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## ***EDITORIAL DESK***

*The current issue of the Aurora's Journal of management has four articles, each of them is on a topical theme. The first article articulates the crucial role of the IT Department in non IT firms. It laments the neglect of the IT Departments and their sidelining vis-à-vis the line departments. The article suggests that the strategic IT Management could be the solution to end this neglect.*

*The second article highlights the potential of the imaginative HR practices in securing competitive advantages for companies. It highlights the HR practices that have helped companies outperform their business rivals.*

*The third article closely examines the turnaround of the SCCI Company which meets the bulk of the energy needs of the energy deficit Telegana State. The strategy adopted has been explained with the help of a welter of data from the official sources of the company. The last article is on the exciting theme of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This article takes a balanced view of the impending prospects and problems of the Fourth Industrial Revolution that is engulfing the world at a break neck speed.*

*Dr. Sreenivas Reddy G  
Consulting Editor*

## Guidelines for Authors

**Auroras Journal of Management (AJM)** invites original papers from scholars, academicians and practitioners pertaining to management, business, and organizational issues. AJM also welcomes articles dealing with the social, economic and political factors that influence the business and industry. Papers, based on theoretical or empirical research or experience, should illustrate the practical applicability and/ or policy implications of work described.

The Editorial Board offers the following guidelines which are to be followed while contributing papers for publication in AJM:

### Manuscript

The Author should send three copies of the final manuscript. The text should be double-spaced on A4 size paper with one-inch margins all around. The Author's name should not appear anywhere on the body of the manuscript to facilitate the blind review process. The Author may send a hardcopy of the manuscript to Aurora's Business School or e-mail the MS Word Document at [ajm@absi.edu.in](mailto:ajm@absi.edu.in). The manuscripts should be submitted in triplicate and should have been proof-read by the Author(s) before submission.

The paper should accompany on separate sheets (1) An executive summary of about 500 words along with five key words, and (2) A brief biographical sketch (60-80) words of the Author describing current designation and affiliation, specialization, number of books and articles in refereed journals, and membership on editorial boards and companies, etc. along with their contact information.

### AJM has the following features:

- Research Articles which present emerging issues and ideas that call for action or rethinking by managers, administrators and policy makers in organizations. Recommended length of the article is 7,500 words.
- Book Reviews which cover reviews of contemporary and classical books on Management and related subjects.
- Articles on social, economic and political issues which deal with the analysis and resolution of managerial and academic issues based on analytical, empirical or case research/ studies/ illustrations.

### Headings/Sub-Headings

The manuscript should not contain more than 4-5 headings. It is suggested that lengthy and verbose headings and sub-headings should be avoided.

### Acronyms, Quotes and Language

Acronyms should be expanded when used for the first time in the text. Subsequently, acronyms can be used and should be written in capitals only. Quotes taken from books, research papers and articles should be reproduced without any change. American English is recommended as compared to British English. Keeping the diversity of the readers in mind, it is suggested that technical terminologies should be explained in detail while complicated jargon may be avoided.

**Tables, Numbers and Percentages**

All tables, charts, and graphs should be given on separate sheets with titles. Wherever necessary, the source should be indicated at the bottom. Number and complexity of such exhibits should be as low as possible. All figures should be indicated in million and billion. All graphs should be in black and not in colour. The terms 'and' and 'percentage' should not be denoted by their symbols (& and %). Instead the complete words must be used.

**Notes and References**

The notes and references shall be presented at the end of the text, with notes preceding the list of references. Both, the notes and references should be numbered in their order of appearance in the text.

**Endnotes, italics,** and quotation marks should be kept to the minimum.

References should be complete in all respects:

(a) The reference for journals shall be given as :

Hannan M T and J Freeman (1977), "The Population Ecology of Organizations", American Journal of Sociology, Vol.82, No.5,pp.929-964

(b) The reference for books shall be given as :

Hooda R P (1998), Indian Securities Market, Excel Books, New Delhi.

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The Editorial Board will share the manuscript with two or more referees for their opinion regarding the suitability of the papers/articles for publication. The review process usually takes about 3 months. Aurora's Journal of Management reserves the right of making editorial amendments in the final draft of the manuscript to suit the journal's requirements and reserves the right to reject articles. Rejected articles will not be returned to the Author. Instead, only a formal communication of the decision will be conveyed.

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## IT Department: is it just a support line!

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### **Abstract**

*This paper attempts to shed light on key factors that hinder organizations from leveraging their IT departments' effectiveness in terms of added value sustenance. The thrust of the paper is on the IT departments in organizations that are not into Information Technology or IT Enabled Services industry. However, IT departments in organizations where IT is the main business vertical like Software Sales, Technology sales and Technology outsourcings are not covered in this paper.*

Key Words: Information Technology, Staff Function, Strategic Management, ITES

Information Technology (IT), as the term suggests, is the sum total of techniques that harvest useful information from small bits and bytes of data to over peta bytes of data. IT departments in organizations both supply and maintain relevant technology that can use small to extensive computing power to convert available data into useful information, reports and inputs for different operations. Modern businesses, ranging from non-profit organizations to huge publicly traded corporations, overwhelmingly rely upon their IT departments to drive innovation and promote business. In fact IT departments have become sole driving force for Fortune 100 companies around the world. However, some organizations are still struggling to give IT departments proper thrust to break the inertia and drive business growth rather than limiting them to just a support line function. In Organizations where IT departments were encapsulated as a supporting department, have either stagnated or have become just another support line function like customer services department.

We all can unarguably agree that the journey of IT departments in many companies started in a small way with a single or handful of desktops and then grew to be big departments with support staff, application development team, analysts, managers, IT strategists and IT heads. While most companies visualized the need for invigorating their IT arm to sustain in the ruthless market competition and strengthened their IT departments with required investments and resourcing, Some have failed to understand the IT departments' roles in the success of their business by overlooking the fact that an effective IT department can play much bigger role than just being a support line function to the organization.

### **Neglect of IT Department**

Majority of firms still view the IT department as a supplementary department for the organization. They view it as a channel to optimize their business processes rather than as a vital element to garner top line revenue. Treating IT department as supporting or staff function in an organization is not bad but, it also does not do anything great for the organization. When an IT department is treated as a staff agency and is separated both from the business operations and functional departments the huge potential of IT for innovation is left untapped. A resourceful IT department can fuel innovation only when it is in sync with day to day business by being a part of business planning and operations. This is because while there is all the technology available at our doorstep knowing what to choose and how to use becomes vital part of success.

This is why even in consumer innovation sometimes we see both immediate takers and late boomers for similar product. The technology is only as good as its user's ability to use it appropriately and exploit it. Many of those who work in IT operations and infrastructure line know this common practice where IT department members are treated as insignificant professionals in the organization, while the functional departments are considered pivotal. The members in these departments are treated as superheroes, while IT staff become the chorus.

### **Why this discriminatory approach?**

We can cull out a few reasons why organizations treat their IT departments just as a support or staff function: They are:

- They don't see its direct impact on the revenue
- They don't believe it can actually create new business opportunities
- They don't think available resources can be used more effectively
- They don't visualize that IT can reduce their operating costs drastically in the long term
- They don't believe in automated processes
- They don't want to enforce strict processes where in IT can be effectively deployed

Contrary to the above, the companies that have realized that IT is no longer just a support staff function have maximized the benefits of IT innovation by making IT departments and CIO's as key stakeholders in the business operations. In such companies IT staff are also hailed as superheroes.

In the era of social media, the hobby horse of Gen-y, we can see that more and more companies have changed their outlook towards their IT departments, from viewing them more as a support structure to stakeholders and are reaping huge benefits with IT innovations. It is high time now that those companies that have not made this transformational journey do so immediately before their competitors exploit IT innovations to gain additional market share and explore new opportunities.

### **IT Department as Business Enabler**

IT departments enable organizations to reap many benefits, such as:

- Automate most of the repetitive and clearly defined business processes that don't need human intervention. After automation, technology can perform repetitive business processes at faster pace and increase productivity. Human resource used for those processes can be reorganized and redeployed more productively elsewhere.
- Business processes can be easily tracked once they are automated there by limiting the scope for human errors.
- Multiple reports from various business processes will provide a greater analytical power to the decision makers to make more informed decisions or to take calculated risk. With analytical power comes the power to mitigate unknown risks and avoid known risks even while discovering potential new opportunities.
- Ability to set in triggers within business processes to proactively detect deviations and gaps causing delays in the work.
- Resource utilization can be monitored and optimized more effectively.
- Inventory management becomes easy and efficient.
- Financial management and tracking will be effective.
- Organization's data on all processes and Industry data can be stored and analyzed to forecast business opportunities and threats well ahead.
- Using effective technology will automatically increase overall productivity and cost reductions over time, as business processes replicated by computing power or software are far cheaper than a dedicated resource for years together.
- Additionally as data from automated processes can be stored, and reused at any required point, unlike in the case of human resource where all the experience lies within an individual and complete portability is not possible.

