

## **HUMAN RESOURCE IN PAKISTAN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES: PRACTICE AND REMEDIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

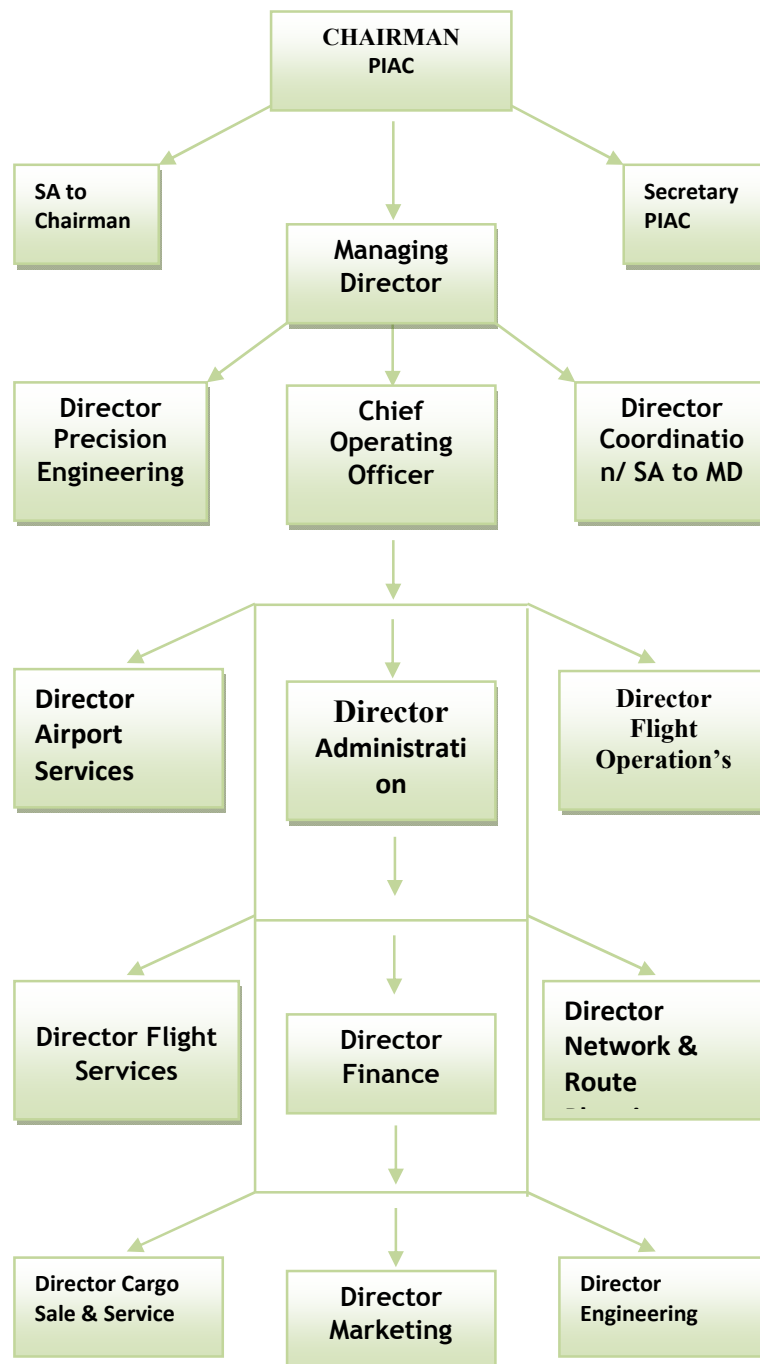
*This paper aims to analyze the human resource (HR) practices that are being implemented by the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). Also it gives an insight on how these policies are disrupting PIA's overall organizational setup and what remedies should be executed to put things back to order. The article also provides a general overview of what are some of the HR practices in general, that PIA could also adopt for a healthier and flourishing future.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Has anybody ever noticed why some employees are happy with the organization they are working with while others are unhappy? Why some employees crave to switch while others remain happily glued to their organizations? The reason is very simple. If employee is satisfied with the workplace and the policies, he/she is bound to stick with the organization, or else the employee will be very unhappy and forced to leave. Employers who know how to take good care of their employees, pamper and provide a balanced working environment helps them retain their employees, while on the other hand those companies that promises such things but do not use these strategies have unhappy employees.

