

Exploring various dimensions of Human Resource Practices leading to High Performance Work Systems.

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I. Introduction

All of us have heard the famous fable from Panchatantra – The Goose with the Golden eggs. One day a poor farmer discovers in the nest of his pet goose a scintillating golden egg. At first, he thought it to be a trick. But on second thought, he decides to take the egg and have it appraised. The farmer can't believe on his good fortune, that the egg is pure gold! He becomes even more excited for the next day when the goose lays another golden egg. Day after day, he awakens to rush to the nest and finds another golden egg. Soon he becomes fabulously wealthy. But with wealth comes greed and impatience. Unable to wait every day for the golden eggs, the farmer makes up one's mind to kill the goose and get them all at once. But when he wide-open the goose, he finds it empty. There are no golden eggs and now there is no way to get it anymore. The farmer has destroyed the very thing that produced them.

With this fable comes a key principle of High Performance. Sustained high performance is a function of two things – What is produced or performed (Golden eggs) and the capacity to produce (Goose). In Business Organizations, goods and services are produced by the employees working there. If the organizations focus only on producing golden eggs (achieving profits) today and neglect the goose (employee building capacity for tomorrow) they will soon be without the asset that secures their future survival. The problem is that we always seem to under invest in the people and over focus on the profit or the immediate outcome which is the visible end result. The invisible forces which lies within and contribute the maximum, is not paid enough attention to future growth & development. As a result we are not able to develop High Performance Work Systems.

Happy Employees —————> **Happy Customers** —————> **Sustained Profits**

With this approach in mind, we would like to explore dimensions of Human Resource Practices and High Performance Work Systems.

II. Objectives

1. To understand the concept of High Performance Work Systems.
2. To identify various characteristics' of High Performance Work Systems.
3. To examine the characteristics which leads to High Performance Work Systems with the help of the existing Literature Resources..
4. To explore the Human Resource Practices under the pre-determined Key Parameters of High Performance Work Systems in an Organizational set-up.

III. Research Methodology

A critical review of the academic literature was undertaken using the following key terms: High Performance Organizations' High Performance Characteristics, High Performance Work Systems, Human Resource and its importance, HR Practices, Organizational Performance etc. This search resulted in several hundreds of resources, which were then reviewed for relevance to this paper. Additional citations were also identified using reference lists from the sources selected from the initial search. On the basis of this secondary data, key characteristics are developed and then Human Resource practices are collected and analyzed from an Indian Organization on the Key Parameters leading to High Performance Work Systems.

IV. Literature Review

(i). Definitions

High Performance Work System (HPWS) - There is no single agreed definition of a high performance work system; however, existing approaches do share some common ideas (Osterman, 1994; Appelbaum et al, 2000). High commitment management (Walton, 1985), high involvement systems (Pil and MacDuffie, 1996), transformed workplaces, flexible work practices (Osterman, 1994), flexible production systems (MacDuffie, 1995) and high performance work systems (Appelbaum and Batt, 1994) – were the terms used to describe the organizational form held to be the most suitable for modern competitive conditions (Wood, 1999). Diffusion of these practices is clouded by different interpretations and meanings attributed to these practices. Pfeffer (1998) believes that all labels refer to '*similar ideas about how to obtain profits through people*'. High Performance Work System is one that is intentionally designed to bring out the best in people and thereby produces organization capability that delivers sustainable leadership business results. what people can contribute and what a high performance work organization relies upon is a high degree of commitment, creativity, knowledge, and skill - Texas Center for Productivity and Quality of Work Life

Human Resource Practices - The traditional role of the HR/personnel department is essentially functional in nature and revolves around the following tasks: Human Resource Planning, Recruiting of Staff, Job Analysis, Performance Review, Wage/Salary and Benefits Administration, Employee Training, Personnel Administration, Legislative Compliance and Labour Relations. Conner and Ulrich (1996) said, "Many drivers have led to the reinvention of human resources, considering cost pressures, increased attention to customer satisfaction, importance on well-being, productivity, and commitment of the employee, and treating people and organizations as a source of competitive advantage.

