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CHANGING TALENT LANDSCAPE IN INDIA

Talent Landscape - India Story

As per one of the study by Goldman Sachs, India will be the largest contributor to the global labor force in the coming decades and will add about 110 million workers by 2020. While highlighting this fact, there also seems to be an agreement around the need for quality talent to drive the economic engine at a pace which keeps the GDP and the India Shinning story alive and relevant for next couple of decades.

The need to initiate processes and create a mechanism that supports existing talent infrastructure and create more employable human resources as per the requirements of the industry and future trends is imperative. This requires a closer partnership of industry and government (local/national) and also exploring or building other channels to create a smooth supply of deployable talent in specific vocational areas. Taking a long-term view on talent, which is broader in its scope and devoid of typical corporate “self -aggrandizement”, is the need of the hour.

The mindset of the so called “elite” talent in India has also undergone a lot of change. There seems to be a clear preference or bias for specific career options and industries, leaving other industry segments to recruit and develop the second layer of talent. In the larger context, it results in an inequitable distribution of high quality talent and therefore may have a bearing on the growth, sustenance and competitiveness of majority of Indian industries in the coming years.

The socio-economic landscape of urban India comprising of cosmopolitan and metro cities vis a vis the tier 2&3 cities is quite different. This leads to a significant difference in terms of the mindset, behavior and expectations of these two types of workforce from the job and the organization especially in the professional formative years.

The motivators for contribution and performance in today's workforce seem largely influenced by external factors, especially in the initial years of their career. The extremely competitive environment coupled with increasingly consumerist lifestyle results in cultivating a “short term, instant win” kind of an orientation. This has impacted the employee loyalty phenomenon which was so prevalent with the earlier generations.



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In the current scenario when India is gearing up to move from being a developing nation to a developed nation, one of the expected outcomes is its reliance on service sector growth. As the service sector starts fuelling the economic growth, the impact of knowledge led or driven services/solutions will be a great contributor to a country's economic success. Joining the different pieces of puzzle, we have a mobile and consumerist workforce that is perhaps not adequately skilled. We have deep pot holes in the leadership depth especially at middle and upper middle levels of the organizations. We have corporates perceived to be skewed towards short term gains and their investment in people is limited by 'use readymade talent' phenomena. To make this potpourri more interesting we have insufficient infrastructure to provide adequate supply of talent and then there is the eternal debate between hiring for skill or attitude.

The people who manage the talent pipelines are playing the role of a juggler and their task is to ensure all the balls are in the air while more balls gets added after every round with the never ending demand of increasing the pace of jugglin

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Nature of Premium Quality Talent:

There has been a success template that emerged in the past that defined premium quality talent. This was largely based on academic pedigree and background and it delivered the goods for quite some time. There has been an assumption about engineering graduates completing their MBAs, as the most potent combination to deal with any and every kind of business situation in any Industry at all levels. With the changing times, there are other factors that have suddenly become more relevant. In certain industries and specific roles, factors such as knowledge of local culture, market, government regulations etc have become crucial for success. One of the formidable ongoing challenges in front of any talent acquisition team is to take a judgment call of focusing highly on specialization or choosing people with a generic management and/or engineering background.

“The traditional MBA-Engineering model is not working; specialization need has increased specially at certain levels and specific type of industries”

SAURABH UPADHYAY, BACARDI

The old HR maxim “hire for attitude and train for skill” invokes differing views. At a conceptual level professionals tend to largely agree with it, however considering the ground reality where one needs to deliver quick results to the business, the focus shifts to knowledge and skills. This may result at times in hiring professionals who give the impression of being exceptional resources based on education and pedigree, however may not be able to perform and grow due to inherent attitudinal challenges.

“People in telecom usually look for an MBA with an FMCG background. The question whether the person is willing to work in a remote area is many times ignored or isn't given enough importance”

S. VARADARAJAN, TATA TELESERVICES LTD

The professionals passing out of best of the colleges in management or engineering stream prefer to join specific type of industries and companies. This results in selective industries and companies attracting majority of the top talent. The others have to then rely on the remaining lot which demands a lot of time investment to groom them to come up to the desired performance level and many a times companies either don't have time and orientation or the infrastructure or both.

