

Emerging theme in human resource management

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Part One

Macro Level Issue: Social: Changing Cultural Patterns

Mesco Level Issue: Flexibility and Work Life Balance

Chosen Industry: Telecommunication Industry

Justification of the choice of themes in the context of the identified industry/sector

The current business environment is characterized as multi-faced, highly intricate and competitive, and is in a constant mode of transition, hence demanding greater level of flexibility and adaptability from business firms which intend to thrive and succeed.

A theme which is at the centre of this demand for greater adaptability and flexibility is 'changing cultural patterns', an emerging phenomenon which driven by growing influence of globalization. With the advent of globalization which is in turn fuelled by mass communication, information and communication technologies and international business, the traditional societies are being replaced by modern ones which demonstrate a greater extent of cultural heterogeneity. This cultural heterogeneity lays emphasis upon fairness, openness, empowerment, respect, and flexibility. Resultantly, the changing culture patterns impact upon the modern human resource practices, requiring them to adhere to the agenda of fairness, openness, participative leadership and management style, and cater greater flexibility to main a sound work life balance, in order to keep abreast with the emerging circumstantial requirements.

The significance of realizing the changing cultural patterns and incorporating them in the human resource practices especially in terms of flexibility and work life balance is underscored due to the fact that modern day organization, especially those operating in telecommunication and related technology industries need to be highly adaptive, innovative and creative and sensitive to customers' demands and aspirations. This can be achieved by having a highly motivated workforce, working within an organizational culture that ensures fairness, respect, encourages creativity and innovation. The aims of fairness, respect and encouraging creativity can be achieved by ensuring a level of flexibility that balances the social, personal and professional life of employees. Innovation and creativity that is achieved through such human resource management practices is necessary in the current business environment and is considered to be primordial for the survival of businesses operating in telecommunication and digital media industry. Without the right kind of workforce with the right kind of capabilities, businesses in the high tech industries would not be able to compete in the highly complex and fast paced technological environment.

War for Talent:

Some commentators are of the view that after the economic conditions get stable and recover from the recent economic downturn, the end of the financial battle will only mark the beginning of the war among human resource management (HRM) practitioners which would be the 'War for talent'.

The post-recovery phase is characterized with high turn-over rates and dearth of skills as indicated by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) study report.

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It highlights that one out of three employees in the UK plan to budge to another job or position when the possibility emerges (Change Board, 2010: pg. 1). Moreover, the study predicts that following the economic recovery in 2011, employers in UK and elsewhere in similar economies will face a dire shortage of skills. They would have more difficulties than before in filling new positions. The survey revealed that more than 50% of the respondents ranked 'skills shortages' as their greatest upcoming concern (People Management, 6 Dec 2010: pg. 1).

Recent Employee Outlook CIPD's survey (People Management, 29 November 2010: pg. 1) identified a phenomenon termed as 'fixed grin' in which job satisfaction levels rose to a peak during economic hardship due to the fact that the top most concern of the employees was only to have job stability. This would be followed by a likely drop once the economy convalesces, and new opportunities erupt (People Management, 29 November 2010: pg. 1). Hence HRD personnel will have to play a crucial role in engaging employees when the economic climate becomes favourable by offering competitive learning environment and growth prospects in order to attract and retain the best talent within the industry. Thus attracting and retaining talent is another concern that deepens the demand for a cultural overhaul across organizations and flexible working environments especially in telecommunication industry.

List of most suitable potential publications for this publication and its relevance

For the current discussion paper, the author has shortlisted two UK based publications. The credentials and relevance of both those shortlisted publication are presented in the following:

HR Magazine

'HR Magazine' is aimed for people-focused, forward-thinking, business leaders who wish to gain valuable insights and examples of business-contextualized human resource for developing high-performing and effective business firms. HR magazine is aimed for the up-market business consumers. The magazine's ABC circulation is 7, 968 comprising of HR directors and heads, chief executives, managing directors, financedirectors and chairman positions only. The magazine has a premium position among business and HR magazines, a fact confirmed by the recent British Business Survey 2011, undertaken by Ipsos Mori in which out of 1. 8 million purchase decision makers, 75, 000 purchase decision makers had dealt with HR brand in the previous month of the survey (see <http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk>).

This magazine is deemed relevant for the publication of this discussion paper due to its high readership and brand value among HR personnel across UK.

Flexibility

'Flexibility' is a uniquely positioned HR magazine which aims at stimulating a debate regarding the changing organizational culture and work environment. The magazine brings together researches and opinions about new trends in HR practices, organizational change and technological development. The magazine has been under publication since 1993, and

provides regular updates regarding flexibility working. It also publishes digital version of its magazines. The specific purpose of this magazine which coincides with the discussion of this paper makes is very suitable for the publication of this discussion paper (see www.flexibility.co.uk).

