

Identifying the “Best” Human Resource Management Practices in India: A Case Study Approach

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Abstract. The primary purpose of this research paper is to detail the human resource management (HRM) practices of three Indian companies identified by Mercer, the global consulting firm, as the best companies to work for in India in 2008. The human resource management practices that were researched were recruitment & selection, training & development, performance appraisal, and compensation & benefits. India is becoming a major player in the Asian economy and US multinationals are significantly increasing their presence in India.

This qualitative paper uses a design strategy of purposeful sampling which provides rich information about the distinctive companies sampled. The primary method of data collection was interviews that were tape-recorded, which was followed by transcription of the data. The data analysis strategy involves studying each unique case, with cross-analysis following the individual case studies.

These “best” companies demonstrated a very superior work culture, an elaborate recruitment system, rigorous training and development, performance-based work culture and unique benefits. These Indian companies definitely walked that extra mile to make employees feel motivated, engaged, and committed.

This study provides successful HRM practices that multinationals can adopt for their business units in India. Further, this paper highlights the HRM practices that are integrated with information technology providing an idea of what human resource management information systems (HRIS) are successful also.

This research proposes a HRM model identifying best practices of this research that can be emulated by global HRM practitioners. The paper advances theory by integrating resource-based theory and HRM practices of best companies to augment the understanding of strategic human resource management better.

1 Introduction

India has become a very important economic power in the today’s international economy. Economists suggest that it will be the third largest economy in 2040 [18, 31]. There are several reasons that India has become such an economic power today. The Indian software industry is very instrumental in the attention the country is receiving today [7]. The country has a very well-educated English-speaking work force that can communicate easily with other English-speaking cultures. The country’s work force is also commended for its high work ethic, willing to work 12-

hour long days, six days a week [31]. Professional labor costs are much lower in India, almost 25% lower than that in the US (10). Global consultants McKinsey identified that if a multinational bank of 1000 employees shifted to India, the bank would save \$18 million in labor costs [5]. The country has a well-defined private sector, transparent financial system, and a respect for the law. [31, 7, 24]. Finally, the time zone difference between the US and India provide customers with the attractive business concept of receiving solutions around-the clock or 24/7 [5, 29].

The government's proactive liberalization policy in 1991 opened the doors to numerous multinationals. Today 125 Fortune 500 companies have their R &D centers in India [18, 31]. Software companies such as Microsoft, IBM. & Hewlett-Packard and other US multinationals are significantly increasing their operations in India [29, 23]. For instance, Dell is planning to double its work staff in India over the next three years to almost hiring 20,000 technical workers. Microsoft is going to add another 3,000 jobs in India over the next three-four years [9]. Ford India is the exclusive manufacturer of Ikon cars that are exported to Mexico, China, and several African countries. GE Motors India has developed a noiseless motor for its washing machines that are supplied worldwide from India. HP Labs India has innovatively created a model hand-held scanning device, reducing the anxiety of reliance on scanner machines [30].

US Multinationals in India are offering innovative perks such as concierge services, on-site cafeterias, interest-free loans (for housing, automobile), educational benefits, twelve weeks maternity leave, to attract the top talent [25, 3]. Multinationals are including group term life insurance as a popular employee benefit, which provides monetary assurance for unexpected death of employees. Intel offers hundred percent medical benefits to its employees and 80% of the medical benefits to the family of the employees [3].

The presence of US multinationals has prompted Indian organizations to introduce several progressive HRM practices in India such as stock options, merit-based pay, flexible work schedules, part-time work, temporary workers which were unheard of in the Indian corporate world [30, 24, 26, 28]. For example, TISCO (Tata Iron and Steel Company), India's oldest steel plant, with the help of external consultants, McKinsey, replaced age-old seniority-based promotions with PEP (performance ethic program) to develop a new brand of employees with greater answerability and independence [30]. Arvind Mills, a textile giant, introduced Selection Information System, an innovative staffing practice allowing HR managers to offer a complete online recruiting process, [30]. A study on three multinationals in India indicated that such progressive HRM practices are reflected in superior firm performance [16].

This qualitative study is organized as follows: First, it discusses the resource-based view, which is the main theoretical framework for this study. Second, it identifies the methodology adopted for this research. Third, it details the best practices in the results section as indicated by the respondents from the interviews. Fourth, it integrates the results with the theoretical framework to strengthen the discussion section. Finally, it addresses the contributions to the literature and practice provides a model of best HRM practices and the HRIS component of the best practices.

