

An Interview with GM – HR, IR, Legal & EHS, M/s.Kern Liebers (India) Pvt. Ltd.

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Interviewed by **Shekhar Ganagaluru**, HR Professional and Author

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"I strongly believe that anything is possible to achieve provided you have the right mindset and positive attitude. Being in HR gives you more opportunities to connect with people and make an impact on your company, society, and family. If you are in HR, think that you have been gifted with something special."



Shri. Govindaraju NS. comes with more than two decades of industry experience in Human Resource Management & Labour Law Compliance. He is currently working as GM – HR, IR, Legal & EHS for a German Subsidiary M/s.Kern Liebers (India) Pvt. Ltd. Govind is closely associated with professional bodies and industry associations like CII, FKCCI & KASSIA and is the current President of Tumakuru HR Forum and immediate past President of the Greater Nelamangala Industries Association in the Bengaluru Area. Govind holds a Postgraduate degree in Social Work with a Human Resource Management Specialisation from Bangalore University and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Mysore University. He also holds a degree in Bachelor of Law (LLB) from Bangalore University.

Govind worked with different Indian and Multinational industries, which include textile, food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, and engineering. He has been in a top management position and travelled to Asian countries and Europe for Human Resource training and strategy discussions. Govind has been leading industry awareness initiatives on changing situations, especially in regulatory compliances and emerging trends in labour law. He is known for blogs, literary works and also shares knowledge on Labour Law and Labour Relations through his YouTube Channel '3LR Partner' (Labour Law and Labour Relations).

Govind has authored two books titled "Managing Labour Relations – A Practical Handbook with Strategies and Techniques" and another book in the Kannada language on Industrial Relations. He has published many articles and quizzes in the area of labour law and labour relations and delivered lectures and training programs on Labour Law and Labour Relations on various platforms.

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1 Why did you choose HR as your Career Option?

HONESTLY, I had no choice at that point in time. Being a Social Science student, joining Social Work/HRM, and finding a job in the industry for livelihood was the only option I had. If circumstances were good, I had the aspiration to pursue my career in Economics or the Civil Service. At the time, I had neither the money nor the influence nor time to prepare for civil service. But it is true that everything happens for good, I'm proud to be an HR & IR professional. HR is a great profession, it has shaped my life and given me incredible things to cherish in my personal and professional life with an identity in the society that I did not even imagine when I started my career.

2 What is success according to you and do you feel you are successful today?

Success is actually relative terminology and it varies from person to person. Success is a positive desire and therefore I think there is no end to it but yes compared to the early stages of my career and now I feel more secure.

3 What made you feel so or how did you achieve this?

Continuous reading, updating skills, and knowledge have complemented my career. The desire to excel, continuous demonstration of high competence and performance have definitely helped. More than this, knowing what my Organization and Managers expect and delivering results accordingly has resulted in continuous growth. Additionally, focusing on value-added activities has helped to channelize energy and time. Forecasting future potential and issues, preparing adequately for future scenarios have minimized the rate of failure.

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4 Some HR professionals say that HR people are given last priority when it comes to recognition and compensation, they don't have the authority and power they need, decisions are taken by the CEO/COO/MD. What do you say about this?

In my view, these are the reasons for securing safe shelter and of course the outcome of incompetence. When it comes to decisions, the CEO/COO/MD is responsible and accountable for the same to ensure the progress of people and the organization. Here, the question is whether HR is treated as a business partner, consulted before making decisions and the consideration given for the inputs of HR is what matters the most. In addition, it is also important to understand the space available and set the right space for HR in the organization. HR professionals must create their brand by ensuring a great value addition and agile HR systems to manage the uncertainties of the business. HR Professionals can achieve this by obtaining strong business and human-centric competencies, only.

5 I've heard that IR has no place in the HR domain in the future? Do you agree with this?

NO. We currently have a shortage of IR professionals in the HR domain as the younger generation does not want to have tough jobs and they don't want to take the risk. The shortage of IR professionals will continue and the demand will further increase. Upcoming Labour Codes will require more IR professionals with a good situational-concrete approach as disputes could increase and if not handled properly can lead to unrest. This definitely requires the IR minds, which we have a shortage of anyhow at the moment. IR specialists will have more attention in terms of importance, recognition, and compensation in the next few years.

