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EMPOWERING TIMES



THINKING ALOUD

Cruise Control in Choppy Oceans
Vijayan



PODIUM

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Head-Human Resources
The Great Eastern Shipping Company



WE RECOMMEND

The Man Who Knew Infinity
Robert Kanigel



WONDER WOMEN

Anuradha Alurkar
Founder
A Big Indian Story, Pune



Dear Reader,

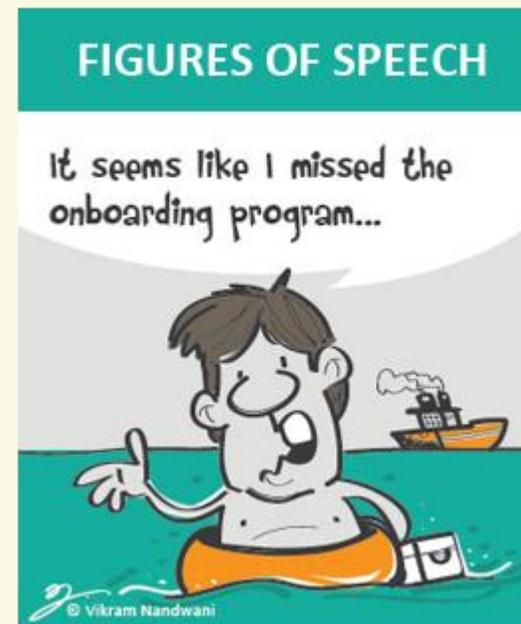
The Shipping industry plays a vital role and is the backbone of the world economy. With globalisation and 90% of world trade conducted through this route came the need to feed the appetites of industrial nations and eventually the necessity for mega vessels, smart ships and remote sensing technologies.

This sector in particular relies on its unique workforce - the onshore and offshore staff. By the very nature of this sector, amidst weather and geographical hazards, it becomes imperative for Shipping companies to ensure the safety of its people assets. The Shipping and maritime industry's HR function has evolved significantly but has a long way to go in tiding over the challenges concerning its Human Resources function. Organisations today are taking progressive steps in their approach to HR - from recruitment and hiring, training, performance reviews to assessments and workplace wellness. Buzzwords such as diversity and inclusion are slowly making its way in this industry.

This month, ET looks at the **HR Challenges in the Shipping Industry**. Sharing his thoughts on this theme in the **Thinking Aloud** segment, **Vijayan** emphasises that the Human Resources challenges of this sector are closely determined by the nature of the business model and structure. **Salil Raghavan**, Head of Human Resources at The Great Eastern Shipping Company, on the **Podium**, shares his views on how to manage HR in the Shipping industry stressing that technology can be a great enabler in addressing people challenges.

In the **We Recommend** section, we review **Robert Kanigel's** book, **The Man Who Knew Infinity**, which highlights the journey of renowned Indian Mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan. In the **Wonder Women** segment, entrepreneur **Anuradha Alurkar** explains her role in starting up her venture A Big Indian Story.

In **Figures of Speech**, **Vikram's** toon goes off board!



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THINKING ALOUD

Cruise Control in Choppy Oceans

- Vijayan

The call of the sea has always evoked mystery and excitement in the sea faring community.

In yester years, ships and boats provided the only 'connection' between continents and countries. Those were the days when air travel, internet and mobile phones were not even thought of!

This context and scenario has dramatically changed. The Shipping industry is an important enabler for travel and tourism besides commerce including cargo like coal, petroleum, gas, etc. The size of the vessels and related technology has increased over time while reducing the number of people required for a voyage.

The Human Resources challenges of this sector are closely determined by the nature of the business model and structure. The industry has a long gestation for generating returns on the capital invested. The industry also seems to go through inevitable cycles of peaks and troughs, largely due to excess/shortages in capacity. Hence, people management strategies and processes are challenging to develop and execute.

The industry largely follows the model of hiring its sailing personnel on voyage-linked contractual terms. This model has its own plus and minus points. On the one hand, there is better control on costs/expenses and also enables the sailors to spend time with friends and family especially because during the voyage, they are away from periods of up to even eight months at a stretch. On the other hand, organisations are challenged as to how

to keep such talent engaged when they are not contracted to sail.

Secondly, this industry is global in nature and hence compensation levels are determined by global talent demand and supply dynamics.

