



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT USING SOCIAL NETWORKING TOOLS

K. Chellamma * Dr. L. Vijayashree**

**Assistant Professor, Department of MBA, BNM Institute of Technology, Bangalore .*

***Professor, Department of MBA, BNM Institute of Technology, Bangalore .*

Abstract

Employee engagement has appeared as a vital factor in the success of business in today's competitive marketplace. It has become a deciding factor in the success of every organization. Engaging the employees not only improves the potentiality of employee retention, increased productivity and loyalty, but also plays a key link in satisfying the customers, improving the reputation of the company and the value of the shareholders.

Social Mediatools like Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter has become integral part of our life. Social Media is an integrated technology that allows the users to create and share their content by using various available media. Web 2.0 is commonly associated with Social Media. This technology focuses on integration, collaboration and interaction. All type of people all over the world are embraced themselves with social media. Organizations with all size and shape are achieving a lot of success by using various social media tools to communicate with the employees, customers and the members of the community in new ways. The purpose of this paper is to explore the relevance and impact of social media in Employee Engagement.

Keywords: Social Media, Social HR, and Employee Engagement.

1. Introduction

Employee engagement has appeared as a vital factor in the success of business in today's competitive marketplace. It has become a deciding factor in the success of every organization. Engaging the employees not only improves the potentiality of employee retention, increased productivity and loyalty, but also plays a key link in satisfying the customers, improving the reputation of the company and the value of the shareholders. To gain competitive edge over other competent organizations HR sets the agenda for employee engagement and commitment (Lockwood, 2007). Clear, consistent and direct communications are the vital tools for an effective employee engagement programme.

Social Media tools like Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Yammer, Twitter has become integral part of our life. Social Media is an integrated technology that allows the users to create and share their content by using various available media. Web 2.0 is commonly associated with Social Media. This technology focuses on integration, collaboration and interaction. All type of people all over the world are embraced themselves with social media. Organizations with all size and shape are achieving a lot of success by using various social media tools to communicate with the employees, customers and the members of the community in new ways.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Social media applications are widely used in the workplace of various organizations. Many of the organization have started using Social Media as tool for various Human Resource Practices including but not limited to recruitment, employee engagement, Learning and Development, knowledge management, Performance Management etc. Adopting social media as a platform for employee engagement has its own pros and cons. It is highly important to study the various best practices and challenges in adopting social media in employee engagement.

1.2 Purpose of study

The objective is to explore the usage of social media applications in managing the human resource, specifically around employee engagement. Furthermore this paper provides a conceptual framework for effectively using the social media tools in employee engagement.

1.3 Objective

The research question of this study is formulated as follows:

1. What are the various social media applications used in the workplace?
2. What are the best Policies and Processes for effective adoption of social media as a tool for employee engagement?

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 What is social media? Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, 61) define social media as "a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content." Sinclair & Vogus (2011, 294) cite O'Reilly's (2005) definition: "social media is a broad term that describes software



tools that create user generated content that can be shared.” There are various elements a website has to meet to fulfil the requirement of social network websites i.e. user profiles, content, methods of connecting with each other, comments on each other’s page, joining virtual groups with common interest such as sports, fashion etc. (Gross &Acquisti, 2005; Ellison, Steinfield& Lampe, 2007; Lenhart& Madden, 2007; Winder, 2007; Boyd & Ellison, 2007 as cited in Cox 2010).

2.2 Social Media Tools

2.2.1 Facebook –A popular social networking service where the users create personal profiles, add various others into their friend list, exchange messages, updating the profiles and getting the notifications. In addition to this facebook users join common interest groups e.g. class groups, community groups etc.

2.2.2 LinkedIn –A professional networking website mainly used for the professionals from the corporate sector as well as business related individuals. The user maintains a contact list of people with whom they are having a building a professional relationship. This list is often used to build the contact in the professional world, follow different companies, people, and various business opportunities and to find jobs.

2.2.3 Twitter–A popular microblogging website enabling the users to read and send messages which can read by the public, it is called as tweets. These are posts up to 140 characters displayed on one’s own profile. Users may follow other users too and see their tweets.

