NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES AT JUTE INDUSTRY IN POST COVID 19

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted lives, economies, and workplaces. Bally Jute company Ltd, Bally, Howrah, West Bengal has taken several measures during lockdown and post Covid time at workplace. During Lockdown, entire production were stopped, but maintenance activities were taken places with social distancing norms and other SOP. After lockdown, the unit is gradually come back to normal situation with engagement of employees in new way. The main objective of the unit is now to protect employees and customers. A few official employees are advised for remote work and telecommuting. Physical meeting with customers, external providers are now eliminated. Marketing department officers are now communicating with buyers and customers through on line mode. Communication with various stake holders and Top management officers are now through whatsapp messaging, video conferencing etc. The employees are expanding their comfort, capability and confidence with such modern communication adds. Social distancing norms maintain at work place by all level of employees. Distribution of masks to all level of staffs and staffs has been deployed to monitor that every employees should follow the right way of face masks at work place. Hanging banner, display board relating to cleanliness, SOP etc. at various strategic position of the unit.

Keyword: Measures, Engagement, Telecommuting, Confidence, Monitor, Protect

1. INTRODUCTION

Jute is a natural biodegradable fibre. It is the second largest fibre used in Textile manufacturing next to cotton. Demand of Jute products are increasing day by day, due to its bio degradable nature and keep environment clean. During New normal situation, demand of jute products are remained same. Problem of jute industry is that, huge number of manpower is required in day to day activities to attain the desired productivity. The HR department is dealing with crucial role for maintaining the SOP of Covid 19 protocol at work place of Jute industry. HR professional in Jute industry taken active role to keep the employees safe at work place during covid 19 time. The team of HR department has implemented several norms at workplace. The norms are maintaining social distancing, regular disinfection at offices, workplace, production places, buses, cars, labor colonies etc. Management of industry has taken own arrangement of hand wash, sanitizers tunnel and distribution of free masks to all level of employees at this time. At new normal situation, HR department takes crucial, leading role for keeping employees engaged, motivated, safe, and productive. HR managers were maintaining the minimum staff requirement for some time at this situation. They counselling the employees that the virus is such a nature social distancing is to be continued at least a year. As a result HR professional are now dependent of modern communication technology for recruitment, teaching and learning process, workplace training program etc. Training and skilling of staffs and labours are reconfigured for an online-only mode. Standard attendance and leave policies of employees are now changed. Organization is now maintaining the building trust between employees and Management that a few work should be done remotely except manufacturing process. It is found that employees of some department are now able to work from home. This is helping the employees to balance professional and personal issues better. Employees, who are directly linked with production process, are engaged at work place with maintaining social distancing and wearing face masks. Organization is distributing face masks to all level of people at work place, so that safety and security are well maintained.

2. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY:

The Objective of the present study is stated below.
• To observe the impact of Covid 19 in Jute industry.
• To find out the various decision accepted by the HR department under pandemic situation.
• To observe the benefit obtained from the implementation of the corrective measures for new normal

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:
Research papers, articles published in various websites are studied and collected on Employees working process, duties and responsibilities during pandemic and new normal activities of various organization. Top Management along with HR department is an important area of any organization for taking new initiatives and transformed the organization in challenging situation. Bally Jute Company Ltd. is a well-known organization in Kolkata. The unit is selected for observation of various activities during lock down, policies ,initiatives and changing decisions at the Covid 19 situation. Regarding this all meeting, minutes, notices of HR department as well as top management are studied. The different initiatives of HR department are discussed with officers of all departments along with HR department for writing such case studies. Personal interview with HR officers relating to the planning of employees engagement at new normal were undertaken. Based on such studies, this paper is written on the engagement of employees at this unit which will helpful for any Jute /Textile industry in new normal.

4. LITERATURE REVIEWS:
Due to COVID-19, companies have planned to accelerate into digital marketing procedures. Human resource management (HRM) have took a big place inside the hearts of the human beings and this resource management also needs to manage the needs of the companies in the crisis period, to continue the digital business modes in a balanced manner. By taking the help from all this process, our future would get more flexible, smooth and remote- friendly, digitally balanced, relax able [1].

Organizations have to get prepared for the unforeseen events and for the crisis period, to balance the downfall, and have to alter their working environment from one place to another. They need to find new solutions to all the challenges coming across them, during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Performance level should be as balanced as before the crisis period arrives [2].

Many actions were taken by the decision makers in multinational companies to deal with the pandemic situation. This situation has helped the HR management to overcome many problems like managing distance and vast thinking skills at the macro or firm-levels. IB research team has chosen distance management and thinking capability process as the primary focus and also they have equitably taken the area of academic inquiry [3].

Research team has highlighted many facts which have difficulties in training purpose, health issues, safety measures and selection process of the employee. This pandemic situation has led to distance management problems in new intra-firm and in cross-border distance. Maintaining distances socially and physically has shown a poor impact on the firms because virtual communication is not enough for satisfying the customer needs, while active communication helps to reduce all sorts of communication as well as dual thinking problems, in this way it takes over the organizations into a path of improvement [4].

