

OVERCOMING PROFESSIONAL STAGNATION: A STUDY OF TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT AIRTEL

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ABSTRACT

Human resources is an inimitable resource for any organization. Right hiring, right motivation, right compensation and right training are indeed vital functions of any human resource management system. Despite things going rock steady and good, an employee is likely to face career and professional stagnation owing to varied factors like- poor workplace engagement practices, poorly designed work environment, office politics, office bullying and restricted career growth. It's detrimental to both the organization and the employee. The paper deals talent management practices at Airtel in its MP circle. The study deals with the identification of stagnant employees-those who are in the same role and same network for three years and more. 41 such employees (out of 645) were identified and suitable interventions were thus designed to overcome the 'career stagnation' faced by them. The research employs a descriptive research design and highlights the process of talent management for overcoming profession stagnation at Airtel.

Keywords: Talent Management, Employee Stagnation, Strategic HR, Telecom

INTRODUCTION

Talent management is the people dimension in management. It is a set of integrated organizational human resource processes designed to attract, develop, motivate, and retain productive and engage employees. The idea is to create a high performance, stable, and sustainable organization that meets its strategic and operational objectives. It is strategic in its intent as it aims at sourcing, attracting, selecting, training, developing, retaining, promoting, and moving employees through the organization. It's an HR activity that translates into economic benefits like revenue, productivity, quality, customer satisfaction, cost, cycle time and market capitalization. Besides, being emphatic on employee retention, it seeks to hire the most valuable and most qualified employees from an organizational viewpoint.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Identification of stagnant employees is a talent management

initiative to effectively mobilize the employees resulting in improved productivity and retention. This approach is not specific to a particular organization or sector, but is universally relevant to all companies considering employees as their valuable assets. As we know that Telecom sector continues to be at the epicenter for growth, innovation, and disruption and virtually for any industry, it is considered as the backbone of industrial and economic development. The industry has been aiding delivery of voice and data services at rapidly increasing speed, and thus, has been revolutionizing human communication. Apart from telecom being the fastest growing sector, it has also been the sector involving frequent changes due to rapid changes in technology and rising demands of customer expectations. Telecom sector being the fastest growing and changing sector has led to increasing competition by major players like Airtel, Vodafone, Idea, Reliance, etc. The companies are coming with most innovative products to attract more subscriber base giving more employment opportunities and

hence talent management practices came into picture.

The attrition rate is increasing due to decreasing level of satisfaction in employees and unsatisfactory work environments. This is majorly in case of employees having experience of 3 or more than 3 years. The causes of higher attrition rates also include poor workplace engagement, unsatisfactory work environment, office politics and restricted career growth. So, to curb these issues, HR department comes with talent management initiatives, in which identification of the stagnant employees is one such initiative. The concept of stagnation is not only related to a particular organization or sector but is relevant to all companies. Employees become stagnant due to personal or professional reasons and it is the responsibility of HR department of every organization to identify their stagnant pool.

Stagnation is defined as 'to become stale and stop growing or developing' which is unhealthy both for the employee and the employer. Employee stagnation can lead to complacency, reduced productivity and profit, playing over the odds for employee remuneration, detrimentally affecting the organization's competitive advantage. It is a human nature for employees to resist change and to stay in their jobs for security out of fears for the future. Organizations can no longer afford to carry underperformers or those who are resistant to change. All talent needs to be liberated for the benefit of the organization, staying in or exiting out.

A development roadmap is specific to each employee including the analysis of its career journey, mobility, achievements, future aspirations, learning needs, potential and performance ratings, and expectations from the company. It is a plan by HR team in calibration with their line managers that matches their short-term and long-term goals providing them insights to meet those goals. Development roadmap has major uses and impacts like creation of IDPs, launching of successful career stories, improving employee satisfaction, increased retention rate, talent brokerage, and effective utilization of talent beyond the KPI etc.

After identifying the stagnant pool, it is the responsibility of HR department to find out the reasons of stagnation and create Individual Development Plans for each identified employee and motivate them to grow by providing better opportunities through additional responsibilities, projects or Internal Job Postings.

