Integrated Talent Management Framework for Healthier Healthcare Performance – A Strategic Approach

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Abstract: In spite of the fact that the healthcare industry needs to face constant change because of the continuous development of rules and guidelines, health care delivery procedures and payment models along with increasing demand for quality health services, it can be expected that talent management in healthcare sector need to be given more importance than earlier. Managing talent is even more critical in healthcare industry as it directly impacts the quality of patient care apart from meeting various regulatory and quality standards. Needless to say that, without qualified healthcare professionals, it will be very difficult to provide quality service to patients, to their family members and the community. Acquisition and Retention of skilled healthcare professionals is a great challenge as healthcare workforce is aging thus causing a dearth of experienced talent in the industry thus intensifying the war for talent within the health care industry. An effective formulation and implementation of integrated talent management framework is the need of the hour for healthcare industry for healthier healthcare performance as shortage of skilled healthcare professionals grows at an alarming rate.

Keywords: Integrated Talent Management, Acquisition and Retention, Skilled Healthcare Professionals, Healthier Healthcare Performance, Strategic Approach.

I. IMPORTANCE OF TALENT MANAGEMENT

Many of the industry leaders recognize the necessity to invest in talent management process. Attracting and retaining right talent is the highest challenge for any industry especially in healthcare industry. Healthcare industry is no stranger to the ever changing dynamics of compliance and competency requirements but today’s volatile and uncertain business environment are changing the game as healthcare organizations are more concerned with providing top patient care. HR leaders in the healthcare industry face a persistent challenge with regard to retention of talent and they need to ensure healthcare employees with the right skills stay long in the healthcare organization. Planning and implementation of right talent management policies and programmes will certainly help healthcare leaders’ to focus on things that really matters. This will surely help to be in control with the organization’s talent and will pave way for talent base to grow with time contributing to achievement of the overall healthcare organization’s Vision and Mission. In order to keep pace with the changing business environment, healthcare organizations need to create an agile talent management process in place so that they can respond more effectively and quickly to the changing needs of the healthcare industry. When proper talent management processes are in place, then the healthcare organization will be able to achieve better insights as how best talent can be developed to provide top notch quality patient care. Moreover healthcare leaders’ need to necessarily to plan and implement series of best talent management practices throughout the healthcare organization as competition for skilled talent is very intense from the positions of registered nurses to senior healthcare leaders to housekeeping staff. Therefore talent initiatives just cannot be focused only on few positions instead should be addressed to a broad spectrum of healthcare needs. Thus, talent management is a healthcare organization’s commitment to recruit, develop and retain the right talent available to achieve organizational objectives.
II. APPROACHES TO TALENT MANAGEMENT

Today, there is no consensus related to the meaning of talent and talent management and therefore there exists differences in views among different academicians, consultants, practitioners with regard to the same. There remains still an unanswered question as to whether to consider ‘talent’ as an inborn trait or can it be acquired over a period of time. Whether human capital should be differentiated or not and if yes, based on what principles? These are the questions which are debated in the present scenario in the corporate environment. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development defines Talent and Talent Management respectively as “Talent consists of those individuals who can make a difference to organizational performance either through their immediate contribution or, in the longer-term, by demonstrating the highest levels of potential.” and “Talent management is the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of those individuals who are of particular value to an organization, either in view of their ‘high potential’ for the future or because they are fulfilling business/operation-critical roles.” Nonetheless, healthcare leaders can formulate their own strategies, policies and programmes which they would like to follow in their healthcare organization with regard to talent and talent management depending upon their organizational culture which they envision to be followed not only by their existing human capital and but future prospective human capital too.

III. WHAT IS INTEGRATED TALENT MANAGEMENT?

Integrated talent management is nothing but connecting various talent management processes to attract, develop, engage and retain key talent in the healthcare organization. These talent management processes encompass activities like Human Resource Planning, Recruitment and Selection, Onboarding, Learning and Career development, Employee engagement, Performance management etc., these talent management processes are integrated through a common platform through data sharing and retrieving for smooth flow of organizational functions.

The absence of Integrated Talent Management Process will certainly affect not only the HR department but the entire healthcare organization including all other departments or functions. Absence of Integrated talent management process as strategic approach may lead to wastage in time, effort and money and decrease in the positive impact of employee engagement initiatives and ultimately decrease in healthcare organizational performance.

