ALIGNING EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP) IN THE ERA OF NEW NORMAL REALITY- AN ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic is upsetting the business world, in overcoming the difficulties organizations must choose the option to audit their techniques to defeat the emergency. The worldwide COVID-19 lockdown impact affected our own and expert lives. ABC&D Enterprise is presently undergoing a plan of rolling out EAP digitally in considering the present Pandemic condition. The responsibility of rolling out the digital platform was given to newly appointed Chief Happiness Officer of the company. The CHO formed team consisting of techno functional members who are primarily responsible for implementation of Digital employee wellbeing platform within given span of time (Syriopoulos, 2020).

Keywords: Covid-19, Lockdown Impact, EAP, Business Procedures, Psychological Well-Being, Digital Employee Wellbeing Platform.

INTRODUCTION

India announced the primary affirmed instance of the Covid-19 contamination on 30 January 2020. On 24 March 2020, the Government of India and other state Governments requested a cross country lockdown for 21 days, restricting of the whole 1.3 billion populaces of India as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 pandemic in India. About 90% of IT representatives and 70-80% of BPO and little and medium organizations in the area are assessed to be telecommuting to guarantee business congruity. Most business pioneers have chosen to dispatch advanced change activities to keep organizations running as easily as conceivable during the COVID-19 flare-up and to all the more likely get ready for the recuperation stage. The unexpected move in work culture negatively affected by and large worker wellbeing and prosperity. Stress, uneasiness, and other psychological well-being issues have consistently been there, and it is no new story. Associations have consistently been starting wellbeing programs and furnishing representatives with security, medical advantages, and adaptability to assist them with conquering their medical problems.

This disordered circumstance is constraining organizations over the globe to reevaluate their business procedures. The unexpected move in work culture has brought new difficulties for workforce management professionals. The first concern for HR experts is presently emergency reaction and how to keep the representatives connected with, give the correct correspondence channels and instruments for far off work, and that's just the beginning (Clouse, 2021).

Company Background

In Adapting to the reality ABC&D enterprise has planned to adopt new normal reality in

continuing business operations virtually. ABC&D is an Original Equipment Manufacturing Designer Founded in 2005 and it has more than 1500 workers spread over 6 Indian workplaces in Chennai (HQ), Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Coimbatore, and advancement place in Singapore. Since the firm is experiencing virtual mode of operation regarding this preceding the CHRO of the enterprise is thinking with his team members in aligning EAP with accessible digital reality. At the end of the brain storming session the responsibility of formulating the framework to rollout EAP digitally was given to newly established CHO-Chief Happiness Officer of the firm with the limited time span of 60 days. The critics with ABC&D were being low digital presence being an OEM Designer.

In our relentless, upsetting world, it's not bizarre for an association to have a few representatives battling with work environment related pressure or private matters. These issues can influence a worker's work execution and performance through lowering down efficiency levels, expanded non-attendance and tense associations with colleagues. Workplace counseling is treatment offered to representatives of an organization, regularly through an EAP, that furnishes representatives with a protected spot to examine any issues that they're battling with. A counseling administration offered by an EAP regularly incorporates both in-person counseling or as a phone-based helpline. While emotional well- being of representatives had consistently been an intriguing issue of conversation, it is urging to see associations putting forth attempts to guarantee that their workers' psychological wellness remains their main concern, particularly during these dubious occasions.

As close to home space converges into proficient, working hours have extended and representatives can't turn off intellectually and inwardly. This will affect physical and mental prosperity. So, organizations are starting to reconsider their protection approaches, pay structure, leave and Employee prosperity arrangements and so forth.

Aligning to New normal Reality-Managing the Millennials

The genuine idea of representatives going distant, correspondence network courses have been altogether undermined, leaving the directors dumbfounded or if nothing else less cognizant. In an ongoing COVID-19 heartbeat overview, HR experts over the globe reacted wellbeing and prosperity of the laborers to be a significant concern. The progress to distant work culture isn't as consistent as it appears. Before the COVID-19 flare-up, under half of organizations had a distant work program. Financial institution, controlled enterprises, and numerous monetary administrations organizations didn't support far off working. Presently practically every one of them racing to fabricate distant work procedures.

