

Date: 2.4.2018	Publication: BW People.in
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"Launched a casual attire policy all days across the country", says Vikramjeet Singh ,CHRO, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance

In the recent years, the role of HR has evolved from a being a Personnel Management function to Talent Management and has gradually become an influential business partner for the organizations. The role now focuses more on laying out strategies as per organization's business goals and employees' skill sets.

02 April, 2018 | By Sanjima Adhikari

Vikramjeet Singh is the Chief Human Resource Officer at the Bajaj Allianz General Insurance company. Prior to Bajaj Allianz GIC Vikramjeet Singh had an eventful and rich association with leading firms such as L&T, Vodafone, & Detusche Bank. A young and vibrant leader, Vikramjeet has always been committed towards implementation of innovative and path breaking HR initiatives. He has contributed immensely to the people's agenda by crafting robust performance management frameworks and driving culture change. He has been instrumental in introducing number of interesting employee friendly initiatives, latest of which is introducing casual attire policy for employees across the company, which is not a usual norm in the Indian BFSI sector.

How has been your journey as an HR professional?

The life of a HR professional revolves around people and their management, but the enriching experiences that we gather along this journey are unique in their own sense. Various aspects such as choosing the right talent and managing the conflicts situations makes this profession a vivid one and perhaps that's what attracted me towards it. I feel fortunate to have worked across the entire gamut of HR during my varied stints in Engineering, Telecom, Banking and Insurance sector. Each industry comes with its own flavour and dynamics, hence it is critical for HR professionals to be agile enough to grasp them well. One of the learning has been that HR can only add more value if they understand the nuances of business and become a solution provider to help them grow in a sustained manner.

How has the role of HR evolved in the recent years?

In the recent years, the role of HR has evolved from a being a Personnel Management function to Talent Management and has gradually become an influential business partner for the organizations. The role now focuses more on laying out strategies as per organization's business goals and employees' skill sets. Especially, in a VUCA world, where specializations important today may become redundant tomorrow. The role has evolved in terms of choosing the skill set for future meticulously, as well as, capturing the need of resource reskilling. Another, important role that has grown in the past few years is to create the next generation of leaders, which makes it imperative for Human Resources to align with business goals of the organization.

Today, HR policies have moved from the books to practice in order to bring convenience and transparency for employees, for instance; traditionally, BFSI sector related with formal attire, however, for ensuring a convenience to the employees, we have launched a casual attire policy all days across the country. We are one of the pioneers in the industry to introduce these measures.

How effective and how important are rewards and recognitions in strengthening employee engagement and retention?

Rewards and recognitions are motivational for employees and remarkably contribute to the work environment that an organization has. However, it is imperative that these rewards and recognitions relate well with the employees' performance and align with their expectations. Monetary rewards cannot compensate for feedback in words, since employees do seek gratitude for the contribution they make to an organization's growth. Appropriate rewards and experiences go a long way in strengthening employee engagement, retention and performance.

What has been innovative and path breaking HR initiatives carried out by your organization?

At Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, we always strive to introduce people initiatives that cater to employees' requirement well and also help them shape their career graph well. A few initiatives that can be cited are:-

Wolf of Park Street: - This is an award winning gamified sales simulation program. Offering a real time sales environment to the players, the game educates players about company's products through gamification and helps honing their selling skills.

MobiBuzz : - This is a learning and communication mobile application, which employees can access on their smartphones. The application keeps employees updated about new initiatives as well as industry activities. There are number of quiz and games that feature on the application and help establishing a constant engagement with the employees.

Recruitment drives at tier 2 & 3 cities/towns of India to promote employment and geographical diversity:- Every year recruit a significant number of fresher candidates from tier 2 and 3 cities including the likes of Coimbatore, Tezpur, Anand, Vishakhapattanam, Jodhpur and over 20 other towns. Typically these students are taken on board for trainee programs of the company, geo diversity projects, and many of these recruits have turned into great success stories within the organization.

