

e-HRM in Indian IT Industry: An Employee-Oriented Tool

Bhadoriya Monica Chauhan (Dr.)

Assistant Professor, Amity Business School, Amity University Madhya Pradesh, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh (India)

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Corresponding Author

Email: mcbhadoriya[at]gwa.amity.edu

ABSTRACT

In today's world of increasing competition, organizations are facing the employee related issues viz. employee motivation, engagement, attrition, retention, etc. With the advent of newer technologies every day, it has become essential to use technology for finding solutions to these problems. E-HRM is such a tool which uses information technology to integrate hr (human Resource) department to all other departments of an organization. This paper is aimed at studying e-HRM from the point of view of employees of Indian IT industry. Various e-HRM practices are being followed in Indian IT industry, which are studied in this paper. This paper suggests that the application of e-HRM can be a useful tool for Indian IT industry in order to motivate the employees, engage them and retain them. This paper also presents a case study of Indian IT industry to support the findings.

1. Introduction

People are the makers of an organization. They are the root of an organization because they are the ones who actually plan and act as per the requirements. The strategies are planned, formulated and executed by the people. Hence, they are rightly addressed as 'work force' or 'human resource' (HR). HR managers deal with maintaining and organizing this workforce. Each and every department of an organization has its own importance in bringing the success of organization as a whole. Still, it is the human resource which is common in every department and responsible for its success. HR department has a critical role in the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage for global organizations. In this competitive world, the most significant and complex task in the corporate sector is of HR department. They do not just put the right people at the right place, but they also make sure that they are aligned with the organization and that there is always a balance between the organization and the employees. They need to foresee the changes and act accordingly.

One of such continuous changes is the change in technology. To remain competitive in marketplace, it is must for an organization to grow and advance with the growing technology. The mushrooming of companies in every industry and thereby the highly increased competition forces every organization to focus on the innovative use of technology. It becomes the need of the hour to adapt to the global changes in every sector of the organization. One such remarkable change is in the last few years in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM).

Earlier, researchers have stated the importance of IT in HR (Wright and Dyer, 2000; Jäger, 2001; Trapp, 2001; Legnick-Hall et al., 2003; Ruël et al., 2004; Gueutal and Stone, 2005; Lee, 2005). The use of technology in HR department can be extended to be used by whole organization resulting in the interconnection of all other departments with HR. This interconnection of all the departments with HR department via internet and electronic media is termed as electronic human resource management or e-HRM.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

In this study, Indian IT industry was chosen to be studied because IT is the backbone of e-HRM as well as IT is the most emerging field today. Moreover, e-HRM is highly dependent on computer-savvy professionals and the presence of IT culture is must for implementing e-HRM successfully.

This paper provides a foresight of using e-HRM applications in Indian IT industry. The paper is aimed at understanding how e-HRM has benefitted Indian IT industry and how could it further be explored for achieving employee engagement through various aspects. The work is concerned for Indian IT industry and hence the suggestions need to be checked for generalisation to other sectors and areas; the suggestions are henceforth meant for the same industry. The suggestions are backed up by the case study presented at the last section of this paper.

2. Literature Review

A systematic scan of the database was done in order to find the relevant literature on e-HRM. The focus was also on other similar attributes like HRIS (Human resource Information System, VHRM (Virtual Human Resource Management), etc. This study does not focus on e-recruitment, e-compensation etc. separately, which constitute e-HRM.

2.1 E-HRM (Electronic Human Resource Management)

Bhadoriya et al. (2018) have proposed the definition of e-HRM as "The use of information technology and web-based solutions to connect HR department with the whole organization and to turn all or most of the divisions of HRM from manual to electronic in order to enhance the employees' working capacity and their efficiency."

The use of e-HRM varies from one organization to other. Its scope can range widely: from a simple web-based system to access employee data to a fully integrated, electronic network of HRM services, data, information, tools and applications which may be accessed by all employees, managers, and HRM professionals (Hussain et al., 2007). Enterprise Resource

Planning (ERP) systems and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) are to name few such high-end systems (Pant et al., 2012).

