

Eco-Savvy Workforce in the Modern Era

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ABSTRACT

We are living in the era where we put our organizations in the green economy – one in which consumer and employee expectations and future environmental change will require businesses to address “green” issues. Environmentally conscious organizations will become increasingly prominent as we re-enter into a period of growth. Eco-savvy workforce may provide interesting results for all stakeholders in HRM. For employers and practitioners, these may be to establish the usefulness of linking employee involvement and participation in environmental Management program to improved organizational environmental performance, they may help them lobby employers to adopt Eco-savvy workforce policies and practices that help safeguard and enhance worker health and well-being; and for academics, they may reveal additional data to add an HRM element to the knowledge base on Eco-friendly management in general. Across the globe, we are moving from an industrial-based financial system to a talent based economy. The main environmental focus of many businesses was placed on reducing waste and optimizing resources. However, HR is never going to have a truly significant impact on a business through the improvement of HR processes alone so the greater opportunity is to contribute to the green agenda of the business as a whole.

KEYWORDS: Eco-friendly management, Society for Human Resource Management, Workplace, Human Capital, Learning Organization, Strategic Competitiveness, Knowledge Management

INTRODUCTION

The impact of our daily activities on the environment and the desire to go green has expanded from just individuals to organizations. More organizations are volunteering to operate in a more environmentally responsible way. Local municipalities are encouraging businesses to become greener by offering incentives. In the near future, “being green” could become the norm. In September 2007, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) conducted the SHRM 2007 Green Workplace Survey to examine environmentally responsible practices from the perspective of HR professionals and employees. We are entering a green economy – one in which consumer and employee expectations and future environmental change will require businesses to address “green” issues This survey brief explores types of practices organizations have in place, human resource professionals’ and employees’ perceptions of their organizations’ practices, and HR professionals’ role in their organizations’ environmentally friendly programs. Green HR is one which involves two essential elements environmentally friendly HR practices and the preservation of knowledge capital. Business professionals consider it to be environmental initiatives

to reduce employee carbon footprints. The initiative can be like electronic filing, car-sharing, job-sharing, teleconferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, telecommuting, online training, and energy-efficient office spaces. These ideas are being implemented to support existing green HR efforts focused on increased process efficiency, environmental waste reduction, and revamped HR products, tools, and procedures. These measures also have an impact on intangible yet invaluable assets such as brand and reputation.

Many companies are adopting green HR which helps in reducing carbon footprint through less printing of paper, video conferencing and interviews, etc. Companies are quick to layoff when times are to Human capital and the systems surrounding it are the true cornerstones of building a sustainable business. Eco-savvy workforce policies and practices that help safeguard and enhance worker health and well-being; and for academics, they may reveal additional data to add an HRM element to the knowledge base on Eco-friendly management in general. Businesses are sustainable because of their operations and culture, but it's the employees who craft and execute those eco-policies and create that green corporate culture. Without developing personnel and implementing sustainable strategies, it's rather difficult to go green successfully.

That's why human resource (HR) practices are a key component of sustainable business development.

Consequently, using sustainability to build a positive employment brand in a tight recruiting market is a clever move. After all, the visionary and highly motivated entrepreneur-type prospects are naturally attracted to companies that pursue a socially and environmentally .The HR Professional are helping the companies to adopt strategies to green their business through online sharing of training/self-learning materials, encourages employees to turn off their computer monitor when they are away from their desk, leaving only minimal lighting on during non-business hours if necessary for safety, effective use of LED technology for office lighting arrangement , employees can be encourage to write below their official mail signature a default line: 'Save a Tree' and mention that kindly don't print this e-mail unless you really need to' encourage employees to segregate waste at their workstations which is further tie up with NGOs who take this further and recycle it. The HR green strategies are also including activities like substituting emission-enhancing actions (example: air travel) by adopting technology applications like teleconferencing, video conferencing and virtual interviews, letters and faxes have been replaced by emails and scanners. They are encouraged to use of recycled paper, use of compostable utensils, cups & plates in the cafeteria, reducing the use of paper cups. Employees are encouraged to work with IT to change printing defaults to duplex printing. Moreover for internal travel in large factory premises they encourage electricity operated cars/scooters/cycles rather than petrol/diesel fuel vehicles. There is also an introduction of subsidized loan scheme for employees who opt for green technology cars/scooters because they believe that green initiative drive for customer will also support corporate sustainability strategy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the benefits of having Eco-savvy workforce.
2. To study the role of the HR professional in environmental management

3. To study the changing attitudes and behaviors related to environmental issues in the workplace
4. To discuss the significance of developing and maintaining eco-savvy workforce.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is explorative cum descriptive in nature. It is an empirical research based upon secondary data. The theory is basically developed from secondary sources of information and a thorough study of various academic works in the relevant field has been attempted.

