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Managing Business during the COVID Crisis: A Case Study on the HR Scorecard at Renaissance

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Abstract

The pandemic, COVID-19, posed numerous challenges and opportunities for a new awakening. The new dawn of digital literacy is the new normal, albeit need of the hour. The present paper tries to explore a coaching institute, Renaissance, that is based in Vadodara, Gujarat, and managing its teaching-learning processes amidst the pandemic. The paper is based on a case study that discusses the pre and post COVID-19 scenario of doing business at Renaissance. The main aim of a coaching institute is giving personalized counselling to students and attain satisfaction. There must be some framework through which operational processes of doing business are streamlined to generate satisfaction. Thus, the present study explores such framework, the HR Scorecard through which the vital cogs of managing business are discussed and explained with regards to Renaissance. The study also explores what competencies the HRSC helps in building for teachers that are required by the coaching institute. This is the reason that HRSC becomes food for thought and a reason for action.

Key words: HR Scorecard, COVID-19, Renaissance

Introduction

Background of the Organization/ Start-up:

Renaissance Educare Private Limited is a coaching and consultancy company that caters to the changing dynamic forces of education followed by consultation, and delivers high quality service,

and personalized counselling with conviction. With 10 years of strong foundation in Ahmedabad, Renaissance is also functional in Vadodara, Gandhinagar, and Gwalior as franchises (Anon., n.d.).

Introduction of the Company:

The foundation stone for Renaissance, Vadodara was laid in June 2018. Renaissance is a start-up of 10 employees (including teaching and non-teaching). Renaissance helps students to prepare for exams like TOEFL, SAT (U.G.), GRE (P.G.), IELTS, GMAT (P.G). These exams are abroad-specific, for students aspiring to pursue their careers outside India. On the flip side, the students who wish to study in India appear for exams like CAT, MHRM/ MSW, CLAT (Law- U.G), IPM (Integrated Program in Management at IIM Indore and Rohtak), CMAT (Common Management Admission Test), IIFT. Renaissance aids in meticulous planning in preparing students to crack exams by designing study material, scheduling lectures, conducting doubt-solving sessions (one-to-one, if required) post-lectures, and taking regular feedbacks from students so that there is always a scope for continuous improvement. Renaissance believes that learning should never stop – for students and teachers. The organizational set-up is purely flat with no hierarchies, believing that the channel of communication should be regular and open. To cater to the students' learning needs, Renaissance has a huge library offering around 2000 books of different subjects. Renaissance also has a counselling lab where the counselling sessions are being held (Anon., n.d.).

The brainchild behind setting up Renaissance, the training academy:

It is usually seen that students are in a quandary as to which course to pursue after 12th, or UG, or PG courses. To alleviate this apprehension, the Centre Director at Renaissance thought of setting up this training academy, where students are counselled by the staff at Renaissance. A lot of brainstorming is done where students discuss their career aspirations and colleges/ universities where they would end up going. This whole lot of process requires in-depth understanding of colleges/ universities, the courses they offer, their rankings, and repute. The team at Renaissance is well equipped and well-armed to handle such issues and solving students' and their parents' doubts and giving them the best career guidance. Renaissance aims at making students realize their true potential through career counselling, which is taken by the Centre Director at Renaissance. Renaissance prides itself on getting students admitted into Ivy League colleges and top-tier universities, which otherwise becomes a far-fetched option for students without proper career

counselling. Renaissance is the only such institute in Gujarat which gets students admitted into top-tier institutes by building their profiles.

Renaissance and its growth since inception

Renaissance soon after the establishment as a franchisee in June 2018, has been successful in satiating the appetite of its students who wish to study abroad with 100 percent VISA acceptance in top-tier US-based universities in its first year. Successively, Renaissance has catered to almost 200 students since then and helped them realize their dreams.

