EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS DESIGNED BY AARONG FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EMPLOYEES



Internship Report

on

Employee Engagement Programs Designed by Aarong for Different Levels of Employees

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September 09, 2014

To,

Ms. Syeda Shaherbanu Shahbazi Ahmed

Senior Lecturer

BRAC Business School

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Dear Ms. Ahmed,

Enclosed is a copy of the Internship Report on "Employee Engagement Programs Designed by Aarong for Different Levels of Employees". It contains detailed information about the organization, its background, vision, mission, values, its product and service offerings, its organogram and relationship among BRAC, Aarong and Ayesha Abed Foundation. It also contains detailed information about the job that I had carried out at Aarong. Furthermore, I have talked about the different employee engagement programs that take place at Aarong and the strategies for designing them. I have then made an analysis based on my findings both on the employers' and employees' perspectives. Followed, I have included recommendations of my own along with the conclusion of the report.

I hope that this report will be of great value to you.

Sincerely,

Afreen Khan

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Acknowledgement

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Executive Summary

This report focuses on the different employee engagement programs designed by Aarong for different levels of employees.

In this report I have talked about the organisation, its background, its vision, mission, values, product and service offerings, its organogram and the relationship among BRAC, Aarong and Ayesha Abed Foundation. I have also talked about the nature of the job that I was assigned to carry out during my internship period, and the specific responsibilities of my job. I also talked about the different aspects of my job performance and the critical observations and recommendations that I have regarding my job.

Followed, I talked about the project itself. I have first started by discussing the literature review and then related them to Aarong. I further talked about the strategies for designing the employee engagement programs and some of the different employee engagement programs at Aarong. I also mentioned the non-financial incentives that Aarong provides its employees. I then analysed the employee engagement programs from the perspectives of both the employees and the employers. Later, I came up with few recommendations of my own that Aarong can utilise to enhance its employee engagement programs.



Introduction

William A. Kahn first used this term in his article "Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work" in a 1990 Academy of Management Journal. Since then there is a growing interest for employee engagement among organisation all over the world. Organisations that follow Best Practices tend to engage the employees to the organisation as much as possible. Aarong recognises the importance of following Best Practices, and it provides different employee engagement programs through which employees can be committed to the organisation.

Objective of the report

General Objective:

The general objective of the report is to find out about the employee engagement programs designed by Aarong for different levels of employees.

Specific objectives:

The specific objectives of the report are as follows:

- Description of the organisation and its operations
- Description of the job that I was assigned to do
- The strategies for designing the employee engagement programs at Aarong
- Discussion of some of the different employee engagement programs at Aarong
- Discussion of the non-financial incentives provided to employees at Aarong
- Analysis of the employee engagement programs from the perspectives of employees and employers
- Suggested recommendations that Aarong can utilise to enhance its employee engagement programs



Methodology

Primary data:

For collecting the information regarding this report, I have interviewed eight employees of Aarong (including employees of Human Resources and Training and one employee of Export).

Secondary data:

For collecting secondary data, I have made use of the online journals and articles, leaflet (of the organisation), official website of BRAC and Aarong, internship reports of students of BRAC Business School from the repository of the institution.

Limitations

As Aarong is a huge organisation that consists of many departments and outlets and production centres, it was difficult for me to conduct a survey on employee satisfaction regarding the employee engagement programs since I had a time constraint. Rather, I had to ask the respective employees of the Human Resources Department who communicate with the employees and gather feedback from them to provide me with the information.



PART 1: THE ORGANISATION











BRAC started its journey in 1972 as a limited resource operation in a remote village of Bangladesh, then known as Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee. Sir Fazle Hasan Abed initiated the project to help the returning refugees of the Liberation War, 1971. When the first segment of relief was over, Sir Abed re-arranged the focus of BRAC to the empowerment of the poor and the landless, especially women and children in particular.

BRAC was later renamed as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee in 1973 as their activities transformed to long term community development from relief and rehabilitation. In 1978, BRAC set Aarong, a handicraft marketing outlet to generate employment for the poor women in Manikganj. Other programmes of BRAC include education, agriculture and food security, community empowerment, disaster, environment and climate change, gender justice and diversity, health, nutrition and population, human rights and legal aid services, integrated development, microfinance, road safety, migration, social enterprise, socially responsible investments, targeting extreme poverty, water, sanitation and hygiene and other support programs.

