

A study about Employee Commitment in Advertising Industry

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Introduction

In today's world entering an organisation and swift exit from the same has become a common practice among the employees. That is why words like commitment, job hopping, high attrition, employee turnover are frequently heard. These terms have reached alarming figures of 30% in advertising industry. Where does HR stands in these situations? HR is not only hiring of employees but it is also about Human Resource Development and Management.

Indian advertising industry growth rate is expected to be 16.8 percent and with jaw dropping estimated value of Rs51, 365 crore in 2016 (Pitch Madison Advertising Report, 2016) has set eyeballs gazing with some astounding pieces of work that it has given in the recent past. The creative minds that the Indian advertising industry have come up with some mind-boggling concepts and work that can be termed as masterpieces in the field of advertising.

The various media agencies in India have emerged from a small and medium industry to a booming industry with huge opportunity in various areas. The top advertising agencies are

Mudra, Havas Worldwide, Ogilvy and Mathew (O&M), Mccann Ericsonn, Rediffussion, Leo Burnett to name a few.

Various national and international projects are handled by the agencies. The credit for this development can be given to various functions available to the clients from start to end like client servicing, media buying, media planning, conceptualisation, campaign analysis, market research, branding, public relation services, business pitches. With this scenario, Indian advertising industry will be playing a bigger role in the country economy in the coming future and win accolades worldwide.

But looking at the other side, the biggest challenge faced by advertising industry these days is not attracting the prospective employee but retaining the talent. To be able to compete in the global economy the organisation ability is more tied to the quality of the employees they have in their organization. In the previous years we saw Rohit Ohri, partner, JWT India, who was in the agency for 21 years left the agency to become CEO of Dentsu India. The exit of Bobby Pawar from Mudra Group to become chief creative officer at JWT, Tarun Singh Chauhan left Lowe Lintas to join JWT India, Punitha Arumugam, CEO of Madison Media, left Madison to join Google, CVL Srinivas, chairman of Starcom Media Vest Group, India, quit the agency to become CEO of GroupM South Asia. These are the few names which show that employee attrition is at all levels of organisation.

Many organizations rely on the proficiency of their resources to gain competitive advantage in this economy. There are many challenges faced in attempt to retain employees which become an increasingly important characteristic of building organizational capabilities to ensure sustained competitiveness. Employee commitment has been a problem for every organisation especially in the developing countries like India, there are multiple factors responsible for it like stagnant growth pattern, unclear HR policies, Internal conflicts etc. It not only affects the morale of other employees but also on the monetary position of the organization. As it becomes very essential for the HR managers to understand the factors that provoke employees to quit an organization, agencies are introducing many retention strategies to combat the attrition problem. A firm success can be directly proportional to the effective human resource management. The effect of HRM practices on business performance such as training and development, teamwork, compensation/incentive, HR planning, performance appraisal, and employee security helps improve firms' business performance including employee's productivity, product quality and the firm's flexibility.

Literature Review

In the current scenario various variables are playing an important role in the employee commitment in an organisation. Hiring capable people is a successful part of selection process but creating a committed workforce will be possible by presence of varied range of experienced and talented human resource department (Y. Chew, 2005; Raghuram, Bird, & Beechler, 1993). The process of staffing employees in the organization consists of finding, evaluating, and assigning people to work (Harel and Tzafrir, 1996). HRM activities involved in getting the right person on the right place (employee skills and organizational structure) contribute to higher productivity (Huselid, 1995). In addition, research has shown that implementing an effective staffing process (selectivity in staffing) is positively related with organizational performance (Delany and Huselid, 1996).

According to Latham (1988), training is defined as the systematic acquisition and development of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by employees to sufficiently perform an assigned job or task to boost performance in the job environment. Huselid (1995) suggested that perceptions of HR practices such as providing training and job security by the company are important determinants of employee retention. Training is a valuable activity for enhancing skills and improving staff performance, and that training can address some of the factors contributing to staff retention. Investment in training measures and the implementation of development schemes are becoming increasingly acknowledged as vital elements of HRM (Oakland & Oakland, 2001), and studies across a wide range of industries and sectors have all found a positive correlation between investment in training and employee commitment (Bassi & Buren, 1999).