Changes in teaching-learning processes post COVID at Renaissance:

Stakeholders' play a pivotal role in building any educational institute. Students being an imperative chunk of stakeholders', demand immediate attention in any educational institution. The pandemic, COVID-19, brought massive challenges and opportunities to the fore. The first lockdown that was announced on the March 25th, 2020, came with a lot of qualms for all stakeholders': students, parents, teaching, non-teaching staff, and the Centre Director. The lockdown shook the entire world as every government and non-government institutions were completely shut down. It was a massive blow for the economy as lockdown came as a fury with immense apprehensions pouring in from all sides.

Changing roles pre- and post-lockdown

Before the lockdown

The teaching-learning processes were purely offline before the lockdown was declared. The faculty and students preferred the offline mode of teaching as this modus operandi was popular at Renaissance. Face-to-face interactions make a connect between students and teachers. The offline mode of teaching aids in engaging students, which is an important factor for generating students' satisfaction.

Post-lockdown

As the pandemic barged in, everything started getting haywire. The announcement of the first lockdown fogged the brains of students' and their parents. Everyone seemed to be mucking around

as to what would come next. Sailing through turbulent times without any ray of hope was difficult. The situation clamoured for a change in the modus operandi by Renaissance. The corona incubus seemed to be the springboard for the online mode of teaching. As the wave of panic was sent among students and their parents, the team at Renaissance was driven to decipher new ways/ modes of pedagogies that were unheard back till then, hoping that new pedagogies would placate the students' and parents and bring everything back to normalcy.

Standing at Crossroads: How to introduce change?

Technology: A Digital Push

As necessity is the mother of invention, the corona wave seemed to be a precursor in driving Renaissance towards the online mode of teaching. Students and their parents were completely baffled as to how things would shape up during the pandemic. Students started panicking as their VISA processes were put on hold. For Renaissance to be out of woods, the old ways of doing things had to be mended. For learning something new, we must unlearn the old. A digital push was the cornerstone during the pandemic to set things right.

Technology as a Boon for Renaissance

Technology proved to be a boon that aided Renaissance to sail through tough times. The online mode was shaky and rough on the edges but picked up with the help of technology. With the announcement of the first lockdown, the offline mode of teaching had to be completely jettisoned. Switching towards an online mode of teaching for Renaissance was not easy. So, Renaissance rebounded by giving a crash course training to the staff so that they could conduct online sessions smoothly. Training was also given on how to use MS power point for both visual and textual aid. Frequent online meetings were done with the staff to understand whether they were comfortable with the online mode. Writing pads were allotted to the faculty (mathematics and English) to conduct lectures on platforms like Zoom. These platforms were new and the teaching staff at Renaissance was made abreast of this by the centre director himself.

The HR Scorecard: Framework to streamline the processes through HR

The foundation of the concept of the HR Scorecard (HRSC) was laid in 2001 by Mark A. Huselid, Brian E. Becker, and Dave Ulrich. The HRSC is a performance measurement tool that measures the contribution of human resources in any organization/ institution. The human resources are used more and measured less. The measurement requires a framework where customer value proposition is enhanced, and strategies are designed for developing the human capital (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

Need for the HR Scorecard

Since the change is inevitable post lockdown, tremendous number of efforts needed to be put into the teaching-learning processes. The journey of shifting from offline to online mode of teaching-learning requires a framework where students' satisfaction is given serious attention. Some intervention was needed to be there in Renaissance, through which the teaching-learning processes, financials, operations are all linked to the vision/ mission/ strategy of this coaching institute. The processes need to be streamline and aligned with the vision/ mission of the institute. Human capital is the cornerstone for value creation. Measurement is the new language that is used in organizations (Becker, et al., 2001). What can be measured, can be managed, and improved. Measurement tools like the HRSC would manage an institute's HR architecture comprising the HR function, the HR system, and Employee Behaviours. The HRSC is designed to link people, strategy, and performance. Since the new economy is marked by speed, innovation, time, the HRSC caters to these fundamentals by focusing on how human capital can be honed and drawn towards the strategy implementation process. The HRSC stresses the importance of not just financial measurement but measurement of intangibles that play a major role in creating value for the organization/ institutions.

