
**ATTRITION AND RETENTION IN THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
- A REMEDY**

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Abstract

Attrition, in Human Resource terminology, refers to the phenomenon of the employees leaving the company. High attrition is a cause of concern for a company as it presents a cost to the company. Any organization of repute always put forth its efforts to retain its talented and productive oriented employees. Some companies raising objections and creating hurdles to the employees who wish to resign is against business ethics. A close observation and research reveals several other attributes for attrition and retention mainly attributed to the employers concerned. Some organizations practice nihilism with a view to spoil the career of skilled and talented ones and drive them on filthy reasons with black scars. This act of cruelty damages the future career of such relieved employees.

Keywords: Attrition, Retention, Case Studies, Perfunctory, Perfidious, Nihilism, Success of ISRO.

Introduction

Employees of any organization of repute never venture to leave the existing jobs when their respect is restored, their services are regularized, their skills/talents are recognized, their expertise is appreciated by means of promotions, transfers, awards, rewards or at least a pat on their back by the Management. Attrition is generally caused by the disappointment, distress, demotion, overwork, less pay, lack of promotional avenues, ill-treatment, stoppage of increments, low or no bonus, lack of medical facilities, lack of welfare measures and any other fringe benefits on par with other company employees, which grossly and evidently affect the organization goals, culture and objectives. New recruits though fresh or experienced need fresh training in order to fix in the slot of organization profile. Further attrition is caused because of better employment elsewhere with a better pay package, working environment, working hours

and renowned organizations and better informal relations, etc. Untrained and inexperienced teachers, poor results, lack of competitive spirit are the reasons for the parents to shift their children from one educational institution to another. Retention of employees, in contrary to attrition, control or stoppage of the work force from leaving the organization should be the sole aim to any setup, especially those retainable staff are classified as experts in their field of work. However, a close observation and research reveals several other attributes for attrition and retention mainly attributed to the employers concerned.

Case Study-I: Attrition in Indian Call Centers

The call centre in India has been witnessed to rising attrition rates over the years. According to the Assam Contact Centre Industry Bench Marking Report for 2008, the Indian call centre industry has taken on the challenge of reducing attrition rates as one of its priorities. The study was conducted in India, Singapore, China, Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand, and the assessment was based on the following parameters : Control centre strategy, revenue generation, operations, human resource management, technology, customer service, channel management, outsourcing, key performance indicators and management challenges. The average tenure of an Indian call centre agent is 9 months, which is the lowest in the region. Though agent absenteeism or sick leave Indian contact centers had reduced on average from 15 days per annum in 2007 to 9 days per annum in 2008, the agent attrition rate is still high.

The high rates of attrition in India has been attributed to the graveyard shifts that most call centers follow on account of the time difference between India and clients in the West. When India is asleep, call centre agents spend their nights talking to customers abroad. Though companies have put in efforts to ensure the comforts of their employees, sleep deprivation and confused biological clocks play havoc on employees' health.

The most effective strategy implemented by call centers to reduce attrition in India in the recent past has been financial incentives, followed by rewards and recognition, and mapping the career paths of employees. According to strategies guru Oscar Alban, attrition rates in call centers can be reduced by following motivational strategies such as creating good front line supervisors, balancing quality and quantity of services, managing agent schedules, fostering a strong sense of

leadership; among those qualified and putting training initiatives in place with on-going training programmes.

Studies have shown that employees of call centers seek good communication from their superiors for effective motivation, followed by financial benefits. HR practices too have undergone a sea change with most players understanding the importance of incentives to retain employees and their loyalties. To sustain the number one position in the outsourcing arena, these centers have to focus on the career development of their employees. If an organization manages to weed out the chaff from the wheat of the time of recruitment itself, a lot of pain and sweat would be saved later. In addition to charting out career maps, quality monitoring through coaching and training and performance analytics would go a long way in fighting attrition and retaining a motivated workforce. *(Source: Kavita Singh, Organizational Behaviour (Text and cases) PEARSON Education)*

Case Study-II: Perfunctory Decision

An Associated Professor in an Engineering College working in MBA stream was earlier a senior officer with thirty years experience in a Central Public Sector Undertaking. He was very glad for recruiting him with high honor by the Management. His four years soulful teaching methodology was very much admired by all the MBA students as well as the HOD/Principal and the Management and the pass percentage in the subjects taught by him in all semesters was highly appreciated compared to his colleagues including the Head of the Department. The Principal of the college had also issued appreciation letters which were standing testimony for the great efforts exhibited by the Professor.

After a meeting held exclusively between the HOD of MBA and the Principal, the said renowned and appreciated professor was shifted to Stores Department by removing him from MBA department and was coerced to issue stores material like a stores clerk or even as sub-staff, without disclosing any reason. The entire faculty members of the college, having a good and positive attitude towards this professor, were astonished but kept quite as Management may take action against them if they extend their support to the professor. Insulted and mortified over the indecent and unceremonious attitude of the Principal, the said professor resigned from the post immediately. Though his eviction did not cause any harm to the institution, it had earned a

negative impression in the minds of those who are still working. Such kind of removals with some other reasons is quite common in all the institutions. This is one of the glaring events that cause attrition in the institutions.