5. STUDY AREA:
Bally Jute Company Ltd.[BJCL] is a pioneer Jute industry in West Bengal. It is situated at Bally, Howrah district and near to Kolkata. More than 3000 employees are engaged in the day to day work of this unit. Human resources is an integral part for this unit. Large number of machineries is running in this unit in three shifts. Lot of people are required to run the machineries, maintaining day wise productivity to desired level. Jute fabrics, yarn, Jute twines, geotextile fabrics, various jute bags are the main products of this unit .So , it is very challenging situation of HR department for maintaining standard SOP within such employees at New normal to maintain desired production .The unit is running for 24 ×7 hrs. in new normal

6. EMPLOYEES ENGAGEMENT IN JUTE INDUSTRY AT NEW NORMAL:
Top Management is now concentrated on the Covid 19 protocols at new normal situation while keeping the standard productivity of day wise capacity. There is high demand on Jute products in National and International market. Problem is
the labor attendance at the new normal. Most of the employees, during lockdown time returned to their native place of UP, Bihar and Odisha. BJCL is now running with machines operator from closed Jute Industry. As a result, uncertainty is always there for regular labour attendance. But industry has high product demand of finished goods. Under this situation, this industry is in a challenging situation for meeting the customer satisfaction. Top management is now concentrated on the following areas at this new normal.

6.1. A few department employees are remote working:

A few employees are taken into remote working. People who are in official work at main office are arranged to remote work from their home. Weekly 2-3 days day are coming their respective workplace for submitting their day to day activities to management. Employees of Marketing, Purchasing of raw material and consumable store items are working from their home. Official work people are now rotating their duties in 3 days in a week. As a result, offices of the organisation can maintained the social distancing norms. People who are essential to day wise production, are now coming to their workplace six days in a week.

- Staffs, machine operators and other utility and engineering services staffs and employees are coming to their workplace regularly.
- Production related staffs are now entertained the company’s own staffs quarters.
- Those who are local resident, come from their home regularly.
- Goal setting of employees those who are in remote work.
- Enhancement of Contractual jobs and freelancers in different activities of the unit.
- To maintain competitive, employees are upgraded through various types of online training on Covid SOP.
- Learning and development of trainers at workplace is important and this to be continued. Trainees of machines operators are now entertained the company’s own bachelor’s mess with lodging, fooding free. As a result constant labor attendances are now under control for day wise production.

- Most of the permanent workmen are living at labour colony which is attached with the company. So travelling of employees from long distances to company’s duty is eliminated.
- A large number of workmen, mainly machine operator are coming from various closed jute mills. In such cases, company is arranged a few bus services for received and drop facility from company to the nearby city of their home.

6.2. Continuous Shift instead of break shift:

Top management is now run the shift in continuous manner. It is planned due to, a large number of people, machine operators are coming from distant closed mill. HR department is now concentrated on the following areas. Three shifts are now running at this unit. A shift from 6 am to 1.30 pm, B shift from 2 to 9.30 pm and C shift from 10 pm to 5.30 am. So exit and entry of employees are taken in such a manner, that there is no intermixing between employees at starting of shift at the department and also in the main gate of the company. Apart from that HR department also concentrated on the following areas.

- Physical health and wellbeing of the employees.
- Remote Work of employees except production and maintenance.
- Issues related to jobs and work continuity of employees at work place or from home.
- Counselling of employees that it is very urgent for development of mental health, resilience and family support in this uncertainty situation.

6.3. Special attention for Clean Work place of the Industry:

HR department takes special initiatives to clean the work place of each department along with official areas. Fumigation, social distancing, disinfecting, pest control, hand sanitizers, clean floors etc. are taken in time. Following measures are taken at work place.
• Sanitization tunnel installation at the main entry gate of the company. It is placed in the main entrance, that entry and exit of each employee are restricted and everyone can pass freely through the sanitization channel.

• Regular cleaning at work place of each department.

• Disinfecting at main office, and other office of HODs

• Each working table is surrounded by plastic sheet covers which help the staffs to make safe distance with the staffs or people at the opposite side of the table.

• Liquid soap is given in plastic container at each basin of washing.

• Continuous monitoring of the workplace by CC TV camera.

6.4. Care on employee’s wellness:

• Hanging of banners on Covid 19 rules and regulations, Health and Environment related issues, at strategic point of the industry.

• Counselling of staffs and labour to maintain the Covid 19 standards norms and procedure at work place,

• Hanging banner, display board relating to cleanliness, e.g., DO NOT SPIT, at strategic point of workplace.

• Display board of Do’s and not to do’s of Covid 19 SOP.

• HR profession of this unit is now given more focus on the mental health and overall wellness of the employees.

• Retired employees has been given full benefit and released from job. They are advised not to join at work place during pandemic situation. Better to stay at home. Employees above 60 are generally released from work at this new normal.

• Distribution of masks to all level of staffs and staffs has been deployed to monitor that every employees should follow the right way of face masks.

• Face screen has been given to all senior officers.

• Drop and receive facility of company car for staffs’. Senior officers already avail the company staffs quarters. A few staffs are given lodging facility during lockdown days.

