

WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND ITS RELEVANCE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ORGANIZATIONS.

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Abstract

High pressure due to globalization and competition in the global market, Information Technology (IT) organizations are demanding more from their employees. This has been a main reason for work pressure among the employees and affecting their performance. Work place spirituality in organization's culture encourages employees to be themselves and allows them to express their views and opinions. Hence this paper focuses on work place spirituality, its relevance in the Information Technology industry, as well as how it is being practiced in few of the selected IT companies. The findings of this study reveals that organizations which practices workplace spirituality have conducive working atmosphere ,employees are highly valued and are treated as assets of the organization.

Keywords :IT organizations , Spirituality and Work place spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of information technology in today's competitive business environment and developed economies has turned the world to a new era. Challenges such as global market demands, economic restructuring through mergers and acquisitions, multiculturalism due to diverse workforce, increased opportunity for skilled workforce leading to attrition, downsizing and high expectations from the stake holders has pressurized employees to feel demoralised and demotivated. This decline in sense of belongingness has urged top management to emphasize on inclusion of broader spectrum of ethical values and spirituality in the workplace.

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality arises from one's inner self benefitting self and others. Spirituality cannot be concluded as religion; Religion is belief in god, worship through rituals and conducts. Spirituality does not necessarily refer to religious doctrines; It is one's own philosophy, values or meaning of life. (Kellehear 2000). Spirituality is awareness of one's existence as an integral part in the society.

There are three main components in the definitions of spirituality – “the inner self or sense of oneness, presence of a force higher than the self, and purpose and meaning in everyday life.” (Nash 2001). Schmidt-Wilk, Heaton, & Steingard (2000) suggest that the definitions of spirituality can be categorised as

- 1) Those that define it as an inner personal experience.
- 2) Those that focus on values and ethics.
- 3) Those that focus on behaviors.

Paul T P Wong, Professor at Trinity Western University in Canada says that “for companies to survive in the 21st century in the face of economical downturn and global competition, It would be helpful to seek inspiration from spirituality and tap into the employees' spiritual resources. Employees find it difficult to separate their spiritual lives from their work lives (Zimmerman, 2004). Employees who feel spiritually connected at work experience peace of mind, inner strength, serenity, patience, calmness and positive attitude. (East 2005, as cited in Litzsey, 2003). These researches and study have influenced management consultants and business leaders to introduce concept of spirituality in workplace or workplace spirituality.

WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

Workplace spirituality means the spirituality perceived by organizational members in the workplace or spirituality perceived by the employees in workplace because of meaningful work content (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Spirituality in work performance refers to individual internal motives and work significance to reinforce transcendental experience in lives and living activities (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), (Harrington, Preziosi, and Gooden, 2001).

Workplace spirituality is a new field related to individuals, organizations and social and physical and mental health, including organizational support, organizational commitment, and internal work satisfaction (Sheep, 2006; Moor & Casper, 2006). Workplace Spirituality is defined as “an experience of interconnectedness, shared by all those involved in a work process, initially triggered by the awareness that each is individually driven by an inner power, which raises and maintains his or her sense of honesty, creativeness, pro-activeness, kindness, dependability, confidence, and courage, consequently leading to the collective creation of an aesthetically motivational environment characterized by a sense of purpose, high ethical standards, acceptance, peace, trust, respect, understanding, appreciation, care, involvement, helpfulness, encouragement, achievement, and perspective, thus establishing an atmosphere of enhanced team performance and overall harmony, and ultimately guiding the organization to become a

leader in its industry and community, through its exudation of fairness, cooperativeness, vision, responsibility, charity, creativity, high productivity, and accomplishment” ,Marques, Dhiman, & King (2005). Workplace spirituality recognizes that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place within the context of community (Duchon and Ashmos 2005). Workplace spirituality can be defined as an awareness among management and business leaders that every employee has an inner power which is to be oriented towards achieving individual and organizational goals with high ethical values .

Latest research by researchers (Duchon and Plowman 2005; Fry 2005; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003; Miiliman 2003) suggests that work place spirituality reflects sense of meaning, purpose, sense of community , alignment between organizational and individual goals, sense of contribution to the community , sense of enjoyment at work, work-life balance ,interconnectedness, transcendence, compassion, mindfulness, inner -life and ,self actualization.

WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY IN IT ORGANIZATIONS

High pressure due to globalization and competition in the global market, Information Technology (IT) organizations are demanding more from their employees. This has been a main reason for work pressure among the employees and affecting their performance. Work place spirituality in organization’s culture encourages employees to be themselves and allows them to express their views and opinions. Workplace spirituality refers to the ways we express our spirituality at work, both for personal support and in making ethical, just decisions (Smith, 2002). Organizations have begun to learn that encouraging spirituality boosts loyalty and enhances morale (Ashmos&Duchon, 2000). White (2001) emphasizes that spirituality at work is becoming important because people want to feel connected to each other at work.

There is a growing emphasis on the spiritual needs of employees for increased employee performance to meet the needs of the Information Technology (IT) organization, thus inducing the managerial leaders to inculcate work place spirituality in the organization. Workplace Spirituality has become a basic need for every Information Technology (IT) organisation. According to Rutte (1996), spiritual individuals are in touch with the source of creativity. As business people, they realize the value of creativity and innovation. Creativity is a cornerstone of business, it allows them to come out with new products and services and allowing them to do more with less.