BENEFITS OF ECO-SAVVY WORKFORCE

Green HR initiatives help companies find alternative ways to cut cost without losing their top talent. Green HR refers to the contribution of people management policies and activities towards this broader agenda. It's an important issue for HR because it is clearly an important issue for all employees, as well as customers and other stakeholders. It's also one in which HR can have a big impact without causing much expenditure. Good environmental management can improve sales and reduce costs, providing funding for green benefits to keep staff engaged.

Ways for getting the most of Green Management benefits:

1. Employees can be advised to start making changes at home, and then watch them practice environmentally responsible behaviors at work. Once they witness substantial energy savings from the solar panels or Energy Star-rated refrigerator, they're more likely to buy into the value of saving energy and resources at home and at work.
2. Employees can be asked to suggest ways the organization can go green. Example: Companies can start an employee "green team" that can draw some volunteers from the firm's and some from employee workforce. The group can meet monthly to bring changes such as the addition of transportation incentives and the use of recycled papers.
3. Publicly congratulate to employees who take advantage of the company's green benefits and then publishing a quarterly, online newsletter devoted exclusively to their stories and to reminding workers about green benefits and how to participate.
4. It is essential to look beyond the obvious benefits like mass-transit subsidies.
5. Everyone can be informed about green benefits like job candidates, shareholders, the media and community. In advertising campaigns environmental issues can be focused. Press releases can be sending to local media, which will publicize the unique employee benefits. Every employee communication must be green.
6. It is important to review what employees have already done and it must be publicize them while focus can be done to rewrite job descriptions to highlight any green aspects of a position.

7. The concept has to be explained to the top management by collecting data. Example: Gathering information on whether quality job applicants are accepting job offers because of the organization's green benefits. HR professional can make it a point to ask candidates how important those benefits were to their decision.
8. They can choose a green theme for events like the employee health fair; benefits-enrollment fair, holiday parties, recognition ceremonies, even staff meetings.
9. Helping employees to understand the real, cash value of green benefits.
10. Employees and the public and media usually can see through an organization's attempts to hype its green benefits and practices. Publicize what the companies are doing.

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ROLE OF HR MANAGER

Companies that want to be more earth-friendly need to make sure current employees are on board with the goals. This can be accomplished through communication and training by the HR professionals. Companies that don't employ HR managers will still benefit just by knowing what HR people can contribute to the green movement in terms of hiring and training practices, as well as devising special programs to drive green initiative. The Greening of HR Survey "conducted by Buck Consultants, human resources and benefits consulting firm, finds that 54 percent of respondents incorporate environmental management into their business operations. These survey analyzed responses from 93 organizations in the United States, representing a wide range of industries. The research was conducted during the fourth quarter of 2008, and examines the type of "green" initiatives employers are using in work-force management and human-resources practices. Whether they are part of a strategic business plan or a one-off practice, some common green human-resources initiatives include using web- or teleconferencing to reduce travel (78 percent), promoting the reduction of paper use (76 percent), and implementing wellness programs to foster employees' proper nutrition, fitness, and healthy living (68 percent). "Many employers now recognize that green programs in the workplace can promote social responsibility among workers and help retain top talent". More than 60 percent of survey respondents have made environmental responsibility part of their organization's mission statement."The survey found employee involvement in green programs dramatically increases when organizations appoint an individual to lead the efforts. In many companies employees actively involved in green programs. Among companies that provide rewards to encourage green behaviors, 77percent provide special employee recognition, 36 percent give prize incentives and 14 percent provide a monetary reward. The company heads are expecting to see future growth in green training programs, environmentally responsible investment options, and recruiting employees with green skills. HR

professionals takes the responsibility as they are realizing that environmental awareness is important for their employees. For whatever reason, human resources departments are the ones who tend to institute “green” practices at the office.

