

Talent Management In Academics: Nurturing The Knowledge Pool

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INTRODUCTION

“Talent” connotes different meaning to different people. It has different meaning in different contexts also. The meaning of talent is different for someone serving a corporate than someone serving defense services, serving civil services etc. Therefore, it is germane to first decide in what context one is talking about the meaning of talent. In this paper, talent used in the context of “ACADEMICS” and for Academic Institutions. Talent is like the person who climbed the Himalayas to the guru’s cave to ask “what is the meaning of life?” and got the answer, “Oh I was hoping you might be able to tell me dear son...” So, there is no one answer to this question. Just to cite an example from the Gita, which says that there is no plant that grows on the surface of the earth which does not have medicinal value; there is no sound in the universe that cannot form a mantra and that there is no man born who does not have a talent, only one has to have an eye to recognize the hidden talent in him. The use of the word “talent” has become almost jaded but not quite in the category of academics which is extremely serious and sincere in its true sense because it is not only concerned with the society and country at large, but with the entire human civilization. One of the major issues for higher education is ensuring the continued excellence of its faculty to continuously improve and compete in the future as the number and diversity of students is increasing; creating an institutional environment that values the recruitment and retention of an excellent and diverse faculty is more important than ever.

UGC AND AICTE NORMS FOR FACULTY STRUCTURE

The knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of staff are aspects which greatly contribute to their own individual effectiveness as well as to institutional performance. In addition to the norms on pattern and structure of staff, guidelines should also emphasize on the process of recruitment, development as well as appraisal. The faculty structure will be based on the norms as ; The desirable ratio for Professor, Assistant Professor, Lecturer could be 1:2:4 for each engineering department. However, for Undergraduate courses, a minimum of 1 Professor and 2 Asst. Professor/Readers at the senior level of the faculty for each course being offered may be ensured. This is to provide for situations where the institution may not be able to identify programmes to ensure appropriate senior faculty at the U.G. level also. The desirable student to teacher ratio for engineering degree program for the model curriculum will be 10:1. However, it should not be allowed to rise beyond 15:1.

LEVELS OF TALENT IN ACADEMICS

One size fits all also does not apply to talent management in the academic institutions. There are four levels in the academics for the management of talent. The first level is at the Management level followed by the Head of the Institution’s level. The third level is a combination of faculty and technical staff and the fourth is the level of students. Every level requires a different set of dexterity to manage the talent. The set of issues, problems, challenges are different at different levels. Similarly, the solutions of all those problems are also different at different levels.

It is also pertinent to mention that no level is more important than the other because each level is important enough that it could make or mar any academic institute. Undoubtedly, talent management is a double-edged sword. If used prudently at all the levels, it could give very rich dividends, otherwise it could spoil a rising star. The present study focuses on management and retention of the third level of talent that is Faculty, the knowledge pool of any academic institution.

THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF THE INSTITUTION IN RECOGNITION OF TALENT

The main challenge before the management of the academic institution is the scarcity of talented people who could be made The Head of the Institution or Director. The management has to choose someone from either industry or academics. The latter happens to be the better choice as a person from the academic field is well acquainted with the psychology of the faculty and the issues faced by them. Some of the attributes of a Director/Head of the institute should be as:

- Should have a vision to take the institution to academic success.

- Should be an academician with administrative experience.
- Should identify himself with the vision, mission and the objectives of the institution.
- Should be a leader in true sense of the word.
- Should be self-driven and a motivator.
- Should lead by example, both in work and deeds.
- If the Director is visionary, he is self-motivated and develops a kind of self-pressure to perform.
- If the Director is not a visionary but is ready to work hard, then he needs to be continuously guided by the Governing council to perform, so creating a kind of external pressure to deliver.

HEAD OF THE INSTITUTION & FACULTY

Good faculty members are an invaluable asset to any good academic institution. Steps should be taken to retain such employees. Employees leave because they have been pulled away by “more pay” or “better opportunity.” Yet, more than 80 percent of employees leave because of the “push” factors related to poor management practices or toxic cultures that drive them out.

