Training the Manpower – Challenges and Prospects in the light of Present day Retail Market in India

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Abstract

Any corporate or commercial endeavours can be considered to be fructified when they amount to moulding human resources into skilled manpower that participates in productive activities, in turn, contributing to the overall development of the nation.

The retail market in India is at crossroads with different policy perspectives representing different views and the practices undergoing a huge change. With the advent and rise of a new economic clan called Upper middle class, the retail market has been subjected to a metamorphosis which is rather undreamt of. This paper attempts at focusing on the training needs of the current and prospective manpower pertaining to the retail market and certain strategies for retention of human resources.

A qualitative representation of corporate experiences with regard to training the personnel is also taken up.

I. Introduction:

This paper takes into reckoning the semi-organized and organized retail market in Indian scenario. It is common understanding that retail market has various facets starting from Hawkers on foot paths to Mulit-storeyed shopping arenas popularly called Malls, from kiosk-based sellers to IT Vendors. The author confines himself to the parameters of training pertaining to the presumably “Organized” sector of Indian retailing.

Training the manpower for a business enterprise is no less than a gigantic task involving many considerations starting from analyzing the requirements to executing the processes. The author would like to highlight the following aspects before delving deep into the actual managerial elements.

1) Metaphorical or conceptual alignment of the Business strategy:
Metaphorical or conceptual alignment of training activities with the fundamental Business strategy is one of the core elements of business oriented mechanisms and even one of the goals for most of the training activities for a long period of time. The phenomenon shall be understood in the light of business organizations beginning to realize that training is a tool which not only contributes to improving the job performance but also involves itself in creating organization-wide acceptability.

2) Understanding the Demographic Transition:
The impact of demographic transition is quite often found with regard to the performance of any large scale organization.
The Following items contribute to the impact

- Increased Ethnic and cultural diversity
- Differing Values as far as generation gap is concerned
- Notable changes in mortality and birth rate
- Aging related issues and the status of senior citizens in the demographic framework
3) Requirement and availability variance of knowledge workers:
   The concept of skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled has become marginal with the advent of technological revolution. The variance between the availability and requirement pertaining to manpower continues. The organizations have training as the only go for encountering the phenomenon successfully.

4) Training as an on-going process:
   Training shall not be considered a water-tight compartment or a one-time activity. It is considered an on-going process. In the process, the identification of Training Needs Analysis has become a gigantic task in the organization.

5) Quality concerns:
   It is believed that High-performing organizations always endeavour to launch quality-rich products. In order to process sales and marketing of those products, High-end training is required.

6) Legal issues:
   Confidentiality complemented by affirmative action in the process of offering training has become a bottle neck for many an organization.

7) Ever expanding Job analyses and indicators:
   Consequent on the LPG package, the job profiles are expanding regularly and hence the skill-set up gradation has become an influential issue which has to be kept in view while planning and offering training to the personnel.

8) Trainer Training: When the designated trainers shed their egos and keep themselves abreast of the developments in the respective fields, the trainees can learn something concrete. Hence, training the trainer is a must.

9) In tune with Technology: Involving emerging technological tools in business processing is a must in offering training. The personnel shall be well-versed with technology which not only adds service Value but also societal prestige to the organization.

10) Knowledge in International Political developments:
   The Business environment of any given country largely depends on the politico-economic stature and because of this the personnel involved in processing business shall be aware of the political developments. An understanding shall be offered pertaining to the policy framework of the country and of the world.

II. Socio-economic developments in India with reference to retailing:
   “The retail sector is currently the second largest employer after agriculture and thereby has the potential to be part of a socio-economic transformation in this country. The retail industry is people-centric and driven by the relationship between the staff in the stores and customers. In retailing, a good attitude is more important than experience and skills, and so can provide employment for a wide range of people”. It is true with regard to the conventional ‘Kirana shop model’. But, the establishment of Multi-product or One-stop Shopping Malls even in Small towns creates a situation which requires Both Good attitude and skill complemented by Knowledge for those that promote Business. Modernization of retail within India could improve employment opportunities for millions of Indians from the lower socio-economic groups who have not had the opportunity for higher education. It could also provide opportunities for part-time employment over and above full-time employment”. The skill-
set many times is beyond the confines of an academic degree. The element required is Business Intelligence.

III. The Fundamental aspects of training the Manpower:
One shall be trained in order to develop the celebrated concept called Business Intelligence. The term is used in the sense of Competitive Intelligence without prejudice to any of the ethical principles. The training that is expected to be offered shall conform to the following items.

