

Expert Interview

The Role of HR Executive as a Transformational Leader

Introduction

In a digitally fastened world, where workplaces are fast transforming, there needs a new eye to look upon as an HR leader and expert. HR dynamics are changing frantically, thereby exfoliating a new leadership style so as to meet the changing demands. From the People Manager,



HR has to evolve and enact the role of a **People Leader-More of a Listening person and an Empathetic persona**. Therefore, in the present times, ***HR Leaders should be Transformational***, where they can transform the mindset of the people and curate a new work climate-with the changed practices, processes and strategies - Aiming for a Leaderless Culture. Keeping this in mind, here is an Exclusive Expert Interview with **Dr. Simanta Mohanty, Head of HR, Milk Mantra** which was jointly done by Prof. Abhipsa Mishra and Prof. Abhijit Mohanty of ASTHA School of Management.

Background of the Expert:

Professional Background of the Expert

Currently, the Head-HR for Milk Mantra (www.milkmantra.com) where I handle the entire gamut of HR responsibilities for the mid-sized dairy company located in the east coast of India. Have set into motion a culture of continuous learning and established the Milk Mantra Learning Academy as a training and certification body within the company.

- Fully cued into developing collaboration with and within teams and serving as an internal counsellor to the senior management team; have been a member of strategic and leadership teams for the past 15 years.

- Skilled in government relations, project management, team building and leadership, mentoring and coaching, performance management, community relations and consultation, project delivery and monitoring
- An experienced management professional who has worked in Project Management, Human Resource, Corporate Affairs, Communication and External Affairs, across sectors – non-profit, profit, academia and the government – enabling a gathering of best practices from all sectors;
- Career track includes Program Support Manager of the non-profit CARE-India, Chief Consultant with Ministry of Education, Government of India, Lead of the State Mission Management Unit for NULM in Odisha, leadership HR roles in Wipro and IBM;
- Worked with CARE in Sri Lanka for program management inputs; Served in Sri Lanka and lead a major recruitment drive to scale up the CARE Sri Lanka mission 20
- Interests lie in programs of empowerment of disadvantaged populations with livelihood skills and stimuli, emphasis on involvement of women and gender equality, and raising the theme of climate change to the centre of developmental planning.

Prof. Abhipsa: Sir, could you share some of the enlightening moments experienced in your professional journey?

Expert : I have a rich experience of 33 years in my professional career. I have diversified exposure in private, Government and non-profit organisations across the globe. I started my career as a management trainee (administration) at SAIL. Subsequently, I also worked in the non-profit organisation CARE International. Where I dealt with matters relating to infant health, maternity health, HIV AIDS, livelihoods, girls' education and many other poverty-related aspects. I also went to Sri Lanka post Tsunami where I played an instrumental role in disaster management. And there is how I

advocated for resilience building and a community service attitude of the management towards people. I also served for many years in IT sectors with Wipro and IBM. Now, I am associated with Odisha's most-prized dairy Company, Milk Mantra. as Head of HR.

Prof. Abhijit: What HR interventions and initiatives have you taken in the HR department so far?

Expert : Although, I am a front-runner in implementing many HR strategies some of the most notable initiatives in the field of HR were "Wipro@home". It is a family engagement program at Wipro to give a home-like feeling to the family members of the Employees with the objective of shaping positive perceptions about night shifts at the workplace. Similarly, at IBM I devised an innovative program "Voice of Employee Clinic" (VoCE) that enabled the communication flow between the senior leadership and the lower-level force in a one-on-one setting to foster employee engagement. In this program, they are free to talk whatever for one hour with their seniors. It was a great success and it is followed in all the IBM offices around the globe. At Milk Mantra I architected an innovative initiative i.e., "make it happen". This program has a unique objective to continuously nurture and develop a small cohort of 40 high-potential employees for their fast-tracked performance and growth.

Prof. Abhijit: What are your values and ideologies to better manage the people?

Expert : As a leader, I don't seek to lead. I don't separate myself from people I am very empathetic, caring and people friendly. that's how I win the trust of my people and manage them better.

Prof. Abhijit: What is your take in this age of digitalisation and AI?

Expert : Yes, I believe that AI plays a very significant role more so in the supply chains. At Milk Mantra we are planning to bring people who will digitalise our entire supply chain. In the HR department, we

have already implemented HRMS to keep track of our personnel records relating to their personal inventory, performance, leaves, holidays, communication etc.

Prof. Abhipsa: Sir, in this war for talent when we are facing the Talent crunch, we are left with two options "make in Talent or buy out Talent". Sir, which one would you vote for?

Expert : We are prepared for both. This year we have established Milk Mantra Learning Academy to impart in-house training for our employees to update their skills. on the other hand, buying talent is always welcoming at Milk Mantra believing that there should be no rigidity. Agile and adaptive people are in need of the hour.

Prof. Abhijit: HR seems at the forefront of many challenges in an organisation. What are the biggest concerns that you have explored and you have faced within a HR department?

Expert : I have a natural ability to get along with people. Getting people and attracting people is the biggest challenge for every company and organisation. Attracting people is not through advertisements or any recruiting ads. Every HR leader must have experience in public relations, and communication, and must be a forward-looking, confident, inclusive and progressive person. So, he must have the right knowledge of managing the image of the company. I think these are some of the key ways to tackle any challenges in an organisation.

Prof. Abhipsa: What skills do you look for when hiring a potential talent for Milk Mantra?

Expert : We look for a person with basic knowledge, technical skills, strong ethics and a person of moral values. For lower-end jobs tacit knowledge is a must. Whereas, for high-end profile jobs for example Sales head and other managerial positions, a candidate should have a great deal of market understanding, analytical skills, strategic thinking, and an experimental intent.

Prof. Abhijit: Sir, could you please tell us about your leadership Mantra at Milk Mantra?

Expert : I don't seek to lead. If you live like an ordinary person, you will never suffer. I always believe we are all one team you don't need to be led; we are all Champs. My role is to streamline the process.

Prof. Abhipsa: An HR has to focus on managing the team and fostering Team Spirit. how have you been able to create an effective team?

Expert : At Milk Mantra we organise off-site engagement activities. We select a small proportion of employees approximately 40 in number and we take them to luxurious hotels where they chill and relax for 2 days. In my opinion, communication is the backbone for building a great team. I personally vouch for open and continuous interaction with people.

Prof. Abhipsa & Prof. Abhijit : Thank you Sir for sharing your experience and insights!

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