

Developing and Honouring Human Resources

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The human being has been on this earth for over 30,000 years. However, civilization started with his acquiring two technologies: farming and keeping animals. Both the technologies required manual work. Initially, he did the work himself.

As the assets increased, the work available from the family was not adequate. So he had to get 'human resources' to supplement the efforts of himself and his family members. Initially, the help was obtained by acquiring slaves and creating master-slave relationship. This relationship became economically untenable so he modified it to master-servant relationship. In both these relationships, the supremacy of the master was fundamental – the slave or the servant working according to the instructions from the master. Thus, a slave's position was obviously a servile one and it continues the same way in feudal organizations. The technology was by and large passed on by the master to the servant and the servant was totally dependant on the master. The children of the servants normally looked forward to becoming servants in the master's organization.

Over a period, the servants also acquired some technologies and became craftsmen. Thereafter, the relationship became contractual. The craftman's products became available to others besides his masters.

A sea-change came with the industrial revolution and establishment of factories. The master-servant relationship now became a distant one - the master being concerned with the servant only for the servant's period in the factory. The master's approach now was to get the maximum production from the worker irrespective of what happened to him when he left the factory. This created a wave of resentment regarding "exploitation". With the French Revolution, advent of Communism and the labour union movement, there was a struggle for a greater equality from the human resources i.e., the workers. The struggle continued all through the 19th and 20th centuries.

The 20th Century started with increasing conflict between the employer and the employee. This adversary a relationship created a lot of hostility. The employer was accused of exploitation and the employee was accused of resistance to productivity.

By this time it was obvious that the prospects of an organization depended on productivity, quality and innovation. The employers tried to bring in productivity by supervision with industrial engineering

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techniques like time and motion study. These increased the conflict between the employer and the employee and the employee used all his intellect to resist productivity.

Quality also became a problem. Department had to be created to check and ensure quality and here again adversary relationship increased.

The innovation of the employees was largely used against the employer. Experiments were carried out through suggestion schemes to utilize the innovation of workers. However, by and large these were not successful.

While the industrial engineers were concentrating on techniques to improve productivity, they were shaken by the "Hawthorne" experiment. In this experiment, the effect of intensity of light on productivity was being studied. As the intensity of light increased, the productivity went up and it went further up when the intensity of light went down. It was then discovered that discipline regarding time, task and methods do not decide productivity by themselves. The motivation of workers is also an important factor. It is not only the skill, but also the will that determines productivity.

Thereafter, the employers tried to create motivation among the workers through "Workers Participation in Management". These were rarely successful.

By the end of the 20th century, we got into the second industrial revolution through use of computers. Now, the human resource as termed "knowledge workers" by Peter Drucker became an increasingly important part of industry. The knowledge workers

could not be treated the same way as feudal workers or industrial workers, because they acquired and developed technologies on their own and often were more knowledgeable than the masters.

This brought in the necessity of mutual respect between the employer and the human resource (employee). This is most evident today in the software industry but the concept is spreading and all managements have to prepare themselves for developing and honouring human resources.

Developing human resource

In developing an employee, three factors are involved:

- Contribution Value
- Transfer Value
- Leisure Value

The contribution value is developed through acquiring information, knowledge and skill in the area of work. But that is only one part of development.

The second part of development is in the field on "Transfer Value". Take a person contributing to his specific job in a specific department. Suppose he goes to another function or to another department or to another company, how well would he perform? That depends on three things: The first is the extent of his "learning", second is the widening of his "horizons" and third is his ability to "project an image".

First let us look at "learning". The best way to understand learning is to see a small child. A child at the age of 2-3 months gets up in the morning and starts talking, i.e. make noises. Then it realizes that the stupid adults around

him can't understand him. Why? Because human being is the only animal that requires a language to communicate. All other animals seem to communicate just by making noises. So a child decides that it must acquire vocabulary - the "information". As soon as he becomes one year old, he starts asking questions: What is this? Apple; What is that colour? Yellow. What is that colour? Green. When it is asking all these questions, it is trying to acquire vocabulary. And this is the first stage of learning i.e. information.

After some time, the child starts relating information and then it becomes "knowledge". For example, it realizes that water has to be in a glass, it can't be by itself. That is knowledge; when the child applies the knowledge, it becomes "skill". You ask a three year old child to bring water. It puts water in a glass and brings the glass. That is skill. If we look at ourselves, all of us have acquired lots of skills which are vital for our contribution value.

The next stage of learning is "insight". Many people have knowledge and skill - but they don't have insight. For example, I have my office at my home. Whenever I have nothing to do, I go to our kitchen. My wife is making some curry. She boils water, adds some ingredients at one point of time, spices at another point of time, chillies at third point, salt at another point and so on. I ask her "Why do you add different items at different times? Why not get everything together, put in pressure cooker and cook. It will save your time and it will save energy." What does she say? "Please get out of my kitchen! We always do it this way. Please don't bother me." She has skill. She makes very good curries.

But she doesn't have insight. The other day, I asked another lady the same question. She said, "Look here if we add salt right at the beginning, the boiling point of water would go up, consequently the ingredients may get overcooked. And if we add spices right at the beginning, some of them are volatile. When you sit down to eat the curry, there might be no flavour left." This lady has not only the skill, but also the insight.

Very few employees acquire insight. When you ask an employee, "Why are you doing this in this way," what is his response? "That is our procedure. We always do it that way. It is according to the company instructions Manual." This means the person does not know why he is doing it.

Out of those who know why, very few people are able to project themselves to ask: "Whatever we are doing today how far would it be valid in the future." This shows "foresight", i.e. the ability to project and see the future. Out of those who have skills, less than 1% have the foresight to look at things and understand their role in the future.