The main challenges faced by the Head of an Institution regarding faculty members are as follows:

- It is difficult to find adequate number of true talent i.e. qualified and experienced faculty.
- Inability to attract a good response to job ads, both in terms of quantity and quality.
- Difficulty in motivating the young faculty and to balance the ego-clashes with senior faculty i.e. with the professors & deans.
- Lack of aggression and proactiveness which is building among senior faculty members.
- Pyramid structure is skewed- too many junior faculty members, with too few teachers in the middle and higher level.
- Limited interaction with industry and external research teams, leading to inadequate exposure and visibility.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE FACULTY

The good qualities which should be looked for in a faculty by the Head of the Institution are as follows:

- Should be qualified and experienced.
- Should have a good academic background.
- Should have command, both in subject and communication.
- Should act as a role model for the students.
- Should be punctual and focused.
- Should understand the roles and responsibilities of a teacher.
- Should be updated and well informed.

METHODOLOGY FOR RETAINING TALENT

One methodology which could be followed in retaining of the good faculty members is as follows:

- To do an ABC analysis of the faculty.
- To identify the team of core teachers.
- To find those who are trainable and willing to see the institute as a path to success.
- The A graders must be given full recognition in terms of their growth and promotions.
- The B graders can be invested in for the future. They will soon turn into A graders.
- To identify the C grade ones -who neither have the necessary skills nor the motivation. There may be a need to hire in excess so that these C graders can be slowly phased out

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper aims to gain knowledge about the various ways through which academic institutions can retain its valuable assets (faculty) and what are the strategies the management should follow for retention of good faculty members. The present study has been carried out in two phases, in September 2008 and February 2009 (as to check the reliability of responses) by taking views of the faculty as well as views of management in two Educational group of Institutions in Agra-Mathura region with around three hundred fifty and five hundred faculty members respectively. Descriptive Research has been applied for this study and the data was collected through structured questionnaire method and personal interview with convenient sampling method of non-probability sampling technique with around Five hundred & fifty respondents.

AFTER ANALYZING & INTERPRETING THE COLLECTED DATA, THE FINDINGS ARE AS FOLLOWS

- Many people leave their job due to lack of promotion or less growth opportunities..
- They want to work in the same organization if they are sure that the institute would enhance their future career prospects.
- They want to have autonomy, power, position & involvement in decision making.
- Competitive salaries represent the most-cited factor in faculty retention, especially among male faculty.
- Lack of research support (financial, library holdings, travel, and graduate research assistants) is the most cited factor in faculty resigning cases.
- A sense of professional isolation, including a lack of supportive and friendly colleagues is an important concern for both male and female faculty.
- Employment of the spouse is another factor in faculty retention, especially among female faculty.
- Employees need to know how further reward and appraisal is linked to performance. This will help to remove any uncertainty as to what is expected of them.
- Their primary career option is academics instead of the corporate world as they found that in the academic field (as compared to the corporate world), there is less pressure, good working environment, better facilities, power & position.
- Benefits derived by the employees besides remuneration are as follows:-
Paid vacations, Complementary accommodations, Vehicle facility, EPF, Higher studies, Marriage gifts, Working environment.

STEPS FOR RETAINING FACULTY TALENT

Faculty are very much important for any academic institute because they play a very important role in shaping the future of the country through imparting values and knowledge to the students for the development of students as well as the development of the nation. If the employees are satisfied, then they enthusiastically perform their work. The management should take the following steps for employee satisfaction:

- Implement a formal orientation program that is at least three weeks long and includes a thorough overview of every area of the department and an introduction to other departments.
- Assign a senior staff member to act as a mentor to the new employee throughout the orientation period.
- Employees should be well aware with the policies & procedures of their institution.
- The management should provide its staff with opportunities for personal and professional growth. Allow employees to take classes and attend professional development seminars. Challenge them with new responsibilities that enable them to acquire new skills.
- Create opportunities for your technologists to grow and learn. Reimburse them for higher studies, seminars and professional meetings: discuss recent journal articles with them, ask them to research a new scheduling method for the department.
- Encourage every employee to learn at least one new thing every week and you will create a work force that is excited, motivated and committed.
- Some gifts should be given during the main festive season.
- A supportive environment is critical in faculty recruitment and retention as Faculty, like all people, desire a sense of appreciation and respect in a community. By engaging with the faculty, administrators can help build this sense of belonging and can have detailed knowledge about the individual faculty member and his or her needs.
- A range of resources- salary adjustments and reduction in teaching or service load, research support, laboratory facilities should be prime concern of the management.
- Personal counseling should be given to the employees in order to overcome their queries.
- The institutions should adopt open door policies.
- In certain cases, faculty members may be underpaid vis-à-vis their peers at similar institutions. By undervaluing in these cases, a special merit salary increase may be requested. Either the chair/director or the individual faculty member may initiate such a request. If the faculty member initiates the request, it must go first to the chair/director for evaluation.
- Educational institutes conduct Faculty Development Programs for their employees in order to improve their personality & enhance their careers.
- In order to retain the faculty in the organization and for the achievement of future long term goals, benefits like Self insurance Club membership, Informal outings and Flexi timings should be provided.

- Medical facilities should be provided to the faculty members.
- Factors such as job satisfaction and workplace atmosphere are also important, create an environment where employees feel free to share their ideas and give you feedback about the management style.
- Employees want to know when they're succeeding in their jobs, so if they're doing well, let them know it. When they meet their goals, celebrate it.
- If the management really wants employees to feel a sense of loyalty and commitment, they should be treated as partners, not hired hands. Give employees a sense of ownership and keep them engaged.

CONCLUSION

Over the past few years, the culture of higher education has been permeated by an apparent paradox of increased demands for containment of instructional costs and increased accountability for educational outcomes as no institution can be greater than its faculty, staff and students. Employees are very much important for any organization because they play a very important role. If the employees get satisfaction, then they enthusiastically perform their work. "Every human being needs to be valued" is a universal truth and same is applicable to the employees. Whether it is an employee of any company or of any academic institute, when a contribution is made, recognition is what one seeks. When an employee is contributing his/her nine hours a day to the organization, he has some expectations that succeed the salary cheque at the end of the month. He wants to be acknowledged that he matters and makes a difference. As for a company; the faculty is like an intellectual property, both in terms of skills and money. A trained and content faculty can lead the institute to new heights while an opposite one can hamper it badly. So, every resignation saved is every dollar earned and it's the faculty who add value and shapes the future of the nation by developing talents of the students and act as the facilitators and mentors for their self growth as well as the growth of the economy; so it's the responsibility of the management to nurture its knowledge pool – the faculty.

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APPENDIX

Note: All the following figures are in percentage.

Table 1: The Benefits Derived - Besides Salary

BENEFITS	EXTREMELY GOOD	VERY GOOD	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR
Self- insurance	0	09	16	36	39
Paid vacations	06	09	62	14	09
Complementary accommodations	8	29	41	16	6
Vehicle facility	31	47	22	0	0
EPF	19	38	43	0	0
Informal outings	0	11	27	16	46
Marriage gifts	0	8	42	31	19
Flexi timings	0	14	19	32	35
Good working environment	15	43	32	5	5

Table 2: Primary Career Preferences.

Corporate	32
Academics	68

Table 3: Important Retention Strategy.

Job security	11
Compensation	15
Employee communication & participation	05
Benefits/incentives	19
Opportunity to grow	24
Career Development	26

Table 4: Reasons For Leaving The Previous Organization.

No growth opportunities/lack of promotion	35
Physical strains	25
Policies & procedures are not conducive	32
Uneasy relationship between peers & managers	08

Table 5: Organizing Faculty Development Program (FDP).

Yes	90
No	10