



Making a difference

Human resource is now considered as part of entrepreneurial capability in the expanding diverse market, says **Nirmala Behera Udgata**, Executive Director – Group HR, RSB Group

By **Niranjan Mudholkar**

Q Congratulations on being promoted as the Executive Director – Group HR in the RSB Group. How do you see this enhanced role in contributing towards the overall progress of the Group?

I thank you for your congratulatory greetings. As an Executive Director, functions of HR now “stand with a difference” and forms integral part of Business Strategy. Hence, every strategy now needs to visit HR. Today, finance, material and capital alone cannot give desired deliverables unless human resource puts them into a right mix and direction.

Now I have the privilege of being part of strategic decision making and an added responsibility of being a business manager too. Human resource is now considered as part of entrepreneurial capability in the expanding diverse market where innovative HR approach gives an edge. Right talent acquisition, management, retention and career progression get synchronized with business strategies through HR.

Our HR function is constantly upgraded or modified to align with business goals and is continually correlated with business outcome through monitoring and measurement at planned intervals. It is now more of a function with business sense where value addition of every working colleague takes the precedence and HR systems are aligned. The digitized

error-free measurement of individual performance aligned with business strategy ensures value addition at every stage and synchronized with appraisal/rewards.

Q You have been with the RSB Group for over 18 years. How has the Group evolved in this time with regards to its human resources policies?

When I joined this group, HR was a conventional administrative work and routine legal compliances, which was an order of industry practices at that point of time. Emphasis on the technical training was a mandate for the precision manufacture of component on the state-of-art machines and heavy fabrication to boost productivity, quality and service. As expansion made way to functioning of 11 plants pan India with diverse local culture, practices and statutes prevailing at different locations, I embarked upon bringing “Unity in Diversity” for HR domain. Our entire HR process went through changes after participative consultation with colleagues across India and I finally put in place a HR bible with policies, procedures, grievance address, appraisals, rewards, training & development, career progression, on-the-job training, e-learning of critical operations, monthly performance review of value addition made by every colleague,



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On-line Performance Management System, Self-Appraisal, Greet-and-Meet Sessions at planned intervals at every location and finally introduced “Heart-to-Heart” sessions with Chairman.

Q How would you describe RSB Group’s recruitment policy?

RSB recognizes people as its most valuable assets and hence attaches great importance to their selection. It is done with extreme care to match them with organizational requirements, i.e matching their skills, qualifications and experience with existing and potential vacancies. We strive to attract right people at every stage, create opportunity for their development and advance the best.

Manpower planning is done in the beginning of the year along with finalization of budget and business plan of the organization.

For any recruitment we start the process from Online PRF (Personnel Requisition Form), which is approved by concerned Plant Head and Vertical Heads. Thereafter, HR, on the basis of job description and job specification, starts sourcing the candidates and arrange CVs. This is followed by written test, aptitude test and interviews with HR, Departmental Heads, Vertical Heads and in case of senior or specialist positions, final interview is taken by Chairman/VC & MD. In case of selection of senior personnel. We also have a process of interview by Independent Directors as part of neutral and unbiased assessment. This process is then followed by compensation and benefits.

The recruitment cycle gets completed once the employee joins and complete the formalities.

We are an equal opportunity employer irrespective of religion cast, creed, or gender. In RSB attracting the right talent is achieved through Campus Recruitment for MTs/GETs/DETs and other Technical candidates from ITIs. While we largely achieve our recruitment plan through recruitment of freshers, we do recruit a good number of experienced candidates for niche profiles as well as to get new and innovative ideas to the organization.

Q What initiatives have you implemented to create a positive and engaging work environment?

Our HR Systems and initiatives consist of systems and procedures that have a humane connect and provide ample space for the growth. The System gives opportunity to our people to take ownership of their areas of work and responsibility.

“TQM in HR” is done through seven key measures, viz. Productivity, Quality, Cost, Delivery, Safety, Morale & Environment based on responsibility and hierarchy established for each and every level of employees keeping in mind Group’s Vision & Mission. The performance in these measures is reviewed by the Management at planned intervals. Wherever there is gap, same is analysed and appropriate actions are initiated to improve the process rather than focusing only on results. This has brought about empowerment, boost in morale, sense of oneness and belongingness, significance of every one’s contribution and laurels through awards and rewards.

The path to individual growth is open, unending and unhindered with focus on building and imbibing “Quality and Customer Service” in all respects. This has not only helped our company to emerge as a global player, but also have embedded the never-ending quest for excellence as the DNA of the organization.