STAGNANCY REPORT CONSISTS OF FOLLOWING THREE THINGS

Identification of the stagnant pool of employees;

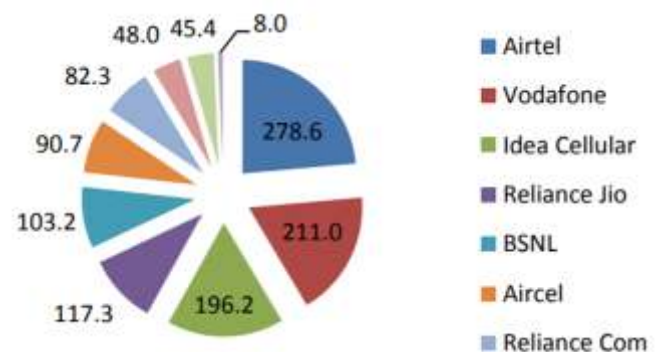
Target employees database consisting of complete information related to their career journey and future prospects; and Analysis of the stagnant pool.

TELECOM INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Telecom Industry was introduced in India in the year 1851, in Calcutta, with the start of landline services. It deals with the activities and services of electronic systems for transmitting messages through cables, telephone, radio or televisions. It is regulated by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), 1997 and is one of the fastest growing sectors having a major role in Indian economy.

India is currently the 2nd largest telecommunication market in the world with a subscriber base of 1.2 billion as on May 2017. It expects the revenue of US \$37 billion in 2017, with a CAGR of 5.2% 2017. As per the current market situation, Airtel is the leader in the telecom sector with maximum market share which stands 1st in the world's rank. The other players along with the market share are given below

Figure 1. Indian mobile operators market share as on May 2017



The Airtel people survey score for the FY 16-17 was very low. So, to improve productivity and retention, it was necessary for the company to carry out a research and find the number of stagnant employees.

Research Objectives

- To identify the stagnant employees of Airtel, Madhya Pradesh and create their career/ development roadmap;
- To plan the career of stagnant employees and work upon talent brokerage;
- To make required investments to help the target employees grow and move;
- To build a platform to effectively mobilize the stagnant pool;

- To improve productivity and retention; and
- Mapping priority- E and X Raters, 5 years and above with same role and different location, immediate roles available vis a vis career aspirations.

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This paper illustrates the process followed by a telecom company, Airtel, to identify its stagnant pool of employees of Madhya Pradesh and work upon their development roadmap. The scope of the paper includes a talent management initiative and understanding the business objectives of the circle and the organization with respect to identifying the stagnant employees, making development plans with respect to mapping their career roadmap, achievements, mobility and their aspirations. The paper intends to provide development opportunities to stagnant employees for career growth.

The target employees were those who have completed 3 or more years in the organization with same roles and location at work. Those employees are put in the upper TAT- who have completed 5 or more years and have E and X ratings. It comprises of a database consisting of target employees' career journeys along with their future aspirations and the detailed analysis based upon it.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research employs a descriptive research design. Airtel in MP circle has 645 employees. The sample drawn for the study includes employees with 3 plus years of experience with the network in the same role and the same location-41 respondents is the precise sample size. It is a purposive sample drawn with the purpose of drawing a map for 41 employees who have completed 3 plus years with the network at a given location and at a given role.

The study relies on Primary Data obtained directly from the pre-identified employees with the intervention of the HR department. Telephonic (structured calling process) as well as personal interviews were conducted to obtain information and identification of stagnant employees. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

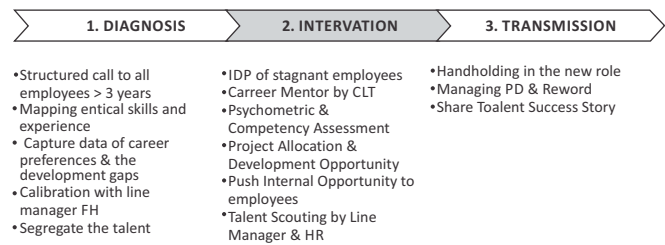
Definition of Stagnant Employees

The respondents chosen for the study were employees spread across seven zones of Madhya Pradesh i.e. – Indore, Chambal, Gwalior, Jabalpur, Sagar, Rewa, and Ujjain who

have an experience of 3 or more than 3 years with Airtel. Employees who have Age on network i.e. experience of 3 or more than 3 years without any role and location changes and also without any role enhancements are called stagnant. These were the target group employees for the purpose of study. Analysis of the stagnant employees is done on different bases like- location, function, band, compensation ratio, mobility, performance rating and potential rating.