“If the skill level is average, business is either grooming the employees or using technology to do the job”

RAMENDRAJIT SEN, AON HEWITT



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Impact of Growth on Talent

The pace of economic growth in the last decade or so has been superfast. This has resulted in people quickly moving up the corporate ladder. In the initial career stage people usually get promoted for their functional expertise and also because of the growth of the business. The self – image of a lot of such professionals is that of a highly competent employee and by the time they reach the rungs of middle or senior management, a lot of them face the issue of lack of broader skills and/or leadership depth. The gap in self- image versus who the professional really is and what s/he brings to the table translates into misplaced expectation, workplace stress, conflict, lack of adequate effectiveness in higher level roles etc. The zipping through of people in the leadership pipeline without systemic ongoing development seems to be the real cause of a lot of the above-mentioned problems.

“Middle to senior management hasn't matured in its role. Given the need to promote to fill positions, , we bet on 'apparent' potential every-time, often completely ignoring the current performance”

VIPIN ARORA, HONEYWELL

Another interesting aspect is of hiring people for the immediate need or role and in the process not giving adequate importance to the basic attitudinal dispositions required by the individual in the next role(s) and organizational fit. This issue gets compounded when one of the tenets of talent management of an organization is 'promoting people from within' .It results into a serious business challenges when the organization is on a rapid growth path.

“When we hire we are looking for compliant and stable people, we want them to follow instructions, later we want people to innovate and think. To build a smarter workforce is the deeper challenge”

GURINDER SINGH, AON HEWITT



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Dynamics of Today's Workforce

With the youngest workforce among the large economies in the world, India faces a challenge of Gen X and Y interacting at the workplace. The two seem to have different worldviews, values and ways of operating. Sensitizing both the generations about the value that each bring to the table and how the two can complement each other requires more than diversity workshops. It requires a shift in the mindset where Gen X realizes the value of questioning and being truly inclusive in decision making. In addition, Gen Y appreciates the idea of balancing “rights” with “responsibilities” and not being non-conformist just for the sake of being different.

“In India you find Gen X leading Gen Y as a common corporate phenomenon. Gen Y want to be actively involved in almost all the decision making process. Usually both the generations talk about the same thing, however their modus operandi are different.”

KIRPAL SINGH SIDHU, N.E.W.S.™



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Today's workforce is fraught with an extreme sense of competitiveness which is both a boon and a bane. It is great to have a competitive workforce that aspires for more and is inherently wired to push the bar further up. The challenge is that this competitiveness seems to pervade the psyche of young talent to such an extent that it mars meaningful judgment about their own careers and development. People often are ready to switch companies simply because of a salary hike or an elevation in their social status that gratifies the inner competitive urge at-least for some time. Considerations of real personal growth and development are laid aside. This phenomena leads not just to an unstable workforce but also forces managers and companies to be less committed to developing employees.

“High degree of consumerism today has resulted in number of
People moving at parallel jobs just for money”

ANURAAG MAINI, DLF PRAMERICA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

The quality of competitiveness along with consumerist lifestyle, coupled with the idea of achieving a quick win, at times hinders people from devoting enough time in a role. The consequent lack of skill and applied knowledge with any significant depth becomes visible in future roles, and impacts both personal effectiveness and growth. The booming industry growth provides ample opportunities for people to switch companies and progress their career graphs. However in this overall process the depth of experience, expertise and professional excellence may get adversely impacted.

“At front line level we require people to do basics of the job right.
There aren't enough people who do it rigorously. “

VIVEK TRIPATHI, LAVA MOBILES

India is also increasingly able to attract more NRI/Expat talent from USA and Europe especially at senior levels. This is happening partly because of the global economic conditions and partly because there is a leadership gap at senior management levels and the perception of imported talent being of high quality. This perception is undergoing a change and now. **“Acceptance of skill level of expat talent seems to be high, however assumption of automatic value addition is not there anymore”** says **Bimal Rath, Think Talent Services**



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The other part of this story is the high potential young professionals including MBAs who are also willing to come to India and China to experience the culture and business peculiarities of this region. These people can provide real value add if companies are willing to coach and mentor them in the initial part of their journey in this geography.

