ABSTRACT

These days there has been an increased awareness across the global business community regarding the significance of going green and implementing various environmental management systems. There has been a growing concern regarding sustainable development everywhere.

These days, the human resource department plays a very significant role in making Green HRM a key business strategy for any firm. This paper aims at focusing on a few fundamental aspects related to Green HRM such as: the meaning and importance of Green HRM, reasons for adopting green HRM, prerequisites for green HRM, barriers in the implementation of green HRM, green HR initiatives adopted by companies and how employees can contribute in this regard.

Keywords--- Green HRM, Sustainable Development, Environmental Management, HRM

I. INTRODUCTION

Go Green has become the buzzword for the 21st century due to an increased environmental concern all around the globe in all the fields be it business or non-business. This has majorly occurred due to some specific treaties to combat climate change. In the present scenario the organizations are supposed to find out ways and techniques to deal with reduction in carbon footprints apart from tackling the economic issues. The business community is supposed to earn profits but not at the cost of environment. In order to attain success it is required that the corporate play a significant role in sustainable development so that a balance can be maintained among social, economic and environmental factors.

It is required that all the departments in an organization be it HR, Marketing, IT, Finance, and so on, work together in a joint effort to contribute towards the implementation of any corporate environmental program.

Of these we can say that HR is the most important contributor because ultimately it is the peoples’ effort that can bring about any significant change to the working of an organization. This implies that Green Human Resource Management is the most significant element of sustainability. HR function can be renamed as “People and Society” function which is responsible for creating a green world where consumers and employees are equal contributors to environment sustainability. In this paper, we are going to focus on the exclusively focus on the topic Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) where the Human Resource Management (HRM) is engaged in managing the environment within an organization

Objectives

The main purpose of this study is:

1. To develop a basic understanding of the meaning and importance of Green HRM.
2. To find out the reasons why we need to adopt Green HRM.
3. To identify the prerequisites for implementation of Green HRM.
4. To determine the limitations or barriers to its successful implementation.
5. To suggest some possible Green initiatives by the HR department.

Research Methodology

The study is primarily based upon the secondary data. The data relevant to the topic was collected from different databases, websites and other available sources.

Green HRM defined

Green HRM has become the buzz word in the business field today and that is the main reason why it has become popular with researchers.

It has been defined by various authors like Marhatta & Adhikari, 2013, p. 2) who says Green HRM is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within organizations and, more generally promotes the causes of environment sustainability.
According to (Mathapati, 2013, p. 2), GHRM is directly responsible in creating green workforce that understands, appreciates, and practices green initiative and maintains its green objectives all throughout the HRM process of recruiting, hiring, training, compensating, developing, and advancing the firms human capital and business.

Thus in simple words, we can say that it is an integration of Management of both Human Resource and Environment and lay stress on the fact that an organization’s HRM policies should be used to promote environmental sustainability as well as the judicious use of the human resources. So, it not only tries to improve environmental affairs, but also cares for social and economical well-being of both the organization and the employees.

Green HR involves focuses on improving two elements, Environmentally-friendly HR practices and the preservation of knowledge capital thus creating a green world.

II. IMPORTANCE OF GREEN HRM

Green HRM focuses on environment-friendly HR initiatives which are resulting in following benefits:

1. More operational efficiencies
2. Improved employee engagement and retention thus leading to lower costs for the organization for example car-sharing, job-sharing, virtual interviews, online training etc.
3. Helps to create competitive advantage from the existing opportunities in the changing markets.
4. Helps to reduce labor turnover because employees are more satisfied with the organization.
5. Some indirect benefits like improvement in the health of the workforce when they are encouraged to do cycling for going here and there during work hours, reduced stress as the employees themselves wish to work more.

Overall it is a win-win strategy both for the employee and the employer The employer is successful in attracting and holding the top talent, making them satisfied and engaged towards the work which makes them happy and productive too. All this is done with the help of right direction with by providing them a strong leadership, taking care of the sentiments of the employees, offer them better opportunities for their professional growth, offer them more responsible work which makes them feel empowered, offer flexible hours thus creating a better work-life balance. If an HR department is successful in creating this culture of sustainability by making changes in functions like recruitment, induction, training and development, performance appraisal and employee compensation with a touch of corporate social responsibility, no one can beat that organization in terms of its unique worth.