Benefits towards Employees

1. Quick access to educated counsellors
2. A quiet room to chat about their concerns
3. Helping workers understand themselves better
4. Maintaining or strengthening coping abilities
5. Developing reliable alternatives to issues
6. Learning to look at challenges from a more optimistic perspective from diverse views

Benefits for Employers

1. Greater productivity of workers, leading to gains in productivity
2. Reduced absenteeism of workers

3. Lower levels of attrition among workers
4. Effective approach to cope with sensitive circumstances or troublesome behavioral team members
5. Develops a reputation as a business which cares about employees.

In adopting to reality, CHO formed techno functional team of 10 members including a in house counsellor along with new health care vendor to rollout digital accessibility of EAP.On26 March 2020 meeting was scheduled with key executives of enterprise to discuss the requirements and functional needs to float the digital wellbeing program. In the meeting the CEO questioned to the panel formed by CHO "*is it really possible to build a medium to connect with employees in enabling the employee wellbeing*". CHO replied "*yes, it is possible but being an enterprise with low digital presence needs little long way to implement the plan*". The meeting ended with critical discussion with setting faster deadline of 60 days with condition of not rolling out leads to fully outsourced EAP platform irrespective of the financial constraints (Salem et al., 2020; Mansour & Salem, 2020).

The key Considerations in the Meeting were

1. A virtual Peer to Peer platform with zero charge
2. 24*7 counsellor support
3. Medical support system
4. Feedback system
5. Platform with encrypted Security and High confidentiality
6. A new system bounding to legal and regulatory standards
7. Employee query Redressal platform
8. A new Normal platform for employees and their family members

Considering occasions to upskill representatives and cross aptitude groups. Give admittance to instruments and web-based learning stages to enable representatives, increment authoritative capacity, labor force adaptability and versatility. Representative commitment and resilience with help of EAP interventions.

The Transitions towards Digitality

It's elusive the energy to stay inspired in a period of emergency. Setting a reasonable and short guide for association's targets will activate and excite the workers around a shared objective. This is likewise a decent an ideal opportunity to rearticulate the enterprise real- time philosophies, which help keep individuals grounded in the natural and give them a guide for exploring vulnerability. The pandemic emergency had the HR experts on toes and kept them searching for the correct far off working apparatuses that suit their way of life. In spite of the fact that device applications like teams or meet are regularly used to address the issues of the labor force, it absolutely isn't sufficient to get everybody in the same spot. The abrupt move to telecommuting can possibly de-rail execution. It is critical to make sure representatives have adequate foundation, adaptability and backing to manage their responsibility as well as could be expected under the current conditions (Priyono et al., 2020).

The overwhelming sensation of not understanding what's on the horizon or what measures to take to support hierarchical activities is an immense test. We as a whole are pretty much influenced by vulnerability. Representatives are influenced intellectually, not understanding what's on the horizon for them, and the HR groups are battling to place everything in

arrangement. A definitive organization objective is the efficiency of its workers. It gets testing to keep the representatives connected with when they are working distantly and that as well, in an emergency. The inner correspondence is undermined, and keeping everybody in the same spot gets extreme. With distant working, it is hard to follow a daily schedule and even aside from a methodical work process. Following the Philosophy of "Employee first customer next" Budget was not a problem for the enterprise being profitable since its inception. In time of advanced reality for the two gatherings, supporting prosperity successfully requires an all- encompassing methodology that tends to psychological well-being and commitment with the psychosocial contemplations in the new workplace. The subsequent profound exhaustion aggravates all the anxieties of home working and childcare, just as the significant wellbeing fears of getting back to their work environment. This can show in specialists feeling caught and ambushed in a path inconspicuous previously, making the new burnout a genuine possibility (Priyono et al., 2020).

