

RESULTS ONLY WORK ENVIRONMENT (ROWE): A NEW PARADIGM

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Abstract

The objective of any business or organization is to get desired results by the creation of a perfect ecosystem to energize and encourage people to work at high motivational levels. The ability of an individual to be effective also depends on the work environment of the organization. Being effective is to produce spectacular results that help in promoting one's career growth and advancement. Organization has to create a work culture or work ethos that sets in a process where RESULTS only matter at the end of the day. ROWE (Results Only Work Environment) is a new paradigm in HR. It is growing into a game-changing concept in Human Resource Management Strategy wherein an organization compensates its employees for their Results (output) only, irrespective of the time spent in executing their duty or responsibility. Many corporates are planning to embrace the unique HR strategy of ROWE which has in fact revolutionized the workplace and work culture in some organizations in America many other countries.

Introduction

Success of an organization is a matter of positive and profitable results and it has to disseminate across all levels of the organization. It is apt to state that the functional mechanism of an organization is governed by four 'R's-Rules, Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships. But a highly successful organization is propelled by a fifth 'R' i.e., Results, which bestows a high trajectory of growth and recognition. In a ROWE system the focus is more on the 5th R i.e., Results.

ROWE (Results Only Work Environment) is a concept or strategy which states that the results produced by an employee are more important than the other aspects of work like 'time in' or 'time out', formal or casual attire, working from desk or home or any other place of work, attending meetings- do not matter.

ROWE is a Human Resource Management Strategy co-created by Jody Thompson and Cali Ressler (2009) at retail giant Best Buy. Jody Thompson co-created the concept of ROWE with her business partner Cali Ressler. Both the authors are leading a

global movement to foresee a dramatic change in the way people work and live. In the words of Jody Thompson (2009), "There's this belief that if you're at work, you're doing work — and people are not. 80 percent of companies' lost productivity is from 'Presenteeism' — when someone is physically in the office but mentally somewhere else".

Every organization has to ensure that the concept of ROWE is created in every team, group, division, segment and the organization as a whole. Every leader of a team, group, division, and segment should work hard to create an ecosystem of ROWE at their respective levels which contributes to the overall ecosystem of ROWE at the organization level.

There is a paradigm shift in the work ethos of organizations across the globe. According to Jody Thompson "It's time to change the conversation from 'flexibility' to 'results'. What's important is that results are being achieved, not where or when the work is being done".

Importance

ROWE (Results Only Work Environment) inspires and influences a result oriented work culture with a strong focus on results. In a sense ROWE fosters organizational efficiency to deliver better and increased output. It also ensures the creation of an organizational climate where the employees can manage and meet all life's demands. It may reduce absenteeism. Another important aspect of ROWE is that the employee is in full control of his time or the working process because he has to decide himself when to come, when to go, where to work, how long to work. Besides, there is no need to attend regular meetings and need not adhere to mandatory or fixed schedule. How he leverages his time is solely at his discretion. The only objective is to complete the work as the deliverable is more important. Work does not mean the PLACE one goes to it is just the RESULT you produce or achieve. ROWE is implemented on the principle that the employees are all responsible adults.

Corporations across the globe are striving hard to create ROWE where work ethos for RESULTS takes precedence over other matters. The approach

is purely 'result oriented' and focuses only on results and not the various aspects of job or work.

According to Lee, James H. Futurist (2012) the future prospects of employment in the United States of America may witness a decline in the number of fixed and permanent jobs. A number of people are doing multiple jobs. Some of them are self employed and some are contingent workers. It is also mentioned about the ROWE model and cooperative offices that enable economic and low cost office space for entrepreneurs.

Implementation Of ROWE

Working from Home, Flexi timing, Telecommuting are some of the methods of executing ROWE in an organization.

It is an accepted fact that the peak performance times of individuals differs throughout the day. Sometimes, it could be that the peak performance time of an employee is not in the 9 to 5 schedule of work. ROWE dispenses the traditional 9 to 5 working system or the 40 hour a week work. It brings forth the fact that organizations are in a wrong notion or perception or assumption about the efficiency of traditional 9 to 5 system.

The best aspect about ROWE is that an employee who completes his monthly work can spend the rest of the time with his family or if he plans to go on a holiday he can. Besides he can also pursue his other interests and hobbies. In the traditional work culture if one work is accomplished another job is assigned to the employee, whether he likes it or not.

For example, uniform or formal attire of the employees is not a consideration in some of the organizations. The organization looks for a productive employee and not a formal employee. Another aspect is the employee timing. In fact, there is a huge debate going on where organizations should follow employee timings strictly. A result oriented organization striving to achieve ROWE does not pay attention to physical presence of the employee as long as he is delivering the expected product/ service in the prescribed time. The organization does not focus on the entry and exit timings of the employees. The employee is accorded the liberty to design his own schedule and assignments to deliver a productive performance in terms of product or service. An autonomous environment definitely motivates the employee to work with a feeling of attachment and a sense of purpose.