Many employers now recognize that green programs in the workplace can promote social responsibility among workers and help retain top talent. The companies can start purchasing Green Office Products. There is a large range of ‘green’ office products available that help lower waste, lower energy usage, and use a lesser amount of chemicals than traditional products like ink & toner cartridges, several retail stores offer consumers the ability to purchase remanufactured ink and toner cartridges, which cost up to 15% less than traditional cartridges and it is also wise to recycle the used cartridges. PCR paper which is made of post-consumer recycled content and is the same quality as non-recycled paper. Energy star electronics also prefer while buying office electronics, such as computers or printers, look for those with Energy Star labels. These products automatically shut down if they are not in use, so they use up to 75% less energy. The entire company can easily help conserve energy and energy costs with a few simple changes. Employees can use natural light when they can and make a habit to turn off the lights when leaving any room for 15 minutes or more. 75% of lighting energy can be saved by using energy star fluorescent light bulbs. These bulbs last up to 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs, which also help reduce maintenance costs. An additional 75% of energy can be conserved when employees use power strips to power the electronics. It’s easy to turn the power strip off at the end of the day, and on every morning, rather than letting electronics run 24/7. Apart from giving all these awareness to the employees the HR professional can initiate an reward/recognition program for employees for their go green initiatives in their respective area of work. They can secure a commitment for action from Sr. Management & set up a cross functional core group to identify, implement & monitor go green initiatives. The HR manager can aim to raise people’s awareness of the impact that we as individuals have just from green initiative.

Impact of ‘Green Awareness’ Services

Many organizations recently launch a practice group that counsels employers on “green” awareness in the workplace. These group hopes to help employers implement best practices that will improve the environment through reducing, reusing and recycling certain materials. The green practice group also advises companies on educating their workers about how their behaviors in the office and at home affect the environment not only this but the companies are offering a strategic communications platform to their clients and prospects as a solution for driving greater green awareness within their own organizations. There are numbers of program which offers monthly electronic communications, including newsletters and interactive games, as well as working with companies to appoint green coordinators in local offices to help develop plans and serve as points of contact for green practices. Companies which have adopted the program within its organization found that one-third of its employees, from entry level to principals and executives across all practice areas, made significant changes in their daily behavior, including increased

recycling, decreased printing, elimination or reduction in the use of bottled water, plastic and Styrofoam cups, using reusable grocery and lunch bags, switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs and other energy saving and green products, Changing transportation habits, including limiting car trips, carpooling, buying hybrid cars, using mass transit, and biking or walking to work. The company needed to adapt to changing lifestyles and changing workforces. Flexibility is often the driver of change, and it's at the heart of our sustainable management initiative. For example, a flexible work- ing program me means staff can work from home for part or all of the week. This takes into account work/life balance, depending on care or parental responsibilities – and its reduced office space by 25%, so both parties benefit. It also indicates the growth of collaborative tools, al- lowing teams to talk wherever they are. For new and younger entrants to the workplace, the distinction between working life and home life is becoming blurred, and tools such as instant messaging are not just an integral part of their work, but an integral part of their life.

Best Practices for Greening

The best practice for greening the business are be the use of computerized human resources information systems, applicant tracking systems and online applications streamline hiring efforts. They also reduce paper usage and costs. In addition, documents that authorize motor vehicle, background, criminal checks and references can all be scanned and transmitted to third parties and reduce excess paperwork.

Open enrollment for employee benefits can be conducted online and signatures for legal documents may be obtained electronically, eliminating excessive use of paper so the company initiatives driven by human resources are blood drives, charitable contribution campaigns and wellness programs are typically coordinated by human resources departments. Green initiatives such as recycling campaigns, paper drives and educational programs can be driven by HR personnel.

This also contributes to cleaner air quality, not to mention saving time and money. Customers are often more flexible than people might expect, especially when they are aware of admirable green practices that appear responsible and forward thinking.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING AN ECO-SAVVY WORKFORCE

- More inspired problem solving: Employees who bring a sustainability lens to business decisions allow for a broader perspective that sparks innovative solutions to both common and newly emerging climate change-related business problems.
- Increased desirability as an employer: Intellectually knowing what sustainability is and practicing it in daily decision-making are two different animals. As you become known as a desirable green employer, you'll have your pick of the green talent pool individuals who already understand sustainability and have practice in maximizing people, planet, and profit through business strategy. Bringing them onboard gives you a powerful market edge. Just look at Patagonia, a company that receives thousands of applicants for

each posted job opening. The synergy that builds from green-minded employees working together in a business can be unbelievable.

