

Talent Management Approach: Attraction and Retention

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Abstract

Talent in the workforce refers to people who have high potential, essential knowledge, skill, and who can successfully lead transformation and change within the organization. As talent is crucial in determining the success of an organization, much emphasis is placed on its management. Talent Management encompasses the application of best practices in the identification, cultivation, recruitment, and retention of a qualified, effective workforce. This case study tests the presence of any talent management approach and its contribution to attracting and retaining talented employees. As far as Loadstar is concerned, when Complying with the definition used in this study, Loadstar has its own talent management practices. Incidentally, there is no specific officer as a talent manager to manage the aforesaid talent. However, the company practices all the principles of talent management as a whole. They have only to conceptualize it into the framework of the company methodology and initiate it as a separate function.

Introduction

In the challenging business world today, business leaders want increased revenue and productivity, driving real value to the shareholders; whilst employees are expected to be accountable, focus on customers, improve their skills, knowledge, and attitudes and be able to adapt to change. With this notion, Talent Management according to Sullivan (2004) is *the integrated process of ensuring that an organization has a continuous supply of highly productive individuals in the right job, at the right time*. According to him Talent management is a continuous process that plans talent needs, builds an image to attract the very best, ensures that new employees are immediately productive, helps to retain the very best, and facilitates the continuous movement of talent to where it can have the most impact within the organization, Sullivan (2004). Cammon J.A & McGee. R (2007) explains Talent Management as *the process by which an organization identifies, manages and develops its people currently and for the future*. The basic idea behind Talent Management is the assumption of the potential in each individual, and some approach should be sought to get it unleashed. Atkins. R, McCutcheon. M & Penna. G (2004) describes that Talent Management comprises three main clusters. They are, firstly, acquiring new talent: attracting, sourcing and selecting the right talent, secondly, leveraging existing talent: Maximizing the value of high potentials, performance management, and realign capability and thirdly retaining talent: employment value proposition surveys to identify what people value and secure their retention by providing systematic and targeted development opportunities for them.

Research Methodology

The study is based on the Case Study Method. Loadstar Pvt. Ltd was utilized as a case for analyzing the talent management practices. Interviews and discussions (especially with the HR staff including the Senior HR manager) and observations were done. Corporate documents were also investigated to gain further insight. Even though there are many definitions for the talent management approach, this study used the definition of **Sullivan. J**, (2004) as it illustrates the talent management process explicitly.

The remainder of this paper is structured based on the company Introduction and the key elements in the definition used for the study.

Case study –Loadstar Pvt. Ltd

Loadstar Pvt. Ltd started in 1984 with 5 employees. It is a joint venture between the Jinasena Group of Companies and Solideal m.v., Belgium. Its factories are situated in 5 locations – Ekala, (2 factories) Kotugoda, Kuruwita, and Midigama. The workforce of the company is approximately 8200. The researcher visited the factory in Midigama, which is the largest, in terms of production volume, employee strength (2700 Employees), and world-class technology for producing solid tires for industrial and agricultural vehicles. The company's contribution to the solid tire market in the world is 25% and Loadstar has achieved the number one position in the world's solid tire production. According to Zoya. A Perera. O, Abewickrama.

L, (2008), the strengths, abilities, and the strong information and communication network of the two companies (Loadstar and Solideal) facilitate the functioning of all the processes efficiently and competently. The whole production of the Loadstar is exported. According to the year 2007 statistics, they have exported 47% to Europe, 35% to North America, 9% to Asia 6% to Central and South Asia, and 3% to Middle East countries.

Planning the talent needs

The loadstar is highly dependent on the customer requirements. It has understood that there are no two similar customers who have the same needs. The organizations like Toyota, Caterpillar, JCB, etc, are the trend-setters in the industrial equipment market in the world. The company's direct buyers are those organizations, implying that the company has to face a highly sophisticated and dynamic environment. To maintain the product quality and world-class customers' requirements, the company has to regularly update the technical know-how and competencies, in other words, talents. For that, the company has to plan the talent needs which are intended to be acquired. As far as Loadstar's concern, the talent needs are originally made by the world-leading OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers). The company plans its workforce and talent needs on annual basis. The Midigama Factory has an allocation from its annual budget for talent development, an overwhelming 40 million for the year 2008. Every year the company plans to get world-class talent to face the competition, survive in the market and meet customer requirements. Among other things, the talents to improve quality and to reduce production costs are essential. For example, the company has planned to introduce the concept of Toyota Production System (TPS) as Loadstar Production System (LPS) within 3 years. The company management has identified what talents the employees have to acquire for this. As a result, the company has obtained consultancy from world-renowned consultancy firms like McKinsey. First, the company has made a project team called 'NAVODAYA' including members representing all layers in the hierarchy, and then has given them an opportunity to work with the consultants of McKinsey. This team is responsible to get the maximum expertise not only from different knowledge bases but also from the consultants of McKinsey, to implement the system in a particular section, then test and ultimately apply it to the whole organization. Likewise, the same procedure has been planned and pursued to gain the talents in the 'Working Conditions Improvement Project', Machine Improvement Project and Energy Saving Project, etc.