Problem Statement

1. What are the difficulties in Aligning EAP digitally?
2. Identify the Key stakeholders in ABC&D?
3. As a CHO how will you form a team and rollout the responsibilities to the techno functional team members?
4. Provide a successful roadmap for Implementing EAP digitally?
5. What are the different modes of delivering EAP?
6. What are the other considerations to be made by HR in designing EAP?
7. What are the interventions needed to frame during post-implementation of EAP?
8. Is it good to collaborate EAP system with HRIS of the enterprise?
9. General Suggestions.

Synopsis

ABC&D is OEM designer Headquartered in Chennai with workforce population of 1500 has plan to Rollout EAP digitally in considering the pandemic condition. The CEO in discussion With CHRO has formed a new department under the new appointed leadership of Chief Happiness Officer. In understanding the condition, the CHO has formed techno functional team to begin the process of implementing EAP. This case study will provide a brief proceeding on the organization undergoing's towards digital aligning interventions and their difficulties.

Target Group

This case study is designed generally to all the students Irrespective of their domain of interest, the focus is to provide the qualitative knowledge on employee assistance Program in considering the uncertain condition of new normal reality. This case generally fits to all graduate or postgraduate programs where issues related to workplace counselling are discussed.

Learning Objective

1. The primary objective of the case is to enable the understanding and importance of digital Employee assistantship and infrastructure
2. To provide managerial framework support during the process of implementation.

The Class Strategy

This case study can be solved in team of 4-5 members by taking the individual responsibility as given in the case like CHRO, CHO, Counsellor, and Vendor with differential outcomes in fitting to the dynamic business environment.

Experiences on using the Case

The case enables the readers to understand and experience the dynamic shift happened in the corporate world on account of COVID-19 outbreak. It provides overall perspective from the organization side in designing and implementing EAP during pandemic outbreak. The readers will able to analyze the case study with the help of conceptual knowledge in bringing the realtime solutions to build the digital gap.

Teaching Notes

Difficulties in aligning EAP digitally

In this new normal era various enterprises are undergoing dynamic changes in their business structure. The prime consideration of these changes is to enable effective wellbeing of the employee and customers. On the other side these changes will give ultimate pressure on the employees. In order to overcome above downslides Enterprises started implementing Employee Assistance Program for the structural wellbeing of the workforce. But in the era of virtual space there are few constraints in rolling out EAP digitally, the following are:

1. Low confidentiality
2. Non reliable Technology
3. Privacy data breaches
4. Low response rate during the crisis situation
5. Access to Non appropriate therapy
6. Ethical and Legal Concerns
7. Not same as real
8. Not appropriate for severe issues

Key Stakeholders in ABC&D

The following are the key stakeholders who involve decision making process in the enterprise

1. Employees
2. CHRO
3. CHO
4. In house counsellor
5. External Vendor

The main aim of the above stakeholders is having a common objective to rollout the EAP digitally

Team Formation

In considering the above case scenario the following are the team members and their level of

hierarchy shown in Figure 1.
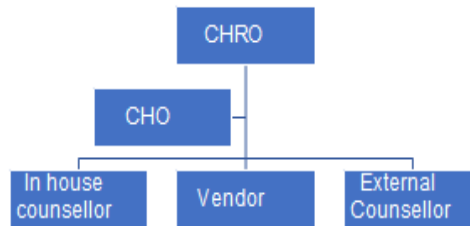
FIGURE 1
TEAM CHART OF ABC&D

Responsibilities of CHO

1. Formulating Techno functional team in Rolling out new EAP plan
2. Vendor selection
3. Motivating and Engaging Employees
4. Ensuring employee happiness

In-house Counsellor

1. Helping to maximize key employee skills.
2. To further build a community of greater synergy in the learning and growth of organizations.
3. Help workers raise their self-awareness to make them more successful in their jobs as a person and in exchange, more efficient.