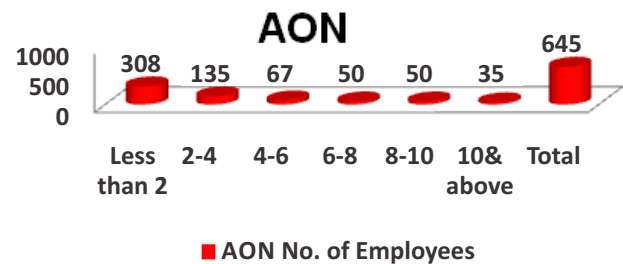
RESEARCH PROCESS

Figure 2: Process to Identify Stagnant employees at Airtel Madhya Pradesh



Data Analysis Madhya Pradesh Employee Data at Airtel

Figure 3: MP employee spread- Age on Network (AON)



MP circle has an employee spread of total 645 people and the above figure 3 shows the bifurcation of those 645 employees according to age on network i.e. the time duration they have completed in the company. As per the data collected from the HR department, it is evident that the maximum employees are those who have completed less than 2 years in the company and that group constitute a number of 308 members. The target employees are considered excluding the employees having less than 3 years of experience. So, the target employees to be considered are those employees who have completed 3 or more years and they are 274 in number (645- 308employees with less than 2 years &-63employees with more than 2 but less than 3 years of experience).

Table 1: MP Employee spread: - AON-Function Wise

Function Wise AON						
Functions	Less than 2 Years	2-4 Years	4-6 Years	6-8 Years	8-10 Years	10 & above Years
HR & Admin	2	2	2	0	2	2
Sales & Marketing	168	67	33	26	26	8
Finance	14	5	8	6	14	10
VBS	26	8	5	4	3	1
CS	84	44	10	4	3	13
Technology	9	8	9	9	2	1
Others	5	1	0	1	0	0
Total	308	135	67	50	50	35

The above table shows the function wise bifurcation along with bifurcation done on the basis of age on network of employees. The information gathered from the graph states that highest number of employees are working in the sales & marketing function with majority of people who have tenure of less than 2 years. The least number of employees are employed in the HR & Admin function with consistent average of two years in different tenures.

Table2: MP Employee Spread: - AON-Zone Wise

Zone Wise									
AON	Chambol	Jabalpur	Gwalior	Indore	Sagar	Rewa	Support Office	Ujjain	Total
Less than 2 Years	21	24	40	38	42	32	70	41	308
2-4 Years	9	11	8	36	14	19	23	15	135
4-6 Years	0	4	5	10	10	3	29	6	67
6-8 Years	5	1	1	8	3	2	26	4	50
8-10 Years	1	4	4	5	3	4	25	4	50
10 & above Years	2	0	0	2	3	2	24	2	35
Total	38	44	58	99	75	62	197	72	645

The above table show the zone wise bifurcation along with bifurcation done on the basis of age on network of employees. The zone wise information reveals that maximum number of employees work in the Support office with an experience of less than 2 years and there are 24 employees who have the highest age on network.

Chambol zone has least number of employees and most of the employee base carries the maximum are those who have less than 2 years of experience with the company. Jabalpur and Gwalior zones have no employees with 10 & above years of experience and only Support office zone has highest i.e. 24 employees with experience of 10 years & above.