Thirdly, there are challenges in managing the dynamics between sea faring personnel and their seniors/bosses located on shore at the corporate HQ. These relationships become more challenging as many corporate seniors were sailing leaders in their early career phase.

Fourthly, seas and oceans have become more risky due to potential attacks from pirates - possibly a better term being 'sea-based economic terrorists'. The vessel's sailing personnel have to be more vigilant and at times have to coordinate with the naval personnel to rescue and/or thwart such attacks.

What I have understood over time is that the Shipping industry's success is not marked by accelerated/consistent increase in growth. It is determined more by the organisation's capability to manage an even keel inspite of peaks and troughs of business cycles.

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PODIUM

Interview with Salil Raghavan Head-Human Resources, The Great Eastern Shipping Company



Salil is an Industrial Engineer and MBA from XLRI. He started his career with Ballarpur Industries and then had the opportunity to be associated with multiple companies like TVS, BPL Mobile and Marico. He is currently the Head-Human Resources for The Great Eastern Shipping Company, one of the largest private sector Shipping Companies in India and has been with them for close to a decade.

Salil's career journey has largely been in Talent Management, Learning and Development, Compensations & Benefits and OD interventions. He is certified in multiple Psychometric instruments like MBTI, Firo B, Saville, Workplace Big 5, Hogan, etc.

He has been instrumental in rolling out various OD and change management interventions using LSIP, Appreciative Inquiry and Broadbanding. He is a huge believer of new experiences which has helped him bring in varied projects to the workplace ranging from 360 degree feedback processes & employee engagement initiatives to corporate branding projects. His fraternity and colleagues draw upon his rich collection of books. He is an avid quizzer and also passionate about sports and plays tennis regularly.

He has always believed in balancing business goals without losing sight of the humane side. Human process Lab experiences, his professional mentor network and activities through Buddhist groups have helped him in bringing in this holistic approach.

ET: Given your varied experience as a Human Resources (HR) professional, please share your thoughts on how managing HR in the Shipping industry is different from other sectors?

SR: There are quite a few similarities and differences. Shipping is a cyclical business and is capital intensive. The business undergoes volatility and turbulence and the success of the business depends on managing the cycle. For example, ship earnings may undergo 100% downward corrections and there may be times when the firm has to operate below the operating costs. Salaries of ship staff do not undergo such changes, it may remain stagnant but very rarely it goes down. So manpower capacity planning has to be flexible. Shipping is global in nature, so it is affected by geo-political issues and global economic sentiments - a small skew of 2-3% in the demand and supply equation can upset earnings. Pre-2009 was considered to be the golden time for the industry where many new players entered the sector and with this, asset prices went up considerably. Post-2009, there were too many ships available for trading and the glut coincided with the economic slowdown - it crippled earnings and many players went bankrupt. HR has to keep these scenarios in mind while devising policies.

There are two types of work-forces in Shipping - Floating (Ship based) and Shore based. The shore staff HR processes are very similar to other industries.

ET: What are the current HR challenges facing the Shipping industry?

SR: There are multiple challenges. Talent acquisition and retention are the critical ones. Employee engagement especially with respect to floating staff is tough and needs a creative approach.

The industry is struggling to attract millennials to entry level jobs. Compared to the past wherein a job in merchant navy was seen as elite and well paying, today prospective employees have a surfeit of options. In a sense, there is war for talent and we have to devise campaigns to attract youngsters - so the industry has to shake off its fuddy-duddy traditional image. The jobs are hands-on and physical in nature unlike the white collared ones which many youngsters aspire for. Parents are worried about issues like piracy and safety and since they wield a major influence regarding the career choices of their children, Shipping becomes an unattractive segment. So unlike the past, kids from metros do not opt for this sector, hence we need to penetrate rural India for sourcing. It poses quality and logistics issues for the firms and affordability challenges for the parents. The certification process to advance has many levels and can be perceived as lengthy and cumbersome. Those who clear and reach the ranks of Captain/Chief Engineer are in demand and are poached by competitors, so one has to devise retention strategies to make good performers stay. In India, income is subject to high taxation due to which many employees leave to join foreign firms. Indian employers may not be able to provide NRI status to all because of trading patterns. If the firm has to neutralize income tax, operating costs go up and business viability

gets impacted.

Managing ship board staff remotely is tough - Competence, Commitment and above all Trust are the key aspects to ensure smooth sailing.

