

The Transcendental Mentor

An erstwhile specialist in Supply Chain Management, Suhas Mukherjee, Head Corporate HRD, Ambuja Neotia Group was inspired to take up a HR role after starting a HR consultancy along with his wife in Kolkata. Suhas, in spite of his vast experience of 33 years, remains his humble self, and, endorses his belief in the fact that every leadership role is a HR role since the leader always deals and connects with his team members and colleagues.



BY S. AJAY KUMAR

How do you look back at your professional journey traversed thus far? Please share some of the enriching experiences that you have come across.

First, let me admit that I do not pertain to a core HR background. I had commenced my career in the domain of Materials Management and served more than 18 years in the field of SCM (Supply Chain Management). I also have an MBA in Materials Management and have worked in various capacities with some of the leading national and multinational organisations across India. However, in 2001, I floated an HR consultancy firm in Kolkata along with my wife, Sumita. Together, we successfully offered our consultancy services to a large number of well-known organisations concentrated in Kolkata. My journey in HR had hence commenced and has

IN BRIEF	
Name	: Suhas Mukherjee
Age	: 55 Years
Title	: Head - Corporate HRD
Organization	: The Ambuja Neotia Group
Experience	: 33
Years in HR	: 12
Education	: MBA in Materials Management

remained in existence till date.

It is my opinion that each of us occupying a responsible position in an organisation need to possess man management skills, and must handle HR issues on a regular basis, and, are transformed as HR Managers by

default, though, we may not have any professional qualifications in HR. We only require the passion to work with employees, understand them, and, cater to their welfare. HR does not necessarily mean issuing Appointment letters, Circulars, Show-causes etc., but has a much wider scope beyond these issues. One significant issue that I have come across during my journey in the field of HR is that most organisations do not have defined job responsibilities in respective positions. Employees tend to lack a specific direction, which leads to major confusions resulting in duplication of jobs and disguised unemployment. Eventually, it impacts cost and productivity. The HR Department may not directly contribute much in terms of productivity; however, it plays a major and significant role indirectly.

Taking all these into consideration, we once implemented the most popular and well accepted, though, not widely implemented KRA & KPI system in Ambuja Neotia Group, where Realty is one of the core businesses. The benefit of the system under reference is that each employee is aware of his job responsibilities, which can avoid duplication of jobs, while having some specific and measurable targets. It imparts direction to the organisation and to the individual employee and creates an atmosphere of healthy competition.

How has working across industries made your professional journey more interesting?

I have more than 33 years of working experience across various industries in national and multinational

organisations. Apart from HR, I also have significant exposure in SCM, Sales & Marketing (Commodity and Concept) etc. However, I have had immense opportunities to work with various organisations in multiple directions and different positions. Eventually, I managed to gather a versatile work experience, which has added value in my professional life. I always welcome challenges, which has given me an opportunity to achieve targets. Work actually tends to become monotonous if there are no challenges.

Each organisation or industry has its own unique style of working and presents varied challenges. One cannot simply infer that the procedures followed by an organisation are correct or incorrect. The system or the rules and regulations followed by an organisation are its legacy, which have been followed possibly for an extended period. The same may not be followed in some other organisation. All these are dependent upon the work culture of the organisation, the background of the employees, the geographical position of the organisations etc. Therefore, when one is inducted into a new organisation, one must study the organisation from every possible angle and then come forward with the wrongs, and, attempt to rectify and adapt gradually.

How different have the two experiences been for you- setting up HR from the scratch in an organisation to managing well-established HR frameworks?

According to me, setting-up a new HR system is more interesting and challenging than maintaining and

Rapid Fire

Favourite Quote: "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success". - Swami Vivekananda

Leadership style: Spontaneous

Current Professional Goal: Team Building and Bonding, motivating

employees to perform and meet targets, delineating KRAs and KPIs and extracting the best out of available resources- bottom-line to get the work done. Nothing is impossible with a motivated high performing team.

Favourite Book: The Black Swan by Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Favourite Movie: Three Idiots

Favourite Music Artist: Kishore Kumar

Life is... precious and there is no second time, live it to the fullest...

Family is...the topmost priority, success and failure depends upon on the time, support and co operation from family.

I strongly believe in.... punctuality and fulfilment of commitments.

The most important thing I do on Sunday.... Helping my wife in household chores and spending time with family.

I deal with setbacks by...Stay positive

3 Things I never leave home without... Sense of humour, confidence and positive thinking

Up, Close and Personal

What inspired you to steer your career towards HR?

HR is one of the most innovative and challenging professions. It offers enormous scope for doing newer things - creative and innovative, for the wellbeing of employees and their families, without compromising the interest of the employers. It gives immense pleasure when you do well for the employees, and, because of you, someone does well in his/her career and personal life. One has to have enough passion to choose HR as a profession. You feel good when you create something good, and, it does well for the world.

