CROSS CULTURAL HRM STRATEGIES & PRACTICE IN SERVICE INDUSTRY

S. SUBRAMANIAM,

Assistant Professor ,Email – iyer1768@gmail.com

Datta Meghe Institute of Management Studies

(Affiliated to Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University and approved by AICTE)

Atrey Layout, Nagpur – 440022

Phone – 0712 – 2249527

Abstract

The world has become an open market where many players can operate simultaneously without any hold-up as was prevalent before 1990. The open market has brought human resource from various fraternities and with broader cultural values. The important global pressures impacting HR practices in MNC's have grown in number, variety and complexity in recent times – thanks to the changes in information technology, dismantling of tariffs, differentiated labour laws, cultural and language barriers, bargaining practices etc. Getting the right people with requisite skills, motivating them to accept the challenges in a foreign locale and extending family support through cultural orientation, language training and education assistance have become truly demanding.

Introduction

Global market is bringing lot of players with vast culture into business fraternity resulting into a great challenge to overcome the obstacle and create newer better HRM strategies. It is very easy to plan and create global strategies but it is very difficult to implement it. The countries which are offering better business packages to overseas players and now becoming major target for leaders in the business. The business community is basically from countries like U.S.A, U.K, Germany, France, Japan, Thailand, China, etc. with cultures and people very different from the parent country. It doesn't mean that only people going abroad face the problem of

different work culture but even in our own country the problem is prevalent. A person going from a state of Maharashtra to Assam is reluctant to go because he finds it very difficult to settle in that state and a person working in a state of Uttar Pradesh is reluctant to go to Tamilnadu, Karanataka or Andhra Pradesh. The problem is not only due to difference of language but even in the working pattern there is lot of difference. Adapting to new place apart from our home town is very difficult hence there should be a training policy of all organizations for the employees who are willing to work anywhere in the country as well as abroad.

Culture

Culture can be defined as the basic nature of the society, the way they behave, the language they speak, the fashion they adapt, the working culture, the life style etc. As we go out of our country we enter into a world which is not same. The difference is so much that for many it takes years to adapt to the condition.

Relation of culture with HRM

When we talk of human resource we often talk about their upbringing, the society in which they are living, their life style, the working style etc. The reason behind discussing this matter is the model invented by Josepth Luft & Harry Ingham (Johari Window)

	Known to Self	Not Known to Self
Known to Others	1 OPEN	2 BLIND
Not Known to Others	HIDDEN 3	UNKNOWN 4

The Johari Window, named after the first names of its inventors, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, is one of the most useful models describing the process of human interaction. A four paned "window," as illustrated above, divides personal awareness into four different types, as represented by its four quadrants: open,

hidden, blind, and unknown. The lines dividing the four panes are like window shades, which can move as an interaction progresses.

In this model, each person is represented by their own window. Let's describe mine: 1. The "open" quadrant represents things that both I know about myself, and that you know about me. For example, I know my name, and so do you, and if you have explored some of my website, you know some of my interests. The knowledge that the window represents, can include not only factual information, but my feelings, motives, behaviors, wants, needs and desires... indeed, any information describing who I am. When I first meet a new person, the size of the opening of this first quadrant is not very large, since there has been little time to exchange information. As the process of getting to know one another continues, the window shades move down or to the right, placing more information into the open window, as described below.

2. The "blind" quadrant represents things that you know about me, but that I am unaware of. So, for example, we could be eating at a restaurant, and I may have unknowingly gotten some food on my face. This information is in my blind quadrant because you can see it, but I cannot. If you now tell me that I have something on my face, then the window shade moves to the right, enlarging the open quadrant's area. Now, I may also have blind spots with respect to many other much more complex things. For example, perhaps in our ongoing conversation, you may notice that eye contact seems to be lacking. You may not say anything, since you may not want to embarrass me, or you may draw your own inferences that perhaps I am being insincere. Then the problem is, how can I get this information out in the open, since it may be affecting the level of trust that is developing between us? How can I learn more about myself? Unfortunately, there is no readily available answer. I may notice a slight hesitation on your part, and perhaps this may lead to a question. But who knows if I will pick this up, or if your answer will be on the mark.

