
Managing Productivity with Employee Engagement

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Abstract

For businesses to survive and thrive, managing its productivity is very important because by providing more goods and services to end users, it can raise its profit margins. As productivity increases, an organization can translate its resources into revenues, share its profits with stakeholders and retain cash flows for future growth and expansion. Thus, productivity leads to competitiveness and competitiveness leads to success.

The engaged employees are the backbone of an organization and through their efforts and energy, they achieve excellence and prosperity. Employee engagement is interwoven significantly with important business outcome. No amount of investment will deliver the outcome the Government and business want if their employees aren't engaged to go ahead an extra mile to do what it takes to increase productivity and profitability that make up successful organizations.

Key Words: Productivity, Employee Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Any effective and successful business understands the importance of productivity in the workplace. Being productive can help the organization increase and utilize the capacity of the human resources it has. Most productive companies have happy and healthy employees, which are the basis of a successful organization. Most of the organizations today have realized that a 'satisfied' employee is not necessarily the 'best' employee in terms of loyalty and productivity. It is only an 'engaged employee' who is intellectually and emotionally bound with the organization, feel passionately about its goals and is committed towards its values. He goes the extra mile and associates himself with the actions that drive the business. Engaged employees are most likely to stay, and be the advocates of the company, its products or services.

The purpose of this paper is to understand how Employee Engagement will help organizations manage productivity and succeed in a complex competitive environment. The paper contains SIX parts: Part I - is introductory in nature. Part II - Explains the concept of productivity, employee engagement, Gen-Now workforce. Part III - Examines the importance of productivity to organization and gives an overview of Employee Engagement Part IV- gives the suggestions for managing productivity by engaging employees "Honey Bees" way. Part IV- provides empirical evidences of how employee engagement practices in companies helps enhance productivity and also provides recent employee engagement trends in India for 2017 and the way out. Last part: provides concluding observations and indicates some issues for further research in this area.

PART II - The Conceptual Frame

Some of the concepts used in this paper are explained below:

- A. Productivity**
- B. Employee Engagement**
- C. Gen- now workforce**

Let us attempt first one first

A. Productivity: Productivity is defined by the formula outputs divided by the inputs for a specific period of time. Outputs are the goods and services. Inputs are not only labour but capital, material, and energy. It is the productivity that measures the performance of an organization, and it can also be used for companies themselves in order to assess their own progress. Productivity can be applied at any level, individual, work unit level, organizational level. Productivity growth is important to a firm because more real income means the firm can meet its obligations to customers, suppliers, workers, shareholders, and governments (taxes and regulation), and still remain competitive or even improve its competitiveness in the marketplace.

B. Employee Engagement: Engagement is the energy, passion, or 'fire in the belly' employees have for their employer. Employee engagement is the extent to which employees feel a sense of commitment to their organization, to its values, goals, and objectives and consciously and unconsciously work toward achieving those goals and objectives. Engaged employees are passionate about their work, proud of their organization and are enthusiastic about coming to work each day. Engaged employees are emotionally connected to their work, and are willing to "go the extra mile" to increase productivity and bring success to the organization.

C. 'Gen-Now' workforce: Today's workforce is multi-generational—and it's changing fast. It's the first time in history that the workforce in organizations includes workers from different generations. While this can be celebrated for its welcome diversity, this can pose challenges for both engaging employees as well as collaborating with other colleagues. These generations are wired differently, they work differently and organisations have to adapt or they'll go the way of the dinosaur. Improving productivity, reducing turnover and building the talent supply chain across these diverse generations is imperative for organisational success as the organizations stare down the barrel of a rapidly changing workplace and marketplace. There are fundamental reasons why organisations, not just HR departments and HR leaders, must respond to generational issues—and quickly. Today's workforce needs to believe in its employer and perceive meaning in its work, this helps to engage effectively in their task, become more productive and contribute towards the success of the organisation.