“Young MBAs want China, India experience which makes their resumes look good. The organization needs to understand their aspirations and background, and support their development and acculturation to gain maximum returns ”

DR. PRAKASH V BHIDE, JK ORGANIZATION



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Honing Versus Using Talent

As the business environment becomes complex and uncertain, HR leaders from a strategic point of view are trying to create a talent mix which can be managed as per the varying business trends. Investment in hiring as against investment in development is an ongoing debate, especially with businesses needing quick results and seeing opportunities slipping by for lack of trained talent. The make vs buy judgment call, and its link to a talent strategy providing a sustainable and consistent pool of talent is a tough one to take.

This brings in the aspect of managing and effectively utilizing temporary/contractual /part time employees as also looking at options like outsourcing more from strategic viewpoint and less from a pure cost standpoint. Increasingly this aspect is becoming important for acquiring specialized skills and fulfilling short term requirements. It also answers to the younger or highly talented workforce which may not want to be tied down.

“Temping is going to be important especially in projects that run for 1-2 years and post that there is no visibility of career path”

VIVEK PUNEKAR, HCL INFOSYSTEMS

“Temp companies will become stronger especially in service sector that is growing. Companies don't want to hire a lot of employees on their roles”

DR PRAKASH V Bhide, JK ORGANIZATION



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However, companies that have tried this model in the past are skeptical to continue with this approach and reason cited is that it creates more issues and problems in terms of culture fitment and adversely impacting the brand image and therefore offsets the benefit associated with it. Needless to say, the jury is still out on this issue and organizations haven't arrived at any absolute answer. There is a good reason that builds a strong case for keeping the overall workforce supple; it still may not turn out to be the most prudent decision in the long run, unless managed really well.

“This model (temp employee) has failed and we are now reintegrating the workforce”

SAURABH UPADHYAY, BACARDI

“Both temp and outsourcing is going to go up when we are not sure about sustained business growth”

VIPIN ARORA, HONEYWELL



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Matching Individual and Organizational Needs Through Active HR Participation

In order to manage growth and complexity with the aforementioned talent situation, developing talent through a practical multi-pronged approach becomes a critical business agenda. In an environment where everything seems to be in abundance and there is a plethora of choices available for individuals, retaining and developing talent is becoming extremely difficult. Where employees have started giving more importance to the immediate and short-term, the challenge is to help employees align their aspirations and potential to the roles and career options existing within organizations. What is required is a “compass” that enables employees and managers to navigate effectively. This requires highly skilled and mature managers to start with. **“Aligning personal, interpersonal and organizational compasses is a universal challenge. People seem to be less happy in their jobs. They need help in order to get aligned to their own inner self”** Says **Laurent Choppe, N.E.W.S (Global)**

“People these days are living an EMI Life”

VIVEK PUNEKAR, HCL INFOSYSTEMS

“The question is how can we nurture attitude of developing oneself and growing with the organization?”

SAURABH UPADHYAY, BACARDI

What is also required is the dire need of integration and participation of HR in the overall business strategy, decision making and execution; and helping bring the talent agenda upfront. Along with this, the involvement of HR with the business and employees on an ongoing level and breaking the notion of HR either doing purely administration work or sitting in the ivory tower and creating a people strategy devoid of ground reality has to come to an end.

“ HR people need to do some research and not always go for adopting existing best practices.”

DR PRAKASH V BHIDE, JK ORGANIZATION



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When it comes to people development, what matters towards the end is an ability to understand the business, contextualizing and customizing talent solutions and ensuring a high degree of simplicity and practicality. Each business and its need will be different, while some common factors may apply.