We have an open-door policy with walk-in access to members irrespective of rank and file to air grievances and to offer ideas and suggestions. The grievances and ideas are respectfully and seriously evaluated and implemented according to the merit. We are proud to say that many of our organizational and business improvements have their origin in these grievances and suggestions. While all said and done, we do not measure our success only by our top and bottom lines, but also by how much we have strengthened our core values and humanistic approach.

We ensure that our counselling extends beyond the ambits of the organization to the family members of our people as well. Through annual get-togethers, we connect with the family members and also understand their wellbeing and get valuable feedback. The Chairman’s interaction with the people is institutionalized in the HR process through an activity titled ‘Heart to Heart to with Chairman’ which keeps a tab on pulse of the people for gap, if any, and consequent corrective course. This activity has targets and regular review of its impact. Many improvement and new ideas owe their origin to this activity.



This is an effective institutional tool for the top management to keep in constant connect with the rank and file. This keeps the channels of communication open and scope for surprises are eliminated.

We have annual award ceremonies at Jamshedpur plants, where colleagues who have excelled in their performance, are facilitated with their families by invited dignitaries, followed by greet-and-meet dining sessions. Besides inter-plant cricket tournaments are held regularly, where our VC & MD, Executive Director and senior colleagues part-take as players with RSBians, capped by awards and accolades to winning and runner-up teams.

We have monthly Employee-of-the-Month function at every plant where colleagues who have excelled in their areas of performance are facilitated with accolades and awards.

Q Tell us something about RSB's skill development and training programmes.

We have a structured process of Learning & Development (L&D) for various skills. The training plans are made by identifying the needs to meet organizational, functional, project role, job, statutory, quality, role-change and customer specifics. Every Plant HR Head carry out a structured exercise, identify the L&D needs of every individual and capture the same in L&D Matrix. This document is used as the primary source to map the training needs of an individual. The matrix is further validated by L&D Role-based Matrix and training calendar, month-wise/week-wise, is rolled out for every location.

The training programs are centrally monitored and measured every month to ensure that desired results are achieved through viva, written examinations and practicals. Gaps, if any, are identified and closed immediately. Periodic review ensures that effectiveness of training is achieved.

It is mandatory for every colleague to undergo training of at least four man-hours per month and is fitted in PMS.

"Human Resource & Human Relations are two sides of same coin."

Q How do you see AI and machine learning impacting manufacturing companies?

AI provides assistance across various human resource functions to automate numerous repetitive processes and work smarter by analysing big data that leads to identifying human resource needs. This makes things easier for shop floor colleagues and managers to interact with software more naturally. For example, software users often prefer to search for things rather than navigate a complex menu. AI makes the software better understand the user's intentions, which makes the system more intuitive, higher productivity and fewer errors.

Future HR strategies will be more on focussing, through AI, creating an agile, employee-focussed and digitally enhanced dynamic environment. It will cover four vital HR Pillars, viz. Attract, Engage, Retain & Develop. This will enhance the efficiency process of attracting right talent and of hiring cycle. AI has widened the scope of traditional recruiting process, introducing virtual assistants for recruiters, thereby making talent acquisition less-time consuming. AI uses massive data base to identify subtle patterns, thereby indicating the precise areas where bias crops up in the hiring process or any people related decision making.

AI will influence Productivity in allied disciplines like selling, production, customer service or any parameter of Balance score card, thereby impacting factors around greater engagement and retention. AI will also shorten the process of duration of PMS.

Q What are some of the initiatives taken by you to bring more synergy at the Pan Group level?

Our customized HR ERP system plays a major role in standardisation clubbed with our own Internal Portal which is open for all to follow policies and procedures. There is a window to give suggestions. With monthly review with every location through video conferencing, we receive feedbacks and suggestions are implemented after screening internal and local requirements. HR audit at regular intervals gives pulse of the people and valuable input for improvements. This ensures consistency and standardization with built-in flexibility.

Q What inspires Nirmala, the person?

As a person, my source of inspiration comes from listening to the voice of heart of all my colleagues with a humane touch, which solves even complicated HR issues by direct interaction. After all, Human Resource & Human Relations are two sides of same coin. As a professional, I get inspired with all successful people as each of them have different set of traits. This is evident when we look at renowned global leaders where each display different leadership qualities. Learning to inspire begins with discovering and cultivating the latent talents each of us already possess. 