

Effectiveness and Competencies of HR Professionals towards Human Capital Development

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Abstract— The role and competencies of human resource professionals are changing because of changes in human capital trends, owing to moderating variables in the global marketplace. The study focuses on prominence of human capital trends, significance of human capital management, impact of human resource competencies on human capital management, effectiveness of human resource competencies that help to nurture a thriving workforce through relevant human capital management and development practices, which in turn helps to build successful business organizations with sustainable competitive advantage. Human resource professionals from different business organizations were the universe of the study and a sample of respondents were identified for the purpose of the qualitative study. For the qualitative study, descriptive research design, qualitative method, case study as research tool, purposive non-probability sampling technique, and thematic analysis for interpretation of the collected data has been used. It was found that there was low business-awareness in HR professionals, HR competencies differed in different businesses, there was a lack of understanding on how HR competencies and human capital development practices align to business performance, there was no rapid transformation in HR competencies and its application towards human capital development practices. It was also found that maturity levels of HR competencies varied based on years of experience, HR competency framework was not valued, well-defined and developed. Additionally it was found that HR competencies are constantly evolving, culture building with purpose helps in leading talent, organizational design and change management as a HR competency helps build winning talent strategies, irresistible employee experiences help to promote employee engagement, and implementing innovation paves way to growth.

Index Terms— Competencies, Effectiveness, Human Capital Development, Human Resources.

I. INTRODUCTION

Global marketplace is rapidly changing over the years because of moderating variables like natural

calamities, pandemic, geographic, demographic, social, cultural, political, economics and technology.

Since global market place is rapidly changing, *Human Capital Trends* including designing work for well-being, unleashing worker potential, building super-teams, governing workforce and

accelerating the shift to re-architecting work, is speedily changing.

Because human capital trends are rapidly changing the *Role of HR* is also bound to change to a Business & Human-Centered role and propel transition from “People as a means to an end” to “People as the purpose of the business”.

While the role of HR changes, only the latest *HR Competencies* like accelerating business, advancing human capability, simplifying complexity, mobilizing information and fostering collaboration, can help deliver relevant human capital management and development practices.

Relevant *Human Capital Management and Development Practices* help to nurture a thriving

workforce of effective, enabled and empowered employees.

In turn a *Thriving Workforce* helps to build *Successful Business Organizations* with *Sustainable Competitive Advantage*.

Based on this context and focus the researcher has conducted a qualitative study to understand the effectiveness and HR competencies of HR professionals towards human capital development.

II. PROMINENCE OF HUMAN CAPITAL TRENDS

Human Capital Trend means a general direction or fashion in which Human Capital is developing or changing rapidly over years in a VUCA World, where the business environment has become more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA).

Since the global marketplace scenario is swiftly changing, Human Capital Trends have changed, namely - governing workforce strategies, tapping into a broad talent pool, searching for technical & innately human skills, ensuring great-candidate-experience, building super-teams where productive-work happens, reskilling towards lifelong learning, unleashing worker potential beyond reskilling, redesigning hybrid-work, designing work for well-being, promoting work-life integration, re-inventing new forms of leadership, enhancing employee experience, sustaining company culture, aligning performance with purpose, enabling greater trust and shaping the future of work.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Work, Workforce & Workplace are the three pivotal dimensions of Human Capital Management, for any organization previously and during the on-going global pandemic, that are being influenced and impacted by the following disruptors like, The Great War for Talent, The Era of Great Resignation, The Great Race to Reskill and The Great Leap to Energize the Employee Experience - created by new players, new business models & new customer-behaviour-shifts that are reshaping industries.

Human Capital Management in any organization has become more important than ever, to enable organizational success by working with the business teams, to pivot from traditional to future-workplace models, from hierarchal

leadership to mindful leadership, from low-trust to high-trust, from stagnation to innovation, from instruction to self-direction, from worker-mind-set to entrepreneur-mind-set, from performers to high outperformers, from silos to collaboration, from thought leadership to unified execution leadership, from individualized best practices to institutionalized best practices, from employee engagement to employee experience, from career reversion to career progression and from conservatory work culture to participatory work culture, for rapid business transformation.