BRAC renamed itself to Building Resources Across Communities in 2000.





Aarong which means 'village fair' is one of the eighteen social enterprises of BRAC and it began its operation as a retail outlet since 1978. Aarong started out to bring positive change in the lives of rural women and then also included other craftsmen and master artisans who were involved in the creation of handicrafts for generations but were finding it difficult to survive in the newly formed country. Aarong works to "establish market linkages for rural artisans, revive crafts and interpret them for the contemporary market". It also works towards the mission of BRAC which is to alleviate poverty through economic development and building human capacity, with a specific focus on women empowerment.

Aarong now has 13 outlets (in Gulshan, Dhanmondi, Uttara, Moghbazar, Mirpur, Jamuna Future Park, Wari, Narayanganj, Sholoshahar, Halishahar, Khulna, Comilla and Sylhet) all across Bangladesh and exports its products to different countries mainly Japan, Nepal and India in Asia, United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, France and Sweden in Europe, Canada and United States of America in North America and Australia and New Zealand in Oceania. It employs more than 65,000 artisans and among them 85% are women.



The Ayesha Abed Foundation (AAF) was established in 1982 in honour of the memory of Late Mrs. Ayesha Abed, wife and co-worker of Sir Fazle Hasan Abed. The foundation has 13 centres and 640 sub-centres and it works as a production hub for Aarong. It works as a "facilitator in gathering and organising both the skilled and untrained artisans from various Village Organisations across the country and providing them with training and development in its



numerous centres". AAF and Aarong works towards the same ambition i.e. to make an extensive support system for artisans all over the country.

Vision

Aarong changes its vision every three years and their current vision is "Vision 2014" and the vision will change again in 2015. "Vision 2014" focuses on the following:

"Customers

- By 2014 5M customers to be served of which 10% through ecommerce
- Open 8 new outlets all over Bangladesh including Dhaka by 2015
- 90% satisfaction rating in Customer Service Index

Employees

- Seen as the employer of choice having a dedicated, trained and motivated professional team with a staff turnover of 5% 10%
- Having an effective performance management system in place that justly rewards performances on the basis of values, skills and abilities

Society

- We are viewed as a socially responsible enterprise providing equal opportunity development and having respect for the environment
- Standing as a symbol of pride for Bangladeshi heritage and culture (brand survey)

Shareholders

- 100% increase in revenue generated for
- Profit percentage will increase by 4% as compared to 2010 by cost control
- BRAC to showcase Aarong as a model of successful social enterprise that maximises benefits for all stakeholders



Artisans

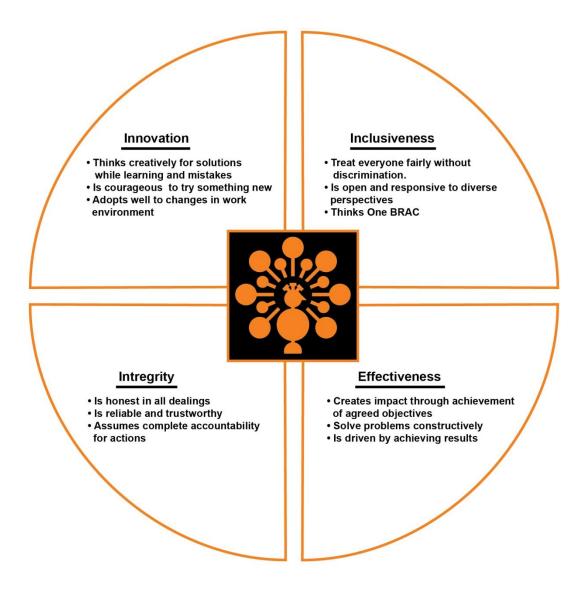
- Ensure that all artisans get maximum benefit from BRAC (health, sanitation, legal aid, children education, financial support)
- By 2014, all artisans will know that Aarong's core mission is to empower them in realising their potential
- Artisans and their children will seek to preserve Bangladeshi craft tradition through Aarong"

Mission

"Be the best socially responsible enterprise empowering people to realise their potential by creating appeal for a Bangladeshi lifestyle experience".







