

BOOK REVIEWS

***Personnel Management and Industrial Relations* by Rustam S Davar, Vikas Publishing House Private Limited, New Delhi, pp.421, Rs. 135, ISBN 0-7069-9905-3**

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Indian industry is waking up to the challenges thrown by the global market economy. To survive in this highly competitive scenario, managers are pressurized to improve quality, increase productivity, cut down waste and eliminate inefficiency. The collective efforts of employer and employee assume relevance in this context. And this is why Personnel Management can play a crucial role in industry or an organization.

Since Independence, India has attempted to take wide strides, particularly since, 1951, by embarking upon a planned economy with a view to generate all-round economic and industrial development. Industrial development in recent years has resulted in the advent of large enterprises with large labour force. Besides, the recent trends indicate that employee can no longer be viewed as a commodity. The socialistic pattern of society, the advent of intervention by the state and the idea of a welfare state must move the alert manager to recognize the importance of the human relations and his actions must result in social justice. The educated component of the work force is increasing. A worker today is more urban than rural in his outlook. The labour force is better organized through the increasing strength of trade unions and the trade union movement.

The need to motivate employees in the right direction, develop their morale and ensure a happier industrial relation has been in the forefront. Management of personnel can no longer be done by intuition or hunch. The person concerned must be familiar with the relevant findings of the behavioural sciences. He should be aware of the contributions made in his field by psychology and sociology as well as understand and appreciate the labour laws in India.

This book is thus an attempt to help managers, required to perform the personnel functions whether they be employed in the personnel department or any other functional area of management. It is aimed at aiding such a manager to develop the appropriate procedures and attitudes whereby he would succeed in encouraging initiative and foster enthusiasm among his subordinates. Undoubtedly this book is likely to help most of the personnel managers. However, as every manager is concerned with the personnel functions, it is hoped that this book will be of value to all managers in general irrespective of whether they are in private or public sector undertakings or employed in government departments or non-business undertakings.

Study of various illustrations clearly indicates that good companies in India certainly appreciate the modern thinking in their policies and procedure.

Rustam S. Davar was the principal of Davar's College of Commerce, Mumbai, and had directed several in-companies training programmes and conducted many seminars on various aspects of management. Two of his books on management have won the Escort Award. He was President of the Bombay Management Association and also the President of the Bombay Productivity Council. He is also on the governing Body of the National Productivity Council.

In the first part the author stresses that management is the development of people and not the direction of things. Thus in his view, "management and personnel administration are one and the same. They should never be separated. The author explains that the objectives of the personnel department can well be summarized by saying "personnel management means the optimum utilization of the human resources." In this topic the author displays the figure of personnel department objectives and functions at ITC Tobacco Limited. Having discussed the objectives and functions of the personnel department, the author realized that in the final analysis, success will depend on the organisation's personnel philosophy. To a large extent, the actions of the persons concerned with the personnel function will depend on their value system and their mental approach dictating their actions. Unless an appropriate philosophy is accepted, it will not be possible to secure dedication and commitment which results in efficiency of the human resource.

The author illustrates, taking into account the company Blue Star Limited., its constant endeavor to fulfill effectively the responsibilities towards its employees. According to this company, it is the duty of the manager and the supervisor to motivate their subordinates to develop a sense of enthusiasm and pride in their work. The manager can earn his subordinates' respect and confidence and motivate them by providing good working conditions within the department, a warm friendly atmosphere and cordial relations. If such philosophy is put into practice, then alone will an organization have dedicated and loyal employees who would realize that their own personal interest are not in conflict with those of the company.

In part two the author is concerned with manpower planning, recruitment and selection. Once the new personnel is selected, it becomes necessary to equip the new employees through adequate training and developmental facilities including suitable promotions and transfers to make him/her ready for higher appointments and offer him/her a career within the company itself, where he deserves it. The author speaks of manpower planning of different Indian companies such as Larsen & Toubro Limited., TELCO, manpower forecasting at India Tobacco, and manpower planning in Hindustan Lever. The author indicates the step-by-step programme in personnel selection which will be of great help for managers to acquire knowledge in man power selection.

Employment application format of Indian companies have been attached which will help others to know how the application form provides the information. The unique feature of this chapter is the inclusion of what companies in India are actually doing, along with the actual forms used by the companies in India in connection with the personnel management functions such as selection, interview evaluation and appraisal for supervisors, managers and the personnel record form. This part also includes actual job description of important individuals such as the personnel manager, the marketing manager and the production manager. These increase the practical utility of the book for personnel managers as well as students who want to be familiar with actual forms and job descriptions applicable in India.

This part further explains that once an applicant is selected by an organization as a member of its personnel, the next duty is to place him/her in the right job and provide him/her with training and development facilities. In this regard the author included some blue chip companies Induction programme. The author explains about the company Blue Star Limited. which has a small handbook for all its employees entitled "Blue Star is You". This invites the employees to become a part of the Blue Star team. This handbook helps the new employee to familiarize himself with Blue Star- what it stands for, what it expects of him and what he can expect from the company. In this part, the author explains about the promotion policies i.e. Merit vs. Seniority. Promotion should be from a scientific management viewpoint; promotion should be used to place employee on the job based upon who is most productive and competent to do the job. After having concluded more in favour of merit than seniority, it must be realized that the cultural environment in a particular system is more appropriate in one country than in another. It is in this context that permanent employment of Japanese system management known as Nenko is mentioned here which though admired by American Scholars is not thought of as appropriate in the American environment. Thus he said that there is no right system which can be applied in a universal manner. The system must be developed in terms of the needs of a particular country and in terms of the existing cultural environment.

The third part indicates how personnel productivity can be enhanced through an adequate system of motivation which includes consideration of leadership styles and an appropriate policy of wages and fringe benefits. The author explains that the whole object of human resource management is to secure from the employees maximum performance in terms of the pre-determined objectives. The employee should be committed. The author quotes Dale Yoder commitment as "The syndrome of attitudes, understanding and feelings that identify the team-dedicated participant". In his view, each manager seeks to develop and maintain morale which Yoder describes as "evident commitment" that is "exhibiting the behavioural symbols and symptoms of personal commitment." The author gives few illustrations of application in India of Maslow's need hierarchy of different companies which will help for future managers.

In the Fourth part the author discusses about more effective human relations and it comprises of three areas: Industrial relations, industrial disputes and the legislative frame work and employee communication.

In this part the author explains how personnel productivity can be enhanced through an adequate system of motivation which includes consideration of leadership styles and an appropriate policy of wages and benefits. The greatest problem faced today in the Indian context is the industrial relations situation highlighted by the large number of strikes, lockouts, and gheraos, etc. Therefore, suggestions are made in this part as to how disputes can be avoided and a better industrial relations climate can be maintained through adequate employee communication.

In the fifth part the author discusses about the performance evaluation and personnel audit and it comprises of two areas: Performance appraisal and Personnel records & audit. The author gives details as to how the aspect of control through the personnel record and audit can be achieved. The author provides different company's assessments of the employee potential, procedures, objectives in appraisal and how the records are maintained for personnel audit.

Finally the author concludes with some valuable words as an overall summation "The personnel management function is increasing in importance and securing a more sophisticated and scientific outlook. Human resource being the most valuable asset of an organization, productivity and ultimate profitability of the entire organizations depend considerably on the effectiveness with which the personnel management is executed".

It is a book which every practicing manager should keep in his office to always remind him of the fundamentals of his/her job. It is a book, which every student of management studies, must read before taking up a challenging assignment at the end of his/her formal management education.