HRSC in Renaissance

The pandemic COVID-19 opened the doors for many new opportunities that were beyond any stretch of imagination. Online mode of teaching – the new normal – is the cornerstone for embracing the world of digital education. Renaissance is not behind in pushing the operations digitally, as that is the need of the hour. This seemed a massive challenge for Renaissance, but it

could pick up because of the sound digital infrastructure. Becoming digitally acclimatized with students and parents posed a new set of challenges. The faculty at Renaissance had to be trained for new competencies that came up with the online mode of teaching-learning. The new situation demands an organizational diagnosis. The architecture for the organizational diagnosis is split into three pillars (Ulrich, 1996).

- Competence Pillar: It states the new competencies that are required by the teaching and non-teaching staff to accomplish the strategy.
- Consequence Pillar: It states the consequences and standards that are needed to accomplish the strategy?
- Capacity for change/ Work Processes Pillar: It underscores the importance of “change” that is inevitable and in the light of that change, how do we manage our operational processes?

In the wake of this organizational diagnosis, the measurement tool, the HRSC, came into limelight as some intervention is required that answers the aforesaid questions, but how?

The National Policy of Education, NEP, 2020

The National Policy of Education, 2020 has underscored the need for blended learning that is the sum of online and offline mode of teaching-learning. The blended learning comprises the digital learning through Massive Open and online courses (MOOC's) just to encourage the idea of self-paced learning.

The digital learning not only poses a new set of challenges for students, but also for teachers who need to be well-equipped for such situations. The NPE, 2020 has stressed upon a capable, motivated, and energized faculty that is well trained through refresher courses and other forms of training activities (GOI, 2020).

New competencies for the faculty at Renaissance: The need of the hour

Teachers form the backbone of any educational institution and are a great source of inspiration for students. Since the student value proposition is the mantra for Renaissance, teachers' need to be honed for new competencies. It is through building a strong base for teachers in terms of competencies that would result in students' satisfaction.

Renaissance is open for students 7 days a week; with employees working in rotational shifts to ensure each member has at least one day off every week. The mode of learning is offline as preferred over by students. Switching to online mode requires a competent staff who is digitally well-versed. These competencies are linked to the strategy implementation to measure the contribution of human capital. A person's true worth can be measured through his/ her capabilities and contribution. The person's capacity to change makes a huge difference. Building competencies is a great way for improvement (Mayo, 2001).

Building Competencies at Renaissance

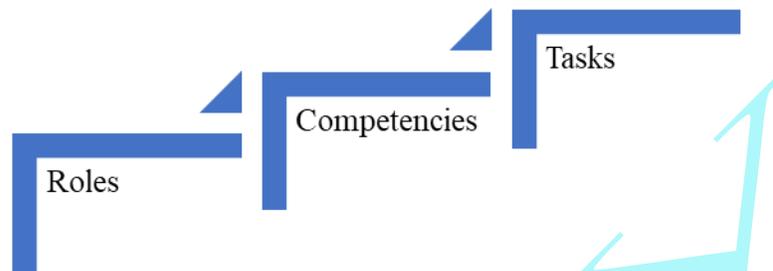
The capacity for change is one of the most pertinent competencies that can be build amongst employees of Renaissance. It is this capacity for change that adds value to the institute. The true potential of employees cannot be measured unless competencies are built up in them. There are three ways of building competencies, 3 B's: buying, borrowing, and building through development. In addition to all of this, working environment is essential that acts as a cornerstone and helps in keeping employees motivated and committed.

The initial journey of online classes saw many hiccups. But as things started unfolding, everything started falling into place. The student engagement was a major challenge faced by the faculty at Renaissance. It was difficult to engage students through online mode, but faculty was trained via zoom meetings, phone calls, and regular communication helped them to overcome this challenge. New competencies were required by the faculty: preparedness, proactive, problem-solving, processing information, the act of resilience, creativity, analytical ability, and imagination (Hadar, et al., 2020).

The HRSC Model: Explanation of the model

Building Competencies through the HRSC

Competency Defined: It is defined as the abilities to carry out tasks based on the benchmarks. Roles define the competencies that are required by teachers that further define the tasks (Alvarez, et al., 2009).

