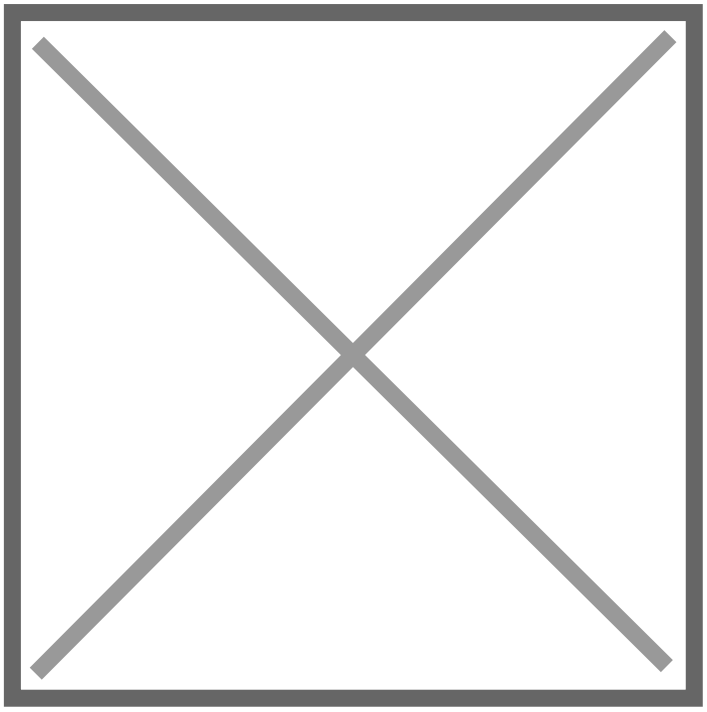
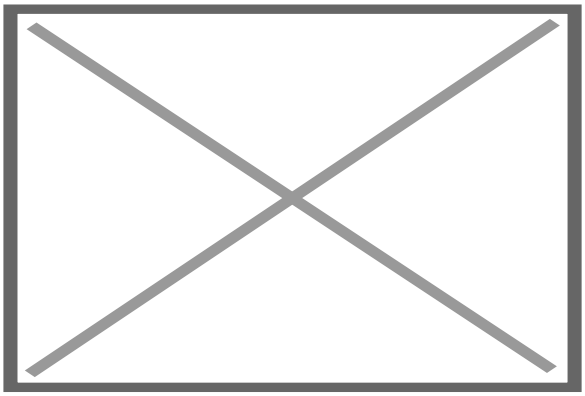


Work Environment: The Positive Effect

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When it comes to offering a comfortable work zone and the best incentives, biotech companies are no less than the IT and manufacturing firms. In fact, their HR teams are putting the best efforts to provide world class facilities and are even going the extra mile to make the employees feel at ease and stay productive



Work environment has emerged as a critical employee policy, with the growth of the industry. This has marked a sea change and is now well recognized to be one of the critical parameters of employee retention. Therefore, providing the best work environment and empowerment of employees remain the top priority of all biotech companies. Besides concentrating on providing the basic facilities, the companies with, each passing year, are adding new initiatives in order to keep the employees motivated.

Comfort zone

Performance of the employees is directly linked to their work environment. Therefore, the companies have been giving special attention on creating centralized AC facilities at their office locations. Apart from regular facilities such as library and subsidized canteen, companies are also making periodic celebrations a part of the work life. Also, the focus in many companies is to improve the IT infrastructure as it is directly associated with the employee performance.

Most of the top ranking biotech companies have formulated unique policies to make the employees comfortable. New Delhi-based Panacea Biotec, one of the leading vaccine players in India, believes that providing infrastructure facilities at work place is essential for employees to give their best. The company offers one of the best cafeteria facilities with well-equipped gymnasium and expansive green landscapes. Mr Kulvinder Sarao, vice president, HR, Panacea Biotec, says “We believe in the personal touch and this is what defines our company’s welfare policies, which is derived from our core value of being humane.”

Putting efforts to create a conducive campus environment, Reliance Life Sciences (RLS), which is based at Mumbai, has made a lot of improvements in terms of the architecture, landscaping, biological diversity and availability of various facilities that cater to the requirements, such as banking transactions, health and wellness and food and refreshments. The company has also brought in the fun element within the ambit of its day-to-day functioning. Mr KV Subramaniam, president, Reliance Life Sciences, says, “RLS lays significant emphasis on creating a work environment conducive to productivity at campus. Besides providing an in-house cafeteria, there is a gymnasium, a 24 hour tea and coffee vending facility, auditorium and round-the-clock in-house security.”

