

Khetri copper complex

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Khetri Copper Complex is in the Aravalli range of hills in Rajasthan. In 1967, Hindustan Copper Ltd, a central public sector enterprise, was entrusted with the task of prospecting, mining, extraction and fabrication of metals and manufacture of primary products, alloys and by-products at the huge complex.

Before this project came up in the Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan, there used to be only three small factories employing just 57 persons. Around 8000 persons suddenly found employment in the new copper complex. Two separate townships were constructed for residential requirements of employees working in the complex. There are about 5000 residential quarters along with other amenities such as hospitals, nursery, primary and secondary schools, schools, shopping centres, sports grounds and community centres. Another noteworthy point was more than 80 percent of the employees were drawn from the local areas.

The project was fully functional from 1975 and in a couple of years time the production targets of the company were fully realised. The setting up of the complex had a multiplier effect. A number of ancillary establishments, small industries, transport network, building contractors, retail shops, hotels and restaurants sprang up which also generated considerable additional employment. Unique Characteristics

The pre-copper complex situation at Khetri represented an underdeveloped typically rural, traditional society which had earlier remained unexposed to modern industrial climate. With the setting up of the complex around 8000 people with the rural agricultural background were thrown into the industrial life and culture. Management Initiatives, Findings and Steps

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As a management philosophy the company decided to induct communications as part of day-to-day working of the complex. A number of management trainees, HR professionals and public relations executives were inducted for a study to: (i) Appreciate the brand orientation that the village communities have towards the project and their expectations. (ii) Identify the ecological and economic impact that the project had made on the life and activity of the people in the area. (iii) Identify the extent of resentment on land acquisition by the complex.

Under these situations, communication gap could be widening further unless the management team was capable of 'reaching' and 'leading' a collaborative force with the local communities. The company came to appreciate that most communication failures do not arise out of lack of skills; the failure is more due to attitudinal blockages. What was needed was a firm commitment to the human perspectives both inside and outside of the complex. Communication and Information Campaign

Here comes the importance of developing and maintaining effective internal and external communication. The management actively took appropriate steps to counteract one sided flow of information and grapevine or rumour formation. The purpose was to create a proper balance to enable the community to form an objective opinion on all issues.

The communication campaign was founded on the following concepts: (i) The company is constantly concerned with maintaining healthy relationship with the local people and their opinion leaders. (ii) The internal communication is emphasised to achieve meaningful understanding and relationship between the organisation and its employees most of whom are the local people. They

are actually the carriers of messages from the organisation to all the people in the village around. Results and Benefits

(i) Internally, there was visible appreciation among the people that the copper project has a primary social obligation towards the local communities. (ii) Even land compensation issue was not so much in focus now as suitable employment was provided to at least one from each family. (iii) Rural development works, electricity and drinking water supplies to villages and services of fire brigade and medical aid even to non-employees earned high appreciation. (iv) Villagers were freely invited to attend cultural, official and recreational activities in the township (for example, open air cinema, variety entertainment, republic day and Independence Day functions). (v) Special plant visits for the village communities were organised. (vi) More frequent communication with leaders, panchayats and group of villagers was attempted and successfully pursued. The total communication campaign paid in terms of change of behaviour and attitude and also in terms of gains for the organisation and its surrounding communities.

Discussion Questions 1. Assume yourself as a recently inducted manager at Khetri Copper Complex and you are asked to review the state of industry - community interface in the complex. How do you propose to move and what would be your recommendations. 2. To what extent you perceive that the management should be involved in communicating with the village communities without feeling a kind of drain on money and time? Give your considered judgement. 3. Do you think that Khetri is a precise example of

success where many an organisation failed in several parts of the country owing to their failure on the communication front?