Ulrich states that in the past few years, roles of HR professionals were often viewed in terms of transitional form like operational to strategic; qualitative to quantitative; policing to partnering; short term to long term; administrative to consultative; functionally oriented to business oriented, etc. HR function has changed from being reactive, prescriptive and administrative to being proactive, descriptive and executive.

At present, the importance of human resource practices is recognized in India as a source of competitive advantage for continued success in the business activities. In recent years, after economic reforms, emergence of foreign companies, Indian corporate have started giving much importance to the human resource practices to develop the skill and efficiency of their work force and to develop their commitment to the organization for better performance. Generally, to improve their overall efficiency in the era of high tend competition, human resource practices play a vital role in achieving the high Performance.

(ii). Characteristics of High Performance Work Systems

As Tom Peter and Robert Waterman in the book “ In Search of Excellence”, The eight attributes have come forth to distinguish the excellent, innovative companies.

1. A bias for action: for getting on with it. "Do it, fix it, try it." approach.
2. Close to the customer: learn from the people they serve.
3. Autonomy and entrepreneurship: to develop many leaders and many innovators in the organization.
4. Productivity through people: treat the rank and file as the root source of quality and productivity gain or regard capital investment as the fundamental source of efficiency improvement.
5. Hands-on, value driven
6. Stick to the knitting means "Never acquire a business you don't know how to run."
7. Simple form, lean staff
8. Simultaneous loose-tight propertie: both centralized and decentralized management.

In the book **Built to Last**, author **James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras**, makes a unique and valuable contribution to current business through global survey of 700 Fortune 500, and Inc. 500 and 100 company CEO's. These business leaders were heads of industrial and service companies, both private and public. Built to Last gives many examples of companies that have focused more on building a fine organization rather than making a product, providing a service, or making a profit.

1. Company's core ideology, which is comprised of two aspects:
 - a. Organization's core values?
 - b. Reason for company's existence?
2. Preserve the core values.
3. Stimulate progress.
4. Correct misalignment's with the company's core values.

Jim Collins, challenge in the book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*, was published in 2001: identifying and evaluating the factors and variables that allow a small fraction of companies to make the transition from merely good to truly great.

The distinctive characteristics that differentiated these 'great' firms from their competitors were quantified and analyzed.

1. Good is the Enemy of Great - Disciplined people, disciplined thought and disciplined action, were the most significant factors in determining a company's ability to achieve greatness.
2. Level 5 Leadership - "Level 5 leadership" is an unusual mix of intense determination and profound humility. They have long-term personal sense of investment in the company and its success, often developed through a career-spanning up of the company's ranks.
3. First Who, Then What - With the right people in the right positions, or hiring delayed until an absolutely suitable candidate has been identified.
4. Confront the Brutal Facts (Yet Never Lose Faith) - (1) Lead with questions, not answers; (2) Engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion; (3) Conduct autopsies without blame; and (4) Build red flag mechanisms that turn information into information that cannot be ignored.
5. The Hedgehog Concept (Simplicity) - The way to make the transformation from *Good to Great* is often not doing all the things well, but instead, doing one thing in the best way than anyone else in the world. To follow this (1) Determine what you can be best in the world at and what you cannot be best in the world at; (2) Determine what drives your economic engine; and (3) Determine what you are deeply passionate about.

