

“ANALYSIS OF THE COEVAL WORKPLACE STRATEGIES FOR A SUCCESSFUL CORPORATE MANTRA” – AN INSIGHT INTO THE CONTEMPORARY MANAGERIAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE CHANGING WORKPLACE DYNAMICS IN INDIA

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the industrial revolution management practitioners, researchers and policy makers have tried to define and evaluate particular workplace practices and systems that can spur productivity growth at the organizational level. The spectrum of organizational workplace issues has widened tremendously over the past several decades. From a mere business philosophy, the concept of workplace management has grown to a full-fledged corporate discipline. The contemporary strategic solution to managing workplace lies in the successful implementation of its recruiting and retaining functions.

However, during the last few years, the cases for employee dissatisfaction have witnessed a surge at multinationals in India. Never before has the workplace changed as rapidly or as dramatically as it is changing today. Managers are faced with issues they couldn't have predicted

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ten years ago. This has led to a change in corporate, personal and association life. A number of trends have impacted the relationship between employees and their workplaces such as

- A more complex legal environment and changes to laws influencing employee rights and employer legal compliance
- Economic uncertainty and volatility
- The impact of information and communications technologies
- Greater demand for work/life balance
- Growing demographic shifts leading to a shortage of high-skilled workers

Successful managers are those who have mastered the skills of managing change and have the abilities to keep pace with these emerging business trends.

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the issues that have lead to a change at the contemporary corporate workplace in India and strategies developed to resolve them at the managerial level. For the purpose of this study, the technique of primary research has been used with a structured questionnaire and survey method. A sample set of 50 respondents from different leadership levels and diversified industries is used to understand the relative importance of workplace mechanics. The questionnaire is designed keeping in mind various parameters of study such as workplace etiquettes, conflict management and resolution, workplace diversity, legal and ethical issues, stress management, flexi time work approach, sexual harassment and workplace violence.

Keywords: Manager, Conflict, Workplace, Strategies

Introduction

Workplace management is a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued. The literature on workplace management has mostly emphasized on organisation culture; its impact on diversity; conflict management; workplace violence; stress management; human resource management

practices and institutional environment. The current study examines the potential barriers to healthy workplace management and suggests strategies to enhance workplace inclusiveness. This study concludes that successfully managing workplace can lead to more committed, better satisfied, better performing employees and potentially better financial performance for an organisation. A sound managerial approach to handle various workplace related issues has become a necessary trait for contemporary senior executives. Nowadays, as a manager, people have to face difficult conversations with employees that tend to make them defensive and angry. In the midst of workplace management crisis, a leader needs to effectively coach his team to enhance productivity. He needs the skill and art of helping someone improve their performance and reach their full potential. There needs to be a transition from a directive approach such as teaching, advising, giving feedback, offering suggestions, to a more non-directive approach like asking questions and listening so that the employee can solve his or her problems. When employees can come up with their own solutions, they are more committed, the strategies are more likely to be implemented and these individuals are more likely to solve similar problems next time on their own.

Key Workplace Management Issues

1. Workforce Diversity

A business that embraces changing demographics can reap the economic benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce. The businesses that recruit from a diverse workforce are better able to find the best and the brightest talent needed to compete nationwide and globally. By including people from different backgrounds, skills, and experiences, businesses are relatively better placed to breed the type of innovative and creative environment needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive economy. Employee diversity also helps to optimize workforce productivity and job performance. Moreover, diverse workforce drives economic growth, as more women, racial and ethnic minorities enter the workforce. The major benefits of a diverse employee base are:

- **Pool of talent:** Organisations employing professionals from diverse backgrounds, talent and experience band have the advantage of flexibility in adapting to fluctuating markets and customer demand with greater variety of solutions to problems in service, sourcing, and allocation of resources.
- **Global Workforce:** A diverse workforce with different languages and cultural understanding allows a company to provide service to customers on a global basis.