### **Why Companies don't see the Benefits?**

All said and done when there are so many benefits and quintessentially undeniable necessity to strengthen IT department of an Organization, then why do many if not all companies fail to make the transformation by strengthening their IT departments? Some key hurdles faced by such companies probably are:

#### **Difficulty of Automating Business Processes**

When a company is not able to define each and every activity in their business processes it is difficult to automate those business processes using technology. Without automating business processes companies cannot take higher advantage as the major advantage of any technology is ability to duplicate and scale business processes accurately at a faster pace. The challenge for the organizations is being able to define each business process with required inputs, outputs and the entire process of converting the inputs into output. If they are able to define clearly the business processes there might be still a challenge if an organization has less number of repetitive business processes that can be automated. This is where an organization may have to undergo a reality check and evaluate if there is scope for innovation using technology if not in the regular course of business. For example, if a company decides to have a business process of storing all paper documents into electronic format for future retrieval and sorting, this business process can be automated in different ways based on the need. It can use an auto feeder scanner or a single page scanner and achieve productivity. While single page scanner serves the requirement an auto feeder scanner brings in more productivity. Similarly the organization can go a step further and use technology that not only scans the document but sorts and stores them automatically using software without any human intervention. This way human resource requirements could be eliminated from this business process. While this is a small example, what it can explain is when your business process can be defined you will be able to use the right technology to increase productivity.

#### **Recurring Capital Investment**

IT investments for an organization are often in the form of recurring costs ranging from software licenses to hardware upgrades depending on the usable life of the product. While this is true for any major capital investment like machinery, for the IT investments the challenge is that a business cannot view immediate impact on the core business functionality if the technology is not upgraded immediately. When the immediate impact cannot be foreseen it is likely that an organization misses the opportunity to invest in required technology of the day. It continues to use obsolete technology which later leads to lower productivity and potential business losses. A simple example of this could be an organization still using a PC with older Operating System that is no longer supported by Microsoft leaving the whole organizations'

network vulnerable to virus attacks and data theft leading to business losses. The reason for such an incident in Organizations could be just that organizations didn't think a new OS would bring any more improvement to their day to day business even while that may be true, they might have ignored potential cyber-attacks due to discontinued support from Microsoft. In view of this when an organization needs to upgrade software licenses / hardware equipment its management has to study the effects carefully and make the right decision. Often in organizations where IT departments are not playing major role it is likely to miss or take notice of major threats/opportunities due to ignorance or lack of competent people at the decision making level.

### **Prioritising Functional Departments vis- a-vis IT Department**

Many a times organizations have to make a choice between investing in IT or marketing as both generally take up huge investments, which is when organizations see one side and conclude that "Marketing" is more important as that sells their products/service and thus increases the organization's revenue. However, organization may be forgetting an important fact that these days any marketing campaign cannot produce great results without Company Website created and sustained by the IT Department. Further, CRM, Smartphones, Laptops, Customized MIS reports and exploiting Social media, are all part of an IT of any organization. Other major operations and functions like HR, Finance, Product development, R&D of every organization too depend heavily on IT deployments yet certain organizations fail to recognize IT departments as major stakeholders in their business.

### **Ignorance is not bliss**

The age old saying "Ignorance is bliss" might be true in certain scenarios. It is definitely not true in the case of IT. Organizations ignoring critical IT upgrades and investments can never be blissful. It comes back to bite the organization heavily when a competitor gains competitive advantage and acquires our part of market share. In terms of technology adoption if you miss the bandwagon it will become very hard to recoup. Companies like Blockbuster, Dell, Eastman Kodak and Sony, among others, have lost market share due to delayed adoption of modern technology trends. On the other hand the companies that have adopted modern technology trends and succeeded in gaining competitive advantage include Apple, Google, Amazon, Netflix, Procter & Gamble and IBM.

### **Appropriate IT Staffing**

IT departments in certain organizations deal with a serious problem, which is they are either less staffed or lack appropriate competence within the team. Most of the time even though the hardware and software upgrades are deployed it is very rarely that the staff also under-

goes similar skills upgrade. Most of the time the skill upgrade is through self-learning and practice, while it is undeniably great experience for the programmer, timelines and productivity may suffer.

This is the precise reason why IT and ITES industry constantly facilitate their staff go through compulsory skill upgrades and technology workshops. Self-learning has its' advantages but it fails in giving the benefits of structured learning that can avoid common pitfalls, which can only be experienced and learnt through with practice as in the case of self-learning. While loyal IT staff is a quite essential, grooming them with proper trainings and skills is also important to gain competence.

### **User Acceptance**

It is an undeniable fact that the technology is as good as a user who can use it. Latest mobile phones might have capacity to use multiple apps but if a user chooses not to use any of the apps the smart phone productivity is equal to a dull phone. Similarly, while IT departments can be invigorated, users of the organizations also have to be trained sufficiently to keep the task of pace and adopt quickly to the tools provided. While it may seem very easy, technological adoption organization wide is quite difficult. Fear of user rejection makes many organizations take a back step in implementation of available technology and in choosing to get the work done with the outdated technology that the user is comfortable with. This is where a small team of IT savvy and fast learning staff could help an organization bridge the gap and prepare the users for the change through workshops and one-on-one trainings, to make every user adopt latest technology. This might be an expensive task for an organization but will be fruitful in the long run.

### **Conclusion**

These hurdles are quite common to any organizations that tries to make the leap through their IT departments. Infact there can be more hurdles of the kind listed. Similarly one solution doesn't fit all the organizations in handling these hurdles. A strategy team with the help of in-house IT department should first evaluate the gap within the organization followed by analysis of the gaps along with required solution to eliminate gaps and make the jump. Only an in-house IT team would be aware of current gaps and challenges as compared to an external consultant. While external consultant can help you draw solutions after initial diagnosis the actual solution and action plan should be drawn in conjunction with Strategy team and in-house IT department. The need of the hour is adopting the concept and practices of Strategic IT Management. Strategic IT management implies involvement of IT professionals of the organization in the goal and strategy setting work.

# HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AS SOURCES OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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## **Abstract**

*Gaining and retaining competitive advantage is crucial to a company's success. Although different companies may peruse many different paths to this end; one that is frequently not recognized is capitalizing on superior human resource management practices. Now a days, many companies do recognize the growing importance of their human resources, but only a few are capitalizing on them in strategic terms to gain a competitive advantage. As a result, many companies forego the opportunity to seize competitive advantage through HR initiatives. There are a few companies that do not forego the opportunity. They systematically develop such advantages via a "target/thrust matrix." This matrix has significant implications for both corporate strategy and the management of human resources. This article highlights some of the superior HR practices that have helped companies gain and retain competitive advantage.*

**Keywords:** Competitive advantage, corporate strategy and HR practice

## **Introduction**

Competitive advantage is a concept that is closely related to the concept of strategic initiative which is defined as a company's ability to capture control of strategic behavior in industries in which it competes. To the extent a company can gain this initiative, competitors are compelled to respond and thus play a reactive rather than a proactive role. Consequently, if it can gain a strategic advantage, a company can control its own destiny, and stay in control longer. Although the financial benefits of gaining competitive advantage are many, gaining this advantage requires an understanding and anticipation of response barriers, intelligence systems, preemption potentials, infrastructure requirements, calculated sacrifices, general management challenges, and host of others. This article discusses how companies can strategically utilize these infrastructure requirements to gain competitive advantage, particularly through their HR practices.

## **How to gain competitive advantage through HR practices?**

How companies gain competitive advantage through their HRM practices could be understood from a discussion of strategic targets and strategic thrusts (Boxal, 2003). After discussing these two for a company we show how specific HRM practices can be used by a company to gain a competitive advantage.

