Chapter 24

Social Media:
Opportunities and Challenges for Human Resource Management

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ABSTRACT

Social Media is primarily internet and mobile tools allowing people to share, collaborate and publish information. Over the last couple of years, the availability and usage of such tools has emerged substantially and led to a cultural shift, connecting people and allowing them to collaborate in ways that were not possible otherwise. To embrace social media tools seamlessly in the organizations can be a real challenge for human resource management professionals. The specific contribution of this paper is to take a relook at the opportunities which social media tools are able to create for the organizations in terms of learning and collaboration. Living and smooth working in a non-hierarchical network is still a big hurdle for organizations and can be a challenging task faced by human resource departments. This paper presents the foundational components of social media linked with human resource processes and lays the groundwork required for companies to harness the potential of social media in the long run. The ultimate objective of human resource departments is to be ready with a shift in their competency and skill sets by embracing a high degree of "technological readiness", adaptability and positive attitude towards these new social media tools. An exhaustive literature survey presents the analysis of the paper.

INTRODUCTION

We are living in an era of unprecedented change and rapid growth. The challenges of this growth are not unique to the Web 2.0 and social media (SM). Tim O'Reilley, a media guru, in 2004, had popularized the term Web 2.0,which covers a wide range of technologies such as, wikis, blogs, pod casts, linked in, Facebook and Twitter. From the perspectives of the Human Resource (HR) professionals, these tools have immense potential to transform the way business is being conducted, leading towards greater credibility. SM is a subset of Web2.0, which falls under the broader Web 2.0 landscape of tools. One of the interesting paradoxes of social media is that its biggest impact is human rather than technological. As people adopt and leverage social media, their personal, consumer, and professional lives are changed in significant ways. The human impact of SM is not limited to individuals, however. The human capital that drives organizations will also be transformed significantly as organizations continue to incorporate new digital technologies into their operations (Hunt, 2010). It is also important to remember that the lines between work and non-work have become increasingly blurred as technology continues to advance. Many organizations have capitalized on this by enabling and expecting employees to work beyond the confines of traditional work spaces and work hours. And though employees are generally willing to accommodate those expectations, they expect some reciprocity in terms of being able to meet some of their personal, non-work needs during the traditional work day. They rightfully fail to see the logic or the fairness in limiting access to their social networks while they're at work – and as they increasingly feel empowered, they're increasingly likely to assert their rights, either directly or indirectly (Hunt, 2010).

Human resource professionals are increasingly becoming aware of the rapid changes which SM is bringing into the workplace, which is not only affecting the communication patterns of the working professionals but also affecting the rigid structures of the workplace. Changing communication patterns at the work place are diminishing the rigid boundaries between the various levels of the hierarchies at the workplace. To drive organizational success HR in its strategic leadership role need to understand the implications of the SM trends. Use of SM has created highly effective communication platforms where any user virtually anywhere in the world, can freely create content and disseminate this information in real time to a global audience ranging in size from a handful to literally millions —in less time than it takes to read this document (ISACA, 2010). SM is creating both new challenge and opportunities for HR, by helping to build in a culture of collaboration, transparency and engagement. In order to succeed in today's hyper connected environment, organizations will need to adapt to and implement SM tools not only around their business strategy, but also around their marketing and public relation efforts and information technology which can ultimately create an internal culture of collaboration and engagement. SM offers a whole new paradigm within which HR can work to engage organizations' members, investors and internal and external employees. Social media has become a powerful tool for enterprises across the globe.

In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the changing role of HR professionals and the need of the time is to evolve to become a strategic partner within the organization. The role of the HR department must parallel the needs of the changing times and to become more adaptable, resilient and employee focused. It is important to engage the employee's interest in SM by empowering them with SM tools to exploit and explore its benefits further. In order to succeed HR must be a business driven function with a thorough understanding of the potential of SM tools for the benefit of the organization. In the present paper an attempt has been made to involve the support of SM tools to create an effective management of mainstream functions of HR department like recruitment

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