

# Recognise employees as individuals

**CAREER**  
**CLAUSE**  
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*ACT, the fourth largest player in wired broadband service in India with half a million subscriber base, is present in Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu. The company has been making considerable investments in resources, adapting personalised processes for performance review, incorporating family-friendly activities and undertaking employee wellness initiatives.*

■ **Organisations are looking at innovative ways to retain employees and develop a vibrant work culture. What is the need of the hour in this direction?**

Employees like to work in a place that meets their professional and personal needs. Dissonance arises when either goes off the balance. This, however, is easier said than done, as each individual is different from the other. As individuals, our drives are different and may be defined by factors like social, economical, perceptual and familial. Also a large part of the workforce these days comprises millennials and the Gen Y. Unlike the previous generation that used to look for structure, security and stability, the new generation is hungry for growth. They favour mentoring to classical su-

pervision.

The need of the hour is to recognise employees as individuals with distinct personalities and aspirations, and to understand them as a person. 'One size fits all' doesn't work and is often the cause of failure of various retention practices. We need to answer simple questions like, "what drives the person to come to work everyday and what are the factors that he/she considers important in life?" Knowing the answers requires investing time with the team members much beyond the work. Knowing the answers indicates to employees that their manager cares. Knowing the answer also helps the manager and the organisation understand what needs to be done to retain the talent. Organisations need to focus on building this ability in their managers.

At the end of it, the work environment defines the enthusiasm level of each employee. The happiness quotient is correlated to productivity at work. Similarly, transparency makes the employees and the organisation seamless. A transparent environment communicates trust and a feeling of oneness.

■ **You have been successful in helping employees increase their productivity. How did you them raise the bar?**

Our businesses can be pegged at different stages of an organisational evolution curve. Some are at an investment phase, some may be classified as mature businesses and some are in between. Learnings from the relatively older businesses flow into the newer ones. To me, some of those key learnings are:

● Measurement is the sin-



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gle most important factor while driving any change. What we measure gets done. What doesn't get measured fizzles out. This requires a strong system of analytics and information.

● **Success is addictive.** Providing opportunities for employees to experience small victories and building an environment that celebrates small wins is important in driving any change in behaviour or performance.

● **Leadership's engagement and commitment to the cause becomes a force multiplier.** A leader's involvement and commitment to develop his/her people is the key to any successful change to happen.

Moreover right from the inception, training has been a religion at ACT. There is a huge focus on capability building besides filling the current gaps. Not only has productivity been positively impacted over the years, many employees have had a very meaningful professional and personal growth.

■ **What should new-age HR professionals do to make their firms future-proof?**

The focus must shift from

now to future, and preparations must be done now. Future proofing also means developing agility to adapt to changes, and cross-skilling being promoted. Hiring and training has to be planned and done in advance. Internal communication is very important and employees should get the opportunity to "connect" with senior management. A compelling vision for the journey ahead must be constantly communicated creating excitement in those who want to be part of a story. Employees will climb mountains if they find meaning and a purpose in what they are doing. Create an environment that is high energy, fun and natural.

■ **What are the key elements of R&R mechanism at ACT?**

At ACT, the thought behind the R&R initiative is to drive a particular culture by recognising an employee for a behaviour displayed or effort put in or results achieved. There is a high correlation in a person's decision to continue with an organisation, and reward and recognition. There are several monetary and non-

monetary reward mechanisms.

**Monthly awards:** This is driven at a team level and is the most classical form of R&R comprising the best individual and the best team awards. The effort is to make it as ceremonial as possible with a focus on making the winner feel special.

**Special performance:** Superior performance in any deliverable executed deserves a special mention. Monetary rewards are extended to employees for outstanding performance. This is discretionary and is decided by the remuneration committee.

**Spotlight:** Whenever an employee goes out of his/her way to get work done, help a colleague or a customer, stand up for what is right, it is a display of extraordinary behaviour. An effective way of reinforcing desirable behaviours is to reward them. And nothing better than rewarding them on the spot.

**Holiday sponsoring:** Families are one of the most important stakeholders of the organisation and their support plays a huge role in the employees' performance. This support and also the 'personal' time they sometimes sacrifice is appreciated by the organisation. As a gesture of appreciation, the employee is given some personal time off and sent on a sponsored holiday.

**Movie screening/dinners:** A movie screening, a special dinner and many such activities are organised for the entire team to celebrate the spirit of teamwork.

Firms need to have a focus on both informal and formal ways of recognising and rewarding employees. We need to focus on building an ecosystem that encourages appreciation.

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