

It's not business as usual for HR

Chetan Tolia

yourviews@shine.com

Over the last decade or so, the term VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) has found an increasingly prominent place in business articles. Global markets and economies of most countries have witnessed previously unseen turbulence. India too is experiencing new and varied sources and forms of business challenges. This is certainly true in the power sector of India. The current economic scenario is characterised by a higher level of unpredictability. The new norm is that it is 'not business as usual.' Yet, it is in this changing environment that opportunities exist. Converting these opportunities to deliver results on a sustainable basis is the leadership agenda. Progressive organisations are experiencing that people are indeed the most critical resource, more so in the current economic scenario. These complexities need a new set of competencies in the future workforce, a willingness to take on challenges with perseverance, and aiming to find innovative solutions.

The functional domain responsible for managing people results is often called 'HR' in organisations. In a 'business as usual' scenario, the HR function has played a supporting role to the business. This includes supporting the business requirements by following business



■ HR managers of today are responding to the challenge of aligning people skills to business strategy.

SHUTTERSTOCK

strategy and establishing a HR strategy that essentially revolves around business growth, cost competitiveness, shareholder satisfaction, return from human resource deployed, etc. In a scenario that is 'not business as usual', it is people results that can make a difference between surfing the waves of change, or being swallowed by them. In such times HR needs to adapt. It should play a business leadership role, in order to instil cultural habits that build and sustain organisational confidence. The circumstances demand transition of HR from a support function to a business function by taking ownership of the people results. The HR function needs to adapt, by evolving from playing a supporting role, to a business leadership role, enabling people to deliver the business results in spite of,

and probably making use of, the turbulence in the business environment. This adaptation is a contrarian one. It requires leadership commitment and tenacity amongst HR and business leaders alike.

At Tata Power, the HR team has re-aligned itself around the HR vision 'enable people to achieve their full potential and unleash it in a sustainable way.' The HR strategy has a clear linkage to business strategy and the implications thereof. With this clear roadmap, the HR team addresses the strategic as well as execution aspects in a structured way, manifested by an impeccable focus on delivery.

This is done by having a balanced approach towards the spheres of HR delivery and long-term planning, for sustainable and prudent human resource utilisation, as per the changing

needs of the organisation. The approach and deployment of HR strategy for any organisation becomes much more critical with changing demographic factors of the workforce. Align three key dimensions for a win-win situation – nourishing the aspirations of the employees, serving the requirement of the organisation, and optimally utilising resources at hand – is the biggest challenge today. Tata Power has been creating opportunities for multiple generations of professionals to work, on cutting edge of technology in its sector, and lead the developments while being part of the organisation.

Instituting policies and programmes like fast track career development programmes for promising young employees and having reward systems or medical benefits aligned to the aspirations of all sections of the workforce are examples of this approach. Managing scale and complexities while retaining the core proposition 'care and career' for the individual has been the agenda for HR in its journey.

The change in the current scenario in the country where more focus is on to leverage the young workforce that we have is both an opportunity and challenge. Skill development for creating more employable workforce in particular is a business imperative.

*The author is chief HR officer,
Tata Power*