

GLOBE RUNNER

At peace with himself and his achievements, Avadhesh Dixit's career has sky rocketed due to his truly charismatic personality, in depth understanding of global HR and his ability to deal with cultural diversity.

■ BY SANNITA CHAKRABORTY SAHA

RAPID FIRE



Favourite quote

"Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved without deep thought and hard work"-
JRD Tata

Leadership style

Participative and consensus driven

Current professional goal

Take CMC HR practices to greater heights!

Favourite book

'Execution' by Ram Charan

Favourite music artist

Lata Mangeskar & Bryan Adams

An HR trailblazer with an extremely strategic outlook, Avadhesh Dixit comes across as a man who is highly passionate, confident, with a remarkable ability to make quick, well-considered decisions. However, he also comes across as a person who would try and go beyond the ordinary. Someone who believes that sharing knowledge and mentoring can be a very gratifying experience at the end of the day.

Multitude of experiences

Today Dixit has a long list of accomplishments and successes in global HR initiatives, but interestingly, his career had the humblest of beginnings. Starting out with a lesser known electronics manufacturer, Calcom Vision Limited, Dixit's first assignment was to study the PCB assembly line and suggest the ways to improve the process time and ensure higher quality output! In his second job, he found himself

conducting primary research in the marketing department an electrical appliance company. Dixit believes that his exposure to the non-HR functions in the initial years of his career has helped him become a better HR professional. "It is important to understand the nuances of the core business to excel in the HR domain," he says.

The defining moment of his career was when he landed the opportunity to work with Tata Consultancy Services during early 2000, when the organization was growing at a rapid pace. As part of the resource management function, he grappled with challenges of global mobility and manpower utilization - the two functions were integral part of the core business operations. "In fact, it was hard to say whether I was part of the business team or the HR function," he says.

It was at TCS where Dixit gained deeper insight into the direct linkage between HR and business. "This was

also the time when I realized that the foundations of a great organization are laid on values of integrity, customer centricity and ability to think big. Everything at that point of time was big; be it number of people, number of processes to be streamlined or the extent of HR technology deployment," he shares. It was also around this time when TCS was assessed as a PCMM level 5 organization and being an integral part of the core PCMM team, Dixit gained valuable learning. It was a phase that proved to be the key to a successful career journey.

One of Dixit's first realizations was that systematically building competencies is a serious exercise. "You need to get the multiple role definitions right, and once you master this exercise, the next job is to precisely articulate what makes each role successful. The bottomline is that any competency development exercise will be futile unless one gets these aspects right," he asserts.

For an HR professional, the true test is in finding the needle in the haystack. When Dixit was given the responsibility to lead the TCS Campus and Academic liaison program in the northern region, his core responsibility included acquiring quality talent at

the entry level, which was crucial for the business success. He also had to build a strong mutually beneficial relationship between academic and the business development team to maintain conformity.

His initial days at CMC were also full of challenges. His first primary objective was to get every employee aligned to a common corporate objective and that was a huge challenge. He introduced several

tools and measures to achieve this. It included BSC as a framework for strategy deployment and Sonar 6 (PMS Tool) implementation for performance and potential assessment. For each of these measures, it became imperative to build a culture of accountability within the organization.

Talking about his current role at CMC, he shares how he has been involved in driving performance in the organization. He reminds of a famous quote from JRD Tata, the man who shaped the Tata Group, "Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved without deep thought and hard work". As the share of international business increased in the company, the need to introduce global HR practices at the local level became of utmost importance. Dixit successfully implemented several processes like international assignment management and other aspects of global mobility and diversity management in the company.

The global spin

Though he started his career with the manufacturing sector, most of Dixit's experience has been in the technology sector across India, the UK and the US. And, his strong cross-cultural aptitude as a result of his global assignments has definitely worked in his favour. He confesses that the big shift in his career came



from his first international HR assignment which was based out of London. As the HR leader for a large IT implementation project, he got tremendous exposure to global HR.

With the beginning of globalization, many Indian companies started looking offshore for new businesses. Even CMC followed the same path. Though this paved the way for exponential growth for the IT companies, it also brought in its own set of challenges especially on the HR front and managing cross cultural sensibilities was one of the key issues. Dixit came forward to take up these challenges in his international assignments and eventually this turned out to be a new set of learning for him.

"The HR practices in different parts of the world differ significantly based on local laws and cultural aspects. For example, in India it's quite common to find job adverts with gender and age as part of job description while in Europe it is a serious violation of equal

In brief

NAME : Avadhesh Dixit
TITLE : Global Head - HR
AGE : 38 years
ORGANIZATION : CMC Limited
EXPERIENCE : 14 years
YEARS IN HR : 14 years
EDUCATION : MBA in HR, Delhi School of Economics

opportunity laws," he says.

In the UK, his responsibilities included not just sourcing manpower from India but also scouting for talent across Europe and the US. "The entire dimension of hiring changes in the international context. UK and Europe's labour market and its various constituent such as suppliers, partners, government agencies, etc., are highly structured and organized.