Employee loyalty is a psychological state and it characterizes the relationship of an employee with the organization for which they work and that has implications for their decision to remain with the organization (Allen and Grisaffe, 2001). According to the definition of Mathieu and Zajac (1990), loyalty means as attachment to the organization that may be considered an emotional response, especially when an employee believes strongly in organizational goals and values and has a strong desire to maintain membership of the organization. Thus, loyalty is characterized by the strong wish to continue membership of an organization, which plays a positive role in retention of members in the organization.

Retention is often governed by motivation and the realization that the recognition and training needs of each individual are different (William, 2004). It is realized that the need is not merely to stem attrition rates by implementing various retention strategies. It is rather to identify the right candidates at the time of selection, so that they connect with the agency and stay on proving to be assets for the company. They are not motivated by hygiene factors like salaries alone (Kulshreshtha and Kumar, 2005). They look for other softer rewards like a challenging job,

clarity of work, catering to training needs, etc. The selection process creates a pool of applicants with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that will help it achieve its goals (De Cieri & Kramar, 2008, p. 30).

Cultural shock is something that often leads to employees withdrawing themselves and building up a lot of unnecessary pressure on them. They need to be made comfortable to culture and again training plays a major role at this moment. Organizations must strike the right balance between pampering their employees and extracting maximum effort from them. Any one of these when overdone would lead to frustration, and thereby, attrition.

Corporate control has to be very carefully handled (Amaram, 2005). Employees should be given ample freedom to complete their work as and how they want to (flexi-times and work from home), without compromising on the quality of work done. The HR managers need to be more authoritative, while at the same time, allowing work-related suggestions from the employees to move upstream. The problems faced by managers who are not of Indian origin underlines the fact that employees do not like to receive orders from 'outsiders'. Hence, the managers should know about the employee expectations and mindset (Hora, 2005). A clear career progression path laid out in front of the employees will help them to look forward and grow with the company. Challenging roles and adequate recognition for the efforts go a long way in making the employee feel wanted. The gap between HR and the employees needs to be bridged and the focus should shift from a command and control model to a trust to deliver approach. Change is the only constant and this can only be brought about when the management is open to receive feedback from the employees and shows real interest in implementing some of the valid and reasonable suggestions. An open benefits and compensation plan should be in place which should not be under wraps but should be demystified, so that the employees understand the true value of what the organization is doing for them. According to the researchers (Guthrie, 2001; and Noe *et al.*, 2003), there is a positive correlation between high involvement work practices and employee retention and firm productivity. An effective interaction is indicated; employee turnover is associated with decreased productivity when use of high involvement work practices is high and increased productivity when use of high involvement work practices is low. Postgraduate management education, in particular, serves to produce a shared sense of mission for the employee and the company.

Cascio (2003), defined it "as initiatives taken by management to keep employees from leaving the organization, such as rewarding employees for performing their jobs effectively, ensuring harmonious working relations between employees and managers, and maintaining a safe, healthy work environment. There are various theories on employee retention which can be studied to understand the employee retention. Human Capital Theory, (Huang *et al.*, 2006) considers

voluntary turnover an investment in which costs are borne in an earlier period in order to obtain returns over a long period of time. As a result, the decision to stay or leave involves assessing costs and benefits; that is, if the current value of the returns associated with turnover surpasses both monetary and psychological costs of leaving, employees will be motivated to shift jobs. In the same vein, the theory proposes that employees will resist shifting jobs if the discounted stream of benefits does not surpass monetary and psychological costs.

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organisation most valued asset- the people working there, who independently and jointly contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the business (Armstrong M, 2006). It said that all the HRM function should work in coordination with the organisation strategy. It basically consisted of four generic processes namely selection; appraisal; rewards and development.

Employee turnover is a costly affair for the employers as they have to find replacements which prove costly to the organisation (Huang et al., 2006). Finding a replacement is not an easy task and time taken in this activity also hampers the work. The psychological and monetary costs faced by employees prove to be a challenging situation Chhabra and Mishra (2008).