ALIGNMENT BETWEEN TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGY AND OVERALL ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

When there exists an integrated talent management strategy with regard to talent acquisition strategy tied with healthcare organizational strategy it will certainly improve overall organizational performance. Necessary steps to be taken to explicitly align talent acquisition strategy with overall healthcare organizational strategy so that human resource planning can be rapidly adjusted to ever changing business environment.

ALIGNMENT BETWEEN TALENT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

All the steps involved in talent management processes need to certainly be aligned with overall organizational strategy. Therefore, all the talent management activities need to be integrated with talent strategy and human resource planning of the organization as it drives fundamentally all other talent management activities.

INTEGRATION OF TALENT MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

In the integrated talent management framework, sharing of information from one process to other process should take place with ease. Succession planning date should be shared with talent acquisition team, Trend based hiring needs information should be shared by talent acquisition team to succession planning team or to learning and development team, HiPo’s information should be shared with succession planning team etc. so that every single activity in talent management framework is integrated at a strategic level for the better performance of the healthcare organization.
DEVELOPMENT OF COMMON COMPETENCY MODEL

Talent management processes should be integrated in such a manner that there exists a common competency model among various functions in the organization. Each and every talent management process needs to evaluate performances of the talent in the organization with the help of the common competency model developed in the organization so that standardizations and uniformity can be maintained throughout the healthcare organization.

INTEGRATION WITH TECHNOLOGY

All the activities involved in the talent management processes should be integrated with the help of advanced technological tools, systems and equipment so that whenever the organization is growing at a rapid pace, each and every activity of talent management process can be scaled to the required level of growth.

IV. WHY A STRATEGIC APPROACH IS ESSENTIAL FOR AN INTEGRATED TALENT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTHIER HEALTHCARE PERFORMANCE?

In today’s challenging work environment, integrated talent management is critical to differentiate healthcare organizations from their competitors in order to drive quality patient care. Healthcare organizations’ need to formulate and implement talent management strategies in such a way that a linkage is established among various elements of talent management in an integrated manner and consequently, its impact should be measured on performance of healthcare organizations. Accordingly, healthcare organizations need to develop and implement an integrated talent management approach comprising various facets of human capital management like Human Resource Planning, Recruitment and Selection, Onboarding, Learning and Career Development, Employee Engagement, Performance Management, Compensation Management and Succession Management and Retention Management. Though healthcare organizations experience their own distinctive challenges in managing talent, when an integrated talent management approach is followed, it will certainly lead to healthier healthcare performance.

FIGURE 1: Managing Talent

V. INTEGRATED TALENT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTHIER HEALTHCARE PERFORMANCE – A STRATEGIC APPROACH

Leading healthcare organizations around the world adopt different talent management strategies to attract, acquire and retain talent. Figure-2 shows the integrated talent management framework which can lead to healthier healthcare performance and each of its facets is concisely discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.
A. **Human Resource Planning**

(Deb, 2006) “Human Resource Planning (HRP) may be defined as a process to forecast an organization’s labour demand and internal labour supply for the acquisition, utilization, improvement and preservation of organization’s human resource (HR)”. Human resource planning in the healthcare organization is the basis for integrated talent management. Hence, healthcare organizations should include talent forecasting in their human resource planning. With the help of effective human resource planning and human resource management, right recruitment strategies can be established to acquire the right kind of healthcare professionals for providing quality care to patients. HR leaders’ working in the healthcare organizations need to evaluate the labour market in order to get a fair idea about the availability of required skills and expertise in order to subsequently match the demand and supply of the same. It should include clear description about availability of present healthcare professionals’ and future talent requirement. Clarity should be there in human resource planning with regard to future talent requirement in terms of educational qualifications, specializations, prior experience (if any) in hospital industry so that integrated talent management can serve as a link between HR and healthcare organization’s business strategy. Proper care should be exercised by healthcare HR leaders in order to recruit right kind of talent so that overall organizational objectives may be met by building adequate talent pipeline. When proper care is taken during the HRP process, strategic plans can be achieved without any much deviation. Hence, HR leaders should collect essential information from healthcare leaders and consult them to create strategic human resource plans as it will help them to neatly track and adjust human resource plans accordingly to meet the changing talent needs of healthcare organization. Successful integration of HR plan with healthcare organization’s business plan will surely pave the way for achieving healthcare leader’s organization goals.

