

Employee Engagement: An Indian Perspective for Flexi Festival Holidays as a Tool to Enhance Productivity

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Abstract

Each year most of the organizations are forced to compromise on account of lost man hours due to festival holidays spread throughout the year. The bigger the company with spread in different geographies with in the country the loss is relatively bigger. From employee perspective also it is no good fun in many times and these holidays are not utilized by them fully. If the new approach is adopted with flexibility in holidays, it would be a win-win situation for both employees as well as employer. It will have a positive impact on productivity and employee engagement.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Flexi Holidays, Productivity, Indian, Festivals

Introduction

Productivity in mathematical terms is the ratio between output and input. Productivity simply does not mean the additional output but it could be the similar output with reduced input or vice versa. In those industries where the cost of labour and capital is low as compared to the material cost, the focus remains on the cost reduction of material so as to improve productivity.

In other industries where it is capital intensive, technology intensive, skilled manpower intensive etc, the focus shifts according to the requirements.

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In totality any improvement in manpower productivity will definitely add value to any kind of industry.

The concept of employee engagement is not very old. There is no universal definition of employee engagement. Different literatures have presented it in their own languages. The common accepted fact is that it impacts both the employees as well as employers. It is considered that employee engagement plays an important role in overall organizational health. The level of commitment and involvement towards the fulfillment of organizations goal and objective in line with the vision is always high with engaged employee. It is the state in which employees are emotionally and intellectually committed towards the organization. As per the Gallup consulting group there are three types of people in organization namely engaged, not engaged and actively disengaged. Engaged employees have clarity of goals and objectives and are aware about the surroundings. They consistently perform at high level. Not engaged employees are those who are focused about the task and not much bothered about the outcome and overall goal and objective. Actively disengaged are those who are unhappy at work. Employee engagement is well talked about in many organizations and a lot of business houses are getting feedback and doing studies of this critical component for overall growth. A lot of activities are being done by such organizations to improve the engagement level of their employees towards the organization. There are various components of employee's engagement and out of those family friendliness and co-operation is very important. Family life of any person influences his or her work life. When an individual realizes that the organization is concerned about his or her family's benefit also, it will have an emotional attachment with the organization which will lead towards engagement. Similar way if the organization and employee works together by helping each other considering each others requirement, this too will lead towards enhanced engagement.

There is a lot of literature available in the field of manpower productivity and employee engagement too is getting a lot of focus. Gallup, Hewitt etc are some world famous consulting organizations which are engaged in doing studies and involved in extending support in the field of employee engagement measurement and improvement.

Data and Analysis

In each organization, apart from weekly off, there are several holidays in each calendar year on account of different festivals. The numbers of it vary from company to company however more or less the number of it remains within certain bracket industry wise. States as well as central Government follow their own rules and are flexible only in case of restricted holidays. Certain other bodies follow the same festival holidays year after year.

Private companies have the constraints only with respect of National Holidays and in case of festivals many companies have flexibility in changing it on year on year basis. The flexibility is adopted mainly with minor festivals as by and large the total holidays in a calendar year remain fixed for each year.

Earlier most of the Indian organizations were very particular about the fixed timings in working to be considered present on any working day. Then the time came when the concept of five working days in a week was evolved and adopted by several organizations. On one hand the objective was to improve the efficiency of manpower with better engagement and on the other hand it was a cost benefit with respect to the operational administrative cost on sixth day. Later on with the change in time and requirement few companies, especially IT companies, shifted towards flexi timings. Now there are many businesses which have gone even one step ahead and even work from home is not uncommon.

It is a critical component of effectiveness. It is used by many organizations as a tool for the improvement of recruitments and retention. Lot of research shows that it reduces the stress level among employees and help in employees engagement.