Vendor

1. Insurance and Health compensation Benefits.
2. Counselling and other allied health care service.

CHO Decision in the Perspective of the Pandemic

An extensive range of things can distress an employee's work performance, from mental health and relationships to stress caused by workplace and financial struggle. Employee assistance programs give employers a way to help their teams handle the struggles of life before they have a noticeable impact at work. EAP's are important and helps the employee to overcome from the relationship issues, personal stress, workplace stress, depression, anxiety. Employee Assistance Programs can help and tackle these issues and preventing significant issues from impacting performance, productivity and morale. EAP's can support our business in the following ways: a)Reduce cost related to poor performance b)Improves productivity c) Strengthen workplace Mental Health, d) Reduce Absenteeism d) Attract Top Talent. DCM group (2018). An employee assistance program is envisioned to confirm that employees can cope up their daily lives while remaining productive, even in the midst of perplexing circumstances or experiences. And while it's certainly a benefit for the workers, there is clear research to suggest that it's equally beneficial for employers (Hughes & Fairley, 2020).

EAP implementation Road Map

Technology remains the same without the human involvement behind it, in the era transformation firm which has higher ability in filling the gap will lead to project pioneer position in their respective industries shown in Figure 2.
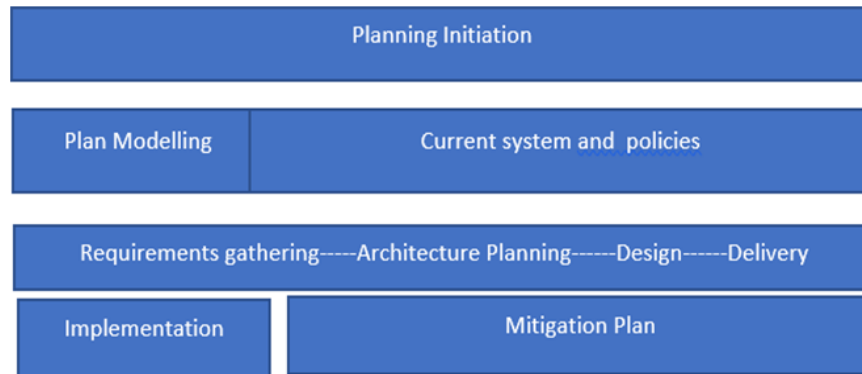

FIGURE 2
EAP METHODOLOGY (BASE SOURCE: SPEWAK & HILL 1992)

EAP Delivery Models

The assistance of delivering EAP can be in different formats like mental wellbeing, Personal financial Advisory, advice to Misuse of substance, performance advisory etc. The general models of Delivering EAP delivery.

1. Management sponsored - Directly provided by Employer
2. Fixed- fee contracts- building contract for various services
3. Fee-for-service contracts - Paying only service is delivered
4. Consortia- micro business program with low-cost involvement
5. Peer Assistance programs - Sponsored model
6. Child care program
7. Mixed model Program - Amalgamation of different model.

Considerations in Designing EAP

HR Professionals Play a Key Role in Bringing Change Interventions inside the Organization

Key role of HR	Other Key Aspects
Vendor selection	Communication
Service location	Legal Compliance in Aligning to COBRA, HIPAA, ERISA etc.
Scope of services	Bounding to regulatory standards
Referral rates	
Frequency	
Recovery rate	
Client confidentiality	

Interventions after Post Implementation

1. Post policy changes
2. Legal and regulatory standards and compliance
3. Communication and Training through proper channel
4. Establishing different methods of service accessibility
5. Creating service Quality standards
6. Space for customized data reporting
7. Omni channel presence

Aligning EAP with HRIS

Yes, it is good to align EAP with HRIS in ensuring confidentiality and Security

1. Benefits
2. Dashboard Management
3. Track and trace
4. Information Gathering
5. Attendance Management
6. Creative State of Workforce Pre and Post Implementation changes in terms of productivity, Turnover etc.

Suggestion in Designing EAP

1. Ensuring Qualifications and credentials of the counsellor and vendor
2. Scope of Training
3. Considering space for employee's children welfare
4. Creating mode of convenience and responsiveness
5. Aligning with technological accessibility in ensuring confidentiality
6. Setting effective feedback redressal system

The overall benefits of Implementing EAP digitally will make the Enterprises in positive experiences like: a) Creative state of workforce, b) Supportive state of environment, c) Balance state of mind, d) Progressive state of performance, e) Protective state of knowledge.

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