

Green HR Practices in Organizations

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Abstract:

There is a lot of talk about going green these days. The corporate sector has increased its adoption of environment management systems. A green approach to people practices is the core of good green governance and will contribute to valuing people for their contributions in the work place. This paper reviews how corporations today develop human resource policies for promoting environment management initiatives. Most people think that Green HR involves reducing carbon footprints via less printing of paper, video conferencing and interviews, etc. In reality, Green HR has two essential elements: environmentally friendly HR practices and the preservation of knowledge capital. Companies are quick to layoff when times are tough before realizing the future implications of losing that knowledge capital. Green HR initiatives help companies find alternative ways to cut cost without losing their top talent. A green approach to people practices is the core of good green governance. Shifting the mindset and practices to a green model requires a total re-engineering of all the process steps in the entire system, i.e. considering the end-to-end cycle steps that make up the entire HR strategy. This paper will focus on an analysis of green business initiatives which are being implemented in the corporate world.

Keywords: Green HRM, environment management initiatives, retention, training, rewards.

The Green HRM is the requirement of 21st Century as day in and day out, it is reported in the newspaper that because of the excess consumption of natural resources as a raw material by the industries and other commercial organization there is tremendous pressure on the natural resources of planet Earth. The situation is so alarming that the scientist and the environmentalist are discussing the issues of ecological imbalances and the bio-diversity. In every International Conference on environment the nations are discussing about the carbon credits, global warming and the changes in the climate, resulting into earthquakes, frequent floods and vanishing of certain species and animals. The responsibility of the present generations, HR managers is to create awareness amongst the youngsters and among the people working for the organization about the Green HRM, Green Movement, utilization of natural resources and helping the corporate to maintain proper environment, and retain the natural resources for our future generation i.e. sustainable development.

The impact of our daily activities on the environment and the desire to go green has expanded from just individuals to organizations. Now days, many organizations are volunteering to operate in a more environmentally responsible way, therefore in the near future; "being green" could become the norm. The awareness of green action can be demonstrated into natural environment, such as green product (no animal testing); green technology; green education; green life (work-life balance). There is a growing need for the integration of environmental management into Human Resource (HR) and it is called Green HR. Many studies argued that system of environmental management can only be effectively implemented if the companies have the right people with the right skills and competencies.

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responsible way. Local municipalities are encouraging businesses to become greener by offering incentives. In the near future, "being green" could become the norm.

Green HR is the use of Human Resource Management policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and, more generally, promotes the cause of environmental sustainability. Due to the responsibility of the present generations, HR managers are to create awareness amongst the youngsters and among the people working for the organization about the Green HRM.

HR plays an important role in Management of people, which is regarded as an Asset of an organization. The people in the organizations must realize the importance of Green Movement, Green HR and Green Audit. The responsibility of the present generation HR Managers is to incorporate the Green HR Philosophy in corporate mission statement, HR-Policies. It should also spread it with the help of training programmes, in recruitments, etc.

Objectives

1. To what extent and how HR policies and practices can improve the environmental performance of organizations
2. Specific HR philosophies, policies and/or practices that support or inhibit change around environmental issues
3. The Role of the HR professional in environmental management
4. Changing attitudes and behaviours related to environmental issues in the workplace.

Green HR initiatives help companies find alternative ways to cut cost without losing their top talent. Green HR refers to the contribution of people management policies and activities towards this broader agenda. It's an important issue for HR because it is clearly an important issue for all employees, as well as customers and other stakeholders. It's also one in which HR can have a big impact without causing much expenditure, good environmental management can improve sales and reduce costs, providing funding for green benefits to keep staff engaged.

The best practice for greening the business are be the use of computerized human resources information systems, applicant tracking systems and online applications streamline hiring efforts. They also reduce paper usage and costs. In addition, documents that authorize motor vehicle, background, criminal checks and references can all be scanned and transmitted to third parties and reduce excess paperwork. Open enrollment for employee benefits can be conducted online and signatures for legal documents may be obtained electronically, eliminating excessive use of paper so the company initiatives driven by human resources are blood drives, charitable contribution campaigns and wellness programs are typically coordinated by human resources departments.

