

UNDERSTANDING GREEN HRM AS A STRATEGIC INITIATIVE TO IMPLEMENT ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY PRACTICES THEREBY PRESERVING INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

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Abstract

Ecological consciousness is the magic word of today that is promptly invading every dimension of our lives and workplace. Of late, our lifestyle both at personal and professional level started affecting the environment so adversely that we cannot risk to letting the effects go unchecked. To implement any corporate environmental program several units of an organization HR, Marketing, IT, Finance, and so on, work together to put forward a positive joint effort and among them, the most important contributor is the human resource management unit. There is clear evidence that in the business world, a large part of the workforce feels strongly about the environment as employees today are more committed and satisfied with the organizations that take a proactive part in endorsing green.

Green initiatives within HRM form part of wider programs of corporate social responsibility. Green HR essentially consists of two major elements namely **environment-friendly HR practices** and the **preservation of knowledge capital**. Green human resources refer to using every employee touch point/interface to promote sustainable practices and increase employee awareness and commitments on the issues of sustainability. Hence the scope of study will be to study and understand proactive environmental management thereby creating sustainable greener HR practices.

Keywords: Environment effects, Knowledge capital , Sustainable HR

Introduction

All organizations have impact on the environment through their operations product and services and through frequent interaction with shareholders, employees, customers and suppliers. There is an increased awareness among organizations about the environmental sustainability for future generations. Organizations have stated integrating Environmental Management and Human Resource Management – GREEN HRM practices. Green HR is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and, more generally, promotes the cause of environmental sustainability. Green initiatives within HRM form part of wider programmes of corporate social responsibility. Recently, there has been observed an increasing awareness within business

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communities on the significance of going green and adopting various environment management techniques.

Objectives

The main purpose of this study is

- To provide with a basic understanding of green HRM.
- To highlight different significant works on green HRM.
- To elaborate on various green practices that can be incorporated for building a Green workplace.
- To suggest some green initiatives for HR.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is primarily based upon the secondary data. For this extant literature related to the topic from different databases, websites, articles, writeups and other available sources were collected. A systematic review of collected literature was done in detail. Hence the study for this research has resulted into a desk research rather than a questionnaire survey or any other form.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ashok Ramachandran, Director HR Vodafone Essar Ltd defines green HR as using every employee touch point to espouse sustainable practices and raise employee level of awareness, AnjanaNath Regional Head HR, Fortis healthcare ltd defines Green HR as environment- friendly HR initiatives leading to better efficiencies, lesser cost and heightened employee engagement levels.

In summary, green management refers to the management of corporate interaction with, and impact upon, the environment (Lee and Ball, 2003), and it has gone beyond regulatory compliance and needs to include conceptual tools such as pollution prevention, product stewardship and corporate social responsibility (Hart, 2005; Pullman et al., 2009; Siegel, 2009).

Business organizations play a key role in the problems of environmental management since they are part of our society and cannot be isolated from the environment, and in fact, they contribute most of the carbon footprints in the past (Liu, 2010).

Application of new technology could improve the environmental decline by developing, for example, the biotech products and by searching for alternative energy to reduce the use of finite natural resources. Therefore, organizations should put more effort into the research on new technology to minimize the impacts of environmental destruction by creating products that are harmless and less pollution to environment (Liu, 2010; Ozen and Kusku, 2008).

HR and Sustainability

Organizations are increasingly apprehensive with sustainability and corporate social responsibility. The HR function is exceptionally placed to assist in both developing and implementing sustainability strategy. The HR function can provide as a co-worker in formative what is needed or what is achievable in creating corporate values and sustainability strategy. The Human resource department of organizations has the ability to play an important role in the design of their organization's sustainability culture . HR will have to study to manage the whole scope of problems ranging from employee wellness, healthy, and safety workplace multiplicity. The HR staff is expected to be the only department that is efficiently skilled to modify the attitudes and behaviours of the management, managers, and employees by modifying their many Human Resource systems. Organizations are catching themselves on to the green practices in their intensity to sand up their image, ratchet up employee morale and significantly score their costs. Nowadays many companies have designed environmental concerned new jobs or positions in order to focus exclusively on environmental management aspects of the organizations. From the perspective of HRM, it is really a valuable initiation and practice to protect the environment. Moreover, some companies have involved in designing their existing jobs in a more environmentally friendly manner by incorporating environmental centered duties and responsibilities.

Companies at present are also trying to link their Human Resource planning to Green HRM. Strategies include engaging in forecasting number of employees and types of employees, needed to implement the corporate environmental management initiatives/programs/activities (e.g. ISO 14001, cleaner production, responsible care etc). Efforts are also taken to appoint consultants / experts who have knowledge of working in ISO standards and who can perform environmental / energy audits.

Areas Where HR Department can Go Green

HR & Procurement

Organizations can opt for paper free recruitment process with a minimal impact. They can invite candidates through online medium like e-mail, online application form or Global talent pool. Video based or telephonic rounds too can be substitutes.

Eg: Google, Infosys because they believe the most talented people get attracted because of it.

