

Have you ever thought success can be as easy as doing what you like? In other words, if you are doing what you like, there's nothing that can stop you from achieving your goals, since work will then be a treat for you. All that's needed is to identify that aspiration which you cannot do away with. For example, a person who aspires to be a writer cannot do too well in a sales job! For convenience of comprehension, experts have named this 'career anchor'. Now what's in it for the industry? Well, it could be an organisation's best tool to retain their best talent. Letting your employees do what they like can help them excel in their jobs and maintain their loyalty to the organisation. Sure, it's not an easy task. But enterprises would benefit tremendously by keeping an eye on the 'career anchors' of their employees, and aligning the same to the company goals. This, in turn, calls for establishing a symbiotic relationship between the employee and employer.

Knowing an employee's career anchor can be one of your best retention tools, says **Jhinuk Chowdhury**

KNOW WHAT YOU ARE



DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S IT THAT YOU CAN'T DO AWAY WITH?

A 'career anchor' has been defined as one's occupational self-concept comprising self-perceived talents and abilities based on actual successes in a variety of work settings; self-perceived motives and needs based on opportunities for self-tests and self-diagnosis in real situations and on feedback from others; and self-perceived attitudes and values based on actual encounters between self and the norms and values of the employing organisation and work setting.

This anchor could vary from managerial aspirations where people like to administer, to technical/functional aspirations where people are more attentive towards the details of their craft, stability, autonomy/independence, and

more or less know what their career anchor is.

Abhishek Kumar, a senior software engineer, considers himself one of the lucky ones. "Right from the early days, I wanted to create. And today, in the capacity of a software developer, I am learning, applying new skills and implementing new thoughts in action, everyday," he says.

BUILDING THAT PSYCHOLOGICAL CONNECT IS NEVER EASY

Dr. Bandyopadhyay opines that a good understanding of career anchors can strengthen the psychological contract between the employee and employer. But this is never an easy task. After all, how do you deal with entry-level professionals, who would join an industry not out of any specific

entrepreneurial/creativity; among others. The most important thing to note here, says Dr. Pallab Bandyopadhyay, Chief People Officer, Cambridge Solutions, is that the anchor is a 'stabilising force' - the values, motives and needs that an individual will not give up, if forced to make a choice.

However, there's usually a mismatch between an individual's career anchor and the kind of career path that an organisation provides. And in the knowledge industry, where the employee is the greatest asset, no organisation can achieve success without its employees achieving success. Therefore, the relationship between organisations and professionals also needs to be looked at from an increasingly symbiotic perspective.

I'M NOT SURE, BUT I THINK....

You need to have mental clarity to understand your career aspirations. Interestingly, while entry level professionals mostly pursue careers that are in vogue, those in the 2-3 year experience category,

career inclination, but because of other reasons like peer pressure, what's in vogue etc, asks Milind Jadhav, senior VP & head HR, Patni. Again, many a time, career options that are in line with the employee's career anchor might be limited. "So once the career anchor has been identified and the employee assigned responsibilities in line with the same, after a period, the growth of the employee may become limited by the opportunities available in that area," says Mukul Agrawal, Managing Director, Unisys Global Services India.

TAKE YOUR TIME

As an organisation, Patni gives people time to 'settle down'. "Instead of charting out a career path right at the entry level, we wait for two years and then let them choose their careers," Jadhav says. One of the main purposes of Patni's performance appraisals is to identify the strong areas of an employee. It has six growth paths, which are thrown open to employees once they have

completed a certain period of time with the company. "After a fair bit of counseling, we help employees choose the career they would like to be in. Employees even have the liberty to opt out of a career path after spending a considerable amount of time, in case they feel they want to do more. But yes, their decision to opt out should be backed by genuine reasons," Jadhav concludes.

RIGHT FROM THE FIRST CONTACT

For Unisys Global Services India, the process of identifying an employee's career interests begins right at the stage of the first level of interview wherein the potential employees' motivations for joining the company, other than remuneration or role and responsibility, are uncovered. Once the employee is hired, there would be formal and informal sessions which help reporting managers to uncover by discussion and analysis, the career anchors of employees. Agrawal adds, "Going further, there are mechanisms like setting up of measurable objectives (in line with the company goals) along with the reporting manager which will be assessed at the time of appraisals. During this process, managers get a chance to uncover other factors (career anchors) which keep the employee with the company. The manager then incorporates these along with the objectives which will be measured at the time of appraisals. Agrawal says this has a twofold impact - better employee retention and brand building of the company.

REACHING THE INNER PERSON

Mindteck believes that understanding a person's career anchor could be a way to bridge the gap between what is planned for him/her and what the 'inner person' will accept. Informs Philip Mammen, Group Head - HR, Mindteck (India), "There are basically three approaches to identifying career anchors. First is the use of questionnaires, the second is to have structured discussions with the individual and understand what motivates him/her and the third is self-evaluation to help make the correct career choice." This helps identifying areas where one can deliver fully over a period of time, and also understand the work setting in which one thrives best.

Mammen says this will go a long way in helping people identify if there is a fit between them and the job they are doing. "People are constantly looking for something meaningful. Many people switch jobs in the hope of finding 'meaning' without understanding where their passion lies and end up being miserable in a new place. Stability will come when people are clear which career will work for them in the long run."

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