2 Theory: The Resource-based View

Scholars and practitioners have realized a revolutionary method of identifying a firm's sustainable competitive advantage. Organizations now look inward toward their employees and identify human resource management practices to provide an incontestable source of value and distinctiveness. Therefore an increased awareness that employees and their human resource management practices (HRM) can provide organizations with sustainable competitive advantage has been completely entrenched in the strategic human resource management literature. The key terms that his seminal study provided to the human resource and strategic literature are value, rare, inimitability and non-substitutability [8, 19].

Scholars [8, 13, 16] have concluded with studies that an organization's internal resources can provide superior firm performance. In an empirical study of human resource management practices in 80 foreign firms in India, superior human resources practices (such as elaborate selection, employment branding, employees identifying their own job content, and performance-based rewards system) provided organizations with superior firm efficiency and competitive advantage. Specifically, the study demonstrated that by providing such human resource management practices made the employees idiosyncratic to the organization. Therefore competitors were not able to easily duplicate such intangible human capital that was embedded in distinctiveness [8].

[13] in an international study of 305 best companies in eight countries in Asia-Pacific region found that "best companies" usually demonstrated three important work practices- career planning, continuous learning and development, and an unique work environment. Such work practices provided a complex organizational structure for competitors to imitate and therefore these "best companies" were able to sustain their competitive place. The RBV theory supports the concept of inimitability and matchless competition that best companies are able to provide to their employees.

[16] in an empirical study of foreign and Indian firms with 300 managers concluded that strategic HRM initiatives such as rigorous hiring, continuous training and development, frequent performance management, and compensation practices that provide flexibility and ownership result in providing sustainable competitive advantage. Further, 68% of the managers from the foreign firms and 65 % from the Indian firms endorsed that human resource management is a value-driven function, providing firms with an indisputable advantage.

[1] in a study of HRIS (human resource information systems) on 111 Spanish firms, identified firms that place a strategic importance on information systems for human resource functions were superior to competitors that did not place such strategic importance. HRIS can be defined as any IT (information technology) support to manage human resource management functions. Such coordination between information systems and human resource management functions provide a complex social structure very difficult for competitors to duplicate.

A corporate example that elucidates this integration between HRIS and HRM is that of Best Buy, a national US electronic retailer with its revolutionary flexible work policy of ROWE (results-only work culture). This unique work practice allows employees set their own work hours and are held accountable only for their work results, and not by their physical presence in the organization The ROWE program

has demonstrated 35% work productivity increase and more than 50% decreased employee turnover. Employers communicate with their employees through IT support of laptops, blackberries, and cell phone- a work concept possible only because of close integration between HR and IT [14].

3 Methodology

This qualitative study uses purposeful sampling with interviews as the primary data collection method to analyze each unique case followed by a cross-analysis [22]. The use of multiple cases increases the reliability of the research and avoids the bias from a single company case study. Several international HR scholars [20, 21] have used this method successfully to get in-depth perceptions of global HR practices. Qualitative studies allow interpretation of several interesting themes within specific cases and across the cases from this study [21, 22].

[22] suggests that purposeful sampling of few organizations provide organizational rich information even though the sample size might be small. The most important kind of information in qualitative research is that the context of understanding is as seen by the respondents actually experiencing the phenomenon in question, therefore providing undeniable authenticity. Therefore [22] suggests that the respondents' answers are synonymous to quantitative data and the qualitative researcher is comparable to the survey instrument.

This qualitative research examined the human resource management practices of the three best companies as identified by Mercer global consulting company in 2008. The goal of this ethnographic study was to understand the best human resource management practices in selection, training, performance appraisal, and compensation. Table I provides the description of these companies.

The informants for all the companies were senior human resource managers responsible for human resource management practices in their company. The interviews were conducted by phone in October and November 2008. Each interview, conducted in English, lasted for about 60-90 minutes. Several steps were taken to ensure that the researcher had accurate information of the interview. The open-ended questions were sent to the participants ahead of time so that respondents could reflect and provide accurate interpretation to the interview questions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as such interviews allow interpretations of research topic in respondents' own words, without providing any

Table 1. Demographic profile of Indian organizations.