### **Strategic Targets**

There are four strategic targets of a company's practices that can be used for competitive advantage. These four targets are:

1. Self or the focal company
2. Customers
3. Distributors
4. Suppliers.

Companies can reach backward or forward to help shape the HRM practices of other companies. For instance, companies like Pepsico trained its store managers (in other words Pepsico's distributors) in merchandizing techniques to help increase store sales. Unifi helped its customers with their performance appraisal systems, making their customers more competitive so that they are enabled to buy Unifi products. Mercedes has trained mechanics (their servicers) in the service garages throughout the United States to offer 24-hours servicing anywhere in the United States. Honda Motors and Nissan Motors offer extensive training programmes to their suppliers of spare parts in order to enhance their product quality. McDonald's offers extensive training to their franchise owners (i.e. their distributors/servicers)

### **Strategic Thrusts**

Strategic thrusts are the ways to beat the competition, with the help of human resources management practices. There are two kinds of strategic thrusts. The first one is the cost efficiency thrust. Under this thrust company's have to increase production efficiency to and thereby lower the cost of the product or service. The second thrust option is a differentiation thrust. The differentiation thrust uses HRM practices in ways to differentiate the product or the company from its competitors. Although this may not necessarily make them more efficient, but will make it different from its competitors.

### **Key HR practices for Competitive Advantage**

By effectively managing its human resources a company can both attract and retain qualified employees who are motivated to perform. Employee's motivation in turn leads to greater profitability, lower employee turnover, higher product quality, lower production costs, and more willing acceptance and implementation of corporate strategy. These results can lead to a number of competitive advantages through human resource management practices. For example compensation tied to performance is a powerful spur to manage hustle. Excellent organizations make effective use of their human resources. Another bonus for a company's ability to attract and retain key people is its capacity to implement other critical corporate strategies and even ensure its profitability. We now list out and discuss a few important HR practices that give competitive edge to a company.

- **Human resources planning for competitive advantage:** Companies are being increasingly forced to link HR planning with strategic business planning. Another aspect of planning that companies are addressing is the baby boom bulge (people aged 25-54) that is moving through the workforce. This is leading to a rapid expansion of potential managers with a narrowing base of managerial jobs. Added to this situation is the desire of many of those in this age category to be promoted and be successful. Meanwhile these changes are occurring in an environment that is becoming more turbulent and more demanding of change by the organization. Companies such as AT & T, Bank American Corporation, Sun Company, and Eastman Kodak are trying to gain this flexibility currently by offering attractive early retirement packages to select groups of employees. Assuming that if the current demographic, economic, and technological trends will continue in future, it can be reasonably assumed that the companies that most systematically plan with their human resources in mind will most likely gain a competitive advantage viz. having "the right people at the right place at the right time" to produce quality products and services.
- **Staffing for competitive advantage:** Several companies use staffing practices to gain competitive advantage. Sometimes, they supplement their staffing practices with consistent training practices. For example, in hiring consultants we can look for a generalist who has high propensity to learn other areas in the productivity domain. We can promote cross-training and multi-disciplinary approach to consulting engagements. The competitive advantage here is that most members of the consulting staff can "sell" any of the other specialties apart from being reasonably effective in the delivery of those specific services. Consulting firms that are more specialized and do not seem to have this broad perspective of hiring generalists and promoting integration among consultants miss on this competitive advantage. This practice of careful selection to ensure a better fit between company and employee is also a critical HRM practices. Abundant care in selecting and bringing right people on to the board of governors leads naturally to several other innovative staffing practices.
- **Socialization:** Socialization represents the process used to expose new employees to a particular company's culture and ways of doing things. When done successfully, it results in intensely loyal employees who are dedicated to the company's goals and objectives. Effective socialization leads to heightened employee morale, lowering of attrition and greater team cohesion.
- **Competitive advantage via training and development:** Delco-Remy trained its employees in participative management, and succeeded in differentiating itself from all competitors. The success of this training and resultant competitive advantage that Honda of America gained was reaching a situation of zero returns of batteries and zero complaints on quality or delivery. McDonald's uses training to ensure competitive advantage through cost/efficiency to its distributors and dealers.

- **Appraising as a competitive advantage:** Performance appraisal is one of the most important tools in the management arsenal. If done imaginatively, appraisal system can complement the emergent strategic planning emphasis in all areas of the company's working. Appraisal views help executives in clarifying and articulating objectives and expectations for themselves and their employees. Further, it gives a realistic assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, and future requirements of a company's workforce. Firms can better utilize their HR's with the help of scientifically done appraisals. One critical aspect of appraising is correcting poor performance. The Emery Air Freight provides a good example of this. This company was losing dollars annually because of the employees on the airport loading docks shipping small packages separately rather than placing those with the same destination in one container that would be carried at lower rates by air carriers. Management also found that the containers were being used by 45 percent of the time when they should have been used 90 percent of the time. By establishing a program of positive consequences and feedback, nearly one million dollar annual loss was eliminated. Stories of similar changes from poor performance to good performance and larger dollar savings resulting from absenteeism reduction programs and employee assistance programs have been reported by many a company. Further performance appraisal should be followed by performance management for higher productivity.
- **Competitive advantage through compensation:** Lincoln Electric uses compensation practices to gain a cost/efficiency competitive advantage. TRW and Hewlett-Packard use compensation to drive their search for innovative products and services. At Hewlett-Packard, entrepreneurial behavior is stimulated in project leaders by tying up rewards to their success. Yet another company that has used compensation to gain a competitive advantage is Nucor Corporation. It has simultaneously utilized four different group level incentive plans to increase its sales more than 6,000 percent and profits 1,500 percent in a matter for ten years.
- **Competitive advantage through knowledge transfer:** A significant component of the knowledge that organizations acquire, especially tacit knowledge, is embedded in individual members. For example knowledge which can be embedded in the various networks formed by combining members, tools and tasks. The member-task networks are the division of labor specifies member which performs tasks in the organization. These knowledge reservoirs augment the emerging role of knowledge as a basis for the competitive advantage of organizations.
- **Competing through industrial relations:** Success of many companies vis-à-vis their competitors could be traced to their labor costs. Many companies today face possible bankruptcy due to high or uncontrolled labor costs. Helping to lower costs are wage reductions mutually agreed upon by unions and management. American Airlines, Greyhound,

McDonnell Douglas, and Ingersoll-Rand have negotiated two-tiered wage systems to help reduce total costs by reducing labor costs. Without these jointly negotiated systems, these companies would not have survived. Thus industrial relations in a general and a company's relationship with its union in particular can be critical to its survival, and the better its relationships are, the more likely it is to ever gain a competitive advantage over its competitors. Thus we can say that harmonious industrial relations are an important source of the competitive edge.

- **Employee engagement for competitive advantage:** Google and Virgin are two of the good examples of extraordinary employee engagement enabling real benefits of changing world where new challenges continuously require new thinking and actions. The way management treats associates is exactly how the associates might treat the customers. Hence, employee engagement is a key business driver for organizational success. High levels of engagement in domestic and global firms promote retention of talent, foster customer loyalty and improve organizational performance and stakeholder value. However, employee engagement is a complex entity that is influenced by many factors- such as organizational culture, organizational communication and managerial styles, trust in and respect for leadership and company reputation. For the current generation of employees, access to training and career opportunities, work-life balance and empowerment to make decision are all too important. To foster a culture of engagement, HR should take a lead in designing measuring and evaluating proactive workplace practices that help attract and retain talent necessary for growth and sustainability of the firm.
- **Top Management Team (TMT) Social Network :** High-technology firms are an important and interesting context in which to study the effects of human resources practices and employee-based resources because such firms play an increasingly important economic role and exist in ambiguity and hyper competition. These turbulent conditions of ambiguity and hyper competition place a premium on both the speed and quality of top management team's decision making and firm action. A key factor in a TMT's ability to achieve both speed and quality is the use of real-time information. The social networks of top managers, defined as the systems of relationships top managers have with employees and other actors outside of their organization, are a chief source of timely and relevant information on the state of both the external and internal environment of the organization. Thus, the distinct information capabilities created though different TMT networks - both external and internal provide a competitive advantage for high-tech firms.
- **Strategic alliance as competitive advantage:** In the context of emerging strategic alliances that bestow competitive advantage, the strategic intent of achieving dominance makes the long-term win/win outcomes highly unlikely. The competitive advantage of a

firm engaged in such an alliance can be sustained only through its capability to accumulate invisible assets by a carefully planned and executed process of organizational learning. The process of learning is embedded in people. Simultaneously capability to accumulate invisible assets is closely linked to HRM strategies and practice. The transformation of the HR system to support continuous organizational learning is one of the key strategic tasks facing the HR function in firms engaged in international cooperative ventures.

