



**FOSTERING AND SUSTAINING HUMAN CAPITAL
SOME BEST PRACTICES @ VMM, VIJAYAWADA**

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Fostering human capital is the principal prerogative of educational and training institutions while their valuation, acquisition and retention are generally the tasks of employing organizations. Here comes an organization called VASAVYA Mahila Mandali (VMM), Vijayawada, which is uniquely poised for both fostering and sustaining human capital with an approach worth reckoning in the domain of Human Capital Valuation and Talent Retention.

Drawing inspiration from some global organizations in the field of development sector such as National Association of Social Workers of United States of America and the Alliance International, VMM has adopted a paradigm of valuing the human capital in terms of the 'Employee's ability to serve the Clients', 'Employee's Ethical Responsibility to Colleagues' and 'Employee's Ethical responsibility to Employers and Employing organization'. Further the 'People Skills' and 'Managerial Skills' are also valued.

The parameters are evolved on a five-point scale and the valuation is multipronged such as self-valuation, valuation by peer, valuation by immediate superior as well as immediate subordinate and valuation by management team. The average of the scores constitutes the aggregate value for the employee as a measure of one's personal appraisal.

Strategies of talent retention @VMM include encouraging constructive feedback and personal development, fostering creativity, handling change management, encouraging dialogue and two way communication, rational work-reward structures, positive conflict resolution mechanisms and investments in human capital of the workforce and building relationships among and with the workforce.

Fostering Human Capital @ VMM

A number of NGOs may be contributing for human capital development but VMM stands aloft with it's quite a laudable contribution of human capital development for the generation of quality human resources in the domain of development sector by having an astute institutionalized interface with Universities and Colleges, the places of higher learning that produce graduates and postgraduates to the country to handle



complex tasks of building the nation.

While so many NGOs, even the larger ones, are found to be rather shunning from academic institutions like Universities and Colleges to work in unison with them through institutionalized forms of collaborations, VMM has always been in the forefront of such initiatives, of having formal collaborations of working together with the Academia. Its collaborations with Andhra University, Visakhapatnam and Post-Graduate Courses and Research Centre, DNR College, Bhimavaram for Skill Development Workshops and Field Action Projects-the social labs to Universities- needs a special mentioning, apart from its association with scores of other institutions like Acharya Nagarguna University and Stella Marry's College.

VMM's contribution in organizing Skill Development Workshops to University students and partnering Field Action Projects, with financial and technical support, on the most vexing current social issues confronting the human societies and of vast masses of people in dire circumstances is unparalleled in the history of NGO-University interface in the state of Andhra Pradesh. What is so unique of this interface is that VMM brought with its fore the most contemporary applied knowledge in the area of unraveling the social reality and articulating pragmatic interventions to improve the quality of life of people, which is otherwise quite unavailable in any standard books of reference, as the availability of standard reference books is scant due to budgetary constraints and subject to time lag from the time of generating new theoretical frameworks and their availability in print form.

This brought a cutting edge to the students of the Universities, with which VMM has had collaborations, in acquiring the most needed skills of employability in Qausi-Governmental or Non-Governmental Organizations, the principal source of employment for professional social workers, which is otherwise not possible through the regular class room learning from the Universities, because quite often even the senior faculty in the departments of the University campuses were not having updated knowledge and that kind of skill sets readily with them. Even for the faculty, the sessions conducted by VMM's technical staff were of pretty new revelations to reckon with to integrate theory with practice.

To conclude, VMM's collaborations with Universities and Colleges contributed for the generation of human capital of the most appropriate one, by knowledge management of the faculty and students, improved the skill sets by involving them in field action projects on current issues of human wellbeing, thus enlarging scope for application of theoretical models to the practical circumstances, fine-tuned their attitudes by imparting values in action and heralded action research to search the simple, yet culturally appropriate practical solutions for the promotion of social well-being and thus contributed for the expansion of quality human resources in Universities and



Colleges wherever it has treaded with its collaborations. So, shouldn't the University Grants Commission, the highest policy making body that fosters higher education in the country, recommend this kind of interface on much a wider and larger scale in the interest of the nation? Shouldn't apex organizations like ICSSR encourage action research to unravel such initiatives to draw lager policy generalizations to the benefit of the society?

Human Capital Valuation @ VMM

Valuation of Human Capital @ VMM is done on the basis of appraisal of Staff with respect to Service to Clients; Ethical Responsibility to Colleagues; Ethical Responsibility to Employers and Employing Organizations. Further the People Skills and Managerial Skills are also valued.

“Appraisal of Staff With respect of Service to Clients” is done on the basis of employee's ability to serve clients with devotion, loyalty, determination, and the maximum application of professional skill and competence. The worker should not exploit relationships with clients for personal advantage. The worker should not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical handicap, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or status. The worker should avoid relationships or commitments that conflict with the interests of clients. The worker should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities with clients. The worker should provide clients with accurate and complete information regarding the extent and nature of the services available to them.

The “Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Colleagues” is assessed in terms of Respect, Fairness, and Courtesy- the worker should treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith. The worker should cooperate with colleagues to promote professional interests and concerns. The worker should respect confidences shared by colleagues in the course of their professional relationships and transactions. The worker should create and maintain conditions of practice that facilitate ethical and competent professional performance by colleagues. The worker should treat with respect, and represent accurately and fairly, the qualifications, views, and findings of colleagues and use appropriate channels to express judgments on these matters.