In addition to providing a similar work environment, Novozymes, one of the leading enzymes companies in the world, provides special attention to the employees by sponsoring their vacations up to a certain limit. Says Mr G S Krishnan, regional president, Novozymes, “For us, the work and life balance is important and we, therefore, give them all the facilities they deserve. We sponsor everything from free snacks to picnics and try to make them comfortable.”

A similar kind of work environment is provided to the employees by diagnostic companies as well. Mumbai-based Transasia Bio-Medicals, a leading diagnostics company, keeps recreation and work life equally balanced. Says Mr G Jayaraman, head — HR, administration and CSR, Transasia Bio-Medicals,“Providing conducive environment at work tops our priority list. Besides offering a healthy and hygienic canteen facility, we provide many recreational activities for the employees.”

For agri-biotech companies, the major focus is on creating a great environment for the scientists to work efficiently. Among these, Jalna-based, Mahyco, provides a pollution-free campus at its R&D center. According to Mr P L Gaekwad, vice president-HR, Mahyco, “Besides having transparent policies, we provide motivating and enabling work environment to our employees. For the benefit of the employees, we provide accommodation with amenities like gymnasium, a state-of-the-art auditorium, an air conditioned club house, and indoor and outdoor sports facilities.”

Transport services & flexible timings

Almost every company provides free transportation facilities to the employees for ensuring their safety. Besides the regular transport for commuting, many firms provide transport in case of emergencies. This includes air conditioned four-wheelers for employees engaged in field work. Apart from that, flexible work timings reduces the pressure on the employees.

Mr G Jayaraman of Transasia Bio-Medicals says, “Along with flexible timings for reporting for duties, we provide transport facility to commute to the nearby station and back”. Echoing similar views, Mr G S Krishnan of Novozymes says, “The major USP of Novozymes is that it is a employee-friendly organization and gives employees the option to work from home, whenever required, in order to maintain a work and life balance.”

A large number of agribiotech companies in India are family-run businesses and therefore, have flexible timings. These firms work based on mutual trust and rapport shared by employees with seniors. Companies like Ankur Seeds feel that the USP of their employee welfare policy is that being a family-run business, they provide an environment which makes the employee feel that he or she is a part of the family.

Even the companies who are only involved in marketing and do not have R&D setup, seem to have no reservations on flexible approach on work timings as far as it doesn’t hamper productivity. With a full fledged marketing set up in India, Gurgaon-based global biopharma giant, Eli Lilly, has a generous leave policy to improve work-life balance. In a year, an employee is entitled to almost 54 days of leave, over and above the regular weekends. The company has paternity leave of five days and adoption leave as well.

Health and insurance

Apart from the basic facilities, such as good campus, transportation and food, the companies also ensure that the employees remain safe while doing their jobs. The 24x7 medical facility and on-site consultation remains the top priority of companies. The benefit package at Reliance Life Sciences includes a group mediclaim policy for employees and their families. Employees working in the company are also covered with accident and life insurance. On similar lines, New Delhi-based CRO, Max Neeman International, offers complete hospitalization group coverage to all its employees and their family members, to address any health related problem. Says Ms Vipra Datta, senior manager HR, Max Neeman International, New Delhi, “We offer an accident policy cover to all employees and interest free loans from the employee contingency fund are applicable to all employees in case of any tragedy.”

Eli Lilly has created an all India 24x7 helpline to provide medical assistance and guidance round the clock in case of an emergency. It also provides on-site physician consultation. Mr Sameer Bhariok, director-HR, says “We have a physician to provide in-house medical consultation to our employees. Regular communication on outbreaks and epidemics is carried out to ensure that employees are well aware of the medical conditions.”

Similarly, all employees at Mahyco are covered 24X7 against accidental death to the extent of their 80 months gross emoluments. According to Mr P L Gaekwad, vice president, HR, “Employees are also covered under group annual medical check-up arrangements with leading hospitals and are also covered under life insurance.”

Rewards and recognition

Various innovative forms of rewards and recognition of contribution is one of the key aspects in HR function. Besides the welfare policies for employees like career planning, competency development programs and rewards and recognition scheme, there are some policies which are unique to various companies. Among these is an opportunity for employees to go for higher

education. Educational tie-ups with reputed institutes where employees are deputed for research fellowship program also lies on the top agenda of some companies. The employees are also sent for participating in national and international symposiums in order to enhance their knowledge base.

To recognize and promote positive behavior in the employees, Reliance Life Sciences has advanced diploma programs in place, wherein the fresh graduates and postgraduates are groomed by in-house faculties and are put to classroom and on-the-job training. The company also has rewards and recognition programs like Employee of the Year, Leader of the Year, Scholar of the Year. “We also have monthly retreats, a forum where the CEO shares business performance with the employees and the staff share the latest developments in their functional areas, says Mr K V Subramaniam of Reliance Life Sciences.

<big>Rahul Koul</big> in New Delhi