



## ENABLING COMPETENCY & TALENT DEVELOPMENT FOR FRESHER'S IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

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### ABSTRACT

*Employability has become the buzzword amongst potential workforce. There is widespread awareness of getting educated to get employable and successful in life. The same spirit is invariably seen in the youngsters who are seen thoughtfully selecting career options and making serious efforts to connect with worthwhile careers. The spirit has been valued by academicians and necessary value-added interventions are being identified, translated into initiatives at educational institutions. The basic purpose is to imbibe the spirit of 'employability' amongst youth to stand firm in the competitive world.*

*Everyone aspires for a great and sparkling career in life. After completion of academics, the prospective talent pool yearns for a break in a good organization. Apart from functional knowledge the candidates are required to have basic managerial fundamentals imbibed as traits whilst getting interviewed for a position and thereafter selected.*

*The transition from academic to professional world has its inbuilt anxieties, curiosity, expectations and desires coupled with tensions - firstly to get selected and secondly to get the first real job experience. With little known expectations of the talent pool from the employer's there is high level of difficulty experienced during the entry level stages of the career. However, on experience of such models, it is vital that organizations focus on this concern and address the same with structured plan and greater rigour.*

*The initial stages of acquiring a job, further getting inducted into processes and policies do provide an impetus for a successful career for a fresher in any given domain. The phase also calls for effective on-boarding interventions coupled with series of management inputs to channelize, upgrade and uplift the talent pool. The seeds of Talent and competency get planted to further emerge into a fruit bearing tree of success.*

*The paper attempts to touch upon the intricacies involved in the professional value-adding processes at the Organization level and also provides major tips to ensure quick realization of objectives during the initial stages of career benefiting both - the employer as well as from the talent pool. A mutual collaboration invariably helps to improve the effectiveness and performance in a larger way.*

**Keywords:** Talent, Skills, Competency, Manufacturing

### INTRODUCTION:

In the competitive employment scenario, there has always been a high level of expectation of industry from the young talent pool in terms of employability skills. There is nothing wrong in possessing such expectations – since Organizations need to achieve their goals in defined time schedules. Any input through any resource needs to be carefully analysed towards output and therefore even 'Human Resource' gets the same screening. As like any other resource, there needs to be a value-adding process when it reaches in semi-finished form – Human Resource or Fresher at the factory is no different. The entry level is definitely in semi-finished form and therefore value-added interventions are required to give a 'finishing touch' to this vital resource thereby making it a worthwhile resource in every angle.



Unemployment is huge – however, getting employable resource continues to pose serious problem. The said aspect is being studied by educational institutions in the light of candidates getting placed.

Several value-added initiatives have been drawn thoughtfully drawn to ensure that the students are aligned to the requirements of the potential employers. The educational institutions do organize Industry-Institution forums to discuss the need and proactively step up the educational agenda to match the said skills and competency gaps. The industry experts are invited to the institutions to update the latest trends in the industries – be it processes, management strategies and principles, benchmarking practices and so on.

Educational institutions too have been aggressively driving the 'employability' agenda at the student's level – conducting mock interview sessions, experiential learning, and case-study, role-plays, training on latest trends and continuously reviewing the ever changing industry expectations. These aspects are provided to build 'Employability' to the potential talent. Willard J (2012) stressed upon various professional, behavioural attributes and skills the following skills: self-drive, energy levels, eagerness to learn, assertiveness, self-reliance, self-confidence, self-control, self-knowledge, positivity, independence, appreciation of diversity, perseverance, creativity, flexibility, comfortable with uncertainty, open-mindedness, communication skills, and sense of humour. These attributes will make a good professional and give effective performance to the organization too.

On moving through the employment processes, the candidate fairly analysis and assesses the competitive edge he is required to acquire even at the entry level. The entry into new horizons also provides ample scope for the fresher to paint a new canvas of career. He has a forum to depict his learnt skills and basic functional knowledge.

