

# Organization Development

## A Journey Towards Organization Excellence

Face to Face Conversation with Mr. Guruvayurappan, VP- HR at Omega Healthcare



**1) Your 25 year rich career has been mostly in the field of OD. Can you share a few highlights about your OD experience and the initiatives that you have taken up at Omega?**

The first few years of my career were in the manufacturing sector, after which I joined Omega. Though the transition from manufacturing to the BPO sector brought with itself new and different experiences, it was truly a cultural shock for me. There was a marked difference in the way manufacturing companies dealt with OD and the way BPOs looked at OD and development of their employees.

In manufacturing, experience was all that counted for promotions. However, in a BPO, a new employee would start looking at progression of his career just one year into the job. Apart from career, youngsters today are also concerned about the feedback given by the managers—they want to know whether they are progressing or need to improve. Frequent informal acquaintances with the younger generation at Omega helped me gain these kinds of insights. This inspired my team and me to put in a robust feedback and review mechanism at Omega.

At Omega, I also had the opportunity to undertake three major structuring initiatives and was also a part of many Strategic Organization Development initiatives, Technological Organizational Developmental initiatives and other short term

Change management initiatives. There was much more complexity in implementing any OD intervention with a 9000 strong employee workforce. Hence, many of these initiatives were anchored with help from external OD consultants.

With the assistance of these OD consultants, we focused on the following 3 areas of work:

**Creating the Right Structure:**

Few years back, Omega decided that it would build leadership internally as hiring from outside brought with itself many challenges in terms of domain knowledge and getting the right cultural fit.

Hence, it was decided that Omega would promote people from within. Employees who joined as an associate could go on to become a Team Lead and thereafter get promoted to the position of manager. However, building leaders from within had its own downside. We became highly domain oriented and were basking in our past success. It also questioned our company's scalability. This is when we decided that we will forcefully bring in 20% of our employees externally. We created different positions for our senior managers by creating 3 BU's. This helped us verticalize the organization and manage our surplus talent. The selling point of this initiative was the effective utilization of the current talent.



Being a veteran in the people management space, Guru was instrumental in attracting senior professionals for the growth of Omega Healthcare over so many years. He is a strong believer in taking up challenging tasks with constant up gradation of skill sets and strives to establish the same attitude amongst employees at the work place. He played a key role in putting in place good HR practices, which have led the organization to have a 9,000 strong workforce. Guru specializes in Organizational Development and Organizational Behavior and has launched key change management initiatives in various roles of his 25 year long career in this field. Guru holds a post graduate degree in Industrial Relations & Personnel Management and a Diploma in Training & Development from ISTD. He started his career with the BPL Group where he directed people strategies across their various manufacturing plants and also BPL's corporate office at Bangalore. In his decade long stint in the BPO/KPO industry, Guru was instrumental in winning prestigious awards for Allsec Technologies Ltd, and for setting up benchmark HR processes for Paramount Airways. Guru is a life member of Bangalore Management Association (BMA), National Institute of Personnel Management (NIPM), Indian Society for Training & Development (ISTD), and the National HRD Network (NHRD).

## Transitioning from a 'domain' to a 'service' oriented organization

The next challenge for us after creating the 3 Business Units, was to manage the existing work and talent. We realized that hand-holding between the three units was taking place through the clients and not within the teams. To circumvent this issue, we hired delivery heads. They were sent to US and trained on the processes which would help them transition to business leaders.

However, once they were on the job, it appeared that they were taking on 80% of the job responsibilities which could be delegated to others. This led to the creation of a Work Force Management team, which helped us look into issues of workplace productivity. As capacity planning takes place separately, looking at the levers of productivity was a challenge. The workforce management team helped Omega manage shrinkages and leakages in the organization. However, to aid this we needed to analyze the data which in-turn led to forming an Analytics team from IIM. The team helped us look at different perspectives of delivery and quality. Based on their recommendations, we created quality heads who would handle inspection quality as well as assurance quality.

We invested in ERP and modified the governance structure which aided in keeping our talent intact.

This entire initiative enabled us to move from a domain service delivery organization to a highly service-oriented organization.

Today we are taking the help of KPMG (a well-known consulting company) for a project called **New Horizon**. They are conducting an operational study across each business unit to analyze and comprehend the structure that had been put in place 4 years back, redundancy of roles, the number of years an employee could work in a company etc.

