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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & TECHNOLOGICAL CRISIS

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Abstract:

One would tend to think that Human Resource management in one country would be much like it is in another country. There are similarities in the human resource function from one country to another however; due to cultural differences the human resource function can also be quite different. We must first define the Field of Human Resource Management. According to Peter Dowling in International Human Resource Management, "Human resource management is those activities undertaken by an organization to utilize its human resources effectively." These activities include but are not limited to, human resource planning, staffing, performance management, training and education, compensation and benefits, and labor relations.

"People are your most valuable asset"

Human resource professionals must stay informed and be involved in the employee and workplace development process with quality training to ensure legal compliance, performance management, and the implementation of effective personnel policies.

Human resources managers face a myriad challenges with today in relation to workforce. There are issues concerning the diverse workforce, legislation affecting the workplace and technology matters that rise to the top of the list of challenges. Human resources managers who encounter these challenges use their leadership skills and expertise to avert issues that might arise from these challenges. The workplace setting is changing because of technology. Telecommuting, telework and remote reporting relationships are becoming the norm rather than an anomaly. Flexible work schedules and arrangements are ways to improve productivity for some employees; however, these types of technology-based changes for all employees. Human resources managers must ensure there is a mutual agreement between the employer and employee for options that include telecommuting. Working from home--telecommuting or telework--requires motivation and discipline. Some employees lack these traits and would not be productive workers if allowed to work from the comfort of home. The upshot to technological advances for human resources managers is the type of human resources information systems available to employers for a variety of purposes. Human resources departments are able to track applicants and manage the recruitment process more effectively. In addition, producing data and reports can be accomplished easily because of technology.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Human Resource management approaches vary from company to company depending on their individual stage of internationalization. Peter Dowling describes these as ethnocentric which is key

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decisions are made at Headquarters and few foreign subsidiaries have any autonomy. Polycentric this is, the individual subsidiaries have autonomy over themselves. This occurred most when there were substantial barriers to trade. Geocentric is the company takes a global and strategic view and a worldwide approach. Regiocentric is similar to geocentric however, the perspective and decision making is handled by a regional headquarters. These above stated degrees of internationalization are also the degrees by which the HRM is measured. When a company is in very early stages of internationalization such as exporting the HRM functions can be handled without any additional burden to the HR department.

1.1 Judgment and flexibility during Problems/crises:-

Sequence of sudden unwanted events leading to major disturbances at the workplace is called crisis. Crisis arises on an extremely short notice and triggers a feeling of fear and uncertainty in the employees.

It is essential for the superiors to sense the early signs of crisis and warn the employees against the same. Once a crisis is being detected, employees must quickly jump into action and take quick decisions.

What is a Crisis Management Team?

A Crisis Management Team is formed to protect an organization against the adverse effects of crisis. Crisis Management team prepares an organization for inevitable threats.

Organizations form crisis management team to decide on future course of action and devise strategies to help organization come out of difficult times as soon as possible.

During crises, the priorities are for personal safety and mental health. Unresolved personal emotions that may arise from events can not only disrupt performance at the given moment, but can be sufficiently traumatizing as to cause long term declines in performance and loss of effective staff. People first and foremost need access to current information, so there may be a need to relax policies to allow more radio or television usage in common rooms and at workstations. Should individuals require a few additional personal telephone calls to reassure themselves of the safety or location of loved ones, that is also a key consideration. It is appropriate to continue some controls provided that you specifically communicate to managers and supervisors that they must exercise judgment where rules would normally be strictly prohibitive of such activities. The global crisis is pushing companies to stretch their financial resources to buffer the effects of limited income as a result of the sharp decline in the demand of their products and services. Efficiency is the key to the survival of any company in this kind of economic condition. Running the company at the least possible cost should be the priority of management. In order to achieve that, companies must keep a pool of competent employees that will help the organization in pushing their sales, expanding their market, innovating new products and in keeping the operations efficient as possible. Employees that are causing too much "wastage" should be encouraged to be more productive and their financial contribution to the company must be at par with the salaries they are receiving. We are not saying that we should put a price tag on every employee, but we should also remember that business organizations are not synonymous to charitable institutions. Income is always their lifeblood, period. With this, HR managers should always find a way to motivate this type of employees, either through training or coaching, before making any drastic actions like transfers, demotions or terminations.

Greater judgment and flexibility should be allowed and specifically explained to be allowed at the commencement of a crisis or at escalation points. Clearly local disasters require the greatest flexibility and often specific cancellation of work for one or more individuals or at least the provision of absolute discretion to them to determine whether to continue working or leave to attend to emergency matters. The key question is mental health. What may be a minor crisis for one person may have enormous psychological impact on another.

