Workplace Absence
1

**Workplace Absence**

Need to re-think our work ethics
Managing Workplace Absence
Why employees absent from work?
Socio-Psychological reasons and remedies
Absence-Physical or Psychological?
Impact & Coping Strategies
The NINL way of managing absence

- D.V. Nandakumar
- Dr. Deepak Sharma
- Surendranath A
- Vinay Kumar Singh
- Smita Dash Sahoo
- Thomas Mathew
- C.K. Podder & Rohit Gupta

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5

**Do we really engage employee?**

Companies celebrate birthdays, but ignore how the manager is treating employees. They organize fun activities, but ignore the feedback on the performance of an employee. An article by Vinod Bidwai.

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9

**Why Teams work Less?**

People in a team commonly feel that other team members decrease their chances for "personal success." This is especially true with high performers who may frown on teams. An article by Madhu.

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11

**On the right side of PMS**

This article is an attempt of sharing the views on how the concept of PMS is received and practiced in one part of the industry and what are the few changes one might expect to happen in PMS methodology that looks promising both for the individual employee and the Organization associated with. An article by Kasi SP.

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14

**Passion to deliver, passion to move ahead**

For any leader, manager or supervisor who wants to make themselves and their workforce sustainable has to ensure that passion is instilled in the very thread of the organization culture. So creating a passionate and dedicated workforce is the first step to building a passionate organization. An article by Amitabh Akhauri.

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36

**Quality education needs more than infrastructure!**

Shortage of quality faculty members represent an enormous stumbling block in the transformation of higher Education in India. An article by Dr. Nidhi Maheshwari.

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37

**What is your source of stress?**

All stress is not work-life balance related, the moot question is how can a person deal with stress and move across the continuum from distress to eustress? An article by Latha Nambisan.

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4

**HR without Prejudice**

**Dignity of Identity**

Dr. Vinayshil Gautam

---

32

**Rewards & Recognition**

**Incentive Pay - Short and Long Term**

By Simran Oberoi

---

33

**Role of Employee Development Plan in Managing Performance**

In today’s business environment, designing an effective Employee Development Plan has become a significant part of HR manager's portfolio. Not just this, a well-crafted EDP helps employees find clear direction and opens up avenues for them on how to improve their skills and move ahead in their careers. An article by Shraddha Awasthi.

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37

**What is your source of stress?**

All stress is not work-life balance related, the moot question is how can a person deal with stress and move across the continuum from distress to eustress? An article by Latha Nambisan.

---

15

**Social Media for Corporates - Do’s and Don’ts**

In the social media space, there are many things a person in a position of power has to understand before they embark on a digital journey. The three main things that one should think about are communication, reputation, and business results. An article by Avneet Kohli.

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16-31
For loss of 5 paisa, case contested for 41 years by spending Rs. 9 lakh

Here is a startling case of a poor DTC bus conductor who was compelled to fight his case for more than four decades. And for what? It was the dishonesty of the bus conductor for the princely amount of 5 Naya Paisa. An article by H.L. Kumar

Impact of recent PF amendments

In respect of persons who are enrolled as PF members after 01/09/2014 and who are drawing a salary of more than Rs. 15000/- per month, the entire contribution (the employee’s and the employer’s totaling to 24%) will be deposited in the PF account. An article by K. Varadan

The consequence of faulty job design

By Dr. Pravin Durai

Consumer Behaviour

- Author: Rajneesh Krishna

Labour Problems & Remedies

- Author: H.L. Kumar

Innovation Management

- Authors: Vinnie Jauhari, Sudhanshu Bhushan

EVENT Reports & HR News

Readers are invited to comment on articles published in BM through email at: bmalwar@gmail.com
Employees’ absence from workplace is a menace and silent killer in Indian industry. Apart from leaves, weekly offs and holidays, it is unplanned absence of employee which hurts the organization in many ways. The problem is much serious but sadly, has not been viewed and addressed with equal gravity. Though the facility of leaves are much valued by employees when it comes to their satisfaction level in terms of employer branding yet very costly to industry when it is coupled with abrupt absence thus leaving the organization in lurch.

