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GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Offering upskilling and reskilling opportunities to retrenched employees, or those on furlough, helps increase their chances in securing a new job during an economic slowdown

BY VINITA BHATIA

TThere is no doubt that hospitality was amongst the most affected sectors by the pandemic. Following months of uncertainty and lockdowns, many companies were forced to down their shutters temporarily, and some even permanently. This had a ripple effect on their workforce, as the industry saw massive layoffs and furloughs.

However, some companies went beyond the call of duty to help their workforce. When OYO Hotels laid off about almost 15% of its workforce last year, it did its best to support the re-

trenched staff. It tied up with agencies to offer a three-month out-placement service that would help the affected employees get new jobs.

As they work with a leaner workforce, Joel Paul, MD, Randstad RiseSmart IMEA tells Vinita Bhatia that most companies will increasingly

focus on their team members' mental health, considering that they are functioning under stressful circumstances. This is the time for organisations to foster goodwill amongst their teams and even help their employees make successful career transitions, wherever possible.

After witnessing massive layoffs and furloughs last year due to lockdowns, the hospitality industry is battling restrictions again. What are the long-term effects on people who suffered its brunt, as well as on those who continue to remain in the business?

Amidst the economic uncertainty, one of the immediate effects was on the workforce's mental health. Not knowing what lay ahead is a stressful situation to be in, which was also felt by retained employees too.

Seeing how well or badly a company has handled the impact can make all the difference to existing employees in terms of their approach towards the management. The long-term need is to alleviate stress and provide a wholesome environment for growth as companies recover from the pandemic and reverse the negative effects felt during the last year.

How can outplacement drive solutions within the hospitality-sector?

As a best practice, offering outplacement solutions to impacted employees can greatly mitigate the reputational damages caused due to layoffs. Outplacement providers work with the organisation to first identify opportunities for redeployment wherever possible.

The next step is to work out an outplacement programme along with the company to offer impacted employees access to career coaches. These experts can guide them through the available options, recognise areas that they can explore in addition to reskilling and upskilling opportunities. They can also assist them in identifying and working towards their next career move.

Has your company worked with any hospitality companies to offer outplacement services?

Recently, we worked with some of the world's largest hospitality brands to offer outplacement services to their employees who were being laid off. While the news broke about the impact this layoff would have on the retrenched staff, the company also earned goodwill among stakeholders for handling the situation well by offering their impacted employees respite during tough times.

Ultimately, that is really what hospitality is about. It is about how you take care of your stakeholders, including your staff, and ensure they have a pleasant experience at every step of the journey, even at the end.



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As hospitality companies turn to outplacement as a solution, please shed some light on the importance of reskilling of employees in such a scenario.

Offering upskilling and reskilling opportunities to impacted employees is a great solution to help them increase their probability in securing a new job, especially amidst an economic slowdown. Additionally, this helps create value to their profiles, which act as a confidence booster for them to face the job market.

Reskilling has become a necessity today amidst the takeover of technology in operations and the dynamic needs of the business environment. As the saying goes, necessity breeds innovation. These words hold true today, especially when talking about the importance of reskilling as a means of career development and progression.

How can hotel companies create a supportive working environment that promotes positive wellbeing, without it being reduced to a paper exercise?

There has been a tendency across organisations to consider wellness as two-dimensional with a focus on mental and physical health. In the new normal, there is a need to consider career wellness as an important third dimension.

This third dimension plays a critical role in its relationship to the other two. It can be initiated through programmes that are designed to help employees proactively manage their careers and corresponding skill sets.

Additionally, organisations should offer solutions to employees who seek redressal for any grievances, irrespective if it is personal or professional. When all three dimensions are properly aligned, companies can expect their employees to be more positive in their approach towards work.

This will go a long way in helping the organisation meet its business goals. After all, when companies take care of their employees, the employees take care of the rest, which is a fundamental need in the hospitality business. ■

THE HARDEST BLOW OF ALL

According to a study by the Institute of Management Accountants, professionals hit hardest by the pandemic belonged to the tourism, travel and hospitality industry, with 13% furloughed while 58% received pay cuts.