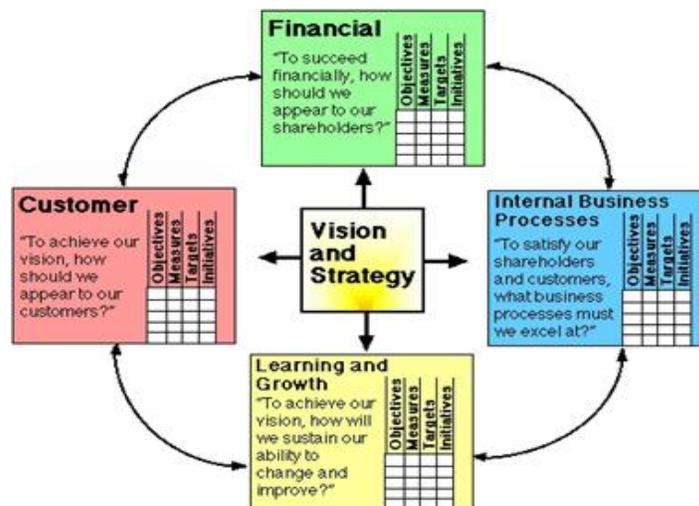
6. A Culture of Discipline - Disciplined workers will be better equipped to the goals with a single-minded intensity with this overarching culture of discipline, every team member is afforded the degree of personal empowerment and latitude that is necessary to ensure that they will be able to go to unheard-of extremes to bring the firm's envisioned objectives into existence.
7. Technology Accelerators -Technology helps to enhance efficiency, cut down overhead, and exploit competitive advantage. Collins characterizes the ideal approach to technology with the following cycle: "Pause -- Think -- Crawl -- Walk -- Run."
8. The Flywheel and the Doom Loop - By making decisions and taking actions that reinforce and affirm the company's "hedgehog" characteristics, executives develop optimistic momentum. This, results in the growth of tangible positive outcomes, which suffice to stimulate and develop the investment and loyalty of the staff.
9. From Good to Great to Built to Last - Companies need a set of core values in order to achieve the kind of long-term and sustainable success which lead to greatness. Companies exist for a higher goal than just profit generation.

Balanced Scorecard Basics

The balanced scorecard was originated by Drs. Robert Kaplan (Harvard Business School) and David Norton as a performance measurement framework that added strategic non-financial performance measures to traditional financial metrics to give managers and executives a more 'balanced' view of organizational performance.

"The balanced scorecard retains traditional financial measures. But these financial measures are insufficient, however, for directing and assessing the journey that information age companies must make to create future value through investment in customers, suppliers, employees, processes, technology, and innovation."

Adapted from Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, "Using the BalancedScorecard as a Strategic Management System," Harvard Business Review (January-February 1996): 76.



The Learning & Growth Perspective: This perspective includes employee training and corporate cultural attitudes related to both individual and corporate self-improvement. In a knowledge-worker company, people -- the only repository of knowledge -- are the main resource. Learning' is more than 'training'; it also includes things like mentors and tutors within the organization, and the comfort of communication among workers that allows them to readily get help on a problem when it is needed.

The Business Process Perspective: This perspective refers to internal business processes, allows the managers to know how well their business is growing, and whether its products and services adapt to customer requirements (the mission).

The Customer Perspective: The importance of customer focus and customer satisfaction are leading indicators: if customers are not satisfied, they will eventually find other suppliers that will meet their needs. Customers should be analyzed in terms of kinds of customers and the kinds of processes for which we are providing a product or service to those customer groups.