When organizations recognize the importance of employees' involvement and sense of belongingness there can be changes seen in the personal and organizational development. Organizations should inculcate an ambience for employees to express themselves and enhance their performance. This can be implemented when organizations realize the importance of workplace spirituality in organizational growth.

The pace and scope of change in information technology has been tremendous and all levels of the society have been impacted by this change. Work culture has become complex and spirituality is focused to cope up in the organization. Spirituality has now become a trend for every organization and particularly in Information Technology (IT) industry. Information Technology (IT) industry has started to reap profits by valuing employees and giving room for employees’ expressions.

According to NASSCOM, Information technology industry in India has increased its contribution to India's GDP from 1.2% in 1998 to 9% in 2014. The industry has seen remarkable growth and it also has challenges to face. Employees of Information Technology (IT) industry are pressurized for phenomenal achievements but the organization takes a back seat when it comes to valuing employee’s expressions, thus causing stress among employees which in turn has impact on employees’ performance. This is where

workplace spirituality comes in as a means for relieving stress. It helps the organization to nurture personal values of its employees and enhances organizational growth through individual growth.

Workplace spirituality has a role to play in productivity and performance. A recent study of several companies that encourage spirituality in the workplace has concluded that there is a high level of correlation between overall workplace spirituality and organizational performance (Chakraborty et al., 2004; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Marques, 2005).

To show phenomenal growth in the competitive global business market, organizations are surging towards achieving their vision. This has been one of the main cause for employees being over stressed and that in turn is resulting in disorientation towards work which individual is not aware of, thus affecting one's performance.

Today workplaces are not just to earn one's salary but also a place to nourish performance, self respect, pride, commitment, better living standards and to fulfil one's psychological needs. Employees have to eagerly bring their soul, body, and spirit into the workplace where they spend their most productive part of their life. Information Technology (IT) organizations being global players, have to deal with clients across the countries. They have to adapt to the culture of the global clients which is an crucial task, workplace spirituality helps in experiencing interconnectedness, shared by all those involved in a work process, thus developing a focus on individual development and organizational development.

In present situation of achieving competitive differentiation, InformationTechnology (IT) organizations are emphasizing on pooling in knowledge workers and creating a good working atmosphere for them, as organizations can gain competitive advantage only by employee potential. According to Harrington (2002) low-level needs no longer motivate knowledge workers actions. Hence, the organizations require an environment that cultivates the growth of human spirit for their employees in order to prosper. (Tripti Singh, R. K. Premarajan,2007)

Information Technology (IT) organizations are incorporating workplace spirituality dimension into their work culture, a dimension that has less to do with rules and order and more to do with meaning, purpose, and a sense of community (Ashmos and Duchon, 1998).

Top management, business leaders and employees are striving towards spirituality at workplace. The spiritual movement is not just abiding by the rules and regulations of the organization; It is having a purpose and sense of community within the organization. Meditation classes are now held at many major corporations, such as Medtronic, Google, Yahoo, McKinsey, IBM, Hughes Aircraft, Cisco and Raytheon. Indian companies like Wipro, Tata and Infosys have demonstrated to the world at large that a good corporate governance practices can put the business on high pedestal. These companies have consistently taken a long, hard, but ethical route to achieve greatness. Other Indian business giants Godrej, Vardhaman group, Eicher, Indian Oil Corporation, and Birla group have demonstrated their commitment in providing good corporate governance and making the society a better place to live in for all its stakeholders.

Godrej Group has uncapped the sick leave quota for its employees. The company has also introduced programmes like Godrej LOUD (Live Out Ur Dreams) which spots and attracts the best talent from business schools and campus recruitments.

Flip kart provides paternity policy for the male employees either before the child is born or within six months after the child is born. For the first three months, the new fathers can also opt for working four hours at office and then completing the rest of their work from home.

Accenture India has introduced a policy called 'Hours That Help', which allows employees to donate their leaves to their colleagues. The annual performance appraisals have been replaced by honest, timely feedback from the managers.

Google has the best policies for its employees in all aspects, cafeterias which provide multi cuisines, gym, spa, laundry service, medical care indoor games and lot more recreational activities at no cost. Apart from work, the company also encourages their employees to pursue their hobbies and hidden talents. Fridays are the best as the company hosts TGIF (Thank God Its Friday) happy hours at 4 pm, where employees get together to socialize and unwind.

Tata Teleservices Limited has removed attendance monitoring, there is no mandatory card swipes or daily attendance sheets. The employees are freed from attendance and encouraged to focus on productivity.

SAP Labs IndiaSAP provides its women employees extended maternity leave and cab transportation during and post pregnancy.

CONCLUSION

Today's employees are looking for organizations with opportunities to unlock their own creative energies working in a supportive atmosphere that encourages involvement in a rapidly changing workplace (White, 2001). Employee performance can be enhanced only if employees are motivated to perform better. Employee performance is measure that HR department of Information Technology (IT) organizations usually takes care of because it determines productivity, job involvement of employees, organizational performance, and individual growth as well as organizational growth, which in turn helps the organization to gain competitive advantage.

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