

Employee Engagement, Training and Career Development (Tata Tele Services Limited – A Case Study)

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Abstract

Employee engagement is generally the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his or her organization and its core values and beliefs. An engaged employee is presumed to be aware of business context, and work dynamics with colleagues and peer groups to improve performance within the job for the benefit and excellence of the organization. It is a positive attitude held by the employees towards the organization and its values. The paper focuses on how employee engagement is an antecedent of job involvement and what should a company do to make the employees engaged. The scope of the study is limited to one organisation i.e. Tata Tele Services which is one of the major players in the Indian services sector. The paper attempts to do an analysis of employee engagement strategies adopted by the organisation on the basis of the widely accepted Ten Cs Model of Employee Engagement.

Key words : *Job Involvement, Employee Engagement, Career, Progression Policy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, and particularly in the past three years, employers and employees have faced human capital challenges and an uncertain economy. The economic downturn that started in 2008 has had a significant impact on companies and the resulting decisions made by management. These decisions have impacted employee engagement levels and perceptions globally, leading to changes in leading drivers of employee engagement. In uncertain times, organizations need to focus on harnessing the discretionary effort that engaged employee. This makes a difference in how companies are affected during the economic downturn, how quickly they emerge from it, and how strong they are in the future after the downturn passes. Employee engagement initiative has a direct impact on the organization's productivity. Also, employee engagement is directly influenced by growth of the organization, value addition experienced by employees and employee perception of the organization. When managers become disengaged, employees are 37%

more likely to be frustrated with company systems, processes, and procedures. (FLS Research 2008-09) This paper is based on a case study of Tata Teleservices. The paper has been divided into six sections. First section is all about introduction to employee engagement which elaborates the issues and its importance for organizations. Section two deals with the conceptual overview and the third includes the literature review. In section four strategies and initiatives linked to employee engagement has been described along with an analysis of different initiatives taken by the organization and its implications based on ten Cs of Employee Engagement model used for analysis. It also elucidates the impact of employee engagement initiatives on organizations performance and employee retention. The fifth section includes the implications and initiatives and the last section i.e. sixth section concludes the paper.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Alan M. Saks (December 2011), the study

“Workplace spirituality and employee engagement” describe the importance of Workplace Spirituality for Employee Engagement Maintenance. A model of workplace spirituality and employee engagement is presented in which three dimensions of workplace spirituality (transcendence, community, and spiritual values) relate to employee engagement through four psychological conditions (meaningfulness in work, meaningfulness at work, safety, and availability).

Sanchez-Hernandez Isabel & David Grayson (2011), “Internal Marketing for Engaging Employees on the Corporate Responsibility Journey”. As cited by the authors, Internal Marketing has been developed directly from conventional marketing theory (Woodruffe, 1995). It is based on the assumption that the accumulated knowledge of the marketing function can be used within the organization itself in order to gain competitive advantage in the market as well. The purpose of this paper is to explore whether internal marketing could be a powerful tool for engaging employees on the corporate responsibility journey. A conceptual approach based on literature review is carried out to determine the existing possibilities provided by internal marketing to enhance corporate responsibility.

Junghoon Lee (2012), this study empirically tested relationships among antecedents and consequences of employee engagement in the hotel setting. In particular, this study provided theory-based empirical evidence regarding whether employee evaluations of self (i.e., core self-evaluations) and perceptions of organizational environment (i.e., psychological climate) affect employee engagement. This study also investigated how employee engagement directly and indirectly leads to intrinsic rewards, job satisfaction, personal attachment to an organization (i.e., organizational commitment), and the (LMX). Results of hypothesis testing showed that core self-evaluations and three components of psychological climate (managerial support for service, interdepartmental service, and team communication) positively influence employee engagement. The results also revealed that employee engagement is positively

associated with all the outcome variables.

3. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT : AN OVERVIEW

The concept of engagement has naturally evolved from past research on high involvement, empowerment, job motivation, organizational commitment, and trust. All these research streams focus on employees’ perceptions and attitudes about the work environment. In some ways they are variations on the same fundamental issue. Obviously, all organizations want their employees to be engaged in their work.

