Role of Guidance as a Strategic Function in Retention and Development

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ABSTRACT
This study is aimed at looking upon the importance of guidance in the managerial aspects, without which it becomes difficult for the organizations to achieve its objectives. Appropriate guidance is the best way to ensure employees commitment & loyalty. If employees are guided well, then work performance efficiency & productivity level increases. According to Karen Oman, “Human beings are reciprocal. If you treat them well, they’ll treat you well, and if you treat them bad, they’ll treat you bad.” This study is therefore, designed to find out the ways in which guidance can be made a strategic function of management to improve job commitment and production capacity of employees. It is even examined through the origin and evolution of related studies. On the other hand, it also offers information that is relative to the influences perceived and detected in these developments. The study allows us to offer an approximated picture of the role of guidance and its importance in today’s scenario of business. Research suggests that when individuals are guided well then the work becomes meaningful and they are responsible and accountable for the outcomes of their assigned tasks. The study also supports the research finding which states that guidance as a strategic function is beneficial for the organization as well as for the employees.

Key words: Guidance, Employee, Performance, Organization and strategic function.

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

GUIDANCE:
Guidance is an activity, which is both focused upon, and evaluated against, the job that an individual currently holds.

Employee Guidance is a necessity and need to make new employees equally efficient and productive to the organizational team and update the skills of existing employees, so as to get updated on various parameters such as implementation of new technology, develop new processes and acquire new market.

Timely guidance has become essential because technology in today’s era is reflecting a continuous development. Systems and practices get obsolete due to new discoveries in technology, including technical, managerial and behavioral aspects. Organizations that do not develop mechanisms to catch up with and use the growing technology soon become stale. However, developing individuals in the organization can contribute to the effectiveness of the organization.

Similarly expansion should be monitored so as to be purposeful. Without proper monitoring, expansion is likely to increase the frustration of employees at times. Once the right skills are developed in the employees, their expectations get raised up, and if not given right opportunities for the application of such skills, the potential tends to transfer towards better growth opportunity. A good guidance sub-system would efficiently systemize in monitoring the directions in which employees should develop in the best interest of the organization. A good guidance system also ensures that employees develop in directions congruent with their career plans.
A SUGGESTED GUIDANCE SYSTEM

An efficient guidance system starts with the identification of guidance needs. The following sources can be used for identifying guidance needs.

Performance Review Reports
Performance review reports help in identifying directions in which the individuals should be trained and developed. On the basis of the annual appraisal reports, various dimensions of guidance can be identified. Guidance needs identified on the basis of performance appraisal, provide good information for organizing in-company guidance, and on-the-job guidance for a select group of employees.

Potential Appraisal
Guidance needs can be identified on the basis of potential appraisal, which can become inputs for designing guidance programs or work-out guidance strategies for developing the potential of a selected group of employees who are identified for performing future roles in the organization.

Job Rotation
Working in the same job continuously for several years without much change may have de-motivating effects. Some organizations plan job rotation as a mechanism of maintaining the motivation of people. Guidance is critical in preparing the employees before placing them in a new job.

Continuing Education
Besides these, most of the Guidance programs that are organized today, aim at equipping the managers with new technology. These Guidance programs attempt to help the managers raise their present level of effectiveness.

ORGANISING GUIDANCE PROGRAMMES

After identifying the guidance needs, the next step is to design and organize Guidance programs. In large companies it is possible for the guidance department to organize several in-company guidance programs.
For designing the guidance program on the basis of the guidance needs, the following points may be kept in view:

1. Wherever there is sizeable number of people having the same guidance needs, it is advisable to organize an in-company program. It would prove to be cost effective for the organization. Besides, by having the group of people from the same work place inculcates mutuality. Better support and coordination leads to high probability of effective learning amongst the trainees.
2. Whenever new systems are to be introduced, guidance is needed to develop competencies required to run the systems.
3. It is better to aim at in-company programs for technical skills wherever possible and outside programs for managerial and behavioral expansion.
4. People performing responsible roles in the organization should be encouraged to go out periodically for guidance where they would have more opportunities to interact with executives of other organizations and get ideas as well as stimulate their own thinking.
5. The guidance department should play a dynamic role in monitoring the guidance activities. It should continuously assess the impact of guidance and help the trainees in practicing whatever they have learnt.
6. Whenever an individual is sponsored for guidance he should be told categorically the reasons for sponsoring him and the expectations of the organization from him after he returns from the program.
Most companies do not inform the employees why they have been sponsored; such a practice reduces learning, as the employees sponsored are more concerned about the reasons behind such sponsorship rather than actually getting involved in and benefiting from the Guidance.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Majority of the published articles and books have given the general view of the authors and are not based on empirical studies. A review of some of the selected headings related to the topic is given below;