Crisis is not a time to use the argument, "if I let you, I'll have to let everyone...." Rather it is a time to be prepared to explain that everyone is different and one person needed special support. Others will appreciate that they would want the same options. At the same time, remember basic rules of personal privacy when explaining your reasoning to others. Team members need to know enough to understand that an absent member had a crisis, had to leave or make a phone call and that you provide such support automatically when it is explained and is urgent and appropriate. They do not need to know the details from management, but can be asked to find them out from the individual in question when they return or at an appropriate time.

Of course, it is best to prevent or correct rumors when possible. When letting someone leave it is appropriate to ask whether you should advise others of the reasons. That way the individual can say yes or no, tell them or don't. If it's confidential at least you can tell others they requested the reason not be given out

until they have a chance to resolve matters. Even if you can't give a specific detailed reason at the moment you can indicate it was a crisis. Later facts will bear you out and validate your decision to allow flexibility to this one person and not others.

It is critical for supervisors and managers to be reassured that these are the procedures so they aren't concerned about being penalized if they relax rules in reasonable ways. Most people want to do the right things, but they sometimes fear for their own position if they ease up. They need to understand they will get support and approval for acting reasonably. Ideally this will always have been the policy, but an approaching or on-going crisis is a key time to reinforce such principles for anyone new to the workplace or to management responsibilities.

Crisis Management Team is formed to respond immediately to warning signals of crisis and execute relevant plans to overcome emergency situations.

Role of Crisis Management Team.

Crisis Management team primarily focuses on:

1.2 Detecting the early signs of crisis

Identifying the problem areas Sit with employees face to face and discuss on the identified areas of concern Prepare crisis management plan which works best during emergency situations Encourage the employees to face problems with courage, determination and smile. Motivate them not to lose hope and deliver their level best. Help the organization come out of tough times and also prepare it for the future.

1.3 Crisis Management Team includes:

Head of departments Chief executive officer and people closely associated with him Board of directors Media Advisors Human Resource Representatives The role of Crisis Management Team is to analyse the situation and formulate crisis management plan to save the organization's reputation and standing in the industry.

How does Crisis Management Team function?

A Team Leader is appointed to take charge of the situation immediately and encourage the employees to work as a single unit. The first step is to understand the main areas of concern during emergency situations. Crisis Management Team then works on the various problems and shortcomings which led to crisis at the workplace. The team members must understand where things went wrong and how current processes can be improved and made better for smooth functioning of the organization.

It is important to prioritize the issues. Rank the problems as per their effect on the employees as well as the organization. Know which problems must be resolved immediately and which all can be attended a little later. A single brain cannot take all decisions alone. Crisis Management Team should sit with rest of the employees on a common platform, discuss prevailing issues, take each other's suggestions and reach to plans acceptable to all. One of the major roles of the Crisis management team is to stay in touch with external clients as well as media. The team must handle critical situations well. Develop alternate plans and strategies for the tough times. Make sure you have accurate information. Double check your information before finalizing the plan. Implement the plans immediately for results. Proper feedback must be taken from time to time. Crisis Management team helps the organization to take the right step at the right time and help the organization overcome critical situations.

2. Ways to overcome from crises:

Sequence of unwanted events leading to uncertainty at the workplace is called as crisis. Crisis leads to major disturbances at the workplace and creates unrest amongst the employees. Employees must not lose hope during crisis. It is important for them to face inevitable threats with courage, determination and smile.

- a) Adopt a focused approach. Take initiative and find out where things went wrong. Identify the problem areas and devise appropriate strategies to overcome the same.
- b) Gather correct and relevant information. One should not depend on mere guess works and assumptions during emergency situations. Double check your information before submitting reports.

c) Employees should change their perspective. One should always look at the brighter side of things. Remember life has its own ups and downs. Unnecessary cribbing and complaining does not help at the workplace. Avoid making issues over petty things. Don't adopt a negative attitude; instead understand the situation and act accordingly.

d) Effective communication is essential to overcome crisis in the organization. Information must flow across all departments in its desired form. Employees must be aware of what is happening around them. Individuals should have an easy access to their superior's cabin to discuss critical issues and seek their suggestions. Superiors must address employees on an open forum during critical situations.

e) Roles and responsibilities must be delegated as per the employee's specialization. Make sure the right person is doing the right job. Employees must be motivated to deliver their level best and focus on the organization's goals to overcome tough times in the best possible way.

It is essential to take quick decisions during critical situations. Learn how to take risks. The moment an employee detects the early signs of crisis, it is important for him to act immediately. Escalate issues to your superiors and do inform your co workers as well. Don't wait for others to take action.