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6 The Labour Codes are coming with some changes. What are the key positive takeaways or benefits for employers and employees from the codes?

The consolidation of labour laws was very much required to fuel the growth and sustainability of the Indian Economy and we now see the codification which is a good trend.

- **For Employers:** The changes are expected to ease out the compliance for employers because of the digitization of licensing process, single registration, combined and single return, decriminalization of offenses, web-based inspection system, self-assessment, and self-certification. Express provision on fixed-term employment will provide more flexibility to the employer to align the manpower based on the volatility of business. The law of limitation is now introduced to industrial disputes which is a key development in employment law.
- **For Employees:** The wage disparity is expected to reduce because of the national floor wage. The safety and health of employees will have high focus. The contract labour system will come with more restrictions and this means less exploitation. The benefits and Government schemes will have the possibility to reach the beneficiaries directly. The Codes cover all kinds of employment including unorganized labour, platform, and gig workers. The recognition of trade unions as an agent of collective bargaining which is a long-standing demand of the workers is now met.

7 What is your advice to young professionals?

Continuously update knowledge, acquire additional skills, pursue additional relevant certifications/qualifications that complement the profession, follow successful senior professionals' footprints, never compromise with accountability and integrity. These steps take them on the path to success.

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8 Despite the positive aspects, we see employers and employees agitating against Labour Codes. What is your opinion on this?

It is true that there are few provisions that may not favour positively for employers and a few for employees. But this should not hinder the implementation of the Labour Codes because 'a right of a person is an obligation of another.' Moreover, the expectations of parties are opposite of each other most of the time. As long as two opposite parties are involved, one party is right and the other is wrong and both are right & both are wrong in different perspectives. As time progresses, the law will fit its own and gets matured by the interpretations of Courts and also amendments to the provisions. Therefore, we have to appreciate the objective behind the codification and accept the change.

9 You are known for sharing knowledge through YouTube, articles, and books. Meanwhile, you have a regular job that demands attention and as well as the family too. Managing all these competently is a tough task. How do you handle it?

Good that you have asked this question. Many of my followers have been asking this question. I am able to manage all these things with the support of the following:

1. I have activated and empowered my team to work independently and made them accountable with SMART objectives and reviewed at a regular interval.
2. Fortunately, I have a great life partner, who is brave and independent enough to take care of the family.
3. I have earned the respect and support of my boss (even all my managers wherever I worked) through a consistent demonstration of efficiency and performance. He is the major source of my inspiration.

As a leader, I believe that "it's my responsibility to contribute to society through these initiatives of my own, in addition to my contribution to the company." As long as you are ethical and you are the source of someone's motivation/learning/success, go ahead and rock it. We must bring change and we are responsible for the development of people not only in the company but also in society.

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10 How do you see the younger generation coming to HR today?

You get two categories, the first is that they are very good in terms of their skills, more ambitious and hard-working. The second category is they lack basics, want a quick buck and quick fix, have no reading habits, extremely lack communication. I have seen more and more in the second category.

11 Have you ever been under pressure? If so how did you handle it?

Oh yes, in spite of good circumstances, many times I get stressed out, my anxiety levels go up, and have spent a few sleepless nights in the past. I had to learn new skills, yoga, pranayama, and get help from spirituality. However, through pressure, I am able to realize and understand my true character and work on them to become better and better.

12 Do you agree that HR is an easy job and everybody can do it?

This is a big and dangerous misconception among people. People who have felt this way and who have been entrusted HR to less qualified /& lack of experience people have got into serious problems in their businesses.

In my opinion, it is the hardest and most sensitive job one can have in all professions. This is because we deal with people and everyone is unique in nature. HRs must be Multi-Experts to perform and deliver progressive results. Many times a single solution may not suit all and the solutions should be articulated or reformed based on the persons whom we are dealing with.

Remember, people are with emotions, feelings, and reactions. Managing them is a science and art and competent HR professionals can only make this a reality.