### **Myriad Barriers to Competitive Response**

It is not that all companies can easily achieve competitive advantage through HR practices listed above. There are many barriers that stunt a company's progress towards competitive advantage. There are at least four inertia barriers that need to be encountered. The first of these is the needs-matching challenge. It relates to ensuring the right person in the right place which in turn requires a company to engage in extensive analyses of jobs, needs, products and people of the company, present and future. Multiple approaches exist for analyzing jobs. Yet none seems to be convincingly superior to the others since all have their own unique strengths and weakness. Hence proper choice among contending approaches is crucial.

The second barriers are the impediments against attaining consistency. For example, on account of imperative need to cut costs companies have been rationalizing their structures. A consequence of this has been the need to downsize the workforce. One popular way of attaining this is by offering early retirement benefits. Some companies found this practice to be completely inconsistent with their "retirement rehearsal" and tapering off" programs that aimed at easing the retirement process for its employees. The "golden handshake" retirement benefits have caused many employees to suddenly accelerate taking retirement. Not only does this result in inconsistency between their retirement practices, but often times companies lose their best and brightest employees who know that they can take the retirement incentive payment and easily get another job elsewhere, perhaps even with a competitor.

Lack of commitment is the third major barrier to be overcome. Any significant change in human resource practice consumes vast amounts of time and energy: As was mentioned earlier, merely attaining consistency requires a great deal of analysis, even under the best of circumstances, and even more is required to meet the needs matching challenge. If this is combined with any past failures to change human resource practices, it becomes difficult to get organizational commitment to any more changes, starting at the top of the firm and working down. Yet it is at the top that commitment must begin for bestowing enough time and energy for change management.

Critical time horizon is regarded here as a fourth inertia barrier. One estimation is that it may take as much as seven years for managers to install, adjust to, and reap the benefits of key changes in human resource management practices such as weeding out unproductive employees; and installing the new generation of employees. It may take the employees equally as long to accept the changes. This is because effective relationships between employees and companies rest on former's trust about the congruity of the goals of the individuals and companies. But developing trust often requires overcoming years of bad experience as many employees' do believe that companies exploit people. This believes may be unfounded but will cause much damage till it is dispelled.

### **Conclusions**

Good human resources practices are major sources of competitive advantage for companies. There are many ways in which companies can gain competitive advantage. One way often overlooked is thorough their human resource management practices. There are significant benefits from having HRM considerations represented in the strategy formulation stage rather than only in the implementation stage. However, once the strategy is formulated and the appropriate HRM thrusts are identified and specific HRM practices need to be developed. Practices such as staffing and compensation, are the ones that actually create the competitive advantage for the company. In addition, selection of the most appropriate practices leads to behaviors that are supportive of the strategy. For example, if cooperative behaviors are needed among employees, then group or organizational level compensation incentives should be provided rather than an individual-level incentive system. If product quality is critical, quality circles and union-management cooperation should be developed.

Once the strategy is formulated, determination of the needed behaviors comes from job analysis. The HRM practices that stimulated those behaviors must be identified. They must be fostered among employees so as to ensure consistency across HRM practices. Hard-won consistency will help ensure competitive advantage. However there are many barriers to be crossed to achieve competitive advantage.

In addition to using their HRM practices on themselves, companies can also gain a competitive advantage through using their HRM practices for customers, dealers and distributors. The firm is stronger and healthier only when its suppliers, distributors and customers are robust and competitive. While companies will certainly be better off when they gain a competitive advantage, few do it and even fewer do it through their human resource practices.

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## TURN AROUND- A CASE STUDY OF THE SINGARENI COLLIERIES COMPANY LIMITED

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### **Abstract**

*This article discusses the turn around of the singareni collieries company limited (SCCL) from a situation of deep losses to one of profitability. It profiles the strategy followed and the specific steps taken for the turn around of the company*

**Key Words:** Turn around, recognized union strike, trade union, industrial relations.

### **SCCL: A Brief History**

During the second half of 18th Century, pilgrims who were on way to Bhadrachalam had their night stay in a village near Yellandu and started cooking their night meals on fire by keeping some big stones as supports .After having meals they slept off for the night. They noticed to their surprise that till next day morning the supporting stones caught fire and were burning. They brought the incident to the notice of the then British government. Then the British government ordered for a study It was in that process in the year 1871, Dr. William King, the British Geologist discovered coal near the village of Yellandu in Khammam District. The Singareni Collieries got its name since coal was discovered in Singareni Village first. As a mark of respect to the British Geologist who discovered coal in Singareni- the SCCL one of the underground coal seam bears the name as "King Seam" .The Singareni Collieries is the only company in South India mining coal in the Godavari Valley coal fields, in the State of Telangana. The Hyderabad (Deccan) Company Limited incorporated in England acquired mining rights in 1886 to extract the coal at Singareni and the first commercial operation commenced at Yellandu in Andhra Pradesh in 1889.In 1889 the coal production started and it was named as Hyderabad Deccan Company incorporated in England and its shares were listed in London Stock Exchange. Thus it became the first company to list the shares outside of India.

In the year 1920 on December 23rd ,the company was re-christened as The Singareni Collieries Company Limited. In 1945 the company was taken over by the Nizam of Hyderabad making Singareni -the first government managed coal company in India. Now the Govt.of TS is having 51% stake and the Govt. of India the remaining 49% stake in the Company. By the year 1990 - 1991 the SCCL employed 1,16,918 people, recording the highest ever number of employees on its roll.

Like any other company, SCCL also has faced many ups and downs over the century and was at one time on the verge of being referred to BIFR .With the efforts put in by the then Government of AP, the management of SCCL on the one hand and that of the elected trade unions and the dedicated workmanship of the employees on the other made the Singareni a role model in the entire coal industry in India today. Singareni is contributing 10% of national coal production and is having about 6% of national reserves of coal.

**Table 1 : Time Series Data on Performance of SCCL (1997 and 2001)**

Sl.No	Description	Figures as on 31.03.1997	Figures as on 31.03.2001
01	Manpower	1,13,823	1,05,627
02	No.of Mines	71 (UG Mines 60+ OCPs-11)	67 (UG Mines 56+OCPs-11)
03	Production per annum	28.73 MT of Coal	30.274 MT of Coal
04	OMS(Overall Production per manshift)	0.98	1.22
05	Turnover	Rs.1796 Crores	Rs.2827 Cr
06	Profit / Loss per year	Rs.(-)244.76 Cr in 1996-1997	Rs.85 Cr
07	Accumulated Profit / Loss	Loss: Rs.(-)1219 Crores.	Rs.(-) 566 Cr

The following were the operating constraints for the smooth running of the organization :

01. The entire coal field is spread over the 4 Northern Telangana districts of Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal and Khammam which are Naxal infested Districts - have poor or inadequate infrastructure facilities such as roads, railways, housing and township facilities as well as poor water, power, medical and health facilities.
02. On the organizational front SCCL faced the following difficult geo-mining conditions as compared to Coal India Limited such as:
  - a) Steep gradient
  - b) Presence of clay bands and hard coal
  - c) Poor grade of the coal available in the top and upper seams
  - d) Bad roofs and faults due to which mining activity either slowed down or had to be discontinued in particular underground areas.
  - e) Low amenability of the SCCL for the opencast mining as the stripping ratio is very high when compared to the Coal India Limited, and
  - f) Rigid policies of the government on environmental clearances

**Table2:Economics of the technologywise production for the year 2001**

Technology	Production%	Manpower %	Investment %	Average Production cost(Rs/Ton)
Opencast	54	8	53	542
Underground H/section	38	68	19	1436
Underground Machine mining	8	5	19	882
Dept.Staff	-	19	9	-
Overall	100	100	100	905

**Industrial Relations Scenario at the SCCL(1984-1985 to 1997-1998) :**

Prior to 1999, there were no elections for trade unions in the SCCL.As on date also excepting SCCL in no other coal company in the entire country are the verification elections to trade unions through secret ballot held.

There were more than 77 registered trade unions in the Singareni Collieries . There are no details of actual patronage of workers of a particular union. The only principle for the existence of such unions was the "might is right" principle. All the unions vied with each other for supremacy. Thereof leading to inter-union rivalries marring industrial peace.

The multiplicity of the unions, which lead to inter-union rivalry paved way for the wild cat strikes and the illegal stoppage of work. At one stage it was so disappointing that in an year there were more than 475 strikes in the company. Due to this the management was all the time engaged in resolving the IR related issues due which attention to production got reduced.

During the period of 1996-2002 many strikes had occurred over various issues .The causes for these strikes could be categorized as in the following table.

