

THE VITALITY OF COMMUNICATION IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT- A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

In today's global corporation, corporate communication serves as the conscience of the corporation and is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of human resources management in modern organizations. Previously called 'corporate communication' or 'public affairs', corporate communication has assumed great significance in the 21st century as a result of corporate scandals or crises at modern companies. Public and private undertakings have established corporate communication departments, which usually oversee communication strategy, media relations, crisis communications, internal communications, reputation management, corporate responsibility, investor relations, government affairs and sometimes marketing communication in the present age of globalization, liberalization and privatization. The present study evaluates the corporate communication strategies for human resources management in leading public and private undertakings of Karnataka such as Bharat Earth Movers Limited, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, Mphasis and Biocon. The role of corporate communication in human resource management is primarily examined in this paper.

Human Resources Management

Today, the term 'human resource management' has gained more importance in the corporate world. Earlier, it was known as 'personnel management'. It primarily deals with the art of managing people in organizations. Scholars have commonly defined it as a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued assets – the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives. HRM primarily consists of the norms, guidelines

and processes used to put HR strategic plans and policies into effect. Practically, it is not possible to bring the personnel under a common umbrella, make them work together and put forth united efforts

for the development of the organization in the absence of well developed HRM system. It includes several components such as – selection of personnel, performance appraisal, recognition of the capacity of personnel and enhancement of the work efficiency of the personnel. Management experts have designed various models which enable the HRM system function efficiently and capitalize on new opportunities. Strandberg (2009:20) defines human resource management thus: "Human resource management is the organizational function that deals with recruiting, managing, developing and motivating people, including providing functional and specialized support and systems for employee engagement and managing systems to foster regulatory compliance with employment and human rights standards".

Corporate Communication Strategies for HRM

The HR department is mainly responsible for the promotion of communication activities in modern corporate houses. Recent studies have identified the role of HR department in the planning and management of internal communication which is the life blood of organizational management. The nature of corporate communication has changed drastically over a period of time. The HR managers are required to create competitive differentiation, develop new markets and products, streamline the integration of efforts, make the merger work and redefine the roles of the corporate center and the divisions under the changed circumstances. Corporate houses have

also realized the importance of communication which facilitates effective functioning of modern organizations in general and activates the process of human resources management in particular. "The management should redefine the corporate communication from HR point of view and enhance the status of corporate communication to standardize the overall effectiveness of HRM", observes Quarke (2002:17).

Cappel (2002:08) found a significant gap between expected and actual communication skills in respect of the personnel of corporate houses. Wise (2005:22) noted that public relations professionals could be actively involved in the communication skill development of the workforce. Russ (2009:18) and Haras and Katz (2010:13) suggested that corporate communicators should better understand and teach the communication skills business considers important. The absence of interaction between the academia and practitioners is also responsible for the malnourished communication status of HR personnel. Corporate leaders are sensitized by the scholars about the need for improvement of corporate communication which plays a crucial role in enlisting the active participation of the various stakeholders of business promotion in the process of organizational management.

The personnel of the organization should also receive adequate training and orientation about organizational harmony, unity and coordination which are essential for the successful conduction of business in modern times. Communication skill of the personnel should be developed systematically for the managerial workplace. Scholars have emphasized the need for the development of communication skill of managers, supervisors and workers who are required to function as efficient builders of the organization and promoters of corporate reputation in the present times. Studies have suggested a more comprehensive approach in corporate communication for human resources management. Bhaskar et.al. (2010:06) observe: "The phenomenon of change is all pervasive in organizations. There are a host of HR issues which affect the success of modern corporate houses. The absence of communication skill and competence has affected the HR integration and status in India. Corporate communication should be used as a strategic tool to address HR issues and organizational leaders are required to play a responsible role in facilitating meaningful linkage between HR and corporate communication

Review of Literature

Few researchers in India and abroad have evaluated the role of corporate communication in human resources management. Prominent among them include: Abelow and Hilpert (1986:01), Van Riel (1997:21), Gill (1998:12), Balmer and Gray (2000:04), Yamauchi (2001:23), Quarke (2002:17), Center and Jackson (2002:09), Cappel (2002:08), Argenti and Forman (2002:03), Yi-Luo (2003:24), Wise (2005:22), Prakash (2007:16), Davis (2007:10), Sapna (2008:19), Elena (2008:11), Zulhamri (2009:25), Strandberg (2009:20), Russ (2009:18), Banerjee (2009:05), Haras and Katz (2010:13), Bhaskar et.al. (2010:06), Ilan et.al. (2010:14) Ananthakrishnan (2011:02), Nielsen (2012:15) and Can (2012:07). The past studies did not indicate the factors contributing to the HRM efficiency vis-à-vis corporate communication with special reference to corporate houses in Karnataka state.

