



| **HUMAN RESOURCES** |



**HCM Professionals' New Agenda and Challenges**  
Challenge # 3: Changing Expectations of Workforce

**C**itizen rights are gaining momentum for certain developing nations; developed nations have already guaranteed the rights envisaged in their constitution; those that have not guaranteed are suffering from internal unrest and protests. In the face of such political run the challenges of HCM professional are extremely critical. The prominent illustrations are, for example, freedom of speech; the right to participate in the management of the industry, or right to privacy, etc. The debate goes round: should employees be allowed to speak up and criticize an organization's management without jeopardizing the job security? In most public industries this has been accepted through enactment of law made compulsory with the provisions of labor union, collective bargaining agent or participation committee. All public and private sector companies are required to follow and comply. However, some private companies put undeclared embargo on openly criticizing the management; those who dare are, in most cases, terminated on the basis of employers right to terminate "at will". They claim that interpersonal relationships have been seriously and permanently damaged by such "squealing" and the employee should be discharged.

A research project published in Administrative Science Quarterly by Marcia, Janet and Tamila titled "Correlates of Whistleblowers' Perceptions of Organizational Retaliation" published in 1982 shows that firms are most likely to retaliate against "whistle blowers" i.e. who are proponents of freedom of speech within the organizations. Therefore freedom of speech within the organization is a very slow process and often depends upon the sweet will of the employer. On the other hand, employees are also becoming more concerned with the information they must provide on the employee profile form, structured job applications. They feel that many questions are an invasion of their privacy. Some examples may be given here:

- a) How much current salary is?
- b) Whether one is pregnant or not?
- c) Any records of arrests;

- d) Whether the applicant has ever received psychiatric treatment or not?
- e) Drinking habits;
- f) Information about finance;
- g) Age or date of birth;
- h) Married or divorced, etc.

### **Bangladesh Labour Law – 2006**

The Bangladesh Labour law 2006 defines in precise terms the conditions of employment such as conditions of termination, retrenchment conditions, discharge, disciplinary actions, compensation and benefits and makes the conditions known to workers and mandates that it must be enforced at all levels. Unfortunately, these conditions are not strictly followed in many companies. In Bangladesh it has become commonplace to maintain two different sets of documents - one for inspection by Labour Inspectors who find that the company followed every bit of the law. The inspectors give a 'clean man' certificate. Actually, the actual records show a violation of law. Side by side, the act grants employers the liberty to frame their own service rules and they may not follow the provisions of this chapter 'provided that the conditions are more favorable to workers than the facilities provided in the Act'. Because of the lack of proper inspection by the Labour Directorate, employers tend to manipulate things in their favour. It is well known practice that employers put the gun on HR professional's shoulder to get done things in his favour.

### **US Privacy Act of 1974**

The US Privacy Act of 1974 is a revolutionary act that has influenced the minds of employees across the globe. It mandates that personnel files so opened may be inspected by the employee concerned. It prohibits universities from disclosing information to a third party without the student's consent. Employees perceive a greater invasion of privacy when

- personal information is distributed to others without their permission;
- when personality information, as compared with productivity data, is disclosed,
- personal information is shared with outsiders rather than those within the firm.

All this information is considered personal and must be divulged with prior permission of the person concerned.

### **HCM at Cross Road**

Now is the criticality of the function of the HCM Professionals. They stand on the cross road - obverse of the coin is the compliance of the labour code and also ILO rules; the reverse is the employers' wishes, dictates and 'sweet will'. Which direction to tread is the great dilemma most HR or HCM professionals are wavering today? Many that I know show indecisiveness 'To be or not to be' is their greatest question.

### **The Challenges of HCM**

The business world is dynamic, so is the law and above all the human civilization. The professional must embrace a dynamic principle of justice for all corners without fear. On one platform he is the champion of employees; on the other he is the assurer that employers do not incur loss in business. It issues a

challenge to HCM professionals: define the value you create for employees and investors. You must remember if you want to gain an edge in the competitive challenges of today and tomorrow including globalization, technology, profitability and capacity for change - you hold the key to success. As Dave Ulrich, Professor at the school of business at the University of Michigan points out you as professional must change your mentality from "what I do" to "what I deliver". According to him you assume the role of strategic partner, admin expert, employee champion, and change agent. You must impress the minds of both the employer and the employees so that adherence to best practices and compliance with law is maintained. Both share a unified vision and develop competency to run a business profitably. You should devise a diagnostic tool with which to evaluate and improve sound human resource practices. It should help the investors to become employee champion, too.

### **Gender Issues**

The issue of gender in workplace goes far beyond sexual harassment. The women workforce in particular expects equal treatment like their male counterparts in wage and benefits as well as progressive responsibilities for career growth. Harassing women is an offence and must be shown zero tolerance. Make sure that all employees are judged by what they contribute to the organization not merely by their gender. Be prepared to take any action necessary to create an atmosphere in which both men and women feel comfortable and in which any needs, such as child care, are understood and accommodated. Always keep in mind that aggressive behavior in the work place may disguise personal difficulties; therefore avoid jumping to conclusions; instead be prepared to listen. The workman expects that he would be given attention and sympathy for any difficulty that he is currently suffering from. This can take the form of any personal assistance, perhaps involving money or helping to find legal advice, for example, even alcoholism or addiction.

### **HCM Professional's Credibility**

Unless you develop your own acceptability and credibility with all corners, you will fail to glide through the challenges. All employees expect that they will be given equal treatment and shown respect to their jobs and personality. For this one needs to create an image of trust and credibility. We may cite some behaviors that enhance credibility:

- Accuracy: Being accurate in your work
  
- Consistency: Being predictable i.e. people will apprehend what course you will follow in a given situation
  
- Commitment: Do things on time or as promised
  
- Integrity: Behaving ethically
  
- Think outside the box: Go extra mile
  
- Confidentiality: Maintain strict confidentiality
  
- Good Listener: Listen attentively to employees
  
- Focus on Problems: handling problems in the light of needs of business.

Develop personal rapport with your staff. This will help you to recognize any changes in their behavior. If an employee displays unusual irritability, tension or other negative behavior, do not hesitate to approach them. Do not reprimand for being inattentive to job; rather encourage them to talk openly about their problems. Listen with sympathy. This will contribute to developing a caring environment in

which people feel they can share their concerns.

It is the HCM professional who holds crucial responsibilities for adding value and delivering results in changing expectations of workforce.

*(Next Issue: Challenge # 4: Changing Levels of Productivity for Competitiveness)*

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