Flexible timing in routine gives the flexibility to the employee to start and finish the day as per his convenience. In the organizations where it is practiced, an employee needs to remain at workplace at pre decided core hours and total working hours in a week. Suppose the pattern in the organization is to work forty hours in a week and eight hours in a day. In flexi timings suppose twelve noon to four PM is decided as core working hours and total day is extended from 8 AM to 8 PM. In this way employee have the flexibility to start his day early and finish early or start late and finish late as per his or her requirements.

In such type of arrangements an employee does not require to take forced leave on account of few hours work which he or she needs to undertake during the working hours only. It gives an edge to such organizations which are rigid with respect to working hours in spite of scope of flexibility. There is a social advantage also as if it is accepted in most of the organizations; it will reduce the peak hour concept as the traffic will be spread throughout.

Though there are disadvantages also as many of the resources at the work place need to be used extra hours like electricity, maintenance, support services etc. Management will also find it difficult to arrange important meetings as it will be practically possible only during core hours. This will also pose a threat to other companies in the similar industry as they too will feel pressure to adopt the similar working way. Also it will be relatively tough to go back to the previous method of working if such requirement comes up.

We are living in a country which is full of religions and so festivals. Each festival has its own values and significance and is celebrated by respective followers. On one hand where there is lot of importance of major festivals and on the other hand there is a lot of cost and planning involved in it. Take the case of festival like Diwali which is one of those festivals which is celebrated by maximum number of people in our country. As a rough estimate the expenditure involved in this festival would be more than the sum of expenditure involved in all other festivals across the country in whole year. Even the consumption of sweet in this week would be a very large percentage of total sweet consumed throughout the year. The similar is the issue with festivals like Holi, Dusherra, Eid, Pongal, Christmas and other national and regional festivals. The festival day comes along with more days of significance which are prior and after the main day and makes it a virtual festival week. On top of it nearby Saturday/Sunday makes it total holiday week. An analysis is done on this year's holidays as per below table.(Annexure1)

Table 1: List of Holiday as Per Central Govt.Holiday List 2012				
S.N O	HOLIDAY	DATE	DAY	REMAR KS
1	Republic Day	26th January 2012	Thursday	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	27TH Jan.	FRIDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	26TH TO 29TH MAR	4 DAYS	
2	ID-E-Milad	5th February 2012	Sunday	
3	Maha Shivaratri	20th February 2012	Monday	
			3 DAYS	
4	Holi	8th March 2012	Thursday	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	9TH March	FRIDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	8TH TO 11TH MAR	4 DAYS	
5	Mahavir Jayanti	5th April 2012	Thursday	
	TAKE LEAVES ON	2,3 & 4th APR	MON,TUE,WED	3
	TOTAL VACATIONS	31 MAR TO 8TH APR	9 DAYS	
6	Good Friday	6th April 2012	Friday	Took above
7	Buddha Purnima	6th May, 2012	Sunday	
8	Janamashtami (Vaisnava)	10th August 2012	Friday	
			3 DAYS	
9	Independence Day	15th August 2012	Wednesday	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	13rd & 14TH Aug	MONDAY & TUESDAY	2
	TOTAL VACATIONS	11th TO 15TH Aug.	5 DAYS	
10	Idul Fitr	20th August 2012	Monday	
			3 DAYS	
11	Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday	2nd October 2012	Tuesday	
	TAKE A LEAVE	1st oct.12	Monday	1

	ON			
	TOTAL VACATIONS	29 sep TO 2 oct	4 DAYS	
12	Dussehra (Vijaya Dashami)	24th October 2012	Wednesday	
	TAKE LEAVES ON	22 & 23 October	MONDAY & TUESDAY	2
	TOTAL VACATIONS	20TH TO 24TH Oct.	5 DAYS	
13	Idul Zuha (Bakrid)	27th October 2012	Saturday	
14	Diwali (Deepavali)	13th November 2012	Tuesday	
	TAKE LEAVES ON	12th oct.12	MONDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	10 TO 13 OCT	4 DAY	
15	Muharram	25th November 2012	Sunday	
16	Guru Nanak's Birthday	28th November 2012	Wednesday	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	26th to 27TH Nov.	MONDAY & TUESDAY	2
	TOTAL VACATIONS	24th TO 28th Nov.	5 DAYS	
17	Christmas Day	25th December 2012	Tuesday	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	24th Dec.	MONDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	22th TO 25th Dec.	4 DAYS	
			53 DAYS	14