Green initiatives such as recycling campaigns, paper drives and educational programs can be driven by HR personnel. This also contributes to cleaner air quality, not to mention saving time and money. Customers are often more flexible than people might expect, especially when they are aware of admirable green practices that appear responsible and forward thinking.

Here are some actions which the organizations can adopt to go green:

ISO 14000 environmental management standards exists to help companies to minimize the operational affects on natural resources and environment, to comply with pollution laws and improve, organizations applying for ISO 14000 series, conducting environmental audits and using eco-friendly technology and producing eco-friendly products. It is a step towards Clean HR e.g. in many manufacturing companies are shifting from old packing material like tin containers, plastic bags to eco-friendly packing material.

Paperless Office: Banks and other service sector was major consumer of paper, but today with introduction of IT, the consumption of paper has come down. E-business, e-learning has changed the methods and procedures at offices.

Wastage-Disposal: This recent development in disposal of industrial waste, domestic waste, the sewerage system, bio-medical waste is an example of "Protective Environment" or we care for environment.

Conducting an energy audit - Most local utilities offer businesses free on-site consultations on how they can reduce usage and save money. Frequent suggestions include: Improve insulation, install timers to automatically turn off lights, use energy efficient lightbulbs, keep temperatures at comfortable ranges that are not excessively cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Reduce commuting - Encourage carpooling by provide preferred parking for carpoolers). Offering transit passes to employees who take the bus or subway, and bike racks for cyclists.

Reducing business travel - Teleconference instead of traveling. For must-go trips, keep track of the miles driven and flown and buy carbon offsets from a non-profit like Carbonfund.org to make up for the greenhouse gas emissions.

Buying green - Tell suppliers that you're interested in sustainable products and set specific goals for buying recycled, refurbished, or used. Make the environment, and not just price, a factor when purchasing.

Detoxify - Many offices have toxic substances, such as used batteries and copier toner, on hand. Talk to suppliers about alternatives to toxics, and make sure you properly dispose of the ones you can't avoid using.

Rethink transportation Consider the petroleum it takes to ship and receive products. Evaluate the impact of products you buy or sell, and find ways to mitigate those impacts. Purchase or lease

Energy-efficient cars and trucks for your employees - business uses and delivery of products. Provide leadership and resources for going greening - Assign a respected executive-level person to head up going Green/Organizational Sustainability initiatives. Including "going green" in Company's mission statement and business plans.

Get employees involved - Create a team to lead the company eco-efforts.

Communicating about Going Green issues - Inform suppliers and customers about your efforts. And get in touch with local regulatory agencies, many of which offer financial incentives to businesses that implement green initiatives. Keep employees and shareholders/investors informed about going green progress.

Save water - Monitor sinks and toilets for leaks that waste water. Eliminate water waste in manufacturing processes and in watering the company's lawns.

Explore opportunities for implementing alternative energy sources - Evaluate opportunities for using solar energy, bio-fuels, wind power and other alternative energy sources.

Implement green manufacturing processes - Use energy-efficient equipment, and streamline processes to use fewer steps and less materials and packaging. Green ideas and concepts are beginning to gather pace within the HR space, often complementing existing sustainability-based initiatives.

Increasingly they are delivering tangible benefits to the business, rather than simply adding a gloss to brand and reputation. These new processes, policies, products and tools are actually helping to ensure compliance and improve productivity too. And with legislation now in

place to effectively formalize the need for a new corporate approach to the environment, now's the time for HR to embrace the green agenda.