PART III: Importance Business Productivity and an overview of Employee Engagement

A) Importance of Business Productivity

Business productivity is the capability of a business organization to utilize its available resources to produce profitable goods and/or services as desired by its customers. Productivity is the only way forward. Increased productivity leads to increased capacity and capability. This in turn leads to a firm's capacity to innovate, to reduce cost of production, to better satisfy customers and to better satisfy all its stakeholders; including its employees. Productivity is much more important than revenues and profits. This is simply because profits vary as a result of external factors, such as exchange rate, dividends on investments, bank rates, etc. Profits reflect the end result whereas productivity reflects the increased efficiency and effectiveness of the whole organization (including its policies, structures, management systems, etc.). The only way ahead: productivity. Productivity is important for the following reasons:

Utilization of resources: Productiveness increases the overall efficiency of an organization. When the efficiency of the organization increases, the production capacity of the company is utilized to the optimum level. Thus, all resources are used in an effective and efficient manner to get the best possible results.

SWOT analysis: Productiveness enables a business to find out its strengths and weaknesses. It also lets the business easily identify threats as well as opportunities that prevail in the market as a result of competition and changes in business environment.

Lower price, more customers and more sales: Enhanced production lowers the cost per unit of a product which in turn, results in lower prices for better quality, which enhances a business' competitiveness in the market. Businesses can sell products at more competitive prices and gain an edge over others. If the rates are competitive, the business is in a better position to attract more customers and make more sales.

Share value, Reputation and Goodwill: Increased production due to efficient utilization of organizational resources leads to a lower cost production resulting in better sales and profits. If the profits of an organization shoot up, it increases the confidence of investors in the organization. Moreover, the share value of the

company increases and also when the organizations meet its customer expectations, they speak positively of their experience, which can lead to more business and more profit. Due to this, the reputation and goodwill of the organization increases.

Employee Morale and Efficiency: when the company profits increase due to enhanced production, the business can share a portion of its profits with its employees. This boosts the morale of the employees as they get to enjoy a part of the profits and the satisfaction of a job well done. As a result, their working efficiency tends to increase which in turn, further increases the production of the company. As you can start to see, there is a snowball of business success that starts with increased productivity.

The importance of productivity can never be ignored by any diligent business owner. Successful ventures are often those that give priority to productivity compared to solely looking into revenues and profits of the company. On the other hand, businesses that do not pay attention to productivity pay a huge price in terms of reduced production and high cost of production, resulting in reduced sales and low profits. Thus, a productivity level can be considered a measure of success or failure for any business.

Workplace psychologists have argued that high productivity is essentially a matter of keeping people motivated and engaged. When somebody puts heart and soul into work, he creates a congenial atmosphere where organizational and individual goals can be achieved more effectively. All the employees should put their heart and work for the company. This can be possible through employee engagement. Engaged employees are most likely to stay, and be the advocates of the company, its products or services. Employees who are highly engaged and motivated to do what it takes to increase productivity and profitability make up successful organizations.

B) Employee Engagement- An overview

‘Survival of the fittest’ is the rule of the game today. In an atmosphere of huge competition and change, organizations need to be the best in order to survive in the long run. An organization needs to gain competitive advantage over the other to excel. Two organizations may afford to invest the same amount of capital in the business, can have same resources in terms of machinery, latest technology, infrastructure, et., but what differentiates them is the ‘manpower’ they have. No two organizations can have the same set of knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs), as to two human beings are the same. They are distinct entities with difference in capabilities, the way they think, they work, etc. This is the place where an organization needs to work to gain competitive advantage over the other, by utilizing their KSAs in the best possible way. At the same time, it is equally important to know that human resources are emotional beings. It is very much important to satisfy their needs and wants to secure their cent percent effort and turn it into commitment. And this demands for what is called ‘Employee engagement’. Employee Engagement may be defined as the ability to influence the employees- their heads, hearts and souls to instil in them in intrinsic desire and passion to succeed and excel. Engaged employees develop a sense of oneness with their organization and their organization to succeed wholeheartedly because they feel connected emotionally and socially to its mission, vision and purpose.

History: Although the term ‘Employee Engagement’ was conceptualized by William A Kahn in 1990, its origin can be traced back to as early as 1920s from studies of morale or a group’s willingness to achieve organizational objectives. The value of morale to organization was matured by the US Army during the WWII to predict the unit of effort and their readiness to go to any extent for the well-being of the organization. The term was required to describe this emotional attachment of employees to the organization, their fellow associates and the job. This gave birth to the term ‘Employee Engagement’. Engaged employees care about the future of the company and are willing invest the cent percent effort for the organization.