2.3 Social media in Workplace

In recent years there has been an explosion in the social media used at the workplace. Human Resource and Social Media by KPMG, 2012 define social media is well established as a consumer and brand oriented set of tool. Social media is offering inventive solutions for various problems to improve the internal effectiveness. Various social media tools have always made a positive impact on the success of the workplace in the organization.

Research firm Ipsos conducted a study for Microsoft to understand the impact of social media and the tools of research at the workplace. The study covered 10000 respondents across 32 countries including India from March 25, 2013 to April 24, 2013. The following are the key findings in Indian context:

- 61% of Asia-Pacific employees believe social media increases productivity at workplace
- 38% of the respondents felt that social media usage was underestimated by the company
- Social media tools is used more by Indians then their peers across the world
- 71% of the Indians felt that social media and research tools increased the collaboration in the workplace and improved their workplace.
- The usage of email is done by 9 out of 10 people, IM or Video conferencing by 8 out of 10 people and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total use intranets and sites.
- 57% of the employees in Asia Pacific want to be involved in the decisions regarding the implementation of newer technology at workplace, but social media network and micro blogging were not allowed in many of the Indian firms.

2.4 Why Social Media in the Workplace?

In today’s connected world, we have to deal with various workforce related diversities. Key driving forces for Social Media tool in the workplace are workforce generation and Global Workforce (Geographically disabled, multi-cultural, multi-lingual etc.).

While a Generation Y employee may have issues when said to use social media but a baby boomer may be overwhelmed and irritated by such a proposal. Traditionalist and baby boomers like face to face meetings or phone calls, while Generation X & Y don’t believe in face to face encounters but prefer to send a text or make a call for the purpose of the business. For this group just a “pinging” of message is a form of relation building.

Table 1 : Different generation’s view of social media.

Different generation’s view of social media	
Generation Y (16-30 years)	Generation X (31-46 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I like to send a quick text message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I find e-mail more effective to do business.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media sites are good to build good teamwork and innovation in the workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct meetings are occasionally required, but e-mails are more than enough.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No need to meet subordinates to build a strong relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will get used to any form of social media’s, but I don’t prefer using it.
Baby Boomers(47-65 years)	Traditionalists(66-86 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face to face meeting or by phone is the most effective form of meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I prefer face to face meeting and it works the best.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct meetings build good relationship and build better rapport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usage of various social media’s in the working environment lowers the productivity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don’t understand all the hype about various social media’s. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not believe in sharing all the information or knowledge gained with the younger generation.

2.5 Social Media and Human Resources:

The eruption of social media as a tool of marketing and networking has created a huge opportunity for the HR professionals to select, recruit and retain top level talents in the organization. It deals with using the right form of social media among the various available options and utilizing the best one to create a value for the organization. Knowing various benefits and drawbacks of social media is very important to maintain a standard in an efficient manner from the context of the organization. This helps in the HR department to recruit better candidates, collaborate better and keep them engaged efficiently.

Social media sites provide a chance for the employer to recruit the potential employees. Social media has become a valuable tool for the employer to choose the best among prospective candidates. Social media websites permits the firms to build employment awareness and thus expanding the depth of the network. Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are those social media sites which provide valuable information about the availability of qualified candidates. These sites provide the employer to select the candidate, communicate with them and recruit the applicants who fill the vacant position. According to the research conducted by Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), 76% of the companies are either using or are planning to use the various media’s for recruiting the candidates. Majority of the employers supported the fact that social networking sites are the effective way to recruit the candidates.

Many employees are using social media tool to facilitate the process of learning in the workplace. They believe that effective usage of social media can improve and extend the workplace training and learning.

Social media are not just transforming the communication and interaction but also have changed the way people work. The work in the organization can be extremely optimized by utilizing the social media knowledge.

Using social media applications in managing the performance helps in engaging and mobilizing the high performing teams. The feedbacks from the social media helps in coaching the employees, improve the level of performance, achieve rapid alignment, and make a business impact directly. In addition to the above it also reveals the talents hidden in the organization, create plans of retention and rewarding the key informers for their contributions.