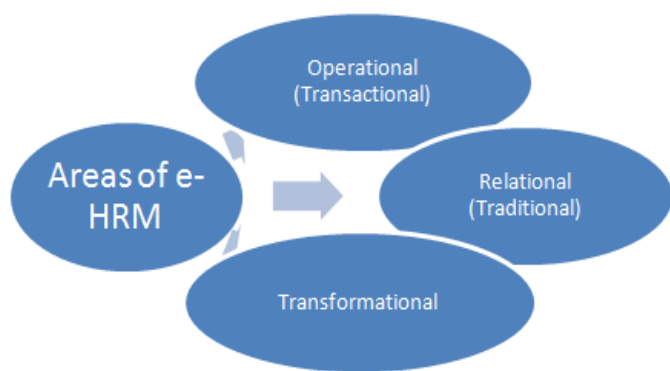


Figure 1: Areas of e-HRM
Source: Author

Likewise, e-HRM has been broadly distinguished in 3 areas (Figure 1) depending upon its usage in the organization: operational HRM, relational HRM and transformational HRM (Lepak and Snell, 1998; Ruël et al., 2004; Parry and Tyson, 2011). These areas are also termed as transactional HRM, traditional HRM, and transformational HRM, respectively by some researchers (Wright and Dyer, 2000). Basically, these areas help to understand the organizational dimension of using electronic means or technological means to provide HR services.

The first area, operational HRM or transactional HRM focuses on the basic day-to-day HR activities. These activities are performed mainly in administrative division like personnel-data management, payroll management, etc. The second area, relational HRM or traditional HRM focuses on advanced HRM activities i.e. on the supporting tools of basic business processes such as recruitment and selection, learning, training and development, performance management, appraisal, rewards, benefits, etc. The third area, transformational HRM, focuses on strategic activities of HRM like organizational change management, competency management, strategic re-orientation, strategic knowledge management, etc.

Relational e-HRM practices help to foster employee-organization relationship by enhancing the trust among them and thus, help in aligning the interpretations of both. On the contrary, operational and transformational e-HRM practices don't directly relate with trust between the employees and organization, but deal with HR department and line managers, respectively (Bissola and Imperatori, 2014).

The available literature says that IT industry is one of those industries which focus on electronic and web-oriented methods for achieving organizational and employee benefits. India is one of the biggest players in IT industry. The next section gives an overview of Indian IT industry.

2.2 Indian Information Technology Industry

The adoption and implementation of e-HRM is prominent in almost every industry. Being an inevitable part of the information technology (IT) industry, the use of e-HRM here is very important. India is the world's largest sourcing destination

for the IT industry, accounting for approximately 67 percent of the US\$ 124-130 billion market. Its revenues (excluding hardware) is estimated at around US\$ 130 billion in FY 2015-16 and is estimated to be at US\$ 154 billion in FY 2016-17 (NASSCOM, 2017). This growth indicates that the Indian IT industry is coping well with the use of technology and hence, has a high scope of giving the effective results of implementing e-HRM.

A recent study revealed that the use of IT in HRM has been evident for the last 15-20 years only and has occurred as a response to the developments in and use of web technology (Johnson et al., 2016). The recent studies have shown that despite rigorous efforts to study e-HRM, there still lies scope of detailed theoretical developments to understand the complexity and effectiveness of e-HRM projects (Ruël and Bondarouk, 2014) and also to understand the various factors which affect the adoption and effectiveness of e-HRM implementation. IT companies wanting to succeed in the emerging digital game have to get used to new ways of doing things (Srinivasan et al., 2015). Although various studies have been done to understand the factors affecting e-HRM, there is a scant research on environmental factors (Bondarouk et al., 2017). These factors are difficult to be controlled by an organization itself but important to be considered.

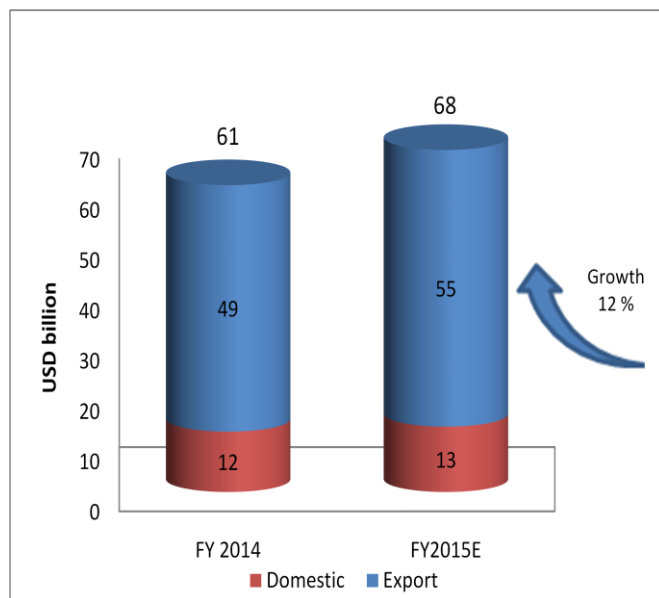


Figure 2: Growth of Indian IT Industry
Source: www.nasscom.in (2017)

Figure 2 shows the growth of the Indian IT industry which is 12% from 2014 to 2015, according to NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Services Companies) in 2015. The report states that by FY2025, the Indian IT industry is set to reach triple of its current annual revenue to US\$ 350 billion at a growth rate of 12-14 percent (NASSCOM, 2017).

