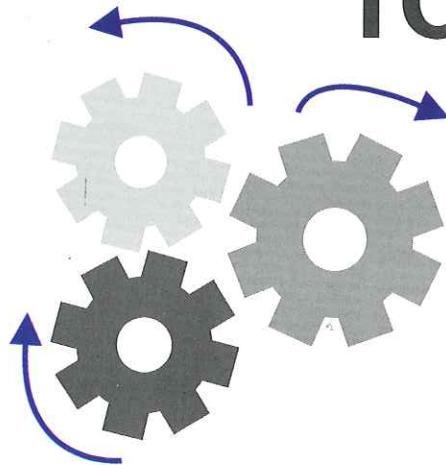


# people and management

BEING PEOPLEWISE

**"THE NEED  
TO SKILL"**



**sodexo**  
Growth through  
Motivation

**HIGHLIGHT**  
**India's Bulging Population**  
**Boon or Bane**

**CASE IN POINT**  
**A Compelling**  
**Brand Culture**

**SPOT LIGHT**  
**The Art of**  
**Negotiation**

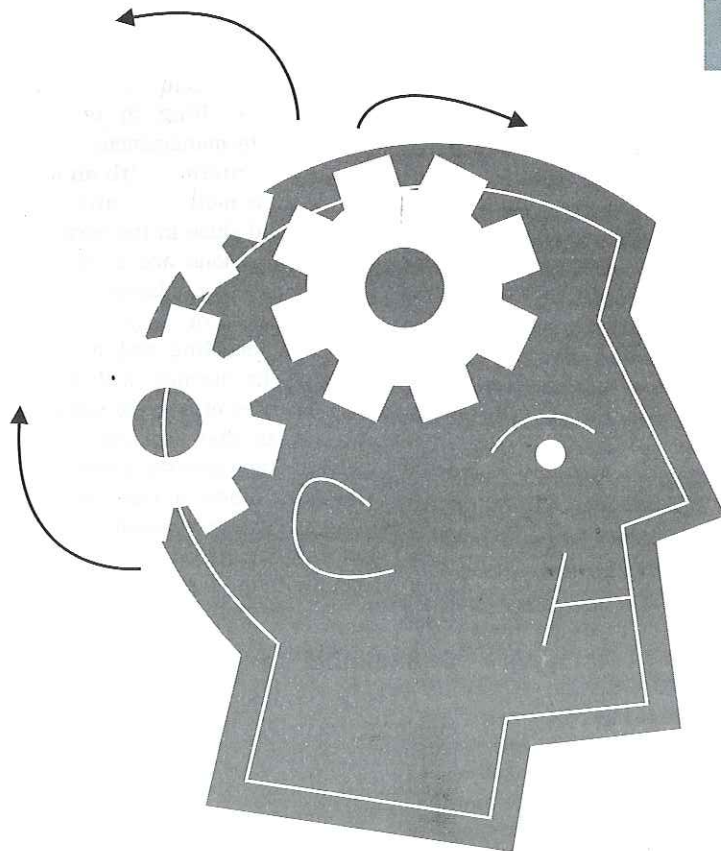
# Talent Management

## Delight your workforce to devise standards!



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*“Man is a gaming animal. He must always be trying to get the better in something or other.” — Charles Lamb.*



**D**emographics are changing fast. The world has shrunk into a global village and the dynamics are changing on a daily basis. In order to establish and sustain a centre of excellence, the prerequisite is a comprehensive Talent Management System firmly in place within organisations. Talent management can improve Human Resources' ROI through an integrated, end-to-end HR infrastructure. Building a talent management system with a committed end-to-end process of planning, developing, managing and retaining employees throughout the organisation is a challenge for every HR professional. After all, organisations need to ensure that it attracts and keeps the employees it needs for future survival and growth.

The contemporary issue that looms large – globally and in India – is the acute shortage of talent – the right talent and the scramble for it has become a worldwide trend. Like any other resources like land, capital, energy etc., human talent pool is shaping up as a prime strategic resource for any type of industry around the world. Despite the huge number of backlog on the rolls of employment exchanges – both state owned and private – the so called plethora of head-hunters or placement agencies what is missing or the formidable task of a HR Manager these days is to scan, scout and hunt for real and 'appropriate talent' with high quality, depth and of course, commitment to the job.

### What is talent?

Although we use the term 'talent' quite often in various contexts, to define it precisely is indeed difficult though not impossible. It is quite complex; it has a broader connotation and has to be critically visualised as 'an organisation-specific' need, and

that kind of crystal gazing is not always easy. Talent in a way is the result of dovetailing the individual capabilities with that of the organisation to achieve the goals. Skills need to be updated and enhanced in their effectiveness to meet the contemporary dynamics of an organisation with a view to stay afloat and to derive competitive edge. To quote John Gardner – the author of the book titled Excellence, “There are those who perform great deeds and those that make it possible for others to perform great deeds. There are pathfinders and path preservers. There are those who nurture and those who inspire. There are those whose excellence involves doing something well and those whose excellence lies in being the kind of people they are ....”

### **Identify best practices for a talent sourcing system**

It is absolutely necessary to formulate your organisation's sourcing parameters well in advance, benchmarking with the well known and successful companies wherein the time-tested mechanisms are in vogue. While it is difficult in practice to understand the various principles and methodologies that are in vogue in multiple organisations some of them industry specific, some location specific etc., the underlining spirit in such should be assimilated and blended with the company of our operations. To quote an example, some hi-tech companies with their core competence like the software designing, information security scrutiny and monitoring etc., are some of the areas where the employees are given a lot of freedom even at entry points, in view of the high sensitivity of their tasks and are allowed to operate on virtual office base. Such an experiment has produced enormous positive results and therefore Banks, Insurance and similar sectors may recruit specialised cadre of personnel with this operational mode in mind, especially the back-office functions, with the accountability parameters being made more specific and lapses or resultant damages if any, being compensated. This eventually leads to other tangible benefits like cost and time savings and operational freedom for the personnel. “Most human beings have an absolute and infinite capacity for taking things for granted”, says Aldus Huxley and this is true for those vested with the responsibility of identifying the right person for the right job. We need to develop the uncanny skill of spotting talented people and inducting them to our folds.