**Table 3 : Distribution of strikes along with reason at SCCL**

Reason for Strike	Percentage of Strikes o on that issue(%)
Unsatisfactory working conditions	44.3%
Wage related issues	29.0%
Protest against disciplinary action	10.16%
Sympathy for accidental deaths	10.66%
Employment of dependents	00.33%
Bandh call given by various organisations	02.83%
Other reasons	04.0%

The company had highest ever number of human assests during the year 1990-1991 with a tally of 116918 of employees.

### Financial Front

On the Finance front the revision of coal prices disallowed during the years 1995 - 1996 and 1996 - 1997 . The impact of the escalation in input costs that could not be recovered through price increase went up to Rs.264 Cr.(i.e.20%) in 1995-1996 and Rs.409 Cr. (i.e 29%) during the year 1996-1997 respectively. The National Coal Wage Agreement (NCWA -V) awarded a wage increase for the employees to the tune of @76 Cr.per annum aggravated the impact of strikes on the profit /loss is as follows.

**Table 4 : Impact of strikes in financial terms of SCCL**

Year	Profit/loss Due to Strikes Rs.	Profit/loss for reasons other than Strikes Rs.
1995-1996	-191 crores	-75 crores
1996-1997	-247 crores	-209 crores

One more reason for the poor performance of work was on account of low productivity of manpower due to the following reasons.

- a) Non-adherence to scheduled shift timings
- b) Abnormal delays during shift changes
- c) Frequent wild cat strikes
- d) Indiscipline and indifference among the workmen
- e) Surplus manpower deployment

The following factors have contributed to the poor utilization of the equipment and its consequent reflection on the financial performance of the company.

- a) Low availability
- b) Delay in manning vehicles
- c) One-man-one -equipment concept
- d) Poor maintenance standards with costly and delayed repairs.

Besides the above certain external factors too have contributed to the poor financial position of the company :

- a) Extremist activities in the coal belt area
- b) Non remunerative selling price.
- c) Multiplicity of Unions
- d) High demand for coal and the consequential neglect of quality.

**Table 5 : Details of strikes during the turbulence period**

Sl.No.	Year	No.of Strikes	Mandays lost	Production lost (Tonnes)
01.	1984-85	406	18,28,028	16,86,580
02.	1985-86	128	2,07,662	1,92,149
03.	1986-87	217	5,68,038	5,70,984
04	1987-88	354	21,47,571	23,83,167
05	1988-89	378	7,63,209	9,44,383
06	1989-90	435	32,23,544	24,55,490
07	1990-91	445	34,19,209	27,84,166
08*	<b>1991-92</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>14,22,159</b>	<b>13,53,120</b>
09	1992-93	430	8,88,878	8,41,242
10	1993-94	214	4,17,508	4,11,141
11	1994-95	268	5,52,123	5,27,310
12	1995-96	191	36,79,892	33,02,740
13	1996-97	310	10,04,021	9,64,759

Highest number of Strikes recorded in the history of SCCL. (Source :IR wing SCCL:Corp)

The Industrial Relations Policy approved by the Board of Directors of SCCL in August, 1991, made a provision for verification of strength of different unions functioning in the Company with a view to decide the bargaining agent at Corporate level and Area level. The salient features of the Industrial Relations policy are as follows:

1. Verification of the strength of the unions functioning in the Company will be done through secret ballot once in two years by the appropriate authority.
2. Only one union will be recognised at Company level.
3. There will be one Representative union in each Area.
4. The recognition or representative status accorded will be valid for two.
5. The Union recognised at the Company level may represent and discuss any issue on behalf of the workers either at Company level or Area level.
6. The Representative Union for an Area can represent the issues pertaining exclusively to that area.
7. Any indulgence in or any encouragement of violence, intimidatory tactics, illegal strikes or violation of Code of Discipline shall render the recognised/representative Unions liable to forfeit the status of 'recognition'.

There was a prolonged strike commenced by 5 JBCCI Unions and SAAJAC from 25.05.1998 throughout the mines. In the course of discussions with the unions collectively and individually, the inter union rivalry came to fore to the extent of some unions boycotting the meeting taken by the then Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. on the plea that the 5 JBCCI Unions would not sit for discussions along with Singareni All Associations Joint Action Committee ( SAAJAC a conglomeration of 13 Craft Associations ). As it was becoming increasingly difficult to conduct negotiations systematically and in a professional manner, a firm decision was taken by the company management in consultation with Government to arrange for the verification of the membership of the Unions through secret ballot, so as to identify the majority union, which will be a sole bargaining agent in the discussions with Management.

It was against this backdrop that the Central Labour Department nominated the Regional Labour Commissioner(Central), Hyderabad as Returning Officer to conduct secret ballot on 09.09.1998. Although 77 unions were functioning in SCCL, only 13 unions contested the elections as craft unions were ineligible to contest as they did not represent the cross-section of workmen of SCCL.

As the tenure of two years of the Recognised Union expired on 06.03.2003, the Ministry of Labour, GOI and the Central Labour Department were requested to fix the tenure for four years from the next election. Ministry of Labour GOI has decided that the grant of the period of recognition now onwards would be for four and appointed the Regional Labour Commissioner(Central), Hyderabad as Returning Officer during the last week of March, 2003. Notification for conducting verification of membership of the registered trade unions operating in SCCL through secret ballot was issued by the R.O & RLC(C), HYD on 07.04.2003 and the date of election was fixed as 14.05.2003.

**Table 6: Results of elections from 1998 to 2012**

Sl.No	Date of Election	Periodicity/ Tenure	Name of the Union that got Recognition	% of Votes polled
01	09.09.1998	02 years	<i>Singareni Collieries Workers Union- S C W U (AITUC)</i>	33.24%
02	19.02.2001	02 years	<i>Singareni Collieries Workers Union- S C W U (AITUC)</i>	20.79%
03	14.05.2003	02 years	<i>Singareni Collieries Mines Labour Union- SCMLU (INTUC)</i>	39.59%
04	09.08.2007	04 years	<i>Singareni Collieries Workers Union- S C W U (AITUC)</i>	42.83%
05	28.06.2012	04 years	<i>Telangana Boggu Gani Karmika Sangham - TBGKS</i>	38.69%

(Source :IR&PM Wing ,SCCL:)

**The Recovery Path:**

As against the above scenario of strikes, low productivity and poor financial performance a recovery path was charted out to achieve a turn around of SCCL.

The path comprised of the following specific measures:

- 1 Communication- Transparency in management
- 2 Multi-Departmental Teams
- 3 Centralised decisions & uniformity in operation.
- 4 Manpower utilisation & Productivity improvements
- 5 Rationalisation of manpower
- 6 Trade Union Elections - Recognition Plan
- 7 Motivation & Incentives
- 8 Financial Re-structuring
- 9 Cost cutting exercises
- 10 Technological innovations
- 11 Customer satisfaction - FSAs and quantity improvements.
- 12 Intensive use of IT
- 13 Safety & Environmental protection Measures

**Establishment of Communication Cells**

Effectiveness of Communication was through improved selling of letters to all the employees from the Chairman and Managing Director in Telugu explaining the facts about company's performance and the requirements for bringing the company to profits, the efforts to be put in by the employees etc. The communication cells were given the following specific responsibilities.

- Sending of Individual letters to workers from C&MD & GMs
- Use of TV - Cable network - Q&A sessions & news features on company / township activities
- Arranging Proactive press meets / releases to create public awareness
- Release of Mine level posters to educate workers on important issues / occasions
- Introduction of 'Dial your GM' programme in all areas on TV.
- Organising "Padayatras" by senior officers to workmen colonies for quick redressal of their problems
- Constitution of Resident Welfare Committees to supervise and monitor various "Special Welfare Amenities".
- Visit of pressmen to coalfields - visit of workmen/Union leaders to other coalfields.
- Periodical meetings with unions
- Organizing sports events and publication of in house magazine for dissemination of information

### **Constitution of Multi-Departmental Teams (MDTs)**

Constitution of Multi-Departmental Teams comprising of the senior officers drawn from Mining/Personnel/Engineering/Industrial Engineering / Finance / Medical departments was done. That duty was visiting the mines and enlightening the workmen about the company's performance in general and the mine concerned mine in particular. The MDTs discussed the following issues

- Production, productivity & profitability of the company.
- Safety & health of workmens
- Past, Present & future of SCCL
- Energy conservation measures
- Optimal Utilization of UG / OC equipment
- Review of Personal savings /finances / chit fund Cos.

