

An Interview with Group Vice President (HR & ADMN) MSPL Ltd

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*Interviewed by **Ramesha M.H.**,
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**"Set your heart on doing good. Do it over and over again,
and you will be filled with joy."
- Buddha**



Dr. Debabrata Dash is currently working as Group Vice President (HR & ADMN) of MSPL Group, a diversified Business Conglomerate. He has about 26 years of Professional Experience in Human Resource Management.

Has successfully and efficiently served many major private & public sector companies i.e. BILT (the Thapar Group), NALCO, ITC Ltd, JSL Ltd., Tata Motors & Tata Steel.

He is an Electrical Engineer (B.Tech) From CET, Bhubaneswar with PGDM from XIM BBSR and Ph.D. from Utkal University. He has been a rank holder throughout his academics. He is a Certified Competency Mapper, NLP Practitioner, Life Coach & Career

Counsellor having a passion to mentor the students and Budding Managers. Many of his research articles are published in various journals of repute.

He has played an instrumental role in spearheading Transformational HR Initiatives & introducing Business Centric HR Policy formulation across various organizations.

He is the recipient of the Golden Peacock HR Excellence Award, HR Leadership for Change Management by World HRD Congress & Mentor for the Youth Award. As a part of his weekend volunteering activities, as on date he has delivered 70 Campus Talks on various contemporary themes and is on the academic advisory board of various B-Schools.

He is the Life Member of various professional bodies viz NHRD, NIPM, ISTD, and advisor of L&D Global.

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1 One thing that makes you passionate about HR...

Each Human Being is unique. Human Behavior cannot be standardized, and it varies under different scenarios. HR plays a pivotal role in meeting the business needs through People with an understanding of the Business Model and People Behavior. Both these aspects are very dynamic which makes me passionate about HR.

2 What is your Success Mantra?

Drive for Results with a passion for Excellence, Treating Stakeholders with Respect and Dignity, Unbiased and Neutral Approach with Professional Acumen, Solution Provider & Value Creator, and Adherence to the Ethical Code of Conduct.

3 What are three big-ticket items for HR according to you?

First and foremost is to build an inclusive culture through which cross-functional collaboration is very effective. Employees across various departments / functions / Businesses will have a strong alignment and integration.

Second: To evolve customized policies, which benefit both Business and Employees.

Third: Design & Implement Sustainable HR Interventions.

4 Today, many progressions are going toward Digital Transformation. What is the Role of HR in such Transformation?

Digital Transformations are taking a leading edge to make things smarter and simpler. To make such a transformation successful, HR must take the lead to develop the right mindset to embrace the changes coming out of this transformation. This requires structured communication at periodic intervals with various focused groups to address their queries and concerns. To make the transformation successful, HR has to implement upskilling and reskilling initiatives as appropriate.

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On Leadership-different schools of thought are existing. As an HR Leader, what are your focus areas?

I believe in Release Paradigm rather than Control Paradigm-encouraging all Team Members to experiment with New Ideas / Concepts rather than remaining satisfied with limited options. My objective is to involve them in a collective dialogue process so that all of them have clarity about the purpose and vision.

One of the important requisites for a Leader is to contribute to building a Talent Pipeline for the Organization and create more Leaders. I prefer to showcase the contribution of All Team Members and give them the opportunity to interact with Key Management personnel and Senior Leaders. At the same time, I handhold and support a few to build their confidence. Leaders should always trust Team Members and empower them.

6

Over the last decades, you are associated with HR Functions and handled various Strategic Roles in different organizations. What are the changes you are finding in HR Function?

HR focus is shifting from Transaction to Transformation. Gone are the days when HR Interventions are only Events-Now, it is a process where the outcome is observed. Business Leaders are seeking active involvement and participation of HR Leaders to drive the agenda. Technology and Transformation are creating unique Roles. HR Decisions are now based on insights derived from Analytics, not on any assumption or theoretical construct.

7

You have worked in Organizations where there are Unions and also in Some Organizations where there are No Unions. Between these two types, which do you find better?