“We need to be honest about what needs to be done”

DP SINGH, THINK TALENT SERVICES

The simple statement made by DP Singh actually captures the essence of dealing effectively with a lot of issues that at times seem too complex.

Conclusion

The talent landscape in India presents a mix of challenges and opportunities. On one side there seems to be a huge pool available, on the other side there are questions about whether this pool is or will be ready to perform at international standards. The efforts put in by the corporates and the government in this area are a testimony to the relative importance of this issue vis-à-vis many others that we face as a society.

“Bonding between line manager and HR is crucial”

VIVEK PUNEKAR, HCL INFOSYSTEMS

Like many other areas, even in the talent sphere there are two Indias, one which is the urban metro/cosmopolitan face and the other is the rural Bharat. The value that the two bring to the table and challenges associated with each of these talent pools are unique and therefore need to be addressed through a mix of different approaches and strategies.

The people who manage talent pipelines in organizations have juggled with multiple models, some seem to work in some situations and some have turned out to be a cropper. Nevertheless, there seem to be an overall sense of optimism linked to the Indian talent pool and its contribution to the economy.

Irrespective of all the differing views, there is one point of confluence which is related to the attributes/qualities/attitudinal dispositions that are a hallmark of a high quality talent. This cuts across all levels of industries, companies, genders and geographies. This quality is a high degree of learning ability and a strong need for self-development.



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DR. LAURENT CHOPPE

Chairman, N.E.W.S. (Global)

Dr. Laurent Choppe brings a broad range of expertise in managing multi-functional teams and setting up new businesses in human pharmaceutical, biotechnology and consumer goods. Before joining N.E.W.S. Coaching & Training Ltd, Dr Choppe occupied various executive positions in marketing, sales, business development and general management in Europe, North America and the Middle East. Dr. Choppe is a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine of the University Paris XII, laureate of the École Nationale Vétérinaire d'Alfort (France) and earned an MBA from INSEAD.

KIRPAL SINGH SIDHU

CEO, N.E.W.S. (APAC)

Kirpal Singh Sidhu has a wide spectrum of experience that covers from engineering and software development to setting up and developing companies. Before joining N.E.W.S. Asia Pacific, he held several positions in various organizations at several levels like COO and Board Member. There he takes a hands-on approach in mentoring starts-ups, guiding the management, and putting in place a corporate infrastructure for a rapid growth. Kirpal has a Bachelor of Electronics Engineering from the FH Ravensburg/Weingarten, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany and holds an MBA with a focus on Systems-Thinking from the University of Hull, UK.

S VARDARAJAN

Executive President – HR, Tata Teleservice

Vardarajan is Regional President-North, NHRDN and Executive President – HR of Tata Teleservices, part of \$83.5 billion Tata Companies. Mr. Vardarajan has over three decades of experience in heading organizations like Mc Dowell, American Express, Tata Communication, Tata Cellular, Quattro Global Service etc. He was also part of the start team of Tata Teleservice. Mr. Vardarajan has a Masters in HR & IR from Xavier Labour Relation Institute (XLRI)

SAURABH UPADHYAY

Director – HR, Bacardi

Saurabh Upadhyay has been with Bacardi since June 2010 and working as an Director - Human Resources. As Head of HR for Bacardi, he own and drive the people strategy of the organization. Currently he is focused on Capability Enhancement, Talent Development and Organizational Design. Saurabh was associated with Nokia, TAS, and Tata Motors. Prior to working with Bacardi as a Director, he was Head HR for Markets Organization of Nokia India, this included functions like Sales, Marketing, Services, Logistics, Finance and Control, Legal and Government Relations etc.



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VIVEK PUNEKAR

Vice President – HR, HCL Infosystems

“To Win is to work hard, innovate and never give-up

Vivek joined HCL in 1986. An engineer by profession with over two decades of industry experience in various functions, he heads the HR function for the company. He is credited with innovative HR initiative that has helped HCL to be ranked amongst the best companies to work for.