(Source: http://www.aarong.com/our-values/)

Products offered by Aarong

- Men's clothing and Accessories
- Women's clothing and Accessories



- Kids' clothing and Toys
- Shoes (for men, women and kids)
- Home Décor
- Office Accessories
- Books and Stationery
- Nakshi Kantha
- Wedding Clothing and Accessories
- Jewellery
- Taaga

Services offered by Aarong

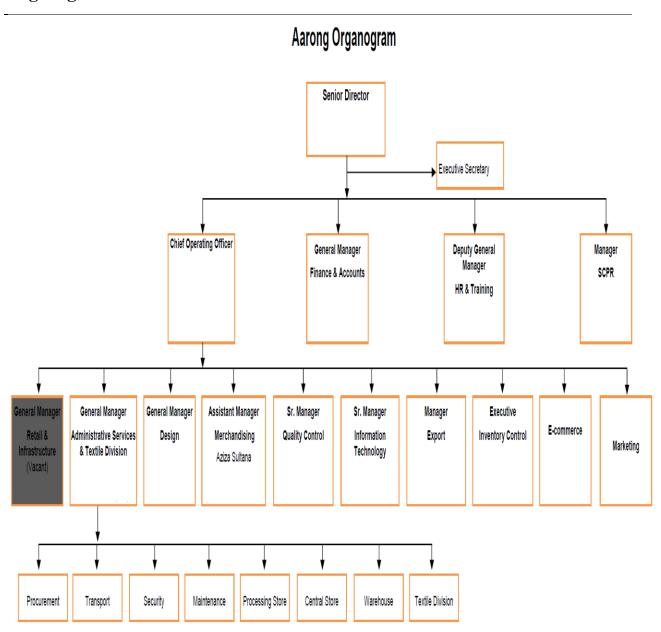
Aarong provides the following services to the production workers of Ayesha Abed Foundation.

- Legal support to employees
- Free skills training
- Raw materials
- Transportation of goods
- Quality Control
- Storage
- Management
- Finance
- Marketing and Public recognition
- Medical
 - Free medical check up
 - o Medicine supply
 - o Free eye check up and glass supply
 - Treatment cost for severe illnesses
- Day care centre
- Advance wage payment



- Workers' gratuity benefit
- Workers' welfare support

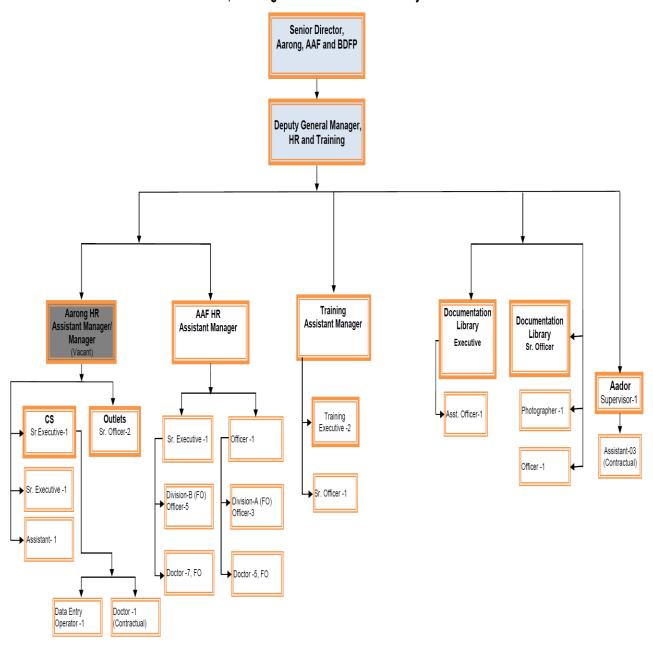
Organogram



(Figure: Organogram of Aarong)



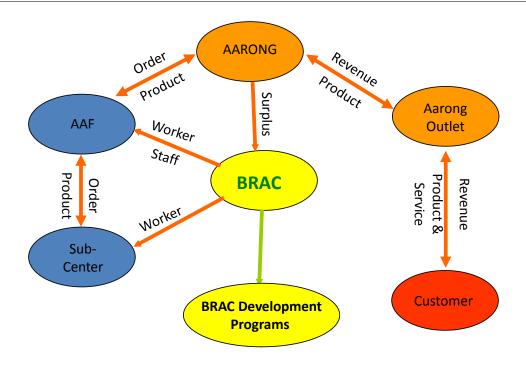
HR, Training and Documentation Library



(Figure: Organogram of HR, Training and Documentation Library)



Relationship among BRAC, Aarong and Ayesha Abed Foundation



(Figure: Relationship among BRAC, Aarong and Ayesha Abed Foundation)

Initially, BRAC used to provide its workers to AAF and its sub-centres. But nowadays, AAF and its sub-centres also recruit employees on their own.