ET: What are your views on using technology to enhance HR performance and improve employee engagement at all levels in the Shipping industry?

SR: Technology is a great enabler. In our case, we use it extensively for talent acquisition, learning and development through Learning Management Systems (LMS) and also performance management. But I have to admit that our adaptation rate could be improved. We gather that block chain technology could be a game changer for the Shipping industry, with respect to how trade is conducted and this can enhance productivity and efficiency.

ET: Great Eastern Shipping has been recognised and is known for its distinctive HR practices in your unique sector. Could you please share some of your best practices?

SR: Industry considers our shore HR practices to be progressive and path breaking. Probably we are the few Shipping firms to introduce and invest in practices like 360 degree feedback, psychometric instruments like Hogan, Saville, MBTI, etc. for a variety of applications and regular employee engagement studies. Considering the volatile nature of the industry, we introduced variable schemes almost a decade ago and it is linked to the performance of the company's Return on Capital Employed (ROCE) as well as the individual. In the floating staff segment, we realized that leadership skills for the top four ranks are critical for a ship's performance - so we rolled out a leadership program for them with Empowered Learning Systems as the delivery partner. The PMS for floating staff is an online multi-rater based appraisal and we also launched a performance based incentive for the senior ranks which is unique in the industry.

To make employees familiar with the commercial aspects and challenges, we created a business simulation with the help of Industry Masters and Circular Angle and exposed 75 + employees.

ET: In your opinion how can the CHRO become the partner to the CEO for enhancing business effectiveness at a Shipping firm?

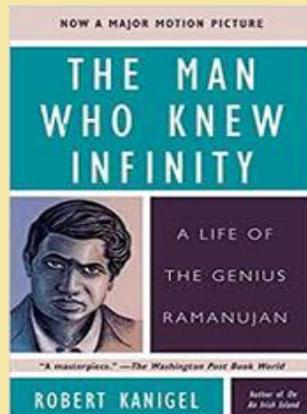
SR: By building employee capability and commitment and through constant calibration of business requirements, the CHRO has to work closely and collaborate with Line leadership. HR has an advantage of providing an outsider a neutral perspective even though it is an internal function. By being close to employees, the function gets to know the dynamics of the collective psyche which the organisation leadership may not be aware of or may fall in the blind zone. By ensuring employee engagement through the alignment of PMS and reward systems, the function contributes in enhancing organisational effectiveness. We have had experiences of improving team collaboration and climate through interventions like Team Relationship reviews. These ultimately resulted in productivity/output gains.

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WE RECOMMEND

The Man Who Knew Infinity

- Robert Kanigel



In January 2018, Empowering Times highlighted the Magic of Mathematics in Business where we had Professor Sudhir Ghorpade of IIT Bombay share his love for the subject. The Man Who Knew Infinity by Robert Kanigel highlights the journey of the Mathematics prodigy, Srinivasa Ramanujan's journey and his long lasting mark in the field of Mathematics.

While the world remembers the late Physicist and Cosmologist, Stephen Hawking and his profound contributions to the world of Science, this year marks the centenary of India's own brainchild and enigmatic, Ramanujan's election as a Fellow of the Royal Society, the world's oldest and most respected scientific society. Hailing from a small town in Tamil Nadu, Ramanujan's dedication to Mathematics was visible from an early age as he constantly looked forward to learn new concepts well beyond the four

corners of his education. Ramanujan's journey to Cambridge would not have been possible without the help of G H Hardy, a Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge and his mentor. Professor Hardy had said that a 'single look' of their correspondences was enough to show that Ramanujan was a Mathematician of the highest calibre in the making.

Many of Ramanujan's most insightful works came during his tenure in London, with more than 20 papers being published in collaboration with Professor Hardy over a period of five years! The Mathematical prodigy embarked on a journey to Cambridge and it was here that the world was gifted with his work that led him to compile almost 3,900 results, including mind boggling solutions to Mathematical problems that were considered unfathomable. Today, the world has knowledge of the Landau-Ramanujan constant, Mock theta functions, Ramanujan conjecture, Ramanujan prime, Ramanujan-Soldner constant, Ramanujan theta function, Ramanujan's sum, Rogers-Ramanujan identities and Ramanujan's master theorem, among other concepts. His contribution to Algebra, Geometry, number theory, among other themes, has made him immortal.

