

*An Interview with
Head – Human Resources (Indian Operations),
AUMA India*

Volume II, Issue 2, February 2022



“Engagement means the emotional connect where an employee is faithful to his employer and the organizational goals. The care and concern, timely recognition and appreciation, or a sincere thank you to an employee goes a long way. There is a difference between offering a job and offering a career.”



Interviewed by Shekhar Ganagaluru, HR Professional and Author

Mr. Vinay M.S. is a seasoned agile HR & ER Leader with over two decades of experience that includes 13 years of leadership positions in various business verticals such as Pharmaceutical, Engineering, Automobile, and Electronics Industries.

Vinay is a postgraduate (MSW) in Human Resources and Industrial Relations from the University of Mysore and currently working as Head – Human Resources (Indian Operations) at AUMA India, a German MNC based in Bengaluru. He is a member of AUMA India’s Leadership Team.

During the stint in HR, Vinay has managed the Employee Life Cycle from talent acquisition to talent management, handled complex/volatile IR

situations & disputes, successfully had five amicable wage settlements with the Trade Unions, ensured a collaborative approach by implementing the goal-setting process with joint accountabilities for the leadership teams, transformed and re-vitalized Performance Management System with an “objective approach” fostering the organizational effectiveness.

Vinay has envisioned and imbibed the learning culture, conceptualized, customized and implemented the Competency Framework, Compensation, and Benefits Matrix. Vinay believes in continuous learning and is passionate about training and an in-house trainer on various HRD and OD modules for Managers and the Leadership Team.

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1 I am in HR, because...

My younger days were filled with wonderful memories growing in a joint family in our village and spending most of my time with our people in the paddy fields. Since my childhood, I grew up observing their behaviors and expectations, admiring their loyalty and trust. These characteristics and attributes are similar in corporate world. As time passed by, memories became experiences as I moved on different paths of life. While every individual has his/her share of ups and downs in life, I was no exception! Experiences made way to attain a little wisdom through reflections and realizations. This very essence of experience in various phases of life had a deep impact since my childhood that made me choose a curriculum and then a career connected to people.

With this overview, being in HR gives me immense satisfaction in managing diverse human behaviors with human connect and trust. While we manage the behaviors, we are also in a premise of diverse situations - imagine the complexity! Indeed all of us need to be proud of ourselves being in the HR fraternity.

2 The top three things HR Professionals need to succeed are...

Understanding and continuous updates in the market, and legislative conditions under which the organization operates is critical for HR. This enables to effectively partner with the business hereby conceptualizing or revisiting important HR process and policies to be aligned with the business objectives. Few critical leadership competencies a successful HR professional can be the following:-

1) Leading Transformation:

Transformation starts from our existing situations, current employee connect, preparedness for such transformation. This requires a commendable effort by HR to conceptualize, communicate and plan the approach of transformation in an organization resulting in long-term shifts in employee mind set, behavior, and capabilities. This is to be a Top-Down approach driven by HR along with the top management team and all stakeholders.

2) Impact & Influence: One of my learnings in enhancing the performance is results by relations. The relation here means connect and impact that includes the use of persuasive techniques, presentations and negotiation skills to achieve the desired

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results. Personal Effectiveness is one of the critical dimensions in influencing that is derived through work, continuous learning and the respect HR commands. The greatest satisfaction derived from this competency is revival of employee self-confidence by such influence.

- 3. Thinking Big:** The ability to look forward within and beyond HR framework facilitating new business opportunities or to handle a complex/ambiguous situation. This comes with willingness to take calculated risks, ability to make quick decisions; develop new sustainable ideas resulting in adding value and increased efficiency in the business. One of the key trait is to act out of choice than compulsion in taking initiatives.

3 What do you think are the biggest challenges of your role are?

- 1) Digitalizing HR Systems:** Over the years we have been following a conventional method in HR in my current assignment. We are now in the path of going live in the entire employee life cycle management. Implementation was not easy due to the integration of the policies with the standard product that required immense customization followed by failures, testing, trial, and implementation. It took 2 years to

implement especially during the pandemic. My team's perseverance was tested to the core, at the end of the day we as a team are happy to see our colleagues in office and inside the plant manage their own attendance, apply/regularize leaves at workplace with dedicated systems. Thanks to my Team!

- 2) Business continuity during volatility:** Pandemic has hit the industries badly and we were no exception. Strategizing our plan – Instilling confidence in employees and family members by constant communication, ensuring business continuity by approvals from authorities, re-organize the manpower to initiate/start the operations action, managing employee anxiety/emotions at work, and employees working from home mattered us the most. This helped us to get closer to our employees and family members and enabled us to gear up in case of any exigencies in future.
- 3. Talent Management:** Currently the approach towards talent management is changing in today's dynamic environment. The very basic concept of nurturing talent is becoming critical due to employee retention issues arising out of attractive compensation offered by organizations creating an imbalance in the talent management process. There are connected sub-processes that need to work in unison

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to ensure the success of an organizational talent management process. By the time we analyze the right talent gaps for the present (including vacant positions) and future (successions) and look forward to optimize the existing skills, we have a causality of separations. A tremendous effort is required to source the resource in order to ensure business continuity.

