

Social Reengineering The Imperatives For Human Resource Management

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Objective

This paper is an attempt to reflect some of the learning and experiences of the author, to coherently put forth the changes that are affecting Indian Organizations and to discuss what needs to be done to manage these changes. The author argues that human resource professionals have to engage themselves for social reengineering to bring fundamental transformation in core structure and values to build a developed Indian Society. The purpose and the role of such reengineering executives are discussed. The core competencies essential to bring transformation and create highly productive work systems have been explained. Finally, the roles of human resource professionals are outlined.

Pressures for Change

Currently, Indian economy and organizations, both in public and private are experiencing the unusual pressures for change. First, it is worth looking at the nature of some of these change processes:

Demographic

The demographic upturn is, to varying degrees, reflected over most of the states in India. The complex mixture of increasing unemployment of the vast population, several million people below poverty line and a minimal literacy level, coupled with the tendencies and upsurge for technological automations and consequent search for higher skilled workforce are really the significant pressure points to build what is dreamed as a modern India in the 21st century.

Social values

Indian social attitudes are undergoing a radical change. In a pluralistic democratic nation, people are decreasingly accepting authoritarian and controlling management patterns and at the same time quality of life consideration are becoming increasingly important even in the rural landscape of Indian subcontinent.

Industrialization

There is a tremendous pressure from the international funding agencies and multinational corporations on the Indian political machinery and state bureaucracy to move towards market driven economy. A decade old pronouncements by government of India for liberalization, privatization and globalization have generated new type of changes which are termed as 'reforms in Indian economy'.

Information revolution

The rapid march of the Information technology and systems add up to an expectation for transparency in all our actions and dealings.

These pressures of change need not only be the fitness to compete, but the qualities needed to reengineer our management systems and build up a totally different and new architecture which will be able to meet the new demands of the Indian society under the given boundary conditions defined by the parameters like poverty level, literacy level, quality of life, economic indicators, national security requirements etc.

However, such changes will be manifested through different modalities such as: Inside-in changes, Inside-out changes, Outside-in changes. Different modalities of change may arise simultaneously, but they can eventually be traced back to a fundamental difference in conceptualization and structuring. For example, inside-in changes are internal changes which will call for improving products and services, reengineering the management structure, simplification of the existing process, reducing costs, eliminating wastes, bottlenecks, and redundancies etc. However, in managing the futuristic organizations we may require different mechanisms and instrumentation in comparison with managing today's organizations. Such mechanisms and instrumentation have to be designed making comparison with existing rules of interactions. This modality is referred to as inside-out change, which may be necessary first to start with, but may not be sufficient in the long run. What may be required is the outside-in modality, where we may have to reconstruct new codes and rules of the game in the broader societal context. Reconstruction here will be a consequence of continual change which will change the total horizon of our socio-economic activities.

Indian organizations will face the pressures and the challenges of the external environment - economic, social, technological, etc. - must produce response to and interaction with internal systems and processes, if there is to be the development in the real sense. The key issues before India are how to reengineer the existing ritualistic or absolutistic systems? In the future, who will fill the executives' role? How these executives acquire skills and competencies? What will determine the success of these executives?

The purpose of a reengineering executive

In the Indian context, a reengineering executive must have a prudent merger of competence and a purpose committed to the

social good. Today, in many Indian organizations, there is an undercurrent of reflection on the role and expectation of the executives. I would like to give here some of the symbolic concepts and the intrinsic meaning of the purpose of a reengineering executive for Indian organizations.

Authenticity

Every executive working in an executive position cannot be termed as authentic. He can be considered to be authentic only when he establishes a dominant relationship through his understanding of the justice; such as work justice, social justice etc., and his ability to apply his knowledge, skills, and finally his wisdom to eventuate work justice and social justice. Authentic social engineers have prudent regards for all the pluralistic interests that merge to make an organization a growing enterprise in the future and have the courage and conviction to protect and augment the social equity.