**Figure 2 : Integrated Talent Management Framework for Healthier Healthcare Performance – A Strategic Approach**

B. **Recruitment and Selection**

Today, healthcare organizations in order to compete in the global business environment they should attract and retain the best healthcare employees and consecutively, greater than average market share and higher profits can be achieved. Recruitment of healthcare professionals needs to address both current and future needs in the healthcare organization. Whenever any recruitment request has come for any key position, the HR professional in
the healthcare organization need to discuss about various issues with the concerned healthcare department head like what kind of strategic contribution this key position can make, required knowledge and experience, expected behaviors to be exhibited when interacting with different functions and levels in order to make integrated talent management a successful one. Furthermore, whenever recruitment happens, always certain key points to be considered like degree to which the key position to be filled need to be associated with the healthcare organization’s culture and values, the alignment of ‘right fit’ with the team members that the key position has to work with in future, the ability of the immediate supervisor and the new recruit to build a beneficial working relationship between them and finally the required knowledge, skills and competencies desirable to deliver the healthcare professionals service to provide a quality patient care. It is noteworthy to mention that the assessment processes of healthcare professional to be designed in such a manner that it not only tests the healthcare professional’s present performance capability but also future potential of the candidate to accept greater responsibilities in future.

C. Onboarding

Onboarding is the process or system that organizations use to familiarize and train the new hires to the culture and systems of an organization during their first year. Healthcare organizations need to make onboarding a process of strategic onboarding in order to prepare and make ready the new hires to familiarize with the healthcare organization’s social and performance facets of their new job as quickly and as smoothly as possible as it will serve as a foundation block to the integrated talent management approach. Successful integration of onboarding in the integrated talent management approach will certainly ensure employee engagement and in turn retention of healthcare talent in the organization. Senior healthcare leaders should also keep in their mind that successful strategic onboarding can really make a significant impact in employee turnover. Every aspect that you decide to implement or not to implement in the onboarding process will have a tremendous effect on newly hired healthcare professional’s perception related to their jobs and employer as well. Hence, onboarding exercise should be cautiously designed with utmost care as it should make the new hire to feel welcomed, to feel comfortable and secured. Onboarding process should not be left only to HR department in the healthcare organization but the concerned onboarding team should educate all the employees of the healthcare organization who comes into contact with the new hires about their critical role in onboarding exercise to make it successful. Therefore, a successful implementation of onboarding strategy in the healthcare organization will make the newly hired healthcare professionals thank you for guiding them to the path of success and over a period of time the healthcare organization will be well positioned on its goal to turn those new hires into seasoned employees.

D. Learning and Career Development

It is critical to note that recruitment of healthcare talent alone is no longer adequate. There is no alternative but to develop and grow healthcare talent within the organization. Healthcare leaders’ have to establish a more holistic method to provide learning and developmental opportunities to its employees’ thereby creating a clear linkage between its healthcare objectives. Failing to establish adequate and appropriate learning and development programmes as a part of integrated talent management is a precarious misstep to avoid. Many healthcare organizations do not understand as to how learning and development programmes for healthcare professionals can really make the difference in delivering the patient care service in a better manner. Healthcare leaders’ may allocate supervisors and mentors in respective healthcare departments to train and coach healthcare employees in an appropriate manner in order to improve their performance. As such, learning and development programmes for healthcare employees’ play a very critical role in the healthcare sector and absence of such programmes in the healthcare organization will certainly be considered as a critical misstep as healthcare professionals tend to leave their organizations if there is lack of career opportunity and look out for other competitors as they may consider their career development is more important to them than pay. While developing career development opportunities for healthcare professionals, HR leaders in healthcare organizations need to spend adequate time in gathering data both formally and informally to identify and analyze each employees’ career aspirations so that a suitably designed learning and developmental opportunities may be provided aligning with goals of the organization so that mutually meaningful career paths can be formulated. To nurture employee engagement, coaching be provided to healthcare employees’ on a continuous basis rather than restricting it to only during performance reviews at the end of the year. In turn, it helps to impart confidence or self-efficacy among employees about their performance not only at the end of the year but throughout the year. It should be noted that regular meetings should be held in order to clearly understand what their expectation from their career is and where exactly they wanted to go in future. It need not be in the form of performance appraisal at the end of the year, rather informal discussions need to take place to really understand what motivates each key healthcare professional and how should their career path be developed.
E. Employee Engagement

