

Learning Factory

A strong culture of learning and inclusiveness makes Godrej Consumer Products a preferred choice for employees

By SAMAR SRIVASTAVA

Ask Sunil Kataria, CEO, India and Saarc, GCPL, how his younger employees differ from their older counterparts and pat comes the answer: "They want to contribute more than just their specific job roles." For Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) this meant going beyond the learning sessions and job rotation opportunities that its counterparts offer and see how they can work on getting employees to move outside their comfort zones.

Enter the 10xers programme that paired 10 sets of three managers across the company to job roles that helped them understand each other's functions better. For instance, a sales manager would work with the analytics team on models to forecast price and demand. Could a delayed monsoon drive up demand for mosquito repellents in an area? Or would greater competitive intensity and lower raw material costs justify increased promotional

activity for soap in another area? Could a region-specific marketing campaign be created for a particular festival on a shoe-string budget?

"When people got involved in functions that were unrelated to theirs, we realised it helped them do their own job better in the long-run," says Kataria. The company has

now made analytics a key part of its training programme.

Another initiative called 'I am Ardeshir' got employees to think like Godrej's founder, ie like an entrepreneur. For a rapidly growing company—sales are up eight times to ₹10,314 crore in the last decade, while profits have risen 18 times to ₹2,342 crore—these also provide fertile grounds to identify new talent and move top performers into

positions of higher authority.

In the highly competitive consumer goods industry, GCPL also realised that it wasn't only monetary compensations that matter to young managers. Hence, learning and opportunities is a key

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- 10xers programme lets employees partner with other teams to see how other parts of the company function

- 'I am Ardeshir' programme gets employees to think like an entrepreneur

- Diversity and inclusion are encouraged

- Quality of life allowance to let employees in smaller cities visit families in bigger cities

MEXY XAVIER



(From left) Mahnaz Shaikh, head HR, India and Saarc, and Sunil Kataria, CEO, India and Saarc of Godrej Consumer Products Ltd

"We are now trying to figure out how to hire more people from the LGBT community."

MAHNAZ SHAIKH, HEAD HR, INDIA AND SAARC, GCPL

of being able to offer employees the chance to work out of any location. All this has allowed GCPL to keep its attrition rate at 13 percent, 2 percentage points below the industry average, according to Aon.

Another challenge GCPL faced was to get new employees from diverse industries to adhere to the same set of values.

Codified as The Godrej Way, these values are listed as Trust, Be Bold in Decision Making, Create Delight, Own It, Be Humble and Show Respect. "We also need to

explain to new employees how these values translate into action," Kataria says. They're sent to workshops and taught with the help of examples. For instance, how to be firm without being disrespectful, or how to earn the trust of suppliers and business partners.

Another important part of employee engagement is to make GCPL an inclusive workplace. Employees use gender-neutral toilets, they can choose medical coverage for same-sex partners through the company's health insurance plans, and are given generous leave if they adopt

a child. "We are now trying to figure out how to hire more people from the LGBT community," says Shaikh.

It's all part of the plan that kicked off well before the Supreme Court decriminalised homosexuality.

"Godrej had seen the need for this inclusion far ahead of other companies," says Saundarya

Rajesh, founder and president of the Avtar Group and an expert on diversity. Top managers are sensitised to the needs of the LGBT community; last year this was done through films and discussions. **1**