Organization	Full-time employees	Domestic Branches	Full-time HR employees	Industry	Education of HR Director
Company A	4162	4	45	Information Technology	Masters in Business Administration
Company B	300	14	21	Pharmaceutical Industry	Masters in Business Administration
Company C	44,000	NA	NA	Information Technology	NA

response bias [20]. For instance, research questions that were addressed were “what are your three successful selection practices and please explain why they are successful.”

Every effort was made to capture the informant’s point of view on staffing practices by taping the conversation and also taking notes diligently during the interview process. The tape recorded interview was transcribed for complete clarity of the interview. The tape recorded conversations were heard several times to get the main themes of the interviews. Finally, a summary of the interviews were sent to the informants to ascertain accuracy. Subsequent email interactions with respondents were maintained to for clarification and comprehension of interview material [22].

4 Results

This section provides a description of human resource management practices as identified by the respondents from their interviews. The four main research questions are:

Research Question 1: Identify **three** successful staffing practices and please explain why they are successful?

Research Question 2: Identify **three** successful training practices and please explain why they are successful?

Research Question 3: Identify **three** successful performance appraisal practices and please explain why they are successful?

Research Question 4: Identify **three** outstanding benefits that you provide and please explain why they are successful?

4.1 Case 1: Company A: Information Technology

This company in the information technology industry has about 4000 employees with its as main offices in India and in the US.

Recruitment and Selection. The three most successful recruitment and selection practices are elaborate interviews, employee referral programs, and internal recruitment.

Elaborate Interviews: Qualified applicants have two technical interviews and a final management interview with senior HR managers. The technical interviews are usually done by a panel of technical experts, who are superior to the level that is being hired. At the final interview, the senior management identifies the attitude and the culture congruency of applicants with that of the company’s. The technical managers receive special training to conduct hiring interviews. Regular coaching sessions for conducting effective interviews are arranged for hiring managers. The company emphasizes role-based hiring: therefore for each role, a defined competency is identified which includes the acronym of CLASS (Caring, Learning, Achieving, Sharing and Social). Hired applicants should demonstrate technical, functional and

organizational skills based on the competency model. In the respondent's words, the whole process of recruitment is seen as:

"Recruit for attitude, train for skill, and develop for leadership. Our process is to recruit people and not profiles; recruit for a career and not for a job."

Employee Referral Programs: Thirty percent of the employees are hired through this successful staffing method. The monetary rewards Indian employees receive are Rs 10,000, while US employees receive \$1000 for referring qualified candidates. A specific dimension of this referral program is to also reward families of the applicants' who have been selected as the company recognizes that without the help of their families applicants cannot contribute long hours of work. So families of applicants' are recognized with several monetary incentives such as dinner and store-coupons.

Internal Recruitment: Senior executives are hired predominantly through this method as they are rotated through different functional levels. The organization also feels a strong sense of commitment to their internal pool and provides vacant postings to their internal employees first. Internal vacancies are posted via an intranet so that internal employees might be first aware of career opportunities within the organization.

Training and Development. Learning and remaining current in technical knowledge is an important aspect of the IT Industry. The training department, which is known as Culture and Competence, is responsible for all the learning initiatives. The company conducts about ninety-one percent of their learning initiatives internally, with their own employees, and only nine percent of the training initiatives are outsourced. In the respondent's words:

"The company focuses on building the capacity to learn and an emphasis on increased interaction from participants as opposed to being instructor-led and theoretical."

The main training initiatives identified as successful are leading performance workshops, professional workshop, and learning communities.

Leading Performance Workshops: This workshop is designed to train middle and senior-level leaders who are managing teams, motivating talent, and transitioning high performers to leadership roles. This workshop content includes visioning, building teams, performance management, resource management, customer management, appreciating conflicts, and adversity management. These workshops are conducted by senior successful leaders, providing a very hands-on approach to the training process.

Professional Workshop: This workshop aims at building self-management skills for employees who move to upper-level positions. Such positions require employees to manage teams and interact with high-profile customers. This workshop content focuses on understanding the big picture, identifying the traits of a successful professional, and learning workplace etiquette.

