Global Competitiveness: Challenges and Best Practices in HR
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Reimagining HR
Global Competitiveness & New Age Workforce

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Background
With concentration of the management to be a Engineering major, priority of development and adoption of best Human Resources practices matching industry standards took a back seat. Being a Government Organization, company had adopted various procedures and practices prevailing in Central Government Offices and major activities of HRM Department were concentrated on service matters such as leave, attendance, pay fixation etc. Appraisal Process of the company (APAR Process) was in operation in line to procedure adopted by Central Government offices.

Hard copies were issued to employees for writing their self appraisal which were sent by employees to their subsequent assessing authorities who were placed at distant far location either through courier or postal services which lead to delay in finalization of APARs. With hard copy APAR process in existence, there used to be cutting/ use of fluid in the APARs and representation/ grievances and court cases by employees were on rise. With frequent transfers of employees from one project to another due to nature of business of company, sometimes it was difficult for HRM Department to track APARs of employees which used to delay convening of DPC activities which was one of the cause of demotivation among employees. RTI application by employees seeking APARs were all time high which used to keep one to two employees of HRM Department always engaged in getting photocopies of APAR of employees.

It is essential to point out here that the performance of the organization among its peers in industry was excelling day by day and management wished that HRM department should also adopt the prevalent automated HR solution for APAR process which is robust, transparent, paperless and easy to operate with provision to monitor the real time progress of APAR activities online on click of the mouse to re-image the HRM functioning.

Problem Statement
How to transform APAR process of the company in online mode matching industry standards which is transparent, easy in
operation by employees and assessing authorities and can reimage HRM Department.

**Key Challenges**

- Fear of Acceptability of Online Appraisal application at all levels
- Accessibility of ERP Application by employees located at far flung areas across the country
- Cost effectiveness of ERP applications
- Testing of Developed Application
- Data Collection, Verification and storage
- Backup and Support Mechanism
- Establishing credibility of HRM Department through transparency in APAR Process.

**Steps taken to address the Challenges**

With the vision of present Chairman - cum - Managing Director to adopt a technology based automated HRM process which helps bringing in transparency and operational efficiency in the working HRM Department, Corporate HRM Division initiated “Project Prayas” for streamlining various HR practices and procedures. The first initiative undertaken by HRM Department under “Project Prayas” was transitioning the Manual APAR process into online mode through Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Application for all Group A&B level employees including employees at E-8 and E-9 level. A task force of HRM employees from PMS section was constituted to implement the Online Appraisal Process. In order to ensure that a complete HR transformation take place as per the direction and vision of the Management, series of HRM transformations processes were planned and it was decided that with the successful implementation of this application in appraisal process, new and modern transformation to improve HRM practices can be extended later to other areas of Human Resource Department.

**Fear of Acceptability of Online Appraisal application at all levels**

In order to address the key challenge of acceptability of Online APAR Process by employees at all level, major emphasis of task force was towards designing a blueprint of a user friendly and interactive online Appraisal application which is easy to use and simple to understand. The entire online E-PMS application blueprint was commissioned with an approach that employees find it easy to login into the application with ease and can operate application conveniently. The application was developed in-house after taking into consideration the comfort level of employees using the existing ERP application.

**Accessibility of ERP Application by employees at distant location**

Since NBCC is an engineering organization where majority of employees are located at projects spread across India and abroad, so the challenge of accessibility of APAR by employees located at far location was a major issue for successful execution and implementation of the E-PMS application. In order to address this issue provision was created in the application that part from webmode the application can also be accessed through mobile phones by employees/ assessing authorities located at project sites.

**Cost Effectiveness of E-PMS application**

Since the project of Transformation of HRM activities was one of the initial projects given to HRM Department, efforts were put in that E-PMS application can be developed using the best web technologies which can later be synchronized with the existing ERP application. To ensure that E-PMS application is cost effective and all features starting from tracking the APAR activities online to provision of Printing dully assessed APARs were created in the E-PMS application. The application was developed on .Net Web Framework (Microsoft Technology) matching the industry standards.

**Testing of Developed E-PMS application before roll out to employees**

Another major challenge before HRM Department was user testing of E-PMS application along with its various functionalities right from appraisee to accepting authority level. To ensure that no major glitches are encountered by users while operating the application, application testing was carried out in house by HRM Department. All these activities were carried out internally before the final APARs were rolled out to employees for writing their self appraisal and assessment by various assessing authorities.