IV. IMPACT OF HR COMPETENCIES ON HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Human Resource Competency means, the ability to do something successfully or efficiently with 'Application' of 'Expertise (specific learned activities)' in Human Capital Management. HR needs to transition effectively between strategic and functional roles, as they may be required to play different hats in different business situations.

Human Resource Competencies should evolve and be used by HR to create value inside with employees and organizations, and outside with customers, investors and communities in line with changing Human Capital Trends.

HR professionals have increasingly been urged to develop new competencies as 'HR business partners' in their ongoing search to integrate business strategy with people management practices. Large organizations have developed very sophisticated and role-specific competency models for business partners, and an academic research and consultancy industry has grown up around this area, especially for organizations.

According to Dave Ulrich et.al, (2007), 'In the world of business, familiar themes continually surface. Globalization has made the world a global village, and new markets offer new challenges and opportunities. Global issues like trade barriers, exchange rates, tariffs, and distribution become important elements of managerial choice. Technology has increased accessibility, visibility, and connection. The connected world is smaller, rapidly changing, and transparent. Customers have become increasingly segmented, literate, and demanding. Investors have become increasingly attuned to and actively concerned about not only financial results, but also intangibles. Competitors come from both traditional large global players and increasingly smaller investors. Employees

represent increasingly diverse demographic backgrounds. In some parts of the world, employees are aging more than in others. Employee expectations are constantly rising as they gain in education and skills. Most of these trends are outside the control of any one individual or any one company. They occur in both predictable and unpredictable ways. They affect all aspects of business from how to fund a firm to how to position the firm in customers' minds and how to engineer and deliver products. They also affect human resources. HR practices are becoming more integrated, aligned, and innovative. HR departments are operating more like a business within the business, with a clear strategy and channels of distribution'.

Dave Ulrich, has been tracking the ever-evolving competencies of HR professionals. In the mid-1980s, the primary effort was to study broad-based HR competencies. Eventually his research on competencies was with the desire to resolve three issues, namely (i) Define the competencies that add the greatest value to key stakeholders (ii) Figure out how HR professionals develop these competencies in the fastest and most effective ways (iii) Determine how HR competencies and HR practices align to business performance. In 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2016 and 2021 surveys were conducted to evolve the HR competency models, once in a gap of 5 years and not each year. But HR Competencies and its real-time application has to rapidly change, to rapidly changing Human Capital Trends.

V. EFFECTIVENESS AND COMPETENCIES

Human Capital Development Practices positively impact business performance considerably. But while identifying and understanding HR Competencies and their relationship to Human Capital Development Practices, there is a dire need to sustain the transformation of the HR function.

HR professionals must develop and demonstrate a new set of competencies to fulfil their changing roles and create sustainable competitive advantages. Given this requirement, it is clear that HR professionals must be fully competent in strategy development, implementation and evaluation.

Effectiveness of HR professionals towards human capital development matters more than ever because leaders of business have increasingly recognized the importance of individual abilities

(talent), organization capabilities (culture) and leading skills (leadership) as key to the success of their organizations.

In an increasing world of change, there has never been a greater need to identify what HR professionals must be, know, do, and deliver to contribute more fully to their organizations.

Being an effective HR professional is not just knowing the body of knowledge and HR Competencies that defines the profession but being able to apply that knowledge to Human Capital Development Practices.

VI. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Globally, the 21st century economic landscape has become volatile and unstable. Thus, firms must continue to reinvent themselves in order to maintain the competitive edge.

The current rise in knowledge work, as well as reduced product life cycle time, workforce diversity, flatter, leaner and more participative organizations have put priority on human capital as the major strategic asset of organizations that strive for sustainable competitive advantage (Akinyemi, 2007; Becker, Huselid, & Ulrich, 2001; Kearns, 2004; Mercer, 2003; Pfeffer, 1998; Torraco & Swanson, 1996; Ulrich, 1998; Wright, 1999).