Learning Communities: In a knowledge industry, it is critical that employees constantly build and learn new skills to be differentiators in the competitive market place. Therefore the organization has provided adequate opportunities for employees to continuously enhance their skills and competencies by forming learning

communities. Such groups are self-organized and members share their valuable work experience and learning. There are about thirty learning communities in the organization that participate in specific computer learning domains. In addition, the company has launched a global online learning system, focused on collaborative learning among its global employees.

Performance Management. The performance process follows consists of setting objectives, a mid-year review, and a final evaluation. The performance process is elaborate and developmental in its method of operation. In the respondent's words, the process is very successful because:

“The process aligns the individual objectives to the organizational objectives.”

The main performance management initiatives identified as successful are performance assessment, behavioral assessment, and 360 degree-feedback.

Performance Assessment: The performance assessment is set against different objectives at the beginning of the year. The various types of objectives include the role-based objectives (what project work employee is doing), organizational objectives (how does it contribute to the organizational goals), personal objectives (how has the employee's performance improved over previous year's objectives) and out-of-the-box objectives (innovative and creative way of doing things).

Behavioral Assessment: The behavioral attributes are driven by the CLASS acronym (Caring, Learning, Achieving, Sharing and Social) competency model. As part of their annual performance appraisal, employees have to provide a self-appraisal. This self-assessment carries a significant weight in the overall performance appraisal.

360 Degree-Feedback: This method solicits feedback from the supervisor, peers, and subordinates. It provides an undeniable comprehensive feedback to employees from different perspectives. The feedback is anonymous and the scores are aggregated and presented to the individual. This is mandatory for management cadres (mid-management) and optional for junior-level of management.

Compensation & Benefits Practices. Several pay practices ensure a workplace that is committed and caring to its employees. The predominant benefits are work-life balance practices, employee stock ownership options, and on-site facilities for new mothers.

Work-life Balance Practices: Employees are encouraged to take vacations as a part of the company's philosophy to maintain a strong work-life balance. This is facilitated by providing variety of opportunities such as the federally mandated vacations and also encouraging employees to take annual sabbaticals. Female employees have the option of taking up to 12 months loss-of- pay to care for a family member or to accompany their spouses on overseas trips. Female employees can also choose reduced hours of employment to balance work and life.

ESOPS (Employee Stock Ownership Options): The company provides ESOPS to all their employees-this benefit is not restricted to any specific levels but applied universally. ESOPS increases accountability, provide a sense of belonging and most important gives employee a sense of ownership in the company.

Day-care Centers for New Mothers: New mothers often face the hard conflict of leaving their newborns at home when they return to work after three months. To help new mothers transition, the company has an innovative work facility which allows new mothers to bring their infants to work. Trained professionals watch over these infants, while the mothers focus on work and also get to see their infants throughout the day. Women receive 90 days of paid leave for maternity and new mothers can take 365 days with loss-of-pay to care for their child. Further, women are guaranteed of their jobs when they return from maternity leave.

4.2 Case 2: Company B: Pharmaceutical Industry

This company has about 300 employees and is has main operational units in the US and UK, with their biggest manufacturing unit in Russia.

Recruitment and Selection. The three most successful recruitment and selection practices are employee referral programs, internal recruitment and global internships.

Employee Referrals: This method of recruitment known as *Parichay* (Indian word means “introduction”) allows employees to refer their friends or family who are qualified for the job.

Such referrals have monetary rewards to the employee who refers qualified applicants. This has also proven more cost-effective. Also, as the jobs in the pharmaceutical industry are quite difficult to articulate to external recruiting vendors (such as placement consultants) because of their high job technicality. Therefore, such recruitment methods of having current employees explain the fundamental job details to potential applicants, such as friends and family has proven to be very effective.

Internal Recruitment: After completing two years in the organization, current employees can apply to any of the different jobs advertized through the internal job portal. An interesting point to note is that employees do not need to tell their line managers as the whole internal recruitment process is confidential till the employees get the job. Once the applicant gets another internal job, he/she has about 1-3 months to give notice to their boss. Any vacant jobs are first internally advertized and then open to the external labor market demonstrating a very strong commitment to their internal labor pool.

Global Internships Program: This recruitment method identifies high-performing applicants globally from universities for both management and technical applicants through elaborate selection process such as interviews, group exercises, technical and cognitive tests (analytical tests) and presentations. Finally, they are given a pre-placement offer (PPO) and applicants can identify if there is a fit between their personal values and those of the organization’s- therefore in this process applicants self-select themselves.

