

"Our People Practices Have Always Been Ahead Of Times," Archana Bhaskar

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25 March, 2022 by Sugandh Bahl

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Women need to become role models and coach other women to move up the career and maintain work-life balance. The month of march talks about commemorations and celebrations of women 's achievements from all walks of life. Off the lot, this time e are commemorating the work-done by a pharma lady Archana Bhaskar, CHRO< Dr, Reddy's and how has she redefined the way we perceive the life of woman in pharma industry.

1. How have you successfully accomplished the task of managing an entire organization during a pandemic?

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two clear priorities for the company – the safety and well-being of our staff and their families, and delivering to patients. This clarity helped us organize our approach. We moved quickly to keep the organization across sites and geographies closely connected through a regular flow of information, townhalls, sessions on wellness and nutrition, spiritual guidance and counselling support. A dedicated Safety, Health, Environment (SHE) team kept a database of employees at all locations of Dr. Reddy’s along with positive cases, co-morbidities and medical supplies. Once we were past the initial adjustment to the enormity of what was happening, we started to look at how best we could use our strengths and make ourselves useful to society. We formed a team for community outreach measures

– supply of medicines, ventilators, teleconsultation, personal protective equipment, oxygen concentrators and even an oxygen plant. Our internal call for volunteers received an overwhelming response! During the first and the second waves, our phones rang off the hook.

There are patients around the world who depend on our products. With them in mind, we kept our manufacturing plants running round-the-clock. There were several challenges we were suddenly faced with – lockdowns, curfews, scarcity of raw materials, transport issues, etc. Our teams stretched themselves, and through exemplary collaboration and innovation, found solutions to ensure we delivered on time. We saw self-motivated leaders and colleagues in the company take on the initiative of leading our COVID-19 response, especially in facilitating therapeutics for the entire spectrum of the disease – from vaccine to mild, moderate and severe COVID-19. The pandemic offered us the opportunity to truly fulfil our purpose of Good Health Can’t Wait. Each and every person in the company really lived our values of empathy and dynamism. This was the most gratifying and successful takeaway of the pandemic.

2. What drives you?

We want every person at Dr. Reddy’s to be able to meet their potential through work and through continuous learning. We also have a big transformation and growth agenda for the business. Our people practices have always been ahead of times; be it our culture, the kind of people we hire or our investment in world-class learning. I have found it very fulfilling to have the opportunity to re-define and take these to the next level. In an entrepreneurial company such as ours, I have had significant freedom to make decisions and change things in a dynamic way – more than I could ever do in any other multinational, no matter how large the role. What better platform for an HR professional than this to make an impact! Even now, every morning, I feel energized as I start my workday and there hasn’t been one dull moment in the last five years.

3. How has your organisation helped you in bringing out your best potential?

If I had to answer this in one word, I would say empowerment. The freedom and empowerment at Dr. Reddy’s to learn, to do, to experiment, to fail and learn all over again is tremendous. This is crucial for a sector such as pharma in which innovation plays an important role. I would also highlight the quality of people at all levels in terms of diversity in experience, in nationality and in wealth of expertise as something that inspires me as a professional. Respect for professionalism and authenticity are highly valued traits in the company, and this is exemplified by the leadership starting with the promoters. The company has a well-defined purpose, promises, principles, and values. I find Dr. Reddy’s to be among the few companies that have institutionalized ‘respect for the individual as a core value alongside ‘teamwork and collaboration’. As a people development professional, this balance between integrity and respect for people on the one hand and industry-leading ambition on the other has been a very powerful attraction. This is one way in which the company has truly empowered its people and differentiated itself. Little surprise that our organization is seen almost as a training school for the pharma sector

– these values and leadership skills have given pharma many of its present-day leaders and successful entrepreneurs!

4. As a people person, what are the goals you strive to achieve in an organization apart from management goals?

I believe that in my role at Dr. Reddy’s, I carry the responsibility of thinking not just about the company but about the industry. The pharma industry in India is poised to play an even larger role in contributing to healthcare, to the economy, to innovation and to sustainable growth going forward. Any leader today must keep this in mind and think about all stakeholders – people in the company, our partners, communities that we are a part of, and of course the planet. We are in the process of clearly defining our longer-term goals in these and other key areas of Environment, Social, Governance (ESG) – how to skill for the future, building talent, raising the quality of pharma education and skills, improving livelihoods and more. At the organizational level, as a trail-blazer in many areas, we have always put a premium on company culture and living our values, retaining our emphasis on doing things the right way, creating leaders of the future, and ensuring that our workforce is a reflection of the wider society we live in. There are areas in which Dr. Reddy’s has made pioneering contributions – conceptualization and execution of Self-Managed Teams (SMT) is one in which we empower youth from under-privileged backgrounds with vocational skills needed to work in our sites with independent charge of their work. We are the only pharma company in India to be included in the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index – 2022 marked our fifth appearance in a row – and we are a signatory to the United Nations Women’s Empowerment Principles (UN WEP). These are people achievements we cherish. At the same time, this is an ongoing journey and there is a lot to be done. Changing mindsets, facilitating a broader view of diversity, making employee well-being and employee volunteerism a part of work culture are all long-term goals.

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In the last two years, we have seen disruption become very real very soon. One of the most interesting challenges has been to adapt to the evolving situation during the pandemic – the

‘future of work’ discussions, hybrid work models, re-doubling focus on employee well-being and safety and being prepared for ever-changing scenarios. All of these are areas that have seen deeper attention and re-orientation, if not permanent changes! If ever there was a belief that the people function is a soft one, the pandemic has dispelled it forever. I find that the most important trait to tackle evolving situations is humility and the ability to learn from the situation. Challenges are great teachers!

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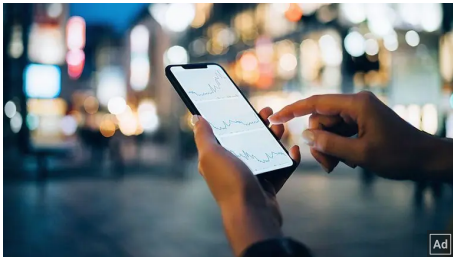
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