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Vintage employees: boon or bane?

A balance in fresh hires and vintage employees is a win-win for all

■ Kiran Yadav

Organisations spend considerable time, effort and money to design their values, mission, vision, employee value proposition, etc. to ensure they have a sustainable business plan and stay on the right side of the war for talent. It was also understood and engrained decades back that retaining employees was critical as the cost of replacing is high and legacies are lost in transition. If the above is true then why are there various discussions around vintage employees in the corporate corridors?

The answer is more complex than it seems. As bottom lines drive the decisions at various levels and there is often a fight to finish first in the innovation game, agility and speed powered by technology are given high premium. This is where newer hires at all levels score an edge and are able to produce tangible results in seemingly lesser time. Given that they need to establish their credentials all over again in a new environment, they are competitive, goal-driven, optimistic, unabashedly use network and try to connect the dots at a faster speed. Vintage employees on the other hand, at times are seen as taking too long to arrive at decisions, are conservative, lose their killer instinct over time, over analyse and their past experiences drive their future behaviours. With more scrutiny than ever before on profitability, innovation, pushing the envelope and creating USPs, vintage employees come under the scanner for losing the edge, hence the 'bane'.

However, in organisations where the vintage employees don't feel as valued as they should, a part of blame has to be taken by them as well. Global business is conducted at continuous high speed demanding flexible approach and agile execution. How things were done is not necessarily how they will continue to be done, the same problems may

[CORPORATE MANTRA]

Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength.
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require different answers and quick adaptation. Resting on past laurels and glories can leave one standing in the same place and not move forward.

Indian corporate warriors seem to prefer promotions over most other benefits, which forces them to move vertically in the area they specialise, rather than explore opportunities horizontally. This one dimension growth leads them to a particular grade but stunts them beyond a point as the leadership pyramid keeps getting narrower progressively, and their acquired skills simply aren't adequate.

Key leadership positions today are biased towards employees who have done multiple roles, are mobile, are good people managers and can deal with ambiguity. If employees do not continuously sharpen their skills on the way, they will find themselves at cross roads sooner than later. Loyalty and longevity alone cannot be valued and rewarded without sustained zeal, courage and enthusiasm as we move forward.

To summarise, it's really up to the vintage employees to demonstrate they are and will continue to be a boon for the organisations they work for. Staying 'relevant' is the new black and being versatile the key to success. Organisations equally need to remember they had invested in these employees and should continue to mentor, challenge and groom them. A balance of fresh blood and actively engaged vintage employees creates a win-win situation for all.

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[FUNNY BUSINESS]

It is better to wear out than to rust out.

>BISHOP RICHARD CUMBERLAND