Training and Development. The main in-house training initiatives identified as successful are know your basic training initiatives, back-to basics training initiatives and long-term education:

Know-Your- Basics (KYB): This training initiative trains employees to understand their business unit holistically- therefore from different perspectives- internal, customer, and leadership perspectives. For example, an organizational recruiter should understand how recruiting impacts their business unit and organization.

Back-to-basics (B to B): This is a certification program that empowers employees to be thorough in the basic essentials of their job. For instance, an employee in production should be cognizant of total-quality management practices in manufacturing. This organization is unique in providing certifications to different functional departments.

Long Term Education: The organization focuses on providing continuing education for all its employees to improve competency development, employee engagement, and professional. Several leading Indian universities conduct advanced classes at the organization, which is extremely beneficial to the employees, providing a platform of continuous learning.

Performance Management. The main performance management initiatives identified is the use of PERFECT (Performance enhancement coaching tool) appraisal management system. The goal setting for employees are obtained from the balance scorecard for each business unit.

PERFECT: In this approach the organization uses a face-to-face dialogue approach for its performance appraisal as this provides a rich opportunity to have an actual dialogue about employees' performance. Therefore both the managers and employees can discuss any performance shortcoming and also highlight areas for development and coaching. In this system, employees also have the right to disagree with the performance rating providing reasons for doing so. The organization is of the opinion that online appraisals focus on performance documentation instead of discussion and dialogue, which is critical for identifying the actual reasons for employee performance.

Compensation & Benefits Practices. The predominant benefits are performance bonus, stock options and opportunities to interact with top management.

Performance Bonus: This organization was a pioneer in providing variable pay in the Indian pharmaceutical industry. The two main forms of variable pay are performance bonus (an employee gets this bonus if his/her individual target is achieved and as well as their target of the business unit is achieved) and profit sharing (an employee gets this bonus if the company target and individual target are achieved).

Stock options: This is provided not only to senior-management but also to middle - management – these stock options are contingent on employee performance.

Coffee with the CEO (chief executive officer): The organization offers professional networking with the different business unit leaders to discuss important issues such as mentoring, coaching and leadership. This is open to employees at all levels, therefore providing a rich platform of discussion for internal career growth.

4.3 Case 3: Company C: Information Technology

This company has about 44,000 employees and its main operational units are in the US and UK.

Recruitment and Selection. The three most successful recruitment and selection practices are employee referral programs, external recruiters and e-recruitment.

Employee Referrals: The organization recruits 30-35% of their employees through employee referral program. The recruitment teams work closely with current employees to get such referral details coordinating employee vacancies, advertisements ensure qualified applicants are recruited. Employee referrals receive monetary rewards.

External Recruiters: The organization hires 15% of their offshore resource needs and around 25% of domestic requirements through qualified recruiters. The external recruiters are evaluated on their performance on an on-going basis of every quarter, based on applicant quality, retention, and employee job performance.

e-Recruitment: The organization uses established domestic and international job portals (such as Naukri, Monster, Jobs Ahead, Dice, Job Street). On an average 20-25% of the new hires are done through e-recruitment. The company has agreements with these e-recruitment vendors whereby their technical representatives are in constant communication with the organizational recruiters to understand the features of the portal and also ensure good quality applicant profiles.

Training and Development. The main training initiatives identified as successful are leaders as teachers, real-time training initiatives and Planet Satyam.

Leaders as Teachers: The organization provides consistent leadership training to potential leaders. Successful leaders offer learning and development opportunities to emerging leaders with hands-on experience. Potential leaders are expected to role-play business scenarios and identify business decisions. In 2007-2008, Leaders as Teachers contributed 82,400 hours across 12,154 teaching and mentoring learning opportunities spread over 60 locations around the world.

Real-Time Learning (RTL): This training and development initiative enhances productivity without taking employees away from the workplace. This is designed to specifically improve the quality of interaction between customers and employees. RTL involves direct observation, timely feedback, experiential learning and coaching as it actually happens in the workplace. Performance consultants are assigned to work teams and during any onsite customer visit, the consultants observe employee's performance with the customers directly. Finally, these consultants provide unbiased feedback that identifies any training, developmental or coaching issues.