Inclusiveness

If an executive is authentic, he has a right to be included in the organization. Then we need social engineers to design and to serve inclusive organizations. An inclusive organization permits every member to exercise certain rights and enjoy certain privileges. Members have a right to a sense of ownership, a sense of opportunity. They have a right to reach the potentials and have a right to share the results.

Truth

Any organization public or private cannot really achieve growth without objective truth. Even though some organizations in India are posing to be growth oriented, they are incapable of understanding the meaning of truth. The degree of its presence has a tremendous impact on our social relationships and on our future. The social engineer, therefore, must understand what objective

untruthfulness is. For example, is promise a truth? Is commitment a truth? Is behavior a truth? There are many ways in which we have to understand and interpret truth.

Vulnerability

We live with diversified interests and motives. Vulnerability is a gift that our executives must own, because they must be vulnerable to the diversity, and have the will to seek contradictory opinions and manage such conflicts, discords and distortions. They should not be inconsistent but have the endurance to bring resolution and tenacity to withstand the hammering of the individuals.

Accessibility

Before we examine the accessibility of executives, let us know access to what? More often, we have seen that psychopaths have more access to the executives, and sometimes superficial or artificial subordinates get things done through their bosses, and in quite a few cases, such bosses are projected as representatives of their followers. People are given the gift of talents, but not all are given the gift of access. Executives will be able to deliver the goods if they understand the intrinsic meaning of these important aspects. We cannot think of building a progressive nation until we permit our members of society access to their executives to demand equal opportunities, affirmative action for the social welfare, and the objective truthfulness. Executives will need to mobilize the followers by maximizing their potentials for taking up responsible, creative and cooperative action which in most of our contemporary Indian organizations remain untapped and underused.

The Core Competencies of the Reengineering Executive

An executive who would like to reengineer the Indian Institution must be a multidimensional individual who will be

willing to undertake to create or develop a particular way of life (form) and a way of living (process) for the members. Indian institutions today need executives who can bring in innovations, enlightenment, and above all a framework of moral standards into reality and order. More particularly, such executives will be needed by thousands, an army of such reengineers, who have conceptual understanding of the social justice, principles of equity and at the same time have a knowledge of designing and managing high performance work places. They have the human instincts and empathy to help people through the required transitions, and the courage to take on the rough and tumble work of making change at an accelerating productive rate. Looking more closely at these reengineering executives, we must define the competencies for them.

First let us accept that future of our country will be greater complexity because of environmental pressure of change. Indian organizations will enter into an era of relativism where ritualistic patterns of administration by compliance and control will not at all work. Neither the bureaucratic form of governance nor even the absolutistic boundary-divided nor the functional silo type management form will work in the relativistic era, the organizations will relate to the world class organizations and will strive towards accepting multiplicity of management principles even will accept the coexistence of different contradicting frames of reference. The reengineering executive must transcend ritualistic as well as absolutistic patterns and bring their contributions together to meet the challenges and opportunities of the relativistic era which will pose greater complexity, broadening horizons and accelerating speed of change. The reengineering executive is one who will analyze the failures of the old systems and create new systems.

In brief, some of the key competencies of a reengineering executive may be

understood as follows:

- The executive's competence can be gauged in terms of his perception, definition and expression of real time discontinuous but strategic changes that capture the nation as a whole and organizations in particular.
- The executive's competence will depend upon his strategic initiative for defining the creative alternatives and enabling the members to design, implement and learn such creative process.
- The executive's dominant authority will be vested in building trust and winning legitimacy through authentic behavior, inclusive character and objective truths.
- The executives' capability will depend upon how does he discover hidden potentials of people in the society at large, select the appropriate personnel, develop and nurture them and finally assign them the key tasks to contribute towards social value creation in the long term.
- The executives' creditability will depend upon his ability to practice simplicity and demonstrate such simplicity in actions and participate in the plurality of interest of all his followers enhancing their real happiness and spiritual growth.

