

Green HR: Going Green with Pride

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ABSTRACT

Going green has been elevated to a key business strategy for employers today. In the future, a company's carbon statement will be as prominent as its financial statement. Human resource managers are bringing the green movement into the workplace. Earlier in the past it looked too expensive but now it is the way the business has to go in order to stay in the market in long run. In this paper we have focused on the increased need of going green practices through the human resource department of the organizations. The support of green HR practices resulting in eco-friendly organization remains another emphasizing area of this paper.

Keywords: Employees, organization, Green HR, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The modern day HR Manager has devised a novel employee engagement initiative that helps a company to achieve environmental sustainability. Green HR could very well imply using every employee interface to promote sustainable practices and increase employee awareness. It reflects the way an organization chooses to drive and increase employee commitments and awareness on the issue of sustainability.

Green HR can be defined as environmentally friendly HR initiatives resulting in greater efficiencies, lower costs and better employee engagement. HR plays a key role as it creates awareness amongst employees and builds engagement, which in turn helps the organizations to operate in an environmentally sustainable fashion.

Eco-consciousness or colour "GREEN" is rap-

idly emerging in every dimension of our lives and workplace. Green HR is one which involves the following two essential elements-

- Environmental friendly HR practices and
- The preservation of Knowledge Capital. HR of an organization plays a major role in making environmental responsibility a part of the mission statement of the organization.

The main Question here is "What are the various initiatives through which HR can help an organization in preserving its environmental sustainability"? Green HR involves reducing your carbon footprints via less printing of paper and substituting emission- enhancing actions (e.g. air travel) by adopting technological applications constructively like video conferencing, conference- calls for meetings, interviews etc.

Benefits available to the Companies by going GREEN

1. When choosing a company to work for, applicants seem to value eco-friendly initiatives much more than even ten years ago. In fact, according to the Corporate Environmental Behavior and the Impact on Brand Values

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Survey, 81% of US participants would rather work for a company that has a good reputation for environmental responsibility. This gives a clear indication to the HR of the organizations. Companies that implement a green strategy can improve candidate engagement and thus, talent quality, with less recruitment tools.

2. Consumers are willing to spend more on a product that is healthier, safer or more beneficial for the environment, regardless of the current economy state.
3. By going GREEN, the companies may have much more profits than they were having before adopting Green practices.

Examples of Green HR Practices adopted by the Companies

- Car Pooling
- Work from home
- Recycling
- Public Transport
- Carbon footprints
- Video Conferencing
- Paperless work

Initiatives Taken by Companies

Green HR initiatives help companies find alternative ways to cut cost without losing their top talent; furloughs, part time work, etc. "Many employers now recognize that green programs in the workplace can promote social responsibility among workers and help retain top talent." HR can help the organization to stay sustainable primarily through initiatives like building awareness among employees and extensive trainings. The HR team has an "Environmental Responsibility" policy. This policy plays a significant role in inducing staff to adopt green measures, thus inculcating long term values of saving energy and resources of the corporate for the Humanity's benefit in whole. In a survey in USA (published in Times magazine) on Green HR Practices adopted by Companies, the results showed that 78 percent Companies use Web or teleconferencing to reduce travel, 76 Per-

cent promote the reduction of paper use, and 68 percent implement wellness programs to foster employees' proper nutrition, fitness, and healthy living.

Among companies that provide rewards to encourage green behaviors, 77 percent provide special employee recognition, 36 percent give prize incentives, and 14 percent provide a monetary reward.

Indian Examples

- Some of the company's actions have been really simple, but still very effective (at least for raising awareness), for example allowing employees to buy a coffee mug at their coffee bar rather than using disposable cups, and then receiving 10p off a cup of coffee.
- Some Companies have a "Waste to Wealth" recycling programme where they encourage employees to segregate waste at their work stations. They have tie up with various NGO's who take this further and recycle it.
- Some Hospitals have their patient welfare team who ensures that all pediatric girl patients are gifted a green sapling. This comes under their initiative of protecting girl child as well as preserving nature called "Nanhi Chaoon".
- Some Companies motivate their employees for the "Tree plantation" on their birthdays while some others organize a ramp show on social masses like save trees to help the environment.
- Some Companies give free reusable grocery bags to clients or employees.

