

Rethinking Role of Human Resource Managers During Covid -19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Background

Human Resource (HR) professionals have been central to the response in organizations' globally during this COVID-19 pandemic, as the COVID-19 is a human crisis. By intensifying the role of Human Resource Managers, COVID-19 has become an inflexion point with functional consequences for HR globally. In this research paper, the researchers reflect on the implications of a pandemic on HR professionals, including identifying some key challenges faced by HR and strategies to overcome the challenges.

Objectives

The objectives of the present article are twin. First, to identify the challenges faced by HR professionals in this disruptive time and second to list down the changes in HR's roles and responsibilities.

Methods: This paper is a review of secondary sources available (research article, websites, blogs, discussion forums etc.)

Key Words: Coronavirus, COVID-19, Mental health and Wellbeing, Work-From-Home, Human Resource Management

Introduction

The COVID -19 Pandemic, Coronavirus has disturbed organizations and triggered Human Resources Managers to deliberate in a different way about their role as they regulate a new work environment which they at no time have imagined. In order to avoid the spread of the coronavirus, corporations have switched to a Work -From- Home model which was a new concept in India. E-mails and videoconferencing have replaced face-to-face interactions, the role of HR has become more difficult in this difficult situation. HR professionals are worried and stressed out about the health and well-being of the employees during the pandemic.

They are even under stress about giving consolation to the millions of employees who were laid off during the pandemic. The employees who are still on the job, HR professionals are working hard to keep them productive, inspired, involved and connected—all factors that are moving targets in the new normal.

Challenges Faced by HR Managers During COVID -19

Human Resource Professionals never thought through the issues that COVID-19 has begun on them. The ambiguity has impacted the economy, workforces are facing traumatic states, and HR executives are working hard to manage the critical situation. The unexpected move in work pattern has carried new difficulties for HR. The topmost importance for Human Resources specialists is now responding to the predicament, keeping the staff engaged, providing the correct communication channels and tools to work remotely. The below-mentioned figure shows a list of top challenges faced by HR professionals:



Mental
Health and
Wellbeing



Managing
Remote
Work



Lack of
Agility



Employee
Communication



Uncertainty



Employee
Engagement

Mental Health and Wellbeing

In this Pandemic, the frequency of mental health disorders has upstretched anxieties. 18% of American employees (with an age group of 15-54) reported signs of nervousness or depressing disorder throughout the COVID -19 pandemic. A KFF Health Tracking Poll published in July 2020, revealed that

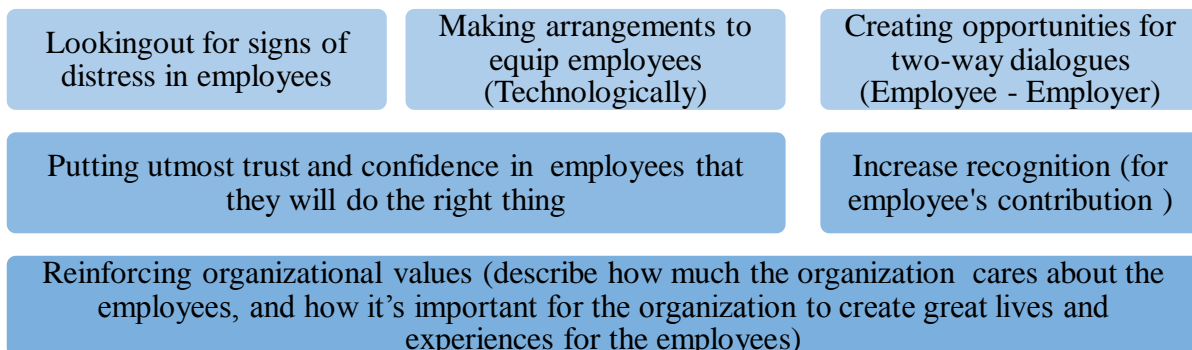
several adults have reported explicit adverse effects on their psychological healthiness and well-being, such as trouble to sleep (36 percent) or eat (32 percent), rises in liquor consumption (12 percent), and deteriorating lasting conditions (12 percent), because of fear and strain over the coronavirus. Many employees are undergoing conditions related to deprived mental health, such as loneliness and loss of job. The World Health Organization (WHO) projected that depression and anxiety alone shall cost the worldwide economy US\$1 trillion per year.

COVID -19 has marked an unprecedented impact on all the employee's professional and personal life. This has made the HR department scrambling to make adjustments quickly to the 'new normal'. The unexpected move-in working pattern and culture grabbed attention on overall employee healthiness and wellbeing. Tension, nervousness, and other psychological well-being problems are constantly been there. Organizations are regularly introducing wellness plans and provide personnel with safety, health assistances, and flexibility to assist them to come out from their health issues. Nevertheless, the unexpected COVID-19 eruption has carried the employees' psychological problems in the front seat. When employees are working in the office work environment, it is easy for HR to realize their pulsation and compassion and that benefits HR enormously to handle the matters. But work forces working remotely, communication ways have been expressively conceded, parting the administrators naive.

