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Balance between role & career is must

CAREER CLAUSE SHISHIR PARASHER

For over five decades, Spark Minda, Ashok Minda Group (the erstwhile Minda Group) has been a major presence in India's automobile industry. These 50 years have been interspersed by a number of technological innovations that have gone on to become industry standards. Today the group has emerged as one of the leading manufacturers of auto components with a turnover of ₹3,000 for 2013-14 and employs more than 11,200 people in India and overseas. Excerpts:

■ You have worked extensively in the field of employee engagement. How do you go about formulating these initiatives? What would you describe as key elements?

Strategic initiatives are being taken at group levels and then escalated to the business and unit based on the HR strategy we have for next three to five years. There is group HR strategy and business HR strategy, and both are being aligned. Some of the key elements of these initiatives are:

- How to increase employee engagement
- Attraction and retention of talent

- Develop internal leadership capability
- Fostering creativity and build agility in the system
- Managing conducive industrial relations
- Improving productivity and employee contribution

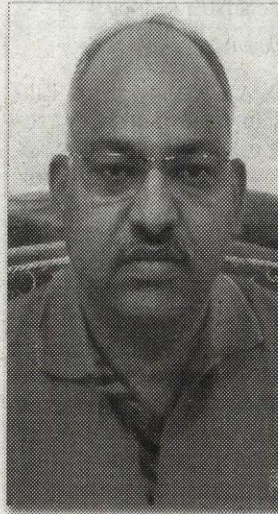
Engaged workforce contributes directly to the business results and there is strong correlation between employee engagement and increased productivity. People play the most important role in the auto component industry next to raw materials. We conduct employee engagement surveys periodically to understand the issues to be addressed and prepare an action plan. Before the engagement survey we also do a focus group study and dipstick survey to understand the work environment and culture of the company.

■ What do you do to turn a disengaged employee into an asset for the organisation?

There are three types of employee work in an organisation engaged, not engaged and actively disengaged. We try to convert an 'actively disengaged' member to 'not engaged' member through clear communication on his role and its impact on the organisation and making him realise his value in the system. Handling the 'actively disengaged' employee/group is one of the key challenges for the immediate superior. The disengaged employee also spoils others in the team. We continuously monitor the group/individual and try to connect with them.

■ What are the few imperatives of making employees happy?

- Building transparency and openness in the system which will lead to trust amongst employees



■ Leadership should walk the talk

■ Employee recognition and reward

■ An effective performance management system

■ Managing employee hygiene

We have various initiatives and programmes in the group to move from basic hygiene to attachment to affiliation and self esteem of the employee. The initiatives and welfare facilities are designed to meet requirements at each level. The initiatives are divided into three blocks to improve employee participation, employee involvement and employee belongingness.

■ How are new-age employees different from others?

New age employees have high energy and confidence levels. They think differently and are always hungry for results. They require little supervision and follow-ups. They are not shy and try to find solutions. They also have higher expectations from the company, their boss and their peers. It is crucial to strike a balance between the role we offer and the career we define for them. The new age group expect quick results in terms of compensation, ca-

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reer growth and better work life balance.

■ What is it about succession planning that Indian organisations need to understand?

Many Indian organisations do have a well-laid structure succession plan, however it is restricted to select few in the system. Organisations should have succession planning for all levels. We do succession planning up to the second level in the units and develop people accordingly. Our succession planning process is highly integrated with the PMS system.

■ Do you agree that industrial relations has taken a back seat in India?

No, I think Indian HR/IR managers are handling things better, also there is ample awareness and realisation within the workmen community. Today's workforce have better understanding of the country labour legislations and business imperatives. They also link their expectations with the growth of the company. At the same time the external environment is also very volatile and there are lots of external influences on the workforce. We believe in proactive industrial relations and have hence taken

series of precautions to maintain harmonious industrial relations within the units.

■ What are the key elements of your selection process?

New candidates' attitude and approach towards the new role you are offering is what is vital along with basic education, relevant experience and age. Talent acquisition is an important function of HR. We have proper job descriptions for each positions. We first look at internal possibilities to fill up the position through internal mobility/promotion/job rotation and then look for external talents. In the case of external talent, the key element is the reference check of the candidate and overall impression and suitability to our requirement.

■ Is attrition an issue for organisations like yours? What do you do to keep it in check?

No. However, we are a little worried about attrition particularly in the engineering and design functions. We do extensive work on recognition and rewards and we have launched the innovation and improvement policy to create opportunity to learn and contribute. Second line development, talent pipeline and leadership bench are the activities and they mitigate risks of employee attrition. Attrition of key talent is the issue. We have retention strategy for key identified resources in the group in place and are trying to mitigate all the risks. At some points there is the need to have few employees leave which will allow us to promote and upgrade people.