**Verification of credentials in APAR by Employees and Data Storage**

In order to ensure that data in APAR of employees is correct in
all respect, blank APARs were put open to employees with the data. The Blank APAR format with data were opened to employees through E-PMS application for their viewing and verification of credentials. This activity was strategized to ensure that every employee could feel the ease in operating the E-PMS application on one hand and on the other hand could give employee chance to review their credential such as names of reporting and reviewing officers, period of assessment, name of the project and other details in APAR. Provision was made for proper Data security and storage.

Backup and Support Mechanism
Since the APAR assessment through E-PMS application was introduced for the first time, HRM Department strategized series of actions to ensure that employee queries were resolved at earliest over the phone or e-mails. Steps were also taken to ensure that no technical issue exist during the course of the APAR cycle. To ensure that employee don’t feel dejected due to any technical glitches if they encounter any, following steps were taken

- A back up support Team at HRM Department, was always available to address the queries of the employees and guide them about the filling of appraisal reports.
- E-PMS help/guide files were made available to employees through ERP, these guide files walk through employees/assessing authorities right from logging stage to assessment stage.
- SLC of PMS section was defined and any query by employees/assessing authority was responded back in the shortest possible time.
- Data security and Data Backups were carried out on daily basis by IT Team to ensure complete safety and security of E-PMS data with provision of proper storage of records.

Establishing credibility of HRM Department through transparency in APAR Process
In order to address the major area of operational transparency during the currency of appraisal cycle, HRM Department organised series of dialogues with employees through informal personal discussions and also through official communication in form of circulars and mailers. To reinforce employees belief in ensuring that complete transparency exist in APAR process, employees were provided with a window in E-PMS application through which every employee could view the progress of the APAR cycle. Further, on completion of Appraisal process, APARs duly assessed by assessing authorities are disclosed to employees for viewing which has helped employees to improve their performance in areas highlighted by the assessing authorities.

Process Flow of Appraisal process of the company:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Timelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Collection of Employee Details from E-PMS application</td>
<td>10th January to 31st January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Opening of Blank APAR forms for verification of employee credentials</td>
<td>15th Feb to 15th March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Opening of APAR form for writing self Appraisal by employees</td>
<td>01st Week of April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Closure of Appraisal process after assessment by all assessing authorities including Accepting authorities at various levels</td>
<td>15th July</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Convening of DPC proceedings</td>
<td>10th September onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Issue of Promotion Orders</td>
<td>01st October</td>
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Outcome of the HR Transformation initiative

• E-PMS application helped re-building trust of HRM Department that complete transparency exist in the APAR process.
• With successful implementation and completion of Online Appraisal cycle, credibility of HRM Department increased manifolds which led HRM Department to establish itself as Business Partner to Management.
• Successful implementation of online appraisal cycle also resulted in disclosing employees with the duly assessed APARs with complete marking and grading of assessing authorities.
• Time bound completion of APAR process resulted in time bound convening of the DPC activities every year in month of September. Promotion orders are issued on 01st October every year resulting in benchmarking HRM Department commitment as per the policy of company. This also led to strengthening HRM credibility among employees.
• Introduction of online appraisal process has also resulted in zero transit loss of APARs as all data remain intact on server. Migration to online APAR process has also enabled Management to retrieve information in respect of employee’s performance in few clicks through E-PMS application.
• Online APAR process has also helped in timely preparation of PRP data for submission to Remuneration committee.
• There has been no RTI application by employees seeking photocopies of their APAR after implementation of E-PMS process.
• All APARs submitted electronically by employees are available in ERP for employee reference to enhance transparency.

Reimagining HR: Global Competitiveness and New Age Workforce
The novelty of the initiative taken by HRM Department for modernization and transformation of HRM practices helped in re-branding and re-imaging HRM Department as one of the most transparent and employee friendly Department. The initiative not only helped in establishing the credibility of HRM Department but also made organization competitive with respect to the practices followed by its peers in the industry which is a pre-requisite expectation now a days of the new age workforce. The initiative not only helped in transforming the appraisal process but also acted as a launchpad for introduction of new modernized HR practices which are essential to survive in a competitive environment.

