People Management in an Indian IT Services Company During COVID-19:
A Case Analysis

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The case revolves around the reactionary measures taken by an Indian IT services company based in Pune in an attempt to stay afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic. The case, in particular, brings to light the effect of the employee-related managerial decisions on their well-being and work involvement amidst the unprecedented health crisis. The pronounced role of leadership, decision making, communication, conflict management, employee perceptions, and HR policies is well brought out in the narrative. Apart from the key takeaways, the readers are provoked to analyze the case and deliberate on novel ways to manage a business within India's unique socio-economic scenario. The in-depth account acquires significance in the light of rapid digital transformation due to the pandemic and its impact on business and management. It paves the way for empirical research on the newer constructs in the areas of organizational behavior and has implications for human resource policies in the VUCA environment.

INTRODUCTION

"Like Abraham Lincoln, I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts." – Douglas MacArthur

Shivraj Shekhar, the Chairman of IndoGlobal IT Remedies Pvt. Ltd. sat in his Pune home office. It was the 12th of June, 2020 and he was reflecting on the unprecedented damage caused by the pandemic. The issue on his mind was the reactionary measures taken, so far, by the company in response to Covid-19, their ramifications, and the future course of action. He regretted the short-sightedness of

the company leadership in handling the employees during the first wave of the pandemic, the serious mistakes committed in dealing with the emergency and the inability to devise flexible HR policies. Amidst the sensitive scenario, it was crucial to take decisions that could help business stay afloat. His mind was in a brainstorming mode trying to come up with ideas of how to manage the various resources in the company – both tangible and intangible. Instant decisions were the need of the hour. It was time to respond with agility to this volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situation.

Background Information

1. Healthcare IT Industry in India

A knowledge-based economy is characterised by the use of information technology in various business domains and health services is no exception. Hospitals in India either have an in-house IT department or have outsourced IT services such as computerization of medical records, networking of various departments in a hospital, and providing of tele-medicine services. This has resulted in a symbiotic relationship between different levels of health care. The primary and secondary level hospitals can have a direct access to the Super Speciality Hospitals resulting in collaboration. This new organisation model in a HealthTech company provides an atmosphere conducive to patient health resulting in a win-win situation.

With the changing ecosystem of the healthcare industry, its IT requirements are radically different from the past. The emergence of corporate hospitals on a larger scale is relatively a recent development which has led to greater professionalism. With privatisation, modern management models are being applied to most healthcare institutions, with a few exceptions. Today, resources and manpower are being strategically utilized; patient convenience and experience is in the forefront along with the use of analytics not only for reporting purposes but for all aspects of patient care and hospital functioning. The existence of different categories of hospitals throws light on the complex Indian hospital landscape. The primary and secondary hospitals are still working on the traditional health services model. Technology in health care is primarily associated with super speciality and multi speciality hospitals and also tertiary care hospitals which work on the dictum "Expert Care for Everything".

Health-tech market in India has seen a considerable expansion since the onset of the pandemic. Teleconsultations, digital wellness and health tracking, e-diagnostics, e-pharmacy etc. started witnessing a sharp rise with more and more people seeking remote healthcare solutions. The onset of Covid-19 resulted in an unprecedented need for IT solutions in all the four kinds of patient care viz. acute, chronic, preventive, and predictive; the focus on acute health being more salient (Sharma, 2023).

2. Challenges Specific to Healthcare IT Industry in India (Sharma, 2023):
    i. Inaccessible and insufficient quality care in the backward areas is a roadblock to the application of IT in hospitals. Healthcare can be facilitated through IT only in major Indian cites where specialist doctors are available.
    ii. Application of IT remains uneven because of incomplete, fragmented and contradictory information on patient care and medical procedures.
    iii. Handling complete, updated and accurate patient records through a database is not easy because of a resource crunch.