Allen et al. (2010) recognized that the costs associated with recruiting, selecting and training new employees often exceed 100% of the yearly salary for the position being filled, and that the direct costs, work disruptions and losses of organizational memory and seasoned mentors associated with turnover are significant issues that underscore the importance of employee retention. Kim (2012) argued that the high cost associated with loss of talented employees has reinforced the need for contemporary organizations to identify and implement HRM practices that support employee retention.

The concept of retention as defined by ALDamoe et al. (2012) and James and Mathew (2012) is an organisation process of creating an environment which motivates and encourages employees to stay with the organisation for a maximum period of time.

Methodology

This paper is based on data collected by secondary sources like organisation websites, blogs, articles, research paper published in the area of employee commitment and retention in advertising agencies.

Findings

The employee identifies achievement of organizational goals with his own growth. The company, in turn, gains from the enhanced capacity and motivation to import value addition.

More importantly, if managed effectively, this process can pave the way for companies to move up the value chain.

The need of the hour is to set up a functional model which would map the work environment and the employees' needs. Each employee can be affected by unique factor which needs to be identified by the HR so that the issue of attrition can be tackled effectively. Many reason have been identified like taxing and challenging working environment, lack of clarity in job description, career growth opportunities not defined, difference between aptitude and expectations of employers from the employee, competition in the industry, higher education goals to name a few. It can be inferred that on the job, higher education using tools like distance education or Management Development Programs (MDPs) not only helps in reducing attrition, but also helps in getting the incumbent prepared to take on higher responsibilities and makes him feel important and equipped to face the turbulent future.

Attrition Impact:

- Young and highly skilled are hired: Agencies recruit young talent to replenish the lost agency personnel's during attrition. Their energy and thirst to learn increases the overall performance of organisation with less cost.
- Cost Saver: The new staff which will be hired will be paid less as compared to their seniors and cost to company will be less.
- Cost of company: Agencies assign substantial portion of their budgets on recruitment drives and employee training. An employee leaving the company results to additional cost of hiring a new employee.
- Effect on accounts: There is a high possibility that an account will move with the employee. They are connected with him professionally and trust factor makes them to move with the concerned person. The trust, clarity of work expectations with the employee affects the client and agency relationship adversely.

Various steps that are taken by advertising agencies can be summarised as given below:

- Incentives: As planned by RK Swamy BBDO, employees will be provided stakes in profit sharing and long term benefits. In a way of making an employee's a part of agency, ESOP's as a part of sharing the wealth of the organisation is rolled out to the deserving employees in ARM Digital.
- Working Environment: Agencies need to provide a better working environment for the employees hired. They are flexible, energetic with freedom of thought, exposure to

handling innovative & challenging projects, training to use latest technology tools etc. along with decent perks. Chetan Asher, Founder & CEO, Tonic Media has created a culture in their organisation wherein employees can discuss ideas and initiatives which can develop the bond between them. Easy accessibility to seniors is a big factor that can help individuals to be loyal to the company and this is taken care by Gozoop, a digital advertising agency. In Hungama Digital Services, the company relaxed and positive environment has played a major role in retaining the employees. There are individuals who are associated with the agency for 5-10 years and this factor has played a crucial role in their stay. Various training programmes are conducted like Tinder Tuesdays in which the industry veteran and seniors share their wisdom are held in ARM Digital. They also have various certifications programmes for the employees from Google, Twitter etc to build a strong career.

- **Training Facilities and Better Induction Programmes with Better Career Opportunities:** The induction programmes and training facilities provided to the employee should be done in the best way. Employees are also given opportunities to apply their learning's and are rewarded for their exceptional work. Draft FCB Ulka conducts Star One Trainee Programme, at entry level which helps in growing the new talent."Further, we keep this talent well trained by putting them through programmes like the Leadership Grid WorkShop, BrandWealth Seminar, Organisational Health Survey, empowerment programmes and annual performance reviews," said M Parameswaran, CEO & ED, Draft FCB Ulka. As told by Amardeep Singh, CEO , Interactive avenues has modified their training modules which are more focussed on developing the right skills required in the agency like soft skills, functional skills etc. Lowe Lintas has been focussing on training their employees in the right direction so that they can enhance their work and also build a career out of it.
- **Rewards and Recognitions:** Recognition is one of the several motivational factors that can increase the job satisfaction of an employee and retain him in an organization for a longer period of time. Managers are trying to appreciate the employees for out of the box thinking or any innovative works done by them. Those who will be awarded will try to be devoted and proficient with the organisation and will try to increase productivity of the organisation and the team. This in turn will increase the satisfaction and make them happy to see the admiration they get. At Chimp&z Inc the employees are recognised monthly for their work as Chimp of the month. The Friday Beer, Birthday Parties, Director's Talk like events are held so that employees can appreciate good work and understand the importance of being a part of the organisation. In ARM Digital, various gifts like Mac are given on the completion of two years in the agency.