Case Study-III: Perfidious Act

A famous manufacturing company wanted to downsize its staff. The President passed instructions to the Administrative Officer to take action to downsize at least 30% staff in order to save expenditure on them in terms of salary and other benefits being paid to them. In fact, the company was going good and making profits. The Administrative Officer who was unhappy with the decision, made a fervent submission to the President saying that it would affect the morale of the employees and leaves an indelible scar on the company. Still, the President stuck to his guns. As no alternative left, the officer downsized the staff who are known as efficient in their field of work. Upset over the decision, the estranged staff members had to join in some other organizations. To work in private organizations often throws the employees in quandary.

The company's financial position improved and the President of the company informed the Administrative Officer that the company achieved the targets. Administrative Officer responded that the company achieved the targets, but lost expert employees who were recruited by the company's competitors and are gaining more advantage.

It is an imprudent decision of the owner though the company saved a large quantum of revenue by downsizing, the rival company gained much more by employing the skilled personnel. The President could have strategic plan to expand his company as there has been a good demand for the company products.

Employee Attrition

Attrition, in Human Resource terminology, refers to the phenomenon of the employees leaving the company. It is usually measured with a metric called attrition rate, which simply measures the number of employees moving out of the company (voluntary resigning or layoff by the company). It is also referred as churn rate or turnover.

High attrition is a cause of concern for a company as it presents a cost to the company. The company loses on the amount it spent to recruit and select these employees and to train them for their respective jobs. The company may also have to spend additional money to fill the vacancies left open by these employees.

Software companies in the recent past have experienced high attrition rates of over 30%. Attrition can also be used to refer to customer attrition which is the number of customers which a company has lost in a given period of time. Attrition, in general, refers to loss or decrease in a number of personnel, material, etc.

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Employee Retention

Any organization of repute always put forth its efforts to retain its talented and productive oriented employees as and when the employees need change to overcome the monotonous work environment in an organization for a long time and for higher salary and to grow higher and higher in the ladder of their career development. Companies raising objections and creating hurdles to the employees who wish to resign is against business ethics and approved general principles. All out efforts should be taken by the top management to attract the top performers by luring in various means not only to get the good out them in meeting the objectives but to guide and improve the low performers. These set of the not-so-effective performing group, though loyal to the organization, they fail to rise to the occasions set by the company due to lack of ability and knowledge. This group is categorized under theory 'X' by Douglas McGregor who was a management theorist.

Retention of an expert workforce can be made possible by a number of ways and means. The one surest source is not only enhancing their pay package weight but utilizing their enriched skills by properly providing the needed training if situation demands, conducting workshops, deputing them as delegates, etc., to suit the changed objectives to meet the needs of the product beneficiaries.

According to Herzberg, another management advocate said that satisfaction and dissatisfaction among the employees play a crucial role. He said that opposite of satisfaction was not dissatisfaction as was traditionally believed. In other words, removing dissatisfying

characteristics from a job does not necessarily make the job satisfying, or vice-versa. Herzberg interpreted his findings to propose the existence of a dual continuum with the opposite of “satisfaction” being “no satisfaction” and the opposite of “dissatisfaction” being “no dissatisfaction”. Therefore, by acting to eliminate factors that can create job dissatisfaction, one can bring about peace, but not necessarily motivation. As a result, such characteristics as company policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and salary have been categorized by the Herzberg as hygiene factors. If employees want motivation only, Herzberg suggested emphasizing achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, growth, and advancement. These are the characteristics that people find intrinsically rewarding.

Finally, Herzberg suggested that employee retention was possible by eliminating betrayal behaviors of the Management. This system can be coined as “doctrine of mandatory”. Failure to strictly adhere to these principles would lead to attrition in the organizations which is not a healthy trend. (Source: David A DeCenzo and Stephen P. Robbins “Personnel Human Resource Management” – Prentice-Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi – 1998.)

The secret behind the success of ISRO has been its employees who are both capable of using and are willing to use the advanced technology to achieve the targets. Last but not least, concentration of the organization should be on ‘motivation’, prompt payment of monthly salary which is also the main motivator. A motivated employee generally is more quality oriented. Motivation as a concept represents a highly complex phenomenon that affects and is affected by a multitude of factors in the organizational milieu.

Conclusion

There is no end to human efforts. Nothing is static especially when science and technology is advancing to dizzy heights. All systems in all areas are dynamically changing towards achieving to near perfection. Perfection is right as on the time of testing and assessment. But perfection becomes a mirage in the passage of time. Employees’ goals are also changing from time to time. They need to meet esteem needs as defined and designed by Abraham Maslow, a management theorist on Hierarchy Needs. But still, one more step is created – that is – self-actualization. No person is polyglot or polymath.

All the employees' goal in their personal and professional life is to see 'Alchemy in their lives'. This is the aim for attrition of employees from one organization to the other. Even in political field, a leader changes his political affiliation from one party to another with a goal to acquire higher position attributing the reason of serving the society. This attitude can also be treated as attrition. Some organizations practice nihilism with a view to spoil the career of skilled and talented ones and drive them on filthy reasons with black scars. This act of cruelty damages the future career of such relieved employees. This mentalist approach adopted by proletcult unfolds the textual expression of the management and it surely imprints negative feeling among the existing and new aspirants.

Finally, about retention, it is an established fact to register that ad-lib scholars of high virtue are not recognized in the right direction. '*Vidwan Sarvatra Poojayeet*'(scholars are worshipped everywhere) remains an adage prevalent since ages. The smiles of employees reveal that their job is copacetic.

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