Petre Schumacher, Chief executive of Value Leadership Group says, "While Indian IT services firms like to think of themselves as being tech-savvy, customers are looking for the Indian firms to develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the business implications." He also states that "Indian IT services firms need to figure out how they are going to position themselves in this changing landscape, and what the

unique value is that they can deliver to their customers" (Srinivasan et al., 2015).

The sector-wise requirements of manpower in Indian IT/ITES sectors has been increasing and it had drastically increased in 2012 (Table 1). This clearly signals the

continuously increasing demand for manpower in IT industry, the highest demand being a total of 2.72 million in FY2012. The continuous growth of human requirement can be accounted for the lack of skilled employees as per the demand of software industry.

Table 1
Service-wise manpower requirement in Indian IT industry

Service-wise Manpower Requirements for IT-ITES Sectors in India (2002, 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2012) (In Millions)					
Services	2002	2003	2006	2009	2012
IT Export Services					
Consulting, Integration, Installation	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.09	0.27
IT Development	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.11
Outsourced IT Support	0.09	0.11	0.17	0.28	0.53
Training and Education	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.06
Total	0.17	0.21	0.29	0.48	0.97
IT-Enabled Services					
Customer Care	0.03	0.05	0.15	0.42	1.03
Finance	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.09	0.21
Human Resource	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.15	0.69
Payment Services	0.00	0.1	0.05	0.14	0.45
Administration	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.15	0.15
Content Development	0.03	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.20
Total	0.11	0.16	0.38	1.0	2.72

Abbr.: IT-ITES: Information Technology- IT-Enabled Services.

Source: www.indiastat.com (2015)

Thus, e-HRM can be used as a solution for motivating and engaging employees of Indian IT industry and retaining them.

2.3 E-HRM for Benefitting Employees

For most of the organizations in IT sector, keeping staff engaged is an ongoing struggle. According to the findings of a study conducted by Gallup, a staggering 87% of employees worldwide are not engaged and about 68% of employees still consider themselves "actively disengaged" and "not engaged" at all (Gallup, 2018). If the human assets are disconnected and disengaged with their job and organization, the expected deliverables of the organization are far to reach. The negative impact of disengaged staff can also mean higher rates of absenteeism, lack of productivity, higher turnover, and more room for human error, safety incidents, and much more.

Therefore, the HR departments are becoming more creative and innovative. They are greatly investing in technology to help them manage their employees and consequently increase employee engagement. To improve employee engagement, an organization thus requires revamping the HR department with software systems that increase departmental visibility and offer employees' flexibility they need in the modern business landscape.

Employees are motivated by different factors and not one. Moreover, the use of e-HRM also improves the modern and traditional methods of engaging employees which are further discussed. Thus, this section proposes and enlists the various methods related to e-HRM which can be adopted by

organizations in order to comply and cater to the needs of employees for providing them a place they always wanted to work in:

• Automating the basic HR processes

Recruitment and selection, on boarding and training, performance management, performance appraisal, rewards and recognition are those basic HR activities which leave little or no time for HR managers to actually understand the employees' requirements and thus enacting for improving their engagement level. These processes when automated give ample amount of time to indulge into engagement activities.

• Orienting towards end result

E-HRM helps the employees and managers to be end-result oriented by improvising the methods of communication, collaboration and coordination (with both time and team). This means that if the employees are delivering the work on time and up to the standard agreed on rather than being process focused, they can work at their ease and put more emphasis on the end result.

This approach shifts the responsibility to employees, whilst empowering them to work in a way that fits their lifestyle and personal needs, thus driving engagement.

• Measuring quality of work

For engagement to be in its place, all the related things which are believed to provide engagement (pay, promotions,

recognition, appreciation, interesting work, and so on) need to be in place as well otherwise the passion of employees fleet.

These functions are repetitive and hence when automated, they provide consistent and unbiased results. E-HRM thus helps in keeping focus on measuring quality of work rather than the amount of hours spent on work without a fruitful end result. Thereby, managers can also keep track of their ongoing development activities and professional goals and understanding the tools and learning required by them to perform well.