Table 3: MP Employee Spread: - AON Gender Wise

Gender Wise AON			
No. of Employees	Male	Female	Total
Less than 2 Years	266	42	308
2-4 Years	111	24	135
4-6 Years	57	10	67
6-8 Years	45	5	50
8-10 Years	48	2	50
10 & above Years	30	5	35
Total	557	88	645

From the Table 3 it is evident that the company consists of maximum i.e. 557 male employees in MP region and only 88 female employees in the MP region. There are 266 male employees & 42 females with AON less than 2 years in MP region. The ratio of males to females with AON of 10 & above years is 6:1 employees in the region.

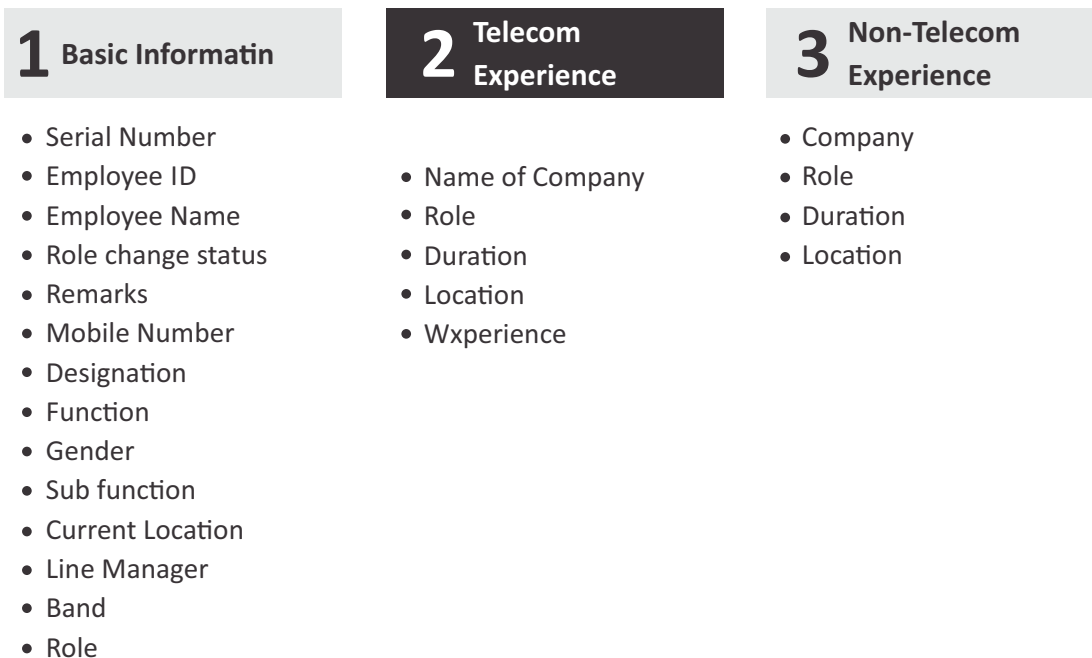
Identification of Stagnant Employees

The major thrust of the research was to identify the stagnant employees in the MP region and it was decided that people with 3 years and above age on network with same role and same location will be targeted for the purpose of study. Upper

Limit-5 years and above with same role and different location.

Once this set of 274 employees were identified we intended to map priority- E & X Raters, 5 years and above with same role and different location, immediate roles available vis a vis career aspirations. Authors also suggested to HR department for creating IDP's for probable/future aspirations. They have been advised to create monthly governance/progress tracker and flash successful career stories on role movements/lateral growth and creation of a platform for talent brokerage for the existing pool.

Figure 4: Sample of Structured Calling Questions



4. Airtel Experience

- Role
- Duration
- Zone
- AON
- Total Experience
- Mobility
- Role Enhancement
- Achievements
- Projects
- Promotion Date
- Aspiration
- Development Gap

5. Other Information

- Time to achieve aspiration
- Remarks

Identified Stagnant Pool

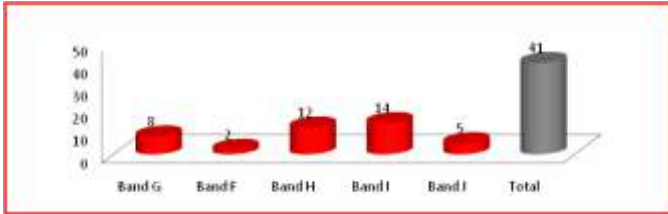
After completion of structured calling process and appropriate filtration with the help of HR department finally 41 employees were identified as stagnant pool which also includes Activation Officers.