Planet Satyam: Employees world-wide now have access to an entire range of educational programs at the click of a mouse. This is a novel web -radio/ TV channel that creates a highly interactive learning platform of thousands of online courses, webinars, wikis, blogs across several domains such as technical, behavioral, and management education for employee enrichment.

Performance Management. The main performance management initiatives identified are accelerated career tracks for top performers; mandatory job rotations and forced attrition.

Career Tracks for Top Performers: High performing employees are identified for a fast career growth in the organization. This is very rewarding for employees who want to immediate results for their superior performance.

Mandatory Job Rotations: Employees are rotated through different functions so that they can have a well-rounded organizational functional expertise. This is mandatory for all employees so that can get a good business exposure in different functions.

Forced Attrition: Employees who perform at the bottom 10% of their annual performance goals are asked to leave the organization. The organization places a strong emphasis on superior performance and therefore will not tolerate under-performers.

Compensation & Benefits Practices. The predominant benefits are flexible benefit plans, expatriation & repatriation benefits and health and life insurance benefits.

Flexible Benefit Plans: This includes several components such as transport allowance, leave Travel allowance, medical reimbursement and company car. Employees have the flexibility to pick and choose any benefit from this flexible plan that they would need. This provides lot of flexibility as employees' needs for benefits are usually quite diverse.

Expatriation & Repatriation Benefits: Usually approximately. 10% of employees are on overseas assignments. Therefore some benefits offered to overseas employees are relocation benefits, 14 Days of initial travel expenses and commuting allowance in the host country, travel expenses for the family, housing and car assistance in specific countries.

Health & Life Insurance Benefits: Employees are covered under comprehensive Health & Life Insurance Benefit plans which are competitive and are in line with the statutory & regulatory requirements of the various countries where the company operates. For e.g. in India, 100% of the premium contribution is made by the company to cover the employee and his/her family under the India Health Insurance Plan.

5 Discussion

[13] on a study of Asian companies found that “best companies” had a very strong focus on their employees and therefore their management practices were a very high organizational priority. They also observed that these best companies demonstrated high performing work cultures, continuous learning, and a strong sense of employee engagement. Organizations that consider their employees as their most important capital and therefore human resource management practices a very strategic organizational concern are able to maintain that edge over their competitors.

The RBV endorses the view that employees and their management practices can provide unmatched competitive advantages. There are several examples of

“inimitable” HRM practices in the US corporate. The Internet king Google, has a work policy of allowing employees to decide their own work time with a 70-20-10 policy (work project, personal development and creativity), so well-known in the American corporate, but very difficult to imitate [11]. The ROWE (results only work environment) flexible work policy of US electronic retailer, Best Buy, has revolutionized the work concept of not having to be physically present at work by providing employees absolute work flexibility [14]. In the hospitality industry, Ritz’ Carlton’s daily employee-line ups, elaborate talent-hiring process, and \$2000 frontline empowerment culture is applauded in the hospitality industry, albeit very difficult to duplicate. Booz Allen, a US management consulting firm, recognized as the best in training and development, offers \$5000 in tuition reimbursement (graduate education and professional development) annually to its employees- and considers employee development as a shared task between the employer and employee [17]. Table 2 identifies the various “best” HRM practices provided by these three Indian organizations.

Staffing practices such as employee referrals and internal recruitment provide a very idiosyncratic network of employees that are unique to that organization. Such applicants usually have realistic job expectations, are grounded in the organizational culture and values, and therefore are able to perform very well in new positions almost immediately [19]. Further, [6] argues that developing and identifying employees within the context of the organizations can definitely be an “inimitable” source of competitive advantage. Such employees also develop a deep sense of loyalty and rich internal network.

Table 2. Model of Successful HRM practices.

HR Practices	Staffing	Training	Performance Management	Compensation	HRIS
	Internal Recruitment	In-house training programs	Role-based objectives	Stock Options	Internal job postings
	Employee Referrals		360 degrees feedback	Day-care centers	E-recruitment
	Elaborate Interviews	Learning Communities	Developmental Appraisals	Flexible benefit plans	Learning Communities
	Global Internship programs	Educational Assistance	Forced Attrition		Planet Satyam (world-wide learning via web/TV/radio)
	E-recruitment				
	External Recruiters				

The paramount advantage of global recruiting (such as e-recruitment and global internships) is the ability to identify the most qualified applicant world-wide. Therefore, for knowledge-based industries, such as IT (information technology), such recruitment options is an undeniable staffing advantage to hire the best global talent. Hiring qualified applicants definitely adds value and provides distinct competitive edge to organizations [27].

