

Interview | Shampi Venkatesh, chief people officer, NIIT

# Best practices of 2014 are about talent attraction & engagement

**CAREER  
CLAUSE**  
SHISHIR PARASHER

*THE global talent development company, NIIT, has been ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in "Best places to work for in India — 2013-14" by Great Place to Work Institute®. The firm, that has 4,000 employees in the country, was set up in 1981 to help the nascent IT industry overcome its HR challenges.*

■ **Tell us about Hats off, your R&R mechanism.**

Hats Off is a structured rewards and recognition programme. It focuses on creating high standards of work ethics, enhancing teamwork and rewarding outstanding contributions in building the organisation. There are various awards related to high performance, behaviour at the workplace, teamwork, long service through on-the-spot recognition, monthly and quarterly awards, individual and team awards, including the annual awards that are declared on NIIT day. For NIITians who receive three awards of excellence, we dedicate a conference room to them. NIITians get Hats-Off

points, which can get accumulated and redeemable on a benefits portal. All such awardees also get recognised under a hall of fame hosted on our portal iNIITian.com

■ **Should performance be the only benchmark of reward and recognition? If not, what are the other key points that should be considered?**

Performance is an important yardstick and must be considered while rewarding an employee. However, it is not the only yardstick. At NIIT, our R&R programme is a 360-degrees framework that not only covers rewards related to performance but also recognises desirable behaviour at the workplace, high performing teams, innovation, customer centric behaviour, and exceptional performance in line with the strategy set for that year. We have a unique way of recognising reporting managers and leaders as well. This is a process of nomination and polling by the NIITians and conducted worldwide.

■ **A lot of organisations these days are moving away from the practices of one-size-fits-all when it comes to offering benefits. A lot of new types of benefits have been introduced by them, as per employees' choices and preferences and soon the traditional benefits structure will become obsolete. How important is it for organisations to be flexible when it comes to giving benefits to their employees? What is**



■ **NIIT doing in this domain?**

We too believe that one size does not fit all and hence we had redesigned our compensation structure way back in 2006 to introduce flexi basket, thus giving NIITians complete flexibility to choose salary components which are important to them and matter them the most. Over the time, we have introduced benefits as 'per NIITians' choice' such as work from home, maternity benefits for adoptions and surrogacy; sabbatical, Little NIITian care leave etc. We try and participate in the critical life stages of our people. Every year we come up with a new category of necessary time-offs and have hence introduced "Take A Break" scheme to encourage NIITians to go on a vacation to rejuvenate themselves.

■ **India Inc has hit upon the concept of stay interviews to help sustain retention better. Discuss the elements that make a stay**

**One of the critical elements of stay interview is to take appropriate measures before issues become serious**

**interview impeccable.**

This concept is gaining popularity as a tool to reduce staff turnover and increase employee engagement. One of the critical elements of stay interview is not just to discover issues and concerns but to take appropriate corrective actions before it becomes a serious matter. Matters of engagement, support from reporting manager, learning and career growth need to be addressed.

■ **What will be the talent trends or practices of 2014 that will help corporate India to stay abreast of growth?**

The top-most practices for 2014 are all about talent — attraction and engagement! In the talent acquisition space, we need to identify ways to continuously reinvent ourselves; aggressively and intelligently source and attract talent; explore new social recruiting channels to leverage our brand, use analytics to integrate and

make informed decisions.

In the employee engagement space, the focus should be on building passion and creating a holistic work environment. Since millennials are the ones who we are attracting and engaging, we need to expand our horizon and look at employee engagement from their standpoint.

■ **What are some of the best practices which help in making work environment that focuses on encouragement, appreciation, learning and innovation.**

Appreciation is a way of life at NIIT. Our managers periodically recognise their teams by executing online e-WOW cards, which is a form of instant recognition. What's more, we have Hat's off points which NIITians can redeem using an internal e-shopping portal, NIIT-Flipkart.

In the domain of learning and development, it has been observed more than often that despite having a good programme design and content, the training is ineffective as the participants do not get an opportunity to practice the newly acquired skills. Which is why we have a Learning Clinique, an innovative session designed to help and guide our management development programme trainees to practice the learning. We have two half-day sessions and both the sessions are based on the relationship between reflection and action.

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