

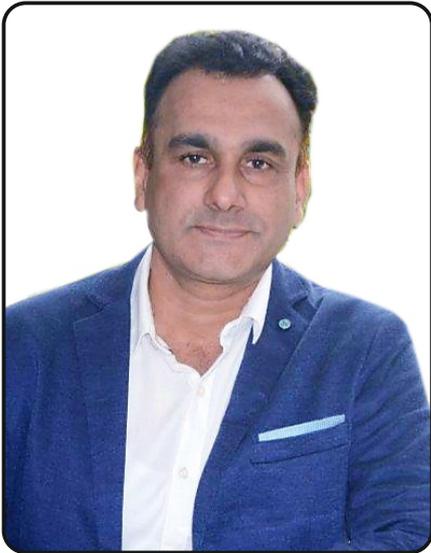
An Interview with Vice President – HR Gokaldas Exports Ltd.

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*Interviewed by Dr. Kempegowda B.K.,
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To win any game, it is important first to understand and master the rules of the game and it is the same in business.



Moideen Ibrahim is a seasoned HR professional with experience spanning over two decades in various roles in Human Resources, Industrial Relations and Organization Development. He has been associated with diverse Sectors like Machine Tools, Textiles & Apparels, Construction and Education.

A Science Graduate and an alumnus of School of Social Work, Roshni Nilaya with a Masters degree in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations, he also holds a Diploma in Business Management.

Previously has been associated with HMT Machine Tools Ltd., HMT Ltd., Bearys Group, Shahi Exports Pvt. Ltd. and Gokaldas Images.

Prior to joining Gokaldas Exports, he led the Vigilance functions for HMT and its subsidiaries (A Govt of India Enterprise). He is passionate about exploring new ideas in Human Resources and Organization Development. He has been instrumental in implementation of Lean Manufacturing with his earlier assignments.

Moideen is the trustee of Gokaldas Exports Charitable Foundation. He is closely associated with NIPM, NHRD, CII, and VSC. He spearheads ESG and CSR initiatives and also anchors the Lean Management initiatives of the Organization. An all-rounder in cricket, he represented and led College and Corporates at various leagues and tournaments.

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1

Describe your HR journey? was it a conscious effort to take up HR as profession?

We are all born with abilities to progress, but it is the guidance we get & choices we make at the appropriate time makes all the difference. I was always inclined towards people management which led me to School of Social Work - Roshni Nilaya. Grown up with an aim to become a Cricketer but have never lost an opportunity to hone my people management skills, either as a student or as a growing professional. Quite early in my career, opportunity placed itself for me to work with top management and understand the business dynamics. Yes, to progress, one must make conscious effort in that direction.

2

What do you think should be the HR priorities?

For me, HR priorities comedown to everything that correlates to the overall organisational health. It's about organisational design layers, span of control, performance management and optimisation of the compensation and benefit systems.

Meanwhile, the key resourcing priorities are competencies, workforce strategy and management. Then, in terms of workforce strategy, there's the strategy and the gap analysis; what do you have? What do you need? Where are the gaps and how can they be filled? It actually pays to have two plans - a short-term workforce management plan, so that people can see and experience change and improvement - running alongside the longer term, more sophisticated plan, which can continue off grid.

On top of this, we are also in the mid-stages of reorganising HR so that it is well-equipped to deal with the future business plans and organisational set up. The pandemic has thrown us a curve ball, but there are signs indicating that we are gaining momentum and I'm eagerly awaiting our latest round of employee survey results, so that we can assess whether we are back on track.

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3

What do you think defines an organisation as a top employer today?

I believe the key to being a Top Employer is having the curiosity and motivation to continue getting better. In a world that is becoming increasingly challenging and agile, it is essential to continue evolving to meet the needs of our employees and to enable our goals.