But what can help them predict if their employees will “give their all”? Several standardized tools exist for assessing employee engagement and then providing feedback for making changes. These tools tend to have several common goals and characteristics:

Create a simple and focused index of workplace engagement—Many organizations are using very short, simple, and easy-to-use measures that focus on the fundamentals of a great workplace. Instead of conducting broad culture or climate surveys with 100 or more questions, many organizations are opting for a focused approach that measures fundamental qualities of the workplace that likely will be important 10 years later (e.g., feedback, trust, cooperation).

Allow for benchmarking—most organizations want to know how they stand in comparison to other organizations. Using a standard measure of engagement allows an organization to see how it measures up to other companies along a simple set of fundamental work qualities

Empirical research on “employee engagement” is relatively new. “Employee retention” has received the lion’s share of the spotlight. This focus on retention however has spawned several studies on “engagement” - since retaining employees is dependent upon the need to “engage” them. Hence, engagement studies are beginning to take center stage. One of the most significant threads in the current research is the discovery that employee engagement is linked to customer satisfaction which is linked to an organization’s financial success. Employee engagement/

satisfaction distinctly affects the bottom line. These findings are detailed in the studies referred to in this article. Engagement really happens at the team level - a framework called VOICE helps that process. VOICE is an acronym made up of its component parts i.e. V is for vision, which is an emotion as well as a financial connection as to why people should be part of this organization; O is for opportunity. Are there opportunities to grow and develop? ; I is for incentive. If you do a good job do you get financial and non-financial rewards? ; C is for community. Do I like the people I work with? ; C also stands for Communication, which is about “telling people about what is going on, and gives them the confidence that people care; and E is for entrepreneurship, defined as things such flexibility on how people can work”... “It’s about things like flexibility in time so people don’t feel they are being a slave to the organization.”

4. PRIVATE SECTOR : CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Career Development Programs have been around since the turn of the century. The number of organizations using them has steadily increased since the mid-1970s, as more organizations strive to meet the needs and expectations of their employees. A 1991 survey of 1000 private agencies, 70% of the respondents had or were planning to implement Career Development Programs in the workplace (Gutteridge, Leibowitz, & Shore, 1993). The increasing popularity of Career Development Programs suggests many organizations are willing to play a major role in career planning and employee development. Organizations that emphasized customer service, organizational performance, professionalism and employee empowerment were most likely to have Career Development Programs. In a 1978 survey conducted by the American Management Association on company-sponsored Career Development Programs, over 90% of the respondents found them to enhance job performance, help employees use personnel systems more effectively, and improve the utilization of available talent (Walker & Gutteridge, 1979). In the late 1980’s, a number of large corporations (British Petroleum Exploration, Amoco, Baxter Healthcare and John Deere) developed and implemented

comprehensive and visible Career Development Programs in the workplace. Each of these companies used methods such as career counseling, workshops, workbooks, along with techniques such as self-assessment testing and job rotations to enhance their employees opportunity for growth and development. This resulted in lower employee turnover, fewer employee complaints and higher levels of job satisfaction. In fact, Baxter Healthcare has the lowest employee turnover in their industry segment. The results achieved by larger organizations caused even mid-size and smaller organizations to implement Career Development Programs.

5. PUBLIC SECTOR : CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Even with the increased popularity of Career Development Programs, the public sector has lagged behind the private sector in instituting these programs (West & Berman, 1993). Why is this? First, organizations in the private sector are extremely competitive and their bottom line is directly tied to corporate profits. Competition occurs in a global rather than a national context. Also, technological advances have occurred more quickly in the private sector that requires more highly skilled workers. Quite simply, organizations in the private sector must maintain a competitive edge and their overall success translates into corporate profits. Conversely, organizations in the public sector are service-driven and operate on budgets that are generated primarily by taxes. Career Development Programs in law enforcement have been even slower in developing. In fact, “career development has been traditionally viewed as nothing more than promoting officers through the ranks until they are eligible to retire” (Gibbons 1995, p. 16). At best, employees are given limited guidance in professional development and little, if any, guidance in areas pertaining to personal growth. Economic pressures have also attributed to the slow growth of Career Development Programs in law enforcement. In the mid-1980’s, many police departments were forced to reorganize in an effort to reduce costs. The terms “flattening and downsizing crept into the vocabulary of many administrators” (Grossman & Doherty, 1994). This resulted in fewer and fewer opportunities for