Also, the Hawthorne effect can be cited as an example of employee engagement. The Hawthorne effect is a form of reactivity whereby subjects improve or modify an aspect of their behaviour being experimental manipulation. A study was conducted at Hawthorne works, a western Electric factory outside Chicago, (between 1924 to 1932) to determine whether workers would become more productive in higher or lower levels of light. After the study, it was suggested that the increase in productivity was due to the motivational effect of the interest being shown in them.

‘Employee Engagement’ has been a topic of discussion in corporate circles for several years now. It has captured the attention of all, whether it is employees or employers. Each of them has a different way of looking at it, and both have realized the gaining importance of the term, rather than the concept. Several studies and surveys haven conducted over the past few years on the topic and each of them have revealed different aspects of the term. As a result, there are different key drivers and implications. The quest to find out the best practices to retain and engage employees has forced HR pundits to carry out surveys on employee delight and employee satisfaction. On such survey that is worth mentioning here is the one conducted between Jan to March 2008 by Blessing White, a global consulting firm based in the US, in partnership with HR Anexi, a leading HR consulting firm based in Mumbai. The survey defines ‘Employee Engagement’ as an alignment of maximum **job satisfaction** with maximum **job contribution**.

In this survey, the respondents were asked to state one factor that they believed was most important in influencing their **satisfaction** at work. Almost 30% of the respondents believed that career development opportunities and effective training was the most important factor. 20% of them considered a challenging work environment was a great motivator and influenced their satisfaction at work. Another 19% believed that if they were provided with more opportunities to do what they could do their best; they would feel more connected with their work.

Table -1: **Types of employees** (Source: www.blessingwhite.com)

BlessingWhite Employee Engagement Levels Explained	
Level	Description
A The Engaged: High contribution & high satisfaction	These employees are at “the apex” where personal and organizational interests align. They contribute fully to the success of the organization and find great satisfaction in their work. They are known for their discretionary effort and commitment. When recruiters call, they cordially cut the conversation short. Organizations need to keep them engaged, because they can transition over time to any of the three adjacent segments, a move that would likely impact workforce morale and the bottom line.
B Almost Engaged: Medium to high contribution & satisfaction	A critical group, these employees are among the high performers and are reasonably satisfied with their job. They may not have consistent “great days at work,” but they know what those days look like. Organizations should invest in them for two reasons: They are highly employable and more likely to be lured away; they have the shortest distance to travel to reach full engagement, promising the biggest payoff.
C Honeymooners & Hamsters: Medium to high satisfaction but low contribution	Honeymooners are new to the organization or their role — and happy to be there. They have yet to find their stride and clearly understand how they can best contribute. It should be a priority to move them out of this temporary holding area to full alignment and productivity. Hamsters may be working hard, but are in effect “spinning their wheels,” working on non-essential tasks, contributing little to the success of the organization. Some may even be hiding out, curled up in their cedar shavings, content with their position (“retired in place”). If organizations don't deal with them, other employees may grow resentful or have to pick up the slack.
D Crash & Burners: Medium to high contribution but low satisfaction	Disillusioned and potentially exhausted, these employees are top producers who aren't achieving their personal definition of success and satisfaction. They can be bitterly vocal that senior leaders are making bad decisions or that colleagues are not pulling their weight. They may leave, but they are more likely to take a breather and work less hard, slipping down the contribution scale to become Disengaged. When they do, they often bring down those around them.
E The Disengaged: Low to medium contribution & satisfaction	Most Disengaged employees didn't start out as bad apples. They still may not be. They are the most disconnected from organizational priorities, often feel underutilized and are clearly not getting what they need from work. They're likely to be skeptical and can indulge in contagious negativity. If left alone, the Disengaged are likely to collect a paycheck while complaining or looking for their next job. If they can't be coached or aligned to higher levels of engagement, their exit benefits everyone, including them.

Again, the respondents were asked to state one factor that they believed was most important in influencing their **contribution** at work. 26% of the Indian employees said that development opportunities and effective training was the most important necessity that had an impact on their contribution towards work. 25% of them believed that regular specific feedback about how they doing was very important for them to contribute significantly to their work. Another 22% believed that greater clarity about the organization wants them to do and why, was important for them to contribute successfully to the organization.

By plotting a population against these two axes, the employees were classified into the following five segments. A brief description about the various types of employees based on their satisfaction and contribution at work is given in the table below: level and description

C) Embracing and Engaging the ‘Gen-Now’ Workforce

Today enterprises face a dual conundrum in their workplace strategy:

- A globally distributed workforce.
- An always-on and connected mind set.

