

Multiskilling or Specialization? The need for it in today's hospitality field

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Abstract

Teamwork based hospitality organizations involve a lot of Inter and Intra departmental activities based on human Resource, Service Handling and Recoveries. The mission is one and that is Exceeding guest Expectations by providing Quality Service. Hospitality Management looks for manpower that can be easily molded according to the Mission and vision of the company. Staff is expected to handle varied jobs Responsibilities, as the Guest is not aware of the Core Fields of service or the forte of the hotel staff. They expect the employees to have solutions to all the problems they are facing and look for immediate Responses and Actions.

This results in shifting of more Responsibilities from upper management to workers and the pressure to sustain in the competitive hospitality field forces them to be multi-skilled which is a bonus for the lean organizations which cannot afford much of the staff due to less budget or funds.

Organization have brought a shift in the hiring procedures and they are not looking for Manpower possessing a limited set of Skills but a staff having varied skill sets so they can make the optimum utilization of their skills. With the increase in expectations, there emphasis on cost reduction tools are also increasing and hotels are not willing to compromise on the productivity aspect too. Multiskilling provides a better flexibility to assign the tasks to workers in case of less demand and also not relevant to their work of specialization. The outcome of a worker who is specialized in a particular field will not be the same as that of a worker who is multi-skilled which results in variations in the output or the results thus affecting the market image of the brand. This is because of the growing competition that the skills are overlapping each other and cost of skilled labor is also increasing. The scenario results in two broad perspectives, which we refer to as “flexibility” and “productivity”.

Keywords: *flexibility, paradoxically, incentive, productivity, perspective*

Introduction

Exemplifying the term multiskilling

The workplace philosophy now a day is not about minding your own work or sticking to only those tasks, which are specified in your job description. it is about adding value to other business too and exploring other streams. With the increase in job recession the need to known and learn more has become imperative and firms are on the verge of implementing multi-technological training initiations. Today's corporate work scenario expects a lot more from their employees in terms of upgrading their skills and productivity.

Companies expect them to be multi-skilled and contribute to the work outside their job profile. With this the companies are making themselves cost effective and efficient in terms of Resource management. Multiskilling helps in avoiding Redundancies in the system and gives an added advantage to the company which they can encash at the time of contingencies by creating a pool of employees that fits into job profile, reducing pressure and increasing output.

Multiskilling can be a great tool for promoting an increase in the skill refinement by expanding knowledge in the concerned areas and fields which serves as an add-on at the time of career progression. Giving the staff or workforce extra burden or tasks to achieve without thinking about their desire, skill, time and support will eventually end up in failures. Multiskilling could only be made possible in an organization when the staff has the desired skill and willingness to go for an extra mile and learn. Motivation plays an important role in achieving that desire.

Specialization and its elucidation

Labor who is specialized in what he does makes him expert of his field making him more efficient which lowers the cost of production. Specializing in a particular field helps worker builds his Reputation for expertise in his/her Area but at the same time limits his opportunities when the area of specialization is less important to the employer or not much in the demand or holds less importance due to recession or any other circumstances for that matter.

Usually at the beginning of the career, specialists tend to get higher pays as they are harder to replace but the disadvantages usually hit in the mid careers as innovation. The main problem with the specialization is that the worker can become over specialize making them proficient at their work and after a certain period of time they will get bored or dissatisfied as the set of tasks will get repeated on a daily basis. This can also hamper the output of the workers and can also lead to absenteeism. Multiskilling resolves the problem of manpower crisis to a large extent.

Objective of the study

The aim is to study about two very important tools for hiring personnel for hospitality “multiskilling and specialization “. Choosing one and looking for the desired qualities in the employees is the dilemma of the new age hotels. The objective is to make out which one serves for the betterment of both employee and employer in terms of process improvement, productivity, job security and satisfaction. The objective is to also find out which of these bring easy flow of work barring all deficiencies and the implications of the same on both employee and business. The research focuses on hospitality field, as they are more likely to invest and upgrade their manpower and resources in order to provide exceptional service due to competitive environment in the field of hospitality. The research also examines the feasibility of both multiskilling and specialization in today’s hospitality scenario and to choose one over other by studying the pros, cons and beneficial factors.

Research methodology

Coverage of the study: -This descriptive research paper is confined to study the two basic aspects for hiring in the field of hospitality and their impacts from the business’s and employee’s view point.

Sources of Data: -The study is based on secondary data collected through various books, business magazines, journals, newspapers, Internet websites and research studies.

Data Analysis: Analysis of data and information collected from published sources were made keeping the objectives of the study in mind.