III. REASONS FOR ADOPTING GREEN HR

Better workforce: Workforce development needs are created by newly emerging green economy thus benefitting the employees.

More inspired workforce for better problem solving: Employees are more engaged have more innovative solutions to dynamic change-related business problems.

Improved employee retention: even workforce desire to work in Green companies because of the environment friendly practices adopted by them.

Increased desirability as an employer: a green employer will search for green talent pool who understands about sustainability and provide better profit through business strategy

Improved environmental performance of organizations: due to frequent discussions of how HR policies and practices can bring a lot of improvement in the organizations

Standard of living maintained with less budget: The employees who know about sustainable careers are interested in flexible compensation and benefits, carpooling, flexible working hours, and are more successful in maintaining themselves in less budgets.

More future for our own country: Green HR helps to create jobs in India which will provide employment opportunities for diverse groups of people such as architects, lawyers, business risk analysts, engineers etc. and there is a requirement of additional skilled workforce to fill these jobs.

IV. ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS OR PRE-REQUISITES FOR GREEN HR

For successful achievement of organizational environmental goals or greening, essential requirements for green human resource need to be identified. There are four categories of green human resource requirements which are as follows:

- Green competencies
- Green attitude
- Green behavior and
- Green results.

Though these major types of green human requirements are related they can be distinctly treated. Figure 1 shows these requirements and relevant dimensions.
Green competencies: to become a green employee, every employee should possess a competencies in terms of knowledge and skills. There are few researchers also who have advocated this fact. To name a few, we have (Callenbach et al., 1993; Gupta & Sharma, 1996; Ramus, 2002; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; etc). The role of HR department is to provide the requisite competencies in the employees for the betterment of the organizational performance.

Green attitude: The employees should also have the right attitude of greening which means the positive intention related to greening. Even if they are not the green employees, at least they should have the attitude to become so. (Stern & Dietz, 1994; Bamberg, 2003; Schultz et al., 2004; Perron et al., 2006)

Green behavior: An appropriate behavioral change is also expected from employees towards environmental sustainability (Harries & Helen, 2012). Employees should aim at engaging in those positive actions that strive to achieve greening.

Green results
Some of the green changes leading to green results are as follows:

- Use of natural water not the refrigerated one for drinking to save electricity.
- Employees bringing their own cups and dishes.
- Using less bulbs to work
- To switch off the air-conditioners and other gadgets before going home
- To report regarding damages and harms etc to the environment whenever noticed to the relevant officer.

Figure 1 Green human resource requirements

V. BARRIERS TO GREEN HRM

Even though companies are making great efforts to become more environmental friendly, there can be a number of disadvantages or we can say limiting factors to “go green” for corporations.

1. Higher Conversion Expense: It can be quite costly for a corporation to go green initially. For example, switching to solar power will require panels to be installed at business facilities. The cost reduction in energy savings gained by going green is not always enough to offset the initial conversion costs.

2. Costlier Products: Using green materials can lead to more expensive raw materials for manufacturers and hence more expensive products for consumers.

3. Lack of Support: Green initiatives require a lot of support and dedication not only from the management of an organization but also from the government.

4. Loss of data: For most of the companies, a common method of going green is to minimize or eliminate the use of paper. This has its own disadvantages. For example, if employees lose or experience the theft of laptop
computers, sensitive information could fall into the wrong hands. Moreover, in the absence of a proper back up; a system crash could prove disastrous.

5. **No value to environmental sustainability**: Most of the companies lack the internal mechanisms to properly value the benefits of managing environmental sustainability, such as reduced exposure to energy, price volatility, and other environmental impacts of operations and supply chains.

6. **Divergent goals**: Most of the time, the priorities of sustainability teams and financial teams are divergent. As a result, sustainability teams are brought into project planning too late. As a result they are not able to convince the financial decision makers.

7. **Lack of metrics**: Organizations do not have clear methods to price external environmental costs, such as the risk of climate change to society; as a result they can’t factor these "expenses" into their traditional decision-making. Companies may find they are not fully aware of the real costs and risks associated with their investments over time.

8. **Non integration of environmental factors**: Environmental factors such as climate change and water scarcity are not being fully integrated into long-term business strategy. Therefore, companies miss out opportunities to improve financial performance through environmental improvements in processes and product lines.