Table5: Zone wise Stagnant Employees

Zone	No. of Stagnant Employees
Chambol	1
Jabalpur	3
Gwalior	2
Indore	5
Sagar	6
Support Office	23
Ujjain	1
Total	41

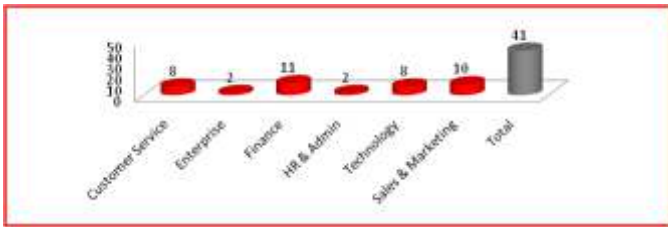
The above table shows that 23 employees working at support office are stagnant. Chambol and Ujjain zones each have only one stagnant employee, while Gwalior, Jabalpur, Indore, and Sagar have 2, 3, 5 & 6 employees and Rewa zone do not have any stagnant employee.

Figure 5: Band wise Stagnant Employees



The above figure shows that Band I & H have highest number of stagnant employees & least are in Band F. Employees having Band F are the ones who have more work experience, with top designations and they are highly paid by the company.

Figure 6: Function wise Stagnant Employees



Finance, Sales & Marketing functions have highest number of stagnant employees followed by Customer Service & technology and least number of employees in Enterprise and HR & Administration department.

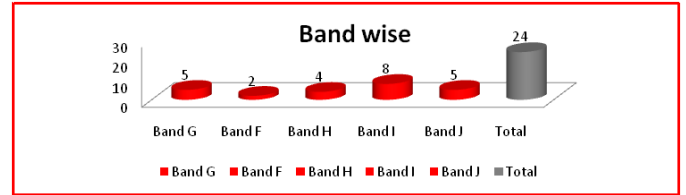
Type 1: Stagnant Employees with same Role & Location greater than 3 years AON

Table 6: Zone wise: Stagnant Employees with same Role & Location greater than 3 years AON

Zone	No. of Stagnant Employees with Same Role & Location greater than 3 Years AON
Chambol	1
Jabalpur	2
Gwalior	2
Indore	4
Sagar	4
Support Office	10
Ujjain	1
Total	24

There are total 24 stagnant employees who are having the same role & location greater than 3 years. From these 24 employees, maximum are from support office and only 1 employee each from Chambol and Ujjain zones.

Figure 7: Band wise: Stagnant Employees with same Role & Location greater than 3 years AON



The above figure shows that the employees with same role & location greater than 3 years are maximum from Band I and minimum from Band F.

Figure 8 : Function Wise: Stagnant Employees with same Role & Location greater than 3 years AON



The stagnant employees with same role & location greater than 3 years are highest from Sales & Marketing & minimum from Enterprise & HR & Admin.

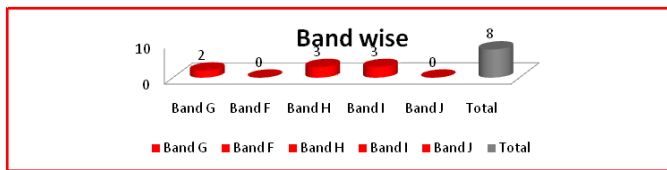
Type 2. Stagnant Employees with same Role & different Location greater than 3 years Age on Network

Table 7: Zone wise Stagnant Employees with same Role & different Location greater than 3 years AON

Zone	No. of Stagnant Employees with Same Role & Different Location greater than 3 years AON
Chambol	0
Jabalpur	1
Gwalior	0
Indore	1
Sagar	2
Support Office	4
Ujjain	0
Total	8