When placing an order of the product, the outlets inform the central service (i.e. the Design Dept. of Aarong). It then transfers the order to the head office of AAF. AAF then further transfers the orders to the different centres of AAF from where the orders are further transferred to the sub centres. After the completion of the order, sub centres then transfer the products to the centres, then the centres send it to the Quality Control Dept. Of AAF head office and from there the products go to the Quality Control dept. of Aarong. After the products are verified, the products reach the different outlets and then to the customers. The revenue generated from the sales from the outlets are then transferred to central service of Aarong and the 50% of the income are transferred to BRAC so it can invest in its various development programs.



PART 2: MY JOB AT AARONG





Description/Nature of the Job

The Human Resource Department at Aarong and Ayesha Abed Foundation is divided into different parts. One part looks after the retail and outlets, one part looks after the Ayesha Abed Foundation, and another part looks after the different departments of Aarong Centre. There is a separate Training Department that looks after the training and development of the employees. My job at Aarong was to work under the Deputy General Manager, HR and Training, BRAC-Aarong and AAF. I had to carry out the various tasks that she had assigned to me.

Specific responsibilities of the Job

I had to conduct web-based research on topics such as employee engagement, leadership strategies, HR strategies, management roles, etc. I also had to proofread reports and articles and edit them and prepare a summary whenever needed. I was assigned to a project titled "Employees' experience regarding HR service of HRD-Aarong and AAF 2014 survey". In this project, I had to assist in the preparation of the survey questions and later distribute the blank questionnaires to the employees who were eligible for the survey (Aarong Grade 1-13 and BRAC Grade VIII and above) and then collect the filled up survey from the respective employees. I also had to prepare a soft copy of the filled up questionnaires before arranging them in separate portfolios. After the preparation of the soft copy, I had to analyse the data (both feedbacks and the objective answers) and then prepare a report of the results.

Different aspects of job performance

While carrying out the tasks I was asked to, I initially faced some challenges. To begin with, I had difficulties in understanding formal language of Bangla since I come from an English Medium School. In time, I overcame this difficulty and in addition, I learnt how to type Bangla in MS Office. I also had some weak points in using MS Excel which also I overcame up to a certain extent while carrying out my tasks. The most important thing I learnt in my stay with the organisation is how to handle pressure and how to organise work based on priorities.

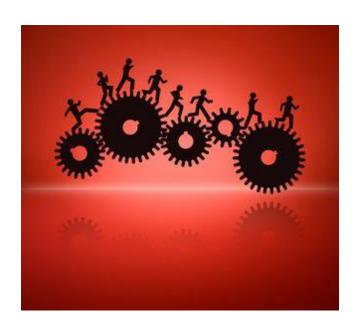


Critical observations and recommendations

Being a student of BBA with a concentration in Human Resource Management, I wish I could learn more about how Aarong follows the Labour Laws of Bangladesh and the International Labour Laws and how it implements them in the organisation. I also wish I could learn about the criteria the organisation uses to measure the performance of its employees.



PART 3: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS AT AARONG





Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1: Definition

Employee engagement is "the emotional commitment the employee has to the organisation and its goals". (Kruse, 2012).

Employee engagement is a medium or strategy through which an organisation aspires to create a build a partnership between the organisation and its employees. With the help of employee engagement, employees completely understand the organisation's objectives and are committed to achieve them and the organisation respects the ambitions and personal aspirations of its employees.

1.2: Importance

Employee engagement drives performance and helps organizations hire, develop and retain top workers.

Employee engagement develops organization performance in various ways. If employees are engaged then their productivity will increase, organization's profitability and customer satisfaction will also increase as well as employee turnover will decrease.