Brief justification of why the publishers should publish this discussion paper

The aim of the current discussion paper is to recognize the changing patterns in organizational culture especially within information and communication technology industry in order to promote flexibility and continuous learning and development. It fits precisely within the scope and purpose of the Flexibility magazine, whose motto is to provide “resources for new ways of working”. The magazine champions the cause of flexible working environment and organizational learning and development.

Therefore the author of this discussion paper is of the view that the current discussion paper will make a valuable contribution to the magazine, in acquainting its readers with new emerging HR trends and practices within telecommunication industry that fosters innovation and creativity through its organizational culture and flexibility.

Part Two

The modern day business environment has evolved to become much more multifaceted than ever before. The entire globe is intertwined by complex networks of communications enabled by cutting edge information technologies. Markets are evolving at a higher pace with consumers' demands varying quickly due to globalization. In such a business

environment, a company operating within fast evolving industries such as telecommunication and digital media, its organization culture worldview ought to vary significantly from that a traditional manufacturing and production company. This discussion paper evaluates how organizations should evolve in terms of organization culture as a response to the changing cultural patterns especially those operating within telecommunication industry. It will also discuss the significance of maintaining flexibility and ensuring a sound work life balance for fostering innovation and creativity. It will also assess the implications of the proposed changes and how the attitudes, skills and behaviors of HR professionals will have to change resultantly.

Various organizations within the telecommunication and digital media industry have successfully developed organizational cultures that coincide with the changing cultural patterns of modern societies to bring about transformation change. These transformational changes are marked by the introduction of ground breaking products and applications such as smart phones, tablet computers, operating system, social networking applications, cloud computing technologies, to name a few. Cultures within such organizations provide for working environments that are founded on wider modern social values of openness and fairness, encouragement for creative thinking, and a participatory and democratic management style. Such an organizational culture adheres to the view that all the business solutions to the external and internal challenges can be realized internally by not just the top executive but by any of its knowledge workers. Hence, it entails to making efforts to tap into the creative base of employees, providing them

with the “ ability to think critically and creatively, the ability to communicate ideas and concepts, and the ability to cooperate with other human beings in the process of inquiry and action.” (Navran Associates Newsletter 1993)

A modern organizational culture which deliberates innovation and creativity within its realms underscores the importance of flexibility and work life balance for its employees. It tries to build a workforce which is free from constant managerial oversight as it employees are not considered to be passive players within the overall business equation. Such an approach encourages employees to utter ideas, explore new phenomena, and push their limits beyond their comfort zones and subsequently contribute towards an enhanced working environment which further strengthens the modern organizational culture. Such participating brings about a paradigm shift, refuting the traditional authoritarian management approach complementary to the traditional social cultural pattern. Herein, the managerial hierarchy is invalidated in terms of knowledge creation leading to a business environment where knowledge workers can “ create the results they truly desire and where they can learn to learn together for the betterment of the whole” (Rheem 1995, p 10).

Impact of Modern Organizational Culture

A salient example such an organizational culture which can be considered as a benchmark and blue print for companies operating within the fast paced telecommunication industry is the Internet search engine colossal ‘ Google’. Within a short time of establishment, Google has succeeded in becoming a

global leader owing to its diligent innovation and focus upon customers' needs.

The company's management style is the key behind its organizational culture that systematically fosters organizational learning and development and resultantly innovation. Google's management approach is highly participative and to some extent free reign, reflecting its adherence to the evolving modern culture of the society in general. The central premise of this type of managerial approach is based on the fact that the leader (top executive/CEO) has only part of the information, whilst the rest of information is within the employees. The leader is someone who has the ability to extract the potential out of the employees in order to know everything; hence he/she employees well-informed and capable employees. Likewise, Google managerial style and its organizational culture value the common wisdom. Its leadership surprisingly supports dissent and disagreement when conversing new ideas and values those who tend to differ. According to Schmidt, the Chairman of Google and its former CEO, disagreements are vital to bring about all important information and varying point of views on table leading to a thoroughly informed decision (Manyika 2008). The company's leadership also acknowledges that freedom, flexibility and collaboration and learning are key aspects getting the best ideas and solution. Schmidt mentions that " in traditional companies, the big offices, the corner offices, the regal bathrooms, and everybody dressed up in suits cause people to be afraid to speak out. But the best ideas typically don't come from executives."

