

CULTURE

Why a cultural fit in the workplace is critical

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A cultural fit in the workplace has become an important factor in the selection of people into an organisation.

This is especially critical in middle to senior roles. Any gap here sets back both the individual and the organisation by years. A significant percentage of 'infant' mortality of lateral recruits at the middle/senior levels happens because of inability to cope with a culturally different set-up vis-a-vis a cosy environment at the previous workplace. We spend most of our time in the workplace, interacting with people and teams.

People often realise too late that they are in an environment that is inconsistent with their individual values. It is necessary to therefore understand one's cultural bent and choose a workplace that will help maximise happiness and output at work.

Extensive research has been done to understand this aspect and studies have revealed that people in a matching culture were able to deliver better results and were happier. In addition to this, attrition levels were lower and employees displayed higher satisfaction. Studies have also found a direct positive correlation between cultural fit and mental and physical health.

In today's inter-connected

economy, employees and organisations are grappling with this issue in multiple geographies and workplace cultures. Special programmes are being designed to mentor and coach people apart from time to adapt.

Individuals must also leverage this and put in extra effort as this strategy is key in managing a culturally diverse workforce. Personalities need to transform to suit today's job requirements. An open mind, reading, interacting, collaborating and adjusting to cultural nuances are necessary.

Pitfalls

This cultural fit syndrome also has its pitfalls in that an organisation gets branded in a particular way. Change then becomes a titanic effort. Organisations have taken up massive programmes to turn around the perception of the market on their culture and it has yielded positive changes.

Organisations that have built a sustained primary culture that is meritocratic, objective and conducive for high output have been able to attract bright talent and retain them.

A lot of the culture that is developed depends on the promoter and the majority stakeholder. It's difficult to change overnight but stakeholders have also realised that the style that took them thus far will not take them further.

They have proactively adapted themselves to the changing environment.

Willingness

Willingness of top management to change in response to a changing market scenario and culture is a precursor to employees adapting quickly. A corporate-level reverse mentoring exercise is being done in many organisations to try and bridge the generational/geographic gaps, which can be learnt from the homes where senior managers face it with their own kids.

Hiring has also embraced these: corporates present their hiring needs with detailed cultural nuances. This helps the hiring teams look for candidates with the closest fit. The recruiters are specially educated by the customer organisations in this regard. A few initial selections happen jointly, where the recruitment partner sits through the line of questioning, absorbing the cultural aspects of the job. Most jobs, including the entry-levels, have cultural assessment as a key component of selection and hiring. This is only going to be reinforced in days to come as the individual's adaptability will become critical to survival.

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