Productivity is also affected through engagement of employees. When employees are engaged, they not only develop new knowledge, respond to opportunities and go the extra mile but they also engage themselves in mentoring and volunteering. They urge to meet the challenging goals of the organization and in succeeding them. They also dynamically change and arrange their work in terms of the changing work environment. Moreover, it is easier to retain highly engaged employees within the organization.

When employees are engaged they are satisfied, and when employees are satisfied they are able to serve the customers better and therefore enhancing increased customer satisfaction. As a result, engagement is an indicator of service quality and customer loyalty towards the organization.



Engaged employees can bring about change within the organization.

1.3: Ten C's of Employee Engagement

There are different elements that can help an organisation to implement employee engagement. The ten elements or the ten C's are discussed below:

- 1. *Connect:* According to this element, leaders must let their employees know that they value them. Employee engagement is direct evidence about the relationship of employees with their boss. Leaders must let their employees believe that they and the organisation actually value their employees and not just say so. Employee-focused initiatives are important such as work-life balance, profit sharing, etc.
- 2. Career: Leaders should provide their employees with challenging work so they can advance in their careers but at the same time foster confidence among the employees that the challenges can be met. Lack of confidence among employees can lead to stress, frustration and lack of engagement.
- 3. *Clarity:* It is important that employees are clearly communicated about the goals of the organisation, why they are important and how they can be achieved. Leaders and/or superiors must clearly communicate the vision they have for their employees for the achievement of the goals of the organisation.
- 4. *Convey:* Leaders must clarify their feedbacks that are both positive and constructive to their employees to boost up employee morale and keep track of the performance of their employees in the organisation.
- 5. *Congratulate:* Apart from giving feedback to employees when their performance is average or poor, it is important that leaders praise their employees and recognise their hard work when they perform good or excellent.



- 6. Contribute: It is important that leaders let the employees know and feel how they are contributing to the success and future of the organisation. It is necessary because once employees know about their contribution their dedication may increase which in turn allows them to increase their performance and provide better customer service.
- 7. *Control:* Employees like to have control over the pace and flow of their work. They like to be given the opportunity to participate in the decision making process of the business which in turn help the businesses as employees take ownership of the problem and find solutions to those problems.
- 8. *Collaborate:* When employees perform in teams and cooperate with each other then they can outperform individuals and teams that lack cooperation. Being cared about by colleagues is important factor of employee engagement.
- 9. *Credibility:* Employees want to be proud of their organisation, job and performance. Hence, leaders must demonstrate high ethical standards and maintain the reputation of the organisation.
- 10. *Confidence:* Confidence can be maintained in an organisation when leaders can become examples of delivering high credibility.



Chapter 2: Employee Engagement at Aarong

Aarong has now grown bigger than before and it realised that even though employees are working at Aarong, there is a lack of engagement among the employees. In order, to improve the engagement and commitment of employees towards the organisation, Aarong has decided to implement different employee engagement programs to keep employees engaged and committed. Moreover, since following Best Practices and Employee Engagement programs are followed globally, Aarong recognises the importance of such practices and follows the same.

In relation to the Ten C's of Employee Engagement mentioned in the previous chapter, employers at Aarong connect with their employees through informal meetings, help them with their careers through counselling, department heads clearly communicate and convey messages regarding any changes in the organisation to their subordinates, for example, through circulars. Different department heads congratulate the employees of their respective department for their contribution or a good work done for the benefit of the organisation. In order to deliver credibility and confidence among the employees regarding their organisation, Aarong provides 'Value Awareness Session' for them.

2.1: Strategies for designing Employee Engagement Programs

Aarong sets the strategies for designing the different employee engagement programs based on several different sources and/or issues. Some of them are mentioned below:

1. Performance Appraisal trend analysis of the last three years: Based on the trend analysis, Aarong has identified its weak, average and high performing employees. Currently, Aarong is implementing employee engagement programs for the weak and high performing employees. Their focus on weak employees is because they want to help them improve their performance so that they can become average or above average performers. Their focus on high performing employees is because they want to retain the performance of those employees and help them excel further.



- 2. HR survey on the quality of service provided to the employees by the HRD: Aarong HRD recently conducted a survey on the quality of service they provide to their employees. The main motive behind this survey is that they want to figure which employees/departments have room for improvement and/or development. Also, the department wants to ensure whether the initiatives that they are taking are being received by the employees or not.
- 3. Development of the organisation in a value-based culture: Aarong wants the organisation to have a value based culture where employees are empowered to speak up their mind without hesitation.