### **Centralized Decisions and Uniformity in Operations**

With regard to certain policies and decisions centralized decisional guidelines were issued from the Corporate Office only to be implemented in all the Areas of the SCCL. These related to the following aspects :

- Ban on transfers from underground to surface
- Transfers and promotions only against vacancy
- Regulation of dependent employment
- Restrictions in playday & overtime rules
- Regulating closure/opening of lamp-room
- Wild cat strikes declared illegal - penal wage cut to all
- Implementation of work norms for clerical staff
- Attendance & punctuality - wage cut for > 1 hr

### **Manpower utilization & Productivity Improvement**

Manpower related operations such as Rationalisation of manpower, medical and Health measures were improved, medical camps were organised in workmen colonies and nearby coalfield villages etc., on AIDS/TB/Viral Fevers/Gynaec camps/diarrhea camps. A few other important measures of this kind were

- Stoppage of employment to land oustees ( 900 in court cases )
- Dismissal of chronic absentees after due enquiry
- Implementation of VRS (Golden Handshake) Scheme about 20 times during Jan 2000 to May'09 and 23974 employees opted for VRS GHS.
- Employment of dependents of medically unfit and VRS recipients only against vacancies & not otherwise.

- Growing activity based designations - eg. Supportmen instead of timbermen, steel support men etc. to employees so that designations truly reflect the nature of performed by an employee.
- Rationalisation of stores and workshops

### **Motivation & Incentive Measures**

Motivational and incentives were improved further based upon the performance to increase the productivity and morale of employees.

- Incentive schemes reviewed & revised
- Basis changed from category of employee to technology and skills used
- Productivity parameters were given weightage eg - coal tub fill factor, dumper fill factor etc
- Best worker awards were given on national days
- Incentive schemes devised for mine development activities viz., drivage of tunnels, shaft sinking etc.
- Presentation of Utility Articles was stopped
- Attendance linked reward scheme was scrapped

### **Trade Union Election verification plan**

For the first time in the history of the coal industry verification elections to the trade unions operating in The Singareni Collieries Company Limited were organized under the auspices of the RLC© ,Hyderabad on 09.09.1998,subsequently on 19.02.2001 for a two year term and for a four year term on 13.05.2003. Fourth time elections were conducted on 09.08.2007 & Fifth time elections were conducted on 28.06.2012 and sixth such elections were heard in June/July 2016. With this the industrial relations problems were greatly solved and smooth functioning of the mines started with the pro-active co-operation of the Recognized and Representative Unions . The issues if any are settled bilaterally across the tables and the strikes rate gone down markedly.

After the introduction of verifications elections to trade unions and recognition to the above unions based on the mandate by the workers, the situation took a 'U' turn and a turnaround from Strike culture to Work Culture has taken place as could be seen from the table below

**Table 7 : Industrial Relations from 1998-99 onwards to 2015-16 :- Most Satisfactory, Orderly and Mutually Beneficial period.**

<b>i. No.</b>	<b>Y e a r</b>	<b>No. of Strikes</b>	<b>Mandays Lost</b>	<b>Production Lost (Tonnes)</b>	<b>Strike Free Months Actual</b>	<b>Nos</b>
01	1998-99	124	18,84,48	15,79,194	--	Nil
02	1999-00	98	13,18,55	15,80,840	--	Nil
03	2000-01*	47	2,95,277	3,56,762	Aug 2000	1
04	2001-02	54	13,33,051	12,54,813	March 2000	1
05	2002-03	35	16,30,798	6,47,426	May, Dec & Apr 2003	3
06	2003-04	15	1,02,942	1,21,647	Aug, Nov 2003 & Mar 2004	3
07	2004-05	13	91,818	57,499	Apr, Sept, Oct, Dec 2004 & Jan 2005	5
08	2005-06	11	2,40,403	1,10,189	May, July, Aug, Dec 2005 & Jan 2006	5
09	2006-07	03	5,587	9,872	May, June, July, Sept, Oct, Dec to Mar 2006	9
10 @	2007-08	NIL	NIL	NIL	Apr 2007 to March 2008**	12
11	2008-09	02	23,065	19,072	Apr to Jul 2008 and Sept to Oct 2008	6
12	2009-10	02	1430	4,893	Aug 2009 to Sept, & Nov to March 2010	7
13	2010-11	02	168760	4,22,984	Apr to Aug 2010, Oct 2010 to Jan 2011 & March 2011	9
14	2011-12	04	1628931	40,11,353	Apr to May 2011, Aug 2011 to Jan 2012	8
15	2012-13	02	93418	1,28,519	Apr 2012 to Jul 2012 & Sept 2012 to Feb 2013	10
16	2013-14	01	37,504	79,752	April 13 to Nov 13, Jan 14 to March 14	11
17 @	2014-15	NIL	NIL	NIL	April 14- March 15	12
18	2015-16	01	43,177	79,614	April 15 to Aug 15, Oct 15 to Feb 16	10

(Source : IR&PM wing SCCL:Corpn)

A close look at the statistical profile of industrial relations scenario at SCCL from 1998-99 to 2015-16 reveals that from a situations of year long occurrence of strikes as in 1998-99 to 1999-2000 these has been a marked improvement of having totally strike free years. First time after 1982, SCCL has witnessed a Strike Free Month

@The year 2007-2008 & 2014-2015 remained strike-free years which is a unique record in the history of SCCL

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### **Financial Restructuring Package**

The financial restructuring package introduced comprised of

- Infusion of equity of Rs 268 Crs in addition to Rs 298 Crs already committed for IX plan.
- Ten year interest free moratorium on Rs 663 Crs of interest overdue on VIII plan loans.
- Rescheduling of IX plan GOI loans of Rs 157 Crs by 2 years (Balance outstanding GOI loans repaid in 2001-02)
- Waiver of penal , interest on interest (Rs 66 Crs).
- Production , productivity , manpower downsizing targets.
- No more budgetary support after 2000-01.

### **Cost-Cutting Exercises:**

The company introduced a host of cost cutting measures to improve the financial position. They include

- Offloading of overburden removal resulting in a saving of Rs.2900 Crores.
- Power - theft & consumption control through HV pole mounted small capacity transformers (7% savings pa in power costs in colonies in all areas)
- Phasing out of company vehicles - cars/buses / jeeps/ lorries
- Staggered deliveries of stores supplies - inventory costs cut; reduced from 8.64 to 1.7 (stock in months consumption)
- Cut in playday & overtime norms fixed
- Suppliers depots in areas ( JIT ) - BEML
- Hiring equipment on production-linked payment basis
- Rate contracts for spares & fast moving items (300 Cr pa)
- Swapping high interest loans with low cost alternatives
- Technological Innovations

In addition to IR climate improvements and cost cutting measures the company has made several technological innovations to improve productivity as mentioned below.

- Increased Mechanization in U/G Mines (SDLs & LHDs)
- Metalon tub pedestals
- Spacer assisted inverted blasting in UG mines
- Supply cum Service contracts for tyres
- Explosives - Slurry mixed instead of NG type
- R&D orders on Midhani for alloy based usage for roof supports, shearer plates etc.
- Online Load Monitoring of LW powered supports
- Micro-processor Based Control for UG Haulage System
- Polycarbonate goggles/lenses for operators.

#### **Customer Satisfaction & Quality Improvement:**

- Several measures of customer satisfaction and quality improvement were introduced at SCCL as a part of the turnaround strategy. The most important improvements are as follows.
- Selective mining and separation of clay bands.
- Linear Programming for despatches of coal to optimise revenues being examined.
- Electronic weighbridges /samplers at all CSPs.
- Entering into Coal Supply Agts sequents with all customers worth provision for penalties , bonuses, commitments.
- Visits to customers by workers for first hand information of quality of supplies.
- Customer meets.

#### **Intensive Use of Information Technology**

In turn with the changing technological climate the company has harnessed use of information technology for improving performance and productivity through the following measures.

