

# HR Leadership Dialogue



The Global Head of Human Resources at Bilcare Research, Anu Mhaisalkar, answers some key questions regarding the role of an HR leader operating in an international business in the current economic crisis.

Anu Mhaisalkar is the Global Head, Human Resources at Bilcare Research. In this capacity, Anu is responsible for aligning core HR processes with the values and goals of the organization. He implements performance indicators and training objectives in the boardroom, and provides HR leadership in organizational development, performance management, total rewards, job evaluation, training and development and labor relations.

Anu holds a Bachelor's degree in Commerce and a Master's degree in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He has taught Employee Relations and Human Resources Administration at McMaster University, Ontario, Canada.

## The Conversation

With the global economic meltdown and companies facing survival challenges, how important is Human Resource as a core function in today's business environment?

Human Resource as a core business function is more relevant at a time when businesses are dealing with an economic crisis resulting in lesser financial resources. HR plays a critical role in ensuring business continuity, talent realization and ensuring organizations and employees undergo less pain during such periods.

In the changed global business landscape, HR has taken on strategic importance in managing employee or human capital cost. Innovating in business / HR processes and improving employee engagement, output and productivity are key functions for the HR team in the current environment.

Do you think that the failure of corporations worldwide can be directly attributed to Human Resource - is it a cumulative leadership failure? Has the past decade failed to prepare the leaders of tomorrow?

The current financial meltdown has not been because of the failure of one function, such as HR, but of the system as a whole.

Leadership comes from the top; but HR has an important role to play. HR brings the ethical point of view to businesses. HR is a key mentor to the CEO and top leadership of the company, ensuring that business decisions are fair along with being business focused.

How do you think Human Resource and People Leadership play a key role in building competitive edge for corporations across the world, especially, boardroom leadership?

Being competitive is a must in today's business culture. A strong performance driven organization builds competitiveness. An effective performance management system is required to implement the above.

The ability to measure performance is key to success. HR should set up scientifically modelled metrics which give the CEO and top leadership a crystal clear view of employee performance and top performers.

Tell us something about the challenges faced by the healthcare sector. A shrinking drug discovery pipeline, failure of blockbuster drugs, rising healthcare costs etc. have made the healthcare industry look inwards - how are Human Resources and People Leadership playing an important role to create a better and safer world?

As healthcare industries face cost pressures with budgets under scrutiny globally, the need for strong HR leadership is critical. This is a time to review the performance management systems and positions within companies. The three key questions to ask while reviewing roles are:

- A. Are the roles required?
- B. Are the roles at the right level within the organization?
- C. Is the right person in the right role, i.e. is there a good match?

Reviewing positions along with these parameters leads to a performance driven organization. In today's business scenario, more emphasis is put into looking inwardly into the company, to reward good performance and groom future business leaders. Also, HR has to find solutions to effectively manage poor performers.

One of the key challenges in recent times has been organizational value system, both in India and abroad. How do leaders practice and implement their professional value system? How do they ensure alignment and / or influence to the organizational value system?

A lot of organizations have value systems in place - but they do not follow this system. Organizations limit themselves to "talking the talk" and find difficulty in "walking the talk".

To give an example, at Bilcare Research, the first exercise we did was to arrive at the value system with the CEO and senior leadership team. This value system has to be embedded in the culture and DNA of the organization, and especially, the leadership team.

**Our values are:**

- Innovation
- Speed
- Customer Focus

These values are embedded in our Performance Management System, Job evaluation system and Recruitment system. The objective is to create an organizational culture around these core values.

How important is communication in creating a transparent and robust employee focused organization?

Communication is extremely important in building a transparent organization. Effective communication is also very important in engaging employees.

Effective communication helps in attracting good talent as they are more comfortable working in a transparent organization. Current employees also like the feel of fair play and transparency.

With new age media such as intranets, company blogs, websites etc. communication has become integral to the success of an organization. Simplicity and honesty in communication is the key to its success.

Another challenge which global corporations face is in integrating the growing multicultural workforce within international operations. How does corporate or group HR ensure that value, systems and company ethos are the same across each and every employee working out of any location globally?

Culture of an organization is created by its core value systems. At Bilcare Research, our aim is to bind us all together by our core values. All our Business / HR Processes will be aligned to our Core Values. Once that is established, it does not matter which part of the world you are in.

One of the key challenges facing the industry in general and healthcare sector in particular is talent. How should organizations attract, retain and manage the best talent to build a strong human capital leadership in the company?

Attracting talent is important in any business sector. Good talent likes clear cut business plans that are plain and simple. Talent should know what is expected out of them, and should be provided with tools to achieve what is expected out of them. There should be an effective Performance Management System and a fair reward system. Rewarding good performance is critical. Identifying top talent and engaging them constructively is equally important.

With the global recession, employee benefits, salaries and ROI have become cost cutting measures. This is a big challenge grappling the corporate sector. What can you suggest to employees so that they can ensure that they add significant value to the company they work for and ensure long term profitability of employment?

HR has to manage employee expectations in times like these. HR has to explain the change in business environment. Effective communication at times like this becomes critical.

What is your suggestion to employees on the skill building arena - What should they regularly do to keep themselves professionally updated and create individual competitive skills to enhance their job contribution to the company?

Focusing on specialized skills is more important than generic skills. Each and every employee should build a "core skill" or "area of specialization".

In today's changed world, specialization is key for employees to survive and prosper. General management skills add value but cannot guarantee success in a company.

The basic skills and their core competencies should be mastered first before graduating to generic skills like leadership.

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