Managing diversity is an art of planning and implementing practices, policies and systems to deal with people such that the potential advantages of diversity are optimized and its potential disadvantages are reduced with an aim to improve organizational productivity. Managing diversity well provides a distinct advantage in an era when flexibility and creativity are keys to competitiveness. According to a 2011 study from Forbes Insights, *"diversity is no longer simply a matter of creating a heterogeneous workforce, but using that workforce to innovate and give it a competitive advantage in the marketplace."* However, the key challenges in managing workforce diversity faced by managers in India are:

- **Barrier to communication in the chain of command:** Communication barriers lead to problems in a company attempting to create a diverse workplace. When an Indian company hires employees of different regional culture, employees and managers may experience difficulties communicating with one another. This can lead to misunderstandings and a decrease in productivity. For example, if a superior gives instructions about completing a certain task to an employee who fails to fully understand the instructions, the employee may make mistakes if he tries to complete the task without receiving further clarity.
- **Need to improve gender diversity:** A big part of the problem in India is the nature of the discussion around gender workplace diversity. Highly generalized studies appear from time to time suggesting that companies with women CEOs are better performers or are more ethical or are better places to work than those headed by men. If corporations do not create opportunities for competent women, they will be depriving themselves of a wider talent pool.

- **Reluctance to change among senior executives:** Although workplace diversity is beneficial to an organisation, some senior employees and managers may not react positively to changes made. Those who oppose workforce diversity usually reject new ideas, innovative thinking and make work environments more rigid. To deal with opposition, proponents of the concept should explain the reasons for diversity and what benefits changes in diversity bring to management and employees.

2. Conflict Management

Workplaces are often an unavoidable source of conflict. People come from widely different backgrounds and value systems, and have different methods of approaching workplace behavior. While conflict may be inevitable, it is not always bad for the workplace, if handled properly. One of the most prominent reasons for conflict is the nature of the group which may result in goal variances and differences in perceptions. Any given group embodies various qualities, values, or unique traits that are created, followed and even defended. Relationships between groups often reflect the opinions they hold of each other's characteristics. When groups share some interests and their directions seem parallel, each group may view the other positively; however, if the activities and goals of groups differ, they may view each other in a negative manner. Some major reasons for contemporary conflicts in organisations are:

- Difference of perception among team members regarding work pressure and stretch hours
- Team members blaming each other for past mistakes
- Rebellious jealousy due to perceived belief among team members for “playing favorites”
- Dissatisfaction due to nature of work assigned
- Personality clash. For example, a systematic vs. unorganized approach to the job, or a sensitive person vs. insensitive person
- Disagreements based on ideas, goals, process discrepancies, etc.
- Personal hygiene factors of individual employees

3. Stress Management

Employee stress is a growing concern for organisations today. Stress is a situation in which people face constraints and opportunity loss of something they desire. The consequences of such a condition are unpredictable and crucial. Stress is the response of people to the excessive pressure or demands placed on them. Stress is not always negative. It may induce an individual to discover innovative and smarter ways of doing things. This positive dimension of stress is called eustress. But usually, the term stress has a negative connotation and this negative aspect of stress is termed as distress. We can say that “Stress causes some people to break, and others to break records. According to **Madhusudan Thaku, Regional vice president (South Asia) of Regus** (workspace provider company), the corporate sector has a major role to play in avoiding employee stress at their end. He states *“There is no doubt that stressed-out workers are unhappy and unhealthy. So businesses that want to help their staff lead more rewarding lives must analyse and tackle levels of stress within their organisation”*

Workplace stress has many causes, which includes long hours of work, heavy workload, job insecurity, threat of job loss, conflicts with other workers etc. Moreover, frequent disputes and dissatisfaction within the group, increase in the number of complaints, difficulty in keeping up with the quantity of work, poor performance, and handling customer dissatisfaction often lowers employee morale and ultimately leads to stress.

4. Workplace violence and harassment

The ILO has a much broader description of workplace violence that could be physical or psychological, anything at place of work that may fall under homicide, molestation, kicking, biting, punching, harassment, including sexual, and racial abuse, bullying, mobbing, victimising, leaving offensive messages, name-calling or deliberate silence. Greater levels of awareness are required in organisations, both amongst managers and workers.

Unlike India, sexual harassment laws are gender neutral in most parts of the world. Moreover, the laws on this controversial issue vary from country to country and company to company. However, at several places companies tend to take a lenient view of relationship between two sexes if the employees are peers but are strict when it comes to a subordinate and senior

employee relationship, as happened in the recent case of Phaneesh Murthy (former CEO of iGATE Corp). Murthy was sacked after a company sexual harassment investigation revealed that he had not disclosed a relationship with a subordinate.