• Adapting to the employees' needs

The use of e-HRM allows the managers to adapt to the style of their employees by understanding their needs and their ways. The styles can differ from employee to employee. A group of similar styled employees can be made for providing them learning, communication, etc. This is considered to be more effective as compared to changing employees. This increases their engagement because it makes them believe that they are being heard and taken care of.

• Empowering employees

By the use of e-HRM, employees would feel more connected to their work and more empowered. E-HRM would let them have their say in the organization which can be made to reach all the concerned ones at the same time and also be escalated, if required. This would increase the employees' sense of respect, recognition and empowerment. The managers on the other hand, would have better and innovative ideas from their employees.

• Networking employees

e-HRM provides networking opportunities to employees which increases competitiveness along with working in team. This encourages them to put forth best practices and new ideas into their work and workplace. Through the use of networking through e-HRM, they can also share the ideas and suggestions from other teams to incorporate into their projects. This brings about learning through sharing among the employees, no matter how far they are from one another.

• Provision of learning and re-learning

Technological changes are rapid and totally unpredictable which requires increased emphasis on quality of services. Hence, software industry is keen to recruit adaptable and competent employees. Software professionals also have an expectation from their employers that they provide them with all the training they may need in order to perform not only in their current projects but also in related ones that they may subsequently hold within the organization.

The use of e-HRM in training and development gives an easy access to the methods of learning. Modern training and development software also makes the employees feel that their organization is ready to invest in their continuous growth and development. It also makes learning fun for them.

• Open communication and feedback

e-HRM allows an organization to have open communication among employees and managers which in turn

develops a healthy culture in the organization. Employees are thus prompted to give their honest opinion and their trust of turning their views into action increases. This enhances the sense of being valued in the organization.

• Appraisal and compensation

An employee's performance is closely linked to positive reinforcement. e-HRM ensures that the appraisal and compensation provided to the employees is justified and unbiased. Rewarding desirable behaviour does not only enhance the employee's self-confidence but strengthen their motivation which in turn engages them with the job and organization.

• Employee Self Service

A modern online HR system like e-HRM allows employees to control their own personal information by updating records and conduct analyses, make decisions and communicate with others, without consulting the HR department. e-HRM gives the employees the information they need, whenever they need it, with a minimum effort without scanning through numerous other material.

Therefore, it is suggested that e-HRM is able to yield quick, efficient and effective results. Depending on the intended use, it may cover one or all aspects of human resource management: recruitment and selection, personnel administration, training and development, learning and education, career planning and development, awards and recognition, communication and feedback and so on.

3. Case Study: Indian IT Industry

As the results are pertaining to the Indian IT industry, this sub-section is dedicated to the case study of Indian IT industry including some facts, figures and examples in support of the use of technology in the Indian IT industry which has helped it to glide smoothly on the path of growth and productivity. The environmental factors which support the use of IT have also been presented in this section because these factors are least studied so far.

The Indian information technology sector is one of those sectors in the Indian economy which continuously shows rapid growth and a promise to grow further. Deloitte reports that 87% of executives of the Indian IT industry (nearly all organizations) view employee engagement as one of the biggest challenges (www.forbesindia.com, 2017). According to a recent survey by NASSCOM, IT in India has extensive growth, which results in the enormous inflow of foreign investment and a high contribution to GDP (Gross Domestic Product). It also confirms that the biggest challenge of companies is not just satisfied employees, but to engage the employees permanently for the organizational success and individual growth (Prabhakar and Reddy, 2016)

In Employee Engagement Trends Report by Quantum Workplace, they state the most as well as the lowest engaged industries. In this report, IT industry was ranked as 5th (Quantum Workplace, 2013).

A report by Dale Carnegie Training (www.dalecarnegie.com, 2014) said that the Indian employees are most engaged with 46% of the Indian IT workforce as fully engaged IT professionals, as compared to their global counterparts which was 34%. It also states that these employees are willing to put in extra hours without more pay to complete a task. This makes the number of disengaged employees in the Indian companies the lowest in the world.

One of the recent reports says that only 15% of individuals worldwide are engaged at work and within India, the percentage is even lesser i.e.13% (Table 2) (Gallup, 2017). This clearly shows that the level of engagement among the employees worldwide has declined. Therefore, HR professionals need a quick and efficient solution to improve employee engagement.

Table 2
Engagement level in Indian IT Industry

Country	Engaged %	Not engaged %	Actively disengaged %
India	13	65	22

Source: Gallup, 2017

3.1 Use of e-HRM for employees

A recent survey claims that over the last two years, about 60% of India Inc. organizations have witnessed improvements in their employee engagement levels. It also suggests that employers are actively working towards improving the employee engagement and are investing in technology and analytics to achieve the same (www.economictimes.indiatimes.com, 2017).

