



FEATURE

Promoting fun at work

Making the daily work interesting and challenging for employees has become a norm for organizations today. They are now coming up with different activities on a daily basis to motivate their employees, writes **Nivedan Prakash**



Today organizations across all the sectors are emphasizing on making the daily work interesting and challenging by introducing new elements of surprise so that their employees are motivated to come to office and look forward to a new day and an enriched experience.

To have a sense of accomplishment, it is critical to feel good about a day at work and to look forward to a new one. So an organization needs to ensure that the work people do gives them that sense of happiness and satisfaction.

Offices are now termed as 'home away from home.' Employees spend most of their day hours at the workplace and there are times when the work gets extremely challenging, in addition to being highly stressful. This can have an adverse effect on employee productivity. At times like these, it is important to give employees opportunities to de-stress and rejuvenate. In such a scenario, it becomes essential for the organization to promote an employee-friendly work culture by nurturing the spirit of innovation amongst employees and helping in their career growth.

Deepinder Bedi, Executive Director, Tulip Telecom, said, "We

believe that an employee really needs to love his job and enjoy his day-to-day work. We acquire talent that is ready to take up challenges and at the same time we ensure that a person's individual goal is also met with."

Interesting working ways

24/7 Customer has designed specific 'employee fun in the organization' programs that energize and motivates employees and add fun in their work life. Every quarter, half a day of fun, games and competition is organized, to bring together employees from various departments. Various clubs pertaining to different hobbies like sports, music, dance, drama, movie and book reading, have been formed. Employees with common interest use these clubs as platforms to share and interact informally. Team outings, celebration of festivals, recognition programs and annual day of fest are some of the ways that add fun in everyday work life.

Prasad Patil, Senior Project Manager, Empower Research Knowledge Services, said, "If employees are aligned to think the way our customers do and are asked to come up with innovative ways of doing everyday work that can lead to customer delight, work becomes interest-

ing and challenging. By doing this, we are asking them to think beyond the scope of their work and be accountable to the end customer."

Infogain firmly believes that a challenging, vibrant and fun-filled work culture automatically motivates employees and they look forward to coming to office everyday. "We have established Centres of Excellence (CoE) for employees so that they can keep themselves updated about their respective areas of technology interests. We also organize a monthly 'Work with fun' event wherein all Infogainers get together to enjoy the cultural show put up turn-wise by different projects, and 'eat and dance together' aids in elevating the motivation levels," added Punkaj Shankar, Head HR and RMG, Infogain.

Laser Soft Infosystems makes the work innovative and challenging by continuously improving the technology and system performance with a view to reduce the cost to its customers. It also ensures that the work is not of routine nature and that is the reason they keep changing the domain area and the products people work on. The company also rotates the roles they play. In addition, senior people have the choice to continue in core technology area, rather than shift to management roles.

Mindteck has a dedicated HR employee relations team that is responsible for designing various recreational programs internally to keep its employees engaged, informed and motivated. There are programs that are generic in nature, and some that are specific to individuals. These activities/programs help enrich the work experience of every employee at Mindteck to a large extent. Under these engagements, various levels of continuous learning opportunities are provided to employees; all religious/national festivals are celebrated with equal spirit; professional successes of individuals and employee birthdays are celebrated with vigor and

► enthusiasm; managers are encouraged to celebrate project successes by taking their respective teams out for entertainment; various technology/leadership trainings are provided internally on a regular basis; and lastly, employees are encouraged for R&D initiatives depending on their skill-sets.

Rajesh Padmanabhan, Executive Vice President and Global Head, HR, Patni, commented, "Patni as an organization encourages innovation and knowledge-sharing at the workplace. Job rotations and role changes are also a part of Patni's work culture which keeps the employees' learning curve on the incline and interest levels high. Working in cross-functional teams brings out an amalgamation of different perspectives which keeps the work challenging as well as interesting. Our 'fun at work' teams ensure that the element of fun is maintained as employees put in their hard work to attain their goals."

"There are numerous initiatives taken to make the work environment a fun-filled and interesting one. We also arrange regular workshops and seminars that are interactive in nature and allow employees to get to know one another better, in addition to increasing their knowledge base," asserted Benny Augustine, Director, HR, Unisys.

Collabera has project responsibilities for each employee, which focuses on the three key initiatives to help keep work interesting and challenging. These include 'solution creation'—where the objective is to identify industry, technology and client problems and create innovative solutions to address them; day-to-day, time-bound responses to



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proposals, and solutions to problems raised by prospects and customers; and rotation of employees both onsite and offshore, so that each employee gets an exposure to both project delivery and client-facing activities and also gets a real experience in dealing with customers.

Challenges in daily work

Rather than making these programs a periodical activity, most of the organizations ingrain such initiatives in daily work routine. Although most of these initiatives are periodic activities, they will require some work every day. There are organizations that let the employees use some part of their daily time towards any additional projects that they have taken up.

A Subramaniam, Vice President, HR, Consim Group, pointed out, "We encourage new ideas, suggestions and innovations round the clock and round the year. By awarding best ideas and implementing them in our work and company, we encourage them to share their inputs through a dedicated email id, which is accessed by our CEO daily."

"There is a clear demarcation between the periodical activities and the routine exercises that take place. Activities which will include a larger number of people and teams are periodical and are usually done on a larger scale e.g. Annual day, Mothers' Day, World Environment Day activities wherein the entire organization/employees participate. The daily routine activities are carried out by respective teams and are usually conducted by the Employee Relationship Executives



Rajesh Padmanabhan
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND GLOBAL HEAD, HR, PATNI

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and the team leads. These vary from games to impromptu breaks," added Naresh Vassudhev, Senior Director, HR, e4e Business Solutions.