Hence, the scope of this article revolves around the aforementioned phenomenon in Pakistan International Airlines. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is a national airline, operating passenger and cargo services covering eighty-two domestic and foreign destinations.

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE PIA**

As shown in the hierarchy above, the chairman is at the top of the organizational hierarchy and directors of each department report to him. The structure is centralized with the top-level management making the decisions solely (PIA, n.d). Also the fact that PIA is a publically owned organization enables it to enjoy relatively higher power and at times illegitimate powers than the other counterparts in the same industry.

### **HR PRACTICES OBSERVED AT PIA**

One of PIA's pivotal departments is the administration department which also looks after human resources of PIA. All the human resources' processes are facilitated via this department. Recruitment and selection, training, security of employees, pay roll, compensation etc comes under this department.

However, the recent flurry about PIA's much debated inefficiency, both at the consumer end as well as employee end, proves that there is a major loophole somewhere in this organization. On further scrutiny, found out that PIA has a very basic way of managing its employees and that too lack in every sense. Thus, the policies adopted by the HR department are quite tinted as compared to the western policies. One could figure out the poor human resource practices that are being carried out by this organization in their work, which is making its employees, suffer at a great deal, that leads into employee dissatisfaction and poor performance.

### **Organizational Culture**

Culture of any organization is indomitable by how strongly defined the vision and values are and how smoothly they are communicated amongst the people in that organization. Now since Pakistan International Airlines is a bureaucratic organization, the work environment is very much alike any other government body. On the contrary, air lines in the west have their distinct mode of working, as an independent body in line with the needs of the industry they are working in. Culture is also a determinant of what leadership style does the organization bear.

Consequently communication and group dynamics are also verified by how good the cultural set up is. The workers like the idea of a smooth work life that shoots their degree of motivation

very high. The final outcome inevitably results in greater performance, satisfaction, personal growth and development of an employee. All this is apparently not present when we talk about PIA as it has a very closely knitted work setup where sharing of knowledge is not acceptable. Also the culture is such that it can not really appreciate openness and diverseness of its employees. This really affects the overall work as this lacking becomes visible in their employees' work. Furthermore, the kind of culture PIA has doesn't seem to respect innovation as the upper level management is literally too bossy and too adamant to make changes according to their needs and requirement. However, what they should really be doing is that they should encourage employees' suggestions as well and see where to fit it according to their criteria and in line with the company's ultimate goals. This way the culture will be more open to new changes, innovation and help employees' morale boost rapidly (Markus & Kitayama, April 1991).

### **Effect of Decision Making on Employees**

At PIA decisions are made by the top level management only without involving their employees. The consent of lower level management is ignored completely. On the other hand, air lines in the west involve employees in the decision making process in the initial level, like by asking employees to participate in giving valuable feed back or suggestions. This way employee will be motivated and feel good as a result of which they will give really good ideas and be happy if their ideas will be accepted further. This however is not being practiced by PIA and whatever decisions they take they do not at all interact with their employees or take their suggestions which really affect them negatively. Such employees then feel like switching to other companies where their suggestions are heard and respected and decisions are made on that basis also (Allen, February 1996).

### **Entrustment of Tasks**

Due to PIA's centralized structure, establishment reserves the right to make decisions and only mundane tasks are delegated to the employees. On the contrary the western set up is mostly decentralized that believes in delegating power to its employees also. Decentralized structure helps in motivating employees

through involving them in the decision making process. Decisions affect employees eventually therefore the process should include employees consent as well to empower them. Tasks should be delegated smoothly to all employees and not just one particular employee who is the most favourite of boss or thing like that. PIA needs to understand that this will raise productivity in employees and this will eventually help the organization only in the long run (Hideshi, April 1994).