- Integrated Mine Management Systems successfully implemented in one UG and one OC mine for the first time in Indian Coal Mines
- Biometric based attendance recording systems has been introduced on a pilot basis.
- Operator Independent Truck Dispatch System has been introduced in one OC mine
- Online Material Management System is introduced in 3 Stores
- Introduced ERP / SAP which is first in coal industry in India (Materials mgmt, Finance, HR-Payroll, S&D and quality modules)

## The Results

All these measures for improvement has cumulatively resulted in a stunning turnaround by the year 2002-2003 as exemplified by the following :

- The SCCL earned Profits continuously from 1998-99
- A paradigm shift took place in attitude of employees from "Strike Culture to Work Culture" as seen from table and Strike Months to twice Strike Free Years have been attained in SCCL.
- Accumulated losses to the tune of Rs.1219 Crores have been wiped out completely during the financial year 2002-03.
- The Company entered a Net Profit Regime after 27 long Years in 2003-04
- The Company declared dividend of Rs 86.70 Crores after a gap of 37 Years in 2003-04 and continuing the dividend payment thereafter

**Table 8 : Broad picture of turnaround at SCCL**

<b>Details</b>	<b>As on 31.03.1997</b>	<b>As on 31.03.2011</b>
<b>Manpower</b>	<b>1,13,823</b>	<b>67,615</b>
<b>No.of Mines</b>	<b>71 (UG-60 + OC-11)</b>	<b>50 (UG-36 + OC-14)</b>
<b>Production per annum</b>	<b>28.73 MT</b>	<b>51.33 MT 2010-11</b>
<b>O.M.S</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>2.90</b>
<b>Turnover</b>	<b>Rs.1796 Crores</b>	<b>Rs.7,800 Cr. for 2009-10</b>
<b>Profit / loss - Year</b>	<b>Rs -244.76 Crs in 1996-97</b>	<b>Rs. 268 Cr. 2009-10</b>
<b>Accumulated Profits&amp;Reserves</b>	<b>Rs. - 1219 Crores</b>	
<b>Production Target for the year 2011-12</b>	<b>52.20 MT</b>	

Factors that helped the turnaround

The turnaround of the SCCL was made possible due to several factors. It is not possible to account for the relative weightage of each of these factors. However they all have either individually or in some combination to the improvement of the company. The factors that have contributed are :

- Political will & improved law and order situation at the SCCL.
- Decline in the swang of extremist organisations on workmen
- State Governments support for implementation of much needed measures
- Realisation among the workmen the need to save the Company that has given them livelihood made possible by Sensitising workmen on futility of work stoppages and educating to see the season and not to be carried.
- workmen to see the reason and not to be carried by emotions/sentiments and hearsays,
- Credibility of Management policies on coupled with adopting written IR Policy its uniform implementation across the SCCL. As a part of this were involved system driven procedures to take care of all employee related issues
- Regulating employment of dependents by offering jobs to dependents only vacancies arise and not otherwise. Further giving appointments, promotions and transfers only against the vacancies identified & not otherwise.
- Sensitising Trade Unions on their obligations towards the company by holding periodical structured meetings with the Recognised Union and Representative status unions as part of IR Policy.
- Motivating workers to adopt good work culture through different means including the chairman to managing director writing letters to each & every workman.
- Management being transparent, objective and responsive in dealing with the workers' issues. The management has adopted the BCCI guidelines for resolving issues related to wages, allowances, service continuous etc
- Enforcing discipline among all employees without any let up to punish wrong doers
- Multi-departmental teams interacting with the workmen at work place
- Activating communication strategy by forming communication cells in all the Areas.
- Officers going on Padayatras in colonies of workmen
- Cutting edge level officers spending more time at the work place than before.
- Implementation of work norms evolved through scientific studies.
- Enforcing all the legal rights accrued to management under statute to maintain discipline, work standards etc

With all these, strategies and measures in place employee satisfaction went up markedly thereby reducing the strikes and improvement in industrial relations scenario in SCCL as shown below in table 8.

**Table 9: Improvement in Industrial Relations at SCCL ( 1998-99 to 2006-07 )**

Year	No.Of Strikes	Mandays Lost (Lakhs)	Production Lost
1998-1999	124	18.84	15.79
1999-2000	098	13.18	15.80
2000-2001	047	02.95	03.56
2001-2002	054	13.33	12.54
2002-2003	035	16.30	06.47
2003-2004	015	01.02	01.21
2004-2005	014	00.91	0.57
2005-2006	011	02.04	01.10
2006-2007	NIL	NIL	NIL

From the above table it could be understood that the more number of working days were created for the workmen thereby the production as well as wages to the workmen increased and the company's overall performance as well as the profits increased which could be seen from the table below:

**Table 10 : Production achieved & profits earned by SCCL from 1999-00 to 2014-15**

Sl. No.	Year	Prodn. achieved in MTs	Profits earned Rs. (Cr.)	%age of profits given as special performance incentives	Amount Rs. (Cr.)	Date of payment of spl incentives
01	1999-00	29.556	300.00	10%	30.00	17/18.06.2000
02	2000-01	30.27	85.00	10%	8.50	07/08.07.2001
03	2001-02	30.81	290.00	10%	29.00	07/08/09.07.2002
04	2002-03	33.23	417.00	11%	45.87	02/03/04.09.2003
05	2003-04	33.85	164.43	12%	19.73	24.07.2004
06	2004-05	35.30	361.25	12%	43.35	15/16.09.2005
07	2005-06	36.13	184.63	12%	22.15	22.09.2006
08	2006-07	37.71	63.80	15%	9.57	7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> Oct.2007
09	2007-08	40.60	176.17	16%	28.19	09.09.2008
10	2008-09	44.44	132.83	16%	21.25	26.11.2009
11	2009-10	50.42	268.00	16%	42.88	14.10.2010
12	2010-11	51.33	351.37	16%	56.21	20.08.2011
13	2011-12	52.21	358.27	17%	60.90	22.10.2012
14	2012-13	53.19	401.00	18%	72.18	11.10.2013
15	2013-14	50.40	418.74	20%	83.74	16.10.2014
16	2014-15	52.50	490.44	21%	102.99	30.09.2015
				TOTAL	676.51	

(Source:IR Wing SCCL Corporate)

From the above it could be seen that an amount of Rs.676.51 Cr., have been distributed to all eligible employees during the last 16 years.

With a view to motivate the employees and workers of SCCL to increase the production and productivity and profitability of the Company by putting in all out efforts, the Govt. of A.P. had decided for the first time in the Month of April, 2000 to pay 10% of the net profits for the year 1999-2000 as Special Incentive. As decided by the then Government of AP every financial year certain percentage of amount is being distributed to all the employees below board level on the profits earned by the company since,1999- 2000 onwards -the first of its kind in the Coal Industry and other PSEs which is termed as the Special Performance Incentive to have a feel of Owning of the Company among employees and to say that it is their own company.

Realising that the human resources are a major asset of the Company, the Management of SCCL has given utmost importance to the welfare of its employees. As on 31.03.2014, about 49,842 employees have been provided with quarters resulting housing satisfaction going upto about 84.75%. All the workers' colonies have been provided with well laid roads, lighting and water supply. All the Areas of the Company have been provided with Hospitals/dispensaries to cater to the needs of the employees and their families. Even though education is a state subject, the Management of SCCL has established a good number of schools in different Areas of the Company for the benefit of the employees' children. Employees and their families have been provided with recreational facilities through construction of various recreational clubs in all areas and big Stadiums. Programmes such as Meekosam - Mee Aarogyam Kosam, Special YOGA Camps, Special Medical Camps for Ladies and employees wives for Breast Cancer Check Ups and Gyneac diseases etc.,

## **Conclusion**

With all the efforts as above coupled with many other reforms such as Financial, Technical and HR interventions put in by the Company, the employee -employer relationship in SCCL continues to be harmonious and cordial and SCCL which was declared as potentially sick company in the year 1992 and referred to BIFR has substantially improved its performance, production and productivity, work culture and thereby taken a turnaround. The accumulated losses which were standing to the tune of Rs.1219 Crores as on 31.03.1997 were wiped out by December 2003 and SCCL has entered into Net Profits Regime and has been earning profits successively for the last 10 years. It has emerged as a role model employer in maintaining harmonious industrial relations as Singareni Family within the legal frame work of the State besides taking care of safety and welfare of the employees and their families. The consistent comprehensive written Industrial Relations policy followed by the Management in dealing with unrecognised unions, after holding elections has led to disappearance of many of the craft unions and small unions.

The other unrecognised unions have also realised that Management is following the Industrial Relations Policy and Code of Discipline strictly without any deviation and hence they have no role to play in representing major issues in the Company, which rightly comes under the purview of recognised union.

Holding periodical meetings with the Recognised Union and Representative status unions of the Areas are yielding good results in redressing the genuine problems of the workmen and maintaining harmonious industrial relations blended with transparent management policies. If the present Industrial Relations Policy is followed scrupulously, it will lead to further improvement in the Industrial Relations Scenario in SCCL in the years to come.

