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Green HRM: An organizational strategy of greening people

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Abstract

The corporate world is changing the perspective from a business oriented financial perspective to a competency based economy and green economy. As the world is moving towards green economy, the responsibility of corporate has expanded to go green. The term Green human resources refer to promotion of sustainable employee practices with the help of interface of every employee. Its aim is to increase the awareness among the employees on the issue of sustainability. Green HR deals with the HR activities which are environment friendly and promote the sustainable use of resources in the organizations. This in turn, help business organizations to trim down employee carbon footsteps by the likes of teleconferencing, sharing of car, telecommuting, filing electronically, virtual interviews, recycling, online training, etc. Present study, focus on Green HRM as a strategic initiative by the corporate to promote sustainable business practices. The researchers will also try to come up with the various ideas applied by the organizations for practicing green human resource practices and the impact on organizational outcomes. Hence, at the end the research shows that Green HRM encompasses two major elements: environmental-friendly HR practices and the preservation of the knowledge capital which helps the industry people to become conscious of their business and corporate social responsibilities in a better way.

Keywords: Green HRM, Sustainable Development, Employee Retention, Green Management Practices.

1. Introduction

Organizations are nowadays realizing that, in addition to focusing on financial profits, they must consider all social and environmental impacts for their long term sustainability. Sustainability is “the ability to meet the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” Organizations need to understand their responsibility towards social and environmental risks and opportunities for all business decisions taken by them. This simultaneous approach of delivering positive results for 3P’s- People, Planet and Profit- is referred to as “triple bottom line.” HRM plays the critical role in embedding sustainability strategy of the organization for creating the skills, motivation, values and trust to achieve a triple bottom line. It ensures long term health and sustainability of both the organization’s internal and external stakeholders with policies that reflect equity, development and well- being; and supports environmentally friendly practices. Thus there is a growing need for the integration of environmental sustainability into human resource management (HRM) - Green HRM. In a nutshell creating a green World where consumers and employees force change. In fact the HR function can be renamed as “*People and Society*”.

1.1. Green HRM

Green HRM is the use of HRM policies to support the sustainable use of resources within organizations and, more usually helps the reasons of environment sustainability. The term “Green HRM” is most regularly used to refer to the concern of people management policies and practices towards the broader corporate environmental schedule. Typical green activities contain video recruiting, or the use of online and video interviews, to minimize travel requirements. Green rewards can embrace the use of workplace and lifestyle benefits,

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ranging from carbon credit compensates to free bicycles, to keep people in the green program, as continuing to identify their involvement. Whereas many employees often feel it is not their responsibility to support the environment while they are at work, the new workforces of millennial are highlighting environmental realization as they prefer their employers. There is also a broader opportunity to connect the workforce given that more and more people search for significance and self-actualization in their jobs. Other simple green events embrace minimizing the amount of printed

materials used in performance management, salary evaluations etc. Although there is absolutely an important amount of “green washing” happening in reducing waste, there are many opportunities here too. However, HR is never going away to have a really important impact on a business through the improvement of HR processes singlehanded so the superior opportunity is to include to the green program of the business as a whole. To be a part of green revolution the companies adopt certain strategies and according to the ranking of the companies are as follows:

Table 1: Green Rankings: U.S. Companies, Top 15, 2014

Rank	Company	Industry Sector	Green Score	Environmental Impact	Green Policies	Reputation Survey
1	Dell	Technology	100.00	81.49	100.00	84.33
2	Hewlett-Packard	Technology	99.32	90.60	94.09	95.35
3	International Business Machines	Technology	99.20	98.71	89.52	98.42
4	Johnson & Johnson	Pharmaceuticals	99.02	74.95	98.86	80.34
5	Intel	Technology	97.57	95.74	88.79	92.71
6	Sprint Nextel	Technology	94.98	99.70	94.58	44.72
7	Adobe Systems	Technology	94.15	89.61	88.08	72.57
8	Applied Materials	Technology	92.67	91.98	87.33	60.06
9	Yahoo!	Technology	92.67	68.62	89.07	59.74
10	Nike	Consumer Products	92.66	67.63	77.53	97.39
11	Accenture	Industrial Goods	92.04	89.80	84.63	65.89
12	Advanced Micro Devices	Technology	91.17	99.51	81.46	55.78
13	Cisco Systems	Technology	91.07	69.41	77.56	83.87
14	Johnson Controls	Consumer Products	90.94	90.79	81.73	64.97
15	Baxter International	Health Care	90.59	91.78	81.80	61.02

Source: 2014 Green Rankings, Newsweek (www.newsweek.com).