promotions, and this trend will most likely continue into the 21st century. As a result, organizations must emphasize the strong value of growing and learning one's current job, as well as, exploring other areas within the organization. In recent years, many law enforcement agencies have sought accreditation through the Commission for the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA). This independent accreditation process ensures that law enforcement agencies have met specific requirements and prescribed standards. Participating agencies devote considerable manpower and resources in order to be accredited. CALEA requires that participating agencies have a documented Career Development Program (Commission on the Accreditation for Law Enforcement, Inc., 1991). As a result, an increasing number of law enforcement administrators realize the importance of Career Development Programs and they are viewed in similar context to the private sector.

Theoretical Basis for Career Development

Career Development Programs have evolved because of changes in the workforce (work-life balance, diversity, focus on quality), advances in management theory (employee motivation), changes in managerial styles and the increasing complexity of technology. It is these contemporary trends which have fostered the growth of Career Development Programs.

6. WORK FORCE CHANGES

In the past, "employees tended to remain attached to one or two organizations throughout their careers, with loyalty to the organization and acceptance of the employer's authority being the norm" (Lewis, 1986).

An even more pressing reason for organizational change involves the demographics of the workforce, which is experiencing a steady increase of women, minorities, disabled, as well as, older workers. All of the factors have caused organizations to re-evaluate and assess their most valued and importance resource, their employees. Also, Total Quality Management (TQM) has become a dominant concern of many organizations. With the emphasis on customer service, quality in daily work and continuous improvement, it is seen as essential to organizations

that desire to maintain a competitive edge.

7. MANAGERIAL STYLES

Changes in managerial styles have contributed greatly to the overall success of career development. Management scholars have long been aware of the distinctions between Douglas McGregor's "Theory X" and "Theory Y" management styles. According to McGregor (1960), Theory X managers assume that employees dislike work, seek to avoid responsibility, and need coercion and control to make them work toward organizational goals. The Theory Y manager believes in the inherent creativity of employees and assumes that they are generally interested in directing their own work. The Theory X manager was also concerned with productivity, rather than with employees' needs for involvement. The Theory Y manager tends to emphasize the human aspects of the work environment.

Organizations must no longer choose between concern for people or concern for production. According to Blake and Mouton (1978), the most effective managers are those who realize that employee commitment and productivity are directly related to the organization's overall effectiveness.

8. TECHNOLOGY

Rapid changes in technology have transformed every aspect of the workplace. Advances in technology (computers, communication, etc.) have resulted in the need for skilled professionals, and this has caused problems for many organizations. As a result, these organizations were forced to hire skilled technicians or fill these positions with untrained personnel. These technological advances further stress the importance of having a Career Development Program. Employees would be able to make practical career decisions based upon the organization's current and future needs. Organizations will benefit by being able to use existing personnel to fill "new" positions.

9. TRAINING

Proficiency in-service training

The second component of a Career Development Program encompasses Proficiency In-service Training. This component of the career

development initiative must be closely coordinated with the organization's training efforts. This benefits both the organization and its employees by keeping them up-to-date on duties and responsibilities within present job assignments. It also allows employees the opportunity to maintain those skills and abilities necessary for the job they perform. Proficiency training subjects must consist of those elements of the training program that are indigenous to the organization and its operations. This type of training is job specific and generally limited to areas that are essential to the overall job function. A training program should be developed and implemented which encompasses all phases of training. This will allow employees to have a clear understanding of the organization's formal training requirements, as well as, demonstrate the department's commitment to employee development.

Career specialty training

Career Specialty Training is the final component in a Career Development Program and provides employees with the opportunity to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform jobs beyond the minimum level. It also allows employees the opportunity to explore new areas of interest and specialization that will enhance abilities and skills in other specialized jobs. The opportunity to attend specialty courses of instruction offered by other organizations or institutions must be afforded to all employees. This can be easily incorporated into the organization's training policy.

10. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Case study: Tata Teleservices: HR interventions and Employee engagement Tata Teleservices' (TTSL) many HR interventions have earned it the distinction of being an employer of choice. CN Nagakumar, CHRO, TTSL, believes that his company's commitment to employee engagement is what has earned it this accolade. The company's HR practices include a strong HR model that talks about alignment, assignment, engagement, empowerment and pride of the workforce. The annual employee engagement survey - Darpan - has been designed

around the HR model. In order to foster a customer-centric and performance-driven culture in the organisation, the pillars of organisational culture were defined under the acronym CRISP - customer focus, responsibility for results, initiative with speed, self-confidence with consciousness and passion for achievement. A robust performance management scheme, a reward and recognition policy, and a career progression policy exist in the organisation, besides a number of engagement activities. The performance management system ensures the top down cascade of business goals. The key performance indicators of every employee are aligned to any one or multiples of the five key business levers, namely revenue, profit maximisation/cost optimisation, cash flow, customer satisfaction and employee engagement, aligning the entire organisation towards the vision, mission and business plans of the organisation. The reward and recognition (R&R) policy aims to create a framework for recognising and rewarding the contributions of individuals and teams, and institutionalises a culture of openness, transparency and meritocracy. The recognitions include Spotlight (for on-the-spot recognition), Star of the Month, Super Stars for achievers, Customer First Reward and Valuable Reward. These awards are decided at both the circle and corporate level by various business units and circle R&R committees. TTSL strives to provide career growth in consonance with performance, merit and potential of an employee, while considering organisational needs. The opportunities include Career Progression Policy and CAS (Career Advancement Scheme), Job Rotation Policy and Internal Job Postings. The Career Progression Policy ensures career progression for all employees based on their performance rating, tenure in the role, SPARK Assessment Center scores and potential for growth. It also highlights the commitment to building a leadership pipeline by "grooming talent" from within. To ensure a supportive and encouraging environment, TTSL has focused its efforts towards institutionalising several initiatives like the employee health and well being policy, Long Service Award on completion of five and 10 years of service, Medical Insurance, Liberal Personal Accident Insurance coverage etc. For

employees posted in remote geographies like the North-East, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, a special geography benefit is provided. The Weavers initiative includes sports and recreation activities for employees, cultural and sports activities for employees' children, career counselling and corporate sustainability initiatives. These policies also seek to create and ensure "a meaningful relationship between the employee and the organisation." The company knows that a relationship of mutual respect and trust is the key to ensuring a motivated workforce. That is why TTSL engages in a number of activities to offer employees an opportunity to display the creative side of their personalities. At the circle level, the company organises various fun activities and games, including hoopla, tambola, carrom and table tennis, besides outdoor game championships for cricket, football and hockey. Many of these teams have participated in inter-corporate events and won for the company's pride.

Leadership development is one of the strategic pillars at TTSL. Assessment centres form the basic tool to identify high potential employees who undergo a comprehensive leadership developmental programme. The Business Leadership Programme is carried out in association with the Tata Management Training Centre and involves all COOs and high performing senior leaders. An in-house enabled multi-rater feedback system called Reflections has been put in place to enable senior leaders to get 360-degree feedback and create an individual development plan. Team-building initiatives at TTSL are not limited to the top management alone but touch all levels of management, aligning teams across the company towards achieving the organisational objectives. Regular Town halls are conducted by the MD and COOs at corporate and circle levels respectively to get to know the views of the people. Initiatives such as Lunch with MD, MD Online and Phone your MD also seek to increase interaction between employees and the MD. A chief ethics officer and local ethics officers have been appointed to deal with ethical issues. A women's welfare committee, comprising senior women employees, has been created to address women-related issues.