It is evident from table 2 that against the scheduled 13 festival holidays (Excluding Saturday and Saturday) an employee may avail 53 days holiday in twelve slots. Only June and July are two months where there is no holiday clubbing because of festivals however in June normally there remains school holidays due to summer vacations in schools and in those days lot of employees plan their holidays as per their respective leave entitlements.

Situation remains more or less similar if we see it in the next year. Here also an employee may avail 50 days holiday just by taking 14 days leaves and club it with festival holidays.(Annexure 2)

Table 2: List of Holiday as Per Central Govt.Holiday List 2013				
S.N O	HOLIDAY	DATE	DAY	REMARKS
1	ID-E-Milad	25TH JAN	FRIDAY	
			3 DAYS	
2	REPUBLIC DAY	26TH JAN	SATURDAY	
3	HOLI	27TH MAR	WEDNESDAY	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	25 TO 26 MAR	MONDAY & TUESDAY	2
	TOTAL VACATIONS	23TH TO 27TH MAR	5 DAYS	
4	Good Friday	29TH MAR	FRIDAY	
			3 DAYS	
5	Ram Navami	19th April, 2013	Friday	
			3 DAYS	
6	MAHAVIR JAYANTI	24th April, 2013	Wednesday	
	TAKE LEAVES ON	22,& 23rd APR	MONDAY & TUESDAY	2
	TOTAL VACATIONS	20 APR TO 24TH APR	5 DAYS	
7	BUDDHA PURNIMA	25th May, 2013	Saturday	
8	Idu'l Fitr	9th August, 2013	Friday	
			3 DAYS	
9	Independence Day	15th August 2013	Thursday	
	TAKE LEAVES ON	16TH Aug. 13	Friday	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	15TH TO 18TH Aug	4 DAYS	
10	Janmashtami	28th August, 2013	Wednesday	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	26TH & 27TH Aug	MONDAY & TUESDAY	2
	TOTAL VACATIONS	24 SEP TO 28 Aug.	5 DAYS	
11	Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday	2nd October 2013	Wednesday	
	TAKE LEAVES ON	3TH & 4TH Oct.13	Thursday & Friday	2

	TOTAL VACATIONS	2ND TO 6TH Oct	5 DAYS	
12	Dussehra	13th October 2013	Sunday	
13	Idul Zuha (Bakrid)	16th October 2013	WEDNESDAY	
	TAKE LEAVES ON	17TH & 18TH Oct.13	Thursday & Friday	2
	TOTAL VACATIONS	16TH TO 20 Oct	5 DAYS	
14	Diwali (Deepavali)	3rd November 2013	Sunday	
15	Muharram	14th November, 2013	Thursday	
	TAKE LEAVES ON	15.Nov.13	Friday	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	14 TO 17 Nov	4 DAYS	
16	Guru Nanak's Birthday	17th November, 2013	Sunday	
17	CHRISTMAS	25TH DECEMBER	WEDNESDAY	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	26rd to 27TH DECEMBER	Thursday & Friday	2
	TOTAL VACATIONS	25st TO 29TH DECEMBER	5 DAYS	
			50 DAYS	14

We extended the study for another year i.e 2014 and found again that more or less the situation remains same and can be seen below.(Annexure 3)