Human Resources Development departments play a vital role in helping the organization meet its strategic goals by managing the workforce effectively and efficiently. The role of Human Resources is changing as fast as technology and the global marketplace. Human Resource Development plays vital role meeting the changing requirement of highly skilled and competent human resource due to globalization. Best Practices in HR are subjective and transitory. In the business world there are changes and challenges every minute, unlike Human Resource Development in most companies. Since the future and success of any organization depends upon its dynamic and skilled personnel, it is thus important to understand the effectiveness and competencies of HR professionals towards human capital development.

This study focused on various domains of HR competencies such as Efficient Talent Acquisition, Productive Power and Time, Teaming and Leading the Talent, Optimize Talent Strategies, Transformative HR Actions, Engaging and Employees Energy, Workforce Innovation and Utilization, Effective Imitativeness, Sustainable

competitive advantage, Strategies to retain Human resources, and Proactive HR Approaches.

VII. NEED AND IMPORTANCE

Human Resource Development practice is multi-dynamical. It is about developing the people, place and organization. Real development of any organization will get propelled only if there is proper development of manpower or personnel. There can be no organization without Human Resource Development Practices. There are many Human Resource Development Practices are available as like millions of companies exist in the world. Then what is that which makes a company unique and successful? It is not the mere existence of practice but unique competencies of Human Resource Development professionals which make the company unique and successful. "For HR professionals to respond to changing business conditions, they must demonstrate new competencies. HR professionals who would have been successful in previous decades would not be effective today. We have worked for the last 20 years to identify the competencies that enable HR professionals to respond to business conditions. HR competencies are the values, knowledge, and abilities of HR professionals. HR professionals with the right competencies will perform better. They will be more likely to engage employees, to serve customers, and to create intangible shareholder wealth. HR competencies define what is expected from those who work in HR and form the basis for assessment and improvement in the quality of HR professionals" (McLagan, 1983). The study focuses on the influence of rapidly changing Human Capital Trends on HR Competencies and to analyze the effectiveness of HR Competencies of HR Professionals and its real-time application in Human Capital Development Practices. Thus this research is most important in the current business scenario.

VIII. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To determine the influence of Human Capital Trends on HR Competencies.
- 2) To evaluate how HR professionals develop these HR competencies in the fastest and most effective ways.
- 3) To assess the effectiveness of HR Competencies of HR Professionals towards Human Capital Development Practices.

IX. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The scientific and systematic way of solving a research is research methodology. It refers to the various sequential steps adopted by a researcher in studying the research problem with certain objectives to solve the issue. The research design considered to be the basic framework of research methods and techniques which are selected by the researcher based on the suitability for their study. The research design for this study is Descriptive Research Design. The descriptive study is used to analyze and understand the Effectiveness and Competencies of HR Professionals towards Human Capital Development. The researcher adopted Qualitative method to the study. Case study was the research tool used to collect the data from the respondents. Six senior HR Professionals were interviewed personally in consideration to the objectives of the study. The Universe of the study was HR Professionals from various HR Forums. The purposive sampling technique (Non-Probability sampling) was used in the study for data collection. Using the sampling techniques mentioned, the sample of six respondents were identified and selection for the purpose of the study. The data was analyzed systematically and the information gathered was presented with the interpretation of categories of various domains. The researcher used thematic analysis for interpretation of the collected data.

X. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Contemporary organizations are essentially people driven. Termed as Human Resources in HR parlance, the contribution of people towards success is established. Organizational environment is characterized by competition and performance, thus making traditional human resource practices in managing people redundant. Creating new forms of competitive advantage has thus become a major area of concern for organizations. It gets all the more complex in the contemporary knowledge based industry with knowledge workers contributing to the organization in the form of human capital. The search for newer forms of competitive advantage in organizations are being seen in the name of competencies at the individual level and creating value to the human resource management (Berardine 1997, Hagan 1996, Nordhaug 1993).

The overview of each case study with respondents in the HR fraternity, from multiple industries, is summarized below.

