Kiran Yadav, director, HR, Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance Company

There are no right jobs, only opportunities

CAREER CLAUSE

RITWIK MUKHERJEE

Kiran Yadav heads the HR functions of Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance Company, jointly owned by two of India's largest public sector banks – Canara Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce and HSBC Insurance (Asia Pacific), the Asian insurance arm of HSBC. With more than 17 years of professional experience, she aims at enabling people and eliminating boundaries between the functions to help employees grow. Here Yadav explains how opportunities for growth and development help employees expand their knowledge, skills and abilities and eventually offer motivation and job satisfaction. Excerpts:

■ How do you hire fresh talents and groom them?

At Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance (CHOICe), the employee value proposition emphasises that you bring us your passion and a great 'mountain moving' attitude and we get you the fairest pay check, honest balance of your life at work and at home, a career that you can control and endless learning where you have the opportunity to be a leader in your role. We deploy a multitude of competency-based interviews, which enables us to map the talent to the job criterion followed by an ability test that re-affirms the person's potential to succeed in our organisation. This is our simple and scalable philosophy of getting the talent onboard. The profile once scrutinised by the HR team, goes to the supervisor of the role and the skip level manager for review who also authenticate the profiles against the prerequisites of the role delivery. To assess the fitment, we make use of globally validated psychometric tools followed by a robust competency based interview and a structured/role-based ability test, which helps us find the right fit. The CHOICe virtual campus ensures that employees get every possible opportunity to develop themselves at an easy click. An employee corner on the training portal helps the new hires to go through an online induction and other compliance-related trainings within few days of their joining. Apart from this, all employees are given ample opportunities to interact with the leadership team through knowledge sharing sessions of business knowledge and industry experience.

■ Do you think that working for a financial product or more particularly, insurance company needs different skill sets?

The external environment is dynamic — and that demands an agile and fungible workforce, rather than one that is departmentalised. With changing technology and increasing number of players in the industry, customers have many options. So it is important to have a workforce which is ready to adapt to ever evolving customer needs and cater to not only the current requirements, but also anticipate and prepare for their future requirements. It is a constant process to upscale our employees by engaging them in short term assignments, role enhancements through internal job postings and trainings with focus on their current and future professional needs and not just be limited to a defined skill set. Moreover, being a company with the customer at the core of our existence, we look for employees with a flair for putting customers first. We believe in the motto 'Hire for attitude, train for skills!' Over 50 per cent of our positions are internally filled through internal job postings, which serve as a platform for employees to explore roles of their interest resulting in organic growth of the inhouse talent. Along with the internal job postings, we also have a strong employee referral scheme "mitr", which helps us ensure that we hire through the most trusted source, our people!

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■ Insurance products need to be customised and the company needs to bring in new products, new schemes on a regular basis. How do you keep your work force ready alongside upgrading their skills?

■ Our sales training follows a unique 'integrated approach' towards training and development of the sales personnel across its partner banks and company's own sales teams. Our company believes in people empowerment and excellence with focus on building two long-term sustainable differentiators — people and processes. We conduct annually over 8,000 sales training and coaching sessions covering close to 32,000 staff members of our partner banks with the objective to better equip them in treating customers fairly, assessing customer need and offering right solutions. We believe in conversational selling skills, which is a unique customer centric approach, where the focus is having friendly conversation with our esteemed customers, to uncover their unique life stage needs. In addition to a thorough knowledge of products, it is important that our sales force understands the customer's financial needs- investment, protection, retirement solution or all of these.

■ What is your current head count and what are your hiring plans for the next one-year?

We currently have an employee base of 1,500 with a vision of adding more sales personnel over the year to fuel further growth, as it's crucial to be present wherever our customers are.

■ What are the growth opportunities that an employee gets working in your company?

Opportunities for growth and development helps employees expand their knowledge, skills, and abilities and apply the competencies they have gained to new situations. The opportunity to gain new skills and experiences increase employee motivation and job satisfaction in our company. By providing opportunities for growth and development, the quality of our employees' work experience has improved and we realise the benefits of developing workers to their full potential.

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