Table 3: List of Holiday as Per Central Govt.Holiday List

S.NO	HOLIDAY	DATE	DAY	REMARKS
1	ID-E-Milad	14TH JAN	TUESDAY	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	13.Jan.14	MONDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	11 TO 14 JAN.14	4 DAYS	
2	REPUBLIC DAY	26TH JAN	Sunday	
3	HOLI	17th March, 2014	Monday	
			3 DAYS	
4	Ram Navami	8th April, 2014	Tuesday	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	7TH Apr	MONDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	7TH TO 8TH MAR	4 DAYS	
5	Mahavir Jayanti	13th April, 2014	Sunday	
6	Good Friday	18th April, 2014	Friday	
			3 DAYS	
7	Buddha Purnima	14th May, 2014	Wednesday	

	TAKE LEAVES ON	15th & 16th May	THURSDAY & FRIDAY	2
	TOTAL VACATIONS	14th TO 18 May	5 DAYS	
8	Idu'l Fitr	29th July, 2014	Tuesday	
	TAKE LEAVE ON	28th July	MONDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	26 TO 29 July	4 DAYS	
9	Independence Day	15th August 2014	Friday	
10	Janmashtami	18th August, 2014	Monday	
			4 DAYS	
11	Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday	2nd October 2014	Thursday	
	TAKE LEAVE ON	3rd Oct.	FRIDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	2nd to 5 oct	4 DAYS	
12	Dussehra	3rd October 2014	Friday	
13	Idul Zuha (Bakrid)	6th October 2014	Monday	
			4 DAYS	
14	Diwali (Deepavali)	23rd October 2014	Thursday	
	TAKE LEAVE ON	24TH October	FRIDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	23 Oct. TO 26 Oct.	4 DAYS	
15	Muharram	4th November, 2014	Tuesday	
	TAKE A LEAVE ON	3TH November	MONDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	1 TO 4 November	4 DAYS	
16	Guru Nanak's Birthday	6th November, 2014	Thursday	
	TAKE LEAVE ON	7th Nov	FRIDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	6 TO 9 November	4 DAYS	
17	Christmas Day	25th December, 2014	Thursday	
	TAKE LEAVES ON	26th Dec	FRIDAY	1
	TOTAL VACATIONS	25th TO 28 December	4 DAYS	
			51 DAYS	10

In this year just by taking 10 days leaves at different slots and combine it with festival holidays one may enjoy 51 days vacations and this is excluding regular week ends.

This always remain a challenge for corporate/industries to manage the show especially in the official working days in such weeks. Attendance remains very thin and many times the productivity of even those who are present comes to very low due to interdependence on other people/roles. As per the normal rules all the companies have a provision of casual leaves, sick leaves and earn leaves and so employees do not find it difficult to manage the vacations as per the above table.

The calculation is not similar for workers in the factory but when managers make their calculations as per the above chart, it gives a direct impact on overall productivity.

Conclusion

There is no ready made solution to this but one way could be to make festival holidays flexible. This way all organizations should freeze the number of festival holidays like 12 or 16 as per the prevailing practice. Out of this only national holidays should be fixed on particular dates and rest all should be as per the choice of individuals within a calendar year. Further it could be classified as maximum 6 to 8 such holidays can be taken at stretch and can not be clubbed with any other leave. This will allow the employee to have more freedom and at the same time compulsory holiday kind of situation would be avoided which is taking place now in many times in a year. It may also be made similar to the earned leave so that there is no compulsion or fear to consume it or lose it. Even the encashment of these leaves is not a bad idea on similar lines of privilege leaves. It will improve the employee engagement and so the employee turnover will be reduced. Engaged employees will not only help in improved numbers but the quality of work will also be improved.

Suggestions

Flexibility is not possible in all the organizations. It depends on the type of work and business requirements. It may be done for select levels only and not for all levels in most of the organizations. It will not be useful where most of the employees are local and live with their families.