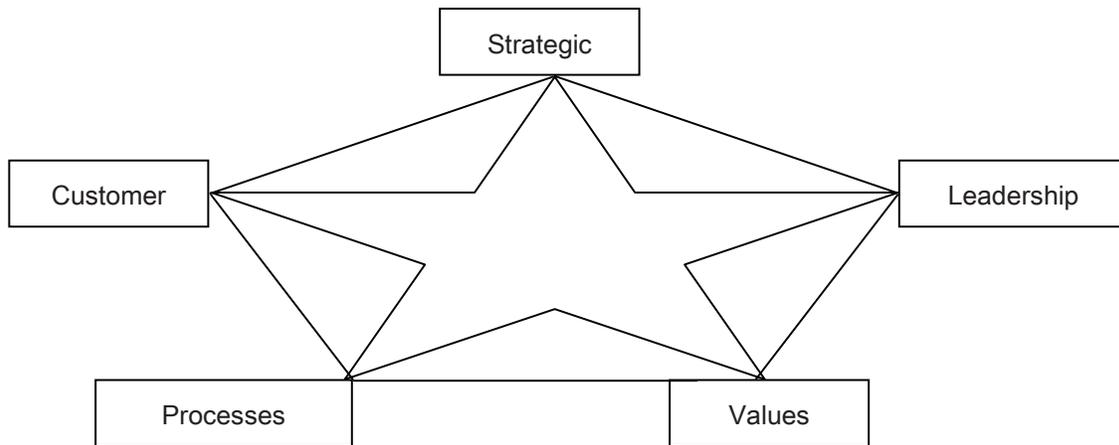
The Financial Perspective: Kaplan and Norton do not disregard the traditional need for financial data. Timely and accurate funding data will every time be a priority, so managers will do whatsoever required to provide it. There is a need to include additional financial-related data, such as risk assessment and cost-benefit data, for this concept.

Richard L Osborne & Scotts Cowen in the article titled High Performing Companies: the distinguishing profile

- Culture: Emotion packed vision, True believer mentality, Plain Vanilla values, Pride & dissatisfaction, Peer respect, Long term relationship, fun.
- People: Can do attitude, Crush the competition, Hang tough, Be the best in business, Boss is a colorful character.
- System: Precise expectation, performance is King, Truth is told.

Jay J Jamrog & team – American management Association in the global study of current trends and future prospective 2007-2017 highlights the followings components

INTERACTIVE COMPONENTS OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATIONS



From Overholt, Granell, Vicere, Jargon 2006

The strategic approach sets that an organization's consistency can be measured to see how well the organization "walks the talk." High-performance organizations establish clear visions that are supported by flexible and achievable strategic plans. In addition, they have leaders, managers, and employees who perform consistently with the strategic plan and the company's philosophy.

The customer approach is, how a company treats its customers. High-performance organizations tends to have clear approaches to obtaining fresh customers, retaining current customers. They also build the necessary infrastructure and processes to support their customer approach.

The leadership approach describes the organization's strategy in managing people to achieve a particular set of behaviors. High-performance organizations have to be clear about what behaviors employees must exhibit to execute the organizations and departmental strategies. Executives and managers fix clear goals, realize employees' abilities, and escort their performance.

The processes and structure captures how organizations arrange their work processes, policies, and procedures to assist and implement strategy. High-performance organizations develop processes that strengthen strategy, build up work flows and tasks that most effectively enable employees to meet internal and external customer needs within the limits of the strategy.

The values and beliefs are essential to helping a company execute its strategy and accomplish its mission. High-performance organizations have a set of well-established values that are the deep drivers of employee behavior and are well understood by the vast majority of the employees.

Andre' Ade Waal – The characteristics of HPO are stated as under

Strategy creates clarity and a common understanding of the organization's direction and strategy, which results in a commonly held strategic mind-set among organizational members.

Process management continuously simplifies and improves all the organization's processes to improve its ability to respond to events efficiently and effectively and to eliminate unnecessary procedures, work,

information overload, constantly striving to improve productivity and quality, continuously identifying opportunities for improvement, searching for best practices, and executing flawless operations.

Technology implements flexible ICT systems everywhere in the workplace, creating an accessible and credible database, having back-up systems to take over when accidents happen, and using the internet to share information and streamline transactions.

Leadership apply decisive, action-focused decision-making by coming up with decisions and effective actions and, at the same time, fostering action taking by others. It inspires people to accomplish extraordinary results by applying charismatic leadership, making a larger-than-life mindset, motivating all to do their best, and pull together individual initiative.