The three companies provided intense in-house training and learning opportunities to their employees- both technical and management. Scholars suggest that in-house

training programs that are tailored to specific organizational needs provide a very rich collaborative learning environment. Employees learn hands-on from their leaders and also have regular opportunities to develop both their technical and management skills. Such intense training and development definitely adds positive value for the firm augmenting several positive HR outcomes [8, 16].

A case in point-Booz Allen Hamilton, US consulting firm, recognized globally as the number one organization for training and development, spends 6.3 % of its payroll on training and development. The organization provides almost 800 learning courses and provides several in-house leadership development training initiatives. The organization boasts of several positive HR outcomes such as increased retention, reduced turnover, being the employer of choice, and an annual savings of almost \$18 million dollars [17].

Performance management that is frequent and developmental allows employees to achieve superior results for organizations [16]. These three organizations had an emphasis on frequent and comprehensive feedback, learning collaboratively from one another, and providing career guidance. [12] suggest that providing employees with positive solutions to their performance evaluations and frequently discussing performance is the best way employees will overcome negative connotations associated with this annual process.

On the other hand, the forced attrition method (identified as a performance method by one of the three companies) might seem a radical approach in performance management. Forced attrition is a performance method where the lowest 10 % of the employees in performance appraisals are asked to leave the organization. This method is still adopted by some very high profile US and UK companies. Microsoft and GE use forced attrition performance method regularly in dismissing the lower 10 % or under-performers of the organizations. Their justification is that this performance method would motivate employees to constantly to provide their best to organizations, resulting in superior firm performance. In a global survey of UK managers, 77 % of the 562 managers surveyed indicated they would prefer a forced attrition method of performance appraisal [2].

Compensation and benefits that are unique, provide flexibility, and ownership offer organizations with immense value in terms of becoming an employer of choice, having reduced turnover and increasing employee retention. The three organizations interviewed provided unique benefits, flexibility in choice of benefits and also a sense of ownership in their compensation practices [16].

Organizations that offer unique benefits and care for their employees are able to maintain their competitive edge in the industry relentlessly. A case in point- the Internet giant, Google, the number one Fortune 100 company for several years, provides benefits that are unmatched in American corporate, such as offering free food in their 15 ethnic restaurants, on-site child-care center, \$5000 for adoption expenses, free movie nights, and paid 12 weeks maternity leave for their employees or Googlers [11, 15].

Finally, this research paper identifies how HRIS provides a strategic advantage for these companies. The integration of technology for identifying internal and external potential candidates through e-portals allows the organization to provide an idiosyncratic network of internal employees and also get the best qualified candidate externally, thereby adding value to the firm. Consistent and continuous learning is made possible by these "best" companies by technology support which provides for

global learning communities. A strong focus on organizational learning has shown to definitely contribute to sustainable competitive advantage [1, 16].

6 Conclusions

This study provides three significant contributions to the literature. First, it showcases the current best human resource management practices in organizations identified as high-performing in a very successful economy. This study focuses on an economy that is moving forward in leaps and bounds [18, 7]. [18] emphasizes that India and China are the most successful emerging economies with India becoming the world's "back-office" and China becoming the "factory of the world." Multinationals should increase their awareness of cultural practices in these upcoming economies and identify proactive human resource strategies. Multinationals are establishing to India at an increasing pace with about 15,000 joint-ventures in India today [4].

Second, this study provides a model of best practices for both domestic and global companies to adapt in their business units. As India and China race to become the high economic world powers, multinationals should be cognizant of successful practices in these upcoming economies. Multinationals that "glocalize"- absorb the best from different cultures- are most likely to succeed in this amazingly flat world [7].

Finally, this study integrates and provides what HRIS practices are successful so organizations can be mindful how successful organizations have integrated their technology support to advance the performance of human resource management functions. The HRIS functions that are provided are detailed in Table 2. Organizations that use their HRIS to support their HRM efficiently provide an indisputable edge, as suggested by the non-traditional work approach of Best Buy in the United States [1, 14].

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