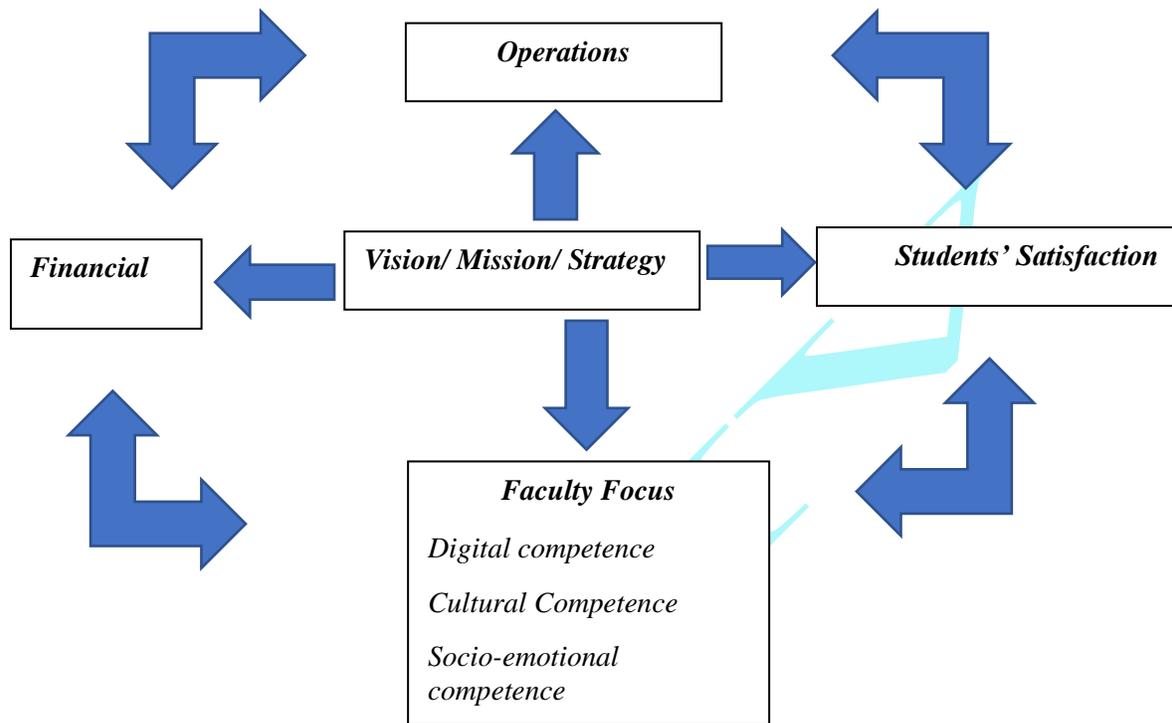


A framework is must where all the above-mentioned competencies can be built in employees at Renaissance. Competencies are employee behaviours that are linked with the strategy implementation process. The HRSC would act as clock and compass for Renaissance as the competencies that are required post COVID-19 would be build that would enable the strategy implementation process by defining performance drivers and enablers.

The competencies discussed for Renaissance are:

- Digital Competencies: Renaissance had integrated the information and communication technology (ICT) tools into its teaching-learning processes and training of employees before the pandemic barged in. After the lockdown, the team at Renaissance is driven towards green HRM (paperless) where students connect through telegram, a digital platform. Online examinations are conducted and evaluated through telegram and other online platforms.
- Socio-economic Competencies: These comprise the competencies that help teachers stand the test of time. These include stress management, anxiety, helplessness, strain, difficulty, self-management, self-control, depression, overload, and drowning (Hadar, et al., 2020).
- Cultural Competencies: These competencies include in understanding inter-cultural differences amongst students.

The HRSC Model: A Conceptual Framework



Questions for discussion

1. Is there any other framework for measuring the human capital? If yes, discuss.
2. What competencies, according to you, are pertinent for a coaching institute other than the ones discussed in the case?
3. As the Centre Director of Renaissance, how would you measure the worth of your human capital?

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