Training is an important component of employee engagement. Training employees through innovative workshops, cross functional teams and collaborative working is also a key focus area in TTSL. TTSL encourages employees to enhance their skills and come up with innovative ideas and best practices through initiatives like Mind Beans, Propel (Six Sigma) and Promising Practices." Employees are also actively encouraged to develop their personalities. The portal Gyaan Jyoti enables people to enhance their skills through e-learning. Employees list their fields of interest and expertise on Gyan Tarang. TTSL then uses its in-house expertise to conduct various training workshops for others, thereby giving employees a chance to learn and teach. TTSL strongly supports the Tata Group program called SCIP (Second Career Internship Program) which enables women who have taken a break from their career, to restart their career. They work on a 6-month project in any one of the Tata Group companies and then confirmed as permanent resources. The motivated workforce is encouraged to give back to the community as well as TTSL has tie-ups with NGOs like SOS Children's Villages and the National Association for the Blind, and partners with various schools under the Samvedna initiative. It also has an active eco-club, Prakriti, which conducts activities such as tree plantation drives, energy conservation and wealth out of waste initiatives." The company's CSR activities include education and the environment as well, fully leveraging the company's core competencies, in addition to initiatives on affirmative action plans focused on employment generating schemes. DIALog is the monthly Internal Newsletter which covers the latest internal and external news about TTSL. Apart from TTSL news, there are specific write-ups by the senior management, communicating pertinent and relevant issues and news. DARPAN, the Employee Engagement Model of TTSL covers various aspects of employee work life namely Alignment, Assignment, Engagement, Empowerment and Pride. EPulse is another innovative tool, which was created to enhance engagement of employees from the moment they join by staying in touch and taking feedback from them from the time they join the

organization. It is an IT-enabled engagement tool to ensure that assimilation of new employees happens in a smooth manner. It is these and other similar activities that have helped TTSL gain the trust of its employees and ensured an atmosphere of enthusiasm and commitment in the workplace.

11. IMPLICATIONS AND NEW INITIATIVES

The analysis gives us very clear picture that the organisation is able to meet most of the criteria of Ten Cs to a greater extent. Tata Teleservices has an excellent reward and recognition policy and a career progression policy which shows the connect parameter. It has different programs to congratulate its employees. Further it also provides a platform to the employees to collaborate and increase the interaction between superior and subordinates. The company is high on meeting ethical standards for which it has an ethical officer to deal with the local issues. It is suggested here that the company can clarify the roles of the employees from the very first step by giving them a realistic job preview and conducting a strong induction and orientation programme as a part of the performance management system. Employee counselling and mentoring techniques can be used to get the feedback from the employee about his role and job performance.

Strategies can be suggested to form some more communication forums including team meetings, conferences, monthly updates on corporate goals etc. to add more to the credibility component. Team building exercises like small team recreational activities e.g. bowling, skating; trips to cinemas etc. once in a month can also be introduced. Employee engagement is a direct reflection of how employees feel about their relationship with boss. Thus, quality of working relationships with peers, superiors and subordinates can be improved by providing more opportunities to collaborate. Though organisations are having their own models of practising employee engagement but to make the strategies more effective they can take into consideration the ten Cs model of employee engagement and try to meet every 'C' as a parameter to the greatest possible extent.

12. CONCLUSION

Acquiring skilled workforce is just not enough in today's changing economy like ours; instead a lot needs to be done to retain, involve and make them committed to the organization and its goals. Thus, engagement is a state where an individual is not only intellectually committed but has great emotional attachment with his/her job that goes above and beyond the call of duty so as to further the interest of the company. Organizations like Tata Tele Services are not only providing their employees a great infrastructure and other facilities but also freedom to make their work exciting and also are providing them an environment wherein they can say good-bye to a monotonous work. The company focuses on retention as an outcome of three HR focus areas - employee motivation, career growth and remuneration and compensation. Thus working in a safe and cooperative environment adds to the engagement level of an employee. We would hence conclude that raising and maintaining employee engagement lies in the hands of an organization and requires a perfect blend of time, effort, commitment and investment to craft a successful endeavor and to help them being productive employees. The productivity seems to be in the direct proportion to the Employee engagement. With all the positive measures offered to the workers with quality and quantity production as the chief aim, it may be of much more good factor for increasing the productivity and performing the organization in a better manner by improving Employee engagement. The HR managers should do well to focus their initiatives on employee retention and on job satisfaction.

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