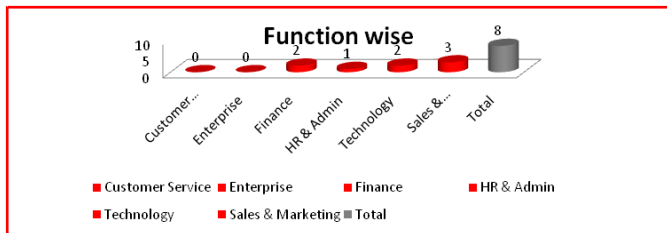
The stagnant employees having the same role for greater than 3 years but they changed their location are total 8 in numbers. These type of employees are maximum in support office followed by 2 in Sagar, 1 each in Chambol, & Indore. No such employee is found in Ujjain, Jabalpur, and Gwalior zones.

Figure 9: Band wise Stagnant Employees with same Role & different Location greater than 3 years AON



The employees with same role but different location greater than 3 years are 3 each from Band H & I, 2 from Band G & no such employee from Band F & J.

Figure 10 : Function wise Stagnant Employees with same Role & different Location greater than 3years AON



The employees with same role but different location greater than 3 years are maximum from sales & marketing functional area followed by 2 each in finance & technology, 1 in HR & Admin & no such employee in Customer service & enterprise.

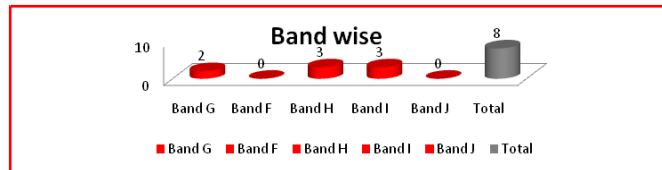
Type3: Stagnant employees with same Role & different Location greater than 5 years AON

Table 8: Zone wise: Stagnant employees with same Role & different Location greater than 5 years AON

Zone	No. of Stagnant Employees with Same role & different location greater than 5 years AON
Chambol	0
Jabalpur	1
Gwalior	0
Indore	1
Sagar	2
Support Office	4
Ujjain	0
Total	8

The employees having the same role from 5 or more years but have changed locations are total 8 in number with maximum employees at Support office, 2 employees in Indore.

Figure 11: Band wise: Stagnant employees with same Role & different Location greater than 5 years AON



The employees having the same role from 5 or more years but have changed locations are 3 each of Band H & I, 2 in Band G & no such employee of Band F & J.

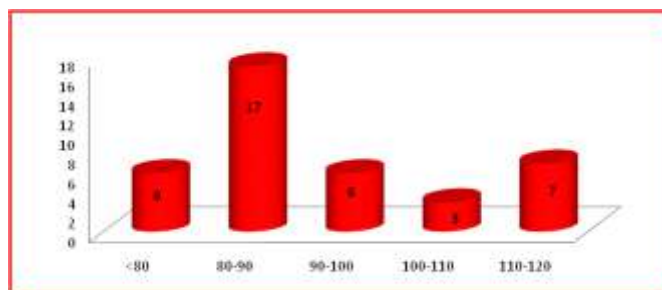
Figure 12: Function wise: Stagnant employees with same Role & different Location greater than 5 years AON



The employees having the same role from last 5 years or more but have changed locations are 3 from sales & marketing, 2 each from finance & technology, 1 from HR & admin & no such employee from customer service & enterprise.

Compensation Bracket & Stagnant Employees

Figure 13. Stagnant Employee Head Count in Compensation Ratio Brackets

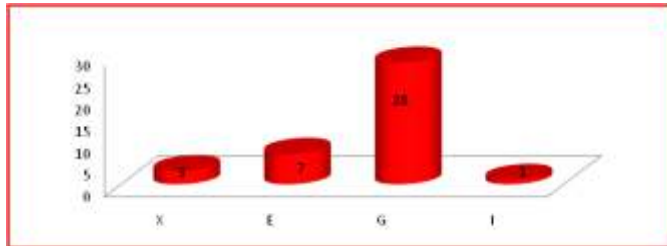


The above graph shows that maximum i.e. 17 employees are in 80-90 bracket of compensation ratio, 6 employees are in the bracket of less than 80, 6 in the bracket of 90-100, 3 in the bracket of 100-110 & 7 in the bracket of 110-120 which is the last bracket and these last bracket employee's compensation

cannot be increased further and the company either has to change their role, department or ask them to leave the company.

