

HR expert calls for human talent management

Sunday Observer®: Sunday, 9, 2000 – © Lake House Publications

A leading human resources expert recently proposed that Human Resources Management or HRM be replaced by a new leadership concept known as Human Talent Management or HTM in order to realise both the personal fulfilment of the employee and the success of the organisation he/she serves.

M.U.J.De Silva, Director - Human Resources, Browns Group said that a number of successful companies have already adopted the idea that leadership is the art of managing people's talents and not just getting things done. He noted that whereas HRM assumes that people are a resource to be exploited in order to achieve corporate goals, HTM assumes that people are not resources, but possess resources such as knowledge, skills and experience. People also have professional talents and it is with the release of such talent that both personal fulfilment and organisational success can be realized.

"People are not mere resources, but human beings with feelings, ambitions and thought power. The effective leadership will care about managing people's talents, adjust in a flexible way to various corporate as well as market demands and promote an organisational climate which tolerates or rather encourages a variety of mental styles", he stressed.

De Silva also condemned the expression 'Human Resources' as misleading and dangerous. "People are not resources and resent being treated as such. Contrary to what managers claim, people are not human capital", he said. "Employees' expectations have drastically changed over the last few years due to more knowledge-based business, social transformations and economic evolution. New psychological needs are evolving in line with the new profile of people entering the workforce". De Silva said that leaders should be looking at practical ways to maximise the release of individual, team and company talents.

"The leader must become a nurturer of talents, a catalyst in search of synergy", he stressed. He noted that among the key factors that will determine the effectiveness of tomorrow's leadership will be behaviour flexibility, mental innovation and people orientation. He explained that behaviour flexibility would mean that leaders be extremely sensitive to their environment and adjust rapidly to its changes. As for mental innovation, he noted that the ability to interpret reality in original and unique ways is becoming more and more pressing for corporate leaders.

"They are learning that everything is defined and too often artificially limited by 'mental programming'", he pointed out. "Nothing is fully known or fixed. Everything is perceived through a human mind programmed by education, experience and training. However some mental constructions are more effective than others. Different situations require different mind reactions. Mental versatility is therefore important".

De Silva said that with regard to people orientation, it is amazing how ineffective leaders are at tapping individual talents within their organisations. "Many employees complain bitterly not only about how their companies have misused their professional skills, but also about managers who do almost everything to ensure that employees do not perform to the fullest of their talents. It is almost as if leaders are afraid of giving their staff a fair opportunity to perform", he said. "Many leaders have apparently not yet learnt that their employees are frequently working far below capacity. They do not realise that an employee's success is also their own. Employees whose expectations are not met, withdraw and start to invest their time, energy and skills outside the organization".

De Silva added that in order to prevent such an eventuality, management should show due consideration to its employees, ascertain their talents and give them a chance to perform at their highest level.