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Manager's Role as a Change Agent in Managing Talent- Techniques for Managing Change with Special Reference to Logistics Sector

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ABSTRACT

The logistics sector plays a vital role in influencing the economic development of a country. With the advent of new technology the globe has shrunk in terms of reachability and easy access as well. Robust trade growth and innovative practices in the logistics industry has paved way for easy mobility of goods and services to any corner of the world. This is not possible without big players entering the booming industry with multiple options and customer service. Ultimately the pressure builds up and the competition becomes very stiff. In such a critical environment how do employees working in logistics industry handle the challenge? It is more of a change and mental shift that is required apart from facing it. This is mainly due to the huge influence of the unorganized sector and high number of small players venturing into the business. As a result more employees are in need to cater the services from various backgrounds. Sources also estimate that this logistics industry employs over 45 million people in the country as against IT and ITES sectors which employs approximately 4.3 million people, and is growing at the rate of 15% with sub-sector growing at 30-40% per annum.

The scenario is clear and challenges are humongous. The role of a manager here is to either refine the young brain into a finest master piece or just keep as an empty pot. This paper focuses on the manager's role in identifying knowledge, managing, shaping up and retaining employees for accommodating changes in workplace particularly in Logistics sector. On the other side it encompasses the techniques to manage talent and subsequently in retaining them.

KEYWORDS : Manager, Change agent, competency, knowledge workers, knowledge management, talent management, logistics sector

Introduction:
Ethical issues occur frequently in management. They extend far beyond the commonly discussed problems of bribery, collusion, and theft, reaching into such areas as corporate acquisitions, marketing policies, and capital investment. A large corporation has taken over a smaller one through the common practice of negotiating for the purchase of stock. Then, in merging the two firms it is found that some of the positions in one are duplicated in the other. Is it right to fire or demote executives holding those duplicate positions, many of whom have served their respective firms for years? Here comes the quality of the professionals on to consideration. Firms spend crores to enhance the potential of the hired candidates; but not all the times it succeeds. At this crucial juncture how are these firms going to manage multi faceted talent? A person is adjudged based on the group he belongs to. A student is valued based on the teacher who has trained him. Likewise even clay can be modified and made to excel in quality if given in right hands. Here comes the role of the manager who is the ultimate authority of managing and retaining existing talent.

Objectives of the paper:
- To highlight the role of a manager as a change agent in managing and retaining talent.
- To examine the skills required for a manager to effectively manage talent.
- To present different techniques to be adapted by the manager in managing and retaining organizational talent.

Manager's role:
Managers in today's corporate world have been given due importance and consideration mainly for the above mentioned reasons. Most of the corporate feel that wonders can be made in quality enhancement and sustenance with an appropriate manager who is also aptly called as a 'change agent'. Human capital that has been very recently considered as one of the most important resources of the organization carries its own weightage and hence should be given priority than any other domain to enhance the quality. In this scenario this manager as a change agent carries most important portfolio in his shoulders and is totally held responsible for any outcome.

A change agent is a person who leads a change project or business-wide initiative by defining, researching, planning, building business support and carefully selecting volunteers to be part of a change team. They should have the conviction to state the facts based on data, even if the consequences are associated with unpleasantness. On the whole, networking to build and maintain relationships is essential to the success of any team. But then what is the difference or relationship between a manager and a change agent? The manager is just responsible to update a person in a specific job related area. But a change agent takes up an additional responsibility of grooming and molding their actual skills to the required level.

Skills required:
Skills required for manager and change agent are

Table 1: Skills required

Profession	Skills required
Manager	Training skills Empathy Modeling of behavior Persuasion Project management Skills with internet tools for instruction Advising/counseling skills
Change agent	Modeling of behavior Managerial skills Marketing skills Strategic planning skills Policy-making skills General education theory

Now it is very clear that a change agents' role is more professional and marginal, but ambiguous, insecure and risky. A manager should very cleverly strike a balance between these two roles he plays. As far as the logistics sector is concerned, it is even more crucial as multiple levels of skills are involved. Huge range of workforce right from unskilled, semi skilled to skilled employees are associated with this sector. If quality enhancement of the employees is going to be the manager's utmost priority then he has to very tactfully face the challenges before him. Since the profile of the workforce varies in this sector in comparison

to other sectors, challenges lie for the trainers in understanding their background itself. The world is changing and the profile of workers has considerably changed over the last two decades and so is the task of the managers. Logistics sector requires a combination of workforce who are technically as well as physically strong.