3. The "hidden" quadrant represents things that I know about myself that you do not know. So for example, I have not told you, nor mentioned anywhere on my website, what one of my favorite ice cream flavors is. This information is in my "hidden" quadrant. As soon as I tell you that I love "Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia" flavored ice

cream, I am effectively pulling the window shade down, moving the information in my hidden quadrant and enlarging the open quadrant's area. Again, there are vast amounts of information, virtually my whole life's story that has yet to be revealed to you. As we get to know and trust each other, I will then feel more comfortable disclosing more intimate details about myself. This process is called: "Self-disclosure."

4. The "unknown" quadrant represents things that neither I know about myself, nor you know about me. For example, I may disclose a dream that I had, and as we both attempt to understand its significance, a new awareness may emerge, known to neither of us before the conversation took place. Being placed in new situations often reveals new information not previously known to self or others. For example, I learned of the Johari window at a workshop conducted by a Japanese American psychiatrist in the early 1980's. During this workshop, he created a safe atmosphere of care and trust between the various participants. Usually, I am terrified of speaking in public, but I was surprised to learn that in such an atmosphere, the task need not be so daunting. Prior to this event, I had viewed myself and others had also viewed me as being extremely shy. (The above now

reminds me of a funny joke, which I cannot refrain from telling you. It is said that the number one fear that people have is speaking in public. Their number two fear is dying. And the number three fear that people have, is dying while speaking in public.) Thus, a novel situation can trigger new awareness and personal growth. The process of moving previously unknown information into the open quadrant, thus enlarging its area, has been likened to Maslow's concept of self-actualization. The process can also be viewed as a game, where the open quadrant is synonymous with the win-win situation.

Much, much more has been written on the Johari window model of human interaction. The process of enlarging the open quadrant is called self-disclosure, a give and take process between me and the people I interact with. Typically, as I share something about myself (moving information from my hidden quadrant into the open) and if the other party is interested in getting to know me, they will reciprocate, by similarly disclosing information in their hidden quadrant. Thus, an interaction between two parties can be modeled dynamically as two active Johari windows. For example, you may respond to my disclosure that I like "Cherry Garcia" by letting me know what your favorite ice

cream is, or where a new ice cream shop is being built, kinds of information in your hidden quadrant. Incidentally, it is fattening, so be careful on how much you eat! We believe disclosure to be healthy, at least that's the impression one gets after reading Freud. However, Anita Kelly recently wrote that self-disclosure of personal secrets has its dangers. We are often better off not telling secrets regarding our sexual behavior, mental health problems or large-scale failures. "If you give people information about yourself, you give them power over you," she says. Monica Lewinsky's disclosure to Linda Tripp and the ensuing scandal that enveloped President Clinton is a case in point. Be forewarned that most secrets get passed along to at least two more parties. People also misjudge how others respond to secrets. Sometimes you get negative feedback. For example, women who reveal that she was raped may be seen in the future as a victim or by men as damaged goods. Now, if you must tell your secret to someone, chose that person very carefully. You must choose someone, whose response will give you some insight into the problem. Unfortunately, such a person is often hard to find. So if you cannot find anyone appropriate, consider this: that keeping secrets is healthy and tasteful,

because it is a way of managing your identity, and indicates you are secure and have self-control. But it takes energy, because you have to be on constant guard not to accidentally reveal something that is potentially damaging.

As ones level of confidence and self esteem develops, one may actively invite others to comment on one's blind spots. A teacher may seek feedback from students on the quality of a particular lecture, with the desire of improving the presentation. Active listening skills are helpful in this endeavor. On the other hand, we all have defenses, protecting the parts of ourselves that we feel vulnerable. Remember, the blind quadrant contains behavior, feelings and motivations not accessible to the person, but which others can see. Feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, impotence, unworthiness, rejection, guilt, dependency, ambivalence for loved ones, needs to control and manipulate, are all difficult to face, and yet can be seen by others. To forcibly reveal what another wishes not to see, is "psychological rape," and can be traumatic. Fortunately, nature has provided us with a variety of defense mechanisms to cope with such events, such as denial, ignoring, rationalizing, etc.

