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Indian Journal of Training and Development



Indian Society for
Training and Development

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Golden Jubilee Twin Issue Celebrating Women Leaders

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Volume 50 No. 1&2
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Book Review

"Reality Bytes" The Role Of HR In Today's World

Author:

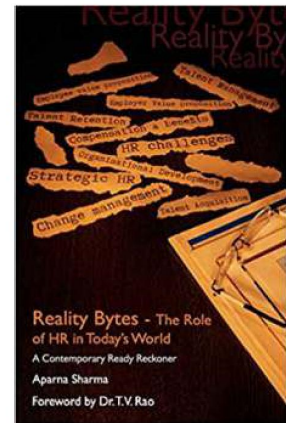
Aparna Sharma

Published by: **Vishwakarma Publications**

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The comprehensive book "Reality Bytes -The Role of HR in Today's World" by Aparna Sharma, written in a simple language, is a ready reckoner for budding HR graduates and professionals of other streams to have a comprehensive insight into the intricacies of all HR functions. It gives a clear insight into how HR can carry out value addition to a business. The caselets at the end of each chapter also aim at getting the reader to think and find his/her own solutions based on learning/s in each chapter. Key points (leads) which are thought-provoking and bring out the crux of the matter have been separately highlighted to give them prominence.

There was a time when machines or equipments were the most important asset/resource an organization could possess. People were more or less required only to run these machines and maintain them. But as we raced through time, we have loft allthose traditional thoughts far far behind.

Today and in the future too, the single-most competitive edge for an organization is its "people". In today's dynamic times, managing turnover in terms of people is as critical as increasing business turnover. This is because, inspite of being the most valuable resource, manpower is also the most difficult to manage, maintain & retain, and many organizations fall short of managing their people well.

Probably the reason for this is that formal education in HR does not prepare the young, would-be HR manager or even a line manager who needs to be an HR manager in his own right to manage people to face and deal with the Reality at the Workplace. This book has been written to achieve this very purpose.

'Reality Bytes - The Role of HR in Today's World' has something for everyone - whether an HR student, a budding early career HR manager(1-3 years), a Line manager who needs to be an HR manager in his own right to manage people or even a teacher or an entrepreneur trying to understand what HR is all about. This book is for you!

The First chapter discusses the "Employer Value Proposition and the Employee Value Proposition as TWINS". The author assigns huge importance to communication of Employee Value Proposition message across the organization and across all the stages of Employee Life Cycle. She says that if this is not communicated effectively, everything is lost.

The Second chapter discusses regarding Talent Acquisition, Talent Development and Talent Management as the 3 Ts. The readers would like to take a note of the newer and popular methods of recruitment especially recruitment through mobile phones which stands at 19 %and is likely to grow further.

SHRM study states that there are three major reasons for employee exit, 50 % cite better compensation and benefits, 35 % specify problems and 32 % need new challenges, which I feel is huge. The 32 % employees are an asset and can be tapped for their skills. I couldn't have agreed to the author more, when she speaks about sending leaders to foreign countries for exposure and stating that succession planning should be part of every company's strategic plan. Exposure widens horizon.

The author while discussing "Succession Planning Pitfalls" states that "Uncertainty about how long one needs to wait for promotion may result in the best people Leaving". This problem is omnipresent in all organizations.

While deliberating on Talent Retention, the author quotes McKinsey's War for Talent' study as "In an operational role, high performance can increase productivity by 40 %". I would rather say that when one is served with lifesaving situation/s, these are the people who turn defeats into victories. These heroes emerge out of nowhere. The need is, how to identify them and make arrangements to retain them.

In the Fourth chapter on "Compensation and Benefits" the author recommends the Four Cornerstone approach of Communication, Training, Reinforcement and Measurement by John Schaefer. Good performance needs to be recognized.

In the Sixth chapter on "Change Management" various models of Change Management are discussed. It is also brought out that OD and Change Management are different from each other but both are needed to run a business successfully. "Adaptation is the key for survival." as a key nugget is brought out very well.

While describing "Big Data" in the Seventh chapter, the author states that an organization can benefit by combining it with Analytics. It will result amongst others in cost saving, improving logistics, maximizing profits, recalculating risk portfolios, customer management and in detecting fraudulent behavior.

Chapter Eight discusses "Exit" in which What, Who, Why and How of "How to conduct Exit Interviews" are valuable. Exit Interviews are to be used as instruments of peace, as a knowledge bank of the competencies of the employee who is leaving, shows organization in good light in front of potential employees and it may be the last effort to retain a valuable employee. The author advocates third party audit for such interviews for an impartial assessment.

Chapter Ten deliberates on "Challenges in Today HR Management" where the famous quote of Adam Smith "The Market Moves through Invisible Hands" finds mention. The change in scenario to me is a combination of old and today as under:-

1. Focus should remain on to Produce what Customers' Need.
2. The Aim should be Customer Delight which will give you profit.
3. The Means should be Happy employees.

Sound & ethical HR professionals are key to the success of any business. They can produce results only if the organizational goals are clearly understood by them. They can thereafter tone their practices according to the goals and work accordingly. These professionals need to be aware of the future talent requirements of the business and need to work on the requirements accordingly. They should work out the tangibles by which the success of an employee(s) can be measured. Adequate tools may be required to be designed for the purpose.

For employees, besides salary, the employment conditions play a major role in continuing with the same organization. An employee would like to continue in an organization which does not change the goal post very often. It sticks to what it promised to the employee during signing on the contract of employment and provides adequate avenues for personal growth. An employee would love to work for such an organization and give his/her best so that the organization benefits and achieves desired targets.

Note :The book also has a compendium of relevant articles written by the author, Aparna Sharma on various HR topics covered in the book right at the end.