A. Case Study 1

This respondent is the CHRO of a manufacturing firm. His organization follows contemporary hiring practices for candidate experience. Rate of quality production, sales volumes and new product development propels productive power and innovation. Cross-generational workforce and skill-match to job-role helps workforce management. Regular cadences, online performance management system, automation of repetitive tasks, meaningful engagement, job-rotation, multi-skilling, enhanced benefits and reward mechanisms are few talent management strategies used. Culture transformation, grade re-structuring, balance score-card, role clarity and buddy program, were few Transformative HR Actions. Month end movie outing, sponsoring for special education, family & annual get together are few employee engagement interventions followed to boost employee morale & energy. Individual passion related KRA, Execution excellence awards, unique sales contribution awards, Star performer awards and Budgets for small experiments promotes workforce innovation & utilization. Compensation benchmarking, quality targets, systems and process improvement supported sustainable competitive advantage of organization in the marketplace. Employee Engagement survey, long term service awards, retainer bonuses, attrition limit awards to managers handling teams, performance linked bonus linked with full year of service and quarterly town hall meeting to hear employee voice, were few strategies to retain employees. Updating of policies, leadership communication with line managers and engagement conversations from HR to employees were few pro-active HR approaches taken.

Managing aged workforce and fast track growth for millennials continues to be a challenge.

B. Case Study 2

This respondent is the HR Leader of a shipping port. Hiring of locals and diverse workforce, were few efficient talent acquisition practices undertaken. Knowledge sharing sessions and employee work's committees helped improve productivity. Mentoring, reduced micromanagement and employee empowerment helped better workforce management. Tailoring

employee experiences and optimizing workforce planning were few talent strategies adopted. Data analytics in decision making and periodical department meetings were few notable transformative HR actions taken. Innovation Club was a unique intervention used to boost employee morale & energy. Digitization of routine activities and skill upgradation were interventions for better workforce innovation & utilization. Right skilled-people for right job and consistency in customer outreach, helped HR to support for sustainable competitive advantage.

Pro-Active HR approaches and unique strategies to retain employees has more scope for improvement.

C. Case Study 3

This respondent is a HR Business Partner in an IT Infrastructure Management Company. Reducing the number of interviews for a position was a unique talent acquisition practice followed. Flexibility in work timings and decentralization of roles were few transformative HR actions taken.

No pro-active HR approaches, interventions and talent strategies were deployed for enhanced productivity, teaming, workforce management, workforce innovation & utilization to retain employees.

D. Case Study 4

This respondent is a HR Business Partner in an IT Software Company. No innovative talent acquisition practices were followed, owing to increased open positions to be closed. Mentoring programs increased productivity. Division of labour, work-life balance, weekly learning sessions and spot-feedback on performance are few talent management interventions deployed. Process simplification was a transformative HR action taken. Manager-Worker trust and intense technical trainings helped workforce utilization. HR automation of process increased enhanced efficiencies.

Not much of importance for pro-active HR approaches, employee engagement interventions, innovation and strategies to retain employees, for sustainable competitive advantage.

E. Case Study 5

This respondent is an L&D professional in the hospitality sector. Hiring of physically challenged is a unique talent acquisition practice followed. Team huddle before shifts and leave sharing policy helped boost productivity. Learning and

development programs helped better workforce management. Maximum utilization of available resources continues to be key to optimization. Interim retention bonus is a strategy to retain employees. Memorable customer service is considered key for customer loyalty.

Ongoing pandemic, has not paved way for new talent strategies, transformative HR actions, employee engagement and pro-active HR approaches.

F. Case Study 6

This respondent is a recruitment professional in a technology start up. Exponential salary to attract the crème of top technology talent is the most preferred talent attraction strategy. Innovative technical projects and hybrid work policy helps in productivity and work-life balance. Workforce management is easy given the lean headcount in the start-up. Employee Engagement events happen virtually and sometimes in office.

Fear of business progress owing to recession in information technology sector prevails. Talent strategies, transformative HR Actions, strategies to retain employees and pro-active HR approaches, are yet to gain momentum since the company is in a start-up stage.