2.2: Some of the different Employee Engagement Programs of Aarong

Some of the different employee engagement programs for different levels of employees and different departments at Aarong are discussed below:

2.2.1: Value Awareness Session

This is a session where the values of BRAC and Aarong are shared and discussed with the employees. This session is same for all levels of employees and all the departments of employees.

2.2.2: Career counselling

This is provided for all employees. The employees who want the career counselling will have to take appointment to meet up with the concerned person(s) of HRD (if they are within Dhaka) and over the phone (for employees who are outside Dhaka).

2.2.3: *Training*

Training with the common topic is provided to all employees. However, training is also customised based on the subject, department, levels of employees, etc. For example, helpers' training was provided to the helpers of the central store and processing store and in



the training they were communicated about the organisation and its related information, communication and team bonding. Another example is the customer service training provided to the Sales Associates at Aarong outlets.

2.2.4: "Amader Aalap"

This is a forum for female employees where they can speak up regarding issues concerning them or the organisation.

2.2.5: Aarong Premier League

This is a cricket match organised for all the employees of Aarong.

2.2.6: Exposure Trip

Exposure trip is given on the Ayesha Abed Foundation (AAF) to the new employees who join the organisation and to old employees who never went on the trip. However, this trip is currently not provided to employees who are helpers or assistants.

2.2.7: Open-door policy

Supervisors can meet their employees any time and employees can also go meet their supervisor any time without any prior appointment.

2.2.8: Meditation

This program is open for all the employees of Aarong.

2.2.9: Health awareness session

This session is also open for all the employees of Aarong.



2.2.10: Informal meeting

Aarong sometimes conduct informal meetings with the employees of different departments where they can share their thoughts and employers get to know where development and attention is required for the enhancement of the employees.

2.2.11: Living the Dream

In this program, employees are aligned with the vision, mission and values of the organisation so that all employees share the same thoughts regarding their organisation.

2.2.12: Newsletter

This is a quarterly published newsletter by the organisation for its employees.

2.2.13: Employee orientation

Whenever a new employee joins the organisation, they are provided with an orientation to familiarise them with the organisation, its vision, mission, values and activities.

2.2.14: Picnic

Aarong organises annual picnic for all of its employees. The picnic is held within or outside Dhaka based on their booking of the location.

2.2.10: Reward System

Aarong has a special reward system - "Staff of the Month" and "Staff of the Year" for the employees of its outlets.

Through these employee engagement programs, Aarong helps their employees to get motivated.



2.3: Non-financial incentives used by Aarong

Aarong realises the impact that non-financial incentives can have on employee motivation and satisfaction other than financial rewards. Hence, Aarong provides various non-financial incentives to their employees and they are discussed as follows:

2.3.1: Subsidised facilities

Aarong provides subsidised canteen and transport facilities to its employees.

2.3.2: Health insurance

Employees at Aarong have the benefit of health insurance that is being provided by the organisation for the employees themselves along with their spouse and children who are below 25 and unmarried.

2.3.3: Leave

Aarong provides leave such as annual leave, accidental leave, quarantine leave, sick leave, etc. Accidental leave and quarantine leave does not get deducted from annual leave and employees are sometimes even paid for sick leave. The mentioned leaves are applicable for all employees.

2.3.4: Provident Fund and Gratuity

These benefits are provided to confirmed employees only.

2.3.5: Medical Facility

The employees get health care benefits as the organisation has an assigned doctor so the employees can pay a visit for health problems.

2.3.6: Day care facility

This facility is open to all employees i.e. to all levels and all departments.



2.3.7: Scholarship for further studies

This benefit is applicable only for the confirmed employees.

2.3.8: Higher studies

Sometimes the employees are sent abroad by the organisation to pursue higher studies and the fees are paid by the organisation.

2.3.9: Study leave

If employees work for the organisation for five years then they can take study leave. In that case, their job will remain secured however, they will not get paid.

2.3.10: Loan Facility

Employees receive interest free loans from the organisation such as car loan (applicable for General Managers and senior positions), computer loan, special loan, motor cycle loan, etc. which are applicable for the confirmed employees of all levels.