According to (Robinson et al., 2004) employee engagement is “a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.” For healthcare organizations’, the difference concerning an engaged and disengaged healthcare workforce can eventually mean success or failure. Usually, the engaged healthcare professionals will show lots of enthusiasm, they tend to contribute innovative ideas, will be optimistic about the organization they serve for and its future prospects, do not frequently absent themselves from work, normally stick to the serving organization for a longer tenure of service and will be one of the organization’s valuable ambassadors. On the other hand, disengaged employees will be frequently absent from work, are disconnected, habitually pessimistic about new ideas and changes in the organization, likely to negatively influence those employees around them in the work environment. One important aspect for determining employee performance is employee engagement. Initially though employee engagement initiatives may initially seem to be expensive, the overall benefit it brings to the healthcare organization is enormous. It also helps to enhance overall organizational culture in a positive manner. Moreover, employee engagement significantly improves a healthcare professional’s morale in turn he/she can exert more discretionary efforts to deliver quality patient care which will eventually lead to a positive impact on healthcare organization’s performance. Engaged healthcare professionals will be able to discharge their allotted duties with more mental concentration. They will also develop a positive emotional bond towards their healthcare organization and will speak positively about their healthcare organization to others with Zeal and enthusiasm. Employee engagement of healthcare professionals can be measured through engagement surveys and today there are valid tools to measure and envisage the ROI in engagement related initiatives. Therefore, senior healthcare leaders need to ensure that their healthcare professionals are engaged as they will be more loyal, more productive and may strive to provide quality patient care and moreover are more likely to stay with the healthcare organization.

F. Performance Management

Performance management is a vital element in retaining the best healthcare professionals as it empowers healthcare organizations to recognize high performers and high potentials based on their capabilities to provide quality healthcare service to patients. When healthcare organizations formulate and implement appropriate performance management policies and programmes, it will certainly help to create high levels of employee engagement in turn leading to enhanced performance. One critical element in the integrated talent management approach is to monitor constantly the available talent pool to locate and develop key talent apart from individual performance appraisals. HR leaders need to make talent segmentation and should maintain adequate talent pool for filling up the future positions. The identified HiPo candidates need to be nurtured with utmost care so that they can easily fit into the new roles whenever need be. This process of talent review should be carefully handled by senior healthcare leaders as it will be very useful for the healthcare organization to build their talent pipeline. Senior healthcare professionals can rely on Nine-Box Grid model for talent assessment and talent reviews to identify and develop future talent in the healthcare organization. Each of the nine boxes in the grid reflects distinct set of activities connected with it. Normally, “Performance” (which is measured by performance reviews) will be placed in horizontal axis and “Potential” (individual’s potential to grow up in the career ladder) in Vertical axis. A group of senior healthcare leaders during this process can work together to place the individual healthcare professionals in the X-Y axis so that they can identify who are high potential individuals, who requires development to improve their performance. Obviously, an employee is considered to be a dream employee if he/she falls under both high potential and high performer category. The Nine-Box Grid model, will also allow the managers/leaders to identify those employees who will be doing very well in their present position but may not do well if he/she gets promotion and other category of employees who has got the potential to deliver good performance but for some reason they are not delivering their good performance in the present role.
Competition for skilled healthcare professionals is continually increasing and hence healthcare organizations need to follow an integrated talent management to develop innovative methods of tapping intrinsic motivation of healthcare professionals. Rewards and recognition programmes basically aims at tactically planning various methods to compensate healthcare professionals for their efforts and contribution in the healthcare organization. Adequate care should be taken to implement a well-balanced rewards and recognition programmes for healthcare professionals as it certainly helps in the fulfillment of their needs based on their efforts and contribution. When there are effective rewards and recognition programmes, it motivates the healthcare professionals in turn leads to quality patient care which ultimately results in the overall enhancement of the healthcare services provided by the healthcare organizations. HR leaders’ in the healthcare industry should formulate policies and programmes to adequately differentiate performance based pay such as based on individual performance, team performance or organizational performance and a variety of incentive schemes for different categories of skills. At the same time, the design and implementation of rewards and recognition programmes need to reflect the healthcare organization’s culture and should definitely integrate well with the nature of its strategy and goals to attract and retain skilled and qualified healthcare professionals. It is better to involve the healthcare professionals in the healthcare organization while designing the rewards and recognition programmes instead of taking unilateral decisions. These programmes should be personalized without deviating from healthcare organizations objectives in order to satisfy individual healthcare professional’s preferences and personality to make it more meaningful.

