

Green HRM: HR Addressing Environmental Issues and Minimizing the Wastages

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Abstract

Purpose: Green HR has a vital role in restructuring & reengineering the business to environmental friendly business where the priorities have been shifted to be a green economy. Green HR emphasizes on the contribution of people management policies and practices towards the broader corporate environmental agenda. Green HR activities Comprises of video recruiting to minimize travel requirements and minimizing the amount of printed materials used in performance appraisals and other HR activities, use of environment friendly Green machines at workplace like bicycles.

This study reflects how green HR is addressing environmental issues and various green HR methodologies that can be adopted to achieve a green business. Analysis of Green HRM as a high performing system, that review role of HR in business by minimizing the wastage and incurred cost . In nutshell, the effectiveness of Green HR leads to optimizing the use of resources.

Design/ methodology/Approach: It is a case based research in which the companies following Green HRM practices have been studied. The green HRM Practices has drawn an outstanding success in UK and in China.

Findings: As it is a case based study and case studies of many International companies have been studied and analyzed to study how these organizations have addressed environmental issues in their business. And what methodologies they have adopted to be a part of green business and how they have minimized the organizational wastages.

Research limitations/implications: The accuracy of the analysis is totally dependent on the authenticity of the cases which have been referred in the research to study the Green HRM roles in business and Green HRM methodologies.

Practical implications: During the recession Green HRM with a huge environmental focus played a vital role in reducing waste and optimizing resources. These Green HRM practices can be adopted in Indian context and thus contribute to the broader corporate environmental agenda by taking Green Management Initiatives like going paperless, reduce commuting, reducing business travel, buying green, detoxifying etc. Green HR is a new dimension of traditional HR which is required to be explored and worked upon. This study also provides opportunity to academics to further establish theories and cases.

Originality/value: This research paper is an honest attempt to addresses green environmental issues with context to HRM and green HRM Methodologies and also studies role of green HRM in post- recession and minimizing its effect.

Key Words: Green HR, Green HR methodologies, Restructuring & Reengineering the business, Green Management Initiatives, detoxifying and Environmental Management.

Paper Type: Research Paper.

Introduction

The term 'green HR' is most often used to refer to the contribution of people management policies and

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practices towards the broader corporate environmental agenda. Also defined as the HRM aspects of environmental management (EM). Across the globe, we are moving from an industrial-based financial system to a talent based economy. We are also entering a green economy – one in which consumer and employee expectations and future environmental change will require businesses to address “green” issues. Environmentally conscious organizations will become increasingly prominent as we re-enter into a period of

growth. While CO₂ growth may have stabilized during the recession, it is destined to increase again as businesses increase production and other business activities. In addition, during the recession, the main environmental focus of many businesses was placed on reducing waste and optimizing resources. A renewed focus on growth provides unique opportunities for businesses to become green by looking at ways to create new environmental friendly business.

As an HR professional or if you are involved in the employment process, you are probably aware that as more and more companies initiate environmental programs how important these can be to the employer not just because they can impact the bottom line in cost cutting and savings e.g. heating, electricity, paper, etc... but these initiatives can as well please employees and make for a cleaner, healthy working environment and in addition can also serve as an effective recruitment tool.

"The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." - Mahatma Gandhi.

Normally HR is the first and last point of contact for employees HR can lead the way, start in a small, simple way and make the difference!

Green HR Activities

Green activities include video recruiting, or the use of online and video interviews, to minimize travel requirements. Green rewards can include the use of workplace and lifestyle benefits, ranging from carbon credit offsets to free bicycles, to engage people in the green agenda, while continuing to recognize their contribution. While many employees often feel it is not their responsibility to protect the environment while they are at work, the new workforce of millennial are emphasizing environmental consciousness as they chose their employers. There is also a broader opportunity to engage the workforce given that more and more people seek meaning and self-actualization in their jobs. Other simple green actions include minimizing the amount of printed materials used in performance management, salary reviews and so on. While there is definitely a substantial amount of 'green

washing' occurring in reducing waste, there are many opportunities here too. However, HR is never going to have a truly significant impact on a business through the improvement of HR processes alone so the greater opportunity is to contribute to the green agenda of the business as a whole.

Green HR in Business

HR can have a significant impact on the broader green agenda. For services-oriented business in particular, employee focused green initiatives can be extremely impactful since the workforce is often the largest single contributor to waste and pollution. Although green initiatives are often supported by an operations group, HR can also play a role in reviewing how the business works and identify how people can act differently in order to reduce their use of energy and materials.