Be calm and patient. Don't panic and spread baseless rumors around. Taking unnecessary stress makes situation all the more worse. Remember a calm individual can handle things better. Relax and then decide on the future course of action to overcome crisis. Don't lash out at others under pressure.

f) Discussions are essential during crisis. Sit with fellow workers and discuss issues amongst yourselves to reach to mutually acceptable solutions which would work best at the times of crisis. Be loyal to your organization even at the times of crisis. Stick to it during bad times. Don't just treat your organization as a mere source of earning money. It is important to respect your workplace. Review your performance regularly. Be your own critic. Strive hard to achieve your targets within the desired time frame. Don't work only when your boss is around.

g) Avoid unnecessary conflicts and misunderstandings at the workplace. Treat your fellow workers as members of your extended family. Help each other when needed. Employees should not ask for unjustified things. Think from the management's perspective as well. Avoid criticizing your colleagues.

Don't hide at the times of crisis. Come out; interact with external clients as well as media. Do not hesitate to ask for help. Ignoring outsiders worsens the situations.

CONCLUSION

An incompetent and poorly functioning human resources department reflects the overall state of affairs of an organization and its possible uncompetitive position in the marketplace. There is a disconnect between the HR department and the executive management leading to miscommunication, poor decision making on operational aspects and critical mistakes. Employee training and development programs are not properly budgeted for and hiring practices are skewed. Bad HR planning ensures that the HR assets of the organization are not aligned to organizational goals and objectives. A dysfunctional HR roadmap or ineffective HR management strategy has long-term consequences for an organization. It affects the performance of a business and the productivity levels of employees. Customer service on all fronts gets affected. The loss of customers and medium-term revenues is quite immediate. Over a period of time, the freefall leads to an impact on the bottom line of an organization. The remarkable developments in globalization and international trade could never be achieved without the technological, operational and financial investments in shipping. Shipping is a technical industry that highly depends on human skills, strategic, managerial and operational. Not only education and training, but also experiences are highly important in realizing a safe, secure and clean marine environment. The working conditions are tough for seagoing professions and especially for officers if these priorities are not taken into account the manpower shortage problem of the industry will never be solved. The demand for shipping is derived from the demand for international trade and this is the main reason of the fluctuating market conditions in the industry. If the shipping companies do not consider the negative effects of these fluctuations and if they reflect the problems mainly on officers by tightening their financial or social benefits and conditions, the escapes from these professions will continue. The industry will not be able to attain the existing crews and attract the newcomers. The economic crisis that has started shaking the world since the fourth quarter of 2009 has brought even a unique risk to the industry which has to be handled with

great care. These risks can only be approached through the strategic human resources management principles and the shipping companies should develop their organizational culture in such a manner as to solve the problems in the scope of the long term visions. Economic downturn impacts all areas of business, operations, finance, marketing, sales, legal, and HR, and appropriate responses are required in every functional area of organizations. Surviving an economic downturn requires appropriate integrated and coordinated actions. HR departments in shipping companies should play an active role to rescue their

organizations in the adverse effects of economic crisis, to support and assist their organization to adjust to the changes required by the economic downturn. This can be achieved not only by applying cost reduction strategies but also applying practices that will increase morale, motivation, job satisfaction and loyalty of seafarers. Image of seafaring is so fragile that some inappropriate practices and strategies implemented during economic turndowns can not only result in decreased morale, motivation and loyalty of seafarers working on board, but also decreasing popularity of seafaring occupation among young generations. And this will have negative medium to long term consequences on the HR 14 supply and demand equilibrium in shipping industry which has been facing chronic shortage of qualified seafarer for a long period. In this study it is concluded that as gaining and retaining qualified seafarers is very difficult in maritime industry, shipping companies in Turkey try not to reflect the adverse impacts of economic crisis to the seafarers working on board in order to retain their key employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Moreover, and as per the results highlighted by the research, there should be better provision and dissemination of information about employees' job satisfaction in order to improve management's ability to get the most out of the current workforce and start reaping desirable benefits. This should include information about what makes use of employees' abilities, the way they get along with their coworkers, the chances for advancements on their jobs and how they are affected by working conditions. This study is limited in several aspects. The most significant limitation is that the survey results are based on the viewpoints of class-A contractors. Besides, this research is only limited to the private sector and can be, in the future, directed to the public sector

FURTHER SCOPE OF THE STUDY

People and risk are as integral to farming as are weather, prices, and technology. Human resources must have careful attention if managers are to have a full understanding of their sources of risks and their alternatives for handling risk.

Managers' paradigms, understanding of human resource management, and human resource skills determine the success they will have with people. Like the rest of risk management, blaming others for management shortcomings neither solves problems nor provides escape from the problems. The good news is that managers can make human resource management one of their strengths. The result will be better risk management, more effective management, and greater satisfaction from working with people.

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