Guidance is a key retention factor for employees at any age. Statistical evidence indicates job Guidance is a critical factor for personal (behavioral) and professional (technical) Expansion. The availability for all employees having access to Guidance and Expansion programs is critical in facilitating organizational growth, particularly with performance and technological improvements (Boomer Authority, 2009). Research supports that both the organizational benefits and cost savings associated with Guidance programs outweigh the initial cost it incurs (Prenda & Stahl, 2001). Eisen (2005) states that Guidance programs available to all employees correlate with a 70% increase in employee retention rates. Research indicates Guidance methods that engage workers with career challenges, advancement opportunities, work incentives, competitive wages/benefits, and supportive work environments are effective retention strategies for employees of any age (Eisen, 2005). Evidence supports the conclusion that access to regular Guidance programs enhances growth, prosperity, and retention for both employees and employers (Amble, 2006). Research provided by Berryman & Vaughan (1989) and McIntosh (2001) indicate a relationship between enhanced Guidance foundations (competencies, efficiencies, and intelligence) and advanced Expansion of best practices, cross Guidance, mentoring, and technology changes for all employees. Guidance benefits (tangible or intangible) correlate with higher levels of consistency, competency, productivity, adaptability, independence, and loyalty in employees at any age (Agrela, et al., 2008; Boomer Authority, 2009; Yazinski, 2009).

Colligan & Cohen\(^1\) have reported the benefits of the training showing how training objectives are met such as increased hazard awareness among the worker who are at risk of health hazards. Knowledge of safe working practices reduces the work related accidents and improves workplace safety. Lack of safety training may result into workplace hazards which may cost the company even more in terms of lost man-hours. In their reports the authors conclude how training resulted into reduced injury, reduced time for work, and reduction in the medical costs. Training outcomes were successful which were supported by management decision in supporting the safety training, whatever may be the job site. The issue is not so much whether training is worthwhile but the factors beyond the training process which can make great impact. Jacobs & Washington\(^2\) have studied the effects of formal training courses. While conducting this study he has examined the work setting characteristics and the work 14 outcomes. He used questionnaires to be completed anonymously by large sample of managerial and professional categories. All were the employees of one large single firm. Study findings indicated that training courses have tangible benefits in several important areas of perception and job satisfaction. The participation in both external and internal training programmes was beneficial to the organization as well as individually. Employees who had a perception of greater value in their formal courses were more satisfied with their present jobs and felt comfortable about the firm as compared to other places where they could work. Thus these employees were less likely to leave the firm. Interestingly enough, the work setting also showed positive result as employees described the firms cultural value more.


positively, they rated the competence of their colleagues more highly, they indicated greater opportunities for on the job development and continuous learning, said that they participated in more training courses and found it very valuable for gaining skills and knowledge.

Perdue et al\(^3\) assessed the relative effectiveness of alternative training methods in private clubs across US. He used an e-mail questionnaire and collected data from random sample of 123 private club managers from across USA. The result indicated that one to one training method is considered the preferred method for all the objectives of training except for the objective of interpersonal skill development. The use of video ranked fifth best training method. Audio conferencing, paper and pencil, programme instruction, audio tapes, computer conferencing, self assessments were considered least effective training methods. Harris\(^8\) examined the opinions of a sample of American directors of human resource as well as of training about their training methods and the quality of these methods. The result indicated that classroom training method was most used and useful. One on one and on the job training method was mostly preferred by smaller firms. The most preferred method was videotapes regardless of company size. The main barrier for using computer technology was high cost and obsolescence of computer technology. The author concluded by suggesting that computer based technology and multi media should be used for saving time and money. Klink & Streumer\(^4\) examined the effectiveness of on the job training and some possible factors that clarify effectiveness of two samples taken from two Dutch companies. The first sample was from 36 sales staff working in a telephone company. They were being trained to improve the quality of telephone sale call so as to increase the telephone sales. The 2\(^{nd}\) sample consisted of 45 new counter clerks of post offices, who were trained on how to 15 behave and function independently at the post office counter. The results indicated higher level of effectiveness for telephone sales staff than counter clerks. The perception of telephone sales staff about the managerial support and their own experience as sales staff added to the high level of effectiveness. In case of counter clerks the work place atmosphere and their own efficiency was the main variable to determine the effectiveness of the training. Mann & Robertson\(^5\) studied trainee reaction and knowledge acquired in order to find out the effectiveness of the training programme. Sample of about 29 trainees who were part of 3 day email and internet training programme held in Switzerland. Each participant was asked to fill up a questionnaire before training, at the end of the programme and after a month of the programme. The result showed that trainees increased their knowledge. The positive attitude shown during training is not the indicator of actual work performance. Attitude and reaction measures were not linked to later performance. Therefore the authors advocate that such measures should be used with care for evaluating training programmes.