The pandemic has led to a fundamental shift in people's expectations. We see more movement as people re-evaluate what is important to them, and I believe top employers will be those who can engage their teams in a shared purpose. As employers we will only be more successful if we reflect the communities we serve and tap into talent from a variety of sources. This means being committed to helping individuals from all walks of life to develop their careers.

4

What is the next objective in your organisation's journey to keep improving the employee experience?

We need to keep building our capability to help drive forward our goal to create an ever-better employee experience.

The role of the manager is crucial here, particularly in daily interactions and processes like career conversations. Managers play a greater role in the experience of their team, but often struggle to provide the direction and support needed. I believe that investing in managers – and recognizing the importance of their role is essential.

We are also introducing initiatives that create a different experience for our colleagues, such as our campaign for Dignity at Work that reinforces the importance of how we treat each other at work. Our aim is to create the right conversations to build awareness on the importance of dignity at work. Every employee has a role to play in creating a positive employee experience.

5

What are the advantages of positive work environment and how to promote them?

Having a work environment that's positive and conducive may help employees feel satisfied & happy at their company. Companies can achieve a positive environment by maintaining a healthy company culture, which may include encouraging employee growth, promoting communication and helping employees feel comfortable and safe in the workplace.

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6

What is the biggest HR challenge facing your organization today and how are you planning to overcome it?

We are conscious that these are challenging times across many sectors, and Apparel Manufacturing is no exception to that. This places a lot of strain on the organization and our employees, and so we need to provide the right support for employees to feel bolstered up, inspired and fulfilled.

It implies that our HR processes need to be simple and robust, we need to be completely focused on what really matters and recognise where we need to get better. It also requires us to actively listen to what our employees need – what matters to them, and how we can work together on a common purpose.

We are at such an exciting point and from an HR perspective, the next challenge is to evolve our culture, because after a lot of growth and the impacts of the pandemic, we need to take a properly considered perspective. We need to evolve our culture to incorporate business dynamics and we have to find that equilibrium between equality and commonality, with individualism and diversity. It's really an exciting prospect as we continue to expand and broaden the horizons of the business. Our most valuable asset will always be our people and on that front, the future looks incredibly bright.

A positive workplace culture attracts talent, drives engagement, impacts happiness and satisfaction, and affects performance. Leadership, management, workplace practices, policies and people significantly influence culture.

7

You held Leadership positions at earlier assignments and also had a stint as Chief of Vigilance in Public Sector Enterprise. How has those experiences shaped your current role?

We all fall back on our past experiences while dealing with the current situations. I headed Vigilance at HMT Ltd, a Govt of India Enterprise. Working under the guidance of CVC and Ministry has given immense level of experience to exercise an authoritarian role with responsibilities. It was interesting to work closely with investigating agencies like CBI, ED etc. This empowerment in role has helped me in having in-depth understanding of where things may go wrong and take preventive measures. This also helps in alerting business leaders on the loopholes in the system & what needs to be done to plug the system.

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8

With HR heads becoming CEOs, how important it is now for HR heads to understand the business and to be in line for CEO's in making?

To win any game, it is important first to understand and master the rules of the game and it is the same in business. Post pandemic, the current headwind business scenario seems to be short format and completely different from the business we have seen so far, and thus we need to understand and get acquainted with new rules of business to succeed.

To possess a clear understanding on the dynamics of the industry, Business challenges and uncertainties, Financial and supply chain knowledge are highly essential to take up CXO positions in the organization. Needless to mention, blend of business knowledge and people management skills can do wonder towards HR's aim to become a CEO.

True and well-equipped HR professionals always understood it. Now it has been brought to the fore. I am glad that HR roles are getting into business roles.

9

What are the ways of making HR a Business Partner?