The successful implementation of E-PMS application by HRM Department also re-inforced the Management beliefs that modern HRM initiatives matching the industry standards can be developed and implemented in-house by HRM Department.
NBCC (India) Limited, is a blue-chip Government of India Navratna Public Sector Enterprise under the aegis of Ministry of Urban Development. Listed with both the Stock Exchanges, the company’s unique Business Model has today, made it stand out as the largest PSE in the construction sector and a leader with more than INR 70,000 Crores order book. The Company has registered a substantial 32% Growth in top line during FY 2015-16 as compared to previous year. It has posted a profit of Rs. 311 crores while its total turnover has surged to Rs. 5749 Crores during FY 2015-16. Having an immense strength in the construction sector, NBCC has a PAN India as well as global presence.

The Company’s present a cas of operations are i) Project Management Consultancy (PMC), ii) Real Estate Development & iii) EPC Contracting & Redevelopment of Govt. colonies.

Background
Due to diversified business & having its operation in remote areas across the country, it is imperative for NBCC not only to establish a system for timely completion of projects & meet the deadlines but also to update, enhance and change the system from time to time in line with the emerging trend and challenges by adopting new technologies. To achieve this in efficient manner, HRM department of NBCC set to play a pivotal role. The vision of our CMD towards HR automation including paperless working and the flagship program of Digital India Movement initiated by Government of India further acted as a driving force to initiate a change from conventional file-paper working to paperless technology based working in the organization.

Problem Statement
The problems can be listed out as below:

- All employees deployed in semi urban remote areas often complained about absence of efficient mechanism for taking Administrative approvals and resolving service matter.
- Slow and lengthy communication process resulted in distorted and delayed information which slows down the decision-making process.
- Different Units are not able to share the information at a common platform so that it could help other units to use the information for achieving common goals. This limits the capability of the company as a whole.
- There were thousands of paper documents in the form of files being dealt in the company on a daily basis. Keeping record of all paper documents, their movement, safety, storage and retrieving involves lots of time, money and efforts which in turn decreases the efficiency and productivity of the company.
- The physical file movement of official files & documents from remote locations and from other projects across the country incurs a lot of time and requires an extended tracking from table to table before the final decision.

Key Challenges
It was felt by the NBCC management, that the need of hour in this situation was to have a system in place where an authorized employee could locate the required documents and files in the shortest possible time, update and share them with other relevant users and eventually store them with proper references. This provides NBCC a valuable insight to the need for creation of e-services portal.

Initiatives
To start with, in order to achieve this end objective,
Incoming Letters are scanned and sent to the concerned through Dak Dispatch Program

On receipt of a letter through Dak Dispatch, a soft file is initiated through e-file movement program.

Digitized files are attached with the e-file initiated through e-file movement program.

Initiated file are sent to any officer by choosing from a list.

Each officer in turn can write his comments/recommendations/approvals etc.

After approval, file is returned to the initiator by marking the same for further necessary action.

Action on approved files are being recorded.

Initiated and approved files are searched for future reference.

eOffice, is a workflow based system that replaces the existing manual handling of files with more efficient electronic system. The system involves all stages, including the diarisation of inward receipts, creation of files, movement of receipts and files and finally the archival of records. With this system, the movement of receipts and files become seamless and there is more transparency in the system since each and every action taken on a file is recorded electronically. This simplifies decision making, as all the required information is available at single point.

we took a decision to implement the following four HR automation tools.

a) E-Office, b) Digitization of records, c) Official email ids to all Resources and d) Online property return

**E-office: A MAJOR HEADWAY**

The need of transforming conventional government offices into more efficient and transparent e-offices, eliminating huge amount of paperwork has long been felt. The office product pioneered by National Informatics Centre, aims to support governance by ushering effective and transparent inter and intra-government process. It is designed for the government departments, PSU’s Automation bodies to enable paperless office by scanning, registering and routing the inward correspondences along with creation of file, noting, referencing, corresponding attachment, draft for approvals and finally movement of files as well as receipts.

**Application of e-Office in HRM**

**HRM Policy**

Through E-office, policy formulation section processes the proposal electronically till the approval stage without using a single paper. All papers relating to coverage of mediclaim for all employees also move electronically.

**Welfare**

**Mediclaim**—The mediclaim Identity card processing is also being carried out electronically.
Training & Development
For the nomination of employees for the external training, the entire process of approval by competent authority is being processed through E-office. The training needs identification process is also through APAR and online, from where the data is being picked up for the structured training interventions.

Industrial Relation Process
The internal process of getting all approvals/correspondences relating to unions are processed through e-office.