Every month or every year we have brought in changes and modifications which have helped us reach where we are today.

## Cultural Alignment

Post the "Obama Care Act", Omega decided to set up health care facilities in Manila. In order to get the necessary talent for this new facility, we hired locally from Manila and also promoted existing Omega employees. A few months into the business, we started realizing that managers were leading their teams in very different ways. Hence, aligning their thoughts and culture was a major challenge in front of us.

Though we had a good training team, we lacked behavioral experts who could look at this challenge from different perspectives and lend a hand in aligning diverse employees with the organizations culture.

Consequently we hired a behavioral expert to help us bring parity amongst them and to bring in a uniform culture across the organization. Based on their suggestion, we recruited a senior director who helped in conducting various programs like **"First Time Leaders Program"**, which was spread across 13 weeks and **"Lead the Leader"**.

This helped employees move up the value chain and contribute to the company beyond their regular work.

## 2) How do you get the buy-in from your employees and top management for various initiatives that you have come up with from time to time?

In today's business scenario 'Data' is king. I use data to substantiate my word. If the top management has to invest in interventions, in return I have to have sufficient data on the positive impact the intervention will have. It is important to make them realize the ROI. In OD, it is difficult to quantify the impact or outcomes in terms of dollar value and hence it is important to quantify in HR terms.

For example, OD interventions will improve Employee Satisfaction Scores, which in turn will ensure higher productivity and eventually contribute to organization success. However, before pitching ideas to the top management, I usually run it with different heads and take opinions after which I convince the top management.

As a professional it is my responsibility to point out what is going wrong and what will be the consequences if it is not rectified at the earliest. At the end of the day, it is about creating a winning instinct for the organization as well as for the talent available in the organization.

To share an example-One of the most challenging issues that we were facing was Suicides amongst our employees. I collected and analyzed data of the number of Suicides per year in our company and thought that we have to come up with initiatives to reduce this sad phenomena. This gave birth to the initiative called “Parivarthan”, a counseling center which ensured that employees were always connected to their family. Apart from getting management buy-in, the bigger challenge that we faced was to get employees to understand that they do not have to feel vulnerable and that this initiative has been created exclusively for them. We are trying

to create HR BP models, HR touch points to ensure that the employees, feel the management is always there for them.

### **3) What are the communication strategies that Omega uses to communicate new initiatives to its stakeholders?**

Like every other company, we too relied largely on emails to communicate about any activity or change that had to be brought about in the company. But then we realized that apart from just informing them about the initiative, it is also important to make them understand why this is being done.

Hence, we created a corporate communications team. Their main role was to focus on dissemination of information as well as reinforce the same from time to time. After every communication, the team does a survey on how many employees have responded to the communication sent and the way the message has been perceived. This survey helps us bring in modifications in our communications strategies.

Communication is a significant process, just like any other function in the organization. Companies lose a lot of people due to their inability to communicate.

It is a continuous process and an integral part of the Talent Management life cycle. Communicating with a new joinee is as important as communicating with an employee leaving the organization.

### **4) OD is all about having a good work environment. What according to you is an ideal working environment?**

A good working environment comprises the necessary freedom and showing respect for one-another. It is a place where interpersonal relationships are strong and where people value each other's work.

Organizations should ensure that they are sensitive to employee's needs and ensure that employee's requirements are met.

Apart from this, organizations also need to provide opportunity to learn and grow at work. If these are fulfilled, then employees would not only stay in the company longer but would also remember it fondly even later. I believe, all the other external amenities at work are merely frills and do not contribute in a major way to creating an ideal work environment.

. 5) What do you think is the future of OD? Any messages for HR professionals?

OD is all about creating a win-win situation for the company and the employees. Hence it is important for every HR leader to analyze and identify the true requirement of any initiative.

The ABC of OD should be taken care of-Attention to the basic details, focus on the Business, and finally clarity on the Change that is going to take place. If there is no fit between ABCs, then the OD intervention is unlikely to be successful. While considering any change, it is mandatory to focus on few factors like:

- . Employees
- . Business
- . Productivity
- . Measuring the impact of the initiative

**OD is here to stay.** Hence, before plunging into any initiative, it is very important that the foundation and the pre-work are strong enough.

**“If Everyone Is  
Moving Forward  
Then Success  
Takes Care of  
Itself”**

**Henry Ford**