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Making HR People Complete



Jana Venkata Ramakrishna

Sameer Nagarajan

Chetan Yadav

Vinod Bidwaik

Lopamudra Banerjee

Kumaar Priyaranjan

Smita Singh

High Performing Culture

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As consumers, we are living in a golden age of choice, flexibility and control, where we can mould the world to our personal interests, preferences, and needs. As employees, we're bringing these expectations with us to workplaces, and it's a trend that's reshaping the HR function.



Time to focus on personalization

Aparna Sharma, Board Member, Thought Leader, Best Selling Author & Motivational Speaker, Mumbai

Research has shown that the HR strategies of the past no longer cut it. Enhancing employee engagement and retention, improving mental health of employees while dealing with trust issues employees may have with management etc., need clear communication & 100% transparency in words & actions by business & HR leaders alike. While HR professionals will continue to work on People Analytics, up gradation of recruiting technology, recruiting more for attitudes & behaviours & less for qualifications, enhancing Employee Experience (EX), I see apart from AI, employer branding, gamification of HR, atypical working, Personalization will gain much focus.

As consumers, we are living in a golden age of choice, flexibility and control, where we can mould the world to our personal interests, preferences, and needs. As employees, we're bringing these expectations with us to workplaces, and it's a trend that's reshaping the HR function.

In virtually every aspect of our lives, people are increasingly able to enjoy personalized experiences based on their unique needs. For example, instead of watching shows when the network airs them, services such as Netflix enable us to watch them whenever it fits our schedule.

Historically, HR has focused very much on standardisation and "One-Size-Fits-All". Making the shift to an approach where the individual needs, wishes and capabilities of candidates and employees are the starting point is difficult. Traditionally, many HR-practices take the needs of the organisation as the starting point. An example is recruitment : we have an organisation structure, with a hierarchy, and well-defined jobs. Next step : how do we find the candidates that can fill the vacancy? Another example : most on boarding processes are designed top-down : what do we want new employees to know when they enter the organisation? The reverse question is hardly ever asked : what can we learn from the new employees who enter the organisation?

Also learning & development has a hard time to make the shift to an individualised approach. We still see many programs targeted at groups (e.g. high potentials, senior managers), with a large classroom component. Office design is an area where the standard approach has backfired. Most of the new office designs now take the different needs of users into account. If you work better near other people and if you regularly need advice from colleagues, you can work in open space. When you need to concentrate on a complicated report, you can sit alone in a quiet room. For a call with a client, you can find one of the small phone booths.

In 2019 personalisation will get a lot of attention, and employees and organisations will benefit. Below are three areas where personalization will yield big benefits in the workplace :

A. Individualized development paths

Many companies organize development opportunities around jobs

and not people. With this approach, a specific program is designed to reflect the job requirements, and every individual is required to complete the same program in order to qualify for the job. While this kind of job-focused process is easier to administer, it can be frustrating for employees and costlier for the organization.

An individualized approach to development would start with the employee, not the job. What strengths, skills, and experience does this person have already? Where do they excel? Where do they need to improve? With that information, a customized program can be developed to target the right areas. This enhances employee motivation and engagement by delivering a tailored learning experience pitched at the right level to challenge the learner without overwhelming or frustrating them. It also saves the organization time and money by eliminating unnecessary training.

Competency-based development supports this type of personalized approach aligning the appropriate development options to each of the competencies that are required for job success. After the employee is assessed against the job requirements, any performance gaps can be addressed with the appropriate training.

In addition to customizing the learning requirements to the employee's needs on a more granular level, the organization will ideally provide training options that support a range of learning styles. Some employees prefer one-on-one learning. Others work well in classroom or team dynamics. And others need the convenience of self-paced, online learning. By making the appropriate training available in formats that fit different learning styles, the organization will see greater completion and success rates.

and preferences with a single, company-controlled wellness plan is unlikely to serve any population very effectively. This is one of the reasons workplace wellness has gone high-tech, with a nearly endless array of corporate apps and wearables designed to help individuals set and follow highly individualized health and wellness regimens. These technologies, along with flexible spending accounts for health and wellness activities, can help HR affordably deliver personalized programs that support a diverse workforce.

As employees grow used to greater choice and flexibility in other areas of their lives, they're bringing bigger expectations to the workplace. HR professionals who are tasked with retaining and engaging these workers need to anticipate the trend and explore



The reality is that for most employees, the boundaries between work life and the rest of life are porous, with late-night work emails and weekend check-ins now a regular part of the working landscape.

B. Flexibility around work-life balance

Achieving a healthy work-life balance is a priority for many employees, especially the growing contingent of millennial workers. HR leaders are recognizing that achieving greater balance is critical to the task of competing for talent. A study conducted by *Flexjobs* found that one in five employees would agree to earn less money in order to enjoy more flexible work options.

The reality is that for most employees, the boundaries between work life and the rest of life are porous, with late-night work emails and weekend check-ins now a regular part of the working landscape. By being flexible around schedules and preferred work styles, the company can show workers that they're appreciated and trusted.

C. Personalized health and wellness programs

From the weekend warrior to the couch potato, employees' health and wellness profiles vary greatly. And as the retirement age skews older, today's workplace can span four generations - from millennials to Gen Xers to Boomers to the "Silent" generation born before 1946. Attempting to cover this widely divergent set of health priorities

new ways to deliver self-guided, customized experiences in the workplace. By finding ways to integrate greater choice and personalization into key talent management processes, HR can support an increasingly diverse and autonomous workforce.

While all the above mentioned areas will be important, in summary, my recommendation is to stay open-minded and embrace the ones you feel could really benefit your business and employees.

If you fail to evolve, your business may face the reality of being left behind. **BM**