Conclusion

This paper studied various factors that are involved in retention of employees and how this affects the agencies and the industry. The focus should be on how an employee can be committed towards his goal and agency. This in turn will help the company to utilise its manpower to achieve the organisations targets and profits. Attrition rate has a huge impact on client agency relationship. Account managers and creative directors usually dedicate themselves to a particular client account and hold complete responsibility of end to end requirements of the client. They will have access to the sensitive data of the client and be responsible for ideation, creation and execution of all the campaign requirements thus acting as the face of the agency. Client becomes totally comfortable with the agency staff and builds long term relationships with the agency to ensure that they get to work with the staff on all their project requirements.

This review has critically explored and synthesized the available literature on employee retention and related concepts, with results demonstrating that retention is a well documented topic in HRM, though many of the findings in the literature appear fragmented across various thematic areas. Despite this setback, the findings of the review are important in finding the various HR policies which can be implemented in agencies to influence the employee retention rate.

Future Scope: The employee retention issue in advertising sector is still a vast area for study. Various researches can be done on the same to find an effective way to sustain an employee in the agency. However, many studies mentioned in the review are not directly related to analyzing the idea of the 'win-win' situation in the organization when the implementation of HRM practices guarantees the employees' retention and the development of their commitment to the organization that affects the organization's progress. If the focus on the decreased turnover, cost-efficiency, high productivity, and employee engagement are actively discussed in the literature, many other factors associated with employees' intrinsic motivation should be discussed in more details. Therefore, it is necessary to review researches that are based on employees' self-reports in which individuals assess how different HRM practices can influence their job satisfaction, commitment and intentions regarding staying in the company or leaving a job. While paying more attention to exploring the employees' perspective regarding the issue of retention, it is possible to find out more factors that can influence employees' attitudes that are associated with such HRM practices as training, promotion and performance management, but not covered in the discussed studies.

In addition, many researchers are inclined to focus on assessing HRM practices used to promote employee retention from both employees and managers' perspectives. Still, the literature selected for the review does not allow comparing visions of managers and employees regarding the effectiveness of certain HRM practices, and it is necessary to explore more researches in order to identify any differences and gaps in managers and employees' perceptions of the concept of

employee retention and associated HRM practices that can be discussed as barriers to promoting job satisfaction and commitment in organizations. From this point, the other direction for the research in the field is the focus on finding possible differences in managers and employees' visions of effectiveness of HRM practices that are noted by researchers in the scholarly literature. In spite of the fact that these issues are often mentioned in studies in those sections where the challenges in management are discussed, it is necessary to examine more sources that discuss how differences in assessment of HRM practices can influence the issue of employee retention .

In this scenario, when agency staffs leave the company, there is a huge compensation that the agency will have to bare since they are answerable to the client. Also, a new resource has to be trained and substituted for the vacancy at a senior level, who will take some time to blend not only within the agency but also at the client side. In some cases, the client will adapt to the change in staff, but in other cases, the client may stop relationship with the agency after the contract period and establish relationship with a new agency where the old staff has joined. Also, in some cases shift of team lead may disturb the working mechanism of the entire team which may lead to more personnel's leaving the job and hunting for better opportunities.

It's clear that having proper retention strategies is essential in order to retain employees. According to Mike Foster, founder and CEO of the Foster Institute, in order to foster an environment that motivates and stimulates employees, managers need to incorporate motivation-building practices into their corporate culture. These practices include listening to employees and respecting their opinions, basing rewards on performance, and being available to them for everything from listening to their ideas and concerns to assisting them with their career advancement.

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