Training engages and involves the workforce by involving people in developing vision and values, synergistic discussions in the decision-making process by communicating issues and developments important to the organization. A HPO creates a learning organization by continuously investing in training and upgrading of skills, establishing good management development and top-of-the-line training programs, and by perpetually identifying and approaching new competencies.

Culture - empowers people and gives them freedom to decide and act by devolving decision making authority and giving autonomy to organizational members to work, with clearly established limits and constraints of what is allowed and what is not. A HPO creates a culture of transparency, openness and trust by establishing a common understanding, openly discussing information and fostering informality.

External orientation - continuously strives to enhance customer value creation by learning what customers want, assessing their values, building perfect relationships with them, having direct contact with them, engaging them, being responsive to them, and concentration on continuously enhancing customer value. A HPO chooses to compete and compare with the best in the marketplace by always striving for relative success compared to competitors and obtaining a leading market position.

In the research paper titled” The Dynamics of High Performing Organizations by Gary Lear – President and CEO – Resource Development Systems, identified Seven elements which act as building blocks in the success of High Performing Organizations

The core element is people, everything that an organization does is either done by or for people. People design and make products or services; people market and sell the products or services; and people buy the products or services. **The 4 cardinal elements are Vision, Leadership, Strengths and Innovation.** A compelling **Vision** is what motivates employees to give their discretionary effort to the success of the organization. Rather than inspiring employees through individual leaders, the vision should be what inspires them to want to do great things. A vision is made of Purpose, Values and Goals. **Leadership** is about behavioral approach to dealing with people and ideas. **Strengths** play and focus on the organizational efforts and resources on those things that they could be good at doing



exceptionally well (best in the world at) and which they were passionate about. **Innovation** is organizational success so as to preserve the core, yet stimulate progress. The 4 cardinal elements cannot exist without the **Foundational Elements of Trust and Personal Responsibility**. Trust is composed of four components: Straightforwardness; Openness; Acceptance and Reliability. If trust is the foundation of the building, then Personal Responsibility is the trusses; the foundation for the roof, if you will.

Vikram Bhalla & team in HPO, the secrets of their success (2011) enlisted 14 organizational and people characteristics that can be grouped into five broad dimensions and that lead to sustained performance.

When organizations take a strategic approach to their pursuit of monitoring and improving these five broad capabilities—and the 14 characteristics they represent—they generate lasting performance gains and a competitive edge. (See Exhibit 1)

- *Leadership* is effective deep within the organization.
- *Design* is a lean structure reflecting the organization's strategic focus and has clear roles and accountability.
- *People*. The organization effectively translates business strategy into a powerful people strategy, attracting and holding the most capable individuals.
- *Change Management* has the ability to drive and sustain large-scale change and to anticipate and adapt to an increasingly volatile environment.
- *Culture and Engagement*. The culture is shaped to achieve strategic goals, and its employees are motivated to go beyond the work in pursuit of corporate objectives.

EXHIBIT 1 | Highly Effective Companies Manifest 14 Characteristics

LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-performance teams of individual leaders drive urgency and direction • The pipeline is stocked with future leaders whose skills are matched to future needs • Middle managers embrace and translate strategy
DESIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure and resource allocation reflect strategic tradeoffs • Few layers separate the CEO and the frontline, and spans of control are wide • Accountabilities, decision rights, and collaboration are constructed with thoughtful consideration • Individual capabilities are matched to role requirements
PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employer brand is a core asset • Critical roles and key talents are clearly identified and treated with care • HR is a strategic partner and an enabler of the business
CHANGE MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change is a disciplined cascade • The organization is evolutionary
CULTURE AND ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture accelerates strategic objectives • Engagement is measured and cultivated to generate discretionary effort from employees

Source: BCG analysis.