Review of literature

Researchers have done studies based on the implications and effects of both multiskilling and specialization on hospitality operations. Work Specialization is a key element of organizational structure (Sree Rama Rao, SEPTEMBER 8, 2008). Quality improves when more of the work that goes into a final product is done by people who are good at it(thomas W malone ,2004) “Multiskilling is part of a raft of changes that organizations may introduce with the aim of improving efficiency and competitiveness, reducing costs, improving quality, increasing production and so on” (Dr Caroline Horbury & Michael Wright, 2001). “With the implementation of multi-skilling, a number of job

positions will be lumped together into a single category with a single salary range”(G. Rajasekaran, 25 July 2002).

The Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) defines multiskilling as “the acquisition of additional skills, supplementing those already achieved in a given craft” (EEF, 1993). Whilst the Oil Industry Advisory Committee (HSC, 1998) defines multiskilling as “a way of working where the traditional divisions between work areas and separate disciplines are removed, and individuals are given responsibility for a range of different types of task.” Incomes Data Services state that “multiskilling is where workers are trained to undertake a limited range of functions in other trades, with due regard to safe working practices” (IDS, 1996). Furthermore they assert that it is not about making employees competent in two disciplines, but equipping staff with additional skills relevant to the efficient running of the business

“Labor flexibility (via multiskilling) in all aspects of the employment relationship has provided organizations with the capability to match the supply and demand for labor more closely and thus achieve more efficiency in the management of labor (Kelliher& Riley 2002).”“The goals of multiskilling are related to job enlargement (wider range of job tasks), rotation, and enrichment (more complexity of tasks) (Campling, Poole, Wiesner, & Schermerhorn 2006)”

“A positive employment relationship can influence a higher level of service delivery because an employee’s behaviour is dependent on their fair treatment in the employment relationship in regard to remuneration and career prospects”(Lucas 2004, Koutromanis 2008). Maximum number of hotels agrees that multi competency leads to better productivity, achieves greater guest satisfaction & gives both short term & long term financial benefits. PulakMandal, June 2012. “While specialization is an efficient mode of production in a firm that produces existing products, multiskilling is a more efficient production mode in a firm where new products are continuously introduced.”The introduction of new products provides workers with new leaning opportunities in the process of production (Stokey 1988; Young 1991; and Park 1996).” Treating multiskilling as an endogenous choice changes its estimated effect on product quality from zero to positive and substantially increases the estimated magnitude of its (positive) effect on financial performance (M.farnham, 2011). Training of employees, “in more than one skill, also makes them capable of handling support functions, symbiotic to the job at hand, thus saving the organization monetary resources in terms of additional recruitment and staffing” (stuti pandey,2004)

Augment productivity to elevate the bottom line

A large fluctuation occurs in almost every business significantly in lean and peak season. Most hotels tend to hire staff during the peak season when the demand for services are high but are scared of having idle staff or in other terms think that they are overstaffed as the need or demand for services are very less during that time. The same can be resolved if there is interdepartmental training of staff and the staff in which the staff will acquire skills and competencies of other work or related fields in the same area thus creating a conducive environment to enhance productivity. With the increase in interdepartmental interactions and multiskilling, an environment or a culture of informality sets in within the business or company affecting a pace of work in a positive manner.

The pre-eminence point

The employee or worker who has attained mastery in his or her skills and trade and is subsequently training himself in concerned fields in the same domain finds himself at a vantage stage wherein the confidence of the candidate goes leaps and bounds and he is able to perform his duties with much more preciseness and with zero error and also evade boredom and prevents torpidity and stagnation from setting in.

Issues in hospitality



Specialization or multiskilling. The feasibility test

Specialization or having a forte or mastery over a field might help you enter into a job profile but in order to sustain you need to move out from a nutshell and become a part of change process. There are no minuses of multiskilling and the employee will continue to nourish his one core field but will also accustom himself to the ancillary fields which will prove as an add-on for him and will also avoid monotony in work and expand his Realm.

Multiskilling can only be implemented or can be brought into place if the employee believes in his multiskilling capabilities and the employer acknowledges the hard word of employee and provides him with the opportunities to get multiskilled. Multiskilling never results in diluting of the specialization on the contrary it helps the employee to gain confidence in himself by doing varied challenging tasks and at the same time sticking to his/her core field .

Multiskilling Vs Specialization

MULTI-SKILLING	WORK SPECIALIZATION
From Employee perspective- Reduce the risk of insecurity in jobs for the employees	Jobs can become too monotonous and simplified creating a sense of insecurity among employees
From Employee perspective-Better job opportunities for the multiskilled employee as he is not confined to one profile.	Lesser job opportunities as switching of job is difficult due to limited skills
From company’s perspective – they will have a flexible workforce, which serves an aid to them at the time of lean period.	Rigid Workforce with monotonous job
From company’s perspective Easy cross functional posting of employees as per the organization needs.	Employees are confined to their own field or profile.
Makes the employee diversified, increasing his skill sets and motivational level.	Employee stick to their core fields confining their skills.