1.2. Sustainability

Sustainability is defined as chance for businesses to present long lasting solutions that will help in increasing the socio-economic background, in generating jobs and economic wealth well into the future. Green business practices were defined as those that concentrated on environmental stewardship and social responsibility. The term Sustainability, Sustainability development, corporate sustainability and corporate social Responsibility are often interchangeable the term Sustainability can be defined “as the development that meets the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. WCED defined three components for sustainability development person environmental protection, economic growth and social equity. Sustainable development is really mostly identified by referring to this establishment of a balance between Profit, Planet and People. A Sustainable organization can be defined as an undertaking that all together gives economic, social, and environmental benefits-known as the “Triple bottom line”. Sustainability is seen by many as increasingly necessary to making shareholder value, as investors and employees look to organizations to be good corporate people.

2. Literature Review

A key finding of “The Greening HR Survey” indicates that 54% organizations, incorporated environmental management in their business operations, 74% used web to reduce travel, 76% promote reduction of paper use & 60% implement wellness/fitness programs for employees. A report published in DNA paper on March 27, 2010. “Corporations are going the green mile, points out that number of consultancy and corporate taking initiatives on Green HR and Green Movement e.g. Gensol Consultants (P) Ltd., the Hyatt

Regency, id 8 Media Solutions adopted Green lifestyle. Lastly, the giant Pepsico has reduced its water use by 15%. It concludes to say that HR has vital role in pursuit of green business practices, role in saving the planet, recruiting, training and development of a green workforce and enforcement of environment friendly green practices and amendments in environment unfriendly behaviours. Green management refers to the management of corporate interaction with, and impact upon, the environment (Lee and Ball, 2003) [4], and it has gone beyond regulatory compliance and needs to include conceptual tools such as pollution prevention, product stewardship and corporate social responsibility (Hart, 2005) [3]; (Pullman *et al.*, 2009) [9]; (Siegel, 2009) [13] application of new technology could improve the environmental decline by developing, the biotech products and by searching for alternative energy to reduce the use of finite natural resources. Therefore, organizations should put more effort into the research on new technology to minimize the impacts of environmental destruction by creating products that are harmless and less pollution to environment (Liu, 2010) [5]; (Ozen and Kusku, 2008) [8]. Environment friendly HR processes gives better efficiency, minimized costs and manage to develop and nurture an environment of engaged employees helping organization to operate in an environment friendly and sustainable manner. “Green” or “greening” has at least four meanings in the context of managing people at work / human resource management:

2.1. Preservation of the natural environment: all the things in the world which are neither caused nor controlled by human beings and they include land, forests, plants, animals, and other natural phenomena are referred to as the

natural environment. To keep it in its original form and protect it from harm, loss, or negative change.

2.2. Conservation of the natural environment: to be very careful in the way of using it in order to let it last as long as possible, to use it at the minimum level so that future generations will be able to utilize it.

2.3. Avoidance or minimization of environmental pollution: to stop contaminating the water, air, atmosphere, etc. through unpleasant and poisonous substances and wastes. To guard against outcomes that will ultimately endanger the planet/earth where humans and non-humans are living.

2.4. Generation of gardens and looking-like natural places: to create parks and places which have plants, trees, and grasses. Thus, it is possible to argue that an employee who may be manager or non- manager is supposed to perform four roles for the purpose of becoming a green employee.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the concept of Green HRM in more comprehensive manner.
2. To study the practices and strategic implementation of Green HRM in the organizations.

3. To study the benefits of adopting the Green HRM in the organizations.
4. To study the challenges of Green HRM.

3.1. Greening People through Green HR Process

Some common examples of Green HR activities can be use of job portals of companies for recruitment and the use of telephonic, online and video interviews. This can reduce the travel requirements of the candidates, besides causing reduction in paper work. As part of compensation management, companies can introduced Green rewards to employees in the form of nature-friendly workplace and lifestyle benefits, which may include carbon credit offsets, free bicycles and pollution-free vehicles for commuting to and in the workplace in order to engage people in the green agenda. While many employees are not conscious of their responsibility to protect the environment while they are at work, the new workforce of millennial, particularly the knowledge and highly skilled workers, are emphasizing environmental consciousness as they choose their employers. The talented and knowledge workers look for meaning and self-actualization in their jobs in order to stay committed to the companies they are working in and Green HR can help create this commitment by following green values and practices. Other green activities can concern minimum use of paper and printed materials in recruitment, performance appraisals, and learning and development.



Fig1: Process of Green HRM

Source: <http://www.managementguru.net/>

Specifically the functional areas where HR can have a green approach and which can have a bearing on acquisition, development and retention of human capital could be the following:

3.1.1. The On boarding process: With the use of new and advanced technology, organizations need less paper in all aspects of recruitment and selection process. Resumes are submitted online, company websites are used by candidates to search for jobs and resumes are invited online, which helps to substantially reduce waste created from printing and

mailing resumes. This process is not only completely paperless, but also makes one’s career more accessible and easily shared with potential hirers. Organizations can also use online portals for on boarding documentation such as offer letter, credentials and testimonials regarding qualifications and experience of selected candidates, acceptance letter and so on, which can significantly reduce the amount of paper used after an offer has been accepted by a new employee. Information about the company and job descriptions of advertised positions on its website also help companies in the orientation of new employees.