(iii). Comprehensive High Performance Characteristics

S.No	Author	Title & Year	Characteristics
1	Tom Peters & Waterman	In Search of Excellence (1982)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bias for action • Close to customers • Autonomy & entrepreneurship • Productivity through people • Hands on Value driven • Stick to knitting • Simple form, lean staff • Simultaneous loose-tight properties

2	Kaplan & Norton	Balanced Scorecard (1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer prospective • Internal Business processes • Learning & growth • Financial performance
3	Porras & Collins	Built to Last (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Ideology : Core values, Core Purpose • Envisioned Future: Audacious Goal, Vivid description
4	Jim Collins	Good to Great (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 5 leadership • First who then what • Confront the brutal facts • Hedgehog concept • Culture of discipline • Technology accelerates • Flywheel & Doomloop
5	Richard L Osborne & Scotts Cowen	High Performing Companies: the distinguishing profile (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture: Emotion packed vision, True mentality, Plain Vanilla values, Pride & dissatisfaction, Peer respect, Long term relationship, fun. • People: Can do attitude, Crush the competition, Hang tough, Be the best in business, Boss is a colorful character. • System: Precise expectation, performance is King, Truth is told.
6	Jay J Jamrog & team –AMA	How to build HPO (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Approach • Leadership Approach • Values & Beliefs • Processes & structures • Customer Approach
7	Andre' Ade Waal	Characteristics of HPO (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy • Process management • Technology • Leadership • Training • Culture • External Orientation
8	Gary Lear	Managing Human Side of Business (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Element: People • Cardinal Element: Vision, leadership, strengths, Innovation • Foundational Elements: Trust, Personal Responsibility
9	Vikram Bhalla & team	HPO – The secrets of their success (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Design • People • Change Mgmt • Culture & Engagement

On the basis of The High Performance Characteristics, different Dimensions of HR Practices are identified, taking into consideration that almost all the key characteristics are included and keeping abreast with future expectations of the business – we identified five broad parameters which links HR to HPWS. All these parameters concentrate on the current activities and help in forecasting future growth, unlike the financial variables which are based on past figures.

(iv). Selected Key Parameters leading to High Performance Work Systems

1. Vision & Mission – Strategic perspective
2. Values & Beliefs – Cultural perspective
3. Leadership – Management perspective
4. Innovation & Empowerment – People-centric perspective
5. Learning & Growth – Continuous Improvement perspective

V. Case of Bharti Airtel – Desire To Succeed

Now we would explore these key parameters in one of the High Performing Indian Organization - BHARTI AIRTEL. Bharti Airtel Limited, commonly known as Airtel, is an Indian multinational telecommunications services company headquartered in New Delhi, India. It was founded in 1985 by Sunil Bharti Mittal. The company ranks amongst the top 4 mobile service providers globally in 20 countries across Asia and Africa in terms of subscribers. Bharti Enterprises is one of India's leading business groups with pioneering force in the telecom sector and today enjoys a strong nationwide presence. Bharti Airtel Limited, India's largest integrated and the first private telecom services provider with a footprint in all the 23 telecom circles. Bharti Airtel had nearly 275 million customers across its operations at the end of June 2013.

1. **Vision & Mission:** By 2015 Airtel will be the most loved brand enriching the lives of millions

- Always empowering and backing our people.
- Being loved and admired by our customers and respected by our partners.
- Transforming millions of lives and making a positive impact on society.
- Being brave and unbounded in realizing our dreams.

2. **Values & Beliefs:**

- Empowerment: We respect the opinions and decisions of others. We encourage and back people to do their best.
- Entrepreneurship: We always strive to change the status quo. We innovate with new ideas and energies with a strong passion and entrepreneurial spirit.
- Transparency: We believe we must work with honesty, trust and the innate desire to do good.
- Impact: We are driven by the desire to create a meaningful difference in society.
- Flexibility: We are ever willing to learn and adapt to the environment, our partners and the customers' evolving needs.