### VI. GREEN HR PRACTICES

Following are some of the green HRM initiatives that can be adopted by companies to GO GREEN

1. **Going paperless** – This involves replacing the age old tradition of paper documentation by paperless office which can be achieved by encouraging e-mailing.

2. **Conducting annual surveys** – Separate surveys can be conducted among employees to assess how well the organization is doing with regard to implementing green business practices and to gather suggestions and insight for future actions with respect to environment friendliness.

3. **Conducting an energy audit** – In order to reduce wastage and save money companies can improve insulation, install timers to automatically turn off lights, use energy efficient light bulbs, air conditioners etc. and keep temperatures at comfortable ranges that are not excessively cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

4. **Recycle** - Recycling of glass, paper, plastic, metal trash and manufacturing waste materials should be adopted. Food canteens should adhere to zero wastage policy. Eliminate unnecessary photocopying and reuse packaging for shipping.

5. **Reduce commuting** - Employees should be encouraged to use carpooling by providing preferred parking for carpoolers. Companies can offer to provide transit passes to employees who take the bus or subway, and bike racks for cyclists.

6. **Communicating about Going Green issues** – The organization should try to inform suppliers and customers about its go green efforts. It can also get in touch with local regulatory agencies which may offer some financial incentives to companies that implement green initiatives. Efforts should also be made to keep employees and shareholders/investors informed about the progress of green HRM initiatives.

7. **Provide leadership and resources for going green** - This can be done by assigning a respected executive-level person to head up going Green/Organizational Sustainability initiatives. “Going green” should also be incorporated in the company’s mission statement and business plans.

8. **Detoxify** - Many offices have toxic substances, such as used batteries and copier toner on hand. Steps can be taken to dispose them safely and non toxic alternatives should be sought from the suppliers.

9. **Rethink transportation** - Alternative ways to transportation and delivery of goods should be thought about. For example - Purchase or lease energy-efficient cars and trucks for your employees’ business uses and delivery of products.

10. **Buying green** - Suppliers should be informed that the company is interested in sustainable products and set specific goals for buying recycled, refurbished, or used materials. Make the environment, and not just price, a factor when purchasing.

11. **Involve Employees** - Create a team of dedicated employees to lead the company’s eco-efforts and encourage them to take initiatives on their own.

12. **Reducing business travel** – Teleconferencing and videoconferencing should be preferred over traveling. Online training programs should be given preference. For must-go trips, keep track of the miles driven and flown and buy carbon offset from a non-profit like Carbonfund.org to make up for the greenhouse gas emissions.

13. **Save water** - Wastage of water in manufacturing processes and in watering the company’s lawns should be completely eliminated. Water wastage due to leakage in sinks and toilets must be carefully monitored.

14. **Explore opportunities for implementing alternative energy sources** - Opportunities for using alternative sources of energy like solar energy, bio-fuels, wind power etc. should also be evaluated.

15. **Implement green manufacturing processes** – his can be done by using energy-efficient equipment, and streamlining processes to use fewer steps and reduce materials and packaging involved in products.

16. **Hiring eco friendly talent** – As a part of Green HRM organizations must attract employees who are concerned
about the environment. They must focus on preservationists and conservationists.

17. Green printing - Printing papers leads to increased usage of paper, toner wastage and carbon dioxide emission. Companies are now adopting “pre-ton” saver, a software which can reduce paper demand by 20% and toner and ink demand by 50% without degrading the quality of output image or printout.

18. Green rewards – Companies can introduce green rewards for employees and departments who contribute to innovative initiatives and green contribution by reduction of wastage, energy and resources.

19. Green promotion - Organizations provide loan discounts on fuel efficient cars and energy saving home improvements, and discounts at local green merchants.

20. Green policies - Green policies such as providing free reusable bags(for grocery, etc) to clients or employees or giving free in-office lunches everyday so no one has to drive to eat out can be encouraged.

VII. CONCLUSION

Overall, it is concluded that Green HRM should be made a business strategy for firm. Organizations should provide proper training to the employees and influence them to adopt green HRM. No doubt there are certain barriers in the implementation of green HRM but firms should still concentrate on the innovative methods to adopt Green HR and should learn from other companies’ green HR initiatives adopted by them. They should focus on strengthening their employees so that can also contribute in this regard. This way, the natural resources would be better utilized and also for the purpose they should be used.

REFERENCES


