Leading with wisdom

Introduction

With more than 27 years of rich experience in the corporate world, Mr. Anand Pillai is Sr. Vice President and Global Head of Quality, Talent Transformation & Leadership Development at HCL Technologies, thus leading the two critical functions of People and Processes.

Anand has handled challenging assignments in general management and as head of sales operations in companies such as Honeywell, Tata Unisys, Hughes Network Systems and Bay Networks. Anand has been a much sought after speaker in many national and international forums. He has been the distinguished speaker at the Fortune Innovation Forum in NY, USA (the only non American speaker to be invited)), NASSCOM, CII, etc. He also has given guest lectures at the country's premier institutes such as IIM-Ahmedabad, SPJIMR, IMT, etc.

Proud recipient of many HR awards, Anand has also been recently featured in the book "Leading with Wisdom" along with 30 other leaders (Steven Covey, Abdul Kalam to name a few) in the world. He is also going to be featured in a new book "Leadership is a Decision" to be published by London Business School.

Mr. Anand Pillai
Senior Vice President HCL Technologies

Q: What do you think is the greatest challenge of being an HR Senior Vice President of such a large conglomerate?

A: Since a large percentage of our employees belong to Generation Y, the biggest challenge is to constantly develop ways of igniting their passion and leveraging their potential

Q: You have been conferred upon various HR Awards like HR Professional of the Year, HR Leadership award etc., how does it feel to receive such an honorable recognition?

A: It is actually a very humbling experience because with each recognition comes a responsibility. As I continue to live up to the rising expectations of the stakeholders both within the organization and outside, situations like this give the much needed challenge and push to rise above yourself and be available for others.

Q: What role do you think effective leaders play in an organization?

A: Leadership is imperative for molding a group of people into a team, shaping them into a force that serves as a competitive business advantage. Effective leaders know how to make people function in a collaborative fashion, and how to motivate them to excel their performance. Leaders also know how to balance the individual team member's quest with the goal of producing synergy – an outcome that exceeds the sum of individual inputs.

Effective leaders today need to focus on increasing their span of influence rather than span of control. For leaders to become relevant in today's organization, they need to also connect to the gen Y- know what drives them and create enabling environments that influence and impact the way they operate inside the organization.

Q: Can you share a few leadership development initiatives undertaken for employees at HCL?

A: Various programs have been conceptualized with a vi-

sion to create world class leaders at HCL and build effective bench strength in the organization. Some of them are:

Top Gun-It is a program that is aimed at identifying and grooming future business leaders on the six HCL leadership competencies so that they are ready to head independent business units in the future. The Leadership Development program is aimed at being a process intervention that locks in the participants for a period of 14-21 months where they are exposed to various components of leadership development such as classroom training, one on one coaching, action learning projects. The program incorporates both the traditional and modern approach to leadership development. As we move towards an uncertain and volatile culture, it is essential that our leaders stand by certain values and beliefs to withstand external forces and emerge victorious. Keeping this in mind, the Employee First Leadership Style has been developed at HCL. The Employee First Leadership style is the true hallmark of an HCL Leader.

FLAME- (First Leap in Achieving Managerial Excellence) is a modular as well as competencies based development program designed to develop First Level Managers.

FLAME envisions grooming the next generation of corporate leaders by endowing "First Time Managers" with the critical competencies required to be successful in a managerial role. It enables participants to develop a broader vision to create high business impact. The various topics covered under this include self management, delegation skills, managing interdepencies, leading teams, conflict management skills, negotiation skills, managing performance.

TITAN – It is a program to develop competencies for middle level manager at HCL and intends to cover all managers in the company. The fulcrum band of managers will be looking at heading businesses in about 3 years – TITAN caters to these middle level managers. This program runs for about 18 weeks covering 6 modules through a blended learning approach – Case Study, Live meeting discussion, ILT & experience sharing. The several modules covered in this program include 360 leadership, coaching, engagement skills, etc

Q: Can you throw some light on some of the Best HR Practices followed at HCL?

A: Open 360 Degree Feedback: The Open 360 feedback is about inverting the management pyramid. It is asking the managers to get their employees' point of view, a radical departure from the command and control style. Typically, in most organizations a 360 degree feedback is a closed process where only a small group of managers participate and shown the reports. The results are not shared with anyone. The most unique features of the HCL's Open 360 Degree Feedback are:-

The feedback received by the managers is posted on the company's intranet and is a public document. This increases accountability and transparency amongst the employees, thereby promoting an open culture in the organization.

The individual is given feedback on a set of behavioral parameters as opposed to the performance indicators that most

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organizations use. HCL's Open 360 degree feedback is not linked to the individual's performance appraisal and is purely used for his/her development purposes.

A typical 360 degree feedback invites feedback from only the direct influence group- the immediate reporting manager, peers and subordinates. HCL's Open 360 Degree feedback process opens up the feedback reception to even those who are indirectly being influenced by the said manager- it assesses a manager's span of influence rather than his/her span of control

Employee Passion Indicative Count™ (EPIC™):- Keeping the employees and the overall organization goal in mind, Employee Passion Indicative Count™ (EPIC) at HCL Technologies was conceptualized. While most organizations conduct an Employee Satisfaction or Employee Engagement surveys – the results of which are not employee owned, rather more for the management consumption. HCL's passion assessment or EPIC™ aims at measuring the passion drivers of an employee at the same time giving them practical tips on how they could leverage those drivers in everyday work. This program was completely focused on the employee wherein they received customized reports on what their top 5 passion indicators were and how could they capitalize on them. The organization indirectly benefited from this exercise in that we analyzed the organization's overall passion drivers. Analysis was also done at several levels- generation X, Y and Baby Boomers, Geography, Business Unit levels, etc. This helped us understand what was driving individuals and teams thereby, allowing us to re-align our strategies and innovation. Having obtained customized reports, the employees also got their roles re-aligned according to what they could do best and were passionate about. Over 25,000 (57%) employees participated in this program when it was first launched in March 2009.

Q: What do you think are the most essential attributes that are required by management graduates to make it big in the corporate world?

A: in my opinion there are three most essential attributes that a management graduate needs to possess:-

- ❑ Empathy and particularly the ability to identify with Gen Y
- ❑ The ability to be creative and innovative rather than be bogged down by the policies and procedures
- ❑ Be more connected with the business so that they do not perform the role of HR in isolation