

Promoting Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

I received a mail which in all probability you must have received too. It is titled 'Why Tatas are a respected name' and talks about, among other things, the heroic acts of the employees at Taj on 26/11.

It points out that Thomas George, a captain, escorted 54 guests from a backdoor staircase and when he was going down last he was shot by the terrorists; people who exhibited courage included janitors, waiters, directors, artisans and captains – people at all levels. It is well known that Ratan Tata broke down in full public view and sobbed saying the company belongs to these people.

What makes people go beyond the call of their duty in industry? They were not part of army or police who are trained for such jobs or from whom such behaviour is expected, yet the Taj employees did it almost without exception. In some cases they put their lives in danger, which undoubtedly is the highest level of commitment.

The problem of HR managers is that they cannot promote this behaviour by 'reward' policies and mechanisms. In fact if they attempt to do it, they will make complete mess of it. If you are asked to donate blood for a noble cause, such as saving life of people injured in an accident, you will readily agree. But if you are told that whenever you donate blood you will receive a certain amount of money, will you do it?

In building an organisation like The Taj Hotel, we should encourage the making of a certain personal choice by an employee; and we have no control over it! If an employee does not make that choice he cannot be 'punished'. So the carrot and stick technique will not work. And that pretty much complicates the matter us.

The way to encourage OCB [Organisational Citizenship Behaviour], the name given by research scientists, is to take care of 'Organisational Justice' or in simpler words, people's perception of fairness within organisation. In other words, people must be heard, allowed to express themselves, they must be spoken to, and in a nutshell, they must be treated as valued human beings. Looks simple! But in organisations which define 'performance' wrongly, and promote actively fierce competition within, and where 'I am better than you' is promoted and excessive emphasis is placed on monetary rewards, promoting OCB will remain an uphill task.

Tough job being HR manager, but whoever believed it was easy?

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