

HRM Strategies for Virtual Workplaces And Remote Workforces: Need Of The Hour BY

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Abstract

In a world gone digital due to the Covid 19 outbreak, corporates are now increasingly asking their employees to work from home as a means of following physical and social distancing. With the Indian Economy as well as the Global Economy in deep recession, it is important for organisations to deal with the effects of the recession. Human resource management is the organizational function that manages all issues related to the people in an organization. That includes but is not limited to compensation, recruitment and hiring, performance management, organization development, safety, wellness, benefits, employee motivation, communication, policy administration, and training. All these decisions concern real people and hence, the Human Resource (HR) managers in such organizations have a vital role to play as far as managing the after effects and the side effects of such difficult decisions are concerned. Indeed, one can go so far as to say that the HR managers have a vital role to play in these times as they are in the “frontline” or in other words, have to directly deal with the employees who are being laid off. Therefore, it is important to consider how they must act and deal with the unpleasant decisions that all organisations have to take in recessionary times.

Introduction

Human resource management is also a strategic and comprehensive approach to managing people and the workplace culture and environment. With the uncertainties surrounding a return to normalcy, or for that matter, a new normal where such arrangements are permanent, appropriate strategies have to be put in place to ensure that organisational productivity does not suffer and that organisational goals are met. We have well and truly entered the Digital Age and it is time for organizations, business leaders, and the Human Resource (HR) Managers to start preparing for the Workplace of Tomorrow. To start with, future workplaces would be very unlike what they were and are now and this has to do with the revolutionary changes in business, politics, society, and other aspects of our world driven by technology and peopled by a generation of workers and professionals who are very different from their predecessors.

Indeed, while this was said at the onset of the services revolution as well when experts pointed out that the phasing of the Industrial Revolution and transitioning to the IT (Information Technology) paradigm would trigger changes in HRM strategies, what is different now is that the very concept of a Physical Workplace seems to be receding with virtual working, freelancing, remote working, and distributed office spaces.

Objective:

The digital workplace gives employees the tools they need to improve their communication, collaboration and connections with each other. Implemented effectively, it also allows organizations to mitigate common risks, adhere to their regulatory compliance mandates and ultimately realize enhanced business value.

Challenges Due to Virtual Workforces

There are real challenges for managers and others supervising their teams to ensure that the workflow continues in a seamless manner and to avoid “disconnect” (literally and figuratively) as far as the links that bind workforces are concerned. Having said that, firing of workers is not the only challenge that HR managers have to deal with in recessionary times. They also have to ensure that the existing employees are working to their full capacity as this is one way of ensuring that the organisations are productive.

In other words, as the workforce shrinks, the remaining workers have to shoulder the burden of the entire output targets and hence, the HR managers have to face the challenge of motivating the remaining workers to be extremely productive. Hence, they need performance appraisal as well, by their superiors to boost up the morale. Indeed, fresh joiners and entry level staff have to be supervised for a few years before they become self-sufficient and autonomous to do their work and this poses a challenge for line managers as well as the HR managers. Shifting from office culture to WFH, those who are not very tech-friendly are facing difficulties and are in a need of a support system.

When one considers how employees with children and dependant parents have to achieve Work Life Balance, it becomes a headache for both the employees as well as the organisations. In addition, team meetings conducted virtually might not have the same gravitas as face to face interactions and this can become a significant challenge as well.

On top of it, in countries in the developing world, there can be additional challenges in terms of breakdown of power and disruption of internet services that can add to the problems arising from WFH.

New Work Paradigm and New Policies

Therefore, what is needed is a new work paradigm for organisations as they navigate the challenges of an uncertain future. where business leaders have to step in and provide Pep Talks and Inspiring Speeches as well as Comforting Words for the employees who are WFH. Moreover, they must also draw up an action plan that would be longer term dealing with the challenges of the New Realities and also budgeting (both financially as well as strategically) for a future that would be both radical and uncertain at the same time.

In other words, it is important that corporates dig in for the Long Haul given the prevailing uncertainties.

As mentioned earlier, this requires the active cooperation of the governments at the various levels and a good starting point can be a summit (virtual, of course) where all stakeholders can come together and decide on a common strategy.

Moreover, there needs to be more coordination at the global level as well that can include a set of protocols regarding WFH and Virtual Workforces implementing New Policies and who knows, maybe, New Laws as well.

Changing the Employer Employee Relationship

These challenges are turning into opportunity to eliminate the hitherto existing fiction between the employers and the employees. Infact, they opened a whole new portal to build a cordial relationship between both the aforesaid fractions of any industry/company.

Infact, for the first time in the history of business, firms such as Uber and other Unicorn Digital Economy businesses need not even need their workers to report to specific locations or even meet their HR managers and others in person and instead, workers and professionals in the Digital Economy firms would be well and truly “faceless”.

Next, the very concept of the Employer Employee Relationship is undergoing a radical change as professionals and workers alike need not necessarily be on the rolls of the businesses they work for or employed as full time and permanent employees. The workplace of tomorrow would have part time workers, Zero Hour Contracted Professionals who are paid by the hours they work and not full salaries like before, Freelancers who divide their time working for multiple businesses.

Concluding Thoughts

Last, **there is also a need for the human touch and the healing touch as well as a humanitarian approach from all stakeholders.**

This is especially the case for Middle Managers who have to adjust and move away from brash and tough team management methods to a softer and understanding leadership.

Indeed, if we have to cross this together, we might as well ensure that we have each other's backs and those we are all on the same rope that is holding us together.

To conclude, WFH might become the New Normal and we better get used to it.

Conclusion

Thus, future HR Managers would be expected to be the Human Element in the Interface between Machines and Employees.

In other words, they would be living up to the term Human in HR and this is something to think about for what it means to be one in the workplaces of the future.

To conclude, just as the Personnel Managers in Factories became HR Managers in the Services firms, they would have to become People Managers in the Digital Age where the distinction between Human and Machine is thinning.

Key Takeaways

- Human resource management (HRM) is the function in an organization that handles everything having to do with its people.
- The HRM department enables employees to contribute effectively and productively.
- The HRM function has evolved, and it's often expected to add value to the strategic direction of the company.
- Certification isn't required to get a job in HRM, but it can give candidates an advantage.

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