3.1.2. Sourcing and Acquisition of Human Resources: To start with, HR Department can make Green job descriptions for employees. While developing the competency model for talent, an organization can include environmental consciousness as one of the core competencies required of employees. Green job candidates, who comprise a large section of talented and knowledgeable manpower, use Green criteria when applying for jobs, and, therefore, companies having green practices can attract good talent. Preference in selection should be given to candidates who are 'Green aware', which becomes a part of the HR acquisition policy.

3.1.3. Induction: Employee orientation programmes should be designed in such a way as to facilitate the integration of new employees into a culture of green consciousness. Induction programmes should highlight an organization's concern for green issues of employees like their health, safety and green working conditions.

3.1.4. Performance management and appraisals: Performance management systems should be developed to include 'green' targets in the key performance areas (KPA). This can be translated into Green performance standards and Green behavior indicators which should serve as yardsticks in performance appraisal of employees at all levels. Green targets, goals and responsibilities should be established for managers and achievement of managers in accomplishing Green results should included in appraisals. Examples of such contributions can include creating awareness and familiarization of green issues amongst the subordinates, encouraging them to involve themselves in green activities of the company and facilitate environment management learning etc.

3.1.5. Learning and Development: Extensive use should be made of online and web-based training modules and interactive media as training tools for not only for environment management training but for other functional areas as well. Environment- related aspects of safety, energy efficiency, waste management and recycling can become the focal points of green training. Training managers should rely more on online course material and case studies rather than on printed handouts, thus further reducing use of paper. Training, development and learning plans should include programmes, workshops and sessions to enable employees to develop and acquire knowledge in environment management, green skills and attitude.

3.1.6. Compensation and Reward management: Compensation and reward management should recognize contributions in green management. Compensation packages should be customized to reward green skills acquisition and achievements by employees. Monetary- based, non monetary based and recognition- based rewards can be used for green achievements of employees. Monetary-based rewards for contributions in environment management can be allocated in the forms of salary increase, cash incentives and bonuses while non-monetary rewards may include sabbaticals, special leave and gifts to employees and their family members. Recognition-based awards can highlight green contributions of employees through wide publicity and public praise and appreciation of green efforts by CEO or top management executives.

3.1.7. Employee Relations: Promoting 'eco-intrapreneurs' to add value to organization's products and/or services with efficient utilization of existing financial, human and natural resources. Encourage the employees for involvement and participation in the social and ecological initiatives. Green suggestion schemes and problem shooting circles should be developed through employee involvement and participation. Companies will be developing green workplace which is environmentally sensitive, resource efficient and socially responsible.

Green commuting habits like flexi-hours, car-pooling, free or discounted transportation passes, etc. should be introduced. Arrangement of telecommuting or e-work to reduce travel and emission. Promoting green printing by reducing paper and toner usage and Adopting '3R' approach of 'Reduce-Recycle-Reuse' resources. Establishing focus groups as Low carbon-chiefs (including CEO and Board) for green initiatives. Provide 'green whistleblower' help-lines in addition to this the companies implementing employee wellness programs.

3.1.8. Exit: For the Strict Compliance of the green strategies and policies the companies should take certain actions and they are as follows: Environmentally unfriendly behaviour may constitute breach of contract and possible ground for dismissal. Exit interviews to gauge employee's perceptions on organizations green practices.

3.2. Benefits of Green HRM in the Organisations

Green HRM has its prime importance in the achievement of broader objectives such as cost saving, corporate social responsibility, talent acquisition and management and gaining advantage over the competition. It further has the following benefits:

- It increases employee morale.
- It helps in employee retention and reduces labour turnover.
- It provides lucrative opportunities for quality human talent.
- It helps in building company image to attract good human resource.
- Improves brand image of the company in the market.
- It can also be used as a marketing strategy.
- It improves the quality of the overall organization both internal and external.
- It improves relationship of the company with its stakeholders- customers, suppliers, vendors, shareholders, government agencies, employees and the media.
- It reduces the overall cost of the company as costs are largely influenced by the size of the company and steps taken to make it environment friendly.
- It provides competitive advantage to the company in industry as well as the market.
- With increasing global issues, many organizations are becoming vigilant of their activities and their impact over the environment.
- Green management practices are also beneficial to the companies as it helps to save money and reduces ill-effects on the environment, hence avoiding much government interventions.
- It stimulates innovation facilitating growth, improvement in quality and enhancement of procedures and methods.