The laws around equal opportunity and non-discrimination based on gender, age, etc., are better regulated and are uniformly embraced by the corporates. There is enhanced focus on building diversity of culture by building diverse workforce. This makes the whole experience much more enjoyable and significantly enhances professional learning," he admits.

While in London, another important task was to build employee engagement and fuel organizational development. He learnt a key lesson that the same set of factors doesn't drive engagement for diverse and segmented workforce and that customization based on cultural aspects is critical to

running a successful engagement program in a diverse environment.

Driving employee engagement in the context of multicultural workforce does pose its own set of challenges but in turn offers great learning experiences. "One learns to appreciate the merit of diverse ideas and challenges it poses. What engages one set of people may be very different from another and that's where the idea of differentiation and customizing comes in," he says.

Getting inspired

Dixit claims that he has been extremely lucky to have worked with leaders of great intellect who were also driven by extraordinary set of values. "I learned immensely from each of my supervisors. All leaders should imbibe certain values that define them as leaders. Integrity, fairness in dealing with people, transparency, genuine interest in developing people, eye on the future are some core values that one should practice," he asserts. He further adds, "For any leader, walking the talk generates trust which is crucial element to lead teams. Stakeholders want to interact with leaders who can be trusted and who can solve their problems rather than complicating or avoiding them."

As for emerging HR leaders, "A great way to win the trust of stakeholders and business leaders is to understand the drivers of business and what HR levers can influence those business drivers," he opines.

Apart from his professional senior, one person who has touched Dixit's life is J Krishnamurti, the noted speaker and a writer on philosophical and spiritual subjects. As a child, he went to a residential school run by the Krishnamurthy Foundation of India. "He greatly influenced my personal and professional life. Whenever possible, I visit the school of retreats run by the foundation.," he says.

PERSPECTIVES!



Gaps in HR organizations can be bridged with "greater adoption of modern technology, leadership development at various levels, diversity focus, and massive re-skilling at all levels" says Dixit.

Pitfalls to engagement practices in organizations "could be relayed to adopting the same engagement approach for all kinds of workforce segments. Not appreciating diversity while designing engagement programs is another issue," asserts Dixit.

Defining moment

Having spent his childhood in a boarding school, helped Dixit emerge as a different person all together. At the boarding school, he learnt to be disciplined, independent and adapt to varied situations. "The sheer thought of leaving home and staying with strangers was dreadful. I remember it took me three months before I learnt to wake on hearing the boarding school's morning bell. The whole experience of growing up into an independent thinking adult was transformational," he says.

Dixit also recalls, "There was play, music, prayers, sports, dining all at the same place in a hectic 24/7 schedule." This taught him two things - time management and to align his professional and personal life - which went on to shape up his professional life to a large extent. In fact, his days at Delhi School of Economics, went on to further instill the importance of these two aspects in his life.

Today, though he is required to travel extensively within India and abroad, he still manages to blend his two lives. In fact, staying away from home during his schooling days has made him to cherish his family life much more. "Spending time with my family is always a luxury". His life partner is a homemaker and has borne him two



lovely kids," he says.

In his free time, he likes reading on management, philosophy and cultures of the world. "The silver lining of all this hectic business travel is the enormous time that I get during transits. This gives me the opportunity to read and write about subjects of my interest," he says. "In fact, reading on Indian Philosophy is a sheer delight, especially when there is uninterrupted time to indulge," he adds.

On his wanderlust

Dixit believes that travelling makes one appreciate diversity of culture and teaches one to adapt to unknown situations and people. Being a globetrotter himself, Dixit cherishes having travelled to Finland, Hungary, Slovakia and Scotland. However, being a family man that he is, he confesses that there is no better place than the hill stations, which offer awesome family summers getaways.

The road ahead for HR

According to Dixit, social media, crowdsourcing and gamification are shaping the way people are engaging

with each other. The emergence of such technologies and ideas has significant importance in the way companies are going to excite people and engage with them. "We too have adopted some platforms that get people together to generate ideas that benefit the organization while creating a platform for networking and engagement," he shares.

"I see increasing adoption of technology in HR areas especially engagement, HR analytics, recognition and the way the work is going to be organized in future. Some of these trends are already finding their way into HR strategy and employer branding," he adds.

For CMC, he envisions many glorious moments ahead. He believes it will stay at the forefront and implement several best in class HR practices. He also foresees many more global footprints as far as business goes. All along, he also plans to continue in his effort to build accountability in the core culture of the organizations along with an appetite for learning. "I strive to be in constant touch with what's happening in the HR through various forums. I also believe that a great way to learn is to teach. Whenever possible, I try to find some time to address and interact with budding HR professionals in seminars or HR summits. This method works as a great two- way learning process," concludes Dixit. (HC)

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- National Residential Scholarship by Government of India as a young student (1988)
- Distinguished Alumni Award from Faculty of Commerce and Business, Delhi School of Economics, 2011
- HR Best Practice Award (CMC) at NHRDN Annual Conference 2012
- HR Leadership Award from World HRD Congress
- Golden Peacock Award for HR Excellence (CMC) 2012
- Talent Management Award from Delhi Management Association 2013