It is noteworthy that employees on their own have introduced new methods for improving quality and reducing cost, which require precise coordination of these two concepts which are at two different ends. According to the HR Manager, not planning of talent needs but experience on this is required. However, it can be concluded that there is some general planning of the talent needs even though there is no talent needs planning for each job specifically.

Image building to attract the very best

This is very important to attract talented employees. The following are the facts for building images to attract the very best.

1. This year the company was ranked as the largest exporter in Sri Lanka.
2. Jinasena Company's reputation. The Jinasena group consists of 15 companies including engineering-based and interdependent, two luxury class hotels, and a management service company and the group has approximately 8200 employees including loadstar employees.
3. Jinasena as a pioneering engineering organization, Loadstar has made linkages with the Engineering Faculties of Universities of Ruhuna, Moratuwa, and Peradeniya.
4. The company gets down consultancies from world-class consultancy firms like McKinsey.
5. Always adapting to world-class practices like TPS, 5S, KAIZEN, JIDOKA, etc,
6. Public awareness programs such as opening stalls at national exhibitions like 'Deyata Kirula'.

Ensuring that new hires are immediately productive

Here, the induction and training, and development are the practices to ensure that the new hires are immediately productive. Each of them is described below:

Induction program: After being selected, the employees have to complete a 12 months training period. The first three days are residential training where they are basically given the following things.

1. A full awareness about the company, its history, its objectives, and its expectations

2. Enabling them to have a deeper and better understanding of themselves as individuals highlighting their strengths weaknesses and aspirations
3. Making them feel comfortable in an industrial environment
4. Awareness of Safety procedures, ISO processes, hygiene, health and rules, and regulations.

After this, they are assigned a one-month on-the-job training under the direct supervision of the Loadstar training center (LTC). Thereafter the special 15-day residential training program is conducted. There, Lean concepts and personal development techniques are taught.

During this period, the CEO speaks personally to the groups of trainees. The trainees are free to ask him any questions directly and seek his advice.

Training. The next stage of training lasts for 6 months. During this period, trainees are free to ask both work-related and personal questions from trainers and superior officers. A further six months (Total One year) of training is given and during this period they have conveyed the idea that the company's progress is directly linked to their progress.

During this one years' training period, at special points such as, at the end of 15 days, 6 months, and 12 months, an evaluation is done. There, the trainees' strengths, weaknesses, and special talents are identified. This is used to monitor the trainees to ensure that adequate development is required to meet the on-the-job performance and plan for future talent needs.

Helping to retain the very best

As remarked by the Senior HR manager, Loadstar's main concern is to respect Human beings. The following features help the employees to stay in the company.

1. A flat structure and the absence of hierarchies: it is evident that the gap between the management and the employees has been minimized. The workers have been empowered to make decisions and participate in the management meetings etc.
2. A complete 'open-door policy, in other words, the transparency or openness and accessibility to the management, either in groups or as individuals, to discuss work-related or personal problems. For example, the CEO's telephone numbers have been made available to all employees and they are permitted to call him directly at any time.
3. The company's one of main concerns is to uplift the working conditions. Priority is given in this regard at the annual budget meetings.
4. Providing more opportunities for personal growth, in other words, uplifting them to become leaders and managers. Employees are offered outside training in foreign institutes, the institute of rubber technology, engineering institute, etc. There is evidence that the engineers and the employees from shop floor level are following the same courses. In addition to that, organizing foreign trips to give exposure to world-class practices and work with world-leading consultancies like McKinsey.
5. Giving special benefits such as 24-hour insurance coverage, free meals, traveling allowances, welfare shop selling goods at cost, special loan schemes, etc.

Facilitating the continuous movement of talent within the organization

The learning culture in the organization emphasizes multi-skilling, gaining multi-disciplinary knowledge and qualifications of every employee.

The Loadstar's training is a means of not only improving knowledge and skills of a technical nature but also of team building, developing trust, relationships, and personal skills such as leadership and counseling. The story behind this is that the employees have both technical and soft skills. Therefore, employee mobility to any operation area in the factory is apparent. There are instances where employees were deployed from the production department to the HR department.

It is quite remarkable that the factory is in production during weekends and holidays without staff members. This implies that the employees have developed the capacity to run the factory, make their own internal arrangements to work with different workstations, and solve problems that could arise.

it also remarkable that In each module at the factory, there is one or two HR coordinators or leaders who are also able to participate in the production process due to the comprehensive training given.

Conclusion

According to Ashbridge Consulting's latest research on Talent Management, there is no one correct way of conducting talent management. Every organization needs to find and develop its own method which is aligned to its specific business strategy and requirements. As far as Loadstar is concerned, this statement is true. Complying with the definition used in this study, Loadstar has its own talent management practices. Incidentally, there is no specific officer as talent manager someone like that to manage the aforesaid talent. However, the company practices all the principles of talent management as a whole. They have only to conceptualize it into the framework of the company methodology and initiate it as a separate function.

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