

HR Technology a Buzz

Business Manager in an exclusive chat with **NIRMALA BEHERA UDGATA**, Head - Group HR, RSB Transmissions (I) Limited, she talks about how Big Data in Indian organizations have vast potential as a tool that managers can utilize, both generally and in human resourcing functions in particular to increase the capabilities of the organization.

Interview

Is HR Technology a buzz-word that will disappear in a few years, or is it something that we get used to talking about?

HR Technology will stay and continue to stay as it helps in every process right from recruitment to retirement(R2R) and it has greatly changed the way employees get instant access to human resource data.

Smart tools have made the life easier with remote access through HR portals from the mobile apps from any part of the world and have thus enhanced the productivity and deliverables. No more visit to Human Resource Department unless it has specificity.

For instance, when our RSBians in remote location across 13 plants pan India, is unable to get the desired answers from our dedicated HR portal, we have an on-line Service Request, in brevity SR, through which communication is addressed to HR, after which SR gives instant e-mail revert, giving time span of resolution and contact details of concerned HR colleague with email id and mobile numbers along with access reference details. If SR is not resolved within the given specified time span, matter gets escalated. As a result, employee issues get resolved with speed and accuracy in matter of hours.

We have a dedicated HR team to attend to 4000 plus colleagues in our pan India spread. Performance Appraisal is an important annual event and our on-line appraisal portal for every employee under Performance Appraisal System (PMS) is



robust, where appraisals by employee (self-appraisal) and peers are tangibly measured before the conclusion of designated date, with two-way transparency, followed by accolades and rewards. Apart from PMS, we have many more user-friendly application for comp-and-ben featuring benefits, packages, income tax calculation, filing of IT returns, Provident Fund status and balances with linkage connected to Employee Provident Organization Portal, etc to mention a few.

Thus, technology holds the promise of meeting the challenges of Human Resource Management, such as attracting, retaining, and motivating employees, meeting the demands for a more strategic HR function, and managing the "human element" to a technological change in the future. Such focus gives value-added benefits in order to realize and vitalize the full potential of human resource in an organizational strategy.

The tallest benefit of using Technology in Human Resource is freeing of HR staff from intermediary roles, thus enabling them to concentrate on strategic planning in human resource organization and development. It has automated routine tasks such as payroll processing, benefits administration, and transactional activities, so that HR professionals are free to focus on more strategic matters such as boosting productivity and organizational effectiveness.

How has your organization leveraged on technology to simplify processes?

Our organization is using Oracle system and implemented varied applications to support HR function. We have a dedicated intra HR portal where every employee pan India can log in and get instant e-assistance besides personal touch through Service Requests (SR). The portal has a gamut of data like, to mention a few, employee Database, Policies, Talent Review, New Appointees, Exit formalities, Personnel Requisition, Travel bookings, Expense Tracking, Employee Service, Accommodation, Assistance while relocation, etc and are tailor-made to suit the convenience.

Besides we have a built-in continual improvement in portal through interactions, deliberations and feedbacks aligning with industry's best HR practices. The HR intervention in person is now reduced to rarity while grievance issues are addressed amicably with a win-win situation. This has considerably enhanced employee morale and motivation.

What is the future of Big Data in Indian organizations?

While "Make in India" has taken a feverish pitch, giving rise to increased globalization of Indian products and services, employing organizations and their environments have become increasingly complex. Managers in these organizations face growing difficulties in coping with workforces that may be spread across a variety of countries, cultures and local systems. Given such a scenario, Big Data in Indian organizations have vast potential as a tool that

managers can utilize, both generally and in human resourcing functions in particular to increase the capabilities of the organization.

While we do lack vast database as of now, the same will get strengthened with efflux of time in the face of our increased globalization. Evidently, this will strengthen our hands to face the challenges in managing, motivating, retaining and strengthening the human resource base for improved efficiency and productivity, as well give vast space of opportunities for career development and create leaders.

People often say baby boomers aren't digitally-savvy than their Gen-Y co-workers, and are more prepared to accept authority than the millennial. Do you think this is true? How can we make the baby boomers embrace technology with a more positive attitude?

I think this could be true with some of them having steady belief in conventional approach. However, scenario is changing and baby boomers are willing to change to compete with Gen Y peers. In fact, this has become necessity to work in the present millennium era.

An orientation program for baby boomers highlighting the benefits of speed, consistency and accuracy will change the approach to embrace technology with emphasis on data base created through systematic collection, storing, maintaining, retrieving and validating data for strategic decision making forces. Since technology is in blood stream of an organization by default in the present millennium, transition of such baby boomers to be digitally savvy will be more a necessity than a choice.

How is technology changing; how HR does its job?

HR function has become smart with the help of technology. HR technology is changing to support to individual employees rather than work flow processes in an organization and HR will focus on giving individual tools and strategies to become more informed, skilled, and efficient.