### G. Compensation Management

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### H. Succession Management

Succession management is one of the most vigorous and interesting segments in integrated talent management in the healthcare industry. It is above and beyond filling the top positions. The success of succession management will largely depend on senior healthcare leaders’ critical role in driving a smart integrated talent management strategy which in turn will drive talent retention throughout the healthcare organization. If properly planned and implemented, succession management will certainly make sure the required healthcare professionals will be in place whenever required in order to react to the ever demanding healthcare industry. Adopting an
integrated talent management approach to build talent from within the healthcare organization by promoting from within, healthcare professionals will be provided with more opportunities within the healthcare organization to develop, grow and move on in their career ladder. It will increase the likelihood of talent getting engaged and will probably try to explore newer avenues with in the healthcare organization rather than searching for opportunities elsewhere. The senior healthcare leaders need to design a robust process to recognize, evaluate and nurture talent on a continual basis after carefully understanding the critical features of integrated strategic talent review process. Healthcare organizations that fail to concentrate on developmental plans to healthcare professionals may miserably also fail in the succession management strategies. Not only developmental plans need to be designed but should be implemented in an appropriate manner to prepare successors for the talent pipeline. Senior healthcare leaders’ need to make sure that succession management is integrated with recruitment, learning and development and performance management at both technical/professional and management roles as it will serve as the key differentiator between “best” and “rest” as far as the amount of commitment and involvement demonstrated is concerned in the healthcare organization.

I. Retention Management

Though the healthcare organizations’ strives to enhance the lives and health of its patients, it should also take care of its bottom line. Without achieving adequate revenue, healthcare organizations may not be able to serve its patients in a better manner. Healthcare leaders’ should have the money power to pay reasonably well to their employees thereby limiting the employee turnover. When healthcare employees’ of different levels like nurses, healthcare administrators change their jobs, the healthcare organizations’ in real terms lose money as costs are associated with the process of hiring, onboarding and several training programmes conducted to enhance the knowledge and skills of those healthcare professionals’. Moreover, there is loss of intellectual capital and downtime. Some patients who visit healthcare organizations to get the medical facilities very often may be loyal to their doctors and other healthcare providers depending on their requirement. When these patients visits the healthcare organization for a routine check-up or for medical procedure and realize that their favourite doctor or nurse or any other relevant healthcare provider is not available in that particular healthcare organization, they may have a negative experience. Whenever their favourite doctor leaves a particular healthcare organization, more possibilities are there that some of the patients may follow their favourite doctor, who has joined another healthcare organization. Provision of support mechanisms like grievance procedures, flexible work arrangements, counseling sessions etc., to help employees to deal with shocks is very much required to retain critical employees in the healthcare organization. Thus, retaining its talent is vital to any healthcare organizations and therefore senior Healthcare leaders should always make sure to take necessary steps by formulating and implementing integrated talent management strategies so that the critical positions in the healthcare organization always remain competitive to achieve overall objective of the healthcare organization. Failing to do so may lead to lose its position to stay ahead in the competition.

VI. Conclusion

The ever demanding nature of healthcare sector combined with its great reliance on highly skilled healthcare professionals will certainly place considerably greater talent pressures on employers in the healthcare sector. Given this situation, adopting an integrated talent management approach is not optional but essential to rationalize talent processes in such a manner that will enhance efficiency, lower risk and reduce costs. The health care industry certainly management from a holistic perspective so that they can integrate talent management programs into the healthcare need to formulate necessary steps to manage the increased demand for its services in addition to human capital challenges with regard to acquisition, development and retention of critical talent. Needless to say, senior leaders in the healthcare industry need to develop and implement integrated talent management approach that will help them to invest in right kind of talent management strategies which in turn will attract, develop, engage and retain qualified clinical professionals to ensure the provision of quality patient care.

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