Performance Ratings of Selected Stagnant Employees

Figure 14: Performance Ratings of Stagnant Employees



The above performance rating figure 14 provides an information that best raters i.e. E & X raters are 7 employees with E rating & 3 employees with X rating. These 10 employees are on priority basis. The remaining 28 employees have G rating & only one employee has I rating.

Mobility of Stagnant Employees at Airtel – MP Circle

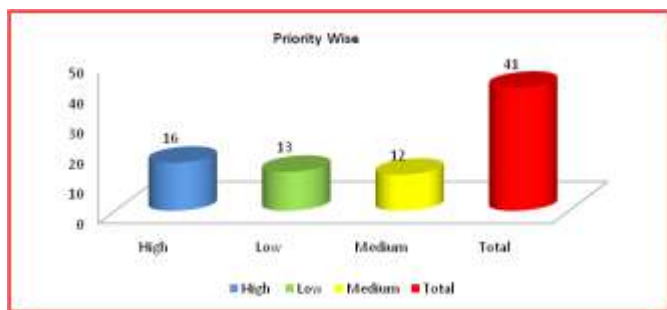
Figure 15: Mobility Preferences of Stagnant Employees



The above figure 15 shows that 31 employees have no mobility issue, 8 employees are not ready to change their locations and 2 employees have restriction to some places and they prefer to put forward their conditions in case of any mobility.

Employee Categorization based on Priority

Figure 16: Priority Categorization of Target Employees



The 41 target employees who were considered as stagnant employees were categorized as high, medium & low on the basis of priority. Priority categorization is mentioned below.

- High- E & X raters, 5 years & above with different

location

- Medium- 3 years and above with same role & same location
- Low- 3 years and above with same role & same location and Activation Officers

FINDINGS

- Employees look forward to HR policies and set their expectations and share them with HR team when given a chance;
- Employee engagement activities play a crucial role in motivating the employees and keep them aligned with the organization;
- The target employees were maximum from support office;
- Highest stagnant employees are from Band I;
- Finance function has maximum number of employees who are stagnant;
- There are 17 employees who are in 80-90 bracket of compensation ratio;
- Maximum employees have G rating;
- 31 employees out of 41 have no mobility issues; and
- 16 out of 41 employees were considered on high priority which we recommended to company to focus at the initial stage.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Every work takes time so the work culture of the company should be more structured. Learning and Development department currently has just two people but as per the work, the company must employ three more people. HR database contains employee information for current and past year but it should contain the employee information at least for the past five years. There should be online feedback forums or idea rooms. There should be peer rating procedure in the company which will inculcate positive and friendly environment in the organization.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was conducted on limited number of employees for practical reasons. The research had to be done on the target employees only as per the project requirement and permission granted by the Airtel MP circle.

CONCLUSION

In this era of modernization and competitiveness, employees

are resistant to change. Every employee wants to work in his/her comfort zone. They are scared of taking additional responsibilities or risks and don't want to prove themselves. Companies provide opportunities at every level but the work pressure and targets stop them for taking up new roles. It is a human tendency to resist change and thus employees become decayed.

But in today's competitive scenario, companies expect employees to have multiple skills and want them to deliver results with higher productivity. No organization want their employees to become stagnant. It is essential, vital, and desirable that stagnant employees are identified and were given opportunity to change their department, role or location and further develop themselves. They should be asked about their career preferences so that when the companies have place for the specified roles, the employee has opportunity to move. Some employees will always be resisting change and will hesitate in taking up new roles, in that case company should try to convince them and try to fulfill their career aspirations but if they don't want any change in future, they can be asked to leave the organization as change is a necessary step for every organization to grow.

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