Suggestions to the HR for Becoming More Greener

1. **Use of light as little as possible:** Artificial lighting accounts for 44 percent of the electricity use in office buildings. Employees should make it a habit to turn off the lights when they are leaving any room for 15 minutes or more and utilize natural light when you can. Organizations should also make a policy to buy Energy

Star-rated light bulbs and fixtures, which use at least two-thirds less energy than regular lighting, and install timers or motion sensors that automatically shut off lights when they're not needed.

- 2. Maximize computer efficiency:** Computers in the business sector unnecessarily waste \$1 billion worth of electricity a year. Employees should make a habit to turn off their computers when not needed.
- 3. Print smarter:** The average Indian office worker goes through 10,000 sheets of copy paper a year. Employees should make it a habit to print on both sides or use the back side of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts. They should avoid color printing and print in draft mode whenever feasible.
- 4. Use of Eco friendly paper:** Organizations should make it a policy to buy chlorine-free paper with a higher percentage of post-consumer recycled content. They should also consider switching to a lighter stock of paper or alternatives made from bamboo, hemp, organic cotton, or kenaf. They should use Recycle toner and ink cartridges and buy remanufactured ones.
- 5. Go paperless when possible:** Employees should make it a habit to think before they print. Organizations should make it a policy to post employee manuals and similar materials online, rather than distribute print copies. They're easier to update in this way too.
- 6. Ramp up recycling:** Organizations should make it a habit to recycle everything they collect. Just about any kind of paper encountered in the office, including fax paper, envelopes, and junk mail, should be recycled. So should be employees' old cell phone, PDA, or pager etc.
- 7. Eco Friendly fixtures:** Organizations should

make it a policy to purchase office supplies and furniture made from recycled materials.

- 8. Watch what (and how) the employees eat:** Organizations should make it a habit to bring their own mug and dishware for the meals they eat at the office. They should also provide reusable dishes, silverware, and glasses. They should switch to Fair Trade and organic coffee and tea, and buy as much organic and local food as possible for parties and other events. Provide filtered drinking water to reduce bottled-water waste.
- 9. Rethink the travel by top management:** Some rental agencies now offer hybrids and other high-mileage vehicles. Organizations should make it a policy to invest in videoconferencing and other technological solutions that can reduce the amount of employees' travel.
- 10. Reconsider the way by which employees commute:** Organizations should make it a habit to carpool, bike, or take transit to work, and/or telecommute when possible. They should also make it a policy to encourage telecommuting and make it easy for employees to take alternative modes of transportation by subsidizing commuter checks, offering bike parking, or organizing a carpool board.
- 11. Create a healthy office environment:** Organizations should make it a habit to use nontoxic cleaning products. They should go for the office premises brighten up with plants, which absorb indoor pollution. They should also avoid gas toxic chemicals.
- 12. Use of Green Incentives:** Every Organization should give a small plant as an incentive to the employees every year. So by giving the small plants they can appreciate the employees as well as they may have plantation outside the

organization. Chemical wastages should be reduced by the organization which will help in controlling air pollution.

13. Fulfillment of Statutory Obligations: All the staff members should avoid unwanted print outs by which the paper consumption can be reduced and they should go for only those print outs which are mandatory for the statutory obligations, as the same is required by the Govt. Authorities.

CONCLUSION

Everybody should be thankful for the change that has begun in human resources for the preservation of human race in the long run. Organizations have started these Green practices by the adoption of paperless, web-based systems. Companies should continue to reduce their paper usage and help to make the world a cleaner and safer place.

The benefits of going Green apart from contributing towards genuine environmental health also carry direct advantages in impacting the brand and bottom line of the organization. So it certainly adds yet another feather on the HR's cap. It proves how fruitful it can be for the growth of the organization. So every organization should go green and celebrate "Happy Earth Day."

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