4 Do you think “Story Telling” will enhance the effectiveness of HR Professionals?

As a human being, we are receptive to stories than facts or data. It is a good approach to connect with the audience who are the employees on a purpose. Having said that relating to point 2, I wish to reiterate that HR professionals need to understand the overall business model only on which there can be connect with the flow. This will certainly enable the content to be communicated into a relatable story with key take aways. The most important part of storytelling is it sets the expectations clear and most importantly imbibe the required behavior at workplace.

Many organizations have shared their journey starting from the very genesis, the struggle, growth, and values. The above facts are put forth in a different manner to make it more interesting for employees so

that it helps to connect with the focal events in the story. It can be means to convey the company's values and beliefs. A good case study is of Toyota.

5 The best HR culture leads to the best IR culture. Your comments...

Culture is derived and made by man as a part of social environment. This is to regulate and balance the behaviors of people with defined norms that guide action or a reaction to a person or situation. Organizations derive a culture which is a guide for employee behavior that sets a conducive working environment. Hence, interpretations of two cultures in an organization more so within HR can contradict the very essence of the culture in an organization where HR is the guardian and facilitator of the culture. Hence, the role of HR is to analyze the behavioral gaps that impacts the overall culture in an organization and take steps to minimize these through required HR interventions.

6 How do you define Professionalism?

In my opinion, professionalism is the conduct of a person employed – be it an entrepreneur or an employee possesses sound knowledge in the related field marked with humility, honesty with high standard of work ethics.

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7 What does a successful leader look like?

We have wonderful terminologies of a good leader. But, candidly speaking I am a follower of Blake & Mouton's Model of leadership grid. In this, a leader is passionate about the team's effort work and who does the best he/she can for the team. When employees are committed and have a stake in the organizational success, their needs and the organizational need coincides. This creates an environment based on trust and respect which leads to high satisfaction, motivation and excellent results. I was fortunate to be a part of Relationship Management Programme (RMP) by Homi that was an experiential learning.

8 Great engagements avoid great resignations. Is it practical?

Great Leaders avoid resignations to a larger extent. In my experience, employees leave their managers, not the organization. Further, the work has to be enriching and interesting. Engagement means the emotional connect where an employee is faithful to his employer and the organizational goals. The care and concern, timely recognition and appreciation, or a sincere thank you to an employee goes a long way. There is a difference between offering a job and

offering a career. Organizations need to have a robust talent management process to ascertain the above when an employee joins an organization.

9 Do think the Artificial Intelligence will be a challenge for HR?

I feel before we presume Artificial intelligence can be a challenge for HR, we need to understand the ground realities and factual situations. I was going through one of the articles where the grand view research reveals that by 2025, the market for HR technology will be worth an estimated \$ 30 Billion. A big proportion of this predicted expansion includes Artificial Intelligence. On the impact to HR AI may add value in the recruitment processes and training modules where the training modules are derived after analyzing the job roles. In addition, the pandemic has propelled many organizations to embrace automation as an initial option. This situation is one of the key triggers for HR leaders and organizations to acquaint themselves with intelligent HR solutions. Hence, it is critical for HR professionals to equip and embrace required skills, especially in analytics. On a progressive outlook, I feel the role of HR may transformed where HR professionals may get relieved from the routine tasks but certainly will be a value-added function especially in the decision making, objective setting, and guardian of

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culture. The role of industrial relation professional is in fact always enriching that requires human intervention since it is correlated to the labor legislations.

10 Which one do you prefer: time-based increments or results-based increments.

There has to be a balanced approach as emotions, hard work are involved. The timing to determine the increments matters the most. We need to value the effort, hard work involved that has to be recognized with time. Hence, time-based increments add in more value and propel an employee or a team to achieve more in the subsequent year.

We live in a social environment where many factors have an influence in the time-based increments such as eligibility for loans, the market value of an employee, etc. The result-based increases are uncertain that always can be determined with the project-based/variable pay concept/bonus or in the form of incentives with clear metrics that can be measured.

We have the CPI (Consumer Price Index) index in determining the inflation and the increments. Hence is also important to balance the aspirations of all sections of employees in an organization. Hence, a combination of time and result-based assessments with clear measurable metrics adds value. Results can be

determined by having a short-term or long-term that can spill over to the next year, but what is critical is the progress towards achieving the results.

11 Which one the younger generation prefer; “Money – Recognition – Position” or “Position – Money – Recognition” or “Money – Money – Money.”

It is important to relate this in a family. In my personal opinion, our ancestors believed in securing the basic needs of a family with good education for the next generation. The mid-generation which I mean aging between 45-55 years has an inherited belief of ensuring the basic, social needs and good education for the next generation. Hence, the young generation has a choice in life where recognition matters the most for them.

I have also personally experienced the younger generation being very responsible taking the entire responsibility at a very young age due to unforeseen situations. Recalling my personal experiences with our people in the fields, their children are very well placed in life and doing great and well respected and admired. They are our guests along with their parents! Hence, irrespective of social status, Upbringing matters a lot! I wish to redefine the above to Responsibility – Recognition – Money!