Significance of the Study

Human resources management assumes great significance in the present age of globalization of economy. The ultimate goal of human resources management is to boost the status of organizational development through proper corporate communication and mobilization of human resources and integration of activities. The crucial importance of corporate communication becomes highly relevant since human resources should be harnessed for the purpose of organizational development. It is necessary to motivate the corporate leaders to take appropriate measures for the development of communication skill, individual talent and capacity of the workforce. The corporate communication strategies should be designed and implemented to facilitate the optimum utilization of human resources to achieve the goals of modern corporate houses. A synthesis of the available literature suggest that the relationship between corporate communication and human resources management has not been properly understood by the corporate leaders, HR executives and corporate communicators. A perusal of relevant literature also reveals that the past researchers have not investigated the system, process and practices of corporate communication in public and private undertakings of Karnataka State with special reference to human resources management in leading public and private undertakings of Karnataka State.

Statement of the Problem

Human Resource Management has become an important branch of organizational development. Corporate communication is

practiced with a view to enhance the status of HRM across the globe. Modern corporate houses also primarily rely upon the corporate communication in order to enter into the good books of constituent publics who matter most from the point of view of organizational development. Corporate communication basically involves the art of reaching out to the people. The personnel are also required to assume multi-faceted roles including brand ambassadors and spokespersons of modern corporate houses. Today, the business conditions, both at the micro and macro levels are passing through many testing and trying times. In the recent years, the global business environment is under metamorphosis. The business organizations are shifting their priorities from focusing within the national boundaries to the borderless international communications and transactions. Hence, the need to understand people, their emotions, attitudes and behavioral patterns is becoming increasingly important for the modern organizations. Corporate communication strategies are absolutely essential for the effective and fruitful management of human resources in modern times. The inherent relationship between corporate communication and HRM is not systematically examined by the scholars with reference to Karnataka.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the attitude of the management towards corporate communication in leading public and private undertakings.
- To study the relationship between corporate communication and human resources management.
- To assess the system of corporate communication in leading public and private undertakings.
- To analyze the practice of human resource management in leading public and private undertakings.
- To examine the role of corporate communication in human resources management and
- To suggest appropriate strategies of corporate communication for better human resources management in leading public and private undertakings.

Research Methodology

The present study approached the problem through a systematic survey method. The system, process and practices of corporate communication in select public and private undertakings were evaluated through a scientific empirical investigation with special reference to

human resources management. A structured and pre-tested interview schedule was administered to the representative sample consisting of corporate leaders, HR executives and corporate communicators. Appropriate statistical tests were conducted to analyze the primary data, draw inferences, test the hypotheses and make recommendations.

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample

Respondent groups	Male	Female	Total
1. Corporate Leaders	22	08	30
2. HR Executives	26	12	38
3. Corporate Communicators	41	26	67
Total	89	46	135

Statistical Analysis

The study being descriptive in nature, no parametric statistical tests were involved to draw inferences based on the sample results. The interpretation of the chi-square and contingency table analysis justify the assumption of independence which was primarily carried out at the 0.05% level of significance. The major statistical tests carried out in the present study include – frequencies and percentages, chi-square test and contingency table analysis.

Limitations of the Study

The usual limitations of the survey method and case study, namely time, human inadequacies, resource constraints, recollection and communication were experienced by the researcher. It was practically not possible to contact all the internal and external stakeholders due to lack of time and resources. An exhaustive and intensive survey as well as case study was not possible because of large numbers and above practical constraints. Stratified sampling was followed in selecting the respondents since this method of selection also gives significantly correct results with much less time, manpower, money and materials. Though much care was taken to collect the data, the memory bias on the part of the respondents cannot be completely ruled out.

Findings of the Study

Corporate Communication

- A vast majority of the respondents (75.83%) have stated that corporate communication was an intrinsic part of organizational management in the select public and private undertakings.
- A vast majority of the respondents (79.17%) have stated that select corporate houses understood the

relationship between corporate communication and HRM.

- A majority of the respondents (64.17%) have stated that select corporate houses provided opportunities for the improvement of communication skills of the personnel.
- A vast majority of the respondents (74.17%) have stated that select corporate houses recognized the personnel as key stakeholders of organization.
- A majority of the respondents (70.0%) have stated that the select corporate houses maintained cordial relations with the personnel consistently.
- A majority of the respondents (62.50%) have stated that the select corporate houses created better working conditions.
- The respondents have also identified the major tools of HRM such as group meetings (56.67%), personal contacts (59.17%), orientation programme (54.17%), letters (55.0%), teleconferencing (54.17%), training programmes (54.17%), trade union leaders meeting (69.33%), video cassette display (60.83%), circulars (54.17%), backgrounders (65.0%), guidance and counseling (62.50%), grievance committee (52.50%), employees' conference (60.0%), house journals (79.17%), video conferencing (60.0%), film and slide presentation (60.0%), displays and exhibits (66.67%) and suggestion system (60.0%).