There is no doubt that finding the right people to do the best job is still a huge challenge,

but we have so many tools available today that I believe we have a better chance to identify and attract the specific kind of talent we need. The need of the hour is to innovate and arrive at contemporary and currently validated modes of locating the right talent as against the conventional methods like campus recruitment, job fairs, head-hunters, advertisements etc. Take for instance, the internet, through which an organisation can scout around the world for the just right talent now that the trans-national interface has become a possibility. To me it appears a good idea for organisations to think of backward integration processes for identifying their future human resource when they are at teens in schools; adopt them, nurture them and shape them as loyal and talented lot in their long term perspective by educating them and bearing all the costs, which would primarily satiate their appetite and incidentally serve as a credible corporate social responsibility too. This goes to prove that the dictum – ‘invest in people’ with as much commitment as you invest in technology and systems, holds true.

Nonetheless, the age-old job interview mode remains key to assessing the candidate's cultural fit. The job interview remains the tool you can use to get to know your candidate on a more personal basis.

### **Translate business goals into competencies to drive the company's success**

The concept of core competencies was developed in the management field. C.K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel introduced the concept in a 1990 Harvard Business Review article. They wrote that a core competency is “an area of specialised expertise that is the result of harmonising complex streams of technology and work activity.” This evidently leads to competitive advantage for your company.

Unless the people at all rungs are made aware of the commitment of the organisation to achieve the core competencies and are consciously trained through a systemic pattern in gaining the organisational objectives, any peripheral effort would only lead to chaos and frustration amongst the people in the organisation. The organisational goals need to be discussed, validated, fine-tuned and accepted by the employees for proper implementation. This should be preceded by a free and transparent system of assent and dissent dialogues between peers and superiors. Needless to add that the goals should be pragmatic and a sense of challenge should be in-built, but which should

not be over-ambitious. The best way would be to ask oneself, 'would I gladly accept these goals and be able to surpass them?'

According to D. Leonard-Barton (1992), "Capabilities are considered core if they differentiate a company strategically." On the other hand Galunic and Rodan (1998) argue that "a core competency differentiates not only between firms but also inside a firm; it differentiates amongst several competencies. In other words, a core competency guides a firm recombining its competencies in response to demands from the environment."

Having underlined the significance of developing core competency models, be it for a manufacturing firm or service based, the business goals as envisioned by the top management need to be blended with this competency model so as to synchronise it effortlessly to achieve the predetermined results. This evidently calls for a high level of commitment and ingenuity on the part of the top management team and realise it through the whole-hearted contribution of the people at large in the organisation. This will also serve as an acid test for the managerial capabilities of the business leaders and the work-culture, motivation levels and the overall morale prevailing therein.

### **Understand methods of selecting a performance management system.**

Performance management system (PMS) is at the heart of any 'people management' process in an organisation. Organisations exist with a soul aim to perform. It is common knowledge that if people do not perform, organisations don't perform either, and in the long term, might even have to struggle to survive. However, if people perform at their optimal level, organisations can assume that the challenges to compete with their counterparts, however formidable, can be overcome and it will prosper and grow.

Performance management systems if properly designed and implemented can change the course and pace of growth of organisations. In the past, many organisations and their HR functions have wasted a significant time and energy by wrongly focusing on performance appraisals rather than performance management.

Performance management is a conscious and continuous effort of enhancing the performance levels of each employee, both at an individual and the group levels, thus paving way for a tangible performance trajectory for

the organisation. The organisations in their own interest need to hone up their business objectives with intent to blend them with its people's skills so as to strategically scale new heights. This evidently calls for a band of workforce with high level of confidence and commitment. We need to establish a 'YOYO' (you are on your own) model of competency in the organisation to create long lasting value for it. Of course, this is more easily said than done in reality. Unless the organisation is mature enough to have time-tested systems in place to assiduously evaluate the potential as well as performance of the members of the workforce through well-designed structure sans subjective overtones, the exercise would go astray defeating the very purpose of it. And the converse is also equally true in that once a well-defined performance management system is in place it would evidently enhance the skills the workforce, paving way for organisational effectiveness and competitive advantage. High performance standards with a periodic review systems based on 360 degree feedback, reward mechanisms and realigning the expected levels of performance, based on employee performance review systems (EPRS) etc., are some of the ingredients of an effective PMS. The psychometric tests may inter alia, be suitably administered to evaluate and enhance personal and team development of individuals or groups and their motivational profiles.

It should be the constant endeavour of any organisation to identify and deploy appropriate tools for evaluating employees' current knowledge and skills as well as potential, and create an inventory (KSI) of it for meeting the organisational growth plans and emerging exigencies. While doing so, certain crucial and critical employee profiles should be segregated to utilise them for some specialised tasks or for correction and counselling. This would, even if practised regularly like a ritual, aid the organisation in meeting out sudden attrition related issues and serve as a reliable back-up, particularly for key positions. After all, a talent management system is all about identifying right talent, facilitating them to grow and meticulously retaining them with the sole motive of achieving the organisational goals. It is worthwhile to recall the words of the famous American author, Dale Carnegie, "Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all." And "We will either find a way, or make one," as stated by Hannibal. ■

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