The Johari window, essentially being a model for communication, can also reveal difficulties in this area. In Johari terms, two people attempt to communicate via the open quadrants. On the simplest level, difficulties may arise due to a lack of clarity in the interaction, such as poor grammar or choice of words, unorganized thoughts, faulty logic etc. This induces the receiver to criticize you, the sender, by revealing something that was in your blind quadrant. Then, if the feedback works, you correct it immediately, or perhaps on a more long term approach take a course in reading and writing. On a deeper level, you may be in a group meeting, and while you secretly sympathize with the minority viewpoint, you voted with the majority. However, blind to you, you actually may be communicating this information via body language, in conflict with your verbal message. On an even deeper level, you in an interaction with others may always put on a smiling, happy face, hiding all negative feelings. By withholding negative feelings, you may be signaling to your friends to withhold also, and keep their distance. Thus, your communication style may seem bland or distant.

And let's not forget the parable of the blind men and the elephant. Our society is constructed so that many of us get very specialized, knowing only a small academic field very well, while being virtually ignorant of all others. This specialization is blinding many of us to what is happening in the world today. According to R. Buckminister Fuller, this system of education was done on purpose, to channel the most intelligent people into specialties, enabling them to be more easily controlled. Noam Chomsky has made similar comments with regards to the manufacturing enterprise, and how Adam Smith's writings have been purposely misrepresented.

Enterprises are opening there branches all over the world with a positive intention of expanding there customer base as well as increasing profits. In order to achieve the overall objective, the enterprise is entering newer countries with an intention of getting hold on the market. The basic problem that each enterprise is facing is adapting to newer culture.

The employees who are deputed to overseas assignment have following presumption –

- ➤ The country will be better than India.
- ➤ The lifestyle will be lavish.
- ➤ The environment will be beautiful.
- ➤ The working condition will be excellent.
- ➤ The perks will be extraordinary.

In the context of the presumptions it becomes mandatory on the part of the organization to give the employees going abroad some type of training. Training should be given with an eye on the working conditions and working culture present in that country.

The areas of training to be offered to expatriate employees working in service industry must have following dimensions –

Sense of self and space – People in a number of cultures prefer to stand close when conversing. An interpersonal distance of only six inches is very disturbing to a Northern European or an American who is used to conversing at arm's length. Cross cultural gatherings in the Middle East often involve for example, an awkward dance as Arab hosts try to get closer while their American and European guests consider maintaining some distance. In Maharashtra, when you visit somebody's place it is a practice to give water but if you go to South people there ask for water before serving. South (people from Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh & Kerala) people are ready to go anywhere in the country or world. This gives them better opportunity to prosper and progress in life as compared to others.

Language – In India there are in total 27 recognized languages and with a population of over 100 crores it is very difficult to get job opportunity in your own state. This makes it imperative on your part to proceed to newer pastures which provides more prosperity as compared to present. As communication is an important aspect in business, it is mandatory to prepare yourself before embarking to new venture. I often used to face the problem of language in Maharashtra as the common language spoken is Marathi. If you are able to speak you are accepted immediately but vice versa it is difficult. If we take it in a positive way this gives us an opportunity to learn newer languages as well as newer culture.

Dress and Appearance – Garments and body decorations vary by culture. Anyone disrespecting the turban in India may be roughed up badly. But if we go through the news that are coming everyday regarding racist remarks from Australia, America, England etc. it is a dangerous situation for Indians working abroad. The moment any person with dark complexion is seen he is related with terrorist community. This is creating lot of insecurity on the part of people from South East Asian countries. If some abroad assignment is given to

employees the enthusiasm is less as compared to early times. If we talk about dress and appearance in India it is surprising that people from other states laughs at you if you are wearing traditional clothes. Like people from South who wear Dhoti & Shirt are often mocked.