Google systematically advocates innovation and learning at every stage at Google in the whole system, including management. Google adheres the “70/20/10” rule, which implies that the employees at the organization spent seventy percentage of their time regarding core business activities; twenty percent of their time in tasks related to that business activity; and ten percent of their time doing things which are not associated with any of the core business activities. Schmidt himself also complies with this rule by spending his time in three different chambers, so he can track his time spent on each activity (Battelle, 2005). Moreover, Schmidt asserts that “new ideas emerge with freedom from thinking about obligations” (Manyika 2008). Therefore Google put up its core engineers in spending twenty percent of their time in the pursuit of innovative thoughts which does not include any formal or regular duty (Battelle, 2005). Schemes like these have given birth to several products and services which Google is offering these days. Google’s organizational culture hence adheres to the policy of openness, employee empowerment and participation and respect for every individual’s ideas. This leads to a greater level of innovation and creativity at an organizational level.

Impact of Flexibility and Work Life Balance

Google also treats its employees as internal customers, offering them a high level of flexibility and ensuring a great work and life balance. The company leaves no stone unturned in appeasing its employees in its effort to keep them highly motivated and enthusiastic. One way through which Google advances work satisfaction is through its great working conditions. Google’s

work places all over the world are very spacious; providing employees with every possible facility they could ask for. It is not unusual for a Google's workplace to have outdoor tables, park benches shaded by trees, gardens, sports facilities etc. Staff members are provided with free on-site massages, haircuts, pet care facilities and healthy meals throughout the day. Google also offers unlimited sick leaves to its employees and as many as 27 days of paid time off after one year of employment. It has comprehensive maternity and new fathers leave program in place as well. The company also holds annual on-site HealthFair offers various free testing services, including eye exams and cholesterol testing; also offers free flu shots. It's on site perks at headquarters include medical and dental facilities, oil change and car wash, courier, fitness center, banking center, and free breakfast, lunch and dinner on a daily basis. The company spends as much as \$70 million annually on free meals and snacks (Sutherland, 2012). The company literally looks after every need that a technology geek would not want to be bothered with, to help them focus on innovation, and creativity. Such flexibility and measures for ensuring a great work/life balance keep the employees highly motivated and foster innovation and creativity.

Implication of these Themes for HR Managers

Modern day organizations ought to make strong efforts in maintaining a participative and democratic leadership as the very first thing needed to enforce a modern organizational culture which is not based on traditional hierarchy, but upon a diverse workforce wherein every individual provides a valuable input to lead the organization (Senge 1996). The leadership should

recognize and admit that every employ has potential to find solution to the challenges faced by the company. This should lead to a organizational culture which is based on openness and trust, where employees are supported and rewarded for learning and innovating, and one that promotes experimentation, risk taking, and “ values the well-being of all employees” (Gephart 1996, p 39). Such a culture would position organizations to capitalize upon forthcoming ideas which can deliver unquantifiable benefits for the development and success of the telecommunication firms. Adhering to this line of thinking, HR managers should provide ample facilities and amenities for socialization, such as gyms, pool and indoor games, well kept cafeteria and canteens among other recreational facilities where employees can share ideas, experiences, and embark in informal learning. Such an environment is very effective in fostering group work and team learning as well (Senge 1990).

Conclusion

As Hout (1999) mentions that “ management as we have known it is too cumbersome for today’s fast, unpredictable pace. A new kind of company wins now. The best management models don’t adapt to the new economy; they emerge from it. It’s no longer the survival of the fittest; it’s the arrival of the fittest.” Hout’s contention clearly identifies the new order in the business world, which is characterized as fast paced, complex and unpredictable. It dictates a paradigm shift in the modern organizational culture. He further states that: “ No intelligence from on high can match the quality of solutions to market problems that arise from players who are constantly

communicating with one another on the ground level. The invisible hand of the marketplace should displace the visible hand of the manager. The markets can determine where one team or initiative or company ends and another begins. Managers interfere at their peril." This signifies the importance of a participative organizational culture, which encapsulates themes such as fairness, openness, and respect ; all of which combine the collective wisdom of executives and all those working in an organization, in yielding bright ideas and solutions that can be translated into company's success.

Organization within the telecommunication industry should recognize that the journey towards creating such an organizational culture through flexibility is a long and gradual one and thus temporary setbacks and difficulties are to be expected. Enforcing a participatory managerial style and engaging employees in the organizational learning process are massive feats that cannot be achieved overnight. However, given the current overall outlook of the business environment and the rapidity of the technological advancements, and recognizing the changing cultural pattern of the society in general, developing such an organization is the most crucial strategy for the success of telecommunication firms. A flexible working environment can create an organizational culture that would promote innovation and creativity. It is the best way to avert any foreseen and unforeseen challenges faced by organizations.

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