Manpower Planning
The process of understanding the current manpower, expected VRS/Exit etc., expected additional manpower requirement could be processed through E-office. Transfer/posting of resources – Competent authority's approval can be obtained through E-office for all transfer and postings.

Recruitment
The process of getting manpower vacancy approval, giving advertisement in the newspapers, communicating to internal Corporate Communication division, formation of panel for the interview, getting approval of the proceedings of group discussion and interview, approval from competent authority for the selection of candidates and issuing the offer is being processed through E-office.

Service Matters
This division handles the following processes and the benefits are:

- **Establishment**: All correspondences relating to this division are processed through E-office. Some of the usages are Annual Confidential Report, Transfers, Time Office, Industrial Relations, Superannuation Pension, Personal/Service file, Superannuation process, Leave management system etc.

With the launch of this new System, the organization moved a giant leap towards digitization and paperless management of files as a part of Digital India Movement.

After implementation of e-office, we are benefited with following functionalities:

- **Unifies view of data**: Each Application of e-office accesses the same data, so it reduces duplications of efforts and data remain common across all the functions.
- **Single Standard Based Directory Service**.
- **Archival of e-Records & Content and Document Management**: Data remain stored in the server and made available as and when required. Retrieval is possible on the basis of metadata.

**Digitisation of Records**
NBCC is an over half a century old organization. It has thousands of files which runs into several lacs of pages. It was extremely challenging to store the files as well as their retrieval. It leads to procurement of more and more compactors. Hence we took concerted decision to digitize all the files of all the functions in stages. We scanned & uploaded over sixty lakhs pages. In the server the data is secure and hence the possibility of data loss is next to zero. Based on the functional requirements, authorization have been given to the specific users, hence the possibility of tweaking data is remote. Any specific subject/topic could be retrieved through search which takes seconds from lacs of pages. This was a great leap indeed towards the vision of paperless office in NBCC.
Personalised Email IDS to all Resources

The uniqueness of NBCC is its presence in every nook and corner of the country and in several foreign countries. Most of the projects are in extremely remote locations which are far from cities.

Only way to have written communication with them is through email. We took a concerted decision to create official personalized Email IDs of NBCC domain for all resources including Junior engineers who are at the project locations. The provision of Email id has resulted into a phenomenal change in terms of data exchange among executives at all levels. Now any message from HO can reach to any of the concerned employee instantly.

On Line Property Return

Annual Property Return (APR) is mandated by the Government in which each and every resource in an organization is supposed to declare assets. The process of filing was in hard copy. We were receiving thousands of pages through postal or through courier. It was important to have perfection in terms of timelines. Instant retrieval of papers in case of requirements was also much more challenging. To get rid of all these challenges it was decided to receive the APRs on line. The system is designed in such a way that without filling the APR on line, the employee can’t access the ERP.

Accepting the challenges and responding

Though the challenges are big but moving forward is the only solution to face the challenges. The challenges were met in the following way:

• We believe that generational differences can actually present a positive opportunity for development at both ends of the spectrum. “YGen’s” enthusiasm for trying new things could be used to encourage a culture of innovation. Batches mixed with young and old officers were called for interactive sessions and asked for their ideas and suggestions for improvement in the presented system. This generated a sense of belonging among the officers and also generated a general acceptance among the users.

• Effective trainings on e-Office, both external and internal to every employee of the company to make this project successful.

• IT officials visited various locations to train the users on the job.

Outcome

• Accountability increased, the responsibility of quality and speed of decision making is now easier to monitor.

• The total cost of the stationery and printing has greatly reduced.

• All desks are free of physical papers.

• Retrieval and assessing of the files in much more faster and full proof.

• Promote greater collaboration in the work place and effective knowledge management.

• Files, approvals are now traceable and can be used at any time in future.

Reimaging HR: Global Competitiveness and New Age Workforce

The uniqueness of the initiatives taken by HRM department for automation, modernization and transformation of the function has helped in re-branding and re-imaging the department. The initiatives not only helped in establishing the credibility of the HRM Department but also made organization competitive with respect to the best practices followed by its peers in the industry which is a pre-requisite expectation of the new age work force.

Going Forward

Currently for various functional requirements we are using several applications like Eoffice, Data management system (DMS), Performance management system, Intra Net, ERP etc. Now the real challenge is to integrate all of them under one umbrella. We are in the process of implementing an ERP in the system to integrate all. We are at an advance stage of implementation.