VIPIN ARORA

Director - India C&B, Honeywell International

Vipin Arora is the Human Resource professional with extensive experience in projects organization, manufacturing set-up and BPO sector. Also he is well versed with all aspects of HR and Training, Employee Relations, Performance Management, Comp & Benefits. He thinks through and maintains his cool personality at all times. His methodical approach to HR policies has been extensively appreciated by one and all. He is an alumni of XLRI having experience in MNCS like Aegis, IBM Daksh, NEW Holland Tractors, SIEL etc. His behaviour and human approach to every issue make him an outstanding personality.

RAMENDRAJIT SEN,

HR Leader, Aon Hewitt APAC

Ramendrajit Sen joined Aon Hewitt in December 2003 and has supported the Aon Hewitt business during its explosive growth phase over last couple of years. He is currently the HR Leader for India Outsourcing and Corporate Shared Services at Aon Hewitt and has more than 22 years of experience in the areas of consulting in talent development, implementing learning technologies and solutions, and human resource management.

VIVEK TRIPATHI

Chief HR Officer, Lava Mobiles

Vivek has over 17 years of experience in generalist and specialist roles in Human Resources. The last 13 years, he has been with leading companies in the Hi-Tech sector and in Human Resources Consulting. He has worked with Bharti Airtel Enterprise Services, Corporates, Adobe Systems India, Motorola India Limited, Cadence Design Systems India, Daewoo Motors India, Crompton Greaves India Limited. He is a post graduate diploma in Personnel Management from XLRI Jamshedpur, India



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DR. PRAKASH V BHIDE

Group President HR -. 2UJDQLJDWLRQ

Dr. Prakash Bhide joined JK Organization in 2002 and has Significantly contributed in improving Quality of Top Management Leadership and Building Strong Leadership Pipeline for the 20,000 Employees of diversified JK group. He has worked with International HR Consultants such as Hewitt for Executive Coaching using Marshall Goldsmith Methodology, Saville Holdsworth Ltd (SHL), Hay Group, etc., Prof. Richard Beatty, Dr. Tim Jones (Game Changing Innovation).

ANURAAG MAINI

**Senior Vice President – Human Resources,
DLF Pramerica Life Insurance Company**

Prior to his current role at DLF Pramerica, Anuraag was the director, Human Resources for Cargil India. After a brief stint of four years as a Captain in the Indian Army, Anuraag joined Gillette, where he worked for 17 years in the HR function with stints in different manufacturing facilities, in plant and corporate HR. His last assignment for Gillette was head of HR for India. Anuraag is a graduate from the prestigious National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, Pune and holds a Masters in Business Administration degree.



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GURINDER SINGH

Business Leader HR BPO, AON Hewitt APAC

Gurinder joined Aon Hewitt in 2003 and was part of the team that set up Aon Hewitt's off-shore captive center in India. Gurinder managed transitions into the India Center and also worked on project management activities to set up and expand the Gurgaon centre. He also led the Mumbai operations for a year following Exult's merger with Aon Hewitt in 2005 while the new organization and leadership were being put in place. He left Aon Hewitt briefly in 2006 and re-joined Aon Hewitt as the Market Manager for the HRBPO business in South-East Asia. His role was expanded shortly thereafter to include the APAC region.

DP SINGH

Think Talent Services

DP Singh has over 20 years of international management consulting and industry experience. He has worked extensively in strategy and transformation space. In his immediate past role, DP was working as a Director with Hay Group where he provided engagement oversight to client organization restructuring, top team alignment, performance dashboards. Majority of his experience has been with global consulting firms (A T Kearney, SDG) where he secured tangible results for clients.

BIMAL RATH

Founder and MD of Think Talent Services

Bimal consults coaches and facilitates leader's team for individual development and superior performances. Bimal has over 23 years of experience across different industries, and across geographies including the USA, Middle east/Africa and APAC. His latest corporate position was as HR Director for Nokia, supporting the massive growth for the company over the last few years. He has previously held senior positions in Eicher, British Telecom and Tata Sons. He is a certified executive coach for Center of Creative Leadership, USA. Bimal is advisory board member of several companies across industry.