On-line Learning & Development, knowledge-sharing through HR Portals, HR Service Application, etc have really made HR function prompt and efficient. Hiring talent has become more dynamic with social media. Growing Use of Mobile will have continued emphasis on mobile applications, with managers & employees gaining direct access via mobile devices for all HR related information. With today's average worker relying increasingly on their smart phones, the ability to leverage a smart mobile platform has become important. Companies will continue to invest heavily in further improvements of Mobile Apps in HR Services.

Besides, given the vast scope of human resource management functions in today's dynamic and changing scenario, e-HR management addresses a range of administrative, statutory, functional and technological requirements in order to enable support partnership between HR professionals, program managers, finance staff, executives and

employees; while also providing accurate, reliable information for organization-wide planning and decision-making.

Do you think the datafication of HR is taking the 'Human' aspect from Human Resources?

Though human intervention is a must, however, managing people with data and facts will definitely help. Leaders need to graduate from metrics to analytics. Datafication will make it to understand people more and more so as to take the right decision at a right time. Managing people who are remotely working or working from home and internal movements of people can be monitored. The challenges in today's business environment require new approaches to remain competitive in an ever-shrinking world of global competition. By graduating from metrics to analytics, HR professionals and leaders can better understand the contributing factors that are impacting their organization, and take the right actions to implement programs that will provide a true competitive advantage.

As a consequence, e-HR organizations with a large data base, are able to use various permutation and combination in consonance with vision and mission for corporate strategy and decision-making, have become more competitive by reducing the costs, improving the productivity, quality and profitability in HRM area.

In your opinion, will the global technological developments lead the personnel size of HR departments to shrink, grow, or stay the same.

It may marginally shrink with lean and mean measures, but the growth will remain the same as personal and humane touch continues to remain a dominant factor. While HRians are considered as soul of an organization, giving ethical and just feedback from the field, with valuable input on the morale, motivation, perception of image, fraternity and other related attributes, to enable timely corrective measures.

The bottom line success of an organization depends on how people are effective in Key Result Areas which has a directing bearing on the revenues. Apex management has increasingly recognized HR's strategic importance. Creating a strong, well-defined culture provides a competitive edge by attracting the best candidates. The importance of HR will continue to grow. HR is moving up the ladder in terms of credibility. Almost all the confederation is discussing about "Is HR executive become a CEO of company one day? What is his/her growth path or carrier development?"

In your HR career, what are some of the biggest, most influential technological changes you have witnessed that revolutionized how HR functions?

Communication has become faster and everybody is in the same page and language. There is a transparency between employee and employer. Implementation of any new HR initiative with a big

bang approach has become easier with technology. We're seeing a big shift right now for HR by giving the business data at their disposal when and where they need it, and by implementing new cloud-based and mobile applications with user interfaces across all talent management practices, we're looking at a future where employees will do more and more themselves at the point of need. This is a fundamental transformation in the HR function. HR will become much more focused on enabling analytics and become much more of a strategic adviser to the business than ever before.

With a shift to cloud-based apps, HR folks are spending less time in maintaining in-house talent management tools and more time on how to most effectively use these tools to increase workforce productivity.

Besides Cloud-based technological approach has also enabled organizations to invest more resources into creating highly scalable, user friendly applications that embed HR expertise in tools that is accessible to decision makers and line managers. This allows HR professionals to shift their energy from managing processes to actively supporting business execution.

HR, as a consequence, is now focusing less on simply keeping track of "who is who", and more on ensuring these employees are being used effectively to support the company's short and long-term business strategies.

The impact that cloud based business execution technology has on HR is now likened to the impact that global positioning satellite (GPS) technology has on the use of street maps. It allows companies to take information off of shelves where it was rarely accessed and put it in the hands of decision makers when they need it in a format they can readily use. The result is an increasing number of HR organizations that are fundamentally and profoundly improving how line managers run their businesses.

On the training front, webinar has impacted the employees to get trained at their work place or desk in multiple locations across the globe without the need for trainers to visit the business location. Internet-based interactive tools are so vividly designed with animated features and pictorial representation that assimilation of the training topic with live-shot videos has increased the penetration in the grasping power of trainees for their practical implementation. Besides, any time 24/7 video training through webinar, has ensured that employees have flexibility and can opt for getting trained at their leisure hours from home in their computer or on their mobile while on the move, without the need to take out time from their routine work. Due to this, loss of production hours is reduced practically to nil.

Communication with employees at multiple locations on various issues through video conferencing has given a great amount of human touch and has now, more or less, become order of the day. Besides, regular meeting with HR colleagues across the globe at multiple locations at planned intervals has become easy through VC mode, thereby bringing down the travel cost practically to nil. ■■