- It helps in efficient use of resources and manages risks more effectually.
- It develops green learning environment in the organization.
- It leads to refinement of employee behaviour in order to develop eco- friendly habits in their private and professional lives.
- It serves as a helping hand in realization of the self-actualization needs of an employee.
- It helps in generation of employment opportunities.

3.3. Challenges of Green HRM

Apart from the above mentioned advantages or benefits, green HRM faces certain challenges. The challenges of Green HRM are as follows:

- ❖ It is difficult to alter the behaviour of employees in a short span of time.
- ❖ Not every employee is equally motivated to participate in the promotion of Green HRM practices in the organization.
- ❖ Developing the culture of Green HRM in entire organization is a cumbersome and lingering process.
- ❖ It requires high investment at initial stage and comparatively slow rate of return.
- ❖ Sourcing and recruitment of green employees with quality talents is a challenging task.
- ❖ It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of green HR practices in employees' behaviour.
- ❖ HR professionals faced problems of being expected to provide the essential green structures, green processes, green tools, and green thinking to make the best selection and develop the future green leaders of the organization.

4. Green HRM in India- ITC and ONGC Initiatives

To elucidate the concept of Green HRM, the initiatives taken by one of the largest private and public sector companies-ITC and ONGC respectively- has been considered.

4.1 Green Initiatives by ITC

- Only company to be carbon, water and solid waste recycling positive in the world.
- More than 40% of the energy consumption is from renewable sources.
- ITC Hotels- Greenest luxury hotel chain in the world.
- Creating over 5 million sustainable livelihoods.
- An exemplar in Triple Bottom Line.
- Watershed Development initiative brings precious water to more than 116,000 hectares of moisture stressed areas.
- Social and Farm forestry initiative has greened over 142,000 hectares.
- Ethos of ITC Gardenia-‘Forward to Green, Back to Nature’.
- ‘WOW’- Wealth out of Waste- encourages recycling in schools, offices and homes.
- ITC PSPD (Paperboards and Speciality Papers Division) inaugurates a new 60,000 sq. /ft. QSC (Quick Service Centre) in Talegon which reduces lead time of 2-3 days with additional turnover, thereby doubling the capacity to supply.
- Launched “Paperkraft Premium Business Paper,” a multipurpose green paper which is created with the “Ozone Treated Elemental Chlorine Free Technology”

for the first time in India. This has helped to drastically reduce the volume and toxicity of effluent discharged, as well reduce the consumption of certain chemicals in the process.

- First mill to adopt ECF (Elemental Chlorine Free) technology for the bleaching process, ahead of legislation.
- The use of Super batch digesters has helped to reduce specific power consumption from 35kWh/BD MT to 25kWh/ BD MT, while reducing MP steam consumed from 1480 kg/ BD MT of pulp to less than half of this.

4.2. Green Initiatives by ONGC

- Receives ‘Greenies Eco Award’ for green initiatives and practicing best policies for environment protection amongst PSUs.
- A comprehensive GHG accounting exercise to assess overall carbon footprint of the organization and help identify mitigation opportunities.
- National Gas STAR Program to promote development, implementation and reporting of profitable, voluntary methane emission mitigation activities.
- Sustainable water management strategy aiming at reduction in specific fresh water consumption and reporting on water footprint based on internationally recognized standards and practices.
- Global Reporting Initiatives (GRI-G3) to assure sustainability reports to improve overall engagement with stakeholders, be accountable for triple bottom line performance and help improve the same.
- ONGC Energy Centre (OEC) conducts research on marketable solutions in renewable and alternate energy sources beyond hydrocarbons.
- Development of Green Building with due compliance with GRIHA compliance which ensures to save 50-60% energy and 30% water; harvest 100% rainwater and discharge zero sewage.
- Developed Safety Management system based on OHSAS 18001 to identify all hazards and associated risks with emergency preparedness campaign like ‘HUMSAFE’.

5. Conclusion

Green HR efforts have mainly focused on increasing competency within processes, reducing and eliminating environmental desecrate, and restoring HR products, tools, and procedures consequential in greater efficiency and lower costs. The results included: electronic filing, teleconferencing and virtual interviews, ride sharing, job sharing, recycling, telecommuting, online training, and developing more energy efficient office spaces. Society becoming more environmentally conscious, businesses are starting to include green proposals into their everyday work environment. Environmentally friendly HR proposals resulting in greater efficiencies, lower costs and create an atmosphere of better employee engagement, which in turn helps organizations to operate in an environmentally sustainable fashion. The rising concept of green human resource management carries a great significance for both organizations and employees with the help of this research paper, researcher has attempted to focus on the responsiveness and implementation of green HR practices in organizations. Organizations today in organization are well versed about the green HR concept that has been put advance

to help them to keep the environment green but still few organizations are not able to put it in to practices in different functional areas of Human resource Management. This study has also helped the researcher to identify the areas like training and development, performance appraisal system and some regular activities where non implementation of this concept of Green HRM takes place.

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