

4 The Strategist

MONDAY 4 MAY 2015

“Keep the end customer in mind”

The common slogan among HR folks for a while had been that everyone needed strong ‘people orientation’. Then came the concept of business partnerships as propounded by HR management guru Dave Ulrich. Now the task is to be ‘business oriented’. Being ‘business oriented’ for HR in any organisation means keeping the end customer in mind while taking care of the employees who are the internal customers.

Customer centricity involves describing an organisation that is operated from a customer’s point of view. Rather than developing new products and attempting to convince consumers to purchase them, a customer-centric firm develops products and services that the customer needs.

For HR too, this means designing and nurturing an organisation with an outside-in approach that needs to be aligned as a strategic priority of the business.

A few things are key in designing a customer-centric organisation. First, structure it around the end customer and not the product; second, involve the customer in the design process to ensure proper alignment. Finally, empower the front line staff.

Simultaneously, the communication mechanism, the incentive and reward system and the overall employer value proposition (EVP) must clearly spell out the approach to attract the right talent and ensure focused delivery of results.

A clear EVP helps you understand your HR priorities and work out the HR agenda accordingly. Most companies with a good EVP do not have to engage in the war for talent and pay a premium to attract it. Skilled talent is almost always attracted to them. A good EVP is the driver of employee engagement, recruitment and retention. For business overall, a customer centric EVP has a positive impact on the return on invest-

ment through the employee life-cycle. But this is not easy. Being customer centric is more than being responsive to customer needs. A company must reorient its processes and plans around the customer’s needs.

To begin with, the mindset and skills of the HR teams need to undergo change. Once they are re-skilled, only then can they partner with and support business and the end customers.



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