Relevance of initiatives

Recreational activities, flexi-timings or tele-commuting, are to an extent relevant in making the employees more comfortable and thus more productive. A majority of today's workforce comprises of youngsters who tend to get bored with repetitive work very easily and quickly. So it is important that some change in the daily grind is introduced in different forms.

Recreational activities play a very significant role in making employees comfortable and infusing high energy levels in them, whereas flexi-timings and tele-commuting help employees in working at their own pace and convenience which in turn yield better results. This also in a way promotes autonomy wherein nobody is actually sitting and driving anyone leading to a more responsible behavior from the individual employee's end.

Rajita Singh, HR Head, Broadridge Financial Solutions India, asserted, "All these definitely invoke the creative side, thereby helping discover newer ideas and value-adds which do impact productivity positively; though tele-commuting is given a priority based on business requirements and personal needs."

These activities and other policies that provide flexibility to the employees are realistic to the extent that the basic hygiene of the organization, including role clarity, transparency, and communication, is in place. These initiatives are also the buzzword to make employees more

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Srishti Sofat
COUNTRY MANAGER, INFOSPACE

Policies that are supportive of the employee and acknowledge their need to have a work life balance are important to keep the employee engaged and productive. Besides, playing games / recreational activities bring out the competitive spirit and passion out in folks

productive, as they add flavor to the workplace and keep monotony at bay. It also gives them time and opportunity to explore avenues that they would not have ventured otherwise.

"Policies that are supportive of the employee and acknowledge the need for them to have a work-life balance are important. This will keep the employee engaged and productive. Besides working hard together, playing games or other recreational activities bring out the competitive spirit and passion in folks," said Srishti Sofat, Country Manager, InfoSpace.

Adding further, Vikram Kallianpur, Director, HR, Virtusa India, explained, "Recreational activities, flexi-timings, pro-employee policies and other engagement activities are essential for striking a work-life balance and create an environment for a healthy workplace. It indirectly assists in improving the employee morale and productivity thereby removing monotony and de-stressing the work. Employees get the freedom to work on their schedules and perform well by owning up to their responsibilities. With the right checks and balances in place, it is a win-win situation for both the employee and the organization."

Overall role of HR

The HR department plays a big role in galvanizing the initiatives to a more departmental or functional level, given the fact that they have to interact with a cross-section of people from various departments and across all levels. To make sure that the initiatives are implemented across the organization effectively, the HR personnel have to make sure that they keep the departmental or functional managers updated on their plan and also take their views on any amendments that need to be made thereof. This coordination and cooperation with various departments shall help make the initiatives effective and successful.

It is also important that when it is a department-specific initiative, the HRD along with the representatives of the concerned department, work out the finer details of the plan and also train them in smooth implementation. Since HR is a business support role, the impact of its initiatives will surely affect the entire organization, and hence they have to play an overall role to stimulate action.

Krishna Reddy, Head HR, ValueLabs, asserted, "The HR department is the fulcrum around which all our recreational and employee welfare initiatives are



Naresh Vassudhev

SENIOR DIRECTOR, HR, e4e BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

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conducted. Apart from the individual department heads and project heads, the HR team is involved gauging in the overall fun index in the organization. The HR does this through various kinds of informal as well as formal channels like emails and intranet, e-tools like 'Talk to us' and 'Val Chat,' ValComm—our newsletter, and quarterly open houses."

Different initiatives at the departmental and functional levels help in encouraging innovation and promoting team spirit. HR can help in identifying the requirements and internal dynamics of each team and propose activities or suggestions that will facilitate mutual respect and improve relations among members. This will in turn improve productivity. At a functional level, exercises and sessions that are challenging and improve the technical or managerial skills go a long way in improving the employee skill-sets.

Supervisors taking the lead

The team leaders make the work interesting by providing learning experience every day. Team members are always encouraged to take up a work which they think they cannot do (just above their capability matrix) and thus made to climb up the capability ladder gradually. When people learn and contribute at the same time, the results are excellent for them as well as for the company.

Supervisors and leaders have a huge role to play in motivating their teammates and in making the daily work interesting. Team leaders have an excellent understanding of what the organization or customer expects from them. They try



Krishna Reddy

HEAD HR, VALUELABS

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to foster an environment where their teams are constantly encouraged and enthused, and therefore feel positive to give in their best. This will not only increase productivity and improve the quality of work, but also inspire them to enjoy the work that they do. They also ensure that their teams are consistently motivated and appreciated for their work, thereby reducing the monotony of the work.

Jagat M Sarkar, Head, HR, eRevMax Technologies, emphasized, "The role of the team supervisor is that of a single point of contact (SPOC) for various employee engagements. In essence, they are the ones who are directly involved in implementing any initiatives in their teams. It is a part of our culture that any new improvement plan is based upon the feedback we receive from the supervisors. Their direct involvement increases the level of participation of their team members which makes the entire activity interesting and successful."

Employees are closest to their team supervisors. They are the ones who the employees work closely with and look up to. So without the team supervisors' involvement no such initiatives can become successful. Supervisors play an important role to ensure that their team is engaged and productive. As they work closely with their employees they can customize their work to ensure that there is learning, knowledge sharing, brainstorming, ownership and a sense of achievement on delivery. All these elements and embarkments put together make the work interesting on a daily basis. ■