Chapter 3: Analysis

By talking to the employees of the HR and Training department of Aarong, I have been able to find out the effects of the employee engagement programs from the employers' and employees' perspectives. Below are the following analyses.

The employees' perspective

Due to the employee engagement programs, employees at Aarong have a positive attitude towards their work and the organisation. Hence, their level of satisfaction increases and their commitment towards their work also increases. They are able to perform their day-to-day activities proactively and can come up with ideas that will help them improve their way of working and increase efficiency in their work. As a result, this helps in improving their work performance which leads to increase in work productivity. Also, due to the provision of non-financial incentives, employees have an attachment towards the organization since they have a feeling of job security and are future oriented towards the organization.

The employers' perspective

Employers at Aarong have a positive attitude towards the employee engagement programs. As employees are engaged in their work, they are able to improve their work productivity and as a result improve the overall productivity of the organization. Also, since employees are now engaged in their work than before, employers do not have to push them to meet deadlines for the different tasks assigned since employees are proactive about their work. Moreover, as employees perform better in their work, they are able to deliver better customer service hence increasing the brand image in the market. The main focus of providing different employee engagement programs and non-financial incentives to the employees is to increase employee satisfaction and be able to hire high skilled and high capacity employees in the organization.



Chapter 4: Recommendation

By analysing the organisation and its operations, I have come up with some recommendations that are listed below:

- 1. Cafeteria style compensation package: Since different employees have different compensation needs, Aarong can allow employees to choose the compensation package that best fits their needs.
- 2. Reward System: Aarong can allow the reward system of "Staff of the Month" and "Staff of the Month" for all the employees of Aarong (i.e. Central Services, Outlets and Production Centres) rather than for just the employees of outlets.
- 3. Suggestion box: Aarong can arrange a suggestion box where employees can talk about issues or matters that require development or improvement or even talk about an idea that is in the favour of the organisation.
- 4. Make up for absenteeism on Saturday: Sometimes employees miss work or go on leave due to various problems. Rather than marking their absenteeism as a leave, Aarong can give the employees an opportunity to make up for the absenteeism on Saturdays. This way, employees will be able to preserve their leaves and complete their work at the same time.
- 5. Recreation Centre: Aarong can arrange for a recreation centre for example, a sports centre, where employees can go and play for mental refreshment so they are not stressed from their work.



Chapter 5: Conclusion

Aarong is realising the importance of Best Practice and the Employee Engagement Programs that are being followed globally and hence, it is also moving itself in that direction. Aarong gathers both primary and secondary data to set strategies for its employee engagement programs. The organisation provides various employee engagement programs such as training, counselling sessions, awareness sessions, workshops, etc. for its different employees and non-financial incentives for its employees in general.

By talking to the employees of the HR and Training Department, it has been found that both the employers and the employees have a positive attitude towards the different employee engagement programs arranged by the organisation. Employees have a feeling of job security and are future oriented regarding the organisation. Employers are able to improve the satisfaction of their employees and are also able to hire high skilled employees in the organisation.

Apart from my findings from the organisation, I have included some recommendations that I feel Aarong can utilise to broaden its employee engagement programs even further. Aarong, a social enterprise of BRAC, emphasises on the importance of organisational ethics and values and thus promotes itself like that in front of their employees and the society. For Aarong, employees are not just employees but a member of the BRAC family.

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Appendix

The following questions were asked to the different employees of Aarong according to relevance.

- 1. What is the Mission of Aarong?
- 2. What are the service offerings of Aarong?
- 3. In which countries do Aarong exports its products to?
- 4. What is the relationship among BRAC, Aarong and Ayesha Abed Foundation?
- 5. What is the objective of designing Employee Engagement Programs at Aarong?
- 6. What are the different programs for different departments and the different levels of employees?
- 7. What initiative is currently being taken by Aarong?
- 8. How Aarong helps employees to get motivated?
- 9. What helps Aarong to set strategies for different Employee Engagement programs so far?
- 10. What were the different engagement programs so far and what are the upcoming ones?
- 11. What are the different non-financial incentives used by Aarong?
- 12. What are the effects of the different employee engagement programs and non-financial incentives from the perspectives of employers and employees?