• Most of the workmen are already taken the company’s own labor colony for lodging facility which is adjacent with company’s own area. Outstation workmen are given receive and drop facility by hiring bus service for three shifts. Labour shortage is the main problem during pandemic. Most of the regular workmen of the company had already returned to their native home at Bihar, Odisa and UP. As a result, company has to arrange outstation contact labor from closed Jute Mills. Labor from such closed mills is coming to this unit at various shifts. Such people are entertained the Bus service given by company.

• 24 Hours opening of company’s own dispensary and free consulting with medical officers. All employees are getting such benefits. HR officers believed that holistic benefits of company are now important. These benefits are indicating all aspects of well-being including mental health and wellbeing of the all level of employees and financial security at this crisis time. The idea indicates to provide employees with benefits which will improve their wellbeing and health coverage. People now realized that Social distancing norms maintain at work place by all level of employees.

6.5. Adoption of New Technology in day to day activity:

Top management along with the HR department are now fully engaged for adopting the new technology in new normal. Following areas are now concentrated by HR department of this unit.

• Communication with various stake holders and Top management officers are now through whatsapp messaging, video conferencing etc. The employees are expanding their comfort, capability and confidence with such modern communication adds.

• Physical meeting with customers, external providers are now eliminated. Marketing
department officers are now communicating with buyers and customers through online mode.

- Lockdown was taught the employees of BJCL to figure out a way to deal with these challenges and they are now confident that most of the employees are enhancing their comfort, capability and confidence with digital technology. HR officers were taken leading role to achieve such generation of confidence within the employees.

6.6. Educating and equipping the workforce –

Top Management is now educating the workforce with the right information on COVID-19, safety tips. The HR officials are communicated various measures taken by the company during this situation.

6.7. Up Skilling the Employee

As the employee personalization trend illustrates, employees want to be appreciated on an individual level. One way employers are showing their appreciation is through upskilling. Learning and development initiatives. Not only does this help employees feel valued, but it also helps fill knowledge gaps within the company. Employees are now given training on digital technology at workplace, so that they can get knowledge and apply in the day to day activities. So upskilling by external and internal experts are now used for developing the skill of staffs and managers of various levels. This will enhance the company’s day to day communication activities in fastest way.

7. SPECIAL ATTENTION OF MANAGEMENT:

Management of BJCL is now declared norms to all level of employees to wash their hands regularly and stay at least one meter away at production place, office and canteen of the industry to avoid physical contact and rapid spread of the virus. It is declared by HR department that if somebody feel ill at workplace, immediately communicate with dispensary for medical measures and take suggestion of medical practitioner. They are advised to contact with company’s own dispensary for medical consultation. Management of BJCL is given restrictions on employees to comply with any travel from other states, movement or large gatherings. It is advised to security to monitor the temperature of all employees during entry at the main gate. Employees who have returned from Covid hotspot states, should take 14 days home quarantine before joining at work in the industry.

It is advised to employees that if they feel mild cough or fever, should stay at home and keep themselves self-isolation. This will help to avoid close contact with other people at work place, including family members too.

At various places of the unit it is displayed dispensers of alcohol-based hand rub prominently around the washing basin, toilets. At workplace, doors and windows are in open condition, so that sufficient air is circulated at the work place. Ventilation system is kept in well condition. At work place If anyone who starts to feel unwell, immediately they are guided for medical consultation. In such cases isolation room is keep ready for immediate precautionary measure.

Management of BJCL BJCL is taken care for Employee Engagement after Covid at factories and office of the organization that keep morale high.

1. Mill workplace and office area be Visible: It is true fact that at work place people want to see their leaders. Line manager or departmental managers are strictly involved to monitoring the machine operators and other employees at workplace. Employees feel refreshed when they find their boss visible and accessible.

2. Team Manager or departmental supervisors check in their employees. Manager of this unit is trying to see observe or understand the situation of all production, maintenance employees. The departmental supervisors, Managers taken face to face meeting with workmen and taken information about his family health information daily. In this way they motivate and exhibited care, attention towards employees at workplace which enhance trust of employees to Management.

3. It is found that women employees are worried about their husband possibility of losing their job. And they worry about income. Top management of this unit reassures their teams. They feel that safety concerns are obviously a big chunk.
Management is trying to make sure to follow employees health and safety at workplace.

8. CONCLUSION:

So, now, we came for a conclusion, that the HR team have to deal with every drastic situation either in normal phases or in pandemic situations. The sudden shift in work culture and to adopt the new culture due to the pandemic was the biggest challenge for HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT team. But they worked according to overcome and bear least of loss for their respective firms. They had emphasised on several challenges coming on to their way like mental health and well-being, managing of remote work, lack of agility, employee communication, uncertainty and employee engagement. Also they have to face some budget issues during the lockdown period, but somehow they solve their problems by encouraging the employees, and by recruiting software, also via outsource task from changing locations to communicate and to deal more comfortably. Though they had to encounter with these situations during the pandemic but they came with organised solutions.

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[1] REFERENCES:


