

Unlocking the talent code

Parth M Doshi in conversation with Nishchae Suri, Partner & Country Head - People & Change Advisory KPMG India on unlocking the talent code and what it takes to build a better HR ecosystem. He further delves on how increasing emotional connect with employees help organizations reach far greater heights of success.

Nishchae Suri is the Partner and Head of the People and Change Advisory for KPMG in India. He has more than 18 years of rich experience, having led client engagements in the areas of HR transformation, leadership development, talent management and rewards with large global and Indian multinationals in more than 25 countries. In his last assignment at Mercer Consulting, as Chief Executive Officer, Managing Director and India Global Partner, he played the key role in positioning Mercer as a leading and elite HR consulting firm in India.

He also serves as the president of the National HRD Network (NHRDN) Delhi & NCR Chapter. Suri is an MBA graduate (gold medalist) from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune and holds a Bachelor of Arts (Economic Honours) from Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University.

PD: What makes leaders grounded and approachable?

NS: When you are humble you learn. When you are egoistic, it can inhibit your learning capacity. For a leader to grow, he or she must learn on a day to day basis. For your own growth and evolution as a leader, humility is a very important trait. When people around you feel respected, you encourage ideation, straight talk and gratitude. For a person you interact with, this trait becomes equally important and special. For an organization, higher the humility quotient within the organization the more it can interact freely with its customers. The cultures which with you operate internally manifest in your interactions with clients and customers externally.

PD: What is your vision for the National HRD network?

NS: My vision for the Delhi Chapter of NHRDN is based on learning. At the centre of the

vision is promoting a learning culture - both in people and in organizations. NHRDN presents the right opportunity for this, through its various learning events. It ignites the spirit of learning, thus creating awareness among individuals about the importance of understanding, appreciating, and assimilating new things. Along with this, the second part of my vision is providing a platform where people can interact to build a better HR ecosystem, talk about their products and build meaningful business relationships in order to add value to their work.

PD: What do you mean by your statement "The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart"?

NS: Life is complex and demanding in today's day and age. Over the last decade our standard of living has improved, but the quality of our living has deteriorated. The level of

emotional connection that individuals have with their organization seems to be on a steady decline, which can manifest into a low level of trust, doubting each other's intent and double talk i.e. I say what is right vs. I say what I mean. In this environment, often you are not able to unleash the true potential of an individual. Increasing emotional connect with employees will help organizations reach far greater heights of success.

PD: Is there any room for innovation in the people and change advisory and the use of big data analytics in Human Resources?

NS: There is a greater need for organizations to understand the talent quotient, which essentially means understanding the knowledge pool, attitude of people, their intellectual and emotional connection within the organization, the depth and breadth of the skillset; all the areas many organizations are spending more time in understanding. The use of technology and analytics, i.e., real time and predictive information, which I call "Unlocking the Talent Code," seems to be locked for organizations as of now. Every lock is unique, and so is every key. It is in search of this key, that analytics and technology can play a big role.

The second area for me is Learning and Development. In L&D how people learn, how quickly they learn and what they should learn is again linked back to the talent code. If you have not got the right key you could continue to give your employees the L&D material without knowing whether it is effective enough or not. These two areas according to me are among the most significant, where innovation, investment and application are needed.

PD: Any tips for management students aspiring to reach to the

top of the ladder in an organization and the leader you admire?

NS: "Always be humble, always be respectful, always be willing to learn and work hard."

With youngsters, so long as they are mindful of always wanting to work hard, being respectful and humble; being resourceful and networking comes naturally. Growing up in a flat organization does not necessarily mean less respect or humility. The leader I admire is my mother. For me she embodies the virtues that I aspire for and admire - respect, hard work and humility.

PD: Completing your MBA in Finance how did you shift and generate interest in the people and change function?

NS: The universe sometimes conspires to make things happen. I wanted to become a banker. After Economic Honors and an MBA in Finance, logically speaking you end up becoming a banker. Part of the reason I moved was that I found banking less exciting when I did my summer and winter internships. Other reason was that it was the year of financial crisis in 1997 where very few banks came to campus along with placement policies, requiring me to opt out after my selection through my first interview, which got me into an MNC start-up in HR consulting called Noble & Hewitt. I am glad that I went for the interview as this start-up shared my passion and presented the right entrepreneurial opportunity, along with an excellent culture of respect, hard work and humility of the founders.

PD: How do you manage your work-life balance and how should management professionals handle the same?

NS: Pursue your passion, in that

way you do not have to balance things. I do not think I have balanced work and life as I have pursued things I was passionate about. You have to balance only when there are opposing objectives. The second aspect is to be clear about what is important to you. When you have clarity, it enables you to spend majority of your time on what is important to you, which could be your family, friends or a hobby. It depends on



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what you define as being important and therefore, "Live your life in a manner that brings joy to you on a day to day basis".

The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of KPMG in India. 