

# Employee rebellion to delight

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**I**t is an undisputed fact that at the core of a healthy organisation is a highly engaged workforce. An engaged workforce can help organisations work through challenging business situations and remain profitable. It is therefore natural that in today's competitive scenario, organisations would do well to invest in their employees, and continue to keep them motivated and happy.

With technology driving a greater degree of awareness and networking opportunities within today's workforce, the present day employee has gained opportunities to not only understand best practices in the marketplace or emerging professional opportunities, but also discover larger avenues to organise and seek a collective voice. Consequently, today's employees are able to build collective opinion and/or initiate a rebellion with greater speed and strength. Organisations today are developing varied strategies to not only engage their employees, but also stay sensitised to the pulse of their workforce.

## Employee rebellion

Corporate India has witnessed a spate of employee rebellion and strikes at work in recent times. In the past decade, Indian organisations have spent substantial resources – both monetarily and in man-hours – trying to devise strategies and ways to connect better with their workforce, yet recent events such as the workers' agitation at Maruti Suzuki's Manesar plant drive home the point that employees demand a greater voice and that ignoring their needs can be expensive. The leading automaker reportedly lost ₹1,500 crore in the 14 day agitation, besides suffering immeasurable reputational loss. Other organisations that have witnessed similar challenges include Bosch, Moser Baer, Hyundai and Nokia.

At the heart of an employee rebellion is a disgruntled workforce which believes that it is not being adequately heard, or given equal opportunity for participation and representation in organisational decisions. HR thought leader Dr Michael Mercer cites several research reports that indicate that companies can fail in their profit objectives owing to 'people problems'. He categorises the 'people problems' under two 'r' categories: rebellion and resistance.

*Rebellion* is identified as an expression of defiance to authority – for instance, rebelling



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against a leadership/authority figure that is driving change.

*Resistance* on the other hand, is the creation of obstacles/roadblocks in the way of the organisational change. Typically this would include employee behaviour such as slowing down the pace of work, spreading negative opinions about the leadership within the work environment, reducing work productivity, etc.

## How to create employee delight?

*Hire the best:* Dr Mercer recommends that an effective way to build an engaged workforce is also through hiring the best talent, as that would naturally bring on board highly self-motivated individuals, who are productive, dependable and also deliver their best to the organisation and its customers. Employees who are inspired and driven also find ways to keep themselves well-engaged, and work hard at delighting the customers and partners who work with them.

*Maintain high touch with your employees:* It is important that organisations find ways to stay in touch with their employees and make themselves accessible to the workforce. Being approachable and sharing ideas with your employees is often a great way to inspire them in driving change, and creating a healthy work environment.

*Recognise your employees:* Employees appreciate it when they see the organisation recognising their efforts and positive behaviour. Reinforce desired behaviour with rewards and positive feedback. This ensures that employees continue to stay motivated and work harder to help drive the organisation's goals.

## Employee delight in Indian organisations

The following is an illustration of measures taken by organisations in India to promote employee delight.

*Hindustan Unilever Limited:* Hindustan Unilever Limited has always worked hard to engage with their employee union bodies. The organisation operates with the wisdom that when management engages the unions with openness and transparency, it always creates results that benefit the company and its stakeholders. The organisation has over 30 factories in the country, and has posted an HR manager at each factory to ensure the creation of a collaborative environment.

*Philips India Limited:* At Philips India's Mohali

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lighting factory the management shares information on business and productivity targets, with the workforce, right at the start of the year. They have also instituted productivity-linked incentive schemes, which are tied to agreed targets. Besides, the organisation has also created a participative culture by creating forums that enable joint decision-making decisions on various matters.

*Infosys:* Infosys is reckoned as a stellar example in driving employee delight. The IT organisation has long recognised the benefit in driving organisational success through employee involvement. The company initiated the trend of granting stock options to employees as a way of gaining their involvement and commitment to delivering business objectives and profitability goals. This highly effective technique helps employees recognise that they can participate in the wealth creation process along with their employer, and give their best on the job.

*Cognizant Technology Solutions:* At CTS, the management has long emphasised on employee

involvement and dialogue. The organisation has strived hard to create a culture that is open, participative and transparent. Aside from common industry practices such as granting stock options, the organisation also forges a spirit of celebration for individual successes. The organisation has instituted several monetary and non-monetary reward programmes such as Wah! to instantly recognise and reward positive employee behavior and organisational contribution.

At the heart of an organisation is its value system, and employees play a key role in driving it and ensuring its integrity at every step of a business process. Naturally, organisations that invest in staying connected to their employees enjoy more effective dialogues with their workforce, and are better equipped to understand the real issues that matter at the grassroots levels. This helps organisations respond with greater speed and effectiveness to employees, and benefit from employees who are better engaged, truly delighted and who operate with a greater sense of ownership and personal responsibility. ♦