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WHAT SHOULD **MANAGERS** DO TO INCREASE **TECH EMPLOYEES' WORK PERFORMANCE** AND **RETENTION RATE**?

Organisational productivity and employee retention will increase if organisations strategise around the meanings of what IT employees seek from their work and how to offer them opportunities to grow and develop.

by Shalini Chandra

Technological innovation is picking up at an exponential rate. Technology has undoubtedly created a massive impact on our daily lives. Despite the booming information technology (IT) industry that comes along with attractive benefits, this industry is still experiencing one of the lowest tenure rates. PayScale's recent survey reported that the IT industry is witnessing the highest turnover rate amongst all Fortune 500 organisations. Inevitably, it is critical to engage and retain the IT employees in the organisation by maximising their potential.

Past research suggests that developing acts of collaboration, cooperation, and gestures of goodwill amongst the employees, termed as 'Organisational Citizenship Behaviour' (OCB), helps facilitate employee motivation and retention. So, it becomes pivotal to develop organisational citizenship behaviour amongst the IT employees.

How OCB can be Nurtured Amongst the Knowledge-driven IT Employees
Due to the continuously developing nature of the IT in-

dustry, the employees of this domain often experience job insecurity and stress. IT employees would regularly evaluate the meaning of their work. Are they doing what they should be doing? Is their work impacting others? It is difficult to retain these knowledge workers in an organisation if they do not find their job meaningful. Employee departures cost the organisation's time, money, and other resources and may have alarming impacts causing shortfalls in organisational performance. We believe that IT organisations should carefully plan and strategise by identifying the kind of work their employees find meaningful. That will keep them affectively committed to their organisations and further develop their OCB. This will result in increased employee retention despite the uncertainties and challenges in the industry.

Inducing Employee Commitment and Loyalty through the Meaning of Work

We conducted a research by collecting data from 416 employees from an IT organisation. We wanted to understand if the meaning of work ('sensemaking' of work) for IT employees motivates them to stay affectively committed to their organisation. We also wanted to know if that would thereby develop their OCB and consequently result in increased employee retention. People often thought that excellent employee benefits and big paychecks were crucial to employee retention. Of course, employees do look for rewards and recognition from their work, but these are extrinsically driven factors that might not be enough to give them a sense of meaningful work.

Workers in the knowledge-intensive IT industry tend to appraise their work cognitively. They are affectively committed to their organisation only if they find their work meaningful. Extrinsic meaning from work such as financial rewards, job security, and recognition from supervisors or co-workers is not enough to keep the employees affectively committed to their organisation. It is critical to examine how our IT employees cognitively evaluate the meaning of their work which advances their affective commitment towards their organisation, developing their OCBs.

Our research suggests that in addition to developing the extrinsic meaning of work, organisations can consider developing the "intrinsic meaning" of work for their employees. One can do so by giving them opportunities to learn and develop themselves through work. Organisations can create an open culture where all employees across departments can freely contribute ideas and share opinions. Such initiatives can be done through online and offline platforms.

Other than making the work extrinsically and intrinsically meaningful for the employees, our research suggests that organisations should also keep in mind the need for present-day employees to derive social meaning from their work. Employees may find their work socially meaningful if the organisations make a genuine attempt to connect their employees to the people who benefit from their work. This creates more transparency between the creator and the end-user, allowing the employees to see the real impact of their job.

The Importance of Extrinsic, Intrinsic, and Social Meaning of Work

In summary, organisations should consider developing strategies that could help employees seek extrinsic, intrinsic, and social meaning from their work. All these three factors are no less important than each other as they manifest into OCB. Organisations could help induce the employees' positive attitude towards work, maximise their potential, and strengthen their commitment to the organisation. Employees would then be more forthcoming in helping and cooperating with their colleagues. The likelihood of them leaving the organisation will reduce with more contribution and community involvement. Organisational productivity will increase as well if organisations strategise around the meanings of what IT employees tend to seek from their work and how to offer them opportunities to grow and develop. All these initiatives will create a healthy positive work climate of 'caring and sharing' within the organisation. The result— increased employee retention and a stronger and more collaborative workplace.

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