To contend with these challenges, organizations must embrace the following guiding principles that will shape the future workplace. Doing this will help enterprises stay ahead of the workplace curve by creating a “Gen-Now” workforce with a platform for enhanced business productivity.

Guiding Principles

-) **Accelerate smart work** – anywhere/anytime: Enable workforces to be more productive with anytime, anywhere access to apps/data that are aligned with enterprise security guidelines.
-) **Institutionalize process excellence**: Establish built-in workflows that trigger a process-centric approach towards information seeking and sharing with role based access.
-) **Facilitate insight and provide information visibility**: Enable workforces to find and share information, thereby improving business insight.
-) **Promote compliance**: Leverage gamification techniques to promote compliance and adoption within the workforce.
-) **Collaborate and support teamwork**: Support multiple media that leverage technology and platforms for teams to interact with and work through.
-) **Agile**: The enterprise must create a modular workplace architecture built on solutions that generate and extend operational agility and are responsive to ever changing business demands from employees.
-) **Always on and connected**: A connected enterprise should be equipped with mobility solutions, empowering end users to deliver improved productivity through app stores and collaborative platforms.
-) **Enriched user experience**: An integrated process- and technology-oriented approach has toolsets that aid in providing an enriched and seamless end-user experience.
-) **Sustain competitive advantage**: Leveraging cost-controlled workplace transformation solutions that result in measurable improvements will empower end users to deliver enhanced performance, improving individual and organizational productivity.
-) **Insight-driven**: Enterprises must systematize improvement programs through a data-driven model enabling workforces and the enterprise as a whole to derive meaningful analysis by measuring outcomes.

In order to create an environment conducive to productivity, the best way to engage everyone from each generation is to host meetings to discuss the needs and lifestyles of each employee. The workforce transformation coupled with workplace transformation will directly increase business productivity.

PART IV - Managing productivity by engaging employees ‘Honey bees’ way

Employee engagement is a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organization to give of their best each day, committed to their organization’s goals and values, motivated to contribute to organizational success, with an enhanced sense of their own well-being. Engaged employees are not naturally born, but can be developed by organizational support and best practices.

How do bees produce honey? Can organizations and employees learn some positive aspects from their behavior to enhance productivity?

1st Aspect: Honeybees inspire us to gather knowledge

Bees start making honey, their food, by visiting flowers. They collect a sugary juice called nectar from the blossom by sucking it out with their tongues. They store it in 'honey stomach'. The colour and flavor of honey they produce differ depending on the nectar source.

The quality of the work produced by employees depends on the quality of knowledge they have gathered from various sources like attending a workshop or seminars or conferences, learning from colleagues and updating their skills through constant training. The organizations should invest on employee-training in order to harvest quality output.

2nd Aspect: Honeybees provide key relationship advice

Did you ever think you could get a relationship tip from a bee? Well, think again! Bees have amazing symbiotic relationships with plants; they are neither greedy nor selfish. In the process of gathering nectar, a bee gives back more to the flower: it transfers pollen grains from one flower to another, thus pollinating the flower for essential fertilization and reproduction to take place. While drinking nectar, the bee doesn't harm the delicate petals of the flower. Similarly, Organizations should strive to provide an environment for proper relationships among employees so that every employee strives to give more of them self, their love, attention and time just as the honeybee does and their relationships with others should be characterized by respect and esteem for the other. Organizations that have invested into employee relations programs, have experienced increases in the productivity, and the increased productivity in turn leads to increases in profits for the business.

3rd Aspect: Honey bees teach us to communicate well

Bees are deeply engaged with each other. They keep each other informed about changes in their environment. They never break contact with the group and are constantly passing on information they receive. Proper communication at all levels in the organization helps to function better, achieve greater productivity and succeed.

4th Aspect: Honeybees inspire us to work with a team spirit

When the Bees have a full load of nectar, they fly back to the hive. There, they pass the nectar on through their mouths to other worker bees who chew it. It's passed from one bee to the other, until it gradually turns into honey. Then the bees store the honey in honeycomb cells, which are like tiny jars made of wax. The honey is still a bit wet, so they fan it with their wings to dry it out until it becomes stickier. When it's ready, they seal the cell with a wax lid to keep it clean. The secret to success is their team spirit. If one bee is suffering or falling behind, the others step up and do the work, making sure that collective productivity is never reduced. To produce good results, all employees need to work as a team. Lack of initiative, lack of interest and absenteeism would logically lead to poor results. Organizations should encourage team spirit among employees for better productivity.