Out of those who have foresight, a few use this foresight for the benefit of the community not for their personal benefit. This is "wisdom". As we can see, there are six stages of learning: information, knowledge, skill, insight, foresight and wisdom.

Most people acquire upto skill stage. If you desire transfer value, then at least some insight and foresight are required. That is the learning one has to acquire. Sanskrit is a very rich language. In English, everybody is a "teacher". In Sanskrit, each type of teacher is given a different designation: A person who gives information is "Adhyapaka", the person

who gives knowledge is “Upadhyaya”, the person who gives skill is “Acharya”, the person who gives insight is “Drashta” the person who gives wisdom is “Guru”. Of course, Guru is the highest teacher. As Kabir said “Guru Gobind dou khade, kake lago paay, balihari Guru apane, Gobind diyo batay” (If Guru and God are both standing, first salute the Guru. Guru is even greater than the God because you understand what is God, only if you have Guru.) For transfer value, insight and foresight are important aspects of learning.

With the foresight people can widen their horizons. Many people seem to wear blinkers and do their job in the narrowest sense. The other day, I was visiting a fertilizer factory. The executives said, “We do not have many opportunities in fertilizers. There are more petrochemical factories coming up.” I asked them, “Why don’t you go to petrochemicals?” He said, “How can I? I am a fertilizer man”. Not only the production man said this even the accountant! He said, “I am a fertilizer accountant. I can’t be a petrochemical accountant!” As you can see, the person has decided to wear blinkers. This affects his transfer value adversely.

The third aspect is projecting image. As long as you are doing a job, everybody in the company knows how well you are doing it. But when you are thinking of going to another job, people wonder: “Can you do some other function, work effectively in some other department, other location or even another company?” Then your image counts. Acquiring this image is a very important aspect of transfer value.

Acquiring the image does not mean that people will leave the organization. I would

like to give a very simple example: let each of us look at his mother, wife and daughter. We can see how the transfer value has changed in these three generations. In the case of your mother, probably she had no transfer value in spite of high contribution value. If your father did not respect her, then she had no choice but to bear it. As you can see, your wife has much better transfer value. She has acquired some learning not merely in terms of education or book-learning, but also learning about the world. Your mother may still require an escort to travel. Your wife can travel on her own. This is the transfer value she has acquired through learning and widening her horizons. When it comes to your daughter, she will prefer to travel on her own. This is because of a further improvement in the transfer value. This does not necessarily mean that there are going to be divorces left and right. Possibly the percentage of divorces will increase, but still most couples will continue to stay together.

Thus, increased transfer value does not mean a rapid turnover. It only increases the possibility of turnover. On the other hand, it means that people who are dissatisfied with the organization do not have to sit in the organization and blame the organization. In every organization, we find a few people sitting in some corner and collectively cursing the organization and their fate. After all, no organization can keep everybody satisfied. Somebody or the other is affected adversely by some decisions of the company. If he has no transfer value, all he can do is to sit down and curse. The great advantage of transfer value is that people will think of a change rather than sit in the organization and curse. They will go out, find their avenues and opportunities.

The transfer value also helps people to think about delegation. As long as a person believes that there is only one chair he has in this world from which he can contribute and if he gets out of this chair there is nothing he can do, he is unlikely to delegate in spite of all the sermons we give him. Where a person feels: "I am doing the present job for quite a few years. I have already done it five years may be I shall do it for another one or two years more. Then I must do something else." If this is the attitude, then obviously the person is likely to develop subordinates and is likely to delegate. Thus, HRD for the individual himself as well as for his subordinates depends a lot on how much transfer value is acquired. So this transfer value is a very important aspect of human resource development.

The third aspect of learning is learning for the Leisure value. When a person is working, he has to increase his results. For this, learning for contribution value is important. Sooner or later, he may think of changing his function or changing his job and doing something wider. For this, learning for the transfer value is required. The third situation is when he stops working. After all, however senior a person is, however hard he is working, there will be some evening when there will be a gathering of people where he gets a bouquet of flowers, an alarm clock, words like 'live happily hereafter', the yeoman's service he rendered to the organization; "how difficult it is going to be to fill in the void", etc. But ultimately: "Get out and don't come again," That is the end of work. What does he do the next day?

A friend of mine was a Project Manager in a very large organization. He felt the day he retires there will be people asking for his

advice. He retired. The next day, the queue was missing. He looked at his wife and drew an activity chart and told his wife, "You are spending so much time in the morning doing many activities in tandem one after the other. If you were to do these activities in parallel, you will save 50 minutes every morning." His wife came to me and said, "Sharu, please get him out of the house. I have got half the money and four times the husband - very difficult to take!"

A person has to spend his time even after retirement, when he has nothing to do. We learn what to do on the job but we don't know what to do when the job is no more. This is where learning for the Leisure Value becomes relevant. After all, we are supposed to "enjoy" leisure. People work for 35 to 40 years of their life. Thereafter they are supposed to retire and enjoy the retired life. But how many do so? Most of the people I meet after retirement are miserable. Just the other day, I was attending a farewell function of a General Manager who was retiring. He started his address with the words "My funeral procession has started and I don't know how long it will be". If people are not prepared, the leisure is not an opportunity, it is a calamity. If people prepare themselves with the leisure value i.e. with hobbies, they are able to deal with the time after retirement and that will make the retirement an opportunity and not a calamity.

In the 21st century the productive use of human resource would involve not only developing the resource through contribution value, transfer value and leisure value but also respecting the resource to ensure a cordial relationship._____●