Workplace violence and harassment issues should be tackled with immediacy and toughness. There two major hurdles in the organizational process are “reporting mismanagement” and “absence of a strong legislation”. Many incidents of workplace violence go unreported or are reported very late (after the damage has been done) primarily due to fear of repercussion and lack of awareness. We definitely need more teeth both in terms of legislation and reporting.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study key factors for workplace management in corporates.
2. To identify the most important challenging factor as identified by employees in managing workplace.
3. To recommend / suggest ways for improving workplace by managing the issues of the corporate.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature and seeks to identify the key factors of workplace management which are important for the employees working in corporates. The main purpose of the study is to identify the most important challenging factors for the employees for workplace management.

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The scope of this research is the limited to employees working in corporates.

SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size was 84 respondents working in different corporates in India.

COLLECTION OF DATA

This study is based on survey method with primary data collection on the five dimensions of workplace management namely: Workforce Diversity, Conflict Management, Stress Management, Workplace Violence And Harassment and Legal And Ethical Issues

The survey was conducted to study the relative importance of factors of in workplace management in order at corporations in India. The purpose of this survey the respondents were asked to provide a rank of 1 to 5 for factors mentioned below; such that the factor which they believe is the biggest challenge for corporate in contemporary workplace management should be ranked “1”.

Data Collected On Questionnaire Basis From The Different People Working At Different Designations In Corporate:

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average Ranking
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT and RESOLUTION	25% 21	28.57% 24	35.71% 30	10.71% 9	0% 0	84	3.68
WORKPLACE DIVERSITY	3.57% 3	14.29% 12	21.43% 18	35.71% 30	25% 21	84	2.36
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE and HARASSMENT	17.86% 15	21.43% 18	7.14% 6	14.29% 12	39.29% 33	84	2.64
STRESS MANAGEMENT	39.29% 33	14.29% 12	14.29% 12	21.43% 18	10.71% 9	84	3.50

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average Ranking
LEGAL and ETHICAL ISSUES (such as changing employee benefit regulations, demand for flexi time approach, etc)	14.29%	21.43%	21.43%	17.86%	25%	84	2.82
	12	18	18	15	21		

Findings of survey:

The following analysis has been made from the above collected responses of the respondents:

1. The most important challenge at workplace according to the respondents of this research is **Stress Management**. So this is the opinion of people working at corporates that to cope up with the stress is the biggest challenge in front of them.
2. The second most challenging factor ranked is **Conflict Management and Resolution** which according to the respondents is difficult to deal with at workplace.
3. This is followed by **Workplace Diversity** and **Workplace Violence and Harassment**, so the respondents find these factors less challenging in comparison to stress management and conflict management and resolution, the reason could be the rarity of these factors which also point out the healthy climate of corporates.
4. The least challenging factor is **LEGAL and ETHICAL ISSUES** (such as changing employee benefit regulations, demand for flexi time approach, etc.); the reason could be that still these policies are not implemented strongly.

Recommendations and Conclusion:

1. **STRESS MANAGEMENT:** The most important challenge as identified by the respondents at their workplace management is stress management so here we offer some recommendation to cope up with workplace management. The key to reducing stress is to prevent it. Some of the ways in which businesses could try to alleviate stress on their employees one way is individual intervention by monitoring the stressors in the individual and next is attacking that stressor and trying to figure out ways to alleviate them in any way. Developing social support, changing behavioral patterns, Employee Assistance Programs etc. could be other programs which can help the employees and businesses to manage stress in employees. As also certain counseling sessions could be done by corporates for their employees.
2. **Conflict Management and Resolution** is the second most important challenge and we are here providing certain recommendations to deal with it at workplace first is to manage stress while remaining alert and calm. By staying calm, you can accurately read and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication. Control your emotions and behavior. Pay attention to the feelings being expressed as well as the spoken words of others. By avoiding disrespectful words and actions corporates can manage conflict and also by maintaining strong HR department resolution of conflicts can be done timely and fairly.
3. **Workplace diversity** can be managed by being aware of and respectful of differences of culture, background and gender. So corporates should try to involve all employees at workplace so that there is proper co-ordination and co-operation.
4. **Workplace Violence and harassment** can be managed by having rules and guidelines at the workplace and which are strictly made to follow by all. As well as all complains should be dealt at fast pace and strict punishment should be levied on the guilty.
5. **Legal and ethical issues** also play a very important role in maintaining proper workplace environment so some recommendations to handle such issues is first to develop a workplace policy based on company's philosophy, mission statement and code of conduct. Incorporate the policy into your performance management program to hold employees accountable for their actions and alert them to their responsibilities to uphold professional standards throughout their job performance and interaction with peers and

supervisors. Also providing workplace ethics training to employees is also a helpful step to handle ethical issues.

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