5th Aspect: Honeybees teach us cooperation

Bees live together in well-organized hives where every bee has a role to play in its community. The queen bee lays the eggs, while worker bees clean the hive and keep the hive's temperature cool. Some bees protect the hive from intruders while others fly for miles to collect nectar. A bee cannot survive or make honey on its own; it has to cooperate with its fellow bees. Following their example, each employee needs to take care of his or her responsibilities and work with others to create a harmonious environment. Cooperation enhances team productivity.

6th Aspect: Honeybees teach us to thrive and lead a productive and meaningful life

Bees invest much effort in producing honey. Though they are small and simple yet they lead an extremely productive life. They are highly organized, focused and produce amazing results as a team. This shows that employees as a team need to be highly organized, constantly and firmly focused, if they are to succeed in achieving high productivity.

7th Aspect: Honey bees teach us to live work ethic

Bees have an innate sense of responsibility. They are driven by the desire to work, produce and sustain the colony. They pick up delays caused by others, doing what needs to be done, without micromanagement or delay. Taking lessons from honeybees, employees could follow work ethics in the workplace to accomplish their given responsibilities.

8th Aspect: Honey bees us to take time to rest

Contrary to the common belief that they work all the time, honeybees actually spend two-thirds of their time doing nothing. They work hard with unwavering dedication and discipline, but they also get plenty of rest in order to recharge. Organizations need to implement activities that help the employees to relax and recharge themselves so as to increase their efficiency in the workplace.

9th Aspect: Honey bees teach us punctuality

For bees, everything depends on the sun. They start their day soon after the sun rises, and return to their hives at around 3.30 pm (unless the skies are overcast). Keeping time helps them deliver optimum results. In a professional set-up, the workplace operates smoothly when employees stick to time. Being late often ups stress levels and being habitually late can hamper the work patterns and may lower the productivity levels as a whole.

10th Aspect: Honey bees teach us to be meticulous

Honeybees are able to control the temperature within the hive through both a colony-level response and each individual worker's behaviour. Honeybees keep their nest temperature consistent in summer between 30 to 35 degree Celsius regardless of external conditions. Monitoring and adjusting the organization's climate and culture is very important for employee engagement and managing productivity. Organizations need to build a solid structure, encourage feedback and clarity of the results everyone is working to achieve, create a climate of accountability by transforming value statements into promises.

11th Aspect: Honeybees teach us efficiency

You must have heard the phrase: they're 'busy as bees'. This description sums up the life of honeybees: they're extremely efficient. They are tiny indefatigable creatures who offer a powerful demonstration that small beings through small actions can create big results. A large beehive can house up to 60,000 bees and they may collectively travel 55,000 miles and visit two million flowers to gather enough nectar to make just a kilo of honey! Productivity is all about efficiency -- doing more, faster and with less. And with increasing demands from today's anytime, anywhere workplace, the organizations and employees cannot work in isolation, but take inspiration from honeybees and work together, not just hard but efficiently, to achieve the best results in whatever they do.

If organizations have to manage their productivity well, then they need to inculcate in their employees these above traits of the behaviour of honey bees, so that they are fully engaged to produce better and excellent results and take the organizations to great heights.

Part V – Empirical Evidences

A) Employee Engagement practices in Corporates

Gone are the days when employees only looked for high paying jobs in a ruthless office set up. At a time when work-related stress is taking a toll on the life of employees, it is refreshing to see some companies go out of the way to make their staff love the work they do and also ensure they have a great work-life balance. It may be said that employee's feel more engaged when they have clear direction, performance accountability, proper feedback, efficient work environment, interpersonal support and opportunities for personal growth which creates a willingness to behave altruistically, an atmosphere of excitement when there is genuine recognition for their work effort. Most importantly, employees should have buy in and ownership of initiatives, which will ultimately lead to success. Here we take the examples of top three companies, employees in these companies love the companies they work for a host of positive factors.