Indian IT firms are experiencing a paradigm shift in their corporate culture. They are working not only to retain or engage their employees but also focusing on integration of the core HR activities like the processes of hiring, training, performance management, etc. They now talk about 'Employee Experience', a more evolved term for employee engagement. This deals with proactive use of technology in the HR functions (www.bwpeople.in, 2018). This suggests that the use of e-HRM in Indian IT industries has proved to be at par with the overall benchmark in terms of engaging workforce.

Recent studies on employee engagement trends predicted that automation would make its way large in 2017 (www.dfrens.com, 2016), which is clearly seen in today's era. Barely any organization is away from automation. IT firms are undoubtedly the pioneers in this field. The studies also predict that the Indian economy would grow at more than 7% through the 2019 and 2020 fiscal years, mainly due to automation. 86% of IT organizations are using people analytics or using IT in managing people as a strategy, a recent report says. It makes the judgments free from human biases and oversights which further allows managing human resources management of human resources backed by data which is more reliable and credible. Further, as the results of this research say, this data can also be used to assess the engagement level of employees and to identify their engagement needs. (www.shrm.org, 2018)

Dedicated software for HR is suggested to be a help for organizing the teams and making processes more efficient. It can also produce employees who work harder, stay longer at

the company and are more engaged in what they do. The use of analytics and digital tools help managers and HR professionals to understand their employees' wants, needs and interests on individual basis which impacts their engagement level. In this way, e-HRM helps to identify the current engagement level of engaged and disengaged employees, factors to promote their employee engagement levels and increase their productivity. (www.timesjobs.com, 2016)

There are examples of big names in the Indian IT industry which use e-HRM. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) uses Ultimatix for employee self service, feedback, performance appraisal, etc. Senior leaders support their team members for coming up with innovative solutions. TCS also uses Sametime, an internal messenger for interconnectivity of employees across the globe (Mehta et al., 2016). TCS also uses an employee engagement platform, Maitree, for engaging employees with similar non-working interests together as a team (Srivastava et al., 2014).

Infosys Ltd. uses many platforms for engagement and communication to let employees share their ideas, opinions and solutions. Techniques like JAM are used to promote communication among juniors and seniors. Fast Track programs are used to identify high performers and to promote engagement (Srivastava et al., 2014).

According to a survey of disengaged employees of those IT firms that have used e-HRM software for improving the engagement levels, certain factors were determined which helped them to climb up the ladder of engagement. As a result, these firms witnessed growth in their financial as well as human score. As per the results obtained from this survey, the dedicated HR software or e-HRM not only enhanced engagement level but brought a holistic environment for engagement. These organizations witnessed consistent increase in employee engagement within 2-3 years of using e-HRM (www.shrm.org, 2018).

The key results of another survey of organizations (www.economictimes.indiatimes.com, 2017) which experienced increase in the employee engagement level also support the findings of the present research. They are:

- Within 2 years, 55% organizations had 10-15% increase in their employee engagement scores.
- Among the employees who experienced an increase in their engagement level, 40% accounted the use of IT in HR for the same.
- 80% of the employees believed that e-HRM led to better organizational culture which improved engagement levels.
- Disengaged employees were found out to be responsible for 40% higher absenteeism and 75% more errors.
- Lower engagement levels led to lower productivity and profitability
- Increased engagement levels made a 50% increase in productivity.

4. Conclusion

This paper studies e-HRM thoroughly and suggests e-HRM as a tool for benefitting employees of Indian IT industry in terms of employee engagement, boosting motivation, minimizing attrition and maximizing the productivity of employees.

The main contributions of this paper are:

- To find out the e-HRM practices being carried out in Indian IT industry
- To understand the use of e-HRM as an employee-oriented tool.

Conclusively, we can say that this study provided the comprehensive understanding of e-HRM in Indian IT industry

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which can be a strong base for industries and budding researchers for taking up e-HRM to the next level.

5. Limitations and Future Scope

This study was limited to general e-HRM research and did not specifically search literature in functional human resources areas such as e-recruitment and e-learning. Further, this study is also limited to Indian IT industry. Hence, the benefits of e-HRM need to be tested further in case of other industries.

Researchers can use this paper as a base for studying other IT implementations in HR. As the study focuses on only e-HRM, specific e-HRM areas like e-recruitment, e-training, e-compensation can be taken care of in further studies.