According to Allan Avery, "The cannery floor', as you put it, isn't a job which demands a great deal of creativity. That exception has been clearly defined in this talk. Software development, on the other hand

demands the constant creation of new solutions to new problems. Strict adherence to the old school of management is often a massive hindrance to the true goals of that field. With ROWE, you still have to deliver the goods, and you'll still get canned if your work doesn't get done, but you can work whichever hours in whatever location is best for you to complete your tasks. Also, because tasks and deliverables are clearly defined upfront, simply showing up and 'looking busy' is no longer an effective means of 'flying under the radar'.

Organizations Successfully Implemented ROWE

Some of the organizations which implemented the strategy: Gap, the second large American Retailer, The Girl Scouts of San Gorgino, J.A. Counter and Associates, and the Fairview Health Services, I.T. Department.

Valve Software is a perfect example of ROWE where there are no job titles, no schedules, and complete freedom to work on what you will.

Hennepin County successfully implemented ROWE to bestow on each employee the freedom to do their job when and where they want, as long as the work gets done.

In the United States of America, the state of Minnesota executed a contract to implement ROWE, last year as part of a campaign to reduce rush hour traffic on 35W in Minneapolis.

The benefits of implementing ROWE have been realized by many businesses. "Since going ROWE three years ago, my company has seen tremendous, measurable gains in productivity and even better customer service," said Michael Reynolds, president and CEO of Indianapolis-based digital agency Spin Web. "Cali and Jody are progressive innovators and working with them has been inspiring." -Indianapolis, Indiana (PRWEB) October 29, 2011.

Evernote, a software company, and Netflix and Zynga, Internet companies, offer their employees unlimited holiday as fringe benefits, which is an example of ROWE approach to management.

It is mentioned that Ressler and Thompson (2009) had conducted a study and found out that implementation of ROWE increased the productivity of ROWE Teams by 41%. Further, there was a decrease in the voluntary turnover rate by about 90%. This work proves the advantages of implementing ROWE in organizations.

Further, it is apt to state that American retailer Best Buy implemented ROWE successfully for its

4000 employees who can work anywhere and anytime as long as they complete the projects on schedule. Inspired by the success of ROWE, Bestbuy started a new department called CultureRx so as to promote the concept to other companies.

Benefits of ROWE

ROWE ensures that employees work at high motivational levels.

ROWE results in high employee productivity.

ROWE promotes a Win-Win situation for the employer and the employee.

An employee is in perfect control of his schedule

Employees completing the job early can spend quality with their families and also pursue their passion or hobbies. In a way it helps the employee to reduce stress. Better work-life balance is maintained. Tasks and deliverables are clearly and explicitly defined with dates and deadlines.

ROWE reduces absenteeism

ROWE is best suited to individuals who are independent thinkers and want freedom to work

Job satisfaction and high productivity are achieved in some companies.

Employee turnover is reduced in some organizations.

Constraints To Implement ROWE

ROWE may not be implemented in all types of businesses or organizations. For example, Hospitals need not follow the ROWE system of work.

For service oriented organizations where the customer contact is high it would be difficult to implement ROWE.

ROWE suits only individuals with perfect self-control, self-motivation, self-discipline and self-regulation.

For ROWE to succeed, the process of hiring by an organization should involve an elaborate process of screening which should be intensified and specialized to ensure that incompatible applicants are not recruited. People who want to present 'facetime' only with no result oriented approach do not find a place in an organization driven by ROWE.

Arguments Against ROWE

Employees miss the beauty of working with colleagues i.e., they miss out on team work.

It is suitable for jobs where individuals only have to work. For team based projects, it is not suitable.

Rating or ranking of employee is a difficult task.

Social bonding does not take place in the office environment. Employees don't get to share positive vibes.

Sharing of information does not happen. Camaraderie is always missing.

It is very difficult to imagine and implement a work environment full of free lancers.

Employee engagement should extend beyond the realms of the job per se. In ROWE, it does not happen. Interpersonal communication with the employees and among the employees is hampered.

Conclusion

Most organizations can embrace ROWE for faster growth and development. The work environment is pivotal to create and execute ROWE in an organization. The top management must follow a clear and unambiguous approach to implement ROWE and communicate effectively across various layers or divisions of the organization. Depending upon the type of product or service, changes could be made to ROWE. It is basically an outcome focused approach which may bring cost and time-saving for some organizations. Overall, ROWE might become a game-changing strategy in the days to come.

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