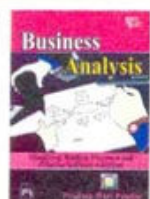




## Righting downsizing in Asia

Lundby, Kowske and Partha discuss how layoff survivors can be kept engaged

Page 36



## Enterprise analysis

Each function, person and level within an organization has a different perspective about a business process

Page 38

FEATURE

# Valuing vs. recognizing employees

Though recognition and valuing go hand in hand, it's the value given to the employees that brings fruitful results in the long-term, writes

Nivedan Prakash



**V**aluing and recognizing employees has always been intertwined and can be termed as the two sides of the same coin. One may not exist without the other. While recognizing is more extrinsic, valuing is intrinsic and deep rooted. Valuing employees means that employers are committed to the employees' success, development, and well being. Whereas recognizing employees imply that the employer acknowledges the contribution made by the employees towards the success of the specified task or goal.

Recognizing employees is the formal process of evaluating an employee for the work that they have done. It is typically done during the performance appraisals or evaluation of an employee's goal sheet. Valuing employees goes much beyond mere recognition; it means a commitment towards their development, success and overall welfare. Increasingly, this involves more flexible, high performance work practices adapted to each employee having different professional and personal needs.

Recognition is given to an employee to acknowledge his contributions in his/her work. In other words, it is appreciation given for their efforts. On the other hand, valuing is respecting employees for what they are and what they bring to the table and maintaining their dignity.

Partha Patnaik, GM-HR and Administration, Four Soft, pointed out, "Valuing employee means the organization is investing in their development and growth, which in turn adds to the organization's overall performance through higher levels of organizational learning and knowledge sharing. Recognition is the measure of this investment, wherein the qualitative measures (lead indicators like training and development) are converted into quantitative measures like increased efficiency and productivity leading to higher revenues and profits."

Expertus, a learning outsourcing organization, is of the view that recognition is the identification and acknowledgement of one's effort.

When we recognize employees, we acknowledge that they are doing good work and letting them know we appreciate their efforts. Valuing is about appreciating one's worth and in doing so regarding one in good esteem. When we value employees, we appreciate them for who they are and what they bring to the organization.

## Different yet interlinked

Valuing as well as recognizing employees are different but yet interlinked. As we know that recognizing requires giving reward towards employees' achievement and contribution, at the same time, valuing means that a company is required to take efforts and start initiatives that help employees grow, achieve their goals and build an environment where they feel meaningfully engaged, respected and cared for. So, in a way, valuing of employees leads to better performance and hence recognition, which is a motivational factor for better performance.

► Eka Software, as a company, believes that the two aspects are different as the former is the commitment extended by the employer to the employee and the latter is the result of an employee's commitment to the employer. These two aspects are interlinked as they talk about the five letter word TRUST, which binds the employee and the employer together. Only when these two aspects are found in an organization that its wheels are on the track.

Echoing his views on the same, Rajesh Padmanabhan, Executive VP and Global Head-HR, Patni, said, "A company that ranks high on valuing employees will inevitably also rank high on recognizing its employees. These employees will add value to the company by working with dedication, and in turn will get recognized for their good work."

"I think recognizing may be interpreted more as a transactional phenomenon and extrinsic while valuing is probably more deep-rooted and something, which is longer on a continuum. The intertwining comes across when you tend to value your employees and hence have recognition programs. Your recognition programs help them go ahead and communicate to your employee base that you value them and their contributions," added Arun Rao, VP and Global HR, AppLabs.

For Broadridge Financial Solutions, an associate can be recognized without being valued, however, one cannot value without recognizing. Value is about encouraging involvement, openness, empowerment, trusting, and being fair. It is a combination of hard and soft aspect i.e. it takes the associate as a whole and how their presences matters and not just focus on one aspect of the job or skills. And recognition is a mechanism of being able to commend for proven capabilities, performance, etc. It is about acknowledging the knowledge and skills or the hard aspect.

### Creating valuable environment

Here it will be right to say that most organizations are weak in creating an environment where employees truly feel valued. Most of the organizations, over a period of time, do tend to take long serving employees for granted and fail to understand their needs thereby, creating a weak environment resulting in loss of productivity and sometimes attrition of talented resources.

Elucidating further on the fact, Mohan Sekhar, President and COO, Collabera, stated that making employees feel valued is not something all organizations pursue as part of their strategy or culture. This, to a large extent, is one of the



**Tim Huiting**

VICE PRESIDENT-HR, CONVERGYS

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values a company adheres to and definitely not an off-the-shelf process which can be implemented.

Most of the progressive organizations start with the right intentions. They know that the employees are their assets, hence value them and their contributions. However, short-term orientation and the compelling need to manage other attributes of business, lead to dilution of the intent and the initial commitment soon wears away and existentialism with respect to valuing people takes over.

Moreover, paying lip service to employee value without following it through in practice will be exposed in the long run. Good companies not only value their staff—they put it into practice as well. It also means listening to the staff and getting their ideas and comments before launching yet another initiative. Employees expect a just and fair treatment from their employer. Companies that invest in their employees' professional and personal development will gain a competitive edge over their rivals and a more committed workforce.

However, Bhaskar Das, VP-HR of Cognizant, is of the view that it would be inappropriate to generalize that observation, "Having said that, we do see situations where some organizations have enhanced their focus on reward and recognition mechanisms in the recent past without a concomitant focus on valuing employees for what they are." This has led to a disproportionately high focus on reward and recognition systems alone, without enhancing organizational culture that encourages valuing employees.