Managing Remote Work

Stay-at-home guidelines provoked by COVID-19 has created many challenges for HR Managers. The sudden introduction of remote work culture was a new concept in India. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, hardly any of the organizations planned for allowing employees to work remotely. Financial Services and Banks and many other industries did not encourage working remotely. Present-day, nearly all of them are rushing to frame strategies for productive Work-From-Home and executing telework guidelines for the first time. As per the recent research finding of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), nearly 71 percent of organizations find it hard to adjust to Work-From-Home as a way of doing business.

HR professionals are working on framing policies to overcome the issues and challenges faced by employers and employees because of Work -From - Home. To this point, HR professionals are not designing intermittently or in the early stage, rather in real-time. The importance of employee efficiency and engagement has switched to instantaneous responding and analysis. HR executives are now working on:



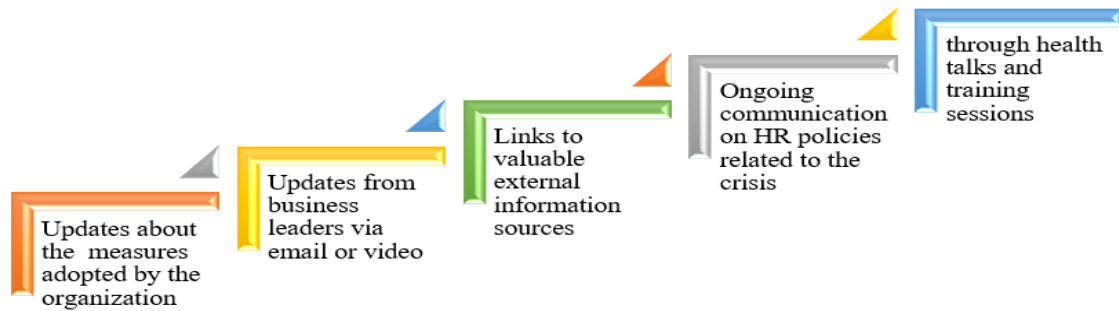
Lack of Agility

One of the important causes, why HR professionals are struggling, is because of the deficiency of quickness. HRs are not intended for quickness. In this difficult time, it is very important to answer fast and take actions rapidly. Nonetheless, the HR executive has to take many approvals before taking actions. This decelerates the progression of collecting information and taking instantaneous actions that an emergency demands. To be extra lively in HR's style and re-order business objectives and having the correct communication in addition to alignment amid mid- management and administrators is an immediate necessity.

Employee Communication

Communiqué is one more major challenge that is on the insistence list of HR professionals. Communication is a crucial facet which needs to be addressed irrespective of the staff is remotely working. Deprived of the precise channels of communication, it turns out to be problematic to manage personnel. The COVID-19 outbreak kept the HR specialists on toes and held in reserve them arranging for the perfect tools used for work-from-home which fits the organization's culture, and requirements. However, tools like Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Team etc. are generally used to meet the requirements

of the employees, it is not sufficient to come to be everyone on the same page. HR specialists are undertaking the same by sharing:



HR Team can be in constant touch with the employees using tools like Video Conferencing, Project Management System, Applications for Chat, File Storage and sharing tools, Software for Rewards and Recognition, Productivity or Tools for Project Management and many more.

Uncertainty

The intimidating sense of not being aware of what the upcoming future holds and actions that need to be taken to withstand companies' operations is a major task. Workforces are affected psychologically, not being aware of the future. HR executives are stressed to place the whole thing in alignment, responding to the emergency and developing operative actions and tactics altogether.

Employee Engagement

The eventual company's objective is the output of its workforces. It is a stimulating task for the HR team to retain the employees involved when they are working from their home and that too, in an emergency time of the pandemic. It turns out to be a difficult task to keep everybody on the same platform. With working from home, it's hard to follow a systematic workflow every day. HR Team has to keep updating employees regularly by organizing meetings which can influence their self-esteem to a great extent.

Conclusion

The pandemic has triggered major disturbance in personal and professional lives. HR's role is vital to support organizations and bring out changes in the workplace. It is now essential for organizations to rethink, reimagine and review how HR functions, how do they promote talent, provide services and reinforce the company through a forward-looking human resource strategy. In the current situation of the pandemic, employees, organizations and HR professionals are adapting to new strategies to achieve results. In this regard, HR should rethink their roles and responsibilities by giving due importance to internal communication, bringing team spirit, collaboration and collaboration to survive in this difficult time. HR professionals are making a noteworthy contribution by introducing new HR processes and policies, training employees, making employees feel the organization care for them, taking care of the cognitive and emotional health of employees and their families and keeping employees motivated and engaged to perform their jobs.

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