Both are having some advantages and disadvantages. Having Union, certain challenges in implementing changes or Management Directives-However it gives a scope to go through the process of Workers' Participation in Management. I have seen Union Representatives giving excellent ideas to boost productivity and Employee Morale. They should be perceived as Trusted Partners instead of sole Bargaining Agents. I had the experience of involving Unionized Employees in Self Directed Teams and Small Group Activities which have given benefits to businesses. With No Union, Organizations might have less headache in carrying out any change management initiative, which requires the involvement of workers but it may lead to the syndrome of imposing decisions on the Workers' without any discussion.

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What are the HR challenges organizations are facing today with the Multi-Generation Workforce?

The aspirations & Preferences of these Multi Generation workforces are quite different. One Generation might be looking for stability—the other may be for Flexibility & more emphasis on Quality of Life. Hence, Organizations need to design a Segmented Employee Value Proposition instead of relying on rigid norms. This may call for flexible arrangements of Work Week, Work Hours, Work Location, Compensation & Benefits Packages.

9

Going by your experience, which factors contribute to the Performance of A New Hire?

A Talent is hired after evaluating various factors like Cultural Fit, Experience, Exposure, etc. This element of Fit is an extremely element for the Selection- However, it is not necessary that this factor will ensure the Performance of a New Hire. Two other elements- Sense of Belongingness and Connect with the Organisation are extremely important which can be ensured through New Joinee Interface Programme. In a few cases where the Connect with the organisation is poor, New Hires find it difficult to meet up performance expectations and there are cases of early exits.

10

During the Covid period, how you have built the connect with your Workforce?

During Covid First wave and Second wave, we created exclusive Helpline desk comprising Covid Committee Members, the HR Team, and our Doctors to render all support for tests, hospitalization, and medical advice. We have also done counseling for employee family members. Virtual meetings are scheduled with a different group working from home. It was a period when we gave assurance 'Organization is with You' and set up exclusive Covid Care Centre.

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11 How have you handled failure in your Professional Career?

What others perceive as failures are learnings for me. I have preferred to handle these not by blaming any particular person / entity or passing the buck, but by a joint consultation to avoid such lapses in the future. As a Leader, many times I have taken accountability for such failures. Failures have also provided me with important lessons such as strengthening the Intra Team and Inter Team Communication in an organization, Involving Key Stakeholders and getting their buy-in to ensure accountability, and sensitizing fellow colleagues or Team Members about the Big Picture which they may not envisage.

12 How do you find the Future Role of HR in any Organisation?

The Role of HR in understanding talent needs & building a performance-based culture is extremely crucial. The Future Role of HR is going to be more Strategic with an emphasis on building a Talent Agenda for Business Continuity, developing Agile HR Processes, creating a culture of Collaboration, and providing meaningful Employee Experience.

13 What are your accomplishments in your Career?

The last 26-plus years have been quite meaningful for me. I have been in HR Function at Business Unit, HR-COE, Green Field Project, Corp HR & Group HR. During these years, I have contributed to Leading Organization Transformation, Revamping HR Processes, Spearheading Group Digital Transformation, Conceptualizing OD Initiatives, setting up Organizations post-Merger & Acquisition, Employer Branding, Formulating Business Centric HR Policies & implementing sustainable initiatives to strengthen Industrial Relations. It is a pleasure for me to receive many awards for my professional contribution to the field of HR. These awards and recognitions include the S B Mishra Gold Medal Award for HR Excellence by NIPM, Best HR Leader India Leadership Award, Recognition for setting up exemplary practices of Business Partnering in Green Field Project, and Golden Peacock HR Excellence Award for Innovative HR Practices.

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Dr. Debabrata Dash receiving a Ph.D. degree from the Hon'ble Vice President of India during the 50th Convocation of Utkal University.



Receiving the Best HR LEADER Award from distinguished Academician Prof Padam Ex Dean ASCI Hyderabad. The international conference on Inclusive Work Organization organized by AIMS.



Dr. Debabrata Dash receiving SB Mishra Gold Medal for Excellence in HR from NIPM.

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