degree employee engagement, and monthly incentive schemes have been very productive. Their celebrations at work to induce a fun work context includes Dussehra Puja, *Dandiya*, Birthday celebrations, food festivals and baby gifts to children of employees. In Larsen & Toubro, their pay scales are 5% above average. This is a culture which they have maintained for a long time. Their employee centric initiatives include consideration of the home towns of employees while allocating work locations, appreciation of hard work, facilitation of a work atmosphere where employees get opportunities to learn, the competency of innovation is encouraged where the juniors are allowed to take challenges, leadership development skills inculcation are encouraged and employees are empowered and given ample freedom to design their own work. These manpower challenges are known to attract Gen Y who constitutes a good portion of the total workforce of 50,000. NTPC as a PSU has a rare distinction of a company who believes in the credo where people work to enjoy and enjoy to work. Thus it is able to attract for example, 1,60,000 applicants for vacancies amounting to 300-400. Studies have revealed that career are very important to people and if roles are not defined across levels, there is no way one can put a career management system or career planning process. Compensation and benefits management requires to benchmark roles across the groups and ensure there is role based benchmarking. Mahindra and Mahindra uses psychometric tools to get profiles of people who match the roles the company has to offer. It uses a trait based recruitment process along with a psychometric test. Mahindra and Mahindra has a shadow board where a team of young managers critique the functioning of business, air views on strategic imperatives and give out of box ideas. The office ambience at M&M is customized to respect individual's privacy and also a greater accessibility. Cubicles have transparent glasses for gaining a closer access with the team members. The values of credibility, respect, pride, fairness, camaraderie are respected. Their flat structure and fun at work philosophy, family involvement and a regular monitoring of employee feedback helps course corrections and building of an atmosphere of trust, innovation and learning. Ingersoll Rand launched a special cell on an Entrepreneurship Creation Programme, where few employees are hired to launch their own enterprise. Whirlpool's "W connect" helps to give each employee a forum to express their voice. This forum connects with employees across all levels.

Diversity

Godrej Consumer Products belief in inclusivity has provoked the floating of an Affirmative Action Programme which includes the inclusion of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, physically handicapped, and mentally slow workforce. At Whirlpool India care is taken to create an employee workforce which is heterogenous in composition. The diversity policy at Johnson is geared towards development of a global mindset through a global workforce. Forbes Marshall's initiated diversity policy has lead to a proactive placement of personnel from Jammu and Kashmir, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Women and differently abled personnel. It is convinced of the social and innovation related benefits of diversity in its personnel composition.

Training and Career

Careers are very important to people at Mahindra and Mahindra and if the roles are not defined across levels, there is no way one can put a career management system or a career planning process. Hence the exercise of a clear definition of roles and expectations are very important. This also helps to design compensation and benefits management system which includes benchmarking roles across the group. Godrej Consumer Products focus towards establishing and maintaining harmonious relations with the workers is manifested in its learning agenda and initiatives. Its Gurukul and E Gagan are oriented towards the spirit of fun in learning and a holistic nature of learning. Apart from the formal design of an initiative, the organization believes in fostering learning

through the promotion of an open culture, flat hierarchy, and development of continuous improvement teams. Its forum called Just Like That, aims at facilitating a regular interaction with employees across all levels. Connect, is another design as a magazine, aimed to promote good and best performance practices among the employees at all levels and forge a regular interaction. Larsen & Toubro has designed a system of training its top talent and leaders at the tie up institutes like the IIMs Management Education Programme. Its training strategy includes compiling a manual for potential problems and challenges like the taxation policies, new dollar rates, and project delays and so on. Heavy engineering and construction industry induct engineering trainees who are mostly not trained to act like MBAs. The initiatives in such companies focus on training newly inducted recruits from within. Research studies undertaken mention how poorly handled organizational entry processes will result in higher levels of employee turnover in the first few months of employment. (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Programmes of institutes of IIMs like the Management Education Programmes, are considered for enrolment of the trainees to learn the skills related to management. Their manual including strategy design to counter bad projects, bad acquisitions and project delays are considered effective learning instruments. Cadbury Kraft has an intensive induction, designs like Coffee with HR for employee sharing, learning modules like soft skills, innovation, out of box thinking, relationship management and so on. Whirlpool University has initiated a host of online courses in order to facilitate learning and self development of the personnel.

III. TALENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Whirlpool has a nine box system and the employees are placed according to their performance and promotability. In box number 1, 2, 3 are earmarked and identified by key players who are considered as game changers. These are seriously considered for a special Retention Plan and they are subsequently allocated higher responsibilities, international assignments and adequate monetary compensation and benefits appropriately. Another initiative as a part of their young talent management system is to allow the subordinates to provide feedback of their supervisors and managers in relation to the behaviours and performance and rate them honestly. This measure allows subordinate to be an active part of the organizations' performance development system and facilitate a condition for their retention. The rewards designed are a multitude and varied and veer towards appreciating employees' achievements, efficiency, optimal utilization of time and talent. They take the form of Spot Surveys, Employee of the Quarter, Smart Squad award and Long service award. Godrej Consumer Products is known to consider its human capital as its real capital. In an endeavour to upgrade the skill and create an environment where excellence is recognized and rewarded, it has a group of external consultants to evaluate and assess its talent. The talent assessment exercises to identify future leaders take the form of Performance Linked Variable Remuneration (PLVR). This is a regular activity undertaken to monitor and retain talent. Mahindra and Mahindra's Farm and Equipment Centre has devised an innovative strategy for the effective management of its global talent pool. Its communication process has a component of Communication inclusion process, which is aimed at providing objective feedback for improvement of the workforce and sharing of best practices discovered during this exercise. It is entitled as a People Development Programme, and the purpose is to retain top talent.

Employee Inputs are valuable

The Shadow Board, design of inducting newly appointed personnel in its Board of Directors meetings is a manifestation of its talent retention programme by facilitation and sharing of inputs of personnel and technology related expertise from the new incumbents. Its initiative called "Starting Own", taps into the highly talented pool of mid career women who wish to restart after their marriage and other child related responsibilities are more or less in order. The objective of this exercise is to reorient the potential talent into the workforce and gain from their expertise and instinct skills. In Classic Stripes the opinions of the employees are considered and as a part of the healthy work environment healthy professional benchmarks are set. The HR team at Whirlpool India is increasingly focused on creatively managing talent retention, capability development, culture and communication. It is increasingly proved that employee retention is directly related to profitability. (Simins & Hinkin, 2001).

IV. COMMUNITY SERVICES

Godrej Consumer Products believes in giving back to the society. Apart from adoption of a neighboring village school called Singwari School, it conducts regular health camps for wellness promotion in society. The Rural Internship Programme imparts training on areas related to zero waste and renewable energy. Classic Stripes' focus on as strong community programmes has manifested in circulating education kits to Zilla Parishad schools, Tree Plantation, and Disaster Management Training. Forbes Marshal has adopted two municipal schools in the nearby Kasarwadi areas. They take care of up gradation of the infrastructure as well as the provision of trained teachers to teach in the schools. It also has a 100 bed hospital in its premises with trained doctors and nurses to treat the poor in the nearby areas.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The in depth study of the ten manufacturing companies in India being featured in the rankings of Great Places To Work for and The Best Companies To Work For, reveal some common features and adoption of their Human Resource practices, which may be emulated by others. Manufacturing Companies like the service sector are increasingly convinced of building of work practices and creation of a culture which is an employee centred one. Some of the common HR practices being adopted are underlined in the below mentioned categories:

1. Culture of Holistic Caring of Employees
2. Employee Empowerment and Employee Involvement
3. Continuous Learning- On the job, Job content, Educational learning
4. Career Planning and succession Planning
5. Talent Management
6. Value and Aspirational Alignment
7. Development of community and social consciousness among personnel These practices underlined have been a dominant characteristic in the manufacturing companies ranked above. The measures of sales turnover and revenues also substantiate the benefits of the imperative focus on personnel centeredness.

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