### **Performance Incentives**

Good performance should always be appreciated. At PIA employees' main source of dissatisfaction is the fact that they are not highly paid and secondly they don't get much appreciation either. This de motivates the employees who end up working for the sake of it, affecting both their jobs and company's bottom line. Even also at the recruitment level, skills, education and experience is supposed to be measured which PIA seem to ignore at a large part and induct people on the basis of reference mostly. Yet another bad HR practice which is not acceptable at all. PIA should really consider inducting employee compensation plans like give out bonuses and make available the promotions to employees who well deserve it not just the ones who do not (Shah, *et. al.*, February 1998).

### **Open Management**

Keeping employees in dark is like providing an outlet of escape to them. Nobody likes the idea as it kills enthusiasm and passion. The organizational structure of PIA is centralized; therefore delays occur in downward communication. This delay causes lots of perplexity as to what is happening at the upper level. In the multinational companies, communication plays an effective role where even at the occurrence of minute delays, the management keeps all employees informed and abreast of what is going on at the upper level (Tannenvaum & Yukl, February 1992). This manages to create response and passion within employees.

### **Job Rotation**

Employees at PIA are not rotated unless they asked to do so in comparison with other organizations here and also in the west.

They are prone to do their mundane, redundant work till the time they retire. Hardly anyone in PIA has shifted from the department they were recruited for to some other department. This is a very bad practice from the HR point of view. PIA should understand the psychological set up of employees as well and know that employees are human beings at the end of the day. And these are a few things that should be respected in human beings (Jaime, October 2011).

### **Unprofessional Individuals**

PIA employees are observed to be quite unprofessional. They have their own distinct aura which is rather unimpressive to people who interact with them in general. They do not follow any proper code of conduct as such which is partly due to the fact that the management is not stringent enough to authorize and penalize them on this front. This portrays a very negative image about the company. However, if we compare other organizations in the similar industry or even in the west, we would see a very professional working environment; in fact it is the very platform that shows how the company operates and what kind of a people it keeps. Grooming is known to be the biggest motivational factor for the consumers to get attracted to any particular company and also the one thing that measures how good the overall company looks like.

### **Check on Employees**

As mentioned in the above paragraph that PIA doesn't have any source of keeping a proper check on the people working for them, makes it a very ordinary company. And ordinary has no place in today's world. PIA has gone behind its competitors because of the poor management skills and it works more like a government office where people have a very non serious attitude and what really matters there the most is the end results and not the means.

What this organization tends to ignore is the fact that by doing so they are actually ignoring the fact that how their employees are working or what strategies they are adopting to reach their ultimate goals. There is no accountability, neither from employer's side nor employees. The employees are not scared

because they know whatever they will do, good or bad will not be notified as there is nobody to observe them or there is no check and balance. This show how non serious the organization is when it comes to being professional.

### **REMEDIES FOR OVERHAULING HR PRACTICES IN PIA**

PIA, in its long run somehow forgot to keep a stringent notice on the HR policies the management created when the prestigious organization came in to being, consequentially resulting in today's current fiasco.

Every company, small or big takes pride in their employees and devise strategies to retain them because they think of them as their most precious asset and greatest resource. Keeping them happy is the key to retain them. And the key to make employees happy are a few very simple, very smartly devised HR practices that even PIA could adopt to nullify its present bad impression. Some of the remedial steps that PIA could adopt for a better change are as follows:

#### **Employee Evaluation**

Every company has an employee evaluation system in line with their organizational objectives but a good system links individual performance to the goals and priorities of the organization as well.

For a fair review of each employee at PIA, the evaluation, apart from being done by the bosses, should be done by another person at a higher level, like the line manager, for whom the employee's contribution is important. This further guarantees a fair and accurate evaluation of each and every employee and even the employee feels that they have been treated fairly and in a just manner.