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# WHITHER FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ?

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## **Abstract**

*Are the technologies that surround us today are tools that we can identify, grasp and consciously use to improve our lives? Or are they powerful objects and enablers that influence our perception of the world, change our behaviour and affect what it means to be human? Technologies are emerging and affecting our lives in ways that indicate we are at the beginning of a Fourth Industrial Revolution, a new era that builds and extends the impact of digitization in new and unanticipated ways. It is therefore worthwhile taking some time to consider exactly what kind of shifts we are experiencing and how we might, collectively and individually, ensure that it creates benefits for the many, rather than the few .This article brings out the import and consequences of the fourth Industrial Revolution that is engulfing the world today.*

**Key Words:** Industrial Regulation, Fourth Industrial Revolution genome editing, Technology.

## **What and when of other industrial revolutions?**

The First Industrial Revolution is widely taken to be the shift from mankind's reliance on animals, human effort and biomass as primary sources of energy to the use of fossil fuels and the mechanical power this enabled. The Second Industrial Revolution occurred between the end of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century, and brought major breakthroughs in the form of electricity distribution, both wireless and wired communication, the synthesis of ammonia and new forms of power generation. The Third Industrial Revolution began in the 1950s with the development of digital systems, communication and rapid advances in computing power, which have enabled new ways of generating, processing and sharing information.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution can be described as the advent of "cyber-physical systems" involving entirely new capabilities for people and machines. While these capabilities are dependent on the technologies and infrastructure of the Third Industrial Revolution, the Fourth Industrial Revolution represents entirely new ways in which technology becomes embedded within societies and even our human bodies. Examples include genome editing,

new forms of machine intelligence, breakthrough materials and approaches to governance that rely on cryptographic methods such as the block-chain.

Although the Fourth Industrial Revolution is already there it is not very evenly distributed. Indeed, in many parts of the world including India aspects of the Second and Third Industrial Revolutions have yet to be experienced. This scenario is complicated by the fact that new technologies are in some cases able to "leapfrog" older ones. Today more people in the world have access to a mobile phone than basic sanitation. In the same way, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is beginning to emerge at the same time that the third, digital revolution is spreading and maturing across countries and organizations.

The complexity of the underlying technologies and their emergent nature makes many aspects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution feel unfamiliar and, to many, threatening. We should therefore remember that all industrial revolutions are ultimately driven by the individual and collective choices of people. Here it is not just the choices of the researchers, inventors and designers developing the underlying technologies that matter, but even more importantly those of investors, consumers, regulators and citizens who adopt and employ these technologies in their day to day life and work.

This Revolution may look like a powerful exogenous force but in reality, it is a reflection of our own desires and choices- conscious or unconscious. At the heart of discussions around emerging technologies there is a critical and central question: what do we expect these technologies to deliver for us?

### **What is the potential impact?**

Historically speaking every period of upheaval has had winners and losers. And the technologies and systems involved in this latest revolution mean that individuals and groups could win or lose a lot. As Schwab would say: "There has never been a time of greater promise, or one of greater potential peril". Being still at the beginning of this revolution it is impossible to know its precise impact on different groups of people. At least there are three big areas of concern as far as the Fourth Industrial Revolution is concerned. They are: inequality, security and identity. Now we discuss each one of them in some detail.

**Inequality:** Globally the richest one percent of the population now owns half of all household wealth. Further, just 62 individuals control more assets than the poorer half of the world's population. Researchers such as Wilkinson and Pickett have found that unequal societies tend to be more violent, have higher numbers of people in prison, experience greater levels of mental illness and have lower life expectancies than the egalitarian societies.

Past experience indicates that consumers tend to gain a lot from industrial revolutions as the cost of goods falls while quality increases. It seems, this is holding true even for the Fourth Industrial Revolution also. Both the Third and Fourth Industrial Revolutions are making possible products and services that increase the efficiency and enjoy ability of our lives even while reducing costs. Tasks like organizing transportation, booking restaurants, buying groceries, making payments, listening to music, reading books or watching films can now be done instantly, at any time and in almost from any place. The benefits of technology for all of us who consume it are incontrovertible.

**The questions that arise now are:** What if these benefits fail to contribute materially to broad-based economic growth? Will everyone truly be able to access, afford and enjoy these innovations?

A major driver of increased inequality is our increasing reliance on digital markets. Globally connected digital platforms tend to grant outsized rewards to a small number of star products and services, which are in turn able to be delivered at almost zero marginal cost. In addition, the dominance of digital platforms themselves, given their power, influence and profitability, is a matter of concern to many..

One of the most discussed driver of inequality is the propensity of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to increase unemployment. Although all earlier industrial revolutions both created and destroyed jobs, there is evidence that the new industries are creating relatively fewer positions than in the past. According to one estimate only 0.5% of the US workforce is employed today in industries that did not exist at the turn of the 21st century, a far lower percentage than the approximately 8.2% of new jobs created in new industries during the 1980s and the 4.4% of new jobs created during the 1990s. Furthermore, the type of jobs being created in these industries require higher levels of education and specialized study, while those being destroyed involve physical or routine tasks.

Shifts in employment and skills may also increase gender disparity. Unemployment due to automation has in the past was concentrated in sectors that mostly employ men, such as manufacturing and construction. But the ability to use artificial intelligence and other technologies to automate tasks in service industries puts many more job categories at risk in the future. These include jobs that are the source of livelihood for many young female workers and lower-middle-class women around the world, including call centre, retail and administrative roles.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution may cause inequality across economies as well as within them. In particular, the increasing flexibility of capital in the form of robots and other ad-

vanced manufacturing systems may erode the comparative advantage currently enjoyed by many emerging and developing countries, which are focused on labour-intensive goods and services. The phenomenon of "re-shoring" could have a particularly negative effect on those least developed economies just beginning to industrialize as they integrate into the global economy in recent times.

**Security** : The accentuating inequality doesn't just affect productivity, mental health and trust. It also creates security concerns for both citizens and states. A hyper-connected world, when combined with rising inequality, could lead to fragmentation, segregation and social unrest. These factors create conditions for violent extremism and other security threats enabled by power shift to non-state actors like the business lobbies and NGOs.

Furthermore, the strategic space for conflict is changing with the combination of the digital world with emerging technologies .These are creating new "battle spaces", expanding access to lethal technologies and making it harder to govern .The rapid spread of digital infrastructure thanks to the Third Industrial Revolution means that during the Fourth Industrial Revolution, cyberspace is now as strategic a theatre of engagement as land, sea and air in the war between nations, firms or individuals.

The technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution also offer expanded capabilities for waging war which are increasingly accessible to both state and non-state actors, such as drones, autonomous weapons, nonmaterials, biological and biochemical weapons, wearable devices and distributed energy sources. These are very dangerous portents.

**Identity**: In addition to concerns around rising inequality and threatened security, the Fourth Industrial Revolution will also affect us both as individuals and members of communities in many other ways also. For example, digital media is increasingly becoming the prime mover of our individual and collective framing of society and community, connecting people to individuals and groups in new ways, fostering friendships and creating new interest groups.

Unfortunately, expanded connectivity that we have now does not necessarily lead to expanded or more diverse worldviews. Paradoxically, the dynamics of social media use can serve to narrow available news sources. In addition, controversial or anti-establishment views can be further undermined by states and other actors willing to use new technologies and platforms to restrict speech and harass citizens. Importantly the emerging technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution increase diversity and the potential for collaboration rather than driving polarization in the world .This is a green shoot of kind.

Emerging technologies, in the biological realm are also raising new questions about human

kind and about what it means to be human. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is the first where the tools of technology can become literally embedded within us and even purposefully change who we are at the level of our genetic makeup. It is completely conceivable that forms of radical human improvement will be available within a generation but there is no guarantee that they do not create entirely new forms of inequality and class conflict.

## Conclusion

A complex web of the technologies that are driving the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the pervasiveness of their impact suggest that all stakeholder groups should work together on innovative governance approaches. The calling of the time is that we should learn from our past mistakes and implement and extend thoughtful approaches to dealing with the intersection of technology and society. We have to ensure that emerging technologies and the Fourth Industrial Revolution improve our lives individually and collectively in as broad-based and meaningful a way as possible. The bringing of together of stakeholders will open up new ways to discuss the future of technology and society. The new technology age, if shaped in a responsive and responsible way, could catalyze a new cultural renaissance that will enable us to feel part of something much larger than ourselves - a true global civilization.

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