XI. SUMMARY OF CASE STUDIES

Human Capital Trends differ from industry to industry and is changing at a rapid pace, due to moderating variables like natural calamities, pandemic, geographic, demographic, social, cultural, political, economics and technology. Not all HR Professionals are aware of the rapidly changing Human Capital Trends in their industry, due to low industry-awareness. HR Competencies within HR, differs from one role to another, one job level or grade to another and one industry to another. The need and importance of relevant HR Competencies and Framework is largely not valued, except by Senior HR professionals. Evolving HR Competencies that add the greatest value to key stakeholders are not well defined, understood, developed and evaluated by many HR Professionals across industries. The maturity levels of HR Competencies vary from novice, beginner, intermediate, expert to world class, in HR Professionals, based on their level of experience and exposure. HR Competencies like accelerating business, advancing human capability, simplifying complexity, mobilizing information and fostering collaboration that are evolving, can help deliver

relevant human capital management and development practices. There is a lack of understanding in many HR Professionals on how HR Competencies and Human Capital Development Practices align to business performance, due to low business acumen. HR Competencies and its application towards Human Capital Development Practices has not rapidly changed, to the rapidly changing Human Capital Trends and largely cause ineffectiveness.

Majority of HR Professionals have an inability to predict future skill needs and fulfil them on time, despite the best talent acquisition practices. Hybrid work that is driving business transformation, is a balancing act on productive power, productive time and productivity. Building culture with purpose, helps in teaming and leading talent. Only Organizational Design and Change Management as a HR competency, can help build winning talent strategies. The competency of harnessing analytics with objective and actionable insights can propel transformative HR actions at a desired level. Irresistible employee experiences, will promote employee engagement, and largely boost employee morale & energy. Implementing best practices around Innovation paves way to growth and efficiency. Competency to identify the future of work trends, most relevant to each business, will provide a sustainable competitive advantage to organizations in the marketplace. Pro-Active HR approaches and strategies to retain employees need to be more contemporary than conventional.

XII. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) There is a lack of understanding in many HR Professionals on how HR Competencies and Human Capital Development Practices align to business performance, due to low business acumen so the organization should provide them proper training to understand the significance of competencies to face the HR challenges in the contemporary world.
- 2) HR professionals need to be aware that a new model for HR is emerging. Hence the presence of competency-consciousness will help diagnose, design, develop and evaluate the latest and best of HR Competencies in HR Professionals.
- 3) HR Professionals in organization will need to adopt a consequential and accountable DEIB Strategy (Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging).

- 4) While rising turnover is increasing competition for talent and pandemic-disruption overturns workforce planning - talent intelligence and skills taxonomy will have to become the cornerstone of any people strategy.
- 5) An effective talent management model should pivot from essential talent activities, to critical talent growth, to managed talent relationships and finally blossom into an inclusive talent system.
- 6) Learning, skills, and career progression tracks will have to become business critical for human capital development.
- 7) Companies will need to invest in a digital future, re-architect their HR technology and rethink HR.
- 8) People analytics will require to touch on every aspect of business, with objective and actionable insights and propel transformative HR actions at a desired level.
- 9) HR Professionals will require to increase overall workforce health and drive resilience.

CONCLUSION

In this research an attempt has been made to study the effectiveness of HR competencies of HR professionals towards human capital development. While the existing practices serve as key practices which bring the desired organizational growth and better results, there is an urgent need to introduce more effective human resource development practices. Thus the competencies of human resource development professionals which constructively work towards the successful attainment of personal and organizational-vision and objectives, is pivotal.

This research study will be useful in providing knowledge, experiences of human resource development professionals and organizations on how effective they contribute to human capital development. It is not the mere existence of the existing human resource development practices which make an organization visible but it is the best human resource development competencies which will be utilized properly and constantly will bring greater glory, high employee satisfaction, increased profits and human capital development.

Organizations are becoming more agile, more flexible, more empathetic, and more digital than ever. The coming years will bring in newer and unforeseen challenges. But, HR Competencies and its real-time application towards Human Capital Development Practices will have to rapidly

change, to the rapidly changing Human Capital Trends.

While HR Professionals are increasingly aware of gaps and the ineffectiveness between rhetoric HR-competencies and the actual reality of Human Capital Development, it is increasingly important to develop a critical awareness of HR competencies and their effectiveness in transforming HR roles and the HR function for long-term strategic success, to build a Thriving Workforce that in turn helps to build Successful Business Organizations with Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

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