Food, eating habits and perceptual problems – Different cultures may have different ways of preparing and eating food. This is the biggest problem that expatriates face in other countries. Change of food results in lot of physical problem like ulcers, piles, stomach upset etc. and this hampers the efficiency of the employee. Once I was transferred from my hometown Nagpur to a place called Junagadh in Gujarat. The initial days were quite good with new place and new environment but the problem started after a week. I was used to eat spicy food in my place but in Junagadh the food was sweeter and eating food like this took the toll resulting into reduced sales for the month. The manager was quite annoyed but when I told him my problem he became quite. Secondly, the work timing in my place was morning 9 am to 9 pm with a break from 1 pm to 6 pm but there the calls used to start at 6 pm so in the day time I was idle. The result was that I became very lazy.

Time and time consciousness – The sense of time varies across cultures. Time management in India is a topic on which everyone wants to talk. In India, if you are conversing with somebody and ask him when his boss is coming. He will answer 10 am but if you tell him it is already 12 noon he will say that the boss will come as per Indian standard time. So it is a preconceived notion about Indians that they generally come late and they don't follow the time properly. The habit of coming late to office is dangerous signal for the employee as it will lead to problems if it all he is transferred to a place where people are time conscious. It also creates a bad image of the country you are representing if you don't follow the norms of that country.

Relationships – Cultures specify human and organizational interactions by age, gender, status and family relationships, as well as by wealth, power and wisdom. Relationships in India are very much important as human-human relationship is given prime place. The reason behind this is that we are bonded so we want to remain in the same situation wherever we go or which ever place we are working. In western countries, the relationship is not given that much

importance hence we must adapt to there lifestyle to progress in our career.

Values and norms – Material wealth might be the dominant value in some cultures. People are ready to do anything in order to acquire wealth. But I must tell you that there are people in many countries who don't work for money but for enjoyment. Wealth is always important but if it comes in the form of rewards and incentives it will be appreciated much more.

Working norms is always different in different places and we must be prepared to adapt to those working norms. If in the present place where you are working doesn't have shift duty and where you will be posted has working shift you have to cope with that.

Beliefs and attitudes - Religious beliefs and attitudes vary among cultures. Hindus let things happen. Most North Americans try to control events by taking charge of things all by themselves. It is also a belief that work is worship and if this is followed no organization will face problem resulting into smooth functioning. Attitudes are a part of work culture and it is the most difficult thing that can be changed. Positive attitude will give more mileage but negative attitude will lead to inefficiency and de-growth.

Mental Processes and learning - Across cultures, one can always find profound differences in the ways people think and learn. Some people emphasize logical thinking and proceed cautiously, weighing pros and cons from various angles. In other cultures, people may go after ideas, take risks, face innumerable difficulties that come in the way withcourage and finally emerge victorious.

Work habits and practices – The attitude toward work may vary greatly across various cultures. In some there is a strong focus on work values and ethics, where as in others it is missing. There are basically three types of people working at workplace. They are busy people, frustrated people and people who enjoy there work.

If you talk about busy people they are those people who are never out of work but if we talk about the productivity then it will be below par. The reason behind is basically due to lack of focus in working. In many organizations people are unable to prioritize the work and this leads to time being given to unproductive things. There are many people who work till the last date for

submission of report related to different functions.

If you talk about frustrated people, they are people who generally dislike work. No matter how much you motivate them but they are reluctant to do work. They will try to pinpoint fault in your work but they will never understand there faults. These type of people generally give no result to the organization.

If you talk about people who enjoy there work, they are people who are very much interested in their work. No matter what work they have been allotted, no matter at what time they have to work they will be ready for the organization. They will always be fresh in there work and will not falter at any time. Even if they fail in there work they try to repair it and move ahead.

Conclusion

The study on cross cultural HRM strategies it can be concluded that –

All the organization who are thinking about sending there employees abroad or to any alien place must train them to face the situation.

Before embarking on new assignment the employee on his part should also mentally prepare himself.

Adaptation to the new place is mandatory.

Reference

Human Resource Management – V.S.P. Rao – Second Edition – Excel Books, Page 681 & 682.

Luft, Joseph (1969). "Of Human Interaction," Palo Alto, CA:National Press, 177 pages.

Kelly, Anita E. and McKillop, Kevin J. (1996), "Consequences of Revealing Personal Secrets." Psychological Bulletin, v120(3), pg. 450 .

Roan, Shari (1996). "Our secrets are spilling out all over," Los Angeles Times