"The most valuable asset can be our employees... but they can also be our greatest liability". Looking at human resources on a larger and complete scale as human beings, it is the responsibility of HR leadership to be concerned about the wellness of people and looking beyond just monetary rewards and incentives. The focus of leaders and human resource managers ought to be to bring out the best of human nature and quality in people. The nature of organisations, institutions or governments must be of the human kind which value and promote enabling conditions for recognition for people and the

realisation of the limitless potential of the human individual to become more productive, motivated and inspired.

One way of achieving this is by adding quality and meaning to products and the way in which such products are made. I believe it is the possibility of attaining green HR practices in an organisation that will give people the sense of security, pride and confidence to be productive and performing employees. Determining the carbon HR footprint of the organisation is dependent on analysing all the processes in the performance system. If HR leadership is going to embrace a green HR model, it is not only the output of each cycle step in the strategy that needs special consideration, but actually all the touch points of each process step should be re-visited to ensure that the entire strategy subscribes to the new green HR strategy.

The future of a country is shaped by the way a country invests in the development of its human resources. As in the case of all countries, and especially as a developing country, Bhutan too has grand visions and aspirations. We have therefore, invested heavily in HRD from the early stages of our development process and continue to do so. In turn, we hope to become an IT enabled knowledge based society to build a wholly green and sustainable economy within which pursuit of happiness will be the conscious goal of every citizen." This is the opening speech of the Prime Minister of Bhutan at a recent human resources conference held in India. Gilbert (2007: 1) identifies a green business activity as any activity that is performed in a manner that has either limited negative ecological impact or directly benefits the natural environment in some way.

The effect of green business practices requires an in-depth knowledge of client requirements together with the ability to satisfy these requirements while contributing to environmental sustainability. Managers need to develop systems and structures within their business that satisfy the requirements of green business practices while still achieving strategic business goals. Green HR is one which involves two essential elements, environmentally friendly HR practices and the presentation of knowledge capital. The importance of green HRM practices is vital to promote employee morale and this may help in arriving at a great deal of benefit for both the company and the employee. For example some of the benefits that an organization can attain as a result of introducing green HRM principles in the organization include:

- Improvement in retention rate of employee
- Improvement public image
- Improvement in attracting better employees
- Improvement in productivity and sustainability
- Reduction in environmental impact of the company
- Improved competitiveness and increased overall performance

Apart from this it is to be identified that employees who are actively involved in environment management principles may play a vital role in arriving at better environmental strategies to be implemented. Employees may feel empowered to adopt specific environment management principles as a result of promoted human resource policies which present better opportunities for improvements related to reduction of waste and promotion of lean manufacturing. This also may help in arriving at greener products and green savings from waste elimination. The promotion of such values will also indirectly improve consumer satisfaction.

Conclusion

Today most consumers look for companies which adopt environmental standards. The following conclusions and recommendations are provided based on the literature study conducted:

Manufacturing/Operations function: Businesses should apply green principles by using their resources more efficiently. This can be done by creating byproducts to eliminate waste and intensifying production processes to reduce environmental impacts while lowering the cost of inputs and waste disposal.

Businesses should consciously avoid actions that can cause changes to the climate, water infrastructure and forestry, and rather make use of alternative energy sources.

Businesses should have a recycling, re-use and waste policy. Using green technology and reducing the impact of facility construction and operation could increase productivity and ensure that a business remains competitive.

Marketing/Sales function: Businesses must sell only green products and use only green packaging for products. This type of approach would show that a business is environmentally friendly and could lead to new market opportunities, as well as developing a reputation for supplying green products. Green businesses should have a brand that is valued by customers. Advertising positive environmentalism is not enough, as businesses should be able to honour their promises.

There is a need to continually advertise green products to increase customer awareness of the impact and benefits thereof. Furthermore, businesses should be committed to investing in green research and development initiatives.

To conclude we can say that HR has a role in the pursuit of greener business practices, a role to save planet earth and recruit new employees and enforce greener working practices and change environmentally unfriendly behaviours. HR has a significant opportunity to contribute the green movement and to motivate employees / people to work for greener business.

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