Many studies have indicated that about ten percent of payroll costs are linked to unplanned absence globally. In India it is about 15 to 20%. Cost leakage due to workforce mismanagement is three times higher than that of globally. The reasons of absence have been repeatedly identified but what is not done is how to tame this problem in constructive way because many feel that negative reinforcement through punishment may not bring desired results.

Is it a question of mindset or of work culture or of work ethics which does not allow employee to treat his unplanned absence a sin or guilt committed towards self development and national growth? When an employee after having 52 weekly offs, about 10 holidays and about 30 leaves which comes to about three months off the work in a year in private sector, absents from work in a unscheduled way, then the issue has to be taken up seriously by the organizations to identify the underlying reasons as it lowers the morale of other sincere workforce. In Govt. and PSUs leaves are much more. Does it also indicate our mindset towards work?

In many Indian organizations managers don’t appreciate the magnitude of this problem. Actually this problem has been more or less accepted as if beyond their control and they have learnt to live with that. It needs greater focus because not only it impacts the financials of the company but also help deteriorating the work culture and discipline of the workplace.

What is required for the managements to take up this issue on priority, invest in training of frontline managers to manage absence carefully and effectively, initiate proactive measures to identify habitual absenteees, do their case studies, analyze the issue and enforce constructive discipline. Reforms are difficult than elimination of such persons though may require at some point of time if do not show sign of improvement.

The month’s cover story is on this untouched and unaddressed issue, which has been more or less away from limelight of the Corp Inc. and specifically HR for a long time. Experts and seasoned management professionals address bigger, more challenging and more pressings questions to show the ray of light in dark tunnel ranging from methodical to psychological to legal sparkles.

If you like it let us know. If not, well, let us know that too.

Happy Reading!
Psychological Presence & Absence

In earlier times, most of the jobs required 100% physical presence at workplace with varying degrees of psychological presence depending upon the job. In recent times, advanced technology has made it possible for jobs like 'Work from Home'/'Remote Control'/'Multi-location' jobs with broader perspective. Thus, we also find employees who may be '100% Physically-Absent' but '100% Psychologically-Present', connected through technology. This brought us to an interesting insight and we consciously started identifying employees who were physically present but psychologically absent at workplace- the non-engaged and disengaged employees. Thus, came the importance of Employee Engagement Surveys and Satisfaction Surveys which got inter-linked to Engagement activities, Employee Value Proposition, Brand Building, Brand Value etc. One of the common ongoing efforts of every organisation is to move the employees from a state of Attendance to Engagement.

Measures to minimize Absenteeism

1) Adopt the right Policy framework
2) Define the attendance Policy clearly
3) Preserve the individual attendance record.
4) A proper communication channel.
5) Uniform/equitable, continuous and consistent application of rules.
6) Fair practices and a good work culture.
7) Responsible process owners.
8) Leaders to be a fair example.
9) Effective management.
10) Flexibility to accommodate special situations and uniformity in such flexibility.
11) Provide internal & External support to reform through Counselling, Coaching & mentoring.
12) Have an effective Grievance handling procedure.
13) Discipline rule-breakers/respond in time.
14) Measure absence and address employee engagement issues in time.

Conclusion

Finally, the manager’s role in motivating the employees is very important. If a good attendance culture is encouraged, it will improve the psychological presence and minimise absenteeism in real terms, and none will need to use lie-detectors. While managers measure absence, they also need to connect with the employees a little beyond the workplace. Organisations need to be careful while rewarding employees for near-100% attendance score, as it could undermine the vigilance aspect, advocate work-life imbalance, create workaholics, and discourage employable workforce from taking up employment, especially The women of India, they being the process-owners of their respective homes. To adhere to vigilance aspect, certain companies practice disconnecting the employees from all their systems during leaves, and certain others have a policy of annual mandatory authorised absence.

Organisations need to strike a BALANCE between a caring and a disciplined organisation, and between a People-Oriented and Productivity-Oriented organisation. This will not only help IMPROVE work-life balance without affecting productivity, but also the Indian work culture, Indian economic climate and the happiness quotient at each unit.