How do you like to spend your free time?

I am a Bengali and we are generally fond of music and culture. I am quite in tune with the same. I spend some of my free time in recitations of poetry written by eminent Bengali poets like Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul and others. Listening to music and reading are also my passions.

Please share some of your experiences of travelling to different

places. What have you gained from these experiences?

Travelling is a part of my job since I am in HR and I had started my career in HR from Sterling Holiday Resorts India Limited. I must mention that working with Sterling those days was really a pleasure. Frankly speaking, each and every moment with Sterling was an experience. I used to travel for almost 15 days in a month across India as the company had around 14 resort properties at various corners, and, I had to travel to almost every centre other than my territory of Eastern India. There is a massive cultural difference in the various regions in India, though there is not much of difference in the thought process. People in India are basically intelligent, and, at the same time emotional. Therefore, performing HR duties in countries like India is different from any other country in the globe.

What was your learning from the B-School?

B-school is a place where you study and learn certain theoretical techniques and processes of work which are absolutely necessary to start a profession, and, I did the same. However, situations during day-to-day work or how they would appear are quite different and difficult to predict in

advance, and therefore, no questions arise to receive readymade solutions.

Has someone from your family deeply inspired your values and growth as a human being?

Success is possible only when you are a good human being. My mother taught me that each and every person in the society is worthy of respect regardless of their age, economical condition or education. I feel a person can achieve success when he is respected and well accepted by others, and, it is possible only when you are a good human being.

Who would you credit in your life as a great influence in shaping the man that you are today?

The things that I have been able to achieve, and, to stand where I am today is majorly because of my wife, Sumita Mukherjee. She has been an inspiration for me ever since I have been married in every aspect of life including professional and personal. She is basically a self made person, who has worked as the Regional Head of Sterling Holiday Resorts India Limited and is presently running her own F&B Outlet. According to me, she is one of the best self-taught chefs in the World.

following an established and pre-set HR framework. While setting up a new HR system in an organisation, one must study the existing work culture and the prevailing practices of the organisation well, try to find out the objectives of the organisation, and, most importantly, the Vision & Mission. Whereas, in a well embellished HR system, the scope is limited, and, one can modify or rectify only the existing systems. In an established HR System, one must undertake required precautions before implementing a new system or rectifying an existing system and gauge its impact on the working of the organisation.

Having been long associated with the Realty & Hospitality sectors, what is your understanding of the business, and, how big a role does HR play in this sector? Were there any sector specific challenges and opportunities

experienced by you?

Every sector of varied industries has its unique and specific advantages and challenges. Realty, Hospitality and my present responsibility in the Education sector are no exception. The Realty sector is one of the most flourishing sectors across the country. Therefore, the mobility in jobs is comparatively higher as compared to the other sectors leading to a higher attrition rate. Consequently, recruitment becomes one of the most important roles of the Realty sector and the same is reflected in the Hospitality sector as well. In the Hospitality sector, the attrition rates are comparatively most critical. The dynamics in this particular sector is different from the other sectors. There is a disparity ratio between ground level employees and their supervisors. Therefore, the HR Department is always busy seeking and recruiting personnel. Because of the

HR Perspectives

Some gaps that HR Organisations need to bridge

According to Mercer's 2016 Global Talent Trends study - "The first to take into account the perspective of both employers and employees - a lack of development, outdated processes, and discontent with the role of managers are the main drivers of workforce dissatisfaction."

Workforce is an important and precious asset of any organisation, and therefore, retention through appropriate measures increases productivity of the

organisation. Bridging the gap of needs between employees and employers is one of the foremost role of importance of the HR department. There are differences of opinion existing between employers' planning for development and welfare of employees, and simultaneously, employees' views of a proper and professional work environment.

Common errors companies commit while designing engagement practices

Engagement or recruitment is fast becoming a significant challenge for the HR Department these days. Hiring

appropriate talent is difficult in such a scenario where mobility of jobs at various levels is improving reasonably. Moreover, it is all the more difficult to retain them in the organisation. Because of the critical practices of job hopping, ownership towards one's job is becoming less important by the day.

Therefore, the concerned organisation should concentrate on retaining existing resources, motivating them and valuing them appropriately. It would save cost of recruitment and enhance their ownership towards their jobs and loyalty to the employing organisation at the same time.

high mobility in this sector, retention of employees, especially at the ground level, is a challenge.

Who have been your figures of inspiration during your professional journey? What are some of the values and ideologies with regards to which you think, leaders should definitely walk the talk to win stakeholder confidence?

"I believe the first test of a truly great man is in his humility."

- John Ruskin.