Techniques to manage talent

Considering the multi skilled background of the Logistics sector employees, it is clearly understood and essential to conceptualize a strategy and suggest if followed by the managers can ensure quality talent management and retention of the staff. Managers can try these techniques right from day one.

- **Design a challenging and transparent Job description:** List down clearly employee's most preferred factors or job areas they are strong enough and confident in contributing towards organizational enhancement. A Job description clearly narrates the roles, responsibilities and the most important outcomes from a position and thus enables an employee to stretch himself for the extra mile he is willing to travel. One who gets attracted towards a challenging job description will definitely stay for a longer duration which is absolutely a clear indicator of quality management and retention practices.
- **Attract and develop talented staff:** Next follows the proper execution of the task mentioned in the first step. Once a neatly designed job description is ready, it's time now for the managers to attract a pool of talented workforce to conceptualize their dreams. Attracting right talent for the right task is always essential. One cannot be careless in identifying the right person for the job to be performed. If one such mistake is committed the loss and dissatisfaction will be caused mutually. To avoid such a delicate scenario right fitment of staff becomes vital, especially in logistics sector where multiple profiles are required to perform various tasks. Also it is a general perception that logistics jobs involves more of physical work and this may be true to some extent as far as the lower level employees are considered. Utmost care should be envisaged not only in right selection of human resource but also in continuous talent management practices.
- **Train employees in Logistics related areas:** It is like icing and garnishing a delicious recipe and plating it for supper. Training facilitates acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies in a practical environment. The practical environment has to be converted to a positive environment so that it instills confidence in the learners and bring them closer to the target. It is unanimous that a skilled person is more inclined towards the task he is performing and gives tremendous outputs. Lot of earlier research has discussed that productivity has direct connectivity with job satisfaction. Hence grooming an employee towards better performance is directly proportional to the output produced by him which again is in accordance with the job satisfaction derived by the individual. This ultimately is going to ease the manager's task of managing and retaining talent.
- **Provide conducive work environment:** Work environment though not as a single contributor but delivers a sizable proportion as a major stake holder towards job satisfaction. Work environment is a combination of workplace and the co workers in any organization. With special reference to logistics sector where multiple work places and multiple peers are involved, it becomes more challenging to design a positive work environment for employees. Any employee for that matter is highly satisfied with a conducive work environment. If he is free from a nagging colleague and bullying boss, he is more inclined towards constructive work and thus increases productivity. Also ensure that employees have everything in place to perform their jobs faster with perfection. This is an ongoing and challenging task for a manager to keep his subordinates happy and productive.
- **Ensure Supportive Management and developmental opportunities:** Management support plays a key role in the success factor of any individual employee. Many researchers have proved this factor and the famous speaker Ray B Williams also have rightly quoted that 'Happy individuals are more likely than their less happy peers to have fulfilling, positive relationships, superior work performance and robust health'. Making an employee happy and productive is otherwise not so possible without the support of the top management. Also not sufficient is only their support but ultimately empowerment. Employee gets a feeling of togetherness and belongingness once he is empowered with authority.
- **Practice strong two way communication and feedback system:** Everything and anything is incomplete unless it is well communicated and received. So is the feedback system. Today's employees have huge expectation from their management not only in monetary returns but also in terms of their participation in decision making process. Their belongingness and cohesiveness increases to a greater extent if given an opportunity to give feedback and contribute ideas. Moreover employees are internal customers who portray the organization's image (positive or negative) in front of the stakeholders. They move closer to the customers understanding them better and are the right tools to sketch the feelings of the customers. This has to be cleverly borne in mind and accordingly managed by a talented manager which would reduce employee turnover in the long run.