- **Less stressed budget:** Many employees who are committed to sustainable careers are amenable to flexible compensation and benefits, often preferring alternative transportation, flex work schedules, and other low-cost benefits over hard dollar cost-of-living increases. These options can give you more bend in your budget.
- **Improved employee retention:** Many green companies these days boast low turnover rates compared to their non-sustainable counterparts. That's not just talk. In a green workplace survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 61 percent of respondents who worked for an environmentally conscientious company said they were "likely" or "very likely" to stay at the business because of those practices

Tips to Enhance Greening

Employees need to be educated and trained on company objectives and green initiatives; customers should be educated on how to create a more earth-friendly environment. These messages speak volumes about ethics, morals and standards. Companies need to be train their employees on best business practices and how to educate customers. Customers are learning how to become more earth-friendly from a multitude of sources. HR professionals are great strategic partners in building better workforces and advancing companies to higher greener levels. By "going green" and becoming environmentally responsible, many companies have significantly reduced costs and increased sales. In the future, as predictions about the availability of energy, water and other natural resources are validated, going green may also enable companies to keep customers and investors happy, maintain market share, become more efficient, and avoid legal liability for environmental damage and stay in business.

Driving the move toward going green and becoming a sustainable organization are high oil prices, global warming, a sense that chemicals are causing real harm, knowledge that natural resources are finite, and an increasing number of customers and shareholders that are demanding a move toward corporate social responsibility, particularly focusing on creating a green, sustainable organization. Going green does not necessarily require major changes in how companies are run. A number of small steps, some of which do not cost money to implement, can vary significantly change how business is conducted.

CONCLUSION

Green ideas and concepts are beginning to gather pace within the HR space, often complementing existing sustainability-based initiatives. Increasingly they are delivering tangible benefits to the business, rather than simply adding a gloss to brand and reputation. These new processes, policies, products and tools are actually helping to ensure compliance and improve productivity too. And with legislation now in place to effectively formalize the need for a new corporate approach to the environment, now's the time for HR to embrace the

green agenda. Here are several areas where companies can incorporate more environmentally conscious strategies like the use of internet or teleconferencing to cut down on business travel, putting employee manuals, policies or other company information online to reduce printing. The companies can promote the reduction of paper usage and focus on storage of paperwork electronically, providing recycling trash bins for paper around the office and for bottles and cans in the break area. The companies are focusing on telecommuting/work from home programs. Institute Ride/Share programs are also successful to introducing greening of business. Research has shown that employee involvement in green programs dramatically increases when organizations appoint one employee to lead the efforts. At most organizations, earth-friendly perks emerge from an overall effort to green the business. As companies begin recycling, upgrade to energy-efficient heating/air conditioning systems and seek production efficiencies that save energy or reduce carbon emissions, it's natural to consider green benefits. It is high time to make environmental management an integral part of their way of doing business so HR professional can provide a constant calendar of activities. Specific actions within the program can include offering staff incentives for buying a hybrid car, savings on carbon offsetting, on public transport and bikes. Companies can also make additions to their holiday discount scheme to feature holiday companies operating in an environmentally friendly way, and to their volunteering programme, for example to volunteering in schools, to help pupils undertake environmental projects. Some of the company's actions have been really simple, but still very effective (at least for raising awareness), for example allowing employees to buy a coffee mug at their coffee bar rather than using disposable cups, and then receiving 10p off a cup of coffee. Organization can also launch a carbon credit card employees receive points for taking public transport or walking to work, or video conferencing rather than taking a flight. Prizes can be given to people with the most points. This articles focus on company's innovative approaches which can be applied. Adopting environmental practices helps companies save money, find new sources of business and avoid trouble. Green companies believe that it is more economical to go green than it is to continue adding harmful chemicals to the atmosphere and the environment in general. Going green also helps companies enhance their public relations, and improved public relations and positive public perception can have a strong impact on company profit.

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