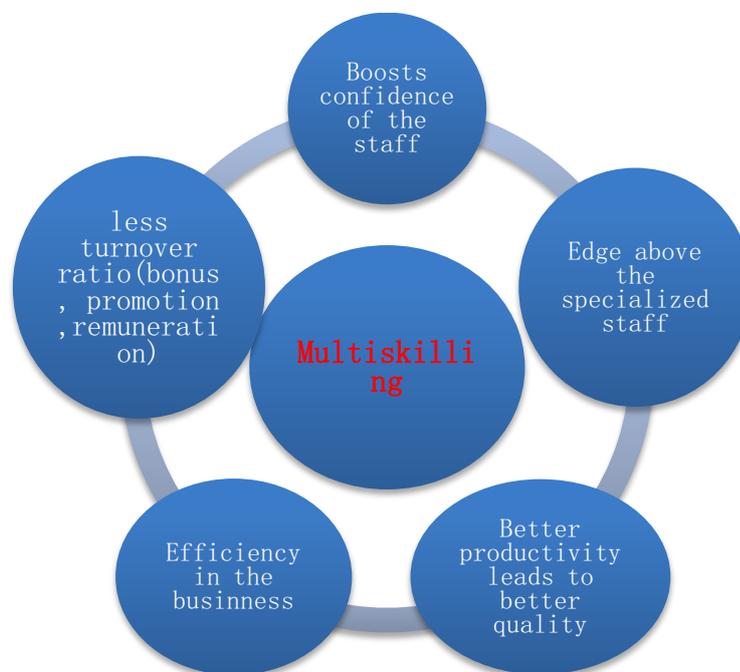
The kaizen principle and multiskilling

According to kaizen, A Japanese organizational philosophy, everyone in the work pyramid, be it worker, supervisor or manager needs to be involved in order to improve the business and to cope up with the competitive environment. The principle never relies on investment but on the improvement of process and employees output with the help of finding ways for continuous improvement.

Multiskilling over specialization

It increases the overall productivity and performance of the employee by breaking down departmental barriers and by providing opportunities to widen their skills and competencies. Multiskilling gives employees an added over advantage by giving them a platform to deal with unpredictable situations in the field of hospitality thus enabling them to be a part of the important strategies and tasks which boosts their confidence and will also add to their job profiles. Multiskilling reduces Employee turnover ratio. Employees leave or look for options when they find a dead end or hindrances in their career path. The variety in job profiles leads to better work quality, which in turn results in sustainability of employees.

Hotel employees get fair remunerations to encourage them in multiskilling themselves, which also provides a sense of job security leading to internal promotions and pay hikes.



Conclusion

Single skilled workers or specialized hotel staff will have lesser job satisfaction as compared to the multi-skilled workforce. But to bring out the best from a multi-skilled labor the employees should get a feeling of learning something new and acquiring new competencies. the moment they get a feeling of overloaded work pressure, then the organization will not be able to convert their single skilled workforce into a multi-skilled one. This can only be achieving by developing detailed processes and training of staff. Multi-skilled at anytime is preferred over specialization as Multiskilling is seen as a driver of learning opportunities and a provider of tangible and intangible benefits to both employee and hotel business. But there are times and it is seen in the industry that multiskilling leads to frustration at times as the expectations of the employer increases thus making them uncomfortable and they have to strife between their current roles and core fields.

Multiskilling training can also backfire so the training of hospitality employees needs consideration and feedback at individual levels. Being a developmental process the better the training form the easier will be the role reversal process.

The key Imperatives

There are some key imperatives that hold the success of multiskilling in hospitality. There are

1. The hospitality business's ability to identify skills that can be transformed into multiskilling.
2. The employer's initiative to create an environment of learning and cross functioning.
3. How to craft a sense of multiskilling in the hospitality environment in order to make a positive impact on the business.

Scope for further research

Not all specialized or single skilled hospitality professionals can be multiskilled. Many hospitality businesses consider multiskilled to be level- agnostic. Avoiding retrenchment and increasing output in terms of providing services is the need for today's hospitality business. Taking the Decision of transforming all staff into a multiskilled one will not be feasible. Multiskilling being a mindset and not a task require filtering of the workers or staff who can be multiskilled after some level of training. The basis of selecting those staff that could be multiskilled is a research process of its own. If the staffs (without any consideration) are multiskilled then the cost of training increases but the output of the staff is unsure and the probabilities of getting a multiskilled staff decreases. There are some barriers too which comes in the way of multiskilling and there is a need for addressing these issues before the procedure of multiskilling of workforce is initiated.

Multiskilling has to be practiced in moderation by the hotels as the employees might show reluctance towards their training. They might not be able to relate their roles and core strengths to the work they are expected to do and this results in conflicts in their minds. In such a fast pace and competitive environment everybody wants to equip himself with different forte and this leads to multiskilling, which directly affects the organizational levels and hierarchy. Multiskilling surely is the need for today's hospitality business. Types and methods for multiskilling is again the other important field of research to make out which one suits the hospitality organization.

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