Ramanujan's thoughts - "*An equation for me has no meaning unless it expresses a thought of God,*" tell us that he was God loving in nature. The book is interspersed with the various struggles of his time but more importantly one can sense Ramanujan's passion for his subject which helped him overcome challenges. Apart from his profound discoveries and contribution to Mathematics, which is used today in almost every walk of life, Ramanujan's experiences present a distinct set of lessons to addressing the roadblocks of life and the power within to overcome almost anything if you will it the most.

Robert Kanigel, author of six books and the former Professor of Science at MIT has looked for inspiration to author this book. What started as an idea is now a story of Ramanujan and the clash of cultures between India and the West. It is a story of one man and his stubborn faith in his own abilities that helped him bloom into one of India's enigmatic Mathematicians, etching his name in history. Towards the end of the book, Kanigel questions readers, the answers to which will help one look at fate in a different light along with examining the current education system in India and its ability to churn out Ramanujans.

The read is truly a dedication to this Mathematician. However, readers can lose their train of thought as Kanigel delves into the finer aspects of Ramanujan's life. Based on this book, a movie of the same name (starring Dev Patel) as Ramanujan highlights the genius' journey. Spoiler alert! Like most movie adaptations, the book is a

better option, any day!

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WONDER WOMEN

Anuradha Alurkar

Founder - A Big Indian Story, Pune



Meet Anuradha Alurkar, the brainchild behind eco-fashion lifestyle brand - A Big Indian Story. After over 14 years in various corporate roles, she decided to quit her job. Her love for design, sustainable fashion and Indian crafts led her to start her venture - A Big Indian Story.

Her venture's main product category is bags and wallets using cruelty free materials and natural fabrics by Indian artisans, retailed through their outlet in Inorbit Mall, Vashi (Mumbai). Her brand fuses contemporary design with age old crafts like Ajrakh, Kalamkari, hand weaving, Chikankari, Shibori and many more to create their exclusive collections. They work directly with artisans and craft clusters and are proud to be supporting livelihoods and helping them sustain these crafts. Her brand is about 2.5 years old and is now looking to grow to other malls across Bangalore, Mumbai, and Chennai and eventually pan-India. She is super excited to launch her

range of all natural bags and footwear using imported plant based leather equivalent. This is a step towards the future - the future of sustainable fashion.

It was never Anuradha's dream to become an entrepreneur. But after years of working in various roles, she realised that she could use her potential and talent to create value and so took the plunge into the world of

entrepreneurship. Her entrepreneurial journey has not been an easy one. It came with its share of hiccups and failures. The initial years were tough and she did make a few mistakes related to her product bouquet. Coupled with this she had challenges reaching artisans in remote places and getting them to agree to supply materials. Being a bootstrapped venture, there was also concerns on the financial front. However, the only way forward was to believe and keep going ahead each day. Her role model is Anita Roddick, the Founder of Body Shop, who created a global business around cruelty free beauty products.

Anuradha is of the opinion that the concerns women entrepreneurs face is akin to challenges any entrepreneur would go through. Any first time entrepreneur has to go through the cycle of starting up, financial constraints, social challenges and managing a work-life balance. Most women might have it a bit more challenging due to the social environment, depending on the family background one comes from. She personally has a very strong support system and believes that the only challenge is the fear within.

She is a firm believer in the law of attraction - what you believe, you become. Success to her is being a better version of her each day and trying to create a positive impact on the people around her. According to Anuradha, the biggest challenge to women leadership exists in one's own mind. If women decide to take up a leadership role, nothing can stop them except their own fears! Her advice to readers is to continue to have a dream, go all out, work hard, just make it happen and make it count!

Her company is the proud winner of Pink Power 2017-18, which is an initiative by Inorbit Mall recognizing women led start-ups. She also retails her products online on Ajio.com as well through their website, abigindianstory.com. She plans to launch their men's collection shortly along with their all-natural range of bags and footwear.

Good luck Anuradha for your future endeavours!

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THROUGH THE LENS



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Rupesh Balsara

Rupesh Balsara spots the Indian Eagle-Owl (also known as the Rock Eagle Owl) at the Great Rann of Kutch, Gujarat which is found in hilly and rocky scrub forests, and is usually seen in pairs. Generally, these Owls breed between February to April, choosing to lay its eggs in sheltered areas.

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