

The Avenues To Engaging Workplaces

The workplace landscape is always changing-keep up, and you'll undoubtedly see positive results.

(Source: <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/best-workplaces/>)

Organizations across the globe, irrespective of the fact that they were operating from a garage or from huge campuses, always thrive to achieve the best possible work culture within. Human Capital posed the expert panel questions over the role played by financial enticements, the top leadership, communication and flexibility at work in creating the best work culture.

- BY **S.AJAY KUMAR**

Our Expert Panel

Prasanna Soparkar - Founder and MD, Core Integra

Kripesh Hariharan - Chief Human Resources Officer, Sterling Holiday Resorts Pvt. Ltd.

Praveen Rawal- Managing Director, Sales - Southeast Asia and India, Steelcase Asia Pacific.

Nilay Khandelwal- Regional Director, Michael Page India.

Paramjit Anand- Executive Director, ACreaty.

In 2012, Sharon Price John, the then CEO of Build A Bear told her employees that if they ensure 1 \$ profit for the company in the next Quarter, they would be entitled to bonuses. Do you think such bold announcements are detrimental for creating a competitive work environment?

PRASANNA SOPARKAR: During troubled times, it is the responsibility of all the employees to achieve the company's goals and targets. In my opinion, Sharon Price John was engaging the employees to achieve certain targets, which the company could not achieve in the past few quarters. She knew, unless she engages the employees, who are the largest and the most important stakeholders, she will never be able to attain the organizational goals. In today's context, where the world is becoming extremely competitive, and, business models are demolished due to disruptive ideas and technologies in a few months or years, the employees should be geared to work in a very competitive work

environment, where change is a norm. It is therefore imperative to create a conducive work environment. Such a bold announcement pushes the employees to use their potential to the maximum. For a company, whether in a turnaround phase or looking to increase their profitability, employees' ownership of their work and job profile

play a key role in achieving organizational goals. Today, companies are about two key stakeholders - clients and employees. The companies today have to work on a dual brand strategy so that both the client and the employees take pride in associating themselves with the company. Thus, giving the employees the chance to directly impact the topline is a bold move, and can have a life changing impact on the business model of the company. In India, we have seen the culture of rewarding employees. But, such an announcement of working towards common organizational goals is quite unheard of. Thus, new age companies, should experiment with



such moves. This not only works as a good employee retention technique, and beneficial to the organization as well.

KRIPESH HARIHARAN: Do rewards work? Rewards succeed at securing one thing only- temporary compliance. When it comes to producing lasting changes in attitudes and behaviour, however, rewards, like punishment, are strikingly ineffective. Once the rewards run out, people revert to their old behaviours. Incentives, a version of what psychologists call extrinsic motivators, do not alter the attitude that underlies our behaviour. They do not create an enduring commitment to any value or action. Rather, incentives merely-and temporarily-change what we do. Rewards do not create a lasting commitment; they merely, and temporarily, change what we do.

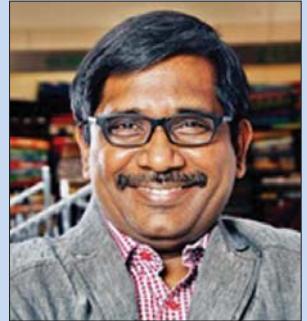
NILAY KHANDELWAL: This would depend on the work environment and the state of the company. If a firm has been going through losses quarter after quarter, the morale will not very high in general. However, if you look at it in totality, any company that has not been profitable for a long time will need to take some measures. We do not think a bold announcement like this is detrimental; this actually brings people together towards a common goal. It is a way of realigning everyone's objectives and goals to that of a company. That said, it is also important to remember that making profit is not just the job of the sales force in an organization. Every business unit including IT, HR and marketing all have a role to play towards making that goal happen. This works in bringing everyone in the company back together and placing \$1 profit as the goal to work from a negative profit business also gives employees a realistic and achievable objective to achieve.