PIA has not been quite just while evaluating employee performance lately and the reason as to why employees have repelled from this organization and are de motivated at large. If it could really implement a reasonable and spontaneous and encouraging evaluation, it could really manage to retain its best employees.

**Training**

The fact that PIA has an affiliated Training Centre operating in Karachi, that conducts training courses to boost the skills of employees is a very good thing for them to focus on even further wide scopes like training the employees to enhance their attitudes, beliefs and emotions. PIA could outsource trainers for a change to inculcate awareness in employees about how much they want them to bring the passion again to work that they are calling trainers from outside and those trainers who are highly skilled and motivated and have the power to light the burning passion within their employees.

What PIA should now be doing is to literally make the employees feel special and give away the feeling of doing something intense for them to create a different in a good way environment for its workers.

**Sharing Information**

Another remedy that would help PIA in securing its employees is knowledge sharing. This way the upper level management should communicate with the lower level employees directly in spite of delays by appointing the intermediary. This will allow employees to feel engaged in the organization which also will further boost the employee buoyancy and make them feel good. Not only will make them feel good but will also enable them to do better job in future because they will know that they are being trusted and trust helps an individual go higher and higher.

Moreover, by keeping the information centralized will help PIA in disseminating the information regarding new policies and the like. For example a proper federal database like the company's intranet could facilitate the upper level management to communicate with everybody in the company. This way hard feelings and the feeling of keeping employees uninformed and in dark will disappear gradually.

**Recruitment Plan**

PIA need to heavily invest in this particular area the most, both in terms of time and money because the people they induct



are the people who run the organization in the future so they cannot afford to take any risks here.

Usually PIA installs employees on referential basis; reference from the chairman or some director ignoring completely the other person's credibility with respect to education, skills, accurate experience, traits etc. This instils disinterest in the particular employee causing a lot of work place distortion and confusion for the individual who starts looking for other better options which really is a big problem for the company as the employee leaves them in the midst without any notification. Even employees who are credible and skilful and interested them are somehow ignored in the recruitment process because the process is in shambles and need serious amendments (Wanous, 2002).

## **CONCLUSION**

To sum up this debate we can justify with accurate data that Pakistan International Airlines has been at the crossroads for quite some time now. It has not been making colossal profits neither satisfying its employees nor customers markedly. In contrast other air lines like Air blue, Shaheen Air line are doing much better considering that they are new in this market whereas PIA instead of accelerating has decelerated in the past few decades.

There are some factors that PIA need to understand if it has to thrive in the present market scenario. Firstly it has to take steps to motivate employees like increase remuneration; provide rewards and compensation in order to retain its employees. Furthermore, things like training and employee feedback could help furnish the employees monotonous attitudes and boost energy and zeal in them. Besides, PIA needs to maintain its brand name in the market by making its recruitment wing stringent enough to make people believe in its strength.

All in all, PIA has been the source of pride for Pakistan and it should continue improving its standard by revitalizing its HR practices in line with the modern western organizational setups and also try new strategies to retain its employees for meeting organizational goals and reaching the optimum bottom line. It is time that PIA quit the bad HR practices that they have been implementing all these years and really focus on strengthening this

department even more so to have its trickledown effect on the overall organization.

PIA should introduce new policies, for both the employee and the customers. It should bring innovation and keep on adding new thing in their organization to have that element of surprise hidden somewhere. It should really learn from its past experiences and also from other companies in the same industry and implement new changes in the organization for good. This will help employees to work in a spirited manner where they can actually grow with the company and work in line with the company's objectives. PIA is a name, an identity for the people of Pakistan and also for the land of Pakistan. In order to maintain and continue proving itself as Pakistan's identity, PIA has to bring about a certain changes in its organizational setup that would really help them to thrive or else it will no longer be able to serve the nation with pride.

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