

**By V Pradeep Kumar**



I have been observing the constant change in attitudes of employees over the last two decades. Turning the clock back, during the 70's and 80's, things were different. Our economy wasn't doing anything great and wasn't close to becoming a world super power that it will now be. The revolution in IT, BT, BPO industries were not even dreams. The job opportunities weren't many and the government, banks and public sector still were favourites for job seekers.

Advertise for a job-sales, finance or administration, you would be inundated with applications - all by snail mail. It wasn't unusual to see applicants walking in to drop their applications and trying to sneak a meeting with decision makers. And after getting into an organisation, they remained there steady with fewer career moves, even if they didn't retire. Discipline, commitment, loyalty weren't advocated, they were usually taken for granted.

But everything has changed now, especially the attitudes of employees and has radically shifted the employment market.

The genesis of the problem has its roots in:

- Increased job opportunities
- Shortage of skilled manpower

- Increased family income
- Increased standard of living
- Life style changes and aspirations
- Low commitment levels
- Monetary benefit expectation
- Increased job hopping trend
- Behavioural and discipline issues

All employment survey and studies indicate that attitude is the most important aspect affecting performance of organisations. The modern organisation has become hotbed of competition with heavy task orientation and insecurity. This coupled with myth that things would be better in another organisation, has resulted in sweeping changes in employee attitudes.

Therefore coping with changed employee attitudes and expectation is a huge challenge. The challenge is even greater at operational level, for managers. Having been part of organisations witnessing such employee syndromes and at the forefront of meeting those challenges, here are my thoughts on what an organisation can do to combat such challenges:

### 1. Make jobs profiles interesting

a. Job profiles have to be made interesting from an employee's perspective. Jobs shouldn't be routine and monotonous and efforts should be to bring in an element of variation or excitement, even occasionally.

b. Job descriptions have to be clear and precise in terms of what the expectations of the employer are. Equally important are the expectations of the employee from the organisation and how expectations of each other are met.

c. Along with job profile it's also necessary to have key result areas for each job so that employees are aware of expectations. Marketing and Production being line functions always have had quantitative objectives but HR and finance generally could get away with qualitative

objectives which are not amenable for proper evaluation.

### 2. Institute strong interview and selection process

a. We need to have strong selection process to identify the right candidate. The selection process cannot be a mere number game to fill up the vacancies. The turnover of employees in the first few days are more attributed to weaknesses in the selection process.

b. Even though sourcing candidates is a challenge for the HR function, it's desirable to have a detailed selection process. This will ensure communication skills are tested and in place.

c. The stress levels in today's competitive industrial environment are high and employees are constantly under high pressure to perform. It's therefore necessary that employees need to be relatively strong emotionally to handle such pressures. This should be tested in the selection process appropriately and the skills sharpened periodically through training.

d. The line managers have to be involved in selection process which no longer can be the domain of the HR function and the top management.

e. It's better to project the tougher aspects of a job rather than avoiding them. It's necessary that a potential employee knows clearly what he is getting into as otherwise there can be gaps between expectations and reality leading to turnover.

### 3. Give jobs to the needy

a. A candidate with a strong need for job would be more stable and a committed employee as compared to a candidate who is less job dependent. In the wake of increased family income and ability to sustain periods of unemployment, employees from such background are more susceptible for job shifts.

- Make recruitment and training a continuous process

a. The process of recruitment has to be continuous and proactive, irrespective of vacancies. This way, an organisation would always have short listed candidates ready and hence less vulnerable to turnover and sometimes unreasonable demands from employees.

b. It's a good concept to have people on the bench which can work beautifully in most organizations for junior positions.

c. Similarly, training has to be continuous and not merely a yearly ritual. It's a good idea to have a panel of senior people from different levels of hierarchy involved in training.

### 5. Institute measures to build organisation loyalty

a. It's not always that employees leave an organisation for monetary benefits. We need to understand that a human being is a bundle of emotions and therefore treat every employee accordingly with dignity and respect.

b.Organisational loyalty can be built with simple measures often costing nothing to the organisation, but with immense benefits. The measures depend on nature of the organisation, work culture etc.

c.Ensure a healthy balance between work and fun. Organisational pressures peak and can reach very unhealthy levels. High pressures do not lead to high performance always and often letting the pressures off can be more productive.

d.Over a period of time, people tend to become inefficient due to a variety of reasons including lack of even the minimum energy and enthusiasm levels. We need to guard against people reaching the climax of low productivity being in the same position or job profile over a long period of time.

e.More and more organisations are adopting flexible work timings within normal guidelines of 8 hours a day or 40 hours or more a week, as the case may be. Where the emphasis is on productivity and not the effort, the guiding philosophy can be appropriately changed.

### 6.Have a transparent performance evaluation process

a.The annual appraisal process often leads to employee turnover. This is due to unreasonable expectations as well as improper performance evaluation process. Employees invariably relate expectations due to increased costs or aspirations and less due to their performances. We need to handle this contradiction tactfully and proactively.

b.The performance evaluation process has to be clear and as transparent as possible. We must have benchmarks to make decision making process easy and transparent. Managements have to take appropriate decisions based on merit and without bias.

### 7.Be innovative

a.Innovation can come in all functional areas whether it is Sales and Marketing, HR or Finance or across the organisation. Innovative ideas can be either work related or for building a healthier environment. Employees should be encouraged to generate Innovative ideas and recognized suitably.

### 8.Communicate

a. There is an important need to communicate the vision, mission and corporate objectives across the organisation. Equally important is to make it clear to every employee how they are part of the vision and mission of the organisation and the benefits that will accrue to every employee by following that path.

b. Communication has to be clear and has to be in either direction. Clear communication is essential to maintain a healthy work environment and minimize the dangers of corporate gossips.

c. Employee grievances can be nipped in the bud, if superiors have good listening skills and patience. Often good listening and acknowledgement of the problem alone can suffice to address the situation.

### 9.Management style and environment

a. It's necessary to understand that task or people orientation are not exclusive and focus on one need not mean compromise on the other.

b. Organisational environment can get polluted and tense for silliest of the reasons and often not connected with business. 'Ego' clashes between people often rise to high levels and can spread like wild fire. Operating managers need to take appropriate steps to preserve harmony.

### 10. Lead by example

Leading by example, is the best way to instill the right attitude in employees.

It's a fact that all employees join an organisation with high energy, motivation levels and positive attitude and it's only over a period of time, they deteriorate. As employers, we need to have the patience and aptitude to manage the attitude of employees.

### About the Author

**Mr.V Pradeep Kumar**, hailing from Bangalore has over 28 years of hardcore management experience in all aspects of management in a variety of Industries including FMCG, Industrial marketing, Media and Publishing. His focus in the last fifteen years has been on Media and Publishing.

He can be contacted at [info@vpradeepkumar.com](mailto:info@vpradeepkumar.com)