Developing Green abilities: attracting and developing talented staff

Recruitment and selection

Attracting high-quality staff is a key HR challenge in the 'war for talent'. It seems that some employers, particularly major multinational companies are adopting GHRM practices as a form of 'employer branding' in order to improve their selection attractiveness for an increasingly environmentally aware younger generation. Job seekers prefer organizations that have a close fit between their and the organizations' values, and a recruiting organization's environmental reputation and images are now increasingly prominent in recruitment efforts.

The move to more web-based recruitment activity has permitted recruiters to provide much more information compared with traditional media such as newspaper advertising or brochures.

Employee training in EM

Training is widely seen in the literature as a key GHRM intervention, not least in order to heighten staff awareness of the environmental impact of their organization's activities to equip staff with core skills, such as how to collect relevant waste data, and to raise the level of 'eco-literacy' and environmental expertise

in the firm. Well-trained and environmentally aware frontline employees are ideally placed to identify and reduce waste, as they are closest to it.

Training in Green issues is widespread now in some countries UK organizations are educating and training employees in business practices that are environmentally friendly and training employees to comprehend the threats that climate change may pose on firms. Advanced EM approaches are seen to be 'people intensive' and dependent upon skill development through employee training find that a pro-environmental approach requires increased employee awareness, knowledge and skills in both processes and materials, and that this requires integrated training in EM to create an emotional involvement in environmental concerns. HR practices 'encourages a higher level of environmental training', and the development of skills required for waste reduction Training opportunities include the development of a diploma course, other training concerns in EM include the re-training of employees who have lost jobs in the 'polluter' industries, ensuring that managers release staff for training, and integrating training into appraisals and PM systems to tackle training concerns.

Environmental knowledge

A key to the effectiveness of training is developing an environmental knowledge base is that environmental knowledge and values are predictors of personal environmental behaviors. Issues in environmental knowledge generation include difficulties in confirming linkages between environmental education, knowledge and behaviors.

Management development and leadership

Training for management staff is also important for GHRM. As business schools are potentially seen as architects of a new 'evolutionary course' towards sustainability and environmental knowledge they may play a key role in educating and developing environmental leaders in the future. Environmental management is also increasingly being included in MBA programme curricula in countries such as China, and is seen to be the type of business education that

empowers managers to start projects in).

Performance management and appraisal

Using PM in EM presents many challenges, not least here being how to measure environmental performance standards across different organizational departments/units, and gaining useable data on the environmental performance of these units and staff. Some firms have addressed this issue by installing corporate-wide environmental performance standards, and Green information systems/audits to gain useful data on environmental performance. One way in which Green PM systems can be successfully initiated is to develop performance indicators for each environmental risk area.

Green performance appraisal (PA) covers topics such as environmental incidents, use of environmental responsibilities and the communication of environmental concerns and policy.

It may also be that negative reinforcements (such as suspensions, criticisms and warnings) are needed in PM systems to get employees to make environmental improvements,

Pay and reward systems

In line with a strategic approach to reward management, defined as the aligning of pay practices and corporate objectives, there is some evidence for organizations developing reward systems to incentivize EM. In Britain, for example, ICI have included environmental targets as part of their performance-related pay assessment for senior managers.

Providing Green opportunities: employee involvement

Wider employee participation in EM rather than restricting involvement to managers and specialists is often seen as crucial to successful practice of green HR.

Empowerment and engagement

Commitment from senior management to EM systems is seen as providing the underpinning framework for EM, but without wider employee engagement the success of EM may be limited.

Green HR Model

Corporate Environment Citizenship Model (CEC)

Corporate environmental behaviour has been researched as an attempt to explain the heterogeneity of organizational response to the environment-related institutional pressures. Studies concerning this specific issue have generally recognized that companies are subject to strong institutional pressure in the form of normative societal expectations, coercive regulations, tight public policies, media and non-governmental organizations scrutiny. Environmental strategies of organizations within developing countries vary from opportunistic compliance to voluntaries. Hence, the concept of CEC has been defined as "all of the precautions and policies corporations need to implement in order to reduce the hazards that they give to the environment" This study will explore the construct of CEC based on the concept proposed by Ozen and Kusku (2008) which consists of regulative, normative and cognitive as consequences of implementation of EMS and development of green IC assessment based HR interventions.

Green HR: During the recession

This may not be the time to focus on organizational growth. Instead need is to examine vital strategic areas that should be focused on as you manage through the current recession. These areas can have an immediate business-impact: increasing workforce productivity, innovation, workforce flexibility, workforce planning and metrics.

Nurture Relationships: By renewing focus on these directly related business issues one is use social networking tools to build visibility around your personal brand and what you uniquely bring to the HR industry, write blogs.