The employers too view intake of fresher as an opportunity to build up talent pool in an organized manner. It is steady process of inducting the talent pool which could be a potential work force for tomorrow. The employers – studies have indicated – provide a critical feedback that there is a dire need for educational institutions to upgrade the employability factor in the students. There is a huge gap between what is expected of the fresher or students and what generally comes to them in-spite of stringent selection criteria (Kagaari, 2007) – which is true in many respects.

It has been stated by Weligamage (2009) that the expectations from fresher – potential youth professionals are different geographically. He suggested that skill assessment and identification should be the foundation for any development of employability initiatives. These could be sought from the labour market and the potential work force. Educational institutions need to seek such critical information before devising interventions which will impact the labour market.

Whilst engaging fresher at the grass root level, it is important that organizations take adequate precaution to groom, mould and mentor the talent pool with sensitivity and strategy. A structured approach would support the fresher in the transition and also replicate benefit to the organization at large.

Thoughtfully driven initiatives which upgrade the knowledge, skills and abilities of graduates will instil greater confidence amongst them in making a right choice of careers - Harvey (2004)

**Discussion:**

There is a point in saying that loads of work need to be done at educational level in order to groom the potential work force for the future. Much more scientific studies and research 'on what makes or what breaks a career' have to be conducted at ground level so as to build higher strata of skills, competencies and talent for the future need of the labour market.

The vicious cycle of mediocre performance will have to end with collaborative efforts by industries and institutions together. As the institutions make efforts in improving educational standards driven by the market, it is equally true that industries too are making unstinted efforts to build robust mechanisms at organization level to imbibe religious learning and grooming climate. These efforts are built though expertise available within the industry represented in various fraternity.

Dr Kiran Sharma (2015) – in her paper has stated that the importance of values, skills and competencies are important – and educational institutions need to abide with this social responsibility towards youth's up-liftment for better employability. Educational institutions and industry need to collaborate and imbibe this value in creating learning interventions as a part of their curricula.

On careful selection of fresher from various institutions using various interview and selection processes, it is now left with the organization to channelize the potential which will effectively support both - the fresher and the organization. "However, it need to be noted that employable youth today yearn not just monetary benefits but are choosy on type of industry, job profile, geography, culture, benefits etc. They also need variety of job experiences before finally choosing a career path for their life" - Tang S K ( 2014 )

For the purpose of discussion, we will select two functions primarily any manufacturing organization will definitely have – Operations & Human Resources. The basic purpose of this paper is to imbibe the spirit of having structured approach to make an effective beginning to end the first phase of learning and development with higher level of confidence with cheer.

**Generic Attributes of a fresher**

- Happy to have got selected
- Curiosity about the company, its scope
- Adaptability factor
- Functional curiosity
- Getting along with functional expectations
- Understanding the intricacies of processes
- Role and responsibility
- Initial support required
- Understanding personalities, culture & team
- Grooming and mentoring in the new role

Further to the above aspects, the fresher will invariably have the above factors lingering in his / her mind which brings in necessary nervousness whilst the initial phases of getting into a fresher role.

**Major Factors which do bring confidence in fresher – on joining**

- Warm welcome to the fresher.
- Team connect – with informal and formal introduction.

- Making the fresher comfortable with openness in communication and behaviour.
- Providing basic information about the organization, hierarchy, structure, operational processes etc
- Devising thoughtfully framed induction process with sizable time frame to understand and learn the process.
- Providing extra slot and add-on learning experience in the domain / s where the fresher will have to interact or act upon
- Providing adequate learning time – since the foundation of experience is being built at this juncture. Rushing through such periods will provide low confidence and impact the effectiveness of the induction program.

The above said basics when followed will trigger good level of confidence whilst one assumes duty at office – as a fresher. This will heal, to a good extent, the curiosity factor which mounts tension at the initial phases. Having a perfect state of mind at this juncture is crucial – since this phase affects the overall confidence of a fresher. The confidence or no confidence at this moment dictates the way further actions & learnings that will follow.

On getting the basics right, it is time for the fresher to move to the next level wherein more detailed version of understanding and learning takes place in an organization. With the first milestone gets achieved at the preliminary induction stage, it becomes important to get into phase 2 of training and development.