The worker who replaces or is replaced by a colleague in professional practice should act with consideration for the interest, character, and reputation of that colleague. The worker should not exploit a dispute between a colleague and employers to obtain a position or otherwise advance the worker's interest. The worker should seek arbitration or mediation when conflicts with colleagues require resolution for compelling



professional reasons. The worker should extend to colleagues of other professions the same respect and cooperation that is extended to his own colleagues.

The worker who serves as a mentor to colleagues should make orderly and explicit arrangements regarding the conditions of their continuing professional relationship. The worker who has the responsibility for employing and evaluating the performance of other staff members should fulfill such responsibility in a fair, considerate, and equitable manner, on the basis of clearly enunciated criteria. The worker who has the responsibility for evaluating the performance of employees, supervisees, or students should share evaluations with them.

The “Worker’s Ethical Responsibility to Employers and Employing Organizations” is valued on the basis of one’s commitment to Employing Organization—the worker should adhere to commitments made to the employing organization. The worker should work to improve the employing agency’s policies and procedures, and the efficiency and effectiveness of its services. The worker should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination in the employing organization’s work assignments and in its employment policies and practices. The worker should use with scrupulous regard, and only for the purpose for which they are intended, the resources of the employing organization.

The “People Skills” of the employee is valued in terms of the ability to delegate authority, to assign definite assignments and supervises by results, to minimize detailed orders, to use low pressure, to train subordinates, to do different work from that done by his subordinates, to spend his time on long-range rather than short-range problems, placing the right person on the right job, orienting new employees in the organization, training employees for jobs that are new to them, improving the job performance of each person, gaining creative cooperation and developing smooth working relationships, interpreting the company’s policies and procedures, controlling labour costs, developing the abilities of each person, improving morale and motivation of employees, maintaining safe work environment, and protecting employees’ health.

The “Managerial Skills” are valued in terms of Employee’s ability to motivate himself and his workers to more and better production. Since the other elements in business like materials, money, methods, machines, and markets are usually fixed or at least the same among all companies, the opportunity for improvement lies in the only variable element, the available workers. The second factor is vision. Every executive is a supervisor; he supervises people or an activity or both. The word ‘supervisor’, if not by definition then at least by connotation, means someone possessed with ‘super’ vision. Hence, a supervisor must be capable of seeing over and beyond the obvious. The third factor is decision-making ability. The person who can make decisions gets paid for it, the one who cannot must yield the authority and salary to the higher up who has to make the decisions for him. The fifth factor is humility. As important good



health is, even more necessary for success is peace of mind. A true spirit of humility provides a source of executive strength that is greater than all others.

Strategies of Talent Retention @ VMM

It has been established beyond doubt that employees do not merely work for what they receive in terms of pay and perks but on the basis of how well they are valued. An environment that fosters the feeling of satisfaction not only in tangible ways but also in intangible forms is crucial in retaining the talent with the organization. Driven by this praxis wisdom VMM adopted strategies that facilitated the personal development of its workforce along with organizational advancement which acts as its strategy of talent retention.

VMM's staff development strategies include constructive feedback and coaching.

It helps people learn to accept feedback constructively and encourage them to set up a process to develop themselves. VMM strives to develop skills in everyone that facilitate immediate performance improvement to meet key strategic goals. Also, this development is used as a reward for excellent performance as well as a retention tool.

The other focused area is fostering creativity. Without creativity any organization stands still as the world changes around. Creativity helps to obtain today's results while simultaneously creating new future. To foster creativity barriers are identified and removed and a culture is set in place that stimulates it. The creative person generates new ideas and the organization runs effectively. Leaders are either personally creative or quick to exploit the ideas of creative people.

Creativity depends on creative qualities, a supportive environment and opportunity to apply creativity. Innovation in organizations is very much like [thought leadership](#) except that the thought leader does not need to be personally creative. He or she can promote the creative ideas of others instead and VMM banks on this thought leadership.

Change Management is another key area that contributes to talent retention. Fear of change stems from low self esteem Low self esteem doubts one's ability to cope. Change threatens security if self esteem is low. Those with high self esteem resent change at worst not fear it. Both resist change if their personal identity is tied to the status quo. Change is enjoyable only if none have a stake in the status quo and hence VMM engineers change accordingly.

VMM understands communication as a two way process and as a dialogue. Its best way to foster dialogue is simply putting open questions in a supportive tone of



voice with a supportive choice of words when it comes to choices between strategies to accomplish its goals. This works as a motivational factor and staff accomplish the targets on their own effort.

The other predisposition of VMM is to establish a close relationship between work and reward. If rewards are not tied to performance, you won't motivate anyone. Motivation stems from satisfaction in doing a good job or from recognition by others for their efforts. The strongest employee motivators are: achieving results, being valued, made to feel important, being included and accepted by an admired group, competing - getting ahead of others, gaining influence and status, earning more money, opportunities to do things you enjoy and VMM has a tactical perspective over this that is made known to its employees from time to time.

A most sensitive area in organizational climate is the mechanism for 'Conflict Resolution'. The perspective of the organization on how it resolves conflicts is quite crucial. Search for win-win solutions is the strategy being followed by VMM. By finding areas of agreement to make the parties realize that they are not being rejected outright and bringing to fore the common goals, values and belief, conflict resolution mechanisms are put in place that can foster emotional intelligence on both sides to create win-win solutions but not lose-lose outcomes.

The other retention strategy of VMM is investments in human capital development of its workforce through programs of capacity building and continuous professional development. This in association of encouraging networking to gain intelligence and build alliances leading to the genesis of support groups, employee's satisfaction is high leading to higher retention. Thus fostering knowledge leadership and relationship building are facilitating the realization of not only the organizational goals but also the personal goals of its workforce and hence their retention with the organization.