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...MORE THAN JUST WORK

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...MORE THAN JUST WORK

The most intriguing question that many employers seek an answer to is – how can one keep employees happy? Several strategies have been chalked out as possible answers to this question. Helping employees to pursue their personal interests beyond the scope of work could be one of the workable solutions, as it not only fosters employee engagement, but also motivation, says **Priya C Nair**

Picture this - you are passionate about dance and used to perform during your school and college days and have received immense fame and recognition as a

dancer. But once you stepped into the corporate world, you never got a chance to hone your skills or perform because of your busy schedule. One day, your firm gives you a

chance to perform during an organisational event and also an opportunity to teach dance to a few others at office who are interested in pursuing it. Wonderful, isn't it? A perfect

opportunity to pursue your passion and the right place to showcase your skills too, isn't it? This is exactly what many organisations are doing, when they talk about employee engagement – allowing their employees to follow their personal interests beyond work.

It is a known fact that a happy employee is a productive employee and organisations are striving hard to make their employees happy through various ways. The initiatives vary from firm to firm but largely through their initiatives, firms are trying to support their employees towards achieving their aspirations. Most organisations have realised that it is important to support their employees' personal interests beyond work as it keeps them motivated. "Each individual has many aspirations, which a few of them are able to fulfill, but the majority is unable to, either due to a lack of time or initiative. Here, the role of organisations becomes vital," says Shankar Ganesh, managing director, Nyka Events Pvt.Ltd.

"We have an associate, Shant Swarup, senior software engineer who is very passionate about chess and also an active participant in chess tournaments. The firm has been very supportive of him and allows him to take time-off from work for participating in corporate tournaments," explains Rajalakshmi S, director – HR, Pegasystems Worldwide India Private Ltd. "It is helping him hone his skills and get the right kind of exposure and the company is also benefiting by taking his advice in aligning itself with chess-related promotional activities of the company," adds Rajalakshmi. On similar lines, the music enthusiasts at 24/7 Customer have an in-house music club and recently, they launched a music album 'Jhalak', with the able support from the organisation. The 13-track album has

been written and composed by nine members of the firm and the songs are centered on the life at 24/7 Customer and various other themes like love, life, etc. "Our company gave the financial support for the album. We used to come to work early and compose and then log on to work after that. While recording, we were given time-off. Also in terms of our leaves and working hours, our manager and project lead have helped us in ways more than one. This flexibility and support made this album happen," says Satyam, customer support executive and team member of the music album, 24/7 Customer. "At Sobha Developers Limited, the employees have formed a creative club and actively celebrate awareness campaigns like Earth Day, Bus Day, Earth Hour, Environment Day, etc., to sensitise other Sobhaites. The club has formed a group called 'Rhythm – soul of life' to give employees a platform to showcase their talent in music, theatre and dance and organises various programmes with active support from the organisation," informs J C Sharma, MD, Sobha Developers."

These kind of initiatives give employees an opportunity to showcase their talent and also an opportunity to bond with other employees in the firm. "These initiatives keep employees encouraged, especially with the amount of stress involved at work; it rejuvenates employees to pursue their creative goals. It gives employees a platform to develop their potential and helps create a sense of belonging in the company," believes Rajalakshmi.

Hence, with organisations lending a helping hand to their employees, it has no longer become difficult for employees to strike a chord between their professional lives and personal interests.

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