The stages are here below depicted separately for ‘Operations and Human Resources’

#### Steps in inducting a fresher into ‘Operations Function’

- Meeting the Head of the department (HOD)
  - Basic information on Operations processes
  - Hierarchy (Names & Designations)
  - Macro level details of plant, processes, products, capacity & capability
  - Orientation to targets
- Explaining the flow-chart
  - Allocating shop or process -wise induction responsibility – with check sheet of each stage with fixed duration time line.
- Practical orientation under strict supervision with context of safety standards to get a feel of the process and product
- Orientation towards
  - Detailed processes, concerns and challenges faced
  - Quality Parameters, standard operating procedures & inspection checks
  - Human Resources Management at the shop floor
  - Maintenance processes
  - Briefing on ‘skill Mapping & development exercise’
  - Various internal & external audit protocol
- Allocation of job-responsibility with clearly defined mentor for the Fresher.
- Define clear roles plus deliverables with support allocation from experienced officials
- Time framed Assessment of learning of a fresher ( initially monthly and later a quarterly review will help)
- Realignment and diversification of role on having achieved good score on given tasks.
- Learning Shop-floor management skills and basic soft skills at work place



### Steps in inducting a fresher into 'Human Resources Function'

- Meeting the Head of the department (HOD)
  - Basic information on Human Resources
  - Vision, Mission & Value systems of the Organization
  - Goals for the year
  - Team introduction & briefing (formal)
- Introduction to systems, processes and guidelines
- Induction to various Policy Guidelines
- Detailed Organization chart
- Provide glimpse of Agreements and highlights of the same
- Orientation to
  - Macro Level – HR practices
  - Processes pertaining to Recruitment, Training & Development, Talent Acquisition & Retention, Organization Development initiatives
  - Understanding of culture of the organization
  - Achievements & concerns
  - Legal calendar guidelines
  - Administrative orientation of the organization and details thereof
- Disciplinary action processes
- Budgetary exercise & control mechanism
- Explaining various HR initiatives undertaken and planned during the year/s
- Visit the 'Environment, Health and Safety' policy guidelines and roles
- Training Need Identification program
- Training and Development initiatives
- Training Calendar for the year
- Meeting with the Union officials and key opinion makers of the organization
- Provide clearly defined deliverables and responsibility
- Appoint a mentor during a learning process
- Assessment of learning performance & re-aligning – as may be required.
- Understanding basic Industrial Relations sensitivities

### **Important Points**

1. Structured Induction Process - Carefully drawn induction programs are necessary towards ensuring 'effective learning'. A good investment in preparing basic ground and climate for learning is as important as 'learning' itself. Organizations do have structured and well thought of plans to incorporate a 'Mentoring Model' to ensure effective learning at their organization.
2. Ownership for learning – though with the fresher – imparting the best quality experience and exposure also becomes important. Industry play a vital role in setting the best learning environment in order that the talent is well groomed for the future challenges. Inadequate attention at the stage of induction may bring forth concerns pertaining to mediocre overall deliverables – thereby affecting the functional and organizational performance.



3. Assessments for alignment – these play a pivotal role in understanding the depth and path of learning for a fresher. A well laid out induction process will draw a road map for the fresher to do well during learning stages – however, an assessment of learning performance will make the learning robust. Deviations – if any, can be re-aligned without any delay and thereby get assured results and an effective learning curve.

### **Conclusions**

There is a high level of importance to be given to initial stages of career development. Though the academics provides generic and basic fundamental knowledge to the career aspirants, however, the industry too plays a pivotal role in establishing the robust mechanisms of greater practical learning to the fresher.

A good thoughtful induction process once devised leads to higher results of achievement for the potential talent and provides the much necessary confidence to perform a given role. Initial hand-holding, mentoring and tutoring definitely supports learning process. A certain amount of flexibility and freedom to express views, encouraging curiosity and provide platform for creativity is definitely required for building interest and enthusiasm at job.

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