Table 2: Factors that influenced these companies the best to work for in India

(source:<http://m.rediff.com/money/report/pix-special-what-makes-these-10-companies-the-best-to-work-for-in-india/20150721.htm>)

Company	Positive factors
<p>1. RMSI a global IT services company providing geospatial and software services</p> <p>Aim: ‘People are respected and performance is nurtured’</p>	<p>A flexible and rewarding work environment, high level of empowerment and accountability, employees’ involvement in company’s business decisions, leadership development through mentoring and coaching, skills/competency development initiatives, corporate social responsibility program, multi-cultural exposure through onsite work opportunities. People are respected and valued, performance is nurtured, creativity and excellence are encouraged, and leadership and teamwork are rewarded. Parenting, relationship counseling, child psychology workshops, Healthcare and other benefits specially for women. Other activities: The music band, photography club, painting, acting, movie making, guitar classes, zumba lessons, sports tournaments etc</p>
<p>2. Google India</p> <p>Aim: ‘Fitness and fun are woven into Google's history’</p>	<p>When it comes to facilities, working environment and benefits, work-life balance, very few companies can compete with Google. Creative and colourful ambience; offices are designed to promote fun-filled innovation. TechStop - Google in-house tech support shop, Access to best facilities -fully equipped gyms, customized health programs, Fun at work a 'bureaucracy buster' day, Google hosts TGIF (Thank God It's Friday), Women’s initiatives-supporting employee resource groups like Women@Google, For families-Google hosts its annual 'bring your children to work' day.</p>
<p>3. Marriott Hotels India</p> <p>Aim: ‘Taking care of our associates is at the heart of Marriott’s core values’</p>	<p>Marriott calls its employees ‘associates’. On their birthdays or anniversaries, the hotel employees are allowed a meal for six in any hotel or a stay to experience their own hospitality at its best.</p> <p>The hotels’ discount policies, talent development program, international exposure, open door policy, cross department exposure, performance incentives and rewarding high performers boosts the morale of employees. Access to a gym, recreation, discount on food and beverages, room stay, assignments locally and internationally, international placements and health insurance are other benefits</p>

B) Employee Engagement Trends for 2017 in India and the way out

Trend # 1 – Gen-Y meets Gen-Z under Gen-X’s Watch

Some organizations haven’t yet found answers for engaging their Gen-Y workforce, and now here comes Gen-Z. This is the first year when all three generations will be working together! This bound to lead to friction at the workplace as some of organization’s Gen-Y employees will be in managerial positions, trying to steer the careers of Gen-Z. Just like any generation, Millennials will negatively stereotype, Gen Z’s as being laid back.

The way out: Transformation in policies, workplace, rewards, and more focus on personal aspirations of individuals. Improved feedback mechanism, promote connectivity, evaluate experience of working in the

organization, encourage positive dialogue of generational issue, help workers to excel and be transparent, setting up real monitoring programs, consider intrapreneurship models etc.

Trend # 2 – Employee Engagement in the World of Agile and DevOps

Agile and DevOps are not the methodologies that concern IT employees alone, it will be a way of life in the workplace.

The way out: Experiential learning and internal communication programs will have to be created to help employees embrace the new agile world and ensure that mind-shift happens rapidly.

Trend # 3 – More Women at the Workplace

We will see more women joining the workforce due to culture shift and organizational policies. While organizational maturity quotient will go up several notches, it will also pose new challenges – pushing organisations for better workplace practices that are diversity friendly and inclusive. Managing a healthy and engaging workplace will be key.

The way out: Women friendly policies or initiatives, Train for growth and expansion, Develop an internal support system for women. Create a woman-to-woman mentoring or diversity program, sponsor new community-building programs, and initiate an ongoing forum for women to connect, share, and collaborate. Foster optimal flexibility: telecommuting, flextime, job sharing, part-time offerings, and more.

Trend # 4 – Whose Culture is it Anyway

With organisations spreading globally, and creating workplaces that have locally relevant policies, the old notion of what organizational culture is, is in danger of ceasing to exist. The years ahead will see several cultures mushrooming in each organization, and would evolve or devolve into being relevant at a team level, rather than an organization wide being. A sort of tribal culture of individual groups will come into being. The team manager will be influential in creating the culture and driving it. Organisations may define an outline, but it's these tribal cultures that set the future of the workplace

The way out: Diversity programs, focus on multicultural collaboration: It gets everyone to the table, emphasizes common interests rather than differences, makes communication more effective among groups, shared knowledge of others' cultures,

Trend # 5 – Employee Experience and Personalization

Most organizations singing the “Digital” song to their clients are conveniently forgetting to do the same with their employees. This year would mark a great shift in the way employers invest in personalizing their employee communication. We will see several digital companies emerging with the typical big data and collaboration pitch.

