

Browne & Mohan

Board & CEO Advisors, Management consultants



Lovable workplace: key insights

Amrita Rao, Human Resource Group

Introduction

What does it take for employees to come back to work happily on a Monday morning? What elements of a workplace make an employee to willingly contribute more to her job? These are questions that have always intrigued organisation theorists and management scholars for years.

The recipe is something that all CEOs and entrepreneurs dream of getting their hands on. Despite several years of research (both autobiographical and multi-organisational surveys), the angelic proportions is a druid game; especially for the small and medium enterprises which face the challenge of attracting brighter resources, higher attrition and engaging the employees in meaningful work.

Towards filling this gap, Browne & Mohan consultants undertook a study of organisations that we termed as "Lovable places to work". So what constitutes a loveable place? Any workplace that characterizes satisfied employees, wherein employees look beyond the clocks to embellish their job content and experience, wherein employees look forward to improving and innovating their work and organisational process and finally organisations that have been growing financially stronger and gaining market share is a lovable workplace.

To manage the human resource in an organisation, it becomes important to know what is it that keeps them happy in the organisation, what are the aspects which they love in their company and those which they don't.

Results

Three facets emerge to define a "Loveable workplace". Those are Communication, Process, Job Design and Infrastructure.

Communication in organisations can be at various levels. Loveable organisations ensure their employees are constantly updated on all the work related information. Employees seek good communication rapport between peers/subordinates/managers and also seek timely feedback which helps them improve their performance.

Open door policies are much appreciated by the employees and they appreciate receiving equal and open information. In an organisational setup, employees prefer comprehensible communication where they also can give out suggestions and opinions.

Process refers to the general practices carried out in the organisations. Such practices make a lot of difference in the impression which the employees as well as the society have on the organisation. Timely appraisals and an environment which supports professional growth of the employees tops the list in the survey which closely is followed by factors like challenging work content, clear objectives, assigning uniform work load, training sessions, awards given to the employees, performance driven organisation and a self-organisation which encourages the employees in taking initiatives. One of the lovable employers commented- 'Many employee friendly practices at workplace help them maintain a work-life balance.

First and foremost factor is ideal team size to ensure uniform work load. Other important factors like well-defined processes and updated tools to reduce duplication of efforts, excellent facility and management to ensure employee safety etc.'

'Reviews and feedbacks on work constantly help the employee improve. Various events that are organized by the cultural committee are run by the employees, hence we get to develop organizing and administrative skills. These help the employees grow on both personal and professional front' was the response of an employee when asked about the various practices followed by his organisation for employee growth.

Continuous feedback on output delivered, understanding training needs and periodic performance appraisal systems are some of the 'best practices' that have to be inculcated in organisations.

Job design had a major impact on how employees perceived their organization. In better performing organizations, employees were divided between doers, improvisers and innovators. Doers mostly followed the directions set, completed the task with highest adherence to process and hence preferred objective feedback on their performance. Improvisers were those who had gained experience on a project or process and were capable of improvising the same. Innovators were employees who could design newer process and products or suggest incremental innovation. Jobs with challenging work content, clear objectives, assigning uniform work load across peers, and continuous training sessions were key to loveable employers. Activities designed to stretch the administrative and managerial talent in an informal set up also contributed to loveable workplace. Events where the employees themselves manage the activity help the employees grow on both personal and professional front. The key as one of the employee said in “making us do something appear challenging and different in a week draws out the monotony of the work”.

Employees these days seek more than monetary incentives. Some of it may be recognition, status etc. whereas some other factors may be the facilities obtainable in their organisations. Gym facilities, sport/game rooms, library are the some of the facilities the individual seeks apart from the monetary incentives they are provided with. They see their workplace as an extension of their personality as it is the place where they spend most time of the day. Good infrastructure in the organisation with ample facilities like these ensures general well-being, employee health and also education in many ways.

How can you create a lovable place to work?

- Installing various intra-organisational online messengers where employees can keep in touch with their co-workers and managers.
- Multiple channels and opportunities must be used in order to provide constant information to the employees and also interact with them regarding various issues/opinions.
- Firms where the employees do not have 1:1 computer facility, may initiate floor meetings where individuals can discuss their daily/weekly plans of action or the progress of their on-going project etc. After successful completion of a project, lunch or dinner party may be held to celebrate etc.

- News sharing sessions can be held where employees inform the others in the group on the latest news. Individuals with common interest may come as a group and have group discussions on various topics. This helps in bringing together the employees and also keeps everyone informed about the happenings in the organisation.

To best manage the processes in the company, organisations may try out the recommendations below

- Give continuous/ spontaneous feedback on output delivered. It gives a clear idea to the employees on how to carry forward the work and also on critical areas which they have to stress upon to give out optimal performance.
- Employers must make an effort to understand training needs for the employees. By providing training to the employees it increases the efficiency of the employee and also give the employee a feeling of professional growth
- Periodic performance appraisals for all levels in the organisations are necessary. It helps the individual find their growth potential.
- Timely and appropriate actions to be taken on issues and definite weaknesses identified consistently and systematically at organisational level
- Identifying Doers, Improvers and Innovators in the organization helps in assigning appropriate roles to.

Infrastructure too has a major role in creating a loveable workplace. Some of the infrastructural parameters are listed below

- ‘Good infrastructure’ is a subjective term. What may seem like a good infrastructure to one organisation may not be the same for another. In general, organisations must be designed in a way which supports organisation culture and work practices. It has to be designed in a way which helps employees in a distraction free work.
- Facilities like library, gym, sports room, and music room are some of the attributes which may be installed in workplaces which employs ‘knowledge workers’ (which involves analyzing, creating, deciding etc.). These recreational activities not only divert employees from their routine but lessen the amount of work related stress an employee undergoes.

- Personalising the workspace will bring in a feeling of belongingness in the employees & also gives them the feeling of being in their 'second home'.
- Companies are trying to reach success by giving thoughtful consideration on their organisational workings be it communication, the processes, infrastructure or the organisational culture on the whole. This not only helps in improving their overall productivity and stability in the market but also helps in acquiring and retaining one of the most important assets, its manpower.

For those who seek the easier way- Simple! Create a place where YOU would love to work!

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