Impact & Coping Strategies

Thomas Mathew
Head- HR, Centum Learning Limited, New Delhi

An organization's profitability depends on its employees being healthy, present and productive on the job. While most organizations in India have a clearly defined Leave/Absence policy, hardly any of them monitor the cost of absence. Even a small percentage of the companies who do monitor absence, there is still a lot that can be done to decrease absence levels and promote the health and well being of the employees.

Leave policies are defined by organizations to encourage employees to plan and avail leaves at times of personal requirements thus encouraging work-life balance. While planned leaves are not much of an issue, it’s the unplanned or extended absences usually due to sickness, short-term disability, persistent repeat short term absences for personal issues, extended maternity etc. that is a matter or serious concern. Achieving 100 per cent attendance is not necessarily desirable if this results in people being at work when they actually should not be. They may end up spreading their medical condition to others and worsen the problem.
Absenteeism: A major issue

Having said this, absenteeism is an issue that affects all organizations. Whether absences are planned or unplanned, whether they last a day or a month, all absences affect the business’s bottom line. Many of us are unaware of the costs organizations cough up when it comes to paying employees for unplanned absences or extended absences.

On an average 8-10 per cent of payroll is either directly or indirectly associated with unplanned employee absences.

Employee absence is a productivity killer. A recent study conducted by Mercer showed that unplanned absence attribute to 21 per cent of daily productivity loss. Of course, these figures don’t tell the whole story; there are host of other less tangible costs and implications. These include business disruption, additional workload inflicted on employees who have to cover for absent colleagues who are in turn left dissatisfied, recruiting and training replacements, inevitable drop in overall levels of work if part timers are hired as replacement since they are not well versed with the ways of working in the company and lastly there is always a risk of reduced customer satisfaction.

Reason for absenteeism

Now that we have understood the impact of employee absence, let us now try to comprehend why employees fail to turn up at work.

The key reasons are:

◆ Capability - Employee is absent due to sickness. This cannot be remedied or corrected by disciplinary measures.

◆ Conduct - Employee could come to work but chooses not to. Here is where the managers’ role comes into the picture. While leave /absence policy gives a consistent framework, it is the responsibility of the manager to apply the framework and treat employees as individuals within the framework of the policy. Line managers should identify and understand the reason of absence at work and also identify patterns of absence if any and inform HR for corrective action.

◆ Obligation - Employees who have sick people at home also tend to take more leaves.

Reducing absenteeism at work

There are a number of factors that organizations need to focus on if it is keen to reduce absence levels and increase productivity.

◆ Technology is a powerful tool in enabling HR and payroll professionals to boost their company’s performance and productivity. With the right attendance monitoring system, HR professionals can be free from much of the administrative burden and be in a stronger position to make a more strategic contribution to business goals.

◆ With HR software system installed, HR could have easy access to reports and analytics to identify and deal with individual/teams where the levels of absence are of concern and also identify any employees that are on long term sick or persistent repeat short term absences.

◆ Have a clear leave policy stating measures to act as trigger points when absence levels reach a point when they need to be investigated. It’s important that HR does not merely calculate absence rate and file it somewhere. It needs to be communicated to the business heads and acted upon. This must be done on a regular basis else the information becomes useless.

◆ Include the line managers in the absence management process. Line managers play an extremely important and often underrated role in managing absence. They can literally make or break the effectiveness of any policy. So it is important that they understand the policy and know how to put it into practice, this should be supported by regular and effective training in absence management and associated HR policies.

◆ Study has shown that employers who undertook prevention programs aimed at cardiovascular disease reported an average 28 per cent reduction in sick leave. Many organizations these days are proactive in offering services such as health screening, healthy food initiatives in cafeteria, clinical prevention programs which include things like mammograms and immunizations. Health promotion and disease prevention programs could also include seminars aimed at improving unhealthy behaviours, setting up gym facilities, offering regulars yoga sessions at office, etc. Wellness programs are an investment in people which would result in improved productivity in the long run. B M