2.6 Social Media and Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement is defined as “a heightened emotional connection that an employee feels for their organization, this influences them to exert greater discretionary effort to their work” (Soldati, 2007). Generally employees feel busy or engaged when there is a level of personal involvement and motivation in the working environment (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2003). Employee engagement has appeared as a vital factor in the success of business in today’s competitive marketplace. It has become a deciding factor in the success of every organization. Engaging the employees not only improves the potentiality of employee retention, increased productivity and loyalty, but also plays a key link in satisfying the customers, improving the reputation of the company and the value of the shareholders. To gain competitive edge over other competent organizations HR sets the agenda for employee engagement and commitment (Lockwood, 2007). Clear, consistent and direct communications are the vital tools for an effective employee engagement programme.



Human Resource departments should promote thoughtful strategies of communication that encourages the employee engagement by keeping the workforce strengthened, focused and productive. Such critical strategies help in the success of organization in the long run. In addition, strategic and continuous communication lends credibility to the leadership in the organization. On the other hand poor communication may lead to lack of trust, dissatisfaction, scepticism, cynicism and unwanted turnover (Kress, 2005). The messages in social media spread rapidly. Blogs & twitter provide personal opinions and it helps the leaders to deliver efficient messages to motivate the employees as well as obtain the feedback from the employees. Instant messaging, text messaging and various social networks help in the internal communication process. The web 2.0 communicative tools like social networking blogs, audio blogs, video blogs, instant messaging tools, podcasts and web conferencing to share ideas, information and creations.

2.7 Social Media Potential and Risks

Robert et al (2012) the proper usage of social media is beneficiary to the organization. If it is not managed in an efficient manner it may create legal, financial and personal risks. The managers in the organization have to develop policies and procedures governing the social media usage at the workplace given the potential risk and benefits of social media. There has not been any standard guideline set to assist the business managers regarding the usage of social media. Due to the emergence of newer technologies every moment there is a little initiation taken to steer appropriate action. The executive brief key issues and pose strategic questions to help the managers in making the decisions during the usage of social media within the premises of the organization.

Despite various risks and benefits involved in social media at the workplace, a recent research conducted by Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that 72% of the firms have set a clear goal for the activities of the social media. The evolution of social media has been rapid. According to Emerging Workforce Study by Spherion, by 2012 twice of the total number of companies using the social media today will be having their own social networking strategy. However, 45% of today’s organizations have formal social media policy for digital and social media initiatives.

Although there has been a great adoption of social network initiatives and strategies, the success of such initiatives has been slightly involved since 2012. Table. 1 describes the potential benefits and risk of using social media applications. Approximately one quarter of companies in 2009 rated their efforts in achieving social media goals as successful. After 3 years the number has slightly increased to 30% of the companies.

Table 2. Potential Benefits and Risks of Using Social Media

Organizational Use	Potential Benefits	Potential Risks
Employee Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the turnover • Improvement in the satisfaction of job performed • Improvement in employment compatibility • Greater organizational commitment and identification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discouragement for the new hires by the existing employees • Division creation rather than the inclusion • Spreading of damaging and unnecessary information

3.0 Research Methodology

The research will be primarily exploratory in nature. Online survey followed by telephonic interview will be used to collect the data. A sample set of 600 Human Resource professionals in IT and ITES organizations would be invited to be part of the survey. Online Survey instrument with 10 close ended questions will be created and it will be shared with HR professions. Randomly selected respondents will be contacted through telephone for further information about their response.

4.0 Implications

4.1 Implications on research: The research finding will draw attention on social media in employee engagement and this will form a base for future research in this area.

4.2 Implications on practice: Social Media will become widely accepted practice in managing the multi generation human resources specifically in the employee engagement arena.



5.0 Conclusions

Usage of Social Media applications for employee engagement is an emerging practice in India. The research findings will draw attention on social media in managing Human Resource and this will form a base for the future in this area. Social Media offers many potential benefits in managing the human resources in the workforce if used carefully. Organizations should cautiously analyse the aids and risks of using the social media in managing the human resources. To decrease the level of risk, leaders in the organization must remember that the same compliance, legal and ethical principles that apply to other employment practices also apply to social media.

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