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Annexure 1

S No	Holiday	Date	Day	Status For Central Govt offices at Delhi / N Delhi
1	Republic Day	26th January 2012	Thursday	Gazetted Holiday
2	Milad un Nabi or ID-E-Milad (Birthday of Prophet Mohammad)	5th February 2012	Sunday	Gazetted Holiday
3	Maha Shivaratri	20th February 2012	Monday	Gazetted Holiday
4	Holi	8th March 2012	Thursday	Gazetted Holiday
5	Mahavir Jayanti	5th April 2012	Thursday	Gazetted Holiday
6	Good Friday	6th April 2012	Friday	Gazetted Holiday
7	Buddha Purnima	6th May, 2012	Sunday	Gazetted Holiday
8	Janamashtami (Vaisnava)	10th August 2012	Friday	Gazetted Holiday
9	Independence Day	15th August 2012	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday
10	Idul Fitr	20th August 2012	Monday	Gazetted Holiday
11	Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday	2nd October 2012	Tuesday	Gazetted Holiday
12	Dussehra (Vijaya Dashami)	24th October 2012	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday
13	Idul Zuha (Bakrid)	27th October 2012	Saturday	Gazetted Holiday
14	Diwali (Deepavali)	13th November 2012	Tuesday	Gazetted Holiday
15	Muharram	25th November 2012	Sunday	Gazetted Holiday
16	Guru Nanak's Birthday	28th November 2012	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday
17	Christmas Day	25th December 2012	Tuesday	Gazetted Holiday

Annexure 2

S No	Holiday	Date	Day	Status For Central Govt offices at Delhi / N Delhi
1	Milad un Nabi or ID-E-Milad (Birthday of Prophet Mohammad)	25th January 2013	Friday	Gazetted Holiday
2	Republic Day	26th January 2013	Saturday	Gazetted Holiday
3	Holi	27th March, 2013	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday
4	Good Friday	29th March, 2013	Friday	Gazetted Holiday
5	Ram Navami	19th April, 2013	Friday	Gazetted Holiday
6	Mahavir Jayanti	24th April, 2013	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday
7	Buddha Purnima	25th May, 2013	Saturday	Gazetted Holiday
8	Idul Fitr	9th August, 2013	Friday	Gazetted Holiday
9	Independence Day	15th August 2013	Thursday	Gazetted Holiday
10	Janmashtami	28th August, 2013	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday
11	Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday	2nd October 2013	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday
12	Dussehra	13th October 2013	Sunday	Gazetted Holiday
13	Idul Zuha (Bakrid)	16th October 2013	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday
14	Diwali (Deepavali)	3rd November 2013	Sunday	Gazetted Holiday
15	Muharram	14th November, 2013	Thursday	Gazetted Holiday
16	Guru Nanak's Birthday	17th November, 2013	Sunday	Gazetted Holiday
17	Christmas Day	25th December, 2013	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday

Annexure 3

S No	Holiday	Date	Day	Status For Central Govt offices at Delhi / N Delhi
1	Milad un Nabi or ID-E-Milad (Birthday of Prophet Mohammad)	14th January 2014	Tuesday	Gazetted Holiday
2	Republic Day	26th January 2014	Sunday	Gazetted Holiday
3	Holi	17th March, 2014	Monday	Gazetted Holiday
4	Good Friday	18th April, 2014	Friday	Gazetted Holiday
5	Ram Navami	8th April, 2014	Tuesday	Gazetted Holiday
6	Mahavir Jayanti	13th April, 2014	Sunday	Gazetted Holiday
7	Buddha Purnima	14th May, 2014	Wednesday	Gazetted Holiday
8	Idu'l Fitr	29th July, 2014	Tuesday	Gazetted Holiday
9	Independence Day	15th August 2014	Friday	Gazetted Holiday
10	Janmashtami	18th August, 2014	Monday	Gazetted Holiday
11	Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday	2nd October 2014	Thursday	Gazetted Holiday
12	Dussehra	3rd October 2014	Friday	Gazetted Holiday
13	Idul Zuha (Bakrid)	6th October 2014	Monday	Gazetted Holiday
14	Diwali (Deepavali)	23rd October 2014	Thursday	Gazetted Holiday
15	Muharram	4th November, 2014	Tuesday	Gazetted Holiday
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