The basic starting point in helping the executives to learn and develop is a focus on the qualities; the organization needs to meet the future demands. The competence approach to executive development has never been debated in Indian academics or industry or even in the government. Even if some attempts have been made by a few national level academic institutions in this regard, there has been no real impact on organizational ability to learn and change. The result has been a proliferation of management education and training curricula, many of which are either commercial or merely cosmetic, often giving

a spurious objectivity and unfocussed direction. In the real sense, there is no learning and hence no real change.

There is a need now for recruiting, developing deploying, and retaining holistic executives whose competencies should center around - providing the vision, empowering people, providing social infrastructure to people, assuring affirmative actions and equal opportunities to all people, influencing factors that impact socio-economic patterns, establishing a planning framework and operational processes, and above all inspiring through a missionary spirit. All these competencies, in my opinion, will center around the executive's mindset. What I propose here is a reengineering executive must be developed to have a mindset of an institution builder. Tomorrow's reengineering will demand for construction of new structures by demolishing the existing filthy structures. Basis of this, the mindset of the builder must be a commitment to create value for the society to maximize it not only for the sake of work justice, but for the social justice. The goal is the establishment of a culture of production and services, taking such productions and services into societal ownership and formulation of a management system, which will ensure value innovations in the everyday affairs of the work system to make productive contribution.

Viewed from the above perspectives relating to core competencies of a reengineering executive in the Indian context, I am confident that we can develop the requisite army of such executives to create high performance work systems in Indian organizations on a massive scale. What is really required is for all of us - in industry, in the government, in education etc. to sit together and map out a vision for India in the 21st century and create a social infrastructure to attain it fast. My viewpoint here is reinforced through my learning and experiences over the past three decades in Indian academics and industry. I have been

involved in education, research and consulting programs, which were structured under the premises of imparting merely the skills to some extent, but we do not facilitate broader communication, do not motivate participants for building of network of relationship across the society i.e. community of practices and constructing a common vision of the ideal Indian ethos and identity. We have never promoted cohesiveness between industry, government and academics and have never attempted to inculcate a common set of core values, which we Indians can become proud of in the entire globe. We have made political transitions successfully because of the great inspiring leader (M.K. Gandhi), who propagated the core values of truth and nonviolence. This political transition did not teach us how to reengineer our social structure and infrastructure although his writings mentioned them very vividly.

HRM's new role

Now, I draw upon a set of new roles for human resource professionals. They are; Partnership with line management, Becoming a proactive champion and change agent, building learning organizations.

To become effective in our role, we need the resources. They are: Knowledge - Knowing what is new, not just reinvented; Intellectual abilities-generating, evaluating and executing ideas; Thinking styles- a preference for thinking in innovative ways; Motivation - Making a move; Personality-Determination and persistence in overcoming obstacles; Environment - Institution that supports the professionalism and spreads the culture. How ever, we must be willing to become more sensitive and understanding with respect to social, cultural and gender differences within the work-place and to demonstrate the sensitivity and understanding; willing to craft and implement new and different employment and communication processes to enhance and promote perceptions of

fairness and equity; willing to bring full commitment to the effective utilization of a diverse work force.

More specifically, the emerging role demands the following:

- Understand the external environment, recognize the forces and assess them.
- Enlist the passion and energy of human resources to support your organization's mission and strategy.
- Provide consistent leadership to grab the interest of people all across.
- First change behavior of people with the right kind of systems and policies in place and then people will create the climate of alignment.
- Let service to people drive your structure.
- Facilitate people by providing knowledge resource.
- Productive employees are always happy, but they need development, coaching, mentoring, etc.

The new moral work place factors for the HR professionals, which will call for social reporting, are:

- Equal opportunity
- Affirmative actions
- Diversity management
- Ecological sensitivity

I draw upon the following attributes for HR professionals:

- A belief in oneself, a passion for the job,
- A love of people, confidence in people,
- Certainty in people,
- Strength in people,
- Expertise in people,
- Courage in people,
- Optimism in people.

Lastly, we must have the conviction that the future will be better.