Hashim\(^6\) observed 262 training institutes in Malaysia to identify training evaluation practices. The result indicated that training institutes used different methods including trainees’ feedback, observation, interviews, performance analysis and training reaction forms. Most used form of evaluation was trainee reaction. A study made by Kunavi\(^{12}\) found that the training outcomes were of immense help for trainees, clients and organization. Trainees enhanced their knowledge, practical skill and attitude. Training did achieve its objectives. In this case outcomes were measured immediately after the training programme. The follow up evaluation were few. It was found out that the communication skill increased as well as there was considerable decrease in the stress level. Willingness to work as well as sustainability of the knowledge and skills was also achieved. The observation made by

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Currie13 regarding effectiveness of training, indicated that the learning was more effective when the trainees applied the concepts and the techniques in suitable ways. The learning cycle used in structured sessions brings good results. Trainer should use different ways and techniques, encourage learning, use self assessment methods, encourage group activities, and use case methods to promote analysis skills. Learning becomes effective when learners feel that they are not criticized and can apply the skills learned back at their workplace. Trainer should guide, direct, lead, coach and encourage become facilitator and not instructor. Mistakes should be considered as learning steps and adult to adult relationships should be developed. It was suggested that induction programme should take place where trainees, trainer and participants’ managers take part in order to solve the difficulties about the confidence and promises. Putra7 investigated service-training programme at four big hotels in Sydney, Australia. He advocated the importance of linking training activities with the organizations ‘bottom line connecting with strategic HRM objectives. The major part of the research is concerned with the usefulness of Kirkpatrick model of evaluation, which identifies evaluation at the reaction of training, learning of the trainees, behavior of the trainees and the final results. A participants ‘reaction was requested to ensure whether training provided was in line with the workplace, the course contents were applicable to the job specifications, whether it helped to do the job better, and whether the trainer was able to motivate to learn. The findings showed that trainees perceived the training programme as relevant to the hotel work environment. The trainees confirmed that the training benefited them as they applied the knowledge back at the workplace. There was an interesting finding that some of the junior level trainees stated that lack of managerial support was a hindrance in transferring the learning at the workplace. Thus the research suggested that after training, the more encouragement the trainees receive, the more successful it becomes in achieving the bottom line results.

EXPANDING THE GUIDANCE CONCEPT

The concept of guidance has to be widened and guidance should include not only programs involving face-to-face classroom work, but should also include other ways of providing information and giving necessary skills to people in an organization. In fact, getting people together in a group for giving information which can be given in some other form is a waste of resources. Moreover, the organization cannot afford to provide the necessary information and skills on all aspects to all those who need it, by using the classroom model of guidance. Self-instructional packages and manuals of various kinds can be very rich and useful resources of guidance, even without collecting people at one site. For example, all those who join the organization should know about the budgetary processes and the concept of transfer price. If a self-instructional book is prepared on this subject, this can be given to anyone who joins the organization so that he gets familiar with this concept and can understand the whole process of all the negotiations taking place in the company. It may, therefore, be recommended that a list of areas in which such self-instructional material can be prepared should be developed. This may include the new tax rules, new environmental changes, basic financial problems, calculating contribution, etc. Similarly, manuals of simple office procedures, leave rules, various personnel practices, etc., may also be prepared. However, the immediate superior officer may help the employees by calling them for dialogue and further clarifications after the employees have learnt through such self-instructional books.

PREPARATION OF GUIDANCE MATERIAL

There is a great need to develop more Guidance materials. Unfortunately, most of the Guidance programs use only the lecture method. While the lecture method itself needs improvement through use of small group discussions, etc., new guidance materials need to be developed. These will include simulation exercises and games, role play cases and material, cases and incidents, practical work manuals, tests and instruments, and self-instructional materials. Preparation of such material involves

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large investment of money, time and energy. But it is still worthwhile, and will have much higher pay-off than the cost of the investment. In some cases an organization can get help from outside experts in the preparation of such material, especially simulation exercises and games, role plays, cases, and self-instructional material.