In the Indian context, life is incomplete without a proper Guru and the same is applicable to me as well. I have had the pleasure of being a part of various organisations for over 33 years, and, have come across lots of professionals

and leaders in my long tenure. However, while working with various professionally capable and successful personalities, I observed and experienced certain qualities in them, which are exceptional, very relevant, but not taught in any B-school in the country. This is something unique and only a select few are blessed with such innate qualities.

Fast rising HR professionals are great human beings who believe in forming deep connections with those around them. They are generally very humble over their own achievements and profile, and therefore, could manage to acquire a lot of respect and gratitude in the business. True and successful HR leaders never let personal opinions, judgment or experiences or impose their thoughts over others. They always give sufficient time to employees for their issues and difficulties.

Buzzer Round

A mysterious benefactor wrote you a check for 1, 00, 00, 000 and said, "Help me solve a problem!" What would you say?

I would definitely resolve the problem if I could, irrespective of the monetary factor.

What's the one thing you are deeply proud of but would never put on your resume?

I am a reasonably good motivational speaker.

What's the one dream that you have tucked away for the moment?

Play a role in a Feature Film!

Is there something that people consistently ask for your advice on? What is it?

The general impression among people is that if you put in significant stakes, you may end up losing your financial stability. I do not agree with this as it is a topic that involves mathematics and comprehensive study and research. One can continuously earn money if he follows certain technical and

fundamentals of this trade. Those who know, always ask for advice.

When was the last time you astonished yourself?

A life lived completely for self will never astonish you.

What do you value most: free time, recognition, or money?

Free time, very precious never come back

Are you living your life purpose or still searching?

Yes, I am enjoying my life with a purpose and worked in various roles.

Learning Points

- A Continuous learning process and enhancement of knowledge keeps someone at par with developments and trends in the industry. One must keep himself updated with the changes in the industry and changing dynamics as it helps the concerned employee develop faster, and, at the same time, remain abreast of the changing dynamics.
- While working, each of us face a lot of difficulties and impediments which in the professional field is referred to as challenges, and, these challenges actually transform people to be successful in life, while increasing their ability to adapt to different work cultures and environments.
- A Positive attitude towards anything makes the person more confident and successful in life.

One of the prominent personalities who inspired me both in the professional and personal space is Mrs. Rajakumari Ravindranath, the then President - HRD of Sterling Holiday Resorts India Limited. She taught me how to get the work done without a Hire and Fire policy. She also made me understand that the employees are the assets of the organisation, and, it is our duty to take care of them and their family too. When an organisation goes out of the way to do this, employees become dependent and relaxed; and hence, there is enhanced concentration in their jobs and the development of ownership.

A person has to play various roles in life in different situations, and, to perform this minutely, effectively, and intelligently is an art. Mr. Pradip Jyoti Agrawal, Advisor to the Chairman of Ambuja Neotia Group, and my present reporting head, has taught me how to delegate jobs to the right people and get the same done on time.

"Best HR practices are built on a futuristic vision." What are your views on the same and how have you practiced this during your stint with various organisations?

HRM is a process, a continuous development of the human/work force. Organisations have begun to realise the importance of Human capital, and, HR majorly works on human capital. Employee development is dependent on the vision and work culture of the organisation. For the overall development of an organisation, it is incumbent upon every individual employee to have a fitting futuristic vision. Without a vision, setting up organisational goals or an individual's overall growth-path is not possible.

During my tenure, Ambuja Neotia group implemented the KRA systems in the Realty & Hospitality sector of the group, which could be the first of its kind in the realty sector in India. In Ambuja Neotia group, we give priority to employees to express their mind. There are plenty of avenues for the employees to enhance their educational qualifications. Creating a positive employment relationship between management and employees and a climate of mutual trust encourage the application of an ethical approach to people management.

As a part of the Ambuja Neotia family, what will be your focus for 2018? What are the organisational goals that have been set by you?

Being a part of the Ambuja Neotia family, I want to work towards equality in the work field and work life balance. There should be no disparity between male and female work force. Though we are developing in every sphere, such as conceiving the thought of landing on Mars, and women making careers as astronauts, we discriminate women owing to their gender. It is one of the critical issues even in various developed countries till date. Female employees are paid less as compared to their male employees. We must think about it and try to overcome the situation, as in the real sense, no such differences exists these days.

The second biggest challenge of today's generation is 'Work life balance'. Most of us are unable to differentiate the professional/Office work and personal work or time with family. Eventually, we are unable to justify any one side adding further stress inviting ailments such as hypertension, diabetes etc. 

Awards and Accolades

- "HR Leader of the year 2014" PAN India by Genius Consultants Ltd. in association with Times of India Group.
- '100 Most Talented Global HR Leaders' by CHRO Asia with 'World HRD Congress' in 2015 at 'Taj Lands' End', Mumbai.
- '100 HR SUPER ACHIEVERS (India)' by CHRO Asia with 'World HRD Congress' in 2018 at 'Taj Lands' End', Mumbai.