PARAMJIT ANAND: Sometimes a temptation works far better than a dozen of motivational stimuli. Sharon made this statement at that phase when Build-A-Bear saw a tough period, and for several quarters at a stretch, they had not made a good profitable quarter. I think such a bold statement was the 'need' of the hour, and it was effective because it demanded action from each of them. Build-A-Bear was following the philosophy of 'Getting people on the Bus' and even though many of them were not able to get on board, the company ensured that everyone would definitely enjoy the ride. We must understand that the competition in business is inevitable. No doubt, the statement was bold, yet it was rewarding and motivational for the employees. It definitely gave the employees something of a challenge and intensified their urge to accomplish the challenge. Sometimes a temptation works far better than a dozen of motivational stimuli. We cannot undermine the fact that Build-A-Bear's journey in many ways promotes their brand, and the constructiveness of business model has strengthened into new profitable heights. Speaking to your employees about the company's vision is always constructive and positive. The company has made sure (and it certainly works

Prasanna Soparkar is Founder and MD, Core Integra, a Mumbai-based recruiting, staffing and compliance company. Prasanna has over three decades of experience in the human resource industry and has worked in senior HR positions in companies such as Tata Industries, Tata Infotech, Rallies in Leadership positions.



Kripesh Hariharan, Chief Human Resources Officer, Sterling Holiday Resorts Pvt Ltd. Kripesh has an experience of more than 25 years in People Management and L&D functions. Prior to Sterling, he was the Head of People Office at Pantaloon Retails and was responsible for leadership mentoring, L&D and Employee life cycle management.



Praveen Rawal, Managing Director, Sales - Southeast Asia and India, Steelcase Asia Pacific, and is responsible for overseeing the India and SEA business segment and possesses over 20 years of sales and management experience in the Asia Pacific region. Praveen is an MBA in Marketing.



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Paramjit Anand is the Executive Director, ACreaty. He carries an experience of 20 years in the corporate world. An MBA and a Commerce graduate, Paramjit started his career with Gillette Group LLC as a part of a sales management team.



"Pay is not a motivator." - W. Edward Deming

W. Edward Deming's declaration may seem surprising, or even absurd. Of course, money buys the things people want and need. Moreover, the less the people are paid, the more concerned they are likely to be about financial matters. Even if people are principally concerned with their salaries, it does not prove that money is motivating. There is no firm basis for the assumption that paying people more will encourage them to do better work, or, more work in the long run. As Frederick Herzberg, Distinguished Professor at the Graduate School of Management, University of Utah, has argued, just because too little money can irritate and demotivate, it does not mean that more and more money will bring about increased satisfaction, much less increased motivation. It is plausible to assume that if someone's take-home pay were cut in half, his or her morale would suffer enough to undermine performance. But, it does not necessarily follow that doubling a person's pay would result in better work.

Rewards punish

Many managers understand that coercion and fear destroy motivation and create defiance, defensiveness, and rage. Punishment and rewards are in fact the two sides of the same

coin. Both carry a punitive effect because they are manipulative. Further, not receiving an expected reward is also indistinguishable from being punished. Whether the incentive is withheld, withdrawn deliberately, or simply not received by someone hopeful, the effect is identical. And, the more desirable the reward, the more demoralizing it is to miss out. The new school, which exhorts us to catch people doing something right and reward them for it, is not very different from the old school, which advised us to catch people doing something wrong and threaten to punish them if they ever do it again. What is essentially taking place in both approaches is that a lot of people are getting caught. Managers are creating a workplace in which people feel controlled, not an environment conducive to exploration, learning, and progress.

Rewards rupture relationships

Employees' relationships are often the casualties of the scramble for rewards. The surest way to destroy cooperation, and, therefore, organizational excellence, is to force people to compete for rewards or recognition, or to rank them against each other. For every person who wins, there are many others who carry with them the feeling of having lost. And the more these awards are publicized through the use of memos, newsletters, and awards banquets, the more detrimental their impact can be. Relationships between supervisors

HARD) to ensure that every employee is happy with the change. The policies are made in a manner that everyone is eventually happy with the decisions. I think even if the change is competitive, it is necessary, you cannot do without it. Not to forget, that competition in this form is always progressive and healthy. It does not lead to the ills of competition like insecurity, work politics, sensationalism, etc. The company had these things in control, and was sure about the gamble, since they had the ground prepared for the situation. In effect, it was a calculated move, and, nevertheless a chance.