MAKING GUIDANCE A STRATEGIC FUNCTION

Turnaround related to thought process on guidance is already evident - that it must move from periphery to the center, from being a service function to partnership in the main task of the organization.

1. Guidance is concerned with increasing organizational effectiveness. So far the approach of guidance has been to offer/organize guidance for specific competencies. The movement is aimed towards making guidance proactive and strategic contributor to the organization. This swing is sometimes seen as abandoning the previous position and taking a new one. Repositioning does not mean taking an "either or" position. Repositioning involves expanding the role and emphasizing the strategic role, of guidance. While the strategic role is important, the other roles are not to be neglected.

Guidance should attend both to the current as well as the future needs. The current perspective is more operational, while the futuristic perspective is strategic. The other dimension relevant for the role of guidance is that of content vs. process. While the former emphasizes the Expansion of specific competencies, the latter is concerned with developing learning and empowering capability.

2. Guidance effectiveness depends not only on what happens during guidance, but also on what happens before the actual guidance (pre-Guidance factors) and what happens after the guidance has formally ended (post-Guidance factors). Evaluation cannot neglect these important contextual factors.

3. Various aspects of the guidance process that are not direct guidance inputs (for example- which also contribute to its effectiveness). Evaluation should, therefore, also focus on these factors.

4. The focus or the main task of evaluation should not only be in the nature of auditing (measuring guidance outcomes in terms of what has been achieved and how much), but should also be diagnostic.

Guidance Role:

Guidance system should develop required competencies for various role occupants. The emphasis should be on making the current roles in the organization more effective by equipping people occupying these roles with the needed competencies. Guidance takes current strategy and implements it in terms of expansion of needed competencies. The trainers should deliver good guidance. And to do this they themselves must have the relevant technical competencies.

Research Role:

In order to move in the strategic direction, trainers need to search what competencies are and will be needed in the organization. Guidance then assumes two more functions: searching future competencies, and developing them. Since the narrow boundaries of roles are breaking down, a person should develop flexibility to perform various roles. Multi-skilled workers are a good example of such effort. This becomes the first essential step for developing autonomous work groups and self-managed teams. The trainers, who function as researchers, need to develop their deep insight into organizational needs and process. Trainers should develop research competencies, especially those of action research.

Consulting Role:

Expansion of effective teams influences both the effectiveness of the individual team members as well as organizational effectiveness. The emphasis is synergy building, thereby enhancing effectiveness of each member. This can be done if the trainers advance with their research competencies into a consulting role - analyze problems, develop and use interventions involving concerned line people to deal with the problems, help in implementing the agreed action plan, and support it to stabilize the decisions. This is one step further in contributing to the strategic process. Guidance is then seen as a
useful function for developing organizational strategy. Trainers should develop both sharper understanding of the organizational strategy, and consulting competencies to play this role effectively. Guidance function should be used more frequently for international consulting. Trainers then will also develop more hand-on experience, which will make guidance more realistic and relevant.

Change Management Role:
This is the real strategic partnership role. The focus of Guidance is to develop leadership at all levels in the organization - the ability of strategic thinking, taking responsibility, creativity to find alternative solutions, and empowering others. The objective is to transform the organization, to make paradigm shift if needed. Guidance then becomes a true strategic partner. This is not possible without involvement of the trainers in the main business of the organization, and gaining relevant business knowledge.

TRANSLATING BUSINESS STRATEGY INTO GUIDANCE TERMS
Successful implementation of the business strategy of an organization will require some competencies. Business strategy indicates the broad direction for the future movement of an organization, and preferred ways of doing so for successful implementation; the organizational tasks must be translated into various functional terms: marketing, financial, technology, human resources, Guidance etc. This helps to make strategy formulation and implementation participative.

The overall organizational or "business" strategy should provide the framework for developing the guidance strategy to facilitate effective implementation of the strategy. It will include detailed approach to be adopted, competencies to be developed (in what thrust, evaluation etc. Guidance strategy thus prepared may be reviewed by all the functional leaders preparing the strategies which must be integrated into the main strategy for better synergy.

Another way to translate business strategy into guidance terms may be to develop strategies for key decisions taken by the organization. For example, if cost reduction is one of the elements in the business strategy, Guidance may develop ways of advancing this concern and achieving concrete results. In a study of 34 large US companies, for example, 78% HR professionals listed "cost reduction" as a top goal.

Guidance goals get closely linked with business goals. By maintaining an independent strategy, guidance may send a signal that is not connected with the other functions.

