

The Case of the New Recruit: Learnings from the Experiences of MsAparna Jain

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Abstract:- Aparna having graduated with distinction in Computer Science from a premier institute considered herself fortunate in bagging a job in a Multinational company. She had also qualified for admission in a prestigious Institute in Mumbai but, after due deliberations and advice of friends and family members, decided to take up the job offer. She along with two of her college mates were tremendously excited to join the company and received a very warm reception and were extended all necessary facilities on arrival. They were put through a grueling orientation and Training programme. Aparna was ecstatic and took her own time to get over the hangover and carefree days of the college and was somewhat laid back. Evidently her batch mates who were earnest from day one fared better and were given more responsibilities. Soon, realizing the opportunities she had missed she tried making amends. She got good encouragement and support from her Team head that was an expatriate and gave her a sound and timely guidance. However, this congenial work environment was disrupted with the arrival of the new Head who was a hard task master and a workaholic. He would brook no delay or deficiency in meeting the targets. Aparna unable to adapt to his mode of working incurred his wrath and criticism and began to be side-lined. This was quite upsetting and unnerving for her. However having borne the situation for some time, she decided to spruce up and take up the challenge to prove her mettle.

It was a bright Saturday morning and Aparna Jain, had come out with flying colours in her Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from one of the premier institutes of Lucknow. The reason for her enthusiasm was that she would be flying to Bangalore in a few hours to start her career with a world renowned Multi-national company and she looked forward to a positive start. Aparna was one the bright students of her batch and was actively involved in organizing and participating in various cultural and co- curricular activities of her college. She enjoyed a good rapport with her friends and was liked by her Professors and the Principal Dr. Fatima Siddiqui. That particular year her college under the dynamic leadership of the Principal had initiated the **career development and guidance Cell** whose objective was to place the students in the corporate world. Aparna and her batch mates got a couple of opportunities to face interviews with companies for different positions. It was during the month of April 2013 that **she cleared the written test and first round of interview** for Omega Inc. (aglobal Web based Advertising and Marketing Business entity) in her college campus. The company was recruiting aggressively in large numbers for its Web based Advertising and Marketing Business operations throughout the country. Aparna and six of her classmates also had a telephonic interview with the Head of the Web based Advertising and Marketing Business operations in Redmond, Washington, USA which lasted for about 45- 60 minutes. She was quite happy with the turn of events.

In the meanwhile she also received a letter announcing her admission to the one year diploma course in Mass Communication from Xavier Institute of Communication, Mumbai. Caught between the desire to pursue a Post-graduation degree in Journalism and Mass communication and a lucrative corporate career beckoning her, she sought the advice of her parents and Principal to come to a right decision. The advice she got from both quarters was to first try her best to get the job and then decide between the better of the two alternatives. Her inner fear was also that she had never stayed away from her family and was apprehensive of the fact that she was not prepared mentally to take on a job which demanded high accuracy, accountability and responsibility.

As luck would have it, she along with two of her classmates got a final interview call from the Bangalore office where the company was based and was offered a job in the Web based Advertising and Marketing Business operations SBU (Strategic Business Unit). She had not expected things to fall in place so soon. She decided to go ahead and join the company. All three girls received a warm sendoff by their families at the Lucknow Airport. At the Bangalore airport they were received by the company representatives and put up in their guest house. Her first few days were spent in undergoing a rigorous training programme which started at 9 am and got over by 9 pm for two weeks continuously. Along with her there were twentynew joiners from

various parts of the country. The company had made their arrangements for boarding and lodging in the company guest house and they were asked to arrange for their own accommodation within the next two weeks.

The orientation and training programme began the very next day. It commenced with the HR executives escorting the new joiners to the training hall where they were greeted by the HR dept and shown a corporate video on the company. The same was followed by an addressal by the HR executives, informing them about the various policies and practices of the organization and where to look for in case of any help required. The next two days were followed by the addressal from managers of various departments who would introduce and explain their operations and how it impacted the overall operations of Omega Inc. world wide. The last addressal was by the Country Head HR, Ms. Sheena Patel, who spoke about the multinational environment and the growth prospects within the organization. She also informed them about the various facilities and perquisites the employees would be enjoying including an attractive compensation package along with stock options, various bonuses both fixed and performance based and a generous leave entitlement. The Induction and Orientation program got over with all the joiners filling up plenty of forms like health insurance, bank accounts, and detailed personnel information forms required for employee database etc.

After the formal orientation and induction program, the core training program commenced. It covered various aspects of their job, including product knowledge, process knowledge and soft skills like team building, interpersonal skills and techniques of effective Communication. They were assigned to four HR executives in teams of five each who were responsible for their reception, lunch arrangements, and drop back every day in addition to their daily training activities and other miscellaneous issues. After a rigorous training schedule of two months in which they also mastered the skillful use of the keyboard as well as policies and guidelines related to their job, they were assigned to Ms Charlotte Dwivedi, a senior Manager in the Web based Advertising and Marketing Business Operations. This was an initial period of familiarization of one month between her and the joiners where they would be attached to her core team as an understudy. Consequently she would be picking up some of them who perform brilliantly for her core team as junior team members to work with the more experienced employees of her team. Though there were many different teams in the organization which were equally competent, Charlotte and her team had acquired a formidable reputation in the organization and were seen as the best team to imbibe the work values and competitive spirit from. A well prepared job description was handed to each of them which explicitly stated their tasks, duties and responsibilities as well as performance appraisal timelines and also a list of FAQs related to their jobs. Each of them was given access to a Team Leader for helping them in their day to day work issues.