It's not enough to be conversant in the language of HR. Human resource professionals need to know and contribute to the vision, mission and financial success of the business—otherwise, they won't be taken seriously by the C-suite. And on a practical level, they won't be able to execute effective workforce planning or attract, hire and train the right talent. Beyond knowing the company's stock price and how to read a profit and loss statement, HR leaders need to understand the strategic direction of the business and the economic and social environment in which the company operates. They need to anticipate and prepare for changes in work and the workforce. Only then can HR leaders effectively manage human capital and align HR initiatives with the organization's goals'. HR professionals need to understand about how business and companies work. What does the CXO strategize about? What does the CFO worry about?" As HR moves into the C-suite, it needs to start tracing a space to be a part of the executive team.

Basically, Business is driven by QCD, Quality, Cost and Delivery. Any step in that direction helps in business delivery and customer delight. As a process development strategy, we are currently engaged in 5S implementation across the organization. 5S is a tool for workplace discipline leading to Lean implementation. HR plays an active role in training every employee of the organization. The team takes up project for process improvement and subsequent cost saving. Failure to achieve the set combined targets will make HR accountable for business units not achieving their targets. I strongly reckon and ratify that, the HR's KRA and KPI's should be structurally aligned to the business objectives and deliverables.

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10

In recent times the talk of the town has been 'employee experience' help us understand itself better?

Employee experience is a worker's perceptions about his or her journey through all the touch points at a particular company, starting with job candidacy through to the exit from the company. The company's physical workspace, culture and technology are all important components of the employee experience.

My team has come up with a nomenclature called 'GexStar' for every employee in the organization. The objective being to treat & value every employee as Star with utmost dignity with a sense of belongingness. This gives a feeling of pride to each employee. Each touch point at Gokaldas is considered seamless.

We also celebrate all cultural festivals, organize competitions, celebrate academic success of our employee's children, organize sports events and visit families. We also take feedback through internal surveys to improve employee experience. This Benefits us in bringing out performance culture by means of transforming non performing employee to productive employee, lowering absenteeism rates, substantial increase in quality of work and improved customer relations.

11

How does your organization give back to the society?

As a responsible organization, we do what we can to give back to the society. Our CSR policy and projects are aimed at achieving sustainable development goals, Environmental, Social and Governance goals. Our major focus to partner in transformation of Health, Education and rural infrastructure the drive on computer education in the rural Government schools by setting up full pledged computer lab is in our priority as these kids refrain from basic computer infrastructure. We are also in the process of setting an Academy for the benefit of our employees and their children. The academy would be one of the best of its kind where industry and academia interact seamlessly resulting in product that are industry ready. We also train local women and provide them employment.

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12

What's your Organization's Sustainable development and women empowerment plans?

Our sustainable investments like Zero liquid discharge (ZLD) are aimed to reduce Carbon foot prints and global warming. Our Social and Environmental performance is continuously measured and we are placed best in the industry for our concern on environment and people. We at Gokaldas Exports Ltd, strongly focus on Women Empowerment and boasts to have more than 75% of the total workforce as women. To enhance women employees' life skill and to make them self-reliant in life, continuous developmental training on Health and Hygiene, Financial Literacy, Communication and wellbeing are designed and imparted from time to time. In nutshell, we are committed to make world a better place by driving Green Initiatives.

13

How do you promote diversity in the workplace?

To promote diversity in workplace, we are hiring people without discriminating on variety of different characteristics such as age, gender, sexual orientation, caste, religion and political views.

We have an inclusive workplace culture and all these individual differences among employees are accepted and all are treated on an equal basis.

Benefits of workplace diversity are usually mentioned in the context of social responsibility and boosting a company's reputation. However, workplace diversity has many tangible benefits that directly impact the company's bottom line and revenue.

14

Message for the future HR leaders?

HR is an exciting area to be in. The challenges you take gives immense satisfaction. HR has progressed leaps and bounds. But to make yourself relevant and take pole position in a disruptive business environment, you must work on the following:

- Embrace Technology and analytics
- Stay focussed on people
- Update your HR knowledge and skill set
- Partner business with tangible HR ROI's.
- Anticipate and be ready for disruptions.

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