Both quantitative and qualitative application of knowledge and thoughts become paramount. There are many highly educated and articulate managers in the corporate sectors today. The main focus for a manager should be on implementing change, get results and produce respectable growth and profitability and return on investment.

A manager as a change agent should emphasis more on creative insight, sensitivity, vision, versatility, focus and patience. Last but not the least, the "change in attitude" through training is most important. Test of the success of the training can be carried out by finding the change in the attitude to practice or implement the knowledge and skills. For testing the change in attitude, post course evaluations can be carried out, seminars can be held, from time to time in which previous participants' feedback can be obtained. It can be said that if the level of our nation is to be elevated, it is possible only through the human resource development, for which training and retaining of personnel is one of the most effective tools. This tool can be effective only when various factors, are kept in view and practiced by managers honestly and sincerely. A successful manager not only makes the person competent to perform his job efficiently but also prepares him to shoulder higher responsibilities and the process of delegation also becomes easy. A successful HR team facilitates understanding of various problems and viewpoints of others and the overall horizon of the trainee also widens, thus making the person capable of standing on his own feet, making himself a starter needing least supervision and control. Therefore, the organization gets a competent, confident, dedicated and devoted worker, who can contribute tremendously, under mutual trust and confidence for the growth and development of the organization: i.e; ultimately quality enhancement of self and organization.

Tools to be used for managing talent:

Keeping this as the base another important dimension to be taken into consideration is the knowledge of the manager. Not every person is equipped with same level of knowledge and skills and also not every person deserves the same level of guidance. Work has to be delegated as per the knowledge of the individual employee. But before doing this knowledge testing is very vital. There are various tests adapted in different organizations to measure the level of knowledge. A manager in consultation with the trainer can decide on the tool with which he is going to test the knowledge like, TAT or transactional analysis or any appropriate tool he is comfortable with. It is not over with this but the real task starts from here. Another area which is gaining momentum nowadays is talent retention. Having identified the skills and knowledge required to perform a specific job and the relevant match with the particular employee it is now the duty of the manager to obligate and regulate the duties accordingly; otherwise called as "Knowledge management".

Managing knowledge workers:

Knowledge management helps us to share, learn and regenerate the new knowledge. It is the buzzword in the management environment today just because of its advantages in shaping the organizational strategy and helping the firms in gaining competitive advantage. Not only the logistics sector but this new world of business is characterized by high levels of uncertainty and inability to predict the future. It is no longer possible to achieve success by using yesterday's strategies, for today's business. Especially in sectors like logistics, Supply chain and Manufacturing where new players venture into business very frequently making the competition more rigorous, innovation and idea generation should be an iterative process. Knowledge is information enriched

with experiences of people and the application of it to different contexts. A company which does not know how to manage knowledge will find its intellectual capital constantly eroding and will fail to leverage knowledge for business advantage because of its inherent weakness to reinvent what is already invented. An effective knowledge management program should

- Foster innovation by encouraging the free flow of ideas,
- Improve employee performance by streamlining activities,
- Boost revenues by enhancing employee productivity,
- Enhance employee retention rates by recognizing the value of employee's knowledge and rewarding them for it and
- To streamline operations and reduce costs by eliminating redundant or unnecessary processes.

Conclusion:

A managers' task in knowledge management becomes a crucial and mandatory process, since knowledge strategy has more to do with core competencies with business imperatives and organizational culture. Talent management is surely here to stay, providing an opportunity for everyone where collaboration would be the key. And the manager is the only person who is authoritative to hold the key and use it appropriately wherever necessary. It is the ultimate duty of the manager to transform himself as change agent and perform daunting tasks to ensure quality and retention of the knowledge workers pertaining to this booming sector. Developing appropriate strategy to enterprise wide knowledge initiatives needs a clear understanding of the requirements which ultimately paves way for quality enhancement and sustenance in the practices followed.

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