The way out: Integrating technology with culture: Improving Collaborative Working, Open Communication, Facilitating learning through Gamification, Fostering peer to peer recognition. Create a talent mobility program, Perform regular evaluations Foster strong relationships Positive employee experience that meaningful work, supportive management, positive work environment, growth opportunity and trust in leadership, leaders ‘leading by example’

Trend # 6 – Automation Resources vs. Human Resources

Automation will take over in a big way in 2017. Automation in already lean, and barely staffed companies, will certainly lead to concern and confusion among employees. No organization can stay away from automation, but at the same time will have to ensure that the existing and new breed of employees are either re-skilled or moved to other roles.

The way out: Training and development programs, Treating employees as customers: understand their passions and preferences and weave those in their job design.

Trend # 7 – Flexibility is the Enemy

Global, connected, flexible, collaborative. Well, these are all the buzz words used in defining the corporate workplace today. All these employee friendly strategies (which employees don't think so) will work against

the organization from a team productivity perspective – and hence organizational performance and success. Seeing all the team members together, at least once a week is a rarity today. Team building is too far away.

The way out: Organizations need to focus on more than just flexi-work schedules and telecommuting programs to help the employees to manage their work and personal responsibilities. Work-life balance leaders should provide clear direction regarding organizational priorities to help the employee to focus on highest value tasks, implement policies and practices consistently to ensure that work loads are fairly and equitably distributed, emphasize on high levels of teamwork within and across organizational units to secure support from their co-workers, support training, development and empowerment opportunities, provide adequate resources to execute task efficiently and with high quality.

Trend # 8 – Compete with organization’s own Talent

Start-up culture is the big fad across India. Organizations have started to realize that the “entrepreneurial bug” has been biting far too many employees. Companies have gone overboard (rightfully so) promoting “empowerment” and “entrepreneurial spirit” among its employees that everyone is looking forward to the opportunity. Organizations are rapidly losing their most valuable talent. Not just that, the people who are going out are poaching other employees too. Organizations, in a nutshell, will start competing with their own talent. This is a nightmare that any Employee Engagement and Human Resources would want to avoid.

The Way out: Flatten hierarchies, Leaders as ‘Culture Advocates, Empowerment programs: empowering employees to empower customers, creating compelling work environment: A culture is always comprised of tangible (e.g. infrastructure) and intangible elements (e.g. values, beliefs, and norms). While it is necessary to be aware of the intangible elements, caring for tangible aspects is also important. Regard for employee well-being: promoting employee wellness programs like yoga classes, walking challenges, weight loss challenges etc.

Trend # 9 – Trumped

If most of the H1B and other employees in international locations return and if the reverse brain drain happens – it will be a challenging time for organizations. All people who are returning, though Indians, will carry a different culture and mindset. Adjusting to the realities of an Indian workplace and local company policies, not to mention a change in lifestyle, will be nothing short of a shock. Managing such situations and helping them gel well with local employees needs to start from the ground-up.

The Way out: Employee Assistance programs (EAP) would be the best choice.

Part VI – Concluding observations

An organization should realize the importance of employees, more than any other variable, as the most powerful contributor to an organization’s competitive position. Organizations and employees share a symbiotic relation, where both are dependent on each other to satisfy their needs and goal. Survey and researches reveal that employees can be best engaged if their unique needs are fulfilled. It is very essential to realize what they are best at and engage their talents in the best possible way. When employees feel like they are a part of something important and their contribution has made an impact on business results, they form a mental and emotional attachment that becomes mutually beneficial for both parties. Therefore, employee engagement should not be a one-time exercise, but a continuous process of learning, improvement and action. Employee engagement is based on trust, integrity, two way commitment and communication between an organization and its members. It is an approach that increases the chances of business success, contributing to organizational and individual performance, productivity and well-being. It can be measured. It varies from poor to great. It can be nurtured and dramatically increased; it can be lost and thrown away.

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