Aparna came to know the enormity of her organization's presence and operations in many countries of the world. The organization was structured into various departments on the basis of products, services, clients and geographies. The work culture of the organization encouraged team based and cooperative endeavours. The performance of each department was rated on the basis of the performance of the team as a whole. Each team had ten-fifteen employees, depending upon the nature of tasks concerned and skill requirements. Charlotte was known to be a hard task master and she was heading the team which was responsible for monitoring of client's advertisements and sales on the web. She was very choosy about the inclusion of the employees / trainees in her team as she believed that your **output is as good as your input**. At the same time she was known to make the careers of her team members by aggressively pushing their names for promotions, based on their continuous excellent performance and hard work. She also persisted and prevailed upon the management, for her team members to be regularly sent for various training programs, skill up gradation courses and the highly coveted **Global Leadership programm** wherein the employees from Omega Inc. from one country would be sent on an exchange visit to study the best practices and core competencies of their organization in a different geography and adapt and implement the same in their home country. These exchange visits usually took place between India, US, Australia, UK, Ireland and China, ranging from a period of one month to three months. It was considered to be the springboard to a successful Career in Omega Inc.

Aparna's initial reaction and attitude towards her job was quite casual and laidback. She did not realize that one needs to be seen as a **self starter** and **career oriented** in the first few days of their joining an organization. She was drawn into a self created illusion that by getting this job she had proved her worth and did not need to make any efforts to prove anything beyond this. As a result she never took pains to understand her job clearly or to find out the minute details required to perform the job efficiently. She did not have the appetite to become a super achiever by honing her functional skills nor developing and employing her interpersonal skills to forge a favourable professional relationship with her colleagues and superiors. In comparison to this some of her colleagues who had joined the company at the same time, began to take their jobs seriously, taking an active interest in their training sessions, networking with their senior colleagues and Team Leaders to learn

the finer techniques of their jobs and building up on their computer and Internet skills. This made them more proficient and competent in their transition from trainees to employees. They began to be noticed and acknowledged within their organization as the new stalwarts.

It was only when the HR manager announced the names of those new joiners who had made it to Charlotte's team did Aparna realize and regret the opportunity that she had lost. It sunk into her that this company did not have any place for mediocre and average performers, that the culture of the organization was highly achievement oriented. She knew she had to act fast and decided to jettison her previous working style and more importantly, her attitude towards her job. She became more focused and began working long hours and improving her performance in terms of quality and quantity. In addition to this she also started networking with her colleagues and senior managers to take their help and guidance when needed. She began seeking multiple assignments apart from her existing tasks. This gave her a valuable insight into acquiring a more holistic understanding of her job and a better appreciation of the significance of her performance towards, achieving the stated objectives of her organization.

Aparna was assigned to work under Ms Deborah Hayden, an Expat from the US office who was posted to India for a short period, till an Indian manager could fill her position. Thereafter she was to return to the parent office in the US. Deborah's style was completely professional and she did not let personal feelings come in the way of her tasks or affect her objectivity. She was partial to no one and treated all her team members alike. She praised the good performers and showed her non acceptance towards poor or average performers by referring them for Performance Improvement. She was neither critical nor cynical towards them and she believed in motivating her team members by having high expectations of them. Aparna settled down in the work environment with ease and began enjoying her work.

It was around 5 months later when Deborah was to leave for US that Aparna and her team members came to know about their new Boss Mr. Pranay Das who had an MBA degree from one of the leading Business Schools and a work experience of ten years that things changed. He was a workaholic, extremely meticulous in the accomplishment of the tasks at hand and demanded relentless efforts from his subordinates. Even slight complacency would invite criticism and censure. Over the next three months he started building up his own select team who were high performers and could deliver. He would allocate plum assignments to those who were in his good books and recommend their names for liberal increments and promotions to the HR department.

Aparna was somewhat unnerved by the changed environment and responded by keeping a low profile. Though she had worked quite hard and improved significantly, Aparna was yet to prove her mettle in the organization. She found herself at the receiving end of his displeasure regarding the quality of work and achievement of targets. She was convinced that though her performance was much better than many of her team members, yet Pranay was singularly picking her out for low performance. During the team meetings she would see him praising the other team members for their dedication, taking on higher targets and achieving them with excellence. Not once would he even mention her name, though she had become one of the high achievers in her team. During the **goal setting exercise** she was given unrealistic targets which could not be achieved in one go. It needed much more time and efforts to meet those targets whether it was clearing the advertisements posted by various entities or responding to the queries sent by clients. She tried reasoning with him to initially set a lower target and then scale it up gradually. In the next quarter she was passed up for the promotion that she was looking forward to and instead saw her team member, Ashlesha being promoted to the rank of Team Lead. She felt demotivated and started doubting her self-efficacy and capability. **It was then that she realized the gravity of the situation.**

Questions

- Summarize the Case. Bulleted points preferred. (Not more than half a page)
- Enumerate the areas of concern faced by Aparna? Is she having any shortcomings / incorrect attitude as a professional? (Bulleted points)
- Are there any shortcomings / improper implementation of any particular HR process/ processes in the organization in this case? Point out the same and suggest an alternative.
- What steps should Aparna take to deal with the current situation and turn it around?