



The Business of People

Nupur Mallick, HR Director for the UK&I at IT services company TCS, talks to Dawn Murden about how the HR function is changing and the role technology plays in improving employee engagement



Questions about people, performance and levels of engagement may have once been regarded as 'soft issues' in the boardrooms of global organisations, but that's no longer the case.

"When you talk to CEOs, executives and those who are on the board, the majority have identified talent as a key concern," says Nupur Mallick, HR Director for the UK and Ireland at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).

For a human resources director to perform at a high level, they need to possess a strong understanding of the overall business strategy. "You have to know what the future talent requirements are and what clients are looking for," she explains. "I am there in the leadership meetings and there's always open communication."

TCS has 320,000 employees spread across 48 countries, with 10,000 of those in the UK&I. According to Nupur, it's important to create a framework in which employees can develop as individuals and work "towards a shared goal".

She describes how communication across the organisation has been enhanced by the introduction of an internal social platform, Knome. Launched two-years ago, she describes it as a combination of Twitter, Facebook and WordPress: "On a daily basis we have around 65,000 employees on there talking to one another about a range of issues from work, to health and wellbeing."

It brings staff together, allowing them to collaborate on projects, ask questions, receive company updates or start a

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group about something more informal. Nupur says it's an extremely useful tool for encouraging interaction and measuring employee engagement: "What was once based on perception or periodical satisfaction surveys has become much more data-driven.

"We collect data on everything from performance to job satisfaction, helping us to understand employees. It's like a constant, 24/7 international employee survey that keeps updating itself."

One of the priorities for Nupur at present is to promote greater awareness of health and wellbeing in the workplace, while also developing wider social awareness. For example, employees are encouraged to take up sports and exercise and the company has developed an app to help them track their progress.

"We encourage employees to form teams and pledge how many kilometres they'll run swim or cycle," explains Nupur. "On a daily basis, you can switch on the app and it will monitor where you go and how much you do."

Nupur also describes one of TCS' UK-based social projects, IT Futures. The idea is to inspire students to study Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects at GCSE level.

"Our staff have the opportunity to focus on making younger generations not just the users of technology, but the creators. They run workshops in schools and we offer work placements," she says. "It's helping upskill the leaders of tomorrow. So far, we have been able to work with 25,000 students."

If initiatives and programmes like this are to be successful, they need the backing of the leadership team, says Nupur. She references the introduction of Knome as a prime example: "If senior managers are not using the platform, or you do not have sponsorship from the top, you might as well not have it.

"When we rolled it out to everyone in the organisation, we created a feeling that if you weren't there you were missing out, as the managers were already using it."

It comes back to the need for HRDs to win support at the highest level, ensuring their ideas are relevant and in-tune with the business strategy. "It's all about how you've been able to change the culture and encourage the workforce to adopt a new, and often better, way of working," she says. ■



Nupur Mallick
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Nupur has been with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) for 18 years and in December 2005 she was appointed HR Director for the UK and Ireland. In this role Nupur is responsible for the end-to-end HR function, including 10,000 employees from 39 nationalities.

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