Practice of HRM

- A vast majority of the respondents (76.67%) have stated that the select corporate houses had evolved suitable HRM policy.
- A vast majority of the respondents (83.33%) have stated that the select corporate houses treated personnel as significant stakeholders.
- A majority of the respondents (63.33%) have stated that the select corporate houses periodically organized orientation programmes for the personnel on corporate communication.
- A vast majority of the respondents (80.0%) have stated that the select corporate houses provided regularly information about the organizational policies, priorities and responsibilities.
- A majority of the respondents (70.0%) have stated that the select corporate

houses organized frequent interactive sessions with the personnel.

- A majority of the respondents (70.0%) have stated that the select corporate houses had developed HRM communication network.
- A majority of the respondents (66.67%) have stated that the select corporate houses had developed an open and transparent corporate communication system.
- A vast majority of the respondents (80.0%) have stated that the select corporate houses had conducted opinion survey to understand the relationship between HRM and organizational development.
- A vast majority of the respondents (76.67%) have stated that the select corporate houses provided need-based services to the personnel.
- A vast majority of the respondents (90.0%) have stated that the select corporate houses considered HRM as a priority sector of organizational management.

Testing of Hypotheses

H1. The public and private corporate houses have not developed healthy HRM initiatives and practices.

The data reveal that the public and private corporate houses have developed healthy HRM initiatives and practices. Hence, the above hypothesis stands disproved according to the data analysis.

H2. The public and private corporate houses have not developed meaningful corporate communication initiatives and practices.

The data reveal that the public and private corporate houses have developed healthy corporate communication initiatives and practices. Hence, the above hypothesis stands disproved according to the data analysis.

Implications of the Study

The implications of the findings of the study with special reference to the role of corporate communication strategies in human resources management in leading corporate houses of Karnataka State in general terms are given below.

- The investigation reveals that it is imperative to formulate specific policies on HRM and corporate communication policy in the new millennium since modern corporate houses are required

to race against the time and rise to the occasion in reaching out to various stakeholders, motivating them to accept the policies and products and enlisting their active participation in the processes of organizational development.

- The policy makers of public and private corporate houses are also required to expand and develop corporate communication system in terms of visionaries and missionaries in the field concerned. These houses should also equip the corporate communication divisions with the state of the art technologies, resources and services in order to carve a niche for themselves in the field of corporate governance.
- The corporate communication department should also have adequate specialists in HRM and corporate communication. The corporate communicators should be given timely and adequate orientation on the art and craft of corporate communication in the changing economic environment and communication environment.
- The corporate houses should also actively involve veterans, specialists and other seasoned corporate leaders and communicators in the process of strategy making. Corporate communication and HRM strategies should be made on the basis of adequate systematic evaluation and introspection.
- The corporate communication activities need management support and active involvement of various branches of organizational management. The study emphasizes that inter-departmental coordination would enrich the status of corporate communication and HRM in select corporate houses.
- The modern corporate houses should also formulate a set of sound ethical considerations and practices in order to prevent unlawful and unhealthy corporate communication practices. The personnel should also be encouraged to follow ethically sound and appropriate means and mechanisms in order to maintain positive identity for the modern corporate houses.

- The corporate communication policy, planning, programming, activities, effects and other aspects should be subjected to regular scientific evaluation by the experts in research and development. The present evaluation reveals that adequate scientific surveys are not conducted by the corporate houses in order to assess the effectiveness of corporate communication from HRM point of view. Hence, scientific evaluation should become an important component of corporate communication in modern corporate houses.

Conclusion

HR is making notable contributions in strategic areas, including human resources mobilization, involvement of personnel in organizational activities, management of talent, development of capacity of workforce and delivery of goods and services for the attainment of organizational success and prosperity in the age of competitive business management. The corporate leaders are required to develop the communication competence of the workforce and map out HR organization strategy to the corporate management strategy. The corporate leaders and HR executives need to get better at understanding the challenges and business needs of supervisors and front-line managers on a first-hand basis. Business leaders should realize that the goal of organizational development cannot be achieved if the corporate communication and HR are not embedded in the process of corporate governance. The spectrum of HR needs to be broadened in modern times to ensure the integrated and sustainable development of modern corporate houses.

Modern corporate houses like BEML, BHEL, Mphasis and Biocon have achieved commendable success in the business management, HRM and corporate communication management. These corporate houses have certainly realized the significance of the role of corporate communication in HRM in the new millennium. The present study reveals certain shortcomings in respect of corporate communication practices in relation to HRM. These organizations are required to enhance the status of HRM and corporate communication on the basis of systematic evaluation and scientific design. These corporate houses are required to understand their strengths and limitations in order to enhance the status and prospects of organizational development. A surge in corporate communication interest is typically attributed to the strong relationship corporate

communication plays in the mainstream of business management and human resources management. The future agenda for corporate leaders of these corporate houses must deal with the process of adoption of creative and systematic corporate communication strategies for better human resources management in modern times.

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