3. **Leadership:** Sunil Bharti Mittal - Chairman & Group CEO

Sunil Bharti Mittal is the Founder, Chairman and Group CEO of Bharti Enterprises. Unlike the scions of those great families, Mittal wasn't born to wealth. He was raised in Ludhiana, a manufacturing hub in Punjab, as the middle son of a Congress Party politician. He founded Bharti in 1976 at the age of

18, after graduating from Punjab University, with \$1,500 borrowed from his father. Today he heads a successful enterprise which employs over 38,000 people.

4. Innovation & Empowerment – for the employees

- The entire organization is measured on five performance parameters: profitability, market share, brand saliency, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction.
- At Bharti Airtel, the ‘Mantra’ for employee delight focuses on 5 Ps – People, Pride, Passion, Processes and Performance
- People enjoyed their roles
- Invite criticism from the employees
- A state-of-the-art learning centre.
- Believe in “Open door policy”
- Key aspect of the business focus “building a best-in-class leadership team that nurtures talent at every level”
- Bharti’s Code of Conduct is a policy which aims to provide an independent forum by means of the Office of the Ombudsperson

Employee Engagement and Development:-

- Offering ‘Study while Work’ programmes
- Setting benchmarks in employee reward and recognition
- Implementing employee friendly HR policies
- Interacting with employees through open houses
- Developing role competency matrix
- Managing employees lifecycle

5. Learning & growth of the employees:

People Investment: Our talent management and development strategy hinges on a balance between growing talent from within and hiring people with specialist skill sets from outside. Our leadership capability development programs are customized for all levels to ensure a robust leadership pipeline.

Senior Leadership Capability Development: The leadership capability development strategy is geared towards developing a pipeline of top leadership talent, by implementing a framework of leadership development and aligned culture building. Our leadership development programs are aligned to business strategy & goals and integrated with key HR systems like performance management and talent management. Through our tie-ups with international training institutes like INSEAD and Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), we continue to provide our valued top talent with opportunities for growth and development.

Young Leaders program offers fresh business school graduates opportunities that combine on-the-job training with cross-functional project work. The program aims to provide exposure to all key functions, verticals and their work ways to allow hands-on experience around key operations specific to the industry. Through these assignments and projects, Bharti endeavors to nurture and create a pool of potential talent who can deliver superior business performance.

Awards & Achievements of Bharti Airtel

All the 5 key parameters are present and successfully adopted by airtel with due attention to the Human Resource practices because of which it has become among the Top Telecommunication service providers in the world. Not only this, Airtel has grown and diversified manifold over these years and growth oriented plans in the future too. Certain recent accomplishments of Airtel are highlighted

Bharti Airtel is

- 3rd largest in-country mobile operator in the world
- Bharti Airtel has stood out as the top telecom brand and winner of the prestigious Effie Awards 2012.
- INSEAD Business Leader Award 2011
- Philanthropist of the Year Award 2010 at The Asian Awards
- Top Telecom Company – NDTV Profit Business Leadership Awards 2010.
- 6th largest in-country integrated telecom operator in the world
- Ranked number 5 in the best performing technology companies in the world by business week
- India's most innovative company by Wall Street Journal
- Winner of Gallup Great Workplace for being one of the best places to work worldwide
- Ranked 188 in the FT 500 world's largest companies 2009 ranked by financial times

VI. Conclusion

The study shows the importance, relevance and characteristics of high performing organizations and how Human Resource Practices help to adapt these characteristics in the overall functioning and future growth of its business. The high performing companies have a profile that separates them from the rest, by developing and adapting HR practices on the key parameters of Vision & mission, Values & beliefs, leadership, innovation & engagement and learning & growth. The case of Bharti Airtel is giving examples of various HR practices followed and the accomplishments attained.

It is proposed that high performance HR practices can improve organizational performance by strengthening relations among employees who perform distinct functions with all the interested associates of the business, a pathway that is expected to be particularly important in achieving qualitative and quantitative outcomes successfully not just once but every time in the long run.

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