

Leadership Talk Report

Speaker: Mr. Ankush Arora

Date: 26th November 2023

Theme: *Transforming Role of an HR Leader*

The first-year students of the School of Human Resource Management, XIM University, were fortunate enough to attend a Leadership Talk on the theme – ***Transforming Role of an HR Leader*** on the 26th of November, 2023 which was very immaculately delivered by Mr. Ankush Arora, Ex-CHRO of Oxane Partners. In his past roles, he has worked with major enterprises such as Blinkit (Formerly Grofers), Havells, Jubilant Life Sciences, SAP Labs, L&T Infotech, Tata Interactive Systems amongst others. Mr. Ankush Arora graduated in Chemical Engineering from the National Institute of Technology, Rourkela and is also an alumnus of XIMB. While the theme was extremely relevant to the first-year students, the speaker made it a point to deliver his thoughts using real-time examples from his professional experience and personal experience as an expatriate, which made the session even more interesting and valuable.



Talk Summary:

The session, helmed by Mr. Ankush Arora, CHRO of Oxane Partners commenced with a spirited dialogue on the crux of an HR professional, ie. what do organisations look for in a candidate before hiring and thoughtfully aligned the conversation with the context of transforming HR roles. The audience engaged in a profound exploration of the transformational quality of HR roles, clearly showcasing enthusiasm on the theme. The discourse illuminated an HR professional's quintessential attributes—courage, motivation, trustworthiness, active listening, and empathy. These facets were underscored as the bedrock upon which effective HR leaders are built.

What stood out in the discussion was that Mr. Ankush Arora wove his own journey into the narrative, offering a living embodiment of these virtues. He emphasized the vital importance of harmonizing personal ambitions and chasing one's passion by citing the example of how he gave up computer science engineering to study what he was truly passionate about ie. chemical engineering from NIT, Rourkela.

He further spoke about his personal life, his family and his interests which included travelling and culinary experiences. The conversation ventured into the realm of challenges that the leader encountered, such as a typical HR's infamous struggle to gain a seat at the table. The talk elegantly conveyed the idea that facing adversity and embracing discomfort is pivotal to cultivating mental resilience for an HR. The ability to transcend fears and maintain unwavering focus amidst external influences have emerged as quintessential traits for effective leadership in an HR perspective. He further emphasized that HR is more of a cost/expense center and how an HR should be proficient in speaking the business language. A horse-riding activity was ingeniously employed as a metaphor, which beautifully encapsulated the equilibrium between control and power dynamics—which is a pivotal aspect of being a competent HR.

Mr. Ankush Arora's emphasis on having an opinion on everything that goes on in the business (be it tallying the organisation's balance sheet, or the increase of outflow of cash over inflow of cash) resonated deeply, reflecting a profound understanding of the dynamics that foster unity and productivity within an organisation. He further pressed that "customization" is the key to the formulation of policies. His insights very aptly highlighted that HR leaders are the real "players" and their exposure to roles outside of HR makes them even more proficient in their field. For any HR closely working with business teams and senior stakeholders of the organization along with slowly developing and sharpening his/her business sense and commercial acumen is truly the cherry on top.

Sir gracefully concluded his talk by saying that employee satisfaction lays the foundation for operational triumph. All in all, the discourse encapsulated a treasure trove of wisdom, which helped in cultivating an enriching experience for the entire audience. The resounding message of the transforming role of an HR amalgamated with practical examples and theoretical discourse, which in turn equipped attendees with a robust framework to ascend as the distinguished HR leaders in the future.

Key Takeaways:

- ✓ Leaders radiate positive energy and in order to develop this it is important for an individual to be calm and composed in his dealings of life.
- ✓ Experience teaches a person a lot and it is these experiences that help us drive the force within ourselves.
- ✓ Attributes for Effective Leadership are Courage, motivation, trustworthiness, active listening, and empathy are crucial for HR leaders
- ✓ Incorporating personal experiences can enrich the understanding of HR leadership transformation
- ✓ An individual should emphasise the importance of aligning personal passions with professional pursuits for career fulfilment
- ✓ HR leaders need mental resilience and the ability to embrace discomfort, especially in overcoming challenges like gaining a seat at the table
- ✓ HR leaders should be proficient in speaking the business language and must understand the cost/expense center nature of HR
- ✓ There must be a balance between control and power dynamics in competent HR roles
- ✓ Adaptability is as important as accountability, do not run away from it
- ✓ The key to formulating effective policies lies in customization, considering the unique needs and dynamics of the organization.
- ✓ HR leaders benefit from exposure to roles outside HR, enhancing their proficiency and understanding of business dynamics.

O&A Session:

- 1. As a leader what was your strategy in looking after the well-being and the happiness of the employees working with you?**

*Mr. Arora considers the well-being and happiness of the employees above any other thing as he believed that if the employees are satisfied and happy in the organization that would help in increasing productivity. Moreover it would also help him get the work easily done by the employees. He has also adopted various strategies in order to tackle this by providing a flexible schedule and also by providing holidays on various festivities so that the employees remain motivated. According to Mr.Arora, there is a direct correlation between the efficiency and the effectiveness of employees. *

2. What was your motivation to be a part of Oxane Partners and what were your strategies while preparing for it?

Mr. Arora strongly believed in the policy that an individual should emphasise the importance of aligning personal passions with professional pursuits for career fulfilment. Sir mentioned that he felt that computer science engineering was not the right option for him and he should do something which is more of his liking and hence he pursued chemical engineering from NIT Rourkela. He also mentioned that he had no specific strategy while preparing to be a part of Oxane and was purely motivated by the challenge that he as an HR had to gain a place at the table and make himself heard. That was one thing which can be considered one of the major factors that helped in developing Mr. Arora's personality. In the end sir said that it was an amazing experience and the want to help people was the driving force for him in his entire journey.



Profile of the Speaker:

Mr. Ankush Arora is a seasoned HR Executive Leader, with nearly two decades of experience, working with reputed organizations. His forte lies in seeking new opportunities in building and sustaining national competitive advantage through people management and tangible value creation. Mr. Ankush is the Ex- CHRO of Oxanne Partners where he enabled the organization to establish a strong HR function that acts as an enabler of people growth and change. In his past roles, he has worked with major enterprises such as

Blinkit (Formerly Grofers), Havells, Jubilant Life Sciences, SAP Labs, L&T Infotech, Tata Interactive Systems amongst others.

What drives Ankush is his passion for developing people and helping them grow as a person and a professional. Across organizations, he has nurtured a value & performance-based culture in teams by providing cross industry perspectives and implementing best practices. Ankush graduated in Chemical Engineering from the National Institute of Technology, Rourkela and obtained his Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management from Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar.

With organizations like **ActionAid, Helpage, ACF, Plan, Save the Children, and VSO**, he has considerable experience working in extremely sensitive, conflict, post-conflict, and dynamic security contexts. His work experience spans over **8 countries in Asia and Africa** in leading and managing people, systems, and institutions. Prior to taking on international duties in Afghanistan, Nepal, South Sudan, and Rwanda, along with regional responsibilities in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, he oversaw programs in Kashmir and Jharkhand in India.

He has extensive knowledge of creating and leading large, impactful programs, partnerships with several stakeholders, and teams with a wide range of backgrounds. His expertise in working mostly in post-conflict environments adds another level of complexity to his job in terms of identifying and grooming people and talent.

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