Adding further, Sachin Tikekar, Chief of People Operations, KPIT



**Bhaskar Das**

VP-HR OF COGNIZANT

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Cummins Infosystems, said, "I believe this isn't true. I agree, there does remain a lot to be desired, but companies across the globe are putting in sincere efforts to make their employees feel valued and get engaged. At KPIT Cummins, we focus on engaging employees through various opportunities, not only on a professional level but also on a personal level to enhance their growth and development."

Also supporting it, TeamLease, a people supply chain company, opines that in the recent times, organizations have become even more cautious towards creating a winning environment which is truly performance oriented than the mere optics which was being done in some organizations.

### Initiatives that go beyond recognition

Today, organizations take different initiatives that go beyond recognizing employees and focus more on valuing them. There are a good number of companies that have taken steps in this direction. For example, the Consim Group has taken up learning and training initiatives, career growth for their employees, job rotation and inter-department movements, transparency and communication, and benefits of health and education.

Tim Huiting, Vice President-HR, Convergys, pointed out, "We have several programs and initiatives that focus on making employees feel valued. Our 'Power of One' program encourages any employee to write a 'Power of One' card acknowledging another employee for something they have done that aligns with the Convergys values."

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**Shilpa Bhardwaj**

DIRECTOR-PEOPLE SUCCESS, SAPIENT INDIA

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**Rajesh Padmanabhan**

EXECUTIVE VP AND GLOBAL HEAD-HR, PATNI

A company that ranks high on valuing employees will inevitably also rank high on recognizing its employees. They are interlinked as these employees will add value to the company by working with dedication and in turn will get recognized for their good work



**Mohan Sekhar**

PRESIDENT AND COO, COLLABERA

Making employees feel valued is not something all organizations pursue as part of their strategy or culture. This to a large extent is one of the values a company adheres to and definitely not an off-the-shelf process which can be implemented

*Organizations cannot afford to overlook the fact that their success depends increasingly on the diverse backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and motivation of all their employees*

► For a company like Policy-bazaar.com, its culture is based on equality, honesty and transparency. What that means is everyone speaks their mind, criticism is valued, and mistakes are absolutely fine. So in a way people are valued for who they are, and speaking their mind, not just for performance.

To follow the suit, Q2A Media takes a keen interest in initiating the building up of an employee in terms of giving them relevant training sessions, making sure that they get an overall view of the industry. Every person working in the firm is easily approachable and accessible to the employee. The company has a suggestion and a complaint box, where anyone can give their feedback which is taken seriously.

Ajit Varwandkar, MD of aglakadam.com feels that in order to value the talent one has to be serious about quality of work that an employee delivers. They need to be trained for developing the leadership capabilities and professional skills and thereby fostering a culture that encourages excitement as well as sense of achievement.

"At Tesco, our values are our code of conduct and they are the way we have chosen to work and drive the way we do business. These values are formulated by the employees based on interactions with our customers, work environment and the ways of working at Tesco. By living these values, we create a great place to work and one where great service is delivered," added Sudheesh Venkatesh, Head-HR, Tesco HSC.

### Adding value to the work

It is important for employees to align themselves well with the organizational DNA. Within the larger framework of the values that define

and drive an organization, they can add value by innovating, thinking ahead of the curve, acquiring new skills, adapting better and faster to business dynamics, helping organizations increase efficiencies and contain costs, and provide increased benefits to customers.

Shilpa Bhardwaj, Director-People Success, Sapient India, commented, "Client focused delivery is one of our core values and passion for client delight is a way of life for all Sapient people. Simple things like continuously looking for ways in which we can excel at the work we do for our clients and thinking from the clients' point of view lead to value-add. Our recognition framework is also designed around acknowledging people who go above and beyond for the client's success."

Shantanu Banerjee, Director-HR, Steria India is also quick to point out that employees can add value to their work by being conceptual in thinking, having the ability to see newer and different dimensions and possibilities, which has a direct bearing on one's ability to add value, becoming a continual learner, and lastly being a mentor.

Therefore, we can say that employees constantly add value to their work, if they are valued and are passionate about it.

Passion and values go hand in hand. In the most traditional sense, an employee can add value when he makes his workplace better by taking initiative, uses good judgment to improve personal productivity on-the-job or saves company money. But, in a less traditional sense, the employee who offers suggestions that solve tricky problems, brings optimism and creates a positive attitude in the workplace, particularly when that is not the

norm, is also adding value.

### Falling into the pit

Here we would like to mention that without valuing employees, organizations fall into a dangerous zone where they fail to treat and see them as people. Apparently, the repercussions are much larger than what it looks. If organizations fail to value its employees, they would actually miss out in terms of leveraging its most elastic resource.

Organizations cannot afford to overlook the fact that their success depends increasingly on the diverse backgrounds, knowledge, skills, creativity, and motivation of all their employees.

Valuing employees holds the key to guarding against dehumanizing the workplace. This can be achieved by enhancing systems and opportunities for employees to be accepted for what they are.

Valuing employees is an integral part of the process of developing employee commitment and loyalty which ultimately leads to the success of the company. The knowledge industry is completely built on intellectual strength and is a summation of individual strengths and capacities.

People are an organization's biggest asset. Given the current environment, customer expectations have become higher. Hence, employees need to perform better, develop innovative solutions at low costs to provide more value to customers. It is important for an organization to value its intellectual capital and invest in long-term people growth. There are more opportunities for those who encourage challenging of hierarchies and value meritocracy. ■

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