How do you induct new comers and inculcate new potentials?

People practices have evolved over the years especially for the new comers and the manner in which new potentials are inculcated. Inducting new talent is not a quick two days affair anymore, now the emphasis is laid on a well outlined engagement journey with the candidates through orientation sessions, training and development programs, counselling sessions spread over months. An important Human Resource practice now is to share relevant sectorial ingredients with the candidates; this also aim to underline the opportunities that an industry promises including a snapshot of their career graph opportunities. We have

collaborated with colleges to run Campus Collaboration program, wherein we will run Insurance specific curriculum along with an internship program to give candidate on the job training/experience.

What are the key recruitment game changers in 2018?

During last one decade Human Resources landscape has evolved like never before and it will continue to develop in the coming times. Therefore, it becomes imperative for recruiters to be adept with the new platforms and initiatives to acquire the best talent out there. Recruitment trends, which I feel are going to lead talent acquisition strategies include the integration of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, leveraging unconventional channels and presence on mobile platforms.

In addition, a strong employer branding by creating a brand about the organization's culture and vision on various platforms is also being adopted by the recruiters. As in the end, candidates do make a conscious choice while choosing an opportunity.

How is technology changing HR, especially recruitment?

At present, technology disruptions are bringing a certain shift in all the business aspects and Human Resources is no exception. Technology can make a significant impact on recruitment processes. We have introduced industry first robotic video interviews for recruitment, which offer behavioral insights based assessment to the hiring managers. Powered by Artificial Intelligence, the initiative not only enhances the recruitment experience, but also helps hiring manager make more informed decisions. With such platform, the hiring opportunities are being made available to candidates across the country, without any geographical restrictions.

What are the challenges HR faces in the new era of the 'digital age'?

I feel otherwise about this. Digital Age has brought in number of aids for Human Resources. It is much more convenient to create the employees' data base, their roles, performances and journey with the organization and even beyond. Critical here is the ability of Human Resources to leverage the digitization in the best possible manner. Citing few examples, we have leveraged gamification for various Learning and Development initiatives for our employees. Mobile platforms for L & D have enabled us to strike an improved learning engagement with the employees. They now have access to product related information on their mobile devices.

Integration of Artificial Intelligence powered chatbots too can be very efficient in offering convenient assistant to the employees. They can be a 24x7 touch point between the employees and Human Resources and can be leveraged to assist employees for their day to day HR needs and details.

However, the challenge would still be how we blend the use of technology with human connect.

HR industry provides plethora of opportunities for women candidates. In turn, what are your goals in terms of creating opportunities for male in male bastion profiles?

We are an agile, diverse and equal opportunity organization.

Do you think in the coming year's automation, robotics and artificial intelligence would end up replacing humans?

The perception around job market shrinking as a result of automation and digitization should change. In fact, this development will lead to remove only some of the operational jobs albeit in phases while also equally steering the highlighting value creation. BFSI sector and Insurance specifically deal with risks and safeguards, where human interface cannot be ruled out completely; and as this sector grows, human touch will gain more relevance. However, it is essential for students as well as professionals to constantly focus on softer aspects as they build their technical knowledge to stay competent and resourceful.

Organizations need to outline the strategies for Talent Acquisition as well as Development in accordance. Short term programs in conjunction with journey based interventions that focus on specific learning schools, while also offering detailed curriculum and assessments will be an advantage for employees. Organizations may also look at reskilling programs, by training the resources with certain skillset that may turn obsolete in future.

How does Bajaj Allianz General Insurance embark on finding specific skill sets?

While looking for suitable candidates, we look at candidates coming with right attitude. Given the diverse functions in the organization, we welcome the candidates from diverse backgrounds. Prime objective is to scout candidates, who are ready to explore and enjoy marking their strides in a competitive environment. In addition to the strong hold of technical skills, personality traits like flexibility and swiftness of job seekers make them a perfect stakeholder. Depending on their capabilities and expertise, we offer them in house trainings to polish their skills further.