Working More Closely With Line Managers
People dealing with guidance should work more closely with line people. They are already working with line people in the areas of coaching, counseling, guidance, strategy planning for the departments etc. When cross-functional task forces and implementation teams are set up, guidance people should join these. Similarly, when teams are set up to discuss guidance issues etc., line people should be invited as members. Such close working together may help in integrating guidance with the various business groups, and making guidance a strategic partner.

The partnership in guidance should be based on value-added partnership of the trainers and guidance system. As strategic partners guidance people should raise serious discussion on how organizational strategy should be developed, and how it can implemented faster. Effective partnership comes out of professional competence and credibility.

MAKING GUIDANCE A STRATEGIC PARTNER
1. The employees responsible for the guidance function should be actively involved in formulating corporate strategy, to ensure that:
   • Strategic goals are realistically ambitious with respect to the reservoir of skills that will be available to meet them
   • The guidance function will be able to help top management communicate corporate strategy throughout the organization and to help managers translate the strategy into guidance needs.
2. The responsible person for the guidance function should ensure that all guidance programs (1) are necessary to the corporate strategy; (2) are recommended by (and, if possible, budgeted to) the managers whose employees are to be trained; and (3) help the trainees progress along the career paths jointly set by them and their managers.

3. The effectiveness of a program should be measured by how fully and how durably the trainees have mastered the subject matter.

4. The most controversial—and potentially the largest-factor in measuring the cost of a program is whether the trainee's time spent in guidance should be considered a cost. Since guidance (assuming that its objectives are strategically necessary) is an essential part of every job, then it should not be considered as an added cost. On the other hand, management should count as a cost any additional expense incurred to cover the trainee's work while guidance is in progress.

5. When an employer invites an employee to be retrained, it should ensure that the employee becomes fully acquainted, as early as possible, with the new position, work unit, and supervisor, whether the position is within or outside the firm. Such acquaintance maximizes the trainee's ability to learn and to apply the new skills.

ALIGNING GUIDANCE STRATEGY WITH CORPORATE STRATEGY

1. The senior associates should include a guidance plan as a critical component of the corporate strategic plan, to ensure that all levels of the organization will have the knowledge and skills to carry out the strategic plan. The guidance plan should distinguish clearly between (1) tactical programs designed to meet current needs, and (2) strategic programs designed to keep up with—and even anticipate—changes in technology, competition, and work-force standards, as well as with the rapid obsolescence of occupations.

2. The senior should regularly monitor the guidance function to ascertain that (1) program priorities match those of the corporate strategy, (2) program cost and skill objectives are valid, and (3) program cost and skill objectives are met.

3. Employers should think of their organizations as, in a sense, institutions for continuous learning, and should make them function as such. They should, therefore, aim to involve all employees in all stages of guidance, from needs analysis through evaluation.

4. Where employees are presented by unions, employers should invite the unions to share in the design and administration of guidance for their members. Unions should press for and accept such joint programs, but they should be careful to take on responsibility no faster than they acquire the skills and experience to discharge it.

5. To institutionalize continuous learning throughout the organization, the employer should encourage employees to make special efforts to learn—and/or to help other employees learn—skills valuable to the employer. Encouragement should take such forms as:

- A clear declaration that continuous learning and helping other employees to learn are integral parts of every job and every employee's responsibility.
- Favorable structures and mechanisms, for example, learning by objectives, train-the-trainer programs, continuous learning centers, semiautonomous work teams
- Appropriate rewards, for example pay raises, eligibility for promotion, recognition by peers
- Where a union is present, a jointly administered guidance program and fund
- Guidance, with focus of competency building amongst various organizational units, requires collaboration amongst several players in the organization. Partnering by different key persons in the organization is important for the success of guidance. As Sloman (1996, p. 198) says "If guidance in the organization is to become more effective, action will be required from trainers, academics, business schools, consultants and Government. While external agencies like management institutions, academics, consultants and the government are important for making guidance effective, the more critical role has to be played by the internal people in the organizations".
CONCLUSION
The idea of making Guidance a strategic function and its role can be enhanced if

Trainers
• Develop their own clear model regarding their role in the organization and communicate it effectively.
• Participate in appropriate networks to keep abreast of the debate on the changing nature of the function.

Academics, Business Schools and Consultants
• Recognize that the place of guidance in most organizations does not correspond to best practice, and developed models accordingly concentrated efforts on the need to produce practical instruments for translating an organization’s strategic policy into human resource terms.

Government
• Introduce fiscal measures designed to ensure that employers invest at least a specified amount in the guidance of their workforce.

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