A) Making one undertake proper Needs Analysis:
As Needs analysis is considered one of the Prime elements of pragmatic and strategic competence of any business endeavour, one shall be trained so as to develop a rational Needs analysis both in open-ended and terminal manners. On the other hand, one shall be trained in order to develop a personal mission statement pertaining to the job responsibility at the moment and with a futuristic perspective.

B) Taking up Means Analysis:
After identifying the Needs of a particular endeavour, one shall be able recognize the means to achieve the ends. The Machiavellian perspective of Ends Justifying Means does not prove itself fruitful in all circumstances. There shall be an efficacious orientation towards selecting the means which ends up with success. In spite of good intentions, right kind of product may not be marketed properly because of defective means. On the other hand, the same means for all the tasks may not be an acceptable proposition. Hence, Training in Means Analysis shall be offered.

C) Honest GAP analysis:
The elements of Rationalization, Benchmarking, Optimization, and all those that contribute to highlighting Gap between the Performance and Potential shall be honestly assimilated. The attitude of the personnel will be properly moulded only with an honest GAP analysis. The Pro-active nature shall be developed in the personnel with a comprehensive training in GAP analysis.

D) Target Situation analysis:
The Visualization of the target situation is primarily of two types, viz. through projection using Mathematical or statistical modelling using the quantitative data and through Qualitative perspective by attempting at understanding the ever changing tastes and preferences.

E) Triangulation Techniques:
Teaching the Techniques pertaining to triangulation of the projections both qualitative and quantitative with the base line planning resulted in by Piloting and such other Brand creation and management techniques is a very significant step in one’s strategy development(making) and execution. A mere seller or promoter becomes a professional by aptly doing this. Hence, training in this area is a necessary phenomenon.

F) Conceptual training:
Every organization nurtures a culture and certain practices, and training in those concepts or items is a basic requirement. In addition to knowledge about the product(s), the presentation techniques shall be taught to the personnel.

G) Un-touching Brand Loyalty:
Many of the Indians are ‘Brand loyal beings’ with many products and hence the personnel shall be trained in such a manner that when a new product is introduced either in a selling mode or in the generic marketing orientation, the representation shall not be something that attempts at Lowering the Image of the existing brand to which prospective customer or listener is loyal, but shall present something that really overshadows the existing brand.
H) **Persuasion Skills:**
Teaching the persuasion skill is very significant since devoid of which there would little transaction.

I) **Negotiation skills:**
Negotiation does not always mean the sale and purchase process. All those elements that make business interaction and especially the Business orientation and relation can be considered to be a part of negotiation which would be cherished in the long run. Hence, the skills shall be taught.

J) **Edification Skills:**
The skills related to Elevating somebody without going out of proportions like leading to irony or hyperbole shall be taught in order to make somebody come to at least a strategic concurrence such that there would be a chance of total acceptance in due course of time. It shall be kept in view that the specific items of training be offered to the personnel based on the requirement.

IV. **Overcoming Challenges and realizing the prospects:**

It is common understanding that given the vast population, the retail market happens to be one of the largest in the world which brings in its train lots of challenges ranging from restrictive trade practices to the undue involvement of foreign players. Even though it is a point of debate whether to allow the FDI into the Indian retail market or not, the author reserves his observations on the issue.

Even the domestic retail traders promoting foreign or high-end commodities require a huge pool of trained business promoters and personnel. With the advent of modern economic clan called Upper middle class which is largely unperturbed by the inflationary tendencies in FMCG and such other products, market has been revolutionized to a large extent. The Epicureanism and hyped-consumerism have been great challenges in Indian market. For example the skill-set required to market the items of conspicuous consumption in spite of the oligopolistic tendencies in Indian market shall be like a big inventory. Whatever may be the field of activity, there is competition and in some it is cut-throat competition. The Liberalized, Globalized scenario compels everyone to strive more and compete better. The Phenomenon is realized in retail market in a better way. In spite of all the challenges, Indian market offers better prospects for those that are ready to work hard and elevate themselves. Even though there is a debate pertaining to the growth of Indian market whether it is Vertical or Horizontal and may be both, the Manpower planning and retention techniques have been bearing fruit to a large extent. Even though there is a claim that the reduction in attrition is due to recession, the post-recession scenario also has not given rise to the attrition scale of mid2000.

V. **Conclusion:**

India with its vast and varied resources and preferences offers market to all those that display considerable consistency and persistency. The only Mantra of Success in Indian market is to keep up the promises. **Express, Impress and develop the soft skill of not being subjected to the capricious behavior**

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