Training & Development: Ongoing training and development Consider low-cost options such as work shadowing and developing coaching and mentoring programs using existing talent to train developing talent. Evaluate your training partners: smaller, boutique firms can often offer far more bang for your training buck. Bear in mind that those companies with strong customer bonds have the best chances of

weathering the storm. We believe small businesses and organizations have the advantage to quickly respond and adjust to their customer's needs. You may find that some of your "boutique" providers can best serve your needs in recessionary times.

Increase employee innovation: competition in the marketplace has remained constant or increased for most companies even though business revenues may be down. This means that to compete you need to accelerate innovation in product and service areas despite having fewer resources and provides HR with a great opportunity to demonstrate leadership in increasing innovation. How? One way to do this is to implement specific actions to improve your group's ability to work with mission-critical business teams. This way you can help identify barriers to

innovation. HR staff can then function as business consultants by providing tools, training and advice on increasing the rate of innovation.

Increase workforce flexibility: Companies can consider offering more paid time off such as increased holidays or Friday afternoons off as an incentive to increase employee motivation in these difficult times. Flexibility is a major motivator and the introduction of flexible working; flex-time, job sharing, and telecommuting are surprisingly easy ways to improve the bottom line. Reduce expenses that don't add value. Instead include low-cost but high-impact benefits at a time when the rest of the business world is cutting back.

Talent and Performance management: this is the time to have a holistic process is in place where employee objectives are linked to business goals. Securing existing talent and investing in them will ensure that a company becomes more competitive so that when the economy picks up they are much better placed to move forward.

Tackling poor performers head on, and removing from the workforce as part of a change management program or stand alone process, can help a business survive so long as fair capability and disciplinary procedures are used to prevent costly legal mistakes. Poor performers can reduce profits dramatically through low

productivity and disengagement. Talent management can help ensure employee engagement. Talent needs to be nurtured and rewarded accordingly to ensure employees don't jump ship and join a competitor. Having clear HR processes in place such as succession planning and career paths are the basic building blocks together with the right training and development. There is the need to look at creative ways to reward staff, when increased financial compensation is not available. Communication to staff about companies' actions in this area will help employees to understand the "hows" and "whys".

Economic pressures on workers combined with a higher unemployment rate might lead you to assume that recruiting and hiring are easier during a downturn. Depending on the nature of your job openings, recruiting is not necessarily easier in a downturn, but it is different. Some of the challenges we are used to are still there and are easier to meet (e.g. fewer demands and less negotiating from candidates) but there are new challenges too. Such as:

1. Candidates Don't want to Change Jobs

One of the biggest hiring challenges in an economic downturn is that passive job seekers do not want to change jobs. While you will get an increase in the number of unemployed candidates, it may be that the candidate you want for a particular position is currently working. And employed passive job seekers are much less likely to change jobs in a recession as many of them perceive changing as risky. The irony is that staying put in their current job many times is not the safest choice. For example the government's bailout of AIG, banks, and other seemingly stable financial institutions shows us that risks are not always what they seem.

Recruiters and hiring managers today need to work to get passive candidates to overcome their fear of change. Understand what motivates the candidate and outline all the ways that the job opening is attractive specifically to them. The fact that you are recruiting and hiring now might be a point to underscore with candidates assuming you are hiring for expansion purposes; it mean something positive is happening at your company and you are secure enough to make

investments for the future.

2. Qualified Candidates are Still Hard to Find

As more organizations lay-off staff and the unemployment numbers climb, recruiters are hearing from more and more people looking for work. Rather than making a recruiter's job easier, the increase in applicants means recruiters must be more judicious than ever in culling through the information to find the right candidates. Using all the tools available – including careful resume screening, phone interviews, face-to-face meetings, and both formal and informal (i.e. back door) reference checks – is more important than ever to make sure you're making the right choices. Recruiters must take the time and ask the right questions to determine why the candidate is out of work or seeking a new position. We also have to be savvy when checking references to avoid getting "sympathy" references that lack candid feedback.

3. Generalized Unemployment Numbers Don't Tell the Whole Story

While the headlines will tell you that unemployment is up over last year (currently around six percent nationally, with some experts predicting it will get as high as eight percent in 2009), unemployment amongst the type of people you are recruiting might be drastically different. For instance teenaged workers might be easy to find — according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is a 19.1 percent unemployment rate for teenagers. On the other hand, the unemployment rate for college graduates is 2.5 percent, still a relatively low level.

Recruiting during an economic downturn is not easier, but it is different. And, for organizations intent on finding top talent, adjustments must be made to their recruiting strategy.

Conclusion

It is research in which the companies following Green HRM practices have been studied. The green HRM Practices has drawn an outstanding success in China and Britain. Green HRM is not so popular in India thus International companies, primarily America and china are selected for the study in this case based approach.

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