PRAVEEN RAWAL: Retaining positive and motivated staff is vital to an organization's success. However, it is also emerging as one of the biggest challenges encountered by most of the organizations today. We believe, rather than creating a competitive environment, there is a need to create a workplace; which offers a palette of space, fosters innovation, enhances wellbeing, and encourages collaboration and engagement amidst the employees. Making such announcements is the secondary factor, which influences employees' performance; however, the primary factor is to create an employee experience in the workplace as it stimulates innovation and creativity, leading to increased productivity. Multi-generational considerations, the pressure to innovate, and the need to attract and retain talent are forcing

companies to better understand the importance of collaboration and the necessity of well-being in their office designs. Hence, to keep employees engaged, it is vital that the workplace be designed to nurture their physical, cognitive and emotional needs. Steelcase will soon be launching its new concept, which is created to enhance wellbeing and collaboration at workplaces. It is designed to cater to the changing dynamics of the Indian work culture.

"Engaged, happy employees work on teams led by leaders who listen, care and are attentive to their needs practice." How would you like to elaborate on the above phrase?

PRASANNA SOPARKAR: Narayan Murthy, Co-founder, Infosys, said, "People don't leave organizations but managers." This statement is even more relevant today. With companies engaged in a perennial war for talent, there is a pressing need to keep the employees happy. The brand of an organization creates the initial pull for a candidate to join a company, but who is he working with on a day to day basis decides for how long he will stay in that organization, and, his performance during the tenure. It is understandable if a team leader argues that he has several things on his list and may not find the time to interact with every team member and pay them due attention. The fact remains that a leadership role

automatically implies that you stop thinking 'Me first, rest later.' Leadership means leading your people, having their back, guiding them through work related challenges, and, be a mentor and a friend. Being a boss comes as easy to us, but being a listener is an art that only a few possess. As a team leader, it is a given that your team will expect you to understand and listen to them, and suggest possible solutions to their problems. If as a senior, you are not able to protect your team or understand the challenges, then it does not matter, since even if you are contributing to the company's bottom-line, but as a leader, you have failed. It is important to remember that one is as good as their team. My suggestion to team leaders would be to make it a point to engage in informal chats with your team members on a regular basis, a lunch or dinner once every fortnight will only help you gain better insights into their challenges and the potential of achieving bigger goals. At the end of the day, happy team members will only make you look good in front of the top management.

KRIPESH HARIHARAN: True leaders are those who find their success through the team's success. Leadership is about empowering others to achieve, which they think is unachievable. Great leaders know how to balance the head and the heart. Empathetic leaders are also nonjudgmental, even when the others' feelings are in direct

and subordinates can also collapse under the weight of incentives.

Rewards ignore reasons.

In order to solve problems in the work place, managers must understand what caused them. Are employees inadequately prepared for the demands of their jobs? Is long-term growth being sacrificed to maximize short-term return?

Rewards discourage risk-taking

"People will do precisely what they are asked to do if the reward is significant," enthused Monroe J. Haeghele, a proponent of pay-for-performance programmes, in "The New Performance Measures." Whenever people are encouraged to think about what they will get for engaging in a task, they become less inclined to take risks or explore possibilities, to play hunches, or to consider incidental stimuli. In a word, the number one casualty of rewards is creativity. Excellence pulls in one direction; rewards pull in another. Tell people that their income will depend on their productivity or performance rating, and they will focus on the numbers. Sometimes, they will manipulate the schedule for completing tasks or even engage in patently unethical and illegal behaviour. The number one casualty of rewards is creativity. As the late John Condry put it, rewards are the "enemies of exploration." Rather, people tend

to lower their sights when they are encouraged to think about what they are going to get for their efforts. "Do this and you'll get that," in other words, focuses attention on the "that" instead of the "this." Emphasizing large bonuses is the last strategy we should use if we care about innovation.