HR & Training- Development

To further give an impetus to the Green concept, there should be extensive use of online and web-based media interactive system than printed training material or paper notes.

HR & Performance Management System (PMS)

Including green performance standards in appraisals is a challenge for future HR managers. The green performance standards should act as yardsticks of measuring

performance of employees at all levels. Even managers should be appraised for accomplishing green objectives of enterprise.

HR & Compensation Management System

Companies can align employee performance with Green HR at workplace. An employees package could include environmental awareness incentive, desirable behavior on job. Motivation amongst employees can be provided by giving recognition certificate as “Green Employee of the Year”.

GREEN PRACTICES

Business Operation requires a lot of consumables, such as paper, plastic, envelope and ink toner. Although there are both environmental and economical concerns, it is very hard to use less of those because they are integral part of our basic operations. Then, is it possible to be ecological, economical and practical at the same time? Apart from general green office practices, there are environmentally-friendly solutions for Organizations to stay green in the HR functions.

i) Green Printing Paper and toner consumption are both obvious causes for environmental problems, but reducing printing and paper consumption is very hard especially for those corporations with huge numbers of staff. More printing naturally leads to increased in paper, toner wastage and carbon dioxide emission. PretonSaver is software which can reduce paper demand by up to 20% and toner and ink demand by up to 50% without degrading the output image quality. Companies can even set printing page allowance for those departments that doesn't require much printing. According to actual case reference, a company with 1000 employees may reduce its toner consumption by around 350 cartridges per year and will reduce its carbon footprint by around 1.68 tons of CO₂ annually.

ii) Green Design for Payroll and Taxation Forms Technology is not the only solution to stay Green in your daily operation. There are some simple and easy ways to be environmentally friendly, for example by just switching to Green design products like sealer forms. You may already have heard of sealer forms, it is a form that can be folded into a self-contained envelope, so a single piece of paper can both act as a form and an envelope, perfect way to prepare pay rolls and taxation forms. ‘Sealer Solution’ enables automatic individual information printing and form sealing in a secure manner. Comparing with traditional payroll printing method by Dot Matrix, its speed can be as fast as 3400 pieces per hour while operating in a comparatively silent mode. It cannot only reduces the manpower tremendously, but also enhance the indoor working environment in the HR Department.

iii) Green Manufacturing & Disposal of Staff ID Card ID card issue is a familiar part of HR operation. Usually these cards are made of PVC, which is harder to recycle and cause more pollution. PETG is a better material to produce plastic cards in terms of ecology, it

is 100% recyclable, does not produce any noxious fume, and creates less water and air pollution.

iv)Turning off office lights, printers while employees attend meetings and at night and over the weekend.

v)Putting computer and printer on energy saving settings when employees are away for a while.

vi)Turn lights off in restrooms, conference rooms, libraries, and so forth when the room is not in use.

vii)Promote web or teleconferencing to reduce flighttravel. Promote car pooling, car sharing, telecommuting practices.

viii)Implementing wellness programs to foster employees" proper nutrition, fitness and healthy living. Use air conditioning with discretion. Suggest lighting changes and use more energy efficient bulbs.

ix)Purchase large or refillable containers of creamer, sugar, salt, pepper, and butter instead of individual containers.

x)Work with IT to switch to laptops over desktop computers. (Laptops consume up to 90% less power). Increase the use of teleconferencing, rather than on-site meetings.

xi)Promote brown-bagging in the office to help employees reduce packaging waste thereby improving health, too.

xii)Played green-themed games-to promote environmentally friendly behavior and staff togetherness.

xiii)Provide green promotion which includes loan discounts on fuel-efficient cars and energy saving home improvements, discounts at local green merchants.

Examples

1) Dell Inc promotes environmental sustainability by encouraging employees for plantation weekends. Certificates are issued for the best planter in a quarter.

2) Google has opted for E-recruiting because they believe talented people get attracted most by this practice.

3) General Electric use Six sigma techniques for optimizing their operations to improve environmental & social outcomes thereby increasing overall performance.

4) Hewlatt Packard opts for Green packing and integrative designs.

Findings

-Switching to using green materials in some cases can lead to more expensive products for consumers.

-It can be costly for an organization to go green initially. Eg: Installing solar panels at work facilities. The cost reductions in energy savings gained by going green are not always enough to offset the conversion cost.

- Companies intentionally / unintentionally make false claims that their products are safe & environment friendly. Moment the consumer knows that Company is “Greenwashing” as it is called; Company may lose its credibility and goodwill.
- Researcher could also find that except few companies not many are ready to actually apply Green concept to their organization.

Conclusion

The emerging concept of green human resource management carries a great importance for both organizations and employees. Green HR efforts to date have primarily focused on increasing efficiency within processes, reducing and eliminating environmental waste, revamping HR products, tools, procedures resulting in greater efficiency and lower cost. The future of Green HRM appears promising for all stakeholders of HRM. Socially responsible and sustainable organizations that employ green HRM practices reap benefits by attracting and retaining good employees. Improved employee retention translates into low replacement costs. The topic of green HRM is attracting increased attention among management scholars and entrepreneurs to use as a tool for their competitive advantage.

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