More women joining security sector

Ravi Nair, country head, HR, Topsgrump

With 120 offices worldwide employing over 93,000 trained human capital assets and 8,000 customer companies, Topsgrump is India’s largest and one of the world’s biggest security companies. This London-headquartered firm has recently acquired UK’s tenth largest business security company, The Shield Group. It also aspires to become a $10 billion firm by 2020. Topsgrump is driven by the philosophy that employees should feel free to discuss all their issues with the HR head, who will work around it to give them what they want. Speaking to FC, Ravi Nair, an alumnus of IIM Lucknow and Princeton University, explains the firm’s HR policies.

Excerpts:

- Do you see any noticeable change in HR areas in your sector?
  One of the most significant trends, which I have observed, is the increasing number of women entrants to this sector. We have a good percentage of junior, mid and senior-level management positions, which are occupied by women and most of them have been consistent top performers, especially in sales and operations.

- What are your hiring strategies and what are the key parameters that you look at while hiring?
  Being an industry, which is about work force management, one key parameter we look for is people management skills and perspective towards safety and security of the community. There is a big social cause associated with this sector, of securing people and what matters most to them. This is also one of the guiding principles of this sector. One of the parameters applied is during the selection of the senior management cadre, where health check-up and psychometric testing is conducted for the selected candidate before an appointment letter is issued. A “panel of approved doctors” of the Topsgrump conducts the health check-up.

- What is the average attrition rate in your industry and what are your employee retention strategies?
  As per a report by KPMG made for the government of India, attrition levels in this sector/industry stands at 40 per cent for untrained guards and 15 per cent for trainee. Guards are primarily categorised as unskilled or semi-skilled because of which they are graded on a lower salary scale. We have a comprehensive training vertical that conducts various skill development programmes for these guards and upgrades their skills. This, in-turn, helps us secure better remunerations for them from the clients they serve, as they become more skilled and qualified. Many of them are posted as security officers (rather than guards) in multinational companies and are attached to other such premium clientele. Though we still face the risk of them leaving us and joining a competitor, a good percentage of them have chosen to stay back as they saw the value add, which we provided to them.

- What are the most significant HR changes that you have brought in the company and how have they helped you?
  We have introduced various events and programmes where we get to meet and interact with the team at least on a quarterly basis. The second important step we took was transparency. Even a guard has access to the senior management staff. So at any point they can approach the top management to address their concerns and grievances. This transparency has helped us build tremendous goodwill amongst our management team, security officers and guards. Besides this, there are quarterly awards and incentives for staff that have gone that extra-mile. All guards from across India are invited to Mumbai for the Annual Global Leadership Seminar and felicitated in front of the leadership team.

- What are the growth opportunities for your employee?
  Every employee has a career path, which is set on the first day he joins the organisation. He has a clear vision on where he will be in the next five or 10 years. Based on the analysis and recommendations of regional heads and head of departments (HoD) at the corporate office, employees are considered for increments and promotions. The committee for appraisal, as per “guidelines for performance appraisal” for indirect staff, will review the recommendation.

- Could you please throw light on your appraisal policy and its impact on your employees?
  All employees at corporate/region/branch are evaluated on a quarterly basis by assessing the individual’s performance within the quarter vis-à-vis monthly expected deliverables (MED) decided by the management. Details of the quarterly performance of individuals and assessment results are recorded in a “monthly appraisal form” and are consolidated in the “quarterly appraisal form”. Employees at various levels have MEDs and quarterly expected deliverables (QED). They have performance-linked bonus (PLB). The respective HoD carries out monthly appraisal in the subsequent month. If the employee is unable to perform over his MEDs/QED, i.e., his/her performance is below expectations, then there is a gap between the actual performance and MED will be evaluated and he/she will be counseled or provided further training by the HR department. Similarly, employees performing more than assessment and scoring the highest overall percentage within the branch/region/corporate will be awarded employee of the month.

- How difficult is it to get the right person for the right job?
  While we always strive to get the best, we focus on competence-based recruitment. So if we come across a candidate who has an X level of competency and the job requires Y level of competency, then we do not write off the candidate. We examine whether we can provide adequate training and help him acquire the desired competence level. This also applies to our internal promotions.

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