Rewards undermine interest.

If our goal is excellence, no artificial incentive can ever match the power of intrinsic motivation. People who do exceptional work may be glad to be paid and even more glad to be well paid, but they do not work to collect a paycheck. They work because they love what they do. Few will be shocked by the news that extrinsic motivators are a poor substitute for genuine interest in one's job. What is far more surprising is that rewards, like punishment, may actually undermine the intrinsic motivation that results in optimal performance. The more a manager stresses what an employee can earn for good work, the less interested that employee will be in the work itself. Managers who insist that the job won't get done right without rewards have failed to offer a convincing argument for behavioural manipulation. Promising a reward to someone who appears unmotivated is a bit like offering salt water to someone who is thirsty.

Source: <https://hbr.org/1993/09/why-incentive-plans-cannot-work>

disagreement with their own feelings. They appreciate what the other person is feeling and understand how those feelings are affecting that person's perception, without passing judgment whether those feelings are right or wrong. As employees seek more attention, feedback and support, leaders must become more mindful of individual needs, in order to inspire professional development and overall performance. Leaders who listen are able to create trustworthy relationships that are transparent. In order to be more mindful of the other person's stress requires us to boost our emotional intelligence. The "one-approach-fits-all" way of thinking has become outdated; this varies from employee to employee, as the same cannot be followed for all the employees. While many of the organizations balance between performance and emotion, it is easy as such to manage the performer than the non-performer. When you become more caring to the needs of the employees, we shift from the boss-subordinate relationship to mentoring and coaching, and often, this is transformed into countertransference. **NILAY KHANDELWAL:** Engaged employees are the ones who bring the right level of productivity and efficiency in any organization. As long as the leader is the one who is respected and not loved, we feel that makes sense. Sometimes, when the management care

too much, they go down the path where they are loved by the employees, but do not command the respect due to them, since the management is unable to draw the line between the emotional and the intellectual, and this can render the management weak. An individual who is a respectable business leader is capable of getting the best out of the employees by way of setting the right goals, guiding them along, and ultimately grooming them to become the business leaders of tomorrow. It is important for the employers to know that helping your employees does not mean doing the work for them. More often, the sign for a good leader is someone who can make the difficult decisions and stick by them.

PARAMJIT ANAND: I think when it comes to leadership; I always have this great quote to share from the movie Spiderman- "With Great Powers, Comes Great Responsibilities." And, if you are a leader, you first have to set an example in front of your team. A leader is like the head of a family who not only instructs or takes decisions, but also makes an effort to keep the entire family happy. It is important for businesses to invest their time and money in training their core resources so that the leaders can capitalize his/her capacity for strategic thinking, personalized development, clarity in goals, etc. It is overwhelming for a team when they feel a 'leader' out of leader- a leader who can mentor them, guide

them on the right path and at the same time, can keep the team motivated and engaged. Walking with a team is like running a relay marathon not a sprint. You have to go far, and you have to hold the calibre for long. Sometimes, walking alone or winning a sprint is easy, but the real challenge is, proceeding towards the goals with the team, since, leadership is a collective effort. So, if you desire for a collective victory in business, then care for the employees as the head of a family.

PRAVEEN RAWAL: It is true, and for the success of an organization, happy and productive employees play a vital role. My suggestion is that workplaces should be designed in a way that it co-locates the team leaders within team spaces for quick problem solving and alignment. This will bring agility to the decision making capacity, boost collaboration and enhance wellbeing. Bringing forth team members in the same space, will also create room for social interactions and build confidence and trust amidst the team members. According to the Steelcase Global Workplace study, happy employees are most engaged as they contribute to the organization's success. And, they are more creative and mature to understand the organizational goals. Hence, it is essential for the employers to rethink their strategies and invest in creating employee experience to retain them. **HC**

To be continued